CROFTERS AND THE LAND QUESTION (1870 - 1920)

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SUMMARY

"Crofters and the Land Question" takes as its subject the record of land- and landlord-centred conflict in the Scottish Highlands. The body of the text concentrates on the events of the decades between the 1860s and the 1920s, and concludes with a detailed look at one particular land-centred conflict in the aftermath of the Second World War.

The foreword establishes the present-day state of play with regard to the land question in the Highlands; while the first chapter introduces some themes relevant to the historical record of landlord-centred conflict.

The second chapter covers the long period of conflict-rehearsal prior to the riots at Sollas in North Uist; while the third examines in greater detail the landlord-centred disputes at Strathaird, Bernera and Glendale which form the overture to the generalised anti-landlord agitation of the following years.

The fourth chapter considers the events surrounding the trouble at Braes in Skye along with the victory represented by the formation of a Royal Commission to investigate crofters' grievances; while the fifth focuses on the growth of the Land League.

The sixth chapter covers the agitation leading to the passing of the Crofters' Act in 1886; the seventh covers the high point of landlord-centred conflict as a mass movement; while the following chapter introduces some wider themes beyond the immediate cockpit of popular struggle in the Highlands, along with a look at the growing (and continuing) interest of the early nationalist and socialist movements in the Highland land struggle.

Chapter nine examines the record of landlord-centred conflict in the 1890s; chapter ten takes the story on to the outbreak of the Great War; chapter eleven briefly considers the Highland wartime experience and its effect on Highland consciousness, as well as examining the land question during

the war and the immediate post-war period; while chapter twelve takes the story of land-agitation forward to its finale (as a generalised phenomenon, at least) during the 1920s.

The final chapter, by way of coda to this long record of anti-landlordism, examines in detail the Knoydart land-raid.

The afterword serves briefly to contextualise this record with reference to our own times; suggests work remaining to be done in the context of the socio-political formation of the indigenous Highland community of today; and looks briefly at the wider Scottish significances of that community's record of landlord-centred conflict.

The central thesis of "Crofters and the Land Question" is that there is a long and deep anti-landlord tradition in the Highlands; that this tradition was under-pinned with an identity that can justly be identified as one of agrarian radicalism and nationalism - and that this tradition, in one way or another, lives on to the present day.

NOTES

Note that during the course of preparation of this script the designations may have changed of a number of persons quoted or otherwise mentioned in the text or the notes thereto.

Note that in accordance with current usage "The Highlands" have been rendered as of plural number.

Note that surnames beginning with any version of Mac... have as a general rule been rendered MacUpper-case: for example, McKenzie, Mackenzie, M'Kenzie or MacKenzie, is rendered MacKenzie.

Note, finally, that much of the source material on which the following text partly draws, and in particular the modern newspaper and magazine material, is in the course of preparation for deposition at an appropriate public location.

The earth is the common property of man. In its produce we have a common right as a means of preserving our existence - he is a robber and murderer, who prevents me from obtaining subsistence. And when the millions are individually robbed of more than half which they ought to possess, there needs no miracle to account why some hundreds wallow in luxuries which they cannot enjoy; and some thousands are silly enough to support them in their debaucheries and extravagance, because they believe their own little and precarious comforts depend upon the continuance of this most beautiful of beautifully bad systems.

Black Dwarf, Jan 6th, 1819.

Such is the concentration of land-ownership in Scotland, for instance, that if this country were in a position to apply to an agency like the World Bank for development aid, that aid would be refused on the perfectly reasonable grounds that it would tend to benefit already-wealthy individuals rather than the community at large.....the facts of land-ownership are certainly valueless to those who have no intention of radically altering them.

West Highland Free Press, Dec 9th, 1977.

FOREWORD

The land-question - the question of the use of the land and the ownership of the land - has been a topical one in Scotland in recent years. So too has the associated question of the use and abuse of landlord powers - not to mention the class, cultural and national-identity dimensions that partly underpin the same debate.

Not of least interest in this debate is the extraordinary extent to which very much of it is an echo of similar debate, and open conflict, over the last two centuries of Highland history, and in particular during the decades that straddle the "Crofters' War" of the late nineteenth century.

Recent public interest and attention has centred on a number of topics.

It has, for instance, been reflected at the level of government and state agencies, with regard to official policy alternatives on the rural economy and enterprise(1); it has further been reflected in the demand "that all future land-use plans should be tested against a national land-use survey conducted by an elected land commission which would be directly responsible to a national parliament in Edinburgh"(2) - a form of demand raised at repeated meetings and conferences of the Land League in the closing decades of the last century.

Public interest and attention has been reflected too in the proceedings of the the Labour Party in Scotland, whose 1987 conference debated motions on forestry, on the need for a land register (at the bidding of the Caithness and Sutherland constituency party), on the need for a "democratisation" of the Crown Estate Commissioners with regard to salmon-fishing rights (from the Ross, Cromarty and Skye constituency party), and on crofting (from the Western Isles constituency party)(3).

The motion on crofting contained the following

statement; "This conference reaffirms the party's commitment to crofting as essential to the economy and way of life of the Highlands and Islands. This conference would like to see an increase in the number of crofters and in the amount of land given over to crofting tenure [and] the rapid implementation in the crofting counties of Labour's Land Reform Policy, so that under-used and mis-used private estates of 5,000 acres or over can be taken into community ownership in response to community demand"(4) - once again, a modern form of a demand raised time and again in the years when the Land League was at the height of its power.

Indeed, a marked consciousness of the history of the land-question and agitation relating to it is clearly evident from media coverage of the subject over recent years.

Throughout 1986, for instance, the West Highland Free Press ran a series of articles to commemorate the land-struggles of the 1880s(5), while earlier the same paper had carried James Hunter's even-longer series on the same theme(6).

BBC Radio Scotland broadcast a 25-minute piece on the Battle of the Braes, based largely on the evidence presented to the Napier Commission in the course of its visit to the district, along with the evidence of children and grand-children of some of those directly involved(7). At around the same time, BBC Scotland screened a film documentary on the origins of crofting(8), while Grampian Television had earlier broadcast a ninety-minute programme on the use and mis-use of land, entitled "The Scottish Land Debate - Grounds for Change?"(9). Radio Highland also celebrated the centenary of the events at Glendale in the early 1880s with Oighreachd Ghleanndail(10). And while the 7:84 theatre company's acclaimed "The Cheviot, the Stag and the Black, Black Oil" brought the Highland land-question before a wide audience(11), a stinging debate in the letters columns of The Scotsman, some years later, suggested the extent to

which the history of Highland land-use and land-ownership remains a living issue to the present day(12). So too did the success of the 1986 touring exhibition, As an Fhearann, (and the associated book of the same name) mounted to commemorate the passing of the 1886 Crofters' Act(13) - as does a random selection of articles from the recent Highland press(14).

A sense of the past also informs recent debate with regard to the ownership of the land, dating notably from John McEwen's 1975 analysis of land-ownership in the Highlands. In it, he wrote, "The degraded condition of the Highlands of Scotland, in the hands of powerful, often anti-social landlordism is a public scandal...I can now record that one hundred and forty individuals or companies own just under half the Highlands. Four individuals own just under half a million acres...Seventeen individuals or companies own sixty nine per cent of the land of Caithness. Thirty eight own eighty four percent of the land of Sutherland. Eighty own fifty seven percent of Inverness-shire; sixty seven own forty eight percent of the land of Argyll; seventy six own eighty percent of the land of Ross and Cromarty; and sixty three own sixty two percent of the land of Perthshire"(15).

Though the precise details have naturally changed, the spirit that drove McEwen's research is exactly the spirit that drove John Murdoch's Highlander, and Alexander MacKenzie's Scottish Highlander, respectively in the early and the later years of the struggle for the implementation and consolidation of the 1886 Crofters' Act.

Less than a year after McEwen's figures were published, the proposed reform of that original Act (as amended in the intervening years) was under discussion in the House of Lords(16); while by the end of that same year the Western Isles Island Council was preparing a land-register for the island area(17).

The Highlands and Islands Development Board (HIDB)

also announced a strategy for land-use in the Highlands, though the proposed compulsory powers of land-acquisition would only be a "final string to our bow", as "ownership of land was an emotive, political thing"(18).

At the end of 1977 McEwen's "Who Owns Scotland?" was published, unleashing a new wave of debate. Reviewing the book at length, the Highland historian James Hunter wrote, "Such is the concentration of landownership in Scotland, for instance, that if this country were in a position to apply to an agency like the World Bank for development aid, that aid would be refused on the perfectly reasonable grounds that it would tend to benefit already-wealthy individuals rather than the community at large. It is this situation which ought to make Scotland's landlords and their doings a matter of public concern. It is this situation which demands that, at the very least, the government investigates precisely who owns what in rural Scotland".

And in the view of Willie Orr, another historian writing from within the Highland community, "Control over land use, either through fiscal or statutory means, is extremely limited. A landowner can still make a fundamental change without having to consult local or indeed national opinion ... a proprietor can clear 50,000 acres of sheep and convert the land to deer forest as easily as his nineteenth century counterpart. The results of this freedom are obvious to most Highland residents. Vast areas are under-used or flagrantly abused"(19).

The same debate, though in different terms, was to echo through the proceedings of the conference of the Scottish Landowners' Federation (SLF) of 1981(20); while by Christmas the following year Donald Stewart, MP, raised the question of Highland land-ownership in the House of Commons and asked whether the government "was aware that there is great disappointment in the Highlands that the HIDB had never used its existing powers with regard to land. The Highlands require legislation to wipe out the curse of

landlordism once and for all"(21).

Just a matter of months later, Keith Schellenberg, owner of the island of Eigg(22), was urging the SLF to reject the proposed HIDB powers of compulsory acquisition noted above(23).

And a month after that, a report on land-ownership and land use in the Highlands identified aged and absentee landlords as a major factor in under-utilisation of the area's land resources. The same report underlined the external origin, both in geographic and cultural terms, of many of these absentees. It recorded that the popular image of the Highland landlord as the product of an English public school, followed by perhaps Oxbridge or the Services, was shown to be accurate in practice. About half the landlords in the north of Scotland could be regarded as absentee. Of those landlords listed in Who's Who, more than two-thirds had attended public schools, and of the forty six who had attended university, Oxbridge was almost the exclusive choice, according to the report(24).

As a recent opinion poll indicated, the Scottish population has strong views on land-ownership and use. Among other findings, it showed that seventy seven percent of Scots were in favour of some form of control over the amount of land that could be privately owned in the country. Sixty three percent favoured limitations on the amount of land that could be owned by any one individual; sixty percent favoured controls on landownership by non-Scots; and almost seventy percent thought it "very important" that remote communities should survive in the country(25).

These views underscore an ongoing debate on crofting(26), the public ownership of land(27), the operation of the law relating to rights-of-way(28), and the environmental impact of quarrying(29); as well as fish-farming and the role therein of the Crown Estates Commissioners(30). Brisk and continuing debate has also been occasioned by the activities of the Nature Conservancy

Council, and its statutory powers with regard to the declaration of Sites of Special Scientific Interest in the Highland area(31). In particular, conservancy operations on Islay have drawn considerable publicity(32), while attention has also focused on the problems of toxic pollution deriving from onshore and shore-side activities relating to quarrying(33) and fish-farming(34). The work of the armed services has also drawn attention in connection with issues of land-use and land-ownership(35), whether on St Kilda(36), or in Glengarry(37). Above all, however, has been the debate with regard to forestry; an issue deserving a full-length study in itself.

But for many observers and commentators, the lesson has been clear - when London investors pay attention to the Highlands, the Highlands would do well to beware; and in this sense alone there is a strong continuity of relevance between the tradition of both public interest in the land question and landlord-centred conflict over the last two centuries, and present-day developments in the Highlands and Islands(38).

Just one area of friction relating to land-ownership and its associated rights has been in recent years that of access to game-fish; and the activities of salmon and deer poachers(39). This is an old point of dispute in the Highlands; the press of a century and more ago records the seasonal courts at which poachers were regularly convicted - as they are today; or as the former Member of Parliament for the Western Isles put it, "To be convicted of poaching in the Highlands is no disgrace. Most Highlanders would agree with the man who said, poaching is not a crime; it is a moral duty"(40).

The laws relating to game are of continuing interest to the Highland press(41), while their news columns have detailed a catalogue of conflict, sometimes involving violence, between the "haves and the have-nots" with regard to access to salmon and deer. Taken together, the details

of these disputes arguably constitute an implied - and sometimes stated - repudiation of the economic and cultural legitimacy of the landlord class in the Highlands; a repudiation of legitimacy as precise as any of the greater conflicts of a century ago(42).

Most attention has gone to the long-running disupte in Lewis, surrounding the Grimersta estate's game-fishing rights(19), which resulted in a court-case in which counsel for the estate claimed that "a constant state of war exists between poachers and the estate, which has led to a long history of violence". Considerations of class and culture, which arguably underlie so much of the conflict, did not come before the court; but it was later reported that the sheriff who presided over it had himself come from a wealthy background in Sutherland, had been educated at Glenalmond public school and the universities of Grenoble and Cambridge - and shared membership of Edinburgh's New Club with two members of the syndicate that owned the Grimersta estate; Lord Biddulph, and Brigadier Gregor MacGregor of MacGregor. Such indentification between the agencies of law and the landlord class was pinpointed throughout the 1870s and 1880s in the Highland press; here too, therefore, there is a continuity of past with present(44).

A flavour of the background to the conflict is evident from the parliamentary debates surrounding the passage of the 1986 Salmon Act, in particular those in the House of Lords, where speakers included Lord Gray of Contin, the Sutherland landowner Lord Kimball, Viscount Thurso of Caithness, Lord Margadale (owner of 75,000 acres on Islay), Lord Burton of Inverness-shire, Viscount Massereene and Ferrard who owned 19,000 acres of Mull, and Lord Biddulph (making his maiden speech after fourteen years in the House)(45).

Much the same flavour is to be found in House of Lords debates relating to deer and the penalties on those convicted of poaching them. The 1982 Lords' debate, for

instance, on the Deer (Scotland) Bill was described as "a debate remarkable even by parliamentary standards for the naked parading of vested interest". Among the speakers were Lord Glenarthur, Viscount Thurso, Viscount Massereene and Ferrard, Lord Lovat (owner of 76,000 acres of Inverness-shire), Lord Margadale, and Lord Burton(46).

Meanwhile, criticism has been directed steadily at the exten to which many of the "deer-forests" are increasingly the preserve of anonymous foreign-registered owners(47), and old animosities continue to surface with regard to, for example, a proposed eviction for alleged poaching at Glenelg, where a seventy-year old estate-employee was ordered to quit his tied house on New Year's Eve, as the landlord suspected him of poaching(48).

Underlying these conflicts is, above all, the old question of land-ownership and land-use - through which runs the equally old themes of incomer wealth on the one hand, and indigenous poverty, or at least relative financial modesty, on the other. For the last fifteen years, developments in Highland land-ownership and use have been carefully documented in the Highland newspapers - the very first issue of the West Highland Free Press reporting the celebrated case of Dr John Green and his ownership of the island of Raasay(49).

Shortly afterwards, public interest focused on the transfer of land in Harris(50), and a year later, attention fell on attempts to turn the North Harris estate into a "vacation haven and a sporting retreat for investors". One observer noted - in words that would not be out of place in Murdoch's Highlander or MacKenzie's Scottish Highlander of the 1880's - "The people of Harris have not been consulted for their views. They have no say as to whether or not their island should be anaesthetised as a vacation haven for dollar-rich Americans. Naturally enough, the 14th Baron of Cleveden, Sir Hereward Wake [owner of the land on which the development was proposed], has been mute. Old Etonian Sir

Hereward no doubt regards the disposal of vast tracts of Harris as a private business deal to be conducted as he sees fit. Obviously, his studies in estate management stopped short of any exploration of the wider public interests involved in estates of so gigantic a size as to constitute private kingdoms"(51).

Further publicity quickly followed, with regard to the Strollamus estate on Skye(52), Torridon(53), Glendale(54), Valtos in Lewis(55), Strathaird in Skye(56), and Uig, again in Lewis(57).

Not long afterwards, the "appalling record of absentee landlords" in Wester Ross and Harris was under attack in words suggestive of the height of the 1880's land agitation; "These people typify a breed of greedy, grasping nuisances who contribute nothing to society and who usually exert a positively malign influence on the communities that they inflict themselves on"(58). There was further public comment on events in Skye(59), Lewis(60), and Morar in west Lochaber(61), while in Skye the land-speculator who had acquired the Waternish estate was also drawing adverse public comment(62).

More recently, publicity has surrounded the transfer of ownership of Eriskay(63), Morsgail and Uig in Lewis, South Uist, the Eishken and Garynahine estates in Lewis, Skye and Knoydart(64).

Popular response has also indicated a marked awareness of the history of landlord-centred conflict in the Highlands and Islands. While the Garynahine estate was in the process of sale, for instance, an application by two crofters in the township of that name for apportionment of land was opposed by the estate, on the grounds that the land was of sporting value. One of the two crofters wrote to the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (Scotland) (DAFS) to the effect that, "When the DAFS in 1935 formed the crofting community of Garynahine they never intended our crofts and common grazings to be on "number one" priority sporting

ground", and to point out that, "it would set a very dangerous precedent if the Crofters' Commission agreed with the Garynahine estate that the sporting interests of landlords in common grazings should be allowed to transcend the agricultural interest of crofting tenants"(65).

The observation betrays a shrewd sense not only of crofting law but of crofting history; one matched, with stylish restraint, by a spokesman for the Crofters' Commission who shortly afterwards, in the context of further land-dealings in the west of Harris, was required to respond to a new landlord who had said that his land was under crofting tenure but that he had "already bought some of them out". As the spokesman observed, "things are not that simple with land in crofting tenure"(66).

Land-use and landownership, therefore, have been hotly debated issues in recent years; as have other issues whose relationship is either stated or more often implied - among them the nature of the Gaelic-English cultural interface in the Highlands of today, and the wider but organically linked question of Scottish national identity and the place of the Highlands, and the Highland experience, therein.

But running through most of it, and informing much of it, has been an awareness of the past - of a record of landlord-centred conflict in the Highlands that extends back over the best part of two centuries, and in the course of which popular victories established crofting as the bastion of Gaelic and traditional social and economic life in the Highlands of today.

The record, in other words, is one that underpins much of the recent debate; and in many ways too, it helps to explain it. An examination of that record, and some of the wider themes it involves, now follows.

FOREWORD

1.

Rural Scotland, Her Majesty's Stationery Office/Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, Scotland, 10-3-1987. Farming Leader, March 1987.

2.

Scottish National Party 18-3-1987; SNP demand rural land strategy for the 1990's. See also Scottish National Party, 15-3-1987, Green Print for Scots Farming.

3.

Scottish conference of the Labour Party March 1987; resolutions 147, 148, 165 and 176.

4.

The text of this motion speaks volumes for the speed at which the reformed Scottish Crofters' Union, under the direction of James Hunter, has established itself as a political force in the Highlands.

5.

Joni Buchanan, the events of 1886.

6.

See the review of his The Making of the Crofting Community by Roderick MacFarquhar, in the Glasgow Herald 14-10-76. MacFarquhar served as secretary of The Highland Fund and retired, after twenty five years in the post, in 1983; see the profile of him by Rob Brown in the West Highland Free Press, 20-5-1983. MacFarquhar is a direct descendant of the Alexander MacFarquhar referred to on page 14 of the present writer's Mightier than a Lord (letter of 23-7-1981).

7.

Iain Fraser Grigor wrote and presented; Ishbel MacLean produced; TX 17-4-1982. Sorley MacLean of Braes, was an interviewee.

8.

So Here I Am; research by Iain Fraser Grigor, presented by James Hunter, produced by Neil Fraser and featuring Sorley

MacLean. Reviewed by Martin MacDonald, Radio Times (Scotland), 9/15-10-1982.

9.

Screened first week of December 1978. Reviewed by John McEwen, West Highland Free Press, 15-12-1978.

10.

Broadcast Radio Scotland 18-2-1982.

11.

Published in 1974 by the West Highland Publishing Company, publishers of the West Highland Free Press. See also the debate on the drama in that newspaper for 4-5-1973, 18-5-1973, and 25-5-1973.

12.

Among those taking part were James Hunter, John Prebble, Roderick MacFarquhar, Lt.Col. Monteith, Sir Iain Moncreiffe and Charles Janson, husband of the Countess of Sutherland. For a synopsis of the debate, see Richards, vol 2, A History of the Highland Clearances, 167-171. .

13.

See review of the Edinburgh exhibition, Stornoway Gazette, 25-10-1986.

14.

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Fraser Grigor, West Highland Free Press, 25-11-1977. Iain Fraser Grigor, Fort William Free Press, 16-1-1976. Ailic MacArtair, Oban Times, 1-1-1987. Sorley MacLean, Calgacus, no 1, winter 1975. James Shaw Grant, Stornoway Gazette, 5-4-1986, 27-12-1986, 20-9-1986. Calum MacLeod, West Highland Free Press, 14-9-1973. James Hunter, (on the MacDonald archives), West Highland Free Press, 17-9-1982. Ruaraidh Halford-MacLeod, West Highland Free Press, 4-7-1975. Neil Munro, West Highland Free Press, 22-4-1983.

15.

John McEwen, West Highland Free Press, 25-7-1975.

16.

House of Lords, Hansard, 19-3-1976.

17.

West Highland Free Press, 24-12-1976.

18.

West Highland Free Press, 24-6-1977. Note James Hunter's comment, West Highland Free Press, 9-12-1977, on land acquisition powers.

19.

EUSPB, Edinburgh, 1977. Republished, Polygon, Edinburgh, 1981. Reviewed by James Hunter, West Highland Free Press, 9-12-1977. See also, Neil Munro, West Highland Free Press, 27-10-1978 and 23-11-1979. Willie Orr, Deer Forests, Crofters and Landlords, 150.

20.

Victor Robertson, The Scotsman, 10-6-1981.

21.

West Highland Free Press, 24-12-1982.

22.

For reports relating to housing conditions on the island three years later, see; Shelter Rural Housing Initiative, Report on Eigg, September, 1986; BBC Scotland Gaelic television report 14-10-1986; the Sunday Times 26-10-1986; the Glasgow Herald 29-10-1986 and 5-11-86; Press and Journal 15-10-1986; and the Oban Times 23-10-1986, 13-11-

1986, 20-11-1986, 27-11-1986, and 11-12-1986.

23.

West Highland Free Press 11-3-1983.

24.

A. Armstrong and T. Mather, Land Ownership and Land Use in the Scottish Highlands; Aberdeen University Department of Geography, O'Dell memorial monograph series, April 1983. See also Victor Robertson, The Scotsman 25-4-1983 and Roger Hutchinson, West Highland Free Press, 6-5-1983. Fred Bridgland, The Scotsman, 15/16/17-11-1983. John Bryden and George Houston, Agrarian Change in the Scottish Highlands, Martin Robertson/HIDB, 1977. Drennan Watson on land-ownership, West Highland Free Press, 8-8-1986, during a seminar in a series to mark the centenary of the Crofters' Act, organised by the Scottish Crofters' Union. For a comment on officer-corps ownership of Highland estates in the 1880's, see Willie Orr, Deer Forests, 38-39.

25.

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26.

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28.

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29.

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30.

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31.

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32.

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33.

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34.

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35.

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Helen Gibbins, The Scotsman magazine, March 1987. Stewart Tendler, The Times, 9/10-11-1981. Brian McCartney, Sunday Standard, 13-3-1983. The Scotsman, 22-2-1978, 18-11-1982, 29-3-1983. Press and Journal, 13-3-1983. Glasgow Herald, 17-12-1979.

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Press and Journal, 15-2-1983. Note that much of the remainder of this chapter is based on the files of the West Highland Free Press. For a comment on the paper's importance as a journal of record (and a historical source), see Iain Fraser Grigor, The Scotsman, 7-4-1987. and Malcolm Burns, West Highland Free Press, 1-4-1988; "I learned more about history in the Free Press that I ever did at school. I learned that I came from a culture with a hard radical edge".

41.

Malcolm C.N. Scott, West Highland Free Press, 26-10-1973. See also, "a lawyer", West Highland Free Press, 12-9-1986.

42.

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44.

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45.

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50.

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51.

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52.

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53.

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54.

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55.

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56.

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57.

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For a comment on the capital gains to be made in estate trading in the middle of the nineteenth century, see Eric Richards, A History of the Highland Clearances, vol 2, 487.

58.

West Highland Free Press, 10-12-1976. (Brian Wilson's column.)

59.

West Highland Free Press, 27-5-1977.

60.

West Highland Free Press, 8-4-1977.

61.

Iain Fraser Grigor, officers gentlemen and Highland development, West Highland Free Press, 9-2-1979. This is an

old rights-of-way dispute; a memorandum on it was circulated to members of parliament by Charles Fraser MacIntosh, MP.

62.

West Highland Free Press, 16-3-1979, 23-3-1979. Seven Days, Jan 1976.

63.

West Highland Free Press, 6-6-1980, 13-6-1980.

64.

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65.

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66.

West Highland Free Press, 6-1-1984, The Guardian, 4-1-1984.

CHAPTER ONE

The last decade or so has witnessed a spate of books on the Highlands in general, and more particularly around the theme of rich and poor in the north of Scotland during the nineteenth century. Why this should be so must be a matter for informed speculation - though the mid- and late-'seventies agitation with regard to the devolution of some government functions to a Scottish Assembly in Edinburgh is likely to have been of no small importance.

At the end of 1979, for instance, Oxford Polytechnic published, in the series Discussion Papers in Geography, its selected bibliography of the crofting system(1). And since then a steady stream of publications has followed, including the Gaelic-language An Cogadh Mor ("The Great War"), based on the memories of Highlanders who saw service during it(2). The present writer's Mightier than a Lord appeared from the same publishers as An Cogadh Mor (Acair)(3) and considered in a consciously populist way the struggle for the 1886 Crofters' Act. Acair also brought out Go Listen to the Crofters(4) to coincide with the centenary of the Act. Somewhat earlier was John MacPhee's The Crofter and the Laird(5), while Duff Hart-Davis' Monarchs of the Glen, a history of deer-stalking in the Scottish Highlands(6), was complemented by Willie Orr's Deer Forests, Landlords and Crofters - written, unlike so many recent works on Highland history, very much from within the community whose history it sought to discuss, and informed by significant experience and understanding of that community(7).

J.M. Bumsted took another look at Highland clearing and emigration to North America in The Peoples Clearance(8), as did Eric Richards in his generally comprehensive, if somewhat pedestrian, two volume History of the Highland Clearances(9). Denis Stuart published his biography of Millicent, Duchess of Sutherland(10), Speck's study of Cumberland in the Jacobite Highlands appeared(11), as did

David Kerr Cameron's study of crofting life in north-east Scotland(12) - while more recently Rob Gibson has usefully detailed the 1880's crofter-agitation in Easter Ross(13), as something of a companion to the volume of miscellany published to accompany the touring exhibition which commemorated the passing of the 1886 Crofters' Act(14).

And while 1981 saw the revised re-publication of John McEwen's lifetime's work on land-ownership in Scotland(15), he is currently finishing a follow-up(16), and Orr is working with T.M. Devine on a project, just completed, covering the Highland famine of the 1840s(17); which will complement Melven's excellent re-publication of Robert Somers' letters of 1846(18).

And a steady trickle of articles and pamphlets continues to flow too, keeping the question of landlord-centred conflict and its associated themes before the public, whether from Joni Buchanan on Clearance, Conflict and Crofting in the Scottish Trade Union Review(19), the Scottish Socialist Society in the form of papers of its conference The Land for the People(20), or a recent debate in the columns of Radical Scotland on the nature of the legacy in the Highlands of the 1886 Crofters' Act(21).

These titles and debates add to earlier ones, concerned in their various ways with the central and tangential themes of Highland history over the last couple of centuries, from the Earl of Cromartie's general study(22) to Calum MacLean's more personal overview of the subject(23) and to James Hunter's extensive study of the (primarily economic) formation of the Highland crofting community of today(24). Some writers have chosen to concentrate on specific areas or estates, such as Gaskell on the "transformation" of Morvern(25) and Richards on the "Leviathan" of Sutherland(26), while it is now fifteen years since the Scottish History Society was bringing-out its volumes of papers on Sutherland estate management in the early years of the last century(27).

"Clans and chiefs" has always been a popular theme for some writers, although Grimble's book of that title is useful(28), while Highland affairs, and in particular the subject of the Clearances, surface in recent work by Rosie(29) and Steel(30), among others.

The theme of emigration too has continued to draw attention, whether from as far back as Adam in the Scottish Historical Review(31), Grimble in Scottish Studies(32), or Whyte in Scottish Geneaologist(33), to Donald MacKay's book on the Highland settlers at Pictou in Canada(34). And testimony to the extent of Highland emigration can still be found, memorably, in less likely titles - as in the diary of John Mitchel, the Irish patriot exiled to the Antipodes; "We have ridden to a lonely region, known as the Blue Hill, being a succession of small hollows lying westward of a high mountain which bounds our valley at one side. Went up to the first settler's place we came to, a rather humble wooden house.....and was received most joyfully by the proprietor, one Kenneth MacKenzie, an ancient settler, from Ross-shire. He brought us in, sent our horses to the stable, introduced me to his wife (one of the MacRae's), a true Gaelic woman of tall stature and kindly tongue, who speaks Erse [ie.Scottish Gaelic] better than English, though thirty years an exile .....Here is a genuine family of Tasmanian Highlanders, trying to make a Ross-shire glen under the southern constellations.....as we sat round the table.....tall youths and maidens came in, and were addressed by such names as Colin, Jessie and Kenneth. I could almost fancy myself in some brae of Balquidder"(35).

Some of the themes central to the record of landlord-centred conflict are discussed later in this text - such as the nature of the proposals of the Royal Commission into crofters's grievances in the 1880's and the rather different nature of the legislation that followed; such as the nature of Lord Leverhulme's much-publicised experiments on Lewis and Harris in the aftermath of the Great War; and such as

the specific tactics deployed by the crofters' movement and its leadership during the years of agitation - something seldom, if ever, discussed by contemporary or modern observers.

Other themes are tangential to the main story of landlord centred conflict, though some at least form a permanent and necessary backdrop to it.

These include the spread of communications - not least the coming of the telegraph system and a scheduled steamer service to the Highlands and Islands in the latter part of the last century, and the development of the railway system in the Highlands: a line from Perth via Inverness to Invergordon in 1863, a line from Dingwall to Strome Ferry seven years later, and a further link to Wick and Thurso in 1874(36).

Tangential too to the main story - though, as noted above, ever-present backdrops to it - are the records of emigration, famine, militarist exploitation, landownership, sheep farming and deer foresting and the Clearances - consciousness of which records certainly helped power much of the crofters' agitation, rhetoric and perceptions, and many of which remain controversial to the present day; as Richards notes, "The debate about the Highland clearances ... has been a living issue in Scottish politics almost since the first Blackface sheep crossed the Highland line"(37).

"Balmorality" - the invention of tradition - is part of the backdrop too, and plays its part in Scottish popular perception of the Highland past and its place in national consciousness today(38). As one recent comment put it; "At the recent Edinburgh festival, the eminently televisual military tattoo offered as just one of its delights the singing, in English, by a band of middle-class and middle-aged ladies, of a bowdlerised Victorian version of a Jacobite lament. As a song, doubtless, as naive and incidental amusement, it was harmless enough, and went well

enough with the welter of pipes and drums and tartans of the rest of that tourist spectacular - but as music, as something significantly relevant to the consciousness of the Scottish people, it represented, and promoted, a malign absurdity at once apparent to anyone with the merest inkling of knowledge of Scottish history. In this, of course, it was not unique - for a century and more the Jacobite adventures have, suitably romanticised, played a role in the maintenance of a specifically Scottish false consciousness ... but it does not even begin to address the imperatives posed by the crucial role of the Gaelic place in contemporary Scottish consciousness. It is in this sense that Gaelic is much more than a minority language - the historical experience crystallised within its speakers is central to Scottish self-perception, and - in the widest sense of the word - to Scottish culture. That the relationship is a complex one is obvious enough, fashioned in the nineteenth century, when the curious imbroglio of popular Scottish consciousness was largely formed, when the very real and great traditions of the Highlands, sanitised and deformed by Victorian romance, were welcomed as quaint jesters into the parlours of a national ersatz culture, as mis-shapen and scarcely legitimate cousins, safe after a century or two to be paraded once a year in Edinburgh under the swagger of the Union flag, for the innocent titillation of uncomprehending tourists. The same can be said for the whole monstrous militarist nonsense of clans and tartans and army pipe bands - the pipe grabbed as a recruiting symbol for the imperial army and the pibroch consigned as token of indulgent ethnicity to Anglo-Scottish officers' messes, while the braw kilted squaddies fought their masters' wars in Spain, Flanders, the Crimea, South Africa and, once again, Flanders. What Thomas Johnston once called "drum and trumpet history and ruling-caste ancestor worship" has all too often supplanted in the Scottish popular consciousness the real record of the past ... It is un-

necessary to identify here the caste in whose sub-culture the [anti-Highland] slur is elevated to the status of "tradition" - though it is surely a measure of extraordinary arrogance, to hold such views of a people by whose privations fortunes were amassed, and by whose men grand imperial adventures were launched and sometimes won, while their culture, in an appropriately bastardised form, was appropriated as some kind of decorative embellishment to a life style with a foundation in little but a capacity to conspicuously consume wealth created by someone else"(39).

This touches on the concept of internal colonialism, developed by Hechter and rebutted by Richards - "But the poverty of the people was not specifically a consequence of the expropriation of their 'surplus' by the landlords; it was a product of their low productivity. Nor was this an economy in the classically colonial mould in the sense that income was continuously extracted out of the region to satisfy external investors. Many of the greatest landlords were net importers of capital and so were most of the sporting tenants. The destinations of the profits of sheepfarming are not well researched, but the greatest of them all, Patrick Sellar, invested most of his money in the purchase of a Highland estate. In general terms, it would be misleading to brand the nineteenth-century Highlands as 'an extractive economy'"(40).

In turn, the strictly economic question of surplus value, its extraction and destination, is contiguous to the less quantifiable - though no less substantive - question of cultural colonialism (not to mention responses designed to counter it, explored on an international scale by the likes of Paulo de Freire)(41).

Concern with this matter of culture often reflects best away from the field of non-fiction. Richards acknowledges this; "There was a continuity of writing which, in the twentieth century embraced Neil M. Gunn, Iain Crichton Smith, Eric Linklater, Sorley MacLean, John MacGrath and

many others..."(42). Unfortunately, Richards does not develop this theme, upon which there has been little written; though Lorn MacIntyre's unpublished PhD thesis on Sir Walter Scott and the Highlands is at least a beginning(43). The subject has also drawn the attentions of such as James Shaw Grant (44), and Iain Crichton Smith(45). There is, of course, a wide range of fiction, in print or other media, concerned with Highland history - not least in the widely-read junk fiction, buttressing many a stereotype associated with the concept of cultural colonialism, of Barbara Cartland and Lilian Beckwith.

In terms of quality fiction, the work of James Kennaway at times explores with sensitivity and understanding some of the roles played in Scottish national consciousness by 'the idea of the Highlands' - not least in his first novel, Tunes of Glory (1956), and rather less so in his The Cost of Living Like This (second edition, 1980). In the present century, writers of serious intent on specifically Highland themes range from Neil Gunn (Butcher's Broom, 1934), Fionn MacColla (And the Cock Crew, 1945), Iain Crichton Smith (Consider the Lilies, 1968), to Robert Crichton's much undervalued The Camerons (1972), with its marvellous salmon-poaching sequence. Recent works of fiction marketed at the young reader include those of Margaret MacPherson, Allan Campbell MacLean (The Hill of the Red Fox, set in Skye during the height of the 1880's land agitation), and Mollie Hunter's A Pistol at Greenyards (1965), recently filmed by Jam Jar Films.

The concern of serious fiction with the Highlands is of course older than these titles would suggest; no less a writer than Stevenson opens chapter sixteen of Kidnapped with a short but wonderfully evocative emigration scene in the Sound of Mull, for instance.

And in John Buchan's Mr Standfast (1919), chapter six opens with a scene of great perceptivity, worth quoting in full. "I found they had a son in the Argylls and a younger

boy in the Navy. But they seemed disinclined to talk of them or the war. By a mere accident I hit on the old man's absorbing interest. He was passionate about the land. He had taken part in long-forgotten agitations, and had suffered eviction in some ancient landlord's quarrel farther north. Presently he was pouring out to me all the woes of the crofters - woes that seemed so antediluvian and forgotten that I listened as one would listen to an old song ... He told me of evictions in the year One somewhere in Sutherland, and of harsh doings in the Outer Isles. It was far more than a political grievance. It was the lament of the conservative for vanished ways and manners ... I told him that after the war every acre of British soil would have to be used for the men that had earned the right to it. But that did not comfort him. He was not thinking about the land itself, but about the men who had been driven from it fifty years before. His desire was not for reform, but for restitution, and that was past the power of any Government".

As James Hunter has observed, "In the folk memory, therefore, the sense of expropriation was undoubtedly vivid and strong, thus adding greatly to the consciousness of injustice and wrong that the agrarian system could not, by its very nature, have failed to produce"(46).

The significance of fiction - whether in prose or dramatic form(47) - should not be under-estimated in terms of an interpretation of the Highland past, nor in terms of its significance in terms of consciousness with regard to that past. As Douglas Gifford has noted, "The kailyard novel became propaganda for the Tory establishment to drown the nineteenth century movement in Scotland for political reform - its aim was hardly that of radical critique or creative unrest"(48).

A related point of comment is that of narrative methedology. The extent to which one particular method can be fixed to one particular political or ideological point of view (or its absence) is open to question; though it may

with justice raise the question of purpose and effect, and point of view relative to the community observed and interpreted. Some writers, for instance, may "tend to denigrate the Scots. There is a lot in the cultural tradition that is harmful, but the outsiders concentrate on these negative features and deepen the already existing deep sense of insecurity and inferiority"(49). And another observer has written, "The working class retains its identity anyway, but seeing it portrayed gives it an added impetus, de-marginalises it"; and goes on to add, "Walter Scott's most successful Scottish characters are not the upper-class ones but Davie Deans and Edie Ochiltree - and they're why Scott is still read. It's as if Scott knew this was where the strength of Scottish identity lay"(50).

The relation of what is to be said, for whom, and in what manner is a complex one - and rather more difficult than the sound concept of the separation of fact and comment might suggest. As John Mortimer has observed, of Robin Blackburn's study of the overthrow of colonial slavery, "I could wish the present fashion of writing history as if it were a report to some moderately enlightened minister for economic affairs did not prevent us being given some dramatic set-pieces and more personal and illuminating studies of the remarkable characters concerned ..."(51).

The observation is of particular interest in terms of written comment on Highland history. Few, if any, of the writers on the subject has defined his or her narrative method other than by implication - one of the best examples of this being Richards review of Prebble's Mutinies, and its profoundly arguable strictures on methods of historical narrative(52). Richards returns to the theme in the second volume of his work on the Clearances; though based in Australia, he feels able to assert confident opinion, without recourse to source, on the present-day Highlands - "Grim apathy, mixed with malevolent pleasure when failure occurred, was an impenetrable barrier to development. This

attitude, all-pervasive even into the twentieth century - may have been half the tragedy of the Highland problem...It helped to reinforce among the common people a fatalistic apathy which even today is not fully dispersed". Richards comments on the works, viewpoints and methods of Grimble, Prebble and Hunter are equally stimulating(53).

A middle way is of course available, between what Richards, somewhat inaptly, identifies as the "dramatised" method of Prebble and the alternative method he by implication attributes to himself. This middle way is characterised by a narrative method that is linear in chronology, episodic, and dramatic (in a properly technical sense); in terms of style, it deploys the use of quotation and image; without any "dramatisation" in a popular sense - that is, no characterisation, no scene-painting, no inversion of chronology, and no dialogue. An overall sense of narrative tension is not therefore lost of necessity; while examining events from the principal viewpoint of the common people in any case suggests a favouring in terms of material of a reportage of the incidents, the reports, the speeches, and the evidence to court and commission of the common people, while drawing on the usual sources of public archive papers, contemporary press and periodical reports, pamphlets, primary and secondary books, and oral material. The purpose of this narrative method is intended to concretise themes that underlie the story of landlord-centred conflict in the Highlands - in any case, it is the method deployed in this present text.

A contiguous theme to that of narrative method is that of the significance of oral sources. In terms of the record of landlord centred conflict in the Highlands, this is of particular significance - not least in that the link at times concerns little more than a generation or two. The Lewis-born poet Derick Thomson, for instance, has recently recalled that, "There was a small inner harbour behind my

grandfather's house, largely land-locked because of the jutting tidal island known as Eilean Habhaigh, on which the Established Church was built. It was here that the Rev. Donald MacCallum, the famous Land Leaguer, preached to his small flock, and my grandfather acted as precentor, though he never committed himself sufficiently to join the Church. He and MacCallum were good friends. MacCallum had a large glebe, and ran it as a farm with the help of his brother Dughall. Later this glebe was raided, and the village of Keose Glebe built on it. One of the raiders was my Uncle Willie, and my grandfather must have derived real satisfaction from seeing his youngest son staking his claim to Keose land that had been denied himself so many years before"(54).

Calum MacLean also recalls recording a onetime Sutherland Land League activist; "Hector Sutherland is one of the few surviving Gaelic speakers in the district and a most intelligent and discerning old gentleman. In his younger and more active days he was prominent in the activities of the Radical Liberal party during the time of the crofter and Land League agitation. He was full of memories of that period. He once heard Gladstone address a meeting"(55).

And another poet - reinforcing the Highland tradition of poets as bearers of tradition and history - has recalled more recently in print how his great-aunt spent a night in prison for her anti-landlord activities(56). As late as 1976, the West Highland Free Press reported as piper at an island wedding - the same man as had played the pipes at the Balranald land raid in 1919(57). James Hunter has profiled another of the men who took part in that same raid (after four years in France and Flanders), unrepentent at 84 years of age(58); and as recently as 1981 the present writer interviewed in Glencalvie crofter Jock MacKenzie - still with three bullets in his body from his time with the Seaforths in the Great War, he recalled how as a small boy

two of his neighbours had been very elderly sisters, one of whom was crippled as a result of having been involved as a child in the Greenyards eviction riot of 1843(59). John Macrae MacLellan has described in print his memories of his grandfather, John MacRae, secretary of the Ross-shire Land League(60), while Rob Gibson has established a direct link with Donald MacKay through his daugher Joan Fraser (61), and through Alex Robertson with Donald MacRae(62).

Oral sources have also informed Finlay MacLeod's Na Gillean Grinn, the stage story of the men who raided land in the Uists in the aftermath of the Great War, with the part of the leader of the raid played by that raid-leader's own daughter(63).

The general issue of oral sources and their significance has been questioned; though their significance in the context of Highland history has been highlighted by no less than J.L. Campbell, who has observed, "communities where the oral tradition predominates are so much out of the experience of the modern western world that it is extremely difficult for anyone without first hand knowledge to imagine how a language can be cultivated without being written to any extent or what oral literature is like or how it is propagated and added to from generation to generation. The consciousness of the Gaelic mind may be described as possessing historical continuity and religious sense; it may be said to exist in a vertical plane"(64).

The spirit of Campbell's observation easily suggests the much earlier one of Alexis de Tocqueville (in his 1835 Journeys in England and Ireland), anent the Irish peasantry and how there was among them, "a terrifying exactitude of memory" with regard to ancient wrongs; "the great persecutions are not forgotten".

Further discussion relating to oral sources has included contributions from the Highland historian Frank Thompson(65), John MacQueen of the School of Scottish Studies(66), and the fishing-industry historian Angus

Martin(67); and from Eric Cregeen on both the oral sources for Highland social history and the oral tradition and agrarian history in the Highlands(68). As Cregeen has observed, "Oral history presents us with a rich and diverse store of source material ... it is as near as you can get to the history of everyman and to everyman's history ... they demand from those who use them not only enthusiasm and wide sympathy for the human condition but an alert and critical judgement and sufficient detachment to weigh the recorded testimony"(69).

Oral sources have also drawn the attention of E.P.Thompson(70), while Eric Richards also gives them some consideration in his work on the Clearances, and in which he concedes that the minutes of evidence of the Napier Commission constitute for the common people who appeared before the commission "a sustained collective view of Highland history". He also concedes that the evidence constitutes "the finest source for 'history from below' in the entire history of the Highlands". Richards also, however, quotes with apparent approval the comment of the commissioners on this evidence; "In judging the validity of much of this evidence, we shall do well to remember that these depositions, regarding acts and incidents often obscure and remote, are in many cases delivered by illiterate persons seeking from early memory, or from hearsay, or from popular tradition, fleeting and fallacious sources even when not tinged with ancient regret and resentments, or by the passions of the hour"(71).

The comment, it might be noted, contrasts most interestingly with that of J.L. Campbell, quoted above.

Richards also notes the poetic tradition as a source(72); while Sorley MacLean has identified much of the value of oral tradition in the Highlands in a quatrain from his lament for his brother, the noted oral tradition expert, Calum MacLean; in translation, it reads, "There is many a poor man in Scotland/whose spirit and name you raised;/you

lifted the humble/whom our age put aside"(73).

Significantly enough, the oral testimony of first and second generation descendants of the crofters who took part in the Battle of the Braes - used later in this text - matches with considerable precision the accounts to be found both in the contemporary press and the Ivory Papers in the Scottish Record Office - a fact that in itself says a great deal about the importance of oral sources for the history of the common Highland people.

Partly, of course, orientation to oral sources on a writer's part is not only a function of a consciousness of class as a key determinant in the process of Highland affairs; it may also be a function of a specific narrative approach to Highland history. The theme is too wide to command detailed consideration here, but it does involve considerations that underlie a great deal of recent comment on the Highland past, from varying degrees of idealist and determinist comment, to the sort of view that appears to present itself as free of any kind of controlling vision at all. Three examples will suffice. The controlling view of Hunter, for instance, is - as Richards observes(74) - "a conventional quasi-Marxist framework of class conflict.....Some of this credo derives from a particular reading of Highland history; some of it is contingent on judgements about political equity, economic justice and the rights of property". On the other hand is Gaskell - whose controlling vision, bounded by the class perceptions of estate documentation, is found firmly at the drawing room windows of Ardtornish, briefly scanning the empty hillsides and deaf in any case to the language of their former inhabitants, before returning to his natural audience of "improvers" and "transformers" - or, rather, their latter-day apologists. The third sort is exemplified by Richards, whose writings are at times characterised by an apparent repudiation of any controlling vision; and thus on occasion

the result is an absence of any significant narrative or political cohesion or drive in his work.

The day, of course, may come when Highland history is largely the responsibility of historians from the Highlands, and from the popular end of the social spectrum at that - but at least until then, the record of the past will be complicated by considerations of the extent and reliability of sources, of moral and political considerations, of questions of ideology, and of the perception of the key "problem" in Highland history; a problem of crofters, as Collier, Gaskell and others suggest, or of landlordism and private landownership. Ray Burnett has already explored the topic of the tradition of landlord-centred conflict in the Highlands and the response to it by the Scottish Left(75); but, as Christopher Smout has observed, the Clearances and their aftermath of landlord-centred conflict can justly be characterised as an ideological struggle(76).

The extent to which modern interpretation of that aftermath can itself usefully escape being part of an ongoing indeological struggle is, at least, open to question and a range of historical interpretation.

Some other themes associated with the tradition of landlord centred conflict are, however, less prickly if no less problematic.

A number of writers, for instance, have given some thought to the role of religion in the development of popular consciousness throughout the nineteenth century. John Macinnes and Steve Bruce have considered its eighteenth century significance(77); while Christopher Smout has observed that, "The zeal with which crofters throughout the Highlands embraced the more authoritarian forms of Presbyterianism was perhaps rooted in a wish to replace their reverence for earthly father-figures who had betrayed them by reverence for a heavenly Father whose properties were unchanging and merciful to the weak, but implacably vengeful to the oppressor. Few aspects of social change in

the Highlands are more striking than the conversion of almost all the peasantry (except the Catholics) from a state verging on semi-paganism at the start of the eighteenth century to strict religious observance in the nineteenth century"(78). Writing of "the catastrophic break-up of the material norms of Highland life, from which the people fled towards the compensations of an intense spiritual enthusiasm like leaves before a storm", Smout adds that, "In Ross-shire, where depopulating sheep clearances began early and were particularly severe, the revival originated chiefly among an illiterate laity and reached an immediate and sustained level of popular fervour"(79).

The relation between religious fervour and popular consciousness is not one notably amenable to the pretensions of the statistician or his historical counterpart; but Richards - who, it sometimes appears, can justly be counted a member of this school - gives some attention to the subject, writing that, "The obliteration of the tacksmen class, the continuous drain of youth by migration, the social abdication of many of the landowners and the invisibility of the sheepfarmers all undoubtedly diminished the ability of this society to shape its own future. It left the Highlands bereft of its old social leadership and created a vacuum which was filled by the new ministers of religious extremism - the revivalists, and the hard men of the Free Presbyterian Church [sic] who triumphed in the Disruption"(80). Richards mentions the significance of religion on a number of occasions, and does note that "the connection between religion and social action is a notoriously subtle and complex question"(81); while Hunter too has noted, "In the Highlands the Disruption was not just an ecclesiastical dispute. It was a class conflict. Its battle line was the line of class demarcation, the line between the small tenantry on the one hand and sheep farmers, factors and proprietors on the other. In that fact is to be found the explanation of what is otherwise

inexplicable; the intensity of proprietorial opposition to the Free Church.....at the same time and through the medium of the Free Church.....the first concrete links were established between the incipient agrarian radicalism of the crofting population and the mainstream of Scottish Liberal and radical politics"(82). Elsewhere, Hunter has suggested "that it is pretty meaningless to talk of a crofting community until the Free Church came into existence"(83).

Much less substantial - and no less speculative in nature - is the matter of the role of women in the land-agitations of the nineteenth and twentieth century. The wider role of women in revolutionary situations and forms of resistance has been explored elsewhere(84); the continuity of their role in the Highlands has also been noted - at Culrain, Gruids, Durness, Lochshiel, Glencalvie, Sollas, Strathaird, Coigach, Greenyards, Braes and at many other locations(85). The contemporary press and estate letters and report also claim an interesting proportion of incidents in which women were in fact men dressed as women(86); but it is surely of somewhat greater significance that the Highland press, whether in the hands of Murdoch or MacKenzie, seldom if ever found it necessary to comment in any particular way on the role of women as a special agent of anti-landlordism. Mary MacPherson, the poetess of the land-agitation, does not make a special issue of the role of women either; nor does John Murdoch in his manuscript autobiography(87). It may be sufficient to add that the role of women was not seen as an issue in the community at the time nor since, and it is adequate simply to document with an even hand the role that they did indeed play.

Much more significant is the relationship between anti-landlordism in the Highlands and the anti-landlord tradition in Ireland; a subject on which John Murdoch, who knew both well, has a great deal to say, in relation to the land-question as well as in relation to wider questions of national identity and pan-Celtic nationalism. Even as early

as the 1850's, Murdoch was arguing in The Nation for joint anti-landlord campaigns; "Relying on this oneness of race, of language and of traditional right, as well as of present pressing wrong, let the erstwhile separated Celtic brothers meet with ceud mille failte on the broad ground of the land.....Under the land laws established in England by conquest and transplanted into Scotland by fraud, the property and power of the country are being concentrated in the hands of the one absorbing, monopolising class of landlords.....The land, the skills, the industry and the capital of Scotland all exist for the honour and gratification of this one landlord fraternity"(88).

More than thirty years later, Murdoch's views were unchanged; when visiting the Irish of the United States in the winter of 1879-1880, the Irish World of New York reported that, "He said he knew the case of Ireland, having been in the country for eleven years. He added his testimony to the truth of all that had been said of the sufferings of the Irish people and added that the half had not, and indeed could not, be told of the horrors of the English land system. And darker yet was the history of it in his native Highlands.....He spoke of the hand England had in keeping Irishmen and Highlanders divided.....And he proceeded to predict that - marching, as they would, like men shoulder to shoulder - they would be irresistable"(89).

And six years later, in a series of articles in the Paisley and Renfrewshire Gazette, Murdoch wrote, "The governing of the Celt by the Saxon, who does not take the trouble to know the language or to understand the views and characteristics of those with whom he takes to do, has been and ever will be a failure. This is being discovered in regard to Ireland after every possible failure and crime. Is it too much to expect that what has thus to be confessed to the Irish people, will have some effect on those who are taking such a stupid course in regard to the people of the Highlands?"(90).

Recent writers have looked at various aspects of the Irish dimension to anti-landlordism in the Highlands, from Hunter(91), to Dewey(92), to Smout(93); but the contemporary record, from the minutes of evidence to the Napier Commission, from the pro- and anti- crofter press(94), and from government and landlord papers is evidence enough of the extent to which the anti-landlordism of the people of Ireland set an example for the common people of the Highlands. This example is noted in the pages that follow; they also contain a discussion on the extent to which the Highlanders adopted some Irish tactics of struggle, did not adopt others (though we shall never know if these others were discussed), and developed some that were untried by the Irish.

The role of the industrial proletariat in Scotland was of much less significance than the Irish model, and its contribution to the partial victory of the 1886 Crofters' Act was at best minimal. Even by the 1880's, it can be questioned whether there was a Labour movement that in any major way went far beyond the boundaries of economism, on the one hand, and parliamentary representation on the other, in its aspiration. There was not at this point, or later, any overtly revolutionary implantation of significance in the working class; even social democracy was weak as a current in a movement still largely in thrall to the Liberals. The crofters' movement was certainly known to the progressive or socialist intelligentsia, if as part of a wider concern. According to W. MacCombie Smith, for instance, "Deer forest rents come from the rich, but where do the riches come from? There is only one possible source - from the toiling millions defrauded of the fruits of their toil..."(95). Certainly, there was south of the Highlands - and not only on the part of the working class - a developed consciousness of and sympathy for the crofters' movement, as a glance at the contemporary weekly and daily press confirms.

Willie Orr has observed, "As the cohesion of rural society in the South disintegrated, a tentative but dynamic relationship began to develop in Scotland between the urban working class and the remaining peasant communities in the Celtic periphery. The question of land - its ownership, its usage and the privileges associated with it - formed the basis of several national controversies"(96). This relationship continues to the present day - as the foreword indicates; but it did not provide practical tactical models, not did any support extent significantly beyond expressions of interest, concern and approval of anti-landlordism in the Highlands. In 1887, for instance, John MacPherson of Glendale spoke at Stratford to a meeting three-thousand strong; the Trades Council of Edinburgh condemned the sentences passed on the Clashmore and Aignish crofters in 1888; and the first meeting of the Scottish Labour Party in the same year, with John Murdoch in the chair, demanded the nationalisation of the land(97). Campaigning societies on the land question there certainly were in the south; the Land and Labour League, advocating the nationalisation of the land, had been formed in 1869, along with the Land Tenure Association. In 1881 the Land Nationalisation Society was formed, formally proposing communal ownership of the land; and two years later the Land Restoration League came into operation; while in 1884 the Scottish Land Restoration League came into being, at a meeting addressed by Henry George and chaired by John Murdoch (who became its secretary). But as Orr has observed, "It would give a false impression of the threat to the proprietors posed by this union of interests..."(98).

For Murdoch, the land agitation had the wider significance of letting the Highland stand as a "battalion in the great array of the peoples to whom it is given to fight the battles incident to the moral and social progress of makind"(99); and though the view is likely to have commanded approval in the Highlands, the provision of ideas

with regard to popular access to the land was incidental to the crofters' struggle, in that those ideas had been for a long time rooted in the community in any case.

Contact with the southern Gaelic revivalist current (which at times overlapped with the Labour movement) was rather more significant. As Hunter has noted, "Public opinion would not of itself have moved the government to make concessions to crofters. That was achieved only by further agitation and above all by the development of a crofters' political movement....in the aftermath of the Braes affair John Murdoch's long campaign for a political union between crofters and the adherents of the Gaelic revivalist movement then flourishing in the south at last began to bear fruit in the emergence of a pro-corfter coalition..."(100) It was Murdoch, in fact, who first proposed the formation in Inverness of a Gaelic society - and he was to be its secretary. But it can hardly be over-stressed that the crofters' movement was an indigenous movement, with its own vision, its own drive, its own impetus, activists and tactics - nor should it be overlooked that the likes of Murdoch and MacKenzie were very much of the community as opposed to being sympathetic outsiders to it.

There were many such others(101); and if one thing united them above all, it was a marked consciousness of the place of the Highlands in Scotland, and the place of Scotland in - or outwith - the Union. This is both an old and a difficult issue - not all would accept without reservation, for instance, the view that "the Gaelic language and the Celtic tradition are by far the most important symbols of genuine separate Scottish nationality", and even less would claim it easy to translate the view into realistic and effective political action(102). The issue is complicated by the historical relationship between progressive politics and nationalism in Scotland(103); but there is no doubting its ancestry, and the issue of Scottish

independence (or some variation of it) was a regular visitor to the agenda of the Land League conferences during the 1880's. A number of writers have concerned themselves with aspects of the relationship, among them Smout, in whom we hear an echo of John Murdoch with the observation about 'colonising alien settlers'(104), while Richards notes that to the incomers to Sutherland "it was like a colony ripe for exploitation, an entirely new field of enterprise"(105).

This notion of "colonialism", whether economic or cultural, runs through (though it may not be expressed as such) a great deal of the landlord-centred conflict of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; in one form or another, it also informs much of the wider debate in nineteenth century Scotland on the issue of nationality and nationalism, with which Hanham has dealt(106). Hanham, for instance, notes the furore over the Wallace monument in the first half of the century(107) - though a much more powerful comment is found in Murdoch, and his observation, "Give the mass of the people the same kind of interest in their native soil and their national spirit will require no column to lean upon...The land of Scotland, then, being in the hands of an alien power, and the people being merely suffered to exist on it in the capacity of 'hewers of wood and drawers of water', for the benefit of their lords and masters, anything approaching to nationality is a mere fiction..Give the people the nation and they will be national!"(108).

Hnaham also notes that, "Of course, there were voices of protest at the equation of the Highlands with the whole of Scotland, but the events of 1822 [the welcome in Edinburgh of George IV] and the 'tartan frenzy' which accompanied it, confirmed the outside world in its view that Scotland was a land of Highland romance. The cult of 'Balmorality' had begun"(109). On this too, Murdoch had something to say; "In such a state of things, how could nationality exist? And as long as they are in operation what could restore it? The usual exhibition of it is an

occasional Braemar gathering for the amusement of those who look on genuine Scots in kilts as an interesting curiosity and, perhaps, for the edification of such as would keep up the ancient Highland spirit and people as a military nursery for England - but nothing higher...And how far will a Wallace testimonial go to remedy the evil may be guessed from the abusurdity and futility of attempting to preserve, by such means, the spirit of nationality after the people have ceased to own the nation"(110).

Hanham does not give much attention to the role of the Highlands in Scottish national consciousness - though he does note that most of the "clan societies" did not come into operation until the 1890's(111), and quotes James Grant (whose father had been a laird in Glen Urquhart until 1830) on absentee landlords drawing Highland and Scottish wealth to London. He also suggests that John Stuart Blackie - "eccentric and celtophile" - who in the 'seventies and 'eighties would be an important propagandist for the crofters' cause, was the only man in Scotland who had the talent and drive to create "a national literature". Hanaham adds that "he preferred to devote himself to the Celtic revival rather than to the lowlands", but speculates no further as to why Blackie so chose.

The answer is plausible that, of course, Blackie saw the Highland experience as central to the wider Scottish consciousness - an answer equally applicable to the long history of landlord-centred conflict in the Highlands. The role of the intelligentsia in the formation, maintenance and refurbishment of national consciousness, whether in Scotland or elsewhere, is rather wider an issue than the scope of this present text will allow; might, however, it be too whimsical to suggest that in the absence of Hanham's national literature, the Scottish historian has done service as - if nothing else - a temporary substitute?

And if in so doing he puts the common people of the Highlands at the centre of their own historical stage, free

from the condescentions they have long endured - then, does he not promote much the same end?(112).

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94.

For Murdoch's view on the Inverness Courier as an organ for the landlord interest in the Highlands, see Hunter, For the People's Cause, 141-142.

95.

W. MacCombie Smith, Men or Deer in the Scottish Glens, Inverness, 1893, 7.

96.

Orr, Deer Forests, 59.

97.

Ibid., 63.

98.

Ibid., 64.

99.

The Highlander, 13-4-1878.

100.

Hunter, Making, 136.

101.

See, for instance, Murdoch's list of supporters of The Highlander, in Hunter, For the People's Cause, 145, 148, 149.

102.

Seamus Mac a' Ghobhainn, The Scotsman, 25-1-1977.

103.

David Howell, A Lost Left, Manchester, 1986 (a study of James Connolly, John Maclean, and John Wheatley); note Jim Smyth's review of the book in Radical Scotland, 25, 1987, and his comment, "It seems odd that it has taken the English so long to wake up to this problem of their own national identity".

104.

T.C. Smout, Scotland and England, is dependency a sympton or a cause of under-development, Review, vol 3, 1980.

105.

Richards, Clearances, vol 2, 375.

106.

H.J. Hanham, Mid-century Scottish nationalism, in R. Robson, Ideas and Institutions of Victorian Britain, London, 1967, 143-179.

107.

Ibid, 145.

108.

Hunter, For the People's Cause, quoting Murdoch, 99-102.

109.

Hanham, 145.

110.

Hunter, quoting Murdoch, 102.

111.

Hanham, 148, quoting R.W. Munro, The rise of the clan

societies, Scottish Genealogist, no 2-3.

112.

The extent to which this consciousness is served by the teaching of history in Scottish schools is tentatively explored in Iain Fraser Grigor, History in Scottish Schools, Scottish Marxist, no 18, 1975. The editor of the journal was Willie Thompson, author of the study of popular versus landlord rights on Orkney, The Little General and the Rousay Crofters, Edinburgh, 1981.

CHAPTER TWO

For long, the opinion prevailed that there was little or no record of anti-landlord conflict in the Highlands; Richards was one of the first from outwith the Highlands to suggest that, "the notion of Highland passivity should be regarded, if not derelict, then at least very suspect"(1). The same writer noted that according to Hanham, after Culloden, Highlanders had been "pacified, tamed and domesticated" to such an extent that, in the clearances, "scarcely a hand was raised against the destruction of much-loved homes"(2).

According to Richards, "Most seem to agree. Eric Linklater has stated without qualification that 'a singular feature of the clearances is the absence of resistance', and T.C. Smout has remarked that there was 'no major organised protest' between the Levellers' revolt of 1724 and the crofters' war of 1882'". In the same vein, William Ferguson claimed that "there was little resistance", and Rosalind Mitchison emphasised "the traditional submissiveness of the Highlander to civil and religious authority". Even John Prebble, of all writers 'external' to the Highlands probably the one with the best insight to the native community, though noting that resistance did occur, remarks that the common people came to accept sheep, "as they accepted famine and pestilence". And E.J. Hobsbawm has written about the Clearances in terms of "the handful of Scottish nobles who drove their dumbly loyal clansmen across the seas to Canada to make room for the profitable sheep"(3).

Hanham too argued that there was no significant history of landlord-centred conflict in the Highlands, with the comment that, "it required the publicity machinery of the British press to make a movement out of a very minor land dispute... Like so many events in Highland history the crofting movement began insignificantly, escalated by way of

a sort of gathering of the clans, and then petered out"(4).

On the contrary, however, there was a century of overt resistance to landlordism prior to the "Crofters' War" of the 1870s and later; a century of incidents in which tactics were refined to the point that they were to attain at Bernera, Glendale, Kilmuir, Braes and across the Highlands towards the end of the nineteenth century.

Indeed, the earliest of these incidents pre-date the opening of that century. Logue, for instance, records a conflict on the shores of Loch Lochy in which a firearm was deployed(5).

He also records an attempt a few years later on the border of Sutherland and Ross, intended to force a sheep-farmer, Geddes, "to give up his sheep farm and to compel Ross [the landlord] to return it to its former use for grazing black cattle and to its former, evicted small tenants"(6). Ross was a former vice-admiral who had come in 1762 to Balnagowan Castle, from which he shortly afterwards began to organise the importation of sheep to the district(7). He hired shepherds from the south - but as Sir George Steuart MacKenzie was to observe in his general survey of the county, these shepherds "found themselves very disagreeably situated, amongst a race of people who considered them as intruders"(8). Geddes, the tenant of Ross, was the first of his kind to come north of the Great Glen specifically to farm sheep on a commercial basis(9) but as Sir George was to remark, it was with great difficulty that the people of the district "had been restrained from acts of violence"(10).

According to Logue nothing further is known about these two instances of opposition - although on the other side of the country, there had already been "widespread disaffection in the mid-eighteenth century on the Argyll estates where ambitious landlord plans were often frustrated by a spirit of resistance which acted as a powerful restraint on landlord policy"(11).

Considerably more, however, is known about the next recorded instance of opposition, in 1792 at Rosskeen(12), where the people, "were ready to adopt any course, however violent, which they foolishly thought would rid them of sheep and sheep farmers"(13). The origin of the course adopted lay in the leasing of more land for sheep in Kildermorie from Sir Hector Munro. The land in question was taken by two Cameron brothers in 1790 or 1791 and as Sir George Steuart MacKenzie noted, "strong symptons of opposition began to appear about this time, among the lower orders of the people"(14). With a Gaelic-language edition of "The Rights of Man" reportedly "spreading rapidly through the Highlands"(15) it is not perhaps surprising that there was soon conflict between the natives of the district and the Cameron sheep-farmers, and in the autumn of 1792, the issue came before the Inverness Circuit Court, Lord Stonefield trying 8 men on riot and associated charges(16).

That same year, "Bliadhna nan Caorach", the year of the sheep, saw a concerted attempt to simply drive away from the area on the Sutherland and Ross-shire border all the sheep that had been brought there. Hundreds of people gathered in Strathoykel and began to drive south all the sheep they could find in the parishes of Lairg, Creich and Strathoykel itself. Within days another 200 men, from the Balnagowan estate, were also driving sheep southwards - by the end of that week, perhaps 10,000 head of sheep were on the move. In Edinburgh accounts of the rising began to circulate - the Edinburgh Evening Courant reported that 3,000 sheep had been drowned by "people rendered desperate by poverty"(17).

Later that same week, therefore, soldiers arrived from the south and, along with the local gentry on horseback, attacked the sheep-drovers who, not surprisingly, scattered. In September the ringleaders of the drive appeared in court in Inverness charged with threatening property, and placing its owners "at the mercy of a lawless and seditious mob". Unsurprisingly, they were found guilty;

and though they escaped gaol that, for the time being at least, was the end of the matter(18).

It was not however, the end of opposition to landlordism. As Hunter has noted, "In the second half of the 18th century, therefore, the old semi-independence of the Highland economy was transformed into an essentially neocolonial subordination to the requirements of the developing industries of England and lowland Scotland....in the fifty years after 1760 the place of cattle was more and more effectively challenged by two new commodities; wool and kelp. The large-scale production of both these materials required a massive transformation of the Highlands' traditional agrarian system....."(19)

And he adds, "The consequence was that those Highland landlords who had not already turned their estates over to sheep farmers faced almost irresistable pressures to do so; for the profits to be made from sheep farming were almost as spectacular as those to be made from kelp, principally because the boom in wool prices was accompanied by a flurry of speculative interest in the sheep rearing potential of the north-west Highlands' vast tracts of hill pasture. Throughout this area 'The competition for farms became excessive, and rent were given which were often extravagant'. Enormous expanses of land were made available to southern graziers"(20).

For the Highland gentry, therefore, these years were good ones, as they stood on the edge of wealth and its celebration in the "cult of Barmorality". By August, 1807, for instance, the majority of the eldest son of the Marquis and Marchioness of Stafford was celebrated at Dornoch with two companies of the Sutherland volunteers to "fire volleys after each of the leading toasts"(21).

Meanwhile, that October, 130 poor were being shipped out of Thurso bound towards Pictou(22); later that month, they were wrecked off Newfoundland, and all drowned(23). The following spring, the Pampler, out of Leith, foundered

too, with her emigrant cargo from the parishes of Farr, Lairg, Creich and Rogart(24) - while the following summer, the Inverness Journal was able to record that, even at this early date, the Highlands were becoming "a holiday resort for southern gentlemen"(25).

A year later, the Journal could note, "this place for some days back has been the resort of an immense number of persons of rank and fashion who at this season of the year generally visit the north for the purpose of viewing its beautiful and romantic scenery"(26); and while the local gentry was developing as the Highlands' premier social event the Northern Meeting Ball in Inverness, an early social event in the phenomenon of Balmorality - some thirty or forty vessels were arriving yearly in London with Hebridean kelp.

That same year, however, there was another sign of determined anti-landlord feeling, when the Marchioness of Stafford presented her new minister to the people of the parish of Creich, Murdoch Cameron. Cameron was presented "under protection of the military, when a riot ensued in which Captain Kenneth MacKay of Torboll had his sword shivered to pieces by stones thrown at him by an old woman of seventy"(27). According to Donald Sage's memoir of parish life at the time, "The people, to a man, were opposed to him.....He still lives, very old, very useless, but very wealthy"(28).

And in 1813, there was further violence, on a much larger scale, associated with the Sutherland estate again.

The Clearances in the name of that family, and the cause of sheep farmers like Patrick Sellar, have been documented elsewhere(29). (Though it can scarcely be ignored that the monument of the first Duke of Sutherland still looms over Golspie, very much larger than life and looking down over Dunrobin Castle; or Cockrobin Castle, as Henry Brougham once called it(30). A hundred feet high, it was designed to be visible for eighty miles - though it has

often been noted that the duke faces the sea, with his back to the emptied glens he once owned. It was designed by Burns, modelled by Sir Francis Chantrey, and had its construction entrusted to a Mr. Theakstone(31)).

Sutherland enjoyed an annual income of around £300,000, deriving largely from the labour-surplus of the coal miners he employed in Staffordshire(32). At the age of 27 he had married Elizabeth, countess of Sutherland, who in the counter-revolutionary war with France, and then the Thermidor of Bonaparte, had raised from among her tenants a force of soldiers by the simple expedient of directing five hundred of them into her "volunteer" Sutherland Highlanders(33) - the sort of men of whom Eckermann was thinking when he described to Goethe "the Highlanders as he saw them that June day on the field of Waterloo, stepping forth erect and powerful on their brawny limbs, so physically perfect.....that they looked like 'men in whom there is no original sin'"(34).

While they were abroad, however, great changes were under way in Sutherland, which were accelerated by the arrival there in 1809 of Patrick Sellar and William Young. Two years earlier, the countess had written of her husband that, "he is seized as much as I am with the rage of improvements"; it was in pursuit of these improvements that Young had recruited Sellar as his agent. And within two years of arrival, Young and Sellar had indeed improved the tenants-at-will in Dornoch, Rogart, Loth, Clyne, Golspie and Assynt.

Seventy years later, old men could still give to the Napier Commission the names of forty-eight cleared settlements, in the parish of Assynt alone(35). When the Commission visited Helmsdale, their first witness Angus Sutherland reported, "In the year 1815, when many natives of the parish were fighting for their country at Waterloo, their homes were being burned in Kildonan Strath by those who had the management of the Sutherland estate. "(36).

Given the attitude of Sellar, this might not have been surprising; as he described it all in a letter to the Lord Advocate, "Lord and Lady Stafford were pleased humanely, to order a new arrangement of this Country.....it surely was a most benevolent action, to put these barbarous hordes into a position, where they could.....advance in civilisation"(37); while Young described the tenants to James Loch, overall master of the Sutherland properties, as a "set of savages". Young also wrote to the countess to complain that "a more provoking lawless set of people than many of the Kildonaners never inhabited a civilised country"(38).

The background to the complaints lay simply enough in the refusal of the people of Kildonan to be "improved". In 1812 they had been given notice to quit; in January of the following year, agents for the intending sheep-farmers arrived to inspect the property, but were met by a crowd who told them that if sheep "were put upon that ground, there should be blood". And another two shepherds (in a scene strongly suggestive of the early land-agitation on Skye almost seventy years later) were force-marched to a meeting and insulted, interrogated, threatened - and released with a warning not to return.

The law took a hand in the affair. The sheriff-substitute, Sellar and Loch met a crowd of 150 men in the Kildonan schoolhouse, where were told that the people had a right to the land, because of promises made to them at the time the Sutherland Highlanders were being raised. Sellar replied that the promises only ran until 1808, and were therefore void(39). Young later reported that "their answer was it may be so but we will hold the land until the men are delivered to us again"; and Sellar also wrote that, "I am satisfied that the rioters would find friends in every quarter, and that much distress would be brought on the Country"(40).

Sellar wrote later to the countess, noting that the indigenous population "finding that our purpose is to cram

the property full of people, make common cause with the rioters, and have their communications with the people of Kildonan"(41). Once again the army was made ready at Fort George, the landlords giving "their Authority and approbation to any measure you may hereafter find it necessary to adopt to carry your proposed arrangements into full and complete effect"(42). The people petitioned the Prince Regent; Young wrote to his employers, warning of a rebellion(43). Shortly afterwards, however, soldiers arrived, and the leaders of the people were arrested; at which opposition collapsed. By the end of March the soldiers were withdrawn, those arrested were released, and proceedings were dropped, Sellars explaining that if a judicial enquiry had followed, the results would have been "more unpleasant than anything at present before us"(44).

Defeated, seven hundred people applied to emigrate and by July more than one hundred had left the estate. Kildonan was given over to sheep, and its native people lived on the barren shores of their county; and on the banks of Canada's Red River, near Winnipeg, in an area which is still called Kildonan to this day. And in 1815 one James Sutherland, "Seumas Buidhe", led another party of people from Kildonan and Upper Farr to the Red River; his great grandson was to be Angus Sutherland, the Land League leader of years to come(45).

The Kildonan attempt was by no means the last in the record of popular opposition to landlordism; unsurprisingly, insofar as it had yet to halt or slow landlord activities in the Highlands. In the spring of 1812, for instance, the Duke of Gordon's 14,000 acre Glenfeshie forest was offered "adapted either for a summer-grazing to black cattle or for shooting-ground to a sportsman who might wish to preserve the tract for deer"(46); little more than a year later, a number of sheep-farms on the Glengarry estate were being advertised to let(47); and while, the following summer, some who had made money from kelp were bemoaning its recent

fall in value (48), in June 1815, under the inspiration of MacDonnell of Glengarry, a number of gentlemen were convening at Inverlochy to band themselves into "a pure Highland Society, in support of the true Dress, Language, Music and Characteristics of our illustrious and ancient race"(49).

By the end of the year another MacDonnell was dying at Knoydart - Ranald MacDonnell, who had fought with his father, brother and nephew at Culloden and had suffered seven years banishment for his pains. He was buried at Kilchoan(50), almost within sight of the "magnificent mansion" then being erected across the Sound of Sleat by Lord MacDonald and his kelp profits(51); while the following summer Glengarry's Society of True Highlanders was dancing and feasting (52) at Inverlochy, everyone attired in "the globular silver buttons of their ancestry, and the highly finished pistols, dirks, powder horns, and other paraphernalia giving an air of magnificence"(53).

Meanwhile, the first sheep and wool market at Inverness was a glowing success, and it was reported that sheep farming was growing so rapidly in the Highlands that Sutherland alone already was home to 100,000 Cheviots(54); while Glengarry had taken for his public appearances to what was called "the complete Highland garb, belted plaid, broadsword, pistols, and dirk" - and thus was Marx's "promised land of modern romance" outward bound on a passage that shows little sign even now of nearing such shore as it may merit(55).

For the common people of the Highlands, of course, there was little on offer from this promised land, except the bitter alms of a recreational patronage under-pinned by class interest - finely expressed a century and a half later by the (scarcely fictional) Lady Phosphate of Runcorn(56).

In the face of it, however, popular disaffection with the new order was unabated throughout the first half of the

nineteenth century; and the Kildonan dispute was hardly over, when a new one developed at Assynt over the installation of a clergyman. Young complained to Loch that he had gone to the district with the new minister but they had been driven home by these "mountain savages"(57); or as Donald Sage put it,"The people of Assynt were not consulted in the matter [but] they however took the liberty of thinking for themselves in the case"(58).

As a result of this independence of thought, a warship was ordered from Leith with 150 soldiers; and five leaders of the Assynt people were taken to Inverness, where one was sentenced to nine months in gaol.

Once again, the authorities had triumphed; but by now, affairs in Sutherland were drawing attention far to the south, with Lord Pitmilly recording that, "...in the years 1812 and 1813, open violence and riot ensued. But even after the riots were quelled.....the unreasonable opposition to the improvements were not at an end. A new mode of attack was reserved, and every attempt made to poison the public mind"(59).

What Pitmilly meant by this was the popular attempt to thwart Patrick Sellar with regard to his conduct in the county. At the end of 1813 Sellar leased land in Strathnaver for a sheep farm, and in due course the much-publicised evictions followed(60). The law was resorted to, this time by the people rather than the landlords(61), and in due course the sheep-farmer appeared in court on charges of murder. There were no Sutherland tenants on the jury; 67 years later, Sellar's son explained that this was so because until 1819, such people were exempt from jury-service in Inverness(62).

At the trial, one of Sellar's lawyers talked of "the clamour which had been raised in the country, the prejudices of the people"(63); and when the jury found the sheep farmer not guilty, the trial judge hoped that the result would "have due effect on the minds of the country, which have

been so much, and so improperly, agitated"(64). In short, Sellar had won outright, and though twenty of his sheep had their throats cut along with that of Lady Stafford's pet goat(65), there was to be no further opposition recorded until 1820.

By the spring of that year Sellar had already retired as an agent for the Sutherland estates but was keeping on his sheep farming interests from which, in less than a decade, he had already made a fortune. Some years later he would buy himself an estate in Morvern for £30,000(66). In the Highlands generally the profitability of sheep-farming was pushing to new heights the price of estates, and accelerating the ownership of the Highlands by non-residents. Fairburn, for instance, with a rental of £700 at the turn of the century was worth, by 1820, £80,000(67)

At the opening of that year Hugh Munro, laird of Novar, announced his intention to clear the natives away from his estate at Culrain, and put the land under sheep. At the beginning of February Novar's agents arrived to serve the writs of removal. Strathoykel, of course, was the place where the people had gathered for the great sheep drive of 1792; and thus when a party of Novar's agents went to the glen they were met by a hostile crowd who drove them away, the sheriff-depute reporting to the Inverness Courier that murder had also been threatened.

The local gentry urged him to enforce the writs; he asked the Lord Advocate, it was rumoured in Dingwall, for five hundred soldiers and three cannon, as if seriously anticipating another, and even more serious, "year of the sheep". In the event, however, forty police and twenty five militiamen, along with a party of local "gentlemen", marched on the recalcitrant natives to enforce the writs. A riot ensued, in which one woman was shot dead; while the Inverness Courier reported that "a body of three or four hundred people, chiefly women, posted behind a stone dyke, rushed out upon the soldiers with a hideous yell and

attacked them with sticks, stones and other missiles"(68).

And the new factor for the Sutherland estate wrote to Loch to say that the sheriff-depute's force had been "opposed by an overwhelming number of men and women organised and armed to give Battle....their principal force of reserve, it was said, were armed and reported to be about 500"(69).

The sheriff-depute, his carriage overturned and his writs scattered, fled, pursued for four miles to the inn at Ardgay and much abused; but the local minister went among his people counselling "the madness and inutility of violence", and instructed his assistant to do likewise, "exhorting them in the name of obedience"(70).

The Culrain attempt thereafter subsided; but such attempts had cautioned the landlords to proceed warily for fear of publicity(71), with James Loch writing to his agent in Sutherland and urging him to remember at all times that "every motion is watched and if you do anything at all which will occasion public observation it will be brought before the House of Commons"(72). Loch also instructed his agents that the burning of houses should no longer be associated with clearing operations - clearing, nevertheless, was still to proceed.

Shortly after the events at Culrain, sheriff-officers were visiting Gruids with notices of eviction - "they were literally stripped of their clothes, deprived of their Papers, and switched off the bounds of the Property"(73); Loch was informed that the Gruids people were "mustering and preparing all sorts of weapons"(74).

By then the period of worst clearing was drawing to a close on the Sutherland estates, but there was soon further disturbances at Achness; and again at Gruids(75). For Achness, 100 soldiers were made ready, as it was feared that the people there were to be reinforced by supporters from Caithness and Ross-shire; while at Gruids the following year, a sheriff-officer was again assaulted and deforced of

his papers. Thus in the spring of 1821 soldiers were sent towards Achness and Gruids - and again, opposition collapsed. Plots on the barren northern coast were made available(76); for as Loch himself observed, "It would produce a great sensation if any set of people were wandering about without habitation"(77).

By then the great clearances of Sutherland were all but completed; and the cult of Balmorality growing apace. In Edinburgh under the auspices of the new Celtic Society (its principal object was to "promote the use of the Highland garb" in the Highlands) a dinner was hosted by Glengarry, with Walter Scott as guest; he recalled "with delight how he used to cling round the knees of some aged Highlanders" and listen to the tales and traditions of "that romantic country"(78). A year later, Glengarry was to appear at the coronation of George IV, dressed in what he called "the full costume of a Highland chief"(79). When the same monarch appeared in Edinburgh shortly afterwards in a justly famous development of the "traditional Highland costume" sixty-five synthetic Highlanders were there to meet him "representing the Earl of Sutherland"(80). Within weeks Glengarry was hosting his latest fashion of Highland Games(81), the marriage of the Leveson-Gowers' eldest son was reportedly "celebrated with great rejoicing" in Sutherland(82), and no less than one hundred gentlemen dined in honour of Thomas Fraser's majority, with for the lesser "clansmen" "free beef, with ale and whisky liberally distributed"(83).

Underlying these events, of course, was a brisk trade in Highland property, that would continue from the year of the disturbances at Gruids and Achness right through for another twenty years. MacDonald of Clanranald, in the quarter century from 1813, sold land to the value of over £200,000; in 1840 Colonel Gordon of Cluny got the island of Barra for £38,000, and Lord Abinger purchased Inverlochy for £75,000(84). In 1825, MacKenzie of Seaforth bought Lewis for £160,000(85); while in 1831 Waternish in Skye went to

Major Allan MacDonald for around £13,000. Baillie of Dochfour took Dochgarroch for £10,000, and Corriemony went to a Colonel Pearce for £13,000(86). In 1834 Glendale in Skye was sold for £8,600(87) and a fortnight later Torbreck went for £23,000 and Aberlour for £15,000, respectively to the trustees of Colonel Baillie of Leys and Mr Grant, late of Jamaica(88). In July 1835, Mr Baillie of Bristol took land in Badenoch for £7,000(89); and in October, at the sale of Cromartie lands in Ross, Fannich made £6,500, and Lochbroom made over £9,000. A few years earlier, such prices would have been considered ruinous, and the editor of the Inverness Courier attributed the rise in estate prices to the prosperity of sheep farming "and the passion entertained by English gentlemen for field sports"(90).

In 1836 the Earl of Aboyne was reported to have acquired the Glengarry estate(91); in the spring of that year, the sporting rights over huge areas of Sutherland were on offer, including the rights over the districts of Armadale and Strathnaver(92); the following year twenty five square miles around Achnasheen and Loch Fannich were advertised for sporting purposes(93); in April, Glenelg went to Baillie of Bristol for nearly £80,000(94); and Geanies in Ross went in June to Murray the banker for £60,000(95). A year later, James Evan Baillie, the new laird of Glenelg, bought Glenshiel for £25,000; the late Sir Fettes' Redcastle lands had changed hands for £120,000(96); and in 1839, Achany in Sutherland went to James Matheson(97). And a year after that, 20,000 acres in Argyll-shire were advertised as being suitable for use as a deer forest; while estates that were not selling, or not for sale, were nevertheless enjoying a vast increase in rental income(98), as the scramble for profit from sheep, sport from deer, and status from mere association gathered way.

To the Highlands in the years after the events in Sutherland, incomers poured - by 1826 alone, "the number of fashionable personages" who had visited the Highlands was

"beyond all precedent", with every shooting lodge filled(99); two years later, by way of obituary for an older order, 150 gentlemen dined at Glengarry's funeral, and the grief of 1500 others was "plentifully supplied with bread, cheese and whisky"(100). A few years later the Lord Chancellor was holidaying at Dunrobin(101); a month later, he passed south again, in the company of "Mr Edwin Landseer, the distinguished artist", they thus awarding the "promised land" the double approval of Government and Art(102). Shortly, Lady Vere presented Lochiel with an heir; while the gentry dined, 2,000 lesser clansmen were supplied "plentifully but not improperly" with whisky; and great rejoicing was reported(103). That year, Lord Southampton had taken the hunting, shooting and fishing of Lochbroom(104); and in September the Duke of St Albans and Lord Frederick Beauclerk appeared at the Inverness Northern Meeting "in full Highland dress"(105), while soon enough Lords Loftus and Jocelyn were hunting at Flowerdale(106), and the Duke of Bedford was entertaining Badenoch(107).

Meanwhile, hundreds were leaving the west coast ports for the Americas, for by now the kelp industry was in ruins - in the outer Hebrides, some four to five thousand people were in disastrous circumstances(108). And thus, a year later, arrangements were in hand for the departure of several hundred people from the MacDonald estates in Skye. The emigrants were to provide their own food; but "Highlanders, it is well known, can exist on very little when necessity requires them to do so"(109).

By April of the following year, the "fever of emigration" was "raging" in Sutherland(110). In early June, a shipload of emigrants sailed; a fortnight later, two brigs hauled away from Cromarty, towards Quebec, carrying another 300 people(111). That winter, two-thirds of the people in the Uists and Benbecula were without food(112); in Inverness, four prominent and wealthy townsmen received letters signed "Swing", written in consequence of a meal

scarcity caused by the extensive exportation of meal from the north; the authorities, alarmed, "took precautionary measures" and offered the fortune, to a hungry man, of 20 guineas, for the discovery of the organisers(113).

By summer, conditions in the Hebrides were desperate; "a more deep and universal distress prevails than was ever remembered"(114). By 1836, the people of Lewis were in a "lamentable state of dearth and destitution"(115); and by the following spring, destitution was raging across Skye(116). That summer the Brilliant sailed from Tobermory towards New South Wales, with 300 passengers(117); the following spring, the gentry of Lochaber, clergy included, met at Fort William to promote emigration from the district to the colonies(118).

There were, of course, many other such sailings; but throughout, the period was punctuated by episodes of overt direct action against the landlords. In the summer of 1839, there was trouble on Harris(119). Anticipating events four and a half decades later, a sheriff and soldiers marched to Borve, on the west coast, and arrested five tenants; and thereafter, overt resistance crumbled(120). No legal action was taken against the people - it was scarcely required, though one member of the gentry observed that its absence did encourage "resistance to the law"(121); and within just two seasons, the island's owner and his guests were shooting "ten excellent stags, some of them twenty stones in weight"(122).

A year later there was again trouble at Culrain; the landlords claimed that a strong body of eviction agents was deforced and put to flight, with the buildings of the chief agent fired and twenty head of stock lost in the blaze(123).

And in the autumn of 1841, there was serious trouble at Durness occasioned by the activities of James Anderson(124).

That August, he announced that it was his intention to evict 163 people in Durness at two days notice. On September 18th, therefore, it was necessary for the sheriff-

substitute, the procurator-fiscal, sheriff-officers and special constables to visit Durness, where they met with "stout resistance", in which the women took a leading part"(125). The authorities were put to flight and took refuge in Durine Inn, where they were attacked that night and driven away. The sheriff, Lumsden, recorded that there were rumours of a general uprising in the whole district of Tongue. He wrote to the Lord Advocate demanding infantry to catch the leaders of the people; the rumour of the request was enough to invite compliance, with those involved (women prominent among them) dispersing to Edderachilles. Anderson in turn delayed his eviction proceedings for six months(126).

No criminal prosecution followed; again, the landlords had won - though the failure to prosecute in the courts those who had stood against them, albeit briefly, may well have been a measure of awareness of their unpopularity. The previous Christmas, after all, there had been a Chartist speaker in Inverness(127); even the Inverness Courier, "the organ of the oppressors of Sutherlandshire"(128), had been moved to report his presence, and the killing earlier of twenty Chartists in Wales during their attempt to seize Newport(129).

The landlords, as a class, counselled emigration. In early 1841, Henry Baillie, MP for Inverness-shire, brought the subject before parliament(130). And by that summer, the official committee on Highland emigration was claiming that a "well-arranged system of emigration was of primary importance"on account of the level of popular destitution in the Highlands(131).

Five years later, with the failure of the potato crop, such destitution would be "practically universal" in the Highlands. By June 1846, the people of Harris were beginning to exist on shell-fish and sand-eels(132). Within two months, the total failure of the crop was "everywhere realised"(133). On Harris, the poor went "to the seashore

and gather limpets, cockles and other shell-fish, and by digging in the sands of Scarista, they get a species of small fish called sand-eels. On these and these only do they subsist"(134). By August, it was reported from Inverness that the blight was "fast spreading its ravages over this and neighbouring counties"; in Easter Ross the crop was turning into a rotten pulp(135).

Further emigration followed; James Matheson paid 1,000 people to leave Lewis in 1852, and the Highland Emigration Society despatched 2,500 Highlanders to Australia(136). Earlier, 200 people from Gairloch and Torridon had already made their way to Canada; while in 1847, the Duke of Sutherland had despatched 400 people from the Reay country to Montreal(137). The following year, the barque Liscard hauled away from Loch Hourn, with 300 people from Glenelg(138). A month later, large-scale emigration was reported from Gordon of Cluny's estates in the southern Hebrides(139). In the summer of 1851 emigrants sailed from Scrabster for Quebec(140); in July, a ship took Lewis people away from Loch Roag(141). The following month Colonel Gordon was supporting the departure of 1,000 people from South Uist, and another 500 from Barra(142); a year later the Georgina stood away from Greenock with 500 emigrants, bound towards Australia. Th Rev. Dr MacLeod, on the day of sailing, addressed them in Gaelic, this "being the only language they understood"(143). Two months later, 400 people, mostly from Skye, departed from Birkenhead, also for Australia(144). That winter the Captain Baynton sailed from Argyll for Australia, with 730 people from Skye, Harris and the Uists(145). In 1853, the 255-ton brig Countess of Cawdor(146) cleared Inverness with a cargo of emigrants on the first day of August(147); she arrived at Geelong two days after Christmas(148). On the 28th of September, 1853, an emigrant ship from Liverpool, bound towards Quebec, was driven ashore on the western coast of Vatersay and 360 people were lost(149). A month later 100 people of Lochaber

left for Australia(150). And soon enough the David MacIver was sailing from Birkenhead with 400 emigrants; "a considerable number of these were natives of the Highlands"(151).

For the Highland elite, however, despite the occasional upset of conflict, life went on in its usual way. Already, it was showing a taste for marrying within its own class; in the years following the famine the 2nd Duke of Sutherland's eldest son, the Marquis of Stafford, married at Cliveden Miss Hay MacKenzie of Cromartie(152). Later, Sutherland's daughter, Lady Constance Leveson-Gower, married the Earl Grosvenor, heir to the Marquis of Westminster(153); while two years before the famine, Lady Elizabeth Georgina, Sutherland's eldest daughter, had married the Marquis of Lorne, only son of the Duke of Argyll(154).

