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‘British Rights for British Citizens’: The Campaign for ‘Equal Citizenship’ for Northern Ireland

Colin Coulter

This essay traces the evolution of the demand that the principal British political parties should extend organisation to Northern Ireland. Although originally nurtured by a small Stalinist sect of the far left, the ideal of electoral integration or ‘equal citizenship’ would in time come to exercise considerable appeal among middle-class unionists disorientated by the 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement. This unlikely political alliance would give rise to a vibrant pressure group—the Campaign for Equal Citizenship (CEC)—which played a vocal role in Northern Irish political life in the late 1980s. While often vaunted as its essential attribute, the political diversity of the CEC would foster divisions that would ensure its swift demise. The paper concludes that the decline of electoral integrationism in the early 1990s represented perhaps a prerequisite of a nascent peace process that envisaged a very different political future for Northern Ireland.

Keywords: British and Irish Communist Organisation; Ulster Unionism; Anglo-Irish Agreement; Direct Rule; Electoral Integrationism

Introduction

Elections in the predominantly affluent and overwhelmingly unionist constituency of North Down had hitherto typically been distinctly subdued affairs. The campaign that accompanied the general election held on 11 June 1987 would, however, prove to be anything but. When it was announced that he had been returned to serve another term, the sitting independent Unionist MP James Kilfedder took the opportunity to vent grievances that had been simmering over previous weeks. In his acceptance speech, Kilfedder issued a vitriolic attack on the composition and character of the

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campaign team that had canvassed for his principal rival, the 'Real Unionist' candidate Robert McCartney. Amid scenes variously described as 'tense', 'rowdy' and 'somewhat farcical', the veteran MP expressed particular outrage that McCartney counted among his supporters a number of 'Communists'.¹

In the days that followed, the controversy surrounding the alleged 'Communist intervention' in the North Down contest would be played out in the letters pages of Northern Ireland's most explicitly Unionist daily newspaper. On Friday 19 June 1987, the *News Letter* published correspondence from a reader who described herself as 'a True Blue Tory from the Home Counties'. Given her political credentials, it might reasonably have been presumed that Mrs Barbara Finney was writing to express support for Kilfedder's caustic remarks after the count in North Down. It would quickly become apparent, however, that her intentions were entirely otherwise. The involvement of those branded 'Communists' was, Mrs Finney argued, completely welcome within the 'broadly based group' that had sought to secure the seat for McCartney. The 'True Blue' reader even went so far as to suggest that the principal publication authored by the alleged subversives was in fact 'the best read of the week'.

This letter prompted by the acrimonious North Down election draws our attention to the existence in the mid-1980s of a rather unlikely group of political bedfellows in Northern Ireland. In the aftermath of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, a popular movement emerged that managed to bring together Stalinists and Thatcherites, among others, in support of the case for 'equal citizenship'. The purpose of this essay is to describe and explain how this most implausible of alliances became, for brief time at least, a pervasive voice in Northern Irish political life.

Stalin and the (Northern) Irish Working Class²

As the political climate in Northern Ireland deteriorated in the late 1960s, the analysis offered by the Irish Communist Organisation (ICO) appeared to share many of the assumptions of mainstream Irish Republicanism. The violence that heralded the onset of the Troubles would, however, soon lead this small Stalinist splinter of the far left to a rather different perspective. Key figures within the ICO—most notably Brendan Clifford—were living in west Belfast when loyalists began attacking nationalist districts in August 1969 and the experience led them to reflect on many of their central political convictions. In particular, the sustained ethnic violence that accompanied the beginning of the conflict shattered the assumption that unionists were mere creatures of British imperialism whose beliefs and identities would simply dissolve in the face of persuasion or pressure.³ This realisation invited 'some serious thinking'⁴ that led the ICO to abandon their erstwhile Republican perspective and to adopt a position that would come to be known as the 'two nations' approach.

The Stalinist grouping offered a materialist analysis suggesting that the uneven development of capitalism had created the conditions for the emergence of two distinct national communities in Ireland. While these national distinctions were principally economic in origin, they found ready cultural expression in the guise of

religious difference. In view of the existence of 'two distinct historical communities', the partition of Ireland should not be seen as an 'imperialist contrivance' but rather as a democratic acknowledgement of social and political realities on the ground. This radical departure from the precepts of Irish Republicanism was made by the ICO within weeks of the onset of the Troubles with a brief sketch of it appearing in the September 1969 edition of their theoretical journal *The Irish Communist*. Over the next two years, the 'two nations' thesis would be developed more fully in a sequence of weighty pamphlets that would prove influential and controversial alike.⁵ The irrevocable shift in the perspective of the ICO would in turn lead them to change their name. In the December 1971 edition of *The Irish Communist*, readers were informed that the grouping would, from now on, be called the British and Irish Communist Organisation (B&ICO).⁶ This telling reincarnation established a precedent that would be repeated many times over. In the quarter century that followed, the B&ICO would assume a seemingly endless sequence of aliases. While the title of the Stalinist splinter would change as necessity or opportunity required, the location of their premises in central Belfast would, over the period in question, remain unchanged. As a consequence, commentators disorientated by the multiple *noms de guerre* adopted by the B&ICO often found it convenient to refer to the group simply as 'Athol Street'.

The name change that occurred in the latter stages of 1971 served notice of the political direction that the Athol Street grouping would take over the next two decades. In adopting a title that combined nationalities often deemed mutually exclusive, the B&ICO acknowledged the Stalinist instruction that workers must transcend national distinctions and unite in common struggle against the state in which they happen to reside. While the grouping considered the fact of partition to have been entirely legitimate, they also considered the form of partition to have been entirely reactionary. The creation of Northern Ireland offered the British state an opportunity to extend to people living there the same entitlements as other citizens of the UK. Westminster had, however, squandered this opportunity in order to govern the fledgling political entity as 'a place apart'. The operation of a devolved parliament merely served to antagonise relations between already mutually hostile national communities. The inevitable outcome of this inappropriate mode of government imposed on Northern Ireland was, the B&ICO insisted, the resumption of political violence that signalled the beginning of the Troubles.

The detrimental effects that flowed from the particular form of the partition settlement were held to have had impacted most gravely upon the Northern Irish working class. An article of faith among writers within the B&ICO fold was that if given the opportunity Catholic and Protestant workers would, over time, have been able to transcend their differences within the wider and more secular environs of the British labour movement. This process of reconciliation had been frustrated by the fact that working-class people in Northern Ireland were only allowed to exist on the margins of the British trade union movement and were not allowed membership of the British Labour Party at all. For the B&ICO, the absolute political imperative was to bring these forms of exclusion to an end in order to forge an alliance between British

and Irish—or at least *Northern* Irish—workers that would advance their interests within the state of which they were all, formally at least, citizens. Over time, this conviction would give rise principally to the distinctive and insistent demand that the British Labour Party begin to organise in Northern Ireland.

