• The Devon Commission, in 18143, recommended limited compensation for those tenants who had carried out improvements. Peel sponsored a bill for this, but was defeated in the Lords by hardline Protestant Peers and Irish Landowners.

Heytesbury as Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, July 1844

• Ireland possessed a different administration to Britain, despite the act of union of 1800.
• Head of it was Lord Lieutenant, the monarch’s official representative in Ireland.
• Lord Heytesbury was appointed in July 1844 and followed Peel’s policy of making concessions, in stark contrast to Earl de Grey, his pro-Protestant Ascendancy predecessor.

Irish or Provincial Colleges Bill 1844

• Improved education, Peel felt, would mean a better relationship between Catholics and Protestants.
• Thus Peel established three new non-sectarian colleges in Belfast, Cork and Galway, despite opposition from ultra-Protestant Tories and O’Connell.

The Maynooth Grant, 1845

• Peel offered to develop Maynooth College, for the training of Catholic priests, by giving it £30,000 for rebuilding and increasing its annual grant from the government, in order to win over moderate Catholic opinion.
• This was important as priests educated the peasantry, and it would have a more favourable outlook towards Britain with priests onside.
• The bill was passed despite 149 backbench Tories voting against it.
• Relations with Ultra-Protestant Tories in the party reached an all-time low.
• William Gladstone, as a result, resigned from the board of Trade.

The Irish Potato Famine 1845-49

• The Potato crop failed in successive years.
• Potato blight was spread across Europe.
• Prices pushed up.
• Relief was unable to cope - mass starvation resulted and 1 million people died.
• ½ a million emigrated.
• Peel tried to organise a relief operation, but it was difficult with the Corn Laws in place. The Peel said “the removal of all impediments to the import of all kinds of human food” was necessary for Ireland.
• Peel knew he was unlikely to survive the consequences - due to the outcry of the landowning classes - but for the good of Ireland this had to be done.