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*The office of Governor as the Crown's representative, symbolising 'the permanence both of the authority of the Northern Ireland Government and the union with Great Britain',
1921-1973*

The 'symbolics of power'

In the 1980s, one of Her Majesty's Secretaries of State frequently worked late into the night. There was nothing unusual about this, of course, but more uncommon was the array of bullet-proof glass, armoured cars, crackling military radios, and clattering helicopters that protected his building and patrolled its perimeter around the clock. Here, Douglas Hurd began to read his official papers in one of the downstairs rooms, 'with the help of whisky and a cigar'. A solitary lamp shone on his ministerial box, and in the opaque darkness he could glimpse portraits by Sir John Lavery of Lord Carson and Lord Londonderry, two of the towering founders of Ulster unionism.¹ No less ghostly were the somewhat unusual features of the house: a grand 'State Entrance', leading to a 'Throne Room', resplendent with its gilded seats and dais, surrounded by ornamental tapestries and portraits of various royal and noble worthies. This was Hillsborough Castle, also known as Government House, now the official residence of the Secretaries of State for Northern Ireland. Although less widely known than the Parliament Buildings at Stormont, the mansion was the setting for the Anglo-Irish 'Hillsborough Agreement' of 1985, and later became the venue for the various negotiations that led to the Good Friday Belfast Agreement of 1998.² By then, its earlier official function had been largely forgotten. When, in April 2019, the house was reopened after a costly refurbishment, readers of the *Daily Mail* were informed that this had been the home of the Governors of Northern Ireland from the 1920s until 1973, when the post was abolished, and 'when the Royal Family were not in residence'.³ This was something of a distortion, however, for Royal visits to Hillsborough were only occasional in those decades, whereas it was the constant presence of the Governors of the Province for over fifty years that – in the words of the great scholar of the Commonwealth, Nicholas Mansergh – had symbolised 'the permanence both of the authority of the Northern [Ireland] Government and the union with Great Britain'.⁴

Equally noteworthy, the office of Governor scarcely figures in the work of historians of Northern Ireland who, in the main, have either ignored it altogether, or regarded it as an office of only minor ceremonial consequence, in contrast to analyses of individual Ulster prime ministers and politicians. Hitherto, apart from Mansergh, more mindful of its significance, perhaps, having been born of the Anglo-Irish gentry, only legal scholars have been much concerned with the governorship, and even then largely in passing. Mansergh appears to have anticipated David Cannadine's astute observation that 'the rituals of rulers, the "symbolics of

power”, are not mere incidental ephemera, but are central to the structure and working of any society’.⁵ Indeed, the fundamental significance of this emblematic role has been more true of the governorship of Northern Ireland – notoriously, that most symbol-laden of territories - than in any other gubernatorial office in the Empire-Commonwealth.⁶ Moreover, the role was both conceived and abolished in crisis and this predicament marked it throughout its existence.

The position of the office of Governor in the administration of Northern Ireland

The Governorship of Northern Ireland was unique within the territory of the United Kingdom and an office more typical of other self-governing overseas possessions of the Crown. Moreover, it was born in insurgency and evolved in crisis. It originated in the Government of Ireland Act of 1920, which partitioned the country into six of the nine counties of Ulster, now called ‘Northern Ireland’, and the remaining twenty-six counties, to be known as ‘Southern Ireland’. It was envisaged that each area would receive a home rule government, still within the United Kingdom, with a Council of Ireland to promote cooperation between both administrations, but with a single Lord Lieutenant, or Viceroy, representing the King. In the event, the scheme was rejected outside Ulster.

The Government of Ireland Act thus applied solely to Northern Ireland, which, having become a truncated remnant of the Union, immediately exercised its right under the Treaty to contract out of the Irish Free State. The Act created a legislature that ‘followed closely the model of the British Dominions’, with power to make laws ‘for peace, order and good government’, but excluding matters relating to the Crown, peace and war, the control of the armed forces, foreign affairs, the postal services and certain fiscal matters.⁷ The Crown was represented by a Governor, who assumed the powers previously envisaged for the Lord Lieutenant/Viceroy and who became custodian of the Great Seal of Northern Ireland. He was appointed by the Imperial Government but, significantly, after informal consultation with the Northern Ireland Government, he held office for a six-year term. Although the Northern Ireland Cabinet did not come to enjoy direct access to the Crown that the dominions would soon achieve, it was felt that the creation of such an office would add to the prestige of the new government and that its cabinet system required such an officer. It was the Governor’s duty to summon, prorogue and – acting normally on the advice of the Northern Ireland Prime Minister and Cabinet - dissolve Parliament in the monarch’s name. The Governor possessed the right to give or withhold the Royal Assent to bills passed by the Northern Ireland Parliament, but was also required to comply with any instructions, essentially drafted by the British Home Secretary, to reserve any bill, if so directed, for the King’s pleasure. From 1922 to 1924, relations between Belfast and London were handled by the Irish Branch of the Home Office, in a small department that dealt with the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man, which possessions, significantly, lay outside the United Kingdom.⁸ An Imperial Secretary was also appointed to advise the Governor on reserved matters, until that post was deemed superfluous and abolished in 1926.⁹ F. H. Newark, Professor of Jurisprudence at the Queen’s University of Belfast summarised the role of the Governor thus:

With regard to the Governor’s powers in connection with legislation we have to distinguish between the strictly legal position and what in fact happens by constitutional convention. The theoretical position is that, unless the King gives the Governor special instructions to assent to, or withhold assent from, or to reserve a bill,

the Governor can please himself whether he gives or refuses assent. In fact, the Governor acts like a constitutional monarch, and if a bill passes the Commons and Senate he must give his assent. Nor, in fact, can the King, either on his own accord or on the advice of his Whitehall ministers, give instructions to the Governor to refuse assent or to reserve.¹⁰

All executive and administrative authority was vested in the Crown, but exercised by the Governor who, as has been pointed out, generally acted on the advice of his Ulster cabinet. His Prime Minister and Ministers were required to be members of the Privy Council of Northern Ireland. All Ministers - heads of (ultimately) seven Departments of State - were answerable to Parliament. The legislature included a Senate and a House of Commons. The former was composed of twenty-four Senators elected by the House of Commons for eight years under proportional representation, half of whom retired every four years, as well as the Lord Mayor of Belfast and the Mayor of Londonderry as ex-officio members. The House of Commons consisted of fifty-two MPs elected originally under Proportional Representation but after 1929 on a simple majority basis. Until 1969, four members were still elected by PR by Queen's University, Belfast.¹¹ Although, as Nicholas Mansergh has noted, Northern Ireland, in contrast to the dominions, was 'not in any real sense a sovereign state':

'[Westminster's] control over legislation [was] analogous to that exercised [by Ottawa] over the [Canadian] provinces ... yet the Governor ... assumed, partly by law and partly by constitutional convention, all the more significant attributes pertaining elsewhere to the respective Governors-General'.¹²

The Northern Ireland Supreme Court of Judicature was separate from that of England and Scotland, yet the appointment of judges continued to be subject to the Imperial Parliament. In theory, the United Kingdom Parliament thus retained the widest degree of authority over Northern Ireland, but its chief power was financial, since the Province relied heavily on subsidies from London. Significantly, these included even three quarters of the Governor's £8000 annual salary. Thirteen MPs were still elected from Ulster constituencies to the 'Imperial Parliament' at Westminster, the majority of whom were Unionists who took the Conservative whip there, and the Province was still represented by peers in the House of Lords, several of whose close kinsmen were also members of the Northern Ireland Senate.

