Some Notes on Parliament and its Limerick Members (1767–1771)

By CLIODNA SNODDY, Member

In 1760 “Limerick was declared by the Government to be no longer a fortress”,1 the knocking down of the town wall was started, and in the next decade the streets were cleared and the foundations laid for most of the fine Georgian buildings of which the city is proud today (in 1764 the Courthouse was started, in 1765 the new Customs House, etc.). It was a time of prosperity for the citizens, it was also a time of political interest and activity, for after thirty years there was a new monarch in England who was to be instrumental in bringing many changes to both countries.

In this paper it is proposed to examine the position of the Limerick Members of Parliament and the Irish House of Parliament during the Viceroyalty of Townshend. For this it is necessary to include a lot of general history, because the dealings of the Irish Parliament during this period are complicated by the struggle of George III for power in England.

This paper will at all times be dealing with the upper strata of influential landowning Protestant planters. Most of these families were at least a hundred years resident in Ireland by 1760, and were conscious of the differences which that hundred years had created between themselves and England. They clung, however, of necessity to union with England, though by 1760 some were no longer sure of the constitutional form that union should take.

The other Ireland—outnumbering the Protestants by three to one in Limerick—Catholic native Irish, living in poverty, speaking a different language, holding different traditions “who look on themselves as true lords of the soil”,2 at first glance seems to have no connection with the Protestant aristocracy except in their oft-expressed wish to be rid of them. “Do réifeadh Fóidla go h-úile ó Thurcachaibh daora ’n áir ’”,3 as said Seán Clárach Mac Domhnaill the founder of the first Cuir Óige cois Máighe. But by 1760 the Penal Laws were for the most part relaxed, and Co. Limerick was the centre of one of the finest schools of poetry-writing in eighteenth century Europe, the loose collection of writers known as the Maigue Poets. One of their number, Seán Ó Tuama, ran a school which was attended by Henry Hartstonge, (Member of Parliament for Limerick in 1776) among others of the local Ascendancy4 so there was some exchange of ideas between the two classes. The attitude of the Ascendancy to the Catholics is well summed up in a debate, held in the Irish House

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1 J. Ferrar, History of Limerick, (Limerick 1787), p. 69.
3 Mac Domhnaill, Seán Clárach, An Bonnaire Fiá-Phoic Fáin.
of Commons in 1763, on giving Catholics legal security on mortgages—(not granted): „The different religious opinions of the inhabitants of this country make a certain degree of evil necessary, but with religious opinions any further than they include political principles affecting civil government we have nothing to do. We renounce the infallibility of the Pope, it would be absurd to set up instead the infallibility of the State. We ought to keep power out of the hands of those whose principles would lead them to hurt us”.

This debate shows that although the Whiteboy outbreaks of agrarian unrest has been severely dealt with by 1763, the Ascendancy were secure enough in their position in Ireland to be able to consider giving legal rights to their former enemies, the Irish Catholics, and were growing in consciousness that their own Anglo-Irish identity was apart from that of the English.

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“The Viceroy, nominally vested with the executive government came commonly for a short time once every two years, leaving the real power to Lord Justices chosen out of the principal state officers of the country”. The Lord Lieutenant was assisted in his task for the six months of his stay by the Privy Council designed to advise the Government on matters of State.”

The Privy Council was composed of about seventy leading men in the Kingdom and had power to reject, alter, or destroy the Heads of any Bills passed in the Commons, and given to them to be transmitted to England. In England these Heads of Bills might be passed by the King and the English Privy Council, then returned to Ireland during the same session of Parliament to be passed again or rejected by the Irish House of Commons in the exact form in which they were returned from England. The procedure was governed by Poyning’s Law (Henry VII, 1496) which said, no bills could be passed by the Irish Parliament that had not first got the affirmation of the King and the Privy Council in England. This meant the Irish Parliament could not originate any measure of their own. This Act was modified by an Act of Philip and Mary, which empowered the Irish Privy Council to send over Heads of proposed bills to England.” The Irish Commons could only discuss the Heads of Bills about to be sent to England.

It became customary for the Lord Lieutenants to encourage some of the principal men of the Kingdom to “undertake” to ensure a Government majority and the easy passage of Bills through the House of Commons, very comparable, as Lecky pointed out, to the way a small modulating clique governed in eighteenth century England.”

The Undertakers “were entrusted implicitly with a means of consolidating the aristocratic influence which made them indispensable to the English Government.”

The Lord Lieutenants were often criticized in that they did not consider “this kingdom worthy of the honour of their residence longer than was absolutely neces-

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5 Caldwell, Debates, 25th Nov. 1763, p. 513.
9 Lecky, History of Ireland in 18th Century, II (London 1882), p. 66.
10 ibid.
11 Fitzmaurice, Life of Shelbourne, p. 91.
sary”, and for attending “balls and routs”—passing their time talking to the Lords Justices and having for their only object the passing of the Money Bill, fearing the mob and “scattering pensions to Corporations.”

The custom of summoning the Irish Parliament every two years was inaugurated under Charles II when the perpetual Hereditary Revenue, voted by the Commons was found to be insufficient. Previously the Parliament had been summoned at the King’s pleasure. In 1692, after the Treaty of Limerick, expense again exceeded the revenue. A Parliament was called under Lord Sydney to grant Extra Supply—under the rule of Poyning’s Law which said two Bills must be sent over to England to inaugurate the assembly of the Irish Parliament. The Commons rejected the Money Bill put before them asserting that they alone had the right to inaugurate the Money Bill. For this independence of spirit Lord Sydney immediately prorogued the Parliament. This prorogation taught the Commons a lesson, and the following Parliaments were subservient, though they naturally wished to control finance. The subject of the Hereditary Revenue did not come up again until 1751, when there was a surplus in the revenue. Some of the Commons challenged the King’s right to appropriate the surplus. In 1753 there was again a surplus and this time the Commons asserted their right to deal with the money as they wished. The matter developed into a constitutional crisis, in which some men were dismissed from office and some got titles in order to quell the demand of the Irish Parliament for independence in money matters. In this conflict the right of the Irish Privy Council to interfere in Bills for the Irish Parliament was also questioned. It was consistently denied that the Privy Council was part of the Constitution.

