



Wentworth's 'eye of the Court': Sir George Radcliffe's management of the Irish parliaments of Charles I's reign.*

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Sir Thomas Wentworth (later earl of Strafford) has often been portrayed as an isolated figure working in Ireland, as lord deputy and then lord lieutenant, for the good of the crown. In reality, he had a tried and tested support system that developed throughout the 1620s in England and was implemented in the 1630s in Ireland. In the Irish Parliament of 1634–35, Wentworth relied heavily upon Sir George Radcliffe to generate and maintain support for governmental policy. He was an important conduit of information to Wentworth, assessing the mood of the House, acting as a controller of debate and reporting back to the lord deputy on discussions within committees. However, despite outward appearances that the Parliament of 1634–35 had been a success, the 1640 sessions of the 1640–49 Parliament were much more difficult to control in Wentworth's absence and Radcliffe struggled to maintain the government's initiative over parliament. Radcliffe's parliamentary career provides an insight into how Wentworth used his cabal to support his policies. This was fairly successful whilst Wentworth's government was strong, but, in Wentworth's absence, Radcliffe was unable to control parliament, contributing to the collapse of the regime.

Keywords: Sir George Radcliffe; Irish Parliament; Irish privy council; Sir Thomas Wentworth; earl of Strafford; impeachment; lord deputy of Ireland; Christopher Wandesford; Charles I.

George Radcliffe was a lawyer with relatively little political experience in the 1620s, yet thanks to his friendship with Sir Thomas Wentworth, he performed a key role in the Irish parliaments held during Charles I's reign. Wentworth became lord deputy of Ireland in January 1632 and, from January 1640, was lord lieutenant, at the same time gaining his title of earl of Strafford. Radcliffe worked closely with other members of Wentworth's cabal, in particular the Master of the Rolls Christopher Wandesford. Wentworth himself commented on the integral role of these two men in his Irish regime, stating 'there is not a Minister on this Side, that knows any Thing I either write or intend, excepting the Master of the Rolls and Sir George Radcliffe ... Sure I were the most solitary Man without them,

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that ever served a King in such a Place'.¹ Radcliffe's significance as a representative of the Irish government and the prominence of his role within parliament is revealed by the fact that both the English and Irish Parliaments attempted to impeach him at the end of 1640. This article is concerned with the Parliament of 1634–35 and the sessions of the 1640–49 Parliament which took place in 1640, before the collapse of Wentworth's administration and his execution in 1641.

Radcliffe's legal work first brought him into contact with Sir Thomas Wentworth. He was called to the bar in 1618² and, with Wentworth, took part in a commission at Rotherham in December 1618 to settle the estate of Wentworth's sister.³ Wentworth and Radcliffe were also later related through marriage, Radcliffe marrying Wentworth's cousin Anne Trappes in 1621.⁴ Wentworth facilitated Radcliffe's fledgling English parliamentary career, obtaining a seat for him in Callington in Cornwall in the 1628–29 Parliament.⁵ Radcliffe's political career took an unexpected turn when Wentworth became lord president of the Council of the North in December 1628, appointing Radcliffe as his king's attorney.⁶ Wentworth addressed Radcliffe in his first speech as president of the Council of the North at York, asking his 'eye of the Court' to 'look abroad upon the pressure of the grievances of the subject, to bring delinquents to justice, so the oppressed may go free'.⁷ Wentworth's rapid promotion continued with his appointment as lord deputy of Ireland in January 1632,⁸ and Radcliffe was integral to Wentworth's administration from the outset. Wentworth delayed his departure to Ireland for 18 months after his official appointment but proposed that, in his absence, Radcliffe would act as his representative. Despite English privy council pressure that he should take up his position in Ireland immediately, Wentworth reassured the king and council that the Irish government would not suffer as he was sending Radcliffe 'to settle the business before I come'.⁹ Radcliffe arrived in Ireland in January 1633, followed later by Wentworth in July 1633.¹⁰

Wentworth wanted Radcliffe to have a flexible role in his Irish Government and this may explain why Radcliffe was not given an official office within the administration.¹¹

¹Sheffield City Libraries, Wentworth Woodhouse Muniments [WWM], WWM/Str P 3a/46; Wentworth to the Earl of Portland, 31 January 1634; William Knowler, *The Earl of Strafforde's Letters and Dispatches* (2 vols, 1739), i, 194.

²HPC, 1604–1629, www.historyofparliamentonline.org/ (accessed 21 July 2023), s.v. Radcliffe (Ratcliffe), George.

³J.P. Cooper, *Wentworth Papers 1597–1628* (1973), 322.

⁴Cooper, *Wentworth Papers*, Table II, p. x; *The life and original correspondence of Sir George Radcliffe, Knight, LL.D. The friend of the Earl of Strafford*, ed. T.D. Whitaker (1810) 123.

⁵McGrath states that Radcliffe's English constituency is not identified and, indeed, he does not appear in the list of speakers in the 1628 *Commons Debates*. However, his identification clearly reveals that he was present at this parliament. In a letter to his wife, Radcliffe explained that he was so dedicated to his time-consuming parliamentary work, that his legal practice had been overshadowed: Brid McGrath, 'A biographical dictionary of the membership of the Irish House of Commons 1640–1641', Trinity College, Dublin PhD, 1998, 250; Whitaker, *The life and original correspondence*, 159.

⁶R.R. Reid, *The King's Council in the North* (1921), 408.

⁷S.R. Gardiner, 'An unpublished speech of Lord Wentworth', *The Academy*, vii (1875), 582.

⁸WWM/Str P/12/272: (copy) letter from Charles I to lords justice of Ireland and Lord Wilmot, 12 Jan. 1632; Knowler, *Letters and dispatches*, i, 63.

⁹WWM/Str P/1/82b: Wentworth to Cottington, 21 Oct. 1632.

¹⁰*Dictionary of Irish Biography [DIB]*, https://www.dib.ie (accessed 19 July 2023), s.v. Radcliffe, Sir George.

¹¹HPC 1604–1629, s.v. Radcliffe (Ratcliffe), George.

On arrival in Ireland, Wentworth petitioned the king to create Radcliffe a member of the Irish privy council, stating that there were other members of the council 'almost as far beneath him in Estate as they are in Parts and Understanding to serve his Majesty'.¹² Radcliffe was knighted on 1 November 1633¹³ and duly appointed as a privy councillor on 23 September 1634.¹⁴ Wentworth's priority in Ireland was to raise money and he therefore needed to manage parliament carefully so that its members would be willing to support the king through parliamentary supply. Wentworth relied heavily upon Radcliffe to support him whilst preparing for parliament, and whilst it was in session.

