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THIS THESIS MAY BE READ ONLY
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THE FREEDOM OF THE PRESS
IN IRELAND.

1784 - 1842.

Submitted for Ph.D
by
Brian Inglis



THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

PHILOSOPHY

1951 - 1952

THESIS

128



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PREFACE

This thesis as originally planned was to span the years 1784-1851 - 1784, because Foster's Press Act marked the beginning of a new phase in the relationship between government and press: 1851, because the action *Birch v. Somerville* brought this phase to an end. The decision to stop at 1842 was made primarily because the story of the Nation which was founded in that year has been many times told, and although the time has probably come for a critical re-appraisal of that most remarkable of newspapers, such work would be outside the scope of an essentially exploratory thesis. In any case, the amount of material available for a study of the freedom of the press in Ireland before the appearance of the Nation, proved very much greater than expected; so that not only did this final section remain unwritten, but two written sections, originally incorporated, have been discarded, one on the law of libel, and the other on O'Connell's influence on the press. For reasons described in Appendix A, the importance of the law of libel was less during this period than it is, for example, today, and that section would only have had negative interest: but I am aware that the omission of the section on O'Connell is less justifiable, because the story of his attempts - for the most part singularly unsuccessful - to influence the press, is extremely interesting. I feel, however, that it does not quite fit into the framework of this thesis, which it would certainly

~~ix~~ (6)

make excessively long.

One other section that I intended to include remains unwritten: an account of the growth of the concept of the freedom of the press in the minds of Irishmen. To attempt this would require a very intimate knowledge of the lives and opinions of the people of the period. Plenty of opinions are to be found upon the subject in newspaper editorials, in the speeches of politicians, in the pleas of counsel. But in all these, the writer or speaker is concerned not with what he wants to say, but what he thinks he ought to say. Politicians invariably profess respect for the freedom of the press. Few of them suit the action to the word, when they find newspapers ranged against them. In any case, no man defines exactly what he means when he defends press freedom. Each of us draws the line between liberty and license somewhere: few of us are aware exactly where we would draw it, if circumstances - such as finding ourselves on a jury trying a libel action - left us the decision. It is not then by any research into the written or spoken word, but only by a profound knowledge of a nation and its people at any given period of history, that a satisfactory judgment of their ideas about the freedom of the press can be obtained. Libel actions, when heard before a jury, can give some indication: but for the reasons referred to in Appendix A the libel actions of this period are of disappointingly little value. If they had been heard before impartial juries, they would have given

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perhaps as good an indication of the public's state of mind as can be expected: but they were not.

The internal organisation of newspapers, their production, and distribution to readers, cannot entirely be divorced from a consideration of the freedom of the press; a newspaper's freedom depends to a great extent upon its commercial well-being, and that in turn derives from its efficiency. I have not, however, gone at all deeply into the question of newspaper production - costs, techniques, labour, etc., nor into the problem of distribution; such research would have taken me too far from the main subject. Suffice to say that newspapers were continually harassed by - for example - distribution problems. The owners of morning papers, which were sold mainly in Dublin, complained that newsvendors hired out copies instead of selling them, thereby depriving them of revenue: and the owners of evening papers, which sold predominantly in the country, frequently complained of the dishonesty, inefficiency, and rapacity of the "Clerks of the Road" into whose hands their newspapers had to be committed. These problems really require separate consideration.

Lastly, little attempt has been made to compare conditions in Ireland with those existing in England, Scotland, or other countries. Recent research by Dr. Aspinall on the British press, and R. M. Cowan on the press in Scotland, has made such comparisons feasible: but again, I have thought it best to defer ^{discussion of} so important a subject, to a later occasion.

My intention has been to follow the "Rules for the Guidance of contributors" published in Irish Historical Studies for March 1944, in matters of style, punctuation, use of capital letters, form of footnotes, bibliographical abbreviations, etc. In extenuation of certain deficiencies, and of numerous corrections, I must plead years of service with a Dublin newspaper whose style rules might have been designed to be diametrically opposed to those laid down by the editors of I.H.S.

Whenever possible, I have spelt the names of individuals as they themselves spelled them. When, as not infrequently occurs, they used more than one variant, I have adopted the commoner usage. It is perhaps as well not to be too pedantic on this point.

INTRODUCTION

The freedom of the press has no effective statutory recognition in Ireland, neither does it exist among the maxims of common law. The constitution in 1784, as it does today, permitted anyone to say, write, or publish what he pleased, in the knowledge that he could be held responsible for his words in the courts. This applied alike to newspapers and to individuals; the writer received, in theory, the same treatment if he wrote for a newspaper, as if he scribbled on a roadside wall. The phrase 'the freedom of the press' which was often heard in these islands during the latter half of the 18th. century, came into use not to describe the newspapers' constitutional protection, but to point the contrast with the relative servitude of the press on the continent - in two essentials. Publication could be made by anyone without previous licence or censorship; the publisher might risk conviction for blasphemy, sedition, or libel, after the article appeared, but he could not be prevented from printing it. And if anyone held that the article was blasphemous, seditious, or libellous, the publisher could only be convicted through and by the ordinary courts of law. In practice this meant

that anything could be published with impunity that in the opinion of a jury did not endanger the social structure of their day. Judges were still insisting in 1784 that they alone were capable of deciding whether or not matter was libellous; and they often attempted to cajole or bully juries into adopting a verdict dictated from the bench. But juries retained the ultimate power. In the last resort, they could refuse to convict.

The limit to the freedom of the press was the state of public opinion - the opinion, at least, of that section of the public from which juries were empanelled. At any one time, juries might vary among themselves; and at different times, public opinion could undergo considerable changes, so that what was innocent one year might be considered ^{to}inflammable~~able~~ the next. But in general, opinion of men of property was the measure of press liberty.

Theoretically this should have meant tolerance for the expression of a wide range of opinion in the periodical literature of the day. But there was always the chance that majorities would use their weight - or minorities, their influence, wealth, and power - to deny the press that full range. Nor was it only the press that suffered. When a Dublin newspaper founded in 1797

took as its motto 'No liberty can survive the liberty of the press', the implication was that the absence of press freedom was the reflection of a country enslaved. It was more than that. The press in Ireland already held a privileged position - not in law, but in the public mind. Already in 1784 its function as a fourth estate, concerned not to make or administer, but to criticise the law, was recognised. As the English advocate Erskine expressed it, 'other liberties are held under government, but the liberty of opinion keeps governments themselves in subjection to their duties'. The press acted as a constitutional safety valve; without it, the idea of a society in which citizens can criticise, reform, and change their government, without revolution, would have remained impracticable.

1.

PART ONE.

1784 - 8

- | | | |
|----|-------------------------------|-----|
| 1. | The Irish Newspapers in 1784. | 2. |
| 2. | Conflict: 1784-5. | 15. |
| 3. | The Press in Decline: 1785-8. | 68. |

'If there be no means left by which public measures can be canvassed, what then will be the consequence? Where the press is free, and discussion unrestrained, the mind, by the collision of intercourse, gets rid of its own asperities; a sort of insensible perspiration takes place in the body politic, by which those acrimonies, which would otherwise fester and inflame, are quietly dissolved and dissipated. But now, if any aggregate assembly shall meet, they are censured; if a publishprinter publishes their resolutions, he is punished . . . What then remains? The liberty of the press only - that sacred palladium which no influence, no power, no minister, no government, which nothing but the depravity, or folly, or corruption of a jury, can ever destroy.'

John Philpot Curran: Trial of Hamilton Rowan.

The Irish Press in 1784.

Resolved, nem.con., that the said paper is a daring, false, scandalous, and seditious libel on the proceedings of this house, tending to promote discontents among his majesty's subjects, to create groundless jealousies between that kingdom and Great Britain, to alienate the affections of the people from his majesty's government, and to excite an opposition to the laws of the land. (1)

The Irish house of commons followed this resolution, made on 5 April 1784, with an order that the printers and publishers of the paper, the Volunteer's Journal or Irish Herald, should be taken into custody. On the 6th, a similar order was made for the arrest of the printer of the Freeman's Journal; (2) two days later, the chancellor of the exchequer, John Foster, brought in a bill (3) to prevent abuses in the press. It was the first serious clash between press and government in Ireland.

(1) Ir. Parl. Reg., III. 144.

(2) Ibid., III. 147.

(3) Ibid., III. 154

Before 1780, newspapers had rarely caused the government any concern. For the most part they had been small commercial sheets, published primarily to circulate advertisements, the news being included almost as an afterthought to fill up space. Occasionally a single individual would be owner, printer, publisher, editor and manager combined, running the paper with the help of a printer. Even the well established newspapers had no staffs, in the modern sense - neither reporters, nor sub-editors. Circulations were small; a newspaper that could sell 4000 copies of one issue would boast about it in the next. ⁽¹⁾ Advertisers were not prepared to pay high rates to reach so limited a circle of readers; and takings were small. This discouraged owners from employing writers, so that the papers, unless they could command a flow of free contributions, such as letters, from outside, remained featureless.

The bulk of such news as was given was copied direct from the English papers. This cost nothing, and could be left in the hands of the printers, who took as much as they needed to fill the newspaper, with very little regard to the content. Home news was neglected. Sketchy reports of debates in parliament or in the Dublin City Council

(1) cf. D.E.Post, 18 Jan.1781: 10 June 1784.

were supplemented by a few paragraphs about murders, assaults and robberies, and the arrests, sentences and executions that followed them, each Dublin paper lifting any occurrences it had not itself received from the columns of its rivals. The combined resources of the whole Dublin press rarely provided enough home news (apart from reports of debates) to fill a column; whereas news taken from the London papers might yield a couple of pages, or more.

Irish newspapers at this period were as alike as a row of georgian houses; each differing slightly in outward appearance, but barely distinguishable to the casual eye. In this they followed the English example; the difference being that the London newspapers, having nobody from which to 'lift' news as the Dublin newspapers did from them, were compelled to take a more active interest in events around them. Controversy helped to fill a newspaper, and after Wilkes had shown the way with his North Briton, there were many conflicts between press and administration, frequently ending in the courts with prosecutions for libel, or sedition. (1) The Irish newspapers did not then catch the infection. Their news columns could be filled without recourse to controversial matter, and until a domestic problem appeared that could not be ignored,

(i) cf. C. Grant Robertson, Select Statutes, pp. 299-342.

proprietors were probably well satisfied to play safe.

Before the Volunteer movement was fully under way, one newspaper had achieved a reputation for ability in controversy. The Freeman's Journal, which Lucas had founded, and for which Grattan had written, had been the only newspaper 'that upheld liberal principles, that raised a public spirit where there had been none, and kept up a public feeling when it was sinking, and to which, in a great degree, Ireland was indebted for her liberties.'⁽¹⁾ Another paper, the Monitor, had for a few months in 1773 expressed views unwelcome to the administration, and the brevity of its career used to be cited as a warning how the administration could crush opposition;⁽²⁾ but a few years later a pamphleteer remarked that no newspaper had been prosecuted within living memory.⁽³⁾ The freedom of the press was not endangered, because so little was printed that could be termed subversive.

The growth of the Volunteer movement brought about the change. New papers were started; old papers began tentatively to include polemical material - resolutions passed by the Volunteers, letters demanding independence or the Repeal of Poyning's Act, and occasional editorial comment.

(1) Grattan, Memoirs, i. 92.

(2) Freeman, 27 June, 1789.

(3) Anon., Thoughts on Newspapers^(P) (Dublin 1780), p.5.

The government grew uneasy, but still they could not bring themselves to act. In 1780 the Freeman and other newspapers published certain Volunteer resolutions which the Irish houses of parliament thought libellous; the lord lieutenant was urged to prosecute⁽¹⁾ but refused on the ground that to do so might aggravate rather than allay the discontent.⁽²⁾ This was on the advice of the attorney general, John Scott, the future Lord Clonmell. Nothing in Scott's later career suggests that his advice came from any conviction about press freedom. He must have realised that to proceed against the newspapers for publishing the resolutions would be tantamount to prosecuting the Volunteers themselves; and that the government dared not do.

The old style of newspaper - primarily an advertising medium, little interested in news and not at all interested in home affairs - gave place to the new, politically minded and controversial, under the protection of the Volunteers. It was not a conscious change, but a reflection of the new spirit in Ireland; and any chance there might have been that the press might slip back into its old ways after the achievements of 1782 was dissipated

(1) Lords Jn.Ire., V.218 (24 Aug.1780).

(2) See 'Eureka'

by the fresh controversies which arose - particularly the disputes between Flood and Grattan. * Throughout the period 1780-4 the press in Ireland was exuberantly healthy.

In Dublin alone, ten newspapers were being published - thrice weekly, as a rule - during 1784. Two retained the characteristics of an earlier time, hardly entering into the controversies that raged around them. Faulkner's Dublin Journal, the patriarch of Irish newspapers, had been founded by George Faulkner, Swift's publisher, in 1725; under his half century's proprietorship it was "with few exceptions the dullest, most spiritless, least political, polemical, literary, instructive, or entertaining of the Dublin papers".⁽¹⁾ It remained equally drowsy in his son's charge. Saunders News Letter followed the same pattern. Advertisements often took up three pages out of the four.⁽²⁾ Such little news as it supplied, it took from the English journals; "It could not have been more destitute of Irish news, if it had been published in Iceland."⁽³⁾ The proprietors justified themselves

(1) Madden, I.P.L., ii. 73.

(2) All newspapers consisted of a single sheet, folded in two to make four pages. Occasionally a supplement or an extra page might be published. Four columns to the page was standard practice.

(3) Madden, I.P.L., ii. 285

by claiming that they were securing the services of the best London journalists without cost. Both newspapers professed political neutrality, which in practice usually meant a negative support of the government.

The best-known of the opposition papers was the Freeman's Journal, but during 1784 its influence began to wane; the Dublin Evening Post, which had been founded in 1778, usurped its place. The Post had been steady in patriotism, opening the year 1780 with a cry of delight over the possibility of 'that badge of slavery, called Poyning's Act' being repealed. A year later, it claimed to have the largest circulation of any paper in the country - 4000 - inviting doubters to find proof in the Stamp Office records. ⁽¹⁾ It supported Flood, as did the General Evening Post, a paper no more distinguishable from it in policy than in name. The Hibernian Journal, on the other hand, diverged from the main opposition by following Grattan, which brought it into conflict with the Dublin Evening Post. By 1784 this feud was dying; the opposition was becoming unified once more.

On the flanks were the violently anti-government Volunteer's Journal, and the government-owned Volunteer

(1) D.E.Post, 18 Jan. 1781.

Evening Post. The Volunteer's Journal was set up in October 1783, quickly establishing itself as uncompromisingly radical, and even showing some interest in Catholic claims, for which the patriot press had until then shown little sympathy. 'When the men of Ireland forget their destructive religious prejudices, and embrace each other with the warmth of genuine religious philanthropy, then, and not till then, will they eradicate the baneful English influence, and destroy the aristocratic tyrants of the land', was written boldly across the front page of each issue. It discussed whether or not the connection with England should be maintained in a manner that left no doubt where its sympathies lay,⁽¹⁾ and by April 1784 had worked itself up to a pitch of scurrility that had moved the administration to retaliation. The Volunteer Evening Post had begun a month after the Volunteer's Journal, presumably as a counterweight; it protested impartiality, spoke of the value of a free press, and offered a gold medal for the best essay on the Volunteers.⁽²⁾ Nobody was deceived; the appearance of numerous government proclamations in its columns, and articles condemning parliamentary reform had shown where its real sympathies lay.

(1) McDowell, Irish Public Opinion 1790-1800, p.115.

(2) Volunteer Evening Post, 24 Dec.1783

Other newspapers which appeared during this surge of press activity in the early '80s were to leave less mark on their time. An Evening Chronicle, set up in 1783, incurred Foster's displeasure by reprinting the Volunteers' Journal libels the following April. (1) A Prospectus in the Dublin Evening Post for 29 March 1781 forecast the appearance of a Morning Post to join the opposition press; whatever befel this enterprise, it must have been another Dublin Morning Post whose first number appeared in time to compensate the opposition for the defection of the Freeman's Journal in the summer of 1784. (2) A New Evening Post, supporting the government, came out for a while in 1782.

The provincial press, too, showed signs of growth, though its real expansion did not come till later. In Belfast the Newsletter, which had been established in 1737, had supported the Volunteer movement; after 1782 it drifted into conservative ways, and in 1783 the Mercury was set up in opposition. Newspapers were published in Cork and a few other provincial centres: perhaps the most influential was Finn's Leinster Journal, an opposition paper printed in Kilkenny.

The bulk of the press was antagonistic to the administration after 1782: and had the newspapers' attention

(1) Commons In. Ire., xi. 264. (6 Apr. 1784).

(2) See p. 39.

not been distracted from the administration by the quarrel between Flood and Grattan, it is unlikely that their immunity would have lasted as long as it did. The administration must have watched with alarm the growing strength and vigour of the press in Ireland; but months slipped by while they hesitated, uncertain how or when to act, until the issue of the Volunteers' Journal for 5 April 1784 finally irritated them beyond endurance.

It was scurrilous by any standards. Extracts
 (1)
 read in the house of commons included a demand for complete severance from England. It said that 'the Rutland administration has in one month made more progress in infamy, than any preceding one could arrive at in two years...'. The house of commons was referred to as a 'den of thieves', and 'a Gomorrah of Iniquity'; some of its members were mentioned disparagingly by name, reference being made to a place obtained for 'the Honourable (!!!) James Luttrell'. Abuse of this kind had been printed for some weeks in the Volunteers' Journal; months before, it had denounced the 'prostitute accursed house of commons, whose conduct could not be sufficiently stigmatized', and had praised the Americans for their determination to fight for their freedom. But in this number a new threat had crept into the paper - personal violence. An 'advertisement' announced that:-

(1) Ir.Parl.Reg., 'iii. 144.

'In a few days will be published
 in the WEAVER'S SQUARE
 The whole art and mystery of TARRING
 and FEATHERING a TRAITOR
 Dedicated to the rt.hon.John FOSTER',

- promising further editions dedicated to
 Luttrell, and to Scott, who had just been elevated to the
 Bench. A cartoon on the front page showed a gibbet
 erected for traitors; underneath was the announcement
 that the starving manufacturers (Foster had just refused
 to impose a protective tariff on English cloth) had
 gathered round 'the den of thieves in College Green' and
 'from a numerous band of notorious malefactors dragged
 the arch-traitor, Jacky Finance, whom amid the execration
 of thousands they led to a gallows' - from which the
 cartoon portrayed him hanging.

The declaration of war on the press - the orders
 for arrest of printers and the Press Bill - was not
 planned; it was the instinctive reaction of a group of
 men threatened with physical violence, and frightened by
 the threat - as well they might be.

That the outbreak of hostilities had not been
 planned mattered little; the important point was that it

(1) The house of commons.

(2) John Foster - the chancellor of the exchequer.

had occurred. Once the first move had been made, once the precedent had been established that the government could take action against newspapers which gave it offence, there was nothing except the government's good sense and perspicacity - and in neither, as it proved, was/well ^{it} endowed - to prevent the campaign from continuing until the press had been brought to the point of unconditional surrender.

Foster could say, and probably believe, that it was the excess to which he objected: not the power of the press, but the abuse of that power. But the decision what constituted abuse was left to the administration, which was to prove a stern judge in its own cause; the opposition press was to be reduced almost to impotence before the battle was called off, in 1785.

The events of these years attain significance not only because this was the first major clash between press and government, but also because the period happens to contain in microcosm all the history of later conflicts between them. All the expedients that were to be used by governments were given a trial. They were later adapted and approved, but the methods by which the press might be brought to submission were all given their initial tests in the months that followed the prosecution of the

Volunteers' Journal.

In discussing the methods used to subjugate the press, it may be admissible to make distinctions between executive, legislature and judiciary: in practice, the distinctions did not exist. The various elements of the administration had a remarkable unconscious homogeneity, whatever views individuals might hold on the freedom of the press. When that freedom threatened their interests, ministers of state, parliament and judges acted in unison. The opposition in parliament, although it contained many able men, was too small to influence parliamentary decisions. Juries were the only doubtful element. They required careful picking if the government was to be certain of their verdict: otherwise the government could only act in their dealings with newspapers on the courts' co-operation. Consequently, it is seldom easy to be certain who initiated any particular act of aggression against the newspapers. When the attorney general launched a prosecution it might be on his initiative, or on orders from ~~the~~ Dublin Castle - 'The Castle' being used as a convenient synonym for the lord lieutenant and his secretaries of state. Bearing in mind that qualification, it is possible to attempt to disentangle the different parts played by executive, legislature and judiciary in the government's first contest with the press.

Conflict 1784-5A. Executive.

The executive - the lord lieutenant, his secretaries, and his ministers of state - could operate against the press either by repression or by purchase. Opposition newspaper owners could be persecuted: or, they could be offered inducements to alter their allegiance. The executive in this period tried both methods.

(a) Prosecutions and Penalties.

The house of commons, not without some quiet amusement, listened to the extracts from the Volunteers' Journal read out by Foster's wish on the 5th. April, 1784, and ordered P. Donnelly, the printer, and William Bingley described as the publisher, into the custody of the sergeant-at-arms, who acted as their special constable.⁽¹⁾ Later in the day, he returned saying that he had been unable to find them. The house passed a resolution asking the lord lieutenant to offer a reward for the apprehension of the writers,

(1) Commons Jn. Ire., (1797 ed.), xi. 261.

printers, and publishers of the newspaper - tantamount to a general warrant - and the attorney general was ordered to prepare to prosecute. ⁽¹⁾ The lord lieutenant gave his consent. ⁽²⁾

Foster had further complaints to make the following day; the Evening Chronicle and the Freeman had contained libels, and their printers and publishers were added to the sergeant-at-arms' list. ⁽³⁾ In the meantime Foster claimed to have ascertained that one Carey was "solely responsible" for the libels in the Volunteers' Journal; his name, too, went down. ⁽⁴⁾ Evidently Foster had been faced with the uncertainty that was to prove one of the newspapers' few allies in the courts, by preventing the allocation of responsibility. The Commons had no clear idea of the distinction between printer, proprietor, publisher, and editor (or 'conductor', a term in use at the time); their functions were not separate in the public mind, nor, for that matter, in the newspaper offices themselves. The confusion helped newspapers to circumvent prosecutions; it was to be deliberately encouraged even after the division of labour had begun to sort journalists into easily recognisable categories, which

(1) Ibid., p.262

(2) Rutland to Sydney, 8 Apr.1784. (H.M.C., Rutland ~~VI~~.iii. 864.)

(3) Commons Jn.Ire., p.264

(4) Ir.Parl.Reg., iii. 151.

had not happened by 1784, when the terms can only be used loosely. After the North Briton precedent in England (1) it was unwise to rely upon a general warrant; but if the charge was made out against the proprietor Carey could call himself the editor, or vice versa.

This was Matthew Carey, a man of only 23 years (2) of age. By his account, which is not entirely consistent, he had at an early age apprenticed himself to a bookseller, in Dublin, in spite of the opposition of his father, a well-to-do merchant. He began writing for the newspapers, and at the age of seventeen had to leave the country for a while on account of a pamphlet he had written vehemently supporting Catholic claims. On his return to Ireland in 1783 he had persuaded his father to put up the money to found the Volunteers' Journal; and Foster was right to assume that his was the responsibility for the libels.

Again, the sergeant-at-arms had to report failure. He had gone to a house in Abbey Street, where he had word (3) that Carey was to be found, and had seen him there; but Carey had made his escape by leaping from a two pair of

-
- (1) A general warrant to arrest printers, publishers, writers, and all concerned with the publication of the North Briton had been subsequently declared illegal, ~~and the act had been amended accordingly.~~
(C. Grant Robertson, Select Statutes, p.299)
- (2) Bradsher's "Matthew Carey" gives a brief account of his early life in Ireland.
- (3) Ir. Parl. Reg., iii. 153 (7 Apr. 1784).

(1)
stairs window. The lord lieutenant was petitioned to
(2)
sanction a reward for Carey's capture.

A few days later, he was arrested in the offices
(3)
of the Volunteers' Journal, which had continued publication
as if nothing had happened, repeating and embroidering
some of the libels. He was brought before an Alderman,
sitting as a justice, and tendered bail; but at that
moment an order came to take the prisoner out of alder-
manic jurisdiction and hand him over to the serjeant-at-
arms - an act which the lord lieutenant, Rutland, in
a despatch to London, admitted was "contrived" in order
(4)
to prevent him from getting bail, and which led the Dublin
(5)
Evening Post to mourn the lost liberty of the subject.

The decision to bring him before Parliament,
instead of letting the law take its course, was due less
to any sensitivity of the commons for their rights, than
to determination not to let him escape, as there was a small
risk that he might, if the prosecution in the courts broke
down on a technicality. A majority in the commons could

(1) Commons Jn.Ire., xi. 267.

(2) Ibid.

(3) 13 Apr. 1784. (P.R.O., H.O., 100/12)

(4) 14 Apr. 1784. (P.R.O. H.O. 100/12)

(5) D.E.Post, 17 Apr. 1784.

be relied upon to do the administration's bidding. Carey
 came before the house on the 19th. ⁽¹⁾ The Speaker warned him
 that he need not answer any questions which might criminate
 him; the attorney-general went further, and told him that
 if he had any sense he would answer no questions at all;
~~since~~ anything he said could be used as evidence against him
 in the courts. Carey denied the Commons' right to deal
 with a case that was pending in the courts. Foster himself
 was aware of the risk that if the commons dealt with Carey,
 the courts might acquit him on the grounds that a man should
 not be punished twice for the same offence; but the majority
 were determined to act. ⁽²⁾ The minority were uneasy. Even
 if the libels were proven, Carey's treatment, they thought,
 had been scandalous. Three ranks of soldiers had been sent
 to make his arrest, and after the prisoner had been forcibly
 removed from the power of the magistrate, he had been put in
 close confinement and denied the use of pen, ink, and paper.
 Some speakers argued that Carey would have a good case
 against the house for wrongful arrest and imprisonment -
 advice which William Bingley, the supposed publisher, who
 was by now also in custody, was later to remember, to his cost ⁽³⁾

Carey defended himself vigorously. He charged the
 sergeant-at-arms with unnecessarily harsh treatment; to judge ⁽³⁾

(1) Commons Jn. Ire., XI. 277.

(2) 21 Apr. 1784 (*Ire. Parl. Reg.*, iii. 183 ff.)

(3) 19 Apr. 1784 (*ibid.*, iii. 172)

(4) ~~21 Apr. 1784 (*ibid.*, iii. 176, 183 ff.)~~

by the evidence put before a committee set up to investigate
 the charge, his grounds for complaint were good, but the
 sergeant was vindicated. Carey then obtained a writ of
habeas corpus: but the magistrate before whom he was brought
 had to admit that the Commons' jurisdiction over-rode that
 of the courts. The commons' answer was to keep Carey in
 custody, while the administration made arrangements to press
 the prosecution against him before the Kings Bench. Before
 these had been completed parliament was prorogued, which
 meant that Carey was automatically released; and he managed
 to escape, disguised as a woman, to America.

Carey's influence on the press in Ireland was very
 great. By the viciousness of his onslaught on the government
 he had, within the space of six months, changed their atti-
 tude to the press from tolerance to detestation. The
Dictionary of American Biography hints that lameness as a
 child made Carey first shy, then aggressive, in adolescence:
 and this may be true, as the squibs and cartoons in the
Volunteers' Journal are irresponsible rather than calculated-
 ly seditious. In America he settled down to become one of

(1) 21 Apr. 1784 (ibid., iii. 176, 182 ff.)

(2) 21 Apr. 1784 (ibid., iii. 186.)

(3) Vs' J., 21 Apr. 1784.

(4) D.E.Post, 28 May; 3 June, 1784.

(5) Town and Country Magazine, July 1784

(6) Dict.Amer.Biog.: Gilbert, This Dublin, iii. 320.

the best and most respectable publishers in the country, Had the Irish government realised what kind of man they were dealing with, and treated the case less seriously, they could have settled it without recourse to the mechanism of intimidation.

As it was, the Dublin Evening Post immediately sensed the danger: the method adopted for the prosecution meant that 'a strong precedent will be established which at a future day, perhaps not very distant, will prove a most formidable engine against our liberties'.⁽¹⁾ The Dublin Evening Post's proprietor, John Magee, was to have many months in jail during which he could congratulate himself on the accuracy of his prediction.

The Volunteers' Journal was the only newspaper in which violence had been unrestrained: other opposition newspapers had become more aggressive, but none to the same pitch of scurrility. The libels in the Freeman's Journal and the Evening Chronicle, it was stated in their defence when their case came up before the house of commons, had been copied innocently by journeymen printers from the Volunteers' Journal.⁽²⁾ The commons accepted this excuse, and At that time the administration intended no more than to frighten a newspaper which had incited the public to violence: they could justify the

(1) D.E.Post, 29 Apr.1784. (2) 7 Apr.1784 (Ir.Parl.Reg.,iii. 153)

harsh treatment of the Volunteers' Journal staff as the only way to deal with a mad dog. But appetite was whetted by their action. Why stop at the Volunteers' Journal, when half-a-dozen Dublin Newspapers were in vigorous opposition? The rest had ridiculed the press bill: might they not be tempted to fall into the ways of the Volunteers' Journal, if they were not taught a lesson? Would not another prosecution - or, better, prosecutions - help to make them more docile?

On June 26th, the administration struck, initiating proceedings in the Court of Kings Bench against three Dublin newspapers.

The Volunteers' Journal had published a letter⁽¹⁾ criticising the military despotism in Ireland. The newspaper must have got wind of the impending prosecution; on June 25th they protested that the article should NEVER, NEVER have been inserted; ~~the~~ the MS. had not been passed for publication. As it had occupied $2\frac{1}{2}$ columns on the front page, the excuse was thin.

It was a peculiar choice for prosecution, since the tone of the letter was not particularly savage, and the author, Handy Pemberton, was known to be eccentric and of

(1) Vs' J., 21 June, 1784

(1)
 doubtful sanity. The other two charges were still more stupid. The General Evening Post was accused, vaguely, of libelling the House of Commons: it protested ignorance of the nature of its offence, and the prosecution did not offer any enlightenment. (2) The libel complained of in the Hibernian Journal consisted in the succession of two paragraphs in the domestic intelligence column. They ran:-

'Tarring a tailor is a small beginning, and the greatest revolutions have often proceeded from small causes, or inconsiderable acts - we hear that two Right Honourables are in contemplation'.

'We are credibly informed that Mr. Foster and Mr. Beresford are not yet embarked for Holyhead, and in the present state of affairs, it is uncertain whether they will take their flight together, or separate, from Waterford, or Donaghadee'. (3)

The Hibernian Journal ingenuously maintained that there was no connection between the two paragraphs. (4) The attorney general presumably realized, too late, that it would be difficult to prove them liars; all that the abortive prosecution achieved was to give the jest publicity far more

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- (1) Gwynn, Grattan, p.192.
 (2) G.E.Post, 27 June, 1784.
 (3) Hib.J., 21 June, 1784
 (4) Hib.J., 23 June, 1784.

extensive than it would have had from the few hundred readers of the Journal.

Simultaneous action against three newspapers on such ill-chosen ground was a warning that the Castle had made up thier mind to assail the press, on any excuse. One was offered a few weeks later. In August a butcher, convicted of assisting at the tar-and-feathering of a colleague who had failed to observe some trade convention, was ~~being~~ whipped throughthe streets at the cart's tail, a sentence which brought out a mob so threatening that the military at one point opened fire, killing a bystander. The lord lieutenant sent a lurid account of the event to England, even alleging that the soliders were fired upon first. The Volunteers Journal maintained that the volley had been provoked by no more than a drunkard's casual stone-throwing, which had served the magistrate in charge as an excuse to give the order, 'Level well, and fire low, my boys'.

The Volunteers' Journal was charged with seditious libel, on the strength of this report; but again, the Castle's plans miscarried, because John Rorke, an eminently respectable citizen of Ballsbridge, came forward to avow that he had heard the words spoken by Alderman James. It was Rorke, therefore, and not the owner of the newspaper, who stood his trial the following January. The result was nevertheless a warning to the press.

(1) 23 August 1784 (P.R.O., H.O., 100/74)
(2) 24 August 1784.

Rorke's counsel wished to bring evidence that the words attributed to ~~the~~ Alderman James had in fact been spoken. This defence was declared inadmissible by the bench, who held that the truth 'would not weigh a feather in the question' - a decision which relieved the prosecution of the onus of trying to prove that the words had not been spoken. As the law then stood, what mattered was whether publication of the words might lead to a breach of the peace, which they were more likely to do - if anything - if the report was true. Rorke was found guilty, fined, and imprisoned. (1)

This is looking ahead; ~~by~~ as soon as they found that the Volunteers' Journal had again writhed out of their grip, the administration had taken fresh proceedings against the paper, for a letter which had appeared in its columns on August 25th. The letter's general tone had been innocuous, but it had concluded with the injunction 'pull those tyrants from the seat of power', which was quite enough. This time, the

(1) V.s' J., 26 Jan. 1785.

law officers of the crown were careful to make sure they had the right man, bringing Carey's successor, James Dowling, the registered proprietor and printer, before the Stamp Commissioners for identification before putting him into close confinement. (1)

In their next number, the Volunteers' Journal (2) complained that the prisoner had been denied visitors. A day or two later the reason became clear. As proprietor, it was Dowling's business to lodge all newsprint with the commissioners to receive the government stamp: and the commissioners now refused the stamps on the grounds that they had no authorisation from Dowling. After some argument they were persuaded to hand over the stamped paper that they had in stock, but they announced their determination to stamp no more. The Volunteers' Journal published their refusal, holding it up as illegal because it was equivalent to condemnation before trial: and the commissioners were reluctantly compelled to give way. (3)

Less than a month later, the administration made a more direct assault on the Volunteers' Journal. The Dublin Sheriffs appeared with a squad of men and searched the office, breaking in doors, opening cases, and ransacking

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- (1) Vs' J., 30 Aug.1784.
 (2) Vs' J., 3 Sept.1784
 (3) Vs' J., 15 Sept.1784.

cupboards, before retiring empty-handed, refusing to give
 any reason for the raid. (1) According to the Freeman, (2) the
 search had been for Thomas Carey, who had taken on the
 paper and had escaped through the same window, his brother's
 experience having prompted him to have a ladder put there
 permanently against emergencies.

The raid put beyond doubt the design of the
 government to break the Volunteers' Journal. In its first
 number of the new year, the paper spread over its front
 page the boast that in the previous nine months it had
 received:

- 2 informations ex-officio;
- 3 rules to show cause;
- 2 indictments for misdemeanours;
- 4 indictments for high treason.

Had all these charges been genuine the government would have
 been satisfied to leave the Law to do its work. The rigor-
 ous imprisonment without trial of two proprietors and members
 of the staff; the attempt to withhold stamps; and the raid
 by the sheriffs all point to the government's uneasy con-
 sciousness that it had a poor case to make against opposition
 which was as galling for its justification as for its violence.

The only excuse the administration could put for-
 ward was the undoubted difficulty of pinning libel on the
 right man in the courts. Dowling, for example, had been made

(1) Vs' J., 10 Nov.1784.
 (2) Freeman, 13 Nov.1784.

the nominal proprietor of the Volunteers' Journal, in order to shield the Careys. ⁽¹⁾ He had been kept in jail for four months, under the threat of execution for high treason, until he had signed an affidavit that the Careys, first ⁽²⁾ Matthew and then his brother Thomas, were the true owners. Matthew had by this time gone to America, but his father Christopher, a wealthy baker, was furious that Dowling, who had only been the nominal owner and who had won his release from jail by betraying Matthew and Thomas, should resume his proprietorship of the paper. In the middle of January, 1785, ^{Christopher} Carey took possession of the newspaper office, an action for which he was able to obtain justification in the courts. ⁽³⁾ The next number of the paper, however, could not be called the Volunteers' Journal, or Irish Herald as before; ~~as~~ that paper was still nominally owned by Dowling. Instead, it appeared as the Volunteer Journal, or Irish Advertiser. The paper was unnumbered, and the motto changed from 'Liberty and my Native Land' to, ~~{appropriately}~~, 'Now or Never'; otherwise, except for the change of printer from Dowling to Doyle, the paper could have passed unnoticed for its predecessor, and probably did. But, within a week Dowling had persuaded one Nicholson to put up the money to

(1) Vs' J., 21 Jan. 1785.

(2) Carey's Volunteer Journal, 21 Jan. 1785.

(3) Carey's Volunteer Journal, 21 Jan. 1785.

revive the Volunteers' Journal. For some time the two papers ran alongside, arguing vigorously, one with CAREY, the other with NICHOLSON, printed boldly at the top of the front page.

Had Christopher Carey, as Dowling alleged, connived with the government in an effort to stamp out the old Volunteers' Journal? If the charge was true, it would be an indication that the government had already learned the lesson that there were more effective ways of dealing with the press than straightforward repression. The Careys certainly came to terms with the government. Later in the year, Thomas was arraigned on two charges before the King's Bench: the first, that he had published the letter for which Dowling had been jailed, in the Volunteers' Journal of 25 August 1784: the second, that it had been printed again - in a fit of bravado, on the news of Dowling's arrest - a few days later. The first witness put up by the prosecution had been on the paper at the time, and deposed that Thomas Carey had been away in Kilkenny on both occasions. The judges promptly instructed the jury to find the prisoner not guilty. ⁽¹⁾ Suspicious though the circumstances of his acquittal are, the Careys and government may not have come to terms until after April 29th, when Nicholson's

(1) Vs' J., 1 June, 1785

and the Careys' newspapers merged as the result of an agreement. There is no proof that ~~the administration's~~^{such} guile had been behind Christopher Carey's action in January; and his newspaper was not unduly friendly to the administration.

The dispute between the two Volunteer Journals quite distracted them from their task of flaying Ascendancy; and in the other opposition papers, although they could be caustic enough, the government had not so much to fear. The Dublin Evening Post, however, had been consistently irritating with its steady advocacy of a reformed parliament, and its exposure of corruption and incompetence. In January a paragraph appeared in opposition journals written by its proprietor, John Magee, giving his change of address to the New Jail, to which he had been committed.⁽¹⁾

The previous November, the charge ran, Magee had printed some resolutions passed at a meeting in Roscommon, calling, among other things, for the impeachment of the attorney general, Fitzgibbon.⁽²⁾ Procedure by informations had been begun at the time, possibly without any intention of prosecuting, just to keep a threat over the paper's head. Magee paid no attention: on January 25th the Post Script, which did general duty as a column of home news, gossip, and

(1) D.E.Post, 28 Jan. 1784.⁵

(2) Ibid., 8 Nov. 1784.

comment, led off: - 'never did an Irish Administration cut so deplorable a figure as the present'. Two days later he was 'attached' - brought up on a special warrant - before the King's Bench, and committed to jail. He was then charged not with the original offence but with contempt of court for criticising the procedure by which he had been committed: Scott, now Baron Earlsfort, sentenced him to a month's imprisonment, and a fine of £5, together with securities to keep the peace.⁽¹⁾

It was not a heavy sentence: but that the proprietor of the most popular and most widely read newspaper in the country, which had usually avoided scurrility even in its most strenuous opposition to the government, could be ignominiously jailed along with the common felons of Dublin, must have had more effect than all the threats and prosecutions against the Volunteers' Journal together. It was unnecessary for the government to pursue the prosecutions still pending from the previous summer. The newspaper proprietors had had enough.

By this time the newspapers had realized that they could be brought to bankruptcy by unsuccessful and frivolous prosecutions, even if these never reached the courts. Defences⁽²⁾ had to be prepared in case trials came on, as they often did, at short notice. The courts tried to make the newspapers pay

(1) Freeman, 8 Feb. 1785

(2) Vs' J., 28 June, 1784

for copies of informations which had been laid against them, which, at the regulation five words to a line, seven lines to a page, operated as a fine on its own account. (1) The law officers of the Crown, newspapers complained, had a direct interest in promoting prosecutions, for which they were well paid. (2)

The significance of these executive assaults lay in their gradual accumulation. Once the precedent had been established that the press could be arraigned in the courts, the administration unconsciously began to use the courts as a weapon to frighten the press into subjection. The actual sum of repression was quite small: few prosecutions were pressed. It was the threat implied in them that really cowed the press. Parliament, the Castle, and the Courts presented a formidable trio of adversaries with unlimited powers of vengeance on anyone who irritated them. An editor, hesitating whether to insert some charge of corruption or repression, might well fear that the ministry had made up their minds that at the next excuse they would strike, and show no mercy.

The administration at first intended no more than to weed out scurrility and incitement to violence from the press, distinguishing between liberty and licence. After the initial prosecutions of the Volunteers' Journal, the lord

(1) Hib.J., 28 June, 1784.

(2) D.E.Post, 24 June, 1784.

lieutenant, in a letter to England, commented that although the press was still violent it was doubtful whether fresh prosecutions might not give the printers too great a sense of their own importance. ⁽¹⁾ A week later he repeated this opinion; violence in the press, he considered, worked no material ill-consequence. He enclosed with this dispatch an extremely sensible and far-sighted petition from the Dublin city commons ~~which was presented~~, drawing attention to the danger of placing in the hands of the stamp commissioners the power to withhold stamps, which they might ⁽²⁾ abuse - as they later did.

But once the government had become involved in a conflict with the newspapers its tolerance vanished. In June ⁽³⁾ the lord lieutenant was complaining about their insolence; and though in November he could still write that he wished them to have the same 'free range of discussion and animadversion which is the right of the British press', he regretted that they were still licentious, and the attorney general had, ⁽⁴⁾ in consequence, been compelled to proceed against some of them. No doubt Rutland was sincere; but because he was on one side in the conflict, he could not see that the newspapers were no longer licentious, by the standards of the past five years.

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- (1) Rutland to Sydney, 21 Apr. 1784. (P.R.O. H.O. 100/12)
 (2) Rutland to Sydney, 28 Apr. 1784 (P.R.O., H.O., 100/12)
 (3) H.M.C., Rutland ~~Memorandum~~, iii. 109 (~~17 June, 1784~~)
 (4) ~~Rutland to Sydney~~ 25 Nov. 1784 (P.R.O., H.O., 100/13)

They were critical, and occasionally annoying, but as he had said himself, that worked no material ill. Without realising it the government had committed itself to silencing press opposition of any kind.

The press...
administration...
pledged...
support.

.

When the strength of the...
1701 began seriously to...
chief secretary wrote to his...
Lord North, urging him to...
secret service...
purpose...
by the force of good...
private...
press...
continuing it...
North's reply...
a few days, the chief secretary...
reconsider his decision...
regret that...
Lordship has not found...
the article of secret service...
power in the government of this...
utterly without means to influence...
after 1701 was the...
with which to set up a newspaper...

(1) *Derbyshire Correspondence*, i. 170.
(2) *ibid.*, i. 171.

b. Purchase.

The most straightforward method by which an administration can influence citizens through the press is to have newspapers of their own, or at least pledged to their support.

When the strength of the Volunteer movement in 1781 began seriously to alarm the administration, the chief secretary wrote to his prime minister, Lord North, urging him to transmit some of the secret service money for this purpose. 'We have hitherto, by the force of good words, and with some degree of private expense, preserved an ascendancy over the press', he wrote: 'but we are with-
(1)
out the means of continuing it'. North's reply was unfavourable; in a few days, the chief secretary was urging him to reconsider his decision. 'We much regret that your lordship has not found any means to assist us in the article of secret service. The press is the principal operative power in the government of this kingdom, and we are
(2)
utterly without means to influence that power.' Not until after 1782 was the Irish administration able to obtain funds with which to set up a newspaper of their own, *the New Evening Post*.

(1) Beresford, Correspondence, i. 170.

(2) Ibid., i. 171.

Correctly expecting an outcry if the New Evening Post's affiliations were known, its editors claimed that in politics it would be 'impartial'.⁽¹⁾ Since that word was already notorious as a convenient euphemism for support of the status quo the opposition press at once denounced it as a ministerial wolf in sheep's clothing. The Hibernian Journal, then at variance with the rest of the opposition owing to its support of Grattan, unguardedly asked what was wrong with the government having a paper of its own.⁽²⁾ The New Evening Post soon vanished from the streets:⁽³⁾ possibly it was the paper referred to in a passage by an English historian, Andrews:

The government, recognising the power of the press, and finding that it was all exerted against itself in Ireland, used every means to encourage the establishment of an organ in Dublin - but in vain. No printer would run the risk to his windows, if not to his life, of printing a newspaper on the government side, so in 1780 a press and types and a staff of English editors, printers and compositors were sent out, and a paper started with the title of the Volunteer Evening Post, professing to advocate the popular side. At last it was found

(1) Hib.J., 2 Oct.1782. (2) Hib.J., 14 Oct.1782.

(3) The last issue of the New Evening Post in the British Museum, for 10 Dec.1782, contains a denial of a rumour that it was closing down. The rumour may have been correct.

wavering - the secret oozed out, and the Irish mob was up. The editor fled for his life and got away, but the printer - less fortunate - fell into the hands of the populace and was carried to the Tenter Fields and tarred and feathered. The paper broke down and the press, types and materials were advertised for sale; but no one would have anything to do with the obnoxious saxon things, and after three years printer, plant, and all were fetched back to England. (1)

Although almost every verifiable reference Andrews made to Irish newspapers was inaccurate, and this story has all the stock ingredients of legend, it may have had a basis in fact. But the newspaper can not have been the Volunteer Evening Post, whose first issue appeared in the autumn of 1783 and which ran for some years. The exact nature of its connection with the administration remains uncertain, but it was certainly under government control rather than independently owned and supporting the government from choice. Its circulation was negligible. Advertisers, who have never been infallible judges of a newspaper's popularity but whose likes and dislikes afford a rough guide, ignored the Volunteer Evening Post, which

(1) Andrews, "History of British Journalism", i. 294

was forced to rely almost exclusively for revenue on government proclamations, published in great quantities. One issue had less than a column of commercial advertisements to six of government advertisements and proclamations. (1)

Unwilling though they must have been to admit that their own newspaper served little purpose, the government could hardly have failed to realise how much more effective it would be to win over one of the popular opposition papers to their support.

In 1782 signs of a change of heart began to appear in the Freeman's Journal, for long the most influential opposition paper. Government proclamations were to be found in its advertisement columns; and this, though not invariably proof that a newspaper was supporting the administration, was unusual in one that had been unwavering in opposition. Possibly the administration were endeavouring to buy their way into the Freeman's favour: if so, they were temporarily disappointed, for in October it suddenly lashed out at the 'Castle scribes' for garbling a speech by Charles James Fox, referred to the 'curs~~e~~ of the administration', and backed Flood in the 'renunciation' quarrel with Grattan. (2) The proclamations abruptly ceased.

(1) On 6 April 1784.

(2) Freeman, 22 Oct. 1782.

See Harrison

Why the Freeman failed to recover its position as the lead-opposition newspaper becomes clear from a letter written by the lord lieutenant in March 1783. Loyal addresses had been sent to the government from various bodies in the state which, the opposition had endeavoured to insinuate, had been solicited by the administration. 'Higgins has had a variety of letters', Temple wrote, 'some directly and some obliquely charging the government with these dealings, all of which he has refused to insert, specifying the subjects to the public and the reasons why he did not admit them'.⁽¹⁾ This was Francis Higgins, the notorious 'Sham Squire', who had secured an editorial post on the Freeman and was, unknown to the proprietors, in government pay.⁽²⁾ With characteristic ingenuity he contrived that this 'Specifying the subjects to the public' should be done in such a way that Temple, who knew what the paragraph referred to, imagined that the public would understand its significance, whereas to the casual reader it would be meaningless.

In other words, Higgins was keeping up a pretence of patriotism for the benefit of the proprietors at the same time as he was ingratiating himself with the administration, a difficult feat, which he did extremely well, though he must have lost the Freeman many puzzled subscribers in the process.

(1) Earl Temple to W.W. Granville, 23 March 1783. (H.M.C. Fort ^{Issue} ~~Home~~ 1, 203.)

(2) He was ordered to attend at the bar of the house of commons on 8 Apr. 1784 as one of the conductors of the Freeman.
(Commons' Jn. Ire., xi, 268.)

When the publisher of the Freeman appeared before the Commons early in April 1784 to explain why his paper had reprinted the offensive cartoon - the hanging of 'Jacky Finance' - from the Volunteers' Journal, it may have been ~~Higgins'~~ (1) influence that saved him, because Luttrell (2) defended him, and Luttrell was Higgins' friend.

The Freeman continued its equivocal way for a few weeks more. Foster's Press Bill was opposed, but its most prominent criticism, a letter signed 'Junius', is sufficiently diffuse in its sentiments to suggest that it might have been put in as a sop to the opposition; and in its attitude to the tar and feathering of sellers of imported cloth, then in full swing, there was little to distinguish the Freeman from the administration's Volunteer Evening Post. In June, however, a letter from the proprietors - (3) given the lead on the front page - made a new profession of 'impartiality'. This unmistakable sign of government sympathies was reinforced by the reappearance of Castle proclamations among the advertisements, bringing the advertisements up from the two columns to which they had dwindled - good evidence of the declining influence of the

(1) 6 Apr. 1784. (Ir. Parl. Reg., iii. 147)

(2) Fitzpatrick, The Sham Squire, 46.

(3) Freeman, 10 Apr. 1784.

(4) Freeman, 2 June, 1784

paper - to four and a half. The Freeman had become a government newspaper, and was to remain one for ^{over} twenty years.

It is unlikely that the administration had planned this coup: Probably Higgins had seen in government support the means to further his ambitions, and had persuaded the Castle, whose agent he was, that he could do a great service for them by altering the Freeman's allegiance. Nor is it likely that the policy of trying to keep in with administration and patriots alike, by maintaining the Freeman as ostensibly an opposition journal, was calculated: Higgins was serving two masters, and had to satisfy both until such time as he could persuade them to come to terms. The dwindling circulation and profits of the paper, reflected in the falling-off of advertisements, must have reinforced his arguments with the owner, and may have clinched them. Higgins seems to have been clever enough to give the Castle the idea that it was their plan to win over the Freeman, and to let them credit themselves with its success. When the newspapers began to give trouble again a few years later the administration were quick to remember the plan and put it into operation again.

To have won over the Freeman must have seemed to the government a decidedly satisfactory achievement. But, in the event, it brought them little benefit.

To begin with, the government papers were not read. As soon as their sympathies became known, readers left. The Volunteer Evening Post never established a circulation, and the Freeman, to judge by appearances, ~~had~~ lost ground as soon as it changed sides. All that the administration were, in fact, achieving was a transference of readers to other newspapers. And this was to prove expensive. The Castle had found two ways of subsidising their newspapers: one, directly, by secret service money: the other, indirectly, through proclamations. The amounts disbursed from the secret service fund were never made public: but the figures of payments to newspaper owners for the government advertisements and proclamations were eventually laid before the Irish commons⁽¹⁾. They showed that before 1780 the proclamations and advertisements had been confined almost entirely to the Dublin Gazette, the official Castle publication, not in the strict sense a newspaper. But, subsequently, the Freeman and the Volunteer Evening Post had received large sums from the re-publication of these advertisements from the Gazette - the amount paid to the Post each year running into four figures. In 1774 the expenditure incurred by the administration for inserting proclamations in the newspapers had been £276: in 1785 it was over £4000.⁽²⁾ The Castle could claim that the necessity for

(1) Commons Jn.Ire., xii. Appx. lxii.

(2) 13 Feb. 1786. (Ir.Parl.Reg., vi. 106)

the proclamations - warnings about disturbed areas, rewards offered for felons, and the like - had become greater; to which the opposition members retorted, why, then, give most of the proclamations to two newspapers which were not read, and deny them to the opposition? The sums that had been received by individual newspapers for publishing proclamations in 1786, it was disclosed, were divided between two newspapers: the Freeman took £650, and the Volunteer Evening Post, £1350, the rest going to the official Gazette.⁽¹⁾ For those days, these were big incomes; enough to maintain a newspaper without the help of private advertisers, and more than enough to tie a proprietor effectually to the government, in the knowledge that independence would precipitate the loss of his livelihood.

At the same time, secret service money was being used to buy writers in the opposition newspapers. Higgins had his pension:⁽²⁾ and as early as 1780 the lord lieutenant had boasted that he had seduced Frederick Jebb away from the patriots with a promise of £300 a year.⁽³⁾ Jebb had won a reputation as the Irish Junius by some fiery articles over the signature of Guatimozin which appeared in the Freeman:

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- (1) 2 Feb. 1787. (Ir. Parl. Reg., vii. 83) and cf. Commons Jn. Ire., (1797 ex.) xii, appx. lxii.
- (2) Francis Higgins to Edward Cooke, 18 May 1801. (Rep. Papers 620/18/14)
- (3) Madden, Irish Periodical Literature, ii. 430.

he was to be equally fiery on the government's behalf, and
 his conversion was considered as a considerable acquisition. (1)
 But the process of buying off opposition writers was ex-
 pensive and not always satisfactory, but it probably gave
 the government more value for their money than the purchase
 of newspapers.

Until the 1770's the English House of Parliament
 had looked upon publication of reports of their debates as
 a breach of privilege. Although seldom applied, the privi-
 lège was usually only taken when the matter printed gave
 either those cases for annoyance, publication since was
 sufficient to constitute a breach of privilege, no matter
 how favourable or accurate the report might be. In 1771,
 an attempt was made to contest this point by Alderman John
 Wilkes and the lord mayor of London who, sitting in their
 judicial capacity, sentenced a parliamentary messenger,
 despatched to arrest a printer, for contempt. The sentence
 was nullified by sending the lord mayor to the Tower, but the
 reaction of the London mob was so menacing that, although

(1) ^{General} Q.E.Post. 8 May, 1781.

LEGISLATURE

The Legislature - the two houses of parliament - were closely tied to the administration by patronage and interest. They could co-operate in the subjugation of the press in two ways: by the exercise of their privileges, and by the enactment of restrictive laws. In the period 1784-5, both methods were adopted.

a Privilege.

Until the 1770's the English houses of parliament had looked upon publication of reports of their debates as a breach of privilege. Although action against the publisher was usually only taken when the matter printed gave either house cause for annoyance, publication alone was sufficient to constitute a breach of privilege, no matter how favourable or accurate the report might be. In 1771, an attempt was made to contest this point by Alderman John Wilkes and the lord mayor of London who, sitting in their judicial capacity, sentenced a parliamentary messenger, despatched to arrest a printer, for assault. The commons retaliated by sending the lord mayor to the Tower: but the reaction of the London mob was so menacing that, although neither house formally relinquished its claims, newspapers were tacitly permitted to report debates without fear of

retaliation - except when either house felt itself the
 (1)
 victim of calumny.

The Irish houses of parliament had less clear cut views on the subject and, before 1782, they had rarely dealt directly with the press. When the house of commons had resolved in 1749 that some publications of Charles Lucas's reflected on their dignity, they ordered him and
 (2)
 his publisher to be sent to the Newgate; but they were content to leave his prosecution to the state, as they did again in 1780 when both houses denounced the Hibernian and the Freeman's Journals for publishing certain inflammatory
 (3)
 Volunteer resolutions. Occasionally they took action for themselves: when the Earl of Clanricarde complained that he had been maligned under the feeble disguise of 'E. . . . C. . . .' in the Dublin Evening Post, the
 (4)
 following year, the printer was committed to prison until,
 (5)
 a fortnight later, a penitent apology secured his release. In these cases a very much less high handed line was taken than had been taken by the English houses of parliament.

(1) C. Grant Robertson, Select Statutes, p. 337.

(2) Commons Jn. Ire., v. 14 (16 Oct. 1749)

(3) Ibid., x. 194 (21 Aug. 1780)

(4) Lords Jn. Ire., v. 241 (26 Nov. 1781)

(5) Ibid., v. 253 (11 Dec. 1781)

The subject came up for discussion in December 1783, when Lord Mountmorres complained that he had been misrepresented in the Volunteers' Journal.⁽¹⁾ The house of lords ordered the printer, to appear before them. ~~As since~~ he was able to show that the misrepresentation complained of had been copied from a government journal - the Volunteer Evening Post - the lords could hardly take action. The debate, however, showed how little formed their ideas were on their rights. Lord Mornington claimed that printers had acquired from immemorial usage the right to publish parliamentary debates, and that the charge of misrepresentation would have to be proved: whereas Lord Carhampton thought it was a breach of privilege for anyone to presume without the leave of the house to publish its debates at all. As this Carhampton was the father of Luttrell, who had been Wilkes' opponent in the Middlesex election, and had been liberally bespattered with abuse by the popular press in London, he may have been biassed: the house, nevertheless, inclined to his view and told the printer that, although no action would be taken against him, he had been guilty of a breach of privilege in publishing the debate without permission.

(1) 11 Dec. 1783 (Ir. Parl. Reg. (Lords), iii. 69 ff.)
Lords Jn. Ire., v. 413-15.

The lords, in effect, were saying that a newspaper could continue to publish reports of parliamentary debates but they reserved the right to punish it if the report gave offence, without argument about the rights (1) and wrongs of the case - simply on proof of publication. This was the position when the conflict between administration and press began the following April. Parliamentary privilege proved one of the most useful weapons against the press that the administration possessed. The houses of parliament, the newspapers soon discovered, were above the law. They could remove a prisoner from the magistrate, sentence, and punish him - and then hand him back to the magistrates to be dealt with as if nothing had happened, in defiance of the rule of common law that no man should suffer twice for the same offence.

Matthew Carey found this to his cost: but he was not so unlucky as a member of his staff, William Bingley. Bingley had been named by Foster as the publisher of the (2) Volunteers' Journal in the original warrant on April 5th: he had been arrested on the 16th, and taken before a judge of the King's Bench, in the judge's home, in order to offer security. The judge admitted him to bail, but before Bingley could leave, the deputy serjeant-at-arms of the house

(1) Cf. Lords Jn.Ire., v.464 (23 March 1784)

(2) ~~Commonwealth~~, 5 Apr.1784 (Ir.Parl.Reg., iii.144)

of commons arrived to arrest him. The sergeant was reprimanded by the judge, who gave Bingley a safe-conduct out of his parlour. He was promptly re-arrested in the hall and, like Carey, put into close confinement - so close that when he was brought before the commons he claimed that he would have been able to prove to their satisfaction that he had nothing to do with the direction of the paper, but that he had not been allowed to see anyone in order to arrange to obtain witnesses. He reminded the house that he had already entered into a recognisance of no less than £2000 to appear for trial before the King's Bench; and the following day he was able to produce some respectable citizens to vouch for his story that he was only a clerk in the Volunteer office. He was discharged: on May 1st he was informed by the King's Bench that his attendance would not be required before them unless he received notification, which was as much as to say that he would not be prosecuted if he gave no more trouble. 'Merciful Proceedings', was the Dublin Evening Post's sarcastic comment.

(1) The Reformist, 21 Feb. 1785: D.E.Post, 17 Apr. 1784.

(2) 19 Apr. 1784. (Ir.Parl.Reg., iii. 176)

(3) 20 Apr. 1784 (Commons Jn.Ire., xi. 277)

(4) D.E.Post, 1 May 1784.

There the affair might have rested, if Bingley had not been born to trouble. Whether he guessed it or not, his arrest had been made on the strength of his past. The Earl of Mornington referred to him as 'Bingley of famous memory',⁽¹⁾ and in a dispatch from the Castle the chief secretary, Orde, wrote that 'the Volunteers' Journal is the property of Matthew Carey and of William Bingley, late a printer in London, who was prosecuted there for offences of a similar nature, and is supposed to be instrumental in all this mischief'.⁽²⁾ Bingley had been the friend and disciple of Wilkes, from whom he had taken on the publication of the North Briton after the prosecution for No.45 had compelled Wilkes to withdraw from the paper. Most of Bingley's work had to be done from jail, as an English court ruled that No.50 was libellous. It was ten weeks before he had been admitted to bail; and then, because he had refused to answer questions until brought to trial, he had been imprisoned for a further eighteen months without trial before being released on a nolle prosequi - a procedure that had not escaped⁽³⁾ the attention of Junius.

On his own account, Bingley had come to Ireland to forget the past, and he had taken up farming in Donegal; but financial straits had compelled him to return to his old

(1) H.M.C., Fortescue, i. 230.

(2) P.R.O., H.O., 100/12. (7 Apr.1784)

(3) Reformist, 21 Feb.1785: A treatise on the origin of attachments and informations (P) Dublin 1785.

(1)
 profession in Dublin. What influence he had in the
Volunteers' Journal it is impossible to say, but he managed
 to satisfy Foster and the house of commons that he had none.
 The grievance of their treatment must have continued to
 rankle; a year later he adopted a suggestion that had
 been made by a sympathiser in the House, and brought an
 action against the sergeant-at-arms for wrongful imprison-
 (2)
 ment.

In spite of his past experiences, Bingley must
 have felt that he had an excellent case. His arrest had
 been of dubious legality, and his confinement harsh: he
 ought not to have been taken up at all, since some days
 before he had been arrested Foster had named Carey as
 (3)
 solely responsible for the libels. The Commons had ad-
 mitted this by letting Bingley go free. So confident was he
 of compensation that he refused a collection made for him
 by some members of the House, who thought he had been
 unjustly treated, in case the courts should dismiss his
 (4)
 action on that account.

(1) Reformist, 21 Feb.1785.

(2) 17 Feb.1785 (Ir.Parl.Reg.,iv.239; Commons Jn.Ire.,xi.,
 p.353)

(3) See p.23 above.

(4) Reformist, 21 Feb.1785.

The commons were informed of the action pending (1) against the sergeant-at-arms on February 16th, 1785, and they promptly ordered that Bingley should appear before them the following day - "in custody", the choleric Sir Henry Cavendish suggested, but other members thought this was hard on someone whose only fault was seeking redress of a grievance in the courts. Foster replied that the house was the judge of its own privileges, and the attorney general denied that the courts were competent to judge the house. In that case, a member of the opposition remarked, should not the court which issued the writ be attached and brought before the bar of the house? The solicitor- (2) general hurriedly disclaimed any such intention.

(3)
Bingley told the commons that he had no intention of bringing an action against them - only against the sergeant-at-arms, for abusing his authority. The brusque reply was that they were not interested in the merits of his case; all they wished to ask him was, did he intend to proceed with this action in the courts? Bingley refused to commit himself: and his solicitor, who had been showing signs of increasing agitation, seized the excuse to abandon

(1) 16 Feb. 1785 (Ir. Parl. Reg., iv. 239)

(2) Ibid., p. 241.

(3) 21 Feb. 1785 (Ibid., p. 300)

his client. Bingley was again committed to custody in the Newgate jail with the common felons of Dublin. (1) Three weeks later he petitioned the House, promising to answer their questions; they ruled that he had not shown proper submission, and ignored his request. (2) On May 26th he was given permission to appear as a witness in the trial of Thomas Carey, (3) but it was not until August 2nd that another petition, (4) which amounted to unconditional surrender, was adjudged sufficiently penitent for the Commons, a week later, to order his discharge - magnanimously waiving the usual fees.

Both houses, in brief, arrogated to themselves the right to deal with individuals exactly as they pleased. In times when it had nothing to fear from the press, they could be tolerant: when frightened they were tyrannical. Against their disfavour a newspaper owner had no protection; and from their decisions he had no appeal.

(1) 5 Apr. 1784. (*Ir. Parl. Reg.*, iii, 184 ff.)

(2) Earl of Mansfield to Earl Temple, 16 Apr. 1784.

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- (1) *Ir. Parl. Reg.*, iv. 302. 21 Feb. 1785
 (2) *Ibid.*, v. 77-80. 11 March 1789.
 (3) *Ibid.*, v. 228. 26 May 1785.
 (4) *Ibid.*, v. 305.
 (5) *Ibid.*, v. 317.

Legislation.

The bill 'to secure the liberty of the press' (1) which Foster brought before the Commons early in April 1784 bore all the signs of hurried composition. The Earl of Mornington, who was in close touch with the Castle, complained in his correspondence that neither he nor the chief secretary, Orde, had seen the bill before it was introduced; He approved certain clauses, but there were others that had been included without sufficient thought, and he had made up his mind to have the bill altered or, failing that, to oppose it in the Lords. As it was, he feared that the Castle would be blamed for the bill by the public, who could not know that they had not even been told. (2)

His annoyance was shared by the influential John Beresford, who wrote that although he reprobated violence, he doubted the prudence of an attempt to restrain the press at that time. Beresford thought Orde was at fault, blaming him for involving the government supporters without prior

(1) 8 Apr. 1784. (Ir. Parl. Reg., iii. 154 ff.)

(2) Earl of Mornington to Earl Temple, 10 Apr. 1784. (H.M.C., Fortescue, i. 228)

(1) consultation. The prevailing uncertainty makes it probable that it was Foster, against whom the worst scurrilities were aimed, who prepared the bill: certainly he introduced it.

The first clause, reasonably enough, required printers, publishers, proprietors, and profit sharers in a newspaper to give their names and addresses to the Stamp Commissioners. The object was to make certain of catching somebody in the event of a successful prosecution for libel - even if it was not the man responsible. Nor could much objection be taken to the clause which made it illegal for newspapers to accept payment for the publication of libels, or to extort payment not to publish them. There was no proof offered that this was a known practice at the time, but according to Luttrell it was happening in England. ⁽²⁾ The section of the bill which aroused most opposition was that requiring each proprietor to lodge the sum of £500 as security. This in effect meant that proprietors were held to special bail, though that had been only intended for very grave offences; and small newspapers would not find it easy to raise the money. Another clause, providing for the arrest of newsvendors of publications containing libels, came in for criticism; a blind hawker, it was said, might suddenly find

(1) Beresford, Correspondence, ii. 256.

(2) 12 Apr. 1784 (Ir. Parl. Reg., iii. 167)

himself in jail.⁽¹⁾ Grattan summed up the prevailing opinion in committee. Part of the bill he thought necessary, as 'one paper teems with exhortations to and incitements to assassination'; but a clause requiring the printer to make known his name was all that was needed.⁽²⁾ It was agreed to strike out the controversial clauses - a decision that satisfied Mornington, who supported the bill in the Lords, writing to Grenville in England that it had been amended conformably to his objections 'and, I believe, produced by them'.⁽³⁾ The special bail requirement was omitted, and the clause affecting newsvendors modified; they were not to be arrested provided that they disclosed whence they had been provided with the offending newspaper.

The amended bill received the king's assent,⁽⁴⁾ becoming law on June 1st. In its final form it contained little threat to the freedom of the press. The threat lay rather in what the act might have been if its sponsors had been less precipitate. The attitude of Orde, Mornington, and Beresford, and presumably of many colleagues,

(1) 10 Apr. 1784. (Ir. Parl. Reg., iii. 161)

(2) Lecky's contention that Grattan cordially supported the bill is hardly borne out by the report of his speech. (Lecky, History, ii. 429)
(Ir. Parl. Reg., iii. 166)

(3) H.M.C., Fortescue, i. 230 (21 Apr. 1784)

(4) Irish Statutes, xii. (23 & 24 Geo. iii. c. 28).

would have been less liberal if they had not resented the introduction of legislation about which they had not been consulted.

Otherwise, the bill was chiefly remarkable for the resistance it provoked in the Dublin newspapers during its passage. With the single exception of the government Volunteer Evening Post, they were unanimous in their execration of the bill "for 'securing' - alias annihilating, the liberty of the press", The lord lieutenant's later assertion in a dispatch to London, that most printers favoured the bill, ⁽¹⁾ may have been true of the act in its final form: it certainly was not true of the bill as originally presented. The General Evening Post called it 'the most flagrant direct attack ever attempted upon the liberties of Ireland'. ⁽²⁾ The Dublin Evening Post warned the commons that juries would not suffer the freedom of the press to be assailed by 'the prostitute and corrupt minions of a tyrannic power.' ⁽³⁾ The Volunteers' Journal had another cartoon of a gibbet with 'Jacky Finance' Foster lying below, the inference being that his corpse was so execrated that no one would take it away for burial. ⁽⁴⁾ Even Faulkners Journal,

(1) Rutland to Sydney 8 May 1784 (H.M.C. Rutland,iii.94)

(2) G.E.Post, 8 Apr.1784.

(3) D.E.Post, 8 Apr.1784.

(4) V.'s Journal, 9 Apr.1784.

which Foster had referred to in the commons as 'generally ~~these~~ chaste enough', and which rarely ventured any comment whatsoever, said that on similar principles they could expect a bill for the perfect security of the liberty of subjects, by sending them in chains to Newgate prison. ⁽¹⁾

All this, admittedly, was before the bill had been amended. In any case the opposition was not so impressive as it sounds: the criticisms were less spontaneous than they appeared. The newspapers took each other's news, and comments, as a matter of course. On April 10, for example, the Freeman included two paragraphs, one calling upon the seconder of the bill to withdraw his support, the other commenting generally on press liberty. Later that same day, the Dublin Evening Post included both these paragraphs, adding one of its own praising Dublin University for their support of the cause of freedom. The General Evening Post did the same. Next morning, the three paragraphs were reproduced word for word in the Volunteers' Journal; and two of them by the Hibernian Journal, which omitted the praise for Dublin University. On the 13th, Faulkner's Dublin Journal joined in, with slight alterations in the wording; and the following day the three paragraphs appeared in Finn's Leinster Journal.

(1) F.D.J., 9 Apr.1784.

It would be unwise to put too high a value on the unanimity with which the newspapers rallied to defend the freedom of the press, or to single out individual newspapers for special mention. A solemn protest against the act may have been inserted by some apprentice journeyman, who could barely read, trying to fill the paper's columns. Although over a period of weeks a newspaper's opinions can soon be detected, they can rarely safely be judged by isolated paragraphs; the Volunteers' Journal, the most opinionated of the Dublin press, was at the same time the most inveterate robber of other papers' material.