Between 1727 and 1761 there was no general election, as there was only a general election in Ireland on the death of the English Monarch. The members came up to Dublin every second year, met another Lord Lieutenant and rushed the Money Bill through Parliament in the first session. With the Money Bill safely passed, Parliament could devote itself to provincial matters, e.g. the Biennial Grant to the Dublin Society and the grants for new bridges, roads and piers. To pass the Money Bill by voting for Supply was the only necessary function fulfilled by the Irish Parliament, and it followed that this prerogative was jealously guarded by them. After 1753, any sign that the Hereditary Revenue might be sufficient for public purposes and so obviate the need for Supply voted by the Commons, caused them to impose a further burthen on the Hereditary Revenue by voting bounties and other charges without imposing any specific taxes for paying them. Under the Duke of Bedford (1757) a law was passed granting a Bounty in perpetuity on the carriage of corn to Dublin; this Bounty amounted to £50,000 per annum and was to be paid out of the Hereditary Revenue.

As is always the case with a government which represents no one but itself, and also because of the narrow character of Irish political life, there were continual complaints of corruption and bribery. Those who undertook public works made huge

13 Letter to J (ohn) Plonsonby, (Dublin 1767), pp. 11-12.
14 Pery, op. cit., p. 36.
16 Lecky, op. cit., p. 58.
17 Pery, op. cit., p. 27.
18 The Speech of a Young M.P., on the Septennial Bill, (Halliday Pamphlets no. 303), Dublin 1761, p. 15.
personal profits on the money Parliament granted for these purposes. "Sometimes they have violent passion for the arts of peace, for the improvement of trade, shipping, manufactures and high roads, at other times they are busy in preparation for war, erecting fortifications, ramparts and bridges. They are always zealous and in haste to begin a work, but they care not how long they have it on their hands. They take an innocent and gentle delight in tracing canals through meads and lawns, from one great city to another. They love good company and associate with the Treasury Board, the Linen Board, the Barrack Board; nor are they to be missed from the Grand Juries or Societies". Members protested at large sums being lavished on visionary schemes . . . "on piers that would afford ships no shelter or streams that would run only in the Journals of the House", but the majority of public men accepted and benefited from these schemes, considering them as a sort of public annuity.

Ireland seems to have troubled English politics very little in the first half of the eighteenth century, the House of Commons in Westminster regarding the House of Commons in Dublin in the same light as the House of Burgesses in Virginia or the Assembly at Boston, as a provincial character was common to them all and, if necessary, laws could be passed in England for Ireland. As Swift had written to Bolingbroke, "we never had leisure to think of that country when we were in power."

The introduction of the Hanoverian dynasty into England gave the Whigs a chance to consolidate their position and to gain ascendancy over the Court, as the first two Georges, being ignorant of the English languages and customs, busied themselves mainly with foreign affairs and the country was governed by the Whig junta, with the Tories jockeying for power. With the accession of George III in 1760, (the first Hanoverian to be born in England), the King tried to regain an influential position in Parliamentary affairs, but without much success. The King played Whig and Tory factions against each other and changed ministers as often as he changed Lord Lieutenants for Ireland. Having been victorious in the Seven Years War in 1763, England had a big war debt, and George III's idea was to make the Colonies pay with the unpopular and short-lived Stamp Act in America, and the Augmentation of the Army in Ireland.

Pitt's administration in 1766 had a plan to make the Lord Lieutenant resident in Ireland "because the Irish Governors embarrassed the Lord Lieutenant and threw the nation into factions to the obstruction of all public business partly to the support of private jobs." In 1757 the Commons had refused to grant supply unless their petition concerning pensions was sent to the King (the pension list had risen from £38,000 in 1755 to £51,583 in 1757 and a rise of £13,000 in two years was naturally considered excessive). The petition had no effect and by 1763 the list exceeded £72,000. The Irish Parliament petitioned against this abuse but apart from this or the threat of voting short supply there was little they could do.

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19 Caldwell, Debates, (2nd Nov. 1763), pp. 142 seq.
20 Caldwell, Debates, (7th Dec. 1763), p. 572.
22 Quoted Hardy, Life of Chariemont, p. 9.
24 Lecky, op. cit., p. 70.
25 Caldwell, op. cit., 8th Nov. 1763, pp. 191 seq.
In Ireland as in England, the "Country Gentlemen" formed a large part of the
Parliament—"They would not have accepted a seat at random, merely to be seated.
What mattered to them was not so much membership of the House, as primacy in
their own county."26 The seats of the aristocracy were hereditary but in any county
there was room for any gentleman of means who had gained a standing. Some
country members promised their constituents to support a Septennial Bill (an election
every seven years)27 in the 1761 election. Townshend found them the backbone
of the House in 1768 when the great lords turned against his administration.28

Limerick City and County members were "independent country gentlemen"
for no great lord controlled the city or county, as in Cork where Lord Shannon (an
Undertaker) controlled seven or eight out of the twelve boroughs, and sent about
eighteen men into Parliament.29 "Lords reckon power by the number of Commons
they bring into Parliament."30 Ferrar notes that in 1757 the Right Hon. George
Evans died "the only nobleman who resided near the city or in the county of Limerick."
"Most of the land in West Limerick was owned by the absentee Earl of Devon,
so the city and county gentlemen disposed of the eight seats for city and county
between them. There were two seats for the City, two for the County and two each
for the boroughs of Kilmallock and Askeaton,32 and only in Kilmallock was there
any definite landlord influence.