The institution of the Irish parliament was based on the model of the English parliament. However, Dennehy notes that it should be considered a 'different institution which operated in a different environment and under different conditions'.¹⁵ For example, there was an extra dimension to the English version of the 'parliamentary trinity' of the house of lords, house of commons, and king with English privy council – in Ireland, there was the addition of the lord deputy and Irish privy council.¹⁶ Due to Poyning's Law of 1494, the Irish parliament could only meet after proposed legislation had been approved by the king, lord deputy and the English and Irish privy councils.¹⁷ This meant that Wentworth could take advantage of the potential to have more control over parliamentary debate. Religious differences were also more pressing in the Irish context than in England. In 1634, the 254 members of the Irish house of commons consisted of 112 Catholics and 142 Protestants.¹⁸ Clarke suggests that Wentworth had 'already established the political value of playing catholic against protestant' and planned to use the 'same technique in parliament by arranging for the return of a centre party committed to the support of the government which would hold the balance of power'.¹⁹ The broader context of the Graces is also significant. These reforms were proposed by Irish Catholics between 1628 and 1634 who professed themselves loyal to the crown and would enable them to play a more complete role within Irish political society. Out of the 51 Graces presented at the 1634–35 Parliament, only ten passed into law, two were outright rejected as they would threaten Wentworth's plantation policy, and the rest would be considered 'at the discretion of the government'.²⁰ This rebuttal of Irish Catholic ambitions and the tensions that this created can be seen as an important contributory factor in the collapse of Wentworth's administration. Dennehy argues that the combination of the denial of the Graces, along with 'the creation of a government grouping to play the

¹²WWM/Str P/5/10: Wentworth to Coke, 3 Aug. 1633; Knowler, *Letters and dispatches*, i, 100.

¹³W.A. Shaw, *The Knights of England. A Complete Record from the Earliest Time to the Present Day of the Knights of all the Orders of Chivalry in England, Scotland, and Ireland, and of Knights Bachelors, Incorporating a Complete list of Knights Bachelors Dubbed in Ireland* (2 vols, 1906), ii, 202.

¹⁴Coke to Wentworth, 20 Sept. 1633; Knowler, *Letters and dispatches*, i, 115; WWM/Str P/4/43: Charles I's appointment of Radcliffe as privy councillor, 23 Sept. 1634.

¹⁵C.A. Dennehy, *The Irish Parliament, 1613–89: The Evolution of a Colonial Institution* (Manchester, 2019), 3.

¹⁶Dennehy, *Irish Parliament*, 3.

¹⁷Anthony Carty, *Was Ireland Conquered? International Law and the Irish Question* (1996), 35; R. Dudley Edwards and T.W. Moody, 'The History of Poyning's Law: Part I, 1494–1615', *Irish Historical Studies*, ii (1941), 415.

¹⁸Raymond Gillespie, *Seventeenth-Century Ireland: Making Ireland Modern* (Dublin, 2006), 103; Aidan Clarke, *The Old English in Ireland 1625–1642* (1966), 80.

¹⁹Clarke, *The Old English in Ireland*, 79–80.

²⁰C.V. Wedgwood, *Thomas Wentworth, First Earl of Strafford: A Revaluation* (1961), 155–6. On the negotiations surrounding the Graces and Wentworth's denial of many of them, see Clarke, *The Old English in Ireland*, 46–54, 77–89.

settler interest against the Catholic interest' and the 'policies and practices' of the 1634–35 Parliament, ultimately led to Wentworth's downfall.²¹

Preparations for the Irish Parliament of 1634 required detailed planning and negotiation with Charles I and the English privy council. The question of holding an Irish parliament was being debated by Wentworth's closest advisers from at least the summer of 1633. Wentworth told the English secretary of state, Sir John Coke, that the proposal to call a parliament in Ireland was being carefully considered with Wandesford and Radcliffe, 'whom only I trust on this side'.²² Wentworth needed to raise revenue in Ireland and believed that each parliamentary subsidy could raise £30,000.²³ The mechanics of his proposed parliament were also carefully thought through. He suggested to the king that there should be two sessions of parliament; the first providing supply and the second to consider the Graces.²⁴ Wentworth would thus ensure that the king was in the best position to avoid parliamentary bartering, fearing that MPs would attempt to force through the Graces by withholding supply. Wentworth made this two-stage format clear to the House in his opening speech on 15 July 1634. He assured parliament that, if they did their duty to the king in granting supply, a second session would be allowed in which Charles I would listen to their proposals and grievances. However, although Wentworth may have given the impression that the Graces would be granted, he made it clear that parliaments did not have the right 'to give direction to government policy or to exercise control over state administration'.²⁵ Managing the nature of bills discussed within parliament was also seen as important. Wentworth proposed to choose a committee to decide what bills might progress through the House, staffed by men he could trust like Radcliffe.²⁶ In these meticulous planning stages, Radcliffe played a prominent role. Radcliffe claimed to the Yorkshireman and Wentworth ally, Sir Arthur Ingram, that his involvement in the preparations for the Irish parliament had been extremely time-consuming, stating that the run up to the parliament was 'exceedinge cumbersome unto me; for much lay on my handes, so as I could not be spared nether forenoone nor afternoone'.²⁷

Wentworth was careful not to give the impression that parliament was going to be carefully managed and controlled, as this could severely affect his chances of holding a successful parliament. Therefore, he could only discuss parliamentary policies with men he knew he could trust completely. Radcliffe's role in drafting legislation before the session began demonstrates his importance to Wentworth's regime. Once he had received the king's permission to hold a parliament, Wentworth appointed a committee of Radcliffe and the three

²¹ Dennehy, *Irish Parliament, 1613–89*, 3–4.

²² WWM/Str P/5/10: Wentworth to Coke, 3 Aug. 1633.

²³ WWM/Str P/14/19, point 18: Wentworth's proposal for an Irish parliament.

²⁴ WWM/Str P/14/19, point 10.

²⁵ Anthony Milton, 'Thomas Wentworth and the political thought of the Personal Rule' in *The political world of Thomas Wentworth, earl of Strafford, 1621–1641*, ed. J. Merritt (Cambridge, 1996), 145. Despite this, the Commons unanimously voted six subsidies and the bills passed through both houses by 2 August: J.C. Beckett, *Making of Modern Ireland, 1603–1923* (1966), 66; *Journals of the House of Lords of the Kingdom of Ireland* (8 vols, Dublin, 1783–1800), i, 24.