On the financial front too, commercial landownership was being consolidated. In 1844, James Matheson bought Lewis for £200,000 of his drug smuggling profits(155). A year later the Marquis of Salisbury bought the island of Rhum, recently cleared, "in order to form a shooting ground or deer forest"; and in 1855, Sir John Orde bought North Uist, and thus "the whole of the Hebrides has changed hands within the last quarter of a century". That same year, Kilmuir in north Skye went to Captain Fraser for £80,000; his name was one of which much would be heard, and even more said, in the years to come(156).

In the winter of 1847, as an echo of the outside world, the shoemakers of Inverness formed what the authorities identified as an illegal combination and formed a closed shop(157); four of their leaders were promptly arrested; and their appeals spurned by Lord Cockburn, who had defended Patrick Sellar(158). Three years later Sellar, now styled "Sellar of Ardtornish", was dead , though there were few tenants left in Morvern to mourn his passing, should any have felt the inclination(159). Within a year, Cockburn, "friend and biographer of Lord Jeffrey", was dead too(160);

and the following summer James Loch was also finally gone(161).

In April 1846 the centenary of Culloden went largely unremembered, at least in public(162) - by that summer, hunger-riots were spreading across the eastern Highlands, as the failure of the potato crop grew imminent, and as corn-merchants stock-piled and exported meal too expensive for the people to buy. Already, a series of riots, extending over several days, had shaken Inverness. They had arised "from a fear of scarcity and high prices", it was reported; and as another, smaller, disturbance occurred at Tain(163), twenty rioters were remanded in custody(164), of whom three would later be gaoled(165). At the same time "potato pits opened in Lochcarron were found to be mostly rotten"(166). By the winter, there was a riot in Granton on Spey(167). At Evanton, a large crowd prevented the shipment of grain - and the Inverness Courier printed a long list of disturbances, or threatened disturbances, across the Highlands(168). There were further meal-mob riots in many places, including Beauly, Rosemarkie and Balintraid(169); and in Avoch, soldiers were called from Fort George to put down a riot in the village(170). At the beginning of March, 1847, riots occurred in Ross-shire; country people had broken into the granaries, to mix various corns and render them unfit for sale (though still edible)(171). In Castleton and Wick there were riots too(172).

Meanwhile, from 1843, the effects of the Disruption had hit the Church of Scotland and torn it apart in the Highlands. Lay patronage, the power of a landlord to appoint as minister a man politically suitable to the landlord cause, was not popular, as the events of previous years had shown. There were precendents from Clyne, Creich, Assynt, Croy and Kinlochbervie(173); and in the year of the Disruption(174), the people of Rosskeen resisted the induction of a new minister(175). That autumn, at Invergordon, a force of soldiers was landed to repress

"Church rioters"(176). At Logie and Resolis in the Black Isle, crowds armed with sticks and stones prevented entrance to the churches, arising from the introduction of new ministers; at Resolis, a woman was arrested and gaoled at Cromarty, but she was freed by the mob(177) from her underground cell; her gaoler, on the arrival of the mob, locking himself in another cell(178).

With the coming of the Free Church came a continuing trickle of landlord-centred direct action in the Highlands. In 1842, a sheriff-officer was deforced at Glencalvie(179). The same month there was a "great demonstration" at Fort William with 500 of the Lochaber poor marching behind pipers (not for the last time were the pipes to figure in anti-landlord demonstrations)(180); and that summer the women of the 300-strong community of Lochshell, in the parish of Lochs, drove away an eviction party of officials(181).

The following year, a party of sheriff-officers was deforced at Balcladdich in Assynt, while attempting to evict one John MacLeod, and were driven away by perhaps fifty people. The sheriff gathered a force of thirty special constables, marched to Assynt, and arrested the leaders of the action(182). In 1845, notices of eviction were served on between two and four thousand people in Ross and Cromarty alone(183); though the editor of the Inverness Courier thought that the numbers were an underestimation of those involved(184).

The following month the case of Glencalvie was also raised in the Commons(185). The matter even made the London press, with The Times sending a special correspondent to the north(186), and reporting that, "for the same land no farmer in England would give £15 at the utmost"(187). Of the people themselves, an estate official noted, "They are exceedingly attached to the glen. Their associations are all within it.....their hearts are rooted to the heather"(188). Temporarily, the authorities retreated; but

within a year, the people had been cleared(189), having left scrawled on the windows of the church in which they briefly took refuge their names(190).

(The gable in which the inscribed window is set faces down the glen; opposite the other gable is the graveyard, the inscriptions on its headstones themselves constituting a poignant history of Highland affairs)(191).

And yet another defeat lay on the far side of the Highlands, at Sollas in North Uist. In 1849, Lord MacDonald decided to evict 600 or more people, starving in the aftermath of the potato famine(192).

Thomas Muloch of the Inverness Advertiser warned that Sollas was foredoomed, for it had caught the eye of two or three prospective sheep farmers(193).Thus, in July 1849, the factor, Patrick Cooper, was deforced, and anyone attempting henceforth to evict any tenant was "threatened with instant death"(194). A few days later, another estate party was driven away by a crowd of 300, with warning flags flying (as they would in Skye thirty five years later); again, the authorities retreated , and the landlord wrote to the authorities, asking for "an armed force"(195). The Inverness Courier suggested, "Their conduct was very unlike what Highlanders might be expected to exhibit, and some mischievous demagogue must have been among them"(again, almost exactly what would be said of the Skye crofters three and a half decades later)(196).

By the end of the month, a major assault was launched on Sollas(197). Police seized two men; and returned the following day, and simply moved into the houses of the people, emptying them of goods and possessions, and tearing away the roofs. At that point, the people of neighbouring townships, the women in the lead, charged the police, and a running battle ensued. The police finally took prisoners of the leaders, or those they called the leaders; and the people finally agreed to leave for Canada the following year. In September, four men appeared at the Inverness

Circuit Court, charged with mobbing, rioting obstruction, deforcement and police assault(198), Lord Cockburn warning the jury that the case involved moral and political considerations "with which you and I have no concern"(199). The jury found the accused guilty, but recommended the utmost leniency; but Cockburn gaoled the men anyway, and committed to his journal the observation that, "The popular feeling is so strong against these (as I think necessary, but odious) operations, that I was afraid of an acquittal"(200).

The following year, therefore, the district was "completely and mercilessly cleared of all its remaining inhabitants"(201) - and just before Christmas, 1852, the Sollas people sailed to Campbeltown to join the Harris and Skye emigrants aboard the Hercules; and on Boxing Day, she stood away to the open sea(202).

Sollas, therefore, was a defeat; and it would be some years yet before the people would begin to fight back with success(203). But the record of landlord-centred resistance from the closing years of the previous century until the eviction riot at Sollas adequately gives the lie to the allegations of passivity with which this chapter opened. By the time of Sollas too, the great themes of the backdrop to landlord-centred resistance had been established; those of clearance, sheep-farming, deer-forests, famine, poverty, and emigration on the one hand; and land-speculation and Balmorality on the other.

By the time of Sollas, the lines of class demarcation were clear; and the stage was set for a development of the tactics deployed in the preceding sixty years(204). Never again would there be a sheep-drive in the style of "the year of the sheep".

Rather, their tactics in the years to come would reflect an awareness no longer bounded by immediate locality, but by membership of a Highland-wide community,

conscious of itself, and for itself; and increasingly organised.

CHAPTER TWO

1.

Eric Richards, How Tame were the Highlanders during the Clearances?, Scottish Studies, XVII, 1973.

2.

Ibid.

3.

Richards's original is sourced as appropriate.

4.

H.J. Hanham, The problem of Highland discontent, 1880-1885, Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, vol 19, 1967.

5.

Kenneth J. Logue, Popular Disturbances in Scotland 1750-1815, Edinburgh, 56. Reviewed by W. Hamish Fraser, Scottish Historical Review, 1981, vol 60, 199. See also Charles Fraser-MacIntosh, The Camerons of Letterfinlay, Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness, XVII. (An appendix to this volume lists the members of the Society.)

6.

Ibid.

7.

John Prebble, The Highland Clearances, London, 1963, 30.

8.

Sir George Steuart Mackenzie, A General Survey of the Counties of Ross and Cromarty, London, 1810, 128.

9.

Prebble, Clearances, 31.

10.

Mackenzie, 129.

11.

Eric Richards, Patterns of Highland Discontent 1790-1860, in R.Quinault and J.Stevenson, Popular Protest and Public Order, London (reviewed by William Ferguson in Scottish Historical Review, 1976, vol 55, 44) - drawing on Eric Cregeen, The Changing Role of the House of Argyll in the

Scottish Highlands, in N.T.Phillipson and Rosalind Mitchison (editors), Essays in Scottish History in the Eighteenth Century, Edinburgh, 1970.

12.

Bliadhna nan Caorach - "the year of the sheep" - is extensively covered in: Prebble, Clearances, chapter 1; William Mackenzie, Bliadhna nan Caorach, Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness, VII, 1877-1878; Logue, Popular Disturbances, 58-64, (drawing in particular on the declarations and indictments of the accused, from the High Court of Justiciary papers covering 1780 to 1815). See also J.A.S. Watson, The Rise and Development of the Sheep Industry in the Highlands and North of Scotland, Transactions of the Highland and Argicultural Society of Scotland, 1932.

13.

Rev.Carment, New Statistical Account, Ross-shire, 266.

14.

Mackenzie (General Survey) 131-132.

15.

Thomas Johnston, The History of the Working Classes in Scotland, Wakefield, 1974, 218.

16.

Scots Magazine, Sep 1792. Edinburgh Evening Courant, 20-9-1792.

17.

9-8-1792. See also Scots Magazine, Aug 1792, and Edinburgh Evening Courant, 11-8-1792.

18.

Edinburgh Evening Courant, 3-11-1792.

19.

Hunter, The Making of the Crofting Community, 12.

20.

Ibid, 21-22.

21.

J.Barron, The Northern Highlands in the Nineteenth Century,

Inverness, 1903-1913. Volume 1 covers 1800 to 1824; to 1807 it is based on James Suter's Memorabilia; and then on the files of the Inverness Journal until the first issue of the Inverness Courier on 4-12-1817. Vol.1, 5.

22.

Ibid. 6.

23.

Ibid. 8.

24.

Ibid. 26.

25.

Ibid. 26.

26.

Ibid. 43.

27.

Huw (or Hew) Scott, Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticanae, v.7, 83.

28.

Donald Sage, Memorabilia Domestica, Parish Life in the North of Scotland, Edinburgh, 1975. 206.

29.

Notably by Prebble, Clearances, and Richards, Leviathan. See also: Eric Richards, The Mind of Patrick Sellar 1780-1851, Scottish Studies, v.15, 1971, 3-4. Thomas Sellar, The Sutherland Evictions of 1814, London, 1883, 10-11.

30.

Prebble, Clearances, 61.

31.

Inverness Courier, 28-6-1837, 22-8-1838. The Times, 4-7-1837, 10-10-1838.

32.

Richards, How Tame, 37-38. Adam, Sutherland Estate Management, v.2, 164-165, 176-177, 180-189, 254-255, 280-285. David Monypenny, Report of the Trial of Patrick Sellar, Edinburgh, 1816. Logue, Popular Disturbances, 64-71.

Patrick Robertson, The Trial of Patrick Sellar, Inverness,

1883.

33.

John Prebble, Mutiny, London, 1975, 500. Richards review of this title is noted above; in this respect, see also James Shaw Grant, Wanted, a Highland historian (reviewing T.C. Smout's A Century of the Scottish People), Stornoway Gazette, 20-9-1986; and Aonghas MacNeacail, My grandparents and crime, 7 Days, November 1978.

34.

J.P.Eckermann, Gesprache mit Goethe in den Letzten Jahren Seines Lebens; quoted in F.Marian McNeill, The Scots Kitchen, St Albans, 1974, 74. See also John Stuart Blackie paper, National Library of Scotland, MSS 2621-2664, MS 2649 (vi) (f.294-8); Fortnightly, 1836, Eckermann's Conversation with Goethe. The famous "stirrup-charge" of the Gordons at Waterloo is still controversial; see John Dickson, With Napoleon at Waterloo, Edward Low, 1911; and Stephen Wood, The Scottish Soldier, London, 1987.

35.

Hunter, Making etc, 27.

36.

Napier Commission, question 38219.

37.

Adams, Sutherland Estate Management, vol.1, 156.

38.

Adams, Sutherland Estate Management, vol.2, 185.

39.

D.K.Murray, History of the Scottish Regiments, London, 1863, 411.

40.

Adams, Sutherland Estate Management, vol.2, 177-178.

41.

Ibid, 181.

42.

Ibid, 182.

43.

Ibid, 185.

44.

Ibid, 181.

45.

And in the intervening years, the gentry continued to celebrate their wealth in the district. In 1846, for instance, Sir Alexander Matheson paid for the building of Ardross Castle, with ten public rooms, 25 main bedrooms and a ballroom. By the 1920's it was in the ownership of Dyson Perrins (whose family also owned land in the Hebrides until very recently.) Perrins it was who installed a chandelier from the Palace of Versailles at Ardross; in 1982, the building was on offer for conversion to "a leisure complex"; The Scotsman, 5-7-1982.

46.

Inverness Journal, 17-1-1812.

47.

Inverness Journal, 19-2-1813.

48.

Inverness Journal, 5-8-1814.

49.

Inverness Journal, 23-6-1815.

50.

Inverness Journal, 22-12-1815.

51.

Inverness Journal, 14-7-1815.

52.

Inverness Journal, 28-6-1816.

53.

Inverness Journal, 19-7-1816.

54.

Inverness Journal, 20-6-1817.

55.

Inverness Journal, 24-10-1817. Karl Marx, Capital, Part 7, chapter 24, section 2.

56.

The Cheviot, the Stag and the Black, Black Oil, Kyleakin, 1974.

57.

Richards, Patterns of Highland Discontent, 1790-1860; 83; in R.Quinault and J.Stevenson, Popular Protest and Public Order, 1790-1920, London.

58.

Donald Sage, Memorabilia Domestica, 193-194. MacGillivray was eventually forced on the parish - but moved to Lairg four years later; and died in 1849. His two sons were also ministers - in the Free Church.

59.

David Monypenny of Pitmilly, Report of the Trial of Patrick Sellar, Edinburgh, 1816, 2 and 3.

60.

Most famously, by Donald MacLeod in his Gloomy Memories of the Highlands (a riposte to Harriet Beecher-Stowe's 'Sunny Memories'); published as one volume with Alexander MacKenzie's History of the Highland Clearances; 1st edition, Inverness 1883; 2nd edition, Glasgow 1946, with an introduction by Ian MacPherson MP (reprinted 1947, 1958, 1966). Third edition, Inverness, 1979, with an introduction by John Prebble. Also Prebble, Clearances, chapter 2.

61.

As the Knoydart land-raiders did a century and a half later; with the same consequences!

62.

T.Sellar, 1883, 41.

63.

As a reflection of, and focus for, anti-landlord sentiment, the Military Register was setting a tradition - which has continued through the Oban Times, the Invergordon Times, and the North British Daily Mail; to the West Highland Free Press of the present day.

64.

David Monypenny, 67.

65.

Richards, Patterns, 87.

66.

See Philip Gaskell, Morvern Transformed, A Highland Parish in the 19th century, Cambridge, 1968, for Sellar in Morvern.

67.

Prebble, Clearances, 130.

68.

Inverness Courier, 9-3-1820; and 23-3-1820.

69.

Richards, How Tame were the Highlanders during the Clearances, Scottish Studies, 1973, XCVII.

70.

Prebble, Clearances, 131-137.

71.

And there is little reason to suppose that anything has changed since this.

72.

Richards, Patterns, 92.

73.

Prebble, Clearances, 138. As a means of resistance, deforcement was to be popular sixty years later, at the height of the agitation on Skye in particular.

74.

Richards, Patterns, 92.

75.

Inverness Courier, 12-4-1821.

76.

Almost the same formulation as Lord Brocket would use on his land-raiders, 129 years later!

77.

Richards, Patterns, 93.

78.

Inverness Courier, 8-2-1820.

79.

Inverness Courier, 9-8-1821.

80.

Inverness Courier, 22-8-1822.

81.

Inverness Courier, 10-10-1822.

82.

Inverness Courier, 5-6-1823. See also Sir Francis Lindley, Lord Lovat, 307-308, on the celebrations for the majority of the present Lord Lovat; also 50.

83.

Inverness Courier, 19-6-1823.

84.

J.Barron, vol 2, 329-330.

85.

Inverness Courier, 17-3-1825.

86.

Inverness Courier, 14-12-1831.

87.

Inverness Courier, 10-12-1834.

88.

Inverness Courier, 24-12-1834.

89.

Inverness Courier, 15-7-1835.

90.

Inverness Courier, 28-10-1835.

91.

Inverness Courier, 27-1-1836.

92.

Inverness Courier, 27-4-1836.

93.

Inverness Courier, 8-3-1837.

94.

Inverness Courier, 12-4-1837.

95.

Inverness Courier, 28-6-1837.

96.

Inverness Courier, 27-6-1838.

97.

Brian Inglis, The Opium War, London, 1976, 68, 70, 154, 168; "The rebellion was led by James Matheson, still in his early 'twenties, who had begun to smuggle Malwa [opium] to China under the Danish flag in 1818 and the following year had negotiated a deal with the Portugese to ship regular consignments of opium from Goa.....On March 18th opposition leaders met in Peel's London home to decide what line they should take in the debate on China. There was no doubt what line they would have liked to take: most of them despised the merchant classes, and particularly the nouveaux riches 'Nabobs' (an attitude reflected in Disraeli' Sybil, published in 1837: 'Lord Egremont derided a dreadful man, richer than Croesus, one MacDrug, fresh from Canton with a million of opium in each pocket, denouncing corruption and bellowing free trade' - a barely disguised reference to Matheson"). On James Matheson and his nephew Alexander, see J. Barron, vol 3, xviii, xix, xx. See also The Celtic Magazine, vol VII, 489-503.

98.

Inverness Courier, 21-6-1837.

99.

Inverness Courier, 16-2-1826.

100.

Inverness Courier, 6-2-1828.

101.

Inverness Courier, 7-8-1833. A year later, Donald MacLeod, the sheriff-depute, was dead, at 89; Inverness Courier, 29-1-1834.

See also Inverness Courier, 3-9-1834.

102.

Inverness Courier, 8-10-1834.

103.

Inverness Courier, 29-4-1835.

104.

Inverness Courier, 6-5-1835.

105.

Inverness Courier, 30-9-1835.

106.

Inverness Courier, 20-9-1837.

107.

Inverness Courier, 2-10-1839.

108.

Inverness Courier, 16-7-1828.

109.

Inverness Courier, 28-1-1829.

110.

Inverness Courier, 7-4-1830.

111.

Inverness Courier, 23-6-1830.

112.

Inverness Courier, 23-2-1831.

113.

Inverness Courier, 2-2-1831.

114.

Inverness Courier, 6-7-1831.

115.

Inverness Courier, 23-5-1836.

116.

Inverness Courier, 1-3-1837.

117.

Inverness Courier, 11-10-1837.

118.

Inverness Courier, 16-5-1838.

119.

Inverness Courier, 24-7-1839.

120.

Inverness Courier, 7-8-1839. Alick Morrison, The Grianan Case 1734-1781, the kelp industry and the clearances in Harris, 1811-1854, Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness, 1980-1982, vol 52, 20. James Hunter, (column), West Highland Free Press, 3-12-1982; "The fate of the Harris

people was sealed in 1843 when the island was sold to Lord Dunmore.....Dunmore decided to clear practically every settlement on the west and south coasts of Harris. The Harris people, however, were not inclined to go quietly.....A sympathetic government obligingly rallied-round and sent a detachment of heavily-armed troops.....Some of those expelled in this way were to emigrate to New Harris and other settlements in the vicinity of St Anns, Cape Breton. Others were sent to the bleak and barren Bays district of Harris where crofts had to be created by gathering the scanty soil into little heaps between the rocks. In a place like Geocrab, where once there had been eight tenants, there were now 26.....".

121.

Richards, Patterns, 95. Within 40 years, Harris contained the Earl of Dunmore's 17,000 acre deer-forest at Luskentyre, and another 40,000 acre deer-forest at Amhuinnsuidh; Napier Commission, report volume, appendix C; map and lists of deer forests.

122.

Inverness Courier, 3-11-1841. The continuity of landlord-centred conflict in Harris, till the present day, is striking.

123.

Richards, Patterns, 95.

124.

The similarity between Anderson's behaviour and the storyline of J. MacDougall Hay's Gillespie (first published 1914; and Edinburgh, 1979) springs to mind, of course; though there is no evidence that Hay was aware of the Anderson story.

125.

Inverness Courier, 3-11-1841.

126.

Inverness Courier, 27-10-1841; and 17-11-1841.

127.

Inverness Courier, 23-12-1840.

128.

MacLeod, Gloomy Memories, letter 23.

129.

Inverness Courier, 13-11-1839. Morton and Tate, The British Labour Movement, 1956, London, 87. For further information on the Durness troubles, see MacLeod, Gloomy Memories, letters 22, 23, 24.

130.

Inverness Courier, 17-2-1841.

131.

Inverness Courier, 16-6-1841.

132.

Is the recent Highland aversion to shore-line shell-fish an echo of these times?

133.

J.Barron, vol.3, p.xxiii. And, of course, Somer's Letters from the Highlands.

134.

Inverness Courier, 17-6-1846.

135.

Inverness Courier, 16-8-1846; and 26-8-1846.

136.

J.Barron, vol 3, xxxv.

137.

Inverness Courier, 18-2-1848.

138.

Inverness Courier, 19-7-1849.

139.

Inverness Courier, 9-8-49.

140.

Inverness Courier, 26-6-1851.

141.

Inverness Courier, 3-7-1851.

142.

Inverness Courier, 7-8-1851.

143.

Inverness Courier, 5-8-1852. Greenock, of course, has always been a stronghold of Highlanders. During the land-agitation of the 1880's, the Greenock Telegraph was editorially strongly pro-crofter. On migration in general, see, T.M. Devine, Highland Migration to Lowland Scotland 1760-1860, Scottish Historical Review, 1983, vol 61, 137.

144.

Inverness Courier, 7-10-1852.

145.

Inverness Courier, 6-1-1853.

146.

Inverness Courier, 13-6-1850.

147.

Inverness Courier, 4-8-1853.

148.

Inverness Courier, 6-4-1854.

149.

Inverness Courier, 13-10-1853.

150.

Inverness Courier, 27-10-1853.

151.

Inverness Courier, 7-9-1854. See also Inverness Courier, 13-2-1851, for a report on a party of Barra people arriving in Inverness.

152.

Inverness Courier, 28-6-1849.

153.

Inverness Courier, 6-5-1852.

154.

Inverness Courier, 7-8-1844. The interconnection of the land-owning elite in the Highlands of today deserves a study of its own.

155.

Inverness Courier, 17-1-1844.

156.

Inverness Courier, 23-7-1845; 22-2-1855; and 7-6-1855.

157.

Inverness Courier, 14-12-1847.

158.

Inverness Courier, 18-4-1848.

159.

Inverness Courier, 30-10-1851. Gaskell, Morvern Transformed, 37-42.

160.

Inverness Courier, 4-5-1854.

161.

Inverness Courier, 5-7-1855.

162.

Inverness Courier, 15-4-1846.

163.

Inverness Courier, 11-2-1846.

164.

Inverness Courier, 18-2-1846.

165.

Inverness Courier, 22-4-1846.

166.

Inverness Courier, 18-2-1846.

167.

Inverness Courier, 27-1-1847.

168.

Inverness Courier, 3-2-1847.

169.

Inverness Courier, 10-2-1847.

170.

Inverness Courier, 24-2-1847.

171.

Inverness Courier, 10-3-1847.F. Marian MacNeill's The Scots Kitchen, 1974, offers interesting, and presumably soundly-based, advice on the mixing of meals in the cause of economy. See also her comment; "The virtue of hospitality is being systematically extirpated in the Highlands by the

powers that be. A man who has paid a sum running into four figures for a few weeks' deer-stalking naturally objects to having his day's sport ruined by the appearance of a couple of pedestrians at the moment his gun is levelled at the stag. Therefore in many districts the crofters are not merely discouraged from giving hospitality, but are forbidden under threat of eviction. Thus not only the material but even the spiritual well-being of the native race is sacrificed to the great god Sport". See also the comment in a 1932 speech by Sir John Stirling-Maxwell on deer forests; "it is astonishing that Scotland has so long allowed her natural playground to be dedicated to the greatest happiness of the smallest number" - between the lines of which speech, The Observer, 11-12-1932, commented, "one of the hidden roots of the Scottish Home Rule movement may be traced".

172.

Inverness Courier, 13-4-1847; and 20-4-1847.

173.

Richards, Patterns, 96.

174.

The class-dimension of the Disruption has not been explored in depth, at length. But see, Iain Fraser Grigor, The Churches and the Highland Land Question, West Highland Free Press, 25-11-1977. More generally, see G.I.T Machin, The disruption and British politics 1834-1843, Scottish Historical Review, 1972, vol 51, 20.

175.

Inverness Courier, 27-9-1843.

176.

Inverness Courier, 11-10-1843.

177.

Inverness Courier, 4-10-1843; and 18-10-1843.

178.

Inverness Courier, 17-1-1844.

179.

Inverness Courier, 6-4-1842. Richards, Patterns, 99. Mackenzie, Highland Clearances, 211-219. Prebble, Clearances, 221-253. J.Barron, vol 3, xxxii.

180.

Inverness Courier, 20-4-1842.

181.

Inverness Courier, 15-6-1842.

182.

Inverness Courier, 20-9-1843.

183.

Inverness Courier, 16-4-1845.

184.

Inverness Courier, 28-5-1845.

185.

Inverness Courier, 18-6-1845.

186.

Prebble, Clearances, 222.

187.

Prebble, Clearances, 224.

188.

Prebble, Clearances, 225-226.

189.

Inverness Courier, 6-4-1845.

190.

Present writer's visit, July 1981.

191.

Present writer's visit, July 1981.

192.

MacKenzie, Clearances, 232-236.

193.

Prebble, Clearances, 273.

194.

Inverness Courier, 26-7-1849.

195.

Prebble, Clearances, 274.

196.

Prebble, Clearances, 274.

197.

Inverness Courier, 9-8-1849.

198.

Inverness Courier, 20-9-1849.

199.

Prebble, Clearances, 281.

200.

Journal of Henry Cockburn, 1831-1854, Edinburgh, 1874, vol 2, 247.

201.

MacKenzie, Clearances, 231-236.

202.

Napier Commission, evidence, vol 1, 785-836, and Appendix A.XXXIII. (At Locheport.) See, eg, Q 12276 (Malcolm MacInnes); and 12437 (John Morrison, crofter). See also Q's 12438 to 12489 inclusive. The trip of the Hercules was a particularly savage one. She sailed with 756 emigrants on board, but smallpox broke out almost at once, and she put into Cork. When she sailed in April the following year, there were only 380 of the original emigrants on board. See the note on correspondence between Mrs Burn of Victoria, and James Shaw Grant in his article in the Stornoway Gazette of 2-4-1988.

203.

The countess of Sutherland has sought to explain the record of landlordism is this period by reference to modern times. See her introductory remarks to, Dunrobin Castle, Pilgrim Press, 1981, (with its useful centre-spread genealogy of the Sutherland family). According to Mrs Janson, "The Sutherland Clearances, together with other Highland Clearances, were bitterly resented.....Much the same sort of thing is done today by town councils who uproot people from their old, shabby but neighbourly streets and place them in ultra-modern, clinically clean but often completely inhuman

high-rise flats, usually against their will".

204.

Richards, Clearances, vol 2, 333-334.

CHAPTER THREE

From around 1870, driven by the popular experience of the best part of the previous century, land-centred conflict in the Highlands was set to enter a qualitatively new stage.

By then, the people had fought - and almost always lost - at a striking number of known locations (and may well also have fought, and lost, at an un-counted and unknown number of others). The people had, by 1870, encountered and contested landlord might at Balnagowan, Rosskeen, Strathoykel (in the great "year of the sheep"), at Kildonan, Culrain, Gruids, Achness, Borve, Durness, Glencalvie, Lochshell, Assynt, and Sollas; as well as in the course of sundry hunger-riots and induction-disturbances.

Most of these encounters and contests, so far as the record indicates at least, were in the eastern Highlands (while after 1870, the engine of opposition would find itself along the western seaboard and in the Hebrides).

But direct-action anti landlordism was no prerogative of the men - and women - of Ross and Sutherland, as the inclusion of Harris and Lewis indicates; and thus, on a general, if yet uneven scale, the common people of the Highlands had by the eighteen-seventies smelt something of the sweetness of success, touched the wheel of united popular action and glimpsed the hot torch of publicity, albeit in a language that was not their own.

A long history of oppression had been matched, though not yet overcome, by a long history of resistance; in the course of which oppression and resistance, the makings of a tactical and strategic awareness had been laid, along with a consciousness of the power of united action and co-ordinated leadership. Centrally, such vision as the community claimed with regard to the land was hardly wider that the demand that they occupy it in peace and some sort of prosperity appropriate to their times - but the landlords, sustained to this point by simple might, saw no reason to yet abandon it

- or even modify it - in the cause of concession: and were, arguably, thus impoverished to a greater degree in the struggles soon to come.

By the eighteen-seventies, in short, the stage was set for a rapid escalation of land-centred conflict in the Highlands; but first, there was to be yet another period of defeats on a local scale.

The first of these would occur when Lord MacDonald determined to evict 600 people from Strathaird, lying to the west of Loch Slapin in Skye, that their removal might thereby make room for sheep(1). An officer sent with writs was deforced and ejected, however, and he reported subsequently that "the people will do all in their power to resist any number or force that may be brought against them". The sheriff demanded police and soldiers; the Destitution Board told the people that they would get no more relief - and thus warned, the people surrendered(2).

The previous year, James Loch, despite the restricted franchise of the time, had been defeated in an election as member of parliament for Wick(3) which must say something of his reputation in the district; in the course of the campaign, he had been subject to a barrage of abuse, and his agent had considered the town "a den of radicalism under the rule of demagogues"(4).

And at much the same time there was further trouble in Strathconan. Some years earlier, Gillanders of Highfield had driven away 400 people(5) and there had been no resistance; but now, there was determined objection to eviction, not least at Coigeach on the western coast of Ross-shire. Writs of removal were issued against the people involved, tenants of the Marquis of Stafford, but "they made a stout resistance, the women disarming about twenty policemen and sheriff-officers, burning the summonses in a heap, throwing their batons into the sea, and ducking the representatives of the law in a neighbouring pool"(6).

According to MacKenzie's account, all the party of

officials was forced to return whence it came without serving a single summons or evicting a single crofter while, in a phrase that would echo for a long time after Coigeach, "the men formed the second line of defence".

Again according to MacKenzie, no further attempts were made to evict the people; and thus Coigeach must be counted one of the first victories in the long record of landlord-centred conflict in the Highlands. Scott, the factor, had been warned not to approach Coigeach along the Destitution Road, "so hostile are the inhabitants of Ullapool and surrounding country"(7); so he went by boat across Loch Broom, from which the Hector had sailed for Canada in the previous century(8) - "some scores of women dragged the boat up the face of the hill for about 200 yards from the water, one man sitting in it, the whole cheering them on, and placed it high and dry in front of the inn"(9). Scott wrote to the marquis that the whole thing was "a distinguished triumph of brute force over law and order", and while such mob-rule continued "in the ascendant the rights of proprietors must remain in abeyance"(10)

In Skye, meanwhile, the following year witnessed threatened evictions in Suisnish and Boreraig, with Lord MacDonald's trustees removing 120 families to make way for a sheep farm(11) and explaining that the people "had been steadily retrograding, and that the landlord had been over-indulgent"(12). According to Donald Ross, an eye-witness of the evictions, Lord MacDonald's debts by this time were such that his creditors had appointed trustees over his lands, which were entailed and could not therefore be sold, and the purpose of these trustees was to "intercept certain portions of the rent in payment of the debt.....The tenants of Suisnish and Boreraig were the descendants of a long line of peasantry on the MacDonald estates, and were remarkable for their patience, loyalty, and general good conduct"(13).

In the early days of April, however, they were warned to get out of their holdings, and they petitioned for a

reversal of the demand - the reply in due course being that they could have other land, on another part of the estate; part of a barren moor, unfit for cultivation. According to MacKenzie, "In the middle of September following, Lord MacDonald's ground-officer, with a body of constables, arrived, and at once proceeded to eject, in the most heartless manner, the whole population, numbering thirty two families, and that at a period when the able-bodied male members of the families were away from home trying to earn something by which to pay their rents, and help to carry their families through the coming winter".(14). The people were nevertheless simply thrown out of their houses, the furniture dumped outside and the doors nailed up, in what must have been one of the nastiest eviction scenes recorded on Skye during the period(15); and as a result three men were later charged with deforcement, before the Justiciary Court in Inverness, having first been imprisoned at Portree.

According to the Inverness Advertiser's long report of the trial, the eviction was "one of a fearful series of ejectments now being carried through in the Highlands.....Here were thirty two families, averaging four members each, or from 130 to 150 in all, driven out from their houses.....But it was the will of Lord MacDonald.....he has driven the miserable inhabitants out to the barren heaths and wet mosses. He has come with the force of the civil power to dispossess them, and make way for sheep and cattle".

The accused, however, appeared before a sympathetic jury, which found them not guilty. They returned home; but at the end of December, the factor came again and threw them out, to live in the open or under such shelter as they could find for themselves. Eighteen of them were still there the following spring; but by the summer, they had all gone, and MacDonald had the place to himself(16)

Given the apparent ease with which MacDonald had overcome the wishes of his tenants at Suisnish and Boreraig,

it is not difficult to see why the landlords found little need to attempt to legitimise their position other than by recourse to the "sacred rights of property"; though the implications of the defeat was not at all lost on the rest of Skye, as events in the very near future were to demonstrate.

But first, there was to be yet another splendid victory for those rights, on the mainland coast a matter of miles away. At the same time as the events at Suisnish and Boreraig, Knoydart was being cleared in a savage manner(17). A year earlier, Aeneas MacDonnell, owner of Glengarry, had died and the administration of Knoydart passed to his widow and his young son's trustees - along with a mountain of debt. As usual, the tenants were to be made to pay for it, and though they were themselves in debt to the estate, thanks to the effects of the potato famine of the previous decade, it amounted to a small sum by their standards, and an extremely tiny one by the standards of the trustees. Their indebtedness, however, served as an excuse to remove them and replace them with sheep; and a petition that they be allowed to remain was rejected out of hand. That summer, a government transport ship, the Sillery, was summoned to Isle Ornsay, across the sound of Sleat and just a mile or two to the north of MacDonald's castle at Armadale. Her boats were sent across the sound to take the people away, and over 300 of them went(18): (though the Lord Lovat of the time re-settled some over Loch Nevis, at Mallaig Bheag; and their descendants are there to this day)(19)

The people cleared, their dwellings were torn down; in the memorable words of MacKenzie(20), "From house to house, from hut to hut, and from barn to barn, the factor and his menials proceeded carrying on the work of demolition, until there was scarcely a habitation left standing in the district.....No voice could be heard. Those who refused to go aboard the Sillery were in hiding among the rocks and caves"(21). For a while, some natives did manage to remain

in Knoydart; but two years later, when the estate was sold to a southern millionaire by the name of Baird(22), an ironmaster, almost all of Knoydart was under sheep, and only a dozen or so impoverished "clansmen" and their families held off starvation with the shell-fish along the shores of the sound of Sleat.(23)

What the people of Knoydart thought of the process has not formally been recorded, other than in Alexander MacKenzie's great history of the Highland clearances; and MacKenzie, it might well be thought, could be expected to have a very good idea of what the Knoydart people thought, given that his family lived a matter of miles up the coast from the peninsula, and this in a coastal community with highly developed lines of oral communication.

What the people of the general district in the vicinity of Knoydart thought of the clearing there was not formally recorded either; though they can scarcely have missed its significance, given that just across the sound was Sleat, home to Lord MacDonald's improving efforts, and given that a matter of miles to south lay Arisaig, whose community was no stranger to clearing either in the past or in the future.

In any case, the significance of the events at Knoydart can scarcely have been lost on the wider Highland community; and just one year later, there was real trouble at Greenyards, on the other side of the country. Fierce violence accompanied a riot (and two survivors of the violence were alive and passing-on their story in the early years of the present century, to a man who saw sustained service with the Seaforths throughout the First World War, and who was still alive to relate the story at the beginning of the present decade.)(24)

In the early weeks of the year, the rumour grew that four of the tenants were to be evicted, and the people, many of whom would of course have recalled the Culrain riot of 1820, decided on resistance. In March, when the sheriff-officer came, he and his assistants were stopped and

deforced. The Inverness Courier had already warned that "considerable obstruction was anticipated in the execution of the summonses of removal" upon the tenants of Robertson of Kindeace, and the affair indeed turned out "to be of a very formidable character".

At six in the morning the sheriff, several sheriff-officers, and thirty policemen from the forces of Ross and Inverness marched from Tain; "on arriving at Greenyards, which is nearly four miles from Bonar Bridge, it was found that about three hundred persons, fully two thirds of whom were women, had assembled from the country round about, all apparently prepared to resist the execution of the law. The women stood in front, armed with stones, and the men occupied the background, all, or nearly all, furnished with sticks".(25)

By seven in the morning, each party confronted the other(26).The riot then ensued, with twenty women seriously injured by the batons and boots of the police. One woman later died; two at least bore thereafter on their bodies, until very old age, the marks of the violence inflicted on them((27). According to the Courier, "the feeling of indignation is so strong against the manner in which the constables have acted, that I fully believe the life of any stranger, if he were supposed to be an officer of the law, would not be worth twopence in the district"(28). In September, an Ann Ross and a Peter Ross appeared in Inverness before Lord Justice Hope, who had just spent the deer-stalking season shooting in Sutherland. The Greenyards accused got twelve and eighteen months respectively and a warning from the bench on the wickedness of rebellion, and the need to suppress it(29).

By then, however, developments in the wider world had served to strengthen the crofters' cause; or were at least beginning to do so.

Not least was the continuing habit of the landlords to conduct their affairs in the established manner of whimsical

tyranny at the expense of the tenantry. As the Napier Commission evidence indicates, such tyranny was no small matter; on Skye, the standard method of discipline involved a summons for eviction for rent arrears rather than a civil-action small-debt claim(30). When a tenant was removed for non-payment of rent, the estate required that any new tenant take the responsibility for the previous tenant's debt-burden; the collection of seaweed on the shore was reserved as an estate-right, infringement of which could lead to court-action; while the rights of deer-stalking sportsmen were superior to those of crofters, who in some places were forbidden even to keep dogs. And in Lewis, as the Scottish Highlander would report, crofting tenants would be fined for failing to remove their caps in the presence of the factor(31). There is neither in the minutes of evidence of the Napier Commission any substantial suggestion to the effect that this sort of regulation was untypical: or, in other words, it is strikingly easy to see how the mass of the common people of the Highlands saw landlord policy as a whole as one designed simply to clear the native population out of the Highlands - a perception that public landlord opinion did nothing to contradict.

The effects of the 1843 Disruption of the established church also helped alienate tenants from the Highland gentry, the latter remaining largely faithful to the Church of Scotland, the former deserting it for the Free Church. The effects of the Disruption were to give organisational expression to this alientation, and serve as a focus for it. And, as a general rule at least, the response of the landlords merely made things, from their point of view, worse. In Strontian, for instance, when the people were denied a site for their new church by the landlord, they built one on a raft floating in Loch Sunart; while on Skye Lord MacDonald would not make any land available to the Snizort, Kilmuir and Portree congregations, who for years were required to hold their services alfresco.

The religious revivalism of the late 1850's also gave the community its own recognised leaders, if in a form that was not overtly political; while the development of railways and steam-ship services (and in due course the telegraph) served to facilitate seasonal migration to the south in search of work at harvest or fishing, and can only have had the effect of widening the horizons of the crofting villages of the Highlands. (The fishing, in particular, brought Highlanders to Ireland, and though the effect on them of the Irish land agitation can only be supposed, it seems a fairly safe supposition that much was learned there - certainly, the authorities of the time were not slow to suppose it.)

Perhaps of equal importance was the development of what might be called a Gaelic movement in the south of Scotland, allied to a growth of interest in Gaelic culture at a both popular and academic level. As Sorley MacLean's 1939 paper on the poetry of the Clearances indicates(32), work in this area up the period of the 1880's, while not overtly anti-landlord, was nevertheless imbued with a strong sentiment against the southern landowner and sheep-farmer(33).

And around the same time, there was a marked growth in city-based societies composed of Highlanders, particularly during the 1860's and 1870's. By that second decade, Glasgow alone was host to regular meetings of the Sutherlandshire Association founded in 1860, the Skye Association, founded in 1865, the Tiree Association, founded in 1870, the Lewis Association, founded in 1876, the Mull and Iona Association, the Ross-shire Association, the Islay Association, the Lochaber Society, the Appin Society, the Coll Society, and the Arnamurchan, Morvern and Sunart Association(34).

And the formation of the Gaelic Society of Inverness in 1871 was followed by the establishment of similar groups in Glasgow, Greenock, Aberdeen and Dundee, between them pushing for the teaching of Gaelic in the schools, and for the foundation of a chair of Celtic at Edinburgh University.

Indeed, it was, in 1877, the Gaelic Society of Inverness which first petitioned parliament for a royal commission into tenants' grievances; and the next year, the Federation of Celtic Societies, soon to be a powerful clearing-house for land-agitation matters, was formed. These societies, or their activists, brought the question of the Highlands before a wider audience too. For instance, a Society of Highlanders was formed in Liverpool in November, 1880, following a discussion on the land question which was reported in Murdoch's Highlander; which went on to report that "the meeting was one of the most enthusiastic ever held in Liverpool, the prevailing tone being 'no compromise with feudalism or eviction'". The same edition of the paper announced that, "Mr Murdoch, editor of the Highlander, reports great interest in the Highland land question in Bolton and Manchester, which he has just visited". And later that month, the paper was reporting that, "The Liverpool Argus has been giving forcible support to the land claims of the Highlander"(35).

The printed press, too, not for the last time nor the first, was to be an important factor in the coming years. As the turn-of-the-century press had publicised events in Sutherland, so by the middle of the century was the Inverness Courier recording the wider world of Highland affairs. In 1856 it was joined by the Invergordon Times, to be in due course perhaps the most outspoken of all papers in the popular cause, along with the Ross-shire Journal, dating from 1875. The Oban Times would also be a strong advocate of the crofters; while the North British Daily Mail would chronicle on a daily basis the agitation of the 1880's and later; as did The Scotsman, though from an anti-tenant point of view. John Murdoch's short-lived Highlander ran through the 1870's until its demise; while Alexander MacKenzie's Celtic Magazine and, later, his Scottish Highlander seldom failed to keep the landlord, and related, questions in the public eye.(36)

For instance, the Celtic Magazine's report of one meeting of the Edinburgh Sutherland Society recorded, "The Rev. J.S.MacKay, in the course of an address, referred to the land question in Sutherlandshire, and said he feared that in the immediate future large tracts of their beloved country might be turned into huge deer-forests"(37).

And though the recorded level of landlord-centred conflict was to dip (38) from the year of the Greenyards riot (perhaps as a result of this greater scrutiny being brought to bear on the doings of the landlords) it was to surface spectacularly in the middle of the 1870's, on the island of Bernera off the west coast of Lewis, as a "significant and expressive overture" to the next decade(39).

The problem in Bernera, in essence, was the conduct of the landlord's factor; as Malcolm MacLean would tell Lord Napier's Royal Commission at Ness, in June 1883, "my firm conviction is that his policy from the first day of his factorship to the last was to extirpate the Lewis people so far as he could"(40). The island was part of the estate of Sir James Matheson, a self-made millionaire in the Victorian mould, who ran his property as might be expected of any Victorian owner of a fortune(41). He had acquired the estate in 1844, for around £200,000, from the representatives of the last Earl of Seaforth, along with almost half a million acres; under his ownership the rental had almost doubled to £24,000.

His factor was one Donald Munro, who was also fiscal, not to mention the occupier of at least sixteen other posts in the administration of Lewis(42).

He was, in short, extremely powerful in the island, and he exercised the power without let or hindrance, pre-empting future landowners in the Highlands(43) with threats to any tenant who might be so incautious as to leave his hands in his pockets, or cap on head, when Munro was about. But in 1874, he was at last to meet resistance, with regard

to a summer grazing on the mainland of Lewis used by the Bernera people and which the estate was now to deny them. Protests followed; and the factor threatened to mobilise his volunteer artillery militia in Stornoway (of which he was commanding officer), and warned that the people would all be evicted from their homes, on account of their recalcitrance (though none of them was in arrears of rent.)

In March a sheriff-officer, along with a sub-factor and one other assistant, arrived on Bernera and began to serve 58 notices to quit. That evening, the sheriff-officer was lightly assaulted by children; and the following morning, he and his party were accosted by a crowd of about 14 men. In the scuffle that followed, the coat of the sheriff-officer was torn - surely an act of monstrous sedition given the social conditions of Lewis at the time. As a result, three men would appear in court on appropriate charges; but not before one of them was spotted in Stornoway, and arrested. Although the site of the arrest was just one hundred yards from the police station, the intervention of a crowd of local sympathisers meant that it took the police four hours to make the journey; while the sheriff was sent for, to read the riot act.

One hundred and thirty men marched from Bernera (no mean march in a Lews spring) to effect the release of the arrested man, armed with such implements as were available to them, and headed by a piper; the prisoner was however released before any violence occured, and the procession sent instead a deputation to Sir James at the castle (who simply claimed that he knew nothing about the eviction schemes on Bernera.)

In July, the three accused appeared in court in Stornoway, charged that they, in March, had "wickedly and feloniously attacked and assaulted" Colin MacLennan, along with various other charges(44). From the viewpoint of the authorities, the case for a court hearing was a strong one; the common people had never won a land-centred disupte in a

Highland court before, and there was little to suggest that they would win this one either. For the authorities, therefore, the outcome of the trial must have been thought certain - conviction, exemplary sentence, some further police work, collapse of oppostion, and implementation of estate policy. The trial of the Bernera people, however, would not run to plan - and its result can only have had an extraordinary effect on popular anti-landlord consciousness across the Highlands when the result became known (as it would have done with very great rapidity, of course).

The Bernera men pleaded not guilty; the factor, Munro, was the first witness, and was cross-questioned by the lawyer for the accused, Charles Innes of Inverness, to the delight of a packed public gallery. Munro was not a good witness; he had difficulty in remembering all of the many posts he held in the administration of Lewis; nor did he know how many people he was attempting to evict from Bernera - such things, he said, he left to his subordinates, as he was a busy man. Nor had he consulted Sir James Matheson about the proposed removals - he was "not in the habit of consulting Sir James about every little detail connected with the management of the estate". As Innes told the court, "Had he been in either Connaught or Munster he would long ago have licked the dust he had for many years made the poor people of Lewis to swallow" - a reference, or implication, that a full century later would be considered highly daring indeed. In any case the men were acquitted; while soon afterwards, the sheriff-officer himself was charged with assault on one of the Bernera men, found guilty, and fined.

This, in effect, was the end of Munro (he progressively lost all his posts, finally being dismissed as factor); it was also a tremendously significant victory for the cause of the common people of the Highlands, and was widely reported as such. The notices of eviction were allowed to lapse - in other words, the estate surrendered, as it would soon

afterwards with the people of Ness(45), from whose widows Munro had for years withheld publicly-raised monies deriving from a fishing-tragedy fund established during the 1860's, in lieu of alleged rent-arrears.

His departure, of course, did not solve the land question in the district; as The Highlander noted, "The central problem still remains that the land is badly distributed. In Uig, for example, one half of the parish has only eight families, while in the other half one hundred families are so pinched for land that they have to toil on sea as well as on the land to eke out a poor existence"(46). But his leaving signalled a major setback for landlord power - and one all the more significant in that it was the first of such. More, however, were quickly to follow.

On the mainland, for instance, trouble was brewing on the estate of Leckmelm on Lochbroom, which had been bought in 1879 by an Aberdeen paper-maker, Pirie, for £19,000, from Colonel Davisdon of Tulloch. Pirie at once demanded that all the tenants on the estate surrender their stock at valuation prices and become his employees; or face eviction. A storm of publicity followed, with little of it favourable to Pirie. The local Free Church minister circulated letters to every newspaper in the north of Scotland about the threatened evictions - while further publicity also attended an eviction at Lochcarron at the same time. Charles Fraser-MacIntosh, MP for Inverness, raised Leckmelm in the Commons, and the Home Secretary was drawn in to the matter; while every newspaper, with the exception of the pro-landlord Scotsman, was unremittingly hostile to Pirie's plans.

The Highlander reported events at Leckmelm across three of its columns, and editorialised that the name of Leckmelm was becoming a by-word for "iniquitous evictions", adding - in an expression that must surely have had an ominous ring for such of the landlord class as read the paper - that, "Our Irish cousins are using a way of their own to rid their

part of the earth of oppressors. Who can blame them?". As a result of the Leckmelm controversy, however, Murdoch felt able to assert confidently that "the land question is now felt to be the leading question of the day". Many landowners, the paper thought, must be cursing Pirie for creating so much discussion and helping so much to "ripen" the question - a question given extra piquancy by the paper's report, in the same issue, that Gordon of Cluny, owner of the southern Hebrides, had been recently suggesting that the tenants there "ought to have the opportunity of improving their position by emigrating to America"; the landlord providing financial assistance to get them there.

That November too, The Highlander gave almost seven columns to a speech in Inverness by the Rev John MacMillan of Ullapool on the subject of the Leckmelm evictions, the paper thanking him "for setting the clergy a-going on the land question".(47)

In Skye too, there was trouble, almost at once, at Valtos, on the Kilmuir estate. The estate was owned by Captain William Fraser, from Nairnshire, who had bought its 46,000 acres from Lord MacDonald in 1855, and who had since set out to rack-rent his tenantry along the Irish model. Under his ownership, rental income from tenants had almost doubled, though there had been a substantial lessening in the quantity of land available for their use, while some rents had increased from £5 to £13(48).

In 1877, The Scotsman had reported widespread dissatisfaction with Fraser's regime in Kilmuir(49); and in the same year a storm of wind and rain had swept the estate, flooding the Conan and Hinnisdale rivers, "carrying away bridges, obliterating crops, sweeping flocks of sheep into the sea, and entirely changing the face of the country"(50). More to the point, the floods also wrecked Captain Fraser's lodge at Uig, and while his estate manager was drowned, the nearby graveyard was washed-out and bodies carried into the gardens of the lodge.

With greater journalistic verve that common-sense, perhaps, Murdoch's Highlander reported; "The belief is common throughout the parish that the disaster is a judgement upon Captain Fraser's property. It is very remarkable, it is said, that all the destruction in Skye should be on his estate. What looks so singular is that two rivers should break through every barrier and aim at Captain Fraser's house. Again, it is strange that nearly all the dead buried in Uig in the last five hundred years should be brought up as it were against his house, as if the dead in their graves rose to perform the work of vengeance which the living had not the spirit to execute. But though the living would not put forth a hand against the laird, they do not hesitate to express their regret that the proprietor was not in the place of the manager when he was swept away"(51).

Fraser sued for damages of £1,000, an action surely designed to crush the paper (though it survived for some time yet)(52); and in 1881, some of his tenants at Valtos defiantly refused to pay the rents as they had been increased since Fraser's arrival at Kilmuir. This rent-strike followed a petition asking for a rent reduction; which petition was promptly refused, and those who had put their names to it, threatened with eviction(53). The strike followed; and without reason, the estate suddenly reduced rents by 25 per cent in Valtos and Elishader(54); Alexander MacDonald telling the Napier Commission at Portree that the reduction arose from "an allegation made by the tenants that the ground officer upon the estate gave in for the summing of the township two cows more than the real number. When Captain Fraser was satisfied about the correctness of that, he at once agreed to reduce the rent; but that was the beginning of it"; by which he meant a generalised agitation on the land-question.

Taken together, the events, and their results, at Bernera, Leckmelm and Valtos did indeed suggest the start of a qualitatively new stage of land-centred conflict in the

Highlands; one under-pinned by a mass meeting in Glasgow's City Hall, addressed by Parnell, at which the Valtos evictions were condemned, and publicised by Murdoch's Highlander(55).

But the first major shot fired in this generalised agitation was to be at Glendale, on the west of Skye, towards the end of 1881, and continuing into the following year; the difference to previous episodes of anti-landlordism being that at Glendale, for the first time, the people combined the tactics of rent-strike and land-occupation and deforcement and refusal to recognise court orders, with wide publicity, a keen and informed idea of their own case, and above all a sense of organisation that would serve to carry their cause from the end of 1881 right through the following year.

Glendale towards the end of 1881 covered two estates; the 5,000-acre Husabost estate in the ownership of the 80-year old Dr Nicol Martin - and the 35,000 acre estate of Glendale proper, in the ownership of the trustees of Sir John MacPherson MacLeod, who had acquired the land in the early 1850's from the impoverished MacLeod of Dunvegan. Since that time, conditions had been poor for the tenants of the district in a number of ways; when the Napier Commission came to the glen in May 1883, the assurance was required on a number of occasions that no tenant would be victimised for speaking before it(56).

This may not have been surprising, given the views of Dr Martin before the same commission on what he identified as the "extravagance"(57) and health of the people; " the children are weakly, scrofulous and very much deteriorated"(58). He also was a strong supporter of emigration; "I don't see how the land can be improved. The only remedy, I think, for them is to go where they can get land - that is, America. Go to Manitoba and various parts of America....."(59); and he also appeared to believe that it would be best for Skye if the landlords paid for the

entire small-tenant population of the island to emigrate(60).

From the small tenants themselves, of course, there was a different interpretation on offer, with a whole series of witnesses relating their conditions and grievances. John MacPherson, for instance, the "Glendale Martyr", spoke at some length on housing conditions; "Of the twenty crofters' houses, there are only two in which the cattle are not under the same roof with the family"(61).

What MacPherson wanted was "the land, as there is plenty of it"(62), and, as to payment for it; "My father, my grandfather and my great grandfather have already paid in money far more than the value of the land"(63). When they had asked the trustees for more land, they had been told to be patient, but "We told them that our forefathers had died in good patience, and that we ourselves had been waiting in patience till now, and that we could wait no longer - that they never got anything by their patience, but constantly getting worse"(64).

One of the commissioners, in a question that reveals the extent to which the authorities expected a deferent tenantry in Skye, wanted to know whether MacPherson's manners on this occasion had been "civil, such as Highlanders are accustomed to use in talking to those of superior social station"(65); MacPherson said they were, but noted objection to the factor, on the grounds that "He is not a suitable factor for us, for he does not speak our language, and many of us cannot speak English"(66). And as to emigration, MacPherson thought that it "would be more satisfactory to the people if the money .....should be spent at home, and, when the land at home would be peopled, then to send us away to other countries"(67).

MacPherson added that it would be "a capital thing" for the island's population of large, incomer farmers - "those who have the £1,800 tacks" - to emigrate (68); but as for the emigration of his own people, "at present we see no

reason for it, as there is plenty of land in our country and I don't know how we do not get it(69); this is not our kingdom, we have nothing where we are"(70)

According to MacPherson, "we are not home scarcely a week with our earnings when we pay it over to the proprietors, and they are off to London and elsewhere abroad to spend it, and not a penny of it is spent on the place for which the rent is paid"(71). They had, he said, "better justice in the south than they have in the north. There are two sides of the law; but we never saw the just side, always the worst side"(72). And he added, "I know that many of our landlords never purchased the properties which they have - that it was our forefathers who purchased the properties with their own blood, and that, therefore, we have as much right as anyone else to have it by purchase"(73).

The points made by MacPherson were not, of course, new; they had been made in one form or another for the previous century; their significance was the extent to which they can be seen to represent a typical version of what the Napier Commission heard across the Highlands - and the extent to which they won unprecedented publicity.

In a long statement from the tenants of Boreraig, Alexander MacKenzie presented similar grievances, which encapsulates the poverty, overcrowding and tyranny of conditions in Glendale; "We complain generally of the smallness of our crofts - the want of hill pasture - that we are too highly rented.....Forty five years ago our proprietor subdivided and cut up our twelve crofts into twenty four different small lots and raised the rent .....When the former crofts were cut up into small lots tenants were brought from Waternish and Bracadale for them, and all were crowded together in this little township.....The land having been in perpetual cultivation for hundreds of years, is become so poor and so much reduced that it is incapable of yielding any crop except of the very poorest.....The result is that we are for ever sunk in

debt, and have to spend the greater part of the year away from home to earn money to buy food for our families, and to pay the rent for the landlord.....if they did not work as hard as he wished, or were absent for a day, he would threaten them with eviction.....there is plenty of land in Skye for all the people in it, and that land which originally belonged to our own forefathers"(74).

Not only were the delegates from the people of Glendale before the Napier commission articulate and clear in their opinions, however; they also presented a list of demands, which indicates a significant degree of prior discussion of their grievances, these including more land, security of tenure, and compensation for improvement. These demands were largely the same(75), from Lower Meiloveg(76), Fasach(77), Lephin(78), Hamara(79), Ferrinvicquarrie(80), Galtrigill(81) and Husabost(82) - where of the sixteen crofters, only six could sign their names, the rest marking a cross. (No wonder the oral tradition is so important!)

As a result of such conditions, the people of Glendale were ready to go on the offensive by the closing months of 1881; and the following month, they were goaded into action by a warning posted by the landlords at the post-office, with regard to the former right of the people to collect timber on the sea-shore for their own purposes(83). This warning was reported in the Aberdeen Free Press and later printed in Alexander MacKenzie's history of the clearances, and noted at Glendale by the Napier commission(84); but by the time that it was posted, Glendale was clearly on the brink of open rebellion.

There was talk of a Meiloveg and Borrodale Alliance against the landlords(85), a clear consciousness of the rent-strike weapon(86) and the possibility of land-raiding(87). MacPherson would shortly be gaoled for his anti-landlord activities(88); and the people were increasingly restive about estate regulations of whatever nature.

As Alexander Ross would tell the commission, "I cannot judge a factor's heart by the heart of any man"(89), with regard to the factor having shot his dog: "he shot him with his gun in the well, and the well is dry since then, although it was one of the best wells in the country but since then it has denied water.....I do not know what he did to the well; but likely if he could kill the well, he would do it"(90). Such, in one striking image, were social relations in the west of Skye at the beginnings of the eighteen-eighties.

By then, there may already have been knowledge in the glen of the Irish land league and its forms of popular persuasion(91); certainly, an Irishman would be in the district soon enough(92); tenants inclined to pay rent would shortly be threatened(93) - and certainly too, John Murdoch of the Highlander was on his way to Glendale(94), where his host John Campbell would be threatened by the factor for giving room to "Irishmen and blackguards"(95).

In any case, a direct result of the edict displayed at the post-office was the calling of a general meeting of the tenants. In time-honoured fashion, petitions were sent to the landlords - and in precisely the same fashion, rejected. The tenants at once declared a rent-strike; and for good measure announced that they would shortly occupy the Waterstein sheep-farm, with or without permission. Now, in a gesture of unprecedented moderation, the landlords asked for time to consider the position - they were told, however, that the people had run out of patience. By the end of May, their sheep were on the farm; Court of Session orders were ignored; warrants of arrest could not be executed; and at the Martinmas rent collection in Glendale, only five of the estate's one hundred crofters came forward to pay(96).

In short, Glendale was now the scene of open rebellion on the land question; the locus of head-on conflict between two clear positions on the ownership and use of land in the Highlands. The view of the common people had been given

voice by John MacPherson, quoted above, with an eloquence that any paraphrase must fail to match; that the land belonged to the people whose country it was and whose ancestors had lived in it and worked on it. The view of the landlord class was equally simple; that the land, its use and occupancy, was in the gift of those who owned it in law, along with the associated right to do with it (and such as scraped a living from it) precisely as they chose. Between these positions on the "emotive, political" question of the land, its use and ownership, there was little room for compromise; nor, in any case, was there any taste for compromise on either side.

Two radically different, and irreconcilable, viewpoints thus stood opposed; in one corner the landlords, of whom a Hebridean poet had observed over a century earlier that "they would geld a louse if it would rise in value by a farthing"; and in the other, the common people in, if not arms, then certainly unarmed rebellion(97).

CHAPTER THREE

1.

Richards, Patterns, 100, quoting Barron, vol 3, 207. See also, generally, Return of Persons tried at Inverness from the Fort William, Skye and Long Island districts of Inverness-shire, from the year 1860 to June 1882. PP 1884-1885 (21) LXIV 201. This list, of course, is not concerned with "agrarian offences", and does not indicate offences that may have been related to landlord-centred conflict; though as might be expected the cases of the Braes people clearly figure.

2.

Inverness Courier, 6-6-1850; 24-10-1850; 31-10-1850.

3.

F.W.S. Craig, British Parliamentary Results, 1832-1855, 562.

4.

Richards, Patterns, 100.

5.

Prebble, Clearances, 224, 231.

6.

MacKenzie, Clearances, 308.

7.

Prebble, Clearances, 313.

8.

In this respect, see generally MacKay, Scotland Farewell; and in terms of broadcast material - Odyssey series, series-producer Billy Kay, Poets and Pioneers, Tiree emigrants to Canada by Margaret A MacKay, TX (repeat) BBC Scotland 1-7-1981; (print version, Odyssey, voices from Scotland's recent past, Polygon, Edinburgh, 1980); Gaels of Cape Breton, presented by Martin MacDonald, BBC Scotland, TX 1-7-1981; and Se Ceap Breatunn, presented Martain Domhnallach, producer Coinneach Macguaire, BBC Scotland (television) 15-3-1982.

9.

Inverness Courier, 1-4-1852.

10.

Prebble, Clearances, 314.

11.

Inverness Courier, 3-11-1853.

12.

Inverness Courier, 5-1-1854.

13.

Quoted in MacKenzie, Clearances, 237.

14.

Presumably at the winter-herring fishing, though MacKenzie does not say so.

15.

Though nailed-up doors were not at all uncommon on Skye, as the biography quoted above indicates!

16.

MacKenzie, Clearances, 236-248.

17.

See chapter on Knoydart, below, for fuller details.

18.

Inverness Courier, 8-9-1853.

19.

The extent to which religious considerations, rather than simple altruism, have traditionally conditioned the less-severe orientation of the Lovats as landlords has never been fully examined; nor such mediation-role as the Roman Catholic church may have played. The minutes of the Napier Commission may be of some significance here; but the matter, unless very recently, has never been explored.

20.

MacKenzie, Clearances, 268; also, in general, 265-284.

21.

The remains of the habitations in question are still to be seen on Knoydart, notably at Sandaig (Loch Nevis).

22.

Magnificently-wrought fence ironwork, a relic of Baird's occupancy, could be seen on Knoydart, well into the 1970's.

23.

Though the shores are rich in shellfish, as the present writer well knows, having once gathered them there for a living! Quite why there was no major, violent resistance at Knoydart remains a mystery; or, perhaps, less of a mystery if it can be accepted that the resistance was greatly delayed, not finding its expression until the late 1940's. Certainly, it was a clear consciousness of the clearances in the district that drove those who took part in the Knoydart land raid in the aftermath of the Second World War.

24.

Jock MacKenzie of Ardgay, recorded by the present writer, July, 1981.

25.

MacKenzie, Clearances, 228.

26.

Inverness Courier, 6-4-1854; 27-4-1854; 14-9-1854.

27.

Testimony of Jock MacKenzie, above.

28.

MacKenzie, Clearances, 229-230; Prebble, Clearances, 247.

29.

Shortly afterwards, Lord Saltoun of Ness Castle attempted to evict 32 people in the cause of establishing a pheasant-preserve; trouble followed. Inverness Courier, 10-4-1856; 24-4-1856.

30.

I.M.M. MacPhail, Prelude to the Crofters' War, 1870-1880; Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness, vol XLIX, 1974-1976, 156. For a profile of the Inverness Courier today, and of the last-of-the-line Barron family, see Fay Young, Inverness Press Barron, Scottish Business Insider, vol 4, no 6, June 1987, and Brian Wilson, WHFP, 13-5-1988.

31.

Scottish Highlander, 26-1-1888.

32.

Sorley MacLean, Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness, vol 48, 305.

33.

As a contrast, see Sorley MacLean on the poetry of Mairi Mhor nan Oran, Calgacus, no 1, winter, 1975, and his article on the same subject, West Highland Free Press, 16-5-1975. See also Donald Meek, Gaelic Poets of the Land Agitation, Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness, XLIX, 1974-1976.

34.

MacPhail, Prelude, 169.

35.

MacPhail, Prelude, 170. The Highlander, 10-11-1880, 24-11-1880.

36.

MacPhail, Prelude, 171-172. See, for instance, North British Daily Mail, 25-4-1874, editorial in favour of Gaelic chair at Edinburgh. James Hunter, The Politics of Highland Land law reform, 1873-1895, Scottish Historical Review, LIII, 1974. Another paper which flourished briefly was The Crofter - a title recently brought back to life; by the Scottish Crofters' Union!

37.

Celtic Magazine, VII, 1882, 194.

38.

On the last day of September, 1873, a Tiree widow, MacFarlane, was found guilty at a court in Tobermory; the previous month, she had defended her house with fire-tongs against eviction, "in the process injuring one of her evictors"; Highlander, 11-10-1873. There were doubtless many similar incidents, un-noticed in the wider world, and never reported.

39.

In the words of John Stuart Blackie, The Scottish

Highlanders and the Land Laws, London, 1885; on Bernera, 192-199.

40.

Napier Commission, Evidence, vol 2, 995, Q 15460.

41.

On Bernera, see as well as Blackie, Scottish Highlanders, and Napier Commission, Evidence, vol 2. Anon; Report of the trial of the so-called Bernera rioters, Blackwood, Edinburgh, 1974. Charles MacLeod, How Bernera toppled a tyrant, The Scotsman, 15-6-1974. "Domhnall Donn", 14 part series, Stornoway Gazette, March-July 1973. Anne Whitaker, Eilean an Fhraoich Annual, 1974. The Highlander, 25-4-1874; 25-7-1874. James Shaw Grant, A Hydra-headed monster, Stornoway Gazette, week ending 27-1-1986. James Campbell, The case of the riot at Bernera, Press and Journal, 11-4-1974.

42.

This concentration of interest is not foreign to Lewis today, as any glance at the files of recent editions of the West Highland Free Press will make plain!

43.

Brocket, of Knoydart, for one. See the appropriate chapter below.

44.

The sheriff-officers.

45.

Celtic Magazine, IV, 1879, 307.

46.

Munro might best be remembered as the factor who would fine tenants on account of an (alleged) unwashed face - Charles MacLeod, The Scotsman, 16-6-1974. See also MacKenzie, Clearances, 337-339, on Charles Innes; and MacPhail, Prelude, 178. The Highlander, 26-1-1881. The factor, of whatever estate, was seldom popular, of course. The Highlander, 8-9-1880, records the burial of one Lewis factor (he choked to death on a lump of meat) and the comment (in

Gaelic) of one of the crofters hired to work the burial spade; "Heap it on him, heap it on him; it's he that would have heaped in upon us; and if he but rise again he will heap the more on us". And the Highlander, 16-4-1880, in a report on the victory for Inverness-shire constituency in the general election of Cameron of Lochiel, noted that during the losing candidate's speech there were cries from the crowd that the landlord's victory had been engineered by the factors, and that, "The factors did it".

47.

Celtic Magazine, LXXX, vol VII, June 1882, 436-438. MacKenzie, Clearances, 314-326; 326-333; Alexander MacKenzie, Report on the Leckmelm Evictions, Inverness. The Highlander, 8-9-1880, 22-9-1880, 24-11-1880.

48.

Napier Commission, Evidence, vol 1, Q 1556.

49.

Hunter, Making, 133.

50.

D. Nairne, Memorable Floods in the Highlands during the Nineteenth century, Inverness, 1895.

51.

Highlander, 3-11-1877.

52.

MacPhail, Prelude, 182, refutes the suggestion that the law-suit killed the Highlander, quoting Murdoch's manuscript autobiography, held in Glasgow's Mitchell Library. Apart from it and the collections of Roland Muirhead and Thomas Johnston papers, the library has little of Highland interest in its manuscript collection; some out-mail from Sir John MacNeill to Trevelyan, chairman of the Highlands and Islands emigration society, from 1852; a handful of Jacobite scripts; and volumes of minutes of the Gaelic Society of London. In vol 4 of the manuscript, 136, Murdoch writes of the paper, "From the first my aim was to have a high toned journal and to let Highlanders feel as

much as possible that [it] was an espousement of their views, feelings, and hopes". From 193-196, he covers Fraser of Kilmuir and the Uig flood; and on page 199 the prosecution of the paper. Nine years after his death, sympathisers and land-reformers convened at Ardrossan Cemetery to unveil a memorial stone over Murdoch's grave; Oban Times, 6-4-1912.

53.

Highlander, 23-3-1881; 30-3-1881.

54.

Highlander, 4-5-1881.

55.

Napier Commission, Evidence, vol 1, Q 8548; see also Q 8552 on the effects of the Irish example; and up to Q 8584 on Kilmuir. See also John Stuart Blackie's letter on Irish argrarian outrages, The Scotsman, 14-1-1881 (Blackie papers, National Library of Scotland, MS 2649, (vi), f. 294-8.) (See also, same source, Gaelic catalogue, middle copy, 2644, letter (in Gaelic) to Blackie from Malcolm MacLeod, Berneray, Harris, of 28-8-1884, on the land question; f.128). The Highlander, 27-4-1881.

56.

Napier Commission, Evidence, vol 1, Q 6503 (to John Macpherson), Q 6815 (to Alexander Ross), Q 7621, 7622 (to Alexander MacKenzie). For recent debate on the clearances of the MacLeod estate, see the multi-part article by Ruaraidh Halford-MacLeod, commencing West Highland Free Press, 4-7-1975 (and the excerpt on the same page from James Cameron's 1912 account of the life and times of John Murdoch, quoting the editor of the Ardrossan Herald); the letters in response from C.Campbell of Struan, and John Prebble, West Highland Free Press,8-8-1975; the letter from James Hunter in The Scotsman, 2-2-1977; and from Sir Iain Moncreiffe of that Ilk, The Scotsman, 14-2-1977. For a profile of Roderick MacFarquar, another participant in this debate, see Bob Brown, A campaigner for change, West Highland Free Press,

20-5-1983.

57.

Napier Commission, Evidence, Q 7561.

58.

Ibid, Q 7563.

59.

Ibid, Q 7568.

60.

Ibid, Q's 7591, 7592, 7594, 7595.

61.

Ibid, Q 6506.

62.

Ibid, Q 6548.

63.

Ibid, Q 6552.

64.

Ibid, Q 6571.

65.

Ibid, Q 6598.

66.

Ibid, Q 6605, 6607.

67.

Ibid, Q 6652.

68.

Ibid, Q 6654.

69.

Ibid, 6755.

70.

Ibid, Q 6760.

71.

Ibid, Q 6712.

72.

Ibid, Q 6743.

73.

Ibid, Q 6813.

74.

Ibid, Q 7263. (See, incidentally, this witness's classic reply later in his evidence (Q 7360) to a question from Fraser-MacIntosh as to "how the pipe music has so much gone out in Skye?"; given that the area had once been the traditional base of the MacCrimmon pipers.) For the authorities view of affairs, see the Ivory Papers, (eg, 1/36/1 (Spiers to Ivory, April 1882); and the police reports, etc, for Glendale, 1/36/1(2).

75.

Place name spelling as per Napier Commission.

76.

Napier Commission, Evidence, vol 1, Q 6506.

77.

Ibid, Q 6818.

78.

Ibid, Q 6954.

79.

Ibid, Q 7209.

80.

Ibid, Q 7471.

81.

Ibid, Q 7369.

82.

Ibid, Q 7425.

83.

MacKenzie, Clearances, 415-416.

84.

Napier Commission, Evidence, vol 1, Q 6806.

85.

Ibid, Q 6563.

86.

Ibid, Q's 6602-6605.

87.

Ibid, Q's 6786-6788.

88.

Ibid, Q's 6796-6798.

89.

Ibid, Q 6861.

90.

Ibid, Q's 6858-6860.

91.

Ibid, Q 6912; see also 7419-7423 on "intimidation".

92.

Ibid, Q 7084.

93.

Ibid, Q 7153.

94.

Ibid, Q's 7213-7231.

95.

Ibid, Q 7210.

96.

MacKenzie, Clearances, 413-422; Hunter, Making, 137-139. Ailean Caimbeul, "Oighreachd Ghleanndail", BBC Radio Scotland (vhf service), 18-2-1982; and Angus Martin, West Highland Free Press 9-7-1982. On the matter of publicity for the Glendale crofters; the Napier Commission evidence (Q's 7189, 7190, for instance) indicates that this was not insignificant. And while the Aberdeen Free Press gets a mention by name (Q 6923), MacKenzie, Clearances, 413, notes that journalists also visited the district from the Dundee Advertiser and the Glasgow Citizen as well. In this respect, if more generally, James Shaw Grant is worth quoting at length, from Sutherland's law - almost!, Stornoway Gazette, 5-4-1986, on the leaders of the anti-landlord agitation in Sutherland; "I remember, as a young university student, meeting one of the leaders of the Sutherland crofters of that era, in my uncle's office in Inverness. Joseph MacLeod from Kildonan was a very old man by that time, but still active and full of fun. He looked like an Old Testament patriarch.....My uncle spoke of him almost with reverence, because of his standing in the north during the Crofters' War. Joseph MacLeod told me that, in

the early years, it had been difficult to organise the crofters even in their own cause, they were so apathetic. His technique was to go to a village, call a meeting, and deliver an address ... He could then send an account of the meeting to the local press reporting his speech in full ... Other nearby villages, not wanting to be outdone, would invite him to speak to them, and the snowball - perhaps I should say fireball - of land reform was rolling through the district".

97.

James Hunter, Making, 14, quoting Willie Matheson (ed), The Songs of John MacCodrum, Edinburgh, 1938; including the lines, "Look around you and see the nobility, without kindness to friends; *they are of the opinion that you do not belong to the soil...* (Emphasis added).

CHAPTER FOUR

From 1882, the Highlands embarked on a qualitatively new stage of land agitation; one that would run right through to the passage four years later of legislation designed to ameliorate, if not solve, the land-problem, and on again, at as high a pitch for at least another two years, with a view to distributing the land in the cause of the crofter and at the expense of the landlord. The experience of these years showed, or at least most powerfully suggested, that, in the words of the Land League - the Highland Land Law Reform Association - slogan, the people were indeed mightier than a lord(1). Various aspects of the period have drawn the attention of a number of writers; among them MacCuish on the origin and development of crofting law(2), Hunter on the politics of land law reform(3), Dunbabin on rural discontent in the Highlands(4), Hanham on "Highland discontent"(5), Savage on the wider parliamentary political context(6), Crowley on the "Crofters' Party" and the Land League(7) and Kellas in a general overview of the years in question(8).

But in 1882, as a prelude to the coming storm, agitation held the centre stage; and it was centred on Skye, first at Glendale and then, most famously, at Braes on the other side of the island; although towards the end of the year, there was a surge of trouble in Lewis, Barra, Tiree, wester Ross and Sutherland as well.

Nevertheless, it was the events at Braes that caught the imagination of writers at the time like MacKenzie(9) and Cameron(10) or writers since, in Gaelic(11), or English(12); it was the events at Braes that also caught public attention far beyond the Highlands; it was the events at Braes that - at least for the wider public - signalled the opening shot in the land war on which the Highlands, it must have seemed at the time, and certainly seems in retrospect, appeared to have embarked. The events at Braes also caught the attention

of the authorities, whether estate, legal, or governmental; their confidential responses repose to this day in the archives, notably those of Sheriff Ivory of Inverness-shire(13), and demonstrate the extent to which popular agitation in the Highlands had started to seriously alarm those same authorities.

Braes too illustrates the role of the press in publicising and often promoting (which was often the same thing) the crofter cause; illustrates the 'hot torch of publicity' in concerted action for perhaps the first time in the crofters' war of the coming years. According to one report, for instance, the newspapers represented in Skye during the month of the Battle of the Braes included the Dundee Advertiser, the People's Journal (which would be giving strong coverage to crofting issues a full forty years later), the Glasgow Citizen, the Scotsman, the Glasgow Herald, the Glasgow Mail, the Inverness Courier, the Northern Chronicle, the London Standard (reportedly sending its war correspondent), the Glasgow News, and the Freeman's Journal(14).

The matter was also raised in parliament, with Charles Fraser-MacIntosh asking the Lord Advocate in the Commons on April 20th, "If he can explain the circumstances under which fifty of the Glasgow Police Force have been sent to the Island of Skye?"; the answer being in the name of the Lord Advocate, as a further indication of how serious matters in the Highlands were now being regarded(15).

For these reasons, Braes deserves particular attention; to this present day, after all, as token of this importance, it is the only location (with the exception of the Land League cairn at Gartymore on the east coast of Sutherland) which can lay claim to a memorial to the land war of the 1880's.

The background to the events in the spring of that year went back almost two decades. Until 1865, the people of Braes had had the use of the nearby hill of Ben Lee, when

they were ejected by the MacDonald estate in favour of a sheep-farm; and in 1881, when the lease of this farm was about to end, they petitioned the estate for the return of the grazing of the hill. This petition was at once rejected; and the people announced a rent strike and marched into Portree to proclaim it.

The estate considered arrests on the grounds of intimidation [sic], but did not think the claim would stand in court; so it resorted to attempting to evict a few tenants, on the grounds that the rent-strike had driven them into rent-arrears. Orders to quit were taken out against a dozen of them; but the sheriff-officer attempting to serve these orders was accosted, and his papers burned. This was deforcement - and warrants for arrest were issued. At this point, Ivory, the sheriff of Inverness-shire, arrived with his force of fifty police; the celebrated riot then took place on the narrow track into the township, on the steep side of the hill, above the shore; and five men were arrested, despite ferocious opposition from the Braes people(16).

Given the history of landlord-tenant relations in Braes, as the people themselves told it then and later, the ferocity of their opposition may scarcely have been remarkable. The very first meeting of the Napier Commission was held in Braes(17); its very first witness was Angus Stewart, a crofter of Beinn-a-chorrain(18), examined in Gaelic (in which language, however, he would not be able to write; a further demonstration of the validity and importance of oral sources for popular Highland history). Stewart was author of the much-quoted line, one characteristic of everything Napier's Commission would hear as it toured the Highland that summer and one that well serves as epitaph to the Commission's endeavours; "I cannot bear evidence to the distress of my people without bearing evidence to the oppression and high-handedness of the landlord and his factor"(19).

Stewart set the tone for the proceedings by asking for a guarantee that he would not be victimised by the estate for giving evidence(20); and then proceeded to offer it anyway. His words to this day encapsulate to perfection the popular vision of what was wrong with the system of land-ownership in the Highlands; "The smallness of our holdings and the inferior quality of the land is what has caused our poverty; and the way in which the poor crofters are huddled together, and the best part of the land devoted to deer forests and big farms"(21). His remedy was equally simple; "What would remedy the people's grievances throughout the island of Skye is to give them plenty of land, as there is plenty of it, and they are willing to work it(22)..... Give us land out of the plenty of land that is about for cultivation.....that is the principal remedy that I see. Give us the land ....."(23).

A procession of other witnesses followed; their stories offering evidence of land-use and mis-use over the previous century, evidence of the clear view of the people that they had a natural right to the land on which they lived - and evidence too of the strength of popular memory on the land question. John Matheson's evidence is particularly significant in this respect(24).

The simple and powerful eloquence of Matheson, and scores, hundreds, of other crofting witnesses before the Napier Commission renders papraphrase less than appropriate; the simple and powerful clarity (and certainty) of this eloquence, and its unanimity, itself constitutes a searing indictment of class relations, and associated issues, in the nineteenth century Highlands.

For instance, deportation (and the word is clearly merited) of the common people - for long the only response other than coercion of the landlord class to popular land-hunger - was in Braes, as throughout the Highlands, briskly rejected. According to one crofter, for example, "I would like very well if those who are wallowing in wealth would go

away where no crofters would obstruct their wishes in land"(25); while for another, in a typically memorable phrase, "The places I knew in my young days where the grass could be cut with the scythe are now as bare as possible with deer and big sheep"(26).

The response of this single crofter was replicated time and again during the course of the Napier hearings; and while it, and those of similar tone that followed it, recalls the comment of J.L Campbell, quoted earlier, it underlines the accuracy of Richards' comment that the minutes of the hearings do indeed constitute not only "the finest source for 'history from below' in the entire history of the Highlands", but also that they represent "a sustained collective view of Highland history".

This sustained and collective view - primarily oral - is not a thing of the past either; to the present day, the inhabitants of Braes lay claim to an informed and accurate version of the past events that without little doubt render possible their existence there today(27). Their comments are worthy of record, firstly because they have hitherto been largely ignored by historians who have tended to concentrate on the Ivory and other papers; secondly, because the events at Braes have been widely documented on the basis of such sources; and thirdly, because the oral record of land agitation in Braes matches with great accuracy the archive record of Ivory and Lord Advocate.

Nor can it be ignored that many who still carry the oral record are direct descendants of those involved in agitation at the time. John Nicolson, for instance, had both his great-grandfather and grand-father gaoled for their part in the Battle of the Braes; "The hill-land was being taken from the crofters. To do this the rents were increased to such an extent that the poor crofters couldn't afford to pay, so then they were threatened with eviction. This led to a lot of unrest and they refused to pay the rent and the story I have heard is that the sheriff-officer

was sent to Braes with eviction notices. He was met by a deputation of crofters, when he was handed a glowing peat and made to burn the eviction notices. He then returned to Portree and reported to his superiors and as a result it was decided that the crofters were in revolt. It was then decided to send a force of police to quell this revolt in Braes"(28).

In the words of another present-day Braes resident, Willie MacDonald (delivered with a cadence, wit and attention to detail that would not have shamed a witness before the Napier hearings), "Well, it happened in 1882, the Battle of the Braes. They lost the grazing of Ben Lee, three townships, Peinchorran, Balmeanach and Gedintailor(29). And they were left with what they called the township common grazing and this grazing that they lost, it was 3440 acres, divided between 29 individual shares. They were only left with in Peinchorran, approximately 299 acres, in Balmeanach 214, and in Gedintailor, I amn't sure, about 230 or something. They started a rent strike and the rent strike took place and then they were going to be evicted by sheriff-officers, and these sheriff-officers came as far as Gedintailor, and the people resisted taking the summonses and they went after them, and they took a burning peat, the matches wasn't so plentiful then, or the lighters, they took a burning peat from a man called Donald MacPherson in Ollach, upper Ollach, and they made the man blow the flames on the summons, and burnt them"(30).

In the words of Nicolson, "The chief constable of Glasgow decided to send a force of policemen and they arrived in Braes on a wet and stormy morning in April, 1882, and there the battle took place"(31).

According to Kate MacPherson, "My father was born in Braes and my grandparents lived there of course, my grandfather was a crofter. I can remember my father talking very much about the battle, he must have been five or six at the time, and what he remembered, what I remember

about him telling the story so much, was how frightened he was when he saw his mother being attacked by the policemen and he was terrified because they were manhandling my grandfather, and of course my grandmother went to his rescue. She was a very tall, strapping, strong young woman, and three policemen she knocked out, and she was batoned, and what he remembered being so afraid of was his mother lying on the ground with blood pouring over her face. My grandmother wasn't the only woman in that situation but I know she was one in particular that was badly hurt. It was a black day, for the crofters of Braes, that day"(32).

And another recollection, collected a full century after the battle, goes thus; "My grandmother was Marion MacMillan, she was in the battle, we were told the policemen made for her, she was a very strong woman, and they made for her, she put one of them on his back - there are ruins there now, which Colin MacDonald uses for his sheep and things; there were two women staying there at the time, and when the police came and the battle started, they came out with a bucket of ashes and they threw the ashes to blind the police, it gave them a good advantage"(33).

According to the poet and historian Sorley MacLean, another resident of Braes though born across the sound in Raasay, as the fighting became particularly fierce, "The Peinchorran people arrived about this point. The fight went on for about a quarter of a mile beyond here to the narrows. But about three hundred yards beyond this a group of Braes men, maybe women too, cut up the hill so as to cut off the police retreat to Portree. Of course, by this time the police were using the prisoners as shields"(34).

To this day, Ivory is recalled locally; in the words of one Braes resident, "The police came to Portree and they marched down to Braes with the sheriff of the county, sheriff Ivory, and it seems his height was about five feet four, and I read in a book all dictators were about that height, Mussolini and Hitler, yes; and sheriff Ivory!"(35).

According to John Nicolson, "My great-grandfather and my grandfather were among those apprehended. They were taken to gaol in Inverness but their fines were paid by well-wishers, and they were released. They were met at Portree pier by people from all over Skye and carried shoulder-high to the local hostelry and well-feted there"(36). And, in the words of Alasdair Beaton, "Another thing I was told, that day the Balmeanach and Gendintailor people were there and they were saying, where are the Peinchorran people? So word was sent and they were on the shore, cutting seaweed, at that time they used to take boats and fill the boats, so they left the boats and made for the battle, probably they didn't care if they would lose the boats or not with the tide coming in, but anyway when they came back the boats were still high and dry, and they were saying afterwards, they never saw a tide in their lives that stayed out so long as it did that day"(37).

Once again, it seems particularly apt to recall the comments of J.L. Campbell on oral tradition, noted above!

The aftermath of the events at Braes, given the state of agitation by then sweeping over Skye, was predictable. Of the five men taken to Inverness three were fined £1, and the others £2.10/-; and when they returned home to their tumultuous welcome, the crofters of Braes simply drove their stock onto Ben Lee, while MacDonald's agents applied for, and got, a Court of Session order demanding that they be removed, as they were there illegally. Fifty three people were to be served with these orders; but when they arrived in Braes in September, the women of the district put the messenger-at-arms carrying them to flight. Ivory asked for 100 soldiers to subdue Braes; but the request was denied, (an interesting enough denial, in terms of what it suggests with regard to government perceptions of events in the Highlands) although the county's police force was increased by fifty men. In October, however, when the messenger-at-arms returned in the company of 11 policemen to serve his

notices, they were all prevented even from entering the district by a crowd of crofters; and two months later, thwarted, the MacDonald estate retreated and agreed to lease the grazing of Ben Lee to the crofters of Braes(38). In short, the crofters of Braes had won.

By then, of course, the balance of forces had tilted against the landowners of Skye, both as landowners and, at least by implication, as bearers of a culture clearly viewed as alien by those who gave evidence to Napier; whether Fraser of Kilmuir and his 46,000 acres; Norman (Harrow and Athenaeum) MacLeod of Dunvegan, "Isle of Skye, N.B.", and his 141,000; or Lord (Eton and Carlton) MacDonald of Armadale, "Isle of Skye, N.B.", and his 130,000 acres(39). For by the time of the battle at Braes, the anti-landlord movement had developed a momentum, encouraged not only by direct events, but by the agitation of the Highland press.

In this, MacKenzie's Celtic Magazine, published out of Inverness, played more or less every month its own significant role; indeed, the view is persuasive that the overall role of MacKenzie during the land agitation was at least as impressive as that of John Murdoch(40). A glance at the appropriate files of the Celtic Magazine quickly betrays MacKenzie's sense of what was significant in the Highlands. In January 1882, for instance, it published as a special supplement a very long report on the annual meeting at Perth of the Federation of Celtic Societies(41). One issue later, it carried a long letter from "A Canadian Highlander"; in it the refrain, inseparable from the land agitation of the time and later, of radicalism on one hand and nationalism on the other, is clearly heard; "Give Scotland liberal Land Laws, for which we are glad to see they are now agitating, and hope they will soon obtain - surely there is enough spirit of independence in the descendants of the followers of Wallace and Bruce to assure and secure their civil rights and liberties, whether usurped by Scottish lairds or English millionaires....."(41).

The same issue carried a full-page report on the last meeting of the Edinburgh Sutherland Association; John MacKay of Hereford there referring to the land question in Sutherlandshire, and warning, " that in the immediate future large tracts of their beloved country might be turned into huge deer-forests", and professor Blackie adding that the principle of the Irish Land Act "applied to the Highlands as well as to Ireland, and that principle was that the people had a right to the soil.....This was their favourable moment; this was the moment when they must speak out, and if they did not speak out, they were lost for ever"(43).

Two issues later the magazine was carrying a piece by John MacKay on the Sutherland evictions(44); and the following month was reporting, as well as the results of the Gaelic census(45), events at Glendale; "The tenants paid their rents at Martinmas last, but they have given notice that unless their demands are conceded they will not pay the rent due at Martinmas next.....they are in great hope that the friends of the Gael in the large towns of the south will manfully aid them in their battle with landlordism"(46).

June's edition carried a short piece on the battle at Braes(47), and a much longer article on Lord MacDonald, the Highland destitution and "the clearances of 1849-51-2"(48); while the July edition gave space to a ten-page piece by Lachlan MacDonald of Skaebost on the land agitation in the Highlands and Skye in particular; a continuation of the Lord Macdonald-and-the-destitution article of the previous issue; a glowing review of Blackie's just-published Altavona; and three pages on particularly severe evictions then under way at Lochcarron(49).

The following month's Celtic Magazine carried a full-page report on the formation of a "Highland Land Law Reform Association" at Inverness, with a view to "affecting such changes in the Land Laws as shall prevent the waste of large tracts of productive land in the North, shall provide security of tenure, increased protection to the tillers of

the soil, and promote the general welfare of the people.....a special object of the Association shall be the encouragement and fostering of small holdings in the Highlands, and the collection and publication of the facts and circumstances connected with evictions in the North". It also carried a reprint of a letter of MacKenzie's used in the Inverness Courier(51); a report on the treatment of events in Skye by local and national newspapers(52); and an article on the "Skye crofters and their claims"(53).

In the October edition, the magazine carried a note on Blackie, Russell-Wallace(54), the Sellar family and the clearances in Sutherland(55); and a report on Charles Fraser-MacIntosh, MP, and the Highland crofters.

This was an early reference to the growing demand, orchestrated by MacKenzie and his magazine, for an official enquiry into the condition of crofters. A deputation from the Highland Land Law Reform Association had met with Fraser-MacIntosh, in Inverness, "with reference to the necessity of energetic action in Parliament in favour of special enquiry into the crofter question by Royal Commission". MacKenzie himself announced that a majority of the members of the town council of Inverness were already members of the Land Law Reform Association, and added, "The time has passed for any half-hearted action, for unless something were done, he feared the people would themselves take to the settling of the question, and no one could predict the consequences. At all events there was looming in the near future a general movement throughout the Highlands on behalf of more equitable relations between landlord and tenant.....". To this Fraser-MacIntosh had agreed and promised to raise the matter in the next session of parliament, for "events now occurring render inquiry imperative"(56)

Meanwhile, MacKenzie and the land-law reform association kept the pressure on for a commission right through the following winter. In November, his Celtic

Magazine carried yet another piece on the Sutherland evictions; and a report on a trial following events at Rogart. Quoting the Oban Times of October 7th(57), the magazine reported, "The crofter, Andrew MacKenzie, who was reinstated by his neighbours recently, was tried before the Sheriff at Dornoch on Saturday, and received the heavy sentence of one month's imprisonment, without the option of a fine"(58).

Professor Blackie had already been agitating on the matter; and now MacKenzie added, "People who know the case thoroughly wonder why it was tried before the Sheriff-Principal, and not before the Sheriff-Substitute.....here we find Sheriff MacIntosh, himself a laird, and, in his capacity of advocate in Edinburgh, senior counsel in the case of Lord MacDonald against the crofters of Ben Lee, sitting to judge a case which arose out of an attempt to evict MacKenzie from his croft.....It is probable that this will be brought before the notice of Parliament by the Federation of Celtic Societies"(59).

