

Dafydd Tudur

CYMRU’N DEFFRO

MICHAEL D. JONES AND THE ‘NATIONAL AWAKENING’

One must admit that the blood of the Welsh nation is warm, that its heart is beating consistently and strongly, and that it breathes healthily – the whole life of the nation has been restored in strength and in energy.

Thus wrote one correspondent in the columns of the Welsh language weekly periodical *Y Gwyliedydd* in October 1894. The Welsh nation seemed a picture of health, which is all the more remarkable when taking into account that Wales, as a political entity, could not have been less visible in British politics for most of the nineteenth century. In the four centuries that had elapsed since the 1536 Act of Union between England and Wales, only one act of Parliament had applied to Wales as separate from England. As far as government was concerned, there was nothing to suggest any distinction between the Welsh and their English neighbours and, despite differences in language and custom, both people were treated as a homogeneous British nation. The situation had changed significantly by the 1890s. Wales was recognised in political circles as having needs and interests that were separate from those of England, and Welsh MPs campaigned for measures that were specific to Wales. Such was the change in Wales’s political standing, which was accompanied by a renaissance in Welsh language and literature, that some contemporaries, such as the correspondent in *Y Gwyliedydd*, believed that Wales was experiencing nothing less than a ‘national awakening’.



Dafydd Tudur, ‘Cymru’n Deffro: Michael D. Jones and the “national awakening”’, in: *Studies on National Movements*, 2 (2014).

<http://snm.nise.eu/index.php/studies/article/view/0204a>

When the 'national awakening' made its impact on Wales, there were contemporaries who were also eager to point out that one man had expressed these sentiments of 'Cymru'n deffro' – 'Wales awakes' – long before anyone else. One admirer described him as the 'vanguard of the national awakening', while another noted that 'the historian who writes the history of the Welsh Awakening must give detailed consideration to his vigorous attempts to bring it about'. The twentieth-century Welsh poet David James Jones (better known by his bardic name 'Gwenallt') described him as 'the greatest Welshman of the nineteenth century; the greatest nationalist after Owain Glyndŵr', and Gwynfor Evans claimed that he was the one who did most to generate the hope that Wales, as a nation, would have a future. For Evans, he was 'in many ways the spiritual father of Plaid Cymru'. Hailed also as 'the founding father of modern political nationalism in Wales', that figure, a Nonconformist minister and college principal named Michael Daniel Jones, has been described as 'the first in modern times to offer the Welsh a rational political solution to the question of how best to maintain their identity'.

Despite this acclaim, studies of nineteenth-century Welsh political history suggest that Michael D. Jones was a marginal figure and his apparent isolation from mainstream politics has not passed unnoticed. Kenneth O. Morgan described Jones as an 'isolated figure'. Similarly, Ieuan Gwynedd Jones referred to him as 'lonely and enigmatic', while R. Tudur Jones branded him 'a loner' who 'made no attempt to form a group or party to propagate his views' and did not 'associate himself closely with any particular movement after 1870'. Indeed, in the opening chapter of his recent study of the political thought of Plaid Cymru, Richard Wyn Jones draws attention to the absence of a nationalist movement in Wales during the nineteenth century, claiming that 'it could be argued that this is the only major historiographical question raised by the Welsh experience, especially when there were few countries in Europe during the nineteenth century where there were better prospects of a successful national movement.'

When bearing in mind that many twentieth-century Welsh nationalists have regarded Jones's thought as progressive or even prophetic, it is surprising that his understanding of national identity and his political

vision for Wales have not been subjected to more detailed analysis in order to gain a better understanding of their development. The only comprehensive study of his life and work published to date continues to be the somewhat hagiographical biography written by his former student and friend Evan Pan Jones, entitled *Oes a Gwaith y Prif Athraw, y Parch. Michael Daniel Jones, Bala* and published in 1903. Based on an analysis of Michael D. Jones's work, in particular the letters and articles that he published between 1848 and 1865, this paper describes the nature and formation of his views on Welsh national identity and the subsequent development of his nationalist aspirations for Wales. It concludes with an attempt to explain why Jones did not gain wider support for national self-government during the nineteenth century.