²⁶ The king was pleased with this plan and additionally suggested that the English attorney general would reassess the Graces to ensure that 'nothing pass by law w[hi]ch may p[re]judice our crown': WWM/Str P/14/19, point 21.

²⁷ West Yorkshire Archive Service, Leeds, Temple Newsam papers, WYL100/PO/7/II/18: Radcliffe to Ingram, 9 May 1635.

Irish chief justices to consider their proposed statutes for parliament within the restrictions of Poyning's Law and other statutes in Ireland, before sending an express letter back to England with their recommendations.²⁸ The English privy council objected to the Acts 'in preparation towards a Parliament' prepared by Radcliffe and the chief justices, but Wentworth reassured them that they were 'all very confident there is not therein any omission at all'.²⁹ Only then did Wentworth inform the whole Irish privy council that parliament would be called. Seeing Wentworth's pre-arranged statutes, they were convinced that it was possible within such a short time scale.

Having Radcliffe as an insider on the Irish privy council was invaluable to Wentworth. Radcliffe was able to prevent debates which might be prejudicial to Wentworth's agenda from going too far, by informing the lord deputy about the councillors' discussions. Wentworth explained to Archbishop Laud that he had had to act upon information given to him by Radcliffe that the Councillors 'grew to touch upon things w[hi]ch might haue drawn ill consequences upon us'.³⁰ Radcliffe also informed Wentworth that the privy councillors seemed more concerned about serving the Irish people, rather than focusing on Wentworth's priority of gaining supply for the king. Wentworth addressed this with the Irish privy councillors, and later explained in a letter to Coke that he had told them that they had 'begun at the wrong end, Thus Consulting what might please the People in a Parliament, when it would better become a Priuy Councill to Consider what might please the King'.³¹

Controlling the membership of the Irish house of commons in order to ensure that it would work for Charles I's benefit was also important. Wentworth proposed to balance the number of Protestants and Catholics within the Commons and to ensure the election of MPs who had 'im[m]ediate dependence upon the Crowne' and therefore would be loyal.³² Wentworth obtained a parliamentary seat for Radcliffe who sat for Armagh city.³³ Radcliffe could report back on the events within the House, notice emerging difficulties for Wentworth's government and also potentially guide parliamentary and committee debates towards Wentworth's own ends. Recent historians have suggested that Radcliffe intimidated or even bullied the members of the Irish house of commons into following the government's agenda. Pogson suggested that he engaged in 'systematic threatening of MPs ... to secure support for government measures'.³⁴ Clavin argued that Radcliffe's role was one of 'intimidating MPs to ensure majorities for government bills', describing him as Wentworth's 'watchdog'.³⁵ This coercive handling of parliament was later highlighted as a complaint against both Wentworth and Radcliffe in their impeachment proceedings in 1640.³⁶ Although undoubtedly the charges against Radcliffe's handling of parliament painted him in the worst possible light, evidence to suggest that Radcliffe was aggressive

²⁸WWM/Str P/5/64: Wentworth to Coke, 29 Apr. 1634.

²⁹WWM/Str P/5/85: Wentworth to Coke, 31 May 1634.

³⁰WWM/Str P/6/77: Wentworth to Laud, 3 June 1634.

³¹WWM/Str P/5/65: Wentworth to Coke, 29 Apr. 1634.

³²WWM/Str P/14/19, point 25; WWM/Str P/3a/47: Wentworth to Charles I, 22 Jan. 1634; Knowler, *Letters and dispatches*, i, 187.

³³HPC 1604–1629, s.v. Radcliffe (Ratcliffe), George.

³⁴Fiona Pogson, 'Strafford's "spirit" at the royalist court', *Irish Historical Studies*, xliii (2018), 67

³⁵DIB, s.v. Radcliffe, Sir George.

³⁶Pogson, 'Strafford', 7.

and intimidating is fairly limited. Indeed, two particular occasions against the MPs Sir John Clotworthy and Nicholas Barnewall have been emphasised by McGrath.³⁷ Like Wentworth, he may have believed that, in order to achieve a successful parliament for the king, parliament needed guiding, and if necessary, with a strong hand at times.

Wentworth was reliant upon Radcliffe to control the bills passing through the House. In the preparations for parliament, it had been decided that a committee would decide which bills would be considered. This would be managed by someone Wentworth could rely upon and Poyning's Law was to be exploited to ensure that the Irish house of commons was not trying to push through bills that had not been presented to the king and privy council of England. The committee, which included both Radcliffe and Wandesford, was appointed on 28 July 1634 and would meet twice a week 'for drawing and perusing of such Acts as are necessary to be transmitted into England, before the next Session of this Parliament'.³⁸ This continued in the second session of Parliament and, on 13 November 1634, Radcliffe was part of a committee of 12 appointed to meet with a committee of six Lords to discuss and debate 'any Bill sent from this House'.³⁹ This would ensure that parliament was fully controlled and could not pass any acts that might jeopardise the king's position or Wentworth's authority in Ireland. Radcliffe, and other Wentworth supporters, appear to have successfully controlled the debates in parliamentary committees, ensuring that the committees were not working against Wentworth's policies and also reporting back to him where potential dangers were emerging. It seems that this system was working well and Wentworth did not feel threatened by committee discussions as, on 19 November, committees were granted full power to call witnesses before them, debate and vote upon issues.⁴⁰

Radcliffe's legal expertise explains his prominent role in committees with a legal agenda. For example, he participated in a committee that required James Ussher, the archbishop of Armagh and the lord primate of Ireland, to allow the committee members to search through the Statutes of Kilkenny.⁴¹ This is significant due to Wentworth's plans to plant areas of Connaught, Tipperary and Kilkenny. However, supply was the most important issue to the government in the Parliament of 1634–35 and again Radcliffe featured prominently in related committees. On 5 March 1635, the Commons asked Wentworth's permission to allow a committee including Radcliffe to discuss the 'proportioning of the Subsidies so as might best serve his Majesty's Occasions, with Ease and Equality to the Subject'. This was clearly a sensitive issue and Radcliffe was integral to this discussion. The concern about the distribution of supply was raised again on 7 March 1635, when committees representing Leinster, Connaught, Munster and Ulster wished to inform Wentworth that the subsidies could amount to £40,000 each. As member for Armagh, Radcliffe was part of the committee representing Ulster. On 14 April 1635, he sat on a committee appointed to draw up instructions to direct commissioners on assessing subsidies. The committee was to report their suggestions back to the Commons.⁴² Radcliffe was essential to Wentworth's steering of the issue of supply throughout the first session of the 1634–35 Parliament.