'Governing without consensus'¹³: The formative years of the Governorship

Conscious that the 'eyes of the whole Empire...[were] on Ireland... [and] as the head of the Empire', George V personally opened the first Northern Ireland Parliament in June 1921, where, in a momentous speech, influenced substantially by General Jan Smuts, Prime Minister of South Africa, he called for reconciliation, stating that he 'could not have allowed [himself to entrust such a function] to a deputy alone'.¹⁴ The Treaty of 1921, which followed, ended the Anglo-Irish War, and led to the creation of the Irish Free State on the constitutional template of the Dominion of Canada; still reluctantly within the Commonwealth, but crucially outside the United Kingdom. On the day after the King's Speech, the Irish Republican Army (IRA) blew up the train carrying the King's cavalry escort, killing four soldiers and eighty horses, arousing the siege mentality of the state at its moment of birth.¹⁵ Nevertheless, the King earnestly hoped that the Crown might become a focal point of unity. The obstacles confronting such an ambition were formidable, if not insurmountable. Catholics made up one third of its population, many of whom - regarding themselves as

members of the national majority population on the island - scarcely recognised the partitioned state as remotely legitimate, remaining throughout its existence, a disaffected minority. Neither were they able to turn to the Imperial Government for redress against discrimination. In 1935, for example, the British Prime Minister, Stanley Baldwin, refused an official Nationalist request for an inquiry into rioting, because law and order was a responsibility that had been transferred to the Province's government.¹⁶ The Nationalist Party initially refused to recognise the new state and periodically abstained from parliamentary institutions, highlighting discrimination in employment and blatant manipulation or 'gerrymandering' of constituency boundaries and the local government franchise in order to exaggerate further Protestant electoral dominance.

All Ulster politics and general elections thus hinged on the very legitimacy and existence of the state itself. The Catholic minority were members of the largest church in the province. Superficially united by fear of nationalism and expressed by the Orange Order, the Protestant majority was fragmented into largely Scottish-descended Presbyterians and dissenters, who inherited elements of a radical egalitarian tradition, as well as members of the Anglican/Episcopalian Church of Ireland of the former Ascendancy. Although the latter had been disestablished in 1869, and the industrial and mercantile elite had come politically to the fore of unionism, still the landed class possessed great cultural and local influence. Indeed, it was paradoxical that the Province should become widely perceived as the last bastion of the landed ascendancy in the very island where the chief heave against agrarian political power had begun.¹⁷ Embodying the Unionists' appeal across the social and denominational divisions of Protestantism and reacting against the growing confessional character and irredentism of their southern neighbour, the founding Prime Minister, Sir James Craig, later Lord Craigavon, asserted that Northern Ireland was a 'Protestant parliament and a Protestant state.'¹⁸ Sir Denis Henry, the Lord Chief Justice, was the first and last Roman Catholic in the administration, a pattern largely repeated through the upper echelons of the civil service over the following decades. As the historian of the British aristocracy, David Cannadine, has noted, 'it was in the most peripheral part of the United Kingdom that the traditional elite seemed to remain most completely in charge', even if, in retrospect, it is clear that 'the control of Ulster Unionism was passing from the big bourgeoisie of Belfast to the more militant lower middle classes'.¹⁹ In the following half-century, successive Governors would preside over this smouldering social hierarchy.

Unionist sentiment was consoled and nationalist suspicion of the state appeared to be vindicated by the appointment of the first Governor, the third Duke of Abercorn (1868-1953), an Old Etonian and the grandest of Ulster grandees, with powerful metropolitan and Empire-wide connections.²⁰ In Mansergh's words, as a scion of the Hamiltons, who had been settled in the marches of Tyrone for 300 years, he 'enjoy[ed] by right of birth the chief place in Ulster society'.²¹ He was foremost among those landed aristocrats who had lent a tone of noble respectability to the pre-war Ulster resistance to Asquith's scheme for home rule. This seemed a form of 'country house syndicalism' that came close to threatening an armed rebellion and a rebel administration, all 'in the name of the King's Most Excellent Majesty'.²² Abercorn was tested almost as soon as he was appointed. The Northern Ireland Government decided to equip itself with powers similar to those possessed by the Imperial Government in the Restoration of Government in Ireland Act (1920), itself essentially an extension of the Defence of the Realm Act (1914). The result was the Civil Authority (Special Powers) Act,

set out by Abercorn in the King's Speech on 14 March 1922 and approved by Parliament without objection. 'Almost no limit of any kind was imposed on [the Minister of Home Affairs] to suppress disorder', Mansergh notes; they were 'frankly despotic', with draconian powers of search, detention, flogging for breaches of the various firearms acts, the death penalty for breaking the Explosive Substances Act, and, more remarkably, a prohibition on spreading false rumours whether by word of mouth or in print, or disseminating reports 'likely to cause disaffection to His Majesty' and to prejudice the recruitment of the police.²³ Although renewal of the Act was initially required on an annual basis, it was automatically passed until 1973, reflecting Northern Ireland's continuing state of crisis since its inception, along with the fact that the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the 'B-Special' police reservists were armed and paramilitary in character. At no point was this emergency legislation, unique within the United Kingdom in peacetime, referred by the Governor, or reserved to Whitehall. This reflected a consistent feature of British policy - vigilance regarding the Province's finances but complete abdication regarding local control of law and order, electoral regulation and discrimination. Few in Britain appeared to care much about the Catholics of Northern Ireland, except at times of crisis. In 1923, the Speaker of the United Kingdom House of Commons ruled that 'With regard to those subjects which have been delegated to the Government of Northern Ireland, questions must be asked of Ministers in Northern Ireland, and not in this House', and the distinguished British jurist, Sir Ivor Jennings, argued in 1959 that 'It would be unconstitutional for [the United Kingdom] Parliament to exercise its legal power of legislation in the matters delegated to the Parliament of Northern Ireland, except with the consent of that parliament'.²⁴ Fatefully, a convention developed which was not broken until the outbreak of the Troubles in 1968-9, that ministerial responsibility for matters transferred to Belfast were outside the purview of Westminster, where discussion of its internal affairs were until the 1960s invariably ruled out of order.²⁵

In the early years, nevertheless, several issues unavoidably involved the Governor. The most urgent of these was the proposed Boundary Commission to delineate the border between north and south. Craig had warned Austen Chamberlain, the Foreign Secretary, during the parliamentary debate on the Treaty, that feelings were so strong that loyalists might declare independence unilaterally and seize full control of the Province.²⁶ The threat of 'loyalist rebellion' had worn somewhat thin since the pre-war revolt against home rule, which had also involved Abercorn and other pillars of the Ulster 'establishment'. Chamberlain reproached Craig by telling him that he could not believe 'that men whose loyalty is their price are contemplating war against the King'.²⁷ The Northern Ireland Government declined to appoint a representative to the Commission on the grounds that it would infringe British guarantees regarding the integrity of its territory. The British hoped that, despite Craig's refusal, Abercorn might be persuaded to do so, which would save Craig's face.²⁸ In the event, the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council was asked whether the King or the Governor could lawfully appoint a representative in the absence of a recommendation from the Northern Ireland Government, but ruled that no such power existed. As a result, an additional clause of the Anglo-Irish 'Treaty' had, albeit in minor key, to be negotiated in 1924 which stipulated that the power to appoint such a delegate would now pass to the Imperial Government. This underlined, not for the first time, Northern Ireland's relatively weak position vis a vis the Irish Free State, which enjoyed, in contrast, full dominion status and, thus, greater leverage with Whitehall.²⁹ The Imperial Government felt caught, meanwhile, between anti-Catholic pogroms, disputes regarding security between Whitehall, Belfast, the

commanders of the British garrison and the Special reservists of the Royal Ulster Constabulary – effectively a Protestant militia. Craig advised the appointment of a British agent to investigate the crisis and produce an objective report. Under Craig’s threat of resignation, and on Churchill’s recommendation, the Imperial Government appointed Sir Stephen Tallents, a respected civil servant, as its agent in Belfast. It was significant that neither London nor Belfast considered that the Governor - the normal conduit for communication between Whitehall and a possession of the Crown – might be sufficient for such a role. Tallents advised against a judicial enquiry, as it was felt likely to be used by nationalists for propaganda purposes. As we shall see, Whitehall would retain a sense that the Governorship was inadequate until the closing years of self-government.³⁰

