

Definition: **Home Rule** from *The Macquarie Dictionary*

## 1.

self-government for Ireland, pursued by the Irish Nationalists from about 1870 to 1920.

Summary Article: **Home Rule**

From *The Columbia Encyclopedia*

in Irish and English history, political slogan adopted by Irish nationalists in the 19th cent. to describe their objective of self-government for Ireland.

### **Origins of the Home Rule Movement**

A basic theme in the history of Ireland through the centuries of English dominance was the desire for control over its domestic affairs. The modern Home Rule movement began in 1870 under the leadership of Isaac Butt, whose program appealed most strongly to the Irish middle classes. The long agricultural depression beginning in 1873 increased economic stimulus for Home Rule, and under the leadership of Charles Stewart Parnell the movement gained support from the agricultural laborers and erstwhile members of the Fenian movement. In this period only a minority had recourse to violence, and Parnell disavowed the murder of two British officials in Dublin in 1882 (see Phoenix Park murders).

### **The First Home Rule Bill**

In 1886, William Gladstone committed the Liberal party to Home Rule. His bill of 1886 would have established a separate Irish legislature, while reserving many powers, including taxation, to the British Parliament at Westminster. The bill failed to pass, and the incoming Conservative government developed a policy of land reform (see Irish Land Question) to mollify the Irish. The unity of the Irish party in Parliament collapsed after Parnell was ruined by a divorce scandal in 1890.

### **The Second Home Rule Bill**

In 1893 the Liberals passed the Second Home Rule Bill in the House of Commons, providing a bicameral legislature for purely local matters and Irish representation at Westminster to vote on Irish taxation. While unsatisfactory to Home Rule advocates, the bill was, nevertheless, defeated in the House of Lords. Advocates of constitutional means to Home Rule began to lose ground to republicans and revolutionaries. The ideals of an increasingly self-conscious Irish people, expressed by the Gaelic League and Irish Ireland culminated in the founding (c.1900) of Sinn Féin. The Irish Council Bill of 1907, which was to establish a purely Irish body to direct the spending of Irish tax proceeds, failed to pass because of Irish dissatisfaction with the plan.

### **The Third Home Rule Bill**

In 1912 the Third Home Rule Bill passed the House of Commons. The most notable difference from the bill of 1893 was that it would have eventually given control of the police to Ireland. A tremendous outcry arose in Protestant Ulster, which feared Roman Catholic domination. Private armies—the Ulster Volunteers (in the North) and the Irish Volunteers (in the South)—were raised, and civil war threatened if the bill became law. In 1914, Commons again passed the bill, but the House of Lords excluded Ulster from its provisions. The Commons voted to allow Ulster to vote itself out of Home Rule for six years.

At the outbreak of World War I the bill was passed once again with the proviso that it should not go into effect until after the war. The law never took effect.

## **The Irish Free State and the Fourth Home Rule Bill**

By this time Irish labor leaders like James Connolly had been drawn into the struggle, and Irish radicalism—along with impatience and doubts as to Britain's good faith—brought about the Easter Rebellion of 1916. In 1918, S Ireland elected to Parliament only Sinn Fein members pledged to republicanism instead of Home Rule. These members did not go to Westminster; they set up their own Irish assembly, the Dáil éireann, which declared Ireland independent. There followed a period of guerrilla war between the nationalist Irish Republican Army (IRA) and a force of British irregulars known as the Black and Tans.

In 1921 the British government entered into negotiations with the *de facto* Irish government headed by Eamon De Valera. The Irish Free State, with dominion status, was created by an Anglo-Irish treaty in 1921. Remaining ties with Great Britain were gradually discarded (see Ireland, Republic of). The six counties of Northern Ireland (see Ireland, Northern) remained part of the United Kingdom, their government established under the provisions of the Fourth Home Rule Bill of 1920, which was rendered void in the South by the establishment of the Irish Free State. The continued British presence in Northern Ireland was abhorrent to Irish nationalists, but except for scattered IRA terrorism, the issue was dormant until Protestant repression led to revived militant nationalism among Northern Ireland's Catholics.

## **Home Rule in Contemporary Northern Ireland**

Escalating violence between Protestants and Catholics and an intensive campaign of terror by the IRA caused the British cabinet to suspend the Northern Ireland government in 1972. A new government was established in 1973, in which the Roman Catholics shared power with the Protestant majority for the first time and provision was made for increased cooperation with the Republic. However, Protestant pressure brought about the resumption of direct British rule of Northern Ireland in 1974. Direct rule continued until 1981.

In 1985, Great Britain signed an agreement with the Irish Republic, giving the latter a consultative role. While the Catholic party (SDLP) favored the agreement, the Protestant Unionist Parties used their majority in the regional Assembly to block it, resulting in the resumption of direct rule in 1985. An accord reached in 1998 provided for a new assembly, but disagreement over the disarmament of paramilitary groups slowed the formation of a multiparty government (Dec., 1999) and the end of direct British rule. Disagreements on the same and on other issues have led to several suspensions of home rule.

## **Bibliography**

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