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## The Voting Behaviour of the Irish parliamentary party on social issues in the House of Commons 1881-90<sup>1</sup>

Mel Cousins, Glasgow Caledonian University

Most studies of the Irish Parliamentary party and its leaders have, understandably, focused on issues directly concerning Ireland. There have been relatively few studies of the role of the Parliamentary party in broader British politics, particularly in relation to social issues. Even O'Day's study of Parnellite involvement in British politics gives only one short (19 page) chapter to the issue of 'British domestic problems and Nationalist social radicalism' and reports no quantitative data on the attitude adopted by the party (although it appears that the author did carry out some statistical analysis).<sup>2</sup> O'Day concludes (in relation to the period from 1880-1886) that most of the Parnellite members of Parliament 'were well to the left in social politics'.<sup>3</sup> While they were not Socialists, the most influential wing of the party, O'Day argues, 'tended to speak and act as left-wing radicals'. However, this assessment is not supported by any detailed evidence of voting behaviour. Lubenow in his analysis of all the divisions in the 1886 Parliament comes to somewhat similar conclusions. He argues that the Irish party in 1886 was 'radical on more questions than Irish policy' and showed 'a general commitment to advanced politics located on the leftwardmost parts of the ideological voting dimensions'.<sup>4</sup> However, this analysis relies solely on the positions adopted in 1886, a quite exceptional year in British politics.

In order to assess this issue over a period of time, this study examines the division lists of the House of Commons in relation to votes on selected 'social' issues in the 1880s.<sup>5</sup> Of course, such votes are subject to limitations such as the fact that there were relatively high levels of non-

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<sup>1</sup> An earlier version of this paper was given to the Irish Historical Society, November 2007. I would like to thank Sherman O'Neill for his research assistance.

<sup>2</sup> A. O'Day, *The English face of Irish nationalism*, Gill and Macmillan, 1977. Indeed in the earlier 1841-47 period, Aydelotte's voting analysis indicates that the Repeal members were (with the Radicals) the furthest to the left in voting patterns and constituted 'the most radical segment' of the broad Liberal opposition in that parliament: W. O. Aydelotte, 'Parties and Issues in Early Victorian England' *The Journal of British Studies*, 5(2) (1966), pp. 95-114 at 111.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* Page 157.

<sup>4</sup> W.C. Lubenow, *Parliamentary politics and the Irish home rule crisis*, Oxford University Press, 1988, page 154.

<sup>5</sup> Drawing, in part on the database of House of Commons division lists and MPs deposited with the ESDS data archive: SN 2833 -House of Commons Voting, 1861-1926. See <http://www.esds.ac.uk/findingData/snDescription.asp?sn=2833&print=1>

voting and, of course, we generally do not know the motives for individual votes (e.g. whether a vote on a particular issue expressed a MP's 'real' views or whether a vote was recorded for tactical reasons). Nonetheless such votes are a public and measurable record of the views of the members of the Irish Parliamentary party on these issues and thus provide information not available from other sources.<sup>6</sup> As Aydelotte has pointed out the use of division lists avoids the danger of 'concentrating on a few prominent individuals and disregarding or overlooking those who were less conspicuous'.<sup>7</sup> An analysis of the Irish Parliamentary party's voting record in the 1880s throws some light on the party's broader views on social issues.

The study examines the voting behaviour of the Irish Parliamentary party in the context of that of the other major political groupings in the 1880s Parliament.<sup>8</sup> It looks in particular at

- i) The extent to which the Irish party members actually voted in comparison with MPs overall;

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<sup>6</sup> Given the absence of political manifestos in the period and the limited nature of the surviving political papers of members of the IPP. For other studies in this general period which also analyse roll-call voting see, for example, W.O. Aydelotte, 'Constituency influence in the House of Commons, 1841-1847' in id. (ed.) *The history of parliamentary behaviour*, Princeton University Press, 1977; W.C. Lubenow, 'Ireland, the great depression, and the railway rates: political issues and backbench opinion in the House of Commons of 1886', *proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 122 (4) (1978), pp. 204-213; id., 'Irish Home Rule and the great separation in the Liberal party in 1886: the dimensions of parliamentary liberalism' *Victorian Studies*, 26(2) (1993) pp. 161-180; id., 'The Meaning of Voting Dimensions in the Late Victorian Liberal Party,' in Joni Lovenduski and Jeffrey Stanyer, (eds.), *Contemporary Political Studies*, Political Studies Association, 1995 (in addition to his book *Parliamentary politics op. cit.*); H. W. Stephens and D.W. Brady 'The parliamentary parties and the electoral reforms of 1884-85 in Britain', *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, 1(4), pp. 491-510; C. Schonhardt-Bailey, 'Ideology, party and interests in the British Parliament of 1841-1847', *British Journal of Political Science*, 33(4) (2003) pp. 581-605; id. 'Conservatives who sounded like trustees but voted like delegates', in *From the Corn Laws to Free Trade: Interests, Ideas, and Institutions in Historical Perspective*, MIT Press, 2006; I. McLean, 'Interests and Ideology in the United Kingdom Parliament of 1841-7: an analysis of roll call voting' in J. Lovenduski and J. Stanyer eds, *Contemporary Political Studies*, Political Studies Association, 1995, pp. 1-20; id. 'Irish Potatoes, Indian Corn, and British Politics: Interests, Ideology, Heresthetics, and the Repeal of the Corn Laws', in F. McGillivray, I. McLean, R. Pahré and C. Schonhardt-Bailey, eds, *International Trade and Political Institutions*, Edward Elgar, 2001, pp. 99-145; id and and C. Bustani, 'Irish potatoes and British politics: interests, ideology, heresthetic and the repeal of the Corn Laws', *Political Studies*, 47, (1999), pp. 817-36.

<sup>7</sup> W. O. Aydelotte, 'Parties and Issues in Early Victorian England', *The Journal of British Studies*, 5(2) (1966), pp. 95-114 at 112. In addition, one has the difficulty that even a focus on the views of men such as Parnell would find it very difficult to come to clear and measurable conclusions as to his position on social issues over time.

<sup>8</sup> MP identification is on the basis of the Cromwell listings in the ESDS archive (corrected in a small number of Irish MPs by cross-reference to B.M. Walker, *Parliamentary election results in Ireland, 1801-1922*, Royal Irish Academy, 1978. Although the results of votes is shown in Hansard the members voting are not always shown in this period (and there is no obvious rationale for the votes which are fully recorded and those which are not). In the 1880-1885 parliaments the details of the members voting are taken from Hansard. In 1886, the records of all votes are in the ESDS archive noted above, while in the period 1886-1890, votes are taken either from Hansard or from the House of Commons division lists which are available in the British Library. (A copy appears to exist in Trinity College, Dublin but the author spent a day trying to locate it without success).

- ii) the internal cohesion of the Irish Parliamentary party votes, i.e. the extent to which those members voting expressed the same views;
- iii) their 'likeness' with the voting patterns of other major political groupings, i.e. the extent to which the Irish party votes were in line with other groups; and
- iv) the extent to which (if any) this changed over time.

The division lists of the House of Commons on a sample of about 20 votes on 'social issues' were analysed to establish the extent to which the Irish Parliamentary party resembled other parties/factions.<sup>9</sup> The analysis used the Rice Cohesion index which measures the extent to which a group of voters votes in the same way (on a scale of 0-100) and the Rice Likeness index which measures the extent to which the structure of party votes resembles another (again on a scale of 0-100).<sup>10</sup> One caveat with the Rice indices is that they do not take account of non-voting, i.e. a party of 100 members in which 10 vote 'yes on a vote (with 90 not voting) will get the same cohesion score as a party of 100 in which 90 vote yes (with 10 not voting).<sup>11</sup> So interpretation of the cohesion and likeness cores needs to have regard to different levels of voting (or 'turnout').

About 20 votes in the period were analysed on broadly 'social' issues such as women's enfranchisement, the abolishment of the death penalty, marriage law, maintenance of children, the holding of public meetings, local taxation, liquor licensing, contagious diseases,<sup>12</sup> coal mine regulation, labourer's allotments, employers' liability, and wages. One issue in this selection is

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<sup>9</sup> The full details are listed in an annex to this paper.