The first mention of the prospect of Labour candidates standing for office in the six counties appeared in the 15 May 1976 edition of *Workers' Weekly*, but it was only in the autumn of that year that the idea took hold and became the preoccupation that would for years to come define the B&ICO perspective.⁷ While the activists operating out of Athol Street would gradually come to the understanding that the British Labour Party would only establish constituency organisations in the six counties when they were compelled to do so, it would take an ill-starred loyalist strike to spark them into acting on it.⁸ On 3 May 1977, the United Unionist Action Council (UUAC) began an industrial stoppage designed to pressurise the British government to introduce more draconian security measures against Republicans and to restore devolved government to the region. In advance, the B&ICO had been opposed to the strike which they claimed had been called without 'adequate reason' and with no 'coherent objective' in mind.⁹ Once the stoppage began, however, Athol Street threw their support behind it. This seeming change of heart might perhaps be more accurately read as a characteristically pragmatic attempt to direct the energies summoned by the strike in ways considered progressive. Throughout the ultimately unsuccessful industrial stoppage, B&ICO members distributed copies of an *Ulster Workers' Charter* which issued the integrationist demand that Northern Ireland should be governed as 'an equal and integral part of the United Kingdom' before striking a populist note in denouncing 'IRA terror'. It was claimed that this demand for 'equal citizenship'—a phrase that would come to rather greater prominence a decade later—had secured 'widespread grassroots support' among strikers.¹⁰

The enthusiasm which they claimed had greeted their political agenda evidently boosted the confidence of B&ICO members and sparked a period of renewed political activity. Within two months of the collapse of the UUAC strike, the group had reinvented itself again as the Labour Representation Committee (LRC). The 'Manifesto' of the LRC opened with a predictable preamble detailing why Northern Ireland was ill suited to devolution before moving on to state an objective that was rather less familiar. The purpose of this new pressure group was 'to bring about the activity of the British Labour Party in Ulster in the same way that it is active in every other part of the UK'.¹¹ Within a year, the LRC would be dissolved and recast under the perhaps more authoritative title of the Campaign for Labour Representation (CLR). In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the CLR would provide the principal channel for the considerable energies of the B&ICO.¹² While the socialist credentials of the Athol Street activists ensured that their foremost concern was to persuade the British Labour Party to extend its organisation to Northern Ireland, the specific logic of their integrationist perspective would in time lead them to widen their focus. If Northern Irish people were to enjoy 'equal citizenship' with their counterparts in England, Scotland and Wales, they would need the same opportunity to vote for those who

might aspire to govern the UK. The integrationist case demanded, therefore, not only that the Labour Party accepts members from Northern Ireland but also that the other principal party of government follows suit. The point at which this logic reached its natural conclusion was marked in a publication that appeared in 1984 courtesy of another B&ICO creation. In their pamphlet 'Towards Equal Citizenship', the Integration Group issued the first call for the Conservatives to extend their party organisation to include Northern Ireland.¹³

Over the first decade and half of the Troubles, then, the B&ICO came to represent one of the most distinctive and insistent voices within the volatile political life of Northern Ireland. The seemingly endless sequence of densely argued pamphlets that emerged out of Athol Street would exercise a considerable resonance and would prepare the ground for the emergence for a new generation of revisionist academics. Even commentators deeply hostile to the B&ICO perspective would in time find themselves compelled to acknowledge the substantial contribution of the group to the controversies that attend modern Irish history.¹⁴ While the intellectual impact of the Athol Street was readily apparent, their political significance at this stage was rather less tangible. The agitation of the CLR had admittedly ensured that motions favouring the admission of members from Northern Ireland featured in the agenda of the 1983 annual conference of the British Labour Party.¹⁵ The ease with which the party hierarchy was able to prevent composite 15 actually being discussed, however, suggested that the prospect of Labour candidates running in Northern Irish constituencies remained as distant as ever. Disillusioned at the possibility of political progress, the most influential thinker and prolific author within the Athol Street fold, Brendan Clifford, decided to leave Northern Ireland and had by 1985 settled for another spell in London.¹⁶ Events towards the end of that year would, however, signal a dramatic and unanticipated turn in the political fortunes of the B&ICO. An international agreement signed by the British and Irish governments at Hillsborough Castle on the afternoon of Friday 15 November 1985 would transform the political context in Northern Ireland in a way that would for a time allow the Athol Street group to move from the margins to the centre stage of political life.

The Case for 'Equal Citizenship'

In the 1980s, the political landscape of Northern Ireland would be dominated by the repercussions of the hunger strikes that had seen ten republican prisoners fast until death in pursuit of the reinstatement of 'special category status'. The campaign in support of the prisoners and the widespread trauma occasioned by their deaths accelerated the political turn within the republican movement. In the 1982 Assembly elections, Sinn Féin announced their arrival as a mainstream political force when they secured the support of 10 per cent of the electorate. During the general election the following year, republicans polled more than 100,000 votes and captured their first Westminster seat in modern times. The seemingly inexorable ascent of Sinn Féin inevitably generated considerable alarm among the political establishments in London

and Dublin. Both governments recognised that if the rising tide of republicanism were to be stemmed, more moderate nationalists in Northern Ireland would have to be persuaded that their voices and interests were being recognised. This concern to underwrite the more constitutional modes of Northern Irish nationalism articulated by John Hume of the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) would, in the winter of 1985, be given legal expression in the Anglo-Irish Agreement.¹⁷ The internationally binding treaty signed by Margaret Thatcher and Garrett FitzGerald at Hillsborough Castle signalled that for the first time the Dublin government would have the right to be consulted on the affairs of Northern Ireland. Its advent would arguably represent one of the most profound turning points in recent Northern Irish political history.

It would be difficult to overstate the impact of the Anglo-Irish Agreement on the unionist community in Northern Ireland.¹⁸ The Hillsborough Accord offered a consultative role in the affairs of the region to an Irish government that unionists have traditionally regarded as a treacherous and irredentist foe. The feelings of betrayal and outrage prevalent within the unionist community would assume many forms but would be manifested most visibly on Saturday 23 November 1985 when a crowd of perhaps a quarter of a million people descended upon the City Hall in Belfast to vent their anger. While Unionist opposition to the Anglo-Irish Agreement would be impassioned, prolonged and, occasionally, violent, it would ultimately be to no avail. The structures established under the Hillsborough Accord, crucially, offered no institutions that were susceptible to political pressure or intimidation. As a consequence, for all the outrage expressed and energy expended by the unionist community, the mechanisms of the loathed deal remained obdurately intact. The campaign against the Anglo-Irish Agreement exposed the Unionist mainstream not merely as politically ineffectual but as intellectually feeble also. While the crisis initiated by the Hillsborough Accord seemed to demand new ideas and directions, the principal voices within Unionism were evidently unable to produce any.¹⁹ In the name of unity, the Unionist leadership held to a 'steady course' that appeared to elevate inertia to the status of philosophical principle.²⁰ The political and intellectual crisis of Ulster Unionism was immediately recognised as a singular opportunity by the B&ICO.