The way to become a Member for the City was first to be elected as Mayor or one
of the Sheriffs; these positions did not always lead to power but most of those who
became Members had held one of these offices. In the County the office of High Sheriff
of the County was the key one: the Sheriff convened the County Court at time of
elections and could exclude voters from the list at his whim, as some did.33

The election in the city was fairly open, that is, it was not controlled by any rigid
interest; in theory any man popular with the leading citizens could stand with good
hopes of success. In practice, Charles Smyth, Member of Parliament for the city, was
elected in 1731, in the place of Henry Ingolsby.34 He was the son of the Bishop of
Limerick, and held his seat until 1776. He was re-elected in 1761 and 1768, and was
succeeded by his son Thomas Smyth in 1776. "He had the good will of the guilds
firmly behind him."35 But in those forty-five years he only contested three elections
and is a good example of the political stagnation of the mid-eighteenth century.
In Parliament Smyth was looked on as an independent man generally in opposition.36
His family "interest" is constant in Limerick during the eighteenth century.

The other City Member during the period under review was Edmund Sexton Pery.
He was of a Limerick Church of Ireland family, and as an able young lawyer chose
politics as a career. In his pamphlet "Letters to an Armenian" he questioned the

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29 Hunt, Irish Parliament, 1755, i., 55.
30 Pery, op. cit., p. 27.
31 Ferrar, op. cit., p. 96.
32 ibid., p. 293.
34 Ferrar, op. cit., p. 293.
35 Lenihan, op. cit., p. 328.
36 Hunt, op. cit., p. 47.

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Constitutional position of the Irish Privy Council and said that the Irish Parliament should have the right to dispose of their own money.\(^{37}\) He was first elected to Parliament in Wicklow in 1751 in a bye-election,\(^{38}\) and in 1761 he was elected for Limerick.\(^{39}\) He had severely criticized the Lord Justices in his pamphlet,\(^{40}\) and was considered a most independent member, vying with Lucas (popularly-elected M.P. for Dublin), in introducing measures difficult for the Government.\(^{41}\) He was also accused of hating the English Government and of trying to raise support against the Pension List. He held his seat in the elections of 1766 and 1776; \(^{42}\) in 1768 he was in opposition and was assessed "as a man of great abilities" but "a cursed jobber".\(^{43}\)

A letter from Mrs. Julia Vereker\(^{44}\) to her father at the time of the election of 1768, shows how Pery was supported at that election and gives a good idea of the interplay of politics among the interested families:—

"Mr. Billy Pery and Mr. Maunsell were making great interest for Mr. Pery (Edmund) in the city and Sir Harry Hartstonge in the county, so I think you should loose no time, though you may be sure when solicitations were going about we were not idle, but everyone seems to expect you down immediately. [This probably refers to an intention of her father's to stand for election or to support another candidate]. Mr. Pery I hear leaves Dublin to-day; they talk as if he had a very bad chance for they say none of the treads [sic] will take him. Mr. Maunsell asked Mr. Ingram for his vote for Sir Harry in the county and Mr. Ingram told him he could not promise it till he saw you. Mr. Maunsell said he believed you would not interfere in the county, upon which Mr. Ingram said he did not doubt but you would set up for the city and Tom Smyth for the county."

When Townshend came to Limerick in 1768, in his pre-election visit, trying to gain support for a Lord Lieutenant's party in the Parliament, "the Smyth, Pery and Vereker families vied to do him honour."\(^{45}\) In the election of 1768, Pery and Charles Smyth were elected for the city\(^{46}\) (Harry Hartstonge was not elected until 1776 his candidature being postponed in 1768). Both Pery and Smyth competed with each other in beautifying the City,\(^{47}\) and were on all the Committees formed for improving, building and extending the City.

Pery was considered at first to be a friend of Townshend, as both were firm supporters of Pitt's Government. When Pery took the Speakership in the House of Commons in 1771, he was considered to have sold over the Government\(^{48}\) as by then Pitt was opposing George III and Lord North's Government.

\(^{37}\) Pery, op. cit., p. 38.
\(^{38}\) Complete Peerage, p. 495.
\(^{39}\) Ferrar, op. cit., p. 293.
\(^{40}\) Caldwell, op. cit., 21st Dec. 1763, p. 620.
\(^{41}\) Hunt, op. cit., p. 42.
\(^{42}\) Ferrar, op. cit., p. 293.
\(^{43}\) Hunt, op. cit., p. 42.
\(^{44}\) Lenihan, op. cit., p. 360.
\(^{45}\) Ibid.
\(^{46}\) Ferrar, op. cit., p. 293.
\(^{47}\) Lenihan, op. cit., p. 361.
\(^{48}\) Haratarania, (16th March 1771), p. 142.
In 1759 Hugh Massey, owner of a "large independent property" and High Sheriff of the County in 1752, was elected for the County at a bye-election. He was re-elected in 1761, 1768 and 1776. Massey supported the Government under Townshend, was recommended for a peerage for his support, but instead got a position collecting Hearth Money Tax.

The other seat for the County was held by the Hon. George Southwell in 1761 (Lord Thomas Southwell was Mayor of Limerick in 1737 and Hon. Henry Southwell was Mayor in 1750), by Silver Oliver of Kilmallock in 1768 and by Harry Hartstonge in 1776. This county seat is a good example of a free seat passing among the political gentry.