In other words, even by this early point, publicists and agitators and parliamentarians were working in close collaboration; although on a scale that could not begin to match what was to come.

In the December issue, MacKenzie carried a piece on land nationalisation(60), and another piece on the Braes crofters(61); while in January, he printed a piece on the depopulation of Argyll(62); and a four-page article on the first Highland emigration ship to Nova Scotia - the Hector(63). The following month he carried long quotes on the crofters' agitation from the Greenock Telegraph and the Christian Leader(65;) while by then, "a number of gentlemen, summoned by Lord Archibald Campbell, met in London and passed resolutions requesting the Government to grant the offending Skye crofters "sufficient time" to submit to the law before force is used, and urging the appointment of a Royal Commission"(65). Just six days later, in Edinburgh,

two-thousand five-hundred people met too, to demand a commission to inquire, among other things, into "the extensive depopulation of fertile districts for the purposes of sport".

With MacKenzie in attendance, as well as Blackie, principal Rainy, and D.H. MacFarlane, MP, (the skeleton of the city-based land-reform leadership of the coming years) the meeting also demanded "the utilisation for productive purposes of the vast tracts of the country at present under deer". And Blackie moved a motion, carried unanimously, that the meeting, "recognising the necessity at this juncture for united action on the part of all friends of the Highlands, heartily endorses the objects of the Edinburgh Land Law Reform Association.....to provide a basis for combined action in favour of such changes in the land laws as may be necessary - and recommends the formation of similar Associations throughout the country"(66).

As a direct response to this publicity, organisation and agitation, the government did indeed grant the formation of a commission into crofters' grievances shortly afterwards; though it was now six years since MacKenzie had first called for one, almost as long since the Gaelic Society of Inverness had asked for it; and since which time it had been demanded by a 1880 public meeting in Inverness, by the Federation of Celtic Societies, the Gaelic Society of Perth, and the Highland Land Law Reform Associations of Inverness and Edinburgh. Fraser-MacIntosh had also written to the Home Secretary in February; "I could not have believed that so soon after the meeting at Inverness in December 1880 the agitation should have gone to such a pitch.....it will be imprudent to delay".

MacKenzie promptly urged that steps be taken to counter the landlord influence that would, if allowed, be brought to bear on the Commission; otherwise, "It will only prove the commencement of an agitation on the Land Question, the end of which no one can predict"(67). And a little

later he added, "if it fails to give satisfaction, the people, by a more powerful, legitimate, and persistent agitation, will still have the remedy in their own hands"(68).

The commission, however, had the effect of unleashing on the public the history of class-relations in the Highlands over the best part of the previous century; and of serving as a focus for the anti-landlord movement in general. From the very first meeting at Braes, this was the pattern that was set; whether on the mainland or in the islands.

On Mull, for instance, the commission met at Tobermory; in 1841 there had been over 10,000 people residing on Mull, and yet within only ten years, this number had fallen to no more than six and a half thousand. And by the Census of 1881, it was shown that the population had fallen even further - to just over half of the numbers of forty years earlier(69). John MacCallum noted how he had witnessed great changes in Mull even in his own time; with every new landlord, he said, and with every so-called "improvement", the crofters were left worse off than before (70). John MacKinnon, aged 93, told of how in a spot where there had once been 129 crofts, there were now only two; while Lachlan Kennedy reported repeated raisings of rent, and of the successive reductions of land, and of how on one occasion, the factor had compulsorily taken land from the crofters, leaving them without grazing for their cattle - and then buying that cattle at a price far below their real value. And Lachlan M'Guerrie [MacQuarrie?] described his eviction from his croft at Ormaic at the hands of the proprietor, a policeman and a sheriff's officer, and of how he had to take refuge with his family in a hut on the shore six yards above the high-water mark(71).

This evidence was given against a wider background, the significance of which could not fail to escape those giving it. By now, after all, it was August, the start of the

"sporting" season in the Highlands. According to the correspondent of the Times, for instance, prospects were excellent for "Scotch grouse"; "Daily and nightly the trains from the south come into Edinburgh and Glasgow heavily laden with passengers and baggage; they are sent on to Stirling and Perth, to Aberdeen and Inverness and Oban.....Oban becomes a little Euston, and Inverness a miniature King's Cross". Of all the moors in the island of Mull, those in the Bunessan district gave promise of the best sport; the birds there were said to be very numerous and unusually forward and strong, while in Inverness-shire, the season was expected to be the best to be seen for at least six years. In the forests, the deer were in unusually good condition too - "Good reports come from North Knapdale, Easdale, Ballachulish, Morvern, and from Tobermory, Salen and Bunessan in Mull"(72).

Meanwhile, it was to Bunessan that the Napier commission moved after Tobermory; a district for the most part in the ownership of the Duke of Argyll. Of his 53,000 acres, 49,000 were let for sheep-farming, while the remaining 3,700 acres were let to 74 crofters. The crofters also paid double in rents per acre what the sheep-farmers paid; though as one of the commissioners noted, the best land was in the large farms, and the crofters had the worst. The first crofters' delegate, Allan MacInnes, told of the repeated raising of crofting rents between 1850 and 1876; of how fifteen years earlier half of their hill-land had been taken away by the factor who then added it to his own land; of how they got no compensation for improving their crofts and of how they had no security of tenure - so that, should they improve their land, they could be evicted and get nothing for their work; and of how this was a positive discouragement to crofters trying to improve their position(73). (These were, of course, precisely the sort of grievances that the commission would attempt to remedy when it came to deliver its report on its findings).

And in a joint statement from Alexander MacPherson and Malcolm MacLean, the commission heard; "There is excellent land lying nearby in the hands of the proprietor, that is ready for the plough; and if he does not allow the men who are willing to work it to take a living out of it, and add it to the wealth of the nation, it is a good enough reason why we should add our voice to that of the others who have suggested that the government should take in into their own hands, and make sure that it is applied to the purposes for which God created it"(74).

On Lismore, when the commission came, the first crofter delegate to appear asked for immunity from victimisation by the estate on account of the evidence he intended to give; the factor refused such an undertaking - but the people of the island went on to tell their story anyway. Donald MacDonald was one such witness, who described what had happened when some of the island fell into the hands of a southern lawyer by the name of Cheyne; "When he got the whole place under grass, instead of under crops, then he stocked it all, and the people were all away by that time. Those who had the means to take them to America went there, and some went to the largest towns. The poorest became labourers to him at 1/- a day for the men and sixpence for the women, and they were paid each Saturday by a kind of meal. If they would not go to work for him on these terms he threatened to pull down the houses of the poor people about their ears"(75).

And on Lismore the commission also heard the factor for one of the owners of the island report on his employer's response to a petition for a rent-reduction; "it seems to me that they have combined to put pressure on me, being apparently encouraged by the sympathy shown to the Skye crofters.....I shall distinctly resist any attempt to coerce me. I think the crofter system a bad one.....a crofter living on his croft has no right to expect anything but the most abject penury. His condition is one of idleness and,

of necessity, poverty"(76).

These three paragraphs demonstrate with incomparable simplicity, crofter perception of what had happened in the last half century or so to the Highland rural economy; what the crofters' view of landownership was - and what the landlord position was. A marked undercurrent of class and cultural antipathy, might with justice also be easily inferred!

Throughout the rest of their tour, the Napier commission was to hear much more of the same. In Morvern, for instance, on the south side of Ardnamurchan, "where the land is good, the people were removed.....removed down to narrow and small places by the shore; some of them have a cow's grass, and some of them are simply cottars"(77). In Acharacle, "we cannot get any land to cultivate, although abundance of good land, formerly under cultivation, is going to waste at our very doors.....The first evictions which took place in this district happened between fifty and sixty years ago...the second eviction happened between forty and fifty years ago, when the tenants of several townships on the estates of Acharn and Ardtornish received summonses of removal from the proprietors before they sold the estate to Mr Patrick Sellar of Sutherlandshire.... There was another cruel and very harsh eviction which took place in this district about seventeen years ago.....There was yet another eviction on the estate of the late Lady Gordon of Drimnin.....(78).

The same story - of eviction, of no security of tenure, of marginalisation on the worst of the land, of uncompensated improvement - was to be told across the Highlands to Napier and his commissioners. In Arisaig, for instance, the common people of the district had suffered as the district passed from hand to hand, from Clanranald to Lady Ashburton to Lord Cranstoun to Mr MacKay, into the ownership of the Astley-Nicholson family(79).

Their administration was not a welcome one; popular

tradition in the district still records that they were foretold that their descendants would never inherit the estate. Certainly, one son, Stuart, 25, educated at Winchester, and a lieutenant with the first battalion, Camerons, went off to the great game in August 1914, and within just four weeks was missing, presumed killed, with the B.E.F. at Ainse(80). Two months before his departure, his brother William, 26, educated at Marlborough and Oxford, had been married in Westminster and honeymooned at Arisaig House (the many-windowed mansion beside the beach from which the Young Pretender left for France), being drawn there from the station in a carriage dragged by the tenants(81). A lieutenant with the second battalion, Camerons, he was killed at Ypres on the evening of February 22nd, 1915(82); and thanks to other personal disasters to hit the family, they died out and the estate was passed to Miss Becher, a former governess; who some years ago sold most of it - to the great grandson of a man evicted from Knoydart during the 1850's clearances there!

The principal speaker at the meeting of the commission in Arisaig was the local minister, Donald MacCallum(83), who had been born at Craignish within a generation of the clearances and evictions there, and whose first parish, after Glasgow University, had been in Morvern; the following year, 1884, he would succeed in forming a Morvern branch of the Land Law Reform Association. His story was also one of eviction, overcrowding, rent increases and no security of tenure at all.

MacCallum also spoke of the so-called "Seventeen Commandments", or estate-regulations; of how, under these regulations, sons were not allowed to stay on their parents' crofts after the age of 21, and also of how they would neither be given any house nor land in the district in which to live; of how crofters had to get estate permission even to dig a drain, and of how they were forbidden even to improve a house or croft.

In one of MacCallum's comments, there is an uncanny echo of the observation noted above with regard to Lismore; "One does not like to say that these English and other folk have a positive hatred to the native Highlander; but there is something at the bottom of it....."(84).

In the islands, too, the commissioners were to hear the same sort of story. In South Uist, one witness reported, "There is twice or thrice as much waste arable land in South Uist as there is under cultivation.....as there is plenty of arable land in the country not used or cultivated, we want as much of it as will support our families comfortably, and that at a reasonable rent, with security that we shall not be removed from our holdings....."(85).

In Barra, the crofters had the same complaints, and the same demands. Barra (and South Uist) had suffered from one of the worst clearing-landlords in the past(86); begining with Colonel Gordon of Cluny buying the bankrupt property from the MacNeils in 1839, and ending with the death of Lady Gordon Cathcart in 1932.

(On her death, her Will instructed that the island be sold; and that the proceeds of the sale be used so that "an emigration fund could be set up to encourage the tenants to emigrate from the estate to the Dominions, Colonies, and Dependencies. In 1977 [sic], the fund, by then worth £194,000, was wound-up, the proceeds going to Putney's hospital for the incurables, and the London leprosy mission.)(87)

Ten years after her death, Donald Buchanan of Barra would publish his "Reflections on the Isle of Barra", which would include a section on the land-agitation of the 1880's, based on conversations with two of the crofters who gave evidence to the Napier Commission in May 1883(88).

But as Buchanan observed, the tyrannies of the Gordon regime "carried within their very nature the seeds of revolt"(89); and as the minutes of the Napier Commission demonstrate, their progress around the Highlands in the

summer of 1883 served only to increase the anti-landlord agitation of the previous years - as the report volume recorded, "the land agitation of the Highlands is not likely to pass away without some adjustment of the claims of the occupiers acceptable to the greater number who are not yet possessed with extravagant expectations"(90).

Hence, agitation was going from strength to strength. From Kilmuir, the reverend MacPhail of the Free Church was worried about "disorder and lawlessness", and added that "There have been combinations among the people against payment of rent, and there have been threats posted up at the road side to deter men from settling with the factor on rent day.....In the present circumstances of our island population, I feel sure that a little more strain and a little more agitation would soon fan them into a state of wild confusion"(91)

The farmers on Kilmuir "wished to point out that an organised agitation was got up and prepared for the advent of the commission.....previous then to the arrival of the commission, certain parties organised meetings of the tenantry, with a view to agitation and the allegation of grievances.....it was almost hopeless at the time for proprietors or loyal tenants to express themselves, popular feeling, under the prevailing influences, being apparently all for revolutionary ideas"(92); "as to the cause of the agitation, we believe that it was, in the first instance, due to the course of events in Ireland.....it is well known that an Irish agitator was in Skye for the most of last season, as well as various others of similar type"(93).

From Waternish, Captain Allan MacDonald had the same complaint; "no doubt all this land cry has been got up by outside agitators and by paid agents"(94); while from MacLeod of MacLeod the commission heard, "For some considerable time there have been agitators in every corner of the island, circulating the most communistic doctrines, and endeavouring to set tenants against their

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landlords"(95).

From Strath, the reverend Donald MacKinnon complained that, "As a consequence of the agitation, and unreasonable expectations of a crofters' millenium raised by well-meaning but injudicious counsellors.....and by disloyal socialistic demagogues.....a tendancy to exaggeration and mis-representation has seized the minds of the people"(96); while he added, ""What is the reason of the agitation and discontent which has been prevalent?.....Not a few have been unwillingly concussed by threats of personal violence to join in the agitation.....on account of the Utopian and communistic ideas instilled into their minds by professional and unprincipled agitators.....and further, by the way in which the disaffected and turbulent were permitted so long with impunity to go on setting the law at defiance"(97). MacKinnon also sent to the commission "foolish and criminal pamphlets and cartoons", and referred to "others, more objectionable still, which I have not been able to get, freely circulated by an agent of the Land League"(98).

Captain Fraser himself made reference to his tenants as "the tools of agitators and the victims of political enthusiasts"(99), and said he was "quite aware that there are parties who have been endeavouring to promote discontent on my property.....in my opinion the present disturbed state of things in Skye is very much due to agitation in consequence of late events in Ireland"(100).

From Stornoway, the reverend MacIver thought that "it is evident who knows the real state of the Highland crofters that the commission has not been appointed a day too soon. In many places matters have been getting into a dangerous state....."(101), while from Knock the Free Church minister feared a "future far more troublesome than it has yet been, unless some remedy is applied"(102); and the tenants of Calbost wrote to Lady Matheson, enclosing a copy of a petition they had already sent, reminding her that it had not been replied to, and "trusting we may not be led to

resort reluctantly to such steps as many of our unfortunate countrymen are forced to adopt"(103).

Also from Stornoway the solicitor wrote to the commission noting that, "The policy of the estate must be characterised as a tortuous, subtle, and aggressive one in pursuit of territorial aggrandisement and despotic power"(104). And he added the warning that, "The island most undoutedly is, and has long been, seething in a chronic state of discontent. Any vagrant spark might kindle a dangerous conflagration. What precise shape this unhealthy feeling might ultimately assume no one can predict.....the crofters have long been, and still are, insulted, trampled on, and terrorised over"(105).

In Orkney too, the agitation had been having an effect, Lieutenant General Traill Burroughs complaining that, "They are endeavouring to establish a reign of lawlessness and terror here"(106). He complained of attacks made on him in the Orkney Herald, and of a threatening letter, received some days after the commission had left Kirkwall, "threatening me with death should I ever remove a tenant from my estate"(107). Threats of vengeance and destruction to stock, crop and property were being dealt out by "agitators", he claimed, and the "more I have inquired into this agitation, the more convinced I am that it is an exotic product which has been fostered into growth by the unscrupulous agency of outside agitators"(108). And his wife, "whose one idea has always been to do good and make happy all around her, was so hurt at the wicked and untruthful statements made by the so-called 'delegates' before the Royal Commission in Kirkwall, on behalf, as they said, of all my tenants, that she has resolved not to take any trouble on their account any more, and declined to give the childrens' party....."(109).

In short, the ruling class in the Highlands was under threat, and something had to be done. In the words of Gilchrist, an Alness farmer, "it is a fact that good men and

true, throughout the country, are feeling that something is far wrong, and that something must be done by and for the public safety"(110).

News of the commission was spreading far beyond the Highlands, and its doings watched closely and without great patience, as the heart-wrenching letters of emigrants indicate (111); in the words of one, writing from Benbecula Settlement, North West Territory, "Tell me if the commissioners did any good"(112).

It should be evident, then, that the tour of the Napier commission fuelled the flames of an agitation that was in any case growing apace across the Highlands. Indeed, the commission was a product of popular unrest and combined pressure from those who were outwith the community and yet of it, like Alexander MacKenzie; along with simple allies from the south of Scotland, like Blackie.

But the powerhouse of agitation was the direct action of the crofters themselves; and while the tactics they developed have already been noted, it is of interest to comment on the tactics that they spurned.

They spurned, for instance, the sort of agrarian terror and terrorist organisation characteristic of Russia at various points throughout the century; and though the crofters themselves could not be expected to know of this history, it is at least arguable that their external leaders did.

Nor is there any substantial evidence to the effect that some of the brisker examples of Irish land agitation were considered. Though the leadership was not coy in referring to events in Ireland, the references (some of which are noted earlier) seem to have been intended as no more than verbal provocation. There was no burning of lodges, mansions and castles, for instance - though this would hardly have been difficult in much of the Highlands. Nor was there any attempt at murder of landlords or their agents, either. Above all, there was no attempt to form an

armed organisation, any truly secret brotherhood, on an Irish model.

Had these courses been followed, then the stakes would have increased substantially in the Highland land agitation; and led, it can be speculated, to a conflagration on a Scottish scale. Whether the forces to sustain it existed in the south in sufficient force is open to question, of course - as is the response of the authorities, and an alternative outcome to the land war.

In any case, the tactics developed up until Braes and the tour of the Napier commission had served well enough, certainly to that point. But though there was always a marked current of antipathy to a landlordism that was in essence English, the crofters' struggle was not an integral part of any wider struggle for national liberation as in Ireland.

In the absence, on any significant scale, of such a wider controlling ideological vision, the tactics developed by the time of Braes were strictly reformist; but they had served well enough - and as the agitation continued to grow, they would continue to serve the movement well too.

CHAPTER FOUR

1

This period, to the summer of 1886 and the enactment of the Crofters' Act, is covered in greater detail in Iain Fraser Grigor, Mightier than a Lord, Acair, Stornoway, 1980.

2.

D.J.MacCuish, Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness; a four part series on the origin and development of crofting law. MacCuish's first article appeared, vol XLIII, 1960-1963 (read to the Society as a paper, 2-2-1962); the second, The case for converting crofting tenure to ownership, was read November 1968; the third, reform of crofting tenure, was read March 1974; and the fourth, Ninety years of crofting legislation and administration, was read 31-3-1978.

3.

James Hunter, Land War in the Highlands, The Scotsman, 24-7-1976. James Hunter, The Highland land war of the 1880's, Calgacus, vol 1, no 3. And of course Hunter's The Politics of Highland Land Reform 1873-1895, Scottish Historical Review, 1974, vol 53, 45.

4.

J.P.D. Dunbabin, chapter 9, the crofters' 'land war'; in the same writer's Rural Discontent in Nineteenth Century Britain, Faber, London, 1974. Reviewed by James Hunter, Scottish Historical Review, vol 54, 1975, 207; which volume also carries Hunter's, The Gaelic connection; the Highlands, Ireland, and nationalism 1873-1922.

5.

H.J. Hanham, The problem of Highland discontent, 1880-1885, Royal Historical Society Transactions, 5th series, no 19, 1969.

6.

Donald C. Savage, Scottish Politics, 1885-1886, Scottish

Historical Review, vol 40, 1961.

7.

D.W. Crowley, The 'Crofters' Party', 1885-1892; Scottish Historical Review, vol 35, 1956.

8.

James G. Kellas, The Crofters' War, History Today, XII, 1962.

9.

Alexander MacKenzie, The Isle of Skye in 1882; in, Clearances, 407-517.

10.

James Cameron, The Old and New Highlands and Islands, Cameron, Kirkcaldy, 1912, chapter 4. (Note that the previous chapter is a biography of Murdoch; and gives details of the Highlander.) Perhaps Murdoch's most characteristic product is his pamphlet, in Gaelic and English, The Land Question answered from The Bible, published at the time of the Napier Commission.

11.

Somhairle Mac Gill-eain, Batal na Chumhaing, West Highland Free Press, 25-4-1980. The Gaelic and English words are MacLean's on the cairn at Braes today which commemorates the battle; "Near this cairn on the 19th April 1882, ended the battle fought by the people of Braes on behalf of the crofters of Gaeldom".

12.

Iain Fraser Grigor, Battle that changed Highland history, Glasgow Herald, 19-4-1982. And also;

Iain Fraser Grigor, reporter, presenter, writer, The battle of the Braes, BBC Radio Scotland, TX 17-4-1982, and repeat 20-4-1982; producer, Ishbel MacLean; contributors - John Nicolson, Braes; William MacDonald, Braes; Kate MacPherson, Kyleakin; Sorley MacLean, Braes; and Alasdair Beaton, Braes.

13.

SRO, Sheriff Ivory Paper, GD 1/36. For more of the same, from the point-of-view of the authorities, see Lord

Advocate's Papers, especially Box 2, the Lothian Muniments, GD 40, and Scottish Office Miscellaneous Files, HH/1. These sources, however, complement, or at least no more than equal, the value of contemporary press reports; unsurprisingly, perhaps, given that it was an age of reporters with magnificent shorthand, an age of verbatim reporting as a matter of course, and an age of broadsheets with editors who would as a matter of routine give column after column to any one story. Parliamentary Papers add little on Braes; but see the letter from Balfour, the Home Secretary, on Braes; "I received on the 28th ultimo the Report of the Procurator Fiscal at Portree, relative to the occurences which took place at Braes on the 24th.....It is clear that Lord MacDonald is entitled to have adequate protection for the messengers-at-arms whom he may employ for the purpose of serving writs upon the Crofters at Braes.....From the various reports which we have received, it appears that one or more places in the island of Skye are in a disturbed condition.....". (1882 (428) LIV 267.)

14.

The Celtic Magazine, no LXXX, vol VII, June 1882, 344. And of course the pro-crofter press followed the events at Braes extremely closely too.

15.

Hansard, Commons, 20-4-1882, cols 1032-1033.

16.

HH 22/4, Memorandum on the recent disturbances in the Island of Skye, Feb. 1883, covers events at Braes the previous year in some detail. See also, Ivory Papers, GD 1/36/1: MacDonald to MacLennan, Jan 1882; MacLennan's memorandum on alleged charges of intimidation (at Braes), March 1882; and (Portree's) police inspector report to Ivory, end of March 1882 - as background to the riot of the following month.

17.

On Tuesday, 8-5-1883.

18.

Township spellings as per Napier Commission minutes.

19.

Napier Commission, Evidence, vol 1; Q 10.

20.

Ibid, Q's 13-21.

21.

Ibid, Q 23.

22.

Ibid, Q 25.

23.

Ibid, Q's 32-35.

24.

Ibid, Q 346.

25.

Ibid, Q's 533-534.

26.

Ibid, Q 547.

27.

For a printed memoir of the MacDonald regime, see David Fraser, The Christian Watt Papers, Paul Harris, Edinburgh, 1983. Reviewed by James Hunter (column), West Highland Free Press, 20-5-1983. On MacDonald himself, see Who's Who, 1899; and Who Was Who, 1941-1950

28.

Iain Fraser Grigor, Battle that changed Highland history; John Nicolson.

29.

Spelling as per Ordnance Survey.

30.

Grigor, Battle that changed Highland history; Willie MacDonald.

31.

Ibid, John Nicolson.

32.

Ibid, Mrs Kate MacPherson.

33.

Ibid, Willie MacDonald.

4.

Ibid, Sorley MacLean.

35.

Ibid, Willie MacDonald.

36.

Ibid, John Nicolson.

37.

Ibid, Alasdair Beaton. Note that local tradition also records the plan to storm the gaol in Portree with the mast of a sailing boat as a battering ram, with a view to thus freeing the prisoners; who were, however, swiftly removed to Inverness. This tidal phenomenon, however, escaped the notice of Ivory in his report of the Battle to the authorities of three days later; Ivory to Lord Advocate, GD 1/36/1.

38.

For a parody in song of Ivory's assault on Braes, see Celtic Magazine, vol 7, no 80, June 1882, 358, "Charge of the Skye Brigade", (reprinted from the North British Daily Mail.) The Ivory papers document the 'long hot summer'(and autumn) of Braes in 1882. See statement of MacDonald, the deforced messenger of September; Spiers (the sheriff-substitute at Portree) to Ivory the same month (and from the previous April and May); police inspector Aitchison's report to Ivory of October; Balfour's refusal of the military, November 3; and the county police-committee decision of ten days later - all GD 1/36/1.

39.

John Bateman, The Great Landowners of Great Britain and Ireland, Leicester University Press, 1971 (reprint of 1883 fourth edition), 176, 292, 287; and Loretta R. Timperley (ed), A directory of land-ownership in Scotland, c.1770, Scottish Records Society, Edinburgh, 1976. Reviewed by G.R.Barbour, Scottish Historical Review, vol 57, 1978, 113.

40.

And, indeed, the importance of MacKenzie as publicist and propagandist for the crofters' cause can scarcely be over-estimated.

41.

Celtic Magazine, vol 7, no 75, Jan 1882, 120-121.

42.

Ibid, no 76, Feb 1882, 192-194.

43.

Ibid, no 76, Feb 1882, 194-195.

44.

Ibid, no 78, April 1882, 291-294.

45.

Ibid, no 79, May 1882, 321.

46.

Ibid, no 79, May 1882, 344.

47.

Ibid, no 80, June 1882, 392.

48.

Ibid, no 80, June 1882, 367-372.

49.

Ibid, no 81, July 1882. Lochcarron evictions, 436-438.

50.

Ibid, no 82, Aug 1882, 461.

51.

Ibid, 462.

52.

Ibid, 462.

53.

Ibid, 426. Note that the following issue carries a biography of Matheson of Lewis; 489-503.

54.

Whose book on nationalisation of the land was serialised in October 1976 by the Lochaber Free Press!

55.

Celtic Magazine, vol 7, no 84, Oct 1882, 572.

56.

Ibid, 562-563.

57.

Celtic Magazine, vol 8, no 85, Nov 1882. Which gives, inter alia, an idea of magazine lead-times a century ago! See also in this issue, 20, a (rare!) computation of relative Highland battle-losses (at Tel-el-Kebir.)

58.

This absence of choice, of course, because had a fine been imposed, it would have been paid by well-wishers!

59.

Celtic Magazine, vol 8, no 85, Nov 1882, 25-26.

60.

Ibid, no 86, Dec 1882, 61-67.

61.

Ibid, 72-75.

62.

Ibid, no 87, Jan 1883, 131-133.

63.

Ibid, 140-144.

64.

Ibid, no 88, Feb 1883, 178-180.

65.

The Scotsman, 2-2-1883.

66.

Celtic Magazine, vol 8, no 89, Mar 1883, 209.

67.

Ibid, no 90, April 1883, 282-285.

68.

Ibid, no 91, May 1883, 317-319. Note MacKenzie's scathing comments on the class-basis of the commissioners; "four landed proprietors, one lawyer (who is also a landed proprietor's son) and the professor of Celtic at the university of Edinburgh who has never exhibited any special interest in, or so far as known, paid any special attention to, the subject of the enquiry....."(319). See also the note, bottom of 319, on John MacPherson, the "Glendale

Martyr", still in gaol on the eve of the commission visiting Skye. See also Napier Commission evidence (of MacPherson); Q's 6502; 6598. For the Oban Times obituary of Fraser-MacIntosh, see 2-2-1901 (notice), 9-2-1901 (1 col), and 25-1-1901. For the Oban Times on the retiral of Professor MacKinnon, see 20-6-1914 (1½cols.)

69.

Iain Fraser Grigor, Croft a luxury says landowner, Fort William Free Press, 19-12-1975.

70.

Ibid.

71.

Ibid.

72.

Iain Fraser Grigor, Rents doubled during famine, Fort William Free Press, 21-11-1975.

73.

Ibid.

74.

Ibid.

75.

Iain Fraser Grigor, Poverty among Lismore crofters, Fort William Free Press, 19-9-1975.

76.

Ibid. 77.

Iain Fraser Grigor, Scenes from the Napier Commission in Morvern, Fort William Free Press, 3-10-1975.

78.

Ibid. Note that among the newspapers represented at the sitting in Lochaline were The Times, the Glasgow Herald, The Scotsman, and the North British Daily Mail.

79.

Iain Fraser Grigor, Scenes from the Napier Commission in Arisaig, West Highland Free Press, 29-8-1975 (part one.)

See also Lochaber Free Press, 1-10-1976, The Arisaig Clearances.

80.

Oban Times, 6-3-1915.

81.

Oban Times, 20-6-1914; 27-6-1914.

82.

Oban Times, 6-3-1915.

83.

For a biography see, inter alia, Donald Meek, The prophet of Waternish, West Highland Free Press, 8-7-1977; and Lochaber Free Press, 22-7-1977, 29-7-1977. Also Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticanae, revised and enlarged edition, vol 7, Oliver and Boyd, Edinburgh, 1928.

84.

Iain Fraser Grigor, Scenes from the Napier Commission in Arisaig, West Highland Free Press, 5-9-1975 (part two.)

85.

Iain Fraser Grigor, The crofters' struggle for the land, West Highland Free Press, 24-2-1978.

86.

James Hunter (column), West Highland Free Press, 8-2-1982.

87.

Iain Fraser Grigor, The crofters' struggle for the land, West Highland Free Press, 17-2-1978.

88.

Donald Buchanan, Reflections on the Isle of Barra, Sands and Co., London, 1942. The present writer is indebted to his nephew, the late Donald Buchanan of Barra and Morar, for the use of this book, and for discussions on it. Donald Buchanan (the author), was a Harley Street medical specialist, according to the Oban Times of 18-6-1987, in a report on the death of his nephew, Dr Hugh Buchanan of Kilmarnock and Barra, and brother of the late Donald Buchanan of Barra and Morar.

89.

Buchanan, Reflections, 38; see also 39, 40, 41.

90.

Napier Commission, Report, vol 1, 111.

91.

Ibid (appendices pagination), 10.

92.

Ibid, 13.

93.

Ibid, 14. See also James Hunter (column), West Highland Free Press, 16-7-1982 (on Michael Davitt.)

94.

Ibid, 14.

95.

Ibid, 24.

96.

Ibid, 45.

97.

Ibid, 47.

98.

Ibid, 48. The titles were: The land for the people, an appeal: The Irish land question, an appeal to the land leaguers: A plea for the nationalisation of the land: Letter from Dr Nulty to Joseph Cowen, published by the National Land League of Great Britain, 1882: and, several "objectionable" cartoons from the Weekly Freeman.

99.

Ibid,, 76.

100.

Ibid, 70.

101.

Ibid, 137.

102.

Ibid, 141.

103.

Ibid, 152.

104.

Ibid, 201-202.

105.

Ibid, 194-196.

106.

Ibid, 248.

107.

Ibid, 257.

108.

Ibid, 260-262.

109.

Ibid, 259.

110.

Ibid, 361.

111.

Ibid, 127-8.

112.

Ibid, 129-130.

CHAPTER FIVE

Aspects of the period of agitation in the Highlands from the tour of the Napier Commission to the passing of the Crofters' Act in 1886 have drawn considerable attention from various writers, including MacPhail on the commission itself(1),and on the Skye military expedition of 1884(2), as well as from MacKay on the famous "Pet Lamb" case(3).

The period has even drawn the attention of French writers, among them Carre(4), who noted in a 1971 article, of the 1886 Crofters' Act, that it was, "veritable chartre pour ces paysans qui devenaient proprietaires de leur champ en fait sinon en droit et qui recevaient des aides diverses de l'Etat. Pourtant les Highlands continuerent a se vider, car apres la regression de l'elevage du mouton sous l'effet de la concurrence des laines du Nouveau monde, ce furent de riches citadins qui prirent possession de la montagne pour en fair des terrains de chass au daim et a la grouse, que l'on appelle les "deer forests"(5).

A second, and contemporary, French observer of the crofting scene was Charles Guernier, drawing on information supplied by the Land League propagandist Stuart Glennie.

(Glennie was recently, and perhaps somewhat slightingly, described as "a Scottish philosophic historian whose special period was 6000BC". He was, however, in spite, or because of this, one important link between the crofters' movement on the ground, and the fairly new-fangled socialists of the southern cities. He was, for instance, involved in the Fabian Society, along with Sidney Webb and George Bernard Shaw. With Shaw, Annie Besant and William Morris, he took part in the November 1887 'Bloody Sunday' illegal demonstration in London's Trafalgar Square, held to protest against the Government's Irish policy. Glennie is token of the tenuous, but nevertheless significant, link between the crofters' movement, and the Labour, Socialist and Marxist (though most certainly not Leninist) groups of

the southern salons and cities. It was William Morris, for instance, who led the breakaway from Hyndman's SDF in 1884; its follower, the Socialist League, quickly splitting on the question of self-government for the Scottish section of the organisation.)(6).

Guernier, a Parisian lawyer, published a monograph on the crofting movement in 1897(7); and in a few crisp paragraphs he traces the rise and fall of the sheep industry in the Highlands, recently examined in depth by Hunter(8), and notes the effect of the fall in price on the balance of class forces in the Highlands(9). Guernier goes on to deal with the question of deer forests and class-relations in the Highlands(10); but his account of the struggle for the crofters' cause, based as it is on information supplied by Glennie, is of particular interest, not least because it firmly locates the thrust of agitation among the southern intellectuals and crofters' sympathisers, rather than among the crofters themselves.

"Un mouvement se forma dans les villes que se generalisa bien vite. Ce mouvement a pris naissance chez les ecossais etablis en Angleterre. Le developpement des moyens de transports, les progres de l'industrie et du commerce ont au cours de ce siecle attire dans le sud beaucoup de jeunes Highlanders qui n'ont pas tarde a occuper dans les affaires des situations influentes. Mais l'Ecossais n'oublie pas son pays. Il garde au couer le souvenir des injustices souffertes par les siens. Ce que le modeste crofter ou cottar, impuissant au fond de sa glen ne pouvait faire contre le landlord, son fils independant osa l'accomplir. Les Highlanders, residant dans les villes, precherent la croisade contre le landlord. La campagne ne tarda pas a porter ses fruits"(11).

Guernier was clearly well-informed about the course of events in the Highlands. Having dealt with events at Kilmuir, he goes on to mention the dispute at Leckmelm; while of Braes he notes - again with the emphasis on the

southern sympathisers - that, "Cependant, les Highlanders des villes mirent a profit ce succes en organisant un grand mouvement d'ensemble"

Guernier (interestingly enough, he does not mention John Murdoch) gives due recognition to the role of MacKenzie; "A Inverness, l'historien M. Alexandre MacKenzie posa les premieres bases de la Highland land law reform association. Puis se formerent a Edimbourg la Highland association of Edinburgh qui fut l'oeuvre du reformateur infatigable M. Dugald Gorvan [sic; Cowan, clearly], et a Londres la Land law reform associaton of London creee par M. Donald Murray. Au point de vue du nombre, de l'influence et des moyens financiers, l'association de Londres prit immediatement la premiere place. Elle etait aupres du gouvernement, elle pouvait agir sur les deputes et les surveillier. *Elle fut la tete et l'inspiratrice du mouvement agraire*". (Emphasis added).

Guernier notes Alexander MacKenzie's agitational work on the ground in advance of the Napier Commission; records the work in Parliament of Donald MacFarlane; and details the formation of a national Land-League; "Alors, a l'automne de 1884, toutes les associations pour les reformes agraires dans les Hautes-Terres se grouperent en une seule ligue tres puissante qui prit le nom de Highland land law reform association. Le premiere conference annuelle fut tenue a Dingwall, dans le Rosshire sous les auspices du comite central executif de Londres".

Guernier goes on to describe the progamme of the League, and to describe its formal structure - incidentally, one of the best and most detailed available. He also notes the visits to the centres of agitation by Glennie and Donald MacCallum, the Bonar Bridge and Portree conferences of the Land League, and the parliamentary campaign to get crofters' representatives into the House of Commons.

According to Guernier, "L'organisation de la ligue a cette epoque comprenait deux cents villes et groupes locaux

et plus de vingt mille membres. L'effet moral de la campagne fut considerable. Six mois apres les elections, le rapport de la Commission royale fut depose et le projet du crofters' act de 1886 depose et vote au Parlement"; though he adds, writing, of course, eleven years later, that, "....depuis le triomphe de la loi nouvelle, la ligue semble avoir perdu en grande partie son caractere social. Elle n'est plus guere qu'une arme aux mains des politiciens"(12).

Despite certain errors of detail in Guernier's account, it remains an interesting one, given his position as a Parisian lawyer, drawing on Stuart Glennie as a source, and recording his comments just a decade after the passing of the 1886 act. Broadly enough, his account is substantially accurate; except that it fails to give due prominence to the role of the crofters themselves - a role that was critical in the agitation, as the detailed record of the years 1883 to 1886 indicates.

And by then, of course, a full ten years of agitation has passed in the pro-crofter press, first in Murdoch's Highlander, then in MacKenzie's Celtic Magazine, and in general in the mainstream press. In due course, a recognition of the power of this press would extend into the depths of the community. In 1888, in Lewis, for instance, "One of them threatened to baptise the reporter with a basin of slops. Someone else restrained her saying they would be glad to see reporters among them at any time". And in the trial of the Park deer-forest raiders the same year, it was revealed that a witness, the Stornoway merchant James MacPherson, worked as a stringer for the Scotsman, the Glasgow Herald, the Inverness Courier and the Press Association. (In the spring of the following year, he also launched the short-lived The Lewisman - the first-ever paper in the Western Isles). In the same trial, it became clear that the Land League leader Donald MacRae also wrote on a regular basis for the Scottish Leader and the North British Daily Mail(13).

From the very beginning, Murdoch's themes were clear and betrayed a holistic view of the Highlands and their potential place in a progressive Scotland - the place of Gaelic (to which the Highlander gave a considerable amount of space), affairs in parliament, the game-laws, and above all the land-laws and the relations between crofter and landlord. The second edition of the paper carried a strong editorial on evictions(14); by that summer it was carrying articles on the game-laws(15), letters against deer-forests, and editorials on the land question(16). The paper covered the Clearances and gave room to Blackie from the beginning on the land question(17); while throughout its first year articles, editorials and letters were given space on these same central themes - the game laws(18), the land laws(19) and the land question(20; while one edition alone covered land ownership, resistance to evictions on Tiree, life for crofters inside a deer-forest, and tenants' rights(21).

Towards the end of 1873, further letters dealt with the game-laws(22), and the duke of Argyll "laying waste a large tract of land"(23); and throughout the following year the paper deviated not at all from the course set for it by Murdoch.

His Highlander covered the Gaelic bards and the Clearances(24), the clearances on Mull and Iona(25), popular interest versus sheep and deer forests(26) - and of course the dispute on Bernera, off the west side of Lewis(27).

There was also coverage of the land-question in Skye(28); continuing editorials on land reform(29) and letters on the relations between landlords and tenants(30) - as well as the first of many articles on the state of affairs on the Gordon estates in South Uist(31); with constant coverage of the doings of Blackie, and of Charles Fraser-MacIntosh in parliament, and elsewhere. Through the course of 1876 (a full decade before the passage of the Crofters' Act), Murdoch - with rare persistence and foresight - kept up the pressure on the land question(32),

whether with regard to "sport"(33), or the state of affairs in Ireland(34); and, along with reports of Blackie's efforts to establish a chair of Celtic at Edinburgh university(35), denunciation of the anti-crofter Scotsman as "notorious, crawling and unscrupulous"(36) and anti-poaching laws(37) went sustained coverage of land-management at Skibo(38). (The marriage of Charles Fraser-MacIntosh, however, was also covered.)(39).

In the midst of all this came his local notes (in the style of the Stornoway Gazette of today) and conscientious reports of the doings of Gaelic, Celtic and Highland societies at home and abroad; whether of the well-known Glasgow Gaelic Association(40), or of the less well-known San Francisco Caledonian Club (and Gaelic societies were flourishing in the United States well into the 1930's)(41), the Manchester Camanachd Club(42), the Sons of Scotland in Toronto(42), the Greenock Higland Society, or the Gaelic Society of Inverness(43).

Murdoch's energy appears never to have slackened, or his firmness of purpose; the Highlander was "an irresistible power for good in the land", he editorialised(44), and there was no, "good reason why the Highlander should not have the largest circulation of any newspaper in Scotland"(45). (A month prior to this extraordinary suggestion, it had been enlarged by one third in size, having previously moved from a tabloid to broadsheet format.)(46).

Murdoch - of whom the only known photographic likeness is today in the National Portrait Gallery - covered Lord Lovat in the Lords on the Game Laws Amendment Bill of mid-1877(47), depopulation(48), affairs in Uist(49) and in Sutherland(50); while in January 1878, he reported that the Greenock Highland Society was calling for a Royal Commission into the condition of crofters in the Highlands(51).

And the same stray call would of course harden over time into the central demand of the crofters' movement,

taken up and promoted strongly by MacKenzie in his Celtic Magazine into the 'eighties.

In early 1882, for instance, he published as a special, broadsheet-format supplement a report on the Federation of Celtic Societies' annual meeting, held at Perth(52). Coverage of the Edinburgh Sutherland Association followed(53), as well as a short piece by John MacKay on the Sutherland evictions(54), a mention of the Gaelic census in Scotland, a comment on the Skye crofters and the press, and a long piece on social unrest in that island(55).

Just a month later the magazine was covering the Battle of the Braes, and the agitation for which both papers had so long campaigned was under way - in a way, perhaps, that neither Murdoch nor MacKenzie could have expected just a few years earlier.

And within a year Napier's commission had arrived in Braes to open its work; during the course of which, MacKenzie campaigned tirelessly for the crofters' cause. In May, the Celtic Magazine was covering the gaoling in Edinburgh of three Glendale crofters, and quoting the Greenock Telegraph to the effect that, "The Judges are obliged to act upon statutes framed by a class in their own interests.....nobody thinks any the worse of the poor men who are now in prison. They were loudly cheered as they left the dock; their families will be well seen to - in spite of The Scotsman's sneers at their friends - while they remain in custody; and they will be certain to get a warm welcome from the public when the day of liberation arrives"(55).

MacKenzie himself had visited the three men in the city's Calton Gaol, found them in good spirits, and reported that "they were much delighted at the enlivenment of their evenings by frequently hearing the bagpipes in the neighbourhood playing familiar airs"; which was, added MacKenzie with admirable panache, "an arrangement by their Edinburgh friends of a remarkably considerate and delicate

nature"(56).

The coverage and agitation of Murdoch and MacKenzie did much to enhance this sort of support - which, if not illegal, was certainly seditious in spirit and intent. It was reflected widely throughout the crofting community too.

On May 15th, for instance, when the three Glendale men (gaoled for breach of interdict) were freed, they were met by a crowd of 1,000 supporters, along with two pipers. That same evening John MacPherson travelled north for Strome Ferry and thence to Portree, in the cause of getting to Glendale in time to give evidence before the Commission. Off Braes, on the way into Portree, he could see bonfires blazing and flags flying; while at the pier, the steamer carrying him was met by a large crowd of supporters - MacPherson later telling them that, "he believed the imprisonment of the Glendale crofters had done more to remove landlord tyranny and oppression from Skye than anything which had happened during the present century"(57).

Later that month the Highland Land Law Reform Association of Inverness was thanking the General Assembly of the Free Church for its views on the crofters' cause(58); amd in London a Land Law Reform Association meeting, with Blackie and D.H. MacFarlane on the platform, was passing resolutions "regretting that no representative of the crofters had been placed on the commission, and declaring that no alteration of the Land Laws would give permanent satisfaction which did not give the Highlanders a permanent footing on the soil"(59).

Meanwhile The Scotsman was claiming manipulation of the commission by outside agitators(60); a claim strongly denied by MacKenzie, who nevertheless turned it to splendid advantage in terms of publicity - for which he clearly had a significant talent(61). Murdoch too was accused by The Scotsman of complicity in Irish politics and of having taken Irish money to buy dynamite; though he denied it, the paper, as he later confided to his diary, "never withdrew its

accusations, nor in any way made amends for its foul attack on me"(62).

None of this, however, appeared to thwart crofters from giving such evidence as they chose to the commission, though in at least one case the estate refused to undertake not to victimise witnesses for what they might say(63).

As MacKenzie noted, of the commission, "Whatever may be the outcome of its labours.....the commission has already done unspeakable good, by exposing the evils of Highland estate management to the world"(64); and a few months later he would add, in a notice in the hundredth edition of the Celtic Magazine announcing his plan to shortly begin publication of the Scottish Highlander, that "the real work of those who demand and will insist upon a change in the present Land Laws will only begin in earnest when the nature of the report is known"(65).

Meanwhile, fired in part by the effect on communal consciousness of giving evidence to the commission (as the landlords and authorities had feared), the agitation was going from strength to strength.

There was trouble in Lewis, with the Melbost crofters taking over Lady Matheson's links and driving away her tenant-farmer's sheep; when the factor returned them, they were again driven off; and her ladyship turned to the Court of Session for action against 33 of the men said to have been involved. In the Uists there was trouble too; from Lochboisdale it was reported that meetings were being widely held and widely attended, that flags were flying in nearly every township, while at Stoneybridge the people were threatening to seize land for cultivation. In Skye also, "the attitude of the crofters in their opposition to all constituted authority is as determined and defiant as during the last outbreak", according to one report(66).

At Leckmelm, in defiance of a Court of Session order, crofters invaded the property by boats and sailed them away loaded with seaweed; legal proceedings were at once

initiated; while from Tiree came the report that "The land question forms the chief topic of discussion on the island at the present time; while opinions differ as to the ultimate results of the agitation, it is generally entertained that the crofters now mean business...on Saturday night a considerable number marched in a body to Island House to ascertain of the factor whether a certain one of their number had paid his rent lately.....our sheriff-officer stands in actual danger of bodily harm should he attempt the performance of his duty.....the crofters threaten to take forcible possession of Ben Hynish and Ben Hough as grazing grounds"(67).

Police reports from across the Highlands indicated the same depth of popular feeling.

On Skye, according to the chief constable, meetings had been held at Broadford, Waternish and Fairy Bridge in one week alone. In Broadford, John MacPherson addressed sixty crofters and announced, "that the time had now arrived, when the crofters should unite together and agitate their cause for freedom and more land, and by doing so they would be sure to succeed". At that meeting alone, 50 crofters joined the Land League. And three days later the police constable in Waternish was reporting that "a meeting of the HLLRA was held by the Rev Donald MacCallum, Waternish, within the Established Church, Waternish, on Friday.....the meeting was attended by about 30 of the crofters of Waternish; but none were admitted to the meeting except those who became members of the association. There is a report current here today that a mass meeting of the crofters of the parishes of Dursinish, Bracadale, and Snizort is to be held at Fairy Bridge on Tuesday.....". And four days later John MacPherson addressed a Land League meeting at Flashadder; that same afternoon he and MacCallum had spoken to 800 men who had gathered at Fairy Bridge, from the districts of Edinbane, Waternish, Dunvegan, Glendale and Bracadale (68).

By then, League membership was growing rapidly on Skye. MacPherson on his return home via Glasgow - where he addressed in Queen Street Station from his carriage window a crowd of well-wishers, in Gaelic(69) - at once plunged into agitation. In August he spoke to two thousand Highlanders at Fraserburgh for the summer fishing(70); by that December, as president of what the authorities saw as a "Fenian fraternity", the Glendale branch of the League, he was opening its first meeting in the local school-house(71). In the new year, fifty men of Dunvegan met to form their own branch; the Oban Times reporting in February that "branch societies of this new mode of agitating crofters' grievances are now in full swing"(72).

That same month the Land Law Reform Association of London issued, in English and Gaelic, an appeal to the public and the crofters, urging the support of the former for land-reform. To the latter, its advice was to the effect that "your first duty now is to form, as soon as possible, Associations, through which you could speak and act and make your grievances known. In forming a district association, you might first convene a public meeting to discuss your affairs, resolve that an Association be formed, and appoint a provisional secretary and small committee. Then, the townships included in the district might each, under the direction of the committee choose representatives, and these representatives, at a convenient time and place, might meet to frame a constitution and elect officer-bearers. An organisation embracing the whole Highlands should be aimed at..."(73)

The Oban Times reported a Glasgow meeting of the Scottish Land Restoration League at which "thousands were unable to obtain admission",(74) covered the formation of branches of the League throughout Mull(75), and reported the London "headquarters" demanding "such changes in the Land Laws as will secure fair rents, durability of tenure, and compensation for improvements, with such an

apportionment of the land as will promote the welfare of the people"(76).

In April, the Stenscholl branch of the League met at a township in the possession of a farmer described as being, "a land shark of no small voracity". According to Norman Stewart of Valtos it was neccesary to, "agitate more loudly and more unitedly still"(77); and otherwise "all the speeches were enthusiastically cheered throughout, while there were interruptions of a very uncomplimentary nature about the lairds, factors, and tacksmen. This is a fair specimen of what is going on in almost every township in the West....."(78).

A month later a speaker from the Scottish Land Restoration League was in Skye, with arrangements made for him to speak at Dunvegan, Waternish, Glendale, Valtos, Uig, Portree and Braes; as the Oban Times reported, "the movement is carried on with almost incredible enthusiasm and determination. Meetings are being held at regular intervals, and speeches delivered by crofters that would do credit to a member of parliament....."(79). Reports were coming in of agitation across the Highlands, from Barra, Strath in Skye, Loch Eport, Loch Alsh, from Lewis, and across the mainland(80). In June the HLLRA of London heard its secretary report that it now had 29 branches with 5000 members(81); a month later, the Edinburgh association was preparing to amalgamate its branches with London(82).

By then, police reports in Inverness-shire were recording a Land League meeting at Fort William, "which meeting was addressed by a man named John MacDonald, native of Uig, Isle of Skye, the property of Fraser of Kilmuir.....[he] spoke in strong terms against the existing land laws"(83). A month later they were noting professor Blackie's presence on Skye, in the company of Donald MacFarlane. That evening they both spoke at a meeting in Portree; Blackie "strongly advising the people to keep up the agitation as hot as possible, and not to fear landlord

or factor, and that he, himself...would not die until he would see the right of the poor established, and the landlords done away with"(83).

And a month later, John MacPherson, the Rev MacCallum and the secretary of the London HLLRA were touring Skye, along with delegates from Uist. At Skaebost, they addressed a meeting of 150 crofters (and one police agent suitably disguised as per Procurator Fiscal's suggestion). MacCallum offered, as usual, a benedicition on the gathering, then the speakers addressed the crofters in Gaelic; and MacCallum afterwards retired to an "unknown place" for a private meeting with local crofters' leaders(84).

In Argyll too, the agitation grew throughout the spring and summer of 1884. John MacPherson spent a month there, helping to form branches of the League at Easdale, Salen, Tobermory, Bunessan, Creich, Iona, Tiree, Lismore, Lochaline, Strontian, Arnamurchan, Taynuilt and Oban(85). At the Easdale meeting, 400 people turned out to hear him(86); at Lochaline, 100 were present, "which may be considered a large turnout for such a sparsely populated district"; on Luing, "the whole audience showed their readiness to join the association"; in Salen "almost every man present agreed to become a member"; and on Lismore, "on a motion being put to the meeting for a show of hands on the side of the HLLRA, all hands were up in an instant".

From Barra it was reported that "The advent of Mr MacFarlane and professor Blackie is held in high esteem", while in Shetland hundreds of fishermen met to demand land reform, "many of whom are crofters from Skye, Lewis, Caithness, Sutherland, and Argyll-shire, presently engaged in the herring fishing here". On Iona, "most of the householders are members, and those who had not previously joined intimated their intentions of doing so at once, so that these districts may be considered as rapidly ripening for the great struggle"(87). At Strontian, "a large proportion of those present enrolled"; at Lochaline the

motion to form a branch was accepted unanimously; and in Kilchoan, while a large meeting heard MacPherson, there were repeated requests that he return to the district in the near future(88).

By then, Napier had reported(89) and the government was confronting the prospect of having to legislate, in some way or another, on the crofters' grievances; while at the beginning of September, the HLLRA association met at Dingwall in national conference.

By any standards it was an impressive-enough gathering; but by the standards of hitherto-existing class relations in the Highlands, until so recently un-challenged on anything other than a local scale, it was surely an extraordinary gathering. Branches and associations came together on a national basis; from the county associations of Ross-shire, Inverness-shire, Argyll and Sutherland; as well as from Edinburgh and London. Along with representatives from the Scottish Farmers' Alliance and the Scottish Land Restoration League, there were crofters' delegates from Lewis, Halladale, Strathy, Forres, Grantown, Lochalsh, Skye (of the island's 13 delegates, three came from Kilmuir), Culbokie, Resolis, Evanton, Inverness, Strathpeffer, Gairloch, Kintail, both Uists, and Caithness.

Individuals in attendance read like a roll-call of those who had been active in the agitation on a national scale - Blackie, Fraser-MacIntosh, Donald MacCallum, Alexander MacKenzie, John MacPherson, Donald MacFarlane, Michael Buchanan of Barra; and others who had also played a role outwith the Highlands, or who shortly would in parliament - Charles Cameron MP, Dr Clark, next constituency candidate for Caithness, Dr MacDonald, who had recently stood for the crofters' cause in a Ross-shire by-election, Donald Murray of the London HLLRA, John MacKay of Hereford, Dugald Cowan of the Edinburgh HLLRA, and Angus Sutherland of Glasgow(90).

The conference rejected the proposals of the Napier

Commission, demanded the compulsory enlargement of crofters' holdings, and that the law be changed in the favour of crofters with regard to deer-forests and the game laws. It was agreed to establish a newspaper for the movement; and above all, it was decided to run candidates for parliament.

Ten years on from the Bernera riot, the crofters' movement had made extraordinary advances; to the hostility of the pro-landlord press. The Times, for instance, "could only characterise the whole proceeding as a piece of pernicious nonsense", and "could anticipate nothing but mischief from a policy of public agitation"(91); meantime, however, the Highlands were on the brink of a period of agitation fiercer than anything than had gone before.

As MacKenzie himself had written just two years earlier, in the circular of the Inverness branch of the HLLRA, "all that is wanted to make it a real power for good in the land is that those who believe in its object should at once enrol themselves among its members". And by the autumn of 1884, membership was widespread in the crofting counties; while in Skye the rent-strike weapon was increasingly popular.

Soon, the government was to send north its own agent to report on the extent of the agitation; from Skye, he would record that "the teachings of the Land League seem to have penetrated to every district.....it is probable that every man of the crofter and cottar classes, with many merchants and artisans besides, is an enrolled member.....Open dissentients are now rare, and even those who still profess independence are secretly anticipating a future when the landlords and tacksmen shall have disappeared from the island"(92).

The story was the same on Harris, in the Uists and Barra; "the individuals occupied in arousing agitation are the same whose names occur so frequently on the other side of the Minch.....the doctrines preached by these persons are all but universally accepted in Barra.....as to the other

islands the mass of the population.....continue fully in sympathy with the movement. The truth I believe to be that Land League-ing is as popular in Harris and North Uist as in Barra, but that the latter island enjoys the services of a specially active local secretary.....and thus the population of South Uist are probably prepared for mischief when opportunity occurs, as also those of Benbecula"(93).

From Lewis, McNeill's secret report was particularly alarming. He had conferred, he reported, with the factor for Lady Matheson, but had otherwise concealed from everyone the purpose of his visit to the island, on the factor's advice. The facts disclosed by the factor were so important that he could not delay in forwarding them; "all the cottars, squatters, and young men in Lewis, especially those belonging to the Naval Reserve, are members of the League.....the first emissaries who visited the district seem to have been Messrs Murdoch (late of the Highlander) and MacKenzie (of the Celtic Magazine).....the next public meeting was held in October 1884, when Messrs MacIver, MacCallum (Waternish), MacPherson (Glendale) and several local agitators were present. Outrages have been numerous.....I am led to the conclusion that it is the deliberate intention of the people to deprive Lady Matheson of the whole revenue hitherto derived from sporting rents....."(94).

And on the mainland, though McNeill thought the movement less numerous than in the islands, it nevertheless "appears to have attained a firm hold of the people in Sutherlandshire, Ardnamurchan, Tiree and some parts of Mull.....there seems to have been hardly a parish on the coast which was not visited by the same active emissaries whose names so frequently occur in the islands, viz, Messrs MacCallum, MacKenzie and Murdoch, and John MacPherson.....". On Mull, and in the general area, the movement was especially active on Tiree, the Ross of Mull, and Iona, with influential branches at Salen and Dervaig. In Ardnamurchan,

"the whole population belongs.....and form one of the centres of its greatest activity"; partly, explained McNeill, because Donald MacCallum's brother was minister at Strontian(95).

And in Arisaig, where the bulk of the crofters' evidence to the Napier Commission had largely been given by Donald MacCallum, the head stalker explained that the numbers of members probably did not exceed fifty in Arisaig and Morar, "but the great bulk of the population were in sympathy.....the first agitators here were the Rev Donald MacCallum (now of Waternish) and Mr Aeneas MacDonnell of Morar. Mr Murdoch was also here, and.....Mr Alexander MacKenzie of Inverness". According to the Arisaig doctor too, "It may be said that every man of the crofter and cottar class in a Land Leaguer, either actually a member, or in sympathy with the league.....The Rev Donald MacCallum (now of Waternish, then a minister here) was the first agent of the League; Mr Murdoch was also here; but, except the Oban Times, no incendiary literature was circulated. There was no need of coercion, as the sympathy was general....."(96).

Northwards too, along the western seaboard, McNeill found the same conditions prevailing; in Lochbroom the sub-factor at Ullapool for the duchess of Sutherland reported that, "the people are thoroughly imbued with the principles [of the League] and believe that the land should (and will) be distributed among them; in short they think that the land is justly theirs and that rent is an unjust action.....extreme newspapers are also circulated in the district".

And from Ullapool, the police sergeant claimed that "the whole population is in sympathy" with the Land League; while from Inverewe, strong support for the agitation was reported in the district of Gairloch and Gruinard Bay. In Gairloch, "The League has a strong hold on the people here, especially of the younger people, and numbers probably 150

enrolled members, with a regular organisation, a chairman, and a secretary.....Mr Alexander MacKenzie was the first to bring Land League teaching here, and being a native of the parish, he was listened to. John MacPherson (Glendale) also addressed a meeting, and advised 'no rent'....."(97).

From Applecross, the minister reported that, "There is a regular Land League organisation, with president and secretary.....there was, and is, a good deal of sympathy with Land League doctrines"; and from Loch Carron (98), it was reported that "practically the whole crofter and cottar population are Land Leaguers.....the active members are mostly the young men". From Lochinver, the wife of the local Free Church minister reported that "the League has complete hold of the people in Sutherlandshire, and she knows hardly any exception among her neighbours"; her husband believed, "the League has great hold of the people" while extreme views were increasingly being expressed at its meetings. The police constable also reported from Lochinver that, "The Land League is universally favoured by crofters and cottars throughout the country.....there is a considerable circulation of Land League literature, both newspapers and leaflets, which impress on the people they have a right to the land".

And in the closing months of 1884, the people of the Highlands thus showed signs of simply taking possession of the land they believed to be their land, by right. Scarcely had the Dingwall conference of the League ended, but the crofters in South Uist were in open conflict with Lady Gordon Cathcart(99). At Grogary, one of her ladyship's fields was seized forcibly by the crofters, Gordon's cattle driven away, and the crofters' stock replacing them; while "on Saturday an attempt was made to waylay Mr MacLennan, the factor on the estate, and he only escaped injury by friendly warning"; while just a week later, the local press was reporting a "most malicious outrage" in South Uist(100).

Within a week of the Dingwall conference, Donald

MacFarlane had arrived on Tiree, and at Baugh he convened a "monster meeting" of crofters. He was welcomed ashore by Neil MacNeill, delegate of the crofters from the east of the island, who would also welcome John MacPherson, touring with MacFarlane. And a week later, feeling was running high in the outer islands, with the Rev MacCallum and John MacPherson touring Benbecula, South Uist and Barra. At Stoneybridge, they were met by pipers and flag-waving supporters; a growing number of minor cases of arson were reported, under cover of darkness(101).

And by the end of the month, the Oban Telegraph could report that(102), "In Skye, the centres of agitation are at Glendale, in the parish of Duirinish, and Eastside in Kilmuir. To all appearances the agitation is becoming intensified, and extending; and deeds have been done with impunity for some time back which would not be tolerated for a day in other parts of the country, deeds of malice and lawlessness.....since so many officers of the law have been thrashed and beaten in these districts with impunity, no hope of enforcing legal action can be seriously entertained and it is becoming proverbial that 'there is no law in Skye'".

And from South Uist the same report noted, "Many acts of shameful mischief have recently been committed; the outlook now is most discouraging".

From Mull, by the end of September, the League, it was reported, was operating with vigour at Salen and other centres of population - "It has created an amount of interest and excitement on the land question which was unknown before; fuel has undoubtedly been heaped upon a smouldering fire, and if proper remedies are not forthcoming, it will burst forth with volcanic fierceness over the length and breadth of the Highlands".

(The strength and mass-nature of the Land League on the estates of the Duke of Argyll is perhaps worthy of particular note).

In October(103), the Iochadar men in South Uist expropriated yet another of Lady Gordon's fields; in Kilmuir, the crofters resolved to withold payment of rent, and to subscribe to a legal fund for their defence in the event of proceedings being taken against them. Unanimously, it was also agreed to boycott the factor; and it was made known too that any crofter who chose not to support the League in the matter could expect the destruction of his property.

From Lewis, meanwhile, came the news that "the land agitation has reached a very acute and critical stage". In the parish of Uig, the crofters practically of every township were on rent-strike, and though the factor had toured for a week attempting to collect rent, he had returned home without a penny. By mid-October, land-seizure was well advanced in Uig, with the crofters having possession of the holdings of large farmers, and refusing even to meet or discuss with the authorities the seizures. As the Oban Telegraph reported; "Respect for law and order has for some time past been at a discount in the island; but the open and avowed renunciation of all authority and government which now prevails is only of recent date", and was traceable to the influence of local agitators.

In South Uist too, the land-question "is fast becoming the all-absorbing one here.....the agitation seems to be spreading rapidly, and is taking shape in a very determined way". And from Skye - "In all probability the land agitation in this island may well soon reach its climax. In the two most disaffected districts, matters are surely coming to a crisis".

In Glendale, by mid-October, some of the men interdicted two years earlier had again taken over landlords' land. All crofters, it was reported, had been instructed to put their stock on the field; and those who did not, were subject to the attentions of a League delegation; as indeed were those who did not attend League

meetings - the miller of Kilmuir defaulted on a League meeting, and found his corn stacks scattered to the wind; while from throughout Skye reports indicated that the land-seizing phase of the agitation was only getting into its stride(105).

By the end of October (106), the 60-strong Glenelg branch of the League was "prospering greatly" and meeting weekly; in Barra, the people were "extremely interested" in the question of land reform - "wherever two or three are gathered together, one may safely wager that the land is the subject of conversation". At the beginning of November, the new style of agitation was spreading like wildfire on Skye; "deeds of lawlessness such as seizing proprietors' land, placing stock on the same, intimidating shepherds from interfering with such stock, scattering the corn-stacks, and burning peat-stacks of crofters who do not join the land association, and assault upon such are becoming altogether too frequent to be put up with much longer.....In Glendale, crofters have placed stock on the farms of Waterstein and Scor, and propose ploughing old arable lands in the proprietors' hands, all of them to sow a given quantity of seed in the same, first spring, and divide the produce in the following autumn. Wilder schemes are discussed, and deeds that would shock the people some ten years ago are now cooly proposed.....".

And in Lewis, by November, 400 crofters in Uig were more firmly than ever on rent-strike, and lands had been seized from the estate and from the large farmers. On one occasion, the farmer attempted to put stock on some of the occupied land - 100 men removed him and his stock, with threats of violence should he persist. In Lochs, there was also a rent-strike in progress, and so well-organised was the agitation, that those who privately claimed a willingness to pay did not dare do so, for fear of retribution(107).

By the middle of that same month, all non-croft

grazing land in Uig had been occupied; in Lochs, no-rent proclamations had been issued from the townships of Crossbost, Raernish, Luerbost, Calbost, Marvig, Linervaig and Gravir. In Gravir, one man was declared outcast and boycotted, for having paid his rent; while the boundary dyke between the farm of Orinsay and the townships of Gravir and Limervaig, was destroyed by bands of men in the second week of the month(108).

At least on the face of it, therefore, by the autumn of 1884, the Highlands were on the brink of something approaching open insurrection. The subtext of this movement was an old one, with a contemporary theme; as a writer in Nineteenth Century noted that year, "The arguments against deer-forests are unanswerable. What would be said in England if one or two Scotchmen and Americans were to buy up the whole of Lancashire, turn out the population, and make of it a deer park? The thing would surely not be tolerated"(109).

That theme, of course, was the land-question; but the subtext - of which no observer or participant was unaware - was that of the integrity of an indigenous community in the Highlands versus the competing claims of an alien landowning elite; and the implied question of Scottish national identity and Scotland's relationship with England.

The struggle for that integrity - as the record of agitation on the ground serves to show - was primarily the prerogative of the crofters themselves; despite the claims of Guernier, with which this chapter opens.

To that struggle, however, several agencies were partners. The press was one; not simply the overtly agitational journals of Murdoch and MacKenzie, but the locally-based papers too. Hanham, for instance, has descirbed the Northern Ensign of Wick as "an exceptionally good local newspaper"(110); while MacPhail mentions the contributions of the pro-crofter Invergordon Times and Oban Times, as well as of the Inverness Courier and the Inverness

Advertiser(111).

The churches also played their part, to a greater or lesser degree. MacPhail has noted of the religious "revival" of the late 1850's that it, "helped equip many of the crofters spiritually, morally and intellectually for the political struggle of the 1880s, the Crofters' War"(112). Hunter has noted that by the late 1880s, "the Free Church's Highland clergy had come out strongly in favour of almost all the Land League programme, including the crucial demand for more land"(113). Shortly afterwards, according to Crowley, the Church of Scotland was condemned by its Highland laity, in a special session on the land question, for failing to give support to the crofters on the land question - a sure sign that its lay activists in the Highlands, at least, were pro-crofter(114). While Dunbabin has noted that a church split in Uig, Lewis, "was as much if not more a land question than a church one"(115), Hanham records that the Free Church newspaper, The Witness, "frequently denounced landlordism"(116). And by 1888, a conference of Free Church clergy and laity at Dingwall was demanding "the restoration to the Highland people of their native land" along with a series of detailed demands intented to implement this general principle(117).

The Gaelic societies too had a role to play(118); not least in the provision of a platform for some members of the external leadership of the land-reform movement in the Highlands.

Other agencies also impinged - at least - on the crofters' struggle for the land; the critical link being one of personnel.

Their role has in general been recognised (though the early contribution of at least one anti-landlord agitator of the 1850's and 1860's was not until recently documented)(119). Hanham, for instance, attempts to locate the motive-force of opposition in "the small, inert and widely dispersed" middle-class of the nineteenth century

Highlands; but adds that, "this 'opposition' was so weak that it could never make much headway in the Highlands without outside support. But at the end of the 'seventies and early in the 'eighties, it began to receive significant backing from outside...chiefly from the activities of Highlanders who had made good outside the Highlands and of the Gaelic movement". Hanham's judgements on some of these leaders are questionable - Fraser-MacIntosh, for instance, as, "a champion of the crofters from a neo-Jacobite point of view", or John Murdoch as, "essentially a rather old-fashioned figure". Hanham does, however, note the role of the seldom-mentioned Henry Whyte, the Glasgow-based Gaelic columnist "Fionn" of the Oban Times, and records the role of D.H. MacFarlane, John MacKay, Roderick MacDonald, Angus Sutherland, Charles Cameron, J.G. MacKay, and John Stuart Blackie - according to Hanham, "the key figure in the movement"(120).

Dunbabin does rather more justice to Murdoch, in the context of a perceptive note to the effect that, "At the same time a 'cultural' movement was building up among Highland migrants and sympathisers *that would, in other circumstances, have been nationalist*(121). (The nub of the question is - precisely what other circumstances; but Dunbabin does not pause for speculation in this most fascinating regard!)

MacPhail notes the same names, and adds those of Alexander MacKenzie and John Whyte, librarian in Inverness and brother of "Fionn" Henry Whyte(122); while Rob Gibson adds the important names of the Dingwall lawyer John MacRae (son of a crofter) and election agent for Dr Roderick MacDonald (another crofter's son), Donald MacRae, the Land League officer, Baillie Nicol of Dingwall, G.M. Urquhart of Invergordon, and Hugh Graham, publisher of the intensely anti-landlord Invergordon Times(123).

To these names Hunter adds that of Donald Murray, a London lawyer and Gaelic speaking Highlander from Shieldaig,

whose Westminster chambers served as London office for the Land League; while he adds that the attention of the Gaelic movement was drawn to crofting affairs, "largely by the efforts of one man, John Murdoch"(124).

And this view, certainly, is arguable, at least insofar as it was Murdoch's Highlander that did the campaigning throughout the early years of the agitation. Perhaps more importantly, however, is that of all the indigenous leaders Murdoch had the grandest scope of political vision; one that encompassed the theory and practice of land reform, Ireland's struggle for national liberation, Celtic political and cultural brotherhood, Scottish nationalism and - however broadly it may be defined - socialism. In this he was a strong link in the chain that extended from the poorest cottar's cabin through the radical press to Parliament and the socialist intelligentsia and agitators of the southern cities and beyond. G.B. Clark, for instance, was a member of Marx's First International, the Fabian Society and the Scottish Home Rule Association - and, like Murdoch and Keir Hardie, a keen temperance reformer and editor of the Good Templar. A second supporter of the crofters was R.B. Cunninghame-Graham, a socialist, a nationalist and M.P. for north-west Lanark largely thanks to the support of the Scottish Land Restoration League(125).

For the crofters, the support in parliament, press and public life in general of these men (no woman was prominent) was not insignificant; but the time was too young for significant assistance from the great movement of the proletarian oppressed that they sought to construct.

Had it been otherwise, the future of the Highland land war, and of the Union itself, might have been considerably more radical than it was to be; then, and now.

CHAPTER FIVE

1

I.M.M. MacPhail, The Napier Commission, Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness, vol XLVIII, 435-472.

2.

I.M.M. MacPhail, The Skye Military Expedition of 1884-1885, Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness, vol XLVIII, 62-94.

3.

I.R. Mackay, The pet lamb case, Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness, vol XLVIII, 180-200. (This article serves as a case-study of what can be done with local sources in the context of Highland history, incidentally.)

4.

F. Carre, Les paysans-pecheurs ecossais, Norois, 1971, vol 71, 451-476. This includes a short but interesting bibliography (475), listing three German-language periodical sources on crofting. L. Hempel, Zeitschrift fur Agrargeschichte und Agrarsoziologie, vol 5, no 2, Frankfurt, 1957. H. Uhlig, Erdkunde, vol 13, no 1, 1959. H. Uhlig, vol 13, no 2, 1959.

5.

Ibid, 469-470.

6.

The description of Glennie is from Michael Holroyd's 1988 biography of George Bernard Shaw. For the involvement of Morris in the SDF and the Socialist League, see James D. Young, The Rousing of the Scottish Working Class, 145. Despite this "metropolitan contempt for the periphery" in James Shaw Grant's phrase (Stornoway Gazette, 9-8-1988), there was a thriving branch of the SDF (and the Socialist Labour Party) in Lerwick in the early years of the present century; James D. Young, Women and Popular Struggles, 128.

7.

Charles Guernier, Les crofters ecossais, Rousseau, 1897. 8.

James Hunter, Sheep and deer; Highland sheep farming 1850-1900, Northern Scotland, vol 1, no 2, 199-222.

9.

Guernier, 96-97.

10.

On the whole question of the Irish example, see James Hunter, The Gaelic connection; the Highlands, Ireland and nationalism 1873-1922, Scottish Historical Review, 1975, vol 54, 178. (One example being the reported assertion of a Glendale crofter that the way to get justice on the land quesiton was to shoot a few landlords; Ivory Papers, GD 1/36/1(2), police report of May 1884.) Guernier, 99. For a recent and perceptive comment on the significance of Irish affairs, see James Shaw Grant, Stornoway Gazette, 9-7-1988; "In Ireland the fault lines produced by differences in race, nationality, social class, language, education and religion all reinforced each other, producing an almost unbridgeable chasm...In the Gaeltachd of Scotland all these divisions were ambivalent and blurred in themselves, and they did not coincide with each other".

11.

Guernier, 100; Guernier does not source this reference. From the pages of the Highlander, however, the references are as follows; 3-11-1877, original story; 1-12-1877, editorial apology; 13-4-1878 and 20-4-1878, report of court case; and 22-7-1878, letter of support from New Zealand, sending money for the struggle with the likes of Fraser of Kilmuir. With regard to Guernier's reference to the effects of the Irish example, see the Highlander, 17-11-1877, "Can anyone say that Irish tenants should have such facilities for the purchase of their farms and Scotchmen not? Is it that Scotchmen like to be at the mercy of the landlords? Or is it that they have not the spirit to agitate for their rights?".

12.

Guernier, 100-104.

13.

Stornoway Gazette, 31-12-1988; on MacPherson and MacRae, Stornoway Gazette, 6-8-1988; in both cases quoting the contemporary Glasgow Herald reports. For a recent comment on the Highlander, see Neil Munro, All our yesterdays, West Highland Free Press, 5-6-1981.

14.

The Highlander, 31-5-1873.

15.

The Highlander, 7-6-1873.

16.

The Highlander, 5-7-1873.

17.

The Highlander, 26-7-1873.

18.

The Highlander, 9-8-1873; 16-8-1873; and 30-8-1873.

19.

The Highlander, 30-8-1873.

20.

The Highlander, 4-10-1873.

21.

The Highlander, 11-10-1873.

22.

The Highlander, 22-11-1873.

23.

The Highlander, 4-12-1873.

24.

The Highlander, 3-1-1874.

25.

The Highlander, 28-2-1874.

26.

The Highlander, 14-3-1874.

27.

The Highlander, 25-4-1874; 9-5-1874; 23-5-1874; 25-7-1874; and 8-8-1874.

28.

The Highlander, 24-10-1874. A flavour of the times (and the relevance of oral sources for popular Highland history) is given in Martin MacDonald's Heather on Fire, Radio Times, 9/15-10-1982; " 'Cha losgadh na gunnachan le buachair', my grandmother told me in her native Gaelic - 'their rifles were so lathered in dung that they couldn't fire'. In old age she frequently recalled the incident as she had watched it as a girl of 12 in a crofting village in North Skye in the mid-1880's.....". As noted elsewhere, the degree of popular illiteracy highlights the importance of the oral record for Highland history in the period under review. MacPhail, Prelude to the Crofters' War, 187, quoting the Napier Commission Report, notes that "the percentage of men who signed the marriage register by a mark only (ie, illiterates) decreased in Inverness-shire in the years 1861-1881 fro 30.9 to 17.5 and of women from 49.5 to 27.5". Illiteracy appears to have been higher elsewhere; Crowley, Crofters' Party, 116, notes that in the 1885 general election, of the 4942 votes cast for Dr MacDonald in Ross-shire, 2,000, mostly from Lewis, were cast by illiterates.

29.

The Highlander, 8-1-1875; 25-5-1875.

30.

The Highlander, 6-3-1875; 3-4-1875.

31.

The Highlander, 11-9-1875.

32.

The Highlander, 19-2-1876; 2-12-1876.

33.

The Highlander, 22-9-1876.

34.

The Highlander, 20-5-1876.

35.

The Highlander, 7-10-1876.

36.

The Highlander, 11-11-1876.

is known to exist today; although he does appear in line-drawing form in the files of the Illustrated London News, of course.

48.

The Highlander, 30-6-1877.

49.

The Highlander, 6-10-1877.

50.

The Highlander, 20-10-1877; 27-10-1877.

51.

The Highlander, 5-1-1878. In the following issue, of 12-1-1878, Murdoch notes the death of John MacKie, former editor of the Northern Ensign, and adds, "long before there was a Highlander to take up the cause of the Highlanders and the question of the land, John Mackie and the Northern Ensign were at the service of our people". Nowhere, however, does Murdoch dwell on the role of women in the struggle for the land (nor, for that matter, does MacKenzie). It seems plausible that they took for granted the view of Keir Hardie that, "I think it could be shown that the position of women, as of most other things, has always been better, nearer to an equality with man, in Celtic than in non-Celtic races". Quoted in James D. Young, Women and Popular Struggles, 103. See also Hamish Henderson's comments in, Some thoughts on Highland History, Cencrastus, no 3, 1980, 14; "One of the most noticeable and most easily documentable characteristics of Celtic tribal society, from the early Irish heroic sagas onwards, is the place in it of tough, strong-minded women. This is the hidden world of matriarchy, exercising power indirectly ...". In any case, female militancy was not exclusively a Highland thing in nineteenth century Scotland. Thomas Johnston records in his History of the Working Classes in Scotland, 348, that in Ayrshire in 1880, "under Keir Hardie's leadership, a strike was resorted to for another shilling; blacklegs were savagely maltreated - the trial of collier's wives for intimidation was a common

occurence - ".

52.

Celtic Magazine, Jan 1882, vol 7, no 75, (filed between) 120-121.

53.

Celtic Magazine, Feb 1882, vol 7, no 76, 194-195.

54.

Celtic Magazine, April 1882, vol 7, no 79, 291-294.

55.

Celtic Magazine, May 1882, vol 7, no 79, 321, 344, 335-344 respectively. And - Celtic Magazine, May 1883, vol 8, no 91,, 307.

56.

Celtic Magazine, May 1883, vol 8, no 91, 308.

57.

Celtic Magazine, June 1883, vol 8, no 92, 359.

58.

Celtic Magazine, July 1883, vol 8, no 93, 426. For a report on the assembly see 407-414. See also Napier Commission, report volume, 398 (LXXXVII), Statement for Free Church and its committee for the Highlands, by Rev Robert Rainy, principal of New College, Edinburgh, etc.; in particular, 406-409 (condition of the people).

59.

Celtic Magazine, July 1883, vol 8, no 93, 427-428.

60.

The Scotsman, 12-9-1883.

61.

Celtic Magazine, Oct 1883, vol 8, no 96, 580-581.

62.

Murdoch MS, vol 5, 24. See also MacKenzie's evidence to the Napier Commission at Inverness, Q 41057; including an interesting autobiography of MacKenzie; and of Murdoch's evidence to the Commission at Lanark (Glasgow), Q 44462 - Q44538.

63.

Napier Commission, report volume, 52 (and references there to evidence and correspondence.)

64.

Celtic Magazine, Nov 1883, vol 9, no 97, 44.

65.

Celtic Magazine, Feb 1884, vol 9, no 100, 192. Further references to the proposed paper are Celtic Magazine, March 1884, 226-227; April 1884, 292; and Aug 1885, 460 (1st issue of the Scottish Highlander.) In the Oct 1886 issue of the Celtic Magazine, MacKenzie announced that he was giving up editing it (571); and in the Oct 1888 issue, its incorporation in the Scottish Highlander was announced (572.)

66.

The Scotsman, 5-4-1884. At this point, the factor for the MacDonald estates was Alexander MacDonald, the Portree solicitor, whose intelligence-reports feature notably in the Ivory material on Skye. In 1897, on his death, he was succeeded by his assistant, one Ronald MacDonald - whose father Peter had been evicted from his croft by Fraser of Kilmuir, and who had been the crofter spokesman for Glenhinisdale before the Napier Commission. Isobel MacDonald (his daughter), A Family in Skye 1908-1916, Stornoway, 1980.

67.

The Times, 21-4-1884.

68.

Ivory Papers, GD 1/36 2(1).

69.

Oban Times, 19-5-1883.

70.

Oban Times, 25-8-1883.

Ivory Papers, GD 1/36/1 (2), Skye police reports, September.

71.

Oban Times, 29-12-1883. Ivory Papers, GD 1/36/1(2), include the League tracts circulated (in Gaelic and English)

offering advice on branch-formation and structure; and more general exhortation on aims and objects (Rules for Local Branches; Shoulder to Shoulder), as well as the police reports from Skye for the winter of 1883-1884.

72.

Oban Times, 2-2-1884.

73.

Celtic Magazine, Feb 1884, vol 9, n 100, 175-177.

74.

Oban Times, 15-3-1884.

75.

Oban Times, 22-3-1884.

76.

Oban Times, 29-3-1884.

77.

For a contemporary photograph of the Land Leaguers of Valtos, see Grigor, Mightier than a Lord, 137.

78.

Celtic Magazine, May 1884, vol 9, no 103, 337-340.

79.

Oban Times, 3-5-1884.

80.

Oban Times, 17-5-1884.

81.

Oban Times, 28-6-1884.

82.

Oban Times, 12-7-1884.

83.

Ivory Papers, GD 1/36 2(1).

84.

Ibid.

85.

Oban Times, 6-9-1884.

86.

Oban times, 2-8-1884.

87.

Oban Times, 16-8-1884.

88.

Oban Times, 23-8-1884; 30-8-1884.

89.

For MacKenzie's analysis of the report of the Napier Commission, see the series of articles in the Celtic Magazine, June, July, August, September, 1884 (also published in pamphlet form; for a review, by the Greenock Telegraph, see July 1884, 444.)

90.

Celtic Magazine, Sep 1884, vol 9, no 107, 537-538; and Oct 1884, vol 9, no 108, 572-575.

91.

The Times, 5-9-1884.

92.

Lothian Muniments, GD 40/16/32; Report of McNeill's confidential mission of enquiry. This is perhaps the single most important document of all, in terms of demonstrating the extent of anti-landlord agitation in the mid-1880's. (It is, of course, used slightly out of strict chronological place here.)

93.

Ibid.

94.

Ibid.

95.

Ibid.

96.

Ibid.

97.

Ibid.

98.

It is not without significance that MacPherson, and his role in the land-agitation on Skye, was commemorated as recently as 1981 by the Skye musicians of Run Rig in the title song of their album Recovery, Ridge Records, words by

C. and R. MacDonald. The popularity of the song may say something about a continuing anti-landlord sentiment in the Highlands. Some of it runs, "But now there's a new day dawning/I've heard the Braes men talk in Portree/The news from Glendale.....And MacPherson's in Kilmuir tonight/What a night for a people rising/Oh God not before time/There's justice in our lives".

99.

Oban Telegraph, 5-9-1884. Note in relation to events in Uist the comment of Hamish Henderson, Some thoughts on Highland history, that, "There is no truth in the statement one occasionally encounters that there was more resistance in Catholic areas than in Protestant". This seems indeed to be the case. In Uist there was a clash of religious identification between landlord and tenantry. So too was there in Arisaig with another Catholic tenantry. Both were centres of agitation. But in Morar, the Catholic tenantry (of a Catholic landlord) did not agitate to any extent, and did not even give evidence before the Napier commission.

100.

Oban Telegraph, 12-9-1884. See Ivory Papers GD 1/36/1(2), for Uist police and procurator-fiscal reports on events on the Gordon-Cathcart estates.

101.

Oban Telegraph, 19-9-1884. On Tiree, see also Celtic Magazine, Nov 1884, vol 10, no 109, Fraser-MacIntosh, the Duke of Argyll and Tiree; 42-48.

102.

Oban Telegraph, 26-9-1884.

103.

Oban Telegraph, 3-10-1884.

104.

Oban Telegraph, 17-10-1884.

105.

Ivory Papers, GD 1/36/1(2), police reports from Portree, for September. Note that every issue of the Oban Telegraph for

that month, and also October, 1884, carries material on the agitation.

106.

Oban Telegraph, 31-10-1884.

107.

Oban Telegraph, 6-11-1884. Ivory Papers, GD 1/36/1(2), police reports, autumn 1884.

108.

Ibid.

109.

J.A. Cameron, Nineteenth Century, XVI, 381, 387.

110.

H.J. Hanham, The Problem of Highland Discontent, 63.

111.

I.M. MacPhail, Prelude to the Crofters' War, 170-173.

112.

Ibid, 161.

113.

James Hunter, The Politics of Highland Land Reform, 60.

114.

D.W. Crowley, The Crofters' Party, 119.

115.

J.P.D. Dunbabin, The Crofters' Land War, 191.

116.

Hanham, Problem, 46.

117.

Stornoway Gazette, 24-12-1988.

118.

Hanham, Problem, 38, lists the original members of the Federation of Celtic Societies as: Gaelic Society of London; Gaelic Society of Inverness; Birmingham Highland Society; Hebburn Society; Aberdeen Gaelic Society; Edinburgh University Celtic Society; Edinburgh Sutherland Society; Greenock Highland Society; Greenock Ossianic Club; Tobermory Gaelic Society; and a number of territorial groups from Glasgow, including those of Skye; Islay; Sutherland;

Cowal; Lewis A and B; Mull; and Ardnamurchan; while later the Federation was joined by the Liverpool Highland Association and the Vale of Leven Highland Association. See also MacPhail, Prelude, 169-170.

119.

That of Alexander Robertson of Perth-shire; noted in James D. Young, The Rousing, 120-121.

120.

Hanham, Problem, 35-38; 62.

121.

Dunbabin, Crofters' Land War, 183. (Emphasis added).

122.

MacPhail, Prelude, 170.

123.

Rob Gibson, Crofter Power, 1, 14, 24. For a recent memoir of John MacRae, see John MacRae MacLennan (his grandson), Press and Journal, 13-9-1984.

124.

Hunter, Politics, 51.

125.

Crowley, Crofters' Party, 117, 121.

CHAPTER SIX

From 1884, the efforts of the crofters themselves on the one hand, and their external allies on the other, began to bear significant fruit in a campaign the likes of which had not been seen in the Highlands until then, and has not been seen since.

The press continued to play the role pioneered by Murdoch's Highlander; the churches, at least, offered no consolation to the social forces urging a return to the exploitative status quo ante; and in the southern towns the Gaelic societies and "progressives" retained their place as an urban focus of discontent and publicity for the cause of the Highland crofters.

Thus the two years from the summer of 1884 to the passage of the Crofters' Act in the summer of 1886 were the high point of the Crofters' War, when agitation and organisation came together in an unprecedented way to win for the crofter cause attention in the press, parliament and public life in general.

Throughout this period, MacKenzie kept up his side of the agitation through the pages of the Celtic Magazine. In the August 1884 issue he ran a piece by the American land-reform agitator and theorist Henry George (whose role, views and influence are discussed below) on the Highland Clearances, for instance(1). Mackenzie followed up a month later with a reprint from the Scottish Review on the report of the Napier Commission, which had been appointed in March the previous year (and the proposals of which are also discussed later)(2). In the September issue, space was given to the vexed subject of the administration of justice on Skye(3), and in November MacKenzie ran articles on Ireland and the Irish land act from a Highland point of view(4), Lochiel on the Loch Arkaig clearances(50), Fraser-MacIntosh versus the Duke of Argyll on the nature and theory of land-ownership(6), and a short report on a crofters'

demonstration in Stornoway(7).

In Westminster the matter of the crofters was also drawing attention, at government level. At the beginning of November, Fraser-MacIntosh was challenging the Home Secretary as to whether he would make available police-government communications with regard to the situation in Skye; Harcourt stalled, saying that such communications were not complete, but that when they were, "I shall have no objection to lay them on the Table of the House"(8). And five days later, members again clashed with Harcourt over developments in the Highlands, one asking about Kilmuir and the interests of its proprietor, Fraser, and adding that the demands of the crofters, "are nothing more than a fair-rent, and the restoration of the sheep land of which they were deprived many years ago". Had the government, (in an early reference to the formation of a Crofters' Commission with quasi-judicial powers), "considered the expediency of creating a public tribunal to fix the rents to be paid by tenants in the exceptional conditions of crofters in the Highlands and Islands"; was the government considering the report of the Napier Commission with a view to acting on it - and, finally, would the government therefore be bringing legislation on the crofter question at the opening of the next session of parliament?"(9).

Harcourt ritually thought that, "there was no justification for the defiance of the law and the breach of the peace which have unhappily occurred at Skye"; but added that "the government will feel it to be their duty to take action at the earliest possible time, so far as they can, upon the report of the Royal Commission". Harcourt also clashed with MacFarlane in the same sitting over, "petty outrages in Skye"(10).

The matter of the crofters also came up later that same month in the House of Lords. The attack there on their cause was led by the Duke of Argyll, chief apologist for the landlords, and whose opinions are examined later. As a

flavour of his views and interpretative powers, however, he is worth quoting here, in unvarnished simplicity: "I am in favour of emigration, and I hope the day will come when the overcrowded districts will be relieved of their surplus population. I do not say that the Highlands are over-populated as a whole; far from it. But in the Long Island [Lewis] and other places they are undoubtedly over-populated.....Before I sit down I wish to say a few words with regard to the lawlessness which has prevailed in some districts of the Western Highlands. I believe, and I know, that this lawlessness has not been born among the people of the country. It is the work and active propaganda of Socialistic agitators. In the Island of Skye, when I was there last year, I heard details which left no doubt whatsoever that the minds of the people have been poisoned by active emissaries altogether outside the people. Naturally, they are the most tractable, the most loyal, and the most law-abiding people in the world.....The whole thing has been got up by one of the societies in London.....I wish to explain to the house the extent to which the lawlessness has gone. so far as I know the fact, it is not a question of resisting rents - it is not a question of resisting evictions or removals. It is a question of seizing other people's land. A great many of the crofting townships there have issued and executed a threat of entering on the ground of the larger tenants and seizing it by main force. If such a state of things is allowed to go on all capital will be driven from the country".

Argyll's views are discussed in appropriate detail later; but there are few comments as concise as this which blend so well the ignorance and arrogance and self-interest of his class - its urge to deport the common people (allied to a concession that they suffered a shortage of land), its fear of united popular action, its enduring loyalty to the tradition of recreational patronage, and its attribution of popular discontent to the effect of "outside agitators". By

way of reply, Lord Napier himself noted, somewhat drily it might be thought, that the Duke of Argyll was, "usually ranked among those who, in theory at least, would rather apply a strict economical principle to the management of land than those practices of benevolence and mutual accommodation which are advocated by others"(11).

That same month, the Commons debated the question of the crofters, on the motion of Donald MacFarlane, with Fraser-MacIntosh seconding, to the effect that the government give effect to the proposals of the Napier Commission, "or to apply such other remedies as they deem advisable". In a markedly favourable speech from the crofters' point of view, Harcourt noted that he had spent his leisure-time on Skye for the best part of twenty years, claimed that two years earlier he had refused appeals to send a force of soldiers to the island, and added, "Some people say, Oh, the remedy for this is emigration. Well, sir, in my opinion emigration is a very poor remedy indeed. (Irish cheers.) I have myself no sympathy with a policy which improves a country by getting rid of its people. To my mind this is the policy of despair.....I, at all events, do not accept the policy of making a solitude and calling it political economy".

And of land-ownership in the Highlands, Harcourt said, "The number of proprietors in these districts is very small.....I think in the outer islands, in the Long Island, I doubt whether there are six separate proprietors altogether. When you come to Skye the number is very few of proprietors of any magnitude at all. When you come even to the mainland the number is not considerable. Certainly there are no people who have more reason to desire to see this question settled than the proprietors of the West Highlands. It is certainly not in their interest to raise a great land question in Scotland....."(12).