³⁷ B. McGrath, *The Operations of the Irish House of Commons, 1613–48* (Dublin, 2023), 91, 97.

³⁸ *Lords Journal of Ireland*, i, p.13.

³⁹ *Journals of the House of Commons of the Kingdom of Ireland* (21 vols, Dublin, 1796–1801), i, 79–80.

⁴⁰ *Commons Journal of Ireland*, i, 82.

⁴¹ *Commons Journal of Ireland*, i, 85.

⁴² *Commons Journal of Ireland*, i, 103, 117.

In addition to supply, the improvement of the economy of Ireland was of key importance during this parliament. Wentworth and Radcliffe believed that an Irish mint would significantly improve the Irish economy and could also augment their personal profits from the Irish customs.⁴³ They used parliament to make it appear that the house of commons was presenting the case for the mint, although it was actually Radcliffe steering the proposition through parliament. The benefit was that, if the king disliked the scheme, the administration could disassociate themselves from it. Equally, Wentworth could use this issue to appear generous by seemingly conceding to the Commons' desire for an Irish mint, even if he was unable to allow the Graces to pass into law. The proposition for a mint came from the Commons to the Lords on 24 November 1634 and Radcliffe was chosen to be the speaker for the committee to discuss this issue with the Lords.⁴⁴ On 3 December, the committee met with the Lords and Radcliffe made 'a learned and eloquent Discourse' where he presented the case for the king allowing them to establish an Irish mint.⁴⁵ The following day, the Lords, who were clearly influenced by Radcliffe's argument, which was described as 'exquisitely set forth,' decided that it would be in the best interests of Ireland for a mint to be established.⁴⁶ Radcliffe, who had been in charge of this proposition from the outset, and Patrick Darcy, an Irish lawyer and MP for Navan,⁴⁷ were chosen to draw up a petition from both houses on 10 December 1634.⁴⁸ This was completed by 14 December 1634 and was ready to be taken to the Lords the following day by Radcliffe.⁴⁹ It was agreed by the Lords that the petition should be presented to the lord deputy as an act of both houses.⁵⁰ Wentworth of course approved the Bill.⁵¹ Even though, ultimately, the mint was not established in Ireland during Wentworth's lord deputyship, this example illustrates the way Wentworth used Radcliffe to steer an issue through parliament.

Radcliffe was also instrumental in managing relations between the two houses. Wentworth could not risk any reports of non-harmonious negotiations within the Irish houses of parliament reaching England where it might be suggested that Wentworth was not in control. For example, Wentworth chose Radcliffe to offer an apology to the house of lords after they had waited for two hours for a committee from the Commons to turn up and they had refused to meet with the Commons again until they had apologised for their

⁴³Wentworth's plan for a mint in Ireland originated even before he arrived in Ireland; WWM/Str P/3a/5–6: Wentworth to Charles I, 16 July 1633; Knowler, *Letters and dispatches*, i, 93–94. Indeed, there had been a mint in Ireland at various times in earlier centuries. If the mint was properly controlled, it could be used to reduce the drain on English resources, yet it could also be a political risk if the monarchy was unable to maintain a tight check on it. See Raymond Gillespie, 'Peter French's petition for an Irish mint, 1619', *Irish Historical Studies*, xxv (1987), 413; S.G. Ellis, 'The Struggle for Control of the Irish Mint, 1460–c.1506', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, lxxviii (1978), 17, 19.

⁴⁴*Lords Journal of Ireland*, i, 34; Lord H.R. Mountmorres, *The History of the Principal Transactions of the Irish Parliament, from the year 1634 to 1666* (2 vols, 1792), i, 329.

⁴⁵*Lords Journal of Ireland*, i, 41.

⁴⁶*Lords Journal of Ireland*, i, 41.

⁴⁷McGrath, 'A biographical dictionary', 125.

⁴⁸*Commons Journal of Ireland*, i, 89.

⁴⁹*Commons Journal of Ireland*, i, 90–91.

⁵⁰*Lords Journal of Ireland*, i, 47.

⁵¹*Lords Journal of Ireland*, 47–8.

behaviour.⁵² Wentworth was able to trust Radcliffe to smooth over relations between the two houses.

Radcliffe's personal interests meant that it was sometimes to his own benefit to keep close control over parliament's activities. Radcliffe profited from the Irish customs farm, through his share in tallow. Radcliffe was able to press his objections against the monopoly on tallow by the London Company of Soapers through the parliamentary forum. Radcliffe was concerned that, if this monopoly was allowed to go ahead, it would destroy Irish trade with Dutch merchants who bought much Irish tallow. Radcliffe believed that as much as one third of Irish trade passed through these merchants' hands and feared that 'If this tallow be taken from them, wee shall loose at least ... 4000l p[er] an[num]'. However, Radcliffe was able to report to Ingram that 'The Parliament hath bene very Sensible of this for the good of the Kingdome' and had presented petitions against the monopoly.⁵³

Radcliffe played an important role in ensuring the success of the Parliament of 1634–35 which had exceeded the amount of supply hoped for; parliament granted six instead of the predicted two or three subsidies. Wentworth had even managed to convince Charles I that the supply should not be extracted from Ireland and used to bolster the English treasury.⁵⁴ Wentworth was also able to avoid the enacting of all of the Graces, which would have made his intended plantation policy 'legally impossible'.⁵⁵ Wentworth used Radcliffe as a tool to keep a close eye on parliamentary proceedings so that potential disquiet could be quickly stifled. Pogson and Clavin presented this as intimidation, but Wentworth may have genuinely believed that, in order to do the king's service, these kinds of measures were necessary. However, it should be noted that parliament did present challenges, and although Wentworth tried to prevent word of these problems reaching the king, he was unable to contain the rumours completely.⁵⁶ Radcliffe was to play a similar role in managing parliament in 1640, although in the absence of Wentworth after the first session of parliament, and Wandesford acting as lord deputy in his place, he struggled to control parliament's agenda.

Wentworth's support team had been aware that an Irish parliament was imminent since at least December 1639.⁵⁷ Wentworth was to be present at the opening of the 1640 parliaments in both England and Ireland and so, in Wentworth's absence, Radcliffe was to have a key role in organising the elections to the Irish parliament in February and March 1640,⁵⁸ packing parliament with men who either supported, or could be manipulated

⁵² *Lords Journal of Ireland*, 15; T. Carte, *The Life of James Duke of Ormond: Containing an Account of the Most Remarkable Affairs of His Time, and Particularly of Ireland Under His Government* (6 vols, Oxford, 1851), i, 127–128

⁵³ West Yorkshire Archive Service Leeds, Temple Newsam papers, WYL100/PO/7/II/17: Radcliffe to Ingram, 28 Oct. 1634.