The reaction against the bill as originally drafted, was largely justified. Foster had rushed it before the commons, and the accusation was made that he had brought it in after many members had returned home, under the impression that no more important bills were to be brought up that session, ⁽¹⁾ - not that this would have affected the outcome. An influential element in the house, too, were in favour of still more drastic measures to curb the press. The law officers of the crown, in whose hands lay the freedom of the press, were among them. The prime ⁽²⁾sergeant expressed his 'thorough detestation' of newspapers: Sir Henry Cavendish, the diehard tory of his time, and Luttrell, would have liked

(1) 10 Apr. 1784. (Ir. Parl. Reg., iii. 187)

(2) 9 Apr. 1784. (Ir. Parl. Reg., iii, 155)

to see the bill go through as originally drafted: and another member of the Beresford family wanted corporal punishment revived for refractory journalists. (1) The newspapers had some reason to feel that the act, for all its final moderation, might prove a dangerous precedent.

The following year, the chancellor of the exchequer dealt what the Dublin Morning Post referred to as 'the finishing blow to the liberty of the press' - the imposition of a higher rate of duty on newspapers' stamps, and an increase in the advertisement tax. (2)

A stamp duty of one halfpenny a sheet, and an advertisement duty of twopence upon each advertisement printed had been imposed a few years before. (3) Now, the stamp duty was to be raised to one penny and the advertisement tax to one shilling. The opposition newspapers contended that such an impost could only be made, not with a view to raising revenue, but in order to cripple the independent press. The advertisement tax, for example, was clearly discriminatory against the opposition papers, because proclamations and government advertisements, upon which the Castle papers relied, were exempted.

(1) Vs'.J., 14 Apr.1784. (2) D.M.Post,29 March,1785.

(3) Irish Statutes,x.690 ff. (15-16 Geo.iii. c.9)

The new duties came into force on March 25, after which date, the newspapers warned their subscribers, prices would be raised from 1½d to 2d, and the advertisement duty passed on by higher rates to advertisers. As the papers had feared, advertising fell off sharply. The number of advertisements in the Belfast Mercury fell by one third, and the General Evening Post lost four columns - a full sheet - of advertising matter. The greatest sufferer was the Volunteers' Journal, which was reduced for a time to a single sheet - two pages - and was much reduced in size when it returned to its original four page layout. The Castle papers protested that they were suffering for the sins of their rivals - thereby confirming that the duties were punitive in intent. (1) As the Freeman of the time had less than four columns of advertisements, three of them from government sources, and consequently exempt from the duty, its sufferings were not severe. By this time it had become undisguisedly a Castle paper, lampooned in the opposition press as the Slaveman's Journal.

The advertisers gradually returned, though not before the newspaper owners had been severely shaken. In 1786, they petitioned the commons for the removal, or at

(1) Freeman, Volunteer Evening Post, 31 March, 1785.

(1)

least a reduction, of the duties, setting out their losses.

Returns called for by the house showed that the revenue from the increased stamp duty was actually less than it had been at the earlier rate, and although the revenue from the advertisement tax had more than doubled, the increase was far from being proportionate to the increase

(2)

in the tax. The attorney general - Fitzgibbon - made the ingenious defence that the tax did good by discouraging landlords from advertising auctions at which land was

sold by cant to the highest bidder, which was the cause of rack-renting, and to which all the peasants' misery might be attributed. In any case, he said, it was salutary for people to be compelled to express themselves more concisely in order that they might be charged less duty.

An opposition speaker sarcastically inquired why, in this sudden administrative enthusiasm for the promotion of belles lettres, the government should have reserved to itself the right to be verbose by exempting proclamations

(3)

from the tax. The duty remained unaltered.

It is never easy to determine the extent to which taxation affected the press. Any increase in duties, whether on newsprint, on copies, or on advertisements,

(1) 13 Feb. 1786 (Ir. Parl. Reg., iii. 154)

(2) Commons Jn. Ire., xii, appx. lxiii.

(3) Ir. Parl. Reg., vi. 154 ff. (13 Feb. 1786)

increased the running costs of the newspapers and impaired the quality of the service they provided by compelling owners to cut down their expenses. The newspapers catering for the less well-to-do sections of the community were the hardest hit, because their subscribers were less able to bear the extra cost and would be more likely to give up taking a newspaper, or read the free copies provided in coffee rooms. The advertisement tax, too, weighed more heavily on the opposition than on the castle press. In its general tendency, any increase of duties operated decidedly, if not always visibly, against the independent press.

defence.

Corruption was unnecessary; the defence was natural and often voluntary. Judges were bound to the will of the government by their desire for preferment. Promotion through the judicial hierarchy was dependent on the administration's pleasure; and the man who had reached the top of his profession, a chief justice, could still hope, by keeping in favour, to rise in the peerage.

John Scott, for example, had been a young man of no particular family or fortune. After obtaining some reputation in the parish work he had been won over by a

(1) Cf. Curtis & Russell, *Irish Historical Documents*, p. 204.

3.4. The Judicature - Newspapers before the Law.

To consider the judicature as a power separate from legislature and executive is to mistake the legal fiction for the fact of eighteenth century government. The Courts, whatever they might be in theory, were in practice virtually an arm of the administration, at least for so long as the administration commanded the support of the Protestant Ascendancy. Where the Ascendancy was threatened, even remotely, the courts, judges and juries, acted in its defence.

Corruption was unnecessary; the defence was natural and often unconscious. Judges were bound to the will of the government by their desire for preferment. Promotion through the judicial hierarchy was dependent on the administration's pleasure; and the man who had reached the top of his profession, a chief justice, could still hope, by keeping in favour, to rise in the peerage. (1)

John Scott, for example, had been a young man of no particular family or fortune. After obtaining some reputation in the patriot cause he had been won over by a

(1) Cf. Curtis & McDowell: Irish Historical documents, p.204.

farseeing Viceroy, who had realised that he was both talented and purchaseable.⁽¹⁾ Proving himself a clever advocate he became successively attorney general, a justice of the King's Bench, and chief justice: and plain John Scott became Baron Earlsfort in 1784, Viscount Clonmell in 1789, and the Earl of Clonmell in 1793. All this was merit's reward, but the merit lay in gratifying Ascendancy, not in the impartial exercise of justice.

Other judges sat in the court of King's Bench, but Clonmell was the strongest personality, and he did very much as he liked. As it happened, he liked dealing with press cases, and from 1784 to his death just before the end of the century, he was the judge in the majority of trials in which newspapers were concerned.

There were many ways in which the courts, dominated by such a man, could discriminate against the press. They could impose abnormally heavy sentences. Magee's month in jail may seem light in retrospect, for a time when petty larceny was punishable by death. As a special concession,⁽²⁾ too, he was allowed to go to the new jail rather than the Marshalsea which 'was so extremely overcrowded that no apartment could be had that was not occupied by six, eight

(1) Grattan, Memoirs, ii. 141.

(2) D.E.Post, 27 Jan. 1785.

or ten persons.'⁽¹⁾ And he was able to continue working: a paragraph appearing in the Dublin newspapers on 29 January ran -

Magee entreats his friends to be so obliging to confine their kind visits from 12 - 3, as he finds it peculiarly necessary to rescue a few hours each day for the arrangement of a business which seems at present to involve his ... fate. (2)

Still, it came as a shock to the public and to the profession that so well-known a citizen as Magee should be sent to jail with common felons. ~~And the treatment of Magleoy, Carey and Dowling by parliament, acting in its judicial capacity, had been extremely harsh.~~

Or the courts could revive obsolescent procedures, or allow actions against newspaper proprietors which might be within the letter, but were not in the spirit of the law. 'Informations,' lodged by individuals, or ex-officio, by the law officers against proprietors, were commonly used, because they made it unnecessary to put the case to the Grand Jury, who might refuse to find a true bill:⁽³⁾ it rested in a judge's hands whether the prosecution should proceed and the newspapers might find when the case came up for trial that the same judge who had ordered the prosecution to proceed, would be on the bench to try the case. Nearly all actions against newspapers were begun this way, though it was denounced as

(1) Freeman, 29 Jan, 1785.

(2) D.E. Post, 29 Jan, 1785.

(3) cf. Aspinall, Politics and the Press, p.40.

as contrary to Magna Carta.⁽¹⁾ Several months could elapse between the lodging of the information and the prosecution itself, during which the newspaper was left in ignorance what was happening, and unable to comment, on the case without risking a charge of contempt of court.⁽²⁾ Often the threat of prosecution alone seems to have been enough, the law officers holding the charge as a security for the newspapers good behaviour.

Or procedures of doubtful legality could be adopted. Magee was 'attached' and committed to jail on a judge's order; for a while, 'attachments' threatened to undermine the judicial system by circumventing trial by jury.⁽³⁾ The writer of a well-reasoned pamphlet on attachments and informations spoke of the danger to the freedom of the press in the transference of the power of punishing from a jury, to magistrates chosen by the crown; cited as an example 'the new process of attachment and information in the Court of King's Bench, so materially narrowing, superseding, and in many cases annihilating the trial by jury.'⁽⁴⁾ The subject was exhaustively debated in the Irish Commons⁽⁵⁾ and soon afterwards the English advocate

(1) Dublin Newspapers 26-30 June 1784.

(2) Freeman, 8 Feb. 1785.

(3) Curran, Speeches, p.8.

(4) 'Vindex' a treatise on the origin of attachments and informations, p.3.^(p) Dublin 1785. A number of pamphlets discussing the same subject were published in the period cf. R.I.A Halliday Collection, 476-7.

(5) 8-26 Feb. 1785 (Ir. Parl. Reg., iv. 144 ff; 375 ff : v. 15 ff.

Erskine, in a letter published by many Irish newspapers, said that judges could not entertain attachments 'without such a gross usurpation and abuse of power as would make me think it my duty, were a member of the Irish parliament, to call them to account by impeachment'. The precedent, he declared, if acquiesced in, would be fatal to liberty in both countries.
(1).

All these expedients were the symptom of the courts' bias in favour of the prosecution, in state trials. As soon as attachments were allowed to be extra-legal, the law officers and the judges would search out some other way around the normal process of law. The State could always find an excuse to prosecute, and the prosecutions would invariably have been successful, had not jurymen occasionally taken it into their heads to side with the defendant. Juries must to some extent have been drawn from the men who had been Volunteers, some of whom would still be supporters of Grattan and the parliamentary opposition. For actions against opposition newspapers, it was necessary for the Crown to avoid juries, as far as possible, by expedients such as attachments and informations : or, when a jury was necessary, to ensure that its selection was carefully performed by a government official.

(1). V. S. J., 23 March 1785 : Lecky, Ire., ii. 400.

3. The Press in Decline - 1785-8.

Although the Stamp Act of 1785 provoked press anger it was not comparable to the rage that had seized the newspapers at the time of Foster's Press Bill. They had had enough. With the examples of Matthew Carey, Dowling, Magee and Bingley before them, they had been forced to realise that the administration could only be opposed within the limits it prescribed; and by the summer of 1785 it had come to dislike opposition of any kind. Newspaper proprietors had learned that nothing less than abject apology and retraction could save them from vengeance if they annoyed the administration. When, in March 1786, Dowling was ordered to attend at the bar of the House of Commons for some misrepresentation printed in the Volunteers' Journal,⁽¹⁾ he humbly submitted that he had meant no disrespect and threw himself on their mercy.

(1) 23 March 1786 (Ir. Parl. Reg., vi. 357)

The attitude of the House showed how little they had cause, by this time, to fear the press: they allowed the word 'wilful' to be struck out of the charge, and contented themselves with reprimanding Dowling and discharging him. ⁽¹⁾ A few days later the printer of the Hibernian Journal, up on a similar charge, was released without reproof. ⁽²⁾ A member suggested that to avoid such misunderstandings in future, official note-takers should be appointed; and the attorney general remarked with pleasure how decorous the press had become. ⁽³⁾

The Dublin Evening Post was quiet for so long ⁽⁴⁾ that the administration sent it a proclamation. The next issue ~~it~~ praised the administration's excellence, and the care with which it watched over the people's liberties. Excellence, it added as an afterthought, in creating peers and granting pensions: and watchful 'as a kite over a partridge'. The proclamations were discontinued. Such boldness was exceptional; for the most part the opposition press was by then restrained, languishing under the deprivation of the stimulus of controversy.

(1) 24 March, 1786 (Ibid., vi. 362).

(2) 27 March 1786 (Ir. Parl. Reg., vi. 343): and see ibid., viii, 441)

(3) 13 Feb. 1786 (Ibid., vi. 157)

(4) D.E. Post, 14 Sept. 1786.

The Dublin Evening Post and the Hibernian Journal survived: but by the time the Regency problem began to exercise men's minds in the winter of 1788 the Volunteers' Journal, the General Evening Post, and the Morning Post had disappeared. So had the Belfast Mercury and, most significant of all, the government's Volunteer Evening Post. A member of parliament had referred to it as a 'paper (1) which nobody ever sees', and how small its circulation must have been can be gauged by the fact that during 1787 it sometimes carried no advertisements at all. But it ^{is} unlikely that the government would have let it go unless they were so well satisfied with the general meekness of the press that the possession of two newspapers of their own appeared superfluous.

Newspapers rarely forecast their own dissolution: nor, usually, do other papers print obituaries of deceased contemporaries. The reasons why the Volunteers' Journal and the others ceased publication can only be guessed. The absence of domestic agitation in the years from 1785 to 1789 must have been one contributory factor; newspapers with a cause for which to fight can surmount

(1) 2 Feb. 1787 (Ir. Parl. Reg., vii. 83)

difficulties that would put down the ordinary commercial venture at once. But there was material enough for agitation, if the press had dared to use it, in the need for the reform and the removal of religious disability and (1) in the administration's corruption and incompetence. Had the newspapers continued to focus public attention on the anomalies of representation and helped to obtain parliamentary reform, the '98 might have been unnecessary and the Union avoided. But they had been paralysed. As an opposition member had said during the debate on Foster's press bill 'the connection between liberty and licentiousness is so intimate that it is very difficult to correct the one without wounding the other. . . licentiousness is the speck on the political eye which ought to be touched with a very delicate hand lest, in attempting to remove it, you destroy the body on which it appears.' (2) Jail sentences, fines, and taxes had expelled faction from the press in Ireland: they had gone far towards expelling press freedom in the process.

(1) Lecky, Ire., ii. 462.

(2) 10 Apr. 1784 (Ir. Parl. Reg., iii. 158)

II.

1789 - 1833.

Outwardly there had been little material change in the position of the newspapers. Foster's bill, which had attracted so much attention, made no real difference, but the tranquility after the summer of 1785 was illusory. The administration had not thrown away its arms; they were stored for further use, should they again be required. By taxation and by subsidy the executive had secured a measure of control over the newspapers. The legislature had shown that when challenged there was hardly any limit to its coercive powers. The judicature had found ways in which to twist the law to the administration's purpose; they could be found again. The outlook for the press, should it attempt to stage a revival, was gloomy.

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1789.

The measures that the government had adopted against the press in 1784-5 silenced some opposition papers, and moderated the tone of those that remained. The moderation was not, however, solely the result of government action. The period between 1785 and 1789 was one of general apathy: the press reflected the character of the time. ⁽¹⁾ As soon as events began again to stir the hopes and loosen the tongues of the opposition, the newspapers, too, roused themselves. The regency crisis, provoked by the King's insanity and, later, the growth of the United Ireland movement, provided the necessary stimulus.

The government, for its part, reacted as it had done before. After 1789 it becomes less easy to disentangle the threads of government action - to decide, for instance, whether a sentence on a printer for a breach of privilege is the spontaneous reaction of one or other house of parliament to an infringement on its rights, or an expedient adopted by the attorney general to avoid bringing the case before the ordinary courts. Executive, judicature and legislature formed a homogeneous body whose community of interests was such that they were rarely to be found out of sympathy. For a few months in the winter of 1794-5, when the liberal Fitzwilliam was lord lieutenant, there was discord; for the

(1) Lecky devotes less than a dozen pages of his history of Ireland to these years.

rest of the period, the Castle, the courts of justice, and the houses of parliament pursued a common end - the maintenance of their own interests.

The under secretary of state for civil affairs - Edward Cooke held the post almost throughout the period - was in charge of routine business between government and press: but quite often the chief secretary, or even the lord lieutenant, was brought into consultation: and Cooke's actions may have often been the result of unrecorded consultation with, or orders from, his superiors: the euphemism which attributed actions to 'the Castle' had a practical justification. The assumption could be made that the law officers of the Crown obeyed the Castle's general and, often, particular instructions when action was taken against the press, though in fact the attorney general was called upon less and less, as purchase began to take the place of prosecution as the instrument of government policy. Proprietors whom the government had reason to fear would first be approached with an offer of financial assistance; prosecutions were initiated mainly as an added inducement to come to terms.

The sources from which the government drew the money to purchase support were the secret service fund, and the money voted annually for the printing of proclamations. Again, the government were not always conscious that they were buying - or, for that matter, the newspaper owner that he was for sale.

Proclamations were naturally given to friendly newspapers whose owners felt that it was only just that they, who helped to sustain the government, should be recompensed for their trouble. Dublin journalists were not then, as they were by the time Charles Gavan Duffy started work among them, prepared to take a cynical attitude. They rarely, if ever, allowed themselves to be seduced into public support of a government which they privately detested. The process was accompanied by a change of heart, the journalists concerned managing to convince themselves of the virtues of the administration before, or at least at, the time of conversion. These conversions were spurious - the personalities of men engaged in journalism are a safer indication of the health of the press than their expressed beliefs. A free press attracts men of ability and integrity, even if the rewards are meagre, by promising them an unrivalled opportunity for self-expression. If they have continually to trim, to avoid subjects that may give offence to the government or other influential interests, they will leave journalism to men who are prepared to prostitute their talents, or who, being without principles, are capable of persuading themselves that any cause which offers them prospects is worthy of their support. Their advocacy of that cause may then be apparently sincere; but it cannot, strictly speaking, be termed

*the
Catholic
the
public*

disinterested. Where such men breed in the press, it can be neither free, nor healthy; their advocacy is undistinguishable from sycophancy, and their condemnations reveal the malice of the renegade.

The character of the newspaper owners during this period provides an unusually good barometer to the state of the press, because the owner was usually so absorbed in his paper that it tended to become the expression of his personality. A journalist, writing in the 1790's, described his life:-

"To preserve my interest with my old advertising friends, and to obtain new, I had a daily round of visitations to make through the principal streets of business. To collect money due for advertisements I had also a number of calls out in the day. As I had neither editor nor writer, all the literary labour devolved on me. Besides essays to write, I had to run over the London, the Dublin, and the Irish country papers; to digest the packets, to make extracts, and to furnish articles of domestic intelligence, and of general observation. I had also to run to the coffee houses to pick up the news of the day; to attend the theatre in the season, in order to give an account of the performance, and the parliament house, to take down debates. When I add to this that I had to correct the proofs, to write the letters to country correspondents, and to act as my own clerk, it will appear that my hands were pretty full." (1)

This was an extreme case; most of the newspapers had small staffs. But they were very small; and the owner, even if he did have to do all the work, usually kept the direction

(1) W.P.Carey, Appeal to the People of Ireland (P), p.11.

of the paper in his hands, and infused it with his personality. The story of the newspapers in Ireland in the years before the Union can most satisfactorily be told through the biographies of their owners.

... in return for their support, the administration would ensure that they received regular direct or indirect subsidies. These arrangements soon became known, and the newspapers concerned would thereafter be contemptuously referred to by the opposition press as 'Castle prints'. They were not run by, or even as a rule subjected to direction from the Castle, but the Castle's indirect control was none the less implicit in the contract.

The Freeman's Journal.

The administration had only one newspaper on which it could rely for unqualified support, when the regency crisis made such support once more desirable. This was the Freeman's Journal, of which Francis Higgins had, by 1789, become sole owner.

Francis Higgins had first achieved notoriety in 1768, when a county Dublin grand jury had described him as 'a person of evil name, fame, and dishonest conversation, and a common receiver and cheat'. Higgins had defrauded a Dublin merchant, William Archer, with intent to marry his daughter,

(1) Hodder, L.P.J. II, 303.

THE CASTLE PRESS.

The distinction whether a newspaper was tied to the administration, or supporting them of its own free will, is not always easy to make. But certain papers came to be linked with the Castle by what amounted to contract; in return for their support, the administration would ensure that they received regular direct or indirect subsidies. These arrangements soon became known, and the newspapers concerned would thereafter be contemptuously referred to by the opposition press as 'Castle prints'. They were not run by, or even as a rule subjected to direction from the Castle, but the Castle's indirect control was none the less implicit in the contract.

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(1) Madden, I.P.L., 11, 303.

by saying that he was possessed of estates worth £250 a year in Down, and a post worth £100 a year in the revenue office, "though in truth and in fact the said Francis Higgins was not then, nor is he now, possessed of, or entitled unto, any estate in lands or tenements in the said county of Down, or in any other county in this realm, or elsewhere; nor had he, the said Francis Higgins, then, nor hath he now, any manner of employment in the custom house, or elsewhere"⁽¹⁾. This fraud won him the nickname by which he was known to his contemporaries, and to posterity: 'The Sham Squire'.

A few weeks later, he was again in trouble. A paragraph in the newspaper he was later to own announced that "at the Commission of Oyer and Terminer, Mark Thomas, a revenue officer, and Francis Higgins, the celebrated adventurer, were convicted of an assault against Mr. Peck . . . the latter was fined £5, to be imprisoned one year."⁽²⁾

Yet this was the man who by 1789 had become one of the most influential citizens of Dublin. At some stage he had struck up a friendship with Scott, the future Lord Clonmell, who had helped him to become an attorney in the court of king's bench.⁽³⁾ Three years later, in 1783, he had been elected to the Dublin city commons, as one of the representatives of the

(1) Ibid: Fitzpatrick, The Sham Squire, p.6.

(2) Freeman, 28 Feb. 1766.

(3) Freeman, 17 June 1780: Fitzpatrick, The Sham Squire, p.24.

hosiers guild. His election was opposed on the grounds that he was not a hosier. He had transacted some legal business for the guild, it was said, for which he has charged them a stiff fee, intimating that he would be satisfied if they made him a freeman of the guild, in lieu of payment. They had agreed, and he had formally entered the guild by taking over the trade of a bankrupt, though he had no shop except his own back parlour. The city commons, on hearing these charges, ordered the hosiers to elect a new representative. (1)

The setback was only temporary. By 1789 Higgins (2) was a master of the guild. He had also been made a justice, (3) after serving a term as coroner for the city of Dublin; and (4) he was proprietor of the Freeman's Journal.

Towards the end of March, 1789, a series of tortuously allusive squibs began to appear in the Dublin Evening Post directed against "Frank Paragraph, proprietor of a prostitute print", alias 'Shamado', or 'the Sham'. Francis Higgins had made an enemy of John Magee, the Post's (5) proprietor, who had disinterred the story of the sham squire. Magee first published insinuations; then, growing bolder, (6) gave the jury's true bill from the Archer trial. Higgins

(1) D.E.Post, 19 Sept., 1783.

(2) D.E.Post, 19 March 1789.

(3) Fitzpatrick, Ireland before the Union, p.123.

(4) Fitzpatrick, The Sham Squire, p.24.

(5) See above, ~~above~~, p.2729.

(6) D.E.Post, 30 June 1789.

announced that, as he was taking legal action, he would not
reput the falsehoods; ⁽¹⁾ later he admitted their truth,
⁽²⁾ attributing the incident to the venial folly of youth. Magee
then revealed the story of the second fraud, adding sundry
unsubstantiated allegations of an even more scurrilous nature -
that Higgins had seduced his jailer's daughter; that, on his
release, he had worked as chucker-out in a gambling den,
possessing himself first of his employer's wealth, by cheating
him at his own tables, and subsequently, of his employer's
wife; that his employer had been driven mad; and that his
wife died later from a disease contracted from Higgins, who
had deserted her as soon as he had secured possession of the
gambling den which, Magee complained, was still a source of
shame and irritation to respectable Dublin citizens. ⁽³⁾

Higgins' past had not been such that he would have
cared to attempt a refutation of all these charges in detail,
even if most of them were unfounded. With the assistance of
Scott, now Lord Earlsfort, and chief justice of the Kings
Bench, he was able to silence Magee; but not before his name
had been unrelentingly trailed in the gutter for more than
six months. ⁽⁴⁾ The revelations do not appear to have affected
his position: Not even the connection of his name with some

(1) Freeman, 31 March; 20 May 1789.

(2) Freeman, 4 July 1789.

(3) D.E.Post, 6 May 1789.

(4) *See below*

irregularities in his suit against Magee could do that. In 1790 Arthur Browne, member for Trinity College, who had been one of Magee's counsel, inquired about the discovery of certain erasures and alterations in the court records of the case. The attorney general promised to investigate: ⁽¹⁾ nothing further was heard of the matter that session. The following year, Browne succeeded in reopening the inquiry. A witness, brought before the bar of the house of commons, admitted being present at Higgins' house while the alterations were made. The combined efforts of the secretary of state, the attorney general, the solicitor general, and other government speakers were required to hush up the scandal, by persuading the house to take no further action. ⁽²⁾ It is possible that the disappearance of Higgins' name from the list of justices in that year ⁽³⁾ can be traced to Lord Clare's disapproval of his ways; but the Evening Post, which, unless it was being sarcastic, would hardly have wished 'to silence misrepresentation', gave it out that Higgins had sent in his resignation some time before on ⁽⁴⁾ the grounds of ill-health.

For the rest of his life - he died in 1802 - Higgins gave much of his time to acting as a government agent. He

(1) 5 March 1790 (Dr. Parl. Reg., X.382).
 (2) 1 Feb. 1791 (Dr. Parl. Reg., xi, 57).
 (3) Fitzpatrick, Ireland before the Union, p.125.
 (4) D.E.Post, 15 Dec. 1791.

(4) John Bellamy to Arthur Browne, 27 March 1802. (Pub. Papers, 230/18/14)

wrote frequently and at length to under secretary Cooke at the Castle, giving details of the activities of United Irishmen, which he obtained by 'managing' spies and informers, including Francis Magan, the betrayer of Lord Edward Fitzgerald. The details of the 'setting' of Lord Edward are described in some detail in his letters to Cooke; there is more than a hint of blackmail in the Higgins management of Magan, and the letters in general confirm that Higgins was a man without scruple and without mercy.

Embarrassing though it was to the administration to have such men as Higgins among their supporters, they would have felt better disposed towards him if his newspaper had been a success. But the Freeman did not recover from the decline that set in when it became a Castle paper. Throughout the period it remained with little circulation and less influence. To judge by Higgins' complaints that he was neglected in favour of rival Castle papers, the government realized its worthlessness; certainly the obscurity into which it had sunk was admitted in the correspondence which followed Higgin's death, on the subject of its future. To sustain Higgins

(1) Fitzpatrick, Secret Service under Pitt, p.123.

(2) Reb. Papers, 620/18/14. Nearly 150 of Higgins' letters to Cooke have been preserved.

(3) cf. Higgins to Cooke, 3 May 1798 (Reb.Papers, 620/18/14).

(4) John Pollock to under secretary Marsden, 27 March 1802. (Reb. Papers, 620/63/9).

and his paper, the government had to provide a subsidy,⁽¹⁾ amounting at times to over £1,500 a year, from the proclamation fund, in addition to the £300 a year pension that was paid to him, and excluding payments to him for his services as an agent.⁽²⁾ For this support, they received no thanks. Higgins was rarely without imagined grievances against the government, and in his determination to see them remedied, he made himself an intolerable nuisance. In person and in correspondence, he plagued Cooke incessantly, pestering him for interviews, begging, cringeing, whining, and backbiting. Cooke evidently did his best to avoid him. Higgins' letters were full of complaints that he had been denied admission to the under secretary; on one occasion he threatened to bring his bed to the Castle and sleep outside Cooke's door, to make sure of seeing him.⁽³⁾ Letter after letter detailed his services, and complained that he had never received a penny for them.

The Castle had secured, in the Freeman, a newspaper with a great past reputation. They were to find that reputation was, if anything, a liability. Goodwill in a newspaper is an uncertain asset; the better it has been beloved, the more swiftly will readers vanish when its principles change. The government, throughout the period, had the credit value only of the Freeman's name, to set off against the galling realization of the paper's impotence, the cost of its maintenance, and the annoyance of Francis Higgins' importunities.

(1) Fitzpatrick, The Sham Squire, p.30.
 (2) cf. Cornwallis, Correspondence, iii, 320.
 (3) 23 March 1798, Reb.Papers, 620/18/14.

The Dublin Journal.

Faulkner's Dublin Journal remained stolidly conservative, avoiding controversy or comment, until 1788, when Thomas Faulkner, who was suffering from ill-health, ⁽¹⁾ allowed it to fall into the hands of John Giffard.

Giffard's early career reads like a parody of the life of Francis Higgins. ⁽²⁾ Educated at a charity school, and apprenticed to an apothecary, he managed to wed an heiress, styling himself 'Surgeon' Giffard for the benefit of her family. Shortly afterwards he returned to his apothecaries trade in Dublin, earning money on the side by reporting parliamentary debates for the newspapers. In this capacity, he attracted the government's attention. They offered to employ him. Giffard, who had been a member of the popular party, accepted, and by 1784 he was known to be in the administration's service. ⁽³⁾ The Dublin Evening Post named him as a 'Castle scribbler', and Napper Tandy accused him of selling himself to the government. ⁽⁴⁾ Like Higgins, he used his guild membership to further his ambitions, becoming one of the apothecaries' ⁽⁵⁾ members in the city commons. At meetings of all kinds he

(1) Madden, I.P.L., ii, 50.

(2) Ibid, ii, 80-104; Gilbert, History of Dublin, ii, 53.
D.E.Post, 17 Apr., 1794.

(3) D.E.Post, 24 July, 1784.

(4) Freeman, 10 June 1784.

(5) D.E.Post, 12 Nov. 1789.

spoke often and at length, tending to 'dwell copiously on his own honesty and purity'⁽¹⁾, and vilifying reformers and Catholics at every opportunity.

The administration asked him to take over Faulkner's Dublin Journal in 1788⁽²⁾, when they felt the need of support over the Regency Crisis. Seeing in its owner's ill-health a chance to win the oldest Dublin newspaper to their side⁽³⁾, they instructed Giffard to take up the lease for £500 a year⁽⁴⁾, offering to pay £300 of it. Castle proclamations brought government papers £1,000 a year or more; and he already had a pension of £300 for unspecified services to the Rutland administration - Giffard's explanation being that the government found him so useful to them with his pen that they had taken him away from his original profession of apothecary⁽⁵⁾, and given him the £300 as compensation.

The change in the character of the Dublin Journal was immediately noticed, and guesses were made in the opposition press who had become the new owner. 'Mr. Giffard', the Morning Post announced, 'is said to be the proprietor; there was some doubt of it, until it appeared that the government purse was opened'⁽⁶⁾. As soon as it became obvious that the paper's new connections were known, Giffard threw off restraint

(1) General Evening Post, 22 June 1784.

(2) Mrs. Ward to R. Peel, 14 Oct. 1816 (B.M., Add. MSS. (Peel) 40259

(3) B.M., Add. MSS. (Hardwicke), 35758 f.128. f.156).

(4) Off. papers, 528/199/24.

(5) B.M., Add. MSS. (Hardwicke) 35758 f.128.

(6) Morning Post, 2 Feb. 1789.

and abused the 'factious and disaffected' opposition journals for their support of the claims of the prince.

Giffard himself, secure in his new favour, rapidly developed into a notorious bigot and braggart. Soon after he had taken on the Dublin Journal, a complaint was made to the government by the advocate John Philpot Curran, that 'a man of the name of Giffard, a conductor of your press, a writer for your government, your notorious agent in the city, your notetaker in the house of commons' had threatened him with violence. ⁽¹⁾ Giffard had not at that time fully established himself in the administration's confidence; the lord lieutenant, referring to the incident, referred to him vaguely as 'an officer in the Custom House who is supposed to take notes for administration', and suggested that the house of commons should punish him for a breach of privilege. ⁽²⁾ The suggestion was not acted upon; instead, Curran fought a duel with the under secretary. To challenge Giffard himself, he ⁽³⁾ considered below his dignity.

Curran's reference to Giffard as 'your notorious agent in the city' was justified: Giffard may not have been as useful to the Castle as Higgins, but he gave service over a longer period. ⁽⁴⁾ From 1792, he acted as a go-between for under secretary Cooke and the spy Collins, the first of the

(1) Madden, United Irishmen, iv, 87.

(2) Westmoreland to W.W. Granville, 20 March 1790 (H.M.C., Fortescue ~~199~~, i, 568).

(3) Madden, I.P.L., 11, 109.

(4) Reb. Papers, 620/19/49.

(1)
systematic informers. Collins posed as an extreme United Irishman, and managed to retain the Society's confidence while he was sending frequent bulletins of their activities to Giffard, who sent them on to the Castle. Giffard's services were sufficiently highly thought of for him to be chosen in 1794 as sheriff of Dublin - given the post, his enemies said, because someone was needed who could be relied upon to pack an amenable jury for the trial of Hamilton Rowan. (2)

Under his charge the Dublin Journal threw off restraint. In 1793, he was prosecuted - unsuccessfully - for a libel on the Duke of Leinster. (3) The following year the Dublin Evening Post begged Giffard, in his capacity as sheriff, to deal with Giffard, the editor of the Dublin Journal, who had accused the Post of propagating atheism. In the next issue of the Post, (4) Giffard was caricatured as 'The Dog in Office', a nickname which was to cling to him; and a few days later, (5) it published a poem recounting "The Dog's" career - how he owed his initial advancement to the good offices of a patriot duke, but how he had found work for the Castle more profitable, being rewarded with a 'place' in the customs, a captaincy in the militia, the post of Sheriff, and the editorship of the Dublin Journal. The squibs suddenly ceased;

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- (1) R. B. McDowell, Proceedings of in Dublin Society of United Irishmen, in Analecta Hibernica (1949), vol. xvii.
(2) See Curran's speech for the defence, D.E. Post, 30 Jan. 1794.
(3) Hib. J., 13 Nov. 1793.
(4) D.E. Post, 10 Apr. 1794.
(5) D.E. Post, 17 Apr. 1794.

possibly Giffard had found some way to remind Magee of the results of his last contest with the proprietor of a government newspaper. The subject was dropped until the following autumn, when the Post ⁽¹⁾ apologised to Giffard, saying that it had discovered he had been away at the time of the earlier controversy, when the Dublin Journal had been in the hands of his nephew Ryan. This was a back-handed apology, as Ryan was also in the government's service; he was to be killed in 1798 at the arrest of Lord Edward Fitzgerald.

Giffard earned opposition execration by taking the names of citizens celebrating the verdict of not guilty at the trial of the United Irishman, Dr. Drennan. ⁽²⁾ Such anger did he arouse, that a substantial minority of the city commons opposed the vote of thanks to the previous year's officers when he retired from being sheriff - a vote normally passed nem. con., ⁽³⁾ as a formality. Giffard, attributing this opposition to 'the filthy scurrility of the Morning Post, and the wild ⁽⁴⁾ ravings of the Evening Post', set about gaining his revenge. A week later he had William Baird, ballad hawker, into court for selling 'The last speech and dying words of the Dog', along with the printer, Patrick Byrne. Both of them escaped on ⁽⁵⁾ legal technicalities. The proprietor of the Morning Post was

(1) D.E.Post, 18 Oct. 1794.

(2) Trial of Dr.Drennan (P) 1794, p.92.

(3) F.D.J., 18 Oct. 1794.

(4) ibid.

(5) D.E.Post, 20 Oct. 1794.

less fortunate. For printing a libellous description of Giffard's conduct in his year of office as sheriff, he was sentenced to a long term of imprisonment - Giffard on this occasion keeping three fresh indictments in reserve, in case technicalities again thwarted him. (1)

The following year, Giffard was brought up on a charge of assaulting James Potts, owner of Sander's Newsletter. The evidence against him was too damning for an acquittal, and in spite of a plea that he could not be spared from 'military duties', he was sentenced to six months' imprisonment. After a month of the sentence had been served, the lord lieutenant remitted the rest, an action which roused the Dublin Evening Post to publish an article reprobating the practice of pardoning criminals, which encouraged men to believe that influence could aid wrongdoers to escape just punishment. (2) The sentence was commuted to a fine, which, the Dublin Evening Post later claimed, was not paid. (3) Giffard was to be in the courts again in 1799, when he was found guilty at a court martial of conduct disrespectful to his commanding officer in the Dublin militia, and sentenced to a reprimand. (4) And again, the lord lieutenant intervened, ordering that the reprimand be given 'in a slight manner'. (5)

(1) See p. 154-5 below.

(2) D.E.Post, 20 Aug. 1795.

(3) D.E.Post, 3 Oct. 1795.

(4) Sankey, Proceedings of a general court-martial ... upon Capt. John Giffard, (P), (1799), p.70.

(5) Ibid, intro. p.viii.

Higgins' superb affrontery lends his career an agreeable flavour, in spite of everything. Giffard's is less palatable, at this distance, by reason of a rancid flavouring of Orange bigotry. It is to Giffard that tradition assigns the coining of the phrase, 'Protestant Ascendancy'; and until his death, some twenty years after the Union, he was to be the Protestant Ascendancy's most vocal advocate. The historian Madden had an interview with him on one occasion, and 'carried away a very lasting impression of his insolence, coarseness, and vulgarity' - an impression that appears to have been widely shared. Barrington alone has some good to say of him. Giffard, he thought, was vulgar and impetuous, and carried his hatred of Ascendancy feelings to excess; but, with all his faults, 'he was as warm-hearted and friendly a person as I ever met with'. On the other hand, 'a bitterer enemy never existed: I don't think he ever was mine', ⁽¹⁾ Barrington flattered himself: his opinion might have been less favourable had he known that Giffard had denounced him in letters to the ⁽²⁾ Castle. Grattan's picture of Giffard is the one that survives: 'the hired traducer of his country - the excommunicated of his fellow citizens - the unpunished ruffian - the bigoted agitator: in the city a firebrand - in the field a coward. And so obnoxious is he to the very party he wishes to espouse, that he is only supportable by doing those dirty acts the less

(1) Barrington, Recollections, p.181.

(2) 1802. (Reb. Papers, 620/62/8, 18).

(1)
vile refuse to execute'.

As a journalist, the government received ^{ceiv} ~~rather~~ better value for their money from Giffard than from Higgins. The Dublin Journal under his control lost its old air of commercial prosperity: but its circulation did not fall away as catastrophically as that of the Freeman, and its influence, if anything, exceeded its circulation, because Giffard's scurrilities ensured that the paper was read even by those to whom his views were anathema. In their assaults on the Castle press, the opposition papers almost invariably concentrated their fire upon the Dublin Journal.

The reason for the comparative success of the Dublin Journal was, however, the product of a circumstance not wholly congenial to the Castle - Giffard's independence. He was the spokesman of the Protestant Ascendancy: and where its interests clashed with those of the administration, there was always the likelihood of a quarrel.

As it happened, he had only one serious clash with the Castle - during the brief period of the liberal Fitzwilliam's viceroyalty in 1794-5. Fitzwilliam's arrival put Giffard in a difficult position. The newspapers generally were exultant: Cooke, writing to Fitzwilliam's predecessor, had to admit that: "all the newspapers are let

(1) Gwynn, Grattan, p.368. Barrington, Recollections, p.181. (The denunciation was provoked by Giffard's intervention against Grattan in the 1802 Dublin Election).

loose, and hallooed against your excellency's government and
its supporters'.⁽¹⁾ The Freeman sourly commented on the
sudden courtliness of papers that had earlier held republican
sentiments: could it be that they were thinking of becoming
proclamation prints? But neither the Freeman nor the
Dublin Journal, dared to offend their new master by absenting
themselves from the chorus of welcome. The Dublin Journal
published a long poem in his honour.⁽³⁾ Fitzwilliam was not
impressed. Within a month of his arrival, Cooke wrote again
to Westmoreland:-

"Poor Giffard who had the management of the
Dublin Journal is no longer employed. He had
£300 a year for his labour; and in the faith
of government he took a lease of £500 a year
for seven years, government paying £300 of the
rent. I hear this dismissal has been at
Curran's instance. He cannot well go into
opposition with his paper as he has an employ-
ment at the custom house, and poor fellow, he
will be ruined." (4)

What the 'dismissal' implied is not clear. Giffard
later confirmed Cooke's account: 'Fitzwilliam dismissed the
Dublin Journal and me as a writer'; But there was no
diminution in the amount of government advertising in the
paper. Either Fitzwilliam's recall came before his orders

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- (1) I.S.P.O., Westmorland Correspondence, Fane, 127.
(2) Freeman, 10 Jan. 1795.
(3) F.D.S., 8 Jan. 1795.
(4) I.S.P.O., Westmorland Correspondence, Fane, 120.

had taken effect; or only the direct subsidy was withdrawn. Fitzwilliam's apologia, in which he dealt in some detail with the dismissals, made no mention of Giffard.⁽¹⁾

Giffard's dismissal enhanced the popularity of his newspaper. The great bulk of the newspaper-reading public were still protestant, and an independent Ascendancy line could command a substantial circulation. But as soon as the Dublin Journal allowed its ties to the Castle to draw it against the current of popular opinion, readers deserted. At the time of the Union, which Giffard advocated, the influence of the Dublin Journal again declined, never to recover. And Giffard, for his rather doubtful allegiance, levied at all times a heavy annual tribute on the state.

How heavy this expense was, came out in 1799, when the paper fell foul of the house of commons, who committed the printer - not Giffard - to custody for a few days.⁽²⁾ An inquiry set on foot by the injured house revealed that the Dublin Journal was being subsidized to the extent of over £1000 a year from government proclamations and advertisements, apart from any money income its owner might be receiving from the secret service fund.⁽³⁾ The government defended the proclamation system on the grounds that the public must be

(1) B.M., Add. MSS. (Hardwicke), 35728 f.125.

(2) 20 Apr. 1799, (Commons Dn.Ire. (ed.1799), xviii, 158).

(3) Ibid., Appx. lcccxiv.

kept informed when emergencies arose; and they might well be published in the Dublin Journal, the oldest-established newspaper in Dublin, and still the possessor of a fair circulation. The manner in which proclamations appeared in the Dublin Journal refuted that argument. The proclamation offering a reward for the apprehension of the printer of the Union Star appeared in almost every issue of the Dublin Journal from July 1797 to March 1798, in spite of the fact that the reward was only offered until January 1798, and that the Union Star was suppressed before the end of 1797. It is possible that the Dublin Journal continued to print the proclamation gratis, to fill up space: more probably, it was published with the connivance of the Castle, in order to keep up the level of the Dublin Journal's subsidy.

The comparative prosperity of the Dublin Journal before 1800 meant that the government to some extent were spared a repetition from Giffard of Higgins' importunities. Giffard did, indeed, urge his and his families claims, on occasion; but it was not until some years later that the declining fortunes of his paper made him a plague to the Castle, with his requests for assistance. He contrived, however, to keep the Castle in a constant state of worry and irritation by his untrustworthiness. Years before Grattan

(1) Reb. Papers, 620/57/120; 620/57/112; 620/62/8, 620/62/18; Off. Papers, 579/124/10.

had called attention to the dislike which was felt for Giffard even by his own party, Dr. Drennan had been gratified at the way in which Giffard was growing disagreeable to his employers; and his publication of deliberate falsehoods about the Catholics gave the Castle, who were anxious to avoid sectarian strife, considerable trouble.

Corbet never attacked the activities of Giffard: but his secret work - as far as can be judged from his letters - his character, were of the same pattern. His usefulness to the Castle began and ended with his work as

(1) 30 Oct. 1794, (Drennan, Correspondence, p.216).

(2) Castlereagh, Correspondence, iii. 9.

The Hibernian Telegraph.

The third Dublin newspaper to come under Castle control in the period, was the Hibernian Telegraph, and Morning Star. The Morning Star, when it first appeared in 1793 had been an opposition newspaper, with United Irish sympathies: but it fell into the hands of William Corbet, and, renamed the Hibernian Telegraph and Morning Star, it renounced its former opinions. Corbet, according to a letter he wrote to under secretary Cooke in 1790, had been in the Castle's service for some time. Like Higgins and Giffard, he combined his newspaper work with activities as a government agent, particularly in connection with their dealings with journalists. He was instrumental in securing the conversion of William Paulet Carey in 1794, and, three years later, in persuading Brennan, the editor of the Press, to betray his colleagues. For this work, he received payments from the secret service fund.

Corbet never attained the notoriety of Higgins or Giffard: but his career and - so far as can be judged from his letters - his character, were of the same pattern. His usefulness to the Castle began and ended with his work as

(1) Reb. Papers, 620/49/94.

(2) Corbet to Cooke, 9 Jan.1790 (Off.Papers, 512/54).

(3) See below, p.

(4) See below, p.

(5) cf. Secret Service Money Book accounts 1798-1805 in Gilbert, Documents Relating to Ireland.

their agent: his newspaper was a failure. The expenses of maintaining the Hibernian Telegraph can have been little less than those of the Freeman and the Dublin Journals; and internal evidence suggests that, if the Freeman's circulation was small, the Hibernian Telegraph's must have been almost non-existent. It contained hardly any advertisements, except proclamations. Accounts which Corbet furnished to the Castle during 1797 show that he was receiving at least £500 a year from the proclamation fund: a typical entry being -

"For declaring the parish of Taughbove, All Saints, etc., in the barony of Raphoe in a state of disturbance (90 lines, 28 insertions at 24/4) . . . £34. 2. 6d." (1)

- twenty-eight insertions of a piece of information that would not in any case have been read (it was a standing joke at the time that nobody ever read proclamations), even if the Hibernian Telegraph had circulated to more than a handful of readers. Opposition newspapers paid no attention to it, sufficient proof of its obscurity. Advertisers continued to ignore the paper: on occasions during 1799, it contained no advertisements at all, though it would have a page or more of government proclamations. Only once did it attract notice. Early in 1797 the printer, T. Codd, was ordered to

(1) Reb. Papers, 620/35/164.

attend at the bar of the house of lords for a libel on Lord
(1)
Aldborough. Aldborough was himself in disgrace at the time.
He had taken a civil action against a nephew of Lord Clare
in chancery, and the chancellor - Lord Clare - found against
him. He appealed to the house of lords. Lord Clare,
presiding, had no difficulty in persuading the house to
confirm the decree. Aldborough thereupon wrote a pamphlet
denouncing the proceedings, for which he was later sentenced
to imprisonment by the house of lords - with Lord Clare
(2)
reading the indictment. Corbet was taking no risk in
libelling such a man. The lords contented themselves with
a formal reprimand - automatically given on such occasions,
to remind printers that to publish the proceedings of the
house was in itself a breach of privilege. He did not
escape, however, without a denunciation by Aldborough, who
expressed the opinion that the press was controlled or
prostituted, and printers, either hirelings or awed by fear
or power from reporting matters fairly.

After this incident, the Hibernian Telegraph
retired into the shadows. This did not deter its owner from
being only less persistent, in urging his claims upon the
government, than Higgins and Giffard. In his letter to

(1) Lords In. lvs. ., vii, 569: 13 Feb. 1797.

(2) Ibid., vii, 510: Barrington in his Recollections
(chapter xxix) gives a full account of this case).

Cooke in 1790, he had claimed to be 'though behind the curtain,
the real editor of the Phoenix;⁽¹⁾ his labours, he said, in
setting up that paper had impoverished him, and he requested
assistance, the difficulties 'rendering expedition of a
peculiar object to me'.⁽²⁾ In the ~~War~~ rebellion period,
he was constantly in trouble. First, he was too successful
in ingratiating himself with the journalist Brennan, to bring
him over to the government's side; Brennan fleeced him
unmercifully.⁽³⁾ Then, Corbet found that he was heavily in
debt to the Stamp Commissioners.⁽⁴⁾ No sooner had he
persuaded the Castle to pay them off than they informed him
that his debt was larger than they had thought; he had to
make fresh demands upon the Castle,⁽⁴⁾ Finally - crowning
ignominy - Corbet learned that the new chief secretary had
decided to take away government patronage from him, on the
grounds of his intimacy with a notorious scoundrel, the
journalist Brennan. The new chief secretary was soon put in
possession of the facts, as Corbet viewed them.⁽⁶⁾ The pleas
secured the survival of the Hibernian Telegraph - which
remained without circulation or influence, brought out by a
man who was a constant source of annoyance and expense to the
Castle.

(1) ~~Scalp~~ a short-lived paper printed by *anyas Griffin* (see Appx 1).

(2) Off. Papers, 512/54.

(3) Reb. Papers, 620/61/140.

(4) Dec. 1801 (Off. Papers, 517/106/30).

~~(4)~~

(5) Corbet to *Jn.* Pollock, 9 Feb. 1802 (Reb. Papers, 620/61/140)

The General Evening Post.

A fourth Castle newspaper appeared in Dublin towards the end of the year 1795: William Paulet Carey's General Evening Post. Carey's case differed from those of the three earlier owners of the three of his predecessors in the field, in that he began his journalistic career in opposition to the government, and was even, for a time, a member of the Dublin Society of United Irishmen. Before his emergence as a Castle writer, he had to be persuaded to turn his coat.

Over the names of 'Junius Hibernicus' and 'Scriblerius Murtagh O'Pindar', Carey, a brother of the Careys of the Volunteer's Journal, had written many squibs and (1) parodies for the shortlived Town, or Dublin Evening Packet; a Dublin paper that had been published in the days of the Regency Crisis. In 1791, he founded a paper of his own, the Rights of Irishmen or National Evening Star. He was an able writer and an industrious editor: the new paper was a success at a time when at least one other opposition paper, (2) with greater resources behind it, failed. It paid more attention to seeking the solution of religious divisions that was usual in the opposition press of the day; on the front page, a Protestant, a Presbyterian, and a Catholic were shown

(1) W.P. Carey, Appeal to the People of Ireland (P), Dublin 1794, p.5.

(2) The National Journal, set up by the United Irishmen; see below, p. 182.

(1)
shaking hands. Carey kept the National Evening Star lively and controversial; and it was soon in trouble with the administration.

How little real cause for offence the National Evening Star had given during its first year, could be judged from the excuse for a prosecution; a paragraph copied from a Belfast newspaper giving an account of the rejoicings in Belfast after the French victory at Valmy. (2) The attorney general (3) pronounced this to be a seditious libel. A month later, a second prosecution was threatened, for the publication of the "Address to the Volunteers" by the Dublin United Irishmen, (4) for which Hamilton Rowan, Dr. Drennan, and the proprietors of the Northern Star were all to be brought to trial. Carey, feeling that his position was growing impossible, thought it advisable to disappear for a while. He hoped to be able to carry on the paper from hiding, but (5) this proved beyond his powers, and he had to sell out.

The new proprietor, Randal MacAllister - also a United Irishman - was himself soon in trouble. He was summoned before the house of commons for a squib in the National Evening Star, which had defined parliament as a

(1) National Evening Star, 27 March 1792.

(2) National Evening Star, 3 Nov. 1792.

(3) W.P. Carey, Appeal, p.18.

(4) Ibid., p.23.

(5) Ibid., p.58.

market where honour and virtue were sold to the highest
bidder. ⁽¹⁾ The commons ordered him to appear before them;
and, when he failed to attend, the sergeant at arms was
instructed to take him into custody. ⁽²⁾ Some weeks later
MacAllister was brought to the bar of the house. He admitted
that he had been proprietor of the newspaper at the time the
squib was printed, but claimed that, as it had been copied
from an English paper, it must refer to the parliament at
Westminster. On a vote, the house decided to commit him to
the Newgate prison for libel. ⁽³⁾ Reporting the debate, the
Belfast Northern Star commented that the National Evening Star
had been given up, on account of the numerous attacks made
upon it by the administration. ⁽⁴⁾

Carey, deprived of his source of livelihood, had
an obvious attraction for government agents. When he gave
evidence at the trial of Dr. Drennan for the publication of
the United Irishmen's resolutions of December 1792, he was
no longer the Carey of the United Irishmen, the tickler of
Viceroy's noses. He was in the box as a witness for the
Crown.

While he was in hiding Carey had had time to
meditate upon his position. The more he thought about it,

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- (1) National Evening Star, 16 March 1793.
(2) Ir. Parl. Reg., xiii, 401.
(3) Commons In. Ir., XV, 190.
(4) Northern Star, 4 May 1793.

the less he liked it. He was a married man, with seven children. His portrait shows a sensitive face, quite unlike the features of other newspapermen of the day; he had artistic leanings, and a horror of violence. He knew what the administration could do, when they took a dislike to a newspaper, as they had to his brother's Volunteers Journal. His imagination conjured up the prospect of a life of fines, imprisonment, the pillory, and whipping at the cart's tail through the streets of Dublin.

Carey put his case, tentatively, to the Dublin Society of United Irishmen, hoping that they would urge him to leave the country, and agree to pay his bail if it should be estreated; he did not want the men who had put it up to be out of pocket. The Society, who were not in funds at the time, refused to respond. Carey then told the government that he would follow his brother to America, if they would refrain from estreating the bail; but they made the condition that Carey should first name the man who had ordered the publication of the address of the United Irishmen, and this Carey at first would not contemplate.

As the days drew on, Carey began to feel increasingly aggrieved about his treatment at the hands of the Society. He had been a member, and the Society had promised to sustain

(1) W.P.Carey, Appeal, and see D.N.B., W.P. Carey.

(2) Ibid., p.xxviii.

(3) W.P.Carey, Appeal, p.70.

(4) Ibid., Preface.

him in the event of prosecution, for which he had been so grateful that he had offered to print all their resolutions free. (1) While he was in hiding, he began to realise how little used to him their assistance would be. If he was jailed, they could send in dinners; if pilloried, they would collect a crowd to cheer. But he did not want to go to jail, (2) or the pillory - and what if he were sentenced to be whipped? Obviously if the Society really wanted to help him, they should pay his bail. The Society, which was already sustaining (3) three of its officers in jail, felt (according to an informer's (4) version to the Castle) that it could not raise the money. Carey was advised to stay, and hope for acquittal.

This suggestion infuriated Carey. He began to remember slights: the first time he had been put up for election to the Society, he had been blackbeaned; some of the (5) members had subsequently been rude, and others had ignored him. (6) To add to his difficulties, Randal McAllister went bankrupt. Carey had allowed him to buy the National Evening Star with a promissory note, which was now worthless. McAllister tried to leave Ireland, Carey intercepting him as he was boarding a (7) ship: but it was no use having the man without the money.

(1) W.P.Carey, Appeal, p.21.

(2) Ibid., p.xxviii.

(3) Drennan, Letters, ~~see chart, (see above)~~, p.142.

(4) Reb. Papers, 620/20/74.

(5) W.P.Carey, Appeal, p.14.

(6) McDowell, Personnel of Dublin Society of United Irishmen, in I.H.S., 11, 39 (March 1940).

(7) Drennan, Letters, p.194: W.P.Carey, Appeal, p.93.

Relations between Carey and the Society continued to deteriorate. The Society had promised to put an end to a legal process of outlawry that had been initiated against him. They failed to do so. (1) Carey's alarm was increased when he heard that a man had been sentenced to a year's imprisonment and a fine of £1000 for distributing a seditious paper in Co. Louth, of which Carey recalled that he had been the original printer; (2) and that a Scotsman had been sentenced to transportation for publishing the Address of the Society, for which Carey was awaiting prosecution. (3) The Society, on their side, grew tired of Carey's constant whining. They suspected, with reason, that articles which had appeared in the National Evening Star criticising the Society had been written by Carey himself; and they took the excuse to expel him from membership. (4)

The government, through their agent Giffard and their spy Collins, had been watching the progress of the dispute. (5) They were anxious to obtain evidence with which to convict Dr. Drennan of the authorship of the United Irishmen's resolutions; and as soon as the Society broke with Carey, William Corbet of the Hibernian Telegraph

(1) W.P.Carey, Appeal, p.96.

(2) Ibid., p.56.

(3) Ibid., p.112.

(4) Reb. Papers, 620/20/76.

(5) R.B.McDowell, Proceedings of the Dublin Society of United Irishmen, in Analecta Hibernica (1949), xvii, 27, -127.

Collins' references to Carey confirm the truth of Carey's own account in his Appeal.

received instructions to win Carey over. A meeting was arranged between Carey and the two crown lawyers whom the administration used to do such work, in connection with government prosecutions - John Pollock and Thomas Kemmis. Carey was told that if he would help the government to convict Drennan, the sins of the National Evening Star would be forgiven, and its former owner would be handsomely compensated for its loss. (1) Pollock had been a friend of Drennan's, and still pretended to be; (2) the government, therefore, gave him the task of collecting evidence for the prosecution. He had already tried to bribe McAllister and the foreman printer of the National Evening Star; but either they had nothing to sell, or they had not been offered enough. (3) Pollock was able to bring Carey to terms. The terms agreed were £1000 down and a pension of £100 a year for life, plus a contract of (4) about £750 a year for government printing, with protection.

This was a high price to pay for evidence against one man; but the government could rarely secure any reputable citizen to give evidence in court. Men who were willing to pass information, did not as a rule care to admit their treachery in public. Carey would need substantial compensation for the public hatred of a turncoat; he would

(1) Reb. Papers, 620/49/94.

(2) Drennan, Letters, pp.96, 192.

(3) Ibid., pp. 188-9.

(4) Reb. Papers, 620/49/94.

run the risk of injury, and possibly assassination, at the hands of the United Irishmen. A proviso in the agreement that if life should become impossible for him in Ireland, he should be given equivalent assistance in England.

Carey had a good case against the Society, which had treated him shabbily; but he spoiled it by betrayal of Drennan. Drennan could not believe it: 'the fellow', he wrote, 'will not damn his soul to gratify pique'. On paper, Carey was able to make quite a convincing apologia - good enough to impress the Dublin Evening Post, which had no sympathy for the administration - but in the witness box, his duplicity was unravelled and exhibited naked by Curran. He cut so poor a figure that not even Clonmell's efforts from the bench on behalf of the prosecution could prevent the jury from returning a verdict of not guilty.

The prosecution having failed, it was not surprising that the government reward owed to Carey was paid with reluctance. He had promised to revive the Evening Star, counting on government support; this project fell through, as the £1000 was not paid in a lump sum, but doled out in instalments, of £50 a time, through William Corbet. The annuity was not paid at all.

(1) Drennan Letters, p.195.

(2) Trial of William Drennan (P), 1794: Drennan Letters, p.207.

(3) D.E.Post, 9 Oct., 1794.

At the time the bargain was struck, Pollock had assured him that everyone from the viceroy down had approved the terms, but that a written agreement was out of the question: if it was discovered, the whole group of them could be prosecuted for suborning a witness. Carey, having no documentary evidence, could do no more than protest at the delays. Pollock seized the excuse of the arrival of Fitzwilliam as lord lieutenant in 1795 to tell him that, as everything at the Castle had been turned upside down, he could expect no more money from the administration. Carey threatened to go to counsel: Pollock reminded him that he was pledged to secrecy. The threat must, however, have carried weight, because shortly afterwards Kemmis saw Carey and offered to buy his pension for £400 down - a little more than half the real market value of £100 a year at that date. After some haggling, Kemmis went up to £500, on condition that Carey signed a receipt that all his claims against the government had been discharged. Corbet urged that this was the only chance he had of obtaining anything at all, and Carey reluctantly signed.⁽¹⁾

With this money, Carey set up his new government paper, the General Evening Post, in November 1795: and thence forward his career conforms to the established

(1) Reb. Papers, 620/49/94.

pattern - with this exception: that as Carey was not in a position to act as a government agent, he gave the Castle nothing but trouble and expense.

The General Evening Post remained as obscure as Corbet's Hibernian Telegraph. It would contain anything up to seven (out of sixteen) columns of proclamations: but ordinary commercial advertisements came in only ones and twos. (1) The expense to the government must have been considerable. Carey himself, at a time when he had good reason to minimize the amount of support he had received from the Castle, admitted that he had obtained £1000 from Westmoreland's administration, £500 from Fitzwilliam's, and £1000 from Camden's. (2) And he was even more annoyingly persistent than his colleagues, in badgering the Castle for more assistance.

In June, 1796, he wrote what was to be the first of many supplicatory letters to the Castle, complaining that he had not been given the proclamations. (3) The deficiency was remedied; but a few weeks later Carey wrote again, enclosing a balance sheet which showed that even with the proclamations he was losing money. "I have no hope, no friends, no reliance but what I first place in government, and what I now rest in your humane consideration of my case." (4) His

(1) cf. G.E.Post, 16 Feb, 7 March 1797.

(2) Aspinall, Politics and the Press, p.411.

(3) Off. Papers, 507/13/35.

(4) Reb. Papers, 620/24/125.

plight moved the government - if his own story is correct - to give him a further grant of money, Kemmis again insisting upon a signed receipt to the effect that he had no further financial claims upon the government. (1) Carey was then informed that the proclamations would be withdrawn from him. As he was filling as many as six columns of the paper with them, regardless of relevance, this would have ruined him; but by going behind the backs of Pollock and Kemmis, with a direct appeal to the lord lieutenant, he obtained a pension of £50, and a promise of £400 worth of proclamations for his paper each year. (2) This was paid to him during 1797, in spite of Higgins' warnings to the Castle that he was printing sedition on the sly. (4) Under secretary Cooke was more concerned with the paper's small circulation; and, ignoring Carey's plea that circulation had risen since he altered the nights of the week on which the General Evening Post appeared, (5) in order to avoid direct competition with the Dublin Evening Post, he decided that the proclamations were to be withdrawn. (6) This brought the paper to an immediate end.

The government were then to learn that they did not, by allowing one of their worthless newspapers to disappear,

(1) Reb. Papers, 620/49/94.

(2) Ibid., 620/49/94.

(3) Off. Papers, 509/22/36.

(4) 7 Feb. 1797. ((Reb. Papers, 620/18/14).

(5) Off. Papers, 509/22/36.

(6) Reb. Papers, 620/49/94. (1797)

put an end to the embarrassments it caused them. There remained the problem of what was to be done for its owner; and Carey continued to be the most persistent of mendicants. He despatched memorials to Cooke, to the lord lieutenant, and even to Whitehall, setting forth his grievances in detail. Eventually in 1799 he resorted to an earlier expedient, promising to cease his importunities if the Castle rescued him from the bankruptcy he feared was imminent. Cooke impatiently scribbled on the back of his letter that documents existed to prove that every claim had been settled long before. The lord lieutenant, however, must have taken pity on him; in the secret service accounts for 1799 there is an entry:-

"4 June. Mrs. Carey

In full discharge of Mr. Carey's demands ..£100"

The Careys then went to England. By 1801, he had transferred his attentions to the Duke of Portland, at Whitehall, saying that the formal surrender of his claims against the government had only been made 'with the sword of necessity at my breast'. He asked for a further £100, to commence business as a dealer in engravings. Portland

(1) Reb. Papers, 620/40/165.

(2) Ibid., 620/56/60.

(3) Ibid., 620/39/163.

(4) Ibid., 620/56/64.

(5) Gilbert, Documents Relating to Ireland, p.30.

(6) Aspinall, Politics and the Press, p.412.

replied telling him to submit his memorial to the Irish government, which he did, setting out his going back once again over the whole story of his relations with the Castle. (1) In the meantime, however, he begged Whitehall to give him 20, 15, or even 10 guineas, to tide him over. (2)

(3)
William Paulet Carey provides a particularly good example of the fate of an able and intelligent journalist, who is persuaded to sacrifice his integrity. In the early part of his career he showed unusual promise: and in later years, when he recovered his equilibrium, he was to become a respected connoisseur in London, attaining the posthumous distinction of two columns in the Dictionary of National Biography, which makes no reference to his early life, except to mention that he was said to have been a United Irishman. The middle years, where he allowed himself to become a hired hack, were melancholy for himself, and profitless to his employers.

(1) Reb. Papers, 620/49/94.

(2) Aspinall, Politics and the Press, p.412.

(3) An MSS. memoir of Carey in the Madden papers in T.C.D. confirms some points, but contains little material that is not to be found elsewhere.

Provincial Newspapers.

Such scattered information as remains about the provincial press suggests that, where newspaper owners allowed themselves to be brought over to the government's side, they conformed closely to the established Dublin pattern.

The most influential newspaper outside the capital had long been the Belfast Newsletter. Although the Newsletter became conservative, compared to the rest of the independent press, after 1782, Madden was unjust in calling it "steady in its anti-liberal, anti-Catholic and anti-National sentiments."⁽¹⁾ The Newsletter took up quite a friendly attitude to the French revolution, up to the time of the king's trial.⁽²⁾ Henry Joy, the editor and part proprietor, was a friend of Charlemont's,⁽³⁾ with whom he corresponded frequently, and the paper can be said to have been representative of Charlemont's liberal, but not revolutionary, cast of mind. Under Joy, it certainly was not a government newspaper.

The story of the Newsletter's conversion into an unqualified supporter of the administration has recently twice⁽⁴⁾ been told, in some detail. It followed the familiar course.⁽⁵⁾ Henry Joy found his revenue from the paper diminishing, a

(1) Madden, I.P.L., ii. 207.

(2) R.B.McDowell, Irish Public Opinion, p.157.

(3) Charlemont Correspondence, H.M.C., Rep.13, Appx.viii, pp. 71, 89, 97, etc.

(4) R.B.McDowell, The Irish Government and the Provincial Press, in Hermathena, LIII (May 1939): Aspinall, Politics and the Press, pp.109-12.

(5) Drennan, Letters, p.110.

decline which he blamed on the war, but which was more probably due to the competition of the Northern Star, set up in Belfast by the United Irishmen early in 1792. The Newsletter, put up for sale, found purchasers in two Scots newspaper owners, John Robertson and Robert Allen, who appointed George Gordon, another Scot, as editor. Gordon, unable to check the Newsletter's decline, approached the Castle for help, through one of its agents. In the meantime, the Newsletter warmed to the administration, so that Gordon, writing direct to under secretary Cooke a few weeks later, was able to detail the assistance he had given to them - not, he hastened to add, with any prospect of reward in mind, though a reward would be an incitement to further efforts on the government's behalf, and would help to make those efforts successful. At the same time Gordon canvassed other influential persons to put the Newsletter's case to the Castle, which they did.

Eventually the Castle, satisfied about the Newsletter's good intentions, agreed to allow Gordon to print the proclamations, thereby guaranteeing his paper a steady income for so long as Gordon continued to give satisfaction. But, inevitably, Gordon found that to advocate the administration's cause was to court losing his subscribers. He carefully explained to Cooke that he was deliberately avoiding adulation of the government, and might even

occasionally print language foreign to his real sentiments,
in order to delude his customers.⁽¹⁾ For a time he maintained
the precarious balance successfully, even to the extent of
inserting an article so demonstrably loyal that he could send
it to the Castle, in the hope that Cooke would order a
reprint. But almost immediately afterwards, the deception
ignominiously collapsed. The murder of a loyalist so
enraged the C. in C. of the army in Ulster that he insisted
on Gordon publishing what amounted to a general condemnation
of the citizens of Belfast. The citizens were furious; many
withdrew their subscriptions. An apology from Gordon, in
which he maintained that he had been compelled to insert the
C. in C's strictures because they had been brought to him and
paid for as an ordinary commercial advertisement, only
succeeded in infuriating the C. in C. as well. Gordon
found it prudent to depart for a while from the city, and
later,⁽²⁾ to fly the country.

He continued to pester the Castle for assistance.
So, too, did his employers. The more the paper's fortunes
declined, the greater was the need for subsidies; and they
were constantly writing to Cooke, and later to his successor,
begging for better terms. Presumably because they were
further away, and less well able to harass the Castle into

(1) Hermathena, liii, 140.

(2) Ibid., liii, 140-1.

acceptance of their demands, the owners of the Newsletter received less generous treatment than their Dublin colleagues. The meagre indemnification for their losses that was paid to them, and an allowance of £200 a year from the secret service fund, was little compensation for the loss of the proclamations, which were taken from the Newsletter, presumably because of more pressing demands elsewhere. But the calls on the secret service money were equally clamant, and the Newsletter's owners had great difficulty in extracting their pension, which was brought to an end by Cooke's successor, in 1802. ⁽¹⁾

The Newsletter possibly owed its survival to the suppression of the Northern Star in the spring of 1797: thereafter for a time it had no competitor in Belfast. The reaction, too, in the North against the excesses of '98 probably brought back old readers. But in general, it conformed to type: an unsuccessful and expensive newspaper, with proprietors who were a constant nuisance to the Castle.

Most of the other provincial newspapers followed the Belfast Newsletter's example, and came over to the government side. Usually the change of heart was accompanied by a profession of principle. Madden cites the example of the Waterford Herald, which up to 1794 had paraded liberal principles, suddenly making a solemn denunciation of disorder, and affirming its loyalty to the constitution. Shortly

(1) Reb. Papers, 620/61/7.

afterwards 'the unmistakable evidence of venality was to be found in its columns of government proclamations, Gazette notices by order of the Lord Lieutenant and Privy Council. frequently occupying two of the four sides of the newspaper'.⁽¹⁾ The deduction is confirmed by a memorial from the proprietor of the Herald, Isaac Heron, to the Castle, in which he admits⁽²⁾ that he had experienced acute financial difficulties in 1793.

By 1796 Heron was calling for more proclamations, which, he thought, were 'not nigh sufficiently promulgated' - the illiterate did not see them. He kept the Castle informed about the state of the public mind in Waterford, warning them that the Northern Star was being read in the coffee houses: - 'surely it should not escape instant death?' 'The apostate Driscoll's Cork paper is equally wicked', he went on, 'and ought to be destroyed'.⁽³⁾ For his support, Heron was able⁽⁴⁾ to claim £10 in 1795, £293 in 1796, and £632 in 1797.

The government's satisfaction was not shared by all the local loyalists. A Venerable Dean writing to the Castle in 1797 complained that the paper was dangerous. A rival paper that had been set up was now defunct; but the Dean was prepared to offer his services to found another one in the government interest, and hoped that he might be appointed to take charge

(1) Madden, I.P.L., ii, 197-8.

(2) Reb. Papers, 520/23/89.

(3) McDowell, Hermathena, liii, 144.

(4) Reb. Papers, 620/57/142.

- 'for appointment I presume it may be denominated, if the Proclamations, etc. are to be granted to the new paper as they were to the late. ⁽¹⁾ Possibly strictures of this kind moved Cooke to withdraw government support from the Herald; when Heron wrote presenting his account in 1800, the last charge was for 1797, and he gave his address as 'From Prison', complaining that his desire to serve the government had ⁽²⁾ brought him into debt.