Tallents was retained in Belfast until 1926 as an adviser to both the Government and the Governor regarding reserved matters. At this time, each parliamentary bill was circulated privately in Whitehall for comment before their introduction in Belfast, thus allowing their certification by the Attorney General as a matter ‘transferred’ to Belfast. London subsequently increased the scope of these transferred powers.³¹ Very few statutes were challenged in the Northern Ireland courts, mainly because they drew on Canadian practice which judged that a piece of legislation was not invalidated if it incidentally affected matters outside the scope of its express powers. As a result, there was little likelihood of a Governor denying the Royal Assent for a *vires* reason.³² Nevertheless, in 1922, a crisis erupted over the Local Government Bill (NI), which proposed to abolish proportional representation in local council elections, not least because, despite all efforts, nationalists had taken control of Londonderry – symbolically crucial as the unviolated ‘maiden city’ of loyalist lore – in 1920. As the rest of Ireland erupted into civil war between pro- and anti-Treaty factions, Winston Churchill, as Colonial Secretary, came under pressure from General Michael Collins to intervene in the passage of the bill, which was a major grievance of the nationalist minority.³³ The bill passed the Northern Ireland Parliament in July 1922. Legal experts at the Colonial and Home Offices were consulted and these concluded that the abolition of proportional representation justified a reservation of Royal Assent. Abercorn accordingly, on instructions from London, set aside the bill. Craig and his colleagues, already infuriated by Abercorn’s clemency in terrorism charges, threatened to resign. In the Northern Ireland House of Commons, it was stated, to widespread support: ‘We must be masters in our own house’, which sentiment was conveyed to Whitehall and the bill was reluctantly but speedily approved.³⁴ Churchill as Colonial Secretary cited as justification the convention in self-governing colonies of non-interference and the impact any intervention would have on dominion parliaments, even though Northern Ireland did not possess such a status. Following this incident, although London was further tempted to intervene in 1925 and 1930 regarding education bills, Governors acted only on the advice of their Northern Ireland cabinet.³⁵

The Governor, ceremony and the exercise of power

For a new state that was just emerging from the crucible of loyalist resistance to Irish nationalism, the Duke of Abercorn seemed symbolically a natural Unionist choice for the governorship. He had impeccable credentials, with his estate holding one of the contested frontiers of the Province, which was foremost in his allegiance, even to the extent, later, of declining an offer from the Canadian Prime Minister, R. B. Bennett, of the prestigious post of Governor-General of the senior dominion, in favour of remaining Governor of Northern Ireland. Since the governorship of the Province was a new post, Abercorn had relative

freedom to formulate his own precedents and procedures, as well as being able to set the style of the office.³⁶ Initially, he held court on his own estate at Barons Court in County Tyrone, but in 1925 the Government purchased Hillsborough Castle in County Down, several miles from Belfast, a rambling late-Georgian mansion, located in a town noted for its very 'English' character.³⁷ The surrounding village that had grown up around it was an archetypal settlement of the Ulster Plantation. There were well-planned streets, a market square and a handsome Anglican parish church, overlaying an ancient, pre-colonial past. William of Orange had stayed at Hillsborough Castle on his way to his victory at the Battle of the Boyne in 1690, and the older fort that still stood nearby provided a salient – to some, reproachful – reminder of this contested colonial history.³⁸

Government House, as Hillsborough Castle now became, was an unusual Janus-faced fusion: half-townhouse on a village street and half-country demesne facing a parkland of ornamental gardens, with tall pine trees and reputedly the biggest rhododendron bush in all of Europe. 'It makes for a convenient location ... as the place of residence of His Excellency the Governor', one Ulster writer recalled, 'and it has come to figure in the minds of Ulster people as a place visited by royalty and many eminent people'.³⁹ Indeed, the residence itself would become – in petrified form – one of the enduring *dramatis personae* of the governorship. As Governor, he occupied the summit of Ulster society, and just as Northern Ireland appeared a truncated provincial remnant of the Government of Ireland Act, so, too, his viceregal court seemed a shrunken survival of the old Ascendancy that had once ruled throughout the whole island, centred on Dublin Castle and the Phoenix Park. Hillsborough and the Governor's social round of county agricultural shows and gymkhanas seemed to some observers to be anaemic substitutes for the vanished viceregal world and splendour of Dublin. Unlike their southern cousins, however, the Ulster Ascendancy maintained its official position, serving as county Lords Lieutenants, DLs and JPs.⁴⁰ Several sat in both the Northern Ireland Senate and the House of Lords. They had not forgotten the ancient martial function of their rank, with an extraordinary prominence of former officers in both houses who habitually retained their military titles.⁴¹ The aristocracy was 'less effective, even less ceremonious' than in Great Britain, claimed a biographer of Craigavon, for they had not 'good-formed themselves', like the southern English.⁴² With every passing year, Northern Ireland, encapsulated by the governorship, drew further away from the Irish Free State which, always restless as a dominion, steadily eroded its links with the Commonwealth, particularly after the coming to power of Eamon de Valera's republican-minded Fianna Fail party in 1932.⁴³ Northern Ireland thus embodied fundamentally a repudiation of Irish republican disaffection. As Mansergh notes, Craig rarely missed an opportunity, no matter how remote or inappropriate, to refer to the 'loyalty of Ulster'.⁴⁴

The most tangible symbol of the permanence of Ulster's Britishness was the Parliament Building at Stormont, on a scale appropriate to that of a great dominion, the foundation stone of which was laid by Abercorn in 1928 and opened by the Prince of Wales.⁴⁵ 'The imposing complex of grandiose buildings... with Carson's statue in front of them ... struck me as a *folie de grandeur*', a later Secretary of State, Jim Prior, successor to the Governors, would remark, on first seeing them, in more violent and post-imperial times.⁴⁶ At State Openings, members of the green-benched Commons, together with members of the red-benched Senate, would be summoned by a Gentleman Usher of the Black Rod to the foot of the 'Imperial Staircase' to witness the Governor, wearing the full ceremonial court uniform

of cocked hat, white swan-feather plume and sword, read the King's (or Queen's) Speech which had been approved by the Cabinet, setting out the legislative programme for the forthcoming session.⁴⁷ Successive Governors were thus central features of this 'most important architectural symbol of the North's political identity'.⁴⁸ Less successful was their attempt to bridge the sectarian divide in their society. Relations between the Catholic hierarchy and the state remained cool, however, in preparations for the Royal Visit of 1937, for example: 'Unfortunately', Buckingham Palace was informed by Abercorn, 'the Roman Catholic Church has not accepted the invitation to present an Address [of loyalty].'⁴⁹

In 1940, Lord Craigavon died in office, having resolutely refused to recommend a successor. Abercorn took private soundings of leading Unionists and called on John Andrews to become Prime Minister and form a government. Abercorn would have been happy to retire the same year but was persuaded to remain in office for the duration of the war, playing host to such visitors as Robert Menzies, Prime Minister of Australia, Deneys Reitz, Deputy-Prime Minister of South Africa, and US General Dwight Eisenhower.⁵⁰ Abercorn became a central figure in promoting the Province's war effort and morale. A campaign was also waged by the IRA, which sought to facilitate a Nazi invasion. In 1942, six IRA members were sentenced to death for the murder of a policeman. Five of these had their sentences commuted. Andrews wrote to Abercorn to advise him that there were 'no grounds for the exercise of the prerogative of mercy' in the case of the 19-year old self-confessed IRA leader, Tom Williams. Abercorn agreed to this decision and the hanging went ahead, thus adding Williams to the pantheon of Irish republican martyrs.⁵¹

In 1943, against a background of electoral decline and party criticism that was developing into a full-scale revolt, Andrews refused to make cabinet changes and submitted his resignation to the Governor without, it would seem, nominating a successor. Abercorn again took soundings from leading Unionists and asked Sir Basil Brooke to form a government. Brooke, later Lord Brookeborough, was drawn from one of the leading landed families and was the nephew of Field Marshal Lord Alanbrooke, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff.⁵² Brooke was worried about the prospect of a post-war Labour electoral victory in Britain. Moreover, regarding the governorship, Mansergh had wondered a decade earlier whether a problem might occur should the office fall vacant while a Labour government was in office 'when a choice acceptable to both cabinets may well prove of exceptional difficulty'.⁵³ Despite these fears, however, when Abercorn resigned in September 1945, there was no disagreement regarding his successor, the 4th Earl Granville.