⁵⁴ Wentworth asked Archbishop Laud to ensure that the Irish subsidies would not be diverted to other uses until he had resolved the crown debts. Laud assured Wentworth that the king had consented to 'the keeping of subsidies on that side for the necessities of that kingdom'; WWM/Str P/6/82, 107: Wentworth to Laud, 19 July 1634, Laud to Wentworth, 20 Oct. 1634; Knowler, *Letters and dispatches*, i, 273, 329–331; J. Bliss, *The works of the most reverend father in God, William Laud, D.D* (7 vols, 1847–1860), vi, 399.

⁵⁵ H.F. Kearney, *Strafford in Ireland 1633–1641* (Manchester, 1989), 56.

⁵⁶ Milton, 'Wentworth and the political thought of the Personal Rule', 149.

⁵⁷ Whitaker, *The life and original correspondence*, 187.

⁵⁸ McGrath, 'A biographical dictionary', 30.

into supporting, the agenda of the administration.⁵⁹ Although the members of parliament became more aggressive in their quest to have their grievances settled, initially it appeared that Radcliffe had done a good job. A faction of government supporters was installed within parliament, consisting of Wentworth's extended support team and members of their families; McGrath identifies at least 19 members as having Yorkshire connections with Wentworth, and 16 others who were privy councillors, with Radcliffe and Wandesford straddling both of these groups.⁶⁰ Sir George Radcliffe sat for County Sligo and his son Thomas sat for Sligo town. Christopher Wandesford sat for Kildare, along with Wentworth's brother Sir George Wentworth. Wandesford's son George sat for Clogher in Tyrone and his half-brother Michael Wandesford sat for Thomastown, County Kilkenny.⁶¹ Radcliffe also ensured that parliament had a strong Protestant majority⁶² and attempted to reduce the influence of Old and New English.⁶³ However, parliamentary opposition began to transcend these traditional boundaries by the second session and therefore Radcliffe's election success had diminished influence over time.

The first session of the Irish Parliament of 1640–1649 convened on 16 March 1640, two days prior to Wentworth's arrival at Dublin as he had been delayed by westerly winds.⁶⁴ Consideration of parliamentary proceedings opened events in the Commons. Sir Richard Barnwall, MP for Meath, desired that the sheriffs' returns should be examined before the speaker of the house was chosen. Radcliffe stepped in to resolve the debate with his in-depth knowledge of parliamentary protocol. He stated that 'nothing could be done till the election of a speaker was confirmed' by the lords justices. Radcliffe's intervention, which served to delay any further proceedings until Wentworth was present, led to the House adjourning themselves after nominating their speaker, Maurice Eustace, MP for County Kildare.⁶⁵ Parliament was officially opened on 20 March once Wentworth had recovered from his journey from England.

Radcliffe's role in increasing support for Wentworth's administration was not confined to the election period. It was hoped that the government would be able to maintain the initiative by sustaining weighty representation within parliamentary committees.⁶⁶ In the

⁵⁹ Pogson, 'Strafford', 7.

⁶⁰ McGrath, 'A biographical dictionary', 33.

⁶¹ Other secretaries and associates of Wentworth also gained seats; Sir Philip Mainwaring sat for Carysfort in Wicklow, Thomas Little senior sat for Cashel and his son obtained a seat in Banagher, King's County. Joshua Carpenter sat for Carlingford in Louth and George Carr for Castlebar in County Mayo; McGrath, 'A biographical dictionary', 100–1, 194, 206, 249, 251, 297, 307; Kearney, *Strafford in Ireland*, 260–3.

⁶² Kearney and Perceval-Maxwell noted that two-thirds of the Commons were Protestant; McGrath specifically identifies 161 Protestants and 74 Catholics, making up the total membership of 235 MPs when it first met on 16 March 1640, although the numbers changed between March 1640 and November 1641. Perceval-Maxwell also argued that most of the practising Catholics within the parliament were actively oppositional, whereas only some Protestants were: Kearney, *Strafford in Ireland*, 192; Michael Perceval-Maxwell, 'Protestant faction, the impeachment of Strafford and the origins of the Irish civil war', *Canadian Journal of History*, xvii (1982), 239–40; McGrath, 'A biographical dictionary', 31, 35.

⁶³ Aidan Clarke, 'The breakdown of authority, 1640–41', in *A New History of Ireland*, vol. 3, ed. T.W. Moody, F.X. Martin and F.J. Byrne (Oxford, 1976), 272.

⁶⁴ WWM/Str P/11a/271: Irish privy council to Secretary Windebank, 19 Mar. 1640.

⁶⁵ Mountmorres, *The History of the Principal Transactions*, 19–20; *Journal of the House of Commons of the Kingdom of Ireland 1613–1666*, vol. 1 (Dublin, 1796), 133. See also Dennehy, *Irish Parliament, 1613–89*, 189.

⁶⁶ For example, privy councillors Sir William Parsons, Sir Adam Loftus and Sir Robert Meredith were leaders within a significant number of committees: Perceval-Maxwell, 'Protestant faction', 241–2; McGrath, *Operations of the Irish House of Commons*, 273.

first session of parliament, which sat between 16 and 31 March 1640, Radcliffe, Wandesford and Sir Edward Trevor, a privy councillor since 1623,⁶⁷ sat on more than half of the committees.⁶⁸ Government presence within the committees was clearly an integral part of the plan to maintain control over parliament. Radcliffe was chosen to be part of the committee of privileges and the committee of grievances⁶⁹ and sat upon a wide range of committees, including those where it was essential to have strong governmental control. This would ensure that Wentworth would be fully informed of the content of the discussions, as well as the mood of the debaters. For example, on 1 April 1640, Radcliffe was involved in a select committee to discuss the laws proposed in the first session of the parliament and to consider what other laws and ordinances were needed. Wentworth's supporters on this select committee could divert discussions away from grievances that Wentworth would not wish the parliament to stray onto and report issues that might become problematic for the administration.⁷⁰

Radcliffe was also prominent within high-profile committees of both houses, for example the committee called on 23 March consisting of 24 members of the Commons and 12 Lords to draw up a joint declaration on supply, declaring the whole parliament's readiness to assist the king with their 'Lives, Fortunes, and Estates'.⁷¹ This committee met again on 26 March, although the Lords suggested that, this time, a smaller committee should meet, as it would 'sooner effect that Work so well propounded and begun'. Despite this trimming down of the committee membership, Radcliffe remained part of the proceedings.⁷² Wentworth was keen to project the image that the Irish assembly was supportive of his demands for supply. On 23 March, the Commons voted four subsidies and Radcliffe was one of those appointed to draw up the declaration of the House.⁷³ However, the house of commons had, in reality, not been particularly cooperative as the request for supply had originally been for six subsidies.⁷⁴

In the second session, which sat between 1 and 17 June 1640, the Irish house of parliament was increasingly asserting itself and promoting its own agenda. Wandesford, with the support of Radcliffe, had to steer the government of Ireland through a time of incomparable trouble. He was acting as lord deputy after Wentworth's departure to England on 3 April 1640 to attend parliament there, and was to discover that Ireland was not as settled as Wentworth seemed to believe.⁷⁵ It is not clear if the first session of parliament

⁶⁷ McGrath, 'A biographical dictionary', 286.