The spirit of this reply is not without interest. Harcourt is here rejecting Argyll's views on emigration,

with an interesting echo of earlier writers on Caledonia! A warning to the Highland landlords not to overpress their case can also be inferred in his last sentence quoted - which also suggests the extent to which the "land question" was an important one in (Great) British politics at the time; this too is discussed later.

The motion, to give effect to the proposals of the Napier Commission, was adopted by the government and passed unanimously (though they were in the event spurned, as we shall see later).

But by this point, in any case, a force of soldiers and police was already on Skye - just the first of a number of armed expeditions that would visit the Highlands over the coming years, and one which re-inforces the thesis that, whatever might be discussed in legislative or other chambers in the south, the motive-force for land-reform lay firmly with the common people of the Highlands themselves. The legitimacy of this thesis is amply underwritten by the record of that force on Skye - as elsewhere in the Highlands, throughout the decade(13).

The intervention stemmed formally from reports that some crofters in the west of Skye were preparing forcibly to bring before their mass-meetings such of those as did not agree with them, and in particular some farmers, "for statements reported to have been made by them in connection with the evidence taken by the Crofter Commission" [the Napier Commission]. (Though Harcourt repeated these claims in the Commons, according to MacKenzie they were manufactured - but they do serve to highlight the confidence of a movement that had as yet won in law nothing of their demands. To paraphrase Argyll, the people clearly were ready to take by this point what they demanded, whatever the law and its agencies might rule or attempt to enforce)(14).

Whatever the truth of the matter, however, a small party of police were sent to, "protect persons threatened with outrage by the crofters", but were turned back

forcibly; as a result of which the demands of the landlords and authorities in Inverness-shire for the military were at last met.

As the county chief constable, MacHardy, reported at the end of October, "the state of the land agitation has been gradually increasing", over the previous four months. At Glendale, there had been land-raiding by the Hamara and Ferrinvicquarrie crofters, while in August Blackie and MacFarlane had visited the glen. It was also rumoured, MacHardy reported, that, "secret societies existed in the district for the purpose of committing outrages on proprietors, and their property, and also for the injury of persons unfavourable to the crofters' agitation. Beyond the declaration of secrecy exacted from persons who became members of the Land League, and kindred associations, no direct evidence has been got of the formation of secret societies of the serious nature referred to"(15).

Glendale, of course, and the west of Skye in general, was perhaps the pre-eminent area in the Highlands which had enjoyed close contact with Ireland over the previous ten years, via the Kinsale fishings, the visits of trading vessels, and "emissaries" of the Irish Land League (and the long tradition of secret and direct-action societies that lay behind it). Whether secret societies did exist is now not known, far less their extent or proposed tactical and policy programmes; nor the precise nature of the "outrages" they may have considered.

But at the end of the previous August, one of the land-raiding crofters in the district had been ordered by the landlord to get his stock of the raided land. The crofter refused, and went to Uist to buy more stock - which were also put on the land in question. In September, a party of landlords' men removed some crofters' stock from raided land at Scor; they were interrupted in this by a body of crofters, and the stock returned. As Ivory noted of the district and his agent there, "The people of the district

continue in an excited state over these matters, and it is with the utmost caution that Constable MacVicar performs his patrol duty among them"(16).

Affairs were similarly tense elesewhere in the island. In Kilmuir and Uig, the authorities were reporting a "crisis" in landlord-tenant relations. "Meetings of the local branch of the Land League have been frequently held throughout the district, and large gatherings of the people have taken place....at Land League meetings later held, those who attended the same are said to have made a declaration, and banded themselves together to carry out several resolutions passed at such meetings in regard to land. Each crofter agrees to pay ten shillings, and each cottar five shillings, agreeing not to do any work to any of the district farmers, and that under pain of injury to person or property, and it is stated that they have appointed persons to watch over the district to see that these directions are carried out. It has been arranged that all the crofters on the Kilmuir estate are to hold a mass meeting at Quiraing on 31st October.....A no-rent proclamation has been issued, and published in the Oban Times of 25th October, from the Kilmuir branch".

To this clearly high degree of community organisation, rent striking and land-seizing, the crofters were now adding the "Irish" tactic of boycott and enforcement thereof; while they were also preparing, in a remarkable form of popular trial, to force the attendance at a mass-meeting of two local farmers and a factor, "for the purpose of demanding some explanation from them".

In was, in the chief-constable's phrase, "in anticipation of these outrages" that Fraser of Kilmuir asked for additional police protection; and though MacHardy had sent more men, and a consignment of fifty revolvers from the War Office, he also reported that, "with special reference to the present serious outbreak of disorder and lawlessness in Skye, I beg respectfully, but candidly, to state that the

available force of police under my command, is entirely inadequate to maintain order, and carry out the law"(17).

And indeed the force of police sent to Kilmuir, under the command of Superintendent Aitchison, was turned back by force, as his exchange of telegrams with MacHardy bears witness, and while he awaited orders in Portree, the sub-committee of Inverness police, with Lord Lovat in the chair, wrote to the Home Secretary noting the urgent need for more police to be made available for Skye. Over and above this, "all the additional police sent to Skye as well as those located in the disturbed districts should be armed with revolvers; the men should be openly instructed in the use of these at Portree ..... as many as possible of the additional police, more especially those engaged in patrol duty, should be mounted, and an application should be made to Government to station a gunboat with marines at Portree"(18).

Sheriff Ivory also wrote to the Lord Advocate, in similar terms and, "of the opinion that the immediate despatch of a gunboat and marines to Skye is absolutely necessary to protect the police and assist them in protecting the property and persons of the lieges in that island"(19).

The Highland elite, at least, was thus keen for a trial of strength in Skye (though the authorities in the south were less keen, or more cautious). The outcome of such an all-out trial, both in the short and the longer term, is open to a degree of interesting speculation - not least insofar as a full armed intervention might have ignited in the island a violent contest on the Irish model, with shootings, lootings, burnings and selective assassination versus armed police, marines and warships.

A campaign of terror on both sides, however, would not go un-noticed in the rest of the Highlands, where absentee landlord property was peculiarly open to destruction at no cost and very little risk to the crofters' movement, with

the benefit that such a course, on a generalised scale, might well lead to a downward trend in property values and even recreational occupancy. The publicity attendant on such a course of events would also have been enormous; while its effects on the rest of Scotland were incalculable, but not likely to be in favour of the landlord or industrial capitalist classes or government.

In the event, the contest would not attain these heights, however, despite the apparent efforts of the landed elite in the Highlands to force a trial of strength with the popular opposition to landlordism. To accommodate the force of police planned for Skye, for instance, a steamer was to be chartered on the grounds that nowhere safe could be found ashore for such a purpose(20). This popular antipathy was known to the chief constable, MacHardy, who was clearly spoiling for some sort of fight at the bidding of his police committee under Lord Lovat. According to his reports from the period, since the earlier rebuff of his men, "The people of Kilmuir have turned out and held possession of the district, determined to resist the police entering or going among them. They have for the past week assembled in hundreds, day and night armed with sticks for the purpose of assaulting an expected body of police, and declare that they will attack any number of constables so long as soldiers are not sent....a force of 50 constables including those presently stationed in Skye has been made available for the enforcement of law and restoring order to the island, under the Government protection"(21).

MacHardy then went to London, while from Inverness Aitchison kept him informed of developments in Skye - reports which testify to the extent of popular solidarity in the island with regard to the land question. On the 8th of the month, for instance, there was, "great excitement prevailing in Uig and East Side today; watchers on all conspicuous places armed with long sticks.....Crowds going about Uig". Two days later there was, "great excitement

prevailing in district. Still determined to resist any police force whatever.....Groups constantly on watch". And the following day, "people going about in great numbers about one in the morning, waiting for receiving police; great meeting held at top of Rha yesterday evening, watchmen posted all over Kilmuir.....The agitation throughout the whole island is in highest degree, and undoubtedly all would turn out"(22).

By then Harcourt had told the Commons that the conduct of the Skye crofters could no longer be tolerated and that it was the duty of the local authorities, "with the entire support of the executive government, to take all such measures as may be neccesary to the observance of the law"(23); and by the second week of November, the Lochiel was ready at Stornoway, whence she was to steam south for Strome Ferry, and collect the force of police coming by train from Inverness. A violent gale over the weekend delayed a proposed mass-meeting of crofters at Kilmuir; nevertheless, supporters from throughout Skye were expected to lend their weight, and it was anticipated that the crofters could perhaps field a demonstration of 2,000 people(24). On Monday, the crofters heard that the police had yet to leave Inverness, as sheriff Ivory and chief constable MacHardy had still to return from London(25). They also heard from Stornoway that the Lochiel was unable to sail, as her skipper and crew were refusing to, "serve in the ungrateful task of carrying armed men for the purpose of shooting down their helpless and unoffending brethren"; while on Tuesday, November 12th, supporters in Stornoway telegrammed, "Lochiel's crew refuse to proceed to Skye. Thousands of Lewis men threatening to proceed to Skye to help crofters. Great excitement here"(26).

By this point, a veritable fleet of vessels was heading for Skye, in the cause of restoring its crofters to the condition of traditional subservience and good temper attributed to them by the Duke of Argyll in the House of

Lords.

On the Monday evening the gunboat Forester had sailed from Greenock, called briefly at Tobermory (where her temporary presence must have caused something of a sensation among the Land Leaguers of Mull), and thereafter headed for Skye(27). On the Wednesday the Lochiel was coaling at Stornoway, her owners still trying to find a crew for her; MacHardy arrived back in Inverness; and the Assistance and the Stormcock were reported on their way north to join the Forester. That afternoon, (28) the Forester herself came into Portree Bay (anchoring five cables off, which suggests that her commanding officer feared some sort of assault on his vessel); the following morning the Lochiel arrived at Strome where she was met by a relief skipper and crew, "in room of Captain Cameron and the Highland crew who have refused duty"; and on Saturday afternoon, she arrived in Portree with 25 police, Ivory, MacHardy, and the Inverness procurator-fiscal, who had all travelled down from the Highland capital by train that morning. On the Sunday the Assistance arrived, with 350 marines and 100 sailors; the following afternoon, the Banterer arrived at Portree with another 65 marines(29).

By then, the Forester, Assistance and Lochiel had all steamed for Uig. The Forester, being the last to arrive, anchored in such a way that she could cover with her guns the landing of the marines and police - again, something of a comment on the seriousness with which the county authorities, at least, were prepared to confront the crofters' movement in the island. That afternoon, seven police came ashore along with Ivory, MacHardy, Aitchison, the Fiscal, the captain of the Assistance, and the officer in command of the marines. At the inn, however, they were refused accommodation, by way of introduction to the opinion prevailing on the island. The police were therefore sent to the school, and the sheriff's party retired to their ships; and as darkness fell, *seventy* marines came ashore in full

marching order, that they could protect the seven policemen in the school from the attentions of the crofters(30).

To all this, however, the response of the crofters was one of passive resistance, which may well suggest a very intelligent response on the part of the local Land League leadership (for, though the national leadership was in public counselling just such a course, there can be no doubt that direction of the immediate course of events on Skye lay in the hands of the islands' crofter leaders themselves).

There was to be no violence or outrages. Even as Ivory's fleet had steamed along the eastern coast of Skye, "everywhere people were ostentatiously and conspicuously seen to be at work, along the coast, digging potatoes". At Staffin, where opposition had been expected, "the utmost quietude and decorum prevailed"; and at Uig, "the crofter population make big efforts to look busy. Not a single grown-up crofter came down to the shore, either to defy or welcome" the visitors. As the special correspondent of the Glasgow Herald observed, "The long threatened expedition to the country of the crofters is now an accomplished fact.....the district was found in a state of the most perfect peace, with every crofter minding his own business".

The morning following the arrival of the fleet at Uig, 250 marines were marched over to Staffin, the flanks of the force protected with marine artillery and scouting parties; but this four-hour procession, by any standards a provocation, was the occasion of no violence at all, and night fell, "amid a scene of perfect tranquility on the part of the villagers".

The same sort of tactic was applied in the west of the island. At the end of that week, Ivory took three of his ships to Glendale and went ashore with 20 police and three companies of marines. Once ashore, and on the march for Hamara, they came on a Land League meeting, with John MacPherson in command; marine buglers failed to disrupt or provoke the meeting; and Ivory was left to station six

police and 75 marines at Hamara Lodge. On the Sunday following, more marines and police were stationed at Dunvegan, and Ivory, who had already indicated his willingness to undertake "pacification" of other "disaffected" islands and areas, returned to Portree to organise it. By the Monday, his fleet had completed coaling and provisioning for such an expedition to Uist; but the Home Secretary prohibited it "for the time being".

In the spotlight of very considerable national publicity, and the watchful scrutiny of their friends in parliament, the crofters, it can be argued in retrospect, scarcely put a foot wrong in a situation which certainly offered a number of tactical alternatives. To Ivory's expedition, however, they paid scant attention. The men of Valtos and Staffin, for instance, met in public (with the press in attendance to record and report) and announced a new rent-strike, having first expelled four of Ivory's men from the meeting. And at Uig the people also met in an autumn gale of wind and rain, "in order that the sheriff and armed men in the bay might see what was going on, and learn the fact that the men of Uig have not yet been frightened into forgetting their grievances".

In Glendale too, the tenants of both estates agreed that they would not pay any rent until further notice; and when the factor called for his rents, no one was there to pay him. Indeed, the tenants of Fasach wrote to their landlord baldly informing him that they too were on rent-strike: an anouncement formalising the de-facto strikes of earlier, and *in itself* signalling a new confidence and organisation in the movement - as well as a consciousness of the publicity and support in enjoyed in the wider political world. They also added the explanation (itself mute testimony to the crofter viewpoint on the ownership and use of land and the origin of profit deriving from it) that they were in any case not morally bound to pay rent, because, "Our poverty is not our fault. We have worked.....to pay

you for what should be our houses; but we are now so poor that we must first obey the law of nature, to feed and clothe ourselves, and we therefore cannot pay you the rent which you wish to exact from us.....owing to thus being deprived, we consider that you are owing us £40, and in all seriousness, we say that you should pay us this instead of asking us for rent".

And in the south and east of the island, on Lord MacDonald's estates there, the rent strike tactic was spreading too; in the words of John MacPherson at a meeting of MacDonald's striking tenants at Braes, "it would be as easy to stop the Atlantic Ocean as to stop the present agitation until justice has been done to the people". The long record of conspicuous expenditure (of what the people saw as their rents) by the MacDonalds was not unknown, of course, to the tenantry of the estate(31); and while a rent-strike was promptly declared at Snizort the people of Braes and Sconser also announced a suspension of all monies formerly payable to the estate - bringing the number of townships on strike to 14 on the MacDonald estate alone.

By this point, in other words, social relations on Skye had tilted (from the landlord point of view) alarmingly in favour of the crofters, and their fears of a generalised expropriation given eloquent expression. In Kilmuir, for instance, the landlord Fraser invited the crofters to send delegates to discuss matters with him - itself something of a concession. But the crofters, their expectations clearly expanding in precisely the way that pro-landlord observers so feared, refused; instead, they invited Fraser to come to the crofters and explain himself - and before a mass meeting of his tenants at that.

Similar conditions existed throughout the island; and while the rent and other strikes began to bite at the landlord purse in no small way, the marines could not be used in a military capacity for fear of what such an action might by then ignite across the Highlands. Nor could

anything be done in effect about the thousands of crofters technically breaking the law whether by striking or land-raiding; while in Westminster, their supporters, in a skilled demonstration of parliamentary tactics, agitated for emergency legislation to illegalise eviction for rent-arrears until such time as laws were enacted to meet the crofters' grievances.

As a result of this public scrutiny on the one hand, and the crofters' passive response to the marine invasion of their island on the other, the bulk of Ivory's force was shortly withdrawn from Skye, with just a token party left on the island(32); although as the Home Office warned the Lord Advocate in January, "you will make it quite clear to the police committee that Her Majesty's government regard the military force as acting in support of, and not in substitution of, the police, on whom properly devolves the duty of maintaining order and executing the law"(33).

The will of the Skye crofters was underpinned by events contiguous to Ivory's invasion. By that winter, for instance, poverty had become particularly severe in the island, with £2,000 needed for meal and clothes to meet the relief of distress, "which is of an exceptional character and may be expected to be at its worst at the beginning of February"(34). Just a week after that report, Henry George was touring the island urging the people to take, "what was justly theirs"; an appeal, whatever the precise details of George's remedies, that can only have powerfully reinfored crofter opinion on the land-question(35). And by way of further reinforcement, there was widespread (and highly unfavourable) publicity on a civil action in the Sheriff-court at Dingwall, where the American Winans was taking legal action against a Kintail crofter and shoemaker who had allowed his pet lamb to graze on land owned by the railway millionaire(36).

In Kilmuir, meanwhile, Fraser was continuing with action in the courts against some of his tenants (including

the local minister, Davidson) on the grounds that, "if under Land League direction tenants, who until of late have paid their rents so well, will not now pay them at all, and if no processes are to be used against them, how can landlords so placed recover their rents, or defend their non-crofter farms from seizure? And then, further, in such cases how can those whose incomes may be derivable from their estates pay their accounts if the crofters cannot be called upon to pay theirs?"(37).

This hint referred to the forthcoming landlord version of the rent-strike, their short-lived "rates-strike" on Skye; while on a Highland-wide scale, the landlords, recognising that the government could not be depended on for an all-out and crushing coercive move against the crofters, met in conference at Inverness, to offer concessions to their crofters. These inclued, "an undertaking to increase the size of their holdings as suitable opportunities offer, and where the crofters are in a position profitably to occupy and stock the same" - offers, by this stage, that were more or less derisory; given that the record of landlordism did not suggest a high frequency of "suitability" with regard to land availability, or with regard to "profitability" as far as their crofters were concerned. The landlords also offered long-term leases, such as Lord Lovat had introduced for some of his own tenants (though only to crofters who were not in arrears with rent); as Lovat's conduct with regard to leases within three years demonstrates, the offer was judged as little more than a manoeuvre by the crofters. Further, the landlords also suggested compensation to outgoing tenants for improvements they had made to their holding; but did not forget their old refrain on the importance of, "granting assistance to those who may be anxious to emigrate"(39).

The outcome of the conference, in fact, served to demonstrate just how little the landlords could agree on any significant measure of concession; and by the crofters,

therefore, their offers were simply spurned - itself a powerful token of the extent to which the agitation of the previous years had spurred, "visions of a crofters' millenium".

On the ground, the agitation was unabated. By the end of January, the sheriff of Ross had been visiting Lewis aboard the Seahorse(40) for the purpose of arresting crofters charged with deforcement of a messenger-at-arms while he was attempting to serve interdicts from the Court of Session. By now the roads in the west of Lewis were blocked with boulders, to dissuade any other expedition of sheriff's messengers; while in Skye too, sheriff-officers were deforced at Valtos and Glendale, in the course of serving summonses for rent-arrears. Later that month, therefore, following widespread speculation fuelled by the crofters' contacts in the south(41), Ivory returned to Skye with another fleet carrying marines and police. At Glendale, six men, including John MacPherson, were arrested, accused of rioting and deforcement - as they were led away, MacPherson assured his fellow-tenants that they had nothing to worry about, as he and the other arrested men would soon be back(42).

Ivory's force was also deployed at Valtos, landing from the Assistance; "Immediately on landing, operations for arrests were commenced, but after a whole day's search the officers of the law were only successful in apprehending two out of the eight against whom warrants had been issued. The other six had betaken themselves with a number of others to the surrounding hills.....the excitement throughout the island is intense". In Valtos, there had been a struggle with the police, requiring 100 marines to fix bayonets; and that evening when the party reached Portree with its prisoners, further trouble was feared(43). In the morning, when the prisoners were taken under very heavy guard to the County Buildings, they were "greeted by the assembled crowd with ringing cheers, again and again repeated.....the

excitement in Portree on Saturday night continued most intense, and the policemen who patrolled the streets were hooted and hissed in the wildest manner".

To this sort of intimidation, however, the crofters on Skye and elsewhere paid scant attention. At Strome (from which ten men had appeared in court eighteen months earlier on a church-riot charge), the crofters demanded the distribution of sheep-farms and deer-forests among the people, "and shall not permit these to be robbed by the landlords as they have notoriously been". Similar demands came from Stornoway, at the inaugural meeting of the League's branch there(44); while on the Dalglish estate in Ardnamurchan, fears were being "entertained that troublesome times are impending". In the Ross of Mull, the League branch on the Duke of Argyll's estate was reported active, and of especial worry to the authorities on account of its decision (suggestive of the "secret societies" reports from Skye), to conduct its proceedings in private; while nationally, the League announced that it would arrange the legal defence of the men lately taken prisoner at Valtos and Glendale.

In South Uist, land-raiding was under way; the men of Boisdale taking formal possession of an island in the loch for potato ground. At Lochcarron, the reverend MacCallum and John MacPherson addressed the crofters, the latter assuring them that from the first, "he had discerned the hand of Providence in the agitation, and now rejoiced at the dimensions and importance it had assumed"(45). In Daliburgh, South Uist, three fields were seized, and the factor's remonstrations simply ignored(46); in Lewis, 400 men met at Barvas to demand land reform; while on Tiree, "a large number of rents due at Martinmas last are still unpaid, and as his grace has now expressed his resolution to enforce payment in the usual way, the outlook at the present time is very dark".

And throughout the following months, the agitation grew

across the Highlands((47); while the campaign was maintained in the pro-crofter press and by the pro-crofter members of parliament (and prospective members of parliament, for with the franchise recently extended, the crofters were now preparing to run their own candidates in the general election at the end of the year.)

From the Celtic Magazine, a steady stream of articles poured in the crofters' favour - Fraser-MacIntosh on where to get money for the stocking of "new and enlarged crofts"(48), the Marquis of Lorne on the land agitation(49), and MacKenzie himself on the annual meeting of the Gaelic Society of Inverness where speeches were delivered by Cameron of Lochiel and Sir Kenneth MacKenzie, both ex-members of the Napier Commission(50). In March, MacKenzie found room for cartoon coverage of the Skye invasion from the Graphic and the Pictorial World (having already noted mentions in Punch in his January issue), for John MacKay of Hereford on croft and farm rents in Sutherland, on affairs in Kilmuir by the Rev Davidson, on the landlord conference at Inverness, and (as his lead story), "terrorism in Skye; sheriff Ivory's latest folly"(51).

In April, space was given to land courts and Highland sheriffs, the trial of the Lewis crofters, Lord Napier and the Duke of Argyll, and a review of Blackie's just-published "The Scottish Highlanders and the Land Laws"(52). May's edition covered MacDonald of Skaebost on the landlord conference at Inverness (with a reply by MacKenzie), "Sheriff Ivory's mountain and his mice" (the trial of the Glendale and Valtos men), again Napier versus Argyll, and a general piece on the land reform movement in Skye(53).

In June, MacKenzie covered American sympathy for Highland crofters, reprinted a biography of John MacKay of Hereford from The Crofter (the short-lived journal of the Land League), and carried an analysis of the proposed crofting legislation introduced to parliament by the government in May (which would fall with the government in

due course)(54). And in July, in the last edition of the Celtic Magazine to carry agitational material relating to crofting (due to the launch of the Scottish Highlander) MacKenzie again covered the proposed crofting legislation, and a piece on the Scottish Land-League of America(55).

By then, preparations were in hand for the national League conference, held in Portree in September, and covered by the national and English press as the major event it by then was. The Glasgow Herald, The Scotsman, the North British Daily Mail and The Times covered at great length in their broadsheet pages both the conference and the demonstration through Portree that followed it(56). By any standards, certainly, it was an impressive exhibition of the extent to which the crofting movement was organised by the autumn of 1885 - with delegates from Skye marching in from Braes, Glendale, Valtos, Snizort and Staffin carrying banners and headed by pipers. There were delegates from Lewis and Harris and the Uists, and every corner of the mainland Highlands - nearly 200 in all(57), as well as visitors from a host of southern organisations, and also from the United States, Canada and Australia(58). The Glenelg delegate set the tone of the proceedings when he announced that, "the people walk about with a new freedom for they have almost entirely thrown off the nightmare of landlordism", while from Lewis Alexander Morrison, anticipating developments there, said that, "The question of the hour is the destruction of the deer forests.....the people have been kept down in poverty and oppression for centuries through the unjust and cruel land laws".

That evening, a general meeting drew speakers from not only the Land League, but also the Scottish Land League of America, the Land Nationalisation League, and both the English and the Scottish Land Restoration Leagues; with speakers from Skye, Chicago, London, Hull, Caithness, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Oban, Liverpool, and - from Barra - Michael Buchanan, delegate from the crofters there. The

next day, thousands of people marched through Portree; "It is not too much to say that an equally animated scene has never before been witnessed in that place.....When all was in order, the procession, following its banners, and with its pipers playing, marched round about and through the village of Portree; as many of the inhabitants as were not in the procession turned out to see it, and during its progress cheered with the greatest enthusiasm".

A string of resolutions were announced; The Scotsman thought, "If we are not to break up our whole social system.....the demands of the conference at Portree must be set aside as monstrous and utterly inadmissable". According to the paper, "the incendiarism" of the Portree conference held out "a bribe to the lawless to encourage and practise lawlessness"(59).

Most critically, however, the conference agreed on candidates to stand in the crofters' cause at the imminent general election - the first under the extended franchise, which would give voting power to the crofting population of the Highlands(60).

Prior to the extension of the franchise, the electorates of the Highland counties were tiny compared to their populations - for Argyll 3,300, for Caithness 1250, for Inverness-shire 1860, for Ross and Cromarty 1720, and in Sutherland no more than 325. And traditionally these seats had been in the hands of the landlords - in Argyll, the sons of the Duke had held the seat non-stop since 1868; in Sutherland, one of the Duke's family had been returned since 1852 (with the exception of six years, when it was held by Sir D. Dundas, who got it on the elevation to the peerage of the previous holder, the Marquess of Stafford, and resigned to let Lord Ronald Leveson Gower back in during 1867)(61). Caithness told the same story(62); while in Ross and Cromarty there had been but one election between 1847 and 1884, during which time the seat was held by Sir James Matheson and then by his nephew, Sir Alexander Matheson(63).

(Inverness-shire was held from 1840 to 1865 by H.J. Baillie, and then mainly by Cameron of Lochiel)(64).

But the extension of the franchise increased the electorate in Argyll by over 200 per cent, in Inverness-shire by over 400 per cent, in Ross and Cromarty by nearly 500 per cent, and in Sutherland by nearly 880 per cent(65).

The campaign, therefore, was a fierce one, with the landlords attempting to defeat the crofters' own candidates of Fraser-MacIntosh for Inverness-shire, MacFarlane for Argyll, Roderick MacDonald for Ross-shire, G.B. Clark for Caithness (where his opponent's father, grandfather and great-grandfather had all been M.P.'s for the county), and Angus Sutherland for his home county. In Ross-shire the opposing candidate was the young Munro-Ferguson of Novar, who had plotted with the Duke of Argyll an attempt to gerrymander the Highland constituencies in the landlords' favour(66), and who would go on to a successful career in British imperial affairs in later life(67).

But from the beginning it was clear that the crofters' candidates had the popular vote, not least in Inverness-shire, where Fraser-MacIntosh toured the constituency by yacht. In Kilmaluag, for instance, in Staffin, the League branch meeting, the first since the return of the menfolk from the east coast fishing, agreed to complete support for Fraser-MacIntosh; throughout the district the League was ensuring every crofter was on the roll of voters; at Stein, men were set to watch from the highest hill in the district, that the people might have time to prepare a suitable welcome for their candidate.

In Lewis, the Park branch of the League met at Gravir, to show support for Dr MacDonald, the Ross-shire candidate, with the secretary of the Branch assuring the meeting that, "Novar is a landlord, and that is a sufficient reason why we should do all in our power to oust him at the general election.....whatever landlords say, we cannot place any confidence in their promises, when we consider how they have

acted towards us during the last 80 years"(68). In Fort William, Cameron of Lochiel was shouted-down at an election meeting with demands that he reverse an eviction at Achintore(69), while on the Dochfour estate, "the factor has been going among the tenantry using such methods as factors know how to use for procuring support for the landlord candidate". And in Argyll, mocked the Scottish Highlander, "the climax of daring wickedness was attained when the minister of Inverary chose to oppose the electoral choice of the Duke of Argyll"(70).

In the event, all the candidates won, with the exception of Angus Sutherland (who would take the seat the following year anyway), although in the new Scottish Highlander, MacKenzie thought his defeat a victory for the, "most disgraceful servility"; the results, nevertheless, overall, led him to believe that, "the crofters' cause is advancing at an extraordinary and unexpected pace"(71). The pro-crofter Oban Times memorably proclaimed, "From the Mull of Kintyre to the Butt of Lewis the land is before us"; while the pro-crofter Invergordon Times thought the result showed landlordism, "trampled in the dust", and at last, "an object of derision to even its former slaves".

The Invergordon paper, if anything stronger in its language than even the Oban Times, editorialised of the election that, "Dr MacDonald was everywhere received with loud demonstrations of welcome. His views, especially on the land question, were in entire harmony with the vast majority of the electors, who were sickened of landlord rule, and who were determined that they would have a member who thoroughly understood their wants and wishes to represent them.....The victory was hailed with great delight throughout the counties by the crofters, and bonfires blazed and general rejoicings took place in honour of the victory. It was a terrible defeat to the holders of the soil, and we trust that it will have a good effect"(72).

As a result of this electoral victory, the "Crofters'

Party" entered parliament on a tide of expectation in the Highlands - where agitation, if anything, was encouraged by the prospects of parliamentary fireworks. From South Uist, for instance, even as the Crofter Members took their places, the landlords were alerting the authorities that, "influences have been at work which if allowed to remain unchecked must lead to a very alarming state of matters". Land-League associations had been formed throughout the Hebrides, forcible possession had been taken of the land with threats of violence, the fences had been destroyed, the telegraph wires cut, "and dangerous obstructions made at night on the public road near Sir Reginald and Lady Cathcart's residence". The "terrorism" prevailing was such that no culprit could be identified (by the authorities), and throughout the island, "law is practically in abeyance"(73).

If anything, in fact, the early months of 1886 saw an escalation of agitation. For the first fortnight of the new year, the Invergordon Times was covering anti-landlord meetings at Alness, Creich, and Melness (where ten new subscriptions to the paper were taken out), and where the League chairman (once again eloquently voicing the popular view of land ownership and use) hoped that the people would soon show the landlords, "that they had been robbed of their natural rights in their native soil, and that they would not be satisfied with less than a full restoration of the lands of which they had been deprived by fraud and usurpation"(74).

Further meetings were reported from Clyne, Loth and Kildonan, Rosehall and Laid, and at Golspie and Stoer(75), as well as Halladale, Strathpeffer, Garve and Dornoch. At Durness the people demanded, "a proper and final settlement of the land question"; while at Lochinver, the League branch demanded the restoration to the people of the deer-forest of Glen Canisp, "where there is plenty of provision for ourselves and families. It extends 21 miles.....and is in

the possession of an Englishman called Painter, while we are at home starving and the land of our fathers lying waste".

Similar demands were reported from Strathy, Drumbeg, Achmelvich, Resolis, Ferrintosh and Culbokie; while at Tongue the chairman reminded a League meeting that they should stick more closely together than ever, for, "to the eye of the political seer", the future, "was pregnant with work"; as clear a warning as any that, to the League's local leaders at least, an item very much on the agenda was indeed something akin to the 'restoration of the land to the people'.

The same feeling was evident across the Highlands. Sheriff Ivory of Inverness, for instance, warned his superiors in Edinburgh that the Skye crofters were now two years in rent-arrears, worth in total value something like £17,000(76), while an Inverness law-firm was calling urgent attention to the cottars on the estate of Kintail, "who had pledged themselves to take the land"(77). At Resolis the tenantry refused to pay their rents for the previous six months unless it was reduced by one third(78); in Lewis, some Uig people were in court following charges of assault(79); in Skye, the landlords were by now on rates-strike, as Fraser of Kilmuir had earlier hinted, pleading poverty as a result of their tenants' rent-strike(80); and Lord MacDonald's factor thought it, "perfectly plain that a most serious crisis has arrived.....the present state of matters cannot last"(81).

Again, the Inverness solicitors wrote to Edinburgh reporting that, "the cottars on the estate of Kintail have carried out their resolution to take possession of the land", and adding that, "if the government do not look to the matter they may soon find themselves face to face with an insurrection of the labouring population of the Highlands"(82).

By this point, the government had indeed introduced a Bill to parliament on the subject of crofters. But time and

again sheriff Ivory wrote to the Scottish Secretary, twice warning that the Edinbane, Waternish and Kilmuir crofters were not satisfied with the provisions of the Bill(83), warning that in April, "only one fisherman has left Staffin for the Irish fishing, instead of 30 as usual, and that the crofters are determined to agitate for more land than the Crofters' Bill proposes to give them"(84). That same month he warned that, at Waternish, 120 crofters had announced that, unless the Bill, with amendments to meet their objections to its shortcomings, was law within a month, they, "would begin to cultivate the land wherever they found it suitable"(85); and in May, Ivory again reported that on Barra Michael Buchanan had conceded that the Bill was only a, "step in the right direction", and that the agitation must be kept up(86).

Nor did the Bill please the crofters' members in parliament either; MacFarlane for one called it, "a miserable, deluded, rubbishy measure", in a phrase that in general matched crofter opinion of it.

The nature of the Act which followed, and its divergence from the proposals of the Napier Commission of two years earlier, are dealt with later; here, it is necessary simply to locate the passage of the legislation in the context of ongoing agitation throughout the Highlands.

The government of the time was by now headed for a general election, and was determined to enact something, at least, on the "crofter problem"; and as a result, on the last day of the parliamentary session, the bill received the royal assent, and the 1886 Crofters' Act passed onto the statute book.

Its provisions, as amended, are considered in detail later - at this point it suffices to note its principal provision of security of tenure and fair rents; provisions of outrageous character to landlord ideologists such as the Duke of Argyll, and testimony to the power of the crofters' agitation to that stage in their struggle.

But if the Act was a response to agitation, it did not meet its demands; and the agitation therefore went on. It was, in the memorable words of the Oban Times, no more than, "an instalment of justice". It did nothing, for instance, about returning the land to the people; and it was left to Alexander MacKenzie to warn that, "we must not rest satisfied until every inch of productive land in the Highlands is placed at the disposal of those who are able and willing to till it.....Until this is assured, the people must resolve to maintain the most persistent and determined agitation; and if this resolute and comprehensive movement should end in the total abolition of the Game Laws, the sporting element, in and out of parliament, who so stolidly opposed the demands of the people, will only have themselves to blame"(87).

"They are", concluded MacKenzie, " sowing the wind and they will most assuredly reap the whirlwind"; and it would take another two years before it became evident that the 1886 Act carried a significance not obvious at its birth, and before the Highland land agitation adopted a new form.

CHAPTER SIX

1.

Celtic Magazine, Aug 1884, vol 9, no 106, 489-490 (from Nineteenth Century.)

2.

Celtic Magazine, Sep 1884, vol 9, no 107, 537-538.

3.

Celtic Magazine, Oct 1884, vol 9, no 108, 580-583.

4.

Celtic Magazine, Nov 1884, vol 10, no 109, 12-27 (see also vol 10, no 110, 57-65.)

5.

Ibid, 40-42.

6.

Ibid, 42-48.

7.

Ibid, 48.

9.

Hansard, 6-11-1884; cols 1113-1114. On MacFarlane, see Who's Who, 1901 (728), and Who Was Who 1897-1916 (451). He died in the summer of 1904; see his short obituary notice in The Times for 4-6-1904.

10.

Hansard (Lords), 21-11-1884, cols 105-106. See also Argyll's letter in The Times, 25-11-1884.

11.

Hansard (Lords), 21-11-1884. As suggested earlier, the tradition of recreational patronage is an enduring sub-text to the consciousness of the Highland elite. Indeed, the social psychology of the landowning class in the Highlands is surely a pretty subject for further investigation.

12.

Hansard (debate), 14-11-1884.

13.

Iain Fraser Grigor, Mightier than a Lord, 101-118, covers

the military expedition in detail.

14.

Celtic Magazine, Dec 1884, vol 10, no 110, 94.

15.

Papers relating to the despatch of government force to Skye, December 1884. (C. 4257.), 3.

16.

Ibid, 4.

17.

Ibid, 5.

18.

Ibid, 7.

19.

Ibid, 12.

20.

Ibid, 13.

For an illustration of the Lochiel, see Francis Thompson, Victorian and Edwardian Highlands from old Photographs, Batsford, London, 1976, plate 124.

21.

Papers relating to the despatch of a government force to Skye, December 1884, 13.

22.

Ibid, 14.

23.

Glasgow Herald, 31-10-1884; 5-11-1884; 7-11-1884.

24.

Glasgow Herald, 9-11-1884; 10-11-1884.

25.

Glasgow Herald, 11-11-1884.

26.

Glasgow Herald, 12-11-1884.

27.

The question might well be asked; how long did it take for the crofters' leaders in Portree to hear of this encounter; and this visit?

28.

Glasgow Herald, 14-11-1884.

29.

Glasgow Herald, 18-1-1884.

30.

The press, British, national and local, daily and weekly, gave blanket coverage to the Skye expedition of Ivory; it was covered extensively by The Times, The Scotsman, the Glasgow Herald, the North British Daily Mail, the Oban Times and the Inverness Courier. Here, for instance, is an index, from Nov 19th to the end of the year, for the (broadsheet) Glasgow Herald, from the pages of which, with those of the North British Daily Mail and the Oban Times, the following paragraphs are generally drawn.

November.

19 1½ cols, marines march to Staffin.

20 ship movements round Skye.

21 crofters' meetings.

22 3 cols, Glendale expedition.

4 cols, speeches in parliament.

24 15" reports.

25 12" reports

26 2 cols.

27 ½ col, Ivory visits his garrisons.

28 2½ cols, meetings Uig, Oban, interdicts.

29 4" reports.

December.

1 4" reports.

2 4" reports.

3 4" reports.

4 ½ col, Glendale.

5 1 col, Braes.

6 1½ cols, Snizort, Lord Advocate decides no action on Uig deforcement.

8 6" reports.

9 1 col, withdrawal expedition, Kilmuir meeting.

10 2 cols, Lewis, no-rent movement in Skye.

11 1 col, Lewis, Portree, Skye.

13 4", fraternisation.

17 4" refusal to pay parish rates.

18 10", meeting at Sleat

19 2 cols, HLLRA meeting, Skye.

22 John MacPherson to London.

23 editorial, Free Church and crofters; 1 col, Lady Cathcart appeals to her crofters.

24 2 cols, agitators, delegate meeting London.

26 editorial, plus 1 col marines to Lewis, deforcement.

27 4" Lewis.

29 1 col, Lewis, Braes, Glendale, Caithness.

30 1½ cols, Glasgow, Portree, Inverness, Stornoway.

31.

According to Mrs H.D. of Perth (and formerly of Sleat), whose family were tenants of the MacDonalds in this period, estate conspicuous-consumption was stupendous in its scale. For entertainment in Armadale Castle, for instance, the catering was attended to directly from Edinburgh. And Lady MacDonald insisted, every day for years, on having a fresh ox-tongue on her luncheon table; until the estate factor, by an extraordinary ruse, managed to dissuade her on grounds of cost.

32.

James Cameron, The Old and the New Highlands and Hebrides, Cameron, Kirkcaldy, 1912, 58-69. Celtic Magazine, Dec 1884, vol 10, no 110, 82-92.

33.

Lord Advocate's Papers, Box 2, Harcourt to Lord Advocate, 7/13-1-1885.

34.

The Times, 3-1-1885.

35.

The Times, 6-1-1885.

36.

I.R. MacKay, The Pet Lamb Case, Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness, vol XLVIII, 1972-1974, 189, 195.

37.

The Times, 22-1-1885.

38.

Francis Lindley, Lord Lovat, 1871-1933, 23. On the matter of Lovat and leases to crofters, see Lovat's letter to Lothian, 3-7-1887; "I sincerely trust that the government are not going to give in on the subject of leases in the Crofters' Act. It will be most unfair on proprietors.....It is not the fixing of fair rent that raises so much objection, though the works of the Commissioners in Skye are simple robbery.....it is the entire destruction of trust and good feeling between landlord and tenant"; Lothian Muniments, GD 40/16/33. For a pro-landlord account of what the Lovats were up to in North Morar, see David Turnock, North Morar, the improving movement on a west Highland estate, Scottish Geographical Magazine, 1969. See also Lord Lovat, March Past, Weidenfeld, London, 1978, introduction by Sir Iain Moncreiffe, page 3, "Neither Shimi nor his father ever raised the rent of a bona-fide crofter living on the property".

39.

Celtic Magazine, Feb 1885, vol 10, no 112, 191.

40.

The Times, 27-1-1885.

41.

The Times, 30-1-1885.

42.

Glasgow Herald, 30-1-1885.

43.

Glasgow Herald, 2-2-1885.

44.

Glasgow Herald, 3-2-1885.

45.

Glasgow Herald, 7-2-1885.

46.

Glasgow Herald, 9-2-1885.

47.

Grigor, Mightier than a Lord, 126-137; for further details.

48.

Celtic Magazine, Jan 1885, v 10, no 111, 134-138.

49.

Ibid, 142 (on his article in Contemporary Review, Dec 1884.)

50.

Celtic Magazine, Feb 1885, vol 10, no 112, 192-202.

51.

Celtic Magazine, Mar 1885, vol 10, no 113.

52.

Celtic Magazine, April 1885, vol 10, no 114.

53.

Celtic Magazine, May 1885, vol 10, no 115.

54.

Celtic Magazine, June 1885, vol 10, no 116.

55.

Celtic Magazine, July 1885, vol 10, no 117. The influence of the magazine over its run from 1876, as a forum for agitation in a way not possible in a newspaper like Murdoch's Highlander, deserved recognition. For instance, volume 1 contained a piece on the Game Laws, the Highlands and the present position of the Highlander, and a poem, The Scots Emigrant. Volume two carried a piece on destitution, on depopulation, the poetry and prose of a Highland croft, and two poems, entitled The clearing of the glens, and the alien chiefs. Volume three carried pieces titled a plea for the Highland peasant, the clearances, the croft system, depopulation, and a poem called we'll have our Highlands yet. Volume four carried a poem, the crofter's lament; volume five returned to the clearances, and 'the government

factor and the widow's cow'; while volume six carried a piece on the clearances, three pieces on eviction, and a poem - evicted. Given that MacKenzie was only 37 when the magazine started, self-educated, brought-up on a croft and a former fisherman, according to his evidence to the Napier Commission it is hardly surprising that he was so active in the agitation of the 1880's!

56.

Conference coverage, all 3-9-1885;

The Times, 1 col.

The Glasgow Herald, 2½ cols.

The Scotsman, 2½ cols.

The North British Daily Mail, 3½ cols.

Demonstration coverage, all 4-9-1885.

The Times, ½ col.

The Glasgow Herald, 3 cols.

The Scotsman, 2 cols (and leader).

The North British Daily Mail, 3 cols.

57.

Iain Fraser Grigor, The earth hath he given, West Highland Free Press, 8-4-1977.

58.

The Times, 3-9-1885; and 10-12-1885.

59.

The Scotsman, 4-9-1885; and 8-9-1885.

60.

Grigor, Mightier than a Lord, 143-147.

61.

F.W.S. Craig, British Parliamentary Election Results 1832-1885, Macmillan, London, 606.

62.

I.M.M. MacPhail, The Highland elections of 1884-1886, Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness, 1976-1978, 368.

63.

Roger Hutchinson, The early history of parliamentary democracy in the Highlands, West Highland Free Press, 20-5-1983.

64.

Craig, Elections, 588.

65.

MacPhail, 370.

66.

Iain Fraser Grigor, The battle for the land, West Highland Free Press, 20-5-1977.

67.

MacPhail, 390-391.

68.

Iain Fraser Grigor, Moving into the Commons, West Highland Free Press, 27-5-1977.

69.

Scottish Highlander, 20-11-1885.

70.

Scottish Highlander, 11-12-1885.

71.

Ibid.

72.

Invergordon Times, 30-12-1885.

73.

Lothian Muniments, GD 40/16/3.

74.

Invergordon Times, 13-1-1886.

75.

Invergordon Times, 20-1-1886.

76.

Lothian Muniments, GD 40/16/3, Ivory to Scottish Secretary, 22-2-1886.

77.

Ibid, Messrs Stuart, Rule and Burns to Scottish Secretary, 18-3-1886.

78.

Glasgow Herald, 14-1-1886.

79.

Glasgow Herald, 9-1-1886.

80.

Glasgow Herald, 5-1-1886.

81.

Glasgow Herald, 6-1-1886.

82.

Lothian Muniments, GD 40/16/3, Messrs Stuart, Rule and Burns to Scottish Secretary, 2-4-1886.

83.

Ibid, Ivory to Scottish Secretary, 22-3-1886 and 27-3-1886.

84.

Ibid, Ivory to Scottish Secretary, 10-4-1886.

85.

Ibid, Ivory to Scottish Secretary, 19-4-1886.

86.

Ibid, Ivory to Scottish Secretary, 11-5-1886.

87.

Scottish Highlander, 22-4-1886.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Despite the passage of the Crofters' Act (or perhaps as a partial consequence of it), the following two years were marked by an intensification of popular agitation on the land question in the Highlands, as the record, with which this chapter is primarily concerned, makes clear. The autumn of 1886 was marked by combined police and marine activity on Tiree, the annual conference of the Land League at Bonar Bridge, and by another naval invasion of Skye; while throughout the following year, and right through into 1888, there was large-scale agitation, and associated military activity, in the outer Hebrides.

Tiree was the first to draw the attention of the authorities, with the county sheriff warning as early as July, 1886, that the Duke of Argyll feared a violent response to a forthcoming attempt to serve interdicts, "in consequence of certain lawless acts by crofters", and to, "ask whether, in that case, I may trust to the help of a detachment of military in aid of the civil power"(1).

Two months earlier, the Oban Times had reported a Land League meeting of Tiree crofters which had decided, as crofters across the Highlands were deciding that summer, that, "some of the lands unjustly taken from themselves and their fathers and now lying waste be taken possession of and planted with potatoes"(2).

Within the month planting was under way, the farm of Greenhill distributed among 300 crofters and cottars, and the Duke petitioning the Edinburgh courts for the sort of intimidatory provocation not unknown on the island: when the Napier Commission had arrived to take evidence on Tiree, for instance, it was only with considerable reluctance that an undertaking was offered by the duke's factor (and not by the duke himself) that no one would be victimised for what they might say(3).

As a result of the occupation of the farm, and the

sheriff's plea, 40 policemen were sent with a sheriff-officer to serve writs on the raiders of Greenhill. They were met, however, by a force of 300 men and boys armed with sticks and clubs, who drove the police to a refuge in the inn at Scarinish. And, at the end of July, the inn was mobbed, with the police forced to leave the island that same day; an event that serves to highlight the extent to which popular confidence had grown since the Battle of Braes(4).

Years later, the depute procurator-fiscal of the county recalled events on Tiree; "whether the authorities acted wisely in sending an escort at all has been open to doubt. The very nature of it was provocative"(5). It is arguable, indeed, that the sending of the police party was intended as a provocation; the notices, after all, could have been sent by post(6).

In any case the scene was now set for a test of will between the classes; a flavour of whose relationship one with the other can be guessed from an observation penned a full century later; "Tiree was worth between four and five thousand pounds a year to the duke. His son was singled out as a suitable bridegroom for the daughter of Queen Victoria. To have a Royal Personage tweak one's whiskers and call one "dear Papa" was something which only came the way of the well-lined. It was the fate of the citizens of Tiree to supply some of that lining"(7).

In the 1840's, when the Destitution committee of the Free Church raised money for the relief of poverty in the island, it found the duke trying to get some of it in the cause of helping pay for crofters to be sent to Canada. And when some did leave, the duke had refused to give the land they vacated to those who remained - but made sheep farms out of it, as the local doctor told the Napier commission(8).

James Cameron later recorded that the policy of the Argylls with regard to Tiree had rendered it keenly ready for the League(9); or, as the county's depute-procurator

recalled afterwards, "the frame of mind of the islanders saw only the application of the law for the benefit of the rich against the poor"(10). And thus, on the last Friday of July, lookouts posted above Scarinish spotted off Coll the Royal Navy's guardship on the Clyde, the Ajax, along with the Assistance (lately of Skye) and a chartered steamer, the Nigel, all proceeding for Tiree(11).

Having left Oban that morning, they made anchor while the day was still light; and as night fell, the people of the island were left to the wonders of the Ajax, the depute-procurator being, "witness of the terror which the ships' searchlights aroused in the minds of these simple people". The next morning, 100 police and 250 marines were landed at Scarinish, pitching camp there; and within a week eight crofters' leaders had been arrested on charges of mobbing, rioting, and deforcement. (The nephew of Colin Henderson, one of those arrested, would become professor of theology at Glasgow University and author of the spiced observation on the well-lined duke, noted above.) The eight were taken to Inverary, where they lay in gaol for a week, until a lawyer came from Glasgow and bailed them. They were met at the gates of Inverary gaol by a piper and a large crowd of supporters, and their departure for Tiree on the Lord of the Isles was marked by sustained cheering - as the depute-procurator noted, "there was no question as to where public sympathy lay".

Throughout August, meanwhile, Tiree was garrisoned by 250 marines and 16 policemen; though this did not prevent a speaker from the English Land Restoration League addressing a crofters' meeting at Moss (from which the correspondent of the pro-duke Scotsman was ejected). Nor did it prevent D.H. MacFarlane arriving at the end of the month in the yacht Hiawatha, "displaying a red flag", and coming ashore to be met by 150 cheering crofters(12).

In October the eight Land Leaguers, though entitled to be tried at Inverary, were taken to Edinburgh High Court.

After three days, they were found guilty and sentenced to six months in the Calton Gaol. The following January, however, they were freed, and returned home to a tumultuous welcome. Pipes again featured; as the record of agitation in this period indicates, pipe music was an integral part of anti-landlord celebration and defiance. Those who observed this defiant celebration did not record (they probably did not know by name or narrative subject) the tunes characteristically played on these occasions; but it seems fair to suppose that had the authorities known, then their alarm might have been all the greater(13).

By then the League had met for its 1886 conference at Bonar Bridge, shortly after the summer general election that followed the passing of the Crofters' Act. Again, it had been a good election for the crofters' movement, with J.M. Cameron standing in Wick (with Land League support) and taking 57% of the vote; in Caithness, Dr Clark taking 78%; Fraser-MacIntosh unopposed in Inverness-shire; Dr MacDonald getting nearly 80% in Ross-shire, and Angus Sutherland taking Sutherland with well over two-thirds of the vote. (Only in Argyll was D.H. MacFarlane beaten by 613 votes; although he won the seat back in 1892, and again in 1895)(14).

The North British Daily Mail thought Bonar Bridge as a location for the conference, "singularly appropriate at this state of the agitation. Sutherland stands out pre-eminently above all other counties in Scotland for eviction and clearance"(15). The movement there was, "immensely strong", with 22 branch associations and a membership of 3,000 overall. Presiding was Donald Murray, secretary of the London-based office; and among the delegates from Tiree were three of the men recently held until bailed in Inverary gaol (and shortly to be gaoled at Edinburgh following their court-appearance there)(16).

The agenda and organisation of the conference showed ample evidence of the political identity the League had

attained in a few short years; indeed, by the time of Bonar Bridge it was on the brink of constituting itself as an independent political party in the Highlands. Until then, its organisational nature had been that of a single-issue mass-campaign with all the strengths and weaknesses of that form; now, it was to re-shape itself, with a formal structure and rule-book. And though this new form was not to survive long, due to wider political considerations, and the alteration of its mass-basis within two or three years of the passing of the Crofters' Act, the programme adopted at Bonar Bridge alone says much for the league's confidence at the time, as for enduring themes in Highland political life; not least the game laws, and what they were taken to symbolise (or their obverse, poaching, and the repudiation its practice also symbolised)(17).

The new structure, adopted at Bonar Bridge, suggests the extent to which the league was moving beyond a single-issue mass-movement. A 25-strong executive was to be formed, for instance, along with district councils and county boards, the latter responsible for the selection of parliamentary candidates. A pan-Celtic league was also to be established, "for mutual co-operation in securing necessary reforms and promoting the welfare of the Celtic people"; while delegates were to be chosen with a view to promotional touring in England, North America and the colonies(18).

There was also a very impressive body of Highland and pro-Highland opinion present among the three three hundred delegates; from parliament there were the "Crofter Members" of Dr Clark, Dr MacDonald and Angus Sutherland. Stuart Glennie and Donald Murray had also come from London; while from Skye, the poetess Mary MacPherson was present(19). And a latent tone - a tone that would shortly be something more than simply latent - of the conference was voiced by the delegate from Mull, one MacPhail, when he considered that, "the core of England was rotten with Toryism and to be rid

of these Tories they must have Home Rule the sooner the better"(20).

John MacPherson of Glendale was also present; "he believed that they had compressed the work of a century into four years". Another Glendale delegate boasted of how 18 months earlier he would have been gaoled for taking a fish from the river there; but of how no-one now dared interfere with him when he did so, for they had "already broken the back of landlordism in Skye". (Yet again; the game laws - and game poaching, as covert repudiation of cultural legitimacy!) From Lewis, meanwhile, a delegate described the Crofters' Act as no more, "than a device to stave off the evil day for landlords", for what they wanted, "was more land for those who have too little, and some for those who have none at all". Among other speakers were John Murdoch, and the Rev Donald MacCallum; while the conference also adjourned to take part in a 3,000-strong procession, in which Ross and Sutherland men carried a banner inscribed, "Men of Kincardine, remember Glencalvie, Greenyards and Culrain". At the rally which followed, Dr Clark declared the Crofters' Act entirely inadequate to redress the grievances of the Highland people, and insisted that no legislation would be satisfactory unless it provided for the restoration of the land to the people. And Fraser-MacIntosh, meanwhile, demanded for Scotland, "full control of her domestic concerns by means of a separate parliament"; while there were further resolutions on the Game Laws and deer-forests(21).

What injury, it might be worth asking, is committed on reason by suggesting that this conference represented nothing less than a Highland parliament, infinitely more representative than anything that had met (or has since) in Westminster; and that its central demands were the land for the people; Scottish sovereignty; and an unequivocal assertion of the politico-cultural illegitimacy of English landlordism in the Highlands?

In any case, within the month the authorities so repudiated were preparing to take the Tiree land-raiders to court(22); while the gunship Humber left Portsmouth, bound for the Hebrides with 100 marines aboard. The following day the police-committee of Inverness-shire met; and it was rumoured that another police expedition to Skye was in preparation, for the purpose of giving protection to officers serving writs for arrears(23).

By that evening, the rumour had reached Portree and spread rapidly(24); the local branch of the League nevertheless met to hear their delegates report on the Bonar Bridge conference, which had been, "another nail in the landlord coffin"(25).

Three days later, however, the gunship Humber was, "hourly expected, and great excitement prevailed in the town. The news spread rapidly throughout the island. The excitement, which was at a very high pitch before then, was intensifed". Shortly afterwards, the steamer Glencoe arrived at Portree from Strome carring Ivory himself, who was quickly recognised, "and followed all the way to the Royal Hotel, the crowd hooting and yelling all the time".

By this time the Crofters' Commission was ready to begin the long process of reviewing crofters' rents around the Highlands, and was scheduled to begin operations at Wick in the middle of October, where in addition to 300 applications already received, it would also adjudicate on Sir Robert Sinclair's crofting rents - which he had recently refused to reduce. Its deliberations formed an essential backdrop to the agitation throughout 1886-1888; and the crofters' movement was thus in the difficult tactical position of imminent, if partial, redress on the one hand, and coercion on the other. Of that second strand, Skye was to be cockpit towards the end of 1886.(26).

In fact, sheriff-officers had been expected to begin serving, or attempting to serve, writs prior to the arrival of the Humber and Ivory on the Glencoe - but they then

refused to proceed, as they considered the police then available to them no match for the forces likely to oppose their attempt, and had thus chosen to wait for the arrival of the Humber's marines. In Sconser, meanwhile, on the very morning that the Humber was steaming for Portree, the crofters there found some of Lord MacDonald's deer (though the genitive ill-serves the precise legal relationship between landlord and vermin) among their crops (about which traditional depradation they had complained so bitterly to the Napier Commission.) This time, however, a large crowd of men, women and boys drove the deer into the sea, where they were captured by boat, towed ashore, and then slaughtered. (For crofters, on a Highland estate, in broad daylight, to behave in this manner today would be considered revolutionary, if not psychotic; in the 1880's, it was at least an act of unspeakable sedition - and eloquent testimony to the extent to which active anti-landlordism had grown in Skye since the trouble at Braes just four years earlier).

By then it had become known that on the day Ivory reached the island, its landlords had agreed to end their rates-strike and pay-off their arrears, "in order to avoid the service of writs on themselves". Meanwhile the presbytery of Skye had met at Portree to resume consideration of charges against the Rev Donald MacCallum, following their censure of him the previous March, "for his connection with the crofters' agitation", and for his "incitement of the crofters to violence and class hatred". On this occasion, after acrimonious debate, MacCallum was again censured for writing to the newspapers, disputing, it was claimed, the accuracy of the Presbytery minutes from the previous March. A sideshow to the military invasion, it speaks eloquently enough of the strains agitation was causing in the Established Church; it was also a prologue to further trials for MacCallum in the coming weeks(27).

As to the invasion itself; the North British Daily

Mail persuasively editorialised that it had all been got up by the Skye landlords as a trick to get their rents from the crofters(28); but trick or not, the Humber was shortly to leave Portree having embarked 75 marines, 30 police, and two sheriff-officers and attendants, and bound for Glendale. The vessel reached Colbost in Loch Dunvegan at noon, and landed her soldiers, "armed to the teeth", shortly afterwards. The savagery of the Skye landlords with regard to their crofting tenants can hardly be overstated on the basis of the evidence from Glendale that day(29).

And the next day(30), Ivory's expedition turned its attention to the village of Stein on the estate of Waternish, where writs were served again for arrears of rates and rent; with the Humber lying in Lochbay, there was no overt opposition, although the cattle of the township had earlier been driven to the hill to avoid any chance of poinding(31).

The North British Daily Mail observed, "every village and hamlet throughout Skye is permeated with the doctrines of the Land League. The land reform agitation now has a grip of the entire island. Stein is no exception. A number of the inhabitants are Radicals and sturdy land reformers". Some fifty summary warrants and summonses were served in the Stein district, and the following day another 50 warrants were served in Glendale, Roag and Edinbane. And it was reported, not perhaps without justice, that, "several crofters will shortly be evicted from their holdings at the point of the bayonet, and should this be done, it is feared there will be a general uprising throughout the length and breadth of the island"(32).

The next Monday, the military expedition travelled to Uig where around 25 warrants were served for arrears of rent and rates in Kilmuir and Kilmaluag(33).

Still, there had been no violent response from the crofters, despite the clear pro-crofter nature of the evidence unveiled in the press, whose corps of reporters

trailed Ivory around Skye, and whose reports were not considered by him to be favourable to the landlords; in fact his co-operation was denied to all but the correspondent of The Scotsman(34).

Ivory also moved against Valtos and Lealt, where the record of landlord-tenant conflict catches in one paragraph the spirit of social relations in the Highlands over the previous century; "Valtos has a notorious reputation for the persistency and in many cases, the violence, with which it has kept alive the land war.....The crofters have been harshly dealt with by the proprietor, and by exhorbitant rents and excessive sub-division of crofts the people have been reduced to the verge of starvation. In 1854, when Fraser purchased Kilmuir, the township of Valtos paid a gross rental of £48. The rent some years afterwards was raised to £94". As Peter MacDonald had complained to the Napier Commission, "The principal cause of our grievance is the repeated rising of our rent.....We pray that the Royal Commission will give us the land in a way that we can live on, and in such a way that the proprietor cannot raise our rents or remove us"(35).

Meanwhile, as the sheriff officers served notices in Waterloo, Sconser and Breakish the following day, the Crofters' Commission held its first hearing in Dornoch. The majority of the applicants were crofters from the estate of a Mr Sutherland of Skibo; and his repsonse to the crofters' claims and demands were to typify another 40 years of landlord-obstruction of land reform in the Highlands. Sutherland appeared in person to argue that his estate did not fall within the provisions of the Crofters' Act, "as he had already warned the crofters from their holdings". But the significance of this was not confined to Skibo, of course; these proceedings would in full be available to the crofters of Skye, through the daily press, within a day, or two at the most(36).

By this time, Ivory had served notices all over the

MacDonald estates in Skye, and the day the Tiree land-raiders appeared in the Edinburgh High Court(37), Ivory departed Skye for a few days, leaving its crofters to anticipate the arrival of the Crofters' Commission - for already hundreds of them were demanding a stay of any evictions and rent-payments until the commissioners had visited the island (very clearly indeed, the proceedings of the Commission were followed with detailed interest!). By way of counterpoint, the Scotsman meantime suggested that John MacPherson had been paying his rent in secret; by way of coda, 300 Land Leaguers met in the Colbost schoolhouse to deny it with appropriate scorn(38).

Until this stage, Ivory's expedition has passed fairly peacefully; but on Monday the 25th, the press announced latest developments with shrieking headlines - "exciting scenes on Skye", "desperate resistance of crofters", "writs served at point of bayonet"; and of deforcement and arrests. The scene of the violence was again Kilmuir, the expedition having left Uig early in the morning with eleven police and seventeen marines to protect the sheriff-officer in serving charges of decrees obtained in the Portree Sheriff-Court on crofters in the townships on the western side of the estate(39).

At Borneskitaig, "fighting broke out, involving a large number of people in the township. This fighting lasted for nearly an hour, with the police and sheriff kicked and pelted with mud, until the writs were served at the point of bayonets and six crofters arrested". And the following day, a sheriff-officer was again deforced while serving a writ for arrears of rent in Garalapin, on land owned by Lord MacDonald(40).

By this time Ivory was on his way back to the island; he returned the following day, and took 75 marines and 13 police to Kilmuir, to conduct arrests for deforcement. When they reached Herbusta, however, they found the township deserted, and after a diligent search and questioning of

children, they apprehended one cowherd and a Mrs MacMillan, who were both then taken off to Portree under marine guard(41). And the next day Ivory was back at Herbusta, at midnight, but all the men wanted for deforcement were in hiding and not one was to be found, despite Ivory arriving in the township at one a.m. and searching the houses for two hours(42).

On the 29th, however, Ivory's force did arrest eight men and a women on Lord MacDonald's townships in the vicinity of Garalapin, in connection with the deforcement of the sheriff-officer the previous week(43).

The North British Daily Mail editorialised that Ivory's actions were clearly illegal though, "destined to mark an epoch for the land movement"(44); but throughout November, the sheriff nevertheless went on with his work, poinding possessions from Broadford to Staffin(45); while in consequence of his conduct, 33 members of the Skye Volunteer Corps tendered their resignations, so reducing its numbers that it was likely to become extinct(46); "the Mutiny Act was dangled in the faces of the men, but they have refused to be intimidated"(47).

Ivory journeyed to Braes with 40 marines and a dozen police; later, at Broadford, they found the road blocked with stones, and two boys were arrested(48); while another midnight raid was launched against Herbusta - again without success. As a result, crofters' meetings were banned; but this did not stop them(49). Ivory, in short, was not prepared to surrender Skye without a fight; and at the beginning of November, John Nicolson of Portree was arrested on charges of slandering, defaming and insulting the sheriff(50).

Nicolson had written to the pro-crofter press, claiming to have witnessed Ivory in Portree post office, "endeavouring to press the telegraphist to disclose the names of persons who had occasion to send messages through the office in November of 1884, when the first military

expedition visited the island" (or, in other words, break the Land League system of communication from the mainland to Skye, and within the island itself). And in the middle of November, J.G.MacKay, "one of the most prominent leaders of the land movement in the island", was also arrested on a charge of defaming and insulting Ivory. MacKay, the author of several pamphlets on the land question, was said to have defamed Ivory in a letter published in the Inverness Courier, in which he called the Sheriff a, "judicial monster"(51).

The landlords of Skye at this point tried a manoeuvre. They jointly appealed to Ivory to proceed no further; and on the 11th of November Lord MacDonald, Fraser of Kilmuir, Robertson of Greshornish and MacDonald of Waternish, had their solicitor announce in the Portree sheriff-court that they had decided to suspend further action in the matter of recovering rent arrears - on condition, however, that the crofters consigned two-thirds of those arrears to that court. The landlords also announced that they were prepared to abide by any decision of the Crofters' Commission; though in fact they had little option but to do so anyway. The crofters, therefore, spurned the offer, considering it a trick - and believing that consigning the money would be equivalent to paying it. Ivory consequently voyaged yet again to Glendale with marines and police, and also to the north end of the island. At Stein, two vessels anchored offshore and forces were landed to locate and arrest the Rev Donald MacCallum, "a man of considerable intellectual ability", and one who had, "a thorough grip of the land agitation. Since he became minister of Waternish established church, some years ago, has taken an active part in indoctrinating the islanders with the principles of the Land League". And in Glendale, John MacPherson was also arrested(52).

MacCallum was to have preached in the Stenscholl church the following Sunday; instead he was in gaol in Portree

along with John MacPherson, but when bailed on Monday, he returned to Stenscholl and delivered his Sunday sermon then. Perhaps understandably, J.G. MacKay wrote to the North British Daily Mail, saying that the struggle in Skye was now at an acute stage; "Landlordism is making its strongest and last pull; it is playing its last card, and it is time for the masses to rise up"(53).

And in fact, the Ivory expedition was coming rapidly to a close. In London, a crofters' delegation was pressing the case of the crofters in Skye(54); while in simple financial terms, Ivory's invasion, quite apart from its cost to county and central funds, had been a failure; and a disaster in terms of publicity - "midnight raids worthy of Zululand have been the order of the night, and Sheriff Ivory has had a judicial and martial debauch", in the words of one account(55).

Despite the gunboats, marines and police, not much money had been collected. "Seventy five marines collected between them £200 in rent. The arrears still due, or supposed to be due, are £19,500.....If it takes 75 men and a sheriff 30 days to collect £200, how many will it take to collect £19,500?", demanded one observer(56).

In short, Ivory had failed once again on Skye, and as the government was not prepared to force the issue, the sheriff returned home(57), though in the week of his going, it was reported that a two-month old baby had been poinded in lieu of rent; "The baby's value was declared by competent appraisers to be 6d., and to be the property of the complainer, Lord MacDonald. At the same time, a collie puppy was valued at 1/-, and a graip at 2/-". Given the prevailing conditions, the significance of the report lay not in its accuracy (it was denied) but in the publicity it attained; and the extent to which it was seen at least to be accurate in spirit - and for many, both within the Highlands and without, it was certainly that(58).

Thus at the beginning of December, the marines left

Skye too, bound for Chatham(59). There remained the matter of court cases for those crofters arrested during the Ivory campaign; shortly before Christmas, six men from Bornaskitaig appeared in court in Edinburgh charged with mobbing, rioting and assault, and drew six months each(60); and on the 28th of December, another batch of Skye crofters left Portree for the High Court of Edinburgh(61).

Ivory, however, had failed to crush agitation in the island; while as in Skye an upsurge in anti-landlord direct-action across the Minch in Lewis can not have but been fuelled by the ongoing proceedings of the Crofters' Commission. The Commission, after all, was still touring the Highlands, examining (which would mean reducing) crofters' rents, to intense interest on the part of the crofters themselves, and with an effect similar to that of the Napier Commission tour. Initally a matter of some debate and doubt, the membership of the Commission was approved-of by MacFarlane and Fraser-MacIntosh(62); and by October, it was in Sutherland, to hear the claims of 70 crofters with regard to the rent they were paying(63).

No-one expected it to favour the landlords; as the North British Daily Mail editorialised, "According to the Act, a landlord may apply to have fair rents fixed for his land, but it is somewhat significant that not one of them have as yet troubled the Commission with an application"(64).

While the same paper covered extensively individual crofter applications with regard to land(65) and housing(66), it diligently followed the commission throughout November, by the beginning of which the commissioners had moved to consider applications from tenants of various proprietors in Sutherland; despite attempts to thwart its work by the landlords. At Gruids, for instance, on land owned by Lady Matheson of Lewis, an attempt was made to persuade the crofters to spurn the protection of the Crofters' Act, and thus of the

Commission. This persuasion, however, they ignored; and their evidence was given by the local Land League leader William Black, who had also given evidence before Lord Napier.(67).

According to one report, Black had been subject to an eviction attempt; but his neighbours from Lairg, Rosehall, Bonar Bridge, "and many other districts assembled to his aid and made such a determined resistance that the officers of the law were forced to decamp without effecting their purpose". Once again, the evidence heard sustained that collective sense of injustice, that collective vision of redress, that had in the previous decade been heard with increasing volume across the Highlands; its central theme the old one of - the land for the people(68).

By that Christmas, however, the commission, acutely aware of the continuing agitation in Skye and elsewhere, was drawing favourable comment from pro-crofter sources; not least by dint of its decision to thwart landlord attempts to circumvent the spirit of the Act by getting their crofters to sign leases. The Commission ruled in this respect that only leases of more than one year (precisely the sort of crofting lease a landlord would avoid) would render the Act inapplicable(69).

The perceived pro-crofter rulings of the Commission had a dual affect across the Highlands - early adjudications having the effect of serving as an incitement to crofters everywhere to have high expectations of the commission when it reached their area; and thereby as an encouragement to sustained agitation until such time as it did(70).

Once again, therefore, there was trouble on Skye, at Elishader in Kilmuir, with the by-now usual disturbance when sheriff-officers attempted to force payment of rent arrears(71). And just weeks later, further trouble erupted on Lord MacDonald's lands in south Skye, at Sconser. In March, with the Crofters' Commission in the island and taking evidence, the Sconser people readily admitted that,

"on more than one occasion of late they had driven deer found among their corn into the sea, where the animals were caught by fishing boat, the spoil being equally divided"(72).

By now, in the spring of 1887, having won security of tenure in law and being in the process of winning rent-reductions, the land-movement was in the course of moving towards the demand of the return of the land increasingly under deer forest; towards the end of the year, this would re-appear in spectacular form. But meanwhile, the Act of the previous summer was amended, again in the crofters' favour; an amendment of which even The Times approved(73).

In parliament too, the work of the crofters' commission was being raised; the member for Ross and Cromarty urging the government to appoint more valuers, to speed-up its work (74). In May, the member for Caithness was reporting in the Commons press coverage of crofters' grievances in Skye, with particular attention to the availability of the land lying under sheep and deer(75); the governmentwas asked, in anticipation of legislation still many years distant, to empower the commission to form new townships and holdings to relieve such congestion - but the government would not(76).

The strains induced by concession on the one hand and attempted coercion on the other, along with attempts to re-structure it as a formal progressive political party in the Highlands, were by now having a noticeable, and public, effect on the Land League, with acrimonious debate beginning to surface in the columns of the North British Daily Mail(77), particularly as the 1887 League conference approached, to be held at Oban in September, and intended to unite, "under one name and one organisation all societies advocating land law and other reforms in the Highlands"(78).

Once again, however, the established leaders were in attendance - among them Dr Clark, Dr MacDonald, D.H. MacFarlane, Donald MacCallum, Donald Murray, John MacPherson, Stuart Glennie, and John Murdoch, most of whom

formed the new executive. Generally, the view of the conference was that the original Act was no more than "an instalment of justice". The by-now familiar call for a Scottish parliament was made; it was agreed that the land-question in the Highlands, "would not be settled until they had a Scottish Legislature and a Scottish Executive". As Stuart Glennie advocated, it was time to establish a Scottish National League (again, anticipating events by many years) with its object, "the securing of Home Rule for Scotland to achieve a satisfactory settlement of the land-question, which they could not get as long as they were over-ruled by English members of parliament". Suitably enough, another speaker was Donald MacRae of Lewis, whose name was soon to be associated in a major way with the land-movement there, and who warned that Lewis would, 'fight rather than surrender'(79).

Shortly before the island would have this opportunity however, there would be the celebrated case in Sutherland of Hugh Kerr, a fugitive Land-Leaguer, as a result of trouble at Clashmore in Lochinver deriving from a crofter decision to seize a local farm. The farm was duly seized; while it was found that the steading of the farm had been destroyed by fire -"singularly enough", in the words of The Scotsman. Some days earlier, a barn and byre at Glendhu had also been burned to the ground - "as yet, no cause has been publicly assigned of the origin of the fire"(80).

A correspondent in the North British Daily Mail observed that if there were less deer in the Highlands there might be room for more men "and fewer Cockneys and German Princelings"; while at Land League meetings throughout the district raids on deer-forests were under discussion(81).

Similar action was also being discussed with reference to the Winans deer-forests in Ross-shire and Inverness-shire. A detachment of crofters connected with the League was reported in Beauly, canvassing for support; the plan "was being seriously discussed by both cottars and crofters

who have been evicted out of Strathglass and neighbouring glens"(82).

At the beginning of December, therefore, 11 policemen and forty men of the Royal Scots arrived at Lochinver, aboard the gunboat Jackal, and under the command of the chief-constable and sheriff of Sutherland, who had for the past week been in urgent communication with London and Edinburgh regarding events in Assynt(83). After an "exceedingly stormy passage", the gunboat reached Lochinver, the party marched for Clashmore, and managed one arrest(84). Hugh Kerr, however, a well-known and popular local League leader, had disappeared into the hills; with a symbolism unlikely to have gone un-noticed by the indigenous population of his district, the Highlands, or Scotland(85).

The prospect of a raid on the Winans' deer forest was still being discussed - in the middle of December, a special meeting of the Lovat Land League was held at Kilmorack; it was denied that moves were afoot to organise a mass raid, but also denied were claims that the estate was so well-guarded that the League could not take it if it wanted to(86).

Clearly, crofter consciousness was at a high pitch; encouraged, doubtless, by the continuing, and widely publicised, work of the Crofters' Commission, with even the traditionally pro-landlord Scotsman showing signs of criticising some landlords(87).

In Assynt, meantime, affairs at Clashmore were, "assuming a very serious aspect". The week before Christmas, the chief constable and ten of his men were billeted in the factor's house; two had already been assaulted and stoned; dykes had been torn down; and three days before Christmas, the Seahorse arrived at Lochinver under cover of darkness(88). The popular refrain was the old one of eviction in the past, land-shortage in the present - and the certain belief that the people had a right to the land(89).

Forty marines helped serve interdicts relating to the seizure of the Clashmore farm(90); but, "nothing of Hugh Kerr's whereabouts are known, though the general impression is that he is in hiding not far from the township"(91). The Times, meanwhile, reported that fires at, "more than one of the Duke's farm-steadings had aroused suspicion of incendiarism"(92).

By the following week, the Glasgow Sutherlandshire Association was meeting in Glasgow to consider an appeal from the people of Stoer, "narrating the grievances which caused the present rising in the Clashmore district, and appealing for funds in support of the families of the imprisoned crofters"; among the speakers was Angus Sutherland, MP(93).

At the beginning of February, the trial of the Clashmore people opened in Edinburgh(94). Nine women had smashed open a gate to the farm, and assaulted the factor(95); and later a fifty-strong crowd had surrounded a valuer with the warning that no farmer would be allowed on the land; for the people were going to take it for themselves(96). Three of the accused were found guilty, among them the wife of Hugh Kerr(97). He, however, remained at liberty; as one paper noted, he had for nine months evaded capture, police surveillance, midnight raids and military expedition(98).

Elsewhere in Assynt, meanwhile, "a raid on the Canish deer-forest was in contemplation", while the crofters around Scourie, "were making ready for another raid on part of the Reay forest" - the Duke of Sutherland's agents believed that if, "something was not done soon to protect the forests, very serious consequences may shortly follow"(99).

Kerr, meantime, remained free; a Land League organiser on the run, his wife gaoled in Edinburgh for anti-landlord agitation, her husband giving interviews from a cave to a sympathetic press. The authorities spent over £1,500 trying to capture him, but without success; and when he finally

surrendered to them, he was given one month in gaol - a light sentence in comparison to the sentences awarded Lewis men that winter for raiding the deer-forests and farms of their own island(100).

In Lewis, of course, land-hunger was acute, and the popular response to deer-forests equally acute. Along with the deer forests went large-scale popular destitution. By the onset of winter in 1887-1888, much of the crofter and cottar population was on the edge of starvation; and yet in the district of Lochs, Lady Matheson had let her 40,000-acre deer-forest to an Englishman called Platt. Popular demand for more land was intense; and yet for years the estate had refused to concede it. Six years earlier, when the lease of the land now occupied by deer was on the eve of expiry, she had refused a petititon that at least some of it be given to the people - and two years later, she had again refused a similar petition(101).

By 1882, Lady Matheson's tenant at Park had been A.C. Sellar, of the Patrick Sellar family; two years later his sheep-farming activities gave way to deer, like another 30-odd sheep-farms during the decade. In January 1887, however, a new school-teacher had come to the area; Donald MacRae, who had been expelled from his position at Rosskeen for involvement in the agitation there, and a forthcoming delegate to the Oban conference of the Land League(102). At the beginning of November, MacRae had convened a meeting at Balallan school-house, where it was decided to occupy the Park deer-forest. Within the fortnight, the raid began; leaving their townships early in the morning, the crofters, "were supplied with guns. They had flags flying, and a piper headed the Balallan contingent....."(103).

How many deer were killed in the forest is open to question; but for the authorities, the fact of the raid alone was alarming enough. The local sheriff warned that there was, "civil war in Lochs"; the tenant of the forest put his yacht at the disposal of the authorities; and the

police in Stornoway were followed through the town by a large, and unfriendly, contingent of crofters and their supporters. Central to the awareness of the raiders was an 1881 petition to Lady Matheson for an apportionment of the land occupied by the forest; it had taken her until 1883 to reject the petition. The formation of the forest, according to one report, had involved the destruction of 40 or 50 crofting townships, and the land could now support two or three hundred of the raiders. According to the same report, 1,500 of the 6,000 people in Lochs had taken part in the raid, 200 deer had been killed, with some butchered and cooked at a raiders' camp in the forest(104).

Within a day or two of entry to the forest, men from Harris had arrived. Great excitement, it was reported, prevailed in Balallan, with, "sentries posted at various points commanding views of the district". As a result, 82 men and 5 officers of the Royal Scots were despatched from Glasgow for Lewis, and three carriages were made ready for them at Inverness station, that they and their equipment might be conveyed without delay to Strome and thence on to Stornoway. It was also reported, "the crofters all over the island are unanimous in approval of the course adopted by the Lochs people. Large meetings are being held all over the west side of Lewis at which the new plan of campaign is warmly discussed"(105).

In Dingwall, the Royal Scots, who before dawn that morning had marched down from Maryhill to Glasgow's Central Station (doubtless observed closely by the crofters' friends in the city as they did so), were on arrival greeted by an angry crowd there; while the Ajax left the Clyde, with 400 marines on board, bound for Stornoway; her departure too was doubtless telegraphed ahead(106). On the trip north she was disabled and nearly wrecked; a symbolism that would not itself have gone un-noticed in Lewis or the wider Highlands(107).

In the face of this major demonstration of force,

however, the raiders promptly withdrew from the forest; and it quickly transpired that the raid had been a highly-organised tactic to draw national attention to the question of Lady Matheson's Park, and Lady Matheson's hungry tenants. The authorities had been informed beforehand of the raid, and its leading participants were ready to co-operate fully, having themselves arrested and brought to court; "the leader of the movement in the Lochs parish is the schoolmaster of Balallan, Donald MacRae"(108).

Thus nine men soon afterwards surrendered to the authorities at Stornoway, including MacRae, and were charged with incitement to intimidation(109). With regard to MacRae, said one report, "It is clear that the officials of the Castle are determined to crush him. He is a dangerous man on an estate such as Lady Matheson's, where the people are starving"(110).

In the face of this insurrection, however, the landlords had nothing better to offer their tenants that the traditional landlord remedy of crofter-emigration. A colonial agent was at this time in London, "prosecuting a scheme for the assisted emigration of Highland crofters". These proposed emigrants would be expected to repay, "on easy terms" the, "sum necessary to set them up in their new allotments". The Marquis of Lorne had already, "expressed keen support for the whole idea", and further enthusiasm was, "eagerly anticipated" from the Duke of Argyll - and Lady Matheson(111).

In Lewis, consequently, the Park example was being copied. On the last day of November, cottars from Ness and Barvas marched to the sheep-farm at Galston, and warned the tenant there that when his lease had expired they were going to take forcible possession of the place, which "measured eight miles by six, all of which was formerly cultivated by crofters who were evicted.....They gave the tenant warning to sell off his stock and prepare to emigrate"(112).

Shortly afterwards, the last of the men wanted in

connection with the Park raid surrendered(113); but on the first day of December the land-leaguers of Lochs met to consider their next move. The meeting began with the expulsion of suspected informers, continued with congratulations to the men charged as a result of the raid, and concluded with a threat to re-occupy the Park forest(114).

Thus at the end of that week, a detachment of marines was again bound towardsLewis, from Plymouth, aboard the Seahorse, with 100 rounds of ball cartridge per man(115); while a day later, the Jackal was under recreational orders for Loch Shell, as the officers had been invited to a few days's shooting of such deer as were left in Park by Mrs Platt, wife of the shooting-tenant(116).

While the results of the Crofters Commission in North Uist were reported, and a rent-reduction of 28% ordered(117), the Seahorse was arriving at Stornoway; the Jackal was lying at Eishken; and the Marquis of Lothian was arguing that, "people were so desperately poor in Lewis that they could be nothing but better off if they would only emigrate"(118).

His counsel, unsurprisingly, went unheeded in Lewis. On the shortest day of the year 4,300 cottars from Borve, Shader and Barvas marched to Galston sheep-farm and surveyed the lands, and warning the tenant to leave as soon as his lease expired the following March. "The contingents were headed by pipers and flags in military order"; while in Skye, land-leaguers were meeting outdoors in a snow-storm to express sympathy with events in Lewis(119).

The following Saturday, the day before Christmas day, on the other side of the island, 1,000 crofters and cottars of Point marched on the Aignish sheep-farm, yet again with flags and pipers, to warn the (English) farmer to get out within 14 days. They then marched on to the Melbost sheep-farm, tenanted by a relation of the Aignish farmer, with a similar threat(120).

On the 29th of December, a Land League meeting drew crofters and cottars from throughout the district; and it was agreed that a week or so later, the stock of the farmers would be driven away, and replaced by crofters' stock(121).

Four days later a proclamation under the terms of the Riot Act was posted widely throughout the neighbourhood prohibiting such a raid(122); unperturbed, a 300-strong deputation presented itself on the steps of Lady Matheson's castle to demand the farms; she refused and suggested emigration; and at a mass meeting later that day in Stornoway, "strong and passionate language was freely used"(123).

In Edinburgh, the trial of the Park raiders was scheduled for the opening weeks of the new year. Donald MacRae announced that he would be calling as a witness Lady Matheson; while the island was by now, "in a seriously disturbed condition; the reply which the people got from the proprietrix will not tend in any way to allay the turbulent feeling that is abroad"(124).

The following Monday, therefore, the raid on Aignish took place, with a party of Royal Scots in reserve and 36 marines from the Seahorse stationed at the farmhouse. Soon after dawn a police scout observed by telescope that, "there was great excitement and stir among the townships"; and that people were moving to a nearby hill, where a standard was already flying. By noon, the brow of this hill was "gradually blackening"; and then the crowd rushed down, spreading across the farm, and driving the stock before it. Bayonets were fixed; the Riot Act read; the Royal Scots summoned; and 13 crofters arrested. That night, 33 marines and 12 police guarded the farmhouse(125).

On the following Tuesday, the rifles in the Stornoway base of the local Volunteer company were disabled and the ammunition taken aboard the Seahorse; while it was reported that the farm of Galston, on the west side of Lewis, would shortly be raided. Mass deputations to the Matheson castle

were now almost a daily affair; one 150-strong group of Coll crofters were turned away with the suggestion that they too emigrate. As a result, the Forester was provisioning on the Clyde, and embarking marines for Lewis. The Aignish people however, unrepentant, gave notice that in five weeks 1,000 men would begin cultivation of the Aignish farm. There were also fears of raiding at Carloway and Shawbost; and from Uig, it was reported that raids were also being planned(126).

In the middle of January, the 13 arrested Aignish raiders were taken aboard the Jackal en route for Dingwall gaol, under escort of marines and police - as a result of a rescue-bid rumour of the previous evening, the men were embarked at 2 in the morning. That same day the raiders from Park were on their way to trial in Edinburgh; 400 yards of dyke had been destroyed at Galston; at Dalbeg farm, in Barvas, there had been threats made and police sent for(127).

There had also been some destruction of fences at Dell; and at Linshader, in the parish of Uig, five hundred men had marched from Tolsta, Dun, Carloway, Breasclete and Callernish; at Garrynahine, they warned the tenant of the sheep-farm there to clear-out at once; and then proceeded to deliver the same message to the farmer at Linshadder(128).

The following Saturday, more marines were disembarked at Stornoway(129); on the Monday, the trial of the Park raiders began in Edinburgh, with the jury hearing of how 130 men had marched from Gravir behind a red flag; of how in a crowd of perhaps 150, there were perhaps 50 firearms, mostly old single-barrelled muzzle-loading shotguns and rifles; of how the raiders established their camp in the forest, and then began the destruction of the deer(130).

The agent for the defence noted that the forest extended to 150 square miles; wondered how 150 men could mob and riot over as many square miles; and secured a not guilty verdict. By that evening, news of their acquittal had

reached even the most remote corners of Lochs; while elsewhere in the island, there had been further raiding that same day, with 50 men from Borve destroying a mile of boundary fence at the Galston farm, in the process overpowering a dozen police set there to guard it. The Seahorse was sent to Galston with 60 marines; a contingent of the Royal Scots set off to march to the farm; even as the jury was re-entering the court in Edinburgh, the Seahorse was landing her marines at Port of Ness. The next day, at dawn, 80 marines and Royal Scots, along with 40 police, raided Borve, where, "Land League doctrines have a firm hold", and arrested six men who had been identified by the local farmer as League activists(131).

That same week, the example of Lewis was being followed elsewhere; in Skye, the Braes Land League met to demand the division among them of Lord MacDonald's Glennargilt farm; in Glendale, the people were demanding the division of Bracadale and Minginish; in Ross-shire, "an attempt may be made on the deer-forest of Kildermorie, on the estate of Munro-Ferguson of Novar; the authorities have been warned of the affair"(132)

Back in Lewis, the Park raiders returned to a triumphant welcome, with bonfires on every hilltop in Lochs; the Borve men were released from custody on grounds of insufficient identification; and a deputation from Back called on Lady Matheson to demand the division among them of the farm at Gress, reading aloud to her a letter which concluded, "In the case of a sharp refusal it is hard to say what the result will be"(133).

Donald MacRae was in London, on Land League business, and was interviewed by the London Evening Star at length; "The schoolmaster of Balallan is in town - a famous man in Lewis and not unknown here. In his own island and parish he is the guide and inspirer of the land war, and the leading spirit of that powerful and active body, the Highland Land League.....the land for the people, not for the landlords or

the deer, and room on it for those who cling to their native soil, is the programme"(134).

By the end of the month, crofters and cottars in Breasclete and Tolsta were demanding the restoration of the sheep farms at Linshadder and Garynahine; at Coll, fences were being destroyed; while to the south, in Barra, a mass-meeting at Castlebay was demanding more land. In Skye Lord MacDonald was taking court action against crofters for non-payment of rent. And on the mainland, a meeting in Brora protested against the recent increase in the county police force, "as it is only fitted to augment the agitation which is its cause". In Beauly, an enthusiastic meeting of crofters and cottars was held, "in connection with the Highland Land League, and had reason to rejoice at the recent acquittal of their Lewis brethren, the Park deer raiders". At Ullapool, a similar meeting agreed to, "not rest satisfied until the land which lay in close proximity to them was restored"; the six deer-forests in the parish of Lochbroom ran to 25,000 acres, and, "it was agreed to continue the agitation until they secured some of the land in the six neighbouring forests"(135).

Still, the landlords urged their tenants to emigrate; Hugh Matheson, nephew of the late Sir James, wrote to The Times, claiming that the poverty of the people was their own fault, as a result of over-crowding themselves on the land left-over from deer-forests and sheep-farms(136).

In Lochcarron, however, the local League met to collect money for Lewis, and hear a speaker remind them that, "they had been agitating constitutionally for too long a period.....the only remedy for a redress of their grievances lay in their taking possession of the land at an early date". One of the largest League meetings ever in the district, it also agreed to prepare for raids in two neighbouring deer-forests(137).

In Skye, the tenants at Sconser warned that unless they were granted, "lands now under deer", they would simply take

them; while in Kilmuir the tenants of six townships met to discuss similar action(138). In Greenock, 2,000 people met to advise, "every crofter and cottar to set their faces firmly against any scheme of emigration while an acre of fertile land remains out of cultivation, and devoted to sporting purposes"(139).

And from the New Zealand Gaelic Society, money was despatched to Charles Cameron, owner of the North British Daily Mail, "conveying to you the thanks of the Highlanders of this part of the world for your powerful advocacy of the crofter cause". Those who had subscribed to the appeal identified their origins as: Orkney, Shetland, Lewis, Argyll, Iona, Arran, Lochalsh, Arisaig, Applecross, Tiree, North Uist, Barra, Aberfeldy, Kerrera, Bonar Bridge, Dingwall, Fort William, and Mull(140).

By then, the Aignish men were appearing in Edinburgh on trial. The Stornoway police superintendent told of how the Royal Scots had bayonet-charged the crowd; of how the authorities' warning-posters distributed prior to the raid had been removed; of how a Stornoway shop-keeper, who had displayed one, had had his windows smashed. Newall, the tenant, himself told of how, the day before Christmas, he had met a mob, hundreds strong, carrying a red flag, and of how he was warned that he had 14 days to get off his farm(141).

The trial went to a second day; Lord Craighill summed up strongly against the prisoners; the jury found them guilty but recommended leniency; the gallery cheered; and Craighill warned that if they persisted, he would have them thrown out. Having already demonstrated a dislike of Gaelic in his court, Craighill lost no time in imposing sentences of between 6 and 15 months - at which the gallery duly hissed. As the North British Daily Mail noted, "The hissing begun there has already spread over the whole of Scotland.....Unless something better than gunboats and soldiers and gaols can be offered to the crofters very

quickly, the government will find that they have heavy work before them in the Highlands"(142).

Certainly, the sentences passed in Edinburgh did not dissuade further agitation. The Land League was again planning to send fund-raising delegates to the colonies and the Americas, among them Donald MacRae, John Murdoch, Angus Sutherland, John MacPherson and Alexander MacKenzie(143).

In Skye, crofters at Valtos agreed that, "the time for asking was past;" the time for taking had come(144). In Portree, the Land League met to denounce, "with horror and indignation the sentences passed on the Lewis crofters and the manner in which non-English speaking witnesses for the defence in the recent trials were terrorised and browbeaten in court". Staffin and Valtos tenants met on the sheep-farm at Duntulm, "chiefly made-up of crofter townships cleared in the last thirty years", and warned that they would soon take direct action too(145).

In Lewis, Lady Matheson received a threatening letter - she sent it to the post office, with the instructions that it be displayed on public view(146). Meetings in Skye and Sutherland were denouncing the Aignish sentences(147); 30 yards of boundary dyke between the farm of Dalmore, Carloway and the township of Garinen were torn down(148).