In the charged atmosphere summoned by the Anglo-Irish Agreement, many within the unionist community were open to new influences in a way that would have been unthinkable before. The leftists operating out of Athol Street wasted little time in seeking to bring the arguments they had developed over the past decade and a half to a wider and more attentive audience. At the mass rally in Belfast convened eight days after the signing of the Hillsborough Accord, activists distributed the first edition of a new occasional journal, *The Equal Citizen*. In addition, when the House of Commons sat three days after that enormous gathering to discuss the Agreement, MPs were already in possession of a substantial, newly written publication offering the B&ICO perspective on recent developments.²¹ This essay, entitled *Parliamentary Sovereignty*, was the first in a sequence of influential pamphlets in which the key Athol Street

intellectual Brendan Clifford set out to explain the nature of the crisis and how it might be resolved.²²

The interpretation that Clifford advanced sought to depict the Anglo-Irish Agreement as merely a symptom of a much deeper malaise.²³ The principal source of all the political difficulties that faced Northern Ireland was, he argued, the exclusion of the region from the party political culture of the UK. Since partition, the six counties had been suspended in a form of political quarantine with the result that people living there had been subjected to a profoundly unaccountable form of government. According to Clifford, it is the effective competition between political parties that is the guarantor of genuinely democratic governance. Those parties that secure office cannot under normal circumstances afford to behave in a consistently autocratic fashion. Failure to accommodate the feelings and aspirations of citizens would inevitably ensure a shift in electoral preference that would consign the government to the largely ineffectual status of parliamentary opposition. The problem that Northern Ireland had faced, Clifford contested, was that this 'reflex' between government and governed had never existed in the six counties. The exclusion of Northern Irish people from the mainstream British political parties had ensured that voters in the province had been unable to participate in electing the government of the state of which they are nominally citizens. Freed from even the prospect of electoral retribution, the sovereign parliament had been able to govern Northern Ireland in an entirely unaccountable manner.²⁴

The particular reading of the crisis initiated by the Hillsborough Accord prompted Clifford to chart a distinctive political course ahead. If the problems that beset Northern Ireland were to be resolved, Clifford insisted, the region would have to be fully integrated into the party political life of the UK. The advent of 'equal citizenship' would sound the death knell of unaccountable government in the region. Rather than being governed as a 'colonial condominium' or 'Britain's Bantustan',²⁵ Northern Ireland would be embraced as an equal and integral region of the UK. Once Northern Irish people could join and vote for British parties, they would be in a position to bring about those electoral swings that can make the difference between government and opposition. The executive of the day would no longer be able to overlook the wishes of voters in the six counties as such disregard could lead to Ministers being swept out of office. Political initiatives such as the Anglo-Irish Agreement that proved deeply unpopular among the Northern Irish electorate would simply become impossible.

The realisation of the 'equal citizenship' project would, Clifford continued, initiate a complete transformation of political life in Northern Ireland. The stunted and sectarian nature of politics in the region was the outcome, Clifford insisted, of its exclusion from the wider and more secular party political culture of the British state.²⁶ If the Conservative and Labour parties were to run for election in the six counties, there would be an opportunity for Northern Irish people to overcome their existing ethno-religious distinctions and begin to embrace political identities other than those conventionally designated by the terms 'unionist' and 'nationalist'.²⁷ Individuals from different confessional backgrounds would begin to realise their shared interests and to

collaborate in their pursuit. In time, the ethnoreligious disputes that have traditionally consumed the public realm in the six counties would recede and the principal fault line of Northern Irish political life would come to centre on the 'real' issues associated with social class.²⁸

While the arguments featured in the writings of Clifford had existed on the margins for a decade or more, the crisis signalled by the Anglo-Irish Agreement enabled them to reach a much larger and more appreciative audience.²⁹ It would soon become apparent that the 'equal citizenship' project exercised a particular appeal among some of those middle-class unionists whose interests and outlook had changed profoundly since the dissolution of Stormont.³⁰ While the fiscal benevolence of 'direct rule' had bestowed considerable affluence upon the unionist middle classes,³¹ its distinctly autocratic form had at the same time left them politically vulnerable.³² The potential gravity of their position had of course recently been starkly underlined by events at Hillsborough Castle. In the febrile political environment summoned by the Anglo-Irish Agreement, the ideal of 'electoral integration' appealed to elements of the unionist middle classes precisely because it appeared to resolve the gnawing contradictions that defined their experience since the fall of Stormont. The advent of equal citizenship would, after all, have ensured that direct rule became not only permanent but also accountable. It would, in other words, have enabled the middle-class unionists to continue to enjoy the appreciable material benefits of their dependence on the British state while allowing them to avoid its now painfully apparent political costs.³³

If the strategy mapped out in Athol Street appeared tailor-made for the unionist middle classes, that was perhaps not entirely coincidental. When the crisis over the Anglo-Irish Agreement broke, the seasoned activists in the B&ICO were keenly aware of the particular elements of Northern Irish society that might, in the first instance at least, be most amenable to the project of 'equal citizenship'.³⁴ In the spring of 1986, the Stalinist splinter adopted another persona with the explicit intention of tapping into this potential body of support.

The Campaign for Equal Citizenship

The most prominent of all the many front organisations associated with the B&ICO was conceived in the rather unlikely setting of one of the more affluent districts of London. When a parliamentary by-election was called in Fulham for 10 April 1986, the Athol Street grouping decided to run a candidate to promote the cause of 'equal citizenship'. The academic economist and B&ICO member Boyd Black stood in the constituency demanding 'Democratic Rights for Northern Ireland'.³⁵ Those canvassing in Fulham were in the main at pains to emphasise that the purpose of the campaign was not to win votes—an astute move given that only 98 would be secured—but rather to bring attention to the exclusion of Northern Irish people from the British political parties. Perhaps the most important outcome of the intervention in Fulham was that it brought together experienced figures in the B&ICO and those younger people from

mainstream Unionist politics that had come to London to canvas.³⁶ This unusual alliance would prompt the formation in late March 1986 of a new pressure group entitled the Campaign for Equal Citizenship (CEC) for Northern Ireland.³⁷ Over the next two years, the CEC would assume considerable prominence in Northern Ireland and in the process bring the arguments formulated by the B&ICO to a much wider audience than hitherto. The high public profile enjoyed by the pressure group owed a great deal to the recruitment of the prominent figure of McCartney. In the early days of the CEC, the barrister and Unionist politician acted as the principal spokesperson for the organisation before being elected President at its first annual general meeting held on 1 November 1986.³⁸ A charismatic but abrasive individual presumed to have future ambitions to lead the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP), McCartney would at various stages prove to be both an asset and a liability to the pressure group.³⁹

In his finely detailed and in part first-hand account of the CEC, Arthur Aughey⁴⁰ noted that there were from the outset two rather different, though not entirely discrete, understandings of what the organisation should stand for and the political lineage that it should claim. The first of these cast the CEC as a 'civil rights' movement that was the inheritor of the demand that nationalists had issued in Northern Ireland in the 1960s for 'British rights for British citizens'.⁴¹ The second regarded the campaign as an expression of 'real Unionism' that, by seeking the admission of Northern Irish people into the party political life of the UK, assumed the mantle of Sir Edward Carson. Most observers of political discourse in Northern Ireland would have considered these two readings of the meaning of 'equal citizenship' to be entirely incompatible, and indeed the tension between them would in time become a major line of fissure within the CEC. In the early stages, however, the 'civil rights' and 'real Unionism' arguments both featured prominently in how the pressure group sought to present itself. The first major public address to the CEC by McCartney illustrated this coexistence particularly well.