Finn's Leinster Journal had been steady in opposition since its foundation; 'very violent and democratic', Lord Ormond and Ossory termed it, writing to chief secretary Pelham in 1797. — ⁽³⁾ But it had mended its ways and was now completely proper. Finn had evidently been warned that the paper would be suppressed unless it changed its policy; he had allowed himself to be converted, but had warned Lord Ormond, in return, that when it changed its policy it would lose support. It had lost support: and Lord Ormond and Finn were jointly petitioning the Castle for assistance. Finn later told under secretary Marsden that a claim he had put in for £1700 had been accepted by the administration; but they had told him that the capital sum was not available. ⁽⁴⁾ Instead he would get £300 down and an annuity of £200. The

(1) Reb. Papers, 620/32/177.

(2) Ibid., 620/57/142.

(3) Ibid., 620/33/99: quoted by McDowell, Hermathena, 1111, 123.

(4) Ibid., 620/57/106.

first half-yearly instalment had been paid, but nothing more.⁽¹⁾ These facts, verified by Lord Ormond and by the Bishop of Meath, were later put before the lord lieutenant, reinforced by a plea that a large family depended on the pension for support.⁽²⁾ In 1805 Finn was still petitioning the Castle,⁽³⁾ complaining that nothing had been done about his claims.

George Grace, who was to pester the Castle with sheaves of letters in the early years of the 19th Century, started a newspaper in Clonmel in the late '90s - to counteract the rebellion, he later claimed, but it may have been to take advantage of the £800 a year from the printing of proclamations that the Castle bestowed upon him.⁽⁴⁾ Another Clonmel proprietor, Power, wrote to Marsden in 1803 thanking him for proclamations, and for finding his son a 'place' in the city. 'I have one favour more to beg,' he concluded, 'your permitting me to send you a vessel of Blackwater cyder of such quality as not to be had in Dublin.'⁽⁵⁾ Even if the owner's loyalty was not originally purchased - there are instances of proclamations being asked for provincial papers where there is no evidence of venality -⁽⁶⁾ the procuring of proclamations invariably had a fatal effect

(1) McDowell, Hermathena, liii, 193.

(2) Off. Papers, 520/132/1 (18 Feb. 1802).

(3) Ibid., 529/201/9 (17 Dec. 1805).

(4) Ibid, 2nd S., 536/262/32.

(5) Ibid, 524/153/16.

(6) cf. the Sligo newspaper mentioned in McDowell, Hermathena, liii, 193.

on the newspaper's independence. No proprietor could afford to risk the loss of so substantial a source of income.

Support of the administration reduced newspapers' circulation to the point when they had to have the proclamations in order to survive,⁽¹⁾

Proprietors who strove to support the government without the assistance of proclamations or pensions appear to have found their task impossible. Early in 1798 Henry Morgan set up the Cork Herald as a rival to the proposed Harp of Erin, which the United Irishmen were starting. The chief secretary was asked to lend assistance. It did not materialise.⁽²⁾ By June, Morgan confessed to a friend in Dublin that he was in desperate financial straits.⁽³⁾ In September, he was in Dublin reminding Cooke of a promise of help.⁽⁴⁾ An undated memorial to the lord lieutenant requested immediate assistance in the form of proclamations or a loan of £250. 'If not, the post which may bring me the answer, will at once put an end to the Cork Herald.'⁽⁵⁾ By the end of the year, the Herald was defunct.⁽⁶⁾

This appears to have been an exceptional case:

Normally, the government would rarely fail to assist any

(1) Thomas Lord, proprietor of The Southern Star, to Edward Cooke, 3 Aug. 1797. (Reb. Papers, 620/32/10): and see McDowell, Hermathena, liii, 143.

(2) Ibid, liii, 144.

(3) Ibid.

(4) 13 Sept. 1798. (Off. Papers, 511/47/21).

(5) Reb. Papers, 620/38/159.

(6) McDowell, Hermathena, liii, 144.

newspaper that came to terms. A letter of Castlereagh's shows that by the rebellion year this was, in fact, the government's deliberate policy: 'the principle provincial papers', he told Whitehall, 'have been secured, and every attention will be paid to the press generally'.^① By the summer of 1798, not a newspaper of any importance remained in the country that had not been either bullied or bribed into support of the administration.

but it is probable that the Irish, the Whig and the General papers had only a few hundred readers. ----- by the standards of the time, filled as they were with proclamations, and more copied straight from the English papers. Irish news rarely occupied more than a few paragraphs, and there were few general articles or lectures. The Castle, therefore, had little reason for the expense, and it had to put up with the knowledge that they were despised, and their owners ascribed. Of the few men, three had achieved an unequalled notoriety, one as an adventurer, one as a bigot, one as a renegade. All three were to be looked out for assassination in the 1797 rebel broadcast, the Irish. Only Cortes remained in comparative obscurity, and there is

① Romanticism & Correspondence, ii. 448

notable to see that the Castle was not any more estimable a character than the others. That such men should be employed in its service, was a fair reflection of the character of the Castle press.

By the time of the '98 rising, then, the pattern of the government press in ^{Ireland} ~~Dublin~~ was well established. Castle newspapers, and their owners, shared common characteristics to an almost comical degree. The most significant was that they were not read. The Dublin Journal was an exception, owing to Giffard's independence; where a newspaper committed itself entirely to government direction, its circulation and influence invariably contracted. No figures are available, but it is probable that the Freeman, the Hibernian Telegraph, and the General Evening Post mustered only a few hundred readers ~~between~~ ^{among} them. As newspapers, they were dull even by the standards of the time, filled as they were with proclamations, and news copied straight from the English papers. Irish news rarely occupied more than a few paragraphs, and there were few general articles or features. The Castle, therefore, had little reason for the expense; and it had to put up with the knowledge that they were despised, and their owners execrated. Of the four men, three had achieved an unenviable notoriety, one as an adventurer, one as a bigot, one as a renegade: all three were to be marked out for assassination in the 1797 rebel broadsheet, the Union Star. Only Corbet remained in comparative obscurity; and there is nothing to suggest that this was because he was any more estimable a character than the others. That such men should be employed in its service, was a fair reflection of the character of the Castle press.

Evidence
this

Where no opposition newspapers existed, readers had to turn to papers supporting the government; the general rule that such support lost newspapers their circulations, ceased to be applicable. But the measure of the unpopularity of the pre-Union Irish structure would be reflected in newspaper circulations, if the figures had survived: as it is, the appearance of the various newspapers gave proof enough. Even after the rebellion, readers tended to drift towards the more moderate, and still reasonably independent newspapers, rather than subscribe to the Freeman or the Hibernian Telegraph. The other disadvantages consequent upon the government's control of the press - the expense, and the importunities of the newspaper owners - remained, and tended to grow, as time went on, whether opposition newspapers existed or not. The formula - that a Castle paper was ipso facto a bad paper, with few readers, giving endless expense and trouble to the government - was of general applicability in this period - and in the years to come.

The history of these established independent papers during the 1790's gives in many ways, a more accurate picture of the difficulties which confronted the press in this period, than the stories of their better known and more flamboyant contemporaries, simply because the moderates were not tied to a cause. They were the ordinary, everyday, commercial newspapers; and

The Commercial Press.

The Dublin Evening Post.

The Hibernian Journal.

Saunders' Newsletter.

A few of the newspapers that had been in opposition to the administration, or at least neutral, in the 1784 struggle, had been sufficiently well-established to survive the slump that followed. From the time of the regency crisis they were to find themselves in much the same position as they had been in 1784, tempted on the one hand by the prospect of increasing their circulations through taking a firm opposition line, and on the other, by the chance of securing patronage for supporting the government. Or ^{if} the proprietors looked at it from another angle - they had the choice of running the risk of prosecution by attacking the government, or of losing the bulk of their circulation by defending them. Where strong feelings were aroused, neutrality would become a difficult, and not always a safe policy, a point of which the owners must have been aware. The history of these established independent papers during the 1790's gives, in many ways, a more accurate picture of the difficulties which confronted the press in this period, than the stories of their better known and more flamboyant contemporaries, simply because the moderates were not tied to a cause. They were the ordinary ~~newspapers~~, commercial newspapers; and

their history was none the less important, because it was not always spectacular.

(a) The Dublin Evening Post.

Alone of Dublin newspapers, the Dublin Evening Post had retained sufficient circulation and influence after 1785 to give the administration much cause for worry when the Regency question arose. But the Post had grown sleek with advertisements, and avoided controversy. When in the spring it reversed this policy, and became polemical, it was not as part of the campaign for the prince's supposed rights. The cause it took up, ^{was} John Magee's personal vendetta against Francis Higgins, which Higgins himself attributed to a desire for vengeance, because he had appeared as prosecuting attorney in an action against Magee for illegal lottery practices. ⁽¹⁾ Diatribes against the 'Sham Squire' filled the Post's columns during 1789, to the exclusion of other controversy.

Magee's charges in his paper against Higgins were repeated, and to a great extent accepted, by both Madden and Fitzpatrick. Even if they were true, they were undoubtedly scurrilous and libellous, and Higgins, however little he cared to parade his past before a jury, could not but bring him to court. Had Magee been left to the normal processes of

(1) Freeman, 11 July 1789.

law, he could have been dealt with firmly and expeditiously, and the matter might have been forgotten. But John Scott, Lord Earlsfort, was now chief justice: he was Higgins' friend, and he detested the press, particularly the opposition press. The case quickly ceased to present the appearance of a libelled man seeking restitution, and became instead a conspiracy to crush Magee and his Dublin Evening Post.

The suit of Higgins v. Magee came up before Earlsfort on July 4. Magee was not present; he had been confined a prisoner in a spunging house on an order by Earlsfort himself. One of the sheriffs asked whether they should bring Magee up; to which Earlsfort replied that they could if they liked, but he would give them no direction. The court proceeded in the defendant's absence. A jury was empanelled, Higgins striking two names off the list; and the prosecution opened their case. Counsellor Boyd, who was in the court, moved for a writ of habeas corpus; it was refused, on a technicality. Another application was turned down because the counsellor had not been briefed by Magee. Finally, counsel for Magee's father-in-law managed to obtain the writ, and Magee was brought to court. He denied the validity of the trial on various grounds, and was returned to the spunging house. The prosecution completed their case; no defence was offered. The jury, after listening to Earlsfort's charge, retired for half an hour and then came back to ask whether they might find defendant guilty of printing and publishing? Earlsfort

said they might not. One of the jurors ventured to suggest that Magee's trial had not been entirely fair; the judge replied that his guilt must be obvious to any sensible man. A verdict of Guilty was returned. Any other verdict, Earlsfort told the jury, would have disgraced them and their country.⁽¹⁾

A different result from the trial would have made little material difference to Magee's position; he was already condemned to stay in jail indefinitely on account of fiats granted by Earlsfort against him - a fiat being an order by a justice to hold a suspected criminal to bail, to any amount which the justice might think fit.⁽²⁾ This was an obsolescent legal process that had been used in very serious cases, or when a prima facie case could be made for specific damages. The amount of bail required from Magee on these fiats was over £7000. Four thousand of this was for a lampoon on Richard Daly, the manager of the Theatre Royal, who claimed that his theatre's profits had dwindled by that amount owing to libels in the Post.⁽³⁾ Higgins' claim was for £2000, and two other people had suits for

(1) D.E.Post, Freeman, and Hib. J. all give accounts (5 & 6 July 1789) of the trial, varying in emphasis but reasonably consistent in detail.

(2) Several pamphlets were published concerning the case, giving the arguments of counsel (see bibliography).

(3) D.E.Post, 17 June 1789.

smaller amounts. Earlsfort accepted these sums at the aggrieved parties' valuation; and Magee, who could not raise the huge sum required, went to prison.

Legends grew up around the way in which Magee contrived to avenge himself on Earlsfort; how he bribed an attendant to turn scalding water on the judge in his turkish bath; and how Earlsfort sent round in a panic to the prison on receipt of a letter from Magee to the effect that he was 'in much better health since he had got his heels out of Newgate', only to hear that Magee had been seen lying with his feet, clad in scarlet slippers, stuck out between the bars of his cell. ⁽¹⁾ The story of Magee's fêtes has at least a measure of truth in it, and remains one of history's most ingenious revenges.-

Earlsfort had just bought a new estate near Dunleary; he had spent great sums on the house and grounds, of which he was enormously proud. Magee gave notice in the Dublin Evening Post that he was going to hold a series of fêtes, ⁽²⁾ 'La Bra Pleasuras', in the fields beside the estate. Various entertainments were promised: ~~Earlsfort~~ ^{Earlsfort} himself, one advertisement announced, 'will condescend to exhibit the elastic properties of legal power, and the ductile ⁽³⁾ extensibility of judicial privilege'. Magee also gave

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- (1) Gilbert, History of Dublin, iii, 81.
(2) D.E.Post, 8 Aug. 1789.
(3) Ibid., 22 Aug. 1789.

the populace, who were to be well-filled with liquor brought in for the occasion, an idea what was required of them: 'on this occasion, the private back door, leading into from his worship's back garden into Fiat Lawn, is to be widened into a triumphal arch'. If Lord Cloncurry's memory is to be trusted, the hint was taken. At the fête, of which he claimed to have been an eye-witness,-

"Several thousand people, including the entire disposable mob of Dublin, of both sexes, assembled as the guests at an early hour. A variety of sports were arranged for their amusement . . . until at length, the crowd having reached its maximum density, the grand scene of the day was produced. A number of active pigs, with their tails shaved and soaped, were let loose, and it was announced that each pig should become the property of anyone who could catch it and hold it by the slippery member. A scene impossible to describe immediately took place; the pigs, frightened and hemmed in in all other directions, rushed through the hedge which then separated the grounds of Temple Hill from the open fields; forthwith all their pursuers followed in a body and, continuing their chase over the shrubberies and pastures, soon revenged John Magee upon the noble owner." (1)

Magee had managed to obtain his release from jail. After the fêtes he was put back in again - the bail required, (2) he complained, being £10,000. Earlsfort (who had in the meantime been made a viscount, taking the title of Clonmell), or one of Magee's other enemies, then thought of a way to silence him for good, by persuading his relatives to take out

(1) Cloncurry, Recollections, p.58. Barrington's version is less hilarious.

(2) D.E.Post, 5 Sept. 1789.

a statute of lunacy against him. The case was brought before the house of lords; when Magee found that he was only to get one day's notice in which to prepare his defence, he must have felt that the administration had prejudged him. But the Lord Chancellor, Fitzgibbon, who detested Clonmell, dismissed the case, saying that even if all the charges were true they only amounted to acts of extravagance and indiscretion. (1)

Another judge of the King's Bench, Yelverton, released Magee from imprisonment at the end of October, on a surety of £4000 'to keep the peace for five years towards Lord Viscount Clonmell'. (2) Within a fortnight he was again in a spunging house on more of the original fiats, and Clonmell sent him back to jail for contempt. (3) On the 19th, he came up again before Clonmell, who remarked with a judicial air that his arguments deserved close thought, and that therefore his trial could not come up before the following term; he was released on bail. No sooner was he out in the street than he was rearrested on fiats issued by Clonmell; (4) as there were nearly 100 informations laid against him there was no difficulty in getting him back to jail whenever Clonmell felt so disposed. (5) In addition to individual

(1) D.E.Post, 1 Oct. 1789; Morning Post, 3 Oct. 1789.

(2) D.E.Post, 29 Oct. 1789.

(3) Ibid., 12 Nov. 1789.

(4) F.D.J., 21 Nov. 1789.

(5) F.D.J., 26 Nov. 1789; Morning Post, 30 Jan. 1790.

actions, there was one against him for reflecting on the court of King's Bench, and for this he was sentenced to six months imprisonment. (1)

Magee had already realised that Clonmell was quite prepared to keep him in jail indefinitely, so long as the Post continued venomous. By the end of the year, ^{1789,} the Post had returned to such quiet respectability that Magee was forced to publish a denial of a rumour that he had given up his interest in the paper. (2) It now avoided comment of any kind, and became for a time, entirely innocuous.

The case of Daly v. Magee came up at the end of June, 1790. (3) Damages were laid generally at a total of £8000, the plaintiff having discovered fresh libels since the original fiat had been issued. The defence claimed that this was illegal: Clonmell overruled them. The articles complained of were extremely scurrilous, but by this time Magee's treatment had won him general sympathy, and in spite of strong judicial direction the jury awarded only £200 damages, and 6d. costs. This was discouraging for Higgins, whose suit was pending. The Freeman was not doing well - to judge by the single column of advertisements, which was all that it could attract: the Dublin Evening Post could fill threequarters of its space with advertisements, at the time.

(1) F.D.J., 11 Feb. 1790.

(2) D.E.Post, 30 Jan. 1790.

(3) The Trial of John Magee for a libel against Richard Daly Esq., Dublin, 1790 (P); D.E.Post, 29 June 1790.

Still, when Magee was released in July, after twelve months, off and on, in prison, the Freeman took care to remind him that the actions were still pending.⁽¹⁾ Possibly he came to terms, out of court; the Dublin Evening Post gives no further clue to its proprietor's relations with Francis Higgins.

Although the state was not directly concerned in the actions against the Dublin Evening Post, Clonmell's use of fiats involved the administration, since it was assumed by the opposition, with reason, that the judges were the administration's servants, and acting under their orders. The documents relating to the case were ordered, and presented to the house for perusal in February 1790.⁽²⁾ In March George Ponsonby, speaking in the commons, denounced a system whereby a bare affidavit was sufficient to put a man in prison, in default of bail for a very great sum assessed by the plaintiff, especially when the plaintiff did not need to bring an action for three law terms; the turks, he said, would not submit to it.⁽³⁾ Arthur Browne backed him, pointing out that in England fiats were only permissible for small amounts and for specific damages. He alleged that numbers of printers had been run down by fiats whom the public had never heard of; Magee had been more sturdy, therefore his sufferings had made more noise. A man might be kept in jail for 18

(1) Freeman, 27 July 1790.

(2) Commons Pn. Ire., xiii. pp.179, 184/85; and see Ponsonby, On Fiats, (P) Dublin 1796.

(3) 3 March 1790. (Ir.Parl.Reg., x, 357 ff).

months on a fiat, only to be acquitted at the end of that time. Every man offering bail had to pledge himself worth twice his security; on Clonmell's fiat £30,000 had been involved. The name of fiat was becoming as ominous as lettre de cachet. The legal question might be difficult, 'but, thank heavens, questions of liberty are simple'. It was no defence that fiats had been a practice in the past - so had been Ship Money. Used unscrupulously, fiats would mean the end of the liberty of the press. (1)

Even that pillar of Ascendancy, Sir Henry Cavendish, spoke against fiats; and the attorney general, although he claimed that the judge's action was based on precedent, made little effort to justify their use. He asked the house not to press the point, until he had given it his full consideration. (2) A year later, Ponsonby reopened the discussion, moving that Clonmell had acted illegally in granting the fiats against Magee. The attorney general spoke at such length that a subsequent speaker found most of the house asleep. (3) The motion was rejected. The documents of the case were, however, placed before the committee of the house dealing with courts of justice; (4) and although

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- (1) See Browne, Arguments ... on Fiats, (P), Dublin 1790.
(2) Hobart to Scroope, 4 March 1790 (P.R.O., H.O., 100/21).
(3) 22 March 1791. (Ir. Parl. Reg., xi, 367).
(4) Commons. Dn. Ire., xiv. 343-92.

nothing specific seems to have been done, the court of King's Bench did not dare to employ fiats again.

The use of fiats not only endangered the freedom of the press; it brought the law into contempt, and the courts into detestation, as the lord lieutenant himself admitted in his correspondence. ⁽¹⁾ Grattan used the treatment of Magee as an illustration of the way in which the liberty of the subject was being undermined in Ireland. ⁽²⁾ Magee was not the sterling patriot that later writers have tried to make him: he was unbalanced, and probably already suffering from the mental instability that was to bring him in the end into an asylum. But his case showed - more clearly, perhaps, than a straightforward trial for sedition would have done - on what uncertain ground the freedom of the press in Ireland was founded. Fiats were only one expedient: the law could provide others in their place. And the administration could create more judges from the same mould as Clonmell.

The Dublin Evening Post's popularity was naturally confirmed and increased by its owner's treatment: and, in spite of the studied moderation which it employed after the contest with Clonmell was over, it does not seem to have lost its hold. The absence of any good rival opposition paper in Dublin must have helped: it was not until 1797 that a paper

(1) Westmoreland to W.W.Grenville, 26 Apr. 1770. (H.M.C. Fortescue, i, 518).

(2) 19 Jan. 1792. (Ir. Parl.Reg., xii, 15).

was set up in Dublin by the United Irishmen themselves. The Evening Post was even selected, along with the Northern Star, as the paper in which the Society of United Irishmen published their proceedings, as late as 1794.⁽¹⁾ But it was never strictly a patriot paper. The Northern Star⁽²⁾ accused it of time-serving, saying that a panegyric on Fitzwilliam on his departure was occasioned by spite, because Fitzwilliam's administration had offered it better opportunities to secure government patronage.

To the Ascendancy, however, the Evening Post's professed independence was only a cloak for sedition. In the summer of 1797 the house of lords seized the opportunity to sentence William Gilbert, who had succeeded Magee, to imprisonment in Newgate for three months, with a fine of £200, for 'having had the insolence to print a false account of the proceedings of this house in the Dublin Evening Post'.⁽³⁾ Such breaches of privilege were normally dealt with by a formal reprimand, or, at most, by a few days in custody: for the owner of one of the most influential Dublin newspapers to receive such a sentence, argued special circumstances. The Evening Post, significantly, did not dare to comment upon, let alone criticise the decision: but in newspaper reports

(1) D.E.Post, 15 Feb. 1794.

(2) Northern Star, 7 Jan. 1796.

(3) Lords In.Ire., vii, 611 (9 June 1797).

of the lords' debate reveal the reason for the sentence. Gilbert's defence was that he was not proprietor; that he was only acting for the now insane Magee; and that he had no financial interest in the paper. The excuse might well have served; but in the house was a man who had an old score to settle with the Evening Post. In one of his more subtly damaging speeches, Lord Clonmell told the house that Gilbert was accumulating vast wealth out of the irresponsibility of the Post; not, indeed, directly for himself, but for his son-in-law, heir to the property.⁽¹⁾ Clonmell persuaded the house that they were dealing not only with an offender against their privileges, but with a disseminator of blasphemy and sedition, 'its publications have been uniformly, I say systematically, directed against the principles of morality and piety'.⁽²⁾ The sentence on Magee's successor was some compensation for the annoyance Clonmell had suffered from Magee.

Thereafter the Evening Post became extremely circumspect. There is even the possibility that it entered into some compact with the government; Castlereagh a few months later hinted at something of the kind to the commons.⁽³⁾ The Evening Post lent the government its support throughout the year of the rebellion; and although its opposition to the

(1) D.E.Post, F.D.J., 13 June 1797,

(2) F.D.J., 13 June 1797.

(3) Hib.J., 5 March 1798.

Union shows that it did not become in the strict sense a Castle paper, it afterwards came very close to losing all independence, when in 1802 it suffered the same fate as had the Freeman some twenty years before.

A member of the staff of the paper, ^{H. B. Code,} made proposals to the government, which were accepted, that he should act as their agent on the paper. According to a later account by Walter Cox, this 'Mr. Cody, now Code' - the confusion over the final letter appears to have been caused by his accentric signature - had originally been, like Francis Higgins, a member of the hosier's guild. ⁽¹⁾ Higgins knew him; as soon as he heard that Code was working on the Dublin Evening Post, he informed Cooke that Code was a renegade United Irishman who in his earlier days had been employed on the Press, and who had given public readings of 'The Rights of Man'. He had, Higgins went on, been employed for a time on the Freeman, and had been dismissed for bad behaviour; yet he was boasting that he had been promised a £300-a-year 'place' by the administration. ⁽²⁾ But by this time Code was well established, and was a visitor to Cooke's private house - Cooke thought it would be safer for him not to be seen going into the Castle. ⁽³⁾ He worked himself on to the staff of

(1) Cox's Irish Magazine, March 1813.

(2) 23 May 1801. (Reb. Papers, 620/18/14).

(3) Off. Papers ~~2nd~~ 8., 544/325/9).

the Post - possibly by taking advantage of Magee's insanity.⁽¹⁾
By February of the following year he was in a position to
take instructions from the Castle how the Post should be
handled.⁽²⁾ Up to that time he had to be careful; now, he
felt, he could be more actively employed, if the Castle so
wished. The under secretary evidently encouraged him, as he
wrote frequently to the Castle; he would report that he had
kept out a speech by Grattan,⁽³⁾ or expunged material from
articles that might offend the administration.⁽⁴⁾

By 1803, under secretary Marsden was actually a
contributor to the paper;⁽⁵⁾ and the Post, in addition to express-
ing its detestation of the rebellion, deliberately played
incidents up, or down, on his instructions, striving to bring
the rebels into contempt by referring to them as a rabble, a
blood-thirsty mob.⁽⁶⁾ Like the rest of the press, the
Evening Post garbled Emmet's speech from the dock, to make
it sound as if he were making a recantation. And as well
as working for the Castle in the Press, Code acted as one of
its secret agents,⁽⁷⁾ passing it much information, not as a
rule of value.

(1) Cox's Irish Magazine, Oct. 1812.

(2) 16 Feb. 1801. (Off. Papers, ~~240/180~~, 544/325/9).

(3) Reb. Papers, 620/61/119.

(4) Ibid., 620/61/144.

(5) Landreth, Emmet, p.149.

(6) Ibid., p.233.

(7) cf. Off. Papers, 524/153/93.

As the Evening Post, under Code's editorship, approached closer to the Castle, the now familiar process was repeated. Code had sense enough to realise what would happen once the Evening Post took on the appearance of a Castle paper; he once confessed to the under secretary that he had felt compelled to assert an address which he had promised to keep out, in order to avoid appearing partial 'and subjecting the popular character of the paper to suspicion'.⁽¹⁾ The pretence could not be kept up indefinitely. The under secretary had to be told that friends of the Evening Post were angry at the reactionary turn it had taken; and Code asked that the Castle should arrange for some new orders to be sent for the paper from the country, in order to dupe the owners of the paper into thinking that the change of policy was good for business.⁽²⁾

The Evening Post was not under Code's direction for long enough seriously to embarrass its reputation; But Code himself remained to torment the government. He was always, by his own account, in financial difficulties, brought upon him by his work for them. When he was later being dunned for certain debts, he proposed to the under secretary that he should be allowed to overcharge for the reports which he, as its agent, was sending to the Castle, promising to use the

(1) 5 July 1802 (Reb. Papers, 620/61/124).

(2) Off. Papers, 524/153/93.

extra income this would bring him towards paying off the £105 he owed them. It might seem odd, he confessed, that after the many benefits the administration had conferred upon him, he could not find that small sum; but he had a large family to feed.⁽¹⁾ He had already exploited this family, behind the under secretary's back, by writing direct to the lord lieutenant to complain that the permanent provision promised to him had not materialised; he added that a change of government would mean that if something were not done for him immediately, his family might suffer for their father's unrequited love of the administration.⁽²⁾ Their father's love⁽³⁾ had actually been well requited, from the secret service fund; but the lord lieutenant had the reputation of being sentimental. Code asked him to think of 'the anguish of a father's heart'. Hardwicke pondered; and a few weeks later⁽⁴⁾ Code wrote showering blessings on him for an appointment - 'landwaiter to the Custom House', in which post he remained for some years.⁽⁵⁾ Code, in fact, was cast in the same mould as Higgins and Corbet, and his career followed the same lines.

(1) Off. Papers, 529/205/1.

(2) B.M. Add. Mss. (Hardwicke), 35749 f.110.

(3) Gilbert, Documents Relating to Ireland, p.66 ff.

(4) 30 June 1804 (B.M., Add. Mss. (Hardwicke), 35750 f.254).

(5) Cox's Irish Magazine, March 1813.

The Hibernian Journal.

The Hibernian Journal which, with the Dublin Evening Post, had managed to survive through the lean years after 1785, continued for a while to represent the more moderate elements of the opposition, taking the prince's side in the regency question, but avoiding strong expressions of opinion. Later it became identified with the United Irishmen, which encouraged the government to attack it, when opportunity offered. In January 1793, the attorney-general called the commons' attention to what he termed a very gross libel on the house, which had appeared in the Hibernian Journal.⁽¹⁾ It had published the resolutions that had been passed by the citizens of Dublin at an aggregate meeting, and these included 'that the house of commons is not freely chosen by the people', and 'that the house, as at present influenced by places of emolument and pensions, do not speak the sense of the people'.⁽²⁾

The truth of these two statements was too much to be borne by the commons; and Thomas McDonnell, who had become sole proprietor of the Hibernian Journal in 1788, was ordered to appear before them on the following day. He pointed out that the resolutions had been signed by the sheriff of Dublin. The Attorney general replied that the sheriff's signature

(1) Hib. J., 25 January 1793.

(2) Ibid., 30 Jan. 1793.

might mitigate, but did not excuse the printing of a libel. Opposition speakers argued that a newspaper could hardly hope to print a better authenticated document than these resolutions: Curran said that on the attorney general's theory of libel, the Volunteer resolutions which led to the liberation of 1782 could not safely have been printed; and Grattan thought that the expressed desire for reform was perfectly reasonable. By a large majority, the house showed its agreement with the chancellor of the exchequer, who said that even if these resolutions were not particularly mischievous, faction must be stamped out as soon as it reared its head. The number of the Hibernian Journal was voted libellous, and McDonnell ordered into custody. (1)

He was released with a reprimand two days later, which suggested that the commons only wished to give him a fright; or, what was more probable, that the attorney general was manoeuvring to detach him from his allegiance, for use in the impending prosecutions of the United Irishmen. McDonnell was himself a member of the Society: and a month before, he had received notice that he was to be prosecuted, like Carey and the owners of the Northern Star, for publishing their address to the Volunteers. (2) But the attorney general was

(1) Commons Pn. Ire. xviii 133: Ir. Parl. Reg., xiii, 83.

(2) W.P. Carey, Appeal, p.23.

after bigger men. He was quite prepared to come to terms with newspaper owners, if they would turn their coats. In April, M'Donnel resigned from the United Irishmen;⁽¹⁾ and like W.P.Carey, appeared in court in the trial of Dr. Drennan as a witness for the crown.

The first indication the United Irishmen had been given of M'Donnel's impending defection was his refusal to give back the MSS. of the resolution for which the Society were being prosecuted - on the advice of Leonard MacNally, who told him that it would be a useful security, bearing as it did signatures of men whom the government would be anxious to indict. M'Donnel, therefore, could use it if necessary, to save himself.⁽²⁾

On being asked in Court whether he was the printer and publisher of a newspaper, M'Donnel said that he did not wish to implicate himself while the charge on which Dr.Drennan was being tried was still being held over him. The attorney general immediately offered to file a nolle prosequi, to set his mind at rest, if he cared to give the evidence required. M'Donnel agreed, and the transaction was completed, there and then. Resuming his evidence, M'Donnel admitted that he had published the Address, and that it had been inserted by the United Irish Society.⁽³⁾ The information proved of little value

(1) R.B.M'Donnel, The personnel of the Dublin Society of United Irishmen, in I.H.S., ii. 40 (March 1940).

(2) Drennan, Correspondence, p.131.

(3) Hib.J., 27 June 1794: and see Trial of Dr. Drennan, (P)

to the prosecution, since Drennan was still not specifically implicated; but it must have shaken public confidence in McDonnell - the nolle prosequi business was obviously prearranged.

Thereafter, McDonnell steered clear of any further trouble. He was brought up before the house of lords at the same time as Gilbert of the Evening Post in 1797, but he was able to persuade them that the paragraph about which they complained had been copied inadvertently from the Post into his paper, and that he had only a few copies printed before he had seen it, and ordered its removal. He escaped with a (1) reprimand. Francis Higgins, in his frequent warnings to the Castle about the menace of the opposition press, rarely mentioned the Hibernian Journal - though on one occasion in (2) 1798 he urged that 'McDonnell and Potts should be punished.' By this time the paper was innocuous, and extremely dull. Comment was shunned, and home news cut down. It was even (3) accepting a few government proclamations. The rebellion had given the signal, and probably the excuse, for this change; thereafter the Hibernian Journal carefully avoided inflammable material. It did not, however, become a government paper:

(1) Lords Dn. Ire., vii, 611 (11 June 1797).

(2) 20 Aug. 1798. (Reb. Papers, 620/18/14). Potts was the owner of Saunders's Newsletter.

(3) After 14 May 1798.

like the Evening Post, it retained sufficient spirit to oppose the Union. The Post's obituary of McDonnell at his death in (1) 1809 bears out the impression that the Hibernian Journal never entirely sacrificed its independence; but the independence was not conspicuous in the policy of the paper. In the first number for the year 1802, the Hibernian Journal was to be found ranged alongside the papers it had so often denounced for their sycophancy, praising 'the temperate, conciliatory, and beneficent conduct of our present wise and vigilant government'.

Saunders's Newsletter.

After the Dublin Journal was taken over by Giffard, Saunders's Newsletter was the only Dublin paper to retain the characteristics of an earlier period. It relied upon advertisements, filling up such space as remained, wherever possible, with news from abroad, and rarely reporting, and still more rarely commenting upon, home events. As the years went by, it became less easy for the paper to avoid noticing what was happening at home; reports of parliamentary debates came to be grudgingly inserted, getting the paper's owner, James Potts, into trouble with the commons, on one occasion. The commons, however, accepted his excuses; he escaped with (2) a reprimand.

(1) D.E.Post, 9 March 1809.

(2) 4-7 Feb. 1791 (Commons Jn. Ire., xiv, 66-79).

Saunders's aversion from controversy was not enough to protect it from calumny. In 1795 the Dublin Journal began to accuse Saunders's of propagating jacobinism - which in one sense, was true, because the doings of the Jacobins occupied a considerable proportion of the news which, each morning, the printers of Saunders's copied out word for word from the English papers. James Potts, the proprietor of Saunders's was momentarily roused from his policy of neutrality, into publishing a squib on 'the Dog'. The next Sunday morning, (1) Giffard accosted him, knocked him down, and horsewhipped him. That so innocuous a print as Saunders's could be accused of jacobin sympathies was symptomatic of the chronic state of fright in which the Ascendancy had come to live: any proprietor who was not actively for them, they felt, must be against them. Higgins took the same line as Giffard; he (2) warned Cooke about the menace of the paper, and alleged that John Potts - James did not long survive Giffard's assault - (3) was under the thumb of a United Irishman. This was in May 1797, when the administration had decided to show Potts the folly of political neutrality in times of civil discord. He was brought up before the commons, charged with publishing a report of a speech by chief secretary Pelham that might be

(1) The Giffard trial is reported in Walker's Hibernian Magazine for Aug. 1795; and see D.E.Post, 14 July 1795.

See above p.

(2) 11 Oct. 1796 (Reb. Papers, 620/18/14).

(3) 26 May 1797 (Ibid.).

construed as throwing doubts on the loyalty of the yeomanry regiments. Potts' defence, that he had not seen the report, may have been true - though it was the same defence that he had made six years before, and was, in fact, almost invariably made on such occasions. (1) He and the reporter of the debate were ordered into custody, remaining in prison for ten days (2) before being released, with a reprimand, on payment of fees. The reporter had laid the blame on a defective memory: he had not taken down the debate because he understood it to be contrary to the privileges of the house to take notes. But he admitted that this rule was not enforced. Saunders's became, if possible, more chaste after this incident, and soon proclamations again appeared to swell its advertising revenue. (3) Higgins remained critical; but if the Potts family had any sympathy with the rebels, they took care not to allow it to appear in the paper. It remained unchanged in form and policy through the rebellion period, and later gave the Union its negative support. (4) In its anxiety to give no offence it became as flat and uninteresting as it had ever been.

(1) Freeman, 20 May, 1797.

(2) Freeman, 30 May, 1797.

(3) 20 Aug. 1798: (Reb. Papers, 620/18/14).

(4) Madden, I.P.L., ii. 259.

The significance of the government's handling of the three 'moderate' independent Dublin newspapers lay in the reflection it gave of the times. All three were commercial papers: that is to say, they were regarded by their owners primarily as sources of income, and only secondarily, as vehicles for the expression of opinions. If Magee and McDonnell were in sympathy with the United Irish cause in the early '90s, this was symptomatic less of any revolutionary ideas, than of the fact that the United Irishmen represented, at first, the prospect of more rational and stable commercial policies. That the government should react with prosecutions, and that Ascendancy men should charge even Saunders's with jacobinism, only confirmed that when a social structure ^{is} ~~was~~ as illogical and unsound as Ireland's ^{was} in the period immediately before the Union, the expression of any common-sense opinion - or even the failure to express positive loyalty to the administration - will inevitably be interpreted as treason in disguise, and treatment will be prescribed accordingly.

Eventually, sufficient pressure was brought to bear and the newspapers vanished. The process took more, or less, time, according to the degree to which the administration felt itself in danger. All the expedients used against the independent press in 1794 were revived and refurbished. Spies were employed to work in the newspapers and report upon their

The Opposition Press.

The Morning Post.
The Northern Star.
The Cork Gazette and the Harp of Erin.
The Union Star.
The Press.

The Castle preferred, when it could, to win over newspapers without violence, and usually it succeeded. But in the case of the newspapers set up by the United Irishmen, there could rarely be any compromise: the Northern Star, the Harp of Erin, and the Press had to be put down by force. The other three newspapers, although they were not directly connected with the movement, were owned by men whose sympathies were with the United Irishmen, and although overt force ^{sometimes} proved unnecessary, they were all, in effect, suppressed by the administration.

Their histories, like those of the government newspapers, follow a prescribed formula. They were founded, and grew popular. The government took fright, and then took action. Eventually, sufficient pressure was brought to bear, and the newspapers vanished. The process took more, or less, time, according to the degree to which the administration felt itself in danger. All the expedients used against the independent press in 1784 were revived and refurbished. Spies were employed to work in the newspapers and report upon them:

workers were bribed to give away the papers' secrets: agents were set to work to seduce members of newspapers' staffs away from allegiance to their employers. Where the courts were used, every twist that the law could be given was employed against the newspaper owner. And in the last resort, when other methods had failed, the military were sent for to raid the newspaper office, and smash or carry away the equipment. The odds against the opposition press were overwhelming, and in the end, destructive of the freedom of the press in Ireland: but papers like the Northern Star and the Press survived long enough to demonstrate afresh that independent newspapers, well presented and trenchantly written, had very great potentialities, when allied to a popular cause.

The Morning Post.

With the Dublin Evening Post uninterested, and later distracted by Magee's quarrel with Higgins, the newspaper that caused the administration most concern at the time of the regency crisis was a new Morning Post which had been set up by Peter Cooney in 1788. His advocacy of the prince's claims led, early in 1790, to a prosecution for a reflection on the character of the chancellor of the exchequer, and for publishing a paragraph which, he claimed, had been copied from a London paper. This was a common enough defence in libel actions. Cooney further claimed that he was out of town

when the paragraphs were published and that the London paper had not been prosecuted, which is not improbable, considering the nature of the paragraph. It ran:

"The was formerly a very domestic woman, but now gives up too much of her time to politics".

This, the prosecution stated, was clearly a reference to the queen. Either owing to a misunderstanding, or to malice, neither Cooney nor his attorney were present when the case came up for trial. ⁽¹⁾ The verdict went against him by default, and he was sentenced to six months' imprisonment - ⁽²⁾ three months for each offence. He was also condemned to stand in the pillory, quite a welcome break, probably, from prison life. The statue of King William III, near which the pillory stood, had been draped with black during the night; a notice proclaimed:-

IN MOURNING
FOR THE BILL OF RIGHTS
AND THE LIBERTY OF THE PRESS.

A large crowd of onlookers, the Morning Post reported, hearing a rumour that Giffard had hired men to pelt Cooney while he was in the pillory, came out to protect him and ⁽³⁾ demonstrate their sympathy. A committee was formed to receive subscriptions on Cooney's behalf, the signatories ⁽⁴⁾ including Napper Tandy and Hamilton Rowan.

(1) Morning Post, 11 Feb. 1790.

(2) Ibid, 9 Feb. 1790. An article in the Hibernian Journal many years later suggests that it was Marie Antoinette, and not the Queen of England, to whom the M.Post referred. (Hib.J. 14 Apr. 1817).

(3) Morning Post, 29 June 1790.

(4) Ibid.

Cooney served his full sentence, coming out on the same day as Magee, with whom he had shared a cell.⁽¹⁾ a situation not without humour, as Magee had accused Cooney of being under the influence of Francis Higgins.⁽²⁾ During Cooney's imprisonment the Morning Post moderated its tone, and even accepted a few Castle proclamations; this was possible due to financial difficulties, as the paper then attracted few advertisements. Once back in office, Cooney resumed his campaign against the administration. The proclamations ceased.

Cooney was proposed for membership of the United Irishmen in 1793.⁽³⁾ The Morning Post greeted the new year following with the boast that while most other newspaper proprietors had only talked about liberty, he had suffered for it: imprisonment, fines and the pillory had been his lot.⁽⁴⁾ He would carry on, in spite of threats. He was as good as his word. The Morning Post was threatened with prosecution for its forthright comments upon the government's treatment of Rowan; and when Giffard retired from the office of sheriff at the end of September, Cooney printed a savage description of his conduct while he had been sheriff, alongside a cartoon⁽⁵⁾ of 'a dog running out of office' with a can tied to its tail.⁽⁶⁾

(1) Morning Post, 27 July 1790.

(2) D.E.Post, 15 Oct. 1789.

(3) R.B.McDowell in Analecta Hibernica, xvii. 64.

(4) Morning Post, 2 Jan. 1794.

(5) Anthologia Hibernica, May, 1794.

(6) Morning Post, 30 Sept. 1794.

The truth of the article made it still less palatable to Giffard; he brought Cooney up before the King's Bench and had him convicted of libel. ⁽¹⁾ On the following day he was convicted on two further libels, one apparently inadvertent, the other, strictures on the secretary to the Post Office, Lees. ⁽²⁾ He was then brought up on three more charges which Giffard, who was taking no chances of letting him escape, had held in reserve; but Giffard, expressed himself satisfied with the success of the first actions, and offered no evidence. Cooney was sentenced to terms of imprisonment totalling 15 months, with a fine of one mark for the libel on Lees, who had indicated that he did not wish to press the matter. ⁽³⁾ Had Lees seen a paragraph that had just appeared in the Morning Post, that 'Mr. Lees, the Secretary to the Post Office, it is said, is one of those old stagers who shares the melancholy ⁽⁴⁾ fate of being cashiered by the Fitzwilliam administration', he might have been less humane,

Imprisonment did not daunt Cooney; the Morning Post continued in opposition. But, like the Dublin Evening Post, it was inconsistent. On occasion, the Morning Post might ⁽⁵⁾ carry as many as three columns of Castle proclamations;

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- (1) Dublin Journal, 18 Dec. 1794.
 - (2) D.E.Post, 18 Dec. 1794.
 - (3) Dublin Journal, 23 Dec. 1794.
 - (4) Morning Post, 16 Dec. 1794.
 - (5) Ibid, 13 July. 1794.

one issue would launch squibs at 'the Dog in Office' ⁽¹⁾ the next, urge firmness on the magistracy in the course of their duty. ⁽²⁾ Still, with the exception of the Press, it was the paper that gave the administration most trouble in the months before the rebellion. Francis Higgins continually urged upon the administration the evils that resulted from allowing such a paper to continue. He enclosed an article that appeared in the Morning Post in August 1796, describing it as a disgrace ⁽³⁾ to the nation, which called loudly for remedy; a few months later, he complained that Cooney did not seem to care what he published in the Morning Post; ⁽⁴⁾ and he continued to draw ⁽⁵⁾ Cooke's attention to inflammatory material in that paper, warning him that Cooney was well in with the Stamp Commissioners ⁽⁶⁾ who were allowing him to sell unstamped papers. Leonard McNally, ^{to,} told the Castle that the Morning Post had joined ⁽⁷⁾ forces with the United Irishmen. On 28 March 1798 Higgins ⁽⁸⁾ exultantly noted that the Morning Post had failed to appear. A few days later an advertisement appeared in another paper saying that Peter Cooney, late proprietor of the Morning Post, informed the public that in consequence of being obliged to

(1) Morning Post, 26 Dec. 1797.

(2) Ibid., 30 Dec. 1797.

(3) 24 Aug. 1796 (Reb. Papers, 620/18/14).

(4) 11 Oct. 1796 (Ibid.)

(5) 25 May 1797 (Ibid.) ~~(McNally also informed upon Cooney - Reb. Papers, 620/36/227)~~

(6) 24 Nov. 1797 (Ibid.)

(7) (undated) Reb. Papers, 620/36/227).

(8) Ibid., 620/18/14.

relinquish publication, he had, with the advice of his friends,
embarked in the coal trade. ⁽¹⁾ The wording of the advertise-
ment, and the date of the paper's cessation, suggest that the
weight of the new stamp duties imposed at that time, ⁽²⁾ rather
than any direct action by the government, had compelled
Cooney to bring the Morning Post to an end. Possibly because
of its inconsistency, the paper had never attracted a large
circulation: and for newspapers on the margin of survival,
the duties would have pronounced a death sentence.

The Northern Star.

In October 1791 Wolfe Tone established the first
Society of United Irishmen in Belfast. One of its earliest
decisions was to set up a rival newspaper to the Belfast
Newsletter which, although still liberal in its opinions,
would be unlikely to have any sympathy with the aims of the
Society. Drennan in a letter said that he would not like
to injure Joy, who had always used him civilly: but he felt ⁽³⁾
that new papers in Belfast and Dublin could do good service.
The newsagents in country towns in Ulster were canvassed, and
their replies were encouraging. A few hailed the idea with
relief, one from Fivemiletown complaining that the Newsletter
was all advertisements. Others, though friendly, were
pessimistic; a reply came from Donaghadee that 'attempts of

(1) Hib. J., 9 Apr. 1798.

(2) See below p. 197.

(3) Drennan, Correspondence, p.60 (Nov. 1791).

this nature heretofore have failed we are all in this little town through long acquaintance quite wedded to Mr. Joy, and mostly too poor to gratify ourselves with a second entertainment'; and the Limavady newsagent recalled that the Mercury had received little support there. From Portadown alone, however, was there positive disapproval: a second paper was dangerous, the answer ran; it could only create anarchy and discord. Still, most of the newsagents who replied ⁽¹⁾ said that they would take copies.

The Northern Star appeared for the first time on 14 January 1792. It was nominally owned by twelve proprietors who had jointly subscribed the £2000 capital. Samuel Neilson, who undertook the editing of the paper, was also the biggest shareholder. ⁽²⁾ Although quiet at first, the Northern Star soon began to criticise the administration; its policy was stated early in 1794, in an editorial:-

"A reform in parliament was the great end of our establishment; the union of Irishmen, the means. The latter is accomplished. Let every honest man in the nation, then, avoiding levellers (if there are any) on the one hand, and trimmers (who are very numerous) on the other, rally round this one point - equal representation of all the people in parliament".

This was the line consistently adopted; the Northern Star urged reform but reprobated violence, abominating 'those

(1) Reb. Papers, 620/19/42.

(2) Jacob, United Irishmen, p.173.

infatuated people called defenders'.

By 1794, the call for parliamentary reform was, to the Castle, sedition in disguise. Even if the writers did not themselves desire rebellion, it was argued, they encouraged it by criticising the government; and other less moderate men would be ready to take over as soon as parliamentary reform was accomplished. To some extent this was true: Wolfe Tone admitted that the necessary, if not the avowed consequence of the Northern Star's policy, was to erect Ireland into an independent republic. ⁽¹⁾ But the proprietors could argue with greater truth that the constitutional imperfections which they were trying to expose would, if not remedied, bring disaster to the country; and that if newspapers were not permitted freely to voice the prevailing discontent, the leadership of the opposition would pass into the hands of the men that the government had still greater cause to fear, and civil war would be inevitable.

The men whose livelihood depended on the continued existence of the abuses attacked by the Northern Star did not appreciate these arguments. From time that the paper appeared, the Castle kept a close watch on its activities. The foreman printer was induced to sign a sworn information giving the number of copies of the first six issues that had ⁽²⁾ been printed without stamps. In a footnote, however, he

(1) Madden, I.P.L., ii, 227.

(2) I.S.P.O. Miscellaneous undated non-relevant papers, A. 1. 52 (see catalogue).

insisted on expressing his opinion that the owners did not wish to flout the law: they had been disappointed in their expectation of a supply of stamps - which must be assumed had been ordered - from Dublin. Before the year was out, the administration had initiated a prosecution against the proprietors and the printer for publishing the Dublin United Irishmen's 'Address to the Volunteers'. While the prosecution was pending a riot was fomented against the paper by the military, it was believed - and a government agent was instructed to approach the proprietors to persuade them to come to terms. The prosecution was to be abandoned, provided that the Northern Star changed its politics. After a meeting of the paper's supporters, the negotiations fell through. (2)

Probably the administration was alarmed less by the Northern Star's policy than by its popularity. It had been an immediate success, gaining subscribers all over Ireland. (3) Enemies alleged that this was through free circulation to the coffee houses, (4) but that was said about every newspaper. (5) Circulation rose to over 4000, still a spectacular figure; and the attorney general's procedure shows that he took the prosecution more seriously than most.

(1) Drennan, Correspondence, p.151.

(2) Thomas Russell's Journal, 8 July 1793: quoted by McDowell, Hermathena, liii, 145.

(3) Jacob, United Irishmen, p.178.

(4) Reb. Papers, 620/28/16.

(5) Jacob, United Irishmen, p.178.

The way in which the judicature could be manipulated by the Castle in these actions was clearly shown in the proceedings against the Northern Star. The original publication complained of was the number for 5 December 1792. In January 1793, all twelve proprietors were called upon to proceed to Dublin to enter into bail before Clonmell.⁽¹⁾ To his chagrin, they arrived - after an attempt to persuade the authorities to allow them to enter into recognisances in Belfast had failed.⁽²⁾ Each of them was compelled to put up £100 and find two securities of £50. When they asked with what they were charged, Clonmell was unable to tell them; - incitement to arms, he thought; but the crown solicitor thought, no, it was something to do with tithes.⁽³⁾ A copy of the warrant was refused.⁽⁴⁾

The prosecution was then delayed for as long as possible, a favourite trick of the Crown's law officers; it gave newspapers longer to consider, and perhaps regret, their temerity. No action was taken in the first legal term after the informations had been made except to file six more informations against the proprietors.⁽⁵⁾ The law officers

(1) Trial of the Proprietors of the Northern Star (P) 1794, p.v.

(2) Ibid., p.vi.

(3) Northern Star, 9 Jan. 1793.

(4) Jacob, United Irishmen, p.183.

(5) Jacob, United Irishmen, p.183.

were playing safe, in case any of the charges broke down on legal technicalities. The Easter term, too, went by without action. During the Michaelmas term the proprietor's lawyers moved that the prosecution should be abandoned, as nothing had been done. The application was refused, the attorney general adding a new information against the Northern Star.⁽¹⁾ In July, notice of trial was served for two out of the eight charges, not including the original one. The proprietors, briefed their lawyers and prepared an elaborate defence. Five days before the trial was due to begin the Crown lawyers announced that they would not prosecute.⁽²⁾ Nothing was done during the following term, but the trial was provisionally fixed for the following February. It eventually took place at the end of May, eighteen months after the original charges had been made.

The proprietors were tried not on the original charge of publishing the Address of the United Irishmen, but for reporting the proceedings of a Belfast club. Curran made an able defence, arguing that all the proprietors could not possibly be held responsible for publication: suppose one of them had been out of town? The court might just as well prosecute the owners of a vessel whose captain had turned pirate.

^{The 2nd}
 (1) Trial of the Proprietors of the Northern Star, &c (P)
 Belfast, 1795, p.vi.

(2) Jacob, United Irishmen, p.184.

It was **not** Curran's skill, though, that brought about the ~~ma~~acquittal. Clonmell had discovered a legal complication, which gratified him immensely, his knowledge of law being notoriously weak. He declared that the publication was the most mischievous, flagitious, and seditious that he had ever had the misfortune to read, and he sentenced the printer to a term of imprisonment; but the proprietors were found not guilty, on the strength of his point of law.⁽¹⁾ The wisdom of the attorney general in filing the other informations was now apparent. A fresh charge was selected, and the proprietors again brought to trial, in November 1794.⁽²⁾ But this time there was a difference; they came before a northern jury, and Clonmell was not on the bench. They were up on the original charge of publishing the address of the United Irishman; Hamilton Rowan had been found guilty for the same document so it seemed unlikely that they could escape. Curran's defence was masterly. Either by a trick, or by collaboration, the witness from the Stamp Commissioners, who was there on behalf of the prosecution, was induced to bring in his pocket a copy of the Belfast Newsletter, dated the day before the Address had been printed in the Star. Curran called upon him

(1) The trial is fully reported in the pamphlet and in most of the newspapers: D.E. Post, 29 May, 1794.

(2) ^{the 2nd trial} ~~Second edition~~ of the Proprietors of the Northern Star ^(p) gives a full account.

to produce it: he hesitated, (it was cleverly staged, if pre-arranged) but was eventually compelled to show the paper, which contained the Address. No less than five of the articles complained of, Curran said, had appeared in the Newsletter as well as the Star. The Newsletter had by this time become so notoriously a government paper that people had forgotten that in 1792 it had been less well disposed towards the administration; and to have prosecuted one paper and not the other seemed clear evidence of partiality. Curran also made the most of the iniquity of the law officers' cat-and-mouse procedure with their information. The jury, although they found the defendants guilty of publishing, gave it as their opinion that there was no malicious intent. The court refused to accept this verdict: the jury must give a general verdict, guilty or not guilty. The jury retired, consulted, and decided, not guilty. (1)

The administration then began to try other expedients against the Northern Star. Bird, alias Smith, a spy whose duplicity bordered on madness, (2) was employed to ingratiate himself with Neilson and the staff of the paper. Bird had been in jail in England, and had escaped to Ireland by

(1) Northern Star, 20 Nov. 1799.

(2) He wrote ^awierd accounts of his life, which is preserved in the Rebellion papers, 620/27/1.

breaking parole; the facility of his inventiveness made him a useful man to produce whatever evidence might be required.⁽¹⁾

Thomas Whinnery, a Castle agent employed in the Belfast Post Office, warned the government that the Northern Star had run out of stamped paper.⁽²⁾ The stamp commissioners were asked to investigate; a printer on the paper was persuaded to turn spy, and to give evidence of the occasions in which unstamped papers had been sold.⁽³⁾

A warrant for the arrest of the proprietors was issued in September 1796.⁽⁴⁾ Bail was refused. Neilson had to make arrangements for the paper's continuance as best he could from a Dublin jail - by post, as he was at first denied visitors.⁽⁵⁾ The office was attacked by the military, and plundered; and although the paper was able to carry on, its position was obviously precarious. With Belfast under martial law, the surprise is that it continued for so long. Early in February 1797 Colonel Barber, in charge of the military, received instructions from the Castle to make a further raid, and this time to take possession of everything to be found in the office,

(1) Reb. Papers, 620/34/28; 620/37/277.

(2) 1 Oct. 1796 (Reb. Papers 620/25/137).

(3) Reb. Papers, 620/54/5; 620/24/172.

(4) Ibid., 620/25/60.

(5) Drennan, Correspondence, p.241.

types, machines, and papers, and to arrest all concerned with the paper.⁽¹⁾ These instructions were carried out on February 3, the brothers Simms were arrested and sent along with all the seized papers to Dublin.⁽²⁾ They petitioned from jail that the paper should be put in the hands of one Thomas Corbett, to whom the types and office accessories that had been taken, should be delivered up.⁽³⁾ This was exactly what Cooke had determined to avoid; he sent word to Barber to prevent anyone from reviving the paper without a regular printer⁽⁴⁾ - his idea being that if a printer applied formally for registration in the usual way, he could deal with him through the Stamp Office. Thomas Corbett, who was either a very courageous or a very rash young man, persisted in his efforts to restore the Northern Star. He appeared before the Stamp Commissioners, saying that he had been authorised by the proprietors to take on the production of the paper. The commissioners refused, on the grounds that there was no proof that this had been authorised by the proprietors.⁽⁵⁾ The Simms's tried to send written confirmation of Corbett's appointment, but this was intercepted by the Castle.⁽⁶⁾

(1) Reb. Papers, 620/28/199.

(2) Ibid., 620/28/200.

(3) Ibid., 620/28/233.

(4) Ibid., 620/28/213, 221.

(5) Ibid., 620/34/35.

(6) Ibid., 620/28/271.

Nevertheless, the Northern Star reappeared. In spite of pleas by the government's supporters in Belfast, one of whom urged that the Star men be sent to Botany Bay without trial by Act of Parliament;⁽¹⁾ in spite of the inducements held out to the staff of the paper - they had been given notice by Colonel Barber, who at the same time had hinted that he could be of great service to anyone who cared to quit the paper;⁽²⁾ in spite of the harsh treatment accorded to two sets of proprietors in Newgate:⁽³⁾ - where bail was still refused; and in spite of the removal of the types, a rumour began to circulate in Belfast that publication was about to be resumed;⁽⁴⁾ and on February 24, it was. An editorial explained that publication had been redommenced without stamps, but in accordance with the spirit of the laws, since their representative had been waiting on the Stamp Commissioners for a fortnight.⁽⁵⁾ The following number announced that the Commissioners had been forced to give way, and Corbett was now the legal printer and proprietor.⁽⁶⁾ Although in great difficulty owing to poor equipment, inexperienced staff, and lack of money,⁽⁷⁾ the revived Northern Star ran for some weeks, its language, according to the agent Whinnery, growing worse and worse.⁽⁸⁾

(1) Reb. Papers, 620/28/241. (2) Ibid., 620/28/319.

(3) Ibid., 620/28/233. (4) Ibid., 620/28/248.

(5) Northern Star, 24 Feb. 1797. (6) Ibid., 27 Feb. 1797.

(7) Ibid., 10 March 1797.

(8) 30 March, 1797. (Reb. Papers, 620/29/131).

Dr. Drennan's sister, writing to him at the end of March expressed a fear that the newspaper would soon be sacked for the third time. ⁽¹⁾ On May 19^{1797,} a party of the military entered the office, without a warrant, and finally destroyed it. ⁽²⁾

The administration would have been well satisfied had not rumours of the situation in Belfast filtered across to England, where the opposition began to ask why the freedom of the press was being so abused there. ⁽³⁾ Whitehall anxiously called for an explanation. They received two. Chief Secretary Pelham wrote that the destruction of the Northern Star was an outrage not to be justified, and that the soldiers concerned in it had been punished. ⁽⁴⁾ The lord lieutenant's version was that the men of the Monaghan militia had been justly irritated by the Star by which some of their comrades had been corrupted. They had asked the paper to print a loyal address; the request had been refused, and the raid was a reprisal. The men could not be punished, because no one would come forward to identify them. ⁽⁵⁾

(1) Drennan, Correspondence, p.253.

(2) Mrs. McTier to Dr. Drennan, 19 May 1797. (Drennan, Letters p.256).

(3) P.R.O., H.O. 100/70/191.

(4) Ibid., 100/70/181 H.M.C. Fortescue, iii, 385.

(5) Ibid., 100/20/191. H.M.C. Fortescue, iii, 387.

A letter from General Lake, officer commanding the troops in Ulster described what had actually happened: ⁽¹⁾

I have extreme satisfaction in telling you that upon my return to town after an absence of 4 hours, I found the Monaghan Regiment, in consequence of the printer of the Northern Star having refused to insert their resolution in that paper, had attacked the office, destroyed the types, press, etc., but unluckily before they had completed the business, Colonel Leslie arrived and took them to the barracks: but as luck would have it the moment they were gone the recruits of the artillery with some of the old hands rushed into the place and did lay about them most lustily, and almost totally demolished the whole of the machines. [This time, the Northern Star did not reappear.

Neillson remained in prison for eighteen months without trial. A memorial written signed by him and some of his fellow prisoners during his sentence alleged that they were kept in a dungeon, subsisting on 3d. worth of milk a day. ⁽²⁾ He was released after the informer Bird had confessed that the charges against him were entirely without foundation.

(1) General Lake to General Knox, 20 May, 1797. (N.L.I., Lake MSS., letter 79); and see also R.B.McDowell, Irish Public Opinion, p.258.

(2) R.E.D., Madden MSS., 1469. Q.1.

The Northern Star was edited for a time during his imprisonment by Dr. Parter,⁽¹⁾ who wrote some popular lampoons on the Earl of Londonderry, which appeared in the Northern Star in serial form, and were later reprinted in a pamphlet.⁽²⁾ He was executed as a suspected rebel in 1798; the unpopularity that the success of his skits had incurred were traditionally supposed to have prevented a reprieve. Efforts by men who had been sympathetic to the Northern Star to set up a paper on the same lines after the Union were twice frustrated by the administration, who, forewarned by the proprietor of the Belfast Newsletter, told the Stamp Commissioners to refuse them registration.⁽³⁾ The North was to have no liberal newspaper for many years.

In his memorial to the French Directory in 1798, the United Irish leader MacNeven expressed the opinion that had the Northern Star reappeared, the outrage would have promptly been repeated, the suppression of the paper being a necessary part of the government's policy of keeping different portions of the country in ignorance of what was happening elsewhere, the better to prevent concerted action.⁽⁴⁾ His diagnosis was

(1) Jacob, United Irishmen, p.192.

(2) 'Billy Bluff and the Squire' (P) Dublin 1797.

(3) Reb. Papers 620/16/232: Aspinall, Politics and the Press, p. 61.

(4) Castlereagh, Correspondence, i. 304.

correct, except in so far as it attributed to the government, consciousness of this aim. The ~~knawing~~ instinct of self-preservation was sufficient to compel the Ascendancy to put down the Northern Star. The suppression was too inefficiently handled to suggest, even if the official correspondence did not disprove, that it was planned. When the interests of Ascendancy were so directly threatened, the forces working for the elimination of the opposition newspapers became so strong that official action was often unnecessary.

Early in 1794, Driscoll was prosecuted for one of his articles against the administration, and found guilty of libel. (1) Nearly all the jury who convicted him were found to have been in government employment at the time. (2) The prosecution was initiated by the Rev. W. Lynch, who had been a close friend, - he was one of the sureties for the paper with the Stamp Commissioners - Driscoll was sentenced to two years imprisonment.

(1) Irish Gazette, 2 Oct. 1793.

(2) Ibid., 20 Nov. 1793.

(3) McDowell, Reminiscences, 1111, 140; Irish Public Opinion, pp. 274, 281.

(4) McDowell, Reminiscences, 11, 131.

(5) D. B. Irish, 1 May, 1794.

THE CORK GAZETTE.

The newspaper which expressed the most advanced views - occasionally beyond the horizon of the United Irishmen - was the Cork Gazette, which had been founded in or about the year 1790, and was edited by the Rev. Denis Driscoll, a convert from Catholicism. From castigating corruption and the deficiencies of parliamentary representation, he went on to criticise primogeniture⁽¹⁾ and pluralities,⁽²⁾ and to urge full employment.⁽³⁾ The Gazette was better set out, and more vigorous in expression, than any paper of its time.

Early in 1794, Driscoll was prosecuted for one of his sallies against the administration, and found guilty of libel.⁽⁴⁾ Nearly all the jury who convicted him were found to have been in government employment at the time.⁽⁵⁾ The prosecution was initiated by the Rev. F. Archer, who had been a close friend, - he was one of the sureties for the paper with the Stamp Commissioners - Driscoll was sentenced to two years imprisonment.

(1) Cork Gazette, 5 Oct. 1793.

(2) *Ibid.*, 30 Nov. 1793.

(3) McDowell, *Hermathena*, liii, 146: Irish Public Opinion, pp. 174, 201.

(4) Madden, I.P.L., ii. 181.

(5) D.E. Post, 1 May, 1794.

In February 1797 Driscoll told the readers of the Gazette that another prosecution had been initiated against him; ⁽¹⁾ and a few months later a notice in the paper announced that 'after seven years devotion of his time to advocacy of sound, just and constitutional principles,' he would have to cease publication. ⁽²⁾ This was one of the rare occasions that a paper was in a position to forecast exactly its disappearance. The court had accepted a proposal that the paper would be discontinued if the prosecution was suspended after a final issue had been published in order that subscribers might be warned. The prosecution had agreed, reserving the right to resume the case should Driscoll be mixed up in any other seditious paper in future, and he was released, on condition of obtaining security of £1,000. ⁽³⁾

This effectually debarred Driscoll from continuing in journalism; and in 1799 he was pleading extreme poverty as the reason for his desire to obtain a passport to leave for the U.S.A. ⁽⁴⁾ If the request was granted, he may not have

(1) Cork Gazette, 15 Feb. 1797.

(2) *Ibid.*, 16 Sept. 1797.

(3) R. Day *to* Pelham, 22 Sept. 1797. (Reb. Papers, 620/32/136)

(4) McDowell, Hermathena, *l*iii, 146.

been in Ireland to enjoy the last laugh, when the whirligigs of time brought forth its revenges. In 1802, the Rev. F. Archer found himself served with a scire facias, a writ for the £137 owed by the Gazette, for which he had been a trustee, to the Stamp Commissioners. Archer had lived for some years in danger of his life from the United Irishmen for betraying Driscoll. Now, he was being threatened with jail for Driscoll's debts. (1)

Efforts were made to prevent the Harp from appearing. Securities for both papers were tendered on the same day; the Reverend's were accepted, the Harp's, refused. (2)

The first issue of the Harp eventually appeared on March 7. Arthur O'Connor told Madden that his brother Roger was the editor and did most of the work. (3) According to Barrington, the brothers Shearman were the real editors. (4) The paper continued on the same lines as the Press. 'The Harp! its motto ran 'is now struck, and will be heard.' It was not destined to be heard for very long; the printer, Daly, was arrested on March 20, and the types and MSS confiscated. (5) An attempt by Roger O'Connor to revive it was frustrated. (6)

The Harp was a weekly paper published in Cork at the time.

(1) Reb. Papers, 620/61/80. Harp of Erin of Cork is abstracted, the Press ignored, praising the Cork authorities for doing their duty so efficiently.

(2) Col. Nath. Massey to Father, 30 Jan. 1793. (Reb. Papers 620/61/80)

(3) Press, 6 February, 1793.

(4) Madden, United Irishmen, iv, 18.

(5) Barrington, Recollections, p. 321(n)

(6) Reb. Papers, 620/61/80. (5) Ibid., 620/30/40.

(7) Reb. Papers, 24 March, 1793.

(8) Reb. Papers, 24 March, 1793.

THE HARP OF ERIN.

An advertisement in the Press on 6 February 1798 announced that a newspaper called the Harp of Erin was about to be set up in Cork. This was not news to the Castle; ~~also~~ they had already been warned about the Harp by the sponsor of a rival newspaper, the Cork Herald,⁽¹⁾ who suggested to the chief Secretary that he might use his influence with the Stamp Commissioners to prevent the Harp from appearing. Securities for both papers were tendered on the same day; the Herald's were accepted, the Harp's, refused.⁽²⁾

The first issue of the Harp eventually appeared on March 7. Arthur O'Connor told Madden that his brother Roger was the editor and did most of the work:⁽³⁾ According to Barrington, the brothers Sheares were the real editors.⁽⁴⁾ The paper continued on the same lines as the Press: 'The Harp' its motto ran 'is new strung, and will be heard.' It was not destined to be heard for very long; the printer, Daly, was arrested on March 20, and the types and MSS confiscated.⁽⁵⁾ An attempt by Roger O'Connor to revive it was frustrated.⁽⁶⁾ The Dublin Evening Post mentioned arrests in Cork at the time, but without comment;⁽⁷⁾ 'The Harp of Erin of Cork is unstrung,' the Freeman jeered, praising the Cork authorities for doing their duty so efficiently.⁽⁸⁾

(1) Col. Nath. Massey to Pelham, 30 Jan. 1798. (Reb. Papers 620/38/8)

(2) Press, 6 February, 1798.

(3) Madden, United Irishmen, iv, 15.

(4) Barrington, Recollections, p. 321(n)

(5) Reb. Papers, 620/36/34. (6) *Ibid.*, 620/36/46.

(7) D. E. Post, 24 March, 1798.

(8) Freeman, 29 March 1798.

The Union Star

The Union Star began to appear in the streets of Dublin during the summer of 1797. It was not a newspaper, but a periodical broadside against the Castle, printed on one side of a sheet only, so that it could be pasted up on walls. It varied in size from a small handbill to a full newspaper sheet, containing patriotic slogans, and giving lists of individuals who ought to be assassinated - Giffard, Higgins, W.P. Carey among them. '....perhaps some arm', it regularly quoted, 'More lucky than the rest, may reach ^{his} heart And free the world from bondage.' (1).

Needless to say, the names of the proprietor and printer were not given; the paper was not stamped, and was rarely even dated. Although it expressed strong United Irish principles, the Union Star was not produced by the Society; one or more of the host of informers within the Society would certainly have betrayed it. The more responsible elements in the Society denounced the paper for doing harm to the cause by its advocacy of assassination: (2). Emmet detested it, and the United Irish newspaper, the Press, complained that it gave ^{assistance} ~~more assistance~~ to the government than it did to the opposition. (3). The suggestion was even made that the Union Star was encouraged by the Castle in order to justify reprisals. (4).

(1). Reb., Papers, 620/53/14 : 620/54/1-2.

(2). Reb. Papers, 620/53/36. (3). Press, 20 Jan. 1798.

(4). Press, 30 Jan. 1798. Madden, United Irishmen, iv.66.: Landreth Emmet, p.68.

This credited the Castle with too much cunning. They did not know who was responsible for the Union Star, nor where it was printed. Even Francis Higgins, for once, was on a false scent; he thought that Stockdale, the future printer of the Press, printed the paper, and during September 1797 he kept asking why the administration did not send round to Stockdale's in Abbey Street and catch him red-handed. In October he had to admit that Stockdale was not responsible for the paper, but his next guess was no closer.

