

Irish Home Rule

Home Rule had as its aim the establishment of a parliament in Dublin to legislate for Irish domestic affairs. This political policy was devised by Isaac Butt who argued that Ireland suffered not so much from bad government but from scarcely any government at all. He argued that the heart of Empire beat too remotely from Irish grievance and that MPs in the Imperial Parliament at Westminster understood little of Irish problems and were not willing to spend sufficient time considering them or trying to solve them. A Home Rule parliament in Dublin would understand, address, and solve Irish problems.

Charles Stewart Parnell

Charles Stewart Parnell was born in June 1846 and died in 1891. Charles Stewart Parnell is one of the leading figures in recent Irish history and is most associated with Home Rule and the issues surrounding it.

Parnell's parents were strong Irish nationalists and he grew up with an increasing resentment over London's dominance of Ireland. Parnell actively involved himself in politics after the execution of three Fenians in 1874. These men became known as the 'Manchester Martyrs' and many in Ireland believed that their execution was a gross mis-justice. Parnell, aged 29, quickly made a name for himself and in 1875 he was elected the Member of Parliament for Meath. He joined Isaac Butt's Home Rule Party. Parnell quickly realised that one way of bringing attention to the cause of the Irish was to totally disrupt the workings of the 'Mother of all Parliaments'. Parnell became skilled at talking and talking. His speeches could go on for hours and caused great disruption to what were seen to be the sacrosanct ways of Westminster.

In 1879, the Irish National Land League was founded and Parnell was appointed its president.

Irish Movement For Self-government

Formed in 1870 by Isaac Butt (1813-79) and thereafter led by Charles Stewart Parnell (1846-91), the movement included demands for a separate Irish parliament and land reform. The First Irish Home Rule Bill was introduced, in 1886, by Liberal Prime Minister William Gladstone to create a devolved assembly for Ireland. It was, however, defeated in the House of Commons. The Second Irish Home Rule Bill of 1893, also backed by the British Liberal party, was passed by the House of Commons, but vetoed in the House of Lords. A third Home Rule bill was finally passed in 1912; however, its implementation was delayed by the outbreak of the First World War. Radical Irish Republicans came to the fore during the First World War and, following the declaration of Irish independence in 1918, the Irish Republican Army went into armed rebellion against the British government. The Irish Free State, later to become the Republic of Ireland, was created in 1921.