THE BELFAST RIOTS IN 1857

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ABSTRACT

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The objective of this thesis is to examine the riots in Belfast in 1857 and to ascertain its uniqueness in the history of mid-nineteenth century urban disturbances. Compared with a more typical disturbance which transpired in London two years earlier, some important differences are apparent. Rather than a riot with the usual manifestations suggesting class conflict, Belfast witnessed the clash of two working class parties divided strictly on religious lines. While only members of the lower classes actually came into direct conflict, both sides received direct or indirect support from their religious brethren in higher levels of Belfast's society. For at stake was the survival or overthrow of a system that granted social, political, and economic privileges to one religious party over the other. While concentrating on events in 1857, the paper also briefly examines why sectarian harmony in Belfast and the rest of Ulster further deteriorates after this date.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I

INTRODUCTION

Compared with other mid-nineteenth century urban riots, the 1857 sectarian disturbances in Belfast seem relatively unimportant. Though hundreds were injured, no deaths were directly attributable to the riots and property damage proved to be relatively small. Yet these riots are nonetheless worthy of serious examination for a number of reasons. Few urban disturbances have been so prolonged in duration. During the last three weeks in July and again for the first two weeks in September, Belfast remained in what was termed "a state of siege". While there were only sixteen days of actual fighting, Ireland's "model town" was so disturbed that Parliament was forced to send two commissioners to report on the situation. More significantly, a comparison of these riots and more recent disturbances in Belfast suggest that the causes, the methods, and the very localities of rioting in Belfast have remained basically unchanged up to the present time. Thus, a thorough examination of these early riots might be extremely helpful in understanding Belfast today.

The primary source of information in the preparation of this paper has been the Report of the Commission of Inquiry - Belfast Riots, 1857. This Report was sent to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland before being forwarded to the Parliament at Westminster. In addition I have examined three Belfast newspapers for the months of July and September, the better to understand the chronology of events, to supplement and verify the Commissioners' Report, and to see how different segments of society interpreted the disturbances. Broadly, The Ulsterman represented Belfast's Roman

Catholic view, The Northern Whig that of the predominantly Protestant Whig or Liberal groups, and The Belfast News-Letter voiced the opinions of the Belfast Protestant Tory establishment. Moreover, another report, entitled The Inquiry into the Conduct of the Constabulary During the Disturbances, was examined for conflicts with earlier statements and possible elucidation of the causes of the riots. However, this Inquiry, also presented to the Lord Lieutenant, for the most part proved to be inadequate, as it presented little that was new and served merely to white-wash the authorities.

To understand the frictions that precipitated the 1857 riots it helps to note that Belfast had only recently surpassed Dublin as Ireland's principal industrial and commercial city.[1] Belfast's major industrial development was in the rapidly mechanizing linen trade.[2] The 1840s witnessed vast improvements in the town's port facilities, which enabled Belfast to also take the lead as Ireland's main trading and ship building center. These developments attracted the cheap labour required from the nearby rural areas of northern Ireland at a time when tenant farmers were being forced off the land by recurring famines and the Encumbered Estates Act of 1849.[3] Belfast's population rose from 70,000 in 1841 to approximately 110,000 in 1857, a significant increase at a time when Ireland's national

1. L.M. Cullen, An Economic History of Ireland Since 1660 (London, 1972), p. 161.

2. J.L. McCracken, "Early Victorian Belfast", ed. J.C. Beckett & R.E. Glasscock, Belfast: The Origin and Growth of an Industrial City (London, 1967), p. 89.

3. G.P. Macdonell, "From the Insurrectionary Movement of 1848 to the Land Act of 1870", ed. James Bryce, Two Centuries of Irish History: 1691-1870 (London, 1888), p. 429.

population was registering a slight decrease. The great majority of this huge, rural influx were Roman Catholics and, by 1857, Belfast had some 30,000 Catholic inhabitants. It was, therefore, during the very period that its economic growth was at its height that Belfast came to be characterized by recurrent communal rioting of a sectarian nature.

The 1857 upheavals, however, were definitely not the first disturbances to plague the town in the nineteenth century. Minor clashes had, from 1813 onwards, marked the Orange Day (July 12th) celebrations. In addition, elections, whether municipal or Parliamentary, provided the catalyst for violence in 1832, 1835, and 1841. Following the 1835 riots, court proceedings for the first time brought to light the existence of two distinct rival factions, "The Sandy-Row Boys" and "The Pound-Street Boys". These two parties clashed again in 1841, 1843, and 1852 and their animosity towards each other led to the "pulling down"[1] of houses during the 1843 and 1852 disturbances, forcing many to depart from their homes for good and move to other districts. By 1857 these two adjoining working-class districts had become polarized into a predominantly Protestant Sandy-Row area and a mainly Catholic Pound-Street area.[2] When disturbances broke out once again in 1857, it is not surprising that it should involve the inhabitants of these same two districts of Belfast.

1. I. Budge & C. O'Leary, Belfast: Approach to Crisis (London, 1973), p. 76.

2. I. Budge & C. O'Leary, pp. 75-77.

II

THE RIOTS

With the industrialization of Belfast and the recurring rural famines of the early 1800s, both the Pound-Street and the Sandy-Row districts grew rapidly, and by 1857, they totalled some 20,000 inhabitants. The population, composed almost exclusively of members of the labouring and artisan classes[1], depended for its livelihood primarily on the numerous linen mills and factories in the vicinity. Narrow streets and small houses characterized both districts and overcrowded conditions set the stage for the troubles to come. While the Protestant sector was slightly more populated, the Catholic inhabitants of the Pound were increasing at a far more rapid rate. The Catholic community in the Pound had, in fact, doubled in the twelve years prior to 1857.[2]

As the fatal day, 12 July 1857 approached, both districts seemed calmer than usual for this day of the year. On that evening, a large, orderly, Anglican procession made its way to Christ Church, located near the boundary between the two districts. Contrary to the law, however, a number of the marchers were seen putting on Orange scarves before entering the church.[3] As the popular minister, Dr. Drew, gave his usual stirring Orange oration, an overflow crowd assembled in the vicinity of the

1. The Report of the Commission of Inquiry, 1857 (Dublin, 1857), p. 1.
2. Ibid., p. 69.
3. Report Relating to the Conduct of the Constabulary During the Disturbances at Belfast in 1857 (Dublin, 1858), p. 12.

church. Suddenly, an inebriated young Catholic named John Loughran (Appendix I) drove a carriage through the Pound, inciting his fellow Catholics by waving an Orange lily. This may have led to the minor scuffles that took place that evening, but it wasn't until the following evening that the two factions actually confronted each other en masse, in Grosvenor Street, off Durham Street (see map), and pelted one another with stones until the constabulary arrived. The constables soon found themselves the common enemy when they attempted to separate the two parties and they were forced to use bayonets to disperse the rioters. During the ensuing confusion, the "Sandy-Row Boys" reassembled and attacked as many Catholic homes in the Pound as they could before the police arrived. This assault resulted in over four hundred smashed window panes.[1] When the local police finally arrived to clear the streets in the Pound area, they were set upon by angry Catholics who complained that the wreckers had been purposefully allowed to escape. Dozens of police were injured by stones, two seriously, with cracked skulls after they were dragged out of a Catholic home where they were seeking refuge. From this point on, as long as the riots lasted, the unarmed "locals" refused to enter the Pound unless escorted by troops.

For the next few evenings the battle ground shifted to Albert Crescent and a field nearby (see map). At about eight in the evening, the two groups, usually estimated at some two thousand each[2], assembled on opposing sides of the crescent. While the Protestants were gathering in the

1. The Ulsterman, 17 July 1857.
2. Ibid., 17 July 1857.

fields, the Catholics prepared for the battle by tearing up their own streets for ammunition. On the first evening, a Wednesday, a large body of local police, constabulary, and troops were stationed between the two parties to prevent the belligerents from getting within stone-throwing distance of one another. By Friday evening the crowds had grown larger and showed signs of being more anxious to fight. Gunshots from both sides, together with stones aimed at the police, forced Mr. Getty, the Mayor of Belfast, to read the Riot Act. In the noise and confusion there was doubt as to whether the mayor's declaration was actually heard, but, nonetheless, when the Catholics showed no signs of dispersing from their own district, the military, with bayonets fixed, charged into their midst. The Pound residents, fleeing in terror, smashed numerous gas lamps along the way, plunging the Pound into darkness. As horses stumbled in the darkened and torn up streets, hundreds of Catholic men, women, and children were injured, including many who were watching the proceedings from their own door steps. Catholics' hatred of the local police showed clearly when the rioters attacked them with paving stones as they fell behind the charging mounted military forces. A number of the "locals" were seriously injured, and three had to be sent to the hospital with almost fatal wounds.[1]

Work was over by four o'clock on Saturday and the crowds began milling about the Albert Crescent area by six o'clock, far earlier than usual. The authorities were caught off guard, and the mere handful of local police, stationed on Albert Crescent at this time, could not or would not do anything to prevent what followed. Two young Catholic boys

1. The Belfast News-Letter, 18 July.

were shot at and badly wounded. As if this were a signal, a large crowd charged the row of houses on Albert Crescent owned by a Mr. Watson, a well-to-do-Catholic. Since many of the tenants were Protestant, some blamed the incident on the Catholic party;[1] however, other accounts,[2] that were later confirmed by the authorities at the Commissioners' hearings, proved the action to have been committed by Protestants. The crowd tore down the shutters, window sashes and doorframes and set them ablaze in the street.

When the magistrates finally arrived with the Constabulary and military reinforcements, they found the two parties locked in hand-to-hand combat. Men, women, and children were all equally engaged fighting with stones, clubs, sticks, and anything else they could lay their hands on. Hundreds on both sides had to be carried away bleeding profusely. Once again the Riot Act was read, this time by Mr. Tracy, the Resident Magistrate. And, once again, the military were ordered into the Pound to disperse the Catholics that had gathered near the Albert Crescent area. Again many Catholics were left seriously maimed by the charging cavalry and nine prisoners, all Catholics, were arrested that evening.

The following Sunday and Monday evenings large numbers of troops and constables stationed between the two districts precluded further clashes, though scattered gun fire was heard through most of the evening hours. Though the rest of the town was unusually quiet, the police reported the movement of large bodies from other working-class areas to the disturbed

1. The Belfast News-Letter, 18 July.
2. The Ulsterman, 20 July; The Northern Whig, 21 July.

districts to aid their fellow co-religionists. While most of the fighting took place in the evenings, on Monday a day-time fight broke out between Protestant and Catholic workers at the Pound Mill, forcing the establishment to be closed for the day.[1] Large reinforcements of constabulary from the rest of Ireland arrived bringing an uneasy peace to Belfast for the remainder of July. This enforced truce lasted through August as well, yet a number of events took place that month that, in view of the charged atmosphere, kept the explosive situation simmering. On the sixth of August some seven hundred Catholic working men formed a gun club,[2] which, in turn, provoked the formation of the "Protestant Defense Association".[3] That month also saw the emergence of an issue that would play a key role in the September disturbances, open-air preaching. This was a practice that both the Anglican Church and the Presbyterian synod insisted on maintaining even though the magistrates felt strongly that its persistence could only lead to further violence. Street preaching continued even during the first week of riots in July but eventually most ministers, even those as outspoken as Dr. Drew, an avowed Orangeman, and the Rev. McIlwaine, famous for his no-Popery lectures,[4] bowed to the wishes of the city authorities. The Presbyterian Rev. Hanna, however, refused to give up "this blood-bought and cherished right".[5] In an open letter to the Protestants of Belfast (Appendix II) he "broadcast" his intention to

1. The Ulsterman, 22 July.
2. Ibid., 7 August.
3. The Belfast News-Letter, 12 September.
4. Report of the Commission of Inquiry, 1857, p. 66.
5. Ibid., p. 252.

preach on the town's quays (see map) on September sixth. This area had been free from party strife to this point and was the town's most popular spot for both Catholics and Protestants to stroll on Sunday afternoons. The day before the sermon placards appeared in parts of Belfast appealing to Catholics to stop the "insulting oration" planned by the obdurate Rev. Hanna (Appendix III).

By four o'clock on September 6th, an audience of some six to ten thousand had gathered by the Custom House steps to watch Rev. Hanna mount the rostrum. Ten minutes after the sermon began a huge cheer erupted from the crowd and, as if on cue, waves of Protestant ships' carpenters, swinging staves "borrowed" from a nearby shed, attacked groups of Catholics that had gathered along the quays. While hundreds of ill-prepared Catholics fell before this merciless onslaught, Rev. Hanna continued his preaching, seemingly oblivious of the mayhem around him. The authorities were finally able to separate the antagonists, but not before several more heads had been cracked open with paving stones. Once again, in an effort to separate the two groups, the military were ordered to drive the beleaguered Catholics away from the harbour area. Nine were arrested that day, all of whom, it appears, were Catholics. Roving bands of young Catholics and Protestants continued the struggle into the late afternoon moving through Barrack, Howard, and Waring Streets (see map). In the evening the disturbances returned to the old familiar battle grounds in the Pound and Sandy-Row districts.[1] Minor skirmishes and occasional gun fire marked the rest of the week. On September 11th, the exasperated city magistrates, under the chairmanship of the mayor, finally issued a proclamation forbidding assemblies

1. The Ulsterman, 7 September.

in the streets.[1]

To prevent a repetition of Sunday's fiasco the authorities placed a large contingent of constables and recently arrived troops from Scotland and Wales in the harbour area early the following Sunday afternoon. The day passed uneventfully until late in the evening when fighting erupted in Brown's Square (see map). Most Catholics had suggested all along that the local police were Protestant sympathizers and this clash in Brown's Square seemed to prove this contention. For the first time a number of witnesses were willing to testify that certain members of the local police took an active part in the riots.[2]

It was just after the July riots subsided that a number of Whigs (Liberals) signed a requisition for a public inquiry into the disturbances, a request that was granted a month later in the form of a Royal Commission. On Monday, September 14th, the government Inquiry began and the newspapers declared the hearings would soon show their side to be in the right. At the same time they were unanimous in their pleas for a stop to the violence. And apart from some minor attacks on individuals,[3] the pleas were generally heeded during the seventeen days of the Commissioners' session. Just before the Commissioners began their work, the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, signed a proclamation placing Belfast under "The Crime and Outrage Act",[4] giving the magistrates extraordinary powers to control further

1. The Belfast News-Letter, 12 September.
2. The Ulsterman, 14 September.
3. The Belfast News-Letter, 24 & 25 September.
4. Ibid., 12 September.

outbreaks of violence. Four days later, on September 19th, the Lord Lieutenant signed another proclamation "commanding all parties not duly qualified to hold arms in the proclaimed district of Belfast to deliver the same to the police authorities"[1]; failure to comply would entail a year's imprisonment. On Monday, September 21st, fifty licenses were issued by the Resident Magistrate but none were granted to those with past records or any resident of the disturbed districts. Though it was reported that large amounts of firearms were removed to the countryside and carefully buried for future use[2], this measure and the large reinforcements of constabulary finally put an end to the riots of 1857.