Background

Michael Daniel Jones was born near the village of Llanuwchllyn in the rural county of Meirionnydd in north Wales on 2 March 1822. He was the third of five children born to Michael and Mary Jones. His father, Michael Jones, was an Independent minister who also kept a school in Llanuwchllyn where children were taught to read and write in English and instructed 'in the principles of the Christian religion'. Michael Jones was eager to see his children take advantage of the educational opportunities that they were offered and it has been claimed that young Michael had mastered the rudiments of both Latin and Greek by the age of twelve. He completed his studies at the age of fifteen, and spent the subsequent two years assisting his father at the school. In 1839 he was admitted to the Presbyterian College in the town of Carmarthen in South West Wales. He went on from there in 1844 to study at the Congregational College in Highbury, London, but completed only three of the course's four years. The reasons behind his retirement are unclear, but the report of Highbury College Committee for 1847-8 stated clearly that he had 'proceeded to North America, where he has the prospect of being useful to his spiritually destitute countrymen, settled in that part of the world'. Jones spent most of the following

eighteen months in the state of Ohio, where his eldest sister Mary Ann had settled since 1837.

Michael D. Jones was ordained to the Christian ministry at a Welsh chapel in Cincinnati in December 1848. He had not intended to settle there permanently and he returned to Wales in 1849 and was inducted as minister at Bwlchnewydd and Gibeon, about five miles from Carmarthen. Three years later, he returned to Meirionnydd to succeed his father as Principal of Bala Independent College. He also accepted calls to become the minister of five Independent churches in the area. His increasing workload would force him to relinquish his responsibility for two of the churches in 1860, but he retained his position as principal of Bala College and minister of the remaining three churches until his retirement from public life in 1892. He died at the age of 76 at his home, Bodiwan, on the outskirts of Bala on 2 December 1898.

It is not for the performance of his duties as a Christian minister or as principal of a theological college that Michael D. Jones is largely remembered in contemporary Wales. Instead, his name is usually associated with the establishment of a 'Welsh' settlement in Patagonia, a sparsely populated region of South America, as a place where it was hoped that their national identity would be safeguarded from the assimilative influence of other cultures and could flourish unhindered. He was instrumental in its establishment in 1865 and, for nearly thirty years, he was the most vociferous advocate of the movement's aims and endeavours. By the time he retired from public life in 1892, the Settlement had become home to about two thousand Welsh speakers.

Michael D. Jones's understanding of Welsh national characteristics also led him to the conclusion that, in order to maintain their identity and further their national interests, the people of Wales should campaign for their own parliament. But alongside his nationalist interests, Jones was also involved in local politics. In his native county of Meirionnydd, he campaigned for the rights of tenant farmers, whom he believed to be oppressed by landowners and their staff. His vocal support for David Williams, the first Liberal candidate to stand for the parliamentary seat of

Meirionnydd, secured for Michael D. Jones a place in the political history of the county.

As Principal of Bala Independent College, Jones held an influential position among the Independents, one of the three largest Protestant denominations in Wales collectively known as Nonconformists (the other two being the Calvinistic Methodists and the Baptists). Michael D. Jones served as principal for almost forty years, during which he instructed more than two hundred students, most of whom went on to enter the Christian ministry. These denominations had, since the beginning of the eighteenth century, seen a significant increase in adherents and congregations. For decades, the Nonconformists were at the forefront in improving the level of literacy among the people of Wales, whom they provided with vast amounts of material published in the Welsh language. By the second half of the nineteenth century, educational institutions such as Bala Independent College played a key role in educating young men who would be held in high esteem by congregations throughout Wales and beyond, not only fulfilling pastoral duties but also shaping public opinion on a range of subjects. The nature and extent of the Nonconformists' influence on society in Wales during the nineteenth century deserves further examination; suffice to say that this was the context within which Michael D. Jones made his contribution to public life in Wales, and that the pulpit and periodical press were the means by which he propagated his nationalist aspirations.

Identity

It was during his visit to the United States in 1848-9 that Michael D. Jones first expressed a concern for Welsh national characteristics. There he saw assimilative forces within American society eroding the national characteristics of communities of Welsh people who had migrated there. Writing in 1849, he lamented the immigrants' gradual assimilation into American culture: 'It is truly heartbreaking to work with any institution belonging to the Welsh in this country, when all evidence shows that our nation will disappear here.'