<sup>10</sup> See S.A. Rice, 'The behaviour of legislative groups: a method of measurement' *Political Science Quarterly*, 40(1) (1925), pp. 60-72. For more recent discussion of the methodology see A. R. Clausen, 'The measurement of legislative group behavior' *Midwest Journal of Political Science*, 11(2) (1967) pp. 212-24; J.M. Carey 'Competing Principals, Political Institutions, and Party Unity in Legislative Voting', *American Journal of Political Science*, 51(1), January 2007, pp. 92-107. The Rice measures are not very complex but appear well suited to the objectives of this study. Much more sophisticated measures have been used in other studies such as J.R. Bylsma 'Party structure in the 1852-1857 House of Commons: a scaleogram analysis' *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 7(4) (1977), pp. 617-635; T.W. Heyck and W. Klecka 'British radical MPs, 1874-1895: new evidence from discriminant analysis', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 4(2) (1973) pp. 161-184; V. Cromwell, 'Mapping the political world of 1861: a multidimensional analysis of House of Commons division lists', *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, 7(2) (1982) pp. 281-297.

<sup>11</sup> See J.M. Carey 'Party Unity in Legislative Voting', American Political Science Associations conference, September 2000.

<sup>12</sup> That is the legislation relating to the regulation of prostitution. See J.R. Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian society: women, class and the state*, Cambridge University Press, 1980; P. McHugh, *Prostitution and Victorian social reform*, Croom Helm, 1980. M. Luddy, *Prostitution and Irish Society*, Cambridge University Press, 2007 gives rather brief discussion to the issue (pp. 140-52) given its importance. Surprisingly, although she discusses the role of the Ladies National Association (by her own account 'a very localised and small affair') in some depth she makes no reference to the views of the Irish party on the Acts. In fact, as we will see, the Irish party MPs voted with the Radicals on the motion to suspend the Acts although with a turnout somewhat below their (rather modest) average.

the rather large number of votes relating to the 'liquor' issue – a topic on which the Irish party (and indeed others) were often divided.<sup>13</sup> All were larger votes (with at least 20 per cent of MPs voting) and contested, i.e. there was a significant body of votes on the losing side.<sup>14</sup> No doubt many other issues such as, for example, land tenure, could also be seen as 'social' in a broad sense. However, any Irish 'national' issues have been excluded from consideration here on the basis that 'national' considerations would dominate over 'social' in terms of voting decisions. Issues predominantly relating to, for example, religion or foreign affairs were also excluded.

## 1. Voting behaviour 1880-85

### Turnout

In the period 1880-85 when the party remained a very loose alliance with a Parnellite and non-Parnellite section, one finds that turnout is lower than for the Liberal and Conservative parties (only 40 per cent of overall).<sup>15</sup> While overall turnout averaged over the seven divisions examined is 51 per cent, Irish party turnout only exceeds 40 per cent on one vote (the vote on the local liquor option in June 1880) which the party largely opposed.<sup>16</sup>

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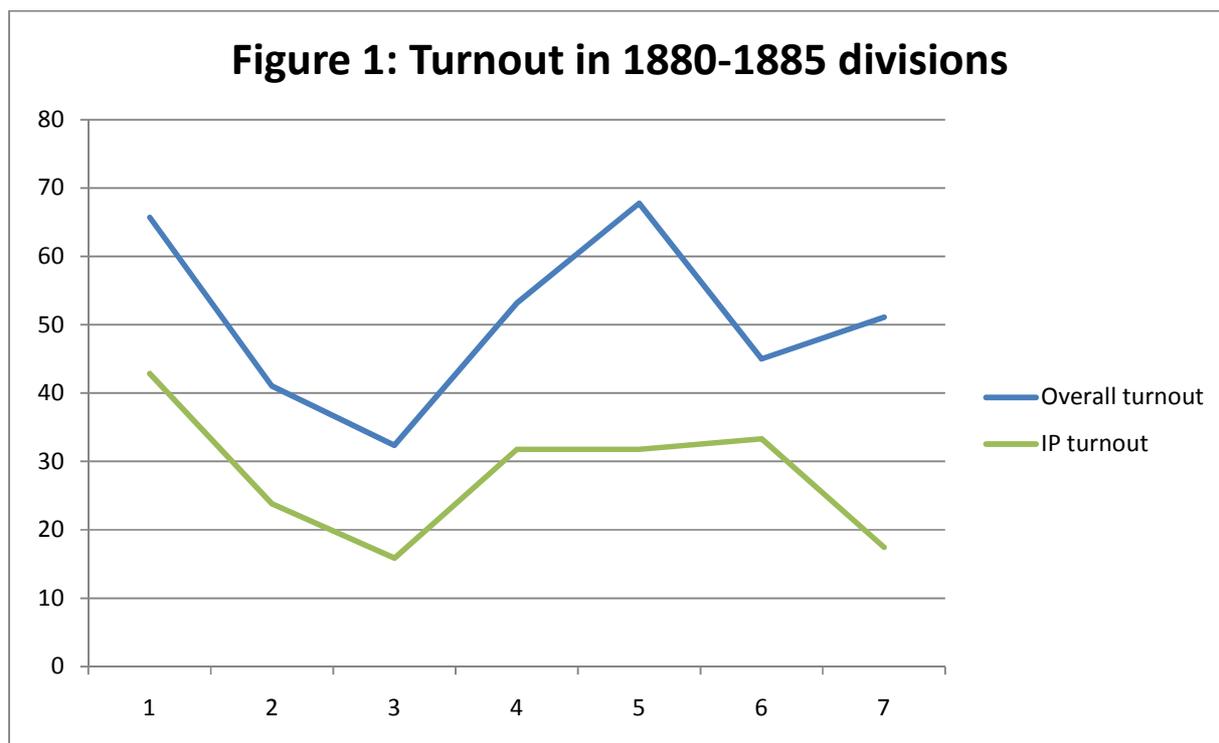
<sup>13</sup> On this issue see E. Malcolm, *'Ireland, sober, Ireland free': drink and temperance in nineteenth-century Ireland*, Gill and Macmillan, 1986, chapter 5. On the importance of the 'drink interest' in Irish politics see also K.T. Hoppen, *Elections, politics and society in Ireland, 1832-1885*, Clarendon Press, 1984, pp. 51-55.

<sup>14</sup> This is to avoid any distortion which might arise from including small votes called by a particular group of members and on the basis that the larger votes were presumably seen as being on more important issues.

<sup>15</sup> All averages are unweighted.

<sup>16</sup> The motion, moved by Liberal party MP and temperance campaigner Sir William Lawson, provided 'That, inasmuch as the ancient and avowed object of Licensing the Sale of Intoxicating Liquors is to supply a supposed public want, without detriment to the public welfare, this House is of opinion that a legal power of restraining the issue or renewal of Licences should be placed in the hands of the persons most deeply interested and affected, namely, the inhabitants themselves, who are entitled to protection from the injurious consequences of the present system, by some efficient measure of local option.'