Not until the middle of December was Cooke able to inform the Chief Secretary, 'this day I suppressed the Union Star.' A reward had been offered the previous July for information leading to the arrest of the proprietor, and a Dublin gunsmith, Walter Cox, had appeared at the Castle and promised, if he was given a safe-conduct, to disclose the proprietors' and printers' names. The bargain struck, he told Cooke that he himself was the proprietor and printer.

Cox had come to the conclusion that the UnionStar could not continue indefinitely; this was a good opportunity to get out unscathed. He had been printing the paper for months

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- (1). 15 Sept. 1797. (Rev. Papers, 620 (18/14)).
(2). 24 Oct. 1797. (Rev. Papers, 620/18/14).
(3). Cooke to Pelham, 14 Dec. 1797. (B.M., Add. MSS. (Pelham), 33, 105. f. 262.)
(4). B.M., Add. MSS (Pelham) 33, 105. f. 262.
(5). Cox's Irish Magazine, October, 1800.

(1).

in a small cellar beside the Castle. and he had been lucky to avoid detection for so long - especially as Higgins had warned Cooke about his political sympathies, and the fact that he had

(2).

a private press. He knew that the leaders of the United Ireland movement detested the Union Star; and he could tell himself that by giving it up, he was doing the cause no harm.

But although he had a safe-conduct, by confessing his past deeds Cox had put himself in the government's power, to the extent that he could never again do anything without the knowledge that he was being watched. Cooke, who was impressed

(3).

by him, 'he is a clever man, and deep', wanted to use him to obtain information, making that one of the conditions of his

(4).

pardon. Cox, saw Cooke occasionally, and give him bits of information, but he appears to have avoided telling him any-

(5).

thing that would be of any real value to the administration. He suggested to Cooke that all the information the Castle had gathered about the United Irishmen should be published; once they realised how completely they and their plans were known, they would be deterred from any rash step, and prevention was

(6).

better than cure. The Castle were sufficiently pleased with

(1). Madden, United Irishman, iv. 78.
 (2). 19 Aug. 1796. (Reb. Papers, 620 /18/14).
 (3). B.M., Add. MSS. (Pelham) 33, 105, f.262.
 (4). P.R.O., H.O., 100 /75/189.
 (5). Reb. Papers, 620 /37/194.
 (6). Cooke to Wickham, 13. March, 1798. (P.R.O., H.O., 100/80).

(1).
him to grant him a protection order, but the probability is that he told them very little.

Cox left Ireland for a while, but he was back by the time of Emmet's rebellion, and was suspected of connection with the insurgents. Corbet was employed to extract information about him; and Cox again managed to give the impression of giving a great deal of valuable information when in fact (2). he was saying nothing. He overreached himself, on this occasion, by creating too good an impression. Marsden sent him a note, with portentous secrecy: 'If the person to whom this is addressed will give the writer an interview, one whatever beside shall have knowledge of it. A line (3). dropped into the G.P.O. will be received!' Cox replied that he had nothing to fear from publicity, and would see him (4). openly whenever he liked. Later, Cox promised Marsden he would work among his friends against sedition, justifying (5). himself with the excuse that the cause had degenerated.

Cox was, as Cooke said, a clever man, too clever to work

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- (1). Reb. Papers., 620 /53/33.
(2). *ibid.* 20 /56/56A.
(3). (undated). *ibid.*, 620/64/107.
(4). 12, March 1803. (Reb.Papers, 620/64/149)
(5). *ibid.*

with the United Irishmen, who distrusted him. His only friend amongst the leaders, significantly, was Arthur O'Connor, who was equally opinionated. O'Connor later claimed that (1). it was he who made Cox give up the Union Star, but O'Connor's memory was not very reliable. Cox, apparently, (2). was embittered by brutality inflicted upon his father, and the Union Star was the expression of his personal vendetta. He found himself quite unexpectedly in a position to deceive both the Castle and the United Irishmen, and it rather gratified his vanity that he could do so. His acquisition did not benefit the Castle directly - he was too clever for that - but indirectly, by keeping his able pen out of the service of the opposition for many years, the administration could consider themselves well rewarded. (3).

Not that they had gained by the suppression of the Union Star. Exhortations to assassinate look absurd in print; the Union Star cannot be held directly responsible for any shedding of blood. The only effect it had, as the United Irishmen guessed, was to bind the forces of

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- (1). 12, Aug. 1803. (ReB. Papers. 620 /11/130).
(2). Madden, United Irishmen, iv., 14, 75. ¹³
(3). *ibid.*, iv., 62.

and the administration together, and to encourage them to greater repressive activity. The presence of a journal advocating violence was an excellent excuse to demand violence in retaliation. Cox gave more assistance to the Castle by his paper, than he could have done as an informer.

received a letter from [unclear] in [unclear] mentioning that some difficulties were encountered in the preliminary stages and when it came out, he explained that the paper was bad, and the printing office [unclear]. The publication was suspended, he explained that in the [unclear] the Catholics objected to the editor, and would not take up their minds who should be his successor. According to William Paulist Carey, the National Journal failed because of the difficulty of running a paper in support of an Association:

"to use a common phrase, what is every man's business is no man's business. A literary committee may possess talents, yet jealousy, vanity, and intolerance prevent it from successful exertion. There must be an acting editor of abilities to conduct the business, and no man of spirit will ever submit to the caprice, the control, and the censures of the number of persons who will deem that they will have a right to interfere in a matter which their money goes to support." (3)

(1) [unclear], Letters, p. 50.
 (2) [unclear], p. 71.
 (3) [unclear], p. 23 (Feb. 1870).
 (4) [unclear], p. 27.
 (5) [unclear], Appeal, p. xix.

The Press.

For some unexplained reason, United Irishmen found it difficult to set up a newspaper in Dublin, corresponding to the Northern Star in Belfast. The Dublin National Journal (1) appeared at about the same time as the Northern Star; but it only survived a few weeks. Drennan in his correspondence mentions that many difficulties were encountered in the preliminary stages; and when it came out, he complained that (2) the paper was bad, and the printing often inaccurate. (3) When publication was suspended, he explained that it was because the Catholics objected to the editor, and could not make up their minds who should be his successor. (4) According to William Paulet Carey, the National Journal failed because of the difficulty of running a paper in support of an Association:

"to use a common phrase, what is every man's business is no man's business. A literary committee may possess talents, yet jealousy, vanity, and indolence prevent it from successful exertion. There must be an acting editor of abilities to conduct the business, and no man of spirit will ever submit to the caprice, the control, and the censures of the number of persons who will deem that they will have a right to interfere in a matter which their money goes to support." (5)

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- (1) Drennan, Letters, p.60.
 (2) Ibid., p.71.
 (3) Ibid., p.82 (Feb. 1792).
 (4) Ibid., p.89.
 (5) W.P.Carey, Appeal, p.xix.

The Northern Star surmounted this obstacle: but the editor of the Northern Star was also the largest shareholder, which gave him the powers he required. To judge by Drennan's account of the setting up of the National Journal, Carey's explanation is probably correct. Twenty owners were to put up £50 each, in equal shares. ⁽¹⁾ The editor, Drennan explained, was to be free from interference by the owners; but with twenty owners, it is highly improbable that he was - especially if men of different religious beliefs were on the board.

Whatever the reason, Dublin United Irishmen did not have a paper of their own until 1797, unless the Morning Chronicle, whose prospectus, ominously, was sent by an agent ⁽²⁾ to the Castle, was set up by members of the society. It promised to advocate parliamentary reform, and one of its early numbers reprinted 'Billy Bluff and the Squire' from the Northern Star, ⁽³⁾ so at least it was sympathetic to the movement. It disappeared within a few months: but again, the failure may have been caused by poor commercial sense. The prospectus had had the word 'Evening' crossed out, and 'Morning' inserted: and the fact that in August the publishers announced that they were reverting to their

(1) Drennan, Letters, p.60.

(2) Reb. Papers, 620/23/40.

(3) 27 July 1796.

original plan, and changing their paper's title from the Morning Chronicle to 'The Chronicle and Evening Star' suggests that they had made a tactical error, and realised the fact too late. ⁽¹⁾ The public were still accustomed, in spite of Cooney's efforts in the Morning Post, to regard morning papers primarily as commercial, advertising journals, and to look to the evening papers for polemics.

When the Northern Star was put down, the United Irishmen were left without a newspaper that could be relied upon to support their cause; and during the summer of 1797 plans were again made to start one in Dublin. Owing to the need to make prosecution as difficult for the Castle as possible, the men behind the venture did not proclaim themselves; but among the sponsors were Arthur O'Connor and Thomas Emmet. A compositor on the paper who lived to work on the Nation, ⁽²⁾ later recalled that Lord Edward Fitzgerald had an interest; and Leonard MacNally informed the Castle that ⁽³⁾ Lawless, later Lord Cloncurry, was 'principal' share-holder.

The first number of the Press appeared on 28 September 1797. The Castle had been warned nearly a fortnight previously by Higgins that the United Irishmen were setting up ⁽⁴⁾ a new paper, with the help of the printer Stockdale: before it appeared, Higgins had added that it was to be called the

(1) 24 Aug. 1796.

(2) Fitzpatrick, Ireland before the Union, p.71.

(3) Fitzpatrick, Secret Service under Pitt, p.196.

(4) 15 Sept. 1797. (Reb. Papers, 620/18/14).

Press, but was already jocularly known as the Newgate, from a determination to carry on from there, if need be. Peter Finerty, Higgins continued, who had worked for a while under Corbet in the government's Hibernian Telegraph, was to be the nominal proprietor. Higgins lamented that the administration was doing nothing to prevent the paper from being set up, easier than to put it down once it had started.

His information, on this occasion, was correct. When the Press appeared, Finerty's name was registered as printer and proprietor. He was not yet of age, but the United Irishmen were pleased to have someone willing to accept the risk of prosecution and imprisonment on their behalf. From the start, the Press set out to emulate the Northern Star; the first editorial led off with a panegyric on the liberty of the press, concluding, with a more business-like air, 'a system such as no newspaper has gone to the expense of heretofore, has been adopted for procuring the earliest intelligence'. It quickly settled down into vigorous, though at first not violent, criticism of the administration.

The administration, as quickly, set about encompassing its destruction. Incommoded by the elaborate precautions taken to hide the identity of the men behind the paper, their

(1) 21 Sept. 1797. (Reb. Papers, 620/18/19).

(2) Reb. Papers, 620/32/182.

(3) Trial of Finerty (P) Dublin 1798, p.7.

first need was to unmask them. Finding that the editor, Charles Brenan, was in debt, the Castle secured his imprisonment, and endeavoured to persuade him to betray his colleagues.

Why Brenan should have obtained employment on the paper remains a mystery. His reputation had earlier been blackened in the Dublin Evening Post, at the time of Higgins' dispute with Magee. (1) If Magee's story can be trusted - and it was certainly circumstantial - Brenan, annoyed at some allegations in the Evening Post, had gone round to Magee's home, armed with an oak bludgeon stuck with splinters of broken glass. Magee was away - which, a terrified household had been informed, was as well for him; and Brenan had stormed around the house, smashing ornaments and disabling a man who sought to restrain him. (2)

Even allowing for exaggerations in Magee's story, it was curious that the Press should have employed Brenan. Corbet of the Hibernian Telegraph, set to work on him, soon brought him round. (3) Brenan wrote to his employers saying that unless they paid his debts, he would be compelled to give the government all the information he had about the Press. (4) (5) O'Connor refused: the Castle obtained their information, including MSS, in the handwriting of contributors of the Press. (6)

(1) D.E.Post, 30 July 1789.

(2) Ibid., 4 Aug. 1789.

(3) Reb. Papers, 620/61/140.

(4) Madden, United Irishmen, iv. 30.

(5) Reb. Papers, 620/35/2.

(6) Ibid., 620/61/140.

Meanwhile, agents were employed to watch ^{the paper.} Correspondents informed the government what was happening behind the scenes in the Press office, and who were employed there. (1)

Contributors were spied upon. One of them, sending in an article, apologised for not sending it through the post; if he went to the Post Office with a letter addressed to the Press, he would be a marked man. For all his precautions, his contribution was intercepted and brought to the Castle. The Press complained that newsvendors selling the paper, and citizens buying it, stood in risk of assault; and that innocuous-looking paragraphs would come in to the office for insertion in the paper, which contained concealed libels, to give an excuse for prosecution. Leonard McNally, the better to watch the Press, bought a share in the paper with £50 provided by the government. And little more than a month after the paper's first appearance, Major Sirr arrived at the office with a warrant to arrest Finerty, who was taken off to the Newgate. (2) (3) (4) (5) (6)

While Finerty was in prison, attempts were made to persuade him to follow the course taken by Brennan. His parents, he later complained at his trial, were induced to

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- (1) J. Mullala to Castle, 23 Oct. 1797. (Reb. Papers, 620/32/182).
 (2) 17 Nov. 1797. (Reb. Papers, 620/33/67).
 (3) Press, 4 Nov. 1797.
 (4) Press, 21 Oct. 1797.
 (5) Landreth, Emmet, p. 67.
 (6) Press, 2 Nov. 1797.

(1)
 reason with him on behalf of the government: and it was suggested to Cooke that the offer of proclamations for the Press might help to bring him round. But he remained steadfast, reacting to the news of Brennan's treachery by writing that 'villain, ruffian, knave would henceforth be superseded by the word Brennan, as more expressive of baseness'.

(4)
 After remaining eight weeks in jail, he was brought up on a charge of printing a seditious libel - a report of the trial of William Orr. (5) William Orr had been sentenced to death for administering the oath of the United Irishmen. Soon after his trial, two of the jurors confessed that they had been made drunk in the jury room, on whiskey that had been passed in through the window, and thereby induced to agree to a verdict of Guilty. Nevertheless, Orr was (6) executed. Lecky deals exhaustively with the case, coming to the conclusion that since justice must not only be done, but must be seen to have been done, the administration erred, whatever the truth of the jurymen's tale. The administration, however, having committed themselves to the fact of Orr's guilt, could not allow it to be challenged in a newspaper.

(1) Trial of Finerty (P), (1798), p.117.

(2) Reb. Papers, 620/33/113, 137.

(3) Ibid., 620/34/51.

(4) Trial of Finerty (P), p.106 (1798).

(5) Press, 23 Dec. 1797.

(6) Lecky, Ire., iv, 103 ff.

Curran, for the defence, said that although newspapers ought to be free to criticise, every newspaper in the country was being put down or bought by the administration. He tried to make the prosecution produce figures of how many newspapers were in Castle pay; but the court ruled against him. The attorney general rested his case on the assertion that the Press story excited sedition - that was enough. ⁽¹⁾ Finerty was found guilty and sentenced to two years imprisonment and a fine of £20, to find security for £1000 for seven years, and ⁽²⁾ to stand in the pillory.

For the moment, it looked as if the Press would cease publication. One issue was missed; then, Arthur O'Connor registered as nominal proprietor with the Stamp Commissioners. ⁽³⁾ Higgins had already forewarned the Castle that he would. By his own account, O'Connor had been the real owner since the ⁽⁴⁾ beginning. Circulation soared as soon as the Press appeared ⁽⁵⁾ over his name, eventually ^{- it was said -} reaching the unprecedented figure of 6,000 per issue, which was as much as the printers could handle. The paper grew more violent, printing horror stories of pitch caps and floggings and murders by the military. Arthur O'Connor sailed for England early in the year, and he cannot have directed the day-to-day policy: but Thomas Emmet,

(1) Press, 23 Dec. 1797.

(2) On 30 Dec. 1797.

(3) 29 Dec. 1797. (Reb. Papers, 620/18/14).

(4) Press, 30 Dec. 1797.

(5) Madden, United Irishmen, iv, 31.

the brothers Sheares, Thomas Russell, and Dr. Drennan all contributed. ⁽¹⁾ So did young Tom Moore, who was just 17, though his mother was so horrified when she heard about it that she made him promise never to write for the paper again. ⁽²⁾

The growth of the influence of the Press was to some extent reflected in the volume of its advertising. The first issue of 16 columns had only one column of advertisements; in a few weeks, the number had risen to five. ⁽³⁾ A sudden relapse to three, and subsequently less, during December, was explained by an article complaining that advertisers had been intimidated; the price to subscribers had to be increased to compensate. ⁽⁴⁾ Gradually the advertisers overcame their fears; by February 1798 the paper had more advertisements than ever before.

The administration and its supporters grew more nervous as the Press grew less restrained. The Castle was besieged by self-appointed agents offering suggestions (for cash) how the paper could be put down, ranging from straightforward military assault, to an ingenious scheme whereby exact replicas of the Press printed by the government and containing recantation of past errors, could be sold on the streets an hour or so before the Press itself appeared. ⁽⁵⁾

(1) Gilbert, History of Dublin, iii, 328.

(2) Moore, Memoirs, i, 55.

(3) Press, November 1797.

(4) Press, 12 Dec. 1797.

(5) 7 Jan. 1798. (Reb. Papers, 620/35/24).

Higgins' suggestion was one of the most sensible. The government, he said, had only to levy the maximum fine of £20 for each unstamped copy sold - even the most scrupulous of newspaper proprietors sold unstamped issues occasionally - and the Press would face bankruptcy.⁽¹⁾ Higgins also warned Cooke that Pasley, one of the sheriffs of Dublin, had actually intervened to protect the Press office from an assault, and to permit the paper's circulation. 'J.C. Beresford can make Pasley more steady',⁽²⁾ Higgins ominously concluded: Beresford was a notorious sadist.⁽³⁾ The Castle took the trouble to compile a list of all the English subscribers to the Press,⁽⁴⁾ who included a Duke and two Earls; but for a time they took no more positive action.

In February, the Press found an opportunity to irritate the administration more effectively than by straightforward denunciation. Smith, alias Bird, the Castle spy, had disappeared, and the Dublin Journal accused the United Irishmen of his assassination.⁽⁵⁾ Bird^{then} began to send letters to the Press denouncing fellow informers, confessing that he had trumped up the charges against the proprietors of the Northern Star at the government's instigation, and threatening⁽⁶⁾ to expose the whole government spy system.

(1) 5 Jan. 1798. (Reb. Papers 620/18/14).

(2) 3 Jan. 1798 (Ibid.)

(3) Barrington, Recollections, p.184.

(4) 9 Feb. 1798. (Reb. Papers, 620/35/131).

(5) Press, 1 Feb. 1798.

(6) Press, 3 Feb., 20 Feb. 1798.

By this time the Castle's methods were so well known that the prospect cannot have caused them much embarrassment; but that the Press should be able to jeer at them about Bird must have been galling. A few days later notice was given that the charges that had been pending for months against Arthur O'Connor were to be tried the following day. O'Connor, however, was out of reach, in England. At the end of February, Stockdale the printer, a United Irishman of long standing, was arrested and brought before the house of lords. He was charged with printing an article reflecting on Lord Glentworth, for which he was sentenced to six months imprisonment and a fine of £1000; ~~which~~ even Lord Chancellor Clare expressed the opinion that this was excessive.

To the Castle's annoyance, the Press reappeared on 6 March. O'Connor being by this time under arrest in England, they had felt confident that the paper would cease. On the lord lieutenant's recommendation, a warrant was made out to put an end to the Press; he had previously complained of its 'unheard of boldness', and now expressed himself pleased at any excuse to 'suppress a paper which was causing incalculable mischief'. Within a week, however, a new owner thereupon

(1) Press, 13 Jan. 1798.

(2) D.E.Post, 24 Feb. 1798.

(3) D.E.Post, 1 March 1798.

(4) Fitzpatrick, Secret Service under Pitt, p.196.

(5) P.R.O., H.O., 100/75/183.

came forward, to revive the Press. William Dowdall had been secretary to Grattan, who thought him a handsome young man of good education and considerable possibilities; and who deplored his conversion to more extreme opinions. (1) The news of his intention to resume publication of the Press was brought to the Castle. A squad of the militia were immediately despatched to the Press office, where they found the paper half printed. (2) They seized the incomplete copies, and broke up presses and types with sledge hammers, entirely destroying Stockdale's printing equipment. (3) The Press did not reappear.

[The administration reinforced the lesson of its destruction by continuing to harass the men who had been connected with the Press; O'Connor - who had bigger charges to face - Finerty, Stockdale, and Dowdall.

Finerty was released from jail after serving a year of his sentence; (4) but when he applied for a passport to take up a job he had been offered in England, it was at first refused (5) by Castlereagh. (6) Later, when Finerty found occasion to report some uncomfortable truths about the disastrous Walcheren expedition, Castlereagh had him prosecuted, and he was again imprisoned for eighteen months, in England. (7)

(1) Grattan, Memoirs, v. 226.

(2) Drennan, Letters, p.251.

(3) A printed account of the raid, which Dowdall tried unsuccessfully to publish as an advertisement in the Dublin press, is to be found, with the last number of the paper, in the B.M.

(4) Reb. Papers, 620/47/41.

(5) Ibid., 620/52/233.

(6) 22 May 1799 (Reb. Papers 620/47/41).

(7) D.E.Post, 5-11 Feb. 1811.

[Stockdale served his full sentence, and although the house of lords remitted his fine, an entry in the secret service money book -

"William Corbet, per agreement by Mr. Pollock relative to Stockdale ... £100, (2)

indicated that their benevolence was not entirely disinterested. His services to the Castle, whatever they were, did not prevent him from being imprisoned on suspicion at the time of the Emmet rebellion; after which Corbet, who had again been put to work on him, reported to the Castle that a chastened Stockdale had promised to supply the administration with any information that might come his way. Dowdall fled to England after the raid on the Press, but he was soon arrested, and sentenced, along with Arthur O'Connor, Neilson, and the other United Irish leaders, to banishment at Fort George. (3)

The Press was not a great newspaper. 'Vulgar for the vulgar' was Drennan's description, (4) and Tom Moore recalled it as being more distinguished for earnestness of purpose and intrepidity than for literary talent. (5) But its influence was greater, considering its brief existence, than that of any paper that had gone before. 'I can answer for the experience of my own home', Tom Moore wrote in his memoirs, 'for the

(1) Hib. J., 27 Aug. 1798.

(2) Gilbert, Documents Relating to Ireland, p.66.

(3) cf. Reb. Papers, 620/49/136.

(4) 14 Nov. 1797. Drennan, Correspondence, p.264.

(5) Moore, Memoirs, 1, 55.

(1)
 avidity with which every line was devoured'. It was not
 the last of the opposition newspapers to go under; the Harp
 in Cork and Cooney's Morning Post still had a few days more
 to run. But its suppression marks^{e)} in effect the final
 decision of the government to tolerate no longer newspapers
 that would not come to terms.

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The opposition newspapers in the 1790's were so
 unmercifully harassed, that the temptation to ascribe their
 treatment to a consistent conscious policy of suppression
 becomes at times almost irresistible. But there is little
 evidence that calculated policy existed. The newspapers were,
 the victims of Ascendancy fears, producing an attitude to the
 press which was none the less consistent for being unconsciously
 held. Frightened men then, as always, could produce the
 ready rationalizations to justify their actions - that the
 press should have liberty, but not license; or that opposition
 was one thing, sedition another. For these arguments, the
Press, and to a lesser degree the Northern Star, gave ample
 justification. They were demonstrably seditious newspapers,
 in that they were calculated to encourage the overthrow of the
 state as it was then constituted. Their intemperance was the
 product of natural feelings denied a natural outlet - the
 frantic violence of public-spirited men deprived of the power

(1) Moore, Memoirs, i, 55.

to effect reforms constitutionally. The maintenance of the Ascendancy, and the idea of a free press, were irreconcilable. The corruption of the Ascendancy oligarchy provoked the anger of the opposition newspapers: the anger of the newspapers was to be the excuse for the Ascendancy to destroy the freedom of the press.

- (1) Constitutional History of Ireland, vol. 1, p. 275.
- (2) Ibid., p. 275.
- (3) Times, 10 February 1845. Times, 17 Feb. 1845. Times, 10/11/1847.
- (4) Ibid., 2 March 1845.
- (5) London Standard, 1 March 1845. Times, 10 Feb. 1845. Times, 10/11/1847.
- (6) Standard, 16 March 1845.

Acts of Parliament - and their results.

During the early part of the year 1798, the administration had been investigating how they could substitute cure for prevention in handling what they took to be a diseased press. On February 24, a committee set up by the house of commons reported that Foster's Act had proved insufficient, and should be amended. ⁽¹⁾ The attorney general introduced an amending bill, which was rushed through the commons in three days, in spite of complaints from the opposition that they had no time to consider it properly. The only substantial amendment they secured was the reduction of the sureties required from the proprietor of a newspaper, from £1000 to £500. ⁽²⁾ 'Lord Charlemont's members', as the lord lieutenant referred to them, ⁽³⁾ pointed out that nobody would come forward to undertake the precarious business of running a newspaper if so big a surety was demanded, especially as he had to obtain sureties from two or more friends, for the same sum, to back the paper; and the chief secretary conceded the point. ⁽⁴⁾ The only other concession the opposition obtained was that the Act's duration should be limited to two years. ⁽⁵⁾ The lords' amendments made the bill more draconian. ⁽⁶⁾ They added a clause that made the

(1) Commons' Dn. Ire. (1798), xviii, 273.

(2) D.E.Post, 3 March 1798.

(3) Camden to Portland 6 March 1798 (P.R.O., H.O., 100/75/154).

(4) Hib.J., 5 March 1798.

(5) Camden to Portland, 6 March 1798. (P.R.O., H.O. 100/75/154).

(6) Saunders's, 16 March 1798.

printer's name on a newspaper prima facie evidence that he was the printer, which, it was pointed out, gave a good opportunity to anyone who had a grudge to work off against a printer that he disliked. Another clause they inserted enabled a Grand Jury to decide that a newspaper was a nuisance, and to seize and hold its press and types and destroy them. The printer could be prejudged; as soon as he was charged, he had to give security that he would not print any more of the paper until after his trial, which might be months ahead.

Other clauses in the bill tightened up the regulations concerning the registration of newspaper owners. The staffs of papers, as well as the printer and publishers, were to be registered with the Stamp Commissioners. Heavy fines - up to £100 a day - were to be imposed for any breach of the regulations. Magistrates were given power to issue search warrants, and to seize and hold presses pending trial. Printers and proprietors found guilty of seditious libel were disqualified from printing or owning a newspaper again. ⁽¹⁾

A second bill, a few days later, ostensibly granted duties to the Crown - and, in practice, completed the subjection of the press. It overlapped the previous bill. The most important innovation was that no printing press might

(1) Irish Statutes, 38 Geo. III, Cap.7.

be set up without a license costing £5 per annum. The ways in which a printer could disqualify himself from the ownership of his newspaper were increased - by staying away from the country for more than three months, for instance. The bill tried to ensure that the name of the printer on each copy of the newspaper would in future be 'really and truly' the printer. A further penny per copy was added to the Stamp Duty; an excise duty of 2d in the lb. was placed upon all newsprint of home manufacture, and the duty on imported newsprint increased to 3d.⁽¹⁾

The opposition press by this time had been cowed; these two acts were accepted with little comment. The Hibernian Journal tried to discredit the belief, if it existed, that the duties were for revenue, by producing an article which showed that the stamp duty was always increased after the administration had cause to be annoyed with the newspapers. The first law for the registration of printers' names had come after the brush with the Monitor in 1773: the stamp duty was increased from 1d. to a penny in 1785, after the attacks by the Volunteers' Journal in 1784: and now it had been raised to 2d. as a result of the work of the Press.⁽²⁾ But the Hibernian Journal left it at that: and the Dublin Evening

(1) Irish Statutes, 38 Geo.III Cap.18; and cf.P.R.O., H.O., 100/80/107.

(2) Hib.J., 26 March 1798.

Post, announcing a price increase, made no comment at all. (1)
 The Freeman alone felt safe to express what must have been the prevailing opinion among the newspapers; although it took immense care to flatter the chancellor of the exchequer and to admit there was every justification for his measures, considering the licentiousness of the press, it murmured 'we behold with concern the general operation of the measure'. (2)

'Concern' can hardly have described ~~what~~ the newspapers' feelings. The Freeman was better off than some of its rivals; at the time, it was getting about a page of proclamations, which were still free of tax, and were consequently more lucrative than the same quantity of ordinary advertisements. Nor can the change have seriously worried Saunders', which relied for its income on filling its pages with small advertisements; the advertisement tax had not been raised. For the Dublin Evening Post, though, the combined weight of the new impositions must have been serious. The extra penny per copy on the stamp duty; the yearly license for the printing press; and the increased excise on paper meant that the price to readers had to be put up to 4d.; and 4d. for a small, dull, newspaper represented money which the class of person who took the Post might well have preferred to spend in other ways. As things now stood, the

(1) D.E.Post, 17 March 1798.

(2) Freeman, 13 Feb. 1798.

administration took up to half of the newspapers' gross revenue - takings, not profits ⁽¹⁾ - and the temptation to accept tax-free proclamations must have been strong. The production of a newspaper was so hedged around with restrictions by the new Press Act, that it had in any case become a wearisome business. To found a new paper would now require an almost prohibitive amount of capital. The men who were putting it up would have to be certain that the paper's policy could be relied upon to give the administration no cause to take offence: offence, under the new acts, could have meant immediate suppression, and confiscation of press and materials.

The only opposition that was tolerated in the months following the rebellion, was to the idea of Union. The Hibernian Journal and the Dublin Evening Post both condemned the project: and new papers were actually founded with the aim of supplementing their efforts. The Anti-Union - a periodical tract, rather than a newspaper - ran for a few weeks at the beginning of 1799, ⁽²⁾ suspending publication, by its own account, only because the project of the Union had ⁽³⁾ been postponed. A government paper, the Lantern, apparently set up against it, ceased publication at the same time. The Anti-Union's last editorial promised that the publication would be resumed if the need arose: and in December, the first number of the Constitution, or Anti-Union Evening Post was

(1) cf. Reb. Papers, 620/24/125.

(2) No.1 appeared on 27 December 1798.

(3) 9 March 1799. (~~1798~~).

published. This was on an altogether larger scale than its predecessor, and on occasion it could smite the Union supporters with some vigour, (1) landing itself in trouble on at least one occasion, with the house of commons. (2) The Constitution was, nevertheless, pallid by contrast with the Press or the Northern Star. Opposition to the Union was permitted because the Castle could hardly have secured a jury who would convict; outside the purchased members of the legislature, the Union had negligible support among the Ascendancy. But the former vitality of the press by this time had been so sapped that it could not take advantage of its opportunities. The Constitution itself correctly gauged the situation:-

"It is a melancholy proof of the efficacy of that terror and that influence which the administration of this country have exerted since the agitation of the Union question, that scarcely one public print in Ireland has boldly ventured forth to interpose, between the minister and the constitution, the shield of a free press. All - or almost all - have been tamely acquiescent - their poverty, if not their will has consented, and if they have not assisted the assassin, they have stood by, indifferent spectators, while the crime was perpetrating." (3)

In its 100th number, the proprietors of the Constitution informed their advertisers, who by that time were sufficiently numerous to sustain the newspapers boast of

(1) cf. Squibs in issue for 30 Jan. 1800.

(2) 24 Feb. 1800 (Commons In. Ire. (1800), xix. 53).

(3) Constitution, 3 May 1800.

a big circulation, that as the King's Assent was to be given (1) that week to the Act of Union, it would cease publication.

[The later history of some of the men most closely connected with the paper suggests that its future would not, had it continued, have been very secure.]

Moore, the publisher of the Constitution, was an old-established bookseller, and had been a United Irishman. (2)

The reports of the speeches made by the opposition in the debates on the Union were sent to him for publication, in spite of a warning that he was not to be trusted. He sold the MSS to the administration; Cooke, who was acting on Castlereagh's instruction paid a large sum for them, and (3) burned them. John Shea, the printer of the Constitution had already proposed himself to Pelham, through an inter- (4) mediary, as a potential conductor of a new government journal; and if he was not working for the Castle at the same time that he was printing the Constitution, he entered their service very (5) shortly afterwards.

Shea was chosen as the printer of a new government journal, which came out for the first time in 1803. With the aid of a subsidy, the True Born Irishman was published for $\frac{1}{2}$ d., directing its feeble energies to antagonize the labouring

(1) Constitution, 29 July 1800.

(2) McDowell, "Personnel of the Dublin United Irishmen," in I.H.S., ii, 42 (March 1940).

(3) Grattan, Memoirs, v, 179. See also Gilbert, History of Dublin, iii, 34.

(4) Dec. 1796 (Reb. Papers, 620/26/142).

(5) B.M., Add. Mss (Peel) 40232 f.248.

classes against France. Its design was to persuade the 'labouring men of Ireland' that they would be even worse off under Bonaparte:-

British Laws for my Guard
 When my cottage is barred
 'Tis safe in the light as the dark, Sir
 If the Squire should oppress
 I get instant redress
 My orchard's as safe as his park, Sir! (1)

Bonaparte himself was vilified; an authentic account was produced of the case of a servant girl in Yorkshire, who was in child by him. The patronising air of the paper would have made it irritating to the persons towards whom it was directed, had they been able to read it; but as a class they were almost entirely illiterate. In the True Born Irishman, the government press reached its nadir.

(1) The ploughman's ditty, by Hannah More, ^(an) being an answer to that foolish question, "What have the poor to lose?"
Trueborn Irishman No.1.

CONCLUSIONS.

At the time of the Union,
~~suppressed~~, the independent newspapers in Ireland had
 all been ^{virtually} purchased by the government, or suppressed. ⁽¹⁾ To some
 extent, they had helped to make their suppression inevitable. They were often contentious, occasionally factious, and invariably one-sided. Governments are inclined not to realise that they have equally factious and one-sided newspapers in their interest. The bias, too, was largely a product of government policy: so small were the financial returns from a newspaper, on account of the high duties to which it was subject, that owners could not afford to maintain staffs of reporters. Accounts of meetings had usually to be obtained from a supporter of the cause, whatever it might be, who naturally coloured the report with his prejudices. A number of minor restrictions existed, small in themselves, but oppressive taken together: for instance, in the trial of Stockdale, evidence was given that printing presses had to cease work after nine in the evening, because of complaints from citizens of the noise. ⁽²⁾ If the newspapers were unreliable, the government's regulations and restrictions upon them were largely responsible.

Up to a point, the government's restrictions might have had the effect of stimulating the press to greater

(1) cf. Plowden, *Historical Review*, ii. 709

(2) D.E. Post, 1 March 1798.

exertions. But when the full weight of government influence was used against the press, it inevitably succumbed - particularly as the Castle had the two theoretically independent powers, the judicature and the legislature, acting in close alliance.

Judicial summings-up of cases against the press in the period tended to echo the case for the prosecution. Judges acted as servants of the administration - consciously, in some instances. Clonmell in his diaries more than once admits as much. In 1790, referring to his treatment of Magee, he wrote - 'last month I became a viscount, and for want of circumspection in trying a case against a printer, I have been grossly abused for several months. I have endeavoured to make that abuse useful towards my earldom'.⁽¹⁾ Later, he justified his connection with the court of king's bench on the grounds that it was the best means of keeping himself in power, and in connection with the government of both countries.⁽²⁾ His function, he considered, was to serve the government: and the view of most of his colleagues on the bench was not substantially different.

The houses of parliament were no less willing to serve the administration. Newspapers were traditionally not permitted to report proceedings at all, so that any reference

(1) Fitzpatrick, Ireland before the Union, p.33.

(2) Ibid., p.38.

to debates could in theory ^{still} bring down punishment on the newspaper concerned. In practice, printers or owners were only punished for references considered derogatory: but as each house was judge in its own case, the net could be cast wide. The right of the houses to decide the extent of their own privileges was never tested. A pamphleteer writing in 1792 was in no doubt that they were above the ordinary law of the land - they could not even be discussed in the courts. (1) Accusations against newspaper owners of breach of privilege might lead to no more than a delivery of a formal reprimand; but the case of Gilbert of the Evening Post in 1797 showed that the lords were prepared to impose sentences as heavy as any that might be heard in the court of King's Bench. The Press, warned by his fate, for a time refused to print parliamentary debates at all (ostensibly because they were tedious) (2) because it feared reprisal - rightly, as it turned out, when Stockdale was sentenced for breach of privilege in 1798. Thereafter the tone of the press was so quiet that neither house had cause for annoyance: Instead, the commons on one occasion turned their attention to an English newspaper, ordering that copies of The Sun 'shall be burned by the hands of the common hangman in College Green, in front of this house, (3) on Monday next'.

(1) Observations on the jurisdiction of the house of commons in matters of privilege, (P), Dublin 1792.

(2) Press, 18 Jan. 1798.

(3) Commons In.Ire., xii. 18 (8 Feb. 1799).

The tendency of journalists who are badgered and frightened is either to lie low, or to lash out viciously. The irresponsibility of the press, such as it was, could be attributed not to excessive license, but to excessive restriction. Except in isolated instances, however, such as Magee's war with Higgins, and some of Cooney's tantrums, the press of the day was not particularly wild. A visitor who toured the country in 1790 wrote that "the newspapers here, in general, are spirited and well supported. And to them are attributed the advantages which Great Britain has already conferred on (the Irish). It was the press which diffused the spirit of volunteering throughout the kingdom. No writings are admired in the newspapers which are not highly seasoned with patriotism and reflections on government'⁽¹⁾. The impression he gives is of a vigorous and healthy press exercising its normal functions. But governments dislike criticism in proportion to the grounds that exist to justify it. The worse the abuses, the greater the resentment at their exposure. In a state as corrupt, inefficiently-run, and autocratic as the Ireland of the 1790's, silence was construed as criticism, and criticism as rebellion.⁽²⁾ A press that was fulfilling its task could not be tolerated; the truth was too unpalatable.

(1) Charles A. Bowden, Labour through Ireland, p.65.

(2) R.B. McDowell, Irish Public Opinion, gives many instances of this. cf. ps.170, 254.

Of the government's two expedients to control the press, purchase and suppression, neither proved of ultimate value. Little benefit was obtained from the papers that gave the government support. [Proposing that the Castle should set up a new paper in 1794, John Shea the printer wrote 'there are at present two papers in Dublin which profess to hold these (constitutional) principles. But they are so sunk in public opinion that their circulation is very confined. And indeed they have been so long the object, if not the byword of party contempt, that it is believed every measure to restore their credit must prove fruitless'.⁽¹⁾ Admittedly Shea, as the prospective editor of the new paper, had an interest in damning the old; but all the evidence is that his contempt for the Freeman and the Dublin Journal was justified. The same criticism was to apply to every newspaper which worked for the administration.

Shea made some shrewd constructive suggestions. 'Government papers', he said, 'must avoid panegyrics, and should at least make a show of criticism of the administration! Otherwise 'instead of removing prejudices, their sure effect is to strengthen them'. This was a lesson the Castle proved incapable of learning. Criticism of the administration coming from a newspaper that owed its existence to their

(1) Reb. Papers, 620/26/97 and 142.

support, would have been thought the basest ingratitude - had any newspaper owner the hardihood to criticise.

As Shea said, this simply meant that the government newspapers attracted few readers, and the government had to subsidise them. The curious situation arose that the smaller the circulation of the newspapers, the more the government had to pay to keep them alive; only on rare occasions did the Castle, considering whether it could afford to disburse so much money, decide that it could afford not to. The exact sums distributed remain undisclosed: they can only be guessed at, from the accounts that are known. According to the under secretary, Giffard in 1795 was receiving £300 a year for unspecified services; a further £300 for running the Dublin Journal for the government; and he had been given a 'place'⁽¹⁾ in the Custom House as well. Cooke did not record the sum paid to the Dublin Journal for the printing of proclamations and government advertisements: by the end of the century, this was over £1,000 a year. A single newspaper, in fact, was costing the government in the region of £2,000 a year to maintain. The amounts paid to the Freeman and the Hibernian Telegraph cannot have been much smaller.]

The growth of government influence over the press can be gauged from the increase in the proclamation fund. In

(1) See above p. 94.

1795 it stood at £4,100. ⁽¹⁾ The estimate for the year ending 25 March 1797 was £7,000; and, on top of this sum, the printers of the official Dublin Gazette, who were in charge of the distribution of the proclamations to other newspapers, estimated that there would be a deficit on the current year's (1796) account of £3,400 - bring the total vote up to five figures. ⁽²⁾ The excuse that was given was the great increase in the number of proclamations occasioned by the war. But if the importance of the war had really made the proclamations so necessary, they would hardly have been published in newspapers with negligible circulations. Over £7000 a year continued to be set aside for the proclamation fund annually after 1796. ⁽³⁾ This did not include the advertisements inserted in the press by individual government departments, whose total cannot easily be estimated, ~~but they will have been nearly as much again.~~ Neither did it include the subsidies paid direct to newspaper owners and to individual journalists from the secret service money, the accounts of which have not survived; nor the pensions given for services rendered to the government; nor the sinecures and places given as ⁽⁴⁾ additional rewards. It is impossible, in the absence of so

(1) Commons In.Ire., xv, Appx. Dii.

(2) Ibid., xvi, Appx.cxcvi.

(3) Ibid., xviii, Appx.xxvii: xix, Appx. di.

(4) Aspinall, Politics and the Press, p.409-10, gives an account of the author's unsuccessful search for further information on government expenditure on the press in Ireland before the Union.

many of the necessary records, even to guess at the amount that the government had to expend each year on its press: all that can be said is that it was ludicrously disproportionate to the returns that the press was able to make on their behalf.

The suppression of the opposition newspapers brought the government what might appear to have been more valuable assistance. The Northern Star and the Press had, for their day, enormous circulations; and the government can only have congratulated themselves when those newspapers could disseminate their propoganda no more. If so, they deceived themselves. Curran, speaking at the trial of Hamilton Rowan, exposed the fallacy of their reasoning in one of his finest passages:-
(1)

"What calamities are the people saved from by having public communications left open to them? I will tell you, gentlemen, what they are saved from, and what the government is saved from. I will tell you also, to what both are exposed by shutting up the communication. In one case, sedition speaks aloud, and walks abroad. The demagogue goes forth; the public eye is upon him; he frets his busy hour upon the stage; but soon either weariness, or bribe, or punishment, or disappointment bears him down or drives him off, and he appears no more. In the other case, how does the work of sedition go forward? Night after night the muffled rebel steals forth in the dark, and casts another and another brand upon the pile, to which, when the hour of fatal maturity shall arrive, he will apply the flame. As the advocate of society, therefore, of peace, of domestic liberty, and

(1) Charles Phillips, Recollections of Curran, p.185.

the lasting union of the two countries, I
conjure you to guard the liberty of the
press, that great sentinel of the state,
that grand detector of public imposture;
guard it because, when it sinks, there
sinks with it, in one common grave, the
liberty of the subject, and the security
of the crown."

PART III.

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A. The Period of Recovery 1803-12.

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The vitality of the Irish press was at its lowest in the year of Emmet's rebellion. A slow recovery followed, until by 1812 the Dublin newspapers were full of life, to the embarrassment of the administration. The importance of the period in the story of the Irish press lies less in the revival than in the reaction that revival provoked. The suppression of the independent newspapers in 1785 and in the '90's had been the work of the governments of the day: but it had not, strictly speaking, been consciously planned. Peel's appointment as chief secretary in 1812 foreshadowed a new policy. He came fully conscious of the power of opposition newspapers, and determined to put an end to them: and he had the ability and strength of purpose to pursue this course to its conclusion. The experiment - the only one of its kind ever to be attempted in these Islands - was to provide an illuminating commentary upon the effect of government management upon the press.

The Hardwicke Administration.

The revival of the opposition press in Ireland after the rebellion years was delayed partly by the caution of the newspaper owners, unwilling to risk prosecution, and partly by the character of the administration. Hardwicke, who had been sent over as lord lieutenant to enforce a repressive policy, revealed himself to be tolerant and temperate, and his government was not

unpopular.¹ Consequently, he won the approval of such newspapers as the Dublin Evening Post even after that paper had purged itself of government connections, and resumed its independence. Only the extreme Orangemen ~~and Unionists~~, who resented Hardwicke's toleration, were inclined to be critical.

At the same time that the Post was eulogising "the good Lord Hardwicke" and his "wise government",² it was accusing Giffard's Dublin Journal of nursing a secret hatred for the lord lieutenant.³ Giffard had become the mouthpiece of the Dublin Orangemen, and his fulminations against the Catholics, at a time when Hardwicke was anxious to conciliate them, soon brought the two men into conflict. In 1805, Hardwicke had Giffard removed from his place in the customs, for his part in the presentation of a strongly worded Orange petition from the corporation of Dublin to the king. Giffard, protesting, said that when the Fitzwilliam administration had withdrawn support from the Dublin Journal, they had not touched his customs place. He was too old, he said, to learn a new trade, and the Dublin Journal, which he held in trust for the government, was not very profitable; he hoped that Hardwicke would not harden his heart against him.⁴ Hardwicke would not relent. A few months later, when Judge Johnson was arraigned for a libel, in which he had referred to the Trojan Horse, "comparing that wooden machine

¹ Cf. an article in the Dublin Political Review, no. xii, 24 Apr. 1813.

² D.E. Post, 14 Jan. 1804.

³ Ibid., 13 March 1804.

⁴ B.M. Add. MSS. (Hardwicke) 35728 f.128.

with the head of Lord Hardwicke", Giffard, who went to give evidence on the judge's behalf, seized the chance to accuse the lord lieutenant of turning him out of the customs job "because he was a protestant."¹

Apart from the spectacle of the Dublin Journal in opposition to the government, the press in the last months of the Hardwicke administration showed no startling changes. Francis Higgins was dead, and the patriot writers, dispersed; otherwise, the same journalists tend to appear, in the same circumstances as in the rebellion years. H. B. Code continued to supply the Castle with information:² so did William Corbet, of the Hibernian Telegraph. The government gave financial assistance to newspapers that promised support; George Grace established his Clonmel Herald on these terms during Hardwicke's viceroyalty.³ The older subsidised newspapers printed their proclamations, and their owners drew their pensions. Prosecutions ceased, but that was due less to the Castle's forbearance than the absence of anything that could be termed seditious. The press, during the first five years of the Union, remained torpid.⁴

In the last few months of Hardwicke's stay in Ireland a few

¹D.E. Post, 28 Nov. 1805.

²I.S.P.O. Off. Papers, 534/240/39.

³Ibid., 534/243/3: 556/413/29. And see Geo. Grace, Letter to H.E. the Duke of Richmond, (P.) Clonmel, 1813.

⁴G. L. Smyth, in his 'Ireland Historical and Statistical' (London, 1849) expresses the opinion that Hardwicke 'suborned the most venal newspaper press that ever betrayed the interests of a country' - but he is probably thinking of the 1803 period.

signs began to appear that the independent press was beginning to shake off this lethargy. The Dublin Evening Post was still friendly. It could say, shortly before Hardwicke left, that the people of Ireland were satisfied with the administration, and affectionately attached to the resident nobility and gentry.¹ But it was gradually adopting a more critical line, urging Catholic claims, and expressing resentment at restrictions on press liberty.² By the time of Hardwicke's departure, the Post had so far recovered that Dr. Drennan enclosed a copy in a letter to his sister-in-law, 'by which you will see the spirit that is unextinguished in Ireland.'³ His correspondence also mentions favourably another newspaper, the Evening Herald, that came into existence in Hardwicke's last months in Ireland.⁴

'All the Talents' - 1806-7.

The fact that two independent newspapers, the Post and the Herald, were friendly disposed to the government, and likely to be still more friendly to the liberal Ministry of All the Talents than to their tory predecessors, gave the Duke of Bedford, who succeeded

¹D.E. Post, 2 Jan. 1806.
²Ibid., 23 May 1805.
³Drennan, Correspondence, p. 368.
⁴Ibid., pp. 354-5.

Hardwicke as lord lieutenant, the chance to sweep away the whole structure of government subsidies and support, leaving the press to its own resources. Bedford failed to take it. The proclamation fund remained, ~~at its original level~~ and insignificant newspapers like Corbet's Hibernian Telegraph - the 'proclamation journals', as the Herald contemptuously called them¹ - retained the new government's financial support. The independent newspapers received a lesson which they were to be given many times during the century: that the whig for all his principles was not necessarily a better friend to the liberty of the press than the tory.

Bedford was not long in Ireland before he was complaining that Giffard had assailed the Catholics with violent invective. Everybody knew the connection of the Dublin Journal and the government: the Catholics, Bedford wrote, were not unnaturally irritated, contrasting him unfavourably with his predecessor who had not allowed such things to be done with impunity.²

The government were aware of this dissatisfaction, which they shared; but, instead of putting an end to the whole subsidy system, they could think of no better remedy than to set up a new paper of their own, and to give it such advantages that, unlike its tory predecessors, it would be a commercial success. The Correspondent appeared for the first time on 8 November, 1806. According to

¹Evening Herald, 6 March 1807.

²H.M.C., Fortescue, ix, 121. (20 March 1807).

one of its proprietors, Henry Townsend, the paper was set up by compact with Bedford¹, the government promising it a subsidy of £1200 a year - £500 a year from the secret service money, £400 from proclamations, and the rest from some unspecified source². Within a few weeks the proprietors had obtained a still more valuable concession. In December Morgan, the editor, wrote to the under-secretary asking permission to see the copies of the English newspapers which arrived by express³. This privilege was thereupon granted, exclusively, to the Correspondent⁴. These 'expresses' were brought from London to the Castle by government courier; they were several hours quicker than the ordinary mail, which meant that the Correspondent could be a day ahead of its rivals in printing the British and Continental news that filled most of the Dublin papers. It was ironical that this concession, which was a decidedly more effective method of aiding the government press than the grant of proclamations, and far more of a threat to the opposition newspapers than prosecutions, should have been made by the only 'liberal' government that Ireland was to have for many years. More ironical still, was the Ministry's action in increasing the proclamation fund from the £7000 it had

¹Townsend to Castle, 24 March 1807 (Off. Papers, 534/240/10).

²Townsend to Peel, 27 Jan. 1815 (B.M., Add. MSS. (Peel) 40242 f.267).

³23 Dec. 1806. (Off. Papers, 530/218/38).

⁴Off. Papers, 534/240/24.

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been since the Union to £10,500 - the better to secure a docile press.¹

The Richmond Administration: Wellesley as chief secretary.

Early in 1807 the Ministry of All the Talents fell, and the new tory government in April replaced Bedford by the Duke of Richmond, who brought Arthur Wellesley with him as chief secretary.

For some newspapers, the position was immediately clarified. The Dublin Journal promptly returned to the fold. Giffard was rewarded by the restoration of his place in the customs: and when this appointment was criticised - room had been made for him by dividing customs and excise into two separate jobs, in order to give him an appointment worth £600 a year - Wellesley justified his action by stating Giffard's fitness, his long and faithful service, and "the opinion we entertained that if he had been guilty of an indiscretion, three years deprivation of office was a sufficient punishment."² Conversely, the Dublin Evening Post returned to opposition. Its support for the government had not brought it rewards enough to tempt its proprietor - John Magee, son of Higgins' enemy - to trim. When Bedford left in April 1807 it compared his departure to Fitzwilliam's in 1795, the inference being that the Post would have little sympathy with his successors.³

¹Parl. Papers 1810-11, vi. appx. Cl.

²The Civil Correspondence of the Duke of Wellington, 1807-9, (Ireland), ed. by his son, p. 361.

³D.E. Post, 23 Apr. 1807.

The Freeman's Journal had a more difficult decision to make. After the death of Higgins, it had come into the hands of Philip Whitfield Harvey, who for some years had been in receipt of a secret service pension of £200 a year.¹ Under him, it had continued to support the government. Harvey can have lost no time ingratiating himself with Wellesley, if the Correspondent's complaint that the Freeman was given expresses was justified?² but at the same time he was keeping in with past patrons, writing to Hardwicke to say that the Freeman was printing full reports of his speeches, and defending him from the malice of the Dublin Journal.³ Harvey had picked up some of Francis Higgins' craft. When he bought a new paper, the Evening Packet, in 1807 he told the Castle that he was doing it not for personal gain, but to render service to the government, because the paper had begun in dangerous hands - it had belonged to the former printer of the Press, Stockdale. He added, however, that he would keep the paper in its old politics for a while, to avoid antagonising readers.⁴

As soon as they heard of the impending change of government,

¹Commons Jn. Ire., xix. appx. dxvii: and see Fitzpatrick, Secret Service Under Pitt, p. 124.

²See below, p. 224.

³4 Aug. 1807. (B.M., Add. MSS. (Hardwicke) 35606 f317).

⁴June 1807. (Off. Papers, 534/240/25).

the proprietors of the Correspondent wrote to the Castle, expressing their apprehension that they might be adversely affected. With their £1200 a year subsidy, and exclusive right to extract news from the expresses, they did not care to lose government favour; and they begged the lord lieutenant to persuade his successors that they were worthy of support.¹ The Correspondent formally regretted the departure of Bedford and promptly began to smooth its path to the other side by professing distaste for political acrimony.² It greeted the new lord lieutenant effusively on his arrival, but it took some time to live down the connection with his predecessor. A few weeks later, the editor complained that the agreement whereby he was to receive the London papers that came by express had been broken; they had been given to the Freeman. He promised good behaviour in future, if the privilege should be restored, hinting that the government might find the Correspondent less to their taste if the Freeman continued in favour.³ The proprietors apparently reinforced this plea with direct approach to Wellesley, who on receipt of it gave orders that the editor of the Correspondent should have the expresses.⁴

The government expected some return for this assistance. On

¹24 March 1807. (Off. Papers, 534/240/10).

²Correspondence, 21 Apr. 1807.

³14 June 1807. (Off. Papers, 534/240/24).

⁴Wellington, Correspondence, p. 108.

one occasion the editor Morgan was told to put the best face he could on news that had just arrived from Sir Arthur Wellesley in the Peninsular; but the proprietors of the Correspondent retained sufficient independence to dismiss Morgan for altering the newspaper's more pessimistic version without consulting them. The government accepted Morgan's version of the reasons for his dismissal, giving him a grant of £350 the following year in compensation 'until he should be provided for.' As usual they haggled over the degree of compensation to which he was entitled, the irritation causing him mental derangement - if his wife's version is to be believed - and death.¹

With the restoration of its privilege of exclusive access to the expresses, the Correspondent began to thrive, and by September 1807 could claim to have the largest circulation of any Dublin newspaper - over 2500 copies a day.² Circulation in those days was usually measured by the number of government stamps issued over a period, which would have given the Correspondent and the Freeman, which were dailies, an advantage over the Dublin Evening Post, which came out three times a week: probably the Post still had the biggest body of subscribers. But for a government paper even to claim a large circulation, was most unusual. The opposition press immediately realised the danger. The Evening Herald warned its readers that a bad administration is always compelled

¹Aspinall, Politics and the Press, p. 266.

²Correspondent, 7 Sept. 1807.

to gag opposition newspapers, and 'it matters little to the public if that effect be produced by the strong arm of power, or the more insidious means of undue partiality.'¹ The Evening Post added that although the expresses were paid for out of the public purse, the Correspondent was sole beneficiary.² The Correspondent promptly denied receiving any government favour; it was 'above the hungry pursuit of stipend,' and claimed to be first with the news by virtue of its efficiency.³

These matters rested until the following March, when an Irish member Henry Parnell, who had been a treasury commissioner in the Ministry of 'All the Talents', asked questions about the expresses in the house of commons, saying that one paper's circulation had dropped by 5000 copies a week as a result of the monopoly. Wellesley replied that the cost was about £20 a day, and admitted that the Correspondent was the only newspaper to benefit.⁴ The Evening Post reminded its readers how the Correspondent had denied the facts that Wellesley now admitted.⁵ A few days later Parnell again referred to a practice which 'went directly to the suppression of the liberty of the press in Ireland.' Wellesley's answer

¹Quoted by D.E. Post, 8 Sept. 1807.

²D.E. Post, 11 Sept. 1807.

³Correspondent, 12 Sept. 1807.

⁴15 March 1808. (Parl. Debs., x, 1088).

⁵D.E. Post, 19 March 1808.

was that the Correspondent was the only daily evening paper in Dublin; because only one London paper came by express, it could only go to one paper in Dublin¹ an ingenuous argument to which Parnell replied that all the editors could see the paper in one place, if it was put at their disposal¹.

The following month Parnell drew the commons' attention to an older abuse. When the Irish chancellor of the exchequer moved the annual grant of £10,500 to pay for the printing of government proclamations in the Dublin Gazette and other papers, Parnell moved the omission of the words 'and other papers.' He told the commons² that the Castle used these proclamations merely to gain a hold on the press. Editors used them unscrupulously for revenue: he instanced a case of a newspaper that had just published a proclamation giving warning of a plague that had broken out in Gibraltar in 1805, and another, giving details of a temporary enactment that had expired before the proclamation appeared.

Wellesley replied that proclamations were not distributed with any intent to influence newspaper proprietors: they were also given to the opposition press: and if out-of-date proclamations were published, they would not be paid for. Croker² said that one Irish editor had told him that he often used old proclamations:

¹D.E. Post, 2 Apr. 1808.

²John Wilson Croker, then practising at the Irish bar, and member for Downpatrick.

'Tis not very interesting, to be sure,' he had said, 'but then, it all serves to fill up the paper.' Parnell, however, persisted in his argument that the proclamations were used to purchase support. If they were occasionally offered to the opposition newspapers, it was only as a bribe to tempt them over to the other side.¹

The opposition papers, as Wellesley claimed, did receive a few proclamations. The Post carried as many as two columns full of them, on occasions during the summer of 1808. But it continued critical, on the grounds that the favour extended only while parliament was sitting; Wellesley would restore favours to the government press as soon as parliament was prorogued.² The most influential Cork newspaper, the Southern Reporter, received no proclamations, although it paid nearly £1400 a year in stamp and advertisement duties;³ yet the proprietor of the Cork Evening Post was able to strike a bargain with the government, receiving the promise of proclamations on condition that it gave the government its full support.⁴

Wellesley's denial that the government was endeavouring to influence the press was no more than political face-saving. His

¹27 Apr. 1808. (Parl. Deb.s, xi, 84).

²D.E. Post, 28 July 1808.

³Southern Reporter, 26 July 1808.

⁴J. Harris to Wellesley, 30 Oct. 1807. (Off. Papers, 534/240/40).

correspondence shows that it was he who, in February 1808, secured the monopoly of the expresses to the Correspondent.¹ On his departure from Ireland, he had a qualm of conscience about this - or possibly he feared that he might be taken to task for it later; writing from London, he asked the under-secretary to see Webb, the Correspondent's proprietor, 'and tell him that I prevented the paper from going over to him because I did not think it proper that anything for any individual should be sent by the express.' However, even then Wellesley was prepared to make an exception in the case of the London Sun, which he said might still be given to the Correspondent.²

In another letter to the under-secretary, he set out the principles that guided his treatment of the press. Philip Whitfield Harvey of the Freeman, alarmed that the change of chief secretary might injure his paper, had written to Wellesley asking him to direct that the private subsidy to the Freeman should be continued. This allowance, Harvey said, was smaller than of old; he had also lost money on his Evening Packet, because government assistance had not come up to his expectations, and if the subsidy for the Freeman were to cease, the Freeman would cease with it.³ Wellesley wrote to Saxton enclosing the letter,

¹Wellington, Correspondence, p. 108.

²Ibid. p. 593.

³P. W. Harvey to Wellesley, 5 Apr. 1809. (Off. Papers, 539/290/91).

'which recalls to my mind the measures which I had in contemplation in respect to newspapers in Ireland. It is quite impossible to leave them entirely to themselves; and we have probably carried out reforms in respect to publishing proclamations as far as they will go, excepting only that we might strike off from the list of those permitted to publish proclamations the newspapers, both in town and country, which have the least extensive circulation, and which depend, I believe, entirely on the money received on account of proclamations. I am one of those, however, who think it will be very dangerous to allow the press in Ireland to take care of itself, particularly as it has so long been in leading strings. I would, therefore, recommend that, in proportion as you will diminish the profits of the better kind of newspapers, such as the Correspondent and the Freeman's Journal, and some others of that class, on account of proclamations, you should increase the sum they are allowed to charge on account of advertisements and other publications.'

Mindful of his troubles the previous year, Wellesley went on to warn Saxton that it was absolutely necessary to keep the newspaper charge down to the annual parliamentary vote of £10,500 a year, and that the accounts must be of a kind that could be put before parliament¹.

¹10 Apr. 1809 (written from Portsmouth) Wellington, Correspondence, p. 647.

Wellesley Pole as chief secretary.

Wellesley's successor as chief secretary was his brother, Wellesley Pole, under whom the opposition newspapers increased in number and vigour. 'You have been yourself the remote agent' a pamphleteer addressed him in 1811, 'the vital and master spring which communicated impulse and energy and effect to the Irish press.'¹

The Dublin Evening Post remained the most influential newspaper. It became more spirited as each month passed, and in August 1810 published the most scathing indictment of the government that had appeared in print since 1798, blaming Pitt for setting the fashion for government treatment of the press - 'what oppression could not accomplish, seduction attempted, and bribery too frequently had the looked for success'. On this model, the Post said, the ministry were endeavouring to undermine the Irish press by heavy taxation, bribery, and fraud.²

The Post was joined in opposition, tentatively, by the Freeman. With his pension to consider, Philip Whitfield Harvey was at first more circumspect than young Magee; but he eventually lashed out at 'the political coxcombs whom Mr. Pole pays, from the honest earnings of an impoverished people', and at the dulness, flippancy, insolence, and servility of the government

¹A list of the Catholic Committee interspersed with strictures on the calumnies launched upon their views and character by the Castle press. (P) Dublin 1811.

²D.E. Post, 9 Aug. 1810.

press.¹ Watty Cox had already noticed that the Freeman was 'another character since it flung £1200 Castle ballast overboard to become patriot.'² Harvey claimed that the breach with Pole was consequent upon Pole's treatment of the Catholics.³ It was more probably the result of Pole's barely disguised contempt for the subsidised press, as he found it on his arrival. Harvey's relations with the Catholic party were never particularly cordial, and the furthest the Freeman would go in their support was to denounce extremists, Green or Orange.⁴

A more surprising convert to the opposition was the Correspondent. The proprietors were faced in 1809 with a government ultimatum: they must give the government unqualified support, or cease to receive government benefits.⁵ This put the owners into a dilemma. The paper had obtained its large circulation from the advantage of exclusive access to the expresses. If this privilege was withdrawn, the circulation would undoubtedly suffer. But if they committed themselves to the support of an unpopular government, their circulation would suffer still more. The owners must have felt that the paper was now strong enough to

¹Freeman, 2 Jan. 1811.

²Cox's Irish Magazine, Oct., 1810.

³Freeman, 4 Sept. 1813.

⁴Ibid., 16 July 1811. And see D.E. Post's article on the Freeman, 12 June 1813.

⁵B.M., Add. MSS. (Peel), 40201 f.293.

walk without government crutches. They asserted their independence. Within a few weeks, the expresses were withdrawn¹

The opposition press was joined early in the course of the Pole administration by the Messenger, the first weekly that had appeared in Ireland for some years.² It was run by the editor of the Freeman, Frederick William Conway, who devoted it to the service of the Catholic Board, a task which it did well enough to arouse the anger of the Castle press on several occasions³ - notably when it eulogized Shelley on his visit to Dublin in 1812.⁴ Experience was later to show that papers published in the Catholic interest stood their best chance of success if published no more frequently than weekly, for economic reasons: the Messenger might have demonstrated this itself, had it not been the victim of the split in the Catholic counsels over the Veto dispute, which led to the setting up of a rival Catholic weekly, the Register, neither paper surviving the divergence for long. A third weekly, the Advertiser, proved more durable: but not from its own resources. John Shea had seen his chance in 1810 to re-enter his old profession, approaching Pole with an offer to run a paper in the government interest, in return for the proclamations.⁵

¹Cf. Off. Papers, 538/284/8.

²D. Weekly Messenger, 26 Nov. 1808.

³J. B. Fitzsimons to under secretary Saxton 18 Feb. 1812. (Off. Papers, 548/366/19).

⁴McCarthy, Shelley, p. 296.

⁵J. Shea to W. W. Pole, 24 July 1810 (Off. Papers, 541/304/13).

With their help, the Advertiser survived for five years - in deep obscurity, if Watty Cox is to be trusted¹ - before sliding its owner into petulant bankruptcy.²

The activity among newspapers was paralleled among periodicals of varying degrees of scurrility. Before Pole's arrival, Watty Cox's Irish Magazine had been comparatively sober: after 1809, it launched out into a campaign of venomous scurrility unequalled since the days of the Volunteers' Journal. A Ghost of the Free Press,³ whose "first apparition" - and possibly last - was observed in 1810, likened the government to a gang of robbers who gagged before they stole; the Dublin Satirist, which ran from 1809 to 1811, filled its pages with disguised near-pornographic libels, mostly of a personal rather than a political nature; and half a dozen other magazines were started during the same period, most of them innocuous and none of them long lived, but in their existence, a tribute to the revived interest in the press. The most curious of Irish periodicals appeared in 1812, Dr. Brennan's Milesian Magazine; intended as a monthly, but in practice delivering its sixteen numbers over a period of thirteen years. Brennan was an eccentric, labouring under various grievances, chief among them that his cure for the childbirth fever then killing off

¹Cox's Irish Magazine, Nov. 1811.

²J. Shea to R. Peel, Dec. 1817 (Off. Papers, 568/483/66).

³Ghost of the Free Press, no.1. (undated).

alarming numbers of Dublin mothers - the application of turpentine - had not been accepted by the Rotunda authorities¹. Tradition has it that the state pension he enjoyed was given for his services to the government in his magazine; the Castle hoped, not altogether without reason, that he would be a counterpoise to Watty Cox.

The new vigour of the press was the result partly of the administration's unpopularity, and partly of Pole's unwillingness to enforce what he considered to be an absurd system of muzzling the press. The subsidies particularly annoyed him. Within a few months of his arrival in Ireland, he wrote to the lord lieutenant:-

'A preremptory order should be given to place, without a moment's delay, the payments to newspapers for proclamations and advertisements upon such a footing that the vote of parliament cannot be exceeded. By adopting this plan you will lose what is called the support of some newspapers. But I very much doubt whether any benefit is derived from the enormous expense which has been incurred by purchasing the newspapers. Most of the papers (indeed I may say all but the Dublin Journal) in the pay of government give but an hollow support, and take lines directly hostile to us upon almost all the questions of importance . . . I do not think that the press in Ireland can do the same

¹Cf. a number of letters from Brennan to Peel in the Peel correspondence, B.M., Add. MSS.

mischief to the government that it does here (England).

If the government is conducted with purity and close attention to the public interests in Ireland, the newspapers cannot materially affect the administration. The great political questions are already settled in the minds of all parties, and no newspaper writing can have any effect one way or the other.¹

Wellesley-Pole's sound principles put forward in this memorandum were not put into practice in his dealings with the press. He reduced the sums spent annually by the government on the newspapers; but it remained above the level granted by parliament: and if he lost nothing by the lack of the Freeman's and the Correspondent's support, he gained no assistance of value in their place.

The Dublin Journal, as the memorandum said, remained faithful to the government, for which it was rewarded. In October 1810, Giffard wrote to Pole to remind him that he had promised that he would give orders that the Dublin Journal would be supported by the government 'more liberally than the strict regulation'; and also that the government had promised to foot the bill for the distribution of the Dublin Journal to public boards. Pole noted on the back of the letter, 'remind me of this on my return to Dublin'.² Amicable as their relations were, Giffard cannot

¹N.L.I., Richmond MSS., 73 f.1704 (a).

²Off. Papers, 541/304/17.

have been much help to Pole. Giffard's bigotry made his paper unpopular, and the Dublin Journal's circulation dwindled.

Casting around for more effective support, Pole came upon William Corbet's Hibernian Telegraph, which still survived with the aid of government subsidies - though it was so little considered that the manager of the Theatre Royal had discontinued the normal practice of sending two complimentary tickets to the editor; and the government's help had not kept Corbet out of debt.¹ Corbet, by his own account, was ordered by Pole to discontinue the Telegraph, and to set up a new paper, the Patriot, in its place, 'on an extensive scale'. His office was to be close to the Castle, where he could easily be reached in case of emergency. Liberal financial assistance was promised, and exclusive access to the expresses.² The first number of the Patriot appeared in July 1810. Its title proved an ineffective disguise: the Post immediately commented 'we suspect the wolf, though dressed in sheep's clothing',³ and a few days later referred to it as the 'Patriot, ci-devant Telegraph'.⁴ Once recognised for a government paper, the Patriot would have required much greater editorial talent than it had at its command to prosper; and the

¹Report of trial of Jones v. Corbet. (P), Dublin 1810.

²B.M., Add. MSS. (Peel) 40201 f.293.

³D.E. Post, 28 July 1810.

⁴Ibid., 7 Aug. 1810.

accounts that Corbet presented to the Castle a year later showed that it was not a success.

These accounts also told the extent of the government's assistance to the Patriot. In the first six weeks of its life, over £250 worth of copies had been distributed free around the country on Pole's orders, and batches of the paper had later been given free for a while to coffee houses and military messes. The circulation had since risen, but very slowly, and there were still considerably less than 1000 copies bought, of each issue, in spite of the advantage of the early news from the expresses. The weekly profit on the newspaper came to only £5, and Corbet claimed that he was about £730 out of pocket, having received nothing himself from the government, although they had given him £5-600 a year for the Telegraph.¹ Pole had been poorly rewarded for his efforts.

One other new ally² joined the government before Pole's departure in 1812. The Hibernian Journal had survived after the Union, a respectable and prosperous-looking newspaper. It had retained some independence: enough to earn the praise of the Dublin Evening Post in 1810.³ But early in 1812 the first of a cascade of letters that its^{now} owners, the Fitzsimons, father and son, were to write to the Castle, reached the under-secretary. J. B. Fitzsimons, the father, owned the Hibernian Journal with a partner,

¹Off. Papers, 545/335/4.

²Cox in his Irish Magazine refers to yet another government paper published in 1811, the Dublin Evening Express; it does not seem to have survived for an appreciable time (Cox's I. Mag., June 1811).

