The Home Rule Party after Parnell

• In 1890, the Home Rule Party split over the O’Shea divorce scandal
• For ten years it was divided into hostile groups – the smaller Parnellites led by John Redmond and the larger anti-Parnellites led by John Dillon. In 1900 the two factions re-united. In the interests of unity, Dillon agreed to let Redmond be leader
• They were a good team. Dillon, who hated Westminster, led the Party in Ireland while Redmond, who enjoyed the Commons, spent most time in London, dealing with British politicians.

1900-1906: Dealing with the Conservatives

• From 1896 to 1905, the Conservative Party was in power. It opposed Home Rule and tried to kill demand for it with reforms
• Redmond supported the Wyndham Land Act (1903), but refused to consider an Irish Council instead of Home Rule.

1906-1910: Dealing with the Liberals

• The Liberal Party won the 1906 election. Irish hopes rose, but the Liberals had a huge over-all majority so they did not need the votes of Redmond’s MPs
• They planned to concentrate on social reforms (e.g. old age pensions) and not waste time on a Home Rule Bill that the Conservative-dominated House of Lords would throw out
• Some Home Rule MPs questioned the wisdom of allying with the Liberals. One resigned in 1907 and joined Arthur Griffith’s Sinn Féin Party. He lost the by-election that followed. This showed most nationalists still firmly backed Home Rule.

1909-1911: Home Rule becomes possible

• Two developments in Britain opened the way to Home Rule:
  - In 1909, the Lords rejected the Liberals’ budget, causing a constitutional crisis. After two general elections in 1910, the Liberals passed the 1911 Parliament Act. It reduced the Lords’ veto to a delaying power of two years
  - In the 1910 elections, the Liberals lost their over-all majority. Now they needed the votes of Redmond’s Home Rule MPs to stay in power
In return for Redmond’s votes the Prime Minister, Herbert Asquith, introduced a third Home Rule Bill in 1912. With the Lord’s veto gone, it seemed certain to become law by 1914.

1893–1910: The Unionist Party

- These developments horrified Unionists. They had felt secure since the Lords defeated Gladstone’s second Home Rule Bill in 1893
- In 1905, they had reorganised. Ulster Unionists set up the Ulster Unionist Council and became more important in the Party
- In 1910, they elected the Dublin born barrister, Sir Edward Carson as their leader. Sir James Craig, a wealthy Belfast businessman was his second-in-command.

1910–1914: Unionists resist Home Rule

- Carson and Craig set out to defeat the Home Rule Bill:
  - They organised demonstrations in Britain and the north of Ireland
  - The most famous was the mass signing of the Ulster Solemn League and Covenant in 1912. On one day, 400,000 men promised to ‘use all means that may be thought necessary to defeat this present conspiracy to set up a Home Rule Parliament in Ireland’
  - Small groups of “Ulster Volunteers” began to arm and drill secretly in 1911
  - Carson feared they would do something to discredit the Unionist cause in Britain, so in 1913 he organised them into the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF). Retired British soldiers drilled them and trained them in the use of arms
  - By 1914 the UVF had about 100,000 men. In April they smuggled German guns into Larne
  - Carson laid plans for a “provisional government” to take over Ulster after Home Rule
- The British Conservative leader, Bonar Law, supported the Unionists, even though some of their actions were clearly illegal
- Many officers in the British army were also unionist. This became clear with the “Curragh Mutiny” in 1914 when officers threatened to resign rather than obey orders to disarm the UVF
- That meant Asquith could not use the army to suppress the UVF.

1913–1914: Talking about partition

- At first Redmond thought the Unionists were bluffing. The Home Rule Party had 85 Irish MPs, while the Unionists only had 18, so he believed that when Home Rule passed, they would accept the democratic decision
But as unionist opposition became clearer and as the UVF gained strength, leading Liberal MPs forced Asquith and Redmond to begin secret talks with Carson.

The talks were about ‘special treatment’ for the north-east of Ireland where unionists were in a majority.

First, Redmond offered them a Belfast parliament under Dublin control.

Carson rejected this. He wrote that there was "a desire to settle on the terms of leaving ‘Ulster’ out.”

This pointed to partition. Ireland would be partitioned (divided) into two parts: most of the island would have Home Rule but part of Ulster would remain in the UK, under British rule.

After that there were two issues to be settled:

- How much of ‘Ulster’ would be left in the UK?
- How long would partition last?

Redmond offered to give up the four mainly Protestant counties of Antrim, Down, Derry and Armagh for six years.

Carson rejected that. He wanted six counties, including Tyrone and Fermanagh which had small Catholic majorities and he wanted partition to be permanent.

1913: Nationalist anger at partition

When reports of these talks leaked out, nationalists were horrified by the idea of partition.

Eoin MacNeill, a founder of the Gaelic League, wrote an article called ‘The north began’ in An Claidheamh Soluis. He said that if the unionists could form an army to stop Home Rule, then nationalists must do the same to defend it.

