

WORKING CLASS POLITICAL INTEGRATION AND THE
CONSERVATIVE PARTY: A STUDY OF CLASS
RELATIONS AND PARTY POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT
IN THE NORTH-WEST, 1800-1870.

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SUMMARY OF THESIS

WORKING CLASS POLITICAL INTEGRATION AND THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY: A STUDY OF CLASS RELATIONS AND PARTY POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE NORTH-WEST 1800-1870

The thesis is primarily concerned with the investigation of two inter-related themes. Firstly, it sets out to examine the changing nature and role of the Conservative party in the decades immediately following the 1832 Reform Act up until the advent of householder franchise and the Second Reform Act of 1867. The main contention is that political parties after the First Reform Act began to display many of the features and functions which political scientists of our own age see as the essential traits of modern party structures. One key area in which the Conservative party revealed these traits of modernity was in the way the party in the localities began to integrate sections of the industrial working class into the party structure, a phenomenon which had not occurred before 1832. This leads us on to our second central theme, namely the description of the political development of the working class of the North-West region with specific reference as to why some sections of the industrial working class began to support and join the Conservative party after 1832.

The thesis is divided into two sections. The first is concerned with the changing nature of Conservatism and working class development, and the second with a series of comparative case studies. These examine developments in three different types of urban centres of the North-West region. We look firstly at the county and market towns, secondly at an industrial borough with an established working class electorate, and finally we examine those boroughs created by the Act of 1832. The thesis ends with a chapter which aims to provide a concluding analysis.



THE CHARLES ST. GANG.

FROM McCLEAN'S FORTNIGHTLY MAGAZINE JUNE 1831

WORKING CLASS POLITICAL INTEGRATION AND THE
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INTRODUCTION

The essential hypothesis to be tested in this thesis is that during the period between the Reform Acts of 1832 and 1867 the working class of the industrial North-West of England and the Conservative party at the national and local level underwent a political transformation. With regard to the working class it was a political transformation which affected both the way they themselves perceived politics and the way they were perceived by the brokers of power. In terms of the Conservative party it was a process of relatively rapid adaptation forced by the pace of political change after the 1832 Reform Act and the social and economic consequences - in the North-West at least - of industrialization, which forced the party to react to change in order to defend their principles, and, indeed to survive. Thus the thesis is an exercise in the investigation and explanation of aspects of political change, involving class behaviour and attitudes, and of the institutions - like political parties - who, it will be contended contributed to these developments.

In one way the emerging proletariat of the North-West can be viewed as the forerunners of a social group which after 1850 began to rapidly increase throughout British society. To examine the political changes which affected the behaviour and attitudes of this important social grouping in these formative years may go some way to explaining why the working class after 1867 appears to

be so politically heterogeneous. For what was happening in the North West of England between 1832 and 1867 in social, political and economic terms can be viewed as a precursor for what was to happen in other parts of the country as industrial capitalism advanced.

It could be argued that it does not necessarily follow that social class is inevitably a pre-determinant for political affiliation. However there is a widespread belief among political scientists-especially those who have studied the working class¹ and among Marxist social scientists - that a groups' or classes social position may determine political orientation, interest demands and representation. The fact is that when placed under the microscope of empirical historical investigation, this does not always follow. Thus a major theme running through this thesis is the possibility of variations of political allegiances among the working class - and the factors which may explain these variations - of the North-West in the afore-mentioned period.

One possible suggestion regarding working class political heterogeneity would be that in an objective sense the working class were undergoing major changes in the middle decades of the nineteenth century, and this is something the thesis will eventually discuss. However, we suggest that it was equally important that the political institutions of Britain were undergoing major changes during these years. These changes included the nature of political representation - both in local and national politics, changes in the power of the various branches of the legislature and the role and functions of the executive and the monarch, and, importantly for our thesis, in the development of political parties. It is the consideration of the changing features and functions of the political party-specifically the Conservatives - which takes up the bulk of the opening chapters.

In chapter one we offer an historiographical account of the emergence of the modern political party beginning with the Whig interpretation and ending with that of the approach of political science. In this chapter we introduce a major theme of our investigation in that we contend that it was only after 1832 and the first Reform Act, that we can begin to plot the elements of political change within the nature of modern political parties. An important example of which for this thesis is that the Conservative party in particular began to integrate sections of the working class into their party structure in the 1830's, something which before this period they had never attempted.²

In order to bring the significance of the changes occurring in the nature of parties in the post-Reform Act period, it will be necessary to examine the situation prevailing in the immediate decades before 1832. In chapters two, three and four we attempt this by sharpening the focus by looking in some detail at the effects of change within the Tory/Conservative party. In chapter two we look at the transformation of Toryism into Peelite Conservatism. Here we trace the linkages between the Toryism of the late eighteenth century, through the coalition of the conservative Whigs and up to the guiding ideological principles and basis of Conservatism in the years immediately following 1832.

Chapter three deals with the relationship between the Tories/Conservatives and the other key element of our thesis: the developing industrial working class of the North-West before 1832. Here we shall examine the perceived position of the working class and what they demanded politically, and, in turn how they were perceived by the national and local Tory elites. We shall look at the drift of the working class towards extreme radicalism, examine the reasons why they sought to be included in the political contract and also note the apparent bitter acrimony which existed between the Tories and the emerging working class between 1800 and 1832. In this chapter we also introduce the concept of class

consciousness, and as this shall feature throughout this thesis, it may be useful if we make clear what we mean by this term from the very start. Later in the thesis we will suggest that in order in order to account for regional and periodic variations in the scope and depth of working class consciousness it may be useful to perceive the concept as one within which various levels of intensity exist. We do not wish to labour the point here but we shall use the term class consciousness in the following way. Essentially the term will denote a subjective awareness of the objective reality of the vast majority of the urban proletariat. Class, as a concept, suggests an objective relationship between the wage labourer and the owners and managers of capitalistic production. This may be said to be the objective reality of an individual or groups class position. However, there is thought to exist by many social scientists of an individual and collective awareness of this 'objective reality' of class and this is the subjective element of the class the individual believed himself to belong to and perceives the same identifiable traits among his fellow class members. However, for the purpose of our thesis we suggest that within this subjective awareness there is also a political dimension by which high levels of class consciousness can be detected. When this political element is absent class consciousness is low and intra-class status differentiation high. However when the mass of working people seek to radically change the existing social, economic and political order, with an alternative political structure of their own design and one which ensures at least equal political representation with other groups or classes, then levels of class consciousness must be deemed high. In our analysis a worker who affiliates with the Conservative party has a lower level of class consciousness than the worker who supports a political group which seeks to advance the interest of the working class as a whole and over and above those of any class and of any bourgeois political party.

It is however, important that we examine the nature of class

relationships and the political influences which the working class were subjected (like that of integration into either the Liberal or Conservative parties) in the light of the historical events and period of the time, and not read back to the past theories and concepts of which the working class themselves had no knowledge-like for example advanced socialist theory. We suggest there were valid (in the sense that we do not require a theory of false consciousness to explain them) reasons why some working people supported Conservatism, just as there were why some advocated physical force Chartism. However, the overall effect of political sectionalization, we contend, was that it lowered the levels of class consciousness of the working class as a whole. One of the essential themes of this thesis is to examine why this political sectionalization took place among the working class of the North-West after 1832.

In chapter four we intend to look at the reorganization of the Conservative party in aftermath of the Reform Act. In this chapter we shall focus on the party at the centre but we shall begin to look at the effect these organizational changes had in the localities. We shall examine the possible reasons why the Conservatives began to alter their organizational structure, which, we suggested had a profound effect on the development of the British political culture. One of the central reasons for change was forced by the terms of the Reform Act itself, taking especial note of the Registration clauses which we contend were of particular importance in the boroughs where, for the first time local political parties were organized permanently. In this chapter new evidence will be produced, emanating from the very centre of the Conservative party which suggests that the leadership were well aware of the need to re-organize.

Essentially these first four chapters can be regarded as contextual preliminaries to what will be the central themes of both the main hypothesis and the empirical content of the central

chapters. After these initial chapters the reader should begin to be aware that, seen from the focus of the national political party and from a significant section of an important social group, significant changes were acting upon the very foundation of British politics. What was being transformed here was the very fabric of Britain's political culture. Political culture is used here to denote the traditions, style, attitudes and behaviour of the governed, the governors and the subtle effects these may have on the existing political constitution and its institutions. In subsequent chapters which shall attempt to detail this change from the standpoint of the Conservative party and sections of the working class in the North-West region.

In chapter six we shall begin to look at the early development of the Conservative party's attempt to attract a wider membership through the setting up of the local Operative Associations after 1832. However, in order to judge the historical significance of these political clubs specifically designed for the working class, we must look for evidence of political groups who attempted to influence the working class before 1832. This is the basis of chapter five. In this chapter we shall describe and explain the attempts by the state to gain the loyalty of the 'lower orders' in the 1790's through the use of the Reeves Societies and Loyalist Associations. Also we shall look at the middle class based Pitt Clubs and compare and contrast these bodies with the features and chief functions of the political societies set up after the Reform Act.

In chapter six we take our first detailed look at the Operative Conservative Associations of the North-West. We shall look at the organizational structure of these Operative Associations and, importantly consider what their middle class designers intended their effect to be on the working class of the North-West. We contend that one of these desired effects was an attempt to steer sections of the working class away from what middle class

Conservatives perceived to be the dangers of extreme radicalism. Thus they began to integrate sections of the working class into the local party structure. This is important to our hypothesis in that this may have led to working class political sectionalization and had the effect of reducing overall working class consciousness.

In chapter seven we intend to pursue this theme of working class political integration by looking at some of the issues which the working class were directly concerned with and which the local Conservatives became involved. This introduces us to a major sub-theme of the thesis in that in relation to all the foregoing elements we have noted - especially with regard to changes in the political culture - we now begin to look at the various idioms of politics in the 1830's, 40's and 50's. Here we intend to utilize the models of the politics of influence, of the market and - the idiom which we believe became the dominant trend in the industrial north-west - the politics of opinion. Also in this chapter we shall examine the concepts of deference in relations to Operative Conservatism and look for incidences of paternalism in the light of changing patterns of urban industrial society.

The purpose of chapters eight, nine and ten is to examine the hypothesis in the light of empirical evidence drawn from three case studies which reflect the differing political and economic make-up of the region as a whole. In these chapters we intend to compare political change, working class politics and Conservative party development in the market and county towns, the old (pre-1832) boroughs and the new boroughs created by the Act 1832.

Chapter eight is concerned with developments in the market and county towns. Here we shall be looking at the small borough of Clitheroe, and the County towns of Chester and Lancaster. We shall examine the economic and social structure of each of the towns and describe political change in both parliamentary and

municipal politics. The most detailed description will be of developments in Lancaster, where there appears a fairly equal mix of older economic practices with newer proto-industrial forms. We shall look at political changes in relation to the dominant political groups, patterns of leadership local issues and the incidence of political pressures emanating from the working class. We shall also be concerned to subject the hypothesis and its frame of investigation - namely the various idioms of politics, and the salience (or otherwise) of features such as religion, working class deference and middle class paternalism - to the empirical findings.

In chapter nine we shall concentrate on the old borough of Preston. Preston is interesting in that it was a traditional centre for agricultural products but also had a substantial industrial base. However, its key importance for our thesis is that the town possessed a householder franchise under the terms of the pre-1832 political system. This meant that the working class of Preston made up the majority of electors both before and after 1832. This offers us an ideal opportunity to examine working class development and the attempts of the political parties to influence them in a town where they were the numerically dominant groups. Again we shall be looking for signs of change in the form and features of the Conservative party and looking at how they organized their political actions in relation to the working class, key issues, patterns of leadership and electoral contests in both spheres of local and parliamentary politics.

In chapter ten we look at the new boroughs - those who were granted parliamentary representation by the Reform Act of 1832. We shall be concentrating on the cotton town of Blackburn, but will be comparing developments here with a briefer examination of Bolton. We contend that these new boroughs, unfettered as they were by long standing political traditions and customs, will provide us with the most useful evidence with regard to working

class political integration into the Conservative party and the resultant political sectionalization of that class and its variations of class consciousness. It is in these types of boroughs that we would also expect considerably more emphasis on opinion politics, because of the need of the political elites to contain and control - as in the case of Preston - the numerically dominant working class. Thus we shall be looking at issues which may reflect this in the context of the working class, the development of the Operative Associations and the Conservative party in the North West.

We shall attempt to show that not only did these local working class based political associations act as parties of social and political integration, but that they also acted as agencies of social conditioning, containment and control. They also seem to have been agencies of opinion dissemination and generation in ways which organized political groups never attempted with working people before 1832. This Act of 1832 will crop up throughout the thesis for two essential reasons. Firstly, we contend that it was around this time that working class political consciousness was, in a mass sense, arguably at its highest level in the period under discussion; and secondly that the effects of the Act itself and crisis surrounding its eventual implementation forced the pace of the eventual emergence of the modern party structure.

In our final chapter we shall present an analytical overview which will bring together all the key themes in the individual chapters, and offer an evaluation of the hypothesis in the light of the empirical findings. We shall, in the course of the chapter offer a series of conclusions and 'inconclusions', whilst at the same time seeking to bring into sharp relief the chief areas of discussion each chapter has revealed.

1. For example E Nordlinger, Working Class Tories, London 1968, or R Mackenzie and A Silver, Angels in Marble, London 1968.

2. As far as the present writer is aware there is only one study which covers roughly the same ground as the present thesis, and this is: R L Hill, Toryism and the People: 1832-1846, London 1979. However Hill's work seldom rises - in terms of scholarship - above the level of a crude polemical justification of Conservatism of the later 1920's. Hill makes biased political assumptions from the very selective and limited evidence he presents and is thus of very marginal significance. He does mention Operative Conservative Associations but make very few analytical assessments of the possible reasons for their evidence and makes no attempt to evaluate their form and functions.

SECTION ONE THE CHANGING NATURE OF CONSERVATISM AND WORKING
CLASS DEVELOPMENT.

Chapter One

THE EMERGENCE OF THE POLITICAL PARTY IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

I THE ORTHODOX VIEW.

As with most questions of historical importance the debate surrounding the emergence of the modern British political parties is one that has been raging fiercely for many years. In essence it began in the nineteenth century and was dominated by the Whig view of rational progress expounded most elegantly by T B Macaulay's History of England. Macaulay begins his narration just prior to 1888 and the Glorious Revolution and ends with the final Whig triumph over the forces of Tory ignorance; the 1832 Reform Act. His 'History' is, in essence the account of the transition of the Whig faction (or factions) into early Victorian progressive Liberalism and as such is one-dimensional and narrow. However, Macaulay's History of England was for many years the accepted view that the modern (nineteenth century) political party came into being as a result of the Whigs' successful political and religious emancipation from the absolutist tendencies of firstly, James II (1682-1688) and secondly their triumph over his Tory supporters during the Hanoverian succession and the three decades which immediately followed it, (1714-1746). This struggle set the tone for the opposing factions - of Whig liberty and Tory reaction - right up until the 1870's. It was the history of right and wrong, black and white, Macaulay chose his lobby and stuck with it.

It was not until the publication of Sir Lewis Namier's The Structure of Politics at the Accession of George III in 1929 that

the simplistic thesis propounded by Macaulay regarding the development of British political parties was seriously challenged. What Namier did was to scotch the view offered by Macaulay that the two party system could be traced back to the last two decades of the seventeenth century. For Namier, such a system could not begin to be understood at any time prior to 1832 and the passing of the Reform Act. The great historians of the nineteenth century who set the tone of the 'Whig interpretation' which Namier rejected, were mistaken in thinking that the political and constitutional norms of their day had been an unchanging feature of political development since 1688. Indeed it can be argued that a 'pure' two party system has never existed for any significant period. It is far more plausible to perceive third or even fourth party groupings, themselves transitory but separate entities into the two main groupings. Furthermore, the alternation of the two major parties which was so much a feature of Macaulay's age after 1832 finds few parallels in the eighteenth century except possibly from between 1689 and 1714. For after 1714 the Whigs dominated power until 1762, with their liberal wing (the Rockinghams' and Foxites') denied positions of power apart from four extremely short spells between 1762 and 1830. Thus it is extremely misleading to think of a modern system of the alternation of party political power.

However, with regard to historical development, Namier went too far in totally denying the existence 'in the modern sense'¹ of political party principles and ideological bindings before 1832. It is on this point that much of the criticism of Namier's thesis has focused. The bulk of this historiography has been produced in the 1950s, 60s, and 70s, and a grasp of its complexity is vital in order to explain and describe the importance of the emergence of the political party in the 1830's, especially, in relation to the features and functions which they rapidly acquired, and which most historians have, thus far, not adequately considered. In subsequent chapters we shall argue that, when these developmental

changes in the features and functions of political parties are analysed in detail, one discovers that they were not generally apparent in political society before 1832, but that many of them become increasingly visible and important in political society after that date. This is especially the case when they are examined in relation to their operation as institutions and also in relation to their impact on the changing patterns of political behaviour and attitudes of wider society at the time. This method of examining the institution of the political party and the changing political culture using some of the techniques of political science will, we suggest, set the debate surrounding the emergence of the political party in the first half of the nineteenth century into crisper focus, and allow points of contention to be explained more adequately.

However, let us at this stage return to the debate itself. In one important sense we are, by utilizing the above methodology - of comparing institutions and behaviour before and after 1832 - reinforcing the central theme of the Namier thesis. In other words we are suggesting that the modern features of political parties began to take on more meaningful appearances after 1832. However, many modern critics do not agree and they point to inadequacies in Namier's methodology, many of the faults of which we would not deny.

II THE REVISIONIST VIEW

What seems to have occurred was that the reluctance displayed by Namierite historiography to admit the importance of the eighteenth century type of political parties came about as a reaction against earlier writers. In a sense overstatement produced overstatement, and the structure of post-1688 and Hanoverian politics went from being assumed to be the Victorian type of progressive constitutionalism to being a continuance of the seventeenth

century court/country type. What has come most fiercely under attack in recent decades is the assertion made by Namier that the elemental parts of the Whig and Tory parties fell away in the 1760's. Professor Cannon for example in his, The Fox/North Coalition² has contended that his study of years 1782-84 "could not have been written except in party terms."³ Recently there has been a tendency amongst some historians to return to a modified Whig interpretation in terms of historical explanation rather than a guiding methodology, especially in relation to the descriptive utility of the term 'political party' rather than 'political faction' or mere groups of opposing aristocratic political families, which has been accompanied by a gradual erosion of the credibility of Namier on points of scholarship and detail. Recent historians⁴ have pointed to Namier's lack of detail about the conduct of elections; his overly pessimistic view of human motivation; his excessive attention to political patronage as a political motivator rather than issues; Namier's failure to take into account foreign affairs and his lack of perspective.⁵ However, critics also point out that the most inherent weaknesses of Namier's position are to be found in admissions made within his own writings. For example, he conceded that the names and creeds of Whig and Tory: "which covered enduring types moulded by deeply ingrained differences in temperament and outlook,"⁶ did in fact exist. Also, and importantly, he admitted that "in a good many constituencies the names of Whig and Tory still corresponded to real divisions."⁷ This apparent contradiction; that party nomenclature could be apparent in Parliament and that real divisions continued to exist in certain constituencies, but despite these concessions party's in a modern sense did not exist in reality was never adequately explained by Namier. What later followers⁸ of the Namierite position have maintained was that the period from the 1740's to the 1770's was the high point of the era of 'personal parties' associated with differing cliques, who retained the names and even some of the principles of Toryism and Whiggery, but without any of the disciplines, functions and

features of the political party either between 1688 and 1714 or after 1832.

By far the most important recent critique of the Namierite position has come from Dr Frank O'Gorman, whose chief purpose is to stress the elements of continuity between the pre 1832 political world and that which followed the Reform Act. In The Emergence of the British Two Party System,⁹ the book that addresses the subject most directly he writes that "The interpretation offered in this book conflicts with the accepted or orthodox view that a two party system was created by the 1832 Reform Act."¹⁰ What in fact O'Gorman is saying is that the lineage of the two party system - the modern system of party with tight discipline, wide organization, ideological distinctiveness and multivariant social and political functions - was one that can be traced back some fifty years before the Reform Act, and he places the crucial turning point in this gradual process in the years between 1806 and 1830. He is particularly strong on the development of the Whigs, and sees this grouping as being a permanent, albeit fluctuating, feature of the political structure of Britain from the 1760's. O'Gorman suggests that the Whig party was in reality two parties - those in office and receiving royal favour and those in opposition and waiting to receive royal favour. The Tories were those independent members of the 'country party' who attacked the ministerialists for nepotism, dishonesty of purpose, sinecures and from a general disapproval of Whig principles. Thus this group attempted to distance themselves from both wings of the Whig party, whilst still retaining a zealous advocacy of the Anglican church and the traditional or prescriptive writes of the Monarch. During the 1760's no group had a clear set of ideological principles, and parties insofar as they existed at all were confined to the constituencies, 'where they lingered to give a cloak of respectability to tradition family conflicts and to provide an appeal to the electorate'.¹¹

According to O'Gorman the two-party system evolved as a result of realignments during periods of profound instability, citing the following examples. The early 1760's and the active political involvement of the monarch; between 1779 and 1784 and the crises surrounding the American colonies, parliamentary sovereignty and electoral reform. Again between 1792 and 1794 and the effect the French Revolution had on reviving on the one hand popular radicalism and on the other popular patriotism and traditionalism. Between 1806 and 1812 over once again the political role of the monarch, religious toleration and war policy, and finally between 1827 and 1832 where the issues of the religious and constitutional reforms served once again to divide groupings and forge realignment.

At the beginning of the 1760's. according to O'Gorman the three groupings of Ministerial Whigs, opposition Whigs and independents existed fairly harmoniously together, without, as we noted above, the trappings of party or political ideologies. At the time of the Reform crisis of 1832 the "two party system had become securely established."¹² It was established firstly in the manner of conducting government business and in providing an opposition to the Ministry; secondly, by establishing areas of organization both at the centre and on the peripheries; thirdly, by mobilizing channels of communications via the medium of the written word, and fourthly, by the development of distinctive and discernable sets of political ideologies. O'Gorman contends that as each successive crisis unfolded between 1760 and 1832 it became increasingly possible to talk meaningfully of 'parties'. By 1812 and the start of Lord Liverpool's administration, the Whig politicians in office, backed by a 'covert administration group' and by the independents, had begun to utilize the philosophy of Edmund Burke, especially his 'Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs',¹³ and had effectively fused to form a 'Tory Party'. They were opposed by the Foxite Whigs (led by Lord Grey and George Tierney) and by a loosely organized set of Radicals. The 'Tory'

grouping, according to O'Gorman, became identified with loyalty to the Anglican church and the crown, the preservation of the rights of property - especially political rights, the security of the country and the maintenance of law and order. It was this identification with basic principles which formed the basis of the rapid development of parties up to the last period of crisis between 1827-32. Thus, states O'Gorman, "The events of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic years had infused them (the principles noted above) with a new relevance, and any government dedicated to these objectives, especially one which was continuously faced with an opposition which boasted of its pure Whiggism, was likely to find itself tarred with the brush of Toryism".¹⁴ However, O'Gorman is careful not to identify the administration of Lord Liverpool too closely with a hard or inflexibly doctrinaire political ideology. He says:-

The ethics of executive Toryism, the defence of the country, the landed interest, property, the established Church, and resistance to radicalism may have been so generalized that they scarcely amounted to a specific party programme. Indeed, the Whigs agreed with much of it. It would be unhistorical to depict the ministries of Pitt and his successors as reactionary governments confronted by a liberal and progressive Whig opposition. Opinions on Parliamentary Reform, Catholic Emancipation and the Slave Trade sometimes cut across political loyalties. At the same time, the government's frequently negative approach to such questions before the mid-1820's, its identification with political reaction and its self-proclaimed purpose of maintaining the countries institutions amounted to an identifiable Tory mentality.¹⁵

Thus, for O'Gorman, the nomenclature of political parties was effectively in place well before the Reform struggle. So too was a crude and embryonic form of party organization, both at the centre of political affairs - the legislative and executive - and in the localities. Although conceding that Pitt the younger was an avowed opponent of party political organization,¹⁶ as indeed was George III, O'Gorman invokes Professor John Cannon's argument

that in opposing party organizations the supporters of Pitt and the King became an organized party: "in pursuing his anti-party crusade, his (George III's) supporters had been forced to adopt the techniques of party itself - letters of attendance, pairing arrangements, co-ordinated tactics, organized propaganda and electoral planning.¹⁷

If this situation was true of the emerging Tory party, O'Gorman suggests it was an even more identifiable trait of the Foxite Whigs. He tells us that this grouping had the rudiments of party organization dating back as far as 1782 in the form of the relationship between Charles James Fox and his electoral organizer William Adam. With the assistance of Adam, the Foxite Whigs built up a powerful organization by 1790, this in terms of a network of provincial supporters and organizers, a subscription fund for electoral purposes, the control of an influential section of the London press and a tightening in the control and discipline of Fox's supporters in Parliament, with Adam functioning as Chief Whip in the Commons. Although not stated explicitly, O'Gorman implies that various eighteenth century political groupings also attempted to attract wider popular support from the non-electing social classes: for example the Foxite Whigs with their flirtations with popular radicalism, and the conservative Whigs through Loyal Associations and Reeves Societies,¹⁸ producing a "popular brand of Anglican-Toryism to which many people readily subscribed."¹⁹

It would seem that much depends on the interpretation of the term 'party' and what connotations the historian places upon it. As we have seen for Cannon and O'Gorman, political groups before 1832 were gradually assuming the roles and functions of political parties both at the centre and in the localities. However Namier (and, as we shall see those who defend his position in the 1980's) was fairly precise as to what was occurring in British politics up to 1832. What the Whigs and, to a certain extent the revisionist,

were calling parties were mere factions, located primarily at the national centres of political power - the court, the executive and Parliament. Namier wrote that:-

Parliamentary struggles for office necessarily produce a dichotomy of 'ins' and 'outs'; and two party names were current since the last quarter of the seventeenth century: hence in retrospect the appearances of a two party system. In reality three broad divisions, based on type and not on party, can be distinguished in the eighteenth century House of Commons; on the one side were the followers of the Court and Administration, the 'placemen', par excellence, a group of permanent 'ins'; on the opposite side, the independent country gentlemen, of their own choice, permanent 'outs', and in between occupying as it were the centre of the arena, and focusing upon themselves the attention of the public and of history, stood the political factions contending for power, the forerunners of parliamentary government based on a party-system.²⁰

The important notion which marks Namier off from historians such as O'Gorman and John Cannon is that parties were but 'appearances' and that political divisions were based on where the politician was placed in relation to the broad divisions, which again were not parties but differential 'types'. It would seem at first sight that Namier's three broad divisions, especially those who were the Ministerialists and Court Administrators, broadly correspond to O'Gorman's Tory party-in-the-making throughout the 1790's and the first decade of the nineteenth century. Indeed in a sense they do; the difference is one of emphasis. For Cannon and O'Gorman these groupings were to a greater or lesser extent parties developing historically more and more the characteristics of recognizable political parties from the 1760's to the 1830's. For Namier they were merely appearances of parties and actual parties until the changes wrought by the reform crises and the Act itself made them so.