The Governors and the Reinforcing of the Union at a time of continuing threat

Granville's succession marked a change after the long governorship of Abercorn: he hailed from outside Ulster and, being married to Lady Rose Bowes-Lyon, the sister of Queen Elizabeth, he too had influential connections in Britain. The responsibilities of the Governor had recently been increased in the Ministries Act (NI), empowering him to transfer functions between departments and to alter their names. Hopes for a rapprochement with the Catholic hierarchy were raised by the Governor sending Sir Norman Stronge, Speaker of the House of Commons, as his representative at the funeral of the Archbishop of Armagh, Cardinal MacRory.⁵⁴ Moreover, he possessed relevant experience, having been Lieutenant-Governor of the Isle of Man since 1937.⁵⁵ He took office at a time of 'considerable consternation' among Ulster Unionist leaders. Brooke feared that Labour policy under Clement Attlee

would be to force them into a united Ireland and was reflecting on this prospect, along with further integration in the United Kingdom, which he thought dangerous, and dominion status, which might lower living standards. There is evidence of friction between Belfast and London, particularly when it was decided not to extend national service to the Province without consulting Unionist leaders. The most serious disagreement occurred over Brooke's decision not to replace property qualifications with 'one man, one vote' in local government elections, a continuing nationalist grievance. It was made clear to Edmond Warnock, the Minister of Home Affairs, that the King and the Governor might be advised to withhold Royal Assent. The debate at Westminster on the Northern Ireland Bill, which proposed the transfer of additional powers to Stormont, occasioned scathing backbench comments regarding discrimination in the Province, contravening the tradition of non-intervention. Dominion status was again considered, but dismissed as impractical by Brooke's cabinet, which sought instead to expand legislative and fiscal powers. Despite Unionist MPs traditionally taking the Conservative Party whip at Westminster, Stormont cooperated in applying British legislation but sought to moderate the growing body of socialist legislation as it applied to Northern Ireland.⁵⁶ A further risk to the Ulster position within the Union came in threats from Dublin to lead a global anti-partition campaign, amid fears of a renewed IRA campaign, which Brooke sought to counter.⁵⁷ Unionist fears were somewhat allayed by Clement Attlee's decision to enshrine a guarantee in the Ireland Act of 1949, passed in reaction to Eire's departure from the Commonwealth, that there would be no change in the Province's constitutional position without the consent of the majority.⁵⁸ In the 1950s and 1960s, Ulster Prime Ministers began to attend Commonwealth Prime Ministers' conferences as a matter of courtesy rather than right, in order to highlight the Province's continuing allegiance.

Granville retired in December 1952, to be replaced by the 2nd Baron Wakehurst, who had been a Conservative MP, before becoming the last British Governor of New South Wales in 1937.⁵⁹ Two years later, he successfully handled a major political crisis there involving a vote of no confidence in the Premier. Thus experienced and tall in stature, he appeared to be well suited to the post. The accession of Elizabeth II soon provided an exceptional opportunity to demonstrate the Province's loyalty, in marked contrast to the Irish Republic. In 1953, she undertook a Coronation Visit to Ulster, which proved to be a great success. The couple were guests of the Governor and were greeted throughout Ulster, particularly, if not quite exclusively, in Protestant neighbourhoods. In a special feature, the *Belfast Telegraph* reporter enthused about both the Queen and the Governor in unabashedly colonial terms:

All roads lead to Hillsborough, that ancient town in the heart of the country where once stood the stronghold of the Magennises. On this site the first-born of Sir Moyses Hill, that gallant soldier who served the first Elizabeth, built a castle. Now, here is the home of the Governor...representative in Ulster of Queen Elizabeth the Second. How strangely interwoven are the strands which bind us to our past.⁶⁰

In common with previous royal visitors, the couple were greeted at Government House by two Lambeg drummers, as though these were as consensual as Scottish pipers, instead of divisive symbols of Ulster sectarianism. Away from the royal visitors, the IRA planted bombs and a Flags and Emblems Act was later passed forbidding any interference with the Union Jack.⁶¹ It is evident from his extensive personal movie collection made for television that Wakehurst subscribed, somewhat naively, to common racial stereotypes of industrious

descendants of Scottish and English settlers and 'small dark folk, descendants of the oldest Irish stock' encountered in the highland regions of the Province.⁶² Such bucolic scenes were soon disturbed, however, by a renewed IRA border campaign from December 1956 to February 1962. The Governor's personal authority remained essential to the issuing of Province-wide orders regarding arrest and detention without trial made under the Special Powers Act.⁶³

By 1963, there was a rebellious spirit in the Unionist Party. Lord Glentoran, the Unionist Leader in the Senate, was compromised by having been director of a bank that had benefitted from government contracts. It was widely felt that a more professional cabinet attuned to British standards was required than that provided by Lord Brookeborough, now 74 and ailing from a duodenal ulcer. There were three likely candidates for the succession; Captain Terence O'Neill, the Minister of Finance, Brian Faulkner, the Minister of Home Affairs, and Jack Andrews, the Minister of Commerce, – the latter a particular choice of Unionist Party HQ. On 23 March, Lady Brookeborough telephoned Wakehurst, asking if her husband might see him at Stormont on the following Monday. On his arrival, Brookeborough announced his resignation on health grounds and in the belief that he had staved off a revolt in the Unionist Party. They discussed a possible successor. Wakehurst later recalled that he 'and Lord Brookeborough were of one mind in considering the Minister of Finance and Acting Prime Minister, Terence O'Neill as the obvious choice'. Brookeborough, however, pointedly refused to recommend O'Neill, having a decade earlier promised the parliamentary party that his successor would be elected by them. This undermined O'Neill's ambitions, despite his military credentials and distinguished family background. O'Neill was forewarned in advance of his rivals, Faulkner and Andrews, and called to see the Governor, but among many Unionists he lacked legitimacy. Nevertheless, Wakehurst went ahead and, 'over a whiskey and soda at Government House', asked him to become Prime Minister, which he accepted.⁶⁴ O'Neill was another Old Etonian who was keen to modernise the economy and reform Unionist attitudes to the nationalist minority and towards the Republic. Following the election of Harold Wilson's Labour administration in 1964, he was mindful of the need to present a more liberal image of the Province in Great Britain.⁶⁵

