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THE ROLE OF THE HIGHLAND DEVELOPMENT AGENCY:
WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO THE WORK OF
THE CONGESTED DISTRICTS BOARD 1897-1912

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May 1984

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am indebted to the following individuals for help and encouragement during the preparation of this thesis: Dr J G L Adams, my supervisor in the Department of Town and Regional Planning, who provided the inspiration to undertake the particular study and guided its progress; Professor G C Cameron, formerly of the University of Glasgow, who facilitated the necessary administrative procedures and inspired a more general interest in regional policy; Mr R J Ardern, Librarian, Highland and Islands Development Board, who skilfully reduced the very large volume of Highland-related literature to manageable proportions and provided invaluable help on the chronology of twentieth-century Highland development impetuses; Mr Stewart Fairlie, Editor, The Oban Times, who kindly provided access to the file room of that newspaper; Mr Dairmid Gunn, Secretary and Chief Executive, Scottish Agricultural Organisation Society, for outlining the theory and practice of agricultural co-operation in Scotland; Professor Sir Robert Grieve, Professor J B Caird, Dr Ian H Adams, Dr I D Whyte and Dr J I Prattis, for discussion of ideas at an early stage in the development of the research; and Professor David Donnison of the Department of Town and Regional Planning, without whose encouragement in the final stages of writing, the task would have been all the more difficult to complete.

I am also grateful for the courteous and efficient service of staff at the following institutions: The Scottish Record Office, especially West Register House, Edinburgh; The National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh; The Scottish Library, Central Public Library, Edinburgh; The Mitchell Library, Glasgow; Glasgow University Library; Edinburgh University Library; Scottish Office Library, New St Andrew's House, Edinburgh; Napier College Library, Edinburgh; and Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland, Estate Management Administration, Chesser House, Edinburgh.

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SUMMARY

This thesis examines the constitution, aims and achievement of the Congested Districts Board (1897-1912) against the wider context of attempts to develop the Scottish Highlands from the late eighteenth century to the twentieth century. The extant records of the Congested Districts Board are used in conjunction with other archive material and with contemporary press articles to assess to what extent the Board was successful in achieving its objectives of developing agriculture and fishing; creating holdings, assisting migration, and enlarging existing holdings; improving communications infrastructure and fostering home industries; and to identify the reasons for the Board's comparative failure. It is contended that the Congested Districts Board was considerably handicapped initially by having a remit wider in scope than its narrow legislative provisions could hope to secure, whether in terms of powers, finance or administrative structure, while at a later stage its confidence was eroded by political uncertainty as to its permanence. In conclusion, it is suggested that the unique contribution of the Board to Highland development lies in its importance as an experiment, demonstrating what is feasible, and in what circumstances, and what is not.

FOREWORD

The Highlands and Islands of Scotland constitutes the oldest development area in the United Kingdom. For over 300 years there have been initiatives of one sort or another to try to resolve the problem of underdevelopment there. This thesis argues that the setting up of the Congested Districts Board, which operated in the Crofting Counties from 1897 to 1912, marked the watershed between negative alleviation of distress and more positive implementation of co-ordinated regional development. Although at the turn of the century the mismatch between population and resources which constitutes the Highland problem still manifested itself as congestion relative to the means of production, rather than the modern characterisation of sparsity of population, and the solution was conceived largely as the movement of labour out, rather than capital into the region, nevertheless similarities in the nature of development problems encountered make a study of the Congested Districts Board of interest not merely for its own sake, but also for its relevance to problems faced by those concerned with Highland development today. Thus this study of the work of the Congested Districts Board, which is based on archive material held in the Scottish Record Office, does not claim to be a historical analysis, but draw on the cognate disciplines of history, geography, economics, politics and planning in an attempt to set the experience of the Congested Districts Board within its wider regional policy context, with a view to providing insights into future possibilities for Highland development.

(i) Statement of Objectives

Rural planning, it seems, has traditionally been served short measure.¹ Town planning, which in Britain had its origins in the substantial economic and social transformations of the nineteenth century,² did not expand to become town and country planning until 1932 when the Bill of that name received the Royal Assent. Yet the term 'rural planning' embraces far more than the simple concept of land-use in the countryside, and in this wider sense rural planning, or perhaps more accurately rural development, has a much longer history. The Highlands of Scotland, in particular, reveal what has been admirably summed up as a *long and often conflicting history of development agencies*.³ The latter years of the nineteenth century may be considered as marking the formal constitution of the Highlands and Islands as a development zone in the modern sense. For example Turnock states: *as a result of legislation from 1886 onwards, it [the Highland and Islands] could claim to be the oldest development area in the United Kingdom*.⁴ Hunter prefers to think that *the years around 1890 ... [saw] a very significant shift in the government's Highland policy: away from unrelieved repression and towards the officially sponsored development of the Highland economy*.⁵ Other commentators take the view that development programmes in the Highlands and Islands were started over 350 years ago and have an almost continuous history for the last century.⁶

Clearly the closing decades of the nineteenth century marked a watershed in the saga of Highland development rather than a baseline. Indeed an eminent historian has drawn a tentative parallel between the policies which the Highlands and Islands Development Board (HIDB) has pursued since 1965 and those pursued in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.⁷ It could be argued that such a comparison is untenable on the grounds that present conditions in the Highlands

differ radically from those obtaining around the start of the nineteenth century. The transition from a feudal to a commercial society was only just taking place as the improving movement advanced northwards up the glens from the lowlands. As Turnock points out, consolidation after 1745 was as much negative as positive.⁸ For a time progressive policies to promote the economic development of the Highlands - principally the provision of better transport by the construction of new roads and canals and the more problematical bolstering up of the fishing industry - marched side by side with repressive measures such as the forfeiture of estates and prohibition of certain aspects of traditional Highland culture, most notably the outlawing of the wearing of Highland dress.⁹

The work undertaken by the Commissioners for the Annexed Estates in particular was less a grand design for Highland development,¹⁰ than a highly successful pacification campaign in which *the power of the Crown and the power of the Law Courts for ever crushed the private wars of the feudal nobles, [ensuring that] a tail of tenantry was no longer an asset to the laird [so that] economic value shifted from the Retainer to the Rent.*¹¹ The Annexing Act of March 1752 provided that the rent and profits arising from the annexed properties were to be used specifically for the purposes of *better civilizing and improving the Highlands of Scotland; and preventing disorders there for the future.*¹² Thus while it remains true that the measures adopted after 1745 and the policies pursued by the HIDB since 1965 both set out to promote development, there the similarity ends. Both the nature of the respective development and the means of achieving it are essentially different; . HIDB policies aim to consolidate an ailing market economy, while those of the late eighteenth, and to a lesser extent the early nineteenth,

century were designed actually to create one, through the destruction of prevailing feudal conditions. In consequence, the basis for direct comparison is somewhat insecure.

By contrast it is suggested that a comparison of the policies of a Highland development agency which operated at the beginning of the present century with those of the HIDB could prove both a feasible proposition and a profitable exercise. The Congested Districts Board (CDB) was set up in 1897 and operated for fifteen years, thus satisfying the major condition of falling within the era of 'modern' Highland development. The Board had powers to develop agriculture and fishing, create new holdings and assist migration, and enlarge existing holdings. It was also responsible for providing or improving certain public works such as piers, harbours, roads and bridges and for fostering home industries.¹³ In fact the Board constituted an *institution with broad development powers* whose work seems to have been very similar to that of the HIDB¹⁴ at least to an extent not possible a century earlier. The very names of the two boards indicate that they are both area-specific rather than problem-orientated, in itself testifying to the breadth of their remit. If the original designation of 'congested district'¹⁵ is adopted, the boundaries of the respective Boards' areas could hardly be more different. Yet by 1911, one year prior to its dissolution, the CDB had extended the application of the term 'congested district' to include all crofting parishes.¹⁶ It is no mere accident that the Highlands and Islands as defined for HIDB purposes in 1965¹⁷ is coterminous with the Crofting Counties. It is also relevant to note that it was the firm belief of the first chairman of the HIDB that the Board would be judged by its success in the *true crofting areas*.¹⁸ The 'true crofting areas' have elsewhere been referred to as *the heartland of the*

crofting community.¹⁹ The author of that particular term stated of the original 'congested districts': *this area is - not coincidentally - practically the same as that defined [earlier] as 'the heartland of the crofting community'*.²⁰ Finally it is almost uncanny to compare what Collier wrote of the CDB with Magnusson's comments on the HADB, in the context of Highland administration. Collier views the CDB as one of a series of *ad hoc* authorities created to meet urgent needs when the existing machinery was incapable of doing so; but since they involved resort to one temporary expedient after another, confusion and overlapping inevitably resulted.²¹ Of the HADB Magnusson states: *the setting up of the Board is the most important single development in Highland administration this century But there is still a great plethora of agencies responsible for various aspects of Highland administration often working in a vacuum without proper relationships with other agencies, or without the authority to implement courses of action effectively*.²² Clearly then an examination of the work of the Congested Districts Board in its administrative setting has a certain relevance to contemporary Highland management.

It follows that while a study of the achievements of the CDB could constitute an important contribution to Highland history in its own right, the potential of such a study reaches far beyond what is traditionally defined as the historian's assignment, that is to look for the unique and distinctive in the conduct of men in the hope of capturing as accurately as possible what actually happened in the past.²³ It was during the 1950s that methodological treatises first came to regard history as, broadly defined,

a way of thinking about questions in the time dimension viewing past, present and future as strands in an endless thread of history.²⁴ More explicit statements followed, such as that of Plumb in 1964 who added that [historians'] investigations of the past should lead to an explanation of it for their time and generation, so that, by explaining, man's control over his future may be increased.²⁵ It is particularly interesting to focus on recent methodological re-examinations in those two branches of historical thought within the framework of which a study of the CDB is most likely to be pursued. Baker et al. in an article entitled 'The Future of the Past', under the sub-heading 'The utility of historical geography', demolish the ivory tower criticism frequently levelled at historical geography. The pre-occupation of historical geographers with the past does not preclude the application of their expertise to problems of the present day and of the future. It is suggested that through the medium of investigating continuing processes of change, sufficient factual knowledge and insight may be gained from which to set probable limits to predictions. While the historical geographer can claim no form of omniscience in prognosticating the possibilities of social and economic development, he is able to provide material of value in resolving such problems. One of his tasks - some would say moral duty - is to ransack the past in a search for models not so much of what the future will be as of what it might be, propounding alternative possibilities rather than predictions.²⁶

Perhaps predictably the co-authors conclude that it is, paradoxically, the future that matters most in the study of historical geography, but less predictably for the wrong reasons, at least for the same reasons that criticism has been levelled at the 'new economic historians'. For despite the foregoing emphasis on the importance of predictive models, this final statement is based

on the concept of a model which might be used for postdictive purposes - to decompose known distributions so that something might be learned of distributions in times for which information is scanty²⁷ - precisely the antithesis of predictive research. As Postan has argued in the context of economic history:

*to employ economic theory and econometric tests in the interpretation of famous historical events such as the decision to open up the American interior by railway construction, is a careful but perhaps an over-modest enterprise. It is over-modest not only because it tries to do what economists could always do without the assistance of historians, but also because it concerns itself more with historical episodes than with economic problems. For this and other reasons it does not offer to economists the kind of collaboration which they most need. What economists require from economic historians is not that they should verify the established propositions of economics or use them to illuminate episodes of general history, but that they should help to make economic propositions verifiable and applicable.*²⁸

In other words while it remains true both that the present has a bearing on the past and the past has a bearing on the present, emphasis must be placed fairly and squarely on the latter, that is, on explaining the present and shaping the future with reference to the past. Historians must learn not only to generalize through model building, but to do so predictively and not postdictively. The fact that he acknowledged problems of a current Highland development agency may indicate why a former one also failed to achieve certain objectives possesses about the same purely academic value as a specific examination of that former agency in its own right. On the other hand seeking out correspondences between the earlier body and the later and possibly discovering general 'laws' may well identify both potentially successful

future courses of action, and measures to modify or avoid. Such a study could properly be considered, in the academic division of labour, to belong to the relatively new discipline of applied historical studies - *explorations of the past undertaken with the explicit purpose of advancing social scientific enquiries.*²⁹ However the following examination of the Congested Districts Board makes no claim to adhere rigorously to the rules and regulations of any one discipline. Academic boundaries exist for administrative convenience only; prescribed methodologies exist merely to sharpen the focus on those variables considered to be the proper concern of a particular discipline. As Erikson points out, *unfortunately members of a discipline do not always recognize the price they have paid to achieve this clarity of focus.*³⁰ He illustrates his argument using - appropriately enough in this context - the example of history, widely claimed to be idiographic, and sociology, generally considered to be nomothetic. *This distinction....., Erikson contends, fails because it obscures the extent to which each of the two fields employs the perspective attributed to the other. Historians generalize all the time, as numbers of them have pointed out; and sociologists are always dealing with particularities, no matter how energetically they cut and trim the data to fit the abstract logic of their procedures.*³¹

So the chapters that follow set less store by methodology than by quite simply proceeding as expeditiously as possible with the task of examining the aims and achievements of the CDB, with the parallel of the HIDB and the concept of future prospects for Highland development constantly in mind. The resultant study is an exercise partly in historical geography, partly in economic history and partly in rural planning. It is 'applied' to the extent that it is expressly intended to be predictive;

comparison of a past development plan with a present one is undertaken as outlined earlier with the implicit objective of identifying generally applicable laws so that future outcomes may be not only anticipated but also appropriately modified. Where apposite, and heeding the caveat expressed earlier relating to bases for comparison, the experiences of other rural development programmes are incorporated into the analysis with the aim of providing any model for predictive purposes with a firmer foundation. Model building of this type should ensure that planning as a profession is better equipped to succeed in its task of *foreseeing and guiding change*.³²

In the context of Highland planning the need for predictive historical analysis is implicit in the opening paragraphs of the first report of the H.I.D.B. The prominence afforded to the information that *The Board has studied all the reports and papers that have been produced in such abundance over the decades*³³ is scarcely merited by the summary conclusions actually drawn from the historical material. The report states only that *it is clear that there has been dissatisfaction with past policies - although that by no means proves all or even the majority of these policies were fundamentally wrong. Some may indeed have been wrong only in time or scale. The important thing is that general agreement seems to exist on the proposition that they did not solve the 'Highland Problem.'*³⁴ Surely it is of equal importance to identify why past policies failed, if they did fail, so that similar mistakes may be avoided in future. The suitability of the CDB in particular as a basis for predictive historical analysis has already been demonstrated. Half a century ago, without the benefit of hindsight, a shrewd economist also recognized this hidden potential when he wrote: *The Congested Districts Board was in a sense an experiment in Scotland. In so far*

as it succeeded it supplied valuable experience as to what was possible, and also as to what was impossible.³⁵ It is perhaps on account of the importance of this learning process, more than for any other reason that:

*The fifteen years of the [Congested Districts] Board's existence constitute an undeservedly forgotten chapter in the history of Highland development.*³⁶

(ii) Background to the Highland Problem

The setting up of a board to promote development presupposes underdevelopment. So it was with the establishment of the Congested Districts Board which in 1897 faced backwardness in the Highlands on a massive scale; for 'congested' was no more than a euphemistic nineteenth century epithet applied to what a twentieth-century commentator has referred to as an area defined in terms of its own underdevelopment.³⁷ The expression was originally used to describe areas of Western Ireland where, as Queen Victoria learned from the Marquess of Salisbury, there existed a dense population of half starving multitudes.³⁸ For these, life was a squalid and painful struggle for existence, eked out on inadequate and infertile holdings.³⁹ Even the unemotional language of officialdom conceals little of the misery; as one report recorded, in a 'good year' the unfortunate inhabitants of these uncompromisingly poverty-stricken districts were little more than free from the dread of hunger, whilst a bad year, arising from the complete or partial failure of their crops, produced a condition of semi-starvation.⁴⁰

It was in order to promote relief and to stimulate economic development in these chronically depressed parishes⁴¹ that an Irish Congested Districts Board was specially

established during Lord Salisbury's second Conservative administration, its function being to provide every type of assistance in the affected areas.⁴² The main categories of aid may be summarised as follows: promotion of home industries by subsidies and technical education; purchase of land for resettlement of tenants on amalgamated and improved holdings; provision of a complementary instruction service in modern farming methods.⁴³ On its dissolution in 1923 the Board was highly praised for its achievements.⁴⁴ Long before this its success was apparent, even to Irish nationalists. For example, its contribution to rural revival, by promotion of local development projects, was applauded by Nationalist MP William O'Brien in 1910;⁴⁵ this was praise indeed from one whom even a writer sympathetic to the cause of Home Rule could describe as a *terrible agitator* whose name was written near the top of that long roll of Irish 'rebels'.⁴⁶ By the same token Land Leaguer Michael Davitt stated in 1904 that *much benefit has been conferred by its [the Congested Districts Board's] labors upon several districts comprised within the area of its operations.*⁴⁷ John Dillon the bitter and ruthless foe of British misgovernment⁴⁸ was also early to recognise the value of the Board.⁴⁹ It is not therefore surprising, in anticipation of this overwhelming success, and in view of the apparently similar problems of rural periphery in Scotland, that the third Salisbury administration saw fit to establish a twin body for the Western Highlands and Islands of Scotland.

Just as today's Highland problem is *no new concern of the British people [but] has been brought on gradually over the years by various economic, social and political processes,*⁵⁰ so was the case also with the unfavourable situation in 1897. The early 1880s witnessed extreme destitution in the Western Highlands and Hebrides. The potato crop of 1882 failed; a severe October gale caused the loss of the grain crop;

west coast fishing was poor while the average sum brought back by the men from the east coast was halved.⁵¹ Stock was pledged - in many cases overpledged - for meal or rent so that the credit of the people with local dealers was reduced or wholly gone.⁵² Subsequently an already desperate situation was considerably aggravated by what the poor relief administration itself eventually admitted to be *the collapse of the whole system of administering relief to the poor in Highland districts.*⁵³

Circumstances rendered the 1880s exceptional, yet hardship and deprivation were ongoing features of life in the remoter Highlands even in times of comparative prosperity such as the 1860s and 1870s.⁵⁴ Thomas Pennant, an early and observant visitor to the Highlands, was horrified by dwellings he saw at Invercauld in the central Highlands in the 1760s. *The houses of the common people these parts are covered with clods they look, at a distance, like so many black mole-hills.*⁵⁵ Pennant's description could have applied more than a century later to crofters' houses in South Uist which made a lasting impression on another stranger from the south.

*I shall not forget the shock I had, after a mile or so searching the road right and left for dwelling houses and only seeing in the fast failing light, a few what looked to be a large isolated heaps of stones or earth, lying well back some hundred yards or so from the road we were traversing. I burst out: 'But where are the houses?' Pointing to one of the black-looking heaps I had noticed, my conductor replied: 'Those are the houses'.*⁵⁶

The worst of these thatched stone hovels probably stood in muddy mires and possessed neither formal windows nor chimney, rough holes in the walls and roof serving instead. In fact, the smokier the atmosphere the better, since the soot would be used to enrich the land in the spring. As late as 1877, a Scotsman correspondent

visiting Skye and the Outer Islands reported that in some of these huts, byre and dwelling apartments are thrown together without any effectual attempt at division with the result that in winter when all stock requires shelter the floor is reached only after sinking many inches in dung. Moreover the 'byre' would not be cleaned out at all until the manure was taken away in April, by which time it would be virtually impossible to get in and out of the door. The lack of light and reek of poultry, cows humans and peat - not to mention the odd pet sheep, combined to produce an atmosphere so dark and thick that if the visitor is not chocked to begin with he is very soon blinded. The health of children reflected the damp, dark and dirty conditions in which they were brought up. They were, in the words of the same newspaper correspondent, as squalid and miserable as any that could be produced from the innermost dens of the Cowgate. These puny, uncombed, blear-eyed, shivering little objects, lacking the energy to play, gathered in a listless way and were truly a sorrowful index to the condition of the crofter. Improvements were certainly taking place during the 19th century, but for most families the act of banishing the cows to an adjoining byre and the addition of windows and chimneys came only after typhoid had earned itself the name of *filth fever*. It was a sad fact of Hebridean life during the latter part of the 19th century that so long as dunghills are allowed to carpet dwelling-houses, and water is drawn from a soil into which much obnoxious matter must sink, a clear [sic] bill of health cannot be hoped for. It could also be interpreted as a terrible indictment of successive governments and contemporary society that such a state of affairs persisted in a part of Britain, however remote.⁵⁷

If such conditions seem intolerable by present-day standards, they were as nothing compared to the notorious famine years of the forties. Few today who

have read accounts of the potato famine would challenge the view that the 1840s witnessed *misery and want to an extent unparalleled* in the Highlands, either then or since.⁵⁸

The background to the potato famine is as complex as the evolution of the 'Highland Problem' itself, being a major contributory factor to that problem, but superficially at least the famine was an inevitable corollary of the spectacular increase in potato culture and consumption witnessed during the late eighteenth century in Highland Areas.⁵⁹ Crop failures were numerous during this period and the potato crop acted as a safety net against starvation, averting demographic disaster.⁶⁰ It was when the role of the potato inevitably altered from that of lifeline in emergency to staple diet that the Malthusian situation apparently averted was tragically transformed into a crushing catastrophe merely postponed. By the 1840s it was estimated that potatoes provided on average between three-quarters and seven-eighths of the Highlander's diet.⁶¹ Dependence on the root increased towards the west. *In the more Eastern parts [of the Highlands], the potato forms one-half of the subsistence of the people. In the Western districts, fully three-fourths; and in the Islands, it is the principal means of subsistence.*⁶² In the words of a Skye minister, *potatoes formed almost the sole staff of life*⁶³ - the key element in maintenance of an otherwise impossibly high density of population in the crofting areas at an otherwise impossibly low standard of living.⁶⁴ Disaster struck in the summer of 1846; virtually the entire crop was devastated by blight.⁶⁵

The distress caused by starvation and destitution was aggravated by a bitterly cold winter with a particularly long and severe snow storm at the turn of the year.⁶⁶ It was also compounded by the outbreak of horrible diseases. Those who scavenged cockles from the shore were rewarded for their labour with dysentery, while cholera, typhus and scurvy claimed

other victims.⁶⁷ First hand accounts of the misery occasioned by the potato blight are harrowing in the extreme. For example, a Church of Scotland minister recorded his impressions of a visit to the Outer Hebrides in the summer of 1847. Of the people in South Uist he wrote: *I never witnessed such countenances, - starvation on many faces - the children with their melancholy looks, big looking knees, shrivelled legs, hollow eyes, swollen-like bellies, - God help them, I never did witness such wretchedness!*⁶⁸

With scenes such as these, small wonder members of a charitable committee visiting Mull and Iona the previous January to ascertain the need for relief, reported simply that *the countenances of many of the people rendered any further inquiry unnecessary.*⁶⁹

Because of the potato famine, for five years conditions in the Highlands were unusually severe. Yet just as the years prior to the depression of the 1880s could be considered a foretaste of worse to come, so in the years before the famine the living was never easy. *All the world is aware of the calamities of the potato famines of the forties, in Ireland and in the Highlands. What is less well known is that this was but the culmination, in the Highlands at least, of three decades of creeping hardship and despair.*⁷⁰ As a contemporary report noted in connection with the latter years of this inevitable progression, people reduced to depending on potato patches for survival live at all times in a constant struggle for the means of bare subsistence, and do not rise above the lowest scale of living necessary for existence, not to talk of comfort.⁷¹ And when one already lives upon this extreme verge of human subsistence there is, as a famine relief official put it, *nothing beyond but starvation and beggary.*⁷² The famine itself was no more than a symptom of much more deeply rooted malady. In the words of Sir John McNeill, Chairman of the Board of Supervision for the Relief of the Poor in Scotland, *there must be something peculiarly unfavourable in the circumstances which have caused the failure of a particular crop to produce so great an amount of distress for a succession of years, in those districts [the Western Highlands and Islands], while a similar failure was little felt in any other part of this country Any inquiry, therefore, into the causes of the present state that would lead to a practical conclusion, must go beyond a mere reference to the failure of the potato crop.*⁷³

Yet such apparent wise caution belies an imperfect understanding of wider issues, or perhaps more accurately a deliberate attempt to ignore them. It is worth restating the main points of Sir John McNeill's argument in order to identify the flaws thereafter. The assertion, that the distress stemmed primarily from the structure of the Highland economy, concedes much to popular economic theory. *The continued distress is attributable to the effect of [the potato] failure upon a system which makes the great majority of families depend for their subsistence on the food produced by a man's labour on land occupied by himself.* This argument is developed by drawing on the experience of certain marginal Highland parishes. *Not a century ago Highland parishes bordering on the Lowlands were occupied by small tenants or crofters, who derived their subsistence from the produce of their own labour on the lands they occupied. They suffered from failure of their crops, and were not infrequently in distress, as the crofters of the Hebrides are now. Triumphantly he continues: The advance of industry and wealth swept away the cottages, and united many crofts into one farm. Some of the inhabitants emigrated to the colonies; some were absorbed into the population which increasing manufactures gathered around them. In all of those parishes the population was diminished and distress was no more heard of.*⁷⁴ And finally, applying his model to the Highlands he concludes: *if nothing had occurred to disturb the ordinary course of events, this [same] inevitable transition would probably have been effected without such an amount of suffering as to call for special intervention. By the disturbance was, of course, implied the famine - the calamity that suddenly disabled [the Highlander] from producing his food by his own labour on his croft, [leaving] him generally unprepared to provide by other means for his maintenance.*⁷⁵

Such assertions, while broadly true, do not constitute the whole truth. An important factor is missing, or more precisely, played down - the key factor which at the start of the nineteenth century differentiated the

Highlands from Lowland Scotland, prescribing disaster in the former. There can be little dispute that in Southern Scotland and the nearer Highlands, as indeed in rural England, the net effect of clearance and enclosure was beneficial since the constant threat of famine was effectively removed by the advent of the new economic power.⁷⁶ But to catalogue in a summary dismissal, as Sir John McNeill does, events which in reality spanned a decade and more, runs the risk of superficiality and oversimplification. The process by which *farm-steadings [are] effaced from the map and decent families reduced and scattered* could never be a smooth one. In spite of this isolated complaint from Lanarkshire, it is a fact that the Lowland clearances occasioned almost none of the impassioned bitterness associated with the Highland clearances. *Many passages in the Deserted Village [might] apply strongly and appropriately*⁷⁷ to Lowland Scotland, yet a Scottish economic historian has been able to locate only one written emotive protest of Lowland origin concerning the impact of improved agriculture there.⁷⁸ By contrast, the fact that the Sutherland clearances, some 150 years after the event, can form the subject of heated debate for an extended period in the centre page of a major Scottish newspaper,⁷⁹ provides adequate proof of Smout's contention that *the name of Patrick Sellar still rings with odium through the radio plays and novels of the twentieth century.*⁸⁰ But if the passion is largely absent, reasoned ambivalence towards the effects of what was undeniably the same rooting-out process⁸¹ is not. Thus a Borders parish minister: *The monopoly of farms, though undoubtedly favourable to agriculture has yet deprived the community of many of its most valuable members, by reducing them to the necessity of emigrating. It has lowered the character of the peasantry, and promoted the increase of pauperism,*⁸² to say nothing of the immediate trauma of upheaval for the redundant families. Furthermore, as Rosalind

Mitchison shrewdly comments, *arguing from silence has always risks. Does the absence of complaint mean no hardship? I doubt it.*⁸³

Even so, it bears reiteration that, on balance, such temporary disadvantages were more than compensated for in Lowland and Highland line parishes by the permanent removal of the *age-old insecurity before the hazards of the seasons.*⁸⁴

The same forces of change could equally have wiped out famine and transformed peasant society in the remote north and west. As Smout has observed, it would have been reasonable to expect to find that the social structure of rural society in the Highlands would come to resemble that of the Lowlands, with the emergence of a class of indigenous and wealthy capitalist farmers side by side with a class of landless labourers who lived by working for them. That a modified version of this very social structure did evolve on the Highland margins, notably in parts of Perthshire and Angus, western Aberdeenshire, Banffshire and Cromarty, testifies to the reasonableness of the anticipation. Considering that intermittent famine in the Highland line parishes (the severity of which Sir John McNeill felt justified in paralleling with that of the potato famine in the Western Highlands and Hebrides) did not impede the progress of the modernisation process in the former, it is strange that it did in the north and west. The conclusion to be drawn is, of course, that this was no ordinary famine; it was not, but that in itself is not the whole answer. It is doubly strange that the movement failed to penetrate into the farther Highlands in view of the fact that the pattern of farming which had already emerged in the nearer Highlands was altogether smaller in scale than in the Lowlands, with much reduced farm units and the corollary of a proportionately greater number of less

wealthy farmers, an agricultural structure which would have had much to offer the Gael with his strong identification with the land. Nor was there around 1800 any lack of improvers ready to argue that encouragement of small farms along these very lines adopted in Highland frontier parishes, was the correct way to promote economic change in the remote north and west, just because it would produce results without being completely hostile to this traditional preference of the peasant to keep his feet on land.⁸⁵ The north-west was ripe for change - and change it got, but instead of agricultural improvement, what actually took place was erosion of the agrarian economy without the vital ingredient of physical displacement from the land.⁸⁶ At the very time when the population of the rural lowlands and central and eastern Highlands was diminishing, that of the west Highlands and the islands in particular was swelling dramatically, effectively destroying all possibility of humane clearance.⁸⁷ If the potato contributed to this problem of population increase, *in numbers vastly above what the old Highland economy had been able to support*,⁸⁸ by keeping the growing numbers of peasants from starvation, it was kelp which was the principal catalyst, initiating or at least reinforcing the processes of population growth which squeezed a heavier and heavier tenantry on an inelastic system of lands so that agricultural production was unable to keep pace with the rising tide of population.⁸⁹

The importance of the kelp vomited on to the shores of the islands⁹⁰ by the Atlantic ocean, was that it provided an alternative source of industrial alkali for soap, glass and alum manufacture in the burgeoning English industrial centres. More conventional foreign sources, namely Spanish barilla and potash, were subject to a severe duty; war was in any case physically interrupting supplies from abroad, and salt (the basis of a later nineteenth-century alkali industry) was then heavily

taxed. Prices rose as demand for kelp steadily increased, in the agricultural as well as the industrial sector - since kelp was also used as the basis for fertiliser for the new commercial agriculture which was developing side by side with expanding industry.⁹¹

This dramatic increase in prices did not escape the attention of the landlords who for the meantime looked not to improvement, but to help to supplement their incomes. In effect, they were spared the effort of implementing improvements on their property since this great new form of income had been created largely in addition to traditional sources, so that the old economy - a subsistence one supplemented by trade in black cattle - could carry on, in theory, much as before. The practical reality of the situation was, or at least became, altogether different. On the one hand the growth of money incomes together with the potential of the potato as an intensive subsistence crop made it possible for individual peasant families to live on smaller amounts of land and grazing, substituting kelp income for cattle income and purchasing increased supplies of meal to compensate for the diminution of the arable holding. On the other hand *the Malthusian logic was carried to a conclusion by the willingness of landlords [who alone had it in their power to check the insidious process] to subdivide their lands to the utmost, in order to accommodate the increased supply of labour they found so profitable.* Gray quotes the example of the laird of Ulva who was said to have *at once trebled his income and doubled his population* following the introduction of intensive kelp management to his estate.⁹²

Slow deterioration, Professor Smout has observed, quickened into crisis when kelp prices slumped during the second decade of the nineteenth century;⁹³ the immediate effect of the sudden drop in prices was shrinkage of incomes for landlords and tenants alike.

The latter, now quite unable to pay rent, squeezed from their tiny fragmented plots the subsistence that would keep life going and laboured on futile projects for the proprietors.⁹⁴ The government, having already dealt two of the major body blows which killed the kelp industry, by reducing the tax on salt and the import duty on barilla, merely blundered on in a similar negative fashion, the cessation of public works in 1822 and the withdrawal of the herring bounties between 1820 and 1830 further reducing opportunities for alternative employment. To aggravate matters, cattle prices too had fallen at the end of the Napoleonic Wars. Since the able-bodied unemployed were not legally entitled to relief, in years of worst scarcity the redundant peasantry could do no other than look helplessly to the proprietors to keep them from starving.⁹⁵ But if for the landlords the calls of charity and patriarchal duty increased, it was in vain, for their kelp profits had been squandered and they were receiving little in rents.⁹⁶ The alternative to this reversion to subsistence husbandry with increasing numbers of people living in a vast and steadily deteriorating rural slum, was to switch over in a big way to sheep-rearing, as in the mainland Highlands, with the best ground engrossed by a handful of outsiders and the natives digging plots on the margins. If the ruthlessness demanded by such a course of action was not immediately to be found in the heart of every landlord, the same hearts presently hardened and skins thickened, as slowly but surely the proprietors disposed of their burdensome tenantry, some before, others immediately after the famine.⁹⁷

Sir John McNeill was quite correct to identify the wretched state of the Highlands with the condition of unimprovement. He was also right when he referred to

something occurring to *disturb the ordinary course of events*. But he was entirely wrong to suggest that it was simply the potato famine, for conditions immediately prior to the famine could not by any stretch of the imagination be considered ordinary. It was certainly grossly inaccurate to imply that they were roughly comparable with the pre-clearance situation in the Lowlands and nearer Highlands, and by extrapolation that the relationship between improvement and distress was identical in both cases. In any case Sir John McNeill unwittingly jeopardised even the meagre credibility of his simplistic argument for exact comparability of Lowlands and Highlands, in which the potato famine was identified as a mere freak occurrence which caused calamity in the Highlands but might just as well have wreaked havoc in the Lowlands. He introduced the matter of differentials; an agricultural system which was viable on the east coast of Scotland was not necessarily so in the north-west.⁹⁸ How true! But if the Highlands differed in this one respect, did they not also in others? One cannot, as the saying goes, have one's cake and eat it. Either the Lowlands and Highlands were comparable or they were not. The truth is, it suited Sir John McNeill to infer both that the immediate pre-improvement baselines in the Lowlands and Highlands were identical (with the implication that the improving movement should confer identical benefits in each) and that agricultural potential was far lower in the Highlands, so that regardless of the justifications, agriculture was quite simply unworkable there anyway. He did not care to emphasise: that the same line of reasoning suggests that any agricultural system (pastoral included) might be relatively less successful; and that if the baselines were once vaguely similar, kelp had soon put paid to that. Into the closed, subsistence-economy ecosystem of two main elements - man

and land - had penetrated a third element, disturbing the equilibrium. The land factor remained constant; but instead of supporting X men wholly at a given level of technology, it now provided for 2X men partially, the kelp making up the deficit. As swiftly as it had snowballed, the kelp industry folded. The resultant pressure of population on land invited either a Malthusian or a Marxist solution - starvation or technological change. What actually took place was a mixture of both, with the proviso that emigration modified the population element, although this was partially offset by a severe contraction in the cattle trade and the fishing industry.⁹⁹ Lastly Sir John McNeill gave too little thought to how the redundant Highland inhabitants could ever have been absorbed into *the population which increasing manufactures gather around them without such an amount of suffering as to call for special intervention.*¹⁰⁰ The Lowlands industrial centres were far removed and quite alien, while their capacity to absorb a further influx of newcomers was obviously reduced. On the other hand the inaccessibility of the Highlands combined with its dearth of raw materials limited its indigenous industrial potential. It is a truism that *the grim facts of economic geography have, time and time again, defeated the good intentions of planners.*¹⁰¹ Sir John McNeill's notion would have proved no exception.

But the art of logical thinking had obviously been temporarily abandoned by a man who could accept the word of the very laird who was said to have trebled his income from kelp that *the crofting system cannot be made an advantageous mode of occupying property in this part of the country,*¹⁰² hardly pausing to consider the special circumstances which existed to make this so.¹⁰³ It was precisely because conditions in the west Highlands differed so radically from elsewhere in Scotland that, by the

mid-nineteenth century, after the worst effects of famine were over, when improvement had extended to the remotest parts of the Highlands, distress remained tragically unalleviated, as Sir John McNeill himself observed.¹⁰⁴ This was certainly a poser for him; having earlier made much of the necessity to look beyond the potato famine to isolate the root of the Highland problem, in order to find a way out of an impasse he himself falls into the trap of blaming the famine. Yet the Chairman of the Board of Supervision for Poor Relief could calculate just as well as Malcolm Gray that the *three decades of creeping hardship and despair*¹⁰⁵ which preceded the famine dated from the collapse of the kelp industry.

The truth is that it was kelp, not famine, which was the obstacle to improvement in the west, the factor which more than anything else steered the course for disaster by swelling numbers and altering the character of improvement. Indeed in his report McNeill actually notes that, when kelp manufacture ceased owing to the change in fiscal regulations, a population which had been progressively increasing was abruptly thrown back on the land for survival - on to *crofts ... then insufficient to afford them subsistence*. Equally he comments on the subsequent squeezing out of the small tenantry with the changeover to sheep farming - the implications of 'improvement' when it did arrive.¹⁰⁶ But as the landlord's man¹⁰⁷ doing a white-wash job he discreetly plays down the cause-and-effect relationship linking the island proprietors' frenzied zeal in the matter of kelp management with the erosion of the 'system' (of subsistence agriculture) which in itself he is too ready to decry. It would hardly have been proper to commit to posterity the suggestion that the potato blight might have passed virtually unnoticed were it not for the landlords' desperate attempts to build up the labour force they were now so brutally evicting. While it remains true that increasing population

was no isolated phenomenon peculiar to the kelping districts, but constituted the essence of the whole economic problem of the Highlands in the early nineteenth century, nevertheless it bears reiteration that the areas which showed excessive increase were the kelping districts. Between 1755 and 1801, the population of the Highlands increased by 48%, whereas the population of Lewis, Harris, North Uist and South Uist increased by 139% and that of South Uist alone, where kelp was more important than in any other district, by 211%.¹⁰⁸ Equally, prior to the kelp era the population/resource ratio in these areas was scarcely improving, but this represented no more than the same sort of steadily mounting pressure of population against the means of subsistence typical of the Lowlands, which was great enough to demand innovation but also moderate enough to accommodate it without wholesale social disaster. It was the pre-kelp Highlands, not the pre-famine Highlands as McNeill tries to argue, which could be compared with the pre-clearance Lowlands, telling as they did a saga of intermittent and increasingly impoverishing but seldom devastating famine, with the concession that the situation in the Highlands was inherently more precarious; it is no coincidence that the beginning of the kelping era marked the beginning of Professor Smout's period of *slow deterioration*¹⁰⁹ which ultimately turned to crisis.

The drastic measures eventually adopted by the island proprietors to restore equilibrium were both inevitable and inevitably inhumane. To drive people from homes where their ancestors had lived for centuries could be nothing else. And the peasants could not know that the money spent by landlords or by charitable societies on palliatives was spent in vain. All they saw was that land was being let to sheep farmers who could pay three times the old rent, and the small crofts absorbed into

bigger holdings.¹¹⁰ Those not enticed, or who escaped being hounded, to the New World or to the burgeoning industrial centres of the Lowlands (and the former was hardly worse than the latter to the culturally introverted Highlander) now clung round the coasts in pitiful hungry hordes, living proof of the great greed and shortsightedness of the landlords.¹¹¹ Even those who, too late, realised the error of their ways could not hold out against pastoralism indefinitely in the interests of their tenants; financial sacrifice was one thing, bankruptcy another.¹¹² As for the greedy, even sheep rents could not spare them. For example Macdonald of Clanranald, who owned South Uist, drew 17,000 in 1809 from rents and kelping income: early in the eighteenth century his lands had not yielded £1,000 per annum. By 1838 Clanranald was bankrupt and the estate up for sale, though he had ploughed none of his huge income back into the Uists. Investment in sound projects of long term benefit to the community such as new harbours^{or} roads, new industrial development or more diversified farming might have spared the people and saved the estate, but Clanranald squandered his kelp money on *conspicuous consumption and in adding to and servicing the heavy debt charge on his estate* which was ultimately to ruin him.¹¹³ Even one historian who has been accused of taking a *rather uncharitable view of Gaelic speaking society*¹¹⁴ dismisses Clanranald and his like as a *shiftless and impecunious lot*.¹¹⁵ Their failure to use the windfall of kelp to capitalise their estates was bad enough; it was nothing short of horrific that in order to pay off their debts in a further bid for quick cash they ousted their peasantry to make room for sheep farmers from whom they could extract higher rents. No thought, far less money, was wasted on providing alternative occupations to farming for the dispossessed peasantry.¹¹⁶ The irony of it all has already been hinted at. Less than half a century earlier these same Highland proprietors now engaged in transporting vast numbers of peasants to the New World

or driving them to Glasgow, had used all their influence to secure the passing of an act that would restrict emigration thereby guaranteeing not only an immediate reservoir of labour, but also this problem of frightening proportions in years to come. It is much to be regretted that Sir John McNeill's mental image of a graph illustrating the decrease in distress in proportion to the advance of improvement, conceived as a cover-up, could never be fulfilled as an ideal in the north and west. The opportunity cost of the ephemeral kelp industry was the discontinuation in the affected areas of the *evolutionary processes* at work on the Highland margins. The social cost was the implementation instead of these *revolutionary measures* in the north-west Highlands and Islands.¹¹⁷

By contrast the Sutherland Clearances, belying a shocking reputation which arises from their atrocious mismanagement, were at least well-intentioned. While the end cannot justify the means, the Sutherland Clearances, as Rosalind Mitchison points out, arose from a deliberate decision to improve the estate to the benefit of all, taken in the context of a background of the failure of the old agriculture to support the requisite population.¹¹⁸ (Just because the Clearances were badly executed the end was not notably successful in any case.) According to James Loch, factor for the Sutherland estates, *the object of all improvement was the increase of the comforts of life to the lower ranks as well as the elegances of life to the higher.*¹¹⁹ The Lochian policies have been and still are the subject of considerable controversy; many have doubted how genuine was his concern for the welfare of the Sutherland tenantry painting him as a heartless and hypocritical sycophant.¹²⁰

Yet only sadism or sincerity could prompt the emphasis Loch placed on *how much the fate of about 20,000 people are[sic] connected with and dependent on* Lord Stafford and consequently upon himself in his capacity as Stafford's agent.¹²¹ Being

the sycophant he was, complete indifference to the fate of the tenantry in his efforts to carry out Lord Stafford's wishes would seem more plausible than evil delight in his enormous power over so many people. Besides, where was the logic in launching what was in effect a comprehensive development programme for the creation of a viable regional economy in Sutherland without the intention of carrying it through?¹²² It could scarcely have been a concession to keeping up appearances, for clearance was by then a well-established practice, and there was scarcely a precedent, if at all, for the provision of replacement housing and re-employment as a conscience salver; nor did later improvers regard the Sutherland scheme as having set one. Besides, the scheme for infrastructure improvements which formed an integral part of the larger plan had all to do with a serious attempt at regional development and nothing to do with conscience salving.¹²³

All the same it is difficult not to agree with a leading improver of that era who was inclined to doubt a little of the success of villages by compulsion. *It is one thing to build a village, to which people may resort if they choose it, and another to drive them from the country into villages, where they must starve unless they change at once their manners, their habits, and their occupations.*¹²⁴ And it is another thing still to drive them out without building a village at all, and this is what happened in the north-west where clearance was synonymous not with reorganisation but with *shovelling out paupers.*¹²⁵ The inhumanity of the exercise was heightened not only by sheer weight of numbers but also by what has been aptly labelled the *economic barrier of ignorance of English speech.* It was indeed *no joke to set out for Glasgow not knowing the words for work and bread.*¹²⁶ Even if the plans for the dispossessed in Sutherland were never sincere, at least they were evidence of a guilty conscience; on the remote northern and western shores of

the Highlands, circumstances, which proved unfortunate in combination with a particularly acquisitive breed of landlord, decreed that there would be no room for such scruples. The adage 'better late than never' is not one which is applicable to the saga of improvement in the Western Highlands and Islands.

In Sutherland improvement miscarried; in the west it is a dreadful misnomer - exploitation in a more appropriate word. Yet the demonstrable wrongs of the clearances do not in themselves dictate that previously times were bountiful and life idyllic. Almost predictably this fact did not prevent frustrated resentment at the clearances being channelled into the formulation of misleadingly idealised and romanticised representations of the old life, of which the following two portrayals of South Uist provide an example:¹²⁷

*There was a wonderfully good life enjoyed here at one time, when the people had full use of machaire [sic], mountain and seashore, with only an occasional dip into the sea for fish. They could raise good crops on the level land; they had scope for sheep and cattle in the hill region, and along the coast the sweetest of fine pasture; while shellfish was to be had in great variety and abundance for the taking. But all the big farms now held by the tacksmen, were made up ^{out} of the best parts, and the worst parts, now occupied by Crofters and cottars were crowded with the evicted.*¹²⁸

Strategically arranged with fact in this way, the fiction might pass unnoticed; however the juxtaposing of the two themes for dramatic contrast also has the effect of highlighting the false logic. If this picture of happier times represents an embroidery of the truth, the next approaches pure fantasy:

*How we enjoyed ourselves in those far-away days - the old as much as the young, I often saw three and sometimes four generations dancing together on the green grass in the golden summer sunset. Those were the happy days and the happy nights, and there was neither sin nor sorrow in the world for us. The thought of those young days makes my old heart both glad and sad even at this distance of time. But the clearances came upon us, destroying all, turning our small crofts into big farms for the stranger, and turning our joy into misery, our gladness into bitterness, our blessing into blasphemy, and our Christianity into mockery. - O dear man, the tears come on my eyes when I think of all we suffered and of the sorrows, hardships, oppressions we came through.*¹²⁹

The oppressions were real enough, but it was that very reality which distorted the perception of the past. For all his crofter sympathies James Hunter admits that embodied in such visions of the past ... was a great deal that is obviously unhistorical.¹³⁰ Neither does Professor Mitchison mince her words: we know about the grass being greener somewhere else. Hunter is right to be uneasy: the picture is clearly rubbish, and it is the prime duty of the historian to label rubbish as such when he meets it.¹³¹ Nor were the thelandlords disposed to tolerate nineteenth century nostalgic yearnings for a lost 'golden age'.¹³² In a treatise on Scotland As It Was And As It Is produced in 1887 a Duke of Argyll dismissed the theory very prevalent in the popular literature of Scotland that the old native population lived in some condition of Arcadian bliss with the distinctly unarcadian counter assertion that systematic hardship and oppression was the lot of the unimproved Highlanders.¹³³ Earlier the same century Dr John MacCulloch in his writings on the Highlands criticised poets and romancers [whose] philosophy has been sought in the economics of Oliver Goldsmith.¹³⁴ And the Goldsmithian economics of the deserted village was thriving by the 1880s. As Argyll was no doubt aware, fantasy and fact were becoming dangerously intertwined to the extent that 'golden age' philosophy was posing as 'evidence' to the Napier Commissioners. These, however,

were not too naive to comment sagely that *the delegates have not failed to bring all the features of distress and dependency in their actual existence into marked contrast with the happier conditions and higher privileges they believe to have prevailed in a preceding age.*¹³⁵ For all its landlord sympathies,¹³⁶ the Scotsman was not far wrong in its conclusion that when enquiry is made as to when these happy times were, they are found to recede further and further back The truth is, of course, that the land never did flow with milk and honey.¹³⁷ Though it had altered substantially in degree - and this point the Scotsman did conveniently omit to mention - a Highland problem in some form was not new.

As Margaret Adam has observed, during the eighteenth century (and the same holds good today), crofting worked best in those districts where cultivation of the land was not the sole resource of the crofter.¹³⁸ It is ironically true that while kelp manufacture remained a profitable industry, the West Highland and Hebridean crofters stood a chance - a chance, that is, of survival, which was also the means of postponing and intensifying the inevitable crisis and prolonging the general condition of misery and penury that existed at that time throughout the Highlands.¹³⁹ For the life of the kelper was not to be envied; contemporary observers have compared the quality of their existence unfavourably to that of both negro slaves and urban industrial workers of the day.¹⁴⁰ While the kelp trade boomed in the west, in the mainland Highlands where kelping was not available as an ancillary source of income, clearance, as has been shown, was proceeding apace.¹⁴¹ For time had run out for the system of absolute dependence on the land which had meant that during the latter part of the eighteenth century the inhabitants of many part of the Highlands and Hebrides were living permanently in a state that bordered upon destitution. According to Macdonald there were 30 thousand cottagers in the Hebrides living in hovels which would disgrace any Indian tribe At least seven thousand of the natives of

Lewis (for instance) know nothing of a chimney, gable, glass-window, house flooring, or even hearth-stone by their experience at home; and what we call their furniture, is, as may be imagined, wretched and scanty beyond description, corresponding with their shabby exterior.¹⁴² In other words, as Margaret Adam puts it they were badly housed, they were poorly fed, and they had a continual struggle to pay their rents. Moreover there is no evidence that the standard of living amongst the Highland peasantry had ever been anything but low.¹⁴³ Margaret Adam bases these opinions on reliable statistical and factual accounts.¹⁴⁴ Corroboration is available from other sources, giving the lie to Ian Grimble's fairy tale interpretation of eighteenth-century Highland life.¹⁴⁵ Pennant, for example, described the inhabitants of Islay in the 1770's thus:

A set of people worn down with poverty: their habitations scenes of misery, made of loose stones; without chimnies, without doors, excepting the faggot opposed to the wind at one or other of the appertures permitting the smoke to escape through the other, in order to prevent the pains of suffocation.

Continuing in a vein remarkably similar to Macdonald, Pennant elaborates:

*The furniture perfectly corresponds: a pothook hangs from the middle of the roof, with a pot pendent over a grateless fire, filled with fare that may rather be called a permission to exist, than a support of vigorous life: the inmates, as may be expected, lean, withered, dusky and smoke-dried. But my picture is not of this island only.*¹⁴⁶

Indeed the picture in some islands was actually worse; Pennant writes of Skye:

The poor are left to Providence's care: they prowl like other animals along the shores to pick up limpets and other shell-fish, the casual repasts of hundreds during part of the year in these unhappy islands. Hundreds thus

*annually drag through the season a wretched life: and numbers, unknown, in all parts of the western highlands fall beneath the pressure, some of hunger, more of putrid fever, the epidemic of the coasts, originating from unwholesome food, the dire effects of necessity.*¹⁴⁷

No wonder Philip Gaskell has recently suggested that the eighteenth century Highlander lived *not in picturesque rural felicity, but in conditions of penury and squalor that can only fairly be compared with those of a famine area in contemporary India, and that were tolerable only because they were traditional and familiar.*¹⁴⁸ By contrast with the nineteenth century, wretched conditions in the Highlands during the preceding century were not localised areally - since this predated the traumatic events of the years around 1800 - or indeed socially. In Pennant's time, life on Upper Deeside was scarcely less frugal than in the Hebrides for example. The general quality of life at Invercauld approximated to the standard of housing.¹⁴⁹ Equally Edward Burt in the 1720s described miserable Highland children running around half naked, quoting the adage that a *gentleman's bearns [sic] are to be distinguished by their speaking English.*¹⁵⁰ If early Highland troubles were not selective, neither were they ephemeral. They might fluctuate in intensity with the severity of the winter, or differing local conditions, but they were always, and always had been, threateningly present. As Professor Youngston has observed, Duncan Forbes' statement entitled 'Thoughts concerning the State of the Highlands', which highlights this generally prevailing state of primitive hardship, held good not only for 1746 when it was committed to paper, but for many generations previously.¹⁵¹ Nevertheless 1745 is commonly taken to denote the emergence of the 'Highland Problem' since it marked a new phase in Highland-Lowland relations.¹⁵² An integral part of this new phase was the effective beginning of public intervention in the Highlands and thus the first government recognition that all was not as it should be, or at least that Highland

conditions compared unfavourably to those in the Low-lands.¹⁵³ Forbes, like McNeill but some hundred years earlier, recognized that superficial poverty was symptomatic of deeper ills beneath:

*The Want of Roads, the Want of Accommodation, the supposed ferocity of the inhabitants, and the difference of language, have proved hitherto a bar to all free intercourse between the high and low lands, and have left the Highlanders in possession of their own idle customs and extravagant maxims, absolute strangers to the adversity that must accrue from industry, and to the blessing of having those advantages protected by Laws.*¹⁵⁴

In a word the core problem was underdevelopment and this was the problem which the Government, having defeated the rebellion, now had to tackle. It had to try to achieve what to this day has not been satisfactorily accomplished - that is to eradicate poverty permanently by placing the inhabitants of the Highlands in a sound economic position. That this proved impossible is axiomatic. Yet what Professor Smout has argued of one small aspect of the multi-faceted plan to revitalise the Highland economy is universally applicable. Failure or not the *effort had been a brave one.*¹⁵⁵ After the initial period of repression immediately following the forty-five, which effectively achieved the disintegration of the old social and economic order, the remainder of the period up to 1830 witnessed as grand a design for Highland development as any.

(iii) Early Highland Development Attempts

If regional policy has a long history, the motives for its implementation have not always been consistent. Yet the desired outcome of any regional programme, whether pursued for the national good, the local good, for pacification purposes or as a conscience-salving exercise,

is development. For example, at the crudest level, even a policy designed only to subdue and to civilise substitutes gainful employment for random barbarism. The earliest Highland development attempt may then be attributed to James VI/I, who sought to drive a wedge between the Celts of Ireland and the Celts of the Isles through a policy of colonisation by Lowland Scots and English. The unfortunate legacy of his successful Plantation of Ulster remains to haunt us. The scheme for Scotland, however, succeeded only in part.¹⁵⁷ In fact it was not until a couple of centuries later that the spirit of the independent-minded Highlander was to be finally broken.

Defeat of the Jacobite rebels at the battle of Culloden in 1746 was followed by a campaign of attrition against them. Atrocities against the Highland prisoners were intended to make an example to discourage others. As a longer term measure, profits and rents derived from land confiscated by the Government were directed to be applied *for the better improving the Highlands of Scotland, and preventing disorders there for the future.*¹⁵⁸ The juxtaposition thinly veils the tenet that there would be little time and energy for revolts and riots with fields and fish to be harvested, beasts tended, goods manufactured and surplus produce marketed. But the key question, now as then, is how regional economic development may be satisfactorily triggered. Today, by examining previous plans, their means of implementation and their achievements we can enquire not simply how, but rather how best, is development initiated. Before embarking upon the major exercise of evaluating the achievements of the Scottish Congested Districts Board, it is therefore apposite to consider also three specific and self-contained development schemes which predate it.

(a) The Annexed Estates Board

In such an examination of integrated Highland Development attempts, the work of the Commissioners for the Forfeited Estates offers an obvious starting point. Hence the disappointment of JP Day, when some research of his along these lines in the early years of this century was frustrated.

*I have not been able to trace the existence of the reports of these Commissioners; what records do exist of their activity throw little light on the general policy of the administration or its results. This is the more regrettable since the revenue from the estates was devoted to the improvement of the Highlands.*¹⁵⁹

Contemporary researchers are more fortunate; the papers are now available for examination in the Scottish Record Office. The Commissioners for the Forfeited Estates operated between 1755 and 1784. Their task was two-fold: the administration of certain forfeited Jacobite estates, mainly in the Highland area, and the introduction of reforms throughout the Highlands and Islands. In the course of nearly thirty years they embarked upon an infinite variety of schemes.¹⁶⁰ Professor Youngson has compared the policies of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries with those pursued by the HIDE.¹⁶¹ The activities of the Commissioners for the Forfeited Estates provide particularly suitable comparative material, because they represent the co-ordinated ventures of a unified board rather than the disparate and disorganised remote-control regional workings of central government, and because of their wide-ranging nature.

Prior to the rebellion, the Highlands were regarded as an isolated region of which no good was expected and from which little value could be derived; the sole interest in the area had been to contain the military and political forces which

existed there. Nothing constructive was attempted. After 1745 the Government's intention was to integrate the Highlands with the rest of Great Britain. As outlined earlier, at the political level this policy was promoted extensively and with determination. By the declaration of war on music, language and dress, every last vestige of the old clan system was to be annihilated. In fact the legislation merely hastened an inevitable process. As Professor Youngson observes, *what destroyed it [the clan system] was contact with - and ultimately acceptance of - the economic usages and ambitions of a commercial society.* The idea of a slow infiltration of new values did not, however, appeal to the Government of the day. The abrupt demise of the former tribal-peasant society had to be balanced by the rapid establishment of a modern commercial economy. So in order to accelerate the rate of economic change throughout the Highlands, the powers-that-be created a prototype Highland Development Authority.¹⁶²

The estates which eventually became the annexed estates were forfeited to the crown along with a great many other properties in the months after the collapse of the Jacobite rising of 1745, as a result of the treasonable activities of their owners. Most forfeited estates were sold by public roud to pay creditors, but fourteen estates - all located entirely or partially in the Highlands - were annexed to the Crown in March 1752. The Annexing Act provided that the income from the estates was to be used solely *for the purposes of civilizing the inhabitants upon said Estates, and other parts of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, and promoting amongst them the Protestant Religion, good Government, Industry and Manufactures, and the Principles of Duty and Loyalty to his Majesty, his Heirs and Succesors, and to no other use or purpose whatsoever.*¹⁶³ The unsalaried Commissioners were drawn mainly from the ranks of the nobility and the legal profession

in Scotland. Out of a possible total of over thirty, at any time a hard core of only nine or ten attended meetings with any regularity. Of these active members, several were amongst the leading improvers of the time and were already carrying out on their own estates the schemes of improvement which they were later to introduce via the Board.¹⁶⁴ In total, the Board came to manage and to develop eleven of the estates covering around 15% of the land area of the Highlands during a period of close on three decades. Quite clearly *estate management on such a scale, carried on for so long a period, was well calculated to have a profound effect on the economic life of the Highlands, both by its immediate impact and by the force of its example.*¹⁶⁵

Not only *with zeal and determination*¹⁶⁶ but also *with obviously well-thought out plans for Highland improvement, the Commissioners set out at once to find out as much as possible about the estates under their management.*¹⁶⁷ Surveys were instructed over all the property. As well as noting the nature and extent of the land, surveyors were to identify the possibility of land improvement, the condition of the woodlands, the existence of mines and minerals and the state of communications. Information was also gathered from factors about nearly every conceivable aspect of life on the estates, for example the state of education, of manufactures and of agriculture, the position of trade and commerce, the possibilities for village establishment, general living conditions and the character of the people themselves. The maintenance of law and order was, of course, of paramount importance. As has been observed elsewhere, *if the order in which various topics appear in this questionnaire is indicative of their importance, then industrial development does not rank high; law and order and then agriculture took a precedence which was wholly defensible in the conditions of the Highlands at the time.*¹⁶⁸ To each report was added the factor's suggestions for improvements. At a later stage detailed

returns had also to be prepared on the state of individual farms.¹⁶⁹ Such a systematic and meticulous approach suggests that Board activity lends itself to analysis by sector. First, mention will be made of certain general principles of development fashionable at the time, and the means by which the Commissioners sought to inculcate these in the indigenous population.

The Board appreciated that the attitude of the Highlanders towards work and progress could in itself constitute a problem. Development might be hampered by at best simple inertia and at worst positive local resistance to change. To counteract what they perceived as *indifference - even antipathy - of the people towards innovation*,¹⁷⁰ the Commissioners sought to influence those already living on the estates by settling amongst them ^{those} whom they regarded as *honest and industrious*¹⁷¹ soldiers and sailors back from the seven years war. These, it was hoped, would promote industry by the example of their own diligent application to work. Not surprisingly, the Commissioners' naive faith was misplaced, and for a variety of reasons the scheme was not a success. Many of the colonists showed no aptitude for either farming or fishing, while lack of equipment and infertility of the peat bogs did not help matters. Some were too weak and ill to cope with the severe conditions. The laziness of others was encouraged by the Board's benevolence towards so-called 'exemplary' colonists. Local hostility towards the incomers was probably increased by their general unruliness and immoral behaviour. Inevitably the settlers soon drifted away so that the colonies were short-lived. The lasting advantages of the scheme were few, although a number of houses were built which were put to use later by manufacturers, and a considerable amount of land was enclosed, drained and cultivated by those soldiers who remained for a while on the annexed estates. Nevertheless, of all the Board's schemes it was one of the least cost-effective.¹⁷²

This in itself does not detract from the premise that the promotion of the village may be identified as the physical expression of the whole philosophy of the Commissioners, a philosophy which permeated the thinking of eighteenth century intellectuals more generally.¹⁷³ In their desire to introduce the Highlander to Lowland values, the Commissioners thought nothing more likely to promote industriousness and civilisation than the plantation of villages complete with linen works, English schools, post offices, markets and prisons. For example, reconstruction of the clachan of Beaully, whose inhabitants were reported to be generally lazy, ignorant and addicted to drinking,¹⁷⁴ was undertaken on the recommendation of the Commissioners' surveyor who advised that proper establishment of a village on the site *could not miss to attract strangers of different professions from many corners, and would consequently soon diffuse a spirit of trade and industry, as well as promote agriculture.*¹⁷⁵ Not only was the eighteenth century village to act as a market and as a place of employment, but as a microcosm of carefully ordered development in itself, it was to take its place in a wider process of organized change; it was laid down street by street, house by house, and garden by garden with certain social, economic and architectural considerations always in view. Developed in response to, and to strengthen, a revolution in the economy of estate and nation, it was expected to provide a completely new framework for human life in the countryside.

As has been observed elsewhere, the trouble with this theory of the planned village representing *the perfect mean between the indolence of the deep rural peasantry and the profligacy of unregulated life in the big towns*, was that so frequently industrial employment failed to arrive, and the villages became rural slums.¹⁷⁶ It was all very well to create villages such as Meikleport, near Crieff, to siphon off underemployed agricultural labour from adjacent areas, but still to rely on no more than agricultural employ-

ment could be regarded as largely defeating the purposes for which villages were built.¹⁷⁷ In fact the Commissioners were better placed to provide a long-term solution to this problem than were private landlords. Education was an obvious method of combatting attachment to the ancient way of life and promoting economic development. Gaelic was seen to be synonymous with barbarism, while at a practical and less emotional level, lack of English precluded trade outside the Highlands. So the Commissioners, established a number of new schools, recruited teachers and sometimes even paid fees for poor children. All instruction was given in English, and between 1760 and 1790 the proportion of Highlanders who could not understand English fell perceptibly.¹⁷⁸ Already by 1767 it was observed of Crieff that *the village is daily [sic] increasing from the number of families settling there for the education of their children.*¹⁷⁹ Similarly indicative of this changed attitude to education, partly arising from Board efforts, were the numerous petitions from tenants urging the establishment of schools in their areas where before there had been no interest in them.¹⁸⁰

Neither was education limited to the 'three Rs', it had its distinctly practical side. The new schools included successful 'female schools' where girls were taught domestic science. The Board also supported a system of apprenticeship, allowing the sons of poorer tenants to be sent south for training as blacksmiths, cartwrights, weavers, masons and other such occupations. Besides covering the immediate expense of their education, the Commissioners equipped apprentices with the tools of their trade and earmarked funds to set them up in their respective trades on their return home. Equally, the sons of 'better tenants' were sponsored to learn the foremost farming methods of the day in the Lowlands and in England. It has been suggested that the Commissioners

probably regarded the modernisation of agriculture as the basis of their plans for the development of the Highlands.¹⁸¹ Efficient farm management on their own estates was, at the very least, good for the Board's image. So the Commissioners formulated a set of general rules for estate management. Enclosure was recommended as was overnight shelter for farm animals in winter. Proper roofing of houses and offices was advocated and there were detailed regulations concerning crop rotation. Tree planting was promoted. Progress was monitored by the factors, who were required to be resident on the estates for at least eight months in the year. They were responsible for drawing up structured reports for submission to the Board. As one further method of keeping in touch with the scattered lands under their management, the Commissioners appointed a General Inspector to act as their eyes and ears not only on the annexed estates, but more generally throughout the Highlands. Wills describes how in many parts of the Highlands which the Inspector visited, he was rewarded with encouraging signs of change.

*The tenants were dividing and enclosing their lands and improving them through systems of drainage and irrigation, the introduction of new crops and the use of fertilisers and better farm implements. They were pursuing improved methods of livestock management and were taking an interest in the linen industry, including the raising of flax and spinning. They were agitating for long leases and for the opportunity to apprentice their sons to farming. Perhaps most indicative of a new spirit, they were replacing their old turf-covered houses with good slate-roofed dwellings of stone.*¹⁸²

What Professor Youngson describes as *enterprising and efficient management*¹⁸³ was evidently paying dividends.

The Board's advisory, supervisory and administrative function was important; but its role extended beyond that of co-ordinating body. Supportive rather than executive

in character, nevertheless it promoted projects itself and demonstrated new techniques where there was a need. The nurseries laid out by the Board on the Perth estate were specifically designed as a centre for the wider supply of young trees and thorn bushes with a view to boosting the drive for reafforestation and enclosure and indicating what might be achieved in this direction. Another means of accelerating development was to provide grants to manufacturing industry. Linen, in particular, was singled out for encouragement, its potential having been previously identified by an industrial promotion board earlier in the century.¹⁸⁴ Wills notes as significant that the encouragement of several energetic entrepreneurs in the north-east led to their becoming so successful in their businesses that the General Inspector called for an end to the Board's support of these enterprises. That significance is perhaps greater than immediately suspected.¹⁸⁵

By contrast the difficulties of making progress in the remote western districts were early apparent. It was particularly unfortunate that the Commissioners became involved in what has been described as the *tragic error* of maintaining three linen stations set up by the earlier Board of Trustees for Manufactures at Loch Broom, Loch Carron and Glenmoriston.¹⁸⁶ The value of regular encouraging reports sent by their managers was called into question since they were constantly accompanied by requests for further subsidies and excuses for the small quantity of spindles produced. Between 1750 and the late 1770s. output of linen cloth in the Highlands multiplied threefold, but four-fifths of this output derived from Perthshire and most from Lowland Perthshire at that. One-tenth came from Inverness-shire - there was an important spinning school in Inverness itself. The balance comprised small scattered lots of poor quality from the west and the islands.¹⁸⁷ Eventually one of the Commissioners felt obliged to write to the Loch Carron

manager observing that he must by then be aware of the impracticality of establishing the linen industry there. The communication continued:

*We [the commissioners] have learnt by woful [sic] experience that these [Loch Broom and Loch Carron] are unfit places for carrying on any branch of the linen manufacture. The climate, the barrenness of the soil, the dearness of all sorts of provisions, the distance from commerce, are all of them obstacles, which in conjunction are insurmountable, I am of opinion to abandon these stations altogether and lose no more money upon them.*¹⁸⁶

The Commissioners' suspicions were confirmed when their Inspector returned from visiting Loch Broom and Glenmoriston during his tour of 1767-8. His report was scathing. Immense sums of money were expended in building magnificent structures to carry on manufactures where there were hardly any inhabitants and to push a branch by high premiums which has fallen to the ground so soon as left to itself, as the country could have no access to the rough material.¹⁸⁹ The three linen stations were ultimately sold in 1791. The initial error of judgement was that of the Board of Trustees for Fisheries, Manufacturers and Improvements. £27,000 of public money had been spent by them with little positive good to show for it. But, as Smith observes, the waste of £1,200 of the limited Annexed Estates funds was just as serious a matter for that Board.¹⁹⁰

The Board's encouragement of the woollen industry was on a much smaller scale. However, any evidence at all of a policy to promote woollen manufacture in areas obviously more suited to sheep rearing than cattle^{raising} or flax cultivation bears witness to a certain flexibility. The objective was a diversified range of employment in the Highlands, and to that end, in addition to recommending continued Board support for staple agriculture and industrial

activities, by the late 1760s the General Inspector was calling for an extension of the system of granting premiums. As with most development projects, although intentions are rarely matched by achievements, many small industries did benefit, including tanning, brick and paper making, soap, hemp and thread manufacture.¹⁹¹

Another possibility for the Western Highlands, then as now, was fishing. For centuries Dutch, English and even Lowland Scots fishermen in sea-going boats had been catching herring along the north-west coast. Loch Hourn and Loch Broom, in particular, were noted for their dense shoals of herring during the 1750's, and two of the forfeited estates were situated on these lochs. But the native Highlanders regarded fishing as a subsidiary and largely subsistence occupation. So discharged soldiers and sailors came to be settled by the Commissioners at Inverie on Loch Hourn and at Ullapool. Yet even these seemed to prefer farming to fishing. At the same time the irregular appearance of the shoals in the 1760s caused disappointment and loss. The fishing settlements thus established were of only short duration. A couple of private herring-curing businesses did thrive during the 1770s and early 1780s providing employment for local fishermen and ancillary labour. Subsequently the Commissioners received a number of petitions for assistance in developing the herring fishing, but there was little they could do, since the Board's lifetime was drawing to a close. In any case *later effects*, as Professor Youngson comments drily, *would show how intractable the problems were.*¹⁹²

In fact, the philosophy that it is better to have tried and failed than never to have tried at all is not one which characterises Youngson's review of the achievements of the Commissioners for the Forfeited Estates. His evaluation of the achievement is epitomised in the case study of

a Borderer persuaded to leave Kelso with his family specifically to introduce linen manufacture to Wester Ross. When that project foundered, he turned his attention instead to fishery development there, upon which the Commissioners were disposed also to look favourably. However, nothing came of this venture either, for only a few years later the same man was recommending sheep-rearing and asking for a long term lease of some lands near Ullapool. The Western Highlanders were apparently unable to take a long term view of any project and refused to lend support in the words of the Kelso entrepreneur to... *any new plan but what they see turn out to advantage.* This instance of the way in which the Board's attention was turned back to agriculture, even when they tried to interest themselves in other matters is, as Youngson observes, *significant and not unusual.*¹⁹³ Or in the words of another eminent economic historian:

*The grim facts of economic geography have, time and time again, defeated the good intentions of planners. It could not pay to make textiles in the north because the mills of the central belt were so much better located for the market. It was hard to make substantial investments in fishing pay for the same reason. The marketing of cattle, and even of wool itself, was hampered by bad transport when competition sharpened.*¹⁹⁴

Only the final sentence offers a clue to the fact that Professor Smout is here commenting on the state of the Highlands on the eve of the potato famine after sheep had overwhelmed both Highlands and Highlanders. Unfortunately accessibility to markets did not improve in proportion to the effort and expenditure devoted to the whole problem of communications between 1750 and 1840. Yet it has also been argued that the activities of the Commissioners for the Forfeited Estates in this field had *a more lasting effect on the quality of Highland life in working towards the integration of north and south than all their other multifarious economic meddlings.*¹⁹⁵ The fact is that Highland

communications in the eighteenth century were abysmal. The roads built by General Wade prior to 1745, for military rather than commercial purposes, were of limited value. So the Commissioners strove to facilitate the trade which they were promoting directly in other ways, by spending consistently and, in their financial circumstances, lavishly, on the infrastructure of the Highland economy. By contrast with their other projects, there was invariable and unquestioned Treasury consent to contributions to the improvement of roads, ferries and harbours and to the building of bridges and inns. Thus the Board financed wholly or in part the construction of many miles of roads and the erection of nearly eighty bridges, some of which are still in use today. Some were modest affairs - £9 15s 0d and the free supply of timber for a couple of wooden bridges in an Inverness-shire glen. At the opposite extreme the Commissioners contributed about half of the £26,000 required for the bridging of the Tay at Perth - *a noble work and of great national beauty which opens a communication with all the different great roads of the kingdom.*¹⁹⁶ as described by Thomas Pennant in 1772. As regards roadbuilding, as well as on the estates themselves, particularly useful work was carried out in the west where communications were especially poor. Many were local roads, but a major route between Ullapool and Dingwall was opened in the early 1770s and towards the end of the decade the Commissioners were helping to complete a 75 mile stretch of road along the coast from Inveraray to Campbelltown. Indeed, roads and bridges constituted the largest item of capital expenditure during the 1760s and 1770s, with over £21,000 being devoted to their construction between 1760 and 1784. To encourage coastal traffic and fishing, there was assistance with the building or improvement of piers and harbours in such diverse places as Cromarty in the north-east, Islay in the west and Queensferry on the River Forth - an obvious gateway to the north. To promote

travel, there were contributions to the erection, extension and repair of numerous inns and change-houses in villages on the estates, in neighbouring towns and on the main highways north.¹⁹⁷

A generation of effort on the part of the Board for Annexed Estates was brought to a close by Act of Parliament in 1784. In terms of the loyalty of the people living there, the Highlands had long since been saved and it was this fact that was being given recognition in the Disannexing Act which restored the estates to their former owners.¹⁹⁸ Beyond that, scholars are agreed that it is virtually impossible to measure the achievements.¹⁹⁹ For one thing, that Board was not the only agency working for change in the Highlands. Though momentary aid was no longer forthcoming for the Highlands from the Board of Trustees, it continued to exercise influence there. Individual heritors and improving societies dabbled in training schemes while other landlords with greater means at their disposal than the Annexed Estates Board, assisted industry, exploited mineral wealth on their estates and built villages to serve as centres of manufacturing industry and markets for agriculture produce. The contrast between the activities of such landlords, who devoted most of their resources to concentrated development on their own estates, and those of the Annexed Estates Board did not go unnoticed by the Board's General Inspector, Archibald Menzies. Concerned that the value of the Board's achievement was not fully appreciated, he explained *but from those aids being dispersed and scattered over the Highlands and Islands of Scotland the effects are not visible.*²⁰⁰ This did not prevent the Earl of Selkirk, twenty years after the restoration, estimating that the value of the estates forfeited in 1745 had risen from £12,000 per annum to £80,000 or over sixfold in 60 years.²⁰¹

Unfortunately in restoring the estates the Government also relinquished virtually all responsibilities towards the Highlands. Indeed as J P Day has observed, much fiscal policy over the next fifty or so years actually worked against the ordinary Highlander.²⁰² Yet ironically it was the State that had given the proprietors licence to feel absolved of any responsibility for the welfare of the people. Had not the State regarded clans as lawless, arbitrary, turbulent and dangerous associations, and acted accordingly? Those proprietors who had not had their estates forfeited found themselves divested of power; they were no longer military leaders or hereditary judges of the people. Only their position as landlords was left, and their social position now came to depend on the size of their rent-rolls. Moreover, the compensation of over £152,000 for the abolition of hereditary jurisdiction put them, perhaps for the first time, in command of considerable sums of actual cash. They became aware of the value of money just at the time when the value of men was displaced. Those who had had their estates forfeited found on their return that they had to pay back the debts discharged by the Government. This strained their resources, yet their tenants had been benefitting from the expenditure by the Commissioners of the estate revenue. At the same time, the exiles' experiences had tired them of the quiet monotony of estate life. Furthermore, to be the resident owner of a wild, barren and remote estate is a different thing from being the chief of a clan. So, absenteeism increased steadily and with it the personal expenditure of landlords. Circumstances had combined to teach the landlords the value of money, to create the desire or need for it, and at the same time came the opportunity for amassing it. Yet to come were the economic changes which made it decidedly profitable for

proprietors to turn the land into sheep-walks, turning the tenants off.²⁰³

For the meantime the interests of the Highlands were fostered by non-Governmental parties. In the year that the Board of Trustees for the Annexed Estates was wound up (1778), the Highland Society was founded by a group of progressive Highland gentlemen improvers. The objectives were markedly similar to those of the Annexed Estates Commissioners, but pacification was removed and consideration was actually to be given to fostering Highland culture.²⁰⁴ The Highland Society, however, was not essentially an executive body, but more an interest group or pressure group and its bias was undoubtedly heavily literary and artistic. Its first president was the Duke of Argyll; a recognised exponent of Highland affairs, he was also the first person to hold the office of Governor of the British Fisheries Society. The Highland Society, putting its money where its mouth was, was one of five corporations to subscribe to the British Fisheries Society.²⁰⁵

(b) The British Fisheries Society

In the twenty to thirty years after 1785 it was this semi-philanthropic organisation of private individuals which did most in the matter of structured development. The Society, incorporated in 1786 under the rather long-winded title of 'The British Society for Extending the Fisheries and Improving the Sea Coasts of this Kingdom', differed from earlier Fisheries Companies. Unlike the latter, it was forbidden to issue money or to engage as a Corporation in any trade and it devoted itself largely to the establishment of fishing settlements. In pursuing this objective, however, it was empowered to collect capital, to buy land for lease to fishermen and curers, and to build houses, sheds,

harbours and piers for their use. The hope of modest dividends attracted some £150,000 in subscriptions, enabling the Society to acquire sites in the first instance at Tobermory on Mull, Lochbay in Skye and at Ullapool. There were other similar villages set up by private proprietors, notably the Duke of Argyll himself. But with two old-established exceptions (Stornoway and Campbelltown), from the outset all these west coast villages struggled for survival.²⁰⁶

A major difficulty which beset them was the reluctance of the Highlander to abandon his land. A modern scholar has identified this as the undoing of the British Fisheries Society and indeed has gone so far as to suggest that the problem has not been solved to this day.²⁰⁷ Such a statement adds weight to the Earl of Selkirk's observation at the time that it represented *the greatest of all impediments to the progress of the fisheries on the Western coast and Isles.*²⁰⁸ Certainly the villagers' principal response to diversification of employment seems to have been a refusal to specialise in any one occupation, all clinging to the subsistence cultivation of their crofts as a form of insurance policy. The Society was well warned. In the Spring following its incorporation, it circulated a letter of introduction to a number of Highland proprietors, which also requested the favour of their advice on certain important issues. In his reply Maclean of Coll underlined the difficulty he foresaw in inducing the people to inhabit the proposed towns and villages:

For it is to be considered that there is not at present in this country any distinct body of men who live solely by the fishing, that and indeed any branch of business and trade is carried on by people possessed of lands and who only make the fishing etc., a very temporary object or casualty If the inhabitants of those countries can procure the bare necessities of life by their labour from the grounds they possess their ambition leads them

*to no further effort, nor do they in general desire to meliorate their condition by any other exertion of industry This is so much the case that tradesmen of all descriptions are not to be got without procuring farms for them and no sooner is this procured than they become farmers solely.*²⁰⁹

The obstinate persistence of this subsistence agricultural economy flew directly in the face of the Society's policy of commercialising farming - through the introduction of improved agricultural techniques - and fostering the rise of independent and ancillary industry. While the promotion of the fishing industry was inevitably the primary concern of the Society, there was also a recognition of the importance of diversification. For example, woollen yarn manufacture was established at Ullapool and Tobermory and protected initially with an infant industry subsidy.²¹⁰ Clearly such investment called for division of labour, but this was not forthcoming. In the case of the fishing, the reason is clear enough and has been identified by Dr Dunlop as the second difficulty contributing to the failure of the west coast villages. Quite simply, there was an unpredictable change in the movement of the herring shoals, away from the Minch and the west coast in favour of the Moray Firth and the east coast.²¹¹ The risk of a poor season's catch was by no means new in the west Highlands, and it is little wonder that this risk was calculated to make men without capital reluctant to cut themselves off altogether from the land.

The experience of having nothing to fall back upon could not have been one shared by the Society's London-based Directors. Yet, to their credit, they heeded the warning of another Highland proprietor, Hugh Rose of Nigg, that *the herring is a shifting ambulatory fish*.²¹² And, ironically, it was there very anxiety to ensure that settlers were provided with sufficient land to grow their own food in a poor/fishing season that undoubtedly accelerated failure

of the Society's efforts on the West Coast. The salt laws did not help. The situation is succinctly explained by Dunlop. *Regulations made it difficult for curers to obtain salt quickly so that when, as happened occasionally, a small shoal appeared the fishermen were not prepared to cure them. A few bad years ruined their boats which were no longer seaworthy when the herring came and curers and coopers did not consider it worthwhile to keep supplies or equipment on the West.*²¹³

In 1799, as an instrument to incentive, the Society was empowered to give premiums to the most expert fishermen as well as limited loans for vessel or house purchase. At the same time subsidies were made available for ancillary services or industries such as salt storage or net/sailcloth manufacture. However, James Anderson, a leading policy proponent of the day, observed that these were very trifling sums of money. His criticism was aimed less at the British Fisheries Society than at the Government, for he was prepared to concede that a small matter of money may be a powerful spring of activity among poor people in such remote parts of the country, if the application of it is judiciously directed, and if the people were relieved, from the hardships and intricacies of the salt laws.²¹⁴ These resulted not only in missed catches, but delays incurred by the necessity to complete the lengthy administrative procedure ordered by the Commissioners of Excise not infrequently resulted also in loss of markets. A case in point was when the West Indian convoy sailed before the fish were passed for export.²¹⁵ Subsequently the number of slaves in the West Indies declined and with it the fish market, especially when some fish arrived unfit for consumption. Britain did succeed in capturing new European markets from the Dutch, but this new focus on the Continent no longer favoured the west coast.²¹⁶

It was to the north-east coast settlement of Wick that the Commissioners turned their attention in 1803, in the hope of offsetting failure of their projects in the west. The Wick development, from the start, bore the hallmark of success. The basis for development was different in that Wick was not a settlement in the wilderness but already a thriving town of some 1000 inhabitants, supporting a variety of trades including fishing. It was accessible to Thurso, commercial centre of Caithness, and shared the latter's fertile agricultural hinterland. The British Fisheries Society plan for the expansion of Wick was three-fold: to bridge the Wick river, to build a harbour, and to build an extension to the town. The bridge was completed in 1808, half the cost of £2000 having been subscribed by local landowners. The harbour was a more expensive item altogether, which had to be started from scratch in the absence of even a modest pier. Fish were simply landed on the beach. In the event, an Act of 1806 authorised the distribution for the purposes of further economic development in Scotland, of money arising from the Forfeited Estates settlement, and £7,500 was awarded to the Fisheries Society to help rebuild the harbour at Wick. A further £1000 was subscribed by the Commissioners for Highland Roads and Bridges on condition that this sum was matched £ for £ by the British Fisheries Society - among whose directors were several of the Commissioners. The harbour was completed in 1811, for a total cost of £14,000. Meanwhile the new settlement of Pulteneytown was rising on the south side of the river. The first application for a lot in the new town was submitted in 1803 and by 1812 about 60 lots were taken up, with building - conforming to the plan drawn up by Thomas Telford, the Society's surveyor - proceeding apace.²¹⁷

As at Tobermory, the plan was rectilinear, with the houses set above the storehouses and curing grounds which occupied the lower ground. The arrangements governing the letting of agricultural land, however, were significantly different from those at the Society's other settlements. The land was divided into lots of about five acres and let for 21 years, but a settler was permitted to hold more than one lot. Indeed, settlers were positively encouraged to sell their produce and purchase additional land with the proceeds. In this way landownership could be concentrated into fewer, larger units. The emergence of such a class of professional agriculturalists was paralleled by the emergence of another class of professional fishermen and coopers. These were encouraged to settle by the offer of town lots rent-free for an initial three years, but they were not permitted to own any agricultural land apart from a small garden plot. The importance of the legislation was that, since every settler had to declare himself either fisherman or farmer or tradesman or labourer, the crofter class was thereby excluded. However desirable such an approach might have seemed in the west, its appropriateness there must be questioned. Dunlop, on the one hand points to the poor quality of the ground in the west and the inadequately developed state of the fishing industry, which could not have supported any professionals. Youngson, on the other, attributes the success of the Caithness policy precisely to the well-developed state of the fishery and to the superior soil and climatic conditions of Caithness, *which made commercial grain growing a far more attractive proposition than in the west.* The two arguments complement each other and as Dunlop observes, this advanced state of cultivation in turn facilitated the rise of a class of professional fishermen since it enabled food supplies to be bought cheaply by fishermen and coopers.²¹⁸

However, the British Fisheries Society was reluctant to bow to environmental determinism, and sought to lay the blame at the feet of the inhabitants of the Western Highlands who were considered *temperamentally unsuited* to becoming professional farmers and fishermen.²¹⁹ No doubt this view of the laziness of the Gael - a perception which persists amongst Lowlanders today - was confirmed when early worries as to whether the Caithness settlers would accept the conditions were quickly dispelled. Yet the non-homogeneity of the Highlands (as distinct from the Highlander) was recognised at the time of the Annexed Estates Board. In the supporting documentation for one Scheme for the Improvement of the Highlands, Caithness is singled out as being *the least Highland of any County in Scotland*.²²⁰ More recently Professor Youngson has, in his appraisal of the achievement of the British Fisheries Society, questioned whether Caithness should properly be regarded as part of the Highlands.²²¹ The answer to his question is provided in Bryden and Houston's comprehensive contemporary survey of Highland agriculture. The authors draw attention to the fact that within the Highlands there are very wide variations in agricultural activity *with some clearly defined localities reflecting specific environmental (and other) conditions*. From their analysis they conclude that at least two 'sectors' exist - *the more intensive commercial farming sector concentrated in Orkney, Caithness, the Moray Firth and parts of Argyll, and the more extensive (and in some areas, part-time) agriculture that exists in other parts*.²²² The statement holds as true for the early nineteenth century as for today. Furthermore, if commercial farming in Caithness offered considerable potential at that early date, then fishing was hardly less attractive as a livelihood. By 1814 fishing vessels visited Wick from every part of the British coast and by 1830 from many parts of the Western European seaboard - Norway, Holland, France and Ireland. The resident population had risen to over 2,000, and during the fishing season an additional 7000 could be found in the

neighbourhood. In the twenty years following the building of the harbour the herring catch multiplied 20-fold. Local industries thrived - there was rope and sail manufacture, a number of shipyards, a brewery and a distillery. Accommodation was at a premium, another hallmark of the boom town yesterday or today.²²³

The contrast with the western villages could not have been more marked. Tobermory alone could be described as prosperous, that prosperity deriving from its minor importance as a coastal and Atlantic trading port as distinct from a fishing station. Activity in Tobermory centred upon the Customs House and the harbour, the completion of the Caledonian Canal in 1822 serving to increase that activity. From 1821 there was a summer steamboat connection with Glasgow, while by 1826 there was a regular service to the Clyde. Although the failure of the fishing affected Tobermory, it did not devastate it. Similarly the poor harvests of 1808 and 1809 were of small consequence in a place where the soil barely covered the rock and could yield little even in ideal conditions. Ullapool had fleeting success as a fishing village until the desertion of the herring. Thereafter it degenerated into an overcrowded rural slum, a shanty town of *cotters in possession of lots of land in the suburbs*.²²⁴ Unknown to the Directors, the Agent at Ullapool had allowed squatters to build huts on waste land near the Ullapool river. The squatters were useful labourers and it was the Agent's original intention to move them on when the land was required for 'better' settlers. These never came, and the black huts of the squatters remained. Lochbay was condemned from the start. The pier and storehouses were not finished before the herring left the Minch. Inhabitants of the Society's houses were provided with the same amount of land as at Ullapool, but the better quality of the soil meant that a livelihood could be made from subsistence agriculture without recourse

to supplementary sources of income - in theory to be derived from application to improved agriculture, fishing or manufactures. As a result, when the Deputy Governor visited Lochbay in 1810, he found it wholly unimproved, with inhabitants too idolent to take advantage of the temporary return of the herring.²²⁵ In fact, he and the Agent considered that the apathy was so inveterate that the Society would never succeed at Lochbay.²²⁶

Such an emphasis upon external factors at Lochbay inevitably leads the critical historian to question the extent to which success at Wick was attributable to the Society at all. Dr Dunlop has no doubts when she states: *the truth was that the Society's Agent had comparatively little to do with the sudden popularity of their new settlement. The real cause was the continued success of the fishery.*²²⁷ By analogy the real cause of failure in the west was the promotion of an inflexible or at least single-purpose plan against a background of resource uncertainty. Maclean of Coll was right to claim that there was no such being as a professional fisherman or specialised tradesman in the Western Highlands. However, he failed to recognise that the resultant lifestyle was born less from lack of ambition than from the sheer need to assure survival. Specialisation presumed trade, and trade presumed certainty. But certainty was not a feature of the West Highland economy. Hence the importance of subsistence agriculture. For if the fisherman's catch slumped, the chandler could not sell his wares and both starved while their neighbour, poor last season, could at least feed his family with produce raised on the household plot.

Progressively, then, over the years between 1750 and 1850 the southern and eastern Highlands and the northern and western Highlands grew apart. The social line of demarcation between Highlands and Lowlands which for

centuries had existed in close/imitation of geographical features was eroded steadily. Argyll and Caithness were increasingly subject to Lowland influence in economy as well as speech. The threat of famine in these counties became a thing of the past. But as Gray observes, if the Highland line had retreated, it was still real, indeed more real than ever it had been previously. For the remote north-western Atlantic fringe which it now enclosed comprised:

*As area obstinately archaic and peasant-minded, where people refused to accept the salutary division of occupations and the efficient large-scale organisation so often recommended, where men dabbled in many pursuits, small holdings of land and declined the technical advice of the knowledgeable.*²²⁸

At least in the context of advanced industrialised Britain that was how it appeared.

The persistence of subsistence agriculture in the north-west periphery baffled the paternalistic guardians of Highland welfare, both governmental and charitable. The British Fisheries Society provided an example of the latter, but the Government itself had not abandoned all interest in Highland affairs after the restitution of the Forfeited Estates. To the metropolitan mind the root cause of the difficulties and weaknesses of the Highlands was isolation, and the solution was to open the areas to travel and thus trade. The theory was that good roads would permit the flow of goods and passengers that was normal in other parts of Britain. So a comprehensive programme was set in motion both of repairing and extending the existing road system of southern Scotland, and rather more ambitious, creating a similar system north of the Great Glen. In all, by 1821, nearly 900 miles of so-called Parliamentary Roads had been built at a total cost of £450,000 of which £200,000 was

allocated from the public purse. It was an impressive effort, but one scarcely matched in economic effects. Travel became safer and easier, with public coaches penetrating as far as Tongue and Assynt.²²⁹

Yet the new-found accessibility did more to familiarise southern visitors with the Highlands than it did to acquaint the Highlander with southern mores, and thus integrate a backward and ineffective economy with the vibrant metropolitan one. The main export of the Highlands, cattle, continued to be driven overland independently of made roads. Furthermore, the new roads could not cope with bulky goods, and even for high-value, low-bulk produce from the western coastal settlements, the supply route by sea was still cheaper to use. By the 1830s animals as well were going to market by sea. Meanwhile the Highland Tour increased in popularity and visitors marvelled at the advanced state of roads and the backward state of agriculture. The paradox serves to illustrate the important difference between necessary conditions for development and sufficient ones, but to the gentlemen travellers it was a paradox which remained unexplained. Nor could they suspect what historians have sought to demonstrate - that the distinctiveness of the north-west was based upon a divergent rather than an arrested growth. Far from endorsing the received view that the north-west Highlands did exemplify an archaic and backward economy, Malcolm Gray states emphatically: *crofting was the dynamic adaptation of a developing society.*²³⁰ As a dynamic adaptation it might have worked but for an unfortunate combination of circumstances. Greedy landlords and misguided philanthropists ensured that the effects of land and capital scarcity pressing on the mass of the population were accentuated by deliberate plan. Crofters were not regarded as agriculturalists to be helped towards more independent farming, but as

industrial workers for whom too much land might be a distraction. So when the market for kelp vanished and the herring deserted the Minch the fragmented crofts of the north-west could not begin to provide the required sustenance. The sale of cattle stocks for cash to make good the food shortage further aggravated conditions. Dependence on the potato increased and so in proportion did the risk of disaster.²³¹

Disaster did strike with the spread of potato blight from Europe and southern Scotland to the north-west Highlands in 1846.²³² To find a substitute for their staple diet of potatoes, crofters and cottars scavenged and stole, or trailed south in search of navvy work on the railways. Like sheep stealing or collecting shellfish, however, this type of migration could only alleviate or postpone the distress which the blight had made inevitable. By the autumn of 1846 no less a person than the Lord Advocate, in effect the Executive's chief spokesman in Scotland, was writing to the Home Secretary warning of the imminence of what he described as *great, general and urgent calamity* in the Highlands. The letter prompted swift Government action. Delays and vacillations which had characterised their famine relief policy in Ireland the previous year were avoided, largely because the machinery for dealing with distress was already in existence. Yet the moral responsibility of saving the people from starvation in reality lay with the landlords and it was never the Government's intention to set up a general system of relief. Inevitably, with a few notable exceptions the proprietors shirked their obligations even in the face of considerable official pressure. The intervention of charitable bodies by the start of 1847 was therefore nothing short of a godsend to harassed Government officials.²³³

(c) The Destitution Relief Board

The clumsily entitled Central Board of Management of the Fund Raised for the Relief of the Destitute Inhabitants of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland was formed in February 1847 from an amalgamation of three previously existing Relief Committees. These were the Free Church Destitution Committee, formed in November 1846, and two non-denominational committees set up at public meetings in Edinburgh, in December 1846, and Glasgow, in January 1847.²³⁴ As its name implies, the Board assumed overall responsibility for fund raising and food distribution. However, the Edinburgh and Glasgow divisions of the Fund, or 'Sections' as they now became known, were preserved as regional executive sub-committees, with each assigned appropriate territories. Thus the Edinburgh Section was responsible *for details of the distribution for ... distressed districts which communicate with the south by the east coast* namely Orkney and Shetland, Caithness, Sutherland and the Moray Firth. The *harder* task belonged to the Glasgow Section which was allotted *that part of the destitute districts which communicates by the west coast, including Argyleshire, the Western Islands, the Western Districts of Ross-shire, Western Districts of Inverness-shire*. The Edinburgh Section was not long in discovering that a *limited amount of relief would be sufficient to meet the case of the Eastern Districts*, and was presently allotted responsibility also for Skye and Wester Ross in order to achieve a more equitable balance.²³⁵

Emergency distribution of meal to the destitute was of course an immediate priority.²³⁶ From the outset, the Board was determined that the destitute and their families *shall, without any distinction, be relieved*. But at the same meeting it was resolved that while on the one hand no-one, so far as the funds at the disposal of the Boards would permit, should *perish for want of the necessities of life*, on the other hand, no person in receipt of relief would, so

far as work was available, he allowed to remain idle and unemployed.²³⁷

*While the Board thus look to their funds being made to relieve a greater number of persons, their primary object in so requiring labour in return for food supplied is, to foster and encourage habits of industry and self-exertion; to improve the condition of the people, and to develop the resources of the country; and especially, by increasing the productiveness of the distressed districts, so far as in them lies to prevent the recurrence of so great a calamity, and convert the sufferings of the people into the germ of their future amelioration.*²³⁸

Prevailing concepts of the role of public assistance demanded as much and more from the Board. Yet as the Glasgow Committee soon discovered, it was no easy matter to get *suitable and profitable employment*²³⁹ in many of the districts. It could not humanely withdraw provision of relief, but soon received a timely warning from the Treasury, that the people were not to become *habituated to depend upon public charity.*²⁴⁰

It was never the intention of the Board to become directly involved in the provision of employment. Yet now its hands were tied. So it fell to the Board to implement various schemes of local employment which would also be of benefit to the community at large. Then as now, the option which initially offered simultaneously the best possibility of soaking up a considerable quantity of unskilled labour as well as *the most likely means of generally benefiting the people* was a programme of public local works.²⁴¹ Construction and repair of small harbours and piers was sanctioned under the heading of *works likely to develop the resources of the district*, and establishment and upgrading of minor roads was authorised as *works generally calculated to open up communication in the districts, such as roads not statutory or Parliamentary*. As with much more recent Job Creation schemes incrofting areas, draining, fencing and enclosing of land

was sponsored where the land would as a result be brought into cultivation. To ensure that women and infirm or aged men also met the requirements of the 'labour test', knitting and spinning work was organised alongside the labouring schemes for the able-bodied.²⁴² However, the first garments produced came back from the knitters both dirty and badly fashioned and therefore virtually unsaleable with the result that *the produce barely paid value of the meal given for food, leaving the price of the materials dead loss.*²⁴³ It did not escape the notice of the Board that without proper management of the enterprise and adequate training of the work force, there was little prospect of improvement. The Board also came to the realisation that as a longer term measure it would prove necessary deliberately to stimulate *those branches of industry which seemed likely to form a permanent source of subsistence.*²⁴⁴

So at the start of 1848 some managerial expertise was recruited in the shape of one Samuel Hogg, an Aberdeen businessman with considerable experience of the knitted goods trade. His remit was to superintend the hosiery venture and establish it on a *trade basis*. The area selected for this experiment was Skye, which *from the means of internal communication, and other circumstances, [was deemed] more easily managed*. In Wester Ross the scheme was to continue to run with the voluntary assistance of *resident ladies*, and could therefore act as a rough and ready control. This scheme continued to operate, and the Skye scheme had previously operated, on the principle of relief being given to the women and knitted goods taken in return without any reference to the quality of the work, and by implication - other things being equal - the price which the goods would fetch in the market. However, from 1848, under Mr Hogg's supervision, pay in Skye reflected the market value of the finished items. At first pay was necessarily low and a subject for considerable complaint, but the

combination of incentive to improve and training to facilitate that improvement eventually allowed many workers to exceed the wage which they would have received by remaining on the relief list. A measure of future stability was also ensured from two points of view. The main bulk of the trained workers were young women, *evincing more aptness and industry to learn than the old.* Secondly by diversifying the range of items to include jackets and drawers in addition to hose, it was possible to lay up stocks thus affording some measure of protection against fluctuations in market conditions. From the Board's angle, the situation was summarised thus: *the result of Mr Hogg's steady management has been the rapid improvement of the workers, the gradual increase of wages, and the extension of the trade.* In Wester Ross, by contrast, there was no improvement in the quality of goods produced and the price commanded continued to fail even to recoup expenses. In short the difference between the two ventures was this: *in the one the foundation is laid for its continuance. In the other, the whole must drop as soon as the Board withdraws its assistance.*²⁴⁵

The Skye innovation was unequivocally successful, and could no doubt be satisfactorily extended to Wester Ross. From the Board's point of view, it was distinctly unfortunate that matters could not rest there. However, from the start it had been the Board's intention once a *legitimate and lasting branch of trade* was established to invite the *attention of capitalists to the consideration of whether it would not be worth their while to establish, on their own account, a continuance of the system.*²⁴⁶ The services of Mr Hogg having been secured in Skye as hosiery superintendent, it was agreed that he should have first refusal, and a contract to that effect was drawn up in December 1848.²⁴⁷ Subsequently difficulties arose from the fact that Mr Hogg had everything to gain from such a transaction and the Board, having capitalised the project, had everything to lose. Initially, the

question was one only of the terms under which Mr Hogg might, after three years continued service to the Board, assume the going concern and very basic premises valued at circa £100. However, an early change in market conditions invited much greater investment in spinning machinery, if the opportunity for a considerable expansion of the market share was not to be missed. For good reason the Board was initially wary of embarking upon investment of what amounted to six times its existing commitment, for construction of a spinning and carding mill at Portree. It favoured the less contentious fall-back position of guaranteeing Mr Hogg, in addition to his own salary for three years, the salary also of an assistant together with the existing premises gratis and the stock at valuation.²⁴⁸

However Mr Hogg knew and so did the Board that there was no question of the Board continuing to manage the enterprise once the immediate task of famine relief was over. Nor was there any question of Mr Hogg underwriting the financing of the new capital. Mr Hogg had the Board exactly where he wanted it. He wrote to the Board's Secretary stating that he wanted the machinery provided, since it would save the cost of carriage of worsted from Aberdeen. Further, he was not prepared to carry on with the management of the knitting scheme only, and finally, without his expert help wool could not be obtained, the goods would not be satisfactorily marketed and so all the Board's effort would ultimately be wasted.

*The knitting only, if deserted at the end of my engagement, would fall to the ground, as it would not support an establishment by itself, and no capitalist would ever choose Skye for investment; so that if the Committee, as I have no doubts but that they are interested in the welfare of the people at large, take the view of the matter as to making the thing permanent, the introducing of machinery is the only way.*²⁴⁹

It was certainly Mr Hogg's way, and he had no doubts either that he was blackmailing the Board.

*From what I have said, you may suppose that a sinister motive has induced me, but if so, and the Committee feel themselves anyway burdened by any proposition made by me, I am ready to forego all the labour I have had, and forget the prospects which I had of seeing reared in Skye a standing memorial to the honour of the Central Board.*²⁵⁰

The Board faced an unpalatable dilemma. If it stood firm against such barefaced blackmail, it risked destroying a significant achievement, thereby wasting considerable time, money and effort and denying large numbers of people their sole prospect of reasonable living. Yet at the same time the Board was uncomfortably aware that in supplying the machinery to Mr Hogg, it would be choosing to disregard an early ruling that:

*The object of the Board in promoting Local Works, is not to confer benefit on Proprietors, Tenants, or others, connected with the District, but to secure employment for persons receiving supply from the Board who are in want of it, so as to carry out their rule, that Labour is to be the invariable accompaniment of Relief, and the Test of Destitution; that in all cases work shall be preferred which will benefit the population at large to that which would benefit only individuals.*²⁵¹

Furthermore, the rule went on specifically to spell out that:

*When it is proposed that the Board should assist in Works specially connected with private interests, arrangements should be made with Proprietors or others likely to be benefited by them, so that, by mutual co-operation, and by a share being borne by the party benefited corresponding to the benefit derived, such Works may be completed, and at the same time, Relief may be afforded to those Destitute persons who are able-bodied labourers through the medium of employment thus provided for them.*²⁵²

Inevitably, the difficulty for the Board ultimately took the form, not of taking the decision to supply the investment, but of finding a means of justifying that 'decision'. That means was presented to them in a letter from their former inspector in Skye, a man well placed to be able to comprehend the terrible effects of withdrawal of the newly-established hosiery trade from that area, but, fortunately from the Board's point of view, also a man who no longer had any direct interest in the scheme, making him, in the words of the Board, *a most impartial witness*.²⁵³ The loyal inspector ensured as best he could that the Board was exonerated of potential blame in an 'unbiased' letter of appraisal - an attribute which the Board did not fail to underline - which read:

*If I may be permitted to remark on the objection taken to the principle of benefiting an individual not in distress, contained in supplying machinery to Mr Hogg, of course this is not the object but the consequence of there being only one way of benefiting the people, and that being through an individual; but surely they have admitted the propriety of so doing in all their co-operative works; also in dealing with meal-dealers, but they have so effectually, but only as a means to an end - the end, in this case, justifying the means.*²⁵⁴

The 'co-operative' works in question were started in 1849 and constituted a mutually beneficial arrangement between the Board and Highland landowners. They had their origins in a Board decision of 1848 to provide the Gairloch estate with one-half of the sum of £2,500 required for construction of a road along the southern shore of Loch Maree. The grant was payable on condition that the estate management assumed responsibility for the welfare of the population resident there, by providing crofters with work on the construction of the road. The Board Inspectorate justified its

position in the following terms:

*Works of public improvement undertaken by co-operation between the Board and proprietors, under conditions similar to those proposed in the present case are not properly direct Relief Works, and yet more than answer the purpose of such [being] one of the most effectual forms in which the Board's assistance can be carried out, and the one probably least liable to objection. The employment of the people becomes a real instead of a fictitious thing. No zeal, no attention or careful supervision, will ever stimulate the industry of a man labouring on mere test works in the measure that his best exertions are called forth by the feeling that his labour is mutually beneficial to his employer and himself. It is the only mode of extending relief to a people quite unattended with degradation and demoralisation to them.*²⁵⁵

This was not, however, a view shared by everyone. One critic went so far as to write that *this so-styled co-operative system, stripped of [the Board's] mystifying verbiage, is neither more nor less than a monstrous malversation of a charitable fund giving largesse to noblemen and gentlemen who have improved their estates by means of public subscription.*²⁵⁶

The attractions to the Board of a scheme of co-operation were not simply that destitute people were relieved in a mode which left them in their natural position, and there was no interference whatever with the ordinary relations of society. By implementing the co-operative arrangements, the outlay was no greater than previously, but a saving was made on supervisory staff. Furthermore, the spending of the proprietors was equal to that of the Board - a sum estimated to represent the bare cost of relieving destitution - and therefore the amount of employment provided was twice what it would otherwise have been. It could be regarded as a bonus that the arrangements harmonised with Board philosophy. For the Board did earnestly believe that the people's involvement

in genuine rather than 'job creation' work generated a corporate spirit of improvement and a desire on the part of all classes, to move forwards in raising the social position of the district, the whole effect being magnified where the whole proprietors were united in expending capital in the district on public works which must result in its improvement, and the people were looking to the employment, and other advantages thence derived, as their resource.²⁵⁷ This necessary condition was satisfied for the north part of Wester Ross already by the end of 1848, by which time every proprietor in Gairloch and Lochbroom was receiving funds for road construction. During 1849 co-operative road building was extended to include the whole of Sutherland, the island of Raasay and Shetland. Some idea of the scale of operations is provided by the information that some thousand people were employed on Wester Ross road works in 1849, with the result that by 1850 the Gairloch and Lochbroom proprietors were in possession of a ninety-mile network of new roads linking Ullapool, Poolewe and Gairloch on the western sea-board with Dingwall in the east.²⁵⁸ The importance of the new circuit lay in the eyes of the Board, in opening up a large district with a population hitherto so much secluded²⁵⁹ thereby bringing it within reach of all those benefits and advantages derived from easy communication, access to markets, and contact with an advanced state of society.²⁶⁰

For precisely such reasons, road construction today is regarded as a necessary condition for development in underdeveloped countries. Yet it cannot constitute a sufficient condition, today or last century in the north-west Highlands. As has been stated elsewhere, the 'destitution roads' undeniably represented the Board's great practical accomplishment,²⁶¹ but who would take advantage of the ready access to market and what goods were to be marketed? Although in respect of hosiery manufacture it was reported by the

Inspector General in 1849 that *there is a decided preference to be given to the skill and aptitude of the Ross-shire women over the untaught natives of Skye*, the venture was in its infancy, the experienced superintendence of Mr Hogg having only just superceded *the more loose system that was in operation under the unskilled Relief Officers last year.*²⁶² However, on account of a *less fearful and urgent amount of destitution* in Wester Ross than in Skye,²⁶³ by 1850 the numbers receiving direct relief were restricted and the numbers of pairs of stockings produced reduced from 6149 to 1588, workers being down from 238 to a mere 60.²⁶⁴

Similarly, a concerted attempt to *revive and restore* the run-down west coast fishery never really got off the ground. Investment was considerable with various financial incentives and bonuses offered in conjunction with loan assistance towards the purchase of vessels and gear. Repair and construction of piers was undertaken and outside expertise was imported in the form of boats and crews from the east neuk of Fife. Badachro near Gairloch in Wester Ross was identified for development as a major fishing station and facilities for smoking and curing installed.²⁶⁵ Unfortunately, initial problems of labour shortage subsequently gave place to difficulties of over-production and marketing. At the height of the season in 1849, what was euphemistically described as a *distressing amount of excellent food in herring* went to waste because there existed neither the facilities for curing nor the capacity for local consumption. At the close of the year the conclusion was that *although some good has been attained, the real advantage derived has not yet been commensurate with the expense necessarily incurred by these experiments.*²⁶⁶ The loss of momentum occasioned by the winding-up of the relief fund in 1850 ensured that it never would be.²⁶⁷

The trouble was, as the Board admitted and as has been noted elsewhere, the programme was just too ambitious.²⁶⁸

It was not only true that *regular and patient prosecution of industry requires a more advanced state of society than yet exists in the Highlands*, but a relief committee, with the best will in the world, cannot bring about a social and economic revolution.

*The magnitude of the fund alone was looked to, and there was little reflection as to whether a relief committee were in a position to effect this [transformation], or by what instrumentality the habits and tendencies of generations were to be at once changed, the social relations of the people altered as it were by magic, and an entire population recovered in the course of one year from the shock of the sudden destruction of their great stay and support, and instantaneously adapted to a new and altered state of society.*²⁶⁹

The dream was sadly splendid in its naiveté. All that was apparently needed to rejuvenate the west coast fishing industry was to build a curing house, and inoculate the natives with some east country enterprise, by bringing one or two boats and crews from thence. You would then at once establish a thriving model fishing station, and having done so with the further facilities of connecting roads from it to the main road and other fishing villages, all equally isolated, it would stimulate a whole line of coast.²⁷⁰ The reality was depressingly different, as Sir John McNeill, Chairman of the Board of Supervision for the Relief of the Poor in Scotland was not slow to underline. After an expenditure altogether unexampled in amount directed to the improvement of [the Highland] condition, no sensible progress has been made, and the state of the population has continued to decline.²⁷¹ So Sir John turned his attention to emigration,²⁷² the time-honoured remedy, aligning himself with two Scottish economists who have much more recently argued that the solution to the 'Highland Problem' is to induce the movement of labour out of, and not the movement of capital into, the area.²⁷³ Meanwhile the Relief Board continued to reflect on why it had failed, concluding that:

*To reconstruct the social system is a slow, protracted and difficult process, and requires a more direct and enduring connection and existence, and different powers and influences than those of a Relief Committee.*²⁷⁴

In other words, Rome was not built in a day. But of greater importance in the present context is what can only be interpreted as a thinly veiled proto-allusion to the want of some form of comprehensive Highland Development Agency.

(d) Appraisal

The purpose of the foregoing analysis of early Highland development efforts has been twofold. First, it has sought to provide a developmental context within which to place subsequent discussion of the work of the Congested Districts Board. Second, it has attempted to provide a yardstick against which the methods and results of the CDB may be measured. To accomplish adequately these objectives, it is useful, finally, to attempt to draw out the salient features of each of the three earlier schemes in a synthesis which it is hoped also provides a starting point for comparison and discussion later in this thesis.

An essential aspect of the Forfeited Estates programme was that it represented, primarily, a measure to promote law and order. Furthermore, it was, in keeping with contemporary politico-social norms, imposed from above. Government was, after all, in the hands of the aristocracy, which, in turn, lacked any real interest in the welfare or human rights of the peasantry. It so happened that the good of the nation, a central concern of that elite, demanded a programme of regional development, if that is not too grand a terminology for what amounted to anglicising some uncivilised

clansmen. Against such a background, it is hardly surprising that there occurred a substantial mismatch between, on the one hand, the personal commitment of the nucleus of those unpaid Scottish Commissioner appointees who chose to take their duties seriously and, on the other, the political will of a remote London-based and inevitably English-biased Government. The interest and the motivation to carry through the carefully drawn up economic and social plans of the Commissioners was simply absent, yet without Royal assent the latter's hands were tied.²⁷⁵ In the circumstances the inevitable result of the centralisation and bureaucratic control that tend to characterise any form of state management²⁷⁶ was uncertainty, vacillation and delay, none of which is calculated to contribute to positive or co-ordinated implementation of policy.