However, to further complicate the debate, there are recent historians who not only defend the Namierite position regarding the slow emergence of the political party in the modern sense, but

arguably go further than the great man. One such historian, Professor Ian Christie wrote in a review of O'Gorman's book that "The term 'Whig', on O'Gorman's showing, does not provide a good distinctive party definition of the early nineteenth century. 'Tory' is a misnomer for any politician of that period. The term 'Liberal Tory' is a monstrosity, and the sooner it can be buried the better."²¹ An even more forthright position has been adopted by J C D Clark, "The history of the tory party in parliament between the early 1760's and the late 1820's may be simply written: it did not exist."²²

III THE NEW DEFENDERS OF ORTHODOXY

J C D Clark is the latest and most determined pro-Namierite historian of party development. Following in the wake of Ian Christie and Derek Beales, he vociferously disputes the notion that the political party of the mid-to-late-nineteenth century had a lineage which can be traced back to the mid-eighteenth century. Hence, he is opposed - on serious historical and academic grounds - to the position adopted by the anti-Namierites. He fully endorses the position of his mentor, Ian Christie who said it was the 1830's which was the crucial decade in the development of political parties. For it was in this decade that parties "completed their conquest of the House of Commons, and became accepted as the organizations whose relative strength should determine the complexion of the government."²³

According to Clark the political factions of both government and opposition were coalitions for most of the eighteenth century and certainly after 1760. He argues that the ministries from 1714 to 1760 gained power because their leaders had battled their way to the top of the Whig party. The ministries who enjoyed long periods of office between 1760 and 1827 did so only because they had initially been chosen by, and enjoyed the continued support

of, the King. Support in the House of Commons came as a result of this royal favour, not necessarily because there existed a large 'King's party' but because of the ministries ability to claim the support of the independent members and to poach support from the opposition, thus widening their base by offering places, and by other dubious devices of venal influence. This position is a justification of Namier's 'ins' and 'outs' scenario of political change and continuity. Clark explains his case thus:-

(At first sight the latter part of the (eighteenth) century displays a bewildering list of ministries. In fact successful governments had a common basis. In the years 1757-1827, power was held for over 74 per cent of the time by only four: the Newcastle-Pitt coalition; North's; the younger Pitt's and Liverpool's. They conformed to a common type. They were non-party coalitions, coalitions in the sense that the party identity of the participating groups had been submerged on a basis of loyal support of the King's government, and non-party in the late seventeenth century sense of party, since they were all whig in the old sense, vis-a-vis the question of the succession.²⁴

Also Clark suggests that formal party organization both inside, and especially outside Parliament, was also lacking. It was through the Treasury²⁵ not party organization that government support inside Parliament was rallied, and outside through the use of secret service money at elections. He says nothing of O'Gorman's point regarding William Adam the Foxite organizer-in-chief, but the implication is that Adam operated on behalf of Fox as a means of countering the effects of the Treasury on account of Fox being one of the 'outs'. But Fox's supporters were not a separate party, for on most questions and certainly in principle Fox was a Whig as was the government. "Pitt had no doubt of his Whig identity in the traditional sense", writes Clark, "he was even, at times, willing to play the Rockinghams at their own game, emphasizing his own Whig purity."²⁶

For Clark political coherence came as a result of an administrative ethic rather than one of party. This in turn was

the result of an apprenticeship with individuals working their way up the governing coalition where administrative skills fused with political arts. This situation reached its height under the premiership of the younger Pitt with the support of the King who deliberately ran ministries devoid of party ties. But it was continued under Lord Liverpool from 1812 to 1827. Even the Prince Regent who had close ties with the Foxite Whigs was drawn in to the acceptance of non-party ministries. It was commented on at the time that the Ministry of Lord Liverpool's was a loose amalgam of diverse groups.²⁷ Clark tells us of the government of Lord Liverpool that it was: "The long continuance of that administration (which) gave it, eventually, the appearance of being opposite to the Whig party (Clark's emphasis) opposition; of being the other element in the ancient antithesis. It was an appearance only. Liverpool's cabinet was conducted on assumptions different from those incorporated in the party systems of 1832-46, 1846-68 or 1868-86. In the 1820's the issues of parliamentary reform and Catholic emancipation, in particular, cut across party lines; when they ceased to do so, in 1827-32, the parties were torn apart."²⁸ This 'appearance' of party is what has confused many of the historians who maintain that the modern features of party can be traced back to the mid-eighteenth century. Part of this confusion, argues Clark is that modern historians have taken the language terms of the time too literally. As he says, "Too frequently the language is accepted as authentic, and inferences drawn from it to what the party structure must have been - in order (Clark's emphasis) for that language to have been accurate. But an argument in the contrary direction is necessary to show the senses in which, by contrast to reality, the language was used for political advantage."²⁹ Again the implied point here is that party terminologies merely corresponded to 'ins', 'outs' and 'independents' as convenient tags but not linked directly to parliamentary groups, nor 'to identities derived from the parliamentary stances of such groups.'³⁰ Thus the position of those historians who advocate the long antecedents of party

development prior to 1832 is refuted and the Namierite stance preserved.

Clark also examines the work of those historians writing in the 1930's and 40's³¹ who contended that from 1807 to 1827, (the Duke of Portland, 1807-9; Spencer Perceval, 1809-12; Lord Liverpool, 1812-27) with the exception of 'Talents' ministry (from 1805-7) the government of Britain was conducted by the tories. According to Clark, "Finding the word 'tory' in the contemporary political language, historians assumed that because there was an organized whig party, a tory party existed also",³² Clark suggests it did not and that the political composition of the ministry of Lord Liverpool's 'conformed to the pattern of North's and the younger Pitt's.'³³ He tells us also that important issues of the day such as parliamentary reform and catholic emancipation cut across the lines of the political parties, and adds 'when they ceased to do so, in 1827-32, the parties were torn apart.' This last point is, like most of Clark's style of writing, rather confusing, and indeed is a point of confusion surrounding any explanation of the emergence of political parties in the first half of the nineteenth century. For if, as Clarke argues, parties did not exist prior to the mid-1830's how could they be 'torn apart' by the political crises of 1827-32. The answer is probably that he refers to the old coalition parties of royal influence, and when these were subsequently torn apart the field was left open for political parties to align themselves around firmly held principles, which eventually began to correspond to policy positions, both of government and opposition, with the influence of the monarch thrown into sharp relief.

Another problem facing the Clark thesis, when it is placed alongside that of the anti-Namierites, is the latter's assertion that party alignments came about as a result of deep rooted and far-reaching political crises. With regard to the Tory party the crisis most often cited as the one which galvanized Tory

principles and the re-emergence of the Tory party was the position adopted by the Rockingham Whigs, especially Fox, regarding the revolution in France after 1789. As Frank O'Gorman tells us:-

There can be no serious doubt...that the French Revolution provoked a vigorous debate in Britain between those already suspicious of reform and those captivated by the libertarian principles of the French Revolution. The writings of Burke together with the dislike felt by the middling and landed orders for the anti-religious drift of the Revolution after the Civil Constitution of the Clergy in July 1790 turned British opinion against reform...this phenomenon is depicted - as an upsurge of patriotism, as a religious (evangelical) revival, as a crusade in defence of church and King - the historian is tempted to speak the language of party. A government pursuing 'Tory' policies over law and order, enthusiastically sustained by a 'Tory' public opinion may be seen to possess a Burkean set of 'Conservative' values.³⁴

According to O'Gorman the only obstacle standing in the way of a formally organized Tory party was the younger Pitt, who as a Whig of the old school disliked and distrusted all organized parties. When Pitt died in January 1806 his followers such as George Canning and R B Jenkinson were free to organize as a party. By the General Election of 1807, O'Gorman tells us, the party names of 'Whig' and Tory were back in use describing on the one hand those who railed against the King's actions in removing the 'Talants' ministry of the Foxite Whigs, and those Tories - 'Mr Pitt's friends' - who supported it under the leadership of the Duke of Portland.³⁵

This is a powerful argument, and one which the pro-Namierites do not address directly. Clark maintains that it was on the one hand the adaptability of the leadership of Portland, Perceval and Liverpool which allowed them to lead coalition ministries, and on the other the rivalries of the Foxite/Grevillite opposition coupled with weak inflexible leadership which prevented their becoming a serious political force until the reform crisis. Again the stress is on non-party coalition; its successful

implementation by the political forces of the ruling executive and its lack of success on the part of the opponents for the ministry. Ian Christie sums up the position of the pro-Namierites thus: "The correct label for those sceptical of change is 'Conservative'. Conservatism was evolving within the Whig tradition as part of the Whig tradition. (Christie's emphasis) from the 1790's onwards and thus a gradual bifurcation of Whiggism helped to give birth to both the mid-nineteenth century political parties. In the 1830's Peel's choice of party name was a formal recognition of this fact."³⁶

IV THE POST-1867 ARGUMENT

The picture then regarding the emergence of the modern type of political party in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries is confused and the scene of intense academic debate with advocates on both sides of the Namier line of argument. However, there are some historians who go even further arguing that it is spurious to designate the 1790's or the early 1830's as watershed period at all. They suggest that the true date at which one can safely discuss the emergence of the modern political party was after the Second Reform Act of 1867 and the Ballot Act of 1872, with the advent of household suffrage and the secret ballot. The combined implications of these factors, it is argued, meant that political parties had to become truly organized and develop the features and functions of modernity, especially with regard to competitively managing, for the first time in British politics, a truly mass electorate. However, even the post-1867 historians of party cannot agree precisely when it is proper to speak of the emergence of the modern political party. Nevertheless, Norman Gash, John Vincent, H J Hanham, J B Conacher, Maurice Cowling and Robert Blake³⁷ all, to a greater or lesser extent contend that the modern party system was a product slow in development.

H J Hanham for example has said, "...the break in English political life...came not in 1867 but in the years between 1880 and 1886."³⁸ He goes on to stress the changes in the machinery of politics which accompanied the changes in the nature of the political parties. "The Corrupt Practices Act of 1883 which linked election expenditure and made it easier and cheaper to get into parliament and gave a new importance to party organization."³⁹ He concludes that the old system of parties and politics ended in the mid 1880's and that: "The chapter of political history that opened with the general election of 1885 was, in short, a completely new one. Leaders, parties, constituencies, were all different from those of 1867..."⁴⁰

Norman Gash, in a slightly different vein, stresses the continuity of political change from the pre-Reform era to that of after 1832. He says: "The first Reform Act was both a landmark and a turning point, but it would be wrong to assume that the political scene in the succeeding generation differed essentially from that of the preceding one."⁴¹ This is a theme which Gash elaborated on, "In fact the pre-1832 period contained many new features which it transmitted to the future; and the post-1832 period contained many old features which it inherited from the past. Between the two there is indeed a strong organic resemblance...the continuity of political fibre was tough enough to withstand the not very murderous instrument of 2 Wm.IV., C.45...there was scarcely a feature of the old unreformed system that could not be found still in existence after 1832."⁴² Gash points to the maintenance of the system after 1832 of the nomination of members of Parliament by the aristocratic influence of the local landowner; widespread corruption, and the continued domination in national politics by the greater and lesser aristocracy, especially in the social make-up of the legislature.⁴³

J B Conacher appears more cautious. "It is difficult to say when political parties in the modern sense first emerged."⁴⁴ But he

appears to be sustaining the argument of the anti-Namierites when he says that the various parties which existed in the 1830's and 40's were 'a coalition of sub-groups and subject to various tensions'.⁴⁵ This was a situation which existed, suggests Conacher, until the two great political parties re-aligned after the fluidity of party affiliation in the years following the Conservative split of 1846. With regard to the specifics, Robert Blake maintains that the Conservative party was a product of the confusion of 1846 and less the product of Peel and advisers in the 1830's.⁴⁶ For the Liberals, John Vincent is inclined to a later date:

The creation of a (predominantly Liberal) cheap daily press outside London, the action of organized labour and militant non-conformity, the Reform agitation of the 1860's and the chief representative significance of Gladstone, were the chief influences in the changing context of the Liberal Party. Up to 1865, that party had been the expression of personal rivalries and political differences within the aristocracy, broadly defined. After 1865 the Liberals, without important changes in their Parliamentary personnel, came to represent great and dynamic social forces in the country, by reason of their vitalizing connection with their rank and file.⁴⁷

This then is the rather confusing and in some ways contradictory picture regarding the emergence of the political party in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Part of the problem is that the various positions adopted by historians have been arrived at because the various historians have simply been looking at political change in a very narrow context (the political party) or a specific event (the Reform Act of 1832 or 1867) or a specific event at a specific period, (the Reform Crises of 1830-32 or 1866-7). Also these historians have been products of the prevailing historical methodological orthodoxies as they have developed since the end of the nineteenth century. Modern historians, or rather modern historical methodology and techniques of analysis and description, have, however, undergone subtle changes in recent years. More and more historians are now turning to other

disciplines within the social sciences to explain problems historically.

V A NEW APPROACH

With regard to the problem of the emergence of the modern political party, it appears logical to utilize some of the approaches used by political scientists and political sociologists. The former are usually concerned with the detailed examination of the functions and features of political institutions and the latter with the effects the various institutions - such as the legislature or the executive or the political party - have on political behaviour. We intend throughout this thesis to examine and explain historical change by utilizing some of the concepts and techniques developed in these related disciplines. An example of how useful an exercise this can be is to attempt to offer a definition of the functions of the nineteenth century political party as detailed by historians⁴⁸ building on the work of political scientists.⁴⁹ We suggest that most historians and political scientists would agree that by 1914 that the numerous features and functions of the modern British political parties can be said to be in position. Thus, by attempting to examine the historical transition of the political party from the late eighteenth century (or in our specific case from the 1830's even if only in a heuristic context), a pattern of development will emerge. For if we can point out what party features are on display and what functions are being performed, and importantly what attitudes and patterns of behaviour are apparent, then an advance may have been achieved.

By utilizing the term 'functions' of political parties we are not subscribing to the methodology of structural functionalism in an absolute sense. We use the term to describe the various effects

the changes in the post-1832 political parties had both on the parties themselves and on the local political society. Some of these changes may have been necessary for the political system as a whole to function - which is indeed similar to structural functionalism - but others may have been beneficial only to specific groups, for example the partys' supporters or its governing elites - which is not structural functionalism. Thus we are suggesting that the term function in broad terms be viewed as the possible changes in party structure and their effects on wider political culture.

Let us at this stage, briefly outline what these main features and functions are and return, in our final concluding analysis, to discussing whether the empirical evidence of the central thesis has revealed their existence. Parties are firstly agencies of selection and recruitment by which the local and national elites are built up and maintained. In the contemporary world of the late twentieth century there are other methods and agencies of political recruitment such as trade unions, but the political party is by far the most effective agency. Secondly, political parties play a vital part in coordinating the organizing of electoral activity. Thirdly, parties perform the function of disseminating and, indeed generating both governmental and opposition programmes and policies. There is a problem as to precisely how much the rank and file determine actual policies, which are usually selected and initiated by the political elites. However, there is a process of consultation and consideration with various interested groupings, and one of those groups integral to the consultative process are the party's members and supporters even if only as a sounding board and vehicle of political feedback. This third function is linked to our fourth: political parties have an important role in politically co-ordinating governmental actions and indeed the actions of the opposition. Fifthly, parties act as agencies of political integration of diverse sectional interests by acting as vehicles for the

articulation and possibly satisfaction of political demands. This point regarding political integration provides parties with a sixth function in that they are agencies which allow individuals a platform for political activity and also are a useful device in political education, socialization and proselytization. A seventh feature is that they articulate ideas and organizations alternative to governments.⁵⁰ The eighth feature of political parties is that they act as disseminators of basic political principles - of Conservatism or social democracy or Liberalism - and in their most extreme form can act as vehicles for the transmitting of ideological doctrines. This is closely linked to the ninth, and very basic, function in that political parties are instruments of marshalling and disciplining their political supporters. A tenth function of political parties in the modern world is that they tend to give legitimacy to political activities so long as the members and supporters abide by the principles and structure of the particular party. The eleventh and final feature and function of modern political parties is that to a significant degree they determine the limits of not only the political agenda through policy initiatives, but also set the limits of political action - of what is allowable and what is not, especially with regard to its own supporters, but also on occasions other party's officials in both the local and national arenas.

These features and functions must be set in context in terms of the levels or areas of activity. In broad terms it would seem that our first seven functions are system supporting activities - functions which some agency, not necessarily parties would have to perform if the system as a whole was to function successfully. The last four functions however, serve to benefit just the parties or the groups themselves and, by and large do not act as system supporting functions in the manner of the first seven.

Most of the features and functions outlined above can be said to be in place by the outbreak of the First World War. Their

development had been slow. However, their origins can be traced back we would argue, as far back as the first decades after 1832. This guide we have set up may assist us in clearing a way through the somewhat confused and at times contradictory historiographical path we have outlined above. With regard to a verdict, it would seem that Messrs Clark, Beales and Christie are on strong ground. For we shall endeavour to show subsequently that there were qualitative changes in the functions of political parties after 1832 which were a direct result of the Reform Bill. There is little evidence that political parties acted as agencies for any of the aforementioned functions prior to 1832. Although lines of party demarcation regarding fixed principles can be begun to be detected from the 1790's, it was only in the later 1820's that the notion of broad cross-party coalitions with their inclusive assumption, both at the centre of political activity and on the peripheries, that one party constituted the ministry and the other the opposition. This does not mean that the anti-Namierites are totally wrong. O'Gorman and others are right to point out the growing tendencies towards organized political activities from the 1790's. Precedents were set most notably the work of organizing opposition to the Jacobins and Whig radicals, and, in the work of electoral organization, by William Adam for the Foxite Whigs.

Nor are those historians completely wrong who argue that it is only meaningful to speak of the modern political party after 1867 and the advent of a mass electorate. This is a very important point and one we shall bear in mind throughout this theses, but the changes wrought by the first Reform Act were so markedly different from what was the norm previously. We intend to show in the chapters which follow that not all of the functions outlined were set into place in the years immediately following 1832, nor indeed by 1867, but that sufficient evidence exists to suggest that, with regard to the operating of parties and party politics, the Reform Bill was an important watershed, not only at the centre

of political activity but also in the localities.

We suggest that for many of the areas of functional activity of political parties, the 1830's was the crucial decade. It was here, as Derek Beales has rightly pointed out, parties, "completed their conquest of the House of Commons, and became accepted as the organizations whose relative strength should determine the complexion of government."⁵¹ We must be cautious not to read back our understanding of the parties of today to that period when the parties were merely developing the initial signs of modernity. Our task is to point out when the traits of the changing nature of parties first became apparent and meaningful. Hopefully the method we have adopted will offset the lack of definition which has done so much to fuel the debate regarding the emergence of party. But we have to be aware of historical anachronism. We must consider political and social change in the context of the past and not the ideas of the present. It must be stressed political modernity did not dawn the morning after the passing of the Reform Bill. But on the other hand, the pace of political change did quicken appreciably in the 1830's and 40's in many areas of the political culture of Britain.

One of the crucial changes was that the political party ceased to be confined to the centre of political activity - in Parliament or at Court. Increasingly after 1832 political activity was to be found in the localities. It was in the localities that the struggles for the Reform Act was begun, in places such as Bristol, Nottingham, Birmingham, Leeds, Sheffield and Manchester. This raising of the political consciousness of different social groups did not disappear with the Bills enactment, it was maintained and part of the reason for its maintenance was that political parties - Conservatives, Whig-Liberals, Radicals and Chartists - operated effectively in these localities and part of the reason why they did so was due to the terms of the Reform Act and subsequently the 1835 Municipal Reform Act.

SUMMARY

In this chapter we have attempted to provide a historiographic outline of the debate surrounding the emergence of political parties in the early nineteenth century, whilst also considering the possibility of utilizing some of the tools of political science. Let us now turn to the examination of the changes which occurred to a specific party in this period, namely, the transformation of Toryism into Conservatism.

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2. Cannon, J The Fox/North Coalition, Crisis of the Constitution 1782-4, Cambridge 1969.
3. Ibid, P.240,
4. The modern Anti-Namierites would include as well as Professor Cannon, Frank O'Gorman in The Rise of Party in England, The Rockingham Whigs, 1760-82, London, 1975 or his The Emergence of the British Two Party System, London, 1982, or L G Mitchell, Holland House, London, 1980. The more traditional anti-Namierites would be K G Feiling, The Second Tory Party, Oxford, 1938 or G M Trevelyan, Lord Grey of the Reform Bill, London, 1952 ed.
5. See for example T W Perry, Public Opinion, Propaganda and Politics, Cambridge, Mass, 1962, pp.191-2.
6. Namier, L Crossroads of Power, Essays in Eighteenth Century England, London 1962, pp.229-30.

7. The latest examples being J Brooke ed. (with Sir Lewis Namier) Ibid.

8. The latest examples being J Brooke ed (with Sir Lewis Namier), The History of Parliament 3 vols, London 1964. Or I R Christie, Myth and Reality in Late Eighteenth Century British Politics, London 1970 and J C D Clark, A General Theory of Party, Opposition and Government, 1688-1832 Historical Journal vol. 23 No.2 1980.

9. Especially in The Emergence of the British Two Party System and, The Rise of Party in England, The Rockingham Whigs 1760-1832, London 1975 and, "Party Politics in the Early Nineteenth Century", in English Historical Review January 1987. Also his most recent work, Voters, Patrons and Parties, Oxford, 1990.

10. Emergence op cit p.176.

11. Ibid p.ix.

12. Ibid. p.12, also 'Party Politics in the early nineteenth century' p.84.

13. Burke, E Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs, London 1791.

14. O'Gorman, Emergence, op.cit. p.59.

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17. J Cannon, The Fox-North Coalition: Crisis of the Constitution, 1782-84, Cambridge 1969, pp.235-6.

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19. Ibid.

20. L B Namier, Monarchy and the Party System, in Crossroads of Power: Essays in Eighteenth Century England, London 1962, p.220.
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22. J C D Clark, 'A General Theory of Party Opposition and Government: 1688-1832', Historical Journal 23,2,1980, p.305.
23. D E D Beales, The Political Parties of Nineteenth Century Britain, London 1971, p.11.
24. Clark, A General Theory of Party etc op.cit. p.307.
25. Ibid, p.308.
26. Ibid, p.309.
27. F Bamford and The Duke of Wellington, The Journal of Mrs Arbuthnot 1820-1832, London 1950 vol.II 19/2/1830, p.337.
28. Clark, A General Theory of Party op.cit. p.310
29. Clark op.cit. p.312.
30. Ibid
31. By such historians as Arthur Aspinall, Brougham and the Whig Party, London 1927. M Roberts, The Whig Party 1807-1812, London 1939, A Mitchell, The Whigs in Opposition, 1815-1830, Oxford 1967.
32. Clark op.cit. p.314.
33. Ibid.

34. O'Gorman, 'Emergence' op.cit. pp.45-51.
35. Ibid. p.56
36. Christie, op.cit. p.341.
37. N Gash, Politics in the Age of Peel, London 1953, and Aristocracy and People, London 1979. H J Hanham, Elections and Party Management, London 1959. J B Conacher, The Peelites and the Party System, Newton Abbot, 1972. John Vincent, The Formation of the British Liberal Party, London 1966. Maurice Cowling, Disraeli, Gladstone and Revolution, Cambridge 1967. Robert Blake, The Conservative Party from Peel to Thatcher, London 1983.
38. Hanham op.cit. p.xxx
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40. Ibid.
41. Gash, Politics in the Age of Peel, op.cit. px.
42. Ibid.
43. Ibid and Aristocracy and People, op.cit.
44. Conacher, Peel and the Peelites op.cit. p.10.
45. Ibid. p.11.
46. Blake, The Conservative Party from Peel to Thatcher, op.cit.
47. Vincent, The Formation of the Liberal Party, op.cit. p.xlvii.

48. For example see J Garrard, The Functions of Nineteenth Century Political Parties, Occasional Papers in Politics and Contemporary History, Salford 1986.

49. See Neumann, Modern Political Parties, Chicago 1967.

50. These first seven functions are based largely on the work of John Garrard, op.cit.

51. D E D Beales, The Political Parties of Nineteenth Century Britain, London 1971, p.11.

CHAPTER TWO THE TRANSFORMATION OF TORYISM

In the previous chapter we outlined the state of the debate surrounding the emergence of the recognizably modern political party. We suggested that all those contributing to the debate have sound points to make but that, in the main, a good case can be made out for those who view the Reform Act and its ramifications as a watershed in the emergence of the political party as we understand it in the modern sense. In order to make our case we attempted to define the political party with regard to the functions it performs and to use this model as a guide to understanding its historical development. In this chapter we intend to enlarge on this discussion of the development of the political party by focusing on the Tory and Conservative party of the 1820's and 1830's. This will enable us to plot the changes taking place historically especially with regard to assessing precisely what Conservatism was in the 1830's. We intend to examine the traits of similarity and of difference between the old Toryism and the later eighteenth century and of the Conservatism of Peel and his followers in the 1830's. We shall also look at the importance of the guiding principles of Conservatives especially that of religion, and finally we briefly compare the Conservatism of Peel with that which developed after his retirement in 1846 and death in 1850. The purpose of this chapter therefore is to set a recognizable definition of what was meant by Toryism and Conservatism in the 1820's, 30's, 40's and 50's.

I OLD TORYISM

Originally the Tories were that group who defended the absolute rights of the later Stuart monarchs, Charles II and James II in the 1670's and 1680's. When confronted however, by James's insistence on closer ties with Rome in 1687¹ - which effectively forced the Tories to choose between their King and their Church - they chose the Church. Although the invitation to William III, which signalled the so-called 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688, is regarded as essentially a Whig triumph it is worth noting that it was signed by three Tories; Thomas Danby, Bishop Compton and Lord Lumley as well as four Whigs; Russell, Devonshire, Shrewsbury and Henry Sidney. The Tories joined with the Whigs in bringing about the Revolution Settlement on the basis of a compact between sovereign and people. Henceforth the Tory still believed in Church and King, but his loyalty was to the crown as an institution rather than to the king as a person. When Queen Ann failed to leave any direct heir, the conflict of loyalties between the King on the throne and the King over the water destroyed the Tory party in Parliament, but the great mass of the clergy and greater and lesser gentry preserved Tory feeling and principles as well as the Tory name in the countryside. This is an important point. Even though for much of the eighteenth century the Tory party - as far as it existed - was denied office and power, Tory principles and Tory ideas regarding patriotism and traditional practices and customs were popular among a wide selection of social groupings, among tenant farmers, yeoman, and artisans of several kinds. Thus if one is seeking an historical lineage for popular Toryism, political traditionalism and the preservation of long-held customs, then the line goes back at least as far as the late seventeenth century. The apparent totality of the Whig triumph during the Hanoverian succession and their complete hold on political power at the centre - at least up to 1760 - should not confuse the fact that in the localities Toryism was preserved amongst the various Court Leets, Quarter Sessions, Vestries and

Magistrates benches, and, indeed amongst the 'independent' members who sat on the back benches of the House of Commons. Thus the long tenure of Sir Robert Walpole's term of office was not left completely unchallenged. Helped by the writings of Jonathan Swift and Alexander Pope, Henry St John (first Viscount Bolingbroke) made it his aim to unite the Tories, led in the House of Commons by Sir William Wyndham, with the dissident Whigs led by Sir William Pulteney (later Earl of Bath). He founded the Craftsman as a political magazine with a view to breaking the grip of the dominant Whig families with a call to governing the nation with talented men drawn from all factions and not exclusively by an oligarchy of the same political caste.

The advent of George III, glorying, unlike his grandfather and great grandfather, 'in the name of Britain', and educated in the principles of Bolingbroke, reconciled the Tories once more to the person as well as the title of the monarch, and once again Tories began to be seen as court. When the Whig's attempt at personal rule failed, Tories increasingly found their principles of monarchical and patriotic loyalty, law and order and so on, realized in the policies pursued during peace and war by the younger Pitt, and after his death the Conservative Whigs like Portland, Perceval and Liverpool.

In the long period through the eighteenth century, Tory policy evolved largely by adaptation to changing circumstances, but there remained certain guiding principles. First was the unbroken attachment to the Church of England. Part of the reason for this was political expediency and part was, as the Catholics and Nonconformists claimed, to maintain the privileges of the Established Church as laid down in the Revolution settlement of 1688. Indeed the politics/religious tendencies which were made dominant after 1688 were in fact in being before that date when James II was still on the throne. The Toleration Act was the first legal dispensation for Dissenters. It modestly provided an

exception to the existing penal laws requiring all persons to attend services of the Church of England, and to refrain from other forms of public worship. However, there was a Test clause written into the Act which required all those who swore their loyalty to the Monarch (such as Justices of the Peace, Members of Parliament, Ministers of State, Military and Naval officers), to swear oaths of allegiance and supremacy and to Protestantism by subscribing to the Declaration against Transubstantiation.

It was regarded as politically expedient to exclude from positions from which the security of the state could be compromised all those who would not adhere to the Test clause. No Catholic could ever subscribe to the Declaration against Transubstantiation, but many Nonconformist could and thus while not allowed the full privileges of the Anglicans they were allowed positions of power in local politics, and they were allowed to vote in elections. For the Tories the Test clause became one of the cornerstones of the proven loyalty to the constitution as laid down in the settlement of 1688. If the Whigs thought of themselves as defenders of religious toleration especially of Nonconformity, the Tories saw themselves increasingly after the destruction of Stuart claims to the throne in 1745, and more so after the overtures made to them by George III, as the defenders of the Established Church. Because defence of the Established Church of England equated with loyalty to the King and the Constitution, the Tories defended the abuses of patronage and privileges enjoyed by the Anglican Church, which lost them friends amongst sections of the local Non-Anglican clergy and local squirearchy.

Secondly, the Tories became associated throughout the eighteenth century as closely attached to the landed interest, in opposition to many Whigs who favoured the rights of trade and commerce. This is not to say that the Whigs looked upon the land with disfavour. The voting Whig oligarchy were amongst the greatest landowners in Britain but the question was one of giving priority to that

interest which the two groups believed would best serve the national interest. In the case of the Tories this emphasis was on the capacity of the nation to be self-sufficient in as many areas of economic life as possible, but especially in agriculture; in the case of Whigs it was an emphasis on trade and commerce. For much of the eighteenth century the Whig view prevailed, but again a sizeable amount of popular public opinion was in sympathy with the Tory view.² Nor were the Tories wholly unsuccessful in their policy of protecting land and property. The property qualification for political representation as well as for those wishing to be political representatives was pursued successfully by the Tories, as were the Corn Laws of 1815 which protected home grown wheat against foreign competition.