1. The Belfast News-Letter, 21 September.
2. Ibid., 25 September.

III

ANALYSIS OF THE RIOTS

Who took part in the riots? The best way to find out has proved to be the examination of the documents relating to those arrested. The most important of these have been the reports of police court cases as they have appeared in the Belfast press. However, while the local newspapers devoted considerable space to what took place in the police court, much was unfortunately devoted to the arguments of the opposing lawyers and very little to the activities of the prisoners themselves. Less than a third of the reports made any mention of the prisoners' religious affiliation. Overall, as it appeared that certain lawyers always defended the same religious party, it was possible to deduce that of the 109 arrested for riot and related offenses, 78 were Catholics and 31 were Protestants (for details see Appendix I).

Similarly, occupations were rarely given, but oblique references suggest that most of the prisoners were labourers. In the first week of disturbances The Belfast News-Letter called the Catholic rioters "a savage mob, a ruffianly mob, a crowd of blackguards, unscrupulous vagabonds, denizens of the Pound, and Romish rascals".[1] The Ulsterman had its own vocabulary of expletives, calling the Protestant rioters "Orange ruffians, cowardly ruffians, Orange assassins, Orange scoundrels, ragged miscreants, and degraded wretches".[2] Yet in spite of this obvious bias, both papers

1. The Belfast News-Letter, 16-22 July.
2. The Ulsterman, 16-22 July.

were agreed that the vast majority of the rioters were of the working class, and more specifically labourers in the mills located in the disturbed districts. In their accounts of the riots and those who were involved, the following statements were typical: "When the bell announced the hour for departure in the several mills in the vicinity of the riot-ground, the different workers rushed to their respective battle-grounds eager for the fray".[1] The Belfast News-Letter also implied that mill workers were the main participants: "It would", it wrote "be too much to expect them [the rioters] to exert their energies to such a pitch during the night, and think that they would be able to answer the mill-bell at six o'clock in the morning."[2] The Northern Whig, a paper less partisan in its attitude to either party than the previously mentioned publications, also believed the mill workers to be the main participants. Using heavy sarcasm the paper noted the events of Saturday, July 17th. "Mills and factories were closed, as usual, for some hours earlier than on other nights of the week. The operative classes who have taken part in these disturbances generally ceased labour about 4 o'clock, and those who had earnings to spend, and felt inclined for the struggle, had thus in their possession time and pecuniary means for strengthening their courage by the usual stimulants".[3] In addition, the Commissioners' hearings produced a number of witnesses who suggested the rioters were composed primarily of labourers. Statements from city officials indicating that those involved

1. The Ulsterman, 20 July.
2. The Belfast News-Letter, 21 July.
3. The Northern Whig, 21 July.

in the disturbances were of "largely the uneducated classes"[1] and of "the lower orders"[2] were common. Constables giving evidence in the Report Relating to Conduct of the Constabulary supported newspaper reports that Belfast's streets were relatively quiet and peaceful "but as soon as the mills were discharged [the streets] became as full as ever".[3]

One of the more unusual features in these riots was the large number of young people involved. Of those arrested, nineteen were described as boys or youths (see Appendix I). Mr. Tracy, the Resident Magistrate, suggested to the Commissioners that this high percentage was due to the simple fact that youngsters were easier to catch when it came to act in a chase. This simplistic explanation not only failed to comprehend the role played by youths in the disturbances, but it also ignored the long-range implications of sectarian bitterness handed down from one generation to another. At the Commissioners' hearings, Mr. Watson, the Catholic owner of some eighty new houses in the Albert Crescent area, complained that he and numerous other property-owners located in the vicinity petitioned two years earlier to have a police station located on the Crescent, but the request was rejected. Over the years the large field opposite his houses had become a well known gathering place for youths: "Boys and girls of each party collect there, and party feeling is so excitable, that older people come out, and the melee begins".[4] The retired Sub-Inspector of the Con-

1. Report of the Commission of Inquiry, 1857, p. 10.
2. Ibid., p. 69.
3. Report Relating to Conduct of Constabulary During the Disturbances at Belfast in 1857, p. 7.
4. Report of the Commission of Inquiry, 1857, p. 126.

stabulary, Mr. Hill, gave similar testimony to Mr. Watson's regarding the role of youths, though on almost everything else they disagreed. Mr. Hill, a man with obvious Orange connections and sympathies, attributed the cause of the riots mainly to the disagreements of youngsters working in the mills. "Those children used to meet and ask each other where they were from. One would say, 'I am from Sandy-Row', and another would reply, 'I am from Pound-Street'. Grown up people would join. I have frequently seen riots occur from that beginning".[1] At the police court most youths above the age of ten were fined the same amount as adults who committed a similar offense. While those below this age were fined considerably less (see AppendixI), their disruptive influence was not considered insignificant. When two small boys were brought before magistrate W.J.C. Allen in September for throwing stones, he noted that "stone-throwing by women and boys and children is, in nine cases out of ten, the commencement of these riots".[2]

Many of Belfast's linen mills were located right in the Pound and Sandy-Row districts, the very centers of cheap labour. A large number of those employed in these mills were youths, the majority of them being girls. At the hearings the Catholic side presented over a dozen young girls who testified how they were beaten up on their way to work by Protestant youths while the local police simply watched.[3] When they arrived late and battered and bruised to work, they were not only docked a part of their pay but were in fear of losing their jobs. A local police officer stationed by

1. Report of the Commission of Inquiry, 1857, p. 151.
2. The Belfast News-Letter, 12 September.
3. Report of the Commission of Inquiry, 1857, pp. 123-130.

the Salt Water Bridge (see map) where many of these assaults took place, admitted that he had witnessed these proceedings. The molesting and assaulting of Catholic mill workers crossing the bridge to get to Grimshaw's Mill, he testified, had in fact been going on for the four to six years. The spot had become so infamous that it had been dubbed "The Orange Cage".[1]

Women may have tended to play a minor role in most urban disturbances, but this was not the case in the Belfast riots. Only five women were arrested, but this figure definitely under-represents their significance. The only explanation for such a low number of arrests is the reluctance of the authorities to arrest women. This was evident in the Resident Magistrate's testimony. He showed his hesitancy to order a charge by the military when many rioters proved to be women accompanied by their children.[2] Once arrested, however, magistrates were no more lenient to them than they were to the men. In fact one of the stiffest fines was handed down in the case of Eliza Lawson (see Appendix I) for assault. There were times when women actually took part in the fighting[3], but more often their role was to provide ammunition for the conflict. The correspondent of the London Times noted that, during the upheavals in the Pound in September, "the women, as usual, were busy breaking bricks and carrying stones into the streets".[4] When the two factions faced each other for a whole week each evening in the Albert Crescent area, the women of both parties taunted their opponents by singing and dancing. There was little

1. Report of the Commission of Inquiry, 1857, p. 151.
2. The Belfast News-Letter, 16 September.
3. The Ulsterman, 20 July.
4. The London Times, 9 September, p. 7.

doubt, as Belfast's newspapers suggested, that "the male portion of the crowd were incited by the conduct of the female combatants".[1]

Evidence at the Commissioners' hearings also testified to the women's ferocity in the riots. Jonathan Lyons, an Englishman who witnessed the storming of Mr. Watson's houses on Albert Crescent, described Irish girls of seventeen and more as being as bad as any male rioter, "for she carries them the ammunition - the bricks".[2] Mr. Tracy also testified that women took an unusually active part in the disturbances, their main role being the gathering of ammunition and piling it on the street; some went as far as tearing up their own fireplaces to use the bricks. The Resident Magistrate claimed to have experienced great difficulty in clearing the streets because of the participation of women and children. "Our greatest difficulty was with women and children, for I am sure if we had fired there would be three of them shot for one of the rioters, and I must say these women were the worst of all."[3] In this male-dominated society, the women not only played an important role in the disturbances, but also in the subsequent hearings. More than half the witnesses were females, and in the case of the Catholic witnesses they accounted for over three in four. It was these Catholic women that were the most outspoken and bitter towards the police and city authorities. Their independence came, in part, from the fact that many worked in the mills and were in many instances the sole breadwinners in the family. Their obvious hostility towards the authorities, which often made their menfolk seem mild in com-

1. The Ulsterman, 17 July.
2. The Belfast News-Letter, 22 September.
3. Ibid., 16 September.

parison, may be attributed to the fact that they were the ones most often assaulted by Protestant youths. Many of them complained of receiving no assistance from the police, and often of having to put up with derogatory language from the very people who were supposed to protect them.

Urban disorders often give the criminal elements in a society the opportunity to pursue their profession with impunity. One can often measure the extent of criminal activity during such a period by the amount of looting that occurs. Nevertheless, it appears that in these riots criminals played an altogether minor role. Only four instances of what was classified as looting were mentioned at the hearings. During the attack on Mr. Watson's houses, for example, the wreckers tried to enter Mr. Boyle's pawnshop, located in one of Mr. Watson's buildings. Though they made a concerted effort to enter by breaking down the window and door frames, metal bars prevented them from gaining entrance. They had to be satisfied with stealing the three metal balls hanging over the entrance. Looting was also suggested by Chief Constable Green of the night force who claimed that "some articles of very valuable furniture were taken away during the wrecking" of Mr. Watson's houses.[1] In another case a musician in the Sandy-Row district was attacked by rioters who entered his house and removed a piano and a bass violin. However, in most of these cases, the objects were found destroyed in the streets, making these incidents acts of vandalism rather than looting.[2]

1. Report of the Commission of Inquiry, 1857, p. 69.
2. The Belfast News-Letter, 10 & 17 September.

Another way to measure the criminal activity taking place during the disturbances is to closely examine those arrested for rioting. In only one case, that involving Joseph Brown (see Appendix I), was there any mention of a criminal record. He had spent two months in prison for assault and when arrested for rioting was still on probation.[1] One means whereby lawyers defended their clients was by a rigorous cross examination of prosecution witnesses, and they did not hesitate to make it known if any had police records that would have made their evidence suspect.[2] Because of this and the highly charged partisanship expressed in the court house, it would seem evident that if any prisoners or witnesses had had criminal records, they would have come to light during the proceedings.

The question of leadership during the riots invariably presents difficulties. Many upper class Protestants were convinced of some sort of conspiracy to manipulate the Pound-Street "mob" into upsetting the denominational status quo in Belfast. Rumours of well dressed dark strangers lurking about late in the evening in the Pound were common but never substantiated. Nevertheless, it is not surprising that many in the city administration viewed some prominent Catholics as the instigators, if not the leaders, of the Pound-Street rioters. Testimony at the hearings referring to the issue of upper-class leadership during the riots was at times contradictory, even when made by the same witness. Mr. Tracy at one point suggested that the disturbances in July were traceable to the Parliamentary elections in April. Some civil disobedience had taken place

1. The Ulsterman, 11 September.
2. Report of the Commission of Inquiry, 1857, p. 32.

and party spirit in the middle and upper classes in Belfast was very high. The Resident Magistrate concluded that "if we go from effect to cause, and believing that there has been a great deal of strong language used amongst the upper classes here, it must come down the stream and effect the lower classes, who look up to their betters for example".[1] However, Mr. Tracy had also implied that the educated had no control over the rioting parties.[2] On still another occasion during the Inquiry he was asked if the riots were confined to the two disturbed districts "without going higher into society", and he replied that "the riots were altogether confined to Sandy-Row and Pound districts", suggesting that if the rioters had upper-class leaders, that leadership was an indirect one.[3]

An examination of the various methods used by the rioters suggests some elementary form of planning and organization. The wrecking of houses was never haphazard. Witnesses testified that they saw and heard individuals giving orders as to which houses were to be attacked and which were to be left alone.[4] Organization is also suggested by some witnesses who claimed that street lamps were extinguished just prior to the event to avoid identification.[5] Moreover, intimidation of Catholic mill workers was so well organized that the Catholic newspapers saw this as an Orange conspiracy[6] aimed at depriving Catholic mill workers of a livelihood. A simi-

1. Report of the Commission of Inquiry, 1857, p. 32.
2. Ibid., pp. 10-11.
3. Ibid., pp. 10-11.
4. Ibid., p. 101, & p. 120.
5. Ibid., p. 92.
6. The Ulsterman, 11 September.

use of intimidation and beatings was made to drive Catholics out of their homes in the Protestant area, and vice versa. The Ulsterman calculated that over thirty Catholic families were forced to leave Sandy-Row while about half that number of Protestants left the Pound.[1] Organization is also suggested by the rapid accumulation of enormous numbers of people without the summons of circulars or placards. This massing of rioters was, in fact, one of the characteristic features of the disturbances. Sometimes, a single incident taking place in one of the mills during the day was enough to provoke the assembly of five thousand protagonists in the early evening, only a few hours later.

A number of Catholics were accused, either directly or by inuendo both at the hearings and in the Protestant press, of leading the Pound-street rioters. One such person, who was indirectly accused, was John Hacket. Compared with other working men from the Pound who appeared before the Commissioners, his testimony proved to be exceptionally political and articulate. Protestant lawyers attempted to have him indicted for illegal union activities through his position as Secretary of the Labourers' Friendly Society[2]; and it is evident enough that John Hacket was a leader within the Catholic working-class community in Belfast. On their own initiative this segment of the Catholic population formed a gun club and chose John Hacket as their chairman. But while Hacket's leadership was only implied, it was upper-class Catholic leadership that concerned Belfast's authorities more. Both proprietors of The Ulsterman were directly accused during the hearings of playing a leading role during

1. The Ulsterman, 11 September.

2. Report of the Commission of Inquiry, 1857, p. 137.

the riots. One of them, Mr. McLaughlin, was identified by a Belfast magistrate, William Lyons, as the person "who seemed to be leading" the Catholic rioters.[1] Another magistrate, Robert Thompson, was of the same opinion and stated "that Mr. McLaughlin did all in his power, or in the power of any person, to excite the people, by loud talking, and, in fact, impertinence and gesticulations towards the military and the magistrates."[2] While it is true that both men were often at the scene of riots and were involved in the formation of the gun club, Catholics in the Pound depended on these two gentlemen for inspiration rather than leadership. The Town Council's distrust of the two men stemmed more from the articles they published than from any active role they may have played during the disturbances.