While the initial public meeting of the pressure group drew a substantial crowd of 'more than 100 people',⁴² the second would prove to be a rather more ambitious affair. On 3 July 1986, an audience of '700-plus'⁴³ turned up at the Ulster Hall in Belfast to hear McCartney deliver a speech entitled *We Have a Vision*. The text of the address sought to cast the CEC as an advocate of both 'civil rights' and 'real Unionism', and was perhaps unique in referencing in the same breath the perhaps unlikely pairing of Sir Edward Carson and Martin Luther King Junior. While the tone of the speech was inclusive and idealistic, the details of the meeting had already disclosed which of the two interpretations of 'equal citizenship' had been afforded primacy. The text had, after all, been delivered by a prominent member of the UUP who was regarded as a potential contender for the leadership of what was then still the principal political organisation in Northern Ireland. In choosing McCartney as its public face, the CEC had in effect located itself within the bounds of Unionist politics. The sense that the ambitions expressed in *We Have a Vision* were essentially 'Unionist' concerns was heightened further by the setting in which they were aired. The Ulster Hall in the centre of Belfast has a cherished place in Unionist iconography due, in particular, to a

speech delivered there by Sir Edward Carson at the height of the Home Rule Crisis in 1912. The very deliberate choice⁴⁴ of this 'historic' venue for its first major public outing suggested that the CEC had at an early stage decided to cast itself primarily as a voice for 'real Unionism'.

The initial course charted by the pressure group—'to be *in* but not truly *of* the politics of traditional Ulster unionism'⁴⁵—was prompted at least in part by a pragmatic reading of the existing field of political possibility.⁴⁶ While the CEC might well have chosen at this early stage to devote all of its energies to courting opinion among what its member were wont to call 'the parties of state', this approach was unlikely to bear fruit, at least in the immediate term. The British Labour Party was after all at the time committed to a policy of Irish unity by consent and was therefore sternly opposed to the political agenda of electoral integration. This opposition would become even more entrenched in 1987 when the devoutly nationalist Kevin McNamara assumed the position of Shadow Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.⁴⁷ The stance that the Conservative Party adopted on the issue of 'equal citizenship' would prove to be rather more nuanced. While there were some senior Conservatives that were sympathetic to what might be broadly termed an 'integrationist' agenda,⁴⁸ the hierarchy of the party was in the main wary of the prospect of recognising constituency organisations in Northern Ireland. Internal memoranda from the period reveal that Conservative Central Office was stoutly opposed to the prospect of standing for office in the region as it was felt that this would yield few if any electoral gains and would scupper the possibility of restoring the now strained but historically cordial relations with the UUP.⁴⁹

A further alternative strategy that the CEC might in principle have pursued from the outset would have been to cast itself as an inclusive 'civil rights' movement keen to incorporate a broad swathe of the nationalist community. It was readily apparent, however, that the prospects of the pressure group winning the hearts and minds of a substantial body of nationalists—in the short term at least—would be slim. While the republican movement was inevitably hostile to the cause of 'equal citizenship', even more moderate voices within the nationalist tradition proved to be no less so. Denis Haughey of the SDLP, for instance, dismissed the call for Conservative and Labour candidates to run for office in the six counties as a 'thoroughly dishonest attempt to further the aims of extreme unionism' that would 'deny the political and national rights of the minority in Northern Ireland forever'.⁵⁰

Those within the electoral integrationist movement who genuinely wished to forge a 'civil rights' movement that could transcend the established divisions of Northern Irish public life were faced then with a monstrously difficult task that was unlikely to yield results for the foreseeable future. In contrast, there was a rather greater prospect of winning swiftly to the cause of 'real Unionism' substantial elements of a Protestant community disorientated by recent political events. The agenda advanced by electoral integrationists exercised a certain resonance among those middle-class unionists who had been stirred from their slumber by the Anglo-Irish Agreement and whose traditional home had been the UUP. It was entirely predictable then that the initial

direction of the CEC would be to seek to make advances among the ranks of the principal voice of Unionism. As Aughey⁵¹ has noted, there 'was always something quixotic' about this particular strategy. The ultimate objective of electoral integrationists was, after all, to create the conditions that would see local parties preoccupied with the traditional concerns of 'constitutional issues' replaced by British parties dealing with the rather more modern fare of 'real' politics. In seeking to convert the UUP to their cause, the CEC was in effect inviting the party to collude in its own dissolution. The inevitable resistance that would greet the case for electoral integration would become all too apparent when the traditional voice of Ulster Unionism held its annual conference on 8 November 1986.⁵²

The principal controversy that weekend centred upon two motions advocating that the party adopt the principles of 'equal citizenship' submitted by McCartney and the North Down association of which he was a member. In a heated session from which the media had been excluded,⁵³ the newly elected President of the CEC moved the twin motions with a speech in which he delivered a withering appraisal of the UUP leadership whom he claimed had 'neither vision nor policy'.⁵⁴ The hierarchy of the party responded by having a number of influential figures, including the widely revered Enoch Powell,⁵⁵ table an alternative proposal that any discussion about the future should be shelved until the loathed Anglo-Irish Agreement had been defeated. While the blocking amendment tabled by the UUP leadership was carried, the margin of victory—199 to 153⁵⁶—was far from overwhelming and suggested that there was perhaps within the party a constituency that at the very least wished to have a discussion about the ideas that the CEC had recently brought to the fore of public debate.

The defeat at the UUP annual conference appeared if anything merely to have strengthened McCartney's ambition and resolve. Over the next few months, the public profile of the CEC President would become ever more prominent and his comments on the party leadership would become even more caustic. The hierarchy of the UUP increasingly regarded McCartney as a source of division and, by February 1987, had already agreed to take moves to deal with him.⁵⁷ On Monday 18 May 1987, the outspoken barrister appeared before a disciplinary committee of the party. The multiple charges levelled at McCartney fell into two main categories.⁵⁸ The first addressed what Aughey, as we saw earlier, termed the 'quixotic' nature of McCartney's twin roles as CEC President and prominent Ulster Unionist. The disciplinary committee made the entirely logical case that the activities of the pressure group were designed to invite other parties to compete for votes in Northern Ireland and hence were detrimental to the interests of the UUP. The second broad allegation against McCartney centred on a whole plethora of critical comments that he had directed towards the leadership of Ulster Unionism. Among the many colourful quotations cited at the meeting were his claim that party policy was being 'decided at the urinals of the House of Commons' and his allegation that the UUP, in league with all the other local parties, was content with 'Lilliputian sectarian politics where they can crow over their own little dung hills'. The venom and frequency of McCartney's invective had

offered a great deal of ammunition to his many enemies within the UUP and on the day after the disciplinary hearing the inevitable announcement came that he had been expelled from the party.