³D.E. Post, 11 Dec. 1810.

Warren. Fitzsimons¹ had a government pension, which had excited Pole's curiosity - £200 a year paid to him by the Excise Commissioners, for unspecified services in 1805¹. ~~Distances~~ wrote to say that Warren was preventing him from publishing the paper in the way Fitzsimons would have liked - which, the under-secretary was left to assume, would be to the Castle's liking too. Warren had sent around a clerk to vet all MSS. before publication: 'Now, Sir, when I tell you that the clerk is a Roman Catholic, I think it will appear only right that Warren should be directed to discontinue him!'²

Later in the year, after the Hibernian Journal had been sued for a libel on a prominent member of the Catholic Board, Fitzsimons wrote an even slier letter to the under-secretary, saying that Warren had treacherously wished to admit the libel, and hinting that the government might deal with him³. The trial had revealed, among other things, that Fitzsimons was insolvent, that he had inserted the libel, that both he and his son were placemen, and that he was already receiving a government subsidy for the paper⁴. Warren was so demonstrably a sleeping partner that he was only sentenced to a nominal fine of £5, which the plaintiff, anxious to get at the real culprit, refused to collect.⁵

¹Off. Papers, 548/299.

²Fitzsimons to Sir C. Saxton, 18 Feb. 1812. (Ibid., 548/366/19).

³14 July 1812 (Off. Papers, 548/366/14).

⁴Correspondence, 4 July 1812.

⁵M. Maley, Report of two trials for libel (P) 1812, gives a full account.

Thereafter Warren disappeared from the scene, and the Fitzsimons (father as proprietor, and Edward, the son, as editor) ran the Hibernian Journal in the government interest, and with government support. But they took full control too late to be of much help - or hindrance - to Pole, who left Ireland that summer. In any case the newspaper's change of policy, to judge by the heavy reduction in advertising, had alienated many of its readers without attracting new subscribers in their place.

Friendly and unfriendly newspapers alike, the press in Ireland gave Pole little but worry. A letter written in 1812 by Frederick William Conway, who for nearly half a century was to be one of the most influential of Irish journalists, gave an idea of the situation just before Pole left - though allowance should be made for the fact that Conway had an interest in writing down the government papers, the better to push his claims for a post on one of them (he had just been sacked from the Freeman's Journal)¹. 'Besides their dulness and want of character', he wrote, 'the court prints are without circulation'. It was fortunate, he thought, for the government, that they were; the Dublin Journal's references to the 'Wafer God of the Catholics', and to St. Bartholomew's Day, would cause trouble, if anyone read the paper. He blamed the under-secretary for allowing Giffard too much rope. As for the government's second paper, the Hibernian Journal, which employed ribaldry against the Catholics - if Bonaparte wished to

¹B.M., Add. MSS. (Peel) 40221 f.182.

down the Castle, he could want no better ally. The third, the Patriot, had been dangerous, but after a change of editor, it had become 'as quiet and harmless and dull a production as any in His Majesty's Dominions. Such is the government press'.

Conway spoke less critically of the opposition papers. He named the Freeman at the head of them - presumably because he had been connected with it, as he admitted the superior circulation of the Dublin Evening Post. The Herald had been dangerous, but lately was more moderate. The Correspondent, Conway thought, was 'a ponderous and conceited production which would soon go to the bottom'. But distorted and prejudiced as the opposition might be, Conway expressed himself convinced that they were not so mischievous to the government as its own press.¹

Not only did Pole have the irritation of dealing with the recalcitrant newspapers; he was embarrassed by the same awkward questions that had faced his brother in the house of commons. To what end was the expenditure of all the government money on the press?

Hearing that Sir John Newport - who, as chancellor of the exchequer for Ireland in the Ministry of 'All the Talents', knew about the details of that expenditure - was about to bring up a motion on the subject in the house of commons, Pole investigated the accounts in 1810, and found to his alarm that the sums paid to the newspapers in 1808 had been nearly double the sum allotted

¹F. W. Conway to Richard Martin, 22 July 1812. (B.M. Add. MSS. 40228 f.230).

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to them by parliament - £10,500 had been granted, and over £20,000 paid. It was no use raiding the secret service fund to make up the sum, as that only came to £5000 a year, most of which was marked for pensions. 'I have no doubt', Pole wrote to Richmond, 'but that (the expenditure) will be struck at by Newport. I cannot imagine why Arthur gave in to this expense: Your Grace perhaps may know his motives, but I have never heard any reason yet assigned which induced me to think that the proceeding was either politic or justifiable'.¹

It is not recorded how Pole managed to wriggle out of the embarrassments bequeathed to him by his brother. The debate in the commons, in which Sir John Newport and other opposition members complained of the amounts that were being spent on Irish newspapers, ~~wase~~ not published. The reporters had been excluded, temporarily, from the house over another controversy.² The following year, the opposition's energies were diverted to the campaign against the advertisement tax.³ But in 1812 when Pole proposed the usual £10,500 for the proclamations in the vote on the Irish miscellaneous services, the argument began again. Pole said that he had effected a considerable saving, the money spent had always previously exceeded the grant, whereas he had kept expenditure down to within

¹N.L.I., Richmond MSS., 73 f.1704.

²D.E. Post, 27 March 1810.

³See below, p. 244.

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the £10,500. The amount was agreed;¹ but Newport shortly afterwards moved that a detailed account of expenditure on proclamations be laid before the house, saying that they were in reality only a payment to newspapers for supporting the government. Pole retaliated by pointing out that in his first year as chief secretary, the expenditure on proclamations had been within the sum allotted; whereas when Newport had been chancellor of the exchequer, the expenditure had been £17,000, and it had never previously been less than £15,000. Pole then went on to deny that the proclamations were rewards; an opposition member promptly reminded him that his brother had finally admitted that they were.²

But the opposition could hardly afford to press their case, knowing that the evidence of their own conduct in office could be produced against them. The subject was dropped; to the annoyance of the Correspondent, who said that if Newport had followed it up, he would have revealed that Mr. Pole paid several thousands a year to newspapers to puff Mr. Pole.³ The Correspondent was the paper that most vigorously condemned the system by which proclamations were given only to ministerial newspapers.⁴ Its memory was conveniently short - and needed to be, as within a few months it

¹9 March 1812 (Parl. Deb.s, xxi, 1217).

²29 Apr. 1812 (Parl. Deb.s, xxii, 1114).

³Correspondent, 2 July 1810.

⁴Ibid., 3 May 1812.

was once again gratefully to receive the proclamations.

The administration's reaction to the renewed activity of the opposition press followed the course made familiar before the Union. Legislation was brought before parliament, which discriminated against newspapers not allied to the Castle: and when opportunity offered, individual newspapers were brought before the courts.

In 1810, the stamp duty paid on each copy of a newspaper was 2d, and the duty on every advertisement printed, 1/-. In the budget for that year John Foster, once again chancellor of the exchequer for Ireland, increased it to 2/-. He defended the increase on the grounds that the duty was 3/- in England: but this ignored the fact, as the opposition were quick to point out, that in England the 3/- represented a flat rate, whereas in Ireland the duty was graduated according to the length of the advertisement¹.

Foster pleaded the excuse that revenue was urgently required and that the new duty would bring in an extra £30,000. Sir John Newport replied with a forecast that the increased advertisement tax would not bring a penny more into the exchequer². The independent newspapers read their own meaning into the tax. 'Are we to wonder', the Dublin Evening Post asked, 'that those who have swelled and fattened in the school of Pitt, should detest the press? . . . It is ridiculous to consider the item in any

¹Correspondent, 4 June 1810.

²30 May 1810 (Parl. Deb.s, xvii, 208).

other light than as an attack, not merely on the liberty of the press, but on its very existence.'¹ And the Correspondent complained that the public did not realise how the freedom of the press was being insidiously undermined, 'not by the hands of armed power, nor by precedents taken from lawless times of tumult, but by the ignominious and not less effectual tyranny of the tax gatherer'.²

The new advertisement duty did much more harm to the opposition newspapers, than to those which were supported by the government. The Dublin Evening Post filled ten out of its sixteen columns with advertisements on June 21, before the tax came in; on its first issue after the tax was imposed, a week later, the number of advertisement columns had dropped to five. The government papers, with their smaller circulations, had fewer advertisements, so that they had less to lose (the proclamations, on which they relied, were not taxed). Whether or not Foster was sincere in his assertion that the increased tax was for revenue only, it did in fact operate severely against the opposition press. The Post was compelled to put up its price from 4d to 5d - a heavy outlay for four pages of an indifferently printed evening paper.³

Between them, the stamp and advertisement duties made it difficult for a newspaper to survive without outside assistance.

¹D.E. Post, 19 June 1810.

²Correspondent, 3 July 1810.

³D.E. Post, 19 June 1810.

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The Dublin Evening Post, with its large circulation was able to keep going: and the Correspondent just held out until a new administration brought it back into government favour. But the weight of taxation prevented any newspaper, for many years, from joining the opposition.

Henry Grattan summed up the situation in the commons a year after the new advertisement duty had been imposed. A petition had been received from the Irish newspaper manufacturers, protesting against the excessive duty:¹ and government speakers had produced a variety of specious excuses to show that the tax had done no direct harm to the press. The tax might not go directly to affect the liberty of the press, Grattan said;

'but it may affect the circulation of the press, and if you affect the circulation you affect the liberty of the press in this way: that few men will undertake to conduct newspapers unless they are under the influence and protection of other men of influence and weight, so as to convert the press at any time to the purpose of any ministry.'²

A few days later, Newport explained to the commons that if government advertisements escaped duty, the advertisement tax as it stood must be injurious to the freedom of the press; nor was it any excuse to say that the tax was for revenue. So far from producing the extra £30,000 Foster had expected, the duty had

¹8 May 1811 (Parl. Deb.s, xix, 1012).

²16 May 1811 (Parl. Deb.s, xx, 193).

only brought in £2000 more.¹ Newport's arguments were reinforced by Sheridan:

'there are three ways of destroying the liberty of the press: one is by oppressive acts of parliament, another is by ex-officio informations and the banishment of printers to distant gaols; and the third is by raising the price of cheap publications. This - and this is the way resorted to in Ireland - is a mean, cowardly and circuitous attempt.'

Other speakers reiterated that the duty, if it brought in little extra revenue, must exist to stifle the freedom of the press. Foster could produce no telling argument in reply - but the duty remained.

Poorly served by his supporters, and assailed by his opponents, in the press, Wellesley Pole's reasonableness gave way to irritation. Early in February 1812 he gave as one of his excuses for the proclaiming of the Catholic Board that 'the government was assailed from all quarters, particularly by the factious prints, with the grossest abuse'.² The Evening Post by this time had sufficient self-assurance to reply: 'that the secretary has suffered by the 'factious press' is not less true than that his silly egotism and ludicrous vanity appears plain and palpable - a matter of merriment with his opponents - of regret and disgust among his friends'.³ And the Post was not being outspoken from any impression

¹24 May 1811 (Parl. Deb.s, xx, 311). And see Parl. Papers, 1810-11 (157) vi (1093).

²Parl. Deb.s, xxi, 494.

³D.E. Post, 13 Feb. 1812.

of government weakness. Only a week before, writs of attachment for libel had been issued by the attorney general against the proprietors of six opposition newspapers, the Post included.¹

The actions against the newspapers were part of a general campaign of repression against the Catholic party. Largely through the efforts of Daniel O'Connell, the Catholic Committee had revived, and extended its activities throughout the country to such an extent that Wellesley-Pole felt himself compelled to prosecute some of its leaders for violating the Convention Act of 1793. On the breakdown of the first prosecution, the Catholics retaliated by attempting to take an action against the chief justice: and it was in this charged atmosphere that the newspapers who had taken the Catholics' part found themselves facing prosecution. Apart from minor actions - a disgruntled Orangeman had tried to sue the Correspondent and Evening Herald for libel,² and there had been an instance of intimidation of a Kerry newspaper proprietor, in what may have been outbursts of military petulance, rather than a calculated legal process³ - the newspapers had enjoyed freedom from prosecutions since the rebellion years. But an administration that was bringing the Catholic leaders to court could not ignore

¹D.E. Post, 25 Jan. 1812.

²Cox's I. Mag., Nov. 1808.

³D.E. Post, 2 April, 26 July, 11 Aug. 1808.

the newspapers sustaining those leaders; and once again newspaper proprietors and printers were to appear before the Court of King's Bench.

One journalist had already been committed, before the Catholic controversy reached its full violence. Watty Cox, having failed to secure a government job he had asked for in 1805,¹ returned to writing, and in 1807 set up his Irish Magazine,² a spirited and scurrilous monthly which did its best to keep alive in public memory the atrocities of the '98. In 1809, the office was raided and all papers seized:³ in 1810, Cox was imprisoned for debt,⁴ and in 1811, he was prosecuted for an article in the magazine entitled 'The Painter Cut', which had advocated the severance of the link with England.⁵ The article was harmless enough, but the general tendency of the Irish Magazine, with its Goyaesque illustrations of half-hangings and floggings, left the attorney-general no difficulty in proving that Cox was inciting the public to disaffection, and in spite of a vigorous trio of defending counsel - Daniel O'Connell (who had already made a big reputation for himself as an advocate), Leonard MacNally,⁶ and, at an appeal,⁷ by a

¹Cox to Wm. Corbet, 5 Aug. 1805. (Off. Papers 531/226/14).

²The Irish Magazine and Monthly Asylum for neglected biography, 1807-1815.

³Cox's I. Mag., Oct. 1809.

⁴Ibid., Jan. 1810.

⁵Ibid., July 1810.

⁶D.E. Post, 7 March 1811.

⁷Ibid., 23 May 1811.

young barrister called Perrin, who was to be one of the most stalwart advocates of press freedom in the trials of the '40s. Cox was sentenced to a fine of £300 and twelve months imprisonment.¹ He had already, on March 9, stood in the pillory - enjoying, by his own account, the plaudits of the huge crowd that had come to sustain him.²

The article for which the ^{Evening}/Post was to be prosecuted was a mild complaint about the inefficiency of the police.³ The government were rarely able to find an article that was demonstrably libellous, that would not at the same time involve them in embarrassment, if the true facts were produced in court. When Magee came up for trial, the jury found him guilty of publishing, but without malicious intent. The usual scene was re-enacted, the judges refusing to accept the qualification, and the jury allowing themselves to be persuaded into a straight verdict of guilty.⁴ The government appears to have been content with the verdict, not pressing for a conviction.

The Freeman's Journal and the Evening Herald were brought up on another charge.⁵ Some of the Catholic leaders had taken an action against the chief justice; and the Freeman phrased its

¹Freeman, 30 May 1811.
²Cox's I. Mag., April 1811.
³Ibid., 26 Jan. 1811.
⁴D.E. Post, 22 Feb. 1812.
⁵Ibid., 6 Feb. 1812.

inquiry about the chief justice's competence, in the event of the case coming to trial, in a way that could be interpreted as casting doubts upon his competence generally.¹ Philip Whitfield Harvey was found guilty, and called up for justice, but, 'influenced by a consideration of the description of prison which is assigned to delinquents of his class (badly calculated for a constitution not regularly robust), and by a hope drawn for a determination of submitting his case to the legislature, he did not surrender himself'. He went into hiding.² The under-secretary in his correspondence the following year mentions these proceedings began against the Freeman, saying that they were never brought to issue.³ A letter that Harvey wrote to Colonel MacMahon, the Prince Regent's personal secretary, about the time the proceedings were begun, suggests that he may have escaped punishment by invoking royal protection.⁴

The Evening Herald's counsel put up a clever defence, arguing that the article for which his clients were being prosecuted was meant as a piece of nonsense, and then reading it out aloud in court in such a ludicrous manner that the bench of judges had to agree with him. Although the proprietors were technically guilty, the chief justice decided, he would not think that the ~~attorney~~

¹Freeman, 20 Nov. 1811.

²Ibid., 25 March 1811.

³B.M., Add. MSS. (Peel) 40196 f.146.

⁴Aspinall, Letters of George IV, letter 27.

crown would find it necessary to bring them up for sentence on the strength of so absurd an article.¹ The attorney general appears to have taken the hint. None of the prosecutions, in fact, appear to have ended in convictions.

Before the conflict could be taken any further, Wellesley Pole underwent a change of heart towards the Catholics, deciding no longer to oppose their claims. This decision followed soon after his marriage, and coincided with the revival of whig optimism that followed the establishment of the regency, when, for a while, it seemed that a new ministry of the type of All the Talents was inevitable. Whether either of these events had anything to do with Pole's altered sentiments is not known. Whig hopes were dashed in the summer, when Lord Liverpool was appointed prime minister; this involved a change in the Irish administration, but not one calculated to arouse any enthusiasm in the opposition press in Ireland. The knowledge that Pole's successor would probably be still less tractable did not prevent some exultation at his departure. 'The Right Honourable and Right Revered and Right Renowned Little Man has been at length removed', the Freeman's announcement ran, 'from the office which had been so long playing the devil with him in this country.'²

The years immediately following the Union had repeated the

¹D.E. Post, 6 Feb. 1812.

²Freeman, 8 Aug. 1812.

lesson that had not been learned before the Union. They showed that assistance to the government press was of little value so long as opposition newspapers were permitted to exist: the opposition papers invariably attracted the bulk of the reading public. Cox's Irish Magazine contained many jibes at the puny circulation of the government newspapers, and although his figures - Faulkners, '18', and the Hibernian Journal, '20 readers' - for their circulation were made in jest,¹ there was truth in his comment that a minister might as well paste proclamations in his wig, as hide them in newspapers whose existence the public did not even suspect.² Haphazard persecution inflamed rather than intimidated the opposition press: the trials of the early months of 1812 gained the government no respite. The cost of maintaining the friendly newspapers continued to grow, leaving the administration vulnerable to criticism in parliament. When Robert Peel arrived to take over from Wellesley Pole as chief secretary, he found the government papers expensive, incompetent, and unread; and, overshadowing them, a powerful though by no means united opposition press.

¹Cox's I. Mag., Dec. 1811.

²Ibid., May 1811.

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Peel's policy for the Irish press

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Peel, chief secretary.

'I am very anxious to do something with the press in Ireland', Peel wrote to his prime minister soon after he had taken up his appointment, 'and I am not quite without hopes that we may be able to put it on a better footing'.¹ Peel was already primed with information about the Irish newspapers. One of his closest friends was the Diarist John Wilson Croker, who regarded himself as an authority on the subject, and had warned him what to expect. 'Your advice, you will perceive, was not thrown away', Peel wrote to Croker in October 1812. 'It is easier to silence an enemy's battery than to establish an effective one of your own, at least in the contests of the press. I would give anything for your turn for a paragraph, it would be invaluable here'.² The tone of the letter indicates the adoption of a new attitude towards the press in Ireland. Peel was already dissatisfied with the results obtained by the ^{stem} unsympathetic threats and cajolements of his predecessors. In the back of his mind, there was a determination to make the press entirely the servant of the government.

The Irish, Peel thought, were not to be trusted with their own newspapers. Throughout his life he was able to persuade himself that what was politically expedient was morally justifiable; finding that only by autocratic methods could British

¹14 Sept. 1812 - Parker, Peel, p. 114.

²Ibid., p. 114.

rule be preserved, he was soon writing 'I believe an honest despotic government would be by far the fittest government for Ireland'.¹ His despotism left no room for an opposition press. Left to himself, Peel might have pronounced sentence of death sans phrases; but he had to justify his actions in parliament. He had to pretend that all he was doing was stamping out faction and sedition, when in fact he was deliberately stifling the free press in Ireland, and replacing it by a group of newspapers subsidized by his government, and pledged to its support.

Previous governments had drifted into a similar policy; but none had set about it systematically. In a period of rebellion, the closing down of the opposition presses was inevitable. No such excuse existed in 1812. Peel appears to have formulated his plans less from fear of the opposition - he was irritated, rather than frightened, by their criticisms - than from a conviction that the press should be used almost as an instrument of government. The newspapers were to be to the state, what trade magazines later came to be to the businesses they represent. Peel had the germ of the idea in his mind, that was later to mature into thousands of periodicals devoted to publicity.

The vastly greater circulation achieved by the Dublin Evening Post, than by any newspaper supporting the government, was particularly galling to him. Direct evidence is lacking

¹Parker, Peel, 1, 215.

of Peel's motives, but they would be more in tune with what we know of his character, if he was anxious not so much to prevent people reading opposition heresies, as to make sure that they read the orthodox version presented by the government.

Peel, it must be remembered, was only 24 years old when he became chief-secretary. He believed that he was pursuing a sensible, sane policy in Ireland, and that if only people could be persuaded to hear his case, they would appreciate the government's efforts. There was nothing machiavellian in his treatment of the press; his opinions were sincerely held. But his policy was none the less dangerous for that. If press freedom was to be lost, it would be no consolation to know that the executioner imagined that his actions were all for the best.

Peel had two instruments through which to effect the subjugation of the independent newspapers; the courts, and the exchequer.

responsible for the...
to insult the...
of the...
allow...
left to the...
to themselves the...
were found to be...
Richard...
the proprietor of the newspaper.

Off. Papers, 1801/1802.

H.B. Peel, 15 Dec. 1810.

a. The courts.

The courts had not noticeably changed as a result of the Union: and in Lord Norbury of the king's bench they had a judge whose Ascendancy prejudices excelled even Lord Clonmell's. He regarded himself as the servant of the administration, and used to write complaining that he was insufficiently rewarded for his support.¹ For newspapers he had a strong dislike, intimating on at least one occasion that he would prefer them to be excluded from the courts.² The law in his hands was a sword to be wielded in the cause of the Ascendancy - or, on less important occasions, an ass to be ridden through a maze of ingenious quibbles.

When Michael Maley sued the editor of the Hibernian Journal, which by the time of the trial was notoriously a government paper, for libel, Norbury accepted the defence that Edward Fitzsimons the 'editor' - a term not yet known in law - should not be held responsible for libels in the paper, and took the opportunity to insult the press in general. He wished, he said, that no member of the bar - Edward Fitzsimons was a barrister - would allow himself to be mixed up in newspaper editorship, which should be left 'to the pandemonium of printers devils, who arrogated to themselves the consequence of legislators but, on examination, were found to be only the sweepings of garrets'. Edward Fitzsimons' father, the proprietor of the newspaper,

¹Off. Papers, 530/214/13.

²D.E. Post, 15 Dec. 1810.

sycophantically agreed: his son, he said, only connected himself with the newspaper on the father's account - 'he felt himself above it' and assisted only to help constitution and country. The case was dismissed.¹

If the editor could not be held responsible for libels, it must be one of the proprietors. When Major Bryan of the Catholic Board had sued Warren, Fitzsimons' partner in the Hibernian Journal, for a libel, he had won his case: but as Warren was only a sleeping partner, the court had given nominal damages, which Major Bryan had refused to accept.² He ~~now~~ sued Fitzsimons senior, ^{instead.} The jury in both trials was exclusively protestant. The bench lent its assistance to the defence by permitting such irrelevancies as a demand that Major Bryan should produce his original army commission in court. The jury were told that Bryan was trying to get two lots of damages for the same offence; and the judicial summing up, while admitting the libel, stressed the probability that damages would ruin a poor man. The jury awarded Major Bryan £5.³

While Peel was in office, the judiciary as a whole continued to act as supernumerary crown counsel. So closely were they linked to the government, that Peel himself confessed qualms

¹Maley, Reports of two trials for libel. (P) gives a one-sided account of the trial. The Hibernian Journal's version, however, is not materially different.

²See p.239, above.

³Maley, Report of two trials for libel (P).

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about them to the lord lieutenant. Richmond agreed that they had 'a great many men of high family on the Irish bench, and that it would be better to place there some who would keep us from the imputation of promoting to that bench from political motives', as the newspapers had been suggesting.¹ Seats on the bench had been distributed just like any other government patronage. The judges themselves recognized that their post was a reward for past work, and that future promotion, in rank or station, would depend on their continuing to give satisfaction. They had, in their courts, willing allies in the government's service. By informations ex-officio, and attachments, the Crown law officers continued to avoid the use of juries, as far as possible; and where juries had to be used, they could always be packed.

The Dublin Evening Post, as the newspaper most closely identified with the Catholic cause, was Peel's first concern. During his early months in Ireland, it was easily the most influential newspaper in the country. It claimed to have a circulation three times as large as any other evening paper,² priding itself on giving plenty of home news, and not relying entirely on the London press for its information - with which, Peel complained, it was frequently first.³ An English traveller who wrote a book on his Irish experiences singled it out for

¹Richmond to Peel, 10 June 1813. (N.L.I., Richmond Papers, 71, f. 1408.

²D.E. Post, 31 Aug. 1813.

³B.M. Add. MSS Peel 40232 f. 147: 40285 f. 137.

special mention for its propriety;¹ and it monopolised the attention of the government press.² Among the newspapers named at an aggregate meeting of Catholics in the summer of 1813, that had 'disdained more corruption, and withstood more persecution, than ever the free press has yet sustained', the Post congratulated itself upon receiving the accolade.³ Relying on its strength and influence, the Post continued to harass the government, undeterred by fear of fresh prosecutions.

A few months after Peel's arrival in Ireland, an excuse presented itself for an action against the Post. In an article, it had informed the Lord Lieutenant, the Duke of Richmond, that his administration was not better than that of the worst of his predecessors, and had then proceeded to describe his predecessors' corruption, baseness, cruelty, and depravity.⁴ Possibly the Post took courage from the then prevalent rumour that the government was about to be replaced by a coalition - Wellesley, Canning, and Grey⁵ - but even after that vision had faded, the gibes at the Castle continued.

In April, John Magee was called upon to give bail pending his trial for the libel on the duke of Richmond;⁶ and in June, he was committed to jail for another alleged libel on the police

¹Rev. J. Hall, Tour through Ireland.

²Cf. Hib. J., 22 Apr. 1813, and a letter from the owner of the Patriot to the Castle, 9 Apr. 1813 (B.M. Add. MSS. (Peel) 40214 f. 69).

³D.E. Post, 3 July 1813.

⁴D.E. Post, 5 Jan. 1813.

⁵D.E. Post, 16 Jan. 1813. ⁶D.E. Post, 20 Apr. 1813.

magistrates.¹ He was fortunate not to be brought up on yet another charge: printing a libel on the prince regent. The prince had given Peel to understand that a report of a speech of O'Connell's that had appeared in the Post had made him "Very irritable", and "that he wished extremely to punish the author of them. That he was well inclined to retaliate upon Mr. O'Connell by a year or two of imprisonment, and that it was difficult to make him understand that a conviction might be very doubtful, and that an attempt to prosecute would be very unwise".² Peel appears to have thought that action by the prince not only would arouse great resentment in Dublin, but also would jeopardise the success of the prosecutions already planned. He called on the prince, telling him that Magee was already in prison for one libel, and would soon, he hoped, be in for another - the libel on Richmond. The prince was still not satisfied, so Peel promised to obtain for him the opinions of the crown law officers in Ireland.³ Richmond had no trouble in arranging that both attorney general and solicitor general should pronounce against the new prosecution - even of the printer.⁴

Nevertheless, a third prosecution was soon afterwards initiated. In August 1813 the Dublin Evening Post published

¹D.E. Post, 3 June 1813.

²Peel to Richmond, 24 June 1813. (N.L.I. Richmond MSS. 71 f. 1474).

³Peel to Richmond, 1 July 1813. (Ibid., 71 f. 1411).

⁴Richmond to Peel, 7 July 1813. (Ibid., 71 f. 1478).

some resolutions passed by the Kilkenny Catholic Committee, condemning the government's treatment of Magee. They were pronounced libellous, and the prosecution was set in motion at the request of Peel, who hoped, on this occasion, to strike at bigger game than the printer.¹

For the libel on the Duke of Richmond, a jury composed exclusively of protestants found Magee - who was still in prison - guilty; and he was sentenced to a fine of £500 and two years imprisonment.² The statute dating from the rebellion period, which enacted that government stamps should be withheld from newspaper owners who had been convicted of libel, was invoked for the first time, and to enable the Post and the Evening Herald, both of which were Magee's property, to continue publication, Magee had to give them into the control of his brother James.³ This took time to arrange, and the government seized the opportunity to initiate further prosecutions for the sale of some unstamped copies of the Post, that had appeared in the interim.⁴ The charges, however, were never pressed. They did not need to be; in February 1814, John Magee was sentenced to a fine of £1000, a further six months imprisonment, for the publication of the Kilkenny resolutions.⁵

¹Parker, Peel, 1, 116.

²D.E. Post, 30 Nov. 1813. For a report of the trial see The trial of John Magee (P), Dublin, 1813.

³Ibid., 14 Dec. 1813.

⁴Ibid., 20 Jan. 1814.

⁵Ibid., 10 Feb. 1814.

According to Peel, the case against Magee on the Kilkenny resolutions almost broke down, because O'Connell, who defended Magee in the trials, claimed that the resolutions had been published in the Correspondent - at the time a government paper - before they had appeared in the Post. This was untrue; the Correspondent had put them in two days after the Post, but the prosecution failed to realize the fact until the trial was nearly over.¹

These sentences on Magee were out of proportion to the offences. The Post's condemnation of the Richmond viceroyalty had been violent: but the sentence for publishing resolutions passed by a representative gathering of citizens in a country town, and the enforcing of the act removing government stamps from the proprietor upon conviction, suggest² that there was more behind the prosecutions than the simple enforcement of the law, and Peel's correspondence confirms that they were in fact part of a sustained effort to put down the Evening Post.

A few weeks after Peel had taken office, Magee complained that the 'expresses' were being communicated to favoured newspapers, and not to the Post.² In this, Peel was carrying on the policy of his predecessors; the following autumn he went further, depriving the Post of the translations of foreign despatches normally given to the press³ - a serious matter in a time when newspapers could not afford to employ their own translators.

¹Parker, Peel, p. 117.

²Magee to Peel, 3 Nov. 1812. (Aspinall, Politics and the Press, p. 181).

³Ibid., p. 181.

Having discovered the newspaper's source of exclusive information - he found that the Post had given up the traditional Irish habit of waiting for the English papers to arrive, to copy from them, and instead, was obtaining its own news through the post office - Peel wrote 'I have now got the same intelligence through the same channel for our papers, but I do not think that sufficient. I think we should prevent the Evening Post from having it'. He gave orders that the transmission of any foreign news from the post office to the Dublin Evening Post was to cease, saying that he would take the blame if there was any protest. The post office obeyed.¹

Peel hated the Evening Post with what, for him, was remarkable vehemence. 'Most of the dissatisfaction in this country', he wrote in 1813, 'arises from the immense circulation of that nefarious paper the Dublin Evening Post. It is sent gratuitously into many parts of the country, and read by those who can read, to those who cannot; and as it is written with a certain degree of ability, and a style which suits the taste of those upon whom it is intended to work, it does, no doubt, great mischief'.² When Whitworth arrived to succeed Richmond as lord lieutenant, one of Peel's first communications with him contained ~~a hope that he would publish his official disapproval of the~~ a tirade against ~~welcome he had received from the~~ Evening Post, ~~which had suggested~~ for suggesting that

¹Aspinall, Politics and the Press, p. 181.

²B.M. Add. MSS. (Peel) 40285 f. 137.

that he had been sent over to Ireland 'to implement a liberal policy'.¹ Peel's every reference to the paper contains malice.²

With John Magee out of the way, the Castle turned its attention to the newcomer, his brother James, who was brought up on a further charge of libel, for printing a speech of O'Connell's, in which O'Connell had suggested that Catholics were sometimes not sufficiently protected from Orange violence.³ But this trial took a different course. F. W. Conway, who had become the editor of the Post, gave evidence that he had received specific instructions from James Magee to moderate the paper's tone: and although a verdict of guilty was returned, the Post the next day congratulated itself that the solicitor general had 'distinctly held out a hope that Mr. Magee would not be brought up for judgement, if his future conduct should be found to quadrate with his present professions'.⁴ The Magees, apparently, had had enough.

The weakening of the Post was not, however, wholly attributable to the success of Peel's siege, A quarrel had arisen between the Magees and Daniel O'Connell.

To O'Connell's defence of John Magee in the Richmond libel trial, the Post's immediate reaction was unqualified approval.⁵ But, as the days went by, John Magee began to realise that it

¹Parker, Peel, 1, 105.
²Cf. Ibid., 1, 134.
³D.E. Post, 22 Feb. 1814.
⁴Ibid., 26 May 1814.
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was less a defence than a reiteration and amplification of the libels in the original article. O'Connell's savage attack upon the attorney general who, as a turncoat - he had written, spoken and voted against the Union - was particularly hated, might make Saurin's name odious to posterity, but it was also likely to make Saurin implacable in his hatred of the Evening Post. On a motion to set aside the verdict of the trial, Magee's other counsel unhesitatingly threw O'Connell over, begging the jury not to allow the guilt of the client to be aggravated by the sins of the counsel.¹ O'Connell was naturally annoyed. Magee, on his side, began to feel hardly used. He had voluntarily shielded the author of the libel on the Duke of Richmond. Now, he realised that he was being left with the responsibility for the printing of the Kilkenny resolutions, whether he liked it or not.

The chairman of the meeting, whom the Evening Post had earlier called 'this distinguished honest Irishman, and incorruptible patriot'² was Captain Bryan, a well-to-do Protestant land owner. As chairman, he had taken upon himself the task of transmitting the resolutions to the Evening Post. He then refused to come forward to avow them.

Inevitably, both sides began to feel aggrieved, and recriminations began. The government took their opportunity, promising that if the Magees altered their paper's allegiance, James Magee would not be brought up for sentence. 'Has Gregory told you

¹McDonagh, O'Connell, p. 64.

²D.E. Post, 27 May 1813.

of the adhesion of Magee?' the lord lieutenant asked in a letter to Peel in May 1814. 'Like other worthies he has made the amende honorable, and professes an inclination to efface his misdeeds by serving us to the best of his power'¹ Gregory told Peel shortly afterwards -

As to my friend, he is the most impudent filch I ever knew, having betrayed his own party, and not true to ours. He had the audacity to tell me that it was principally owing to the line of writing pursued by him that the Catholic Board was brought into disrepute.²

The Evening Post as a matter of course continued to profess independence; but the Catholic party regarded it as a Castle paper;³ and it was driven to retaliate by condemning Captain Bryan for allowing Magee to go to prison on his behalf, and O'Connell, for prejudicing Magee's case by his defence.⁴ The government were satisfied with its new ways. In April 1815 Peel, noticing the change for the better, gave orders that the translations should be restored to it:⁵ and a year later Gregory, enclosing a copy of the paper with a letter to Peel, praised it for being the only Dublin newspaper which took the trouble to give what the Castle thought was a correct account of the trial of the Cork printer, Harding Tracey, for libel.⁶

¹Aspinall, Politics and the Press, p. 121.

²Ibid., p. 122.

³Dublin Chronicle, 20 Oct. 1815.

⁴D.E. Post, 27 June 1815.

⁵Aspinall, Politics and the Press, p. 182.

⁶R.M. Add. MSS (Peel) 40202 f. 366.

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That winter, the Evening Post began once again to congratulate itself on the superiority of its special news service.¹ Evidently the last of Peel's restrictions had been lifted.

John Magee served out his terms of imprisonment. On 29 July 1815 the Post noted that his sentence for the Richmond libel had expired, and the sentence for the Kilkenny resolutions begun. He was eventually released on 10 January 1816, after paying £1500 in fines, the Post said, and entering into heavy recognisances.² The fine of £1000 was later remitted, negotiations between Saurin and a representative of the Magees having secured a promise of good behaviour from the Post, which became virtually a government paper. Payments of £100 to the editor, are recorded during the years 1818 and 1819; later, these were increased.³ The Post did not take as sycophantic a line as the Dublin Journal or the Patriot; it continued to follow a moderate and fairly conciliatory policy. But it never regained the influence it had when Peel became chief secretary.

This left the Catholic party without a newspaper upon which they could rely: for the Evening Herald, which Gregory in 1813 had referred to as 'the worst of all the papers'⁴ also belonged to the Magees.⁵ On 20 June 1814 an editorial announced that the paper's name would shortly be changed to The Sentinel - apparently

¹D.E. Post, 10 Dec. 1816.

²Ibid., 11 Jan. 1816.

³Aspinall, Politics and the Press, p. 122.

⁴B.M. Add. MSS (Peel) 40196 f. 13.

⁵Ibid., 40214 f. 69: Freeman, 3 Aug. 1813.

it was changing owners. The Sentinel came out two days later, some 48 hours before it was due, having in place of an editorial an open letter to the attorney general. A poster, apparently, had been put out saying that the Herald's last number would contain some startling revelations - secret instructions alleged to have been given by the prince regent, against the Catholics in Canada. 'Your police', the open letter ran, 'took down the placard of the Herald, you did other things which for the present I omit to mention - you are greatly mistaken if you think that your threats, or your police can influence the conduct of the proprietor of The Sentinel.'¹ Evidently the last number of the Herald had been suppressed; details, however, were not given, beyond the sinister 'you did other things'. The slightly hysterical note of bravado was not to be justified; the paper proved ineffectual, and did not long survive.

The Catholic party, pursued their plan to set up a newspaper of their own, during the early months of 1815: the Milesian Magazine inserted an 'advertisement' for an editor, "a person perfectly competent to be the ostensible proprietor of a patriotic religious newspaper. He must be in circumstances to enable him to say he has no preference for the streets of Dublin to the cells of Newgate".² The Dublin Chronicle appeared during the summer.

¹Sentinel, 22 June 1814.

²Brenan's Milesian Magazine, May 1815.

According to Peel, it was established by O'Connell 'when he and his colleagues had brought the editors of all other papers into Newgate for publishing speeches which they composed and corrected'.¹ It was a spirited, but never a very influential newspaper. The Post in December referred to a dispute in which the Chronicle had charged the Dublin Journal with incest as 'between two papers not in general circulation',² and the small number of advertisements the Chronicle attracted, corroborated the insult.

The Chronicle devoted its energies more to tormenting the government newspapers, than the government itself; but an unguarded article left it open to the charge of impugning the courts of justice, and in May 1816, McDonnell was brought up before the court of Kings Bench. He was found guilty; the jury, however, recommended him to mercy, because the libel was trifling and insignificant.³ As O'Connell had already commented, the speech of the attorney general, Saurin, had ~~already~~ shown that the state were very little concerned with the article that had been made the excuse for the prosecution: what they really objected to was the Chronicle's continued opposition to the government. The bench ignored the jury's plea, sentencing

¹Croker, Correspondent and Diaries, 1, 89. Cox's Irish Magazine for August 1815 also refers to other prosecutions pending against newspapers for articles by O'Connell.

²D.E. Post, 5 Dec. 1815

³D. Chronicle, 12 Jan. 1816.

McDonnell to six months imprisonment and a fine of £100.¹ The Chronicle later published a list of the religions of all those concerned in the case. The entire panel for both Grand and Petty Juries, the court officers, the clerks - even the bailiffs sent round to arrest McDonnell - were protestants.²

The Chronicle did not cease to ridicule the government press³ - which, to the Chronicle, meant every other newspaper in Dublin except itself - but apart from an action against it for libel by Giffard, out of which it escaped only by a much qualified apology,⁴ it seems to have escaped further trouble until its decease, which was not long delayed. Its 'holier than thou' attitude alienated the rest of the newspapers,⁵ and possible the public, as well: Peel may have realised that further prosecutions would only give it the acceptable publicity of martyrdom. And its owner had broken with O'Connell politically by the summer of 1817⁶, which must have reduced its influence.

Apart from the Dublin Chronicle, it appears that no metropolitan newspaper existed after the Post's conversion to trouble Peel's mind with opposition. As a pamphleteer had written in 1813, describing the effects of the libel actions, 'the habit

¹D.E. Post, 11 May 1816.

²D. Chronicle, 24 May 1816.

³Cf. nos. for 10 June and 21 June 1816.

⁴Dublin Chronicle 20 Aug. 1817.

⁵See article in Carrick's Morning Post, 1 June 1816.

Carrick's existed mainly as an advertising medium and professed political neutrality.

⁶O'Connell, Correspondence, 1. 49.

of intimidation produced by these prosecutions is enough to silence the press with regard to the abuses of government'¹. The Freeman was a case in point. Alone of Dublin newspapers, it managed to retain some degree of independence throughout Peel's term of office; but this was at the price of extreme editorial caution. When it published the speech of O'Connell's for which the printer of the Cork Mercantile Chronicle was to go to jail, its editor Michael Staunton only avoided a similar fate by humble self-abasement in a long apologia to the Castle.² Harding Tracey, the Cork printer, was sentenced to two years imprisonment and a fine of £300 for the publication of this speech,³ in which there had been allegations of corrupt practices in the courts;⁴ his release several months before the sentence had expired was probably the result less of the ill-health which he had pleaded at the trial, than of ministerial admission that they had failed in their real object - the entrapping of O'Connell himself.

John Lawless did his best to keep the opposition press alive in Belfast, without much success. His Ulster Recorder was suppressed in 1815,⁵ and the closure in this case was legally applied - he had fallen into debt with the Stamp Commissioners.⁶ He founded a new paper, the Ulster Register, in its place; the

¹Hints to jurors upon the liberty of the press (P), Dublin 1813.

²3 May 1815 (B.M. Add. MSS (Peel) 40201 f. 15).

³D.E. Post, 21 May 1816.

⁴Cork Commercial Chronicle, 17 Apr. 1815.

⁵B.M. Add. MSS (Peel) 40259 f. 263.

⁶D.E. Post, 14 Oct. 1815.

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printer was soon afterwards convicted on a number of counts, for technical infringements of the Stamp Acts. Lawless was prosecuted at the same time as his printer: but he was able to evade conviction.¹ The Register cannot have long survived, for a few months later Lawless was sending out the prospectus of yet another new venture, the Irishman.²

Another journalist who continued to suffer for his opinions, or for the violence with which he had expressed them, was Watty Cox, who was still in jail when Peel arrived in Ireland. O'Connell went to the courts in 1814 to urge the termination of the sentence, his argument being that the fine of £300 was excessive, and therefore contrary to the Bill of Rights. The judge disallowed the appeal, saying that Cox ought to have complained of the fine at the time of his sentence.³

Peel expressed his opinion in a letter to Croker, enclosing some copies of the Irish Magazine, which Cox had continued to produce from Newgate. Cox rather preferred residence there, to anywhere else, Peel thought; he could easily have raised the money to pay the fine, if he had wanted to.⁴ There Peel was almost certainly wrong; Cox was not a man of many friends. He remained in jail for over three years, eventually accepting a sum of £400, and an annuity of £100, on condition of accepting

¹B.M. Add. MSS (Peel) 40260 f. 133.

²D.E. Post, 25 March 1818.

³Ibid., 8 May 1813.

⁴(undated) Croker, Correspondence and Diaries, 1, 89.

exile. Writing to the author of the libel that had brought him into prison, he said he 'was obliged to submit to the government to avoid another dreary imprisonment and, as the attorney general threatened, in a remoter jail. They insist, as one of the terms that I must leave the country: but have agreed to pay my passage to America, and, when landed, to pay me £400'.¹ He sailed in 1816.²

Peel paid Cox the valedictory compliment by instancing the Irish Magazine in a commons' debate as an example of the menace of the opposition press in Ireland.³ That a weekly magazine run by an eccentric renegade was the worst he could find as an illustration showed that the objective Peel had set himself on taking up his appointment had been attained. His boast to Croker had been fulfilled: the enemy batteries were silenced.

6. The exchequer.

Legislation concerning the press, by the time Peel came to Ireland, had reached such a pitch of selective discrimination against the opposition newspapers that further government activity in that direction proved scarcely necessary. Acts passed in 1815 and 1816 revised and underlined the laws of the rebellion period, not materially altering them, except to add a further sixpence to the advertisement duty, to increase the burden still

¹O'Casaidhe, Watty Cox, p. 22.
²Madden, United Irishmen, iv, 80.
³Parl. Deb.s, xxxiv, 35. (26 Apr. 1816).

carried mainly by the opposition press. So long as opposition newspapers were being published, the Castle press accepted the existence of heavy duties, knowing that they operated more severely against rivals. But as the months passed, and it became clear that an opposition press was no longer to be feared, the owners of government newspapers grew discontented, and before Peel's departure, they had begun an agitation for the lowering of the duties.

Henry Townsend of the Correspondent memorialised Peel in 1818 on behalf of the Irish newspaper owners, to the effect that they were unfairly treated. The English stamp duty was 4d., compared to 2d. in Ireland; but the English owners received a 20% rebate, and the Irish only 1½%, and the English were very much better able to sustain the higher rate, owing to the greater prosperity of their country. The cost of printing, the memorial continued, was higher than in England, and there were a number of other grievances. Fines for technical breaches of the law, or failure to pay duties on time; securities required from all owners in case they were involved in seditious libel actions; and the advertisement duty, were all felt to be excessive.¹

Peel's reply to the memorial was discouraging.² There might appear to be no further need for the retention of the heavy duties, once the opposition press had disappeared: but the government had to bear in mind that individual newspapers

¹6 Apr. 1818. (B.M. Add. MSS (Peel) 40275 f. 303).

²Ibid., 40276 f. 25.

would be tempted to reassert their independence, if they could do so without incurring financial loss. Not that Peel was necessarily fully aware of the deterrent value of the heavy duties. They may have been imposed, and retained, as a product of the magnetism which attracts governments - without, apparently, the individuals who compose them being conscious of their motives - to adopt policies which will indirectly produce the results they desire.

2. The subsidization of the government newspapers.

On 10 June 1816 the Dublin Chronicle published an article purporting to give an account of the sums paid by the government to satellite newspapers:-

Newspaper	Proclam- ations £	Government Advertisements £	Pensions £	Total £
<u>Correspondent</u>	1,040	400	1,200	2,640
<u>Patriot</u>	1,040	500	900	2,440
<u>Dublin Journal</u>	1,040	300	900	2,240
<u>Hibernian Journal</u>	about the same as the Dublin Journal			2,240
<u>Saunders' Newsletter</u>	approx.			1,100

Profits from jobs held by placemen connected with these
five newspapers 2,500

25 provincial newspapers at £150 each, cost of expresses,
and miscellaneous items, bringing total cost to approx. 27,000

23 March 1816. (MS.A. 40270 f. 176).
5 Feb. 1815. (MS.A. 40270 f. 52).

With the crumbs that fell to the Freeman, Carricks, and - now that it was behaving itself - the Dublin Evening Post; and with disbursements that could not be checked from the secret service money, the Chronicle concluded that the total government outlay on the newspapers must be in the region of £30,000 a year.

The Chronicle was the only newspaper at that time which received nothing from the government. It had every inducement to malicious exaggeration. Yet the detailed nature of this statement of accounts suggests that it was based on inside information - procured, possibly, from some government official. Some of the figures the Chronicle itself admitted to be approximations, and others may have been guesswork; but they probably were substantially correct.

Much of the account is confirmed from other sources. In 1813 Gregory told Peel that in addition to the proclamation money, and payments for insertion of government advertisements, the Dublin Journal and the Patriot received a subsidy of £800 a piece from the Castle, and the Hibernian Journal £500 - 'formerly more'.¹ When Peel was urging the discontinuance of the Dublin Journal in 1816, he said that the saving to the government would be £1400.² A year before, he had said much the same about the Patriot, which then cost the government £1500 a year;³ but Gregory's account three years later the Patriot was in fact

¹7 May 1813. (B.M. Add. MSS (Peel) 40196 f. 137).
²29 March 1816. (Ibid., 40290 f. 176).
³5 Feb. 1815. (Ibid., 40288 f. 52).

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receiving £1760 - £500 from the secret service money, £800 from proclamations, £260 from the king's printer, and a £200 pension for Corbet.¹ Henry Townsend in 1815 claimed that under the terms of his agreement with the government he was to get £1200 a year: £500 from the secret service money, £400 from proclamations, and £300 from some unidentified source: the first two sums, he said, had been paid, but there was some dispute about the unidentified £300.² Government advertisements were paid for by the department's concerned, and were not included in these accounts.

Proclamations remained the steadiest source of income to newspapers which gave the government satisfaction: Parliament continued to vote £10,000 a year towards them annually, and they were distributed approximately in the proportions described in the Chronicle. The amounts paid to individual papers varied. An account for the years 1818-20 that was put before the House of Commons showed that only the Patriot had retained its full allowance of £1040 a year. The Correspondent had dropped to £600, the Hibernian Journal to £750, the Dublin Journal to only £300 a year from them.³ But the total sums paid to newspapers for the insertion of proclamations was still £10, 500, a year.⁴

Although the fiction was maintained that the proclamations

¹30 March 1818. (B.M. Add. MSS (Peel) 40205 f. 167).

²27 Jan. 1815. (Ibid., 40242 f. 267).

³Parl. Papers 1821 (478) xx (209).

⁴Aspinall, Politics and the Press, p. 138.

were not distributed with any ulterior motives, they were in fact conditional on the newspaper remaining in favour. They were taken away from George Grace of the Clonmel Herald in 1812;¹ Grace had supported the opposition candidate in the General Elections, and General Matthew, whom he had helped to elect, told the Commons that they had been withheld for that reason.² By 1818, Grace had managed to convince Peel, by ardent support in the paper and a constant flow of begging letters, that the Clonmel Herald was a friend to the government; the proclamations were resumed.³ Until Peel's arrival, the Waterford Mirror was one of the newspapers that received the proclamations. In May 1813 the Dublin Evening Post referred to it as being liberal and enlightened. Evidently Gregory had noticed this; a few days before he had told Peel that the proclamations were being withdrawn from it, in consequence of its taking the popular side.⁴ He had already told Peel that three other provincial newspapers 'which were adverse, and had the benefit of proclamations, have been struck off the list'⁵ - the Wexford Journal and the Cork Southern Reporter, as well as the Clonmel Herald. Saunders Newsletter was the beneficiary. Its political neutrality had in the past led to its neglect. But Gregory could not help noticing that

¹George Grace, Letter to the Duke of Richmond (P), Clonmel 1813.

²13 Apr. 1813. (Parl. Deb.s, xxv, 813).

³Parl. Papers 1821, (705) xx (213).

⁴Aspinall, E.H.R., lvi, 267.

⁵Ibid.

Saunders' circulation was greater, as he put it, than all the other papers put together; if any of them should have the proclamations, Saunders should.¹ ~~But~~ ^{however,} Saunders was still independent - and Peel had given orders that proclamations were not to be given to any newspaper that showed signs of independence. Evidently the proprietor and Gregory came to terms, as the Dublin Evening Post that summer began to detect, and reprobate signs that the paper was departing from its traditional policy:² 'Saunders owes all its strength to its neutrality', the Post warned; it should not join the sycophants.³ But - as it usually did, in difficult times - Saunders succumbed to government influence. Its circulation suffered severely, as a result.⁴

The 'government advertisements' referred to in the accounts in the Chronicle presumably represented advertising by government departments. To judge by the official figures given for the year 1816,⁵ the Chronicle was guilty of exaggeration: but the probability is that the administration's definition of what constituted an 'office advertisement' differed from the Chronicle's. Certainly the Chronicle was later able to back its contention convincingly, with evidence that two government papers in Dublin had received between them some £26 worth of government advertising in a single day, in the form of lists of game licenses issued in various counties, - ~~A~~ subject, the Chronicle pointed out, of little

¹B.M. Add. MSS (Peel) 40196 f. 77.
²D.E. Post, 27 Aug. 1814.
³Ibid., 30 Aug. 1814.
⁴Parl. Papers, 1826 (235) xxiii (383).
⁵Ibid. 1822(588) xviii (465).

interest to Dubliners.¹

The official accounts in any case could not disguise the fact that the newspapers who supported the government were again the main beneficiaries; £218 to the Correspondent, £146 to the Hibernian Journal and £108 to the Patriot. The stages of the Dublin Evening Post's conversion are clearly visible. For the first quarter the Post received no office advertisements, but increased respectability brought it £5, £42, and £111 in the other three quarters of the year. The benevolent neutrals did poorly, the Freeman obtaining £24 worth of advertisements, and Carricks only £4. The Chronicle got no government advertising at all. With the provincial papers, the total cost to the country of these office advertisements came to nearly £2000, and they were given out on the same principle as the proclamations - as a reward for services rendered.

The distinction cannot always be made between pensions paid to an individual for his services to the government, and those paid to him as subsidies for his newspaper.² The recipients had an interest in maintaining that pensions were being paid to them for services distinct from journalism; this lessened the risk of the payments being discontinued if their newspapers ceased to give satisfaction. Often they had some justification, in that they had acted as spies and informers, in addition to their work as journalists. In practice, the distinction had

¹Dublin Chronicle, 12 Sept. 1817.

²Aspinall, E.H.R., lvi, 639-46.

little meaning. Knowing that his pension might vanish if he ceased to support the government, the pensioner was unlikely to put it in jeopardy by any show of independence. George Grace of the Clonmel Herald lost his pension, as well as the proclamations, by his support of the opposition in 1812; Gregory had investigated the services for which it had been granted, and decided that they did not justify its continuance.¹ And when the government relented, and allowed him the proclamations once more, the pension, too was once more granted to him, retrospectively from the time it had been taken away.²

The assumption must be that other pensioned journalists would have suffered in the same way, if any of them had dared to thwart the government. They rarely did. Giffard managed to keep his pension, when the government finally removed him from the Dublin Journal; but his fault had been over-zealous advocacy of the government cause, for which they could hardly penalise him by taking away an income that he had enjoyed for over quarter of a century.³

The account books recording payments to newspapers and newspaper proprietors show that payments were irregular, possibly because the government had not always the means to hand. The Correspondent and its owners, Stephen Webb and Henry Townsend

¹B.M. Add., MSS (Peel) 40195 f. 47.

²Aspinall, Politics and the Press, p. 123.

³Gregory to Peel, 27 Apr. 1816. (B.M. Add. MSS (Peel) 40202 f. 297).

received about £6 - 700 a year. Comerford and Corbett both received payments for the Patriot, the total again being in the region of £6 - 700. It was hence that Giffard of the Dublin Journal, Grace of the Clonmel Herald, and Philip Whitfield Harvey of the Freeman received their allowances; and from which the payments were made to Watty Cox, when he came to terms with the government. Altogether, between £2 - 3000 a year was disbursed to journalists from this source.¹

Whether the government 'places' that were given to newspaper owners who supported the administration were, like pensions, the reward for their journalistic work, or were obtained for other service, is more difficult to decide. But again, the precedent of Giffard, who had lost his place in the customs owing to his dispute with Lord Hardwicke, was a warning that such jobs were to be forfeited if the holder incurred the government's displeasure - inducement for any placemen who was connected with a newspaper, to keep that paper behind the government.

Both the Fitzsimons² of the Hibernian Journal, had 'places' as well as Giffard. No placeman was satisfied until his family and friends were also looked after. Giffard's son was given a judgeship in Ceylon, eventually becoming Chief Justice there; and Peel gave another kinsman a place in the customs, on Giffard's request, in 1816.³

¹Aspinall, Politics and the Press, pp. 114-24. The London-derry Journal, the Belfast Newsletter, and the Cork Advertiser also received subscriptions *idies*.

²D.E. Post, 24 July 1813; Aspinall, Politics and the Press, p. 175.

³B.M. Add. MSS (Peel), 40252 f. 163.

The Chronicle's estimate of £30,000 was not greatly exaggerated. Certainly the amount spent by the government annually on the press must have been over £20,000. Almost all of it went to the newspapers that supported the government, the remainder being doled out among the neutrals. The opposition press received nothing. The money was disbursed with the object of securing support for the government - an inducement to serve, or as a reward for services rendered.

The way in which Peel sought to obtain a press that would serve the government did not differ from those of his predecessors. He simply carried them to their logical conclusion. The cost of publishing newspapers was made so high that only ^{two} ~~three~~ types of paper could survive. The neutral advertising journals, Saunders and Carricks, could safely be ignored. A newspaper, the vigour of whose opinions gave them circulation enough to continue publication, like the Dublin Evening Post, had to be put down by force. The remaining newspapers were offered the alternative of accepting government subsidies - on government conditions - or losing money. The expenditure of thousands of pounds annually on the press was made necessary by the weight of taxation needed to keep potential opposition papers off the market. If proprietors had seen any prospect of making money out of independence, they would certainly have renounced the government connection, which as they well knew reduced circulation. The government therefore had to keep the cost of publishing independent journals prohibitive (unless they were so filled with advertisements that

they had little space for news, and less for comment) and to sustain the government press by subsidies.

By 1816, this policy had been successful, to the point that the opposition press had all but disappeared. The Dublin Chronicle still survived but its circulation was slender, and it must have been running at a loss. The commercial value of newspapers was conditional on the prospects of continued government support.¹ It had become hardly possible for individuals to start a new paper, or convert an old one, onto an independent line, as a commercial proposition. Under Peel's guidance, the freedom of the press in Ireland had disappeared, as completely as it had in the rebellion years.

Results of Peel's policy. a. Service.

Peel at first was well satisfied with the results of his press policy. His letter to Croker on the subject a few weeks after his appointment as chief secretary was full of confidence,² and included a list of newspapers that supported the government without payment - possibly Croker had been pessimistic about his chances of winning such unpurchased advocacy. Peel had arrived to find the Dublin Journal, the Patriot, and the Hibernian Journal securely welded to the administration, and none of them showed any disposition to change their allegiance. The Patriot remained

¹Cf. a letter from the owner of the Dublin Journal to Peel, 8 May 1816. (Aspinall, Politics and the Press, p. 144).

²Parker, Peel, 1, 114.

the leading Castle paper, Peel making special arrangements so that it might obtain exclusive 'inside information' from the government.¹ Peel himself sent paragraphs to the Patriot on occasion.² Corbet, the proprietor, and Comerford, the editor, acted as informers and agents for the government when required.³ So did Edward Fitzsimons, editor of the Hibernian Journal. On one occasion, when O'Connell had pleaded indisposition in order to postpone appearing when proceedings against him in London, Fitzsimons wrote to Peel to tell him that O'Connell had been seen in apparent good health in Dublin;⁴ and he frequently passed on information about the Catholics and their plans.⁵

Although the Correspondent on Peel's arrival in Ireland continued for some weeks against the castle papers,⁶ and the monstrous system of corruption associated with the expresses, it soon began to make a distinction between Peel's 'enlightened and upright' courses, and the system he had found on arrival;⁷ Peel promptly grasped the hand held out to him, and in a few weeks the Correspondent was restored to favour, accepting its share of the expresses that it had so vigorously condemned.⁸ A few months later Gregory referred to a conversation with the editor, who had

¹B.M. Add. MSS (Peel) 40214 f. 69.

²Parker, Peel, 1, 105.

³B.M. Add. MSS (Peel) 40214 f. 67: Off. Papers, 568/483/29.

⁴Ibid., 40260 f. 205.

⁵Off. Papers, 545/335/9: B.M. Add. MSS (Peel) 40265 f. 177.

⁶Correspondent, 2 Sept. 1812.

⁷Ibid., 7 Sept. 1812.

⁸B.M. Add. MSS (Peel) 40201 f. 293.

departed 'highly satisfied':¹ and Peel replied: 'The Correspondent had made a very good fight for us recently: Saxton says he had no idea it would have come forward so gallantly as it has done on some occasions against the Dublin Evening Post'.²

The Freeman remained aloof for some months after Peel's appointment: but by the summer of 1813 it had been rebuked by the Evening Post as a waverer,³ and its proprietor, Philip Whitfield Harvey, named as suspect on account of his pension.⁴ Peel that autumn, commented favourably upon its increasing moderation,⁵ and the following year Gregory opened negotiations with its owner.⁶ He feared that the paper was too rich to be brought to terms: the Freeman, Carricks Morning Post and Saunders, the morning dailies, carried more advertising than the evening papers, and consequently were in a better position to resist government blandishments. Watty Cox accused Harvey in 1815 of publishing verses adulatory of Peel to insure himself against the risks of transportation;⁷ and although it retained sufficient spirit to make a mild protest about Peel's denunciation of the Irish press in the commons the following year,⁸ its tone remained moderate, and Peel had little reason to be dissatisfied.

¹B.M. Add. MSS (Peel) 40195 f. 232.
²Ibid., 40281 f. 129: Parker, Peel, 1, 114.
³D.E. Post, 12 June 1813.
⁴B.M. Add. MSS (Peel) 40230 f. 111.
⁵Ibid., 40285 f. 157.
⁶Aspinall, Politics and the Press, p. 116.
⁷Cox's I. Mag. Nov. 1815.
⁸Freeman, 3-4 May 1816.

J. W. Conway, editor of the Dublin Evening Post, had corresponded with Peel in 1812,¹ and other journalists who kept Peel plied with information were George Grace, from Clonmel, and Francis Taggart of Belfast. Peel to some extent revived the methods of Edward Cooke and Marsden, by allowing journalists to keep him posted with news of a type that he might not obtain through official channels. At the same time, he was using the press as a vehicle for the dissemination of government propaganda.² He urged Lord Whitworth, on his appointment in 1813 as Lord Lieutenant in place of Richmond, to show his contempt for an article in the Dublin Evening Post, which had said that he had been sent over to implement a more liberal policy, by publishing a reply;³ and he himself had observations on the subject published in the Correspondent.⁴

In spite of the outward success of his policy, and the assistance he was receiving from journalists, Peel's satisfaction was short lived. He quickly found that government newspapers, even when they professed loyalty to the administration and anxiety to be of service to him, could prove an intolerable nuisance.

Results of Peel's policy. b. Disservice. 1. Inefficiency.

The Dublin Journal was unlikely to keep out of mischief for

¹Aspinall, Politics and the Press, p. 116.

²Parker, Peel, i, 114.

³Ibid., i, p. 105.

⁴Aspinall, Politics and the Press, p. 265.

long, with John Giffard as its owner: and as early as May 1813, Gregory was complaining of Giffard's most reprehensible conduct, in printing an obvious and malicious forgery - 'a most dangerous friend', Gregory described him, 'who has always injured the cause he espoused'.¹ Peel agreed, suggesting that the proclamations should be withdrawn from his paper.² Giffard's effusive loyalty made it difficult for the administration to take this step, in spite of further misdeeds³ - 'I hate writing anything to John Giffard', Peel told Gregory in 1815: 'I know, too, your great horror of a controversy with John ... Say to him that I am much obliged to him for sending me the address, and that I have no doubt it is well-intended, but that I think decidedly that these proclamations from self-constituted authorities in Dublin highly objectionable'.⁴ A year later, Peel had lost all patience with him. He had put words into Peel's mouth that Peel had not spoken:⁵ and he sent in accounts for the Dublin Journal showing that its outgoings were £2,432, and its income £2,491. 'The amount', Peel wrote, 'would be more fairly stated thus - gain to himself £60, loss to government £1,400, and in point of injury and discredit as much more'.⁶ Peel gave orders that the Dublin Journal be stopped. An arrangement was reached however, with the proprietor (one of the original Faulkner family, from whom

¹B.M. Add. MSS (Peel) 40196 f. 196.

²Aspinall, E.H.R., lvi, 272.

³10 June 1814. (B.M. Add. MSS (Peel) 40286 f. 240).

⁴17 Apr. 1815. (Ibid., 40288 f. 187).

⁵29 March 1816. (Ibid., 40290 f. 177).

⁶Parker, Peel, 1, 218.

Giffard had leased the paper) whereby it was allowed to continue, but without a direct subsidy, and without Giffard, who was induced to retire from journalism by the addition of an extra £100 onto his pension.

Even before Giffard had begun to make himself a nuisance, the Fitzsimonses of the Hibernian Journal had attracted the unfavourable notice of the government they were trying to support. By January 1813 Fitzsimons was apologising to Peel for some unnamed offence, and regretting that his paper had not made so good an impression upon Peel as it had on his predecessor Wellesley-Pole.² Fitzsimons promised to mend his ways, which he did so strenuously that Gregory shortly afterwards wrote to Peel, in disconcerted amusement, that 'the editor of the Hibernian Journal has been pleased to let off a flaming puff at us, for which he shall get a jobation. The Duke says it is my writing; but as you are absent, I shall of course attribute it to you'.³ Gregory was shortly to feel less good-humoured about the Hibernian Journal.

The Fitzsimonses had resented the return of the prodigal Correspondent, welcomed as it was with the fatted calf of the expresses; and they used the Hibernian Journal to express their disapproval. Peel, after one outburst, thought a hint to the proprietors, if they offended again, would be enough:⁴ but almost

¹Gregory to Peel, 27 Apr. 1816. (B.M. Add. MSS (Peel) 40202 f. 297).

²Ibid., 40224 f. 32.

³Parker, Peel, 1, 114.

⁴12 March 1813. (B.M. Add. MSS (Peel) 40281 f. 129).

immediately Gregory complained of another attack, promising immediate but unspecified punishment for the offenders, and calling ^{the paper} ~~it~~ 'the most impudent and most useless tributary scribble that was ever employed'.¹ Thereafter the Hibernian Journal is referred to in the government correspondence only with irritation. In 1817, Peel declared that it was 'always offensive', and always ready to inflame instead of to allay animosities.²

In the summer of 1814, the Patriot accused the respectable Sir John Newport of corrupt practices, Peel was annoyed and alarmed, partly because if there was a libel action, the Patriot's connection with government would certainly be emphasised, and partly because he had a genuine distaste for such mud slinging.³ By the following year Peel's disillusionment with the paper was complete. 'I consider the Patriot newspaper' he wrote, 'if it cost us nothing, to be worse than useless: and as it costs us £1500 I am most anxious to abolish so expensive an evil'.⁴ A few weeks later he wrote again

'I wish you would try to bring to a final and favourable issue the project we had of putting an end to the Patriot newspaper. I estimate the value of its services so low, the amount being certainly a minus quantity, that whatever we can save from the present expenses of the establishment

¹Aspinall, E.H.R., lvi. 273.

²Aspinall, Politics and the Press, p. 141.

³Parker, Peel, 1, 116.

⁴B.M. Add. MSS (Peel) 40288 f. 52.

will be more than clear gain'.¹

He gave Gregory full authority to act, saying that he would be 'most pleased when my eye is no longer offended even by the title, beyond which I do not venture, of this execrable paper'. That the Patriot continued publication cannot have been owing to any reformation, because when in 1818 the editor, Comerford, was drowned, Gregory suggested that the paper might be allowed to sink with him,² and Peel agreed.³ It nevertheless survived.

The Correspondent, alone of the government press, was seldom the subject of complaint in Peel's correspondence. But on at least two occasions it was involved in disputes with the Castle,⁴ one apparently leading to the temporary withdrawal of proclamations, which suggests that their relationship was not entirely happy.⁵

Peel's contempt for the government press was justified. On balance - apart altogether from their cost - the newspapers that supported the government proved more of an embarrassment, than an assistance. They quarrelled among themselves. They misrepresented government policy, or advocated it in a fulsome or violent fashion. They were execrably written,⁶ and their circulations, in spite of the absence of opposition newspapers, were extremely small.

¹Aspinall, E.H.R., lvi. 273.

²30 March 1818. (B.M. Add. MSS (Peel) 40205 f. 167).

³Ibid., 40295 f. 25.

⁴Ibid., 40242 f. 267.

⁵Ibid., 40261 f. 47.

⁶With the exception of Dr. Brennan's Milesian Magazine, a the curious publication which appeared in April 1812 and sporadically thereafter. It seems to have been intended as a counterblast to Cox's Irish Magazine and as such was reasonably effective. Certainly this Milesian Magazine, scurrilous and unreliable though it was, had the virtue of readability.

A commentary upon the badness of the government press is to be found in the Dublin Evening Post for 21 August 1813, in the form of an article purporting to be extracts from its rival newspapers discussing the State of Ireland, being in fact a parody of their various styles. In the extracts, the Hibernian Journal lashes out at the rest of the newspapers, the Dublin Journal is scurrilous, the Patriot affectedly highbrow (its editor Comerford prided himself on his learning), the Correspondent insufferably long-winded, and the Freeman self-consciously impartial. Carricks Morning Post and Saunders Newsletter have no comments of their own to make on the state of Ireland; they copy out the opinions from the English newspapers. Judged by the journalistic standards of the times, it was cleverly written, hitting off the newspapers' more obvious characteristics. The Correspondent, for example, had been extremely verbose from its foundation. One of its early numbers had included the sentence: 'The emollency of our abominable antipathies, nor even their positive cessation, could not at once work a miracle, and brush away the inveteracies which the habits of long ages had been producing'¹ - an appeal for conciliation that gives a fair sample of the paper's readability.

The government papers were bad because they were government papers - not by chance, or coincidence. The government represented a negligible fraction of the community; its support was secured

¹Correspondent, 21 Apr. 1817. Cf. also a jibe at the paper in the Dublin Political Review (no. 1) 6 Feb. 1813.

by patronage, and, outside placeholders, it could command only that negative approval that comes from a fear of something still less palatable. Its newspapers were produced by men of elastic principles, who were prepared to prostitute their abilities to hold their jobs. Some of them were able to convince themselves that the cause they upheld was just: certainly Giffard was sincere, in that sense of the word sincerity that includes the ability to relate principle to expediency. But men like Giffard were so detested, and ~~so~~ the views they pronounced so ^{obnoxious} ~~obnoxious~~, that their newspapers, even if they were less turgid, were hardly more readable ~~able~~ than the straightforward 'Castle prints'.

It followed that the government newspapers attracted few readers. Although there is little direct evidence about the size of their circulations, what there is shows that it was extremely limited.

Writing to the Castle in 1813, Corbet boasted that the Patriot had 750 subscribers, 'big for a paper that does not trim'.¹ Two years later he was complaining that the Correspondent had gained circulation at the Patriot's expense, by avoiding controversies liable to make it unpopular. 'An experience of 30 years during which I have been connected with government newspapers enables me to say that nothing can be more difficult in Ireland, than obtaining circulation for a government paper'.² By February 1815

¹Corbet to Sir C. W. Flint, 9 Apr. 1813. (B.M. Add. MSS (Peel) 40214 f. 69).