Jones believed that by preserving their cultural characteristics, the Welsh could retain their national identity in other parts of the world, and, more importantly, pass it on to descendants who had been born outside Wales. Similarly, Welsh people could lose or change their national identity simply by abandoning their cultural characteristics and adopting those of another nation. For him, national identity was subjective in that its continuance would ultimately depend on the will of those who belonged to that specific cultural community. The connection between land and people was not an important factor in this view of Welsh identity, which explains why Jones saw no contradiction between his fierce criticism of the British imperial endeavours on the one hand and, on the other, his prominent role in the establishment of a Welsh settlement in Patagonia.

The three characteristics that distinguished the Welsh people from other peoples and which were mentioned in Jones's articles during this formative period of his thought were their language, customs and religion. The belief that the Welsh were an exceptionally religious people was commonplace among Welsh Nonconformists at that time. Looking at their recent history, they claimed that God had shown particular favour to their nation, raising it 'from the depths of moral degradation, ignorance and superstition, to the highest rank amongst the enlightened Protestant nations of the world'. Jones wrote to similar effect in 1849, when he glorified the religious character of the Welsh:

Let other nations boast of their learning, their refinement, and their civility, and we will strive with our religion. Religion, and not learning, is the glory of the world – Christianity is the glory of religion – Protestantism is the glory of Christianity – Dissent is the glory of Protestantism – Wales is the glory of Dissent.

He was writing at a time when this rhetoric was intensified by the Welsh Nonconformists response to the comments made in the Reports on the State of Education in Wales published in 1847. The 'Blue Books', as they were known, contained comments on the morality of people in Wales that were met with cries of protest in the Nonconformist press, challenging their veracity and suggesting that members of the Anglican Church who

had been interviewed by the Commissioners had given false or misleading evidence in order to denigrate their character.

During his ministry in Cincinnati, Michael D. Jones became aware of an apparent tendency among Welsh immigrants to lapse in moral conduct and neglect religious observances. Jones had only to spend a few months in the United States to conclude that there were ‘hundreds who have become worldly and irreligious’ since their arrival. He saw a link between the loss of the immigrants’ cultural characteristics, particularly their language, and this deviation from moral conduct. ‘The loss of our language will not only mean the loss of a language’, he wrote, ‘but also the loss of our religion and morality to a considerable degree’. Rather than concluding that the religiosity of the Welsh people was merely another cultural characteristic, Jones attached greater value to the Welsh language. In another letter, he wrote that ‘the Welsh rightfully feel that morality and religion are a nation’s glory’, before adding that ‘it is the language that preserves our nation’. He concluded that the Welsh were a uniquely religious people only so far as they remained Welsh in language and custom. His first expressions of Welsh national identity stemmed from his belief that the preservation of national characteristics, the Welsh language in particular, was crucial for the spiritual wellbeing of the Welsh people. Significantly, Michael D. Jones believed that these observations on the connection between language and religion could be applied to Wales as well as to the United States. ‘Are not our language, our customs, our religion and our morality worth keeping?’ he asked, ‘and does not the history of our nation on this side of the Atlantic, *as well as the other*, prove that losing our language usually means losing the other three?’

Michael D. Jones returned to Wales in 1849 with a deep interest in national characteristics which, combined with his determination to make his nationality a pervasive element in his life, had the sense of purpose that was characteristic of late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Romanticism. Indeed, Michael D. Jones is a link between the Romantic and Nonconformist traditions in Wales – two traditions established during the same period but often seen as distinct from each other. When Jones formulated his own grammar and alphabet for the Welsh language during the 1850s, for example, it was based on ‘Coelbren y Beirdd’, an alphabet