Thirdly, and finally, throughout the eighteenth century the basic political psychology of the Tory was of an individual who was adverse to change unless the need for it was proved completely. This habit of mind made many Tories feel ill at ease with the settlement of 1688, though their leaders had helped bring it about; but as the years passed and the Revolution settlement became the established order of things, the Tories came to regard themselves as its special guardians. This dedication to the established order, accentuated by war abroad and unrest at home, created an image of the Tory party - especially in the years immediately following the conclusion of the Napoleonic wars in 1815 - as hostile to the labouring masses and a brake on economic and political progress as perceived by those of a radical bent. But as we have stated above many sections of eighteenth century society could relate more to the homilies of Toryism than to aristocratic Whiggery,³ and this is largely why - with little or no organization inside Parliament and none whatsoever outside-Toryism as a loose set of political principles and policies managed to survive the eighteenth century. It may well be that the call of Bolingbroke and George III for non-party government was successful at the centre of power, especially in the

administrations of the younger Pitt, but in the country at large Toryism still represented a political creed, even if, over the course of the eighteenth century this creed had become somewhat confused.

II THE INFLUENCE OF BURKE.

The man regarded as being chiefly responsible for the intellectual rehabilitation of Toryism, Edmund Burke,⁴ was in fact a Whig, but increasing towards the end of his life a Conservative Whig or 'Old Whig' as opposed to the 'New' Whigs led by Charles James Fox. But Burke remained a Whig until his death always refuting the name of Tory and Professor Christie is probably closer to the truth when he suggests that what Burke was outlining in his Appeal from the Old to the New Whigs,⁵ and Reflections on the Revolution in France,⁶ was not Toryism at all as it was understood in the eighteenth century, but the intellectual precursor of nineteenth century Conservatism. Nonetheless, the Tories of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries found in Burke a close and comfortable ally. Nor is Burke important solely for his contribution to Toryism/Conservatism, but also - and arguably more importantly - for his intellectual justification of the political party as a legitimate and valuable entity.

Burke's first defence of the notion of party came in 1770 with the publication of his Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents.⁷ This was a spirited attack on what he regarded as the conspiratorial, but thus far successful, attempt by those politicians close to the King to reduce Parliament to impotence. The traditional and essential role of the House of Commons was to check to the power of the crown by having the facility to refuse funds. This Burke argued had been undermined by the take-over of the court cabal. This court clique had managed to persuade to

vote extraordinary additions to the Crown's revenues; additions which Burke and the Rockingham Whigs argued were not needed to uphold the dignity of the monarch, but were only needed and used to buy the support of the House of Commons for dubious court policies.

It was to stop this tendency that Burke initially pressed the idea of party. Only if every administration's tenure was made to depend on the support of a declared party could this venal undermining of the traditional function of Parliament be curtailed. What was required, Burke argued, were honest men, publicly committed to stand or fall together, who could not be picked off, one by one by offers of place or office. As he himself put it. "Party is a body of men united, for promoting by their joint endeavours the national interest, upon some particular principle in which they are all agreed."⁸

It may well be that Burke's stance can be seen as no more than a manifesto for the Rockingham Whigs - who in the 1770's were the only group who came close to his criterion of a party, in as much as their leaders were reluctant to take office except as a party. Alternatively, it can be viewed as a seminal work which set out the rationale of the nineteenth century party system and cabinet responsibility - the hallmarks of the British system of representative government. The probable answer is that Burke advocated his system of party only as a measure for the situation existing in the 1770's but that it was utilized - mainly in the 1830's - as a justification of the legitimacy of the party system by politicians of the nineteenth century. But this should not detract from Burke's contribution, for he was the first leading politician of the later eighteenth century to oppose the prevailing orthodoxy set down by Bolingbroke of non-partizan politics.

As we noted in Chapter one to call a group of men a 'party' in the

eighteenth century (and continuing into the nineteenth) was to suggest that there was something suspicious about them. Party was denounced in Lord Halifax's phrase as 'a conspiracy against the nation'. Kings and politicians affected to be above party; to be, above all, patriots and non-party men. The King's ministers could not rule without support in Parliament, which was then often divided into parts; but these parts, as Namier noted were not parties in the late seventeenth century or mid-nineteenth century of the terms usage. They were loose collections or groups of interests which could be influenced or swayed by place, privilege or money. There were opposers - the 'outs' - of the ministries, but this opposition was not organized. This situation was tolerated up until Burke's blast, primarily on the pragmatic basis that it worked.

After 1789, and the possibility that the French revolutionary experiment could spread across the Channel, Burke renewed his advocacy of the political party as a device necessary not only for responsible government but also as a defensive measure against organized Jacobinism. Burke was the first established political thinker and practising politician to advocate open and loyal opposition within Parliament, indeed suggesting that party government could be an instrument of freedom. He was the first thinker to explain that organizations created for the capture of political power are not necessarily obstacles to good and responsible government, but on the contrary are a means to it, provided they work in the open and respect whatever conventions those who seek to hold power are required to be adherent of.

But it must be stressed Burke was no democrat. He developed his theories of party and government precisely to offset the growing tendency of the early 1790's towards democracy amongst the great mass of the population away from the centre of political power. He strongly held to the Lockean notion that only those with property or a viable stake in the political fortunes of the nation

should be involved in the political contract. Furthermore, only those with the most to lose, the aristocracy, were the natural governors and administrators of local and national government. A government ought to be stable and strong while it enjoys the confidence of the politically mature classes; as soon as it loses that confidence, it should abandon power and give way to a successor. This was the Burke's idea which he thought could be best achieved by means of the political party. Thus Burke's notion of party, although innovative, can be viewed as a preservative compromise of the prescriptive or long-standing constitutional values of the settlement of 1688, against on the one hand the venal and over-bearing excesses of the King's cabal, and on the other the danger of democratic Jacobism.

Burke always, throughout his life, considered himself a Whig, he was never a Tory. But towards the end of his life, from 1790 he was a special type of Whig, what we have already noted above as a conservative Whig. His conservatism manifests itself in the defence of the aristocratic oligarchy and the preservation of the prescriptive rights of the House of Commons, House of Lords, the Established Anglican Church as well as those of the monarch, also rights of property, the defence law and order, and finally the vigorous defence of British honour abroad. Again it was the preservation of these prescriptive rights which distinguished the Burkean 'Old' or conservative Whigs, who eventually fused with the Tories in the first decade of the nineteenth century, from the 'New' Whigs whose Foxite progeny became eventually the Liberal party. For Burke, all revolutionaries and many radicals are blind, for they do not see the damage they cause or may cause before they act. They act regardless of the possible effects and ramifications, and this for Burke and for subsequent Conservatives is inherently irrational behaviour.

Burke attacked egalitarianism and the natural 'rights of man' on the pragmatic ground that those who advocated such ideas were

deceiving their followers because they never could achieve their aims and objectives. He argued, as many nineteenth century Conservatives did after him, that differing talents exist among people as do differing opportunities. It is this very difference which gives society its complex balance and structure. He was not opposed totally to social mobility for example, but merely maintained that it should be as difficult as possible in order to assure that only the very best succeed.

These kinds of values, along with the preservation of the prescriptive constitutional and political rights noted above, were fertile ground for the fusion of the old 'absolutist' Tories and the conservative Whigs, especially so after the resurgence of the popularity of the English Monarchy after the summer of 1792 when Louis XVI was executed. Loyal Associations and Reeves Societies sprung up nationwide (at one time in 1795 2000 of them) and these served to re-kindle a jingoistic popular brand of Anglican Toryism - as was the case one hundred years previously - to whom many thousands drawn from all grades of society readily subscribed. This swell of support can be viewed as a reaction; but it was not a blind reaction, (although at times during the Church and King riots it might have appeared so). It was articulate, and the chief presenter of this articulated form of resurgent Toryism was Edmund Burke.

Some commentators⁹ have attempted to portray the Toryism which developed in Britain after 1789 as a political creed opposed to all change, but this is not the case. For Burke and those Tories and Conservative Whigs who applied his views after the death in January 1806 of William Pitt (the man who, incidentally, was the chief barrier to Conservative Whig/Tory union because of his aversion to party) a specific and particular type of political doctrine was being formulated and it was one, as we shall discover shortly, which did not preclude the development of policies designed to reform proven abuses.

Before we compare the political principles of the administration of Lord Liverpool with the Conservatism of Sir Robert Peel, let us at this stage examine in some detail what Burke had to say because it did serve as the philosophical justification for the kind of Liberal Conservatism associated with Liverpool, Canning, Huskisson and Peel. As we stated above Burke's views regarding the post-Revolutionary political world are to be found in two books, firstly Reflections on the Revolution in France and on the proceedings in Certain Societies in London Relative to that Event, published in 1790 and secondly his Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs published in 1791. In these two works he was not just opposing the French revolution and alerting his countrymen to the dangers which might result from that event, he was also protesting against a particular type of politics and political argument. The counter-revolutionary blast of Burke was inspired by a profound dislike and mistrust of the then fashionable rationalistic philosophy. The radical movements of the later eighteenth century had prompted conservative writers to defend the existing constitution, and this they did on mainly practical grounds such as the weakness or absence of public demand for a radical reform of the constitution or the impracticality of proposed reform measures. What Burke did was to elevate the debate to a higher, more philosophical ground. Reacting against many of the current modes of thought - the philosophic rationalism of the enlightenment, the romantic sentimentalism of Rousseau and others, and arguably also against the developing utilitarianism of Bentham - Burke sought compelling philosophical justification for the traditional ties of social order.

Repudiating Rousseau's and the English radicals assertion of a sublime state of nature, from which humanity peacefully derives its rights and freedoms, Burke argued, in a vein similar to Hobbes and Locke - that society was a thankful liberation from the anarchy of nature. Man's rights were derived not from any

mythical or metaphysical contract, but from the practical advantages of living peacefully in society. Political rights and obligations were not, therefore, matters of choice; they were determined by the nature of society and of man and also, importantly, by the religious and moral values of Christianity. Inevitably, therefore, any discussion of political rights involved the historical development of those rights and the activities of man in society.

As we noted above, Burke suggests that practices and institutions passed on from the settlement of 1688 had a prescriptive legitimacy. That is to say they were justified on the empirical ground of their existence, and their customary and traditional development over a long period of time. Institutions of an immemorial age, for example the English Parliament of Commons and Lords, had acquired legitimacy from their very age and their ability to adapt and change, as indeed man had adapted and changed in society as necessity dictated. It was this that Burke contrasted with the radicals belief in the arbitrary and largely theoretical virtues of a rationalist and utilitarian criteria. Burke examined the world around him and was deeply disturbed by what he regarded as the destruction of Christian Europe at the hands of the forces of reason, revolution and atheism.

By arguing for the rights of property, for monarchy, for aristocratic government and for the existing institutions of Church and State, Burke stood on the side of tradition, expedience and pragmatic usage, as opposed to rationalist speculation and dangerous experiment with the complexities and delicate balances of human society. The fruits of experience and history must not, Burke argued, be sacrificed at the altar of rationalism. The classic Burkean maxim and the adage of Conservatism since his time is that Conservatives are entering into a contract to preserve the fruits of a past generation, by the present generation for the benefit of a future generation.¹⁰

Burke did allow for change and reform but these had to operate within the framework of the existing order and must have as their objectives the safe and gradual restoration of an institution to its original purpose of fulfilling its customary and prescriptive function. Indeed on some questions Burke appears to be quite liberal, which should be not too surprising given his Whig credentials. His liberality comes out the strongest when he discusses the relief of Catholic disabilities, or the call for an independent Polish state but most obviously when he discusses economic affairs, and here he influenced several key members of Lord Liverpool's cabinet including Canning, Huskisson, Peel and Goodrich.

Traditionally the Whigs had been the political group that defended commerce against the 'country' Tories who inclined towards the defence of domestic agriculture. In his economic thinking - which the Ultra Tories of the 1830's would have liked to discard - Burke was consistent to this Whig tradition. Let us offer two examples of Burke's economic liberalism which was to gain so much credence in the nineteenth century.

In his book Thoughts and Details on Scarcity¹¹ Burke outlined the folly of the Speenhamland system. At Speenhamland in Berkshire, not far from Burke's estate of six hundred acres in the adjoining county of Buckinghamshire, the Justices of the Peace had put into effect a system of poor relief which involved payments to labourers to supplement their wages. The scale of payments related to the size of the labourer's family and the current cost of bread. They had done this in response to the acute distress of the labourers, whose wages were, in year 1795 below subsistence level. Burke was afraid that the government might make this a national policy, and he wrote his book in an attempt to urge them not to do so. Burke argued that any such action would be both useless and wicked: for it would dry up the springs of

enterprise, which would leave the labourers eventually even worse off; and this because it would be an unnatural interference with the laws of the market, and an arbitrary tax on property.¹² It could be contemplated as an effective relief of the poor only by men ignorant or forgetful of the laws of political economy. Burke wrote his Thoughts and Details on Scarcity to remind the government of those laws, and of the necessary connection of those laws, and of the necessary connection of those laws with the defence of property and hence civilization. These were more or less the same arguments Peel invoked when his back-benchers led by Lord Ashley asked him to explain his behaviour in defending the Whig Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834.¹³

A second example of Burke's economic liberalism which confirms his relevance to the Conservatism of Peel in the 1830's and 40's but not to traditional Tory protectionism was his defence of laissez-faire. Regarding the principle of laissez-faire Burke had no doubts. A competitive self-regulating market economy was the ideal, for it was the most efficient system of production. It was for Burke - whose views incidentally were arrived at independently of Adam Smith's the most equitable system of distribution of the whole product, and it was a necessary part of the natural order of the universe. It was even, Burke believed, divinely ordained, which set the seal on it being both necessary and equitable.

This natural and necessary system of non-interference by the government in economic affairs which Burke praised as being both efficient and equitable was not the simple market economy of independent small producers, whereby peasants and craftsmen exchange their products to mutual advantage. It was a specifically capitalist economy. The motor of his system was the desire for accumulation, and the mechanism was the employment of wage-labour by capital so as to yield a profit to the capitalist. It was this system which Burke held to be natural, necessary and equitable. The desire to accumulate, which Burke took to be a

natural urge,' at least among those members of society who held some capital, was the source of every states prosperity. As Burke tells us, "Monied men ought to be allowed to set a value on their money; if they did not there would be no monied men. This desire of accumulation, is a principle without which the means of their service to the state could not exist."¹⁴

Burke took it as obvious that the capitalist's income came from the surplus produced by the actual producers, and he saw this as beneficial to the community provided that the surplus was ploughed back into production. The example Burke gives is of the landed capitalist but the example served for productive capital of any kind, he wrote

In every prosperous community something more is produced than goes to the immediate support of the producer. This surplus forms the income of the landed capitalist. It will be spent by the proprietor who does not labour. But this idleness is itself the spring of labour; this repose the spur to industry. The only concern of the state is, that the capital taken in rent from the land, should be returned again to industry from whence it came.¹⁵

It was obvious that the rich lived off the labour of the poor, but Burke held, as did the Conservatives who utilized his arguments in the 1830's and 1840's,¹⁶ that, for two reasons, this was no grounds for redistributing wealth. Firstly wholesale redistribution of wealth would give each of the poor an insignificant amount, and secondly, it would dry up the springs of wealth. As Burke tells us in a quote deserving of extended quotation:

The labouring poor are only poor, because they are numerous. Numbers in their nature imply poverty. In a fair distribution among a vast multitude, none can have much. That class of dependent pensioners called the rich, is so extremely small, that if all their throats were cut, and a distribution made of all they consume in a year, it would not give a bit of bread and cheese for one nights supper to those who labour, and who in reality feed both the pensioners and themselves. But the throats of the rich ought not to be cut, nor their magazines plundered, because, in their persons they are trustees for those who labour, and their hoards are the

banking houses of these latter. Whether they mean it or not, they do, in effect, execute their trust.¹⁷

Thus in economic affairs the Liberal Conservatism of Peel has a direct antecedent in the writings of Burke almost half a century before the Corn Laws were repealed in 1846.

The conservatism of Burke which emerges from his writings is one in which notions of prejudice, contract, party, prescriptive rights, economic freedom and the sanctity of the constitutional state are pushed to the fore. It is also powerfully informed by his perception of the inherent corruptibility of man and the frailties of his talents. This practical recognition of man's weaknesses - possibly reinforced by his own experiences as a politician acting on behalf of the Rockingham Whigs painfully aware of the limitations of political power - restrained him from offering confident generalizations regarding man's future capacities.

However, if Burke was essentially a pragmatist in most things, his political philosophy does contain a vital moral dimension. He believed there was a higher moral law which man should observe and which he could not alter. This required man to accept certain basic political values which made possible civilized social existence. Thus Burke believed it a moral imperative for statesmen to maintain social order, to use restraint in their exercise of power and to preserve the timeless heritage of the past. The statesman must employ care and prudence, he must negotiate circumstances and contingencies to enable the state and society to conserve themselves through peaceful change and gradual adaptation.

In arguing that the state should sponsor moderate reform within a prescriptive framework as a guarantee of civilized social order, Burke was leaving the way clear for more specifically organic and developmental forms of Conservatism in the later nineteenth

century. But care must be taken for Burke was quite definitely not an organic Conservative. Burke certainly conceded that states and institutions can and must change, but change was not to be directed towards some vague, untried future ideal but towards a past-directed one. Burke had no ideal conception of a future social order only the value of the nature of society and civilizations in the past - that is to say the immediate past from 1688. The 'Revolution' of 1688 could be defended because it returned to the mixed form of government which the absolutist Stuarts attempted to destroy. But Burke's love of tradition had its limits. For example in 1780 he advocated the reform of the now useless offices of the Royal Household - the separately administered principalities and duchies of Wales, Lancaster, Chester and Cornwall - on the basis that they were redundant to present requirements. They may have performed useful functions in feudal times but in 1780 their only use was to buy Members of Parliament by handing out sinecures. Thus change for Burke had to be proven beyond doubt and then only embarked upon to restore societal harmony, thus his conception of the state and of society has a certain inertia. He recognized the complexity of the state and of society more strongly as the French Revolution unfolded. Consequently he came to rely more on prescription and developed a profound fear of innovation and by the time of his death in 1797 he had become extremely pessimistic as to the prospects of conserving the British and European heritage of civilization.

III THE TRANSITION TO CONSERVATISM.

The idea that society grows and develops like any other living organism was not Burkean, it was the product of the 'organic' paternalistic Tories of the mid-nineteenth century who owed more to the work of Coleridge and his adopter-in-chief, Disraeli. The transformation of old Toryism into Conservatism was of a slow transition and, indeed, after 1846 and the party's split over the

Corn Laws, many of the older Tory principles of protectionism, and of the inherent obligation for those with wealth and prestige to protect those less fortunate, again, came to the fore. But the Conservatism of Peel was the foundation of Conservatism throughout the nineteenth century, and we must seek to discover how it related and grew out of the amalgam of late eighteenth century Toryism and conservative Whiggery.

Nineteenth century Toryism and Peelite Conservatism owe much of their ideological principles to the Conservative Whigs led philosophically by Burke and politically by the Portland Whigs in the loyalist climate of the 1790's and the first decade of the nineteenth century. To the old Toryism of the mid-eighteenth century Peelite Conservatism owed relatively little although certain traditions and continuities of sentiment, and of local and family traditions, can be detected. The 'new Toryism' of the Duke of Portland, Henry Addington, Spencer Percival, Lord Liverpool, George Canning and ultimately Sir Robert Peel can be seen to grow directly out of the reactions to the possible spread of the French Revolution, the radicalism of the Foxite Whigs and the philosophical ideas of Edmund Burke. In the years prior to 1789, the Old Tories, denied office and actual power, offered support to various leaders, but never as a unified party. The principles which held them together as a unit, if anything did, were their total support of the Anglican church and of the title and office of the Monarch. However, even though their leadership was dissipated after 1760 the old Tories still remained a force in the House of Commons. As we noted above this group were rarely place-holders, but independent country gentlemen, representatives of the country interest and sworn to its protection. They scorned bribes and shunned office, and were essentially amateurs in politics, enjoying their status for its social prestige, usually in their own locality, rather than for its material gains. The support these old Tories gave the King was even more effective because it was voluntary and unpaid, and once combined against it, no

ministry could long survive the wrath of the independent Tories. Thus they remained a force throughout the eighteenth century, but what in a sense unified them into a cohesive whole was on the one hand the reactions against Fox and on the other the welcoming and comforting philosophy of Burke (with the economic liberalism left out) and the political leadership of the conservative Whigs such as Portland, Perceval and Liverpool in the last years of the eighteenth century and the first decades of the nineteenth.

In order to bridge the divide between the Napoleonic years of war and the development of Peelite Conservatism of the 1830's we must first set the context of the significance of the changes by resorting to a brief description of the salient episodes in the political history of the intervening period. Although in political terms the amalgam of conservative Whigs and Tories was in the ascendancy in terms of a broad basis of support (both inside and outside the Legislature), and although this support was gathering momentum throughout the Napoleonic wars, there was in reality little sign of party unity during these early stages in terms of formal recognition and actual organization. It was essentially a cabinet coalition.

The long ministry of the younger Pitt came to an end in 1801, and this served to fragment the coalition which had governed Britain in the 1780's and 90's into Pittites, Addingtonians, Grevillites, Canningites, and the supporters of the Duke of Portland with the Foxite opposition remaining outside the pale of possible power. The traditional supporters of the Court and Treasury numbered about 200 to 230 members of parliament and these would support any ministry the King appointed. However, the problem was compounded by those Irish members (of about one hundred) whose loyalties were uncertain and given that the independents were uncertain and that the various former coalition supporters were aligned against each other, there hardly existed a hard basis on which to secure reliable majorities. Thus the situation was extremely fluid. A

stable majority required the alliance of at least two of the constituent groups of the old Pittite coalition of Pitt, Portland, Greville, Addington and Canning, in order to supplement and lead the supporters of the Court and Treasury. It took eleven years before four of the sub-groups came together under the leadership of Lord Liverpool, and Greville and his followers only joined his administration in 1821. Of the prominent issues of the day; the abolition of slavery, catholic emancipation, further served to engender disunity, whilst others, the conduct of the war, law and order, Parliamentary Reforms served to bind the disparate forces together.

The precise reasons and causes as to how and why the various groups came together as a coherent party under Lord Liverpool is, as we saw in chapter one, the subject of intense debate, and is extraordinarily complex. But basically there are two reasons. Firstly the Pittite group, numbering about sixty members of Parliament, realized after their leader's death in 1806 that in order to maintain the basic political principles of Pitt they must act in a way that their leader never would have approved, that is to say act and organize themselves as a single unit. Secondly, as we noted above, although Pitt remained to his death a forthright opponent of party, this hostility was beginning to recede amongst a wise section of Parliamentarians, on the one hand because of the necessary expedience of gaining power, and on the other due to the theoretical justification of party offered by Burke.

It was in the general election of 1807 that the party names of Whig and Tory came back into general political use. The Whigs led by Greville and the Foxite wing stood on the legitimacy of the late 'Ministry of all the Talents', and poured scorn on the high-handed action of the King in dismissing them. The Tories led by Portland and the 'friends' of Mr Pitt stood on the defence of the King's actions. The basis for acting as a party was given added legitimacy when, for the first time in almost one hundred years,

the Tories had a recognizable leader; and a Prime Minister in the shape of the Duke of Portland who now openly referred to himself as a Tory. Of equal importance was the fact that Portland's ministry appeared to the public (electors and non-electors) to openly support the prerogatives of the Crown and to ensure 'No Popery' in politics. Scores of petitions and loyal addresses from all sections of society left the matter in no doubt, nor did the result of the election. In reply to the 'No Popery' chant of the Portland coalition of Tories and conservative Whigs the reformist Whigs of Grenville and Earl Grey cried 'No Corruption'. However, the scale of the defeat for the reformist Whigs revealed to them that the political climate was running against them and this was highlighted when the strongly Whig orientated corporation of London voted an address of thanks to George III for the 'decided support and protection given by him to the protestant reformed religion as by law established'.¹⁸ The overt patriotism felt by the masses during war-time and defence of the monarchy were the key to Portland's election success, but so too without any extra-Parliamentary organization as such, was the notion of party. Henceforth all General Elections would be fought under the party titles.

Among the electors the only extra-Parliamentary political organizations of even a marginal significance which existed in the first three decades of the nineteenth century were the dinners organized (usually annually) by the Whig Clubs - to eulogize the memory of Charles James Fox, and the more permanent and widespread Pitt Clubs. Of the latter more will be said in the next chapter, but it is worth noting that the first stages of permanent extra-Parliamentary organization of a very primitive type dates from 1807.

In May 1812, Spencer Perceval (Portland successor in 1809) was assassinated in the House of Commons Lobby; he was succeeded by Lord Liverpool. Liverpool's administration was a broadly based

team, the core of which were the old Pittites with places found for George Canning and Lord Sidmouth (formally Henry Addington). It was united upon the basis of loyalty to the monarch, a belief in service to the nation as a whole and the defence of the established (or prescriptive, as Burke defined the) institutions in church and state. Added to these basic principles was the decidedly anti-Burkean belief in the protection in agriculture and domestically produced staple industries, arguably excusable during war time but maintained after 1815. However, it was primarily because of the Ministry's uncompromising stance on questions on law and order, but more likely because of its economic policies, that the opponents of Lord Liverpool's administration referred to it as a 'Tory' government.

In several respects the term 'Tory' is misleading. Firstly the government of Lord Liverpool never allowed the Prince Regent or George IV after 1820, the range of prerogatives the old Tories allowed in his father; this limitation of the powers of the Monarch was traditionally Whig in outlook. Secondly there were members of Liverpool's Cabinet who pursued a traditional Whig foreign policy, most notably George Canning who passionately believed in the granting of independent status to nations such as Poland and Greece. Thirdly there were also those ministers - once again Canning but also Robinson and Palmerston - who were in favour of Catholic emancipation in order to resolve the political problems of Ireland. Fourthly, in economic affairs, there were important elements within the Liverpool government who attempted to steer the Cabinet away from rigid protectionism as advocated by the old Tory faction, and towards giving manufacturing industry at least equal status as that of agriculture, most notable amongst this group was William Huskisson. Fifthly, although Liverpool's ministry had a reputation for pursuing a tough line on law and order questions it is unlikely that the 'reforming' Whigs of Tierney, Ponsonby and Grey would have done any differently given the seriousness of the outbreaks of Luddite violence and the semi-

paranoid sentiments of many of the landed and middle classes in the wake of the French Revolution. Moreover, it should also be noted that the Home Office, under the direction of Robert Peel, committed to Statute more legal reforms than any government for over one hundred years. The sixth and final point to note regarding Liverpool's government is that there were even those - Peel, Croker, Goulbourn etc - who pressed for some concessionary measures regarding Parliamentary reform before the radical Whigs put through a measure too sweeping in content.

On all these points Burke and Pitt would have concurred. This was so because the essential fabric of society on the basis of property was being conserved by these moderate measures. It suited the back-bench Tory traditionalists to forget what Pitt and Burke said and wrote regarding the above questions, and to push to the fore those aspects of their heroes' policies which suited the sentiments of traditional Toryism. To be sure the back-bench Tories were significant numerically and their view could not be totally ignored but the point to be noted is that the administration of Lord Liverpool was a coalition of conservative Whigs and moderate Tories. It was in essence the penultimate stage in the development of Conservatism. The traditional Tories realized this and vented their anger on those ministers, such as Canning who they believed went too far, even to the point of withdrawing their support when Canning formed a government in 1827. Thus the coalition was smashed, and in Parliament members began to divide along 'party' lines. The liberal supporters of the 'catholic' Canning - Huskisson, Melbourne, Palmerston and Lansdowne - joined the Whigs. Those who could not support¹⁹ Canning on the catholic question formed a separate group led by Wellington and Peel. These two leaders were joined by the traditional or 'Ultra' Tories - men like, Lord Londonderry, the Lowther family, Lord Salisbury, Lord Eldon, Sir Richard Vyvyan, Edward Knatchbull and the many backbenchers.

But again the Ultras never felt entirely confident with their new leaders, suspecting them of 'liberal' tendencies, confirmed when Wellington as Prime Minister repealed the Test and Corporation Act in 1828 and Catholic Emancipation one year later. The Tories might have deserted Wellington and Peel had not the sweeping nature of Grey's Parliamentary Reform Bill provided a point around which all sides of Toryism/Conservatism could rally. But the essentially Burkean nature of conservative Whiggery was maintained by Peel, Goulbourn, Aberdeen and others, and, in the early 1830's, the term 'Tory' was again thought unsuitable and replaced by Conservative.

Thus a direct line can be traced from the practical policies of Pitt and the theoretical or philosophical foundations laid by Burke - through to Portland, Liverpool, Canning and Peel. Many of the back-bench 'Conservatives' were in reality old Tories in new clothes. They supported Peel and the Conservatives firstly because this group genuinely believed in the preservation of the prescriptive and constitutional principles enshrined in Church and State, even though they may have found Peel's impersonal style unsupportive and still held his policies with great suspicion. The second reason was that there was no one - in the House of Commons at least - equal in political stature to Peel: thus they were in a sense stuck with them and, to his occasional chagrin, he with them. But in political terms the unity of the Peelite Conservatives and the old Tories was preserved primarily because of what each perceived as the danger to the Constitution - in terms of the independence of the two branches of legislature, the rights of the Monarch, and the preservation of the Anglican religion as the national Church of England - as presented by the reforming Whigs.