**Figure 1: Turnout in 1880-1885 divisions**



1	18/6/80 Liquor local option
2	25/6/80 Sunday closing
3	16/3/81 Maintenance for children
4	4/6/81 Liquor local option
5	17/04/1883 Local taxation
6	20/4/83 Repeal of Contagious Diseases act
7	27/4/83 Liquor local option

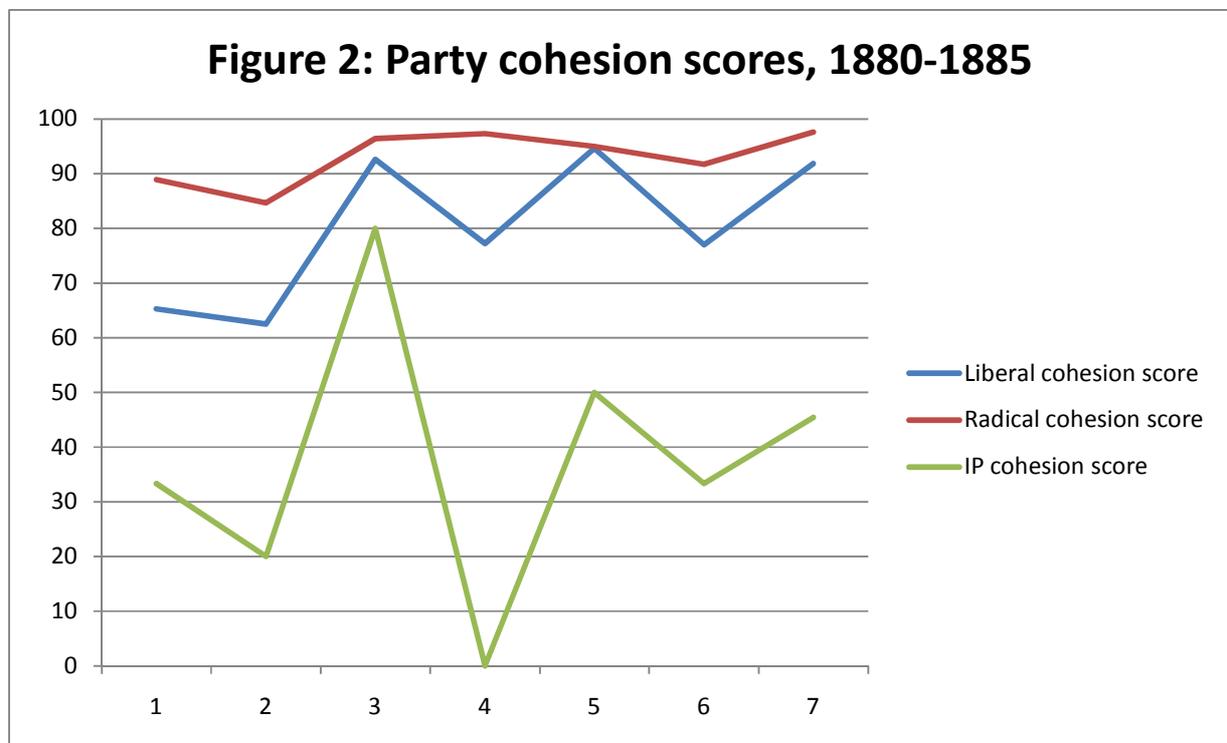
## Cohesion

Cohesion is also low compared to other parties (37 on a scale of 0-100 compared to 80 for the Liberals).<sup>17</sup> Irish party cohesion only reached 80 on one occasion (on a small vote when nine members opposed the adjournment of the Maintenance of Children Bill). It plummeted to 0 on a second liquor local option motion.<sup>18</sup> This might be unsurprising given the loose nature of the party in this period. However, it is perhaps more surprising to find that there is no clear division between the voting behaviour of the Parnellite and anti-Parnellite groups within the party.

<sup>17</sup> Given that the 'radical' group is identified by their voting records (see Heyck, *Dimensions of British Radicalism*, op. cit.) a very high level of cohesion for this group is only to be expected.

<sup>18</sup> This concerned a further motion advanced by Sir William Lawson, calling for legislative effect to be given to the earlier June 1880 motion to give local communities the power 'to protect themselves from the operation of the Liquor Traffic'. It was carried by 196 to 154.

Rather there is a general lack of cohesion across all Irish party members. For example, on the liquor local option vote on 18 June 1880, 9 members voted in favour of the motion and 18 against.<sup>19</sup> Of the 24 MPs who voted for Parnell in the election for chairman of the party in May 1880, 12 voted on the June motion, 3 in favour and 9 against.<sup>20</sup> In the second liquor motion of June 1881, when the party split evenly, one of the original Parnellites voted in favour and two against.<sup>21</sup> On the April 1883 motion to repeal the Contagious Diseases Act, Irish party MPs voted 7 to 14 against an amendment to impose conditions on the proposed repeal. The original Parnellites are to be found on both sides of the motion (2 for and 7 against). Interestingly Parnell himself did not vote on any of the divisions considered here.



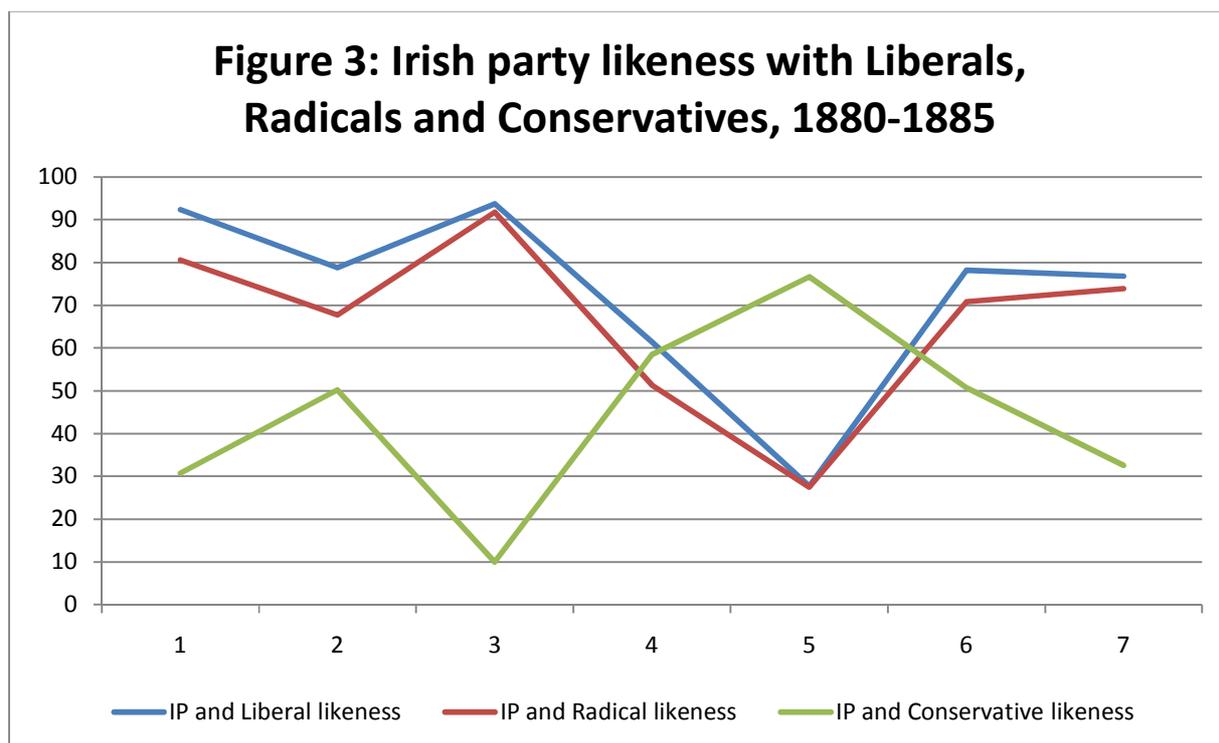
<sup>19</sup> See above fn 16.

<sup>20</sup> Identification is taken from B. M. Walker, *Parliamentary election results*, op. cit. Malcolm, 'Ireland sober' p. 256 gives a somewhat different breakdown (showing 'Home Rulers' voting 12 to 18) presumably reflecting a broader categorisation of 'Home Rule' members. Her breakdown shows that Irish Conservative members were also split on this issue (5 to 7).

<sup>21</sup> Though further MPs who were elected in by-elections since the 1880 election and are generally seen as Parnellites also supported the motion such as John Redmond and A.M. Sullivan

## Likeness

Voting is generally closer to that of the Liberals and somewhat closer to the body of Liberals than to Radicals (figure 3).<sup>22</sup> Only on the local taxation motion in 1883 were the Irish party members closer to the Conservatives.<sup>23</sup> This is hardly a surprise given the background of many Irish Parliamentary party MPs. Indeed, in doing so, they would seem to be acting in line with a longstanding practice of ‘independent’ Irish members given that Aydelotte notes that in the 1841-47 parliament, the Repealers ‘almost invariably’ voted with the Liberals.<sup>24</sup>



<sup>22</sup> Radical members are identified on the basis of T.W. Heyck's work: *The Dimensions of British Radicalism: The Case of Ireland, 1874-1895*, University of Illinois Press, 1974. It would be interesting to compare the voting patterns with the Whig members of the Liberal party but the listing of Whig MPs in the 1800-1885 provided by T.A. Jenkins, *Gladstone, Whiggery, and the Liberal Party 1874-1886*, Clarendon Press, 1988, pp. 300-306 is 'not intended to be comprehensive'.