While no one was mentioned by name as being leaders of the Protestant rioters, organization was more evident by this party. The semi-secretive Orange Society, though originally a rural organization, had spread to Belfast at the turn of the century. By 1857 there were about thirty lodges in Belfast with an estimated membership of some 1,200[3], though The Ulsterman believed it was as high as 4,000[4]. Most members appeared to be of the uneducated, lower classes of Belfast's Protestant population, who had banded together to defend their way of life. The upper echelons of the Society, however, contained some of Ireland's most important nobles and politicians. It is therefore not surprising that this paramilitary

1. Report of the Commission of Inquiry, 1857, p. 137.
2. Ibid., p. 216.
3. Ibid., p. 217.
4. The Ulsterman, 22 July.

organization appears to have enjoyed the covert approval of the Town Council. That Orange lodges played an important role during the riots, there can be little doubt. The lodge that marched to Dr. Drew's church on July 12th, had Thomas Ward as its leader. His testimony before the Commissioners demonstrated the almost military precision with which the march was organized.[1] Though Mr. Ward tended to be secretive on a number of issues, he did mention that he and some other "concerned" citizens had a meeting with Rev. Hanna to plan the strategy for the Reverend's sermon on September 6th.[2] The aim of the Society was to be ever-vigilant against Catholic organizations which would seek to overthrow the government and break away from the British Crown. Such an organization was that of the Ribbonmen. Though The Belfast News-Letter equated the Pound-Street rioters with Ribbonmen, only the retired Sub-Inspector Mr. Hill brought up the issue before the Inquiry. He maintained that the outlawed organization was still active in Belfast and was responsible for promoting the riots.[3] However, less partial witnesses, such as the Resident Magistrate, assured the Commissioners that this Catholic body had already been stamped out by the Belfast police.[4]

While it is difficult to ascertain whether any of the Protestant clergy were actual leaders of the disturbances, it is apparent that some at least acted as a provocation. Three ministers in particular, Dr. Drew, Rev. McIlwaine, both Anglicans, and Rev. Hanna, a Presbyterian, played an important role during the riots. All three had their ministries in or

1. Report of the Commission of Inquiry, 1857, pp. 187-188.
2. The Belfast News-Letter, 28 September.
3. Report of the Commission of Inquiry, 1857, p. 154.
4. Ibid., pp. 28-35.

near the Sandy-Row area and were considered controversial preachers.[1] The latter two appeared at the Inquiry and both seemed to address themselves as much to the cheering crowd that packed the courtroom as to the Commissioners. When Rev. Hanna was asked if he would preach in the open air even if he believed a riot would ensue, he received a thunderous ovation from the gallery[2] when he replied, "I would sir. Our most valuable rights have been obtained by conflict; and if we cannot maintain them without that, we must submit to the necessity".[3] While these ministers remained in the public spotlight, their Catholic counterparts remained by contrast in the background. The priests' influence on Catholic rioters was probably minimal considering they made a concerted effort to keep their parisioners away from Rev. Hanna's open air sermon.

Social position and religion were closely linked in Belfast. Ever since Ireland was conquered and settled by English and Scottish Protestants, Ulstermen had enjoyed a privileged social and economic position. Gradually England was forced to grant more privileges to the Catholic majority. Seeing their status threatened, the more prosperous Protestant peasantry allied themselves with Protestant landowners to form the Orange Society in 1795. Their loyalty to the British Crown was soon tested and proven when, three years later, they assisted in putting down a Catholic uprising. In return, the government acceded to the Society's demand for a "Protestant Ascendancy". For the ruling classes this meant a preserva-

1. These three ministers were well known for their sermons on the errors of Roman Catholic theology.

2. The Belfast News-Letter, 26 September.

3. Report of the Commission of Inquiry, 1857, p. 167.

tion of their political, social, and economic power. For the poorer Anglicans it meant a defense of their privileges and the formation of "a kind of plebeian aristocracy in Ireland".[1] Together they actively opposed any measure that was designed to conciliate the Irish Catholic majority. The society they created was thus "both a barrier to revolution and an obstacle to compromise".[2] Though this ascendancy had been achieved with the aid of Presbyterians, they were not considered equals in the Anglicans' conception of society.[3] Seen in its most extreme form, this alliance created a society "which established Episcopalianism, made Presbyterianism a second-class religion and Roman Catholicism an outlaw sect".[4]

This rural-based conception of society was significantly modified in Belfast. While religion still placed people in a hierarchy of social levels, the structure was tempered by capitalism. Belfast's commercialism democratised society by placing an increased emphasis on wealth, making it possible for individuals of any religion to gain in social prominence. In this town the ascendancy, in practice, was limited to a Protestant monopoly of government offices, and the small Catholic population tended to passively accept this form of discrimination until the 1830s. In 1829 the Catholic Emancipation Act granted Catholics the right to run

1. Howard, Senior, Orangeism in Ireland and Britain: 1795-1836 (Toronto, 1966), p. 274.

2. Ibid., p. 284.

3. Roger H. Hull, The Irish Triangle: Conflict in Northern Ireland (Princeton, 1976), p. 28.

4. O.D. Edwards, The Sins of Our Fathers: Roots of Conflict in Northern Ireland (Dublin, 1970), p. 74.

for Parliament and this combined with new waves of Catholics settling in Belfast presented a challenge, to the Protestant monopoly of government posts. Wealthy Catholics ran in both the general elections and for the Town Council and this resulted in increased Orange activities and sectarian tension. Whether religion or money determined a man's social position depended upon who was questioned. A lower-class Protestant would have said religion, since otherwise he would have nothing to distinguish himself from the poor Catholic mill workers who occupied the lowest social strata. Prosperous Protestants often used the term "respectable gentlemen"[1] at the hearings when referring to wealthy Catholics, though the compliment may have been given grudgingly. The interrelationship of the two factors was complex and perhaps Sub-Inspector Bindon stated it best when he claimed simply that Belfast society "showed a definite bias towards class and Protestantism".[2]

The manner in which witnesses were treated at the hearings revealed some interesting aspects involving Belfast's social structure. This was particularly evident when four Protestant witnesses "crossed the floor" to support the other side. All four sided with the Catholic party on the issue of partisan action by the local police. John Shaw, James Barnett, and Thomas Johnston were wealthy Protestants and, though their testimony obviously displeased the Protestant lawyers cross-examining them, they were treated with courtesy. When the fourth witness, Jonathan Lyons,[3] a

1. Report of the Commission of Inquiry, 1857, pp. 62-70.
2. Ibid., p. 58.
3. The Belfast News-Letter, 22 September.

telegraphic linesman from England, was questioned by Protestant lawyers, they and the Protestant press mocked his accent and even questioned his "audacity" to honestly call himself a true Protestant. Throughout the entire Inquiry, witnesses from the lower classes, whether they were Protestant or Catholic, when cross-examined, had to face sarcasm which questioned their credibility. When the Earl of Enniskillen, the Grand Master of the Orange Society and perhaps the most hated man in the Catholic community, appeared before the Commissioners, he was treated almost reverently by both parties of lawyers as well as by the two Commissioners.[1]

One important task is to consider what evidence there is of any clear-cut conflict of classes in these riots. Such a conflict is usually characterized in urban disturbances by the specific destruction of certain buildings, institutions, attacks against "marked" inhabitants, and the public expression of an ideology on class hostility. There is very little evidence to prove that such expressions were in fact a feature of these riots. It is true that some upper-class individuals and their property were attacked by the "mob" but it appeared that religious affiliation was of prime importance. Attacks on property were purely superficial. After so many weeks of upheaval, no more than £167 of property damage occurred.[2] The aim of the wreckers seemed more to frighten away certain tenants than to totally destroy their property. One example of this was the attack on Mr. Watson's houses. Since most of his tenants were Protestants, it was natural to assume, as the Belfast News-Letter did[3], that

1. Report of the Commission of Inquiry, 1857, pp. 180-182.
2. Report Relating to Conduct of Constabulary, p. 16.
3. The Belfast News-Letter, 18 July.

that the attack came from Catholic rioters. A closer examination revealed that Protestants were responsible. At the Inquiry, Mr. Watson explained that he was receiving a very low rate of return on his investment and, in a desire to upgrade the area and receive higher rents, sought as many Protestant tenants as possible to "help to mix that district and change it".[1] Those that tried to damage his property were Protestants who were upset that fellow religionists were paying rent to a "Popish landlord".[2] The only other times class antagonism seemed to manifest itself was when rioters attempted to physically injure members of the upper classes that entered the disturbed areas. This occurred when Protestants tried to attack the owners of The Ulsterman and when Catholics threw bricks at magistrates. In both cases the issue was not so much that they were members of a higher class, as the positions the individuals held and their relationship to the rioters. However, the fact that such attacks did not occur, was, to a large extent, due to riots being confined to a small, almost exclusively homogeneous, area of Belfast, making the upper class inaccessible to rioters. Nevertheless, a wealthy-looking individual, foolish enough to be in the area, would be set upon if it was known he was a member of the "wrong religion".

While a conflict between classes is not evident, the Catholic press did suggest that members of the Protestant political establishment had manipulated the Sandy-Row Boys to do its dirty work. According to The Ulsterman, the Orange Society "number among their chiefs several of the leaders of the Tory Corporation party: and their organization is specially kept up for the

1. The Belfast News-Letter, 23 September.

2. The Ulsterman, 20 July.

maintenance of that faction in its supremacy over the town". This, according to the paper, was the only way to explain how an Orangeman, "with not five shillings worth of clothes on him, can be found in possession of a minie rifle and plenty of ammunition".[1] An editorial in The Northern Whig repeated this[2]; however, this aspect of the riots was somehow ignored by the Commissioners during the hearings. Considering that the average fine was close to sixty shillings (40s fine plus 20s costs), for most prisoners over a month's wages, it is surprising how many were able to escape jail by paying their fines. It seems more than likely that a number of upper-class Protestants and Catholics gave both moral and financial support to their lower class co-religionists.

Considering that the majority of the rioters on both sides were mill workers, it is surprising that not one of the owners of these establishments was called upon to appear at the Inquiry. Yet not to do so voluntarily seemed consistent with the mill owners' desire to remain as neutral as possible during the entire period of upheaval. This policy became apparent when The Ulsterman reported that shots were fired by Protestant rioters from the property of the Pound Mill and "that the commencement of every riot proceeded from the workers of this establishment".[3] Two days later a letter appeared in the same newspaper from Mr. John Hind, owner of the mill, stating that a full inquiry was made into the matter and he was satisfied that no shots were fired from his premises. He also went on to say that he would not tolerate any "party spirit" at the mill and would immediately

1. The Ulsterman, 22 July.
2. The Northern Whig, 8 September.
3. The Ulsterman, 20 July.

discharge any employee guilty of such behaviour.[1]

The disturbances were interpreted by many as a struggle by one party to overthrow the political structure in Belfast, and by the other, to uphold status quo. Ever since 1829 and The Catholic Emancipation Act Catholics had the right to hold political office. As the number of Catholics eligible to hold a voting franchise increased in Belfast, religion and politics soon became inseparable issues.[2] As a result of this act, one which Catholics had fought for over decades, they enthusiastically became involved in further demands for parliamentary reform. This led to a natural alliance with the Whig or Liberal party. Though this party had, among its supporters, middle and upper-class Protestants, both groups had certain political views in common in addition to the knowledge that they were both omitted from the political-spoils system. The passage of the 1832 Reform Bill built up the hopes of the Catholic-Whig political alliance, but in the first general election following the Bill, both Liberal candidates running for Belfast's two seats were soundly defeated. The Tories continued to represent the town at Westminster for the next ten years. However, support for the Liberals continued to grow, especially within Belfast's Presbyterian community who were also being denied their share of political appointments. By the 1840s the Liberals posed a definite threat to the Tory monopoly, but the two parties agreed in the early 1840s to share the two seats. An uproar followed, and finally a select committee from the House of Commons was formed to determine if the elections were attended by any illegal activities. The committee soon discovered "that

1. The Ulsterman, 22 July.

2. Hull, p. 30.

gross bribery and extensive corruption had characterized the 1841 election in Belfast".[1]

Over the next decade election campaigns in Belfast became more and more a platform for religious fanaticism, and by the time of the 1847 general election, The Belfast News-Letter openly ran anti-Catholic propaganda, and urged all loyal Protestants to vote for the Tories. This did not prevent a Liberal candidate, R.J. Tennent, from winning one of the two seats. In 1852, the general election fell on July 12th, and, considering the strong feelings that this date evoked among both Catholics and Protestants, it is not surprising that a bloody riot broke out. The tactics used were repeated again five years later. As in 1857, the fighting was confined to Catholics from the Pound and Protestants from Durham Street (the main thoroughfare in Sandy-Row). At night shots were fired from windows and at least one person was killed while the wounded were carried away by friends. A new feature, repeated again five years later, was the Catholic and Protestant inhabitants who were forced to flee their homes, carrying their furniture with them.[2] In the elections the Liberal candidate, R.J. Tennent, lost his seat and once again the Tories gained control of both seats.