Silver Oliver had complete control of the Borough of Kilmallock, his family having been elected there since 1703. As a borough owner and Member of Parliament, who is described as being "a very independent country gentleman—always uncertain in his support of the Government," Silver Oliver is typical of the untitled landed families who attended Parliament in the eighteenth century. He owned large estates in Killfinane in East Limerick and ruled his tenants harshly. In Parliament he took no part in debate, but after the Prorogation of Parliament in 1770, and the downfall of Ponsonby's junta, Townshend picked him out to be one of the Privy Council. Despite this he was still considered uncertain in his support under Harcourt, though this may have been because his petition for a peerage got no favour. He was High Sheriff for the County in 1764, and in 1768 sold one seat in Kilmallock to Thomas Maunsell and the other to Wyndham Quin, while he himself got the County seat. He must have made quite a lot of money from these transactions: the average price in England at the time was 2,000 guineas and in Ireland Serjent Lill complained in 1768 that he was paying Lord Baltinglass 2,000 guineas for his borough and expected Townshend, who was trying to form a Lord Lieutenant's Party, to compensate him. Between 1761 and 1776 Silver Oliver could have made about 10,000 guineas from his two seats. It was necessary for an independent member to purchase a seat in the eighteenth century, as open elections, the lack of organised party management as we know it to-day, and the few seats available to independent members made it inevitable.

For a man like Wyndham Quin, who was a member for Kilmallock in 1768, a comparative newcomer to politics, High Sheriff of the county in 1747, and the

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49 Hunt, op. cit., p. 35.
50 Ferrar, op. cit., p. 461.
51 Hunt, op. cit., p. 35.
52 Ferrar, op. cit., p. 141.
53 Hunt, op. cit., p. 40.
54 Arthur Young, A Tour of Ireland, p. 315.
55 Hunt, op. cit., p. 40.
56 Townshend to Weymouth, 7th March 1770, (Cal. H.O.P., 1770, p. 18).
57 Hunt, op. cit., p. 40.
58 ibid., p. 35.
59 ibid., p. 45.
60 Namier, The Structure of Politics, p. 204.
61 Lill to Townshend, 10th July 1768 (Nat. Lib. MSS no. 394).
62 Lill to Townshend, 18th June 1768 (ibid).
63 Hunt, Irish Parliament in 1773, p. 43.
64 Ferrar, op. cit., p. 461.
owner of vast tracts of land around Adare, Co. Limerick, the system was invaluable, for it meant that a seat could be found at the current price and this he purchased from Silver Oliver. Wyndham Quin is described as "wanting to be a Privy Councillor but uncertain in support of the government suffering almost constantly from patriotic qualms." His seat was held by William Christmas in 1776. The other seat in Kilmallock went to Edward Villiers in 1761, who was to be Mayor of Limerick in 1762, and then to Thomas Maunsell snr. in 1768 who had his seat purchased for him by his son Thomas, "whose only object was to see his father on the bench". Both are described as "worthy honourable men uniform and steady in support of the government." Both were on good terms with influential city and county families. Both were men of the law, and for his support of the Government, Thomas snr. got a position at £800 per annum in the Revenue, where he was described as "a dull but very honest man." In 1776 his seat was held by John Finlay.

In the borough of Askeaton one seat was held by Joseph Hoare who was elected in 1761, 1768 and 1776. He was cultivated by Townshend and held the office of Weighmaster in Cork at £800 per annum. The other seat was held in 1761 by James Cotter and in 1768 by Joseph Turnadine "who was much attached to and acted with the Maunsells." Like Wyndham Quin he was a newcomer, his brother being Sheriff Burgess for Limerick City in 1764. In 1776 his seat went to the Hon. Hugh Massey whose father had a steady seat in the County.

In Co. Limerick the seats stayed with the local families of the county and city, and outsiders did not stand for election with the exception of Edmund Malone, elected for Askeaton in 1753. The artificiality of the system can be clearly seen when a very small town like Askeaton elected two Members to Parliament.

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In the conflict for power which took place during the Viceroyalty of Townshend, the Limerick Members were particularly cultivated by the Lord Lieutenant. In this struggle Townshend’s two main antagonists were John Ponsonby and Lord Shannon. From 1744 John Ponsonby succeeded his father as Commissioner for Revenue

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68 Hunt, op. cit., p. 45.
69 ibid.
70 Ferrar, op. cit., p. 449.
71 ibid., p. 287.
72 ibid., p. 35.
73 Lenihan, op. cit., p. 361.
74 Hunter, op. cit., p. 35.
75 Ferrar, op. cit., p. 437.
76 ibid.
77 ibid., p. 26.
78 ibid., p. 51.
79 Ferrar, op. cit., p. 17.
80 ibid., p. 437.
81 D.N.B., p. 85.
which was one of the most lucrative and important positions in Ireland at the time; it gave power to bestow places and collect money, he could dispense £116,000 per annum on jobs and had himself a salary of £5,000 a year.\textsuperscript{79} His brother the Earl of Bessborough, was Postmaster General of England and they were both married to daughters of the Duke of Devonshire. In 1756 he was elected Speaker of the Irish House of Commons. In 1757 he was appointed Lord Justice of Ireland, and held this position, in the absence of every Lord Lieutenant, for ten years. As principal Under-taker, Ponsonby was powerful but not popular. He was accused of being dictator of the affairs of Ireland, becoming ”giddy” with power, losing sense of his proper sphere in the administration.\textsuperscript{80} He controlled the Revenue and the House of Commons and was capable of acting against the Lord Lieutenant if his interests lay that way.\textsuperscript{81} “Mr. Ponsonby may fluctuate and oppose but it is well-known that Lord Shannon animates and disciplines the whole against the Government and any concession to him would be of no advantage.”\textsuperscript{82} He was condemned as “despicable,” as trading ”largely and profitably in elections”, and of “giving secret opposition to the Septennial Bill”.\textsuperscript{83} John Ponsonby, described as ”walking the streets in a coarse plain frock, with an oak Sappling [sic] in his hands,”\textsuperscript{84} was not a leader of causes, but a manager of men. Some saw him as ”a timid, unsteady man impossible from his situation that he should resist the Government.”\textsuperscript{85} Townshend describes him as ”a man incapable of secrecy, as such a man must be who seeks for his politics in a club, and canvasses his friends, by whispering what a man in his situation should reserve”.\textsuperscript{86} Although he and Townshend both belonged to the Whig faction he may have considered Townshend as a man of no influence, neglected by England, the offshoot of a weak conglomerated ministry, a man put in to fill a job,\textsuperscript{87} the fifth Lord Lieutenant appointed in seven years, by “a curious . . . but utterly unsafe” ministry in England.\textsuperscript{88}