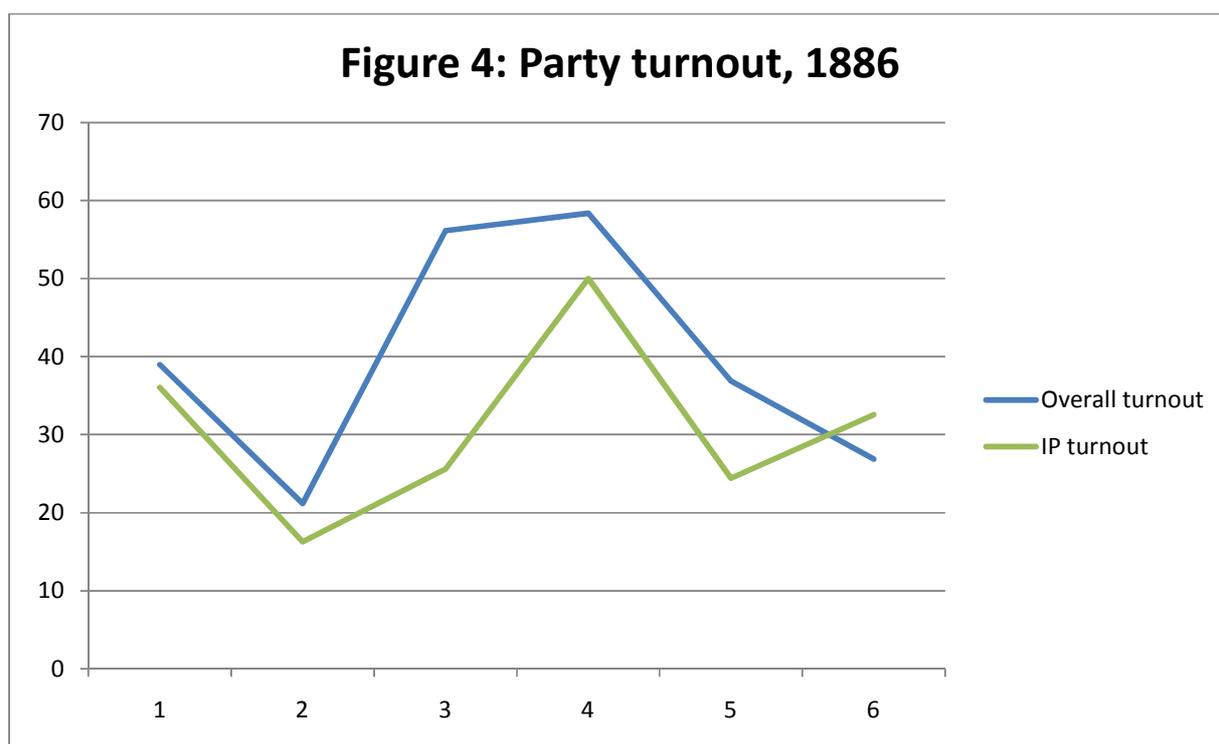
<sup>23</sup> Given its split on the 1883 local liquor option the Irish party was more or less equidistant from both major parties on the issue.

<sup>24</sup> W. O. Aydelotte, 'Parties and Issues' at 104.

## 2. Voting behaviour in the 1886 parliament

### Turnout

In the short 1886 Parliament (which was, of course, exceptional), turnout was up considerably (to 78 per cent of overall turnout). One again, however, the Irish party turnout only exceeded 40 per cent on one vote (that on local taxation in March 1886 in which the party voted unanimously in favour).<sup>25</sup>

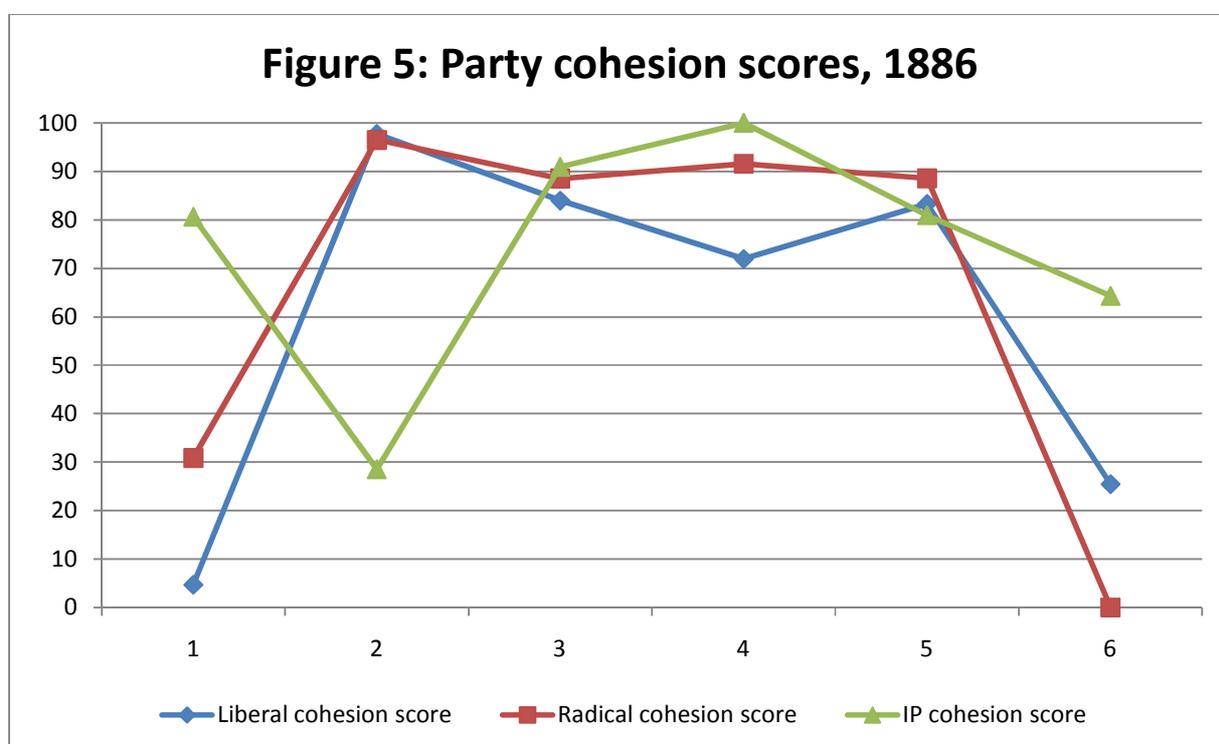


1	18/2/86 Parliamentary franchise women
2	10/3/86 Intoxicating liquor on Sunday
3	16/3/86 Contagious diseases
4	23/3/86 Local taxation
5	2/4/86 Intoxicating liquor to children
6	11/5/86 Death penalty

<sup>25</sup> The motion stated ' That the present system under which, in England and Wales, the first Incidence of Local Taxation ... falls on the occupier and not on the owner of lands and tenements, is unjust; that such owners ought in equity to bear at least a moiety of those charges; that the system under which country mansions are rated is unfair; and that the owners of ground rents in towns are liable to no part of those charges, the outlay of which is essential in order that the property may possess any marketable value whatever.'

## Cohesion

Cohesion also shows a marked improvement (to 74). Irish party cohesion was consistently high with the exception of the vote on a motion to hear now – rather than to adjourn - the Sale of Intoxicating Liquor on Sundays Bill. As in the previous session the party split on this issue with nine voting to hear the Bill and five voting against.<sup>26</sup> This session included a number of controversial issues such as votes for women, the repeal of the Contagious Diseases legislation and the abolition of the death penalty. The party voted strongly against votes for women (with the Conservatives, the Liberals being split on the issue) but for the unconditional repeal of the Contagious Diseases Act (with the Liberals) and for the abolition of the death penalty (with the Radicals). As can be seen in Figure 5, the Liberals and Radicals were themselves split on both the votes for women and death penalty issues.