⁶⁸ Perceval-Maxwell, 'Protestant faction', 243.

⁶⁹ *Commons Journal of Ireland*, i, 137.

⁷⁰ *Commons Journal of Ireland*, i, 142.

⁷¹ *Commons Journal of Ireland*, i, 138.

⁷² *Commons Journal of Ireland*, i, 139.

⁷³ *Commons Journal of Ireland*, i, 138; Wedgwood, *Thomas Wentworth*, 275–276, 278; Beckett, *Ireland*, 76. The Irish privy council wrote to Secretary Windebank on 23 March informing him that the whole House unanimously assented to the four subsidies 'there being found therein not one Negatiue voice': WWM/Str P/11a/274.

⁷⁴ Wentworth framed this in a positive light in a letter to Marquis Hamilton, stating 'This Parliament hath w[i]th all possible Cleare Affections giuen his Ma[jes]tie foure Subsedyes, and passed an Ordinance of Parliament (w[hi]ch is to be printed w[i]th the Act) for the further Supplying of the Crowne to the uttermost of their Abilities as the Kings occasions may require ... I doe seriously iudge [it] to be better then of they had outright giuen tenn Subsdyes': WWM/Str P/10b/141; Wentworth to Hamilton, 24 Mar. 1639.

⁷⁵ Kearney argues that Wentworth had 'no vision of a future catastrophe' and demonstrates that he continued to purchase extensive lands in Ireland: Kearney, *Stafford in Ireland*, 185, 189.

had run more smoothly due to the influence of men such as Wandesford and Radcliffe on the committees, whether it was Wentworth's personal presence, or simply that there was a higher level of support for government policies in the first session and that this good will quickly dissipated. McGrath argues that Wentworth's control over Ireland was impacted by the failure of the Short Parliament in England, which was dissolved in May 1640 before the second session of the Irish parliament met, along with his inability to 'replicate his successful dominance of politics in England'.⁷⁶ Kearney argues that the support of the first session of parliament was generated by the very presence of the king's representative, personified in Wentworth. However, when Wentworth left Ireland, this loyalty 'easily turned to a lukewarm attitude'.⁷⁷ Wentworth was able to exert considerable control over the first session of Parliament. But without the king's chosen representative being in Ireland himself, with his position reinforced by his staging of monarchical power,⁷⁸ this control was much harder to maintain. Support for Wentworth's Irish administration began to deteriorate rapidly. Both Clarke and Kearney have indicated that Wentworth's removal to England led to the final collapse of loyalty to his government. Although the government party did contain loyal and genuine supporters, such as Radcliffe, there were also others who had only remained loyal in order to further their access to patronage.⁷⁹ With the adherents to Wentworth's government policies depleted, the remaining loyal supporters would have found it more difficult to wield much influence.

Radcliffe's committee membership in the second session of parliament was notably less than previous parliamentary sessions; his membership of committees had fallen from half, to one-third.⁸⁰ This is explained by his departure for England on 10 or 11 June, before the session ended,⁸¹ to support Wentworth who was unwell. Shortly afterwards, Wandesford wrote to Radcliffe expressing his fear that the government was losing control, explaining that the problems within parliament were getting worse, 'notw[i]thstanding the good order you left them in'. Wandesford felt that the House had become so 'intemperate' that he had sought the advice of the Irish privy council who 'unanimously voted for a prorogation' of the second session. Wandesford was missing Radcliffe's contribution acutely, stating that 'We now fynde your absence in the house and were not the cause of the King supported by my L[or]d Dillon there I know not what would become of us'.⁸² Perceval-Maxwell observes that Radcliffe's departure must have 'seriously weakened the government's position'.⁸³

However, before he left Ireland, Radcliffe had taken part in the important committee appointed to consider 'how the four intire Subsidies granted this Parliament shall be assessed' on 9 June.⁸⁴ It was clearly important for the government to have a voice within this committee, as it could dramatically affect the amount of money raised for the king.

⁷⁶ McGrath, 'A biographical dictionary', 41. See also Wedgwood, *Thomas Wentworth*, 290–1.

⁷⁷ Kearney, *Stafford in Ireland*, 195.

⁷⁸ Dougal Shaw, 'Thomas Wentworth and Monarchical Ritual in Early Modern Ireland', *HJ*, xlix (2006), 331–355.

⁷⁹ Clarke, 'The breakdown of authority', 277; Kearney, *Stafford in Ireland*, 195.

⁸⁰ Perceval-Maxwell, 'Protestant faction', 244.

⁸¹ *Commons Journal of Ireland*, i, 145.

⁸² Oxford, Bodleian Libraries, MS. Add. C. 286, ff.25v–26r: Wandesford to Radcliffe, 12 June 1640.

⁸³ Michael Perceval-Maxwell, *Outbreak of the Irish Rebellion of 1641* (Montreal, 1994), 80.

⁸⁴ *Commons Journal of Ireland*, i, 143.