If the case for terminating McCartney's membership had not been deemed sufficiently overwhelming already, the UUP might have considered adding another item to the charge sheet drawn against him. In the wake of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, the two main Unionist parties had agreed that in the interests of unity they would not stand against one another at elections. This electoral pact had been extended to include the only sitting independent Unionist MP, James Kilfedder. On the evening of 15 May 1987, the North Down Ulster Unionist Association voted by a margin of 39 to 29 to select McCartney as its candidate to stand against Kilfedder in the forthcoming Westminster election.⁵⁹ As the decision to expel McCartney was already a foregone conclusion, this deliberate breach of the Unionist electoral pact did not alter his circumstances. The outcome of the selection meeting would, however, have considerable repercussions for every other party member in the constituency. On 26 May 1987, the UUP announced that it had decided to expel the North Down association *en masse*.⁶⁰ This was a remarkably rare instance of decisive action by a party hierarchy whose inertia had been compounded by the traumas visited by the Anglo-Irish Agreement.⁶¹

Expulsion from the UUP evidently did little to diminish McCartney's considerable political aspirations and he announced immediately that he would run as an independent 'Real Unionist' candidate on an 'equal citizenship' platform.⁶² The team that gathered to support McCartney was by far the largest of the three candidates running in North Down, and one journalist noted that the barrister had attracted an 'eager, almost fanatical, band of workers'.⁶³ The zeal of the 'Real Unionist' campaign team derived in part from the fact that at its centre was a group of Athol Street stalwarts.⁶⁴ The presence of 'Communists' on the leafy avenues of a constituency often referred to as Northern Ireland's 'gold coast' would prove one of many sources of controversy. While elections in North Down had traditionally tended towards the genteel, the 1987 contest would produce a whole series of lurid allegations among the three candidates. The sitting MP claimed to have been the victim of a 'Nazi smear campaign' and alleged that he had been verbally and physically threatened by 'people from outside the area wielding sticks'.⁶⁵ John Cushnahan of the Alliance Party, moreover, reported that two men in a car had attempted to run him down one evening when he was putting up election posters.⁶⁶

As tempers began to fray, the combustible figure of McCartney was to be heard making claims about the imminent success of his campaign.⁶⁷ When the polls closed, however, this confidence would quickly prove to have been misplaced. North Down had seen the third largest swing of the 1987 elections anywhere in the UK but Kilfedder had still managed to retain his seat, albeit with a vastly reduced majority of around 4000 votes.⁶⁸ While the outcome of the 'Real Unionist' campaign would ultimately prove a disappointment, there was much from which the CEC might have drawn comfort. In particular, the contest in North Down had drawn to the standard of 'equal

citizenship', a substantial body of activists who transcended political distinctions often deemed insurmountable—staunch Unionists canvassed with erstwhile Republicans, Stalinists rubbed shoulders with Thatcherites, Gay Rights activists found common cause with the more genteel elements of the unionist middle classes. While the diversity that sheltered under its umbrella was often vaunted as the principal attribute of the CEC, it would also prove to be its undoing. In the year that followed the unity and energy of the North Down campaign, the differences always latent within the pressure group would begin to tear it apart.⁶⁹

Schisms within the CEC

The principal fault line that opened up within the CEC inevitably mapped the tensions between the two principal centres of power within the organisation, namely the Athol Street grouping on the one hand and McCartney and his supporters on the other. The small band of long-standing B&ICO activists—now operating within the Ingram Society⁷⁰—contested that McCartney had come to exercise too much influence within the pressure group and was intent on reducing its executive committee to a state of 'obedience to his sovereign wish'.⁷¹ One incident that rankled in particular occurred on 20 November 1987 when the CEC President used a press conference to announce that the group planned to invite a range of figures from civil society to discuss possible directions for political progress and that a record would be kept of those who declined to attend. The proposed meeting came as a surprise to other members of the executive who had not discussed, let alone approved, the idea. What came to be known as the 'blacklist' statement was an incident widely cited by those who felt that the President of the CEC exercised excessive authority over the organisation and that his ego was out of control.

The Athol Street grouping held further that McCartney had used his influence to take the CEC in an unpalatable ideological direction. The key players within the B&ICO had endorsed the 'Real Unionist' persona that the pressure group had adopted in its early days. The experience of the 1987 Westminster elections seemed, however, to produce a change of heart. While the Athol Street sect would in public declare the North Down campaign to have been a moral victory,⁷² they knew in private that what mattered most was that it had been a political defeat.⁷³ The B&ICO activists felt that if the CEC were to make a genuine impact on the political culture of Northern Ireland it would have to abandon the discourse of 'Real Unionism' and recast itself solely as an inclusive campaign for 'civil rights'. A rally held a few weeks after the disappointment in North Down offered an opportunity for the CEC to chart a rather different course. While the Athol Street group felt that a meeting held in the Ulster Hall on 2 July 1987 to mark the first anniversary of the pressure group should be used to make the case for the British parties organising in Northern Ireland as a civil right, McCartney seemingly had other ideas. On the night, McCartney used the platform to denounce the cross-party Unionist Task Force on the grounds that its anticipated recommendation of power-sharing devolution represented a form of 'capitulation'.⁷⁴ In the eyes of the B&ICO, McCartney had squandered a golden opportunity to move beyond the

abiding concerns of local politics and had instead 'immersed the CEC in the squabbles of the Unionist Family'.⁷⁵ The conviction that the controversial barrister had taken the pressure group in a direction that was 'too Unionist' was compounded by a series of subsequent events. In particular, the Athol Street contingent were outraged in March 1988 when McCartney appeared to suggest that the entire Catholic population was 'morally culpable' for the deaths of two off-duty British soldiers at a Republican funeral in west Belfast.⁷⁶

Those who found themselves on the other side of this increasingly acrimonious dispute would inevitably offer a radically different interpretation.⁷⁷ Supporters of McCartney would suggest that the allegations issued from Athol Street merely represented a petulant response to the disappointment of having invested a great deal of political capital in the North Down campaign without the desired return. The CEC President himself would contest that the criticisms levelled at him were simply expressions of spite from activists who had lost control of an organisation they had been instrumental in founding.⁷⁸ While the origins of the fissures within the pressure group were open to dispute, their impact was rather more clear-cut. In the closing months of 1987, meetings of the executive committee of the CEC became increasingly rancorous affairs. The minutes for 21 December 1987, for instance, record McCartney storming from the room when the B&ICO member David Morrison attempted, unsuccessfully, to pass a motion of censure against him. As relations deteriorated within the CEC, a number of pivotal figures resigned from the organisation. The 'blacklist' statement in November prompted the immediate resignation of the most influential B&ICO intellectual, Brendan Clifford.⁷⁹ In the spring of the following year, the two principal office bearers of the CEC followed suit. On 12 March 1988, a press release from the CEC announced that McCartney had resigned as President and Dr Laurence Kennedy had stood down as Chairman. These resignations would prove to be simply tactical manoeuvres. Both McCartney and Kennedy evidently intended to return their positions once they had been able to sideline their critics.