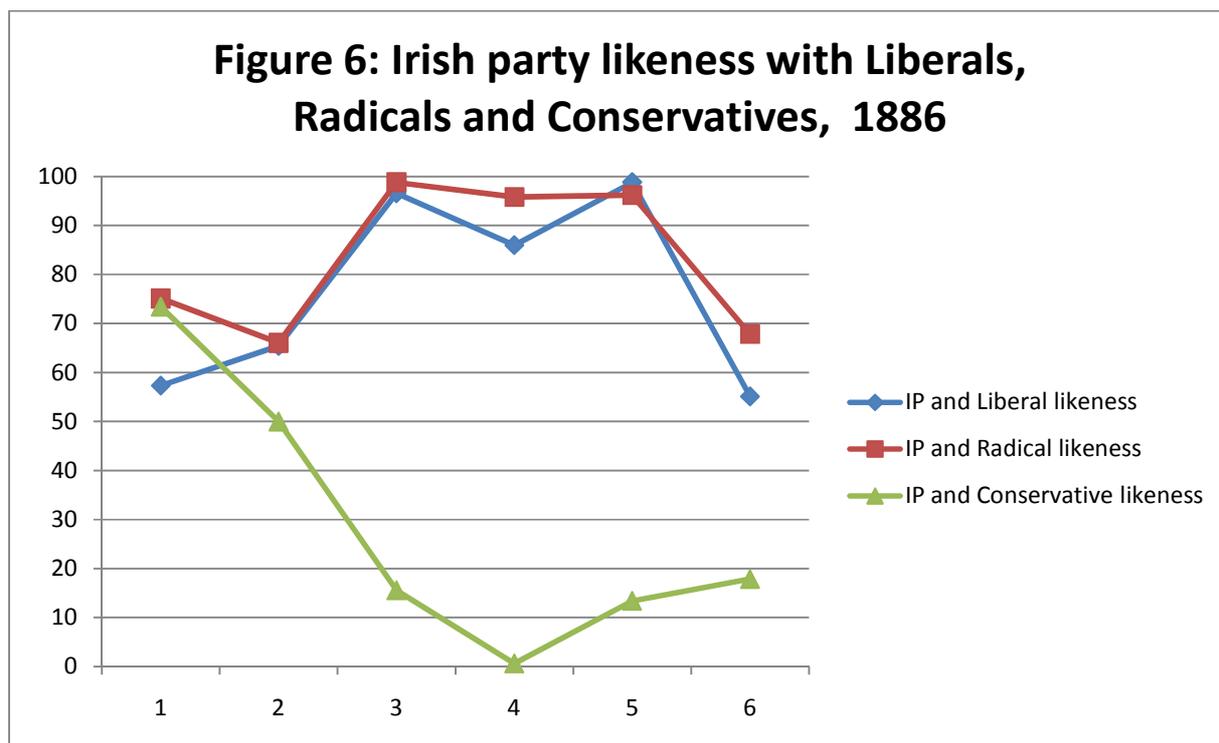


## Likeness

Voting is consistently closer to the Liberals and now closer to the Radical MPs on several issues. Conversely any likeness to Conservatives largely disappears (with the exception of the women's enfranchisement issue).

<sup>26</sup> The ayes won 101 to 41. The party was more united in voting to discuss the Intoxicating Liquors (Sale to Children) Bill which proposed that publicans be prohibited from selling intoxicating liquors to children under 13 years of age.

**Figure 6: Irish party likeness with Liberals, Radicals and Conservatives, 1886**



But voting on social issues is still relatively weak compared both to other parties and to Irish Parliamentary party votes on other issues (and the leadership – in particular Parnell himself - rarely votes).<sup>27</sup>

### 3. Voting behaviour, 1886-90<sup>28</sup>

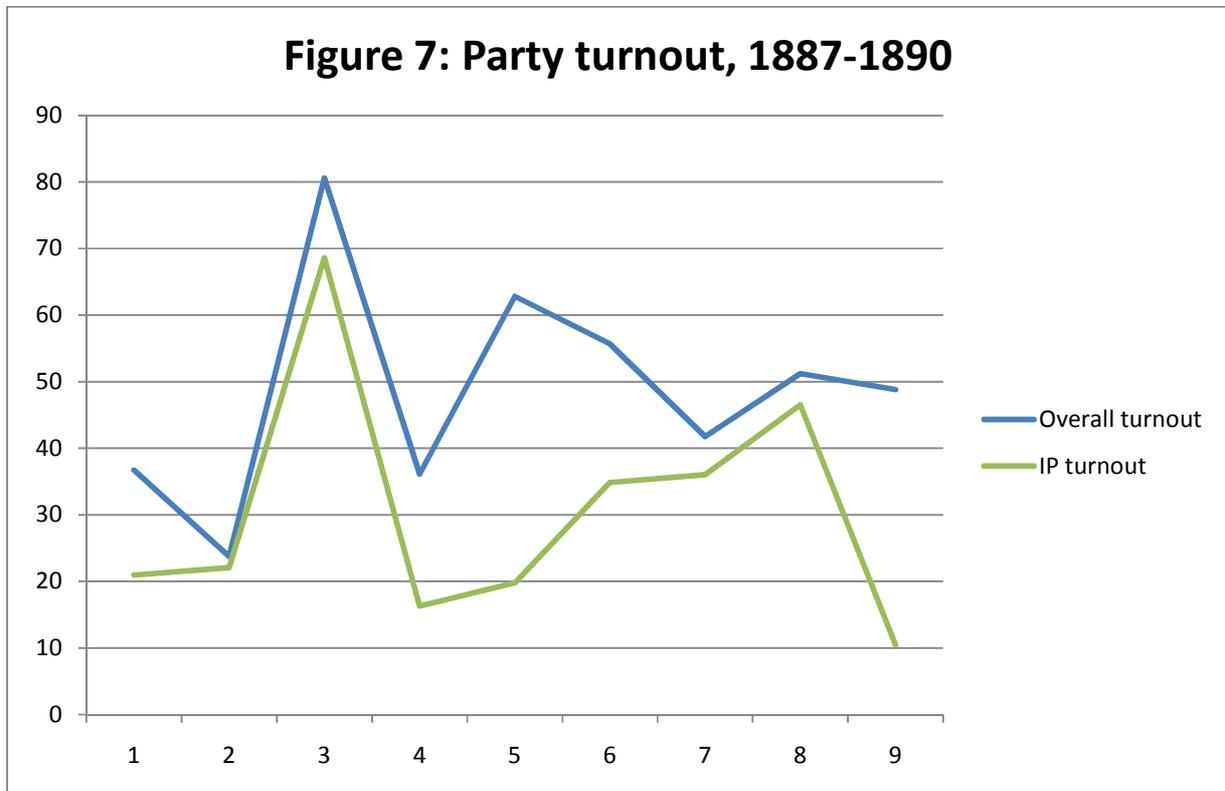
#### Turnout

Finally, in the Conservative-controlled Parliament from 1886 to 1890 (before the Parnell split), turnout falls again. On the nine divisions examined, overall turnout is almost half (59 per cent) but the Irish party MPs manage less than one-third (31 per cent). The party only exceeds the

<sup>27</sup> Parnell explained that he had 'never voted on any of [these temperance questions], because I think that the question of temperance and of the control of the liquor trade, is one which, of all others, could most suitably and properly be left to an Irish Legislature to deal with': HC Deb 02 April 1886 vol 304 cc 694. Of course, this does not entirely explain why he rarely voted on any of the issues considered here (and as Malcolm notes the statement was not, in fact, accurate as to his own voting record on liquor issues).