Ponsonby had supported Archbishop Stone (died 1764) who was disliked by the Duke of Leinster, a leading figure in public life,\textsuperscript{89} but by 1769 Townshend accused Leinster and Ponsonby of acting together, as Leinster wanted to be Lord Lieutenant himself.\textsuperscript{90} Ponsonby was chief ally of Henry Boyle, Earl of Shannon, formerly Speaker who had got his Earldom and a pension of £2,000 per annum for supporting the Government in the 1753 difficulty.\textsuperscript{91} Shannon died in 1764 and was succeeded by his son who then allied with Ponsonby but who was not as accommodating as his father. Shannon, Stone and Ponsonby had been Lord Justices together from 1758

\textsuperscript{79} Townshend to MacCartney, Feb. 1769 (Helena Robbins, \textit{First Ambassador to China}, p. 59; also J. Ponsonby, \textit{The Ponsonby Family}, p. 58).  
\textsuperscript{80} \textit{Letter to J(ohn) P(olsonby)}, p. 7.  
\textsuperscript{82} Lee to Townshend, 23rd April 1768 (Nat. Lib. MSS no. 394).  
\textsuperscript{83} \textit{A modest Vindication of the character and conduct of a great Officer of State}, (Haliday Pamphlets no. 338), Dublin 1767, pp. 12 and 16.  
\textsuperscript{84} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 20.  
\textsuperscript{85} Lee to Townshend, 23rd April 1768 (Nat. Lib. MSS no. 394).  
\textsuperscript{86} Townshend to Mac Cartney, April 1769 (H. Robbins, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 65).  
\textsuperscript{87} Townshend to Weymouth, 17th March 1770, (\textit{Cal. H.O.P.}, 1770, p. 490).  
\textsuperscript{89} Weymouth to Townshend, 9th June 1769, (\textit{Cal. H.O.P.}, 1769, p. 446).  
\textsuperscript{90} Townshend to Grafton, 21st April 1769, (Fisher, \textit{End of the Irish Parliament}, p. 47).  
to 1764. By 1767 it was Ponsonby and young Shannon, Lords Justices, with Leinster acting independently.

There was popular feeling in Ireland against the Undertakers in the 1760's. It was hoped that "if, as is reported, our succeeding Lord Lieutenant shall reside in this country we may be delivered from these pests", 92 It was considered that there was no reason to fear these men if the Lord Lieutenant would reside in Ireland. 93 It was also stated that Ponsonby's "family interest is now broke [sic]" in England and that his power was now on the decline 94 (this probably referred to the death of the Duke of Devonshire, Ponsonby's, father-in-law, in 1764. Devonshire had been on the English Privy Council until 1762, still he successfully used his power in England to have the appointment of Bristol, Townshend's predecessor who never took up his resident appointment, cancelled). As late as May 1768 Barré could write to Shelbourne saying "If a Resident Governor is not appointed the game which has been played will continue to be played in a greater or less degree, let you place power in the hands of whom you will." 95 This is not stressed in Lecky who says that Townshend was appointed a resident Lord Lieutenant.

George Viscount Townshend was appointed to the Lord Lieutenancy of Ireland in August 1767 96 as a temporary Lord Lieutenant. He was instructed to obtain the Augmentation of the standing army in Ireland from 12,000 to 15,000 men and, if necessary, to grant the privilege of a Septennial Parliament (an election every seven years) and security of Tenure to the judges. 97 The promise that the king would not grant English pensions on the Irish Establishment "except for weighty and important reasons" 98 was also made. The fact was clear that "so much is given from the Country and so little left is reward here that mankind care little for his (the Lord Lieutenant's) declarations" 99.

In the struggle which followed during the next five years between Townshend and the Lords Justices, the idea obtained (among the Independent Members of whom Edmund Sexton Pery was one of the leaders) that better, or a change of Government at least, might be achieved. 100 The promises of the Autumn of 1767 were so far beyond the usual recommendations of "the cheerful granting of supplies" and "a firm adherence to the linen industry and the Protestant integrity", 101 that there was a hope for better Government. Townshend, however, got off to a bad start by promising security of judges without getting the Lords Justices' acceptance of Augmentation; 102 they complained that the extra £67,000 for the army might be difficult to find. 103 In the next few years, however, a lot more than this amount was

92 "On the Political Emulation of the Undertaker System", (Freeman's Journal, Sept. 13th 15th, 23rd, 27th, 1766.
94 A modest Vindication of the character & conduct of a great Officer of State, p. 8.
95 ibid., p. 29. Also Barré to Shelbourne 5th May 1768 (Fitzmaurice, Life of Shelbourne, p. 113).
96 Townshend to Manby 4th August 1767, (Nat. Lib. MSS no. 304).
99 Townshend to Granby, 10th Nov. 1767 (Hist. MSS Comm. Rulland MSS, Appendix 5, p. 293).
spent in trying to establish the Lord Lieutenant as the main arbiter in Irish politics. Townshend saw that in Parliament the great interests and the independent men would never concur and also that "the independent men and the servants of the Crown grew jealous while Ponsonby and the Undertakers held all the power".104 "There was want of cordiality between the Lord Lieutenant and the principal persons" and "Shannon and Ponsonby would support His Majesty even on the Augmentation, if they could have their share in the disposal of His Majesty's other favours here in proportion to their weight in numbers".105 (Shannon wanted to be Lord Justice as his father had been, Ponsonby wanted his son's office in the Customs to be for life, Hely Hutchinson wanted provision for his sons, a pension, and a title for his wife; Townshend considered Hely Hutchinson "a very able lawyer", "the most powerful man in Ireland".106).