Thus the chief difference between the Peelite Conservatives and the Ultras or old Tories was one of temperament regarding not only specific issues but to political change as such. If any group

were resistant to change of any kind it was the Ultras. They were unshakeable in their defence of the Corn Laws and in their hostility to the interests of commerce and manufacturing. The Ultras or old Tories were totally opposed to Parliamentary reform of any kind, and were vehemently (in some cases pathologically) anti-Catholic. On this last question, the argument was crudely simple for the Ultras. It demanded how could a man or group of men swear a quasi-holy allegiance to their King and country, when they have already sworn allegiance to the Pontiff in Rome? To the Ultras, all Catholics were suspect, all potential traitors and all indolent ritual worshippers. In an attempt to prove their point they pointed to Ireland or to France. In the second already a revolution had occurred, in the first it could happen at any time.

Although many Peelite Conservatives felt affinity to the basic principles of the Old Tories - especially on religious questions - they could not accept their dogmatic assertiveness regarding policy options. Peel, like Burke realized that national needs were in a state of rapid change and that the Old Tory philosophy of political rigidity was impracticable to Britain in the 1830's. Peel at no time believed in pure laissez-faire as a doctrine - he contended that the state had a role in intervening in the national economy - but neither did he believe in blanket protectionism. Peel's moderation and quest for consensus similarly revealed itself on religious questions. He was an Anglican and not a supporter of Catholic Emancipation, but he recognized that the Catholics and nonconformists had reasonable grounds for complaint regarding the privileges of the Established Church. This is why he set up the Ecclesiastical Commission in 1835 during his 'hundred days' of ministry, and gave the Irish Catholics an annual government grant to train their priests at Maynooth.

Whilst the Peelite Conservatives could agree with the Old Tories on the need to protect and preserve the political constitution in Church and State, and further agree with Burke that innovation in

political terms was highly suspect, they did not agree that all reform was necessarily bad. If it proved to be required then it should be considered; similarly the Conservatives under Peel did not believe that political groups or parties existed solely to protect the interests of a given section of society. This is why Peel mistrusted the sectional interests of the Anti-Corn Law League as much as he was disdainful of his Old Tory backbenchers who advocated protection for domestic agriculture. For Peel the Conservative party was a national party representative of all grades of society and their various interests. Peel was most decidedly not a democrat. He believed like Burke that property and education were the best qualifications for political participation. But he did realize that differing political interests existed and that the Conservative party had to cater for the popular will through its representation, not in extra-parliamentary activity but in the House of Commons. As he stated in 1838, "My object for some years past, that which I have most earnestly laboured to accomplish, has been to lay the foundation of a great party, (cheers) existing in the House of Commons, and deriving its strength from the popular will..."²⁰

Perhaps then the most stark differences between Peelite Conservatism and Old Toryism can be summarized this. Firstly, the Old Toryism represented a sectional interest, Peel a national one. Secondly, the Tories stood for extremes in policy and Peel for moderation and consensus. Thus the old Tories stood for total resistance to innovation and conservatism for the reform of proven abuses; the old Tories for an anachronistic economic policy and conservatism for limited state intervention for the benefit of both producers and consumers.

Peel and the Conservatives were, however, walking a fine line. On the one hand Peel recognized he had to placate those Tory elements on which his majority in the House of Commons rested. This he showed in the Merchant Taylors speech of 1838.

I will, in conclusion, briefly state what I mean by Conservative principles. By Conservative principles, I mean, and I believe you mean, the maintenance of the Peerage and the Monarch - the continuance of the just powers and attributes of the King, Lords and Commons in this country... By Conservative principle I mean that, coexistent with equality of civil rights and privileges, there shall be an established religion and imperishable faith, and that established religion shall be of the Protestant Church... By Conservative principles I mean .. the maintenance, defence and continuance of those laws, those institutions, that society, and those habits and manners which have contributed to mould and form the character of Englishmen.²¹

On the other hand, Peel recognized the need to widen the social foundation of the Conservative party to include all sections of society and that this would upset many of the Old Tories. The problem was noted by Lady Palmerston in her journal in 1841 after Peel had made a speech at the opening of Tamworth Library in which he advocated the need to open-up knowledge to all classes of society and to strengthen the bonds between them. She wrote: "tho' he (Peel) bids for popularity in all his speeches, he disobliges his followers thereby. They do not like...a speech he made at Tamworth at some literary meeting, in which he said all classes were alike and that education should not be merely confined to the Church of England (very displeasing to his bigot followers)." ²²

It was Peel's urge alone to make Conservatism a national party and he realized that this could not be achieved on the narrow basis of landed Toryism alone. These old Tories were, as Henry Goulbourn defined them in 1834, 'deaf to all improvement which comprises change, however much on other ground he desired.' ²³

Even though Peel and the Conservative party were, in the 1830's remarkably successful both in changing the direction of an out-dated and outmoded political grouping, and also in changing the perception of the wider public to the point that the Conservatives

won a clear electoral victory not ten years after many had considered them dead as a political force, the old Tory elements did not disappear. In the later 1840's after Peel had repealed the Corn Laws, landed Toryism under the leadership of Lord George Bentinck, Benjamin Disraeli and Lord Stanley, came to the surface and over twenty years of brooding suspicion of Peel and his political views exploded in a moment of intense hatred.

The Peelite leadership were split off from the main party- although many back-bench supporters of Peel did remain - and Conservatism began to re-trace its Tory antecedents. But the problem, in the years that followed, was that the policies of free-trade invoked by Peel actually worked, and Disraeli and Derby knew this. Protectionism was quietly discarded as the central plank of post-1846 Conservatism and Peel's central aim of strengthening the old institutions by means of controlled and moderate reform became acknowledged as the central tenet of Conservatism.

SUMMARY

In this chapter we have attempted to plot the transformation of eighteenth century Toryism and conservative Whiggery into the Conservatism of the 1830's. We have looked at the defence of 'party' as laid out by Edmund Burke and seen that writings were the foundation of nineteenth century Conservatism. We also looked at the reintroduction of party names in 1807, through the administration of Lord Liverpool to find the central ingredients of Conservatism. We looked at the differences in the character of the policies of Huskisson, Canning and Peel compared to traditional Toryism. We saw how Peel attempted to widen the social basis of Conservatism from the narrow sectional interest as

represented by Old Toryism by appealing to all sections of society. At this point therefore, before embarking on a description of Conservative organisation in the post-Reform era, with its changing form and functions, it may be useful to look at the other side of the analysis from the perspective of those at the lower level of the social order. The aim here is to get some sense of how the working class of the industrial north-west responded to Toryism and, in the 1820's and the early 1830's to developing Conservatism.

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3. Ibid.

4. For an account of other early Conservative theorists see H T Dickinson, Liberty and Property, London 1977 and for an alternative view see J J Sack, "The Memory of Burke and the Memory of Pitt" Historical Journal, Vol.30 N.3 1987.

5. Burke, E Appeal from the Old to the New Whigs, London 1791.

6. Burke, E, Reflections on the Revolution in France, London 1790.

7. Burke, E. Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents, London 1770.

3. E Burke, Thoughts on the Cause of Present Discontents, London 1770 p.335.

9. Most particularly the radical press of the Reform Crisis and the Chartist years.
10. Burke, Reflections etc op.cit. pp.194/5.
11. E Burke, Thoughts and Details on Scarcity, London 1795.
12. Ibid p.380.
13. Peel Papers, British Museum January 14, 1835. Ass Ms 40, 408 pp.310-313. See also Hansard, Vol XXXI p.158, February 1836 for Peel's speech in the House of Commons. See also Gertrude Himmelfarb for the link between Malthus and pessimistic laissez faire and the support given by the substantial land owning class in, The Idea of Poverty, New York 1984.
14. E Burke, Third Letter on the Regicide Peace. London 1797.
15. E Burke, Reflections op.cit. p.270.
16. See for example, T W Whittaker, A Sermon Preached to the Chartists at Blackburn Parish Church on Sunday 4 August, 1839. Blackburn 1839.
17. Burke, Details on Scarcity op.cit. pp.376-7.
18. Quoted in J Watson, The Reign of George III 1760-1815, Oxford 1985 edition p.455.
19. It was not so much that Peel and Wellington could not support Canning's politics as that they detested him personally. See for example L Woodward, The Age of Reform, Oxford 1985 edition pp. 74-5.
20. Speech by Sir Robert Peel at Merchant Taylors Hall, 12 May 1838. From the Authentic Report of the Conservative Festival at the Merchant Taylors Hall, Conservative Journal Office, London 1838. See also Robert Stewart, Party and Politics, 1830-1852, Basingstoke 1982, especially chapter 5, pp.62-77

21. Ibid p.99.
22. T Lever (Ed.) Letters of Lady Palmerston, London 1957 p.248.
23. Peel Papers Add Mss 40333f 177. Goulbourn to Peel 8/12/1834.
British Library.

CHAPTER THREE TORYISM, CONSERVATISM AND THE EMERGENT
WORKING CLASS.

I TORY ATTITUDES.

In this chapter we wish to broaden the discussion to examine what the relationships were between Toryism, Conservatism and the working classes of the industrial North-West in the years from the Napoleonic wars to the election of the first reformed Parliament in early 1833. The justification for this is to show the attitudes between the Tory and Conservative elites and the lower orders before the advent of a nationally organized party structure. This is necessary to gauge the significance of the transformation of attitudes of sections of the industrial working class from antagonism to Toryism up to 1833 to acceptance and support in the later 1830's, 40's and 50's. Later in the thesis we intend to bring forward evidence to support the claim that sections of the working class of the manufacturing districts of the North West did embrace Conservative political principals and did so for a variety of reasons. The ultimate change worked in two ways. From being a group whose political outlook was antagonistic to the manufacturing and working classes, the Tories, as they developed into Conservatives, began to embrace some of those interests. Similarly sections of the working class, from being inherently hostile to the Toryism of the type epitomized by Lord Sidmouth or Lord Eldon, began to look more kindly on the Conservatism of Sir Robert Peel. However, first we must set the context by highlighting previous attitudes.

The lines of change bear out the themes we began to develop in chapters one and two. Namely that in several key areas the essential functions of the political party were not performed before 1832. Further, we see that the transformation of Toryism into Conservatism which took place from the 1780's to the late 1820's, happened without the wider political interests of the manufacturing and working class being considered, except by those enlightened economic liberals such as Canning, Huskisson and eventually Peel. Nowhere was this more apparent than the situation which existed in the North-West in the early years of the nineteenth century.

As we suggested in chapter two, included within the principles of traditional Toryism was the desire to preserve the constitution, a sense of patriotism and attachment to the interests of the agrarian and agricultural sectors of the economy. During the Napoleonic war years patriotism gained the expected purchase on the consciousness of many working people not least in Lancashire. This situation should have reinforced traditional Tory values and moreover given as economic boost to some of the skilled working class through increased government contracts. But the war also brought with it extreme hardships in the form of high food prices and severe trade recessions, especially in the years when Napoleon enforced his blockade. The Tories demand for the protection of domestic agriculture was perceived as an overt act of political partiality in favour of the landed and propertied classes and against those who held no land or property. This, coupled with the Tory principle of a harsh and rigid policy of law and order and a deep distrust of organized labour, served in the years from 1790 to 1832, to make them extremely unpopular among a large section of the emergent working class of the industrial North-West.

As the migrants from the hamlets and villages moved into the rapidly increasing textile towns of Lancashire after 1800, some of

these families may have felt a sense of social deference to the Tory principles of the eighteenth century. However, loss of independence and severe cycles of trade depression, coupled with a growing perception that Tory politics and politicians were inherently hostile to working class grievances, increasingly moved more and more working people toward popular Painite radicalism.

As we noted in the first two chapters the national and local political elites were much frightened by the possibility that the principles and the political ramifications of the French Revolution of 1789 might find a purchase among those socially and politically disenchanted in Britain. In the 1790's the younger Pitt revoked his previous support for Parliamentary reform, and indeed, passed, in 1799 the first of the Combination Acts, in an effort to prevent the workers of various trades from collective action in support of their grievances. The tendency was for both national and local government to pursue increasingly draconian policies of legal coercion and political reaction in an attempt to isolate and eradicate what were primarily working class social and economic grievances regarding the loss of customary work practices and the imposition of new and more rigorous techniques of production.

The Tories were traditionally hostile to the commercial and industrial interests of Britain and felt no sympathy either to the wage labourers or the manufacturers who suffered under the frequent cycles of booms and slumps in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The Conservative Whigs and the Tories were, as we noted, extremely concerned about securing domestic peace and order whilst maintaining a long and, at times precarious war with France. France was a national enemy and therefore it is no surprise that, at a period of high patriotism, any signs of sympathy to republicanism, or of religious and political opposition to government policy during a period of war would be labelled by those of a conservative disposition as being

sedition. It is also understandable that this extremely defensive conservatism would continue for a considerable time after the national conflict itself had been resolved, in this case after 1815.

It might appear to some historians writing, some hundred or hundred and fifty years after the events, that the actions and reactions of the Government and their conservative Whig and Tory supporters bordered on hysterical paranoia. But, at the time for the propertied and others in position of influence, the French Revolution and the war that followed were attempts at the complete destruction of everything they valued. Thus, it is in this context the actions and reactions of those who believed and perceived the situation as being threatening and dangerous must be seen and understood. The war propaganda was intense and was carried to ludicrous lengths even twenty years after its conclusion. The French and Jacobins were portrayed as inhuman barbarians. The Blackburn Alfred for example in 1834 compared the humane nature of the British mode of execution with that of the French, and indeed questioned that decapitation produced instantaneous death. For example, "The head of a criminal named Tillier being submitted to examination after the guillotine, the head turned in every direction from whence it was called by name."¹ The newspapers² of 1835 still carried reports of cannibalism amongst the French troops during the Peninsular Wars of over twenty years before. With such speculation and general anti-Gallic feelings it is little wonder that among wide sections of Conservative opinion when they were told that the disputes and reforms demanded by the working class were Jacobin in origin, they were inclined to believe them. That this climate of anti-libertarian feelings was continued during a major war with France goes some way to explaining why the authorities were unwilling even to listen to the demands of groups possessing as much self-proclaimed probity as the Loyal Order of Mechanics or the Loyal Association of Weavers.

For the forces of the Government the pattern was set by the younger Pitt in the 1790's. When, in 1795 the King on his way to the State Opening of Parliament was jeered and stones flung at his carriage the response of the authorities was immediate.³ A Royal Proclamation was issued against seditious assemblies, and in the House of Commons Pitt introduced Two Acts. The first declared it to be treasonable to incite the people by the written word or by speech to hatred or contempt of the King, Constitution or Government. In the Second Act no meetings of over fifty persons could be held without notifying a Magistrate. The Magistrates were given wide powers to ban meetings or stop speeches, arrest speakers and disperse smaller meetings. It became a capital offence to defy the orders of the magistrates. Habeas Corpus, or the right of trial before imprisonment, had been suspended since May 1794 in an effort to stem the rise of popular Radicalism- especially in London - against the government of Pitt and in favour of Parliamentary reform. The culmination of this legislation was the Six Acts of 1817. Here Lord Castlereagh attempted firstly to prohibit drilling and military training amongst non-military personnel. Secondly the Acts allowed magistrates to enter and search houses without warrants. The Third Act renewed the prohibition of meetings of over fifty persons. The fourth increased the stamp duty on periodicals thus raising the price far above that affordable to working people. The final Two Acts defined and refined the libel laws in accordance with what the government considered seditious and inflammatory. Once again, as a matter of course Habeas Corpus was suspended.

The government felt for much of the period between 1794 and 1831 that only by the implementation of such measures of legal coercion could law and order be maintained. The tone again was set by Pitt who is reported to have said after the passage of the Acts of 1795 that: "My head would be off in six months, were I to resign."⁴

The widening breach between the various sections and groupings within society was summed up in 1807 by the moderate Whig reformer Sir Samuel Romilly when he said, "The influence which the French Revolution has had over this nation has been in every way unfavourable to them. Among the higher orders it has produced a horror of every kind of innovation: among the lower, a desire to try the boldest political experiments, and a distrust and contempt of all moderate reforms."⁵ This then was the perception of respectable opinion. The coalition of conservative Whigs and Tories under the direction of Lord Liverpool believed that the popular claim for reform - Parliamentary, economic, religious and social - were manifestations of a deeper conspiracy to undermine the very fabric of British society. We saw in Chapter Two how this situation of the need to maintain law and order, preserve the rights of property, the monarchy, the Anglican church, and the prescriptive rights of the constitution served to galvanize the union of conservative Whigs and old Tories. But so too did the elite's fears and suspicions of those members of society below them. As one member of the Lancashire magistracy, Ralph Fletcher of Bolton, wrote to the Home Secretary in 1802 in relation to the Cotton Arbitration Acts.

In this neighbourhood (Bolton) the seditious seem to be mostly occupied about the intended application to Parliament for regulating the cotton manufacture. This application (although some small alteration may be necessary to the existing laws as to that trade) certainly originates in the Jacobin Societies (Fletcher's emphasis) and is intended as a means to keep the minds of the Weavers in a continual Ferment and as a pretext to raise money for them which will probably be employed in part at least, to seditious purposes.⁶

After the conclusion of the wars in 1815, as we noted earlier, these feelings continued, not only in the manufacturing districts but to other economic sectors as well. Even in agricultural areas, still the largest single industrial sector in terms of output and employment, and protected by the Corn Laws of 1815, severe cycles of depression occurred in the years immediately following Waterloo. When the farmers complained, the Tory squires

and county gentry were quick to demand further redress, not just for economic reasons but also to offset any political discontent among the yeomen. At the occasion of the General Election of 1818 William Huskisson reported to Lord Liverpool that the radicals were beginning to sway the opinions of those stoutest defenders of traditional Toryism, the Yeomanry. He wrote, "They despise the Whigs; but they are no longer what they were ten years ago in their attachment to the old Tory interests and principles which are prevalent in the Nobility and Gentry."⁷ This widening of the gap between those who believed that government and its administration should be immune from outside and potentially damaging pressures and those below the elites who contended that the closed political oligarchy of constitution conservation was static and detrimental to the nation's interest as a whole was noticed by Robert Peel when he returned to England after six years as Chief Secretary in Ireland. Writing to his friend John Wilson Croker in March 1820 he said.

Do you not think that the tone of England...is more liberal, to use an odious but intelligible phrase, than the policy of the Government? Do you not think that there is a feeling becoming daily more general and more confirmed...in favour of some undefined change in the mode of governing the country.⁸

A feeling that political change was in the air was apparent but the Tory elements of Liverpool's administration - Eldon, Sidmouth, Wellington, Castlereagh and Canning - were determined that no change in the political contract should be considered, at least not while they remained in office. As a justification for their intransigence on constitutional and Parliamentary reforms they utilized the theories and concepts of Edmund Burke. This resistance to popular politics and those who expounded it - as we shall subsequently discover - managed to galvanize the Tories and conservative Whigs into a party unit, but at the time provoked great hostility to those who 'would leave everything as it is'.

For many Tories and conservative Whigs the views of Peel; cited above were symptomatic of the feeling of the post-war political world. For this group a curious situation had developed in which public opinion, with more influence than it had ever had previously, was becoming daily more dissatisfied with the share of actual power it possessed. Peel was writing in the wake of Peterloo disturbance of 1819 and the Six Acts which had followed quickly after the depressing catalogue of alternate bouts of disorder and repression beginning in 1794. The list is long and it includes several outbreaks of Luddism, the riots in East Anglia, the March of the Blanketeers, the Pentrich rising, Peterloo, the Huddersfield rising, the riots at Spa Fields, and, arguably the most serious, the Cato Street conspiracy. Then there were the consequent actions of the state in the form of Special Commission, Orders in Council, the secret committees of enquiry, suspension of Habeas Corpus, and Seditious meetings Acts. In purely Parliamentary terms - but only in those - riots and disorders were in a sense the least of the ministry's problems. In this sense government was never stronger in the legislature than when there were plots and disturbances in the country. The offers of the opposition Whigs and radicals to exploit such situations, as was the case of their anti-war policies prior to 1815, invariably recoiled in their face and convinced the respectable moderates of their unfitness for office. The House of Commons always appeared to be ready to rally round the government in times of social unrest and the repressive legislation was overwhelmingly backed by the governing class as a whole. Ministers were acting in response to genuine fears and alarms and on the evidence put before them seemed to justify their position. Indeed they were often urged to do more in language more extreme than they would have used.

In London and other centres of urban power events such as Peterloo could only increase the widespread feeling that the country was in a state of crisis. The crisis indeed seemed worse than in the

1790's since it was not a matter of a specific danger to British Society inculcated by ideas brought in from outside, but a more pervasive atmosphere of violence and disunion within. Tories, Whigs and Radicals, with some justice, could feel that these were symptoms of an unhappy and divided nation, even though they disagreed both on causes and remedies. Ministers, such as Huskisson and Canning, could reiterate the arguments of the political economists to which most educated men subscribed: that the laws of economics were inexorable and legislative intervention, likely to do more harm than good. However, if the educated public was willing to accept this doctrine in the abstract, they also felt strongly, if somewhat illogically, that something was missing in practice. The discontent and distress in society, even if not directly the fault of the government, materially weakened its prestige and damaged its influence. To be seen to do nothing was to invite widespread unpopularity and worse. It can be argued that Ministers were not indifferent to the problems of the economy and the hardships of the poor; nor indeed to the general dissatisfaction of the public with the conduct of the government. Their difficulty was to know what, if anything, they could do about it. Direct concession to political agitation, which meant in effect making substantial changes in the actual fabric of the constitution, was out of the question. In the immediate post-1815 period, there was no inclination for that in either Parliament or Cabinet. As Romilly observed, the effect of the revolutionary struggle had been to harden the resistance of the governing classes to any organic change. The only exception was Catholic Emancipation, the issue which had been left unresolved by Pitt. On this question the House of Commons was fairly equally divided. But the Cabinet's agreement in 1812 to remain neutral with regard to policy precluded any ministerial initiative; and the House of Lords with Liverpool's personal example to guide them, offered an insuperable barrier to independent action in the Commons until Liverpool's death in 1827.

Yet, as we saw in chapter two, an alternative road did emerge for a ministry that wished to appear both moderately progressive and conservative. As well as utilizing the work of Burke there was also the eighteenth century school of practical reformers, of whom Adam Smith was the great British representative. This group had concerned themselves not with doctrinaire plans for ideal constitutions or attacks on established political institutions, but with an examination of the methods whereby enlightened legislators could improve the lot of society as a whole. The prime object of this new political science, was not to take power from the governing classes - which the proponents of radicalism as diverse as Paine or Bentham wished for - but to teach them how to promote the happiness of the people in their charge.

This then, in general terms was the position of the conservative Whigs and moderate Tories in the first two decades of the nineteenth century. However the perceptions of the working class themselves on the industrial North-West differed from those of the government to an alarmingly dangerous extent. To give balance to the picture of the relationship between the Tories and the emergent working class of the North-West, we must also examine their grievances about the existing political society.

II THE EMERGENCE OF THE WORKING CLASS IN THE INDUSTRIAL NORTH-WEST: A HISTORIOGRAPHICAL OUTLINE.

The disputes engaged in by the emergent working class of the industrial North-West began in the 1770's and were concerned primarily with the introduction of new technology in the sphere of cotton spinning. The interest is to trace the growing political awareness of this social grouping which evolved as a result of what were chiefly economic and social grievances such as the imposition of new work practices and the resultant loss of

independence. This 'political' element in the attitudes and behaviour of the emergent working class is vital to the understanding of the development of a working class consciousness in the first half of the nineteenth century. But it is a question which has in the past, and still is producing a lively debate amongst social and political historians. It may be worthwhile at this stage in the thesis to outline some of the most salient and relevant arguments before we move on to describe the events which illustrate the attitudes of the working class of the North-West from the 1790's to the struggle for the Reform Bill. The purpose of this, as we noted earlier, is to contrast the attitudes of the elites and of the working class prior to the 1830's and to outline the transformation after the mid 1830's.

The first historians who in any sense systematically investigated the development of the industrial working class in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were John and Barbara Hammond.⁹ The Hammonds worked within the tradition of Whig historiography stressing the progress of industrial labour to overcome the obstacles placed in their way by the forces of capital and the state, in this they were in tune with the views of the Fabians and the progressive Liberals of the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

According to the Hammonds within certain limits the ordinary workmen of the 1760's had still a large margin of independence and freedom in his daily life. They drew on sources such as Samuel Bamford's Passages in the Life of a Radical¹⁰ and his picture of the Lancashire weaver towards the end of the eighteenth century drawn from his uncle's home at Middleton. These essentially domestic workers had some limited autonomy in that he could leave off work when he pleased to tend his small-holding or have a meal or take a smoke and a chat. He was not in short "disinterested from the old village economy in which a man did not merely sell his labour but had some kind of holding and independence of his

own."¹¹ The industrial changes of the 1770's, argued the Hammonds, destroyed this social economy with its margin of freedom and choice for the worker. To the observers of the upper or middle classes the new agencies of industrial change such as the utilization of capital for the building and equipping of factories promised a great saving of human labour but also would serve as social conditioning which would morally uplift the loose and disorderly lower orders.¹² That the majority of these workers subjected to this transformation resisted was not surprising considering that the worker did not appear to gain any greater financial compensation for his increased effort but saw, in contrast, the owners of capital becoming enormously wealthy at the workers expense. Not only this but the lifestyle of the working class also underwent a transformation as did that of his family also.

This was the crux of the Hammond's case. The working class of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century resisted industrial change not only because they were materially worse off - the domestic workers of the earlier part of the eighteenth century were not affluent by any means - but because they saw on the one hand the visible signs of a maldistribution of the results of their labour and on the other the closing-in of a social and economic system which they likened to slavery.¹³ The Hammond's were well aware of the fact that the transition from a semi-feudal, or corporate industrial system to a full blown capitalist mechanized system was a slow process. However they were at times guilty of utilizing the language of 'golden age' sentimentalism. For example:

Surely never since the days when populations were sold into slavery did a fate more sweeping overtake a people than the fate that covered the hills and valleys of Lancashire and the West Riding with factory towns that were to introduce a new social type for the world to follow.¹⁴

But the Hammonds were right to point out that, although economic and industrial relations had been gradually changing from the late fifteenth century and the end of feudalism, what the mechanization of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries meant to the wage labourers was the removal of the 'last vestige' of initiative and choice in the daily lives of working people. Indeed they were at pains to show that it was the culmination of a long process.

The last vestige; for so much had been lost already that the upper class came readily to think of the surviving elements as an anachronism. For two centuries there had been a steady concentration of economic power in the hands of a small class.¹⁵

The last vestige was important. It distinguished between allowing a margin of freedom and choice, prevalent in the older type of social economy, from the new conditioning agencies of new industrial society. They argued that so much attention had been given to the transitory nature of the development of capitalism before the industrial revolution that there was a marked tendency to under estimate the transformations on the emergent mass working class which came as a result of industrialization. The Hammonds knew well that, by the 1770's and 80's the majority of domestic workers were already dependent upon capitalist enterprise, but this did not mean that the changes induced by the latest phase of industrialization were in some way unimportant. Indeed they were so important that when the weaver in Oldham or Blackburn or the cropper in Halifax or Huddersfield looked back in the 1820's or the 1830's to the beginning of his life, he believed he could remember a time when the worker was in all senses a freer man.¹⁶

The social economy with its margin of choice and independence, and with its inherent belief in the fair and just price for labour as well as the naive but widespread assumption that the forces of the

state existed as a last recourse of arbitration, was not a myth - as much authoritative research in recent years has revealed.¹⁷ There were of course trade depressions in the eighteenth century as well as in the nineteenth, most notably during times of foreign crises, but in these situations the hand workers had opportunities for the diversification of their labour. In the better times the hand workers earned sufficient wages to take time off for recreation and had the money and time for the cultivation of a garden or the keeping of poultry or pigs. From several trades - wool croppers, woollen weavers, cotton spinners and weavers, framework knitters and so on - such a picture comes forward with such frequency for it to be dismissed as a romantic fancy of an idyllic past. It was a world which was due to disappear both due to the regimentation and authority of the factory system and the long working day in the era of the factory, especially for those hand workers who resisted the factory who still had to work long hours in order to mitigate the effects of falling piece rates in the nineteenth century. The Hammonds, we contend were correct to point out that the reactions of such workers, as well as those actually employed in the factories, to their frequently depressed nineteenth century conditions was intense and passionate because of the recent experience of better times. As we shall subsequently discover, this led many of the working class to seek radical political solutions to their plight, but it also produced among some working people attitudes of deference, and important element in the Tory tradition of the respect for custom and prescriptive rights, and such feelings were played upon by the Conservatives in the decade after 1832.

However, the main problems with the work of the Hammonds is not their passages of description and explanation, which are both scholarly and copious in primary sources, but their failure to analyze the motivations of the working class in terms of politics as well as in the social and economic aspects is something we shall have to look at. Of course the Hammonds recognized the

political context within which the industrialization of early decades of the nineteenth century took place, especially in terms of those in positions of political authority who acted too harshly on those of the working class who opposed the new work practices. Indeed many political leaders, argued the Hammonds saw the new work practices as a means of controlling the lower order, as we noted above. As they themselves wrote.