<sup>28</sup> By chance the nine votes analysed in this period fall in 1887 and 1888. The separate categorisation of Radicals was not continued in this period as they now constituted the majority of Liberal MPs (see T.W. Heyck and W. Kelcka 'British Radicals' pp. 162, 178).

average turnout on the motion on public meetings in the metropolis in March 1888<sup>29</sup> (and came close on the Employers Liability Bill in December of that year).<sup>30</sup>



	23/6/87 Coal Mines Regulation Bill
2	5/9/87 Labourers Allotments Bill
3	2/3/88 Public meetings in the Metropolis
4	10/4/88 Wages (Irl) Bill
5	18/4/88 Marriage with deceased wife's sister
6	2/5/88 Early Closing Bill
7	09/05/88 Public Houses (Irl) Saturday Closing Bill
8	7/12/88 Employers Liability Bill
9	14/12/88 Liquors on Sunday Bill

<sup>29</sup> The motion, proposed by Sir Charles Russell, Liberal MP for Dundalk (1880-1885) and later Hackney (1885-1894), proposed 'an inquiry should be instituted by a Committee of this House into the conditions subject to which [public meetings in the Metropolis] may be held, and the limits of the right of interference therewith by the Executive Government.' It followed riots in Trafalgar Square in November 1887. It was strongly supported by the Liberals and Irish party and equally strongly opposed by the government and defeated 224 to 316.

<sup>30</sup> Voting with the Liberals not to hear the Bill (but defeated by the government).

## Cohesion

As can be seen in Figure 8, the Liberals were generally very cohesive (averaging 83 overall) with the striking exception of the shops Early Closing Bill where the party split on the issue almost 50:50. The Conservatives were also generally cohesive with the exceptions of the Wages (Ireland) Bill<sup>31</sup> and the May 1888 Public Houses (Ireland) Saturday Closing Bill (69 overall). Irish party cohesion remains relatively high on most issues (79) but is overstated due to high non-voting and disappears on a number of issues.<sup>32</sup> The party split on the Early Closing Bill and on the Marriage Bill which (as the title implies) concerned restrictions on the right to marry a deceased wife's sister.<sup>33</sup> Speaking on the Marriage Bill, Arthur O'Connor (Donegal East) stated that

he could not understand how any Catholic Member could, under any circumstances, consent to a scheme which was profoundly and essentially opposed to every instinct and every tradition of Catholicism.<sup>34</sup>

However, a number of senior members including T.P. O'Connor and Parnell (not, of course, a Catholic) did just that.

On the two divisions on liquor issues the party voted on the first (against the Liberals) by 6 to 25 while on the second vote (in December 1888), only 10 per cent of Irish party members voted in a strongly party vote.

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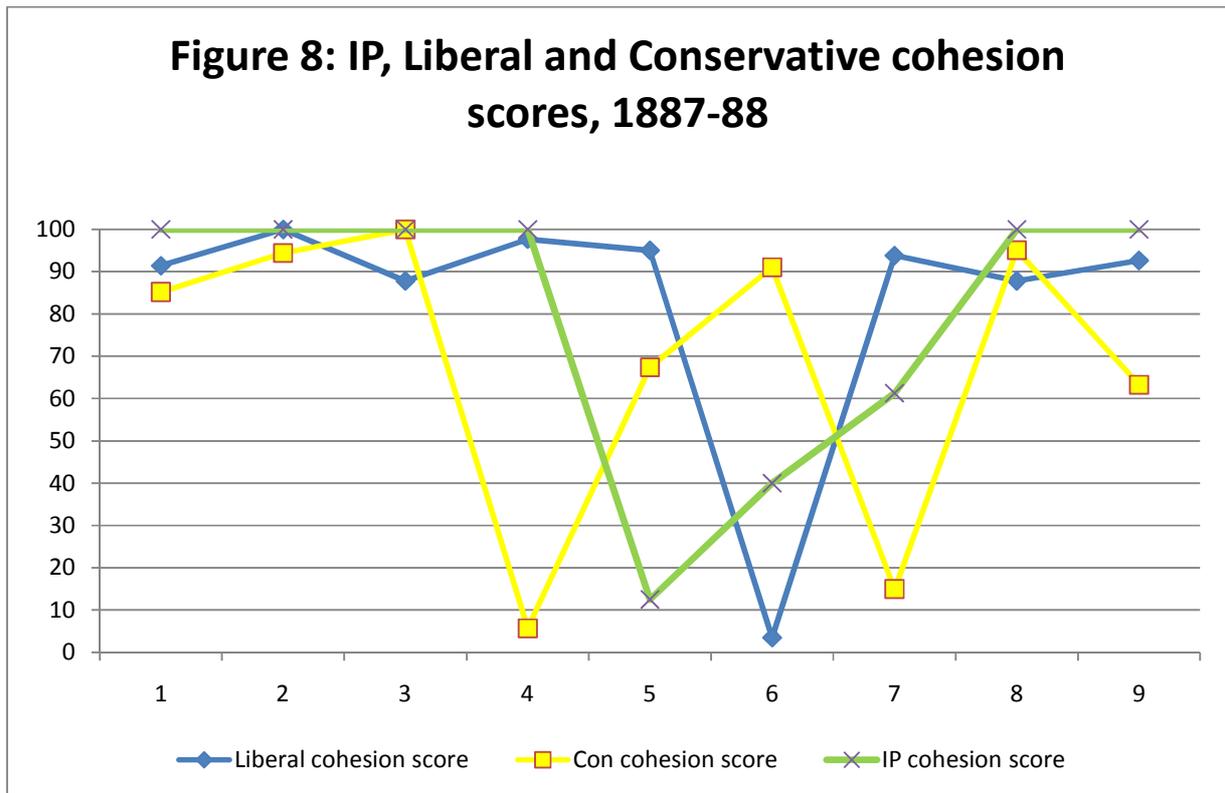
<sup>31</sup> The Bill was to provide for the weekly payment of wages to workmen in Ireland and was opposed by the government.

<sup>32</sup> For example, the apparent unanimity on the December 1888 Liquor on Sunday division is only achieved because most of the party did not vote.

<sup>33</sup> On the background to earlier legislation on the issue see N.F. Anderson, 'The "Marriage with Deceased Wife's Sister Bill" controversy: incest anxiety and the defense of family purity in Victorian England. *J British Stud* 21 (1982), pp.67-86; C. Frew 'Marriage to a Deceased Wife's Sister and the Origins of Lord Lyndhurst's Act' *Journal for Higher Degree Research Students in the Social Sciences and Humanities.*, 3 (2010) at [http://www.arts.mq.edu.au/documents/2\\_Charlotte\\_Frew.pdf](http://www.arts.mq.edu.au/documents/2_Charlotte_Frew.pdf)

<sup>34</sup> HC Deb 18 April 1888 vol 324 cc 1660-63.

