

## **Ireland 1801-1921**

Lesson plans, worksheets & other resources

### **Booklet 7**

Topic 6: Gladstone's early measures (Lesson 15)

By

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**Topic title: Gladstone's early measures**

Lesson 15	<p><b><u>Lesson title</u></b> Why did Gladstone get involved in Ireland and what did he do?</p> <p><b><u>Aims:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To examine briefly Gladstone's motives.</li><li>• To examine his initial measures.</li><li>• To assess the success of his early measures.</li></ul>	<p><b><u>Starter</u></b> Students examine the sources – they have to interpret what reason the source gives for Gladstone's Irish policy.</p>	<p><b><u>Main Activities</u></b> Students then complete the next section of the workbook. They have to read the assessment of the measures passed by Gladstone. They then use this to plan an answer to the key question.</p>	<p><b><u>Plenary</u></b> Students then fill out the final table which tries to assess how far the measures support the motives given for Gladstone's actions.</p>	<p><b><u>Materials</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• w/s Why did Gladstone get involved in Ireland and what were his measures?</li><li>• Gladstone's Irish measure, 1868-74.</li><li>• w/s What was Gladstone's main motive when dealing with Ireland?</li></ul>
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## Why did Gladstone get involved in Ireland and what were his measures?

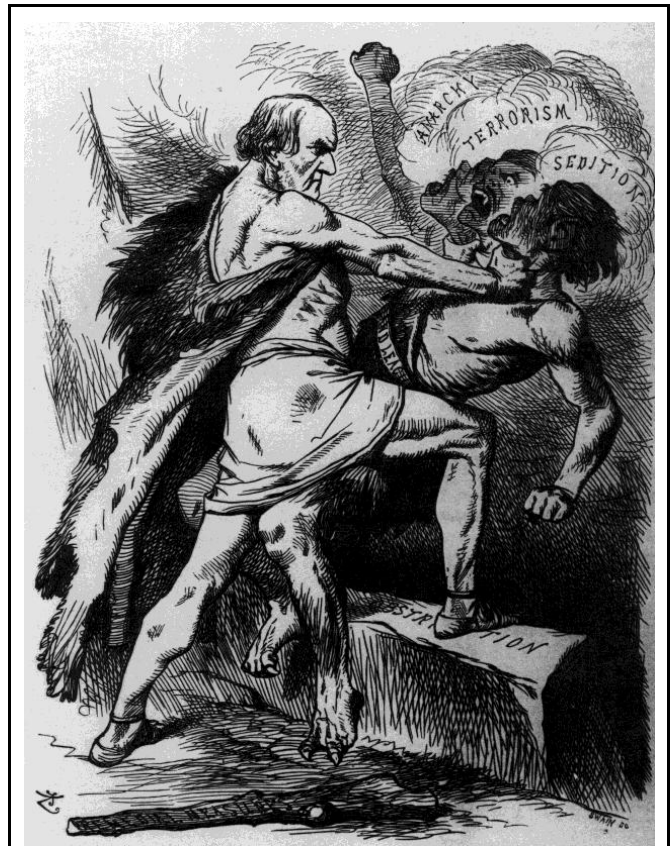
Lesson 15- w/s 1

'Ireland, Ireland! That cloud in the west, that coming storm, the minister of God's retribution upon cruel...injustice. Ireland forces upon these great social and great religious questions.'

Gladstone, in a letter to his sister, 1845.

To this great country the state of Ireland after seven hundred years of our tutelage is in my opinion so long as it continues, an intolerable disgrace, and a danger so absolutely transcending all others, that I call it the only real danger of the noble empire of the Queen.

Gladstone, in a letter to Queen Victoria, 1870.



Strangling the Monster, *Punch*, 1881.

What do these sources suggest about Gladstone's motives for wanting to deal with Ireland?

His support for the disestablishment of the Church of Ireland in his parliamentary resolutions in the spring of 1868 may also have been conceived as a means of reuniting the Liberal Parties after the divisions over parliamentary reform in 1866-7, and also as an attempt - which turned out to be successful, as it led to the 1868 general elections - to regain the political initiative from Disraeli.

Paul Adelman and Robert Pearce, *Great Britain and the Irish Question, 1798-1922*.