²Corbet to Gregory, 15 Dec. 1815. (Ibid., 40201 f. 293).

the advertisements in the Patriot had dwindled to a single column, half of which were proclamations.¹

The Dublin Journal's circulation was even smaller: in 1813 it was less than 500.² To judge by a memorial sent by its proprietor in October 1816, after Giffard's retirement, it had subsequently diminished still further:³ again, this is borne out by the evidence of the advertisements, which by the time of his departure had been reduced to half a column, excluding proclamations.⁴ The paper began to revive, and was soon boasting that it had increased its circulation threefold under the new management.⁵ The memorial states that its circulation was equal to the Patriot's, and five times as large as the Hibernian Journal's, which would suggest that the Hibernian Journal's was very small indeed. Watty Cox in his Irish Magazine often jeered at the Fitzsimons, saying that their paper only sold '21 copies'.⁶

The extent to which a newspaper could suffer by advocacy of government measures is shown in a letter to Peel from George Grace, who confessed that his Clonmel Herald shed half of its 370 subscribers owing to the favour it showed to the Peace Preservation Bill.⁷ Conversely, the only Dublin newspaper that offered serious opposition to Peel, the Evening Post, appears

¹Patriot, 3 Feb. 1815.
²B.M. Add. MSS (Peel) 40232 f. 253.
³Mrs Marie Ward to Peel, 14 Oct. 1816. (Ibid., 40259 f. 156)
⁴F.D.J., 29 June 1816.
⁵Ibid., 2 Jan. 1817.
⁶Cox's I. M., May 1813.
⁷B.M. Add. MSS (Peel) 40348 f. 71.

to have had easily the largest circulation of any paper in the country. Even after its conversion, it still held the lead, presumably because there was so little choice. The Chronicle was too aggressively Catholic in flavour to take its place, among a newspaper-reading population that was still predominantly protestant.

Carricks Morning Post and Saunders Newsletter, usually strict in their neutrality, remained widely read, and the Freeman's Journal, by a show of detachment from the government, managed to do rather better than the rest of the newspapers in Castle pay.

A list of the amounts of advertisement duty paid by each newspaper in 1819, the year after Peel's departure, was illuminating:-¹

	£	£
	<u>1819</u>	<u>1820</u>
<u>Saunders Newsletter</u>	2,512	2,393
<u>Carricks Morning Post</u>	1,560	1,308
<u>D.E. Post</u>	1,475	1,238
<u>Freeman</u>	1,377	1,185
<u>Correspondent</u>	1,146	921
<u>Patriot</u>	339	260
<u>Hibernian Journal</u>	187	162

Saunders', smugly quoting the accounts, said that 'advertisers will necessarily crowd to journals which they know as sure

¹Off. Papers, 579/527/20. (A copy of Saunders Newsletter, giving the official figures).

to give the most extensive opportunities of laying their wants and wishes before the public'. The figures barely stated, were misleading.

— The evening papers, the Post, Patriot,¹ Hibernian Journal, and Dublin Journal were published thrice weekly, whereas the morning papers came out every day.² The morning papers, too, circulated mainly in the city, and were better patronized by advertisers; the evening papers sent out through the country carried less advertisements, in proportion to their circulation. The figures for the evening papers, however, give a fair indication of relative popularity; they bear out the confession later to be made by the Hibernian Journal that 'in Ireland the papers in opposition to government are those most sought after to put advertisements in'.³ The Dublin Evening Post still kept its advantage, presumably because its rivals were still more sycophantic: the Patriot and the Hibernian Journal had no appeal to advertisers, and although the Dublin Journal's figures were unaccountably omitted, a glance at its columns during the period shows that it was doing no better. The slump in newspaper advertising was the product of a decaying economic order: but it was equally a reflection of the general debility of the press.

¹The Patriot had ceased to be a daily on 1 Jan. 1816.

²The Correspondent, though an evening paper, came out daily.

³Hib. Journal, 4 July 1821.

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Disservice. 2. Importunity.

If it was hoped that the government newspapers would exercise a salutary effect upon the public, to justify the government's expenditure on them, the money was thrown away; they cannot have reached more than two or three thousand buyers, out of a population of several million. And in addition, the government's tutelage of the newspapers had two unpleasant consequences. One was that Peel and Gregory were incessantly plagued with a crowd of importunate journalists, writing querulous letters and making themselves a thorough nuisance to the Castle; the other, that the opposition at Westminster were given excellent opportunities, of which, luckily for Peel, they did not often avail themselves, to produce indictments of the waste and futility of his expenditure on the press.

At a time when every supporter of the ascendancy thought his services well qualified him for office, the journalists stood out, as the most importunate, sycophantic, and annoying mendicants in the country. Most of their letters follow the pattern of those written to Cooke by Francis Higgins during the rebellion period. Some of them give information:¹ a few deal with matters relevant to the conduct of the newspaper: but the vast majority concern themselves mainly, if not exclusively, with requests for more assistance, the writer whimpering, threatening, cringing,

¹Cf. one from J. Swapp (Patriot Office) to Castle, March 1812. (Off. Papers, 548/366/7).

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whining or beguiling, according to circumstances.

Giffard remained incorrigible. On one occasion the Castle thought that something had at last been found in which Giffard could be really useful - to supply information about the Orange Order, of which Giffard was a Deputy Grand Master. As Gregory complained to Peel, all Giffard supplied was 'a long panegyric of his civil and military exploits'.¹ He was a constant source of irritation to the two secretaries.

As a correspondent, Giffard was out-written by Edward Fitzsimons of the Hibernian Journal. Fitzsimons was not above recommending himself to the Prince Regent,² but usually he wrote to Peel, mixing protestations of devotion with requests for places. He already held the job of inspector of taxes at £300 a year. In May 1814 he pointed out that one of the commissioners of revenue appeals was old and infirm and infrequent in attendance, suggesting himself as successor.³ 'Were I a commissioner of appeals', he wrote, 'I should be stationary in Dublin, and consequently more capable of energetically continuing my services to the government through the medium of the Hibernian Journal, and my own exertions - without being in any danger of undergoing a removal to any distant part of Ireland, which I am liable to at the present moment, far from my paper and the requisite commun-

¹B.M. Add. MSS (Peel) 40199 f. 27.

²Aspinall, Letters of George IV, letter no. 558.

³B.M. Add. MSS (Peel) 40236 f. 122.

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ications with the Castle'.¹ The following year he reminded Peel of his claims to the post,² and, when the ailing commissioner died that winter, wrote hurriedly, to press his claim.³ Peel replied regretting his inability to act, whereupon Fitzsimons wrote back, 'had I succeeded through your kind intervention, I could not be more thankful than I feel myself at this proof of kindness to one whom you have bound to your service ever'.⁴ Peel jotted nervously on the back 'I hope I said nothing that could justify all this gratitude'. The following April, Fitzsimons was asking for the post of advocat-general to the court of Admiralty, which would 'when granted me, bind me more than ever to your service. It would bring my income only to £600'.⁵ In October he twice asked for a police magistracy, following the deaths of the magistrates.⁶ And in July 1817 he took advantage of a friendly gesture from Peel to say that he was going to the continent to improve his writing - that in travelling, rank would be a help - and 'that I should be thankful if you would have the kindness to recommend me to his excellency the lord lieutenant, for the honour of knighthood'.⁷ Peel's draft replies, scribbled

¹Aspinall, Politics and the Press, p. 176.

²B.M. Add. MSS (Peel) 40242 f. 37.

³6 Dec. 1815. (B.M. Add. MSS (Peel) 40250 f. 37).

⁴15 Dec. 1815. (Ibid., 40250 f. 140).

⁵Ibid., 40254 f. 109.

⁶Ibid., 40259 f. 122: 40259 f. 340. A rival claimant was Francis Magan, betrayer of Lord Edward Fitzgerald.

⁷Ibid., 40267 f. 302.

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on the backs of the letters, are often illegible, but the tone of his answer to this request can be judged from Fitzsimons profuse apologies a few days later, for the 'ignorance of forms' that had led him to make such a gaffe.¹ A year later, he was still asking for a place.² Even after Peel had left Ireland, Fitzsimons continued to plague him, in spite of rebuffs, until Peel told his secretary to write 'I am directed by Mr. Peel to acquaint you, with reference to your letter to him of the 21st. inst., that he will not trouble you to write to him, as he receives information from Ireland upon all points on which he requires it, from other quarters'.³

The most persistent nuisance was George Grace, the proprietor of the Clonmel Herald. The paper had been set up during Hardwicke's viceroyalty, Grace obtaining proclamations in return for a promise of his support for the government. When the value of the proclamations fell off, he managed to secure a £100 a year allowance in lieu.⁴ Peel ordered that this should be discontinued, along with the proclamations, in 1812, giving as an excuse that Grace had fallen into arrears with the Stamp Commissioners.⁵ Grace believed that it was because he had supported the opposition candidate in the elections; and from that time on he was constantly

¹B.M. Add. MSS (Peel) 40268 f. 205.

²Ibid., 40276 f. 237.

³21 Feb. 1822. (Ibid., 40345 f. 45).

⁴During Bedford's Lord Lieutenancy (Off. Papers 556/413/29).

⁵Grace, George, Letter to the Duke of Richmond (P): and see Off. Papers, 534/243/3.

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writing to the lord lieutenant, to Peel, and to Gregory, complaining about the treatment he had received, and beseeching them to restore his allowance, and the proclamations. His initial appeals failed, but the arrival of the new lord lieutenant, Whitworth, set him going again; Grace wrote saying that as a landowner, a lawyer, a magistrate, and a married man with a large family, he must have justice.¹ A year later he wrote to Peel to say that the loss of the proclamations and the annuity had so preyed upon the mind of his wife, the mother of twelve children, that she had gone mad.²

George Grace used to enclose copies of his own paper and the rival Clonmel Advertiser in some of his letters.³ The benefits which had previously been the Herald's now went to the Advertiser,⁴ and it infuriated Grace that his rival, whose support for the government was much less vigorous than his own (as the enclosures were designed to prove) was 'choked with proclamations'.⁵ Often he forecast immediate disaster if the paper was not assisted. In April 1815 he spoke of 'the pressure under which I am struggling';⁶ in October, he feared that the paper was going on the rocks;⁷ and the following January wrote 'I do most solemnly

¹20 Jan. 1814. (Off. Papers, 556/413/29).

²Aspinall, Politics and the Press, p. 123.

³B.M. Add. MSS (Peel) 40248 f. 310: Off. Papers, 556/413/29.

⁴Gregory to Peel, 7 Dec. 1812. (B.M. Add. MSS (Peel) 40195 f. 47).

⁵Ibid., 40248 f. 310.

⁶Ibid., 40244 f. 250.

⁷Ibid., 40248 f. 310.

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declare, as I hope for God's mercy, that nothing should make me again trespass on you in this way but unspeakable pressures of embarrassment'.¹ This appears finally to have moved Peel to action - he gave instructions for the proclamations to be restored² - and Grace's next letter is full of thanks for the restoration to favour.³ No sooner did Grace detect any trace of encouragement, than he demanded further favours. When Peel wrote a friendly letter to him in 1814, Grace sent his acknowledgement by hand - the hand of his son, for whom he asked Peel to find some place;⁴ later, Peel complained to Gregory that Grace 'under pretence of apologising for the persecution of his son, renews his own'.⁵

Grace then desired a vacancy in the revenue department;⁶ and he had hardly got back the proclamations, when he was asking for government advertisements.⁷ When the £100 a year allowance was restored, Grace found to his delight that it was paid retrospectively back to the date of its cessation. This suggested to him that the same might apply to the proclamations, and he wrote to Peel pointing out that he was owed $3\frac{1}{4}$ years at £240 a year; however, since he realised the government was short of

¹17 Jan. 1816. (Off. Papers, 563/457/12).

²Grierson to Peel, 29 Jan. 1816. (Ibid., 563/457/3).

³6 Feb. 1816. (Ibid., 563/457/12).

⁴B.M. Add. MSS (Peel) 40240 f. 144.

⁵10 Apr. 1815. (B.M. Add. MSS (Peel) 40288 f. 167). The letter from Grace referred to is 40244 f. 250.

⁶Ibid., 40248 f. 248.

⁷13 Apr. 1816. (Off. Papers, 563/457/12).

money, they might instead put him 'into some situation in which the requital of its duties might afford a comfortable, though tedious compensation'.¹ Two years later he was again asking for a revenue office vacancy.² Just before Peel's departure, Grace wrote to tell him that the Clonmel Herald was at its last gasp. The value of the paper was dreadfully diminished: many of its subscribers had withdrawn because of his loyalty as a magistrate, and newspaper proprietor. If Peel could not help, he could at least intercede with his successor.³ Like Fitzsimons, Grace continued to badger Peel long after he had ceased to be chief secretary, writing to him in 1822 to say that support of his measures had been the cause of the Clonmel Herald's decline, and asking him on that account to intercede with his successor, 'affording me, in my old age, some of those comforts that age requires'. Peel answered curtly that he made it a rule never to interfere with Irish appointments.⁴

Most of the Irish newspaper owners plagued the government in similar fashion, at one time or another. Henry Townshend of the Correspondent went behind Gregory's back to Peel in 1815, complaining that Gregory was uncooperative.⁵ William Corbet, when he had reason to fear in 1815 that the government was about

¹17 Oct. 1816. (B.M. Add. MSS (Peel) 40259 f. 198).
²Ibid., 40275 f. 78.
³Ibid., 40279 f. 289.
⁴Ibid., 40348 f. 71.
⁵Ibid., 40242 f. 267.

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to abandon the Patriot, reminded them that only while the Patriot lived, was the Correspondent manageable.¹ Comerford, the editor of the Patriot, had earlier insisted upon compensation with some permanent appointment, should the paper disappear, on the terms of the original agreement made when it was founded.² Comerford used to write fulsome letters to Peel; in one, he boasted about a threatening anonymous letter he had received which showed how effective his articles were;³ in another, he touted for a subscription to a book of verse he was about to publish. Peel ordered four copies.⁴ The poem came out so long afterwards that Peel almost subscribed twice.⁵ Fitzsimons was another verse writer; he told Peel in 1815 that he was publishing an edition of Irish Melodies in order to counteract the seditious effect of Tom Moore's. Peel unguardedly replied that the intention was most praiseworthy: Fitzsimons promptly asked permission to dedicate the next edition to him, and Peel reluctantly had to give his consent, which entailed ordering four copies.⁶

The acquisitiveness of the government journalists was at times ghoulish. On 29 March 1818 Comerford, the editor of the Patriot, who had been spending a convivial evening with the manager of the Theatre Royal, missed his way home in the dark,

¹Corbet to Gregory, 15 Dec. 1815. (B.M. Add. MSS (Peel) 40201 f. 293).

²Ibid., 40288 f. 52.

³Ibid., 40243 f. 259.

⁴Ibid., 40247 f. 125.

⁵Ibid., 40273 f. 159.

⁶Ibid., 40247 f. 130.

walked into the Royal Canal, and was drowned.¹ This was on a Saturday: on the Sunday, Gregory wrote to Peel that three Dublin newspaper owners had offered to conduct the paper in Comerford's place:² Townshend, Fitzsimons, and Walter Thom, who had taken on the Dublin Journal after Giffard's retirement.

Fitzsimons wrote:-

As the Hibernian Journal is a morning paper, and the Patriot an evening one, it strikes me that I could easily conduct the latter so as to make it and the former jointly serviceable to the same cause.

Thom wrote:-

The Patriot being published on alternate days from my journal, the editing of the one could not interfere with that of the other therefore I feel justified in proposing to conduct the Patriot.³

Another journalist, the Rev. Edward Groves, allowed two days to elapse before putting in his application for the vacant editorial chair.⁴

Only a fraction of the correspondence between the newspaper owners and the Castle can have been preserved, because the bulk of it must have gone through Gregory, whose correspondence appears to have been destroyed.⁵ And there is no computing the number

¹Patriot, 31 March 1818.

²30 March 1818. (B.M. Add. MSS (Peel) 40205 f. 167).

³Aspinall, Politics and the Press, pp. 488-9.

⁴Ibid., p. 202.

⁵See bibliographical note., Aspinall, Politics and the Press p. 410.

of interviews that newspapermen sought, and occasionally obtained. Their importunities would have been less unwelcome if they had confined themselves to matters relevant to their work, or if they had any results to show for the favours bestowed upon them. As it was, their correspondence must have been a constant source of irritation to Peel and Gregory.

Disservice. 3. Expense.

Peel's source of greatest worry, however, in connection with the Irish press, was probably the need to justify the government's expenditure in the house of commons.

The cost came up in his first year of office, in connection with the annual vote for the insertion of proclamations in the press. Parnell opposed the usual grant of £10,500, on the grounds that it was used to corrupt the press, some of the papers owing their very existence to the proclamation fund. This could hardly be denied, and Peel was able to escape from an awkward position only by making the old point that the Ministry of All the Talents, in which Parnell had served, had spent on them a still larger sum.¹

The following day Sir John Newport took up Peel's challenge, saying that as chancellor of the exchequer for Ireland in 1806 he had been compelled to adopt the estimates of the previous government. Then - presumably in case somebody should ask him

¹12 Apr. 1813. (Parl. Deb.s, xxv, 791 ff.).

why he had not revised them in 1807 - he went on to contend that a minister who has adopted a policy should not thereby be disqualified from arguing against it subsequently, in the light of 'ulterior information'. He now believed that the proclamations exercised a pernicious influence on the Irish press. In this he was supported by General Matthew, rising to accuse the government of depriving the Clonmel Advertiser of proclamations for its support of the opposition in the elections. The chancellor of the exchequer, whose contribution to the discussion had hitherto been negligible, seized his opportunity to steer away the debate into a discussion of the particular incident. From this, it was a short step to an exchange of personalities, the speaker finally having to bind both general and chancellor to keep the peace, by which time the original subject of the debate had been forgotten.¹

Peel, however, took fright, writing off anxiously to Gregory asking for information to sustain him in argument, should the subject be broached again. Gregory replied 'I will return answers to your queries tomorrow, but you have a bad parliamentary cause to defend, and the less you say the better'.² The information despatched consisted of an account of how the proclamations were distributed, what papers received them, and how much they were paid for the insertions. But 'what can you say', Gregory

¹Parl. Deb.s, xxv, 813.

²Aspinall, E.H.R., lvi 271.

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concluded in the letter which enclosed them, 'in defence of the system, except that your adversaries expended larger sums in the same way?'.¹

When the vote became due ~~once more~~ the following year, Peel was once more alarmed. Somebody had shown him a copy of the Correspondent for April 20 in which the public were belatedly notified that a levee to be held on the 14th. April was 'to be postponed'. 'Calm my fears', Peel asked Gregory;² but Gregory could only confirm them, saying that it was an error which would not have been charged for, and in any case would not have been admitted by Grierson, who was in charge of payments for the proclamations.³ This habit of government papers continuing to print proclamations after they were out of date - the Chronicle unkindly pointed out that the Patriot continued to print certain temporary government regulations for the export of pig-iron months after they had ceased to operate,⁴ - continued to be an embarrassment to Peel.

In 1816,⁵ and again the following year, Peel wrote uneasily for comfort as the date of the vote on the estimates approached. 'Ministers have recommended the appointment of a committee to examine every item of our expenditure' he told Gregory in 1817:

¹Aspinall, E.H.R., lvi 271.

²30 Apr. 1814. (B.M. Add. MSS (Peel) 40286 f. 135).

³3 May 1814. (Ibid., 40198 f. 153).

⁴D. Chronicle, 21 June 1816.

⁵29 Jan. 1816. (Off. Papers, 563/457/3).

'I tremble for the proclamations'.¹ Possibly the opposition were restrained from a more vigorous assault on the proclamations by the knowledge of their own acceptance of them when in office: or possibly they tired of reverting to a subject in which the same arguments year after year, produced the same negative results. Whatever the reason, they did not assail the government on the proclamations with the force that Peel evidently expected, and feared. Nevertheless, the threat was always there: and it must have been particularly galling to Peel to realise that this expenditure, which was so difficult to defend, was so barren of advantage for the government.

¹Parker, Peel, 1, 211.

Conclusions.

Peel had proved that it was possible, given the resolution, for the government to rid itself of an opposition press, ~~but only~~ at a cost; but also that without the stimulus of opposition newspapers, the press as a whole became stagnant, unreadable, and offensive even to the government it professed to support.

As late as 1816, when the opposition press had all but disappeared, he told the house of commons that

'among the other causes which had unquestionably contributed to produce the present disturbances and outrages, in Ireland, might be reckoned the press of that country He was far from meaning to say that the benefits which resulted from a free press did not greatly, if not wholly, overbalance the evils of its abuse. He would even venture to assert that what might be called the extreme licentiousness of the press, in a former period of our history, mainly assisted in securing to us invaluable privileges. But what could be said in favour of a press which never sought to enlighten the public mind - which never aimed at the dissemination of truth - which never endeavoured to correct the morals or improve the happiness of the people? On the contrary, the most studious efforts were made to keep alive and foment discord, and the malignant influence of the worst passions of our nature'.¹

¹26 Apr. 1816. (Parl. Deb.s, xxxiv, 35).

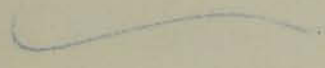
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Considering that the only opposition newspaper that had been published in Dublin for two years previously had been the Chronicle, with its negligible circulation, this petulant outburst could only reflect on the government controlled press. Peel had to take Cox's Irish Magazine as his example: 'Until the present year it had had a wide circulation amongst the lower orders in Ireland ... it was generally distributed gratis, or at least at a price so very much below what the mere cost of printing must be that it was evident profit was not considered, but only the accomplishment of the most pernicious and villainous purposes'. This was nonsense. The lower orders in Ireland could not read: nor could Cox have afforded to circulate his magazine below cost, unless he was in receipt of a subsidy from some undisclosed source, which is highly improbable. Besides, to ground any case against the Irish newspapers on an 'example dug out of the entombed rubbish of Watty Cox's cabinet', was absurd.¹ Obviously Peel was angered not by the sins of the opposition, but by the incapacity of the government press.

That he realised his policy had been a failure, even though his mind was of that cast which refuses to admit such things to itself, is clear enough from his subsequent correspondence, in which he was to advise his predecessors against the methods he had himself used. "A fortnight hence", he wrote to Croker as

¹Freeman, 3 May 1816.

he was preparing to leave, "I shall be as free as air free from the acknowledgment of that gratitude which consists in a lively sense of future favours".¹ Free from Giffard, and Grace, and Fitzsimons. His enemies had been vanquished; he was escaping from his friends.



¹Parker, Peel, 1, 116.

Part IV

1818-1829

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The years between Peel's resignation from the post of chief secretary, and Catholic Emancipation saw a striking revival of the press in Ireland, particularly in Dublin. As late as 1820, newspapers had not fundamentally altered either in appearance or content since the days of the Volunteers. They were better printed, and better laid out: but they still followed the old formula, filling their columns mainly with foreign news copied directly out of the English papers. The amount of space allotted to home news had, if anything, decreased since the Union. But by 1830 a radical change had taken place. The Dublin newspapers by that time had an entirely different air about them. They were more business-like in appearance, and they gave home news in plenty.

The change has been attributed to the rise of O'Connell, with its stimulation of interest in home affairs.¹ But the underlying cause was the political change in England, that led to the appointment of a more liberal administration. Soon after he had come to the throne, George IV came to Ireland, where he received an enthusiastic welcome, particularly from the Catholics. Admittedly his visit produced, as it was intended to produce, a number of false hopes . . . Lord Liverpool maintained the illusion by sending out Lord Wellesley as viceroy and conferring the office of attorney general on Plunkett. But simultaneously Goulburn, an able and bigoted supporter of the Ascendancy, received the chief secretaryship. There was in fact the semblance of compromise without an iota of concession.²

¹ ef Chart, Ireland from the Union to Catholic Emancipation , p 114 (n)

² Cambridge Modern History, X, 637.

- the Catholics did not benefit directly from Wellesly's appointment, which served rather to make them more despondent, as soon as they found that their hopes, raised by the King's visit, were not to be realized. But the shadow of liberalism, for all that it lacked much substance, had the effect of alarming the Ascendancy: and an enterprising journalist, sensing the hatred with which the lord lieutenant's liberalism was regarded by the Ascendancy, produced an independent Protestant paper of such character that it jolted the still torpid Dublin press into life. The Dublin Evening Mail, founded in 1823, quickly attained a larger circulation than any other Irish newspaper, a distinction that it was to hold for many years; and the stimulus of its presence infused vigour into its rivals.

↓ It was, in fact, on the Protestant side that the press revival began. This was a break with tradition. Previously, the newspapers with the biggest circulations had always been sympathetic to the Catholics, liberal and sometimes revolutionary - the Northern Star, the Press, and the Dublin Evening Post.¹ The Evening Mail was frankly and often violently Protestant. Protestant sympathies had been largely alienated by the violence of the O'Connellite Catholics in the post-Union period. An independent Protestant paper might have emerged at any time after 1812, had not the Protestant press been tied to the government by subsidies, so that they feared to take independent action.

¹ The colourless Saunders, an exception, was ~~proposed~~^{still} an advertising paper.

Only when the administration ceased to satisfy the Ascendancy, was the absence of an independent Protestant paper felt. The Dublin Evening Mail filled the gap.

The Catholic press added impetus to the revival once it had begun: but O'Connell was not responsible. The owner of the Morning Register, and a Catholic paper begun in 1824, introduced into Ireland the system already common in England whereby each newspaper had a corps of reporters, sent out daily to obtain accounts of meetings and events - a system which rivals had perforce to adopt, and which completed the process, begun by the Evening Mail, ringing-in the new Irish press. But the Morning Register, although usually ranged behind O'Connell was independent of him, Ascendancy doubts notwithstanding. Its success was won in spite of, rather than because of its political allegiance. O'Connell had not then, nor, indeed, was ever to have the newspaper reading public behind him. That public was small : no more than 3000 people read the Dublin morning papers in 1825, and perhaps twice that number the evening papers. As a morning paper, the Register was competing against three rivals, of which two were pro-Catholic. Both were denounced by O'Connell as false friends. If O'Connell commanded any support among readers of newspapers, this ought to have attracted a larger circulation to the Register. The rivals did, in fact, go into a decline from which one was not to recover: but few of their followers transferred their subscriptions to the Register, in spite of its owner's progressive ways. The assumption can only be that the well-to-do Catholics did not care for the O'Connell line.

O'Connellite newspapers never succeeded in obtaining satisfactory circulations, which suggests that the Register owed its survival more to its occasional demonstrations of independence, than its more normal adhesion to O'Connell.

The point must be emphasised, because to link O'Connell with the substantial change in the condition of the Irish press in his lifetime, is misleading. The revival was stimulated by one independent journalist, and carried on by another: it was to this new independence of the press, made possible by the Wellesley administration, that the revival owed its impulse. That administration cannot take any credit: it had no love for the Evening Mail, the Register, and the other contentious papers. It happened that the Ascendancy so hated the government that no jury could be got to convict for even the most outrageous assaults on ministers; so that newspapers were at their most licentious, when they had least to fear. This press saturnalia was not to last. As soon as the Ascendancy once more had an administration to their liking, the independent newspapers had to resume their old watchfulness, or suffer in the courts. But it lasted just long enough to change the character of the press in Ireland. In the 1820's, national newspapers, as we now know them, were born.

Interlude : 1818 - 1823.

The structure Peel had built up did not immediately collapse on his departure. For the next five years, the Irish press was to remain very much as he had left it, cowed and unenterprising and dull. This stagnation owed as much to inertia as to government supervision, because the chief secretary, Charles Grant, had the reputation of being liberal. He lived up to it sufficiently for Gregory, who stayed on as under secretary, to speculate mournfully on the possibility, if Grant gave any more encouragement to the Papists, of the spectacle of the Elevation of the Host in the streets before a year was out.¹ But Grant's conciliatory ideas seem to have been spoiled by a constitutional indolence,² and the likelihood is that he left dealings with the press in the hands of Gregory, under whom they would be carried on as before. In 1820, a literary magazine which had made its appearance in Dublin, noted that few newspapers were published in the capital:—'our opinions like our presses have been proscribed, and we must import them like other foreign luxuries, or be content to remain in ignorance and apathy'.³

Nevertheless there were by the following year unmistakable signs that a policy such as Peel's could only be maintained, while a Peel was there to enforce it.

¹ 22 Feb 1819. (Mr. Gregory's Letter Box, p 116)

² Ibid., p 109.

³ The Dublin Magazine, quoted by the Irish Monthly Magazine, i, 124. (1832).

The first, was the appearance in 1821 of a new Catholic newspaper, the Dublin Evening Herald.¹ It was brought out by Michael Staunton, who during the Peel administration had been editor of the Freeman, the least venal paper to survive those years. Soon after Peel left, he had founded the Weekly Register,² a Catholic paper which soon attained a substantial circulation. Possibly ^{the} popularity of the weekly persuaded him that there must be an opening for a Catholic paper to take its place among the evening papers. If so, his expectations were not to be fulfilled. Weeklies at that time, and for many years to come, attracted bigger circulations than papers which appeared more frequently, owing, perhaps, to the existence of a class who could not afford a paper more than once a week. They do not appear to have exercised proportionate influence, to judge by the infrequent references made to them. They were by no means invariably staid, but they usually contrived to avoid the attorney general's attention.

There were signs, too, of a revival in the spirit of the existing newspapers. The three confessedly government papers began to squabble among themselves, which gave the Evening Post the chance to justify its rather faded boast of independence by disparaging all three of them. The Patriot, it appeared, had spoken of the 'disgusting scurrility' of the Hibernian Journal, and the 'stupid balderdash' of the Correspondent;

¹ No. 1. was for 30th Jan. 1821.

² Founded in 1818, soon after Peel's departure.

and the Post promised to keep its readers informed of the course of the contest 'as it is very likely that he never sees any of these papers'.¹

The trial of the Queen intervened, monopolizing the news columns for the next few months. Thereafter the Post concentrated its attacks upon the Hibernian Journal until, to the Post's maliciously unconcealed delight, the paper ceased publication the following summer.

That a government newspaper should have been allowed to cease publication was in itself significant. Peel had not liked the Orange press, and he had been profoundly irritated by Fitzsimons: but he had resigned himself to the Hibernian Journal and the other Castle papers. After his departure, the Hibernian Journal maintained its ways. With Giffard in retirement, Fitzsimons, himself a prominent Orange functionary,² made his paper the champion of the Orange cause, and filled it with such abuse of the Catholics, that Grant had to complain to Gregory 'I really think such words coming from a paper notoriously paid by government, when one of the members of that government is known to be of the opinions thus attacked are likely, if allowed to continue, to lower in the public view, not only the respectability of that individual, but also the character of the government itself.'³

¹ D.E. Post , 27 July 1820.

² Hib. J. 12 Feb. 1820, see also Aspinall, Politics and the Press, p 345-6

³ Mr. Gregory's Letter Box, p. 121.

Gregory replied that he had told the editor to avoid personalities in future: but the tone of his letter suggests that he had more sympathy with Fitzsimons than with Grant.¹

His admonition had little effect upon the Hibernian Journal, which continued violent, even to the extent of opposing the King's visit in 1821, on the grounds that if a projected Catholic Relief bill went through, and received the King's signature, the Irish protestants could not be held answerable for their actions. On 28 June 1821 the Hibernian Journal was denounced in the House of Commons;² and Grant took the opportunity offered by the adverse publicity to tell the proprietor that the government could not continue to subsidise his paper.³ Fulfilling the Evening Post's prophecy⁴ that it could not survive without the government's financial support, the Hibernian Journal ceased publication within a week.⁵ It need hardly be added that the editor continued to plague the Castle with importunities, finally extracting from them a pension of £100 a year.⁶

¹ Mr. Gregory's Letter Box, (25 March 1819). p. 129.

² Parl. Debs, N.S., v., 1446

³ Aspinall, Politics and the Press, p. 419.

⁴ D. E. Post, 23 Nov. 1820.

⁵ 4 July 1821.

⁶ 3 March 1824. Off. Papers, 588/444/925.

Although the total withdrawal of the Hibernian Journal's subsidy was an exceptional case, the government had already begun to reduce expenditure upon the press. When opposition speakers in the house of commons began once more to pursue that line of inquiry which had so worried Peel, Grant was able to reply that the amount spent on publishing the proclamations had been reduced to £9000 by 1820, and to £7000 the following year.¹ This did not prevent the radical, Hume, from denouncing the whole system of proclamations as government bribery. Grant said that he was not well acquainted with the methods by which the government's advertising was distributed;² he may have been prevaricating. Further consideration of the problem was deferred until the following financial year. By that time, the administration in Ireland had undergone a considerable change: and the subject was temporarily forgotten.

¹ 28 June 1821 (Parl. Debs, N.S.,v, 1446).

² Aspinall, Politics and the Press, p 145.

The Wellesley Administration.

The growing independence of the neutral press, the collapse of the Hibernian Journal, and the reduction of the proclamation fund represented the growth of a more conciliatory government attitude; a trend away from Peel's policy which was accelerated by the king's visit in the summer of 1821. The King could not have failed to notice that his most ardent acclaimers were the Catholics and O'Connell; the Orangemen, by contrast, were inclined to be suspicious.¹ A few weeks later, the liberal element at the Castle was reinforced by a far stronger acquisition than the ineffectual Grant, when Talbot was replaced as lord lieutenant by the Marquis of Wellesley, the Duke of Wellington's elder brother. It was hoped that his distinguished career as governor general of India, coupled with his brother's reputation, would be enough to overawe the Orangemen. He immediately disclaimed any intention of making radical changes. He had come, he said, to administer, and not to alter the laws. His known views, however, and such changes as the appointment of Plunket, who had introduced a bill into Parliament to remove catholic disabilities, as attorney general in place of Saurin, were enough to make the Ascendancy hostile and suspicious from the start.

¹ cf. Dublin newspapers, Aug. 1821.

Catholic newspapers could now resume publication without fear of prosecutions awaiting their first false step. But whether a Catholic newspaper could attract enough readers to make it a commercial success, remained doubtful. However conciliatory the new lord lieutenant might be, he might not persuade his colleagues in England to sweep away the duties which crippled the growth of the Irish press, by keeping the cost of newspapers so high that only the well-to-do - predominantly a protestant and "Castle Catholic" class - could afford to buy them. Coffee houses existed where less affluent citizens could read their papers - Spadacini's in Dublin advertised that the Evening Post, the Morning Post, the Freeman, Saunders', the Weekly Register, Correspondent, Patriot, and Evening Herald were all obtainable,¹ but a coffee house circulation was not sufficient to ensure solvency. So long as taxation remained at its old level, Catholic newspapers would find it hard to survive.

Staunton's Evening Herald did not thrive. Lord Cloncurry was a subscriber, and occasionally wrote letters to the editor; but he found it 'too full of long, drawling, priest-ridden stuff to do any real good'.² About 300 copies of each issue were sold in the early stages of the paper's career, the number dwindling to less than 200 in 1822,³ and the following year it was allowed to expire. Yet his other newspaper, the Weekly Register, was still obtaining ~~substantial~~ support; and this encouraged Staunton to try his luck with a morning paper - the Morning Register.

¹ D.E.Post, 7 Aug. 1821.
² Lady Morgan, Memoirs, ii, 197.
³ Parl. Papers, 1826 (235) ~~XXIII~~ (383).

It lasted three weeks. A rival, crowing over its decease, said that it was the offspring of the Weekly Register and the Evening Herald, the latter dying in giving it birth ¹ - a statement borne out years later in the prospectus of a revived Herald, which admitted that its predecessor had been relinquished in order that its proprietor might concentrate upon the other two papers.²

Undeterred, Staunton tried again, the following year. This time, the Morning Register caught on. The number of subscribers was small, around 500 in 1825;³ but somehow, Staunton managed to attract far more advertisements than the circulation would appear to have warranted; and the Morning Register gradually took its place as the equal, in influence if not in circulation, of the old-established dailies.

Accusations were immediately made that the paper was run by O'Connell, owned by the Catholic Association, and subsidised by the Catholic Rent.⁴ Charges that the Catholics were subsidizing newspapers had been made before.⁵ In 1824, they began to appear again. 'A large portion of the Catholic Rent, being allocated to the support of the liberal press', one correspondent wrote, 'it becomes a matter of some interest, ^{to those} who have subscribed to that fund,

¹ Dublin Evening Mail, 28 May 1823.
² Morning Register, 8 Oct. 1832.
³ Parl. Papers, 1826 (235) xxiii (383).
⁴ Proceedings of the Catholic Association, p. 446.
⁵ e.g. Cox's Irish Magazine, Dec. 1811.

to ascertain the nature of the publications which are to be printed and circulated at our expense'.¹ There was some ground for this belief. F.W. Conway of the Dublin Evening Post was prominent in the Association: for a time he was its secretary. The Association had adopted in principle a resolution that the rent should be used, among other things, 'to encourage and support a liberal and enlightened press, as well in Dublin as in London.'² And O'Connell had urged that £15,000 a year should be spent on the press.³ The rent was, however, only sparingly used for the support of the Catholic press in Ireland. The Association numbered in its ranks members who viewed any attempt to influence the press with suspicion. A motion put before a meeting to discontinue the subscription to the Dublin Evening Mail was opposed by one speaker who praised the paper's readability, while disapproving of its principles.⁴ O'Connell's proposed expenditure was whittled down by other members to no more than money to be used in payment for insertions and advertisements - not as a subsidy.⁵ This was the policy finally adopted.

¹ Dublin Evening Express, 28 Apr. 1824.

² Aspinall, Politics and the Press, p. 322.

³ Ibid, p. 320.

⁴ D.E.Mail, 3 Dec. 1823.

⁵ Aspinall, Politics and the Press, p.321.

The association's accounts show payments to the friendly newspapers for advertisements - an outlay of only £75 for the first few months of the association's existence divided between seven Dublin newspapers.¹ Charges that had been made that the Association owed upwards of £1000 to certain newspapers were explained away by O'Connell as debts contracted years before by the Catholic Board.²

Otherwise, the only direct advantage accruing to any of the Catholic newspapers was the purchase of copies for the Association rooms. Even this practice was opposed, a member urging the discontinuance of the subscription to the Freeman and the Evening Post, on the grounds that their purchase caused jealousy among other friendly newspapers, and that the fund might more profitably be spent on other purposes.³

On the day that the Morning Register was first published, O'Connell denied accusations that it had been founded on money appropriated from the Catholic Rent.⁴ He denied, too, any personal connection with the paper.⁵ Staunton later explained that the Register was originally conceived as a joint-stock enterprise; this had fallen through, and he had gone ahead on his own resources.⁶

¹ Proceedings of the Catholic Association p. 432^x
² Aspinall, Politics and the Press, p. 321
³ Proceedings of the Catholic Association, p. 419.
⁴ Ibid, p.624. Aspinall suggests that O'Connell was referring to an English paper, the Truth Teller; but the date seems to indicate that he meant the Register.
⁵ O'Connell to Edward Fitzsimons, 5 Nov. 1824. (Off. Papers, 588/444/925).
⁶ M. Register, 17 June 1825.

This account is partially confirmed in a letter of Lord Cloncurry's,¹ and accepted in an article to be written a few years later by a reasonably well-informed contributor to the Westminster Review.² It is reasonable to suppose that the Morning Register was, from the start, an independent newspaper. Nor is there evidence that any other paper benefitted from the Rent to an appreciable amount. The Evening Post was named in the Ascendancy press as the chief paper in the Association's service;³ but O'Connell's intemperate criticisms drove Conway to resign the secretaryship of the association after which their relations were never really cordial. When Cobbett alleged in 1828 that newspapers had received big sums from the Catholic Rent, O'Connell replied that the entire outlay on insertions in the press had come to £500 in 1827, and would be less in 1828. Staunton added that the bulk of this was made up from advertisements ordered by country branches, sending in any resolutions - otherwise the outlay from the rent was trifling. Staunton was further able to show that Cobbett had personal motives for the charge - an old grudge against the Morning Register. The rent accounts were open to inspection, and it seems clear that the Catholic rent was not, in fact, used to subsidize the Catholic press.

¹ Lady Morgan, Memoirs, ii, 197.

² 1830. vol xii, 90.

³ Correspondent, 18 Dec. 1824.

The value to the Catholic cause of a newspaper which was at once respectable, spirited, and commercially sound, could hardly be over-estimated. In 1822 the liberal New Monthly Magazine, in an article on the power of the press, had been compelled sadly to admit that, although the Orange press was full of vigour, 'a sort of indefinable apathy pervades, at the present juncture, all the liberal papers'.¹ That this apathy was dispelled, and the Catholics given a daily tonic to sustain them in their quest for Emancipation, was the work of Staunton. And in his insistence upon a reorientation of the news which appeared in his paper, by the substitution of reports of events at home instead of the old unedited despatches from abroad, he was soon to diffuse his influence still further, by altering the face of Irish newspapers. This, Staunton achieved by the employment of a corps of reporters, after the London model. Up to that time reporting staffs had been virtually non-existent in Ireland: now, all the Dublin newspapers had to follow Staunton's lead, or risk losing their customers. Staunton strove to give the press a consciousness of its importance. On the Royal visit to Dublin in 1821, when the King was being shown over the premises of the Dublin Society, tickets were sent to the newspapers which only gave their representatives access to the street outside. Staunton immediately complained that no gentleman of the press could be expected to subject himself 'to this inconvenience and, indeed, indignity'.

¹ New Monthly Magazine, Oct. 1822.

This address, from the printers of the Dublin Daily Express office, was preserved in his family. It was presented in 1948, with portraits of Staunton and his wife, to the Dublin Corporation.

The omission was hastily rectified, but the Herald refused to report the occasion.¹ An 'Illuminated Address' is rarely a trustworthy source of information: but the one presented to Staunton on his election as Lord Mayor of Dublin, many years later, no more than gives him his due, as 'the man who, if he be not the Father by right of years, does yet, so far as its efficiency is concerned, deserve the title of CREATOR OF THE IRISH PRESS'.²

¹Dublin Evening Herald, 28 July 1831.

²This address, from the printers of the Dublin Weekly Register office, was preserved in his family. It was presented in 1948, with portraits of Staunton and his wife, to the Dublin Corporation.

The limited number of Catholics who could afford to become subscribers to Catholic newspapers deprived them of the chance to exercise much influence: if the Irish press was to reassert its independence, a Protestant paper would have to be the medium. For a while, it had looked as if the Patriot might be that paper. That it was able to win a substantial circulation without antagonising the Castle must be attributed to the personality of Joseph Haydn, who had stepped into the Patriot's editorial chair when Comerford was drowned. From a negligible circulation in 1818, the Patriot under his guidance had four years later obtained the largest number of subscribers of any paper in the land.¹ He even managed to extract the official figures from the Stamp Office to prove it, provoking a rebuke from the Dublin Evening Post for giving them: 'while they answer as puffs to the papers in great circulation . . . they are calculated to disclose the condition of the struggling but, perhaps, more meritorious prints'.² The Post further expressed its sorrow that the Patriot should have chosen a time to boast when the whole Dublin press was at last in harmony (except for the Orangemen) in supporting Wellesley. The Patriot had no opposition rival with which to contend; nevertheless, Haydn must have worked hard for his paper's success. The Patriot was better printed and more attractively presented than the Post, and it contained such features as Elia's dissertation upon roast pig, pirated from a London magazine.³ For a government paper this was unusually enterprising. Haydn made no secret of its government connection.

¹ Parl. Papers, 1826 (235) xxiii (383)

² D.E.Post, 16 May 1822.

³ Patriot, 7 Sept. 1822.

When Hume criticized the subsidised Irish press in the commons, the Patriot inquired why the government should not be allowed a newspaper, if whigs and radicals could have them.¹

The Patriot must at last have begun to make money, in addition to its £2000 a year subsidy from the government.² Haydn, however, appears to have realised that the Patriot's good fortune could not last. Sooner or later it would have to decide whether to accept the lord lieutenant's liberal ideas, or to cater for the alarmed Protestantism of the bulk of its subscribers. During 1822 the Patriot grew more Orange in colour.³ Possibly Haydn resigned because he realised the Castle would not tolerate this: possibly he was removed for expressing his opinion too freely. That winter he and the Patriot parted company.⁴

Wellesley's conciliatory views hardly extended beyond the desire to curb the more extreme Orangemen, and to distribute government patronage more fairly, instead of continuing the old protestant monopoly. The effect on the Ascendancy was described a few years later:-

Moderate, however, as these views were, they could not be acted upon without indirectly limiting the influence of a party in Ireland who were jealous of a monopoly they had long enjoyed,

¹ Patriot, 11 May 1822: and see 10 Aug, 1822.

² Aspinall, Politics and the Press, p.120: Parl. Papers, 1826 (178) xxiii(387)

³ To the annoyance of the Catholic New Monthly Magazine, which praised Wellesley, but warned him that government countenance of the Patriot would spoil his good name.

⁴ He was still editor when the 1822 proclamation money was paid: cf Off. Papers, 579/527/20.

not only of a principle part of the patronage, but also of the ear of the Irish government. Their long possession of the exclusive confidence of government had enabled them to keep all other parties aloof from the Castle, and to represent themselves and their friends as the only persons who could safely be employed in places of trust and emolument, or who could safely be relied upon for correct information regarding the state of the country . . . The underlings in office, who were all indebted to this party for their situations, were devoted to its interests and were constantly on the alert to watch and impede any change of system, and Lord Wellesley has uniformly experienced their secret and unremitting opposition and counter-action in every department. It was chiefly by their means that the press was turned against him. Of two newspapers in the pay of government, one espoused Lord Wellesley's policy upon his arrival in Ireland, and it was immediately rejected by every individual connected with that party.¹ The advertisements of all the departments under government were withdrawn from it, and the consequence has been ruinous to the proprietor. A new paper called the Dublin Evening Mail was established by this party for the professed object of defending the Protestant ascendancy, but really for the purpose of writing down Lord Wellesley's government, and not a single number of that paper has been published without a personal attack upon his private or public conduct.²

¹ The Patriot.

² Col. M. Shawe to Sir W. Knighton, 18 Sept. 1827.
(Geo. IV. Correspondence, ed. Aspinall, letter 1407).

The Dublin Evening Mail, which appeared for the first time on 3 February 1823, was edited by ~~Wellesley~~ Haydn. The first number was ^{innocuous.} ~~innocuous.~~ Its editor had been compelled to obtain assistance from Lonergan,¹ the owner of Carricks Morning Post, who was a man of liberal outlook: and Haydn probably did not feel quite sure of his ground. But within a few weeks the Mail had unmasked itself as violently and scurrilously anti-Wellesley, and anti-Catholic.²

Haydn was erratic and unscrupulous, but he knew how to attract attention. Nothing had been seen in Dublin like his newspaper since the days of the Volunteer's Journal. It was filled with cartoons, scandalous squibs, and contentious editorials, which kept Haydn continually in trouble. At one time he boasted of having four affairs of honour on his hands in ten days,³ one of them with Henry Grattan, Jr.; at another he was horsewhipped by the lord lieutenant's A.D.C.⁴ The publicity had the desired effect. Within a year of its foundation the Evening Mail had a circulation nearly three times as large as any other Dublin newspaper.⁵

Offensive though Haydn's methods were, they had the beneficial effect of awakening the Irish press. Haydn had himself been editor of the government Patriot under Peel, and he knew all the slithy secrets of the government newspapers. He took a vicious pleasure in denouncing 'Old Corbet' of the Patriot,⁶ his former benefactor;

¹ (W. Cox), Bella, Horrida Bella, (P), p. 23.
² D.E. Mail, 21 Feb. 1823.
³ Ibid., 23 Apr. 1823.
⁴ Ibid., 14 July 1823.
⁵ Parl. Papers, 1826 (235) xxiii (383).
⁶ D.E. Mail, 19 Feb. 1823, 29 Oct. 1823, et sq.

and he had hardly finished with Corbet before he rounded on Lonergan of Carricks, who had not only put up part of the money to found the Evening Mail,¹ but had actually printed the paper until Haydn obtained presses of his own.¹ Watty Cox, who had returned once more to Ireland, published extracts from the slanging match which arose between the two papers. They bear a ludicrous resemblance to the editorials in the "Eatanswill ^{Gazette} ~~and~~ Independent". "We have, as far as we have gone, shown this imbecile, yet noxious reptile, to be a calumniator and a coward," wrote Haydn: 'we must now prove him to be a LIAR'. Lonergan replied by calling the editor of the Mail a 'desperate madman', and 'a hangman-headed dog', and his newspaper columns, the 'limbs of the leprous carcass our pincers are to tear'.² Lonergan was easily able to prove that Haydn's calumnies were false. In the process Carricks Morning Post was fairly roused, after its long somnolence.

The owners of the Mail soon became aware that the substantial profits they were making were in danger of being dissipated by Haydn's impetuosity. If their account is to be believed, his indiscretions cost the paper thousands of pounds in keeping cases out of court,³ and they could never be certain that the paper would not contain a libel that could not be thus settled.⁴

* ~~unpublished~~

¹ D.E. Mail, 28 July 1823.

² (W. Cox) Bella, Horrida Bella. The war began with a article in the D.E. Mail, 28 July 1823, and occupied the two papers for a fortnight.

³ D.E. Mail, 23 Nov. 1825.

⁴ At Waterford Assizes the following year £300 damages were awarded against Haydn in a libel action taken against the Mail. D.M. Post, 29 July 1825.

So, after a few months, Haydn was bought out, apparently for a substantial sum,¹ and the Mail settled down into prosperous respectability.² Not that its basic policy was changed - a typical Mail jibe was the parody of the Viceregal levee announcement:-

'Private Chaplain's Office, Phoenix Park: Feb. 17, 1826.

'There will be a Rosary at the Lodge on the evening of Monday the 20th inst. The ladies and gentlemen who attend are requested to bring their own beads'.³

- but the proprietors boasted that they had stopped personalities ^{and friends} / themselves on the Mail's credit, consequence, and character.⁴

Haydn did not allow the Dublin press to slip back into its old sluggish ways. He had promised the owners of the Mail, that he would not edit any other Dublin paper in the Mail's lifetime; this, he evaded by setting up the Dublin Morning Star with another man as nominal editor.⁵ In the Star, he carried on his early Mail methods, with still greater irresponsibility. The first number contained what purported to be an historical account of Lord Wharton, who had been viceroy over a century before. It was obviously directed against Wellesley, the passages meant to be particularly applicable to him being put in capitals -

¹ D.E. Mail, 23 Nov. 1825.

² It had 8 columns of advertisements out of 20 in summer of 1825.

³ Feb. 1826. (quoted in O'Connell Correspondence, i, 88).

⁴ D.E. Mail, 23 Nov. 1825.

⁵ Carricks, 23 May 1825.

'HE TREATED THE CLERGY OF THE ESTABLISHED RELIGION WITH CONTEMPT! and 'HE VIOLATED PUBLIC DECENCY BY HIS LOW AMOURS!'¹ The administration's forbearance came to an end; the attorney general had no option but to begin proceedings.² The Star, confident in securing a well-disposed jury, retaliated by further libels, including a cartoon of Wellesley receiving a present of some headgear from a donkey:-

'Excuse me, friend, I fear I cannot bear it

Pshaw! If the cap don't fit, you need not wear it!'³

One day the Star would proclaim that the attorney general had been compelled to abandon all outstanding prosecutions against the paper:⁴ the next, that he had initiated new ones.⁵ Probably the attorney general's hesitancy came from a desire to catch Haydn, rather than the nominal owner Johnston. In the end both were brought up, charged with the 'Wharton' libel in the paper's first number. Haydn had become sole proprietor on 21 October 1824: but the attorney general was concerned to prove that he had been real editor from the start. He went to great pains to demonstrate the libellous nature of the article. O'Connell, who defended Haydn, took the chance to put forward the ingenious plea that if the prosecution had to spend so long in proving an article libellous, it was obviously not very libellous. The jury disagreed amongst themselves, and had to be discharged.⁶

¹ Star, 9 Feb. 1824.

² Ibid, 24 Feb. 1824.

³ Star, 28 Feb. 1824.

⁴ Ibid, 13 Feb. 1824.

⁵ Ibid, 15 Feb. 1824.

⁶ Carricks, 26 Jan. 1825.

The government's inability to secure the conviction of the Star was only one of a number of important cases in which juries drawn from the Ascendancy refused to give a verdict for the crown. The appointment of Plunket as attorney general, more than any other action that Wellesley had taken, had frightened the Ascendancy, who avenged themselves, in their capacity as jurymen, by refusing to admit the guilt even of such palpable libels, as those in the Star. Ugly as was this reflection of Ascendancy's control of the judicature, it was useful to the newspapers. By the creation of a dividing line between executive and judicature it broke the government's hold. The Ascendancy had no respect for the doctrine of the freedom of the press, but their hatred of Wellesley and Plunket helped indirectly to restore that freedom.

At first, the Star appears to have made the same impact as the Mail had a year before. Advertisements flowed in, filling nearly half the paper, in some issues:¹ and a prospectus was soon issued announcing an associated Evening Star² - which, if it appeared, must have been the only daily evening paper in Dublin. A Sunday Star was even contemplated.³ Haydn by now was making no secret of his connection with the new papers; and it was his lack of balance that was to be their undoing. Where he published libels on individuals rather than on the government, he could not be certain of the jury's sympathy. A reference to a citizen as 'a branded spy, a hideous informer, and a foul and blackened reprobate'⁴ cost him £300 in the summer of 1824.

¹ Star, 13 Feb. 1824.

² Ibid, 23 Feb. 1824.

³ D.E. Post, 24 Feb. 1824.

⁴ Star, 19 Aug. 1824.

Admittedly the verdict was subsequently set aside on a technicality,¹ but this was only one of 16 actions that had been taken against the Star by the end of November,² some of which, it must be presumed, had had to be settled. Others were still pending. In one of them, a verdict was found against Haydn for £50.³ The same plaintiff was awarded £300 in an action against the other proprietor, Johnston.⁴ Johnston became a bankrupt and, when he applied for his discharge, received instead a sentence of a year's imprisonment and a reprimand for going into partnership with Haydn, in view of Haydn's known compact with the Mail.⁵ The Star's bookkeeper in this trial said that his duty was to enter profits, but there were none.

The Morning Register a few days later reported the 'threatened conversion of the Star', quoting paragraphs from it about friends' ingratitude, and supporters' desertion.⁶ Such whining was the common symptom of a newspaper's impending dissolution.

A further attempt was made to set up a daily Evening Star in the place of the morning paper, which was discontinued.⁷ The project failed, and the Star disappeared. Actions against its proprietors, however, continued to be heard in the courts; £600 damages were awarded against Haydn ~~in a civil action~~ ^{some afterwards} in a civil action at Kilkenny.⁸

¹ Star, 26 Nov. 1824. ⁷ S.N.L. 25 June 1825.
² Ibid, 22 Nov. 1824. ⁸ D.M. Post. 13 Aug. 1825.
³ Ibid, 11 Dec. 1824.
⁴ Morning Register, 4 Dec. 1824.
⁵ Carricks Morning Post, 23 May 1825.
⁶ Morning Register, 10 June 1825.

Haydn and Staunton, pursuing their very different paths, had contrived to alter irrevocably the character of the Dublin press. Staunton's work was the more durable: Haydn's the more spectacular. Haydn, at that stage of his career,¹ was addicted to the gutter, and he tended to drag the other newspapers down to the level of his own: but this was largely the irresponsibility of the adolescent who has extorted his independence from nervous guardians, whose half hearted attempts to impose their restrictions only excite to wilder excesses. For all the hysterical bigotry, the Eatanswill invective, and the slimy personalities, Haydn's newspapers had an enviable vitality which, by goading rivals into retaliation, went a long way towards reanimating the moribund metropolitan press. A writer in a contemporary magazine could justifiably assert that the chain of silence which had bound Ireland body and soul had at last been burst asunder, and 'the affairs of that country may now be said to occupy exclusively the public mind'.²

THE DECLINE OF THE CASTLE PRESS.

(a) Symptons.

(b) Causes.

A.

Haydn's influence, and, more particularly, the effect of the appearance of the Evening Mail upon the rest of the Dublin press, could be seen in the circulation figures of the individual newspapers, after 1821, which were published by order of the house of commons in 1826.³

¹ He was later to attain respectability and reputation as the author of the 'Dictionary of Dates'

² Dublin and London Magazine, March, 1825.

³ Parl. Papers, 1826 (235) xxiii (363).

(1)

The figures actually produced represented the number of stamps sold to each paper each year, totals which were misleading without reference to the number of issues a week, and to whether the paper came out in the morning or evening. Converted into approximately the average number of copies sold in each issue, they show that in 1821 the Dublin Evening Post had the largest circulation: but this had sunk to little more than 1500. Of the confessedly Castle papers, the Patriot had 1400 readers, the Correspondent, 600: the Dublin Journal, 300; and the Hibernian Journal, barely 100. The government evening newspapers between them reached only little more than 2000 subscribers - and this, without any competition, except for the ineffective little Evening Herald, which had only a couple of hundred.

The following year, the first of Wellesley's viceroyalty, saw little change. The Patriot gained readers, but the Correspondent lost more: the Dublin Journal was declining, and the Hibernian Journal had disappeared. In 1823, the appearance of the Dublin Evening Mail altered the situation. Its circulation promptly rose to the 2500 mark, at the expense of the Castle press. The Dublin Journal's circulation sank to about 160, and the Patriot lost a third of its subscribers. Thereafter, the government papers continued to decline. By 1826 the Dublin Journal had ceased publication, and the Correspondent and the Patriot could barely muster a four figure circulation between them; ~~where~~ the Mail had a higher circulation than ever.

Although the success of the Dublin Evening Mail was the main reason for the collapse of the government press, a contributory cause was the government's gradual reduction of the amounts spent annually on its newspapers.

② See appendix 'B'.

The Commons request for the circulation figures in 1826 had been made in order that they could be compared with the amounts paid to the individual newspapers for the insertion of proclamations; these, too, were printed for each year back to 1821.¹

At that time, the Patriot was in receipt of £975: the Correspondent, £511: the Hibernian Journal, £388: and the Dublin Journal, £280. Saunders had £314: the other newspapers - apart from Carricks Morning Post, which received £24 - nothing. The total expenditure on the government press was about £2500, the rest of the proclamation money, which totalled £7000 that year, going to the provincial papers. By 1826 the proclamation fund had been reduced to £6000, largely at the expense of the Dublin press, which received only £1750 - and some £150 that was going to papers antipathetic to the government, including the Evening Mail, as Wellesley himself complained.²

The quarterly accounts furnished to the Castle by their official printer, Grierson, show that the government had been perturbed about the amount they were spending. In the first quarter of 1822, although he had kept within the allowance, he had to admit that Saunders was complaining that its bill had not been paid on the grounds that it was too large, when in fact it had had authority to publish all the proclamations that it had used.³ The next quarter, he was able to show a substantial reduction - from nearly £1700, to £1019; and a year later he drew attention to further economies.⁴

¹ Parl. Papers, 1826 (178) xxiii (387).

² George IV, Correspondence, iii, 311.

³ Off. Papers, 579/527/20.

⁴ Ibid., 588a/560/4.

This suggests that he was under pressure from the Castle to justify his expenditure; an enclosure with one account endeavours to prove that proclamations were not inserted too often, or to no purpose.¹ The proclamation fund was at last being effectively reduced.

At the same time, the amount of money that was being paid out in subsidies and pensions from the Secret Service funds was dwindling.² In 1817, the Correspondent's proprietors were getting over £800, and the Patriot's, £700. In 1821, the corresponding figures were £600, and £380. Giffard's death and the disappearance of the Hibernian Journal further reduced the secret service expenditure on journalists.

The return of sums paid to newspapers for the insertion of office advertisements had also shown a reduction, from £1873 in 1816, to £1077 in 1821. As the bulk of this departmental advertising went to the government newspapers they were the losers by its diminution.³

The general reduction in financial support still left the government newspapers with substantial backing. In 1825, the Correspondent was still subsidised to the extent of nearly £1200 a year - exclusive of office advertisements, for which figures are not available.- The Patriot drew over £1300.⁴ The money did little more than keep them in existence.

¹ Off. Papers, 588a/560/4.
² I.S.P.O. Secret Service Account Books. cf also Aspinall, Politics and the Press, pp 119-20.
³ Parl. papers, 1822 (588) xviii (465).
⁴ I.S.P.O. Secret Service Account Books: and Parl. Papers, 1826 (178) xxiii (387).

The avowedly Protestant Ascendancy newspaper could be a resounding success; the Castle Catholic Dublin Evening Post could at least hold its ground: but the Castle press pleased only a handful of readers.

The publication in 1826 of the circulations of the individual newspapers, immediately followed by publication of the amounts those newspapers received from the proclamation fund, could only accelerate the disintegration of the subsidy system. Opposition speakers had been condemning it for forty years, reiterating the complaint that the proclamations went to newspapers that hardly anybody read: but they had always lacked conclusive proof. Now, the commons had ordered the printing of the figures. They were there for anybody to see - including such absurdities as the fact that in Dublin in 1821 the Evening Post and the Freeman, which between them had about 3000 regular subscribers, had no proclamations, while the Athlone Journal,^{which} only contrived to sell a total^{of} 2000 copies in a whole year, had over £150 worth.¹

The publication of the statistics was the work of the radical Hume, who had been agitating unsuccessfully for years against the proclamations, and had at last hit upon this method of driving home his arguments. In the Commons that April² he stated the case against them once again, basing it on the statistics, and demonstrating with their assistance that the proclamations could not possibly be published with the design that they should reach the public: they existed simply as a means by which the government could control the press. Goulburn, who had succeeded Grant as chief secretary, made the best defence he could.

¹ Aspinall, E.H.R. Oct. '41

² 21 Apr. 1826 (Parl. Deb.s, N.S., xv, 539 ff).

The proclamation fund, he was able to show, had been substantially reduced: and as for the way in which it was distributed, he claimed to have better things to do than waste time over such details. He pleaded ignorant~~ce~~ of Dublin newspapers' politics, pretending not to know which were friendly, and which unfriendly to the government - a plea that his correspondence disproves. One good point he could make was that the press attacks on him showed that considerable freedom of opinion must now exist. Other government speakers were less subtle. One of them - ignorant, apparently, of the published figures - claimed a big circulation for the Correspondent, and ingeniously argued that the proclamations ought always to be printed in the same newspapers, regardless of circulation, so that the public would know where to find them. But no amount of sophistry could be effective against the bleak evidence of Hume's statistics.

No doubt, if the Castle newspapers had been giving good service, their masters would have been more careful to see that these secrets were preserved. But the government were as always, dissatisfied with their press.

The number of Castle newspapers had by 1826 been reduced to two, the Patriot and the Correspondent. The Dublin Journal had at last expired, another victim of the fate that overtook subsidized papers for which the government ceased to accept full responsibility. Giffard's lease had been terminated ten years before, at a time when the Dublin Journal's circulation had sunk almost to nothing.¹ Under its new conductors, it showed for a while signs of revival. By the following year they were boasting of a substantial acquisition of new subscribers since Giffard's departure;²

¹ B.M., add. MSS (Peel) 40259, f. 156.

² Dublin Journal, 24 May 1817.

and in 1818, they claimed that it had the highest circulation of any Irish newspaper, except the Evening Post.¹ Increased advertisements suggest that the paper did, in fact, begin to enjoy a more extensive circulation. But the revival was caused less by any real improvement in the Dublin Journal, than by the feebleness of its rivals. 'The only difference', the Freeman's Journal noted, 'we can discover between the lucubrations of its present manager and those of Mr. Giffard is that in the latter, in spite of their bad taste, their folly, and their virulence, there were occasionally discoverable glimpses of intellect'.² The Freeman was not an impartial critic: nor was the Evening Post, which later followed its example and lampooned the new Dublin Journal as 'Sergeant Eitherside';³ but their instinct was sound. The Dublin Journal was trying to have it both ways, to show a patriotic face to the public and a loyal face to the Castle: and though this might succeed for a while, it was a policy requiring greater talent than was purchaseable by newspaper owners of the day, if it was to be kept up indefinitely. As the Post had warned, the Castle would not long tolerate wavering,⁴ and the Dublin Journal soon lost its patriotic veneer, and its circulation. From about 650 copies a day in 1821, its circulation fell away to less than half that number in 1824,⁵ and the following year it ceased to exist.⁶

¹ D.E. Post, 10 Jan. 1818.
² Freeman, 3 July 1817.
³ D.E. Post, 16 Feb. 1819.
⁴ Ibid., 18 Feb. 1819.
⁵ Parl. Papers, 1826 (235) xxiii (383).
⁶ 8 Apr. 1825.

The Dublin Journal had been the oldest established newspaper in Ireland, and for all the ugly reputation that it had picked up for intemperance and bigotry, enough goodwill had remained attached to the name for the owners of the Irish Times, which had been started a few months before, to announce that they had bought the interest of the paper from the Faulkners.¹ For some weeks, their paper appeared as 'The Irish Times, to which will shortly be added the title of Dublin Journal.' Finding that this combination did not produce the desired results, the owners switched again, in July, to a new title - the Morning Courier and Dublin Journal: which, they said, would be 'the only daily Protestant paper in Dublin.'² This was odd, but true: the other dailies were Catholic, Castle Catholic or neutral.

If the Dublin Evening Mail could collect such a large circulation, there obviously was an opening for a well-conducted Protestant morning daily; but the Courier's desire to keep in with the government, in order to obtain proclamations and advertisements, spoiled its chances. Its circulation, to judge by the few advertisements carried, remained small: and the owners, trying to cut their losses by internal economies, only succeeded in provoking a strike.³

¹ Irish Times, 11 Apr. 1825.

² Ibid., 18 July 1825.

³ Morning Courier, 10 Oct. 1825.

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By 1825 the growth of workers' organizations in many trades had made employers nervous; parliament had been invoked, and a commission appointed to investigate the power which 'combinations' had attained. One of the bodies that had achieved a measure of organisation was the union of journeymen printers, which on at least one earlier occasion that year, had staged a strike. Richard Lonergan of Carrick's Morning Post had provoked a dispute with his staff because - if his own account is to be trusted - he had taken on an apprentice against their wishes. The printers had remonstrated, and, finding him determined, had left in a body. He managed to secure the services of some non-union men, and engaged more boys. On the night of February 27, as he and some of his men were crossing Catlisle bridge on their way home, they were waylaid by the strikers, armed with bludgeons, who injured two men before they were driven off.¹ After a police investigation, seven of the printers were charged, and bound to keep the peace. The light sentence was probably the result of the difficulty of obtaining evidence: the police complained that prospective witnesses were terrorised into silence by the threats of the combiners.² Speakers at a meeting of the Dublin manufacturers alleged that the newspapers too, had allowed themselves to be intimidated. Lonergan and other journalists denied the charge;³ the brevity of newspapers' reports was more probably caused by their shortage of staff.

¹ Carricks, 1 March 1825.

² Parl. Papers, 1825 (437) iv (499) (off xii).

³ S.N.L., 22 Apr. 1825.

The owners of the Courier, however, took the hint, when their printers walked out.⁷

In an advertisement which they put in some other newspapers while the strike was on, they hinted that the compositors dissatisfaction with the Courier's politics had been a motive for the strike. In a counter advertisement, the compositors ridiculed the idea:¹

'In the name of Heaven! Who ever heard of a master printer refusing to give, or a journeyman to accept employment on the score of political feeling! Alike it is to the journeyman, as regards his mere political operations, whether publicity is given to the speech of the Duke of York, or the effusions of Mr. O'Connell, provided he is paid for his labour'.

The compositors asserted that so far from their strike being a dark conspiracy, it followed days and weeks of trying to extract from their employers, not an increase, but any wages at all. This sounds probable enough. Such was the fear that these 'combinators' inspired that an employer could break his terms with his workers, knowing that if they resisted, he could denounce them as combinators. Probably the blame could, as the compositors said, be laid on 'the bungling and imbecile management of the concern'.

The Courier reappeared on October 10th, but offensive references it contained to its 'slovenly and inefficient compositors', whose threats had kept away other labour, were presumably responsible for a further gap in publication.

¹ Morning Register, 8 Oct. 1825.

It returned on October 17th. This time, no reference was made to the dispute. The fulminations of its owners had provoked retaliatory advertisements in other papers from a body calling themselves 'the tradesmen of this city', who urged the public not to buy a paper that had charged honest workers with being illegal combiners.¹ The Courier's final disappearance, which was not long delayed, would have occurred without such prompting. In the last number, the owners expressed regret that their hope that one Protestant daily paper might be sustained by the public had not been fulfilled. 'We cannot any longer conceal the fact that ever since the resuscitation of this journal we have been carrying it on at a ruinous loss'. Without the promise of immediate and effective support, they said, the Courier would have to be given up. The support was not forthcoming.²

The two surviving government newspapers had found it convenient, by 1826, each to take one side of the dual personality from which the Castle suffered during Wellesley's viceroyalty. The Correspondent remained Protestant; the Patriot, after Haydn's departure for the Mail,^{was} converted to Catholicism.

The Catholics welcomed the new recruit, to the extent of sending him a few pounds worth of Association advertising:³ otherwise the Patriot's conversion met with little favour. Haydn bitterly assailed his old employer, giving what purported to be accurate account of the sums expended by government on the paper annually,⁴

¹ Morning Register, 10 Oct. 1825.

² Morning Courier, 23 Nov. 1825.

³ Proceedings of the Catholic Association, p 446.

⁴ D.E. Mail, 29 Oct. 1823.

and unearthing the embarrassing information that his successor's editor, Thomas Burke, was also the publisher of some squibs against the administration - which Burke could not deny. By this time the chief secretary Goulburn, who had ultra tory leanings, had himself lost patience with the Patriot; he actually wrote to the Mail to deny that the Patriot was a Castle paper.¹ A month later, he confessed to Peel that the conduct of the Patriot was something about which he was ashamed ~~of~~, himself; he was going to keep an eye on it, in future.²

The Patriot mended its ways for a time, and retained its subsidies: but in 1826 it was in trouble again. The administration in England was no less split than its representatives in Ireland on the Catholic question; and the Patriot's Catholic sympathies, though they might not worry Wellesley, profoundly irritated Peel, to whom somebody must have sent copies of the paper. After a panegyric had appeared on one of the members of the Catholic Association, ^{Peel,} who by this time was Home Secretary in London, ~~Peel~~ wrote to Goulburn to tell him that if one of the consequences of voting for the proclamation fund was direct or indirect support of the Patriot, he would not concur in the vote.³ Goulburn's reply was that he agreed, and had expressed his opinion to the lord lieutenant; but Wellesley had argued that the protestant government paper - the Correspondent - was just as ill conducted.