In December 1964, Lord Erskine succeeded as Governor, marking a further change in the character of the office. O'Neill, who advised his appointment, although himself an Anglican, thought that the choice of a Scottish Presbyterian would better represent the majority Protestant denomination in the Province. Moreover, he was a banker who was particularly familiar with it, having served as a member of the Joint Exchequer Board which regulated the relationship between the Northern Ireland Ministry of Finance and the Treasury. 'A Colonial Governor governs', O'Neill asserted, but a 'Governor of Northern Ireland is purely representational.'⁶⁶ He anticipated that Erskine, as someone who had been used to taking 'big decisions' might find the position 'irksome', but the office proved to be anything but uneventful. In 1965, O'Neill initiated meetings with his southern counterpart, Sean Lemass, of which Erskine fully approved, but which drew the ire of a firebrand evangelical preacher, Reverend Ian Paisley.⁶⁷ 1966 was a volatile year with opposing commemorations of the Easter insurrection and of the Ulster Division's prominence in the Battle of the Somme half a century earlier, as well as growing Catholic demands for civil equality.⁶⁸ In June, Paisley led on the Presbyterian General Assembly in Belfast to protest against its 'Romanizing tendencies' and in the ensuing melee the Governor and Lady Erskine were

heckled and jostled.⁶⁹ Lord Erskine was also unwittingly drawn into another controversy. On 14 January, the Unionist Group on Belfast Corporation decided that a new bridge across the Lagan should be named 'Carson Bridge', after the Unionist leader, Lord Carson, rather than 'Somme Bridge', which was also suggested as a commemoration of the bravery of the 36th (Ulster) Division. Erskine telephoned to make it plain that the Queen, who was due to open the bridge, did not want to be implicated in a political controversy, and he strongly suggested that it be named 'Queen Elizabeth II Bridge' instead. The Unionist Party caucus reluctantly agreed but condemned the Governor's intervention in a political matter. The incident incensed Paisley, who recruited a retired Tory MP, Ned Carson, a son of Lord Carson, to address a rally in the Ulster Hall. He joined in calls for the Governor's resignation, threatening the government with 'as much power as [they could] give'.⁷⁰

Within weeks, Erskine played host to the Queen who arrived in person to open the new bridge, while O'Neill hoped that she would use the occasion to signal her approval of his cross-sectarian bridge-building plans, with, 'quite literally, the constitutional position of Northern Ireland' at stake. 'The Catholics do not like me', she mused, amid protests that included the dropping of a concrete block on the royal limousine, 'what happens if the Protestants also turn against me?' The Duke of Edinburgh appeared to understand O'Neill's dilemma, but not the Queen. O'Neill privately despaired at this lost opportunity:

The Queen, who in Ulster is more a symbol of Protestantism than an ordinary monarch, had failed to use her position in a responsible manner...How can one drag Northern Ireland, kicking and screaming, into the second half of the twentieth century if single-handed, unaided even by one's Queen?⁷¹

Over the following months, the Unionist Party was split by O'Neill's reformism and his response to an increasingly strident civil rights campaign. In October 1968, his hard-line Minister of Home Affairs, Bill Craig, banned a civil rights march, leading to further confrontation with the police. Lord Erskine resigned as Governor after serving just four years out of his 6-year term, and was replaced by Sir Ralph Grey, now elevated to the peerage as Baron Grey of Naunton.

Grey brought exceptional experience to the governorship at this most perilous period in the Province's history. A New Zealand lawyer, he joined the British Colonial Administrative Service in 1936, serving in Nigeria, where he rose to become Deputy Governor-General just before independence, when gubernatorial responsibilities there were becoming consultative rather than executive. In 1958, he was transferred to British Guiana as Governor and Commander-in-Chief, at a time of growing unrest, which necessitated the calling in of British troops. There he became familiar with counter-subversion, closely dealing with both MI5 and the CIA. He cautioned against an excessive belief in communist infiltration, but was condescending regarding the Guyanese in confidential despatches, referring to them as 'children'.⁷² In 1964, he became Governor of the Bahamas, at a time when full internal autonomy had been granted, from where he also oversaw the Turks and Caicos Islands, until he transferred to Northern Ireland. He, thus, brought an unparalleled administrative experience of an emergency situation, as well as of a more advisory and symbolic role to which Ulster had been accustomed. He arrived in office just as the Province descended ever further into violence. A change in style was immediately apparent, as he suggested that he should be circulated with all Cabinet conclusions, as the was the monarch's

practice in London.⁷³ As Sir Kenneth Bloomfield, the former head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service, has recalled:

Although he had exercised the executive powers of a British colonial governor in his previous posts..., he never showed any signs of misunderstanding his very different role of 'constitutional monarch' in Northern Ireland, although he exercised in a shrewd and prudent way that ability to encourage, advise and warn ministers identified by Bagehot in his classic study of the British constitution.⁷⁴

Elsewhere, Bloomfield notes, drawing on his experience of having served three Prime Ministers, that Grey was exceptional among Ulster governors, even if he did not detect any marked contribution, other than the 'ornamental [and] more showy side of government activity'. Grey was a 'class act' who was 'wiser and more experienced than many, if not all, of the local politicians', yet he 'was in no position to know in detail what was going on' as much of the high-level communication between Belfast and London took place between the Stormont Cabinet Office and the Home Office.⁷⁵ Socially, Grey seemed far more approachable than his predecessors, taking a keen interest in PACE, the 'Protestant and Catholic Encounter' organisation.⁷⁶ 'So far, both sides have been extremely nice to me', he remarked, soon after his arrival: 'I only wish they were a little nicer to each other.'⁷⁷ He possessed a somewhat easier, egalitarian-minded 'colonial' manner, even if protocol still had to be maintained. At the height of the crisis, a fellow MP took aside Paddy Devlin, an staunchly republican and socialist-minded parliamentarian, to advise him that he could explain the proper behaviour on meeting the Governor, and offered his wife's counsel for Mrs Devlin regarding the correct way to curtsey to Lady Grey, which convention, however, Devlin declined to follow.⁷⁸

O'Neill was invited to London by Harold Wilson who, very significantly, was then facing parallel crises of 'unrequited loyalists' in Ulster and Rhodesia, both of which self-governing territories were being raised at the United Nations. 'I suppose Northern Ireland is rather like Rhodesia', said Wilson. 'Maybe it is', replied O'Neill. 'but [referring to the deposed Prime Minister there] I do not intend to be the Garfield Todd of Northern Ireland.'⁷⁹ O'Neill was very conscious of this analogy, being a personal friend of the Governor of Rhodesia, Sir Humphrey Gibbs, whose traditional role had been largely ceremonial, but who had recently been reluctantly propelled by the Unilateral Declaration of Independence into an executive if wholly ineffectual role. He was also acutely aware of a widespread admiration for UDI as an example among Unionists of determined frontier assertion by 'true Britishers', including Cabinet colleagues such as Bill Craig - who would later become leader of the right-wing Vanguard Movement - against a pusillanimous metropole. O'Neill pointedly sounded a particular note of caution in his momentous 'Ulster at the Crossroads' television broadcast:

There are, I know, today some so-called loyalists who talk of independence from Britain ... Rhodesia, in defying Britain from thousands of miles away, at least has an army and air force of her own. Where are the Ulster armoured divisions and Ulster jet planes? ... These people ... are not loyalists but disloyalists: disloyal to Britain, disloyal to the Constitution, disloyal - if they are in public life - to the solemn oath they have sworn to Her Majesty the Queen.⁸⁰

In such a potential crisis of allegiance, UDI had implications for the role of Ulster's Governor as a decisive symbol of legitimate authority, particularly as British ministers,

preoccupied with Rhodesia and other pressing predicaments, in common with the public at large, suddenly became aware of how little they knew about Ulster – so near, yet so far - after over fifty years of neglect.⁸¹ When Jim Callaghan took over as Home Secretary at the end of 1967, he found that his first box of official papers contained files on everything except Northern Ireland, despite the developing crisis there. None was more aware of this blind spot than the Defence Secretary, Denis Healey, who was responsible for the deployment of British troops in the Province as the security situation deteriorated. As he frankly admitted:

Northern Ireland has completely different conditions from Britain and we shall be as blind men leading the blind if we have to go in there knowing nothing about the place.⁸²

Grey proved to be the most energetic Governor of all, warning Callaghan at the outset of his visit that he was 'in for a conflagration'.⁸³ He greatly facilitated meetings between visiting British ministers unfamiliar with the Province, including Harold Wilson, and leading local figures.⁸⁴ He met privately with William Conway, the Cardinal Archbishop of Armagh, and requested that the meeting remain secret.⁸⁵ He granted O'Neill a general election in February of 1969 which O'Neill hoped would see off the growing rebellion in his party. Grey also authorised the creation of a Ministry of Community Relations and, more crucially, a commission under Lord Cameron to enquire into the causes of unrest.⁸⁶ In the event, the election results were inclusive, with the Unionists suffering considerable losses. Faulkner resigned as Minister of Home Affairs, in protest against the Cameron Commission and, with further party splits and a series of bomb explosions, O'Neill resigned as Prime Minister in April 1969.