It would soon become apparent that the B&ICO harboured more or less identical ambitions. As the divisions within the CEC became ever more acrimonious in late 1987 and early 1988, the Athol Street group remained uncharacteristically discreet about the whole affair. Indeed, in advance of the *News Letter* running an article that made public the splits within the CEC on 4 March 1988,⁸⁰ only one piece criticising McCartney had in fact appeared in their journal *Workers' Weekly*.⁸¹ The discretion exercised by the notoriously vitriolic B&ICO activists reflected their concern to hold the organisation together in advance of resuming control of it at some stage in the near future. The competing ambitions of the two principal factions within the CEC would come to a head at a heated extraordinary general meeting convened on 18 June 1988. Among the matters before the conference was a motion from the Athol Street grouping demanding that McCartney be censured on the grounds that he had 'moulded the CEC around his own personality' and that his resignation had damaged the organisation in a manner that needed to be acknowledged. That the motion was easily defeated revealed the balance of forces in the room and this was confirmed when the

meeting turned to consider the competitors for the position of President. In a last ditch attempt to recapture the organisation they had founded, the B&ICO had decided to run Mark Langhammer against McCartney for the leadership of the CEC. When the ballots were counted, it emerged that the former President had been returned by a margin of 'almost four to one'.⁸² The re-election of McCartney with such a ringing endorsement clearly signalled that he was the ultimate victor in the bitter disputes within the CEC. The B&ICO members present reacted angrily by attempting to 'wreck'⁸³ the meeting before departing to sever all remaining ties to the pressure group.

Inevitably, Athol Street marked this parting of the ways by forming yet another front organisation. In fact, on this particular occasion they spawned a further two. The Catholic Committee of the CEC was formally intended to chart the descent of the pressure group into 'Unionist fundamentalism' but in practice seemed to be designed purely to cause embarrassment to those with whom the B&ICO had until recently worked so closely.⁸⁴ The Institute for Representative Government, on the other hand, was a rather more sober affair, established to perform the intellectual labour necessary to advance the cause of 'equal citizenship'.⁸⁵

The Demise of the CEC

While the blood letting of the summer of 1988 was certainly damaging to the CEC, it was far from inevitable that it would prove fatal. The B&ICO activists who were now operating, among other guises, as the Ingram Society may well have provided the intellectual impetus for the pressure group but they represented only a small fraction of a total membership that had grown to around 750 people.⁸⁶ It was entirely possible, therefore, that the CEC would survive the departure of the Athol Street contingent. The subsequent swift decline of the pressure group would, ironically, owe rather less to the machinations of the clandestine B&ICO than to those of a rather more 'respectable' element that had been drawn to the cause of 'equal citizenship'. While the CEC contained among its ranks people from a range of backgrounds and with a range of objectives, its principal appeal was, as intimated earlier, among certain elements of the unionist middle classes. These individuals would, in the main, have been 'natural' Tories had they resided in any other region of the UK. It was their attempt to bring Conservative politics to Northern Ireland that would ultimately sound the death knell of the CEC as an influential organisation.⁸⁷

In the spring of 1988, figures within the CEC such as Chairman Dr Laurence Kennedy began to focus more specifically on the demand that Northern Irish people should be admitted to the Conservative Party. In the following 18 months, the inexperienced and often naive individuals who formed the Campaign for Conservative Representation would achieve a great deal more than the vastly experienced and at times astute activists who sustained the CLR had managed over the previous decade. In a slick campaign that emphasised their impeccable bourgeois credentials,⁸⁸ those calling for the Conservatives to organise in Northern Ireland quickly gathered support among the

grass roots of the party. While the demand that Northern Irish people be allowed to join was declined in November 1988 by the executive of the Conservative Party,⁸⁹ the growing popularity of the argument among the rank and file would become fully apparent the following year. At their annual conference on 10 October 1989, the Tories voted overwhelmingly to extend their organisation to Northern Ireland.⁹⁰ Although affiliation had clearly been a remarkable political achievement, the speed and ease with which it had been secured served perhaps to raise expectations and to cloud judgement. The Northern Ireland Conservatives seemed to believe they were on the verge of a major electoral breakthrough, a complacency that was nurtured in part by opinion polls suggesting that they might even become the principal political force in the region.⁹¹ The support for the Tories that was apparently latent within the Northern Irish electorate would, however, never fully materialise. The high water mark of the Ulster Tories came in the Westminster elections of 1992 when they secured 44,608 votes or 10 per cent of the ballots cast in the 11 constituencies in which they had stood.⁹² While this performance might otherwise have been deemed respectable, the failure of Dr Kennedy to win the principal target of North Down dealt a devastating blow to a fledgling political movement seeking to establish itself as a credible electoral force. Within a year, the Northern Ireland Conservatives had been humiliated at the local government elections and had ceased to exist in all but name. An evidently embittered Dr Kennedy made public his conviction that the local Tories had been crippled by a lack of support from the hierarchy of the party and announced that he was leaving political life.⁹³

Among the various casualties of the ill-starred project to bring Conservative politics to Northern Ireland was the pressure group from which it had emerged. In the late 1980s, many of the middle-class unionists who had provided the bulk of the support for the CEC allowed their subscriptions to expire and pursued their political instincts by joining one of the Conservative associations appearing in the more affluent parts of Belfast and its hinterland. As membership began to dwindle and its public profile evaporated, the CEC chose to recast its role from campaigning organisation to 'think tank'. The articles that appeared in *The Equal Citizen*—a title inherited from the original journal produced by the B&ICO—became longer and more scholarly, and public meetings of the pressure group became increasingly rare. The ignominious decline of the CEC was made painfully clear at the annual general meeting of the organisation held in November 1992. At the first such occasion held six years earlier, some '150 delegates'⁹⁴ had come along to hear McCartney enthuse about the prospects of a new political movement whose star was clearly in the ascendant. That the 1992 annual general meeting was the only CEC gathering that year and that only 17 people attended to discuss its future underscored just how far the once vibrant organisation had fallen. The figure at the helm of the pressure group had remained unchanged during its swift decline but it would become apparent that McCartney no longer regarded the organisation as a fitting vehicle for his considerable political ambitions. The President turned up pointedly late to the meeting and made little effort to disguise his disinterest in being there before suggesting that it was time to wind up the CEC.⁹⁵ The motion to terminate the organisation was in fact defeated but the decision to

persevere without McCartney was perhaps testimony more to sentiment than to judgement. The pressure group would remain in existence for a further three years but would serve little discernible political purpose. At a meeting on 6 November 1995, the few remaining stalwarts bowed to the inevitable and agreed to disband the CEC and to distribute its assets to three groupings considered to be politically sympathetic.⁹⁶