The relationship between religion and politics became stronger with the general elections of April 1857. The Belfast News-Letter attacked not only the Catholics and their "Romish Intolerance", but also the Presbyterians for nominating one of their own as a Liberal candidate. The editors of the paper rightly feared that the nomination of tobacco manufacturer,

1. McCracken, p. 95.
2. Budge & O'Leary, p. 77.

Thomas McClure, might cause the majority of Presbyterian voters to leave the Tory fold. However, due to some extraordinarily partisan tactics by the municipal administration, what should have been a close election became a Tory landslide.[1] Some of these unusual practices came to light during the September hearing. Several witnesses involved in earlier elections contended that the April elections, played a large part in the July riots. Those that spoke on this issue all contended that Tory partisanship by the local police led to the Conservative victory. John McKenzie Shaw and Samuel Cunningham, for example, described the police as "strong Conservative partisans"[2] who stood idly by during the beatings of Liberals by Tory sympathizers. On one occasion when a member of the Liberal party asked one of the local police to help, the officer was not only unwilling to interfere but was impertinent as well.[3]

Among other witnesses, James Barnett, had supported one of the Liberal candidates in the elections and testified how the Tories, with the aid of the Mayor and the local police, gained control of the court house where the hustings were held.[4] This was corroborated by Thomas Johnston, who observed several Liberals being turned away at the door by the police. Those who did manage to enter were set upon by Tory supporters and thrown out by the police.[5] These witnesses all agreed that the riots were preci-

1. Budge & O'Leary, p. 77.
2. Report of the Commission of Inquiry, 1857, p. 157.
3. Ibid., pp. 157-158,221.
4. Ibid., p. 221.
5. Ibid., pp. 233-234.

pitated by a religious hate campaign instigated by politicians and newspapers for political purposes. The connection between religion and politics led Liberal supporter Samuel Cunningham to note that "owing to the way in which religion was made the turning point of the election, the Established Church here is looked upon... as the political establishment".[1]

Some of the practices of the municipal government were examined during the hearings and certain activities of the Town Corporation became highly suspect. From its inception in 1842 until 1855, the Tory Party was able to keep out of the Belfast Town Council every Catholic and Liberal that ran for office. This was accomplished mainly through the efforts of a Mr. John Bates, an individual who held the dual role of Town Clerk and election manager for the Conservative Party.[2] Through his efforts a number of tax collectors won the position of ward secretary in Belfast. Failure to pay rates meant the loss of voting rights, and a picture of a deliberate and selective policy of disenfranchising non-Tory supporters was outlined at the hearings. Though witnesses from the town's administration denied any knowledge of the matter, Mr. Rea, one of the lawyers representing the Catholic and Whig parties, claimed that one-third of the Catholics who held votes in Belfast elections had lost them, including Mr. Macnamara, the town's only Catholic magistrate, and even Belfast's Roman Catholic Bishop.[3]

The Conservative monopoly of the Town Corporation ended in 1855 with the election to Council of Mr. Rea. Liberal supporters went to Council meet-

1. Report of the Commission of Inquiry, 1857, p. 221.
2. Ibid., p. 146 & p. 235.
3. Ibid., p. 146.

ings to cheer on their spokesman, and the attitude of the Tory establishment to this new development was best summed up in the testimony of William Hamilton. "They became so rough and unruly, that the Mayor had to order a railing to keep what I may call the mob separate from members of Council, such was the rush to hear these extraordinary speeches" (by Mr. Rea).[1] However, in spite of running in every ward, Mr. Rea was not reelected in 1856 and the situation returned to its "quiet and nice" state. But while the Conservatives were able to prevent Mr. Rea's reelection, other, obviously less outspoken, critics had won places on Council.

Of all the questionable practices of the Town Corporation, the one given the most attention at the hearings was that concerning the selection of the local police constables. When officials responsible for selecting these officers were questioned on why only seven Catholics were on the force totalling one hundred and sixty men, they all maintained the disproportionate figures were due to chance rather than design. Late in the Inquiry this view was seriously challenged when Bernard Hughes, a Catholic and a member of the police committee, testified. He claimed that while technically the religion of the candidates was never mentioned, it was obvious that the members of the committee had previous knowledge of the individuals applying. Some would say "This is my man", implying that they knew the man and his religious beliefs. Hughes further claimed that the majority of the local force were known Orangemen who made sure to send word to their friends and members of the Society when a vacancy arose.[2] This system was perpetuated by the fact that new openings on the force were never

1. Report of the Commission of Inquiry, 1857, p. 146.
2. Ibid., p. 146.

publically advertised except for a small notice displayed at police headquarters.

Everything, in fact, points to religious differences as being the main cause of the disturbances, and the history of Ireland only seems to confirm this view. For hundreds of years the Anglican Church had attempted to convert Irish Catholics, but it was not until the famine years of the 1840s that the Established Church, through its missions, made a concerted effort to impose Protestantism on the whole of Ireland. As missionaries visited every corner of the country, some officials of the Anglican Irish Missions were under the unbelievable delusion that within a short time the Protestants would form a majority in the country. However, as one might expect, the missionary program led only to increasing hostility as it tended to make the majority more intensely Catholic than ever before.[1]

After 1830 anti-Catholic ministers from the Anglican and Presbyterian churches became more conspicuous in Belfast's religious and political life. Some like the Anglican Rev. Thomas Drew, Rector of Christ Church in the Sandy-Row area, maintained a close association with the Orange Society. Dr. Drew gained an impressive reputation for his lectures on the errors of the Church of Rome. Catholics were often "cordially invited" to attend these discourses. In 1854, he founded the Christ Church Protestant Association to renew the struggle for Protestant Ascendancy. Two years later he decided to preach in the open air and continued to do so regularly on Sundays throughout the summer of 1857.[2] Other anti-Catholic preachers soon followed suit, such as the Rev. Thomas McIlwaine of the

1. G.P. Macdonell, pp. 438-441.

2. Budge & O'Leary, p. 79.

Church of Ireland. However, both these ministers bowed to the wishes of the Parochial Mission[1] and the magistrates and eventually ceased taking part in open air services.

Anti-Catholic Presbyterian ministers were not so willing to give up their right to preach in the open air. In part this may be because, in Belfast society, Presbyterians found themselves wedged between the Catholics and Anglicans. Though a large number of Presbyterians were politically affiliated with the Catholics, many of the lower-class members of the order attempted to become more Tory and "Protestant". They accomplished this by becoming more anti-Catholic. One of this group's most noted spokesmen was Dr. Henry Cooke. From 1830 until his death in 1868, he was the town's most formidable anti-Catholic preacher and leading Conservative. He saw a link between plans for Irish political autonomy and the designs of the Church of Rome.[2] His failure to take an active part in open-air preaching in 1857 was due to illness. It was left to the Rev. Hugh Hanna of the Clifton Presbyterian Church near the Sandy-Row area, to play the most active part, in the debate over open air preaching. He decided to preach outdoors only after the other Protestant ministers decided against it, because he felt it was a bad precedent to give into the demands of the Catholic "mob".[3]

Before they finally ceased open air services on 2 September, the Belfast Parochial Mission had justified the sermons with the argument that Belfast's Anglican Churches could only hold twenty percent of their members.

1. Report of the Commission of Inquiry, 1857, p. 256.
2. Budge & O'Leary, p. 79.
3. Report of the Commission of Inquiry, 1857, p. 168.

These services became necessary to "meet urgent and acknowledged spiritual wants of this parish".[1] The Ulsterman, however, noted that on most Sundays Belfast's Protestant churches were half empty and gave two further reasons why these sermons were being insisted upon. One was simply to reach the great majority of the working class which did not attend church services. The other, and major, reason was to provoke Belfast's Catholics.[2]

As was often observed at the Inquiry, open-air sermons had a long tradition in Belfast, and generally they were received with little fuss on the part of the Catholic community. But The Ulsterman countered that "it was not till two well known fanatical Orange preachers... threatened to follow up their church harangues to the Orange gangs, by defiantly continuing their inflammatory discourses in the open air, that some of the humble Catholics, who had so recently been the victims of Orange outrages, threatened angry resistance".[3] While the Rev. Hanna and associates equated the right to preach in the open air with religious freedom, others, including The Times of London, saw these sermons more as a "right to insult".[4] Just how insulting can be seen by Rev. Drew's sermon to the Orange congregation on July 12th (see Appendix IV), which played no small part in sparking the riots. His two hour diatribe, which, as usual, mixed religion and secular politics, began with a blood and guts account, complete with sexual innuendos, of the horrors Protestants faced at the hands of Roman Catholics. Warming to his subject Dr. Drew then reminded his flock that it was the duty of the greatest empire in the world to convert the world to the Protestant

1. Report of the Commission of Inquiry, 1857, p. 256.
2. The Ulsterman, 16 September.
3. Ibid., 16 September.
4. The Times, 15 September.

faith. This was especially needed in Ireland, where countless uprisings against the Crown had proved the disloyalty of Catholics, for it was not possible to be loyal to both Pope and Queen. He concluded with a message obviously intended to instill strong passions in his audience; brave Protestants had died for their religion, "we are inhabiting the homes they provided; we are the occupants of the churches they rescued from silence and decay. We are enjoying the liberty they purchased, and we call the land of William's victory, 'Protestant Ireland;' "[1]

Both Catholics and Whigs were critical of the role played by Belfast's police, but of the three branches it was the Town Council's local force that was by far the most often accused of partisanship. A highly questionable recruiting procedure ensured the formation of a local force composed almost exclusively of Protestant farmers' sons from the nearby counties of Down and Antrim. Their strong Orange leanings and their general support of the Tory Party had for many years made them incapable of exercising their peace-keeping functions in the Catholic districts with any degree of impartiality. Ever since the Municipal Corporation was formed Catholics had complained they were victimized by the obvious bias shown by both the local police and the Town Council, many of whose members did not hesitate at the hearings to express their loyalty to the Orange Society.[2] The local force had continually met resistence by residents in the Pound, and it was only when Hugh Heaney, a Catholic member of the force, was given a beat in the area, that a local officer was "permitted to move about

1. Report of the Commission of Inquiry, 1857, p. 252.
2. Ibid., pp. 154-157 & pp. 152-153.

at all by them".[1] Though the Catholic press was forever critical of the role played by the police, perhaps the most publicized case of bias that was revealed by the Inquiry occurred in 1855 when two of the local police were found guilty of maliciously assaulting a Catholic. They were sentenced to three months imprisonment and dismissed from the force. Within a short time, however, they were reinstated by the Town Council.[2]

Among Catholics it was the young mill-girls that were the most critical of the force. Some testified that officers often stood by when they were beaten and they often laughed or even abused them when they pleaded for assistance.[3] Others gave evidence that members of the force refused to protect Catholic property when assaulted by Protestants.[4] Police policy was also remarkably partial in the case of processions and the playing of party tunes. This was a common occurrence in Belfast, especially as the 12th of July approached. In 1857, drums and flutes were heard every night during the week previous to the Anniversary of the Boyne. Although such processions were illegal the retired Sub-Inspector of the Constabulary "made a wide distinction between Orangemen and Ribbonmen".[5] John McLaughlin claimed that he and a number of other residents also had made numerous complaints about Orange party tunes in the well-to-do Malone Road area, and though repeated representations were made, nothing was done. The owner of The Ulster-

1. Belfast News-Letter, 19 September.
2. Ibid., 23 September.
3. Report of the Commission of Inquiry, 1857, p. 123 & p. 129.
4. Ibid., pp. 87-94.
5. Ibid., p. 154.

man testified that he eventually spoke to an officer about the bands and was told "we cannot search them all. We hear music, and we go up to them, but they drop playing, and we cannot do anything".[1] However, Catholic processions had been virtually stamped out in all of Ulster[2], which showed what the forces of law could do if they were so inclined. The retired Sub-Inspector admitted this inconsistancy but defended his actions against the Ribbonmen rather than the Orangemen for violating the Processions Act. This was because the Protestant organization he claimed, had always proved their loyalty while the Ribbonmen were guilty of disloyalty and "by disloyalty, I mean resistance to the constitued authorities".[3]

Even more damaging to the reputation of the town's local force was the testimony of Catholic witnesses concerning the partisan role played by the police during the actual riots. The presence of police near the Orange marchers going to Dr. Drew's church on July 12th, for example, appeared to Catholics more as a guard of honour than a peace-keeping force.[4] Others testified that the police helped erect Orange arches and offered encouragement to Protestant rioters.[5] Poor Catholics were not the only ones upset by the local force. A wealthy Protestant distiller claimed that in his opinion the local force was "totally devoid of discipline" and James Burnett, a magistrate, did not believe the force was one "which the public can place

1. The Belfast News-Letter, 22 September.
2. Report of the Commission of Inquiry, 1857, p. 156.
3. Ibid., p. 157.
4. Ibid., pp. 35-137.
5. The Belfast News-Letter, 21 & 22 September.

confidence in".[1]

All the testimony against the local police might have been futile had it not been for the fact that five of the local force had been summoned to appear in court for being in concert with Sandy-Row rioters for the disturbances on 13 September.[2] While the hearings continued before the Commissioners, the 13 September incident was investigated and the role of the police was considered serious enough by the magistrates to send five members to the assizes. Some nine months after the hearings before the Commissioners, the Report Relating to Conduct of Constabulary was completed and it purposefully omitted the role played by the local force since "they were admittedly a hindrance rather than a help".[3]

Belfast's small force of harbour police were involved in the riots only during Rev. Hanna's sermon near the Custom House. These constables were appointed by the Harbour Commissioners, who in turn were responsible to the Belfast Town Council. The force worked every day with workers well known for their anti-Catholic sentiments. This was especially true of the ship's carpenters who had virtually formed a closed shop composed of Orangemen and who took an active part in "protecting" Rev. Hanna on 6 September. The Chief Constable of the harbour police, Samuel Dunlop, was the one who gave the order to open the locked gate that guarded the area where the staves were located, rather than risk damage to harbour property.[4] Though this gave

1. Report of the Commission of Inquiry, 1857, p. 157, p. 211.
2. The Ulsterman, 16 September.
3. Report Relating to Conduct of Constabulary, p. 3.
4. Report of the Commission of Inquiry, 1857, p. 196.

the ship's carpenters access to these murderous weapons, he was exonerated for his actions by the Harbour Commissioners.[1]

The Irish Constabulary was an island-wide force formed in 1836 and though at first mainly Protestant, it had by 1857 become a mixed body. Appointments were independent of Belfast's Town Council and since this force was ultimately responsible to the Lord-Lieutenant in Dublin, the Catholic community in Belfast considered the Constabulary a more neutral force than the other peace-keeping bodies. The Ulsterman had nothing but praise for the Sub-Inspector of the Constabulary, Mr. Bindon, "for the courage he displayed, the skill with which he arranged his men, and the evident desire he had to put down the riot without reference to party".[2] In contrast, the Chief Constable of the local force, day division, was described in The Ulsterman as one "who possesses a more than usual share of official stupidity", while Mr. Green, the Chief Constable of the local night force, was seen as one "desirous of removing any unfortunate prejudices which his name might excite by being as Orange as possible".[3] (The colour green was considered the Catholic equivalent to the Protestant orange). While Catholics generally viewed the Constabulary as a less partisan force, it did not prevent the Pound rioters from also seeing them as an enemy to be dealt with. But, unlike the local force, the Constabulary met with almost equal opposition in both the Pound and the Sandy-Row areas.[4] When they stepped between the rival factions they were, in fact, often attacked simultaneously by both sides.