Lady Matheson received another threatening letter of "abominable and scandalous content"; the Land League executive met at Dingwall, to denounce the sentences on the Aignish raider(149); two constables were now patrolling the grounds of Stornoway Castle at night, and incoming boats to the harbour watched, for fear of "agitators" arriving in connection with the issue that had required her ladyship's police protection(150).

The Mull Land League denounced the Aignish sentences(151); in Ross-shire, a mass-meeting agreed unanimously in favour of popular invasion of deer forests in the county on August 12th, to shoot the deer, "in presence of the sportsmen"(152); the Alness Land League presented

Donald MacRae with a purse of money in connection with his services to the movement(153); and towards the end of February, the Seahorse was sent to Bayble to assist in the arrest of two men wanted in connection with the recent riot at Aignish(154).

The Crofters' Act, therefore, and the work of the Crofters' Commission, had not stilled agitation; but had acted, if anything, as a spur to further popular efforts to reclaim the land of the Highlands for the common, native, people of those Highlands.

And below it all - the defiant pipers that led the popular demonstrations, the red flags, the speeches at conference and cornstack - ran one swift and central undercurrent; the repudiation of landlordism, in its class, national and cultural dimensions, both in the Highlands and, at least by some sort of proxy, throughout Scotland. In the words of one editorial on events in the Hebrides, "We thus have a Scotch vote of 37 against 11 (Scots) Tories, but the voice of Scotland is silenced and overpowered by an English Tory majority, which treats the grave crisis in Lewis.....with indifference and contempt. Who shall say after this that Scotland receives justice at the hands of the Imperial Parliament?"(155).

This, as will be seen, was a current, a theme, that was to increasingly characterise the future of the movement in the years to come.

CHAPTER SEVEN

1.

Lothian Muniments, GD 40/16/3; letter from Alexander Forbes Irvine, sheriff of Argyll; and the telegram reply of 13-7-1886.

2.

Oban Times, 1-5-1886.

3.

Napier Commission, evidence, vol 3, Q's 33423-33428; and Appendix A, LXXXV (380-394.)

4.

Scottish Highlander, 29-7-1886. The Times, 24/26-7-1886.

5.

Thomas MacNaughton, The crofters' rising in Tiree, The People's Journal, 14-11-1925.

6.

James Cameron, The Old and the New Highlands, 89-100. On the scenes at Scarinish, see the 5-deck-headline story in the North British Daily Mail, 23-7-1886 (notes from an eye-witness); and the Oban Times for the following day's mass meeting at Crosspool.

7.

I. Henderson, Scotland Kirk and People, London 1969.

8.

Ibid.

9.

Cameron, Old and New; "His grace could not get over the damning fact that between himself and the potato disease of 1845 the population of Tiree was reduced in four years after his accession from 5,000 to a little over 3,000. In 1883, when the duke appeared as a defender of the land policy pursued by him and his ancestors in the island, there were six tenants paying £2,685 a year of rent, and the remaining population, £2,702".

10.

MacNaughton, The crofters' rising.

11.

Iain Fraser Grigor, the day the navy stormed Tiree, Fort William Free Press, 2-1-1976. The Ajax, a modern ironclad, built in 1880, was 280' in length, with a speed of almost ten knots, and a ten-day coal endurance at full speed. Armoured with 17" iron plates, she brought to Tiree 4 15-ton guns, two quick-fire 14-ton guns, and 14 smaller quick-fire guns.

12.

The Scotsman, 2-8-1886. The Times, 2-8-1886. Scottish Highlander, 12-8-1886. Joni Buchanan, West Highland Free Press, 29-8-1886.

13.

North British Daily Mail, as follows;

- 19-10-1886 (3 cols);
- 20-10-1886 (3 cols);
- 21-10-1886 (3 cols);
- 22-10-1886 (1 col);
- 30-10-1886 (1 col);
- 26-10-1886;
- 30-10-1886 (1 col);
- 15-11-1886;
- 17-11-1886;
- and 23-11-1886.

14.

Craig, British Parliamentary Election Results 1885-1918, 527. For a biography of MacFarlane, see footnote 9, chapter 8, this text; and also James Hunter (column), West Highland Free Press, 5-11-1982. Having won Sutherland in the 1892 election, Angus Sutherland moved to be chairman of the Fishery Board for Scotland and resigned his seat. It was won by John MacLeod, who lost it in 1900 (Craig, 1885-1918; 562.) As late as 1899 MacLeod was listing himself as secretary of the Highland Land League; born at Helmsdale in 1862, he was by the turn of the century owner and editor of

the Highland News, "organ of the Liberal and Land Reform party in the Highlands, 1888-1898". (Who's Who, 1899.)

15.

The North British Daily Mail had earlier incorporated the Glasgow Daily Advertiser and North British Mail; in 1890 it became the Glasgow Daily Mail for some five months; when it was incorporated into the Daily Record (according to the periodicals catalogue of Glasgow's Mitchell Library).

16.

He died on 11-10-1912, aged 62; son of Rev D. Murray of Lochcarron - Oban Times 19-10-1912 (½ col and picture.)

17.

At Bonar Bridge, the League demanded; (a) the restoration to the Highland people of their native land on equitable conditions and the resistance by every constitutional method of the depopulation of the Highlands be eviction, forced emigration, or any other means; (b) the abolition of the Game Laws; (c) the emendation of the laws relating to sea, loch and river fishing; and (d) the restoration to the people of their foreshore rights.

18.

North British Daily Mail, 22-9-1886.

19.

Domhnall Eachann Meek, Mairi Mhor nan Oran, Gairm, Glasgow, 1977. Mary MacPherson, of course, was no stranger to land-agitation matters; as Meek's notes to her work make clear. See, eg, (page) [note]; (123)[64] on John Murdoch; (125)[5] on Charles Fraser MacIntosh; (126)[6] on Bernera; (129)[142] on Lord MacDonald; (129)[167-8] on John Stuart Blackie; (131)[14,15] on Fraser of Kilmuir; (132)[41-56] on the Greenock Gaelic Society; (133)[43] on Stuart Glennie and Donald MacFarlane; (134)[20] on the Napier Commission; (134)[26,29 and 30] on Donald MacCallum and his famous sermon on Ahab and Jezebel; (135)[56] and (138)[82] on the Land League; (135)[15] on Alexander MacKenzie; (136)[23] on the naval invasion of Skye; (137)[88-90] on Winans; (137)[9-

12] on the "Parnell" of Skye; (138)[71] on John MacPherson; and (140)[13] on Donald MacRae of Lewis. See also (130)[120] and (134)[12-19] on the famous meeting at Fairy Bridge.

20.

For an incidental comment from Sorley MacLean on Mairi Mhor and Fairy Bridge, see Times Literary Supplement, 9-9-1977.

21.

North British Daily Mail, 24-9-1886.

22.

North British Daily Mail, 4-10-1886.

23.

Ibid.

24.

Ibid.: "The rumour spread rapidly , causing quite a flutter of excitement among the prominent parties connected with the Land League..... a new United Land League is about to be formed on Skye, which is one result of the Bonar Bridge conference".

25.

North British Daily Mail, 5-10-1886.

26.

North British Daily Mail, 6-10-1886. See also 2 cols on the "Pope" of Lewis, a central figure in the Land League there.

27.

North British Daily Mail, 7-10-1886.

28.

North British Daily Mail, 8-10-1886. The paper analysed the landlord manoeuvre thus; "It will be remembered that the landlords refused to pay their poor and school rates on the grounds that they had not received the rents upon which the rates were assessed. Of course, the witholding of the rates was illegal; but few persons imagined at the time what a beautiful bit of legal procedure the landlords intended their illegal action to bring about.....They made out lists of arrears were due; lists which somehow did not show by

whom the arrears were due, but gave the impression that the crofters were the offenders, and that nothing but force would put an end to their defiance of the law. Inquiries in parliament, however, brought out the fact that the landlords owed by far the largest part of the arrears.....In the parish of Portree, for instance, the crofters owed only £47 for arrears, while the landlords owed £336.....So the armed force has been sent; and what has happened? On the very day the expedition arrived at the island the lairds paid their rates, leaving the expedition to be directed entirely against the crofters for the small amount they owe. But for what purpose then did the lairds get the expedition there? Not to serve writs for rates, but to serve writs for rent.....It is evident that the landlords were not only organised, but were kept well informed.....How did the landlords know the day the expedition would arrive?..... But as the crofters have not paid their insignificant arrears of rates - not having had the chance which was given to the landlords - the expedition goes on, and the opportunity is obtained for serving the rent writs under its protection. It is all very clever.....*One week of a local parliament in Scotland would smash up the rotten system*". (Emphasis added).

29.

See Joni Buchanan (column), West Highland Free Press, 24-10-1986.

30.

North British Daily Mail, 9-10-1886.

31.

Ivory Papers, GD 1/36/12, Ivory's report to the Home Secretary of 7-10-1886. Glasgow Herald, 8-10-1886. Joni Buchanan (column), West Highland Free Press, 24-10-1986; 7-11-1986; and 21-11-1986.

32.

Glasgow Herald, 11-10-1886. North British Daily Mail, 11-10-1886.

33.

North British Daily Mail, 12-1-1886.

34.

North British Daily Mail, 13-10-1886.

35.

Napier Commission, evidence, v1, Q1556. The commission's report readily conceded rack-renting in Kilmuir; "The grievance of increased rent had been submitted to our notice in many instances, but in most, we think, with much less force than the complaint respecting restricted areas. A reference to the evidence, however, will show that in particular cases, the question of rent assumes a more prominent position, as in the instances of the Ross of Mull, Tiree and Iona, in the south west, [and] on the estate of Kilmuir in Skye"; 50-51.

36.

North British Daily Mail, 14-10-1886.

37.

North British Daily Mail, 19-10-1886.

38.

North British Daily Mail, 21-10-1886.

39.

North British Daily Mail, 26-10-1886.

40.

The Scotsman, 27-10-1886; the Glasgow Herald, 27-10-1886; and the North British Daily Mail, 27-10-1886.

41.

North British Daily Mail, 28-18-1886.

42.

North British Daily Mail, 29-10-1886.

43.

North British Daily Mail, 30-10-1886.

44.

North British Daily Mail, 1-11-1886. This argument of illegality was not without foundation. "The whole process of serving writs for rents in Skye has been illegal from

beginning to end. In places which come within the Crofters' Act all question of rent are by that Act held in abeyance until decided by the Crofters' Commission. Skye comes within the Act. The formal document signifying that fact was signed by the Secretary for Scotland on the 18th of this month.....Skye has been under the Act since the 18th inst; and the writs for rent were not begun to be served till after that date. The service has therefore been illegal; and sheriff Ivory has been raiding the island not only in a lawless manner, but on a lawless errand, while the crofters have only resisted unlawful proceedings".

45.

North British Daily Mail, 3-11-1886.

46.

North British Daily Mail, 5-11-1886.

47.

North British Daily Mail, 8-11-1886.

48.

Ivory Papers, GD 1/36/12, Ivory's report to the Home Secretary, of 7-11-1886. North British Daily Mail, 6-11-1886.

49.

North British Daily Mail, 8-11-1886.

50.

The Scotsman, 10-11-1886; the Glasgow Herald, 10-11-1886; and the North British Daily Mail, 10-11-1886.

51.

North British Daily Mail, 11-11-1886. See also 12-11-1886, on a meeting of Highlanders resident in South Africa, "condemning in the strongest terms the conduct of the Duke of Argyll".

52.

The Glasgow Herald, 15-11-1886; The Scotsman, 15-11-1886; and the North British Daily Mail, 15-11-1886.

53.

Cameron, Old and New, 109-112. North British Daily Mail,

18-11-1886. Norman MacLean, Set Free, 52-66.

54.

North British Daily Mail, 19-11-1886.

55.

North British Daily Mail, 20-11-1886.

56.

Ibid. The paper also claimed that money collected for rates arrears was actually being debited for rent arrears; the rates-collectors being estate-factors as well.

57.

North British Daily Mail, 23-11-1886.

58.

North British Daily Mail, 27-11-1886; 28-11-1886.

59.

North British Daily Mail, 3-12-1886.

60.

North British Daily Mail, 14-12-1886.

61.

North British Daily Mail, 29-12-1886; 30-12-1886. On references to the work of the Crofters' Commission in the North British Daily Mail over the three months to the end of 1886;

see, for October;

- 13-10;
- 15-10 (2 cols);
- 16-10 (2 cols);
- 20-10 (½col);
- 21-10 (1½ cols);
- 22-10 (2½ cols); -
- 23-10 (1½ cols);
- 25-10 (½ col);
- 26-10 (½ col);
- 28-10 (1 col);
- 29-10 (1½ cols);
- and 30-10 (½col).

And see, for November/December;

- 2-11 (1 col);
- 3-11;
- 5-11 (2 cols);
- 10-11 (1 col; Gruids);
- 13-11;
- 18-12 (½ col);
- 22-12 (½ col; impending decision);
- and 31-12 (rents reduced.)

62.

Inverness Courier, 15-6-1886.

63.

It was composed of Brand, sheriff of Ayr; Hossack, an Oban land agent; MacIntyre, a farmer at Findon Mains; and as Gaelic interpreter, W. MacKenzie; North British Daily Mail, 13-10-1886.

64.

Ibid.

65.

For example, that of Andrew MacKay, applying on behalf of his mother, for a croft of 4 acres of arable and 2 of outrun; "His grandfather was the first tenant. He came there in 1812, at the time of the Sutherland clearances. There was then no arable land at all, the whole of the place being moorland. All the arable ground has been reclaimed by his family on the croft": North British Daily Mail, 15-10-1886.

66.

At Shean, for instance, beyond Invershin, the croft of Hector Forbes, "was little better than the surrounding moorland. The house was the most miserable one which up till then the commissioners had seen. Situated on a damp foundation, built up for perhaps a foot and a half, with loose water-worn stones, on the top of which are constructed rude walls of peat, and covered with a rude thatching of broom, the house presented an appearance which it was

difficult to associate with a habitation intended for the abode of man": North British Daily Mail, 20-10-1886. See also North British Daily Mail, 21-10-1886 and 22-10-1886; the effect on crofter-consciousness of the Napier Commission, of the Crofters' Act, but above all of the agitation itself, was striking; as their apparent refusal to give evidence in English suggests. (See also below, with regard to treatment in various courts of law of Gaelic-speakers on trial for land-raiding.)

67.

Napier Commission, evidence, Q's 38813-38994, at Golspie. (John MacKay, Hereford, was another witness; Q's 39160-39222.)

68.

North British Daily Mail, 10-11-1886.

69.

North British Daily Mail, 22-12-1886.

70.

As the first report of the Commission, 96-98, indicates; in Sutherland, rents were reduced by about a quarter and around fifty per cent of arrears were simply cancelled.

71.

The Scotsman, 20-1-1887.

72.

The Times, 8-3-1887.

73.

"By the Crofters' Act of last year, power is given to the crofter to apply to the commission to have a "fair-rent" fixed. But during the period between the date of application, and the final decision of the commission, it is possible according to a judgement of the Scotch courts, for the landlord to make the crofter a bankrupt for non-payment of arrears of rent, and so expel him from the holding and deprive him of the benefits of the Act. This would in reality be an evasion of the statute; for the commission is expressly authorised to stop all proceedings for removal of

the crofter in respect of non-payment of rent till the application is determined". (The amendment allowed the commission to sist an application; ie, delay any action against an applicant, until the commission had had a chance to examine his or her case.) The Times, 14-4-1887. It should be noted that the verbatim, or at least lengthy, press reports of the Crofters' Commission constitute something of a repeat-version of the evidence collected by the Napier Commission.

74.

Hansard, Commons, v 315, 3rd Series, c.1045.

75.

At Solitote; "The visit of the commission caused a great deal of excitement in the township; the people crowded out to meet them, and followed them from croft to croft, with long tales of their grievances. At various points of inspection the commissioners were met by groups of men who urged them to give the crofters more land.....It was in vain that the commissioners pointed out that under the present Act they had no power to create new crofts, even if the land were available"; The Scotsman, 6-5-1887.

76.

Hansard, vol 314, 3rd series, cols 1466-1467.

77.

North British Daily Mail, 7-9-1887 (D.MacLachlan attacks Murray); 10-9-1887; 12-9-1887; 13-9-1887 (including letter giving history of Land League conferences); 14-9-1887.

78.

North British Daily Mail, 15-9-1887, (3 cols, motions, new executive, reports.)

79.

For a biography of MacRae, see the Scottish Highlander, 20-1-1887, and its report that he had been sacked from a teaching job in easter Ross for Land League activities. For an obituary, see the Bailie, Feb 20 1924.

80.

The Scotsman, 23-11-1887; North British Daily Mail, 23-11-1887. For events in Assynt from the viewpoint of the authorities, see Scottish Office Miss. Files, HH 1/917.

81.

North British Daily Mail, 26-11-1887.

82.

North British Daily Mail, 28-11-1887; MacKay, the Pet Lamb Case, Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness.

83.

Note that some reports in The Scotsman and the North British Daily Mail on Assynt are word-for-word from the same correspondent or stringer. Although this raises interesting questions about the extent of syndication of news from the Highlands during the land agitation, it does show that an index for one newspaper can usefully, if not exactly, serve as an index for the others. For affairs in Assynt, for instance, apart from The Scotsman of 23-11-1887 and 26-12-1887, and The Times of 31-12-1887, see the North British Daily Mail for 23-11-1887 (plus editorial); 26-11-1887; 28-11-1887; 2-12-1887; 5-12-1887; 13-12-1887; 24-12-1887; 28-12-1887; 29-12-1887; 30-12-1887; and 31-12-1887. Where the North British Daily Mail is given as source below, it is almost invariably the case that the same report, or a version thereof, appeared in The Scotsman and the Glasgow Herald; and (to a lesser extent) The Times.

84.

North British Daily Mail, 2-12-1887.

85.

North British Daily Mail, 5-12-1887.

86.

North British Daily Mail, 13-12-1887. For the extent of deer-forests, at 1883, see Napier Commission, report volume, appendix C, 530-532 and map. For deer forests, at 1892, Royal Commission (Highland and Islands, 1892), Report of Commissioners with evidence, appendices and maps; 1895 [c.7681], c.7682], XXXVIII, XXXIX, parts one and two [Deer

Forest Commission]; Appendix "Book of Reference to Maps", showing land in the counties of Argyll, Inverness, Ross and Cromarty, Sutherland, Caithness and Orkney and Shetland variously scheduled as suitable for new crofters' holdings, for additional crofters' grazing, or for moderately-sized farms. See page 25, for instance, for details of the Astley-Nicholson estate in Arisaig; and for Knoydart.

87.

The Scotsman, 10-12-1887; "Whatever may be thought of the Crofters' Act in its bearing on the relation between landlord and tenant, there will be a general conviction that it has been the means of doing good in the case of the Clyth tenants. The commissioners in that case have reduced the rents on an average of 50 per cent, and have wiped-off 82 per cent of arrears.....it was shown that there had been the most unmerciful screwing up of rents, and that practices had been resorted to as to arrears which were on the sharp side".

88.

North British Daily Mail, 24-12-1887.

89.

The Scotsman, 26-12-1887.

90.

North British Daily Mail, 28-12-1887; 29-12-1887; and 30-12-1887.

91.

North British Daily Mail, 31-12-1887.

92.

The Times, 21-12-1887.

93.

North British Daily Mail, 7-1-1888; 23-1-1888.

94.

The fact that the farmer's gates were locked is itself a revealing comment on the state of the land agitation in Sutherland in the winter of 1887-1888! See also the judgement of the Crofters' Commission in the district;

Report to end December 1888, [C. 5634], 130, Appendix H; "The holdings of 210 crofters in the parish of Assynt have been enlarged by taking land from (1) the deer-forest of Glencanisp, let to Major George Paynter; (2) the farm of Clashmore, let to Mr David MacBrayne, shipowner, Glasgow; and (3) the farms of Achmore, Oldney and Ardvar, in the occupancy of the proprietor, His Grace the Duke of Sutherland".

95.

And men dressed as women!

96.

Again, it seems, men, and men dressed as women.

97.

North British Daily Mail, 3-2-1888.

98.

North British Daily Mail, 4-2-1888.

99.

North British Daily Mail, 8-2-1888.

100.

Cameron, Old and New Highlands, 125-128.

101.

Cameron, Old and New Highlands, 116; and generally 113-124.

102.

Willie Orr, Saga of the Park Deer Raid, The Scotsman, 6-12-1980. Also Thomas MacNaughton, Armed Raid on Highland Deer Forest, The People's Journal, 21-11-1925. (As part of this same article, the author relates an interesting case of violent resistance to eviction at Easdale; gaol sentences followed).

103.

North British Daily Mail, 23-11-1887; "It is stated that six thousand human beings of the crofter class are on the verge of starvation. They occupy one-fourth of the parish land, while the remaining three-fourths are occupied by Mr Joe Platt and Mr Brancker as shooting tenants. The crofters and cottars have been driven to desperation owing to Lady

Matheson's refusal to give them lands at a fair rent. All the lands under deer at Park were formerly cultivated by the crofters, who now demand the restoration of their ancestral rights".

104.

This claim, that *fresh* venison was cooked and eaten, has yet to be challenged; if true, it must mean that those who ate it were indeed very hungry. For the perspective of the authorities, see the report of Nov 27th to the Scottish secretary; Lothian Papers, GD 40/16/34.

105.

Crofting Files, AF 67/35, report to Lothian of Nov 26th. North British Daily Mail, 25-11-1887.

106.

North British Daily Mail, 26-11-1887.

107.

North British Daily Mail, 28-11-1887; 29-11-1887.

108.

North British Daily Mail, 28-11-1887.

109.

For a Gaelic account of the Lewis raids, see Norman MacDonald, Creach Mhor nam Feidh, published by the Stornoway Gazette in the late 1960's; and for a profile of MacDonald, see Roger Hutchinson, From Thunderbay to Teangue, West Highland Free Press, 10-12-1982.

110.

For a biography of MacRae, see North British Daily Mail, 29-11-1887. For additional information, see Thomas MacNaughton, Armed Raid on Highland Deer Forest, above.

111.

North British Daily Mail, 30-11-1887.

112.

Crofting Files, AF 67/37, police reports from North Lewis, December. North British Daily Mail, 2-12-1887.

113.

North British Daily Mail, 3-12-1887.

114.

North British Daily Mail, 5-12-1887.

115.

North British Daily Mail, 8-12-1887.

116.

North British Daily Mail, 9-12-1887.

117.

North British Daily Mail, 10-12-1887; a very interesting and factually informative editorial on the work of the Crofters' Commission. See also North British Daily Mail, 12-12-1887, on 2nd report on destitution in Lewis (4 cols); plus 4 good illustrations of raiders, etc, in Park, including one of Montgomery, "a convicted poacher". On destitution, see also the editions of 8-12-1887(3 cols); 14-12-1887(2 cols); 15-12-1887(1 col); 16-12-1887(2 cols); 17-12-1887(1 col); 19-12-1887(1 col); 20-12-1887(1 col); 21-12-1887(2 cols); 22-12-1887(1 col); 26-12-1887(2 cols); and 30-12-1887(1 col.)

118.

North British Daily Mail, 13-12-1887.

119.

Ibid.

120.

Crofting Files, AF 67/38, police reports from Stornoway on Point, Jan 1888. North British Daily Mail, 26-12-1887.

121.

North British Daily Mail, 30-12-1887.

122.

Crofting Files, AF 67/38, police reports from Stornoway. North British Daily Mail, 5-1-1888.

123.

North British Daily Mail, 6-1-1888.

124.

North British Daily Mail, 7-1-1888.

125.

Crofting Files, AF 67/38, 67/39; reports of Jan 1888. North British Daily Mail, 10-1-1888.

126.

North British Daily Mail, 12-1-1888.

127.

North British Daily Mail, 13-1-1888.

128.

Crofting Files, AF 67/39; reports on Galston, etc, Jan 1888.

North British Daily Mail, 14-1-1888.

129.

North British Daily Mail, 16-1-1888.

130.

Crofting Files, AF 67/39; reports to Lothian, Jan 1888.

North British Daily Mail, 17-1-1888.

131.

North British Daily Mail, 18-1-1888.

132.

North British Daily Mail, 19-1-1888.

133.

North British Daily Mail, 23-1-1888; 25-1-1888.

134.

London Evening Star, 25-1-1888.

135.

North British Daily Mail, 28-1-1888.

136.

The Times, 27-1-1888.

137.

North British Daily Mail, 30-1-1888.

138.

North British Daily Mail, 1-2-1888.

139.

North British Daily Mail, 31-1-1888.

140.

Ibid.

141.

North British Daily Mail, 1-2-1888. This trial is a particularly good example of the justiciary's distaste for Gaelic.

142.

North British Daily Mail, 4-2-1888.

143.

North British Daily Mail, 2-2-1888.

144.

North British Daily Mail, 3-2-1888. See the following day's edition for reports of the Crofters' Commission adjudications in Caithness, at Clyth, with rents down by half, and arrears cancelled by three-quarters.

145.

North British Daily Mail, 7-2-1888.

146.

North British Daily Mail, 9-2-1888.

147.

North British Daily Mail, 10-2-1888.

148.

North British Daily Mail, 11-2-1888.

149.

North British Daily Mail, 13-2-1888.

150.

North British Daily Mail, 14-2-1888.

151.

North British Daily Mail, 16-2-1888.

152.

North British Daily Mail, 17-2-1888.

153.

North British Daily Mail, 18-2-1888.

154.

North British Daily Mail, 23-2-1888. See also letter on the recent Commons debate on crofters - and a "Home Rule" analysis of the vote. See also North British Daily Mail, 22-2-1888 (6 cols, and 1 col editorial.)

155.

Ibid. See also North British Daily Mail, 6-3-1888, on the trial of the Barvas raiders on Galston sheep-farm (2 cols).

For recent informed comment drawing on contemporary Glasgow Herald reports on crofter-landlord relations in Lewis in 1888 see the centenary series by James Shaw Grant in the Stornoway Gazette. In particular; 4-6-1988 ("as an exercise in public relations the Park Deer Raid was one of the best conceived protests in Scottish history"); 11-6-1988; 18-6-1988; 25-6-1988; 16-7-1988; 23-7-1988; 30-7-1988; 13-8-1988; 20-8-1988; 27-8-1988; 19-9-1988; 17-9-1988; 24-9-1988; 1-10-1988; 8-10-1988; 15-10-1988; 22-10-1988; 29-10-1988; 5-11-1988; 19-11-1988; 26-11-1988; 10-12-1988; and 14-1-1989. See also Joni Buchanan on the Park deer raid, West Highland Free Press, 27-11-1988; and also Robert MacKenzie (son of one of the raiders), West Highland Free Press, 11-12-1988 - "My father put the numbers not higher than seven, and poor stuff at that as one can understand immediately after the rut".

CROFTERS AND THE LAND QUESTION (1870 - 1920)

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VOLUME TWO

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CHAPTER EIGHT

By the late 1880s the common people of the Highlands could look back to a century of landlord-centred conflict; and, back too on a decade in which they had been winning that conflict without significant reservation.

The period of rehearsal had been a long and difficult one, however. For the early years, the record is less than perfect; and seldom reflects, of course, other than through the illuminated veil of poetry what the people thought or felt or said among themselves with regard to the division of what they saw as their land among what they saw as an alien, and exploitative outsider by origin or conduct. The record is also likely to be less than complete; although in Argyll in the middle of the eighteenth century there was "widespread disaffection" with the post-Culloden order in the Highlands. Sheep farmers, certainly, were also confronted with a firearm on the shores of Loch Lochy before the end of the same century. And around the same time the shepherds of Geddes, tenant farmer of Ross of Balnagowan, finding "themselves very disagreeably situated amongst a race of people who considered them as intruders", confronted popular opposition to commercial landlordism on the Ross-Sutherland border, the people with difficulty "restrained from acts of violence".

In 1792, "strong symptons of opposition" were beginning to appear "among the lower orders of people", and eight men appeared in court on charges of riot. That same year, "the year of the sheep", was witness to the great attempt, heroic and tragic in equal measures, simply to drive the stock of the sheep-farmers in the Eastern Highlands back whence they came; but as the profit potential of Highland sheep farming was irresistable, so too was the coming of the sheep.

Against a background of growing emigration, Balmorality, land trading and recreational patronage, of 'sporting machinery' and 'constructive hobbyism'(1), there

was an induction riot in 1808 at Creich; while a year later Patrick Sellar arrived among the "barbarous hordes" native to Sutherland; and the widespread conflict associated with his activities would shortly erupt in the county, at Kildonan. At the same time the "mountain savages" of Assynt were disputing the installation of a new clergyman among them; while in 1820, the common people contested, and lost, the question of "improvement" at Culrain; and would shortly lose again, at Achness and (twice) at Gruids.

In the 1830s, there was trouble on Harris, with sheriff and soldiers summoned; and a year later, further trouble at Culrain once more, with property fired and stock destroyed. In 1841, conflict interrupted capitalist enterprise at Durness, but not for long; despite rumours of a generalised rising throughout the region of Tongue and the presence of a Chartist agitator in Inverness. Throughout the decade, the visitations of secular Famine and ecclesiastical Disruption were the occasions of further trouble; the former at Inverness, Tain, Granton, Evanton, Beauly, Rosemarkie, Balintraid, Avoch, and Wick; and the latter at Rosskeen, Invergordon, Logie and Resolis.

But landlords remained the main focus of discontent. In 1842 a sheriff officer was deforced at Glencalvie; 500 of Lochaber's poor marched with pipers against emigration plans; and an eviction party was put to flight in Lochs (not for the last time). A year later, a party of sheriff-officers was deforced and driven away from Balcladdich in Assynt. And in 1849, the people of Sollas in Uist rioted too; but were crushed and forced into emigration.

Further incidents followed; at Strathaird in Skye, and at Strathconan, cleared at the bidding of the Balfours; while in 1852, at Coigeach, one of the first popular victories was recorded. Further defeats, however, lay in store: at Suisnish; at Boreraig; on the shores of Knoydart; and at Greenyards in Ross-shire: and it was not until the 1870's that the long period of rehearsal in landlord-centred

conflict in the Highlands began to give way to a stage of overture; a stage in which the pace of anti-landlord agitation accelerated markedly to the point where popular victories (and the expectation of them) on a local scale were increasingly won.

This stage may be said to have opened at Bernera, off the west coast of Lewis; but it was quickly followed by events at Leckmelm on the mainland and Valtos in Skye; and may be said to have closed at Glendale, again in Skye - for from this point, agitation assumed a generalised aspect across the Highlands.

In 1882, the events at Braes took place, to unprecedented interest on the part of the daily and weekly press; and by August of that year, the Celtic Magazine was reporting the formation in Inverness of the Highland Land Law Reform Association; while two months later the same journal was demanding a royal commission into crofters' grievances. The following spring, the Napier Commission came into being; and a year later, against a background of rising agitation, it reported. That autumn the Land League met in conference in Dingwall; and the first naval invasion of Skye took place. Allegiance to Land League aspirations spread like wildfire throughout the following spring and summer; the League itself convened in Portree for the 1885 conference; and by that autumn it was increasingly evident that the crofters' candidates would carry the Highlands with them. In the middle of 1886, therefore, the Crofters' Act went through parliament; the League met in conference at Bonar Bridge (and the next year at Oban); in due course the Crofters' Commission moved into operation; and its proceedings would form the backdrop to a further two years of enhanced agitation, with naval raiding in Tiree, Lewis, Skye and Sutherland, and widespread conflict elsewhere, into 1888.

Pre-eminently, this had been, and remained, a popular struggle concerned with the land. Despite marked overtones

of contiguous issues such as class, culture and nationality, its central driving force was an indigenous vision of land-ownership and land-use of and for the community, a vision fired and inspired by the experience of that community itself, versus the capitalist landlordism of an all too visible elite of outsiders; and driven by a resounding rejection of the view that, "land should produce a revenue ... like any other capital asset and that it should be allocated ... in response to the operation of competitive bidding"(2).

It was a conflict of interest similar to that in Ireland and (though the national dimension was sharper there) not without other links too. Some of these have already been documented; while the report of, and first volume of evidence to, the Napier Commission underlines the extent to which the Irish example was seen as significant by the landlords threatened by agitation. The two farming tenants of Fraser of Kilmuir, for instance, James Urquart and Alexader MacLeod, reported to Napier, "as to the cause of the agitation, we believe that it was, in the first instance, due to the course of events in Ireland...it is well known that an Irish agitator was in Skye for most of last season"(3).

Fraser of Kilmuir also claimed, "it was not until 1881, the year of the Irish legislation [the Irish land act] that an attempt, (if it could be called such) at disturbance took place at Valtos ... in my opinion the present disturbed state of things in Skye is very much due to agitation in consequence of late events in Ireland"(4).

Referring to "Fenian agitators", the Stornoway solicitor Napier Campbell told the commissioners, "the island most undoubtedly is, and has long been, seething in a chronic state of discontent. Any vagrant spark might kindle a dangerous conflagration...the crofters have long been, and still are, insulted, trampled upon, and terrorised over...the policy of the estate - not under one factor alone

- but steadily pursued through nearly all factors, for a long course of years must, I fear, if truth is to be spoken, be characterised as a tortuous, subtle, and aggressive one in pursuit of territorial aggrandisement and despotic power, so absolute and arbitrary as to be almost universally complained of"(5).

And from Orkney, lieutenant general Traill Burroughs told the commissioners of his Land-League tenants, "They are endeavouring to establish a reign of lawlessness and terror here, as in Ireland"(6).

This Irish dimension was of course rather wider than the fears of the landlords might indicate; and originated in rather more than news of anti-landlordism in Ireland, contact with visiting agitators, and the visits of Highlanders to the Irish herring-fishing ports. John Murdoch, after all, had been in constant contact with the leaders of the Irish progressive movement for many years, as his autobiography makes clear; while Irish and Highland emigrants often crossed tracks in the wider parts of the Empire(7).

And Irish and Highland emigrants also combined in land-agitation in eastern Canada's Prince Edward Island, known to the islanders as "the Ireland of the New World" on account of the rapacity of its ruling elite. As a result, a land-reform movement "flourished in the 1830s and 1840s after the arrival of substantial numbers of Scottish and Irish immigrants ... some 65% of islanders were Scottish or Irish (approximately two-thirds of these being Scots, who were overwhelmingly Highlanders)...means of underscoring this point ranged all the way from derision and intimidation to burning the agent's home and, at least on one occasion, murder...driven to desperation, they formed tenant leagues, organisations pledged to resist collection of rents. If a tenant were evicted, the leaguers were committed to prevent occupation of the victim's farm by anyone else; thus no rent could be collected". Arson of landlords' property also

played a significant role in the campaign(8).

Alexander MacKenzie visited the area in 1879 in the course of his Canadian tour; while John Murdoch is said "to have found a model worth imitating" in the island's tenant leagues. Prince Edward Isle's community was also later reportedly supportive of the Scottish Land League of America, whose founder, Duncan MacGregor, a Gaelic speaker from Easdale, supported Donald MacFarlane, former MP for county Carlow, in his bid to win Argyll as a Crofter Candidate, and who thereafter toured the Highlands on an anti-landlord platform and appeared at the Portree conference of the Land League. Murdoch also corresponded with William Carroll, chairman of Philadelphia's "secret-society" Clan na Gael; as did Alexander MacKenzie(9).

Contact between Irish and Highland men and women was not confined to the colonies, of course. Throughout the nineteenth century Highlanders and Irish poured into the bothies, slums and slavey's attics of Lowland Scotland in search of work (though they must have come across each other in the previous century too, in the far-flung services of the Crown). In the 1840s, for instance, the men of Ardnamurchan worked part of the year as labourers in Glasgow's dye-works; while over half of the men working in the 1840s on railway construction in the Lothians were Highland; and Highlanders are also likely to have played a major role in the building trades of the Scottish central belt. Women were not confined to domestic service, either. Where a farmer "cannot give constant work he must fall back on the employment of Highland girls who will occupy a bothy for three quarters of the year and go home in the winter months or trust to occasional supplies of Irish women"; while in Lanarkshire, the Borders and the Lothians, demand was brisk for Irish and Highland women as labourers(10).

This contact, over many decades, helped expose Highlanders to currents of thought, of sentiment, of theory, from outwith the Highlands that were nationalist and

collectivist. As early as 1843, after all, the Glasgow Herald was denouncing 'noxious socialists' at Glasgow Green. Seven years later the Chartist Fergus O'Connor was telling the House of Commons that 'Labour was the source of all wealth'; and the Chartist convention of 1851 declared that "the land is the inalienable inheritance of all mankind; monopoly is therefore repugnant to the laws of God and nature. The nationalisation of the land is the only true basis of a national prosperity". That same year "advocates of land nationalisation could be heard at the street corners"; and a year later still, the commissioner for mines was demanding something be done to "prevent the spread of socialism in the mining districts" of Scotland(11).

The use of the word could hardly be traced back more than twenty years(12); but its appeal was not likely to offend Highland sensibilities. As Thomas Johnston, quoting Skene, observes in his great history of the Scottish working classes, "the labouring folk all down the ages have clung to communist practices and customs, partly the inheritance and instinct from the group and clan life of our forefathers and partly because these customs were their only barrier to poverty; and because without them social life was impossible"(13).

Thus the working class history of nineteenth century Scotland is littered with stray references to Highlanders, or those of Highland background or lineage. Alexander Campbell, for instance, was a land nationaliser, secretary to Robert Owen and a founder of Glasgow's Trades Council(14); while an agitator by name of Donald MacDonald was active among the tailors of Paisley(16).

It is likely too that Highlanders were involved heavily in the merchant shipping trade, and ship-building, both marked by intense exploitation and trade-union activism; while on the railways "we see the poor Irish immigrant and the dispossessed Highlander toiling frequently for less than a bare subsistence in the contractors' gangs(17).

For both itinerant Irish and Highland labourers, the lessons would scarcely have been lost of farm workers' unions and associations in Fife and Midlothian, whether as harvest-gatherers, ploughmen or shearers(18).

As early as 1847, for instance, in the wake of the potato famine, and with the miners of the Scottish coalfields three-quarters Irish, one firm imported 70 starving tenants from Tiree, crucible for the duke of Argyll's vision of unfettered agrarian progress in the inner Hebrides; "only one week did they work ere they struck for an increase of 4/-, which, being refused, they marched away, *led by a piper*"(19).

Two and a half decades later, the doings of the National Agricultural Labourers' Union in Ireland are likely too to have been reported and discussed with interest in the steadings and stackyards of central Scotland, and commended themselves to the interest of both Irish and Highlanders. (One of its leaders was P.J. Smyth, MP for West Meath, the Young Irelander who had masterminded the escape of his fellow Young Irelander John Mitchel, from Tasmanian exile in 1854). Driven by the logic of its position - like the Land League in the Highlands just a few years later - the Union quickly passed beyond economistic and "wagist" models of modest amelioration and reform; indeed, it almost at once became concerned with political issues of national freedom and fundamental alteration of the existing land laws, with one typical meeting spending, "little or no time discussing the mundane questions of improved wages or conditions of employment for agricultural labourers", but instead calling "for a radical programme of land reform and opposition to absentee landlords"(20).

The Irish Land League that followed Davitt's New Departure of strategic union between urban nationalists and rural peasantry, offered another example to the Highlands, of course; though there were certainly two major difference. The first was that the Land League in Ireland could draw on

the lessons of the Fenian tradition of attempting to organise secret agrarian societies in the 1860s. Secondly, and more substantially perhaps, as will be shown, land-reform and nationalism in Scotland appeared to be natural bed-fellows; but in Ireland, "Nationalists were not necessarily unsympathetic to the cause of the farmers; they simply feared that the land question would divert attention from their principal objective, which was political independence for Ireland".

But there were many similarities, not least in the combination of direct-action on the ground, coupled with representation in the wider world of political, and parliamentary, affairs: "A politicised group must be able to exert some form of pressure, but it must also be able to combine this pressure with a reasonably explicit statement of demands. It was precisely this combination of pressure and demands that constituted the most important accomplishment of the Land League. Among the pressures the league employed were to be found relatively new (although not unprecedented) tactics, such as a general refusal to pay rents and boycotting. At the same time, the league incorporated traditional modes of protest, but modes of protest that were no longer spontaneous and unco-ordinated. Instead of hastily gathered mobs, evictions were resisted by large and well ordered assemblies ...". And in Ireland, as in the Highlands, the press played an important role in developing, and leading, the agitation against the respective landed elites(21).

In the realms of ideas too, of ancient Celtic attitudes to the land, Ireland and the Highlands had much to share. Burt had reported that the notion that the land belonged to the people was common in the eighteenth century Highlands; while Lord Selkirk had observed, following anti-landlord disturbances in early-nineteenth century Sutherland, that "the people had so much of the Old Highland Spirit as to think their land their own...according to the idea handed

down to them from their ancestors, and long prevalent among high and low in the Highlands, they were only defending their rights and resisting a ruinous, unjust and tyrannical encroachment on their property"(22).

Between the expression of this opinion, recorded in 1813, and that of the Napier Commission seventy years later, there were very many others in similar vein; some of which have been quoted earlier. Even the Napier Commission recognised the durability of the view; in its report it conceded that, "The opinion so often expressed before us that the small tenantry of the Highlands have an inherited inalienable title to security of tenure in their possession, while rent and service are duly rendered, is an impression indigenous to the country, though it has never been sanctioned by legal recognition, and has long been repudiated by the action of the proprietor"(23).

The conflict between that indigenous impression and that repudiation underlay the land war in the Highlands. And it is caught nowhere better than in one exchange between Lady Matheson of Lewis and Roderick MacLeod, the spokesman for a crofter deputation to her in 1888, pressing for more land. Said Lady Matheson; "If you are not able to maintain yourselves at home, you should go to foreign lands and improve your positions and make provision for your families". Roderick MacLeod replied; "The people would be quite willing to emigrate when they saw that all the lands now under sheep and deer in the island, and suitable for cultivation, were given to the people, but as long as they saw these lands under sheep and deer they were disinclined to emigrate". To this, Lady Matheson simply rejoined: "These lands are my property and you have nothing to do with them"(24).

The opposite view was given no more eloquent expression than in the words of the Skye poetess Mary MacPherson(25); representing as they do, "the vestigal elements of pre-capitalist consciousness, the irreducible notion of a

fundamental communal Gaelic *right* to the land"(26).

The landlord viewpoint was equally simple; the Anglican clergyman and owner of Lismore, Fell, expressing it clearly enough in letters to his factor made available to the Napier Commission; "It seems to me that they [the crofters who had petititioned Fell] have combined to put pressure on me, being apparently encouraged by the sympathy showm to the Skye crofters...I shall distinctly resist any attempt to coerce me. I think the crofter system a bad one...a crofter living on his croft has no right to expect anything but the most abject penury. His condition is one of idleness and, of necessity, one of poverty"(27).

Marx identifies the theory behind this sort of 'distinct resistance' in Capital; "The process, therefore, that clears the way for the capitalist system can be none other than the process which takes away from the labourer the possession of his means of production; a process that transforms, on the one hand, the social means of subsistence and of production into capital; on the other, the immediate producers into wage labourers. The so-called primitive accumulation, therefore, is nothing else than the historical process of divorcing the producer from the means of production"(28).

For the landlord class, the chief theorist and "self-appointed spokesman" was of course the 8th Duke of Argyll, who resigned from Gladstone's government over the Irish Land legislation. He "poured forth a torrent of books and articles in defence of private property in land...on the basis of a clearly articulated theory of wealth"(29).

As he wrote in Nineteenth Century "the art of agriculture is no exception; in it, as in all the others, the accumulation of capital and the advance of knowledge and skill dispense with half-employed and unproductive labour...a population numerous, but accustomed to, and contented with, a low standard of living for themselves, and yielding no surplus for the support of others, gives place

to a population smaller in amount, but enjoying a higher civilisation, and contributing in a corresponding degree to the general progress of the world"(30).

The consequent clash of class-interest was thus underpinned by an ideological contrast; that of the strong claiming that "the landlord had an absolute moral and legal right to do as he wished with his own", while that of the crofters "was given iron strength by Celtic cultural cohesion"; and one to which they had clung "through years when it was thought by most educated men to be inherently absurd and mere evidence of blind obduracy in the face of economic fact"(31).

But among these "educated men" were some who took a different view of affairs. Chief among these pro-crofter theorists of land reform was the American Henry George, against whose writings Argyll, not surprisingly, "was clearly engaged in one long refutation"(32).

Given the longevity and tenacity of indigenous attitudes in the Highlands to land, George's direct influence can be supposed to have been primarily propagandist; but his views were important in the wider cockpit of political debate, not least in the context of the Labour movement. According to one writer, "It is not that he was unimportant; on the contrary, he must be reckoned as one of the formative influences of the 1880s...he was expressing ideas which the British radicals of 1880 regarded as central to their political beliefs. Not all of them, of course, would accept common property in land, but to the proposition that landlordism was the central evil of existing society there was unanimous assent"(33).

George, who had met Michael Davitt in New York the year earlier, visited Britain and Ireland five times from 1881, being received by Parnell in Kalmainham, before crossing to England to meet progressives such as Alfred Russell Wallace and Henry Hyndman. He later met George Bernard Shaw too, and was quickly something of a celebrity, although "the

successful resolution on land nationalisation at the Trades Union Congress in September 1882 owed less to George than to the traditional movement in Britain"(34).

During the winter of 1883-1884, George returned, meeting the likes of Dr. G.B. Clark, and drawing the fire of A.J. Balfour (whose landowning family had "evicted most of the people from Strathconan in his childhood. He recalled on a journey to the family shooting lodge, just after the clearance, being placed in the second carriage for fear of meeting angry resistance to the laird's return")(35).

George was also back again in Britain during the winter of 1884-1885, at the height of the land agitation in the Highlands, where the tenor of his views can only have added to the indigenous perceptions of the common populace the weight that fame such as his commanded(36); "in the intellectual history of modern times there can have been few prophets whose words fell on such fertile ground. Historically speaking his timing was superb"(37).

George, therefore, was at the centre of a national debate on land ownership and land use throughout Britain, involving a variety of proposed solutions from a land-tax(38) to some form of nationalisation of the land, to a full-blooded socialist programme of nationalisation across the spectrum of economic activity; and as such he was "an organic part of reform movements in Great Britain"(39).

But to the Highlands, much of this was irrelevant, other than in the most general of senses. By the early 1880s, the central demands of the crofters' movement were established - in essence, fair rents and security of tenure; though the movement's demand for a second stage of reform involving the return to popular use of deer-forest and sheep-farm land certainly implied a rather more revolutionary approach to land matters than simple reform.

To these demands it was the task of the Napier Commission to propose some sort of answer; and when the commissioners did answer, it was to be one which would lead

to legislation of which it has been observed "the nineteenth century contains few comparable instances of so complete (or so rapid) a reversal of entrenched economic orthodoxies"(40).

Napier's report in fact concerns itself with no less than six areas relating to the Highland economy, these being fisheries and communications, emigration, justice, schooling, sporting deer forests and the game question; as well as the land question. But that last question was the central one in the eyes of the crofters. They wanted their land, in the last analysis in its entirety; the demand for such "occupancy rights" the commissioners rejecting on the grounds that their concession "would be too violent a disruption of existing property rights". The commissioners, therefore, "discounted occupancy rights only to recommend the resurrection of the Highland townships...this was "creeping socialism" with a vengeance"(41).

This resurrection related to a proposed recognition of the "township" as a distinct agricultural and legal entity. It would consist of any settlement of three or more holdings with a common pasture, and could not be dissolved without the consent of a majority of the occupiers. Rents would be fixed by arbitration; while it could also claim from its landlord an enlargement of the land it held, with a provision for compulsion in the event of disagreement. And a minority of individual crofters (small crofters and cottars were to be abandoned to the market) would get thirty year improving leases; at the end of which its members could claim renewal on the same terms.

This "was an ingenious solution for the crofter problem; but it lacked political plausibility...The crofters wanted individual occupancy rights, not subordination to revived village communities. And few politicians could persuade themselves that the township was a feasible proposition. Self-governing, property-owning communes were outside their personal experience...in Ireland concession of

the "three Fs" had ended agrarian agitation; and a Liberal ministry determined to apply the same recipe to Scotland"(42).

In the event, then, the proposals with regard to townships and to confer improving leases on selected large crofters were ignored in the 1886 legislation; between its provisions and those of the Napier suggestions, there being "a startling divergence"(43).

The Act gave the protection of law to the vast bulk of crofters (though nothing to cottars, other than a provision for compensation for improvements). But for crofters it offered: security of tenure (with various sub-conditions); fixed rents (and possible cancellation of any arrears); compensation for improvements; the right to request enlargement of holding from "suitable" and "available" land in the landlord's hands; and the right to bequeath the croft to heir or family member. It did nothing, however, about returning to the occupancy of the common people of the Highlands the lands from which they had been driven over the previous century(44).

Nevertheless, set against the broader political context of the times, it was a remarkable success, in legislative and other terms, for the crofters' movement and the Land League. The success was born against a background of an increasingly complex political situation. The slow enfranchisement and the unionisation of the industrial proletariat (and other issues) were eating away at the long hegemony of the Liberals, and in the 1885 election there were rival candidates "in no fewer than 28 of the 72 constituencies"(45).

This reflected a growing division between Whigs and Radicals in the party; and for the Radicals, land-reform in the Highlands (and elsewhere, for that matter) was a key issue of reform. The Glasgow-based faction of Radicals, for instance, included Cameron, crofters' champion and publisher of the North British Daily Mail(46), while Fraser-

MacIntosh also "had a long connection with the Highland Radicals"(47).

The land-question impinged on electoral politics more directly too. For instance, the Scottish Land Restoration League ran six candidates in Glasgow during the 1885 election, though without success(48). And, reflecting a complicated divergence of Whig and Radical influence between Scotland and England, the Scottish Liberal Association had been formed to press for, among other things, land reform in the Highlands. The Radical leader Joseph Chamberlain also approved of reform(49); and by 1991, the Association was demanding appropriate amendments to the Crofters' Act(50).

But factors on the wider stage of political affairs rendered the process of land reform more complex and difficult than divisions in the Liberal party. Not least of these was the ancestral obsession of England with the possession of the thirty two counties of Ireland. The matter of church dis-establishment added to the difficulty; and overall they posed challenging tactical and strategic alternatives for the leaderships of the parties involved in the Highland land war: government, landlords, and people.

For the first of these, the record hardly establishes a leadership or controlling vision of events worthy of the name. The state might have simply ignored events in the Highlands; though it did not, as the consequence might well have been the simple, physical re-possession of the land and eviction of the landlords' larger farming and sporting tenants. Fierce repression might also have worked, though hardly after the entry to the House of Commons of the Crofters' Members. In fact, the pressure of events drove the state to concede the partial reforms of 1886; a concession in essence forced by popular agitation in the Highlands, and supporting agitation in the wider world of political affairs.

Nor was the response of the landlords as a group impressive. Not at any point in the record of land

agitation did they as a group approach even the threshold of the sort of fundamental concession that might at least ease the great hunger for land, after all. Rather, they offered the traditional amalgam of coercion, promotion of popular emigration, self-serving theorising, and chicanery, allied to the deployment of personal wealth and the influence of privilege; it must never be overlooked, after all, that this was a war between a vastly rich elite and impoverished and often-hungry crofters and cottars inhabiting hovels such as that of Hector Forbes at Shean, beyond Invershin(51).

Of the three players only the Land League, and the movement that powered it, demonstrated a clear sense of tactics and strategy; and followed a leadership with a clear idea of where it was going (and that was, of course, some considerable way beyond the immediate goal of modest land reform). Tactically, land raiding and rent striking, stock destruction, minor arson, and violence or the threat of it, served to win the first strategic stage; to establish the native community on such land as it occupied by the 1880s. The next strategic stage, to reclaim the land under sheep (or, increasingly, deer) was more complex. The League, in its original form of mass movement did not survive this stage; and it would shortly be subsumed within wider movements.

As the focus for an idea, however - and an idea whose time had come, at that - the League had with spectacular success carried the banner of "the land for the people" right through the 1880s; passing that banner in the years that followed increasingly to the hands of the movement for Scottish independence and the organised working class.

By the 1880s, that working class, although unionised, still largely saw the natural expression of its political aspirations through the Liberals. Other currents were at work, however, and major issues of proletarian political structures and strategy, goals and consciousness, remained to be resolved. Already, there lay beyond the Liberals and

their Radicals the prospect of independent working class political action, whether reformist or revolutionary; and one inspired with a sense of class (and national) identity that reached back to Alexander Robertson's anti-landlord campaigning in the 1850s, and the 1868 general election, by which time the "Scottish labour movement was obsessed with the land question", which dominated the election in the country, despite the absence of direct representation in parliament for workers(52).

Unions and trades councils were by no means the only focus of political action available, however; there was, of course, and particularly from the 1880s onwards, parliament itself - whether as a potential instrument of revolution, reform, or simple platform for agitation. Major issues of strategy, organisation and ideology were therefore to the fore as the working class movement groped towards a programme and a means of implementing it.

It was in terms of ideas a turbulent time; a time that witnessed the political formation of John Murdoch, among many others. Murdoch's first article on the subject of the land had appeared in the Bolton Free Press in 1843, when he was "a left-wing radical rather than a class conscious socialist", and upon whom the influence of the Chartists had not been not negligible. Through Patrick Ford, editor of New York's Irish World, Murdoch came in contact with Michael Davitt; through Murdoch, Davitt toured the coalfields of Scotland proposing that the land be nationalised; "When the miners of Lanarkshire founded a Scottish Anti-Royalty League and Labour League, he tried to get them to affiliate to the Scottish Land Restoration League". In the 1885 general election Murdoch represented that league, in an intrevention that opened in G.D.H. Cole's phrase "the pioneer battles for independent Labour representation"; while Murdoch also was to stand as a Land and Labour candidate in Glasgow's Partick constituency. And during the famous 1888 Mid-Lanark by-election, he campaigned for Keir Hardie; a biography itself

reflecting the development of the working class movement over forty years(53).

A few weeks after the Mid-Lanark election, after all, the Scottish Labour party was established; the formation of which, "with Keir Hardie as secretary, marks the coming together of the two main forces in the Scottish working class movement of the late 19th century. These were, first, the trade union movement of the central lowland industrial belt...and second, the Highland crofters movment, already established in parliament with five independent Crofter MPs. The leader of the Crofters' Party, Dr. G.B. Clark, became an honorary vice president of the Scottish Labour Party"(54).

So too did Shaw Maxwell, later secretary of the Independent Labour Party, while in 1888 the Scottish Land Restoration League affiliated to the Scottish party. "Land reform organisations such as the League provided the inspiration in Scotland for an independent Labour party, and the success of the Crofters' Party in the Highlands in electing M.P.s and obtaining the Crofters' Act made miners' leaders like Hardie, Small and Smillie attempt to imitate it"(55).

The tradition of working class concern with the land was of course an old one. As early as 1791, the Lord Advocate had condemed the "unnatural union" between Highlanders and the Radicals of the day; while "the Highlanders' memories of the Clearances - memories they took into the mills, coal mines and factories in the early nineteenth century - were of crucial importance in subsequent Lowland social and political action over the land question. It was, in fact, the land question itself in the late eighteenth century which pushed the artisans, weavers, grieves, orramen and peasants to agitate for equality of property and a new division of the big estates"(56).

The initial (Basle) congress of the First International in 1869 had proposed communal ownership of the land; within

a month, the Land and Labour League had been formed in London to demand nationalisation of the land(57). The tradition was of course older than this; evicted with his family in 1852 from their holding in Mayo, the first man after his father Davitt heard "denouncing landlordism was Ernest Jones, the English Chartist and pioneer labour-leader"(58).

Thirty one years after that eviction, Davitt delivered in London's St James's Hall what he called his "sort of proletarian manifesto" on the theme that "private property in land is public robbery". Henry Hyndman (himself a member of the Irish Land League), described the meeting as "the most distinctly revolutionary gathering that had been held in London for over 35 years"(59).

To all this, by the later part of the century, the land agitation in the Highlands was central; not least because of the symbiotic character of class and nationality in Scottish politics. By the 1880s, in Scotland, "more than ever before, the distinctive economic, political and cultural agitations of diverse and disparate 'working class' groups in Scottish society were unified in struggle against English cultural imperialism, the dispossession of the Highland crofters, exploitation in the mines, fields and factories...". With Gaelic-speaking socialists like Duncan MacPherson active in the labour movement, the rent strikes and land seizures in Skye and elsewhere at once won the support of the Lowland labour movement, "where there had long been strong feelings over the land issue...Under the impact of the agitations in the Highlands the socialist elements in the trade union branches and the Trades Councils persuaded the Labour movement to move from its previous position of demanding reform of the land laws to agitation for land nationalisation. In this new situation of militancy and armed resistance to the Highland lairds, the Highlanders' traditional attachment to the land became a catalyst of social change. It is impossible to convey the

strength of the social forces that pushed Scottish labour into the vanguard of the international socialists' movement unless the dimension of the crofters' struggle is kept in mind...In a country where miners and agricultural labourers justified their poaching in terms of 'primitive' socialist or egalitarian socialist values, and where Highland crofters and Lowland industrial workers shared a common hatred of lairds and landowners, some of the pre-industrial traditions and social attitudes of labouring men and women pushed the labour movement into a new stance of militancy"(60).

With this drive to a new stage of working class consciousness, went a discovery - or rediscovery - of the Scottish national question; also linked intimately to the anti landlord experience in the Highlands. As one observer has written, "The key periods of land raiding from the 1880s to the early 1920s coincided with a profound awareness of the national dimension within the socialist movement in Scotland. Again, when sporadic land raids either threatened or materialised in the 1930s and 1940s, it was at a time of heightened national sentiment"(61).

This sentiment, and its programmatic exposition in demands for Home Rule, was not exclusive to the labour movement; sections of the Liberal party too, in 1888 and 1891, were demanding Home Rule (as part of a policy package that included a miners' eight-hour day, abolition of the House of Lords, extension of the provisions of the Crofters' Act, and something akin to universal suffrage(62).

And the 1889 conference of the Scottish Liberal Association considered a resolution to the effect, "That this national conference is of opinion that Home Rule should be granted to Scotland, so that the Scottish people should have the sole control and management of their own national affairs..."(63).

But "Scottish radicalism was different from English radicalism"(64); or, as was observed of the National Liberal Federation's 'Newcastle Programme' of 1891, "The programme

passed at Newcastle might be good enough for Englishmen, but it was not good enough for Scotsmen - it wanted the democratic ring"(65).

Thus, while throughout the 1990s a majority of Scottish MPs voted in favour of Home Rule (in 1890, 1893, 1893, and 1895)(66), it was the labour movement that was its principal standard-bearer, on account of an identification between national independence and the rights of both crofters and industrial workers. As Roderick MacDonald told a meeting in Alness in 1886, "when Scotland gets Home Rule, the interests of the working class will be better attended to"(67).

And for R.B. Cunninghame Graham, president of the Scottish Labour party by the end of the 1880s, crofters' rights were part and parcel of a socialist and independent Scotland; in his words, "Scotland is a free country, for a crofter to starve in, or for deer to eat his crops in"(68).

Unsurprisingly, therefore, given this identification of crofters' rights with workers' rights with Scottish independence, John Stuart Blackie was first chairman of the Scottish Home Rule Association(69). From 1892, Erskine of Marr (a notable nationalist and Highland champion in the coming decades) was the association's vice-president(70); while among the industrial working class, the Fife People's League was demanding nationalisation of the land and Home Rule(71); and a string of labour leaders continued to identify crofters' rights with wider socialist aspirations in the context of Home Rule(72).

As has been observed, "During its early years the Gaelic revival had acquired a distinctly nationalist flavour as a result of the work of John Murdoch, who from 1873 to 1881, published a newspaper the Highlander, which was long remembered, and caused Murdoch to be regarded as one of the heroes of nationalism down to the 1920s. But other longer-lived Highland papers had also something of a nationalist tone, notably the Celtic Magazine and the Scottish

Highlander, which were owned and edited by the antiquarian Alexander MacKenzie, who was vice-president of the Scottish Home Rule Association"(73).

In short, nationalism, collectivist radicalism, and anti-landlordism had by the late 1880s left the long period when their association one with the other was covert and implicit, presented by proxy, represented by the metaphor of piper and people at pier-head and pit-head; and usually in conditions of defeat, no matter how gilded with defiance that defeat might be. From the 1880s, for crofters, as for workers and as for nationalists, things would be done somewhat differently.

CHAPTER EIGHT

1.

Both expressions derive, obviously, from headings in Philip Gaskell's *apologia* for landlordism on the west coast, Morvern Transformed.

2.

E.R. Cregeen, quoted in Hunter, The Making of the Crofting Community, 8.

3.

Napier Commission, vol 1, 13-14.

4.

Napier Commission, vol 1, 70.

5.

Napier Commission, vol 1, 194.

6.

Napier Commission, vol 1, 248. The reference to "terror" may not be without foundation; Burroughs claimed to have received a letter threatening him with death should he evict any tenant; a copy of which he supplied to the Royal Commission; reproduced, 257.

7.

Most memorably, perhaps, in the case of John Mitchel, quoted earlier, in Tasmania.

8.

I.R. Robertson, Highlanders, Irishmen and the Land Question in Nineteenth-Century Prince Edward Island, in; L.M. Cullen and T.C. Smout, Comparative Aspects of Scottish and Irish Economic and Social History, 1600-1900, 228-233. Note the author's comment, footnote 41; "Little is known about the leaders of the Tenant League, and this is not surprising, given the nature of the organisation, for the emphasis was upon united mass action rather than individual leaders". The same point can be made with a degree of validity vis a vis the local operation of the Land League in the Highlands, of course. For a portrait of Tiree emigrants in Canada,

drawing on oral sources, see Margaret MacKay, Poets and Pioneers, in (ed) Billy Kay, Odyssey, Voices from Scotland's Recent Past, Edinburgh, 1980.

9.

Ian D. Wood, Transatlantic land reform; America and the Crofters' Revolt, 1878-1888; Scottish Historical Review, vol LXIII, no 175, 1984; 85, 88-89, 97, 99-101.

10.

T.M. Devine, Temporary Migration and the Scottish Highlands in the Nineteenth Century, Economic History Review, 2nd series, XXXII, 3, 1979; 351-353. For earlier years, see T.M. Devine, Highland Migration to Lowland Scotland 1760-1860, Scottish Historical Review, vol LXII, no 174, 1983. For a portrait, drawing on oral sources, of Irish itinerant labour at the turn of the present century and later, see Billy Kay, From the Gorbals to Gweedore; in, (ed) Billy Kay, Odyssey, Voices from Scotland's Recent Past, Edinburgh, 1980. For a (fictionalised) eye-witness account from the same period, see Children of the Dead End author Patrick MacGill's The Rat Pit, London, 1983.

11.

Thomas Johnston, The History of the Working Classes in Scotland; 391. John Saville, Henry George and the British Labour Movement, Science and Society, XXIV, 1960, 323-324.

12.

Thomas Johnston, 390, quoting Skene, Celtic Scotland.

13.

Ibid., 388.

14.

Ibid., 384.

15.

Ibid., 385.

16.

Ibid., 379.

17.

Ibid., 356.

18.

Ibid., 354-356.

19.

Ibid., 335. (Emphasis added).

20.

Pamela Horn, The National Agricultural Labourers' Union in Ireland, 1873-1879, Irish Historical Studies, XVII, 1970-1971, 342, 345, 349. For similar unionisation in England, see: Reg Groves, Sharpen the Sickle!, London, 1949; J.P.D. Dunbabin, The revolt of the fields, the agricultural labourers' movement in the 1870s, Past and Present, no 26, 1963; J.P.D. Dunbabin, labourers and farmers in the late 19th century, some changes, Society for the Study of Labour History Bulletin, no 11, 1965; J.P.D. Dunbabin, the incidence and organisation of agricultural trades unionism in the 1870s, Agricultural History Review, XVI, 1968. E.J. Collins, Migrant labour in British agriculture in the 19th century, Economic History Review, 2nd series, XXIX, 1976. R. Harrison, The land and labour league, Bulletin of the International Institute of Social History, no 3, 1953.

21.

Sam Clark, The Social Composition of the Land League, Irish Historical Studies, XVII, no 68, 1971; 447-448, 463.

22.

(ed) R. Jamieson, Burt's Letters from the North of Scotland, Edinburgh, 1876; vol 2, 174-176. Selkirk to MacDonnell, Selkirk Papers, Ottawa; quoted in E. Richards, Patterns of Highland Discontent, 110; in R. Quinault and J. Stevenson, Popular Protest and Public Order.

23.

Napier Commission Report, 8. Note, incidentally, the view of Eric Richards, How Tame were the Highlanders during the Clearances?, Scottish Studies, XVII, 1973, to the effect that "the Napier Commission Report was an acceptance of 'the Highland ideology'", 47. Elsewhere, Richards considers the report and minutes of evidence "the greatest single document

on Highland society, economy and history"; The Highland Clearances, vol 1, 490.

24.

James Shaw Grant, Stornoway Gazette, 28-5-1988.

25.

Sorley MacLean, Mairi Mhor nan Oran, Calgacus, no 1, winter 1975.

26.

Ray Burnett, Highland land raids, their contemporary significance, 14; in (eds) Irene Evans and Joy Hendry, The Land for the People, Scottish Socialist Society, Blackford, 1986.

27.

Napier Commission Evidence; Lismore.

28.

Karl Marx, Capital, chapter XXVI, the secret of primitive accumulation.

29.

John Mason, The duke of Argyll and the land-question in late nineteenth century Britain, Society for the Study of Labour History Bulletin, no 33, Autumn 1976. Laissez-faire or not, it is an interesting footnote to the political constraints of free-market liberalism that Gladstone's government was prepared to nationalise the Irish railways in the 1840s; Thomas Johnston, History of the Working Classes in Scotland, 357, 392.

30.

Duke of Argyll, Nineteenth Century, no 192, 1883. Argyll plotted with Munro-Ferguson of Novar to gerrymander the Highland constituencies in the landlord cause in the early 1880s; and attempted to involve Gladstone. The ploy required that the Hebrides, then split between Argyll, Inverness and Ross, be established as a constituency in their own right. As Argyll wrote; "Novar tells me that the mainland constituencies would return such members as himself with tolerable security but that the Islanders will only too

probably go in for regular Leaguism...Novar thinks that unless the Islands are separated and erected into a constituency by themselves, about 5 seats will be lost..."; quoted in Donald Savage, Scottish Politics, 1885-1886, Scottish Historical Review, vol 40, 1961, 125-126.

31.

T.C. Smout, The Highland Clearances, Scottish International, February, 1972. Note Smout's comment, of the 1886 Crofters' Act, that it "surrendered to the ideology of the weak as it had been felt for most of the century and as most witnesses expressed it to the Napier Commission".

32.

John Mason, the duke of Argyll and the land question, 13. Argyll attacked Henry George, The prophet of San Francisco, Nineteenth Century, April, 1884; George hit back in the July edition of the same year.

33.

John Saville, Henry George and the British Labour Movement, Society for the Study of Labour History Bulletin, no 5, 1962, 18-26.

34.

Ibid. In June, 1883, at the first general meeting of the Land Reform Union in London, Dr. G.B. Clark referred to the TUC decision as one reason for supporting a motion on land nationalisation; Elwood P. Lawrence, Henry George in the British Isles, East Lansing, 1957, 33.

35.

Rob Gibson, Crofter Power in Easter Ross, 9.

36.

On this visit, George was refused the use of meeting halls at four places in the United Kingdom; Uig, Glendale, and Portree in Skye; and the Guildhall in London!; Lawrence, Henry George in the British Isles, 36. For George in Scotland, see North British Daily Mail, 23-2-1884, 22-12-1884, 6-1-1885.

37.

John Saville, Henry George and the British Labour Movement, Science and Society, XXIV, 1960; 321.

38.

On agitation in Glasgow for a local land tax, 1899-1906, see Lawrence, Henry George in the British Isles, 117.

39.

Ibid, 6.

40.

Clive Dewey, Celtic agrarian legislation and the Celtic revival; historicist implications of Gladstone's Irish and Scottish land acts 1870-1866, Past and Present, vol 64, 1974, 30. See, incidentally, the article which follows this on the Kent Union of agricultural labourers during the 1870s; a union which won every conflict into which it entered.

41.

Dewey, 66,67.

42.

Ibid, 68. Note Dewey's comment; "And the "democratic intellect" - given the dominance of the presbyterian clergy in public life, and the strength of the moralist tradition - was peculiarly susceptible to the suggestion that advanced industrial societies, characterised by self-maximising economic individualism, were ethically inferior to earlier, more communal, forms of social organisaiton". This is a stimulating observation; at the least with regard to the Scottish Labour movement, with which the land reform movement, from around the 1890s onwards, would be increasingly identified.

43.

D.J. MacCuish, The origin and development of crofting law, Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness, vol XLIII, 1960-1963, 189.

44.

Ibid, 190-191. The "startling divergence" between Napier proposals and the terms of the Act must be counted as a

considerable victory for the crofting lobby in the House of Commons and country at large.

45.

Donald Savage, Scottish Politics, 1885-1886, Scottish Hisorical Review, vol 40, 1961, 118.

46.

Ibid, 119.

47.

Ibid, 126.

48.

Ibid, 127, 129.

49.

James Kellas, The Liberal party in Scotland, 1876-1895, Scottish Historical Review, vol XLIV, no 137, 1965; 6.

50.

Ibid, 13.

51.

Chapter seven, footnote 66. Nor did the Highland landlords endeavour to "unite" tenants with themselves in the sort of organisational alliance established by relatively wealthy farmers in Aberdeen; see contribution by A. Howkins, John Mason, The Duke of Argyll and the land question in late 19th century Britain, 13.

52.

James D Young, The Rousing of the Scottish working class, London, 1979; 120-121.

53.

James D Young, John Murdoch, a Scottish land and labour pioneer, Society for the Study of Labour History Bulletin, no 19, 1969, 22, 23.

54.

James G. Kellas, Highland migration to Glasgow and the origin of the Scottish Labour movement, Society for the Study of Labour History Bulletin, no 12, 1966, 9.

55.

Ibid, 10.

56.

James D. Young, the Rousing of the Scottish Working class, 27, 28.

57.

John Saville, Henry George and the British labour movement, Science and Society, XXIV, 1960, 326.

58.

T.W. Moody, Michael Davitt and the British labour movement, Transactions of the Royal Historical Society no 3, 1953, 56.

59.

Ibid, 58, 62.

60.

James D Young, the Rousing of the Scottish working class; 143, 144.

61.

Ray Burnett, Highland land raids, their contemporary significance, 17.

62.

James G Kellas, The Liberal party in Scotland, 13.

63.

H.J. Hanham, Scottish Nationalism, London, 1969; 2.

64.

James G Kellas, The Liberal party in Scotland, 6.

65.

Ibid, 14.

66.

Ibid, 15.

67.

Invergordon Times, 21-7-1886.

68.

Rob Gibson, Crofter power in Easter Ross, 31.

69.

H,J. Hanham, Scottish Nationalism, 40.

70.

Ibid., 123.

71.

James D. Young, The rousing of the Scottish working class, 151.

72.

Ibid, 155.

73.

H.J. Hanham, Scottish Nationalism, 123.

CHAPTER NINE

From around 1890 the course of land agitation in the Highlands was complicated by considerations of economic change, of political developments at (British) national level, of an increasing identification of the land issue with Labour and nationalism, and of the decline of the Land League from a mass movement to a single-issue pressure group that still represented popular opinion in the Highlands, but the leadership of which was contested by Liberals on the one hand, and reforming independent nationalists and socialists on the other.

In the Highlands the last decade of the nineteenth century was marked by a downturn in sheep farming and a rise in deer afforestation. Even by the 1880s, for the sheep farmers, "the writing was clearly on the wall". This was not least on account of the rapacity with which they had exploited hill grazing land throughout the century: "a considerable proportion of their early profits in effect consisted of capital extracted from the land"(1).

Growing foreign competion and the deterioration of pasture consequent on these decades of over-grazing and over-stocking meant that after 1872 the fall in wool prices was "drastic and prolonged, and when prices eventually began to stabilise again in the 1880s they did so at less than 60 per cent of the average price of 1864-75 and at only 40 per cent of the prices prevailing in the mid-1860s"(2).

And thus, as the nineteenth century drew to a close, many farmers, "especially those of south country origin, were manifesting a very decided desire to escape from the business"(3).

Already by 1885 Cheviots were fast disappearing except in Sutherland and parts of Skye; and "throughout the Highlands, in fact, the 1880s were distinguished by a more or less spectacular decline in estate revenues"(4).

From 1872, therefore, thirty deer forests were formed

in the next ten years; by which time, there were 99 forests in the Highlands, covering two million acres(5).

As a result, in the closing decade of the century, and into the opening years of the following one, "deer forests were no longer confined to the high, inaccessible and relatively sterile land formerly let as wedder pasture. They began to encroach on land which...could have been farmed at a profit after paying a moderate rent. Sporting tenants simply offered landowners rents which were higher than any farmer could afford to pay...pressures such as these pushed the deer forest area up to its peak of 3,584,966 acres in 1912"(6).

Nor did fishing bring relief to the crofting population, trapped in a conditon of "self perpetuating inferiority" with regard to both demersal and pelagic operations(7).

In terms of national politics, it was a time of "great men and small events" (in Churchill's phrase). The Liberals drifted. Gladstone resigned as prime minister in 1894. Roseberry succeeded him, having fought-off a challenge from Sir William Harcourt. Campbell-Bannerman took the leadership of the party in 1899; while some of the important men of the 1906 Liberal administration were already to the fore, among them Asquith and Haldane(8).

In political terms the pre-war quarter-century represented "an immensely complicated historical situation. The break with radicalism [that is, radicalism within the Liberal framework] on the part of small but significant minorities in the early 1880s was the product of deep-rooted social forces"(9); but this had yet to reflect in a downturn of electoral support for the Liberals (though when it came, long delayed though it was, it would be cataclysmic enough). But for the moment, "The great Liberal victories of 1906 and 1910 seemed to dispel all fears of complete destruction...but this was truly an Indian Summer. The strength of nineteenth-century Scottish Liberalism lasted

far beyond the 1886 [electoral] recession because of a form of inverted conservatism, but factors tending towards disintegration had already been introduced"(10).

Thus, over the course of the ten general elections from 1874 to 1910, electoral support for the Conservatives in Scotland grew from just under 30 per cent to just over 42 per cent; while for the Liberals, it fell in Scotland from over 70 per cent to just over 53 per cent(11).

In the Highlands, however, the Liberals enjoyed a popular class identity. In the words of one Argyll land reformer in 1887, the Conservatives were "composed of landlords and their flunkies, the minister as a rule, some big farmers, and every other blockhead in the place. The Liberals are composed of crofters, fishermen, some farmers, tradesmen, labourers and every other manly and intelligent person who has a mind of his own, and who will go through thick and thin for the cause of justice and right"(12).

This was in itself a complex political arena, and in the Highlands it was complicated further by considerations of church dis-establishement and the struggle for Irish national liberation. Against it, the governments of the years before the Great War swung reluctantly to some form of legislative and developmental approach to Highland affairs. In 1890, for instance, the Walpole Commission recommended expenditure on a comprehensive fisheries infrastructure among other things(13); and by 1892 £238,000 had been earmarked for investment in the area(14).

The Crofters' Commission, meanwhile, was reducing rents by up to fifty percent around the Highlands, and cancelling much of the crofters' arrears. And in 1892 the government gave the new county councils the power to acquire land for smallholdings (though in the event these powers were largely worthless)(15).

In that same year, and much more importantly, the government established the Deer Forest Commission with a view to identifying such lands under sheep and deer as

could be used for land-settlement purposes. The Commission reported in 1895; taking the view that in the Highlands, there were 440,000 acres fit to extend existing holdings, and a further 795,000 acres appropriate for the creation of new crofts(16).

Thus in the 1895 general election, both major parties promised the Highlands land settlement programmes; and in 1897, the government established the Congested Districts Board, charged with making more land available to crofters. "From 1900 onwards, there is frequent reference in Crofters' Commission reports to cooperation between the two bodies by way of Commissioners and members of Commission staff carrying out inspections and making reports for the Board and surveying and laying out crofts"(17).

Nevertheless, only 502 new holdings were created by the Congested Districts Board in the first seven years of its existence(18).

Between 1905 and 1907 the Scottish secretary John Sinclair (Baron Pentland from 1909) attempted further reform despite the "Tories' hysterical reaction" (in Christopher Harvie's phrase)(19); while, in an echo of Henry George, "There was also a wide and apparently growing demand for land taxation, and again Scotland offered an example which English reformers envied. In 1907 Sinclair produced a land valuation bill which was promptly destroyed by the Lords"(20).

Nevertheless, 1911 finally saw the Small Landholders' Act on the Statute Book (it came into operation on All Fools' Day the following year). The Act abolished the Crofters' Commission (though a new one was set up in 1955 and exists to this day) along with the Congested Districts Board, the duties of the former passing to the Scottish Land Court, and of the latter to the Board of Agriculture for Scotland (later the Department of Agriculture for Scotland, and later still the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland)(21).

The Act re-designated crofters as smallholders, and extended to the rest of Scotland many of the provisions of the original 1886 legislation. More importantly, it gave the Board of Agriculture a "wide range of land settlement powers and an annual income of £200,000. The greater part of that income was to be expended on land settlement schemes in the north-west, and especially in the Hebrides"(22). On the part of the landlords, however, "there was much greater readiness now to fight cases and to argue in favour of the strict letter of the law". Much use was made of the right of appeal in the Act, by way of special case, to the Court of Session, which in the five first years after the passage of the Act heard twenty such cases(23).

Concurrent with these governmental, electoral and legislative developments, the established currents of nationalism and socialism continued to run strongly in the land reform movement in the Highlands in the period to the opening of the Great War.

Nationalism was reflected primarily in the demand for Home Rule. It was a demand that found a ready audience in sections of the Liberals, as well as in the various groupings attempting to form an independent political organisation of the working class. The first Scottish Home Rule Association, for instance, which ran from 1886 to 1918, published during the 1890s a dozen pamphlets arguing its case. In 1912, the Young Scots Society published its Sixty Points for Scottish Home Rule. In 1892, John Stuart Blackie published from Glasgow a slim pamphlet, The Union of 1707 and its results, while in the pre-war years another eighteen non-literary titles, some of them very substantial, also appeared (though curiously, not one was particularly concerned with the Highlands). Pro- Home Rule periodicals in circulation in this period included the Scottish Review, Scottish Patriot, British Federalist, Fiery Cross, the Scottish Nationalist, the Young Scot, Guth na Bliadhna, Scottish Nation, Scotia, Alba, and the Thistle(24).

Prominent nationalists included Dr. G.B. Clark and Cunninghame Graham(25); while the main long-term achievement of the Scottish Home Rule Association was "to confirm in their Home Rule sympathies many of the Radical leaders in the Highlands and many of the leaders of the Labour movement. The list of vice presidents in 1892 included the names of such Highland leaders as G.B. Clark...Charles Fraser-MacIntosh, Alexander MacKenzie, John MacLeod...and such Labour leaders as R.B. Cunninghame Graham, J. Keir Hardie and Robert Smillie...for instance, Ramsay MacDonald was for some years secretary of the London branch"(26).

Indeed in the years prior to the Great War, it was with labour rather than nationalism that the land question was most closely associated (although, as noted, many of the labour activists were themselves Home Rulers).

For Labour, meantime, the process of growth was slow but steady in these years. In 1888, the Scottish Labour Party returned three MPs (among them Keir Hardie). Five years later the Independent Labour Party was founded with Hardie as chairman; but though it ran 28 candidates in the 1895 general election, not one was returned. Not until 1900 and afterwards, with the formation of the Labour Representation Committee, did Labour start to make major strides as a parliamentary party independent of the Liberals, traditional haven for Radicals. In the 1900 election the Labour Representation Committee returned but two members (one of them Hardie); in 1906, it returned 30, signalling its conversion to the Labour Party, with Keir Hardie as chairman(27).

Not, of course, that this was a simple pursuit of parliamentary representation for itself; for many, much grander plans were in play. "With adroitness and consummate skill, the Scottish ILP leadership, with Tom Johnston and John Wheatley to the fore, began to utilise the structural shell of the Labour Party to develop a national-popular movement which set out to challenge Liberal hegemony at

every level...Especially through the establishement of their own newspaper, Forward, the ILP *marxisant* Left embarked on the most significant socialist venture within Scotland this century. In this attempt to create an indigenous Scottish socialism it was inevitable and vital that the land struggle and its motive and psychological potency be harnessed and politically developed. The land question lay at the heart of the emergence of a distinctive socialist force in Scotland...the centrality of the land question to the embryonic socialist movement, its collective consciousness and culture must be grapsed...socialist consciousness drew as much on the collective memory of rural struggles against the privilege, power and wealth of landlorism, as on the experience of the new, impersonal struggle between Capital and Labour. The rise of socialist consciousness within the Scottish miners graphically illustrates the importance of this vestigal, rural legacy...the struggle for land had a profound emotional-psychological signification in terms of the subsumed national consciousness of the dispossessed Highlanders, the latent, residual national consciousness of the Scots"(28).

And elsewhere, the same writer notes, "Johnston and the Forward group were actively involved in what can only be described as an attempt to build within Scotland a widely based oppositional culture which incorporated an internationalist socialist consciousness. Johnston used Scottish history, latent national consciousness, residual Irish and Scottish anti landlordism...to build a socialist led national and popular bloc which would confront directly the prevailing political ideas of the dominant social forces. In this context, the ongoing struggle for land, not least the active tactic of land seizure itself, quickly assumed an importance well beyond the immediate and specifically localised grievances which might actually have spurred on the raiders. For by their actions the land raiders were laying emphasis on the political substance

which lay at the heart of the socialist agenda itself - the demand that basic natural resources be utilised and developed in the communal interest rather than for private profit or pleasure"(29).

The Highland land question, in these years, therefore, and as a direct result of the crofters' agitation, became part of mainstream British politics, an "organic part of reform movements in Great Britain", and an integral part of the attempt to build a specifically Scottish socialism. It was also of course very much part of the Liberal agenda. As early as 1879 Gladstone, in his third Midlothian speech, had conceded that the compulsory acquisition of the land was "a thing which, for an adequate public object, is itself admissible, and so far sound in principle"(30).

And in 1888 Lord Roseberry admitted of the need for further legislation on the crofting question; while two years later his party conceded that a future Liberal government would indeed meet crofters' demand for more land(31).

In the same period, both English and Scottish land-associations, with reformists of various hues in their leaderships, were targetting the punitive taxation of land values, notably at local levels. Their agitational paper the Single Tax first appearing in 1894. Associated with the movement were the likes of G.B. Clark, R.B. Cunninghame Graham and Shaw Maxwell; while Tom Mann and Sidney Webb helped lead the movement throughout the decade. And by 1895, the Scottish Land Restoration League was pressuring Glasgow City Council to apply land taxation within its district. In the Glasgow municipal elections of 1896, of the seventy five candidates no less a number than forty nine were land-taxers(32).

Against this complex background, the Highland Land League began to disintegrate, its traditional functions dispersed, if not dissipated, on a wider stage of political affairs. In Morvern, for instance, the district branch of

the League stopped meeting in 1889, and collapsed altogether three years later(33).

But public opinion in the Highlands remained strongly committed to the aspirations of the League, and its discontinuous subsidence occupied the last decade of the century. In 1889 an entirely Highland executive (finally destroying all vestiges of Edinburgh and London influence) had been elected and based in Dingwall. It at once began to prepare for the elections to the new county councils, scheduled for the following year(34).

But in the general parliamentary election of two years later, John MacKay, one of the League's founders, stood as a Liberal Unionist against Angus Sutherland, running as a Liberal and Land League candidate; while Fraser-MacIntosh was opposed on behalf of the Land League too.

And at the League conference the following year, a split was inevitable; G.B. Clark forcing it by denouncing the Liberal domination of the League. The Liberal J.G. MacKay of Portree won the presidency by one vote, however; at which Clark and supporters walked out. They re-formed the Highland Land Law Reform Association (by which title the Land League was formally known until it adopted in 1886 the name by which everyone knew it anyway). Clark was supported by D.H. MacFarlane, who had been re-elected as MP for Argyll the previous year, along with J. Galloway Weir, a founder member of the "old" Highland Land Law Reform Association, who had replaced Roderick MacDonald as Ross-shire MP in 1892. This new Association, however, lasted only for three years; by which time the Land League itself was foundering too(35).

(In 1909, the League was re-constituted by Thomas Johnston, with G.B. Clark was president)(36).

But though the nature of the organisational representation of popular grievance and aspiration was therefore to change during the pre-Great War quarter century, the substance of those grievances and aspirations

had, and would, not. The crofters, after all, had not enough of the land, while the cottars had none of it; and while growing millions of acres were under deer, the aspiration still was for "the land for the people".

And, therefore, the land agitation went on across the last ten years of the nineteenth century; with demands and forms of struggle by now known intimately to the common people across the Highlands. For the previous fourteen years, after all, anti-landlord agitation had been incessant on the mainland and in the islands, as the government's 1888 return of agrarian offences committed since 1874 makes very clear(37).

It runs from a case of assault and breach of the peace at Bernera in 1874 right through to the case of Hugh Kerr drawing a sentence of 60 days for deforcement, mobbing assault and breach of the peace in 1888. Between these, respectively the first and the last entries in the return, appear many others; whether for malicious mischief in Uist(38), deforcement and assault at Braes(39), mobbing and rioting at Rogart, assault at Dunvegan, deforcement at Valtos, rioting at Glendale, breach of the peace at Stoneybridge, mobbing at Waternish, deforcement in Lochs, breach of the peace at Uig, breach of interdict at Rogart; along with a catalogue of similar incidents occuring in the years between from Tiree, Gruids, Kilmuir, Argyll, Creich, Clashmore, and at Park, Aignish and Borve in Lewis(40).

But by 1888, however, though the extraordinary public wrangle between sheriff Ivory and the Valtos crofters Norman Stewart and John Beaton was still exercising the minds of parliament(41), the prevailing orthodoxy, in Westminster if not in the collective consciousness of Highland landlordism, was that if the Highlanders could not be entirely repressed, or driven or bribed into emigration, then the government had better look to the matter, with a view to doing something about it. Emigration remained dear to the hearts of the authorities, as might be expected. A government plan to

arrange "a colonisation scheme for the crofters and cottars of the western Highlands and Islands" was mooted(42), and the reports of the commission charged with the scheme record its success, or otherwise, for the sixteen years from 1890(43).

But emigration, whether funded by the state or the landlords, very clearly did not commend itself as a solution to anything in the view of the crofters; and the state accordingly set-about informing itself and its agencies via a series of public enquiries on the exact nature of social affairs in the Highlands of Scotland. First of these was an official report on the condition of the Lewis cottars(44), which was followed within two years by another high-level committee of inquiry into "matters affecting the interests of the population" of the area(45). And at the turn of the century, a further study was published, comparing social conditions on Lewis with those prevailing in the early 1880's(46).

Across the same last decade of the nineteenth century, the annual reports of the Crofters' Commission would appear (and continue to appear until 1912)(47), with, in the second half of the period, the reports of the Congested Districts Board (CDB) keeping them company(48).

But no single report of the period, official or otherwise, caught the flavour of the continuing land-question in the Highlands quite as much as that of the Deer Forest Commission in the early 1890's. In many ways similar in nature and importance to the Napier Commission, it found that around two million acres of the Highlands were under one hundred or so deer forests. Among these, were found that of the Duke of Sutherland with 145,000 acres under deer in that county (with the Duchess having another 35,000 acres in Ross-shire); that of Lochiel with 32,000 acres in Inverness and Argyll; that of Edward Scott's trustees, with 40,000 acres in Harris; that of Lord Lovat with around 80,000 acres in Inverness; that of Lord MacDonald, by now

down to 10,000 acres of Skye; that of Lady Matheson (who by this stage was living in the south of France) with 34,000 acres in Lewis; that of Munro Ferguson, with 3,000 acres at Kildermorie; that of A.J. Balfour with 30,000 acres at Strathconon; and that of the Duke of Portland, with 36,000 acres at Langwell in Caithness(49).

The Deer Forest Commission therefore highlighted the extraordinary extent to which the land surface of the Highlands was increasingly dedicated to the pursuit of sport; and in its report and appendix, it suggested ways by which such land could be returned to crofting use(50).

As just one page of the appendix indicates, for instance, the commission thought suitable for new or enlarged holdings for crofters about 14,000 acres on E.S.Bowlby's estate of Knoydart(51), while in Arisaig, where the Nicholsons still presided, over 2,000 acres were thought suitable for new holdings. And on Lord Lovat's estate in North Morar, almost 700 acres of the Bourblach grazings were nominated as suitable for addition to existing crofters' holdings(52).

By now the "eviction mania" of earlier years was passing , largely as a result of the Crofters' Act (while as a sign of the times small victories were also being recorded in the courts with regard to rights-of-way)(53). Still, however, the Oban Times could report that the threat of summary eviction was continuing to "cast its evil blight over the peaceful inhabitants of Lismore and the humble tillers of the soil around Loch Nell". In this case, a portion of the Barcaldine estate had been purchased by a Mrs Ogilvie of Sussex, following the departure of two farmers. While "she had only entered into possession in November, her efforts to oust the tenants on the estate have been vigorously prosecuted and persistent"(54).

By the 1890s, nevertheless, the traditional sort of unfettered eviction was increasingly a thing of the past - the great bulwark of the 1886 Crofters' Act serving to

preserve the crofting community from much of the tyranny of earlier decades.

Indeed, by the 1890s, a new rythm had entered the anti-landlord agitation in the Highlands and one that was reflected notably in the fate of the Highland Land League (a pre-eminent example of an institution falling as a necessary victim of its own success). The League has blossomed as a response to agitation rather than as an inspiration of that agitation. Though it won widespread support very quickly, it represented in essence a single-issue mass-movement, serving as a focus for indigenous agitation on the ground. It shared, as an organisation, in the victories of the 'eighties; and as a result of those victories was prey to the pressures and strains of any successful single-issue campaigning organisation. The logic of its existence drove it to develop as it did, towards a formal, party-type association; thus begging questions as to its stance with regard to the established parties. It was driven, or at least its leaders were driven, to involvement in national issues; and hence national issues became an issue in League politics. Not surprisingly, therefore, it was not to survive, in the form that it had established during the 'eighties, the pressures of the "complex historical situation" of which it was part.

Nevertheless, it continued to run parliamentary candidates. In Argyll, D.H. MacFarlane, who had won the seat in 1885 and lost it the following year, took the seat back in 1892 as a Liberal/Crofter (though he would lose it again in 1895)(55).

In Caithness, Dr Clark, under one banner or another, held the seat from 1885, through the elections of 1886, 1892, and 1895. Clark lost the nomination for the seat for the 1900 election as a result of his support for the Boer, however; and in that election the land-banner was formally carried by F.C. Auld, founder and candidate of the Land Law Reform Association of Caithness (who promptly lost the

election)(56).

In Inverness-shire, Charles Fraser-MacIntosh, who had held the seat in 1885 and 1886, was replaced for the 1892 election by D. MacGregor, candidate of the Inverness-shire Land League; but from 1895, when it was lost by the crofters, until the end of the Great War, no further candidate stood in the name of the League. In Ross-shire, Dr MacDonald had represented the seat in 1885 and 1886. From 1892, J.G. Weir, standing then as a Liberal/Crofter but afterwards simply as a Liberal, held the seat in 1895, 1900, 1906 and 1910. On his death in that year, J.I. MacPherson, (who would later write an introduction to a reprint of Alexander MacKenzie's history of the Highland clearances) took over(57).