From this spectacle (of the French Revolution) the rulers of England had derived one set and fixed idea: the idea that the art of government was the maintenance of discipline... Hence their unquestioning welcome to an industrial system that seemed to answer their own purpose and to answer the purpose of nature as well: to reinforce at once the law of authority and the law of progress.¹⁸

However the Hammonds were reluctant to admit that the actions of resistance on the part of working people to the imposition of the factory system - especially Luddism - were in any meaningful sense political, and certainly not revolutionary. This fear of insurrection on the part of working people was at best the machinations of paid informers intent on giving their members reason for their continued employment, or at worst, the kind of information the government wished to present before Parliament in order to secure the support for their draconic measures of social and political coercion. Thus for the Hammonds, the rumours of a general rising in Lancashire in 1812 were started 'solely by spies'.

The tale is an intricate one, and the material on which to base it disordered. Four main factors stand out. 1) A General discontent with power looms; 2) Deliberate but unsuccessful attempts to destroy the obnoxious looms fomented if not originated by spies; 3) Food riots, beginning in anger at high prices and ending in the destruction of power-looms or buildings; 4) Rumours of a 'general rising' started as far as can be gathered solely by spies.¹⁹

Following the work of the Hammonds, F O Darvall²⁰ wrote in 1934 that there was no evidence to support the claim that the Luddites

of Yorkshire and Lancashire had any political motivation whatsoever. He concluded that, "despite the great efforts of the spies to prove such motives" the Luddites had no large-scale political designs.²¹

For over a generation this view remained the orthodox position until the publication of E P Thompson's Making of the English Working Class,²² Thompson offered a very different interpretation of Luddism, and made the Hammond's analysis the subject of a rigorous and continuing debate. Thompson believed he recognized in the work of the Hammonds a reformist/Fabian-like predisposition to minimize to the point of extinction the place of direct action, inter-class violence and high levels of class consciousness bordering on the revolutionary in the history of the development of the emergent English working class. He wrote

The chapters on Luddism read at times like a brief prepared on behalf of the Whig opposition, and intended to discredit the exaggerated claims made by the authorities as to the conspiratorial and revolutionary aspects of the movement.²³

This view of intense conflict between the emergent working class and the forces of governmental authority is one of the key-stones of Thompson's - and more broadly the Marxist - view of the development of a working class consciousness. Similarly, this theme of conflict - both political and between differing social classes - is one to which we shall address ourselves in some detail later, especially in relation to the attempts made by the local and national elites to utilize the vehicle of the political party as one of the means of resolving deep-rooted conflicts and steering sections of the working class away from extreme radicalism and towards respectable and legitimate (and safe) political involvement.

In the thesis of Thompson, and of Marxist historians generally, high levels of working class consciousness can be shown to be

manifest if the overwhelming mass of the working class display a sophisticated and vigorous set of political aspirations on behalf of themselves as a class as opposed to the political aspirations and norms of other classes. It is therefore essential to show that the working class had this political dimension in their subjective evaluation of their objective class position as they began to emerge and as industrial capitalism dramatically began to transform their lives.

With regard to the emergent working class in the period 1790 to the 1820's, the problem lies in the treatment of evidence which consists to a great extent of the reports of paid spies and informers to receptively panic-stricken magistrates and government officials. Thompson argues that the Hammonds, by discounting all such evidence, present an unreal case which can only be sustained:

by a special pleading which exaggerates the stupidity, rancour, and provocative role of the authorities to the point of absurdity; or by an academic failure of imagination, which compartmentalises and disregards the whole weight of popular tradition... We end in a ridiculous position. We must suppose that the authorities through their agents actually created conspiratorial organizations and then instituted new capital offences (such as that for oath-taking) which existed only in the imagination or as a result of the provocations of their spies.²⁴

What Thompson is suggesting requires further elaboration.

Lancashire Luddism which as we noted began in the late 1760's, was suppressed in the 1770's and was re-lit in the early 1800's, is acknowledged to be a particularly difficult era in which to disentangle the aspirations, (political or otherwise) of those involved. The pre-disposition of the Hammonds was to believe that bona-fide insurrectionary schemes on the part of working people were highly improbable, or, alternatively wrong, and undeserving of sympathy and therefore to be attributed to a lunatic irresponsible fringe. Thompson asks reasonably enough why the

working class should hold advanced radical political attitudes by 1812. War had continued for almost twenty years. Trade Unions had been coerced and suppressed. The weavers had suffered a cataclysmic decline in living standards and hunger and food shortages were severe and widespread. Why, he asks, does it appear improbable that men in such circumstances should advocate widespread political change or even revolution? The only reason Thompson argues, for believing that the reports on the revolutionary aspects were false was based on the assumption that such evidence derived from paid agents is bound to be false. Reading the same evidence without such an assumption Thompson produces a version,²⁵ suggesting that by May 1812 Luddism in Lancashire had largely given way to a heightened political awareness and a revolutionary organization. He goes further and suggests that an identical form of oath to one found on an associate of Colonel Despard at the time of the 1802 insurrection is one of many pieces of evidence which links the revolutionary underground of 1802 with that of some ten years later. However, he is disinclined to believe rumours of a national organization or the involvement of genteel leaders; instead he stresses that Luddism was a movement formulated and organized by the working classes usually in the localized community.

For Thompson the subjective awareness of their objective position during this phase of industrialization made the working class conscious not only of their own class in relation to other classes but politically aware of the exploitative nature of capitalism and of those in local and national government who condoned it. "Even while attacking these symbols of exploitation", writes Thompson, "and of the factory system they became aware of larger objectives, and pockets of 'Tom Painers' existed who could direct them towards ulterior aims."²⁶

Traditionally Toryism could count on a measure of popular support through the principle of paternalism and their opposition to Whig

corruption. However, from the 1790's, the economic slump and the cultural cleavages wrought by industrialization, condoned as it was by Tories in government and in the local magistracy, lost the Tories much of their support, especially in the manufacturing districts of the North-West. For Thompson Luddism was part of the transitional development of the working class, 'one is struck not so much by its backwardness as by its maturity... One can see Luddism as a manifestation of a working class culture of greater independence and complexity than any known to the eighteenth century.'²⁷

Thus for the Hammond's working class development between 1790 and the 1830's is seen primarily in economic and social terms whilst for Edward Thompson it is conceived in economic, social and political terms. Let us investigate the manifestations of working class political developments beginning our discussion of the North-West region at the turn of the nineteenth century and ending with the worst political defeat for the conservative Whigs and Tories: the Reform crisis of 1831/2. We suggest that this political dimension of working class consciousness was increasing throughout this period, reaching its peak in 1831/3. We suggest that after this date the political development of working autonomic aims and objectives was curtailed by devices of containment and control imposed on sections of them from above. One of these, the political integration of sections of the working class by the Conservatives will be subsequently discussed. But first we lay the foundations by examining the antecedents which forced the elites to re-formulate their position regarding the working class of the manufacturing districts.

III WORKING CLASS POLITICS BEFORE 1820.

Early in 1799 the weavers of Lancashire were complaining of the decrease in the price of labour and formed themselves into an Association for mutual protection and for obtaining Parliamentary relief. At the end of April a magistrate wrote from Wigan to the Home Office to say that a number of societies were being formed there and in other parts of Lancashire and that:- "when the sum of five hundred pounds is collected by the grand central committee at Manchester consisting of three persons...they are to pay it into the hands of some great person in London who (they) hath engaged to procure them an Act of Parliament for an advance in wages."²⁸ On May 27 the same correspondent sent to the Home Office an address that had been issued to the public by the newly formed Association of Weavers. The address was to be printed and distributed in various towns in the name of the General Committee assembled at Bolton. On May 13, 1799 John Seddon was President and James Holcroft was Secretary. The Committee was composed of representatives from Bolton, Manchester, Salford, Stockport, Oldham, Wigan, Warrington, Blackburn, Chorley, Newton, Bury, Whitefield, Leigh and Chowbent, in total there were 28 representatives on the General Committee. In their address they made a direct claim for political intervention.

The present existing laws that should protect weavers, etc., from imposition, being trampled underfoot, for want of a union amongst them, they are come to a determination to support each other in their just and legal rights, and to apply to the Legislature of the country for further regulations, as it may in its wisdom deem fit to make, when the real state of the cotton manufactory shall have been laid before it.²⁹

The correspondent, John Singleton of Wigan, who sent the weavers address to the Home Secretary, the Duke of Portland, denied that the weavers had grounds for complaint. The labouring class were he said 'fully employed and very well paid for their labour and

before these arts were used to disturb their peace and make them discontented was both happy and contented.'³⁰

The government, in whom the weavers had placed such faith responded by passing the first Combination Act of July 1799. However, the passing of the Combination Act did not deter the weavers nor did it diminish their faith in Parliament as a council for the application of redress. At the end of February 1800, the journeymen weavers of Yorkshire, Derbyshire, Cheshire and Lancashire sent to Parliament a petition '*praying for a more speedy and summary mode of regulating abuses and for the settling of wages, pay and price of labour from time to time.*'³¹

It should be remembered that the Combination Act nominally prohibited combination amongst manufacturers as well as amongst wage labourers. Thus the weavers took the opportunity to point out that their position was in part due to a 'powerful combination of the master weavers and manufacturers and that the Petitioners, scarcely earning a bare subsistence by their daily labour, are totally unable to seek the Suppression of Combinations of so much Secrecy, Wealth and Power, or any redress of their Grievances, by any existing Law.'³² However, some masters and manufacturers sided with the workers for, also in May 1800, there arrived at the House of Commons a petition from the master manufacturers of Chester, York and Lancashire stating that many of their difficulties were due to the fact that there was no power to settle wages.

A Committee of the House of Commons was appointed to take evidence, and the outcome was that the weavers did not obtain their required regulation of a minimum wage, but instead they were given an Act providing for arbitration in the cotton trade.³³ This Act provided that in all cases of dispute over wages of hours of work each party could name an arbitrator, and if the arbitrators could not agree either arbitrator could require them

to submit the points in the dispute to a Justice of the Peace whose decision would be final. In the actions of working people at this time, we see a belief that their economic rights could, and should be protected by a political appeal direct to the national legislature. At this time they were working within the existing political system, but their recourse to that system reveals that they possessed a degree of political awareness and that a collective political consciousness in a class sense was developing albeit draped in the trappings of obeisance to the existing political institutions. This, however, as a situation did not last very long.

The Arbitration Act had some success for a short time as a device for settling disputes and protecting workers from actual frauds. But inherent within what was in reality permissive legislation were two flaws which the manufacturers utilized quickly. Firstly the Act required the masters to appoint an arbitrator, and made provision for cases of disagreement between arbitrators, but it contained no provision to compel arbitrators to act. The manufacturers, discovering this flaw, simply appointed an arbitrator living in London or some other distant place who in reality had no intention of acting, with the result that the arbitration went no further. Secondly, when the arbitration went to a magistrate as a final test - on the few occasions that it did - it was often discovered that the magistrate had some indirect link (eg financial) with manufacturing, and thus was biased. The argument the magistrates produced was that the demands made by the workers were an attempt to fix wages, which, they argued the Act was not empowered to do.

In such a situation, compounded as it was by war-time food shortages and high prices for provisions, the emergent working class lost faith in the forces of local and national political power, and began to develop a more militant attitude to their distress. As for the elites, we saw above that they were becoming

increasingly uneasy regarding the political attitudes of the working classes of the north-west.

By 1803 the judge in charge of the Northern Districts wrote to the Home Office that "much of sedition has mixed itself with the Weavers Petition and Bill...cavalry should be stationed near Bolton and an eye kept on the whole quarter." ³⁴

Not only were the magistrates and judges becoming alarmed at the lack of respect towards authority which the working class was developing at this time but also the manufacturers. In 1800 the Bolton manufacturer Thomas Ainsworth wrote to Sir Robert Peel that: "There is nothing to fear from Jacobinism."³⁵ By 1801 the same correspondent was writing of the possibility of a general rising. "If ever there is an invasion or other commotion to employ the regular force of the country I make no doubt but that opportunity will be seized."³⁶ Peel's partner at Bury, Mr Yates wrote in equal alarm at the same time. "I am sorry to say that what I have seen and heard today, convince me that the country is ripe for rebellion and in a most dangerous situation and I firmly believe that if provisions continue at the present high prices, a Revolution will be the consequence."³⁷ A working man from Salford named Dyson was sent to the House of Correction for uttering the words 'Damn the King and Country. When told he would be informed against his anger spilled over into 'damn the magistrates, damn the volunteers as a set of damned fools', and that it 'time to take Billy Pitt's head off.'³⁸ However, more dangerous than the displays of verbal disaffection with the Government from the working classes of the North West was that doctrines subversive of the existing order were being formulated and circulated in the cotton districts. This was certainly the belief of Colonel Ralph Fletcher of Bolton who informed the Home Office that he had "encouraged several loyal masters who employ great numbers of servants in different branches of cotton manufacture, to examine into the political opinions of their workmen, and discharge such

are known to be Jacobin from their employ."³⁹

Such was the fear of the authorities of their growing unpopularity throughout the manufacturing districts of the North West that in 1801 the Home Office began the procedure of employing informants which was to last for over thirty years. The magistrate parson of Manchester Rev. Hay was overjoyed when he told the Duke of Portland he had secured the services of an informer,⁴⁰ and Col. Fletcher also began to use the services of a Mr Bent to infiltrate the meetings of the working class of Bolton.⁴¹

In 1803 an Amendment was made to the Arbitration Act, which empowered the magistrate to choose a panel of not less than four and no more than six persons, half representative of the manufacturers and half of the workmen. This amended version again proved ineffective although it served to split the Weavers Association into those - such as Richard Needham of Bolton - who were regarded as loyal weavers and those like John Knight of Oldham or Samuel Bayley of Rochdale who became convinced that appeals to an unreformed Parliament were useless. An example of this can be found in a petition from the weavers of Bolton who, in 1813 complained with retrospection that the Act of 1803 was "unavailing inasmuch as not one conviction before a magistrate under this law has ever been confirmed at any Quarter Sessions of the Peace."⁴²

However, growing disillusionment with the forces of authority did not prevent the moves to obtain a minimum wage for cotton workers in 1807/8, and this agitation was carried forward by the 'loyal' branch led by Needham. These loyal weavers were supported by the local elites and large manufacturers of Manchester, Chorley, Preston, Bolton and Stockport. Some of the employers even raised a subscription⁴³ in order that the workers representatives could travel to London to present their case to the President of the Board of Trade, Earl Bathurst and his Common Committee. This

again was greeted with deaf ears in London. The arguments raised against the measure of a fixed minimum wage included the problem of differing skills required for differing qualities of cuts and the numbers of workmen who would be discharged as a result of its possible enactment. It was also argued that the problem was not that wages were too low but that they were too high and thereby attracting an abnormal supply of labour to the trade. The news of the defeat in May 1808, gave rise to serious rioting in Manchester which left one man dead and several injured.⁴⁴ A strike followed with looms idle in Rochdale, Wigan, Bolton, Stockport, Bury and Chorley, and by early June in Manchester alone it was estimated that there were 60,000 looms idle.⁴⁵ The demand of the strikers was for a wage increase of thirty three and one third per cent on present wages. The masters almost at once agreed to increases of 20% Needham and the 'loyal' weavers supported the 20% offered by the Masters, but the strikers held out drawing on funds held by the Friendly Societies. The strike lasted until mid June and the extremists appear to have won further concessions from the manufacturers, but even in what was primarily an economic dispute political elements can be detected. Firstly the strike came about primarily because appeals to the conservative Whig/Tory government had failed. Secondly, and more explicitly some strike leaders were urging the men not to return to work but instead to direct their energies towards attacking the government and its war policies which, they argued, were the true sources of their distress.⁴⁶

The local and national authorities attempted to control this display of economic (and political) insubordination by the use of overt coercion. One magistrate from Wigan, Col. Silvester suggested that the taking away of shuttles by the strikers be made a capital felony, an expedient which commended itself to the Mayor of Wigan who reported to the Home Secretary, "The case was considered by me to be barely a felony - but I wished to give it that construction, conceiving that such an interpretation of the

offence would have great effect on the Minds of the People."⁴⁷

After a brief upsurge in trade in 1809/10 the cotton industry again entered into serious slump in August 1810, with the consequent reduction in wages. At Blackburn a 'Manifesto' was printed by the weavers elaborating a strategy of economic stability. The basis of their plan was:

Simply this; Reduce the quantity of foods when the market is overstocked, and their value will undoubtedly increase with the scarcity. Gentlemen, the whole body of weavers have come to a determination not to submit to a Reduction in Prices, but will rather be limited in the Quantity of their Work, and will, in conjunction with their Masters, bear every privation for a few weeks or months, until a change takes place in the Markets."⁴⁸

This manifesto created such a stir and not a little alarm to the Blackburn Magistrates that they asked for troops to be sent to the town. The local militia, they pointed out, was mostly composed of weavers.⁴⁹ Another manifestation of the discontent the working class of the North-West felt towards the government of Spencer Percival was that although petitions did continue to be sent to Parliament they were no longer addressed to Ministers of the Crown to present but to members of the reforming Whig opposition, most notably to the radical Samuel Whitbread⁵⁰ Petitions of 17,000 from Bolton, of 40,000 from Manchester were sent to the House of Commons,⁵¹ not just from weavers, but signed by mechanics, spinners, printers, tailors and others.

At Manchester a Committee of working men was formed to gather and forward the petition. Richard Taylor and John Knight were the chief organizers and Knight in particular was active in working class politics for many decades. When the House of Commons once again prevaricated on the claims of the workers of the North-West, Knight wrote a remarkable paper, which signals unavowedly the rise in the political consciousness of at least the working class

leadership. He argued that the evidence produced by the Committee as to the plight of working people in the North-West was irrefutable, but the Commons Committee could not suggest any single expedient to remedy the sufferings of the working class. Instead, Knight argued, the mood of the Commons Committee "tended to circumscribe matters which ought to be left to their own operation, and which like water would find their own level."⁵² In his paper Knight displayed a level of political sophistication and powers of logical argument which Pitt in his prime, or Canning would have been proud. It is worthy of extended quotation.

We are only mechanics, of course ill acquainted with the reason why the same measures are frequently opposed, at one time, by the same arguments by which at other times they are vindicated and supported. But considering the number of petitioners and the extent of their sufferings was it not possible that some reasonable portion of hope should not have been founded on these circumstances? But when we consider likewise, that the legislature has already interfered in matters of apparently less moment - has enacted laws for regulating the price of corn (Knight's emphasis), for fixing the assize of Bread, for fixing the price of labour in the case of the Spitalfields Weavers, and Journeymen Tailors of London; for augmenting the salaries of judges and clergymen; for regulating commerce, and a multitude of other things which time would fail to enumerate... This Committee are utterly at a loss to conceive on what fair ground legislative interference can be improper under circumstances so necessitous. If a large mound be projected from one bank of a river, the stream must necessarily make inroads on the opposite shore; and if laws can be made to regulate the necessities of life, laws should be enacted for regulating the wages by which such provisions must be purchased, especially when (as in our case) such wages have lost all reasonable balance and proportion... The moral to be drawn from these events is that the House of Commons, as is at present constituted or appointed, is unfit to manage your affairs... Had you possessed 70,000 votes to elect members to sit in that House, would your application have been treated with such indifference, not to say inattention? We believe not. You are urged to exert yourselves to recover the right of electing representatives and extending the franchise.⁵³

Knight's call for agitation surrounding the electoral franchise is important, for it shows that amongst the radical working class

leadership of Manchester at least the mood had changed from one of agitation of a pressure group type to one demanding wholesale political reform.

The disturbances which swept through the manufacturing districts of the East Midlands, Yorkshire and Lancashire have been well documented,⁵⁴ but it is essential that they be seen in the context of Knight's call for political action on the part of working people, by working people to attain representation on behalf of working people. That they were unsuccessful matters little in this context. What is important to note is that from a very early date in the emergence of the working class of the industrial North-West that they had developed a political side to their class consciousness. The actions of the authorities - both local and national - in attempting to curb this growth of working class resentment only served to highlight to the mass of the working class the apparent disdain which the conservative Whigs and Tories held them. Indeed many moderate members of the middle classes felt angered at the excessively harsh treatment which the forces of the state handed out to Luddites and political activists.

One example must suffice. When, in 1812 a mill at Westhoughton was destroyed by Luddites - instigated and encouraged as was later discovered by agents of Colonel Fletcher⁵⁵ - a Doctor Robert Taylor wrote a letter protesting at the severity of the sentences passed on those convicted. In his letter he picked out the possible reasons for the actions of the forces of authority and the lengths the state was prepared to go to suppress working class anger,

We are told of members of revolutionary principles which have been smouldering for years: and which... are revived by the fancied grievances of improved machinery... we are told that this evil was raised to its height by religious fanaticism prevalent in the manufacturing districts... I am, it is true a Dissenter, and some of Mr Fletcher and Mr Ainsworth's⁵⁶ friends in the enlightened Church and King Club, may possibly

have been instructed, that all Dissenters are Jacobins - and that all Jacobins ought to be swept into oblivion (Taylor's emphasis)... He (Fletcher) then expresses a doubt whether the mildness of these punishments did not operate as an encouragement to the disaffected in the Northern Counties... At Lancaster none of these qualms of compassion were allowed to interfere with the steady march of the law. There only eight were capitally convicted, but even-handed justice consigned the whole eight to the hands of the executioner... It will be recollected that one was a boy (of 13 years of age) so young and so childish, that he called out for his mother at the time of his execution, thinking she had the power to save him.⁵⁷

(It is little wonder that the authorities, especially the government were held in contempt by the mass of working people. These sentences were carried out in April 1812. When, on May 11 Prime Minister Perceval was assassinated in the House of Commons, elation was nationally felt amongst working people. At Bolton Colonel Fletcher complained 'the mob expressed joy (Fletcher's emphasis) at the News'.⁵⁸ In the Potteries a witness heard the news when, "A man came running down the street, leaping into the air, waving his hat around his head, and shouting with frantic joy 'Perceval is shot, hurrah! Perceval is shot, hurrah!'⁵⁹ A crowd in Nottingham celebrated and 'paraded the town with drums beating and flags flying in triumph.' Outside the House of Commons, when Bellingham the deranged assassin was taken away 'there were repeated shouts of applause'.⁶⁰ The conservative Whigs and Tories then, as is apparent from the above, were not at all popular in the final years before the end of the Napoleonic wars.

Nor, indeed were they when the war was successfully concluded. The great hero, Wellington was even one of their own ilk, and even this factor did little to raise their esteem with the masses. During those post-war years the political dimension of working class consciousness continued to increase amongst the working class of the industrial North-West. A spirit of hostility to employers and the authorities was a marked feature of this development. Under the influence of the political reformers many

out of work labourers and weavers began to look with ridicule at the efforts of private charity undertaken by the local elites. "What do the poor want", ran one Bolton pamphlet, "Wages not alms: Work not charity."⁶¹ At Wigan the attitude of the working class was even more direct and uncompromising, declining to receive the local charitable subscription, "using very impious language and observing they would have reform not relief."⁶²

What is interesting is the development in most parts of the region of an intra-class leadership among working people at this particular time, a phenomenon which the local middle classes were to exploit with vigour in the 1830's. However, in these years after the end of the Napoleonic wars the national political leaders of the conservative Whig/Tory party appeared to have no understanding of the possible political advantage such gestures of involvement and interest might procure. This again is in marked contrast to the situation which came about after the 1832 Reform Act was operational, as we shall subsequently discover.

An example of the national leaders apparent ignorance of the political advantages to the party of at least listening and encouraging anti-Reform sentiments amongst the working class leaders came in 1816. At Bolton the anti-Reform working class leadership was Richard Needham, Thomas Thorp and Thomas Ainsworth. The latter recalled in a later letter to the Home Secretary, Lord Sidmouth, an interview he had with him in 1816. At this time he presented to Sidmouth, at the Home Secretary's request 'a statement of the fair average price of labour paid to weavers',⁶³ adding his own suggestions for relief. At the time of the interview, Ainsworth reminded Sidmouth:-

...a petition lay upon the table signed by 20,000 weavers to the Prince Regent. I hope your Lordship will pardon my being plain. I did feel most intensely the slight and cursory manner in which your Lordship overlooked the paper, and the few minutes you took to give a decisive answer to what concerned near a million of souls. Seeing the weekly

earnings you said, "poor things! can nothing be done for them." I replied (feeling as I did, rather too warmly, for which afterwards I was very sorry), "It is as easy as for your Lordship to wind up your watch." After a very few words, laying your hands upon the Weavers Petition you said, "You may tell the Petitioners, I will present their petition to the P. Regent at the Levee on Monday next." Then obeying your Lordships motion, I bowed and left the room. Week after week I was enquired of, if any answer was received? No, No, No, was as often repeated.

It would seem that after this display of ministerial intolerance and, indeed indifference, the 'Loyalist' triumvirate of Bolton became supporters of Parliamentary Reform. For all three of the loyalists spoke in favour of reform - as well as the minimum wage - at a meeting called for the purpose of attaining Parliamentary Reform held at Bolton in late September 1816.⁶⁴

This lack of awareness of the potential importance of political support amongst sections of the working class, indeed the apparent indifference which leaders like Sidmouth attached to it, may serve to illustrate the point we made in Chapter Two. Prior to 1832 the notion of 'party' and what modern political scientists have seen as a pre-requisite of party i.e. a wide political basis of support, was not present. This served to alienate those moderate members of the working class and drew them nearer to the entrenched opponents of the conservative Whigs and Old Tories. What we are suggesting however is that the attitudes of the elites, and of the working class were undergoing a transformation. This environment of attitudinal change affected the urban groups of the industrial North-West profoundly in the years between 1790 and 1832. The Act of 1832 can be seen as a catalyst to changes in the British political culture in that parties became stronger, also they began to integrate social groups into their orbit and it forced the elites to take notice of the interests and orientations of groups the system had previously ignored. Before we describe the activities of the national political leaders during the reform crisis and the effect the Act had on subsequent party

organization, let us end this chapter with a description of the continued growth of the political dimension of working class consciousness.

IV WORKING CLASS DEVELOPMENT IN THE 1820's

At first many working class leaders were reluctant to embrace the 'Jacobin' views of Painite radicalism in the years between 1790 and 1815. Primarily because of the anti-patriotic taint such views engendered. However it would seem that after the conclusion of the war such expressions became widespread amongst the working class of the North-West. This is important because it shows that the working class were developing a political strategy for the attainment of a power to redress their grievances. Whether this manifested itself in the alternatives of either the violent forms of direct action levelled against the 'progressive' mill owners or others of the local elites, or whether it was in the elaboration and the widespread articulation of Painite social and political reforms is of less importance to this thesis than the fact that it existed, and served to politically unite the working class of the North-West.

Of course, throughout the eighteenth century and the nineteenth century, political groups attempted to use working class muscle as a means of intimidating the electors in a given direction. But what is apparent from the 1790's is that this 'Church and King mob' factor is less pronounced. Certain individuals could be bought to inform on their fellow class members, but these were only individuals and this tactic had the effect of underscoring on the one hand the hatred of the government and on the other of how the 'lower orders' had been used as pawns in the past.

This point regarding the united political front of the working class, the development of their own radicalism and the serious political threat being posed to the local and national elites can be clearly seen if we look at the developments from 1818 to 1832. At Blackburn for example in 1819, working class women organized themselves into a Reform Society as a branch of the towns male version.⁶⁵ At meetings of 30,000⁶⁶ working class reformers in the town held on 5 July 1819 the Female Reform Society carried the banner 'Liberty or Death'. Mrs Alice Kitchen called for all working men in the country to join the general union and for universal suffrage, election by ballot and annual Parliaments.⁶⁷ The point that working people would attain redress for their grievances when they had political representatives elected by themselves, in the House of Commons was reiterated by John Knight. He called for a minimum wage, and legislation to back it up, repeal of the Corn Laws and other restrictions of common use. He continued, "As long as our laws are made by men whose interests are so different - if not opposed to the general good - there is very little room to hope for any improvement in our situation, any diminution of our extreme and unprecedented sufferings...nothing less than a radical reform of the Commons House of Parliament will ever produce any considerable diminution of your sufferings or procure any permanent relief."⁶⁸

Knight's remarks were made at a meeting held in Manchester in July 1819. In August there occurred the event which was to serve as a lasting influence upon the British political tradition, especially concerning the politics of the working class. On August 16 there assembled between 60 and 100,000 persons at St Peter's Fields, Manchester to peacefully demonstrate in favour of Parliamentary Reform. The demonstration had been planned for weeks in advance and the authorities in Manchester and in London were apprized of the potential for disorder. Lord Sidmouth agreed that the main speaker, Henry Hunt was to be arrested in the midst of the assembly. All the fear and contempt of the authorities

towards the working class reformers was unleashed on that day. The Yeomanry charged the crowd as Hunt was about to speak, in the ensuing confusion eleven were killed by the sabres of the yeomanry and over five hundred were injured. The mood of one Manchester magistrate and manufacturer was described to John Cam Hobhouse by Francis Place, prior to the attack of August. This gives us some impression of how certain quarters reacted to working class social, economic and political demands.