1. Report of the Commission of Inquiry, 1857, p. 196.
2. The Ulsterman, 17 July.
3. Ibid., 18 September.
4. Report of the Commission of Inquiry, 1857, p. 231, 233.

There was, however, some criticism of the Constabulary, and surprisingly it came mainly from within the force itself. Constable Patrick McGivney, a Catholic, testified at the hearings that Mr. Watson's property could have been saved, had it not been for a ten-minute delay in marching to the disturbed area. This delay he attributed to Mr. Bindon's fear or partisanship.[1] It was this statement which initiated the investigation that culminated in the Report Relating to Conduct of Constabulary, which, as might be expected, exonerated Mr. Bindon's conduct, praised the impartiality of the force, and found Constable McGivney to be "labouring under some morbid sense of wrong which we could not fathom".[2] It also suggested that the force had concentrated its efforts in the Pound simply because that was where the rioters congregated. Much was made of the narrow lanes and entries in the area and the problems they presented for the dispersing of crowds. The Commissioners of this Report, in fact, concluded that it was because the area presented the authorities with so many difficulties that the rioters gathered in this district rather than the Sandy-Row area with its wider streets. This, however, does not explain why more Protestant rioters were not arrested as they made their way back to the more easily controlled Sandy-Row area or why only Catholics were arrested near the quays on the day Rev. Hanna preached his open-air sermon.

The responsibility for deploying and directing the police forces ultimately lay with Belfast's ten magistrates. These ten individuals, serving a population of 110,000, proved to be far too few, especially in a town with as many sectarian disturbances as Belfast had already experienced.

1. Report of the Commission of Inquiry, 1857, p. 227.
2. Report Relating to Conduct of Constabulary, p. 2.

For the town's Catholic community, the magistrates, all of whom but one was a Protestant, proved to be inept and far too biased to hold such responsible positions. Catholics in general were convinced that most of these justices of the peace were Tories with Orange leanings, who had only accepted the position of magistrate for its "social distinction".[1] The Resident Magistrate, Mr. Tracy, was heavily criticized in the columns of The Ulsterman, though not for any display of bias, for he was seen as an "honest and well intentioned"[2] man, but rather for his weakness and naivety. In spite of being warned to the contrary by Catholic journals, Mr. Tracy was assured by the local police that the 1857 Anniversary of the Boyne would be the quietest in years[3]. As a consequence no precautions were taken despite the fact that party sentiments were still inflamed from the general elections of four months earlier. To make matters worse, a serious sectarian brawl had taken place on 1 July only seven miles away in Crossgar, which resulted in one person being killed and hundreds seriously wounded. The event was given ample cover in the press and this only heightened tension in the city as the Orange Day celebrations approached.

Throughout the riots the police constantly arrived late, usually only after the mischief had been committed. This The Northern Whig blamed directly on the lack of magistrates, as neither the Constabulary nor the local force had any desire to act on their own initiative and assume unnecessary responsibility.[4] However, when magistrates arrived, they almost always

1. The Ulsterman, 17 July.
2. Ibid., 17 July.
3. Ibid., 18 September.
4. The Northern Whig, 21 July.

sent the police and troops into the Pound to disperse Catholics and allowed the Sandy-Row rioters to escape. Because of this it is not surprising that almost three times as many Catholics were arrested as Protestants during the riots. But the most bitter criticism by the Catholic and Whig press was reserved for the magistrates' role as justices of the peace. The most damaging to the magistrates' reputation occurred during the first week of disturbances. Seven Catholics were arrested for failing to disperse after the Riot Act was read, and when Mr. Rea tried to speak on behalf of the prisoners, he was refused permission. A heated debate took place but Mr. Tracy claimed that he and his fellow magistrates had already "made up their minds" to send the case to the assizes. The editors of The Northern Whig noted that because of the population's eagerness to find "the slightest appearance of partiality in the adjudicating executive, it might have been better to have disarmed all suspicion of unfair play".[1] Adding more fuel to the fire was the fact that these prisoners were either arrested on their own doorsteps or within their own houses and were subsequently found not guilty by the judges at the assizes.[2]

Whether it was done intentionally or through sheer stupidity, it seems that almost every move by the magistrates antagonized the Catholic community. For example, as the riots subsided in September and the hearings were in progress, the magistrates offered a reward of fifty to seventy pounds for information leading to the prosecution of those who recently wrecked three Protestant houses. This outraged many Catholics who questioned why the magistrates had not acted in a similar fashion when some fifty

1. The Northern Whig, 21 July.
2. The Ulsterman, 24 July.

to one hundred Catholic homes had suffered in July.[1] With the eyes of the world on them after the Rev. Hanna fiasco, the magistrates finally issued a proclamation on 11 September forbidding assemblies in the streets. This drew the ire of various sectors of Belfast's Protestant population, especially Rev. Hanna, who in a letter to The Belfast News-Letter, stated his intention to continue open-air preaching (see Appendix V). While this direct challenge forced the magistrates to finally remove Rev. Hanna from his open-air pulpit on 20 September at gunpoint,[2] they did not act against less inflammatory Protestant ministers who continued to preach in the open air and to draw large crowds up to the end of September.[3]

The most serious obstacle to future peace in Belfast was the history of the Orange Society's connection with the town's magistrates. Lord Chancellor Brady, in a letter to Lord Londonderry, wrote that this connection was serious enough for him to suggest that in future every individual holding the commission of the peace should have no attachment to the Society. The letter caused a storm of indignation, and though it seemed the government would support the measure, the Brady Letter did not, in the long run, lead to any change. "The truth was [it has been written] that for political reasons no English Government had the courage to declare open war on Orangeism".[4]

Urban disturbances have often been attributed to a rapid rise in the price of food. However, in Belfast in 1857, food prices were not only

1. The Belfast News-Letter, 23 September.
2. Ibid., 21 September.
3. Ibid., 22 & 28 September.
4. G.P. Macdonell, p. 457.

stable but, following one of the best harvests in years, were actually declining by the middle of July.[1] While it is true that one grocery store in the Pound was attacked by rioters, nothing in it was looted and the attack appeared to have been due less to any economic cause than to the fact that the proprietor was a Protestant. But while food prices remained stable and therefore did not play a part in the disturbances, there was a great deal of competition for homes and jobs. As with many towns and cities experiencing an industrial revolution, the construction of houses could not keep pace with the population explosion. Catholics, normally concentrated in the two working class areas of the Pound and Smithfield, were forced to seek accomodation in lower-class Protestant districts, including Sandy-Row. Where competition for housing developed between Catholics and Protestants, rents increased. This explains in part why Mr. Watson tried to get as many Protestant tenants in his new houses on Albert Crescent, even though they were located in what was considered a Catholic district. At the hearings Mr. Watson claimed that by "upgrading" the area he could obtain more than the low four percent return on his investment per year. It is quite conceivable that the warring factions tried to establish a monopoly, each in its own district mainly to keep rents down. However, while the pattern of the rioters suggests that this was what was happening, it also suggests a degree of premeditation and clear thinking not generally evident in the riots.

Two small depressions in the 1850s spoiled what was otherwise a prosperous decade for Belfast's linen industry. These happened in the year 1854-55 with the Crimean War, which adversely affected trade, and in

1. The Ulsterman, 20 July & The Northern Whig, 21 July.

the year 1857-58 when a financial crisis did further injury to the industry.[1] During the riots The Ulsterman insisted that an Orange plot was underway to intimidate Catholic mill workers, get them dismissed and replace them with Protestants.[2] The claim appears to have been just so much journalistic sensationalism. The mill owners, mostly Protestants, did not dismiss Catholic employees. In fact, they generally went out of their way to appease the Catholic community by writing letters to the press, such as The Ulsterman, explaining their desire for peace and even offering, in some cases, protection to their Catholic employees. Those Catholics who left the mills did so because of harrassment by Protestant employees, not because they were dismissed. As John Boyd, the owner of Boyd's Mill, complained to the Police Court: "We could get workers, but as they are all Catholics they will not come. We have had to let some Catholics away, and to stop the machinery, because we could not ask them to stop with us under threat of their lives".[3] This situation created a shortage of labor in many of the mills and, as a result, some orders could not be completed.[4] The possibility that Protestants would take the jobs vacated by Catholics frightened into quitting the mills led The Ulsterman to issue a warning to the mill owners. The Protestants, the paper warned, once they succeeded in driving all the Catholics out "will, doubtless,... strike for higher wages themselves, and, having their employers at their mercy, compel them to yield

1. J.L. McCracken, p. 89.
2. The Ulsterman, 11 September.
3. The Belfast News-Letter, 12 September.
4. The Ulsterman, 18 September.

to their demands".[1] But Protestants did not come forward to fill the newly created vacancies. At first sight this seems strange, for unemployment was serious within Belfast's Protestant working-class population. The papers reported that large crowds of the "lower orders"[2] attended daily the afternoon hearings of the Inquiry (11 A.M. - 4 P.M.) to cheer on witnesses. Since the loudest cheers were reserved for Protestant witnesses, it seems fair to assume that the majority of the audience was Protestant. The Ulsterman, in fact complained bitterly about the increasing numbers of Orange rioters, "who do not work night or day" but instead attacked Catholic homes while the male tenants were away at work.[3] On closer inspection, however, the lack of desire of unemployed Protestants to replace the intimidated Catholics can be explained in terms of Protestant Ascendancy. Over generations, poor Protestants had been indoctrinated with the belief that they were socially superior to their Catholic counterparts and the "new" openings were not only considered beneath their dignity, but offered barely liveable wages.

Orange lodges were particularly popular in Belfast's working class areas since one of their primary functions was to create the equivalent of a closed shop and prevent Catholics, who would accept lower wages, from entering. Though information regarding Orange Society membership was kept secret, it is evident that the majority in the working class lodges were either skilled or semi-skilled workers. The Society's intimidation of

1. The Ulsterman, 18 September.
2. The Belfast News-Letter, 16 September.
3. The Ulsterman, 20 July.

Catholic mill workers only opened up positions for unskilled labour, positions many Protestants considered below their social position. While The Ulsterman complained that the mills offered "very moderate wages",[1] which barely kept the family together, the ultra-conservative Belfast Mercury painted a very different picture. This paper insisted that the perpetrators of the riots were recently arrived Catholics who "have become inflated with a bastard independence"[2] because of their high wages. The reason for the massive participation by youths in the riots was also easily explained away by The Belfast Mercury. Work and high salaries had, according to the paper, destroyed the traditional family structure. Recently arrived rural immigrants could not adjust to the cultural and economic shock. "Children at an early age become independent of their parents. Work is so plentiful, and wages so tempting, that the great mass of children become perfectly independent of parental control by their twelfth year".[3] This, it was further argued, brought with it a moral lassitude and a rising crime rate in areas like the Pound. On the other hand, the entrenched Protestant working class were capable of handling prosperity since "they have grown up and increased with the prosperity of the town".[4] This logic may have impressed some readers but there is little evidence of culture shock as Catholics settled into this urban environment. Considering the cost of living in Belfast, it seems fair to assume that the mill wages were relatively low in comparison with other forms of employment, especially since

1. The Ulsterman, 9 September.
2. The Times, 28 September, p. 9.
3. Ibid., 28 September, p. 9.
4. Ibid., 28 September, p. 9.

Protestants showed no rush to fill vacant positions in this labour starved industry. As for crime rates, even a witness with such strong Tory and Protestant sympathies as the retired Sub-Inspector of the Constabulary, admitted that there was virtually no difference in the crime rate between the two disturbed districts.[1]

Another explanation of the riots that deserves much greater consideration was put forward by The Northern Whig. This paper interpreted the fighting as a clash between two civilizations. On one side were those persons who, with the support of the Protestant Ascendancy, had gained social privileges and who were reluctant to give up their dominant status. As the system showed increasing signs of breaking down due to the growing commercialism and prosperty of the town, they were forced to work harder to maintain the upper hand. In the past a Dr. Drew, a Rev. Hanna, and 12th of July processions were considered irksome but were generally accepted by Catholics without much fuss. But by 1857 an increasingly more outspoken minority refused to tolerate a system of economic and social privilege based on religious bigotry. Those who were profiting from this shameless system were gradually declining into a small, "vulgar class" of people. As their situation became more desperate, they were increasingly forced to make use of lower-class co-religionists without whom their status would have not been maintained. But these people, according to The Northern Whig, were "the last of the aborigines",[2] making a last, almost heroic stand, in support of a rapidly dying savagery. Unfortunately history has proved this view, up till now, to have been somewhat optimistic.

1. Report of the Commission of Inquiry, 1857, p. 154.
2. The Northern Whig, 29 August.

Almost every religious and political segment of Belfast's population had its own newspaper. These factions, especially after 1830, were increasingly more hostile towards each other, both in the streets and in the press. Whether the press provoked disturbances in the street or the street disturbances provoked the journalistic warfare, became a matter of heated debate at the Inquiry. Many Protestants were convinced that the riots were instigated by what they saw as the inflammatory columns of a sensation-loving Catholic press. In obvious reference to The Ulsterman, the Rev. Hanna complained that it was relatively simple for a newspaper to act as a prophet if it had the desire and the power to see its predictions come true (Appendix V). At the Inquiry both Revs. McIlwaine and Hanna directly blamed The Ulsterman for creating Catholic hostility to their open-air preaching.[1] Editorial extracts were submitted to the Commissioners to prove this contention, but while there was a considerable amount of name calling, this was a common practice in the Belfast press and hardly served as conclusive evidence.