The second important feature of the scheme, which was in keeping with its anglicisation objective, was the emphasis on the need to import expertise from outside the Highlands. The attempt to settle 'exemplary' soliders and sailors amounted to nothing less than a failure to comprehend the harsh reality of small-scale tenant farming beyond the Highland line. It is hard to assess how much on the one hand policy was dictated by the terms of the Annexation Act explicit or implicit, and how much on the other it reflected the gulf between even the Commissioners' perception of a tenant farmer's lifestyle and the reality: for if they were improvers themselves, they were gentleman improvers. At any rate exiles planted in the agricultural settlements could tolerate neither the social nor the physical shock, while boys from the estates sent to serve apprenticeships in the 'enlightened' environment south of the border often failed to return and did not, therefore, pass on their new found manners and knowledge to those

left behind.²⁷⁷ The Commissioners cannot, of course, assume any blame for the wide geographical spread of the areas in their remit, and thus apparent dissipation of funds. However, charges against them of unoriginality (which led them into development cul-de-sacs such as the linen venture) and bias towards the south and east (since those areas were richer and more developed, with a more numerous supply of well-endowed heritors and entrepreneurs) are better founded.²⁷⁸

The same cannot be said of the British Fisheries Society, which deliberately selected the remote north-west for its experiment, at least initially. Although privately sponsored, the composition of the Directorate meant that the Society's image was hardly substantially different from the benevolent aristocrat image of the government sponsored Annexed Estates Board thirty years earlier. It is not surprising, therefore, that some earlier mistakes were repeated. A misplaced and naive faith was once again put in the ideal of the village. Yet if neatly laid out houses and orderly streets were necessary to promote a wider process of ordered change, they were also in themselves insufficient.²⁷⁹ There was also either an inability to see or an unwillingness to acknowledge that the promotion of a single-facet economy, even at the micro-scale, was impracticable in the context of resource uncertainty. Just as the Forfeited Estates Commissioners had, from their position of social and material elevation, misjudged the nature of agricultural and manufacturing activity in the Highlands generally, so the Governors of the BFS failed to recognise that in the remote north-west Highlands the phenomenon of subsistence agriculture represented a necessary form of insurance, a cultural adaptation to environmental adversity.²⁸⁰ The insensitivity was compounded by inadequate communication with site agents. However, if success at Wick

was attributed to the new strict arrangements for leasing plots, failure in the West was not seen to stem from any deficiency of strategy but found its scapegoat ⁱⁿ the Gaelic temperament. The fact is, in the north-east the regulations may have been superfluous; in the north-west they could never have worked if half the population was not to be left begging for meals.

Even with the insurance provided by subsistence agriculture, the balance between population and resources was a precarious one. That equilibrium was seriously disturbed by the intervention of kelp at the start of the nineteenth century. As a cash crop kelp could support an artificially high level of population and, indeed, itself demanded that increased labour force to harvest it. But if trade provides the means for economic advancement, it also brings in its wake the potential for frictional imbalances and even serious economic dislocation. The humane accompaniment to an advancing economy is therefore a caring society. As prime beneficiaries of the rewards of the kelp, it might have been expected that when collapse came, the landlords would play a leading role in organising a framework for emergency assistance. A majority did not and the embarrassment of the Government - still only too clearly identifiable with the landed classes - was spared only by the intervention of charity. To prevent deaths from starvation was a great achievement in itself.²⁸¹ To expect more was unrealistic - not only was a four year period too telescoped a timescale, but there is a considerable gulf between the alleviation of need on the one hand and the development of potential on the other. Furthermore, if committees based upon the clergy were kept in touch via parish ministers and local presbyteries with the realities of crofter and cottar life, they were scarcely suited to risk assessment and

and the negotiation of business deals. Such an observation cannot be divorced from the implication above that the functions of a work creation scheme and that of a regional development programme are not synonymous. The context is different and thus the objective, the nature of the plan, and the mode of implementation.

The importance of the Destitution Roads scheme, however, lies as much in what it failed to achieve as in its signal achievement. For by 1850 not only was a precarious equilibrium restored, but the act of regaining that equilibrium had served to focus establishment attention upon the fundamental distinction between a rescue mission and true regenerative measures. Not only did the shortcomings of the former constitute the justification for the latter, but as the Destitution Board recognised, the implementation of a programme of positive development should contribute to the establishment of more permanent economic security. This would obviate the need for the charity which was seen to be both degrading and, since it fostered dependence, debilitating. The seeds of an enlightened philosophy had been sown, but they would take almost half a century to germinate and mature.

NOTES

1. See John Weiler, Modern Agriculture and Rural Planning (London, 1967) 3 and 11; H D Clout, Rural Geography (Oxford, 1972) 82; Gordon E Cherry, 'Introduction' in Gordon E Cherry (ed), Rural Planning Problems (London, 1976) 1
2. See Gordon E Cherry, The Evolution of British Town Planning (Leighton Buzzard, 1974) Chapter 2
3. G A Mackay, 'Regional Planning Problems: Scotland' in Maurice Broady (ed), Marginal Regions: Essays on Social Planning (London, 1973) 26
4. David Turnock, 'Regional Development in the Crofting Counties', Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers 48 (1969) 189
5. James Hunter, The Making of the Crofting Community (Edinburgh, 1976) 178
6. See J G L Adams, 'The Highland Dilemma', New Society, February 26, 1976, 425-7; James Grassie, The Highlands and Islands: an account of their development (Inverness, nd)
7. See A J Youngson, After the Forty-Five (Edinburgh, 1973) 198
8. David Turnock, Pattens of Highland Development (London, 1970) 63
9. See Youngson (1973) passim
10. See Virginia Wills (ed), Reports on the Annexed Estates 1755-1769 (Edinburgh, 1973) v
11. Thomas Johnston, The History of the Working Classes in Scotland (Glasgow, 1922) 182
12. 25 George II, c 41. The Annexing Act was passed in 1751 and not 1752 as Wills (1973) suggests, a year in which no acts at all were passed. The Act represented a follow-up to the earlier Vesting Act of 1747 (20 George II, c 41) by which management of the estates was vested in the Barons of the Scottish Court of Exchequer, as guardians of the Crown revenues in Scotland. Because little was achieved in the four year period the Government lost confidence in the Barons and the purpose of saving the estates from Exchequer sale by annexing them inalienably to the Crown was to try to remove the Jacobite problem once and for all by ameliorating social and economic conditions. The Annexed Estates were to be a proving

ground, and as such constituted the first state experiment in Highland development. See below Section (iii): Early Highland Development Attempts.

13. See Appendix A to this thesis, Congested Districts (Scotland) Act, 1897.
14. Adams (1976) 425. The idea implicit in this article that the work of the CDB and the HIDB were in many ways similar is one that was put to the present author more explicitly by J G L Adams at an early stage in the research for this thesis. It was to prove the stimulus behind the particular perspective adopted in writing this thesis on Highland regional development, that is, as a cross-disciplinary interpretation of an earlier Highland development initiative, drawing upon history, economics and planning, with a view to applying the predictive potential of that knowledge.
15. Congested District Board, First Report (1899) vi. For reasons explained later in this thesis, the Scottish Congested Districts Act, unlike its Irish equivalent, provided no exact definition of the expression 'Congested District'. In the Scottish case the precise interpretation was left, within certain limits, to the determination of the Board. On the basis of a rule of thumb test devised by the Board and applied to the 151 crofting parishes, all or part of 56 of these were considered to suffer from congestion. These are listed in Appendix B to this thesis, and mapped for purposes of comparison with the 'Highlands and Islands' of the HIDB.
16. Congested Districts Board, Fourteenth Report (1912) v
17. See Highland and Islands Development (Scotland) Act, 1965 and Appendix B to this thesis.
18. Highlands and Islands Development Board, First Report (1967) 5. (Published in 1967, the First Report covered the period from November 1, 1965, to December 31, 1966)
19. Hunter (1976) 3
20. Hunter (1976) 184, footnote 5
21. Adam Collier, The Crofting Problem (Cambridge, 1953) 96
22. Magnus Magnusson, 'Highland Administration', in D S Thomson and I Grimble (eds), The Future of the Highlands (London, 1968) 246-7

23. Kai T Erikson, 'Sociology and the Historical Perspective', in Wendell Bell and James A Mau (eds), The Sociology of the Future: Theory, Cases and Annotated Bibliography (New York, 1971) 64
24. Alan R H Baker et al, 'The Future of the Past', Area 4 (1969) 46
25. J H Plumb, 'The Historian's Dilemma', in J H Plumb (ed), Crisis in the Humanities (Harmondsworth, 1964) 43
26. Baker (1969) 48-9
27. Baker (1969) 50
28. Michael M Postan, 'Time and Change' in William Robson (ed), Man and the Social Sciences (London, 1972) 36-7
29. Michael Drake, 'Introduction', in Michael Drake (ed), Applied Historical Studies (London, 1973) 1
30. Erikson in Bell and Mau (1971) 67
31. Erikson in Bell and Mau (1971) 64
32. J B McLoughlin, Urban and Regional Planning: A Systems Approach (London, 1969) 24
33. HIDB, First Report (1967) 1
34. HIDB, First Report (1967) 1
35. W R Scott, 'Scottish Land Settlement', in David T Jones (ed), Rural Scotland During the War (London, 1926) 231
36. Hunter (1976) 185
37. Hunter (1976) 184
38. L P Curtis, Coercion and Conciliation in Ireland 1880-1892: A Study in Conservative Unionism (Princeton, N J, 1963) 355. As Curtis points out (356), since the congested districts were so thinly populated, Salisbury's definition was inaccurate. Congestion was a misnomer derived from the high rate of emigration in the west and simply meant extreme poverty. Or, as an Irish MP explained: "The population [of the congested districts] is not excessive - indeed, it is only a fraction of what the land can support - but it is congested in districts where the land is so poor that the life of the people is nothing less than long-drawn-out misery". Hugh Sutherland, Ireland

Yesterday and Today (Philadelphia, 1909) 30. (This is Sutherland's summary of part of a discussion with William O'Brien MP). The situation in Scotland was similar.

39. W L Micks, A History of the Congested Districts Board [for Ireland] (Dublin, 1925) 8
40. Department of Agriculture, quoted in Sutherland (1909) 74. A virtually identical description of the plight of the inhabitants of the Irish congested districts is to be found in Congested Districts Board (Ireland), First Report (1893) 8
41. Micks (1925) 356
42. Credit for the initiation of the plan of operations belongs to Salisbury's nephew, Arthur Balfour, then Chief Secretary for Ireland. See Michael Davitt, The Fall of Feudalism in Ireland: The Story of the Land League Revolution (London, 1904) 664, and William O'Brien, An Olive Branch in Ireland and its History (London, 1910) 86-7
43. Curtis (1963) 358. Discussion of Board activities is also to be found in Davitt (1904) 663, Sutherland (1909) 126-73 and Micks (1925) passim. W L Micks, who gives a very full treatment of Board activities, was at first Secretary and afterwards Member of the Irish CDB
44. Micks (1925) 216
45. O'Brien (1910) 87
46. Sutherland (1909) 29
47. Davitt (1904) 663
48. Sutherland (1909) 107
49. Curtis (1963) 361. See also Sutherland (1909) 108-9
50. Turnock (1970) xi
51. It was the practice in the west for members of crofting households, hard-pressed for money, to migrate seasonally to, for example, Caithness. The active fishermen were accompanied by casual labourers, gutters, porters, and packers. See Malcolm Gray, The Highland Economy 1750-1850 (Edinburgh, 1957) 160-2, and Scotsman, January 5, 1878, one of a series of specially commissioned reports on 'Highland and Island Crofters'

52. Board of Supervision, 38th Report (1883) Appendix 5, 9-11 and 21-2
53. Board of Supervision, 43rd Report (1883) ix
54. Hunter (1976) 119-20
55. Thomas Pennant, A Tour in Scotland and Voyage to the Hebrides 1772 (Chester, 1774) I, 117
56. F G Rea, A School in South Uist (London, 1964) 7. Hunter attributes an amended version of this quotation to the same source
57. This picture of housing in the Western Highlands and Islands in the 1870s is compiled from the Scotsman, December 15, 1877, January 2, 1878 and January 5, 1878 - three of a series of special reports on the Highlands published during December, 1877, and January, 1878. See also Osgood Mackenzie, A Hundred Years in the Highlands (London, 1921) 79 and 85
58. Central Board of Management for the Relief of Highland Destitution, First Report (1847) 13. At the time, one Hebridean minister did try to assert that destitution during the winter of 1882-3 was greater than in 1846-7, but there is little doubt that his memory was distorted on behalf of his parishioners since the opinion was expressed in 1883 to a visiting poor relief official. See Board of Supervision, 38th Report (1883) Appendix 5, 10
59. See Redcliffe N Salaman, The History and Social Influence of the Potato (Cambridge, 1949) 363-4, for more detail.
60. See Salaman (1949) 365 and T C Smout, A History of the Scottish People 1560-1830 (London, 1972) 251. This will be referred to as Smout (1972A)
61. Salaman (1949) 374
62. First Statement as to the Destitution in the Highlands and Islands, December 18, 1846, p 2. The First and Second Statements (see n 67 below) were issued prior to the formation of the Central Board (see N 58 above), but are to be located with the collected Reports of the latter
63. Rev. M McGregor to Rev Dr McLeod, December 29, 1846, quoted in Norman McLeod (ed), Letters to the Rev Dr McLeod (Glasgow, 1847) 5
64. See Salaman (1949) 366-7

65. See J P Day, Public Administration in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland (London, 1918) 96 and Salaman (1949) 376
66. See Rev David Stewart to Rev Dr McLeod, December 25, 1846, Rev John Cameron to Rev Dr McLeod, December 24, 1846, Rev Patrick McIntyre to Rev Dr McLeod, December 28, 1846, in McLeod (1847) 33, 57, 59-60. See also First Statement as to the Destitution in the Highlands and Islands, December 18, 1846, p 4; Free Church Destitution Committee, Second Statement, 1847, p 20; John Prebble, The Highland Clearances (Harmondsworth, 1969) 175
67. See Free Church Destitution Committee, Second Statement, 1847, p 16-17; John N McLeod, Memorials of the Rev Norman McLeod (Edinburgh, 1898) 232-3; Central Board of Management, Fifth Report (Edinburgh Section) 1847, Appendix III, 20; CBM, Third Report (Edinburgh Section) 1847, Appendix I, 10-11
68. McLeod (1898) 232. A particularly harrowing description of prevailing conditions, from the Free Church Destitution Committee, Second Statement, 1847, is reproduced in Hunter (1976) 54-5
69. Free Church Destitution Committee, Second Statement, 1847, p 16
70. Gray (1957) 181
71. Central Board of Management, First Report (1847) 10, quoting extract from First Statement by Edinburgh Committee
72. Sir Charles Trevelyan, quoted in Hunter (1976) 51
73. Sir John McNeill, Report to the Board of Supervision (1851) xxix
74. McNeill (1851) xxxiii
75. McNeill (1851) xxxiv and xxv
76. See Gray (1957) 239
77. More precisely it was the villages of Cadder which seemed to call to mind Goldsmith's poem; the lonely voice of complaint was that of the parish minister. See New Statistical Account of Scotland (Edinburgh, 1835-1845) vi, 404. Future references will take the form of NSA followed by a volume and page number.
78. Rosalind Mitchison, 'The Clearances', unpublished typescript of paper delivered May 7, 1977, to the Edinburgh University Historical Conference, p 8 (Other references to Lowland clearance, such as those found in the relevant volumes of the New Statistical Account, are less emotive than factual)

79. See the Scotsman, January-February 1977, passim. The correspondence was occasioned by a successful campaign to force the Countess of Sutherland to resign from the presidency of the 1977 Mod and included the following dramatis personae: Sir Andrew Gilchrist; Professor Gordon Donaldson; Sir Iain Montcreiff of that Ilk; John Prebble; James Hunter; Rob Gibson; and finally the Countess of Sutherland and her husband Charles Janson. A Scotsman leader on January 7th adopted a pro-landlord stance but balance was restored when the Weekend Scotsman of January 22nd carried an article by James Hunter, 'The Clearances: a continuing controversy', which took the opposite point of view.
80. T C Smout, 'The Highland Clearances', Scottish International Review 5, 2 (February, 1972) 13. This will be referred to as Smout (1972B)
81. Johnson (1922) 186
82. NSA, III, 15 (referring to the Parish of Jedburgh)
83. Mitchison (1977) 9
84. Gray (1957) 239
85. This section is based on Smout (1972A) 325 and 327. A J Youngson, After the Forty-Five (Edinburgh, 1973) 129 also testifies to the Highlander's continuing reluctance to abandon the land. Quoting from Alexander Selkirk, he cites it as one of the major obstacles to the development of a successful fishing industry in the west. Jean Dunlop, similarly, identifies the problem as a major factor contributing to the failure of the eighteenth-century British Fisheries Society (see section (iii) below). The problem was not one which would be confined to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries but, as later chapters of this thesis will show, would persist into the twentieth century and ultimately constitute one focal point in the argument of a particular school of critics of conventional development policies, which regards occupational pluralism as a positive cultural adaptation to marginality. See below Chapter Seven Section (ii)
86. See Gray (1957) 126
87. See Prebble (1969) 248 and Smout (1972A) 327. Smout provides the example of the Outer Hebrides where the population increased from 13,000 around 1755 to 24,500 in 1911, and Skye and the mainland parishes opposite where the population rose from 17,000 to 27,000 over the same period. Sir John McNeill was not unaware of this dramatic increase in population which differentiated the west from the rest of the Highlands; he cites Dr Walker's History of the Hebrides and Highlands (1808) which quotes an 'increase of one third in forty years "in remote parishes, not affected by the depopulating cause" and approaching one half in the islands. See McNeill (1851) xxxiv

88. Smout (1972A) 327
89. See Prebble (1969) 248; Gray (1957) 128; Turnock (1970) 18
90. Prebble (1969) 249
91. See Rev Dr Walker, 'An Essay on Kelp', Transactions of the Highland Society I (1979) 3; Gray (1957) 124-5; Prebble (1969) 249; Turnock (1970) 18. Prices rose from £8 per ton in 1775 to £10 in 1800 and reached a peak of around £22 per ton by 1810
92. The latter half of this paragraph is based on Gray (1957) 128 and 136. His example of the Laird of Ulva is taken from J G Lockhart, Memoirs of the Life of Sir Walter Scott (Edinburgh, 1837) II, 314
93. Smout (1972A) 327
94. See Gray (1957) 183-4
95. See Day (1918) 85-6 and 88. The only relief to which the able-bodied unemployed were entitled was what might be available from that half of the church collections which was not appropriated to the common poor fund for paupers on the regular roll. See Smout (1972A) 327
96. See Gray (1957) 185
97. See Smout (1972A) 328 and Gray (1957) 97
98. McNeill (1851) xxxiii
99. It is fair to mention that Sir John did not omit to mention the latter two factors in summarising the reasons for population pressure. Nor did he of course omit to mention kelp; it was his emphasis that was wrong.
100. And this despite remarking on how after its downfall those employed in kelp manufacture, "having little intercourse with other parts of the kingdom, which were to them a foreign country, clung to their native soil." He continues: "Had they [the people employed in kelp manufacture] not been separated by habits and language from the majority of the population, they would no doubt generally have dispersed and sought other occupations." At the very time that Sir John was putting pen to paper, clearance in the islands was causing congestion on their coast-lines for similar reasons; for the habits and language of the Western Highlander had undergone no dramatic change during the intervening decades. At best the curious anomaly in Sir John's argument amounts to naive idealism, at worst to artless deception

101. Smout (1972A) 337
102. McNeill (1851) xxxi, quoting Clark of Ulva
103. True, the kelp industry was gone and could not be brought back so that the crofting system was cracking under the enormous strain. But that was not exactly what Clark was saying. A 'now' inserted between 'cannot' and 'be' would have made a world of difference
104. Of the crofters of Gairloch, where an experiment in intensive croft culture and management had been tried by one Dr Mackenzie, McNeill writes: "They are neither so prosperous nor so contented, as the crofters in Applecross, where no innovation has been attempted." And he quotes the croft manager as stating that "if cultivated to the highest possible pitch, [they] would not maintain more than two-thirds of the population now residing upon them". Presumably, however, since the Gairloch experiment did not include amalgamation and clearance, Sir John McNeill would not define it as true 'improvement'. See McNeill (1851) xxvii - xxxii
105. Gray (1957) 181
106. See McNeill (1851) ix-x
107. See Hunter (1976) 77
108. See Adam Collier, The Crofting Problem (Cambridge, 1953) 48
109. Smout (1972A) 327
110. See J D Mackie, A History of Scotland (Harmondsworth, 1964) 318
111. See Hunter (1976) 34-49 and 73-88; Mitchison (1977) 14; Mackie (1964) 318; Collier (1953) 45
112. See M I Adam, 'Eighteenth Century Highland Landlords and the Poverty Problem', Scottish Historical Review, 19 (1922) 18
113. Smout (1972A) 326-7. See also Gray (1957) 187-8
114. Ted Cowan, 'Sorting out the Myths', Q Fortnightly Review, May 13, 1977
115. Mitchison (1977) 14
116. See Prebble (1969) 249
117. Turnock (1970) 19
118. Mitchison (1977) 11-13. See also Smout (1972A) 332

119. Quoted in Eric Richards, The Leviathan of Wealth: The Sutherland Fortune in the Industrial Revolution (London, 1973) 191
120. See Richards (1973) 32-3
121. Richards (1973) 26
122. S G Checkland has said of the Sutherland scheme: "Loch and the Duke tried to act as a kind of Highland Board, treating Sutherland as a planning region, 'borrowing' capital from elsewhere (i.e. diverting finance from the family's English estates), setting the sheep rents against deficits on the coastal employments, and hoping, over time, to create some slight surplus." S G Checkland, Foreword to Richards (1973) xvii; see also xv-xvi. Richards himself refers to the Sutherland policies as a "regional development plan" and treats them as such. Richards (1973) 220, 233-4, et passim. Smout described how within five years the estate had invested £14,000 in creating a modern fishing port and trying to make it a growth-point for the hinterland, in much the same way as private and public economic planners have tried to do in similar schemes for the Highlands over the years. Smout (1972A) 333
123. See Gray (1957) 95-6 and 102-3. "The only painless alternative [to emigration] was to clear new ground for the old tenants. In this the Sutherland Estate provides the exceptional example of the rigid plan that provides for everything" Smout (1972A) 333-4. "Sutherland was neither the first nor the last county where clearances broke the established pattern of life, but in most instances the landowners made no attempt to help the displaced tenants either directly or by releasing capital to create new employment." Checkland, Foreword to Richards (1973) xv-xvi
124. Old Statistical Account of Scotland (Edinburgh, 1791-8) VIII, 381. The words are those of George Dempster of Dunnichen who communicated his thoughts on improvement to Sir John Sinclair who compiled the O.S.A. Dempster's statement is also reproduced in Sinclair's General View of the Agriculture of the Northern Counties and Islands of Scotland (London, 1795) 135
125. This very phrase, noted in Hunter (1976) 41, is the subtitle of HJM Johnston, British Emigration Policy 1815-1830 (Oxford, 1972)
126. Smout (1972B) 15-16. The first phrase Smout quotes is from Arthur Geddes, The Isle of Lewis and Harris (Edinburgh, 1955) 226

127. Almost predictably, since such sentimentalization - together with disproportionate emphasis of the worst features of clearance - served as a useful lever "to stir men's consciences and to promote political action" Richards (1973) 159
128. John Murdoch, Autobiography (Preserved in ms in five notebooks in the Mitchell Library, Glasgow) iv, 159. Murdoch - a radical anti-landlord champion of the land reform cause in the Highlands during the later nineteenth century - had his reasons for 'bending' the truth. See n 127 above
129. Alexander Carmichael, Carmina Gaedelica (Edinburgh, 1940) III, 328-9. The words are attributed to one Peggy MacCormack of Lochboisdale
130. Hunter (1976) C3
131. Mitchison (1977) 16-7
132. Richards (1973) 155
133. Duke of Argyll, Scotland As It Was And As It Is (Edinburgh, 1887) II, 1-2
134. J MacCulloch, The Highlands and Western Isles of Scotland, IV, 125
135. Report of the Commissioners of Inquiry into the Condition of the Crofters and Cottars in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland (1884) 9 and 4
136. Hunter (1976) 161. On the one hand, Hunter credits (perhaps 'accuses' is a more appropriate word) the Scotsman with landlord sympathies; on the other he makes use of Scotsman reports as 'evidence' of wretched Highland living conditions during the 1870's. Given the truth of the first proposition, the objectivity of Scotsman reporting as a whole is clearly in question. On the one hand, understatement might be utilised to demonstrate that a mountain was being made out of a Highland molehill; on the other, (and in view of some of the horrific descriptions this seems more plausible) the truth may be exaggerated to provide more newsworthy reading. Of course, objectivity is not ruled out; in which case, accusations of landlord sympathies are. In short, Hunter's argument is a circular one.
137. Scotsman, October 4, 1884
138. See Adam (1922) 177-8

139. See Turnock (1970) 26
140. See Hunter (1976) 17
141. See Prebble (1969) 248
142. J MacDonald, General View of the Agriculture of the Hebrides (Edinburgh, 1811) 94
143. Adam (1922) 1
144. Namely the relevant volumes of the OSA and the General Views of Agriculture for Highland Counties, 1794-1818
145. See Ian Grimble, 'Emigration in the Time of Rob Donn, 1714-1778', Scottish Studies 7 (1963) 150-1
146. Pennant (1774) II, 228-9
147. Pennant (1774) II, 305
148. Philip Gaskell, Morvern Transformed (Cambridge, 1968) 9
149. See Pennant (1774) I, 117. See also above p 11
150. Edward Burt, Letters From a Gentleman in the North of Scotland (London, 1815) I, 198-9
151. See Youngson (1973) 23. Forbes, fifth Laird of Culloden and by 1745 Lord President, was responsible for tireless organisation and co-ordination of resistance to the Jacobites
152. See, for example, Turnock (1970) 1
153. Perhaps this should be expressed more accurately 'the beginning of effective public intervention'. James VI made an abortive attempt to tame parts of the Western Highlands at the start of the seventeenth century. See Smout (1972A) 194-5 and below Section (iii)
154. Culloden Papers including Memoirs of the Right Honourable Duncan Forbes (London, 1815) 298 quoted in Youngson (1973) 23-24
155. Smout (1972A) 437 - referring specifically to the charity school movement
156. The phrase is that of Virginia Wills (1973) v

157. A Lochaber plantation was planned but never implemented. Settlement of Kintyre was only patchy, colonists tending to move from hostile Argyll to fertile Antrim. Finally, a colony of Fifers was repulsed no fewer than three times between 1558 and 1610 by wild Lewismen who attacked them on land and cut them off by sea. No doubt these outcomes served to confirm the King's belief in two types of Highlander: "the one, that dwelleth in our maine land, that are barbarous for the most parte yet mixed with some shewe of civilitie: the other that dwelleth on the Isles and are all uterlie barbares." King James, Basilikon Doron, ed J Craigie, (Edinburgh, 1942) 71, quoted in Smout (1972A) 104

158. A H Millar, 'A Selection of Scottish Forfeited Estates Papers', Publications of the Scottish History Society LVII (October, 1909) 361. Millar's wording, because it is reproduced from an account which appeared in the Scots Magazine LXVIII (1806) 695-62, differs slightly from that of the Act for which see above section (i)

159. Day (1918) 179

160. The attention of historians has been directed to the work of the Commissioners for the Annexed Estates more specifically by the two editings of the SRO papers. Millar (1909) undertook a considerable editing task on behalf of the Scottish History Society and more recently Virginia Wills, in Reports on the Annexed Estates 1755-1769: From the Records of the Forfeited Estates Preserved in the Scottish Record Office (Edinburgh, 1973), has edited fifteen years of Reports for the SRO in an attempt to demonstrate the wealth of interesting material to potential scholars. Her introduction to these edited Reports summarises the Commissioners' undertaking but offers no critical appraisal of the achievement. For a comprehensive assessment and critique, see Annette M Smith, 'The Forfeited Annexed Estates, 1752-1784', Unpublished PhD thesis, University of St Andrews, 1975 or see the same author's more recent book Jacobite Estates of the Forty-Five (Edinburgh, 1982)

161. See Youngson (1973) 198 and Section (i). Smith (1975) 371 points specifically to the analogy between the work of the Commissioners and that of the HDB but less on account of organisational similarity (see below) than because of similarities in modus operandi. For example, both saw the building of hotels as a method of stimulating Highland development

162. Youngson (1973) 26. See also Agnes Mure Mackenzie, Scotland in Modern Times 1720-1939 (Edinburgh, 1941) 44. Annette M Smith, in her article 'State

Aid to Industry - An Eighteenth Century Example' in T M Devine (ed), Lairds and Improvement in the Scotland of the Enlightenment (Glasgow, 1978) 47-58, makes the pertinent observation that 'improving' the Highlands of Scotland was merely "eighteenth century terminology which meant bringing the Highlands into the mainstream of British social and economic life". (47) This development philosophy of absorption into the wider metropolitan economy was wont to find expression in the promotion of single function modes of employment and industry (see note 85 above and Part (b) below) and is a corollary to a failure to understand that crofting may represent a cultural adaptation to adversity (see parts (b) and (d) below)

163. Wills (1973) v-vi. Youngson (1973) 27 and Smith in Devine (1978) 47 give the number of annexed estates as thirteen rather than fourteen
164. See G P Insh, Scotland and the Modern World (Edinburgh, 1932) and Wills (1973) viii
165. Youngson (1973) 27
166. Insh (1932) 52
167. Wills (1973) viii
168. Smith in Devine (1978) 48
169. But for the lack of a computer to speed analysis of the data gathered, the Commissioners could have been working in the mid-twentieth century rather than the mid-eighteenth. For a fuller account and for examples of the nature and form of information collected, see the edited reports themselves in Wills (1973)
170. Wills (1973) xv
171. T C Smout, 'The Landowner and the Planned Village in Scotland, 1730-1830', in NT Phillipson and R Mitchison (eds), Scotland in the Age of Improvement (Edinburgh, 1970) 91
172. Kinloch Rannoch owes its creation as a village and Callander its early growth to these colonies. For greater detail, see Wills (1973) xiv, Youngson (1973) 27-28, and Smout in Philipson and Mitchison (1970) 90-1. Youngson speaks of the soldiers and sailors as 'newcomers'; Smout, on the other hand, suggests that many of the first settlers were actually returning Highlanders. Even so, they would not be returning to their native communities and with memories of clan society still fresh, even Highland colonists would be resented.

173. The idea suffered aggrandisement as the century progressed, one contemporary 'expert' even attributing the failure of the Forfeited Estates' villages to the absence of a substantial town in their vicinity. The background to the eighteenth century equivalent of growth pole theory and to the Commissioners' interpretation of it is provided in Smout in Phillipson and Mitchison (1970) 73-81 and in Youngson (1973) 80-4 and 92-7
174. See Smout (1972A) 324
175. Millar (1909) 62
176. Smout in Phillipson and Mitchison (1970) 78-9
177. The Forfeited Estates' villages were primarily agricultural villages. See Youngson (1973) 35 and Smout in Phillipson and Mitchison (1970) 89
178. See Youngson (1973) 28-9 and Wills (1973) xiii. In addition to subsidising poor children, the Commissioners supplemented teachers' salaries
179. Scottish Record Office, Forfeited Estates Papers, 1975, E729 quoted by Smout in Phillipson and Mitchison (1970) 99
180. See Wills (1973) xiii
181. The suggestion is that of Professor Youngson. Material on technical education and agricultural management is synthesised from Youngson (1973) 29-31, Wills (1973) x-xii, and Pennant (1774) III, 92
182. Wills (1973) xii
183. Youngson (1973) 31
184. The Commissioners now took it upon themselves to distribute raw materials and implements, and encouraged the setting up of spinning schools. Lint mills were erected, a new machine for dressing flax introduced and experiments for improving the bleaching process promoted. Beyond the estates they made substantial grants to proprietors in the Western Highlands and Islands for the establishment of the industry. See Wills (1973) xii-xiii and Youngson (1973) 31-2
185. Wills (1973) xiii. What Wills might have pointed to, had there been a critical assessment, and which strengthens the claim made by Smith (1975) 371 for similarity of the Annexed Estates Board with the HADB, in the parallel with circumstances in

the 1970s surrounding Badenoch (in which district Aviemore is situated) and also the Inner Moray Firth. Certain grant assistance was withdrawn from these areas in 1973 by the HIDB on the grounds that "in these places good hotel and similar projects should be able to proceed with the help of loan assistance only." HIDB, Eighth Report (1973) 56

186. Alastair Durie, The Scottish Linen Industry in the Eighteenth Century (Edinburgh, 1978) 90
187. The Commissioners' involvement in linen is summarised by Smith in Devine (1978) 49 and Youngson (1973) 32
188. Quoted in Youngson (1973) 32 and Smith in Devine (1978) 49. The Scottish Record Office Forfeited Estates Papers references cited by Youngson and Smith do not correspond. The true reference would seem to be that quoted by Smith, namely SR0 FEP 45, E746/111, some transposition having occurred in Youngson's footnotes.
189. Quoted in Smith in Devine (1978) 49
190. See Smith in Devine (1978) 49
191. See Wills (1973) xii-xiii
192. Youngson (1973) 31. See also Wills (1973) xiv and Millar (1909) 83 and 113. Many of the discharged sailors never reached the west coast. Some refused to go; others took their Bounty and disappeared. Still more were "not fond of working while they can make a shift to live otherwise." Millar (1909) 83.
193. Youngson (1973) 32-3
194. Smout (1972A) 360
195. Smith in Devine (1978) 54
196. Pennant (1774) III, 113
197. See Youngson (1973) 33-4, Wills (1973) xiii, Pennant (1774) III, 92 and 113, and John Mason, 'Conditions in the Highlands After the 'Forty-Five', Scottish Historical Review 26 (1947) 143. Pennant gives the contribution towards the Tay Bridge as £11,000 as against Mason's £13,000. Youngson states that the Commissioners "paid half" which suggests that £13,000 is nearer the mark. A detailed analysis of the effort and achievement in respect of improving communications is provided in Smith (1975) 247-309

198. See Insh (1932) 53-4 and Wills (1973) xiv
 199. See Smith in Devine (1978) 53 and Youngson (1973) 37
 200. Quoted in Smith in Devine (1978) 54
 201. Earl of Selkirk, Observations on the Present State of the Highlands of Scotland (London, 1805) Appendix A. Selkirk's figure of £12,000 is derived from Thomas Pennant
 202. See Day (1918) 88. Fishing was particularly badly affected. See below Part (b)
 203. See Day (1918) 179-80
 204. The Society's stated objectives were threefold:
 - a) an inquiry into the present state of the Highlands of Scotland and the condition of their inhabitants;
 - b) an inquiry into the means of their improvement by establishing towns and villages, by facilitating communications through different parts of the Highlands of Scotland by roads and bridges, by advancing agriculture and extending fisheries, by introducing useful trades and manufactures, and by an exertion to write the efforts of the proprietors towards the encouragement and prosecution of these beneficial purposes;
 - c) the Society shall also pay a proper attention to the presentation of the language, poetry and music of the Highlands.
- See Mackenzie (1941) 45
205. See Youngson (1973) 122, note 6, and Eric Cregeen, 'The Changing Role of the House of Argyll in the Scottish Highlands' in Phillipson and Mitchison (1970) 21
 206. See Youngson (1973) 121-2 and 129, and Day (1918) 251. The relevant Act of Parliament authorising the collection of the subscriptions was 26 Geo III c. 106
 207. Jean Dunlop, 'The British Fisheries Society 1786-1893'. Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1952, 47. See also Jean Dunlop, The British Fisheries Society 1786-1893 (Edinburgh, 1978) 53
 208. Selkirk (1805) 97

209. Quoted in Dunlop (1952) 47. The assessment of the work of the British Fisheries Society relies heavily on Dr Dunlop's work in its thesis and later book-form
210. See Youngson (1973) 129 and Day (1918) 251
211. See Dunlop (1952) 228
212. Dunlop (1952) 82
213. Dunlop (1952) 229
214. Quoted in Day (1918) 252. Professor James Anderson was an acknowledged expert and advisor to the Government on Highland economic affairs. See Youngson (1973) 62-100. He consistently pressed the Highland cause, both in public and in a private capacity. In fact, it was a letter from Anderson to George Dempster, a Lowland MP turned Highland Laird, which ultimately led to the establishment of the BFS. In his letter to Dempster "the Professor shows with unofficial frankness how the Highland fishing was ruined by 'absurd laws' which favoured Dutch and Irish in Scots waters but 'tied up the hands of the natives' and wrecked Scots trade." Mackenzie (1941) 45-6. Dempster took matters in hand in the House of Commons. He extracted a promise of Highland Lighthouses, and in 1786 the Act which inter alia incorporated the BFS
215. See Day (1918) 252-3
216. See Day (1918) 256-7, Youngson (1973) 131, and Dunlop (1952) 4 and 229
217. See Youngson (1973) 131-3, Dunlop (1952) 222 and 249, and Smith in Devine (1978) 55
218. Youngson (1973) 132-3 and Dunlop (1952) 251-3
219. Dunlop (1952) 253
220. Scottish Record Office, Forfeited Estates Papers, 1745 E 730/39/1
221. See Youngson (1973) 130
222. J Bryden and G Houston, Agrarian Change in the Scottish Highlands (London, 1976) 31
223. See Youngson (1973) 133
224. Dunlop (1952) 270 quoting the BFS Agent's Report of 1832

225. While it is true that on his visit to Ullapool in 1809, the Deputy Governor equally observed little progress there since 1789, yet he noted "good prospects for future prosperity and ending of unemployment for the people". Quoted in Dunlop (1952) 231
226. See Dunlop (1952) 232 and 237-41. For details concerning relative prosperity of the BFS settlements, see also Malcolm Gray, The Fishing Industries of Scotland, 1790-1914 (Oxford, 1978) 5-6 and NSA Vol VII (1845) 189
227. Dunlop (1952) 256
228. Gray (1957) 193
229. See Gray (1957) 170-1
230. Gray (1957) 197. Hunter (1976) 207-219 argue along similar lines. By implication occupational pluralism is seen as a positive rather than a negative feature of the Highland economy. See also note 162 above
231. See Gray (1957) 171, 193 and 197, and Youngson (1973) 159-60
232. For a description of the geographical spread and intensity of the disease in the Highlands, see Hunter (1976) 53-4. For an account of the nature of potato blight, see C Woodham-Smith, The Great Hunger (London, 1962) 94-102
233. See Hunter (1976) 56-63. The letter quoted by Hunter (56) is from the Lord Advocate to Sir George Grey, Home Secretary, September 2, 1846, and is located with other correspondence in the SRO uncatalogued collection of material relating to Highland destitution
234. The name was later abbreviated to the Central Board for the relief of Highland Destitution. See Central Board of Management, Final Report (Edinburgh Section) (1850) 8; CBM, First Report (1847) 1; and Free Church Destitution Committee, Second Statement, (1847) 4
235. CBM, First Report (1847) 3-5, and CBM, Final Report (Edinburgh Section) (1850) 9
236. See CBM, Third Report (Edinburgh Section) (1847) 9
237. CBM, First Report (1847) 3. This was the third resolution of the first meeting of the CBM on February 5, 1847

238. CBM, First Report (1847) 3-4. This was the fourth resolution agreed at the February meeting. See above note 237
239. CBM, Ninth Report. (Glasgow Section) (1848) 8
240. Quoted in Hunter (1976) 66
241. CBM, Ninth Report (Glasgow Section) (1848) 9
242. CBM, First Report (1847) Appendix I, 15; CBM, Ninth Report (Glasgow Section) (1848) 5 and 8-9; CBM, Tenth Report (Glasgow Section) (1848) 13; CBM, First Report (Edinburgh Section) (1848) 12; and CBM, Second Report (Glasgow Committee on Employment) (1847) 25-6. Even children were involved in the manufacture of fishing nets and tackle. The Committees were not slow to discover that the ruling on labour being required in return for food generated an enormous and complex task of delivering suitable quantities of the appropriate raw material to the right place at the right time
243. Memo re Present State of the Hosiery Plan in Skye (October 14, 1848) 1; Memo on the proposed transference of the Hosiery Scheme (nd) 3. These memos are not contained within specific reports but are located with the collected papers of the CBM. See also CBM, Second Report (Edinburgh Section) (1849) 137-8. This is the sub-section relating to Hosiery in Skye and Wester Ross within the General Report by Captain Elliot
244. CBM, Third Report (Edinburgh Section) (1849) 269
245. Memo re Present State of the Hosiery Plan in Skye (October 14, 1848) 1-2 and its Appendix (Memo of Proposed Plan for the employment of Destitute Women in Skye 1847-8) 5-6; Memo on the proposed transference of the Hosiery Scheme (nd) 3; CBM, Second Report (Edinburgh Section) (1849) 137-8; CBM, Third Report (Edinburgh Section) (1849) 270; and CBM, Second Report (Edinburgh Section) (1850) 30
246. Memo re Present State of the Hosiery Plan in Skye (October 14, 1848), Appendix (Memo of Proposed Plan for the employment of Destitute Women in Skye 1847-8) 5-6
247. See Memo re Present State of the Hosiery Plan in Skye (October 14, 1848) 2; CBM, Second Report (Edinburgh Section) (1850) 30-1 and 104. For the precise terms of the contract, see CBM, First Report (Edinburgh Section) (1849) 58-61

248. See Memo re Present State of the Hosiery Plan in Skye (October 14, 1848) 3 and its Appendix 18-9 including letters from Captain Fishbourne, Inspector, Skye, to William F Skene, Board Secretary, August 1 and 17, 1848. It is interesting to follow the correspondence from the Skye Inspector to the Board Secretary during the summer of 1848. First, there is the matter of a store and wash-house, then a store, wash-house and waulking machine. Finally a draft memo of agreement between Mr Hogg and the Board proposes nothing less than "carding and waulking mills". See Appendix to Memo, 5-13. Either Mr Hogg was very persuasive or the Inspector in Skye very pliable or both. Details of the proposed expenditure of £707 are given at Appendix to Memo, 5. See also Memo on the proposed transference of the Hosiery Scheme (nd) 1-2
249. S Hogg to W F Skene, October 19, 1848 in Memo on the proposed transference of the Hosiery Scheme (nd) 11
250. S Hogg to W F Skene, October 19, 1848 in Memo on the proposed transference of the Hosiery Scheme (nd) 11-12
251. CBM, Additional Rule, Resolutions and Rules and Regulations of the Central Board (Practical Rules) (nd), Annex to Interim Instructions in Edinburgh Section, Private Papers, 5
252. CBM, Additional Rule, Resolutions and Rules and Regulations of the Central Board (Practical Rules) (nd) Annex to Interim Instructions in Edinburgh Section, Private Papers, 5
253. Memo on the proposed transference of the Hosiery Scheme (nd) 3
254. Captain E Gardiner Fishbourne, RN, to W F Skene, October 17, 1848 in Memo on the proposed transference of the Hosiery Scheme (nd), Appendix
255. CBM, First Report (Edinburgh Section) (1848) 51
256. T Mulock, The Western Highlands and Islands of Scotland Socially Considered (Edinburgh, 1850) 97
257. Memo re the Mode of Relieving Destitution by Co-operative Arrangements with Proprietors of Estates upon which there is a Destitute Population (nd) in Edinburgh Section, Private Papers, 3-4

258. See CBM, Third Report (Edinburgh Section) (1849) 261-2; CBM, Final Report (Edinburgh Section) (1850) 25-7; and Memo re the Mode of Relieving Destitution in Edinburgh Section, Private Papers, 2-4
259. CBM, Third Report (Edinburgh Section) (1849) 262
260. Memo re the Mode of Relieving Destitution in Edinburgh Section, Private Papers, 4
261. See Hunter (1976) 68
262. CBM, Second Report (Edinburgh Section) (1849) 140. This is the sub-section relating to Hosiery in Skye and Wester Ross within the General Report by Captain Elliot, Inspector-General
263. CBM, Second Report (Edinburgh Section) (1849) 135
264. See CBM, Final Report (Edinburgh Section) (1850) 32-3
265. See CBM, Third Report (Edinburgh Section) (1849) 264-5, 270, 277-8 and the Memo with regard to the Fishings, September 15, 1849, contained at 419. See also CBM, First Report (Edinburgh Section) (1850) 4-5 and Final Report (Edinburgh Section) (1850) 33-5
266. CBM, Third Report (Edinburgh Section) (1849) 270-1 and the General Report on Fishings contained at 377
267. See CBM, Final Report (Edinburgh Section) (1850) 33 and 35
268. See CBM, Second Report (Edinburgh Section) (1850) 29; CBM, Third Report (Edinburgh Section) (1849) 272; and Hunter (1976) 70
269. CBM, Third Report (Edinburgh Section) (1849) 272
270. CBM, First Report (Edinburgh Section) (1849) 57. This is the report by Captain Elliot on Badachroe as a fishing station
271. McNeill (1851) xxxv. Yet in an earlier letter to the Secretary of the Board, Sir John McNeill had admitted that "it may safely be assumed that.. changes in the habits and conditions of people are never firmly established by any external pressure, however urgent, that endures for only two or three years. These changes are slow and gradual, and are to be noted from generation to generation, rather than from year to year; but they may be accelerated or retarded. The urgent pressure of

the last two years has already caused some progress to be made." Sir John McNeill to W.F. Skene, July 16, 1848, in Edinburgh Section, Private Papers 30-4

- 272. See McNeill (1851) xxxv-xxxviii
- 273. D. J. Mackay and N. K. Buxton, 'The North of Scotland - a Case for Redevelopment', Scottish Journal of Political Economy IV (February, 1965) 23
- 274. CBM, Second Report (Edinburgh Section) (1850) 47
- 275. Smith (1975) 12
- 276. See Smith (1975) 11-12
- 277. Smith in Devine (1978) 53
- 278. Smith in Devine (1978) 54
- 279. Lord Leverhulme, too, was destined to be disappointed in the potential of neatly laid out houses and orderly streets to promote a wider process of ordered change in Lewis. See below Chapter Seven Section (ii)
- 280. Although the theme of 'peasantness' as an adaptive response to marginality - thereby constituting the antithesis of the economic specialisation usually favoured by development authorities - has most recently been espoused by sociologists in critiques of conventional Highland development policy, the same idea much more simply expressed was put forward in 1957 by economic historian Malcolm Gray (197). See Ian Carter, 'A Socialist Strategy for the Highlands', in G. Brown (ed), The Red Paper on Scotland (Edinburgh, 1975); J. I. Prattis, 'Economic Structures in the Highlands of Scotland', Fraser of Allander Speculative Paper No 7 (Glasgow, 1977); also above notes 85, 162 and 230
- 281. See Day (1918) 97

CHAPTER TWO

The Late Nineteenth-Century Development Context

(i) The Circumstances of State Capitulation

For Lowland Scotland the second half of the nineteenth century was an era of great progress. The introduction and extension of railways and steamships was accompanied by an increase in population, trade and wealth, and a decrease in pauperism. The Highlands and Islands, however, did not share to any extent in this progress. Perusal of the volumes of the New Statistical Account, which was compiled about 1840, makes it only too apparent that industrial areas had taken shape in the Central Lowlands, where the coal and iron was, and that already *industrialization, for good or ill, has passed the Highlands by.*¹ It is equally obvious that almost without exception the east coast parishes had made considerable agricultural progress, while progress in the west was halting and limited, so that *the dividing line between farming and crofting territory is clear.*² Furthermore, because some of the pernicious influences of the previous economic changes affecting the north-west Highlands remained unchecked, the period between 1850 and 1883 was one of continued stress.³

(a) Government Coercion

Following the final withdrawal from the Highland scene of the Relief Board - its funds exhausted - in 1850, with the potato harvest still a failure and the outlook very bleak, the Government received numerous urgent appeals for renewed assistance. Already in September 1850 the sheriff-substitute was writing anxiously from Lochmaddy to his superior of the people in North Uist that *there is no alternative but that they must die of want unless food is provided in some other way.*⁴ By January of 1851 the minister of Snizort, Portree, communicated directly with the Home Secretary to the effect that *death from starvation must be the inevitable result if we are denied extraneous*

aid.⁵ Hard on the heels of this letter there followed the next month a petition from the Presbytery of Skye.⁶ These and other similar pleas were referred by the Home Secretary to the Board of Supervision, which was responsible for administration of the Poor Law. All such requests were, however, rejected on the basis that no permanent improvement had been secured through the application of previous aid.⁷

The operation of a vicious circle was in evidence. Until the Highlands showed signs of what Sir John McNeill, chairman of the Board of Supervision was later to refer to as *sensible progress* towards self-sufficiency, no programme of regional aid of any description would be entertained by government.⁸ Yet without precisely such a programme, that progress was scarcely feasible. If its primary lack of concern for the Highlands and the Highlander was less well known, the Government of the day might be accused of muddled thinking - of ill-conceived appraisal of growth potential on the basis only of the impact of previous aid to the pockets of most serious economic distress.⁹ The Destitution Board had signally failed to secure a permanent improvement in the condition of the Highland people; for example, the Editor of the Inverness Courier was in no doubt that *the result of this splendid fund has altogether been so unpopular and so unproductive generally that we are convinced no such subscription will ever again be raised for the Highlands.*¹⁰ But as J P Day pointed out, not a single death from starvation had occurred during the five famine years. *The destitution boards had saved the people; it was beyond their power to place the inhabitants in a sound economic position.*¹¹ It was also beyond their remit - the Boards merely failed to achieve an objective which was wished upon them but which was never the original impetus for their establishment as ad hoc emergency public subscription funds of purely transient duration.¹²

Influenced heavily by the thinking of the Board of Supervision, however, the Government was determined deliberately to condemn Highlanders to a hand to mouth existence, precisely by washing its hands even of the most temporary (and arguably the most necessary) of relief schemes. It succeeded in so doing by availing itself of recently extended Poor Law legislation and passing the executive and financial burden of applying famine relief in the Highlands to the Highland Poor Law Boards. Under the provisions made by the Poor Law Act of 1845 for temporary relief of an occasional nature for the able-bodied (as opposed to permanent relief of the sick poor) Parliament had ensured that responsibility for, and expenditure upon, famine relief could, if deemed necessary, in future fall to be discharged at local level.¹³ Taking advantage of these provisions, the Government now instructed the Highland Poor Law Boards that:

*It is only after exhausting the largest amount of assessment which the proprietors and tenants or other ratepayers are able to pay, that a parish is in a condition to prefer a claim for aid from the public.*¹⁴

Despite the existence of the provisions, the decision actually to implement them represented something of a volte-face; the elapse of the five-year period since the passage of the Act seemed to imply tacit Government endorsement of the conviction (and leading principle of Scots Poor Law) clearly set out in the Poor Law Report of 1844; namely that there should be no relief provision for those fit to work. Aid to able-bodied paupers was strongly condemned as a premium on idleness. The Report stated further that *the habits of the Highland labourer are desultory and imperfectly formed*. Given that profitable investments of labour are fairly open to him it was necessary to conclude that

to provide for his wants in such circumstances by means of an assessment would in fact be taking the most effectual steps for arresting his advancement towards the acquisitions of an honest and independent industry.

Furthermore, the insufficiency of the whole rental of certain parishes to meet the demands of an assessment, particularly on the occurrence of deficient harvests, or of failure in the fisheries was also recognised.

An assessment in this case, and for the purpose now mentioned, would ruin the holders of property without conferring any sensible benefit on the persons intended to be relieved.

The victims of famine and destitution were therefore deemed 'able-bodied' and 'occasional' poor, who under the provisions of the Poor Law were not entitled to assistance.¹⁵

The change of heart on the part of the Government was largely prompted by the withdrawal from the scene of the Relief Board. Much as the operations of the Relief Board were later to be condemned for cossetting the idle, they effectively kept a potentially enormous problem for the Government under control. With their demise, the provisions made by the 1845 Act for the 'temporary relief' of such persons now provided a very useful let out.¹⁶ The Government would be seen to be discharging its responsibilities to the nation's famine victims, but would successfully avoid draining the national (i.e. London-based) purse by placing the responsibility for famine relief squarely on the local authorities and local resources. As the burden of the poor rates increased, even the most conscientious of landlords was bound to hesitate at the thought of investing money in his estate, since however much employment he could provide on his land

for his own tenantry, he could still bankrupt himself discharging the burden of supporting the poor in other parts of the rating area belonging to his more improvident neighbours. The desire to be rid of the obligation, as landlords saw it, *to support masses of indigence and idleness, existing, but not prospering upon small sub-divisions of land*¹⁷ was compelling, particularly where just such small holdings were likely to be disproportionately highly rated anyway and where clearance and subsequent amalgamation would therefore provide a dual benefit. Thus a similar process as was operating in Ireland - where landlords were already under obligation to help meet the cost of famine relief under the provisions of the 1847 Poor Law Extension (Ireland) Act - began to operate in north-west Scotland. The timing was different, but the effect - a powerful stimulus to clearances and evictions - was identical.¹⁸ In other words:

*The Board of Supervision, impressed with the lack of success which had attended the efforts of the destitution boards, and convinced of the futility of a continuation of extraneous financial aid, had determined, to put it bluntly, to starve the people into consenting to emigrate.*¹⁹

The Government, anxious to see an end to a longstanding problem, was only too glad to implement such a proposal.

In the face of potential bankruptcy through massive rates burdens and in the realisation that emigration could also cost them dearly, the landlords strove to impress upon the Government the importance of nationally encouraging emigration. Circumstances favoured their argument and, furthermore, they had powerful allies. For all its change of heart over the matter of aid to the able-bodied destitute, the concept was still deplored in Government circles, and the reversal of stated

policy may simply be viewed as a political device to remove the problem of Highland destitution once and for all. In any case, had not disillusioned members of the Relief Board already, in 1849, advocated the deployment of part of the famine relief fund for the purposes of facilitating emigration. That year more than 800 adults together with nearly 600 children did receive assistance to start a new life overseas, primarily in Canada, and in 1850 assisted emigration was provided jointly by the proprietors and the Central Board to almost a further 400 people.²⁰ Influential sections of southern English and Scottish public opinion were already long convinced of the necessity of emigration. The London Economist declared:

*The departure of the redundant part of the population of Ireland and the Highlands of Scotland is an indispensable preliminary to every kind of improvement.*²¹

These sentiments were echoed in the letter columns of the Scotsman which claimed:

*The emigration of a great number of families must precede all other measures which it will be necessary to introduce amongst this people in order to effect what Sir Robert Peel, in speaking of the destitute Irish, calls their 'moral regeneration'.*²²

The Government scarcely disagreed and during 1851 its fickleness became clearly evident. For all its new instructions to the Poor Law Boards, the Poor Law administrators' view that relief to the able-bodied was a premium on indolence was that year emphatically endorsed in the appointment by the Government of Sir John McNeill, Chairman of the Board of Supervision, to conduct an enquiry into the state of the Highlands. The results could have been foretold. McNeill, who was the third son of the then laird of Colonsay, was

little more than a landlords' spokesman, as was borne out by the conduct of his enquiry.²³ The bulk of the evidence taken into account was provided by the proprietors and their representatives, and to the disquiet of the Free Church Destitution Committee and an eminent Edinburgh economist, W P Alison, who communicated his unhappiness to Sir John McNeill in a scholarly 60 page letter, emigration turned out to be the sole remedy for Highland distress which Sir John McNeill felt able to propose.²⁴

When the Relief Board had advocated the use of its funds for assisting emigration, it had done so only on strict condition that crofts vacated by emigrants were used to enlarge neighbouring holdings.²⁵ Aid was, for example, refused to Gordon of Cluny on the grounds that lands relinquished by Uist and Barra emigrants were being added to existing large sheep farms.²⁶ And, while many crofters were willing to accept emigration as a preferable alternative to starvation, it was clear even to several contemporary observers that if their departure was to help solve the Highlands' problems it would have to be accompanied by the enlargement of the holdings occupied by the crofting tenants who chose to remain.²⁷ Yet there was considerable evidence that this was not the case. For example the Rev Mr Forbes of the Manse of Sleat in Skye testified to the existence of:

*places from which upwards of sixty tenants were ejected and not one of them a penny in arrears. All their land is now in the hands of four or five men, and these small tenants have been driven up the hill-side to trench more ground, to be at some future period pounced upon by a large farmer; or you will find some of them in the lanes or closes, or dark areas of Edinburgh. Let a more equitable distribution of land be made in the Highlands, and the cries of destitution will then cease.*²⁸

G P Scrope, Member of Parliament and economist, on touring the Highlands in the summer of 1849 paralleled what he saw there with what he had earlier described in Ireland as a *general and systematic depopulation of the whole country, by the razing of entire villages and expulsion of the inhabitants.*²⁹

W P Alison noted of Ireland that *all this was done at the special desire of the existing proprietors as being, in their judgement - just as many Highland proprietors say now - an essential preliminary to any profitable improvement of the land.* And he continues:

*But only two years after, we find that this land has passed into other hands and that it appears to be highly susceptible of cultivation, for which many labourers are wanted.*³⁰

Furthermore, he adds that, paradoxically, Highland peasants, in their turn being evicted, are being induced to Ireland as agricultural labourers.³¹ One final contemporary commentator on the Irish experience, Laing, points to the inefficacy of 25 years of emigration from Ireland to England and Scotland *far exceeding what the British navy and the public revenue could transport every year to Canada.* He continues:

And yet, notwithstanding this drain going on night and day at the cheapest rate at which passengers can be carried, the diminution of the Irish population remaining behind is not perceptible.

And he invites his readers finally to reflect upon the paradox of *our cities filled with Irish emigrants yet Ireland still overflowing,* concluding that:

*There must be some flaw in this generally received opinion that the social disease of over-population is one that may be cured or alleviated by emigration to our over-seas Colonies.*³²

From whatever angle, emigration provided neither an ideal nor a primary solution to the Highland problem. What was required was, on the one hand, a fairer

distribution of population and on the other - and which would in part result from the foregoing - an increase in the standard of living. This, in turn, would in time bring about a demographic transition to an equilibrium state characterised by low death rates and low birth rates. In defence of its stance, however, the Government could point to the 'enthusiasm' of the crofters and cottars themselves for emigration. They were advised by the Board of Supervision that:

*There is reason to believe that, since they have ceased to expect further assistance from the fund raised by subscription, the reluctance of the people to emigrate has greatly diminished, and will probably be altogether overcome by a just appreciation of the hopelessness of their prospects in their present position.*³³

In view of Sir John McNeill's commitment to emigration it might be considered surprising that his own estimate of the numbers from some parishes prepared to leave - *more than half of the inhabitants would desire to remove if they could find the means*³⁴ - actually understates the position as depicted by a crofter from Creich in Mull, from whom he took evidence and who placed the figure higher than two out of every three small crofters and cottars.³⁵ Certainly the personnel of the Relief Board, as much as Sir John McNeill or indeed crofters themselves, pointed to the letters received from recent emigrants to Canada, singing the praises of their new life and urging friends and relatives to emigrate likewise.³⁶ The evidence of the petitions from crofters and their representatives to emigrate was also incontrovertible.³⁷ But there was also plenty of evidence that if there was an alternative to emigration, many crofters would prefer it. A petition from the Presbytery of Skye sought emigration only for *those whose condition cannot be improved at home.*³⁸ In other words, if the crofters were not starving at home in the first place, emigration

would neither be necessary, nor desired. As the ground-officer responsible for the Duke of Argyle's property in Kilfinichen in Mull stated so succinctly:

Since the distribution has ceased many who did not avail themselves of the former opportunity, are now desirous to go. 39

Furthermore, the minister of the Free Church congregation of Iona and Ross had heard conflicting reports of how emigrants from his parish were settling abroad, with some apparently suffering great hardships since their arrival in America.⁴⁰ It is true that the general cry of the ministers from whom Sir John McNeill took evidence tended to be that:

*Although the eleemosynary relief afforded during the last few years has averted much misery and even death, it has had a prejudicial effect upon the character of the people.*⁴¹

Even crofters themselves were prepared to agree that the relief meal led many persons to depend upon it, and neglect other modes of helping themselves.⁴² Yet the reasons for such a state of affairs were not difficult to find, but merely unacceptable to the ruling class of the day. For example a petition from crofters and cottars in Duirinish and Bracadale to the House of Commons did not simply beg either for meal to relieve their hunger or for funds to emigrate. Instead it pointed to the underlying reason for the reliance on charitable assistance so loathsome to the Government, and suggested:

*that the attention of the Government be directed to the system now too generally pursued of throwing whole districts out of cultivation for game and grazing purposes, and assigning to the evicted inhabitants small patches of barren land, thus producing idle habits, increase of destitution, and periodical famine, with their whole train of degeneracy and degradation.*⁴³

For these petitioners the desired measures *for relieving their immediate wants and for promoting their permanent improvement*⁴⁴ were clearly not emigration. The Government certainly did not lack sound advice, even if it refused to heed it. A proposal from a Free Church minister in Gairloch might have pointed Sir John McNeill in yet another direction.

*If leases were given at reduced rents, and aid and encouragement to fishing, the number who could not find subsistence here would be very small.*⁴⁵

Even McNeill had to concede - rather ominously - that in some parishes few have yet expressed a desire to go.⁴⁶ But rather than inspire him to recommend that the Government should embrace a two-pronged programme of land reform and regional development, presumably such evidence merely encouraged Sir John McNeill to ponder upon the length of time without provision for famine relief which had to elapse before the dawning amongst remaining unconvinced crofters of a just appreciation of the hopelessness of their prospects.⁴⁷

The task of administering meagre funds for assisted passages to Australia, where there was an acute labour shortage, belonged to the Colonial Land and Emigration Commission, and latterly the Highlands and Islands Emigration Society (HIES) also financed passages there. Canada, however, remained the destination favoured by most Highlanders, and during the late 1840s and early 1850s several thousands of destitute and desperate men, women and children were transported, voluntarily or forcibly, to a country that increasingly questioned the wisdom of the policy that brought them there. Hunter has estimated that during a ten-year period at least 16,000 people emigrated from the north-west

Highlands and Islands to Canada, Australia and the USA. Some emigrated at their own expense, but most were assisted by their landlords, by the government, or by public subscriptions raised for the purpose. And as Hunter is quick to emphasise, many thousands more made their own way to the Lowlands, ultimately exchanging a Highland problem for an urban one.⁴⁸ 1852, however, the year in which the HIES was founded, saw a better harvest than any since famine struck in 1845. Potato blight was virtually absent. With the exception of 1854 subsequent years saw better crops and better fishings. The principal push factor for migration was thus effectively removed, while depression in the United States and Canada operated to diminish any pull factor. Having run short of funds, the HIES suspended emigration from the Highlands to Australia in 1857.⁴⁹ Less than a decade of more or less forced emigrations and evictions had, however, ensured that for the crofting counties the years between 1850 and 1883 represented a period of reduced absolute population, but also of severe localised congestion.

Depopulation of the inland parishes of the Highland mainland and in many places also of the inland parts of coastal parishes was at first coupled with a rapid rise in the coastal population, when men were displaced by sheep, to which the New Statistical Account testifies many times over. Of the population of the parish of Durness in Sutherland we read:

*In the Durness, or second district of the parish, there has been an increase of nearly 50 per cent since 1815; but in the third or eastern district, Eriboll, the population has diminished since 1815 from 517 to 220. The decrease has been owing to the whole district having been converted into two extensive sheep-farms. The increase in the Durness, or second division, has been owing to the establishment of the herring fishery, and the subdivision of lots in the different hamlets.*⁵⁰

Of Glenshiel in Ross and Cromarty we are told:

*Though the change [from cattle to sheep] produced an amazing increase of rent the effect upon the population was not so favourable. The valuable and respectable class of 'substantial tenants' has been entirely swept away; such of their number as did not emigrate to America, having sunk to the rank of lotters or cottars upon the large farms, are crowded along the shores of the loch, dependent for subsistence upon the laborious and uncertain pursuit of the herring fishing, or the still more fatiguing, precarious and pernicious practice of smuggling.*⁵¹

Further change in the rural economy was promoted after 1850 with the coincidence of diminution in the profitability of sheep farming - and so in the rent-paying capacity of sheep farmers - with an increase in the demand for Highland shootings. During the quarter century up to 1875, rising rents and wintering costs continued to eat away at previously handsome profits.⁵² These disappeared altogether, and with them ultimately the Highland sheep industry as a whole, at the start of the 1880s, when prices fell dramatically as a result of increasing imports of meat and the growing availability of finer Australian merino wool. The higher and more exposed sheep farms were also hit by a change in public taste away from wedder mutton in favour of younger meat and lamb. As a result sheep farms, especially those which had carried wedder stocks, were turned into deer forests wholesale.⁵³

For those crofters who had managed to escape eviction, the 1860s and 1870s represented a time of stability and relative prosperity. The crofters did not fare as well as their sheep farming neighbours - who amassed considerable fortunes in the early 1860s as the price of wool soared to record heights - yet they benefitted greatly from a rise in cattle prices which accompanied the general economic expansion. The living from their

part-time agriculture was supplemented with summer earnings as casual labour in 'the south country' as harvesters or even domestics. When sheep profits faded by the 1870s, security of tenure actually increased since it was not worthwhile for the tenant farmer to throw the crofters off - the expense of doing so was not justified by the low returns from additional sheep. The sporting estates themselves provided further opportunities for temporary employment and wages paid for casual labour rose steadily between 1850 and 1880. Fishing flourished and offered lucrative possibilities for crofters. Once blight receded, potatoes again became the staple diet, but now it was supplemented by fairly large quantities of fresh and salted fish. And when crofters' potatoes ran out in spring and early summer there was usually enough cash to buy meal, imports of which rose steadily between the 1850s and 1880s - a situation in marked contrast to that prevailing in the early nineteenth century, when starvation was warded off only by scouring the beaches for shellfish.⁵⁴

However, if the crofting community did appear, as it seemed to the Rev Roderick Macdonald of Lochboisdale, to *partake in the general progress of the country*,⁵⁵ that progress was relative to the penury of the previous decades. The plots were still small and barren, the tiny hovels dark and airless with the door the sole means of entry for sunlight and exit from smoke from the peat fire.⁵⁶ The people were ill-fed, ill-clad, unwashed and often prematurely aged.⁵⁷ Yet even in the Hebrides where poor conditions were at their most extreme, nevertheless the Government could be thankful that *the people of the western islands were quiet and law-abiding, very simple and easily led, fairly contented with their circumstances, knowing and caring little for the outside world*.⁵⁸ If the crofters' progress was relative, it was also shortlived, for the 1880s began

with a sharp reminder to crofters of the transience and precariousness of that economic security. The Highland harvest of 1881 was universally poor and although the summer of 1882 began with the expectation of abundance, it ended with the worst recurrence of blight since the famine years of the 1840s and 1850s, with between one third and a half of the potato crop affected and in most of Skye a complete failure.⁵⁹ The loss of the potato crop was compounded by an unremunerative east-coast herring fishing season. Nor was any comfort to be derived from the coastal fishing off the west of the Hebrides.⁶⁰ To aggravate matters, severe autumn gales destroyed or damaged more than one thousand boats and associated fishing tackle and ruined the grain crop, the harvesting of which was both delayed and protracted owing to prolonged rain during late summer.⁶¹ With their cattle either sold or pledged to the meal dealers, the people were in desperate straits.⁶² Describing to the Napier Commissioners that he lived on credit a crofter from Idrigill near Glendale in Skye further explained:

*Now those who have been supplying us with credit cannot supply it any further. Their own credit is gone.*⁶³

This situation was hardly alleviated by the virtual breakdown of the Poor Law Machinery in the Hebrides which accompanied it.⁶⁴

(b) Crofter Retaliation

To understand what was to follow, these very immediate problems should be viewed in their historical and socio-political context. Crofters had few rights and little security. What little security they did have had been ruthlessly withdrawn, as commercialised

sheep farming invaded the Highlands. If at the time of the potato famine in the 1840s they had been - as small-time shepherds themselves - obliged to tolerate being ousted competitively by a larger and more efficient sheep farming industry, now subserviently to watch that same land - their land - being turned over to deer forests was to prove impossible. There was a great difference between being supplanted by a similar industry, which had claims to be a national one, as contrasted with another which was mere commercialised sport.⁶⁵ Besides, although the period of relative prosperity was shortlived, the effect of a deterioration in the crofters' circumstances was nevertheless devastating, just because of its following a period of rising living standards and correspondingly greater expectations of life. As has been pointed out elsewhere, worst affected by this new crisis would be the generation which had grown up since the famine - a generation unused to absolute poverty, accustomed instead to a situation in which each year was a little more prosperous than its predecessor.⁶⁶ The same South Uist minister who detected an indication of progress said:

Already there is a taste for finer clothing, and what is thought to be a more comfortable way of living in general.

Younger crofters, moreover, were better equipped to defend their interests than were their fathers and grandfathers before them. *Not only had they inherited [a] growing feeling of community, they were slowly but surely developing a political consciousness of a type never before seen in the Highlands.*⁶⁸ For example they were better educated and more aware of the outside world than their predecessors, and partly in consequence of this and partly contributory to it they now read newspapers and indeed provided a ready-made market for a developing genre of radical paper.⁶⁹

Of this specifically anti-landlord press, the Highlander, started in 1873 by retired customs and excise officer John Murdoch, is particularly notable for having *initiated a new epoch in the history of the land question in the Highlands.*⁷⁰

Born in Islay and married in Ireland, so that he was both conversant with Irish land problems and, because of his Gaelic background, sympathetic to the aspirations of the land reform movement there, Murdoch became deeply committed to the concept of creating a Highland land reform movement rooted securely in the crofting community.⁷¹ Through the columns of his newspaper he strove to make publicly known the deplorable social conditions in the Highlands and Islands and in particular *the grievous burdens under which the people laboured through the iniquitous land system which existed.*⁷² But above all Murdoch's objective was stated explicitly to be not only to awaken an intelligent and vigorous public spirit but also to *afford opportunity and encouragement to the inhabitants of the Highlands and Islands to be heard on their own behalf and on matters on which they are best able to judge.*⁷³ His message was further hammered home by strenuous personal campaigning in townships throughout the crofting community, with Murdoch constantly urging crofters to assume the initiative in the struggle against *the evils of [the] defective land system* which he regarded as underlying all their difficulties.⁷⁴

Reinforcement of Murdoch's exhortations also came from quite a different direction. In 1881 some Skye fishermen landed at Kinsale in County Cork. Their Scots Gaelic was sufficiently similar to Irish for them to be able to learn of the Irish Land War and in particular of the remarkable success of the Land League - an Irish nationalist agricultural tenants' movement founded in 1879 - in achieving the Irish Land Act of 1881.⁷⁵ This breakthrough in agrarian

legislation represented only the beginnings of a solution to the Irish land problem, but in conceding several of the Land League's demands it constituted a major psychological victory to small tenants. And no doubt the Skye men listened avidly to the information that their Irish counterparts had secured the much coveted 'three Fs' - fair rents, fixity of tenure and free sale.⁷⁶ On the return voyage the fishermen must have reflected upon why they should be denied what Irishmen had been able to win. As a spokesman for the crofters, who was also an Irish MP and became one of the first crofter MPs, was later to observe:

*It was impossible that the intelligent crofter should not contrast his condition with that of the Irish tenant and ask to what the difference was due - whether it was due to violent agitation in the one case, and to peaceful, quiet, law-abiding habits in the other.*⁷⁷

An Edinburgh University Professor who was also a staunch supporter of the crofters' cause, in his evidence to the Napier Commission, was even more forthright. Denying that he had incited crofters to indulge in rent strikes and other anti-landlord activities, he continued:

*I never told anybody to shoot landlords from behind a hedge; what I have stated is that it was a strange thing that the Irish, who were guilty of such things, should get lollipops, while the quiet Highlanders got stripes and nothing else.*⁷⁸

And at least some crofters on hearing of good news from Ireland admitted to being much inclined to turn rebels ourselves in order to obtain the same benefits.⁷⁹

It was not a coincidence then, that during the winter of 1881, the time when the rent refusal tactics of the Irish Land League were receiving wide press publicity, that crofters on the Kilmuir estate in Skye intimated their intention to cease paying rent to their landlord. At first, summonses of removal were taken out against those crofters who dared to add their signatures to a petition calling for a rent reduction, but in the Spring of 1881 there was a sudden switch from a coercive to a conciliatory policy. For reasons that remain obscure, rents were reduced by one quarter, on the ostensible grounds of an earlier error in their calculation.⁸⁰ However, the notion of a rent strike - and its evident association with victory in Ireland - had too much appeal for it to be left at that. Just as the Kilmuir crofters resumed payment of their reduced rents, those of the Braes of Benlee, on the east coast of Skye some seven miles south of Portree, started their own rent strike, the pretext being an episode dating back seventeen years. Decades previously the local hill - Benlee - had been common pasturage, but early in the nineteenth century it was taken from the crofters for use as a market stance and cattle pound. Nevertheless, the crofters were allowed to continue grazing their cattle there until the mid 1860s, when the hill was let and the crofters excluded from it. By the early 1880s the lease was due to run out and the landlord, Lord Macdonald, was in poor health, spending most of his time in the South of France.⁸¹ In spite of this, the crofters were by no means assured of an early capitulation by the estate authorities, for they had still to contend with the factor, one Alexander Macdonald.

Alec Macdonald was a man of great authority and status. Not only did he represent Lord Macdonald, but he simultaneously managed as many as five Skye estates

since he was, according to one report,

*also factor for further absentees, so that he controls about four-fifths of the island. Besides this he holds all the offices, and is pretty much everything else that gives any influence. He is bank agent, justice of the peace, solicitor, distributor of stamps, chairman or clerk of all the school boards in Skye, chairman of the parochial boards, hotel keeper, captain of the volunteers, and Parliamentary agent for the Conservatives, and to crown all, the sheriff's officer is one of his clerks.*⁸²

What might otherwise be dismissed as a totally exaggerated list of duties is largely confirmed in the pages of the Napier Commission's evidence, which adds also Macdonald's function as collector of taxes and collector for roads in Skye.⁸³ The power and influence wielded by this man was clearly immense, and as far as crofters were concerned, virtually unchallengeable.

*He who is factor, banker, farmer, JP, and so forth, has very little sympathy to spare for those whom he considers in his way.*⁸⁴

Certainly the sheer tyranny of other Hebridean factors is almost unbelievable. It was their practice to exact a 'cane' or tax of livestock upon their already impoverished tenants, who were required to give up a sheep, or a hen and a dozen or two dozen eggs. There is documentary evidence of Lismore crofters crossing annually to Appin with their hens.⁸⁵ Donald Munro, not surprisingly a name still spoken with loathing in Lewis, was the last factor there to extract his ducs, for which he earned the nickname Red Donald of the hens.⁸⁶ Similarly there are authenticated cases of still other despotic factors whose practice it was to increase a crofters' rent for failing to touch his cap as a mark of respect to his superior.⁸⁷ In actual fact Alec Macdonald was not of this breed,

and has even been described as a kindly and popular man.⁸⁸ His fault was to be in the wrong place at the wrong time, serving in the wrong capacity. Controversial as he was in his function as land agent, he was also a landlord in a small way in his own right, and a well respected one at that. There were no complaints at all from tenants on his own property of Treaslane. The statement that *to them he was an ideal landlord, considerate to the point of generosity* is supported by the fact that there were no arrears on his estate.⁸⁹

The indication of trouble from Lord Macdonald's tenants elicited an immediate response from the man who was widely dubbed the *uncrowned King of Skye*.⁹⁰ But Alec Macdonald's lengthy appeal to the crofters⁹¹ encountered only stubborn resistance, and so, on behalf of the proprietor, a sheriff officer - presumably none other than Macdonald's clerk - was sent to serve notices of eviction and small debt summonses for rent on about twenty of the people. The unfortunate sheriff officer was met by a truculent crowd, mainly women, and forced to burn the summonses. His even unluckier assistant was soaked to the skin by the angry mob.⁹² Thereupon, William Ivory, Sheriff of Inverness-shire, accompanied by a force of some fifty police sent up by the Glasgow police authorities - without, apparently, any prior reference to the Government - descended upon Skye, intent upon seizing the ringleaders in order to quell the disturbances and so *stamp out quickly the first germs of anything like the Irish disease that might show itself on this side of the Channel*.⁹³ To the landocracy, who believed that *Mr Gladstone has ruined Ireland; he will ruin Scotland next*, this was imperative, if agrarian revolution was to be avoided.⁹⁴ However, this force too faced a hostile assembly, and there ensued a riot which has come to be known as 'the Battle of the Braes'. The arrests

themselves were not disputed. It was the attempt to remove the prisoners from the Braes which sparked off the trouble. The women gesticulated, shrieking for the police to be attacked, and stones began to fly. The police responded by drawing their batons and charging. This was the signal for a general attack.

*Huge boulders darkened the horizon as they sped from the hands of infuriated men and women. Large sticks and flails were brandished and brought down with crushing force upon the police.*⁹⁵

The police were apparently at some considerable risk, particularly from the women of Braes, who were greater in number and even more determined and aggressive than the men. For though the police baton-charged twice, the women still rushed at them and poured a fearful volley into the compact mass [of constables].⁹⁶ Nevertheless the latter did ultimately succeed in smashing their way through the barriers of crofters which blocked their return to Portree, without sustaining anything worse than cuts and bruises. Sheriff Ivory, who was knocked down in the scuffle, got covered in mud and no doubt smarted from the hurt to his pride, while seven women were physically injured, two of them seriously.⁹⁷

It had been thought that exemplary action in Braes would both destroy resistance there and discourage agitation elsewhere in the Highlands. However, because ten days elapsed between the original serving of the summonses and the arrival of the police and the Sheriff, there had been time also for a press corps to assemble in Skye, the like of which had never been seen before in the Highlands. The crofters' cause was suddenly newsworthy. Whatever its bias, and the national newspapers were almost exclusively pro-landlord, the resultant coverage of anti-landlord action in the Highlands

benefitted none more than the crofting community.⁹⁸ On the very day of their arrest, arrangements for the prisoners's defence were made in Inverness, while in Glasgow, too, supporters organised a defence committee. The men of Braes became folk heroes, and when a few days later they returned to Portree from Inverness on bail - paid for them by eight citizens of that Highland capital - they were greeted with scenes of great jubilation. At their trial a month later, the serious charge of deforcement, that is, resisting an officer of the law in the execution of his duty, was abandoned, and they were found guilty on the lesser charge of assault, for which they received small fines which were immediately paid by sympathisers. The five returned to Skye and with the other Braes tenants drove their stock to Benlee to enjoy the good grazing there. All the while their rents remained unpaid and indeed another attempt to serve summonses was successfully resisted later in the year.⁹⁹ Subsequently the county authorities resorted to applying to the Government for military aid which, paradoxically, was rejected in such a way as to acknowledge the seriousness of the situation. The Government acknowledged that *one or more places in the Islands of Scotland are in a disturbed condition* but argued that *soldiers should not be employed upon police duty which is likely to be of a continuing character*, the Home Secretary sanctioning instead any redeployment of police which might be required.¹⁰⁰

In the immediate aftermath of the Battle of the Braes, as Lord Lovat told a Conservative cabinet some years afterwards, *agitation spread rapidly*¹⁰¹ with grazing lands next being seized at Glendale, which lies on the opposite side of Skye. There too crofters, in defiance of an interdict, refused to move their stock from the farm of Waterstein. Additional police were sent and when a messenger-at-arms attempted to serve

summonses for breach of interdict, some 2,000 people turned out and hounded them from the district. Subsequently the Procurator Fiscal of Skye, having gone to investigate, was also forced to retire before the mob.¹⁰²

Events such as these demonstrate that John Murdoch's exhortations to crofters to take the initiative in the land struggle had obviously not fallen upon deaf ears. Reputedly at the instigation of men from Skye, though aided and abetted by considerable Irish moral support, land agitation spread rapidly into other districts.¹⁰³ The general situation is summed up in the Final Report of the Crofters Commission in 1913, which reads:

*From 1882 down to 1887 the Highlands and Islands were in a state of unrest - in many places there was open lawlessness. Rents were withheld, lands were seized, and a reign of terror prevailed. To cope with the situation the Police Force was largely augmented - in some cases doubled. Troopships with Marines cruised about the Hebrides in order to support the Civil Authorities in their endeavour to maintain law and order.*¹⁰⁴

(c) Conciliation

Clearly such a situation could not be permitted to continue. Parliamentary pressure was, in any case, mounting for the setting up of a Royal Commission to investigate the crofters' grievances. Indeed as early as 1877, Alexander Mackenzie of the Celtic Magazine had asked Charles Fraser-Mackintosh, MP for Inverness, at a meeting of constituents in the town's Music Hall, whether he would not press in Parliament for the formation of a commission to inquire into the present impoverished and wretched conditions, and in some places, the scarcity of men and women in the Highlands; the cause of this state of things; and the most effectual remedy for ameliorating the condition of the Highland Crofters generally. But at that time Fraser-Mackintosh

had replied that he thought it would be counter-productive to press for a commission, for two reasons. Firstly, the Government had to be prepared for the demand by petitions or deputations paving the way. Secondly, the request needed to be strengthened by a general expression of feeling in its favour throughout the country.¹⁰⁵ By the end of 1882 that support was evident. During 1881 the Glasgow Sutherland Association with the backing of the North British Daily Mail, whose owner was Glasgow MP Charles Cameron, organised a petition in favour of a Royal Commission which collected 45,000 names and was ultimately presented to the House by Charles-Fraser-Mackintosh.¹⁰⁶

Furthermore, from being dominated by middle-class Lowland intellectuals,¹⁰⁷ the new Highland opposition suddenly acquired the grass roots impetus which John Murdoch had campaigned so hard to achieve. A 'give-us-more land' campaign was vigorously supported by the crofters of Glendale, who became the spearhead of crofter resistance to landlordism during the second half of 1882, and meeting after meeting was held to discuss what the crofters should do about 'their' land.¹⁰⁸ In September 1882, a deputation of crofters' spokesmen visited Fraser-Mackintosh in Inverness to impress upon him the necessity of energetic action in Parliament to instigate a special inquiry, by a Royal Commission, into the crofter question.¹⁰⁹ Yet despite such visible activity, in November 1882, when Donald MacFarlane, anti-landlord Irish MP for County Carlow and champion of the crofter cause did table a Parliamentary Question as to whether, as stated in an evening newspaper, the Government had the establishment of a Royal Commission in view, Gladstone - the Prime Minister of the day - replied: *there is no such question at present under the consideration of Her Majesty's Government.*¹¹⁰ Further pressed later that November

Mr Gladstone confirmed:

*There was an opportunity for full discussion of this matter in the summer, when the Lord Advocate stated, on the part of the Government, the reasons which led them to believe that it would not be wise to issue a Royal Commission on the subject. On the facts placed before them, Her Majesty's Government cannot see in anything any reason for departing from that determination.*¹¹¹

Over the winter, however, Fraser-Mackintosh, MacFarlane and Cameron pressed the matter.¹¹² Then in February 1883 2500 people packed out a meeting in Edinburgh which, reinforcing an earlier Glasgow meeting at which two resolutions were carried, unanimously carried three motions demanding the appointment of a Royal Commission.¹¹³ It was addressed by no less prominent a figure than John Stuart Blackie, Professor of Greek at the University of Edinburgh, another pillar of the Gaelic Society of Inverness and champion of all things Celtic.¹¹⁴ Even the Free Church, which could have no sympathy with those who advocated resistance to the Law, lent its support to the meeting, calling for restraint in the abuse of landlord power.¹¹⁵ That same February twenty-one Scottish MPs signed a Commons motion asking for a Royal Commission, and accompanying that memorial on the 23rd February went a personal letter to the Home Secretary, Sir William Harcourt, from Charles Fraser-Mackintosh. Now he could point not only to crofter pressure but also to the fact that *the public in Scotland by numerous meetings show that they concur while even the press in Scotland, from the Scotsman downwards, may be said to be unanimous.*¹¹⁶

And so on the 26th of February 1883, in the face of a rising tide of demands and an increasingly dangerous

situation in Skye, the Government announced the appointment of a Royal Commission to inquire into the condition of the crofters and cottars in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland.¹¹⁷ Government resistance to such an enquiry had been eroded, not only by the concerted public demand, but also, undoubtedly, by a gradual realisation that this course of action need not be wholly detrimental to the landed cause of the ruling class.¹¹⁸ It would almost certainly damp down what has been succinctly dubbed *direct action* for a while, and it would serve to postpone the day of radical change. Furthermore, if the Commissioners were carefully chosen, no conclusion or proposal would emerge contrary to the landlord interest so sacrosanct to the status quo.¹¹⁹ That particular realisation, however, was not unique to Government circles. Alexander Mackenzie, in his Celtic Magazine, wrote that to make the Royal Commission really effective, it was essential that the Government place *men upon it who will counteract the landlord opposition and aristocratic influence, which will certainly have to be met in the course of the inquiry on every point where the facts are likely to tell against the landlords and their agents.*¹²⁰ Pointing to the failure of any Highland MP except Fraser-Mackintosh to support the demand for an inquiry as evidence of this Highland landlord opposition, Mackenzie continued:

*Unless the other side is strongly represented, so as to meet, on something like equal grounds, the power, wealth, and influence of those whose conduct has made this inquiry necessary, the Royal Commission had better never to have been granted. It will only prove the commencement in earnest of an agitation, on the Land Question, the end of which no-one can predict.*¹²¹

Here was confirmation of the Lord Advocate's private fears, which were to become something of a self-fulfilling prophecy.¹²² Yet even if its appointment

did not immediately coincide with a cessation of agitation and though its six appointees, with one possible exception, included no-one who was qualified by personal experience and sympathy to consider crofting problems,¹²³ nevertheless the Napier Commission was to represent a landmark in the modern history of the Highlands. It marked a watershed between decades of Government repression or, at best, inactivity, and a century - which is only now drawing to a close - of more positive responses to the Highland problem in the form of various enquiries and ensuing development initiatives, amongst which the Congested Districts Board takes a prominent place.

(ii) The Letting Out of The Waters

The Report of the Napier Commission - a work of great labour and containing recommendations founded upon very voluminous evidence constituting four thick volumes¹²⁴ - was eventually presented to Parliament in early summer 1884. It has been described as the most mournful and tragic publication ever printed in Scotland.¹²⁵ Even the balanced Civil Service style prose could not conceal a story of terrible oppression and absolute deprivation.¹²⁶

Notwithstanding the studied caution of its language, the report discloses a state of misery, of wrong-doing, and of patient long-suffering without parallel in the history of the country. As great oppression may have been inflicted upon the Irish, but it was not endured without bursts of wild criminal resistance.¹²⁷

Despite the fears entertained regarding the composition of the Commission,¹²⁸ as founder of the Highland Land Law Reform Association (HLLRA) and future crofter MP Gavin Brown Clark admitted, it proved more sympathetic and more advanced in its recommendations than was generally expected.¹²⁹ Indeed it was universally acknowledged that nothing could have been either more impartial or more searching

than the manner in which the grievances of the crofters were investigated.¹³⁰ This was also borne out in the recommendations, described by the Home Secretary as "unquestionably of a novel character requiring careful examination."¹³¹ As Irish MP and crofter champion D H MacFarlane put it:

*Everybody knows that it was a Commission composed almost entirely of landlords, that the crofters had no direct representative upon it, and yet so irresistible was the evidence of wrong and the need of remedy that it has made proposals almost revolutionary.*¹³²

This was praise indeed from a man whose background and principles might seem to preclude him from directly complimenting a committee composed of representatives of the landlord establishment, however fair-minded they had ultimately proved to be.

In fact, of the six Commissioners, as many as four were themselves landed proprietors, one was an advocate who was the son of a landowner and one the newly appointed Professor of Celtic at Edinburgh University.¹³³ Certainly the latter two were of Highland extraction, while pro-crofter MP Charles Fraser-Mackintosh was one of the other members. Even so, MacFarlane's objection, raised at the time of the Commission's appointment, that it was not sufficiently representative of the class into whose grievances it was to enquire¹³⁴ was not without foundation. The Chairman of the Commission was Francis Napier, Baron of Napier and Ettrick. Educated at Trinity College, Cambridge, he was a retired career diplomat who had amassed considerable experience of colonial problems and administration in India.¹³⁵ Although a landlord with a holding of some 7000 acres whose home address was a Borders castle, nevertheless in politics he was classed as a liberal.¹³⁶ Whether in spite of his background, or because of it, Lord Napier's

approach to the task of guiding the inquiry into crofter and cottar conditions was entirely unbiased and objective, as is witnessed in D H MacFarlane's honest concession that

*it would be a long time before the people of Scotland would forget the kindly and sympathetic manner in which he had fulfilled his functions as Chairman, and the desire he showed to protect the people from the wrong which had been inflicted upon them.*¹³⁷

Lord Napier, in his turn, paid tribute to the way in which the crofters had given their evidence.

*When we reflect that these remote and often illiterate men were contending for the first time on a public scene for all that is deepest and dearest to them in life, how slender do their offences against morality, reason, and good taste, appear when set beside the stratagems and mendacities of a party demonstration in Birmingham, or the revengeful diatribes of many a debate in the House of Commons!*¹³⁸

At the same time, in keeping with the professional conduct of the inquiry, Lord Napier and his colleagues were alert to the ability of the crofter witnesses to paint the past in attractive colours - a tendency which they felt would not be easily abandoned, nor would be likely to be obliterated by contemporary education or political training, since a comparison of the present with the past is a favourite and effective instrument in stirring popular aspiration for enlarged rights.¹³⁹ The Commissioners were in no doubt that even the small occupiers of the Highlands and Islands had participated in no small degree in the benefits universally conferred in the country by modern legislation and commerce, and the prevalence of philanthropic principles in government and individual action.¹⁴⁰ However, it was recognised that:

*Whatever has been the progress in the condition of the Highland and Island population, we have not reached a point which should satisfy their expectations. There are still wants to be supplied and abuses to be corrected.*¹⁴¹

And in case those unsympathetic to the crofters' cause should be under any misapprehension as to the validity of their grievances, the Commissioners issued the following clear warning.

*Many of the allegations of oppression and suffering with which these pages are painfully loaded would not bear a searching analysis. Under such a scrutiny they would be found erroneous as to time, to place, to persons, to extent, and misconstrued as to intention. It does not follow, however, that because these narratives are incorrect in detail, they are incorrect in colour and in kind.*¹⁴²

The hardships suffered by the crofters and cottars and identified by the Commissioners fell into a number of distinct categories. The disadvantages of geography - the evils attached to an unproductive soil, high elevations, and a variable and boisterous climate¹⁴³ - they could merely note in passing; their attention was directed rather to the several causes of indigence, discouragement, and irritation, which are subject to remedial treatment.¹⁴⁴ Chief amongst these was the inadequate size of the holdings, a state of affairs which the Commissioners noted was occasioned by clearance and productive of congestion. The crofter's situation in this respect was aggravated by the high rent payable for the land which he did hold, the insecurity of that tenure, the impossibility of securing compensation for any improvements effected, and what would today be termed the defective communications infrastructure.¹⁴⁵ To these visible disadvantages the Commissioners added deficiencies in education and in the machinery of justice. There was a lack, too, of any centralised and properly co-ordinated

agency or bureau to make necessary arrangements and provide an advisory and support service for potential emigrants. All of those were identified as contributing to the depressed condition of the people. Finally, the Report pointed to the additional considerable difficulties under which the crofter-fishermen operated: namely, lack of harbours, piers, boat shelters, and landing-places; and under-capitalisation of the industry expressed in a dearth of boats and tackle adapted for deep-sea fishing, problems of access to metropolitan markets and deficient postal and telegraphic services.¹⁴⁶

On the basis of these findings, the Commissioners made numerous recommendations. These included the general strengthening of secondary education with Scottish Education Department grants for the poorest and most sparsely populated Highland districts, and improvements in the administration of local justice with the concentration of public offices in fewer hands, where necessary by the attraction of increased remuneration. Amelioration of road, sea and postal telegraphic communications was a high priority and in this, the heyday of railway transport, there was an inevitable proposal for Government-sponsored extension of the railway by some 80 miles to the west coast of Inverness-shire to interface with boats from the fishing stations in the outer isles. The Commissioners also advocated the provision of publicly-funded loans towards the purchase of fishing boats, and government grants for the construction of harbours and piers.¹⁴⁷ Principal among the recommendations, however, was that relating to land. The Commissioners noted that the meagre lots of the crofters were exhausted during the kelp boom as a result of over-cultivation and under-improvement, while the substantial holdings

of the sheep farmers had gone to rack and ruin following the slump in sheep profits, *passing in many cases from the condition of farm to the condition of forest.*¹⁴⁸ Moreover, their Report goes on to suggest that in the Western Highlands and Islands something *resembling an economical crisis* had occurred in consequence of the surrender of these large sheep farms, the crop failures of the early 1880s, and the prevalence of land agitation.¹⁴⁹ The conclusion drawn by the Commissioners with regard to the alleged crisis embodies at first sight what is apparently a most revolutionary recommendation.

*It may be that an occasion is approaching for a partial redistribution of occupancy, in which the extension of the crofting area will find a place. To us it seems that the moment is favourable for the intervention of legislation.*¹⁵⁰

Reading on, however, it becomes clear that the Commissioners were not seeking wholesale or even, necessarily, minimal division of large farms, but merely a means by which an impulse may be given towards the consolidation and [hence?] enlargement of small holdings.¹⁵¹ It was suggested that a basis for operation was to be found in the recognition of the Highland township as a distinct agricultural unit, which should be endowed with certain immunities and powers by which it might attain a degree of stability, which in turn would foster improvement and expansion.¹⁵²

Interesting as these proposals appear, they bear the hallmark of conservatism and did not encompass even one of the 'three F's', so coveted by the crofters. No official revision of rents was advocated, and the Commissioners reported against free sale and fixity of tenure.¹⁵³ Furthermore, those crofters the rent

for whose holdings was less than £6 per annum - as the Report Admitted *we regret to say, the vast majority* - were to be endowed with no formal security at all against eviction or excessive rents.¹⁵⁴ It was acknowledged both that these poorest people *may need such safeguards equally or more* and that *the inequality of treatment may appear unjust*, yet it was considered imperative to have to accept an evil to avoid a greater evil still.¹⁵⁵ The nature and significance of these evils is explained in the best-known passage from the Napier Report.

*To invest the most humble and helpless class of agricultural tenants with immunities and rights which ought to go hand in hand with the expansive improvement of the dwelling and the soil, would tend to fix them in a condition from which they ought to be resolutely though gently withdrawn. These people ought either to pass as crofters to new holdings of a higher value, or take their position among the cottars as labourers, mechanics or fishermen, with a cottage and an allotment, or migrate to other seats of labour here, or emigrate to other countries.*¹⁵⁶

Even though, in embodying provisions for improved fishing and voluntary emigration, the report did attempt to cater for this most deprived group, it is hardly surprising that the recommendations did not meet with the wholehearted approval of the crofting community, which had learned to show its mounting disenchantment with increasing violation of the law. Coincident with the appointment of the Napier Commission, defiance of an interdict by Glendale crofters had culminated in the ultimate surrender of the ringleaders who gave themselves up on the advice of Malcolm MacNeill - the official in charge of administering the poor law in north-west Scotland - following threatened intervention of the gunboat the 'Jackal'.¹⁵⁷ The Glendale 'martyrs' were subsequently tried in Edinburgh, and sentenced to two months imprisonment for breach of

interdict. Inevitably they became heroes, and on the morning of their liberation in May 1883 they were reputedly met at the door of Calton Jail by a crowd of some thousand people headed by two pipers and ceremoniously marched to breakfast at an adjacent hotel. The celebrations were redoubled upon the arrival of the most notable of the three at Portree that night.¹⁵⁸ Not surprisingly, in view of the prevailing mood, the withholding of rents continued during the long period of public sittings of the Commissioners, which lasted until December. Furthermore, although outright violence was stilled by the appointment of the Napier Commission, it was but a temporary lull. Royal Commissions, whatever the nature of their enquiry, take time to marshall their facts and subsequently to formulate and present their recommendations in report form. So it was that the onset of winter 1883-84 was accompanied by a growing realisation that an officially imposed solution to crofters' problems was far from imminent. Unrest accordingly manifested itself once more in the form of land seizures followed by delivery of eviction orders, in turn provoking assault and deforcement of sheriff-officers - all of which became a standard sequence of events.¹⁵⁹ And if the Commissioners were ultimately to report that the Highlands was facing an economic crisis, Alexander Mackenzie, editor of the Celtic Magazine and who was in a position to know, since he was one of those who travelled around helping the crofters to prepare their evidence,¹⁶⁰ made the parallel observation of the Highlands being on the verge of a social revolution.¹⁶¹

Presently, however, crofter agitation began to find new expression. Sporadic, localised landlord resistance certainly created a nuisance and could achieve limited

de facto victory for a few crofters, but as the Oban Times - from 1881 under new and radical editorship¹⁶² - put it:

*The opposing force is thoroughly and efficiently organised and it is only by thorough and efficient counter-organisation that it can be successfully coped with.*¹⁶³

As has been observed elsewhere, the Napier Commission itself, by forcing crofters who had been previously uninvolved in agitation to meet, discuss grievances, and elect delegates to it, expedited the emergence of an effective political organisation in the Highlands.¹⁶⁴ So when the HLLRA in November 1883 began to issue circulars in Gaelic and English encouraging crofters to organise themselves within its constitutional framework,¹⁶⁵ the time was ripe for a more than satisfactory response. The HLLRA's first Highland branch was set up in December in Glendale¹⁶⁶ and already by the start of February 1884 the Oban Times was reporting that *branch societies of this new mode of agitating crofter grievances are now in full swing in most parts of Skye, and are making themselves conspicuously prominent.*¹⁶⁷ Other parts of the north-west Highlands and Islands quickly followed suit so that by June 1884 the HLLRA was able to boast twenty-nine affiliated branches and a paid up crofter membership of over 5,000.¹⁶⁸ It was in the knowledge of this degree of support and the fact that, the month before, Gladstone himself had pledged his Government to act upon the crofting question,¹⁶⁹ that the HLLRA enthusiastically mounted its first annual conference in Dingwall in September 1884. It was at this event that the crofters' collective response to the findings of the Napier Commission was made plain. The Report itself was welcomed, but not the recommendations, which were rejected, as might be expected, on the

grounds that they did not go far enough. Instead, the HLLRA programme adopted at Dingwall proposed the establishment of the same type of Land Court with judicial and administrative functions that had been introduced in Ireland by the Irish Land Act of 1881 (and had been rejected by the Napier Commissioners) but possessing far more radical powers of compulsory redistribution of land in the crofters' favour.¹⁷⁰

If the crofters were not satisfied with the Napier recommendations, the majority of British MPs were completely indifferent to them. The few radicals, spearheaded by D H MacFarlane, who did maintain consistent pressure on the Government to bring forward legislative proposals were insufficient to prevent the House being 'counted out' for want of a quorum,¹⁷¹ when the subject was finally debated. In the eyes of opponents of crofter legislation this was no doubt a fitting end to a debate on a report which one of them described as "hardly worth while discussing".¹⁷² During the course of the debate it was actually suggested that *the Report was never intended to be taken seriously by Parliament since it was full of inconsistencies and anomalies which had supposedly arisen because the Commissioners were not able to agree upon the main recommendations which were urged upon them by the noble Chairman so that the Report was really a compromise between their varying and discordant views.*¹⁷³

The Home Secretary, Sir William Harcourt, used his own brand of curious logic, supported by highly selective quoting from the Napier findings to argue that the Highlanders had shared in the nation's progress and that the poorest members of society were *never so well protected* by that society against the extremities of human suffering. Yet almost paradoxically, on the basis that that same poorest class who *most largely demand our sympathy* was not properly dealt with by the Commissioners, he felt obliged to conclude:

*I am satisfied that the Government cannot assent in terms so absolute to give legislative and administrative effect to all the recommendations it contains.*¹⁷⁴

In short, as Harcourt was later to admit to Parliament, the recommendations of the Napier Commission pleased no-one.

*I do not find that all the suggestions, or even the most important, of the Royal Commission have met with general acceptance from any quarter, or even from the friends of the crofters themselves.*¹⁷⁵

Within the confines of the Cabinet, the Home Secretary was less circumspect about the awkward position in which the Government was placed.