Grey now turned to Major James Chichester-Clark, narrowly the choice of Unionist parliamentarians, a remote relative of O'Neill and a fellow Old Etonian, whose decision to resign as Minister of Agriculture, supposedly on the question of O'Neill's timing in reforming the local government franchise, had helped to seal the latter's political fate. As we have seen, in the appointment of Sir Stephen Tallents as Imperial agent in 1920s, in times of emergency, Whitehall did not choose to rely on an Ulster Governor alone for intelligence about local conditions. Similarly, Callaghan, as Home Secretary, decided to appoint Oliver Wright, recently the British Ambassador to Denmark, as the British representative at Stormont, whom the Foreign Office was willing to 'lend' for this purpose. Particularly relevant was the fact that he had acted as Wilson's special envoy on Rhodesia, where he had proved exceptionally adroit in dealing with recalcitrant and determined unrequited loyalists. Liberal in outlook but conspiratorially minded, he had advocated a scheme of sabotage against the Rhodesian regime.⁸⁷ In Ulster, there were fears of a similar UDI and the stress such an operation might place on the allegiance of the armed forces, particularly if this might involve confronting elements of Stormont's own security forces. In December 1968, the Chief of the Defence Staff, Marshal of the Royal Air Force Sir Charles 'Sam' Elworthy, a New Zealander who had so recently been deeply enmeshed in analogous service issues regarding the Rhodesian crisis, informed Wilson, that coming to the aid of the civil power was 'probably the most unpopular and thankless duty a serviceman has and commanders would certainly be most loath to undertake this duty unless it was absolutely necessary'.⁸⁸

The appointment of an agent at Stormont was Wilson's idea originally, since Callaghan had wanted to keep the issue in his 'own hands' and feared that a 'resident

Minister might get [them] more involved in Northern Ireland than was necessary'. Indeed, in order to seem semi-detached from the situation, he declined 'kindly offers' of hospitality from both the Governor and Chichester-Clark, establishing his dozen Home Office staff on a floor of the Conway Hotel outside Belfast. He hoped that Chichester-Clark would push through the necessary reforms and that 'sending in Oliver Wright and two other civil servants was a good way of exercising real control without offending susceptibilities overmuch'. There were rumours that the entire Ulster Cabinet might resign if the B-Special Constabulary were disbanded, as well as of an Ulster UDI and that the British 'might be plunged into a very tricky situation without the knowledge or resources to take over the Administration'. It was his public attitude that it was Chichester-Clark who was making the decisions while, in fact, privately, it was Callaghan who was chivvying them through' and the appointment was clearly expedient, providing the British with effective leverage, without being seen to be drawn too much into the internal affairs of the Province. Callaghan thus thought Wright, both a decorated war hero and an experienced diplomat, would be 'first class' for dealing with Chichester Clark, resembling an auxiliary administrator rather than a diplomatic agent:

[Wright] turned out to be an excellent choice: he had natural political nous. He is irreverent, with a sardonic sense of honour and a commanding presence: he is tall and has a sort of swagger when he walks and can get along with most people. It was decided that [he] would sit in a room next to Chichester-Clark' at Stormont Castle [the Prime Minister's residence] and that his job would be to explain British policy to Chichester-Clark and warn him where he was likely to get into difficulties with us. He would also be able to tell us what was going on. But I did not want him there just to tell me what I could learn from other quarters. I wanted him there to put some stiffening into the administration and to broaden its outlook.⁸⁹

Not even Wright's calculating counsel could save Chichester-Clark from the deteriorating security situation, however, or prevent the British from being drawn further into the crisis than they would have wished. Chichester-Clark had considerable experience in dealing with Governors, having been *aide de camp* to his fellow Ulsterman, Field Marshal Earl Alexander of Tunis, as Governor-General of Canada, after the war.⁹⁰ In 1970, Chichester-Clark asked Grey to proclaim a State of Emergency, despite opposition from opposition MPs and Senators. Grey consulted the Home Office and was informed that the Home Secretary had received no specific instructions from the Queen or direction that he should reserve the Bill which became law on 7 December.⁹¹ Nevertheless, Chichester-Clark was forced to bow to London's demands to disband the B-Specials and hand over operational control of security to the British Army commander. With further deaths of British troops, he flew to London to request reinforcements from the new Conservative administration led by Edward Heath, who sensed that the Unionists sought to retain control over security policy. Caught between British policy and Unionist Party unrest, Chichester-Clark resigned in March.

Grey now called on Brian Faulkner, an old rival of both O'Neill and Chichester-Clark, to become Prime Minister. Faulkner marked a break with his landed predecessors. He was a prosperous middle-class industrialist and lacked one of the military ranks so prevalent among Unionist politicians, as he noted, to his considerable political disadvantage.⁹² Unlike previous Prime Ministers, who 'emerged' and were chosen by the Governor, he took the initiative in informing the Governor of his election by MPs and Senators, seeing off his rival,

Bill Craig, by a wide margin.⁹³ He then went to see Grey at Hillsborough, who asked him if he was confident that he could form a government and, on his acceptance, appointed him as Prime Minister. According to Faulkner, he had proved to be a new kind of Governor, who 'clearly did not regard himself as a mere rubber stamp and figurehead to be rolled out on state occasions'. He took a keen interest all aspects of Northern Ireland and availed himself of every opportunity to mix with its citizens. Unlike his landed predecessors, however, the mercantile Faulkner possessed little romantic attachment to tradition. He recalled Grey's 'homily' to new members of the Northern Ireland Privy Council about the need for unity and harmony. Grey was a 'talented and witty' speaker, he conceded, but he was unmoved:

...I must say that, almost alone among my colleagues, I regarded the office of Governor as rather archaic and colonial in a province of the United Kingdom and, although Lord Grey rapidly won the personal affection and respect of people of all political views, I did not see that the post fulfilled any indispensable constitutional function ... terms of absolutely binding secrecy [were necessary]. But other less archaic means could have been found to serve that purpose.⁹⁴

Faulkner's Private Secretary remembers how he 'tolerated' Grey's consultation for several minutes before 'finally pointing theatrically at his watch [and] quite bluntly [informing] the Governor that they had better get on with their respective jobs: his own was to run the Government, Grey's was to sign the bits of paper'.⁹⁵ Nevertheless, Grey's authorisation was essential for Operation Demetrius – Faulkner's introduction of internment without trial in August 1971 – as well as symbolically representing the central authority of the Crown when the constancy of local security forces was coming under acute strain.