that was purported to belong to Welsh bardic circles but had been lost since the Middle Ages. It was later found to be one of the fabrications of antiquarian and bard Edward Williams, better known as Iolo Morganwg, the person whose name is most often associated with the Romantic Movement in Wales. Jones also had connections with Lady Llanofer, one of the foremost patrons of Welsh folk heritage during the nineteenth century and one who is seen as one of the heirs of the Romantic tradition in Wales. He is known to have stayed at Tymawr in Llanover in 1877, where he met Lady Llanofer and presented her with a fox skin from Patagonia. He also sent his children to stay at Llanofer, where they were taught to play the Welsh triple harp. Jones not only gave his children Welsh first names, but also surnames that were in the traditional Welsh form of 'ap Iwan' and 'erch Iwan', meaning 'son' or 'daughter of John'. Occasionally, he used the Welsh version of Michael, 'Mihangel', not only as a pseudonym for writing to the press, but also when writing to friends (and which he later gave to his second son). And when in 1861 he gave his newly built house the Welsh name 'Bodiwan' (meaning 'Residence of John' or 'Jones'), it was a patriotic statement, as it was considered fashionable to give English names to new homes.

Nationalism

While Michael D. Jones asserted the importance of Welsh national identity during his visit to the United States, it is clear from his published letters that it had not yet become the basis upon which he expressed his political aspirations for the Welsh nation. In 1848, he saw the union between England and Wales as based on mutual consent and saw no conflict between the interests of the British state and the need to safeguard Welsh national characteristics. If the Welsh people made a concerted call for better recognition of the Welsh language, Jones believed that the British government would grant it to them without much delay.

His opinion of the British government was to change as a result of his observations on the correlation between language, which he saw as the key characteristic of Welsh national identity, and political power. There is

reason to believe that his views on this subject had begun to take form during his visit to the United States in 1848-9. When referring to the disadvantages that the Welsh faced when settling in the same communities as the English, Scottish and Irish immigrants, Jones noted that the reasons for their weakness as a cultural group were, first, that they were a minority, and secondly, that the legislation is written in a different language. When calling for the establishment of a Welsh settlement, he noted that the law in the proposed settlement should be written and administered in Welsh, though he gave no further explanation for his views on the matter at the time.

The importance that Michael D. Jones attached to the legal status of the Welsh language in the articles which he published in the United States was an early suggestion of the theory that was outlined a decade later in his pamphlet, *Gwladychfa Gymreig* (A Welsh Settlement). In the pamphlet, Jones explained that in all 'settlements' there are cultural groups that may be classified as either 'formative' or 'assimilative'. In fact, Jones's theory applied to any society in which more than one language was spoken, for when he discussed the formative or assimilative status of cultural groups, he was actually referring to the status of their languages.

For Jones, the dominance of a cultural group was reflected by the status of its language in the spheres of law, trade, education and politics, and in most countries the dominant cultural group formed the majority. However, cultural dominance did not always reflect the number of people, or the proportion of the total population, that belonged to that group. In colonies, he noted, the situation was usually different. Jones referred to Algeria as an example, where the formative culture was French rather than Algerian. Similarly, he noted that the English, as the dominant cultural group in all the British colonies, 'force every newcomer to adopt their language and customs, which have given them [the English] the advantage of being foremost in influence, and an opportunity to monopolize every position of comfort, profit, and honour'. Other cultural groups in the colonies could not gain access to positions of prestige and authority. He referred to these as 'assimilative' cultures. Some members of the assimilative cultural groups adopted the characteristics of the dominant cultural group in the hope of acquiring power and influence,

while others simply 'yielded' by adopting the formative language as it became an integral part of everyday life. Jones could see that, if these trends persisted, members of the assimilative cultural groups would 'melt into the mould' of the formative culture to such an extent that no remnants would be left of their original cultural characteristics – in Jones's words, 'like men buried at sea, without anything to show that they had ever existed'. When establishing a Welsh settlement, Michael D. Jones argued that, wherever it was located, the preservation of national identity would depend on the Welsh language achieving 'formative' status as the language of social, legal, educational and political institutions.

The development of Michael D. Jones's views on the interaction between cultural groups caused a radical change in his analysis of the relationship between England and Wales. His hope that the British government would acknowledge the rights of the Welsh nation had been ambitious to say the least. In the mid-nineteenth century, Wales was not even recognised by its own MPs as having distinct political needs. Yet it was within this context that Michael D. Jones formulated his ideas on 'formative' and 'assimilative' cultures and observed that parallels could be drawn between Wales and the colonies of the British Empire. Welsh speakers formed the majority in Wales, and proportionally, they were the strongest cultural group, but it was English culture that provided access to positions of power and privilege. Welsh culture was 'assimilative' in Wales, because English was the language of government, law, trade and education. Thus, Jones concluded that the relationship between Wales and England was colonial rather than contractual. He placed Wales and Ireland, two nations that were rarely considered as British colonies, alongside India, where three quarters of the British Empire's population lived and which was the most important British colony in terms of trade. He even claimed in 1856 that 'Wales, Ireland and the nations of India are slaves of Englishmen'.