In Sutherland the electoral record of land reform candidates was patchy. Angus Sutherland had contested the constituency in 1885 without success. Though he did win it the following year and hold it until 1892, he then resigned it. J. MacLeod took it as a Liberal/Crofter in 1894 and held it the following year as a simple Liberal; but in 1900 he was beaten by one of the Leveson-Gower family(58).

In short, both the scope and form of anti-landlordism changed during the 1890s, partly as a result of increasing government interest in Highland affairs and Highland votes, signified by the Scottish Secretary Lothian's tour of inspection in the autumn of 1889, which was inspired by "a view to improving the lot of its inhabitants"(59).

The very public activities of the Crofters' Commission also helped adapt the nature of agitation; and indeed, the depth of agitation. Its proceedings constitute an important element in crofting affairs throughout the last decade of the nineteenth century, and in particular for the early part of that decade, with its early rulings firing expectation and morale throughout the Highland area.

But still, the fabric of Highland affairs remained strangely suggestive of earlier times. In the first month

of the century's last decade, for instance, the MP for the Partick constituency died. Educated at Rugby and Balliol, an Edinburgh advocate married to the daughter of the landlord of Morvern, he was none other than Patrick Sellar's son Craig; in whom, it may fairly be said, the manifold blessings of clearance, improvement and constructive hobbyism had generously been invested(60).

In the month of his departure, meanwhile, the executive of the Land League met in Dingwall to re-appoint Donald MacRae as organising secretary and to urge crofters to support land-reform candidates in the forthcoming county-council elections(61); the crofters of Lochs were reported to be making ready to take possession for cultivation of the Park deer forest(62); and reports were being received of destitution among crofters exiled to Canada - "the present position of many of the families sent here under the auspices of Lady Cathcart, speculative land companies and the government should be a sufficient warning to those at home to stay and face the ills they know rather than come here and face the ills they know not"(63).

(The districts referred to were at Cathcart and Wapella to which Uist people had been driven prior to the coming of the Napier Commission.)(64).

In February 1890, following the urging of the Land League executive, land-reform candidates in general swept the elections for the county-councils in the Highlands. In Sutherland, for instance, Land League candidates took 17 of the 19 seats. League candidates also won every seat in the Hebrides, while in Skye, they enjoyed a majority of two to one over their opponents(65). As a result, the League quickly began to use the new Highland councils as platforms for land reform. All of them (except Argyll, the only one to have returned a pro-landlord majority) petitioned parliament to implement the Land League programme(66).

Within weeks of the election the crofters of the parish of Canisbay in Caithness were laying claim to land in the

district(67); while on Jura the Crofters' Commission held a court for local tenants "at which their chief grievance seemed to be the encroachment of the deer-forest and consequent restriction of their pasture and loss of stock-land"(68).

That April, a deputation to the factor for Lovat estates was led by one Hugh Fraser, president of the Lovat Land League. They requested that the crofters be given the use of a local hill, for which they were prepared to pay a reasonable rent. The factor refused on the grounds that the land in question was let to Lord Winborne; at which the crofters announced they would simply go to the Crofters' Commission "who'll give us our rights, of which we were unjustly deprived years ago"(69).

That same month a Land League meeting in Uist was addressed by Donald MacRae. He urged all present to persevere in the agitation for more land and a still-further reduction in rent. At the close of the meeting, a committee for each township in the district was elected; and it was announced that a mass-meeting would shortly be convened "with a view to further action", and at which Donald MacFarlane would speak(70).

Shortly afterwards, the Duke of Sutherland announced that he was to clear the extensive sheep-farms of Melness, Siberscross and Clebrig and turn them into a deer-forest; and on Knoydart, Baird announced the same type of plan(71).

Meanwhile the Crofters' Commission had been busy on the duke of Argyll's estate in the Ross of Mull. "The Ross of Mull crofters complained very much of rack-renting before the Royal Commission in 1883 and from the finding of sheriff Brand's court it would appear that they were somewhat justified in their complaints. In the 47 cases in which fair rents have just been fixed the crofters got an average reduction of 39 per cent, and have had over 63 per cent of their arrears wiped off...for many years the duke of Argyll has posed as the model Highland laird. If anyone ventured

to say a word about the poverty of the crofters, the duke was ever ready to declare that they were a lazy lot and that their miserable condition was due to their own improvidence. As to their being rack-rented - there was no bounds to his indignation at such a suggestion...but the idol has fallen...fair rents have been fixed by the Crofters' Commission on the Ross of Mull"(72).

That June the MP for Ross and Cromarty, Dr MacDonald, was addressing the annual meeting of the county association of the Land League(73). And a matter of weeks later, some of his constituents on Berneray in Harris Sound were raiding Borve farm on the island, knocking-down a stable and burning-out a stackyard, in a conflict that would run into the autumn (and return later in the decade)(74).

The following spring forty or fifty men raided Park deer forest, as they had threatened a year earlier, and began to prepare the once-cleared township of Ornsay for cultivation. Thirty two of the men were subsequently gaoled, but briefly(75).

On the mainland, fierce evictions, though rarer than before, were still taking place, as on the Brahan estate that summer, with assault on, and the deforcement of, an eviction party(76); while in the Hebrides, Lady Matheson returned to Lewis "for the first time in some years"(77). In Lochcarron 20 crofters petitioned the Crofters' Commission for more land. The factor, called as a witness by the crofters' representative Donald MacRae, conceded that the land in question had been taken from the township fourteen years earlier, without compensation(78).

In Lochs, meanwhile, as a result of the Commission's decisions, "on the rents of 48 small holdings in Ranish the average reduction is over 41 per cent". And in Barra the commission had ordered an average reduction of 38 per cent on the holdings of 136 crofters(79).

As the Glasgow Weekly Mail noted during the last week of the year, "On the whole of Lady Cathcart's Long Island

estates which comprise South Uist, Benbecula, Barra and several small islands, there are 998 crofters whose cases have been dealt with during various visits of the commission. The average reduction of rent granted over the whole is slightly over 30 per cent. They were due £27,338 of arrears, of which the commissioners have cancelled £20,967.....A liberal concession of land is being offered to the crofter tenants on the well-known estate of Kilmuir in Skye, by Mr G.A. Baird of Stichill, who acquired the estate three years ago"(80).

In short, the balance of class-forces had changed in the Highlands by the 1890s, the progress of the Crofters' Commission both encouraging expectation and stifling active protest on the scale of the previous decade; while the focus of agitation swung to the question, not so much of security of tenure, but of recovery of land from sheep and deer by means of formal political action. The scale of active direct-action therefore dipped, though in the spring of 1892 there was trouble at Clashmore in Sutherland, with fences and dykes again destroyed and the chief-constable of the county writing in some alarm to his superiors in Edinburgh(81). That same month too the crofters in the north of Lewis were meeting to demand legislation empowering the Crofters' Commission to increase holdings and to give new holdings to those without any land at all(82).

At precisely the same time, the Duke of Portland was taking over the shootings of Dunbeath Castle, extending his deer-forest lands to almost 80,000 acres(83); while that August, on Skye a sheriff-officer and party attempting an eviction were assaulted and deforced in the traditional way(84).

Back on the mainland, the Winans deer-forests were drawing attention again. Winans had not shot anything on them for five years, nor had anyone else been allowed to, and the deer were multiplying alarmingly. In the sardonic words of one report, it was, "a novelty in congested

populations...there can be no doubt as to the public scandal of so much land being kept uncultivated and useless when thousands of crofters are being kept in poverty because of the smallness of their crofts. Some parts of the deer-forests might be tilled and large parts might be used for the grazing of crofters' stock"(85).

On Skye, meanwhile, Lord MacDonald was taking court action for eviction against five of his tenants in Snizort, three of them widows. And in Glendale a mass meeting of crofters and cottars was promising further united action with regard to the land-question in the Highlands(86).

In Sutherland, the Duke's funeral was proceeding at Dunrobin (though his sons were absent, on account of a struggle within the family about who was going to get the London and North Western Railway shares)(87). That October, the Land League met, once again at Portree, for its annual conference, with fifteen resolutions calling for a radical reform of the land question (and agreeing to re-appoint Donald MacRae as full time organiser at a salary of £70 a year)(88).

In the previous three months, the press, in particular MacKenzie's Scottish Highlander, had been keeping the land question firmly in the Highland public eye. In July, for instance, the paper had carried front-page statements from its favoured candidates for the 1892 parliamentary election. Among them was Fraser-MacIntosh, for Inverness, whose "views were unchanged since the 1885 election on the subject of deer-forests, game laws, and rights of salmon fishing in river estuaries and arms of the sea". James Galloway Weir was another, who had been the unanimous choice of candidate by the Highland Land League(89).

That same month the paper was covering Lady Matheson and the crofters of Lewis(90), while in August it was reporting a case of deforcement in Skye, at Lynedale(91), and paying continuing attention to the fate of the crofters evicted to Canada from the Gordon Cathcart estates on South

Uist(92). It reported legal action against Donald MacRae(93), J.G.Weir's tour of Lewis(94), the forthcoming conference of the League(95), and publicised a lengthy series then running in the People's Journal on the subject of "men or deer in the Scottish glens?"(96). The Scottish Highlander also reported further court action by Lord MacDonald against the crofters of Skye, tenant-meetings at Glendale demanding more land, and the death and associated legal battles accompanying it of the Duke of Sutherland(97).

As well as a sideswipe at the Church of Scotland and its historical relationship with Highland landlordism ("the established church and the land-question; better late than never")(98), the Scottish Highlander covered at length the September conference of the League, with next-day stories telegraphed from Portree, reporting the presence at the conference of Mary MacPherson the poetess and the absence due to sickness of Michael Davitt. It also noted that at the 1885 conference in Portree there had been ten times as many people present, but added defiantly that "no settlement of the land question in the Highlands can be regarded as final which does not clearly recognise and fully embody the inherent and historic rights of the Highland people to their native soil"(99).

Comment and correspondence relating to the conference continued throughout that autumn(100). The paper also campaigned for Land League county-council candidates, carrying an "address to Highlanders" by the League president on "the man to vote for"(101), with subsequent comment on the results((102). It then turned its close attention to the appointment of the Deer Forest Commission (the proceedings of which it would follow closely in the coming years). It also monitored and reported the response to the appointment of the Commission by both crofters and landlords - the latter very promptly convening in Inverness to discuss its implications(103).

Similar themes dominated throughout that winter and

into the following year. In Kilmuir, the people of the district "were on the march for more land", walking in procession with pipers to the scene of a cleared township to demand it(104). In Inverness, the Land League was setting-up a stream of crofter-witnesses to appear before the Deer Forest Commission(105). In Glendale and Valtos crofters were demanding "their rights" and more land(106). In Arnisdale, on the shores of Loch Hourn, the local branch of the League was also demanding land. In Argyll, the duke was evicting crofters(107). Throughout Skye, the people were busy appointing delegates to appear before the Commission, its visitation to the island then being imminent(108). The dowager duchess of Sutherland was gaoled in Holloway, convicted on contempt of court charges relating to a who-gets-what struggle over the late duke's will(109). And the Scottish Highlander continued to publicise the record of the MacLeod landlords with regard to evictions on Skye(110); along with extensive coverage of the work of the Deer Forest Commission in the same island(111).

And by mid-decade, while the authorities continued to concern themselves with land-agitation matters across the Highlands(112), the same themes of land-hunger and crofter militancy remained apparent.

In January 1896, for instance, the Glendale branch of the League was still active, and meeting to elect office-bearers and hear reports, with John MacPherson in the chair(113). The following month the House of Commons was yet again debating the "crofter-question"(114). In March, sheriff Ivory was once again falling-out with Inverness-shire county council, occasioning some acid comment(115). In April, Lady Matheson, widow of Sir James, was dead and buried(116). In May the Crofters' Commission was at work in Torridon(117). In June, the Duke of Sutherland was in the Court of Session with regard to salmon poaching(118). In Uist "Sir John Orde's crowbar brigade" was evicting tenants(119) - a matter which would also surface shortly in

the House of Commons(120). In September, there was further evictions in Badenoch, with houses reportedly burned down(121). And the League met at Stornoway for its 14th annual conference: an event to which the Scottish Highlander gave two full columns of reportage(122).

Towards the end of the decade too, the land question and related matters continued to exercise public interest; though by then the leaders of twenty years earlier were quitting the scene, with the death of MacKenzie at the beginning of 1898(123), and of Mary MacPherson towards the end of the year(124).

The gentry, old and new, against whose doings both MacKenzie and MacPherson had so long campaigned, still traded in estates as before. Strathaird on Skye sold for £19,000 to the owner of Eigg(125); the same laird would within months be in conflict with his Eigg tenants, whom he had "migrated" from Galmisdale to Laig, and who were approaching the Crofters' Commission as a result(126). And meanwhile, the duchess of Sutherland visited the Hebrides(127), Andrew Carnegie bought Skibo castle(128), and the sauce millionaire Perrins was busy turning Ardross castle into a habitation suitable for a man of his resources(129).

But the causes and conflicts of earlier decades were still in evidence, albeit on a less generalised scale. Crofters in wester-Ross were still destroying deer-fences, and still being interdicted, and still calling on leaders of the land-reform movement (in this case, Donald MacRae) to represent them(130). Elsewhere in the Highlands, crofters were raising Court of Session actions against their landlord(131). Dr G.B. Clark addressed the Caithness Land League, to the effect that "landlordism has performed no useful function and it is bound to go because it is a burden on the land"(132). And in the Black Isle there was a "threatened agitation" following a meeting of the League; "there has been a revival of the crofters' agitation in the

Ross-shire"(133).

There were many other such conflicts, if on a local scale, right through to the end of the century. But as a decade in the history of land-agitation, the 1890s represented something of an interregnum. It had opened in hope; and that hope had been sustained by the judgements of the Crofters' Commission, the findings of the Deer Forest Commission, and, in its closing years, by the work of the Congested Districts Board. The price of this hope had been a downturn in agitation of a mass character, in a decade where the lines of development were more obscure and complex than before, where the forward march of progress less obvious, and less simple, that it had earlier seemed.

But popular aspiration and expectation remained as high, or higher even, than formerly. Both, however, by the close of the century, remained unmet; and for the land movement in the Highlands it therefore closed on a note of unrequited hope.

But the new one, the twentieth, that now opened, did so on a new note - albeit in an older, and familiar, tune.

CHAPTER NINE

1.

James Hunter, Sheep and Deer, Highland sheep farming, 1850-1900, Northern Scotland, 1973; 203, 204.

2.

Ibid.; 207.

3.

Ibid.; 208, quoting the Napier Commission.

4.

Ibid.; 213.

5.

Ibid.; 217.

6.

Ibid.; 219.

7.

Malcolm Gray, Crofting and fishing in the North West Highlands, 1890-1914, Northern Scotland, no 1, 1972; 111.

8.

Roy Gregory, Parliamentary Affairs, vol XXIII, no 2; reviewing Peter Stansky, Ambitions and Strategies, the struggle for the leadership of the Liberal party in the 1890s, Oxford, 1963.

9.

John Saville, Henry George and the British Labour Movement, Science and Society, XXIV, 1960; 331.

10.

Derek W. Urwin, The development of the Conservative party organisation in Scotland until 1912, Scottish Historical Review, no 138, vol XLIV, 1965; 94.

11.

Ibid.; 94. Those elections were; 1874; 1880; 1885; 1886; 1892; 1895; 1900; 1906; 1910 (January); 1910 (December). Note Urwin's comment, 96, to the effect that "The Disruption was perhaps one element which weakened the influence of the Church on social life". In the Highlands, certainly, this

was not the case.

12.

Oban Times, 17-9-1887; quoted in James Hunter, The politics of Highland land reform, 1873-1895, Scottish Historical Review, LIII, 1974.

13.

Malcolm Gray, Crofting and fishing in the north west Highlands; 90.

14.

James Hunter, The Making of the Crofting Community; 179.

15.

John Brown, Scottish and English land legislation, 1905-1911, Scottish Historical Review, XLVII, 1969; 73.

16.

James Hunter, The Making of the Crofting Community; 182.

17.

D.J. MacCuish, Ninety years of crofting legislation and administration, Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness; 303.

18.

James Hunter, The Making of the Crofting Community; 193.

19.

Christopher Harvie, introduction to The Land for the People, Scottish Socialist Society, 9. This 'hysteria' bred Thomas Johnston's "brilliant phillipic Our Scots Noble Families".

20.

John Brown, Scottish and English land legislation; 75.

21.

D.J. MacCuish, The origin and development of crofting law, Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness, XLIII, 1960-1963; 192-193.

22.

James Hunter, The Making of the Crofting Community; 192.

23.

D.J. MacCuish, Ninety years of crofting legislation; 308-309.

24.

Kenneth C. Fraser, A bibliography of the Scottish National Movement, 1844-1973; 11, 14, 16, 17, 18, 22, 23, 25, 30. For a comment on some of these titles, and their publishers, see H.J. Hanham, Scottish Nationalism; 122-123. The second Scottish Home Rule Association, which ran from 1918 to 1928, published in the immediate post-war period a title, Self Determination for Scotland; it was written by, among others, Annie Besant.

25.

James G. Kellas, The Liberal party in Scotland, 1876-1895, Scottish Historical Review, XLIV, no 137; 1965.

26.

H.J. Hanham, Scottish Nationalism; 93. By 1900, however, "the Labour movement's earlier agitation for Home Rule was beginning to collapse"; James D. Young, The Rousing of the Scottish Working Class; 174.

27.

T.W. Moody, Michael Davitt and the British Labour Movement, 1820-1906, Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, no 3, 1953; 55, 56.

28.

Ray Burnett, Land raids and the Scottish Left, Cencrastus, no 18, Autumn, 1984; 2. For a spirited and provocative defence of the reformist wing of this current, see Brian Wilson on John Wheatley as parliamentarian, Glasgow Herald, 8-3-1989.

29.

Ray Burnett, Highland land raids, their contemporary significance, in eds Irene Evans and Joy Hendry, The Land for the People, Scottish Socialist Society, Blackford, 1968; 15.

30.

Elwood P. Lawrence, Henry George in the British Isles; 6, 14.

31.

James Hunter, Politics of Highland Land Reform; 59.

32.

Elwood P. Lawrence, Henry George in the British Isles; 112, 113, 117. The longevity of the land tax cause in British reform politics should not be forgotten. As late as 1935, land-taxers in parliament included Herbert Morrison, Clement Attlee, Stafford Cripps, Arthur Greenwood and Emanuel Shinwell; Lawrence, 85.

33.

J.P.D. Dunbabin, The Crofters' Land War, 209, in J.P.D. Dunbabin, Rural Discontent in 19th century Britain.

34.

Ibid.

35.

James Hunter, The politics of Highland land reform, 1873-1895, Scottish Historical Review, LIII, 1974; 61-64, 66.

36.

James Hunter, The Gaelic connection: the Highlands, Ireland and nationalism, 1873-1922, Scottish Historical Review, vol 54, 1975, 195.

37.

Return of Agrarian Offences committed in the crofting parishes, Scotland (1874-1888), LXXXII 383.

38.

Ibid, November 1881.

39.

Ibid, May 1882.

40.

Ibid, September 1882.

41.

Copy of correspondence respecting the payment from public funds of certain expenses incurred by sheriff Ivory in connection with action brought against him by Norman Stewart and John Beaton, 1886, 446. Only a full reading can do this side-show to the crofters' agitation full justice; but some of its flavour can be caught from Ivory's "enclousure

no. 1". See also Ivory's comments on the background to "Norman Stewart's case", as a demonstration of the way in which the authorities' intelligence system worked in the Highlands.

42.

Memorandum of arrangements for starting a colonisation scheme for the crofters and cottars of the Western Highlands and Islands, and relative correspondence, 1888, LXXX.

43.

Crofters and Cottars Colonisation Commission, annual reports, 1890-1906.

44.

Report on the Condition of the Cottar Population of the Lews, 1888, LXXX.

45.

Report of the Committee appointed to Inquire into Certain Matters affecting the Interests of the population of the western Highlands and the Islands of Scotland, 1890, XXVII, 1890-1891, XLIV.

46.

Report to the secretary for Scotland by the Crofters' Commission on the Social Condition of the People of Lewis in 1901 as compared with twenty years ago, 1902, LXXXIII.

47.

Crofters' Commission, annual reports, 1888-1912. Unlike so many courts in previous years, the commission made no objection to taking evidence in Gaelic, in which language most of the evidence was naturally given. Crofters Commission, Report to December 1887, [C. 5247]; vii-viii. On Lord Lovat and leases to crofters, see Crofters' Commission, Report to December 1888, 126, (Appendix G, Legal opinions on the Lovat Leases.) On farming smallholders and leases on Lovat's west coast estate, see David Turnock, North Morar, the improving movement on a West Highland estate, Scottish Geographical Magazine, LXXXV, 1969, 19.

48.

Congested Districts Board for Scotland, annual reports, 1899-1912. The files of the Board contain the correspondence from local crofters or prospective crofters relating to land-hunger in North Morar, and their appeals for land. These letters do not sustain the conclusions that Turnock proposes with regard to the "improving movement" in the district.

49.

Royal Commission (Highlands and Islands, 1892.) Report and Minutes of Evidence, 1895, XXXVIII-XXXIX.

50.

Ibid.; Appendix, book of reference to maps.

51.

The recommendations of the commission did not go un-noticed, with regard to Knoydart; see the final chapter of this text.

52.

Deer Forest Commission, appendix, page 25. The land proposed for addition to crofters' grazings includes today the croft on which the present writer was brought-up; the land in question having been re-distributed under the auspices of the Congested Districts Board early in the present century.

53.

Some rights-of-way victories dating from this period are still considered noteworthy. See, for instance, Rennie MacOwan, Rights of Way or freedom to roam, Glasgow Herald, 4-7-1987, on the rights of way dispute in Glen Doll, originating in the estate's purchase in 1880 by an owner who then attempted to close it to the public. The civil action which followed lasted from 1886 to 1888; with the Court of Session upholding the right of way in 1887 and the House of Lords sustaining that judgement in May 1888. Today, the right-of-way in question in known to walkers as Jock's Road.

54.

Oban Times; 25-6-1987.

55.

Craig, British Parliamentary Election Results, 1885-1918; 527.

56.

Ibid.; 533.

57.

Ibid.; 559. For a comprehensive bibliographical history of this very influential title, see H.J. Hanham, The problem of Highland discontent, 1880-1895; 30-31.

58.

Craig, British Parliamentary Election Results, 1885-1918; 562.

59.

Oban Times; July 1889.

60.

Glasgow Weekly Mail; 18-1-1890. For Gladstone on the consequent by-election, etc, see Glasgow Weekly Mail, 25-1-1890 to 15-2-1890. See also Gaskell, Morvern Transformed, on Sellar.

61.

Glasgow Weekly Mail, 1-2-1890.

62.

Glasgow Weekly Mail, 22-1-1890.

63.

Ibid.

64.

Toronto Globe, 14-1-1890. Glasgow Weekly Mail, 1-3-1890. Napier Commission, report, 127-130. (See chapter 4, footnotes 111, 112).

65.

Scottish Highlander, 13-2-1890. Oban Times, 15-2-1890.

66.

Glasgow Herald, 20-8-1890.

67.

Glasgow Weekly Mail, 1-3-1890.

68.

Glasgow Weekly Mail, 15-3-1890, 22-3-1890.

69.

Glasgow Weekly Mail, 5-4-1890.

70.

Glasgow Weekly Mail, 26-4-1890.

71.

Glasgow Weekly Mail, 10-5-1890.

72.

Glasgow Weekly Mail, 17-5-1890.

73.

Glasgow Weekly Mail, 14-6-1890.

74.

Crofting Files, AF 67/48, police reports from Berneray, October 1890.

75.

Crofting Files, AF 67/48, report on the seizure of Ornsay, March 1891. Scottish Highlander, March and April, 1891.

76.

Glasgow Weekly Mail, 11-7-1891, 5-9-1891.

77.

Glasgow Weekly Mail, 5-9-1891. For her leaving, see Oban Times, 12-5-1888, and The Times 8-5-1888.

78.

Glasgow Weekly Mail, 28-10-1891.

79.

Glasgow Weekly Mail, 19-12-1891.

80.

Glasgow Weekly Mail, 26-12-1891. (Although there was land=raiding in Kilmuir the following year; Scottish Highlander, June 1893.)

81.

Crofting Files, AF 67/49, April 1892.

82.

Glasgow Weekly Herald, 23-4-1892.

83.

Ibid.

84.

Glasgow Weekly Herald, 20-8-1892.

85.

Glasgow Weekly Mail, 24-9-1892.

86.

Glasgow Weekly Mail, 1-10-1892.

87.

Glasgow Weekly Mail, 1-10-1892; 8-10-1892; and 15-10-1892.

88.

Glasgow Weekly Herald, 1-10-1892.

89.

Scottish Highlander, 7-7-1892. See also Scottish Highlander 14-7-1892 and 21-7-1892 for results and editorial comment; and 18-8-1892 for comment on the new government and the Highlands.

90.

Scottish Highlander, 21-7-1892.

91.

Scottish Highlander, 18-8-1892.

92.

Halifax Chronicle [Nova Scotia], 30-7-1892. Scottish Canadian [Toronto], 1-9-1892, and 29-12-1892. Scottish Highlander, 16-2-1893, "the British Columbia colonisation bubble bursts".

93.

Scottish Highlander, 8-9-1892 (the Bendamph rights-of-way case).

94.

Scottish Highlander, 15-9-1892.

95.

Scottish Highlander, 25-8-1892; 8-9-1892 (resolutions); 22-9-1892 (MacKenzie as delegate for Uist crofters); and 22-9-1892 (editorial).

96.

People's Journal, September 1892. Published subsequently as pamphlet, and reviewed Scottish Highlander, 23-3-1893. The importance, incidentally, of the People's Journal as a

source of information in the crofting counties may well be easy to underestimate; see, for instance, Donald Buchanan, Reflections, 191; "During the Boer War, the arrival of the People's Journal brought the worthies of the village gathering round this fount of knowledge".

97.

Scottish Highlander, 29-9-1892.

98.

Scottish Highlander, 13-10-1892.

99.

Scottish Highlander, 29-9-1892; 5-10-1892.

100.

Pall Mall Gazette, 20-10-1892 (Stuart Glennie on the League conference); Scottish Highlander, 17-11-1892 ("the split in the Land League"); and Scottish Highlander, 12-1-1892 ("who killed the Land League?").

101.

Scottish Highlander, 24-11-1892.

102.

Scottish Highlander, 15-12-1892.

103.

Scottish Highlander, 22-12-1892; 29-12-1892; and 12-1-1893.

104.

Scottish Highlander, 2-2-1893.

105.

Scottish Highlander, 16-2-1893 (and also the crofters of Arran begging for inclusion in the Crofters' Act.) See also Celtic Monthly, March 1893, for a biography and picture of Fraser-MacIntosh; and Celtic Monthly, April-May 1893, for a biography and picture of Dugald Cowan.

106.

Scottish Highlander, 9-3-1893.

107.

Scottish Highlander, 16-3-1893.

108.

Scottish Highlander, 6-4-1893.

109.

Scottish Highlander, 20-4-1893; 27-4-1893.

110.

Scottish Highlander, 11-5-1893 (editorial on MacLeod's evidence to the Deer Forest Commission with regard to evictions); 18-5-1893; and 1-6-1893.

111.

Scottish Highlander, 20-4-1893; 27-4-1893; 4-5-1893; 11-5-1893; 25-5-1893 (with two columns on Ross and Cromarty Land League); and 8-6-1893 (editorial on Deer Forest Commission).

112.

For example; Crofting Files, AF/67 - 48/49/50.

113.

Scottish Highlander, 16-1-1896. See also Scottish Highlander, 9-1-1896, and 16-1-1896, for a list of subscribers to a proposed testimonial presentation to Alexander MacKenzie; and 30-1-1896 for a picture. See also Dundee Advertiser, 16-11-1896, for a biography of MacKenzie.

114.

Scottish Highlander, 20-2-1896, giving a 2-col report on the debate.

115.

Scottish Highlander, 19-3-1896.

116.

Scottish Highlander, 2-4-1896.

117.

Scottish Highlander, 28-5-1896.

118.

Scottish Highlander, 4-6-1896.

119.

Scottish Highlander, 25-6-1896 (1½cols.)

120.

Scottish Highlander, 13-8-1896; Sir John Orde and the Lord Advocate. See also Scottish Highlander, 29-10-1896.

121.

Scottish Highlander, 17-9-1896.

122.

Scottish Highlander, 24-9-1896.

123.

Invergordon Times, 26-1-1898 (illness); 2-2-1898 (burial.)

Scots Pictorial, 5-2-1898 (biography and picture.)

124.

Invergordon Times, 16-11-1898 (1½cols); "During the Land League agitation she was a prominent figure at all the principal gatherings of the crofters at which she recited many of her poetic productions which were supposed to give expression to their grievances as well as to voice their aspirations".

125.

Invergordon Times, 2-2-1898.

126.

Invergordon Times, 18-5-1898.

127.

Invergordon Times, 31-8-1898.

128.

Invergordon Times, 14-9-1898.

129.

Invergordon Times, 10-8-1898 (1½ cols on his "homecoming".)

130.

Invergordon Times, 9-2-1898.

131.

Invergordon Times, 2-3-1898. See also Invergordon Times, 22-6-1898, for important decision of Dingwall Sheriff Court with regard to the application of crofting legislation; and Invergordon Times, 20-7-1898, on the Court of Session's "definition of a crofter" case.

132.

Invergordon Times, 21-9-1898.

133.

Invergordon Times, 30-11-1898; 14-12-1898.

CHAPTER TEN

On the grand scale of British state affairs and parliamentary politics the new century opened to conflict on the fundamental issues of Protection versus Free Trade, Imperialism, the power of the House of Lords to obstruct decisions of the House of Commons: and the rise (and rise) of organised Labour as an independent political force proposing a programme that may (or may not) have been Socialist but which was in any case widely identified as such.

Not all of this went un-noticed in the Highlands, not least the irony of Highland soldiers fighting the Boer in South Africa; which contest was so correctly identified by the Lewis poet Malcolm MacKay, with his covert and yet unmistakable reference to those of Lewis "earning gold and diamonds for others" and whom he would in due course be "lamenting in barren glens"(1).

Nor, despite these great issues of capitalist expansion, had that regrettable "Old National Grudge" (to the modest if strangely seditious effect that Scotland was not, actually, England) died out(2). This was a sentiment that had been powerfully reflected in Gaelic poetry throughout the previous century. Over the course of it, after all, the Gaelic verse of William Livingston, among others, had persistently told with 'clangorous and vigorous vituperation' of the "woes of the Gael at the hands of the barbarian English landlord", of the "desolations caused by strangers in the Highlands", of sorrow for Scotland's "contemporary impotence and desolation": for Livingston, "the sufferings of the Gaels in the 19th century could be ultimately attributed to the accession of strength landlordism received from its backing by the forces of the English Empire"(3).

But if this national consciousness remained alive and well, it did not find any significant expression in terms of

independent nationalist political organisation or action in the years leading to the Great War. Nationalism was either entombed in the Liberals or the preserve of Labour, whether Radical or Socialist; and Labour had more immediate priorities with which to deal. Labour, after all, was just emerging on the stage of parliamentary politics in any significant way, after a debate dating from at least the 1868 general election; "A recurring dilemna that faced trade unionists throughout the nineteenth century was whether or not they and their trade societies ought to be directly involved in political activity and if so whether such involvement should be independent of or in association with the established political parties. It was a dilemna that was not finally resolved until the formation of the Labour Party early in the twentieth century"(4).

Twenty years after that 1868 election, with Keir Hardie standing in the Mid-Lanark by-election, the movement was still groping towards a theory, an organisational form and a programme that would both capture parliament and secure for the workers some sort of socialist redivision of the fruits of their labour. It had also to be peculiarly Scottish in certain respects; "a compound of presbyterianism, Robert Burns and Robert Owen...the Scottish Labour Party had no strong, native ideological strength which the Liberal Party did not already possess...The assimilation of the Irish, and the solving of [Irish] Home Rule, therefore, were the prerequisites of a strong Labour Party in Scotland, and they belong to the twentieth century"(5). Nor was there an answer in an outright nationalist appeal - "for Scottish nationalism, insofar as it existed as a serious political force, was largely contained within the Scottish Liberal party"(6).

Forces were also at work among the Liberals to capture, or rather keep, the working class vote, with Chamberlain denounced for apparently planning "to transform the party from an all-embracing coalition which could cater for all

shades of reforming opinion into one which would represent only the interests of one class"(7).

This, then, was the difficult tactical background to the general election contested between October 1st and October 24th in 1900. It was a significant sign of the effect that land agitation in the Highlands had exerted over the previous twenty years that the manifesto of the Labour Representation Committee was pledged to the "nationalisation of land"; and that Campbell-Bannerman's Liberal manifesto contained the cautionary, if not strictly specific, phrase, "so long as our Land Laws are unreformed"(8). In the event, Conservatives and Liberal Unionists took 403 seats in the House of Commons and the Liberals 183, with three seats going to Labour and Independent Labour members(9). And the results in the Highland constituencies reflected the previous ten years of warfare over issues that did not directly concern the land question. Inverness Burghs was contested by a Liberal and a Liberal Unionist, the latter taking the seat. A Conservative beat a Liberal in Wick Burghs and Argyll; a Liberal beat off a Conservative and two Independent Liberals (one of them G.B. Clark, the other F.C. Auld, running as a joint candidate of the Land Law Reform Association of Caithness) in Caithness. In Inverness-shire, a Liberal also held off the Conservatives; in Orkney and Shetland, a Liberal Unionist took the seat from a Liberal; in Ross and Cromarty, J.G. Weir for the Liberals held off a Conservative; and in Sutherland a Liberal Unionist saw off a Liberal(10).

Concurrent with these affairs, however, and as an undercurrent to them, was the old refrain of popular demand for the land. In the years leading to the Great War the demand was accompanied by a steady rise in deer-afforestation, landlord obstruction of popular aspiration, a failure of government agencies to effect significant land reform in the crofting counties; and the increasing, formal identification of the Highland land question with the motive

forces of the contemporary Scottish Labour movement. (In which context, it is not insignificant that by 1900, at least 50,000 people in Glasgow alone can, with the effects of continuing Highland immigration, be calculated as having been Gaelic speakers)(11).

For the Highland elite, meanwhile, the dawn of the Edwardian era promised an age at least as generous in its charms and advantages as that which had preceded it: not least, doubtless, in its longevity. By the autumn of 1900, for instance, the recreational "sporting season" in the Highlands was well under way, with "excellent sport" reported from the vicinity of Dunrobin, from the Ben Alder forest, from Lord Burton's Glenquoich, and from Argyll, where the gentry were congregating in their lodges and steam-yachts, among them the earls of Harrowby and Dufferin; and in Badenoch, where Lord Southampton and guests had obliterated three and a half hundred brace of grouse in four days(12). Shortly afterwards too, in Lewis, major Duncan Matheson, by now in control of the estate, was importing 140 deer from England in order to improve the stock of his forests(13); while at the same point the Oban Times was carrying an advertisement from the MacDonald estates on Skye, offering for let the farms of Boreraig and Suisnish in the parish of Strath, extending to 3,000 acres and carrying a Cheviot stock of 800(14).

In this sense at least little or nothing had changed; and thus from the very opening of the century there was to be a steady stream, at times bursting into spate, of anti-landlord direct action in the Highlands; and one that would run strongly right up until the opening of the Great War itself(15).

Over the first five years of the period, agitation was concentrated in the outer and inner Hebrides.

In Barra, for instance, there was a marked upsurge of agitation towards the end of 1900, which culminated on the 15th of September in "the forcible seizure of the farm of

Northbay". Two thousand people were living on the island's 25,000 acres, while three quarters of those acres were in the possession of just three farmers, "their portion being principally arable land and pasture of a very fine description"(16).

The people, meantime, were "housed in a deplorable manner. The miserable patches of rock and peat cultivated by them cannot be called land, but for want of better they raise their yearly supply of potatoes as best they can in such patches". Since the beginning of the previous decade, under the 1892 legislation purporting to give county councils the power to acquire land for settlement purposes, the tenants at Northbay had been petitioning for more land. They had eventually "endeavoured to obtain by enforcement of the compulsory clauses of the Allotments Act by the County Council of Inverness some amelioration of their wretched conditions but the influence of landlordism in the county council proved too strong"; and after five years of complaining, the parish council of Barra finally warned "of a cottar upheaval through its refusal to give justice".

The people had already petitioned the Congested Districts Board to come to their aid, but the Board had replied that it was powerless to help. And thus - "the whole fishing and cottar population has risen, seized the farm, divided it into lots for crofts and house sites, and cast lots for the different portions. They openly go about stating their determination to stand by one another, and on no account to yield up one inch of the land seized, holding that it is better to go to prison than suffer longer as they are doing, seeing their families starving before their eyes...the position of affairs is serious, the unrest spreading rapidly. There is abundance of land in Barra suitable for house sites and crofter holdings, and the people express their entire willingness to pay a just rent for such"(17).

Commenting on the failure of the Congested Districts

Board to live up to its declared purpose of providing land for the people, the Oban Times condemned the Board, and demanded legislation on the basis of the recommendations of the Deer Forest Commission; a condemnation all the more damning, given that the Board was just three years old, and that its birth had been greeted with declarations of much expectancy(18).

Spurned by both Board and county council, the Northbay land raiders also petitioned the island's owner, Lady Gordon Cathcart; though without much hope, given the long-established nature of the Gordon-Cathcart regime in the southern isles(19). As Thomas Johnston was to observe just nine years later, she could be presumed to be, through marriage, "a genuine Huntly Gordon of the real old tooth-and-talon breed...while still on the sunny side of twenty summers [she] married John Gordon of Cluny...In 1880, two years after Mr. Gordon's death, she married Sir Reginald Cathcart...Lady Gordon Cathcart has not visited Barra for some thirty years"(20). Thus within a fortnight of the raid on Northbay, Gordon Cathcart's lawyers were writing to the Congested Districts Board, urging them to put a stop to the raiding, in whatever way possible (the presumption being that neither she nor they thought that a police-military force could be acquired) (21).

She was, however, decisively thwarted on this occasion, (though at some considerable cost to the public purse). The following spring, the Congested Districts Board bought Northbay farm and some of the nearby farm of Eoligarry, amounting to almost 3,000 acres of land, from which just under sixty holdings were to be formed. In other words, the raid had resulted in a very clear and certain victory for the raiders despite the obstruction of the landlord and the weakness of statute and official agency. This lesson was not to be lost on the rest of the Hebrides either(22).

During that same winter there was trouble at Sconser on Skye, scene over the best part of thirty years of anti-

landlord direct action on the part of crofting tenants. In October, Lord MacDonald's factor, who had acquired a sheriff's order empowering him to remove crofters' stock from Sconser, wrote to the chief constable of the county in some alarm. "I am convinced that as soon as I proceed to carry out the sheriff's order these crofters will be up in arms and use force to prevent me. With a force of thirty police I do not think that a riot would be attempted but this, I am convinced, is the only means of preventing one, so I write to ask if you can oblige me by supplying me with such a force"(23).

The chief constable replied to the effect that he would consult with the sheriff of the county: the sheriff advised that it would be better to despatch a sheriff's officer first and if (or when) that officer was deforced, then a party of police could be considered(24).

At the end of October, therefore, the factor reported again to the chief constable. He had, as advised, sent a sheriff officer to Sconser, who had, however, managed to serve only half of his notices, "when the people apparently found out the reason of his visit, upon which the township gathered round and stones and dirt were thrown, dogs also were set into him but did not touch him...the people told him that for his own sake he had better stop and further said that if anyone came to remove sheep, half a dozen of them would never return". The sheriff officer, meanwhile, complained to the Procurator Fiscal, in a clear attempt to involve the police, and demanded the eviction of five crofters "who had caused an irritancy of their tenancy". He claimed his party had been "accosted by about a dozen men...these men at once adopted a threatening attitude and told us that we had come far enough, that they wanted no more of our papers, and if we were wise for ourselves, that we had better return the way we had come as quickly as possible...as I saw the crowd was increasing and getting more threatening I displayed my Badge of Office and Wand of

Peace and declared myself deforced.....a mob of about 40 women and children [came] after us and over a dozen collie dogs, which they hounded upon us...". He also attempted to implicate the local teacher; "my own opinion was that the scholars of the school were let out for the purpose of following and annoying us. They followed us for about a mile on the road and besmirched us with clods and mud and everything filthy they could". The sheriff officer also complained to the factor - who urged him to go to the police; as a means of bringing some discreet pressure to bear on the chief constable(25).

As a result of what clearly seems to have been a conspiracy on the part of minor officialdom to bring in the police and crush crofter resistance at Sconser, the police inspector at Portree wired in code to both the chief constable at Inverness and the Procurator Fiscal at Strathpeffer; and in the middle of November, the chief constable (still MacHardy) wrote to the factor that the sheriff had granted permission for a police expedition to Sconser, scheduled for the middle of January, "in order to allow full time for conciliatory influences to operate". In December, however, the matter of the imminent assault was raised in Parliament, with questions directed at the Lord Advocate; and the authorities at once backed down. The estate offered the Sconser people land at Boreraig and Suisnish (from which, ironically, tenants had been cleared only a few decades earlier). In Sconser, as at Northbay, the common people had won; and if their victory was a small one on the Highland scale, it was, at least, a mighty one in Sconser(26).

Meantime, the spirit of agitation was un-dimmed in North Uist, where "the cottars have been clamouring for land for a generation or two back and, having lost all faith in the working of the Congested Districts Board, openly declare that they are forced to revolt in order to obtain sufficient pieces of land to live on". There were several hundred

cottar families involved. Many of them had applied to the Deer Forest Commission, the County Council and the Congested Districts Board for land. A small estate had recently come on the market. The people had applied to the Board for it to be divided among them, but the Board had rejected the demand, claiming that the land was unsuitable. This reply "exasperated the cottars, and a great number of them went in a body on Saturday to part of the lands of the estate and marked out small crofts for themselves...One cottar said it was quite clear to him that the only way to get the Congested Districts Board to work sensibly was for the people everywhere to break the law...They declared they would seize and hold the land by force, no matter how many of them had to go to prison. Several cottars referred to their sons and brothers fighting in South Africa...further developments are anxiously looked for, as many crofters are to join in with them in order to get better lands than those they have"(27).

And within a week the spirit of "unrest and agitation" over the seizure of the land, at Griminish and Vallay, was spreading throughout the island; "on Tuesday night a great meeting of crofters and landless cottars was held at Bayhead, representatives from various townships being present". The chairman, Norman MacDonald, a cottar of Bayhead, reminded his audience that "over half a century ago their forefathers were ruthlessly evicted from their homes at Griminish to make way for sheep farmers". For nearly a generation they had been agitating to have the land returned. They wanted the farms of Vallay, Griminish, and Scalpaig, and would take them and keep them, unless the Congested Districts Board swiftly bought-out the landlord Campbell Orde (who had in any case been trying to sell them for more than two years). Thus the people would again petition the Congested Districts Board and parliament; but "unless a speedy, favourable reply was got, forcible measures would be taken"(28).

In various parts of Lewis too, there was a popular demand for holdings, not least on the farms at Aignish and Gress, notable locations of land-seizure twenty years later. The Congested Districts Board approved of the scheme to divide the farms into holdings. Major Matheson, however, disagreed. To cede the farms as crofts would render the land subject to the protection of the Crofters' Act and thus closed to their free exploitation on the open market. It would also encumber his island with the sort of "kinsmen" then fighting the Empire's cause in South Africa. And thus, the Board was "accordingly unable to take any further steps in the matter"(29).

There was further trouble too on Bernera, scene of the great anti-landlord riot of 1874. Seven years earlier, the island's cottars had asked the Deer Forest Commission to have the farm of Croir divided among them, and since then applications had been made to both landlord and factor. Getting no satisfactory response from either government agency or landlord, therefore, towards the end of April "a number of cottar-fishermen took possession of the farm and marked it off in lots...they seem determined to retain possession"(30).

In due course, the land-raiders on Croir received notices of interdict from Matheson; in open defiance they planted potatoes on the land they had marked-out for repossession(31). The matter was raised in the House of Commons, but the Lord Advocate announced that he was "not prepared to introduce legislation to increase facilities already given as regards the acquisition of land in the congested districts of the Highlands"(32); and thus, before the month was out, "the hunger for more land all over the island estate is now developing into an open revolt at the refusal by the responsible authorities to give any heed to the solicitations of poverty-stricken cottars and crofters for patches of land to live upon"(33).

By now, the remaining sheep farms in the Highlands were

on the brink of an acute crisis, with land increasingly being turned to deer: "The price of blackface wool has fallen to a minimum, the larger farms cannot find tenants, and landlords all over the country are transforming vast tracts of pasture land into deer forests", in the words of the Oban Times(34).

The popular demand for these "vast tracts of pasture" remained as high as ever; but the Congested Districts Board was unable to satisfy it. It had originally been appointed for a five year term; but after just three years its performance was drawing the fire of the Highland press. "With more than half of its life having expired, we should be able to reckon on the completion of nearly one half of its duties...we do not think the people of the congested areas will take that view...if it proceeds during the next two years at the leisurely pace of the last three, it will at the end of its term leave the Highlands with the problems of congested districts, untouched at its foundations...We can only have congestion eradicated by the thinning out of the people over the land. It is a first duty of the Board to bring congestion to an end, and judged by that duty, its three years administration has come painfully short of the mark"(35).

As a result, agitation extended to South Uist, at Iochdar, where the estate factor had demanded that the crofters erect a protective fence between their patches of land and the contiguous Griminish farm (upon which, clearly, the crofters had been allowing their stock to graze). This demand, however, "revealed to the crofters that there was no intention of relieving their present poverty-stricken condition, and the largest meeting ever to take place on the land question in South Uist was at once held...restoration of the land had commenced at the beginning of the new century, and would not stop until complete restoration had taken place"(36).

There was also trouble in the townships of Suishvale,

Howbeg and Howmore, where the tenants of Gordon Cathcart met to decide how to "force land from the estate", and to hold a demonstration against "the tyrannical laws which subject cottars and small crofters to starvation when ample ground is available". Thus a great crowd headed by pipers marched on the farm of Bornish and marked it out in crofter holdings; "resolutions were then passed to the effect that after 25 years asking peaceably for land, their application being unheeded, they resolved to delay no longer in taking such lands"(37).

In May, 1903, the farms of Milton and Ormiclate were seized and apportioned among the people who were preparing the land for cultivation, and were determined "to retain forcible possession"(38).

And within a week twenty five cottars from Stoneybridge had taken possession of the Bornish farm, and divided it among themselves, in time for the spring planting of crops(39).

Nor were these short-lived incidents. Indeed, the agitation in South Uist continued un-abated over the following three years, by which time the crofters of Howbeg were marching "in procession, with flags flying and headed by pipers, to the farms of Ormiclate and Bornish, and again took possession". Twenty one holdings were pegged out, and temporary huts made ready, for use when they commenced cultivation. On the same afternoon, the crofters of Stoneybridge marched to the Ormiclate machair, near Loch Olay, headed by a piper, and divided it into thirty holdings. They had, in fact, first seized the Ormiclate machair, the best in the district, during the winter of 1883-1884, and at the time of the passing of the Crofters' Act in 1886, had asked to be given it, but were debarred by the restrictive conditions imposed by the estate that accompanied its offer. In December 1904, they had again asked to be given it - but again Gordon Cathcart had refused; though "in the early part of last century the

machair had been part of the Stoneybridge crofters' holdings, but they were dispossessed and the land added to the Ormiclate farm". The farm, along with that at Bornish, ran to 20,000 acres of hill and low ground, "in every sense suitable for settling crofters. Great unrest prevails among the cottar class...who have made up their minds to hold the lands they have seized against all comers. They are determined that they will have the land for themselves. It is said that the cottars of Iochdar and Daliburgh districts, who are reported to be restless, will also soon seize the large farms of Gerinish, Drimore and Milton, and in that event the whole of the island of South Uist will be in their hands"(40).

During this period, there were numerous other incidents both on the mainland and the Hebrides; not least in Tiree, where crofters and cottars once again asked for land. The duke, however, counselled them to the effect that, "You should enlist in the Naval Reserve...there are very many lowland farmers anxious to get workers now...I am also willing to assist in getting good lands for those who may like to join their friends in New Zealand and Canada"(41).

And in Skye, by the winter of 1905-1906, agitation was also in the ascendant, on a scale suggestive of twenty years earlier, as a steady stream of press reports, and reports to the authorities, indicate only too clearly. The Inverness Courier, for instance, was reporting mass meetings at the Quiraing that February(42); the Highland Times writing of expected raids at Snizort the following month(43); and The Scotsman throughout March and April reporting trouble at Uig and planned raids at Kilmuir - "discontent, disturbance, and lawlessness are once again appearing in the crofter country"(44).

And on the wider scale of national affairs, the land question had continued to exercise the interest of significant sections of Scottish public, or political, opinion.

Though as early as January 1900 the nationalist quarterly the Scottish Review was lamenting (in an article on the taxation of land values) that "Home Rule is dead or dying"(45), nationalist publications continued to give prominence to land reform. The very first issue of the occasional Fiery Cross announced that "we will advocate...the restoration of the people to the land of their fathers"(46); and two years later it was publishing a short but favourable obituary for John Murdoch(47).

Nor did the subject escape the notice of the monthly Scottish Patriot. As the 1903 "sporting season" in the Highlands got under way, it published a full tabloid page showing the extent of deer forests in Scotland, illustrating in graphic form the extraordinary extent to which the common people, particularly in Inverness-shire and Ross-shire, had been driven to the coastal margins of the land in the cause of deer-forests(48). Two months later, in an article on "the land monopoly", it was explaining "how the Congested Districts Board betrays its trust"(49). The following year, it gave a full page to a piece on deer forests(50); while throughout that same year it campaigned on the land question and rights-of-way in Blair Atholl under the rubric of "The Duke of Atholl as a Land Grabber", opening its campaign with the observation, "There are still Robertsons alive who remember their clansman Dundonnachie and the case of the bridge-toll...the question of the land in Scotland and especially in the Highlands is the leading question in Scotland at the present day". Throughout the summer and autumn of that year, the periodical sustained a campaign fighting fund raised by public subscription on the issue(51).

And that same winter the nationalist Guth na Bliadhna observed, "It is really monstrous that huge tracts of the Highlands and Islands should be denuded of their inhabitants in order to make room for deer; and we beg leave to remark that were this country governed at home instead of at

Westminster, a state of affairs so humiliating and depressing, so morally unsound and so economically wrong as this is, would never have been suffered to endure, much less to attain to its present scandalous dimension...from one seventh to one sixth of Scotland belong to red deer". And in a footnote to this same article, in an echo of the poetry of Malcolm MacKay, it added, "We do not like the sound of the argument that our lands should be repeopled in order that, like fat stock, the inhabitants might be reared for the English military market"(52).

The continuing interest in the land question, and its continuing identification with issues of class and nationality, was reflected in the 1906 general election, when the Liberals took 399 seats, the Conservatives (inclusive of 25 Liberal Unionists) 156, and Labour 29 seats(53). Only the Labour manifesto, however, specifically mentioned the land, asserting that "overcrowding continues while the land goes to waste. Increasing land values go the the people who haven't earned them"(54). This was not, however, reflected in the results in the Highlands. In Inverness and Sutherland, a Liberal beat a Liberal Unionist; In Wick, a Conservative beat a Liberal; in Inverness-shire, Orkney and Shetland, Argyll and Caithness, a Liberal beat a Conservative. And in Ross and Cromarty, the Liberal J.G. Weir also beat off the Conservatives - the Liberals, in other words, were embarked on their rather longer future in the Highlands than the rest of the country(55).

For the vanguard of the Labour movement too, land remained central to their perception of the future; and that perception was given focus and direction by, above all, Thomas Johnston's Forward, founded in 1906. Most of its early contributors and production journalists were Fabians, but they included Roland Muirhead, the nationalist, who - along with Dr G.B. Clark - was often to rescue the title from financial disaster(56). The Irish connection was maintained by having James Connolly as Dublin correspondent;

and the socialist by the likes of writers and organisers such as John Wheatley, who "clearly foresaw a time when the Irish working-class vote could become a permanent reservoir of support for the Left in Scotland"(57). Wheatley's "conversion to socialism had coincided with the arrival of Forward"; while John Maclean was another contributor(58).

In its first two or three years, Forward devoted regular space to coverage of the land question, not least with exposures of "Henry George's fallacies", still influential at municipal level in the West of Scotland(59). It also scrutined the proceedings in parliament of legislation on the land question, for the Liberal government of 1906 was "committed to a vague but ambitious programme of land reform"(60). Many Liberals, however, not to mention the Conservatives and the House of Lords, were opposed to any such reform and by the end of 1906, Forward was republishing House of Commons voting lists on a clause of the Land Tenure Bill, which clause proposed to enact the the consent of landlords was not necessary or required for certain improvements made by tenants to holdings. Of those voting, only two Scots were in favour; one was Labour, and the other the Liberal member for Sutherland(61). And a week later Forward could editorialise; "The present government came into power pledged to Land Reform, and it has begun the task of redeeming its pledges, so far as Scotland is concerned, by framing the Small Holdings Bill...even men who stand aloof from party politics are genuinely surprised at such legislation proceeding from a Cabinet that is largely composed of capitalists, lairds and lawyers"(62).

The surprise was not mis-placed. By the following July Sinclair's Bill was "being mangled in committee" according to Forward; while the same edition reported the vote on the proposal of the Labour leader Arthur Henderson to abolish the House of Lords; those voting against the motion included the members for Argyll, Inverness, Caithness, Inverness-shire, Sutherland, and Ross and Cromarty(63). And the

hegemony of the lairds and lawyers in parliament was matched on the ground in Argyll; in November, Forward was reporting that of the 57 members of Argyll County Council, 39 were landlords and factors and another 8 merchants, farmers, ministers and lawyers. Of the 18-strong small-holdings committee of the council, 16 members were either landlords or factors - every large estate in the county was directly represented on the committee by either a landlord or his factor; while the Duke's estate was represented by two factors(64).

Popular demand for the land nevertheless remained a strong undercurrent to affairs in the Highlands. In the winter of 1906-1907, a Highland Crofters and Cottars Association was established; "We cannot afford any longer to be dominated by a gang of obstructive Peers, most of them English, some of them Scots...The aim of the Highland Crofters' and Cottars Association...is to restore the land to the people and the people to the land"(65).

And the Oban Times was still campaigning on land reform, demanding that "the powers of the Congested Districts Board be considerably extended, so as to include among other things, the power of compulsory purchase of land, at present used for the purposes of sport, in order to extend existing small agricultural holdings and to create new ones"(66).

By way of support for this, the raiders at Bornish and Ormiclate farms were by the middle of March, 1906, simply cultivating the land. Further, "a large number of crofters and cottars from Iochdar and Lower Carnan then marched in procession with flags and pipers, to the farms of Gaerinish and Drimore, and took possession...the farms were formerly in the occupation of their fathers and grandfathers, and the ruins of the dwellings are still to be seen"(67).

That spring, the chief topic of conversation in the Highland communities was the proposed new legislation on the land question(68); and as pro-crofter members pressed their

case in the Commons, all eyes were on the prospects of the now long-running Vatersay dispute(69).

As the landless and land-hungry in the north of Barra had wished for land in that part of the island, so those in the south, around Castlebay, had longed for land in the island of Vatersay. Referring to Barra, after all, the Napier Commission of thirty-odd years earlier had reported that, "The cause of the prevailing poverty is easily arrived at; it is the want of land. The land is particularly hilly and rocky, yet there is enough of good land, if it were divided among the people"(70).

And as Donald Buchanan, a relation of the Land Leaguer Michael Buchanan, wrote later "the main problem remained unsolved; there was still congestion and land hunger...with the evolving charter of liberty which started with the Crofters' Act, the men began to get bolder"(71).

In September, 1900, therefore, Vatersay had been raided by Castlebay area people - the island was the second largest farm on the Cathcart estate, and had been scheduled by the Deer Forest Commission as suitable for crofter settlement(72).

Twenty cottars from Glen and Kentangaval warned the Cathcart factor that "dire poverty would not permit them to wait longer", and that if a favourable answer was not given to their request for land, they would require to take possession of it. "If you require time to consider your decision", they wrote to the factor, "we are willing to wait for fifteen days, but if a favourable answer is not forthcoming within that time we give you fair notice that we will take action without it". Five hundred people waited a whole day in Castlebay for the factor's answer; the same day, Vatersay was invaded and pegged out(73).

And the following spring, Vatersay was again raided; "six large fishing boats laden with fishermen and cottars crossed to Vatersay and took formal possession"(74).

In 1903, the Congested Districts Board finally bought

just sixty acres of the island, Lady Cathcart making a handsome profit from the sale, and the land was divided into fifty potato plots. This, however, failed to still agitation, and in 1906 there was yet another raid on Vatersay, with fifty cottars landing in February, and throughout the summer ferrying stock over from Barra, and building homes for their families. By the following year, they had completed twenty such houses, and showed every determination of staying on the island for good. The Congested Districts Board therefore asked Cathcart to establish a crofting township on Vatersay. Cathcart refused, and offered to sell the entire island to them - at a huge profit to herself, and at a price that the Board could not in any case afford. The estate then took legal action against the raiders, for Cathcart had "carried concession beyond all reasonable limit" and, as she told the authorities "such a combination as now exists for taking and keeping violent possession of private property constitutes a condition equivalent to anarchy or to civil riot"(75).

In June, ten of the Vatersay raiders appeared in court in Edinburgh at the complaint of Cathcart "with the concurrence of the Lord Advocate", to answer charges "that they had in breach of interdict remained in occupation of the land taken"(76). The Lord Justice Clerk gave them all two months in Calton Gaol, for refusing to give an undertaking that they would leave the island(77). The men were however released early and returned home, and proceeded direct to Vatersay to commence cultivation. By the autumn, the Congested Districts Board had agreed to buy the island for £6,250 (a price all the raiders believed to be extortionate) and despite a last-ditch attempt of Cathcart to thwart the settlement on the grounds that there was not enough water on the island(78).

This did not still agitation on Barra, however, and in March, 1909, the landless people in the north of the island "being utterly despondent of getting land" raided the

Ardmore part of Eoligarry, having petitioned the authorities without redress. Glendale in South Uist had also been lately raided; "and there are also rumours that a raid is imminent on Milton Farm"(79).

Throughout this period, Forward kept up its agitation on the land question, with the clear purpose of promoting anti landlord direct action in the Highlands. It was, in this respect, a clear successor to the Highlander and the Scottish Highlander; though in two respects at least different. First, it was driven by a vision of the land-question as an all-Scottish issue; and second, it commanded a very clear vision of the solution to land-hunger - nationalisation of the land. But in journalistic brilliance Forward was a formidable match for John Murdoch's Highlander (though it missed Murdoch's concern for the integrality of a distinctive Highland culture to Scottish politics); and in this period, Forward must easily have deployed a greater degree of influence on the land agitation than any other title.

Quite apart from its series on "Our Noble Families", which ran throughout the first half of the year(80), it gave space to the cause of large-scale timber-growing versus deer "afforestation"(81), reported popular agitation on a rights-of-way issue in the Vale of Leven(82),and campaigned against the continuing influence of Henry George's theories on land ownership(83). It also printed the voting records of selected Scottish MPs, among them those of the Liberals John Ainsworth for Argyll(84), Munro-Ferguson(85), Annan Bryce for Inverness(86), and John Dewar for Inverness-shire(87). It printed with scorn an invitation from the Marquis of Tullibardine for Thomas Johnston to visit the Atholl Forest during the grouse-season(88) - Johnston's response was to despatch a Forward "special commissioner" to Atholl, whose reports ran under the headline "Breadalbane Clearances going on now!"(89).

It printed an appeal from six Uist crofters at Dalbeg

(which suggests that the paper was certainly circulating in the Hebrides)(90); publicised the effects of exclusion from the Crofters' Act on Arran(91); reported the unanimous support of Shetland County Council for land-nationalisation(92); introduced John Wheatley, "president of the Catholic Socialist Society" on land-monopoly(92), the Rev Malcolm MacCallum of Muckairn on deer forests versus crofters(93), and G.B. Clark on the Highland land question(94); attacked the government's record on land reform (in a review of three years of Liberal administration)(95); and, towards the end of the year, launched the first of what would be many attacks on the Liberal MP for Caithness, Harmsworth, a London press baron and owner of the Northern Ensign(96).

But it was to the recreation of the Highland Land League that much of the weekly tabloid's energies were devoted in the second half of 1909. This, clearly, had been planned for some time and, in classic Labour movement style, the journal's sutained coverage was to form the organisational impetus for the launch of the new organisation. On July 3rd, 1909, the paper carried a long letter from Alistair Sutherland, a onetime delegate to the 1884 conference of the "old" Land League, which included the observation that, "there are not wanting signs of an impending upheaval in the Highland of Scotland". This sort of upheaval was to the editors of Forward "the crofters' only hope"; and the following week a full half-page appeal, headlined in Gaelic with the slogan of the "old" Land League Ri Guaillibh a Cheile (Shoulder to Shoulder) and signed by "The Editor", called for a new Highland Land League "to carry on a militant propaganda *especially in the non-crofting counties*"(97).

A week later, the political basis of the proposed new League became clear; its slogan (and how appropriate that word is!) would be "no landlord need apply". Forward published two columns explaining why the League would be

separate entirely from the Liberals; they were written by Hamish MacRae, grandson of a Sutherland evictee and headlined "the traitors who mis-represent us". Correspondence and reports were carried at length in each of the next five issues; while on August 28th the paper carried two columns on "The Highland Land League - an appeal to working men", as token of its clear orientation to the Labour movement. And a week after than, Johnston spelled-out this orientation more clearly, with reports of the League's formal inauguration.

Its president was G.B. Clark; its vice-president was Thomas Johnston; the nationalist tanner Roland Muirhead of Bridge of Weir was treasurer; and Alexander Mowat of Glasgow's Partick district was secretary. The constitution proposed "to bring about the restoration of the people to the soil", to abolish deer forests and "pluralist farmers"; while two key clauses referred to the resumption of "*the ownership and control of land by the State*", and "*all new candidates endorsed or supported by the League [were to] sign the Constitution of the Labour Party*"(98).

Thus a week later, Forward was reporting that Keir Hardie was to tour the Highlands for the new League; and a week after that, in the course of "the great Budget demonstration" in Glasgow, when 100,000 workers marched, there was a Highland Land League contingent with banner, platform and own speakers in Glasgow Green. Two months later, the League had produced its first pamphlet on the land problem(99).

In the Highlands, meanwhile, and particularly on the western seaboard, anti-landlordism was unabated. On Tiree, the demand was unbroken for further land reform(100); in Uist the Milton farm if not broken up quickly was under threat of seizure; and in Lewis, a local farm had been seized by the cottars of Shawbost as early as May(101). Indeed, by the following month, "neither persecution nor threats of imprisonment can seemingly avail anything in

preventing a continuing of illegal seizures of land by the cottars of the Western Isles". The Dalbeg farm was still under occupation - "It is reported that the whole of the landless population of the island are extending their sympathy and support"; while there was also talk of raids on Harris(102). From Lewis, the cottars of Back, Coll and Vatisker wrote to warn that unless they were given land, they would take it for themselves, on the first day of the following October(103). Yet again the Commons discussed the land question in the Highlands, in "a debate that should be an object lesson to crofters and their friends"(104); and by the end of the year, the agitation for land was as strong as ever on Skye(105).

The new year opened (and closed) with a general election. In the first, in which the Liberals took 511 seats (compared to 273 for the Conservatives) Labour got 40 seats; its manifesto having declared that "The country has allowed landowners to pocket millions of pounds every year in the shape of unearned increment - our present system of landownership has devastated our countryside - the land for the people!". In the second, the Conservatives took 273 seats, the Liberals 271 and Labour 42; and while Labour agains referred to land-reform, perhaps the most significant manifesto was the Conservative one - "behind the Single Chamber conspiracy lurks Socialism and Home Rule" - as token of the looming "constitutional crisis" over the power of veto exercised by the House of Lords(106). In Scotland, in the first of these elections, the Liberals took 54% of the vote, the Conservatives and Liberal Unionists 40%, and Labour just 5%. In the second, the Liberals again took 54%, the Conservatives and Liberals Unionists just under 43%, and Labour just over 3%.(107). This was to be the last general election until 1918; and in it, the continuing hegemony of the Liberal Party in Scotland is clearly seen. In the Highlands, this hegemony was particularly marked, Liberals winning every seat in each of both elections (while

as to Highland by-elections, there was one in Ross and Cromarty in 1911, another in Wick in 1913, and a third in Inverness-shire in 1917; the Liberals took them all)(108).

In the face of this, however, Johnston's Forward agitated with rare persistence. Throughout 1910, it ran a long series of "rambling recollections" by G.B. Clark (109), including a piece on "how we roused the Highlands"(110), "the curse of English dominance"(111), "the fight for the crofters and the Crofters' Act"(112), and "how we beat the landlords"(113). There were many other such pieces, whether on the land clauses in the Budget(114), or on Stratherrick and its landlord Walter Menzies((115).

But the greatest effort went into promoting the League. In the first general election of that year, for instance, it was planned to run C.A. Paterson in Caithness though in the event he did not run, on account of the hold "Harmsworth and his money" had on the constituency, with his "paid man in every parish"(116). By the spring, however, an "effective summer campaign" was being organised, while the annual meeting of the League returned as office bearers G.B. Clark, C.A. Paterson, Thomas Johnston and the Rev Malcolm MacCalum of Muckairn(117).

The new League was active in Mull(118) and Caithness too, where one meeting drew a crowd of close to a thousand people (though it went unreported in Harmsworth's Northern Ensign), and where four branches were in operation(119). Speakers were also despatched to Fort William, Skye, Raasay and Islay(120), Banff(121), and Argyll(122), in which county there were active branches at Campbelltown and Carradale. Branches would also shortly be formed in Edinburgh and Dundee(123). Towards the end of the year the League also drafted a parliamentary bill to amend the 1897 Congested Districts Act(124), or "Home Colonisation Bill" as the G.B. Clark styled it(125).

That winter also saw the first of a long series of Highland Land League Papers written for the most part by

John Fullarton Armour; among them those on "what the League will do"(126), "the emigration evil"(127), "afforestation: is there a landlord conspiracy afoot?"(128), "the Congested Districts Board"(129), "the Sutherlands"(130), "the killing of the English Land Act"(131), and "the Liberal treachery on the Land Bill"(132).

And though Forward's weekly reporting of events on the ground in the Highlands never matched that of its predecessors (and may not have been intended to) a close watch was kept on events in the Hebrides. In April, 1910, for instance, the paper was reporting a meeting at Idrigill, where it was decided to take by force the farm at Scudaburgh, with a copy of the resolution being despatched to the Congested Districts Board(133).

Idrigill, of course, remained a hotbed of anti-landlordism; the authorities were receiving (coded) messages by telegraph to the effect that "the ground officer says crofters threatened him with grievous bodily damage if ever he accompanied a sheriff officer again".

Following this, the procurator wrote to the sheriff, reporting that "the very active part which the women took in the disturbance is perhaps the most regrettable feature of the whole case...the animosity shown to sheriff-officers in the old land agitation of the early 'eighties was very marked and I believe in every case practically in which they were resisted the plan was adopted, which was followed at Idrigill, of putting the women (and frequently children) in front of the crowd and getting them to pelt the officers.....it therefore seems to me to be necessary that such action should now be taken as will make it plain to the people of Idrigill that they will not escape the consequences of their conduct. Otherwise, there is only too good reason to fear that the spirit of lawlessness will spread. It is a most infectious disease and in Skye at all events I feel sure that for some time to come it will not be safe for any sheriff officer to attempt to execute a

warrant.....".

The procurator also urged the sheriff that the "ringleaders" they proceeded to select must not be judged by a Skye jury; and thus the Scottish press was shortly reporting "Skye crofters sentenced, heavy penalties for contempt, great sensation in the island, relief fund for imprisoned men". The sentences, however, made little difference; the people of Idrigill, and from throughout Kilmuir, defiantly marched in procession to a mass meeting on Biallach Hill, overlooking Uig, (on a spot where Henry George had made a speech 25 years earlier calling for land reform) and made it plain that their defiance was the equal of punitive action in the law courts(134).

The next four years were characterised, therefore, by a trickle of agitation, mainly in the western Highlands; by the manoeuvres and debates surrounding the Small Landholders' Act of 1911; by the popular perception that that legislation was inadequate; and by continuing efforts to build the League as an integral part of the Labour movement (though John Wilson, for three years an editor of the nationalist Scottish Patriot joined the League too)(135).

These efforts were not without success, though the League never attained (even if it aspired) to the mass character of the 1880s. But the Labour movement was slowly making political progress at local as well as national level(136), and, in May 1911, following the death of Galloway Weir, the MP for Ross and Cromarty (who had taken it over from Dr Roderick Macdonald in 1892 as a Liberal/Crofter), the League considered running its own candidate (though in the event J.I. MacPherson for the Liberals beat off a Conservative in a straight fight)(137). A month later, however, Forward editorialised "There is in the Highlands enough political sentiment of an advanced type to give Scotland in the House of Commons a group of land reformers, working on independent lines, and with land

nationalisation as their goal. The Socialist who comes in contact with the Highlands for the first time is astonished at the widespread convictions on the land question which are Socialist in nature"(138).

That same month with "delegates from every county in Scotland present", the annual meeting of the Highland Land League unanimously agreed to alter its name to the Scottish Land League; it also decided "to delete the clause tying the League down to the Labour Party in Parliament - any representation the League might have there in future should be independent of all political parties"(139).

The secretary of the re-named League was C.A. Paterson, who quickly announced that he would contest Argyll at the next parliamentary election as a Liberal and Land Law Reform candidate (having been adopted as such by the Liberal association in the north of the county, though he was clearly a land-nationaliser)(140). By the following spring, however, the League, though it had the urban areas of Scotland covered, was appealing for money for a rural organiser; for "the control of the Highlands lies with the Liberal Whips, who find there safe seats for alien reactionaries"(141).

Meanwhile, while the League and Forward kept pressing the land question in the Scottish Labour movement(142) and G.B. Clark was arguing that "the Labour Party must now make a bold bid to capture the imagination of the working class on the Land Question"(143), the long-delayed small landholders legislation was working its way through parliament, while some leading Liberals attempted to sabotage it, and Paterson denounced in Forward "Munro Ferguson's latest landlord trick"(144).

"Kepting" Sinclair's proposals had twice gone through the Commons in 1907 and 1908 but had been on both occasions destroyed in the Lords; now, however, with the ending of the Lords' veto, they were on the point of enactment having been re-introduced as a private measure with government support,

replacing Crofters' Commission and Congested Districts Board with Land Court and Board of Agriculture(145).

The League and Forward scarcely welcomed the legislation, in August 1911 giving the issue an extraordinary amount of space and prominence, all of it hostile - it represented "the government's great betrayal of Scotland", according to Paterson(146).

By the following January Forward was reporting what it called "the first fruits of the land bill treachery"(147), and two months later the Rev Malcolm MacCallum was bitterly criticising the "Liberal Land Court"(148). That May the paper editorialised that "the first meeting of the Scottish Land Court takes place this week at Tain when the Landholders' Act will start on its voyage...we have now to create the conditions which will make land nationalisation easy"(149).

The League, meanwhile, was active in Caithness, complete with county organiser(150); while Forward, very mcuh in the spirit of MacKenzie and Murdoch, followed the progress of the Land Court carefully, and carried a series of exposures of "landlord extortion and fraud" across the country(151).

Nor did the new Board of Agriculture escape censure; in April 1913, Paterson wrote in Forward that "the Board of Agriculture have been trying to negotiate with landlords for the creation of new smallholdings, and the landlords have acted according to the traditions of landlordism - blocking any scheme for the benefit of the people except on receiving extortionate blackmail"((152). And by the summer of 1914, Forward was reporting "the failure of the Small Landholders Act"(153).

With Forward's "appeal from the Hebrides: the disappearance of the Gael" and "advice to tenants before the Land Court" went reports of the people of Point in Lewis petitioning the Board of Agriculture for small-holdings(154); and, indeed, the Board was very quickly awash

with demands for land.

This demand, however, the Board was in no position to satisfy quickly (if at all); and by the end of 1913 the 700-acre farm of Reef in Lewis was raided by the cottars of Valtos and Kneep, in the parish of Uig "apparently exasperated at the delay of the Board of Agriculture in dealing with their applications for small-holdings"(155).

Reef had once been a crofting township, and had been raided in 1883; some of the raiders then had been gaoled, and their stock sold to pay their legal expenses. Now, however, the raid had not so much been premeditated "but was the coming to a head of the discontent that has been seething in the district for some time past. The fear is entertained that the outbreak at Reef is only the beginning of agrarian trouble in the island"(156).

The following spring, therefore, with the Commons discussing changes to the recent legislation, eleven of the Reef raiders were sent to gaol for six weeks each. Major Matheson had not pressed for punishment if the raiders would promise no longer to raid; but to this they would not agree(157).

That winter, indeed, raiding went on in the Hebrides; in the spring of 1914, raiders had seized Taransay island, off Harris(158), planted forty barrels of potatoes, fenced their crops, and "now seem to look upon the raided ground as their own. It is reported that building operations have also started"(159).

By now, however, Europe was poised on the brink of war, long-expected and long-prepared; and within one week the German and Austrian waiters toiling in the hotels of Oban were being summoned home by telegraph(160) - though the Oban Times still found space for a letter whose author knew even then "of Highland clearances as bad as any that have happened in the past. I know of men being turned out of the Highlands today, for no other reason than the whim of a laird, and knowing this, can you wonder that a movement is

afoot, and gaining ground rapidly, to organise the Highlanders in city and clachan, to fight once more for the cause which the Oban Times so strenuously advocated?"(161).

In Lewis, crofters were demanding to know why not one acre of land had yet been given them under the smallholders' legislation, and "a feeling of keen disappointment is threatening to assume a serious aspect"(162). The expectations inspired by that legislation "had been chilled almost out of existence"(163); and on all sides, there was "ample evidence of a coming revolt"(164).

With three and a half million acres of the Highlands now under deer, compared with just two million at the time of the Deer Forest Commission twenty years earlier, it was not surprising that another letter-writer to the Oban Times could "venture to suggest that all ardent advocates of land reform should see to it that 'the heather is kept burning'. A thoroughgoing land agitation on land matters seems urgently called for..."(165).

That letter appeared at the end of June; but just five weeks later, Europe was at war - and in the Highlands old loyalties and aspirations were in play.

Within twenty four hours of the declaration of war, over 2,000 people met at Helmsdale, the strath of Kildonan behind them, and before them on the platform the Inverness journalist Hassan, president of the Inverness Trades Council and son of Laurence Hassan, acquaintance of John Dillon and Michael Davitt, along with Joseph MacLeod, doyen of the land reform struggle of earlier years, and who proposed a strong motion on "the land to the people". But the meeting also supported the war, "secure in the hope that the 'holy crusade' of their fathers would soon be answered and the land restored to the people..."(166). And three days later, Forward attacked Highland landlords in general, and in particular "the English capitalist who represents Caithness in parliament"(167).

But by now, it was too late to implement this sort of

class consciousness; while, for the jingoistic consciousness of those that met at Helmsdale, the price would be heavy; and the first instalment due soon.

CHAPTER TEN

1.

Sorley MacLean, The poetry of the Clearances, Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness, XXXVII, 1937-1941; 314-315.

2.

Quoted in Bruce P. Lenman, The teaching of Scottish history in Scottish universities, Scottish Historical Review, vol 52, 1973; 166.

3.

Sorley MacLean, The poetry of William Livingston, Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness, XXXIX-XL, 1942-1950; 18.

4.

W. Hamish Fraser, Trade unions, reform and the election of 1868 in Scotland, Scottish Historical Review, vol 50, 1971; 138.

5.

James G. Kellas, The Mid-Lanark by-election (1888) and the Scottish Labour Party (1888-1894), Parliamentary Affairs, vol XVIII, no 3, Summer 1965; 318, 320, 329.

6.

James Hunter, The Gaelic connection, the Highlands, Ireland and nationalism, 1873-1922, Scottish Historical Review, vol 54, 1975; 194.

7.

John F. McCaffrey, The origins of Liberal Unionism in the west of Scotland, Scottish Historical Review, vol 50, 1971; 52.

8.

F.W.S. Craig, British General Election Manifestos, 1900-1974, London 1975.

9.

F.W.S. Craig, British Electoral Facts, London, 1981; 17

10.

F.W.S. Craig, British Parliamentary Election Results, London, various dates. It is a penetrating comment on the effect the struggle for Irish national liberation had on British (and Highland) politics in this period that in the 1900 Sutherland parliamentary election, the Liberal Unionist victor, with 62% of the vote, beat off the Liberal land-reformer, Joseph MacLeod - who took but 38% of the vote.

11.

Quoted in James D. Young, The Rousing of the Scottish Working Class, 143.

12.

Oban Times, 1-9-1900.

13.

Oban Times, May 1901.

14.

Oban Times, 11-5-1901.

15.

Crofting Files, AF/67 - 54, 55, 58, 60, 61, 62, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 129, 130, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 144, 162, 163, 164, 361, 363, 367, 368, 369, 370, 371, 372, 374.

16.

For a recent comment on conditions in turn-of-the-century Barra, see James Hunter, West Highland Free Press, 19-11-1982.

17.

Oban Times, 22-9-1900.

18.

Ibid.

19.

Crofting Files AF 67/120, petition; and generally AF 67/121,122,123.

20.

Thomas Johnston, Our Scots Noble Families, Glasgow, 1909; 2. The contents of this title derive from a series of articles from Johnston's Forward. The first of the series, carried

in the edition of 27-6-1908, took as its subject the Atholls. The Gordons of Barra appeared in the editions of 11-7-1908 and 18-7-1908; the Sutherlands, in the editions of 29-8-1908, 5-9-1908, and 19-9-1908; the Hamiltons in the edition of 10-10-1908; the Campbells of Blythswood in the editions of 31-10-1908 and 7-11-1908; the Stairs of Wigtonshire in the editions of 14-11-1908 and 28-11-1908; the Dundases in the editions of 12-12-1908 and 19-12-1908; and the Breadalbanes in the editions of 26-12-1908 and 2-1-1909. Throughout 1909 the series ran thus: Duffs, 9/16-1-1909; Primroses, 23-1-1909; Campbells (Cawdor branch), 30-1-1909; Gordons, 6/13-2-1909; Scotts of Buccleugh, 27-2-1909 and 6-3-1909; Campbells of Argyll (sub-headed, The Scottish Huns), 27-3-1909 and 3-4-1909; Dukes of Montrose, 10-4-1909; Frasers, 24-4-1909; Kennedys, 1-5-1909; Stuarts of Bute, 15-5-1909; Homes and Douglases, 29-5-1909; and the Hays, on 12-6-1909. This series alone must have kept the Highland - and Scottish - land and landlord questions very firmly in the forefront of public opinion throughout these years; and arguably provided much of the drive for the re-formation of the Highland Land League in 1909. It was clearly a popular subject; Forward for 28-2-1911 announced that the book had just appeared in a third edition.

21.

Crofting Files, AF 67/120. Cathcart lawyers to CDB, 2-10-1900.

22.

Oban Times, 13-4-1901; 27-4-1901; 19-10-1901.

23.

Crofting Files, AF 67/124.

24.

For press coverage of the events at Sconser, see: The Scotsman, 1-11-1900; 17-12-1900; 18-12-1900; 31-12-1900. Highland News, 3-11-1900; 9-2-1901. Aberdeen Daily Free Press, 4-6-1901. North British Daily Mail, 13-12-1900; 19-12-1900. Inverness Courier, 16-11-1900. Northern Chronicle,

12-12-1900; 6-1-1901. Oban Times, 22-12-1900; 5-1-1901; 12-1-1901 (letter). For a contemporary photograph of crofters' housing at Sconser, see the Grant collection in Edinburgh's Central Public Library.

25.

Crofting Files, AF 67/124. The sheriff officer took particular care to report that when he asked the crowd whether they would prevent him serving his notices (a standard procedure, or manoeuvre, by which he could simply prove deforcement in court if anyone had answered in the affirmative) the local teacher called out to the people reminding them to stay entirely silent; which they did! As a result, the procurator fiscal thought it uncertain whether the sheriff officer had indeed, in law, been deforced.

26.

Hansard, Commons, 10-12-1900, Weir to the Lord Advocate.

27.

Oban Times, 13-4-1901; Crofting Files, AF 67/125.

28.

Oban Times, 20-4-1901.

29.

Congested Districts Board, third report.

30.

Crofting Files AF 67/54 (disturbance at Croir).

31.

Oban Times, 11-5-1901.

32.

Oban Times, 18-5-1901.

33.

Oban Times, 25-5-1901.

34.

Oban Times, 28-2-1903. For agitation in the previous two years, see also Crofting Files AF 67/55 - (church-related trouble in Ness, with talk of calling in naval and military aid to the civil power); 129 - (disturbances at Taransay); and 130 - (land agitation in Vatersay and Barra.)

35.

Oban Times, 4-5-1901. Centrally, the legal powers of the Congested Districts Board were not equal to the powers of the landlords. There is an uncanny parallel to this weakness in the Highlands and Islands Development Board venture with land-development at Kildonan in recent times. Here too, the problem was that the Highland Board, like its Congested predecessor, did indeed possess the formal powers of land acquisition - but only under the terms of the 1947 Acquisition of Land (Authorisation Procedure) (Scotland) Act. This meant, in effect, the power of no more than any local authority to take land for a road or a public toilet. Thus the Highland Board soon found that its powers were in effect useless with regard to large estates, which in any case would have to be acquired at full market value. See: Highlands and Islands Development Board, Strath of Kildonan, Proposals for Development, Special report no 5, April, 1970. Ian Carter, The Highland Board and Strath Kildonan, Catalyst, no 5, 1972. James Grassie, Highland Experiment, Aberdeen, 1983.

36.

Oban Times, 11-5-1901. Crofting Files AF 67/126-127.

37.

Oban Times, 25-5-1901.

38.

Oban Times, 7-5-1903.

39.

Oban Times, 14-3-1903.

40.

Oban Times, 3-3-1906. For 1903-1906, see Crofting Files AF 67/58 - (land agitation in Assynt, at Clashmore, 1904); 132 - (land agitation in Barra, Vatersay and South Uist, 1905-1906); and 361 - (land agitation and settlement, Lewis, Uist and Barra, 1905-1910; Matheson and Cathcart estates, Vatersay, Dalbeg and Dalmore farms.)

41.

Oban Times, 6-1-1901. And 15-1-1901, for a report on the Bernera land-raiders in Stornoway sheriff court.

42.

Inverness Courier, 27-2-1906.

43.

Highland Times, 8-3-1906.

44.

The Scotsman, 7-3-1906; 25-3-1906; and 8-4-1906. Crofting Files AF 67/139. (And AF 67/363 for land settlement in Glenshiel).

45.

Scottish Review, January 1900, J. Edward Graham, The taxation of land values; 106.

46.

Fiery Cross, January 1901; 2.

47.

Fiery Cross, April, 1903; 5. See, incidentally, the article in this edition on the teaching of history in Scottish schools.

48.

Scottish Patriot, August 1903; 3.

49.

Scottish Patriot, October 1903; 66.

50.

Scottish Patriot, George Troup, On deer forests, July 1904; 90.

51.

Scottish Patriot, January 1904, 92; March 1904, 24; April 1904, 40; June 1904, 68; August 1904, 102; and September 1904, 126.

52.

Guth na Bliadhna, winter 1904; 322.

53.

Craig, British Electoral Facts; 18.

54.

Craig, British General Election Manifestos, 1900-1974.

55.

Craig, British Parliamentary Election Results, 1885-1914.

56.

Thomas Johnston, Memories, Glasgow, 1952; 32-33.

57.

Ian Wood, Irish Immigrants and Scottish Radicalism, 1880-1906; in Ian Wood, Essays in Scottish Labour History, Edinburgh, 1978; 87.

58.

John Hannan, The Life of John Wheatley, Nottingham, 1988; 12-13. The debates at this time on the correct socialist orientation to the national question in Scotland are beyond the scope of the present text. But see, James D. Young, The Rousing of the Scottish Working Class, 174-175. There is an interesting echo of these debates in the front page piece by Joe Duncan on "The Lords and the Highland programme"; Forward, 6-8-1910; Thomas Johnston replied to Duncan in the following week's edition.

59.

Forward, 13/27-10-1906; 10/24-11-1906; and 8/22-12-1906.

60.

John Brown, Scottish and English Land Legislation, 1905-1911, Scottish Historical Review, XVVIII, 1968; 73.

61.

Forward, 1-12-1906.

62.

Forward, 8-12-1906.

63.

Forward, 13-7-1907. See also Forward, 6-4-1907 (what the new Scots Land Bill will mean), and 29-6-1907 (what peasant proprietorship of our idle lands could produce). By July, however, the paper's attitude to Captain Sinclair had softened; he had earlier that year been identified in Forward as "Kepting Sinclair".

64.

Forward, 16-11-1907.

65.

Forward, 2-5-1908. The secretary was Alexander MacLaren of East Laroch, Ballachulish. Nothing is known of him, or his association, which seems to have been very short-lived.

66.

Oban Times, 3-3-1906. (And also 10-3-1906, 2 cols, "what the crofters say".)

67.

Oban Times, 17-3-1906; and 7-4-1906.

68.

Oban Times, local reports, March, April, May, 1906.

69.

Crofting Files AF 67/133 - 134 - 135 - 136 - 137 - 138, for land agitation Barra and Vatersay and South Uist, 1906-1909; 141 - for 1909, including Eoligarry; 142 - for 1909-1913; 370 - for eviction, Vatersay, 1909; and 371 - for Barra, Grean, Cleat, Ardvore and Eoligarry, 1902-1912.

70.

Napier Commission, report.

71.

Michael Buchanan, Reflections, 40-42.

72.

Highland News, 29-9-1900.

73.

Oban Times, 6-10-1900.

74.

Oban Times, 6-4-1901. Highland News, 6-4-1901. Ray Burnett, The Seizure of the island of Vatersay, West Highland Free Press, 8-8-1975. J. Cameron, the Old and the New, chapter XIX. PP, Return of correspondence between Lady Gordon Cathcart and the Secretary for Scotland and the Lord Advocate with reference to the seizure and occupation of the island of Vatersay.

75.

Forward, 8-2-1908; 22-2-1908. Oban Times, 28-3-1908; news reports plus two editorials, "the Vatersay correspondence";

and "crofter legislation in danger". Oban Times 31-3-1908, report on debate in House of Lords.

76.

Oban Times, 6-6-1908; 2 cols and editorials. Forward, 15-8-1908; "the government has finally taken fright at the preparation being made in the West Highlands for a huge scheme of squatting...the news...will travel through the remoter districts and, we hope, breed further raids". Forward, 29-8-1908; 2 cols on "the Highland land question", by Thomas Johnston.

77.

Oban Times, 6-3-1909; 2 cols and editorial.

78.

Oban Times, 17-7-1909, 1 col and editorial. See also Oban Times, 30-4-1910; 9-7-1910; 23-7-1910; 24-9-1910; 29-10-1910; and 27-5-1911.

79.

Forward, 19-9-1908; "Land League at Barra - men determined"; 6. Oban Times, 13-3-1909; 20-3-1909.

80.

See footnote 20, this chapter for details.

81.

Forward, 2-1-1909.

82.

Forward, 27-3-1909.

83.

Forward, 3-4-1909; 10-4-1909; and 17-4-1909.

84.

Forward, 24-7-1909.

85.

Forwad, 7-8-1909.

86.

Forward, 2-10-1909.

87.

Forward, 16-10-1909.

88.

Forward, 21-8-1909.

89.

Forward, 4-9-1909.

90.

Forward, 21-8-1909.

91.

Forward, 28-8-1909.

92.

Forward, 6-11-1909.

93.

Ibid.

94.

Forward, 27-11-1909.

95.

Forward, 18-12-1909.

96.

Forward, 11-12-1909.

97.

Emphasis added.

98.

Forward, 4-9-1909. Emphasis added. See also Thomas Johnston, The Highland Land League, why it is Labour; Forward, 6-11-1909.

99.

C.A. Paterson, Highland Land League Pamphlet no 1; The Land Problem - Use or Abandon; Forward, 27-11-1909. See also Forward 2-10-1909, 9-10-1909 and 16-10-1909, for reports on the new League during that autumn's inaugural campaign.

100.

Oban Times, 27-3-1909 (2 cols); AF 67/162 - (land agitation Tiree 1901-1903); 164 - (Tiree land question 1912); 163 - (seizure of Haugh and Greenhill 1906-1909.)

101.

Oban Times, 8-5-1909.

102.

Oban Times, 19-6-1909.

103.

Oban Times, 17-7-1909.

104.

Hansard, Commons, 15-7-1909. For a comment on this debate, see Hamish MacRae (a Land League campaigner in the 1880s), Forward, 17-7-1909.

105.

Crofting Files, AF 67/ 367-368 - (land agitation, Skye, seizure Scudaburgh, 1910.)

106.

F.W.S. Craig, British General Election Manifestos, 1900-1974.

107.

F.W.S. Craig, British Electoral Facts.

108.

F.W.S. Craig, British Parliamentary Election Results, 1885-1918.

109.

G.B. Clark, Forward, 11-6-1910; 18-6-1910; 2-7-1910; 9-7-1910; 16-7-1910; 23-7-1910; 20-8-1910; 27-8-1910; 10-9-1910; 17-9-1910; and 24-9-1910.

110.

G.B. Clark, Forward, 6-8-1910.

111.

G.B. Clark, Forward, 3-9-1910.

112.

G.B. Clark, Forward, 1/8/15-10-1910.

113.

G.B. Clark, Forward, 22-10-1910. Later episodes in this (occasional) series appeared in Forward on 2-3-1912; 9-3-1912; 23-3-1912; and 6-4-1912.

114.

C.A. Paterson, The People's Budget - the land clauses; Forward, 5-2-1910 and 12-2-1910.

115.

Forward, 14-5-1910 (and 11-6-1910 for reply from the

League).

116.

Forward, 8-10-1910.

117.

Forward, 14-5-1910.

118.

Forward, 21-5-1910.

119.

Forward, 18-6-1910; 25-6-1910. For a photograph of the League meeting in Caithness of 18-6-1910, see Forward, 2-7-1910.

120.

Forward, 2-7-1910.

121.

Forward, 30-7-1910.

122.

Forward, 13-8-1910.

123.

Forward, 10-9-1910; 17-10-1910; 15-4-1911; 29-4-1911.

124.

Forward, 12-11-1910.

125.

Forward, 26-11-1910.

126.

Forward, 31-12-1910.

127.

Forward, 14-1-1911.

128.

Forward, 28-1-1911.

129.

Forward, 4-3-1911.

130.

Forward, 11-3-1911.

131.

Forward, 29-4-1911.

132.

Forward, 6-5-1911. See also the HLL Papers of 21-1-1911; 4-2-1911; 7-2-1911; 25-3-1911; and 20-5-1911.

133.

Forward, 23-4-1910. The chairman was Norman Beaton.

134.

The Scotsman, 2-7-1910; 15-7-1910; 24-8-1910; 25-8-1910; 7-9-1910; 14-10-1910. Glasgow Herald, 15-7-1910; 12-8-1910; 30-8-1910; 27-9-1910; 14-10-1910. Inverness Courier, 26-8-1910. Oban Times, 22-10-1910. Dundee Advertiser, 29-8-1910; 14-10-1910. And Crofting Files AF 67/369. One of those accused by name in the secret reports between procurator and sheriff was a fifteen year old girl, Christina MacDonald. She was still at Idrigill in 1981 - letter from Aonghas MacNeacail, West Highland Free Press, 4-9-1981. At the time of writing, she is living in Glasgow.