**Figure 8: IP, Liberal and Conservative cohesion scores, 1887-88**

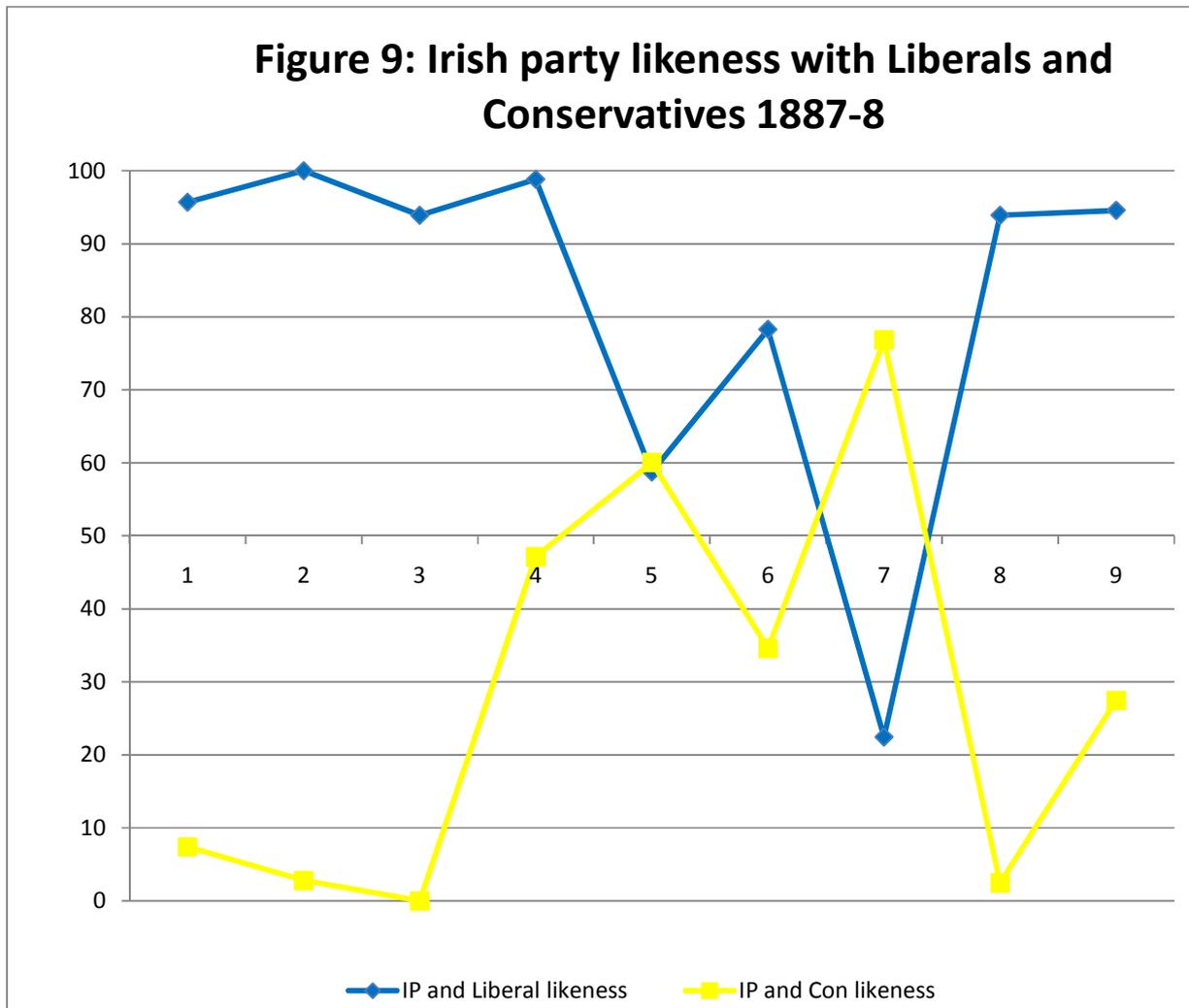


### Likeness

The voting likeness to the Liberals remains but is overstated due to non-voting and split votes. For example, on the Labourers Allotments Bill (which was not intended to apply to Ireland) only 18 Liberals voted (all against the division). Similarly, on the December 1888 liquor vote only 9 Irish party MPs voted. There is little likeness to the Conservatives except on the Sunday closing Bill (May 1888, where the Conservatives were split) and on the Marriage with a deceased wife's sister Bill (and in that case only because the Irish MPs split on the issue).<sup>35</sup>

<sup>35</sup> On the Wages (Ireland) Bill the similarity is due, in contrast, to a Conservative split.

**Figure 9: Irish party likeness with Liberals and Conservatives 1887-8**



#### 4. Discussion

The first point which might be made is that, even in the pre-1885 period, the political parties in Westminster act in a rather cohesive manner. Although the electoral reform of 1884-85 are often seen to – and no doubt did – mark an important change in British parliamentary politics, at the same time, these voting records indicate that – within parliament – the main British parties formed reasonably cohesive and disciplined groupings. Indeed Aydelotte has argued that, at least as early as the 1840s, ‘a pattern of party voting emerges strong and clear’.<sup>36</sup> J.R. Bylsma, studying the 1852-57 parliament, also finds ‘a very strong relationship between a

<sup>36</sup> W. O. Aydelotte, ‘Parties and Issues’ at 109.

Member of Parliament's voting patterns and his party designation'.<sup>37</sup> Cox finds that, as early as 1836, cohesion on whipped votes was as high as 72.7. Although this fell after the Peel split, it rose again to 75.4 by 1871 and continued to rise thereafter.<sup>38</sup>

Turning to the Irish party, and looking at the period as a whole, there is a clear and expected change between the pre- and post-1885 party.<sup>39</sup> After the electoral reform of 1885 and as Parnell established himself as chief – rather than simply chairman – of the party, the Parnellite controlled party (post-1885) becomes more cohesive and the party votes more closely with the Liberals. Overall, however, the record of consistently low turnout does not provide any clear indications that the Irish Parliamentary party was strongly committed on social issues. This study, therefore, questions rather than supports the thesis advanced by O'Day that Irish party MPs 'were well to the left in social politics'. Lubenow's analysis is based on a full analysis of all votes in the 1886 session. However, it must be recalled that this session – leading up to the first Home Rule Bill and the subsequent Liberal split – was exceptional in many ways and it would be essential to take a broader view of the voting patterns of the party in order to come to general conclusions about its approach in the period.<sup>40</sup>

The study also throws some light on broader issues. First, from a methodological perspective, in order to obtain a manageable 'sample' of votes, Stephens and Brady focus on 'large votes' i.e. those in which 400 or more members voted. They argue that this is justified on the basis that these votes seemed sufficiently important to attract at least 60 per cent of MPs.<sup>41</sup> However, in the current study there are only four votes which exceeded the 400 vote threshold (including or excluding Irish MPs) and so many important votes would be excluded by using this cut-off point. In addition the cohesion indices which Stephens and Brady calculate based on these large votes are higher than those calculated (using the same methodology) for the social

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<sup>37</sup> 'Party structure in the 1852-1857 House of Commons: a scaleogram analysis' *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 7(4) (1977), pp. 617-635 at 617.

<sup>38</sup> G.W. Cox, 'The Development of a Party-Oriented Electorate in England, 1832-1918,' *British Journal of Political Science* 16 (1984):187-216. See also the more detailed discussion in 'Party and Constituency in Victorian Britain', PhD thesis, Caltech, 1982, chapter 2. Cox argues for the development of a party-oriented electorate by about the 1860s in Britain. It is perhaps possible to see this trend as coming earlier (after the first Reform Act) but being disrupted by the realignment of forces relating to the Peelite split of the 1840s.

<sup>39</sup> See generally C. Cruise O'Brien, *Parnell and his party, 1880-1890*, Clarendon Press, 1964.

<sup>40</sup> See, for example, A.B. Cooke and J. Vincent, *The governing passion: cabinet government and party politics in Britain, 1886-86*, Barnes and Noble, 1974.

<sup>41</sup> They also justify the decision on the basis of the need for a sufficiently large data sample to allow correlation analysis and because they wish to exclude Irish MPs. In the great tradition of (some) non-Irish academics discussing Ireland, Stephens and Brady sweepingly suggest that 'the single-minded obstruction of the Irish Nationalists in the Commons makes their inclusion either irrelevant or misleading with respect to all other issues affecting political alignment': H. W. Stephens and D.W. Brady 'The parliamentary parties and the electoral reforms of 1884-85 in Britain', *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, 1(4), pp. 491-510 at 501.

votes considered here suggesting that, as one might intuitively expect, parties may have been more likely to vote in a cohesive manner on large 'confidence' votes.<sup>42</sup> Therefore, a focus on large divisions may not be entirely representative of overall voting patterns and, while a potentially attractive option, confining analysis to large votes could only be used with considerable caution.