Michael D. Jones believed that Wales's colonial status was reflected in its economic as well as its cultural situation. He noted, for example, that the wealth of natural resources in Wales, such as water and minerals, which could be utilised to serve the needs of the Welsh people. He suggested that the utilisation of these resources could provide employment, thereby reducing the rate of emigration from Wales. Rather than being utilised for

the benefit of Wales, however, these resources were exploited by England. He wrote:

At present, the Welshman sends virtually all his wool to England to be spun. He pays to transport the wool, as well as fattened animals such as oxen and sheep to provide meat for the Englishmen who do the spinning. And once the Englishman has finished the cloth, the Welshman must pay for its transportation back to Wales, thus giving the Englishman a good profit so that he can live in his palace in England.



Michael D. Jones in his patriotic costume, around 1890 | PEOPLE' COLLECTION WALES – WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Improvements to Wales's transport connections with England over the previous fifty years had brought new industry into Wales, thus creating, in Prys Morgan's words, 'a system of regional economic inequality, emphasizing for the Welsh that their economy was a subservient one, serving the needs of mostly English capitalism'. For Michael D. Jones, this 'regional economic inequality' reflected the Welsh nation's colonial status in relation to England. Jones's costume, a suit made of woollen cloth, knee-length trousers, combined with his unusually long beard, was one of his distinguishing features and he claimed that it was, above all, an expression of patriotism. The woollen cloth

had been manufactured in Wales, and it has been claimed that he prided himself on the fact that his costume had been made entirely in Wales, with the unfortunate exception of the buttons on his jacket. 'We need to educate our nation to support our workshops,' he wrote, before assuring his readers: 'I myself always wear clothes made in Wales'. Jones believed that self-government was not only crucial to the future survival of the Welsh nation as an ethnic group but also key to addressing what he saw as the social and economic injustices of his time.

The failure to gain wider support

Michael D. Jones's understanding of national identity and his observations on the relationship between Wales and the British state had, by the end of the 1850s, led him to the conclusion that self-government was crucial to the wellbeing and survival of the Welsh as a nation. The fact that he was active in public life for a further thirty years, and that he held a position of such influence within one of the largest Nonconformist denominations throughout that period, raises the question why did he not gain more support for this political vision for Wales.

Several factors may have played a part. It is noteworthy that while Jones had formed his opinions on the right of nations to govern their own affairs during the 1850s, he did not begin to express his nationalist aspirations in the denominational press on a regular basis, or at least apply them to Wales in relation to the British state, until the mid-1870s. Instead, he focused his efforts on local political campaigns in Meirionnydd and the establishment of the settlement in Patagonia. Jones may not have been a pacifist, but he was committed to constitutional reform rather than political protest, despite the patent inequality between England and Wales. 'We are a liberal nation,' he wrote in 1863, 'and yet we are oppressed and enslaved. We do not see any peaceful means of perfecting our national character other than through national migration.' Because of his views on political reform and the constraints of the political system in Wales at the time, Jones sought to realise his political vision for the Welsh nation on South American soil, and the movement to establish a Welsh

settlement in Patagonia could therefore be seen as a manifestation of the energy and resources that may otherwise have been channelled towards self-government for the Welsh in Wales.

While Jones's demand for a Welsh parliament was firm and unequivocal, he never set out in detail his views on the subject. He believed that the Parliament should be located in Aberystwyth, but he did not express any opinion on the form it should take or the way in which it should operate. The Patagonian Settlement was established under a constitution that could be regarded as one of the most democratic constitutions in the world at that time, but although it may have been regarded as a blueprint for a self-governing Wales, there is nothing to suggest that Jones had a special role in its preparation. Jones was equally unclear on the subject of how to achieve the goal of self-government and, as R. Tudur Jones noted, he did not form a group or associate with any particular movement with a view to furthering his aims. He published articles on almost a fortnightly basis for over a decade, but the haphazard manner in which he wrote tended to obscure his intentions. There was hardly any development or refinement in his ideas or rhetoric between the 1860s and his retirement from public life in the 1890s. During the 1880s, when he was most productive as a contributor to the Nonconformist press, there was no telling what would be the subject of his articles from one week to the next, and he wrote on a range of subjects and he was often distracted from the issue at hand, especially by personal grudges.