No lessening of tension between the Lord Lieutenant and the leading men was apparent when finally the Septennial Bill was returned from England, changed to an Octennial Bill.107 It had already been passed at four Parliaments in Ireland and each time rejected in England. It was immediately passed by the Irish Parliament.108 Bessborough strongly recommended the Augmentation of the army to Ponsonby,109 but he and his friends held out for their share in Patronage. It was then Townshend wrote to England for permission to use the Independent Gentlemen to assist him against the old leaders, "the Independent Gentlemen now see what Ponsonby's and Shannon's conduct points at (Opposition to desires of the King's Government)."110

With the passing of the Septennial Bill (in 1768) there was great disorder and soliciting of votes among the electorate111 for another election was due; English electoral procedure was used in Ireland, that is, the voting was open and held under the auspices of the local Sheriff.112 Joyce, and Annaly complained that "elections were a riotous business and would cause licentiousness and idleness among the lower people".113 The country had slumbered for thirty-four years without an election and now there were two elections in seven years. As Lady Julia Vereker wrote to her father: "I see you are very happy about having the Bill past [sic] but for my share I wish everything had remained as it was. How dreadful it must be for a year and a half together to have everybody in hot water and their purses open for all that time, to the ruin of trade, for the people will get such a habit of drinking and idleness, that they will never be good for anything after."114 It was customary in spite of Acts to the contrary to entertain the voters lavishly.115

To succeed in removing power from the Undertakers Townshend was determined to have his own personal following in Parliament, and to this he worked hard to get

106 ibid.
109 Bessborough to Townshend, 6th Feb. 1768, (Nat. Lib. MSS no. 394).
111 Townshend to Shelbourne, 10th May 1768, (Cal. H.O.P., 1768, p. 333).
113 Lords' Jour. Ire., 16th Feb. 1768, p. 444.
114 Lenihan, op. cit., p. 360.
support in the country. He stayed on in Ireland, visited Limerick and Cork and was entertained by the leading families.\textsuperscript{116} He entertained in Dublin and was accused of "reeling to and fro with a head full of wine on all national occasions."\textsuperscript{117} He wrote saying: "the people look more to the permanent following of the Speaker (Ponsonby) rather than to the temporary Commission of a Lord Lieutenant",\textsuperscript{118} and that a "resident Governor should have absolute disposal of the revenue offices."\textsuperscript{116} He gave places and acted in the timehonoured fashion with "the Country Gentlemen; besides good works, burgundy, and closeting, it might perhaps have been hinted, how kindly it would be taken to comply with (Government), although it were not compulsory; and that if any inconvenience ensued it might be made up with Graces and Favours hereafter, and that gentlemen ought to consider, whether it were prudent or safe to disgust England. They would be desired to think of some good Bills for the encouraging of Trade, or setting the poor to work; for some further acts against the Popery, and for the uniting of Protestants."\textsuperscript{120} Townshend's plan was "to transfer the disposal of places from the Board of Revenue to His Majesty's chief Governor, by removing Lord Shannon, Lord Lanesborough and Ponsonby, and by substituting Lord Drogheda at the Ordinance and Osbourne and Beresford at Revenue and promising Flood the next vacancy."\textsuperscript{121} The attitude in England to his plan is indicated as follows: "the King has no intention of keeping on servants who show themselves in opposition, but should they on more mature deliberation come back to the fold, some other method must be found for providing for those who so honourably supported Government in the last session."\textsuperscript{122}

It was not until July 1769 that Townshend's continuance in office was assured.\textsuperscript{123} In spite of his staying in Ireland in 1768 there was doubt about his re-appointment.\textsuperscript{124} Since the summer of 1768 he was in open enmity to the Privy Council,\textsuperscript{125} and had tried to found\textsuperscript{126} his own party among the Independent Gentlemen who hated Ponsonby and would have liked to have power in their own hands.\textsuperscript{127} There was for Townshend little expectation in English politics, his victory under Wolfe at Quebec was long past, his brother Charles died in 1767, his uncle Newcastle—the famous Whig party manager—who shepherded him into Parliament in 1761, died in 1768. If his Lord Lieutenancy in Ireland were to be unsuccessful his career would

\textsuperscript{116} Lenihan, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 361.
\textsuperscript{117} \textit{Barataria}, 24th May 1768, p. 50.
\textsuperscript{118} Townshend to Granby, 30th April 1768, (Hist. MSS Comm. Rutland MSS, Appendix 5, p. 305).
\textsuperscript{119} Townshend to Shelbourne, 10th May 1768, (\textit{Cal. H.O.P.}, 1768, p. 334).
\textsuperscript{120} Swift, \textit{Draper's Letters}, vol. IV, p. 111.
\textsuperscript{121} Townshend to Weymouth, 17th August 1769, (\textit{Cal. H.O.P.}, 1769, p. 491).
\textsuperscript{122} Weymouth to Townshend, 8th July 1769, (\textit{Cal. H.O.P.}, 1769, p. 484).
\textsuperscript{123} \textit{ibid.}, p. 485.
\textsuperscript{124} King's Letter 1768, (\textit{Cal. H.O.P.}, 1768, pp. 441-2).
\textsuperscript{125} \textit{Barataria}, 19th Jan. 1768 p. 13.
\textsuperscript{126} Waite to Mac Cartney, July 1769 (H. Robbins, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 68)—He sent a list of 68 doubtful supporters to London. (Townshend to Weymouth, 8th July 1769) (\textit{Cal. H.O.P.}, 1769, p. 489)—cf. Waite to Mac Cartney, \textit{ibid.}, p. 69; there was "reason to wish the alphabetical list had not been sent over."
\textsuperscript{127} Townshend to Granby, 26th Dec. 1768, (Hist. MSS Comm. Rutland MSS, Appendix 5, p. 298).
be blighted. The analogy between George III’s efforts in England and those of Townshend in Ireland was not lost to his contemporaries.\textsuperscript{128}

After the election of 1768 it was estimated that one-third of the Parliament was composed of new Members, which would mean about a hundred new Members.\textsuperscript{129} This estimate is probably rather high, for by comparing lists as far as possible, only about sixty-eight new names can be accounted for. In Limerick three out of eight were new Members: Wyndham Quin, Joseph Tunadine and Thomas Maunsell.