*A great difficulty in the whole matter is that the Report of the Royal Commission affords us less than no assistance in the task imposed upon us. The fantastic scheme of Lord Napier for the creation of new communes has persisted in the birth; no one has a good word to say for it, and it is practically repudiated both at the hands of the advocates of the crofters and of the proprietors.*¹⁷⁶

The Report was too tentative for the crofters, too bold for the Government, and although the latter accepted that it was pledged to introduce legislation at some stage, it was in no hurry to do so.¹⁷⁷

In these circumstances, it would not have been surprising then to find a resurgence of crofter revolt accompanying this renewed evidence that the wheels of bureaucracy and indeed democracy grind exceeding slow.¹⁷⁸ It was certainly what Sheriff Ivory most expected and most desired. In the interval between the Battle of the Braes and the publication of the Royal Commission's Report, he never for a moment lost sight of his objective of seeing a vindication of

the law in Skye, maintaining that the necessary work of bringing the islanders to their knees could only be achieved by an armed force.¹⁷⁹ His ambition was about to be fulfilled. During October 1884 the head office of the North British Daily Mail received some short telegraphic messages from Uig, on the Kilmuir estate in Skye. They described the burning of peat stacks, the destruction of property, seditious meetings and threats of violence. The editor hesitated to use the material, it was so alarming, without first checking its authenticity, and accordingly he sent a correspondent to Uig to make inquiries. The latter discovered that the reports of disturbances were all fabricated by a landlord's official - a former Skye police sergeant who had been transferred to Inverness when he became involved in inducing illiterate crofters to sign a document declaring that their evidence to the Napier Commissioners had been false.¹⁸⁰ Steps were taken to undo the damage done by the circulation of the false statements, news of which had leaked out, but it was too late to prevent HM Gunboat 'Forester' setting sail for Skye, ultimately accompanied by the troopship HMS 'Assistance' and a second gunboat HMS 'Banterer', bearing in total a cargo of between 250 and 350 marines to be placed at the disposal of Sheriff Ivory. The military invasion was full of promise to the newspapers, and a little army of correspondents, no doubt mindful of events at Braes two years before, assembled at Portree. They must have been disappointed, however, since no disorder followed this action, just as no disturbance had preceded it.¹⁸¹

*Few persons were abroad, and these few were mostly children or old men. Such of the younger men as were not indoors plied their vocation of potato digging and turnip lifting, and raised their heads for a moment as the expedition passed.*¹⁸²

Where the show of force did elicit a positive response from the crofters, it was certainly not the one either expected or desired by the authorities. For example, to a similar description the Times added that *those that were abroad seemed to be amused at rather than intimidated by the display.*¹⁸³ Norman Maclean, one of the eye-witnesses of the earlier incident at Braes, describes the moment of the landings and how, this time, the Commander of the marines *had come to suppress a rebellion and he was welcomed with rapturous glee!*¹⁸⁴ There were speeches of welcome, flag hoistings, cheering, clapping and general merry-making to the extent that:

*The Islanders were sorry to see them go; for they provided so much merriment. The spectacle of three of Her Majesty's ships sent to overawe an island that did not trouble to lock their doors at night, was indeed food for Homeric laughter.*¹⁸⁵

The point was that though the people were prepared to defy the police, who to all intents and purposes represented the hated landlords, they had nothing against the marines who were *legitimate servants of the Crown.*¹⁸⁶ The welcome afforded to those by an island that had sent *ten thousand men to fight the battles of her grandfather against Napoleon*¹⁸⁷ was in stark contrast to the difficulties experienced by Sheriff Ivory and his party, which included a posse of some thirty and more police seconded from Inverness. The Stornoway mail steamer the 'Locheil' had been chartered from MacBrayne's shipping company to do the ferrying from Stromeferry and to provide accommodation so that none of the party would require lodgings ashore, where they were bound to prove unwelcome guests. However, their arrival was delayed when the Captain and crew of the 'Locheil' resigned in protest at the task they were being asked to undertake, and a new ship's company had to be found

at the last minute. Furthermore, no help was forthcoming in Skye with disembarkation from the ferry which apparently occasioned less inconvenience to Sheriff Ivory's party than to a few luggage-laden passengers who had nothing to do with the police or the authorities, but were unlucky to sail on that particular vessel.¹⁸⁸

In view of the provenance of the fabricated report of crofter disturbances, it is reasonable to agree with the editor of the Celtic Magazine, who argued:

*Is it to be wondered at, that, in these circumstances, a 'special animosity' should exist against the police in the district of Kilmuir?*¹⁸⁹

The marines, meanwhile, marched unhindered across the island, and the Government concurred with the Times verdict that their manoeuvres,

*intended as an imposing military spectacle to overawe the natives ... can only be described as an extravagant display of force, the effect of which was to excite the astonishment, and mirth even, of the crofters but not to cow them.*¹⁹⁰

And as has been noted elsewhere,¹⁹¹ although Sheriff Ivory was made the scapegoat of the day - he received a ticking-off from the Home Secretary for taking a sledge hammer to crack a nut - his problems were essentially of the Government ministers' own making, and they constitute an important testimony to the vacillating and indecisive nature of the Liberal administration's Highland policy. At any rate, as a means of putting an end to rent strikes and other forms of crofter agitation, military intervention proved a costly failure. At the Martinmas rent collection on the Kilmuir estate, virtually no rents were

forthcoming from the crofters.¹⁹² During the winter the no-rent campaign was no longer confined to Kilmuir and Glendale but spread to the rest of Skye, with crofters universally resolving that unless concessions were granted, no rents would be paid.¹⁹³ And on this occasion Skye was not alone. The Skyemen's tactics were adopted also by crofters on the Black Isle; land was seized from the Duke of Argyll in Tiree; disturbances in North Uist warranted the personal presence of Sheriff Ivory there; and in Valtos in Lewis that of the now increasingly familiar gunboat, with a contingent this time of eighty marines.¹⁹⁴

As a result, it seems likely that it was ultimately - and paradoxically - landlord pressure which forced the Government into action. The Napier Commissioners were right to identify an economic crisis affecting the Highlands,¹⁹⁵ and one effect of that crisis was that the landlords were now virtually wholly dependent upon crofters' rental for their incomes. But as has been demonstrated adequately above, these were not forthcoming. Thus by the end of 1884 Highland landlords, increasingly concerned about their financial position, were expressing a *general desire to come to terms with their crofting tenants*¹⁹⁶ and in order to facilitate just such a rapprochement, a representative group of fifty or so proprietors or their representatives was convened by Donald Cameron of Lochell in Inverness the next month, with the backing of the Home Secretary.¹⁹⁷ The outcome of their deliberations was to offer crofters more land and formal leases, revised rents and guaranteed compensation for improvements.¹⁹⁸ And before long the Home Secretary was conceding to Gladstone the inevitability of legislative reform of the system of Highland land tenure, if the crofters' grievances were to be allayed.¹⁹⁹ Gladstone himself was by this

stage under no illusion as to the genuineness of these, or the need for reform. As he explained to Harcourt of the landlord's role in the Clearances:

*It was might, and not right, which was on his side when, during the half century and more which followed the '45, he gradually found that rearing men paid him in a coin no longer current, and took to the rearing of rent instead, backed by the law, which took no cognizance of right but his. This was but four or five score years ago, and I cannot think that we have here a sufficient prescription against the legislature to bar it from redressing wrong.*²⁰⁰

So a Crofters' Bill was introduced in May 1885, proposing nothing less than *the substantial application of the Irish Land Act to the Highland parishes.*²⁰¹ But the Prime Minister, anxious as he now was to do something for crofters, was destined to have to wait for another opportunity, for that particular Bill fell with the Government in June.²⁰²

By December 1885, however, a fresh Liberal administration was in office following a General Election which saw four of the five crofter candidates contesting Highland seats elected.²⁰³ The arrival of what amounted to a 'Crofters' Party' at Westminster at the start of 1886 represented the culmination of the HLLRA's concerted effort to harness, politically and democratically, the force of crofter emotion which had erupted first in militancy in Skye in 1882, subsequently spreading what might be termed benign anarchy throughout the crofting counties.²⁰⁴ The significance of the presence of the four in Parliament was not lost on the rest of the House. Liberals and Tories alike were agreed that remedial legislation of some sort was urgently required.²⁰⁵ But if more time during this short-lived parliament was to be devoted to

Highland affairs than during any of its predecessors since the Jacobite risings 150 years earlier, it was certainly not all attributable to the brand of apparent, genuine concern and sympathy for crofters expressed by Gladstone, who was once again Prime Minister. When the refurbished version of the previous year's Bill was hastily introduced by George Trevelyan, incumbent of the newly created office of Secretary for Scotland, who reminded the House of its resolution of eighteen months previously to legislate upon this question and its failure to date to do so,²⁰⁶ representatives from both sides, without seeking to renege on that promise, nevertheless made it perfectly clear that the Bill went forward without their blessing. The Duke of Argyll, arch-opponent of all land law reform and stalwart defender of traditional landlordism, who resigned from Gladstone's cabinet over the question of the Irish Land Act of 1881,²⁰⁷ agreed not to oppose it. However, as he explained, this was so not because it was a good Bill on its merits, but on account of the position in which they were placed - namely an overtly political situation on account of which only he fully admitted the extreme importance of having this question settled without the danger and risk of a rising and bloodshed.²⁰⁸ The Conservative chief spokesman on Highland affairs, A J Balfour, was prepared to go even further, denouncing the Bill as worse than useless. He continued:

*But if it be the prelude to action on the part of the Executive, which shall put an end to that melancholy state of social disorder in the Highlands which, so long as it lasts, is a bar to any improvement in the condition of the people, it will not have been passed in vain.*²⁰⁹

And so, what could be interpreted as some very grandmotherly legislation received the Royal Assent on June 25th, although it was equally observed at the time that a wise grandmother might do good.²¹⁰ Whatever the disagreement surrounding the content of the Act, what was beyond debate was,

as the Home Secretary recognised, that the passing of the Crofters Act of 1886 was nothing less than the *letting out of the waters*.²¹¹

To apply the term grandmotherly to the legislation which eventually emerged from Parliament following the Report of the Napier Commissioners is apposite in more senses than one. For the fact of the matter was that the Crofters Holdings Act of 1886 proved very much to be the letting out of the waters that Sir William Harcourt had foreseen,²¹² so that the Royal Commission to inquire into the condition of the Crofters and Cottars in the Highlands and Islands was to constitute not only an important landmark in its own right. It was also to become the parent of a series of subsequent inquiries, which in their turn, would bring about the plethora of legislative change which effectively turned the Highlands into the oldest development area in the United Kingdom. In other words:

*After 1886 the pattern of events in the Highlands was increasingly controlled - or at least dominated by - central government or by official agencies established by it.*²¹³

The 1886 Act itself covered the counties of Orkney, Shetland, Sutherland, Ross and Cromarty, Caithness, Inverness-shire and Argyll, and effectively introduced the 'crofting counties' as an administrative and legal as well as a geographical entity. Its provisions applied to those 151 out of 163 civil parishes where there existed at 1886 or during the preceding eighty years, holdings consisting of arable land held with rights of common pasture, and upon which there were tenants paying annual money rents of under £30. The Act therefore affected virtually every crofter in the Highlands and Islands and was distinctly at odds with the recommendations of the Napier Commission, which had argued

against the granting of legal protection to those tenants paying annual rents of less than £6. To grant security of tenure to the tenants of these tiniest crofts even although (or perhaps just because) they constituted the majority of crofters, was construed by the Royal Commissioners as sanctioning nothing less than security to live in poverty.²¹⁴ So it was that the effect of the legislation, so much at odds with the recommendations, was *to fossilise the crofting landscape as it happened to appear in 1886*.²¹⁵ The ancient claims of custom to hereditary security became legally enforceable, with tenants enjoying the right to bequeath their crofts to members of their families, or should they relinquish their holdings, to claim compensation for improvements effected either by themselves or by their family predecessors. Most important of all, the Act provided for the constitution of a special Land Court, the Crofters Commission, which was empowered to fix rents for crofters' holdings and review those on a septennial basis, cancel all or part of any accumulated arrears, and generally administer the Act and any subsequent crofting legislation.²¹⁶

Many of the demands of the crofting community as embodied in the HLLRA's Dingwall Programme were, as is apparent, met by the 1886 Act for the simple reason that both were drawn up with the Irish Land Act strongly in mind.²¹⁷ Inevitably the landed community was outraged by such radical legislation. The Scotsman condemned the Act as *a great infringement of the rights of property*²¹⁸ considering as ever the the rights of one section of the community only, while Major Fraser of Kilmuir whose tenants had been so ill-served by his sub-factor, went so far as to warn of *communism looming in the future*.²¹⁹ Yet paradoxically, it was precisely in respect of land settlement that the 1886 Act fell seriously short either of meeting crofters' immediate wishes or of providing a satisfactory basis for future development. To understand why, it is necessary to

appreciate that there was a crucial difference between the Irish and the Highland situations, a difference which hinged upon the distinction between the primarily arable nature of agriculture in Ireland as against primarily pastoral in north-west Scotland. Freedom from the injustice of arbitrary eviction and rack-renting was certainly a benefit to Highland crofters but it was not a sufficient condition for improvement.²²⁰

If to these two necessary conditions had been added, not compensation for improvements - *in Ireland worth hundreds of pounds, in Lewis or in Sutherland a species of tenant-right which may be calculated in pence, not even in shillings.*²²¹ - but rather the possibility of acquiring more land through resettlement, then the crofter's joy would have been complete. But by consistently calling for comparability with Irish legislation, the crofting community - or at least its political leadership - had perhaps undermined its own case - becoming increasingly obsessed with theoretical rights rather than practical needs, with the result that it achieved what it had fought for, but not what it actually most required.²²² As Sir William Harcourt had explained to the Prime Minister prior to the introduction of the Bill, *in the Highlands there is very little over-renting, and hardly any capricious eviction.*²²³ So the Home Secretary, at least, was fully acquainted with the peculiarities of the Highland situation. More particularly, in December 1884, one of the Napier Commissioners had actually told him that:

*The Irish Land Act has not proved a success among the very small tenants in the west, whose condition most nearly resembles the Skye or Lewis crofter. I mean, it has not made them any richer, except by the few shillings taken off their small rents.*²²⁴

And even if the crofters themselves failed to recognise it to be so, in January 1885 the Lord Advocate informed

Harcourt that in his opinion "the question of more land is by far the most important" of the crofters' demands to the extent that *the expectations, or, at all events, the hopes, which the crofting class cherish, will not be satisfied unless legislative provision is made for giving them more land.*²²⁵

To acknowledge the problem, however, was not to solve it. Crofters were demonstrably too poor to afford to buy any land made available to them and the time was not yet ripe for implementation of the possible alternative - namely for the government to buy the required land and lease it to crofters. The concept of government intervention in the economy in the name of welfare and equity was as yet unacceptable to the establishment. Departure from the principles of laissez-faire had certainly commenced by the end of the nineteenth century, but it constituted less a voluntary realignment from within than inevitable erosion occasioned by relentless external pressure. Another decade of persistent crofter agitation would make a considerable difference to prevailing views of economic philosophy, but for the present, as the Lord Advocate put it, the notion *that the State should acquire large stretches of land and let it off to tenants would involve a very large proposal, and one which, down to this time, has not been sanctioned by Parliament.*²²⁶ Given that, as it was, the Crofters' Act was known to go further than the Irish Land Act,²²⁷ not surprisingly the Lord Advocate concluded of State Ownership and management of land: *I do not suppose that that is a proposal that would be entertained.*²²⁸ Similarly the Scottish Secretary alluded to the idea of compulsory purchase only to use it as an Aunt Sally to be knocked down on the grounds that one would *not feel justified in calling upon the general taxpayer to pay money or risk his credit for the sake of a Highland population any more than for any other section of the population of the United Kingdom.*²²⁹ Furthermore, the Secretary

for Scotland argued, the proceedings which had placed the Highland crofter in his present position were not the work of the State. However, although at this point the House echoed to cries of *Hear hear* there were exclamations also of *Oh!*²³⁰ This, and indeed the mention at all in the House by Cabinet Ministers of the possibility of public ownership, serves as ample testimony to the ongoing process of erosion of confidence in the continuing appropriateness of the undiluted economics of Adam Smith. And though time would tell, in the meantime the Crofters Commission was endowed with powers of compulsory enlargement of crofts so limited by exclusion clauses that they proved totally ineffective in practice.²³¹

Already by the time the Bill was being debated in Parliament its shortcomings were apparent to the Crofter MPs. Dr Clark announced that he had been led to believe, by, among others, the Lord Advocate, that the refurbished Bill would be much more drastic than the old one, yet he could not see that it was any more radical. Furthermore, he declared:

*If the government is not prepared to give an increase of arable land as well as pasture land, there is no use in dealing with the question at all. The 'three F's' will not settle it; even to give the crofters their present holdings free from both rents and taxes - even then they will not solve this Highland question.*²³²

His conclusion that the Bill represented nothing more than a *sham and a delusion*²³³ was not altogether different from that of the Highland landowner MP for Falkirk Burgh, Mr Ramsay, who considered that the measures so far as the distressed districts of Scotland are concerned, must prove *illusory*.²³⁴ In other words, the Bill did not seek to reduce the ratio of crofters to land whether by enlarging the latter - which would have pleased Dr Clark

and his colleagues - or by diminishing the former - which would have pleased such as Mr Ramsay, who declared:

*That the right honourable Gentleman [the Secretary for Scotland] should have made no provision for removing part of the people from the congested districts, nor any suggestion as to how their distress can be alleviated, constitutes a very grave defect in the proposal now made to the House.*²³⁵

Certainly, the fall-back position which the Government had chosen to adopt, that of a negative policy of protection, would ensure that the House would not hear the end of the problems of the crofting community for decades to come. Of the balance of the Crofter MPs, Messrs MacDonald and MacFarlane observed that the Act was simply tinkering with the question and that it would practically be of no advantage to the Highland people.²³⁶ Yet for all their criticism they acknowledged, however negatively, that the Bill was a start, since they prefaced their respective remarks with *unless it is greatly improved in Committee and in its present shape.*²³⁷ And although Mr MacFarlane was later to denounce the Act for making the crofters' position actually worse,²³⁸ for the present he admitted: *I am glad that something is being proposed; but I wish it was a more thorough and complete measure.*²³⁹ That it was a measure at all testifies not only to the erosion of laissez-faire policy, but also to the certainty of the implementation of further measures as that process of erosion continued, as it surely would. As that most radical of Highland papers the Oban Times was later to concede of the Act, *it must be admitted that it inaugurated a new era for Highlanders.*²⁴⁰

Even as the Bill progressed through its various Parliamentary stages,²⁴¹ the signs that it was to precipitate not a return to tranquillity, but a series of encounters between the crofting community and the forces of law and order more bitter and violent than any which has hitherto occurred,²⁴² were beginning

to be apparent. Already in April 1886 the crofters in Glendale were resolved *not to rest satisfied without getting all the land of the Highlands for the people of the Highlands.*²⁴³

By June, similarly, their Staffin colleagues saw fit to *utterly condemn the so-called Crofters Bill* and they pledged themselves *to continue the agitation until the full measure of their just rights to the soil of their ancestors [was] recognised and secured to them by the legislature.*²⁴⁴ And not only in these peculiarly militant districts of Skye but the length and breadth of the Highlands, from Mull in the south-west up through the Long Island and round by Cape Wrath to Helmsdale in the north-east, virtually identical resolutions were carried unopposed at HLLRA meetings.²⁴⁵

Most frustrated of all were the cottars. At a meeting convened in Skye a few months after the release of the Napier Report, a representative of this group was to be found commenting on the short-sightedness and narrow-mindedness of some of the crofters. As he pointed out:

*It would not benefit the cottars a bit though others got a reduction in rent and more land unless they got land for themselves.*²⁴⁶

The fact is that the provisions of the 1886 Act for increasing land available to crofters were few and far between, for securing land for cottars they were non-existent, and falling outwith the scope of the Act as they did, the cottars felt cheated and angry. In vain Glasgow MP Dr Cameron warned the House that *the discontent in the Highlands can never be removed until the case of the cottars is, to some extent, grappled with in the same way as that of the crofters.*²⁴⁷ So it was that the raiding of waste ground on their landlords' estates by these most deprived members of a deprived community, for no other purpose than to grow potatoes to feed themselves, marked the beginning of this next violent phase of the Highland Land War.²⁴⁸

The dearth of land for the crofters and the dearth of a satisfactory Highland industrial base to provide jobs for the landless were, in fact, to constitute the subjects of the next generation of Commissions of Enquiry on the Highlands. The Report which spawned all the subsequent ones, namely that of the Napier Commissioners, had made a number of recommendations concerning the improvement of Highland, and especially Island, communications.²⁴⁹ It was essentially these which were to lead ultimately to the setting up of the Western Highlands and Islands Commission, the remit of which was to discover what industries could be fostered and how.²⁵⁰ This in turn would result in the Highlands and Islands Works Act, which provided a considerable impetus to the extension of rail, road and steamer communication, as well as the improvement of minor pathways and boatships - £47,000 eventually being set aside in 1891 for *public works and communications*, in the first of a series of similar votes under the provisions of that Act.²⁵¹ However, as will shortly become apparent, to telescope into a few lines several years of persistent lobbying in the House by committed campaigners on the one hand, and several years of private deliberation on the part of successive governments on the other - deliberation which manifested itself as public delay - is to do a serious injustice to the political history of the period. Certain improvements in the area of communications, it is true, had been effected almost immediately the Report of the Royal Commissioners had appeared. For example, the matter of reducing the length of time taken by both telegraphic messages and mail between Barra, in particular, and the mainland was treated as a matter of some urgency, before it became an excessive embarrassment in the House.²⁵² Thus, although the passing of a less than satisfactory Crofters Act took

two years and two changes of government, implementation of, or at least action upon, some of the less fundamental, but nonetheless important, recommendations of the Napier Commissioners ensued much more quickly. It was fortunate that this was so, for as Mark Stewart, MP for Kirkcudbright observed of the 1886 Act, there was nothing in it relating to improvements in either postal or telegraphic communications, or harbours.²⁵³

Nor did the momentum slacken after the fall of Gladstone's third administration in the summer of 1886. Indeed, the Marquess of Lothian, who held the post of Secretary for Scotland from 1887, took a personal interest in the matter of telegraphic extension in the remote north-west Highlands and Islands.²⁵⁴ As a result, between 1887 and 1892, no less than £5,950 had been granted to the Fishery Board for the purposes of guaranteeing telegraph extensions in remote fishery districts.²⁵⁵ Over the issue of major infrastructure development, however, Lord Lothian bided his time. As it happened, from the spring of 1888 onwards, after what transpired to be a final fling of cottar violence focussed largely on the Outer Isles, the fearful unrest which had swept through the Highlands was on the wane. At the height of the disturbances, Lord Lothian had instructed the Lord Advocate, not only that it was imperative to retain existing troops and marines in the Western Highlands, but also that there was a possibility of extra ships being required.²⁵⁶ Subsequently a flurry of letters and telegrams was exchanged between Lord Lothian, his advisers and the various representatives of the authorities on the ground, while an additional vessel - the 'Seahorse' which was standing by at Plymouth - was indeed despatched to Stornoway.²⁵⁷ However, fears that a *renewal of the crofter disturbance in the North [was] imminent* in the form of a *general rising*²⁵⁸ did not, in fact, materialise, a gradual decline in unlawful

activities in the Highlands taking place instead.²⁵⁹ Even so, a few hardy campaigners continued to draw attention to the many deprivations and inequalities which persisted.

One of these stalwarts was Angus Sutherland, MP for Sutherlandshire. A former Glasgow schoolteacher and president of the Glasgow Sutherland Association, whose grandfather had been evicted from Kildonan, Sutherland had succeeded in capturing his native county in the election of summer 1886, where six months earlier he had failed.²⁶⁰ And while the operations of the Crofters Commission and the possibility of securing amendments to the Crofters Holdings Act preoccupied some,²⁶¹ others like Sutherland cast their net wider. Thus, in May of 1889 he put a question to the First Lord of the Treasury concerning the infrastructure development which the Napier Commissioners had agreed was much called for. There was the matter of constructing a railway from Garve to Ullapool, and of tramways, piers and harbours in the Island of Lewis. Did the Government, Mr Sutherland wanted to know, intent to grant subsidies towards these and, if so, could he establish *whether the claims of other localities in the Highlands [would] receive equal consideration?*²⁶² On that occasion, however, Mr Sutherland was to learn only that as far as Lewis was concerned, it was the intention of the Secretary for Scotland personally to visit the island in due course *to inform himself on the spot as to the various plans ... unofficially submitted to the Government.*²⁶³

Lord Lothian himself - in the words of the Oban Times *cautious as he was both as a Scot and a public official*²⁶⁴ - nevertheless described the motive for his West Highland tour as being to identify what could be done *to ameliorate the*

conditions of the inhabitants of those parts²⁶⁵ and certainly following that visit it appears that even if it fully intended to drag its feet the Government was now prepared to make certain ad hoc concessions to under-development, as distinct from distress.²⁶⁶ Any scheme of improvement Lord Lothian wrote in his confidential report of the visit must of course, involve the spending of public money. But he made it emphatically clear that in the way of mere charity, nothing further under present circumstances is either desired or desirable.²⁶⁷ The report continued:

*The only hope for a quiet and permanent solution of the difficult problem before us is to place at the disposal of the peoples of these far-off districts some means by which they may, by obtaining a market for their produce, receive some return for their labour, and thus have the hope and prospect of improving the position by their own exertions. At present they have no such hope.*²⁶⁸

This being so, Lord Lothian's prescription for rescuing the Highlands and Islands was that:

*they [should] receive, in some measure, from the Imperial Exchequer those material aids to development with which districts more fortunately placed have been able to furnish themselves, but which the situation of the Highlands have [sic] put beyond their reach. The question thus becomes one of 'public works', in the wider sense of that expression, and the point for decision is the extent to which, and the manner in which, the Highlands and Islands are to be excepted from the sound general rule that every locality should pay for its own undertakings.*²⁶⁹

As to the detail of any such development plan, the weight of evidence suggested to Lord Lothian that the fishing industry was capable of great extension, so that in any general scheme equal attention should be given to sea and land as factors in development. The deep-rooted preference of crofters for occupational pluralism had not passed unnoticed during the Scottish Secretary's tour,

for he added that at present the crofters on the coast hover between the two elements; they trust to a double harvest, and give their undivided attention to neither.²⁷⁰ With a view to tackling this lack of professionalism, Colonel E D Malcolm, Commander of the Royal Engineers in Scotland, who had accompanied Lothian in an official capacity during the visit, had drawn up a list of recommendations for aiding the fishing industry. These included direct encouragement in the form of assistance in the purchase of boats and gear, and in the training of crew, as well as indirect encouragement in the form of road, railway and steamer development, telegraphic and postal improvements, and provision of beacons and lighthouses.²⁷¹ Finally, the Secretary for Scotland took the opportunity in his report to remind his Cabinet colleagues both of the absolute necessity for such a scheme and of the vital spin-off:

*The interests involved are of the utmost importance, not only for the districts distinctly concerned, but to a far larger area; for so long as chronic destitution exists, so long must there be discontent and a fruitful field for agitation.*²⁷²

In the House, meanwhile, in reponse to a request for information as to the intentions of the Government in respect of improving the means of communication and developing the material resources of the Highlands, the Chancellor merely replied that the Scottish Secretary had informed him generally of the impressions made upon him by his visit. Members were assured that although no actual plan had yet been formulated, the Government was nevertheless very desirous to render aid in directions which he has pointed out.²⁷³ Exactly what these directions were was, however, was not to be revealed beyond the confines of the Cabinet. Further questioning by Scottish Members a few weeks later

revealed only that the Government was to consider the Secretary for Scotland's report carefully during the recess, prior to introducing a Bill the next session along the lines of existing Irish legislation, but in the meantime there would be no consultation with Scottish Members nor even circulation of the report, which was confidential.²⁷⁴ In actual fact, a draft paper based on Lord Lothian's report, entitled 'Proposed Conditions of a Trust for the benefit of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland' was simulataneously being circulated to Cabinet members, which sought to earmark a sum of £150,000 to be invested in *the general improvement of the means of communication by sea and land between the Highlands and islands and the Southern Markets, and between different parts of the Highlands and Islands.*²⁷⁵ However, that particular document was destined only to gather dust as autumn 1889 gave place to winter.

As far as interested MPs in the House were concerned, that the Government was adopting delaying tactics became obvious by Christmas, with the issue by Lord Lothian on December 27th of the warrant appointing the Western Highlands and Islands Commission under the Chairmanship of Spencer Walpole, Lieutenant-Governor of the Isle of Man.²⁷⁶ For, in discharging their remit *to inquire into certain matters affecting the interests of the population of the Western Highlands and islands of Scotland, the members of the Commission were authorised to visit and personally inspect such places as they may deem expedient for the purposes of their inquiry*²⁷⁷ - a necessarily time-consuming procedure. A year later Fraser-Mackintosh was asking vainly of their report *whether an effort to expedite the issuing will be made, so as to permit of legislation during the present Session?*²⁷⁸ But the same stormy weather which ironically on account of the lack of harbour accommodation, claimed the lives

of a number of fishermen constituents of Angus Sutherland, prevented the Commissioners from completing their scheduled programme of visits before the autumn of 1890.²⁷⁹ The Walpole Report was therefore published in two parts, the first in July 1890 and the second in December. At the end of January 1891 it was the turn of Glasgow Camlachie MP Mr Watt, supported by Dr Clark, to raise the question of legislation in the House, yet again in vain, this time on account of the *serious indisposition* of the Secretary for Scotland, who has been unable to confer with his colleagues upon the matter since the December Session. The inevitable carrot was, however, proffered; apparently it was intended shortly to ask the House to provide money to carry out those recommendations which the Government has decided to adopt.²⁸⁰

The crofter MPs politely tolerated just one further unsatisfactory response to their questioning in the House.²⁸¹ Then they and their (in the main Glasgow) supporters launched a scathing attack upon the Government. James Caldwell restated the relevant sequence of events: the Report was issued in July of 1890; the Government were asked what they were prepared to do to carry out recommendations; they undertook to announce their policy on the re-assembling of Parliament for the Autumn Session; in January Lord Lothian was ill; now it was well into the Spring and still no declaration had been made.

*The condition of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland has long been the subject of Commissions; but no practical good having yet followed from them, it is not surprising that the inhabitants have lost confidence in them. and are sceptical as to any good results.*²⁸²

Furthermore, Mr Caldwell continued, why was it that in Scotland distress was scheduled to be relieved with

locally raised revenue of £10,000 set aside by the Local Government (Scotland) Act, yet for Ireland as much as one and a half million pounds had been voted from Central Government funds?²⁸³ In supporting his colleague, Ross and Cromarty MP Dr McDonald saw fit to criticise the West Highland Commission both for its method of inquiry and for some of its resultant recommendations. In particular, he argued, it was ridiculous to propose a steamer for the west coast of Lewis, when it could operate but for four months of the year.²⁸⁴ Dr McDonald pointed merely to the Commissioners' unfamiliarity with, and indeed ignorance of, west Highland conditions; he could have highlighted their actual stupidity in making such a suggestion when they themselves were prevented precisely by adverse weather conditions from meeting their deadline. Following further criticism from Mr Sutherland,²⁸⁵ the First Lord of the Treasury rose to reply. Whether or not his explanation for the delay is regarded as being plausible, the well-chosen words nonetheless signify the public unveiling of the Conservative's new policy of Government aid to the Highlands, a philosophy which had taken forty years - since the collapse of the Destitution Board schemes - to mature. Negative charitable relief was at last to be replaced by more positive regional policy, with an explicit recognition by central government of the potential of well-directed development funds to obviate the requirement for emergency doles once and for all.

So it was that on March 23, 1891 the House was informed that following the Secretary for Scotland's findings during his visit to Lewis,

*it is not now proposed that they [the Government] should do anything on the ground of distress, but that, as there is a portion of the country which remains undeveloped, assistance may be given to enable the inhabitants to maintain themselves in a condition of perfect independence.*²⁸⁶

It was with that purpose, the First Lord of the Treasury continued, that the Government had thought it right to appoint a Commission, and, subsequent to its reporting, the Government had been engaged for many weeks carefully considering what measures would best promote the interests they all had at heart.

*The Government desire not so much to relieve exceptional distress, but, if they can, to raise the condition of that part of the country to a higher level than it has attained in the past. Undoubtedly means of communication are necessary, and so is the improvement of harbours, lights, piers, and landing-stages. Those are the questions which have received the careful consideration of the Government; but as honourable Members must be aware, they are not matters to be arranged offhand.*²⁸⁷

Communications, it was explained, had to be made with the Local Authorities and with all persons locally interested, not least landlords who would be expected to help in carrying out improvements, just as the locality itself should undertake to bear a portion of the expense even if it is only a small portion of the work which is intended to be permanently beneficial to the district.²⁸⁸ Finally the First Lord of the Treasury pointed out that no time had in any case been lost with regard to getting legislation on the Statute Book since,

*when the Government come to the House and ask for a Vote, I think that we shall be able to justify the course we have taken.*²⁸⁹

When that would eventually be, however, he gave no hint, and on April 20 Charles Fraser-Mackintosh once again began applying pressure on behalf of his Crofter MP colleagues.²⁹⁰

Subsequently, whether in recognition of the Government's sincerity to act, or out of sheer resignation, attention was once again being focussed on that most basic of crofter problems, land shortage. Towards the end of April a resolution was put forward by Angus Sutherland calling for provisions to restrict uncontrolled expansion of deer forests. Sutherland reminded the House of the Napier Commissioners' recommendation that legislation should be framed under which croft lands, and indeed all land below a certain altitude, should be protected against further encroachment of forest. Parliament had, by default, warned Mr Sutherland allowed the crofters' land shortage difficulties to intensify during the previous eight year period of expansive and unregulated afforestation.²⁹¹ Support for the resolution was forthcoming from Dr MacDonald who claimed that in addition to deer forest expansion taking in land normally used by crofters as stock pasturage, it now also involved the fencing off by sporting proprietors of arable ground, to provide themselves with winter oats feed, essential if deer numbers were to be maintained well in excess of the 'natural' carry of the uplands.²⁹² The result was, Angus Sutherland pointed out, that while in 1873 deer forests had accounted for only 9% of Highland acreage, by 1884 when the Napier Commissioners had reported, the figure stood at 29% while the figure for 1890 was quoted by Lyall's Sporting guide as a staggering 56½%.²⁹³ And although on that particular occasion with that particular topic the Crofter MPs were to find no joy, little more than a more later the House

was debating the proposal to spend a sum not exceeding £50,000 upon certain public works, and for improved communications, within the Highlands and Islands of Scotland.²⁹⁴ The resolution was scarcely agreed - resulting in the Western Highlands and Islands (Scotland) Works Act of 1891 - when on June 12 1891 a return was ordered of particulars of all Deer Forests and lands exclusively devoted to sport in Scotland.²⁹⁵

In due course the Royal Commission (Highlands and Islands, 1892), or Deer Forest Commission, was appointed:

*to inquire whether any land now occupied for the purposes of a deer forest, grouse moor, or other sporting purposes, or for grazing, not in the occupation of crofters is capable of being cultivated to profit or otherwise advantageously occupied by crofters or other small tenants .*²⁹⁶

And although the Deer Forest Report was three years in the writing, its major conclusion was unequivocal - namely, that rather more than 400,000 acres could be used to extend existing holdings, while almost 800,000 acres over and above that were suitable for the creation of new crofts.²⁹⁷ As D H MacFarlane had put it during the second reading of the remedial Crofters Bill:

*It was as if all the people in a large house were huddled into the garrets. The people were in the garrets, and the deer were on the first and the sheep were on the second floors. The remedy fro that congestion was to replace the people on this land; to re-people the whole house.*²⁹⁸

Mr Ramsay, MP for Falkirk Burgh and Highland landowner, had disagreed, as witnessed by his proposed amendment that the legislation should make provision for assisting the voluntary emigration of families from congested districts. Eventually his amendment was withdrawn, but not before Mr MacFarlane

had observed dryly that he would be prepared to vote for it if the Hon. Member would strike out the letter "e" in the word *emigration* in his Amendment, and make it *migration*.²⁹⁹ Following the Report of the Deer Forest Commissioners, Parliament was to take Mr MacFarlane's orthographic advice.

NOTES

1. Adam Collier, The Crofting Problem (Cambridge, 1953) 49
2. Collier (1953) 49-50. Describing how farms in the lowlands and on the east coast were enclosed, farm houses and steadings built, new implements acquired and the quality of the stock improved, Collier points to the superior climate and soil being a principal enabling factor and better calculated than in the west to bring a good return on the capital invested. See also above Chapter One, Section (iii), Part (b)
3. See J P Day, Public Administration in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland (London, 1918) 26 and 28
4. Sheriff-substitute Charles Shaw to Sheriff Wm Fraser Tytler, September 30, 1850, in Sir John McNeill, Report to the Board of Supervision (1851), Appendix B, 140
5. Rev Angus Martin to Sir George Grey, Secretary of State, Home Office, January 21, 1851, in McNeill (1851) Appendix B, 148
6. Petition from the Presbytery of Skye to Sir George Grey, February 8, 1851, in McNeill (1851), Appendix B, 151
7. See Day (1918) 102 and James Hunter, The Making of the Crofting Community (Edinburgh, 1976) 75. For examples of petitions and memorials, see McNeill (1851) Appendix B, passim
8. See above Chapter One, Section (iii) Part (c)
9. Compare much more recent hesitation and vacillation during the present half-century over the delineation of development areas. Pockets of localised severe unemployment may be particularly deserving, but their marginal potential for economic amelioration is less spectacular and certainly less politically rewarding than favouring the favoured.
10. Inverness Courier, January 1, 1852, quoted in Day (1918) 97
11. Day (1918) 97
12. Despite the grandiloquent wrappings with which it clothed its stated objectives, the Board's primary task was never denied to be other than distribution of relief to the destitute. See above Chapter One, Section (iii), Part (c)

13. See Hunter (1976) 75 and Day (1918) 101-2
14. W Smythe, Secretary, Board of Supervision to H Waddington, Home Secretary, winter 1850-1, in McNeill (1851) Appendix B, 141-2. The legality of this view of the parochial boards' liability and hence the correctness in law of the instruction from Government was, in fact, later successfully challenged.
15. Day (1918) 94-5, quoting from the Poor Law Report of 1844. See also Hunter (1976) 102
16. See Day (1918) 101-2
17. T Mulock, The Western Highlands and Islands of Scotland Socially Considered (Edinburgh, 1850) 10
18. See RDC Black, Economic Thought and the Irish Question (Cambridge, 1960) 129-30; Rev T MacLauchlan, The Depopulation System in the Highlands (by an Eye Witness, reprinted from the pages of the Witness newspaper) (Edinburgh, 1849) 16; Mulock (1850) 10; C Woodham-Smith, The Great Hunger (London, 1962) 227. In Ireland landlords had to pay the full rates on all holdings of a valuation below £4 per annum, and they were further motivated to get rid of tenants of such holdings by the 'quarter-acre clause' of the Poor Relief (Ireland) Act 1847, which made it unlawful to grant relief to any person in occupation of more than that extent of land. See Black (1960) footnote on p 10, pp 35, 125-6 and 129. Tenants with more than $\frac{1}{4}$ acre had to surrender possession before receiving relief, which was highly convenient for landlords
19. Day (1918) 102
20. See Central Board of Management, Eleventh Report (Glasgow Section) (1849) 13; CBM, Twelfth Report (Glasgow Section) (1849) 7-8, CBM, Thirteenth Report (Glasgow Section) (1850) 15. The precise wording from Eleventh Report, p 12, is as follows: "The Committee are convinced of the melancholy fact that there is not enough of arable land in some of the Islands ... to support the population upon them ..." Yet in condoning this last resort application of their funds for emigration, the same Committee also felt it necessary to spell out quite clearly its view that: "Emigration is undoubtedly requisite from some parts, but not so much from this country to any of the Colonies, or to the United States, as from one part of the Highlands to another."
21. Quoted in K Marx, 'Forced Emigration', Marx and Engels on Britain (Moscow, 1953) 372

22. J Bruce, Destitution in the Islands (Letters on the Present Condition of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, reprinted from the Scotsman) (Edinburgh, 1847) 74
23. See Hunter (1976) 76-7 and also above Chapter One, Section (ii)
24. The Free Church Destitution Committee voiced its disquiet through its own mouthpiece, The Witness newspaper. See Hunter (1976) 77. McNeill's remedy is found in McNeill (1851) xxxv-xxxvi. W P Alison's view of emigration is found in W P Alison, Letter to Sir John McNeill on Highland Destitution (Edinburgh, 1851) 11-12
25. See CBM, Eleventh Report (Glasgow Section) (1849) 12-13 and CBM Twelfth Report (Glasgow Section) (1849) 8. Aware of the critics, such as T Mulock who accused the Board of being pro-landlord (Mulock, 1850, 101), the Central Board ensured that every application to emigrate was carefully scrutinised, that provisions were made for passage - money, support both during the voyage and upon arrival at destination - and that the ruling on redistribution of vacated crofts was adhered to strictly. See CBM, Eleventh Report (Glasgow Section) (1849) 13 and CBM, Thirteenth Report (Glasgow Section) (1850) 15
26. See CBM, Report on the Outer Hebrides (Glasgow Section) (August, 1849) 26. "The Committee are therefore precluded from paying any part of the expenses incurred by the emigration of these parties - the resolution of the Central Board ... not having been complied with."
27. See Hunter (1976) 79. The personal views of the Relief Board Local Glasgow Committee members made quite plain in a paragraph pertaining to overpopulation on Mull. "We repeat that we would assuredly object to any system of emigration which did not provide for the permanent benefit of those who emigrated, as well as for those who remained." CBM, Report on Mull (Glasgow Section) (October, 1849) 28
28. 'Extract of a Letter from Rev Mr Forbes, Manse of Sleat, Skye', August 13, 1851, quoted in Alison (1851) 6
29. G P Scrope, Some Notes of a Tour in England, Scotland and Ireland (London, 1849), quoted in Alison (1851) 18
30. Alison (1851) 19

31. Alison (1851) 19
32. Alison (1851) 14-5
33. W Smythe, Secretary of the Board of Supervision, to H Waddington, Home Office, October 25, 1850 in McNeill (1851) Appendix B, 142
34. McNeill (1851) xxx
35. See the statement of evidence from Donald McGillvray. Crofter, Creich in McNeill (1851) Appendix A, 7
36. See CBM, Thirteenth Report (Glasgow Section) (1850) 14-6 and McNeill (1851) xxxv-xxxvi. See also the petitions referenced in note 37 below.
37. For example, Petition from Poor Persons in Tyree to Sir John McNeill in McNeill (1851) Appendix A, 133-5 and Petition from Presbytery of Skye to Sir George Grey, Secretary of State, Home Office, February 8, 1851 in McNeill (1851) Appendix B, 151
38. McNeill (1851) Appendix B, 151
39. Statement of evidence from Alexander Macdonald, February 12, 1851 in McNeill (1851) Appendix A, 6
40. Statement of evidence from Rev Donald McVean, February 10, 1851 in McNeill (1851) Appendix A, 2
41. Statement of evidence from Rev Duncan Stewart McEachern, Skye, March 5, 1851 in McNeill (1851) Appendix A, 37
42. Statement of evidence from Donald Shaw, Crofter, Waternish, February 28, 1851 in McNeill (1851) Appendix A, 54
43. Petition from Crofters, Cottars and Others in Parishes of Duirnish and Bracadale to the House of Commons, nd, in McNeill (1851) Appendix B, 155
44. McNeill (1851) Appendix B, 155
45. Statement of evidence from Rev Duncan Matheson, March 19, 1851 in McNeill (1851) Appendix A, 80
46. McNeill (1851) xxxvi
47. McNeill (1851) Appendix B, 142. See also McNeill (1851) xxxvi

48. See Hunter (1976) 78-82. Hunter arrived at his figure of 16,000 by adding figures given in official and semi-official services, and cautions that, since all emigration statistics of this period are notoriously unreliable and incomplete, the figure is a provisional one.
49. See Hunter (1976) 87
50. New Statistical Account of Scotland (Edinburgh, 1835-45) xv, 95
51. NSA (1835-45) xiv, 198
52. Collier (1953) 73, n 1, cites a rent for three neighbouring sheep farms in the parish of Bracadale in Skye as £5000 per year between them.
53. See Collier (1953) 71-3
54. Hunter (1976) 107-11. Although a variety of sources for his information are listed by Hunter, the Evidence to (and Report by) Her Majesty's Commissioners of Inquiry into the condition of the Crofters and Cottars in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, 1884 (the Napier Commissioners) dominates these, testifying to the importance of the Napier Report and its associated four volumes of evidence as a document of Highland social history of the time.
55. Evidence to the Napier Commission (1884) Question 11474. Future references will take the form of NC followed by the question number.
56. See above Chapter One, section (ii)
57. See Roy Douglas, Land, People and Politics: The Land Question in the United Kingdom 1878-1952 (London, 1976) 60. Douglas, synthesising from contemporary press accounts, is referring specifically to Skye but the description applies to the Hebrides and North West mainland coastline more generally. See also above Chapter One, Section (ii)
58. Lord Lovat to the Lord Advocate, circulated to Cabinet, October 2, 1885 (CAD 37/16/54). This series of Cabinet papers is held on microfilm at the Scottish Record Office. The reference in this instance is RH4/9/6. See also H J Hanham, 'The Problem of Highland Discontent 1880-1885', Trans. Royal Hist. Soc. 5th Series, 19 (1969) 21

59. 'Crop Statistics for 1881', Transactions of the Highland and Agricultural Society of Scotland, 4th Series, xiv (1882) 350-1; 'Crop Statistics for 1882', THASS, 4th Series, xv (1883) 294-6; The Times, March 9, 1883; Reports as to the Alleged Destitution in the Western Highlands and Islands (1883) 1-2
60. See the Reports as to the Alleged Destitution in the Western Highlands and Islands (1883) 2; Scotsman February 6, 1883; The Times March 9, 1883. See also Chapter One, Section (ii)
61. See 'Crop Statistics for 1882', THASS, 4th Series, xv (1883) 294-5; NC 46056. Crop damage related to a gale of October 1; the damage to boats was the result of a subsequent storm of November 22. Hunter (1976) 131 telescopes the two events, making no reference to the November incident, which is, however, substantiated in other Parliamentary references cited by Hanham (1969) 21-65, for example, C 3980 - IV 3314, and HC (1884) XXXVI, 771
62. See Scotsman, December 15, 1883 and The Times, March 9, 1883. See also above Chapter One, Section (ii)
63. NC 1790
64. See Board of Supervision, Forty-Third Report (1888) ix
65. W R Scott, 'Scottish Land Settlement' in D T Jones et al (eds), Rural Scotland During the War (Oxford, 1926) 227. See also Douglas (1976) 89
66. See Hunter (1976) 129
67. NC 11471
68. Hunter (1976) 129. Hunter devotes an entire chapter (Chapter 6, 89-106) to the emergence of the crofting community.
69. The development of education in the Highlands is treated by Day (1918) 143-176. For contemporary reports, see Alexander Nicolson, Report on the State of Education in the Hebrides (1867) and the Napier Report (1884) 67-81. 1876 saw the first publication of the Celtic Magazine which was dedicated inter alia to the "social and material interests of the Celt at home and abroad." A scathing denunciation of Highland landlordism by its editor, Alexander Mackenzie, was repudiated by the Duke of Argyll and subsequently the subject was taken up by the Inverness Courier and by The Highlander.

The Oban Times was, simultaneously, emerging as a radical and outspoken advocate of the crofters' cause and the North British Daily Mail also began to emphasise the crofters' case. See I F Grigor, Mightier Than a Lord (Stornoway, 1979) 35

70. J Cameron, The Old and New Highlands and Hebrides (Kirkcaldy, 1912) 27
71. See Cameron (1912) 26-7 and Hunter (1976) 129
72. Cameron (1912) 28. Cameron's wording is paraphrased from the original version which was printed in the leader of The Highlander, July 12, 1873, and read: "our country ... is labouring under the malign influences of a vicious land system."
73. The Highlander, May 24, 1873. The objectives of the paper are set out in a full page advertisement in this, the second edition of the paper, which also invites applications for shares in the new company, formed with the twin aims of establishing the paper and carrying on the business of printing and publishing in the town of Inverness
74. The Highlander, July 12, 1873 and Cameron (1912) 28. Murdoch himself describes his travels about the Highlands in his autobiography preserved in ms in five notebooks in the Mitchell Library, Glasgow
75. Lord Lovat to the Lord Advocate, October 2, 1885 (CAB 37/16/54); Report by Malcolm McNeill to the Secretary for Scotland on the Condition of the Western Highlands and islands (October, 1886) 3, Lothian Papers SRO GD/40/16/32. The fullest account of the Irish Land League is N D Palmer, The Irish Land League Crisis (New Haven, Conn., 1940). Other accounts are found in L P Curtis, Coercion and Conciliation in Ireland 1880-92 (Princeton, 1963), C C O'Brien, Parnell and His Party 1880-90 (Oxford, 1957) 36-79, and J E Pomfret, The Struggle for Land in Ireland, 1880-1923 (Princeton, 1930) 97-178. The Land Struggle is also treated in general histories of Ireland, in particular in F S L Lyons, Ireland Since the Famine (London, 1973)
76. See Lyons (1973) 172 and also Douglas (1976) 28
77. D H Macfarlane, Hansard, 3rd Series, 289, Col. 1608. Unless otherwise stated, future references to Hansard will be to the 3rd Series
78. NC 45888

79. NC 2804. A Skye factor confirmed that "there was no combination until after the Irish affair", meaning that it was only following the Irish example of what could be achieved that Skye crofters began to hold meetings and put their heads together. NC 8552. See also NC 1461
80. See NC 8549 and also Hunter (1976) 133
81. See Day (1918) 187 and Douglas (1976) 62-3
82. Irish World, May 20, 1882, quoted in Douglas (1976) 62-63. Hunter (1976) 121 describes Macdonald as "Skye's only lawyer" but Hanham (1969) 23 describes Portree as having two solicitors, one Conservative and the other Liberal.
83. NC 8291, 8394-8404. The population controlled by Macdonald is actually given here as 15,000 out of a total of 17,000 in Skye, covering five estates. However, it seems unlikely from the Napier Commission evidence that Macdonald was a member of all the school boards, only several. In his statement, Macdonald himself testifies to working from 10 am until 1 or 2 the next morning. "I think I have worked as hard as any working man in the North of Scotland. I work very hard." Inevitably this invites the rejoinder 'are you capable of doing justice....?' NC 8405-6
84. 'The Present Condition of the Highlands', An Gaidheal V (1876) 120
85. See Alexander Carmichael, Carmina Gaedelica (Edinburgh, 1940) V1, 33 and 38
86. Nigel Nicolson, Lord of the Isles (London, 1960) 43. See also Carmichael (1940) V1, 17
87. See Collier (1953) footnote on 53
88. See Hanham (1969) 23
89. Cameron (1912) 51. Hanham's assessment of Macdonald (see n88 above) is based upon Cameron and upon Norman Maclean, The Former Days (London, 1945). Maclean, who was a small boy living at the Braes in 1882, recounts how a Braes crofter went to ask the new factor's permission to cut down some of Lord Macdonald's trees for rafters and beams for a new house he wanted to build to cope with his expanding family. Alec Macdonald, after checking his records, reminded the man that he had not paid his rent for three years. As to the trees, though he would give them if he could, it was beyond his

power to do so. The crofter replied that a poor man could not rear soldiers for the Queen and pay his rent at the same time. "You wait, and in a few years, when my sons and daughters are working, I shall pay off the arrears and the interest as well." Then, losing his temper over the trees, he blurted out that Mr Macdonald was the fourth factor in his time to manage his Lordship's estate and every one of them was worse than the one before. As he ran from the room, the factor called him back and handed him a gold sovereign from his purse "to help you buy rafters for the new house". As Macdonald in his heart of hearts probably knew, that crofter would never build his house nor even clear the site. But generosity clearly characterised a man who - though in the pay of landlords - in his evidence to the Napier Commissioners felt compelled by his sense of fair play to agree that in his professional capacity he would nonetheless advise that "at a proper period, on proper occasions, portions of the large farms might still be withdrawn and restored to the township" despite probable loss to the proprietors, just so long as "the tenants can show that they are able to stock it". See NC 8311-8313

90. The Crofter, June 1885. See also A Mackenzie, The Highland Clearances (Inverness, 1883) 469
91. Printed in full in the Inverness Courier, April 15, 1882
92. Hanham (1969) 24 confirms that Angus Martin, the heriff officer, was indeed Macdonald's clerk. See also Day (1918) 187 and Douglas (1976) 63. According to Douglas, the assistant was ducked in the local burn. Kellas's interpretation, which is based on Cameron, suggests that "pails of water were thrown over his assistants". James Kellas, Modern Scotland (London, 1968) 283. Cameron's version is consistent with the description of the incident in Mackenzie (1883) 94-6, which reads: "Certain domestic utensils, fully charged, were suddenly brought on the scene, and their contents showered on the unlucky assistant, who immediately disappeared, followed by a howling crowd of boys." Norman Maclean, who heard of the incident at second hand since he himself was in school at the time, mentions only boys pelting the assistant with chuckie-stones, while a crofter's wife consoled the sheriff officer and tended his cut cheek
93. Lachlan Macdonald 'The Land Agitation in the Highlands; with special reference to the Isle of Skye', Celtic Magazine VII (1882) 394

94. Celtic Magazine VII (1882) 394. This account of the origins of the Braes incident represents Lachlan Macdonald's interpretation of the prevailing perceptions of the landocracy. Although Macdonald was himself a wealthy improving Skye landlord, he was more liberal in his own attitude to the land question, as his article testifies.
95. Despatch of Alexander Gow of the Dundee Advertiser, who accompanied the party to the Braes of Benlee, quoted in Hanham (1969) 24-30. Gow's eye-witness account complements and confirms that of Norman Maclean
96. Gow's despatch, quoted in Hanham (1969) 27
97. For contemporary accounts of the Battle of the Braes, see Glasgow Herald, April 18-21, 1882; Scotsman, April 19-21, 1882; Inverness Courier, April 18 and 22, 1882. The story is told at length also by Mackenzie (1883) whose version of Gow's despatch is the one reprinted by Hanham (1969). Gow's despatch is also quoted by Cameron (1912) 34-7. Kellas (1968) and Grigor (1979) also provide popular and very readable accounts of the episode, which is summarised briefly by Day (1918) and Douglas (1976)
98. See Grigor (1979) 45
99. See Grigor (1979) 47, Douglas (1976) 63, and Day (1918) 187. See also the primary sources quoted in n 97 above. A full account of the trial of the Braes crofters is provided in Mackenzie (1883) 435-89
100. Lord Advocate to Sherriff Ivory of Inverness-shire, November 3, 1882, relative to the disturbances among the Skye crofters. Parliamentary Papers LIV, 267
101. Lord Lovat to the Lord Advocate, October 2, 1885. (CAB 37/16/54)
102. Lord Lovat to the Lord Advocate, October 2, 1885 (CAB 37/16/54)
103. Douglas (1976) 64-5. See also Hanham (1969) 30-3 for suggestions as to the cause of the Highland disturbances
104. Crofters Commission, Final Report (1913) xxvi
105. Celtic Magazine VIII (1883) 282

106. Cameron (1912) 41, and D W Crowley, 'The Crofters Party, 1885-1892', Scottish Historical Review XXXV (1956) 115. Crowley correctly attributes organisation of the petition to the Federation of Celtic Societies, which took place in 1878. The Federation was, however, a loose one and the moving force behind the Glasgow campaign was undoubtedly the Sutherland Association. Cameron (1912) ascribes "the strangest spectacle in the streets of Glasgow of Highlanders standing in the principal thoroughfares with little tables in front of them asking passers-by to sign [their] petition." Kellas (1968) suggests that the principal objective of the Federation in Glasgow was relief of crofters in distress at the start of the 1880s. See James Hunter, 'The Politics of Highland Land Reform, 1873-1895', Scottish Historical Review L111 (1974) 48; Hanham (1969) 38 note 2; and Kellas (1968) 282. Crowley's article, although technically correct in this detail, can be misleading, as witnessed by Hunter (1974) 45 and Hanham (1969) 61-2 note 4.
107. This was certainly the case in the 1870s when it was argued in the Gaelic periodical An Gaidheal that the "awakening of interest in Celtic matters [had] not extended to the Highland peasantry." An Gaidheal IV (1875) 250, quoted in Hunter (1974) 47.
108. See Hanham (1969) 55.
109. See Grigor (1979) 53.
110. Hansard, 3rd Series, 264 (1882) col. 1206. (Unless otherwise stated, future references refer also to the 3rd Series). See also Hanham (1969) 55-6.
111. Hansard, 275 (1882) cols. 227-8. During a debate of some length the previous August, D H MacFarlane made the same point which he and others would make again. (See above notes 77 and 78). "Was the land question to be settled; or were they to tell the people of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland so long as they remained quiet, or so long as they did not agitate, so long as they did not commit crime and outrage, they would obtain no redress? That was the inevitable conclusion to which the people would come if nothing was done." The implication was that the comparative lull in Skye - since events in the Spring - would not last if the Government refused to move. However, the Lord Advocate ruled out the possibility of a Royal Commission on the grounds of insufficient evidence of hardship, or of population decrease which would signify systematic eviction. This

resolution had been anticipated in an earlier contribution from the MP for Falkirk, who was also a Highland landlord. Dismissing Mr MacFarlane as being ignorant of Highland matters, he had argued all to be well in the Highlands, using the increase of population as his sole evidence. Furthermore, "there was an endeavour being made at the present time, by some organisations in Scotland, to diffuse Irish feeling and sentiment throughout the population of the Highlands." Hansard 273 (1882) cols. 775-783. Perhaps it was this knowledge, or perhaps it was simply that they knew more than they cared to admit about living conditions in the Highlands, that provided the real justification for the Government's stance as presented by the Lord Advocate. As the latter admitted in private, to concede to the demand for a Royal Commission would create more disturbances in the long run, since expectations would be needlessly raised and would not be fulfilled. See Lord Advocate (J B Balfour) Memorandum to Gladstone, September 19, 1882, quoted in Hanham (1969) 32 n 1. In other words, the Government's only concern with the Highlands was the crofter problem and certainly not the problems of the crofters. Their reason for refusing a Royal Commission was the same reason that, of the 21 MPs later to sign a Commons motion pressing for such a Commission, only one represented a Highland constituency. See below.

112. See Hunter (1974) 49; Celtic Magazine VIII (1883) 282-3; and Cameron (1912) 42. The dating of events by Cameron does not correspond, typifying a haziness for detail pointed out by both Grigor (1979) 168 and Hanham (1969) 54 note 1
113. See Hansard 273 (1882) cols. 767, and Grigor (1979) 54. D H Macfarlane was also able to testify to the receipt of numerous letters from clergymen etc. warning of the consequences of neglect.
114. To the extent that he had been a moving force behind the establishment of a chair of Celtic at the University of Edinburgh, Professor Blackie was such a champion of Gaelicdom. However, he tended to see Gaelicdom through a romantic half-light. For short biographies of the leading personalities in the campaign for Land Reform, see Hanham (1969) 35-42, whose information is based upon material published at the time in The Crofter.
115. See Grigor (1979) 54, and Hanham (1969) 45
116. Celtic Magazine VIII (1883) 283-4

117. See Hansard 276 (1883) col. 853
118. By February 16, even before receipt of the letter from Fraser-Mackintosh, or presentation of the motion signed by the twenty-one MPs, Government resistance was seen to be crumbling. In reply to a question concerning a Royal Commission from Sir George Campbell, the Lord Advocate - Mr Balfour - stated: "I have been requested by the Home Secretary to say, in answer to this Question, that the law must first be vindicated in Skye." Hansard 276 (1883) col. 169
119. Douglas (1976) 65. See also Grigor (1979) 57
120. Celtic Magazine VIII (1883) 284
121. Celtic Magazine VIII (1883) 284-5. See also Alexander Mackenzie, Analysis of the Report of the Crofter Royal Commission (nd) 6
122. See note 111 above. The appointment of a Commission, regardless of the bias of its ultimate recommendations, made further short-term political agitation inevitable. Evidence had to be organised by outsiders, because without such organisation and the aid of an interpreter, many of the remoter communities could not have presented cases. The outsiders who stepped in to fill the breach were, of course, land reformers. See Hanham (1969) 59; Kellas (1968) 284; and the Napier Report (1884) 2
123. See below, Section (ii)
124. The Lord Advocate, J B Balfour, Hansard 285 (1884) col. 335; the Home Secretary, Sir William Harcourt, Hansard 288 (1884) col. 1503. See also Hansard 286 (1884) col. 1503
125. Cameron (1912) 42. Even the epithet "gloomy" used by Douglas (1976) 65 does not adequately convey the character of the contents.
126. The concept of absolute deprivation is not one which is held to exist in contemporary literature on deprivation, a state which is considered to be relative to some assumed norm. "Deprivation is a concept [which] ... has no precise meaning, but a household ... may be said to be deprived if its welfare falls below some generally agreed minimum standard." Ann R Millar, A Study of Multiply Deprived Households in Scotland, Scottish Office Central Research Unit Paper (June, 1960) 1. "Needs are interpreted as feelings of relative deprivation which arise when some good, service

or amenity is wanted by a particular group... but is unavailable, despite being available to others." B E Coates et al, Geography and Inequality (Oxford, 1977) 17, quoting from W G Runciman, Relative Deprivation and Social Justice (London, 1966). However, in the sense that the crofters in the 1880s had virtually no property or rights and could be favourably compared with no other group in Britain at that time, use of the term 'absolute deprivation' is felt to be warranted.

127. D H MacFarlane MP, quoted in Cameron (1912) 42
128. See above, Section (i)
129. G B Clark, The Highland Land Question (London, 1885) 3
130. See Cameron (1912) 43-4
131. Hansard 288 (1884) col. 1503
132. D H Macfarlane MP, quoted in Cameron (1912) 42
133. See Grigor (1979) 57-8
134. Hansard 289 (1884) col. 1606
135. See Grigor (1979) 57
136. Oban Times, May 19, 1883
137. Hansard 289 (1884) col. 1606
138. Lord Napier, 'The Highland Crofters', Nineteenth Century XVII (1885) 451. The full title of this article is 'The Highland Crofters: A Vindication of the Report of the Crofters' Commission'. It was written in reponse to a scathing indictment, in a previous number, of the Napier Commission - accused of being "little better than a great Shop for Scandal" - by the Duke of Argyll. (See 450 of Napier's article.) In view of the fact that the crofters were primed by such notable radicals as John Murdoch and Alexander Mackenzie "their offences" were indeed surprisingly slender. See Oban Times May 12 and 19, 1883; NC 41097; Cameron (1912) 46; and Napier Report (1884) 2
139. Napier Report (1884) 9
140. Napier Report (1884) 9
141. Napier Report (1884) 9

142. Napier Report (1884) 2. This statement was subsequently picked up and heavily emphasised by a landlord supporter in an 1886 Commons debate on a Crofters Bill. Lord Colin Campbell, Hansard 289 (1884) col. 1625. See also Duke of Argyll, Hansard 305 (1886) cols. 1486 and 1488, and his article in Nineteenth Century XVI (1884) especially 681-2
143. Napier Report (1884) 9
144. Napier Report (1884) 9
145. For technical reasons the provisions embodied in the 1883 Agricultural Holdings Act regarding compensation for improvement had proved of very little value. See Napier Report (1884) 38-9
146. See Napier Report (1884) 9-10. see also 15-6 re clearance, congestion, eviction and subdivision and 97-108 where the Commissioners' case for emigration is set out.
147. See Napier Report (1884) 56-83
148. It is probable that the word 'forest' is used here in the sense of wilderness or jungle, rather than deer forest - to which a later section of the report is exclusively devoted. Napier Report (1884) 84-96. The expression 'deer forest' is itself misleading, describing as it does "land at such altitudes, and consists so much of rock, heather, and moor as to be unsuitable for crofters, except as sheilings or summer grazings for cattle and sheep." Napier Report (1884) 85
149. Napier Report (1884) 16
150. Napier Report (1884) 16
151. Napier Report (1884) 16
152. See Napier Report (1884) 17. Even though the bulk of the Napier Commissioners' recommendations pleased no-one (see below), they at least deserved congratulations for proposing a scheme for improvement founded securely upon local tradition rather than awkwardly imposed from outside. Clearly in the months during which they took evidence, the Commissioners had developed a certain empathy with the crofting way of life. The same empathy could not be expected to exist at Westminster. Even the Lord Advocate for Scotland denounced the suggestions as "exceedingly complicated" and "devoid of any analogy or precedent in the rural

economy of Scotland." His attitude to Highlanders is perfectly captured in his subsequent remark: "and anything like complication in matters affecting a simple and primitive people is manifestly undesirable ..." Hansard 298 (1885) col. 845

153. See Napier Report (1884) 51 and 39-40. See also Kellas (1968) 284
154. Napier Report (1884) 39
155. Napier Report (1884) 39
156. Napier Report (1884) 39
157. See Cameron (1912) 53, and Hunter (1976) 142. Hunter's figure of five ringleaders derived from Home Office files is undoubtedly more accurate than Cameron's estimate of three.
158. John Macpherson, the 'ringleader' of the Glendale crofters. This description of the release of the 'martyrs' is based on Cameron (1912) 54 who rather embroiders the facts as given in the Oban Times, May 19, 1883. The "crowd of some thousand people" (Cameron) which gathered is a rather remarkable way of describing how "a number of friends assembled" (Oban Times)
159. See Hanham (1969) 59, and Hunter (1976) 146
160. See Oban Times, May 12 and 19, 1883, and NC 41097
161. Mackenzie (1883) 407
162. See Hunter (1976) 144. The new editor was Duncan Cameron, a young man passionately devoted to the crofters' cause.
163. Oban Times September 8, 1883
164. See Hunter (1974) 51. A Skye factor was subsequently to condemn the Commission as one of the principal "means by which discontent has been fathered." Hunter (1974) 51, note 6
165. See Oban Times, December 1, 1883
166. See Oban Times, December 29, 1883
167. Oban Times, February 2, 1884
168. See The Times, June 14, 1884, and Oban Times, June 21, 1884
169. See The Times, September 1, 1884

170. See Scotsman, September 5, 1884; The Times, September 5, 1884; and Celtic Magazine IX (1884) 572. The full programme is stated by Hunter (1976) 262 to have been published in the Oban Times, February 7, 1885. I can find no trace of the programme in that issue of the newspaper. Although a supplement for that date could not be consulted because it is missing from the file room of the Oban Times office, given that the meeting took place in September 1884, it seems improbable that the event was reported some five months later. On the other hand, it is possible that the missing supplement is one devoted to crofter affairs.
171. On June 27, 1884. Hansard 289 (1884) col 1639
172. Donald Cameron of Lochiel to Sir William Harcourt, December 20, 1884. CAB 37/14/7 contained in RH4/9/6
173. The suggestion was that of Lord Colin Campbell. Hansard 289 (1884) col. 1624. Campbell drew the attention of the House to a "very able" pamphlet written by the Professor of Political Economy at Edinburgh in which some of the alleged inconsistencies and anomalies were "exposed". This allegation is not altogether without foundation since it was no less than one of the Commissioners themselves who condemned the Report as "hardly worth discussing" (see n 172 above) and who constituted one of three out of the five Commissioners to append notes of dissent to the completed Report.
174. Hansard 289 (1884) cols 1628-1634. The Commissioners' remarks about the material wealth of the crofters being better than ever before were equally picked up by Lord Colin Campbell. See Hansard 293 (1884) col. 1799. See also n 142 above
175. Hansard 293 (1884) col. 1750
176. Harcourt to Gladstone, January 17, 1885, Cab. 37/14/7 contained in RH 4/9/6
177. See Hansard 289 (1884) col. 1634. The Prime Minister was to confirm this pledge the following month. See above n 169
178. That is, not only do Royal Commissions (necessarily) take months to report, but Governments are no more bound to act upon these recommendations than the 'reportees' are bound to be pleased by the findings. See above 132
179. See Cameron (1912) 55

180. See Cameron (1912) 55-7. Alexander Mackenzie, editor of the Celtic Magazine, both wrote to the Royal Commissioners in Edinburgh to alert them to the dishonesty of this document, and, by reporting the matter to the Chief Constable of Inverness-shire, was instrumental in the sergeant's transfer. Unfortunately, the officer concerned returned to Skye in the new capacity of sub-factor to Major Fraser of the Kilmuir estate.
181. See Cameron (1912) 57-63; The Times, November 11, 12, 13 and 19, 1884; Scotsman, November 17, 18 and 19, 1884. Alexander Mackenzie even addressed a pamphlet-letter to Sir William Harcourt, the Home Secretary, on November 18, on the subject of questionable sources of newspaper reports entitled The Military Expedition to the Isle of Skye - grave disclosures respecting the sources of newspaper intelligence from the Highlands. (Inverness, 1884)
182. Cameron (1912) 60-1
183. Times, November 19, 1884
184. Maclean (1945) 151-4
185. Maclean (1945) 155
186. Times, November 15, 1884
187. Maclean (1945) 151
188. See Times, November 17, 1884; Scotsman, November 14 and 17 1884
189. Mackenzie (1884) 7
190. Times, November 19, 1884
191. See Hunter (1976) 147
192. See Scotsman, December 25, 1884
193. See Oban Times, December 20 and 27, 1884; Scotsman, December 10, 1884, January 31, February 10, 1885; Times December 8 and 26, 1884. The warning in the Oban Times of December 27, 1884 was plain: "The crofter agitation is fast spreading in Skye and the crofters are getting more determined than ever to get their grievances redressed."
194. See Glasgow Herald, November 5, December 2 and 11, 1884; Scotsman, November 5, 1884; Annual Register, 1884, 53; Justice, November 1, December 27, 1884. See also Police Reports contained in the Ivory Papers for details of widespread rent strikes and land seizure throughout the Isles, but particularly in South Uist, SRO GD 1/36/2

195. See Napier Report (1884) 39. See also above n 194
196. Lochiel to Harcourt, December 20, 1884, Cab 37/14/7 (RH4/9/6)
197. See Harcourt to Gladstone, January 17, 1885, Cab 37/14/7 (RH4/9/6), Malcolm to Harcourt, February 7, 1885, Cab 37/14/10 (RH4/9/6). (Mr Malcolm was Secretary to the Meeting of the Highland Proprietors at Inverness). See also press reports of the Conference in Scotsman, January 15, 1885, and Oban Times, January 24, 1885. A useful summary of the circumstances surrounding the convening of the meeting is provided in Grigor (1979) 90-2.
198. See Scotsman, January 14 and 15, 1885
199. See Harcourt to Gladstone, January 17, 1885, Cab 37/14/7 (RH4/9/6)
200. Gladstone to Harcourt, January 19, 1885, Cab 37/14/7 (RH4/9/6)
201. Gladstone to Harcourt, January 19, 1885, Cab 37/14/7 (RH4/9/6). See also Hansard 298 (1885) col 566 and Times, May 21, 1885
202. See Scotsman, July 21, 1885
203. See Oban Times, December 12, 1885. Defeat in Sutherland was somewhat offset by the election for Wick Burghs of the candidate put up against the official Liberal there by the Wick Radical Workingmen's Association and supported also by the Land League. See Crowley (1956) 116-8.
204. This name was first applied in the Oban Times, January 2, 1886, and of course, constitutes the title of D W Crowley's article (see above n 106).
205. See Hansard 302 (1886) col 1304 ff, and 305 (1886) col. 1466 ff. See also Scotsman, May 21, 1886, and Annual Register, 1886, 83
206. See Hansard 302 (1886) col. 1305
207. See Douglas (1976) 51, and J L Hammond, Gladstone and the Irish Nation (London, 1938) 216-7
208. Hansard 305 (1886) col. 681
210. An observation by the Earl of Dalhousie, Hansard 305 (1886) col. 1472
211. Harcourt to Gladstone, January 17, 1885, Cab 37/14/7 (RH4/9/6)

212. See above n 211
213. Hunter (1976) 167
214. See Napier Report (1884) 39. See also above 131
215. D Turnock, Patterns of Highland Development (London, 1970) 66
216. See Crowley (1956) 119-20; Kellas (1968) 286; Hunter (1976) 161-2. For fuller accounts of the Act and subsequent legislation, see D J MacCuish, 'The Origin and Development of Crofting Law', Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness XL11 (1962) 181-196. See also Day (1918) 190-6, and GCH Paton and JGS Cameron, The Law of Landlord and Tenant in Scotland (Aberdeen, 1967) 387-495. It should be noted that the provisions, unlike those in Ireland, did not include free sale.
217. See above 133-4 and 140
218. Scotsman, March 4, 1886
219. Times, March 13, 1886
220. See Hunter (1976) 162; Turnock (1970) 66
221. Lochiel to Harcourt, December 20, 1884, Cab 37/14/7 (RH 4/9/6)
222. The universal shortage of land was made abundantly apparent to the Napier Commissioners, who time and time again listened to what in Lord Napier's own estimation constituted the "capital grievance" of crofters throughout the North West. Hansard 294 (1884-5) col. 108. The situation is summed up in the following statement made to the Commissioners by crofters from the Sleat district of Skye. "What we desire ... is a reasonable share of the land, whereof we can make a livelihood, without being obliged to go to distant parts of the country to earn a living. There is sufficient land to distribute, and land formerly cultivated by tenantry, but of late converted into sheep farms." NC 5535 (See also NC 2740, NC 10844, NC 16110, NC 888, NC 23, NC 12949, NC 13179, NC 13911). Nevertheless, the consistent call of the Crofter MPs was for comparability with the Irish, as typified by Dr Clark who warned the House in February 1886 that "the Scotch Crofters will not be satisfied with less than has been given to the Irish Crofters." Hansard 302 (1886) col. 1332
223. Harcourt to Gladstone, January 17, 1885, Cab 37/14/7 (RH 4/9/6)

224. Lochiel to Harcourt, December 20, 1884, Cab 37/14/7 (RH 4/9/6)
225. J B Balfour to Harcourt, January 13, 1885, Cab 37/14/7 (RH 4/9/6)
226. Hansard 298 (1885) col. 859. See also 303 (1886) col. 172
227. See Hansard 302 (1886) col. 1338
228. Hansard 302 (1886) col. 1338
229. Hansard 302 (1886) col. 1313
230. Hansard 302 (1886) col. 1313
231. See Crofters Commission, Final Report (1913) xxv-xxvi
232. Hansard 302 (1886) col. 1332
233. Hansard 304 (1886) col. 1747
234. Hansard 302 (1886) col. 1324
235. Hansard 302 (1886) col. 1324
236. Hansard 303 (1886) col. 1195 and col. 158
237. Hansard 303 (1886) col. 195 and col. 158
238. See Hansard 305 (1886) col. 679
239. Hansard 302 (1886) col. 1324
240. Oban Times, January 8, 1887. The occasion of the concession was the announcement by the Crofters Commission of its first adjudications on crofting rents. Tenants of several Sutherland and Ross-shire proprietors had their rents reduced on average by a third, while as much as half of their arrears were cancelled. The paper's leader on that date announced proudly: "We can now look back with self-satisfaction on the patriotic part which the Oban Times has taken in the Highland war of social liberation." For here was public acknowledgement of previous landlord exploitations of crofters - even if Alexander Mackenzie felt it did not go far enough - and from a Government-appointed body at that. See Crofters Commission, First Report (1888) 96-8, and Scottish Highlander, January 13, 1887
241. Opposition to the Bill by the Crofters' MPs and in particular an attempt to incorporate certain radical land settlement clauses, despite considerable Irish Nationalist and other support, came to nothing

in the face of the determination of both Conservative and Liberal front benches to secure the passage of the Bill unaltered. See Hunter (1976) 163; Crowley (1956) 119-120; Douglas (1976) 71; Cameron (1912) 71

242. Hunter (1976) 164
243. Oban Times, April 3, 1886
244. Oban Times, June 19, 1886
245. See Hunter (1976) 163
246. Oban Times, December 20, 1884
247. Hansard 302 (1886) col. 1329
248. See Hunter (1976) 163-4 and Douglas (1976) 89. For an account of cottar, as opposed to crofter, agitation, including the famous Park Raid on Lady Matheson's Seaforth Estate, in Lewis, see Hunter (1976) 184-206
249. See above 129
250. For the warrant issued on December 27, 1889 by Lord Lothian, appointing the Walpole Commission, see SR0 GD 40/16/45, also printed as a Parliamentary Paper for 1890 (LV111, 845)
251. Statement of the amount assigned by Parliament for purposes special to the Highland Crofting Counties of Scotland, from April 1, 1887 to March 31, 1892, SR0 GD 40/16/53. See also below 150
252. See Hansard 289 (1884) cols. 1887-8; 302 (1886) cols. 1319-20. See also Hansard 305 (1886) col. 524
253. See Hansard 304 (1886) 125
254. See, for example, replies from H C Parkes to Lord Lothian, August 20, 1889 (re telegraph extensions in Skye), and Agnes Sutherland to Lord Lothian, August 29, 1889 (re telegraph extension from Durness to Scourie), both SR0 GD 40/16/45
255. See Statement of the amount assigned by Parliament, SR0 GD 40/16/53
256. See Lord Lothian to the Lord Advocate, December 3, 1887, SR0 GD 40/16/34
257. For details of this correspondence, see SR0 GD 40/16/34. See also Glasgow Herald, December 8, 1887

258. Glasgow Herald, December 8, 1887; Times, January 11, 1888
259. See Douglas (1976) 90
260. See Kellas (1968) 283; Hunter (1974) 46-7 and 57; Crowley (1956) 120-1. For contemporary biographies of Angus Sutherland and of the other Crofter MPs, see the following: Oban Times, November 14 and December 5, 1885; The Crofter, March to September, 1885; Times, July 2, 1892; Scottish Highlander, September 28, 1893 and January 27, 1898. (Scottish Highlander was a weekly paper published and edited in Inverness from 1885 to 1898 by Alexander Mackenzie)
261. For example: Charles Fraser-Mackintosh, Hansard 343 (1890) col. 682, Dr McDonald, Hansard 343 (1890) col. 956; James Caldwell, Hansard 345 (1890) cols. 843 and 1044; Dr Clark, Hansard 349 (1890-1) col. 656
262. Hansard 336 (1889) col. 1549
263. Hansard 336 (1889) col 1549
264. Oban Times, June 15, 1889
265. Oban Times, June 15, 1889
266. See below 156-7
267. Lord Lothian to G J Goschen MP, August 10, 1889, SR0 GD 40/16/45, 1
268. SR0 GD 40/16/45, 4
269. SR0 GD 40/16/45, 1
270. SR0 GD 40/16/45, 1
271. The Colonel's actual recommendations are paragraphed by Lord Lothian in his report. See SR0 GD 40/16/45, 2-3
272. SR0 GD 40/16/45, 4
273. Hansard 338 (1889) col. 393
274. See Hansard 339 (1889) cols. 1485-6
275. Proposed Conditions of a Trust for the benefit of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, August 20, 1889. SR0 GD 40/16/45

276. See n 240 above. If the Secretary for Scotland suffered a "conversion to a programme of economic development in the Highlands" as indeed it appears that he did (see below), it is, nevertheless, doubtful if it was as immediate as Hunter (1976) 179 suggests. As was remarked in the House several years later, in 1896: "The right hon. Gentleman undertook a pilgrimage to what he called the misty islands of the north, either to paint in his masterly way the sorrows of the inhabitants or to acquaint himself with the nature of their social problems - he didn't know which But at all events, the right hon. Gentleman left behind him hopes, inflated by sympathetic words and by suggested measures of relief never destined, he feared, to be realised through the instrumentality of the right hon. gentleman." Thomas Hedderwick, Hansard, Fourth Series, 43 (1896) col. 1747. Given the passage in 1891 of the Western Highlands and Islands Works Act, this attack was somewhat unjustified. However, it is true that even when Lord Lothian did turn his attention to the possibility of regional development, his lingering attachment to emigration was evident. See below, Section (iii)
277. Preface to Reports of the Committee appointed to Inquire into Certain Matters affecting the Interests of the Population of the Western Highlands and Islands of Scotland (Walpole Report), Parliamentary Papers XXV11 (1890), XLIV (1890-1), Part I
278. Hansard 346 (1890) col. 929
279. See Hansard 346 (1890) cols. 1294-5. The area of interest was, in any case, extended on the instructions of the Secretary for Scotland to include the north coasts of Sutherland and Caithness, Orkney and Shetland, and Islay. See Walpole Report, Part I (1890) 4 and 6, and Walpole Report, Part II (1890-1) 9
280. Hansard 349 (1890-1) cols. 1288-9
281. See Hansard 350 (1891) col. 1073
282. Hansard 351 (1891) col. 1734
283. See Hansard 351 (1891) cols. 1734-5
284. See Hansard 351 (1891) col. 1739
285. See Hansard 351 (1891) cols. 1740-1
286. Hansard 351 (1891) col. 1742
287. Hansard 351 (1891) col. 1742

- 288. Hansard 351 (1891) col 1743
- 289. Hansard 351 (1891) col. 1744
- 290. See Hansard 352 (1891) col. 924
- 291. See Hansard 352 (1891) cols 1362-70. See also Napier Report (1884) 16
- 292. See Hansard 352 (1891) col. 1378
- 293. See Hansard 352 (1891) cols 1365-6
- 294. Hansard 353 (1891) col. 1247. The debate took place on May 28. See also Hansard 353 (1891) cols 1354-5 for agreement to the resolution on May 29.
- 295. Hansard 354 (1891) col. 278
- 296. Royal Commission (Highlands and Islands, 1892), Report, Parliamentary Papers XXXVIII (1895) v (Deer Forest Report)
- 297. See Deer Forest Report (1895) xxii
- 298. Hansard 303 (1886) col. 152
- 299. Hansard 303 (1886) col. 153

CHAPTER THREE

The Congested Districts Legislation

The Secretary of Scotland Act was passed in 1885, the Duke of Richmond and Gordon being the first of the Secretaries and Alexander Hugh Bruce, Lord Balfour of Burleigh, KT, 6th Baron, being the seventh in succession, appointed ten years after the Act was passed.¹ In the words of Arthur Balfour, who was Secretary for Scotland briefly during the latter part of 1886:

*It was decided to establish the Office of Secretary for Scotland in consequence of a very widespread feeling throughout Scotland, not confined to any section or party, that under former arrangements Scotch business was neglected, and Scotch counsels did not have their proper weight with the Government.*²

However, the Scottish Office began on what was considered even by the early 1920s as very restricted lines.^{2a} It was certainly true that:

*the duties imposed upon the new Office apart from Education were sufficiently multifarious. They included the supervision, either directly or through Edinburgh Boards, of the Poor Law, Public Health, Lunacy Law, Fisheries, the General Register House, Police, Prisons, various branches of town and country government, and the National Galleries.*³

But of particular importance in the present context, although these were the days when agrarian trouble was rife in the Highlands and Islands, yet there had been no transfer of responsibilities

for public order, law and justice to the Scottish Office. ⁴ The reason for this was, as Lord Lothian, who succeeded Balfour in office, explained in a Cabinet memo concerning Scottish business, that *the Bill under which the Secretary for Scotland was established was ill-drafted, and passed at the fag end of the Session of 1885 with the result thatcrofting affairs numbered among various matters of first-class importance [remaining] outside the scope and province of the Secretary for Scotland Act.* ⁵

The inconvenience of this position had been represented to the Cabinet also by Balfour, and by an Amendment Act of 1887 the Office was placed upon a much wider basis. The Secretary for Scotland now became possessed of all the undefined common law powers of the Home Secretary relating to Scotland, with a few exceptions. The result of the change was very important.

It was now the definite duty of the Secretary for Scotland to keep in touch with all the preceedings of Government, so as to ensure that Scotland should not be forgotten, and should receive the benefit of all progressive legislation and administrative improvements, and should also obtain her due share of public moneys. ⁶

So it came about that the seventh incumbent of that Office was to receive the credit for a development that was, more than likely, inevitable, and certainly overdue, when in 1897 Lord Balfour of Burleigh 'took a leaf' out of the Irish book, and obtained the sanction of Parliament to an Act setting up a Scottish Congested Districts Board. ⁷

(1) The Principle of Regional Aid Admitted

The Report of the Walpole Commissioners was rapidly becoming out of date by the time the Deer Forest Commissioners, appointed by a Radical Government, reported in 1895 to a Conservative one. ⁸ The latter work was so comprehensive and detailed, incorporating as it did an entire volume of parliamentary papers

devoted to carefully prepared maps, that it was necessarily slow of production. By spring of the year in question, MPs were inevitably becoming restless. Already by February J G Weir, MP for Ross and Cromarty since 1892, was commenting in the House that he hoped that the production of the Deer Forest Report was *being pushed forward vigorously*.⁹ Ten days later he was moved to inquire directly, when the Report would be presented to Parliament, and by the start of March his colleague Dr MacGregor was demanding to know why publication of the Report was delayed and whether the Secretary for Scotland would introduce a Highland Land Bill and take a first reading pending its issue. The Lord Advocate merely explained that the delay hinged on the printing of the colour maps and obstinately refused to move on the other part of the question.¹⁰ Nor, apparently, could the Report be issued without maps in order to allow a Bill to be introduced before Easter. Quite simply, the Stationery Office had been asked to issue the Report at the earliest possible date and there was no more to be done.¹¹ Yet, as Mr Weir pointed out, there was beginning to be a real danger of Highland landlords evicting tenants in anticipation of new Scottish crofter legislation, which had, after all, been signalled in the Queen's Speech, which referred to *further legislation in respect of the Crofter population in that country*. The staleness of the second Liberal administration inside three years was becoming apparent, and in June 1895 Lord Salisbury began his third term of office as Conservative Prime Minister.¹²

In the event, several Bills were introduced during the next session which had a bearing upon the Highlands. A Crofters Holdings (Scotland) 1886 Act Amendment Bill was introduced together with a Crofters' Holdings (Scotland) Acts Extension Bill on February 1st 1896. The latter, which sought to extend certain provisions

of existing crofter legislation to the north-eastern counties of Banff, Aberdeen, Kincardine, Elgin and Nairn, was superseded by the Crofters' Holdings Acts Extension (No 2) Bill, read for the first time on February 21st, the same day as a motion was brought in for a Bill to amend the Western Highlands and Islands (Scotland) Works Act of 1891.¹³ But of greatest importance, by far, to the crofting community, although that importance was scarcely indicated by its title, was the Agricultural Rating (Scotland) Bill which was introduced in July by the new Lord Advocate, Andrew Graham Murray, MP for Buteshire, and whose English counterpart was already being debated.¹⁴ Earlier in the year Mr Weir had made what was becoming a routine inquiry of the First Lord of the Treasury as to whether it was the intention of the Government to take steps to stop the creation and extension of deer forests and large grazing-farms in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. The rebuff he received when the Lord Advocate replied then, that *the Government have no present intention of taking any such steps as are suggested in the Question of the Hon. member*¹⁵ was no doubt tempered by the discovery that Mr Graham Murray's own Bill to amend the law with respect to the classification of lands and heritages for purposes of rating in Scotland, was not only *for the relief of the occupiers of agricultural lands and heritages* but was also *inter alia for the creation of a fund for the improvement of the congested districts in the Highlands and Islands.*¹⁶

The Bill was a curious one, lumping together a rather hastily drawn together proposal for a general, but nevertheless interim, re-rating measure with overdue yet ill-defined legislation for the opening of a development - as opposed to a relief-fund specifically for the Highlands and Islands. As Thomas Hedderwick, MP for Wick Burghs pointed out, *the second provision of the Bill had no intimate connection with the main purpose of the Bill*¹⁷

which was, in the words of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, to acknowledge such a pressure of rates on the farmer as to justify a great boon being given to him mainly at the expense of the urban population.¹⁸ In introducing the Bill, however, the Lord Advocate argued that

*there are certain districts where it is obvious no mere relief of rates would ever touch the difficulties under which they suffer, and we have thought this a profitable opportunity to take a sum, which we have put at £15,000 a year, in order to form the nucleus of a congested districts board.*¹⁹

And despite the elapse of more than five years since the 'conversion' of a previous Tory administration to a philosophy of regional development,²⁰ Mr Graham Murray continued weakly:

*But in this Bill we do not propose to introduce any scheme. We propose simply to earmark that money, leaving details of the scheme for future legislation.*²¹

The truth is that just because the civil unrest and tension so prevalent in the Highlands and Islands during the early and mid-1880s had largely evaporated a decade later, there had been very little public pressure to encourage immediate debate of contents of the Deer Forest Report or to hasten new legislative developments. Anticipating the displeasure of the small pro-crofter lobby in the House, however, the Lord Advocate concluded:

*I would ask those Members interested in the crofting interest to remember that there is not much hardship in that, because the money will actually only be available on 31st March next. Therefore legislation in the early period of next Session will be in time, as soon as the money is available.*²²

In keeping with the fact that *the Bill, though exceedingly small and compact, was a complex Bill,* ²³ attention during the Debate was divided between the different areas of concern, with complaint as to the unfairness of the proposed new rating system dominating the discussion, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman moving an amendment on that account. ²⁴ Ineptitude of successive administrations over the handling of the Highlands was not forgotten, however, although the Government was less a target for direct criticism on this score from genuinely pro-crofter MPs, than for referred criticism from the Liberal lobby at large, angry at rating proposals designed to benefit landed proprietors and not the impoverished tenantry. ²⁵ Nevertheless, far from recognising a genuinely radical departure in the matter of Highland policy on the part of the Tory Government - one which the Liberals themselves had signally failed to embrace - Members instead focussed upon the meanness of the gesture and its freely admitted lack of definition. ²⁶ Thus Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman:

With regard to the sum of £15,000 which it was proposed to hand over to some unnamed authority for the benefit of the congested parts of the Western Highlands, more information was wanted. What kind of objects had the Government in view? Did they intend to promote colonisation, migration, or the extension of piers and harbours? If any such purpose were contemplated, not £15,000 but £150,000, or more, would be required. ²⁷

Mr Hedderwick was prepared at least to acknowledge that *if the money must be spent on land, he could only say that he welcomed the recognition of the claims of the crofters to a share of the spoil.* But, he continued in much the same vein as his colleague,

before one could agree to or approve of a provision of this kind, it was necessary to ascertain to what purpose the money was to be applied and how it was to be administered [Furthermore] the Lord Advocate had not offered any evidence whatever to show that there was such distress in the country as would induce any reasonable body of men pretending to be legislators to grant relief of this description. If this was a serious proposal to relieve the congested districts in the Highlands, the sum proposed to be given for the purpose was no more than a mere recognition - it was utterly inadequate. 28

At this point in the debate the shouts of *Hear, hear* from the Liberal benches so fired the Wick MP with enthusiasm for the sound of his own voice berating a Tory Government, that he committed the serious error of illogicality of argument. From having, in the previous breath, condemned the Lord Advocate for failing to identify via which bureaucratic channel the development grant might be applied, Mr Hedderwick proceeded to attack the Tory Government for behaviour for which much more recently, in our own time, a Conservative Government criticised its Labour predecessor - namely the proliferation of the quasi autonomous non-governmental organisation.

It was proposed with this paltry sum of £15,000 to create a new Board for the distribution of the money. But why create a new Board? There was the existing Crofters' Commission, composed of men of experience and presided over by one of the ablest men of the Scottish Bar. Why should that Commission not be utilised? The creation of a new Board meant the appointment of a new staff, and he feared that very little of the £15,000 would be left for the relief of distress after the expenses and salaries of a new Board were met. 29

Valid though the Wick MP's criticism might ultimately prove, in the meantime the Lord Advocate was able to cut him down to size very effectively. It was not pretended, he replied, that the sum of £15,000 would do everything that was required for the congested districts - but [as he had indicated earlier] it would form a nucleus. 30

Furthermore, he continued, Mr Hedderwick had surely misread the Bill when he said it was proposed to set up a new Board. The words in the Bill had been specifically chosen, not, the Lord Advocate implied, deliberately to keep the proposals vague and the members uninformed, but in order that the matter might be left open, referring as they did to an authority to be determined subsequently by Act of Parliament. And without even an oblique reference to the Irish Congested Districts Board, upon which he and others well knew the Scottish scheme would be modelled,³¹ he concluded loftily that the Crofter Commission was indeed a possibility *or the Local Government Board, or any other authority; but that was a matter of detail which would have to be dealt with hereafter.*³²

Roundly rebuked on that particular, the Opposition resorted instead to more generalised criticism of the philosophy which underpinned proposals to redistribute wealth at all. The Bill did propose, Sir John Leng, MP for Dundee, agreed, *to apply a direct benefit to districts which were notoriously in need of some assistance.* He continued:

*But those on his side of the House objected to the extension of grants-in-aid. They considered them vicious in principle and mischievous in practice, and they regarded them as devices to delude unthinking people into the idea that they were receiving gifts of money from the State.*³³

It is easy to forget that this was not a Tory MP speaking, but it is important to bear in mind that the crofter-landlord battle was paralleled by another less localised urban-rural struggle. In the context of the latter, 'rural' was seen - at the height of the industrial revolution - to be synonymous with the wealth of the landed proprietary who, leaving aside for a moment the issue of the congested districts,

were to be the beneficiaries of the rerating, while 'urban' was synonymous with the oppressed and impoverished men, women and children who were the factory workers in the industrialised cities. With this contrast in mind, Sir John Leng proceeded:

No money could be appropriated by one class exclusively without being taken out of the pockets of another class, and the great objection of the representatives of urban constituencies was that a Parliament in which landlords greatly preponderated was extending this most vicious system of grants-in-aid. ³⁴

However, taking advantage of the Bill's complexity, and of the associated conflict of interest within the Opposition, the MP for Dunbartonshire, Alexander Wylie, for the Government, was quick to respond that the most painful feature in connection with agricultural distress had been not that the landlord had been receiving smaller and smaller rents but rather

the most deplorable feature had been the steady depopulation of the agricultural lands. Their rural labourers were becoming fewer, and the finest country in the world, with the best climate for the rearing of sturdy men and beautiful women was in many cases becoming a desolate wilderness. ³⁵

And without pausing to reflect upon the paradox of the co-existence of rural depopulation and congestion, or to identify the linking factor - the landlords - whose interest in the proposals he sought to underplay, Mr Wylie merely expressed surprise that *this principle of grants-in-aid had been described as a dangerous system a vicious and mischievous principle.* As he saw it, it was a beneficent principle and, moreover,

he was glad to see that the principle had been carried still further in connection with the £15,000 for the relief of the congested districts in the Highlands. He recommended the Government to double the amount.³⁶

This was the cue for Mr (later Sir) Michael Shaw-Stewart, Tory MP for Renfrew East, to point out - even if his observation did somewhat contradict the protestations of his colleague, the Lord Advocate - that:

*There was a Congested Districts Board in Ireland, and he could say from his own personal knowledge - for he had recently seen some of the work of that Board in Donegal and Galway - that if the money proposed to be allocated for Scotland was expended in the useful way it was spent in Ireland, the Highlands would benefit greatly indeed.*³⁷

The effect might have been predicted. Sir William Wedderburn, radical Liberal MP for Banffshire, who had failed in his attempt to get the Crofters Act extended to apply to his constituency, immediately conceded that the general purpose of the Government would be severely limited if they were prevented from giving such assistance to specially suffering or weak classes of society, which it was in the general interests of the community to give.³⁸ Sir John Leng's support for Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman's objection that if a Bill put money into one man's pocket, there was one other out of whose pocket it came.³⁹ was thus effectively overruled. Mr Wedderburn continued:

*It was very much in the general interest of the general community that these hardy industrious crofters should not be extinguished, but should get such reasonable help as would enable them to hold their own and increase among the glens and valleys where they were found. In the same way, if that rule were rigidly enforced they would not be able to give reasonable help to the fishing industry in regard to harbours and other requirements....*⁴⁰

At this juncture former Liberal Secretary for Scotland Sir George Trevelyan felt impelled to intervene in order to try to separate the various points at issue. Observing that by penalising urban ratepayers, their sympathy would be lost to Scottish farmers, even though it would be the landlords of these who benefited, he reminded the House that up until the beginning of 1895 the Crofters Commission had dealt with nearly 15,000 holdings whose total rents were reduced from £75,000 to £54,000 a year.

And it was not given from the pockets of anyone from whom it ought not to be taken, but from the pockets of men who, if this Commission had not sat, ought to have done as the England and Lowland landlords did, and reduced their rents to that extent. That was the line on which, he thought, they ought to continue working. 41

However, Sir George Trevelyan's genuine attempt to clarify matters for the benefit of his fellow Liberals merely served to add a further complication. For in his computation Sir George Trevelyan had compared the £21,000 a year reductions in rent with a potential capital of the sum of £15,000. Now, therefore, a fellow-Liberal - Glasgow Camlachie MP Alexander Cross - declared aggrieved that:

He had no reason for supposing that the amount of money to be spent for the benefit of congested districts was to be limited to the interest of the capital sum. He understood that the £15,000 was intended for the benefit of those districts, and he hoped his Rt Hon Colleague would not oppose that, or attempt to prevent the money being applied for its proper purpose. 42

Inevitably, the matter was taken up by the Government as an opportunity to score over the Liberals. The Solicitor General, Sir Robert Finlay, repeated that the conclusion that the relief proposed to be given

to the congested districts was utterly inadequate, was arrived at by multiplying the £15,000 a year by five (the intended duration of the re-rating proposal) and calculating the interest thereon. He proceeded:

But who told his Rt Hon Friend that only the interest of this sum was to be applied to the benefit of the congested districts? The Government proposed that this money should be intrusted to a proper authority, to be determined, for the purpose of applying not merely the interest but, as far as they thought right, the capital, and they believed a better investment could not be made. ⁴³

And whether or not he intended, or was authorised, to make a particularised statement of policy, the Solicitor General - unlike his Lord Advocate colleague - had no hesitation in underlining that change in Tory philosophy vis-a-vis the Highlands, first exemplified when Lord Lothian was Secretary for State, prior to the Liberals' three-year interlude in Government. ⁴⁴

It was not desired to encourage emigration from the congested districts in the Highlands; what was desired was to show the people there the way to thrive at home. The Government believed that this sum of £75,000, properly applied, might do a vast amount of good in districts which sorely needed such help. ⁴⁵

Expressed in that way the philanthropy seems admirable. However, it is possible to place a different interpretation upon events as follows. As J P Day observed, for a while the results of new emigration schemes had been expectantly awaited. ⁴⁶ The Napier Commissioners had, after all, expressed a belief that emigration properly conducted was an indispensable remedy for the condition of some parts of the Highlands and Islands, and had strongly recommended that in connection with any measures which might be framed

for improving the position of the crofters and cottars, provision should be made for assisting emigrants, both by State advances and State direction.⁴⁷ A lead in schemes of crofter colonisation, as distinct from mere aided emigration, had been provided in South Uist by Lady Gordon Cathcart in 1883. The Canadian Government had that year passed a Land Act by which it contracted that, where any person advanced £100 on the settling of a family in Manitoba or the North-West Territory, the Dominion would not allow the settler his patent for the free grant of the 160 acres of land until the head of the family had repaid the loan, together with 6% interest. Under this Act seventy-three families were sent out by Lady Cathcart between 1883 and 1886.⁴⁸ Lady Cathcart's venture impressed the Cabinet, and establishment of the Emigrants' Information Office in 1886^{was to} herald an upsurge of interest in the possibility of launching such a scheme of their own. So it was that during the winter of 1886-87 and on until early summer, correspondence relating to a proposed scheme of emigration, principally with one Wm P Edwards, Managing Director of the Canada North-West Land Company, flourished.⁴⁹ And when Lord Lothian took over from Balfour at the Scottish Office, the commitment to emigration was no less evident. For, as the new Secretary for Scotland reminded his Cabinet colleagues in May 1887:

*At serious cost and trouble both to the Government and to the local authorities, law and order have recently been re-established in Skye and Tiree Any recurrence of the necessity for the employment of naval and military expeditions, such as have been frequently requisitioned during the past five years, would be a circumstance much to be deplored.*⁵⁰

Nor was Lord Lothian short of advice as to how to avoid such a recurrence. Later that same year he received a report from Sherriff Cheyne in Lewis explaining that

many who took part in the Park Raids did so to obtain food for starving families. He continued:

In view of it [this condition of destitution] I would respectfully and earnestly press upon your Lordship's consideration the imperative necessity which in my opinion exists for some extensive and well considered scheme of Emigration being without delay submitted to Parliament. I am convinced that it is the only way of relieving the social pressure in the Island. 51

And although the Secretary for Scotland was presently to turn his attention to the possibility of alleviating the Highland problem by means of resource development, for the time being the idea of emigration did have much to commend it, its immediacy as a solution being particularly attractive. That attractiveness was no doubt reinforced at the height of the disturbances in December 1887 by the receipt of yet another communication from Lewis describing the terribly unsettled conditions of the crofters. It continued:

The only effective manner of opposing these agitators we can think of, is to promise the Crofters Emigration in the Spring, and thus by diverting their attention to their own affairs would frustrate to a large extent the action of the League [the HILLRA]. 52

With suggestions of this type uppermost in his mind, it was inevitable that Lord Lothian should have concluded that:

formulation of an effective and practical scheme of State-aided emigration is a subject well worthy of the serious attention of Her Majesty's Government. 53

The point was evidently well made, for in April 1888 the Government announced that £10,000 would be set aside to finance a colonisation scheme for the crofters and cottars of the congested districts of the Western Highlands and Islands, provided that for every £10 a sum

of £2 was raised by private subscription. Thirty suitable families from the Long Island were subsequently selected by Malcolm McNeill, Chairman of the Board of Supervision, and they sailed from Scotland on May 17 and June 2. Advances of £120 were made to each family, and this was to be repaid with interest in eight annual instalments, the first of such to be payable in the fifth year following re-settlement. By the time the families arrived in South Manitoba, the expenses of the journey had virtually halved the £120 and a further £720 had to be disbursed in order to allow for purchase of essential stock and implements. Furthermore, bureaucratic vacillation and delay (a more advantageous scheme had actually been rejected by the Government in July 1887, which the Land Companies declined to renew when invited in the Autumn to do so) had meant that by the time the necessary formalities were completed, the settlers were bound to arrive too late in the season to obtain anything but a very small crop. They therefore had also to be helped with winter provisions and with seed grain the next Spring.⁵⁴ Meanwhile, difficulties for the Government at home in the shape of the collapse of the rating system in the Long Island - and hence of education and poor relief - the probable results of which as one Cabinet memo put it *it is impossible to exaggerate*,⁵⁵ only served to emphasize the inadequacy and triviality of emigration as a solution to Highland problems. As the Board of Supervision saw it *some effectual and permanent remedy [was] urgently called for*.⁵⁶

In other words, Lord Lothian was not so much freely converted to showing the people how to thrive at home, as forced by circumstance.⁵⁷ Specifically, it was towards the end of July 1888, when he found himself unable to provide accurate answers to questions put by the Prime Minister on population and rates revenue

in the Western Highlands and Islands that Lothian sought refuge in the suggestion that a *Committee of experts should be appointed by the Government to examine and report on the best means for developing the resources of the Western Highlands and Islands.* ⁵⁸

The sequence of ensuing events need not be repeated. Suffice it to say that even when he turned instead to regional development as a possible solution, the idea of emigration continued to linger at the back of Lord Lothian's mind. An addendum to his confidential report following his visit to Lewis urged the need for emigration to continue and even proposed the extension of the Government scheme for colonization the next spring. ⁵⁹ Similarly, the draft proposal for a Highlands and Islands Trust, at the end of a long list of Trust objectives, contained one further sub-head followed by a question mark and the single word 'Emigration'. ⁶⁰ And all this but a few months prior to Canadian newspapers carrying headlines such as 'Starving Scotch Crofters in North-West Canada', 'Suffering and Destitution in the North-West' and most telling of all 'Better Selection Required'. ⁶¹ Clearly, whether from the point of view of either origin or destination, emigration was not ideal and could never represent more than a partial solution. And from no more secure foundation than the slow dawning that this was so, the notion of a Congested Districts Fund now being discussed, had evolved. In fact, the decision to instigate a regional policy was taken by default.

Yet in the end of the day it is achievements that matter, not intentions, and the Bill, whatever had initially motivated its introduction, was now progressing through Parliament. Following Sir Robert Finlay's fine words, with little further ado the House divided after a Second Reading with a majority of two thirds in favour. ⁶² Prior to the vote there were two interesting, if rather trivial

contributions to the debate, one from a rural MP, the other from an urban Member. Mr Robinson Souttar, for Dumfriesshire, argued a case for £15,000 to be awarded instead to crofters not in the parts of Scotland covered by the provisions of the crofters Act, complaining of the West Highlands *why they were called congested districts he did not know, seeing that they were the districts in which the population was most sparse and whose greedy landlords could do all this and a great deal more without robbing their establishments of a single liveried footman.*⁶³ Professor Robert Wallace for Edinburgh East argued that on the one hand *the people of the Canongate were not quite sure what a congested district meant* and on the other that *the Canongate was quite as much congested as any district in the Highlands, and why should not money also be devoted there, and if there, where was the system to stop.*⁶⁴ In reality Professor Wallace's observation concerning the state of knowledge of the denizens of the Canongate was true only in so far as few, from the humblest citizen of Edinburgh to the majority of Scottish elected representatives at Westminster, the noble Secretary for Scotland or the Prime Minister himself, were fully informed on the subject of congested districts. As it was, in many cases the inhabitants of the Canongate and their counterparts in crowded Glasgow closes constituted the reason for, or more precisely the effect of, the sparsity of Highland population observed by Mr Souttar.⁶⁵ But without any associated measure of dispersion, averages can prove very misleading. Even so, only ten years after the passing of the Crofters Act, even the least informed of MPs could not help knowing that generalised sparsity represented the combination of two extreme conditions both resulting from wholesale clearance - namely vast empty tracts of land on the one hand and severe localised congestion on the other, the overflow from which now expressed itself as the city tenement dwellers. And, as has been observed elsewhere, Glasgow workers were around that time beginning to realise that their own situation was not unconnected

with the problems in the north-west Highlands.⁶⁶ The link is thereby demonstrated, then as now, between the rural and the urban problem and the inherent weakness of regional policy - identified by both MPs, emphasized. Why not Edinburgh's East End; why not south-west Scotland? Furthermore, regional policy is its own worst enemy and particularly so, successful regional policy. Hence the creation in the twentieth century of intermediate or 'grey' areas when it became obvious that these were suffering at the expense of earlier financial inducements to industrialists to locate in unemployment black-spots.⁶⁷ It is when the 'white' areas begin to suffer at the hands of the grey, that the situation reaches a reductio ad absurdum as it did in 1978: then, the whole of Scotland - with the exception of Edinburgh - was scheduled as some sort of development zone, as was 65% of the land area of Great Britain as a whole - containing 44% of the population. And at that point the framework of regional policy was substantially dismantled, or, to use the expression of Professor Wallace, the system stopped.⁶⁸

Problems of this nature would ultimately have to be confronted by the members of the Congested Districts Board.⁶⁹ For the present the Bill passed to its Committee Stage and Third Reading. In the course of discussion it was once again suggested that the Government could scarcely be serious in its Highland development proposals, for two reasons. Wick Burghs MP Thomas Hedderwick complained that *he felt somewhat embarrassed by the double barrelled character of the Bill as explained by the Lord Advocate.* His point was that it was *all very well to contend at one moment that the Bill really aimed at readjustment of the rates, and at another that its motive was the relief of agricultural distress.*⁷⁰ Secondly, proposing an amendment reallocating a further sum of £38,500 to the West Highlands, Mr Hedderwick argued that only a figure of this order would place at the

Lord Advocate *something like an effective sum for the alleviation of the congested districts.* The Wick MP further explained that, in his Second Reading speech, the Lord Advocate by his own admission had told the House that the gift of £15,00 to the Highland crofters was so inadequate that it was proposed to appropriate it merely as a sort of nucleus of a fund which was some time or other to mature, and come into operation when the Government had created the authority by whom it was to be administered, and had made up its mind as to the purpose to which it was to be applied. It stood to reason that *if the Lord Advocate really meant to do any good to the crofters he ought to be glad that this opportunity had been afforded him of swelling the sum of £15,000 so as to make it, at least approximately, adequate to the purpose for which it was intended.* ⁷¹ Cross-bench support was on this occasion forthcoming from Mr Wylie who, during the Second Reading, had recommended the doubling of the original figure. ⁷² Now he continued to argue that £15,000 *would be a paltry sum to administer. If the sum was increased much really practical work might be done to develop and benefit this part of Scotland.* And, testifying to the fact that deciding upon an appropriate sum for investment in regional development is almost as arbitrary as selecting a suitable area for investing that sum in the first place, Mr Wylie concluded by observing that several Non-Members had suggested various sums, ranging from £20,000 up to even £200,000, and he thought the amount of £34,000 which he suggested would be a fair compromise. Prior to resuming his seat, however, he again paid tribute to Mr Graham Murray for introducing into the Bill *the beneficent principle that the prosperous parts of the country should assist the poorer and weaker parts* and invited the rest of the Committee to note the general acceptance the principle had received in the House. ⁷³ The Members of the Committee then moved on to consider the detailed wording of the Bill, clause by clause, but not before reaching general agreement that the amount of special grant for the Highlands and Islands should be calculated

to reflect the fact that in some Highland parishes because valuations, through no mismanagement, were so low and populations so high, it was impossible to meet the poor and school rates without exacting considerable financial penalties upon the community at large, of the order of seven shillings in the pound compared to sixpence in the pound in wealthier parishes.⁷⁴

When Clause 4 Sub-section 2 was reached, which contained the specific proposal to set aside £15,000 for application in the congested districts, Sir Charles Dilke (Forest of Dean, Gloucester) intervened on the grounds that they had now reached the only part of the Bill in which Members other than Scotch members were concerned. *A Board ... was to be constituted* he stated, despite protestations from the Lord Advocate that the Government was by no means committed to such a line of action, *on the model of the Irish Congested Districts Board. Yet many Members doubted whether it was justifiable to differentiate districts in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland and Ireland from districts in England and Wales, where poverty and congestion just as great existed.* On these grounds he moved the omission of the sub-section.⁷⁵ To this renewed attack on the rationale for regional policy the Lord Advocate could only reply rather weakly that he thought there was a consensus of opinion in Scotland that there were some districts of that country where the difficulty of obtaining the means of subsistence pressed so heavily on the inhabitants that there was a necessity for some special assistance.⁷⁶ The counter-argument to that of Sir Charles Dilke produced by John MacLeod, MP for Sutherland, son of a Helmsdale fishcurer and himself a Highland newspaper proprietor, who was also Secretary to the Highland Land League and member of the Deer Forest Commission, was rather more convincing. Even if some of the detail may be questionable, it provides a succinct explanation of the peculiar origins of congestion in the Highlands

and thereby effectively demonstrated why the condition was certainly not one to be found in England and Wales.

Had it not been for the operation of certain laws passed by the Imperial Parliament, the people of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland would not be today in the position of having to come to the house to ask for assistance. By these laws practically the whole of the population of his constituency were at the beginning of the century lifted out of their ancestral homes, and those of them who were not compelled to emigrate were placed by the sea coast. The result was that in an area of 175,000 acres of land there was only a population of little more than 20,000, and yet a considerable portion of that population were [sic] in an extreme condition of poverty. The average size of holding was not more than 2 acres, and their rent was £3. ⁷⁷

But while he maintained that it was essential that Parliament should act to redress a situation of its own making, Mr MacLeod equally contended that Parliament could give greater relief to the population of Scotland than the proposed system of grants-in-aid would do. In fact Mr MacLeod was referring to further legislation along the lines of the Crofters Act, for as he pointed out, the Crofters Act of 1886 was passed, not for the purpose of replacing the crofters in the holdings from which they had been evicted, but to fix fair rents and protect the tenants' improvements in respect of their meagre post-clearance holdings. What was required at this stage was a redistribution of land in the Highlands, but now unfortunately a Tory Government were [sic] in power, and they could not look to them for any effective reform of the Land Laws of Scotland. Mr MacLeod, having made his point, therefore came reluctantly to the conclusion that:

Although they might not be able to get land reform from them, a Tory Government did sometimes give money. If they could not get the best thing from the Government they must try and get the next best thing. Indeed the only complaint that he had to make against the Government in this matter was that they had not given a sufficient sum of money

for the purpose in view. 78

Accordingly Mr McLeod moved yet another amendment for increase of the sum, this time to £46,000. 79

If nothing else was becoming apparent, it was that £15,000 was considered to be inadequate, even as a nucleus, for the scale of the task in hand. And although there was some further debate on the justification for grant-in-aid to the Highlands, majority opinion continued to approve exceptional treatment, if only on the grounds of former *bad legislation*. 80 Even so, the MP for Aberdeen East felt impelled to sound a final warning, concerning the thorny question - which would dominate mid-twentieth century regional policy - of whether such grants should take the form of assistance in need of investment in potential. *The more and more the system was extended he predicted the more and mire [people] would ask why further public money should be devoted [for example] to harbour construction in places where the fishing was less valuable and the population were not more enterprising that in the East of Scotland.* 81

A number of important issues could have been raised by this line of thought, but in the event were not. How, in particular, was success (or failure) to be assessed, if funds were initially to be disbursed on grounds of need, yet results were no longer to be measured in terms of the alleviation of distress - since this philosophy was now spurned by the Government in favour of the more positive image of economic development? 82 The ideal was certainly a fine and a bold one, but the expectation was neither finely nor boldly delineated. Yet the balance of the Opposition was sidetracked into criticising the Government for withholding precise information on policy proposals and means of application. These, in due course, would be revealed. What would be less apparent would be the criteria upon which the operation would ultimately be judged. After the prescribed five-year period had elapsed, would the Western

Highlands be compared with the Eastern Highlands? And would the grant-in-aid continue if that comparison should prove unfavourable, or only if it were favourable, it being feasible to argue either case? Without such identification of goals, and in the absence of an adequate monitoring function, questions such as Mr Buchanan's were destined to remain unanswered, even if they did not go unasked. The lead proffered by the MP for Aberdeenshire East was not, however, taken up by a Liberal group with singularly restricted vision; discussion instead reverted, as indicated, to the more immediate concern of by what means the *effectual and permanent remedy* called for by the Board of Supervision might be achieved, so that attention was diverted from the fundamental question of how that achievement might be recognised.⁸³ But since questions of how exactly the Government intended to use the money and by whom it would be administered were matters specifically excluded from the particular Bill under consideration,⁸⁴ little time was wasted in disposing of them, with the result that Clause 4 sub-section 2 stood with only the most minor of rewording, the more substantial amendments concerning the size of the fund having been withdrawn for technical reasons, while Sir Charles Dilke's proposal to deny special development status to the congested districts was also withdrawn, having failed to attract sufficient support.⁸⁵

Thus a Bill which for a variety of reasons (in particular its complexity and the suspicion voiced by Lloyd George what what it offered was *not a remedy* but rather a device which enabled the Government to evade real responsibility in the matter)⁸⁶ had received at its Second Reading only two-fifths of the support of the Scottish Members,⁸⁷ progressed steadily through its final stages. On the day it was passed, Mr MacLeod observed with a certain bitter resignation, that the Bill set something of a precedent.