Michael D. Jones was also a controversial and divisive character, and this isolated him from many other influential Nonconformist ministers at the time. From an early stage in his ministry, he displayed a tendency to enter into dispute not only with landowners and churchmen but with fellow ministers too. From the 1870s onwards, Jones became surrounded by controversy because of the way in which his involvement in the Patagonian movement, and the financial troubles that he encountered as a result, had an impact on the affairs of Bala Independent College. His behaviour was outspoken and uncompromising, often causing offence or inciting similarly unreserved responses from other Nonconformists. It would appear that Michael D. Jones's personal grudges were not only an unnecessary distraction but also a barrier to the advancement of his

nationalist project. He seems to have been on better terms with members of the younger generation. The Nonconformist ministers among those who pioneered the Welsh settlement had all studied under him at Bala Independent College and when the movement *Cymru Fydd* was launched by a group of Welshmen in London in 1886, two young men from the Bala area – Thomas Edward Ellis and O. M. Edwards – and also a young David Lloyd George were among its prominent members and were regarded as political fledglings of Michael D. Jones. Political issues were not mentioned at all in the *Cymru Fydd* society's programme in October 1886, and it has been claimed that it was through Ellis's influence that national self-government was later given a central place in its manifesto.

Jones's views on industrialisation and urbanisation were also barrier to gaining support within areas of Wales where what he saw as the key characteristics of the Welsh nation were most at threat. Alongside his appreciation of language and customs, Michael D. Jones expressed contempt for the urban lifestyle. While in Cincinnati, he pleaded with immigrants to avoid what he saw as a lifestyle of pride, idleness and materialism, and to remain 'as rustic as their forefathers'. This tension between rural and urban lifestyles was also apparent in letters and articles that he published during his ministry at Bwlchnewydd in Carmarthenshire, and never receded. He believed that the farmer's work possessed a natural integrity and regarded urban habits as conducive to moral corruption. Moreover, Jones's discussion of industry in Wales was limited to the woollen industry; he hardly mentioned the coal, iron, lead, tin industries, which did not seem to be a part of his perception of Wales. Rather, his perception of Wales was modelled on the social-economic landscape of Meirionnydd, where he lived most of his life. Meirionnydd was among the Welsh counties that experienced the least social and economic change during the nineteenth century and it is therefore hardly surprising that Jones's perception of Welsh identity was quite different from the reality that many experienced in late nineteenth-century Wales. It was shaped by Jones's reaction to the effects of industrialisation and urbanisation. Rather than setting out a better future for a Wales that was being rapidly industrialised, he presented a portrait of Wales that ignored those aspects altogether. He had received an unusually extensive

education, he had travelled to North and South America by the mid-1880s, and he discussed the political situation in such remote places as Afghanistan, Brazil and Burma, and yet he displayed this remarkable parochialism. While consistently emphasising that there was a much greater world beyond 'Great Britain', Michael D. Jones was unable, or perhaps unwilling, to see the rapidly changing Wales that was beyond Meirionnydd.

Lastly, Michael D. Jones's failed to initiate a nationalist movement because the prevailing view of Welsh national identity during the second half of the nineteenth century was fundamentally different from his views on the nature of Welsh nationhood. Jones saw language as the cornerstone of national identity, but many of his fellow Nonconformists did not share the same opinion on its importance. Their attitudes towards language were shaped by liberal thought and in particular the free market principles that had, by the 1840s, become an integral aspect of liberal politics. The appeal to Nonconformists of the *laissez-faire* economic philosophy was that the principle of non-interference seemed to correspond to their demand that the state should not interfere in matters of religion. Some Nonconformists applied the *laissez-faire* principle to every aspect of life. 'Competition', wrote John Roberts (J. R.), minister at Conwy, was 'the order of heaven' and 'free market and competition is that which keeps this world in its place'. Nothing, not even language, was free from market forces, and the notion that their religious convictions depended on the language that they spoke was inconceivable.