The Irish National Volunteers

The IRB saw a chance to form an army for their planned rebellion and enthusiastically backed this suggestion.

At a meeting in November 1913 the Irish National Volunteers were set up.

MacNeill was elected Commander-in-Chief, but behind the scenes IRB men occupied most senior positions.

In 1914, women set up Cumann na mBan to support the work of the Volunteers.

By June 1914, the Volunteers had 200,000 men. Redmond feared the Volunteers would soon rival his own Party. He forced MacNeill to accept his nominees on the organising committee, thus gaining control.

In July, guns were smuggled from Germany and landed at Howth.
**1914: The Buckingham Palace Conference**

- With two private armies, civil war threatened. To avert it, King George V called a conference at Buckingham Palace in July 1914
- Redmond, Dillon, Carson and Craig attended along with the leaders of the Liberals and Conservatives. Talks broke down over which side should get Tyrone and Fermanagh
- A week later, Britain went to war with Germany. Negotiations were postponed. Everyone thought the war would be over by Christmas when the talking could start again.

**Carson, Redmond and the First World War**

- When war began Carson called on UVF men to join the British army
- In September, he reluctantly agreed to let the Home Rule Bill pass, but only on condition that it was not put into force until the war ended and the issue of Ulster was settled
- When war began Redmond promised that the Irish Volunteers would defend Ireland
- But when Home Rule passed, he called on them to join the British army. He did this:
  - Partly because he believed that the British were fighting for a just cause
  - Partly so that he would be equal to Carson when the talks resumed at the end of the war
- In 1914, no one dreamed that it would last for four and a half years. By then Redmond would be dead and the Home Rule Party defeated.

**John Redmond (1856–1918)**

- Born in Wexford and elected Home Rule MP in 1881, he supported Parnell when the O’Shea divorce split the Party. He led the Parnellites after Parnell’s death
- When the Home Rule Party reunited in 1900, he became leader. He and John Dillon, the anti-Parnellite leader, worked well together
- Home Rule was not possible while the Conservatives were in power. When the Liberals won in 1906 they would not bring in Home Rule, knowing the Lords would defeat it
- Events in Britain in 1909–11 led to the Parliament Act which ended the Lords’ veto. After the 1910 elections the Liberal Prime Minister, Asquith needed Redmond’s votes to stay in power and brought in the third Home Rule Bill in 1912. It was due to pass in 1914
- Redmond ignored Unionist opposition believing them to be bluffing. In 1913 he offered the Unionists a Belfast parliament under the control of Dublin, but they wanted six north-eastern counties to remain in the United Kingdom
- Nationalists, angry at partition, set up the Irish National Volunteers in November 1913. By 1914, it had 200,000 men and threatened Redmond’s
leadership. In June, he forced MacNeill to let him take control of the Volunteer executive.

- At the Buckingham Palace Conference in July 1914 talks broke down over Tyrone and Fermanagh. War began shortly after.
- Home Rule passed in September, but was suspended. In gratitude, Redmond called on the Irish Volunteers to join the British army.
- Redmond was shocked by the 1916 rising. After it, talks about partition were resumed but failed again. In the Irish Convention (1917–18) he tried again to reach a deal with Carson but died in March 1918.

**Edward Carson (1854–1935)**

- Born in Dublin, he studied law in Trinity and worked for Balfour during Plan of Campaign. Elected a Unionist MP for Trinity in 1892, he moved to London where he was a successful barrister. In 1900, he became Solicitor General in the Conservative government and was knighted.
- A strong opponent of Home Rule, he was chosen leader of the Unionist Party in 1910.
- When the Parliament Act opened the way for Home Rule in 1911, Carson indicated he would use “any means” to stop it. He spoke at anti-Home Rule rallies, organised the UVF and with the Ulster Unionist Council, set up a ‘provisional government’ to govern Ulster after Home Rule was passed.
- But behind the scenes he negotiated with Redmond to exclude six north-eastern counties from a Home Rule parliament.
- Carson disliked partition, which would leave his native Dublin in nationalist hands. He hoped Redmond would give up Home Rule rather than agree to partition.
- The last negotiations at Buckingham Palace were interrupted by the start of the first World War.
- As a loyal British subject, Carson called on UVF men to fight for Britain against Germany.
- During the war, he served as a Minister in the British government. After it, he was able to persuade the British to give the Ulster Unionists six counties in the Government of Ireland Act. He refused an offer to become the first Prime Minister of Northern Ireland and retired from politics. He died in 1935.
Ireland and the Industrial Revolution

- In the 19th century, the industrial revolution changed society across Europe. Men with money (capitalists) set up large factories, powered by steam and producing goods previously made by hand.
- People left the countryside to work in the factories. They were usually poorly paid, lived in slums and had little access to education or health care.
- In Ireland, only the area around Belfast was industrialised. Elsewhere industries were on a limited scale.