¹ D.E. Mail, 12 Nov. 1823.
² Parker, Peel, i, 353.
³ Aspinall, Politics and the Press, p. 143.

Goulburn had to admit that the Correspondent abused Canning and the Catholic part of the administration as liberally as the Patriot criticised the Protestant part: but in his opinion - though with this the lord lieutenant and the attorney general would not agree - the Correspondent's abuse was less mischievous, 'because support of Catholic politics in this country is necessarily connected with hostility to government'.¹

At the same time, the Patriot was not forthright enough to satisfy the Catholics. A newspaper which gave as an argument for Catholic Emancipation the likelihood that it would increase conversions to the established church,² was hardly likely to satisfy them. The publication of the circulation figures in 1826 showed that the number of its subscribers had fallen by two-thirds since 1822.³ Until 1826, it had retained an air of prosperity, with a steady flow of advertisements: but after its circulation became known, these rapidly fell away. In 1828 it resorted to the common expedient of a newspaper in difficulties, changing its name and its opinions.⁴ The Statesman and Patriot professed affection for the benign administration of Lord Anglesey, the lord lieutenant, but it added a rider in favour of the Established Church. The writer of the editorial claimed to have founded three out of the four Dublin ~~Evening~~ papers,

¹ 9 Jan. 1827 (Ibid, p. 143).
² Patriot, 5 Dec. 1826.
³ Parl. Papers, 1826 (235) xxiii (383).
⁴ 3 Nov. 1828.

which sounds as if, as a last resort, ~~Winnick~~ Haydn had again been called upon. If so, it was too late. After a spasmodic attempt at brightness, - the first number included parodies on the other newspaper's styles - the Statesman and Patriot relapsed into a respectable advocacy of the established church - too moderate to satisfy protestants at a time when Emancipation was threatening: and, in Emancipation year, the newspaper ceased publication.

The Correspondent in 1826 was still following substantially the same policy that had made it in Peel's term of office, at once the least offensive and the least effective of government newspapers; equating, as best it could, support of the government and defence of the established church. Its circulation had for some time past been small; less than 500 copies of each issue were being sold.¹ After 1826 circulation began gradually to increase, probably at the expense of the Patriot. The Correspondent remained Protestant - justifying its antagonism to the Dublin Evening Mail, which otherwise might have appeared an inconsistency, by accusing the Mail of hiding sinister motives behind its support of the Establishment.²

The position of a Castle paper in a time when the Castle spoke with a divided mind, must have been extremely trying. Just as the Patriot's advocacy of Catholic claims satisfied the Canningites and irritated the Wellington/Peel section of the Cabinet, so the Correspondent pleased the ~~ultra~~ tories and annoyed Canning's supporters.

¹ Parl. Papers, 1826 (235) xxiii (383).

² Correspondent, 13 March 1824.

Goulburn admitted to Peel that he had toyed with the idea of getting rid of both papers;¹ and Peel agreed that if the Correspondent abused Canning that would be reason enough to withdraw support from the paper;² but the owners continued to get their £600 a year from the Secret Service money,³ as well as the proclamations and department advertisements.

The owners were sufficiently humiliated in 1826 by the publication of the newspaper circulations, to complain that such figures should not be made public. The Morning Register was able to remind them that the Correspondent had been the first to boast about its circulation, in its early days.⁴ The formation of the Wellington/Peel ministry in January 1828, however, gave them renewed confidence; and, putting the past behind them by altering the name of the paper to the Evening Packet and Correspondent,⁵ they renewed the quest for Ascendancy subscribers with more vigorous opposition to emancipation. In this they were so successful, that a year later Lord Francis Leveson-Gower, who had succeeded to the chief secretaryship, was anxious to withdraw government support from the paper.⁶

The Correspondent's revival dated from the time it struck out upon an independent line; although it continued to receive government subsidies, it was not in the strict sense a Castle paper.

¹ Aspinall, Politics and the Press, p. 143.
² Ibid., p. 144.
³ Ibid., p. 119.
⁴ Morning Register, 25 Apr. 1826.
⁵ 22 Jan. 1828
⁶ Aspinall, Politics and the Press, p. 146.

Castle papers, in fact, for a time ceased to exist. After Wellesley's successor, Anglesey, had been lord lieutenant for a few months, he could say that he had not a single newspaper in his pay or in his confidence;¹ and in 1830 Leveson Gower, replying to Spring Rice's criticisms in the house of commons of the way in which the proclamation fund was administered, said that whatever the amount of influence formerly exercised by the government, he could safely say that it now exercised no influence whatsoever.² He had previously told Gregory that he considered the publication of Castle notices in county papers a useless expense and that he wished to abolish the practice.³ *His Commons' reply* ~~This~~ was not yet quite true: although the proclamation fund had dwindled to £3750 in 1829, it was still inequitably distributed. The Patriot before its disappearance had been given over £350: whereas the Dublin Evening Mail had only £15, and the Morning Register nothing.⁴ But Spring Rice was himself soon to be given the opportunity to implement the policy he had advocated. In 1830 he became secretary to the treasury, dealing with Ireland; and thereafter, although the proclamations did not immediately cease, they were distributed more fairly through the press.

¹ Sept. 1828. Aspinall, Politics and the Press, p. 124 (2).

² Parl. Deb.s, N.S., xxv, 923.

³ P.R.O.I., Leveson Gower Letter Books, i. 10. (26 March 1829).

⁴ Parl. Papers, 1830 (120) xxv (371).

In the first three-quarters of the year 1831, no metropolitan newspaper received more than £50, and all were given something, even if, in the case of the Pilot, it was only £1.¹

The sums paid to newspapers from the secret service money had also dwindled away almost to nothing. In 1830, the Correspondent still received its subsidy, and Corbet and Grace their pensions;² but that appears to have been all. The only source of income from the state which may not have diminished was departmental advertising. Spring Rice had earlier drawn attention to the advertisements 'inserted by the Revenue Boards, Excise, Customs, Post Office, Stamps, and the Military and Civil Offices', urging that they, as well as the proclamations, should be published by the newspapers, if at all, without charge.³ They do not appear to have been distributed on any fixed principle. The writer on Irish newspapers in the Westminster Review hinted that the Evening Packet did well out of Chancery advertisements, owing to the favour of the Master in Chancery:⁴ probably other newspapers obtained their share for no better reasons. If the bulk of departmental advertisements went to the Ascendancy newspapers, these were not necessarily the papers that the Castle wished to favour. Direct Castle manipulation of the press by subsidies had, in fact, virtually ceased by 1829. The system adopted by pre-Union Irish governments, and perfected by Peel, had disintegrated.

¹ Parl. Papers, 1833 (238) xxxii (631).

² I.S.P.O., Secret Service Account Books, 1830.

³ Aspinall, Politics and the Press, p. 420.

⁴ Westminster Review, (1830), xii. 92.

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It is always difficult to determine how far the conscious realisation of a system's faults leads to its revision; and how far politicians discover reasons why the system should be changed, only when the decay can no longer be ignored. The main reason for the collapse of Peel's structure is obvious. A government press without unanimity was absurd: to pay big sums to support newspapers opposing each other only made the government look foolish. While the Castle had pursued a consistent policy, its newspapers could be kept in some semblance of order. When the lord lieutenant thought one way, and his chief secretary another, chaos followed. The split in the tory cabinets of the 1820's, on the subject of Emancipation, made the continuance of Peel's control impossible.

The same incompetence, malice, bigotry and irresponsibility that had irritated Peel continued to disfigure the government press after he left Ireland. One proprietor even thought up a new way to give offence to his masters, by claiming, and receiving, proclamation money for insertions in a newspaper that had ceased to exist.¹ But Peel's successors might not have bestirred themselves to put an end to the system if circumstances had not made it unworkable. Goulburn, telling Peel that he had often thought that it would be better to have no government papers at all, was careful to add the qualification 'as the government is now constituted'. He would have had less scruples about making considerable reductions in the proclamation fund, and getting rid of both Patriot and Correspondent, if he did not fear that at some later date it might be desirable for the government to resume some control over the press.²

¹ 1822. (off. Papers, 580/529/3).

² 9 Jan. 1827. (Aspinall, Politics and the Press, p. 143).

He recognized the absurdity of the two government papers opposing one another; but a neutral paper, he confessed, would not be saleable.

Goulburn's successor, Lamb, the future Lord Melbourne, took a less negatively liberal line. He thought it wrong that any means should be taken to influence the press in Dublin which were not taken in London or Edinburgh; and although there might be difficulty in abolishing all payments, because some of them might be for past services rendered, he was determined that these services should be investigated.¹

Lamb had been prompted to this course by advice from Spring Rice, who had just sent him a long letter² describing the general state of the Irish periodical press. After describing how the proclamation fund had been used to influence the press, by enabling newspapers to exist independently of advertisements or circulation, Spring Rice asked:-

Is this mode of influencing the press worthy or honourable? Does a good government require this aid? Can it support a weak one? And above all, does it not contain within it mischiefs infinitely greater than any it seeks to avert? The best answer to these questions will be found in the present state and influence of the Irish periodical press. The influence of these proclamations is so well known and admitted, that the papers writing under this retaining fee have but little weight with the public.

¹ 17 Sept. 1827. (Aspinall, Politics and the Press, p. 124).

² 12 Sept. 1827. (Torrens, Melbourne, i, 299). The letter is printed in full in Aspinall, Politics and the Press, p. 418.

The editors, in place of thinking of the public, only worship the Castle: and they generally pay for the favours they receive in adulation, base, unprincipled, and tasteless.

On the other hand, the papers excluded from a participation in these profits, are driven into furious discontent. In this they are more sincere than their opponents; and they acquire new power over the public mind by being considered ill-used, and political martyrs, as well as party advocates. Frequently by extravagant violence they endeavour to make it the interest of the government to purchase their neutrality or their support. Again, the favoured few being monopolists, they consider they have a right to do what they choose, and charge what they like; and the result has been a general system of jobbery and corruption

The whole has produced the degradation of the Irish press, without in any degree contributing to the power of the government; and the accomplishment of both these mischeivous consequences is produced at a very considerable expense to the country.

Spring-Rice suggested that Lamb should investigate the accounts; he would then see that those who were profiting most from the system, were often the very men whose views he most detested. It was a letter of considerable perception, and Lamb was at once convinced. His colleagues were not. Replying to Spring-Rice, he wrote:- 'Plunket, when he heard of our scheme about the press, laughed loudly and said, 'Oh, this is Utopian!'

'I only mention this to show you what strong possession the idea has of minds here. I am not apt to be very positive about future measures, but if I feel confident of anything, it is that taking away all the payments would not in the least diminish the strenght of the government'.¹ Lamb was to resign from his post and leave Ireland within a few months, when Wellington formed his administration;² whether by chance or design, his tory successors carried on the project, by reducing the proclamation fund, and distributing what was left more fairly amongst the newspapers. Even Peel at the Home Office was so far disillusioned that he wrote to Leveson Gower, soon after he had become chief secretary, in 1828:-

'My experience of the Irish press would rather lead me to dissuade you from having what is called a government newspaper. If it was moderate and judicious it would have no circulation, and if it was high-seasoned enough for the Irish palate, it would be mischievous. You would have the greatest difficulty in finding a person of sufficient ability to conduct it, whom you could trust. I have witnessed two or three experiments of this kind, and just as many signal and expensive failures. If you could have an impartial and moderate paper, and could also persuade people to read it, it might do good, but I am very much afraid that there is no appetite for the truth in Ireland'.³

The advice to Leveson Gower was probably prompted by a letter Peel had received a few weeks before, which might have given him some sardonic amusement.

¹ Lamb to Spring-Rice, Sept. 1827, (Torrens, Melbourne, i. 250).
² Jan. 1828.
³ Aspinall, Politics and the Press, p. 145.

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The letter was from Wellington; it contained an enclosure setting out in some detail a plan to secure the Irish press to the government, by giving them proclamations in proportion to their support.¹

THE REVIVAL OF THE INDEPENDENT PRESS

The decline of the government press was offset by an outburst of independent journalistic activity unparalleled in Dublin since the days of the Volunteers. At one period in 1824, twelve metropolitan newspapers were in being - excluding weeklies, which were also to establish themselves in public favour at this time.

[Staunton's Register was joined in 1821 by an Orange contemporary, the Warder, the name of H.B. Code appearing once again in journalism as its proprietor. Code had continued indirectly to serve for the government; one of his stage works was filled with jingo clap-trap which irritated Tom Moore into rejoicing over the brief run of so 'pestilently bad' a play.²

While Ascendancy thought itself secure, the Warder was not a success; Code had to suspend publication and when he tried again the following year, the response was still unenthusiastic. He wrote to Peel for assistance, giving as his reasons that the Warder was the only paper of its kind which the government did not support, and that Peel's 'exalted purity and consistency' would not allow him to fail a man with a family of eight children.³

¹ 19 July 1828. (B.M., add. MSS (Peel) 40307, f. 165).

² Tom Moore, Memoirs, 1. 305 (7 Oct. 1812).

³ 4 July 1822. (B.M., add. MSS (Peel) 40348, f. 10).

Fortunately for the Warder, Peel refused help. The newspaper was left free to take up the Orange cause, which in a few months time was to bring it a settled circulation of nearly 1000 readers,¹ in spite of the competition of a rival Orange weekly, the Antidote, which appeared in the winter of 1822. By Emancipation year the Warder had acquired over 2000 subscribers,² and although the Antidote had disappeared, its place had been taken by another weekly, the Star of Brunswick.³ These papers were extremely bigoted⁴ - the Warder on at least one occasion was besieged by an angry Catholic mob, as a result⁴ - but, like the Dublin Evening Mail whose popularity continued to rise until its circulation in 1829 reached almost 3000,⁵ their virility and liveliness was in pleasant contrast to the dreariness of their predecessors.

On the other wing, Staunton's Weekly Register continued to thrive. The Morning Register's circulation grew painfully slowly, but it nevertheless grew, each year.⁶ The Argus, a weekly whose prospectus promised support to Catholic claims,⁷ survived for a while in the middle twenties; so did an Irishman.⁸ And after the Patriot had for the second time turned its coat in 1828, its place was promptly taken by another Catholic evening paper which, according to the Westminster Review - immediately made a reputation for itself - the Pilot.⁹

¹ Parl Papers, 1826 (235) xxiii (383).

² Ibid., 1830 (408)xxv (306).

³ No. 1. appeared 29 Nov. 1828.

⁴ Warder, 8 Nov. 1828.

⁵ Parl. Papers, 1830 (408)xxv (306).

⁶ Ibid., 1829 (164) xxii (273).

⁷ Carricks, 5 July 1825.

⁸ Parl. Papers, 1830 (549) xxv (349).

⁹ Westminster Review, 1830, xii, 92.

The old established commercial morning papers suffered from the growing competition. Saunders' Newsletter managed to increase its circulation by maintaining its traditional practice of avoiding controversy about - and if possible, reference to - Irish affairs, and concentrating upon advertisements. But the Freeman and Carrick's Morning Post, both of which tried to advocate Catholic claims without committing themselves to unqualified support ^{either for Wellington or} for O'Connell and the Association, found that this policy only resulted in condemnation by both sides. The Morning Register and the Evening Mail joined in disparaging them.¹ The Morning Post's circulation had been about 750 in 1821;² by 1828 it had been halved,³ its owner, Lonergan, had died in 1827 - but the decline had set in before then. The Freeman's circulation fell away even more disastrously,⁴ but it had more subscribers to lose. The Evening Post unkindly drew attention to its difficulties by referring to it as a paper 'of which the public has for some time lost sight'.

An evening paper which Lonergan ventured to bring out in 1824, fared no better; The Dublin Evening Express was a moderate advocate of Catholic claims, a policy which attracted so little support that the paper was discontinued after a few weeks. The Evening Post managed to maintain its circulation. F.W. Conway, its editor, drew a pension; on many occasions he acted as a government agent,⁵

¹ Morning Register, 18 June 1825, 10 Oct. 1825: D.E. Mail, 28 May 1823.

² Parl. Papers, 1826 (235) xxiii (383).

³ Ibid., 1830 (549) xxv (349).

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ B.M., Add. MSS (Peel) 40334, ff. 237, 246.

and he came into conflict with the Catholic Association, of which he had been secretary until driven out by O'Connell.¹ Yet in spite of all the temptations, he had sufficient independence when the Wellington government, early in 1829, urged that he range the Post against Emancipation, to reply ~~that~~ 'I do not think the Evening Post could sustain the great popularity it has attained, if I could bring myself to act the ungrateful and dishonest part of endeavouring to thwart the progress of a measure for which I have all my life been contending'.² The continued popularity of the Evening Post pointed to the existence of a substantial class of Catholics who did not care for O'Connell and his methods, but who were none the less anxious for the benefits of Emancipation.

The Dublin Evening Post was an exception: generally, the Irish press bore out Goulburn's view that a neutral paper was impossible to maintain. The public appetite was for controversy. Even when contention drifted towards scurrility, the heat engendered had its uses. Lonergan, complaining of 'the elaborate villainy marked by the woodcuts'³ in ~~Discussions~~ Haydn's Evening Mail, had to admit that they were 'a new feature in newspaper warfare' - new, that is to the generation that had grown up since the Union. The general improvement in the appearance of the newspapers in the 'twenties, their print, and their layout, was most marked.

¹ F.W. Conway to W. Gregory, 26 Jan. 1829. (B.M. Add. MSS (Peel) 40334 f. 272)

² 29 March 1829. (Ibid., 40399f. 110). And see Proceedings of Catholic Association, p. 432.

³ Carrick's Morning Post, 30 July 1823.

Newspapers began to take a pride in their appearance and achievements: the Morning Register on one occasion proudly claimed that two 'slight young men' had printed an average of 530 sheets in an hour one afternoon, exceptionally quick work for the time.¹ The employment of ~~a~~ reporters after the London model, ~~introduced by the~~ gave new life to the papers, which became much more readable.²

The Morning Register set a new standard of reporting home news of interest - particularly the debates of the Catholic Association - which the other papers were compelled to follow. But this insistent demand for home news actually predated the Morning Register; Peel in 1823 had reluctantly advised Goulburn against prohibiting the Castle press from publishing the reports of the Catholic Association, on the grounds that it would prejudice their sales;³ a view with which Goulburn was a year later to agree.⁴ It was this interest that helped to bring the Morning Register into being, and which Staunton was careful to satisfy.

The independent press once more began to exercise influence on the course of events. The lack of enthusiasm of the newspapers for O'Connell, a feeling which he reciprocated, meant that they had little decisive effect on the Emancipation campaign: but the historian of the Catholic Association testified to the importance of their publicity in the movement's early days.⁵

¹ Morning Register, 7 Dec. 1824.
² Westminster Review, (1830), xii, 90.
³ Aspinall, Politics and the Press, p. 265.
⁴ Parker, Peel, i. 353.
⁵ Wyse, History of the Catholic Association, i. 199.

The Castle did not view the growing independence of the Irish press with favour. Assailed as the administration were from two sides, the Mail denouncing them for truckling to the Catholics, and the Catholic press, criticising their dilatoriness in securing promised concessions, they would have been willing to retaliate, if they could. But so long as Plunket remained attorney general, the courts were in effect closed to them. The Ascendancy jurymen might distrust O'Connell, but they hated the government: and verdicts proved unobtainable. Not until 1828, the year in which Wellesley was recalled and Plunket vacated the post of attorney general, was a state prosecution for libel, initiated by private individuals but taken over by the crown, brought to a conclusion satisfactory to the government

The victim was the same Eneas MacDonnell, who had been proprietor of the Dublin Chronicle, and imprisoned as such under Peel. Some violent speeches he had made which had been reported in the Morning Register attracted the government's attention. He elected to take the responsibility for his words himself, rather than allow Staunton to stand trial. The court found him guilty, and sentenced him to eighteen months in jail.¹

MacDonnell had been appointed to the post of London agent to the Catholic Association, in which post he had shown energy and ability. Some Catholics, however, mistrusted him, and with reason; he had already entered into a correspondence with Peel that was to end in his emergence as a tory.² Whether his prosecutors realised it or not, their choice of a victim was discerning;

¹ M. Register, 13 Feb. 1828.

² B.M., Add. MSS (Peel), 40559 f. 250.

That Lawless and Leveson Gower - the chief secretary in question - should the following summer have been corresponding on terms of great cordiality, might suggest that once again the government had used threats to secure the conversion of a dangerous opponent.¹ The characters of both men, however, make this improbable. Lawless had won the name of 'Honest Jack': and Leveson Gower, if his letters are any criterion, was a man to whom such blackmail would have been repugnant.

To Leveson Gower's appointment, the Irish newspapers probably owed their comparative immunity in the months immediately before and after the passage of Catholic Emancipation. Leveson Gower disliked extremists, whether Protestant or Catholic: and both sides gave him opportunity in plenty to deal out retribution. When prosecutions were initiated, however, in 1829, it was not the Catholic or the Orange papers that found themselves before the courts, but the Dublin Evening Post and the Freeman, relatively moderate in tone. Leveson Gower explained in his correspondence:-

It was always my intention to take the first case of serious libel which I could light on for prosecution. These in question appeared to me to constitute an aggravated offence against not any individual government, or member of government, but against society in general, and as such, if my own brother had been the author, I should equally have put the case, as I did these, into the hands of the attorney general.

¹ P.R.O.I., Leveson Gower Letter Books, iii. 172 (17 June 1830): and see P.R.O., H.O., 79. 9. pp. 13, 43.

Leveson Gower agreed that it was particularly unfortunate that Conway of the Post had got into trouble; although a staunch advocate of Emancipation, he had kept the paper consistently friendly to the government. Undoubtedly, Leveson Gower admitted, the liberal press would protest, without the Orange press being silenced: but he was determined to stick to his principle.¹

A few days later he sent a further self-exculpatory letter to Peel, saying that even if the prosecutions inflamed public opinion, he was determined to press them home. He would have preferred to assail the Orange newspapers: but he would never be able to reach them if these prosecutions were not carried through. By this time, he had received expressions of abject contrition from the newspaper proprietors concerned, with 'lamentation for the past and promises for the future'.² The Evening Post, in particular, reiterated promises of repentance, which he had ignored. In spite of the risk of driving the paper into the arms of the repealers, he still felt it best that the government should steer a straight course, prosecuting libel whenever it occurred.³

He was, however, sufficiently swayed by the newspapers' appeals to express the hope to the attorney general, in a letter inquiring the nature and extent of the proceedings to be taken against the two papers, that the most lenient measures would be adopted,

¹ P.R.O.I., Leveson-Gower Letter Books, ii, 110. (4 Sept 1829).
² L-Gower to Peel, 15 Sept. 1829. P.R.O.I., Leveson-Gower Letter Books, ii, 113.
³ L-Gower to Peel, 19 Nov. 1829. (Ibid., ii, 218).

consistent with the government's determination to stamp out sedition.¹ And in both cases a compromise was reached.

Henry Grattan Jr, the proprietor of the Freeman, had at first protested his innocence. On February 15 1830, he changed his mind, and pleaded guilty.² This, as the attorney general remarked, was a prevarication, because Grattan at the same time was trying to pretend that he had withdrawn from the newspaper some time before the libels were printed.³ His counsel explained that he had retained the property, while ceasing to exercise any control over the newspaper;⁴ and although the attorney general thought that Grattan, having pleaded guilty, was trying to establish his innocence, the fact of his having finally severed all connection with the paper⁵ probably weighed in his favour. He was never called up for judgement.

Nor was James Magee of the Evening Post. He, too, pleaded guilty, when he was arraigned in February 1830; he even tried to speed up the normal dilatory court procedure, asking to be sentenced in that law term, as he would prefer to be imprisoned in winter than in summer.⁶ The court refused - fortunately for Magee, because the attorney general subsequently announced that proceedings against him had been abandoned on account of his health, and other circumstances.⁷

¹ L. Gower to Peel, 19 Nov. 1829. P.R.O.I., Leveson-Gower Letter Books, ii, 118.

² D.E. Mail, 15 Feb. 1830.

³ Ibid., 21 May 1830.

⁴ Ibid., 24 May 1830.

⁵ Ibid., 12 Apr. 1830.

⁶ Ibid., 12 Feb. 1830.

⁷ Ibid., 5 May 1830.

That the Irish newspapers survived so critical a period in the country's history, when the state would have had no difficulty in securing a conviction from an Ascendancy jury against a newspaper on the flimsiest of charges, was mainly attributable to the chief secretary's scrupulous honesty. Having made up his mind to prosecute on the next occasion libellous matter was brought to his attention, he held to his course, in spite of the fact that the newspapers concerned were not politically dangerous. By the time their proprietors had been brought up for trial, the tension was relaxed, and sentence could be foregone.

The revival of political agitation in 1830 led to renewed discussion by the government about the advisability of press prosecutions, Peel, from London, expressing himself strongly in favour: but the tories went out of office before the matter was settled.¹

The Irish Press in 1830.

The general improvement of press standards in Ireland in the 1820's was not reflected in any comparable extension of circulation or influence. The total number of newspapers sold gradually increased after 1817, the first year in which returns were kept: but 1817 was the year in which the Irish press reached the nadir of its fortunes, and few more people were reading newspapers in 1830 than in 1800. The revenue from the advertisement tax had actually declined from £21,000 in 1813, Peel's first year in office, as chief secretary, to below £15,000 in 1829 -²

¹ P.R.O., H.O. 122. 15. p. 75.

² Parl. Papers, 1830 (406) xxv (306).

a reflection of the country's declining commercial prosperity, and of the advertisers lack of confidence in the power of the press.

While taxation weighed heavily upon the newspapers, they could not expand. The twopenny stamp on every copy sold, and the 2/6 tax on every advertisement published, coupled with the duty on newsprint and other minor outgoings, still kept the price of newspapers so high that only a small section of the community could afford them: and the owners began to recall the arguments of Grattan and Sheridan that any curtailment of the circulation of newspapers was by extension a curtailment of the freedom of the press. They were able to put their case to a commission set up by the commons in 1828¹ to examine ways in which the stamp revenue might be more cheaply and efficiently collected. The commissioner's inquiries revealed gross corruption and incompetence prevailing in the Dublin Stamp Office. The registry which dealt with newspapers was run by an official who supplemented his wretched salary by black-mail: 'this officer had been in the habit of having his bills discounted by persons whose interests were committed to him, namely newspaper proprietors'.² From the tenor of the commission's questions, they clearly wished to abolish the Dublin stamp office, and they called a number of editors before them to discover how the transference of the stamp office to London would affect the Dublin newspapers. The editors were less hostile to the idea than might have been expected. Most of them bought their newsprint in London, because the quality was better, and the cost - owing, they said, to workers 'combinations' in Dublin - no greater than the Irish product.

¹ Parl. Papers, 1828, xv.

² Ibid., 1828 (7) xiv (19).

They feared, however, that with the transfer of the office to London they might lose certain facilities - for example, the right to buy their own paper and send it in to be stamped, rather than buy newsprint from the stamp office, which cost anything up to 50% more. They must have realised, too, from the questions put to them by the commissioners, that an assimilation of the offices might be followed by an assimilation of the duties, which would double the Irish stamp duty and increase the tax on advertisements. In general, the editors' replies were pessimistic. Thomas Sheehan of the Mail explained that the newspapers' source of subscribers had suffered a contraction. 'There was a class of people who used to support newspapers in Ireland, who have since the Peace ceased to exist. I refer to that class called middle-men; during the war these people had properties of from two to three hundred a year, arising out of profit rents of farms, and they all subscribed to newspapers. They have within the last few years become paupers, and there is now in their places only the occupying tenant'.¹ Conway of the Evening Post echoed Sheehan's sentiments, instancing the decline in the revenue from the advertisement tax to support his arguments: 'it is scarcely the custom to advertise here - we are very poor in Dublin and the people are frightened at the expense'.² Staunton of the Register produced statistical evidence to show that he only received an average return of 3/7 from each advertisement inserted in his paper.³ The expense of buying a newspaper, he told the commissioners, operated particularly harshly against owners of morning papers,

¹ Parl. Papers, 1828, xv. appx. 88.

² Ibid., appx. 89.

³ Ibid., appx. 90.

which were published daily, and whose readers were mostly in the city. Newsvenders were able to take advantage of the accessibility of customers to hire out morning papers several times in the day, before eventually disposing of them at half price, a practice which severely curtailed the owners profits. So badly off were many of the papers that they had been compelled to reduce their advertisement rates, or even to print advertisements free, in order to keep up an appearance of prosperity. He doubted whether any newspaper owner had a gross income of more than £3000 a year.

Alexander Mackay of the Belfast News Letter gave one example of the untrustworthiness of the stamp commissioners in Dublin:¹ but the general trend of the editors' evidence suggested that although they had little liking for the Dublin stamp office, they preferred it to the devil they did not know. This would have kept them from disclosing damaging information about its activities; they must have suffered from an institution which, the commission's report was to disclose, was extortionate, inefficient, and corrupt. The commission recommended in their report that the office be moved to London, but that the greatest care should be taken not to let the move in any way increase the burdens already shouldered by the Irish press. The change must be accompanied by special provisions to secure the Irish newspaper owners equal facilities to those that they had enjoyed when the office was in Ireland. The commissioners had, in fact, realized how narrow was the margin upon which Irish newspapers survived. Spring Rice had come independently to the same conclusion, blaming the advertisement duties which 'operate as a tax upon the transfer of commodities, and as such are objectionable on every principle by which taxation ought to be regulated'.²

¹ Parl. Papers, 1828, xxv. appx. 91.

² Spring Rice to Lamb, 12 Sept. 1827 (Aspinall, Politics and the Press, p.420).

The writer in the Westminster Review attributed the defects of the Irish press to excessive taxation.¹ Accounts laid before the commons in 1830 showed that the position was in reality worse than the returns to 1829 had indicated. Comparing the first four months of 1829 and 1830 the revenue from the advertisement tax had fallen off by 10%, and from the stamp duty, by rather more.² The Emancipation campaign had created a demand for newspapers that was not to be maintained when the campaign had come to a successful conclusion. Even the Mail suffered a reduction in sales at this period.³

All the evidence pointed to the need for a reduction of the duties, if the Irish newspapers were to thrive. But by 1830 Goulburn had been appointed chancellor of the exchequer in the tory ministry; and he was to show as little understanding of the problems of the Irish press as he had when he had been chief secretary. His budget included the proposal rejected by the 1828 commission that the English and Irish duties should be assimilated at the English level. In future, he suggested, for stamps, and an increased rate Irish papers should pay 4d a copy/for advertisements.

The proposal brought the newspapers together in a harmony they had not known since 1784. The Morning Register was the first to draw attention to the danger, saying that the project could only have for its object the extinction of the press in Ireland.⁴ The Dublin Evening Post joined in, setting out the details of the taxes a newspaper already had to pay;e

¹ Westminster Review (1830), xii. 94.
² Parl. Papers, 1880 (528) xxv (369).
³ Ibid., 1831-2 (242) xxxiv (123).
⁴ Morning Register, 17 Apr. 1830.

On April 22 all the newspaper owners of Dublin, and two from Cork, held a meeting, with James Magee in the chair, to discuss the position.¹ They adjourned for a few days, in order to give other provincial owners an opportunity to be present. At a second meeting, they asked Magee, Staunton, and Thomas Sheehan of the Evening Mail to form a standing committee, to fight the new tax. Sheehan pledged himself the following day 'to oppose politically, aye, and personally, and that regardless of party espousing, every individual who is not in his place in parliament during the discussion of the exchequer's proposed measure, and who does not divide against him on it'. He urged every newspaper in the country to make the same resolve. The Mail also published the text of the owners petition to parliament; and another from the newspaper reporters of Dublin, protesting that the increase would cost them their livelihood. Figures were produced showing that the average circulation of Irish newspapers was 547, compared with 732 in Scotland, and 3,260 in England. This meant little; but a comparison of the advertisements per issue was more revealing - Ireland 16: Scotland, 57: England, 80.² The Mail attributed what increase there had been in the number of newspapers printed in Ireland, to the artificial stimulus of the political agitation of the 'twenties. The Register on the same day noted, too, that the amount of stamp duty paid in Scotland had doubled in recent years, and the revenue from advertisements had risen while Ireland's had declined.— The inference being that Ireland was in no position to pay more.

¹ D.E. Mail, 23 Apr. 1830.

² Ibid., 28 Apr. 1830.

The Mail continued to threaten any member who might not oppose Goulburn's bill: 'we will drive such men not only from the hustings but from the kingdom, and there is not a quality, vituperative, satirical, or annoying, that shall not be put in requisition . . . we have found from experience that this species of warfare has succeeded where legitimate argument and astute reasoning have failed'.¹ *Alarmed, considered,*

possibly, by these warnings, the Irish members met, and condemned the proposed additional duties.² In June, Sir John Newport secured an interview with Goulburn and Wellington, to argue the newspapers' case.³ He was not able to claim that he had convinced them: but a few weeks later, O'Connell wrote to Barrett of the Pilot to tell him that the proposal had been abandoned.⁴ Shortly afterwards the Tories, who had been in office uninterruptedly for over twenty years, went out of office.

¹ D.E. Mail, 30 Apr. 1830.
² Ibid., 7 May 1830.
³ Ibid., 2 June 1830.
⁴ O'Connell, Correspondence, i, 207.

1. THE REFORM ADMINISTRATION 1831-4.

The formation of a single national press system in the Irish press

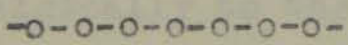
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UNDER WHIG RULE, 1830-41.

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For this, O'Connell was indirectly responsible. The excess of manipulation had urged him to try his luck with 'Appeals' and to a campaign against the Whigs. The Whigs were no better disposed than the Tories. The Whigs had rather more

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1. THE REFORM ADMINISTRATION, 1831-4.

The formation of a whig cabinet gave promise to the Irish press of the removal, or at least the lightening, of the burden of taxation, which the whigs had condemned while they were in opposition. They had also condemned state prosecutions of newspapers, as inimical to the freedom of the press. The omens, therefore, for the Irish newspapers were favourable. In Dublin they were already independent: government subsidies had gone, carrying away the Castle press. With the prospect of a reduction of duties to enable them to sell at a price which would widen the circle of readers, and of freedom to express themselves as they liked on the questions of the day, the newspapers could look forward to a period of unprecedented prosperity.

If this was their expectation, they were soon to be disillusioned. During the next three years a wave of prosecutions broke over them; the Castle press was revived; and, in general, they were to be so harshly treated that they came to look back nostalgically to the days of tory rule.

For this, O'Connell was indirectly responsible. The success of Emancipation had urged him to try his luck with 'Repeal;' and to a campaign against the Union, the whig was no better disposed than the tory. The whig had rather more

sympathy with the peasants' tithe grievance, The other great problem of the time; but, again, he cared no more than tory for the way in which the campaign against tithes was conducted, with its frequent breaches of the peace.

The change of administration, in fact, made little appreciable difference to Ireland. The tone of the letters passing between the Castle and Whitehall scarcely varied during the winter ~~of~~ ^{took place,} the change, 1830-1. (1) Both governments thought that any association pledged to Repeal of the Union was ipso facto seditious: both thought that incitement to the peasantry to withhold tithes was criminal. Newspapers which reported speeches made in either campaign, therefore, laid themselves open to prosecution. No doubt, had the tories remained in office a few weeks longer, they would have been forced to act; as it was, the whigs made the first move, less than a month after coming in to power.

PROSECUTIONS:

The speed with which the whigs acted was probably the result of their choice of lord lieutenant. Anglesea, the friend of emancipation, had been more popular during his

(1) Cf. P.R.O., H.O., 79.9.

(1) Pilot, 19 Jan. 1831.

(2) 4 Jan. 1831. (P.R.O., H.O., 100, 225.)

brief previous administration than any viceroy since Fitzwilliam: he returned to find himself regarded with antagonism and mistrust. The contrast convinced him that Ireland was in an extremely dangerous condition, and that he had best show O'Connell immediately that he was going to tolerate no mischief. On January 19, 1831, O'Connell was arrested; and with him, Barrett, Lawless, and others of the Repeal Association.

Richard Barrett, the former editor of the Patriot, had by now established his Pilot as the chief O'Connellite paper, echoing his chief's denunciations of 'Algerine Anglesey' and the administration. The Pilot, an evening paper, was published at the Morning Register office, and Staunton hurried around as soon as he heard of the arrest to stand bail for his colleague. (1) A few days later, Staunton found himself facing a prosecution; so, too, did Lavelle, Henry Grattan Jr.'s successor as owner-editor of the Freeman's Journal.

These writs would have been served some days before, had not Anglesey taken the precaution of sending copies of the newspapers to Whitehall, for a legal opinion on the advisability of prosecutions. (2) In their reply, the British

(1) Pilot, 19 Jan. 1831.
 (2) 6 Jan. 1831. (P.R.O., H.O., 100. 236.)

law officers agreed that the publications were libellous, but suggested that they were scurrilous about individuals, rather than dangerous to the community. Whether prosecution was expedient would depend on circumstances in Ireland; but, for their part, the law officers thought that to proceed against editors for printing speeches made at the Repeal Association would be thought extremely severe, if not unjust - if the reports were faithful. 'As long as the Association meets and debates, what is said there becomes an article of intelligence, which the government and the public are interested in knowing correctly.' The law officers also deprecated the idea of prosecuting the editors in the hope that this would force O'Connell to come forward and avow his responsibility. It might not. Finally, they objected to the proposed procedure by information ex officio, instead of through the normal channel of indictment 'In the former case the public is made a party to the prosecution, and a verdict of acquittal is not a triumph over the government. But if there is a danger of a bill of indictment being thrown out by a grand jury, it can hardly be less probable that the petty jury would feel extremely unwilling to convict.'⁽¹⁾

These admirably balanced opinions arrived too late. Melbourne, now secretary of state at Whitehall, had written

(1) 15 Jan. 1831. (Ibid.)

earlier to Dublin to say that he had passed the papers on to the law officers, but that if the Irish executive felt that it was necessary or highly expedient to act without delay, they should do so.⁽¹⁾ Stanley, the new chief secretary for Ireland, took the excuse; he was as convinced as Anglesea that action was necessary, partly to put down O'Connell, partly to curb the press.⁽²⁾ Melbourne, informed⁽³⁾ of the arrests, asked a trifle nervously for further details: Stanley replied with the news of the prosecutions of Staunton and Lavelle, undertaken with the intention of enfilading O'Connell. The Freeman, which Stanley considered the most violent of the Dublin papers, was the first to be attacked, for publishing a letter of O'Connell's on his case while it was still sub judice.⁽⁴⁾ As it happened, the Register had published the letter the same day, which intelligence was 'by some strange means conveyed to the Castle;⁽⁵⁾ proceedings were soon initiated against the Register, too. Both owners were 'attached' for contempt of court, a method which had the merit to the government that it dispensed with trial by jury. Stanley's confessed object was to frighten them into giving up the

(1) Melbourne to Stanley 10 Jan. 1831. (P.R.O., H.O., 122, 15 (p. 124.))
 (2) 16 Jan. 1831 (Ibid., 100, 236).
 (3) 20 Jan. 1831 (Ibid., 79. 9. (p.93).)
 (4) 26 Jan. 1831 (Ibid., 100. 236).
 (5) Pilot 28 Jan. 1831.

MSS of the O'Connell letters. In this, he was unsuccessful. Lavelle remained obdurate; Staunton decided to go into hiding, so that the writ of attachment could not be served.⁽¹⁾ The attorney general was not disheartened. He thought that he detected signs of revolt in the newspapers from O'Connell's domination, and he felt that sooner or later O'Connell would ~~have~~ either have to avow responsibility, or incur the odium of letting men be sentenced on his account.⁽²⁾ O'Connell was not on this occasion called upon to make that difficult decision. The court decided against the state on a minor point of law, which, though it did no more than delay the prosecution, was enough to dishearten the Castle. The Ascendancy had not yet reconciled itself to a whig administration.⁽³⁾ The court of Kings Bench was still inclined to show its independence; and the Castle, rather than risk further setbacks, was prepared to accept the opportunity for a settlement that was presented by O'Connell's desire to reach London in time for the opening of parliament.

O'Connell and Stanley denied that they had come to terms, and the official correspondence bears them out:⁽⁴⁾ but to outward appearances an agreement had been reached.

(1) Under Secretary Gossett to Stanley, 29 Jan. 1831. (P.R.O., H.O., 100, 236).
 (2) Blackburne to Stanley, 30 Jan. 1831. (Ibid.)
 (3) cf. Pilot, 11 Feb. 1837.
 (4) Melbourne to Anglesea, 18 Feb. 1831. (P.R.O., H.O., 79 9 (p. 104.))

O'Connell asked the attorney general for a postponement of the trial; ⁽¹⁾ Blackburne replied by offering to enter a nolle prosequi, provided that O'Connell pleaded guilty; ⁽²⁾ this, O'Connell did, the following day. It would have been difficult, under the circumstances, to proceed against the newspapers, and Staunton, who had been in hiding in England, felt safe to return immediately. Tom Moore, who encountered him on the Holyhead Mail, reported that Staunton thought it was 'very much of a giving-in on the part of his brother agitators, and was evidently not a little pleased at it.' ⁽²⁾ Barrett, emboldened rather than chastened by his arrest, became more outspoken in the Pilot, which shortly was again threatened with prosecution: ⁽³⁾ but that, too, ⁽⁴⁾ fell through, to the Pilot's ribald amusement.

The prosecutions ~~made~~, however, were an indication that the new administration would constitute a serious treat to the press if it could once win the confidence of the Ascendancy. For this purpose, it was particularly well-served in its choice of Stanley as chief secretary, and Blackburne as attorney general. Both were soon to become tories. Blackburne had actually voted against Emancipation:

(1) O'Connell, Correspondence, l. 247.
 (2) Moore, Memoirs, vi. 168.
 (3) Pilot, 7 March, 1831.
 (4) Ibid., 29 June, 1831.

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O'Connell said of him that the whigs could not have better (1) proclaimed their hostility to Ireland, than by his appointment. His first efforts had been too precipitate. He had underestimated the strength of the prejudices the Ascendancy still held. But by the time that his administration had been a year in office, he had given proofs ~~of~~ that he was not a dangerous liberal, whom the Ascendancy might have reason to fear; and he could resume proceedings against the press confident in his ability to secure the co-operation of the courts.

The first newspaper to suffer was the Comet, a weekly founded in 1831, which had quickly obtained a substantial circulation and notoriety by its laceration of the established church, notably in the 'Parsons Horn Book,' published in its early numbers. (2) With the tithe war at its height, the whig administration and the Ascendancy had by this time been driven into what amounted to a defensive alliance. Blackburne waited until the paper's initial popularity had begun to wane, before prosecuting John Sheehan and Thomas Browne, the owners, for a violent article on tithes. Secure, as they thought, in Ascendancy's hatred of the whigs, they contented themselves with a reminder to the jury to be **careful**

(1) O'Connell, Correspondence, i. 470.

(2) See Fitzpatrick, Life of Cloncurry, p.423.

of public opinion. They miscalculated: the court of King's Bench promptly brought them up for contempt, and fined them £50 a piece. (1) For the tithe article, they escaped less lightly, each receiving a sentence of a year's imprisonment, and a £100 fine. In reply to Sheehan's plea that he was in bad health, Chief Justice Jebb said that he could go to Wicklow jail, 'a healthful place;' and it was with some difficulty that Sheehan managed to persuade the court to rescind this decision, which would have ruined his business. (2)

Commenting upon the verdict, the Comet remarked:

'The Free Press is to get a squeeze - the Waterford Chronicle has got a squeeze with a vengeance - the Mail got a twitch - the Comet is in for it - the Pilot is in for it - the Freeman is doubly in for it.' (3) The whigs had begun to initiate actions against newspapers all over the country.

In the eighteen twenties, the provincial newspapers had shown little of the spirit of the metropolitan press. They had received a disproportionately large share of the proclamation fund, a share that grew still larger as the number of government newspapers in Dublin diminished. As late as 1829 a close enough watch was being kept upon them for the chief secretary to order the discontinuance of the proclamation

(1) M. Register, 11-15 Aug. 1832.
 (2) Pilot, 30 Jan. 1833.
 (3) Comet, 2 Dec. 1832.

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to a Wexford newspaper.⁽¹⁾ Although occasional references showed that its independence did not entirely disappear,⁽²⁾ the bulk of the country press had remained under government control. The Waterford Chronicle had been an exception. It's proprietor Pierce Barron's opposition to the government had got him into legal trouble in 1826;⁽³⁾ and in February 1832 he found himself charged with inciting the peasantry not to pay tithes. The government were taking no chances; they ordered that he should be tried in Dublin, rather than down the country, the Morning Register deploring the fact that such an odious power should be used by a reforming government against the press.⁽⁴⁾ Barron and his printer were sentenced to a year's imprisonment.⁽⁵⁾ ^{Meanwhile,} The proprietors of the Newry Examiner, a Catholic paper, had been sentenced to four months in jail and a £50 fine for criticising the Orange magistracy;⁽⁶⁾ and the owner of the Tipperary Free Press had been threatened with a trial which, like Barron's was to be held in Dublin.⁽⁷⁾

At the same time, as the Comet had said, prosecutions were pending against the Pilot and the Freeman and, what was

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- (1) P.R.O.I., Leveson Gower Letter Books, i. 10.
(2) Cf. M. Register, references to Carlow and Wexford papers, 8 Oct. 1825.
(3) Madden, I.P.L., ii, 192.
(4) M. Register, 7 Feb. 1832.
(5) M. Register, 15 Nov. 1832
(6) Ibid., 28 Apr. 1832.
(7) Ibid., 19 July 1832.

more surprising, the Evening Mail. The owner of the Mail, Thomas Sheehan, had already been in trouble that year, for publishing a report of the committee of the house of commons before the report had been officially released for publication; an offence for which Sheehan, who refused to purchase his freedom by divulging the source of his publication, was committed for two days to the custody of the sergeant at arms.⁽¹⁾ But this was in London, where the reputation of the Mail meant little. That it should be prosecuted in Dublin was remarkable; that the prosecution should succeed, more remarkable still. Blackburne chose his ground cleverly, charging Sheehan and his partner with a libel on the Provost of Trinity, so that the trial could not develop into a test of strength between the administration and the Ascendancy. Sheehan's brother Remigius, who edited the paper, offered to take full responsibility for the insertion, which the owners claimed not to have seen. Jebb replied that this was immaterial, because they had not published a retraction. They were sentenced to six months imprisonment, and fines of £100, the printer also being sent to jail.⁽²⁾

In all probability the success of the prosecution of the Mail surprised the Castle as much as it surprised the

(1) Parl. Deb.s, 3rd S., xiii. 193: 230-9: 310: and see M. Register, 2-4 June 1832.

(2) D.E. Mail, 23 Nov. 1832.

Mail. It must have been begun less with the hope of silencing the Ascendancy press - much as the Castle would wish to do so - than to demonstrate that the administration was impartial; that it was prepared to retaliate against libels from whatever quarter they came. The success gave Blackburne renewed confidence, with which he turned to deal with more serious enemies, the Freeman and the Pilot. The Freeman had originally been served with a writ for an article in which it asserted that, in Ireland, the only law was the will of the executive. ⁽¹⁾ But this charge was dropped in favour of one more promising; the publication of a letter from O'Connell on the subject of the tithe affray which came to be known as 'the Wallstown Massacre.'

The letter was originally printed by a radical paper in England, the True Sun, in which O'Connell felt sufficiently sure of his ground virtually to charge the authorities with murder. He had the sense, however, to warn Barrett ⁽²⁾ not to reprint the letter in Ireland. The Morning Register, apologising for its omission, blamed the precious effects of the British connection, which meant that London could do things with impunity which in Dublin would lead to the suspension of Habeas Corpus. ⁽³⁾ The Evening Mail, however,

(1) M. Register, 13 Aug. 1832.
 (2) O'Connell, Correspondence, i. 304.
 (3) M. Register, 24 Sept. 1832.

saw the opportunity to wipe the eye of its rivals by printing the letter, with a covering note to the Castle: 'With what face, Mr. Attorney General, can you ask a jury to convict the Comet, the Pilot, the Freeman's Journal, and the Tipperary Free Press for comments or remarks innocent and innocuous compared to that which this night appears in the Mail?'⁽¹⁾ The same evening, the Freeman decided to publish the letter, and Barrett had no alternative but to disobey O'Connell's instructions, and follow suit in the Pilot.⁽²⁾ The attorney general, after some hesitation, decided to take the Mail's hint, and began proceedings against both papers.

The case was not, however, as strong as Blackburne could have wished, owing to the refusal of his colleagues in England to proceed against the True Sun. In reply to his promptings, the English law officers pronounced that in English common law, at least, O'Connell would have a very fair chance of proving his contention that the Wallstown affray was murder;⁽³⁾ and Blackburn, fearing perhaps that O'Connell would obtain these opinions to use against him,⁽⁴⁾ allowed the charge to lapse on a technicality, biding his time until a fresh opportunity offered - which, with the

(1) D.E. Mail, 24 Sept. 1832.
 (2) M. Register, 26 Nov. 1832.
 (3) 15 Dec. 1832. (P.R.O., H.O., 100. 243)
 (4) Pilot, 24 Jan. 1833.

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Pilot making references to the Coercion Act as 'this atrocious bill, this monster spawn of the adulterous connection of the whigs with office' was not likely to be long. (1) In May, Barrett informed his readers that another prosecution of the Pilot was pending ~~against~~, for a letter of O'Connell's. He added the hope that he would be tried by tories: 'if we are to be domineered over let it be by gentlemen.' (2)

The Castle did not allow its attention to be monopolised by the Dublin press. Prosecutions of provincial newspapers continued: the owner of the Carlow Morning Post was imprisoned and fined for his opinions on tithes, and almost immediately afterwards given a stiffer sentence for libelling a member of parliament; (3) and the Hon. Frederick Cavendish, the eccentric owner of the Castlebar Telegraph, was imprisoned and fined for a seditious libel. (4) The Castle's main concern, however, was the prosecution of Barrett. The Pilot had a small circulation, but it was the paper which the Castle was most anxious to humble, as the platform from which O'Connell's opinions were most assiduously distributed. And by choosing one of O'Connell's letters as the excuse for a prosecution, Blackburne was able

(1) Pilot, 1 March, 1833.

(2) Ibid., 1 May, 1833.

(3) Ibid., 29 May, 3 June 1833.

(4) Ibid., 12 June, 1833.

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to leave O'Connell once again with the difficult choice - whether to come forward, avow responsibility, and risk sentence; or to leave the responsibility to Barrett and risk public contempt if Barrett was convicted.

The case came up ⁱⁿ ~~before~~ June 1833. O'Connell was in London, in the throes of his dispute with the whigs over coercion; he hoped to obtain an acquittal to help in his efforts to bring about their downfall, even if this meant alliance with his old enemies of the tory press. A letter he wrote at the time hinted at their possible subornation. 'Barrett's jury is high tory. If Sheehan or Dr. Boyton wish to lay me under an everlasting obligation, NOW IS THE TIME Look to this discreetly. You can, I believe, vouch for my not being ungrateful. If we could but get a fair and impartial jury, Barrett would certainly be acquitted. (D)

Within a day or two, however, O'Connell had come to terms with the whigs, and Littleton became the new chief secretary for Ireland. O'Connell had sufficiently high hopes of him to say, 'a little bird whispers me, no prosecution.'⁽²⁾ The prosecution did, in fact, receive a setback, but it was not through Littleton's intervention. The trial was to be held out of term, 'at Bar,' a procedure

(1) O'Connell, Correspondence, i. 352.

(2) Ibid., i. 356.

adopted usually only in extremely serious charges - on this occasion, the Pilot alleged, to overawe the jurymen.⁽¹⁾ It did, but in a different way to which the Blackburne had intended. His apology⁽²⁾ for the temporary breakdown, which the lord lieutenant transmitted to England, showed that the care with which the jurors had been selected had only succeeded in making them nervous of appearing, in case they should be marked out for vengeance by the O'Connell party. A few of them preferred to incur the £50 fine for failure to put in an appearance; and, as the law term had ended, no more could be sworn in, and the case had to be held over. Blackburne expressed the opinion that it would do no harm to have the prosecution hanging over Barrett, but this was rationalising; he was clearly mortified by the course events had taken.

The case was resumed in November, in spite of the fact, which the Pilot noted, that the whigs were once again on dining terms with O'Connell.⁽³⁾ Sheil had been briefed to defend Barrett; at the last moment, O'Connell appeared to lead in person. He took the same line as he had in the trial of John Magee, treating the jury, which was exclusively

(1). Pilot, 14 June 1833.
 (2). Anglesea to Melbourne, 14, June 1833. (P.R.O., H.O., 100.224)
 (3). Pilot, 20 Nov., 1833.

(4). Pilot, 27, Nov., 1833
 (5). Pilot, 20, Jan., 1834
 (6). Idid, 19, Feb., 1834

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tory and protestant, to a flow of vituperation worse than (1). that for which the newspaper had been indicted. Presumably he wished to win the jury's sympathy by abusing the government, but the jurymen must have known of his recently friendly relations with the whigs. They found Barrett guilty. He was sentenced to a fine of £100 and a jail sentence of six months, the jury's recommendation to mercy moving the bench only to allow him to serve the sentence in Kilmainham rather than Newgate. (3).

A month later, subscribers to Barrett's newspaper found themselves reading -

The Morning Register
THE PILOT is suppressed.

The Stamp Commissioners had taken advantage of the old Statute which laid down that stamps must not be issued to a newspaper owner, convicted of seditious libel; the paper could only continue by appearing ostensibly as a second edition of the Morning Register. (4).

This action at once recoiled upon the government. The English press, led by the Times, took up the Pilot's cause. O'Connell wrote to Barrett that all England was up in arms, promising him that the Statute would at once be repealed, and

(1). Pilot, 27, Nov., 1833.

(3) Pilot, 20, Jan., 1834.

(4). Ibid. 19, Feb., 1834

(1). he would get a free pardon. In the meantime, he devised ways in which Barrett could get around the statute. Lawyers were consulted whether he could not continue to publish the Pilot on the stamps he had in stock, and, if not, whether he might legally become proprietor of another newspaper. If not, somebody else must be engaged as proprietor. O'Connell would indemnify him, and pay Barrett's salary as editor of the Pilot, or the Patriot or whatever name the paper might be called. (2).

The Stamp Commissioner's action was debated in the commons (3). on February 25, when O'Connell and other Irish members were able to make a formidable indictment of the wniq's treatment of the press in Ireland. The government, it was disclosed, had initiated 13 prosecutions for libel in three years : and detailed evidence was given of the way in which juries had been packed in order to obtain convictions. Only a handful of Catholics were on the Dublin Grand Jury ; the method of selecting jury-men from the panel was highly suspect; and the crown lawyers had no trouble in striking off any Catholic names that remained on it before a trial. The same Protestant jurors appeared in cases year after year : some of the jury that convicted Barrett had acquitted Haydn of the Star, (4). nearly ten years before.

(1). O'Connell, Correspondence, p. 399.
 (2). O'Connell, Correspondence, p. 408.
 (3). References had already been made to it in a Debate on the 21st.
 (4). Parl. Deb. 3., 3rd. S., xxi. 791 ff.

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The Commons were persuaded to order the publication of the correspondence between the government and the stamp commissioners prior to the withdrawal of stamps. This (1) revealed, as O'Connell had guessed, that Littleton was responsible the Dublin commissioners had never heard of the statute - or at least they denied knowledge of it. Expecting trouble, Littleton had ordered a search for precedents. The Dublin commissioners were only able to discover two cases where convictions had been secured for seditious libel. In one, the (2) owner had resigned from or retired from the paper, and in the other, it had been the printer, and not the owner who had been prosecuted. (3) But the voluntary retirement of the proprietors in several borderline cases - John Magee of the Evening Post, Barron of Waterford, and Grattan of the Freeman was at least negative evidence that the statute's validity had not been questioned; and Littleton had ordered the stamp commissioners to enforce it. (4) The Pilot was, however, able to resume (5) an independent existence for a while on its stock in hand; and thereafter for some months it borrowed - an illegal procedure. According to the first half year's returns for 1834, (6) it received no stamps.

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- (1). O'Connell, Correspondence, i. 412.
(2). Eneas MacDonnell of the Dublin Chronicle.
(3). Harding Tracey of the Cork Commercial Chronicle.
(4). Parliamentary Papers, 1834 (85) XLV111.(557).
(5). Pilot, 28, Feb., 1834.
(6). ibid., 11, Aug., 1834.

The Pilot continued from time to time to report further unsavoury revelations made to the commons of the conduct of the trial. Five lawyers, it was disclosed, had been briefed for the crown. Of these, three were out of town at the time of the trial. Three substitutes had been called in, making fees for eight barristers in all - though only two had appeared at the trial. (1). Later, it published the accounts of the prosecution's expense, which had amounted to over £700, a big sum for those days. (2). The Castle remained unembarrassed, secure in the knowledge that O'Connell had abandoned Repeal and was working with the whigs - even if not yet very amicably - for remedial legislation. It could claim that its object had been achieved. The newspapers had been subdued.

The four years of whig rule had taught the Irish press many lessons. For all their out-of-office belief in the freedom of the press, the line that the whigs drew, where liberty ended and license began, was not appreciably different from the line drawn by the tories. The whigs had shown themselves just as ingenious in the use of legal twists to expedite prosecutions; they had even thought up new ones of their own, such as the attempt to try Barrett 'at bar'. Once they had won the confidence of the bench, they had been able to secure its support. Jebb was a judge in the Clonmell-Norbury succession; if he lacked his predecessors' personality, he

(1). Pilot, 17 March, 1834.
 (2). Parl. Papers, 1834 (54) XLVlll. (267).
 (3) XXXXX.R.O.XXX, Devision Gower Letter Books, XXXXXXXXXX

shared their ability to identify justice with the interest of his class. Leveson Gower, was chief secretary, had frequently complained of Jebb's partiality to the Orange order, and of still less amiable traits. (1). On one occasion, Jebb not only defied traditional judicial practice by choosing his own part of the countryside for his circuit but, 'not content with this outrage, he has chosen, out of that respectable district, three most questionable names for sheriffs, the two first being the proposer and seconder of his son's election.' 'Is not this,' Leveson Gower asked, 'a sufficiently scandalous addition to his extravagances on the bench?' But Jebb remained. While he remained, newspapers could not hope for impartial justice.

And during this period of whig rule, the press was faced with a threat more dangerous than any the executive had yet devised. In a letter to Whitehall ~~is~~ written in January, 1833, the lord lieutenant, complaining of the difficulty of prosecuting for seditious speeches, suggested ~~that~~ an alternative procedure; 'it deserves to be considered whether the tribunals of courts-martial should not have jurisdiction over seditious libels. (2). Anglesea seems only to have envisaged such action in proclaimed districts: but as it might well be a metropolitan newspaper, circulating in that district, in which the sedition appeared, the

(1). P.R.O.I., Levison Gower Letter Books, ii. 437.
 (2). *Ibid.*, ii., 218.
 (3). Anglesea to Melbourne, 19 Jan., 1833. (P.R.O., H.O., 100.244)

whole ~~Irish~~ press would in practice have been subject to martial law. Nothing came of the proposal: but the fact that it could have been suggested showed on what flimsy foundations rested the freedom of the Irish press.

^{news}
Castle papers.

An active attorney-general, with Ascendancy help, could make the press cautious: he could not, unaided, make it sycophantic. ^{if} The whigs failed to make as much impression on the Irish newspapers as Peel, it was because their efforts to supplement negative control through the courts, with positive propaganda through their own press, were half-hearted, and consequently ineffective.

The whigs endeavoured to establish newspapers of their own. A writer in a magazine article late in 1832 mentioned two, saying that one 'shrunk rapidly into decay' and the other 'never survived the contamp⁽¹⁾ination of the tempter'. Peel in 1830 had suggested to Hardinge, Leveson Gower's successor as chief secretary, that a periodical - not a newspaper - should be established with the name of The Union, on the lines of the Anti-Union of 1799. ⁽²⁾ His advice was disregarded; but the following spring, the Castle founded a morning daily newspaper on orthodox lines - the Dublin Times.

After a few months inexistence, the Dublin Times had made its presence felt sufficiently for the Pilot to complain that

(1). Irish Monthly Magazine, (Nov. 1832), 1. 429.
(2). Parker, Peel, ii. 161.

'the beloved Anglesey has the inestimable satisfaction of having, amongst his other gifts to Ireland, bestowed upon us a newspaper to which the slanderous, pasquinading, ribald, and obscene Mail is dignity, decency, and patriotism itself.' (1). The Pilot often referred to Anglesey as the 'editor's of the Dublin Times: and, although the Lord Lieutenant probably had little to do with it, Littleton was later to confirm that it had been set up by the Castle, and subsidized from the secret service money. (2). The Dublin Times bought out the interest of the Morning Post, (3). whose circulation had dwindled away almost to nothing; and a few weeks later it printed the prospectus of a new government evening paper, the Empire. (5). But neither paper could ^{make} head- (6) way, commercially. The Empire lasted only a few months; and in October 1833 the Dublin Times announced that, as the whigs are now firmly established in power, its labours could be terminated. (7). Littleton, later claimed that he had stopped the paper 'because it was doing more harm than good.' He had, he said, no objection in principle to the government running papers of their own - he could think of few ways in which money could be better employed than in enlightening the public - but he had felt that the Dublin Times was valueless. (8).

(1). Pilot, 2 Dec., 1831.
 (2). Aspinall, Politics & the Press, p.125.
 (3). 7 May, 1832.
 (4). Parl. Papers, 1833, (503) xxxii (613).
 (5). 16 June, 1832.
 (6). 18 June - 2 Nov., 1832.
 (7). 9 Oct., 1833.
 (8). Aspinall, Politics & the Press, p.265.

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Apart from these two, the government do not appear to have been certain of the support of any newspapers. After Emancipation, the Dublin Evening Post could usually be found taking its part. F.W. Conway had broken with O'Connell over Repeal, and the Pilot abused him vigorously thereafter, his support of the government inevitably being attributed to venality. He was on visiting terms with the Castle in 1831, and the Evening Post was later to be used by Littleton to disseminate news favourable to the government, so that there was some justification for ~~immunity~~ Gavan Duffy's assertion that after the whigs came into power Conway openly occupied the position he had so long secretly held, of a stipendiary writer for the Castle. (1).

(2). The Evening Post's remuneration must have been small, relative to the amounts the Castle press had received in the past; one of the commons' periodical investigations into the proclamation found showed that the amounts being paid out of it to newspapers in the early thirties were negligible. (3). Perhaps because the reward was ~~insig~~ insufficient, the Dublin Evening Post never became wholeheartedly a Castle paper, and on occasion could take an independent line. (4).

The New Press:

The administration was, in fact, feebly represented in the newspapers of the day. Not only did the established newspapers remain antagonistic; the independent press was reinforced-

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- (1). Gossett to Stanley, 29 Jan. 1831. (P.R.O., H.O., 100.236).
(2). Aspinall, Politics and the Press, p.265.
(3). Gavan Duffy, Young Ireland, i.99.
(4). Parl. Papers, 1833 (633) xxxii. (629).
(5). O'Connell, Correspondence, i.311.

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as usual, in times of domestic crisis - by a number of new papers. In addition to the Castle's Times and Empire, half a dozen opposition papers sprang up ~~in the months~~ in the period when Repeal, Reform, and Tithes agitated the public mind.

The first to appear was the Repealer, and Tradesman's Journal. The Repealer represented something new in Irish history : a paper designed to circulate among the working classes, then becoming politically conscious - and vocal - in the 'Trades Political Union.' The Dublin Times commented sarcastically on the methods used to push the paper's circulation: two members of the T.P.U. boasted at a meeting that they had been the round of fourteen public houses on previous Saturday night, refusing to drink in any of them that did not stock the Repealer.⁽¹⁾ The class which it was sought to interest could not afford newspapers (except, perhaps, a weekly - the Repealer came out twice a week); and a public house circulation was insufficient to keep a newspaper alive. In this case, however, advertisers showed themselves reasonably willing to be interested, and for a time, the Repealer prospered; but its prosperity served to attract rivals. In the summer it was joined by the Plain Dealer, and in the autumn, by the Express, a daily evening paper of no pronounced political views, but vaguely O'Connellite. The T.P.U., too, became dissatisfied with a paper under independent ownership. They decided to set up a weekly of their own, the People, whose prospectus promised that it would 'mirror the views of the humbler orders of society.'

(1). D. Times, 15 June 1832.

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To the delight of the Dublin Times, a section of the T.P.U., remained dissatisfied, circulating the members with a warning not to support the new venture because it was to be published at the office of a non-Repeal paper; and - what was more dangerous - it was to be printed by machinery.⁽¹⁾ These allegations led to a proposal of no confidence in the People, whose proprietor therefore announced the severance of the connection between the paper and the T.P.U. - in spite of the withdrawal of the proposal, following a remarkable speech by the editor - designate, forecasting the immense advantages which machine printing would bring to the press.

A full account of these discussions appeared in the first number of the Press, yet another new paper, of radical leanings, pledged to work for Repeal, church reform, the ballot, shorter parliaments, and an extended franchise. The People itself came out a few days later.⁽²⁾ But by the end of the year, all the new arrivals had ceased publication.⁽³⁾ They had helped in one another's downfall, by flooding a constricted market. To some extent, their failure was the result of their inadequacy - not by contrast with the established newspapers, with whom they compared favourably, but rather by their inability to break away from the conventional pattern of the newspapers of the time. The tradesmen for whom they were designed were not prepared to pay out five pence for a paper which did not differ appreciably from the Register or the Freeman; and taxation still made it

(1). Daily Times, 23, Jan. 1833. (2). Press, 25, Jan., 1833.
(3). 2 Feb., 1833. (4). Parl Papers, 1834 (412) XLIX (407).

impossible to produce a newspaper for less. The Tribune, a radical weekly founded in 1834, actually cost 7d., which must materially have limited the number of people who listened to its call to the masses to rise, like the Romans, 'against the intolerable burdens of aristocratic oppression and usurious exactions'⁽¹⁾.

Evidently the stamp and advertisement duties were still operating as a formidable obstacle to any extension of the influence of the press. The advertisement duty was lowered by 1/6 in 1833 to 1/- for ten lines : ⁽²⁾ but ^{to} the weaker newspapers this proved of little assistance. Their public was still too limited for their columns to attract the advertisers' attention. The cost of newspapers was too high for any but the wealthiest members of the community to take them; and the profits from their sale were too low for owners to embark upon features which might attract a larger audience. Illustrations, for example, remained uncommon. Circulations ⁽³⁾ remained very small : The Dublin Evening Mail, alone of Dublin newspapers, attracted more than 2000 subscribers, and only one of the morning papers, the advertisement-filled Saunders' Newsletter, reached four figures. For the Catholic papers, the struggle was particularly hard. The Protestant Mail and the Packet could count upon solid Ascendancy support; and the Evening Post, with its 'Castle Catholic' flavour contrived to retain a relatively prosperous. But papers designed to attract the less well-to-do Catholics, like the Morning Register and the Pilot, never came near to achieving real commercial prosper-

(1). Tribune, 21 June 1834. (2). Pilot, 5 July 1833.

(3). Parl. Papers, 1831-2. (242), xxxiv (123; 1833 (505) xxxii (628); 1834 (412) XLIX (407).

ity; and attempts to supplement them failed.

The established Dublin newspapers, however, succeeded in retaining their independence under the Reform administration, even if they tended to lose the courage to give expression to it. In one respect, the Blackburne prosecutions helped to make them stronger than before. The unity brought about by the threat of increased stamp duties in 1830 had been short-lived: as soon as the project was abandoned, the newspapers resumed their mutual distrust. When the Mail found itself proceeded against in 1831, it reminded the other papers how it had always sustained them in similar circumstances in the past; to which the Pilot replied that, so far from the Mail having ever sustained anything but itself, it had teemed with instigations to the government to prosecute the Register and the Pilot, actually provoking action, on one occasion. The Pilot continued to wage intermittent warfare with the Freeman and the Evening Post, as well as the Mail; and the Comet in the early issues flayed the tory papers, concluding that 'in vulgar presumption, unblushing speculation from its contemporaries, and crawling sycophancy to hypocrisy and humbug, all give place to the Warder'. The Comet also referred to the Packet as 'worthlessly spongy', which may have accounted for the Packet's comment upon the sentences passed on the Comet's owners later in the year - that they were too light. But, in spite of innumerable instances of rivalry

(1). Pilot, 9 Nov. 1831.

(2). cf. Jan. 1833 (3). Comet, 8, Jan. 1832.

(4). Comet, 8, Jan. 1832.

(5). Comet, 2, Jan. 1832.

and mutual distrust, the Dublin newspapers tended to come together, in face of prosecutions. If Blackburne had concentrated his attacks on one section of the press, he might have prevented the wounds from healing: but he did not. At first, symptoms of unity were confined to newspapers sharing similar views: the Morning Register started a collection to pay the costs of the Waterford Chronicle's prosecution, (1). and commented favourably on other funds of the same nature. (2). Similarly, the Pilot backed an appeal for funds to help Cavendish of the Connaught Telegraph. (3). By the time of the Barrett prosecution, press unity had reached a further stage. For some time, the Pilot was suspicious of the Mail's tentative overtures. (4). The Mail, however, persisted in its original attitude to the prosecution which was that, if it took on the appearance of being against the press, the Mail would oppose it. (5) When the trial came on, the Mail took the Pilot's part, so unreservedly that Blackburne asked the judges to sentence Sheehan for contempt of court. (6). The Mail, nothing daunted, (8). assailed the government for withholding stamps from the Pilot. Barrett gratefully backed the Mail when it faced an action, a few weeks later, saying that with the exception of the enslaved Post, all the papers in Ireland stood together, whatever their politics, when prosecutions threatened. (9).