Welsh Nonconformists' somewhat nonchalant attitude towards their native language was perhaps most apparent in the 'English cause' (as it was called), a movement initiated by a group of influential Welsh ministers who were concerned for the spiritual welfare of the non-Welsh speaking immigrants who settled in Wales. Rather than encourage the immigrants to learn the Welsh language in order to attend the Welsh chapel services, the intention was to increase the number of English-language Nonconformist churches in Wales to provide for the immigrants. For this movement's leaders, there was no reason for language to stand in the way of religion.

It is noteworthy that, in the response to the Blue Books of 1847, it was mostly the remarks on the morality of Welsh people that Nonconformists refuted and not those on the status and value of the Welsh language. There were Anglicans who responded in defense of the language, but the Nonconformist denominational press condemned the Established Church for what it saw as the betrayal of the Welsh people, and associated Welsh nationhood with Nonconformity and its influence on the people. The Nonconformists rallied together to form a united front and the denominational press began to project a polarised view of Welsh society in which Nonconformists represented the interests of the 'people' ('gwerin' being the term often used in Welsh, which is similar to the concept of 'folk') and, at the other end, the Established Church and its close links with the wealthy landowner class. From the mid-nineteenth century, the Nonconformists claimed that they not only represented the people of Wales, but that they *were* the people of Wales, a claim that was made by the Welsh MP Henry Richard during the 1860s and, more notably, Prime Minister William Gladstone during the 1880s.

The Nonconformists channelled national consciousness in support of campaigns that advanced their own agenda, and, having responded in unison to the Blue Books, they looked to the Liberal Party for the redress of political grievances. It was hardly surprising that a close relationship should develop between Nonconformists and the Liberal Party. Pledging their support to the Tories, who represented the Anglican Church and landed aristocracy, was never a viable option. The intensity of Nonconformist loyalty to the Liberal Party, and particularly to its leader, William Gladstone, was remarkable. It was crystallised by a series of measures introduced by the Gladstone's administration in the late 1860s and early 1870s. These included the abolition of the Church Rate in 1868, the disestablishment of the Anglican Church in Ireland in 1869, and the opening of the ancient English universities to Nonconformists in 1871.

Soon after replacing the Conservative government in 1880, the Liberal Party introduced the Sunday Closing Act, which prohibited the opening of public houses on Sunday in Wales. It was a typically Nonconformist measure, but its significance lay in the fact that it was the first legislation in over two centuries to treat Wales as a separate entity from England.

Michael D. Jones acknowledged that the Act was an important recognition of Wales's national status, but he also argued that the redress of Nonconformist grievances would not solve the social, economic and cultural issues that needed to be addressed in Wales. But Wales's interests in parliament, however, seemed almost exclusively Nonconformist. Even when the 'national awakening' seemed to have increased appreciation of Welsh cultural identity and evoked a desire among Welsh MPs to form a standing committee to discuss issues specifically relating to Wales (an idea that was rejected by Parliament in 1888), there was still a reluctance to demand full national self-government for Wales and the campaign for disestablishment remained the priority. As John Morley, Liberal statesman and journalist, asserted in 1890, 'Home Rule is not more essentially the Irish national question than disestablishment and disendowment are the Welsh national question.' By the 1880s, the 'national awakening' seemed to have provided fertile soil for Michael D. Jones's aspirations for Wales. The Independent minister David Stephen Davies noted in 1892 that Michael D. Jones was by then 'considered a moderate man because public opinion has progressed so quickly in recent years'. Yet Jones would not have agreed with the correspondent who claimed that Wales was a picture of health; when he retired from public life in 1892, his views on national self-government were still considerably more radical than those of most Nonconformists. Wales as a nation had by the 1890s become visible within British politics, but this 'revival in strength and in energy', as it was described in *Y Gwyllydd*, was underpinned by the belief that its interests would be adequately represented within and by the British state. The 'awakening' led to important developments that validated claims of nationhood, but another thirty years would pass before a political party – Plaid Genedlaethol Cymru – would be formed to advance Michael D. Jones's nationalist aspirations for Wales.