Despite Faulkner's contempt, power was already moving from Stormont to Whitehall. Wright was mindful of current British impotence in relation to Rhodesia, and they wished to avoid such a repetition. In January 1969, as O'Neill faced a party rebellion, Callaghan sent a senior Home Office official, Robin North, to Belfast to advise Grey of contingency planning for direct intervention. Grey was 'empowered', if he judged it wise, to inform O'Neill, but Grey and North both agreed not to do so, unless this were 'absolutely necessary', as this might suggest that action was imminent.⁹⁶ Even though this meeting was being effectively conducted in secret, O'Neill, in common with his colleagues, had taken the autonomy of Stormont for granted. As Alvin Jackson has aptly noted:

Even though the sovereignty of London was being quietly and devastatingly exercised, the rulers of the devolved administration remained trapped by their own delusions of ministerial grandeur, and by the parochialism of their culture.⁹⁷

Control of the Province was now, effectively, in the hands of the small committee, comprising Wright, 'at the elbow' of the Ulster Prime Minister, and General Sir Ian Freeland, the military commander.⁹⁸ Wright was succeeded as 'UK Representative' by Ronnie Burroughs, subsequently Ambassador to Algeria, and Sir Howard Smith, a later head of MI5, who operated 'in effect a mini-embassy', significantly located well away from Stormont at Craigavon, 'with all the accompanying apparatus of secure communications'. This quasi-diplomatic presence highlighted the shortcomings of the office of Governor, as Bloomfield recalled:

If not too little it was certainly, by then, a great deal too late. For years successive British Governments, unassisted by the radar of any effective local representation, had peered at Northern Ireland, if at all, through a dense fog.⁹⁹

At about this time, Callaghan recalled, the position of Lord Grey 'began to trouble us'. He was very aware that this dutiful official 'lived, not by his desire, in somewhat faded splendour' at Hillsborough, but was insufficiently remunerated 'to enable him to maintain the dignity of a constitutional monarch'. This had been a common complaint in parliamentary questions at Westminster over several decades, some even suggesting that a member of the Royal Family such as the Duke of Gloucester might occasionally carry out such duties more cheaply on a non-residential basis.¹⁰⁰ But Callaghan mused whether he was indeed – in his phrase – a constitutional monarch. The 'difficulty first arose' when they were considering the possibility of suspending Stormont. Grey pointed out facts that had been 'conveniently obscured'. His predecessors had come to regard themselves as representatives of the Sovereign, acting on the advice of local ministers rather than Westminster, and not just in relation to transferred matters, which convention he attributed to the 25-year reign, without interference, of the Duke of Abercorn, which had defined the role. As a result, 'even on other matters he acted more like the Governor-General of an independent country within the Commonwealth than the Governor of a dependent territory, responsible to the United Kingdom at Westminster'. It was true that the Letters Patent of his original appointment stipulated certain restrictions that highlighted the pre-eminence of the British Home Secretary and Westminster. Nevertheless, Grey correctly reminded Callaghan that when he was appointed he had been advised by him 'to regard himself as Terence O'Neill's man ... rather than the representative of Westminster'. Callaghan attributed this 'cat's cradle' to 'neglect by Westminster over the years and the encroachment of the Northern Ireland Government'.¹⁰¹ As in the parallel case of Rhodesia, the role of the Governor seemed central to the maintenance of sovereign authority and stability at a time of crisis. In both cases, the Governor personified allegiance to the Queen which, crucially, could be seen as transcending obedience to transitory British governments which so many regarded as fickle. A suspension of Stormont administration and Parliament was being envisaged and their replacement by an Executive Council under the command of the Governor or an executive Minister and 'not a policy-making Minister', who would act under Callaghan's general guidance and advice from London.¹⁰²

These considerations gained urgent momentum following the shooting of civilians by British paratroopers in Derry in January 1972. Despite their traditional party alliance with Unionism, Heath's newly elected Conservative administration now took decisive action, withdrawing Stormont's security powers. Faulkner and his Cabinet resigned in protest, while Parliament was prorogued and later abolished. Heath appointed William Whitelaw as Secretary of State who, under Section 1 (1) of the Northern Ireland (Temporary Provisions) Act, combined all legislative and administrative powers previously held by Stormont. On his arrival, he immediately went to Belfast to meet Grey, the GOC, General Sir Harry Tuzo, the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, Sir Graham Shillington, as well as the heads of departments. His task was to ensure their loyalty, which amid all the recent upheaval could not be taken for granted. He went to stay with the Greys at Hillsborough and their wives became good friends. Grey provided much sound advice and Whitelaw felt he had gained an important ally in his 'desperately lonely position'. Subsequently, when Whitelaw

felt like resigning under the strain, Grey counselled against it.¹⁰³ With the appointment of Whitelaw, the role of the Governor seemed redundant. Many Unionists regarded the abolition of the office as an insult. It had been a visible reminder of the Province's constitutional distinctiveness and autonomy, and a more unswerving symbol of the Crown than Westminster. This was indeed a view of the governorship strongly shared by many Unionists, including the influential Grand Master of the Orange Order, the Reverend Martin Smyth, MP.¹⁰⁴ When he left in 1973, a petition was signed by 130,000 unionists urging the British Government to retain the office of Governor. Faulkner recognised the strength of feeling on this issue, heightened by the high regard in which Grey was held, but he was reluctant to support his party's call to campaign against its abolition. By nature, he was attracted to 'business-like and practical arrangements' and, as one who thought that 'the Mother of Parliaments herself' could do with a facelift', believed that their reaction was unhelpfully sentimental. 'To people used to fifty years of ... all the titles and paraphernalia of a Sovereign Parliament this was a downgrading of the their institutions which they resented', he accepted, but he thought that the Governor's title 'smacked of colonialism and damaged rather than strengthened [their position] within the United Kingdom' and an obstacle to full integration.¹⁰⁵ Nevertheless, Claire Palley, the eminent legal historian of Rhodesia, recently relocated from Salisbury to Queen's University, Belfast, thought that the office of Secretary of State was indeed 'akin to the Governor of a Colony' and she considered the possibility of a repetition of the kind of UDI she had witnessed in Rhodesia.¹⁰⁶ Harold Wilson drafted just such an 'Algerian solution', a 'Doomsday Scenario', in light of the failure to achieve a political settlement. He contemplated a British withdrawal from the Province, offering Unionists the full dominion status which many were now demanding, but with constitutional guarantees for the nationalist minority and the Queen represented by a Governor General, but the scheme was overtaken by the loyalist Workers Strike of 1974, which paralysed the Province.¹⁰⁷ Faulkner briefly considered asking for Grey to be recalled to act as a mediator with the strikers.¹⁰⁸ By that time, however, although continuing to take an interest in Ulster affairs, Grey had retired and had been rejected as a candidate for the governorship of Bermuda in 1973 due to his role in Northern Ireland.¹⁰⁹ He delayed his maiden speech in the House of Lords until after he had left office. 'I learned painfully in Northern Ireland', he recalled, 'that it is almost impossible to say anything of consequence in public ... without provoking somebody'.¹¹⁰

A later Secretary of State, Jim Prior, felt a similar sense of powerlessness:

...I found myself performing a dual role, as a Governor-General [sic] representing the Queen and as such the enemy of every Republican in the Province, but also ... acting as a referee in a boxing ring whose authority seemed to be resented equally by both sides. I was combining two tasks kept separate until ... direct rule ... in 1972. At one minute I was discharging duties previously performed by the Governor-General on behalf of the Queen; the next I was, in effect, the Prime Minister of the Province ... living at Hillsborough ... the former residence of the Governors-General of Northern Ireland, which is why nationalists do not like going there for ceremonial events such as the summer garden parties.