Second, on substantive political alignments, it is interesting to note that – on the evidence of the limited number of votes considered here – the Liberal Unionists continued after 1886 to vote on social issues more in line with their former Liberal colleagues than with the Conservative members with whom they were now aligned.<sup>43</sup> For example, on the Coal Mines Regulation Bill in June 1887 both the Liberals (96 per cent) and the Liberal Unionists (78 per cent) voted overwhelmingly against the division while the Conservatives voted heavily in the opposite direction (93 per cent ayes). Even in April 1888 on the Marriage with a deceased wife's sister Bill, the Liberal Unionists continued to vote heavily with the Liberals and it is not until December of that year (on the Employers Liability Bill) that we see the Liberal Unionists voting with the Conservatives. Overall, on the nine votes analysed, the likeness score between Liberals and Liberal unionists averages 75 compared to only 52 between the Liberal Unionists and the Conservatives. This is consistent with Lubenow's finding that (in 1886) there was a high level of likeness between the Liberal Unionists and Gladstonian Liberals (including a very high figure of 86.6 on 'social policy' divisions'.<sup>44</sup>

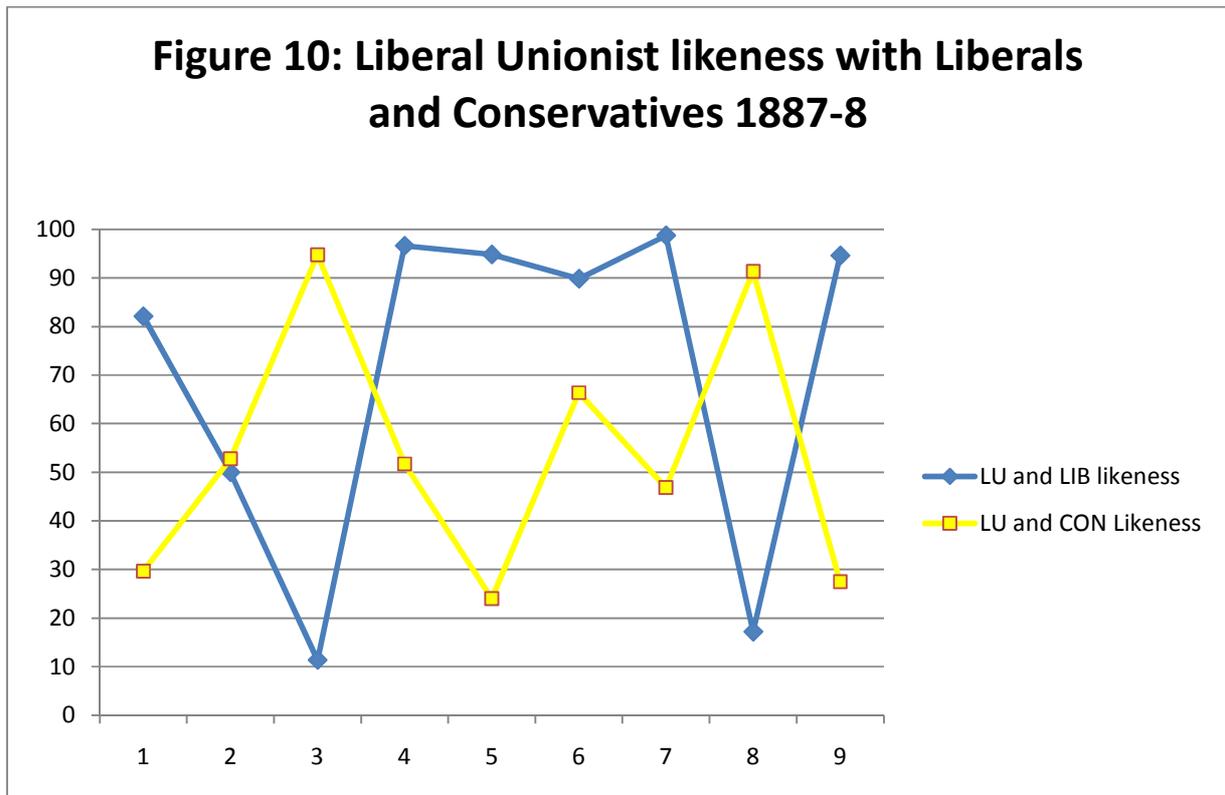
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<sup>42</sup> For example, in the 1880-5 parliament, Stephens and Brady cite a cohesion vote for the Liberals of 93.7 compared to a figure of 80 calculated to the social votes considered here. Similarly in the 1886-92 parliament they quote a cohesion score of 94.8 for the Conservatives compared to a score for this period on 74 on social votes. Cox also finds that dissidence 'occurred more frequently on smaller divisions': 'Party and constituency' p. 19.

<sup>43</sup> Other than on 'confidence' issues such as the vote on Public Meetings in the Metropolis.

<sup>44</sup> W.C. Lubenow, 'Irish Home Rule and the great separation in the Liberal party in 1886: the dimensions of parliamentary liberalism' *Victorian Studies*, 26(2) (1993) pp. 161-180 at 186.

**Figure 10: Liberal Unionist likeness with Liberals and Conservatives 1887-8**



## 5. Conclusion – where to now?

It would be interesting to extend this exploratory study in time to consider the ‘social views’ of the Irish party (or rather parties) after the Parnell split and on its later reunification. However, it must be recalled that the present study is based on only about 20 votes out of a total number of divisions in the period of perhaps 3,900. Of course, a much smaller number would have satisfied the criteria used here (i.e. confined to ‘social issues’, involving ‘larger’ and ‘contested’ votes and excluding repeated votes on similar issues<sup>45</sup>). Nonetheless, before broadening the study in time, it is perhaps necessary to give some consideration to the need to ‘deepen’ the coverage to ensure that the results are not distorted by a biased selection of votes.<sup>46</sup> However, even using the simple Rice indices, handling the data is very time consuming and it would be a very large (and perhaps not very productive) enterprise to attempt to cover all votes. Due to

<sup>45</sup> Where a bill was strongly opposed, it sometimes occurred that votes were repeatedly called on a number of sections of the Bill but the basic issue involved, i.e. opposition to the Bill itself was the same.

<sup>46</sup> Indeed, although some of the selection criteria used – such as numbers voting – are easily measured, the concept of ‘social’ issues is by no means easy to define objectively not is it easy to decide what are and are not ‘duplicate’ votes.

the cyclical nature of politics and the wide variation of issues involved, it would not be particularly easy to select a random sample of votes.<sup>47</sup> It may be preferable to look at an analysis of all votes in selected parliamentary sessions (selected having regard to the political dynamics involved) building this up to cover the entire period from c. 1880 to c.1918.

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<sup>47</sup> Although Cox, 'Party and Constituency' used, in part, a 10 per cent random sample of division lists (at p. 16).

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### Annex: Votes analysed

Number	Description	Date	Total voting	Source
1880-1885				
	Intoxicating Liquors (Licenses) Resolution	June 18, 1880	431	Hansard
	Closing of Public Houses on Sunday, resolution	June 25, 1880	270	Hansard
	Maintenance of Children Bill	March 16, 1881	212	ESDS
	Liquor Traffic Resolution	June 14, 1881	350	ESDS
	Local Taxation Resolution	April 17, 1883	446	Hansard
	Contagious Diseases Acts Resolution	April 20, 1883	292	Hansard
	Liquor Local Option Resolution	April 27, 1883	336	Hansard
1886				
	Parliamentary Franchise (Extension to Women) Bill	February 18, 1886	261	ESDS
	Sale of Intoxicating Liquors on Sunday Bill	March 10, 1886	142	ESDS
	Contagious Diseases Acts, motion to repeal	March 16, 1886	376	ESDS
	Local Taxation (Incidence) Resolution	March 23, 1886	213	ESDS

	Intoxicating Liquors (Sale to Children) Bill	April 2, 1886	247	ESDS
	Death Penalty Resolution	May 11, 1886	190	ESDS
1887-1892				
	Coal Mines Regulation Bill	June 23, 1887	246	Hansard
	Labourers' Allotments Bill	September 5, 1887	159	Hansard
	Public Meetings in the Metropolis	March 2, 1888	529	Hansard
	Wages (Ireland) Bill	April 10, 1888	242	Division list 65
	Marriage with a Deceased Wife's Sister Bill	April 18, 1888	421	Hansard
	Early Closing Bill	May 2, 1888	373	Hansard
	Public Houses (Ireland) (Sunday) Closing Bill	May 9, 1888	280	Hansard
	Liability for Injuries to Workmen Bill	December 7, 1888	343	Division list 330
	Sale of Intoxicating Liquors on Sunday Bill	December 14, 1888	314	Hansard