A closer examination of what was printed in its columns showed The Ulsterman to be often the voice of moderation. After the riots concluded in July, the paper received numerous letters urging fellow Catholics to be less passive and be better prepared for future conflicts. Many suggested that the past riots proved that Catholics could not expect impartial justice in Belfast and in future it might be necessary to take the law into their own hands.[2] The editors warned, however, that open de-

1. Report of the Commission of Inquiry, 1857, pp. 75 & 166.

2. The Ulsterman, 3 August.

fiance of the law was exactly what some Protestants had hoped for all along for it would convince the British Government of the necessity for such loyalist, anti-Catholic bodies as the Orange Society. Since it was apparent Pound area Catholics were preparing to arm themselves, the paper urged the formation of a legal gun club. Though Mr. Holland, one of The Ulsterman's proprietors, took an active part in the club's formation, its creation was independent of the paper. At the club's first meeting, Mr. Holland tried to ensure the organization worked within the law and proposed a resolution that gave upper class Catholics some moderating influence over the club.[1]

A more serious issue was the debate over open-air preaching. The Northern Whig was the first paper to suggest that the city magistrates prevent "this theologico-acrobatism as street amusement for Sundays".[2] The Ulsterman soon followed by warning the Town Council that there would be disasterous consequences if these "blasphemous displays"[3] were allowed to continue. At the same time, the editors urged Catholics to keep their distance from these "fanatics" who used the open streets to deliberately insult them.[4] This advice, however, was contradicted by a placard that was printed on the paper's press. The placard urged Catholics to assemble at the Custom House on the 6 September to prevent the Rev. Hanna's sermon from taking place (Appendix III). When The Banner of Ulster implicated

1. The Ulsterman, 7 August.
2. The Northern Whig, 13 August.
3. The Ulsterman, 26 August.
4. Ibid., 26 August.

the Catholic paper in the placard affair, Mr. Holland, in an open letter, claimed he "never beheld the placard in question, and knew nothing whatever of its existence".[1] But at the Inquiry a week later, Mr. McLaughlin, The Ulsterman's other proprietor, admitted that the placard had in fact been printed in the paper's jobbing office, but this had been without his knowledge. He claimed when he found out, he ordered them all destroyed, but most found their way into the city's streets all the same.[2] Normally The Belfast News-Letter would not have missed the opportunity to castigate its arch rival, but in early September most of its energy was devoted against journalistic opposition from London.

During the riots in July The Times quoted almost exclusively from Belfast's Protestant press. However, as tension built up again in August, The Times sent its own correspondent to examine the situation first hand. After the fiasco at Rev. Hanna's open-air sermon, The Times denounced these public orations claiming that Protestants were merely using them to assert their domination over their Catholic fellow-citizens. These services were, the paper claimed, an affront to the country's religious majority and any attempt by Belfast's Protestants to claim these sermons as part of their constitutional rights simply ignored the fact that they were being used as "the right to insult".[3] In response The Ulsterman noted that even "if The Times' writer were actually resident in Belfast, acquainted with these ranters, and seeing all that was going on, he could not have hit off their motives more accurately".[4]

1. The Ulsterman, 9 September.
2. Report of the Commission of Inquiry, 1857, p. 111.
3. The Ulsterman, 11 September.
4. Ibid., 11 September.

Virtually the official voice of the city's political establishment, The Belfast News-Letter presented an attitude that it, and the people the paper spoke for, were beyond criticism. During the months of July and August the paper tended to either ignore or belittle their local journalistic rivals. But The Times, with its great reputation, could not be treated in the News-Letter's usual manner. With the Government appointed Commissioners in Belfast the journalistic debate assumed a new dimension in September. In an attempt to influence the Inquiry and perhaps the British Government, The Belfast News-Letter attacked The Times' "air of omniscient positiveness"[1] by pointing out that Protestants formed the majority in Belfast and the rest of Ulster.

The battle of the newspapers continued during the Inquiry with few of Belfast's papers altering their earlier editorial positions regarding the disturbances. Most faithfully published the text of the Inquiry, and in addition, selected excerpts from the day's testimony to justify their editorial stance. One exception was the Catholic Morning News. This mass circulation paper did not wish to antagonise any section of its readership and reported both the riots and the Inquiry with virtually no editorial comments. The city's leading Presbyterian newspaper, The Irish Presbyterian, blamed both rioting parties for the disruptions. However, the paper was also critical of the Tory Party's monopoly of the Town Council for so many years. This position was not entirely unexpected considering the role played by many Presbyterians in the last general election. More surprisingly, the paper also questioned the motives of some of

1. The Belfast News-Letter, 11 September.

the city's leading Protestant ministers, in particular Dr. Drew, for his "high toned and bitter political partisanship".[1]

1. Budge & O'Leary, p. 81.

IV

THE INQUIRY

Two months after the last witness testified at the Inquiry, Commissioners Lynch and Smythe submitted their findings to the Lord-Lieutenant. The Report showed a general hesitancy to place the blame for the riots on either of the sectarian parties, but most of the recommendations were aimed at changing some of the more obvious privileges enjoyed by Protestants over their Catholic fellow-citizens. The Commissioners concluded that the disturbances were "plainly and unmistakably"[1] due to the tensions created by the Orange Day festivities. Similar to the editorials in The Times and The Ulsterman, the Commissioners saw the anniversary celebrations being used to create a feeling "of dominancy and insult on one side, and of its opposition to its display on the other side".[2] The Report also agreed with The Ulsterman regarding the Loughran incident, suggesting that it only brought into focus the existing hostility between the two areas, and by itself proved to have little substance as a cause of the riots.[3] In spite of these observations, no recommendations were made to put an end to such proceedings.

Much criticism was made of the local police but the Commissioners maintained that no evidence had been presented to prove that any member of

1. Report of the Commission of Inquiry, 1857, p. 8.
2. Ibid., p. 2.
3. Ibid., p. 3.

the force was guilty of misconduct.[1] This conclusion not only seemed to contradict much of the evidence presented at the Inquiry, but considering that five members of the force were still awaiting trial for misconduct at the assizes, the legality of the Report's statement was highly questionable. The Commissioners did agree, however, that events in July showed that the force could not handle the disturbances in the Pound area. This situation was not blamed on incompetence or partisanship but rather on the force's lack of arms and the attitude of Catholics towards the local police. It was this attitude, according to the Report, that had to be changed. The Commissioners saw that at the root of this problem of attitude lay the force's connection with the Tory Party. In a community like Belfast, where politics and religion were so often interrelated, the Commissioners suggested that members of the force should no longer hold a voting franchise or hold second jobs such as aiding in the collection of taxes.[2] The Report strongly recommended that that part of the constitution which governed the police should be rewritten to ensure the complete elimination of any activity considered offensive to either religious or political party. Based on the testimony of Constable McGivney, the Commissioners recommended the necessity of an investigation to clear the good name of the Royal Irish Constabulary. This was over the issue of a questionable delay by the Constabulary to save Mr. Watson's property on 18 July. In spite of this recommendation, the Report set the tone for the investigation it itself recommended by praising the conduct of the force. In the Report Relating to the Conduct of the Constabulary, the justifications for the actions taken by

1. Report of the Commission of Inquiry, 1857, p. 4.

2. Ibid., p. 5.

the Constabulary were couched in almost the same words as those used by Mr. Lynch and Mr. Smythe six months before.[1]

Criticism of the 12th of July festivities also implicated the Orange Society, the organizing body for these celebrations. However, the Commissioners insisted that they did not mean "to throw suspicion on the leaders of the organization or to question the purity of their motives".[2] The Report felt that while the "educated and refined classes" might possibly keep the Society within the bounds of their by-laws, members in working-class districts had perverted the aims of the body and for the peace of Ireland the Commissioners recommended that the Society should be disbanded.[3]

On the highly emotional issue on open-air sermons, the Commissioners partly agreed with the views expressed in The Times. The Report felt that open-air preaching gave one party the "abstract right to insult".[4] The use of the term "abstract" was employed since the Commissioners were convinced that most of the ministers delivering open-air sermons had no intention of insulting or provoking their Catholic fellow-citizens.[5] But this avoided the issue as most of Belfast's ministers who took to the streets to preach were totally ignored by Catholics. It was only a small group of vocal Protestant clergymen, referred to as "controversialists", that Catho-

1. Report of the Commission of Inquiry, 1857, p. 7; Report Relating to the Conduct of the Constabulary, p. 3.
2. Report of the Commission of Inquiry, 1857, p. 10.
3. Ibid., p. 10.
4. Ibid., p. 13.
5. Ibid., p. 13.

lics objected to. Considering some of the insulting and provocative orations of this group of ministers, and the seeming contempt regarding the consequences of open-air preaching voiced by the Rev. Hanna at the Inquiry, failure by the Commissioners to mention this segment of the Protestant clergy seemed a deliberate attempt to sweep the issue under the carpet.

During the Inquiry, lawyers representing both belligerent parties complained that the hearings lacked direction. However, in their Report, Commissioners Lynch and Smythe defended their methods by claiming that they believed it "was much more useful to leave the parties to make such a case as they thought fit".[1] In spite of this contention, certain areas in the hearing were suppressed. The aim of the Whig Party and Mr. Rea was to show a link between the Belfast Tory Party, the Town Council, its local force, and the Orange Society. However, each time Mr. Rea asked a witness from the Protestant party whether he is, or ever was, a member of the Society, the question was disallowed by the Commissioners on the grounds that it was beyond the scope of the Inquiry.[2] The most glaring omission in the Report was over the issue politics played in the disturbances. In spite of the fact that dozens of witnesses, many of them prominent citizens of Belfast, supplied testimony regarding the role played by municipal and parliamentary elections and its relationship to the riots, the issue was not even given a passing mention in the Report.

1. Report of the Commission of Inquiry, 1857, p. 15.
2. The Belfast News-Letter, 17 & 18 September.

V

CONCLUSION

Events since 1857 in Belfast, as well as the rest of Ulster, have shown that the Report did little to alleviate sectarian mistrust and tension. The blame for this can be ascribed to the British Government, for other than the investigation of one day's activities during the riots of the Royal Irish Constabulary, none of the other recommendations were acted upon. Economically, England wanted to keep Ireland under sufficient control to ensure there would be no industrial competition and Ireland would continue to act as a supplier of cheap food.[1] Politically, the British government was concerned with growing movements in southern Ireland calling for independence.[2] The privileged position of Protestants in Ireland was maintained, perhaps reluctantly, to ensure their loyalty to the British government. Many Protestants felt that they could continue to intimidate Belfast's Catholics and maintain their privileges with relative impunity. On the other hand, the Catholic community increasingly realized they could not depend on the authorities and armed for their own defense. Since none of the issues that had provoked the 1857 disturbance had been resolved and neither of the rioting factions could claim a victory, it was predictable that as long as the British Government was not going to take any steps to change the status quo, Belfast would suffer another outbreak of sectarian violence. The city continued to maintain its position as Ireland's main commercial and industrial center and it therefore persisted in acting as a

1. Michael Collins, The Path to Freedom (Dublin, 1922), p. 58.
2. R.H. Hull, p. 19.

magnet for northern Ireland's rural poor. The majority of these newcomers were Catholics and by 1864 Belfast's Catholic population had increased to one-third of the total.[1]

On the 8 August, 1864, a statue of Daniel O'Conner was unveiled in Dublin. That same day in Belfast, a crowd of 4,000 Sandy-Row residents burned an effigy of the Irish Catholic hero and attempted to bury the "remains" in a Catholic cemetery.[2] This insult precipitated a reaction from the Pound and for eleven days Belfast witnessed the most intensive period of violence in its history. That it did not last longer was due more to the relative speed of the action by the Government in Dublin than to any action taken by the local authorities. While the pattern of disturbances and the participating parties remained basically unchanged since 1857, the vindictiveness displayed had become far more intense.

The rioters of 1864 proved to be far more anxious to injure their opponents than those of 1857. In consequence, over 300 individuals of both rioting parties were seriously injured and 11 died.[3] Another sign of increased hostility was that in 1864 the rioters were not satisfied merely to wreck private homes. For the first time rioters turned their attention to church property, including churches, schools, and even a Catholic female penitentiary.[4] Total property damage was in excess of £4,300[5], or more

1. Report of the Belfast Inquiry Commission, 1864 (Dublin, 1864), p. 5.
2. Ibid., p. 9.
3. Ibid., p. 16.
4. Ibid., pp. 9-11.
5. Ibid., p. 17.

than twenty times what it had been in 1857. A further sign that the situation had deteriorated was the willingness of middle and upper-class citizens to openly participate in provocative processions during the disturbances. During a funeral of a Protestant killed by the Constabulary, many of the town's most respected Protestants took part in a procession that deliberately went out of its way to go through Catholic sections of the city. And though Belfast had just been declared a proclaimed area, many in this march broke the law by openly carrying and firing their guns while making their way through the city.[1]

Northern Catholics looked to southern Ireland as a model of how Protestants and Catholics might peacefully coexist. Though even the south was far from ideal, it never had such violent disturbances that plagued Belfast. Some Catholics believed that the difference in sectarian harmony between north and southern Ireland was simply dependent on which denomination was in the majority. However, events in Londonderry in 1869 showed that any such interpretation was just too simplistic. That year Londonderry had a population of just under 30,000 inhabitants, with over 60% of the Catholic faith. Similar to Belfast, the economic prosperity of the town had attracted a large number of rural Catholics since the 1830s. The original site of the town was a walled-in section on a hill overlooking the Foyle River. Protestants formed the majority within the walls while poorer Catholics composed the vast majority outside the walls near the river, an area commonly called the Bog-side. As in Belfast, it was the lower classes from each religious party that fought each other on the streets of Londonderry.