(These Manchester yeoman and magistrates are a greater set of brutes than you form a conception. I know one of these fellows who swears 'Damn his eyes, seven shillings a week is plenty for them'; and when he goes round to see how much work his weavers have in their looms, he takes a well fed dog with him... He said some time ago that 'The sons of bitches had eaten up all the stinging nettles for ten miles around Manchester, and now they have no greens to their broth.' Upon my expressing indignation, he said, 'Damn their eyes, what need you care about them? How could I sell you goods so cheap if I cared anything about them.'⁶⁹

The charge by the Yeomanry at St Peter's Fields undoubtedly left a lasting impression on the working class of the North-West, but its immediate aftermath had a greater effect on working class radicalism than the authorities could have considered. For the incident served to split the Radical Leadership and their supporters into Constitutionalists (Hunt, Sir Francis Buxton, J T Saxton and others) and 'Ultras' or extremists, (Arthur Thistlewood, Richard Carlile, James Watson etc). The extremists were in the majority in Bolton, Blackburn, Wigan, Oldham and Burnley. The Constitutionalists were in the majority in Manchester, Bury, Liverpool and Preston. However, this split was rendered less significant by the fact that, throughout this development of working class radicalism, the leadership in a national sense had been poor. If sections of the middle classes had sympathy for the plight of the working class and agreed with them in their claims regarding the unrepresentative nature of the House of Commons (especially so after the savagery of Peterloo and

the revelations of the Government spies and 'agent provocateur's) such feelings were dissipated over the Cato Street Conspiracy, when Thistlewood and his colleagues attempted to assassinate the cabinet at dinner early in 1820.

Following the debacle of Cato Street for most of the 1820's working class radicalism was effectively leaderless, except for the demagoguery of Hunt and the radical Toryism of William Cobbett. What is remarkable however, is that the political element of working class consciousness continued to grow in many parts of the North-West. In the years between 1790 and 1820 the emerging working class and their leaders were devoting their energies to harnessing their grievances and industrial claims to wider political mobilization. This was, in a sense, a knee-jerk reaction to the new work processes and the intolerance and injustice they perceived emanating from those classes above them. This was in the tradition of the eighteenth century, and indeed the even earlier perception of the just, or, fair price, of, in essence a leveller tradition. What we can see from 1811, and Knight's manifesto, is the awakening of the working class leadership to other, more subtle and sophisticated strategy. This involved politically educating the mass of the working class as to their real economic position and the exploitative relationship they were involved in under the capitalist factory system. This manifested itself at the time in insurrecting displays of violence, but it was not revolutionary in that these leaders in the main did not wish to destroy the political system but merely to be a part of it. Government coercion was savage, and it did force down the lid on the barrel of rising discontent, but the resentment it left for the pre-Reform political leaders was widespread. What was notable about this period was that throughout the North-West the working class were united in their solidarity - which cut across status and trade boundaries - to defend their living standards. It was this more than anything else which gave the radicals their positions of leadership.

The 1820's up to the Reform Crisis of 1831/2 consolidated this educative process. The growth of unstamped radical tracts - mostly pursuing a republican democratic line on the basis of Paine's writing - was most notable between 1819 and 1833. There was Cobbett's Political Register, Wolley's Black Dwarf, Doherties Voice of the People, The Red Publican, The Destructive, The Pioneer, The Poor Man's Guardian and many, many more. Added to this was the growth of working class literacy and political education associated with the Sunday schools, especially those of the Primitive Methodists. There was also the development of a fiercely independent form of trade union consciousness, with a strong sense of the need for political radicalism. At Stockport for example, the local radical leader Joseph Mitchell reported that the Primitive Methodist chapel was used on the Monday night as a meeting point for working class leaders, on Tuesday for 'moral and political readings'; on Wednesdays, 'a conversation or debate'; Thursday, 'Grammar, Arithmetic etc' was taught. Saturday was a social evening; while Sunday was a school day for adults and children alike.⁷⁰ This work of education as well as being carried on through the medium of the unstamped press and the radical Sunday schools,⁷¹ was also being carried on in the home. In Blackburn members of the Female Reform Society pledged themselves "to use our utmost endeavour to instil into the minds of our children a deep and rooted hatred of our corrupt and tyrannical rulers."⁷² Thus throughout the 1820's, class consciousness was steadily growing and becoming mature amongst the working class of the industrial North-West.

It had been argued that naturally the 1820's as a decade was relatively peaceful compared to the previous two decades.⁷³ But in the North-West this was not the case. Although, as we noted above there were variations in the intensity of feeling in differing parts of the region; and this may be attributed to the 'constitutional' or extreme nature of the radical leadership in

any particular place - a theme incidentally which we shall pursue later in the thesis - but all the working class leadership shared an intense mistrust, not to say hatred, of the national political elite.

Throughout the 1820's in East Lancashire (the towns around Blackburn, Burnley, Accrington etc) the working class appeared to have displayed tendencies of extreme radicalism, that is of the physical force form of direct action against the local elites in positions of power and local manufacturers. Furthermore this seems to have been the situation prior to Peterloo and was maintained afterwards in the climate of the Government's further attempts at suppressing radicalism through the further suspension of Habeas Corpus and the Six Acts. Disputes at Blackburn began in 1823 with the reneging of the masters to keep to the price lists agreed in to 1812 and 1818, at Burnley it was reported that 10 or 15 thousand had gathered for a meeting despite the warnings of the magistrates ordering them not to do so.⁷⁴ By 1826 the situation in East Lancashire had deteriorated further with the trade recession of the previous twelve months. At a meeting of the Blackburn weavers in late March it was announced that out of a work-force of 10,786 town-based hand loom weavers, only 2,807 were in full employment, 6,412 were unemployed and the rest, 1,467 on half-time.⁷⁵ It was also noted that the poor rates were exhausted as was the subscription fund. As to the blame for this situation the working class leaders pointed to the free imposition on power-looms without any taxation of horse-power capacity; the lack of a minimum wage; the lack of a uniform price list for cotton cuts; and finally, (and importantly, for here we have the political element) they blamed the government for the prejudiced operation of the corn laws.

On April 18 a group of manufacturers were stoned as their coach arrived at Syke's power loom factory in Accrington and the First Dragoon Guards were dispatched from Blackburn. On Monday 24 April

a mass meeting was held at Enfield situated half way between Accrington, Burnley and Blackburn, at which delegates from the Weavers Association throughout Lancashire held a conference and then addressed the crowd. Afterwards 10,000 marched to Blackburn as a display of unity and strength. At the time the Blackburn Mail noted, "They came in good order and quietly into the town; about 500 were armed with pikes, several with fire arms (these were called 'captains'); some with large hammers, and the remainder with various weapons."⁷⁶ The effect of these types of demonstrations of working class force should not be underestimated on the psychology of the middle classes and the authorities. Here were 10,000 people armed to the teeth, openly defying the civil and military power of the district. It is little wonder that the local elites felt threatened, for this was no mere demonstration against food shortages, but against the power of the manufacturers. A reporter from the Preston Chronicle gave an impression of the display. "The mob supposed to be about 10,000 had rather a terrific appearance as they marched through the streets, about 300 having pikes on their shoulders, many said to the shopkeepers who were shutting up their shops 'never mind yer shops folk, we shallna meddle whe yo.'"⁷⁷

The following day the attacks on the Blackburn mills began. Messrs Haughton's was visited and all the looms destroyed at the factory of Bannister Eccles not only were the looms broken but explosives destroyed the entire factory. The mills of Feildens were visited as were those of Thorp and Townley, but these were left intact as no looms had yet been delivered.⁷⁸ The same day in Manchester the mills of T and M Harbottle were attacked and all the looms broken, also the factory belonging to Hugh Beaver was attacked and buildings fired, also those of Clegg and Norris at Long Millgate, the foundry of Peel and Williams and Company were attacked and much damage done.⁷⁹ On the Wednesday, Thursday and Friday of that week mills were attacked at Rochdale, Bury,

Helmshore, Edenfield, Oswaldtwistle, Clitheroe, Chorley, Darwen, Wigan and Barrowford near Colne.⁸⁰

That this was a spontaneous outbreak of mindless violence is unlikely. It is probable that the attacks were planned at the Conference of the Weavers Association the previous Monday at Enfield. Thus it is likely that there was a region-wide level of organization intent on inflicting as much damage on the manufacturers as possible.

(On Thursday the 27th at Blackburn the military assembled in force and the magistrates read the Riot Act, in the ensuing confrontation six of the machine breakers were killed. On the same day at Chorley a correspondent of the Preston Chronicle described the scene of machine breaking: "I saw a rioter at work, and the coolness and determination with which they destroyed everything was surprising. There was no appearance of haste, but on the contrary, the greatest serenity." The mob, he said, had come from Blackburn, but that, "there can be no doubt a great multitude of the townspeople were their friends...the women supplied the rioters with stones, concealing the missiles under their aprons."⁸¹

The following week the troubles spread. On Sunday April 30 a mass meeting was held at Tandel Hill near Oldham, and then the factories of Cleggs were attacked, also those of Milne, Travis and Milne. On the Monday the mills of Collins and Lancashire were destroyed. At Chadderton, also near Oldham, the mills of Aitkins were attacked and in the pitched battle with the military, eight rioters were killed. There was a serious riot at Macclesfield and power loom factories were destroyed as far away as Wakefield and Bradford in Yorkshire.

On the Monday of the second week a series of demands were issued to the manufacturers of Blackburn, and they were based essentially

on three points. Firstly it was demanded that a lot of prices be drawn up which would be applied consistently to power-loom weavers, hand loom weavers and cotton spinners. Secondly the use of power looms was to be regulated and employed only in the manufacture of non-intricate cuts, it's status being downgraded to that of semi-skilled work suitable for women and children, the idea here being to control the access to skilled work. Thirdly a tax was to be levied on all power looms driven by steam - this, in order to equalize the conditions of competition, and it was further suggested that some part of the proposed tax could be held in trust for the occasions when the weavers suffered privation due to the downturn in trade. The tax had also a sense of symbolic justice about it in that it seemed to many working people as though the manufacturers were escaping from their obligations of paying a tax, whilst the operatives in their turn were taxed on a whole range of items indirectly, as well as the direct burdens of the poor rate and the church rate. On this occasion all the demands were refused by the manufacturers, and when the magistrates amongst them announced that on that very day news arrived that the King had given a donation of 1000 pounds to the relief fund, for his pains the magistrate was stoned.⁸²

Although a degree of planning is evident on a region-wide scale, there were variations in different districts regarding tactics. At a meeting in Manchester on Saturday April 29 a weaver named Jonathan Hodgins from Stockport urged moderation without violence;⁸³ a man named Aikins from Bolton pursued the same line arguing that petitions and memorials would serve the weavers interests better in the long run than direct action. This kind of working class leadership may explain why there was little violence at either Stockport or Bolton at this time, a point we shall return to later in the thesis.

However it is important to note the apparent closeness of the working relationship between the various textile crafts (hand loom

weavers, power loom operators and spinners) at this time. Indeed, the spinners maintained a strike for two months after the disturbances over the issue of a uniform price list for all textile workers. What is worth stressing is the apparent lack of occupational status differentiation during the disputes of 1826. It would seem that the hand loom weavers did not wish to eradicate the use of power looms or mechanization entirely, but simply to limit its use. This attempting enhancement of the bargaining position suggests that this was not mere Luddism. For example at no time was the mechanized spinning equipment touched. Indeed it is notable that the town of Preston escaped the violence primarily because a uniform list of prices was already in operation and the mills in this town operated power and hand loom weaving with apparent harmony; the former, manufacturing mass produced shirting and the hand loom weavers the fine calicos,⁸⁴ all in the same mill complex. Further supporting the apparent lack of status differentiation at this time is that the various textile Workers Associations in operation all contained representatives from each of the branches of the textile trades, with equal examples given to each. Nor was this trades harmony restricted to the textile trades, the mechanics and other engineering workers sent memorials to London.⁸⁵ Neither was geography a problem, for support and relief to the textile workers of East Lancashire came from Manchester, Liverpool, London and the weavers of Yeovil in Somerset organized meetings and collected funds.

We have attempted to show that there existed among manufacturing people of the North-West a perception, dating from at least 1811, that political rights were required if they were to enhance their class position. This, we would suggest is a sign of rising levels of working class consciousness. Some might dispute this. We have heard a great deal about pressure group demands, rather less of demands for actual political rights. The violent disputes of 1826

were essentially a form of spontaneous pressure group activity centred on primarily economic grievances. But the political element was just under the surface, as the Blackburn Mail bore witness when it referred to those involved in the 1826 dispute as "the disciples of Paine and the blasphemies of Carlile."⁸⁶ The logic of the situation also suggests that a political element was present: here were a large section of the region's population suffering appalling privations due to trade recession and industrial rationalization and the government appeared not to be acting in their interests but in the interests of those groups the working class believed were the cause of their problems, the aristocratic idlers, the place and fund holders, but also importantly the industrial manufacturers of nascent capitalism. Not only this but the Government seemed unwilling, indeed hostile to combating high food prices by allowing cheaper foreign grain into this country and sticking rigidly to the 1815 Corn Laws was protecting one group in society at the expense of another. It is thus only a short step from being able to recognise one's objective class position in economic terms, to forming a political consciousness which identifies the source of the problem as that of the states inability or unwillingness to act or legislate on behalf of those who feel they are being repressed. The obvious solution for the industrial workers, which became apparent from 1811 onwards was to gain working class representation within the institutions of local and national political control. In the local sense this was focused on those ancient institutions of local politics; the Open Vestry and the Select Vestry, and in the national sense on the growing realization of the necessity of the reform of Parliament to include representatives of the working class interest.

What needs reiterating about working class development at this time, in contrast to the subsequent events after 1832 is the homogeneous nature of the working class response. Evidence for this comes from the developing notion of general unionism and in

the way the various trades were able to co-operate with each other. We have noted how, in various parts of the region, the hand loom weavers, power-loom weavers and spinners were able to work together on equal terms. But also many other tradesmen were involved in pre-Reform Act working class politics; shoemakers, hatters, tailors, mechanics, builders, joiners, etc, etc, all of high status in occupational terms and mixing quite freely and equitably with those such as power-loom weavers - of a lesser occupational grade in terms of status.

We suggest that one can gain some idea of the level of working class consciousness and their disaffection with the political elites by examining the responses of those social groups who were directly affected by the increased levels of working class activism, namely, middle classes and manufacturers. It is apparent also that the methods of controlling and containing the activities of the emergent working class which ranged from overt state coercion to conciliation were not functioning well, given the continuing problems the working class posed to the authorities from the 1790's. However, this varied within the region. At Stockport for example overt displays of middle class public and private charity appear to have placated the local working class political leader, William Longson, who only advocated physical force as a last resort. He mounted his campaign around the issues of wage equalization, the re-allocation on equal terms of work between hand and power loom operatives (an early form of work-sharing), reductions of the duties of cotton thread exports and grain imports. At Bolton and Preston similar displays of conciliation also helped to prevent serious confrontations, and Bolton particularly had a reputation for machine breaking and working class political radicalism. By contrast in the Oldham area, the manufacturers resisted all working class demands and serious violence ensued, and, as we have seen, the same kind of development occurred in East Lancashire.

The overall effect of the working class struggles from 1811 through the 1820's; was to induce fear and shock among the middle class. If they had contrived to dismiss the Jacobin 'cranks' and 'demagogues' in the past, towards the end of the 1820's they began to take their threats seriously and lobbied the local and national political leaders for the imposition of effective powers of control. If anything the relationship between the forces of authority (and the middle class and manufacturers of the industrial North West) and those opposed to them (an increasingly articulate and frustrated working class) were not improving as industrial capitalism became more consolidated but deteriorating.

The ease with which the working class could destroy the mills suggests that the mechanism of order and social control were being stretched to breaking point. Apart from sending in military force - which was unwelcome, unpopular and might provide further trouble - there was little the state could do to protect property against a determined mob. There was virtually no regular police force, and all the local magistrates could do was to hope to keep a line of communication with the sources of potential trouble by the use of spies and informants, or sign in special constables, or form a loose and undisciplined local yeomanry and of course keep the national authorities informed. A less coercive means of attempting control was public and private charity, but the sheer state of the recession of the 1820's rendered this inoperable in many parts of the North-West. As we shall show⁸⁷ in subsequent chapters the propertied middle classes and the manufacturers felt threatened by what they perceived as an increasingly violent and 'revolutionary' working class, they felt helpless and confused, and they too blamed the government for its apparent inability to adequately protect property.

Increasingly, the working class of the industrial North-West had abandoned their attitude of social deference and began to develop

a radical set of political solutions. It has been suggested by some historians that nationally the working class as a whole had not manifested a recognizable class consciousness in the early nineteenth century - let alone a revolutionary consciousness. They point out that they had not advanced political theory or strategy.⁸⁸

Indeed some have suggested that they had no political aspiration at all.⁸⁹ In the same vein the agitation surrounding Parliamentary reform in early years of the 1830's, the involvement of the working class is portrayed as merely the tale of a middle class inspired strategy.

Firstly let us examine the arguments that the working class had no political side to their agitation in the period from 1810 to 1830. As we have attempted to show above during the early phase of these struggles from 1810 to 1820's, although the primary aim was the removal of economic impediments to working class independence by exerting pressure and manufacturers and the forces of authority, a political edge did develop as witnessed by the formation of Parliamentary Reform Associations throughout the manufacturing districts of the North-West region. Indeed these associations included branches formed by arguably the most disadvantaged group of all, the women. Although the mass involvement in these associations may have waned and been re-lit during times of trade recession, this does not necessarily mean that working people lost interest in political solutions to their collective predicament. It merely means that probably they were engaged in other things, most notably the very act of working for a living. However, in most of the larger demonstrations of working class grievances, both locally and at a region-wide level, the working class political symbols were to be found; the tricolour, the symbol of the French Revolution of 1789, and the white scarf - the symbol of universal suffrage.⁹⁰ More often than not the speeches delivered on such occasions would include

references to political matters, be it Parliamentary Reform, or the unjust nature of the operation of the Corn Laws, or the acts of repression on the part of local and national governmental bodies. Thus to suggest that during this period the working class had no political aspirations is highly misleading.

We can briefly turn to the claim that working class politics had not developed any sense of political strategy or theory. This is more difficult to disprove but there are signs that an abstract form of political thought based on popular democracy was being articulated and developed amongst wide sections of working people before 1832. This took various forms - from the simple recapturing of lost rights to the calls of William Benbow in 1831 for a month long strike by the working classes during which they would assume control of the nations resources and government.⁹¹ If we have to point to a single work or works by a single author which had the effect of proselytizing the idea of popular democracy amongst the working class, and encapsulated their feelings during the first three decades of the nineteenth century (and indeed beyond), then it would probably be Tom Paine's Rights of Man and Age of Reason (especially the former), both of which date from the last years of the eighteenth century. Neither book, nor indeed any of Paine's work, rank as first class examples of political thought (Burke got much the better of the battle between the two), but on the level of popularizing a series of ideas regarding the abuses inherent within the British political system at that time, he was extremely successful. Paine's call was essentially one in which the people of Britain be given definable and legitimate rights based upon common justice and fairness, in short a call for a Bill of Rights comparable with that of the U.S.A. Simultaneously, the legislature had to be purged of the place-hunting, fund-holding, sinecurists, and the corrupt hangers-on of the aristocracy. Once these had been swept away a popular legislature would be formed based on the mandate of universal suffrage. At the time of Paine's political activities in the

1790's, his ideas received a direct attack, from the conservative Whig Edmund Burke, who had the misfortune to utter two words which inflamed the passions of working people and contributed to their rising dislike of conservative Whiggery and Toryism, when he described the lower orders as the 'swinish multitude', such pejorative language did not endear the starving industrial workers of the ensuing period to the side of Paine's opponents.

In the fifth chapter of the second part of Rights of Man, Paine offers a series of proposals which were to become the bedrock of radical reformism for the next two hundred years. He advocated a reduction of spending with regard to the Army and Navy, abolishing the poor rates, the Church rates and other taxes on the impoverished. Necessary revenue was to be raised by the introduction of a graduated income tax, rising to 20 shillings in the pound for those with an income in excess of 23,000 pounds. Finance raised was to be spent on alleviating and improving the conditions of the poor. A system of family allowance was to be introduced, a state aided system of state education for children, an old-age pension, benefits for newly married couples, a maternity benefit and the building of combined lodging houses and workshops to help migrants and the unemployed. Just how much purchase these ideas gained amongst the working class is difficult to assess, but Paine's works sold very well and it is highly probable that his ideas were explained to many of the working people for whom they were expressly designed.

Paine's works are radical, but they are essentially reformist, albeit couched in the language of republicanism. Nowhere does he speak of economic levelling, or the termination of the basically subordinate relationship between labour and capital; indeed he extols the virtues of commercial and industrial enterprise. Thus, if we are seeking to trace the thread of reformism in the political thought and actions of the British working class in the

nineteenth century, Painite radicalism takes us back a very long way.

This brings us to a further argument - that the working class were used by the middle class reformers to gain them a greater involvement in Parliamentary politics. This view suggests that all working class political activity was merely the tail of middle class led organizations for Parliamentary reform and that the working class actions, during the Reform crisis of the early 1830's were never revolutionary. Again the evidence here is contradictory. Some areas were more active than others, and the activities took on differing forms depending on the area. If one examines the politics of Birmingham⁹² for example, during this period one undoubtedly is aware that the calls for reform and its subsequent organization were firmly in the control of the middle class and the lower middle class. But if one goes to Bolton or Manchester, or Blackburn or Oldham, one sees the same political unions based on the Birmingham model, but firmly under the control of the factory based working class.⁹³ One significant reason why one would not find this situation in Birmingham, was that the structure of capitalistic development differed from that of the North-West. Birmingham certainly had industry in the early 1830's, but there was not a large-scale factory population; it was based mainly around a network of small workshops and 'little masters', unlike the factory towns and cities of the North-West.

The conventional argument⁹⁴ is that the national leaders of the moves for Parliamentary reform - Place, Attwood, Brougham, Parks etc - merely used the threat of working class resistance, and even rebellion as a means of negotiating a settlement suitable for all but the most die-hard defenders of the old system. But the fact is that the Tory and conservative Whig resisters to reform-Wellington, Peel, Croker et al - were well aware of the blackmailing efforts of Brougham and the reform leaders, but quickly realized that once the rebellion or revolution threat had

been put in train the chances of the middle class leadership being able to contain it were very slim. This fact was also known to the working class leaders as well. As the Poor Man's Guardian pointed out in October 1831 during the height of the first phase of the reform crisis:-

...a violent revolution is not beyond the means of those who threaten it, but it is also to them their greatest object of alarm; for they know that such a revolution can only be affected by the poor and despised millions, who, if excited to the step, might use for their own advantage... who would thus (then) have their clear rights and property endangered; (?) be assured that a violent revolution is their greatest dread.⁹⁵

The ministry of the reforming Whigs was well aware of the mood of rising expectations of many working class radicals on the one hand, and, the taunts of the Tories on the other, that they were giving too much away in their scheme of reform. This is why they drew a precise picture of who was to receive the vote and who denied it. This is why the Prime Minister, Lord Grey, said in the House of Lords in November 1831 in an attempt to forestall any leaps in the expectations of the extreme radicals:- "If any persons suppose that this reform will lead to ulterior measures, they are mistaken; for there is no one more decided against annual Parliaments, universal suffrage and the ballot than I am. My object is not to favour, but to put an end to such hopes."⁹⁶ In the immediate aftermath of this statement many of the aspirations of the radicals were dampened, but many of the working class in the manufacturing towns still clung to the idea of radical reform, even after Grey's speech, and they began to take over the organization of the movement from the middle class reformers. As Francis Place noted also in 1831.

The systematic way in which the people proceeded, their steady perseverance, the activity and skill astounded the enemies of reform. Meetings of almost every description of persons were held in cities, towns and parishes, by journeymen tradesmen in their clubs and by common workmen who

had no trade clubs or associations of any kind.⁹⁷

In all the manufacturing towns of the North-West political unions were formed, and as noted above, by 1832, the majority were in the hands of the working classes. Just how this was achieved is interesting, and offers an example of the high levels of working class consciousness and the anti-Tory feeling operating at this time. At Bolton the local Political Union was formed in the Autumn of 1830 and was at this time made up predominantly of the lower middle class 'shopocracy', the small manufacturers and the skilled working man. However, by December 1831 its committee of 25 persons was made up overwhelmingly by what a contemporary source described as 'chiefly working men'.⁹⁸ What happened was that the moderate lower middle class had been ousted by the more extreme working class radicals. The split occurred in October 1831 when the Reform Bill had been thrown out by the Lords after much wrecking and prevarication. In Bolton, a public meeting was called for but refused by the Borough reeve on the specious grounds of the cost to the ratepayers. The situation deteriorated and reached a potentially dangerous point in November when the King issued a Royal Proclamation outlawing Political Unions and banning all political meetings. On November 27 a meeting of the Bolton Political Union was held and attended by the entire committee. Votes were taken and resolutions passed calling for universal suffrage, vote by ballot, and annual Parliaments without either property qualification for the electors or the elected.⁹⁹ At this meeting the shopkeepers and moderate radicals led by William Naisby walked out when a call came to hold an open-air public meeting in defiance of the Royal Proclamation. Thus the council of the Political Union was firmly in the hands of the working class radicals. On the 28th (a work day) the public meeting was held in Bradford Square. In the chair, Thomas Smith, a weaver, opened the meeting by calling for a Painite Bill of Rights, and again reiterated the call for a radical reform of Parliament, whilst at the same time conceding "that all property

honestly acquired be sacred and inviolable.¹⁰⁰ But the cry was also 'down with the Bishops' and 'No Peers',¹⁰¹ thus underscoring once again the Painite influence. At this time the Bolton Union claimed a membership in excess of 4000 and all the members paid a regular membership fee of 2d per month; its total funds by the end of 1831 were put at over 1000 pounds. By the standards of the 1820's and 1830's this level of working class political organization is impressive, and it was to become mobilized to an even greater extent in 1832 when Lord Grey's government resigned and created the so called days of May crisis.

The working class of the North-West believed (wrongly as it quickly became apparent in 1833) that the Reform Bill of 1832 was but the first step in a series of reforms which would restore their political, social and economic rights. Thus it had to be supported at all costs even in the face of discouraging statements made by Grey, Lansdowne and Russell. The Tory opposition to the bill believed in roughly the same kind of scenario: they heard Grey's denunciation of extremists and how he would preserve the rights of property at all costs and further how moderate the claims of the Reform Bill were, but the prevailing Conservative and Tory fear was that to allow one crack in the dam of the Constitution and the 'revolutionary flood would rush in',¹⁰² as the Tory editor of a Blackburn newspaper so graphically put it. Many of the above factors are evident in a letter sent by John Wilson Croker, the former Tory Admiralty chief, to the Home Secretary, Melbourne. However, the most important point to note is that it is apparent from Croker's letter that he claims the working class of the North-West had been mobilized, and that many of them had set off to march to London 'to carry the bill', under the most spurious of pretences.

I think it right to acquaint you that there arrived today in this little village some workmen from Manchester, who, under the pretence of offering some cotton yarn for sale, were strong and sturdy beggars...they told me they had left

Manchester in a considerable body (Croker's emphasis)... The article they had for sale could be of no value to the villagers and it is clearly a pretence. After some conversation...they said they would not go back to Manchester until they had carried the Reform Bill with them - and that there were thousands and thousands resolved upon that -¹⁰³

Two final comments by later historians confirm the view, that at this particular time, working class consciousness was sufficiently high to bring about an open rebellion if not an actual revolution. The first comes from G D H Cole, who said in The Common People "Never since 1688 had Great Britain been so near an actual revolution; never in all the troubles of the next two decades was she to come so near it again."¹⁰⁴ Secondly, the judgment of Edward Thompson. "In the autumn of 1831 and in the 'days of May' Britain was within an ace of revolution which once commenced, might well (if we consider the simultaneous advance in co-operative and trade union theory) have prefigured in its rapid radicalization, the revolutions of 1848 and the Paris Commune."¹⁰⁵ Thompson bases his assessment on the power of the middle class/working class radical alliance, suggesting that the working class response had a strength which had not been seen before. In fact, as we have attempted to show above, working class political development in certain parts of the North-West region was even in advance of this. As witnessed by the way their leadership dispensed with the lower middle class dominated political unions and took over their organizations, advocating a much more working class orientated set of aims and objectives.