7.1 The industrialisation of Belfast

Linen

- Belfast’s industrial wealth was based on linen. It had been made in Ulster since the 18th century. This created the wealth needed to invest in linen mills (factories) from the 1830s.
- In the 1860s, the American Civil war cut off supplies of cotton to Britain. The demand for linen boomed and the industry grew fast.
- It did not grow much after that because factory owners did not invest in new machinery. They lost markets to more up-to-date US and German manufacturers.
- Eighty percent of linen workers were women or children. They were badly paid (less than ten shillings a week) and worked in very poor conditions. Employers resisted government attempts to improve safety or working conditions (e.g. half day off on Saturday).

Ship building

- It was shipbuilding that made Belfast rich. The industry grew there because of a few lucky accidents:
  - In the 1840s, Belfast Harbour Commissioners deepened and widened Belfast Lough. This created a new island, Queens Island and they offered it to shipbuilders.
  - In 1852, a brilliant young engineer, Edward Harland took it over. He designed new iron ships which could carry more freight than wooden ships.

Remember...

- 20 shillings: £1
- £1 = €1.27
Harland formed a partnership with Gustav Wolff who had contacts with Liverpool ship owners. They no longer had room to build ships themselves and they bought ships made in Belfast.

- **Harland and Wolff** succeeded through flexibility and innovation. When the demand for freight ships fell in the 1880s, they designed passenger ships to carry emigrants going to America and wealthy Americans visiting Europe.

- By 1900, they specialised in luxurious passenger liners. In 1912, they launched the world’s greatest ship, the *Titanic*. The biggest shipyard in the world, they employed 15,000 men, many highly skilled, earning 30 to 40 shillings a week.

- A smaller shipyard, **Workman and Clark**, specialised in freight ships fitted with refrigeration units. It employed 5,000 men.

- Shipbuilding drew in ancillary industries like engineering and rope making and the pool of skilled workers encouraged other industries like tobacco, brewing, distilling, etc, to go to Belfast.

**Life in industrial Belfast**

- By 1914, Belfast was a big prosperous industrial city, more like Manchester or Glasgow than Dublin or Cork.

- The population grew from 90,000 in 1851 to 450,000 in 1911, passing out Dublin’s 350,000.

- Workers there were better off than elsewhere in Ireland because there were plenty well paid jobs for skilled men. In many families, men, women and children could get work.

- Because transport was expensive, only wealthier people lived in the suburbs and travelled to work each day.

- Factory workers lived near their jobs in rows of small ‘back to back’ houses with two bedrooms, running water and an outside toilet. They were often built by the factory owner.

- Though better than the slums in other Irish cities, these houses were very small for big families and Belfast’s health record was not much better than Dublin’s, and worse than most British cities.

**Sectarian tension among Belfast workers**

- Sectarian tension between Protestant and Catholic workers was a feature of Belfast life. Most shipyard workers were Protestants, while Catholics got less well-paid jobs as dockers or carters.

- Protestant workers were **unionists** because they believed that their jobs depended on remaining in the United Kingdom.

- Sectarian riots were common, especially at times of political tension like 1886 when Gladstone introduced Home Rule.
Dublin

- Dublin was Ireland’s capital, with a large middle-class population who mostly lived in the suburbs and travelled daily to their jobs in the civil service, law, medicine, etc.
- Dublin also had successful industries, like Jacobs, the world’s biggest biscuit maker or Guinness, the world’s biggest brewer. But most Jacobs’ workers were poorly paid women and Guinness only employed 2,000 men.
- The majority of workers were unskilled labourers. They worked in the docks or in transport, earning less than 20 shillings a week. They could not afford education, decent food or health care.
- Over 40,000 families lived in one-room tenements (rooms in old houses) where sanitation was poor and diseases like TB were rife. Half of all children died before the age of one.

7.2 Socialism and Trade Unionism in Ireland

Socialists

- The industrial revolution made a few people very wealthy but left most workers living in deep poverty.
- Socialists wanted to change this by redistributing the wealth of the rich so as to improve the living conditions of the poor.
- Different socialists had different ideas about how this might be done:
  - Gradualists thought the best way of achieving their aims was to get parliament to pass laws and raise taxes. In Britain and Germany, this slowly improved conditions for workers.
  - Syndicalists thought the best way was through trade unions. If all workers joined one big union, they could take control of all economic activity. James Larkin was a syndicalist.
  - Revolutionaries believed that workers could only get justice if they overthrew the whole system and created a state where the workers owned everything. The most famous revolutionary socialist was Karl Marx. His thinking influenced James Connolly.

Why socialism developed slowly in Ireland

- Socialism and trade unionism were slow to develop in Ireland because:
  - Over 60% of Irish people were farmers who wanted to own land. Socialism had little to offer them.
  - In Belfast, workers were divided by religion and politics. That made it difficult to get them to unite.
  - Outside Belfast, most workers were unskilled, often out of work and poorly paid. If they had a job it was hard to persuade them to risk it in order to join a trade union or go on strike.