Although parliament appeared to grant supply readily enough in the first session in Wentworth's presence, this was offset in June by their demands for a new way of levying the taxes for the three remaining subsidies that had not yet been collected. This change would delay the process, and it appeared likely that the amount received by the government would also be lessened.⁸⁵ In 1635, Wentworth had decided upon a fixed amount of money that each Irish county had to raise. This would generate a set rate of £40,000 for each subsidy. However, on 13 June 1640, the house of commons asserted that the supply was to be levied 'in a moderate parliamentary way after an easy and equal rate of each man his estate'⁸⁶ which could have dramatic implications for the actual amount of revenue raised from the supply granted in the first session. Having the news of the failure of the Short Parliament in Westminster the previous month perhaps gave the Irish members of parliament the confidence to undermine their earlier acquiescence to Wentworth's demands. McGrath also emphasised the importance of the wider context, noting that the Irish economy had been badly affected by poor harvests between 1637 and 1640.⁸⁷

The Commons was also intent upon gaining redress of their grievances in this second session of parliament. Wandesford was forced to allow concessions to parliament that revoked some of Wentworth's policies. For example, the Bill that was to secure Wentworth's policy of plantation in Connaught and Limerick was referred to a sub-committee and was never seen again. This committee included privy councillors such as Radcliffe, Lord Dillon, Sir William Parsons and Lord Loftus, but they may have been unable to push this policy through in the face of burgeoning opposition, perhaps believing it unwise to force through an unpopular policy at the possible expense of supply.⁸⁸ Kearney believes that the rejection of the Plantation Bill and the alteration to the way in which supply was to be levied demonstrates that a new form of opposition was emerging, unified in its ideals regardless of religion.⁸⁹

Another issue propounded by the Commons was a complaint concerning the composition of the House. This was an issue that would come back to haunt Radcliffe in the impeachment attack against him, when he was accused of packing parliament.⁹⁰ The Commons complained of the failure to issue writs to seven Old English boroughs, which had held seats in previous parliaments. This was a direct attack upon the government's ability to control the membership of the house of commons.⁹¹ The Commons decided to issue writs to these excluded boroughs, directly revoking Wentworth's orders. This case is especially significant, as the Old English faction could not have pushed this measure through the House alone, and therefore they had generated support within the New English faction.⁹² This demonstrates that the parliamentary attacks upon government policy were leading men to abandon their traditional opposition against each other, in order to unite against the government.

⁸⁵H.B. McCall, *The Story of the Family of Wandesforde of Kirklington and Castlecomer* (1904), 80.

⁸⁶*Calendar of the State Papers Relating to Ireland: of the Reign of Charles I Preserved in the Public Record Office* R. P. Mahaffy (ed) (4 volumes, 1900), ii, 251; Kearney, *Strafford in Ireland*, 191.

⁸⁷McGrath, *Operations of the Irish House of Commons*, 273.

⁸⁸*Commons Journal of Ireland*, i, 143–4.

⁸⁹Kearney, *Strafford in Ireland*, 190–1.

⁹⁰TNA SP 63/258, no 62: 'Sir George Ratcliffes answer'.

⁹¹Clarke, 'The breakdown of authority', 276–7. See also McGrath, 'A biographical dictionary', 28, 36–7.

⁹²Kearney, *Strafford in Ireland*, 190.

Wandesford must have felt particularly isolated during the summer of 1640, whilst Wentworth and Radcliffe were in England, and in June he begged Radcliffe to keep his word 'for returning so soon' as he could.⁹³ By August 1640, facing the recall of parliament for its third session in October, Wandesford was still requesting Radcliffe's return to Ireland.⁹⁴ Before this third session of the parliament, Wandesford faced further issues. The Scots defeated the king's forces at the Battle of Newburn on 28 August 1640 and Wandesford needed to raise parliamentary supply in order to pay for a large standing army in Ulster to protect Irish interests. Wandesford's problems were exacerbated by Wentworth's hope that the Irish standing army might be used in England. This served to place him in an even more difficult position, between the need for an army, the need to pay for it and therefore the potential for parliament to negotiate for the redress of grievances.⁹⁵ However, Wandesford was aware that parliamentary supply was not forthcoming and, on 29 June, informed Radcliffe that money was coming in very slowly.⁹⁶ By 7 August, he advised that £8000 remained outstanding from the subsidies.⁹⁷ Wandesford was frustrated by Wentworth's apparent lack of understanding of the financial situation in Ireland and thus his ineffectual demands that an army be raised and supplied.⁹⁸ Wandesford was hoping that, once Radcliffe returned to Ireland, he would be able to 'unwynde us all out of this laborinth'.⁹⁹ In light of this pressure to raise supply, Wandesford had no choice but to allow a third meeting of parliament, despite the danger that it was likely to proceed in its increasingly aggressive nature. Radcliffe finally arrived in Ireland in early September,¹⁰⁰ in readiness for the third session of parliament which met from 1 October until 12 November 1640. This session is notable for its integral role in the collapse of Wentworth's regime in Ireland. What is more, Wentworth's carefully selected support system within parliament had dissolved further 'when it became more and more obvious that his star was on the wane'.¹⁰¹

Radcliffe's role now became one of mediation between Wentworth and Wandesford. Wentworth felt that Wandesford was being too lenient upon parliament at precisely the time he needed to assert his authority. He wrote to Radcliffe on 5 November 1640 ordering him to tell Wandesford that he must 'not suffer my gentlemen to grow insolent upon him, and that his old rule of moderate counsels will not serve his turn in cases of this extremity'.¹⁰² The issue of supply continued to be contentious during the third session. Each subsidy was to be reduced from £40,000 to £12,000. Clearly, at this new assessment rate, four subsidies would barely raise much more than the value of a single subsidy.¹⁰³

⁹³Bodl. MS. Add. C. 286, f.29v: Wandesford to Radcliffe, 29 June 1640.

⁹⁴Bodl. MS. Add. C. 286, ff.34r: Wandesford to Radcliffe, 24 Aug. 1640.

⁹⁵Kearney, *Stafford in Ireland*, 191–2.

⁹⁶Bodl. MS. Add. C. 286, f.29v: Wandesford to Radcliffe, 29 June 1640.

⁹⁷Bodl. MS. Add. C. 286, f. 33r: Wandesford to Radcliffe, 7 Aug. 1640.

⁹⁸Wandesford professed that it was no longer possible for the Irish exchequer to 'bere so high a Charge w[i]thout supply from thence ...': Bodl. MS. Add. C. 286, ff.31v–32r: Wandesford and Irish privy council to Wentworth, 28 July 1640.

⁹⁹Bodl. MS. Add. C. 286, f.30v: Wandesford to Radcliffe, 28 June 1640.

¹⁰⁰Henry Smithwicke wrote that 'Sir Georg Ratcliffe landed the last night': The Devonshire Collections, Chatsworth, CM/21/33: Smithwicke to the earl of Cork, 9 Sept 1640.

¹⁰¹Kearney, *Stafford in Ireland*, 195.

¹⁰²Whitaker, *Life and original correspondence of Radcliffe*, 212.

¹⁰³Clarke, *The Old English in Ireland*, 132; Perceval-Maxwell, 'Protestant faction', 250.