The Tory and Conservative opposition certainly expected trouble, indeed revolution. The Duke of Wellington personally supervised the preparations in the case of an attempted seizures of Strathfieldsaye, his country home.¹⁰⁶ Croker arranged for ships in order that his family and friends may flee the country,¹⁰⁷ and even the unflappable Peel began to arrange his own private army at Drayton.¹⁰⁸ The usually taciturn Francis Place - of the leaders

of reform but no friend of revolution or indeed radical working class politics - noted in May 1832 in a private letter

We were within a moment of a general rebellion, and had it been possible for the Duke of Wellington to form an administration the thing and the people would have been at issue... Barricades of the principle towns - stopping the circulation of paper money...(in short) it would have been an act of the whole people to a greater extent than any which had ever before been accomplished.¹⁰⁹

Rebellion or revolution was prevented on the one hand by the reformers moderate national leadership being able to convince the working class that the Reform was merely the first stage in a series of reforms designed to rectify social and political imbalances. On the other this process was assisted by the statements of national leaders like William Cobbett who suggested that half a loaf was better than none. Also it should be noted that violent revolution was not essentially what the working class actually wanted. What they did want was those placed socially above them to witness their plight and to see their point of view. In this sense revolt could only occur as a last resort. But the situation was getting very serious as incidents at Derby, Nottingham and Bristol revealed. However, in the final analysis it must be said that it is probable that a general insurrection would only have to have been forced on the working class by the intransigence of the 'diehards' and Ultra Tories. Basically, it appears that even at this high level of working class consciousness the working class wished if possible to follow the reformist path and this ran deep in the British radical tradition.¹¹⁰

However, working class consciousness was operating at a very high level in the pre-Reform period. There also appears a strong sense of intra-class political unity coupled with a developed sense of political awareness in a class sense; there was also a will to advance the interests of the class in a political sense and there

was a will to act on behalf of those interests. Here we see the beginnings of a working class based programme for political and social change based on a crude, but effective form of political theory linked to popular democracy and an economic theory based on co-operation. Finally there was a sense of mass unity without the sectionalization inherent within intra-class status differentiation. In the five or so years after 1831/2 however, this high level of working class consciousness was to fragment, and we suggest it never reached a comparable level of intensity for the next fifty years. For, although class consciousness did rise during the first phase of the Chartist years, from 1838 to 1842, changes in the structural relations between capital and labour coupled with the subtle changes in the nations political culture in the years between 1832 and 1842 meant that Chartism never looked likely to succeed in dramatically and radically changing society in comparison to the potential the working class had in 1831/32. This distinction between the two phases of activity is based on comparing on the one hand the fears perceptible among those social groups above the working class in the early 1830's with those of the early 1840's, and on the other hand of the relative inability of the authorities to control a dangerous situation in 1831/2, and their ability to control Chartism between 1838 and 1842. It is the consideration of how this situation began to change after 1833, and further how inter-class relationships began to improve and how the initiative was seized by the predominantly middle class groups that concerns the rest of this thesis.

SUMMARY

In this rather long chapter we have attempted to show the nature of the relationship between the ruling conservative Whigs and Tories towards the working class on the one hand, and on the other we attempted to set down the political attitudinal development of

the industrial working class from the 1790's to 1832. We looked in some detail at the prevailing historiography - particularly of the Hammonds and Edward Thompson, and embellished this with our own findings in order to assert that the working class were becoming more politically conscious during this period, and further that this was a feature of their rising levels of class consciousness. We also suggested that the Tories and Conservatives, both nationally and locally recognized this development and, by 1831/2 became increasingly concerned as to its outcome. This story may have been told before, but it was necessary here in order to contrast these developments with what occurred after 1832. Thus much of the analysis and explanation can be viewed as a foundation or basis for comparison with what will follow. For in the 1830's the Conservatives particularly began to radically reformulate their attitudes towards the working class of the northern districts.

However before we elaborate further on describing this process and its consequences for the Conservatives, their party and the working class, we must return to explaining the situation the Conservative/Tory party found itself in after the passing of Reform, and further how the national leadership undertook to change the organizational structure of the party.

1. Blackburn Alfred 8/1/1835.
2. For example see The Morning Chronicle of 1/2/1835.
3. Anon Truth and Treason! or a narrative of the Royal Procession. British Library.

4. Quoted in E P Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class, London 1978 edition p.159.

5. The Life of Romilly Vol. II London 1842 p.537.

6. Fletcher to Portland 3/4/1802, H.O. 42.65.

7. Quoted in J E Cookson, Lord Liverpool's Administration 1815-22, London 1955 p.143.

8. Vol II Croker Papers Peel to Croker 18/3/1820, Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. For a discussion of the growth of the pressure of public opinion see also P Hollis (Ed) Pressure from Without, London 1974.

9. J and B Hammond, The Skilled Labourer, London 1919.

10. S Bamford, Passages in the Life of a Radical, Manchester 1844 and, Early Days, Manchester 1859.

11. Hammonds op.cit. p.2.

12. See for example P Gaskell, The Manufacturing Population of England. London 1833.

13. Hammonds op.cit p.3.

14. Ibid.

15. bid. p.1.

16. S J Chapman, The Lancashire Cotton Industry, Manchester 1954 (ed) p.46.

17. See for example E P Thompson, 'Time, Work-Discipline and Industrial Capitalism' in Past and Present No 38, 1967. Or the same author's 'The Moral Economy of the Eighteenth Century Crowd' in Past and Present No 50, 1970.

18. Hammonds op.cit. p.311.

19. Hammonds op.cit. p.223.

20. F O Darvall, Popular Disturbances and Public Order in Regency England, London 1934.

21. Ibid p.174.

22. E P Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class, London 1963.

23. Thompson op.cot. p.629.

24. Thompson op.cit. pp.631-636-7.

25. Thompson op.cit. p.647.

26. Ibid. p.657.

27. Thompson op.cit. pp.657-8.

28. H(ome) O(ffice) reference 42.47. John Singleton to Portland.

29. Ibid. We do have some figures as to the membership, which was high in the 1790's, see Thompson op.cit. p.460.

30. Singleton to Portland op.cit.

31. House of Commons Journal 5/3/1800.

32. Ibid.

33. 39 and 40 George III c90.

34. H.O.42.50. Justice Bayley to Portland, no date.

35. H.O.42.50. Ainsworth to Peel no date.

36. Ibid. 12/3/1801.

37. Yates to Peel, H.O.42.61. 14/3/1801.

38. H.O.42.62.

39. H.O.42.62. Fletcher to Portland.

40. H.O.42.62.

41. Ibid and H.O.42.65.

42. House of Commons Journal 25/2/1813.

43. In total 477. 1s 6d was raised, the larger donations came from Ainsworth's (Bolton) 75. 0s Od. Horrocks (Stockport) 31. 0s Od. J B Spencer (Manchester) 10. 10s Od. and Sir Robert Peel 31.10s Od.

44. The Times 28 May 1808.

45. Annual Register for 1808, p.63 (Chronicle).

46. H.O.42.95. Handbill, enclosed in letter dated 2/6/1808.

47. H.O.42.95. 15/6/1808.

48. H.O.42.108. August 1810. Handbill.

49. Ibid.

50. H.O.42.197.

51. H.O.42.117, 25/5/1811 and Hansard 24/6/1811.

52. Knight's paper was forwarded to the Home Office by Ralph Fletcher H.O.42.117, Fletcher to Ryder, 21/11/1811. For more on the activities of John Knight in the 1820's, 30's and 40's see J Foster, Class Struggle and the Industrial Revolution. London 1974.

/53. H.O.42.117 op.cit.

54. See for example E P Thompson op.cit. pp.515 to 628 or L M Mumby, The Luddites, St Albans 1971 or M I Thomis, Newton Abbott 1970.

55. See W Moor, The Blackfaces of Bolton, Bolton 1839.

56. Richard Ainsworth a prominent Bolton Tory magistrate and large-scale manufacturer.

57. The Letter of Dr Robert Taylor. Reference No B323-Z Blac. Bolton Reference Library.

58. A Prentice, Historical Sketches of Manchester, Manchester 1851 p.46.

59. F Peel, The Rising of the Luddites, Chartists and Plug Drawers, 1895, reprinted, London 1968 pp.156-7.

60. A Briggs, The Age of Improvement, London 1959 p.157.
61. H.O.42.154 26/10/1816.
62. H.O.42.153. Byng to Sidmouth 15/10/1816.
63. H.O.42.197.
64. H.O.42.154, Fletcher to Sidmouth 7/10/1816.
65. Manchester Observer 10/7/1819.
66. The journalist reporting the meeting estimated the crowd at 'between 30,000 and 40,000 were present'. Ibid.
67. Ibid. There were also Female Reform Societies at Ashton, Bolton and Stockport. Mcr Observer 17/7/19.
68. Mcr Observer 10/7/1819.
69. Quoted in Thompson op.cit. p.751.
70. Quoted in Thompson op.cit. p.788.
71. Most, if not all of the Sunday schools in Lancashire in the 1820's were 'radical' or non conformist, the Anglican church did not open Sunday schools for working class children until the late 1830's.

72. Manchester Observer 10/7/1819.
73. See Thompson op.cit. pp.781/2.
74. Thompson op.cot. p.760.
75. Preston Chronicle 25/3/1826.
76. Blackburn Mail 29/4/1826. The seriousness of this outbreak should not be undervalued, it had enormous impact in London with the authorities. The Times reported on April 25 that 'the City was thrown into much alarm by intelligence that the working class at Blackburn and its neighbourhood had broken out into actual violence.' It was deemed serious enough for a full cabinet council to meet on a Saturday and a Sunday morning to 'devise measures for the restoration of tranquillity in Lancashire.' Something which had not occurred since the end of the wars in 1815. The Home Secretary, Robert Peel informed the Duke of York as commander of the Army, who in turn informed the King in a long session on Sunday afternoon.
77. Preston Chronicle 29/4/1826.
78. Blackburn Mail op.cit.
79. Manchester Mercury 29/4/1826.
80. Preston Chronicle 29/4/1826 and Blackburn Mail 6/5/1826.
81. Preston Chronicle 29/4/1826. This determination also caught the attention of the military. One officer described the situation at Helmsore. "When the military discharged their rifles, a working man assaulted them with stones, and walked deliberately away; this he did repeatedly after the soldiers had

fired, and retreated snapping his fingers in their face. This daring behaviour made one of the officers exclaim. 'Had I a company of such determined fellows as that, I'd storm Hell and make the devil prisoner.'". The Times 4/5/1826

82. Preston Chronicle 6/5/1826.

83. Manchester Mercury 6/5/1826.

84. See for example K M Spencer, Social and Economic Geography of Preston M.A.Thesis University of Liverpool, 1968 pp.50-58.

85. See for example the letter from the mechanics of Blackburn to Sir Robert Peel 9/4/1826 H.O.44/16.

86. At the time the disturbances were regarded as having a political element. See letter in Blackburn Mail 14/6/1826.

87. See for example the memorial sent by the manufacturers of Blackburn to Sir Robert Peel, British Library Ad Ms 40501 ff 139 "...the outrageous proceedings of the rioters, at the periods referred to and the disastrous consequences resulting from their ignorant and inveterate hostility to mechanical improvements..."

88. For example see H Pelling, The History of British Trade Unions, London 1963 or H E Musson, British Trade Unions 1800-1875, London 1977.

89. Musson op.cit. or M I Thomis and P Holton, Threats of Revolution in Britain 1789-1848, London 1977.

90. See J R M Butler, The Passing of the Great Reform Bill, London 1914 or A Briggs, The Background of the Parliamentary Reform Movement in Three English Cities, Cambridge Historical

Journal 1952. Also see Preston Pilot 1/12/32 or Bolton Chronicle 8/12/32.

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91. See A J C Ruter, 'Benbow's Grand National Holiday' International Review of Social History, 1936 p.27.

92. Briggs op.cit.

93. See Blackburn Alfred, 22/10/1832 or W Brimlow, A Parliamentary History of Bolton, Bolton 1880.

94. See D C Moore, The Other Face of Reform, Victorian Studies, September 1961, or M Brock, The Great Reform Act, London 1973.

95. Poor Man's Guardian, October 1831.

96. Cited in Thompson op.cit p.892.

97. British Library Ad Mss. Place Papers 35148, October 1831 Place to Grote.

98. W Brimlow, Political and Parliamentary History of Bolton, Bolton 1880.

99. Bolton Chronicle 5/12/1831.

100. Ibid.

101. Speech of Walter O'Carrol, Bolton Chronicle op.cit.
102. Blackburn Alfred 21/1/1832.
103. Croker to Melbourne 18/5/1832. Vol. 26 of Croker Letter Book, Croker Papers, Clemont's Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.
104. G D H Cole and R Postgate, The Common People, London 1938.
105. Thompson op.cit. pp.898,899.
106. The Times, 18/5/1832.
107. Croker Papers 18/5/1872. Letter to Lord Hertford, Ann Arbor. University of Michigan.
108. Ibid. Letter to Peel 11/11/1831.
109. Place Papers British Museum AD Mss 27 295, ff 26/7.
110. See Thompson op.cit. p.889.

CHAPTER FOURTHE RE ORGANIZATION OF THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY
AFTER 1832.

As we have seen in the last chapter how the relationship between the attitudes of the Tory party after 1789 appeared inherently hostile to the interests of the emergent working class of the manufacturing districts. We also saw how this indifference, indeed hostility on the part of the governing elites created much resentment amongst the emergent working class of the North-West. We also noted how the rising class consciousness and increased political radicalism of the working class was a source of anxiety, if not fear, on the part of the middle classes.

We noted, in the second chapter, the archaic and essentially loose organization and structure of the Old Tory/conservative Whig coalition, and how, in organizational and functional terms, they could scarcely be defined as a party according to the set of criteria we described in Chapter One. In the current chapter we aim to show how this situation changed at the national level in the wake of the Reform Act. But first we must describe what the basic structure was in the 1820's. This was based around the Parliamentary party with virtually no organization in the country whatsoever.

I THE SITUATION BEFORE 1832.

Essentially the reason why the Tory party had no organization outside Parliament - and very little inside it - was that, as the party of government they had no need of formal organization. The method of managing elections not to mention public opinion - in the pre-Reform political world was by personal influence. This personal influence may have the policies pursued by the government (or opposition) at the centre of politics as its basis, but the influence itself was located at the local level. This was usually held by the leading greater or lesser aristocratic families of a given constituency. In the vast majority of cases the political shade of the leading families determined the political shade of a constituency's Parliamentary representation. It was very rare, therefore, for elections to be decided on the presentation of the difference of opinions of the competing candidates over political issues. Indeed it was very rare for a hotly contested election to be held at all, the norm was for those intent on becoming a member of parliament to reach an agreement before the election to avoid the disruption and expense of a contest. In case a contest was called between two rival political groupings, the government always had the advantage of being in possession of office and of the 'Treasury Chest', of which more will be said later.

In fact constituency representation before 1832 was grossly unrepresentative of population density and differing centres of interest orientation, especially the 'new' manufactures of textiles and engineering. More than half of the 204 English boroughs before 1832 were concentrated in Wiltshire and the sea board counties from Norfolk to Gloucestershire. Wiltshire and Cornwall had more boroughs than all of the eight northern counties. This gave the maritime and agricultural interests predominant influence in the House of Commons. The franchise in

these boroughs varied in a loose and haphazard way. In certain places - such as Preston - there were the Scot and Lot, or Potwalloper franchises which conferred basically universal suffrage. Elsewhere, the vast majority of boroughs were made up of electors of the holders of certain privileges, certain tenement rights or even only members of the Corporation who handed down this right in primogeniture. Most electorates were small and their registration was unnecessary because imposters would quickly have been detected. Meanwhile in the counties and the Scot and Lot boroughs, voters could prove their qualifications by producing receipts for the payment of land tax or local rates.

In the boroughs with small electorates the patron could use money or territorial power to secure the return of candidates according to his wishes. John Wilson Croker (chief secretary to the Admiralty in the Liverpool ministry) estimated in 1827 that 276 out of 658 seats in Parliament were directly at the disposal of landed patrons and that 203 of these were under Tory control; eight peers alone controlled 57 seats¹

The existence of the nomination boroughs, and of the patron, gave a particular character to English politics before 1832. Since political power nationally had become centred on the House of Commons, and power in the House of Commons depended on votes, political groupings or individuals could buy votes or seats on the open market, as it were; the 'pocket' or nomination boroughs thus became "the instrument by which the Government of the day maintained its majority"² This was necessary precisely because the authority and discipline with which we associate the modern political parties was lacking before 1832. The price the government paid to the patron was occasionally in money, but more often in the form of political advancement and jobs in the public services for the patron's relatives and dependents. When George III attempted to build up a political grouping of his own he too was forced to become "the first of the borough-mongering

electioneering gentlemen of England.³

The nomination boroughs which existed in the North-West before 1832, were Chester under the control of the Grosvenor family, a seat at Preston held in the interest of the Earl of Derby, one of Clitheroe's seats was controlled by the Earl of Brownlow and the other by Viscount Dustanville, and one of Lancaster's seats was held by the Earl of Longsdale. In the south of Lancashire one of the seats at Newton were owned by T P Legh, whilst the seats at Wigan were shared jointly by Sir Robert Holt Leigh and the coal owner J Hodson. Thus in the twelve borough seats of the county before 1832 only one seat from Lancaster and the two Liverpool seats were open to contest, the other nine being closed. Of the seven the Tories held five to the Whig's four.⁴

Thus it was in the open boroughs that much of the money was spent to bribe or treat or influence electors and non-electors. This was one Tory argument against the Reform Bill - that it would have the effect of increasing both venal activities and expense. An example of the Liverpool election of 1830 will serve as an illustration of the point. Charles Greville, the Whig diarist reveals the nature of the contest.

The Liverpool election is just over... It is said to have cost near 100,000 pounds to the two parties, and to have exhibited a scene of bribery and corruption perfectly unparalleled; no concealment or even semblance of decency were observed; the price of tallies and votes rose, like stock, as the demand increased, and single votes fetched 15 pounds to 100 pounds a piece. They voted by tallies; as each tally voted for one or other candidate they were furnished with a receipt for their votes, with which they went to the committee, when through a hole in the wall the receipt was handed in, and through another the stipulated sum handed out..."

"Here comes the difficulty of reform", went on Greville, "for how is it possible to reform the electors?"⁵ We shall argue later in the thesis that in the manufacturing districts of the North-West

the electors were comparatively incorrupt after 1832.

According to the prevailing theory of electoral representation before 1832, variations in the franchise allowed the representation of differing sections of the community. Thus the opinion of the towns could be declared in the open boroughs, and the county members represented agriculture. Therefore the manufacturing interests were 'virtually' represented in the boroughs controlled by rich manufacturers and merchants. Ingenious arguments were put forward by the Tories and Conservatives to show that the bill of rights had been drawn up mainly by the representatives of nomination or 'rotten' boroughs, and that the House of Brunswick owed its possession of the throne to the votes of these boroughs. It was said that representation was, and should continue to be based on property and wealth and not on numbers.⁶

Given such a basis of representation the government had no need of any formal organizational structure in the country because they had such a large advantage in the nomination boroughs and in the counties. One example of the influence they pressed on their supporters is given in a letter from Lord Liverpool to the Earl of Longdale, a prodigious collector of boroughs in Cumberland and north Lancashire, one of whose nominees, Sir James Graham sat for Cumberland.

The conduct of Sir James Graham unfortunately produces the worst effect, for he seems to have a satisfaction in showing his resentment to the government, not less by the manner of his opposition than by the opposition itself... If your feelings and opinions concur with ours...may I request of you to use your influence with those who are connected with you...⁷

In terms of support in the press to guide and influence political opinion, individual parties - as distinct from Governments - had virtually no control prior to 1832. One of the most important

aspects of the political history of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was the growth of the power of the press, and of its political influence. In the early nineteenth century Whigs and Tories indiscriminately complained of their inability to control the press to their own satisfaction. In 1815 Lord Liverpool wrote to Lord Castlereagh that he could not get any journal to support either the Corn Bill or the income tax. "I can assure you that I am fully sensible of the injurious effect which must result from the general line of present politics taken by our daily papers...there are no papers over which we have any authority, or even any influence on which we can depend."⁸ In 1827 the Ultra Tories complained loudly that the newspapers had totally abandoned them, and that most of the press (apart from the radical unstamped press) was supporting the coalition ministry of Whigs and moderate Tories formed by Canning in April. However, the leader of the Ultra's, the Duke of Wellington, did not help matters by showing his open contempt of those connected with the press, as Lord Ellenborough noted in his diary in 1830, "We have neglected the press too much. The duke relies on the support of 'respectable people' and despises the rabble; but the rabble read newspapers."⁹ However, as we shall discover, this too was a situation which began to change after 1832. Having thus noted that formal organization in terms of party was not required before 1832 we must contrast that situation with an account of the struggle for Reform and the dramatic effects the Act had on British political culture after 1832.

II THE CONSERVATIVES AND THE FIRST REFORM ACT.

One of the most important functions of the political party and of the press is to inform, educate and influence the public. Before 1832 there had been examples of pressure being brought to bear on a ministry from outside Parliament, the most striking probably

being the campaign against slavery and the question of the removal of Catholic disabilities. But these questions, even though mobilized largely from outside, only began to apply real pressure on the government when they were debated inside the House of Commons. Even then these issues did not become 'party' issues but attracted widespread cross-bench support and opposition. The proposed Reform Bills of 1831/2 were the more serious for the Conservatives and Ultra Tories for they served to galvanize the Whigs and Liberals into a serious party and the Conservatives into what appeared to be an entrenched party opposed to any reform whatsoever. Further, this impression was held by the vast majority of those holding political opinion in the country at large. Toryism, as was the case between 1800-1820, was once again being seen as the party of knee-jerk reactionary opposition to what many regarded as a long overdue reform.

The outside pressure which the agitation for reform built up in the country, and especially in the manufacturing districts, was unlike anything seen previously. This was especially disturbing in that there appeared to be an alliance between the middle class reformers and the working class radicals. The outside agitation began in early 1830, when in January, Thomas Attwood founded the Birmingham Political Union, the example was quickly followed by other urban areas. By November, Greville was recording the scenes in London

"It was expected last night that there would be a great riot, and preparations were made to meet it. Troops were called up to London, and large body of civil power put in motion... The Duke of Wellington expected Apsley House to be attacked and made preparations accordingly, at Temple Bar a body of weavers with iron crows had been dispersed."¹⁰

Later in November 1830, Greville states the situation was becoming desperate, and, most alarmingly for the elites more, and more of the working class were becoming involved.

The state of the country is dreadful; every post brings fresh accounts of conflagrations, destruction of machinery, (and) association of labourers... Cobbett and Carlile write and harangue to inflame the minds of the people... Distress is certainly not the cause of these commotions, for the people have patiently supported far greater privations than they have been exposed to before these riots.

Also in November 1830 there was a change of government. When defeated on the Civil List Wellington resigned and the Whigs under Lord Grey formed a ministry pledged to a measure of Parliamentary Reform. Let us briefly recall the progress of the Reform Bill and then consider the Conservative arguments against, for these to a certain extent also fashioned their response to the need for re-organization. The new Ministry formed a committee to examine reform proposals and to submit a scheme to Cabinet, the committee was made up of Lords' Russell, Duncannon, Durham and Sir James Graham. On March 1, 1831 Russell laid the ministerial proposals before the House of Commons. They proved to be more drastic than even the most sanguine of Radicals had dared to hope. The first feature of the Bill was the disenfranchisement of sixty boroughs of less than 2000 inhabitants, who returned in total eighty members. The net reduction of the House of Commons was to be 62 seats. Also there was to be a drastic simplification of the voting qualification. In the boroughs there was to be a 10 pounds qualification of rateable value held in property, though existing freemen and members of corporate boroughs were to retain their franchises. In the counties copyholders were added to the old 40 shilling freeholders. The Bill passed its second reading by a majority of one. However, before it was committed, a motion was carried by a majority of eight that there should be no diminution of the total number of representatives for England and Wales. Upon this rebuff the ministry decided upon a immediate appeal to the country; on April 22 Parliament was dissolved by the King, and amid the widest excitement a General Election was held.

The Whigs were returned to power with a majority of 136, and, although the Conservatives and Tories fought the Bill for two months in committee, by the end of September it was sent up to the Lords. In the Lords, after a weeks debate the Bill was unceremoniously kicked out. It was this action which brought the country the closest to open rebellion. There were serious disturbances at Bolton, Manchester, Blackburn and Oldham, and even more serious rioting at Derby, Nottingham, Worcester, Coventry and Bristol.

Parliament re-opened on December 6, one week later Lord John Russell introduced the third Reform Bill, on this occasion with some important alterations. The disenfranchisement clauses were decidedly less vigorous, and were based primarily on the number of inhabited homes in a given town, whilst still retaining the 10 pounds property qualification. But more importantly, the numbers of the House itself were left unchanged from the previous Bill. The Bill passed rapidly through its stages in the Commons, and once again was presented before the House of Lords just before the end of March 1832.

The stalling mechanisms utilized by Lord Lyndhurst in an attempt to frustrate the ministry succeeded in that the Cabinet as a body advised the King to create as many peers as might ensure the success of the Bill in all its essential principles. The King refused to coerce the Lords and the Ministry once again resigned, with the House of Commons expressing its confidence in the retiring ministry by a large majority, and once again the country was thrown into confusion and agitation. The King turned to Lyndhurst, then to Manners-Sutton, and then to Wellington in an attempt to form a ministry. Only the Duke was will to try but everything depended upon Sir Robert Peel, the leader of the Conservatives in the House of Commons, but Peel refused. The King recalled Earl Grey with Wellington promising to withdraw his opposition. The battle was won. The opponents and waverers in

the House of Lords withdrew and on June 7 the Bill received the Royal Assent.

Let us briefly state what the main arguments of Conservatives and Tories were to the bill before expanding on the effects it had on then as a party. The most basic argument, and one on which all the others rested, was that the Reform Bill would destroy the political harmony and stability that had existed throughout most of the eighteenth century. For many Conservatives and Tories the Bill that gained the Royal Assent in June 1832 was seen as a great betrayal. To a significant extent, as we shall discover later, this attitude really depended upon certain assumptions about the possible changes the Bill might produce. Thus Peel's main arguments was that despite the protestations of the Whigs that the measure was final and irrevocable, it would be merely the first stage of a series of reforms. It could not be a final settlement, because the precedent had been set: the Tories and Conservatives believed this as did the working class radicals. Many conservatives were willing to go some way towards redressing the anomalies inherent within the old system, especially with regard to the large urban areas. However, many Tories believed they had been betrayed by that aristocratic class of political leaders who had pledged themselves to maintain the fundamental nature of English constitutionalism as laid down by the settlement of 1688. The thing that kept the Conservatives united - for Peel had no liking for the Ultras - was the sheer scope of the Whig Bill. Many Tories blamed the 'base and bloody Whigs', but also the pressure exerted by the rising middle classes in the manufacturing districts. Many, including Peel, saw in the passing of the Bill not only the dismantling of the old constitutional system, but the dawn of a new political era. This would be an era in which it was believed intense political struggles would be manifest; bitter divisions would occur between political parties, between classes and between differing economic and religious interests. These last included the agricultural as opposed to the manufacturing

interest, the urban versus the rural, protestantism versus catholicism. In general terms the Conservatives and Tories argued that the constitution had remained intact even though there had been occasions of political conflict in the eighteenth century primarily because of the placatory and consensual effects of the political settlement of 1688 with each branch of the legislature and executive; Monarch, Lords and Commons, independent and able to check the possible excesses of the others. The Reform Act, they argued, would wreck the old order, and to a significant degree their prognostications were correct. Less committed observers held similar opinions. Writing in 1831, John Stuart Mill, who could never be described as a Conservative said that England was in a 'transitional condition'. He believed that there were no persons to whom "the mass of the uninstructed habitually defer;...they ancient bonds no longer unite, nor do the ancient boundaries confine."¹¹

For the Conservatives and Tories the situation was perceived as being serious indeed, even though in the long-run-in to the first General Election under the terms of the Reform Act, the Tories at least attempted to enter the contest with a certain sense of bravado, as the diarist Greville noted:-

The Tories evidently expect that they shall re-appear in very formidable strength, though in particular places the Tory party is entirely crushed; the sooner it is so altogether the better, for no good can be expected from it, and it would be for the better to erect a Conservative party upon a new and broader basis, than try to bolster up this worn-out, prejudiced, obstinate faction.¹²

However, in order to plot the remarkable recovery of the conservative party after 1832 - because in fact Greville's predictions were well borne out at the elections of December 1832 with the conservatives amassing a mere 150 members - we must attempt to understand the perceptions of those who genuinely believed that England was on the very brink of disaster and indeed

revolution, because of what the tenets of the Reform Act exemplified. As we noted earlier, the Bill was perceived as being merely the first stage in a range of sweeping reforms which would destroy the very foundations of British political stability. These reforms included the gradual eradication of the political privilege which the property qualification exemplified in the old system, and the destruction of the nomination boroughs which the Tories regarded as essential to stable government and also as the breeding ground of future political talent. But most damaging of all was the apparent dismantling of the three planks upon which the British Constitution rested. These were: firstly prescriptive rights of the monarch; secondly the fundamental independence of the House of Lords and Commons; and thirdly the predominance of the Established Church of England. It was the perceived threat of the eradication of these constitutional prerogatives which, after the passing of Reform, served to weld the Conservative party into what was essentially a new and viable political opposition, both inside and outside Parliament. The Tories became part of the Conservative party - though they did retain their identity as we shall discover - not from any great admiration of Peel as a leader (for they regarded his policies with deep suspicion especially after Catholic Emancipation) but because there was nowhere else for them to go. This coupled with a profound hatred and fear of reforming Whiggery forced them to take the Conservative Whip.