Ponsonby was unanimously re-elected Speaker when the House re-opened on the 17th October 1769.\textsuperscript{130} The King in England was determined on getting the Augmentation that session and it was hoped that “the Irish Commons would concur in a matter near to His Majesty’s heart.”\textsuperscript{131}

On the 24th of November the Augmentation of the army was carried by 175 to 51 votes in the Supply Committee, and a militia of 5,662 men was also proposed and carried. The idea of a militia was disliked by the Government but permitting the proposal of a militia brought the Country Gentlemen on to their side.\textsuperscript{132} Ponsonby and Shannon supported the measure of Augmentation, but Leinster and his friends were violently opposed to it.\textsuperscript{133} The Commons, on the 21st of November, rejected, on its second reading, the Supply Bill sent up from the Privy Council “because it did not take its rise in the House.”\textsuperscript{134} It was merely a gesture against the dominance of Poyning’s Law, against the Privy Council becoming the tool of the Lord Lieutenant,\textsuperscript{135} and against Parliament’s ineffectiveness as a debating society passing useless measures. The fact that the Commons immediately passed an exactly similar Bill “resolving to give generously” and also passed the Augmentation,\textsuperscript{136} shows the intent and the bravado of the gesture; but this did not take from its enormity in the eyes of the English ministry. In 1761 Ponsonby and Shannon had supported the Government when a similar measure was introduced but now they were under threat of dismissal, and Leinster had disclosed his hostility to anything that emanated from Lord Grafton’s continuance of Pitt’s patchwork ministry,\textsuperscript{137} so they supported the measure. Townshend wrote: “the Constitutional Plan of these men of power is to possess government in this country and to lower the authority of the English Government which must in the end destroy the dependence of this kingdom on Great Britain.”\textsuperscript{138}

It was decided in England to prorogue the Irish Parliament for three months as a mark of disapprobation, as soon as the Money Bills were passed; this took place by 20th of December 1769, but the Parliament did not re-open for two years. Lucas, though an old man and near to death wrote on the right to Parliamentary representa-
tion and the need of consent to taxation. The precedent for Prorogation was found in Henry Sidney's similar action in 1692. The Independent Members wanted to adjourn the Money Bills but were defeated by 114 votes to 79.

Townshend then proceeded with his long planned purge of the Revenue Board, "so long as the Revenue is kept down by those who have an interest therein, so long is the Crown a suitor, and they can dictate and bargain with the Government on every occasion... presuming His Majesty does not want those to hold their seats who refused the Money Bill because it did not take its rise in the House of Commons." He felt nothing but contempt for the leaders of the Irish Commons: "the game is going on for a long time, under one Lord Lieutenant after another, always getting something for themselves, paring away the power and authority of the English Government." An English newspaper, *The Public Advertiser* of the 9th of December 1769, put the whole matter in perspective for the English: "the refusal of the late Bill is a violation of the constitution, and behaviour more fitting to Whiteboys than to the grave representation of a nation. This is the most daring insult that has been offered to Government. The Parliament of Great Britain is supreme over its conquests as well as its colonies and the service of a nation must not be left undone on account of the factious obstinacy of a Provincial Assembly. Let our legislature vote the Irish Supplies." This was read out in the Irish House of Commons and condemned to be burnt by the public hangman. It underlines the fear of the House of Commons that its only necessary function—that of voting Supply—would be taken from it. It also shows the English attitude to colonies, the attitude that was to lose the American colonies, help to create an independent Irish Parliament, and later destroy that Parliament with the Act of Union. The Commons' fears had very real substance.

Townshend gained the upper hand with "his plan to re-establish the Government of Ireland on a proper constitutional footing." All his recommendations were accepted except the baronies for Upton and Mac Cartney. Letters Patent were sent dismissing Ponsonby and Lanesborough from the Revenue Board and appointing Beresford and Osbourne instead. William Ponsonby was also dismissed and Henry Gore was made Examiner of Customs in his place. In the complete replacement of the Privy Council Silver Oliver got his place with the new men, and Thomas Maunsell got into the Revenue Council. Ponsonby stayed on in the Privy Council as it was customary for the Speaker to be a Member.

Parliament did not re-assemble until the 26th of February 1771. The critical state of affairs in England in 1770 had put both the King and Lord North against any meeting of the Irish Parliament in that year. Any discussion on the affairs

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140 Froude, op. cit., p. 81.
144 Commons' Jour. Ire., 18th Dec. 1769, p. 345.
146 ibid.
147 Townshend to Weymouth, 7th March 1770, (Cal. H.O.P., 1770, p. 18).
of Ireland was rejected by Parliament in England. There the Opposition, now led by Chatham, tried to use Ireland as a lever against the King’s Friends in Parliament.\textsuperscript{149}

On his way from the Castle to the House of Parliament in 1771, Townshend was followed by a crowd of people who cried “that the Lord Lieutenant had got a great majority and was going to take away their Parliament.”\textsuperscript{150} Indeed, during the year since the closing of the last Parliament he had been busy in persuading men to vote with the Government. Many places and pensions were distributed “£800 per annum for Thomas Maunsell and a place on the Council for the Revenue.”\textsuperscript{151} “A deanery for the brother of Edmund Sexton Pery, plus £600 per annum” with the disposal of “several small employments in the Revenue.”\textsuperscript{152} These give some idea of what was needed to buy support:—