(1). M. Register, 6 Dec. 1832. (2). ibid, 15, 20 Aug. 1832.
 (3). Pilot, 8 Jan., 1834. (4). Pilot, 11 Oct. 1833.
 (5). Pilot, 10, May 1833. (6). ibid., 29, Nov. 1833.
 (7). ibid., 20 Jan, 1839. (8). ibid., 21-24, Feb. 1834.
 (9). ibid., 28, May 1834.

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THE WHIG ADMINISTRATION.

The Whig administration fell in November 1834.

O'Connell privately expressed the opinion, 'it is well we are rid of the humbuggers';⁽¹⁾ the Irish newspapers might corporatively have echoed him. A Whig administration had shown that they feared and hated an independent press just as Peel had done, and lacked only his ability to suppress it. 'Hereafter' an anonymous writer prophesied in a Dublin periodical issued at the height of the Castle's campaign against the press:-

The historian will signalise the present administration of the Marquis of Anslessey as the most tyrannical yet feeble government England ever forced on us. As regards the press, it is remarkable for the unblushing practice of all that was despotic and disgraceful in the conduct of its most profligate predecessors How did he act towards the press? He first used all those insidious private arts, for which power never wants dexterous agents, to detach the ablest advocates of the people from their cause, or at least to silence them; he failed in this, and then he held out threats of his resentment, to deter them from the due discharge of their duty and at length he resorted to open hostility. The most distinguished conductors of the press were arrested; their properties threatened with confiscation; and their liberties, if not their lives, endangered.⁽²⁾

(1) O'Connell, Correspondence, i. 502.

(2) Irish Monthly Magazine, Nov. 1832.

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2. THE MELBOURNE ADMINISTRATION.

Better Relations:

The tory government with Peel as prime minister was not in existence long enough for its influence to be felt by the Irish press. It passed an act⁽¹⁾ putting a stop to legal actions that were being taken against newspapers by informers who had discovered ways of enriching themselves at the newspaper owners' expense by having them indicted for technical infringements of the 1798 legislation - actions which the Pilot described as little better than blackmail, the informer either obtaining a state reward, or hush-money from the owners.⁽²⁾ But Peel was in power less than six months, during which he had not sufficient parliamentary backing to encourage the adoption of positive measures for Ireland. His ministry's importance to the Irish press lay more in its effects - the forcing of the whigs and O'Connell into closer alliance. The Irish newspapers woke up in April 1835 to the realization that their situations were vastly altered. The Pilot and the Morning Register found themselves for the first time supporting the administration, to the delight of the Mail, which was able to jeer at them as 'Castle prints' and, on occasion, during the next few years, to charge the government with rendering them improper assistance. In 1839, for example, the Mail

(1) Public General Statutes, 1835: 5 Will. iv, c.2.

(2) Pilot, 13 March, 1835.

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complained that the Pilot had been furnished with an advance copy of the royal speech at the opening of parliament, through O'Connell's influence. (1) The Pilot, however, claimed that it had obtained the speech by rail instead of the usual express riders; (2) and there is little evidence to suggest that the Melbourne government gave any material assistance to the newspapers friendly to it. The only serious allegation of discrimination against the opposition press was to come from the Dublin University Magazine, a prosperous tory periodical whose virtues even its political opponents admitted, which accused the government of refusing the Achill Missionary Herald free postage (on the grounds that it was not a newspaper) (3) for political reasons. This was the first attempt, the writer said, 'to carry out the despotic principles of whiggery to the extent of a censorship of the press.' (4) But any small benefits the papers favourable to the whigs may have received were probably more than balanced by the fact that the distribution of departmental advertisements remained in Ascendancy-tory - hands: the tory newspapers, the Pilot alleged, obtained the bulk of them. (5)

The state of the press, during the early years of the Melbourne administration, reflected the state of the country.

(1) D.E. Mail, 13 Feb. 1839.

(2) Pilot, 15 Feb. 1839.

(3) See below p. 419. *(see)*

(4) D.U. Magazine (April 1838), xi. 532.

(5) Pilot, 23 June, 1837.

For Ireland, it was a comparatively tranquil period reflected in the moderate tone taken on by the newspapers, neither from venality nor from fear. The Castle for once could secure the support of most of them without stipend; and even the tory press, little though it liked the government, opposed it with sobriety.

Prosecutions for a time entirely ceased. The Evening Post and a provincial newspaper were given notice of an impending action⁽¹⁾ in 1836, for a reflection on the magistracy; but it does not appear to have been pressed. The cases against the newspapers in the following year, although they resulted in the Freeman,⁽²⁾ the Mayo Telegraph, and the Clonmel Advertiser⁽³⁾ paying heavy damages, were the work of aggrieved individuals, and not of the Castle. In the summer of 1838, the Evening Post was able to assert that since the whigs had come into office, the government had utterly discontinued state prosecutions for libel.⁽⁴⁾

As disillusionment grew, however, with the failure of the administration to live up to O'Connell's expectations, the newspapers/^{became} less temperate, and the government, less forbearing.

(1) D. E. Mail, 16 Nov. 1836.
(2) Pilot, 24 Feb. 1837.
(3) quoted in Ibid., 7 May, 1838.

The Resumption of Prosecutions:

The Evening Post's comment upon the immunity of the press in the immediate past had been prompted by the news that that immunity had been challenged: an action for criminal libel had been begun against the Pilot, at the suit of the Earl of Westmeath. This charge was not pressed; but the following month, another was brought, this time against the Evening Post itself. A bigoted Orangeman, notorious then, and destined to be still more notorious later,⁽¹⁾ had been selected as sub-sheriff of Monaghan, to the Post's vigorously expressed disgust. The Orangeman, Samuel Gray, collected £250 damages off Conway: where Ascendancy and Castle differed in the courts, Ascendancy could still count upon the victory. By this time, in any case, the divergences between Castle and Ascendancy were disappearing. Friendship between O'Connell and the whigs was wearing thin. In 1838, Castle and Ascendancy joined hands once again to procure Barrett of the Pilot a three months prison sentence on one libel charge,⁽³⁾ and a fine on another.⁽⁴⁾ Neither libel was particularly offensive, and the press grew alarmed. The Freeman began to express fears that a conspiracy existed against the press; no journalist had been to prison for a libel since Barrett's last

(1) Cf. Belfast Vindicator, 19 March, 1842.

(2) Pilot, 25 June, 1838.

(3) M. Register, 6 May, 1839.

(4) D. E. Mail, 13 May, 1839.

incarceration, lightheartedly recalled in his Pilot - 'Judge Jebb read me a long lecture once - a tune which ended in the usual dance - bolts, bars, and vaults for some months in the dog days.'⁽¹⁾

The Freeman's fears received confirmation the following winter, when John Jones was awarded damages against Thomas Sheehan of the Evening Mail. Jones was another bigot, too Orange even for the Mail: the jury gave him £300. The Mail thought it remarkable that a libeller so unreserved and irrespective' as John Jones should have obtained a verdict at all.⁽²⁾ The Freeman and the Morning Register joined in condemning the decision, and the Pilot complained that O'Connell would never have obtained a verdict for any of the worse libels heaped upon him.⁽³⁾

These prosecutions were too few and too scattered to suggest that they were undertaken with the Castle's connivance: but in order to bring an action for criminal libel, it was necessary to obtain the attorney general's sanction, and to that extent the Castle must have acquiesced. When relations between administration and the press, so cordial in the early months of the Melbourne administration, deteriorated, the Ascendancy seized the opportunity to prove

(1) Pilot, 12 May, 1839.
(2) D.E.Mail, 4 Dec. 1839.
(3) Pilot, 11 Dec. 1839.

to itself that its hold on the courts was in no way impaired by the accident of whig rule. The duration of the alliance between the whigs and O'Connell, had shown that with goodwill, and as able an administrator as under secretary Drummond, much could be done to allay, if not to remedy Irish grievances; and the state of the press had faithfully reflected the prevailing political mood. But the whigs were really less concerned for Ireland than for the votes of the O'Connellites in the commons. As this became evident, Catholic newspapers, losing their sobriety, became petulant, and occasionally aggressive. It was then found that they had not been able to consolidate the ground that had been gained in 1835, when they had been strong enough to criticise the courts with impunity. In 1835 the Morning Register and the Pilot had no hesitation in exposing a case of flagrant jury -packing (1) to secure the conviction of a Catholic; who a few weeks later had been released. (2). But as soon as the good will of the Castle could not longer be relied upon, the Catholic papers found themselves as badly placed as they had ever been. They were at the mercy of the Ascendancy, whenever an excuse was offered upon which they could be brought to court. And by this time, the newspapers were beginning to suspect, with some reason, that the Ascendancy was no longer antagonistic only to the Catholic newspapers; it was growing discontented with

(1). 2, Nov. 1835. (2). Pilot, 18, Dec, 1835.

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the press as a whole. The verdict against the Evening Mail was a sign of the times. As the Pilot sadly commented, juries had at last become impartial, as far as publishers were concerned; Orange or Green, tory or radical, the damages awarded against the press were 'always excessive' (1).

The Reduction of the Stamp Duty.

that the
The prosecutions had shown/tranquility of the early years of the O'Connell-whig alliance had not effected any real change in the newspapers' position before the law, but in another respect ^{newspapers} they had secured a concession which was not to be withdrawn from them. The most tangible benefit that the Irish press received from the Melbourne administration was a reduction in the stamp duty. (2) Sporadic agitation against this had been conducted for some years, particularly in England where the duty, 4d. a copy, was twice as high as in Ireland. In 1836, Spring Rice, the chancellor of the exchequer, announced that he proposed to consolidate the duties (3). in the two countries at a new level of 1d. a copy. The announcement of the reduction was received in Ireland without enthusiasm. The attitude of the Irish owners was that the duty ought to be decreased proportionately: if the English owners were to pay 1d. the Irish should only have to pay a halfpenny. All the newspapers (4). joined in denouncing the proposal. At a meeting of Dublin newspapers owners a unanimous condemnatory vote was passed, and the decision made to draft a petition to parliament, urging the

(1). Pilot, 4 Dec. 1839.

(2). cf. Pilot, 28 March, 1835.

(3). 15 March 1836. (Parl. Deb.s. 3rd S. xxxii 334 ff).

(4). 20-30 March, 1836.

(1).

reduction of the Irish duty. William Smith O'Brien acted as the owner's spokesman in the bill's second reading in the commons; but he could make no impression on Spring Rice, who replied that the penny was not a duty, so much as a payment for state services to the press - in postage, for example, which was to some extent supplied free to newspaper proprietors. (2). (The following year newspaper postage was made entirely free). If, he argued, the radical's proposal that the duty in England should be removed altogether had been carried, would O'Brien (3). have suggested that the Irish owners should receive a bounty?

No account remains of the discussion on the subject in the debate on the estimates, which was hopelessly confused by an opposition amendment calling for a reduction, instead, of the duty on soap. The opportunity for witticisms about the relative advantages of mental and physical cleanliness proved irresistible. The house was convulsed, and after the debate had degenerated into what the Evening Mail's reporter called 'a scene which it is next to impossible for language to describe', the galleries were cleared by order of the speaker, (4). and the reporters were excluded.

Later, the chancellor of the exchequer relented to the

(1). Dublin Evening Mail, 30 March 1836.
 (2). Public General Statutes, 1837.
 (3). Parl. Deb.s., 3rd. S., xxxii, 872.
 (4). D.E. Mail, 24 June 1836.

extent of allowing the Irish newspapers a 25% discount for prompt payment; but he held to his determination to assimilate the duties. This discount was decided upon after he had received a deputation from the Irish newspaper proprietors, whose case - that Irish newspapers were not capable of bearing so much taxation as English, because of their proportionately smaller circulations - he put to the opposition, when they showed that they did not like the idea of the Irish receiving any concessions. The Irish members showed little interest, only five appearing to record their (1). (2). votes. The consolidation bill was carried.

The reduction of one penny in the price of newspapers did not make for any startling rise in circulations : at four-pence, they were still out of the reach of all but a small minority of Irishmen. The newspapers that might have been expected to reap the benefit, the Morning Register and the Pilot, chose instead to share in, and suffer from O'Connell's declining popularity; it was the Protestant Packet and the Castle Catholic Evening Post who were to be the gainers. (3). The Dublin press in general benefitted little from the change. Official statistics made available in 1840, showed that Scotland, with less than half Ireland's population, had paid almost as much in stamp duties - the figures were £16,600 to £17,000 - and very much more in advertisement duty - £13,700 to £9,500,- in the previous year. The number of copies of newspapers

(1). D.E. Mail, 22, July 1836.
 (2). Public General Statutes, 1836, 6 & 7. Will. iv., c.76.
 (3). Parl. Papers, 1837-8 (73). xxxiv. (393): 1840 (266) xxix (503).

sold in Ireland rose perceptibly in the months following
(1).
the reduction of the duty, but it remained, in proportion to
the population, extremely small.

Of the new Dublin newspapers published in this period,
none made any mark. For a time a weekly Dublin Record, later
the Statesman, enjoyed fair prosperity through its endeavours
to 'make it as clear as the noon-day out of scripture to
every individual, Roman Catholic and Protestant, who shall
read it, that Popery is the Babylon of God's wrath - ipsissima
abominatio - the veriest abomination.'⁽²⁾ In 1836 it was
joined by the twice weekly Dublin Standard, whose protestantism
was only less forthright, both papers surviving long enough
to show that there was a market for bigotry, provided that
it was of the right colour. Contemporaneously with them
appeared what was probably the first sporting paper in Ireland,
a weekly which lived down to its title, Paddy Kelly's Life in
Dublin. No reputable addition to the Dublin press appeared
until the Dublin Monitor, of radical leanings, late in 1839;
and the Monitor did not maintain its early promise.

The reduction in the stamp duties, clearly, had not
been sufficient to cause any startling changes in the Irish
press. And against the gain from the reduction of the stamp
duty, the newspaper owners had to set off the losses they were
beginning to incur from concessions made to their journeymen

(1) Parl. Papers, 1842 (412) xxvi (599)
(2) 9 July, 1838.

printers, who by 1835 had organized themselves into a union capable of making conditions which their masters often found it necessary or politic to accept.

TRADE UNIONS - PRINTERS:

The story of the growth of the printers union in Ireland emerged from the evidence given before a select committee of the house of commons on combinations of workmen, which sat in 1838, with O'Connell in the chair, evidence being taken from both masters and journeymen. Thomas Daly, the secretary of the Dublin printers' association, told the committee that their objects were 'the formation of a permanent fund for affording relief to those who may be out of employment from time to time, to settle the price of labour between employers and employed, and other matters affecting the general welfare of the printers community.'⁽¹⁾ Daly was the union's only paid officer, receiving twenty guineas a year. Delegates, one from each office, met in a public house every Saturday night, representing some 260 members and 180 apprentices. The Union paid unemployment money, 7/6 for the first 6 weeks, and then 5/- a week, up to a maximum of £4 a year. Unemployed journeymen who wished to emigrate were assisted with grants, £4 if going to England, and £8, if to America. "Tramps" - printers wandering round the country in search of work - were

(1) Parl. Papers, 1837-8, viii. (2nd Report) 97.

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given 5/- on production of their union card; and there was a burial allowance of £3 for the family of deceased member.

Daly's evidence suggested that the union was primarily a friendly society: P.D. Hardy, an employer, maintained that it existed to limit the number of apprentices employed in printing offices, to ensure that only union men were employed, and to enforce a minimum wage.⁽¹⁾ As a result, he said, he felt that he no longer had any authority in his own office. He had been forbidden to employ more than four apprentices, irrespective of the number of printers in his establishment; and he had come up against so many union restrictions that, in common with other master printers, he had become disheartened and had reduced his commitments. He was followed by Michael Staunton,⁽²⁾ who referred to a number of strikes that had taken place as a result of disputes - one as far back as the war years, at a time when he had been editor of the Freeman, for a minimum wage; another on the Evening Post against the employment of non-union labour; and another on his Register, for shorter hours (the printers at that time worked a twelve hour day, seven in the morning to seven at night, with two hours off for meals). He had given way to the union on this occasion, and also when they had demanded that he limit the number of apprentices to four. At the best of times, he said, a morning

(1) Parl. Papers, 1837-8, viii (2nd Report) 25.

(2) Ibid., p.47

newspaper was a poor commercial proposition: these concessions had only served to make the Register's position more precarious.

The Dublin master printers admitted that relations between them and their staffs had on the whole been harmonious; at least there had been no violence, since the assault upon Lonergan in 1825. Relations in some of the provincial newspapers had been less happy. Henderson of the Newry Commercial Chronicle⁽¹⁾ had prosecuted his journeymen when they had threatened to strike; seven of them had spent a month in jail. When the printers of the rival Newry Examiner had left work to escort the convicted men to the prison, their employer had initiated prosecutions against them, which had only fallen through because his foreman, on whom he relied for corroborative evidence, turned out to be in the union himself. Francis Dalzell Finlay,⁽²⁾ owner of the Northern Whig, described his disputes with his staff in some detail. On receiving an ultimatum from them in 1836, he had sacked the lot and brought in men in their place from Scotland and Dublin. He - and the new men - had been threatened with violence, for which he was able to obtain the conviction of two of his former printers. Then the new men joined the union, and his troubles began again. It was illegal at that date for the men to strike, but they could give notice in a body; and they did, when he tried to

(1) Parl. Papers, 1837-8 viii (2nd Report) 75.

(2) ibid., p.82.

use one of his editorial staff as a printer. This time - he told the committee, with evident pride -

I adopted rather a novel plan and a plan which I think, if acted upon by other employers would free them from the miseries of combination upon many occasions. I fitted up privately in the rear of my own premises, a printing office, unknown to my men, and known only to one or two confidential persons. I got a fount of types put into it; I went to the country free schools, I brought in children from them, put into them into the secret printing office, I slept them upon the premises, I fed them upon the premises, and privately at night I took them out to give them exercise and air, and sent them into the country on a Sunday, to take gymastic exercises in my garden, at my own cottage. I attended to the business in the printing offices, and attended to the teaching of these boys myself; and by the time this strike came, I had these little boys taught, some not more than ten years of age, whom I perched upon stools, and thus set at defiance the threats of these mighty combinator⁽¹⁾s.

Finlay was an exception; in general, masters and journeymen showed a disposition to understand the each other's arguments, and to reach some settlement advantageous to both. Hardy said that he had realized he should not be judge in his own case, and had asked for the formation of a joint committee, a suggestion which

(1) Parl. Papers, 1837-8, viii (2nd Report). 87.

had been turned down by the journeymen on the grounds that they could only negotiate through their union. Staunton, agreed; he would prefer to see matters settled by employer-employee discussions, than by statute. Both denied that there had been any employers organisation set up to oppose the union. Staunton admitted that he sometimes consulted with the owner of the other Dublin morning paper; ⁽¹⁾ but he asserted that they never made any compact. Finlay, however, boasted of coming to terms with other Belfast owners. The chairman gently reminded him that this was illegal. Finlay replied that he never had entered into any written contract with them; to comply with the law, he made the agreements verbally. O'Connell then asked whether he did not think that workers ought to have a right to form unions? Certainly, said Finlay; he was entirely in sympathy with the printers forming an association - provided, of course, that it did not conflict at any time with the wishes of employers. ⁽²⁾

The evidence obtained by the committee can have been of little value, except to show that the trouble, lying as it did in the economic depression in Ireland after the union, could not be cured simply by promoting better relations between master and journeyman. Staunton in his evidence admitted that the Freeman printers had successfully demanded a minimum wage of £2 a week in 1815. ⁽³⁾ Twenty years later, the minimum

(1) LaveHe of the Freeman; Saunders was still not considered a newspaper, in the strict sense.
 (2) Parl. Papers, 1837-8, viii (2nd Report) 95. (3) Ibid., p.47.

wage had dropped to 32/6. The workers' agitation had not been for increased wages; they had been striving to prevent their livelihood from dwindling down to the subsistence level. Unemployment had increased: over 300 printers had been forced to emigrate from Dublin between 1834 and 1837.⁽¹⁾ The limitation of the number of apprentices was a natural enough demand, when so many printers were out of work. They could point to the Evening Mail office, where only one apprentice was employed, in a staff of twenty.

The employers' arguments were no less reasonable. Newspapers had such small circulations, that profits were insignificant; any additional expenses, and they owners might be forced out of business. Printing firms owed much of their general work, besides newspapers, to the ability to undersell their English rivals; if increased costs put the two countries on a level, the Irish firms would lose orders. The effect of the taxes on the press had been to leave so narrow a margin between survival and extinction of a newspaper, that even the most modest claims of his workers might tip the balance against the owner, and leave him and them seeking new employment.

(1) Parl. Papers, 1837-8, viii (2nd Report) 97.

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TRADE UNIONS (2) REPORTERS:

Another association had its origins in these years; the editorial staffs of the Dublin newspapers took the first tentative steps towards forming a union. The employment of reporters had by then become general. Staunton, who had introduced the system, and Barrett, apparently shared a reporting staff; (1) the Pilot used to boast about the excellence of its newsgathering. (2) The practice of taking news from other papers, with or without acknowledgment, remained common, but the system of coverage of home news by staff reporters had been well established by the late 'thirties.

On 26 May 1838 a meeting of editors, sub-editors and reporters of the Dublin newspaper press was held to consider the propriety of forming a 'press association,' with John Stevenson, editor of the Freeman, in the chair. No proprietor was present, but all of them had sent messages of goodwill. Lynar, editor of the Morning Register, presented a report of a committee which had earlier been appointed to examine the position. 'By being members of a United body', the committee had decided, each should be individually bound to watch over the honour of all.'

The meeting passed a series of resolutions: that the interest and respectability of the Dublin press would be advanced by such a body; that it would secure co-operation

(1). See Pilot, 11 May, 1840. (2). *ibid.*, 12, July 1837.

amongst the newspapers: and that it would help to bridge the disparity between the standing of the literary profession and its influence. Finally, Charles Gavan Duffy, at that time a reporter on the Morning Register, proposed that the Association be formed. A committee was elected, two members from each daily paper, one from each evening and weekly papers. Proprietors could become ex-officio members if they wished; and, on another suggestion by Gavan Duffy, members of the staffs of periodicals were admitted, including Clarence Mangan, whom he introduced as 'one of the most successful and popular members of the University Magazine.' (1).

The press, particularly the Register and the Pilot, welcomed the Association, the Register admitting that 'a want of cordial intercommunication and co-operation has left the individual members of the press a place in the social scale far below that to which their collective influence upon society and the importance of their profession justly gives them claim.' (2).

The association does not seem to have long survived, nor made much impact on the journalistic life of the time. Gavan Duffy makes no mention of it in his recollections: his account of the Dublin press in the late eighteen thirties does, however, help to explain why it failed. The staff of the journals who supported O'Connell, he ^{re-}called, had slight sympathy with ^{O'Connell's} ~~his~~

(1). Pilot, 30 May, 1838.
 (2). 1 June 1838

policy, and few settled opinions of or purpose of any sort. The editors of the three particularly Catholic papers were all Protestants, and the co-editors of a pre-eminently Protestant organ had been born and bred Catholics. Most of them had lived through the first repeal movement; and whatever public spirit they possessed probably evaporated with its collapse'. In the circumstances, it was not surprising that such an association did not long survive.

The Right to Report.

That the association should have been formed at all, was an indication of the reporters' growing realization of their responsibilities; and it came in time to give the press confidence in one of its periodic contests with authority over the limits of the public's right to read accounts of administrative deliberations.

The question arose in 1839 whether the reporters should be admitted to the meetings of the boards of guardians appointed to administer the new Poor Laws. At first reporters were occasionally admitted, but when boards of guardians decided in their favour, there would sometimes be dissentients. The decisive step was taken in December 1840, when the guardians of North and South Dublin decided to allow reports of their meetings. The Pilot, however, saw foresaw trouble ahead.

Publicity had forced itself on every institution in the country,

(1). Gavan Duffy, "My Life in two Hemispheres," i. 27.
 (2). Pilot, 27, Nov., 1839.

even on the legislature; and is it to be endured that foreign commissioners should come here, with enormous patronage and almost unlimited powers of taxation, who want to put a gag on that publicity which has been found the best safeguard against abuse, and the only guarantee for justice? (1).

A few weeks later, Nicholls, on whose report the Poor Law system was based, declared that reporting of the guardians' meetings was inadvisable, a view that was also taken by the crown law officers. (2).

The Poor Law Commissioners forthwith ordered the guardians to stop reporters attending their meetings. The guardians accepted this ruling, under protest. (3).

Faced with growing opposition, the commissioners shifted their ground; they ruled that reporters should be allowed in, but that they could be excluded at the wish of any one guardian, on the principle of the house of commons. (4).

They defended their action in a circular which stated that, while acts of the guardians must be recorded and made public, 'the deliberations precedent to the act - the opinions of individual guardians - the information adduced on particular points, perhaps confidentially obtained - ought, in the commissioners' judgment, to be confined to the board itself, and left strictly private. (5).

The commissioners ~~can~~ ^{thought,} If reporters were admitted, guardians might be swayed by popular clamour, and ~~were~~ the publication of hasty or ill-considered expressions might inflame or mislead the public.

(1). Pilot., 4th. Dec. 1840. (2). Ibid., 9 Dec. 1840.
(3). Pilot, 18 Dec. 1840. (4). Ibid., 23 Dec. 1840.
(5). Ibid., 28 Dec., 1840.

reporters had been present.

'The commissioners fear, too, that such publicity may tend to indispose the fittest person to undertake the duty of a guardian, and may eventually drive from the board men of quiet, business-like habits whose presence there is most important for the interest of the ratepayers, but whose labour and well-considered judgments could be liable to be borne down by the fluency of members more practiced in public debate, and speaking under the existing influence of having what they say reported in the newspapers.'

The commissioners' arguments were plausible, and not without insight into the national character. But they were lost on the guardians, who were probably moved less by desire for publicity, than annoyance at being considered unable to run their own affairs. 'The commissioners', one of them complained, (1). 'will not give us knives lest we should cut ourselves'. Long reports of board of guardians' meetings, which continued to be published, indicated that the commissioners' exclusion ruling was not always availed of by the boards. The Pilot drew attention to the exclusion of reporters, on the few (2). occasions when it occurred. The press were given a useful handle when the Chairman of the North Dublin Union, complaining of misrepresentation in the Freeman, had to admit that reporters (3). had not been present when at the time. The information, he said, must have been passed to the paper by some member of the board. Such misrepresentation could not have occurred if

(1). Pilot, 28 Dec., 1840. (2). Ibid., 6, Jan. 1841.
 (3). Pilot, 22 Oct. 1841

reporters had~~e~~ been present. [The Dublin press had^{not} established a general right to report the deliberations of any public body. Arguments of a similar nature were to occur many times in later years, and the press was not always to secure the victory. The value of the 1840 precedent lay less in any conscious admission of a public right, than in the extension of the field of newspaper reporting, so that the citizen unconsciously grew accustomed to seeing accounts of the meetings of official and semi-official bodies and, - even if he never read them - to allow himself to be stirred to indignation when his newspaper told him that its reporter had been excluded from meetings of a similar nature. Thereafter, the press less often had to fight on its own behalf; the decision to allow reporters more rarely provoked dissent, because the men concerned were used to the presence of reporters at other meetings of the same kind.

The Melbourne administration, which had been tottering for several months, finally fell in 1841. In their decade of power, the whigs had done little that was constructive for the Irish press. The reduction of the stamp duty and of the advertisement tax, valuable though even the smallest financial concessions must have been, had not perceptibly improved the lot of the Irish newspaper owner, set off as they were by the rising costs. By 1841, the memory of the tranquil months that immediately followed the appointment of Melbourne as prime minister had been obliterated by the growing realisation that his term of office had produced no lasting improvement in the state of Ireland.

The return of the tories, therefore, provoked no violent reaction in the Irish press. There was some reshuffling of loyalties : instead of the Mail and the Packet denouncing the Pilot and the Register as Castle hacks, the Pilot and the Register hurled that epithet at the Mail and the Packet - and, along with them, the Evening Post, which had resolved its conflicting loyalties in favour of the Castle. (1). The Castle began again the search for pliant instruments to suborn the independent press; one of them, in this instance, a journalist of some perspicacity, later to become notorious - James Birch. Birch had offered his journalistic services to Wellington in November, 1834, when Peel took office. 'There be a fine field

(1). Pilot, 29 Aug., 1842.

here to beat down agitation through the instrumentality of the press', he had urged 'too long have the tories neglected this great moral engine'. The method he advocated, and claimed to have used, was deception. He had attacked the whigs/as a tory, but in the columns of the short lived radical Tribune. Subsequently he had succeeded in persuading the Freeman to accept an article in which that newspaper's relief at the departure of the whigs was so forthrightly expressed that - in Birch's view - it would hardly be possible for the Freeman in future not to support the tories. The fall of the ministry had temporarily checked his activities, and for a time he cultivated Barrett and O'Connell, not without success. Later, he set up the ostensibly independent World, whose true affiliations were only shown when, in 1842, the paper was involved in legal action. The chief secretary offered Birch £50 to help defray the expenses of the prosecution, and unwisely made the offer publicly. This was too much for the Pilot, which denounced the World as tory beneath its liberal clothing. Evidently Birch had embarked upon the course that finally brought him into court in 1851 to sue the chief secretary for money which, he alleged, he was owed by the government for his services.

With the tories in office, prosecutions began to increase

(1). Aspinall, Politics and the Press, pp.483-6.
 Birch was also corresponding with Peel at this period.
 cf. B.M. Add. MSS. (Peel).
 (2). O'Connell, Correspondence, ii. 82-3.
 (3). Pilot, 5 Sept., 1842.
 (4). Aspinall, Politics and the Press, pp.375-8.

in number and intensity; one of them, directed against the Belfast Vindicator, having all the ingredients of a cause célèbre. The Vindicator, of which Charles Gavan Duffy was then editor, had savagely criticised certain court decisions in Ulster, in particular the capital sentence upon a Catholic, Francis Hughes. Hughes had been tried three times, before the crown could secure a verdict of guilty. On each occasion, the prosecution had challenged and removed all Catholic jurors on the panel; whereas shortly before, in an action where Protestant had been charged with the murder of a Catholic, the state prosecutor had refused to challenge any jurors 'on principle', in spite of the plea of the murdered man's representatives. (1)

As usual, when the Vindicator case came up, the bench made it clear that the truth or otherwise of the allegations was immaterial; the articles, the judge considered, were flagrantly libellous, and that should be enough for a jury. Inevitably, Gavan Duffy was found guilty, and put back for sentence. (2)

In the meantime, however, the case had excited attention in the English press; and the Irish newspapers of all shades of opinion had backed the Vindicator, even the Orange Warder complaining that the judge's charge to the jury was inimical to the freedom of the press. (3) Possibly Peel, the prime minister, who was anxious at the time to conciliate Catholic opinion,

(1) Vindicator, 11 May 1842.
 (2) Pilot, 22 June, 1822.
 (3) cf. articles reprinted in Vindicator, July 1842.

Already that year the crown of the Pilot suggested that matters should not be pressed to the extent of making Gavan Duffy a martyr; and possibly Gavan Duffy's new career in Dublin beckoned him so strongly that he was willing to sink his pride. Whatever the reasons, when he came up for judgment his counsel told the bench that he had been instructed to say that his client had not acted with proper moderation, having been betrayed into using language not warranted by the circumstances. The law officers of the crown, expressing themselves satisfied, did not press for a conviction. The judge made no comment. (1) Nor did the Pilot, at the time; but later it reprinted, presumably with approval, an article from another paper, expressing what must have been a widely felt surprise that Gavan Duffy had virtually whitewashed the crown law officers, leaving in the lurch the press that had defended him. (2)

(1) Pilot, 11 Nov. 1842.
 (2) Ibid., 31 Nov. 1842.

Already that year the owner of the Kerry Examiner had received a six months' imprisonment and his printer a shorter sentence for libel: (1) and other actions were pending in the courts. (2). The indications were that the Irish press had not materially strengthened its position since the Union; ~~and~~ with the tories again in power, the outlook was not encouraging. The few papers that were in a fairly healthy condition commercially were the Ascendancy's Mail and Packet and the Castle Catholic Evening Post. The liberal and opposition Catholic newspapers were struggling to survive, in no position to extend their activities. The Repeal Movement was growing in impetus; but O'Connell had never, at the height of his powers, attracted a reading public, and there was no reason to suppose that the cry of Repeal would gain him any more readers than it had in the past.

One incident alone held promise for the future. Michael Staunton had a passion for statistics which had been shared by his editor Hugh Lynar: and the Morning Register's readers had begun to fall away. (3). disilluisioned by the failure of ~~the~~ O'Connell's alliance with the whigs to produce spectacular results, and deterred by the rather indigestible reading matter with which the Register tended to present them. Towards the end of the whig alliance, Lynar resigned; shortly afterwards, Gavan Duffy, coming down to Dublin for a brief rest from his Vindicator duties, was amused to find the

(1). Pilot, 6 May, 1842. (2). ibid, 10, 15 June 1842.
 (3). Parl. Papers, 1840 (266) xxix (503).

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editorship of the Register in commission, and its readers in ecstasies of astonishment, finding their usual solid entertainment, in which Poor Laws and the Public Debt were standing dishes, and where the Castle was treated with suspicious deference, suddenly replaced by speculations on the revival of Protestant nationality, historical parallels from classic and mediaeval history, and even essays on the agencies and conditions of guerilla warfare.' (1) Two young barristers, he was told, had got hold of Staunton's paper, 'and were playing pranks with it never before seen out of a pantomime.' He went round to the Register office and there found John Blake Dillon in his old sub-editorial chair. The following day, he met Dillon's colleague, Thomas Davis.

This was in 1841. When he again visited Dublin the following year, it was to find that the Morning Register had returned to its statistics, parting company with Dillon and Davis. Walking with them in Phoenix Park, he broached an idea that he had been nourishing in his mind, that the three of them should found and run a weekly Dublin newspaper. The idea seized them. Within a surprisingly short space of time the first number of the new paper had appeared. The Nation departed from the normal journalistic practices of the day in shape, size, distribution of materials, and typography. But its real

(1) Gavan Duffy, Young Ireland, p. 29.

departure, as Gavan Duffy claimed, was in spirit:-

It was not an echo of the Association or its leader, as national journals had commonly been, but struck out a distinct course for itself. O'Connell had appealed to the material interest of the people but there were lessons of profounder influence over the human breast which he had not attempted to teach. Passion and imagination have won victories which reason and self interest would have attempted in vain, and it was on these subtle forces the young^{men}/mainly counted. (1)

The young men were not disappointed; the Nation was destined to make an impact unparalleled in the story of the Irish press.

(1) Gavan Duffy, Young Ireland, p.49.

Appendices, bibliography, etc.

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The Law of Libel

From the year 1694, when the English house of commons had refused to renew the licensing act, the law of libel had been the only outward restraint on the liberty - or the license - of the press. That law, however, had its roots in the Star Chamber: and it could still be twisted to suit the purposes that had been served by the licensing act. If the judiciary felt that it was their duty to uphold the dignity of the state, they could use their powers under the libel law to make criticism of the state so dangerous that a state of censorship virtually existed.

This was the position in Ireland in 1784. The judges then, and for many years to come, were bound to the state by close ties of self interest. The journals of Lord Clonmell,¹ and the correspondence of Lord Norbury,² chief justices of the King's Bench, make it clear that they regarded themselves primarily as servants of the state. Their promotion to the Bench had been the reward of their services to the Castle: their future promotion through the grades of the Peerage was dependent upon their continuing to give the same satisfaction. To them, newspaper condemnation of - say - ministerial corruption was calculated to undermine the authority of the state, and was ipso facto

¹Fitzpatrick, The Sham Squire, p. 101, ff.

²~~CofE~~ Off. Papers, I.S.P.O.

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seditious. The judges consistently reacted to press criticism of the government as if their own livelihood was endangered - as indeed it was.

The bench traditionally reserved the right in cases of libel to decide whether or not a publication was libellous, leaving to the jury only the decision whether or not defendant had been the author, printer, or publisher. It happened, however, that in 1780 an English jury, in the case of Rex. v the Dean of St Asaphs, which had been directed from the bench that the publication in question was a libel, nevertheless insisted upon finding the defendant 'guilty of publishing only'. The judge disputed their right to give this verdict, and, on a motion for a retrial, he was sustained by Chief Justice Mansfield, who quoted the jingle

But Sir Philip well knows
That his innuendos
Will serve him no longer
In verse or in prose
For twelve honest men have decided the cause
Who are judges of fact, though not judges of laws.

The case against the Dean was not, however, resumed; the jury were conceded a moral victory.

This gave a considerable fillip to an agitation to have the right to decide whether matter was libellous transferred from judges to juries. The assumption must be that the class from whom juries were chosen in Ireland knew what was happening in England, because events in England - such as the Dean's trial - were better reported in the Irish newspapers than trials in Dublin, it being easier and cheaper to reprint accounts from the

English press than to employ reporters to attend the Dublin courts. The Castle could not, therefore, entirely rely upon the courts to do its bidding. A flagrantly unfair charge might provoke a jury to follow the St Asaph's precedent. In the 1784-5 period the fright given to respectable citizens by the excessive scurrility of the press enabled the government to secure verdicts: but after 1789, when prosecutions were resumed, they found a growing tendency for juries to be recalcitrant. In July 1790 a jury found a Dublin printer, Amyas Griffith, guilty of publishing only, in defiance of Judicial direction; and when the judge told them that this verdict was unacceptable, they found Griffith not guilty.¹ One of the trials of the owners of the Northern Star ended in the same manner.²

The executive must have realised that the old system was breaking down, and no serious opposition was offered to the re-enactment, for Ireland, of Fox's Libel Act, which gave juries the right to decide whether matter was libellous.³

This act, passed in 1793, ought to have marked the beginning of a new era in the story of the freedom of the press. To have the decision in the hands of a jury is as near as the press can hope to get to trial by public opinion. Had juries been representative of public opinion, the course of libel actions - the arguments

¹Morning Post, 10 July 1790.

²See above, p. 164

³Ir. Statutes, 1793, xvi, 924.

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of counsel, the judge's charge to the jury, the verdict - would have become a reflection of the public attitude to the limits of press freedom, and, therefore, illustrative of its growth. In point of fact, juries quickly ceased to be representative. After 1793, they were systematically packed. When executive and Ascendancy fell out, the newspapers sometimes escaped in the confusion: but normally, they stood no chance of acquittal. Libel trials became a reflection not of public opinion, but of Castle policy. The Dublin Evening Post in the days of its owner's war with Higgins had coined the definitions:-

Seditious Libel . . . any publication that contravenes the holy political doctrine of passive obedience and non-resistance . . .

Traitorous Libel . . . any publication that asserts the rights of Ireland and its independence . . .

False Libel . . . any publication that tells the world that an m.p. always votes, right or wrong, with every administration, because he is a placeman or the hungry hanger-on of a borough-jobbing peer . . .

Scandalous Libel . . . any publication of anecdotes relative to the origin and promotion of a beggarly pettifogging scoundrel:

- what the Evening Post had described in jest, the government was to enforce in earnest. Libel trials became little more than an executive weapon, for use when bribes and threats had been

rejected.

However interesting, then, many of the 1794-1842 libel actions may be; however productive of closely-reasoned legal arguments; however illuminated by the forensic genius of such advocates as John Philpot Curran and O'Connell - the legal side of the trials is irrelevant to the consideration of the freedom of the press. Neither the justice of the newspapers' cause, nor the skill of their advocates affected the results; even where newspapers were acquitted, it was not on the merits of their case, but on account of an Ascendancy squabble with the Castle. O'Connell's ideas of a revision of the law of libel,¹ cogent as they were, could have had value only for England. In Ireland, no revision of the law would have appreciably altered the position of the press, so long as the courts remained at the service of the state.

¹He brought up the subject in the commons almost every year between 1830 and 1838.

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APPENDIX B.

Newspaper Circulations 1821-41

The appended chart shows, very approximately, the circulations of the chief Dublin newspapers during the period 1821-41. The significant points are

a. The popularity of the Protestant newspapers, by comparison with the Catholic. The Dublin Evening Mail's circulation remained the highest throughout the period: and as soon as the Correspondent shed its Castle connection and became the Packet, appearing on alternative evenings to the MAIL, it began to climb into second place.

b. The popularity of the 'respectable' Castle Catholic Dublin Evening Post by contrast with the O'Connellite or near-O'Connellite papers, the Register, Freeman, and Pilot.

Taken together, a and b indicate the tastes of the newspaper buying public, which was a very small public, as the total figures of all the newspapers added together show. It must be remembered that the evening papers - Mail, Post, Packet, Pilot, only came out on alternate days, so the assumption must be that some subscribers took two. Some of these subscribers may have taken one of the morning papers, as well, though the morning papers circulated mainly in the city, and the evening papers, mainly in the country.

c. The unpopularity of the Castle press. (The Dublin

Evening Post, although it consistently supported the government in this period, was not strictly-speaking a Castle paper). Cf. the Patriot's decline as soon as it was brought to heel in 1822.

The chart has been made up from the circulation figures given in Parliamentary Papers from 1826-43:

1826	(235)	xxiii.	383.
1829	(164)	xxii.	273.
1830	(119)	xxv.	365.
	(549)	xxv.	349.
1831-2	(242)	xxxiv.	123.
1833	(503)	xxxii.	623.
1834	(510)	xlx.	407.
1836	(146)	xlv.	359.
	(177)	xlv.	361.
1837	(462)	xxxix.	325.
1837-8	(73)	xxxiv.	393.
1840	(266)	xxix.	503.
1843	(174)	xxx.	537.
	(98)	xxx.	513.

These returns give the total number of stamps used by individual newspapers over periods ranging from a month to several years. From them, it is possible to extract the circulations by dividing the total number of stamps used by the number of times the newspaper was published during the year. It is quite possible that the stamp returns were inaccurate: in any case, the chart is not intended to be more than a rough guide to circulations, showing trends, rather than exact figures.

Parliamentary Papers
 Stationery Office - 200, Strand
 Supply Service Account 2000

British Library

PHYSIOGRAPHY

ORIGINAL SOURCE

1. 1830

2800

2400

2000

1600

1200

400

Dublin Evening Mail

Protestant
Catholic
Catholic
Catholic
Banded
Cleared

Dublin Evening Post
in 1600

The Patriot

Freeman's Journal

Dublin Morning Star
500 Post

Faulkner's Dublin Journal

Correspondent

Irish Star

Morning Register

Dublin Times

Dublin Mail

Packet

Dublin Post

Freeman

Risk

Miles

1821

1823

1825

1827

1829

1831

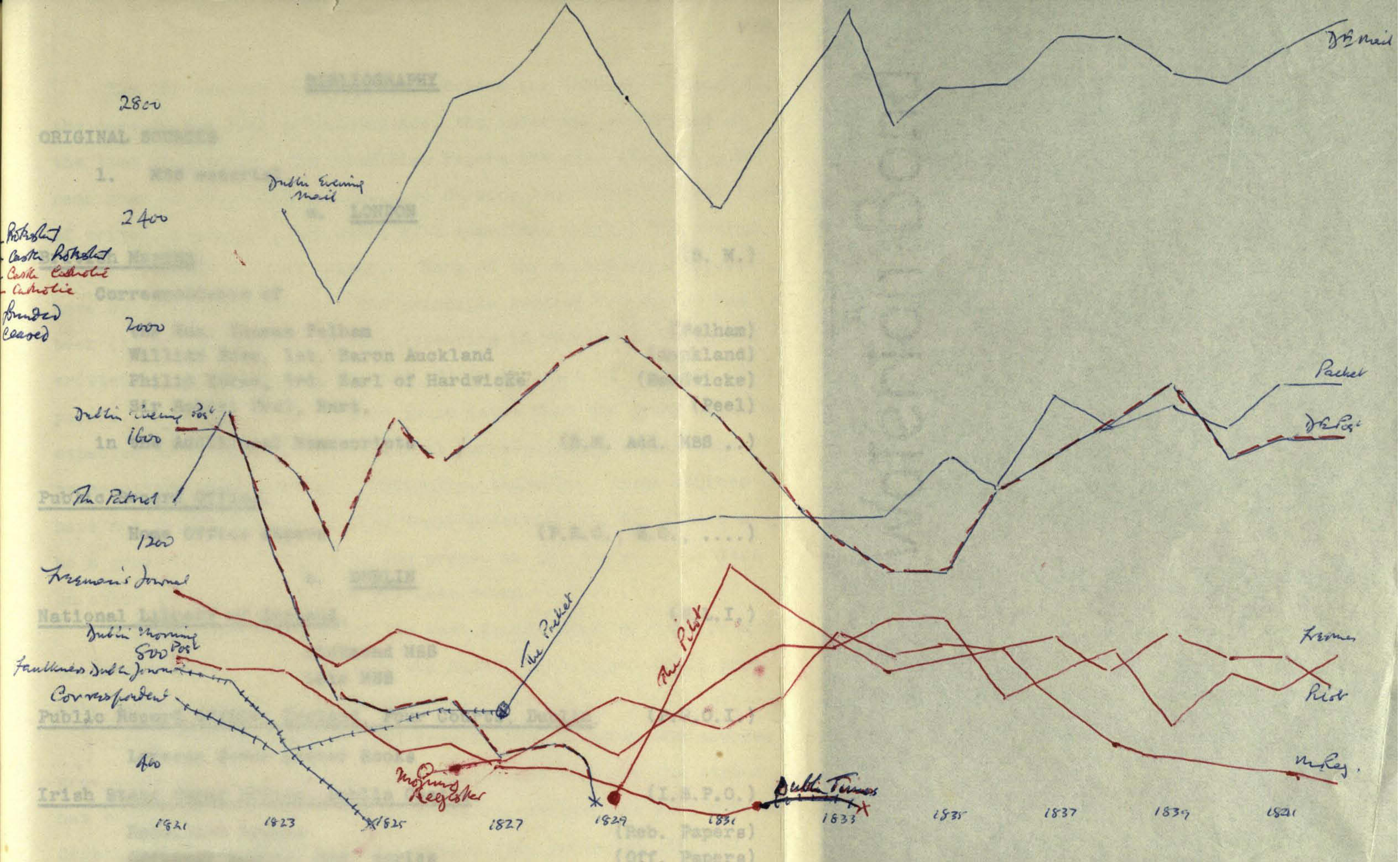
1833

1835

1837

1839

1841



BIBLIOGRAPHY

ORIGINAL SOURCES

1. MSS material.

a. LONDON

British Museum.

(B. M.)

Correspondence of

- the Hon. Thomas Pelham (Pelham)
- William Eden, 1st. Baron Auckland (Auckland)
- Philip Yorke, 3rd. Earl of Hardwicke (Hardwicke)
- Sir Robert Peel, Bart. (Peel)

in the Additional Manuscripts (B.M. Add. MSS ..)

Public Record Office.

Home Office Papers (P.R.O., H.O.,)

b. DUBLIN

National Library of Ireland.

(N.L.I.)

- Richmond MSS
- Lake MSS

Public Record Office, Ireland, Four Courts, Dublin. (P.R.O.I.)

Leveson Gower Letter Books

Irish State Paper Office, Dublin Castle.

(I.S.P.O.)

- Rebellion Papers (Reb. Papers)
- Official Papers, 2nd. series (Off. Papers)
- Miscellaneous Papers
- Westmoreland Correspondence - Fane Collection
- Secret Service Account Books

Trinity College, Dublin, Library.

Madden MSS

17/12

The MSS sources in the British Museum are indexed - though in the case of the Peel correspondence, the index was unfinished at the time of search. The Rebellion Papers are also indexed. The remainder of these MSS sources have no more than chronological lists of writer, recipient, and date, with sometimes a brief indication of the letters' subject matter. Many of the Home Office papers have not even this guide. The principle adopted for search has been (1) to look up all letters appearing in indexes or calendars written by or to journalists, and (2) in the case of the Home Office papers, to search on and around those dates when the press might be expected to be mentioned in official correspondence - e.g. when prosecutions were pending. Obviously, therefore, these sources have not produced anything like their potential yield. There must be a great many references to the press, in the course of letters on other matters, which have not been found.

The Rebellion Papers and the Peel Papers gave the best returns: but a systematic search through the Home Office Papers would probably uncover equally valuable material.

After the departure of Peel from Ireland in 1818, MSS sources grow steadily less revealing: and by the mid-thirties the stream has virtually dried up. For some reason, neither the Public Record Office nor the Irish State Paper Office have preserved official correspondence in the later thirties on anything approaching the scale of former - and later - years. It is unlikely, however, that the newspapers would receive much attention in official correspondence during the Melbourne administration.

PRINTED MSS

- Historical Manuscripts Commission (H.M.C.)
- 13th Report, Appendix, vol VIII: MSS and correspondence
of James, 1st Earl of Charlemont, vol ii. London 1893
- 14th Report, Appendix, vol I: MSS of the Duke of
Rutland, vol iii. London 1894
- 13th Report, Appendix, vol III: 14th report Appendix v:
vols i - iii: MSS of J. B. Fortescue preserved at Dropmore
(Fortescue . . .). London 1892
1894
1899
- Gilbert, Sir J. T. Documents Relating to Ireland 1795-1804
Dublin 1893
- E. Curtis and R. B.
McDowell Irish Historical Documents London 1943

CORRESPONDENCE, MEMOIRS, etc.

- Barrington, Jonah Recollections (Every Irishman's Library Ed.)
Dublin 1917
- Beresford, John Correspondence, (ed. Wm. Beresford), (2 vols)
London 1854
- Bowden, C. T. Tour through Ireland Dublin 1791
- Castlereagh, Viscount Memoirs and Correspondence (ed. C. Vane).
London 1848
- Cloncurry, Lord Recollections. Dublin 1849
- Cornwallis, Earl of Correspondence (ed. C. Ross). London 1859
- Croker, J. W. Correspondence and Diaries. London 1884
- Curran, J. P. Speeches (ed. T. Davis). Dublin 1845
- Drennan, Dr. Letters (ed. D. A. Chart). Belfast 1931
- George IV Correspondence (ed. A. Aspinall). Cambridge
1938
- Grattan, Henry Memoirs (ed. by his son). London 1839
- Gregory, William Mr. Gregory's Letter Box 1813-30 (ed. Lady
Gregory). London 1898
- Hall, Rev. J. Tour through Ireland London 1813
- Hardwicke, Lord The Viceroy's Postbag - Correspondence of the
Earl of Hardwicke (ed. Michael MacDonagh)
London 1904

MacNeven, T.	<u>Leading State Trials in Ireland, 1794-1803.</u>	Dublin 1844
Madden, P. R.	<u>Memoirs</u> (ed. T. Madden).	London 1891
Melbourne, Viscount	<u>Memoirs</u> (ed. W. M. Torrens).	London 1838
Moore, Thomas	<u>Memoirs, Journal and Correspondence</u> (ed. Lord John Russell).	London 1853
Morgan, Lady	<u>Memoirs</u>	London 1862
O'Connell, Daniel	<u>Correspondence</u> (ed. W. J. Fitzpatrick) (2 vols).	London 1888
Peel, Robert	<u>Private Letters</u> (ed. George Peel).	London 1920
Wellington, Duke of	<u>Civil Correspondence and Memoranda</u> (ed. by his son, the Duke of Wellington).	London 1860.

No one collection of memoirs or correspondence deals to any outstanding extent with the press, except the O'Connell correspondence, of which little use has been made in this thesis, for the reason given above¹. Most of the printed sources listed above, however, contain a few valuable references, and no doubt there are other MSS of a similar nature which would prove equally useful, but are not yet available in print.

REPORTS OF DEBATES, etc.

1. Parliamentary

Journals of the House of Commons	from 1800
Journals of the House of Lords	from 1800
Parliamentary Debates	from 1800
Parliamentary Papers	from 1800
Journals of the Irish House of Commons	to 1800
Journals of the Irish House of Lords	to 1800
The Irish Parliamentary Register	to 1800
English Statutes	from 1800
Irish Statutes	to 1800

¹See p.

2. Miscellaneous

Proceedings of the Catholic Association in Dublin from
May 1823 to Feb. 1825. London 1825

The Irish Law Recorder Dublin 1828 -

The Irish Parliamentary Register gives some of the debates in the Irish house of commons, and a few in the Irish house of lords, for the period 1780-1800. They appear to have been reprinted from newspaper reports, and may be presumed reasonably accurate.

The Proceedings of the Irish Catholic Association has certain page numbers duplicated: these are indicated in footnotes with an asterisk.

The Irish Law Recorder gives fragments of cases from 1828 on, but it concerns itself mainly with points of law, of little general interest.

NEWSPAPERS

DUBLIN:-

- Dublin Weekly Advertiser 1810-15
- Antidote, or Protestant Guardian 1822-4
- Anti-Union, 1798-9
- Argus 1825-6
- Evening Chronicle 1783-4
- Dublin Chronicle 1787-93
- Morning Chronicle 1796
- Chronicle 1815-17
- Comet 1831-3
- Constitution, or Anti-Union Evening Post 1799-1800
- Correspondent 1806-28 (cont. as the Evening Packet, 1828-).
- Morning Courier and Dublin Journal (see Irish Times).
- Detector 1800
- Empire 1832-3
- Dublin Evening Express 1811
- Dublin Evening Express 1824
- Express 1832-3
- Faulkner's Dublin Journal - 1825 (merged with Irish Times)
(F.D.J.)

Freeman's Journal (throughout period) Also Evening,
Sunday and Weekly Freeman (Freeman)

Weekly Gazette 1816
Dublin Gazette (throughout period)

Evening Herald 1786-9 (becoming Morning Herald 1789)
Evening Herald 1805-14, becoming the Sentinel, or Herald
Evening Post 1814-15
Dublin Evening Herald 1821-3
Daily Herald 1832
Hibernian Journal -1822 (Hib. J.)

Irishman 1824-25
Irishman 1842

Lantern 1799

Dublin Evening Mail 1823- ~~DUBLIN MORN~~
Dublin Mercantile Advertiser 1820-
Dublin Weekly Messenger 1808-12
Monitor 1838-

National Journal 1792
Rights of Irishmen, or National Evening Star 1791-93

Dublin Observer 1831-6

Evening Packet (see Correspondence)
Irish Packet 1807-10
Paddy Kelly's Life in Dublin 1836
Patriot, 1810-28, becoming Statesman and Patriot, 1828
People 1833
Phenix 1790
Pilot 1829-
Plain Dealer 1832-33
Carrick's Morning Post 1812-32 (merged with Dublin Times)
Dublin Morning Post 1784-85
Morning Post, or Dublin Courant 1788-98
Dublin Evening Post (throughout period)
General Evening Post 1783-84
General Evening Post 1795-97
New Evening Post 1782
Press 1797-98
Press 1833
Dublin Morning Press 1842

Dublin Record 1835-8, becoming the Statesman, and
 Dublin Christian Record in 1838-
 Reformist 1785
 Dublin Weekly Register 1813
 Dublin Weekly Register 1818-
 Dublin Morning Register 1823: 1824-43 (M. Reg.)
 Repealer 1832-3 (merged with Comet)

Saunders's News Letter (throughout period) (S.N.L.)
 Sentinel (see Evening Herald)
 Dublin Standard 1836-7
 Morning Star 1793-4
 Star, 1824-5, becoming Evening Star, 1825
 Star of Brunswick 1828-9
 Statesman (see Dublin Morning Record)
 Statesman and Patriot (see Patriot)
 Stewarts Despatch 1833
 Storm 1798 (wall-sheet)

Hibernian Telegraph 1793 (?)-1810 (Hib. Tele.)
 Dublin Times 1832-4
 Irish Times 1823-5 incorporating Faulkner's Dublin
 Journal 1825, becoming the Morning Courier and Dublin
 Journal 1825.
 Torch 1798 (wall-sheet)
 Town, or Dublin Evening Packet 1788-9
 True-Born Irishman 1802-3

Union Star 1797 (wall-sheet)

Volunteer 1831
 Volunteer Evening Post 1783-7
 Volunteer's Journal or Irish Herald 1783-6 (V.'s J.)
 Volunteer Journal, or Irish Advertiser 1785

Warder 1821-
 World 1840-

BELFAST:-

Belfast Mercury or Freeman's Chronicle, becoming Belfast
 Evening Post 1780's
 Belfast Newsletter (throughout period)
 Northern Star 1791-7
 Belfast Vindicator 1839-
 Northern Whig 1823-

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CORK:-

- Cork Gazette 1790-7
- Harp of Erin 1798
- Cork Herald 1798
- Cork Mercantile Chronicle

PROVINCIAL:-

- Achill Missionary Herald
- Carlow Morning Post
- Castlebar Telegraph
- Clonmel Herald
- Finn's Leinster Journal (Kilkenny)
- Newry Examiner
- Southern Star
- Tipperary Free Press
- Waterford Chronicle
- Waterford Herald

Abbreviations commonly used:-

- D. Dublin
- I. Ireland
- M. Morning
- E. Evening

Abbreviations for a few important individual newspapers are to be found opposite ^{them,} in the list above.

Where a newspaper had a subsidiary title - e.g. the Rights of Irishmen, or National Evening Star - both titles are given only when there is risk of confusion if one is omitted. In cases such as the Public Register, or Freeman's Journal, only the title normally used is recorded. Comparison, the New Statesman and Nation: the Daily Telegraph (and Morning Post).

The list of newspapers is in alphabetical order, omitting words such as 'Dublin' or 'Evening'; so that the Dublin Evening Post will be found under 'P'.

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The British Museum's newspaper repository at Colindale, and the National Library of Ireland, between them have a reasonably complete collection of Irish newspapers from 1780-1842. The British Museum has a printed list of all the newspapers in its collection, in alphabetical order: a second, chronological list is now being compiled. It is not quite true to say that any Dublin newspaper ^{of the period} which is not on the B. M.'s. list will be found in the National Library: but missing files are few. A few minor gaps can be filled from the collections in the Pearse Street library, Dublin: in Trinity College, Dublin, library: and in the Linenhall library, Belfast.

Newspapers during the period were printed off slowly, and they were not published in formal 'editions' - 'late', 'special', 'extra' as they are today. The presses might be stopped at any time to add and subtract news items; the final copy of a paper was often markedly different to the first. What is in a newspaper in the files of the N. L. I. may not be in the paper for the same day in the files of the B. M.

I have accepted newspaper accounts of events, and reports of speeches, etc. as substantially correct, with this reservation: that if there is any reason to doubt their accuracy - if grounds for suspicion exist that they are false, or biassed, or incomplete - confirmation has been sought elsewhere. Where doubt still remains, the newspapers report or comment has been qualified in the text by some such remark as '... the Dublin Journal alleged...'

Generally speaking, the opposition press has been consulted in preference to the government papers, partly because newspapers in opposition provided the better domestic news service, and partly because they had to be accurate, or they were pounced upon by the attorney-general. I have also - this may sound less wise - tended to take reports of trials from the newspaper concerned in the trial; they are usually the most comprehensive. Details have, of course, been confirmed where possible from accounts in rival papers, but this is rarely necessary; the threat of prosecution for contempt of court normally kept newspaper reports accurate.

The above list is not exhaustive. It includes newspapers when they are mentioned in the text. Little work has been done on the provincial newspapers; reference is only made to them when they obtain national celebrity or notoriety - for instance, in state prosecutions.

[Faint bleed-through text from the reverse side of the page, including names like "The Dublin University Magazine" and "The National Library of Ireland"]

[Faint bleed-through text from the reverse side of the page, including "The National Library of Ireland" and "collection of Irish magazines"]

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MAGAZINES (DUBLIN)

(in chronological order)

Town and Country Magazine	1784-6	
Anthologia Hibernica	1793-4	
Hibernian Magazine (Walkers)	- 1812	
Dublin Magazine and Irish Monthly Register		1798-1800
Irish Magazine (Cox's)	1807-15	
Cyclopedian Magazine	1807-9	
Monthly Pantheon	1808-9	
Dublin Satirist	1809-10	
Monthly Panorama	1811	
Hibernian Magazine	1810	
Milesian Magazine, or Irish Monthly Gleaner		1812-25
Dublin Political Review	1813	
Monthly Museum	1813-4	
Dublin Magazine	1820	
New Irish Magazine	1822-3	
Gridiron	1823	
Dublin Monthly Magazine	1830	
Dublin Penny Journal	1832-4	
Irish Monthly Magazine of Politics and Literature		1832-4
Dublin University Magazine	1833-	
Dublin Satirist or Weekly Magazine	1833-4	
Dublin Review	1836-	

Again, this list includes only such magazines mentioned in the text. The Irish magazines of the period were ephemeral, featureless, and dull. Cox's Irish Magazine and Dr. Brennan's Milesian Magazine managed to stir up controversy: Walker's Hibernian Magazine survived for over a quarter of a century: and the Dublin University Magazine attained a considerable literary reputation. The remainder achieved very little: but occasionally they have references to the problems of the press; they cannot be entirely ignored.

The National Library of Ireland has a reasonably complete collection of Irish magazines: but they are not yet separately catalogued.

~~XIX~~
XIX

PAMPHLETS

- 1788

An inquiry into the doctrines lately propagated concerning libels: a letter to Mr. Almon from the father of Candor.
Dublin 1765.

DUNN, JOHN Thoughts on newspapers and free trade. Dublin
1780.

VINDEX A treatise on the origins of attachments and inform-
ations. Dublin 1785.

FITZGERROLD, G. R. The Law of Attachments. Dublin 1785.

TOWERS, JOSEPH Observations on the rights and duties of
juries in trials for libel. Dublin 1785.

1789-1803

CAREY, WILLIAM PAULET Both Sides of the Gutter. Dublin 1789.
The Nettle: an Irish Bouquet to tickle
the nose of an English Viceroy. Dublin
1789.

GRIFFITH, AMYAS Miscellaneous Tracts. Dublin 1789.
→ The trial of John Magee for a libel against
Richard Daly. Dublin 1790.
→ Mr. Sheridan's arguments in the case of Daly
v. Magee. Dublin 1790.

PONSONBY, GEORGE On fiats (with affidavits upon which said
fiats were granted against John Magee).
Dublin 1790.

BROWNE, ARTHUR Arguments in the court of Kings Bench and
speech in the house of commons on fiats.
Dublin 1790.

Letters on the subject of the proper liberty of the press, by an
Englishman. Dublin 1790.

MAYNE, J. A digest of the law concerning libels. Dublin 1792.

Observations on the jurisdiction of the house of commons in
matters of privilege. Dublin 1792.

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- LAW, THOMAS Resolutions of the friends to the liberty of the
press. London 1793.
- The Rights of Juries in cases of libel, by a barrister. Dublin
1794.
- The trial of the proprietors of the Northern Star, May 1794.
Belfast 1794.
- The trial of William Drennan for seditious libel. Dublin 1794.
- CAREY, WILLIAM PAULET Appeal to the People of Ireland (2nd ed.)
Dublin 1794.
- Second trial of the proprietors of the Northern Star. Belfast
1795.
- PORTER, W. Billy Bluff and the Squire. Belfast 1796.
- RIDGEWAY, W. Report of the trial of Peter Finerty. Dublin
1798.
- MAJOR STANLEY Proceedings of a General Court Martial
upon Captain John Giffard. Dublin 1799.
- EMERSON, J. S. A report of the proceedings in the case of the
Hon. Mr. Justice Johnson. Dublin 1805.
- HERON, ISAAC (Propr. of Waterford newspapers). Memoirs
(vol. 1, incomplete). Waterford 1810.
- Report of the trial, F. E. Jones v. William Corbett, proprietor
of the Hibernian Telegraph. Dublin 1810.
- A list of the Catholic Committee, interspersed with strictures on
the calumnies launched upon their views and character by the
Castle press. Dublin 1811.
- GRACE, GEORGE (Propr. of the Clonmel Herald). Letter to the
Duke of Richmond. Clonmel 1813.
- Trial of John Magee, proprietor of the Dublin Evening Post, for
a libel on the Duke of Richmond. Dublin 1813.
- Hints to Jurors on the liberty of the press. Dublin 1813.
- MALEY, M. Reports of two trials for libel. Dublin 1813.

RIDGEWAY, W. A report of the trial of Hugh Fitzpatrick for libel. Dublin 1813.

BARRETT, RICHARD Prudence True Patriotism. Dublin 1815.
 Faction Unmasked. Dublin 1815.

North's speech in the trial of Magee v. O'Gorman. Dublin 1816.

Trial of an action for deceit Magee v. O'Gorman. Dublin 1816.

COX, W. The Mail Reviewed (2 numbers). Dublin 1823.
 Bella Horrida Bella. Dublin 1823.
 Watty versus Dan. Dublin 1825.
 The Cuckoo Calendar. Dublin 1833.

EDGE, J. S. A report of the trial of John Jones v. Thomas Sheehan for libel. Dublin 1839.

DUFFY, CHARLES GAVAN Memoir of, reprinted from the New York Nation. Dublin 1849.

These pamphlets have been issued chronologically, in which order they are to be found in the Halliday collection in the Royal Irish Academy. Most of them are also in the National Library of Ireland, whose collection is not yet separately indexed. Pamphleteers rarely, if ever, goaded the state to retaliation: few of them even made much impression on the public. Pamphlets are nevertheless useful. Some of them give trials, etc. in compact form; others discuss problems such as the law of libel, attachments, etc. at greater length than newspaper writers could command.

Pamphlets are distinguished in footnotes by (P).

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The Sham Squire (3rd ed.) Dublin 1895
Ireland before the Union (2nd ed.) Dublin 1867
The Life, Times, and Contemporaries
of Lord Cloncurry. Dublin 1855
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3 vols. Dublin 1854
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New York 1873
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Landreth, Helen The Pursuit of Robert Emmet New York 1948

Lecky, W. E. H. History of Ireland in the 18th Century London 1916
 5 vols. (Cabinet ed.).

Leaders of Public Opinion in Ireland London 1903
 2 vols.

Lefevre, Shaw Peel and O'Connell. London 1887.

MacDonagh, Michael Life of Daniel O'Connell London 1903

MacDougall, H. Sketches of Irish Political Characters London 1799

MacDowell, R. B. Irish Public Opinion 1750-1800 London 1944

MacNeven, W. J. Pieces of Irish History New York 1807

Madden, R. R. The History of Irish Periodical Literature London 1867
 2 vols.

The United Irishmen, their Lives and Times New York 1916
 12 vols. (Shamrock ed.)

Mullala, James A view of Irish Affairs Dublin 1798

Parker, C. S. Sir Robert Peel London 1891

Phillips, J. S. R. The growth of Journalism (in the Cambridge History of English Literature, XIV, 167). Cambridge 1916

Plowden, Francis Historical Review of Ireland London 1803
History of Ireland 1801-10 Dublin 1811

Robertson, C. G. Select Statutes, Cases and Documents to illustrate English Constitutional History 1660-1832 London 1904

Smyth, E. L. Ireland historical and statistical London 1849

Wyse, Thomas Historical Sketch of the late Catholic Association of Ireland. London 1829

ARTICLES, etc.

- Aspinall, A. The use of Irish Secret Service Money in subsidizing the Irish press in English Historical Review Oct. 1841
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- Young, R. M. A forgotten Belfast Evening Paper in Ulster Journal of Archaeology, New Series, iii, 201 Belfast 1897

Only two secondary authorities concern themselves directly with the history of the Irish press.

Madden's History of Irish Periodical Literature in the 18th Century contains much valuable material: but he unaccountably ignores the most important period, 1784-5, and his work is marred by gross prejudice and slack editing.

Dr Aspinall's Politics and the Press 1780-1850 is extremely valuable, containing as it does much information about the Irish newspapers extracted from MSS sources. Unfortunately, the book did not appear until this thesis was nearing completion: as a result, much of my research on the period of Peel's chief secretaryship was simply duplicating work which Dr Aspinall had already done, and was incorporating in his book. My research through the Peel papers, it should be said, was prompted by the two articles Dr Aspinall had written earlier for the English Historical Review, hinting at the wealth of material on the Irish press to be found in the Peel papers. I was unaware that he contemplated publishing more from the same source: and in an interchange of letters, Dr Aspinall unfortunately did not reveal his intentions, no doubt because he assumed that I was aware of them.

To some extent, then, my section on the Peel administration is redundant; but I have left it in, so as not to spoil the balance of the thesis. And in many cases, I have been able to add material from Dr Aspinall's book; in particular, quotations from MSS sources to which he has had access. Politics and the Press is, in fact, most valuable as a collection of printed MSS

material. As a secondary source, it suffers from certain limitations in its treatment of the Irish press. My comments and criticisms can be found in a review in Irish Historical Studies for September 1949 (Vol IV, no. 24).

The only other useful secondary source bearing directly upon the subject is Dr R. B. McDowell's article on the Irish provincial press in Hermathena, liii. The books on British journalism (other than those by Aspinall and Cowan) are so grossly inaccurate in their references to Irish newspapers that they are not worth consideration.

Madden's United Irishmen, the works of W. J. FitzPatrick on the same period, and Miss Landreth's biography of Emmet, all contain much interesting information about Irish journalists. None of these authors, however, possesses the critical faculty; and their material must remain suspect, unless corroborated elsewhere. I have used them only when there can be no reason to doubt the accuracy of their statements. Gilbert's History of Dublin is less prejudiced, but the same tendency exists to equate legend with fact.

Errata

P. 6. I have mislaid the reference to the cause of the lord lieutenant's refusal to persecute the opposition newspapers in 1780 - but it exists.

P. 24. An extra page has had to be inserted - '24 a'.

P. 115. I am indebted to Professor Hall Stewart, of Cleveland University, Ohio, for drawing my attention to the fact that the abstraction of news from the English newspapers enabled the Dublin newspapers to give their readers a considerable quantity of foreign news in each issue, so that those readers especially after 1789, and in the war years, were to some extent compensated for the indifferent service of home news.

Bibliography.

References. The Drennan Correspondence ed. by Chart, is variously referred to in footnotes as Correspondence and Letters. Carrick's Dublin Morning Post is similarly referred to in different places as Carricks or the D.M. Post. An article which appeared in the Westminster Review for 1830, referred to on a few occasions in the text, has been inadvertently omitted from the bibliography: so has the Dublin and London Magazine, from which one reference is taken, which ran in the 1820's.