1. Report of the Belfast Inquiry Commission, 1864 (Dublin, 1864), pp. 13-15.

The event which precipitated the riots was the visit to Londonderry of his Royal Highness, Prince Arthur, on the 28th of April, 1869. He was greeted and followed for most of the day by two rival bands, each playing their own party tunes and carrying their own party colours. That evening, after the Prince returned to his hotel, the two bands and their supporters exchanged gunfire. The Constabulary and the local force soon proved unable to control the rioters, and the situation quickly deteriorated. The Magistrates made various attempts to persuade the Mayor to call in the military, but he felt that, as the Prince was their guest, it would give the town a poor reputation. Protestant rioters stationed themselves on the town's walls and fired most of the night at their Catholic rivals. Considering the chaotic situation, it was surprising that only three rioters lost their lives.[1]

The Commissioners who examined the Londonderry riots found the causes to be very much the same as those that provoked the Belfast disturbances. The main cause, as in 1857, was the celebration of an historical event that the Catholics found insulting. In Londonderry, the Orange Day equivalent was the historic closing and opening of the town's gates in 1688-89. The twin celebrations of 18 December and 12 August commemorated the Protestant defense of the town against James II and his Catholic army. Its faithful celebration served to enshrine the concept of "a dominant and a subject caste".[2] While the Orange Society had no party in these disturbances, Londonderry had another Protestant loyalist organization whose function was similar. An organization called the Apprentice Boys of Derry

1. Londonderry Riots Inquiry Commission, 1869 (Dublin, 1869), pp. 12-15.

2. Ibid., p. 15.

were entrusted with the guns and cannons used in the celebration of the opening and closing of the gates. This body was composed largely of Protestant working-class men and youths, who were active in maintaining the Tory Party in power, both in Parliament and in the municipal government.[1] Similar to the Orangemen in Belfast, the Apprentice Boys could count on the support of the local Tory establishment or expect at least that the town's authorities would turn a blind eye on many of their provocative activities. One of the more disturbing features of the Londonderry riots was the role played by Protestants from other parts of Ulster. In 1865 railway companies began to run excursion trains to Londonderry from other parts of Ulster to coincide with the town's two historic anniversaries. By 1868, the excursions were so popular that the town's population more than doubled for the celebrations, causing increased sectarian tension.[2] The 1860s, therefore, not only witnessed increased sectarian hostility and fear in Belfast, but growing tension through the rest of Ulster as well.

Just how unique the mid-nineteenth century urban riots in Belfast and Londonderry were can best be seen in comparison with a disturbance that took place in London at about the same time. In 1855, a Bill introduced by Lord Robert Grosvenor to the House of Commons attempted to prevent Sunday trading in the city of London. A series of demonstrations against the Bill led to a number of disturbances commonly referred to as the Hyde Park Riots. Large crowds, many working-class people from London's East End, gathered in Hyde Park on four consecutive Sundays to observe how England's

1. Londonderry Riots Inquiry Commission, 1869 (Dublin, 1869), pp. 8-9.
2. Ibid., p. 17.

aristocracy observed the Sabbath.[1] It was on the second Sunday, the 1st of July, that the greatest disturbance took place. An estimated crowd of 150,000, a few from the middle-class, especially small shop keepers who were also affected by the Bill, were attracted to the Park by leaflets and placards. In the early afternoon, the large crowd began to insult the occupants of carriages passing through Hyde Park with shouts of "Go to church".[2] The police stood quietly by during these proceedings until stones and other missiles were added to the verbal insults. Then the order was given to clear the area and the police quickly moved in swinging their clubs. The crowd fell back and in the resulting confusion many "respectable" citizens, whom many of were merely strolling in the Park, with their wives and children, were trampled underfoot. A Commissioners' Report confirmed the numerous complaints against police brutality and overreaction.[3] Most of the assembled crowd left the Park after the onslaught, but others remained to continue the battle with the police and military. In spite of clashes with groups of stone-throwing rioters, the authorities, in a series of sweeps through Hyde Park, finally managed to clear the area by early evening. However, at seven o'clock, many of the rioters had regrouped and made their way to Lord Grosvenor's residence in Belgravia. Seeing their quarry protected by a large body of police, the crowd indiscriminately began smashing hundreds of windows in the fashionable homes nearby. The dis-

1. Francis Sheppard, London 1808-1870: The Infernal Wen (Los Angeles, 1971), p. 333.

2. Report of Her Majesty's Commissioners appointed to inquire into the Alleged Disturbance of the Public peace in Hyde Park (London, 1855), p. vii.

3. Ibid., p. vii.

turbance quickly ended after this incident, but hundreds of rioters, onlookers and members of the police were injured, yet there was no loss of life.

The huge gathering in Hyde Park was mainly composed of working men and women. There were others as well, who had been drawn to the Park for recreational purposes or simply out of curiosity, yet the majority - the workers - apparently had come to express their disapproval of the controversial Bill. Only seventy-two individuals were arrested during the 1st of July disturbances, and by far the largest number were from the working class.[1] However, this number was so small in comparison to those involved, that any claim to present those arrested as being representative of the whole, would be quite misleading. It is more than likely that the ten people arrested for attempting "to make their gains under the shield of popular excitement"[2] gives an exaggerated picture of the criminal element in the disturbances. Even so, the figure is not without significance when one compares it with the situation in Belfast where not a single person was arrested on this charge during the entire period of upheavals.

It is instructive to compare these two events arising in two cities in almost the same year. The main difference was that the riots in London were the result of class conflict. London's poor came to Hyde Park to vent their frustrations against further economic deprivation by insulting the aristocracy, whom they blamed for initiating the Bill. On the other

1. Report of Her Majesty's Commissioners appointed to inquire into the Alleged Disturbance of the Public peace in Hyde Park (London, 1855), p. ix.

2. Ibid., p. vii.

hand, there is no evidence of class conflict during the Belfast riots. In fact, the very opposite seems to be true. Members from virtually every level of society formed two opposing parties based on religion. Though it was only the lowest stratum from each party that actually came into direct conflict, both rioting factions enjoyed some degree of support from the middle and upper classes.

The most striking factor in the Belfast riots was the dominant role played by religion. Though the Sunday Trading Bill sought to preserve the sanctity of the Sabbath, religion was of little importance in the London disturbances. In Belfast, religion became the focal point, with virtually every other contingent issue playing a role subordinate to it. A man's economic, social and political position in Belfast was dependent on his religious persuasion. This was quite different from London, where the central issue was over economic factors, the most common cause in urban disturbances. In Belfast the two factions that came into such bitter confrontations had little economic advantage to gain, either from each other or from the struggle. These lower classes, in fact, had the least to gain and the most to lose by rioting. But Belfast's poor were those most trapped by their economic situation. Their lack of mobility forced them to react quickly and emotionally to even the slightest threat - in this case from their fellow-poor - to the little stability they possessed.[1]

One of the more unusual features of the Belfast disturbances was the strong sense of history and tradition. Both parties were able to live and work together in relative harmony except in July when the victories of

1. Harold Jackson, The Two Irelands (London, 1972), p. 5.

William III were celebrated.[1] Since 1857, this situation has admittedly worsened. However, there is little doubt that even in 1857 both parties feared and hated each other. This hostility was enhanced by the gradual segregation of the two working-class factions in the city. With each disturbance, the Pound and Sandy-Row became more exclusively Catholic and Protestant. Memories were, and still are, long in Ireland. An event that occurred hundreds of years ago was kept alive and discussed as if the incident had only recently taken place. To a large extent this explains the Ulsterman's passion for processions. The purpose of these parades was "not only to display the trophies of each side's successes but also to delimit the territory each claims".[2] This strong awareness of past victories and defeats became a part of the consciousness of belonging to each faith. To an outsider, the behaviour of both factions seemed to lack rationality. Fear was the main motivating factor on both sides, and while to an outsider this fear seemed totally irrational, to the people involved it was very real. Protestants in Belfast were threatened by a large Catholic majority in Ireland. They had been conditioned by their religious leaders to expect the very worst if Catholics ever gained the upper hand in Ulster. Though Belfast's Protestants made every attempt to prove their loyalty to the British Crown, they were also fearful that the British Government would eventually be forced to give in to the demands of the Catholic juggernaut. Catholics in Belfast, on the other hand, saw themselves as part of an oppressed majority in what they considered to be their own land. The tension between these two groups had a degree of permanence about it that was

1. Report of the Commission of Inquiry, 1857, p. 2.
2. Harold Jackson, p. 6.

not evident in London, or for that matter, in most other urban disturbances in the mid-nineteenth century.

That the two factions would remain in a continuous state of hostility was reinforced by a number of factors. The main issue was religious differences. Most uprisings based on ideological conflicts ultimately lead to some form of revolution. Until this stage, or the start of some dramatic compromises on both sides occur, Belfast will continue to suffer sectarian riots. Ideology by itself was not the only factor involved. Protestants in Belfast were able to control the economic and political power of the city by passing the bulk of its benefits, including political patronage, jobs, and housing, to members of their own religion. In reaction, Catholics attempted by riot to carve out an area or territory they could call their own. What was developing with each disturbance was the increasing separation of the two communities into a condition approaching apartheid. As we all know too well, the problem is still there; but how it will eventually be solved lies beyond the scope of this paper.

Appendix I

Protestant Rioters Arrested in July

Name	Charge	Verdict	Other Information
Allen, James	riot	Fined 40s+*	
Anderson, David	riot	40s+	
Baxter, James	riot	---	
Braithwaite, ---	riot	40s+	
Buchanan, Robert	riot	40s+	
Burns, John	riot	40s+	
Cairns, Isabella	party expressions	10s+**	
Carr, James	riot	40s+	
Edmonson, Thomas	riot	---	
Elliot, Joseph	riot	40s+	
Galbraith, Matthew	harbouring rioters	discharged	
Hamill, John	riot	Fined 40s+***	
Hamill, Margaret	riot	20s+	wife of above
Hanna, Robert	possession of loaded gun	50 lb. bail & 2 sureties for 50 lb.	boy
Heron, Edward	riot	40s+	
Howard, William	riot	40s+	
Matchison, Catherine	party slogans	40s+	
Reid, Howard	threatening with a gun	40s+	
Sherman, Robert	stone throwing	40s+	youth
Steward, Richard	riot	40s+	

Catholic Rioters Arrested in July

Boyd, Alexander	riot	Fined ---	
Boyd, George	riot	40s+	
Boyd, William	house wrecking	discharged	
Brownlee, Francis	riot	---	
Burke, John	stone throwing	Fined 40s+	
Campbell, Michael	house wrecking	discharged	
Campbell, Patrick	riot	Fined 40s+	
Carmichael, William	stone throwing	40s+	youth
Casey, Andrew	riot	40s+	
Connolly, Henry	riot	40s+	
Donagy, John	stone throwing	20s+	boy
Graffin, Henry	house wrecking	40s+	
Healy, Peter	house wrecking	discharged	
Hughes, Arthur	stone throwing	Fined 40s+	
Hughes, Thomas	part of a riotous party	not guilty	assizes

* a 40s fine plus 20s in costs or 3 months in jail
** a 10s fine plus 5s in costs or 17 days in jail
*** a 20s fine plus 10s in costs or 1 month in jail
--- information unobtainable

Catholic Rioters Arrested in July (Continued)

Name	Charge	Verdict	Other Information
Kelly, ---	riot	Fined 20s+	coal porter
Kennedy, William	riot	40s+	
Loughran, John	inciting riot	40s+	first person arrested
McAllister, William	stone throwing	5s/1 wk.	small boy
McAnally, Felix	riot	---	
McAreavy, Archibald	house wrecking	40s+	
McConnell, William	riot	---	
McGiness, John	riot	not guilty	assizes
McKenna, Terrance	riot	not guilty	assizes
McKinney, Michael	riot	not guilty	assizes
McKinney, William	riot	not guilty	assizes
McKinney, Edward	riot	discharged	
McLoughlin, Thomas	riot	Fined 40s+	
McMahon, Peter	stone throwing	5s/1 wk.	small boy
McMullen, John	riot	---	
McMurtry, John	riot	40s+	
Magee, John	riot	---	
Magowan, Henry	riot	not guilty	assizes
Mallon, Patrick	house wrecking	Fined 40s+	youth
Mallon, Robert	house wrecking	40s+	
Mehaffy, John	house wrecking	discharged	
Mehaffy, William	house wrecking	discharged	
Moore, James	stone throwing	Fined 40s+****	youth
Mulholland, Bernard	inciting riot	60s+	2 occasions
Mullen, Bernard	riot	not guilty	assizes
Mullen, Michael	stone throwing	Fined 40s+	youth
Murphy, William	stone throwing	40s+	youth
Patterson, Thomas	stone throwing	40s+	youth
Quinn, Matthew	riot	40s+	
Scott, James	stone throwing	40s+	youth
Thomney, Arthur	riot	40s+	
Thompson, Patrick	stone throwing	40s+	
Walker, John	carrying 1 unloaded gun	50 pounds bail[1]	
Walker, Steward	riot	---	

Protestant Rioters Arrested in September

Blair, Robert	riotous conduct	Fined 10 pounds bail[1]	local police
Bowman, Edward	stone throwing	10s+	boy; millworker
Brown, Andrew	riotous conduct	10 pounds bail[1]	local police
Brown, Joseph	riot	discharged	previous record[2]
Irwin, Charles	riotous conduct	Fined 10 pounds; bail[1]	local police
Irwin, ---	riot	sent forward for trial	

**** a 60s fine plus 30s in costs or 3½ months in jail
1 bail plus two sureties which totalled same amount as bail; sent to assizes
2 a previous jail sentence of 6 months for assaulting a R.C.

Protestant Rioters Arrested in September (Continued)

Name	Charge	Verdict	Other Information
Lawson, Eliza	assault	2 mo. prison	young millworker
McCracken, Joseph	riotous conduct	Fined 10 pounds; bail[1]	local police
McNiece, David	riotous conduct	10 pounds; bail[1]	local police
Robinson, ---	riot	sent to assizes	lawyer?
Smith, William	stone throwing	Fined 10s+	boy; millworker

Catholic Rioters Arrested in September

Barr, Joseph	assault on Prot.	discharged	
Boyle, Michael	assault on Prot.	2 mo. hard labour	
Boyle, Michael	riot	discharged (with caution)	
Chambers, ---	house wrecking	sent to assizes	
Dobbin, ---	house wrecking	sent to assizes	boy
Doyle, ---	abusive language towards mayor	discharged	
Gallagher, Bernard	stone throwing	Fined 40s+	
Gibon, Patrick	riot	discharged (with caution)	youth
Gillmore, William	broke window	Fined 10s+	
Greenan, John	riot	bound by his own recognizance	boy
Hagan, James (Jun.)	assault of Prot.	discharged	
Hagan, James (Sen.)	assault of Prot.	discharged	
Johnston, William	stone throwing	Fined 40s+	
Kerr, John	party slogans	5s+ costs & 2 days in jail	
Lynch, Patrick	party slogans	10s+ costs & 2 days in jail	
McAtasney, ---	house wrecking	sent to assizes	
McGahan, John	assault of Prot.	discharged	
McGee, Patrick	riot	discharged	
McKenna, Peter	riot	discharged (with caution)	youth
McMahon, James	stone throwing	Fined 40s+	
Maguire, Thomas	stone throwing	40s+	
Mahon, George	refused to disperse	40s+	
Mann, George	stone throwing	40s+	
Mullan, John	stone throwing	40s+	
Mullan, Sarah	disorderly conduct	48 hrs. in jail	
Owens, Patrick	assault of Prot.	discharged	
Quinn, John	assault of Prot.	2 mo. hard labour	
Sharkey, Charles	riot	Fined 40s+	

[1] bail plus two sureties which totalled same amount as bail; sent to assizes

Appendix II

Rev. Hugh Hanna's Letter to the Protestants of Belfast (Excerpt)

Men and Brethern, Your blood-bought and cherished "rights" have been imperilled by the audacious and savage outrages of a Romish mob. The well-meant but foolish leniency of an easy-natured magistracy, vainly hoping to disarm resentment by conciliation, has hastened and aggravated the present crisis. But you were not to be either bullied or cajoled out of your rights. They are not to be surrendered, and they will be strenuously maintained. That, you have unmistakably shown on the past Sabbath. Then you arose calm but powerful, as the thunder reposing in the cloud.