*Hitherto, when special grants had been given to the Highlands for the relief of distress, the Imperial Exchequer had been called upon to find the money.; but now, England was taking good care that the Imperial Exchequer was no longer to be called upon to make up any money that might be required. This new departure would not commend itself to the majority of the Scotch people.*⁸⁸

As Scotland would come to know some ninety years later, even democratically sanctioned majority views may count as nought. The Devolution Bill would never receive the Royal Assent, a formality which was granted to the Agricultural Rates and Congested Districts Act on August 14, 1896.⁸⁹

(ii) The Practice of Regional Policy Debated

The successful passage of the anticipatory Act in 1896 gave a new sense of purpose to Mr Weir's task in the Spring of 1897 - as during Spring of the previous year - of agitating in the House for early consideration of crofter business. With the support of the MP for Argyll, Donald Nicol - a Conservative strongly in favour of the application of the Irish Land Act to the Highland crofter grievance - and the most unlikely backing also of Inverness Conservative MP James Baillie - landowner of some 93,000 acres who had succeeded Crofter MP Dr MacGregor - Mr Weir worried the Lord Advocate and the first Lord of the Treasury, A J Balfour, into agreeing a date for the introduction of the congested districts follow-up legislation.⁹⁰ For procedural reasons the Bill was one that required to be introduced in Committee, a factor which was cited by the Lord Advocate as contributing to the delay in its introduction.⁹¹ Ultimately, on June 4th, already two months after the beginning of the financial year in which the £15,000 already voted for the benefit of the congested districts had become available, the Committee sat, with

the Chairman of Ways and Means in the chair. However, on that day a resolution moved by the Lord Advocate to spend a further £20,000 and to provide for the administration of both sums was merely agreed to, and despite protestation, explanation was deferred for a further fortnight until the Report Stage.⁹² On the 17th June, therefore, Mr Graham Murray explained to the House that:

*It was felt that £15,000 was hardly sufficient to conduct the necessary experiments on a scale sufficiently large to have a chance of success, and the Resolution now reported embodied the determination of Treasury to give an additional sum.*⁹³

He further explained that in framing a Bill to carry out the scheme, three points obviously had to be determined, namely the constitution of the body to administer the money, the area over which it should be administered, and the objects on which the money should be spent.⁹⁴

Given the West of Ireland parallel with the circumstances and conditions prevailing in the Western Highlands and Islands of Scotland and, in particular, the precedent of the Congested Districts Board for Ireland, comparison with the sister Isle was inevitable in a consideration of these points.⁹⁵ *A Congested Districts Board might have been created, as in Ireland the Lord Advocate explained but there was a well-founded objection to the multiplication of Boards.*⁹⁶ This was a strange starting point indeed, given that certain members of the Deer Forest Commission - exceeding their remit which was limited to scheduling land available for crofter occupation - had seen fit to add that the profitable cultivation or advantageous occupation of the scheduled lands could only be obtained under a well-considered scheme of land purchase by a representative body possessed of full powers for carrying out properly defined regulations.⁹⁷ However, what those cheering *Hear, hear!* from the back benches could hardly have

realised from the Lord Advocate's statement was that he was dismissing, not the possibility of creating a Scottish CDB at all, but rather the possibility of creating a Scottish CDB constituted precisely along the lines of the Irish one.⁹⁸ The Irish CDB in fact consisted of the Chief Secretary for Ireland, a member of the Land Commission nominated by the Lord Lieutenant, and certain ex officio members together with five other members to be appointed by the Queen.⁹⁹ Perhaps more important than the character of its membership, the Irish Board was, in the words of A J Balfour *not in the ordinary sense a Government Department, nor ... subordinate either to the Chief Secretary's Office or the Ministry of the Day.*¹⁰⁰ This was not a model which it was proposed to adopt in the Scottish case.¹⁰¹

Indeed, for related reasons utilisation of the Crofters Commission was also deemed impossible by the Lord Advocate. *That Commission* he explained *was constituted as a quasi judicial body rather than as an administrative body, and over and above all, it was not directly subject to the control of any Government Department.*¹⁰² Neither had it powers with regard to establishment of new holdings¹⁰³ - an important function of the Irish authority and the raison d'être of any body envisaged by the Deer Forest Commissioners. The drift of the Lord Advocate's argument was ultimately to become clear only after he had equally destroyed the case for employing what he actually conceded as being *the admirable machinery of ... Local Government.*¹⁰⁴ During the passage of the Agricultural Rates and Congested Districts Bill of the previous year, it had been suggested by Liberal MP for Sutherland John MacLeod - who objected to use of the actual term 'congested district' on the grounds that it would be *the means of stereotyping a condition of things which need not exist* - that the Fishery Board should be given the £15,000 to utilise in the building and improving of harbours, or that *the Highland County Councils*

..... would deal with it just as well as it was admitted they did with the other moneys which they already received.¹⁰⁵ The advice of Mr MacLeod who had, after all, himself sat upon the Deer Forest Commission, might well have been acted upon. And yet, although the Lord Advocate had at that early stage vigorously denied that any single option had been excluded, he was no doubt also well aware that yet another member of that same Commission, Argyllshire minister Malcolm MacCallum, had gone so far as to emphasise the particular unsuitability on two counts of the local authorities to the management of the task. As he pointed out in his addendum to the Report:

*No local body would be able to take a conjunct view of the Highlands and the requirements of the people as a whole; and no elective body could afford to give the close, unbiassed, and lengthened consideration that would be required for the adjustment of all the questions that would arise.*¹⁰⁶

And as evidence of the likely attitude of the Highland County Councils to the prospect of administering the Congested Districts Fund, Mr MacCallum cited a minute of the Argyll County Council of December 20, 1893, which concerned the execution of the Small Holdings and Allotments Acts. At a meeting of the Council on that date an amendment had been carried

*that the Report of the Allotments and Small Holdings Committee be not adopted, seeing that Argyllshire is a poor and scattered county, the rate-payers of which are already burdened with heavy taxation: it is, therefore, unfair to impose upon them the extra cost of carrying out the Small Holdings and Allotments Acts, an experiment which ought to be borne by the State.*¹⁰⁷

Thus despite, or perhaps on account of, urgent applications, to the number of three hundred and seventy addressed to the County Council of Argyll for small holdings and allotments the Council refused to take any action and summarily dissolved its Small Holdings and Allotments Committee.¹⁰⁸ And Malcolm

MacCallum further pointed out that he cited the case of the County Council of Argyll only by way of example. More generally *as a matter of experience, it is found that Highland County Councils have failed to carry out the Small Holdings and Allotments Acts, the administration of which has been entrusted to them.*¹⁰⁹ In the knowledge of the existence of such convincing evidence the Lord Advocate could do little else but reject the advice of Deer Forest Commissioner MP Mr MacLeod who, in any case, had scarcely served his Commissioner colleagues well in failing to advertise their reservations as well as his own views, in Parliament. So, making a brief allusion to the impossibility of imposing upon the County Councils the burden of administering another admitted experiment, the Lord Advocate, in a mastery of understatement, acknowledged to the House simply that *there were objections to putting the money strictly under the Local Government Board as such.* 110

The Lord Advocate, however, was not in the business of rejecting advice merely because it emanated from the Opposition. In particular, former Liberal Secretary for Scotland, Sir George Trevelyan had the previous year, apparently unnoticed at the time,¹¹¹ proposed an amendment that wording be incorporated in the Agricultural Rating Bill to the effect that the Crofters Commission should be in charge of the Congested Districts Fund. he had declared then:

that the Commission had the greatest knowledge of the whole of the Highlands and especially of the most congested districts. The President was a man of most remarkable power and of absolutely unequalled experience of the sort required for the administration of this money. 112

So it was that, conceding something to the Liberals' great achievement in the matter of the Highlands, Mr Graham Murray now acknowledged that in particular, *it seemed a pity that they should not avail themselves of the admirable experience gained by the Crofters Commission.* Therefore, he continued,

a plan had been worked out which proposed a Commission directly amenable to Parliamentary control which would really be a sort of sub-department of the Local Government Board and the personnel of which would represent the best practical experience which Scotland could at this moment provide.¹¹³ And certainly, the list which he proceeded to recite, including the Secretary for Scotland, the Under Secretary, the Chairman of the Local Government Board, of the Fishery Board and of the Crofters Commission, constituted a prestigious cast for the proposed Commission.

Having so dramatically disarmed potential Opposition criticism concerning Board constitution, the Lord Advocate proceeded to a consideration of the area to be developed and the means of development. As to the area he declared confidently it was quite obvious that the districts to be benefited were pretty much the same as the crofting districts although it had to be conceded that there were, of course, some of the crofting districts which were not in any sense of the word congested districts.¹¹⁴ However, rather than take the responsibility for making a selection which, in the context of regional development would inevitably prove to some extent arbitrary and artificial, the Government, allegedly in the name of flexibility, was leaving this thorny problem to the discretion of the Commission.

They had thought it better not to have the absolutely rigid scale provided in the Irish Act, and accordingly the definition of a congested district contained in the Bill was any crofting parish or crofting parishes, or any area in a crofting parish, or crofting parishes, defined by the Commissioners under this Act, which they shall, having regard to the population and valuation thereof, determine to be a congested district.¹¹⁵

With no more ado the Lord Advocate quickly moved on to outline the scope of the Act, which in this case did more or less follow the Irish precedent. The proposed objects thus comprised not only the barest provision

of land for sub-division amongst crofters and cottars with essential aid for their migration to and settlement in other districts but also: the provision of aid for, and the development of, agriculture, with associated improvement in the breeding of livestock and in the quality of seed crop; the development of fishing and allied industries; the development of spinning, weaving and other home industries; and the upgrading of the existing communications infrastructure to support the new levels of activity.¹¹⁶ Pressing home his advantage while he had the opportunity, Mr Graham Murray concluded of the proposed development programme:

*It was, of course, an experiment, but it would be seen that it embodied sufficiently generous proposals to allow of the experiment being conducted on an adequate scale, that it would provide sufficient safeguards for the money being properly spent, and that it would result in the improvement of the prosperity of the Highlands.*¹¹⁷

Following his presentation the Lord Advocate received - despite inevitable carping about technicalities - what amounted to the wholehearted congratulations of Opposition members. The Liberals admitted that the proposed legislation would make up for the one defect of the Crofters Act which was otherwise a great success, namely its failure to realise the desire of the crofters for more land. *Emigration had been tried and had entirely failed* and therefore it was *hoped that this scheme of migration would prove a complete success.*¹¹⁸ Yet the congratulations were also tempered with the warning that while *the scheme would certainly relieve some of the existing distress, [yet] it would not solve the question of the Highlands,* a criticism which detracted rather from the positive flavour of the Government's own perception of its new 'development' as distinct from 'relief' programme.¹¹⁹ Finally, the Unionist member for Glasgow Partick, James Parker Smith, thought it right to signify

that *Scotch Members sitting on Government Benches were just as gratified as honorary Members opposite at the prospect of the Bill.* It was noted that this grant would go some way towards restoring what even Tories saw as the somewhat rough and inconsiderate reduction of the Vote respecting harbours and public works in Scotland.¹²⁰ Before the House adjourned, the Lord Advocate offered some reassurance on minor points referred to.¹²¹ And although the subject had not been raised, Mr Graham Murray must also have foreseen the arguments during subsequent stages of the Bill's passage concerning land purchase, for he added as an afterthought:

*As to the compulsory acquisition of land, in the present condition of the land market they did not think there would be any difficulty in getting land if that land was properly paid for.*¹²²

In the event it was Ross and Cromarty MP James Weir who during the Second Reading was first to press the need for compulsory purchase provisions to be incorporated. Emphasizing that what the people wanted was reinstatement on the lands which were once occupied by their forefathers, and now used for deer and sheep, he reminded the House of the findings of the Deer Forest Commissioners.¹²³ He too, he continued, had no objection to deer, but *let them go to the crags and mountain tops, and let the fertile valleys be occupied by men.*¹²⁴ With this in mind he proceeded to point out that, large as the scope of this Bill was, it required powers, the absence of which would tend to make it unworkable so far as the extension of holdings was concerned. In support of his argument Mr Weir pointed both to the limited usefulness of the parallel Irish CDB - the difficulties besetting it being specifically related to the want of compulsory powers in the Irish Act - and to the recent experience in Lewis of disinclination on the part of the proprietor to supply land for the creation of fishing villages.¹²⁵ Turning his attention subsequently to the character and the size of the Board, the MP for Ross and Cromarty further

observed that the practical work of such a Board could not be done either in an Edinburgh or a London office, yet two of the proposed members, the Chairmen of the Local Government and of the Fishery Boards, were located in Edinburgh.

These gentlemen could not spend, say, eight or ten days in travelling to and from remote parts in Lewis, Harris, the Uists, or Barra - the very districts where congestion was most keenly felt. ¹²⁶

What Mr Weir refrained from stating explicitly, because it was so patently obvious, was that the Secretary and Under Secretary for Scotland would not, of course, be in a position to offer a positive contribution in this respect either, and it might be as much as they could do, with their busy schedules, even to forsake Dover House and Westminster to attend Committee meetings in Edinburgh. No doubt with such possibilities at the back of his mind Mr Weir proposed that while the two aforementioned Edinburgh-bound Chairmen might usefully be retained as advisory members, all three, and not just one, Crofter Commissioners should be included. Not only had these gentlemen a thorough and practical knowledge of the Highland and Highlanders, but their inclusion would effectively augment Board membership to nine, as in the case of the Irish Board, which, he reminded the company, dealt with one third of the acreage to be allotted to its Scottish equivalent. Finally Mr Weir proposed a simple but vital amendment that provision be made in the Bill for unexpended balance in each year not to be returned to the Treasury, but to be retained for the use of the Board. ¹²⁷

Mr Weir's Liberal colleagues equally were agreed that *the weak point of the Bill was that it contained no provision for the compulsory purchase of land yet the substantial taking of land would form the key to the success or failure of the Bill as a whole.* ¹²⁸ Glasgow MP James Caldwell complained that in the absence of

the necessary compulsory powers the Bill was *too much of the nature of a charity or dole* giving money as it proposed to do for the purchase of seed and for other purposes such as the building of fishermen's houses.¹²⁹ By contrast, he argued, the Liberals' Light Railway legislation, by opening up means of communication in the Highlands, had given the people an opportunity of earning a livelihood by developing their own districts. Besides, he concluded, how could they build fishermen's houses if they had no compulsory powers to enable them to acquire land?¹³⁰ However, Borders MP Thomas Shaw could not agree with Mr Weir that there were defects in the composition of the Board - indeed he actually congratulated the Lord Advocate *upon making a composite Commission of much experience in Scotland.*¹³¹ But in making that point his main object was to demonstrate that the safety of any compulsory purchase procedure would be well assured just because the taking of the land in this case would be solely at the instance of a *great public Board for the great public weal of a large part of Scotland.*¹³²

In summing up, the Lord Advocate agreed to meet the various points raised but, in fact, although during the Committee stage there was considerable discussion on both the matter of Board composition and that of compulsory purchase powers, it was only the pleas about the former which succeeded in some measure, pressure on the latter issue being strenuously resisted. More important than an attempt to include the Lord Provosts of Edinburgh and Glasgow¹³³ was Mr Weir's amendment proposing the addition of two other persons to be elected by the County Councils of the counties in which the congested districts were situated.¹³⁴ As his colleagues Mr Hedderwick pointed out, *the present Secretary for Scotland might have a thorough knowledge of the congested districts of Scotland, but it did not follow that his successors would all have the same knowledge.*¹³⁵ Yet the power of the Secretary for Scotland

on this Board would be very large, supported as he would be by the Under Secretary and with the right of appointing other members. He continued:

*if the Government wished to make this Bill effective and to do some good in the Highlands, they should take care that the persons who were to administer the Measure were men possessing local knowledge.*¹³⁶

Support in this matter was also forthcoming from Sutherland MP John MacLeod, who argued that, since the Government were proposing to withdraw from the County Councils the whole of the money which they used to administer under the Highlands and Islands Works Act, the least that could be granted them in return was some representation on this new body.¹³⁷ As it was, the new Board would be the mere creature of the Secretary for Scotland.¹³⁸ The Lord Advocate, however, remained unmoved, arguing that an elective element was inappropriate for a Commission that was an avowed experiment. Rightly or wrongly, the Board was to be subject, he further explained, not to veto, but on the contrary to enable the proceedings, if need be, to be defended. *It was better* he concluded *simply, to have a Commission of this official character, looking to the novel experiment that was being made.*¹³⁹ However, as a concession to the need identified by Mr Weir for practical men on the Commission who could spare the time to travel to and from Edinburgh to visit the congested districts of the Highlands, the Lord Advocate did agree to augment the Secretary for Scotland's appointees from not exceeding two to not exceeding three.¹⁴⁰

In respect of powers of compulsory acquisition of land, although it seemed that, late on the night of June 29, Mr Caldwell had actually succeeded in pushing through an amendment incorporating these,¹⁴¹ less than 48 hours later the Lord Advocate was once again emphasising that the Bill was a tentative one so that compulsory powers, as much

as elected members, were inappropriate. It was certainly true, the Lord Advocate further argued, that:

There were provisions for the compulsory taking of land in the Parish Councils Act and in the Light Railways Act, but in those cases the purpose was strictly local, and the land was taken for the purpose of an undertaking which ex hypothesi would benefit the locality.

But, as he pointed out, this would not be so with the removal of persons from congested districts.¹⁴² The Liberals, however, remained unconvinced, reminding the House both of the findings of the Deer Forest Commissioners and of the recent experience of the Crofters Commission of the unyielding attitude of the landlords, notably of the Mathieson family in Lewis - a prime reason why more land had not been distributed among the people under the 1886 Act.¹⁴³ Despite defeat of the amendment on this occasion,¹⁴⁴ the subject of compulsory acquisition of land was inevitably re-introduced, this time yet again by the indefatigable Mr Weir, when the Bill as amended was re-considered three weeks later. Now the Ross and Cromarty MP specifically challenged the Lord Advocate to find land for the purposes of the Bill by voluntary negotiation in the most congested part of the Highlands, which, as it happened, was Lewis.¹⁴⁵ Once again, however, the Lord Advocate argued that compulsory powers were not required.

*In connection with the construction of railways, drains and waterworks it was necessary that there should be compulsory powers, because the opposition of one person, if there were no such powers, might defeat an elaborate and highly desirable improvement scheme. There was not the same reason, however, with the very wide operations undertaken under this Bill. It never could be of the essence of proceedings under the Measure that a crofter should be migrated to a particular farm.*¹⁴⁶

Undeterred, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, who had served as a Crofter Colonisation Commissioner, and who was only too well aware of the tragic inefficacy of emigration as a solution to Highland congestion, reminded the House of the urgent need to focus instead on migration and now *to give some backbone and stiffness and energy to this movement.*¹⁴⁷

Dr Farquharson, too, joined the debate to point out that if it was true that plenty of land could be got on easy terms, as the Lord Advocate implied, then the compulsory powers would not be brought into play at all, adding that *he thought they might trust the Commissioners to carry out a provision of this kind with justice to both sides.*¹⁴⁸ Dr Clark, in his turn, referred to the Congested District Commissioners for Ireland, who in their Report for 1895 had declared the impossibility of carrying out what they considered the most important part of their work, unless they had compulsory powers. In a skilful tactical move Dr Clark appealed to A J Balfour, now First Lord of the Treasury, but previously as Chief Secretary for Ireland the author of the parallel Irish legislation, to corroborate his assessment that compulsory powers were required to budge recalcitrant landowners such as Sir John Orde in the Long Island.¹⁴⁹ And no doubt alluding to evidence of intransigence on the part of the chairman of the Crofter Royal Commission of 1884, when the latter authorised the inclusion in that Report of the statement that legislating in respect of crofters for provision of title to pocket handkerchiefs of land would *tend to fix them in a condition from which it ought to be resolutely though gently withdrawn.*¹⁵⁰

Dr Clark concluded with a certain irony:

*Lord Napier, too, was a man who refused to listen to argument, and these were some of the men who had control of the land that was required.*¹⁵¹

Obliged to agree that the Caithness MP had quoted quite accurately a sentence from the most recent Report of

the Irish CDB, A J Balfour struggled to argue that the cases of Scotland and Ireland were not entirely similar, ending rather weakly in an echo of the Lord Advocate:

At all events let us begin by giving them [compulsory powers] to the Irish Board, which had existed for some years before we give them to Scotland, where the whole matter is in the experimental stage. ¹⁵²

Now even Edinburgh East MP Robert Wallace, who the previous year had withheld his support from the Congested Districts legislation, felt constrained to voice reservations to the First Lord of the Treasury's suggestion that the experiment should first be tried with the good will of every one concerned. He cautioned dryly:

Some experiments were so obviously fore-doomed to failure without certain conditions, that it was foolish to deprive the experiments of the presence of such conditions. ¹⁵³

But neither that warning, nor the additional weight of Co. Mayo MP John Dillon thrown behind the compulsory powers lobby, could convince the House of their necessity, and the amendment was once again defeated, albeit by a narrower margin. ¹⁵⁴ So it was that with the incorporation of minor changes of a technical nature only, the Bill was read for a third time and passed in the Commons on July 28. ¹⁵⁵

Commenting on the progress of the Congested Districts Bill in its leading article on July 31, 1897 the Oban Times observed that:

Though a few minor improvements have been made on the Congested Districts Bill in the later stages of its passage through the House of Commons, the efforts of the Opposition to vitalise the measure by the insertion of powers to acquire land compulsorily have failed. ¹⁵⁶

Referring to the reasoned contributions - during a debate which it described as *thoroughly representative* - of the likes of Messrs Weir, Wallace and Dillon, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman and Drs Farquharson and Clark, the paper noted that:

*Although last Thursday's debate made out a strong case for the adoption of compulsory powers the forcible and effective arguments from the Liberal side were feebly responded to by the Government.*¹⁵⁷

And dubbing the Government response as nothing less than *diplomatic evasion* the leader proceeded to explain to its readership that the attitude of the Government, as expounded by the Lord Advocate, was that compulsory powers were not justifiable until it could be shown in practice that what was a beneficial measure had failed because of the want of such powers. That is to say the Oban Times spelt out in terms of a colourful analogy we must wait until the horse is stolen for proof that the door is useless without the lock.¹⁵⁸ But, the paper pointed out, there was another way of looking at the question, as follows:

*If it turns out that compulsory powers are unnecessary, so much the better, the bill would be nothing the worse of containing them even should no circumstance arise to necessitate their being put into operation. Surely it would be much more to the point to equip the Bill with compulsory powers and find they are superfluous, than to omit them and discover that they are indispensable to the success of the scheme.*¹⁵⁹

As to Mr Balfour's concern that *the experiment should be tried with the goodwill of every one concerned*, the Oban Times quite simply dismissed his suggestion that compulsory powers could result in non-co-operation from desirable parties as *groundless*.¹⁶⁰

Compulsory powers are intended only for those who need compulsion, and if there be no such landowner in the Highlands they could to the satisfaction

of 'all concerned' remain in the present instance a dead letter. In the light of the failure of the Irish Congested Districts Act from the lack of compulsory powers, the course of the Government should be clear in its Highland experiment, but it is exacting the privilege of applying it [sic] own legislation in its own way. The proper value of its policy will only be decided by the results. ¹⁶¹

The actuality of early results from an unchanged wording of the measure moved nearer into view only the next week, with passage through the Lords a mere formality. Moving the Second Reading there himself on August 2, the Secretary for Scotland, Lord Balfour, nevertheless enshrined the explicit tenets of modern regional policy in the history of Parliament - and more particularly in the history of the conservative British Upper House - in emphasising the principle that:

it was for the good of the whole country that special assistance should be given to the people of those parts of the country which were poorer and weaker and in a more backward condition than the general body of the population. ¹⁶²

His assumption that the principle was admitted ¹⁶³ was not disproved in a short debate during which Lord Tweedmouth merely regretted once again the absence of powers of compulsory land acquisition. ¹⁶⁴ Following an uneventful Committee stage the Bill was reported without amendment, and read for a third time and passed, subsequently receiving the Royal Assent on August 6 1897. ¹⁶⁵

Discussing the Queen's Speech in its leader on the subject of the Parliamentary Session the following week, the Oban Times made some observations with regard to another measure relating to workmen's compensation, which nevertheless had a certain bearing also upon the circumstances surrounding the Congested Districts legislation.

The principle of the Act is one for which the Liberal party have always consistently fought, and the partial adoption of it by the present Government is a reminder that their old-time mission of educating the Conservative party is not yet exhausted. ¹⁶⁶

Turning specifically to consider the Congested Districts Act the paper went on to explain that the object of the latter measure, as set forth in the Queen's Speech, was to relieve distress in the Congested Districts. But, the leader proceeded to enquire how is the distress to be relieved?

Distress is the creation of congestion and if the former is to be relieved the latter must be abolished. The relief of congestion means migration, and although this policy is embraced in the Act, the faith of the Government in its success does not appear to be strong. Mr Balfour, for instance, seems to think that migration has a small bearing upon the problem, and the Government did not think it worth while to fortify the Act with powers for the compulsory acquisition of land in cases where voluntary agreement was not possible. ¹⁶⁷

It was certainly time that Mr Balfour had quite openly aired the Government's fundamental reservations about the potential of the legislation which it was promoting, when he had perhaps rather foolhardily, but nonetheless perceptively, observed in the chamber that:

The whole matter is so confronted with problems hard, indeed, of solution, that bold would the prophet be who would say with confidence that the migration clauses of this Bill are ^{going} necessarily and certainly to open a new order of things in regard to the congested portions of the Highland district. ¹⁶⁸

Yet whatever the doubts on either side of the House, what was certain was that, now that the legislation was enacted, in the words of the Oman Times the capacity of the Act [would] soon be discovered. ¹⁶⁹

NOTES

1. See Lady Frances Balfour, A Memoir of Alexander Hugh Bruce, Lord Balfour of Burleigh, KT, Sixth Baron (London, 1924) 65. See also Sir David Milne, The Scottish Office (London, 1957) - especially Chapter 2 on the Development of the office of Secretary of State. Milne states: "The Duke's tenure of the newly created post was brief and that of his immediate successors briefer still. When the Secretary of Scotland Act of 1887 - which increased the powers and duties of the office - was before Parliament, Lord Rosebery complained that it was not so much new powers as continuity of administration that was required, and he pointed out that there had been five Secretaries for Scotland within sixteen months." Milne (1957) 16. Following the changes (see below) the attractiveness of the office increased sufficiently to permit measurement of the length of stay of its incumbents in years rather than months, and from 1892 the Minister responsible for Scottish administration also had the extra prestige conferred by membership of the cabinet.
2. A J Balfour, Cabinet Memo, August 21, 1886, Cab 37/18/42 (SRO RH 4/9/7). A subsequent memo (September 7, 1886) from the Lord Advocate on the memo by Balfour specifically points to "disorder such as has been prevalent in the western islands of Scotland" as evidence of the neglect. Cab 37/19/19 (SRO RH 4/9/7). See also below.
- 2a. Balfour (1924) 69
3. Balfour (1924) 69
4. Balfour (1924) 69
5. Lord Lothian, Memo re Scottish Business, July 12, 1887, Cab 37/20/36 (SRO RH 4/9/7)
6. Balfour (1924) 69-70. See also A J Balfour, Cabinet Memo, August 21, 1886, Cab 37/18/42 (SRO RH 4/9/7)

7. Balfour (1924) 70
8. See above Section (ii) for details of the Walpole Commission and Report
9. Hansard, Fourth Series 30 (1895) col. 455
10. See Hansard, Fourth Series 30 (1895) col. 1268, and 31 (1895) cols 382-3
11. See Hansard, Fourth Series 31 (1895) col. 1559, 32 (1895) cols 152-3
12. See Hansard, Fourth Series 33 (1895) col. 130. For the Queen's speech (February 5, 1895), see Hansard, Fourth Series 30 (1895) col. 4
13. See Hansard, Fourth Series 37 (1895) cols 355, 357 and 835. The number of the Western Highlands and Islands (Scotland) Works Amendment Bill was 103.
14. See Hansard, Fourth Series 40 (1896) col. 221ff, 42 (1896) col. 546. The full title of the Bill was, in fact, the Agricultural Rates, Congested Districts and Burgh Land Tax Relief (Scotland) Bill. As was observed in the House: "The Bill had the longest description of any Measure that had passed through the House, and yet this portentous title was absolutely ineffective in its description of the Bill." Hansard, Fourth Series 43 (1896) col. 1748
15. Hansard, Fourth Series 37 (1896) col. 1495
16. Hansard, Fourth Series 42 (1896) col. 546. See also the First Reading at Hansard, Fourth Series 42 (1896) col. 553
17. Hansard, Fourth Series 42 (1896) col. 1339
18. Hansard, Fourth Series 42 (1896) col. 1330-1

19. Hansard, Fourth Series 42 (1896) col. 549
20. See Section (ii) above
21. Hansard, Fourth Series 42 (1896) col. 549
22. Hansard, Fourth Series 42 (1896) col. 549
23. Hansard, Fourth Series 43 (1896) col. 1360. The remark was made by Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman.
24. See Hansard, Fourth Series 42 (1896) col. 1325. See below for explanation of alleged inequity.
25. See Sir George Trevelyan's observation on this below.
26. Although during their brief spell in office in 1886 the Liberals had succeeded in putting the Crofters Act on the Statute Book, their attitude to central government finance for regional development projects had been clearly spelled out in a Cabinet Memo of eighteen months earlier, which referred to Ireland. The question under consideration had been "modes of stimulating the development of industrial enterprise", not from the point of view of wishing to adopt any such measures, but rather to "consider carefully what the limits of State interference ought to be in regard to such matters". The conclusion reached on that occasion had been that "grants and loans for public objects on the whole do more harm than good Nothing checks local enterprise more than the idea that it is the business of the State" RCG Hamilton, December 1, 1884, Cab 37/13/48 (SR0 RH 4/9/6). In the context of Liberal ineffectiveness during their 1892-95 period in office, Mr Hedderwick's attack on the Scottish Secretary (see above Section (ii), n. 276) - which culminated derisively: "The right hon. Gentleman was now a member of the Government that offered these suffering people the munificent sum of £15,000" - was somewhat hypocritical.
27. Hansard, Fourth Series 42 (1896) col. 1333
28. Hansard, Fourth Series 42 (1896) col. 1339
29. Hansard, Fourth Series 42 (1896) col. 1339
30. Hansard, Fourth Series 42 (1896) col. 1353
31. For example, see below for Mr Michael Shaw-Stewart's parallel of the Scottish with the Irish case.

32. Hansard, Fourth Series 42 (1896) col. 1353. As the Lord Advocate and his colleagues were no doubt well aware, there were very sound reasons why existing bodies were unsuited to administration of a Congested Districts Fund, some of which had been set out in addenda to the Deer Forest Report of 1895. See below.
33. Hansard, Fourth Series 42 (1896) col. 1354
34. Hansard, Fourth Series 42 (1896) cols 1354-5
35. Hansard, Fourth Series 42 (1896) col. 1367
36. Hansard, Fourth Series 42 (1896) cols 1367-8
37. Hansard, Fourth Series 42 (1896) col. 1362
38. Hansard, Fourth Series 42 (1896) col. 1373
39. Hansard, Fourth Series 42 (1896) col. 1328
40. Hansard, Fourth Series 42 (1896) col. 1373
41. Hansard, Fourth Series 42 (1896) col. 1378 (and see also cols 1376 and 1383)
42. Hansard, Fourth Series 42 (1896) col. 1385
43. Hansard, Fourth Series 42 (1896) col. 1485
44. See above, this Section and Section (ii)
45. Hansard, Fourth Series 42 (1896) col. 1485
46. See Day (1918) 202
47. See Napier Report (1884) 108, and Section (ii) above.
48. See Napier Report (1884) 105, and S C Johnson, A History of Emigration From the UK to North America 1763-1912. (London, 1913) 74-5
49. See the correspondence re a proposed Scheme of Emigration dated December 13 and 17, 1886, and January 11, February 16, March 19, 29 and 30, April 4 and May 4, 1887, Cab 37/19/29 (SRO RH 4/9/7)
50. Memo re Crofter Emigration, May 10, 1887, Cab 37/19/29 (SRO RH 4/9/7)
51. Sheriff John Cheyne's Report to Lord Lothian, November 27, 1887, SRO GD 40/16/34

52. Major J F Houston, late RA, to Lord Lothian nd (December) 1887, SRO GD 40/16/34
53. Memo re Crofter Emigration, May 10, 1887, Cab 37/19/29 (SRO RH 4/9/7)
54. See Day (1918) 122-4. Also Select Committee on Colonisation (1891) 4; Draft Terms of Crofter Emigration Scheme No 2, July 1887, Cab 37/20/35 (SRO RH 4/9/7); Crofter Emigration Memo No 2 by Lord Lothian, July 20, 1887, Cab 37/20/38 (SRO RH 4/9/8); Johnson (1913) 240-3
55. Memo re Threatened Education Collapse, February 1, 1888, Cab 37/21/2 (SRO RH 4/9/8)
56. Board of Supervision, Forty-Third Report (1887-8) 9
57. While the fact of Lord Lothian's lingering attachment to emigration, even after he was committed to regional development (see below), demonstrates that his was no lightning conversion (see n. 276 below), nevertheless the abruptness of the policy about-turn (as opposed to the personal conversion) is noteworthy. As late as May 1887, Cabinet accepted that "it is not generally admitted that the congestion of population ... has become so great that by no possible readjustment of division of land can the people be supported." Memo by Lord Lothian re Crofter Emigration, May 10, 1887, Cab 37/19/29 (SRO RH 4/9/7). Thus, later that summer, Lord Lothian was involved in negotiating an improved scheme of emigration. See Crofter Emigration Memo No 2, July 20, 1887, Cab 37/20/38 (SRO RH 4/9/8); and Draft Terms of Crofter Emigration Scheme no 2, July 1887 (?) Cab 37/20/35 (SRO RH 4/9/7). Yet by the following summer a complete policy re-orientation was to take place, set in motion, paradoxically, by Lord Lothian himself. See below.
58. Cabinet Memo on the Memorial of Proprietors in the Western Highlands and Islands of Scotland, July 26, 1888, Cab 37/22/23 (SRO RH 4/9/8)
59. Lothian to Goschen, August 10, 1889 (p 4), SRO GD 40/16/45
60. Proposed Conditions of a Trust for the benefit of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, August 20, 1889, GD 40/16/45
61. See Toronto Globe, February 3, 1890. The first headline was carried in the British Pall Mall Gazette of February 4, 1890, above an article revealing the existence of a "startling report" in the Canadian press concerning the situation of Scottish crofters and appealing for assistance.

62. See Hansard, Fourth Series 42 (1896) col. 1488
63. Hansard, Fourth Series 42 (1896) cols 1400 and 1436
64. Hansard, Fourth Series 42 (1896) col. 1487
65. See, for example, the Testimony of Rev Mr Forbes, Manse of Sleat, Skye, quoted in Section (i) above
66. See Douglas (1976) 71-2
67. The Hunt Report (1969) investigated those areas which claimed to suffer from economic depression but did not receive aid because their unemployment rates were insufficiently high. The Government accepted the report in principle and the whole concept of Intermediate Areas was enshrined in the 1970 Employment Act. For an account of regional policy during the late 1960s and early 1970s, see J D McCallum, 'UK Regional Policy 1964-72' in Cameron and Wingo (eds), Cities, Regions and Public Policy (Edinburgh, 1973) 271-98
68. See P J Curwen and A H Fowler, Economic Policy (London, 1978), Chapter 5 on 'Regional Policy', especially p 167. See also G Manners, 'Inter-regional Development and Planning' in Manners et al (eds), Regional Development in Britain (Second edition, Chichester, 1980) 50-7. A new geography of assistance was phased in over a three-year period up to 1982 which, in the case of Scotland, excludes a large area of NE Scotland centred upon Aberdeen and all of S E Scotland
69. See below p 252-6
70. Hansard, Fourth Series 43 (1896) col. 1396
71. Hansard, Fourth Series 43 (1896) col. 1396
72. See above.
73. Hansard, Fourth Series 43 (1896) cols 1397-9
74. See Hansard, Fourth Series 43 (1896) cols 1403-5
75. Hansard, Fourth Series 43 (1896) col. 1527
76. See Hansard, Fourth Series 43 (1896) col. 1528
77. Hansard, Fourth Series 43 (1896) col. 1528
78. Hansard, Fourth Series 43 (1896) cols 1528-9

79. See Hansard, Fourth Series 43 (1896) col. 1538. Mr McLeod's "earnest protest against any idea of a Congested Districts Board" (col. 1536) expressed his disapproval merely of the mode of potential application of development funding, on the basis that "the Highland People ... did not want to see certain congested districts stereotyped into pauper warrens."
80. Hansard, Fourth Series 43 (1896) col. 1531
381. Hansard, Fourth Series 43 (1896) cols 1531-2. Previously MP for Edinburgh West, Mr Thomas Buchanan's encounters with less prosperous parts of Scotland ceased with his departure from Glasgow High School during his teens bound ultimately for Balliol College, Oxford
82. See above, this section and also Section (ii)
83. See above for the circumstances of the Board's statement. For evidence of the Liberal's ineffectual criticism, see the contributions of Mr McLeod, Hansard, Fourth Series 43 (1896) col. 1529, those of Dr Clark and Mr Dalziel, col 1534, and of Mr Hedderwick, cols 1746-8. A Conservative MP specifically took "Hon Members opposite" to task for the "narrow scope" of their objections to the Bill, col. 1745
84. See above p190-3
85. See Hansard, Fourth Series 43 (1896) cols 1538-9 and col. 1536
86. Hansard, Fourth Series 43 (1896) cols 1532-3
87. See Hansard, Fourth Series 43 (1896) col. 1742. The point was noted by Sir George Trevelyan.
88. Hansard, Fourth Series 43 (1896) col. 1751
89. See Hansard, Fourth Series 44 (1896) col. 823
90. See Hansard, Fourth Series 45 (1897) col. 1047; 47 (1897) col. 681; 48 (1897) col. 1247; 49 (1897) cols 10 and 908
91. See Hansard, Fourth Series 49 (1897) col. 1636
92. See Hansard, Fourth Series 50 (1897) col. 281
93. Hansard, Fourth Series 50 (1897) col. 354
94. See Hansard, Fourth Series 50 (1897) col. 354

95. The Congested Districts Board for Ireland was established in 1892 for a minimum period of twenty years. See also below n. 400 and above Chapter One, Section (ii)
96. Hansard, Fourth Series 50 (1897) col. 354
97. See Addendum to Deer Forest Report (1895) xxvi (signatories Michael Hugh Shaw-Stewart - MP for Renfrew - , George Gordon - Land Valuer, Elgin -, James Forsyth - of Quinish, Argyllshire, subsequently memembr of CDB for Scotland)
98. See below for details of the constitution in full of the Scottish Board.
99. See W L Micks, A History of the Congested Districts Board [for Ireland] (Dublin, 1925) 14. William Micks was initially Secretary and subsequently Member of the Congested Districts Board for Ireland. Details of the composition of the Irish Board are also to be found in Hansard, Fourth Series 50 (1897) col. 799
100. Memorandum placed before the Irish CDB by A J Balfour, January 21, 1892. The occasion of the need for this interpretation of the relations between the Board and ordinary Government Departments was as follows. In steering through Parliament, in his capacity as Chief Secretary for Ireland, the Purchase of Land (Ireland) Act, 1891, Act II - the legislation which provided for the establishment of the Irish CDB - Balfour is recognised by Micks as "being the first British Prime Minister who acknowledged in a practical way that the universal poverty of the West of Ireland was a disgrace to British Government." Micks (1925) 12. Of the subsequent carrying out of the scheme, Mick adds: "I was aware of Mr Balfour's intention that the Board should be free from all outside control." Micks (1925) 17. However, when Balfour was succeeded in Office by the next Chief Secretary, one W L Jackson, less than three months after the Board entered upon its duties, William Micks as Board Secretary received a direction from Mr Jackson to send all the Board's letters to other departments, and most especially the Treasury, through Dublin Castle, the Chief Secretary's Office. Micks, in his own words "demurred" and "placed the matter before Mr/Balfour". Though now First Lord of the Treasury, nevertheless Balfour took the time to come to Dublin in person in order to put before the Board on January 21, 1892, his view contained in the memorandum. This was approved at a formal meeting by the Board, at which Mr Jackson, as Chief Secretary, presided. As Micks

emphasises "this authoritative document ... was a charter of freedom for the Board." See Micks (1925) 17 and 13-4.

101. See Hansard, Fourth Series 50 (1897) col. 354; and for details of the model that would be adopted in Scotland, see below.
102. Hansard, Fourth Series 50 (1897) col. 354
103. See Day (1918) 206
104. Hansard, Fourth Series 50 (1897) col. 354
105. Hansard, Fourth Series 43 (1896) cols 1530-1
106. Addendum to Deer Forest Report (1895) xxvi, by Malcolm MacCallum, Minister, Parish of Muckairn, Argyllshire.
107. Minute of Argyll County Council of December 20, 1893, quoted in Day (1918) 207
108. Addendum to Deer Forest Report (1895) xxvi
109. Addendum to Deer Forest Report (1895) xxvi
110. Hansard, Fourth Series 50 (1897) col. 354
111. See Hansard, Fourth Series 43 (1896) col. 1536. For all his summary dismissal then of 'idle' speculation, the Lord Advocate had clearly been paying close attention to what the former Liberal Secretary for Scotland had to suggest. See below n. 412
112. Hansard, Fourth Series 43 (1896) col. 1536. The Lord Advocate had certainly acknowledged at the time that as a pre-existing body "the Crofters Commission would be a possible competitor" but had quickly dismissed such discussion since "all this was entirely for the future, and it would be idle to say anything about it." In fact, "he did not know the really non-existent mind of the Government on the matter."
113. Hansard, Fourth Series 50 (1897) col. 355
114. Hansard, Fourth Series 50 (1897) col. 355
115. Hansard, Fourth Series 50 (1897) col. 355
116. See Hansard, Fourth Series 50 (1897) cols 355-6
117. Hansard, Fourth Series 50 (1897) col. 356
118. Hansard, Fourth Series 50 (1897) col. 356 (Dr Clark)

119. Hansard, Fourth Series 50 (1897) cols 356-7 (Mr Weir). For details of the change in Government attitude, see above Section (ii) and this section, part (a).
120. Hansard, Fourth Series 50 (1897) cols 357-8. As a result of the Walpole Report, the Western Highlands and Islands Works Bill had been introduced "to make provisions in regard to Construction and Maintenance of certain Works of public and local utility" in these parts of Scotland. The passage of the Act enables the carrying into administrative effect of a vote to that purpose annually included in the Civil Service Estimates. In anticipation of the passage of the Congested Districts Act, the vote on account of Highlands and Islands Works was demitted from the Estimates. Hence Mr Parker Smith's reference. See above Section (ii) and also Western Highlands and Islands (Scotland) Works Bill, (Parliamentary Papers 1890-1) 681-8; Memo re Western Highlands and Islands (Scotland) Works Bill (PP 1890-1) 679, and Congested Districts Board, First Report (1899) Appendix 1.
121. See Hansard, Fourth Series 50 (1897) col. 358. For example, reassurance was provided that the additional £20,000 would originate separately from the Treasury and not from any funds already earmarked for Scotland.
122. Hansard, Fourth Series 50 (1897) col. 358
123. That is, that there were nearly 2,000,000 acres of land in the Highland crofting counties suitable for the occupation of crofters, cottars, and fishermen. Hansard, Fourth Series 50 (1897) col. 472. Mr Weir's figure may have enhanced the true figure - if such a statistic could be relied upon - by 50% again, but the substance of his claim was nevertheless accurate. See above Section (ii)
124. Hansard, Fourth Series 50 (1897) cols 472-3
125. See Hansard, Fourth Series 50 (1897) col. 473. Lewis was owned by the Matheson family. The continued staunch refusal of Sir James Matheson's family either to sell portions of land or to make it available to crofters was no doubt a hangover from that gentleman's obsession with enhancing the value of the property, which he strove to do by, on the one hand, draining the Lewis peat bogland, and on the other, in some respects anticipating the development work of the CDB, as for example in the provision of roads, bridges, boat-slips, fish-curing houses and bulls for stock

improvement. The central object, however, namely the enhancement of the value of the property was not achieved. When Sir James' widow, Lady Jane Matheson, was forced - by the violent circumstances attendant upon the raiding by crofters of the Park Deer Forest on her estate - to leave Stornoway to take up residence in the South of France where her husband had died previously, the family issued the following statement in the Times - "In no single year, from 1844 when he bought the Lews till 1878 when he died at Mentone, did he [Sir James] ever draw any revenue from the island." Times, January 27, 1888. Lewis was subsequently put up for sale by the Mathesons in 1918 and purchased by Lord Leverhulme. See Day (1918) 183-4; and for details of the Park Raids, Hunter (1976) 171-7. For further details of the difficulties besetting the Irish Board, see below p 196.

126. Hansard, Fourth Series 50 (1897) col. 474
127. See Hansard, Fourth Series 50 (1897) cols 474-5. The matter of the unexpended balance was never again referred to in the House. Although in the subsequent Act of 1897 (Appendix A to this thesis) there is no specific mention of this provision being incorporated, it will become apparent from later chapters that Mr Wier's point was met.
128. Hansard, Fourth Series 50 (1897) col. 476. (Mr James Caldwell; Mr Thomas Shaw). Mr Shaw's statement would be echoed almost uncannily in that same chamber by Secretary of State Willie Ross speaking during the Second Reading of the Highlands and Islands Development (Scotland) Bill in March, 1965. For details and further discussion, see below Chapter Seven Section (i)
129. Hansard, Fourth Series 50 (1897) col. 476
130. See Hansard, Fourth Series 50 (1897) col. 476
131. Hansard, Fourth Series 50 (1897) col. 475
132. Hansard, Fourth Series 50 (1897) col. 475
133. See Hansard, Fourth Series 50 (1897) cols 793-4. The logic of pressing for their inclusion was the considerable Highland population in the two cities, so that their addition would place the Board on a more 'popular' basis. The amendment was withdrawn when it was pointed out that these men were sufficiently busy with their municipal affairs without the additional burden of a Highland responsibility.

134. See Hansard, Fourth Series 50 (1897) col. 795
135. Hansard, Fourth Series 50 (1897) col. 795
136. Hansard, Fourth Series 50 (1897) col. 795
137. See Hansard, Fourth Series 50 (1897) col. 796
138. Hansard, Fourth Series 50 (1897) col. 796
139. Hansard, Fourth Series 50 (1897) col. 796
140. See Hansard, Fourth Series 50 (1897) col. 802
141. See Hansard, Fourth Series 50 (1897) cols 810-11
142. Hansard, Fourth Series 50 (1897) col. 923. Ironically enough, these were precisely the sort of powers actually invested some seventy years later in the HADB - at the instigation of Secretary of State Willie Ross - and found, in the light of experience to be wanting. For further discussion of this and of related matters, see Chapter Seven Section (i) and (ii)
143. See Hansard, Fourth Series 50 (1897) col. 923 (Mr Hedderwick); col. 924 (Dr Clark); cols 924-5 (Mr McLeod). For details of the stubbornness of the Matheson family, see above n. 425. (Note that in Hansard the spelling is given as Mathieson).
144. See Hansard, Fourth Series 50 (1897) col. 925
145. See Hansard, Fourth Series 51 (1897) cols 744-5
146. Hansard, Fourth Series 51 (1897) cols 746-7
147. Hansard, Fourth Series 51 (1897) col. 747. The Select Committee on Colonisation had the unenviable task of reporting in 1891 on the disastrous state-aided emigration scheme embarked upon in April, 1888 and administered by the Crofter Colonisation Commissioners. See above p 172-5 for details.
148. Hansard, Fourth Series 51 (1897) col. 478
149. See Hansard, Fourth Series 51 (1897) cols 748-9. See also Congested Districts Board for Ireland, Fourth Report (1895). The Report stated that "additional funds and enlarged powers are desirable if anything is to be done on a large scale towards giving effect to ... the Migration Clauses of the Congested Districts Acts", and had further reported that a resolution regarding tracts of land suitable for enlarging the holdings of small

occupiers had been adopted by the Members of the Board and transmitted to the Chief Secretary for Ireland, as follows: "The Board are ... of opinion that it will be impossible for them to give due effect to this important department of their work unless more funds are placed at their disposal, and compulsory powers given to them to acquire such lands at their just value." (10)

150. See Napier Report (1884) 39. See also above Section (ii) for the context of the statement.
151. Hansard, Fourth Series 51 (1897) col. 749
152. Hansard, Fourth Series 51 (1897) col 750. Balfour, of course, was not wrong to argue that the cases of Scotland and Ireland were dissimilar. But it was precisely in the pressing requirement for more land for essentially pastoral agriculture that the Scottish problem diverged from the Irish. See above Section (ii)
153. Hansard, Fourth Series 51 (1897) col. 752. Willie Ross would make the same point in the same place many years later. See also above p. 192 and the associated n. 428
154. See Hansard, Fourth Series 51 (1897) cols 752-3; 51 (1897) col. 755; and 50 (1897) col. 925. The majority was reduced by one-third from 96 to 68.
155. See Hansard, Fourth Series 51 (1897) col. 1364. For example, in Clause 4, sub-section 1, paragraph (a) "aiding and extending agriculture" was extended specifically to include dairy-farming. See Hansard, Fourth Series 50 (1897) col. 809. Similarly, in the same Clause and sub-section paragraph (f), the list of suitable subjects for possible provision or improvement was extended to include meal-mills. See Hansard, Fourth Series 51 (1897) col. 741. The range of candidates in Scottish Government Departments acceptable for assuming the post of Commission Secretary was also widened, at the instigation of the Lord Advocate himself, beyond merely "senior" officers. See Hansard, Fourth Series 51 (1897) col. 736. See also relevant section of the Congested Districts Act reproduced in Appendix A to this thesis.
156. Oban Times, July 31, 1897
157. Oban Times, July 31, 1897
158. Oban Times, July 31, 1897. See also Hansard, Fourth Series 50 (1897) col. 923

159. Oban Times, July 31, 1897
160. Hansard, Fourth Series 51 (1897) col. 751; Oban Times, July 31, 1897
161. Oban Times, July 31, 1897
162. Hansard, Fourth Series 52 (1897) col. 53
163. Hansard, Fourth Series 52 (1897) col. 53
164. See Hansard, Fourth Series 52 (1897) col. 54
165. See Hansard, Fourth Series 52 (1897) cols 220 and 506
166. Oban Times, August 14, 1897
167. Oban Times, August 14, 1897
168. Hansard, Fourth Series 51 (1897) col. 751
169. Oban Times, August 14, 1897

CHAPTER FOUR

The Congested Districts Board I (1897-1900)

(i) Personalities and Priorities

As soon as the Congested Districts (Scotland) Act received the Royal Assent in August 1897, the necessary steps were taken to organise the Board and its staff.¹ By the first section of the Act the Board was bound to be constituted ex officio of at least the following five statutory members: the Right Honourable Lord Balfour of Burleigh, in his capacity as Secretary for Scotland; Sir Colin Scott-Moncrieff, K.C.M.G., as Under-Secretary; Mr Malcolm McNeill, as Chairman of the Local Government Board, Mr Angus Sutherland, as Chairman of the Fishery Board; and Sheriff David Brand, as Chairman of the Crofters Commission.² Following his education at Loretto and Eton, and graduation in 1871 from Oriel College Oxford, Alexander Hugh Bruce, sixth Baron Balfour of Burleigh had embarked upon a strenuous public career.³ In 1876 he became a representative peer for Scotland, sitting in the Lords in that capacity until his death. His shrewdness, business ability and sound knowledge of local government were early recognised so that his biography is largely a record of his work on commissions. In 1888-89 he was lord-in-waiting to Queen Victoria, and from 1889-1892 parliamentary secretary to the Board of Trade. It was, however, in his capacity as Secretary for Scotland during the third Salisbury Cabinet from 1895 that his unwearied efforts to further legislatively the welfare of Scotland showed him to be one of the ablest administrators that country had yet produced. The establishment of the Congested Districts Board during his term of office was only one of many legislative achievements, and Lord Balfour was also prominent in the public as well as the political life of Scotland. In common with most Scots who attain high political office, however, he was obliged to take up residence in London, so that, conscientious though he was, the additional burden of Chairmanship of the newly created Edinburgh-based CDB in 1897 could not have been ideal either for Chairman or for Board.⁴

Sir Colin Scott-Moncrieff was thirteen years Lord Balfour's senior, a former pupil of the Edinburgh Academy and a graduate of Edinburgh University. He had retired after a distinguished army career in Bengal and India to embark upon a diplomatic one, which included a ten-year spell at the Scottish Office. He was also a London resident.⁵ David Brand was of an age with Sir Colin Scott-Moncrieff, born in 1837 the son of a Glasgow merchant. He was educated at Glasgow Academy and Glasgow University where he took logic and ethics, subsequently proceeding to Edinburgh University to study law and completing a distinguished academic career in Heidelberg where he gained a Doctorate in Laws. He was called to the Scots Bar in 1864 and held the post of Advocate Depute from 1880-85. He later became Sheriff of Ayr and in 1886 was appointed Chairman of the Crofters Commission. From 1892-1895 David Brand was Chairman of the Deer Forest Commission, and service as a Commissioner of Northern Lighthouses from 1885 completed his considerable experience of Highland affairs. Latterly Sheriff Brand lived in Edinburgh.⁶ Like David Brand, Angus Sutherland rose to public, and in the latter case also political, fame from a humble background. His early education took place at the parish school in Helmsdale where his crofter grandfather's family had settled following eviction from Kildonan. In 1868 he entered Edinburgh Training College and subsequently took up a teaching appointment at Aberfeldy. However, in 1872 he enrolled at Glasgow University to complete his education and in 1876 he was appointed mathematics master at Glasgow Academy. Also president of the Glasgow Sutherland Association, Angus Sutherland became deeply involved in the Highland land reform movement and was returned as MP for Sutherland in 1886, a seat which he held for ten years. He was appointed to Chairmanship of the Fishery Board for Scotland in 1896, having already served with David Brand on the Deer Forest Commission. Angus Sutherland, too, lived in the New Town of Edinburgh.⁷

Malcolm McNeill was the nephew of Sir John McNeill, first Chairman of the Board of Supervision and author of the notable report to that Board condoning clearance and endorsing emigration as the solution to the Highland problem.⁸ Sir John McNeill's nephew also was involved in the work of the Board of Supervision, being the official in/charge of administering the Poor Law in north-west Scotland. Indeed it was he who in that capacity selected the thirty Lewis and Harris families who were the first participants in the Government colonisation scheme in April 1888. Despite this involvement in emigration, Malcolm McNeill's commitment to it as a solution to Highland problems was probably less overt than his uncle's. By the time of his period of service at the Board of Supervision, the line of argument adopted by that body was quite simply that *some effectual and permanent remedy is urgently called for*⁹ to which McNeill, with co-author Sheriff-Substitute Fraser, added the following solemn warning to the Secretary for Scotland in their 1888 Report on the Cottar Population of the Lews:

*It is our conviction that actual starvation in the Lews has only been averted during the present winter by the exceptional abundance of last season's crop, and will almost certainly occur before the crop of next season is available; your Lordship will judge whether the immense population here congregated can safely be permitted to rely on a chance so precarious in this climate as a continuance of favourable harvests.*¹⁰

While it is true that the Government's response to such warnings was initially to embark upon colonisation schemes, there were by 1897 few illusions that the solution to the Highland problem was simply a question - as Sir John McNeill had conjectured - of *the population [being] diminished and distress [being] no more heard of*.¹¹ In spite of his society and proprietorial connections - he was also related to Lady Gordon Cathcart - Malcolm McNeill possessed the considerable asset of being a fluent Gaelic speaker and it was he who in that tongue managed the delicate task

of persuading the five Glendale martyrs to give themselves up, so avoiding a potentially bloody, and obviously impossible to win, confrontation with the army. Thus in tune to some extent with the crofter's world-view, McNeill must also have been well thought of in public and political circles. Not only had he served as secretary to the Royal (Napier) Commission of 1883, but he was also appointed to the Western Highlands and Islands (Walpole) Commission of 1891. The Report of the latter, in identifying what industries could best be fostered and how, served together with the Deer Forest Report as an important springboard to the ultimate setting up of the CDB.¹²

In its leader of 18 September 1897 even the Oban Times declared itself well pleased with the appointments made under the terms of the Congested Districts Act.

*These appointments bring together a combination of great and wide experience that will bear upon the various questions the Board has to face from different points of view.*¹³

Lord Balfour, it was noted, had frequently declared a warm interest in the condition and well-being of the Highlands. Now he would have ample scope for the practical exercise of his sympathies and, it was actually conceded, *his Lordship and the Under Secretary for Scotland should prove something more than official and immoveable figureheads.* As Chairman of the Local Government Board Malcolm McNeill was credited as being *in the possession of an inner knowledge of the Highlands which has never before been utilised as it will be by the CDB and which is certain to be of great value.* While Angus Sutherland, as a former Member of Parliament, and as president of the Fishery Board, was deemed to be familiar with both the political and the economic aspects of the land problem and would be able to advise the Board in its operations in relation to the fishing industry. Finally, Mr David Brand was

appraised in perhaps the most glowing terms. *Sheriff Brand, who so ably presides over the Crofters Commission, has unrivalled experience in Highland affairs and a unique acquaintance with the actual conditions of the population.* All in all, the paper concluded, *the appointments made by the Act at once recommend themselves as satisfactory to all parties.*¹⁵ It was the subsequent nomination of the three other non-official members by the Secretary for Scotland that had been awaited with what the *Oban Times* described as *some little anxiety and interest.* As it pointed out, *the introduction of biased extremists would probably have crippled the usefulness of the Board, and the selection of incompetent and inexperienced nonentities would not have added to its efficiency.*¹⁶ In the event, even though two of the three were identified as Highland landowners, yet the *Oban Times* felt able to declare confidently that *Lord Balfour's appointments are happily neither of the one category nor the other.*¹⁶

Sir Kenneth MacKenzie, 6th Baronet of Gairloch did appear to approximate to that titled educated breed of landlord and public servant, which possessed little to commend itself to the crofter community.¹⁸ he owned some 170,000 acres of land round his home at Conon Bridge, Ross-shire part of which was enclosed for a deer forest. His redemption probably lay at least partly in his liberal politics and in his unpretentious marriage to one Eila Campbell from Islay. English by birth, Sir Kenneth MacKenzie was tutored privately before proceeding to the Universities of Edinburgh and Giessen. Following his rise to the rank of major in the Highland Rifle (Ross-shire) Militia, he contested Inverness-shire unsuccessfully at the General Elections of 1880 and 1885, on the latter occasion being defeated by Crofter MP Charles Fraser-Mackintosh. Sir Kenneth did, in fact, have a large crofter population on his property, but neither his defeat in 1880 or 1885 properly reflected his conduct as a landlord.¹⁹ A man of some principle, it was rumoured that when first asked to assume membership of the Napier Commission, initially he declined the honour on the ground that he considered no landlord had a right to act on such an

inquiry. Principled as he was, he was not, however, inflexible, exemplifying instead the worthiest form of pragmatism. Originally antagonistic to the passing of the Crofters Act, his nomination to the CDB was accepted as an indication that the beneficial working of that measure had modified his former views. In keeping with such evidence of considerable integrity, Sir Kenneth Mackenzie was reported to be one of the most popular landlords in the north, dealing directly with his tenantry rather than through a factor (which he did without), and both he and Lady MacKenzie were reputed to take a personal interest in all that concerned them. Away from the heat and passion of national politics in the 1880s in the less turbulent waters of local public and political life this paternalistic benevolence was better rewarded. Convener of Ross and Cromarty from 1855 at the age of twenty-three, he was to become Lord-Lieutenant of the County in 1881 and Chairman of the County Council from 1890. However, whether his *undoubted intimate knowledge of the Highlands* and *lengthened experience of County affairs* transpired, in the context of the CDB, to be coupled with real understanding of and sympathy with the crofter's position, is difficult to ascertain since Sir Kenneth MacKenzie died early in the life of the Board in February 1900. Apart from the brief tribute quoted above, it is recorded in the Report for that year only that *he was specially interested in all matters pertaining to agriculture and to land.*²⁰

Of its neighbour Mr James Forsyth of Quinish, Argyllshire, noting that he was a member of the Deer Forest Commission, appointed by the last Liberal Government, the Oban Times observed that, as such, he would have gained an insight into Highland questions that would be found serviceable to the new Board.²¹ Of particular significance was the fact that Forsyth had been one of the signatories to the Memorandum to the Deer Forest Report making far-reaching recommendations which had gone beyond the limited remit of the Commission by urging the implementation of a *well-considered scheme of land purchase*²² It was fitting

therefore that he should sit on the CDB since, as the paper pointed out, *Mr Forsyth's policy is, perhaps, partially realised by the Congested Districts Act.*²³ The third member to be appointed by the Secretary for Scotland was a Mr William MacKenzie from Trantlemore, north of Forsinard in Strath Halladale, Sutherland. He was a crofter representative of whom the Oban Times observed *none more capable could have been found.* Not only did he have a practical acquaintance with the crofter position in the Highlands and of the conditions of his class, but he was known to possess an intelligent grasp of the wider problems of the Highlands.²⁴ Recognising that Lord Balfour's third appointee had much to commend himself to its readership, the Oban Times was prepared to be generous also about the other two. His Lordship had *used his discretion with results it would be difficult to make more satisfactory.* Two of the three were, admittedly, representative of proprietary interests, but when it was remembered, the editorial sagely reminded its radical readership, that the Congested Districts Act was the scheme of a Conservative Government and that possibilities existed of prejudiced and unpalatable representation, *there [was] every reason for satisfaction with Lord Balfour's choice.*

Besides, the appointment of a crofter representative to the third vacancy ensured that *the interests of the small tenants and of the landless [would] be satisfactorily represented in the work of the CDB.*²⁵

On the whole then, no fault could be found with the composition of the Board. The members were judged to be *a competent body of men who may be trusted to effectively carry out the duties laid down for them by the Act.*²⁶ These same duties, however, were noted to be *of a decidedly multifarious order,*²⁷ as a summary of the relevant clause of the Act demonstrates. In applying the Congested Districts (Scotland) Fund the Commissioners were authorised to take such steps as they considered necessary for developing and modernising agriculture, enlarging holdings, encouraging internal migration of crofters, developing fishing and allied

industries, developing home industries and discharging the greater part of the obligations of the new superseded Public Works Act, that is, provision and upgrading of roads, bridges, piers, harbours, lighthouses and other aids to improved communications.²⁸ Acknowledging the careful specification of the development measures in the Act, nevertheless the Oban Times declared itself certain that *the successful application of them will greatly depend upon the interpretation placed upon them by the Board.*²⁹ A major problem was, of course, that the funds at the disposal of the Board were not large compared with the extent of the ground to be covered. It was probably understating matters to observe that the £35,000 for the development of agriculture, enlargement of holdings, encouragement of fishing etc. *[would] not admit of any great margin.*³⁰ Put more bluntly, here was the potential for a comprehensive policy of regional development with an annual budget to achieve the reality of only piecemeal and uneven improvement. Furthermore, achievement even of piecemeal success could be prejudiced in two ways. Firstly, priorities might easily be misjudged and secondly the very time and effort devoted to prioritising, that is deciding which of the various aims to pursue, might effectively detract from their ever being achieved.

The difficulty of setting priorities is in fact demonstrated nowhere better than in the columns of the Oban Times itself. In its editorial of 18 September 1897 it warned the Board to guard against the danger of beginning at the wrong end. *The development of scientific agriculture, the improvement of stock-breeding, the aiding of the fishing and home industries are all highly important matters, but they will not get rid of congestion.* And it proceeded to advise that:

It is only by the primary use of [its] powers for migration and enlargement of holdings that the Board can hope to extinguish congestion and its evil. If by putting these powers in operation it may find that the other provisions of the Act may not be so necessary. At any rate, it will be discovered that the freeing of the land will do more to solve the Highland problem than demonstrations of scientific agriculture and the introduction of costly and

useless experiments.³¹

Yet only three issues previously the editorial then was observing that:

*Matter for practical reflection in connection with the so-called 'congestion' problem may be found in the consideration that while, during the West Coast herring fishing season of this year our Highland fishermen were fated to see vast shoals of herring pass their shores without being able to take anything like adequate advantage of the boom thus brought within their reach, the same fishermen have since, in large numbers, gone to the East Coast ports, hired to reap the same harvest, and have found hardly any harvest to be reaped.*³²

The argument was not developed on that occasion. But on November 6 - a mere seven weeks after such a strongly worded reproach of the futility of implementing experimental development projects instead of concentrating on the land problem - yet another editorial may be found emphasising that agricultural prosperity could not realistically be looked for in the Highlands.³³ Nor can this point of view be excused as a single aberration on the part of the editorial staff. For it represented a resumption of a theme introduced three months previously when, on August 7, the editorial enthusiastically quoted Hugh Miller, geologist, man of letters and, notably, author of the 1829 'Letters on the Herring Fishery' series in the Inverness Courier.³⁴ Supporting the Miller argument that *the Highlander was never wealthy; the inhabitants of a wild mountainous country never are*,³⁵ the leader went on to regret that the natural advantage of proximity to one of the best fishing grounds available was being *effectively neutralised* and that adequate reaping of the perennial harvest there to be found *would be not less a boon to the country at large than an essential contribution to the solution of the Highland Industrial Problem*.³⁶ The obstacle, as the follow-up article of November explained, was the problem of access to large enough markets for the available catches.

*It is a reproach of the deepest dye to our administrative system that the removable difficulties in the way of the sturdy and intrepid Highland fishermen have not, long ere now, been removed by the provision of suitable harbours, and proper means of communication with the great markets of the country.*³⁷

Thus less than two months after it had warned the new CDB - the very authority in which were now vested the necessary powers to achieve just such an objective - not to be deflected from the task of land redistribution, the Oban Times was now apparently perfectly single-minded in its determination instead that no administration should be allowed to rest so long as the injustice to the Highlands of inadequate communications continued.

*There is no other effective remedy for what is inaccurately termed Highland congestion. Were their fisheries allowed free scope, the West Highlands would be found with a deficient instead of a redundant population.*³⁸

And as for the admitted excess female labour it was to Home Industries that the Oban Times advocated turning to find scope for this reserve of industrial skill and energy, which [had] in some cases - notably with the knitted shawls of Shetland, and the knitted knick-knacks of the Fair Isle made for itself a market against all disadvantages. These instances, the paper concluded, illustrated a general economic principle,

*that if the industry of the so-called congested districts in the Highlands is to be exercised successfully, it must take directions in which it will not necessarily come into competition with our modern great factory system. Human fingers can never compete, on anything like hopeful terms, with steam and machinery.*³⁹

In this connection, the item continued, the Scottish Home Industries Association was to be applauded for keeping this 'vital principle' in view, with the result that the home-spun tweed of Harris [had] made a name for itself, on its intrinsic

⁴⁰ So on this occasion at least, congestion was seen as a misnomer - it was 'so-called', 'inaccurately

termed'. It was apparently not a crying need for land that was required so much as a crying need for development. But undoubtedly the greatest irony of the editorial of November 6 was that a supposedly pro-crofter newspaper was seriously suggesting that the Highlands should be *indebted to the Duchess of Sutherland and her public-spirited co-adjutors*. (These were apparently, under the auspices of, among others, the County of Sutherland Association, engaged in the task of interesting *influential ladies and gentlemen* ,,, in the development of the home industries of the district.)⁴¹ This was scarcely the attitude to be expected of a radical publication towards one of the names most closely linked in the Highlands with clearance and congestion, and hence most hated and feared. It is certainly not what would have been volunteered half a century earlier.

However, inconsistency, or perhaps compartmentalisation, seems to be a feature of Oban Times editorials of the period. Seven weeks later, on December 18, in a leader entitled 'The CDB and the Highland Problem' the paper - regretting that a Conservative Government had omitted the compulsory powers which a Liberal Government might have been expected to include - was observing of the Congested Districts Act:

*Though it provides a great many valuable proposals it does not provide universal access to the land.*⁴²

Furthermore, congestion was no longer seen as an artificial construct. Indeed, even the matter-of-fact definition of it as *overcrowding - an aggregation of the population within a too limited area*⁴³ subscribed to in an earlier issue, was now too tame. Congestion on this occasion was nothing less than a *cantankerous evil* by which the Highlands are degraded the removal of which it was the *primary purpose of the Act* to secure, so that *success or failure must, therefore, be measured by the results*⁴⁴ By contrast, development activities - in earlier issues hailed as constituting an indispensable step towards the solution of the Highland problem and

for which there existed no other effective substitute - now that they too were enshrined in legislation, were damned with faint praise.

*The powers conferred are many and varied, and cover a wide field, but though they may bear upon the evils of congestion, they do so only in a remote degree; they touch merely the fringes, and do not go to the heart of the problem.*⁴⁵

Even if investment in fisheries, development of home industries, improvement of communications and introduction of modern agricultural methods were all acknowledged as being excellent projects, nevertheless the final conclusion was that *strictly speaking, they [would] not contribute directly towards the removal of congestion.*⁴⁶ This was because, it was pointed out, for people who craved land, but by their own efforts had failed to obtain it, only if the Government were able to acquire it for them would there be an end to many of the grievances left untouched by the Crofters Act. Yet as the paper observed *there [were] no compulsory powers while the possibilities for voluntary agreements [had] yet to be demonstrated, although, it was conceded, the arguments employed by the Government in refusing to strengthen the Act with compulsory powers [were] plausible.*⁴⁷ The concession on this point related to the fact that the line taken by the Government that there was sufficient land - was a view strongly endorsed by the Oban Times and now applauded as a *new and welcome admission from the Conservative party.*⁴⁸ However, alluding to the subtle distinction between a condition of 'enough land' and 'enough land readily available', the editorial commented wryly *it will be interesting to see to what extent the Congested Districts Board succeeds where the people have failed, and concluded unequivocally that:*

*In any case, it is clear that if the new Act is to be permanent in its effects it will be through the medium of the migration clauses. Otherwise, of the remaining provisions, generous though they are, the 'running sores' of the Highlands, which Mr Balfour has declared the legislation of the Liberal party has not healed, will remain pestilential as ever. Congestion cannot be killed with kindness.*⁴⁹

Unequivocal though that particular conclusion might be, it is evident from the foregoing paragraphs that the problems of what Richards has recently called 'Highland underdevelopment',⁵⁰ were so many and so serious, and perhaps also so complex, that a consensus view of their solution was impossible - even for the interested observer possessing the dual advantage of freedom to adopt a partisan position without the need to be constrained by practical considerations faced by a government in office. How much more, in that case, did there exist room for debate as to priorities for the underfunded CDB poised as it now was *on the eve of setting into operation the elaborate powers with which it [was] charged.*⁵¹ In fact, the problem was to resolve itself in perhaps the most unsatisfactory way conceivable; a way which not only hindered the Board's efficacy but equally undermined its credibility, and which, inextricably bound up with the compulsory powers issue as it was, if it was foreseen by the Government, was impossible of admission. This was quite simply because its satisfactory resolution was inconsistent with fundamental Tory philosophy, and therefore with political pragmatism for a party which sought to maintain the momentum of its proprietorial support.⁵² For the time being, the Government in emphasising the positive aspects of voluntary agreements on land nearly succeeded in getting away with being seen to do the right thing. As the Oban Times commented:

*If the Congested Districts Act is the Conservative symbol of change, it does not differ so very vitally from the legislation of the Liberal party there is nothing in the Act that the future would not have brought from a Liberal Government.*⁵³

However, it had obviously not altogether escaped the editors of a paper which was still less concerned to praise a Conservative Government than to bolster the public image of a rather jaded Opposition that necessary conditions are not the same as sufficient ones. For the editorial added:

*But, in one important particular, the measure stops short where the liberal party would have begun.*⁵⁴

Deciding on priorities in respect of development was secondary only to deciding on priorities in respect of development areas. The Irish Congested Districts legislation provided an exact definition of the expression 'congested district' but the Scottish Act left, within certain broad limits, the precise interpretation to the determination of the Board. The reason for the divergence from the Irish precedent pertained to essential differences between the crofter condition in the West of Ireland and the North of Scotland. Just as freedom from rack renting was of greater moment to the Irish than to the Scottish Gaels, and access to land was a Highland but not an Irish priority, so for related reasons the Irish definition of a congested district was unsuitable.⁵⁸

In Scotland the landlords derived their incomes from the rents of large tenanted farms or the letting of their lucrative sporting estates so that congestion of the crofter population, by virtue of its exclusion from the greater part of the land area, was nevertheless accompanied by high rateable values. In Ireland the poverty of the peat bog ensured that landlords looked only to their crofter tenantry to provide their incomes, so that congestion there constituted over-population or over-crowding in a more absolute sense. The more people that could be squeezed into each parish for the purpose of rack renting, the greater the proprietor's income, and this unfavourable man-resources ratio was reflected in the low per capita rateable values. Had the Irish definition been applied to the seven northern counties of Scotland, no parish taken as a whole in the counties of Argyll, Sutherland and Caithness would have come within the sphere of the Board's operations. In the county of Inverness only Barra, Harris and North and South Uist " have qualified; in Ross-shire only the Lewis parishes

of Barvas, Lochs and Uig; in Orkney, South Ronaldshay only, together with a substantial eight Shetland parishes. In every other parish, that is 147 parishes out of a total of 163, the total rateable value divided by the number of the population gave a sum of more than the Irish limit of one pound ten shillings for each individual. If the ceiling were to have been raised to 35/- a further six parishes might have been added, including the Burgh of Stornoway which, though it might have satisfied definitional requirements, was clearly excluded by the spirit and purpose of the Congested Districts Act.⁵⁶ As even the Oban Times observed:

*A line must, of course, be drawn somewhere.*⁵⁷

The task of the Board - in recognising that though few parishes satisfied the Irish conditions but that nevertheless in many of them a large part of the population consists of members of the class which legitimately comes within the purpose of the Congested Districts Act⁵⁸ was to devise a test by which to be guided in determining that certain areas fell within the scope of the Act. Difficulties enough would arise from attempting in this way to provide a formula to arrive at a pre-determined answer. More problematical was the matter of borderline cases. As the Oban Times put it:

*There will be no difficulty in mapping out the areas in which congestion rages [however] the lines of demarkation must not be too tightly drawn.*⁵⁹

In fact the 'test' that was presently devised by the Board, following preparation of a return showing population, valuation and sundry ancillary details for eachcrofting parish, did not differ significantly in kind from the Irish equivalent, merely incorporating a simple discounting item. Thus it was resolved that:

*The Board should be satisfied the industrial resources of the locality were insufficient to provide for the needs of its population, and that the valuation (exclusive of the rental obtained from shootings and from holdings rated at over £30 per annum, and exclusive also of the population on these holdings) did not exceed £1 per head of the population.*⁶⁰

The Board was apparently well satisfied with its achievement.

*In giving effect to these considerations we deemed it unnecessary to formulate any definition in the strict sense of the word. On the other hand, the course we have taken has, in our opinion, resulted in the inclusion within the sphere of our operations of the districts the necessities of which are more immediately clamant.*⁶¹

What was not appreciated at that early date was that the Scottish CDB had in fact devised for itself a rod to beat its own back. Though the definition, as stated above, did not differ substantially in quality from the Irish one, it was not generally regarded as being fixed just because it was not, unlike the Irish equivalent, given in the enabling legislation. Furthermore, the Board worsened its own position by publicly admitting to all intents and purposes that the test would be open to reappraisal, its duration of enforcement being casually described as *in the first instance at any rate*.⁶² The error was compounded by acknowledging that the method of arriving at the formula was not entirely objective, but included *consideration of the circumstances of each [parish] in the light of information conveyed to us, as well as of the personal knowledge of members of the Board*.⁶³ And in order to escape any accusation of partiality, having gone thus far the Commissioners were inevitably obliged ^{also} to publish the fact of their *reserving power hereafter to add to and otherwise vary their determination [of congested districts] as circumstances or information brought to their notice may require*.⁶⁴ As a result during its lifetime the CDB was plagued with pleas to incorporate this or that parish or part thereof, requests invariably being accompanied by testimony from minister, schoolteacher or MP as to the genuine

nature of the need to be found in that locality, and to the good character of the applicants.⁶⁵

Initially fifty-six parishes or part parishes were identified, but nine others were added subsequently, before the Board in 1911 declared allcrofting parishes to be congested districts.⁶⁶ It is conceivable that the Board came late to the realisation that a development area policy might have more to offer than a development district approach. The strategic and integrative flavour of the former would certainly have provided a marked contrast to the virtually uncoordinated and compartmentalised blackspot treatment which actually characterised the CDB's reactive, as opposed to active/initiative, nature.⁶⁷ Indeed, that the Board never really succeeded in promoting itself as other than a dole-giving agency was not only a source of concern to the Board itself but certainly contributed to its virtual winding down from 1906, from which time onward lack of positive achievement had become a self-fulfilling prophecy and so a mould which was impossible to break.⁶⁸ However, in order to test such a hypothesis it is obviously necessary to examine the changing approach of the Board to its wide remit throughout its lifetime, the quality of its self-monitoring function and its response to wider criticism.

Summarised accounts of the achievements of the Congested Districts Board during its fifteen year existence, and superficial analyses of its contribution to alleviating the Highland problem may be found in a variety of places. While there is no room for dispute as to the former, great variation exists in the conclusions as to the latter, with the interpretations ranging from the baldly dismissive to the overly enthusiastic. For example, the renowned scholar of modern Scottish history, Agnes Mure Mackenzie, wrote in 1941 of the CDB that:

*achieved so little that in 1911 its work was passed to the Board of Agriculture in the hope that it might prove more energetic.*⁶⁹

An equally distinguished commentator, W.R. Scott of the Department of political economy at St Andrews University held a much less disparaging view. He wrote in 1926:

*The Congested Districts Board was in a sense an experiment in Scotland. In so far as it succeeded, it supplied valuable experience as to what was possible, and also as to what was impossible.*⁷⁰

Yet a contemporary of Professor Scott, writing during the lifetime of the Board, took the extremely cynical view that:

*The Congested Districts Board is now only congested with officials and camp followers..... Minutes and orders and all the paper work goes on, but a Board has no feelings and little knowledge Officialdom is never elastic, except with the public purse.*⁷¹

Perhaps the most generous interpretation was that of Aberdeen advocate H.F. Campbell who, in his 1920 book on Highland reconstruction argued that *the case for a Highland CDB could not be stronger.*⁷² The Highland problem was in his view such as to *require special treatment*, Campbell envisaged a re-constituted Board possessing *more elastic powers than the former Congested Districts Board.*⁷³ But, acknowledging fully the shortcomings, or at least the limitations, of the previous Board, Campbell emphasized strongly that any re-formed CDB should be *revive[d] on a satisfactory basis with enlarged powers and in close relation with the Board of Agriculture.*⁷⁴ What Campbell was in fact proposing was a CDB with a much more specialist remit within the field of land settlement, but liaising with the Board of Agriculture, responsible as the latter was after 1912 for functions within the Crofting counties previously the province of the overloaded and independent CDB.⁷⁵

In much the fullest assessment of the CDB, J.P. Day, similarly, identifies the Board most closely with the task of redistribution of land and, like James Hunter, concentrates particularly upon that aspect of its work,

not without justification, since

*The whole purport and title of the Act indicate that the main idea was to purchase land to relieve congestion and to assist the new settlers in their new venture.*⁷⁶

Nevertheless, it is important to bear in mind that the Board did have a remit that was considerably wider than land settlement alone, as is borne out in Turnock's discussion of its work. Turnock's examination of Highland development eschews a chronological approach in favour of thematic analysis, so that in the various sections, on roadbuilding and industry etc., as well as that on resettlement, the CDB has merited a mention.⁷⁷ Similarly in the Report to the Board of Agriculture for Scotland on Home Industries in the Highlands and Islands prepared in 1912 by W.R. Scott, a considerable amount of space is devoted to the work of the CDB in this specific field.⁷⁸ But for all that Hunter is prepared to concede that the fifteen years of the Board's existence constitute an undeservedly forgotten chapter in the history of Highland development,⁷⁹ he sums up the achievement of the CDB in terms of land settlement alone, by highlighting the contrast between the few new holdings actually provided and what one Highland newspaper referred to as the glowing promises held out ... by the Tory party in the summer of 1895.⁸⁰ It is the contention of this thesis, however, that this is too narrow an interpretation of the achievement of the Congested Districts Board. Rather it is argued here, that it was as much its failure to achieve real success in the many other areas of its work as in its inability to overcome the land problem which - paradoxically - ensured that its endeavours ... laid the basis of much of the comparative prosperity of modern crofting life.⁸¹

(ii) 1897-1900: The Period of Probation

The fourteen Annual Reports of the Congested Districts Board provide a framework of undisputed facts recorded in the logical and clear, if rather stilted, language of officialdom, which may be usefully subject to modified interpretation in the light of evidence from unpublished and unofficial sources.⁸² The First Report covers the period from the Board's inception in the autumn of 1897 until the end of the calendar year 1898 - fifteen months which represented a period of settling down, and one for identifying and getting to grips with potential problems. The fact that at the start of the financial year 1898-99 - that is, the close of its first six month term of operations - the Board was seriously underspent is therefore hardly surprising. And when it is also appreciated that the Board initially approached its duties in respect of holdings, migration and fishermen's dwellings - potentially the most resource intensive area of its operations - with the utmost conservatism, it is readily appreciated why the amount of £15,000 paid by the Secretary for Scotland to the Board in respect of the year 1897-98, remained wholly untouched.⁸³ The First Report stated quite plainly of land matters:

*In regard to this portion of their work, the Board felt the necessity of caution and of only formulating their policy after great deliberation and careful enquiry.*⁸⁴

An early matter which necessarily engaged the attention of the Board was the question of the 'proper' area of holding to be aimed at in any redistribution of land. The conclusion arrived at, and the logic of the reasoning supporting that conclusion, are entirely reminiscent of the argument of the Napier Commissioners some fifteen years previously.⁸⁵

*An agricultural holding should be of such extent that its occupier could depend entirely on it, or mainly, for a fairly comfortable living. It is, we think, obvious that the causes which have produced congestion in the existing Crofting area would operate similarly in the case of new holdings too small for the purpose of support, and that the next generation of these inadequate holdings would be found not to have diminished but increased the evil of congestion.*⁸⁶

Testimony to the many existing examples of inadequate holdings and overcrowded cottars' lots was evident from the numerous applications to the Board during 1897 and 1898 from the Island parts of the Counties of Argyll, Inverness, Ross and from Shetland for new holdings or for extensions to existing plots.⁸⁷

Having thus resolved that any holdings created under its aegis should be of a certain minimum size, the Board was bound to encounter problems difficult of solution. On the one hand nearly all the applications came from cottars anxious to obtain land in their own immediate neighbourhood, that is, within the limits of the already congested parishes in which they were residing. None, apparently, showed the slightest inclination to move further afield, at least not on their own initiative.

*In no case was any suggestion made to the Board that applicants would be willing to migrate to districts outside the area with which they were specially connected.*⁸⁸

On the other hand, when enquiry was made by the Board with the object of acquiring such land suitable for settlement as might be open to purchase, it was soon recognised that entire estates [were]not always suitable. The reason for this was quite simply that often they contained too large a proportion of land not applicable to the purposes that the Board [had] in view, so that their management would necessarily involve responsibilities outwith the closely circumscribed remit

of the Board.⁸⁹ Furthermore, as the Board soon discovered, it was the case that *landowners appeared usually averse to dividing their properties and selling those parcels which were fit for conversion into small holdings.*⁹⁰ The reason was obvious:

*In parting with these they would have been left in possession of the least productive lands and with those already in Crofter occupation, which alone would have had little attraction for other purchasers.*⁹¹

So it was that although, as J P Day emphasized, *the main idea [of the Congested Districts Legislation] was to purchase land to relieve congestion,*⁹² by the end of 1898 nothing at all had been achieved in that direction. It is certainly true that as a result of an arrangement with the proprietor of North Uist, Sir Arthur Campbell Orde, twenty-five cottars had been placed in crofts, nine crofters had been moved to new holdings and seven occupants of old crofts had had their holdings enlarged.⁹³ But all these remained the tenants of Sir Arthur Orde and held their land under the terms of the Crofters Holdings Act. The Board had merely made advances to the tenants to assist them in the matter of erecting buildings and making accommodation roads, and had been subject to considerable pressure to reach even that agreement, Sir Arthur Orde having indicated that he would not proceed with the project without their assistance.⁹⁴ Like Mr Hogg at the time of the Destitution Relief Committee, Sir Arthur Campbell Orde used his advantage to the full, and much as occurred then under the aegis of the co-operative roads scheme, he successfully secured government funds to develop a private estate.⁹⁵

In reality this is probably placing too harsh an interpretation upon events, since the rent which could subsequently be extracted by the proprietor would have been a fair one, subject to the provisions of the 1886 Act. Nevertheless it was clear that it was Sir Arthur Orde

and not the Board which had the upper hand in the negotiations. Considering that the annual value of the resulting crofts ranged from as little as £5.15s to only £8.10s, the CDB felt obliged to offer excuses as to why it had, so soon, backed down on its earlier resolution concerning size of holdings.⁹⁶ The point was rather laboriously made that:

*As this experiment in migration originated with the proprietor, the Board did not feel itself called upon to consider whether the new holdings would prove what may be described as self-sufficing holdings.*⁹⁷

The sensitivity of the Board concerning the matter is apparent even in a bland annual report. Not content with that particular - and plausible - let-out clause, the Commissioners felt obliged to offer some sort of justification for losing their nerve. The report added lamely:

*Having regard, however, to the quality of the stock raised in that quarter, it is possible that these holdings may prove more remunerative to the occupants than others in the mainland of apparently greater yearly value.*⁹⁸

Already at that early date it seemed that the greater the degree of existing congestion in an area, the more Board principles could afford to be compromised. No sooner was the deal in South Uist concluded, than arrangements were in progress for giving assistance to a similar scheme for creating small holdings in the Harris island of Bernera, in the words of the Board an extremely congested part of the South Harris estate.⁹⁹ As to the question of actually buying land, after fifteen months in office it was possible to state only in the vaguest terms that the Commissioners had also been engaged in communications, as to the purchase of a large farm which, it was emphasized would enable the Board to create holdings of such an area and rental that the occupiers could depend upon them for a fairly comfortable living.¹⁰⁰

If resettlement of crofters and cottars was to be an unqualified success, it was essential that it was accompanied by efforts to develop agriculture. So it was that the improvement of agriculture and livestock was felt by the Board to constitute *a question of the first importance* and was accordingly a matter for *frequent consideration*.¹⁰¹

In the knowledge that crofts were cultivated mainly for the purposes of growing fodder for the wintering of livestock and potatoes for home consumption, and in the realisation that home-grown oats and potatoes were of a *very inferior quality*,¹⁰² early in 1898 the Board undertook to supply seed oats and potatoes of the best quality to crofters at cost price. Subsequently the prices in Scottish markets of suitable varieties of disease-resisting potatoes rose sharply on account of the coincidence of relative scarcity and a large demand from Ireland. The same being true of seed oats, though to a lesser extent, the Board was obliged to change its plans, since crofters were, at these prices, unlikely to wish to take advantage of any such offer. Instead, the Board resolved to undertake the gratuitous distribution of a limited quantity of seed potatoes to selected crofters, in lots of one hundredweight, on condition that the produce was saved, and at least half of it subsequently sold to neighbouring crofters for seed at current rates. Following this distribution, numerous applications for cheap seed were received, and as a further concession, in view of high prevailing prices, roughly the same amount again, was sold at half cost, together with a quantity of seed oats offered at cost.¹⁰³

For a number of reasons this venture was not entirely successful. On the one hand people required time to appreciate the advantages offered, and as a result many applications were received too late for seed to be supplied. On the other hand some of the recipients failed to appreciate that even quality strains of root crops cannot

thrive in tired soil on waterlogged ground. As it happened in any case the season was an unusually wet one, even by Western Highland standards, with potato disease rife, so that the seed supplied, although it withstood it well, underwent an extremely severe test.¹⁰⁴ As to the parallel task of livestock improvement, the CDB purchased a number of shearling black-faced rams at the September 1898 Oban Ram Sale, despatching them for immediate use in North Uist and Gairloch and Lochbroom, after ensuring that suitable arrangements could be made for their wintering after service.¹⁰⁵

Applications from all over the congested areas for bulls and a few for stallions for the 1899 season were also matters for early consideration.¹⁰⁶ However, already it was apparent to the Board that the lack of any local representative body, authorised to liaise on behalf of the various districts, would constitute a major problem besetting not only the supply of seed and of stud animals, but also various other matters in hand such as fencing, draining, improvement of poultry, bee-keeping and enhancement of cultivation methods generally.¹⁰⁷ Indeed, as early as the spring of 1898 the Agricultural Committee had minuted a recommendation to employ an Inspector in the service of the Board who *would bring this committee directly in touch with all the Congested Districts.*¹⁰⁸

Early progress in respect of land settlement and agricultural improvement was merely disappointingly slow. The matter of works - a misleadingly simple term which embraced the task of aiding the providing or improving of all of the following: lighthouses; piers or boat-slips; public roads and bridges; footpaths and footbridges; and meal mills - proved to be a hornet's nest of ignorance, incompetence and misunderstanding, all of which led to unnecessary complications in dealing with applications for grants-in-aid and therefore to considerable delays and time wasted.¹⁰⁹ After the passing of the Act and the establishment and constitution of the Board, more than one hundred applications were received, in

the words of the First Report, *from the most diverse quarters*.¹¹⁰ Some were from individuals; some, couched in the most general terms by resolution, from public meetings; some from Parish Councils; and still others from County Councils. Furthermore, in very few of these applications was there sufficient information of a character precise and definite enough to assist the Board in evaluating their merits, or in determining to what extent Board resources were likely to cover them. There was also evidence of considerable misunderstanding as to the Board's role in the matter of funding of public works, with a frequent cause of delay the reluctance of local bodies to assume proper responsibility for the future maintenance in a state of efficiency and repair of any piers and roads etc. which were subject to improvement in a state of efficiency and repair.¹¹¹ This had been a requirement of the Western Highlands and Islands Public Works Act by whose provisions the new CDB felt itself bound, and indeed from which it had *no intention of departing*, given that it was authorised to apply its funds only for *aiding the providing of the specified objects*, and was not (as many applicants appeared to assume) either empowered, or intended to contribute the whole cost of construction, or supply plans, undertake construction, guarantee future maintenance etc.¹¹²

Quite apart from the restrictions imposed by its remit, the Board did not, in any case, consider itself justified in granting public money towards the erection of public works without obtaining the best possible security available. In consequence a Works Committee resolution - that local authorities as the statutory bodies on whom such powers had been conferred, should give a binding undertaking to maintain items of grant-aided infrastructure - was agreed at a full Board meeting early in 1898, and applicants were subsequently advised to approach the Board through their respective County Councils.¹¹³ In order to facilitate procedure, a standard

schedule for piers and boat-slips was drawn up for completion by applicants. But sometimes even these had to be returned, such essential information as the name of the statutory body approving the application and undertaking the maintenance of the work, the estimated total cost of the work, or the amount of the local contribution, having been omitted.¹¹⁴ All this caused trouble and delay and furthermore, even in such cases where the Board decided that grants might properly be awarded, the subsequent necessary arrangements and adjustments were of themselves time-consuming.¹¹⁵

In the event, the method adopted by the Board to deal with applications was to categorise them according to their merits, and to the extent to which they fulfilled the conditions laid down. Works begun, and applications sanctioned or investigated and approved by the Secretary for Scotland under the Western Highlands and Islands Public Works Act prior to the passing of the Congested Districts Act, and thus the constitution of the CDB, were placed on List A, for which priority category £9400 was set aside, and upon which action commenced immediately. List B was reserved for works which there was a *reasonable prospect of proceeding with immediately or in the near future*, these being taken up as opportunity offered.¹¹⁶ A third list, List C, was opened for all other applications, which were divided into two distinct classes: namely, those which the Board having investigated would be willing to take up and carry through with the co-operation of local authorities having the necessary resources; and those which, after investigation, the Board could not see its way to hold out any hope of being able to entertain, an intimation to this effect being made to the relevant applicants as early as possible.¹¹⁷ However, in the case of non-marine works the Board recognised early in the first year of its existence that it was going to prove quite impossible to deal adequately with all the

applications, even if upon investigation their construction could be demonstrated to be in the public interest. All that might realistically have been achieved would have been to select so many of the most necessitous cases of roads, bridges and footpaths as could be brought within the scope of their resources for the year. However, given that even this work of selection could only be done efficiently *on the spot, and with full local knowledge*,^{117a} the Board decided instead to divide the available sum of £6,000 between the Highland County Councils, leaving the latter to select the most appropriate of the applications for the award of 80% grant-in-aid subject to Board approval and to the Board Engineer being satisfied as to the construction plan and specifications.¹¹⁸

Fortunately, in the only other area of public works in which the Board was involved - that of telegraphic extension - there were, in the Board's own words, *elements that admit[ted] of more sure and expeditious procedure*.¹¹⁹ Dealing with a Public Department effectively did away with the necessity for any preliminary adjustments, while the Board was also assured not only that any grant given would be applied with a due regard to efficiency and economy, but also that the matter of future management and upkeep would be properly looked after by the Post Office. At the same time the Treasury had recently undertaken the burden of half of the guarantee required by the Post Office on those extensions estimated not to repay working expenses, while under the provisions of the Post Office and Telegraph Act, 1897, powers had been conferred on Parish Councils to give the necessary guarantee from Parish Funds.¹²⁰ In other words as the CDB itself recognised, in virtually the only area of its operations which seemed likely to proceed smoothly, *it would almost appear as if the necessity of aid from this Board had ceased to exist*.¹²¹

By contrast, provision of minor lights - an area of operations in which the Board would have liked to be involved - was deemed to be outwith its remit.¹²² The attention of the Board had been early directed to the expediency of assisting the Fishing industry by the erection of minor lights similar to ones used extensively and beneficially on the coast of Norway. The idea of the Board was not to interfere with arrangements for the general lighting of the coasts by competing with larger light-houses *provided for the guidance of general trade* but to erect numerous small and inexpensive lights specifically for fishermen and visible only at short distances.¹²³ The Board's impotence to undertake this simple but worthwhile task was all the more galling on account of the fact that several such lights had already been erected by the Northern Lighthouse Board and the expense of their annual upkeep was now transferred to the CDB.¹²⁴

So it was that the main objectives of implementing land settlement, aiding agriculture, and even of improving infrastructure were to prove difficult problems for the novice Board to cut its teeth on, for reasons by and large not of the Board's own making. Difficulties were to arise equally with the development of home industries, but in this case the obstacles were less foisted upon the Board than created from within. To report only that

*the proper mode in which efficient aid should be given, so that the articles made by the spinners and weavers be produced in the most attractive, serviceable and marketable condition, is one on which there is difference of opinion*¹²⁵

was to understate fundamental differences of opinion between the Commissioners. Indeed at a later stage disagreement was to go beyond simply the manner of development to probe the matter of the development objectives themselves and the philosophy underlying regional assistance - an area where divergences in views to a large extent matched the perspective from

which that view was framed.¹²⁶ In particular, the gulf between the position of the Duchess of Sutherland - who was appointed as Advisor on Home Industries to the Board, and who was bound to exert influence upon those Board members who held no strong views - and that of crofter member William MacKenzie, could hardly have been greater.¹²⁷ And although, in connection with home industries, the Board considered itself *fortunate in securing the co-operation of a local committee*,¹²⁸ the members were all recommended by the Duchess of Sutherland, and therefore hardly representative of a wide range of opinion or background.¹²⁹

But, having made light of potentially severe internal strife, emphasising instead the need for careful investigation and consideration of *this rather difficult question [of home industries]*¹³⁰ the First Report of the CDB quickly sought refuge on apparently safer ground with the assertion that there could be little doubt of the value of practical instruction. The report continued:

*Our immediate purpose is the employment of a competent instructor, whose duty will be to visit the various townships and give practical instruction there; to inspect the local methods of carding, spinning, dyeing and weaving and to report what he considers is necessary for the improvement of these methods.*¹³¹

The longer-term role of education in combating under-development was also clearly recognised by the Board.

*That education gives mobility to the population is a well ascertained fact.*¹³²

Indeed, one of the conditions specifically attached to grant-in-aid for improvement of overland communications was that:

*In the construction of such roads and footpaths the requirements of the Education Department should be prominently recognised.*¹³³

However, this was too indirect and too limited a method of promoting educational advancement for a Board with a projected existence of only five years.¹³⁴ And while acknowledging that the effect of the Education Act of 1872 in relieving congestion had been noticed in many parts of the Highlands, the Board declared equally its own belief that:

*This effect would be increased in the remoter islands were fuller provision made for the instruction of the boys in manual work and of the girls in housewifery.*¹³⁵

Thus the start of 1899 saw the members of the CDB engaged in the task of considering how this object [might] best be promoted.¹³⁶ They could not have foreseen the difficulty that lay ahead, or they might well have cut their deliberations short.¹³⁷

In the first year of office of any Board, as well as the need to make visible inroads on major areas clearly within the field of its remit, there inevitably arises also the question of delimiting the boundaries of that proper area of concern, if only to avoid establishing unworkable precedents.¹³⁸ In spite of the CDB's unusually wide remit, many of the schemes for which applications were made to the Board were not within the statutory powers conferred upon it by the enabling legislation. Others again, though falling strictly within the statutory authority of the Board, did not seem to accord with the spirit of the Act, or with the purpose for which the Board was constituted. For example, the Board was approached about the matter of improving the steamer service between Aberdeen and Shetland. This was a proposal for which a Committee appointed by the Postmaster-General had already recommended Post-Office support, as long as it was contemplated ^{also} to spend money from other services.¹³⁹ Well disposed towards the scheme though the CDB was, ultimately the decision was taken to withhold aid.

*We felt, after careful consideration of this application, as well as of the Report of the Postmaster-General's Committee, that the large amount of the sum annually required, the many claims upon our funds and the inadequacy of those to meet such claims, precluded us from entertaining the proposals put before us.*¹⁴⁰

Shortly after its constitution the Board was contacted similarly by the County Council of Inverness, inquiring whether applications for allotments under the Allotments (Scotland) Act, 1892 and the Local Government (Scotland) Act, 1894, could be dealt with by the CDB, and if so, to what extent.¹⁴¹ In reaching a decision, the Board had to concede that there was undoubtedly a desire among cottars for the multiplication of small holdings. But it was also noted that:

*The Allotments Act presumes that the applicant is earning a living in other ways, and its object is to enable him to add to his comfort by working a small patch of land which is in no sense a croft. Its size forbids the idea of the allotment affording its occupant a living by itself, while it is expressly enacted that no dwelling-house shall be erected on an allotment.*¹⁴²

Here was actually the antithesis of what the Board was trying to create, which was the type of dispersed settlement characteristic of the true crofting landscape, with each dwelling standing in splendid isolation on its individual croft, but collectively comprising the scattered and, by village standards, untidy - but typical - crofting township.¹⁴³ The only possible conclusion was therefore that the formation of crofts of the size of the statutory allotment would be hostile to the purpose for which the Congested Districts Act was passed.¹⁴⁴ Accordingly, Inverness County Council was informed that it was not the intention of the Board to create holdings of the size contemplated by the Allotments Act.¹⁴⁵ The report was, however, careful to add:

*It is clear that the passing of the Congested Districts Act does not in any way modify or alter the duty laid on Local Authorities under the Allotments Act and amending statutes. It remains their duty to administer these Acts, the object of which is so different from that of the Congested Districts Act that the size of holding laid down in one case is no guide whatever in the other.*¹⁴⁶

And having thus defined its position, when the Parish Council of Stornoway sent a statement in favour of the creation of two-acre crofts,¹⁴⁷ the CDB replied firmly that while such a plan

*might afford temporary relief, in a very few years the additional area occupied by the new holdings would also have become congested, and would therefore accentuate the very evil it [was] desired to remove.*¹⁴⁸

However if an exception to the self-sufficiency ruling was admissible in the instance of Sir Arthur Orde in North Uist,¹⁴⁹ so too might one be in the case of the unusual circumstances pertaining in Stornoway. The Landward Committee of the Parish Council was therefore not slow to reply, arguing fairly cogently a case for flexibility.

*While that extent of ground would be a great boon and help to the fisherman and his family, it would not interfere with his regular work, as the cultivating of this land could mostly, if not all, be attended to by other members of the household. Further, with an acre of ground the fisherman's family could profitably raise poultry, and with their sale of eggs^{very} materially assist towards securing their own maintenance and comfort.*¹⁵⁰

The Commissioners apparently were not convinced for the Board would not be moved.

*We fear ... that ... a race of professional fishermen, devoting their whole time and their whole abilities to the sea, can never be found so long as the West Coast fisherman is partly dependent in his croft; and we have consequently formed a decided opinion that the combination of crofting with fishing is inexpedient.*¹⁵¹

Presumably it was in the face of mounting lack of progress in the matter of resettlement that the Board's staunch resolve did falter by the end of 1898. Instead, vacillation ensued as the Board agonised over the Parish Council's contention that *the proposed fishing villages would go far towards relieving present congestion among the crofters.*¹⁵²

Fortunately applications for grants in aid of schemes which fell obviously outside the statutory authority of the Board were able to be disposed of more promptly. Into this category came requests for aid to improve water supply, to provide hospital facilities in Lewis and to pay for the rebuilding or repairing of crofter and cottar dwelling-houses.¹⁵³ Similarly speedy action was possible where alternative legislation existed under the aegis of which an application might more appropriately be considered. For example, applications for fishing boats and gear were more immediately relevant to the powers of the Fishery Board under Section 32 of the Crofters' Holdings (Scotland) Act of 1886, and applicants were therefore referred to that organisation.¹⁵⁴ In its early days the CDB was also regularly in receipt of non-specific requests for attention under the Congested Areas Act taking the form of excerpts from Parish Council minutes petitioning the appropriate parent County Council to press for action on their behalf.¹⁵⁵ With regard to the chief concern of these communications *the necessity of migrating the cottar population on to lands for themselves*¹⁵⁶ - the Board was, of course, hampered by its difficulties over land purchase, while in the case of works, separate and detailed applications were necessary via the county council in respect of each proposed project.¹⁵⁷ General requests for aid over a wide front were also received from individual crofters or groups of crofters, sometimes standing alone, but more often with covering notes from more literate figures of authority such as the local teacher, minister, parish clerk or even Member of Parliament. These were normally

referred in the first instance to the Board Committee responsible for that matter either most easily dealt with or, alternatively, soonest affected by a closing date for receipt of applications.¹⁵⁸

In the case of applications from individual crofters for assistance to emigrate, the Board - sympathetic though it might be - could do nothing but referring the applicants to the Emigrants Information Office, its own powers of aiding migration being confined to removals to other districts in Scotland.¹⁵⁹ The Board also received many pathetic pleas from individuals asking for gifts of money or material on grounds of old age, extreme poverty, or ill-health.¹⁶⁰ Again it was apparent that *many of these* were cases worthy of much sympathy,¹⁶¹ but the regional development orientation of the Board specifically precluded the task of emergency dole provision of this type.

*It need hardly be pointed out that the immediate relief of individual cases of poverty and distress is entirely outside the province of this Board.*¹⁶²

Yet, for all that the Board was determined to adopt a tough stance on this issue, the spectre of the destitute crofter, genuine or otherwise, would continue to haunt it and to hamper its activities.¹⁶³ In the meantime the Board moved into its second fifteen-month period of office still *feeling its way*¹⁶⁴ with little of positive value to show for its efforts, to the extent that it was actually described by that most conservative of newspapers, the Scotsman, as being *lacking in initiative*.¹⁶⁵

The same newspaper greeted publication of the Board's Second Annual Report with much greater enthusiasm, however.

*Such criticism would be wholly inappropriate on the present occasion, for the report shows that the more difficult problems contained within their charter have been attacked with courage.*¹⁶⁶

Furthermore this apparently demonstrated admirably to the Scotsman editors that *the exercise of caution is quite compatible with much vigour of policy.*¹⁶⁷ However, even such fulsome praise could scarcely detract from the truth that the Board had in reality, *made disappointingly little progress in the two and a half years of its existence.*¹⁶⁸ As the Oban Times pointed out, it was the case that:

*Except [for] one or two trifling experiments, the overcrowding that so gravely cripples the Highlands and the Highland people is in its foundations untouched as yet by the Congested Districts Board.*¹⁶⁹

Radical and pro-crofter though it was, the Oban Times was nevertheless prepared to admit that this state of affairs was not *altogether the fault of the Board*, which was credited, during the period in question, with being far from idle.¹⁷⁰ If the Oban Times was prepared to be generous to the Board, the Scotsman was prepared to be generous to the crofters, for it actually suggested that if success had not yet been attained, it might be because those who stood to benefit were as much unable as unwilling to take advantage of the opportunities offered.¹⁷¹ The North British Daily Mail was less circumspect in reading between the lines of the Second Annual Report. It reported quite simply that *The great obstacle is poverty.*¹⁷²

In the context of migration and resettlement, the problems facing the board were, in fact, twofold. The first difficulty was the ongoing and yet unforeseen problem of acquiring land from the proprietors, and more particularly the problem which had emerged during its first year of office, of obtaining land suitable to the Board's purposes. In the spring of 1899 the board issued a letter to Highland proprietors seeking their cooperation in offering land, not for purchase, but for settlement on a tenanted basis. All expenses of survey and road-making were to be borne by the Board, which would also lent at 23/4 per cent money sufficient to build houses and construct drains and fences.¹⁷³ In the words of

the Scotsman:

*Here was an offer the like of which had never been seen before.*¹⁷⁴

But neither the incentive of having *all expense of forming a settlement provided without cost to the landlord,*¹⁷⁵ nor what the CDB described as the important result of the eventual formation in the Highlands of a *middle class between the crofter relying mainly on his labour and the great tacksman with many thousand sheep,*¹⁷⁶ was to prove sufficiently attractive to the landowners - a singularly rigid and stultified group. The CDB was becoming desperate. So when subsequently it was informed that proprietors were finding it difficult to recruit labourers on their estates even at high wages,¹⁷⁷ it was decided once again that compromise was justified in the name of expediency. Instead of adhering to its previous condition that holdings should be of a size sufficient to keep tenants fully occupied, the Board let it be known that it was prepared to consider *the establishment in certain localities of medium-sized holdings, the occupants of which could find remunerative labour within reasonable access of their homes.*¹⁷⁸

The need to spend time making increasingly subservient overtures to landlords constituted difficulty enough for the CDB. Now, however, another problem was emerging - one which, viewed in the context of the Board's raison d'etre, was both paradoxical and unbelievable. The fact is, for a number of reasons the Board was finding it difficult to dispose of that land which it did manage to acquire,¹⁷⁹ a state of affairs which, as the Scotsman did not fail to emphasize, would not go unnoticed at Westminster, where the legislature, if such a situation persisted *would be compelled to stop a further expenditure of public money.*¹⁸⁰ The Board's difficulties had their roots in the friction attendant upon any act of migration from one place to another. Where migration is voluntary,

push-pull factors and optimising, or at least satisficing behaviour operate to minimise the friction.¹⁸¹ With state-directed or Government-sponsored migration the obstacles, whether real or perceived, are subject to magnification. as the CDB soon discovered:

*Those who ought with assistance to become migrants are often very reluctant to leave their homes, such as there are; and those among whom it might be proposed to introduce such migrants are not always willing that the experiment should be tried.*¹⁸²

Furthermore, for the cottars as opposed to the crofters, the position approximated to the proverbial 'Catch 22'; for many of these were prepared to migrate, but quite simply could not do so unless the whole expense of migration and resettlement was borne for them.¹⁸³ Nor were the Commissioners under any illusion as to either the degree of hardship which existed in the most severely congested districts, or the implications of this state of affairs for the Board itself, which faced its own related dilemma. Without in any sense seeking to condemn, the Board reported dispassionately:

*There are a large number of Cottars in certain townships who pay little or no rent, and who form a serious incumbrance to the Crofters, but who could not be migrated on any other terms. Moreover, they would not undertake the burden of any loan, but would look to obtaining pecuniary aid in the form of a gift. Even if a loan were arranged the task of obtaining repayment might easily become insuperable. Nor can it be left out of view that migrants who, from whatever cause, or causes, did not succeed in their new holdings, would look to the Board to save them from destitution. The difficulty in such cases of altogether rejecting a plea for eleemosynary or philanthropic aid and making everything turn on self-reliant and independent effort would be very great.*¹⁸⁴

Specifically, the problem of lack of capital had emerged as a major stumbling-block to the Board's migration programme in connection with the resettlement of the

farm of Syre, placed at the disposal of the Board by the Duke of Sutherland, with an option to purchase. A plan of division into sixteen holdings was prepared, with a rent of from £20 to £30 each, and an advance of the entire purchase price of each holding was offered by the Board to potential occupants, the debt to be repayable by modest annuities over fifty years.¹⁸⁵ But, while occupants were further permitted to borrow a sum for the erection of buildings on similar easy terms, unfortunately they were required to fall back upon their own resources in order to take over the stock, the Board having no power to make a grant or a loan to enable a crofter to stock a holding.¹⁸⁶ The difficulty was compounded by the system of sheep-stock valuation - a Court of Session ruling stated that a sheep-stock had to be valued as a going concern in relation to the particular farm it was on, and not simply at outside market value.¹⁸⁷ And although the Board agreed to take over the Syre stock itself and pass it on to the purchasers by private bargain, thus bearing the loss which the prevailing system of valuation invariably imposed upon the purchaser or incoming tenant *still the scheme hung fire.*¹⁸⁸

The crux of the matter was that while crofters were in the habit of rearing a few animals, mainly for subsistence purposes, comparatively few of those whom the Board intended to assist had sufficient capital to enable them to stock holdings of the size which it was the policy of the Board now to create - in the case of Syre varying between twenty-one and sixty-seven acres.¹⁸⁹ The North British Daily Mail summed up the situation bluntly and succinctly, in reply to its own question:

*Where is a cottlar to find money to pay for the stock of sheep on the land? He has none to offer, and so the land which might provide him with a living is beyond his reach.*¹⁹⁰

In other words, the cottars were victims of what today has become known as the 'poverty trap', from which, for the majority, there could be no escape. In the event, although there were eventually twelve applications for eleven of the sixteen holdings, several of these refused to take any portion of the sheep stock, so that the Board was unable to proceed with the scheme.¹⁹¹

That it was land that crofters and cottars wanted, and wanted badly, there could be no doubt, as witnessed by the collapse of another scheme about which the Board itself had expressed doubts from the start. No doubt mindful that the Deer Forest Commissioners had anticipated much from the establishment of fishermen's holdings, the CDB had ultimately relented to the pressure being exerted by the Landward Committee of the Parish of Stornoway and had acceded to their request for assistance in the formation of what amounted to no more than feus for fishermen's dwellings, since the resultant plots were all a quarter of an acre, or smaller.¹⁹² In view of the poor response to the Syre experiment and the attendant reasons for failure, the Deer Forest Commissioners' expectation that fishermen's plots on the north-west coast offered considerable advantages to cottars, who would readily take them up, might in retrospect have seemed a realistic one.¹⁹³ At any event the CDB made the necessary arrangements with Major Matheson, the proprietor of the Lews, for the granting of twenty-nine such feus in the immediate neighbourhood of Stornoway, and undertook to defray all charges for feu-charters, roads, drains, water supply etc. For the purposes of building a house each fisherman was to be advanced a sum not exceeding £120, repayable at 23/4 per cent interest within thirty years.¹⁹⁴ In the Board's own words:

*It is difficult for us to think of a more favourable opportunity, if there is any real desire on the part of fishermen to obtain improved dwellings convenient to a good harbour on as moderate terms as are commercially possible.*¹⁹⁵

However, only one applicant came forward and the scheme foundered.¹⁹⁶ Thus the Congested Districts Board found itself confronting the same problem as had the British Fisheries Society a century before, and the Annexed Estates Board half a century before that.¹⁹⁷ Nor was neither their interpretation of the situation or the conclusion drawn on the basis of that interpretation substantially different.

*It may be doubted whether any scheme for the establishment of fishermen's holdings on the West Coast without land, except a small patch, will be attended with much success. The West Coast Crofters are not historically a seafaring people. They cannot be persuaded to trust entirely to the sea for a living, but cling to the idea that they ought to have land-arable and parture - and the means of resorting to the sea for fish when necessary.*¹⁹⁸

Unlike the Governors of the British Fisheries Society, the CDB Commissioners did at least recognise that the phenomenon of subsistence agriculture was some kind of response to environment, but being for the most part non-Gaels themselves, they failed to perceive its full significance, falling back instead on the popular myth of the lazy Gael.^{198a}

*Their environment almost inevitably fosters a life made up of spurts of work and spells of idleness, and the effect of this habitude is to produce a disinclination to change to a life where there can be little or no idleness.*¹⁹⁹

It was almost certainly the case that periods of intense activity on crofts were followed by periods of comparative inactivity, but it would have been indicative of a greater empathy with crofters if the Board had managed to modify its own attitude to Gaeldom sufficiently to perceive that the life could be construed as being made up of spells of work of various different types, the effect of this being to produce a disinclination to change to a life where there could be little variety and no security.²⁰⁰

However, the commissioners' image of Gaels and of the Gaelic temperament was undoubtedly coloured by the views of two important correspondents, both titled ladies from families with considerable land holdings in the CDB's area. One of these was the Duchess of Sutherland, whose Report to the Board was commissioned by them from her in her capacity as Adviser on Home Industries.²⁰¹ The other was Lady Emily Gordon Cathcart, proprietrix of South Uist, whose self-effacing apology for communicating with such a great and knowledgeable public authority was unlikely ever to compensate for the trouble that matters concerning her estate were ultimately to cause the Board.²⁰² The purpose of Lady Cathcart in writing, was to urge the Board to establish what amounted to a young persons' industrial training scheme along lines similar to an experiment of her own. This had involved training young men and women as gardeners, gamekeepers and domestic servants on her own estate, as well as apprenticing them to established tradesmen as tailors and blacksmiths.²⁰³ But as Lady Cathcart emphasized - a truth which has also been reluctantly acknowledged more than a century later by a Government of the same political persuasion - in the matter of setting up youth opportunity programmes *private enterprise (no matter how great the desire to help) can only be on a very limited scale.*²⁰⁴ Given their own view of the Gaelic temperament, the Commissioners no doubt felt distinctly uncomfortable to be reminded that:

*some of the younger members of the community in those districts ... have only the prospect before them of growing up to a life of aimless indolence which is their present bane as out there they never had the chance of cultivating habits of industry and perseverance.*²⁰⁵

The implication was clear. It was the duty of Government to civilise the 'natives' from the periphery by normalising them and programming them with the skills and

manners appropriate to economy and society as it operated at the centre. This was made clear in a follow-up letter.