Problem - Church of Ireland

Act - 1869 Disestablishment of the Church of Ireland

### *Background*

The general election had given Gladstone a clear mandate. A Liberal majority of 118 assured its easy passage through the Commons although the Lords proved difficult. A compromise was reached since neither the Queen, who disliked the Bill, nor the Conservative leadership, relished conflict with Gladstone's popular majority.

### *Legislation*

- All legal connection between the Church of Ireland and the state ended.
- The property of the Church was confiscated.
- Churches and burial grounds in use in 1869 were returned to the new Church.
- The life interests of clergymen, school teachers and officials of the old Church were protected.
- State grants to the Irish Presbyterian Church and the Catholics ended.
- The Temporalities Commission was established to manage the surplus income for the benefit of the people of Ireland.

### *Impact*

SUCCESS - immediate objective achieved.

Disestablishment was, however, a largely symbolic recognition of the vulnerability of Protestant ascendancy. It did nothing to remove real and pressing grievances.

Problem - Land of Ireland  
Act - 1870 Land Act

*Background*

This was much more controversial. Resignations were anticipated in a Cabinet of landowners opposed to the restriction of property rights. Bright demanded an extensive land purchase scheme to remove the landlord from the Irish countryside. Gladstone wished to strengthen and preserve the influence of the landlords whilst giving the tenants greater security and encouragement to improve their holdings. He had no intention of conceding the tenant demand for the '3 Fs' - fair rents, fixity of tenure, and free sale of the tenant's interest - but he wanted to reduce evictions and give tenants compensation where they had improved the farm

*Legislation*

Ulster tenant custom, which allowed the tenant to sell his interest in his holding to an incoming tenant and required the landlord to compensate the tenant for the improvements he had made, was legalised in the districts where it operated. Elsewhere, tenants were to receive compensation for improvements when giving up a farm, and compensation for 'disturbance' if evicted for any reason non-payment of rent. Tenants who wished to buy had to find 1/3 of the purchase price, the state providing 2/3s repayable at 5 per cent over 35 years.

*Impact*

FAILURE - the tenants were not pacified and Gladstone was forced to re-introduce coercion in 1871. Few tenants benefited from the Act. If Ulster tenant custom was claimed, the case had to be proved in the courts - landlords had the upper hand. Compensation was a 'tax' to deter evictions but the landlord only had to raise the rent and he could then evict without any penalty. Few tenants had the resources to take advantage of the land purchase scheme. Historians of the land question have argued that Gladstone's 1870 Act dealt with the wrong issues. Rent rises were not excessive before 1870, larger tenant farmers were prosperous, eviction rates were low and improvements were often made by landlord and tenant cooperation. The legislation worsened landlord/tenant relations and discouraged landlord improvements since the Act assumed that they were always made by the tenant.

Problem - Education of Ireland  
Act - 1873 University Bill

*Background*

Religion complicated education in Ireland. The Catholic bishops wanted denominational education at all levels, but state support for Catholic education would have been unacceptable to a Protestant House of Commons. A Report of 1870 which recommended denominational control of primary education was quickly shelved. The bishops wanted the endowment of a Catholic University to enable Catholics to study for a degree in a denominational environment.

*Legislation*

The Bill proposed a federal university of Dublin; all existing Irish colleges, Protestant, Catholic, or non-denominational, would be affiliated to the new institution which would organise teaching and examining. To prevent controversy, some subjects - theology, moral philosophy and history - would be excluded from the curriculum..

*Impact*

FAILURE - the Catholic bishops rejecting mixed education opposed the Bill. They broke the alliance with the Liberals, and 35 Irish MPs were persuaded to vote against the second reading. The Bill was defeated, although it was probably unworkable. Gladstone was perceived to be anti-Catholic, a distrust that was intensified by his later attack on the doctrine of 'papal infallibility'.

*'The objective of the first government, of attempting to remove the Protestant ascendancy, would, if achieved, pacify Ireland by leaving no major grievance. The problem of this strategy was that its measures, dramatic though they seemed at the time, were too modest and too slow.'*

H.C.G. Matthew, *Gladstone Diaries*, vol X, 1991

**How fair is this assessment of the failure of Gladstone's policies?**

**What was Gladstone's main motive when dealing with Ireland?**

**Motive**

**Evidence to suggest this was his main motive?**