The campaign for 'equal citizenship' that had flourished in the late 1980s ran aground, therefore, in the early 1990s. By the middle of decade, the Northern Ireland Conservatives had effectively ceased to exist and the once vibrant CEC had barely been able to summon the energy required to wind itself up. The demise of the 'equal citizenship' project found one further, perhaps rather more significant, expression at that time. The electoral integrationist project represented, in part perhaps, an attempt to summon the 'idealism of imagination' that might enable unionists to repair their damaged relations with the British state.⁹⁷ It would become quickly apparent, however, that neither party to this notoriously 'loveless marriage' was capable of resolving their differences.⁹⁸ While unionists would, time and again, prove unwilling to cast their votes for Conservative candidates, the hierarchy of the party was quite content to allow its own constituency organisations in Northern Ireland to 'wither on the vine'. There can be few indices that illustrate more graphically the strained relations between the unionist community and the British state than the string of lost deposits registered by Conservative candidates running for election in the six counties.

The fate of the 'equal citizenship' movement might be said to record then what may well prove to be the last major attempt on the part of unionists to imagine a future in which they would be bound as equals into the full embrace of the UK. The closing off of this particular avenue might well have represented an essential prerequisite for the rather more seismic political developments that were unfolding at the same time. Precisely as the electoral integrationist project was being laid to rest, the conditions of the possibility of political progress in Northern Ireland were being put in place. The advent of the 'peace process' would signal that events were moving in a direction that would require the British political establishment not to foster the potential sameness of the region—as the advocates of 'equal citizenship' demanded—but to acknowledge and ultimately institutionalise its actual difference. It was readily apparent that the political future for Northern Ireland would not entail electoral integration but consociational devolution.⁹⁹ In a series of valedictory articles published in *the Northern Star*—the successor to the long-running *Workers' Weekly*—over a 12-month period spanning 1994 and 1995,¹⁰⁰ the chief Athol Street intellectual Brendan Clifford acknowledged how political circumstances had changed in recent years. The case for 'equal citizenship' could no longer be realised 'within the sphere of practical politics', and those who had advanced it over the past two decades would simply have to 'let it go'.¹⁰¹ Given that he was the individual who had originally formulated the electoral integrationist argument and had worked most assiduously to bring it to a wider audience, Clifford was arguably best placed to declare that it was an ideal whose time had passed. With this judgement, the B&ICO intellectual drew the curtain down on a movement that had created many remarkable alliances and had represented arguably one of the more compelling subplots in the overwhelmingly miserable narrative that was the Northern Irish Troubles.

Acknowledgements

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Notes

- [1] 'Kilfedder Lashes Out in Victory Speech', *County Down Spectator*, June 18, 1987.
- [2] This is an amendment of the title of one of the [British and Irish Communist Organisation's](#) most strident pamphlets, *Stalin and the Irish Working Class*.
- [3] *The Northern Star* 9, no. 9, September 1995, 9.
- [4] *Workers' Weekly* 1, no. 5, May 5, 1972, 1.
- [5] [Irish Communist Organisation](#), *The Birth of Ulster Unionism*; [Irish Communist Organisation](#), *On the Democratic Validity*; and [Irish Communist Organisation](#), *The Two Irish Nations*.
- [6] *The Irish Communist* 72, December 1971, 2.
- [7] *Ibid.*, 2, no. 110, September 18, 1976; 2, no. 111, September 25, 1976; and 2, no. 113, October 9, 1976.
- [8] *The Northern Star* 9, no. 9, September 1995, 10.
- [9] *Workers' Weekly* 2, no. 140, April 30, 1977, 1–3.
- [10] *Ibid.*, 2, no. 141, May 7, 1977; 2, no. 142, May 14, 1977, 4.
- [11] *Ibid.*, 2, no. 150, July 9, 1977, 3–4.
- [12] [British and Irish Communist Organisation](#), *Labour in Ulster*.
- [13] [The Integration Group](#), *Towards Equal Citizenship*, 9–10.
- [14] [McGarry and O'Leary](#), *Explaining Northern Ireland*, 138; and [Whyte](#), *Interpreting Northern Ireland*, 183.
- [15] *Workers' Weekly* 2, no. 455, October 7, 1983.
- [16] *The Northern Star* 9, no. 3, March 1995, 6.
- [17] [Dixon](#), *Northern Ireland*, 184–209.
- [18] [Walker](#), *A History of the Ulster Unionist Party*, 233.
- [19] [Cochrane](#), *Unionist Politics*; and [Porter](#), *Rethinking Unionism*, 6–11.
- [20] [O'Malley](#), *Northern Ireland*, 37.
- [21] *The Equal Citizen* 8, September–October 1986, 3.
- [22] [Clifford](#), *Parliamentary Sovereignty and Northern Ireland*; [Clifford](#), *Parliamentary Despotism*; [Clifford](#), *Government without Opposition*; and [Clifford](#), *The Road to Nowhere*.
- [23] *The Equal Citizen* 5, March–April 1986, 1.
- [24] *Ibid.*
- [25] *The Equal Citizen* 9, January 1987, 4.
- [26] [Clifford](#), *The Road to Nowhere*, 1–3.
- [27] *A Belfast Magazine*, April–May 1988, 6.
- [28] [Clifford](#), *Parliamentary Sovereignty and Northern Ireland*, 13.
- [29] [O'Dowd](#), 'New Unionism'; and [O'Dowd](#), 'Constituting Division, Impeding Agreement'.
- [30] [Coulter](#), 'Direct Rule'; and [Coulter](#), 'The Culture of Contentment'.
- [31] [Breen](#), 'Middle Classes'; [McGovern and Shirlow](#), 'Counter-Insurgency', 127–152; [Gudgin and Roper](#), *The Northern Ireland Economy*, 20; [McGarry and O'Leary](#), *Explaining Northern Ireland*, 295–296; [Cebulla and Smyth](#), 'Industrial Collapse'; [Birrell](#), *Direct Rule*, 155; [Byrne](#), *Economic Assistance*, 63–64; [Coulter](#), *Contemporary Northern Irish Society*, 17–19; and [Farrington and Walker](#), 'Ideological Content', 17–19.
- [32] [Bew and Patterson](#), 'Unionism'; and [Walker](#), *A History of the Ulster Unionist Party*, 143–145.
- [33] [Ruane and Todd](#), *The Dynamics of Conflict*, 59.
- [34] *The Northern Star* 9, no. 1, January 1995, 7–8.