I have noticed that contact with the outer world and the life which is led in our big centres are enormous factors in the education of their mental facilities, and help to rub off more than anything the Cobwebs of their Insular existence.^{205a}

Specifically, Lady Cathcart was suggesting the use of institutions similar to the Oakbank and Westhall Industrial Schools in Aberdeen.²⁰⁶ Never one to mince words, Angus Sutherland immediately recognised the hallmark of the English absentee landowner's attitude to the Gael and unveiled her plan to his colleagues:

*Stripped to the facts, this is merely a proposal to send the children from the Hebrides to a Reformatory for which I understand ... that the sentence of a criminal court is now necessary.*²⁰⁷

In fact Angus Sutherland's interpretation of Lady Cathcart's proposal was rather extreme, and further correspondence suggested that in reality she meant only to cite the system as one from which hints might be taken.²⁰⁸ And as Sutherland himself admitted:

*Technical Education through the medium of the recognised educational agencies is another matter.*²⁰⁹

There was no doubt, however, that Lady Cathcart envisaged the civilised and socialised trainees as being permanently removed from the Congested Districts and absorbed into the wider metropolitan economy of the mainland, rather than returning to benefit their local island economy. Describing the products of her new scheme she boasted:

*All are happy and they are earning good wages, and would not return on any account to their native surroundings.*²¹⁰

Still malleable in the absence as yet of any signs of the emergence of a general philosophy of development or of a coherent development policy (as opposed to the identification of fairly immediate and discrete goals)

and smarting from their conspicuous lack of success in Stornoway in persuading crofters to abandon old habits and adopt the lifestyle of the full-time fisherman, the Board was bound to place considerable faith in their correspondent's advice as well as in her insistence that the islanders needed to be *rooted out young as.... no great faith [could be placed] in the improvement of old or middle-aged people whose habits are stereotyped.*²¹¹

As it happened, the Duchess of Sutherland, was almost simultaneously providing the Board with initially identical advice, although her proposal was less draconian in that it envisaged the importation of metropolitan skills and mores to the islands, which would co-exist with more traditional ways of life. In her Report to the Board she noted that there were two ways in which the people could be helped: *first, by assisting the Tweed Industry; second, by making them independent of it.*²¹² In respect of the second objective, the Duchess was envisaging, not wholesale island depopulation to remove excessive pressure of population, but rather the opposite and more humane approach to an unfavourable population/resource ratio of developing the resource base, in her own words *relieving the pressure of poverty by opening up for the people other means of employment.*²¹³ As with Lady Cathcart, the main concern of the Duchess was especially for the young now growing up.²¹⁴ Referring to Lewis she wrote:

I find a singular absence of all the ordinary trades in these districts. Except in Stornoway, there are hardly any masons, shoemakers, blacksmiths or carpenters, and it follows that unless a crofter is so prosperous as to be able to apprentice his son to some tradesman in Stornoway or on the Mainland, it is quite impossible for the growing boys to learn any of the ordinary trades, and they are cut off from the hope of earning a steady livelihood, and rising in life. This I consider one of the most serious drawbacks to the life of the crofters in these districts, as it affects the whole community. The establishment of a good technical school at Stornoway or some other suitable place under proper management,

would put the next generation on a very different footing from the present.²¹⁵

Such advice was calculated to reinforce existing 'gut' feeling amongst the Commissioners, of the importance of education in relieving congestion, and to sharpen Board focus on the matter already under consideration of how practical education might best be promoted.²¹⁶

Furthermore, for all their differences on Board policy vis-a-vis home industries, even CDB crofter member William MacKenzie was evidently at one with the Duchess of Sutherland on the matter of technical education.²¹⁷ Mr MacKenzie was swift to underline to his colleagues the shortcomings of the type of scheme advocated by Lady Gordon Cathcart.

*One point the CDB should avoid is not drafting their scheme with the sole aim of drawing all the young people from their homes. This applies equally to boys and girls. We are anxious to see them better equipped for their work when they leave home, but we are also anxious to see improvement at home.*²¹⁸

And Millicent Sutherland - despite the guise of conventional paternalistic philanthropist shared by Lady Gordon Cathcart and consistent with their background and politics - had one extremely unconventional recommendation to make concerning centre-periphery relationships. For in an apparent afterthought to her main statement she even noted that:

*Besides the benefit to the islanders, the people on the Western parts of the Mainland could take advantage of such a school, were it established.*²¹⁹

Support for such a scheme was forthcoming also from the highest levels of the Scottish Education Department (SED). Sir Henry Craik, Under Secretary at that Department

stated in a letter to Lord Balfour:

*I am entirely at one with the Duchess of Sutherland and Mr W MacKenzie as to the urgent necessity for a technical or practical school at Stornoway. Consider what is really wanted for these districts. It is not that the boys should be made shoemakers, or carpenters, or blacksmiths. To send them across to the Mainland ticketed accordingly, on the basis of a school education, would only lessen their chance of employment.*²²⁰

Sir Henry Craik agreed that the problem was rather that, because of the absence of such employment, the children had no chance of getting practical acquaintance with manual work and the ordinary conditions of such work, which elsewhere they would pick up from their parents and with which they were otherwise bound to come into contact.²²¹ And he went on to explain that already in certain schools SED was experimenting with trying to take this advantage, where it existed, to good account.

*But in Stornoway we could do much more, because we might open to them a whole range of ideas from which, by their present conditions, they are practically excluded.*²²²

And, most important of all, Sir Henry Craik indicated that:

*If such a school ... is established on proper lines it could undoubtedly earn/a large grant from us.*²²³

Further discussion subsequently ensued, both at Board level and with SED, as to the detail of any proposed scheme and the relative importance to be placed upon the training of boys on the one hand and girls on the other, a matter on which there was some disagreement, Lord Balfour and Mr Forsyth taking the view that boys should come first²²⁴ while Angus Sutherland felt that

the training of girls for domestic service would show quicker results.²²⁵ The question of responsibility for management of any prospective institution was another on which discussion was not entirely harmonious, with the SED and the Board each arguing the case for majority control, the one on thematic and the other on geographical grounds.²²⁶ Of far greater moment, however, was Mr Sutherland's query concerning the general presumption amongst his colleagues that the Board had the necessary powers under the existing legislation,²²⁷ provision of practical education - since it provided mobility - being assumed to fall within the competence of the task of *aiding migration of crofters*.²²⁸ Presently, however, Lord Balfour was advised by the Lord Advocate that:

*I think assisting migration means assisting an actual de facto migration - whereas all these are rather aids to train people to be able to migrate. I am afraid that as they clearly do not fall within the special words as to agriculture etc. that the [sic] would need to be an empowering section.*²²⁹

Unfortunately, the Lord Advocate's confident prediction accompanying that advice that *the object is so laudable that I don't think a one clause bill would be difficult to pass*²³⁰ was to prove quite wrong. Introduced in the House of Lords by Lord Balfour himself, the Bill passed through the various stages there, but was, however, blocked in the Commons by some of the Members for Constituencies which would have had most to gain.²³¹ Its subsequent withdrawal effectively precluded any further progress on the front of either technical education or the allied proposal of training in seamanship for boys, so that the offer of a Stornoway benefactor to place a small training ship at the Board's disposal free of charge had to be turned down.²³²

The Board, it appeared, was thwarted at every turn. Its programme of works was still beset with, on the one hand, problems in coping with the legacy of an inherited backlog of projects authorised prior to its constitution, and, on the other hand, difficulties in dealing with other bodies and, in particular, the extracting from them of maintenance guarantees.²³³

Against this background, confronted with an application to upgrade a certain Skye boatslip, the Board could only observe wryly that this was a Destitution Committee boatslip which had been allowed, with its approach road, to fall into a state of disrepair.

*We are satisfied a boatslip would be very useful in this bay, but the existing state of the pier and road is due largely to there being no public body bound to maintain them.*²³⁴

There were disappointments, too, in the field of agricultural improvement. The results of a potato spraying programme - based upon a similar scheme carried out by the Irish CDB - proved inconclusive because Mr Forsyth, who was to monitor the situation, arrived in Lewis at the pre-arranged date in October, only to discover that, owing to fine dry weather, lifting had begun earlier than usual. As he further explained in his statement:

*In many cases the sprayed lots had been lifted first. I think there had been a natural curiosity to see what the potatoes were like.*²³⁵

Nor was the Board's distribution of cost-price seed an outstanding success. In the first place there were problems with the high cost of carriage. In addition local committees now elected by the crofters and cottars to be responsible for ordering the seed, apportioning it and guaranteeing payments, showed rather an imperfect idea of their duty.²³⁶ On the one hand many accounts were not paid in full or even at all - some recipients choosing to regard the distribution as a free grant from the

Government; on the other hand the distribution itself was the cause of a very regrettable incident at Port of Ness in Lewis.²³⁷ This involved the unauthorised discharge of cargo by crofters from the delivery steamer during stormy weather, and malicious removal of the labels bearing the names of the consignees. Although the whole boatload was successfully repossessed on behalf of the local committee, storage in a wooden shed near the store resulted in salt water damage to the seed. Furthermore the shed was subsequently broken into, which in turn led to fighting breaking out over the remaining supplies, so that police intervention was ultimately required and six and a half tons of potatoes and eight tons of oats were never traced.²³⁸ And to make things worse, debts were still outstanding from the previous year's distribution.²³⁹ In the area of stock improvement, too, matters were not proceeding smoothly. Stud rams were reported to be suffering from excessive mortality²⁴⁰ while it was becoming apparent that the poultry industry cannot be profitably conducted on small crofts in these remote and sparsely populated districts.²⁴¹ The key to overcoming marketing problems and high rail-freight costs was seen to lie in the formation of local crofter co-operative associations to act as agencies for the rapid and systematic grading, packing and marketing of the eggs. But it was merely reported by the Board that it would gladly aid in this important matter if some such plan could be brought into operation [by another party].²⁴² Yet the latter seemed highly unlikely, since it was also noted by the Commissioners that

*There is not much evidence of any desire on the part either of crofters or of local bodies to organise business methods.*²⁴³

In general it seemed that in interpreting its remit of aiding and developing various aspects of the agricultural and industrial economy of the Congested Districts,²⁴⁴ the

Commissioners shied away from offering direct encouragement to entrepreneurs. Referring to the formation of a Committee for promotion of home industries in the Uists and Barra, the Report for 1899 underlined the fact that

*this scheme, like that in the northern part of the islands, is educational, not commercial.*²⁴⁵

In other words, teachers were to be employed at the discretion of the Committee, to give practical instruction in knitting, weaving etc. but there would be no attempt made to examine the problems of the industry as a whole, or consequently to engage in any industrial organisation/reorganisation or product promotion. The kind of tired resignation which greeted applications for anything but instruction in the most basic industrial skills is typified by Angus Sutherland's response to a request concerning the Island of Coll, for a grant to provide expert advice as to gearing female homeworkers to the production of more marketable kinds of knitted work.²⁴⁶ Advised by Mr Forsyth, convener of the relevant Board Committee, that the sample of actual knitting received was perfect, *but the world does not want that kind of sock, and it appears to me that information as to, and patterns of shooting and cycling stockings is [sic] what is most wanted.*²⁴⁷ Mr Sutherland was nevertheless unwilling to sanction Board involvement.

*I don't think the CDB can usefully interfere in this matter. If there is a better market for an inferior article made by machinery the gods themselves cannot, I fear, change the current of things.*²⁴⁸

Faced with similar problems in respect of Donegal tweed, the Irish CDB had embarked instead on a quality control campaign, allied to support for a more aggressive style of marketing. As it happened, the main problem facing

the Irish hand-loom tweed market was, precisely, *the competition with machine made goods*,²⁴⁹ which were not only closer woven and thus finer in quality, but were also being passed off as homespun. Undaunted by the finding that some workers were claiming that it paid them better to make an inferior quality article in less time, the Irish Board introduced a scheme of trade-marking, whereby an inspector visited Donegal prior to the Carrick monthly market to examine and measure the cloth to be sold. All homespuns with a good web and measuring at least forty yards were certified with the CDB mark, with the result that *the web with the stamp command[ed] the better price*.²⁵⁰ Similarly, a Connemara entrepreneur reported that in consequence of CDB-sponsored training in herring-bone and diamond pattern weaving, women were able to command prices of 2/6d to 5/- a yard, as opposed to a previous going rate of 1/7. Subsequently the supply of women looking to him for wool began to exceed the capacity of his existing market to cope, so that he started looking for new outlets in Dublin and London and also intended to *drive tourists in the summer to see the looms and work and to advertise 'Connemara Tweed'*.²⁵¹

Undoubtedly the Scottish Board's unwillingness to assume a less passive role in the area of industrial sponsorship and promotion was, in part, linked to the fundamental ideological misgivings of certain of the members as to the objectives of developing home industries. For home industries were regarded, by William MacKenzie in particular, as marginal activities condemning physically marginal communities to permanent marginality.²⁵² And the doings of Mr McKeowan, the Connemara entrepreneur even as reported by the man himself, were regarded not as laudable models of business acumen but as being, on the contrary, distinctly unworthy.

Just think of these women wearing out their lives spinning wool for that man and then at Christmas going to spend their little earnings 'In my shop'. To me there is something very sad in the insight we get into the condition of those Connemara people.

*What is required in the Highlands as well as in Ireland is not to encourage women or men to squat at home ekeing out a wretched existence by working at a decaying and unhealthy Trade but to foster in them a healthy desire to earn their living at Trades and Employment where men and women are in demand, and where they are well paid for their work.*²⁵³

It was a similar fear that what he called *outside interference* in the commercial side of home industries would quite simply enable a shopkeeper to obtain a higher profit, that motivated Angus Sutherland to advise against any involvement with the Edinburgh chartered accountant who was acting as middleman in the case of the Coll knitters.²⁵⁴

In Mr Sutherland's view it was not the function of a publicly accountable body to extricate a private individual from the difficulty of having had the produce thrown on his hands and so recoup for him what was, in all probability, a fairly small loss in respect of knitters' fees and supply of raw materials.²⁵⁵

Inevitably such conservatism contrasts markedly with the image simultaneously being promoted by the Irish Board. Indeed the latter had adopted a much more positive approach across the board to comprehensive development of indigenous industry, and, in particular, had tackled the difficult problem of marketing small lots forthcoming from scattered producers.²⁵⁶ For example, in respect of fisheries, not only had the Board there appointed officers to supervise the packing of the fish in ice, either on shore or at sea, and their subsequent despatch to English, or in the latter case American, markets, but it was also the case that:

*In Ireland the CDB pay the crews engaged in the mackerel fishery for their fish at the current market price, and secure the services of curers to pickle the fish at the stations provided for the purpose.*²⁵⁷

However, to Angus Sutherland this represented disproportionate and altogether unwarranted effort on behalf of a ludicrously small industry. Commenting upon the fisheries section of a report on the work of the Irish Board, the Chairman of the Scottish Fishery Board had this to say:

*.... what interests me most is the success that is claimed for the development of the [Irish] fisheries. Far be it from me to deprecate 'the day of small things'. But to imagine the fleet of 118 boats for the amount of public money that is spent upon the fishery each year! An expenditure of which the Fishery Board does not require one-fourth - with 12,000 boats.*²⁵⁸

Nor had differences between the resources and, by implication, the capability of the Irish and Scottish Boards passed unnoticed by the Secretary to the latter. No doubt with the fiasco of the Ness seed distribution fresh in his mind,²⁵⁹ he observed to Lord Balfour himself:

*It makes me envy the Irish CDB to see the advantage they have in a well equipped Agricultural Department with local agents all over Ireland to help them.*²⁶⁰

In case he was speaking out of turn, Mr MacGregor quickly reprimanded himself, concluding apologetically *but this is a digression.*²⁶¹ Yet the basis of his covetousness was probably less of a digression than he supposed. While it is obviously virtually impossible meaningfully to compare the annual budget of the Irish Board relative to its remit and area of operations with those of the

Scottish Board,²⁶² it is possible to point to other reasons underlying the differences in outlook and capability. If the Irish CDB seemed almost profligate with its resources by comparison with its Scottish counterpart, it was perhaps no more than a reflection of the difference in the essential nature of the problems faced by the respective Boards. Although in addition to its activities in respect of *agriculture, live-stock, poultry fisheries and industries* the Irish CDB was involved also in *land-purchase operations*,²⁶³ nevertheless the acquisition of additional land, it will be recalled, was of less consequence to the inhabitants of the Irish congested districts than to those of the Scottish congested districts.²⁶⁴ Whereas the Scottish Board could spare only meagre sums for other projects from its fund set aside for prospective land purchase - in the eyes of the world its primary function - the Irish Board, presumably, without comparable fear of adverse criticism, could be seen to devote a large proportion of its energies to revitalising agricultural industries, which, though they would scarcely prevent rack-renting, would certainly reduce its impact.^{264a} Furthermore, in terms of experience, the Irish Board had the benefit of a five year start upon the Scottish CDB, five years which had presumably served to convince the former of the importance of establishing an intermediate layer of local agents and maintaining a network of ground officers who could act as an effective channel of communication and feedback mechanism between Board and people.²⁶⁵ As the Scottish CDB had begun to realise already during the course of 1898 and 1899, to administer Highland affairs remote-control from an ivory tower in the New Town of Edinburgh was both impractical and inefficient.²⁶⁶

During the course of 1900, in anticipation of the forthcoming election, the Scotsman was appraising the record of five years of Unionist rule in two feature articles entitled 'The Government and the Highlands'. It posed

a number of questions, as follows:

*Does the Government deserve the confidence of Highland constituencies? Has it carried through Parliament wise legislation? Has that legislation been administered with vigour and success?*²⁶⁷

In seeking to provide answers to its questions, the Scotsman identified four urgent and special needs of the Highlands which had first been stated five years previously, and three of which fell clearly within the province of the new CDB, namely: the improvement of communications; the development of industries; and the promotion of occupation and ownership of land in parcels within reach of the people.²⁶⁸ Yet no commentator, whatever his political persuasion or vested interest, could deny that the Government's record in these areas was a dismal one. The procedure for instigating public works was a shambles. On the industries front there was either disagreement as to which direction development should take or, where there was consensus, there was not the authority to proceed. And in the matter of land settlement there was quite simply a situation of stagnation, both from the point of view of acquisition and disposal. In the words of the Daily Mail: *The Congested Districts Board are not making much progress with their work in the Highlands and Islands.*²⁶⁹ As far as the question of land settlement - the most important area of the Board's operations - was concerned, where blame was apportioned, the Scotsman was inclined to exonerate the Government, and the Oban Times the Board.²⁷⁰ The fault then lay with the people, whether proprietors or peasants. To the latter the Scotsman issued the warning:

*They should realise that they have no coherent right to advantages not accorded to their fellow-subjects at large, and that the future depends, not on others, but on their energetic and loyal co-operation.*²⁷¹

But recognising that the landlords, too, had their part to play by offering suitable land for settlement, the Scotsman had earlier conceded:

*The number of those who are named as having made propositions of this nature is far too small, and we trust that a fair and full test of the possibility in practice of migration and settlement will not be marred by neglect or hesitation on the part of landowners in congested counties.*²⁷²

On the basis of such observations the Scotsman claimed categorically that:

*The issues are quite clear, the Unionist Government has not only stated its policy, but given it legislative form and sanction. All that is now needed is time, energy, and active goodwill on the part of all classes.*²⁷³

The radical Oban Times was less concerned that everybody 'played cricket' to ensure that its Highland policy reflected well upon the Unionist Government, than to ensure that what little land might be available was at least able to be taken up by those for whom it was intended. Yet its appraisal of the situation, even if it was less superficial than that of the Scotsman, in common with it, offered neither consolation to the CDB nor unequivocal advice as to finding a way out of the impasse in which it found itself.

The Congested Districts Board we take it, was created under the knowledge of the extreme poverty of the overcrowded areas of the Highlands. It is, therefore, the business of the Board to stretch its powers to the utmost in reconciling its policy to the conditions with which it has to deal. The Board may, no doubt, object to being regarded as a mere charity organisation; but, on the other hand, are the evils of congestion to be left in perpetuity simply because of the poverty of the people? Poverty is more a misfortune than a fault; it is an eloquent argument why aid should be given rather than why it should be withheld; and perhaps

*the CDB may yet discover a middle course out of the difficulty by means of which it may remove the plague of congestion without altogether paupering the unhappy beings who are its victims.*²⁷⁴

Commenting on the press reaction to publication of the Board's Second Report, Lord Balfour noted that the Daily Mail and the Oban Times took the same line of failure of putting people on the land, and observed rather matter-of-factly to his colleagues that it was very instructive to note that there is a complete absence of anything approaching a suggestion of how the Board should actually go about this.²⁷⁵ The fact is, without an enabling clause, the Board could not move and the crofters would not move. And as the Oban Times was quick to point out:

*Congestion ... has not its source in the non-existence of roads and piers, and in primitive methods of agriculture, and if the Congested Districts Board does not succeed in taking some further action, it will leave the problem where it found it.*²⁷⁶

The Commissioners' reactions to such criticism varied, Sir Colin Scott Moncrieff and Sheriff Brand taking the view that the Board was doing stalwart work and that the criticism was feeble.²⁷⁷ Macleod of Macleod, on the other hand, regarded the criticism as *interesting and not unfair*.²⁷⁸ Angus Sutherland conceded that he understood the attitude of the press without feeling discouraged.²⁷⁹ Nevertheless it could hardly have been inspiring of confidence to learn from William MacKenzie that *these comments are mild compared with some things said inside and outside the press in the North*.²⁸⁰ Perhaps it was, paradoxically, the nephew of the intransigent and inflexible Sir John McNeill²⁸¹ who had the soundest reasons for being sanguine about immediate set-backs. With Angus Sutherland, he too could sympathise with the critics;

nor was he discouraged, for as he pointed out sagely to his colleagues:

An educational process is in progress, if not of the people then at least of those who rule them.

NOTES

1. The first meeting of the Board took place on October 1, 1897, but already by mid-September the Board was fully constituted with the intimation of the Secretary for Scotland's nominees, while the appointment of a Secretary to the Commissioners was announced some ten days later. This position fell to R R MacGregor, Chief Clerk in the Exchequer Office in Edinburgh, who was seconded to the CDB on a half-time basis. Appropriately enough, Mr MacGregor was a native of Inverness - the eldest son of the minister of the West Church there - who, prior to entering the Civil Service during the 1860s, had been educated at Inverness Royal Academy and the University of Aberdeen. See Oban Times, September 18 and October 9, 1897 and Scottish Record Office, Crofting Files AF 43/323, Minutes of Meeting of CDB, October 1, 1897. Papers of the Board other than Minutes of Meetings are preserved in their own File Series, references to which will take the form SRO AF 42 followed by the appropriate file number.
2. See Congested Districts (Scotland) Act (1897) Clause 1; and CDB, First Report (1899) v. The Congested Districts Act is reproduced as Appendix A to this thesis.
3. Biographical notes on Lord Balfour of Burleigh based on DNB. See also Scotsman, July 7, 1921; British Monthly, December, 1904; and Lady Frances Balfour, A Memoir of Lord Balfour of Burleigh (London, 1924)
4. This was a worry which had emerged when the Congested Districts Bill was being debated, and one which would ultimately prove to have some justification. See above p 191-4, and below Chapters Six and Seven
5. Biographical notes on Sir Colin Scott Moncrieff based on Who Was Who.
6. Biographical notes on Sheriff (later Sir David) Brand based on Who Was Who and Oban Times, June 19, 1886.
7. Biographical notes on Angus Sutherland based on Who Was Who and Oban Times, November 14, 1885; see also additional sources quoted in Chapter Two above, n. 260
8. See above Chapter One, Section (ii). Biographical notes on Malcolm McNeill based on Oban Times, May 19, 1883; James Hunter, The Making of the Crofting Community (Edinburgh, 1976) 142; and J P Day, Public Administration in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland (London, 1918) 128

9. See above p 175
10. Report on the Condition of the Cottar Population of the Lews (1888) 7
11. Sir John McNeill, Report to the Board of Supervision (1851) xxix; see also above p 14-15 for the context of McNeill's statement. For details of the Government colonisation schemes - modelled on an initiative of Lady Gordon Cathcart - see above p 172-5. Although the Crofters Colonisation Commissioners did not issue their Fifteenth and Final Report until 1904, after 1889 their work consisted simply of administering the business of repaying the instalments of the original advances. Although the Manitoba settlers after periods of depression and difficulty did succeed in repaying the entire loan receiving in exchange title to their land from the Crown, the Winnipeg settlement was a failure from the outset and by 1904 the Government had sold the abandoned lands to recoup the debt. See Day (1918) 124
12. The immediate result of the Report of the Walpole Commissioners was the passage of the Western Highlands and Islands Works Act in 1891, aimed primarily at facilitating the marketing of fish through the improvement and extension of rail, major road and steam communications, although in the event a considerable sum was spent on minor roads and footpaths. The recommendations of the Deer Forest Commission (see above p 159) were ultimately taken on board in the form of the land purchase and land settlement schemes of the CDB, to which certain of the powers of the 1891 Works Act were also transferred. See Day (1918) p 271, 326-9 and 392, and below p 245-6, 264-7
13. Oban Times, September 18, 1897
14. Oban Times, September 18, 1897
15. Oban Times, September 18, 1897
16. Oban Times, September 18, 1897
17. Oban Times, September 18, 1897
18. Biographical notes on Sir Kenneth Mackenzie based on Who Was Who and Oban Times, May 19, 1883 and September 18, 1897
19. In 1880 a majority of 29 votes was secured by the Tory candidate - Sir Kenneth Mackenzie's fellow Royal Commissioner, Cameron of Lochail - by the

device of an invasion of shooting lessees. By 1885 the heat of crofter politics was at its most intense and defeat by a 'crofter' candidate was inevitable, even without Sir Kenneth's distinctive views regarding crofter matters. See below, and Oban Times, May 19, 1883.

20. CDB, Second Report, v. Sir Kenneth Mackenzie's family subsequently demonstrated its support of the Board's activities by letting two farms on their estate in extension of the holdings of sixteen adjoining crofters. See CDB, Eighth Report (1906) ix
21. Biographical notes on James Forsyth based on Oban Times, September 18, 1897
22. Addendum to Deer Forest Report (1895) xxvi. See also above p. 185
23. Oban Times, September 18, 1897
24. See Oban Times, September 18, 1897
25. Oban Times, September 18, 1897
26. Oban Times, September 18, 1897
27. Oban Times, September 18, 1897
28. See Congested Districts (Scotland) Act (1897) Clause 4, Sub-section 1, also reproduced in CDB, First Report (1899) viii
29. Oban Times, September 18, 1897
30. Oban Times, September 18, 1897
31. Oban Times, September 18, 1897
32. Oban Times, August 28, 1897
33. See Oban Times, November 6, 1897
34. Biographical notes on Hugh Miller based on DNB
35. Hugh Miller, quoted in Oban Times, August 7, 1897
36. Oban Times, August 7, 1897
37. Oban Times, November 6, 1897
38. Oban Times, November 6, 1897
39. Oban Times, November 6, 1897

40. Oban Times, November 6, 1897
41. Oban Times, November 6 and October 30, 1897
42. Oban Times, December 18, 1897
43. Oban Times, September 18, 1897
44. Oban Times, December 18, 1897
45. Oban Times, December 18, 1897
46. Oban Times, December 18, 1897
47. Oban Times, December 18, 1897
48. Oban Times, December 18, 1897
49. Oban Times, December 18, 1897
50. See Preface to Eric Richards, A History of the Highland Clearances (London, 1982)
51. Oban Times, December 18, 1897
52. Because the Board had no powers of compulsory purchase, and could not therefore buy small sections of land appropriate to crofter occupation, it was obliged to save up its funds in order to purchase entire estates at market price, which effectively precluded significant spending on other projects. For a fuller discussion, see later chapters of this thesis.
53. Oban Times, December 18, 1897
54. Oban Times, December 18, 1897
55. See CDB, First Report (1899) v-vi; and above p 143-4
56. See CDB, First Report (1899) vi, and associated Appendix II, Table of Valuations for Crofting Parishes
57. Oban Times, September 18, 1897
58. CDB, First Report (1899) vi
59. Oban Times, December 18, 1897. For details of some of the difficulties that would arise, see below p 255-6 and n 65
60. CDB, First Report (1899) vi
61. CDB, First Report (1899) vi

62. CDB, First Report (1899) vi
63. CDB, First Report (1899) vi
64. CDB, First Report (1899) vi
65. See for example SRO AF 42/56, Rev. Samuel Lindsay, Burray, Orkney to CDB, December 6, 1897; SRO AF 42/100, James Howden CA to R R MacGregor, January 17, 1898, re East End of Island of Coll; SRO AF 42/154, Sir Leonard Lyell to Sheriff Brand, March 6, 1898, re districts in Orkney and Shetland. As was admitted in the Board minutes associated with Sir Leonard Lyell's communication, "the Board's statistical criterion of congestion has proved arbitrary and unsatisfactory Where, as at Stronsay, there is a successful fishing station, there might possibly be a large and thriving population, holding no land but the sites on which its dwellings stood, which would count for much less in the Valuation Roll than a similar number of persons in a poor district like South Ronaldshay [sic], where fishing is less productive, and agriculture a more important source of livelihood If it is essential in defining congestion, to introduce the Statutory reference to population and valuation, it will be difficult to meet the practical difficulty that has arisen in any other way than by raising the best of rent per head to a point which will admit the whole of the Highland and Island Parishes, - from among which the Board would have to select the most necessitous as the special field of its operation." (Sir Kenneth Mackenzie, March 11, 1898)
66. See CDB, Fourteenth Report (1912) v. Unfortunately Sir Kenneth Mackenzie did not live to see the fulfilment of his prophecy. See above n 65. Examination of the map provided in Appendix B to this thesis allows the geographical extent of the original Congested Districts to be compared with the area covered by the Crofting Counties, which also constituted the effective 'territory' of the later Highlands and Islands Development Board.
67. As the Scotsman (May 28, 1900) put it: "it is for the Board to propose, for the people to accept; for the Board to suggest, to plan, to organise, to found; for the people to construct their own welfare upon these foundations." Although the CDB from an early date did introduce a variety of schemes in the field of agriculture, such as the supply of quality seed and the provision of pedigree bulls and rams, it is possible to argue that these were more akin to the thinly-spread general subsidy arrangements and routine improvement grants nowadays typical of the central government department, as distinct from the purpose and area specific development authority, which is associated with more concerted and concentrated comprehensive development at selected loci within its, generously defined, development zone, although such policy, too, may constitute reactive policy, which is

invariably attractive, equally, to development boards. (For a discussion of responsive versus initiative policy in the context of modern Highland development, see below, Chapter seven, Section (ii)) By 1911, in the almost certain knowledge that they had little time left to run (see below, Chapter Six, Section (i)) the CDB Commissioners seemed almost reconciled to the lesson of experience, which, they admitted "showed that while the list originally made up may have included all the parishes or districts which had claims to preferential treatment at that time, other considerations had emerged which made it advisable that all thecrofting parishes, exclusive of the portions of these parishes which are not rural, should be defined as congested districts ". CDB, Fourteenth Report (1912) v

68. For examples of how the Board sought assiduously to avoid being cast in the light of dole-giving agency, see below page 291 and 295-6 and associated n 103, 255 and 274. For discussion of the reasons underlying the winding down of the CDB, see later chapters of this thesis.
69. Agnes Mure Mackenzie, Scotland in Modern Times (Edinburgh, 1941) 259
70. W R Scott, 'Scottish Land Settlement' in David T Jones et al., Rural Scotland During the War (Oxford, 1926) 231
71. Balfour (1924) 72-3. In spite of the preface date of 1924, it is presumed that this work was written over a number of years prior to that date. Otherwise, it is hard to believe that this well-informed commentator did not know of the CDB's demise in 1912.
72. H F Campbell, Highland Reconstruction (Glasgow, 1920) 88. Campbell's interest in Highland affairs extended beyond the narrowly academic. During the CDB's lifetime he corresponded with the Board in an advisory capacity on the subject of island communications. See SRD AF42/8864, H F Campbell, Aberdeen, to R R MacGregor, re road application from Creich Parish Council, September 28, 1911
73. Campbell (1920) 88
74. Campbell (1920) 86
75. Under the provisions of the Small Landholders Act of 1911, the powers and duties of the Congested Districts Board were transferred to the Board of Agriculture and the agricultural administration of the Highlands and of the Lowlands placed on the same footing. See Campbell (1920) 87; Day (1918) 222; and later chapters of this thesis.
76. Day (1918) 208

77. See David Turnock, Patterns of Highland Development (London, 1970) 70, 76, 132, 153-154 and 243
78. See W R Scott, Report to the Board of Agriculture for Scotland on Home Industries in the Highlands and Islands (1914) 46-54. Although Dr Scott reported to the Board of Agriculture the investigation was commissioned by Lord Pentland in 1911, on whose behalf the CDB issued a circular/letter to County Clerks, Clerks of District Councils and of Parish Councils in the crofting counties, and to individuals in these districts interested in home industries. Analysis of the information thus obtained and of material derived from additional interviews and visits forms the substance of the Report, to which Dr Scott also added his considered recommendations.
79. Hunter (1976) 185
80. Hunter (1976) 186, quoting Highland News, April 20, 1901
81. Hunter (1976) 185
82. The unpublished and unofficial sources comprise in the main two types of material: on the one hand, the partially extant files of the Congested Districts Board, preserved in the Scottish Record Office as file series AF 42, to which a brief explanatory introduction is provided in Appendix C to this thesis; and on the other hand, contemporary press criticism of and comment upon the activities, achievements and shortcomings of the Board.
83. Although the annual income of the Board was £35,000, in respect of financial year 1897-98 the CDB received only the £15,000 available out of the Local Taxation (Scotland) Account. No sum was voted by Parliament for the general purposes of the Board because provision had already been made for £25,500 for Highland Public Works and Communications. See CDB, First Report (1899) vii, and associated Appendix VIII, Account of Receipts and Payments between October 1, 1897 and March 31, 1898.
84. CDB, First Report (1899) viii-ix
85. See above p 129-131
86. CDB, First Report (1899) ix

87. CDB, First Report (1899) ix; see also, for example, SRO AF42/69, John Brown, Schoolhouse, Stockinish, to R R MacGregor, December 1897, Application on behalf of and accompanying petition from 3 crofters, 22 cottars and 9 fishermen in South Harris for land for crofts; SRO AF42/88, Roderick McInnes and others, Sleat, Skye, to R R MacGregor, January 5, 1898, Applications for farm of Ostaig and Gillen in Sleat; SRO AF 42/300, John and Magnus Mackay, Tubeg, Skerray, Bettyhill, December 28, 1898, Application for land at Tongue.
88. CDB, First Report (1899) ix
89. CDB, First Report (1899) ix
90. CDB, First Report (1899) ix
91. CDB, First Report (1899) ix
92. Day (1918) 208
93. See CDB, First Report (1899) x
94. See CDB, First Report (1899) ix
95. See above p 63-68 for details of earlier schemes
96. See CDB, First Report (1899) ix-x
97. CDB, First Report (1899) x
98. CDB, First Report (1899) x
99. CDB, First Report (1899) x
100. CDB, First Report (1899) x. The Commissioners were evidently sensitive about their emerging impotence to acquire land. Yet, in spite of effectively advertising in the report "for the sale to us of lands suitable for our objects under the Act" (p x) the problem would not disappear. See below p 275-6 and later chapters of this thesis.
101. CDB, First Report (1899) x
102. CDB, First Report (1899) x
103. See CDB, First Report (1899) x-xi. Initially 9½ tons of seed potatoes were distributed at a cost to the Board of £62 14s 2d. Subsequently, 11 tons 11 cwt. of potatoes were sold at half cost, the loss to the Board being £37 16s. At the same time 172 bushels of seed oats were sold at cost price. The Board was especially anxious

not to be seen in the light of a dole-giving agency. Hence the conditions concerning saving of produce, the discontinuation of the original free supply, and the prominent statement in the annual report that: "The Board do not, for obvious reasons, propose to continue to any large extent the gratuitous distribution of seed..... their object being [solely] to introduce good varieties of potatoes into the congested districts where they are practically unknown." See also above p256 and associated n 68

104. See CDB, First Report (1899) x-xi
105. See CDB, First Report (1899) xi
106. See CDB, First Report (1899) xi
107. See CDB, First Report (1899) xi. It was however, in connection with the scheme to supply potatoes and seed oats, that the point was especially driven home to the Board. A correspondent enquired naively: "If seed potatoes and oats are sent, who will have charge of distributing them either free or for cash. Will one of the Commissioners see this done." SRO AF42/162, A McGregor, Clerk to the Parish Council of Kilfinichen, Bunessan, Mull to R R MacGregor, April 8, 1898.
108. SRO, AF 43/323, Report of Meeting of Agricultural Committee, March 2, 1898
109. See Congested Districts (Scotland) Act, Clause 4, Sub-section (f). Part of the problem was that the new CDB had inherited its works remit from, and felt bound by, what Angus Sutherland described as "the cumbrous and not altogether satisfactory method of the Western Highlands and Islands Act". (SRO AF42/1, re Bayble Pier, Parish of Stornoway, November 4, 1897). The question of whether the "troublesome procedure" adopted by the 1891 Act would continue to be employed by the CDB was one which early engaged the attention of the Board. (SRO AF 42/1, Sir Colin Scott Moncrieff, November 5, 1897. See also associated minutes of other Commissioners). It was soon recognised, however, that the cumbersome business of obtaining a formal assurance from the appropriate County Council of its willingness to undertake the associated work and maintenance, prior to committing Board funds, was a very necessary evil, as was the obtaining of Board of Trade approval of the technical specification of any project. Only months after his complaints as to the rigmarole involved, Angus Sutherland was having to concede to the Board Secretary's advice in connection with a Caithness pier

application that: "perhaps Col. Gore Booth [the Board Engineer] should see this in case they steal a march on him as in Staffin". (SRO AF 42/5, R R MacGregor to A Sutherland, Nov. 28, 1899). Apparently in the Staffin case the County Clerk had alleged that the pier had satisfied the Scottish Office engineer when, in fact, it had not. Attitudes were soon to harden even further as other problems inherited along with the remit emerged, in spite of the various procedural precautions. See text below, and associated n 112.

110. CDB, First Report (1899) xi

111. CDB, First Report (1899) xii

112. CDB, First Report (1899) xii. Furthermore it appears that County Councils tried to take advantage of the break in continuity occasioned by the changeover in the administration of works grants. In respect of a pier which had been approved under the provisions of the 1891 Act, the County Clerk of Thurso sought to extract additional funding from the CDB on grounds of inflation. The original grant of £150 was, in fact, increased by the CDB to £225, even although Sheriff Brand argued that "the theory of increased costs being due to a rise in material and wages won't bear argument". (SRO AF 42/7, December 23, 1897). Apparently the same County Clerk had notified the Scottish Office Engineer as early as March 1896 that £150 would be insufficient. Presently the figure being mentioned by the Council Engineer increased yet again. Angus Sutherland, who as Convener of the Works Committee had been in favour of the earlier addition, became suspicious. "£150, £225, £310. It is not very encouraging. It takes a lot of 'face' to ask my colleagues to sanction this further increase in the estimate." Then the County Clerk wrote again, giving details of yet another £63 increase in costs. Sutherland angrily put his foot down. "No I cannot see my way to recommend the Board to increase the grant already made. The charges referred to by the County Council are just those meant to be met by the locality." (SRO AF 42/7, January 1, 1900 and September 12, 1900) Sheriff Brand agreed. "The Caithness people have long prided themselves on their skill in Phlebotomy." (SRO AF42/7, September 17, 1900). And on hearing that the County Council had accepted his "No" and were arranging to provide for the deficiency, Angus Sutherland observed grimly: "and so, would other County Councils too if we said 'No' more emphatically." (SRO AF 42/7, October 11, 1900) The pattern was set.

113. See SRO AF 43/323. Minutes of Meeting of January 6, 1898, adopting Resolution of Works Committee of November 23, 1897.
114. See CDB, First Report (1899) xii, and associated Appendix IV for specimen of Schedule
115. CDB, First Report (1899) xii. Even in the case of the most apparently straightforward projects - where on account of considerable fishing potential the Board was agreed that "the case has merits." (Angus Sutherland, February 7, 1898) and where the technical plan was approved by the Board Engineer as "based on a survey which was carefully made" (Col. Gore Booth, May 9, 1898) - matters tended to drag on and on because of wrangling over allocation of financial liabilities. Although correspondence concerning Portnahaven Pier in Islay commenced in November 1897, as long as two years later, and a year after he had observed that "this matter is clearing up" (Angus Sutherland, October 5, 1898), the Works Convener was urging that "it's high time this matter was brought to a point". (Angus Sutherland, November 8, 1899). An ultimatum in the form of a time limit on the grant-in-aid was subsequently applied at which point the Council refused to proceed with the scheme and referred it back to the local promoters, with a consequent waste of two years' time and effort on the part of the CDB. See SRO AF 42/49, assorted correspondence and Board minutes 1897-1900 re Portnahaven Pier, Parish of Kilchoman, Islay.
116. SRO AF 43/323, Minutes of Meeting of March 16, 1898, adopting Recommendation of Works Committee of March 2, 1898. See also CDB, First Report (1899) xii, and associated Appendix V, Grants allocated by the Board for Works up to 31st December 1898.
117. See SRO AF 43/323, Minutes of Meeting of March 16, 1898; and CDB, First Report (1899) xii.
- 117a. CDB, First Report (1899) xiii
118. ^{See} CDB, First Report (1899) xiii-xiv
119. CDB, First Report (1899) xiv
120. See CDB, First Report (1899) xiv
121. CDB, First Report (1899) xiv
122. See CDB, First Report (1899) xv
123. CDB, First Report (1899) xv

124. See SRO AF 42/219. "Having regard to the description of the CDB Vote on the Estimates, My Lords are of the opinion that this charge may properly fall on that Vote, and They accordingly authorise the opening of a new Subhead (C) and the provision thereunder of £750 for the maintenance of the Light Houses in question. It will be necessary in consequence of this decision that the amount available under Subhead A should be diminished by an equal sum." (Treasury to The Under Secretary for Scotland, April 2, 1898). The discretion of the CDB to spend its budget as it saw fit was already circumscribed in the area of Works by a £2000 Treasury ceiling on any one project. (See SRO AF 42/1, Minute by Sir Colin Scott Moncrieff, November 5, 1897). Now, that freedom was to be further eroded.
125. CDB, First Report (1899) xv
126. Interestingly, the 'establishment' point of view of those days that aid to indigenous industries was justified on the grounds that it increased people's prosperity at home, and the 'grass roots' point of view that it condemned islanders to a life of poverty by effectively removing the incentive to migrate to the mainland in pursuit of 'real' work, represent an almost complete reversal of the equivalent stances adopted fifty years later with officialdom condoning, it not actively propounding the modernisation argument. Against this background the launching of the HADB cooperative programme in 1977 can be seen either as a rapprochement between the radical development school and the conventional economic theorists, or, in a sense, as a return to proto-establishment values! See below n 127 and later chapters of this thesis.
127. Benevolent charity towards home industries, favoured by the Duchess, was condemned by William MacKenzie for depriving crofters of the opportunity to compete in the wider labour market. See below p 288 ff
128. CDB, First Report (1899) xv. The Board, presumably hoped that the problems of inadequate local liaison which had arisen in connection with their agricultural improvement programme would be avoided in the case of home industries. See above p 264

129. The involvement in the first place of the Duchess of Sutherland who was prominent in the Scottish Home Industries Association, arose from private correspondence with Lord Balfour, to which the other Commissioners were not privy, and of which only an extract containing the names of members of "unpaid Committees of the leading people in the district in connection with our work" appears in the CDB files. See SRO AF 42/25, Duchess of Sutherland to Lord Balfour, n.d., October/November 1897. In acting upon the advice of the Duchess and contacting the named gentleman, Lord Balfour was seemingly acting on his own initiative and without the authority of his fellow Commissioners.
130. CDB, First Report (1899) xv
131. CDB, First Report (1899) xv. Since this course of action was adopted on the basis of advice from the Duchess of Sutherland, it is, in fact, unlikely that it had the full support of all the Commissioners. On receiving the Report on Home Industries prepared by the Duchess, Lord Balfour immediately instructed the Board Secretary to write to the proposed Chairman of the Local Committee in Lewis asking him to recommend the name of a competent instructor. Apparently the Report of the Duchess was not circulated at that stage, although it was conceded in the letter to Sheriff Campbell that "there will probably be some difference of opinion about the 2nd and 3rd suggestions [re grants for new or improved loans and provision of boilers or dye-vessels] made by the Duchess". (R R MacGregor to George Campbell, Sheriff substitute, Stornoway, September 28, 1898). As to recruiting an instructor, Lord Balfour himself wrote to the Duchess, even before passing her Report to the Secretary for filing, stating that "the employment of a competent instructor seems a fair thing for the CDB to take up and I will see that it is fully considered". (Lord Balfour to Duchess of Sutherland, September 9, 1898). Lord Balfour of Burleigh, it appeared, liked to exert his authority as Secretary for Scotland in his capacity as CDB Chairman. See SRO AF 42/277, Report on Home Industries by Millicent Sutherland, received by CDB in September, 1898.
132. CDB, First Report (1899) xv
133. CDB, First Report (1899) xiii

134. Initially the life of the CDB was limited to a projected period of five years "during the continuance of the Agricultural Rates, Congested Districts and Burgh Land Tax Relief (Scotland) Act, 1896". (Congested Districts (Scotland) Act, 1897, Clause 3, Sub-Section 1). In fact, this placed the Commissioners under considerable pressure on all fronts. Commenting on a proposed amendment to the 1891 Works Act, which would have improved procedure for authorising works grants, the Under Secretary for Scotland observed: "I think our CDB is not permanent enough for that". (Minute by Sir Colin Scott Moncrieff, November 5, 1897)
135. CDB, First Report (1899) xv-xvi
136. CDB, First Report (1899) xvi
137. See below p 285-6
138. This was a problem explicitly recognised in connection with a request from Orkney minister, the Rev. Samuel Lindsay, for a precise definition of the term 'Congested District'. As the Board Secretary observed: "The real difficulty of answering - otherwise than by a reference to Section 10 of the Congested Districts Act - is that of premature publication of the policy of the Board." (SRO AF 42/56, R R MacGregor to Lord Balfour, December 14, 1897). While the term 'congested district' in itself was open to wide interpretation (see above p 252-6) in the context of works it assumed additional ambiguity, given that the CDB had inherited its works remit and with it an associated backlog of approved projects, not necessarily in congested districts. This was recognised by the Works convenor who was obliged early on to advise that "it would be wise, meantime at least, not to raise the question of whether any locality in the Highlands is a congested district or not, or at any rate to dispose of an application on that ground." (SRO AF 42/9, Angus Sutherland to R R MacGregor, November 23, 1897)
139. See CDB, First Report (1899) xvi; and SRO 42/15, Angus Sutherland to Treasury, May 27, 1898, Draft Memo re Steamer Services on West and North Coasts of Scotland
140. CDB, First Report (1899) xvi. See also SRO AF 42/15, Angus Sutherland to Treasury, May 27, 1898, Draft Memo re Steamer Services. The proposed improvements would have raised the cost of the service by about £4,000 a year.

141. See CDB, First Report (1899) xvi-xvii
142. CDB, First Report (1899) xvii
143. See Hunter (1976) 1; and R N Millman, The Making of the Scottish Landscape (London, 1975) 97-8
144. CDB, First Report (1899) xvii
145. See CDB, First Report (1899) xvii
146. CDB, First Report (1899) xvii
147. See CDB, First Report (1899) xvii
148. CDB, First Report (1899) Appendix III, Copy Correspondence re Fishermen's Holdings, R R MacGregor to J MacFarlane, Clerk to Landward Committee, Stornoway Parish Council, August 19, 1898. See also SRO AF 42/274, Sir Kenneth MacKenzie to R R MacGregor, May 1, 1899
149. See above p 261-2
150. SRO AF 42/274, J MacFarlane, Clerk to Landward Committee, Stornoway Parish Council to R R MacGregor. September 2, 1898
151. CDB, First Report (1899) Appendix III, Copy CDB to Landward Committee, Stornoway Parish Council, August 19, 1898
152. SRO AF 42/274, J MacFarlane, Clerk to Landward Committee, Stornoway Parish Council to R R MacGregor, September 2, 1898. No doubt the "agitated state of public feeling at Stornoway" was also a factor in the Board's decision "to consider the possibility of preparing a scheme for an experiment in this direction". (SRO AF 42/274, Sir Kenneth Mackenzie to R R MacGregor, November 15, 1898; R R MacGregor to J MacFarlane, as amended by Lord Balfour, November 23, 1898). Such was the indecision within the Board that Lord Balfour instructed R R MacGregor to add the rider: "that as the Sub-committee are only seeking for information at present, it is desirable that no unnecessary publicity be given at this stage to these opinions and enquiries." Indeed even by the end of April 1899, R R MacGregor was being directed by the CDB to write to MacFarlane expressing regret that the Landward Committee had been kept so long in expectation on the subject of fishermen's dwellings, "but the Board have not yet been enabled to announce a definite settlement of the matter". (SRO AF 42/274, R R MacGregor to J MacFarlane, n.d. April/May, 1899)

153. See CDB, First Report (1899) xvi; SRO AF 42/323, William Muir, Sanday, Kirkwall, to CDB. Application for assistance to obtain Nurse-midwife for North Ronaldshay, January 30, 1899, and associated Board minutes; and SRO AF 42/208, Robert Calder to CDB, Application for Assistance to re-build dwelling house, April 13, 1898, and associated Board minutes. The Board's statutory powers in the matter of house-building were restricted to the construction of suitable buildings on new holdings, or the erection of fishermen's dwellings.
154. See CDB, First Report (1899) xvi; SRO AF 42/328, Myles MacInnes, Staffin, Portree, to CDB, February 13, 1899, enquiring as to whether CDB grants or loans are available for the purchase of new boats and on what terms, and associated reply from R R MacGregor, February 16, 1899; and SRO AF 42/190, Malcolm McDonald, Maraig, Harris and Kenneth MacKinnon, Cluer, Tarbert, Harris, to CDB, March 28 1898, Applications for a boat and fishing, and associated replies from R R MacGregor, April 7, 1898.
155. SRO AF 42/27, Excerpt Minute of Barra Parish Council, August 25, 1897 received via Messrs Anderson and Shaw, Inverness. See also similar excerpt minutes from North Uist, August 26, 1897 (SRO AF 42/26) and from Lochs, Stornoway, March 21, 1898 (SRO AF 42/173). The Outer Isles parishes of the County of Inverness-shire were particularly well-served in this respect by active Lochmaddy solicitor, Thomas Wilson, who was ex officio parish clerk.
156. SRO AF 42/47, Excerpt Minute of Barra Parish Council, August 25, 1897
157. See above p 261-2 and p 264-7
158. See, for example, SRO AF 42/191, Application from Hougharry Crofters, North Uist, for seed, oatmeal, fencing and road, April 21, 1898, and associated Board minutes; SRO AF 42/162, Petition from John McCuaig and others, Kilfinichen, Bunessan, Mull, for seed, boats, fishing gear, telegraphic extension, roads and piers, March 1898, and associated Board minutes; SRO AF 42/292, Rev. Donald McCallum, Lochs, Stornoway, to R R MacGregor, December 5, 1898, Application on behalf of John MacAulay for Weaving Loom, and associated Board minutes.

159. See SRO AF 42/188, Donald Campbell, Tarbert. Harris, to R R MacGregor, March 28, 1898; Lord Balfour to R R MacGregor, April 1, 1898; Sir Colin Scott Moncrieff to Lord Balfour, April 4, 1898; and R R MacGregor to Donald Campbell, April 12, 1898. Also SRO AF 42/298, John MacKinnon, Carnan, Lochboisdale, South Uist to R R MacGregor, December 22, 1898; Sir Colin Scott Moncrieff to Lord Balfour, January 5, 1899; and R R MacGregor to John MacKinnon, February 9, 1899
160. See CDB, First Report (1899) xv; and, for example SRO AF 42/1192, John McIver, South Shawbost, Lewis. "I am ruined altogether, the fourth of my family is confined to bed this last 15 months no hope of recovery...., my motherless children are in miserable condition, while my sons are defending King and Kingdom in Transvaal... ..I have nothing now in View to pay anything withall and my poor croft will remain uninhabited this year for want of seed" (April 8, 1902). When checked out (because the writer made certain serious allegations about the CDB) the information in this particular letter was found to be either untrue or greatly exaggerated, but this was not so in every case.
161. CDB, First Report (1899) xv
162. CDB, First Report (1899) xv. In fact the CDB became so unduly concerned to divest itself of the image of relief agency, that it nearly succeeded in losing all sense of proportion. See below n 255
163. Unfortunately this applied not only to its secondary activities of agricultural and other subsidies but also to its primary function of land settlement. See below p 276-9
164. Scotsman, May 28, 1900
165. Scotsman, May 28, 1900. This Scotsman item, which followed publication of the Board's Second Report, as well as examining the achievements of the second year in office, also offered a brief resume of the Scotsman critique of the Board's first year, published 15 months earlier and a comparative assessment of performance. See text below p274-6
166. Scotsman, May 28, 1900
167. Scotsman, May 28, 1900

168. Oban Times, June 9, 1900. See also North British Daily Mail, May 29, 1900
169. Oban Times, June 9, 1900
170. Oban Times, June 9, 1900
171. Scotsman, May 28, 1900
172. North British Daily Mail, May 29, 1900
173. See CDB, Second Report (1900) xi, and associated Appendix IV, Letter addressed to Landlords, April 1899. See also Scotsman, May 28, 1900
174. Scotsman, May 28, 1900
175. Scotsman, May 28, 1900
176. CDB, Second Report (1900) Appendix IV, Letter addressed to Landlords, April 1899
177. CDB, Second Report (1900) xi
178. CDB, Second Report (1900) xi
179. As the Board admitted reluctantly in its Second Report (1900) in a section primarily devoted to the problem of acquisition of land: "While dealing with the question of migration of Crofters from more to less congested districts it is proper to point out that various difficulties have to be faced." (P xi) Though the Board was at least prepared to itemise in brief some of these emerging difficulties, to have afforded them any greater prominence by treating them in a separate section with its own heading would, at this early date, have amounted to a public admission of impotence and cast the greatest doubts on the wisdom of the Government in framing the original enacting legislation.
180. Scotsman, May 28, 1900
181. For a consideration of the 'laws' of migration, see Robert Woods, Population Analysis in Geography (London, 1979) 191-196 and G J Lewis, Human Migration (London, 1982) 126-129
182. CDB, Second Report (1900) xi. The normal selectivity in the migration process by age, sex, skill and ambition, which is absent in the case of full-blown forced migration is, of course, implied in the phrase "those who ought with assistance to become migrants". See H R Jones, A Population Geography (London, 1981) 260. The irony is that a Government-sponsored

scheme of migration specifically seeks to move more than simply a homogeneous group of susceptible individuals since its intention is to create a new community. However it appeared that, for the CDB, even that was to prove impossible.

183. ^{See} CDB, Second Report (1900) xi-xii
184. CDB, Second Report (1900) xii. The Board was only too well acquainted with the reality of the cottar's position from correspondence lodged in files of which the following is a typical example. "I would like to get a piece of land to live on. I have no means. I would require assistance." SRO AF 42/300, John Mackay, Bettyhill, Sutherland to Angus Sutherland, December 28, 1898. The underlining was that of the CDB.
185. See Scotsman, May 28, 1900; and CDB, Second Report (1900) viii-ix
186. See Scotsman, May 28, 1900; and CDB, Second Report (1900) viii-ix, and associated Appendices V, Particulars of Small Holdings for Sale in Strathnaver (especially para. V); VI, Rev. Donald MacKenzie and Rev J K MacLean to Lord Balfour, October 27, 1899, endorsing resolution of meeting of inhabitants of Farr, Skerry and Melness objecting to condition of taking present stock at valuation; VII, Copy Correspondence between Lord Balfour and Mr Andrew Lindsay, Convener of Sutherland, February/March 1900.
187. Sheep grazing on Highlands and Islands pastures were subject to the diseases of broxy and louping ill, which were particularly deadly to young animals. Lambs were therefore usually sent away from the hill grazings to arable lands. Once the sheep bred on the farms has passed their first year, they were less subject to these diseases, and could remain for the rest of their lives on the hills comparatively healthy and immune. This was not the case with imported or strange sheep, the death-rate with them being much higher. It followed, therefore, that the home-bred sheep on a Highland farm had an additional value known as the 'acclimatisation value'. There was also what was called the 'hefting' value, which belonged to a flock when the sheep were accustomed to the grazing, as distinct from strange or imported sheep which were for a time restless and did not thrive. See Day (1918) 209
188. Scotsman, May 28, 1900

189. See CDB, Second Report, Appendix V, Para I. In the words of one prospective Syre settler: "I could not think about lodging an application for one of the Strathnaver Holdings as I am convinced I could not make a living under the present conditions I can see plainly there would be no margin left for the support of myself and family". SR0 AF 42/488, Alex Graham, Airdneiskich, Bettyhill, to R R MacGregor, January 5, 1900
190. North British Daily Mail, May 29, 1900
191. See CDB, Second Report (1900) ix
192. See Deer Forest Report (1892) xi; and CDB, Second Report (1900) x
193. See text above and Deer Forest Report (1892) xi
194. Scotsman, May 28, 1900
195. CDB, Second Report (1900) xi
196. See CDB, Second Report (1900) xi
197. See above p 44 and 50-51
198. CDB, Second Report (1900) xii
- 198a See Adam Collier, The Crofting Problem (Cambridge, 1953) 1
199. CDB, Second Report (1900) xii
200. For a discussion of the 'cultural adaptation' role of crofting, see above p 73
201. See SR0 AF 42/277, Report on Home Industries by the Duchess of Sutherland; also above n 128
202. See SR0 AF 42/299, Lady Gordon Cathcart to Sheriff Brand re Industrial Education, December 8, 1898. See also later chapters of this thesis for details of the land problems that would arise concerning the Cathcart estate, in particular the Vatersay affair.
203. See SR0 AF 42/299, Lady Gordon Cathcart to Sheriff Brand, December 8, 1898
204. SR0 AF 42/299, Lady Gordon Cathcart to Sheriff Brand, December 8, 1898

205. SRO AF 42/299, Lady Gordon Cathcart to Sheriff Brand, December 8, 1898. A subsequent communication was rather more forthright. "I have tried everything ... to help these very 'feckless' people to till their land to be fishermen etc. ... And all have failed!! To attempt to fix them to their native soil must end in disappointment ... It is really very sad to see them going on for ever, without a vestige of improvement, and this is why I am so anxious to get the younger men and women removed to scenes of real work, before they fall into the dismal habits of their forefathers." (December 19, 1898)
- 205a SRO AF 42/299, Lady Gordon Cathcart to Sheriff Brand, December 19, 1898
206. See SRO AF 42/299, Lady Gordon Cathcart to Sheriff Brand, December 8 and 19, 1898
207. SRO AF 42/299, Minute by Angus Sutherland re Industrial Education, January 4, 1899
208. See SRO AF 42/301, Lady Gordon Cathcart to Sheriff Brand, December 29, 1898; Sheriff Brand to Lord Balfour, January 4, 1899; and SRO AF 42/299, R MacGregor to Lord Balfour, January 4, 1899
209. SRO AF 42/299, Minute by Angus Sutherland, January 4, 1899
210. SRO AF 42/299, Lady Gordon Cathcart to Sheriff Brand, December 8, 1898
211. SRO AF 42/299, Lady Gordon Cathcart to Sheriff Brand, December 8, 1898. See above p272-3 for details of Stornoway project.
212. SRO AF 42/277, Report on Home Industries by Duchess of Sutherland, September 1898. For details of the Duchess of Sutherland's advice to the Board concerning the tweed industry and the controversy it occasioned, see above p 268-9 and n 126-8.
213. SRO AF 42/277, Report on Home Industries by Duchess of Sutherland, September 1898
214. SRO AF 42/277, Report on Home Industries by Duchess of Sutherland, September 1898
215. SRO AF 42/277, Report on Home Industries by Duchess of Sutherland, September 1898
216. CDB, First Report (1899), xvi

217. However, it should be noted that their basic philosophies of development were different, and these were each different in turn from that of Lady Gordon Cathcart. The latter favoured a Buxton/Mackay-style solution of running down the islands economy; Mackenzie supported modernisation of the islands' economy by replacing indigenous industries with imported metropolitan activities; and Millicent Sutherland envisaged complementing an expanded indigenous sector with parallel development of the islands' own modern sector. In terms of recent Highland development, oddly enough, Mackenzie was adopting the stance of the 'old' HIBD and the Duchess the stance of the 'new'. See above p 70 and associated n 273; also p 268-9 and 125-7; and for a fuller discussion of development philosophies and comparative analysis see below Chapters Six and Seven
218. SRO AF 42/289, Technical Education in Lewis, Minute by William Mackenzie, December 1, 1898
219. SRO AF 42/277 Report on Home Industries by Duchess of Sutherland, September 1898
220. SRO AF 42/282, Sir Henry Craik (SED) to Lord Balfour re Technical Education in the Lews, October 16, 1898
221. See AF 42/282, Sir Henry Craik to Lord Balfour re Technical Education, October 16, 1898
222. SRO AF 42/282, Sir Henry Craik to Lord Balfour re Technical Education, October 16, 1898
223. SRO AF 42/282, Sir Henry Craik to Lord Balfour re Technical Education, October 16, 1898
224. SRO AF 42/289, Technical Education in Lewis, Minute by James Forsyth, December 5, 1898. See also Lord Balfour to R R MacGregor, November 11, 1898: "It is the lads that we really want to equip for the battle of life."
225. See SRO AF 42/289, Technical Education in Lewis, Minute by Angus Sutherland, December 7, 1898
226. See SRO AF 42/289 Technical Education in Lewis, Lord Balfour to Sir Colin Scott Moncrieff and Sir Henry Craik, November 5, 1898; Sir Henry Craik to Sir Colin Scott Moncrieff, November 15, 1898 and associated minute by Sir Colin Scott Moncrieff November 15, 1898; Minute by I L Robertson, HMI, November 17, 1898; Joint minute by Sir Colin Scott Moncrieff and Sir Henry Craik, November 18, 1898; Minute by Sheriff Brand, December 20, 1898

227. See SRO AF 42/289, Technical Education in Lewis, Minute by Angus Sutherland, December 7, 1898
228. SRO AF 42/805, Minute by Sir Colin Scott Moncrieff, April 4, 1901. The date of the minute indicates that, despite the Lord Advocate's findings (see text below) the assumption was a compelling one.
229. SRO AF 42/282. A Graham Murray, Lord Advocate, to Lord Balfour, n d, 1898/99
230. SRO AF 42/282, A Graham Murray to Lord Balfour, n d, 1898/99
231. See CDB, Second Report (1900) vii, and associated Appendix I, Copy of Amendment Bill; also Hansard, Fourth Series (71) 1899 col. 435; Hansard, Fourth Series (72) 1899 cols. 164-6 and col. 291; Hansard, Fourth Series (74) 1899 col. 887; Hansard, Fourth Series (75) 1899 cols. 91-2. Objections related to the fact that the Bill, unlike and Irish equivalent, conferred no public money on Scotland. Thus the Scottish CDB would have been squeezed in carrying out its primary duty of land settlement.
232. See SRO AF 42/86, Aeneas Mackenzie, Stornoway, to Sir Kenneth Mackenzie, January 4, 1898; Sir Kenneth Mackenzie to R R MacGregor, January 7, 1898; Lord Balfour to R R MacGregor, January 11, 1898; Aeneas Mackenzie to R R MacGregor, November 17, 1899; and R R MacGregor to Aeneas Mackenzie, November 28, 1899
233. See CDB, Second Report (1900) xxi-xxii
234. CDB, Second Report (1900) xxiii. The case of an application for a boatslip from Stein in Skye (the former BFS fishing village of Lochbay) was viewed similarly. Following his site inspection the Board Engineer reported as follows: "Considering that a pier built there formerly was a failure and allowed to go to ruin, I am not prepared to recommend its construction." (SRO AF 42/41, Colonel Gore Booth to R R MacGregor, June 28, 1898). However, the inhabitants of Stein were more assiduous in their efforts to keep the issue a live one than in the matter of maintenance, for the question of the Stein boatslip would not lie down, and would ultimately involve MPs James Baillie and John Dewar. Indeed by 1912 the idea of a boatslip was aggrandised to that of a pier. See correspondence re Stein Boatslip and Stein Pier, SRO AF 42/6030, March/April 1909; SRO AF 42/7736, October/November 1910; and SRO AF 42/9501, February to April 1912
235. CDB, Second Report (1900) xvi
236. CDB, Second Report (1900) xii. See also xiii
237. CDB, Second Report (1900) xii
238. See CDB, Second Report (1900) xiii-xiv

239. See CDB, Second Report (1900) xiv-xv
240. CDB, Second Report (1900) xix
241. CDB, Second Report (1900) xix
242. CDB, Second Report (1900) xx
243. CDB, Second Report (1900) xx
244. Congested Districts (Scotland) Act (1897) Clause 4
245. CDB, Second Report (1900) xxix
246. SRO AF 42/178, James Howden CA to R R MacGregor
re Coll Home Industries, May 20, 1898
247. SRO AF 42/178, James Forsyth to R R MacGregor,
March 3, 1898
248. SRO AF 42/178, Minute by Angus Sutherland, April 5,
1898
249. SRO AF 42/805, Report by Arthur Wilson Fox on the
Work of the Irish CDB, March 4, 1901, quoting Board
Secretary, FWD Mitchell. Indeed the Report of
the Irish Board for the year ended March 1900 had
actually stated that: "This industry is not in a
hopeful state in any district." (Ninth Report, PP (1900) LXVIII, 41)
250. SRO AF 42/805, Report on the Work of the Irish
CDB, March 4, 1901
251. SRO AF 42/805, Report on the Work of the Irish
CDB, March 4, 1901, quoting Mr McKeowan of Connemara
252. See above p 268-9 and associated n 125-7; and
p 283-4 and n 217
253. SRO AF 42/805, Minute by William Mackenzie,
April 1, 1901
254. SRO AF 42/178, Minute by Angus Sutherland, April 5,
1898
255. SRO AF 42/178, Minute by Angus Sutherland, April
5, 1898; see also James Howden CA, to R R MacGregor,
March 24, 1898. The question of public account-
ability, and the not entirely separate desire
to free itself of the image of dole-giving agency,
was of such concern to the Commissioners in general
that eventually it coloured even the impartial
attitude of the Board Secretary. On receiving
a letter from the teacher at Uig Public School,
Kilmuir, Skye - where by 1904 the Board owned the
estate - asking for Board help to provide a

Christmas tree to encourage attendance during the severe weather, R R MacGregor immediately dismissed the possibility. "It is no doubt a very laudable object, but CDB are not like a landlord, who can do what he likes with his funds." In fact this view, a reflection of Angus Sutherland's own, was overruled by Malcolm McNeill's successor on the Board, who argued: "I'm not sure that I take the same view as he does, - and I scarcely regard it as a begging letter. It is a legitimate request to a proprietor at this time of year There are Xmas Trees always for the School Children in my part of the Highlands given by the Proprietor." Consequently, a postal order for 7/6d was dispatched via the CDB's ground officer in Skye. SRO AF 42/2901, Donald MacDonald to R R MacGregor, December 12, 1905; R R MacGregor to Angus Mackintosh, Land Manager for CDB, December 14, 1905; J Patten MacDougall to R R MacGregor, December 21, 1905; and Angus Mackintosh to R R MacGregor, December 26, 1905

- 256. See SRO AF 42/805, Report on the Work of the Irish CDB, March 4, 1901
- 257. SRO AF 42/16, Fishery Board Memo re Development of a Scottish Mackerel Fishery, October 1897; see also SRO AF 42/805, Report on the Work of the Irish CDB, March 4, 1901
- 258. SRO AF 42/805, Minute by Angus Sutherland, March 25, 1901, re Report on the Work of the Irish CDB, March 4, 1901
- 259. See above p 287-8
- 260. SRO AF 42/334, R R MacGregor to Lord Balfour, April 1, 1899, re Irish experiment to test suitability of tussac grass for cultivation in the Irish congested districts. It should be explained that for a few years prior to the constitution of the Irish CDB, the Agricultural Branch of the Land Commission had been engaged in the improvement of agriculture and of live-stock and poultry throughout Ireland, including the congested districts. As an official staff was in existence, which would cost the Board nothing except the travelling expenses of the staff when in the congested districts, and the salaries of a few additional local instructors, the Board and the Land Commission agreed that the agricultural work of the Board should be carried out in such approved schemes as might be delegated to the Branch by the Board. See W L Micks, History of the Congested Districts Board for Ireland (Dublin, 1925) 24
- 263. Micks (1925) 101
- 264. See above p 143-4

- 264a Ironically, although its early strength in the area of agricultural improvement was the envy of its Scottish counterpart, as time wore on even the Irish Board became increasingly involved in land-purchase operations with the direct result that "all the original functions of the [Irish] Board as regards agriculture, live-stock, poultry, fisheries and industries were relegated into a secondary position, with the certainty that less attention would be paid to them." Micks (1925) 101
265. See above n 260 for details of the Agricultural Ground Staff serving the Irish Board. By the time of its dissolution in 1923, this was augmented by a CDB Outdoor Inspectorate some thirty strong together with some forty Survey Staff. See Micks (1925) 240
266. R R MacGregor's honest envy of the Irish Board's network of ground staff represented nothing more than the logical reaction to the Scottish Board's realisation that not only were there inherent difficulties with a desk-bound Board, but also that ad hoc local committees did not provide an ideal solution. See above p 264, 268 and 287-8
267. Scotsman, August 27, 1900
268. See Scotsman, August 27, 1900
269. North British Daily Mail, May 29, 1900
270. See Scotsman, August 29, 1900; Oban Times, June 9, 1900
271. Scotsman, May 28, 1900
272. Scotsman, May 28, 1900
273. Scotsman, August 29, 1900
274. Oban Times, June 9, 1900. The CDB guarded jealously its development board image and went out of its way to make sure that it was not confused with a dole-giving agency. See above n 103 and n 255
275. SRO AF 42/589, Lord Balfour, n. d., June 1900
276. Oban Times, June 9, 1900
277. SRO AF 42/589, Sir Colin Scott Moncrieff; and Sheriff Brand, n d, June 1900

- 278. SRO AF 42/589, Norman MacLeod of MacLeod, n d, June 1900. MacLeod of MacLeod of Dunvegan Castle in Skye and proprietor of some 82,000 acres, replaced the vacancy on the Board caused by the death of Sir Kenneth Mackenzie
- 279. SRO AF 42/589, Angus Sutherland, n d, June 1900
- 280. SRO AF 42/589, William MacKenzie, n d, June 1900
- 281. See above Chapter 1, Section (ii)
- 282. SRO AF 42/589, Malcolm McNeill, n d, June 1900

CHAPTER FIVE

The Congested Districts Board II (1900-1906)

(i) The End of The Beginning

In 1903, after eight strenuous years at Dover House, Lord Balfour resigned from the Government amidst controversy over tariff reform and joined the Unionist Free Trade group.¹ Lord Balfour's departure marked for the CDB the end of the beginning, and the end, too, of his energy and commitment to a cause of which he was the champion. His biographer has suggested of Lord Balfour, as is amply confirmed in his behaviour at the Board, that there was a good deal of the benevolent Despot about his character.² That particular trait is perhaps an inevitable by-product of other important qualities essential for effective execution of the duties of Secretary for Scotland.

*It requires a man of wide sympathies and a Scotsman to boot, to master all the problems from the Orkneys to Lanarkshire, from the Hebrides to Galloway, and also to apply his mind to National and Imperial politics. It can only be done by an industry and capacity which was in a peculiar degree the possession of Lord Balfour.*³

A subsequent incumbent of that Office, Robert Munro, was to observe both that a Secretary for Scotland must put a severe curb on his personal predilections, and endeavour to deal with those branches of his activities, whatever they may be, that called [sic] for immediate attention" and that "he could not, being merely human, expand habitually to the width which such a catalogue would demand."⁴ And certainly even although, in the words again of Lord Balfour's biographer 'the Isles [might] be a very little thing', and their inhabitants remote, and as often turbulent as peace-loving,⁵ yet 'B of B' worked tirelessly and knowledgeably on their behalf.

'B of B' was no Highlander but he had a half amused insight into their natures, and when he took his cruises ... to Barra or the outer Isles, he knew what he wanted to see, and he laid hold of certain facts, and he had the heart to sympathise. Above all he did not forget them when he reached the mainland.⁶

It was no more than the House had expected - when the Congested Districts Act was debated in Parliament six years earlier - of a man who could, along with the Lord Advocate would say that *between us we know every man in Scotland*.⁷ And what would transpire following his departure was no more than that same House had feared in the event that a future Secretary for Scotland might evince a different set of priorities and assume the mantle of Chairmanship of the CDB merely as a tiresome encumbrance to the major task on hand.⁸ Thus for the Board, having once found its feet, the four years covered by its third to sixth annual reports represented both the zenith in terms of the Commissioners' credibility in the potential of the Board and the peak in terms of public confidence in it, as well as, despite very visible problems, the high noon of Board achievement.

In its Second Report the CDB had sought to pre-empt criticism of its substantial £40,000 underspend by stating that *it is much better to proceed with caution than by precipitate action in disregard of economic conditions to risk the making of mistakes which would defeat the purposes for which the Board was established*.⁹ Only in respect of vocational education had it given any indication that it felt the powers conferred by the Act to be inadequate.¹⁰ Yet Press consensus of opinion seemed to be that it was at least as much its inability to provide grant-in-aid for the stocking of new holdings that was hampering Board effectiveness.¹¹ In the area of vocational education the Board had sought - in vain, as it transpired - to extend its powers with the introduction of an amendment to the 1897 Act, and it might have been expected that, in response both to the difficulties it had faced in connection with the Syre holdings and to media comment, it might similarly have initiated legislative action regarding loans for stocking holdings in the hope of a more successful outcome.¹² Indeed, a cursory glance at the Third Report suggests precisely that.

*Our experience of last year has strengthened ... our opinion that the powers conferred by the Act were in some respects inadequate.*¹³

Reading on, however, it becomes apparent that in reality the Board was now seeking to extend its powers in quite a different area. Referring to the numerous requests that had been received for building and maintenance grants, the Commissioners stated:

*We have found a widespread belief that our powers include that of making loans in approved cases for the building or repair of Crofters' dwelling-houses and steadings, but this is not the case as regards existing holdings.*¹⁴

Nevertheless the Board had considered it sufficiently important that crofters should be encouraged to improve their dwellings, ^{for it} to undertake a careful examination of two plans adopted by private individuals for this purpose. The principle upon which both proceeded was that of a capital sum deposited in a bank, from which loans of specified amount were made without interest to crofters desiring to rebuild or improve their dwelling-houses and steadings. The advance was repayable in yearly instalments, the money so repaid becoming at once available for loans to other crofter applicants.¹⁵

Given that its ability to carry out effectively those operations specifically intended by the provisions of the Act had already been called into question, it is reasonable to enquire why the Board did not feel obliged to concentrate on its mainstream objectives and on the adequacy or otherwise of its powers to achieve these.¹⁶ Its reasoning - in which lies a half-recognition of a fundamental problem confronting every regional development authority - paradoxically ^{constitutes} also the strongest argument against being side-tracked and so dissipating its energy across an impossibly wide front.

*It is important that crofters should be encouraged to improve their dwellings [for] there is no doubt that the desire for better housing is growing in the Highlands. The people are becoming more and more dissatisfied with uncomfortable, unhealthy dwelling-houses, and with the unpleasant surroundings too frequently still to be found in many parts of the crofting area.*¹⁷

In other words, by constantly focussing attention - through the very fact of its existence - upon the relative deprivations of the crofting community, the CDB was now confronted with the situation of the ever-receding frontier of development expectation. Priming the pump to provide the impetus for economic development had also stimulated the desire for the material comforts that ordinarily accompany modernisation, albeit with a time-lag. But in the context of imposed development, where equilibrium has been deliberately disturbed, assumptions are falsified in the presence of new conditions in which sequences of events may be telescoped or changed.¹⁸ But just as the Board had been thwarted on the education front, so it was advised that the establishment of such a revolving fund did not fall within any of the sub-divisions of Section 4 of the Congested Districts Act.¹⁹ And so, whatever the immediate expectations of its crofter 'constituents', the Board was forced reluctantly to observe in its Fourth Report that *until our statutory powers are extended we can only deal with projects coming within the provisions of the Act of 1897.*²⁰

Sale of the sixteen holdings lotted out on the lands of North Syre in Strathnaver fell fairly and squarely into that category of project. The attractiveness to the Board of setting up a housing fund no doubt lay in the certain knowledge of a steady flow of appropriate applications, a position which contrasted markedly with the response to the notices issued at the end of 1859 intimating the sale of the Syre holdings. For obvious reasons, the Board was

anxious not to have to decline to purchase and obtained from the Duke of Sutherland an extension for another year of the option to purchase.²¹ But instead of recourse to the law to secure an amendment to close what amounted to a loophole which was effectively preventing the Board from fulfilling its primary objective of the migration of crofters, the Commissioners settled almost immediately for a compromise solution. Instead of adhering to their declared policy of creating only *self-sufficing holdings*,²² they now instructed P B MacIntyre, of the Crofters Commission, who had lotted out the original sixteen plots on their behalf, now to re-lot the land *solely with the view of issuing a scheme better adapted to attract applicants*.²³ This he did, into five substantial holdings with annual repayments of between £20 and £30, and twenty-four much smaller holdings. In none of these did the annuity exceed £12, while in one case the arable ground amounted to less than three acres, a typical holding comprising approximately five acres of arable and twenty acres of pasture.²⁴ Referring to the fact that applications were subsequently received for almost all of these plots, the Board described the result of the scheme as *gratifying*.²⁵ Any fears previously expressed, that in the longer term inadequate holdings would exacerbate the problem of congestion were now kept private in the interest of political expediency. Caught between the desirability of adhering to principles which would be appropriate in an ideal world, and the need to provide an immediate demonstration of its potential to counter crofter discontent and thus allay press criticism, the Board had taken probably the only realistic course open to it if it was to retain any credibility at all.²⁶

Such compromise of its early-stated principles was rewarded in the review of its Fourth Report by the Oban Times which, as Lord Balfour observed, had *hitherto ... condemned the CDB and especially all its 'works'*.²⁷ Although the editorial continued to maintain that, like agricultural education, aiding the construction of roads and piers had *but the slenderest*

relation to the problems of congestion,²⁸ it was prepared to concede that these duties were laid upon the Board by the Congested Districts Act.²⁹ More than this, it acknowledged that across the range of its duties the Board was managing to achieve considerable success, which was of particular importance since the period of probation was now over.

*After four years the Board has passed the purely experimental stages of its work. It has now had time to see the actual effects of its operations in every department, and on the whole the results are all that could have been looked for, and are such as to engender the completest confidence in the continuance of the policy set up in the Congested Districts Act.*³⁰

Not surprisingly, the highest praise was reserved for the Board's resettlement activities. For it should be remembered that the Oban Times' denouncement of 'works' was paralleled by the deeply-held belief that

*overcrowding can only be adequately dealt by a thinning out process - by the distribution of the people over unoccupied land.*³¹

Considering that in the same editorial the Oban Times argued of the Board's Fourth Report, *it does not greatly differ in colour or substance from its three predecessors*, it is legitimate to enquire just how it could also constitute *the most gratifying yet issued*.³² The fact is that change in the Board's fortunes had come about less through its own agency than through the agency of others, whether crofters or proprietors. And so, in what Angus Sutherland admitted was a *fair article*³³ the Oban Times emphasised that

*in nearly every respect the people of the congested areas ... have honourably met any obligations ... and have co-operated with the Board*³⁴ -

thus effectively acknowledging that previously this was not the case.

If the report for 1901 did contain a better record under the head of 'crofter resettlement' than any of the others, it was not all attributable to the successful outcome of Syre. In fact, although negotiations were not in every case complete, from the various schemes under consideration during the year a total of 200 new and enlarged holdings had been secured.³⁵ Yet in terms of underlining the rationale of Conservative philosophy to create a class of peasant proprietors, by advertising the success of Government policy in this direction, the achievement of the Board was less than satisfactory. For example the fifteen new crofts and twenty-six extensions to existing holdings on the Freswick Estate in Caithness were to be tenanted, not sold, and the involvement of the CDB was limited to making grants for fencing, loss on sheep stock, valuation, and other sundry outlays without which the scheme could not proceed, and to lending money to settlers who required it for buildings.³⁶ All other negotiations took place, not between the Proprietor and the CDB, but rather the Proprietor and the Crofters Commission, the intervention of the Crofters Commission proceeding on the footing that each cottar to receive land became a crofter under the Crofters Acts, while extensions to existing crofters' holdings were deemed to be statutory enlargements of their respective holdings. The Proprietor selected the occupants and arranged the areas subject to the discretion of the Crofters Commission, who visited the lands to fix fair rents for the subjects.³⁷ On the Fincastle Estates in Harris twenty-four holdings at Borve on the Island of Bernera and another forty-one at Northton in South Harris, were occupied on the same basis. Furthermore, the modal rental of £5 was indicative of their pocket-handkerchief status.³⁸ Presumably it was in view of the all too obvious contrast between the reality of achievements such as these and their previously advertised commitment to *crofters holdings of the larger class, and of holdings intermediate between those of crofters and of sheep farms*,³⁹ that in their Fourth Report the CDB Commissioners chose to make such play of the rather feeble news that they had been enabled to help in the establishment

on the MacLeod estate in Skye of seven holdings of good size.⁴⁰ Less emphasis was laid upon the remaining forty-four acres divided between ten cottars for rents of as little as £2.5s in four/cases.^{40a} In any case, if the land-owning members of the CDB like Norman MacLeod were not themselves prepared to set an example by coming forward with an offer of suitable land for purchase by the Board, it was hardly reasonable to expect other proprietors to do so. In these circumstances it is not surprising to discover that it was only *after protracted negotiations* that Lady Gordon Cathcart was persuaded by the Board, against her better judgement, to part with 3000 acres on the Island of Barra.⁴¹ In view of the need to capitalise upon such a coup, and in the light of the initial problems experienced at Syre, the Board subsequently saw fit to create as many as fifty-eight holdings in Barra only five of which exceeded twelve acres and the smallest of which, carrying rentals of £2.10s or less, were euphemistically described as 'fishermen's holdings'.⁴²

Yet, so long as the Board was seen to be achieving the objective of migration and resettlement of crofters, it was bound to find favour with champions of the crofter movement. It was of no consequence to such as the editor of the Oban Times either that the Congested Districts Board was failing adequately to implement the implicit wishes of a Tory Government or that it was compromising its own explicit principles relating to size of holding, whether for rent or sale. Nor was it even of any consequence that as a result of the CDB compromising its principles, in the long run the crofters might actually be ill-served by resettlement, or that precisely by squeezing so many new holdings from so little land the Board was perhaps desperately endeavouring to convince both the world and itself that the sheer scale of the problem was not beyond its capacity, with its existing powers, materially to influence.⁴³ But blindfolded by wishful thinking and its own bias, the Oban Times enthused over the 200 new and

enlarged holdings for the year 1901:

*All this is excellent and encouraging, and shows what can be accomplished by patience and goodwill. In these and former transactions of the kind the Board has been feeling its way over new ground, but so far as it is possible to judge, the results fully justify the policy formulated in that portion of the Act which provides for the acquisition of land for migration and settlement. The further the Board can go in this direction the nearer will it get to the roots of congestion.*⁴⁴

The idea that the Board might actually have shot its bolt was simply not entertained.

There was lavish praise for the Board's programme of agricultural improvement.

*In the distribution of seed oats, and seed potatoes, the introduction of high-class stallions, bulls, and rams, in potato-spraying experiments, and in home industry instruction, the Board is laying within the congested districts the foundations upon which a more enlightened and more profitable system of agriculture may be reared.*⁴⁵

Such unusual enthusiasm for activities previously viewed by the paper as subsidiary to the primary task of relieving congestion was now justified by construing agricultural and industrial underdevelopment as inevitable concomitants of the state of landlessness and of the implicit rural decline, and by analogy viewing agricultural and industrial education as integral components of the restoration of land to the crofters, and of the implicit rural revival. (While few would dispute this to be so, it was not the view previously expressed by the Oban Times, which was more inclined to ascribe to the crofter the image of noble savage, intuitively equipped for the reaping of nature's bountiful harvest).⁴⁶

*It is not surprising that agriculture should exist in a state of primitive backwardness in the narrow limits of the congested areas, where there is no room for expansion and little incentive to the adoption of new ideas, and where poverty reigns supreme. In seeking, therefore, to teach the arts of good husbandry, to introduce modern methods in agriculture and to give a start to some of the smaller industries that are often allied to farming, the Congested Districts Board is doing a sound, a useful, and what should be a lasting work. The fruits of that work ought to be seen in finer crops, on better stock, on new sources of income, and, accordingly, in the raising of the cultivator of the soil in the scale of comfort.*⁴⁷

In reality, from the Board's point of view at least, matters were rather less cut and dried. It is certainly true that in respect of agricultural improvement, the great object of the Board was expressly stated to be not merely to give assistance for a time, but to teach [people] how they can best help themselves.⁴⁸ But as the Commissioners themselves observed, this was best ... effected by mutual co-operation between us and the people,⁴⁹ and unfortunately the goodwill of the latter was simply not forthcoming, and not only in respect of stock-breeding, a state of affairs to which the Commissioners were obliged to own in their Fourth Report. As convener of the Agricultural Committee, James Forsyth, observed to R R MacGregor, the problem was more general.

*You and I are well aware of the general failure of the local committees to carry out their work and the endless petty jealousies and mutual distrust.*⁵⁰

The Board Secretary was indeed only too well aware of the difficulties of local CDB operations, which had been put to him in a letter from one Neil Orr of Portnahaven in Islay who acted as 'corresponding member' for the local district seed distribution committee. Mr Orr had received a letter from the Board conveying the offer of six pens of poultry, which seemed to invite him personally to carry out the wishes of the Board [himself] as judiciously as possible.⁵¹ To call a public meeting to deal with the matter would certainly have been inadvisable since only six households could

get the birds, while possibly 160 would be disappointed. And in the circumstances Mr Orr had decided to carry out the distribution quietly on the basis that people getting the poultry were not so much receiving a boon from the Board as conferring a favour on the people by undertaking to act as mediums for the careful distribution of the eggs.⁵² It had been his plan subsequently to intimate to all householders where eggs for hatching could be had, and on what terms. However his plan for the avoidance of friction⁵³ backfired on him, and protests arose even before the birds arrived.⁵⁴ In order to try to retrieve the situation the luckless Mr Orr acted forthwith.

*Being anxious to have everything open and above board, I sent a cyclostyled notice of meeting to every house within a radius of three miles, read my correspondence with you [the CDB] and explained the grounds of my action.*⁵⁵

But in spite of acting all along in good faith and with the soundest of motives, Mr Orr was roundly criticised at the meeting, and left feeling wholly disenchanted with the whole business of voluntary public service.

*Charges were made against me of favouritism and injustice [and] the lesson I have learned from this occurrence is never to undertake either personally or through a committee the distribution of free gifts. There is sure to be disappointment and suggestion of unworthy motives. I have every year sought to escape from my unsalaried service, but no other victim being obtainable I agreed to continue my thankless labour.*⁵⁶

As R R MacGregor reported to the Convener of the Agriculture Committee, Neil Orr was not alone in recommending that the Board make some charge - though even a nominal one - for everything they send and insist on a list of applicants with particulars in every case,⁵⁷ even if that was not, in all likelihood, the ideal solution.

The suggestion has been made elsewhere that absolutely gratuitous fowls, bees etc. etc. are less valued and valuable than if a small charge was made [although] probably the real remedy [to the difficulties of local CDB operations] would be for the Board to have a man of their own on the spot to deal with the

wants of a widish district, but this is not practicable.⁵⁸

The Convener, in turn, could only endorse the Board Secretary's final remark:

*We have had the question of local agents before us long ago; but, if I am not mistaken, CDB were not prepared to go the length of a number of Local Inspectors who would have little or nothing to do for the greater part of the year, and it would have been impossible to keep them in work and in constant touch with our Board.*⁵⁹

Given that this was so, the Committee system was seen by the Convener to represent the only feasible solution in the circumstances, unsatisfactory though it might be. He reminded R R MacGregor:

*No doubt you remember the awfulness that resulted from our first attempt to send seed to individual applicants - we were driven into the hands of the Local Committees, and though they do their work badly, the system has been fairly workable.*⁶⁰

Compromise and frustration were bound to characterise the endeavours of a Board with a funding quite unequal to its breadth of remit. Yet superficially that financial squeeze was not apparent. Indeed year after year it seemed that the Board was seriously underspending its annual budget. Precisely for this reason the Board came in for much unfair criticism from the press. For example during 1901 the Highland News carried an article about the need for a pier at Glenelg in Lochalsh, and specifically about the mysterious disappearance of the schedule of application to the CDB.⁶¹ What the newspaper omitted to publish was the information that the disappearance of the schedule was antedated by a petition, and that the petitioners had been advised by the Board that it was quite impossible for the CDB to entertain vague and general applications which failed to supply the detailed information absolutely

necessary to form a judgement. In consequence they had been sent a pier schedule as a matter of routine and invited to submit a definite proposal, which was never received by the CDB.⁶² But, implying less than local commitment to the project had faltered when confronted with the undoubted expense and effort required to submit a technical specification, and more that the Board had perhaps suppressed the application, the Highland News was now talking in terms of *renewing the application to the CDB* (as opposed to submitting a schedule for the first time) and further advising that the matter should be pushed forward without delay.⁶³

*This is necessary, for the CDB was only appointed for a term of 5 years, only a little over 18 months of which is to run. But about a year ago out of a total of £78,000 voted for the purposes of the Board only some £18,000 was expended, so there ought to be plenty money still on hand, although it amounted to a scandal at the time that of this £18,000, £8,000 was spent on official salaries and cost of administration.*⁶⁴

Criticism of the latter character is virtually a fact of life of the existence of the publicly accountable bureaucracy, and the CDB would have been the more unusual if it had been exempt. If the factual basis of such invective constituted a testable hypothesis, the subjective element did not, for there can be no precise yardstick against which to measure the justification for retaining a public servant.⁶⁵ Criticism of the former character (that is that the Board was not spending its money on and thus not doing its job) belied an imperfect understanding of the problems facing the Board in the context of land acquisition and, in particular, a failure to appreciate the requirement to establish priorities and to adhere to a decision once taken.⁶⁶ Unfortunately, such misapprehensions were widespread, and were apt to lead to general denigration of the Board, as the leading article in the Glasgow Herald pointed out in June of 1902.

*In the Highlands there is an unfortunate disposition to sneer at the Congested Districts Board, as representing a specious promise with no performance.*⁶⁷

That particular editorial was commenting upon a Scottish sitting of the House of Commons during which the discussion moved for the most part round the actions and inaction of the Congested Districts Board.⁶⁸ On the one hand John Dewar MP was complaining that the Board did not spend within £10,000 of the amount at its disposal during the previous year; on the other hand James Caldwell was complaining that it was not given enough to spend.⁶⁹ The Glasgow Herald, whether in an attempt to be genuinely objective or perhaps merely seeking to be all things to all men, could see both points of view. As well as seeking to reconcile the two rather conflicting complaints⁷⁰ it was also prepared to be constructive in its criticism as well as generous in its praise of the CDB.

*It may be admitted that £35,000 a year is not a large sum with which to effect the objects for which the Board was instituted, but it is evident that the Board finds a difficulty in placing even that limited amount. The argument that the usefulness of the Board is destroyed by the limitation of the funds is not logical, in view of the fact that the funds are not spent. Unfortunately the public know little of what the Board has done or is doing, for it is niggardly of information in its reports. There is, perhaps, a prevalent impression that its sole function is to advance money to enable crofters to enlarge their holdings But the Board has a great deal more to do and has admittedly done it well. It has, for instance, practically instructed many crofters in better methods of agriculture, and in promoting small culture, poultry-keeping, and other forms of rural industry. There ought to be plenty of [uses] in the Highlands for all the money which it has at [its] disposal.*⁷¹

What Mr Dewar had failed to grasp, and the Herald failed to make explicit, was the fact that it was just because the CDB did place such a high priority upon land settlement that it both underspent its budget and, whatever the outward appearance, was having to skimp upon resources for agricultural improvement, certainly as compared with the Irish

Board with its large ground inspectorate.⁷² And if the Board was 'niggardly of information' as to its negotiations for land, the purchase of which would allow it to spend this embarrassing excess of funds which it was saving precisely to that end, it was only because it did not wish either to raise false hopes or to prejudice dealings which were, inevitably, extremely delicate. To be fair to the Glasgow Herald, not only had it taken the trouble to note from the published information that, of the balance of £71,758 at 31st March, 1902, some £25,000 was earmarked for payment of grants already made, leaving a slightly more respectable £44,608 underspend.⁷³ But it had even established from private conversation with the Lord Advocate that

*a certain transaction was in contemplation, the nature of which is not revealed, which will absorb [the] £40,000.*⁷⁴

And as the Herald had observed, one cannot criticise an unknown quantity.⁷⁵

A year later the Board itself revealed that it had in fact been negotiating for the purchase of a large estate which would have afforded facilities both for the enlargement of existing holdings, and for the formation of new holdings which were to be offered to migrants. But that negotiating for land was a difficult business was evident from the further disappointing information that *these negotiations, however, were without result,*⁷⁶ so short a statement cruelly belying the immense waste of time and energy on the part of the Commissioners. Even before that particular deal had collapsed, the Glasgow Herald had endeavoured to gain a considerable insight into the problems facing the Board in the matter of land acquisition, insight no doubt originating in its meeting with the Lord Advocate. So that while it continued, almost paradoxically, to pursue the Government line, that there was no reason to

believe that any good could be effected by giving compulsory purchase powers, the Herald sought simultaneously to defend the beleaguered Board - perhaps out of a sense of loyalty to the Scottish establishment which, after all, it represented - against the rising tide of Parliamentary criticism.⁷⁷

*Now, the chief complaint made [is] that the Board is not doing so much as it might do and should do in assisting the small crofters and the cottars to obtain land. Well, land is not to be got even in the Highlands for the picking up, and, unfortunately, it is seldom to be got exactly where those who need it wish it to be.*⁷⁸

As the Herald had clearly recognised, the problem of land acquisition was only one side of the coin. Successful disposal of hard-won sites was no less a headache for the Board. Just how difficult it was to get the Highlanders to move to a new locality - as the Herald observed even *to more comfortable quarters, better land, and without expense to themselves,*⁷⁹ had lately been seen in the case of the Sconser tenants in Skye.

The township of Sconser, situated at the base of Glamaig Hill, near the Sound of Scalpay, on the Macdonald Estate, was one where epidemic disease was frequently breaking out, with a resultant steady toll in fatalities. Owing to the position of the township at the base of the 2500 ft hill there was a dual problem of insufficient light and excessive damp. In addition, the houses were inadequately ventilated and the drinking water supply contaminated. Although the Local Authority had been enjoined by the Local Government Board, at the behest of their Sanitary Inspector, to adopt some simple measures to protect the water supply, nothing had been done.⁸⁰ As the CDB saw it:

*In these circumstances, it seemed to us most desirable that any help in our power should be given to aid in migrating these Crofters from their unwholesome surroundings to a suitable place where they could live in some measure of health and comfort.*⁸¹

Upon enquiry from the Board, the estate management had put at their disposal the farms of Suishnish and Borreraig for resettlement of the Crofters of Sconser, if they would consent to migrate. Not only had these farms had been scheduled by the Deer Forest Commissioners as suitable for new holdings, but they offered three times as much arable land and double the hill pasture, with fishings at least as good.⁸² Even so, despite an offer which in the words of the Board propose[d] *more liberal terms than we would feel ourselves justified in extending to the more usual cases of migration which [might] come before us*, the Sconser crofters declined absolutely to move.⁸³ As the Glasgow Herald observed:

*The process of aiding the Highland population in this way must in the nature of things be slow. We are not saying that it might not be quicker than it has been, and on a more liberal scale, but the difficulties should not be overlooked.*⁸⁴

In fact, it was to become increasingly difficult to overlook the difficulties facing the Board, or to avoid regarding it as an ungainly administrative white elephant, even though, as the Herald saw it,

*to sneer at the Congested Districts Board as representing a specious promise with no performance is unjust.*⁸⁵

For all the Herald's loyalty, five years after its constitution the Board's achievements were few, and even in these few successes, its inadequacies manifest. Had these triumphs represented a foretaste of better prospects ahead, it might have been possible to interpret affairs differently. But its achievements up to that period were less successes, than compromises made out of sheer

desperation. Not only was the Board circumscribed in what it was authorised to do, but more than that, it was unable to achieve what it was specifically charged to do.⁸⁶ The two years immediately preceding the resignation of Lord Balfour would not substantially alter that state of affairs.

Following the collapse of negotiations for the estate, the purchase of which was expected to absorb £40,000, the unexpended balance leapt first to £86,114 and then to a record £104,838, despite extensive press advertising for suitable land.⁸⁷ Meanwhile, disaffected Barra cottars, who had been unlucky in the ballot allocating the 58 holdings on the CDB settlement there, were moving in to squat with their animals on the newly scheduled lots.⁸⁸ In order to stamp out this undesirable trend with its even less desirable consequences, the Board acted promptly.

*After careful enquiry we selected two of the settlers who were in our opinion best qualified by education, intelligence, and knowledge of farming to be 'farm constables' and to act as guides to their neighbours, and to see that out conditions were being fulfilled in the interests of the whole community.*⁸⁹

The need at all for such an arrangement serves as a measure of the lack of confidence of the Board in a successful outcome on Barra. As the Commissioners were forced to admit,

*So inveterate is habit in this island, and so natural do sub-division, squatting, and over-stocking appear to the people, that it is probable we may have some trouble in dealing with these matters.*⁹⁰

News of the CDB settlement at Borve in Bernera, from a United Free Minister who visited there in July 1902, was more satisfactory.

*I was so favourably impressed by the improvement in the position and prospects of the inhabitants that it has occurred to me to write you thereanent.*⁹¹

The new township was described as *admirably planned* and the houses a credit to all concerned.⁹² However, not all of these were finished, a state of affairs reminiscent also of the settlements of Sollas and Grenitote on the estate of Sir Arthur Orde in South Uist, of which the Board itself conceded:

*The tenants of both townships are steadily if slowly, getting their houses into order. Like every settlement of the kind, however, the ingoing was a great drain on their resources, so that with all the thrift they are capable of it will be some years before they can be considered as Crofters of independent circumstances.*⁹³

Nor were matters straightforward on the farms of Suishnish and Borreraig in Skye, where following the Sconser disappointment, the Board had acted, with the proprietrix, and proceeded notwithstanding to schedule the land under the provisions of the Crofters Acts, for occupation by selected tenants from other parts of the Macdonald Estates.⁹⁴ Not yet convinced of the impossibility of selling the concept of the self-sufficient small holding to the inhabitants of the crofting counties, and still youthful enough to retain some fast evaporating idealism, the Board was soon brought down to earth, on being bluntly informed that large holdings were neither suitable nor popular, given that so many of the people of the district were obliged to follow some other occupation in addition to their croft. Lady Macdonald herself crossed the Board by holding out for thirty small lots rented at £3 each, and although negotiations were still in progress during 1903, subsequently the offer of the farms was withdrawn.⁹⁵

As far as agricultural improvement was concerned, problems abounded also in that area of the Board's activities. People had come to rely upon gratuitous distribution of seed potatoes, mistaking Board intervention to improve the strains in cultivation for nothing less than charity.

Not only were debts to the Board unpaid, but local merchants were increasingly becoming resentful of CDB interference in their market.⁹⁶ Despite discontinuing educational potato spraying during 1904, in order to induce crofters to take advantage rather of their offer of half-price chemicals and machines, the Board must have been sorely disappointed to find that *the people will not carry on the practice on their own initiative.*⁹⁷ With respect to crofters' 'side-industries', it was the remoteness and bureaucratic structure of the Board that, as much as anything, proved a hindrance to progress. Where beekeeping was concerned, the Commissioners observed presently that

*a local man with a little enthusiasm is, both by example and precept, of much more use in a district than any lecturer.*⁹⁸

And although such individuals were in the course of time coming to the attention of the Board, progress was bound to be slow in the context of a highly centralised and part-time Commission. The establishment of reliable local contacts, such as Neil Orr in Islay, was of similar importance to the encouragement of improved methods of poultry-keeping.⁹⁹ But here again, because of the remoteness of the Board and the less than ideal nature of the central-local communications,¹⁰⁰ progress was disappointingly slow, even though the adoption of comparatively simple measures could have dramatically improved returns.

*Better prices could be realised by a little local co-operation in gathering and sorting eggs according to size, and much more attention might be given to cleanliness both of eggs and the general surroundings of hen-houses and fowls.*¹⁰¹

And although it must have been gratifying for the CDB to hear from a correspondent that

*bees, poultry, potatoes, all make life easier to poor folks, and things are much easier now than they were before the Board began its beneficent work.*¹⁰²

yet the Commissioners themselves acknowledged that these were no more than *minor departments of the Crofter's farm life*.¹⁰³

In respect of other areas of its operations, the Board was limited to complaining, year after year, in its annual reports about lack of powers.¹⁰⁴ Increasingly, too, there was seen to be a need for the Board to explain its role in any given area of activity, largely because the reality was failing to match up to public expectation of the potential. Such was the case in the Sixth Report with the matters of both agriculture and works, the paragraphs on the latter being prefaced with a careful re-statement which explained the system inaugurated the previous year of cancelling time-expired grants, and the logic underlying this.¹⁰⁵ Only in the previously controversial area of home industries was there unexceptional but trouble-free Board involvement. Between them, Lord Balfour and the Duchess of Sutherland saw to it that grants were applied, depots opened and instruction given. The objecting Commissioners had by now fallen silent, and if the beneficial effects were difficult to isolate, at least the Board could be seen to be doing something fairly uncontentious in the eyes of both public and press.¹⁰⁶

Such was the state of play on the eve of departure of the CDB's founder and protector, Lord Balfour of Burleigh. With the continued personal commitment of 'B of B', the CDB might have entered a new phase of greater potential and accomplishment through a combination of modified legislation, skilled diplomacy and tireless endeavour. Evidence of Lord Balfour's inexhaustible energy was not difficult to find. Publication in 1902 of the Report to the Secretary of Scotland on the social condition of the people of Lewis in 1901 as compared with twenty years previously, which had been prepared by the Crofters Commission at Lord Balfour's request, had resulted in a frenzy of activity directed at tackling the generalised

deprivation which was shown to exist there, all co-ordinated by the Secretary for Scotland himself. It was he who communicated with Major Matheson of Lewis, suggesting the formation of a local committee representative of all the various interests in the island, to consider the whole circumstances. It was he who convened a conference at Stornoway in April 1903 to discuss questions of pressing interest to the island.¹⁰⁷ Even the conservative Scotsman was impressed. It declared:

*Better days for the people of the Lews are surely in prospect. At the beginning of this month Lord Balfour of Burleigh visited the island with a view to obtaining on the spot personal knowledge of its pressing needs. In these days of State philanthropy, when millions are being lavished on making comfortable the Boers who made war upon us, and more millions promised to placate the Irish who have long made it their pride to thwart and spite us, it is not too much to ask that the claims of the impoverished but law-abiding crofters and fishermen of the Western Highlands and Islands of Scotland should receive some scanty consideration.*¹⁰⁸

Nor was the paper under any illusion as to the magnitude of the task, but looked to the personal commitment of Lord Balfour, in his capacity both as Secretary for Scotland and as Chairman of the Congested Districts Board, to complete it.

*The problems presented by the crofter and fisher folk of the Lews are the most pressing and difficult which the Congested Districts Board has to handle; Lord Balfour has recognised this, and has resolved to do what lies in his power to remedy the deplorable condition of the islanders. He has invited the advice and co-operation of a representative local committee in finding solutions for the distress of the Lewis men. He has pointed out the broad lines of amelioration - the providing of improved dwellings, harbours, and communications for the fishing industry, which is the mainstay of the community; a system of education better suited to enable the young people to leave the island with the prospect of success elsewhere; the enlargement of holdings and the suppression of the evils of sub-letting and squatting; and sanitary improvements and the provision of [local] hospitals.*¹⁰⁹

The work performed by that Committee, and its various sub-committees dealing with the topics identified by Lord Balfour, was exhaustive, its value lying in indicating the various directions in which, in the opinion of those personally conversant with the people, assistance could most usefully be afforded.¹¹⁰ Unfortunately, by the time it reported, not only was there a new incumbent in the post of Secretary for Scotland, but the Bill introduced into Parliament for the purposes of conferring additional powers upon the Board - necessary for authorising release of funds for implementation of the recommendations relating to technical education and housing rehabilitation - had fallen.¹¹¹ And although Lord Balfour's successor, former Lord Advocate Andrew Graham Murray, was pledged to carry a refurbished Bill into law, even so he felt obliged to point out to the Chairman of the Lewis Local Committee that:

*It has to be borne in mind that any important measures taken in the desired direction by Congested Districts Board, as soon as the sanction of Parliament has been obtained for these extensions of their powers, will involve considerable expenditure both of capital and of annual income, and the resources of the Board which may be reasonably available for assistance in the Lews must be duly husbanded.*¹¹²

Since the balance of over £100,000 outstanding prior to Lord Balfour's departure had by now been virtually all used up in the purchase of the Skye estates of Glendale and Kilmuir for a total of £95,000,¹¹³ it was perfectly safe, but scarcely absolutely honest, for the new Secretary for Scotland and Chairman of the CDB to announce that:

*The Secretary for Scotland is prepared to use all the resources at his command to encourage local industries new or old, to improve the sanitary condition of the dwellings, to equip by an extension of technical education boys and girls for profitable careers, and to relieve congestion by migration and settlement or otherwise until the resources of the island are equal to the support of the then existing population.*¹¹⁴

Sir Robert Grieve early on in his career as first Chairman of the present Highlands and Islands Development Board, argued that:

*No matter what success is achieved in the Eastern or Central Highlands the Board will be judged by its ability to hold population in the true crofting areas.*¹¹⁵

The Congested Districts Board, too, would be judged by its performance there.¹¹⁶ As observed earlier in this thesis, the congested districts were synonymous with the heartland of the crofting community,¹¹⁷ and the Island of Lewis constituted the heart of that heartland, the seat of the congestion. Yet, as had been recognised when the congested districts legislation was first debated, without compulsory powers the Board would prove quite irrelevant to the problems of that island.¹¹⁸ After more than five years, so it had proved to be. But the Government would not admit it, and the Commissioners could not. The onus was on the Liberals and they had nothing to do but to bide their time.¹¹⁹

(ii) The Beginning of the End

It is often the case with an organisation that a rapid staff turnover signifies its relative ill-health. When it is the Chairmanship that chops and changes, the prognosis must be extremely poor, for without either direction or continuity, activity is unlikely to be synonymous with progress, as, depending on the outcome, the institution either treads water or marks time. Such was the case with the CDB during the years 1904 and 1905 during which critical period Lord Balfour's successor was himself succeeded twice, the final change resulting from the fall of the Conservatives in December 1905, the mantle of Secretary for Scotland being assumed by John Sinclair, MP for Forfarshire since 1897.¹²⁰ Educated at Edinburgh Academy, Wellington and Sandhurst, Sinclair had entered

the army in 1879, subsequently being decorated for service in the Soudan Expedition of 1885 prior to retiring with the rank of Captain in 1887 at the age of twenty-seven. Although unsuccessful in contesting Ayr Burghs at the 1886 election, Sinclair served on London County Council for three years before securing the Parliamentary seat for Dumbartonshire, which he held from 1892-95, thereafter spending two years as Secretary to the Governor General of Canada, the Earl of Aberdeen, for whom he had also earlier acted as ADC when Aberdeen had held the position of Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland.¹²¹

Like Balfour of Burleigh before him, Sinclair was a tireless campaigner on behalf of his countrymen, not least the crofter element.

*A devoted lover of the country, he was anxious to see it occupied by a large and thriving population. Knowing the means by which this had been achieved elsewhere he was profoundly convinced that Scotland had everything to gain from the more scientific instruction of 'those who tilled her soil'.*¹²²

Furthermore, while in Canada, Sinclair had been impressed with the beneficial influence of the Department of Agriculture there on the industry. So it was in a spirit of informed commitment that he assumed his agricultural responsibilities at the CDB.