Prior's erroneous – if common – titular confusion of 'Governor' with 'Governor-General' is revealing, in light of the character of the office in the Province. He contrasted his duties at Hillsborough, with those he performed at Stormont, 'the traditional base of Government ...

and a symbol of the Union for all unionists.’¹¹¹ He thought it was insensitive and provocative of the British and Irish governments to sign the Anglo-Irish Agreement at Government House in 1985, which conceded an official Irish role in the Province. ‘Hillsborough is very much the symbol of Unionist loyalty to the Crown’, he reflected: ‘It is treated with the same respect and care as Buckingham Palace is by the English – or even more. The Unionists do not really like the fact that English Secretaries of State now live there...’¹¹² Norman Dugdale, a senior Northern Ireland civil servant who served both Stormont and under direct rule in these years, also considered the continuing ‘colonial’ and expatriate feel of British administrative officials at Government House, despite the departure of the last of the governors, in a poem tellingly titled ‘Provincia Deserta’:

Well, here it is: not Botany Bay
 But a Penal settlement all the same,
 The sentence life without remission – saving,
 Of course, Sir, such as yourself, gentlemen newly come
 To live here at the Governor’s Lodge. Two years from how
 You will be safely home again and dining out
 On your bizarre experiences, which cannot fail
 To please your hostess and amuse the company...¹¹³

In the recent restoration of Hillsborough, an effort has been made to make it less ‘imperial’ in tone and more ‘inclusive’, in the fragile political era following the Belfast Agreement. This is in keeping with other changes that have taken place since the abolition of the governorship, including the removal of the monarchical moniker of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, as well as oaths of allegiance, making Northern Ireland considerably less regal symbolically than, say, far-distant Canadian provinces and Australian states still remain. Viceregal traces at Hillsborough linger in the form of ‘Lady Granville’s Garden’ and the ‘Lady Grey Study’. These are faint reminders of that crucial conjunction - that unavoidable ‘and’ - in the title of Great Britain *and* Northern Ireland which, for all the Province’s vaunted Britishness and proximity to the metropole, has helped to perpetuate its singular position as a semi-detached ‘place apart’ within the United Kingdom.

¹ Douglas Hurd, *Memoirs* (London: 2003), p.343.

² Anthony Kenny, *The Road to Hillsborough: The Shaping of the Anglo-Irish Agreement* (Oxford: 1985).

³ Robert Hardman, ‘Through the Queen’s Other Key Hole’, *Daily Mail*, April 2019.

⁴ Mansergh, *Northern Ireland*, p.343.

⁵ David Cannadine, ‘Introduction: Divine Rites of Kings’, in David Cannadine and Simon Price (eds.), *Rituals of Royalty: Power and Ceremonial in Traditional Societies* (Cambridge: 1987), p.3.

⁶ Lucy Bryson, *Clashing Symbols? A Report on the Use of Flags, Anthems and Other National Symbols in Northern Ireland* (Belfast: 1994); Gillian McIntosh, ‘Symbolic Mirrors: Commemorations of Edward Carson in the 1930s’, *Irish Historical Studies*, XXXII, 125 (2000), pp.93-112.

⁷ Mansergh, *Northern Ireland*, p.106.

⁸ Ken Bloomfield, *Stormont in Crisis: A Memoir* (Belfast: 1996), p.57.

⁹ Sir Frank Newsam, *The Home Office* (London: 1955 edn), pp.168-9.

¹⁰ F.H. Newark, ‘The Law and the Constitution’, in Thomas Wilson (ed.), *Ulster Under Home Rule: A Study of the Political and Economic Problems of Northern Ireland* (London: 1955), pp.34-5.

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- ¹¹ Sir Arthur Quekett, *The Constitution of Northern Ireland*, Vol.I (Belfast: 1928); Vol.II (Belfast: 1931); Vol.III (Belfast: 1946); F. W. Newark, 'The Constitution of Northern Ireland: The First Twenty Five Years', *Northern Ireland Legal Quarterly*, 8 (1948), pp.52-66; F. H. Newark et al., *Devolution of Government: The Experiment of Northern Ireland* (London: 1953); A. G. Donaldson, 'The Constitution of Northern Ireland: Its Origins and Development', *University of Toronto Law Journal*, 11, 1 (1955), pp.1-42.
- ¹² Mansergh, *Northern Ireland*, pp.169, 172.
- ¹³ The phrase comes from Richard Rose, *Governing Without Consensus: An Irish Perspective* (London: 1971).
- ¹⁴ 'George V, Belfast, 22 June 1921', in Brian MacArthur (ed.), *The Penguin Book of Modern Speeches* (Harmondsworth: 2012).
- ¹⁵ James Loughlin, *The British Monarchy and Ireland: 1800 to the Present* (Cambridge: 2011), p.315.
- ¹⁶ D. George Boyce, 'A Place Apart? Ulster, Britain and Devolution', in Duncan Tanner et al. (eds.), *Debating Nationhood and Governance in Britain, 1885-1945: Perspectives from the 'Four Nations'* (Manchester: 2006), p.56.
- ¹⁷ Neil C. Fleming, 'Aristocratic Rule? Unionism and Northern Ireland', *History Ireland*, November/December 2007, pp.26-31.
- ¹⁸ Boyce, 'A Place Apart?', p.56.
- ¹⁹ David Cannadine, *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy* (New Haven: 1990), p.672.
- ²⁰ Dennis Kennedy, *The Widening Gulf: Northern Attitudes to the Independent Irish State 1919-49* (London: 1988), p.102.
- ²¹ Mansergh, *Northern Ireland*, pp.171-2.
- ²² D. George Boyce, 'The State and the Citizen: Unionists, Home Rule, Ulster and the British Constitution, 1886-1920', in D. George Boyce and Alan O'Day, *The Ulster Crisis: 1885-1921* (Basingstoke: 2006); D. George Boyce, 'Northern Ireland: The Origins of the State', in Peter Catterall and Sean McDougall (eds.), *The Northern Ireland Question in British Politics* (Basingstoke: 1996), p.23; A. T. Q. Stewart, *The Ulster Crisis: Resistance to Home Rule, 1912-14* (London: 1967), p.68; G. R. Searle, 'The "Revolt from the Right" in Edwardian Britain', in Paul Kennedy and A. J. Nicholls (eds.), *Nationalist and Racist Movements in Britain and Germany before 1914* (Oxford: 1981), p.36; David W. Miller, *Queen's Rebels: Ulster Loyalism in Historical Perspective* (Dublin: 1978), esp. chs 3-4 and pp.118, 134.
- ²³ Mansergh, *Northern Ireland*, p.274.
- ²⁴ Ivor Jennings, *The Law and the Constitution* (London: 1959), p.157.
- ²⁵ For this convention, see Paul Canning, *British Policy Towards Ireland, 1921-1941* (Oxford: 1985), p.53; Harry Calvert, *British Constitutional Law* (London: 1985), p.37-8; Christopher McCrudden, 'Northern Ireland and the British Constitution', in Jeffrey Jowell and Dawn Oliver (eds.), *The Changing Constitution* (Oxford: 1985), p.335-36; K. Boyle and T. Hadden, *Ireland: A Positive Proposal* (London: 1985); Peter Rose, 'Labour, Northern Ireland and the Decision to Send in the Troops', in Catterall and McDougall (eds.), *The Northern Ireland Question* (London: 1996), p.91.
- ²⁶ Canning, *British Policy*, p.55.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*, p.56.
- ²⁸ Thomas Jones, *Whitehall Diary, III: Ireland 1918-1925* (London: 1971), p.230.
- ²⁹ Newark, 'The Law and the Constitution', p.25.
- ³⁰ Canning, *British Policy*, p.65.
- ³¹ Harry Calvert, *Constitutional Law in Northern Ireland: A Study in Regional Government* (London: 1968), p.50.
- ³² Alan J. Ward, *The Irish Constitutional Tradition: Responsible Government and Modern Ireland, 1782-1992* (Dublin: 1994), p.124.
- ³³ Martin Gilbert, *World in Torment: Winston S. Churchill 1917-1922* (London: 1990 edn), p.744.
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