Radcliffe's role within the third session of parliament is fairly obscure, although he does appear on some committees and acted as a carrier of bills to the Lords and the lord deputy.¹⁰⁴ However, although Radcliffe did attend more committees in the third session than in the earlier sessions of parliament in 1640, supporters of the administration were not in attendance at vital meetings and this also coincided with Protestant back-benchers gaining more influence within committees.¹⁰⁵ For example, the committee nominated to meet on 7 November to determine when the Remonstrance outlining their grievances could be presented, did not contain any government supporters.¹⁰⁶ The findings of this committee led to the most dramatic event within the third session of the parliament when the house of commons presented their grievances against the government in the Humble and Just Remonstrance on 9 November, accusing Wentworth of introducing arbitrary government in Ireland.¹⁰⁷ Wandesford was forced to ward off this attack upon Wentworth's government by hurriedly proroguing parliament, especially as it now appeared that the Lords were about to bring their own Remonstrance as well.¹⁰⁸ Wandesford had been unable to withstand the attacks of a more aggressive and ambitious parliament – the house of commons was clearly the most dominant force in the Irish politics of 1640. The turmoil of managing parliament in 1640 had taken its toll on Wandesford and he died suddenly on 3 December 1640.¹⁰⁹ The Irish parliament was able to use Wandesford's demise as an opportunity to press its grievances further by trying to remove another key figure within Wentworth's administration; Sir George Radcliffe.

The charges brought by both the English and Irish parliaments against Radcliffe show that he was thought to be such a close confidant of Wentworth that he was effectively a conspirator in the crimes they believed had been committed in Ireland. Radcliffe first found himself on the receiving end of impeachment charges issued by the English Long Parliament. A warrant was issued for his arrest on 13 November 1640, which he evaded until 9 December when he was taken to the Gate House of the Tower of London.¹¹⁰ By imprisoning Radcliffe, the Commons deprived Wentworth of a friend with legal knowledge who could support him through his time of need and a key witness to support him in his defence. The English parliament's accusations against Radcliffe were read on 31 December 1640. Radcliffe made a 'good short speech of his innocency' and suggested that, as the Irish parliament had granted four subsidies, they could not have been very discontented with their government. In addition, he argued, supply was granted with 'greate & zealous expressions of their readiness to Complie' with the king.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁴For example, on 10 October, Radcliffe, Lord Dillon and Sir William Parsons represented the government on the select committee to discuss the questions concerning the privileges of the House: *Commons Journal of Ireland*, i, 156. On 15 October, Radcliffe carried the Act for the 'granting of six entire Subsidies by the Prelates and Clergy of Ireland' to the Lords: *Lords Journal of Ireland*, i, 126.

¹⁰⁵McGrath, *Operations of the Irish House of Commons*, 218.

¹⁰⁶Perceval-Maxwell, 'Protestant faction', 252.

¹⁰⁷*Commons Journal of Ireland*, i, 163; TNA SP 63/258, no 73; C. Russell, 'The British Background to the Irish Rebellion of 1641', *EHR*, lxi (1989), 170.

¹⁰⁸*Lords Journal of Ireland*, i, 142.

¹⁰⁹The earl of Cork's servant Walley informed Cork that Wandesford had died 'even upon a Soden, not 2 days sicke ... on the third day of this moneth early in the morning': CM/21/75: Walley to Cork, 12 Dec. 1640.

¹¹⁰*Calendar of State Papers Domestic: Charles I, 1640–1*, ed. W. D. Hamilton (London, 1882), 257; TNA SP 16/471, no 58; TNA SP 16/473, no 36: 9 Dec. 1640, 'Order of the English House of Commons against Radcliffe'.

¹¹¹*HMC Buccleuch III*, 404; TNA SP 63/258, no 62: 'Sir George Ratcliffes answer'.

A committee of the Irish house of commons followed suit, levying six general charges against Radcliffe on 29 December 1640. They claimed that Radcliffe and Wentworth had manipulated and ‘laboured to Subvert the Liberties and p[ri]viledge of p[ar]liaments in Ireland’.¹¹² The articles of impeachment were presented to the Irish house of commons on 6 March 1641.¹¹³ The articles consisted of three broad accusations; that Radcliffe had tried to bring about the ‘destruction of the Commonwealth of this realm’ by introducing an ‘arbitrary and tyrannical government against law’ in Ireland with the ‘countenance and assistance’ of Wentworth. Secondly, he was accused of taking ‘regal power over the goods, persons, lands and liberties of His Majesty’s subjects of this Realm’ and, in order to achieve his ends, had passed unjust sentences, judgments and decrees ‘in extrajudicial manner against law’. Finally, they accused the administration of attempting to ‘subvert the rights of Parliament and the antient courses of Parliamentary proceedings’.¹¹⁴ In his responses to the charges, Radcliffe appealed to the king’s prerogative throughout. He argued that parliament was encroaching upon the king’s rights, and therefore the Irish privy council’s actions against parliament were justified.¹¹⁵ As Radcliffe was never officially impeached and brought to trial, evidence presented by both the English and Irish houses of commons to support their accusations against him is lacking. Once Wentworth was removed, there was no need to continue in the proceedings against Radcliffe. On his own, Radcliffe was not thought to be influential enough to threaten parliament’s power.

An examination of the parliamentary career of Sir George Radcliffe provides an extraordinary insight into the way in which one of the ‘great men’ of history utilised his support network and facilitated their political careers. Wentworth used Radcliffe to smooth his relationship with the Irish parliament and to push his own agenda. Radcliffe performed a number of roles which enabled Wentworth to attempt to control the Irish parliament, in particular acting as Wentworth’s ‘eyes and ears’ to judge the mood of the house. He was proactive in controlling the direction of debates and reported back to Wentworth on the mood of committee discussions. However, despite Radcliffe fairly successfully managing the relationship between the government and parliament in 1634–1635, the sessions of parliament held in 1640 were much more difficult to control in Wentworth’s absence. Radcliffe struggled to maintain the government’s initiative over parliament, demonstrating that the personal presence of the king’s representative in Ireland played an important role in holding the administration together. Without Wentworth, Radcliffe was unable to control parliament, contributing to the collapse of the regime.

¹¹²BL, Harley MS 1769, f.42: ‘S[i]r George Ratcliffs Charge 29th December 1640’.

¹¹³Mountmorres, *The History of the Principal Transactions*, 43–44; *Commons Journal of Ireland*, i, 186; *Lords Journal of Ireland*, i, 165–6.

¹¹⁴*Commons Journal of Ireland*, i, 198–199.

¹¹⁵TNA, SP 63/258, no 62: ‘Sir George Ratcliffes answer’.