*Though with far smaller funds, he now had to direct the endeavours of the Congested Districts Board to develop farming in those parts of Scotland where cultivation was most backward, and where the people were cut off from so many advantages.*¹²³

In describing how Captain Sinclair unstintingly fostered the extension of agricultural education, land purchase and settlement, and the promotion of public works, his biographer stresses his personal interest and enthusiasm, which apparently rivalled that of Lord Balfour.¹²⁴

In all these matters, it was only on the spot that the Secretary for Scotland would decide what to do; as he wrote to me once: 'No doubt about it, go and see is the thing, much better than wait and see'.¹²⁵

And like Lord Balfour before him, Captain Sinclair thought nothing of fitting into his schedule summer cruises in his yacht to the Outer Islands in order to *observe progress, meet the crofters, and discuss matters with those in authority.*¹²⁶ But like Balfour of Burleigh, too, precisely because both were men of considerable stature, who shouldered their burdens with responsibility, Sinclair found that the position of Secretary for Scotland was no sinecure, with its considerable breadth of responsibility across areas as diverse as Education, Local Government, Prisons, Arts, Fisheries etc.

*All these subjects had to be mastered by studying boxes full of papers; by endless correspondence, interviews, deputations, meetings, and journeys to Scotland. After finding out what to do he had to get it done; officials, Cabinet colleagues, Parliament had to be convinced; time and money had to be obtained for the smaller and poorer country, and, should Scotland be ready for it, the right to advance alone. Sinclair had besides to answer questions, listen, speak, and vote in the House of Commons; to address meetings in Forfarshire and elsewhere; and to study the matters of foreign, imperial, fiscal, naval and military policy which came before the Cabinet during those years.*¹²⁷

Moreover, for all his enormous presence and capacity for hard work, the contribution of the new Liberal Secretary for Scotland to the operations of the CDB was prejudiced by the fact that he was, first and foremost, a man with a mission, a mission that involved, albeit indirectly, the dissolution of the very Commission, whose Chairman he had become. Amidst the promises of a decade in Opposition now to be honoured as far as possible, to Scottish Liberals in general and John Sinclair in particular, one need stood first: what Scotland wanted most was land for Scots.¹²⁸

Even before Lord Balfour had resigned from Chairmanship of the CDB in 1903, Captain Sinclair had been in touch with Sheriff Brand on the subject of the Land Question in Scotland, specifically in connection with the operation of the Crofters Holdings Act of 1886 and Amending Acts, and of the Congested Districts Act of 1897.¹²⁹ Yet it was neither with the Highlands nor with the congestion that the new Secretary for Scotland was particularly concerned. Sinclair's wife explains how he was impressed with the image conjured up in some Burns' poetry about the cottage of a 'hardy son of rustic toil', and wanted to preserve the prospect of such scenes for the people who remained.

*These small homes were vanishing off the face of the country. Within living memory the road from Dundee to Arbroath was lined with small holdings: hardly one is left.*¹³⁰

Sinclair's personal experience was reinforced by letters from constituents and other lobbyists. A 'well-known large farmer' from Aberdeenshire - which had more small holdings than any other county in Scotland - was one of his correspondents.

*Within the memory of living man, ninety crofts and small farms have disappeared in this district. Yet I hold that the State cannot afford to let them go; the importance of this class of citizen cannot be estimated. The present system has broken down, for there are fifty offers for every place in the market, yet those small farms are being done away with because the landlord cannot afford to keep them up. The history of the crofter in Aberdeenshire is like this: A man built a house in a bog and was allowed for a nominal rent to reclaim what land he could. He built, he drained, he toiled and made a small farm. At the end of his lease his rent was raised and all his buildings ^{and improvements} went to the landlord. The next generation said, if our improvements go the the landlord we will not make any. The result is that the landlord has to do the improvements. If the tenant was assured of proper compensation he would do a great deal himself and more economically than the landlord.*¹³¹

Disturbed by the realisation that there was the same tale in nearly every country parish of Scotland - that is, landlords could not or would not meet the cost of the buildings, and tenants naturally did not spend their capital on places where they had no certain right to stay - Sinclair had for years at his own constituency meetings been raising the alarm at the decline in rural population, and urging remedies which not only measured up to his liberal ideals but seemed also to have been proved sound by experience. Sinclair had, for example, been part of a study commission to examine agricultural tenure in Denmark; and much closer to home, on the other side of Scotland, a successful solution had been found, ironically, less to the problem of congestion - which the measures had primarily addressed - than to the apparently opposite problem of depopulation.¹³² Yet congestion and depopulation were in reality no more than different symptoms of the same basic disease of rural disintegration - a process of erosion either acute and devastating, or chronic but no less insidious, which substituted a blanket of large and extensively farmed estates for a patchwork quilt of small and intensively worked holdings. And it was precisely in order to try to contain the problem in the Highlands^{that} in 1886 a previous Liberal Government had passed the Crofters Act, which gave the crofters of seven counties security of tenure, a fair rent, and compensation for improvements.¹³³ Furthermore, it is difficult to contradict the statement that already in 1896, one decade after its passing, and certainly by 1906, everyone agreed about the success of the Act.¹³⁴ The fair rents were punctually paid, tenants worked hard to put up their buildings, and the value of the landlords' interest increased. As David Brand had expressed it to Sinclair in 1903:

*It is now a matter of general admission even by those who opposed the measure of 1886 as a Bill, that its provisions were framed with much wisdom, and the operation of these attended with a very large degree of success.*¹³⁵

Though it was for consideration whether for the creation of new small holdings different machinery would have to be used for the crofting counties and the rest of Scotland, the Liberal party were therefore firmly agreed on the need for further land reform, and Captain Sinclair was himself eager to make the most of every minute at the Scottish Office. It was apparent that any legislation needed to take into account three points: firstly, the desire of the Crofter class in the crofter counties for the division of sheep farms and deer forests into crofter holdings - an operation for which, to Liberals if not also to enlightened Tories, existing legislation was clearly inadequate; secondly, the fact that Sir George Trevelyan, as Secretary for Scotland, had introduced in 1894 and 1895 Bills to extend crofter tenure to eight other counties; and thirdly, the desirability of creating new small holdings of fair size in the non-crofting counties of Scotland.¹³⁶ As it happened, Liberal leader Sir Henry Campbell - Bannerman had been brought up at Stracathro, in Forfarshire, and his own home, Belmont Castle, Meigle, was on the edge of the county. He had seen the people ebbing away there, and he had often listened to Sinclair's plans. So it was that his very first speech as Prime Minister at the Albert Hall on 21st December 1905 incorporated the statement:

*We desire to give the farmer greater freedom and greater security; to secure a home and a career for the labourer. We wish to make the land less of a pleasure ground for the rich and more of a treasure house for the nation.*¹³⁷

The logical approach to achieving this goal - and indeed a long-declared object of Liberal policy - was to amend and extend the Crofters Act; the King's Speech of February 1906 promised such a measure.¹³⁸ For all that *this sounded harmless, and no one took alarm*,¹³⁹ it spelt the death knell of the CDB, as the Ohan Times recognised later that Spring.

The report of the CDB for the year ending at March last, just laid before Parliament, is probably the last, or the last but one that shall be issued by that body as now constituted. It may be assumed with certainty that the new Highland bill promised by the Government, will to some extent at least affect the status and the powers of the CDB in the direction of adding to its efficiency for the carrying out of what Sir Reginald MacLeod, Under Secretary for Scotland, has defined as a policy under which 'there will be more people able to live prosperous lives in their native counties.'¹⁴⁰

As if in anticipation of coming changes, the Board had, in its Eighth Report, set out a short summary of its complete operations since its institution eight years previously.¹⁴¹ The Scottish Law Review, in its appraisal of the Report for 1905-6, achieved even greater brevity, and in so doing effectively highlighted the fatal flaw in the Congested Districts legislation, which in turn provided a more deeply rooted and adequate explanation for the standstill in the Board's activities during the two previous years, than simply the fact of the Balfour-Pentland interregnum.

Seven years after the institution of the Commission, viz., in 1904, when their accumulated funds permitted, the Commission purchased estates in Kilmuir and Glendale, Skye and much of their attention has been devoted to the re-sale of small holdings on these estates.¹⁴²

The irony was that having allowed its annual income to accumulate at the expense of other potential projects until an appropriate offer of land was made and a bargain struck, and having been roundly condemned for that, now that the Board had finally been able to acquire on its own account more than a token acreage, it was even more circumscribed in its possibilities.¹⁴³

This expenditure, with the necessary outlays for development which follow the possession and adaptation of such large tracts of land, will necessarily require that we should confine, for some time, our attention mainly to the arrangements necessary for the resale and development of the lands purchased.¹⁴⁴

Recognising that it was neither well adapted to, nor most effectively deployed at, the work of routine factoring, which of necessity would entail many details requiring local investigation, the Commissioners quickly appointed a locally based land manager who would specially devote himself to the management of their properties and kindred matters connected with their improvement and development,¹⁴⁵ and without more ado turned their attention to devising a means of carrying on their ancillary development objectives.

*We have given careful attention to methods whereby we may obtain possession of at least a part of our capital expenditure more rapidly than by the slow process of repayment by the small holders who have contracted to repay us the loans made to them for purchase and house-building by annuities calculated to repay principal and interest in 50 years.*¹⁴⁶

Unfortunately, however, the Board's endeavours in this direction went unrewarded, the fact that it had no statutory power to borrow effectively blocking the likelihood of any workable scheme being devised.¹⁴⁷ At any event, failure was not from want of trying. Indeed prior to his elevation to the Upper House, Lord Dunedin (then Andrew Graham Murray) had, in his capacity as Secretary for Scotland, specifically requested that the Treasury should make arrangements to enable the Board to obtain from public funds an advance of three-quarters of the sum expended by it in the purchase and equipment of estates.¹⁴⁸ When the Treasury subsequently advised Mr Graham Murray, not only that legislation would be required to obtain such borrowing power, but also that *My Lords saw no sufficient reason for the introduction of a measure of this kind*,¹⁴⁹ the Board sought legal advice as to the possibility instead of alternative commercial sources of finance.

The points at issue were whether the Commissioners, as owners of lands and of certain annuities created under contracts of sale of lands purchased by them under their Act, could borrow from private lenders on security of

such lands or annuities, and also whether the Board, as appointed by Parliament, was in a position to borrow without express authority.¹⁵⁰ On learning presently that the Board, having had no power of borrowing conferred on it by Statute, could not borrow, and that it was most unlikely that any private lender would deal with the Board without such guarantee - in short that the Board had no powers beyond the provisions of the Congested Districts Act - the frustrated Commissioners quite simply rebelled. In the absence of a strong Chairman,¹⁵¹ or perhaps precisely because they could overrule a weak Secretary for Scotland who ordinarily would have prevented the Board from embarrassing the Government by expressing other than politically acceptable views, the Commissioners made the following defiant announcement.

*We deem it our duty to state, with all the emphasis at our command, that we cannot regard the existing arrangement, which limits our power of purchase and development of land for migration and settlement to savings out of income, as satisfactory. The income provided by Parliament should be available for the many obligations we are called upon to meet for the benefit of the districts concerned, and should not be absorbed by expenditure which, in the strictest sense, is a capital outlay.*¹⁵²

By the following year the position in which the Board found itself was rapidly becoming untenable.

*This question of borrowing to obtain money for further land purchases seems to us to depend a great deal upon our being able to carry out the statutory powers of purchase, resale and settlement though in the ordinary administration of property we can let lands pending a final settlement on statutory lines, we have no power to act permanently as landlords. On the other hand, crofters who are in the enjoyment of the rights conferred by the Crofters Holdings Acts compare these advantages with those offered by a purchase scheme, and seem, not unnaturally, disposed to act with caution. If the lands we have bought cannot be sold for reasons which would probably be equally applicable to various parts of the congested area, it is open to doubt whether application should be made to Parliament for such powers.*¹⁵³

The problem difficult of solution now being faced in Skye was not so much how to persuade cottars to migrate, but rather how to persuade sitting crofter tenants to buy their existing holdings. Although some 20,000 acres of the Kilmuir Estate did consist of farmland which could be used for the creation of new crofts and the extension of continuous holdings, the remaining 24,000 acres was already in the occupation of about 450 crofters.¹⁵⁴ As distinct from Board purchase schemes up to that point, the inducement of 'land for the landless' was not applicable and therefore there existed little if any incentive for the crofters to co-operate in what amounted to nothing more than a game of political football, of necessity condoned by the Commissioners as the agents of Government. By way of protest all that they could realistically do was to highlight the difficulties that confronted them.

*In the cases of Syre and Barra the lands we bought had been portions of large farms wholly unoccupied by small tenants, and the problem of settlement was thus not complicated by questions of purchase by crofters in the enjoyment of statutory rights in the holdings they occupied.*¹⁵⁵

The Commissioners' turn of phrase was no doubt a deliberate device to remind any who might have forgotten just how much of a problem arranging even for the settlement of Syre had initially posed, and just how small the Barra lots had subsequently had to be to offer instant appeal.¹⁵⁶ If they stopped short actually of calling a spade a spade, it was less through any loyalty to their former political masters than out of a desire to bolster the public image of the Board and an associated and much more basic instinct for self-preservation.

It was presumably also concern for the Board's image which prompted the Commissioners to take the rather unconventional step of becoming involved in public debate about its own performance.¹⁵⁷ Tired of what the Scottish

Law Review saw as its achievements being described as ineffective and unimportant by those who are either in ignorance or, at least, have a very elementary knowledge of the work passing through the hands of the Commissioners and their subordinates,¹⁵⁸ the Board had in its Eighth Report set out in response to the criticism a full statement of the difficulties and constraints faced in the matter of land acquisition, which, for present purposes, it is worth restating in full.

A land purchase scheme based upon a portion of an annual income of £35,000, on which there are many other statutory claims, must necessarily be experimental. We have accordingly always had before us the need for caution in our operations, and of careful enquiry before embarking on any scheme in view both of the demands likely to be made upon us and the resources at our disposal, which it might be possible to devote to this branch of our duties. While our desire has been to accumulate a considerable sum, which would enable us to take advantage of any opportunity of purchasing land, and so effect a settlement of some magnitude, we at the same time tried to buy as much suitable farm land, out of lease, or soon to be, as we could.

We advertised extensively for such lands, but with no satisfactory result.¹⁵⁹

With a passing reference to the two exceptions which merely served to prove the rule - namely the offer by the Duke of Sutherland of the farm at North Syre and by Lady Gordon Cathcart of the lands on Barra - the statement continued:

[In any case] we have some reason to doubt whether crofters, especially in the West Highlands, are really desirous of becoming the owners of the holdings they occupy. Many of them look upon the crofting tenure as in many respects as good as, or better than ownership. Besides, an extensive purchase of land in crofter occupation without some assurance of re-purchase might lock up funds which we have no statutory power to lay out in buying land for any other purpose than re-sale under the Act. Accordingly, we embarked upon our recent extensive purchases of estates, having in all about 600 crofter tenants, with some hesitation.

*We knew that if an experiment in land purchase of this kind was to be tried anywhere, these estates in Skye offered as fair a prospect of success as any others we were likely to have an opportunity of buying, but it is idle to deny that the difficulties, both of a practical and economical nature, attendant upon carrying a scheme of this kind to a successful issue are neither few nor slight.*¹⁶⁰

The position for ^{the} Board created by these difficulties was curious indeed. It could not do what it wanted to do - that is, become involved in a wide range of development activities--because it lacked the borrowing power; it could not even do what it was primarily intended to do - that is, create peasant proprietorships -because the market demand for that status was simply absent; and, as a result, it was ending up by achieving the ideological obverse of the role identified for it by its political authorship. Without knowing the context, the very idea that a Tory government could create a public authority which would actually promote state ownership of land seems quite beyond belief.

The reasons why the crofters were unwilling to buy were not difficult to understand, as the Commissioners proceeded to point out. Against the dubious advantage of his heirs becoming the owner of his holding after 50 years, the potential purchaser had to set a number of salient (and much more immediate) disadvantages. Although the purchase annuity required by the Board to repay the capital loan probably represented a saving of some 25% per annum, the responsibility for owner's rates, at 5/- in the £, virtually cancelled out any financial advantage. Furthermore there was the unattractive possibility that County Assessors might cease to assess the new houses built on crofts on the basis of the fair rent fixed by the Crofters Commission, instead rating them on the same basis as houses of similar quality built on a feu elsewhere.¹⁶¹ Thus crofters would be penalised for what amounted to improving housing stock of the congested districts. Had the margin between the annuity

and the fair rent been large enough to provide for owners' rates, and to cope with likely increase of rates both on owner and occupier, the crofters might have been less reluctant to purchase. But the CDB, because it could not buy compulsorily at a valuation established by a county surveyor, was quite unable to purchase land at the low rate required for such to prove the case.¹⁶² Rather the Board found itself in a limited market where both supply and demand were highly inelastic. The landlords were in the position of oligopolists, and it was the buyer in this instance that was the price-taker, since the opportunity cost of using the land for crofting was undoubtedly high, virtually any other land-use being more profitable to the landlord in terms of rental capacity.¹⁶³ Furthermore, the idea of the State sustaining a loss by re-selling at a greatly reduced price would have involved considerable philosophical reorientation for a Tory government and could not be countenanced. The end could not justify the means, precisely because that end was itself ostentatiously political.¹⁶⁴ And while reform in prevailing methods of relief to local taxation, as advocated by the Report of the Royal Commission presented to Parliament in 1902, would certainly have improved the prospects of selling holdings, it was scarcely realistic to depend upon the vague possibilities of future legislation to solve immediate problems.¹⁶⁵

Another important matter having a bearing upon purchase hinged upon the system, or more precisely the failure of the system, under which crofters' common grazings were stocked and managed, and in particular upon the serious question of overstocking by unscrupulous members of a township. Local Committees established under the Grazings Act of 1891, which applied to crofters holding land under crofting tenure, had, in the main, either lapsed or become inoperative after a short time, as

a result of incurring expenditure which they were unable to recover.¹⁶⁶ In some cases it even seemed that men with overstocks get themselves placed on the Committees with the very view of rendering the Rules and Regulations of no avail.¹⁶⁷ As a result of the breakdown of the system, dykes separating the crofts from the common pastures had crumbled; shepherds were rarely employed owing to dispute over shares of the wage bill; purchase or hire of pedigree rams ran into similar problems, with the result that inferior sires were used and the quality of the stock deteriorated; and overstocking was rampant. Finally, in general no regular gatherings were arranged, each crofter simply having a separate ear mark and attending to his sheep on the common pasture independently of his neighbours, with the result that at certain seasons hardly a day passed without the sheep being disturbed so that they were permanently in poor condition.¹⁶⁸ As the CDB Commissioners realised, if the purchase of holdings became generally adopted, *some drastic remedy must be provided, as even the benefits provided by the Grazings Act would not be available when all were proprietors.*¹⁶⁹ And although the Board could enforce rules during the period of payment of instalments, it would be a difficult matter. Thereafter the crofters would be on their own, or as the Board phrased matters:

*What remedy would the law-abiding crofters have against their grasping neighbours when each became an absolute owner?*¹⁷⁰

In fact the Board could offer a remedy, but despaired of implementing it, without the backing of statutory enforcement. This involved the formation of co-operative or club stocks, which, as the Commissioners saw it, offered a number of advantages. Overstocking would be thereby rendered impossible; the possibility of employing an experienced shepherd would ensure that the sheep were disturbed only infrequently for the necessary dipping and clipping; good tups would be secured; and from

the profits of the stock the Committee would retain all township dues and shares of upkeep of fences etc., sums which otherwise would be virtually impossible to collect.¹⁷¹ The Commissioners concluded:

*We do not assume that the Club system is perfect. It puts the management of sheep no higher than the general ability of the Committee who control it, but in our opinion it is the system with fewest faults and most advantages.*¹⁷²

As it was, with the prevailing system of individual stocking, there was a strong disinclination among crofters to cooperate, and little sense of loyalty or obedience to the decisions of a Committee they had themselves appointed. Thus, even although perhaps the great majority of the crofters individually condemned the conduct of others who habitually put an excessive stock on the common pasture, there was no healthy and influential public opinion behind a Committee to support it in action for the good of the Community as a whole.¹⁷³ As the Board's farm manager at Kilmuir preently observed:

*It is not impossible to remove these evils, but to do so requires some power beyond and behind the crofter himself..... It would not be difficult to get the bulk of the people to agree to good and just rules.... What is wanted is the aid of a ruling power to look after and punish the malefactors.*¹⁷⁴

The Commissioners scarcely required any persuading, recognising already that:

*Permissive legislation in such a community is of little use, but if statutory steps could be taken to compel all crofters with rights of common pasture to adopt the Club system, we believe much good would result, including this, that the pasture would yield a better return to those with grazing rights over it.*¹⁷⁵

Unfortunately, as events would subsequently prove, club-stocking of itself could not overcome a fundamental problem facing most of the new generation of crofters, which was the lack of capital for stocking a holding initially, however that stock was subsequently managed.¹⁷⁶

*The fact remains that the Cottars and small Crofters in Skye who have long been clamouring for land and have most need of it, have, owing to their unfortunate circumstances very little capital. Unless they get fairly easy terms to start with they must remain landless.*¹⁷⁷

For although at Glendale the Board sold the estate sheep and all to the settlers on repayment terms as a going concern, using the logic that *it may or may not be perfectly legal but if we choose to do it, who is to say us nay,*¹⁷⁸ in fact the Lord Advocate subsequently ruled against a similar procedure in the case of Kilmuir, just as a previous Lord Advocate had done in the instance of North Syre.¹⁷⁹ In the light of this ruling, in recognition of the dismal poverty facing potential purchasers of the crofts at Kilmuir, the Commissioners presently requested the Secretary for Scotland to apply on their behalf to the Treasury for power to extend the period of repayment from 50 years to approximately 68 1/2 years, so that the annuity would work out at only £3 5s for every hundred pounds of the advance, as was the case with loans under the Irish Land Purchase Act of 1903. However, Treasury sanction was not forthcoming.¹⁸⁰

With its hands ^{thus} tied, all that was left for the Board to do was, on the one hand, to pursue as best it could, with the trifling sum left over from its purchases of land, its activities in the area of industrial, agricultural and infrastructural development, and on the other, to defend itself as best it could against unfavourable comparison with its Irish equivalent.¹⁸¹

*With regard to complaints made both in the press and on platforms that the Commissioners had done very little in the way of land settlement, and reference also having been made to the operations of the Irish Congested Districts Board as showing better results, the Commissioners point out that there can be no comparison between Ireland and Scotland, as the problems before both Boards are different.*¹⁸²

This difference was apparent both on the demand side and the supply side of the land question. Not only was it the case that in Ireland tenants were ready to purchase, whereas in Scotland there was no appearance of any general desire to buy, but rather the contrary; equally the command of money in Ireland was practically unlimited because payment was made, not out of the funds of the Board, but by advances from the Land Commission there.¹⁸³ Furthermore, in Ireland the Board possessed power to carry through a scheme which was generally approved against the opposition of a small minority. The absence of such power in Scotland unfinately increased the difficulties of reallocation and of extension of holdings purchased by the Board.¹⁸⁴ Most interesting of all, however, was the finding by the Scottish CDB Commissioners that prior to 1896, the Irish Board's experience had been exactly equivalent to their own. During the five years from its constitution up until that point, the Irish Board had bought three estates containing in all less than 7000 acres for a sum of £18,807.¹⁸⁵ Indeed, in a summary of their work, the Irish Commissioners had observed somewhat apologetically:

*It should be noted that the three Estates purchased up to this time were paid for out of our income, and that we could not, during the first five years of the Board's existence, obtain advances from the State for the purchase of land. Our operations were consequently on a very limited scale. The system of making advances to enable us to buy Estates commenced in 1896, under the Land Law Act of that year.*¹⁸⁶

The fact of the secondary importance of land settlement up until that time is highlighted by Hicks, who in his history of the Irish Board has observed that, following the change in the law, *all the original functions of the Board as regards agriculture, live-stock, poultry, fisheries, and industries were.... relegated into a secondary position, with the certainty that less attention would be paid to them.*¹⁸⁷ To the historical observer what fine irony there is in a situation where the Irish Board would not get on with the very important original duties assigned to it by the Act of 1891 as regards the development of Fisheries and Industries,¹⁸⁸ and the Scottish Board could not get on with the main idea embodied in its Act of 1897 which was to purchase land to relieve congestion,¹⁸⁹ with the result that each Board ended up concentrating on subsidiary interests approximating to the intended original function of its opposite number.

In the case of the Scottish CDB, this meant the improvement of agriculture and to a lesser extent fisheries, and the encouragement of rural industries.¹⁹⁰ For if the new Board Chairman had ideological objections to the provitisation of crofting land, so that as far as he was concerned it was a happy coincidence that external factors prevented much progress on that front, he had no such objections in principle to the work of agricultural development. Indeed, he was keenly interested in the application of scientific techniques to the enhancement of agricultural productivity.¹⁹¹ However, the implication of his wife, that it was he who was personally responsible for the implementation of all the measures ultimately adopted by the Board in the field of agricultural improvement - that is for local agricultural shows; methods for the improvement of live stock; the cultivation of vegetables.... by schools....; the extension of agricultural education, travelling demonstrations by teachers from agricultural colleges; a home in Aberdeen where Highland girls were trained in domestic economy, and so on¹⁹² - is misleading.

If not Highland produce, then certainly Highland home industries had been exhibited during Lord Balfour's Chairmanship; the question of how best to improve the quality of live-stock was one which had engaged the Commissioners' attention right from the start; and the Board was alive to the weaknesses as much as the strengths of employing visiting experts to lecture to crofters.¹⁹³ While it is true that the experiment in school gardening - later criticised for its inflexibility - was stated during Sinclair's Chairmanship,¹⁹⁴ the breakthrough on the technical education front was certainly made prior to his arrival at the Board.

Although not empowered by the existing legislation to provide opportunities for youth training within the congested districts, since to do so had earlier been deemed not to fall within the competence of the task of aiding migration on the grounds that it did not involve a de facto migration, the Board had discovered a way round the law as it stood.¹⁹⁵ The search for a loophole had been occasioned by the pressing need to find some means of implementing the recommendations of the Lewis Local Committee concerning technical education, efforts to secure the passage of an enabling amendment having twice come to nought.¹⁹⁶ And as the Commissioners discovered, while they were not authorised to provide training schemes for young people at their own homes, there was nothing to prevent them from providing such opportunities to them furth of the congested districts, presumably because so to do, in as much as it constituted *aiding migration from congested districts to other districts in Scotland*,¹⁹⁷ fell within the letter of the law, even if it hardly conformed to legislative intention or expectation. So it was that by the time of Captain Sinclair's assumption of the role of CDB Chairman, as well as the scheme for the training of girls in domestic economy, there were also running, more or less successfully, schemes apprenticing boys to skilled trades on Clydeside and

elsewhere and offering training in practical seamanship.¹⁹⁸ The fact is, just as the matter of 'scientific agriculture' was a hobby-horse of the new Board Chairman, so too was home economics, in respect of which he was heavily influenced by his friend Sir Horace Plunkett, Vice-President of the Department of Agriculture for Ireland, whose influence was destined also to pervade other spheres of Board activity.¹⁹⁹ Captain Sinclair's principal obsession was, however, his commitment to securing the successful passage of a Bill extending the provisions of the Crofters Act. The strength of that personal commitment is illustrated by his wife's rueful complaint that during his time at the Scottish Office - precisely the years when he had a young family - Sinclair's usual answer to any proposals of more leisure was: *wait till the Land Bill's through*.²⁰⁰ As it happened, his family was destined for a long wait and Sinclair himself for a longhaul, for it was to take six years before the dream became a reality. Resulting from unusual obstinacy of Tory opposition, none of this could have been suspected at the start of 1906, when to Liberals and Tories alike it must have been perfectly obvious that to pursue a policy of peasant proprietorships in the Highlands was from a purely practical point of view, a non-starter, so that the CDB had become something of a white elephant.²⁰¹ Furthermore, as was explained in a comprehensive memo outlining ^{both} the background to crofter discontent since 1880 and the context of the existing legislation, a memo which itself took its place amongst the copious documentation of six months of careful consideration and complicated drafting which surrounded the first version of the Small Landholders Bill:

*..... there are indications of serious impatience especially in the Long Island where the difficulties are the accumulation of years. Landless cottars in South Uist have begun to break up land which does not belong to them, two evictions of cottars have taken place in the Lewis, and grave complications may arise at any moment.*²⁰²

In other words, to add to the problems it had inherited from its predecessor of general disarray in the area of Highland policy, the new administration was now having to face a renewal of the land agitation which had never really been far below the surface.²⁰³ And even if it had to some extent brought the latter upon itself, by arousing expectations as a result of the announcement in the King's Speech of the intention of the Government to amend existing legislation,²⁰⁴ this did not alter the fact that now another reason for formulating the proposals of the Government without further delay [was] to be found in the condition of public opinion in the Highlands.²⁰⁵ From all points of view, therefore, it seemed to the Liberals that:

*the time has certainly come when an attempt should be made to lay down afresh a definite line of policy.*²⁰⁶

It signalled the death of the CDB, although it would be a lingering one, and the end of special status for the Highlands for more than half a century.²⁰⁷

NOTES

1. See D.N.B.; and Lady Frances Balfour, A Memoir of Lord Balfour of Burleigh (London, 1924) 78
2. Balfour (1924) 74. Lord Balfour's enormous capacity for hard work was inclined to lead him, having once identified a course of action, to press on regardless of normal Committee procedure without either consultation or delegation. His behaviour in the matter of home industries and over the problems of the island of Lewis typifies this facet of his character. See above p 269 and associated n 131 and below p 343-4
3. Balfour (1924) 77
4. Quoted in Balfour (1924) 77
5. Balfour (1924) 73
6. Balfour (1924) 73
7. Quoted in Balfour (1924) 78. The Lord Advocate in question was Andrew Graham Murray, MP for Buteshire, who succeeded Lord Balfour as Secretary for Scotland. See also above p 193-4
8. See above p 193-4. While Andrew Graham Murray did not possess Balfour of Burleigh's great energy, nevertheless he took his duties as CDB Chairman seriously. It was thereafter that the six-year old fear was to become a self-fulfilling prophecy, as later sections of this chapter seek to demonstrate.
9. CDB, Second Report (1900) xxix
10. See CDB, Second Report (1900) vi-viii; and above p 286
11. See above p 275-9 and p 293-6
12. See above p 286
13. CDB, Third Report (1901) vii
14. CDB, Third Report (1901) vii
15. See CDB, Third Report (1901) vii
16. See above p 275-9 and p 293-6
17. CDB, Third Report (1901) vii

18. An analogy is provided in a comparison of the operation of the Demographic Transition in Western Europe and the Third World. In the case of the former, reduction in the death rate was accompanied by a rising standard of living which in turn was ultimately associated with a fall in the birth rate to a comparable level. In the Third World, imposed reduction of the death rate is not inevitably accompanied by the rise in the standard of living that is a pre-condition for a reduction in the birth rate, with the result that the latter must also be imposed upon the population if equilibrium is to be achieved.
19. See above p 286; and CDB, Third Report (1901) vii
20. CDB, Fourth Report (1902) vii
21. See CDB, Third Report (1901) vii
22. CDB, Third Report (1901) vii. See also above p 259-60 for the background to the Board's policy on size of holdings
23. CDB, Third Report (1901) vii
24. See CDB, Third Report (1901) viii-ix, also associated Appendix II, Particulars of Small Holdings for Sale in Strathnaver
25. CDB, Third Report (1901) viii
26. The policy on holding size was, of course, formulated during the early days of untrammelled idealism, not to mention political naivete. As the Commissioners were soon to realise, political pragmatism represents a necessary compromise between idealism and expediency
27. SRO AF 42/1208, Lord Balfour, n d, April 1902, re Oban Times article of April 26, 1902
28. Oban Times, April 26, 1902
29. See Oban Times, April 26, 1902
30. Oban Times, April 26, 1902
31. Oban Times, April 26, 1902
32. Oban Times, April 26, 1902
33. SRO AF 42/1208, Angus Sutherland, n d, April 1902
34. Oban Times, April 26, 1902
35. See CDB, Fourth Report (1902) v-vi; and Oban Times, April 26, 1902

36. See CDB, Fourth Report (1902) ix
37. See CDB, Fourth Report (1902) ix
38. See CDB, Third Report (1901) x
39. CDB, Fourth Report (1902) viii. See also CDB, Second Report (1900) Appendix IV, letter addressed to Landlords, April 1899; and above p 275-6
40. CDB, Fourth Report (1902) viii
- 40a. See CDB, Fourth Report (1902) viii-ix
41. CDB, Third Report (1901) x; see also below p 389-90 and associated n 41 and p 411-2
42. See CDB, Fourth Report (1902) vii-viii and associated Appendix III, Particulars of Small Holdings for Sale in Barra
43. In his dual capacity as political figurehead at the Board and personal champion of the concept it embodied, Lord Balfour, especially, was under pressure to demonstrate the effectiveness of an authority which, originally, had been given only five years to run. The acquiescence of the other members in toeing the Conservative party line was not to last indefinitely. See below p 354
44. Oban Times, April 26, 1902
45. Oban Times, April 26, 1902
46. See Oban Times, April 26, 1902; and above p 246-50
47. Oban Times, April 26, 1902
48. CDB, Fifth Report (1903) vi. Similarly, R R MacGregor informed a German correspondent that in respect of stock breeding "the great object of the Board is to help people to help themselves". (SRO AF 42/1324, R R MacGregor to Dr Hansen, Bonn, n d August 1902). The aim of the present HADB, as far as the crofting heartland is concerned, is hardly different. As Professor Kenneth Alexander - the Chairman ultimately to be responsible for the specific and deliberate fostering of self-help and self-determination by the HADB - observed early in that Board's history at a Scottish Trades Union Highlands and Islands Conference at which both he and the then chairman were speaking: "Professor Grieve has welcomed the change of attitude from 'How can you help us' to 'How can we help you to help us!'. A further shift in emphasis to 'How can you help us to help ourselves' would be even more encouraging. (KJW Alexander, 'Highland Planning: New Model or Old Muddle?' in Report of 7th Highlands and Islands Conference (STUC, 1968) 38. See also below Chapter Seven
49. CDB, Fourth Report (1902) xiii
50. SRO AF 42/1136, James Forsyth to R R MacGregor March 9, 1902
51. SRO AF 42/1136, Neil Orr, Portnahaven, Islay to R R MacGregor, March 3, 1902

52. SRO AF 42/1136, Neil Orr to R R MacGregor, March 3, 1902
53. SRO AF 42/1136, Neil Orr to R R MacGregor, March 3, 1902
54. See SRO AF 42/1136, Neil Orr to R R MacGregor, March 3, 1902. The protestors were, in fact, two of Orr's fellow seed guarantors. This is all the more surprising since the former had previously established at a meeting of the full seed distribution committee that "as to eggs they could offer no advice and simply left the matter in my own hands."
55. SRO AF 42/1136, Neil Orr, Portnahaven, Islay, to R R MacGregor, March 3, 1902
56. SRO AF 42/1136, Neil Orr to R R MacGregor, March 3, 1902
57. SRO AF 42/1136, Neil Orr to R R MacGregor, March 3, 1902. See also R R MacGregor to James Forsyth, March 6, 1902
58. SRO AF 42/1136, R R MacGregor to James Forsyth, March 6, 1902
59. SRO AF 42/1136, James Forsyth to R R MacGregor, March 9, 1902
60. SRO AF 42/1136, James Forsyth to R R MacGregor, March 9, 1902. For a background to the problems of seed distribution see also CDB, Second Report (1900) xii-xv; and above p 287-8
61. See Highland News, June 22, 1901
62. See SRO AF 42/108, James Baillie MP to R R MacGregor, January 21, 1898 enclosing petition from Alex Mactaggart, Parish Minister, Glenelg, on behalf of the inhabitants of Glenelg and Kylerhea; Angus Sutherland to R R MacGregor, February 2, 1898; David Brand to R R MacGregor, February 7, 1898; Malcolm McNeill to R R MacGregor, February 9, 1898; Colin Scott Moncrieff to R R MacGregor, February 11, 1898; Alex Mactaggart to Angus Sutherland, April 20, 1898; and R R MacGregor to Alex Mactaggart, April 27, 1898
63. Highland News, June 22, 1901
64. Highland News, June 22, 1901
65. Even so, a present-day Conservative administration did try to apply the efficiency and performance criteria associated with evaluating commercial success, to the operation of the Civil Service in the shape of the Rayner scrutiny

66. i.e. the Board had chosen to give priority (as the Highland popular press persistently urged it to do) to relief of congestion through land settlement. If it could not achieve an instantaneous result, that was scarcely justification enough for veering off course
67. Glasgow Herald, June 20, 1902
68. Glasgow Herald, June 20, 1902. See also Scotsman, June 20, 1902 for a transcript of the original debate, which is located in Hansard, Fourth Series (109) 1902 cols. 1130-76
69. See Glasgow Herald, June 20, 1902; also Scotsman, June 20, 1902
70. Glasgow Herald, June 20, 1902
71. Glasgow Herald, June 20, 1902
72. See above p 292-3 and associated n 260 and n 265
73. See Glasgow Herald, June 20, 1902
74. Glasgow Herald, June 20, 1902
75. Glasgow Herald, June 20, 1902
76. CDB, Fifth Report (1903) vii. The negotiations - to buy the western half of the Estate of Kilmuir - broke down because of the vendors' insistence on retaining substantial tracts of shoreland at Uig, including Uig Pier. See CDB, Sixth Report (1904) x
77. See Glasgow Herald, June 20, 1902
78. Glasgow Herald, June 20, 1902
79. Glasgow Herald, June 20, 1902
80. See CDB, Third Report (1901) xii
81. CDB, Third Report (1901) xii
82. See CDB, Third Report (1901) xiii; also Glasgow Herald, June 20, 1902
83. CDB, Third Report (1901) xiii. For details of the terms of the offer and the reasons for its rejection see associated Appendix III, Offer as to Migration from Sconser, Skye
84. Glasgow Herald, June 20, 1902
85. Glasgow Herald, June 20, 1902

86. The irony was that the former would not even have mattered if the latter had not proved to be the case. It seemed, however, that the Board was jinxed.
87. See CDB Fifth Report (1903) Appendix XII, Account of Receipts and Payments; and CDB, Sixth Report (1904) Appendix XII, Account of Receipts and Payments. For details of press advertising see CDB, Fifth Report (1903) viii
88. See CDB, Fifth Report (1903) ix. The problem of squatting in Barra was scarcely unforeseen. When the lands had been lotted the previous year the Commissioners had observed that "it is, of course, inevitable that disappointment should be felt by candidates who have not been successful in obtaining holdings". CDB, Fourth Report (1902) viii
89. CDB, Fifth Report (1903) ix
90. CDB, Fifth Report (1903) ix
91. Quoted in CDB, Fifth Report (1903) xi. This particular correspondent had previously visited Bernera in 1888
92. Quoted in CDB, Fifth Report (1903) xii
93. Undated Holdings Committee Progress Report quoted in CDB, Fifth Report (1903) x
94. See above p 338-9; and CDB, Fifth Report (1903) x-xi
95. See CDB, Fifth Report (1903) x-xi. Though there is no trace of a formal withdrawal, this must be presumed since the 1903 Report provides the last mention of the farms in question, while other Macdonald Estate transactions do appear in subsequent reports e.g. the farm of Kinloch in the Parish of Sleat. See CDB, Seventh Report (1905) xiii
96. See CDB, Fifth Report (1903) xv; and CDB, Sixth Report (1904) xii-xiii
97. CDB, Sixth Report (1904) xiv
98. CDB, Sixth Report (1904) xvii
99. See CDB, Sixth Report (1904) xvii; and above p 332. Orr was described by the Agriculture Committee Convener as being "very conscientious and pains-taking." SR0 AF 42/1136, James Forsyth to R R MacGregor, March 9, 1902
100. See above p 332-4

101. CDB, Sixth Report (1904) xvii
102. Quoted in CDB, Fifth Report (1903) xx
103. CDB, Fifth Report (1903) xx
104. Only in 1905, however, after the departure of Lord Balfour, did the Commissioners dare to complain about their lack of adequate powers in respect of land purchase. (See below, p 354). Up to that time the complaints related only to technical education and housing.
105. See CDB, Fifth Report (1903) xx-xxi; and CDB, Sixth Report (1904) xvii
106. It is evident that where Board policy on Home Industries was concerned, by 1902/3 Lord Balfour was succeeding in wielding his undue influence as Secretary for Scotland. After his departure, the earlier debate as to the merits of aiding this sector of the Highland economy was actively resumed, and later Board Reports once again refer to "difference of opinion" on the matter. See, for example, CDB, Eighth Report (1906) xxiv. See also SRO AF 42/1895, Minutes by Angus Sutherland, February 16 and September 13, 1904; William Mackenzie, February 22, August 3 and September 1, 1904; Macleod of Macleod, February 29, 1904; Reginald MacLeod, March 3 and September 15, 1904; James Forsyth, March 9 and August 28, 1904; and Malcolm McNeill, August 28, 1904, and above p 290. The differences of opinion, as the Under Secretary for Scotland noted, hinged mainly on the question of whether assistance to Home Industries, in the words of Mr Mackenzie, acted to "keep men and women from other and better employments". (Reginald MacLeod, September 15, 1904).
107. CDB, Fifth Report (1903) xiv-v
108. Scotsman, May 1, 1903
109. Scotsman, May 1, 1903
110. See CDB, Sixth Report (1904) xii, and associated Appendix IV, Report to the Secretary of Scotland by the Lewis Local Committee, November 1903. (The Report is prefaced by a full list of the thirty-two members of the Committee, as well as the inevitable local dignitaries who included Lewis crofters, fishcurers, farmers, businessmen, ministers and teachers.) See also Scotsman, May 1, 1903
111. See CDB, Seventh Report (1905) vii

112. CDB, Sixth Report (1904) Appendix V, Copy Secretary for Scotland to Chairman of Lewis Local Committee, February 15, 1904
113. See CDB, Sixth Report (1904) vii-viii and ix to xii. The Estate of Glendale was purchased in December 1903 at an upset price of £15,000 with entry at Whitsunday 1904. The Estate of Kilmuir was purchased in January 1904 for £80,000 with similar entry date. Judicial approval of the latter transaction marked the completion of more than two years of negotiations with the Trustees of the late George Alexander Baird. The earlier part of the negotiations, to purchase the western half of the property only, at that time all that the Board could afford, had broken down early in 1903. see above p 337 and n 76
114. CDB, Sixth Report (1904) Appendix V, Copy Secretary for Scotland to Chairman of Lewis Local Committee, February 15, 1904
115. HADB, First Report (1965) 5
116. The fact that the CDB was charged with removing people from the area rather than holding them there does not alter the similarity of the basic problem - a population/resource imbalance.
117. See above p 4
118. See above p 192-7
119. In the meantime the Liberals saw to it that they were well prepared. Even when the Tories had still two years to run, Sheriff David Brand was briefing the future Liberal Secretary for Scotland on the legislative, administrative and socio-political context of the existing Highland land measures, both Conservative and Liberal. See SR0 AF 43/6/1, Memo by Sheriff Brand to Captain Sinclair MP as to the Crofters Holdings (Scotland) Act 1886 and amending Acts, and also with regard to the Land Question generally in Scotland and the Congested Districts (Scotland) Act 1897, August 25, 1903
120. On his appointment to the office of Lord Justice-General in February 1905, Andrew Graham Murray was succeeded as Secretary for Scotland by the Marquess of Linlithgow, who was Secretary for Scotland and Board Chairman for only ten months. See CDB Seventh Report (1905) vii; and CDB Eighth Report (1906) vii
121. Biographical details of John Sinclair (later Lord Pentland) based upon the DNB
122. Lady Pentland, Memoir of Lord Pentland (London, 1928) 101

123. Pentland (1928) 109
124. Despite some exaggeration of his personal achievements (see below p 363-4) Sinclair's biographer - who was also his wife - gives an impression of an extremely committed and hard-working political administrator, which is confirmed amply by his work both at the CDB and at the Scottish Office in connection with the Small Landholders Bills. See below Chapter Five, Section (i)
125. Pentland (1928) 110
126. Pentland (1928) 112. See also 110-11
127. Pentland (1928) 82
128. Pentland (1928) 84
129. Sheriff Brand's response to Captain Sinclair happens to have been filed with the collected memoranda relating to the drafting of the Small Landholders (Scotland) Bills 1906-11. See SRO AF/43/6/1, Memo by Sheriff Brand to Captain Sinclair, MP, August 25, 1903 as to the Crofters Holdings (Scotland) Act 1886 and amending Acts, and also with regard to the Land Question generally in Scotland and the Congested Districts (Scotland) Act 1897
130. Pentland (1928) 84
131. Quoted in Pentland (1928) 85
132. For the crofting legislation of 1886, so much at odds with the recommendations of the Napier Commissioners, had had the effect of fossilising the crofting landscape as it happened to appear in 1886. See above p 142-3
133. See above p 142-3
134. Pentland (1928) 86
135. SRO AF 43/6/1, Memo by Sheriff Brand to Captain Sinclair, MP, August 25, 1903. Former CDB member and landlord the late Sir Kenneth Mackenzie had perfectly exemplified the truth of Sheriff Brand's contention. See above p 244
136. See Pentland (1928) 86-88
137. Quoted in Pentland (1928) 87
138. See Pentland (1928) 87
139. Pentland (1928) 87

140. Oban Times, May 19, 1906
141. See CDB, Eighth Report (1906) vi-xiii. The summary related to the Board's operations in its primary field of interest, namely crofter migration and land settlement. Other Board activities such as agricultural improvement and infrastructure development were reported in the normal way, these issues being uncontroversial and having no direct bearing upon likely changes to the execution of land policy.
142. Scottish Law Review, November, 1906, 307
143. See above p 335-6
144. CDB, Seventh Report (1905) viii
145. CDB, Seventh Report (1905) viii
146. CDB, Seventh Report (1905) viii
147. See CDB, Seventh Report (1905) viii
148. See CDB, Eighth Report (1906) xii. The approach to Treasury was made following unanimous adoption of a resolution to that effect at a meeting of the full Board in the Spring of 1905.

".... the CDB request the Secretary for Scotland to bring before the Treasury the difficulties under which the Board labour in the purchase and development of property. At present the whole charge has to be defrayed from income and the Board consider it just and necessary that powers should be provided so that funds may be obtained from the Public Works Loan Committee, to be repayable by instalments". (Resolution of Commissioners relating to Item 15 of Agenda of CDB Meeting, April 10, 1905)
149. CDB, Eighth Report (1906) xii
150. See CDB, Eighth Report (1906) xii
151. See CDB, Eighth Report (1906) xii. Draft legislation with the aim of establishing in addition to the Congested Districts (Scotland) Fund a fund to be called the 'Scottish Land Purchase Aid Fund' to facilitate Treasury loans of up to £5,000,000, drawn up after Lord Balfour's departure, got the length of being printed, but no further. See Parliamentary Papers, 1904 (74) I, 307 and 1905 (134) I, 345
152. CDB, Seventh Report (1905) viii
153. CDB, Eighth Report (1906) xii

154. The Secretary for Scotland and Board Chairman at the time was the Marquess of Linlithgow, who was heavily criticised by Scottish Members of the Opposition for being (necessarily) absent from the Commons when Highland affairs were debated. (See Oban Times, July 1, 1905) Yet evidence that his commitment to Highland matters really was minimal, is apparent from the CDB files for the period, amongst which his initials are seldom found, the day to day business of the Board instead being left in the hands of his Under Secretary at the Scottish Office, Reginald MacLeod.
155. CDB, Eighth Report (1906) x
156. See above p 326-7 and 330
157. As J T Hughes, head of the Policy and Research Division at the Highlands and Islands Development Board recently observed in his own published comment upon HADB policy, "it is normally inappropriate for officials of a public body to involve themselves in public debate on the historical record of their agency". (J.T. Hughes, 'HADB Development Policy: A Response' in Scottish Geographical Magazine, Vol 99 No 2, September, 1983). The CDB Commissioners were adopting the even more unorthodox step of joining the debate via the channel of their annual report.
158. Scottish Law Review, November 1906, 312
159. CDB, Eighth Report (1906) x
160. CDB, Eighth Report (1906) x
161. See CDB, Eighth Report (1906) x-xi; also People's Journal, April 7, 1906. In any case the people of the Hebrides already ranked among the most highly rated in the United Kingdom.
162. See People's Journal, April 7, 1906
163. Clearly such was not the case with extensive tracts of barren peat bog or exposed moorland, but it was not these that the Congested Districts Commissioners were anxious to purchase. However, as they had earlier discovered, landlords were unwilling to split up their estates. See above p 261
164. i.e. for the Treasury to sustain a public loss precisely to demonstrate the political and economic merits of private ownership would have been manifestly ludicrous.

165. See CDB, Eighth Report (1906) xi. Even so, discussion did take place as to whether to incorporate into the draft of the 1905 Congested Districts Amendment Bill other clauses designed to provide for rates relief. The idea was rejected on the grounds that to do so would be to depart too far from the main task of relieving congestion, while the Board's funds were already seriously over-stretched. See SRO AF 43/7, Angus Sutherland to R R MacGregor, February 20, 1905; David Brand to R R MacGregor, February 21, 1905; and Reginald MacLeod to R R MacGregor, March 29, 1905
166. See CDB, Eighth Report (1906) xi
167. CDB, Eighth Report (1906) xi
168. See CDB, Eighth Report (1906) xi
169. CDB, Eighth Report (1906) xi
170. CDB, Eighth Report (1906) xi
171. See CDB, Eighth Report (1906) xi. For further details of the shortcomings of the Crofters Common Grazings Regulations Act of 1891, and of the Benefits to be derived from the system of club management of sheep stocks see J P Day, Public Administration in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland (London, 1918) 196-201
172. CDB, Eighth Report (1906) xi
173. See CDB, Eighth Report (1906) xi-xii
174. SRO AF 42/5034, Memo by Donald Gillies, Farm Manager, Kilmuir, as to Club Stocks, n d, prepared at the request of Angus Mackintosh, CDB Land Manager, and despatched to R R MacGregor July 4, 1908
175. CDB, Eighth Report (1906) xii
176. The point was made at the Board's Kilmuir Estate in Skye by the Board Land Manager Angus Mackintosh, who as Solicitor, J P and Factor on the South Uist and Barra Estates of Lady Gordon Cathcart, could hardly be accused of being biassed in favour of crofters. On the ground as he was, and in touch with the conditions and lifestyle of crofters, he was clearly in a position to make more practical assessments than Commissioners who were desk-bound in Edinburgh or London. See CDB, Seventh Report (1905) viii and below Chapter Five, Section (ii)
177. SRO AF 42/5034, Angus Mackintosh, Land Manager, Uig Office of CDB to R R MacGregor, October 9, 1908

178. SRO AF 42/5034, R R MacGregor to Neil Kennedy, December 3, 1908; and James Forsyth to R R MacGregor, November 30, 1908. Neil J D Kennedy, KC, was appointed to Chairmanship of the Crofters Commission following the death of Sir David Brand, and thus from April 1908 was also ex officio a member of the Congested Districts Board. In the case of Glendale it was David Brand who had given the opinion - wrongly as it turned out - that the proposed Board action was legal. In the event no objection was taken to it, though of itself that could not provide a solution for the future.
179. See above p 278. The fact that this precedent, though firmly established early on in the life of the Board, was quickly forgotten is indicative of the weakness of a part-time Commission.
180. See CDB, Eighth Report (1906) xii; and W L Micks, History of the Congested Districts Board for Ireland (Dublin, 1925) 103
181. See, for example, the complaint of J A Dewar, MP for Inverness-shire, that "a great deal more was done for Ireland than for the Highlands" made in a House of Commons debate on 'Parliament and the Highlands', as reported in the Oban Times, July 1, 1905
182. Scottish Law Review, November 1906, 311
183. CDB, Eighth Report (1906) xii. See also Scottish Law Review, November 1906, 311; and People's Journal, April 21, 1906
184. See CDB, Eighth Report (1906) xii
185. See CDB, Eighth Report (1906) xii. By 1903, when still greater land powers were granted to the Irish Board, it had already bought another forty-three estates containing over 160,000 acres. For details of early Irish CDB experience of land settlement see Micks (1925) 98-109
186. Congested Districts Board for Ireland, Fourteenth Report (1905) cxvi-cxxviii
187. Micks (1925) 101
188. Micks (1925) 102
189. Day (1918) 208

- 189a. Thus in introducing the chapters on the purchase of estates and enlargement of holdings, the former Board Secretary in his history of the Irish CDB is able to write of "the function of the Board that to the public view greatly eclipsed all its other proceedings and activities". Micks (1925) 98
190. Although the CDB was empowered to aid the development of fishing, in practice it chose to do very little in this direction on the grounds both that additional funding would have had to be placed at its disposal if these powers were to be exercised to any great extent, and that "there [were] other objects for which [they] might more appropriately and usefully ask for a grant". (SRO AF 42/9696, Memo by J Patten MacDougall, Successor to Malcolm McNeill as Chairman of the Local Government Board, January 3, 1906; see also SRO AF 42/9696, Reginald MacLeod to R R MacGregor, on behalf of Andrew Graham Murray in his capacity as Secretary for Scotland, November 30, 1903) In 1905 and 1906, the CDB did carry out experiments in the use of motor auxiliary power in sailing fishing boats and in steamboat and motor car transport for the regular and rapid transit of fish to railway stations, but apart from this minor involvement, direct development of fisheries was left to the Fishery Board. See SRO AF 42/7622, R R MacGregor to Netherlands Consul General, London, September 29, 1910 and CDB, Eighth Report (1906) xxiv and CDB Ninth Report (1907) xxvi. See also below Chapter Six, Section (ii)
191. See Pentland (1928) 101; and SRO AF 43/6/3A, Notes for Speech on introduction of the Small Landholders Bill, March 19, 1907, p5. These notes constitute part of the extensive collection of drafting and re-drafting which attended the various different versions of Sinclair's Bill. See above n 129
192. Pentland (1928) 109
193. See SRO AF 42/502, Sheriff Campbell to R R MacGregor, February 1, 1900, re Home Industries and SRO AF 42/745, Sheriff Campbell, Stornoway to R R MacGregor, re CDB exhibits of Home Industries at the Glasgow Exhibition, January 21, 1901; SRO AF 42/745, Lord Balfour to R R MacGregor, n d, January 1901; above p 264; and above p 342
194. See CDB, Tenth Report (1908) xiv; SRO AF 43/48, Board of Agriculture for Scotland to Thomas McKinnon Wood, Secretary for Scotland, re School Gardening Scheme, November 28, 1913

195. See above p 286
196. See CDB, Sixth Report (1904) vii; CDB, Seventh Report (1905) vii; and CDB, Eighth Report (1906) vii
197. See Congested Districts (Scotland) Act, 1897, Section 4, Sub-section 1, Clause (d)
198. See CDB, Seventh Report (1905) xiv -xv; and CDB, Eighth Report (1906) xvi-xvii
199. Pentland (1928) 109. See also below Chapter Six, Section (i)
200. Quoted in Pentland (1928) 126
201. For details of the struggle to secure the passage of the Small Landholders Bill see below Chapter Six, Section (i)
202. SRO AF 43/6/2, Memorandum re the Land Agitation in the Highlands and Islands since 1880, and the legislation following thereon, n d, p 10. This unattributed memo must have been prepared by, or at least for, the Secretary for Scotland in the early part of 1906 as background to the drafting of the first version of the Small Landholders Bill.
203. See SRO Af 43/6/2, Memo re the Land Agitation in the Highlands since 1880, n d, p 10; also People's Journal, April 7, 1906; and Oban Times, May 12, 1906
204. See above p 351
205. SRO AF 43/6/2, Memo re the Land Agitation in the Highlands since 1880, n d, p 10
206. SRO AF 43/6/2, Memo re the Land Agitation in the Highlands since 1880, n d, p 7
207. i.e. until the setting up in 1965 of the present Highlands and Islands Development Board, which has been described as "the most important single development in Highland administration this century". (Magnus Magnusson, 'Highland Administration', in D S Thomson and I Grimble, The Future of the Highlands (London, 1968) 246. For details of twentieth century Highland administration and of the context of the setting up of the Highland Board, see below Chapter Seven, Section (i)

CHAPTER SIX

The Congested Districts Board III (1906-1912)

The years from 1906 represented something of an uncertain twilight for the Congested Districts Board, with the axe poised over it in the shape of the various versions of the Land Bill. In a situation where it was impossible to plan ahead, even to the extent of identifying goals and devising strategies for the short term, the Board was restricted to the day to day administration of existing projects. Innovation was inappropriate, although there was some tinkering with new approaches to agricultural improvement, which reflected both the interests of the new Board Chairman and the role of any future Board of Agriculture for Scotland.¹

(i) The Legislative Struggle

In setting about drafting the proposed Liberal Land Legislation, the new Secretary for Scotland had to take account of a number of pertinent factors. Quite apart from longstanding Liberal commitment to amending and extending the 1886 Act, there were additional considerations arising from the need to undo the damage inflicted by a decade of Conservative government, as well as immediate problems stemming from indications once again of unrest brewing in the Outer Isles.² While it was admitted by the Liberals of the Congested Districts Legislation that in many respects it was complementary, and usefully so, to the policy of the Crofters Act, yet in one particular respect it was regarded by Liberals as directly antagonistic to it.³ This was because, at the same time as consistently refusing to amend the Crofters Act, and face the extension of Crofter tenure, the Conservative Government had also passed what amounted to legislation designed to subvert and supplant it, considering that the Congested Districts Board was empowered to institute schemes of land purchase and the creation of peasant proprietorships.⁴ Almost by definition, therefore, in regard ... to the essential point of the re-settlement of the Crofters and Cottars upon the land, the two policies conflict[ed]. Besides,

not only was there conflict between the respective two agencies, but there was also a degree of confusion and overlapping, and before even the Liberals had come into office, much discussion had taken place in and out of Parliament, as to whether the Crofters' Commission and the CDB should be amalgamated into one body.⁵

Yet, however appealing such a course of action might have seemed, it was necessary to understand, as the Lord Advocate was at pains to explain, that the duties of the Crofters Commission were, for the most part, judicial or quasi judicial, and that there was no limit to their action in point of time, whereas the duties of the CDB were wholly administrative and were limited in point of time. The former body exercised a unique jurisdiction, the latter spent money in the public interest over a certain geographical area.⁷ Or, as the Glasgow Herald had interpreted the Lord Advocate's ruling of 1902:

*The Crofter Commission is a judicial Court which is a law unto itself, and over which there would be no control in the administration of the funds voted for the Congested Districts.*⁸

And as Sheriff Brand had also pointed out the following year to Captain Sinclair, the Crofters Commission was a paid body, while, apart from travel and subsistence, the CDB was wholly unpaid.⁹ Furthermore, while conceding that it was true that the two bodies ... worked very much into each other hands,¹⁰ the Chairman of the Crofters Commission had concluded that no good object would be served by the amalgamation of the two bodies, on the grounds that all or almost all of the benefits which might be expected to accrue from amalgamation already existed.

*The Crofters Commission has always been ready and willing to place its knowledge and experience at the disposal of the members of the Congested Districts Board. Besides, two members of the Crofters Commission are also Members of the Congested Districts Board.*¹¹

Undoubtedly if it had been merely a case of the CDB treading upon the toes of the Crofters Commission, a satisfactory modus vivendi might have evolved. But even if this could have been paralleled with fundamental re-emphasis of the CDB, away from its primary remit under the Torics of land purchase and re-sale, in favour of its secondary remit of facilitating the extension of crofting tenure, much more specific difficulties were assailing both the Crofters Commission and the CDB by 1906. As Sinclair put it:

*Neither the Crofters Commission nor the Congested Districts Board are in good order: their reform is in any event forced upon the Government.*¹²

The specific problem at the Crofters Commission was occasioned by the deterioration in the health of its Chairman, Sir David Brand. His illness was so serious that he was physically quite unable to pursue his normal activities. Unfortunately, this entirely paralysed the ordinary work of the Commission.¹³ It also provided the ideal pretext for Sinclair to argue for its reconstitution at the earliest opportunity. In so doing he appeared to fly in the face of both the Lord Advocate's ruling and David Brand's advice.

*I should like in doing so to extend its powers, by transferring to it such of the powers of the Congested Districts Board as refer to the acquisition and tenure of land. Such a change would remove the present overlapping of powers. The Crofters Commission, from the nature of their work, have larger knowledge in these particulars than the Congested Districts Board.*¹⁴

The latter agency, too, quite apart from purely ideological shortcomings where the Liberal point of view was concerned, was bedevilled with quite separate practical problems, none of which were unknown either to the Commissioners themselves or, increasingly, to members in the House, as Sinclair was well aware.¹⁵

On every hand there are complaints as to the lack of executive power and staff. On no single member of the Congested Districts Board or its staff, including its Secretary (who is an official in the Exchequer in Edinburgh), and excepting its factor, who is paid a total salary of £360 per annum, inclusive of allowances, and has to endeavour to supervise various branches of its farm work, is the work of the Congested Districts Board the first claim upon time and money.¹⁶

The inevitable line of complaint in the light of this state of affairs, that the CDB was not well constituted, had not any good business system and even had no policy to follow¹⁷ was presently to be paralleled with the equally long-standing criticism that the Secretary for Scotland was simply too busy adequately and effectively to perform the duties of CDB Chairman.¹⁸ This emergent situation was all the more worrying in view of John Sinclair's own feelings of personal responsibility for and isolation at the Board.

*The Secretary for Scotland for the time being is in reality the Congested Districts Board. He is directly responsible to Parliament. No one of those associated with him in the work of the Congested Districts Board, except the aforesaid factor, gives his whole time to the work, and is acquainted with and responsible for all its details.*¹⁹

The consequences of implementing ill-thought out policy 'on the cheap' did not, however, stop there. The absence of a comprehensive and clear plan for Highland administration and development was also evident from the blurring of responsibilities, not only with the Crofters Commission. Actual responsibility was to be found nowhere and potential responsibility everywhere. What Magnus Magnusson observed some sixty years later of the state of Highland administration, applied just as much at the turn of the century.

*Not only are there far too many of these agencies, but not one of them has been endowed with sufficient authority to cope effectively with the problem it was created to solve.*²⁰

Thus the Secretary for Scotland observed in respect of the CDB in 1906:

*There is overlapping, more or less, with the Fishery Board, with the Crofters Commission, with the Scottish Education Department, and with the Local Government Board for Scotland. Many of the Parish and County Councils in the counties concerned refer to the Congested Districts Board applications ... which they cannot or will not meet for paths and roads, piers, harbours, and the like; and the tendency is to make the Congested Districts Board into a demoralising, dole-giving agency, which stands in the way of sound local government.*²¹

This being so, the only sensible course of action, in Sinclair's view was for the 'land' powers of the CDB to go, that is as far as they applied under a Liberal administration, to the Crofters Commission, for the Fishery Powers to go to the Fishery Board for Scotland, and for the Educational work to go to the Scottish Education Department, and so on, as appropriate.²² That an important function of the CDB would remain, following such a re-organisation, the new Secretary for Scotland was in no doubt, although there was, equally, no question that the existing Board would undergo such fundamental transformation that it would be scarcely recognisable.²³

*In the exercise of the remaining powers of the Congested Districts Board in the preparation of land for occupation, in the development of industries, in the improvement of seed and stock and the methods of cultivation, in technical instruction and the improvement of domestic economy, in developing organisation among these small farmers, in opening access to markets and improving communications and methods of transit, and generally in the work of a Board of Agriculture - for after all agriculture is the main crofter industry - there is an ample field for the work of such a Board: and for the due exercise of such duties it should be equipped with a proper staff.*²⁴

For as the Liberals recognised, no doubt with the benefit of hindsight afforded by the experience of two decades of crofter legislation and another concurrent decade of congested districts legislation, statutory provision alone would not, even on the mainland, transform the habits and industrial methods of the people.²⁵

*Parliament has given security of tenure and will, it is hoped, give further powers for the creation of new holdings. On that foundation it must be the work of administration to see that the land is parcelled out into holdings which are economic, i.e., holdings which in size are adapted to the capacity and standard of life of the crofter. And the future prosperity of these districts depends largely upon the improvement of farming methods, the promotion of subsidiary industries, the organisation for business purposes of the crofter communities, and the reform of their domestic economy - in regard to which much remains to be done by administrative effort.*²⁶

Such a strong desire on the part of a Government, even a Liberal one, not merely to rid itself of a longstanding nuisance, but to pay disproportionate attention to the social welfare of that particular class of small agriculturalists inhabiting the congested districts, was, in fact, symptomatic of growing concern about the quite opposite problem of rural depopulation.²⁷

*It may be pointed out here that though both form part of the Crofters question so called, the present problem in the Long Island differs radically from that of the mainland. Skye may perhaps be said to stand midway between them. The present problem in the Long Island is how to relieve dense congestion: the problem on the mainland, though there is congestion in certain limited areas, is to check de-population.*²⁸

Evidence of the scale of the rural exodus was to be found in the volumes of the 1901 Census of Population. For Scotland as a whole, an inter-censal increase of 446,456 (or some eleven per cent) was recorded. Yet with the exception of 217 persons who had swollen

the population of 'villages', the whole of the increase and more was to be found in the towns, so that the population of the 'rural' districts had fallen by 42,704. Fifteen of Scotland's thirty-three Counties showed a decrease; all were rural.²⁹ Furthermore, it was to be observed that, apart from the special difficulties of the Western Isles, the demand for further crofter legislation did not come - in those counties not then within the operation of the Crofter Act - from a population highly rented, burdened with arrears, or liable and often subjected to eviction. It came instead from comfortably-off, independent, efficient and highly productive small tenant farmers.³⁰ Captain Sinclair, spearheading as he was the Liberal attack on such erosion of the countryside, was bound to agree with his Aberdeenshire farmer correspondent, that *the State [could] not afford to let them go; the importance of this class of citizen [could] not be estimated.*³¹ Yet on the eastern seaboard of Ross and Cromarty, or of Caithness, the small farmers were scarcely different from their Lowland counterparts. They owned sheep, cattle and horses, and paid a rent of approaching £307. But there was one vital difference - as Crofters under the Act they possessed security of tenure.³²

By contrast, the croft of the Western Isles was little more than *an accommodation holding, a house and garden with potato ground and grazing rights, at a rent of one to five pounds, a home for the old people, or for the wife and children, while the breadwinner [was] away earning his annual income elsewhere, working in Glasgow or elsewhere for the Winter, or at the herring fishing.*³³ And as the Liberals were poignantly aware, the position in the Long Island was further complicated by the existence of over 2,000 cottar 'households'.

Sons, or other relatives of the crofter, they and their families 'squat' on the holding of the crofter, which does not suffice as it is to maintain him and his family. The cottar builds him [sic] a house, sometimes

*on the common pasture: he pays no rent, no rates, he has no legal title to his house, and can obtain none, he is always liable to eviction, and sometimes is evicted.*³⁴

Even now a pressing concern for the new Government, one which had surfaced after lying dormant for some years, was that the difficulties which followed wholesale evictions paralysed all endeavours to grapple directly with the problem.³⁵

The task for Sinclair, in summing up the situation on the western seaboard of the Highlands, as it confronted the Liberal Government on the eve of drawing up the new land legislation, ^{was} to demonstrate the link between the Highlands and the Lowlands, the thread connecting congestion with depopulation. It did not take much insight to observe that the policy of the Crofters Commission and the Congested Districts Board hitherto had been to relieve the crofters of the burden of these cottars, by obtaining and making available more land, and adding to the number of holdings, so that the 'best' of the cottars could be provided with land;³⁶ nor that this needed to be done on a larger scale than hitherto, and until it was done, it would be impossible to insist on a strict exercise of the statutory powers, so protecting the crofter in the pursuit of his industry.³⁷ It was plain for all to see that the CDB had taken all but ten years to get their land purchase scheme seriously underway.³⁸ Furthermore, it might have been foreseen that without powers of compulsory purchase, the Board would be restricted to tinkering at the geographical edges of congestion, in one or two districts in Skye, and would be impotent to tackle the hardcore problem in the Outer Isles.³⁹

And although the CDB had evinced considerable success in persuading proprietors to extend the acreage of their land under crofting tenure, this had scarcely required the constitution of a special authority,

particularly as the land assessment and survey work was in any case carried out by the Crofters Commission and the CDB was not even involved as an intermediary in subsequent negotiations between the parties.⁴⁰ Besides, because there could be no coercion, all that the Board could do was to accelerate a process which was probably already underway. Thus, although it made some inroads into the land problem in North and South Uist, it left the difficulties of Lewis once again untouched.⁴¹

In other words, the shortcomings of Conservative Highland policy did not need to be spelt out. However, in his deliberations and speculations upon the Land Question, Sinclair was able to go beyond merely stating the obvious and his conclusions are worth restating in full, not least because of the accuracy with which he estimated both the time-scale involved and the nature of the process which would ultimately lead to a new expression of the longstanding population/resources problem, to be tackled by a new era of Highland developers.⁴²

The condition of the people in the Western Islands is a very urgent matter.

Even with the powers and funds suggested, it will take years to bring the Western Islands into healthy conditions, political and social: and the delays of the last twenty years, though during that period much has been done both by the voluntary action of proprietors and by the Government in settling more people on the land, have added to the difficulties now to be dealt with.

*Education is doing much and will do more indirectly to relieve the congestion: and the same is true of everything which brings these islands nearer to the lowlands, and opens to their men and women a livelihood in the towns and cities of the south. As compared with the crofting districts of the mainland, however, the Western Islands are simply later and slower in their development. The time will come, indeed there are already indications that it is on its way, when in the islands as already on the mainland, de-population may yet be the difficulty of the Government.*⁴³

The ultimate answer to the problem had to lie in security of tenure for the tenant farmer, which in Sinclair's view, especially if he were a small tenant farmer, was an indispensable condition of good farming.⁴⁴ The immediate difficulty for the Secretary for Scotland, however, was how to draft sensible legislation which could reconcile the present problems of the Western Isles with the superficially quite different ones of mainland rural Scotland. What was required was a measure which combined giving something like crofter tenure to existing small farmers throughout Scotland, with provisions for acquisition of land for increasing the total number of holdings and enlarging existing ones.⁴⁵ As regards the formation of new holdings, like most Liberals at the time, Sinclair was not anxious to obtain the necessary land by purchase, because he did not want to turn the smallholders into either peasant proprietors or tenants of a Government Department. On the one hand *public opinion in the highlands, and in parliament [was] not in favour of land purchase*: on the other hand there *[was] a consensus of opinion that the Lairds are far better able to manage the crofters than any officials would be.*⁴⁶ The new small-holders accordingly should occupy their holdings under security of tenure like the existing crofters, but as tenants of the landowner, the State providing them with the means of putting up the houses and steadings. As Sinclair stressed, the compulsory hiring of land had already been adopted in the Crofters Act for the provision of enlargements to existing crofters' holdings, and the CDB had found a number of mainland and island landowners willing to break up sheep farms into crofts and accept the crofter tenants on the understanding that the Government provided the means for the necessary adaptation and equipment of the land. It was merely for consideration whether, for the creation of new small holdings, different machinery would have to be used for the crofting counties and the rest of Scotland. Given all the circumstances, Sinclair opted for a uniform measure for the whole country.⁴⁷

At last, on July 28, 1906, a Saturday afternoon squeezed in at the end of the session, Sinclair introduced the Small Landholders (Scotland) Bill. The main points of the Bill were: the extension of the area of the Crofters Acts to the whole of Scotland, with protection under the Acts also extended to include all smallholders whose rent was £50 or less, or where holdings were 50 acres or less; provisions for the enlargement of existing holdings, by agreement or by compulsory powers; the creation of two new bodies, one administrative, the other judicial, the Board of Agriculture and the Land Court. The Board of Agriculture was to take the initial steps in connection with the making of small holdings, and prepare schemes and finally carry them out; but so far as the compulsory taking of land was involved, the intervention of the Land Court was necessary. To that Court also was left the duty of fixing the fair rents of the new holdings, and any compensations due to the landlord and the dispossessed farm tenant. The Land Court also had the duty of fixing the fair rents for all existing small holdings that came under the Statutory tenure and otherwise arbitrating between them and their landowners. The Board of Agriculture was to take over the Scottish duties of the London Board, and the work of the CDB, and was to encourage agriculture in all directions.⁴⁸ In other words, the geographical constituency, both of the Crofters Commission and of the CDB, had been enlarged, their remits modified, and their names changed. As was later admitted privately by the Liberals, the intention with regard to the CDB was no more and no less than for that Board [to be] developed into a properly equipped Department of Agriculture for the whole of Scotland.⁴⁹

In introducing the Bill, and in many/later speeches, Sinclair showed how rural population had dwindled, emigration increased, cultivation fallen, food imports risen, and how purchase was not wanted and was impossibly

expensive, whereas the Crofters Act had already succeeded.⁵⁰ He argued that smallholders prospered wherever they had security of tenure, with training and organisation.⁵¹ But, unfortunately for Sinclair, those in the House with proprietorial connections, as soon as they began to understand that the Bill included compulsory powers, and that it applied to the whole of Scotland, construed his Land Bill less as an endeavour to solve a problem of vital importance than as an infringement of their inalienable right to select the persons to be associated with the proprietor in the cultivation of the soil, a right which according to Lord Lansdowne, they valued above all things.⁵² Meanwhile the outcry of the pro-landlord press daily grew louder. In the course of the struggle the Scotsman is said to have published over seventy leading articles denouncing the Bill and its author.⁵³ Sinclair was unmoved, and in March 1907 he brought in the Bill again and in April it passed its Second Reading by a majority of 239. According to Sinclair's wife, in no fewer than 467 columns of Hansard are to be found passages on every aspect of the land question as it was thrashed out that summer, for twenty-three controversial days in Grand Committee, and nine days in the House of Commons.⁵⁴

Eventually, on August 9th, the Bill achieved its Third Reading. The Secretary for Scotland was warmly praised for his determination, caution, *amazing patience* and *unfailing courtesy*.⁵⁵ But Conservative ex-Prime Minister Arthur Balfour, who had masterminded the original Congested Districts Legislation in Ireland, denounced the Bill as a *wild and infantile experiment*. Winding up for the Opposition, he declared *no one knows anything of the genesis of the Bill or to whose ingenuity the House owes it*,⁵⁶ to which the Prime Minister made the droll reply:

*If the right honourable gentleman has some doubts as to the genesis, he is able to state as well as most people what its exodus would be; and if that exodus is not of a favourable character, I can promise that there will be a deuteronomy.*⁵⁷

Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman must have possessed the gift of prophecy, for a deuteronomy there would certainly be, though 'H C-B' would not live to witness it.⁵⁸ But it was not on account of the Bill's reception in the Commons, unfavourable though that was on the Tory benches, but on account of its fate in the Upper House to which place the command of the opposition now passed, and where blood proved to be thicker than water, proprietorial bonds holding fast at the expense of political ones. In a rare example of perfectly symmetrical political counterpoint, the voice of the Liberal ex-prime minister in the House of Lords harmonised exquisitely with that of the Conservative ex-prime minister in the House of Commons, as Lord Rosebery branded the Bill *the most amazing measure ever presented to Parliament*, so adding another contribution to what Asquith dubbed *the denigratory rhetoric* heaped upon the Secretary for Scotland and his Bill.⁵⁹ But perhaps the most interesting feature of the game of political strategy being unfolded was that, because Chairmanship of the CDB was a political rather than an administrative office, a situation had come about in which a previous incumbent of that office was about to become - metaphorically speaking - locked in mortal combat with the present one.⁶⁰ Lord Balfour of Burleigh's attachment to the CDB as an institution, and all it stood for, was no less than Arthur Balfour's, and his consequent outrage at Sinclair's Bill no less.⁶¹ In retreating from the limelight of political life back into the relative shades of the House of Lords, he had not expected to have to watch his greatest political achievement being strangled by, of all people, the Board's Chairman himself, and accordingly he moved the rejection of the Bill outright. However, a fellow peer proposed instead that the debate be adjourned sine die, and this was carried by the House on August 14th, by 162 votes to 39.⁶² As Sinclair's wife has it, the exodus was accomplished.⁶³

There was no alternative than for the Prime Minister to announce the Bill's withdrawal. However its early re-introduction was also signalled, and on 12th February 1908 Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman made the last speech of his life, proposing a new procedure for the speedy passage of the Small Landholders Bill and the Scottish Landholders Bill which had suffered similar rejection at the hands of the peers.⁶⁴ This procedure implemented the decision of the year before when, as Sir Henry reminded the House,

*a resolution was adopted, on my motion, by the House of Commons, affirming the principle that the power of the other House to alter or reject Bills passed by this House should be so restricted by law as to secure that within the limits of a single Parliament the final decision of the Commons should prevail.*⁶⁵

Subsequently the Second Reading was passed by a majority of 244, and the Third Reading by 257.⁶⁶ Again the Bill was sent to the House of Lords. Again Lord Balfour immediately moved its rejection, which was carried on 11th March by 153 to 33, despite the warning of the Lord Chancellor, who cautioned:

*I have yet to learn that I am to look for the sense of the country elsewhere than in the minds of its elected representatives.*⁶⁷

As Lord Loreburn wellknew, of the seventy-two members elected for Scotland, sixty were Liberal, and all but three of these enthusiastically supported the Bill, for the sound reason that it [was] what the Scottish people [were] desirous of having.⁶⁸

On April 8th 1908 Asquith became Prime Minister and wrote asking Sinclair to retain the office of Secretary for Scotland in the new administration. Asquith, like Campbell-Bannerman before him, supported the Land Bill, and early declared as much to a well-attended meeting in

the Borders.⁶⁹ It was clear, however, that if the Liberals were to succeed in dealing with the Land question on the sound principles of the *Small Landholders Bill*,⁷⁰ at any future attempt, the Government needed a spokesman for the measure in the House of Lords. The peer who answered for Scotland in the Upper House had felt obliged to give up that duty rather than defend the Bill, and there was no other to take his place.⁷¹ So it was that early in 1909 the MP for Forfarshire wrote reluctantly to his constituency Chairman:

*The Prime Minister has come to the conclusion that in the interests of Scottish business in Parliament at the present time there should be in the House of Lords a Minister acquainted with the administration of Scottish affairs, who can be responsible for legislation in Scotland. He has asked me as Secretary for Scotland to discharge this duty, and I have consented to do so to the best of my ability. As a Liberal I leave the House of Commons with deep reluctance and with a poignancy of regret which can hardly perhaps be realized except by those who have spent as many years as I have in working in it and for it No member of the House of Commons has every been more proud of his constituents or more grateful to them than I am and it is with the intention of working elsewhere for their interests in the future and in that hope that I now say, Good-bye.*⁷²

As Lady Pentland has acknowledged (Pentland was the title Sinclair chose, since his ancestors had lived by the Pentland Hills and then by the Pentland Firth) to vanish into the other House was like vanishing from real political life.⁷³ Sinclair knew that going there might be misunderstood, but he was set on trying to save the Land Bill.⁷⁴ In fact he possibly underestimated the insight of his Commons colleagues, on both sides of the House. Mr George Younger, the Scottish Conservative Whip, wrote to him:

*I can well understand that your side has suffered much from the want of a peer competent from knowledge and experience to deal with the complicated questions in Scottish Law and practice which some of your measures have raised, but all the same I am very sorry we are to lose you.*⁷⁵

A Scottish Liberal MP confirmed:

*There is not the slightest doubt the Land Bills have suffered thro' inadequate defence in the H. of L., your own Bill in particular. In this matter I feel you are going into the den of lions but I know you will not flinch even there.*⁷⁶

Certainly, it was a case of a most amiable, obstinate gentleman (as a fellow Liberal had described Sinclair after he had tried in vain to secure a concession) stepping into the territory of a *benevolent Despot* (as Lord Balfour's biographer had dubbed that gentleman).⁷⁷ But Lord Pentland was well prepared to meet the squalls he had been warned to look out for. All of Lord Balfour's nine criticisms of the Bill had been carefully examined and responses prepared.⁷⁸

What was described as the policy of the Opposition, embodied in the complementary Bills of Lords Camperdown and Lovat, had also been closely scrutinised, and, in view of the generally hostility in the Upper House, a variety of alternative strategies entertained.⁷⁹ On balance, however, it was decided to stand by the existing Bill, at the same time demonstrating, once again, a readiness to consider any fair and reasonable amendments or, more precisely, reserving their discretion as to any minor and non-controversial amendment of the Crofters Acts.⁸⁰

In the meantime, to General Elections followed each other in quick succession.⁸¹ In January of 1910 the overwhelming Liberal majority in Scotland was actually increased, and that increase was maintained eleven months later. The Press took the view that:

*the steadiness of the Scottish county vote in the last two elections was unquestionably due above everything else to the enthusiasm aroused by the Pentland Bill and to the determination to have it reach the Statute Book.*⁸²

In 1911 the Bill was introduced as a private member's measure, and its Second Reading was carried on June 2nd without a division. Apparently by this time the Conservatives had found that the party could make no headway in Scotland while they opposed the Bill. They also saw that at last they were about to lose the power to stop a Liberal Government from doing what the people wanted, for in May 1911 the Parliament Bill had been passed to end the veto of the Lords.⁸³ The Government adopted the Land Bill in Committee, and in order to prevent further delay, agreed to some concessions.⁸⁴ Long hours were spent fitting these changes into the Bill with the least damage possible. Lady Pentland received a note from her husband dated 23rd July, a Sunday.

*We have been pow-wow'ing all day, to some effect I think; but it is heavy uphill work.*⁸⁵

Almost simultaneously the 'original Die-hards' were making a last stand in the Constitutional crisis, but on 10th August the Lords agreed to the Parliament Bill and on 18th August it became law.⁸⁶ In December 1911 the Land Bill came once more to the Lords; it was for this moment that Pentland had gone there, and he did his best for the Bill in the points where compromise was inevitable.⁸⁷ The last tussle was over setting up a separate Board of Agriculture for Scotland. Bonar Law attacked the idea in his first speech after being elected Leader of the Opposition in the House of Commons. However on December 13th the Lords agreed to it on the understanding that the Contagious Diseases of Animals Acts were excluded from its powers.⁸⁸ The next day the Bill received its Third Reading there, and the Act that would always be popularly known as the 'Pentland Act' finally passed into law.⁸⁹ For the CDB it really was the end of the road. Lord Balfour had started it up. Now Lord Pentland had shut it down. The amiable, obstinate gentleman who was the final Chairman had got the better of the benevolent despot who was the first.⁹⁰

(ii) The Administrative Doldrums

In their Ninth Report the Congested Districts Commissioners prefaced their customary General Statement with the information that:

*The work of the Board during the past year has been influenced and restricted in consequence of the introduction of a Bill, entitled the Small Landholders (Scotland) Bill, which provided, inter alia, for the dissolution of the Board and the transference of its powers to the new Land Commission created by the Bill.*⁹¹

As the Statement further explained, since the Bill was designed to establish new small holdings "by a process not hitherto available, the Board had resolved that

*to proceed further with schemes for settlement under the provisions of their Act of 1897, which the Government desired to supplant by the new process, would lead to no useful public result.*⁹²

The reasoning was perfectly straightforward. On the one hand, they could not expect to have time to carry such schemes through to a conclusion. On the other hand, there was no indication that the people who stood to benefit would enter readily into such arrangements as the CDB could propose, in the expectation of impending legislation resulting in yet greater advantages being conferred.⁹³ Under such circumstances it was perfectly understandable for the Commissioners to announce that:

*the Board have, therefore, strictly limited themselves to carrying on the schemes of settlement which had been already considered before the introduction of the Bill, and this will be their policy until this Bill is passed.*⁹⁴

The six year delay occasioned by the legislative struggle was not, of course, foreseen, so that the unexpected extension of the CDB's life, by more than half again,⁹⁵ represented not the bonus of an Indian summer, but a but a becalming in the administrative doldrums.

Even before the return of a Liberal administration in 1906 matters were rather at a standstill as far as land settlement was concerned.⁹⁶ On the one hand, the Board was under the impression that it could only sell its lands, not lease them; on the other hand, crofters remained to be convinced of the merits of purchase as opposed to tenancy.⁹⁷ Members of the CDB had visited Kilmuir in Skye in the summer of 1905 in order to hold meetings with the people to outline the statutory position of the Board, and the principles of the purchase scheme. Details of the system, under which crofters could acquire their existing holdings had been carefully explained, as well as the intentions of the Board concerning new holdings, and such extensions of existing holdings as could be accommodated without prejudice to other interests. As the Report for 1905-6 explains:

*The meetings were well attended, and much interest was shown in the proceedings [but] not unnaturally, the people desired to have time to consider the purchase system.*⁹⁹

Subsequently the Board issued to each crofter tenant occupying an existing holding a detailed statement setting out the terms of the proposed transaction. However, the Commissioners' worst suspicions were confirmed by the response of the vast majority of the crofters, which constituted, in effect, a refusal to accept the terms as stated. Of some 450 tenants in all, only seventeen said they would be prepared to buy their holdings on the terms contained in the statement. Instead the general feeling conveyed by the crofters to the Board was that re-valuation of their holdings should be made by the Crofters' Commission, and other concessions granted, before they could decide on the question of purchase.⁹⁹ The Board acquiesced in this procedure, as it was acknowledged to be important that the purchasing occupants should be satisfied that the rent on which the annuity would be calculated was a 'fair' rent at the time of

purchase within the meaning of the Crofters Act. 347 applications were subsequently lodged with the Commission, and apart from the task of lotting out new holdings and extensions to existing holdings on the farm lands, Board activity on this front stood postponed.¹⁰⁰ Following the announcement of the decision of the Crofters Commission, on 31st December 1907, the CDB once again issued to each crofter a statement containing details of the conditions of purchase, together with a request that a decision should be communicated to the Board by 28th February. Still the crofters dragged their feet. By 31st March only thirty-eight replies had been received, eighteen in favour of purchase and twenty against.¹⁰¹

A situation of stalemate had finally been reached. However assiduously the Board sought to shake off the responsibilities of being a landlord, their tenants just as obstinately refused to take on the responsibilities of becoming owners. In the words of the Scotsman:

*It was intended that the tenants should purchase their holdings by making a certain number of moderate annual payments to the Congested Districts Board, and that in this way a body of peasant proprietors would be created. But by degrees crofters have been losing faith in occupying ownership, and at last the crofters of Kilmuir, while vigorously demanding the use of the land, flatly declined overtures for purchase. The Congested Districts Board were not blind to the awkwardness of the situation thus created, and, prudently as most people think, they are to seek their way out of this situation by trying what can hardly fail to become a peculiarly interesting State experiment.*¹⁰²

Taking account of the fact that a large number of their tenants possessed rights under the Crofters Acts, which they were not prepared to give up in order to produce even enlarged holdings, and given that the whole object of the Board in purchasing the farms was to adapt them for crofter occupation, the Commissioners had taken the step of consulting the Law Officers of the Crown as to their powers. When the circumstances, as they

had arisen at Kilmuir, were laid before these latter, pragmatism ruled the day and the Board was advised that it was competent for it to lease land.¹⁰³ In consequence, the Commissioners would remain the Lairds of Kilmuir. They would divide up the land as originally proposed, and equip the holdings in the manner of benevolent private proprietors, thereafter letting them to old and new tenants under the provisions of the Crofter Acts.¹⁰⁴ The Scotsman was scathing in its cynicism.

*For years to come all eyes will be on Kilmuir. Those who hold up the nationalisation of the land as the one cure for agrarian evils will look to Kilmuir for proof of their wisdom. Those who ascribe rural depopulation, and all its attendant national disabilities, to the wickedness of avaricious private landowners, will expect Kilmuir to for ever establish the soundness of their doctrine. Typical tenants will pay 'fair rents' to model owners; Kilmuir will, therefore be expected to show what land can do when set free from the alleged trammels of ancient tenure, and used as land ought to be used.*¹⁰⁵

Yet what would actually transpire, the Scotsman warned, true to its Tory colours, would be that the reality would fail to match up with the expectation, although the experience itself might be a salutary one.

*In truth, this unique experiment at Kilmuir, if it is carried out with care and good judgement - as we may confidently expect will be the case - is most likely to be fruitful in wholesome lessons alike to the State and to its people.*¹⁰⁶

Certainly the signs were not very encouraging. When the Board had purchased the estate, the crofters were already £4464 in arrears, These the CDB bought for £1773. However, on the advice of the Crofters Commission the Board subsequently cancelled all but £1026 of the outstanding debt, thus losing the difference.¹⁰⁷ Furthermore in the case of the Board's holdings at North Syre in Strathnaver, and Eoligarry in Barra, where the crofters had successfully been persuaded to purchase, difficulties

were also multiplying. By 1907, barely five years into a fifty-year repayment schedule, the Syre settlers were over twenty per cent in arrears on the purchase and building loan annuities. Nor was the Board's resettlement scheme on Barra yet free from problems.¹⁰⁸ A condition of sale at Eoligarra had been that with material provided by the Board at cost price, each purchaser was to build for himself a *comfortable and sanitary approved dwelling*.¹⁰⁹ Initially the Commissioners were inclined to be *patient in [their] attitude on this matter*, on the grounds that it is not easy for new settlers to discharge all their obligations at once.¹¹⁰ But even when houses were, eventually, constructed, many did not meet the Board's specifications, while in other cases work did not begin until notices of forfeiture were sent.¹¹¹ Furthermore, at Martinmas 1907 the Barra settlers were as much as 36% in arrears.¹¹² And although, as in the case also of Syre, the level of indebtedness was halved by 1912, that year the Board received a unanimous request from all the Syre and Barra settlers that they might revert to the status of tenants, and this request was granted.¹¹³ Perhaps it was true, as the Scotsman had implied, that crofters could not face up to the responsibilities of ownership, although they demanded the rights of equivalent status. Perhaps it was the case that tenancy under the provisions of the Crofters Acts did offer an easy option, so that any landlord, public or private, was as good, or as bad, as the next.¹¹⁴

Yet if it were true, it was not because of a fatal flaw in the ideology underlying the concept of land nationalisation. On the one hand, formal crofting tenure protected tenants against the worst types of exploitation that could be perpetuated by private landlords. On the other hand, public ownership of land of itself could not at a stroke wipe out the immediate and self-perpetuating hazard which faced the crofting community - namely poverty, and the vicious circle of the poverty trap.¹¹⁵

What was known to apply to stock management was also more

generally applicable to land management. If crofters had no capital with which to purchase stock, it scarcely mattered whether that stock was to be individually or co-operatively tended.¹¹⁶ Similarly, if they could not afford to make regular payments, it scarcely mattered whether these were loan instalments or rents, or in the latter case, whether the land was privately or publicly owned. Indeed in the case of the Board's estate at Glendale, the two problems had merged into one. Except-ionally the land there had been sold to the crofters *sheep and all* as a club farm, so that initial inroads on their limited means were minimised.¹¹⁷ Yet despite being thus privileged, and having conditions of repayment rather more favourable even than the *fairly easy terms* argued by CDB Land Manager Angus Mackintosh to be essential unless crofters were to become an endangered species, when the Board was wound up, it is interesting that the Glendale settlers were still running arrears of much the same order as in the case of Syre, where sheep were an extra.¹¹⁸ The grazings may have supported the stock, but the drain on the crofters' financial resources was excessive. To convert a crofter with a few sheep and a cow into a small landholder with a flock of sheep and a herd of cattle, depended upon more than the number of animals and the type of land tenure.¹¹⁹ Perhaps it was as much in recognition of the latter truth, as out of concern for its own public image, that the newly formed Board of Agriculture persuaded the Glendale crofters, when they applied in 1912 to revert to the status of tenants, that it was not to their advantage to do so.¹²⁰ The government stood to lose either way, but considering the momentum of antipathy towards the concept of peasant proprietorship which surrounded the Board's parliamentary genesis, the decision was a brave one and represented a slap in the face for the Scotsman.¹²¹

Early CDB experience had shown that to convert a jack-of-all trades and master-of-none crofter into a fisherman was

no easier than to establish him as a farmer. The Battery Park fishermen's holdings project had been dropped in 1900 when only one applicant had come forward.¹²² However, in 1902 the proprietor offered to renew the option, and the Board once again advertised their readiness to underwrite all the cost of enclosure, infrastructure and service provision, and of the Feu Charter, as well as to advance sums of up to £120 for house construction, to be repayable in instalments over thirty years.¹²³ This time twenty-five applications were received for twenty-four holdings, of which twenty-one were accepted by Major Matheson, the owner of the ground. In view of such favourable prospects on this occasion, the Board Engineer was detailed to prepare a report on the necessary works, which were found to include a sea wall. It was further advised that, rather than each feuar being left to build his own house with money borrowed from the Board, the latter should contract for the erection of all the houses to ensure that public health requirements were properly met.¹²⁴ If the project was ambitious, it was deliberately so.

*A good deal of attention has been directed to the type of house in this village and to the comparatively moderate cost at which we have been enabled to complete the erection of these 29 houses. It was our hope that the style of house might be adopted as a standard by others who may from time to time build new cottages, and accordingly our Engineer not only devoted much care in designing as economical a house as possible, but we thought it desirable, in houses of this good class, that a water supply should be brought into each house, and other sanitary arrangements made.*¹²⁵

The Commissioners further admitted that the prospects for formation of other similar fishing villages depended largely upon the success ultimately attending the Stornoway experiment.¹²⁶

With so much at stake, it was no doubt with a sense of relief that the Commissioners were able to report by 1906,

that all the remaining feus had been allotted, that the houses were now occupied, and that the process of repayment by thirty year annuity was successfully underway.¹²⁷ The lingering fear remained, however, that because the feus had been taken only after considerable delay, in reality the demand for such holdings was slight and therefore the level of commitment inadequate.¹²⁸ Perhaps in such circumstances an outcome of self-fulfilling prophecy was almost inevitable. At any rate, when by 1910 arrears were accumulating to both proprietor and Board, the experiment was rather too suddenly condemned as being both costly and unsatisfactory. On the basis of scant evidence apart from the arrears, the Board declared that *the village has not been a conspicuous success as a community of industrious and successful fishermen.*¹²⁹ For the sceptical and increasingly, also cynical, Commissioners, admittedly serious arrears of approaching 50% were proof enough of failure, and the conclusions drawn at the time when the Battery Park project had first failed to get off the ground were now reiterated.¹³⁰

*The great bulk of the West Coast fishermen want something more than a house and garden. Their desires are much better met by the small crofts which we have helped to form in various parts of the Western Sea Coast, where the crofter-fisherman has a home for his family and a small farm to grow potatoes for his household and grazing for the cow which provides milk for his children. He is in fact a fisherman only by compulsion.*¹³¹

If the image here conjured up of crofting as a way of living¹³² characterised by occupational pluralism, albeit of necessity as much as from choice, accurately described the existing lifestyle of the inhabitants of the congested districts, for whom cottar shade[d] imperceptibly into crofter and crofter into farmer and fisherman,¹³³ but for whom the specialization of a modern exchange economy was quite alien, that same image scarcely lived up to either the original 'peasant proprietor' or to the latter 'small landholder' ideal underpinning the land settlement objectives of

the CDB.¹³⁴ During Lord Balfour's Chairmanship, the single facetedness of crofter-farming had been emphasised by the concern, on the one hand, with size of holding and, on the other, with the parallel development of technical training schemes for the establishment in the islands of a tradesman class.¹³⁵ During Lord Pentland's Chairmanship technical training was still part and parcel of the campaign against occupational pluralism, but on the crofter-farmer side the discussion was no longer dominated by size of holding but by what amounted to an obsession with scientific agriculture and agricultural organisation.¹³⁶ Certainly, at no time was maintenance, far less extension, of the status quo ever regarded as desirable, the explicit object of the Board being to foster self-sufficiency through regional development, and not to provide destitution relief and thus encourage dole-dependence.^{136a} But if the CDB Commissioners - as distinct from their Chairmen - could perceive a role for Adam Collier's multi-functional crofter-fisherman-labourer, it was less that they were intellectually convinced of the flaws in the dual economy hypothesis and in the modernisation solution that that they were becoming increasingly resigned to the need for large doses of both realism and pragmatism in their dealings with the crofting community.¹³⁷ It had to be so. For as the Commissioners had observed sadly of the Stornoway experiment:

*There can be no doubt that if there was any possibility of such a settlement of cottar-fishermen proving a success, there ought to be in this case all the elements thereof.*¹³⁸

Unfortunately that resignation was tinged also with resentment. Angus Sutherland, who himself came from a crofting background, was particularly angered by the attitude of the Kilmuir settlers, who seemed to consider themselves in a position to dictate to us what we or they are going to do, yet constituted the most ungrateful lot with whom we have had to do in all our experience.¹³⁹

Creeping cynicism was inevitable on the part of the Commissioners in a situation where, judged from whatever point of view, the Board could do nothing right. Quite apart from the major problems besetting the land settlement programme, of which *the generally backward state of payments*¹⁴⁰ was merely one facet, albeit an important one, the period of the Board's enforced continuance, between the introduction of the first version of the Land Bill and the passage of the final one, was characterised by failure after failure in all branches of its work. As the Commissioners acknowledged, *in a scheme of State-aided purchase of holdings it [was] manifestly of the highest importance that the settlers should make punctual payment of the sums due by them.*¹⁴¹ Similarly, in the context of development of fisheries, the Board set great store by the philosophy that subsidies to steamer or road services should only be granted with a view to ultimate commercial viability, *the provision of facilities so stimul[ing] production that a line of transit becomes self-supporting after a reasonable time.*¹⁴² However the results of a steamer service down the west coast of Sutherland proved so unsatisfactory that the Commissioners did not feel justified in spending public money on continuing the service, unless there was evidence forthcoming that local fishermen were prepared to prosecute their calling as regularly and systematically as the weather would allow.¹⁴³ Although a similar Ullapool-Kyle service fared better to the extent that at one stage the Cairloch-Kyle leg was established as a regular service by MacBrayne, without the need for a guarantee, eventually it too collapsed.¹⁴⁴ The results of a road haulage scheme were never promising, *the only public advantage of the experiment [being] that the fish [were] conveyed at less than half the former cost to the fishermen, and that the speed of transit [was] greater.*¹⁴⁵ Since to maintain the service the Board was having to guarantee almost four times the quantity actually carried, their conclusion, which ultimately applied to steamer subsidies as much as to road subsidies, was inevitable.

*The regular and rapid transit of fish to market is a matter of high importance, but it must be regulated by some reference to financial and business considerations. It seems obvious that Government aid to marketing, which might mean an outlay over an indefinite series of years about equal to the actual selling price of the fish at market, would not be justified.*¹⁴⁶

Disappointment at the unsatisfactory outcome of projects in which the Board did become involved was paralleled with frustration at the existence of so many potentially rewarding areas of work in which involvement proved impossible. Underfunding and understaffing had characterised the Board from the outset, but loomed larger as time elapsed, the latter made worse by the ill-health and subsequent death of David Brand, and the ill-health and subsequent resignation of MacLeod of MacLeod.¹⁴⁷ Replacements were not inevitably sought for vacancies amongst the non-statutory membership, so that, for example, in 1911 the annual report had only six signatories, two of these being the Secretary for Scotland and his Under-Secretary, whose time devoted to CDB business was, respectively, nil and minimal.¹⁴⁸ The lack of staff was compounded by the lack of money. In their Tenth Report the Commissioners point out that, although technically empowered to provide loan finance for fisheries development, the Board would find it quite impossible - having regard to the claims upon its resources - to embark on a scheme of this sort on a scale sufficient to serve any useful purpose unless the funds at its disposal were largely augmented.¹⁴⁹ Similarly, although provision of minor lights and seamarks - as opposed to lighthouses - would have constituted an economical method of providing practical help to inshore fishermen, Treasury had decided that subsequent maintenance charges, of the order of £750 per annum, should also fall to the CDB, rather than to the local authorities.¹⁵⁰ That the necessary outlay imposed a disproportionate burden upon the Board's scanty resources there can be no doubt, so that it is not difficult to understand why the Commissioners did not

feel themselves in a position to deal with more than a few cases of pressing importance.¹⁵¹ Fencing of land exemplified another potentially important area of Board activity which was necessarily constrained by lack of funds. A limited amount of resources was set aside for protecting arable ground from the inroads of stock on contiguous hill pasture, as recommended by the Napier Commission, but otherwise the Board was resigned to the fact that *the amount of fencing which would be necessary in the congested area is so large as to be far beyond our means.*¹⁵²

On the one hand frustration; on the other hand disappointment. Not only in connection with steamer and road services, but across the board, crofter response to CDB initiatives was poor. In respect of poultry-keeping, the Board found that crofters proved impossibly slow to adopt recommended new practices, in particular, the system of co-operative marketing.¹⁵³ In respect of agricultural development more generally, it was admitted that demonstrations by the Colleges of Agriculture, with a view to encouraging improvement in soil quality, cultivation methods and stock management, were falling upon deaf ears for the same reason, that is, that crofters were *slow of initiative.*¹⁵⁴ In respect of technical training, the practical seamanship course had to be dropped owing to inadequate uptake, the domestic training scheme for girls struggled on with barely enough applicants to maintain viability, and the apprenticeship programme for boys ran into difficulties owing to the need for each boy to be financed for five years, and to difficulties of placement associated with a national rise in unemployment.¹⁵⁵

Ultimately the Board's involvement in all these areas was, in any case, paralysed by the appointment by the Secretary for Scotland of various Committees of Enquiry. A Departmental Committee to inquire into methods of breeding and keeping poultry in the Highlands and Islands with particular reference to the achievement of the

CDB, and to make suggestions for development and improvement, was set up in July 1908; in December of the same year a Committee was appointed to examine the whole subject of employment and training of young people; and in August 1909 a Committee of Agricultural Experts was appointed to enquire and report upon the work of the CDB for the improvement of agriculture and livestock.¹⁵⁶ In the face of such a comprehensive vote of no confidence, the credibility and morale of the CDB was bound to be seriously undermined. Nor was there any consolation to be found in the areas of either infrastructure development or home industries improvement. The former had always been a shambles; the latter had, since the resignation of Lord Balfour, once again surfaced as a contentious issue which was ultimately found impossible of resolution other than by commissioning an independent investigation of the question. The task fell to W R Scott of the Department of Political Economy at St Andrews University, whose subsequent report to the Board of Agriculture in 1913 came too late to save the situation for the CDB.¹⁵⁷

Morale was low, credibility was slight. What the CDB needed was a success story, before it was finally banished into the history books and there branded as a total failure. What it got instead was the ignominy of the Vatersay 'episode'.¹⁵⁸ Conditions on Lady Gordon Cathcart's estates of Barra and South Uist rivalled those on the Matheson estate in Lewis.¹⁵⁹ Both proprietors came into the category of those,

*probably the majority, who will not part with land for behoof of [persons of the Crofting class] no matter how serious the congestion on their estates, and no matter how poor and sterile the land presently in the occupation of Crofting tenants.*¹⁶⁰

In spite of efforts by the estate management during the 1880s to prevent the erection of additional houses, the number of squatters had increased. Although the

estate warnings were disregarded, further proceedings to evict them were not taken, possibly in view of the failure of Lady Cathcart's colonisation schemes, which, in turn, aggravated matters.¹⁶¹ Subsequently, following what the Government itself acknowledged was excessive pressure the CDB purchased 3000 acres in Barra from the proprietrix and provided holdings for fifty-eight crofters.¹⁶² Foreseeing trouble because there were as many again who were denied plots, the Commissioners acted early to ensure that the conditions for occupying Board holdings were strictly observed, in the hope of preventing the evils of squatting and overstocking.¹⁶³ In effect, this made the plight of the landless worse.

Presently some of these cottars applied to the Board for ground on the Island of Watersay for planting potatoes. Althoughⁱⁿ that year - 1902 - the tenant's terms proved too high for the Board, the next year the Board was able to buy sixty acres for the sum of £600. But the fifty-one cottars who obtained potato plots failed to obtain satisfactory crops, and for some reason also refused to allow the Board in 1905 to conduct soil tests. By early 1906 negotiations for fresh land also seemed to be breaking down. The Board was unwilling to accept either the offer of the lease of a new patch of twenty acres at 10s per acre, or the theory that its own sixty acres was useless.¹⁶⁴ Inevitably the cottars became frustrated at not knowing whether they were to be allowed to plant cereal instead on the potato land, at whether it was worthwhile starting to collect seaweed for other land that might be provided, and at the prospect of another potatoless winter. And although it had been impressed upon them the previous year that creating a disturbance or threatening to do so would not move the Board but only bring trouble upon themselves, they ignored the warning and threatened to take the land forcibly.¹⁶⁵ Almost immediately the Board wrote to the cottars saying that they had rented the twenty acres,

and that crops of potatoes could be grown on it in 1906, and of corn in 1907.¹⁶⁶

However, the mood of the cottars was now such that Government capitulation did not satisfy them, but instead spurred them on to more daring acts of recalcitrance. As well as making use of the authorised twenty acres, they planted an additional and unauthorised two acres, put up over a dozen huts and proceeded to start grazing their cattle, specially brought over from the main island to this end.¹⁶⁷ Interdicts were obtained, served and broken. Complaints for breach of interdict were prepared. Meanwhile the Secretary for Scotland sent the Sheriff in July 1907 to try to persuade the raiders to withdraw. He did not succeed but recommended instead that the CDB should buy Watersay.¹⁶⁸ It was at this point that the Government embarked upon what was later generally agreed to be a *persistently wrong-headed, course of action*.¹⁶⁹ On the one hand the Scottish Secretary refused to entertain Lady Gordon Cathcart's application for Government protection for the tenant; on the other hand he refused to consider the clear alternative of Government purchase of the island.¹⁷⁰ Instead, the Secretary for Scotland wrote presently to the proprietrix inviting her to co-operate with the CDB in the formation of new holdings on Watersay. She objected, for some fairly plausible reasons. The rest of the year was spent in *spirited wrangling* between the two sides.¹⁷¹

Eventually, in July 1908, it was publicly announced that an arrangement had been made between the parties for breaking up the farm into smallholdings, Lady Gordon Cathcart remaining the proprietrix, and the tenants holding their land under the provisions of the Crofters Act.¹⁷² Matters were apparently in the process of being negotiated in detail, when the Secretary for Scotland suddenly went back on the arrangement for reasons not made public and took the course which he had obstinately refused to consider for more than a year.¹⁷³ The Scotsman took

delight in ridiculing this final twist.¹⁷⁴

*Lord Pentland has signalised his peerage by the purchase of Vatersay for the Government. The announcement is a surprising one; but it is well vouched for by our London correspondent, and confirmation, it will be seen, comes from Barra. It would be incredible in any other set of circumstances than those of Vatersay; but as Lord Pentland has been consistent in this part of his policy only in hesitation and vacillation and in consequence, the greatest surprise of all is the fit ending of the chapter.*¹⁷⁵

For a Tory Government that was committed to the creation of a class of peasant proprietors to create a Board that would come to effect a programme of land nationalisation was curious enough; for a Liberal Government that was committed to the extension of the system of tenanted farms, and was promoting legislation to that end, simultaneously to endorse by its actions state ownership of land was perhaps stranger still.

Lord Balfour's biographer, in summing up that gentleman's opinions, had observed that *the Islanders have a saying, 'Any landlord but the Board of Agriculture', and had captured admirably the inherent inflexibility of the State as landlord in the statement that minutes, and orders, and all the paper work goes on, but a Board has no feelings and little knowledge.*¹⁷⁶ Lord Pentland disagreed with none of these statements. Indeed, in forming his conclusions upon land tenure and framing his legislation, he had argued that *it is not desirable, where avoidable, that the State should be the proprietor; and that all proprietors and large farmers should be expropriated, precisely on the grounds that crofters and cottars, in spite of their difficulties, maintain a warm regard for their lairds: and there is a consensus of opinion that the lairds are far better able to manage the crofter than any officials would be.*¹⁷⁷ And for what it was worth, at the height of the Vatersay controversy, the Oban Times conducted its own opinion poll of crofters, by interviewing settlers on the other CDB estates. Its findings could not reverse the decision to buy Vatersay, but that did not prevent them from substantiating the views of both Lord Balfour and Lord

Pentland, and in so doing, at the very least, calling into question the latter's judgement.¹⁷⁸ Thus, it emerged that the greatest cause for complaint was that:

*the Board's red tape methods are obstructive instead of helpful, and a lot of public money is needlessly thrown away in the settlement of such transactions without benefitting the people for whom it was intended.*¹⁷⁹

The Scottish Office's unhappy handling of the whole episode of Vatersay contributed nothing to alter that view.¹⁸⁰ Even the Scotsman found it difficult to deny that Vatersay was scarcely a bargain buy. That paper's immediate concern to emphasise that Lady Cathcart has made considerable pecuniary sacrifice in order to obtain a settlement was tempered by its equally earnest desire to demonstrate that lawlessness, it will be seen, quickly runs up a heavy bill for the Minister and the taxpayer.¹⁸¹ While the Oban Times did not choose to express matters quite so bluntly, it confirmed that when loss on sheep stock and expenditure on roads, fences and drains etc. were all taken into account, the cost to the CDB would be effectively double the actual purchase price.¹⁸²

*At all events, an outlay of £12,000 in round figures has been incurred at Vatersay from first to last, and that for the settlement of fifty-eight cottars and crofters. The rental of the fifty-eight holdings is £180 a year.*¹⁸³

The Oban Times' final word on the Vatersay affair formed part of its appraisal of the CDB's Twelfth Report, perhaps the most significant of all the series.¹⁸⁴ The significance of the Oban Times' interpretation of that document is itself considerable, for, reading between the lines, the Board is there summed up as being ill-conceived, ill-received and ill-fated.¹⁸⁵ The Vatersay episode is regarded as epitomising the policy flaws, in particular the failure to award powers of compulsory purchase.