135.

Forward, 29-4-1911.

136.

Ibid. "Socialist progress in Scotland since 1907, as evidenced in the results of town, county, parish and school board elections".

137.

Forward, 27-5-1911.

138.

Editorial "Lochaber Again?", Forward, 17-6-1911.

139.

Forward, 8-7-1911.

140.

Forward, 30-9-1911. Until the opening of the Great War, Paterson poured a stream of theoretical articles into Forward. For example: the remedy for Highland depopulation, 13-4-1912; cottages with gardens or tenements and slums, 29-6-1912; Unionist [conservative] land policy, 3/10/17/24--8-1912; a new land policy (the parliamentary land values group), 31-8-1912; the case against the land-taxers, 14/28-9-1912; 5/12/19-10-1912; 9-11-1912; the theft of the land of

Scotland, 15-2-1913; deer forests and shooting preserves, 31-5-1913; the government's deer forests, 2/16-8-1913, 6-9-1913; the duke of Sutherland's deer forests, 8-11-1913; the Caithness land embezzlement, 22-11-1913; the state tenant and the peasant proprietor, 28-12-1912; the public ownership of land, 16/23-11-1912, 7-12-1912; land nationalisation, 27-7-1912; 7/14/21-2-1914; 7-3-1914. To all of these, Forward gave great space and prominence (many of them running as the "splash"(front-page lead)). Indeed, for Forward, the land question was central to its political vision, and the coverage of the subject, from other hands, reflected this, right up to the opening of hostilities in the summer of 1914; among these hands being those of G.B. Clark (on private property in land), 10/17-2-1912 and on first steps in land reform, 16-8-1913; "Rob Roy" (the land question), 10/17/24/31-8-1912; Thomas Johnston (who stole the common lands of Scotland?, a new series of land theft exposures), 1/8/15/22-2-1913, 1/8/15/22-3-1913; and on deer forests, 21-3-1914.

141.

Forward, 6-1-1912.

142.

Neil MacLean, the Labour party and a land policy, 3-8-1912; Tories and Liberals, a great sham fight, 10-5-1913; the Labour Party's land policy a call to arms (interim committee of the land committee), 28-6-1913; the Labour Party and the land, an appeal for a common front, 27-12-1913; and the land question and Labour, 3/10-1-1914.

143.

G.B. Clark. Forward, 19-7-1913.

144.

Brown, Scottish and English Land Legislation, 80. C.A. Paterson, Munro Ferguson stabs at the Land Bill, latest landlord trick exposed; Forward, 17-6-1911.

145.

Brown, Scottish and English Land Legislation, 80, 84. "The

Commission and the Congested Districts Board were both finally dissolved on 31 March 1912. In their 25th and final Report the Commission indulged in retrospect in which they made the following points; They had no hesitation in stating that they left the Highland crofter in a better position than they found him. They did not accomplish all that was expected of them and this they attributed to their limited powers under the 1886 Act. They referred particularly to the limitations on their land settlement powers..."; D.J. MacCuish, Ninety Years of Crofting Legislation and Administration, 305.

146.

Forward, splash, 5 cols, 5-8-1911; splash, full page and turn, 12-8-1911; splash, 3 cols, 19-8-1911.

147.

Forward, 27-1-1912.

148.

Forward, 16-3-1912.

149.

Forward, 11-5-1912.

150.

Forward, 26-10-1912; 16-11-1912; 7-12-1912; by James Thorn, Caithness county organiser.

151.

Forward, 8-2-1913; 8-3-1913; and 29-3-1913.

152.

Forward, 12-4-1913.

153.

Forward, 20-6-1914. The same edition reported that G.B. Clark would stand as a Scottish Land League candidate for Caithness "at the first opportunity".

154.

Forward, 4-1-1913.

155.

Crofting Files, AF 67/61, 62 - (Reef); and on Lewis in general, 60.

156.

Oban Times, 6-12-1913.

157.

Oban Times, 21-5-1914.

158.

Crofting Files, AF 67/144.

159.

Oban Times, 18-7-1914.

160.

Oban Times, 1-8-1914; 8-8-1914.

161.

Oban Times, 13-6-1914 (letter of L. MacNeill Weir.) See also Oban Times, 25-7-1914, 1 col report on Tiree; "Steady emigration threatens to deplete the population of Tiree...The land question absorbs attention there as elsewhere throughout the Highlands and Islands. It was indeed a surprise to us to see the vast portion of the island in the hands of large farmers, while such industrious and capable crofters have been kept on small and inadequate holdings". Also letter, Oban Times, 8-8-1914, in response; and the half-column review, Oban Times, 1-8-1914, regarding Angus Henderson's article on details of Highland estate ownership in that month's edition of the Scottish Review.

162.

Ibid.

163.

Oban Times, 20-6-1914 (editorial).

164.

Highland News, 15-3-1914.

165.

Oban Times, 27-6-1914.

166.

Ray Burnett, Land raids and the Scottish Left, Cencrastus, 18, autumn 1984; 2.

167.

Forward, 8-8-1914.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

The history of the Great War and the Highlands has not drawn the attention of writers to such an extent as might be expected. Indeed, it is a story that remains to be written, drawing on published battalion, regimental and divisional war-diaries, private manuscript materials (though most of those in the Imperial War Museum's small collection for the Argylls, Camerons and Seaforths are written by officers) and local press reports, along with such recorded memoirs as still exist. It must in any case be a history without reservation from the viewpoint of the Scottish common people. The war, and the experiences of the common people in it, has suffered enough from "the chaps went over the top and took a pasting" school of class mendacity - in the spirit of Defoe's "inexhaustable treasure of men to fight England's battles", and Wolfe's "no great mischief if they fall". One of the few titles in the area, for instance, is Sword of the North, published in the 'twenties as, apparently, a celebration of Highland losses in 1914-1918(1).

The Scottish Record Office has recently issued material on the subject(2), and a more general history of the Scottish soldier has just been published(3); but it remains beyond argument that the Great War and the Highlands has been ignored in terms of the military record. So too has the subject of the Home Front: not least the story of conscientious objection (the Imperial War Museum's oral history department contains material on Donald Grant and his "request not to be sent to a Highland regiment"); or the story of the womenfolk in particular, "hidden from history" with a vengeance. Lady Lovat, for instance, visited a widow's house in Muir of Ord, which had already lost three sons, to announce the loss of the fourth and last - her ladyship being observed to weep on departure; *this* noble effusion (rather than the loss of the sons) being the point

of the story as it was told, and is remembered, in the locality(4).

A specific issue in these wider contexts is the extent of Highland casualty rates and their effect on post-war consciousness in the Highlands. To date examination of this issue, and of the extent to which Scottish soldiers (and in particular Highland soldiers) have been a reservoir for the English military cause has been the prerogative of small circulation pamphlets; in general, the spirit of self-sacrificial jingoism of the summer of 1914 has prevailed(5).

Nor were the formal institutions of Gaelic identity slothful in this regard. For instance, just as Lord Brocket's Anglo German Fellowship would hastily close-down in 1939(6) so the Gaelic Society of London's council met at the end of August 1914 and unanimously agreed "in view of the many responsibilities and duties, in defending our country and otherwise, which devolve upon members of the Society at this time of National Crisis, and in which all loyal Gaels are proud to take their share, the council considers it desirable that the meetings of the Society should be suspended for the present"(7).

By October, 1917, therefore, the society was adopting Gaelic-speaking prisoners-of-war in Germany(8); and as late as July 1918 was pleased to accept "an invitation from the 185th Cape Breton Highlanders to give them a farewell concert before they left for the front"(9).

One biography alone demonstrates the actuality of this loyal share-taking. In 1914, Jock MacKenzie of Ardgay left with the Seaforths, and did not return - did not return home once - until his demobilisation in 1919. During these years, he saw in one action his original battalion, of well over five hundred men, reduced within two hours to just 100 men. Wounded badly later that same year, he lay helpless in a mound of dead and dying, also suffering the effects of a gas-attack, until a French soldier found him and gave him a shot of rum, which revived him. Three days

of crawling and resting between the lines later (during which interval he was also wounded by shrapnel) took him to a "forward dressing station" in the Imperial lines, as these infamous charnel houses were so calmly known. MacKenzie survived the war; but as late as 1981, and still with three German bullets lodged in his body, he continued to suffer once a year from the effects of gas - going at once to the end of his croft with a half-bottle of rum, drinking it, being violently sick; but recovering from the effects of gas. As a small boy, he had lived beside two very old women, both of them crippled as young girls in the Greenyards anti-landlord riot of the previous century. At the age of ninety, the exhilarating clarity and precision of his views on the Highland land question, and English landlordism in the Highlands, would have commended him to John Murdoch(10).

Nor, of course, was Mackenzie alone in his wartime experiences. By the spring of 1915, 4,500 men were away from Lewis on military service - the 54 families in Lower Shader had as many men at the front; the 26 families in Ballantrashul had 25 men there; and the 16 families of mid-Borve had 18 men away. From Lewis, almost 7,000 men joined the forces; and while the average death-rate for the Imperial services was 12%, for Lewis it was 18%(11).

. The three seaboard parishes of wester Ross had 76 men killed out of 367 serving - a rate of over 20%. Out of 100 local men in the Seaforth and Cameron regiments, the death rate was 35% - just about three times the Imperial average. "Here is the record of the rural school at Auchtertyre in Ross attended by the writer in 1897. On roll, 48; remained in parish, 1; in next parish, 1; returned from abroad, 2; died young, 4; killed in Great War, 5; at sea, 1; emigration to other parts of Highlands, 4; other parts of UK, 10; overseas, 20."(12).

And in North Morar at the start of the Great War, there was a large-enough community at the head of Loch Morar for

two shinty teams to be raised, according to one man who was brought up there prior to going to Gallipoli with the Lovat Scouts. (Today, and for many years past, the area is a deer-forest without any resident population).

If cautionary voices identified these consequences in 1914, however, they were largely drowned in the clamorous orgy of jingoism with which the Highland gentry greeted the outbreak of war. In the Inverness Courier, for instance, the editor James Barron assured his readers that the "savage pretensions" of Germany had to be "reduced to impotence"(13). Within months, therefore, in May 1915, at Festubert, the 4th Camerons were "losing" 13 officers and 238 from the lesser, though no less necessary, ranks(14); while at Loos that autumn the Highland regiments were slaughtered, including Barron's son(15).

Such casualty rates did not go un-noticed on the Home Front. Even by the middle of 1915 the children of the Easter Ross towns were taking care to pretend that they did not see telegraph-boys in the streets of the town (but all the same watched in terror the home they headed for)(16). In some families in Skye six sons were lost(17); Lord Lovat, in letters to his wife, urged her to get round the crofters on the estate in the cause of morale. The King's message to the Highland Mounted Brigade on their departure for service overseas caught the spirit of the thing, with its irresistible echo of Defoe: "I feel sure that the great and traditional fighting reputation of Scotsmen will be more than safe with you and that your Brigade will spare no effort in the interests of the Empire's cause to bring this war to a victorious conclusion"(18).

The Highland gentry, naturally enough, were prominent in this crusade from the promised land of modern romance; albeit in the officer corps. When the 5th Seaforths marched away from Dingwall with the guns of the fleet booming out over Cromarty and the swaggering Union Flag on every municipal steeple, the Duke of Sutherland was their honorary

colonel; by 1918 they had "lost" 870 men. Cameron of Lochiel, meanwhile, commanded the 5th Camerons, while the MacKintosh of MacKintosh led that same regiment's third battalion; and Lord Lovat took his Scouts with the Highland Mounted Brigade to Gallipoli's Chocolate Hill (where a number of them still lie, gravestones distinguished by Gaelic inscriptions).

Many Highland units served with the 51st Highland territorial division, a "flying division" always in the thick of action. Three times, its intervention saved the general situation on the entire western front; but at some cost, with 1,500 men lost at Festubert, 8,500 at the Somme, 2,500 on the Ancre, 2,500 at Cambrai, 5,000 at Morchies-Bapaume, and 2,000 at Rheims - a total of 27,500 men(19).

From the parish alone of Inverness, 700 men died, and the pattern across the Highlands was similar(20); "In quiet country places the losses of war were most felt. The percentage of killed in the Empire's forces was 12, but seldom, if indeed ever, were the losses sustained by any Scottish community, urban or rural, so low...Many districts, for example south west Ross, showed figures for killed of over 23 per cent of those serving. Villages like Dornie and Bundalloch lost one young man out of every three. Of 102 local young men joining the Seaforths and the Camerons from the three parishes of Kintail, Lochalsh and Glenshiel, thirty six were killed. Such figures were not exceptional. As one moves through the Scottish countryside and looks at the little parish or village memorials, one cannot but realise what irreparable damage was done to the fabric of rural life"(21).

As the stream of volunteers for walk-on parts in this great drama of capitalist competition dried up, conscription followed, and by the spring of 1917, few appeals against conscription were being granted in the Highlands, though many men were allowed to remain at home, but only until the spring planting was completed. Food by now was in short

supply nationally; but many old people faced the prospect of having to get in the harvest that autumn on their own. Staple foodstuffs were everywhere in short supply - the rich, indeed, being urged to eat more expensive foods, that the poor might have more potatoes to consume(22).

By way, doubtless, of recompense, the Scottish Secretary announced that "where the hottest of the fighting has been, there the Highland regiments have been found...after the war every Highland soldier who desires to do so should settle in the homelands and not be shipped to the colonies"(23).

By the spring of 1918, matters were so serious that the Board of Agriculture was urging people to grow more food and, under the Defence of the Realm Act, made an order authorising the killing of deer by the occupier of an agricultural holding, if such deer were trespassing on his grazings or causing injury to his crops; it evidently requiring a European war to amend the operation of the game-laws in the Highlands - and then on a temporary and emergency basis!(24).

What the effect of all this was on the Highlands is not easy to judge. Military mis-management (and by the pre-war landed classes at that) can hardly have improved popular opinion of them. But the evidence is in short supply; though some suggestion is available from the private war-diary of the Catholic chaplain to the Lovat Scouts at Gallipoli. Hugh Cameron had been priest in Castlebay on the outbreak of war; aged forty, he was shortly in Gallipoli and he noted towards the end of the disastrous campaign there, "Rumours of evacuation. The sooner the better. None of us will be sorry to leave this damned hole of a graveyard where so many brave men have fallen in vain...This is for my own use and I can put down my own thoughts for they are the thoughts of all of us. From start to finish Gallipoli has been a most abominably managed business. Had the fine material available been properly handled we should long ago

have been in Stamboul instead of holding three miles of flat dominated on three sides by the enemy. We were up on those heights more than once and *bad leadership in high places lost them to us. That is what makes the temper of the army so bitter*"(25).

As another survivor of the Great War said of South Uist, "The country was bled white. Where I come from there were seven men killed, it was the same all over the Highlands, it suffered an awful lot of casualties. The first regiment of Lovat Scouts, they were practically all of them Gaelic speakers - but the Highlands were never the same afterwards. You didn't have the same type of men. There's no question, the war made a huge difference. There were some houses in Uist that lost three and four sons, there was just the mother left and so on, and the place deteriorated. There was hardly a family that didn't lose someone - there was a gloom on them all after it"(26).

According to one recent commentator, "Scotland as a whole, with a total of 110,000 war dead, had the highest mortality relative to population of any part of the Empire, and certainly no Scottish region was harder hit than the Highlands"(27).

And Christopher Harvie has written, "For the Scots, the supreme sacrifice had also been a disproportionate one. Although the parliamentary return of 1921 simply divided 745,000 British dead by 10 to produce a Scottish toll of 74,000, most Scots probably agreed with the National War Memorial White Paper of 1920, which estimated 100,000 or over 20% of Britain's dead. Scots territorials, at 5% of the male population, nearly double the British average, suffered particularly badly in the mauling of their battalions in 1915...and the impact in the country areas could be twice as severe. The dead were overwhelmingly infantry privates; one officer died for every 13 men"(28).

Despite this, however, the land-question remained firmly on the domestic political agenda; and increasingly so

as the war drew to a close and the cry of "the land for the people" (this time in uniform) was heard again. Food shortages alone drew the attention of the state to underused land resources, and threw light on the possibility of a post-war reorganisation of land use, tenure, and ownership. By the summer of 1916, post-war land settlement in Scotland was being raised in the Commons(29); and by that autumn the government's Acquisition of Land Bill was making its way through parliament(30). A year later "yet another parliamentary land reform group" was constituted with the view that "the land question must occupy first place in all schemes of social reconstruction after the war"(31).

And by 1918, the London press was reporting on agitation in Sutherland(32), Tiree(33), and Skye(34), along with the proceedings of a deputation from the Scottish Smallholders' Association in Lewis, Sutherland and Caithness; indeed, the Association, and its journal the Scottish Smallholder, had been campaigning for post-war land settlement, and changes to the 1911 Small Landholders' Act, since at least 1917. So too had Land Values, the journal of the association for the taxation of land values, then in its 24th year of publication. Land Values, though published out of London, gave sustained coverage to the land-question in the Highlands throughout the last year of the war. With an active Highland branch in Inverness (occupying its time by sending pamphlets on the land question to the soldiers at the front), it was by February 1918, denouncing the 1911 Act as "already a dead letter in Scotland. The search for land has proved absolutely vain and it is impossible to get suitable land except by paying exhorbitant compensation"(35). Even The Times carried reports from South Uist on Lady Gordon Cathcart's interdicting of her crofters(36), from North Uist on Sir John Orde's legal contest with the Board of Agriculture before the Land Court(37), and on the despatch to prison - at the very moment of Germany's last great offensive on the Western

Front - of crofters from Sutherland(38).

In part at least, this public attention was due to continuing agitation in the Scottish radical and nationalist press on the land issue. In 1914, the Thistle was anouncing the nomination of a crofter parliamentary candidate for Inverness-shire (though with the coming of war the election was abandoned), and reporting that "the Small Landholders' Act has neither created, nor met, a demand for land in Scotland"(39).

Later that year the same journal was covering the extent to which Highland estates accustomed to "traditional" owners were falling into the hands of alien capitalists(40). It also reported a private member's Bill in parliament designed to amend the Small Landholders' Act, adding the comment that "it has now been in operation for 2 years...no fewer than 8,000 applications for new holdings or for enlargements to existing holdings have been made, and less than 300 of these have been dealt with...in 18 counties, there are altogether 3,599,744 acres of deer forests"(41).

The following year the author of the failed private member's Bill was writing in Thistle on the "paralysis of Scottish land reform". Commenting on the third annual report of the Board of Agriculture, he observed that "four years have passed and only 434 new holdings have actually been created. Truly a miserable record...A landlord opposition in Scotland persistently dogs the progress of the Act by recourse to every legal expedient to defeat its end"(42).

From Inverness, the Highland News was also distinctly anti-landlord in tone by the early months of the war. Of the Duke of Argyll's appeal for recruits, for instance, it observed, "It is doubtful if the Kaiser himself ever rose to such a height of intolerant impertinence and almighty self-importance as the Duke of Argyll does in his appeal...one would have thought that the Duke would approach these people timidly, saying 'I am the representative of a class who bled

the Highlands almost white'; but there is nothing of that strain about the Duke's appeal..."(43).

And by March 1915, on an attempt to re-possess crofters' land in the parish of Clyne by the honorary colonel of the Seaforth Highlanders, the Highland News could observe "The House of Sutherland is at its grim work again. It may be using more civilised weapons - perhaps the law courts in place of the crowbar and the torch - but the one thing that matters is the same; the people are to be dispossessed"(44).

Nor did Forward lose sight of the land question. The sixth edition of Our Noble Families appeared in February 1915, the paper billing it as "a valuable, unimpeachable and imperishable record of aristocratic tyranny, oppression and land thieving in Scotland...it proves that all the Huns do not live across the Ocean"(45) (Within just eighteen months the title was out of print again(46)). During the remainder of that year Forward ran a series of articles on "the land and the war"; the "land after the war"; and (in April the following year) on "patriotic landlords - landlord robbery of Board of Agriculture money"(47).

By 1916 the Thistle was warning, in an article on post-war land settlement, that "the young men have learned much during their soujourn in the trenches"(48); and Guth na Bliadhna, in an article on "the conduct of the land agitation since 1884" was observing that "the movement that culminated in the adhesion of the Scottish land reformers of the 1880s to the Liberals was a fatal mistake in political tactics"(49).

A year later Forward was reporting the "Scottish Land Court paralysed"; and Thomas Johnston writing of "the extraordinary story of how the Scottish Land Act of 1911 has been secretly paralysed in the midst of the great war of liberation - surely to God there's a limit to what the people of Scotland are going to stand!"(50)

Nor had the Land League, despite the pressures of war,

disappeared from the scene. The Forward-backed Scottish Land League does indeed appear to have sunk by the spring of 1915(51); but by the the end of 1913 a pro-Gaelic rather than pro-Labour Highland Land League had again been re-constituted(52). Within a month, its London-based secretary George James (G.J.) Bruce was writing in The Times on deer-forest devastation of agricultural land in Sutherland(53). By the following year, Bruce was occupying the columns of Highland News on the Duke of Sutherland's efforts to evict an 83 year old man, with three sons in the army, from land at Cnocan, to add it to a grouse-moor(54); and by 1916 Forward was reporting "the communique of the Highland Land League" on affairs in Sutherland(55).

By this point in the war the League was under fire from jingoists on account of having appealed for money, on the behalf of crofters, from Highlanders in British colonies "thus undermining Imperial resolve"(56); nor did it take long for the League to become embroiled (as tradition might be thought to have dictated) between nationalists and socialists; although by this point both were moving one unto the other in any case.

By 1918, indeed, at a delegate meeting of the League in Glasgow, it was decided that it would affiliate to the Labour Party in Scotland, and would run joint candidates in all the Highland constituencies at the first general election(57), while Guth na Bliadhna added of the meeting that "organised Labour in Scotland would be behind the movement provided Three Capital articles were vigorously supported; National Self-Determination, the Land for the People, and Native Language and Culture"(58).

Appropriately enough, the Celtic nationalist Erskine of Marr observed in the same edition of Guth na Bliadhna, in an article on the Celtic and Labour movements, that "hitherto the Celtic movement in Scotland has not been even a popular, much less a democratic, movement. It has divided its attention between the lairdocracy on one hand and the

bourgeoisie on the other"(59).

In March 1918, G.J. Bruce was touring Lewis; at a meeting in Stornoway the chairman was none other that what the new Stornoway Gazette, founded the previous year by the former Hebridean correspondent of Highland News, called "that veteran fighter in the land movement, the Rev. Donald MacCallum"(60). Other emissaries of the League were elsewhere in the Highlands and "the popular spirit is rising everywhere, and the League's programme, consisting of the Three Essentials, Autonomy for Scotland, the Land for the People, and Native (as opposed to English or Feudal) Culture, has been hailed with enthusiasm and adopted by great numbers, wherever it has been expounded and preached"(61).

By September that year, the Scottish advisory council of the Labour party had met in Glasgow and "expressed its approval of a vigorous democratic policy, based on the recognition of national autonomy for Scotland [and] 'the land for the people'". A joint committee of the Labour party in Scotland and the Highland Land League had been appointed "and will shortly issue an appeal to the Scottish people for support in an effort to secure the return in as many Scottish constituencies as possible of candidates favourable to autonomy for Scotland and the land for the people...over 40 candidates have been adopted, and the candidates for the Highland constituencies nominated by the Highland Land League and the Labour organisations will shortly be announced...already the intimation that a big Land and Labour campaign is on foot has aroused consternation in the camps of the old political parties; and in several of the Highland constituencies there has been a shaking of the dry bones of Scottish Liberalism"(62).

The appeal appeared shortly afterwards, styling itself "Scotland's National Freedom Fund", with addresses at the headquarters of both the Scottish Labour Party and the Highland Land League. Old themes - still recognisable today

- were apparent; "The Scottish Labour Party and the Highland Land League, believing that Scotland's interests can best be secured by the re-establishment of the Scottish Parliament, and by the land of Scotland being owned and controlled by the Scottish state, desire your support...Since the Union of Scotland with England in 1907, Scotland has experienced ever increasing difficulty in obtaining from Westminster that attention to her needs which she demands they deserve...Most of the efforts for reform made by Scotland have been spoiled or defeated by overwhelming English votes...The English people show a marked disposition to conservativism, while the Scottish people on the other hand are undoubtedly progressive in political thought and action. The result of the Union has been that Celtic culture and Scottish ideals are discouraged, while the tendency is for the ideals and culture of England to be thrust upon our country. Large areas of Scottish land have been denuded of people in order to provide sporting grounds for the idle rich..."(63).

It is unsurprising, therefore, that in this period, and not least in the immediate aftermath of the Bolshevik seizure of state power in the Russian empire, Forward could report "Bolshevik tactics in the Highlands", and go on to record that the Highland Land League "has its hands full at the moment. Tired of politicians' promises and the dilly-dallying of the Board of Agriculture, groups of men in the Highlands are quietly taking possession of their common heritage". The League, Forward reported, was in contact with raiders on Skye, Raasay, Tiree, and Helmsdale(64); adding a fortnight later "there is nothing in Industrial Capitalism to beat landlordism for naked, barefaced, impudent exploitation and tyranny"(65).

In fact, there had been land raiding even earlier during the war years. In the spring of 1917, for instance, there was raiding at Kyleakin and Sconser in Skye.

In July, a spokesman for a number of people from Kyleakin who had occupied grazing land wrote to the factor

for the MacDonald estates, to the effect that "we have heard quite enough about this little patch of land and there is no estate authority in Britain which can question the legality of our taking possession of it. We will not give up the land nor pay rent...though it cause bloodshed...we shall have none of your interference in this matter in future but shall...have justice and more land to cultivate"(66).

And from Sconser, the Board of Agriculture was informed that part of the deer-forest there had "been illegally taken possession of for growing potatoes to the detriment of game preservation(!)...this practice appears to be on the increase". The Board had received a letter in which "the crofters ask the Board virtually to homologate the illegal action taken by them, and the representative of the food production committee in Skye recommends that the crofters should be left in the possession of the land...Obviously, the Board cannot act as suggested, as similar seizures of land would inevitably follow". The complaint about the conduct of the Sconser tenants had been brought by a firm of Edinburgh lawyers, acting for Sir Anthony Abdy, curator bonis (an agent appointed by the Court of Session on petition from medical authorites) for Lord MacDonald (then an inmate in an Edinburgh asylum). They complained that the Sconser forest, in the past worth £600 a year in shooting rental, was unlet, and unlikely to be let "at this late date in the year". Some months earlier, the Sconser people had asked for a part of the deer forest, and the estate claimed to have offered the use, on unspecified conditions, of the northern, Sligachan, part.

It was the opinion of the factor "that the placing of cattle on this part of the forest would minimise the amount of injury to the forest as a whole...notwithstanding this offer, several of the crofters recently put cattle on the southern part of the forest, in which is situated the sanctuary for the deer, and according to our latest information they are taking in cattle...The situation is

therefore going from bad to worse...The Curator Bonis is naturally most unwilling to take any legal proceedings against the trespassers as his actions would certainly be misrepresented and it is by no means certain that even with a decree of the court in his favour he would be able to vindicate his legal rights...he deprecates the unwarrantable and unreasonable action of the crofters and fears that, unless the law is enforced, the mischief will spread and injury to many other interests will follow. The estate is very heavily burdened and, owing to the increase in the rate of interest on mortgages, the high rate of income tax and the fact of several of the shootings being unlet, the financial position is most serious...it will be most unfortunate if the illegal methods of the Sconser people are followed by others"(67).

At much the same time, there was also raiding at the north end of Barra, again at Eoligarry, scene of so much agitation in the previous fifteen years or so(68).

And by the following February, events in Tiree were being raised in the Commons(69); in due course the Tiree raiders getting 10 days each in gaol(70).

There was also war-time conflict in Sutherland. As early as March, 1915, the Highland Land League was calling attention to actions of the Duke of Sutherland in persecuting Highland crofters and threatening evictions. The issue related to an eviction attempt on one Joseph MacKay, whose father had been shepherd for a tenant-farmer of the Sutherlands, but had been dismissed when the hirsel he herded had been put under deer instead. Joseph MacKay, however, insisted on remaining in his father's former cottage, and grazing his own sheep on the land around it; meanwhile applying to the Board for an official holding - to which the estate responded by issuing an eviction notice on him.

The secretary of the League, G.J. Bruce, wrote to the Board; "The Duke of Sutherland, following the example of his

notorious ancestor in 1815 has commenced persecuting Highland crofters and threatening evictions. One of these notices was recently exhibited by me at public meetings in Sutherland". The eviction had been threatened the previous July, when the League had held protest meetings; "I had several hundred men pledged to assist, and on the day the war began, we had a meeting of 2,000 in Kildonan; our League is determined that the practices of the Sutherland family in 1815 will not be permitted in 1915".

The estate told the Board, without any apparent sense of history, that Knockan, scene of the dispute, was "near the march of the parishes of Clyne and Kildonan", and added the allegation, with vengeful gratuity, that MacKay's sister was the mother of an illegitimate daughter.

The authorities chose not to treat with Bruce; "in view of the tone of Mr Bruce's letter, it seems undesirable to enter into any discussion with him". Bruce, therefore, was simply reminded that "you will incur a serious responsibility if you are party to any resistance to the law"; to which Bruce replied, "I am to warn your government that if it permits or helps the forcible eviction of the old man of 83, whose three sons are now serving with His Majesty's forces (North Hants Yeomanry, Seaforth Highlanders and Natal Light Horse) it may only do so over the dead bodies of MacKay and those Highlanders who will defend him". The matter was also raised in parliament, with the Lord Advocate being asked whether the threatened eviction in wartime Sutherland constituted a breach of the Defence of the Realm Act(71).

That same summer, nine cottars in the township of Port Gower, in the parish of Loth, took possession of grazing land on the farm of East Garty, the property of the Duke of Sutherland. The cottars had originally tried to lease the land from the Duke, but to no avail; and following the raid on the land (much of it on railway embankments) proceedings were raised in Dornoch sheriff court. The cottars were

arrested in their beds at dawn, and taken to Dornoch. Three of them were women, one a widow with two sons on active service; while Hugh Melville had three sons, all volunteers, in the army, two having returned from Canada to join-up. Nevertheless, they were all gaoled at Inverness for ten days(72).

The women, in fact, only served one day; the men, on their release, were met by supporters, "to salute and honour the men for the brave stand they have made for what was their just right, and what they had been promised. Their incarceration added one more chapter to the battle for land reform in the Highlands". The background to the dispute concerned the tenant farmer of the land in question, who had called in the local police prior to the raid; the local constable informing the Chief Constable, the procurator and the sheriff in due course that the raiders, "following incitement by the Highland Land League", had given notice of their intention to take the land and put stock on it.

This they proceeded to do, despite padlocked gates and the presence of the police (who did not intervene). The farmer himself wrote to the authorities, complaining that he knew one of the raiders to be a Land League member, who had threatened that "they were going to take my farm and they were going to fight to the death - it was to be a test-case, and only the first of three in the district". The farmer, sending his letter by registered mail, also noted, "the horrible action of the Portgower crofters is really Ireland in Sutherland, actual Sinn Feinism, this Land League is sowing lawlessness and Sinn Feinism". This matter also was brought-up in the Commons(73).

Within months, of course, the war was over; and the land question clearly an important one as far as the 1918 general election went in the Highlands. The 1918 franchise reform Act had extended the UK electorate from its 1910 level of 7.7 million to 21.4 million, greatly expanding the male working-class electorate, and adding women over 30 to

the electoral rolls(74).

The Land League was by now firmly established on the Scottish political scene, in association with the Home-Rule Scottish Labour Party - one League meeting in Greenock, for instance, ended with a recital of some Gaelic songs, followed by a rendition by the choir of The Internationale(75).

From 1917 the League had been taking full-page advertisements in the nationalist press to the effect that "Scotland may become again an independent nation, and that all lands, mines, and fisheries be restored to the Scottish Commonwealth"(76). Full pages were also taken, listing the League's leadership which by 1917 included office-bearers in Aboyne (Erskine of Marr, styling himself Ruaraidh Arascain is Mhairr), Durness (Rev Adam Gunn), Glasgow (Rev James Barr), Lochs (Rev Donald MacCallum), Coll (Rev Malcolm Morrison), Inverness (Rev A. MacLeod), and in London (Dr G.B. Clark and Willie Gillies). There were further office-bearers listed for Caithness, Helmsdale, Stornoway, Tain, Reay, Rogart, Oban, North Uist, Lochganvich, Ballalan, Tongue, Raasay, Kyleakin and Halladale. Its objects were "to secure Autonomy for Scotland, the return to the people for their use and enjoyment of the land taken from them and now held in large areas by nobles and other landholders in the Highlands of Scotland"(77).

The 1918 election was held in the middle of December that year; and the established parties made considerable play of the extent to which they were commited to land reform. The Liberals, led by H.H. Asquith managed just one word on land; but Labour's manifesto pledged the party to "free the soil from Landlordism and Reaction" and assured its readers that "The Labour Party means to introduce large schemes of land re-organisation, and it is fully aware that they can only be done in the teeth of the most powerful vested interests. Land nationalisation is a vital necessity. The Land is the people's"(78).

And the manifesto of the Coalition of Bonar Law and Lloyd George announced that "Plans have been prepared, and will be put into execution as soon as the new Parliament assembles, whereby it will be the duty of public authorities and, if necessary, of the State itself, to acquire land on simple and economical bases for men who have served in the war, either for cottages with gardens, allotments, or small-holdings as the applicants may desire and be suited for. In addition to this, we intend to secure and to promote the further development and cultivation of allotments and small holdings generally as far as may be required in the public interest...Arrangements have been made whereby extensive afforestation and reclamation schemes may be entered upon without delay"(79).

Nevertheless, the League ran candidates under its own banner in Argyll (L.M. Weir); Inverness (G.J. Bruce); Ross and Cromarty (H. Munro); and the newly-created Western Isles constituency (H. MacCowan)(80).

MacCowan, provost of Oban, was the nominee of the Stornoway branch of the Independent Labour Party running with the blessing of the Highland Land League; but it was a sign of the times in the Western Isles that all three candidates called for sweeping land-reform and "a radical transformation of the land system". And in Inverness-shire the League candidate G.J. Bruce took space on the front-page of the Inverness Courier to present in Gaelic his programme. Bruce claimed to have been "born in a small bothy-type house to a poor crofter", the descendant of parents cleared from Strathnaver "who had to find an exile overseas". In 1913, he had "succeeded in re-establishing the Land League...I fought relentlessly against the displacement of our people in favour of the German prisoners. I struggled strongly to increase the wages of the mining workforce in the Highlands...Self Rule for Scotland, the Land for the People and the People for the Land...the fruits of the threshing blade belongs to all and the land belongs no more to one

than another"(81). (This did not, however, prevent anti-League editorials in the Inverness Courier(82)).

The paper nevertheless reported one of Bruce's meetings in the Town Hall (soon to be decorated with the 700 names of the parish dead). The report of his speech gives a flavour of the campaign: "He stood for the land for the people. He had brought with him the old blue banner that had floated so often in the great assemblages in the North, when they were out for the land for the people. If had been the banner of the Highland Land League. That league was responsible for originating the agitation which led to Scotland getting all the advance in land reform it had obtained; but they must admit that the land-laws had been almost a complete failure in securing land for the people. That was proved by the last report of the Board of Agriculture for Scotland. In Inverness-shire in 1915, the total number of applicants for small-holdings was 1339, and for enlargements 1250, making a total of 2589. How many did the Board of Agriculture get through? There had been granted 106 new holdings and 73 enlargements".

That, he thought, "was failure and nothing else but failure...at the outbreak of the war there were something like 8,400 applications for small-holdings in Scotland undealt with...Why should they have such vast areas of land for the blood-sports of the autocrats who came to the Highlands for idle moments of each year?...the present stampede election was one of the greatest scandals for which the government was responsible. Not more than sixty percent of the soldiers would have any chance of voting...in the burgh of Inverness, 20 percent of the voters were absent voters. In the county there were 5,000 absent voters. The Highland regiments that had a large share in winning the war were disenfranchised. And what about land for returning soldiers? Up to May last, provision had only got as far as settling 26 soldiers on the land; and the provision consisted of giving large sums to certain big landlords for

the most barren spot they could get hold of...He had in his blood a feeling of antipathy to the oppressors of the people....."(83).

In the Western Isles campaign the rhetoric was similar; though the vote was won by Donald Murray, the Liberal candidate, and a strong advocate of land-reform (as his parliamentary interventions would shortly demonstrate). He also enjoyed the support of the Stornoway Gazette; "he is the local candidate, the first in the field, and the people's choice before any other from outside of the constituency was dreamed to be possible"(84). On a turnout of 44% of the electorate, Murray took 47% of the vote, the Land League candidate taking just over 10%, or 809 votes. But Murray's election address had announced that he "would press for a strong and effective scheme of land reform which would result in a speedy distribution of all the available land in the Highlands and Islands among the people"; and over the next four years, he strongly supported land-raiding in the Hebrides, and became noted for his speeches in parliament on the issue of land-hunger(85).

In Inverness-shire too, the press favoured non-League candidates. The Inverness Courier denounced all the League candidates as extremist agitators and "agents of the Invergordon dockers". In any case they all lost, Weir in Argyll taking 19% of the vote on a 52% turnout, G.J. Bruce getting 27 % on a 37% turnout, and in Ross and Cromarty Munro taking 21% on a 51% turnout(86).

On the UK scale, Coalition candidates took 473 of the 707 seats in the Commons; in Scotland 54 of the 71 seats went to Coalition candidates(87). And in the north Coalition Liberals had taken Argyll, Caithness and Sutherland, Inverness, Ross and Cromarty, and Orkney and Shetland; their only upset being in the Western Isles, where Murray ran as a simple Liberal(88).

In othe words, Labour was still some few years short of its national electoral breakthrough (though due to

circumstance of Coalition Government, it did win on a UK scale, and for the first time ever, more seats, at 57, than the Liberals, at 38); while in the Highlands, the old loyalty to Liberals held good. But the wartime and immediate post war land raiding kept the land question firmly to the front of Highland and Scottish politics; notably reflected in continuing criticism of the 1911 Small Landholders' Act. As early as the first month of war, for instance, the Thistle had observed of the operation of the Act that "the maleficent hand of the landlords' influence in the fashioning of the Act in the House of Lords comes out strongly in the reports connected with the sittings of the Land Court...claims of a serious and costly character are made by the landlords whose estates are interfered with by the Court for the purposes of settlement. The Bill, as introduced by the Government, was avowedly for the purpose of re-peopling the Highlands; a great public object before which the so-called landlords' rights should have been minimised to the uttermost. Instead of this, they have been magnified to the uttermost...in one case lately reported, a large sum, considerably over £2,000, was awarded by the arbiter for depreciation of sporting rights, on account of the settlement of crofters on a portion of the estate. And this sporting value did not arise from deer; but from the shooting of wild geese..."(89).

By the end of 1916, the Land Court, in its fifth annual report, was regretting the manner in which the Act had been "marred and mangled" by the ingenuity of landlords' legal agents appealing Land Court decisions to the Court of Session. These decisions had "effectively destroyed the usefulness" of the Act. The procedure for the creation of new holdings was "complicated and expensive. The limits of rent and area are so narrow, particularly for pastoral holdings, that this Court has had to refuse to authorise schemes for new holdings, excellent in themselves and for the public interest". The statutory element of compensation

to the landlord came in for particular criticism as the Act's "most essential defect"; and the Land Court reported "with great regret...that the compulsory provisions of the Act have been rendered practically unworkable by judicial interpretation of the clause...which deals with compensation to the landlord"(90).

By the following year Forward was simply dismissing the Small Landholders' Act as "The Landlord Protection Act"(printing in the same edition its own 'land programme for the Highlands')(91).

The essential weakness of the Act was that it gave landowners whose land the Land Court ordered to be re-settled the right to claim compensation for disturbance of their "sporting rights". This in effect made it impossible to reclaim land from deer-forests, so huge could the claim for compensation be.

For The Thistle the "ignominious failure" and "iniquitous terms" of the Act were proof of the "disgraceful lengths to which landlordism was allowed to go to prevent the settlement of the people on the land...This short-sighted and rapacious action of the landowning class...gives us a warning as to popular action in the future. The settlement of the people on the land is one of the greatest domestic questions that will come before the people when this cruel war is over and care will have to be taken that there shall be no more landowning juggling in the future...A strenuous attempt to do so will be made by the landowning and privileged classes. Of that there can be no doubt, and it must be resisted to the uttermost"(92).

And just three months from the end of the war, the Thistle was reporting on "depopulation in Glenquaich", with the comment that "while there is an Act of Parliament which is expressly designed to give a peaceful settlement in Scotland to men of the class of crofters or small agriculturalists, and that a considerable sum of public money has been spent in carrying out this policy, yet at the

same time landowners in the Highland districts are permitted to carry out a policy of depopulation on portions of their estates"(93).

Even Lord Lovat thought it "a distinctly bad Bill [Act]. It was bad in itself; it was not too wisely administered; and it failed from the very start"(94).

Post-war, therefore, against a background chorus of this sort of criticism, new legislation on land settlement was promoted; and during the course of 1919, the Land Settlement (Scotland) Bill made its way through parliament. It was introduced there two days after the opening of the grouse shooting season, and the Scottish Secretary moved its second reading in the Commons the following day; Land and Liberty gave the debate no less than 5 pages of space(95). There had been small-scale legislation on the land during the war(96); but the Land Settlement Act was altogether more ambitious in scale. Its central provisions were to amend and extend the discredited 1911 Small Landholders' Act, "to make further provision for the acquisition of land for the purposes of small holdings...and otherwise facilitate land settlement in Scotland"(97).

For Labour, it "was a great advance on anything they had yet had in connection with land settlement": while landlord opposition to it was strikingly muted. In the Commons only two members for Highland constituencies spoke on the matter. For Argyll, Sir William Sutherland offered no major complaint on it; while for the Western Isles, Dr Murray complained that it made no provision for land squatters (former raiders now established on land to which nevertheless in law they had no right) - "people in my consituency are getting impatient and are asking when are they going to get small holdings?"(98)

The Conservative Sir George Younger (for Ayr Burghs) worried that "It was a fact that the moment small holdings are established on any property in Scotland the capital value of the estate is reduced"; a point to which he

returned in November, when the Bill was before the Scottish Grand Committee. It was proposed that compensation for acquired land would be paid on the basis of the agricultural value of that land, rather than its "sporting" value. Younger wanted this provision deleted; the "proposal was unjust and ruthless; there were many natural deer forests suitable only for sporting purposes and bringing in large rentals, which would be destroyed if small holdings were created on *or near them*, and something ought to be done to mitigate the extreme loss in cases of this kind"(99).

But the landlords were markedly reticent in their criticism; and mounted no significant opposition to the passage of the Bill.

In the Lords, Lord Lovat contented himself with concern for the "absolute power the Bill gives to the Board of Agriculture for Scotland practically to make bankrupt any unfortunate landowner in Northern Scotland who derives most of his revenue from sporting estates"(100).

But for the Duke of Sutherland, with 300,000 acres to his name in the Highlands as he reminded his peers, other considerations were uppermost. "For 100 years the Highlands have from time to time seen a series of land agitations. They have died down only to rise again and to cause fresh unrest and trouble. Let us hope that this Bill, the fruit of a compromise with all parties, may be a way of laying that ghost which has haunted the Highland glens for so long...The Bill will go to another place and very probably will be returned in the form in which it was sent by us. A serious constitutional crisis might then arise...we remember that it is only a short time ago and a few years before the war, that in Scotland, at any rate in the Highlands of Scotland, the House of Lords was looked upon with anything but favour...it was considered to be the author of all tyrannical evil...we do not wish for a similar state of affairs at the moment, when we should all be united against the evils of Bolshevism"(101).

Thus supported, the Bill received the Royal Assent the day before Christmas; and - 33 years since the young Lloyd George had first heard Michael Davitt speak on the land question before the Welsh Land League(102) - the State set about its avowed aim of resettling the Highlands.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

1.

D. MacKerran, Sword of the North, Inverness, 1923.

2.

The First World War, HMSO for the Scottish Records Office, 1987.

3.

Stephen Wood, The Scottish Soldier, London, 1987. See also, Tormod Calum Domhnallach, Call na h'Iolaire, Stornoway, 1978; recounting an event that can only have had the most shattering effect on post-war consciousness in the island.

4.

Information supplied by N.M. of Lima.

5.

Oliver Brown, Hitlerism in the Highlands, 1-2. Highland losses at Tel el Kebir, Celtic Magazine, no 85, Nov 1882, 20.

6.

On the Anglo-German Fellowship see chapter on Knoydart land raid.

7.

Gaelic Society of London, MSS minute book 4, 28-8-1914.

8.

Ibid.

9.

Ibid.

10.

Interviewed by present writer, July 1981. A second soldier, in the trenches for four years, twice wounded and once gassed, served with the 1st, 6th and 7th Camerons and, on their destruction, with the Seaforths; post-war, he moved from Harris to Portnalong in Skye; West Highland Free Press, 10-1-1975; and obituary, West Highland Free Press, 7-5-1982. (On the settlement itself, see Board of Agriculture for Scotland, 16th report, 16-17.) A third, with the Royal

Artillery for 4 years, took to land-raiding in Uist in 1920; James Hunter, land-raider who fought and beat the system, Press and Journal, 11-3-1980. A fourth, Kenneth Robertson, is profiled by Donald Cameron in a Radio nan Eilean feature, TX 1985. Land raiding in the Hebrides in the wake of World War One formed the subject of the Scottish Oral History Group's conference to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the 1886 Crofters' Act, held in Inverness in the autumn of 1986. The conference included the playing of a tape-recorded interview with the last of Uist's Balranald land-raiders; along with the playing of a recording of the "Great Horn of Glendale" with which the people there were warned of the imminent approach of factors, landlords and their agents; Oran History, vol 15, no 1, 1987.

11.

Oban Times, 10-4-1915; 24-4-1915.

12.

Donnachadh Mac'illedhuibh, Death to the Highland Scot, Glasgow, 1944, 6-8, 18.

13.

J. Barron, A Highland Editor, Inverness, 1927, vol 1, 121.

14.

Ibid, 146.

15.

Ibid, 190; his pro-war editorials in the "Courier" after this event are particularly heartbreaking.

16.

Information supplied by E.G. of Dingwall.

17.

Information supplied by A.C. of Sconser.

18.

Sir Francis Lindley, Lord Lovat, 183. See also letter on landowners, deer forests and the war, 184-185; and 182.

19.

Sword of the North, 138; 10; 21. For a comment on the 51st division at the Somme, see James Shaw Grant, Stornoway

Gazette, 7-5-1988.

20.

Inverness Town House, War Memorial. See also Inverness Courier, 27-12-1918; "the death rates of all UK divisions and regiments to be published soon - the 51st tops the list by a long way". The war-memorial at Bonar Bridge, for instance, lists 46 names; Inverness Courier, 2-3-1923: and for North Uist, 159; Inverness Courier, 31-8-1923: while the Seaforth memorial at Tain records 8,432 regimental dead for 1914-1918; Inverness Courier, 14-9-1923.

21.

Duncan Duff, Scotland's War Losses, Glasgow 1947, 45. See also 42 (and footnote 20, above); comparative casualty rates were never in fact published by the authorities. (Note that Duff's pamphlet contains an interesting bibliography on the subject of the land-question.)

22.

On appeals, see the reports of the proceedings of the County Military Appeals Tribunal in Skye, spring 1917; Inverness Courier, March 1917.

23.

Inverness Courier, 3-4-1917. See also case of conscientious objection at Braes, Inverness Courier, 17-4-1914.

24.

Inverness Courier, 12-4-1918.

25.

Hugh Cameron, war diary, Cathedral House, Oban; emphasis added. For obituaries of Cameron, see Catholic Directory of Scotland, 1932, 326-327; Oban Times, 14-3-1931, and 21-3-1931. See also Iain Fraser Grigor, Gallipoli, in Billy Kay, Voices from Scotland's Recent Past, Edinburgh, 1982; and Iain Fraser Grigor, Survivors of Gallipoli, Glasgow Herald, 15-2-1982. And Larach Cogaidh (Murdo MacLennan on Gallipoli), BBC Scotland Radio (Gaelic service), producer Donald Cameron, TX 1984.

26.

Iain Fraser Grigor, Bloody end to a generation of giants, West Highland Free Press, 19-2-1982. See also Ralph Glaser, New hope in the glen?, The Observer, 26-4-1981; from his Scenes from a Highland life, London, 1981.

27.

G.Y. Cheyne, The Last Great Battle of the Somme, Edinburgh, 1988.

28.

Christopher Harvie, No Gods and Precious Few Heroes, 24.

29.

Glasgow Herald, 15-6-1916.

30.

Glasgow Herald, 20-10-1916; 1/9-11-1916.

31.

The Times, 1-3-1917.

32.

The Times, 20-7-1918.

33.

The Times, 23-7-1918.

34.

The Times, 7-9-1918.

35.

Land Values, January 1918, February 1918. As late as the summer of 1923 the Highland branch could send a delegate to the International Land Values conference in Oxford; Land and Liberty, August, 1923. Scottish Smallholder, 1-3-1917; 1-5-1917; 1-6-1917; 1-8-1917; 1-10-1917 (autumn organising tour in Skye); 1-4-1918; 1-5-1918; 1-7-1918. The Times, 26-8-1918.

36.

The Times, 11-12-1918.

37.

The Times, 1-8-1918.

38.

The Times, 20-7-1918.

39.

The Thistle, no 73, 1914.

40.

Angus Henderson, The passing of the great estates; The Thistle, no 74, 1914.

41.

Ibid. The Bill had had the "warm approval" of the Scottish Secretary; but it had been "killed like so much else by the outbreak of war"; The Thistle, no 79, 1915.

42.

J.M. Hogge, The Thistle, no 79, 1915. Hogge took a leading pro-crofter part in the Commons debates on the Land Settlement Act of 1919.

43.

Highland News, 19-12-1914.

44.

Highland News, 20-3-1915.

45.

Forward, 13-2-1915.

46.

Forward, 23=9-1916.

47.

Forward, 22-5-1915; 3-7-1915; 18-9-1915; 9-10-1915; 20-11-1915; and 29-4-1916.

48.

William Diack, Land settlement after the war, The Thistle, no 81, 1916.

49.

Alasdair Blair, Land and language, Guth na Bliadhna, vol 13, no 2, 1916.

50.

Forward, July 1917; 2-col report.

51.

The last reference to the Scottish Land League in Forward appears in the edition of 22-5-1915, attached to the by-line of its secretary C.A. Paterson; who nevertheless continued to write on the land question for some years to come; for

example, Forward, 31-8-1918, 21-9-1918, 22-2-1919 (on "land for ex-soldiers"); and Liberty (The Scottish Home Rule Journal), February, 1921.

52.

Highland News, 20-12-1913.

53.

The Times, 8-1-1914.

54.

Highland News, 2-10-1915.

55.

Forward, 30-9-1916.

56.

Glasgow Herald, 24-1-1916.

57.

The Times, 12-8-1918. Glasgow Herald, 12-8-1918. By this point the Scottish Smallholders' Co-operative Association was active in Lewis, with 15 branches throughout the island; Stornoway Gazette, 1-11-1918.

58.

Guth na Bliadhna, vol 15, no 1, 1918.

59.

Ibid.

60.

Stornoway Gazette, 22-3-1918.

61.

Scottish Review, 1918; 146. Forward, 31-8-1918; 21-9-1918.

62.

Scottish Review, 1918; 321-322. The land question and the coming general election; Land Values, April, 1918.

63.

Scottish Review, 1918; 544-547. Signatories to the appeal on behalf of the League were the Dulwich-based poor-law administrator Angus MacDonald, president, and the journalist G.J. Bruce, secretary. For contemporary biographies of both Bruce and MacDonald, see; Lachlan MacBean, The Celtic Who's Who, Kircaldy, 1921. MacBean, an editor and publisher, had

according to his own entry in this title, during the 1870s, worked as a sub-editor - on John Murdoch's Highlander! The longevity of commitment of land agitators from the previous century is evident from this title; both the Rev Donald MacCallum and the Portree merchant and Land Leaguer John G. MacKay are awarded entries.

64.

Forward, 6-4-1918.

65.

Forward, 20-4-1918. By this point, the Rev Malcolm MacCallum of Muckairn was a member of the Kinlochleven branch of the Independent Labour Party; Forward, 13-7-1918. His undated pamphlet A Socialist Agricultural Policy, published by the Argyllshire Federation of the Independent Labour Party, is contained in the Roland Muirhead Collection, Box 2 (bundles 38-63), bundles 45-48. Muirhead himself was also in the Independent Labour Party, as a member of the Lochwinnoch branch; William Knox, Scottish Labour Leaders, Edinburgh, 1984; 218. His membership card is contained in Roland Muirhead Collection, Box 1-20. Muirhead's interest in land reform was life-long. His papers in the Mitchell Library, for instance, contain (Box 1, bundles 1-37) two un-dated, but evidently early, leaflets from the Land Nationalisation Society, bundle 1; a printed verbatim report of the 2-7-1889 debate between Henry George and H.M. Hyndman on The Single Tax versus Social Democracy, bundle 33; and his 1929 membership card of the Scottish League for the Taxation of Land Values, bundle 27. Thomas Johnston's interest in the land-question was also life-long, as his papers in the Mitchell Library demonstrate; they include 1928 correspondence from Joe Duncan, by now general secretary of the Scottish Farm Servants' Union on that year's Agricultural Credits Bill; Johnston's press-pass (on behalf of Forward) to the 24-3-1917 West of Scotland conference on "home colonisation by discharged soldiers and sailors" (chaired by the president

of the Glasgow Trades Council); and his delegate's card to the following year's (9-2-1918) Land Nationalisation Society West of Scotland conference on public ownership of land. Note that the Mitchell Library also contains a manuscript biography of Johnston's collaborator, Patrick Joseph Dollan.

66.

Forward, 6-4-1918.

67.

Crofting Files, AF 67/299. On Sconser, see also Congested Districts Board, AF 43/53 (Sconser deer forest fence, 1911, 1912); and AF 43/54 (proposed migration of Sconser tenants, 1902.)

68.

Crofting Files, AF 67/143.

69.

Inverness Courier, 1-3-1918. Oban Times, 16-2-1918; 30-3-1918.

70.

Glasgow Herald, 8/9/23-4-1918. Land Values, May 1918.

71.

Inverness Courier, 23-7-1918. Crofting Files, AF 67/63.

72.

Forward, 22-6-1918.

73.

Inverness Courier, 23-7-1918, 30-7-1918. The Star, 6-6-1918; 20-7-1918. House of Commons 23-7-1918 (Sir Leicester Harmsworth to Scottish Secretary.) Crofting Files, AF 67/64. This file contains a four-page leaflet from the Oban and Lorne branch of the Highland Land League, with a photograph of the raiders, entitled Tiree food producers sent to prison at the instance of the Duke of Argyll; see below; and a letter from the Highland Land League, on headed notepaper, which lists the members of its council. Gartymore is today the site of a memorial to the Land League.

74.

Christopher Harvie, No Gods and Precious Few Heroes, 29.

75.

Highland News, 25-10-1919. Roger Hutchinson, Musical chairs; West Highland Free Press, 20-5-1983.

76.

Scottish Review, advertisements, 1917, 1918, 1919, 1920.

77.

Ibid. For a biography of the Rev James Barr, see Knox, Scottish Labour Leaders; 61-65. The Roland Muirhead Collection contains a 1924 pamphlet by Gillies, published by the Scottish National League, entitled Some Arguments for Scottish Independence, Box 1-20; from which the quote attributed to Defoe, with which this chapter opens, is taken.

78.

F.W.S. Craig, British General Election Manifestos.

79.

Ibid. 80.

F.W.S. Craig, British Parliamentary Election Results, 1918-1949.

81.

Inverness Courier, 22-11-1918.

82.

Inverness Courier, 10/13-12-1918.

83.

Inverness Courier, 26-11-1918.

84.

Stornoway Gazette, 13-12-1918; 3-1-1919.

85.

Brian Wilson and Roger Hutchinson, When the parties found a common platform on the land question; West Highland Free Press, 27-5-1983.

86.

F.W.S. Craig, British Parliamentary Election Results, 1918-1949.

87.

F.W.S. Craig, British Electoral Facts.

88.

F.W.S. Craig, British Parliamentary Election Results.

89.

The Thistle, September, 1914; 167.

90.

Scottish Land Court, Fifth Report (1916).

91.

Forward, 13-7-1917.

92.

The Thistle, September, 1917; 150, 151.

93.

The Thistle, August, 1918; 118.

94.

Lord Lovat, House of Lords Hansard, 5th Series, vol 37, 1919; col. 905.

95.

Glasgow Herald, 15/16-8-1919. Land and Liberty (Land Values until the May 1919 issue), August 1919.

96.

The Defence of the Realm (Acquisition of Land) Act, 1916; the Small Holdings Colonies Acts of 1916 and 1918 (the latter amending the former).

97.

Glasgow Herald, 15-8-1919.

98.

Glasgow Herald, 16-8-1919.

99.

Glasgow Herald, 12-11-1919. Emphasis added.

100.

House of Lords, Hansard, 5th Series, vol 37, 1919; col 907.

101.

Ibid, cols 920-921.

102.

Elwood P. Lawrence, Henry George in the British Isles; 121. Lloyd George was very militant on the land and landlord

questions; see Land Values, December 1918, for three pages of excerpts from his previous statements on these issues.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Highland (and indeed Scottish) land-agitation and settlement in the wake of the Great War have not drawn the attention of historians to any extent(1) (though the absence of this attention may shortly be answered, at least in part(2)).

Nevertheless, the demand for land post-war was as great as before; and, if anything, even more determined and extensive. In the words of one contemporary observer, "In the crofting counties the question is fairly simple and uniform. There is a definite demand for land to be satisfied and a definite purpose to be served. The agrarian question in these counties has been prominently before the public for at least a generation..."(3).

Land therefore occupied a prominent place on the political agenda in the years from the Armistice - in the course of which period Labour moved steadily to displace the Liberals.

In the 1918 election, Labour took more seats (57) than the Liberals (38); though this was, of course, due to the peculiar effect of the cross-party Coalition, in the name of which 473 were taken. But by 1922, when the Conservatives won 344 seats, Labour took 142 - well ahead of the Liberals' 115. The following year, Labour took 191 seats and was in a position to form a minority government; and when, a year later, Labour had fallen from government and back to 151 seats, the Liberals had nevertheless crashed to 40 - the number of seats held by the Labour Party in 1910!

Throughout this period the land-question commanded attention on a UK scale. In 1922 Labour's manifesto promised wide-ranging changes to the Game Laws, while the Liberals promised a "comprehensive reform of the existing land system, including Taxation and Rating of Land Values". The following year, the Liberals were demanding the development and encouragement of small holdings; while

Labour promised to "restore to the people their lost rights in the land". And by 1924, though the Conservatives were "opposed to land nationalisation and the taxation of land values", the Liberals were promising to "secure to land workers the fruits of their energy and enterprise through a complete alteration in the system of land tenure"(4).

In the Highlands, meanwhile, the banner of radical, anti-landlord reform (carried in the 1918 general election by the Highland Land League in Argyll, Ross-shire, Inverness, and the Western Isles) was borne by the Labour Party - though not with great electoral success. Nevertheless Labour in Argyll took 35% of the vote in 1920 (represented by the Rev. Malcolm MacCallum), and 23% in 1924. In Inverness, Labour in 1923 and 1924 took 35% and 37% of the vote. And in these same years the party's candidates took 24% and 17% in the Western Isles(5).

In a context where Labour had yet to establish itself as a fully developed political party on the UK stage, and where many Liberal candidates were strongly associated with land-reform, none of these performances was discreditable; and, taken together, they serve to indicate the extent to which the land-question and associated agitation remained central to the Highland agenda in the post-war period.

The radical and nationalist press did not fail to promote this centrality, either. By the autumn of 1921, Land and Liberty was reporting that one-fifth of the land area of Scotland was under deer-forests(6). The following year, covering the general election campaign in Inverness-shire, the title was reporting that Cameron of Lochiel had urged his tenants not to vote for Murdoch MacDonald (the National Liberal candidate) unless "he modifies his views on the taxation of land values"(7). And by 1923, Land and Liberty was reporting a Commons debate on the despatch to Edinburgh's Calton Gaol of Skye land-raiders (one of the speakers in this debate being the recently-elected Thomas Johnston)(8).

Similarly with Liberty, the Scottish Home Rule journal, as the banner below its masthead ran. In the spring of 1920, the paper was supporting the parliamentary candidacy in Argyll of the Rev. Malcolm MacCallum, and asking "why are the Highlands the playground of the southern capitalist?" MacCallum also enjoyed the support of Forward, which reported his campaign under the stirring headlines of "class war in Argyll", and "carrying the socialist message through far Argyll"(9). That summer Liberty also reported that the Highland Land League had 59 members in Coll, on Lewis(10); and a month later, as the Highlands were convulsed with an outbreak of raiding and threatened raids, it reported that a speaker from the London office of the League had addressed large May Day demonstrations in Chatham and Rochester on the subject of "the Scottish Land Raids"(11).

Early the following year, Libery reported the removal of the League's headquarters from London to Greenock(12); while in March, 1921, as token of the continuing identification of land-reform with the Home Rule cause, it reported the inaugural meeting of the Scots National League, with speakers including Erskine of Marr, Willie Gillies, and Angus MacDonald, Highland Land League president(13). And there was further token that June, this time of the close relationship between land-reform and radicalism, when Willie Gillies wrote (of John MacLean) that "it is not without significance that with scarcely one exception the doughtiest opponents of capitalist rule throughout England's cracking Empire are men of Celtic blood and Gaelic name..."(14). Throughout the remainder of that year, Liberty ran monthly and lengthy reports on the doings of the Highland Land League(15).

And meanwhile Forward, as well as offering its usual diligent news reporting of land agitation in the Highlands, continued to find space for long-term land reformers like G.B. Clark(16); C.A. Paterson(17); and the Rev Malcolm MacCallum(18). It also found space for an attack on the

record of land-ownership in Morvern ("The Almighty of Lochaline")(19); as well as covering extensively the attempts in the early 1920s to introduce nationalisation-of-land Bills to the Commons(20).

And of the gaoling of Skye land raiders, Forward simply noted;

> So Hurrah for the Highlands the Sport Estate Highlands
> Domain of the Nimrods from Piccadillee
> The working-class vermin are fast disappearin'
> The last of the clansmen in gaol at Portree(21).

The background to this extensive press and parliamentary attention was the continuing spate of raids in the immediate post-war period. As an official summary of the time indicates, seizures or threats of seizure of land were common from 1918 through to 1920. Incidents recorded include locations in North Harris, South Harris, North Uist, South Uist, Shetland, Tiree, Skye, Wester Ross, Sutherland, Caithness, and at various points on Lewis; with another fifty farms across the Highlands under threat of occupation(22).

And a similar summary for 1922 details incidents at Forsinain in Sutherland, at Nunton in Benbecula, at Kilbride in Skye, at Newton in North Uist, at Strathaird in Skye, at Rodel in Harris, at Stimervay in Lewis, at Drimore in South Uist, at Galston in Lewis, at Pitcalnie in Ross-shire, at Scoor in Mull, at White Park in Islay, and at Glas Eilean in Harris(23).

In the Uists, for instance, the anti-landlord activities of groups of ex-servicemen drew extensive public attention, in parliament(24) and in the press(25). In North Uist by early 1920 a dozen men were threatening raids, and marching behind a piper from the local premises of the Great War Comrades Association(26). And events at Balranald in South Uist were to draw appeals of support from private

associations across the Highlands (and beyond) including the North Argyll Liberal Association, as well as British Legion Branches in Inverness and Dumfries, among others(27).

At Balranald, thirteen men were involved. Of these, one had been four years overseas, a second disabled with the army, a third four years overseas, a fourth also overseas for a year, a fifth overseas for nearly three years, a sixth overseas and twice badly wounded, a seventh overseas and twice wounded, an eighth overseas and badly wounded, and a ninth overseas and wounded: all had been volunteers(28).

They had over some length of time been applying to the estate for land, and to the Board of Agriculture to take some action - but in both cases without success. In November 1920, therefore, they marched to the landlord's house, headed by a piper, and told him that they were simply going to take his land the following day. As one of them recalled a full sixty years later, "He got very excited about that of course. But we told him to go to blazes and the next morning we were on his land. We tipped over his carts, we rounded-up his sheep and cattle and drove them away. It was a week after that had happened that we were served with a sheriff's interdict forbidding us to set foot on Balranald"(29).

The men had already written to the landlord to the effect that; "We, the undersigned ex-servicemen, have decided to let your cattle have 14 days in Paiblesgarry, but you must keep all sheep off it from now on". And within a week of this missive the Board of Agriculture was also told that "13 ex-soldiers have now raided the said farm (Paiblesgarry on Balranald) and are manuring potato ground". They had divided it into equal shares and "emphatically declared they would not remove and if any proceedings were taken against them, they were prepared to go to prison". A week later the landlord was complaining to the authorities that others in the district were also ready to raid: "the crofters on the north side of the farm are just waiting

developments and watching to see what action the Board are to take and if things go on as at present there will undoubtedly be another raid"(30).

As a result the men were taken to court, and sentenced to sixty days without the option of a fine, but as there was no gaol accommodation for them, they were released. Later, however, they were indeed gaoled; two of them being arrested while in the course of attending a Territorial Army training camp at Inverness (though the arrest nearly occasioned a riot)(31).

The conflict, however, was not at an end. The following spring, an officer of the Board of Agriculture was writing to the Scottish Secretary expressing his deep anxiety "about the situation in the islands generally. There have been two fresh raids in the Lochmaddy district this week and the situation calls for careful, firm and very speedy action". And on the same day the raiders themselves wrote to their anti-landlord Edinburgh lawyer, Donald Shaw, offering to withdraw from the land on condition that the landlord did not work it. This, they warned, would "start trouble again", as they were " dead on having it and will have it if at all possible". The Highland Land League's secretary also pressed the Lord Advocate by letter on the case of the Balranald raiders(32).

There was continuing land-raiding elsewhere in the Highlands and islands too; doubtless encouraged by the small burst of hunger and destitution that victory in the Empire's cause had brought to the populace as its prize. By the spring of 1920, the press was reporting food shortages, widespread distress and starving children on Skye(33), and by the autumn typhoid on Lewis(34). Unsurprisingly, these conditions were matched by a rash of land raids in Sutherland and the Hebrides(35). Its implications did not go un-noticed; in August, while the Board of Agriculture was reported as being short of funds(36), the House of Lords discussed the now widespread land-raiding across the

Highlands(37).

In 1922, there was further trouble in North Uist, with ex-servicemen from Berneray raiding at Cheesebay, Lochportain and Newton farm. They wrote in a confident tone to the authorities with regard to their complaints. "Please do not think we care one straw for threats of imprisonment, for apparently without additional sufferings to what we have had on the continent of Europe, our cause will not succeed. When facing the Germans we were filled with promises of getting land where and when we wanted, and now four years have elapsed but we are still left in the cold. The great European war was finished in about four years and the British government through the Board of Agriculture has failed in about the same time to acquire small plots of land for those to whom they were promised. Is it not time to end this farce?"(38).

The Board responded with a threat that any land-raiders, in North Uist or elsewhere, would be struck off its list of prospective settlers(39).

But raiding nevertheless continued across the Highlands. On Skye, land was seized at Kilbride by ex-servicemen from Torrin. At Christmas 1920, the local Church of Scotland minister had warned the Board that a raid was being planned on a local farm: and the following April the farm in question, on the estate of Lord MacDonald, was duly raided. A full eighteen months later, however, no progress had been made by the Board in terms of making official the claims of the raiders. As a result of this inaction, their Edinburgh lawyer (again Donald Shaw) wrote to the Scottish Secretary: "With the exception of a few acres the whole of the arable land on Kilbride farm has been out of cultivation for a number of years...All the men for whom I act are ex-servicemen. One of them had no fewer than four brothers fighting with him in France". The estate feared involvement in the dispute; but the tenant-farmer of Kilbride went to the Court of Session and gained an interim interdict against

the raiders. A sheriff-officer was in time-honoured fashion then deforced; and in the summer of 1923, five years after the Armistice, "the village of Torrin was invaded at an early hour and the arrest of two disabled ex-servicemen, it is understood, has arisen from a charge of alleged deforcement on the farm of Kilbride"(40).

By this point, there had also been trouble in the west of Skye, where "the demands for land are now so advanced that they could not be met under personal ownership", and MacLeod of MacLeod was agreeing to sell land for crofter settlement in the parish of Bracadale "including the well-known farms of Talisker, Gesto, Drynoch, Ullinish and Oze"(41).

There was also a raid at Strathaird, with some cottars taking possession of Camusunary, and pegging out seven crofts. By March 1923 they were still in possession of the land, refusing to leave, and facing court action raised the previous Boxing Day. Their defence was that "they were not in breach of moral law in laying claim to cultivate some of the lands held by their forefathers for centuries". They had served in the 51st division and some of them had been badly wounded - "it was only in despair of any action being taken to apply the law that they in their suffering decided to occupy". Thus they raided the deer forest (the tenant of which lived in London for nine months of the year) and seized land that "had at one time been under smallholders, who were subsequently removed"(42). Nevertheless, they were gaoled for two months (though the public outcry was so great that they were released after ten days)(43).

That same month three Broadford land-raiders were also facing court appearances. They too were all ex-servicemen. The first had been with the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, the second with the Seaforths and badly wounded, and the third had lost a leg at the Somme with the Black Watch; still, they were ordered to appear before the Court of Session within a fortnight(44).

During this period, though raiding was particularly popular in the Western Isles, there was considerable direct-action, or threats of it, on the mainland and the inner Hebrides too. In Sutherland named locations include Forsinain, Blarich, Farr, Kirkton, Kinbrace and Cambusmore(45). From Ross-shire and western Inverness-shire, they include Kishorn, Glenshiel, and Coiliree(46); along with Arnisdale, Glenelg(47). From Argyll, they include Mishnish(48); Islay(49); and Arinagour and Arnabost on Coll, Gometra and Fidden on Mull, and on the Auchenreir, Fearnoch and Barnaline estates(50). There were also threats of land-seizure in Caithness, where the crofters were reportedly "in revolt", at the farms of Latheron Mains and Latheronwheel Mains, at Charleston and Knockglass(51); and even a case in Perthshire, at Carwhin on the Breadalbane estates(52).

And in the early post-war years, there were two notable cases of determined land-raiding on Raasay, owned by William Baird and tenanted by the "sportsman" Walter Rownsley.

The first of these raids began on March 20th in 1920, with eight local men raiding Raasay Home farm, in the vicinity of Raasay House. They had earlier been assured that they would get land; but, tired of waiting for the Board to allocate it, the men simply staked-out their claims: having by this point established for themselves the legal services of Donald Shaw of Edinburgh(53).

The factor for Baird promptly applied to Portree sheriff court, successfully, for an interim interdict against the raiding. And a sub-commissioner for the Board of Agriculture at once informed the Scottish Secretary that the "attitude of the applicants is in my opinion utterly unreasonable ...they should not receive the very least countenance from the authorities". He went on to identify the leader of the raid; "Mr John M MacLeod, shoemaker, Raasay. He is very hostile towards the factor...I have no doubt he is the author of the raids and the principles of

the raiders"(54).

MacLeod himself warned the Scottish Secretary of the results of public meetings held on Raasay and Rona on the land question in both islands; "at which the criminal negligence of the Board was unanimously condemned. The inaction of that incompetent body is wholly responsible for all land-seizures in Scotland, many of the applications for holdings having been sent to the Board years ago. The interdicts served on the raiders are strongly resented by the islanders, 50 per cent of the male population of which went willingly to the Great War alleged to have been in defence of liberty. At the meetings it was agreed that unless the requests for holdings are granted immediately, there will be forcible possession taken of all the available land in the island"(55).

This was not the end of the matter. In 1921 a group of men from Rona also warned the Board that "we will take the law into our own hands and make a general raid on both sheep and Home Farm of Raasay , which is for a number of years now let to a sporting English gentleman, who rears calves with the milk we should be getting for feeding our little children". Three months later, therefore, police reports from Portree were warning the authorities that men from Rona had "lately been on Raasay measuring out plots of land". The same report quoted the factor as not regarding "the matter as in any way serious. He does not think that the Rona man have any intention of taking forcible possession of the land. He rather thinks the matter is a piece of bluff on their part to spur on the Board of Agriculture to purchase the land for them". Within a week of this report, however, a raid had indeed gone ahead. As a result, an interdict was taken out, but ignored; and that July the raiders failed to answer a summons to appear in court in Portree on charges of breaching the interdict. The Chief Constable wired the Scottish Secretary in August, regretting that he had "to report that though the officers

got into touch with all the defenders, the latter would not listen to reason, showing plainly that they would resist any attempt to take them by force, finally dispersing in different directions and defying the officers".

As a result, the chief constable prepared to deploy the fishery cruiser Minna in an assault on the land-raiders, along with the two dozen policemen he supposed necessary for such an attack. The raiders were to be seized from their beds in the middle of the night; taken to Portree during the remaining hours of darkness "without any person being aware of what was being done", rushed quickly through an early court, and thence by the Minna to Kyle and gaol in Inverness "with little demonstration or trouble". The fishery authorities, however, refused point-blank to have anything to do with the suggestion of using their vessel in the attack; but a late-night police assault was mounted, and five of the men were thereafter gaoled for six weeks. A national outcry followed(56).

Petitions poured into the government from across Scotland (and beyond it), from branches of the Comrades of the Great War Association and numerous trades-councils, among them those of Montrose, Galashiels, Ealing, Edinburgh and Aberdeen; and letters of protest from, among others, the Highland Land League in Greenock. The wives and sisters of the gaoled raiders wrote to the monarch at Buckingham Palace with a covering note from MacLeod (written on his shoemaker's bill-headings). Raasay, they said, had once "sustained in comparative comfort a large number of smallholders but was cleared many years ago to make room for sheep or deer". Despite the harsh treatment of generations of islanders, however, the people "on the outbreak of the Great War magnanimously forgot the injustices and insults heaped on their forefathers", and had joined the forces "at a time when landlords found their title-deeds were of no avail in preserving their lands from danger. Man and not title-deeds was the only hope then of the landlords!"(57).

Inverness Trades Council demanded the release of the men. A fund was opened in the town for their dependants. A former front-line soldier with the Camerons wrote to the Inverness Courier; "Apparently the holdings which parliament ordered for our landless cannot be obtained unless our people first submit to imprisonment...we want to hear no more in the Highlands of our 51st division or any division after the insults suffered by those men for foolishly fighting for landlords. We thought we were fighting for our country, but now find it was only for the landlords' country, and that when we claim any part of it we are directed to gaol. Monuments for the dead and gaol for the living!"(58).

Even a Board officer noted, "There is a growing feeling throughout the west that the only way to get land is to raid it, and from everbody's point of view a stand should be taken against the idea that raiding can be undertaken not merely with impunity but as a sure means of achieving the raiders' ends". The Raasay raiders, meanwhile, spurned offers of a deal with the Board, and wrote to it to that effect, via their lawyer, while still in gaol in Inverness towards the end of 1921. They also wrote, stating their case, to the Prime Minister(59).

Tiree too remained a hotbed of anti-landlordism in the wake of the Great War. Indeed, as early as the spring of 1918, with the conclusion of the war by no means yet certain, the matter of land-hunger was raised in the Commons. The Scottish Secretary was asked whether he "was aware that the duke of Argyll has taken proceedings to interdict crofters of Tiree from cultivating and producing food upon suitable but entirely idle land near their homes and, in view of the present food situation and the thousands of acres of suitable land lying unused by the duke of Argyll's estates, whether he will take steps to enforce the cultivation of these area under the Defence of the Realm Act"(60).

The reply was that the duke and one of his his tenant farmers on the island had obtained perpetual interdict at Oban sheriff court "against certain cottars and others taking possession of the farm of Balephetrish and part of the farm of Kenovy, Tiree"; and added that, in general, the government's agencies were "making every effort by arranging for an increase in the food supply"(61).

The Board of Agriculture was also in touch with the authorities on the issue. In January the previous year - in other words, well in advance of the 1919 Land Settlement Act - applications had been received for land on the farms of Balephetrish, Reef and Crosspool. As far back as 1913, obstruction on the part of tenant and landlord had set back a Board plan to create more crofts on the island; and by 1918, there were 219 applications for holdings and 70 for enlargements (although 69 and 27 respectively had by then been established)(62).

The Board sent an officer to report at first hand on the 1918 raid. He reported that he "did not put myself in the way of the raiders and only met two of them. From these I gathered that the feeling of the raiders is very strong and that they are determined to persist in what they have begun. They declare that even if the law checks them they will, at the first opportunity, resume. When I was there the land had been broken at eight places. Not much ploughing has been done due to bad weather but they mean to push on...There is a good deal of wild talk about gaol, and about the support they expect to receive in Glasgow where they have many friends. They say that on their arrival in Glasgow they will be met with a sympathetic crowd, flags will be waved *and there will be a general throw-down of tools*. At ordinary times this might mean nothing but with so much unrest it is difficult to foresee the result. I understand they are backed-up by some strong Land League body...I heard casually that a wire had been received advising them to *go on ploughing but avoid lawyers*. They

feel that now is the time to obtain the land...There is a general movement in Tiree to get land...Personally, I do not think they will be at peace until the farms of Balephetrish and Crosspool are taken for division"(63).

By early April, following the seizure of land at Balemartin, the authorities were being warned that the Highland Land League had resolved to do everything possible to help cottars engaged in food production and who were threatened with arrest; while at the same time, the League was organising largely-attended meetings on Tiree(64).

And later that month eight raiders were arrested and given ten days in gaol at Oban for having taken thirteen acres of land at Balephetrish. In the Commons, the Scottish Secretary was asked whether "it is intended to continue the persecution of these men who are only voicing the demand in Scotland for access to the land for those who desire it"(65).

The Oban police wired the prison commissioners reporting that the sheriff recommended that the men be treated as political prisoners and be allowed to wear their own clothes. The commissioners agreed "so long as the clothes are suitable"(66).

Objections to the arrest of the raiders - most of whom were very old - poured in to the authorities: from the Highland Land League in Greenock and Edinburgh, from the Edinburgh Labour Party, and from the parliamentary committee of the Scottish Trades Union Congress(67).

The raiders' lawyer, again Donald Shaw of Edinburgh, wrote about the case to Lloyd George (whose very first political meeting had been at Blaenau Festiniog, in 1886, during a tour of Wales by Michael Davitt and G.B. Clark, then "Crofters' Member" for Caithness(68).

In due course, therefore, the raiders were released one day ahead of the end of their term to allow them to catch the steamer home at 6 o'clock in the morning, rather than have to spend six days doing nothing in Oban as opposed to

six days land raiding on Tiree. (As an anonymous civil servant scrawled on the memo requesting the early release - "yes; I suppose this is a land agitation case?")(69).

The gaol sentences had no effect on raiding on Tiree, and it continued throughout that last summer of war. The raiders complained that the crops they had planted on the raided land were being eaten by the tenant-farmer's sheep with the encouragement of the landlord. They also complained that the police had prevented these sheep being driven away - and the matter of this police obstruction was duly raised in parliament, while the Cornaig division of the Highland Land League, based at Scarinish, complained bitterly about the matter to the Board of Agriculture. That summer, with the last great offensive under way on the Western Front, one of the raiders wrote to the Highland Land Settlement Association, asking "Why don't they take the sheep who have destroyed our crops and put them in the firing line in France?".

And by August the following year, raids were again threatened at Crosspool. One of these prospective raiders briskly wrote to the Board: "we have waited long enough and if steps are not taken by the Board soon, we shall take possession of Crosspool by the November term". The Board replied that land would not be available for three years. And thus at Christmas, 1919, sixteen ex-servicemen of the island were once again threatening action. One of their number wrote to the authorities, "We have gathered together and made up our minds to divide the land ourselves - until you see your way to divide the land yourselves, according to promise. This is our last communication anent the subject". The following February, therefore, there was more raiding and assaults on Tiree(70).

And three years later, there was still further raiding. The Board was once more being warned "we are sorry that we are again forced to fight the land battle over again. But we want to notify the Board that we intend to enter and take

possession of part of the farm of Cornaigmore in May". The Scottish Secretary was also warned too: "the result is that we again must take the law into our own hands and enter the farm of Cornaigmore". And as late as 1926, a full forty years after the naval invasion of the island to arrest and gaol land-hungry raiders, there were again threats on Cornaigmore. The Board said that the farm did not fall within the compulsory-purchase clauses of the 1919 Land-Settlement Act and could therefore do nothing about it. Nor would the Duke of Argyll voluntarily let it be divided. The Board therefore was warned, "Nothing will induce these men to keep quiet till they get what they have a right to. All the farm is a waste ground, neither ploughed or stocked for the last thirty years. How long is the Board going to allow that sort of thing while others are starving in the land of their birth?"(71).

But most notable of the land-raiding incidents in the wake of the Great War were those associated with the ownership of Lewis and Harris by the richly eccentric and vastly rich English soap-maker, William Lever, Lord Leverhulme. Lever has already attracted Jolly's general biography(72), and the studies of his relationships with Lewis and Harris by Nicolson and the Golds(73). The story drew much attention at the time(74); and it continues to attract attention today(75).

Leverhulme had acquired Lewis (ownership of Harris came later) towards the end of the Great War from Colonel Duncan Matheson; and with his island, a history of poverty, clearance, land-shortage, factorial oppression, and forty-odd years of popular resistance to landlordism(76).

One contemporary observer noted; "Lewis and Harris suffer from literal congestion. The 30,000 people in Lewis (apart from 4000 in Stornoway) live in a hundred township villages round the coast of the island...In some respects Harris is worse off than Lewis. Harris has all its good land on the Atlantic side and on the Minch side the land is

much more rocky...yet it is among these rocks that the greater part of the population of Harris lives. What makes the situation worse in South Harris is that a great part of the machair grazing is not even in a sheep farm, but in a deer forest - and in the height of summer the deer may be seen on the low ground, just as they may be in the deer park at Magdalen College"(77).

In any case, there were "whisperings of an impending change in the proprietorship of Lewis" by the closing weeks of 1917, and in February 1918 Leverhulme, then aged 65, formally took up ownership of the island(78). That July he visited it for the first time as owner(79); before the summer was over he had joined the local Lodge of the Freemasons(80), been in "frequent conversations with representative businessmen in Stornoway", and captured the enthusiastic support of the Stornoway Gazette, launched only the previous year, which found his coming "like an inrush of fresh life to the island"(81).

(The Gazette was to remain a supporter; drawing in due course from Liberty the comment that it was "the journalistic flunkey of Lord Leverhulme"(82); and further, that it was "that most contemptible and servile specimen of the English press which continues to crawl in our midst...to all intents and purposes it exists for the vain glorification of the new English proprietor of Lewis"(83)).

By the new year, Leverhulme was moving quickly. In January he was proposing ambitious development schemes for Lewis(84); and the following month he was negotiating for the purchase of South Harris from Lord Dunmore(85), finally acquiring it that May for £36,000 and thus becoming the second largest landowner in Scotland after the Duke of Sutherland(86). By July, as token of the extent to which he had to all appearances settled in, he was gifting robes for the provost and magistrates of Stornoway(87).

But this apparent honeymoon was not to last long; and it would founder on the old question of the land. During

the Great War over 6,000 Lewismen had served in uniform(88); and the Lewis to which they returned contained 3,000 statutory crofters and their families, along with 1,500 cottars and squatters and their families, as well as a number of deer-forests and tenanted farms(89).

The ex-servicemen expected to receive land; with some justice, given that the farm of Aignish had been broken-up into a dozen crofters' holdings by the former owner of the island in conjuction with the Congested Districts Board before the war, along with land at Uig on the west of Lewis. The Board of Agriculture had also scheduled four farms for subdivision before the outbreak of hostilities and had applied to the Land Court for enforcement orders; but the war had put an end to these proceedings(90).

Thus, "very little land settlement has been carried out in Lewis and Harris, which are the worst off of all the congested districts"(91).

Leverhulme, however, quickly set his face against any sort of land settlement: it was for him "irrelevant...a gross waste of public money" - quickly splitting the island community in the process(92).

By March 1919 (with the Liberal Robert Munro, the "dim representative of a failing political party", as Scottish Secretary(93)) land-raiding was under way again. The farm of Gress, in Back, was pegged-out and claimed(94); a month later, "after the Communion services were over in the Back district", a number of former soldiers and sailors (The Scottish Federation of Discharged and Demobilised Sailors and Soldiers had an active branch in the island) pegged-off smallholdings for themselves on the farm of Coll, also in Back(95).

By April, Leverhulme's representative was visiting the ex-soldiers and raising hopes which "may well prove the dawn of the Lewis raiders' day of anticipation"(96).

Within a fortnight however there was further raiding at Balallan, where "a large number of disappointed applicants,

ex-soldiers, demobilised sailors and others have taken possession of a tract of land there suitable for small holdings. Village planning at the different proposed new settlements, viz., Brenigil, Stromas and Aline, provides not only for the allotments being shared out, but sites for a school, church, and cemetery"(97).

Four parties were now in play: Leverhulme with his plans to develop the island on the basis of industrial fisheries; the raiders, demanding the crofts they had been promised by politician and statute; the people of Lewis (who were overwhelmingly in favour of Leverhulme's schemes, though not of necessity opposed to the claims of the raiders, raiding, or land settlement); and the Scottish Office.

The point at issue was Leverhulme's insistence that he would not countenance the break-up of farms which were needed, he said, to provide milk for the island. For their part, the raiders were adamant that they had a right to land. As one of them, Angus Graham of Coll, wrote to the Scottish Secretary: "We trust that you will now see the advisibility of directing the Board of Agriculture to enforce here, without further delay, the Acts of Parliament passed for the relief of the landless. Our families have suffered and are suffering severely from bad housing and from want of milk [sic], potatoes and vegetables, while there are thousands of acres on all sides of us fit for cultivation, devoted to the rearing of sheep and game. Coll and Gress and a number of other extensive farms are entirely worked for the benefit of the landlord, but we are unable to obtain a few acres for small holdings. We are willing and have repeatedly offered to pay a fair rent for the lands needed by us. Section nine of the Land Settlement Act of 1919 enacts, 'Where the Board are satisfied that there is a demand for small holdings and that suitable land is available for that purpose it shall be the duty of the Board to prepare a scheme for the constitution of one or more new

holdings on such lands'. So far as we are concerned the Board for which you are responsible to parliament has not done its duty. Indeed it has failed to make any provision for us...The Board cannot deny that we have satisfied them that there is a demand by us for small holdings or that there is suitable land available here to meet our demand...You have now the responsibility of deciding whether or not we are to receive peaceable occupation of the lands required by us and to which we are by law entitled"(75).

The dispute continued into the following year, while Leverhulme's commitment to his proposed development of Lewis began to wane. That spring no less a veteran of crofters' struggles than the Rev Donald MacCallum was supporting the Lewis raiders in Forward(99). Thomas Johnston also visited the raiders at Coll(100); as did John MacLean(101) - who offered perhaps the most perceptive of all speculative comments on Leverhulme's entire adventure in Lewis: "I am convinced that Leverhulme is preparing Lewis and Harris for the navy in case of war with America...Britain controls Greenland; so that by this chain she would have a continuous sweep right across the north of the Atlantic to Canada"(102).

In February, Coll and Gress were again raided(103); Leverhulme interdicted the raiders involved(104); the Scottish trades-unions raised their voice in formal protest(105); warrants were issued for the arrest of the raiders(106); they promised a prison hunger strike(107); the Scottish Trade Unions Congress demanded a statement from the government with regard to its land-settlement policy(108); and Leverhulme without warning suddenly withdrew from the contest - and abandoned his plans to industrialise Lewis(109).

Public meetings were held in every school on the island, at every one of which there was overwhelming support for a continuation of development - but the following year, with land agitation still ongoing, Leverhulme's schemes were

at an end on the island(110).

He transferred his attentions to Harris - meanwhile offering every crofter in Lewis the free ownership of his or her croft. (The offer was turned down; it would have meant taking the land outwith the provisions of the 1886 Act, as amended since, and outwith the protection of the Land Court(111)). The following year he put Lewis on the market ("sporting estate for tuppence an acre"(112)); a year later he was dead(113); and soon afterwards his work on Harris was at an end, and the island also up for sale(114).

On Harris the people had promised not to demand land as long as Leverhulme's development plans were under way; at once, therefore, there was an outbreak of agitation. In the spring of 1926 the farm of Scaristaveg was raided; the next spring, following refusal to respect interdicts, the raiders were sentenced to two months in gaol. Two of them were gaoled again at the end of the year; and as late as May, 1929, two raiders were once more gaoled for four months. There were too in this period raids at Borve, Bosta, and Tong(115).

There was also continuing agitation at places such as Islay, Skye and Glenfinnan in Lochaber (where there was talk of a raid on the local deer-forest)(116); while in Lewis there were reports of resistance to evictions of cottars and land-squatters at Carloway(117). And there were also complaints from the southern isles to the effect that, "the crofters of South Uist, Benbecula and Barra hold their land under the heartless dictatorship of the Trustees of the late Lady Gordon Cathcart. This landowner left a sum of money to assist in further clearances. The Trustees, following her own example, are determined to show she was right for they use all the resources of modern terrorism to make the lives of the crofters as unbearable as possible"(118).

But throughout the 1920s, there had been a slow process of land settlement: against a background of raids and steady

emigration. Deer forests remained a striking feature of Highland land use, as a 1922 government study found(119); and by the middle of the decade, three and a half million acres of Scotland were under deer(120). So too was emigration prominent. In the early spring of 1924, for instance, the British Columbian government was suggesting Queen Charlotte Islands as suitable for settlement for Hebridean emigrants(121); while between July and November the previous year, around 55,000 people had left Scotland for North America(122).

By then, of course, the great post-war emigrations from Lewis had taken place. The Metagama had sailed; with the Bendigo went one emigrant by the name of MacKinnon, who said, reported the Inverness Courier, that "he had become tired of waiting for a holding, for which he had made application as an ex-serviceman"(123).

To settlement, the landlords had been over a long course of years inveterately obstructive and avaricious in broadly equal proportion. In the Uists, the Cathcart estate contested the settlement plans of the Board of Agriculture(124); on Tiree, the Duke of Argyll did likewise(125). On Benbecula, the island's 22,000 acres sustained a population of 1,200 on 233 crofts and the single farm of Nunton, itself running to just under 1,000 acres. By 1922 there were 51 applications for new holdings and 34 for enlargement of existing holdings. Delays had led to the farm being raided twice; but the Cathcart estate opposed its division on the grounds that there was an inadequate water supply to it! The estate further argued that if the farm of Nunton was indeed to be divided, then it should only be on the basis of the government buying the island in its entirety(126).

The same species of extortive obstruction was evident on Mull at the bidding of the Duke of Argyll with regard to Scoor Farm(127); and on Skye where landlords would not consent to the formation of new crofts unless at prohibitive

cost: "proceedings are impracticable on the grounds of expense owing to the existence of a mansion house and valuable sporting rights which would be rendered useless by the constitution of small-holdings" - in other words, the cost of crofts was the purchase of the entire estate at a price set, or over which veto was exercised, by the landlord(128).