You, firmly, temperately, and triumphantly asserted your rights. You were assailed-savagely assailed. The Ulsterman and Whig have belied you. They said you were the aggressors. I tell them, and I tell the world, that THEY LIE. Your enemies were the aggressors, and they are covered with lasting disgrace.

Your ministers have a legal right to preach in the open air. No man can honestly deny that. You have also a right to listen to them. Let them choose convenient places for their services. Where you assemble assemble around, leave so much of the thproughfare unoccupied that such as do not choose to listen may pass by. Call that clearance the "Pope's pad". No man has any right to interrupt the services. It is an offence against the law to interrupt an "oysterman" and we will insist on the same law, for either "Minister" or "Priest". Fair play on all sides must be the rule. If any man interrupts the services, consign him to the police. If the police be not at hand, do not violence to the man. Do not allow your feelings to betray you into any unchristian acts. Be always governed by reason and religion. Get a summons for the man, and the law will teach him propriety and protect you. But never, until your lives are imperilled, stir in your own defence. Then, indeed, self-defence is a duty. You threatened on last Sabbath to dip your aggressors in the dock. You were wrong. The "Police dock" was the right place for them. Keep your present high position. Don't tarnish the laurels of your victory.

Report of the Commission of Inquiry, 1857, pp. 252-253.

Appendix III

Placard Posted on the 5th of September.

Down with Open-Air Preaching. Down with Fanatic Drew, the Squinting Divine! the enemy of tranquillity and peace.

Gather to the Custom-house on Sunday, 6th inst., at three o'clock, and give the Orange bigot such a check, that he will not attempt open-air preaching again.

Catholics of Belfast, Down, and Antrim, - We see by the public placards, that our religion is again to be assailed, our public walks obstructed by that low and ruffianly system of Ranterism, which has lately been got by our Evangelical neighbours, for the sole purpose of giving annoyance to their Catholic neighbours. It is now quite manifest to all

rational minds, that this outrage will be persevered in for the sole purpose of creating a quarrel, and, perhaps, for the purpose of shedding Catholic blood. Since they have got our worthy member, Mr. Cairns, installed with high honour of the ranter's badge, we, therefore, call on all our Catholic neighbours and brethren to come and defend their rights as loyal subjects and peaceable Christians, and we have not the slightest doubt but that we shall compel these disturbers of the public peace to respect the feelings of those who differ from them in religion; who, whilst they are never the aggressors, know how to defend themselves when attacked.

Report of the Commission of Inquiry, 1857, pp. 253-254.

Appendix IV

Excerpts from Rev. Drew's Sermon Before the Orangemen of Belfast July 12, 1857; the Anniversary of the Victory of the Boyne.

...Of old time, lords of high degree, with their own bands, strained on the rack, the delicate limbs of Protestant women; prelates dabbled in the gore of helpless victims; and the cells of the Pope's prisons were paved with the calcined bones of men and cemented with gore and human hair! Would that such atrocities were no longer formidable! What has been done may be repeated...

...The Word of God makes all plain; puts to eternal shame the practices of persecutors; and stigmatizes, with enduring reprobation, the arrogant pretences of popes, and the outrageous dogmata of their blood-stained religion.

...Look where we will, our own British Empire above all parts of the earth, claims most solemn observations. God having given two island kingdoms the greatest empire in the world, their mission is, or ought to be, unmistakable; to aim at the Protestizing of the world!

...To be a Protestant in Ireland is a positive disqualification, and so dull and incompetent Romanists or Rome's sycophants receive what belongs to the true Protestant's birthright, to those who reprobate a double loyalty and who hold that the Roman bishop has no rights or privileges in the realms of the Queen.

...These brave men have done valiantly and left us a great inheritance-religious freedom and the brilliant example of their own deathless renown!

...We are inhabiting the homes they provided; we are occupants of the churches they rescued from silence and decay. We are enjoying the liberty they purchased, and we call the land of William's victory, "Protestant Ireland!"

Report of the Commission of Inquiry, 1857, pp. 248-252.

Appendix V

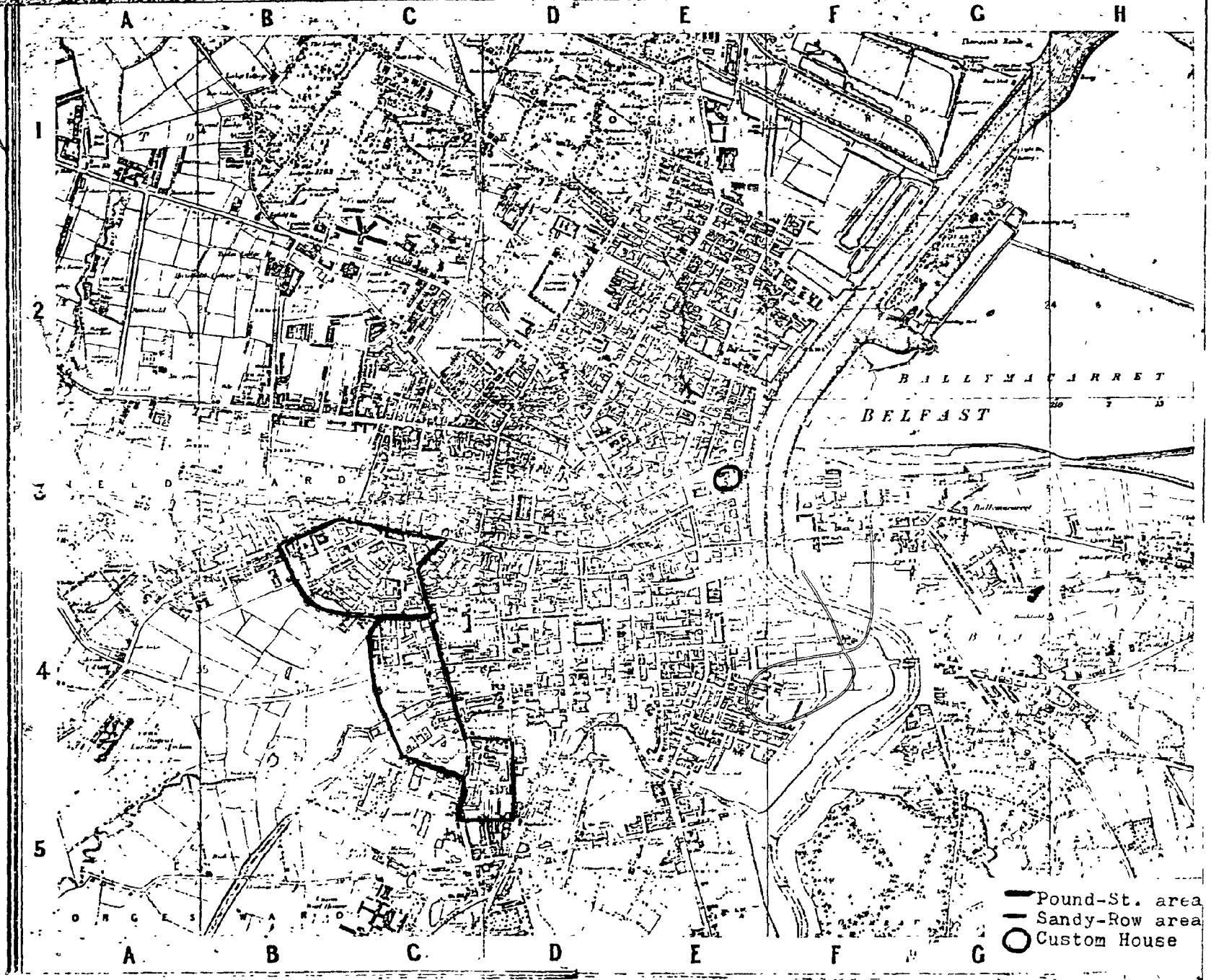
To the Editor of The Belfast News-Letter, 18 September

Sir: It is easy for a man to be a prophet who has the will and power to fulfil his own vaticinations. Of such a character are the prophets of the Whig and the Ulsterman. They predicted "rows" at the street preaching and they produced them. But we have other prophets, it seems. I am told, on the occasion of street-preaching, there would be a breach of the peace". The friends of liberty and right are interested in knowing who they are that have sworn these affidavits. I have, therefore, respectfully to request the magistrates of Belfast that they publish those hidden works of darkness, and let us know to whom we are indebted for this attempted suppression of our rights, and I want them further, to inform me if they are prepared to act on such affidavits. A magistrate is supposed to be a man of, at least, common sense. Before he acts on, or accepts such an affidavit, he should be persuaded that street preaching is, in its own nature, calculated to break the peace. Now I intend to preach in the street, and keep the peace. I guarantee the peaceable character of such open-air congregations as may surround me; but I can have but little respect for a magistracy that, instead of protecting individual rights and the magistry of British law, will allow themselves to be overawed by an ignorant and savage mob.

Sincerely yours,

Hugh Hanna.

The Belfast News-Letter, 19 September.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BELFAST
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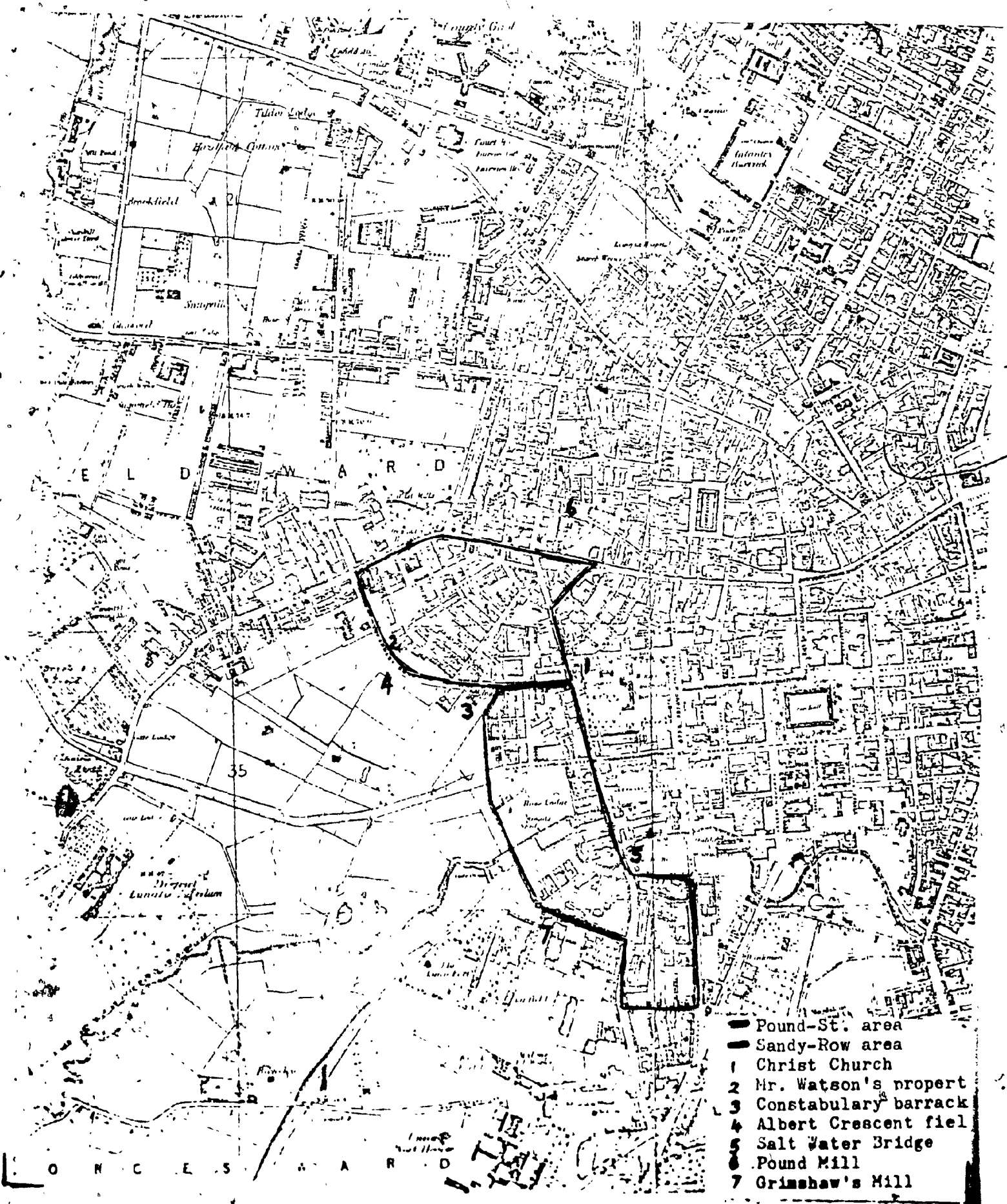
E L D W A R D
O N C E S W A R D
Pound-St. area
Sandy-Row area
1 Christ Church
2 Mr. Watson's propert
3 Constabulary barrack
4 Albert Crescent fiel
5 Salt Water Bridge
6 Pound Mill
7 Grimshaw's Mill

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