Those remarkable figures exhibit only too forcefully the complexities that surround on every side the whole problem of land settlement. The process of repopulation, if it is conducted on the financial basis that has determined the Vatersay transaction will only be possible if the State is prepared to face a gigantic loss. If the results come up to expectation, if this form of land settlement accomplishes what it is intended to accomplish, the cost might be justified. But meantime the limited funds of the Congested Districts Board cannot meet the strain of many such experiments as that of Vatersay.¹⁸⁶

The Stornoway episode is seen as epitomising the failings of the people. And, interestingly, the Oban Times no longer seeks to excuse the defaulters on grounds of poverty, as it might have done previously.¹⁸⁷

If the Board, which has had its experience to buy, has made some mistakes, it may no doubt claim that its labours and its enterprises would show a better record today if the response to them by the inhabitants of the congested areas had been more energetic and more enlightened.... The record of the Board's [land settlement] schemes makes a dismal and discouraging story. The tale is one of a steady accumulation of arrears.... though some of the defaulters 'could have met their obligations in a much more satisfactory manner than they have done.' The attempt to establish a fishing village in Lewis has completely broken down. The preparation of feus and the erection of commodious and convenient cottages proved a costly experiment, but the cost could have been cheerfully borne had it been rewarded with success otherwise. The Board's verdict, however, is that the scheme is a disappointment..."¹⁸⁸

In circumstances in which the Oban Times was disposed to print a mild reproof of crofters, who, after all, constituted its readership, the Scotsman knew no bounds as far as censure was concerned. The conditions were ideal, the Scotsman wrote of the Stornoway experiment, yet the men would not bestir themselves.¹⁸⁹ And while the former newspaper largely exonerated the Board over the Vatersay affair, on the grounds that the CDB inherited the mess from the Scottish Office at whose door blame should be laid,¹⁹⁰ the Scotsman virtually accused the Board of a cover up.

A month's delay in the publication of their report had not enabled the Congested Districts Board to write the chapter on Vatersay with satisfactory detail. Those Scottish members who desire to know the actual condition of the island will not obtain the information from this document... The facts must be sought in unofficial reports.¹⁹¹

In the opinion of the Scotsman the situation was all the more reprehensible in view of the unlikelihood of recouping even the proper amount of rent, far less the whole cost of purchase.

Probably the expectation will not be realised. It is a profoundly disappointing feature in these annual reports that a passage censuring the crofter community for their financial laxity has become stereotyped. It is repeated in exactly the same words as last year; the only difference is that the outstanding arrears are mounting up. 'We thought it our duty', the Commissioners say, 'to intimate that unless there was an immediate improvement in this respect steps would have to be taken to enforce payment.' The same statement was made last year. If the defaulters were unable to pay, legal action would, of course, be ineffective. But the Board state now, as they did last year, that the arrears could be paid if there was any desire on the part of the crofters to meet their obligations.¹⁹²

Whereas the Scotsman chose only to criticise and to condemn what was bad, the Oban Times sought to sympathise and to salvage what was good. It recognised both that the funds at its [the CDB's] disposal were small in relation to the multitudinous duties entrusted to it and that it was breaking new administrative ground in the Highlands.¹⁹³ Furthermore, the Oban Times held out hope for the future.

The losses, the disappointment, and the very partial success which the Board has encountered in so many spheres must all have a bearing upon the future treatment of Highland conditions. The failure of the past may lead to the formation of some sounder policy.....¹⁹⁴

Probably most perceptive of all, the Oban Times recognised the hand of fate in directing the outcome of the

Commissioners endeavours. Precisely because the Board was breaking new administrative ground in the Highlands, could it perhaps have been that the CDB was before its time?

*The Board has had numerous failures, not always because its experiments have been wrongly conceived, but because the factors essential to their successful working out have been wanting.*¹⁹⁵

It was probably because they had so often had their fingers burnt that the Commissioners were wary of becoming involved in the promotion amongst crofters of the congested districts of the concept of co-operative development. That its importance was recognised is evident from a glance through the Board files, which reveals that the subject was one under continual review.¹⁹⁶ Just as the Highlands and Islands Development Board, three quarters of a century later, looked over its shoulders to the activities of its Irish counterpart, Gaeltarra Eireann, in the field of co-operative ventures, so earlier co-op development in the West of Ireland at the end of last century did not pass unnoticed by the CDB for Scotland.¹⁹⁷ Not only did Horace Plunkett, founder member and president of the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society (IAOS) - the body responsible for the promotion of agricultural co-operation in Ireland - sit on the Irish CDB, but he was also a great friend of John Sinclair. The latter was greatly interested and considerably influenced by Plunkett's thinking, the wisdom of which he strove to impress upon his Parliamentary colleagues.¹⁹⁸

In his role as CDB Chairman, Sinclair was in an even stronger position to convert enthusiasm into action, and he soon made it clear that he *would like to see land banks and local co-operative societies established among the crofters of the Highlands.*¹⁹⁹ To that end he communicated formally with Sir Horace Plunkett to enlist his assistance.²⁰⁰ Presently, however, the latter wrote back advising that for the Irish Society to become involved in assisting in

the extension of co-operation to the Highland Crofters, might be construed as an affront to the Scottish Agricultural Organisation Society (SAOS), which, it was reported *has already done a great deal of valuable work in this direction.*²⁰¹ In truth, the SAOS was something of a pale imitation of its Irish equivalent, since co-operation in Ireland, from its inception, was almost entirely producer co-operation based on agriculture, reflecting the economic base of that country, a situation which differed markedly from the experience of the industrial mainland of Great Britain.²⁰² In these circumstances, the reply from the IAOS scarcely signalled an auspicious start to Sinclair's campaign.

Subsequently to discover an ally in the Scotsman must therefore have seemed to Lord Pentland, as he now was, as useful as it was surprising, given the bad press he was simultaneously receiving from that paper over Watersay. No less influential an organ then than now, amongst the ruling classes, the Scotsman was apparently casting its vote for the promotion of co-operative schemes in the Highlands as *a first essential step towards the solution of economic problems.* More specifically, it was advocating *adventitious State-aid, discriminately administered, with a view to evoke self-help on the part of the people themselves.*²⁰³ Successful examples of Danish, Indian and finally Irish co-operative endeavour were quoted by the Scotsman correspondent to emphasise that this was a proven route to prosperity, much being made, in particular, of the Irish-Scottish parallel. Superficially it was a very persuasive argument indeed that *what is possible in the congested districts of Ireland should be equally possible in Scotland.*²⁰⁴ In fact it begged the important question of the essential differences between the Irish and Scottish congested districts, as well as the question of long term, as opposed to immediate, prospects in Ireland.²⁰⁵ However, the picture painted of smooth, business-like efficiency belied any possibility of failure. What was needed, according to the Scotsman were the

following: poultry societies for the prompt and systematic marketing of produce; associations through which crofter fishermen might co-operatively purchase their fishing gear and market their catch; creameries for specially selected districts; and home industries associations for the direct marketing of home-spun and hand-woven products. The role of the co-op credit society was emphasised as a necessary adjunct to the successful working of such schemes, as well as the importance of state assistance in the initial stages.²⁰⁶ A loan system was preferred to the pound for pound matching scheme more recently operated by the HADB, but the underlying objective was identical; the local co-op organisation would have a commitment to making its own money work for it and would be responsible for managing and conducting the co-op enterprises for its own benefit.²⁰⁷

Fundamentally the Congested Districts Commissioners could have had no objections to co-operative development. Commitment to the principle of encouraging self-help and providing the momentum for self-determination was never in doubt. Indeed the commitment to fostering self-help was both publicly acknowledged in so many words, and privately acted upon, since it was regularly held up as the criterion by which decisions as to whether to grant or withhold aid should be taken.²⁰⁸ The difficulty to be overcome in practice was how, in the event, to apply government assistance so that it actually succeeded in stimulating development rather than tending to pauperise the people thus constituting a waste of public money, criticisms to which the CDB was particularly sensitive.²⁰⁹ As the Scotsman observed: *State-aid may be either helpful or demoralising, according as it is administered.* It continued:

*To be helpful, the aid given should depend on the amount of local enterprise and assistance forthcoming, to help in carrying out the schemes that may be promoted.*²¹⁰

At the theoretical level this was also an attractive argument, and one that the Commissioners had themselves employed very early on, in the context of works grants; where local aid was good, the Board considered that it should be seen to be generous.²¹¹ However, that there was a fundamental flaw in their philosophy of development was presently pointed out to the members of the Board by powerful and persuasive correspondents; congested districts themselves were identified on the basis of poverty, at least this was the public expectation. Therefore it followed that:

*it has to be kept in view that the greater the need for help from the CDB, the smaller is the capacity of the people to contribute.*²¹²

The truth is, the philosophy upon which the Board was founded was, from a practical point of view, fundamentally at odds with the policy which it sought to pursue.

As Sir Reginald MacLeod observed, for the Commissioners to perform what they regarded as *their duty to apply [the measures] with as little injury to 'foresight, self-denial and industry' as possible*, was very nearly impossible, given that Parliament had framed the congested districts legislation precisely *to recognise the exceptional difficulty of their geographical position, their soil and climate.*²¹³

Much as in the case of their land schemes, a position of stalemate had been reached. In full knowledge that spontaneous adoption of co-operative practices by crofters was unlikely, the CDB simply dragged its feet as far as the whole issue was concerned. For years the Commissioners had been preaching the benefits of the formation of local associations for the marketing of eggs. They chose to ignore the advice of the convener of their agricultural committee, that people could not be expected to lend support at the outset to schemes which they knew nothing about.²¹⁴ Similarly with co-ops proper, the Board went on waiting for the crofters to make the first move.

*I would start with the idea that the people interested could do some little thing for themselves, and had some glimpses of intelligence, and did not require to have everything done for them.*²¹⁵

These disparaging remarks of Angus Sutherland were, in fact, directed at a press report on co-op progress in the West of Ireland, which the Secretary had directed to the attention of Board members. In addition to assessing the commercial success of ventures in Co. Galway, this article stressed what it identified as quite another side of the co-operative movement.²¹⁶ Today it would probably be called the community development aspect of co-operation.

*An effort is being made to bring more brightness into the life of the rural population by forming libraries in connection with the societies, by giving prizes for collage gardens, and by classes for the teaching of the Irish language. A leaflet on village libraries has been compiled with rules and a list of 100 books There is one society, whose example might well be followed by others, which last winter opened its board-room to members for dancing and other entertainments. These are only small beginnings, but it may be hoped that co-operation will not only bring industrial prosperity to the country, but also do something for the amusement and refinement of social life.*²¹⁷

In fact, had it not been that this was a Scotsman report, for whose readership the protestant work ethic died very hard, the concept might have been taken even further. The final sentence holds the key, and could have been inverted to read: by doing something for the social life of the west, co-operation might ultimately bring industrial prosperity there. For this 'other side' of co-operation was, in the words of the report not immediately remunerative, [but] may have far-reaching effects in preventing the draining away of the young life of the country.²¹⁸ In other words, it could be instrumental in breaking the vicious circle of cultural disillusionment and decline.

However, if the latter was a long-term concern dear to the heart of the new Liberal Secretary for Scotland,

it was a trend as yet unnoticed by his colleagues, both in Parliament and at the Board.²¹⁹ On the one hand, Sinclair had, in presenting his Land Bill to Parliament for the second time, been advised by Sir Reginald MacLeod to play down the rural depopulation angle, which seemed, at the very least, irrelevant to the Highlands.²²⁰ On the other hand, while the whole concept of rural community development might be appropriate to the predominantly agricultural social and economic base of Ireland, it was not appropriate in mainland industrial Britain, and in some respects would have been directly at odds with other Board policies, such as the sending of boys from the West Highlands and Islands to apprentice to trades on Clydeside, or of girls to Aberdeen to train for domestic service.²²¹ The intention was that they should not return, so relieving the primary problem which the Board was set up to tackle, namely, congestion. All the emphasis was on the substitution of supposed Lowland values of thrift and industry for supposed Gaelic ones of fecklessness and sloth.²²² Hence the difficulties in justifying Board aid to home industries, which, while acknowledged to contribute to making the residual population *self-helpful*, equally stood in the way of the desired cultural shift, by providing a disincentive to find 'proper' work.²²³ The truth is, a Board which convened in Edinburgh was almost bound to be Lowland-biased, and there was always the implicit feeling that East coast values were to be revered and Gaelic culture and tradition disparaged.²²⁴

In fact this probably represents an unduly harsh interpretation of Board philosophy. There were also perfectly valid reasons operating at a purely pragmatic level, for the CDB to avoid becoming involved in sponsoring co-operation. Already the Board's remit was far too wide for its budget, and latterly it needed, at all costs, to steer clear of supporting any more 'lame ducks'.²²⁵ As the CDB Land Manager was forced to admit of co-operation:

*The parts of Ireland where operations have been least successful are those which most resemble our own Crofting districts in the western seaboard and islands.*²²⁶

Or, as Board member MacLeod of MacLeod preferred to express matters:

*Poor people do not take kindly to the [co-operative] system with all its advantages.*²²⁷

For a publicly accountable body in a Victorian socio-political context to spend its very limited funds for these purposes in such circumstances would have been to invite criticism for handing out doles. Furthermore, if the Irish approach was, according to Angus Sutherland, grandmotherly,²²⁸ it could afford to be so, since in the Irish congested districts the congestion did not stop at the inhabitants, but extended to the officials of the various interested agencies.²²⁹ The CDB for Scotland, by contrast, was understaffed as well as underfunded.²³⁰ In consequence, although the Commissioners recognised that co-operation was a *principle greatly needed in these parts, that the first step to be taken [was] to educate the population on the benefits of Co-operation, and that once successfully initiated - it would soon spread,*²³¹ they could also see very clearly that their Secretary was correct in his assessment that

*If any co-operative society is to prosper in the congested districts especially in the west - CDB must help to start, both by precept and hard cash.*²³²

Until and unless the stumbling block of resources - both human and financial - could be overcome, the Board could neither fulfil adequately the important educative role of inspiring the people of the congested districts to embrace the co-operative philosophy and ideals, nor provide the necessary practical marketing and managerial assistance to channel the resultant enthusiasm wisely.²³³ Instead, co-operation would have to remain a *matter for*

*some philanthropic person to take up who has the requisite time.*²³⁴

And, as the Commissioners also recognised, philanthropy, of itself, was less the key to success than personal qualities such as a strong sense of commitment and a real empathy with co-op members on the part of the manager. In the words of Angus Sutherland:

*It could only be done by a person in whom the parties had entire confidence and such a person with the will and the leisure and the interest in the matter might be difficult to find.*²³⁵

Given all the difficulties, it was resolved that the Board should merely encourage any efforts towards co-operation; otherwise the crofters must take the initiative.²³⁶

So it was that apart from giving the embryonic national body for agricultural co-operation - the SAOS - its blessing,²³⁷ the most positive step towards the instigation of co-operation in the north-west periphery that the CDB was ever to take was their experiment with club farming.²³⁸ Even the financing of this acknowledged step towards co-operation²³⁹ caused rancour. To advance to crofters the sum necessary to purchase the sheep with no security other than the stock itself was, Sir Reginald MacLeod warned the Secretary for Scotland, to dismiss all idea of sound economy and business principles. It amounted to financing people from head to foot.²⁴⁰ Attitudes had certainly been hardened by Board experience, for two years previously the Under Secretary for Scotland had been happy to suggest for consideration at a future Board meeting the question of a grant - as distinct from a loan - for co-operative experiments in Glendale and South Uist, to include the expenses of a Co-operative expert, to visit, explain and inaugurate.²⁴¹ The attitude of Angus Sutherland, too, underwent an almost complete reversal. Fired with enthusiasm in 1902 for the co-operative ideal, he was forced to acknowledge to his colleagues with evident disappointment that

*I suppose this [matter] may be laid aside meantime; but I mean to take it up some day if at all possible.*²⁴²

He never would. Six years later he was harshly dismissive of those of his colleagues who supported Captain Sinclair and were still inclined to be favourably disposed to the setting up of co-op projects. Sutherland's impatience is evident in his hasty scrawl in the Board file.

*The thing is rubbish.... [but] let them go on with their 'schemes' for the hundred and first time.*²⁴³

The last word on the subject, however, belongs to that Board member who was eventually driven to observe drily that,

*if writing minutes could induce co-operation in the Congested Districts it would have been highly developed years ago.*²⁴⁴

Unfortunately, the force of the remark applied more generally to most spheres of Board activity during the run-up to 1912.²⁴⁵

At last, on 16th December 1911, Lord Pentland took his place with the four other peers, in red robes, who acted as the Commission to prorogue Parliament and give the Royal Assent first to the National Insurance Act, and then to the Small Landholders (Scotland) Act 1911; 'Le Roy le veult'. His children went to see the ceremony, and next day when their great-aunt, Lady Balfour of Burleigh, came to tea they caused considerable mirth by exclaiming joyfully 'The Land Bill's through!'; Lord Balfour of Burleigh having, of course, been such an inveterate antagonist of the Bill throughout.²⁴⁶ After entertaining the Scottish Office messenger staff, in a few days Pentland was off to Edinburgh, busy planning the appointments and other effects of the Act. To celebrate its passing, he invited people interested in agriculture all over Scotland to a party, and 1500 accepted the invitation. But the party never took place. Among the letters awaiting Lord Pentland on his return to London was one from the Prime Minister,

saying that he was convinced that the Scottish Secretary should be in the House of Commons, and proposing that on vacating his present post Pentland should assume that of Governor of Madras.²⁴⁷ The cancellation of the party was perhaps just as well. For in celebrating the passing of the Land Bill, it would have constituted also a wake for the CDB. And although the CDB was dead, the concept of a Highland Development Agency was merely lying dormant.

NOTES

1. John Sinclair's interest in scientific agriculture is discussed above at p 363-5. For the role envisaged for a new Board of Agriculture, see below p 386
2. See SRO AF 43/6/2, Memorandum regarding the Land Agitation in the Highlands and Islands since 1880, and the legislation following thereon, p 10, 12 and 16. This memo, prepared in the early part of 1906, forms part of a collection of similar memoranda filed under AF 43/6 relating to the various versions of the Small Landholders Bills 1906-11. Radicals were inclined to go further than the standard Government viewpoint, and to criticise "twenty years of inaction on the part of successive Governments". See The People's Journal, April 7, 1906, 'The Land Hunger in the Hebrides'
3. SRO AF 43/6/2, Memo re the Land Agitation in the Highlands since 1880, n d(? Spring 1906) p 6. The same sentiment is expressed also the following year. See SRO AF 43/6/3A, Notes for Speech on Introduction of the Small Landholders Bill, March 19, 1907, p 16
4. SRO AF 43/6/9A, Memo on the various Landholders Bills introduced and future policy, n d(? 1908) p 7. See also SRO AF 43/6/2, Memo re the Land Agitation in the Highlands since 1880, n d, p 6; and SRO AF 43/6/3A, Notes for Speech on Introduction of the Small Landholders Bill, March 19, 1907, p 10
5. SRO AF 43/6/2, Memo re the Land Agitation in the Highlands since 1880, n d, p 7
6. See, for example, Glasgow Herald, June 20, 1902; SRO AF 43/6/1, Memo by Sheriff Brand to Captain Sinclair, MP, as to the Crofters Holdings (Scotland) Act 1886 and amending Acts, and also with regard to the Land Question generally in Scotland and the Congested Districts (Scotland) Act 1897, August 25, 1903, p 12; Oban Times, July 1, 1905, 'Parliament and the Highlands', Report of House of Commons debate. The leading protagonist of amalgamation of the CDB with the Crofters Commission was John Dewar, Radical Liberal MP for Inverness-shire, whose constituency included some of the most congested parts of the Highlands, namely Harris, the Uists and Barra.
7. See SRO AF 43/6/1, Memo by Sheriff Brand to Captain Sinclair MP as to the Crofters Holdings (Scotland) Act 1886, August 25, 1903, p 12
8. Glasgow Herald, June 20, 1902
9. See SRO AF 43/6/1, Memo by Sheriff Brand to Captain Sinclair MP as to the Crofters Holdings (Scotland) Act 1886 and amending Acts, and also with regard to the Land Question generally in Scotland and the Congested Districts (Scotland) Act 1897, August 25, 1903, p 12

10. SRO AF 43/6/1, Memo by Sheriff Brand to Captain Sinclair MP as to the Crofters Holdings Act 1886, August 25, 1903, p 12
11. SRO AF 43/6/1, Memo by Sheriff Brand to Captain Sinclair MP as to the Crofters Holdings Act 1886, August 25, 1903, p 12-13. Brand cited the example of the Report on the Social Condition of the People of Lewis prepared by the Crofters Commission in 1902 for the information of the Congested Districts Board at the request of Lord Balfour.
12. SRO AF 43/6/2, Memo regarding the Land Agitation in the Highlands since 1880, n d, p 7. As was observed at a later stage, in the case of the Congested Districts Board, there was an urgent requirement at the very least to get ^{rid} of "a name which in many of its operations is an egregious misnomer". See Memo with reference to the Crofting Parishes (Scotland) Bill introduced to the House of Lords by Lord Lovat, August 30, 1909, p 10. The House of Lords was to become the focus for opposition to Sinclair's Land Bills, not simply on the part of the large Tory majority there, but also on the part of right-wing Liberals desperately seeking to reconcile their politics with their personal interests. For a background to the various Scottish and English Land Bills - some of the former were based upon the latter - see J Brown, 'Scottish and English Land Legislation 1905-1911', Scottish Historical Review, 47 (1968) 73-85; also SRO AF 43/6/9A, Memo on the various Landholders Bills introduced and future policy, n d, passim.
13. For example, in some cases appeals against decisions by single Commissioners (by statute heard by three Commissioners) remained unheard for more than twelve months. See Memo by Sheriff Brand to Captain Sinclair MP, as to the Crofters Holdings Act 1886, August 25, 1903, p 12
14. SRO AF 43/6/2 Memo re the Land Agitation in the Highlands since 1880, p 7
15. See, for example, Glasgow Times, July 1, 1905, 'Parliament and the Highlands', Report of House of Commons Debate; also above p 340-3
16. SRO AF 43/6/2, Memo re the Land Agitation in the Highlands since 1880, p 7-8
17. Glasgow Times, July 1, 1905, 'Parliament and the Highlands', Report of House of Commons Debate, quoting Messrs Munro-Ferguson and Caldwell respectively. These received strong support from their fellow Liberals, who deplored the absence from the House of the then Secretary for Scotland, the Marquess of Linlithgow, who (necessarily) sat in the Upper House. The transcript of the debate is located in Hansard Fourth Series (147) 1905 cols. 1378-9

18. A speaker at a Scottish Chamber of Agriculture conference in Glasgow in December 1909 had observed, half in jest and half seriously, that the part of Scotland where agriculture was in the most backward condition was the wide area geographically over whose farming the Secretary for Scotland, in his capacity as Chairman of the CDB, presided, and he used this as an argument why any new Department of Agriculture should not have the Secretary for Scotland as its head. Commenting on these observations, the Oban Times had confirmed that "the Secretary for Scotland has duties of such a numerous and multifarious character placed on his shoulders that no man - be he who he may - is able to bear them satisfactorily." (December 8, 1909). Sinclair's wife certainly agreed with this statement, and Sinclair himself would have known the criticisms of having the Scottish Secretary as CDB Chairman put forward by his own Party in 1897. See above p 347-8 and associated footnotes and p 191-4
19. SRO AF 43/6/2, Memo re the Land Agitation in the Highlands since 1880, p 8
20. Magnus Magnusson, 'Highland Administration', in D S Thomson and I Grimble, The Future of the Highlands (London, 1968) 273
21. Memo re the Land Agitation in the Highlands since 1880, n d, p 8
22. See SRO AF 43/6/2, Memo re the Land Agitation in the Highlands since 1880, n d, p 8
23. Certainly in terms both of function and area of operations, the name Congested Districts Board would be a complete misnomer, if it was not one already. See above n 12
24. SRO AF 43/6/2, Memo re the Land Agitation in the Highlands since 1880, n d, p 8-9
25. See SRO AF 43/6/2. Memo re the Land Agitation in the Highlands since 1880, n d, p 9. A similar conclusion had, of course, been drawn by the Destitution Relief Board half a century earlier. See above p 70-1
26. SRO AF 43/6/2, Memo re the Land Agitation in the Highlands since 1880, n d, p 9
27. The concern was altogether justified since the transformation of the rural poor into the urban poor was to coincide with the rise of the Labour Party at the expense of the Liberals.
28. SRO AF 43/6/2, Memo re the Land Agitation in the Highlands since 1880, n d, p 10

29. A summary of the results of the 1901 Census, as they applied to rural Scotland, is provided in SRO AF 43/6/2, Memo re the Land Agitation in the Highlands since 1880, n d, 12-13
30. See SRO AF 43/6/2, Memo re the Land Agitation in the Highlands since 1880, n d, p 13; also Lady Pentland, Memoir of Lord Pentland (London, 1928) 84-5
31. Quoted but not referenced in Pentland (1928) 85
32. See SRO AF 43/6/2, Memo re the Land Agitation in the Highlands since 1880, n d, p 10
33. SRO AF 43/6/2, Memo re the Land Agitation in the Highlands since 1880, n d, p 10
34. SRO AF 43/6/2, Memo re the Land Agitation in the Highlands since 1880, n d, p 11
35. See SRO AF 43/6/2, Memo re the Land Agitation in the Highlands since 1880, n d, p 11; also Ober Times, May 12, 1906. Although it left the cottar problem unsolved, from the time of the passing of the Crofters Act of 1886, there had been a gradual decline in lawlessness in the Highlands, interrupted by a spell of cottar insurgence in the Long Island, principally on the Matheson estate in Lewis, in 1888. See above p 148 and associated n 248, and p150-1
36. See SRO AF 43/6/2, Memo re the Land Agitation in the Highlands since 1880, n d, p 11-12
37. See SRO AF 43/6/2, Memo re the Land Agitation in the Highlands since 1880, n d, 12
38. See above Chapter Four, Section (ii)
39. Progress in Lewis had proved impossible without the compulsory powers needed to tackle the Matheson stranglehold, just as Liberals had said it would when the CDB was set up. See above p 195-6
40. See above p 329
41. In any case success on Lady Gordon Cathcart's Estate of South Uist and Barra was only partial, and achieved at the cost of disproportionate effort on the Board's part. See below p 412
42. i.e. the problem of stopping the drift of population away from the Highland counties which would confront the Highlands and Islands Development Board on its establishment in 1965
43. SRO AF 43/6/2. Memo re the Land Agitation in the Highlands since 1880, n d, p 12

44. See Pentland (1928) 87
45. See Pentland (1928) 86 and 87
46. SRO AF 43/6/2, Memo re the Land Agitation in the Highlands since 1880, n d, p 15. These were two points of five which Sinclair considered as being of importance. He observed also that the experimental land purchase schemes of the CDB had not so far, in any case, been either successful or encouraging; that the system of land purchase was fundamentally incompatible with club farming, which was highly desirable; and that, except in extreme cases, purchase was unlikely to be required to effect the purpose he had in view.
47. See SRO AF 43/6/2, Memo re the Land Agitation in the Highlands since 1880, n d, p 15-16; also Pentland (1928) 85-6
48. See Pentland (1928) 88-9; also SRO AF 43/6/9A. Memo on the various Landholders Bills introduced and future policy, n d (?1908) p1. The original text is located in Hansard Fourth Series 162 (1906) cols. 257-266
49. SRO AF 43/6/9A, Memo on the various Landholders Bills, n d, p 14
50. See Pentland (1928) 89; also, for example, SRO AF 43/6/3A, Notes for Speech on Introduction of the Small Landholders Bill, March 19, 1907, passim; and SRO AF 43/6/9A Memo on the various Landholders Bills, n d, passim
51. See Pentland (1928) 89
52. John Sinclair and Lord Lansdowne respectively, both quoted in Pentland (1928) 89
53. See Pentland (1928) 89. The position adopted by the Scotsman in the matter was, of course, quite in keeping with the previous record of that newspaper on crofter-landlord matters.
54. See Pentland (1928) 89-90. Elsewhere the number of days in the Scottish Grand Committee is recorded as twenty-two. See SRO AF 43/6/9A, Memo on the various Landholders Bills, n d, p 1
55. Quoted but not referenced in Pentland (1928) 90. See also SRO AF 43/6/9A, Memo on the various Landholders Bills, n d, p 1
56. Arthur Balfour, quoted in Pentland (1928) 90
57. Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, quoted in Pentland (1928) 90

58. Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman was to die the following Spring after two months of illness
59. Lord Rosebery and H H Asquith respectively, both quoted in Pentland (1928) 90
60. For Sinclair it would mean the sacrifice of his political career, so the epithet is apt. See below p 395-7
61. Lord Balfour liked to give himself the credit for doing for Scotland what his namesake had achieved in Ireland. See above p 161
62. See Pentland (1928) 90; and SRO AF 43/6/9A, Memo on the various Landholders Bills, n d, p1
63. Pentland (1928) 90
64. See SRO AF 43/6/9A, Memo on the various Landholders Bills introduced and future policy, n d (? April, 1908) p 1-2; Pentland (1928) 90-91
65. Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, quoted in Pentland (1928) 91
66. See Pentland (1928) 91; and SRO AF 43/6/9A, Memo on the various Landholders Bills, n d, p 1-2
67. Lord Loreburn, quoted in Pentland (1928) 91. It is interesting to speculate upon what Lord Loreburn would have made of the results, three quarters of a century later, of the 1983 General Election, when a 'landslide' victory was claimed on the basis of a reduced proportion of the electorate
68. See SRO AF 43/6/9A, Memo on the various Landholders Bills introduced and future policy, n d, p 2
69. See Pentland (1928) 92; Brown (1968) 83. It was in order to consider what course now to take to ensure the expeditious passage of a Land Bill, that Asquith had Sinclair prepare in Spring of 1908 the Memo on the various Landholders Bills introduced and future policy. See SRO AF 43/6/9A
70. Pentland (1928) 92
71. See Pentland (1928) 92, and above n 12
72. John Sinclair to David Wilkie, Constituency Chairman, Forfarshire Liberals, January 27, 1909, quoted in Pentland (1928) 92
73. Pentland (1928) 93
74. See Pentland (1928) 93

75. George Younger to John Sinclair, January 28, 1909, quoted in Pentland (1928) 94-5
76. Quoted but not referenced in Pentland (1928) 94
77. Quoted but not referenced in Pentland (1928) 93; Lady Frances Balfour, A Memoir of Lord Balfour of Burleigh (London, 1924) 74
78. See SRO AF 43/6/4, Memo on Lord Balfour's criticisms of 1906 Bill, n d, passim. This document took the form of a detailed discussion of ten separate points raised by Lord Balfour, and answers to these criticisms.
79. SRO AF 43/6/9A, Memo on the various Landholders Bills introduced and future policy, n d, p 2 and p 7-15. See also above n 12 for an explanation of the context of opposition to the Bill
80. SRO AF 43/6/9A, Memo on the various Landholders Bills introduced and future policy, n d, p 6; see also Memo p13
81. See Pentland (1928) 95. The elections were precipitated by the constitutional crisis arising from the impossibility of Liberal Government in the face of a deeply entrenched Conservative majority in the Lords, so that all Commons measures - not only the Land Bills - were constantly blocked or amended beyond recognition in the Upper House. See David Thomson, England in the Nineteenth Century (Harmondsworth, 1950) 184-5
82. Quoted but not referenced in Pentland (1928) 95
83. See Pentland (1928) 95-6; also Thomson (1950) 184-5
84. For example, where the landlord had done the improvements, the leaseholder could remain as a 'statutory small tenant'. See Pentland (1928) 96
85. Lord Pentland to Lady Pentland, July 23, 1911, quoted in Pentland (1928) 96
86. See Pentland (1928) 96; Thomson (1950) 185. The diehard wing of the Unionist Party, led by Lord Willoughby de Broke and Austen Chamberlain, wanted to force the Liberals to carry out the threat of asking the new King (George V) to create over 400 new peers to swamp the Lords, but the idea was clearly ridiculous.
87. Pentland (1928) 96
88. See Pentland (1928) 96-7

89. Sheriff Kennedy to Lord Pentland, n d, (? December 1911) quoted in Pentland (1928) 97. Neil Kennedy had succeeded the late Sir David Brand as Chairman of the Crofter Commission and had continued the Liberal tradition of that office.
90. See above p 397
91. CDB, Ninth Report (1907) v
92. CDB, Ninth Report (1907) v
93. See CDB, Ninth Report (1907) v
94. CDB, Ninth Report (1907) v
95. For the circumstances of the delay see above Section (i)
96. J P Day, Public Administration in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland (London, 1918) 212. Or as Kellas has, more recently, described the position, the Board's activities were "paralysed". See James G Kellas, Modern Scotland (London, 1980) 155
97. See CDB, Eighth Report (1906) x; also above p 354-7
98. CDB, Eighth Report (1906) xii-xiii
99. CDB, Ninth Report (1907) xii. The suspicions referred to had been made public in the previous year's report, as follows: "we have some reason to doubt whether crofters are really desirous of becoming the owners of the holdings they occupy Accordingly, we embarked upon our recent extensive purchases of estates ... with some hesitation." CDB, Eighth Report (1906)x; see also above p 356
100. See CDB, Ninth Report (1907) xii. The great majority were lodged by the tenants themselves, but in some cases where it was found that some of the crofters of a township had not petitioned, the Board lodged the applications on behalf of the remaining crofts in that township.
101. See CDB, Tenth Report (1908) vi
102. Scotsman, May 29, 1908
103. See CDB, Eleventh Report (1909) vii
104. See Scotsman, May 29, 1908
105. Scotsman, May 29, 1908

106. Scotsman, May 29, 1908. In fact, although Kilmuir is to this day owned by the Secretary for Scotland on behalf of the Government and tenanted by crofters who pay a fair rent for their holdings, the 'experiment' is remarkable neither for its astonishing success nor its abject failure.
107. See CDB, Eighth Report (1906) xiii
108. Arrears for 1907 are calculated on the basis of figures presented in CDB, Tenth Report (1908) Appendix XII, Expenditure of Board on Land Schemes up to March 31, 1908. See also Day (1918) 215. For details of earlier problems on Barra, see above p 340 and below p 111
109. Day (1918) 215. This succinct expression is J P Day's shorthand for the Board's own rather laborious description of the required standard of building. See CDB, Seventh Report (1905) ix
110. CDB, Fifth Report (1903) ix
111. See CDB, Seventh Report (1905) ix; also Day (1918) 215. Because of the large number of unsuccessful applicants for the holdings in Barra when they were originally allocated, the Board had foreseen trouble - in the form of sub-division, squatting and overstocking - from the start. See above p 340. The failure to comply with the housing requirement was just another manifestation of the widespread poverty, since time spent building a new house constituted time not spent earning a living to support a family.
112. See CDB, Tenth Report (1908) Appendix XII, Expenditure of Board on Land Schemes up to March 31, 1908
113. Arrears at 1912 are calculated on the basis of figures supplied in CDB, Fourteenth Report (1912) Appendix V, Expenditure of Board on Land Schemes up to March 31, 1912; see also CDB Fourteenth Report (1912) viii and xii. Unfortunately the form of presentation of the accounts is not identical to that employed for 1907, so that comparison can be approximate only. Twenty-four of the fifty-eight Barra settlers had already applied for a change of tenure in 1906-7. At that date the proposal was ruled to be incompetent under the powers given to the Board by the Act. See CDB, Ninth Report (1907) xiii
114. See Scotsman, May 29, 1908
115. In other words, the solution of the land problem might be a necessary condition for Highland development, but it was not a sufficient one. Furthermore, although the CDB was created with the express object of breaking the vicious circle of destitution and dole dependence, it lacked the powers to achieve the

former conditions for development - land settlement - and the funds to achieve the latter - agricultural and industrial development.

116. See SRO AF 42/5034, Minute by Angus Macintosh, Land Manager, re Club Stock at Kilmuir New Settlement, October 9, 1908. Operating on the ground as he was, Mackintosh was much more in tune with the realities of the crofter existence than the Board members in Edinburgh, and was thus more concerned with practicalities, than with politics
117. SRO AF 42/5034, R R Macgregor to Neil Kennedy, December 3, 1908
118. The figures are 8% for Glendale, and 11% for Syre, and are calculated on the basis of information from CDB, Fourteenth Report (1912) xii. The disproportionate burden for the Glendale settlers at the outset might have been expected to ease with the passage of time, as the financial advantage deriving from a complete sheep stock progressively outweighed the disadvantage of paying a lower annuity.
119. As the Destitution Relief Board had observed half a century earlier, "to reconstruct the social system is a slow, protracted and difficult process", not least in a region where, as an eminent historian has it, "the grim facts of economic geography have, time and time again, defeated the good intentions of planners". T C Smout, A History of the Scottish People 1560-1830 (London, 1972) 337; for a discussion of the achievements of the Destitution Relief Board, see above Chapter 1, Section (iii) Part (c)
120. See Board of Agriculture for Scotland, First Report (1913) xviii
121. The Scotsman, thirled to political dogma as it was, would scarcely be able to comprehend such an action.
122. See CDB, Third Report (1901) xi. The Board had, in any case, embarked upon this project in the first place only with the greatest of hesitation. See above p271-3
123. See CDB, Fifth Report (1903) xii; and associated Appendices III, Notice as to Feus for Fishermen's Dwellings near Stornoway, and IV, Particulars of the Conditions on which Feus in the Battery Field at Stornoway may be obtained by Lewis Fishermen
124. See CDB, Sixth Report (1904) xiii-xiv
125. CDB, Eighth Report (1906) xv
126. See CDB, Eighth Report (1906) xvi

127. See CDB, Eighth Report (1906) xv
128. See CDB, Eighth Report (1906) xvi
129. CDB, Twelfth Report (1910) xvii
130. See above p 272-3 and 279-80; and CDB, Fourteenth Report (1910)x. A glance at the situation on the Board's own property at Eoligarra in Barra, where more than half of the plots constituted 'fishermen's holdings' might have reassured the Commissioners somewhat, although it would not have eradicated their doubts. There an early high level of arrears of 36% at 1907 was reduced to a more palatable 19% by 1912. See above p 403
131. CDB, Twelfth Report (1910) xvii
132. Adam Collier, The Crofting Problem (Cambridge, 1953) 25. The Taylor Commission almost simultaneously with Collier, and many commentators since, have described crofting similarly. See Report of the Commission of Enquiry into Crofting Conditions, Parliamentary Papers (1953-4) VIII, 9; and, for example, Farquhar Gillanders, 'The Economic Life of Gaelic Scotland Today', in D S Thomson and I Grimbale, The Future of the Highlands (London, 1968) 100-101
133. Collier (1953) 25
134. See Collier (1953) 35; and above p 259-60; 275-6 and 401-402
135. See above Chapter Three, Section (ii)
136. See above p 365. Maintenance and extension of the status quo was, of course, actively sought in terms of the legal status of the crofter, enjoying security of tenure and safeguarded from rack-renting. Yet the idea of change and development was embodied in the very title of the proposed legislation, which did not refer to the crofter but to the 'small landholder'.
- 136a. See above Chapters Three to Five passim, and below p 420-1
137. For a discussion of the dual economy hypothesis and the modernisation solution, see below Chapter Seven
138. CDB, Twelfth Report (1910) xvii
139. SRO AF 42/5876, Minute by Angus Sutherland re formation of club stock, February 22, 1909; SRO AF 42/5034, Angus Sutherland to R R MacGregor re proposed formation of club stock, August 5, 1908
140. CDB, Ninth Report (1907) xiii
141. CDB, Ninth Report (1907) xiii

142. CDB, Thirteenth Report (1911) xiii. In order to avoid potential accusations of handing out doles, the Commissioners had made it plain from an early date that "this is the real justification for such interference with ordinary commercial processes". (CDB, Eighth Report (1906) xxiv). The idea of running a steamer at a loss for a time as an investment for the future had, in fact, been proposed as early as 1904. (See SRO AF 42/1785, Memo by Malcolm McNeill, March 22, 1904)
143. CDB, Tenth Report (1908) xvi-xvii
144. CDB, Tenth Report (1908) xvi-xvii; CDB, Twelfth Report (1910) xvii; CDB, Thirteenth Report (1911) xiii-xiv; CDB, Fourteenth Report (1912) xix. The Destitution Relief Commissioners of half a century earlier would have been interested to know that the Cairloch-Kyle run took in the port of call of Badachro, for which they had held out high hopes as a fishing station. See above p 69
145. CDB, Ninth Report (1907) xvii
146. CDB, Twelfth Report (1910) xvii. The Commissioners' definition of what constituted a "reasonable time" for subsidies to continue to be granted was never specified so that a period of, for example, five years, while appearing eminently 'reasonable', without such a definition, was easily reinterpreted as "an indefinite series of years".
147. See CDB, Tenth Report (1908) iv; and CDB, Eleventh Report (1909) iv. See also above p 292-3 and p 384-6
148. Apart from his duties as Secretary for Scotland, Sinclair was heavily involved in drafting his Land Bill. The routine work at the CDB was overseen for Pentland by the Under Secretary for Scotland, Reginald MacLeod, who as an official, as distinct from a politician, would scarcely seek to increase his existing huge workload by innovation at the CDB, even if he had the authority.
149. CDB, Tenth Report (1908) xvi. This was no more than the public announcement of the private conclusion arrived at some two years earlier. "The demands upon the resources at the disposal of the Board are such as to make it utterly impossible for them to assume this new duty unless placed in funds especially for the purpose." (SRO AF 42/9696, draft 'Scottish Office letter' as to Board making loans to fishermen, Sir Reginald MacLeod on behalf of the Secretary for Scotland to? Treasury, n d, ? Spring 1906)
150. See above p 268; and CDB, Tenth Report (1908) xxiii

151. CDB, Tenth Report (1908) xxiii
152. CDB, Tenth Report (1908) xxiii
153. From an early date the Commissioners had "often urged that little local organizations should be formed for the proper marketing of [rural] commodities" such as eggs and honey, but by their Tenth Report they were forced to admit that "we have not found it possible to bring about co-operation of the kind". In respect of poultry rearing it was hypothesised that prejudice against an activity widely construed as 'women's work' meant that crofters considered it "hardly worthy of serious and systematic attention". SR0 42/5218, A Horne, CDB Clerical Assistant to James Forsyth, Convener of Agricultural Committee, August 5, 1908; and CDB, Tenth Report (1908) xv. See also CDB, Sixth Report (1904) xvii
154. CDB, Eleventh Report (1909) iv. Just because of his enthusiasm for scientific agriculture, Sinclair had to find out the hard way what Balfour had found out before him, that "a local man with a little enthusiasm is of much more use than any lecturer". CDB, Fifth Report (1903) xx
155. See CDB, Tenth Report (1908) iv and xxvi; Eleventh Report (1909) xxvii; Twelfth Report (1910) xxvi
156. See CDB, Eleventh Report (1909) xii-xiii and xxvii; CDB, Twelfth Report (1910) xii-xiii
157. For a discussion of the problems encountered by the Board in the area of public works, see above p 264-7. For an examination of earlier problems on the Home Industries front, see above p 268-9; for evidence of their resurfacing, see, for example, SR0 AF 42/1895, CDB Commissioners' comments upon a Report by the Committee on Home Industries in Lewis and Harris. The flavour of the disagreement is conveyed by the contrast between William Mackenzie's frustration at "a great population of valuable men and women kept.... away from other more remunerative employments, to earn pittance" (February 22, 1904) and James Forsyth's wholehearted approval of progress, derived from his philosophy that "I would do all I could to make them [crofters] self-helpful" (August 24, 1904). See also CDB, Eighth Report (1906) xxxiv. For the announcement of the appointment of Dr (later Professor) W R Scott, see CDB Fourteenth Report (1912) xxix; the resultant report of 165 pages and additional appendices was published in 1914 as Cd. 7564 but is also located in Parliamentary Papers (1914) XXXII

158. The Oban Times actually used this expression. At any rate the Vatersay 'story' constituted one of those acutely embarrassing affairs for Government, which, enjoying exhaustive press coverage, simmers and subsequently explodes, to the chagrin of the former and the delight of the latter.
159. For the circumstances of this situation in Lewis and the conditions of life in the Long Island associated with it see above p 191-195 and p 388-9; also Oban Times, May 12, 1906
160. SRO AF 43/6/3, Memo by Sir Reginald MacLeod, Under Secretary for Scotland, on the 1906 Bill, January 5, 1907, p 8. This memo was prepared in the form of notes on the Landholders Bill of 1906 for the consideration of Sinclair, before he determined the precise formulation of the 1907 version.
161. See above p 173-5; see also J P Day, Public Administration in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland (London, 1918) 215-6
162. Parliamentary Papers (1908) LXXXVIII, Correspondence between Lady Gordon Cathcart and the Secretary for Scotland and the Lord Advocate with reference to the occupation of Vatersay by Squatters, and proposed arrangements in that Island (House of Commons Paper 91), Appendix III, Memo on the Previous Transactions between the Congested Districts Board and Lady Gordon Cathcart in Barra and Vatersay, 36; see also Correspondence re Vatersay, Skene, Edwards and Garson to Reginald MacLeod, Under Secretary for Scotland, September 9, 1907, 4-7; and above p 330
163. See above p 340
164. See CDB, Final Report (1912) viii; Parliamentary Papers (1908) LXXXVIII, Correspondence re Vatersay, Skene, Edwards and Garson to Reginald MacLeod, June 27, 1906 and September 9, 1907, 3-5; also Correspondence re Vatersay, Appendix III, Memo on the Previous Transactions, 36-39 (especially Duncan Campbell, Cottar spokesman, Barra, to R R MacGregor, Secretary, CDB, April 17, 1905, and R R MacGregor to Duncan Campbell, April 22, 1905)
165. See Parliamentary Papers (1908) LXXXVIII, Correspondence re Vatersay, Appendix III, Memo on the Previous Transactions, 38-39
166. See CDB, Eighth Report (1906) xiv; Parliamentary Papers (1908) LXXXVIII, Correspondence re Vatersay, Appendix III, Memo on the Previous Transactions, 38

167. See Parliamentary Papers (1908) LXXXVIII, Correspondence re Vatersay, Skene, Edwards and Garson to Reginald MacLeod, September 9, 1907, 5-6. For a different source of the same information see Crofting Files, AF 67/134, Police Reports, Barra, June to November, 1906, as quoted in Hunter's retelling of the Vatersay story. See James Hunter, The Making of the Crofting Community (Edinburgh, 1976) 190
168. See Parliamentary Papers (1908) LXXXVIII, Correspondence re Vatersay, Appendix II, Report to Secretary for Scotland from John Wilson, Sheriff of Inverness-shire, on visit to Vatersay, May 23, 1907, 35-6
169. Oban Times, July 2, 1910
170. Scotsman, February 26, 1909. See also Parliamentary Papers (1908) LXXXVIII, Correspondence re Vatersay, Skene, Edwards and Garson to Reginald MacLeod, September 9, 1907, 7
171. J P Day, Public Administration in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland (London, 1918) 216. Day provides an excellent summary of the relevant Correspondence covering the period September 9 to December 31, 1907, and reprinted in Parliamentary Papers (1908) LXXXVIII, 4-21, as follows. Lady Cathcart's position was, that it was unfair and unreasonable to impose upon her the expense and loss - including the burden of compensating a tenant she had no wish to remove - incident to carrying out a policy which she thought unsuitable, inexpedient, and most likely to result in failure. The Government's position was that they were not responsible for the Vatersay difficulties, but only intervened as offering the assistance of the CDB if the proprietrix chose to accept their policy of settling a limited number of tenants upon the island.
172. See Scotsman, February 26, 1909; Oban Times, March 6, 1909
173. See Scotsman, February 26, 1909. It is not easy to provide an objective summary of the Vatersay episode. As the Oban Times commented at the time, not only was it the case that "history has been made to narrate which fully would occupy no little space", but it was also true that "were the history told impartially, a variety of people might be laid open to criticism". (March 6, 1909) The pro-landlord Scotsman was, inevitably, unduly critical of Sinclair, while anti-landlord historian James Hunter (1976) is probably overly generous in his praise of the handling of the whole matter by Sinclair, "whose sympathies lay with the cottars" (191). The Oban Times undoubtedly made the single unassailable statement concerning the affair, when it concluded that "we must give Lord Pentland credit

for his courage in adopting a method of dealing with the question which both in his correspondence with Lady Cathcart and in his statements in Parliament he repeatedly declared that he would not even consider". (March 6, 1909)

174. Scotsman, February 26, 1909
175. Scotsman, February 26, 1909
176. Balfour (1924) 71 and 73
177. SRO AF 43/6/2, Memorandum regarding the Land Agitation in the Highlands and Islands since 1880, and the legislation following thereon, n d, p15
178. Oban Times, March 6, 1909
179. Oban Times, March 6, 1909
180. Oban Times, July 2, 1910
181. Scotsman, February 26, 1909
182. Scotsman, June 29, 1910
183. Oban Times, July 2, 1910
184. Oban Times, July 2, 1910
185. See Oban Times, July 2, 1910
186. Oban Times, July 2, 1910
187. The press as a whole, with the exception of the pro-landlord press epitomised by the Scotsman tended to use the cry of poverty somewhat indiscriminately as a convenient explanation for crofter non-co-operation and Board lack of progress generally. (See above p 278-9 and p 294-6). That crofters were a deprived group there can be no dispute, but to what extent lack of progress was attributable to financial hardship alone, as opposed to other factors such as longstanding repression of initiative owing to lack of opportunity, inadequate education, impaired health, and other conditions linked to a history of landlord oppression, is unclear
188. Oban Times, July 2, 1910
189. Scotsman, June 29, 1910
190. Oban Times, July 2, 1910
191. Scotsman, June 26, 1910
192. Scotsman, June 26, 1910
193. Oban Times, July 2, 1910

194. Oban Times, July 2, 1910
195. Oban Times, July 2, 1910
196. Items on agricultural co-operation derived from a variety of press sources seem to have been fairly systematically filed and circulated. See, for example, SRO AF 42/707 (1900); AF 42/1061 (1902); AF 42/3509 (1906); AF 42/5245 (1908); AF 42/7096 (1910)
197. Some implications of this parallel are examined in Alison McCleery, 'The Persistence of Co-operation as a Theme in Marginal Development' in J Sewel and D O'Cearbhaill, Co-operation and Community Development (Galway, 1982) 1-21
198. See Pentland (1928) 109; W L Micks, History of the Irish Congested Districts Board (Dublin 1925) 15
199. SRO AF 42/5008, R R MacGregor, on behalf of Board Chairman, to R A Anderson, Secretary, Irish Agricultural Organisation Society (IAOS), May 9, 1908, re Scheme for establishing land banks and co-operative societies in the Highlands
200. See SRO AF 42/5008, R R MacGregor to R A Anderson, May 9, 1908
201. SRO AF 42/5008, R A Anderson, on behalf of Sir Horace Plunkett and Executive Committee of IAOS, to R R MacGregor, May 28, 1908
202. See H F Campbell, Highland Reconstruction (Glasgow, 1920) 97-99. The SAOS began its operations only in 1906-7 and prior to that "progress in the Highlands was trifling". (p 98)
203. Scotsman, May 27, 1910
204. Scotsman, May 27, 1910
205. The differences between Ireland and Scotland, which hinged upon the fundamental distinction between an arable and a pastoral economy, were not lost upon the Chairman of the Board's Agricultural Committee, who, in pointing these out to his colleagues, no doubt increased their hesitation in the matter. See SRO AF 42/1061, James Forsyth to R R MacGregor, January 28, 1902. For some details of the rather disappointing outcomes of co-operative efforts in Ireland up to 1922, see McCleery (1982) 9-10
206. See Scotsman, May 27, 1910
207. For details of the HIDB co-operative programme, see, for example, Angus MacLeod, 'Highland Board find a Philosophy', Scotsman, January 24, 1978; Sir Kenneth Alexander, 'The Work of the Highlands and Islands

Development Board with particular reference to the Role of Education and Training', The Arkleton Lecture (HIDB Inverness, 1978) 15-16; R J Storey, 'Community Co-operatives - a Highlands and Islands Experiment' in J Sewel and D O'Cearbhaill, Co-operation and Community Development (Galway, 1982) 71-86; and Bryan MacGregor, 'Regional Planning in a Remote Area: the Highlands and Islands Development Board' in Town and Country Planning Summer School Report of Proceedings (RTPI, 1979) 21-22

208. See, for example SRO AF 42/1324, R R MacGregor to Dr Hansen, Bonn, July 29, 1902; and CDB, Fifth Report (1903) vi
209. These particular remarks, for example, were contained in a letter to the Editor of the Scotsman published on December 1, 1909, from a Stornoway resident, criticising existing Government attempts to assist Lewis. The sensitivity of the Board may be gauged from the fact that a cutting of the letter was circulated for comments. See SRO AF 42/6798, assorted memoranda
210. Scotsman, May 10, 1910
211. See, for example, SRO AF 42/200, Memos by David Brand, May 11, 1908 and Colin Scott Moncrieff, May 13, 1908
212. SRO AF 42/24, Skene, Edwards and Garson to R R MacGregor, March 7, 1899. Skene, Edwards and Garson were the Edinburgh-based legal agents for Lady Gordon Cathcart. See also SRO AF 42/100, James Howden CA to R R MacGregor, January 17, 1898. Howden acted as Curator for the lady proprietor of the east end of the island of Coll
213. SRO AF 42/9699, Sir Reginald MacLeod to R R MacGregor, February 12, 1907; SRO AF 42/9696, Sir Reginald MacLeod to Treasury (Draft on behalf of Secretary for Scotland for scrutiny by Lord Advocate) August 18, 1905
214. See SRO AF 42/1136, James Forsyth to R R MacGregor, March 9, 1902. Unfortunately this advice of Forsyth's was over-ruled by the counsel of Land Manager Angus Mackintosh, who, specifically in connection with co-operation, advised that "great caution must be exercised in organising societies until the people understand the system and its benefits and shew some desire for its adoption". (SRO AF 42/3509, Angus Mackintosh to R R MacGregor, November 29, 1906). Perhaps Mackintosh was just too close to crofters to be able to comprehend that his recommendation would simply perpetuate a chicken and egg situation.
215. SRO AF 42/1061, Angus Sutherland to R R MacGregor, January 10, 1902

216. Scotsman, January 6, 1902
217. Scotsman, January 6, 1902. The writer had evidently had access to material of Sir Horace Plunkett's, since his theme echoes closely a passage from Plunkett's Ireland in the New Century published in 1904. Possibly parts of the book appeared earlier in lecture or article form. See Plunkett (1904, re-issued New York, 1970) 199
218. Scotsman, January 6, 1902
219. See Pentland (1928) 84-6. To all but Sinclair, Highland under-development was still characterised by congestion, and the concern both of Highland MPs and Board members was that the CDB had failed adequately to get to grips with that condition, especially when compared with the achievement of the Irish Board. See, for example, Oban Times July 1, 1905, Report of House of Commons Debate; and CDB, Eighth Report (1906) xii
220. SRO AF 43/6/3, Memo by Sir Reginald MacLeod on 1906 Land Bill (for the information of John Sinclair, Secretary for Scotland) January 5, 1907, p 9
221. In other words producer co-operatives with their basis in an agricultural economy represented the antithesis of the industrial culture (which in any case had a quite separate tradition of worker co-ops) which the Board was seeking to foster. For details of the CDB's apprenticeship schemes, see above p 364-5 and p 410
222. The same policy of de-Gaelicisation was being pursued in Ireland. As Horace Plunkett observed in connection with that country, "it was a fatal policy, for it obviously tended to stamp their native country in the eyes of Irishmen with the badge of inferiority and to extinguish the sense of healthy self-respect which comes from the consciousness of..... ancestry and traditions." Plunkett (1904) 152
223. SRO AF 42/1895, James Forsyth to A Horne, CDB Clerical Assistant, August 24, 1904. Forsyth's view may be compared with that of his colleague Malcolm McNeill, who, with William Mackenzie, urged the Board to "try anything that may induce the surplus population to move to fields of remunerative industry - nothing that tends to retain them at home". (SRO AF 42/1895, Malcolm McNeill to A Horne, August 19, 1904; and see also William Mackenzie to R R MacGregor, February 22, 1904)
224. Occasionally this feeling was made explicit by Board members. For example, summing up the position of his colleagues on the question of loans to fishermen, Sir Reginald MacLeod wrote: "it has been argued that

the native [west coast] fishermen are not so enterprising as their competitors from other Districts and that it is therefore their own fault that they are not able to provide costly boats etc ". SRO AF 42/9696, Reginald MacLeod to Treasury (Draft on behalf of Secretary for Scotland for scrutiny by Lord Advocate) August 18, 1905; and see also associated memoranda by Board membership. This stance was bound to be reinforced by the views of correspondents such as Lady Gordon Cathcart. See above p 280-282

225. See above p 408-10
226. SRO AF 42/3509, Angus Mackintosh to R R MacGregor, November 29, 1906. Much the same point was made three years later also by Angus Sutherland. "To investigate the matter [of co-operation] in Galway and Kerry, as I have done, would put another face on matters." SRO AF 42/5160, Minute by Angus Sutherland, March 29, 1909
227. SRO AF 42/1061, MacLeod of MacLeod to R R MacGregor, January 30, 1902
228. SRO AF 42/1061, Angus Sutherland to R R MacGregor, January 10, 1902
229. See above p293
230. See above p 409
231. SRO AF 42/5034, Memo as to Club Stocks by Donald Gillies, Farm Manager, Kilmuir, n d (? June 1908); SRO AF 42/3509, William Mackenzie to R R MacGregor, October 26, 1906 (see also AF 42/3509, Angus Mackintosh, Land Manager, Kilmuir, to R R MacGregor, November 29, 1906: "in my opinion the only thing to do is to educate the people, that they may understand and appreciate the benefits of co-operation"; SRO AF 42/5218, J Patten MacDougall to A Horne, CDB Clerical Assistant, August 18, 1908. A conflict inevitably remained between the "good moral and social effect" of co-operation, which lay in teaching people to trust and to stand by each other, and its all too obvious association with cultural revival, which was the antithesis of the Board's objective for the Congested Districts. See SRO AF 42/3509, Angus Mackintosh to R R MacGregor, November 29, 1906; and above n 221 and 222
232. SRO AF 42/5218, R R MacGregor to James Forsyth, October 14, 1908. Unusually, the Board Secretary was here exceeding his purely administrative role. By 1908 R R MacGregor was in a strong position to provide a very useful distillation of cumulative

file contents with which he was probably more familiar than were the Board members.

233. See SRO AF 42/5218, R R MacGregor to James Forsyth, October 14, 1908; and Reginald MacLeod to A Horne, CDB Clerical Assistant, November 18, 1908
234. SRO AF 42/1061, William Dunbar to R R MacGregor, January 22, 1902
235. SRO AF 42/1061, Angus Sutherland to R R MacGregor, January 10, 1902
236. SRO AF 42/5218, Neil Kennedy to R R MacGregor, September 15, 1908
237. See SRO AF 42/5160, Memo by J Patten MacDougall, March 26, 1909; and Minute by Angus Mackintosh, Land Manager, April 13, 1909. See also Glasgow Herald, March 25, 1909 for details of expanding activities of the SAOS
238. Glendale constituted a club farm almost by accident, but the Board was committed to the principle of club farming and, in the face of many difficulties, made strenuous efforts to establish club farming on a sound basis also at Kilmuir. See above p 357-361
239. SRO AF 42/5034, Memo as to Club Stocks by Donald Gillies, Farm Manager, Kilmuir, n d (? June 1908)
240. SRO AF 42/5034, Reginald MacLeod to John Sinclair, July 27, 1908; Reginald MacLeod to R R MacGregor, September 14, 1908
241. SRO AF 42/3509, Reginald MacLeod to R R MacGregor, n d, October, 1906
242. SRO AF 42/1061, Angus Sutherland to R R MacGregor, February 7, 1902
243. SRO AF 42/5218, Angus Sutherland to R R MacGregor, September 8, 1908
244. SRO AF 42/5218, Minute by Sir Reginald MacLeod, November 18, 1908
245. See above p 399-411 for details of how, in practical terms, Board activity was prejudiced by the knowledge of its transience, in the context of the Chairman's commitment to an alternative political solution.
246. See Pentland (1928) 126; and above p 392-8
247. See Pentland (1928) 126

CHAPTER SEVEN:
The Comparative Context

(i) The Twentieth-Century Background

If Lord Pentland early recognised that the problem of rural depopulation facing his Forfarshire constituency during the latter decades of the nineteenth century would presently come to afflict the then congested north-west Highlands,¹ he failed to grasp the significance of the time lag; a significance signalling the need for special status for the Highlands. The nature of that significance lay in the difference between farming and crofting and the margin of security separating the two; a margin which ensured that change, where the former was concerned, would be early, rapid and dislocating, and where the latter was concerned, would be late, slow and devastating.² In such circumstances it was inevitable that legislation formulated to suit mainstream agricultural areas was poorly adapted to suit marginal crofting areas. Very specific and negative protective legislation was exactly what was required for the former; but what was needed for the Highlands was a positive and thoroughly comprehensive scheme for developing their full resources. On the one hand the efforts of the many public departments then responsible for agriculture, fishing, transport, electricity, mines, health etc. were quite uncoordinated; on the other hand the efforts of benevolent private landlords such as Lord Leverhulme, even had they succeeded, were piecemeal and could not adequately fill the vacuum.³

As a young man William Lever had taken a summer cruise round the north coast of Scotland with his wife. The ship had reached Stornoway on a brilliant August afternoon and the passengers spent some five hours ashore. The year was 1884 and the island was going through a period of acute economic distress. Though there could have been little for the party of forty or so tourists either to see or do, the sunlit beauty of the Outer Hebrides made a lasting impression upon Lever. Indeed Lord Leverhulme - as he later became - possibly owed his entire business career to that holiday, since he registered his famous soap as 'Sunlight' within a few days of returning from the cruise.⁴

Lady Lever died in 1913, and shortly afterwards the Island of Lewis went on the market.⁵ When Lord Leverhulme learned of the sale, the memory of that wonderful holiday came flooding back. In a moment of sentimentality the hard-headed soap magnate purchased the island. But to Leverhulme, who had had a strict Congregational upbringing in industrial Lancashire, to fail to employ his God-given talents to rescue the islanders from what he regarded as the needless indignity of hardship and poverty, would have been to commit a terrible sin.⁶ Accordingly he set about the task which he presumed the Government might otherwise be hoping to achieve, that of introducing a *little daylight and advanced ideas into remainders from a bye-gone age.*⁷

The key to Leverhulme's development programme was technology, or as it was dubbed in those days, 'modern science'.⁸ He was prepared to invest a small fortune in the revitalisation of the island's fishing industry, and hoped that by providing superior opportunities he could induce Lewismen to abandon the crofting life of their own accord; for Lord Leverhulme was in no doubt, like others before him, that *crofting prevented a man from giving his full attention to what should be his proper job.*⁹ His plan might have worked, but for his obstinate insistence upon retaining two large farms near Stornoway to supply that town's prospective dairy requirements. He could have done without them; in any case, the crofters refused to allow him the opportunity of succeeding with them. For the immediate concern of the young islanders, back from four years in the trenches, was to turn the Government's promise of 'homes for heroes' into reality, and in Lewis that meant a home on a croft of their own.¹⁰ As one of them, then a young married man living with his wife at the back of his mother-in-law's house, explained years later:

*Most of us would have been willing to work in Lord Leverhulme's canning factory, but not yet.....*¹¹

And so, at a great public meeting in Stornoway, Leverhulme's glowing programme of industrial development and economic security was finally rejected by the crofters, whose point of view was incomprehensible to the 'Soap King'.¹²

T C Smout has observed that since the eighteenth century there have been men who would build cities the size of Liverpool in the Highlands. Leverhulme's memorial is Leverburgh in Harris, where he subsequently attempted to redeem his reputation in a virtual repetition of his Stornoway scheme.¹³ But the Leverburgh project was described as *a piece of moonstruck and hopeless foolishness* and, in any case, Leverhulme died before it really got off the ground.¹⁴ The handful of incongruous garden-city style houses belie the metropolitan-sounding nomenclature which still features on Ordnance Survey maps.¹⁵ If Lord Leverhulme achieved anything, it was to demonstrate that *Lewis and Harris have been too long the Cinderella in the Government pantomime*.¹⁶ Whether the islands did genuinely refuse to be industrialised remained to be seen; the debate about the most appropriate method of developing the Highlands as a whole would continue for many a long year. But what was becoming clear by 1925 was that the Highlands and especially the north-west Highlands and the islands, constituted not merely a rural, but specifically a marginal region.¹⁷

So it was that, less than twenty years after they had dismantled legislation which already embodied the concept of special status for the Highlands, the Liberals were pressing for the re-establishment of a Highland development authority. The Report of the Scottish Liberal Land Enquiry of 1927-28 on the Scottish Countryside devoted an entire chapter to the 'Highland Problem' and put forward as the solution the creation of a Highland Development Commission, a platform which was soon adopted as part of official Liberal Party policy. The proposals were subsequently embodied in 'The Highlands - a Liberal Plan for Development', a title in the 'Tartan Book' series

published on behalf of the Scottish Liberal Federation.¹⁸ It was suggested that the Highland Development Commission should be responsible for co-ordinating the work of the various public agencies in the Highlands and for preparing and carrying into effect a comprehensive resource development scheme. Given that the sort of economic development that it was envisaged the Commission would encourage was restricted mainly to the primary sector, with particular emphasis upon land settlement and reclamation, the similarity between the proposed Commission and the former Congested Districts Board was marked.¹⁹

Eight years earlier, H F Campbell in his book entitled Highland Reconstruction had also argued that to deal adequately with the economic problems of the Highlands, what was needed was a re-constituted Board possessing more elastic powers than the former Congested Districts Board. He continued:

*A body of specially constituted commissioners familiar with the Highlands would bring local knowledge and local sympathy to bear upon the business entrusted to them, and would be enabled to avoid many of the mistakes which in the past nullified attempts to solve the land question.*²⁰

Two years before Campbell, in his book on the problems of Highland administration J P Day, equally, acknowledged that:

*One comes, I think, to the conclusion that while the present system of public administration may be excellent for Lowland Scotland, and is tolerable for the mainland of the Highlands, it is not tolerable for the Orkneys, Shetlands, the Long Island, or Skye.....*²¹

And four years before Day, and less than two years after the winding up of the CDB, the Scotsman had argued in a leading article that special account would always have to be taken of the necessity of special treatment of the Highlands and Islands, on the grounds that the social and economic conditions there were neither suited to, nor could support, the elaborate system of public administration appropriate to

the wealthier and more densely populated Lowlands.²²

Throughout the 1930s there was continuing interest in the idea of special status for the Highlands. In January of 1936 the Highland Development League was formed at a large public meeting in Glasgow, and later that year a resolution was passed at its first annual delegate conference calling for the formation of an *administrative or central board for the Highlands*.²³ This proposal was again pressed upon all Parliamentary candidates in Scotland at the 1945 General Election. There were pamphlets by Hugh Quigley, Lachlan Grant, and Sir Alexander MacEwan and John Lorne Campbell of Canna. The latter constituted a critique of the 1939 Hilleary Report, and entitled ACT NOW for the Highlands and Islands contained a *stirring plea* for the creation of a Highland Development Board.²⁴ The function of the proposed Board would be to allocate additional grants for infrastructure development, set up training centres, organise co-operative schemes, carry out land settlement and reclamation, and generally to act in any other way which they [the Board members] may consider to be beneficial to both the economic and social life of the Highlands and Islands.²⁵

The remit of the semi-official Hilleary Committee, set up by the Scottish Economic Committee in consultation with the Secretary of Scotland, had been to examine economic conditions in the Highlands and Islands and the possibilities of development of local industries therein.²⁶ Its 1938 Report constituted the most comprehensive expression²⁷ of the idea of a Highland Development Board, proposing as it did the establishment of a Development Commission, independent of local authorities or central government, and with considerable discretionary powers to plan development and administer experimental schemes. County Councils were to take over responsibility for improving communications, identified as the largest single cause of depopulation. To this end grants would be forthcoming, as would subsidies for sea transport.

The Report advocated also the setting up of a central marketing agency, as well as increased technical training, including experimental and demonstration crofts. Achievement of a healthy agricultural sector was regarded as fundamental, requiring the extension of crofts - crofters being offered the opportunity to own their own land - and the development of ancillary activities such as poultry-rearing. This was to be paralleled with the development of forestry, with Government assistance to tourism, and with harnessing the economic potential of the latest technological marvel, that of hydro-electric power.²⁸

It has been stated by Williams that the Report added up to a fairly comprehensive scheme of development with emphasis on the experimental, and as such marked a *decisive turn away from the more limited 'crofter protection' approach that had hitherto characterised official policy.*²⁹ Yet it is probably more accurate to suggest that the proposal approximated much more to H F Campbell's vision of a re-constituted Congested Districts Board possessing enlarged powers, for it was the CDB which had truly marked the watershed between Highland doles and Highland development.³⁰ As in the case of the CDB, the proposed Highland Development Commission set great store by the development of an 'augmented' primary sector and placed proportionately less emphasis upon the development of manufacturing industry and tourism.³¹ As Williams has implied, that particular shift in emphasis - which had occurred by the time of the setting up of the Highlands and Islands Development Board quarter of a century later - demanded yet another philosophical reorientation on the part of policy-makers.³² That philosophical reorientation, in turn, was dependent upon changes in the underlying intellectual and political climate.³³

Meanwhile, the establishment in 1943 of the Hydro Board - as it came affectionately to be known - prompted another pamphlet from Hugh Quigley. In it he argued that the

*isolated scheme of producing electricity in the Highlands is no real effort to solve the problem of the area or its people.*³⁴ Quigley's own thesis that *the production of electricity must properly be part of a far greater scheme of rehabilitation*³⁵ is all the more interesting in that it depended wholly neither upon the modernisation of the farming sector, the approach favoured in the pre-war and inter-war climate of agricultural self-sufficiency, nor upon industrialisation and exchange, the approach favoured in ^{the} boom post-war years. It is a thesis which, relying as it does upon the importance of founding any development scheme upon the indigenous resources of the Highlands, would have found much favour with much more recent critics of early Highlands and Islands Development Board strategy, based as they saw it upon the 'dual economy' theory; critics who rejected the pursuit of modernisation and de-culturalisation in favour of the pursuit of community development and consciousness-raising.³⁶ Thirty years before the likes of Carter and Prattis, and without the advantage of hindsight, Quigley too realised, though not in so many words, that *the development of a marginal area involves changing its structure of integration with the dominant economic sector.*³⁷ As the New Alliance observed at the time:

*His thesis ... that the Highlander, and particularly the native, resident Highlander who is still part of his Highlands, is naturally anti-pathetic to industrialism is a thesis that is well supported by anthropology.*³⁸

What Quigley explained, which the neo-Quigleys do not, was how *the grim facts of economic geography*³⁹ - which as Professor Smout has observed constitute the root of the Highland 'problem' - were to be overcome, for economic viability is not founded upon ideology alone.⁴⁰

*The only way in which such people may be incorporated in an industrial society is by pursuing their own functions, receiving the economic subsidy necessary to them under such a system by the legitimate trade of tourism.*⁴¹

Quigley's solution would, no doubt, have appalled the purist modern school of community developers, which presumably eschews reliance upon tourism less on the grounds that it constitutes a 'soft option',⁴² than that it constitutes a mode of incorporation within the modern sector on terms of disadvantage to the marginal economy.⁴³ Yet, examined closely, the philosophy of development embraced by the present Highland Board in 1977, and greeted so enthusiastically by former critics, is not intrinsically different from Quigley's approach.

The author of that new look, Board Chairman from 1976 and academic economist Professor Kenneth Alexander,⁴⁴ had, even before the Board began operations in 1965, been responsible for the sort of statement which begins to look rather political, unless it is harmlessly buried, as in the case of Professor Smoul's observations, in a history book.⁴⁵

*Manufacturing industry can never provide the main field of employment in the Highlands. Distances that are too great and population densities that are not great enough, together prevent most industries from enjoying the internal and external economies of scale necessary for competitiveness.*⁴⁶

In the context of such a statement and in the light of Alexander's known preference for left of centre policy options,⁴⁷ it might indeed have seemed that the launching of the HIDB's co-op programme in 1977 constituted tacit acknowledgement that the Board had previously been going in the wrong direction.⁴⁸ It is, however, possible to place a different interpretation upon events; it is suggested that the new Chairman was motivated less by airy-fairy ideology than by a down-to-earth pragmatism which urged that any new approach to nurturing secondary and tertiary sector activities in the most 'fragile' parts of the Highlands and Islands was probably worth a try.⁴⁹ And if the explicit ultimate objective of having communities own and run a number of small enterprises providing employment and sometimes services which would otherwise not be established in these locations⁵⁰

was to be achieved, the key to the whole operation was less the institutional framework within which the development would take place, than the distinguishing feature of multi-functionality.⁵¹ And the latter, presumably, owed more to possibilities of cross-subsidisation from profitable 'money-spinners' than to deliberate preference for occupational pluralism as a traditional productive mode *per se*.⁵² At any rate Board assistance was conditional upon evidence of preparation by communities of *sound programmes of action* involving resource analysis, market research and costings, as well as the raising of local shares.⁵³ Where proposals were seen to hold out prospects of employment and income, financial and managerial help would be forthcoming *to launch these developments*, but not to subsidise them, for the idea was that their multi-functionality would in due course fulfil that role.⁵⁴ In other words, here was Hugh Quigley's proposal, adapted and extended, refined and improved.⁵⁵

For ideas to be fruitful their originators must be in the right place at the right time. And while the socio-political climate of the post-war Labour administration might have seemed ideal for nurturing a policy proposal for a Highland Development Agency, there were, in the words of the *New Alliance*, *persons more strategically placed than Mr Quigley who have less honourable plans to forward*.⁵⁶ Or, to express it another way, amidst the heady atmosphere of mainstream concerns of building up new manufacturing industry on the one hand, and breaking down old social inequalities on the other, Mr Quigley and his ilk, with grandiose plans quite out of proportion to the small scale of problem (relatively speaking) which they were directed to solve, would have been dismissed as fringe eccentrics, if they came to the attention of policy-makers at all.⁵⁷ And so, in spite of pressure from diverse quarters including the Scottish Council (Development and Industry) for a powerful executive agency that could stimulate industrial development⁵⁸ in the Highlands, when it came to the bit, the Government opted for nothing more positive than trying to

co-ordinate the existing administrative machine with a non-executive Advisory Panel. Publication of a White Paper on Highland Development in 1950 scarcely advanced matters. It committed the Government to increased provision of basic services such as housing, health, education etc, but since these fell within the province of local government, in fact the central government role was to be limited to increased exchequer grants.⁵⁹ Drawing upon a 1947 Memo of the Advisory Panel, the White Paper also included various platitudes concerning development of *principal industries*, meaning the staple ones of agriculture, forestry and fishing.⁶⁰ In other words the 1950 White Paper offered nothing new. It merely brought together a statement of the numerous forms of Government involvement in the Highland economy that had evolved over the previous decade or so.⁶¹ A further White Paper produced by the Tories in 1959 made similarly dull reading, and the 1961 Inquiry into the Scottish Economy - the Toothill Report - scarcely mentioned the Highlands at all.⁶²

Instead, during the 1950s the initiative passed to the Labour Party, which was looking for a band-wagon to jump on following loss of office in 1951. It was becoming increasingly apparent that a pastoral economy would not stop the Highland drain, and a policy rethink on the part of the Executive Committee of the Scottish Council of the Labour Party now judged the need for a Highland Development Agency, if only because the Tories did not.⁶³ A pamphlet was produced outlining a 'Programme for the Highland and Islands', and calling for a Highlands and Islands Development Corporation with wide financial and executive powers - powers of ownership and control of the use of land and land resources, power to reorganise crofting townships, develop mineral extraction, establish marketing centres, create more tourist facilities, build factories and grant loans. Its membership was to comprise a substantial elective element as well as representatives appointed by Government.⁶⁴ The programme,

though accepted at the Scottish Labour Party Conference, did not become part of the official party platform until 1959, but the statement that preceded the election that year unequivocally committed a Labour Government to the creation of a Highland Development Board.⁶⁵ The credit for keeping the debate alive during all this time and, more than that, for succeeding in transforming it to an election issue, belonged to the Scottish Trades Union Congress (STUC). They seized on what they interpreted as the Labour Party's policy of industrial development for the Highlands and aired it forcefully at five Highland conferences at Inverness between 1953 and 1963. Their evidence to the Royal Commission on Scottish Affairs called for the creation of a Highland Development Agency either as a corporation along the lines of a New Town Corporation or as a full-time Committee at St Andrew's House.⁶⁶ Following a special Highland Conference in Inverness in May 1953, the General Council of the STUC produced a memo to be submitted to the Secretary of Scotland in which they came down in favour of a New Town Corporation. The Secretary for Scotland, hedging his bets, seemingly declared himself interested, but would go no further until the Royal Commission had reported. In the event it rejected the idea on the grounds that the position of the local authorities would be bound to be eroded by the existence of a Highland Development Board to a greater or lesser degree.⁶⁷

It was probably in the context of that outcome that the Conservatives failed to grasp the opportunity which, according to Magnusson, was staring them in the face, and which might have saved the Highlands for them in 1964 by counteracting the dismal record of industrial development in the Highlands now causing concern even in government circles.⁶⁸ At any rate, by 1961 direct pressure was being applied on the Government by the Highland Panel, who had visited Norway and had their eyes opened to a country that accepted its northern regions not as a darned nuisance but an integral and useful part of the whole nation.⁶⁹ Besides, with a projected increase

in national population to seventy million, it was becoming imperative to make the best use of Britain's available space. Finally, it even seemed in those halcyon days of the sixties that there might be an economic land use in the Highlands after all - *an industry that made sense in context* - that of timber production.⁷⁰ Indeed the Government was confident enough of the expanding demand for timber products to have underwritten the Wiggins Teape Fortwilliam pulp mill development with substantial loan finance. In the words of Magunsson:

*The way was now logically clear for the Highland Development Board, an executive agency that would try to bring in other forms of industrial development and co-ordinate the planning required to cope with the population movement predicted for the next decades. But the Conservatives abhorred the idea of an executive agency, and the chance was lost to them.*⁷¹

Not so to the Opposition. By this time the Labour Party had nailed its colours to the mast in its 1959 Scottish manifesto, and in the equivalent document for 1964, a Highland Development Board was also promised. Indeed Harold Wilson himself spoke to that theme in Inverness in May 1964.⁷² The Scottish Liberal Party, too, had carried a resolution at its 1962 Conference proposing the creation of a Highland Development Agency, and in 1964 the Scottish Liberals published a pamphlet by Russell Johnston calling for the creation of such a body, specifically to co-ordinate the sort of development which would ultimately remove the need for subsidies. Johnston's theme, very much in tune with prevailing Keynesian thinking, that everything was indeed possible in the best of all possible worlds, was to make the Highlands pay, and he stressed the importance of fostering manufacturing industry alongside more traditional activities.⁷³ By the time that academic economists Mackay and Buxton made their memorable statement that *if economic cost is to be counted, the scope for redevelopment is limited in the Highlands and further depopulation is inevitable*⁷⁴ with what was

subsequently described as *an air of confident pessimism*,⁷⁵ the matter was resolved. Labour had won the election, had come into office concerned about regions in general and the Highlands in particular, and was full, if not of optimism, then at least of missionary zeal.⁷⁶

When the Highlands and Islands Development (Scotland) Bill was debated in Parliament, the position constituted a neat reversal of that seventy years before, when the Congested Districts (Scotland) Bill had been before the House. Then the Liberals had failed to embrace a radical departure on Highland development and subsequently the Tories had filled the breach with a measure designed to defuse, as much as develop.⁷⁷ Now it was the Conservatives who had been the ones to drag their heels. They had kept the Highlands, and by implication also the Highland 'problem', ticking over, so that it fell to a Labour administration to implement something altogether more dynamic.⁷⁸ For Secretary of State for Scotland Willie Ross, who shepherded the HIDB legislation through Parliament, it was an opportunity to redress history; the Highlander, he informed the House of Commons during the Second Reading, was the man on Scotland's conscience.⁷⁹ The Labour line of argument was quite simply that the scale of the problem in the Highlands necessitated a Highland Development Board with a wide range of powers to ensure that the resources of that region would in future be put to most effective use.⁸⁰

Much as in that same chamber, many years before, the Liberals had argued that

*the weak point of the [Congested Districts] Bill was that it contained no provision for the compulsory purchase of land [yet] the substantial taking of land would form the key to the success or failure of the Bill as a whole,*⁸¹

now the Labour proponents of the Highland Development

Bill defended their measures on the grounds that

*anyone who denies that power [compulsory purchase of land] is suggesting that the Board should not function effectively at all.*⁸²

It was just as self-evident to Ross that

*land is the basic natural resource of the Highlands and any plan for economic and social development would be meaningless if proper use of the land were not a part of it,*⁸³

as it had been to his Liberal predecessors the previous time round that

*some experiments were so obviously fore-doomed to failure without certain conditions, that it was foolish to deprive the experiments of the presence of such conditions.*⁸⁴

For the Tories it was not a question this time of defending the tameness of their own measure; instead it was a matter of curbing the wilder excesses of Labour extremism.⁸⁵ In reality it was hardly going to be difficult to get a Government with a majority in the Commons of only three to toe the line.⁸⁶ Nevertheless, former Tory Secretary of State for Scotland Michael Noble raged variously in the Press and in the House at the unprecedented powers sought. The Bill was described as a *measure of pure Marxist ancestry giving Socialists power to nationalise all the land in the Highlands.*⁸⁷ The irony was, that the powers of compulsory purchase at issue and which the Board got - the same powers as were denied the CDB and which were equivalent to those of a local authority for the purposes of acquiring small, clearly-defined parcels of land for a particular building or specific road improvement - were to prove quite irrelevant to the demonstration of a comprehensive approach to better land use.⁸⁸ Possibly the Tories realised that this was so, for although they put up a show of opposition, in fact they did not bother to attack the principle underpinning

the legislation.⁸⁹ Noble is reputed to have claimed afterwards, in a private interview, that he was thinking of creating some sort of development body, had the Tories won the election.⁹⁰ This is not inconsistent with his distinctly unTory-like observations during the Third Reading of the Highland Development Bill - observations which exactly paralleled Liberal criticisms of the Congested Districts Bill - that the proposed Board would on the one hand be too much in the pocket of the Secretary of State for Scotland, and on the other hand was under-financed.⁹¹ Given that this was a member of their own party speaking, it is hardly surprising that the Conservative peers gave the Bill their cautious support, so that by August 1965 the Highlands and Islands Development (Scotland) Bill was an Act.⁹²

(ii) The Highlands and Islands Development Board

The history of the Highlands and Islands Development Board in the fifteen years until 1980 has been conveniently broken down into three fairly discrete blocks of evolving strategy which correspond with the terms of office of the three chairmen, and with periods of differing economic fortunes for the area.⁹³ Thus it is possible to identify the early years (1965-70) when the Board was developing its policies, the 'oil boom' years (1971-75) when the fortunes of parts of the Highlands changed dramatically and the east/west economic imbalance grew, and the most recent period (1976-80) after the peak of the oil boom and following the reorganisation of local government.⁹⁴ Back in the relatively full employment days of the 1960s, even if the economic justifications for regional policy were weak, it was nevertheless possible to argue that subsidies for backward areas were likely to generate a greater increase in national output than if such subsidies were operating at the margin of labour capacity.⁹⁵ Today it is much more necessary to be willing to defend subsidies to peripheral areas on socio-political grounds, since regional

policy measures represent relatively less value for money in conditions below 'full' employment, given that a yawning chasm now exists between labour take-up and the margin of labour capacity even in non-lagging areas.⁹⁶ But fifteen or twenty years ago, it was much harder to ignore persuasive neo-Hooverian economic arguments concerning the 'how' of regional policy, given that the same neo-Hooverian logic could be shown to provide a theoretical underpinning to an otherwise political case for regional development in the first place.⁹⁷

So it came about that what the Highland Board did in the way of promoting manufacturing industry more or less fell in with an emerging awareness that area-based government assistance represented economic development and should be distinguished from client-based government assistance which constituted social welfare, and that though it was proper to help people according to their needs, areas should be helped to develop on the basis of their growth potential.⁹⁸ Not only did the operation of external economies of scale dictate that for a given subsidy cost, spatially concentrated investment [was] likely to generate a highly productive environment in which an expanded export base [could] reduce the regional balance -of-payments deficit and provide sufficient job opportunities to restrain the flow out of the region of the economically active.⁹⁹ But also, apparently, spin-off or knock-on effects would ensure that economic improvement initiated in the growth centers [would] spread to their less urbanised hinterlands; so that the best way to help these hinterlands in the long run [was] not by direct assistance, but indirectly by fostering the progress of nearby growth centers.¹⁰⁰ And although the Board was warned against placing too much reliance upon the potential role of manufacturing industry in Highland regeneration by economist and future Board chairman, Professor Kenneth Alexander, amidst the deafening roar of economic advice more appropriate to lagging industrial, as opposed to rural, regions, restrained voices of disquiet were hard to hear.¹⁰¹ So in the HIDB's first report it was conceded that, without manufacturing industry the Highlands would

continue to lack real possibility of a substantial enough rise in real numbers to give credibility to Highland regeneration.¹⁰² The resultant strategy for industrial development revolved around three major projects, namely the Moray Firth Development on the Cromarty Firth focussing upon the Invergordon Aluminium Smelter - the most important locus on the envisaged growth axis - together with the Wiggins Teape Pulp Mill in Lochaber and the UK Atomic Energy Reactor in Caithness.¹⁰³

The motives and objectives of the Board in pursuing this approach have been the subject of much speculation.¹⁰⁴ The consensus view is succinctly put by MacGregor, who explains that the idea..... was drawn from regional planning's conventional wisdom, which saw areas such as the Highlands as underdeveloped owing to isolation from developments in more prosperous areas. The Board implicitly saw the Highlands as 'traditional' and its function was to make the area 'modern'.¹⁰⁵ Supporters of the 'dependence thesis' such as Carter and Prattis have gone as far as to argue that the Board's efforts to develop the crofting counties by opening them up to the same modern market forces, which, they allege, generated the Highland problem in the first place, constituted nothing less than a recipe for disaster.¹⁰⁶ Carter has been accused by the latest commentator, former Board press officer James Grassie, of cho[osing] to ignore some issues which many would regard as fundamental to any effort to put the Board into perspective.¹⁰⁷ Certainly, Carter has, for example, failed to consider that if the Board had not adopted the received economic planning wisdom of the day - and by implementing growth pole strategy given the Highlands the best possible chance, at least in the eyes of mainstream political, planning and press thinking, of gaining a secure toe-hold in the manufacturing sector - then it would not just have lost credibility, it would never have gained it. As another former Board official, Gordon Adams, has stressed, in the earliest days, from a purely public relations standpoint, action of some kind had to precede analysis, for there had already been an infinite number of reports saying what had to be done.¹⁰⁸

In any case, criticism such as Carter's may be seen as misunderstanding the Board's raison d'etre. Unlike its predecessor, the CDB, the HIDB was set up as a development board for the whole of the Highlands, not simply the western and northern periphery. As a publicly accountable body operating within the institutional framework of the status quo, an immediate concern of the Highland Board was bound to be cost-effectiveness. Development based on potential was therefore favoured, and since, in terms of numbers, the greatest potential for unemployment, population loss, capital underutilisation and consequently also development itself, did not manifest itself on the north-west seaboard, investment would obviously not be concentrated there. An implication of the resultant growth centre policy was, however, that in order to reduce inter-regional disparities in the long-term, it was necessary in the short run to increase intra-regional inequalities.¹⁰⁹

From an examination of 1971 Census figures it appears that the Board was successful in making the desired impact with its growth pole strategy. The net population of the HIDB area had actually increased in the inter-censal interval, reversing a trend which had characterised the previous two centuries. Two thirds of the overall expansion was derived from the growth of Inverness, developing as a regional centre, the burghs around the Cromarty Firth and the Caithness Burghs, with the remainder taking place in the hinterlands of these urban settlements.¹¹⁰ The fact that this pattern of movement simply exaggerated the 1951-61 trend seemed to support the contention that *regional plans will... tend to be more successful if they effectively reinforce the nodal characteristics already in evidence in a region.*¹¹¹ However, matters assume a rather different complexion and the 'strategy' element is heavily played down if it is accepted, as one commentator has suggested, that the Board's growth centre 'policy' was actually little more than an acceptance of the reality of Highland urban structure.¹¹² And it has to be acknowledged that, in any case, the Board's

own role in such a policy was limited. The local authorities were responsible for infrastructure and housing, so the Board's role was restricted to promotional, and financial assistance in the form of grants and loans, in other words *the traditional carrot of British regional policy*.¹¹³ It was precisely the inappropriateness of applying what even an apolitical observer could describe as *traditional urban solutions to a mainly rural area*¹⁴⁴ which disturbed overtly political critics such as Carter, although these latter were disposed also to question the effectiveness of traditional economic planning tools even for depressed urban areas.¹¹⁵

*The uncritical welcoming of all manufacturing industry will merely satellise the Highlands more firmly than they are at the moment, particularly since most of the companies involved in, for example, production platform construction are multinationals. The assiduous creation of a branch plant economy in central Scotland in the 1960s is now increasingly seen as a less than perfect solution to the problems of the area. Any socialist strategy for the Highlands must oppose a deepening of satellisation in the area through an uncritical implementation of a similar policy. 'A job is a job is a job' is not a good development strategy, particularly when a high proportion of the jobs created go to non-Highlanders (and almost all the good jobs at that).*¹¹⁶

However, a year after publication of Carter's plea for a socialist strategy for the Highlands, former Board employee turned academic, Gordon Adams, was to be found explaining that, even after the Board had found its feet and made its initial impact, *there was still the problem of how to justify a decision against an entrepreneur who had a project ready to go, in favour of a theoretical project where the whole administrative back-up would have to be funded by the Board*.¹¹⁷ The implication here seems to be that during the early seventies, at just the time when the Board might have moved away from a conservative development strategy, because of new Tory political masters, it was still constrained very much to pursuing development from an economic rather than a social angle, and its position as a 'responsive' agency was

reinforced rather than modified. In the foreword to the 1970 annual report the new chairman, Sir Andrew Gilchrist, said as much by defining the Board's role as a *merchant bank with a social purpose*.¹¹⁸ Entrepreneurs went to it with ideas and each was judged on its individual merit. As MacGregor observes, *implicitly it was assumed that capital injections through loans and grants would somehow filter through and provide community benefit*.¹¹⁹ The trouble was, as MacGregor has also observed:

*Those able to communicate with bureaucracy were typically articulate, middle class, and often incomers or established entrepreneurs. This led, in many areas, to a feeling of neglect and a belief that the Board was not interested, particularly in the remoter areas where constant emigration had drained away the young and able. The Board tended to be viewed as a distant bureaucracy favouring incomers. Further, the sectors of the economy which benefited most were the growth sectors such as tourism, where, arguably, aid was least required.*¹²⁰

In other words, if the Board did seem to be ignoring the remoter north-west Atlantic fringes, it was not (or not necessarily) because its strategy was based on such grandiose economic theories as the dual economy thesis.

MacGregor's interpretation reinforces views simultaneously expressed elsewhere, that criticism such as Carter's at once flatters the Board and underestimates it. Board policy may have reflected nothing more or less than traditional British pragmatism, the theories being subsequently fitted to the practice by the same academics who are the originators of such theories. It underestimates the Board by implying that it has failed to recognise that its region is already integrated with the modern market economy on terms of severe disadvantage. Economic disadvantage is just as well explained by classical industrial location theory as by the dependence theory, and furthermore, the HIBB would never have been set up if that disadvantage, as distinct from difference,

had not been recognised. Besides, rather than reinforcing conditions of economic disadvantage, by seeking to increase peripheral exposure to market forces, Board policy could be interpreted as being protectionist, the Board simply working on the assumption that the operation of these forces in the periphery is inevitable.¹²¹

In any case, circumstances were not to allow the proper testing of the growth pole hypothesis in the Highlands. No doubt mindful that its early and idealistic pronouncement that *the Board will be judged by its ability to hold population in the true crofting areas*¹²² would become a self-fulfilling prophecy, the HIDB remained unconvinced that 'place prosperity' should entirely take precedence over 'people prosperity'. Smaller population 'holding points' were identified in both inner and outer peripheries and per capita spending was actually higher in the west than in the east and the number of projects assisted greater.¹²³ As well as strategic development, sectoral policies were pursued with, for example, considerable resources being devoted to the Shetland fishing industry.¹²³ Rather undermining the force of his invective against the assumption of the dual economy thesis by the Board, Carter had earlier been responsible for an essay which seemed to imply that a growth centre policy was valid only if it denied investment totally to those areas not designated as being capable of supporting major development,¹²⁵ an implication which, as Grassie points out, could have no political reality.¹²⁶ Yet in an earlier reference to outsiders' impressions of the HIDB having a split personality,¹²⁷ Grassie implicitly acknowledges the substance of MacGregor's less extreme claim that

*these two policies considerations appear contradictory and symptomatic of an ambivalence in Board thinking. Growth centres in the east and a reversal of rural depopulation in the west imply a dramatic reversal of emigration trends and a large inflow of immigrants. Expanding urban centres in the east Highlands in fact added to emigration pressures in the remoter areas. This ambivalence is indicative of the Board's dilemma.*¹²⁸

In the event, the much trumpeted 'dilemma', of trying to apply urban solutions to a mainly rural area, was removed by the advent of North Sea Oil, even if the practical problems for the regional hinterland were not.¹²⁹ Oil is regarded by protagonists of the dependence thesis as the latest in a series of boom and bust cycles which has progressively exploited the Highlands and the Highlander since the 1745 rebellion - cattle, kelp, sheep and herring being the forerunners.¹³⁰ And there can be no denying that, whatever the longer term boost for the British balance of payments, oil brought only sporadic and short-term prosperity to West Highland communities.¹³¹ Yet at the same time, as one commentator saw it, *oil may have been the salvation of the north-west Highlands* or, in the words of another, *oil was something of a happy accident*,¹³² for there were clear signs that early industrial strategy was not living up to expectations.¹³³ At any rate, pressure from the oil industry, which could pump more finance at that time into the Moray Firth area in six weeks than the Board could into the entire Highlands in a year,¹³⁴ allowed the HIDB to modify its strategy without loss of face. It argued that rather than oil justifying the Board ceasing its activities, there was in fact a need for its continued existence.¹³⁵ The rethought strategy, first hinted at, then spelt out at a press conference in 1974, placed the emphasis upon bolstering the 'fragile' peripheral areas against the onslaught.¹³⁶

As has been argued elsewhere, the ultra-cynical observer might suggest that, in terms of its own survival, there was no other role open to the board as a bulwark to the subdued but rising baying suggested the influx of oil had robbed it of its role.¹³⁷ A less cynical observer could point, once again, to the supremacy of pragmatism as a uniquely British approach to policy formation. It was certainly a well-chosen moment for the Board to be courting the confidence of the people of the west, by being seen to be on their side. The people had a new confidence in themselves; because of the eroding effects of recession, even at the centre, Glasgow was no longer the 'Mecca' for Highlanders it once had been, while

out of the melting pot of local government reorganisation there had emerged Comhairle nan Eilean - the Western Isles Islands Council.¹³⁸ Instead of being tacked onto not one but two mainland counties, the Western Isles was now to have its own administration. Comhairle nan Eilean has rightly been described as *one of Scotland's more credible local authorities*.¹³⁹ Quite apart from the jobs it could provide in the delivery of administration within its own bureaucracy, it succeeded in halving unemployment rates in the Long Island through its rapid response to the government's announcement of the Job Creation Programme. It restored some status to Gaelic by taking a deliberate decision to embrace bi-lingualism. All in all, the advent of Comhairle nan Eilean coincided with and bolstered a new-found mood of self-confidence in the islands.¹⁴⁰

It was in the context of this new-found mood of self-confidence that Professor Alexander, who a decade before had cautioned against attempting to rebuild the Highlands on a manufacturing base, assumed chairmanship of the Highland Board.¹⁴¹ His was the task of nurturing the new self-respect in the periphery, by converting a sense of purpose into a pride in achievement, before the potential energy was dissipated. The method of doing so presently devised, and borrowed directly from the West of Ireland, was the multi-functional co-op programme.¹⁴² To the extent that it had embraced a decision to help islanders compete with urban-based commercialism by capitalising on local resources, the Board seemed to have embraced Carter's weakening of dependence philosophy. Yet it can be argued that the only way in which such a development policy was designed to alter the structure of relationships between the marginal area and the modern sector was in shifting the balance of advantage. Thus co-operation must get to grips with operating in the wider economy as presently constituted, the world of prohibitive transport costs and of multi-national corporations.¹⁴³ As a Board official has acknowledged, *it seems clear that the co-operatives are subject to most of the difficulties that beset small scale enterprises*

in remote locations, to the extent that it has been questioned whether many would survive without protracted state assistance.¹⁴⁴ Yet the Board's position has been made quite clear.

*The terms of reference and powers of the HIDB restrict the scheme to the fostering of structures for local self-help, and not the encouragement of wider social systems. What the communities do with the co-operatives in the long term is essentially their affair. The Board's function is to assist them to become economically self-sufficient within the present system.*¹⁴⁵

Thus the multi-functional character of the co-operatives, though based on the occupational pluralism that, for example, Prattis defends as a rather negative *adaptive response* to a situation of uncertainty¹⁴⁶ has, by contrast, been held out by the Board as a much more positive device to ensure that integration with the modern market economy is on terms of advantage. The difference in approach is the distinction between the philosophy of determinism and that of possibilism.

The validity of this distinction can be extended beyond the characterisation of socio-economic profiles to the nature of development policy itself, with determinism being equated with responsive, or reactive, policies, in which case one is accepting the market as judge of opportunities, and with possibilism being equated with active, or interventionist, policies, when one regards the market as an inefficient guide.¹⁴⁷ If the market is regarded as an inadequate guide, there is, by definition, an acceptance that the *great temptation to over-emphasize the economic - the quality - aspects of development at the cost of the social - the quality - ones*¹⁴⁸ must be resisted. The logical conclusion to this line of reasoning, pursued by Professor Sir Kenneth Alexander in an Arkleton Trust lecture, is that one of the tasks of a development body should be to achieve a balance between the economic and social aspects of development.¹⁴⁹ This statement may be interpreted both as an extension of Alexander's earlier rejection of wholesale Highland industrialisation

and as a rejection too of the associated notion, however politically attractive, of mak[ing] the Highlands pay or even of taking the Highlands of the back of the nation.¹⁵⁰ Only in the context of thus enlightened chairmanship could a Board official have argued of co-operation, that *prima facie*, the benefits in terms of employment, reduced emigration, improved services, and increased confidence reported by several observers could arguably outweigh the cost of subvention.....¹⁵¹

However, it should be stressed that interventionist development policies presuppose a favourable socio-political backcloth. And while the context of a left-of-centre administration at Westminster may be a necessary condition for their implementation, it is not a sufficient one. By the mid-1970s there was no longer the pressure for the Highland Board to prove itself; immediate return upon investment was not so crucial as it had been during Professor Sir Robert Grieve's term of office, when responsive, or reactive, policy was the order of the day. The particular problem for the Board, previously hinted at by Adams,¹⁵² was later explicitly reformulated in universal terms by the Chairman responsible for implementation of active policy.

*The projects which make up reactive development are easier to handle for the development agency as usually, along with the proposal, comes the necessary management for it, and some private capital contribution towards the necessary investment.*¹⁵³

This was one of what Professor Sir Kenneth Alexander called the *hard realities* to be faced when considering the ability of the Highland Board to influence the direction of development.¹⁵⁴ Quite apart from the obvious limitations imposed by the fact that it is not the sole, or even the major, instigator of policy and is not all-powerful, there is the less obvious but further reaching constraint that to a large extent, the ground rules for development are laid down by those for whom it is politically desirable to adopt reactive policies.¹⁵⁵ The lot

of a Board such as the Highland Board consequently resembles that of the tight-rope walker, ever sensitive to changes in the tension of the rope which represents the relationship between itself and the Government and constantly alert to the exigencies of balance.

*The development body, while being strongly influenced in its work by those reactive, highly economy-focussed policies must steer a course which does not counter or defy these policies, yet has a broader focus, takes heed of development potential not necessarily reflected in the market, and is thus likely to require policies of an interventionist, long-term nature.*¹⁵⁶

Consequently, the introduction even, or perhaps especially, of interventionist policy must concede more to political pragmatism than to the political dogma of radical critics such as Carter. Thus, part of the motivation behind the HIDB co-ops scheme was, presumably, that *the Board ha[d] found that a better record tend[ed] to be achieved by locally derived enterprises,*¹⁵⁷ while a primary objective of the Board was, as previously stated, *to assist [co-ops] to become economically self-sufficient,*¹⁵⁸ for it was explicitly recognised that *little would be gained by long-term policies which [were] blind to the realities of the present.*¹⁵⁹

The author of that last piece of advice had in 1968 advised the HIDB to be less uncompromising in its approach and *to grasp the thistle more boldly and be prepared to declare its targets and priorities.*¹⁶⁰ A decade later, translated from Board critic into Board chairman, Professor Alexander preferred to advocate that *a development board must be flexible in its attitudes and develop flexible policy instruments.*¹⁶¹ And in recognising that, with ten years' water under the bridge, by 1976 the Board was *in a position to be less dictated to by immediate short-term gains than are the majority of policy makers,*¹⁶² the HIDB's third chairman had the good fortune to be able to reconcile the apparently irreconcilable. The CDB, by contrast, was denied the opportunity to steer a course which, while not opposing market tendencies, yet had a broader focus. It is true that the Highland Board was to be badly let down over land; Sir Alexander Gilchrist, the Board's second chairman, had

warned that it would be a waste of time to pursue the question and he was to be proved correct.¹⁶³ But the CDB was let down over something as basic as education,¹⁶⁴ which three quarters of a century later was argued to offer *the best hope of a future in which the Highland population can exercise an initiating and self-determining role.*¹⁶⁵ For the value of community-based decision-making had been explicitly recognised by the CDB also.

*The great object of the [Congested Districts] Board is to help people to help themselves.*¹⁶⁶

But even more than today, in the post-Keynesian 1980s, an interventionist role would have been virtually untenable by a publicly accountable body in the Victorian context which prevailed until socio-political circumstances were changed by the first world war. Even had it been feasible from a purely political point of view - which might have been the case had not the Liberals in 1906 decided against special status for the Highlands - the CDB would have required substantially augmented resources to provide the ground staff necessary to pursue active, as opposed to reactive, policy.¹⁶⁷ For more than anything, the fostering of community-based decision-making is dependent upon good communications between Board and people.¹⁶⁸ Thus co-operation, while *bless[ed]...piously*, was necessarily deemed *hardly ... for the CDB to take up.*¹⁶⁹ No doubt the members of that earlier Highland Board would very much have agreed with the third chairman of the later one, when he stated that

*we cannot dismiss [the] hard realities, which can have the capacity to frustrate efforts to give due weight to the quality of life aspect of development.*¹⁷⁰

For how much harder were the 'hard realities' facing the CDB. As the Lord Advocate, Liberal MP Thomas Shaw, observed in 1906:

*as to the Congested Districts Board, I confess, when I think how it was hampered, I am surprised that it has been able to do so much.*¹⁷¹

(iii) Appraisal

A Director of Industrial Development at the HADB has written:

*I seem to recall once reading a book which purported to deal with the Scottish Highlands. About 90% of it was in fact devoted to the past of the Scottish Highlands, and the remainder consisted of rather anaemic and somewhat politically slanted speculation about what might happen in the next few years. Perhaps it merely reflected that exaggerated concern - some might say obsession - about the past which, to my mind at least, serves as an unwelcome distraction in the task of building a healthier economic and social future for the Highlands and Islands.*¹⁷²

On the surface, these remarks of J K Farquharson would seem to be directly at odds with the stated objective of this thesis, of examining the aims and achievements of the CDB with the parallel of the HADB and the concept of future prospects for Highland development constantly in mind.¹⁷³ Yet, subjected to closer scrutiny, Farquharson's statement does not emerge as wholly irreconcilable with that of historian J H Plumb, who claimed that [historians'] investigations of the past should lead to an explanation of it for their time and generation, so that, by explaining, man's control over his future may be increased.¹⁷⁴ For the substance of Farquharson's complaint would seem to focus on the illogicality of predicting a future for the Highlands on the basis of extrapolation, without consideration either of the legitimacy of the basis for comparison, or of the plausibility of any other approach than historicism. For to do so denies a role for that other brand of historicism, used not in its Popperian sense but in the diametrically opposite sense in which it was understood during the late nineteenth century, that is, an approach to history which emphasizes the uniqueness of all historical phenomena, and maintains that each age should be interpreted in terms of its own ideas and principles, or expressed negatively, which holds that the actions of men in the past should not be explained by reference to the beliefs, motives and valuations of the historian's

own epoch. Nineteenth-century historicism sought to reject altogether the validity of social science; the historicism to which Popper was so hostile cannot see beyond economic determinism.¹⁷⁵

Yet there lies a middle course between speculative systems of history and insistence on the uniqueness of all historical phenomena, which, it is submitted, is to be found in economic historian Michael Drake's applied historical studies, *explorations of the past undertaken with the explicit purpose of advancing social scientific enquiries* conducted in pursuit of what economic geographer Alan Baker argued was the moral duty ... *[to] search for models not so much of what the future will be as of what it might be, [with a view to] propounding alternative possibilities rather than predictions.*¹⁷⁶ If, as Popper argues, the course of history is radically affected by the growth of knowledge, then the past is neither completely irrelevant, nor the future wholly pre-determined. It follows that to analyse a past institution in its administrative and geographical context, and to relate its experience to that of a successor institution, is less likely to serve as an unwelcome distraction to Highland development, than to contribute to the learning process that underwrites possibilism. To implicate the HIEB in an ongoing capitalist conspiracy, even had Secretary of State for Scotland Willie Ross not charged it precisely with the task of redressing history, is a singularly barren and uninviting task.¹⁷⁷ To conduct historical research in the field of government and institutions, either to look for evidence of a learning process, or to lay the groundwork for such a learning process, is, by contrast, to invest confidence in the present or, at least, hope in the future. It seeks less to predict a future outcome on the basis of artificially constructed contextual similarity, than to compare problems and policies with a view also to contrast, as well as to demonstrate a range of options for the future.

There are, in fact, many points of comparison between the HIDB and its forerunner, the CDB. This is hardly surprising, for the Highland 'problem' as perceived in 1965 was scarcely different from its namesake of seventy years earlier. The region continued to demonstrate a lack of employment opportunity, now reflected in high unemployment rates and low personal income, and characterised by stagnation in the traditional bases of agriculture and fishing, which showed few signs of being able to expand.¹⁷⁸ At the same time, large tracts of land continued to suffer from what might be called the dead hand of landlordism, a sort of proprietorial blight.¹⁷⁹ The difference was only in terms of the symptoms of that ailing economy, in that the redundant population no longer crowded into the available space along the Atlantic periphery, eking out a living there, but now sought its salvation hardly less densely packed into the public authority estates on the metropolitan periphery or the tenements of the inner city.¹⁸⁰ It was perhaps ironic that, in seeking to balance the population-resources equation - the identical objective of both agencies - the earlier Board sought to redirect people and the later Board to redirect employment, when viewed in terms of a simple (or perhaps simplistic) logic which argues for reinforcing existing trends on the grounds that the line of least resistance probably represents the most cost-effective solution, it should have been for the CDB to implement a 'work to the workers' policy and for a later agency to heed the warning of economists Mackay and Buxton, that the scope for redevelopment in the Highlands was limited and further depopulation inevitable.¹⁸¹ But the HIDB was a child of its time, and if a regional policy there was going to be, then in the words of Richardson, *influencing the location of capital and new industry has these days a much wider appeal than stimulating inter-regional migration.*¹⁸² And although on the surface, the political contexts of the two Boards might also appear to be counterpoised in diametric opposition, yet these too, demonstrate fundamental

resemblances. Not only was it the case that a spent Tory force in the early 1960s dragged its heels in much the same fashion as had done tired Liberals in the early 1890s, but a cynic might argue that the Labour government was no more sincere in its desire to solve the Highland problem in the twentieth century than the Conservatives had been in the nineteenth century.¹⁸³ In the 1960s the Scottish Nationalist Party was gaining considerable ground in traditionally Labour strongholds, and the passing of the Highlands and Islands Development Act may be viewed in a *short-term perspective of tactics and getting votes*, in other words, as one of several gestures on the part of Labour to try to woo back a neglected Scottish electorate.¹⁸⁴

To attempt to argue that the solution to the Highland problem in the twentieth century was not perceived any differently from in the nineteenth, would be, as indicated above, to try to argue that black is white. Even so, the HIDB has been involved in a variety of similar activities to the CDB, has suffered from many of the same institutional weaknesses, and partly in consequence of the latter, has faced a number of similar policy dilemmas. For example, the fish farming and crafts production training ventures sponsored by the Highland Board represent the modern equivalents of the practical seamanship and domestic economy courses run by the CDB.¹⁸⁵ Equally, both Boards toyed with the sort of 'crackpot' schemes to grow or make strange commodities, which, if successful, are presently enshrined in folk tradition, but which, should they fail, attract the most sarcastic of criticism.¹⁸⁶ There again, the HIDB's trout hatchery at Moniak north of Inverness, or deer farm at Rahoy in Morvern, may be compared with the CDB's pony stud at Monkstadt in Skye.¹⁸⁷ Yet it is in terms of institutional character itself that the parallels are even more striking. The HIDB is, and the CDB was, experimental, underfunded and overstretched. Both Boards were also set in a multi-organisational administrative context, and found themselves circumscribed in their freedom. The threefold risk attendant upon the

former condition has afflicted the HIDB no less than the CDB. As Williams has observed, gaps in provision, or at least executive lacunae, have occurred as a result of thinking that another agency was responsible, while the existence of so many bodies has meant not only that conflicts have arisen between agencies, but also that these could, quite unintentionally, find themselves working at cross-purposes to each other.¹⁸⁸ And while it is true that the Highland Board did not suffer the simultaneous advantage and drawback of having as its Chairman the Secretary of State for Scotland, yet it is also the case that, like the CDB, the HIDB emerged as substantially less powerful than it at first appeared. In the case of the Highland Board, not only was the need for the Secretary of State's approval almost universal before the implementation of a decision, but frustratingly restrictive conditions were attached also to its discretion in the matter of grant-in-aid. As Grassie observes, the Highland Board simply could not be powerful and flexible without freedom from the Scottish Office and from Treasury control.¹⁸⁹ As far as the CDB was concerned, it was necessarily under even closer control of the Secretary for Scotland, while unrealistic Treasury ceilings applied in the context of certain works grants, not to mention the refusal to grant borrowing powers, the absence of which tied its hands from the beginning.¹⁹⁰ And much as some transfer or reorganisation of local authority functions might have increased the CDB's scope, or at least, released its potential, so has been the case also with the HIDB, which found itself considerably hampered in the matter of comprehensive development by a lack of planning powers.¹⁹¹

Given the parallels in the nature of the problems and the similarity in institutional character, it would be surprising if history were not to repeat itself, at least to some extent, in terms both of decision-making dilemmas and policy stumbling-blocks. So it was that both Boards had their internal wrangles, relating to the same development sector, namely industrial promotion. Just as

the CDB was split down the middle as to the advisedness of fostering home industries, as distinct from, or even in addition to, encouraging the acquisition by West Highlanders of the sorts of trade skills appropriate to a modern manufacturing economy - which would either allow them to be absorbed into mainland jobs, or, if it did not, would lend impetus to changing the structure of the islands' economy - so the HIDB had its differences over the matter of industrial development.¹⁹² The growth point policy was a direct descendant of the White Paper on Central Scotland published in 1963, in which in his capacity then as Scottish Office Chief Planner, Sir Robert Grieve, the HIDB's first Chairman, had been a guiding influence.¹⁹³ Deputy Chairman John Rollo, however, had different ideas and, given his lifetime's involvement in Highland affairs, he was not inclined to give way without a fight. Rollo had, at one time, run four production units in the crofting counties and, as Chairman of the Highland Fund, he had assumed a leading role in helping to provide what Grassie has called *character loans on easy terms to budding entrepreneurs the length and breadth of the Highlands and islands*. Given that background, it is not surprising that he felt uncomfortable about what he saw as *grandiose notions of growth areas and holding points*.¹⁹⁴ Indeed, during 1965, in anticipation of the establishment of the HIDB, he had said as much in a Scotsman article.