Thus it is scarcely surprising that the process was slow. As early as the autumn of 1920 there was a total of 13,000 applicants for small-holdings throughout Scotland, of whom 5,000 were ex-servicemen. Of these, less than 400 had been selected for a holding, and a much smaller number had actually been settled. The Inverness Courier noted, "It is already apparent that the Land Settlement Act of 1919 is a failue as an adequate measure for settling even the approved 5,000"(129). And three years later the same paper was reporting that in Skye not one holding had yet been formed in either of the congested districts of Sleat and Waternish: "with very few exceptions all the new holdings wrung in recent years from landlordism have been the results of raids or threats of raids"(130).

And in the slow process of settlement, popular force, or the threat of it, was the key component. On Harris, Kyles farm was finally settled in 1926 - as one official of the Board wrote, "the need of the applicants for land is particularly pressing and unless early provision is made for them, they will doubtless take forcible possession". Rodel Farm was also settled in similar vein: in the words of one official with regard to the purchase price demanded by the landlord, "As this is well within our limits we can agree without any reference to the object surrender to terrorism apparent in this application". Luskentyre was also broken up under the same impetus. The authorities feared trouble "with consequent renewal of agitation and possible lawlessness and disorder...the King's Writ hardly runs in Harris and if land raiding starts, the situation will get

out of hand. The money is being paid to buy off disorder..."(131).

(A total of 68 families were also re-settled between 1923 and 1925 from Harris (and Lewis) at Portnalong in Skye, as a result of the Board of Agriculture having bought the North Talisker estate in 1921(132)).

Slowly, therefore, throughout the 1920s, the work begun by the Congested Districts Board pre-war began to be reflected in re-settlement at the bidding of the Board of Agriculture. In Caithness, 60-acre holdings were the norm: "It can safely be claimed that in no country has a greater number of more satisfactory land settlement schemes been caried out that in Caithness". In Barra, the Board of Agriculture bought and distributed Eoligarry, adding to the pre-war division of Vatersay by the Congested Districts Board. In 1922 Raasay was acquired and the land distributed. In the Uists and Harris too land-settlement (or rather, land re-settlement) schemes went ahead, most of the land once under farms formed on cleared townships being returned to the people; in North Uist, the holdings were around 25 acres, exclusive of outrun and share in common grazings. On Tiree, the farms were finally turned over too, more than a third of the island's population winning a holding as a result. On Skye, where the Congested Districts Board had formerly acquired Glendale and Kilmuir, the Board of Agriculture acquired large tracts of the island around Loch Bracadale; adding over 50,000 acres in more than 200 new holdings. In Sutherland too a number of sheep farms were broken up and distributed; and in Lewis eight farms in the south west of the island were broken up - along with, in due course, those in the east of the island which had occasioned so much conflict and publicity in the immediate post-war years. From 1912 until the end of 1927, the Board had formed a total of 2,874 new holdings and 1,641 enlargements to holdings throughout Scotland; and in the Highlands, those formed were notably in areas with a long record of

determined anti-landlordism(133).

As the 1928 report of the committee on land settlement in Scotland put it; "The problem in the Highlands involves historical, racial, economic and social considerations. We are dealing with a community which...has refused to acquiesce in any of the attempts to change the method of holding or using land which have been made in the last 150 years, and the legislature has been compelled to meet the claims it has made to be allowed to live its life in its own way"(134).

Ironically enough, one of the members of that committee had been Joe Duncan, and he leaked in advance its proposals to Thomas Johnston, anticipating Liberal objections to its "Socialist policies"(135).

That year too the National Party of Scotland was formed, with a radical policy on the land; and in the following year's general election, the Labour Party, with 287 seats, became the largest party in the House of Commons. The Conservatives took 260 and the Liberals 59. Labour party candidates, on a Home Rule platform, took 24 percent of the vote in Argyll; 45 percent in Inverness; 41 percent in Ross and Cromarty, and 32 percent in the Western Isles. On the land question the two main parties stood in stark opposition; they had been elected on manifestos which demanded on the one hand that "the Land must pass under Public Control"; and on the other that "We are utterly opposed to the Nationalisation of Land".

John Murdoch, among others, would surely have approved.

CHAPTER TWELVE

1.

Letter to present writer from James Hunter, 4-5-1978.

2.

Leah Leneman is at time of writing preparing a book on land-settlement across Scotland after the Great War: Leah Leneman, Twentieth century land settlement, the rediscovery of a forgotten part of modern Scottish history, Scottish Records Association Conference Report, no 11, March 1989.

3.

H.M. Conacher, Land Settlement in Scotland, Scottish Journal of Agriculture, April 1921, 175.

4.

F.W.S. Craig, British General Election Manifestos.

5.

F.W.S. Craig, British Parliamentary Election Results. The story of the Highland Labour Party in these years remains to be told; but see William Stewart, The Highland Labour Party, Forward, 14-4-1923; and Glasgow Herald, 1-2-1921. Note that the (non-Labour) Highland MPs formed a Highland Parliamentary Group in the autumn of 1922, on the initiative of Ian MacPherson, MP for Ross and Cromarty; Glasgow Herald, 30-11-1922.

6.

Land and Liberty, September 1921.

7.

Land and Liberty, April, 1922. Lochiel's demand caused something of a sensation in the Scottish daily press of the time.

8.

Land and Liberty, July 1923.

9.

Liberty, March 1920. Forward, 28-2-1920; 6/21/30-3-1920.

10.

Liberty, May 1920.

11.

Liberty, June 1920.

12.

Liberty, January 1921.

13.

Liberty, March 1921. Angus MacDonald became president of the London branch of the Scots National League - Liberty, April 1921.

14.

Liberty, June 1921. Trotsky, of course, made much the same observation.

15.

Liberty, September, October, November, 1921. For further reports on the Highland Land League's activities in 1920 and 1921, see - Glasgow Herald: 18-3-1920 (financial affairs), 23-3-1920 (relations with clergy), 30-7-1920 (text of annual report), 18-10-1921 (council meeting in Glasgow), and 9-12-1921 (new branches). The Highland Land League kept its own identity following the formation of the Scots National League: eg, Glasgow Herald, 19-12-1923. See also James Hunter, The Gaelic connection, 203; and H.J. Hanham, Scottish Nationalism, 124.

16.

Forward, 18-3-1922; 19-5-1922.

17.

Forward, 30-12-1922.

18.

Forward, 2-6-1923.

19.

G.B. Hardie, MP, Forward, 18-8-1923.

20.

Forward, 30-12-1922; 6/13/20-1-1923; 19-5-1923; and 25-8-1923. Nationalisation of land Bill draft, Glasgow Herald, 17-7-1920; Nationalisation of land Bill, Glasgow Herald, 10/24-6-1921; Nationalisation and abolition of private property in land Bill, Glasgow Herald, 28-3-1922, 7/17-4-

1922; Refusal of introduction of land nationalisation Bill, Glasgow Herald, 28-5-1924.

21.

Forward, 2-6-1923.

22.

Crofting Files, AF 67/171.

23.

Crofting Files, AF 67/159. Note that for each of the incidents listed in this (and the preceding) summary, an individual file is usually available in the Crofting Files.

24.

See, for example, parliamentary questions to the Scottish Secretary of 5-4-1921 (Neil MacLean); 5-4-1921 (Dr Murray); 16-8-1921 (Dr Murray); and 16-8-1921 (Mr Rose.)

25.

Inverness Courier, 10-12-1920. Glasgow Herald, 28-6-1921. Dundee Advertiser, 26-8-1921. The Scotsman, 25-8-1921.

26.

Crofting Files, AF 67/152. Inverness Courier, 17-2-1920.

27.

Crofting Files, AF 67/152; all for August 1921.

28.

Crofting Files, AF 67/152. One of the men, Donald Ewen MacDonald played the pipes at a Harris Sound wedding in 1976, at the age of 78; West Highland Free Press, 7-5-1976.

29.

James Hunter, land raider who fought and beat the system, Press and Journal, 11-3-1980. Glasgow Herald, 18-1-1920.

30.

Crofting Files, AF 67/152.

31.

James Hunter, land raider who fought and beat the system, Inverness Courier, 21-1-1921. Glasgow Herald, 10-8-1920; 29-8-1920.

32.

Crofting Files, AF 67/152; letters of 11-3-1921 and 14-3-

1921.

33.

Glasgow Herald, 3-4-1920; 5-4-1920.

34.

Glasgow Herald, 25-11-1920.

35.

Glasgow Herald, 16-2-1920; 3-7-1920.

36.

Glasgow Herald, 18-8-1920. The following year the Government granted the Board an additional £1 million; Glasgow Herald, 7-1-1921; 13-1-1921.

37.

Glasgow Herald, 6-8-1920.

38.

Crofting Files AF 67/150 and 151.

39.

Crofting Files, AF 67/153.

40.

Glasgow Herald, 20-8-1923. Inverness Courier, 3-4-1923; 8-5-1923.

41.

Inverness Courier, 2-4-1920. On land agitation in Skye alone, see AF 67/ 146 (Orbost, Swordale and MacLeod estates; Bracadale and Claigan); 147 (Orbost, Swordale and MacLeod estate); 148 (Gesto, Scorrybreck, Waternish, Claigan, Tormickaig and Ebost); 150 (Lussa, Kyleakin and Ullinish); 151 (Scorrybreck); 156 (Claigan, Tormore and Waternish); and 168 (Claigan, petition from ex-servicemen and threat to seize.) There was also raiding that summer at Melvich and Portskerra in Sutherland, by ex-servicemen, on land promised them by the duke in 1915, but sold by him in 1919 before demobilisation; Inverness Courier, 15-10-1920.

42.

Inverness Courier, 2-3-1923; 9-3-1923; 13-3-1923; and 15-5-1923.

Crofting Files AF 67/158.

43.

Inverness Courier, 29-5-1923 (and editorial); and 8-6-1923.

44.

Inverness Courier, 29-5-1923; 15-6-1923; and 19-6-1923. Later that month the Commons debated land settlement; the Inverness Courier gave the story three full columns (Inverness Courier, 29-6-1923.)

45.

Crofting Files AF 67/65.

46.

Crofting Files AF 67/65. (See also AF 67/150 for three locations in Inverness-shire, at Kincraig, Kerrow and Tomich). For Stratherrick raiding (on Dell Farm) see AF67/155; and Glasgow Herald, 7-6-1922; 10-6-1922.)

47.

Crofting Files, 67/148.

48.

Crofting Files, AF 67/65.

49.

Crofting Files, AF 67/166.

51.

"Caithness crofters in revolt", Glasgow Herald, 9-10-1922.

Crofting Files, AF 67/167.

51.

Crofting Files, AF 67/161.

52.

Crofting Files, AF 67/176.

53.

Derek Cooper, Hebridean Connection, London, 1977, offers a number of striking observations on Raasay. He recounts, for instance, an interesting story about the men of the island leaving for the Great War, 71; and records the case of the island's most notorious recent landlord, Dr Green of Surrey, 75-79. For his comments of Highland landlords in general (("shaking the pagoda tree") see chapter six in its entirety.

54.

Crofting Files, AF 67/149. Note that this file contains a booklet on Highland Land League objects and constitution, and annual report for 1920-1921.

55.

Glasgow Herald, 23-6-1920.

56.

Inverness Courier, 30-3-1920; 25-6-1920; 23-9-1921; and 11-10-1921. Glasgow Herald, 21-9-1921; 7-10-1921; 13-10-1921; 10-11-1921; and 25-4-1922. Daily Herald, 8-9-1921 (man hunt on lonely isle); 11-11-1921 (Armistice day in gaol). The Scotsman, 7-9-1921. Dundee Advertiser, 15-9-1921. Forward, 9-5-1921 (letter from secretary of Highland Land League.)

57.

Inverness Courier, 22-11-1921.

58.

Dundee Advertiser, 23-11-1921 and Inverness Courier, 29-11-1921. See also Inverness Courier, 2-12-1921 (exchange of letters and editorial); 6-12-1921; and 9-12-1921.

59.

Glasgow Herald, 7-9-1921.

60.

PQ, Anderson to Scottish Secretary, 26-2-1918. See also PQ's of 14-4-1918 (Young); 22-4-1918 (Dundas White); 24-4-1918 (Cathcart Watson); 11-7-1918 (Watt); 12-7-1918 (Anderson); and 22-7-1918 (Watt) (all to Secretary for Scotland.)

61.

PQ, 26-2-1918 (answer to Anderson.)

62.

Crofting Files, AF 67/165.

63.

Ibid. Emphasis added.

64.

Ibid.

65.

PQ, 18-4-1918 (Young to Secretary for Scotland). Oban Times, 13-4-1918. Glasgow Herald, 15-4-1918.

66.

Crofting Files, AF 67/165.

67.

Ibid. The raiders were Hugh MacPhail, Hector MacDougal, Archibald Kennedy, Hector MacLean, William MacPhail, John MacInnes, Hugh MacLean, and John MacLean.

68.

The Times, 12/13-2-1886.

69.

Crofting Files, AF 67/165.

70.

Glasgow Herald, 16-2-1920.

71.

Crofting Files, AF 67/165.

72.

W.P. Jolly, Lord Leverhulme, London, 1976, 197-235.

73.

Nigel Nicolson, Lord of the Isles, London, 1960. John R. Gold and Margaret M. Gold, Lord Leverhulme's Hebridean Ventures, Birmingham, 1975. Nicolson brought a proprietorial eye to the craft of biography, having once owned the Shiant Islands off Lewis: "Well, it was in 1937, I was just 20, and they were on the market and I bought them for £1,500...one finds oneself thinking of them at odd moments, you know, when one's in the south of England doing totally different things. It's like a bit of jam inside a doughnut"; Derek Cooper, Hebridean Connection, 57.

74.

For Highland press coverage of Leverhulme and Lewis, see Inverness Courier 18-7-1919 (his plans for Lewis); 26-12-1919 (raids on Coll); 17-2-1920 (island attitudes to his plans); 13-2-1920 (raids; ultimatum; discharge); 5-3-1920 (raids Gress and Coll; bitter feelings); 26-3-1920 (action by Board of Agriculture); 2-4-1920 (breach of interdict

proceedings); 18-6-1920 (the case for the raiders); 29-6-1920; 15-10-1920; and (all on his title) 26-1-1923; 2-2-1923; 2-3-1923; 6-3-1923; and 9-3-1923. For Crofting Files; see, AF 67/65 (Carnish, Ardroil, Aline deer forest, Reef Farm, Coll, Gress, Croir, Tolsta, Garrynahine); 147 (Orensay, Stenervay and Gress); 151 (Aline, Dell, Arnish and Stenervay); 250-256, and 324-335.

75.

Brian Wilson, A disgrace to civilisation (part one of a three-part series), West Highland Free Press, 15-1-1982; drawing on crofting files in the Scottish Record Office. A film version of the Levrehulme-Lewis story is reportedly in development; Stornoway Gazette, 12-3-1988.

76.

See (on poverty, clearance and oppression) the edited extracts from the diary of James Matheson's factor, John Murdo MacKenzie, in Joni Buchanan, Diary of a Lewis Factor, West Highland Free Press, 5-2-1988, 4-3-1988, 11-3-1988, 6-5-1988, 3-6-1988, 8-7-1988, 15-7-1988, 12-8-1988, 2-9-1988, 7-10-1988, 14-10-1988, 11-11-1988, 11-12-1988, 30-12-1988, and 27-1-1989. Drawing on the same manuscript source, see James Shaw Grant, Stornoway Gazette, 30-1-1988, 6-2-1988, 27-2-1988, 12-3-1988, and 28-3-1988. For a comment on Matheson as "philanthropist", and the uncritical promotion of this description by some modern writers, see Joni Buchanan, The myth of the Mathesons, Observer Scotland, 12-3-1989.

77.

H.M. Conacher, Land Settlement in Scotland, Scottish Journal of Agriculture, April, 1921.

78.

Stornoway Gazette, 22-2-1918.

79.

Stornoway Gazette, 5-7-1918.

80.

Stornoway Gazette, 30-8-1918.

81.

Stornoway Gazette, 26-7-1918.

82.

Liberty, Open letter to the editor of the Stornoway Gazette, 13-11-1920.

83.

Liberty, 16-10-1920.

84.

Stornoway Gazette, 31-1-1919.

85.

Stornoway Gazette, 21-2-1919.

86.

Glasgow Herald, 21-5-1919; Stornoway Gazette, 30-5-1919. Leverhulme acquired South Harris that autumn; Glasgow Herald, 24-10-1919. In January 1920, he also acquired North Harris; Glasgow Herald, 23-1-1920.

87.

Glasgow Herald, 17-7-1919.

88.

Murdo MacLeod, Did the people of Lewis refuse Lord Leverhulme's schemes?, paper read to the Gaelic Society of Inverness, January 1958.

89.

H.M. Conacher, Land Settlement in Scotland, Scottish Journal of Agriculture, April, 1921.

90.

Ibid.

91.

Ibid.

92.

On support for Leverhulme, see James Shaw Grant, paradox island, Stornoway Gazette, 11-7-1987. On the contents of a file of letter from Leverhulme to the then-provost of Stornoway, now in the possession of the provost's grand-nephew Sandy Matheson, convenor of Comhairle nan Eilean, see James Shaw Grant, a royal procession, Stornoway Gazette, 18-

11-1987.

93.

Christopher Harvie, No Gods and Precious Few Heroes, 28.

94.

Stornoway Gazette, 14-3-1919.

95.

Stornoway Gazette, 11-4-1919. For a turn of the century, and a recent, photograph of the Coll farmhouse (which was demolished in May 1989), see Stornoway Gazette, 18-4-1989, and 27-5-1989.

96.

Stornoway Gazette, 18-4-1919.

97.

Stornoway Gazette, 2-5-1919.

98.

Crofting Files, AF 67/65.

99.

Forward, 6-3-1920; and 5-6-1920, 31-7-1920, 14-8-1920.

100.

"With the Lewis raiders, the men of Coll who have defied Lord Leverhulme", Thomas Johnston, Forward, 14-3-1920. The coverage included a photograph of the raid leaders.

101.

James Hunter, The Gaelic connection, Scottish Historical Review, no 54, 1975; 201.

102.

Quoted in Nan Milton, John MacLean, London, 1973; 24.

103.

Glasgow Herald, 5-2-1920.

104.

Glasgow Herald, 18-3-1920.

105.

Glasgow Herald, 12-3-1920.

106.

Glasgow Herald, 2-4-1920.

107.

Glasgow Herald, 21-4-1920.

108.

Glasgow Herald, 2-6-1920.

109.

Glasgow Herald, 8/9-6-1920.

110.

Glasgow Herald, 2-9-1921.

111.

Murdo MacLeod, Did the people of Lewis refuse Lord Leverhulme's schemes?, 268. Glasgow Herald, 4-9-1923.

112.

"Lewis for Lewismen", Scottish Nation, 11-9-1923. Glasgow Herald, 5-3-1924.

113.

Glasgow Herald, 8-5-1925.

114.

Glasgow Herald, 1-7-1925.

115.

Crofting Files, AF 67/66. Leah Leneman, Harris after Leverhulme's death, Stornoway Gazette, 28-5-1988.

116.

Crofting Files, AF 67/156.

117.

Crofting Files, AF 67/299.

118.

Hector MacIver, Outlook, August, 1936.

119.

Report of the departmental committee appointed to enquire and report with regard to lands in Scotland used as deer forests, 1922, VII, Cmd. 1636.

120.

J.M. MacDiarmid, The deer forests of Scotland, 6.

121.

Glasgow Herald, 23-2-1924.

122.

Inverness Courier, 23-10-1923.

123.

Jim Wilkie, Metagama, Edinburgh, 1987. Neil Munro, a cheerful leavetaking?, West Highland Free Press, 22-4-1983. James Hunter, West Highland Free Press, 11-3-1983. Etienne Dennery, L'emigration ecossaise depuis la guerre, Annales de geographie, vol 35, 1926, 129-131. Inverness Courier, 24-4-1923; 27-4-1923; 8-5-1923; 28-8-1923.

124.

Glasgow Herald, 10-7-1923.

125.

Glasgow Herald, 15-10-1923, 25-12-1923.

126.

Crofting Files, AF 67/159.

127.

Ibid.

128.

Ibid.

129.

Inverness Courier, 19-10-1920.

130.

Inverness Courier, 3-4-1923.

131.

Leah Leneman, Harris after Leverhulme's death, Stornoway Gazette, 28-5-1988.

132.

"Land hungry Hearachs", Norman MacLennan, West Highland Free Press, 22-4-1988.

133.

Board of Agriculture for Scotland, 16th report, 1928, 12.

134.

Report of the committee on land settlement in Scotland, 1928, 25. (Cmd. 3110). A short biography of the members of this committee is to be found, 11, in the 16th report of the Board of Agriculture for Scotland. The report of the committee itself contains a concise review of the history of legislation affecting land settlement in Scotland, 6-19. A

more comprehensive review is however found, 8-22, in Land Settlement in Scotland, report of the land settlement committee, 1944-1945. (Cmd. 6577). For a contemporary comment on its significance, see the editorial in the Glasgow Herald, 2-6-1928.

135.

Joe Duncan to Thomas Johnston, letter of 16-5-1928; Thomas Johnston Papers, Mitchell Library.

CODA

In the aftermath of World War Two, there were sufficient murmurings of discontent on Skye with regard to the land question for the remaining farmers and landlords in the island to be privately concerned(1). There was talk too in Uist about raiding; while in Easter Ross, "there was agitation for land raids in the spring of 1947 to have the farms, requisitioned for war use at Balnagowan, turned into crofts for homecoming service personnel"(2).

And in 1948, the Lochaber Crofters' Union contested in the Court of Session the resumption of croft land at Caol, under the leadership of Donald Kennedy, Lochyside (grandfather of Charles Kennedy, current MP for Ross and Cromarty). At the time of the court action, Kennedy recalled that his great-grandfather had been one of the original settlers at Caol, having reclaimed it from bogland after his eviction from the shores of Loch Arkaig. The efforts of the Union to block the proposed resumption originated in an attempt, in the immediate pre-war period, to form an all-Highland Crofters' Union. At a conference in Mallaig in February 1939, it was unanimously agreed to express concern at the reluctance of the authorities "to utilise their powers of large-scale land-settlement in the Highlands". The conference also called for a Crofters' Commission "able to form new holdings, enlarge existing holdings and procure more land for common grazings"(3).

The onset of war put an end to this, and in 1948, the Court of Session refused the appeal of the Lochaber Union; but the events serve to illustrate the extent to which the land-question was still a living one in the 1940s.

But in only one instance did it match the standards of the past; and that was at Knoydart(4).

Knoydart had, of course, been cleared in the middle of the previous century - a clearing the savagery of which was recognised during the Napier Commission's visit to Portree

in May 1883, when the then-owner of Knoydart, John Baird, the 31-year-old nephew of its original purchaser Baird, was questioned by the Royal Commissioners(5).

Baird had originally acquired the estate in 1859, shortly after it had been cleared, and by the 1880s, 18,270 of its 67,000 acres, from sea-level to over 3,000 feet, were under deer(6).

Young John Baird had taken over the property in 1876(7) on the death of his uncle(8), and had found it largely given over to sheep-farming. There were five farms laid-out on the lands of Knoydart, but two of them were vacant and since then he had been forced to take over the stock of another two as well; due to the onset of the downturn in the profitability of Highland sheep-farming(9).

Baird complained to the commission about the fall in wool-prices and the consequent fall in rental-income(10), and was keen to extend his deer-forest operations, which could double his income from the land(11). Though there were "considerable" signs of the remains of crofting populations on the estate(12), Baird thought that "the introduction of crofters into these places" as there once had been, "would be an injury to the property"(13), and also thought that it would be much better for his crofters to quit crofting for fishing; "I had a good deal of annoyance with them some years ago. I was very much annoyed at their not fishing"(14).

They were, he claimed, not overcrowded, and being "pretty comfortable", had no complaints(15); and in any case there were only fifty of them left on Knoydart, gathered in eleven families in one township on the shore beside the Sound of Sleat(16).

This land-use pattern of Knoydart, established under the Baird regime, outlasted the family's interest in the estate. Indeed the Bairds had gone from Knoydart within a matter of years and by the time of the Deer Forest Commission, the estate was in the ownership of the Bowlby

family - though when the commission visited Inverie in July 1894, it heard one labourer and four crofters from Airor; but not Bowlby, who instead sent his solicitor from Inverness. And by the 1920's, though still in the ownership of the Bowlbys, Knoydart remained an estate dedicated to deer, with some sheep and a residual population to tend them(17).

Nevertheless, the Bowlbys were "regarded with great respect by the inhabitants, they looked forward to the arrival of the gentry and looked on the end of the season with sadness"(18).

Indeed one of the land-raiders of the post-war period recalled that during the Bowlby era, "It was a wonderful place Knoydart in those days. It was a really happy community"; while the sister of another of the post-war raiders recalled that the people of the peninsula positively looked forward to the arrival of the owners' yacht and family every year(19).

The Bowlbys, of course, were no strangers to using the intimidatory force of law when it suited them, their Inverness lawyers writing in 1925 to the shepherd at Inverguseran with regard to missing sheep in a tone that clearly establishes the Bowlbys as entirely-traditional in the ways of Highland estate management(20).

But with the coming of Lord Brocket, conditions on Knoydart began to deteriorate in serious fashion. Brocket was the second holder of a title created in 1921: born in 1904, he had been educated at Eton and Oxford. In 1927, he went to the English Bar, in the same year marrying; and in 1931 he was elected Tory MP for Wavetree until succeeding to his father's title in 1933. He also succeeded to a very great deal of money from the family's brewing interests - by 1939, he listed as his addresses Brocket Hall in Hertfordshire; Bramshill Park in Hampshire; a town house in Wilton Crescent, London; and Knoydart, in Inverness-shire(21).

Popular disillusion with the new owner did not take long to set in. One of the raiders recalled; "When he came to Knoydart at first it appeared that he was going to carry on the work of the man before him. But eventually things began to change, and he seemed to turn against the people. Then he started evicting people, especially the older employees here and there, and restrictions were put on the movement of people. People weren't allowed near or around Inverie House where he lived, and things like that"(22).

One of those thus evicted was John MacDougall. He had left his ten acre croft "because the estate was allowing his house to fall into ruins, the house where he had been born and learned the shepherding trade from his father. In time he had become the bread-winner for his mother and sister. But when the only three houses beside them were allowed to go empty, and it was plain that the estate was running down, the time had come when he must go"(23).

Half-a-century later, the same process was remembered thus: "I was told that when a house fell vacant, the roof was removed by the estate and thereby young couples could not find a home to live in"(24).

And another Knoydart resident recalled that soon it became a common sight to see boat-loads of furniture being ferried across to the railhead at Mallaig. "As numbers of long-serving members of the local staff were paid-off it became apparent that the object was to get rid of the local people. Even tourists, campers and hill-walkers were not welcome; the game-keepers were instructed to see them off the land. Children seen walking or playing along the beach in the vicinity of the mansion were warned away"(25).

Brocket meantime entertained mightily on his increasingly empty estate - among his guests were Neville Chamberlain, the prime minister, Lord Woolton and the exiled monarch of Romania, King Peter(26).

Given the political condition of Europe in the mid- and late-'thirties, however, some of Brocket's guests were

somewhat more sinister than these(27).

Certainly, many guests were important Germans(28); Hitler's ambassador to Britain, Ribbentrop, may even have visited the estate(29); and there were at least "a number of Nazi big-wigs visiting the place"(30). One unconfirmed report, indeed, dating from the early 'seventies, claims that the German leader himself, having completed his invasion of mainland Britain, was intending to establish a holiday-retreat at Knoydart(31).

Central to these friendships, of course, was Brocket's involvement in the pro-Hitler fascist Right of pre-war Britain; the "fellow-travellers of the right", as the somewhat quaint description of one recent writer has it(32).

Brocket was not alone in this, of course. Hitler had many covert supporters beyond the ranks of Mosley's British Union of Fascists. They extended across the Establishment: from industry and politics, the Services and the press, to the church (many Anglo-Catholics having spent the 'twenties increasingly infatuated with the fascist experience in Italy), land-owning circles, and what was known as "Society" in general. Not least of these socialite Nazis was, of course, Unity Valkyrie Mitford. Roughed-up by a proletarian mob in Hyde Park for wearing a swastika brooch, she would in due course shoot herself (romantically if not immediately fatally) in Munich's Englischer Garten, and be retired to Inchkenneth Island, off Mull, from where she was carried, in 1948, to die in Oban Hospital, at 34 years of age(33).

More substantial allies of Hitler included the Bank of England's Montagu Norman, a staunch supporter of rapprochement with Germany; while thirty members of the House of Lords were members of the pro-Nazi Anglo-German Fellowship (AGF), including Brocket and the Hon. Walter Runciman, son of Viscount Runciman, then in the Cabinet and whose family owned Eigg, just a dozen miles from Knoydart. Others included Major-General "Boney" Fuller, the tank-

warfare strategist and AFG leader. And The Times under its editor Dawson was also pro-appeasement, while the Daily Mail was violently pro-Nazi, its owner Rothermere (who would shortly invest in Hungarian estates in case Bolshevism should triumph in Britain) having described the "sturdy young Nazis" as "Europe's guardian against the Communist danger".

And if Mrs Ronnie Greville, daughter of the brewer William McEwen ("a fat slug filled with venon" in Harold Nicolson's phrase), was "bowled over by Nazism", so too did the 8th Duke of Buccleuch remain until 1939 a "hard-core positive enthusiast" for Nazism(34).

Not all the British enthusiasts were themselves Nazis, of course. A legitimate distinction may be allowed between full-blooded fascism and a simple inclination to remain friendly with Germany at whatever cost, in the cause of preventing (or delaying) a re-run of 1914-1918. Nor were all the enthusiasts English either. The membership list of the AGF for as late as 1938 records the names of Lord Arbuthnot, Sir Donald Cameron, Lord David Douglas Hamilton, the Lords Galloway and Glasgow, Major Ian Macalpine and Mrs E.M. Stirling(35); and when in May, 1941, Rudolf Hess arrived in Scotland, he carried on his person a list of names including those of Kenneth Lindsay, MP for Kilmarnock Burghs; Lord Dunglass, PPS to Neville Chamberlain; Lord Lothian; and the former Tory MP, the Duke of Hamilton(36).

This, then, was the background to Lord Brocket's politics in the mid- and late-'thirties. As Simon Haxey recorded, "The Nazi Government must thoroughly approve of the Anglo-German Fellowship, for among the leading Nazis who have been guests of the organisation are such famous figures as; Herr von Ribbentrop (on several occasions); Field Marshal Von Blomberg; Herr von Tschammer und Ostend, President of the German Sports Association; Dr Ernst Woermann, Counsellor of the German Embassy; H.R.H. the Duke of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha; Freiherr von Hadeln, SS Adjutant

to Herr Himmler, head of the Nazi Secret Police and of the SS. Many members of the Anglo-German Fellowship have in turn been guests of leading Nazis. Lord Londonderry has frequently visited Germany where he has previously been guest of General Goering...and Hitler. Herr von Ribbertrop...has also been the guest of Lord Londonderry at his Irish seat, Mount Stewart, County Down". Haxey also noted that Londonderry would be a guest of Goering's at the same time as Mussolini; and added, "Members of the Fellowship who have met Hitler include Lord Mount Temple, Sir Barry Domvile, Lord Brocket, Lord Stamp, Lord McGowan, and Lord Lothian"(37).

Among the activities of the AGF was the hosting of prestigious dinners, such as that in London's Dorchester Hotel in the middle of 1936, in honour of the pro-Nazi Prince and Princess von Bismarck, those present including Barry Domvile, Lord David Douglas Hamilton, "Boney" Fuller, members of the Guinness family, lords Londonderry and Mount Temple; and Lord Redesdale, father-in-law to Oswald Mosley via Unity Mitford's sister(38).

In all this, Brocket took a prominent part. In 1938, for instance, he was in Germany for the Nazi party-rally at Nuremberg. "The Parteitag is drawing to a close in an atmosphere of indescribable tension. Herr Hitler today was speaking to 120,000 of his Storm Troopers and SS men, paraded before him. Sir Neville Henderson, the British Ambassador, remained here until the evening. He attended the parade of the Youth Movement yesterday morning, and in the evening was the guest of Herr Himmler, Reich Leader of the SS, at supper in the SS camp on the outskirts of Nuremberg, at which Herr Hitler had a friendly conversation over the tea-table with some of his English guests-of-honour. Among those at the Fuhrer's table were Lord Stamp, Lord McGowan, and Lord Brocket"(39).

At another reception, given by Ribbentrop, Brocket sat next to Hitler(40); while a year later, Brocket, in April

1939, was a guest of honour at Hitler's birthday celebrations. "All Germany is tonight celebrating Herr Hitler's birthday...Major-General Fuller, and Lord Brocket, vice-president of the Anglo-German Fellowship, are the private guests of Herr Hitler"(41).

In due course, however, both countries were at war, with Britain's pre-war Nazi 'enthusiasts' suddenly anti-German, or internees of the British state; Diana Mitford, for instance, wife of Mosley, dining in Holloway on her "grocer's port and inferior Stilton"; with a number of others interned from May, 1940, under Defence Regulation 18b, as amended(42).

Brocket, perhaps on account of an alleged nervous-breakdown was not interned; but he had little opportunity to visit Knoydart as it was requisitioned for the training of special commando forces; or, as has become recently known, the agents of the Special Operations Executive(43).

Knoydart, therefore, saw little or nothing of its owner during the war; although his influence was felt in the conduct of the estate which was geared, for the duration, to food-production as well as being a locale for specialist training. But Bishop Colin MacPherson, who arrived as priest at Inverie in December 1942, recalled that even then, "there was a fair turnover of shepherds who came into Knoydart and shortly after coming there wanted to get away - not because they didn't like the area, but they found that the conditions which they had been offered in the way of remuneration and perquisites when they were engaged were not being honoured by the estate".

At this time, shepherds wishing to move required the permission of the wartime Agricultural Executive Committee. According to the Bishop "many of these people, nearly all of them, when they wanted to write to the committee, landed on my doorstep and I had to write their letters. There was this consistent tale of failure by the estate to honour its agreements with them. Reducing their wages after they

arrived - there may have been economic reasons for this, but this was the picture that was consistently thrown up"(44).

Post-war, however, the Brockets returned to Knoydart, Lady Brocket's first act being to have dumped - with strict warnings to the boatmen involved that her orders be carried out to the letter - in the deep hole in the mouth of Loch Nevis, all the cutlery, crockery and water-closets of Inverie House, and the estate lodges, with which the stupendously courageous trainees of SOE might have come in bodily contact(45).

The Brockets then turned their attention to the estate; at which, according to Colin MacPherson, "a pattern seemed to emerge that the policy was to curtail agricultural activity and turn Knoydart into a purely sporting estate. The corollary of that obviously was that there would have to be a reduction in the number of people"(46).

And according to Duncan MacPhail, one of the land-raiders, who had served six years and four months, mostly abroad, during the war, "It was very obvious what he was up to. It was a question of putting off all the sheep. All he wanted was the deer. People began to realise he had no interest in them, that he was going to force them out, bit by bit. There's no doubt about it, he wanted to get rid of all the locals, he just wanted it as a big estate for deer-shooting. I always thought that, and I always will think it. That was the whole thing, to get rid of the locals"(47).

John MacKie was farm manager in Knoydart at the time. Decades later, he recalled, "I went there in the belief that Brocket wanted the estate to be one of the finest in the west, but shortly after I got there things didn't quite seem the same. Of course, the Highland Clearances were very much in the minds of the people there, I was very kindly lent the book on the Clearances which had a lot in it about Knoydart"(48).

According to MacKie, "The Clearances there were very vivid in their minds...the local people thought the estate

should have been their own, that they had a right to the land, that it had been stolen from them, from the crofters...But Brocket was Lord Brocket, on the estate, he made it very obvious who he was, he wanted all things on the estate just to suit himself, not for other people. He was running Knoydart all for his own personal benefit, not for the community there. The shepherds weren't allowed in the hills to look for sheep when he was shooting stags - maybe just as well, in case they got shot. He didn't like visitors about the place. But his standard of living was tremendous - even the piano was painted white, it was just a notion Lady Brocket had. She wasn't popular with the local people, I don't think she was popular anywhere"(49).

And according to the Knoydart gardener, James Dewar, "Brocket was a man who looked down on working people. In fact if there was one of them coming along the road smoking, he would stop them and tell them to put their pipe out, their cigarette out. I left in November, 1947, and inside the next year about fifteen families left the place"(50).

As another of the land-raiders, Archie MacDougall recalled, "At the end of the war the military left, and once more the estate resumed its role as a sporting paradise for the Brockets and their guests. It soon became apparent that changes were imminent. Even the local children were prevented from walking on the beach in the vicinity of the mansion. Employees could be sacked at will, and Brocket did just that. One after another of the workers was made redundant...The reason given was heavy costs, and another excuse was the shortage of houses, as many held rented houses, and once their employment was stopped they could be forced to leave and go elsewhere...It could clearly be seen that the prime motive was to get the local people out"(51).

Knoydart, therefore, in the immediate post-war period, was in a fairly explosive condition - not least because of a consciousness of the long Highland tradition of anti-landlord direct action; because of a radical Labour

government making public noises about the Highlands; and above all perhaps, because of a consciousness of the Napier Commission, the suggestions of the Deer Forest Commission that followed it - and subsequent legislation, most notably the 1919 Land Settlement Act.

As Colin MacPherson said, "The Deer Forest Commission was set up to look at areas in the Highlands and Islands which might allow people to return to more spacious circumstances, and you'll find that there are areas of Knoydart scheduled as suitable - as suitable for settlement in the maps and in the text of the commissioners' report. This was known to the men..."(52).

As a result, therefore, a development-plan for the estate was drawn-up by the land-hungry of Knoydart, and presented to the Highlands and Islands Advisory Panel. It argued that the estate's 70,000 acres could yield £50,000 per annum, and increase the local population from 80 to 500 in five years. In a period of food-rationing, it would mean Knoydart carrying 15,000 sheep, 200 dairy cattle and 400 summer cattle, with forty holdings of 1,000 acres each, including ten of arable and the rest grazing around 400 sheep. The plan also made provision for growth of inshore fishing and forestry, along with a ten-mile road to meet the railway at Spean Bridge. Underpinning the plan was the claim that a century earlier, Knoydart had supported 1,500 people, 20,000 sheep and 200 cattle - while by 1947, there were only four landholders, with 12 useable houses lying empty(53).

Nothing, however, came of the plan. And thus, as Duncan MacPhail remembered, "We put our heads together and thought, all this lovely ground and everything going off, Brocket kept putting-off the stock, it was obvious all he cared about was the deer. We thought, why not have a crack at getting some of the land? I was very keen, it was dash hard lines that after all these years fighting, if you weren't going to get something out of it for yourself.

Probably we all had the idea at the back of our minds that we were going to be put out - and we thought, well, we're entitled to a bit of our own land"(54).

In due course, the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, Scotland, would propose its own scheme, involving just 19 holdings, in response to a third plan, submitted by Brocket (which would in any case be rejected by the Secretary of State for Scotland); but towards the end of 1948 the Knoydart land-raid went ahead anyway(55).

Soundings had been taken in the previous months by Colin MacPherson and the Church of Scotland minister on the estate, with regard to re-settling families from the Hebrides on Knoydart (as had happened with Harris families on Skye after the first war). But while MacPherson had found a number of people from his home area of the southern isles willing to settle on Knoydart, the men of Lewis (from which the minister came) "were all doing too well at the Harris Tweed"(56).

With the press invited to attend, and Brocket also on the estate, the raid nevertheless went ahead on November 9th, with the six raiders (the seventh would add his name later) staking out 65 acres of arable land and 10,000 acres of hill, each stake bearing a name(57).

The Chief Constable of Inverness-shire reported on the raid to the secretary of the Scottish Home Department a week later. "On 9th November 1948, the lands of Kilchoan Farm, Scottas Farm and fields in the neighbourhood of the village of Inverie all of which are owned by and in the occupation of Lord Brocket were raided by six local people who "staked" claims to the land. No offence under the Trespass Act appears to have been committed and the raiders were orderly. The raid appears to have been well planned, Press Reporters and Photographers from far afield being on the spot in advance. It is understood that for some years the raiders have been agitating with the Department of Agriculture for occupation of land. The parish priest Father Colin

MacPherson is playing a leading part in the effort of the raiders to draw public attention to their desire to obtain land. On complaining to the police Lord Brocket was advised that the only action possible at the moment is action in the Law Courts and it is understood that his Law Agents have applied to the Court of Session and have obtained Interim Interdicts against the raiders. It is believed that the raiders will persist in the raiding"(58).

Public support throughout Scotland was instant. The Inverie post-office was quickly in receipt of telegrammes of support "flowing in from across the country"(59), while the Lochaber Crofters' Union pledged full support, and reaffirmed its policy that "a bold and imaginative scheme of land settlement is required for the Highlands and Islands. They urge that full advantage should be taken of the existing powers of the Secretary of State for Scotland"(60).

A packed meeting of supporters was also held, most appropriately, in Glasgow's City Halls; Colin MacPherson telling of "the past 150 years on Knoydart, the depopulation there, and the need for the repopulation of the Highlands"(61).

Brocket, meanwhile, had left Knoydart almost at once for the mainland; passing of necessity through Mallaig, he told an enquiring newspaper reporter that Knoydart was "not suitable for many people as there is too much rain there"(62).

While the raiders cleared the land they had staked out, Brocket went at once to the Court of Session with a petition for interim interdict: "On or about 8th November 1948 the Respondents entered upon cultivated parts of the said farms of Kilchoan and Scottas to which they have no right title or interest whatsoever and staked out claims to smallholdings thereon. Each claim was pegged out and contained a post bearing the name of the person who alleged that he was the owner [sic] of that particular smallholding...As the action of the Respondents in staking their claim was well-

organised, carried out in concert, and with the Press having been duly informed beforehand, the Petitioner believes that for some unknown reason some of the local people object to the Petitioner's ownership of the said estate of Knoydart and that further action may be taken". (In the Closed Record of the case, dated March 9th the following year, Brocket affected to believe that "the said priest Father Colin MacPherson whose flock consists only of less than 40 persons including children, has induced and persuaded the Respondents to take the action they have taken and has persuaded them to trespass upon the said lands, and has since his appointment to Knoydart in 1946 [sic] consistently worked against Lord Brocket")(63).

On the 11th, a seventh raider joined the party(64), and they announced that they were in the process of hiring a lawyer. On the following day, however, messengers-at-arms of the Court of Session arrived and the raiders - after some debate(65) and discussion of a plan to accept the interdicts only to raise as a counter-bid an interlocutor or similar procedure against the Secretary of State for failing to recognise the land-settlement provisions of previous legislation (a ploy dropped in the event due to lack of funds) - accepted the writs, and quit the land(66).

While the Scottish National Party established a support fund, and Edinburgh students sent money, the matter moved to parliament(67).

In the Commons, on November 25th, Arthur Woodburn, Secretary of State for Scotland, announced that, "in view of the conflicting nature of proposals for the development of the resources of the Knoydart Peninsula which have been submitted by different interests in the locality, I have decided, after consultation with the Highlands Advisory Panel, to invite Mr John Cameron, formerly of the Land Court, to examine the position and to advise on the best means of securing the full development of the resources of the area taking into account the social, economic and

financial issues involved. Mr Cameron will be given details of the various proposals for developing the area which have so far been put forward, but he will be free to hear any representations and to suggest any alternative or modified proposals"(68).

This may have been the obvious public position for Woodburn to take, though his subsequent decision on the report of the investigation by Cameron (a sheep farmer in Perth-shire) was less obvious. In any case, there are few clues in archive materials that suggest Woodburn held a private opinion on the Knoydart affair, as opposed to this public one. The Scottish Records Office holds none of his papers, while Hazlehurst and Woodland's Guide to the papers of British Cabinet ministers, 1900-1951, states that Woodburn informed them at the time that he kept no notes, diaries or other papers related to Cabinet business(69).

Papers of Woodburn are held in the National Library, but contain no material specifically concerned with Knoydart - though there is plenty on the land question in general, including a scrap-book on his time as election-agent in the 1936 by-election in Ross and Cromarty, along with a brief diary of the campaign, and three press clippings(70).

And in his draft (typescript) autobiography he notes, "I saw the valley of Strathnaver filled with thriving farms which was the result of the land settlement schemes about thirty years before, and there is no doubt that a consistent and determined policy could change the face of the Highlands"; with the manuscript note added ten pages later, "Afforestation is the one hope for the Highlands. When trees went so did the people. As trees come back so will the people"(71).

And elsewhere in Woodburn's papers is found, for August 19 1948 [sic], an un-titled press clipping, reporting a speech given by him to the Larbert Labour Party; "It is absolutely necessary that we should grow more food in our own country. Great areas of Scotland have been allowed to

deteriorate by depopulation and the surrender of great stretches to deer and grouse"(72).

A month later too, the Inverness Courier was reporting Woodburn thus; "There was a revival of interest in the Highlands for the redevelopment of the Highlands and the rehabilitation of the people throughout the countryside. Among ex-servicemen he found a certain impatience with what they felt was the delay in doing all things they considered should be done for the Highlands...it was possible to increase the number of people who could live on the land in the Highlands, and so far as the government policy was concerned, they were anxious to see that the man who was getting to live on the land would have enough of it"(73).

Woodburn, therefore, was no stranger to land-hunger in the Highlands; nor to the record of land-raiding there. Among his papers are "Labour's Broadcast to Ross and Cromarty", an election broadsheet for the 1936 election, in which the Labour candidate was supported by Malcolm MacMillan, MP for the Western Isles since the previous year(74).

Another item in Woodburn's papers, entitled "The Land League Still Lives", notes, "One of my most cherished memories is the part I took in securing the return to parliament for Ross and Cromarty of Dr Roderick MacDonald...Our first attack on the stronghold of landlordism in 1884 did not succeed. Nothing daunted, we returned to the fray in 1885...let this victory be repeated in 1936". A second reads, "From the glens and straths, from the western seaboard, from the islands, the tale has run these many years; the people go to the south, to the towns and to the cities. There is not a living for them in their own country". And according to a third, headlined What Labour gave the Highlands and Islands 1929-1931: "At Luskentyre the land-hungry men raided and seized arable ground in the deer-forest. The Labour Government acquired the deer-forest under compulsory powers, took the crofters

out of gaol, and settled them upon the land"((75).

In short, the politicians in the Scottish Office were well aware of the background to the actions of the Knoydart land-raiders of 1948; but in the event this was not translated into support for the raiders. In due coure, Cameron's inquiry got under way, with a December meeting at Mallaig. Brocket was said to be sick and did not attend; he sent his factor, however, who agreed that nothing had been done on Knoydart between 1939 and 1947 "to contribute to the country's food supply", adding that he could not furnish precise details as "a great part of the estate records had been destroyed by enemy action in England"(76).

The raiders' spokesman, the Edinburgh lawyer John Shaw(77), said it was essential to repopulate Knoydart in the national interest from the point of view of defence and food production, and also of improving social conditions. The Secretary of State had ample powers to repopulate Knoydart under the Small Landholders' Act and the Land Settlement Act. The only means whereby people had been kept on the land, he said, was "by giving them holdings of an economic size with security of tenure, a fair rent, and compensation for improvements". After stating that the population of Knoydart of 100 was much too small, Shaw said that 150 years earlier there had been ten times as many people on the peninsula. By 1931 the population had dropped to 186. "In view of these figures, and in view of the fall since 1931 by nearly 50 per cent, I do not think it can be disputed that something requires to be done very quickly to repopulate Knoydart, otherwise any measures will be too late; from 1861 to 1931 the local population has decreased by 67 per cent, compared with a decrease of only 7 per cent in the county of Inverness during the same period"(78).

Cameron reported the following March(79); arguing against the raiders' proposals, and in favour of the development of Knoydart as a single unit, preferably under Brocket(80); Woodburn, astonishingly perhaps, agreed(81).

The raiders petitioned Woodburn, urging him to ensure that tenants on Knoydart "be given the protection of the Small Landholders' Act. They submit that it is the statutory duty of the Secretary of State immediately to form smallholdings for them at Knoydart"(82).

Woodburn, however, rejected the petition(83); and Brocket was free to indulge such taste as he may have had - having none, certainly, for development - for retribution. He had already, during the immediate period of the raid, tried to split the Knoydart community on religious lines. He failed to interest the journalists of The Scotsman and the Scottish Daily Express (who checked the claim, and found it untrue), but did manage to have the smear attract the attention of the Daily Mirror; the editor of which, Sylvester Bolam, was gaoled in the spring of 1949 on another matter(84).

Brocket, however, did his best to humiliate the raiders. One wrote to Brocket on the last day of October 1949 asking for work. Brocket wrote back, "If you send me an unqualified apology and undertaking never to repeat such acts as those on November 9th 1948, I will then give consideration to the question of your being employed again on the Estate". The raider in question met both conditions, and withdrew his claim for a smallholding for good measure. Brocket, the millionaire brewer, replied that "in view of your apology and undertaking never to behave in the same way again I have instructed my solicitors not to proceed against you of course on the understanding that you pay your own costs up to date"(85).

Further, the report of Cameron, despite its major recommendation for single-unit control of Knoydart, had also recommended that the estate did give land to those men who had clearly wanted it. Brocket, however, replied that he "didn't intend to offer any land unless enjoined to do so by the government"; which the government could hardly be expected now to do, insofar as it had already accepted

Cameron's report(86).

The raiders, in their answers to the Court of Session lodged in the November of 1948, had argued that they had acted within their rights in terms of the Small Landholders' Act of 1911, and the Land Settlement Act of 1919. They had argued that their actions, being for the purpose of assisting the Department of Agriculture for Scotland in the exercise of its statutory duties, were not an infringement of any rights of ownership - the interdict sought was, in the circumstances, therefore, contrary to public policy. The Lord Justice Clerk, however, did not agree, in his opinion of February 1951. "The justification which the respondents put forward is that they were within their rights in terms of section 7 of the Small Landholders Scotland Act 1911, which, as amended by the Land Settlement Scotland Act 1919, section 9, provides that when the Department of Agriculture are satisfied that there is a demand for smallholdings and that suitable land is available for that purpose, it is their duty to prepare a scheme for the constitution of new holdings under certain circumstances...I can only characterise this contention as fantastic"(87).

In short, Brocket had won; and by 1951 people were drifting steadily away from Knoydart. Whether a criminal course of action would have been better is arguable. Duncan MacPhail, thirty-odd years later, argued "Well, I was in favour of sticking on the land like in the olden days they did. But this lawyer said that in these modern times these things wouldn't need to take place, that we should do it in the legal way and things would work out pretty good. But I am afraid that was our downfall. We would have been far better to have done what the old boys in the olden days did, stick on the ground till they put you to gaol. We all thought it was a very good idea, that it was going to be legal. But afterwards, when we saw the whole thing, and you look back on it, you realised it didn't pay to be doing it

the modern way. Oh yes, it would have worked, if we had got the ground. I am sure we would have made a go of it. Anything was better than the way it was. It was getting less and less used, Knoydart - plenty of ground in Knoydart, and good ground, but all that Brocket was interested in was deer. That's all he lived for, to come up and shoot the deer: and I always said, to get rid of the people"(88).

In any case, Brocket did not stay long afterwards in Knoydart, and died in 1967. In 1975 the 23 year old Lord Charles Brocket inherited from his grandmother Brocket Hall (on the billiard table of which Lord Palmerston had memorably, if fatally, met his match); and the mansion was shortly afterwards broken-up into flats for Tory MP's(89).

Today its grounds are part-let for corporate conferences and motor-trade promotions(90); and young Lord Brocket, ex-Eton, ex-Cambridge and ex-14/20 Hussars, runs Brocket Hall "as England's finest privately owned residence for executive meetings and incentive groups". Though Brocket is down to his last twelve Ferraris, he still turns over about £3M a year: and he is "proud of the title"(91).

And Knoydart, of course, is largely empty(92). Between 1985 and 1988, thirteen houses were sold off as holiday-homes for wealthy people from England. Most of the estate is now in the anonymous ownership of companies registered in the tax-havens of the Dutch Antilles, the Bahamas, and the Channel Isles(93).

At the time of writing, it is scheduled as site for the 1989 Goose Run. The Goose Run, reports the Oban Times, is in aid of Survival International, "an organisation which works for the rights of threatened peoples...and aims to ensure that they keep communal ownership of their lands, have facilities which are suited to their own needs, and are not exploited"(94).

CODA

1.

Information supplied by N.M.

2.

Information supplied by D.N. MacD. Rob Gibson, Crofter Power in Easter Ross; 38.

3.

Oban Times; 7-4-1988: West Highland Free Press; 15-4-1988. The original minute-book of the pre-war Lochaber Crofters' Union is still retained; and in use by the Lochaber Branch of the Scottish Crofters' Union.

4.

See: Iain Fraser Grigor, Armchair pundits obscure harsh facts on Knoydart, Glasgow Herald, 17-2-1983; Iain Fraser Grigor, Seven Men of Knoydart, New Edinburgh Review, 1982; Iain Fraser Grigor, The Seven Men of Knoydart, Odyssey, voices from Scotland's recent past, edited by Billy Kay, Polygon, Edinburgh, 1980; Iain Fraser Grigor, The Knoydart Land Raid, West Highland Free Press, 21-11-1980; Brian Wilson, Knoydart hopes its dark days do not return, Glasgow Herald, 21-8-1981; Archie MacDougall, The Seven Men of Knoydart, Scotland's Magazine, November 1974; Archie MacDougall, The Seven Men of Knoydart, West Highland Free Press, 26-3-1976; Graham Starmore, The Knoydart Alternative, North 7, July-August 1980; Alan Thomson, Last of the Seven Men of Knoydart, Glasgow Herald, 8-12-1987 (a profile of Duncan MacPhail); Alan Thompson, Lights go out over Knoydart, Sunday Times Scotland, 11-12-1988. Broadcasts include: Iain Fraser Grigor, The Seven Men of Knoydart, first TX BBC Radio Scotland January 1981, network TX BBC Radio 4, 9-5-1982, making extensive use of participants in the raid. A Gaelic-language radio programme on the Knoydart land-raid was produced and broadcast in the 1970's by Fred MacAuley of BBC Radio Scotland's Gaelic Service. The Knoydart land-raid is also recalled in the song by Hamish

Henderson of the School of Scottish Studies, containing the verse, "You bloody Reds' Lord Brocket yelled/Wot's this you're doing 'ere?/It doesn't pay as you'll find today/To insult an English peer./You're only Scottish half-wits/But I'll make you understand/You Highland swine, these Hills are mine/This is all Lord Brocket's Land". For a comment on the historical value of song (for example, soldiers' songs from World War One), see the report of the spring, 1987, conference of the Scottish Oral History Group; Oral History, vol 15, no 2, autumn, 1987.

5.

Napier Commission, Evidence, Q's 9210, and 9317. See also Q 9318, which clearly implies that, despite the account of MacKenzie and those writers who have repeated it, there was indeed resistance to this clearing; but unfortunately, Baird does not specify what form or forms the resistance in question took.

6.

Napier Commission, Evidence, Q 9298; Q 9299: Napier Commission, Report, Appendix C, 531, and map.

7.

Napier Commission, Evidence, Q 9211.

8.

Ibid, Q 9216.

9.

Ibid, Q 9212.

10.

Ibid, Q 9232.

11.

Ibid, Q's 9254, 9255.

12.

Ibid, Q 9258.

13.

Ibid, Q 9260.

14.

Ibid, Q's 9273, 9268.

15.

Ibid, Q's 9261, 9265.

16.

Ibid, Q's 9304, 9256.

17.

Deer Forest Commission, fiftieth sitting, of 5-7-1894; evidence, Q 43087 -. Though the Bowlbys were soon to be replaced by the young Lord and Lady Brocket, the family owned land in the Highlands until well into present years. As late as 1979, for instance, the Hon. Mrs David Bowlby put on the market Inverinate estate in Ross-shire. Running over 30,000 acres, it included the deer-forests of Inverinate and West Benula, and was for sale through Strutt and Parker for "over £1 million"; Oban Times, 16-5-1979.

18.

MacDougall, Scotland's Magazine.

19.

Iain Fraser Grigor, The Seven Men of Knoydart, New Edinburgh Review; and present writer's tape-recorded discussion with Annie MacDonald of Mallaig, formerly of Knoydart, 5-6-1980.

20.

Two letters, privately acquired by the present writer, dated 17-4-1925 and 1-6-1925, from Innes and MacKay, Inverness solicitors, to Duncan MacKay, shepherd, Inverguseran. One of the land-raiders worked with this shepherd after leaving school; Duncan MacPhail, transcript, BBC Scotland, Seven Men of Knoydart, 9-5-1982.

21.

Who's Who, 1939. Who Was Who, 1961-1970, gives a full idea of the very extensive business interests of Brocket, though it simply ignores his association with the Anglo German Fellowship. By this period, Brocket was also in ownership of Carton, Maynooth, Co. Clare, which he bought from the Duke of Leinster in 1949; Dublin Evening Express, 3-5-1983. Brocket reportedly had a nervous breakdown at the beginning of the war "brought about by the aspersions thrown at him

from all quarters"; James Lees-Milne, Eccentric characters in country houses, The Times, 30-8-1975.

22.

Iain Fraser Grigor, Odyssey, 73.

23.

Tom Weir, Old John's high road through life, Glasgow Herald, 24-12-1981.

24.

Rob Anderson (letter), West Highland Free Press, c.24-11-1980.

25.

MacDougall, West Highland Free Press and Scotland's Magazine.

26.

Ibid.

27.

Despite enquiries over a number of years, the present writer has been unable to obtain the visitors'-book of Inverie House for the 1930s.

28.

Information supplied by H.S., who worked as a maid in Inverie House during the pre-war years.

29.

Grigor, Odyssey.

30.

Tape-recorded discussion with land-raider Duncan MacPhail, 4-6-1980.

31.

Allan Boyd, on 10-11-1980, attributing the claim, c.1971, to the Rev. Allan MacPherson of Edinburgh.

32.

Richard Griffiths, Fellow Travellers of the Right, British Enthusiasts for Nazi Germany, Constable, London, 1980. See the notice by Peter Dunn, The Sunday Times, 10-8-1980. Reviewed by A.J.P.Taylor, The Observer, 31-8-1980. See also, Iain Fraser Grigor, Supper with Himmler, New Edinburgh

Review, Summer 1981; "Certainly there is evidence post-war of a large-scale cover-up of the pre-war record of many individuals: Brocket's obituary in The Times, for instance, does not mention the AGF or his pro-Nazism, nor his vice-presidency of the AGF...nor do the relevant biographical directories mention Brocket's Nazi sympathies".

33.

David Pryce-Jones, Unity Mitford, A quest, London, 1976. John Mortimer, The pursuit of love, Radio Times, 78-), 14/20-3-1981. Lorn MacIntyre, New Chapter for Unity Mitford's house, The Scotsman, 8-11-1984. John Mortimer, Playhouse, BBC 2, 20-3-1984.

34.

Griffiths, Fellow Travellers. Norman Hillson, I speak of Germany, London, 1937. A.J. Trythall, Boney Fuller, the Intellectual General, London, 1977. Hamilton T. Burden, the Nuremberg Party Rallies, London, 1967. Alan Wykes, The Nuremberg Rallies, London, 1970. Fuller was a member of the British Union of Fascists and a former BUF candidate, as well as a writer in Fascist Quarterly, and genocidally anti-Semitic. Trythall's biography contains a photograph of Fuller's pass to Hitler's birthday-party; along with Brocket, he was the only other British guest. Simon Hoggart, When the Nazis came to Tottenham, Observer, March 1982. Other activists of the period included the editor of Mosley's paper, The Blackshirt, A.K. Chesterton, cousin of the poet, and in later life first chairman of the National Front; and Arnold Leese, a close supporter of Julius Streicher's Der Sturmer. Leese, leader of the Imperial Fascist League, was the first person anywhere in Europe to in public propose the mass-murder of European Jewry; and even post-war he proclaimed, "I do not agree with the Jewish extermination policy being labelled as an abomination or a fearful atrocity. As long as the destruction was done in a humane manner, it was to the advantage of everyone". Such were the intellectual bedfellows of the owner of the

Knoydart estate.

35.

Membership list of the Anglo-German Fellowship, for 1937-1938; copy in present writer's possession.

36.

Colin Simpson and Phillip Knightley, The secret list of Rudolf Hess, The Sunday Times, 7-11-1982. Lord Dunglass, of course, is the present Lord Home; the Earl of Home of the day was a leading light in the United Christian Front, founded to show "that Franco was fighting the cause of Christianity".

37.

Simon Haxey, Tory M.P., Gollancz (Left Book Club), London, 1939, 200; also 167, and 208-9.

38.

A partial guest-list for this dinner was printed in The Times of 15-7-1936. The Fellowship was not entirely fascist. On this guest-list appears the name of one H.A.R. ("Kim") Philby at this time working for the Fellowship's Propaganda Department (in which work he so impressed the AGF president, Lord Mount Temple). Another member of the department was one Guy Burgess, assistant to the right-wing Tory MP, Jock MacNamara.

39.

The Times, 12-9-1938.

40.

The Daily Telegraph, 12-9-1938.

41.

The Glasgow Herald, 20-4-1939. A photograph of Brocket with Hitler appeared in the Glasgow Herald of 13-9-1938, on the occasion of the Nazi congress at Nuremberg.

42.

A total of 747 members of Mosley's British Union of Fascists were interned, though many were freed very quickly. Neville Henderson, Failure of a Mission, London, 1940. Freiherr Ernst von Weizsacker, Memoirs, London, 1951. Louis

de Jong, the German 5th Column in the Second World War, London, 1956. On the tiny number of British fascists who fought with the German forces, see: Rebecca West, The New Meaning of Treason, New York, 1964; David Littlejohn, The Patriotic Traitors, London, 1972; and Ronald Seth, Jackals of the Reich, the British Free Corps, London, 1972. On the alleged Scottish connection in this regard see George Rosie, When Scotland's History is an Official Secret, The Scotsman, 2-4-1980; letter from Arthur Donaldson, The Scotsman, 5-4-1980; and George Rosie, Why should Scots history be wrapped in secrecy?, Glasgow Herald, 24-7-1987.

43.

Iain Fraser Grigor, Deadly mission training ground, Glasgow Herald, 9-3-1985. The work of Special Operations Executive was, of course, very secret indeed. Little or nothing is available in British archives, though some information is still available in overseas archives. The killers of Heydrich, for instance, trained in the Knoydart district; the Gestapo reports on their description of the Knoydart area, and training, are located in Prague (Central State Archive, c/o Federal Ministry of the Interior, Section of K.H. Frank, Buro des Staatssekretars, 2777/42 - 93742/II). Further materials are in Berlin; Archive of the Interior of the German Democratic Republic/Archiv des IML/ Berlin, 35/1/e, Seite 320-328/. Copies of these are with the Yiddish Scientific Institute, (YIVO), New York, sign. 1, 39 - 40. Further material is in Berlin, Archiv des ILM, beim ZK der SED, Fond RSHA/Reichssicherheit-shauptamt/351/e, Seite 329-349. (And at YIVO, 1/A/1, 3-4.) A one-paragraph version from the original Gestapo documentation is printed in Miroslav Ivanov's The Assassination of Heydrich, London, 1973, published in the United States as Target;Heydrich, New York, 1974; but these English-language titles are translated from the French-language version of Ivanov's original Czech version.

44.

Bishop Colin MacPherson, tape-recorded by present writer, 16-9-1980.

45.

Information supplied by various local sources.

46.

Colin MacPherson, 16-9-1980.

47.

Duncan MacPhail, BBC Radio Scotland, 9-5-1982.

48.

Alexander MacKenzie's account, presumably!

49.

John MacKie, farm manager, Knoydart, 1946-1947; transcript of interview; TX in part, BBC Radio Scotland, 9-5-1982.

50.

James Dewar, gardener at Knoydart post-war; transcript of interview, TX in part, BBC Radio Scotland, 9-5-1982.

51.

Archie MacDougall, Scotland's Magazine.

52.

Colin MacPherson, 16-9-1980.

53.

Glasgow Herald, 18-6-1947.

54.

Grigor, New Edinburgh Review.

55.

For photographs of the land raid, see: The Bulletin and Scots Pictorial, 11-11-1948; 13-11-1948; 20-11-1948; Oban Times, 20-11-1948.

56.

Colin MacPherson, 16-9-1980.

57.

Glasgow Herald, 10-11-1948. Daily Record, 11/12/13/15-11-1948. Scottish Daily Express, 10/11-11-1948. The Scotsman, 11-11-1948. The Scots Independent, December 1948.

58.

Scottish Records Office, HH 55/180 (2063 C/944.)

59.

The Bulletin, 12-11-1948.

60.

Glasgow Herald, 15-11-1948.

61.

The Bulletin, 20-11-1948.

62.

Glasgow Herald, 11-11-1948.

63.

SRO (WRH), Brocket versus MacPhee and others, CS 275/108, no 4 of 1952. Brocket also claimed from the raiders the expenses of his action.

64.

Glasgow Herald, 12-11-1948.

65.

See Duncan MacPhail, quoted below.

66.

Colin MacPherson, 16-9-1980.

67.

Glasgow Herald, 16-11- [?].

68.

Commons Hansard, 25-11-1948. A copy of this parliamentary answer, along with the Chief Constable's report quoted above, compose the entire contents of the file in the SRO, HH 55/180, on land seizure at Knoydart, according to letter from W A Elwood, SRO, to present writer, 29-4-1980.

69.

Letter from D M Hunter, SRO, to present writer, 8-6-1981.

70.

National Library of Scotland, Acc. 7656, Arthur Woodburn Papers, Box 13. A small file of press cuttings on Woodburn is contained in Roland Muirhead Collection, Box 2 (as also for Thomas Johnston and others).

71.

National Library of Scotland, Acc. 7656, Box 4.1; 174, 184.

72.

Ibid. Box 28.1.

73.

Ibid. Inverness Courier, 7-9-1948.

74.

Whose original and annotated edition of the Napier Commission Report and Evidence is now in the possession of the present writer. The election was caused by the retiral of Sir Ian MacPherson (author of the introduction to the second edition of Alexander MacKenzie's The Highland Clearances.)

75.

NLS, Acc. 7656, Arthur Woodburn Papers, Box 13.2.

76.

Glasgow Herald, 23-12-1948.

77.

Thirty-odd years later, Lord Kilbrandon

78.

Glasgow Herald, 23-12-1948.

79.

John A Cameron, Knoydart Estate, a report; HMSO/DAFS, 1949. See also the splendid riposte to this report; A. MacAindreis, The Scandal of the Highland Clearances, Is History Repeating Itself? ('a stern criticism of the official attitute to land settlement'), Neidpath Press, Peebles, 1949.

80.

Glasgow Herald, 26-3-1949.

81.

Glasgow Herald, 6-4-1949.

82.

Glasgow Herald, 20-4-1949; also citing the Deer Forest Commission.

83.

Glasgow Herald, 4-5-1949.

84.

Colin MacPherson, 16-9-1980; Glasgow Herald, 26-3-1949.

Bolam died in the early 'fifties; his newspaper, letter to present writer of 16-3-1981, says he left no manuscript or other papers.

85.

SRO (WRH), Brocket versus MacPhee and others, CS 275/108.

86.

Colin MacPherson, 16-9-1980.

87.

SRO (WRH), Brocket versus MacPhee and others, CS 275/108.

88.

Grigor, Odyssey, 77.

89.

The new boys; Private Eye, 4-7-1980. Queen Victoria was here, Sunday Times Colour Supplement, 24-4-1988.

90.

Four wheels on my wagon, Observer, Colour Supplement, 12-10-1986.

91.

Tim Willis, Old blood, new money, Mail on Sunday Magazine, 5-10-1986. Ideas up on the roof, Sunday Times, 10-4-1988.

92.

For details of recent deals involving Knoydart, see; West Highland Free Press, 28-8-1981; 17-12-1982; 24-12-1982; 21-1-1983; 25-2-1983; 15-4-1983; 13-5-1983.

93.

Land Dealing in the Rough Bounds, Scottish Eye, Channel 4, 20-2-1988. George Rosie, West Highland Free Press, 19-2-1988.

94.

Oban Times, 20-4-1989; John Murdoch (diary), Scotland on Sunday, 7-5-1989. See also letter, Fifth Column on the move, Oban Times, 16-3-1989.

AFTERWORD

The record, if not the tradition, of anti-landlord direct-action on specific land issues ended with the Knoydart land raid and its extraordinary echoes of earlier raids.

Some of the themes which informed that record in varying degrees may be said to have resolved themselves in the course of it. The Irish dimension, for instance, so important in the 1880s at least in terms of example, was by the end of the Great War - with Ireland poised to at last win independence - simply not an issue in the Highland land agitation of these years. The churches too appear to have faded from the land-reform scene: though it is notable that clerics were prominent in the Highland Land League in the years that straddle the war. And insofar as the role of women was worthy of comment in the 1880s, then women certainly appear to have played no particular role in agitation this century (though those of Raasay were not slow to write to the monarch of the time to demand justice with regard to the division of the land on the island). The Land League too died a natural death in the 1920s, its aspirations, if not functions, usurped by Labour and Scottish National players on a broader field of affairs (though it is proper to record that the League can lay claim to a hitherto-unremarked longevity; it remained a clearly influential body well until into the 1920s).

The three great themes of nationalism, collectivism and ideology, however, remain of modern significance.

When the raiders of Tiree could promise dependence on their many "friends in Glasgow", who would organise "a general throw-down of tools" should they be gaoled, then that was a clear reference point for crofters in the strength of organised labour: one first forged by G.B. Clark, and re-forged by Thomas Johnston. As noted immediately below, the land-question remains firmly on the

agenda of the Labour Party in Scotland today.

Nationalism too, so far as it can be defined as "an implied, and sometimes articulated, repudiation of the economic and cultural legitimacy" of the Highland landlords remains of significance; and indeed the tradition of land-agitation may be said to inform much of it (not least in extremely important cultural manifestations such as those of Run Rig and the 7:84 Theatre Company).

And ideology - insofar as the concept can be applied to in essence a simple expression of class interest - continues to inform contrasting conduct with regard to land use in the Highlands. Crofters remain wedded to an indigenous and broadly collectivist orientation to land ownership and use. Nor have the landlords changed either. In his 1976 article on the Duke of Argyll and the land-question in nineteenth century Britain, John Saville asserts that "much more research would need to be done on the ideology of the propertied classes in the late nineteenth century to determine whether Argyll's views were typical". This may indeed be the case; but Argyll's views were certainly typical of the Highland landlords of the time, and there is no recent evidence to suggest that these views have changed with regard to our own times. Shorn of their simplistic (if topical) free-market rhetoric, Argyll's case for the landlords (and those of his epigoni) was exceedingly plain - amounting to nothing other than the clear and shameless expression of class interest. It is only remarkable in that some subsquent commentators appear to have been confused or blinded by its startling luminosity - a luminosity demonstrated time and again in the preceding pages. One example will suffice; that of Leverhulme and Lewis. Leverhulme may well have left Lewis in truth because he ran out of money; and if this be true, then no great case can be made for him anyway. But the stated reason was the intransigence of the Back raiders and Leverhulme's allegation that the division of farms (to which he was in

any case opposed in principle) would thwart the supply of milk to Stornoway. This was, and is, a patent nonsense; its quintessential absurdity simultaneously magnified and obscured by the quantity of subsequent comment.

But though the record of anti-landlordism may have come to an end in Knoydart, a catalogue of recent events in the Highlands suggests that the anti-landlord tradition continues to exert a significant pull: not least with regard to the Game Laws, rights-of-way, land-use, the general conduct of landlords, and the ownership of the land itself.

The Game Laws are a permanent point of dispute. In Lewis, for instance, police have investigated an alleged attack on property belonging to Grimersta estate, "focal point over many years for resistance to the salmon laws"(1). And on the same island, townships in the Uig area have sought advice over an attempt to interfere with their right of way in the vicinity of a proposed new road in the district of Loch Hamnaway; "the estate's primary aim in building the road is thought to be improved access for their sporting purposes"(2). There has also been trouble over government vessels interfering with crofters' nets off Ness(3); while in the course of one landlord-inspired anti-poaching "blitz", a local man was followed across a moor at night by a helicopter training a searchlight on him: according to the landlord, Lord Biddulph, the district was "a notorious place for salmon poaching"(4).

As a result, the MP for the constituency demanded the repeal of the 1986 Salmon Act, and wrote to the Scottish Office expressing his "grave concern" over the extent of anti-poaching patrols being conducted on the Lewis coast by vessels of the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries: "the use of at least four fisheries protection vessels and a helicopter during these exercises is surely an excessive and inappropriate deployment of valuable state resources for the benefit of private estate interests"(5). As one London

newspaper explained, "Salmon poaching is a traditional activity on the island...islanders claim the government is colluding with private landlords. They say the naval presence is like having Lewis guarded by an occupying force.....many sympathise with the theft of fish"(6).

Land use remains a second point of dispute. There has been friction between crofters and the Ministry of Defence with regard to its role as landlord on the island of Rona (whence raiders had come to Raasay in the 1920s) leased as grazing-land to crofters on Skye (from Kensaleyre, a onetime stronghold of the Land League), but site of a top-secret NATO submarine installation associated with patrolling the "Greenland Gap" (an earlier version of which John MacLean had cited with regard to Lord Leverhulme's Lewis ventures)(7). And in the Uists there has been conflict with the same Ministry over plans to extend its firing-range to the detriment of the crofter interest; "they have met with fierce crofter resistance, and they have also led to a dispute over the question of the ownership of the land"(8).

The conduct of landlords also remains a point of recurring comment and disupte, and one subject to ongoing scrutiny: a scrutiny under-pinned with an enduring antipathy. As one writer in the West Highland Free Press put it, "Is it the case that 'having little feelings other than contempt for crofters' is one of the qualifications required by landlords or their factors?"(9).

As a result of this antipathy, the doings of the "great Mafia"(10) of the Highland landlords continue to draw public attention: and they run true to established form. Three examples will suffice.

The owner of the island of Eigg, for instance, while selling his castle in Banff for offers over £185,000(11), was also hosting his "Games" on this once most Gaelic of islands: "The MacVaugh family had flown in from Philadelphia, others had come from Tokyo and Paris. German

cousin Axel von Schellenberg had arrived that morning from Frankfurt, chartered a helicopter at Glasgow airport and landed on the croquet lawn. The 'Clanranalds', led by Ranald MacDonald, Chief of Clanranald and Hereditary Chief of the Western Isles, wear kilts during the windsurfing. The next day was the Great Eigg Campaign, a re-enactment of the bloody struggles between the Hanoverians and the Jacobites. Barbour jackets and wine-bottles littered the verandah. Dimly I could see a figure under an enormous white pith helmet standing in a jeep which proudly bore the Union Jack flag"(12).

The Duke of Argyll has also run true to family form, advising the electorate of Argyll on why they should not vote Labour - ("policies fundamentally based on envy of the successful...the greatest feeder of the unemployment statistics is the utterly perverse concept of unemployment benefits which go to people who could and should work no matter what that work is")(13) - and attempting to raise crofting rents on Tiree(14).

And northwards, the heir to the Sutherland family fortune, Lord Strathnaver, has turned-over two thirds of Dunrobin castle to a Swiss-based holiday time-share company, with plans in the grounds of the castle for a 650-bed chalet complex modelled on a "historic Scots village" - though not presumably on a pre-Clearances township in Strathnaver(15).

The traditional confidence of these, and other, landlords, is underpinned by attitudes in the wider word. An interviewee in Vogue, for instance, has expressed the opinion that "My father's family have all the qualities traditionally associated with west-coast Highlanders. They're sloppy and dirty. They lie. They are fantasists with a babbling loquacity and an inability to look people in the eye"(16). The general point of view is reinforced in a Daily Telegraph 'humourous' column: "Clackies, as these small, tough, unusually ferocious dogs are called in Scotland, tend to bite anyone they can get at on sight.

They were formerly used by landlords' agents to evict crofters in the West Highlands. A couple of Clackies down the chimney would soon have the crofters and their families outside and running for their lives"(17). And indeed the same broad image is developed, in negative form, by the Scottish Education Department on Highland regiments and comparative casualty rates: "We have had a number of people in the past who were working towards a theory that the Highland regiments were more savagely used. Surely it matters little in which regiment a man served; what matters was that they did serve. I feel that any historical research which apparently aims at establishing that areas were either priviledged or underpriviledged in particular fields can be very dangerous indeed"(18).

As James Hunter has noted, "Highlanders had their history taken from them long ago and quite deliberately. Those in authority saw to that. The Highland past, like the Gaelic language, had no place in the official scheme of things for most of the last 200 years"(19).

There is nevertheless a steady trickle of interest in Highland history and related current affairs; whether that interest be reflected in a conference on Skye on local history(20), in the publication of another title on crofting life in the north-east(21) or in Shetland(22), in a forthcoming title on the clearances(23), or in the emigration from Lewis in the aftermath of World War One(24).

Concern has also been expressed over the offer for sale (via a Hong Kong based property company) at a cost of £1 million of an islet bought three years earlier for a tenth of that sum(25), and with regard to the Crown Estate Commissioners' role in crofters taking part in fish-farming(26). Meantime the Highlands and Island Development and the Nature Conservancy Council have been disagreeing about the employment-implications of forestry versus conservation(27), in the context of a discussion with regard to the potential fruits of each for the ordinary resident of

the area(28). And while boggy Caithness moorland bought for less than £5 an acre in the early 1970's and sold for £1,300 per acre by South of England speculators as sites for holiday homes which were never built is now changing hands for £10 per square foot(29), the giant forestry-companies of Fountain Forestry and Economic Forestry have been steadily increasing their interests in the Highlands. And much controversy has been occasioned by the publicity given to Lord Thurso's award of £400,000 not to plant trees in land "which he had never previously expressed a desire to plant trees in"(30).

But public interest in the ownership of the land if anything exceeds concern with the operation of the Game Laws, the uses to which the land is put, and the general conduct of the landlords and public agencies. This is hardly surprising, giving the long tradition of perceiving the ownership of land as fundamental to associated questions of its use and abuse, and given the degree of often-secret land-speculation to which the Highlands have been subject in recent years. To this question of ownership is the subsidiary one of the extent to which ownership can - or cannot - be traced and identified. Again, three recent examples will suffice.

The Valtos estate in Lewis, for instance was bought for £47,000 in 1983 by Portlandfield, a company of estate agents based in Middlesex. Almost at once the company began to sell-off parts of the estate, as Sasines indicates. Shiram More went to Velladale Hotels, Pabay Beag to John Barmett, Vacsay to Nicholas Soteri (owner of a steak-house in Greenwich), Pabay Mor to Pabay Mor Estates, Sgeir Bocaig to Neil Morris, and Sgeir Gail to Richard Sidi. Two tidal rocks, Mas Sgeir and Mhinig A'Mhuish, were bought for £4,700 by a 27-year-old Egyptian, Oncy Nathan; while a further chunk was sold to an off-the-shelf company Epprixo, the name of which was quickly changed to Valtos(31).

This deal, however, was at least relatively open to

public scrutiny thanks to Sasines and Companies House. But the case of Skye's Strollamus estate was considerably more opaque. In 1970 the estate's 1,800 acres were sold by the British Linen Bank, as executors for Neil MacGillivray, for £1,000 to Oxfordshire businessman Horace Martin and his son Max Martin. Within a few years, the Martins had recouped their investment by selling-off for houses just 13 of their 1800 acres. In 1981, Horace Martin sold his stake in the estate for £3,000 to his son; who, a few months later, sold a half-share in the property to Richard Kent of Hertfordshire. In 1984, Kent sold his share to his father's company, Batey Ltd - and though that company still claims ownership of half of Strollamus, there is no sign of such ownership in Sasines. In August 1984, some months after he was supposed to have disposed of his interest in the estate, Richard Kent sold a plot of land on Strollamus for £47,000 to the Charabella Foundation of Delaware, which offers "exceptionally favourable trust, corporate and tax laws". Meanwhile, Max Martin was in trouble, with the Court of Session in the summer of 1984 appointing a judicial factor to sort out his financial affairs. He sold half of the estate to the MacFarlane (St Helier) Corporation of Edifici Montserrat, Andorra, for £105,000. At the same time, Martin sold eight acres for £25,000 to the Contra Corporation, of the same address as the MacFarlane (St Helier) Corporation - both impenetrable to public enquiries. Nevertheless, it is known that during this period, four clearing banks had accepted the estate as security for loans, some of which were used, in conjunction with £30,000 of Highlands and Islands Development Board money, to open a yacht charter business. Today, with one exception, the yachts still lie at anchor off Skye: that exception, the Eala Bhan, is moored at Alicante, where Max Martin and his wife live aboard. This did not prevent Mrs Martin from successfuly sueing, in December 1986, the Court of Session's judicial factor to the tune of £17,000 - on account of unpaid salary due to her

by her husband's former estate! Meanwhile, Batey Ltd have attempted to sell part of the estate for £80,000 (though its crofting valuation under the 1976 Crofting Act is just £1,500)(32).

Even more opaque is the third example, that of the North Harris estate, which came to public attention in September 1986, as a result of an attempt to drive the stock of local crofters off the deer-forest, in which they had been grazing their sheep. A brief account of the dispute demonstrates the extraordinary extent to which the ownership of an estate can be concealed from the crofters, the public in general, the investigative media, and even the government agencies concerned with crofting in the widest sense(33).

Among the owners of the estate in the past have been Lord Dunmore, Sir Edward Scott, his son Sir Samuel, Lord Leverhulme, Lord Brocket (from 1925 to 1945), and Sir Thomas Sopwith (to 1960). Messrs Miller-Mundie and Lowndes followed; and then Sir Hereward Wake, who bought the estate in 1964 for £120,000. Eleven years later he put it on the market at £600,000 but after keeping various parts for himself, sold the remainder in 1976 for £235,000 to a tax-haven registered consortium called Enessy SA, of which, as its designation implies (societe anonyme), nothing more was known(34).

Ten years later, Enessy SA demanded of the local crofters that they remove their stock from the deer forest within fifteen days. Intense media interest was then directed to the ownership of the estate - partly fuelled by the admission of the crofters that they did not know who owned it, and by the claim of the Stornoway factor that he did not know either. Extensive enquires indicated that, though Sasines listed ownership of North Harris as Enessy SA, of c/o a post box in Lausanne, it was actually based c/o a post box in Panama City. Further enquiries established that Enessy had no office in Panama, but was merely registered in the city. Enquiries based on the Swiss address

listed in Sasines, however, indicated that the principals of Enessy included the company's administrator, Gerald Panchaud of Lausanne. A great deal of further information was turned-up on Panchaud but despite further wide-ranging enquiries no more information was forthcoming: and it is not therefore known whether Panchaud was truly owner of the company and therefore the estate in law, or whether he was in effect a front-man for other interests(35).

It is hardly surprising that against this background, the land-question remains on the agenda of public debate. The National Trust for Scotland has called for "a serious re-think of the mechanisms for achieving coherent policies in rural land use"(36); while others have claimed that "there are remarkable similarities between the history of the Highlands and what is happening in parts of the Third World...there are attempts at seizing land, movements for land reform, and in the worst cases the use of troops to suppress protest"(37). And the chairman of the Highlands and Islands Development Board has also been calling for a comprehensive policy on land use in the Highlands(38).

Meanwhile, the Labour Party has announced that it favours "a limit of 5000 contiguous acres for the right of sole ownership. Large landowners with estates in excess of that acreage will have to account for their stewardship of the land". The party will also establish a Land Register "to provide a comprehensive guide to the ownership, quality and use of land"(39).

Meanwhile too, crofting itself is enjoying something of a "renaissance"(40) as the proceedings of the latest conference of the Scottish Crofters' Union demonstrate(41); though the extent to which crofting will accommodate itself to the impact of ongoing proposals to dispose of state-controlled crofting estates remains to be seen. The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (Scotland) currently owns of around half-a-million acres of land in Scotland, much of it in crofting tenure and located in estates on

Harris, the Uists, Barra and Skye: a direct result of acquistions by the Congested Districts Board and later the Board of Agriculture in the first decades of this century(42).

Crofting, nevertheless, survives; and, in the context of a European agricultural regime that no longers encourages the manic over-production of foodstuffs, but rather favours (along with an increasingly powerful conservationist and Green lobby) a rational protection and promotion of the rural economy, will continue to survive.

But crofting has not survived by chance or by the goodwill of external agencies. It has survived by the efforts of those who struggled to prosecute its survival as an activity central to the integrity of the native community in the Highlands, which in turn was perceived as of cultural centrality to the survival of an authentic Scottish national identity.

The record of that struggle offers a number of telling suggestions about the Scottish past and its presentation today and tomorrow.

How then should the historians of the Highlands, today and tomorrow, orientate themselves with regard to this past?

First, of course, they must resolutely set their own agenda, establish their own terms of debate - something that has not always been the case - and they must then address the fact that great areas of its own history remain to be made available to the Scottish public(43). Biographies, for instance, and not of necessity in the traditional book format, appropriate to the conditions of modern Scotland, are surely demanded for - at least - G.B. Clark, Roland Muirhead and Erskine of Marr.

A socio-political history of the Game Laws is called for; a study of the formation of the Scottish socialist and nationalist intelligentsia between, say 1880 and 1930, is also necessary (as is a history of the Labour Party in

Scotland). There is ample scope too for studies on the Highland land question and crofting from 1945 to the present day; on the socio-political history of Gaelic; on the relationship between the land-question and the formation of modern Scottish consciousness; and on the wider question of cultural presentations of the Highland experience.

Fundamental to these studies must be, of course, a sense of ideological orientation with regard to their place in the contemporary political landscape of Scotland. (There isn echo of this in the ongoing debate within the museum service of "recreational" versus "instructional" history, of course)(44).

A decade before Culloden, after all, George Buchanan's Latin histories of Scotland were thought not fit to be put "in the hands of our Scotch youth while at school, now there is an Union between the two Kingdoms, for fear of awakening that Old National Grudge, that should now be sopited and industriously forgotten"(45).

And by 1856, at the height of the national controversy over the proposed memorial to William Wallace, the Times in a leader asserted that "Scotland is a country manifestly in want of a grievance. She labours under the weariness of attained wishes and the curse of granted prayers. Never was a territory north of latitude 55 degrees so favoured before. Good fortune has joined her inseperably to the richest and most enterprising nation of modern times...the more Scotland has striven to be a nation the more she has sunk to be a province". For the Times, Wallace was but a "myth"(46).

One of the results of the weight of these views has been a distortion of the value of Scottish history. Of one reviewer's response to his study of Scotland in the later Middle Ages, for instance, Ranald Nicholson has observed that "my book was criticised on three grounds. Firstly, it was thought to be too concerned with detail (presumably only English history deserves the full treatment unquestioningly accepted in the Oxford History of England series).

Secondly, the quotations in middle-Scots were thought to be lengthy and "trumpery" (presumably no one should waste his time trying to understand the finest Scottish poetry and prose of the fifteenth and sixteenth century simply because it is not written in modern English). Lastly, the book was characterised as too severely "nationalist" (presumably because it is upsetting to be reminded that Scotland was once a viable nation with actions and reactions of its own)..."(47).

And as another writer has noted "The roots of this national consciousness and the reasons for its persistence are thus of considerable significance. They remain, however, largely uninvestigated by historians. One cause of this state of affairs is the general lack of interest in things Scottish ..."(48).

It may be said in conclusion that the purpose of this present text is to help change that lack of interest.

July 22, 1989

AFTERWORD

1.

West Highland Free Press, 26-6-1987.

2.

Ibid.

3.

Stornoway Gazette, 25-7-1987.

4.

West Highland Free Press, 31-7-1987.

5.

Stornoway Gazette, 8-8-1987.

6.

Sunday Times, 9-8-1987.

7.

West Highland Free Press, 29-5-1987.

8.

Stornoway Gazette, 6-6-1987, West Highland Free Press, 5/19-6-1987.

9.

Iain MacDonald (letter), West Highland Free Press, 24-7-1987; Vincent MacCaffrey (letter), Glasgow Herald, 26-6-1987.

10.

Oban Times, 2-9-1976.

11.

The Times (diary), 19-6-1987.

12.

Tom Shields, Glasgow Herald, 21-8-1984; Mail on Sunday (colour supplement), 12-7-1987. For a report on the same sort of thing in Skye, see Joan Burnie, It's the real fling, Observer (colour supplement), 25-9-1988.

13.

Oban Times, 2-9-1976.

14.

Oban Times, 30-7-1987.

15.

Sunday Mail, 26-7-1987. For a recent comment on the clearances in Sutherland see Mary Soames, The Spectator (diary), 27-6-1987. The Clearances Museum at Farr near Bettyhill houses the manuscript of John Prebble's The Highland Clearances.

16.

Vogue, July 1982.

17.

Peter Simple (column), Daily Telegraph, 20-10-1981. Incidentally, the same column carries, for 18-2-1983, the following; "In the days of the Highland Clearances, they were used by landlords' agents for evicting obstinate crofters. A couple of Clackies down the chimney had the wretches out in seconds, running for their lives in the direction of the nearest port, where they might hope to get a boat for Nova Scotia".

18.

Letter to the present writer from the assistant keeper of the Scottish United Services Museum, (Scottish Education Department), 2-7-1981.

19.

James Hunter, West Highland Free Press, 23-4-1982. Iain Fraser Grigor, The forbidden tongue learns to speak, Times Education Supplement, 30-12-1983; Culture in decline?, Europe, 33, spring 1984; Glasgow Herald, 2-10-1982, and (letter) 25-10-1982. "The Highlanders are the men of Scotland's conscience" was how the then Secretary of State for Scotland, Willie Ross, put it in the House of Commons, introducing the Highlands and Islands Development Board plan; which Board was to be "a means of redressing history"; Hansard, Commons, vol 708, session 64-65, cols 1079-1204.

20.

Duncan MacInnes, Local history a valuable tool, West Highland Free Press, 22-5-1987.

21.

David Kerr Cameron, A Kist of Sorrows, London, 1987. Reviewed by Frank Thompson, West Highland Free Press, 10-7-1987.

22.

Scottish Crofters' Union (Shetland branch), Shetland Crofters - a 100 years of Island Crofting, Lerwick, 1987. See also Torcuil Crichton's review, West Highland Free Press, 12-6-1987; and in the same edition his review of Shoard's This Land is our Land.

23.

By David Craig; letter in West Highland Free Press, 31-7-1987.

24.

Jim Wilkie, Metagama, Edinburgh, 1987. On a rather smaller island clearance (Soay), see Kenneth Allsop, Picture Post, 11-7-1953.)

25.

Sunday Mail, 26-7-1987. Glasgow Herald, 27-7-1987. Observer, 2-8-1987.

26.

West Highland Free Press, 5-6-1987. Oban Times, 11-6-1987. Glasgow Herald, 10-7-1987.

27.

The Independent, 24-6-1987 (reporting the publication from the RSPB of Forestry in the Flows of Caithness and Sutherland.) Oban Times, 23/30-7-1987. Glasgow Herald, 24-7-1987. Stornoway Gazette, 25-7-1987, 1-8-1987. Observer, 2-8-1987. West Highland Free Press, 7-8-1987; "The real enemies of Highland communities are landlords and their factors...on analysis all problems come back to who owns the land, and how it is managed".

28.

George, Rosie, Land wars as crofters cash in on forestry, Glasgow Herald, 23-6-1987. George Rosie, Threat to crofting from the boom in private forestry, West Highland Free Press,

3-7-1987.

29.

Glasgow Herald, 22-6-1987.

30.

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