- [35] 'Loyalist for UK By-Election', *News Letter*, March 17, 1986, 1.
- [36] *The Northern Star* 9, no. 3, March 1995, 6.
- [37] 'Pact "Symptom of Political Malaise"', *News Letter*, March 31, 1986, 8.
- [38] Ibid. 'NIO Accused of "Keeping Ulster Divided"', November 3, 1986, 13.
- [39] [Cochrane](#), *Unionist Politics*, 101; and [Farrington](#), 'Ulster Unionism and the Irish Historiography Debate', 255.
- [40] [Aughey](#), *Under Siege*, 146–165.
- [41] *The Equal Citizen* 3, December 22, 1985, 4.
- [42] 'Move for Unity is Stepped Up', *News Letter*, May 15, 1986, 3.
- [43] Ibid. 'Support Boost for Equality Backers', July 5, 1986, 6; "Political Prison" Warning Sounded', *Belfast Telegraph*, July 4, 1986, 13.
- [44] Peter Brooke of the CEC stated: 'We have chosen the Ulster Hall because of the historic importance of the issues we are raising', *News Letter*, July 3, 1986, 16.
- [45] [Aughey](#), *Under Siege*, 148.
- [46] Ibid., 147.
- [47] [Campaign for Labour Representation](#), *McNamara's Ban*.
- [48] [Cunningham](#), 'Conservative Dissidents and the Irish Question'.
- [49] [Conservative Research Department](#), 'Confidential: The Implications of the Establishment'; and [Conservative Research Department](#), 'Confidential: The Implications of Recognising North Down'.
- [50] [Aughey](#), *Under Siege*, 158.
- [51] Ibid., 162.
- [52] [Walker](#), *A History of the Ulster Unionist Party*, 238–239.
- [53] 'Unionist Gag Row', *News Letter*, November 8, 1986, 1–2.
- [54] Robert McCartney, *Speech at the Ulster Unionist Party Conference*, Forum Hotel, November 8, 1986, 1.
- [55] [Corthorn](#), 'Enoch Powell'.
- [56] 'Molyneux Demands Unity in Party Policy Battle', *News Letter*, November 10, 1986, 12–13.
- [57] [Cochrane](#), *Unionist Politics*, 221.
- [58] 'Victory Pledge', *News Letter*, May 20, 1987, 1–2.
- [59] Ibid. 'McCartney Blow to Poll Pact', May 16, 1986, 1–2; 'OUP Rebel to Stand', *Belfast Telegraph*, May 16, 1987, 1.
- [60] 'Rebels Ditched', *News Letter*, May 27, 1987, 1–2.
- [61] [Farrington](#), *Ulster Unionism and the Peace Process*, 69–71.
- [62] 'McCartney Launches into Campaign Attack', *News Letter*, May 19, 1987, 9; 'No New Party: QC', *Belfast Telegraph*, May 20, 1987, 1, 3.
- [63] 'Triangular Battle for a Square Deal', *News Letter*, June 6, 1987, 9.
- [64] *The Northern Star* 9, nos. 6–7, June–July 1995, 6.
- [65] 'Kilfedder Hits Out Over "Nazi Smear Campaign"', *News Letter*, June 6, 1987, 7; 'Allegations Abound in Election Race', *County Down Spectator*, June 4, 1987, 1.
- [66] 'Cushnahan Dodges Speeding Car Peril', *News Letter*, June 11, 1987, 8.
- [67] Ibid. 'Triangular Battle for a Square Deal', June 6, 1987, 9.
- [68] [Aughey](#), *Under Siege*, 164. Kilfedder's majority in 1987 was 3953. In 1983, the only previous Westminster election in which McCartney had stood against him, the distance between the two candidates was 14,600 votes.
- [69] [Farrington](#), *Ulster Unionism and the Peace Process*, 64.
- [70] *Workers' Weekly* 2, no. 675, March 19, 1988, 2–3.
- [71] Ibid., 2, no. 677, April 2, 1988, 3.
- [72] The front-page headline of the next (August 1987) edition of *the Equal Citizen*, for instance, declared 'North Down Success!'.

- [73] Aughey, *Under Siege*, 165.
- [74] 'Secret Deal Claims Made by McCartney', *News Letter*, July 3, 1987, 9; 'Unionist Deal Claim is Denied', *Belfast Telegraph*, July 3, 1987, 4.
- [75] *Workers' Weekly* 2, no. 675, March 19, 1988, 2.
- [76] *Ibid.*, 2, no. 676, March 26, 1988, 2.
- [77] Wilson, 'Sect behind CEC Split'.
- [78] 'Campaign Split Over McCartney "Blacklist"', *News Letter*, March 4, 1987, 10.
- [79] Clifford's letter of resignation was noted in the minutes of the CEC executive committee meeting held on 30 November 1987.
- [80] 'Campaign Split Over McCartney "Blacklist"', *News Letter*, March 4, 1987, 10.
- [81] *Workers' Weekly* 2, no. 666, January 16, 1988, 2.
- [82] 'Setback for Equality Group', *News Letter*, June 20, 1987, 1–2.
- [83] This was the term used by Boyd Black—a B&ICO member from 1972 to 1988—in an interview with the author.
- [84] *Workers' Weekly* 2, no. 690, July 2, 1988, 6.
- [85] Institute for Representative Government, *Ending the Political Vacuum*; and Institute for Representative Government, *Representational Politics*.
- [86] This membership estimate appeared in the minutes of a 'steering committee' meeting held on 26 October 1987.
- [87] Coulter, 'Peering in from the Window Ledge of the Union'.
- [88] *The Northern Star* 1, no. 18, November 5, 1988, 4.
- [89] *Ibid.*, 1, no. 19, November 12, 1988, 1.
- [90] Cunningham, 'Conservative Dissidents'; and O'Leary, 'The Conservative Stewardship'.
- [91] Stringer and Robinson, *Social Attitudes in Northern Ireland*, 192.
- [92] Coulter, 'The Origins of the Northern Ireland Conservatives'.
- [93] McGarry and O'Leary, *Explaining Northern Ireland*, 312.
- [94] 'NIO Accused of "Keeping Ulster Divided"', *News Letter*, November 3, 1986, 13.
- [95] These comments derive from the author having attended the meeting as an observer.
- [96] Letter from outgoing Treasurer Barbara Finney to CEC members, 10 November 1995. The assets of 'approximately £3, 300' were distributed between the *Cadogan Group* of unionist intellectuals, *Labour in Northern Ireland* and the *Conservative Integration Group*.
- [97] Aughey, *Under Siege*, 146.
- [98] O'Leary, 'The Conservative Stewardship', 671.
- [99] Nairn, 'Farewell Britannia'.
- [100] This period of reflection began with July 1994 edition of *The Northern Star* and concluded with the June–July edition of the following year.
- [101] *The Northern Star* 8, no. 7, July 1994, 4–5; 8, no. 12, December 1994.

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