Go tell them Freedom is expiring  
And they’re basely bought and sold,  
Commons all with wealth expiring  
Barter liberty for gold.\textsuperscript{153}

The army surrounded the re-opened House of Commons because of the mob.\textsuperscript{154} With the opening of debate a few minor motions by the Opposition, led by Flood, were defeated,\textsuperscript{155} and then Pery proposed a cleverly worded amendment to the Loyal Address saying:—

“Nothing is worse than the disapprobation of His Majesty and nothing better than his approval. We are ever tenacious of the honour of granting supplies, and of being the first movers therein. These are voluntary tributes and we hope that His Majesty will not permit our zeal to be construed as an invasion of the Royal Authority, as nothing could be more distant from our thoughts.”\textsuperscript{156}

Townshend saw the two sides to the address, but when the amendment was passed without opposition, he thought it was better to accept it as an apology.\textsuperscript{157} Pery was, in spite of the favours he received always, “at best lukewarm in his support”\textsuperscript{158} of Townshend.

Ponsonby resigned his seat as Speaker rather than present the Loyal Address to Townshend, for it contained fulsome praise of Townshend and implied censure of the proceedings of the previous Parliament.\textsuperscript{159} He requested the Commons “to elect another Speaker who may not find such conduct as inconsistent with his honour.” Townshend described him as “as sinking in his chair, having sacrificed his friends, who depended on his promise of numbers and the leniency of His Majesty’s Government.”\textsuperscript{160} He considered the Government had driven Ponsonby from the field

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\textsuperscript{149} Plowden, \textit{History of Ireland}, vol I, p. 42.
\textsuperscript{150} Townshend to Rochefort, 28th Feb. 1771, (\textit{Cal. H.O.P.}, 1771, p. 211).
\textsuperscript{151} Hunt, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 35.
\textsuperscript{152} \textit{ibid.}, p. 42.
\textsuperscript{153} \textit{ibid.}, 2nd Dec. 1771, p. 393.
\textsuperscript{155} Commons. Jour. Ire., 2nd March 1771, p. 368.
\textsuperscript{156} \textit{ibid.}, 2nd March 1771, p. 368.
\textsuperscript{157} Townshend to Rochefort, 6th March 1771, (\textit{Cal. H.O.P.} 1771 p. 217).
\textsuperscript{158} Hunt, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 42.
\textsuperscript{159} Commons. Jour. Ire., 4th March 1771, p. 370.
\textsuperscript{160} Townshend to Rochefort, 2nd March 1771, (\textit{Cal. H.O.P.} 1771, p. 214).
“though his inability and the complaints of his friends would have driven him in any case.”

Pery was elected Speaker on the 11th of March, by 118 votes to 117, and Townshend saw this as “making for the strength of the Government” as Pery was “a most able and grateful man.”

He was the choice of the Government as a former Independent Member and was “likely to prove a useful friend to Government.”

He was then accepted as a member of the Privy Council. The popular press mourned the “fall of Pery who had pledged to the principles of 1769.”

In the session that followed, Townshend had, in most instances, a large majority, but in a proposal to increase the number of Revenue Commissioners, Pery spoke against him openly and the measure was rejected by the House. His independent gesture was useless. Townshend gave His Majesty’s reply that there would be five new places on the Revenue Commission and these were created against the wishes of the House. Members could see they had exchanged domination by a venal Privy Council for that of an equally venal Lord Lieutenant.

But Townshend’s victory was a hollow one. He was recalled to England in September 1772 and left Ireland a most unpopular man. Of all the six Viceroys appointed to Ireland in the first twelve years if George III’s reign, he was the only one who was personally disliked: “he sought for popularity by sacrificing the dignity of his position and brought both his person and his office under contempt.”

Crowds gathered “hissing and groaning” to see him embark and his effigy was burned in the streets to commemorate his departure. Even Townshend himself was “disgusted with the annual bargain which Government is at present under the sad necessity of making with ungrateful servants and prostitute opponents.” He left his successor, Harcourt, a mess of political alliances, a Speaker who “hated English Government” and a corrupt system of rule.

In his conduct of affairs Townshend had faced an alignment of the ex-leaders of Government, Ponsonby, Shannon and the Duke of Leinster, with the popular Independent Members, such as Flood, Grattan, Langrishe and Burg. Leinster asked to be removed from the Privy Council on the expulsion of his friend Mayne. Flood Grattan and Langrishe who were the writers of Baratariana (an independent speaking journal) and were in constant opposition. The general opinion seemed to be that previously, three men had power, Ponsonby, Leinster and Shannon, but the whole aristocracy had some share; the Undertakers, although not popular, were better than what followed. Townshend had replaced the old junta with new grasping men like Silver Oliver. The aristocracy hated this attempt to “establish the arbitrary power” of the Government:

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164 Baratariana, 16th March 1771, p. 142.
165 Commons, Jour. Ive., 18th Nov. 1771, p. 427.
166 Lecky, op. cit., ii p. 115.
167 Baratariana, 3rd April 1770, p. 111.
168 Lecky, op. cit., p. 112.
169 Hunt, op. cit., p. 42.
171 Baratariana, 3rd April 1770, p. 111.
"No man can be so simple as to suppose that the present ministry in England would be at the trouble to establish a system merely for the internal benefit of this country and for the aggrandisement of our independent gentlemen. They may flatter the independent gentlemen for the present and corrupt such of them as they cannot deceive, that they may be no longer independent. But when the point is carried there will be an end to this country. They will be treated as the leaders of parties are now. The object of this artifice is to break the confidence of the people, to make them weary of their principal men, that in a fit of desperate disgust they may make the monarch arbitrary."172

This was to prove a remarkably accurate prognostication of events leading up to the eventual Union of the Irish and English Parliaments in 1800, a 1763 lampoon accurately describes the conduct of the Irish Parliament:

Who ever knew
A patriot so just,
Who would not for his interest
Sell his trust.