*There is a tendency in certain planning minds to think in terms of concentration of populations around existing towns or large cities ... with a view to factory development. This will be fatal for the Highlands because it will result in the complete destruction of the agricultural crofting population.*¹⁹⁵

As Grassie has observed, the disparity between Rollo's view, that it would be far more effective to concentrate upon the development of small factories located in the crofting areas, so as to allow people to have wage-earning work in addition to their crofts, and Grieve's growth point philosophy, was bound to give outsiders the

impression that the Board had a split personality.¹⁹⁶ It certainly increased the scope of criticism, by providing ammunition for Board detractors who could now argue that if the Board could not even convince itself of the logic of its growth centre policy, how then could it seek to convince others? That there might be room to pursue both policies simultaneously was liable to be considered as a declaration of defeat, or at least, evidence of wishy-washy thinking. At any rate, such a state of affairs was hardly more inspiring of public confidence than the CDB's coy admissions - begging the question of more fundamental disagreement - that there was *difference of opinion* as to the best way of assisting home industries.¹⁹⁷

Like the CDB before it, the Highland Board, especially during its early years, was keenly aware of being constantly in the public eye and needing to present not only a united front, but a cogent recipe for future Highland prosperity. When there were policy failures, even though they were not always entirely at the respective Board's hands, the whole unfortunate affair would be laid out and dissected by the press in the full public and parliamentary glare, to the proportionate discredit of the most easily identified of the dramatis personae, namely the Boards themselves. So, for example, the Breasclete affair is to the Highland Board no more than the Vatersay episode was to the CDB, the penalty for public accountability being that both interludes formed the subject matter of House of Commons Committee investigations.¹⁹⁸ Unfortunately where such an agency is concerned, its successes inevitably attract less attention than its failures, and in the end of the day it must resign itself to bad press either for failing to undertake, or for undertaking and failing. As the Lord Advocate was driven to observe in the context of a rather unfortunate CDB poultry breeding scheme, he *did not suppose there was anything a Government could do which would not excite criticism*.¹⁹⁹ So it was that both Boards were subject to sniping from within

their constituency as well as from beyond, an accusation in both cases being that the indigenous population stood to benefit less than enterprising incomers, whose concern was their own welfare and not that of the Highland workers they employed.²⁰⁰ By contrast, what critics then or now tended to ignore was that in some degree Highlanders themselves may have constituted a limiting factor where receptiveness to the importance of innovation was concerned, far less entrepreneurship, the latter not being a quality for which they were noted, then or now, which observation should be distinguished from unwarranted and superficial criticism of the 'lazy Gael'.²⁰¹ It was in the context of crofters' 'side industries' that the agencies themselves encountered this disinclination to innovation, in the case of the CDB specifically in connection with egg marketing, and, in the case of the HIDB specifically in connection with tweed marketing.²⁰² Practical problems of this nature, not to mention the inherent Highland disadvantages of geographical remoteness combined with poor infrastructure, which had somehow to be overcome, scarcely facilitated resolution of the real dilemma facing both Boards, of being, on the one hand, publicly accountable bodies, yet, on the other hand, of needing to take business risks, albeit calculated ones, if only to justify their own existence. Perhaps it was the distance - psychological as much as geographical - from Whitehall, as well as the admittedly far superior staff complement, which persuaded the Irish CDB to opt for aggressive promotion of trademarked Donegal Tweed, while the Scottish Board hesitated.²⁰³ Unfortunately for the HIDB, which opted for a progressive stance in the matter of Harris Tweed, it was destined to be impossibly thwarted by the limiting factor, mentioned above, of innate Highland conservatism.²⁰⁴

With regard to the HIDB's co-op programme, however, the story was altogether different. From the outset, the problem has been to channel the enormous enthusiasm

constructively. And in this case the indications are that the risk has proved to be a good one.²⁰⁵ Yet the reluctance of the CDB to become involved in similar co-operative schemes perhaps seems justified, albeit in retrospect, by the subsequent failure of the very Irish schemes upon which the Commissioners would have sought to model a Scottish co-op experiment.²⁰⁶ But begging for a moment the question of resources, it is also possible to argue that, had the loyalties of John Sinclair, Chairman of the CDB from 1906 - whose enthusiasm for innovation and novel approaches to rural development matched that of Kenneth Alexander, Chairman of the HIDB seventy years later - not been divided between that Office and the Office of Secretary for Scotland - in which capacity he was caught up with the passage of the Land Bill - the CDB's involvement in co-operative operations would certainly have been less tentative, and the prospects of success more certain.²⁰⁷ For by the time that Captain Sinclair arrived at the Board, just as in the case of Sir Kenneth Alexander at the HIDB, the immediate pressures to demonstrate the respective agencies' capacities for achieving a concrete and also an instant return upon investment had slackened, allowing room for the introduction of some complementary and longer-term strategies for revival of the periphery in a less fraught political atmosphere. By contrast, both Lord Balfour, and Professor Grieve, as first Chairmen of their respective Boards, had to be seen to be setting about, in a no-nonsense fashion, getting immediate results, results which would highlight just how politically moribund had become an Opposition which was too tired to introduce even a remedial measure.²⁰⁸

Unfortunately, the 'less fraught' political atmosphere during which Alexander assumed Chairmanship of the HIDB was not destined to last, the election of a Tory administration at Westminster, despite election promises, placing the future of that Board, if not in jeopardy - as the advent of the Liberal government did the CDB -

then at least in question, certainly in the long term.²⁰⁹ Clear evidence of the erosion of the Board's position in the institutional pecking order was to emerge in connection with land. It should be remembered that another difficulty of the HIDB, one which had also faced the CDB, had been that it could not be sure that it would always come face to face with a willing seller of land, most particularly in those instances where there was painfully obvious underuse or misuse of land. Although the Highland Board had on paper the technical provisions which, theoretically, allowed compulsory purchase, in practice they were impossibly complex and cumbersome to use.²¹⁰ And just when it seemed that the Highland Board might have achieved the effective enabling legislation denied to it in the 1965 Act, but necessary for it to be able to act in accordance with its powers and duties where there are obvious examples of underuse or mismanagement of ... land which hinder the development of rural communities or even endanger their future existence, the new Conservative Secretary for State, George Younger, acted to trim the sails of the Inverness upstart.²¹¹ That the proposals to allow more effective powers over rural land use scarcely represented a means of 'back door' nationalisation of land was evident from their basis in comprehensive development through co-operation and consultation with landlords; compulsory purchase was to be used only as a last resort.²¹² Furthermore, the Board Chairman, although he had made it clear that he would not tolerate the bad use of arable land, had also told radical journalist Brian Wilson of the West Highland Free Press, that to argue that the solution to Highland problems lay in nationalisation of land was to take too sweeping a view. As Alexander further pointed out, the great potential of the Board was to demonstrate what could be achieved, and that being so, ownership of land was not a prerequisite to success in the Highlands.²¹³

The new Secretary of State for Scotland agreed heartily with that statement. After sitting on the HIDB proposals

for a year, he eventually turned them down on the basis that the *HIDB* has similar powers to those of other public agencies ... and I am not persuaded that there is need to extend them. More precisely, Younger's argument was that if existing powers have not been used, I see no reason to give further powers to the Board.²¹⁴ The era of being less dictated to ... than are the majority of policy-makers was over.²¹⁵ The reason why the existing powers had not been used, as Sir Kenneth Alexander had explained publicly to Brian Wilson, and as a Conservative government of 1895 had been quick to point out to the then Liberal Opposition - who were demanding the inclusion within the Congested Districts legislation of precisely the powers that the *HIDB* had found so useless - was that they were quite inappropriate to the taking of other than precisely defined and carefully surveyed parcels of land required for the provision of essential public utilities.²¹⁶ Younger must have known this; yet when Labour, now SDP, Member for Caithness, Robert MacLennan, enquired in almost rhetorical fashion whether the Secretary of State did not agree that it would be wholly unreasonable to ask the *HIDB* to put to use powers that it had only to demonstrate their complexity, George Younger actually replied No, sir.²¹⁷

Clearly, the land struggle in the Highlands was not over, and the centrality of land as an issue in Highland development had not lessened. For the second time in a century, a Board set up specifically to redress Highland history was forced to stand helplessly on the sidelines in the knowledge that the injustices inflicted by some landowners on the communities depending on them - and which had been identified by the Board itself - would be allowed to continue.²¹⁸

Corroboration of a Labour Secretary of State for Scotland's contention that, without the means of ensuring proper use of land, any plan for economic and social development of the Highlands would be meaningless, and of a Tory Secretary for Scotland's view that the Board was no more than a powerless bureaucratic facade under Scottish Office control,²¹⁹ stared politicians, press and public in the face. Following Sir Kenneth Alexander's

return to his academic career, George Younger was compelled to 'persuade' the former's deputy to 'hold the fort' for an indefinite period until a suitable replacement could be found.²²⁰ Alexander had taken on the job with the highest of hopes. Now these were dashed and Board morale was very low.²²¹ Furthermore, any Tory who could have filled the gap to the Government's absolute satisfaction would, in the circumstances, hardly have found his work challenging.²²² Eighty years before, in the context of another Highland development proposal, it had been predicted that the substantial taking of land would form the key to the success or failure of the Bill as a whole.²²³ Half a century on, Margaret MacPherson defended that view when in a note of dissent to the 1954 Report of the Taylor Commission of Enquiry, she wrote:

*I am convinced ... that crofting can never stand on its own feet until the Nation owns all crofting lands. This, I believe, is the only way in which control and supervision can be real.*²²⁴

Margaret MacPherson belonged to Skye where she had first-hand experience of the exercise of 'real control' on the state-run property originally purchased by the CDB; it seemed to her that state land was well worked, while the privately-owned land in Skye was not. And during the course of the next three decades there would be evidence to support the substance of her complaint at Glenstrathfarrar and the Strath of Kildonan, in Colonsay, Eigg, Mull, and on Raasay ...²²⁵ As to the Highland Board, with its land proposals thrown out, it was back, in the words of James Grassie to square one It was not a battle it had lost, but the war.²²⁶

It is somewhat discouraging, after roundly denouncing the validity of historical materialism, to offer concluding remarks which seem only to enshrine the concept of economic determinism. It is also too easy a way out. Durkheim once wrote:

*It is only by carefully studying the past that we can come to anticipate the future and to understand the present [for the present is] no more than an extrapolation of the past, from which it cannot be severed without losing the greater part of its significance.*²²⁷

But to define the present as a mere extrapolation of the past seems to deny the operation of a learning process and to underplay the value of what the historian can offer society and its political leaders. It is true that the present is inextricably bound up with the past, but more in the Popperian sense that the course of history is radically affected by the study of history. In other words, the growth of knowledge implies the operation of a learning process that should ensure that extrapolation is founded firmly on the wisdom of experience, and not experience per se. And, if futurology is rejected, as it was by Popper (since future acquisitions of knowledge cannot be predicted) careful study of the past, as advocated by Durkheim, should less anticipate the future, than present choices for the future.²²⁸ In the face of such a clear restatement of the logic prefacing this final appraisal, and underpinning the thesis as a whole, it is incumbent upon the writer to conclude with a more positive demonstration of the value of applied historical studies, encheuing contrived comparison in favour of a more organised evaluation of the achievement of the CDB, an evaluation which genuinely endorses Professor W R Scott's judgement that:

*The Congested Districts Board was in a sense an experiment in Scotland. In so far as it succeeded, it supplied valuable experience as to what was possible, and also as to what was impossible.*²²⁹

On the basis of the information collated in the CDB's Fourteenth and Final Report, and in earlier Board Reports, it is not difficult to produce a workmanlike summary of the Commissioners' concrete achievements, as J P Day has done, together with a brief review of the difficulties they encountered.

*At the close of their fifteen years' existence they claim to have created, or helped to create, 640 new holdings and enlargements to 1138 crofters.*²³⁰

Day further classifies the endeavours of the Board in the following four categories: (a) purchase of land and resale in small holdings; (b) co-operation with proprietors willing to subdivide farms; (c) aiding migration; (d) aiding formation of fishermen's holdings and the erection of fishermen's dwellings, and states that *it is possible to say at once that all except (b) were complete failures.*²³¹ The several difficulties identified by J P Day which jeopardised the success of the plan from the outset are unremarkable to the reader of this thesis.²³²

In the first place the Board lacked powers of borrowing, so that the money for the purchase of land had to be accumulated from their not very large income, this saving posing serious difficulty in view of the many demands on them and the numerous other purposes for which they were empowered to provide funds. A request by the Secretary for Scotland for arrangements to be made to enable the Board to obtain from public funds an advance of three quarters of proposed expenditure on purchase and equipment of estates was rejected by the Treasury. Subsequently the Board discovered that it was also unable to borrow from private lenders on the security of its lands and annuities without fresh legislation, by which time the Commissioners, in any case, had good reason to doubt whether they would ever be able to sell the land they had bought, the second difficulty faced by the CDB.²³³ The next stumbling-block arose because comparatively few of the people whom it was intended to benefit had sufficient capital to enable them to stock holdings of the size which it was the policy of the Board to create. For, although the Board could assist in the erection of buildings, and in dividing, fencing and draining of land, it had no power to make a grant or a loan to enable a crofter

to stock a holding. This problem was accentuated by the system of sheep-stock valuation, and it intensified the inertia already militating against migration of crofters and cottars, the third difficulty encountered by the Board which J P Day has identified.²³⁴

As far as cottars were concerned, for the most cogent of reasons, the Board could not assist in the purchase of holdings unless a migration had taken place. As the Commissioners argued in their Eighth Report, the 'Cottar Question' was *the most acute and one of the most difficult questions awaiting solution in the crofting area.*²³⁵ A majority of cottars paid no rent, and many had put up so called 'dwelling-houses' without permission either from the proprietor or from neighbouring crofters. They held no title to the lands they occupied and frequently grazed stock on the crofters' common pasture, again for which they paid no rent. As a result, they constituted not only a *heavy burden on the crofter* who needed all the land he could get and could have used more, but also on the Board, which found itself in an impasse. On the one hand, most of them declined to move even though *tempting terms* were offered; on the other hand, where they were located there was no land to give them. Nor were impoverished West Highlanders - used to the idea of a safety-net to fall back upon in the form of a proper croft - to be palmed off with fishermen's holdings, worthless without either the capital or the acquired business acumen necessary to launch themselves as full-time fishermen. Consequently, the Commissioners could only observe helplessly that

*if any considerable number of cottars would agree to migrate voluntarily, with reasonable aid, some of the difficulties at least would disappear, but so long as the present attitude is maintained, it is hard to say what successful endeavours can be made.*²³⁶

The 'attitude' to which the Commissioners were referring was the tendency for cottars to expect assistance on the basis of charity, as distinct from that of a business loan. In other words, they either would not, or could not, migrate unless the whole expense of removal and resettlement were borne for them, and this was a peculiarly disturbing realisation for a Board founded, as the CDB was, against a background of rejection of short term destitution relief - mere

charity - in favour of long-term regional policy - which would show West Highlanders *the way to thrive at home*.²³⁷ As the Commissioners were not slow to observe, though not in so many words, to initiate development on the basis of need, as opposed to potential - which was what assisting cottars, after all, amounted to - was likely to render their position as a development Board rapidly untenable. Given that potential migrants expected *pecuniary aid in the form of a gift*, the task of obtaining repayment might easily become insuperable.

Nor can it be left out of view that migrants who, ^{from} whatever cause, or causes, did not succeed in their new holdings, would look to the Board to save them from destitution. The difficulty in such cases of altogether rejecting a plea for eleemosynary or philanthropic aid and making everything turn on self-reliant and independent effort would be very great.²³⁸

This was especially the case given the fourth difficulty facing the Board, which was the discovery that West Highland crofters were not, in any case, convinced of the merits of ownership, as opposed to tenancy of holdings which they occupied. Even for that group of cottars, by no means all, who already paid rent, there was the uninviting prospect upon purchase of a CDB holding, of having to pay not only the Board's annuity but also owners' rates, assessed on the full annual value of holdings and land.²³⁹ And although the Board attempted to put the case on more than one occasion to crofters, that in calculating annuities this had been taken into account, manifestly this was not the case, since the Commissioners had previously sought (unsuccessfully) to have the period of repayment of loans extended, and they elsewhere admitted that to make the margin between purchase annuity and fair rent large enough to provide for owner's rates was not possible unless a policy were adopted involving regular and considerable loss on each transaction.²⁴⁰ In the meantime the Board's activities, as far as land was concerned, were paralysed; the alternative was for the CDB to act as a landlord in its own right, and although

scarcely what was envisaged by the Board's Conservative promoters, ultimately, of course, this was how the difficulty was resolved. Unwittingly, a Tory Government had opened the door to the nationalisation of land so acclaimed by Margaret MacPherson.²⁴¹

To criticise an institution which was responsible for such an apparently fundamental revision of the status quo for lack of initiative seems somewhat paradoxical. Yet the CDB was essentially a reactive agency. Apart from its unintentional and unsolicited involvement in the nationalisation of four island and one mainland estates, it merely advertised a range of grants for which inhabitants or communities in the congested districts were eligible to apply, and responded to resultant applications on their merits.²⁴² In consequence, the Board faced two fundamental problems, the first relating specifically to land, the second pertaining to development more generally. As J P Day observed, the only land-related endeavour in which the CDB was involved, which was not a complete failure was co-operation with proprietors willing to subdivide farms.²⁴³ Given that the Board lacked powers of compulsory purchase, apart from indulging in some gentle cajoling of suitably 'wet' landlords, all that was open to the Commissioners to do, was to sit back and wait either for land to purchase or for land to subdivide and let under the provisions of the Crofters Acts. That there was a need for a CDB at all and that compulsory powers had been mooted for it (though not by Conservatives) was an indication of just how unlikely it was for the former - that is, land to purchase - to be forthcoming. On the one hand, the CDB was powerless to get to grips with the core of the congestion problem, the blame for which lay with hard-line proprietors such as in Lewis; on the other hand, cajoling of 'wet' landlords merely hastened a process which would have occurred anyway, without the need for a government agency to accelerate it. Declining income

from other sources was slowly but surely encouraging many proprietors once again to regard the rent from crofters as a necessary insurance policy. In other words, the CDB was governed by market trends; without the capacity to intervene where frictions resulted in market ineffectiveness or where economic and social goals diverged, the Board was reduced to the task of administrative liaison, putting proprietors interested in sub-division in touch with the Crofters Commission. And, if this time round the crofters thus benefitted had their own insurance, it was thanks to the Crofters Acts, and not to the CDB.²⁴⁴ In these circumstances, Agnes Mure Mackenzie's judgement of the CDB that *it achieved so little that in 1911 its work was passed to the Board of Agriculture in the hope that it might prove more energetic* does not seem too harsh.²⁴⁵

However, to dismiss the lack of achievement of the CDB, as Agnes Mure Mackenzie does, without reference to the constraints which it faced, is a pity; even to enumerate these difficulties, as Day has done in the context of his summary of Board achievement,²⁴⁶ begs the important question of the implications of an acknowledged experiment for future generations of Highland developers. For the experience of the Board is interesting and valuable not only of itself, but also for the lessons such an adventure has to offer. If this point of view is adopted, by analogy it can be argued that although the CDB was primarily involved in land acquisition and subsequent management, even so, its particular experience may have more general relevance. In any case, the dilemma of requiring to be an interventionist agency - if it was to be effective at all - and of being restricted to being a responsive agency, blighted Board potential much more widely, on account of the second fundamental problem which it faced. This was because the Commissioners' objective of encouraging self-reliance and independent effort by 'pump-priming' - as opposed to dole-giving - was basically flawed, given that

congested districts were rigorously defined on the basis of need rather than potential. And while generalised investment over a wide assisted area might have generated a return on that investment in especially favourable loci and ultimately given rise to multiplier ripples extending into less favourable marginal environments, aid applied to localised development districts identified by the criterion of poverty, possessed as much development potential, as did straightforward destitution relief; the recipients, not unreasonably, used the improved strains of seed or pedigree stock, not for their investment potential, but for their capacity to see them through a period of crisis, food this year having a distinct attraction over vague notions of greater prosperity in years to come.²⁴⁷

To pursue this line of argument is not to discredit the community approach to development, or to applaud uncritically growth pole policy. The one is not impossible, as was demonstrated then by the Irish CDB, and is being demonstrated now by the successor of the Scottish CDB, the HIDB.²⁴⁸ The other is not infallible, as has been highlighted by the school of dependence theorists, particularly in the context of a subsistence agriculture such as was, and is still, prevalent in the 'heartland' of the crofting community, where the operation of the multiplier may be limited.²⁴⁹ The dilemma for the CDB was that so long as the criterion for assistance was poverty, successful implementation of growth-style policy was impossible, the implicit realisation of which probably contributed largely to the Commissioners' unwillingness to take risks, while for a community-development style policy to flourish, the CDB was over-centralised as well as understaffed. In consequence the CDB was reduced to 'muddling through' with little consistency in policy, a state of affairs which in part derived from the need for constant recourse to the Lord Advocate for interpretations of this or that clause of the enabling legislation, and, depending on

the learned opinion, recourse to Parliament in an invariably fruitless attempt to secure an amendment. Thus, much of the CDB's ineffectiveness stemmed from limitations, whether explicit or implicit, in its constitution.²⁵⁰ This was just as true where the day-to-day business of the Board was concerned, a discovery which disturbed the Departmental Committee appointed in 1910 to enquire into the work of the CDB. Indeed, the methods and achievements of the Board in the area of livestock and agricultural improvement emerged relatively unscathed. As the Oban Times explained:

*If the appointment of even a friendly and sympathetic enquiry into the operations was no compliment to the Board, it has survived the ordeal of investigation with as much credit as might be expected after the routine of twelve years. Indeed, such defects as the Departmental Committee's report discloses are concerned not so directly with the administrative actings of the Board as with the office methods and the lack of funds and staff.*²⁵¹

The defects in question, the generality of which Highland members had not failed to bring to the attention of the House long before the appointment of a Committee, were contained in what the Oban Times described as the most drastic portion of the Committee's report, an addendum signed by all the members except one who was also a member of the CDB. The Oban Times continued:

*In this [addendum] the Committee offers some strong comment upon the composition of the Board and its style of transacting business. The Board consists of eight unpaid members. Of these, seven have hitherto been connected with other Government Departments; they were, therefore, unable to give to the work of the CDB the undivided attention it demands. Moreover, the Board "meets very seldom, and not at regular intervals", and its work is done on the file system - a system which surely yields the perfection of circumlocution. The Agricultural Committee sometimes only meets once a year. No commercial undertaking could long exist upon these archaic and dilatory methods. It is remarkable to find that such a system survives and that to-day it should be found in full swing in one of the Government departments of the country charged with complicated and urgent interests.*²⁵²

Just as it had not needed *the institution of a Board* uncover the essential 'undevelopment'²⁵³ of the Highlands, by the same token it did not take the appointment of a Committee to identify the shortcomings of that Board once instituted. These arguments, and more, had been thoroughly rehearsed in Parliament and in the press. In June 1902 MPs had heard how the CDB was too large and could not meet often enough, especially on the ground, and how the work of the Board fell too heavily upon the Secretary for Scotland. They had heard, too, how it was characterised by circumlocution and strangled by red tape.²⁵⁴ In July of 1905 they heard how it was not a bit of good having a Board of unpaid officials, especially when the CDB's remit was too wide for its budget.²⁵⁵ The problems of running the Board 'on a shoestring', and of attempting to pursue a programme of comprehensive development with a limited budget and within a circumscribed area, were exacerbated by, and themselves exacerbated, the confusion and overlap which existed between the CBD, the Fishery Board and the Crofters Commission. As was pointed out to Angus Sutherland, in his capacity as Fishery Board Chairman, but in connection with the possibility of the CDB offering loans to fishermen, *divided responsibility is almost bound to result in misunderstanding, conflict of opinion, and possibly, slackness in administration....*²⁵⁶ And while it was agreed that in the interests of the state, as well as of the fishermen, it would be better, in order to secure economy and efficiency, if loans were administered by one Department only, it was observed that if the CDB was to manage such a scheme, its operation would be limited to districts scheduled as congested areas; yet *poverty-stricken (and meritorious) fishermen [were] not confined to such areas, and there [would] be an outcry from those left out in the cold.*²⁵⁷

Inevitably the pressures of having to make hurried decisions on the basis of inadequate local knowledge in the context of non-existent or blurred lines of demarcation separating the responsibilities of the various authorities began to tell. In the face of

impossible demands to cope with complex matters, admitted in the case of one Commissioner *to be really too subtle and abstruse for me*,²⁵⁸ cynicism and disillusionment was bound to set in, even if the Board had been notable for its policy successes, which, of course, because of the policy dilemma in which it found itself, it was not. On the one hand, the Commissioners accepted that they had an educational role to play, since crofters could not be expected to embrace ideas with which they were unfamiliar; on the other hand, they realised that the Board had not the time to take up new ideas such as co-operation, and argued that people should be capable of doing something for themselves.²⁵⁹ Similarly, they acknowledged that the needs of certain districts were very clamant, but steadfastly maintained that, as a development Board, they could not *finance people from head to foot*.²⁶⁰ And so the ideal of *help[ing] people to help themselves*²⁶¹ degenerated into meaningless rhetoric. For, under-resourced itself, the Board could not take the initial risk which constituted the first step towards improvement, not while it lacked the staff to provide a comprehensive support network in the needful Western Highlands, not while it lacked the authority to apply assistance in the more *enterprising* eastern Highlands.²⁶² Caught thus on the horns of the need versus potential dilemma, the CDB was forced into the role of paternalistic and somewhat didactic dole-provider, an unwilling chameleon staffed with pressurised and resentful part-timers; the staff was no longer motivated by energy and enthusiasm but was resigned to what the Under Secretary for Scotland, Sir Reginald MacLeod, in the context of aid to fisheries, reminded them grudgingly was *the determination of Parliament to maintain the population in these counties and to recognise the exceptional difficulty of their geographical position, their soil and climate*.²⁶³ The acting Chairman, as Sir Reginald MacLeod virtually became following the Liberals' assumption of power in 1906, warmed to his theme when it was increasingly espoused by other Commissioners.

*I entirely sympathise with the views of the Chairman of the Fishery Board that the qualities named [foresight, self-denial and industry] are the only true road to success either by land or sea. Parliament, however, has provided other means in the Highland Counties by the legislation of the last 20 years and it is the duty of the CDB to apply these means with as little injury to "foresight, self-denial and industry" as possible.*²⁶⁴

Such were the mitigating circumstances in which that member of the Board, whose early commitment to Highlanders and Highland development was unsurpassed, could argue recklessly that:

*What the crofter wants is to be left alone to work out his own salvation in his own way. Give him the earth to use and he can teach agriculture to the best of you.*²⁶⁵

As the Under Secretary for Scotland observed, when the file reached his desk, *Mr Sutherland's minute means dissolution of the Board.*²⁶⁶

In the event, the CDB was dissolved in 1912 with the passing of the Small Landholders Act. To add insult to injury, during the public outcry which arose following threatened expropriation of some £90,000 from the congested districts fund, for re-allocation on an all-Scotland basis by the Board of Agriculture under the provisions of the Small Landholders Act, the blame was laid at the door of the unfortunate CDB. The Board, it was argued, instead of hoarding up this vast sum for the purchase of land could have *usefully spent up to the last penny upon local schemes within the congested districts area, thus making sure that a gross injustice was avoided.*²⁶⁷ In the case of the Glean Times, which was previously given to proclaiming that agricultural and infrastructural improvement merely tinkered with the Highland problem and that what was needed was land - *congestion has not its source in the non-existence of roads and piers*²⁶⁸ - the hypocrisy was startling. The Board was now accused of having turned a deaf ear to applicationsmade year after year for grants for roads, fences, etc., which if constructed, would have proved of immense value in improving the condition of the crofters.²⁶⁹ The article did not

stop there. It continued: *the crofters are beinning to realise that they have been seriously deprived by the CDB of their rights, on which basis it was argued, not that the removal of special status for the Highalnds would further prejudice crofters' interests, but that the action [inaction was the word employed elsewhere in the same article] of the Congested Districts Board during its tenure fills people with doubt about the success of the new Board of Agriculture.*²⁷⁰

Yet only a year before, at the time of publication of the Departmental Committee's Report, the Oban Times had adopted an entirely different and much more positive attitude. With the prospect, at that juncture, of an agency resembling much more closely the present HIDB, it could afford to be optimistic, and complimentary.

*The members of the Board are men of capacity, and the Highlands are deeply indebted to them for the laborous services that have rendered ungrudgingly for many years; but the duties imposed by the Act require more exclusive and sustained personal application than they are free to give. The Committee recommends that the Board should be reconstructed on the lines of the new Congested Districts Board for Ireland, that it should meet regularly to conduct its business, that it should be equipped with a permanent staff to manage its live stock and agricultural schemes, and that it should be supplied with increased funds, so that it might efficiently overtake the larger responsibilities now set forth. If the Committee's report is acted upon by the Government, the reconstructed Board, with more money at its disposal, will be an immense gain to the Highlands.*²⁷¹

And though it took half a century for the Committee's recommendations to become reality, that they did seems to bear witness, after all, to the operation of the desired learning process.²⁷² A highly trained specialist staff at the Highlands and Islands Development Board headquarters, seated in the Highland capital, is now complemented by a network of officers on the ground to ensure that the lines of communication between Board and

people - amidst the cluttered confusion of Highland administration upon which the HIDB, admittedly, was originally superimposed - are clear.²⁷³ Through time, the rigidity born of self-conscious public accountability has given way to more relaxed flexibility, characterised by greater empathy with its constituency, a possibility denied the CDB by politico-historical circumstance, so that, unlike the Highland Board, the CDB was never able to make the important transition from administrative to executive - far less from responsive to interventionist - agency, which underwrites effective regional policy.²⁷⁴

However, interventionist policy is highly context-specific. It reigns supreme (possibly to the detriment of incentive) in a political environment where social considerations predominate; it survives (with ups and downs according to prevailing fashions) where economic considerations motivate policy; and it withers and dies (crushed by the exigencies of the market) where commercialism prevails.²⁷⁵ Technical know-how, where regional economic development is concerned, is therefore no substitute for political will; machinery and policy, loosely in the stewardship of the devolved agency is, in the end of the day, reined in by money and power, firmly in the control of the central administration. And whereas the CDB was before its time, for the HIDB the sun may already have set, even though it would be altogether too coincidental if, much as the CDB was absorbed into the Board of Agriculture, the HIDB's identity was to be submerged in an SDA-HIDB takeover.²⁷⁶ Unfortunately, since the opportunity cost of a regional aid programme defies even approximate computation, political dogma inevitably retains the upper hand, so that in the last analysis, emotional arguments must determine whether or not responsibility is to be matched with power. Devolution of power was never a live issue as far as the CDB was concerned; the HIDB came much closer to achieving it.²⁷⁷ Without it, what American

planner John Friedmann observed of the Tennessee Valley Authority assumes wider applicability.

*Instead of a free-swinging agency devoted to betterment of life in a backward region, it was a tired bureaucracy fighting for its existence, more concerned with saving its budget from a hostile administration than with innovative action.*²⁷⁸

If Friedmann's description were presently to apply to the HIDB, it would be a depressing postscript to a century of Highland development. Fortunately, prediction is not the object of a study in applied history. Suffice it to say that 'Highland experience of regional government' has supplied the necessary regional development know-how; but whether the Highlands are destined to remain 'a backward area in an advanced country' remains a matter for purely political resolution.²⁷⁹

NOTES

1. See above p 387-90
2. Once again it was a question of the distinction between evolution and revolution. See above Chapter 1 Section (ii) especially p 26
3. See Alan Williams, The Highlands and Islands Development Board 1965-70: Policy-making in an Administrative Setting, unpublished M Litt thesis, University of Glasgow, 1973, 104; James G Kellas, Modern Scotland (London, 1980) 155-6
4. See Nigel Nicolson, Lord of the Isles (London, 1960) 2. Nicolson's book constitutes a thoroughly researched and extremely readable account of Lord Leverhulme's involvement with the Hebrides. W P Jolly's biography of Lord Leverhulme (London, 1976) 197-235 also discusses Leverhulme's Western Isles 'retirement' project.
5. See Nicolson (1960) 23. The sellers were the Matheson family at whose hands Lewis cottars had suffered so much and whom the CDB, in the absence of compulsory powers, had so signally failed to budge.
6. See Nicolson (1960) 22-3; Jolly (1976) 3-4
7. Lord Leverhulme to Manager, Royal Hotel, Stornoway, n d, Autumn, 1917, quoted but not referenced in Nicolson (1960) 50. When he had toured the Island of Lewis in October of 1917, prior to purchasing, Leverhulme had taken away a copy of the 1902 Brand Report on the Social Condition of the People of Lewis. He had made this presumption in his letter thanking the manager of the Royal Hotel for the loan, in so doing, revealing something of the plan already forming in his own mind.
8. In his key-note speech to the people, as new proprietor of the Island of Lewis, Lord Leverhulme spoke of the importance of keeping abreast of "the modern line of march of science and art". His enthusiasm for "all that science has placed at our disposal for the improvement and development of the resources of the island" matched that of former CDB Chairman and Secretary for Scotland, Lord Pentland. See Nicolson (1960) 56-7; also above p 347
9. Nicolson (1960) 76
10. See Nicolson (1960) 129-140
11. Quoted in Nicolson (1960) 140. Nicolson interviewed a number of the ex-raiders in the Autumn of 1959.

12. The substance of this rather telescoped version of Leverhulme's encounter with the Lewis crofters at Gress, near Stornoway, which appeared in The New Alliance, Vol 5 No 4, July-August 1944, is correct, the detail less so. For a full account see Nicolson (1960) 137-147
13. See T C Smout, A History of the Scottish People 1560-1830 (London, 1972) 337; Nicolson (1960) 206-231
14. See Nicolson (1960) 231-2. The project was thus described in an article in The Times, October 6, 1924, by Robert Murray, MP, who visited Leverburgh in the Autumn of 1924.
15. It is true that the houses do, as Leverhulme specifically wished, have 'a Scotch feeling', but it is the same Scotch feeling of the extensive inter-war estates built by MacTaggart and Mickel in Glasgow and Edinburgh, and therefore quite out of place against the bare and rocky Harris backcloth, though less inappropriate in Stornoway. See Nicolson (1960) 104
16. Speech by Lord Leverhulme to the Philosophical Institute of Edinburgh, November 4, 1919, quoted in Nicolson (1960) 78
17. See Nicolson (1960) 240-6
18. See Magnus Magnusson, 'Highland Administration' in D S Thomson and I Grimbly, The Future of the Highlands (London, 1968) 288; Williams (1973) 104. I am grateful also to R J Arden, Librarian, HADB, for helping to guide me through the complex chronology of twentieth century Highland development literature.
19. See Williams (1973) 104; and above Chapters 4, 5 and 6 of this thesis
20. H F Campbell, Highland Reconstruction (Glasgow, 1920) 89
21. J P Day, Public Administration in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland (London, 1918) 384
22. Scotsman, January 10, 1914
23. Quoted in Magnusson (1968) 288; see also Williams (1973) 104
24. Magnusson (1968) 289; see also Williams (1973) 104. The Rev T M Murchison, who was presently to assume chairmanship of the League, was concurrently pleading for the creation of a Highland Development Authority. R J Arden has established that Murchison was published to that effect in an otherwise unidentified 1938 volume commemorating the Glasgow exhibition.

25. Magnusson (1968) 289
26. Quoted in Magnusson (1968) 288; see also Williams (1973) 105; K J W Alexander 'Highland Planning: New Model or Old Muddle?' in Report of 7th Highlands and Islands Conference (STUC, 1968) 30. The Assistant Secretary to the Committee, Adam Collier, substantially reiterated the proposals in his book The Crofting Problem (Cambridge, 1953) edited by Professor A K Cairncross and published after Collier's early death in a mountaineering accident in Sutherland.
27. Magnusson (1968) 288
28. See Magnusson (1968) 288-9; Williams (1973) 105
29. Williams (1973) 106
30. See above p 257; also above Chapter Three
31. See Williams (1973) 105-6
32. See Williams (1973) 106
33. By the early 1960s, economic prosperity was fuelling the belief that all things were possible amidst what the 'blurb' on the end-cover of James Grassie's Highland Experiment (Aberdeen, 1983) describes as "the white hot heat of modern technology promised by Harold Wilson's first Labour Government". It was an era of universalities and panaceas, measured in terms of manufacturing industry. See also below n 66.
34. Hugh Quigley, privately issued pamphlet entitled 'The Highlands of Scotland: Proposals for Development', as reported in The New Alliance, Vol 5 No 4, July-August, 1944, 11. The role and achievement of the North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board are discussed in Magnusson (1968) 292-3.
35. Quigley, quoted in The New Alliance, Vol 5 No 4, July-August, 1944, 11
36. For a discussion of criticism of early HADB strategy see below Section (ii)
37. J I Prattis, 'Economic Structures in the Highlands of Scotland', Fraser of Allander Institute Speculative Paper No 7, 1977, 33
38. The New Alliance, Vol 5 No 4, July-August, 1944, 11
39. Smout (1972) 337
40. See R J Storey, 'Community Co-operatives - A Highlands and Islands Experiment' in J Sewel and D O'Cearbhaill, Co-operation and Community Development (Galway, 1982) 71.

As R J Storey observes of the 'comharchumannn' as the HIBD-assisted community groups in the Outer Hebrides are known, "it seems clear that the co-operatives are subject to most of the difficulties that beset small scale enterprises in remote locations..." See also below p 456-7 and associated notes.

41. Hugh Quigley, quoted in The New Alliance, Vol 5 No 4, July-August, 1944, 11
42. The 'soft option' is the sub-title given by James Grassie, in his account of the HIBD, to the chapter on tourism. See James Grassie, Highland Experiment (Aberdeen, 1983) 27
43. See Prattis (1977) 31; Ian Carter, 'A Socialist Strategy for the Highlands' in Gordon Brown, The Red Paper on Scotland (Edinburgh, 1975) 248-9. It is proper to point out that The New Alliance, the magazine in which Hugh Quigley's proposals were reported, might have had some sympathy with the neo-Quigleys, but soon threw aside its reservations. It stated: "although there is a natural distrust of the parasitic functions of those who cater for the tourist trade, he [Mr Quigley] is successful in presenting those functions in a creditable light as a really integral part of a good social life persisting under modern conditions". (Vol 5 No 4, July-August, 1944). The theme was the modern industrial workers' need to 'escape' to a refreshing environment for recreation.
44. Prior to taking up his appointment as HIBD Chairman, Professor Alexander had held an Economics chair at Strathclyde University. Following his spell at the Board he resumed his academic career in the capacity of Principal of Stirling University.
45. See above previous page, and associated n 39
46. K J W Alexander, 'Commanding Highlands' in New Statesman, October 8, 1965, 512
47. Alexander had been a member of a special committee chaired by Judith Hart, set up in the early 1960s to prepare a Scottish policy for a confidently expected Labour Government. See Grassie (1983) 114
48. i.e. that the critics were absolutely right and growth centre policy was fundamentally wrong
49. See Grassie (1983) 49-51; also Sir Kenneth Alexander, 'The Work of the Highlands and Islands Development Board with particular reference to the Role of Education and Training', The Arkleton Lecture (HIBD Inverness, 1978) 15. In other words, in terms of the north-west Highlands - as opposed to the Highlands as a whole and, in particular, the eastern Highlands - and given also

the constraints occasioned by generalised recession, the greatest good for the greatest number in the long term was seen to lie in promoting a community-based programme of self-help. That way lay the possibility of de-emphasising primary activity, rather than importing manufacturing activity and praying for an end to recession. "It was felt that if community action increased local confidence in the way hoped for, there might well be a greater response to other development incentives, as part of a general stimulus to awareness and interest." R J Storey (1982) 73

50. Sir Kenneth Alexander (HIDB Inverness, 1978) 15
51. See R J Storey (1982) 80-82. See below Section (ii) for a fuller treatment of this point
52. Otherwise it would be difficult in the long term, after the initial period of subsidy, to sustain employment and services which would not otherwise be established, as stated objective of the scheme. See Sir Kenneth Alexander (HIDB Inverness, 1978) 15. Furthermore, community occupational pluralism allows labour specialisation, economies of scale and pooling of financial resources which are not the same as the essentially negative reciprocity and mutual aid networks operating as support structures in the context of the strictly traditional mode of individual occupational pluralism, as described by J I Prattis (1977) 11-14.
53. HIDB, Twelfth Report 1977 (1978) 26; see also R J Storey (1982) 4
54. Chairman's Foreword, HIDB, Twelfth Report 1977 (1978) 9
55. The analogy is, of course, overstated. The force of the argument is this, that Hugh Quigley was in the wrong place at the wrong time successfully to put the case for special treatment, far less special status (which is not the same thing) for the Highlands. See also above n 33 and below n 66
56. The New Alliance, Vol 5 No 4, July-August, 1944, 11
57. In other words, this was the era of policy on the grand scale - nationalisation of industry and the birth of the welfare state.
58. Magnusson (1968) 289
59. See Williams (1973) 107
60. Quoted in Williams (1973) 107
61. See Williams (1973) 107
62. See Williams (1973) 107 and 113

63. See Magnusson (1968) 289-90; Williams (1973) 109
64. See Magnusson (1968) 290; Williams (1973) 109
65. See Williams (1973) 109
66. See Magnusson (1968) 290; Williams (1973) 110. With one notable exception, there were few within the Labour movement who were to pause to consider whether there might not be a fundamental inconsistency between the desire to accord special status to the Highlands and the desire to treat the Highlands no differently from the rest of the country, a question entirely begged by the 1965-70 Scottish Economy Plan for Expansion. The word of warning was sounded by academic economist and future Highland Board chairman, Kenneth Alexander.
67. See Williams (1973) 110
68. Magnusson (1968) 291
69. Magnusson (1968) 291
70. Magnusson (1968) 292. It was not, of course, realised at the time that 1964 was to be the last year of the 'baby boom', an unexpected and dramatic reversal of what, with hindsight, emerged as only a short-term upward fluctuation in the birth rate, subsequently taking place. See R M Williams, British Population (London, 1978) 44-6
71. Magnusson (1968) 292. According to Magnusson, there was even a reasonable alternative open to the Tories. "With only a small adjustment in the existing machinery, they could have accomplished the same kind of thing in a way more suited to their ideological stance. They could have used the North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board, and they could have used MacBraynes." In other words, the situation might have been defused in much the same way as the Tories had defused a previous Highland problem with the device of the CDB. See below p 461
72. See Magnusson (1968) 290; Williams (1973) 109
73. See Williams (1973) 109
74. D I MacKay and N K Buxton, 'The North of Scotland Economy - A Case for Redevelopment?' in Scottish Journal of Political Economy, Vol 4, February 1965, 43
75. K J W Alexander, 'Highland Planning: New Model or Old Muddle?' in Report of 7th Highlands and Islands Conference (STUC, 1968) 29
76. See Williams (1973) 119; Magnusson (1968) 295

77. See above Chapter Three
78. See D Simpson, 'Investment, Employment and Government Expenditure' in Scottish Journal of Political Economy, Vol 2, November 1963; passim; MacKay and Buxton (1965) refer to Government support representing merely a 'holding operation', (p 41) and similarly Williams (1973) argues that it was provided only as a means of 'keeping the Highlands happy'. (p 112-3)
79. The full text of the famous Second Reading debate from which these much-quoted lines are taken is located in Hansard, Fifth Series 708 (1964-5) col. 1079-1204. These specific remarks of Willie Ross appear in cols. 1082 and 1095
80. Ross's case occupies cols. 1079-1083, 1085-1091 and 1092-1096 of Hansard, Fifth Series 708 (1964-5). A synthesis of the arguments is provided by Williams (1973) 119-124
81. Hansard, Fourth Series 50 (1897) 476. See also above p 192 and associated n 428
82. Hansard, Fifth Series 708 (1964-5) col. 1082 (William Ross)
83. Hansard, Fifth Series 708 (1964-65) col. 1088-9
84. Hansard, Fourth Series 51 (1897) col. 752. See also above p 197 and associated n 453
85. Great emphasis was placed by Michael Noble during the debate upon the capacity of the private sector to stimulate the necessary development without the need for public intervention. See Hansard, Fifth Series 708 (1964-5) col. 1103-5
86. See James Grassie, Highland Experiment (Aberdeen, 1983) 93 and associated n 37
87. Hansard, Fifth Series 714 (1964-5) col. 1040; Speech by Michael Noble to Unionist Party Weekend School at Dunoon, as reported in Scotsman and Glasgow Herald, March 1, 1965
88. See Grassie (1983) 93; and above p 218a to 221
89. See Hansard, Fifth Series 708 (1964-5) col. 1083-1201. For a distillation of the Tory opposition see Williams (1973) 119-20; also Magnusson (1968) 295
90. See Williams (1973) 111

91. See Hansard, Fifth Series 714 (1964-5) col. 1039. This was essentially a restatement by Noble of points previously put during the Second Reading, when he made his memorable observation that "this Board has not got one tooth, but the right hon. Gentleman has a most ferocious set of new snappers". Hansard, Fifth Series 708 (1964-5) col. 1104. For Liberal criticism of the proposed Congested Districts legislation, see above p 191, 204 and 218a
92. See Hansard, Fifth Series 717 (1964-5) col. 1969. For a consideration of the reception given to the Bill in the Lords, see Williams (1973) 124-5
93. See Bryan MacGregor, 'Regional planning in a remote area: the Highlands and Islands Development Board', Town and Country Planning Summer School, University of York, Report of Proceedings (RTPI, 1979) 16-24
94. See MacGregor (1979) 17
95. For an examination of some of the relevant arguments, see, for example, Gavin McCrone, Regional Policy in Britain (London, 1969) 25-48; Frank J B Stilwell, Regional Economic Policy (London, 1972) 7-24; Harry W Richardson, Elements of Regional Economics (Harmondsworth, 1969) 111-119; E M Hoover, 'Some Old and New Issues in Regional Development' in (ed) E A G Robinson, Backward Areas in Advanced Countries (New York, 1969) 343-357
96. See Richardson (1969) 13-15; Stilwell (1972) 7-9. Richardson, and even Stilwell, were writing at a time when social and political arguments could be employed to give a convincing economic case for regional policy added support. When that economic case no longer exists, for a government (even a Liberal one) to insist on implementation of a regional policy could be politically disastrous. Hoover (1969) 346 states that there is no solution to regional unemployment except in the context of a prosperous national economy. And as McCrone observes: "it is seldom that a regional policy can fly in the face of economic possibility and be based purely on political or social considerations. Regional policy may be expensive....." McCrone (1969) 25
97. MacGregor (1979) 17 makes a similar point to that made here, concerning the idea of the planner as an impartial professional, an idea which allowed the Board to steer clear of overt political conflict. The expression neo-Hooverian is employed because Hoover was responsible for a seminal work on the Location of Economic Activity (McGraw-Hill, 1948) but by the 1960s when regional economics was

developing rapidly and regional policy very much in vogue, was blowing distinctly cool as far as regional aid was concerned, arguing that 'place prosperity' was a dangerous objective to pursue, the only legitimate ultimate goal being 'people prosperity'. See Hoover (1969) 349-50. Hoover's 1969 paper does rehearse many of the important arguments for regional policy, but as much to set them up as 'Aunt Sallies' to be knocked down, as for any other purpose. In this latter he was at most only partially successful so that Cameron has been able to use some of Hoover's 'Aunt Sallies' to strengthen his case for regional policy. See Gordon C Cameron, Regional Economic Development: the Federal Role (Washington, 1970) 40

98. See Hoover (1969) 350
99. Cameron (1970) 57
100. Hoover (1969) 352; see also Cameron (1970) 44
101. See K J W Alexander, 'Commanding Highlands' in New Statesman, October 8, 1965, 512. As Alexander was, no doubt, aware, Mackay and Buxton in developing their case against Highland redevelopment, published earlier that year, had noted the relative absence in the Highlands of U.K. 'growth' industries. SJPE, Vol 4 (1965) 33-36
102. HIDB, First Report (1967) 4
103. See, for example, James B Caird, 'Changes in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland 1951-71', Geoforum 12 (1972) 5-36; Robert Grieve, 'Scotland: Highland Experience of Regional Government', Town and Country Planning, Vol. 41 No 3 (1973) 172-6; Jim Lotz, 'Regional Planning and Development in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland', Canadian Public Administration (September 1969) 372-386; MacGregor (1979) 16-17
104. See, for example, Ian Carter, 'The Highlands of Scotland as an under-developed region' in (eds) E de Kadt and G Williams, Sociology and Development (London, 1974); Carter (1975); Prattis (1977). Such left-of-centre criticism may be compared with the more objective academic appraisals of G A Mackay, 'Regional Planning Problems: Scotland' in (ed) Maurice Broady, Marginal Regions (London, 1973) 20-27, and MacGregor (1979). Finally, the Lotz (1969) paper is distinctive in that it adopts the pro-Board (or at least understanding of the constraints facing the Board) attitude typified by those commentators who are also former Board

- officials, namely, Gordon Adams, 'The Highlands Dilemma', New Society, February, 1976, and Grassie (1983). Frank Spaven's assessment in Contemporary Account (HIDB, 1979) may also be included in this category, even although Grassie suggests that he, too, ignored some issues fundamental to putting the Board into perspective (103)
105. MacGregor (1979) 17
 106. Carter (1975) 249; see also Prattis (1977) 26-33
 107. Grassie (1983) 103. The same accusation is levelled against former head of the Board's Planning and Research Division, Frank Spaven, whose 1979 assessment of the HIDB appeared in the Board's own publication, A Contemporary Account. But if Spaven committed the same 'error' as Carter, this did not lead him to draw similar conclusions. See above n 104
 108. Gordon Adams, 'The Highlands Dilemma', New Society, February 26, 1976. Lotz, too, has noted how "the Board was under pressure to 'do something' from the very beginning". Lotz (1969) 18 n 27
 109. See Alison McCleery, 'The Persistence of Co-operation as a Theme in Marginal Development' in (eds) John Sewel and Diarmuid O'Cearbhaill, Co-operation and Community Development (Galway, 1982) 13-14
 110. See James B Caird, 'Changes in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland 1951-1971', Geoforum 12 (1972) 5-36
 111. Harry W Richardson, Elements of Regional Economics (Harmondsworth, 1969) 103
 112. MacGregor (1979) 17
 113. MacGregor (1979) 17; see also Williams (1973) 129-30
 114. MacGregor (1979) 18. While it would be impossible for any observer not to hold some kind of personal viewpoint, it should be pointed out that MacGregor's paper, presented as it was at the summer school of a professional body (the RTPI) approximates to the highest tradition of academic objectivity, as is indicated by its title, 'Regional Planning in a Remote Area: the HIDB'. By contrast, Carter's 1975 paper, at least, entitled 'A Socialist Strategy For The Highlands' and published in The Red Paper on Scotland, constitutes an unashamedly political comment.
 115. See Carter (1975) 247-253

116. Carter (1975) 249. MacGregor, and also economist G A Mackay, have both joined Carter in criticising the lack of selectivity which was part and parcel of the early Board's responsive, as opposed to initiative, approach to development. See MacGregor (1979) 18 and G A Mackay, 'Regional Planning Problems: Scotland' in (ed) Maurice Broady, Marginal Regions (London, 1973) 20-27. For a discussion of the differences between a responsive and an initiative approach, see below p472-4
117. Adams (1976) 426
118. HIDB, Fifth Report 1970 (1971) 5
119. MacGregor (1979) 19
120. MacGregor (1979) 18
121. See McCleery (1982) 13-15. This paper was originally read at the Fifth International Seminar on Marginal Regions in Dublin in August 1979, in other words, virtually simultaneously with MacGregor's presentation to the Town and Country Planning Summer School at York in September 1979. In support of a pragmatism argument, it can be pointed out that Grassie's account of the Board does not so much unfold a strategy as tell a story; indeed it carries the sub-title "the story of the Highlands and Islands Development Board". It is also of note that the Board's third chairman, who in his academic role had challenged the first chairman to produce an identifiable plan for Highland development, on assuming the chairmanship himself, lost his enthusiasm for a single development plan, which now seemed to him not to offer the flexibility needed in an area as diverse as the Highlands and Islands. See Grassie (1983) 115, and below p 472-5
122. HIDB, First Report (1966) 5. The now famous observation was taken from a paper prepared by the first chairman for Board consideration which provided the foundation for subsequent Board discussions and meetings with other authorities.
123. See Caird (1972) 30-33; Martin MacDonald, 'How the West was won', Scotsman, December 1, 1977; David Turnock, Patterns of Highland Development (London, 1970) 187 and 220; McCleery (1982) 13-15
124. See Grassie (1983) 1-25
125. Grassie (1983) 102. The essay by Carter to which Grassie is referring appeared in Aberdeen University Review, Vol XLV (1) No 149, Spring 1973. A toned

down summary of the argument also appears in Carter's later critique of the Board's growth pole policy, (1975, 248), which rather lends credence to the view that Carter's criticism of the Board is perhaps less well-founded than simply anti-establishment, since it is difficult for both criticisms to have simultaneous validity.

126. See Grassie (1983) 102
127. See Grassie (1983) 46
128. MacGregor (1979) 18. The third chairman of the HIDB has likened the Highland core-periphery problem to the experience of many LDCs, where the riches of their capitals have accentuated the problems and poverty of their hinterlands. See Alexander, The Arkleton Lecture (1978) 10-11
129. i.e. however industrial growth was generated in the eastern Highlands, whether 'engineered' or spontaneous, the pressures on the remoter areas would be identical.
130. See Carter (1975) 249; and Prattis (1977) 28. This line of argument is also very effectively advanced in John McGrath's play The Cheviot the Stag and the Black Black Oil. The 7:84 Theatre Company of Scotland, which made a considerable impact with its Highland tour of The Cheviot, subsequently followed up that success with a similar tour of David MacLennan's Thought for Today. The 'thought' was the text from Isaiah "woe unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field", the subject of the play being the Highland Clearances. What is of note about Thought for Today, as far as this thesis is concerned, is the mention of the CDB, in a tone hardly less disrespectful than that employed to send up (hilariously) the then ten-year-old HIDB.
131. See, for example, (ed) John Sewel, The Promise and the Reality - Large Scale Developments in Marginal Regions (Aberdeen, 1979) Proceedings of the 4th International Seminar on Marginal Regions, Plockton, Wester Ross, passim; also M B Cottam, P L Knox and P H Hirsch, The Highlands in Transition: Current Aspects of Social Geography in a Peripheral Area, SSRC North Sea Oil Panel Occasional Paper No 6, 1983, passim
132. McCleery (1982) 14; MacGregor (1979) 19. See above
 " 121
133. MacGregor (1979) 19

134. Martin MacDonald, 'How the West was won', Scotsman, December 1, 1977. In other words, freed from the task of generating the impetus to development in the east, the Board could concentrate on geographical areas which almost certainly could not otherwise have justified such a narrow focus of attention and concentrated expenditure of public money, yet which were bound to suffer at the hands of development in the east, which did seem justified (in the light of later events) on economic grounds.
135. MacGregor (1979) 19; see also Martin MacDonald, 'How the West was won', Scotsman, December 1, 1977
136. Martin MacDonald, 'How the West was won', Scotsman, December 1, 1977
137. Martin MacDonald, 'How the West was won', Scotsman, December 1, 1977
138. See Martin MacDonald, 'How the West was won', Scotsman, December 1, 1977; and Peter Hetherington, 'Glasgow is no longer the Mecca for Islanders', North 7, Issue 28, March/April 1978, 2-4
139. Martin MacDonald, 'How the West was won', Scotsman, December 1, 1977
140. See, for example Fiona MacKay, Michael P Jackson and Victor J B Hanby, 'Job Creation: its Impact in Crofting Communities', Scottish Journal of Sociology, Vol 4 No 2 (1980) 93-103; Stuart Lindsay, 'Survey of Job Creation Programme', North 7, Issue 27, November/December 1977, 9-11; D M Maclean, 'Gaeldom Reborn', Scotsman, April 5, 1979; Martin MacDonald, 'How the West was won', Scotsman, December 1, 1977
141. See K J W Alexander, 'Commanding Highlands' in New Statesman, October 8, 1965, 512; and above p 464
142. See for example, Angus Macleod, 'Highland Board find a philosophy', Scotsman, January 24, 1978; Peter Hetherington, 'Uncovering the roots of co-operation', North 7, Issue 44, March/April 1981, 4-7. An examination of (modern) West of Ireland co-op experience is provided by Maureen Johnson, 'The Co-operative Movement in the Gaeltacht', Irish Geography, Vol 12, 1979, 68-81
143. See McCleery (1982) 15
144. R J Storey, 'Community Co-operatives - a Highlands and Islands Experiment' in J Sewel and D O'Cearbhaill, Co-operation and Community Development (Galway, 1982) 71
145. R J Storey (Galway, 1982) 81

146. J I Prattis, 'Economic Structures in the Highlands of Scotland', Fraser of Allander Institute Speculative Paper Number 7 (1977) 31
147. Professor Sir Kenneth Alexander, 'The Work of the Highlands and Islands Development Board with Particular Reference to the Role of Education and Training', The Arkleton Lecture (1978) 12
148. Alexander (1978) 11
149. Alexander (1978) 11
150. See Alexander (1965) 512; and above p 464 and 471. To "make the Highlands pay" by development which removed the need for subsidies was an idea which undoubtedly had a much longer history than Liberal MP Russell Johnston could have suspected, when he advocated that approach to the Highland Problem in his 1964 pamphlet on Highland Development. (See earlier chapters of this thesis, and Williams (1973) 104 and 109). As Grassie (1983) 113 has stated, even the less ambitious task simply of "taking the Highlands off the back of the nation" never was a realistic objective for the Board, attractive though the proposition appeared to politicians in the Central belt of Scotland".
151. R J Storey (1982) 71. Although published in 1982, i.e. following Sir Kenneth Alexander's departure from the HIDB, Storey's paper was originally presented at the Fifth International Seminar on Marginal Regions in Dublin in 1979.
152. See above p 467
153. Alexander (1978) 12
154. Alexander (1978) 11
155. Alexander (1978) 11-12
156. Alexander (1978) 12
157. K J W Alexander, 'Local Initiatives', Fraser of Allander Institute Seminar (Balmacara, 1978) no page reference given, quoted by Storey (1982) 73
158. See above p 472
159. Alexander, The Arkleton Lecture (1978) 16
160. Professor K J W Alexander, 'Highland Planning: New Model or Old Muddle?' in Report of 7th Highlands and Islands Conference (STUC, 1968) 31

161. Professor Kenneth Alexander, quoted but not referenced in Martin MacDonald, 'How the West was won', Scotsman, December 1, 1977. Similarly in the foreword to the annual report for 1979 Alexander wrote that "it is essential to bear in mind that the Highlands and islands is not a uniform area and that policies for development cannot, therefore, be tailor made to one model". HADB, Fourteenth Report (1980) 1
162. Alexander, The Arkleton Lecture (1978) 16
163. See Grassie (1983) 98; also below Section (iii) Appraisal
164. See above p 286 and 364
165. Alexander, The Arkleton Lecture (1978) 16
166. SRO AF 42/1061, R R MacGregor to Dr Hansen, Bonn, July 29, 1902; see also, for example, CDB, Fifth Report (1903) vi for a public reiteration of the privately expressed conviction
167. See above p 409 and 424
168. See Martin MacDonald, 'How the West was won', Scotsman, December 1, 1977
169. SRO AF 42/1061, Angus Sutherland to R R MacGregor, February 2, 1902; and William C Dunbar to R R MacGregor, January 24, 1902
170. Alexander, The Arkleton Lecture (1978) 12
171. Scottish Law Review, November 1906, 312
172. J K Farquharson, 'The Future role of the Highlands and Island Development Board in the encouragement of rural-based industries' in (ed) R B Tranter, The Future of Upland Britain (Centre for Agricultural Strategy, 1978) 283. The force of the criticism applies equally to the various articles of Ian Carter.
173. Above p 7
174. J H Plumb, 'The Historian's Dilemma' in (ed) J H Plumb, Crisis in the Humanities (Harmondsworth, 1964) 43. See also above p 4-5.
175. For a discussion of the two diametrically opposite approaches to history to which the term historicism may be applied, see (eds) Alan Bullock and Oliver Stallybrass, The Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought (London, 1977) 285-6. The background to the growth of nineteenth-century historicism is also discussed in J H Plumb (1964) 28-29

176. Michael Drake, 'Introduction' in (ed) Michael Drake, Applied Historical Studies (London, 1973) 1; Alan R H Baker et al, 'The Future of the Past' Area 4 (1969) 48-9. See also above p 5-7
177. See above p 461
178. See Williams (1973) 102
179. See Grassie (1983) 69-98
180. Hence the City of Glasgow records the highest percentage of Gaelic speakers outside the crofting counties.
181. See Mackay and Buxton (1965) 43
182. Harry W Richardson, Elements of Regional Economics (Harmondsworth, 1969) 125
183. See above, Chapter Two, Section (ii) and Chapter Three, Section (i)
184. David Gow, 'Devolution and Democracy' in (ed) Gordon Brown) The Red Paper on Scotland (Edinburgh 1975) 58
185. See Grassie (1983) 24-5 and 53-4; also above p 364-5 and 410
186. The epithet was applied to various HADB-assisted ventures, typified by spectacle frame production in Barra or bulb culture in North Uist, by a local newspaper which "roasted the Board with steady sarcasm". See Lotz (1969) 17 and n 26; also Grassie (1983) 46 and 82. With respect to the CDB, Lord Balfour was responsible for the ordering of Tussac Grass seed from the Falkland Islands via the Colonial Office, for experimental cultivation as animal fodder. The results of the trials were, however, a complete failure, and the motivation was perhaps as much to steal a march on the Irish CDB as anything else, for that Board invariably seemed to have the edge on the Scottish Board in terms of ideas and experience. Indeed other novel development ideas often originated in Ireland, as in the case of the Scottish Board's interest in the feasibility of introducing basket-making. (See SRO AF 42/334, Correspondence, reports and minutes re CDB Tussac Grass experiment, Spring 1899 to Spring 1900; and SRO AF 42/5082, Correspondence between R R MacGregor and F W D Mitchell, Secretary, CDB for Ireland, re osier growing and the basket-making industry in Connemara, June 1908)

187. See Grassie (1983) 24 and 84-5; and CDB, Seventh Report (1905) xix and Ninth Report (1907) xv
188. See Williams (1973) 66. Williams is making a general comment about the administrative environment in which the Board operates, rather than implying specific criticism of the present Highland Board.
189. See Williams (1973) 127-8; and Grassie (1983) 103-4
190. See above, Chapters Three to Five. In the case of piers beyond the limit of £2000 fixed in the Western Highlands and Islands Works Act (which governed CDB procedure) a Provisional Order confirmed by Act of Parliament had to be obtained by the promoters. See SR0 AF 43/3, R R MacGregor to Sir Robert Wright, Digest of Principles and Rules adopted by the CDB, April 3, 1912. (Sir Robert Wright had previously been Agricultural Adviser to the Scottish Education Department, and joined the staff of the CDB in June 1911.)
191. See above, Section (ii), and below p 485-6. The CDB was particularly ill-served in the matter of works, in respect of which it found itself being dictated to by the County Councils, which often acted without authority and prematurely, on the basis of third party assurance of Board commitment, the third party being the local promoters of a particular scheme. See SR0 AF 43/3, R R MacGregor to Sir Robert Wright, April 3, 1912
192. See above, Chapter Four, Section (ii)
193. See Grassie (1983) 44-5; also MacGregor (1979) 17
194. Grassie (1983) 45
195. John Rollo in The Scotsman, February 7, 1965, quoted by Grassie (1983) 45-6
196. See Grassie (1983) 46
197. See, for example CDB, Eleventh Report (1909) xxvii; also above Chapter Four, Section (ii)
198. See above, Chapter Six, Section (ii); and Grassie (1983) 12-23. The Invergordon saga, also examined by Grassie (118-129), may be classed similarly.
199. The Lord Advocate, Mr Scott Dickson, as quoted in 'Parliament and the Highlands', Report of House of Commons Debate, Open Times, July 1, 1905. Nevertheless, the Departmental Committee of Enquiry into methods of breeding and keeping poultry in the Highlands and Islands had a number of criticisms of CDB practice, and made various recommendations which the Commissioners

subsequently took on board, in particular relating to the establishment of breeding centres in the Crofting Counties and provision of appropriate training, supervision and inspection. See CDB, Twelfth Report (1910) xiv-xv

200. See MacGregor (1979) 18; also Grassie (1983) 37. The CDB, too, had to run the gauntlet of hostile reactions to its activities, typified by a letter to the Oban Times (which as a radical newspaper was calculated to give such complaints a sympathetic hearing) from one A Mackay, criticising the methods of the CDB and the "absolute power [that] is invested in the CDB to do what it likes with its £35,000 a year". (Oban Times, December 30, 1911). The Commissioners themselves were not unaware of the problem of potential misdirection of funds. Thus Angus Sutherland voiced his fear that Board intervention in home industries would simply enhance shopkeepers' profits (see above p 291) while William Mackenzie deplored the dependence of weaving trade on the philanthropic efforts of the Duchess of Sutherland, whose image, it was implied, the Board was bolstering, yet who was merely satisfying a whim which "may be withdrawn any day". (See SR0 AF 42/1895, William Mackenzie to R R MacGregor, February 22, 1904)
201. For a number of views as to the origins of the charge of laziness see, for example, Adam Collier, The Crofting Problem (Cambridge, 1953) 1; Adrian Varwell, 'Highlands and Islands Communities' in (ed) Maurice Broady, Marginal Regions (London, 1973) 67-77; R J Storey, 'Community Co-operation - A Highlands and Islands Experiment' in (eds) J Sewel and D O'Cearbhaill, Co-operation and Community Development (Galway, 1982) 73. Traditional egalitarianism, irregular working hours, and discouragement at official ineptitude may be cited as other features of the crofting lifestyle, which, combined with lack of entrepreneurial experience, contribute to the accusation of laziness so often levelled at the West Highlanders by outsiders.
202. See, for example CDB, Tenth Report (1908)xv; also Grassie (1983) 66

203. See above p 289-90 and ff where other factors influencing the Scottish Board's hesitation are discussed. William Mackenzie, in particular, worried that the Duchess of Sutherland created potential instability in the industry by raising demand to an artificially high level, which could not be sustained. (See SRO AF 42/1895, William Mackenzie to R R MacGregor, February 22, 1904; also above n 200)
204. See Grassie (1983) 66-67. The question at issue was the introduction of power-driven double width looms which would have facilitated the implementation of a new marketing approach based on new designs. Ironically, at the time of recording the end of its effort to persuade the weavers to its point of view, the Board also conceded that, thanks to vagaries of the fashion market, demand for the traditional product was on the way up again.
205. See Alexander, The Arkleton Lecture (1978), 15-16; Storey (1982) 5; and Peter Hotherington, 'Uncovering the Roots of Co-operation' in North 7, No 44, March/April 1981, 4-7
206. See McCleery (1982) 8-10. It is necessary to point out, however, that highly specific factors contributed to failure in individual cases, factors which might not have been relevant to Scottish schemes.
207. See above p 347 and 363; and Grassie (1983) 51
208. See above, section (ii) for a discussion of pressures operating in the case of the HIDB, and above p 326-30 for evidence of Lord Balfour's indecent haste, after a disappointing start, to create a good public image of his Board.
209. See below, p 485-7 and 500
210. See above, p 462; and Grassie (1983) 93 and 97
211. HIDB, Eleventh Report 1976 (1977) 81-2
212. HIDB, Proposals for changes in the Highlands and Islands Development (Scotland) Act 1965, June 28, 1978. In the Preface to this document the Board Chairman specifically stated that the Board did not intend the nationalising of land, while the proposed legislation itself incorporated a compulsory purchase clause "as a last resort". (See pages 5 and 29 respectively). Worrying about 'back door' nationalisation of land was not a new phenomenon. See below n 224
213. The occasion was when both personalities were interviewed on 'Farming Outlook', Scottish Television, transmitted March 6, 1977
214. Hansard, Fifth Series 984 (1979-1980) col. 263

215. Alexander, The Arkleton Lecture (1978) 16. See also above p 472-5 for a discussion of the context of this statement
216. For details of the Liberal-Conservative exchanges in 1897, see above p 217-219. The substance of Alexander's explanation to Brian Wilson is restated in the Summary to the Board's Proposals of June 28, 1978 (page 6)
217. Hansard, Fifth Series 984 (1979-80) col. 263. See also Grassie (1983) 96-7
218. Grassie (1983) 98
219. See above p 462-3; and Grassie (1983) 104. The Scottish Secretaries in question were Willie Ross and Michael Noble, who preceded Ross in office.
220. See Grassie (1983) 116
221. See Grassie (1983) 98 and 116
222. Alexander's eventual replacement, Robert Cowan, seemed to fit the Tory bill with his experience in that seat of free market commercialism, Hong Kong. Yet, recently he has been 'guilty' of public criticism of Scottish Office tight-fistedness, which is hardly calculated to endear him to his political masters. See Alf Young, 'Public Audit' column of 'The Business Scotsman' Scotsman, January 23, 1984
223. Hansard, Fourth Series 50 (1897) col. 476. See also above Chapter Three for the context of Liberal criticism of the proposed Congested Districts Legislation
224. Note of Dissent to Report of the (Taylor) Commission of Enquiry into Crofting Conditions, Cmd. 9091, PP 1953-4 VIII) 89. Margeret MacPherson's riposte to the main Report's concern about 'back door' nationalisation of land was unequivocal: "I do not mind what door is used."
225. See Note of Dissent to Taylor Report (1953-4) 91; also Farquhar Gillanders, 'Economic Life' in (eds) Derick S Thomson and Ian Grimble, The Future of the Highlands (London, 1968) 117-8; also Grassie (1983) 69-98; and HADB, Proposals re powers over rural land use, June 28, 1978, 7-8
226. Grassie (1983) 97-8
227. Emile Durkheim (trans. Peter Collins), The Evolution of Educational Thought: Lectures on the Formation and Development of Secondary Education in France (London, 1977) 23
228. See (eds) Bullock and Stallybrass (1977) 285-6; and above p 476-7

229. W R Scott, 'Scottish Land Settlement' in David T Jones et al., Rural Scotland During the War (Oxford, 1926) 231
230. J P Day, Public Administration in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland (London, 1918) 212. See also CDB, Fourteenth Report (1912) viii. The weight of evidence from the research conducted for this thesis suggests that in assessing the achievement, in purely concrete terms, of the CDB, there is no good reason to depart from the basic formula (appropriately elaborated) adopted by J P Day, as long as the considerable limitations of his approach are appreciated (see below p493)
231. Day (1918) 212
232. Day (1918) 208. In other words, the evidence from the CDB papers, set out in Chapters Three, Four and Five of this thesis, substantially corroborates Day's assessment of the constraints facing the Board, which was based on published information. See also n 230 above and n 234 below
233. See above Chapter Five, Section (ii)
234. See SRO AF 42/5601, Memo by Neil Kennedy as to powers of CDB to sell own sheepstock, December 3, 1908, and associated Board memoranda and minutes subsequent to opinion of Lord Advocate (December 11, 1908) requested by Sheriff Kennedy; also above, Chapter Four, Section (ii) and Chapter Five, Section (i). In fact, J P Day's enumeration of the difficulties facing the Board perhaps clouds the issue somewhat, paradoxically in an attempt to achieve simplicity. His four named difficulties are probably better reduced to two, specifically Board lack of borrowing power and crofter unwillingness to migrate. His two remaining difficulties, namely crofter lack of capital and fear of owner-occupier status, may then be cited rather as contributory factors to the second difficulty, that is unwillingness to migrate.
235. CDB, Eighth Report (1906) xvi; See also Day (1918) 209-10. It should, however, be noted that this ruling applied to cottars and not to crofters, as Day implies. The Board was forced into the position of unwilling landlord in the case of Kilmuir just because the sitting crofter tenants there would not co-operate in their purchase scheme.
236. CDB, Eighth Report (1906) xvi. See above Chapter Four, Section (ii) and Chapter Six, Section (ii) for details of Board involvement in the creation of fishermen's holdings, which, though they had their plot of ground for vegetable growing, scarcely lived up to the expectations of denizens of the Crofting Counties.

237. Hansard, Fourth Series 42 (1896) col. 1485 (Sir Robert Finlay, Solicitor General). See also above Chapters Three, Four and Five
238. CDB, Second Report (1900) xii
239. See above, Chapter Five, Section (ii)
240. See CDB, Eighth Report (1906) Appendix No IV, 'Statement to the Crofters on the Estate of Kilmuir in view of purchase by them of their existing holdings, dated December 1905; also CDB, Tenth Report (1908) Appendix No III, 'Statement to the Kilmuir Crofters with regard to the proposed purchase by them of their existing crofts', dated December 31, 1907. The position is best explained in Angus Mackintosh's observation to R R MacGregor in connection with a Times article relating to Kilmuir: "The writer is in error in assuming that it has not been made clear to the Crofters that allowance is made by the Board, in fixing the purchase price, for the proprietor's burdens. That was fully explained to them. All they look to is this: will the yearly payments under the purchase scheme including all rates and taxes exceed or materially exceed the present rents and tenant's taxes? If so they are not prepared to adopt it as they have already more than enough to do to pay their way". (SR0 AF 42/3224, April 28, 1906) The CDB Land Manager had hit the nail on the head: the Board's view and the crofter's view originated from such different perspectives that they could never coincide. See also Day (1918) 212 for a summary of the Board's financial position which is explained in full in CDB, Eighth Report (1906) x-xii
241. See above, Chapter Six, Section (ii); also above p 487
242. See earlier Chapters of this thesis, especially Chapter Four
243. See above, p 489
244. See above, Chapter Six, Section (i)
245. Agnes Mure Mackenzie, Scotland in Modern Times (Edinburgh, 1941) 259
246. See Day (1918) 208-12
247. See earlier chapters of this thesis, especially Chapter Four
248. See Hetherington (1981) 4-7 and Storey (1982) 71-86 for details of modern Highland experience. As far as the West of Ireland is concerned, although early co-op development there floundered around the time of the first world war, for very specific reasons,

the Irish CDB long before then was involved in promoting a very wide range of indigenous craft indigenous such as barrel-making, lace-making, carpet-making, boat-building etc. See CDB (Ireland) Ninth Report, PP 1900 LXVIII, 37-38. The analogous feature is, of course, the relative staff-intensive-ness of the HIDB and the Irish CDB community development approaches, precisely the feature which precluded Scottish CDB involvement in co-op development. See above, Chapter Six, Section (ii)

249. See G A Mackay, 'Regional Planning Problems - Scotland' in (ed) Maurice Broady, Marginal Regions (London, 1973) 20-27; and G A Mackay, 'An Economist's View of Sociologists' Views on North Sea Oil and Gas Developments', unpublished paper to 4th International Seminar on Marginal Regions, Plockton, Wester Ross, July 1977
250. See above, Chapters Four, Five and Six. The inevitable consequence of the uncertainty caused by the need for recourse to learned opinion to interpret the Board's constitutional powers - opinion which was subsequently the subject of much further debate back at the Board - was that there was a continual feeling, in the words of Angus Sutherland, that "we are drifting, drifting," without ever achieving very much. See SRO AF 42/5601, Memo by Neil Kennedy as to powers of CDB to sell own sheep stock, December 3, 1908, and associated Board memoranda and minutes subsequent to opinion of Lord Advocate (December 11, 1908) requested by Sheriff Kennedy
251. Oban Times, January 21, 1911. See also Report of the Departmental Committee Appointed by the Secretary for Scotland to inquire and report upon the Work of the Congested Districts (Scotland) Commissioners for the Improvement of Live Stock and Agriculture, Cd. 5457 (PP 1910 XXI) 5-16
252. Oban Times, January 21, 1911. See also Report of the Departmental Committee Appointed by the Secretary for Scotland to inquire and report upon the Work of the Congested Districts (Scotland) Commissioners for the Improvement of Live Stock and Agriculture, Cd. 5457 (PP 1910 XXI) 16. The Chairman of the Committee, James N Forsyth, who was a member of the CDB and convener of its Agricultural Committee, did not sign the addendum. Evidence of the inefficiency of the file system is amply available from even a cursory glance at the CDB papers. Constant problems arose from the need to send out the files to the homes and places of work of the Commissioners, for their information and subsequent comment. Delay, misfiling and administrative inefficiency was inevitable, despite the best efforts of the Board secretary, R R MacGregor, to keep track of material.

The state of administrative chaos is typified by an instruction from one Commissioner to another, as follows: "if this reaches you before the papers I sent the other day leave you, please file this in its proper place". (SRO AF 42/48, Angus Sutherland to Sir Colin Scott Moncrieff, n d, November 1897)

253. When it made the claim, the North British Daily Mail (May 29, 1900) had referred to Highland poverty, but the existence of development boards has at least drawn attention to the root cause of the disease, as opposed to its symptoms, and given rise to the word now preferred by Eric Richards. See preface to A History of the Highland Clearances: Agrarian Transformation and the Evictions 1746-1886 (London, 1982)
254. See Glasgow Herald, June 20, 1902, Report of House of Commons Scottish Sitting. See also Scotsman, June 20, 1902 for a transcript of the original debate, which is located in Hansard, Fourth Series (109) 1902 cols. 1130-76
255. Oban Times, July 1, 1905, 'Parliament and the Highlands', Report of House of Commons Debate, reproduced in full in Hansard, Fourth Series (147) 1905 cols. 1378-9
256. SRO AF 42/9696, David T Jones (Fishery Board) to Angus Sutherland, December 18, 1905
257. SRO AF 42/9696, David T Jones to Angus Sutherland, December 18, 1905. Elsewhere, equally, the CDB hinted at the unsatisfactory nature of their 'development' area, when it was admitted that "the portion of the North of Scotland under the charge of the CDB is comparatively limited". (SRO AF 42/7622, R R MacGregor to Netherlands Consul General, London, September 29, 1910)
258. SRO AF 42/1804, Angus Sutherland to R R MacGregor, n d October 1903. The context of the admission by the Convenor of the Works Committee was in respect of the complicated procedure for initiation of road improvement. For other evidence of Sutherland's complete discouragement in the face of his duties, see SRO AF 42/3680, Memo by Angus Sutherland, February 9, 1907
259. See above, Chapter 6, Section (ii)
260. SRO AF 42/35, Charles Leith Hay (Clerk to Lord Balfour in his capacity as Secretary for Scotland) to H. Kerney?, Secretary of Public Meeting, Cravie, Lochs, Lewis, November 10, 1897; SRO AF 42/5034, Sir Reginald MacLeod to R R MacGregor, September 14, 1908. Like many such public agencies, early expectations exceeded later possibilities.
261. SRO AF 42/1324, R R MacGregor to Dr Hansen, Bonn, in reply to request for information re Board work, August 2, 1902; see also SRO AF 42/41, Malcolm McNeill to R R MacGregor, February 2, 1898; and CDB, Fifth Report (1903) vi

262. SRO Af 42/9696, Memo relating to loans to fishermen by Sir Reginald MacLeod, n d,? January 1906. The question of whether the lack of enterprise was a cause or an effect of the failure of the west coast fishermen remained unresolved by Sir Reginald MacLeod, i.e. did lack of capital to buy boats result from lack of experience or was it the other way round.
263. SRO AF 42/9696. Memo by Sir Reginald MacLeod, n d,? January 1906. Earlier in its life the CDB had undertaken no aid to fisheries on account of its impossibly wide remit and primary commitment to tackling congestion. The reappraisal, which this memo signifies, perhaps betokens the slow realisation as the years passed - a realisation which speeded up after John Sinclair-assumed Chairmanship - that the future shape of the Highland Problem would be, not congestion, but the difficulty of retaining population. See above, Chapter Six
264. SRO AF 42/9699, Sir Reginald MacLeod to R R MacGregor, n d, February/March 1907. See also A F 42/9699, Angus Sutherland to R R MacGregor, February 11, 1907
265. SRO AF 42/5218, Angus Sutherland to R R MacGregor, re suggestion regarding promotion of crofters' side industries, September 8, 1908
266. SRO AF 42/5218 Sir Reginald MacLeod to R R MacGregor, September 13, 1908
267. Glasgow Herald, February 23, 1912; see also Glasgow Herald, February 22 and February 24, 1912, and Oban Times, February 24, 1912. An opinion of the Lord Advocate and the Solicitor General ultimately ruled that any benefit derived from that property vested in the CDB belonged to the Congested Districts only, but that outstanding moneys belonged to the general fund at the disposal of the Board of Agriculture to spend as it saw fit. See SRO AF 43/23, Opinion of Alex Ure, Lord Advocate and A M Anderson, Solicitor General, March 4, 1912
268. Oban Times, June 9, 1900. See also above Chapter Four, Section (ii)
269. Oban Times, February 24, 1912
270. Oban Times, February 24, 1912
271. Oban Times, January 21, 1911
272. See above p 477
273. See above, 66-67 p 479-80; also Magnusson (1968) 295; and Williams (1973) 66-7

274. This is not to say that the HADB did not face structural problems of its own. Lotz referred to the dilemma of the Board falling between two stools, that of co-ordinating agency and executive agency, while Williams questioned whether it could fulfil an administrative role for the Highlands at all. See Lotz (1969) 11 and Williams (1973) 129-30
275. The three well-known approaches to evaluating nationalised industry are no less apposite to a consideration of regional policy. See, for example, P J Curwen and A H Fowler, Economic Policy (London 1976) 32-61
276. The possibility of such a takeover has been rumoured of late in the press. See Alf Young, 'Public Audit' column of 'The Business Scotsman', Scotsman, January 23, 1984, on which date Young's column bore the headline 'HADB target for shotgun wedding?'
277. See above, p 479-486
278. John Friedmann, Retracking America: A Theory of Transactive Planning (New York, 1973) 5
279. The phrases are borrowed from the titles of a paper and collection of papers, respectively, treating the question of backwardness and its solutions. See Robert Grieve (First Chairman of HADB) 'Scotland: Highland Experience of Regional Government' in Town and Country Planning, Vol 41 No 3 (1973) 172-6; and E A G Robinson (ed) Backward Areas in Advanced Countries (London, 1969), Proceedings of a Conference held by the International Economic Association

APPENDIX A

60 & 61 VICT Congested Districts (Scotland) Ch 53

Act, 1897

Chapter 53

An Act to provide for the administration of Sums available for the Improvement of Congested Districts in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland.

AD 1897

Be it enacted by the Queen's most Excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, in this present Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same as follows:-

1 For the purpose of administering the sums available for the improvement of congested districts in the highlands and islands of Scotland, the following persons shall be Commissioners (called the Congested Districts (Scotland) Commissioners), that is to say:- The Secretary for Scotland, the Under Secretary for Scotland, the Chairman of the Local Government Board for Scotland, the Chairman of the Fishery Board for Scotland, The Chairman of the Crofters' Commission, and such other persons, not exceeding three, as the Secretary for Scotland may from time to time nominate.

Appointment
of Congested
Districts
(Scotland)
Commissioners

The Secretary for Scotland may from time to time make, alter, and vary such rules as he shall deem necessary for regulating the proceedings of the Commissioners, and the times and places of their meeting.

2 (1) The Secretary for Scotland may appoint as Secretary to the Commissioners one of the officers in the department of the Secretary for Scotland, or in any Government department in Scotland, and, with the consent of the Treasury, may assign to him an additional salary. The Secretary for Scotland may also, with the consent of the Treasury, direct any of the officers in any Government department in Scotland to discharge in relation to the Commissioners such duties, not inconsistent with those of their permanent offices, as he may think proper.

Secretary and
officers to be
appointed from
existing officers
of Government
departments

(2) The salaries or remuneration of the officers (if any) employed by the Commissioners, and the administrative expenses of the Commissioners, shall be fixed by the Treasury and paid out of the sums by this Act to be annually voted by Parliament.

3 For the purposes of this Act a fund (to be called the Congested Districts (Scotland) Fund) shall be constituted, to which shall, from time to time, be carried:-

(1) the sum of fifteen thousand pounds annually available for the improvement of congested districts in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland under and during the continuance of the Agricultural Rates, Congested Districts, and Burgh Land Tax Relief (Scotland) Act, 1896; and

(2) any sums not exceeding twenty thousand pounds annually voted by Parliament for the said purpose and during the said continuance; and

(3) any moneys received for payment of interest or repayment of principal of any loan made by the Commissioners under the provisions of this Act; and

(4) any other sums applicable to the purposes of this Act.

4 (1) In applying the Congested Districts (Scotland) Fund the Commissioners may take such steps as they think proper for:-

(a) aiding and developing agriculture, dairy farming, and the breeding of livestock and poultry in congested districts; and

(b) providing suitable seed potatoes and seed oats and implements and dairy utensils and machinery or appliances for the making of butter or cheese for crofters and cottars in congested districts; and

(c) providing, subject to the provisions hereinafter contained, land for sub-division among or for enlargement of the holdings of crofters and cottars in congested districts for the purposes of cultivation or grazing, in such manner and upon such conditions and after such adaptations as shall be determined by the Commissioners; and

(d) aiding migration of crofters and cottars from congested districts to other districts in Scotland, and settling any migrants under favourable circumstances in the places to which they first migrate; and

Constitution
of Congested
Districts
(Scotland)
Fund; sums
to be carried
thereto.
59 & 60 Vict.
c 37

Application of
moneys at
disposal of
Commissioners

(e) aiding and developing fishing (including industries connected with and subservient to fishing) and the erection and formation of fishermen's dwellings and holdings in congested districts; and

(f) aiding the providing or improving of lighthouses, piers or boat-slips, public roads and bridges, and footpaths and foot bridges, and meal-mills, in congested districts; and providing guarantees for telegraph extensions, or such other postal facilities (including money order and savings bank business) as may be within the power of the Postmaster General to grant guarantee; and;

(g) aiding and developing spinning, weaving, and other home industries in congested districts; and

(h) subject to the consent of the Treasury, - aiding the providing or improving of harbours.

(2) The Commissioners may give their assistance either by way of gift or loan, or by way of sale at cost price, and subject to such conditions as they think fit, which conditions and the provisions for their enforcement or for the case of their violation shall be as effectual as if they were contained in this Act, and the consent of the Secretary for Scotland shall be necessary before any grant of money is given by way of gift under the provisions of this Act.

(3) Any person nominated by the Commissioners may, at all reasonable times, and after due notice to the occupier, enter any land occupied by an occupier to whom seed or implements, utensils, machinery, or appliances have been sold or gifted, in order to ascertain whether such seed has been properly sown, or that a proper use is being made of such implements, utensils, machinery, or appliances.

5. (1) For the purpose of the purchase of land by the Commissioners (who are hereby authorised to purchase and hold land and dispose thereof as in this Act provided) the Lands Clauses Acts shall be incorporated with this Act, except the provisions of those Acts with respect to the purchase and taking of land otherwise than by agreement; and the provisions of sub-section four of section three of the Allotments (Scotland) Act, 1892, with respect to the settlement of disputed compensation for land, shall apply, with the necessary modifications, as if the Commissioners were therein referred to.

Acquisition,
adaptation,
and disposal
of land

55 & 56 Vict
c 54

(2) Any limited owner may sell land to the Commissioners for the purposes of the Act at such a price, or for such consideration, as, having regard to those purposes and to all the circumstances of the case, is

deemed reasonable; a limited owner may also, with the sanction of the Local Government Board given under this section, convey the land for that purpose, either without payment of any purchase money or compensation, or at a price less than the real value, and may so convey it free of all incumbrances, and shall consider the objections, if any, raised by them.

(3) The Commissioners may, if they think fit, before disposing of land for the purposes of this Act, adapt the same by dividing and fencing it, making occupation roads, and executing any other works, such as works for the provision of drainage or water supply, which can, in the opinion of the Commissioners, be more economically and efficiently executed for the land as a whole.

(4) The Commissioners may also, if they think fit, adapt the land for the purposes of this Act by erecting or assisting in erecting thereon such buildings, or making such adaptations of existing buildings, as, in their opinion, are required for the due occupation of land, and cannot be made by the crofters or cottars or fishermen.

(5) Where any right of grazing or other similar right is attached to land acquired by the Commissioners for the purposes of this Act, the Commissioners may attach any share of the right to any holding in such manner and subject to such regulations as they think proper.

(6) The Commissioners may accept any gifts of property, heritable or moveable, for any or all of the purposes for which money is provided by this Act, and apply them according to the directions of the donor, if consistent in their opinion with the purposes on which they apply the said money, and, subject to any such directions, may apply them in like manner as that money.

6. Any loan under the provisions of this Act shall be secured by a bond which shall be a charge on the holding in favour of the Commissioners, and shall either be repaid by half-yearly instalments of principal with such interest and within such terms (not exceeding a period fixed by the Treasury) from the date of the loan, or at such date thereafter not exceeding eighteen months as may be agreed on, or shall be repaid with such interest and within such term by a terminable annuity payable by half-yearly instalments. The amount for the time being unpaid may at any time be discharged, and any such terminable annuity may at any time be redeemed in accordance with tables fixed by the Commissioners. A certificate by the Secretary of the Commissioners that the whole of the loan has been repaid, or that such terminable annuity has been redeemed, shall, without any other instrument, operate as a discharge of the said loan and extinction of the said terminable annuity, as the case may be, and the registration of such certificate in the register of Sasines shall be equivalent to the registration of a discharge of the said bond.

7 (1) The Commissioners shall cause to be prepared and duly registered all deeds, writs, and instruments necessary for completing the title to the land disposed of by them, and for securing the payment of any loan over land made by them, and shall include in the grant or loan the cost so incurred, or to be incurred, in accordance with scales set forth in tables fixed by the Commissioners.

As to
preparation
of titles
connected with
grants of or
loans over land

(2) The Commissioners, if they think fit, may from time to time appoint, at their pleasure, a person duly qualified to carry out the provisions of this section, and shall assign to him such salary or remuneration as they may determine.

8 (1) The Commissioners shall submit to the Treasury annually, and at any other time, for any special purpose, in the form fixed by the Treasury, an estimate showing the amount proposed by the Commissioners to be expended, and the purposes for which the same is proposed to be expended, and shall not expend any sums except in accordance with such estimate and for such purposes when approved by the Treasury.

Supplemented

(2) The Commissioners shall keep such accounts of their receipts and expenditure, and accounts shall be audited in accordance with such regulations, as the Treasury direct, and be laid before Parliament.

9 The Commissioners shall once in every year make a report to the Secretary for Scotland on their proceedings under this Act, and every such report shall be forthwith presented to Parliament.

Report to
Parliament

10 In this Act unless the subject or context otherwise requires:-

Definitions

The expression "congested district" means any crofting parish or crofting parishes, or any area in a crofting parish or crofting parishes, defined by the Commissioners under this Act, which they shall, having regard to the population and valuation thereof, determine to be a congested district.

The expressions "crofter", "cottar", and "crofting parish" have the meanings assigned to them in the Crofters Holdings (Scotland) Act, 1886.

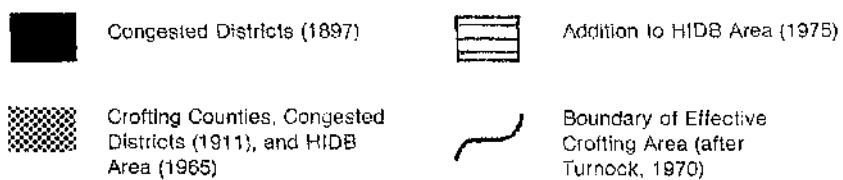
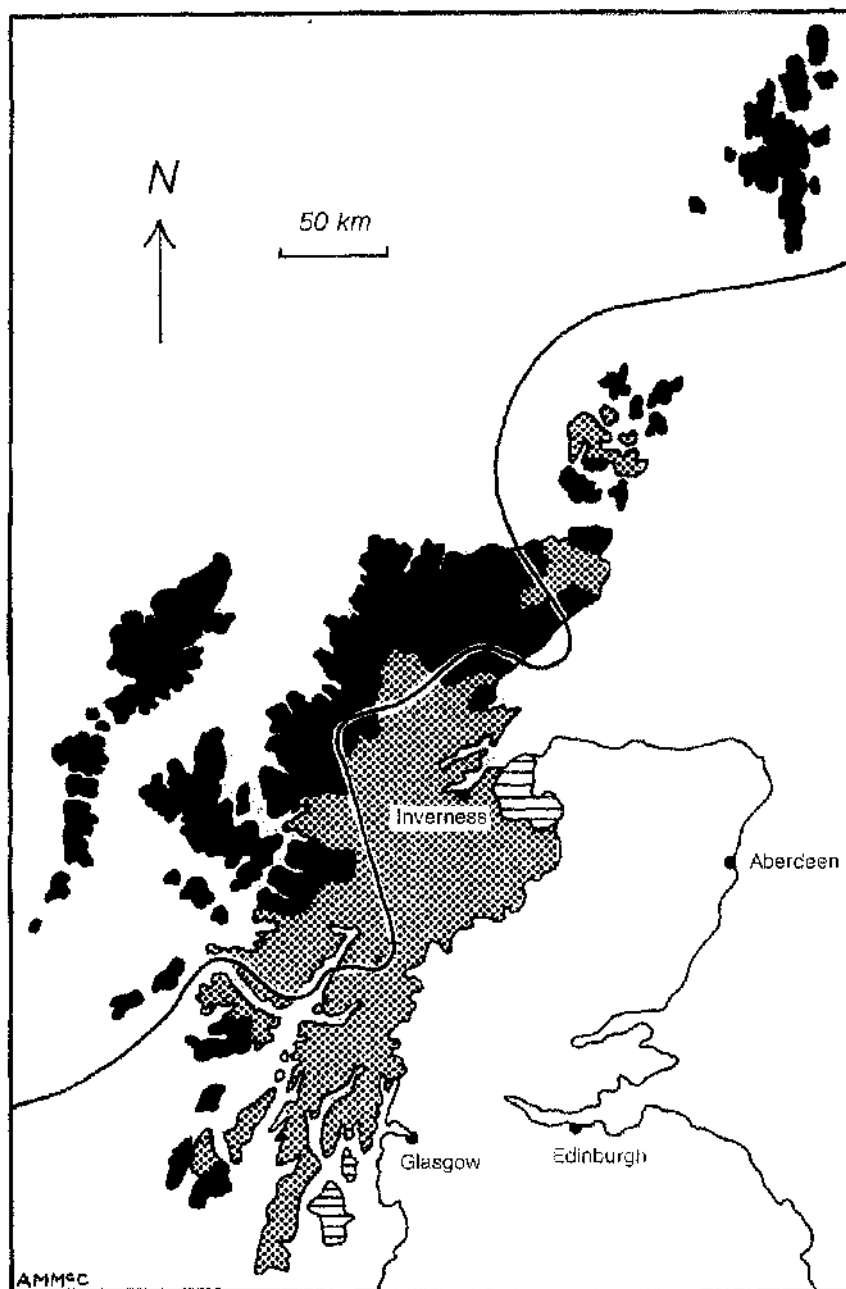
49 & 50 Vict
c 29

11 This Act may be cited as the Congested Districts (Scotland) Act, 1897.

Short title

APPENDIX B

Congested Area: Map and Listing



Evolution of a Highland Development Area

1. Parishes scheduled as congested as at 1897Argyllshire

Coll (part)	Kildalton and Oa
Kilbrandon and Kilchattan	Kilfinichen and Kilvickeen
Kilchoman	Tiree

Inverness-shire

Barra	Portree (excluding the Town of Portree)
Bracadale	Sleat
Duirinish	Small Isles
Glenelg	Snizort
Harris	South Uist
Kilmuir	Strath
North Uist	

Ross and Cromarty

Applecross	Lochs
Barvas	Stornoway (excluding the Burgh of
Gairloch	Stornoway)
Lochbroom	Uig

Sutherlandshire

Assynt	Eddrachilles
Clyne	Farr
Dornoch (excluding the	Kildonan
Royal and	Lairg
Municipal Burgh	Loth
of Dornoch)	Tongue
Durness	

Caithness

Canisbay (part)	Parish of Reay
Dunnet	

Orkney

Cross and Burness	Lady
Hoy and Graemsay	Orphir
South Ronaldsay and	Stronsay and Eday
Burray (excluding the	Walls and Flotta
Village of	Westray and Papa Westray
St Margaret's	
Hope)	

Shetland

Bressay	North Mavine
Delting	Sandsting
Dunrossness	Walls
Fetlar	Yell
Nesting	

2. Parishes schedules as congested prior to 1911

Year ended March 1900: Argyllshire - Torosay (part)
Caithness - Canisbay (remainder)

Year ended March 1901: Zetland - Lerwick (Landward)
Tingwall - (excluding the Town of Scalloway)
Unst

Year ended March 1902: Caithness - Latheron (part)

Year ended March 1903: Argyllshire - Colonsay and Oronsay
Ross and Cromarty - Glenshiel

Year ended March 1910: Ross and Cromarty - Fearn
Tarbat

3. Redetermination of congested districts as at April 1911

"the rural or landward portions (excluding all town, burghal and large village areas in these parishes) of each crofting parish as defined by section 34 of the Crofters Holdings (Scotland) Act, 1886, and determined by the Crofters Commission, with the confirmation of the Secretary for Scotland, to be crofting parishes " (CDB, Fourteenth Report (1912) v

APPENDIX C

Explanatory notes to Scottish Record Office File Series AF 42

The papers of the Congested Districts Board, upon which the original research for this thesis is based, are preserved at the West Register House annexe of the Scottish Record Office, Charlotte Square, Edinburgh. They belong with the records of the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland and are arranged as file series AF 42. The present file series has, as far as possible, been preserved intact. A large number of files raised by the CDB were, however, transferred in the past to the file series of successor bodies, in particular the Board of Agriculture for Scotland, which took over the functions of the CDB under the terms of the Small Landholders (Scotland) Act, 1911. A partial index of files transferred to the Board of Agriculture is available under reference AF 61/9 and in some instances files so transferred can be traced through this index among the Board of Agriculture files, class AF 43. A series of minutes of meetings of the CDB up to the year 1907 is located among the Board of Agriculture files under reference AF 43/323 and a subject index, parish indexes and more detailed indexes relating to specific estates purchased by the CDB, are available in record class AF 61, items 1-8.

In practice many difficulties are encountered in finding and using CDB material. In the first instance all the original CDB records have not been preserved. Those that have been preserved may be very difficult to trace, both because they may appear among the files of a successor body and because the Agriculture and Fisheries file reference may not betray the file's origins with the CDB, although on some occasions the file reference is prefixed with CDB. Although certain files either assigned with Board of Agriculture references or merged with Board of Agriculture files are traceable through the index AF 61/9, all the AF 61 indexes relate to the original CDB enumeration and not to the SRO reference numbers. File references thus traced must therefore be further matched with the corresponding SRO file reference, by consulting the SRO inventory, where original file references have been placed in

brackets after the titles, which, though differently numbered, run in the same order as in the original enumeration. It is, however, unfortunately the case that some CDB files which appear among the Board of Agriculture files in AF 43 do not appear in the index, while the Board of Agriculture itself ceased to exist under the Reorganisation of Offices (Scotland) Act, 1928, when its functions were transferred to the Department of Agriculture. Their files would at this time have been distributed to the various sections then responsible for their functions and, owing to the diversity of these functions, old CDB files may be expected to be found among those 'inherited' by those sections responsible for seed health, lighthouses, piers, roads and bridges, crofters, home industries or harbours. To locate as complete a series as possible of CDB files it is therefore necessary to adopt the following procedure: first, consult the AF 42 series; second, consult the AF 43 series looking for covering dates 1897-1912 and for file references given in AF 61/9; and third, consult other AF series for covering dates 1897-1912 and for functions which were originally the responsibility of the CDB.

Inevitably, time constraints preclude exhaustive pursuit of the procedure outlined above, given that extant files in the AF 42 series alone amount to some 10,000 items. Furthermore, although with such an apparent wealth of material at his disposal the researcher would seem to be well-served, in point of fact, many of these files contain nothing more profound than day-to-day papers relating to applications for Board funds. Yet, since the whereabouts of even explicit policy debate and, more especially, veiled insights into development strategy, cannot for the most part be determined from file subject titles alone, it is difficult to operate an efficient method of sifting through the material. At the same time, because of the incompleteness of the file series, there is considerable difficulty in achieving longitudinal follow-up, where matters are identified in an early file but re-opened in a later, or continued in a related, file which may now be lost. Thus in many cases it is only possible, on the basis of fuller information gained from an early file, to draw inferences from brief references to that particular area of Board activity in later published annual reports. Finally, although it might be expected that those transferred files traced through AF 61/9

would deal with issues of sufficient 'importance' to merit transfer, it must be remembered that that importance is relative to the objective in view, the perspective of the administrator in 1912 differing rather from that of the historical researcher decades later, with the result that a laborious search may reveal nothing more 'valuable' than a list of crofters in receipt of loans for fencing. By contrast, a chance perusal of an unlikely file may reveal material of outstanding significance, demonstrating that the time-consuming toil of historical research can be uniquely rewarding.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: TABLE OF CONTENTS

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Section 4: Books, pamphlets, articles and theses	6

I. Unpublished Material**(a) At the Scottish Record Office, Edinburgh**

Congested Districts Board Files, Class AF 42

(the most important source of original material upon which the research for this thesis is based, explanatory notes to which are provided in Appendix C)

Board of Agriculture, Miscellaneous Files, Class AF 43

(in particular, references AF 43/323, containing a series of minutes of meetings of the CDB up to the year 1907, and AF 43/6, containing important memoranda and other documentation pertaining to the various versions of the Small Landholders Bills 1906-11)

Cabinet Papers 1884-8, Class RH 4/9/6, 7 and 8

(microfilm versions of original documents CAB 37/14/7 to CAB 37/22/23 held at the Public Record Office in London)

Forfeited Estates Papers, E700-788

Sheriff Ivory Papers, Class GD 1/36

Lothian Papers, Class GD 40

(b) At the Mitchell Library, Glasgow

The Autobiography of John Murdoch, preserved in manuscript in five notebooks

2. Official Publications

(a) Statutes of the Realm

Annexing Act of 1751: 25 Geo. II, c.41

Vesting Act of 1747: 20 Geo. II, c.41

*Congested Districts (Scotland) Act 1897: 60 & 61 Vict. c.38

Highlands and Islands Development (Scotland) Act 1965: 1965 c.46

*(reproduced as Appendix A to this thesis)

(b) Parliamentary Debates

Hansard House of Commons Debates, 3rd, 4th and 5th Series
(It should be noted that while these series represent the verbatim record of the business of the Lower House only, they report also such business of the House of Lords as bears upon the work of the Commons, and which has been communicated there for information.)

(c) Reports of Commissioners, Annual Reports of Official Bodies and Miscellaneous Parliamentary Papers

(except in the case of series, includes the parliamentary sessional volume number)

Board of Supervision for the Relief of the Poor in Scotland, Annual Reports, 1847-1894

Report to the Board of Supervision by Sir John McNeill on the Western Highlands and Islands, 1851 XXVI

Report on the State of Education in the Hebrides by Alexander Nicolson, 1867 XXV

Lord Advocate's Letter to Sheriff Ivory of Inverness-shire dated Nov. 3, 1882, re disturbances among the Skye crofters, 1882 LIV

Reports as to the Alleged Destitution in the Western Highlands and Islands, 1883 LIX

Report and Minutes of Evidence of the Commissioners of Enquiry into the Condition of the Crofters and Cottars in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, 1884 XXXII-XXXVI

Report on the Condition of the Cottar Population of the Lews, 1888 LXXX

Crofters Commission, Annual Reports, 1888-1913

Reports of the Committee appointed to Inquire into Certain Matters affecting the interests of the Population of the Western Highlands and Islands of Scotland, 1890 XXVII and 1890-1 XLIV

Warrant issued by Lord Lothian, dated Dec. 27, 1889, appointing the Walpole Commission, 1890 LVIII

Western Highlands and Islands (Scotland) Works Bill and associated Memo, 1890-1 X

Congested Districts Board for Ireland, Annual Reports, 1893-1921

Report of the Royal Commission (Highlands and Islands, 1892) 1895 XXXVIII

Congested Districts Board for Scotland, Annual Reports, 1899-1912

Bill to amend the provisions of the powers of the Congested Districts (Scotland) Act, 1897, as to the application of the Fund constituted by the Act, 1904 I

Bill to amend the provisions of the Congested Districts (Scotland) Act, 1897, as to the style and title of the Commissioners, the execution of deeds by them, and the application of the Fund constituted by the said Act, 1905 I

Correspondence between Lady Gordon Cathcart and the Secretary for Scotland and the Lord Advocate with reference to the Island of Vatersay, 1908 LXXXVIII

Report of the Departmental Committee Appointed by the Secretary for Scotland to inquire and report upon the Work of the Congested Districts (Scotland) Commissioners for the Improvement of Live Stock and Agriculture (Cd. 5457), 1910 XXI

Board of Agriculture for Scotland, First Report, 1913

Report to the Board of Agriculture for Scotland on Home Industries in the Highlands and Islands by W R Scott (Cd. 7564), 1914 XXXII

Report of the Commission of Enquiry into Crofting Conditions (Cmd. 9091), 1953-4 VIII

Highlands and Islands Development Board, Annual Reports, 1967-

(d) Other Reports

Old Statistical Account of Scotland (20 vols.) (Edinburgh, 1791-8)

New Statistical Account of Scotland (15 vols.)
(Edinburgh, 1835-45)

Highland Destitution Reports

(The Central Board of Management of the Fund for Relief of Highland Destitution was formed in February 1847 from three previously existing relief committees. The First and Second Statements were issued prior to this amalgamation, but are located with the collected Reports of the latter, where also may be found various dated and undated memoranda and private papers. The Reports themselves were initially numbered consecutively for separate years but subsequently the Glasgow Section, at least, seems to have adopted a system of consecutive numbering from one year to the next. The collected Reports may be consulted in the National Library for Scotland under shelf marks Y.59.d.18 and Y.59.d.19)

First Statement as to the Destitution in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland (Edinburgh, December 18, 1846)

Free Church Destitution Committee, Second Statement
(Glasgow, 1847)

Central Board of Management of the Fund Raised for the Relief of the Destitute Inhabitants of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, First, Third and Fifth Reports
(Edinburgh, 1847)

CBM Edinburgh Section, First Report (1848)

CBM, Memo re Present State of the Hosiery Plan in Skye
(October 14, 1848)

CBM Edinburgh Section, First, Second and Third Reports
(1849)

CBM Glasgow Section, Eleventh and Twelfth Reports (1849)

CBM Glasgow Section, Report on the Outer Hebrides
(August, 1849)

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CBM Edinburgh Section, Second Report and Final Report
(1850)

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CBM, Memo on the Proposed Transference of the Hosiery Scheme (n.d.)

CBM Edinburgh Section, Private Papers (n.d.) incorporating Memo re Mode of Relieving Destitution and Interim Instructions

3. Newspapers and Periodicals

(Attributed articles in these and other publications are indexed alphabetically by author in Section 4 below)

Annual Register	The New Alliance
British Monthly	North British Daily Mail
Celtic Magazine	Ober Times
The Crofter	Pall Mall Gazette
An Gaidheal	People's Journal
Glasgow Herald	Scotsman
Highland News	Scottish Highlander
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