It is one of the many paradoxes of British political development that, in seeking above all else to maintain the existing political system, the Tories and Conservatives created a fundamentally new and far reaching political dimension. For it is one of the main contentions of this thesis that the type and effects of the Opposition the Conservatives engaged in after 1832, was a major contributory factor not only in the development of the modern political party, but also in the shaping of Britain's emerging political culture.

III THE CONSERVATIVE'S ORGANIZATIONAL RESPONSE

When viewed from the perspectives of the political scientist and the political sociologist - which incidentally this period seldom has been - the 1832 Reform Act stands as a watershed in British political development. If, as we contend, the 1830's saw the consolidation of the organized parliamentary party, with its attendant disciplines and controls, also the widespread recognition that political parties could be the vehicles of legitimate political opposition to the Ministry of the Crown, then the period also saw the dramatic growth of political organization in the Localities. For the Conservatives in the regions and in the Localities, as well as at the centre, the actions of the reforming Whig government and the Liberal progressives - the perceived threat to the Constitution - acted as a spur for improved organization in the Localities and saw a heightened sense of party political rivalry in the sphere of Local government. As Derek Fraser, a historian of local politics during this period, has pointed out,¹³ Local politics were used by the major parties as merely a pawn in the wider political game of attracting support and gaining power, as a means to an end in the wider political constituency. However, it should not be forgotten that local politics often provided bitter contests, divided down party lines for the exercise and pursuit of power '...from the 1830's onwards.'¹⁴ But the terms of the Reform Act itself, and indeed, the Municipal Reform Act of 1835, forced the revitalized Conservative party to organize itself on a permanent basis in the localities in a way that had never been necessary in the past. However many local and national political leaders continued to demur as to the disruption, cost and agitation such contests would produce. Also of concern was the ability of the opposing groups to mobilize their forces and take advantage of the annual process

of registering of electors, which meant that a local party caucus had to be operational at all times. Concern was also felt about the Act in a politico-cultural sense, in that political attitudes became hardened and most local institutions, from the Court-Leet, Corporation, Vestry, Improvement or Police Commissions to the election of Church Wardens and Poor Law Officials, became politicized.

However, let us at this stage consider the organization of the Conservative party at the centre in the immediate aftermath of the passing of the Reform Act. As we suggested above, the party at the centre felt it necessary to organize opinion against what they regarded as the dangerous tendencies being displayed by the Radicals and the more extreme Whigs. During the General Elections of 1832, 35 and 1837 the chief constitutional questions of national importance which the Conservative party pressed included the rule of the House of Commons, the preservation of the privileges of the Church of England and of the Monarch, the maintenance of the independence of the House of Lords, law and order and the protection of the rights of property. In order to mobilize opinion in what was in reality a hostile political environment in the innovation-orientated years immediately after Reform, supporters had to be convinced and rallied to the Conservative side. The supporters, drawn from all grades in society and comprising of both electors and non-electors, were needed in order to capture (or re-capture) a newly municipalized borough, or an improvement commission or a Board of Guardians, as a necessary first step to eventual Parliamentary control. In order that this might be achieved, the various types of supporters had to be galvanized into presenting arguments and answers in favour of the central tenets of Conservative thinking. This last point was again significantly new in that for the first time a party was attempting to present its general ideological principles as applicable to not just those in positions of social, or educational or political status, but to the nation as a whole.

This was important in that, if the Conservatives were to survive the post-Reform years, they had to show their opponents as well as those of moderate political opinion that they meant what they said: that Conservatism - unlike Toryism - was representative of the nation as a whole, of all sections and interests of society, and not just of the privileged elites, agriculturalists or the county squirearchy. Thus it was that local editors of the provincial press in the manufacturing districts gave much publicity to the various social groups - especially the working class - who supported the Conservatives: partly to embarrass the so called 'popular' parties of the Liberals and radicals, but also for the reasons outlined above. As the editor of one of the Lancashire papers noted in 1837.

There is no surer sign of the advance of constitutional opinions, than the increase of Conservative societies, and particularly among the operatives. How potent an answer it is to those contemptible charges which are so fondly and fervently directed against us, and how fatal to the assertion that we possess no hold over the affections of the people.¹⁵

In July 1832, after the Act of Reform had received the Royal Assent, Alfred Mallalieu, the editor of the London based Public Ledger and Guardian, suggested to Lord Aberdeen, one of the leaders of the Conservative party, that the new situation created by the Reform Act required the adoption of new tactics and techniques of electioneering.¹⁶ He argued that this was especially important in the boroughs, which, with the concentration of the middle class vote, potentially presented the conservatives with their most serious threat. This was in line with what most leading conservatives believed. Their argument ran that the replacement of the old nomination boroughs by those representative of the interests of manufacturing and commerce would eventually swamp the House of Commons, and render the lower house nothing better than an assembled group of delegates dictated to by the new growing forces of the towns and cities of the Midlands and North. This would benefit the Whig/Liberals, and, in

the words of the Duke of Wellington, keep "their rivals the Tories out of power for ever." (Wellington's emphasis)¹⁷ It was believed (correctly) that the landed interests in the county constituencies would still be predominant in the House of Commons, at least for the first few years after Reform. (Of the 165 seats reallocated under the terms of the Reform Act, only 62 were to be allotted to the new boroughs). However, Mallalieu went on to argue that the landed predominance would in the long-term be challenged by "the superior shrewdness, tact, intelligence and untiring activity of the trading representatives."¹⁸ He argued that: "The slow and easy process of county and former borough electioneering ought not to be applied to these new interests", and suggested that the old type of election agents formally employed to manage the elections in the localities were now virtually useless. What was now needed, argued Mallalieu, were men representative of the interests of the electorate existing in the boroughs, able to match the Attwoods, the Humes, the Bowrings and the Pearson's, and to further the new broader basis of Conservatism and the Conservative party:

Men who by their connexions and well judged combinations would enable the party powerfully to influence the town elections; who by their ultimate acquaintance with the habits, prejudices, opinions and wants of particular places and districts would be able to point out the fitting sort of candidates, willing to undergo the expense and labour requisite, supported as they would be by a skilful arrangement and bringing to bear all the elements of Conservative and aristocratic influence existing in and about the towns, in aid of their own resources among the more independent portion of the community.¹⁹

In the case of Bolton, Blackburn, Bury, Clitheroe, Lancaster, Preston, Rochdale, Warrington, and Wigan this is precisely what happened as we shall subsequently discover.

Mallalieu suggested that a permanent organizing committee be formed comprising of twenty four persons with an ex-cabinet

minister as chairman,²⁰ to manage and superintend the elections from London. Half of the committee was to be made up of Conservative members of Parliament, and half to be representative of the commercial, shipping, distributive and manufacturing interests. He further suggested that:

the committee would of course sub-divide themselves according to the portions of the Empire where each could operate most effectively. Active and extensive correspondence would be opened... Candidates on the spot would be assisted and encouraged. Where these were wanting, candidates possessing the requisite qualifications would be provided from metropolis, in some instances at their own cost entirely, in others with some small aid from the common fund.²¹

The members of the committee argued Mallalieu, should not be treated as people of inferior consequence, remembering that, under the working of the new Act, "The middle and lower classes have acquired so tremendous an accession of power as can only be comprehended and managed by and through parts and portions of themselves. This is the new blood of which I speak."²² The committee members should be given ready and confidential access to the party leadership. He suggested that it was only by drawing together the bonds of common interest between the lower classes, the middle classes and the aristocracy that the Conservative party could perform its duty and recover from the effects of the Reform Bill. This, he argued was especially important in the urban areas not normally associated with Conservative principles. "The most dangerous portion of the new constituency will undoubtedly be that of the towns, it will also be the most difficult to manage."²³

It appears that Mallalieu had been of service to the party in the past, as in 1831 it was on his suggestion to Lord Stuart De Rothesay and the Duke of Wellington that the Carlton Club be formed in order "to invite the Conservative party to reconcile the ultra and liberal sections."²⁴ It was here that the Organizing Committee operated after the disastrous results of the first

elections under the terms of the Reform Act in January 1833. There is not enough evidence to suggest that Mallalieu's advice about the wide social mix of the Committee was acted on completely but his memorandum was remarkable because it detailed the means by which the Conservative party must transform itself if it was to survive. Mallalieu was basically correct in his assessment of the changing nature of Britain's political culture in the aftermath of the Reform Act. He foresaw the need of a large political party able to integrate differing social groups - regardless of their social station and their respective interests - into the party's structure. This was a point which was not lost on Sir Robert Peel, the leader of the party. As he wrote to the earl of Harrowby early in 1833 "...the vast mass of mankind of the highest as well as the lowest station, cannot be disregarded in politics."²⁵

Mallalieu also saw the necessity for the party to be able to direct opinion and to control and influence members and supporters in a new and original way. Mallalieu himself was editor of the party-owned Public Ledger and Guardian, but also acted as leader writer for several newspapers including, United Services Gazette, and the Surrey Standard, whose articles served for Leicester, a Blackburn and a Dover paper also, all under one London managership and proprietorship.²⁶ This tells us much about the party's gradual moves towards centralizing the distribution of information to the localities after 1832, as well as how it began to control the provincial press, an important point we shall return to.

In deference to Professor Gash,²⁷ and other historians, who argue for the continuity of the political order after 1832, we can admit that the system was not eradicated immediately after the Reform Act. The social make-up of the House of Commons remained essentially the same, there still existed nomination boroughs, corrupt candidates and electors. But as we shall argue below, utilizing the terms coined by Tom Nossiter,²⁸ it was "the

politics of opinion" as well as influence and the offering of treats which rapidly gained importance in the urban setting. In many ways the post-Reform political system was still archaic but attitudes were changing, and, in terms of plotting the modernization of the political party, Mallalieu's memorandum to Aberdeen is important because in it we see the beginning, the germ of the modern political party. Indeed, Mallalieu himself believed his work to have been important. Writing some twelve years later to Lord Aberdeen he indulged himself in a piece of unashamed self-advertising:

"And may I be pardoned for telling Sir Robert (Peel) that, when the history of those times comes to be written, the truth will not be told if it be not stated that I was virtually the sole-founder of the party under its present title of Conservative and not Sir Robert as assumed. His was doubtless the greater work of construction on the foundation I laid. Your Lordship did me the honour to approve, and to bear to the Duke of Wellington, my memoir on the necessity of re-constructing and re-uniting the party, still unreconciled from the Emancipation question, with the means and applicancy (sic) suggested to the end, which led to the meeting at the late Lord Rosslyn's at St James's Square and the establishment of the Carlton Club with other measures.²⁹

Let us examine what measures were put into effect immediately after the Reform Act was carried. By 1833 the Organizing Committee of the Conservative party was meeting (usually) weekly at the Carlton Club. The original committee had been formed the previous year. It comprised John Charles Herries, Charles Arbuthnot, William Holmes, Sir Henry Hardinge, Sir John Beckett and Lord Lowther and it met at the house of the former Chief Whip Joseph Planta in Charles Street, hence the somewhat derogatorily name of the 'Charles Street Gang'. By 1833 the Carlton had been formed and the committee had undergone a change of personnel in the wake of the disastrous Conservative results under the terms of the new Act. The chairman of the committee was Lord Granville Somerset and the party's treasurer was Sir Henry Hardinge but the most significant new appointment was that of Francis Robert Bonham

who acted, as Professor Gash has noted, as the first full-time 'political secretary' of the Conservative party.³⁰ Effectively Bonham acted in what we would now term the capacity of national party agent. His primary task was to collect and collate information from all localities, and importantly, keep the national party leadership informed as to the state of party feeling 'out of doors', and also the level of party strength and organization.³¹ Bonham, it must be stressed, did not seek to interfere in local party autonomy - this would have been a profound mistake - but he did send out regular information sheets, points of advice and, on occasions specific directives in the form of gentle prods to the organizers in the localities. There are several examples of the type of information Bonham received and dispensed. The first dates from 1836 when the elections of 1837 were pending. (Bonham to Peel 1836)

Lincoln is in fact I believe to be quite safe, at least for Stott-Ellis, but it will certainly require some money, at most I hear 1000 pounds...Mahon, who is now at Strathfieldsaye would easily ascertain the feelings of the committee at Finsbury which is cheaply organized.³²

(Bonham to Peel 1837)

Sussex seats winnable. At all counts it will require the whole Conservative strength to be organized and put forward with will and energy to ensure success. The whole influence of the court is arrayed to support (the Whig) Dalrymple who is not popular... In fact the previous victory was achieved solely by the good management of the Conservative Association which was formed here two years ago. You will not be surprised that this association is now (Bonham's emphasis) on the wane and requires very extensive support.³³

Or again another example of information being conveyed from the localities to the leadership in London, this time from the Member for Liverpool, Lord Sandon to the chairman of the Organizing committee, Lord Granville Somerset:

I understand that you are collecting information from all parts of the country as to the feelings of the electoral bodies and the chances of the elections, in case such should take place. In Liverpool itself, my opponent Thornley has implied that he will not come forward again, and if no other Conservative candidate were proposed it is clear, that there would be no contest... There is certainly an improved feeling in the town...the vileness of Lord Durham has alarmed men of property; and the squabbles and unsteadiness of the late government has disgusted and alienated men of all parties. Ewart (The Whig) has certainly lost some hardy supporters among the better classes. Francis Egerton is considered quite safe for South Lancashire: if two Tories are not proposed even then the chances would still be in his favour, and two Tories are possible but not likely. Of Warrington and Wigan you will have heard ... (The earl of) Wilton told me again of four (that is eight the balance might be reckoned on in Lancashire in case of a dissolution, and the best information I could gain this estimate is not over-rated.³⁴

Meanwhile, Sir James Graham wrote to Bonham in October 1840 simply to say that: "I have no news for you except that the reports of the Registration in North Lancashire is excellent and makes both (Graham's emphasis) seats quite secure."³⁵ Finally a letter from a Mr Sidney in 1839 gives an illustration of the kind of assistance Bonham and the committee was asked to provide.

Can you tell me the politics of Sir Hy. Maud?, and can he be got at in any way. He has taken the brewing interest of one Thompson...which will give him great influence especially over the public houses in that district, which heretofore have been used against us, and if it could be turned in our favour would make considerable difference in the county election (they say 30 votes) and probably in the town also:- Sir John Reid is Maud's partner, perhaps it might be managed through him.³⁶

Thus we see in the activities of Bonham, Granville-Somerset and the Conservative party Organizing Committee the beginnings of a central organizing body. Admittedly, it was not until 1867/8, and the work of John Gorst that the Central Office was officially created and the various Conservative clubs and associations centralized into the National Union. However, we can see that from 1833 and the formation of the various associations and clubs

(of which more will be outlined in further chapters) and the Organizing Committee at the Carlton, that the Conservative party had embarked upon the first stages of becoming a party in a modern sense.

Another element regarded by political scientists as essential in the organizational structure of the modern political party is a central fund to be used for matters relating to elections and the publicizing the party's position regarding its policies and basic principles. Modern parties - of Government and Official Opposition - receive funds from the state, but this merely covers cost at a General election. For the period between elections these parties rely on subscriptions from the broader membership, but also from key individuals and groups who feel the need to forge a closer affiliation with the party they believe best represents their interests. In the early decades of the nineteenth century - as indeed was the case in the eighteenth century - the financing of elections was usually left to the individual candidates in the various localities. They would either expend the money out of their own pockets, or would be supported, in the case of a nomination borough, by the local patron sympathetic to the principles of the party, or would raise funds by subscriptions donated by the parties local supporters. Similarly, election petitions, brought by the aggrieved losing candidates in a bid to prove electoral misdemeanour, would be financed locally. However, by far the most normal method of finance in the years immediately before and indeed after 1832 was for the candidates to fund themselves. This of course ensured that those with the most property at stake, that is to say the wealthiest, maintained their political interest and representation in the House of Commons.

The actual outlay could be enormous. For example, Lord Francis Egerton, the member for South Lancashire (a seat with its preponderance of manufacturing made it a target seat for both

Whigs and Conservatives) complained to Sir Robert Peel in 1837. "Having spent some 10,000 pounds on two elections and having a majority to show... I should be sorry to see one or two Whigs ship into such a representation from the mere want of candidates on our side."³⁷

One eminent historian of early nineteenth century politics, Arthur Aspinall, suggested³⁸ that no such thing as the party chest existed after 1832. However, we now know that a central fund was available for various political purposes after 1832. In the run-up to the first election held under the terms of the Reform Act, Alfred Mallalieu wrote to Lord Aberdeen of the need to mobilize the press in a campaign to make clear to the public precisely what Conservative principles were as opposed to the intransigence of the Ultras and Old Tories. "The rumours were that two or three millions were subscribed by the Conservative party for the press and the forthcoming elections. I was encouraged by the late Lord Frank to search for money which would be used to begin a newspaper which would press for moderate Conservative principles."³⁹ There were occasions when the party utilized its election fund for singling out prestige constituencies for special effort, if only in order to show their opponents and supporters alike the strength of the party. South Lancashire, as we noted was one such prize, but in this instance - for Egerton was the inheritor of the Bridgewater millions - the party fund was seldom needed. Other places were different, one such prize was Dublin, the headquarters of the Irish repealer, Joseph O'Connell, so too was the traditionally radical Westminster. In 1837, the party's treasurer, Sir Harry Hardinge wrote to Peel that the party had allocated "... 2,400 pounds for Dublin City and 3,300 pounds for Westminster - the Candidates and their committees must do the rest."⁴⁰

After the elections had been concluded (successfully in the case of Westminster) Hardinge sent Peel his personal assessment of the

places which had received special attention and funds. At Westminster, where, in 1837 the former Ultra-Radical, Sir Francis Burdett was standing as a Conservative, Hardinge wrote to Peel:-

I do not think the local committee were well managed on our side - but our young men of the Carlton, about 120 divided into districts, were at their posts before 7 o'clock, urging the voters who had promised to the poll, and before the result could be known, the great mass had voted for Burdett... What a strange situation is politics - Palmerston voting for a Radical - Burdett seated amongst the Tories - and democratic Westminster by its will concurring with Burdett, that the Constitution, Parliament and Church are in danger.⁴¹

Of these targeted seats probably the most expensive, paid entirely out of party funds was the by-election in Dorset during the height of the Reform crisis in early 1832, when, it was estimated 30,000 pounds was spent on getting the opponent of the Reform Bill, Lord Ashley elected.⁴² Although a central fund existed, only very few of the party's leaders knew of its existence. The reasons for the secrecy were two-fold. Firstly it was unwise to allow the opposition the opportunity of casting aspersions about the uses such a fund could be put to, and secondly in reality no party could undertake to assist, still less totally maintain, candidates in every contested constituency. To allow such a fund to be widely known - for it was still the prevailing belief that men of property should pay for their right to sit in the legislature - would have probably provoked disappointments, jealousies, and suspicions that would undoubtedly have injured the party more than money would have assisted.

As we noted above, Sir Henry Hardinge was the treasurer of the party, and it was he who sent out circulars for subscriptions to the party's wealthy elites. The decision on what money's should be spent on which given objects was left to a sub-committee of the Organizing Committee: this might be termed the Finance Committee. It comprised Hardinge, Sir Thomas Freemantle, (the party's chief

Whip) Lord Rosslyn (who looked after Scottish interests), Viscount Stormont (who looked after Irish interests), Lord Redesdale (the chief Whip in the Lords), and Sir George Clerk, the leading Whip in the Commons. However all large withdrawals would need the authorization of the party's two leaders, Wellington and Peel.⁴³ A selection of the subscription lists drawn up by Hardinge are to be found in Appendix One, but a list of the funds subscribers for the 1837 serve to show how much individuals were willing to subscribe. The Duke of Newcastle headed the list with 2,000 pounds: the Duke of Wellington and Lord Lonsdale each subscribed 1,000 pounds; among the others were Lord Brownlow with 300 pounds, Earl Howe 300 pounds, the Earl of Ripon with 100 pounds and Lord Ashley, 10 pounds.⁴⁴ Indeed some contributors appear to have paid their subscriptions or pledges by instalments, in 1833 Sir Benjamin Durban paid a total of 2,400 pounds in such a manner.⁴⁵ So did a Dr J Erik in 1835.⁴⁶ At the election at Windsor in that year, Hardinge wrote the following memorandum which proves that the Carlton committees did have funds available for electoral purposes.

An agreement was made upon honour that Sir J Gully should undertake the contest for Windsor and to incur an expenditure of 500 pounds. Beyond that amount the necessary aid (pecuniary) was to be afforded by the Carlton Club, Sir J G has fulfilled his part of the contract, and more than doubled the personal expenses above stated; and therefore claims the fulfilment of the other part; so must many demands arising out of the election.⁴⁷

The election fund therefore appears to have been used to assist a limited number of candidates who, from their personal circumstances or official position, seemed to deserve exceptional support. In 1837, for example, the Conservatives of Manchester, unable to find a suitable candidate locally, sent a deputation down to the Carlton Club to meet Sir Henry Hardinge and attempt to find a strong candidate, and some finance to break the hold of the Manchester Liberals.⁴⁸ Hardinge advised W E Gladstone, but

Gladstone would only stand 'in absentia' having already agreed to fight Newark for the Duke of Newcastle. However, even with Gladstone not willing to visit Manchester, he still polled well over 2,000 votes, thanks to the liberality of the funds made available both locally and from London.⁴⁹

Part of the money used on elections would be for the bestowing of treats on electors and non-electors; also arranging for travel and the canvass and, of course, the local and national agents. Bonham had his own team of agents who he sent out at periods of electoral activity. In 1837 he wrote to Peel that the West Midlands were being supervised by one Forster.⁵⁰ In the North-West his agent was an unsuccessful barrister named Charles Wilkins,⁵¹ more of whose activities we shall be describing later. In Ireland, Bonham and Hardinge had also a team of agents, Enius McDonnell, David O'Croly and Edward Fitzgerald.⁵² Bonham also had the use of the local agents; Richard Backhouse at Blackburn, Thomas Yates at Preston, Robert Sowler at Manchester and so on. He also liaised with the local agents controlled by other leading members of the Conservative party. A Mr Lawrence, who acted for Lord Ellenborough in North Gloucestershire and Worcestershire;⁵³ in Wiltshire, Joseph Neeld; in West Gloucestershire and Monmouthshire a Mr Wyatt acted for Lord Granville Somerset;⁵⁴ for North Lancashire and the Borders a Mr Lamond who acted for Sir James Graham.⁵⁵ All these were useful in gaining valuable information regarding the state of the register and of political feelings generally. However these men acted as party organizers - before an election, during the course of an election and if required, afterwards with the petition. All this required money, and, in certain circumstances if this was lacking locally, the central fund could be utilized. There were also the various local associations and clubs which existed not just at election times, but permanently, and these too required organizing, and for Bonham they were useful suppliers of information. Also this growth in the support of Conservatism after 1836 required the use of

initiatives covering a range of activities: for example in the sphere of propaganda like the use of pamphlets written in the Conservative interest to enable supporters to rebuff the arguments of the opposition and to induce a sense of camaraderie among the party faithful.

This was another area in which the party's funds were disposed - in the publicizing of the party in various ways through the medium of the written word. Most of the subscription lists drawn up by Hardinge - shown in Appendix One - were moneys to be paid for the writing of propaganda and publicity pamphlets by the party's Irish expert Enius McDonnell. Similarly, another pamphleteer, Edward Fitzgerald itemized the cost of sending out material to Sir Thomas Freemantle, the party's chief whip and member of the finance sub-committee at the Carlton. It was the Anti-Corn Law League who, it was believed first utilized the power of personalized printed message, but the Conservatives were operating in a similar fashion several years previously. For example in 1837 they spent 384 pounds 9s 4d for 46,000 circulars and 10,000 pounds for the Westminster election, and again in 1838 410 pounds 10s 7d for 51,000 circulars and 65,000 lithographed enclosures.⁵⁶

However, by far the most important and urgent area for action by the Conservative leadership if the aftermath of the demoralizing defeat of the Reform Bill, and the torrent of ill-feeling and public indignation which rained down upon them, was to present the Conservative message - both nationally and locally - through the medium of the press. Before 1832, the Liverpool government had utilized part of the Secret Service fund to purchase newspapers in Ireland, this in order to control and direct public opinion in that much troubled nation. But the experiment does not seem to have been attempted on mainland Britain. During the Reform Crisis itself not one single major London newspaper supported the Tories.⁵⁷ Even as late as 1834 Croker was complaining to Peel that the London papers were in the main hostile and asked the new

Prime Minister: "Who is to manage your press (for) managed it must be; and by a Cabinet Minister too. I think Herries is your best man for this."⁵⁸ However, what Croker was probably unaware of was that John Charles Herries, a former Cabinet Minister under Wellington, had attempted to establish Tory/Conservative influence over the London press one year earlier in 1833, through buying the influence of an unscrupulous former editor named McEntagart. This had proved a disaster with the party losing well over 3,000 pounds to silence McEntagart who threatened to take his story of how the Organizing Committee had attempted to buy off editors and reporters⁵⁹ since 1830. Nor was this disastrous attempt the first and only occasion that the party had attempted to control a section of press and laid itself open with dealings with men like McEntagart.⁶⁰ In Herries' words such men had 'hugely inflated power as to the intimate workings of the party.' Writing to Charles Arbothnot (a former Chief Whip) in November 1834 he lamented.

You know the whole story and can judge as well as I can what this scoundrel has it in his power to do...all that this fellow may chose to say, truly and falsely, of the doings of Charles St.⁶¹

However, the Conservatives relations with the press did improve and this was a result of good fortune and hard work, rather than nefarious intrigue. The hard work was undertaken by Peel who, behaving with frankness and candour during his 'Hundred Days' won over many influential journalists. It was also due to the Duke of Wellington and Lord Lyndhurst - the former a well-known hater of the press, who by late 1834 had recognized the error of their former views. In November 1834 when the Conservatives formed their Ministry, Wellington and Lyndhurst approached the editor of The Times, Thomas Barnes with the object of securing the support of the journal. On 19 November Barnes put on paper the terms on which he would assist the Ministry. The Reform Act was to be allowed to stand unaltered, as were the other measures of reform

passed by the Whigs, and there was to be no change in foreign policy, but Wellington who believed that The Times could not be influenced declined to pledge himself to such a policy, especially in view of the fact that Peel, the new Prime Minister was abroad at the time and unaware of the negotiations.⁶² But even though no treaty was actually entered into, The Times did give its cordial support to the Ministry in the latter's short and somewhat chequered existence. Another factor in swaying The Times over to the side of Peel's moderate conservatism was the secession of Lord Stanley and Sir James Graham from the Whigs over the issue of Irish Church reform. Barnes was a close ally of Stanley's, and when the latter pledged his support for Peel's Ministry without actually joining it - although he and Graham were asked - Barnes followed suit.

In the provinces, as we noted from Mallalieu's memorandum, the Conservatives made major inroads in their attempt to influence moderate opinion. In the North-West there were several Conservative newspapers; two in Manchester; the Courier, and the Chronicle, the Bolton Chronicle, the Blackburn Standard, the Preston Pilot, the Wigan Gazette and the Oldham Chronicle. Most of the newspapers took their editorials direct from London, written by men like Mallalieu, James Fullerton and Enius McDonnell and others, and financed partly out of funds supplied by the Carlton.⁶³ Indeed specific groups, such as the working classes were singled out for special attention. After the Conservative party took office in 1841 negotiations took place between Sir Thomas Fremantle and William Painter, the editor of the Church of England Revue over the issue of a new weekly paper called The Journal of the Working Class, designed to popular taste and expressly designed to counteract radical influence. Fremantle suggested to Peel that if he thought the paper likely to do good, they could give Painter 1,000 pounds or 2,000 pounds to meet initial expenses.⁶⁴

Nevertheless much of the central organization endeavoured to draw together the scattered threads of the party, it should not be forgotten that the main conduct of political affairs in the localities was in the hands of local men. It was, inevitable that this should be so given the very recent nature of political organization after 1832. Local knowledge, local opinion and influence, and local support and subscriptions were, as we shall discover shortly, indispensable for the work of electioneering in the distant counties and boroughs. In their efforts to mobilize the press - especially the local press - the Conservative leadership realized this. One manifestation of this was the way in which the party leadership attempted to address themselves to those of less elevated social position - in effect pandering to popular tastes and emotions. One example was Peel's *Tamworth Manifesto*, which we shall mention shortly, but another, and equally relevant, was his speech at the Merchant Taylors Hall in May 1835. Not only was this a party political speech but also a subtle change can be detected from the overtly aristocratic Tory party of pre-1832, to a more middle class orientated party of post-1832. Peel said:

We deny that we are separated by any line or by separate interests from the middle classes. Why, who are we? If we are not the middle classes ...it is because we owe our elevation to those...principles of moral conduct that we have a right to say that our interests, and theirs are united... Why the very charge brought against myself disproves such an insinuation. What was the charge? That the son of a cotton spinner (great cheering) that the son of a cotton spinner had been sent for to Rome to make him Prime Minister of England.⁶⁵

This view - held by those of the highest status within the party - that conservatism should address itself to those social groups who previously had been known as zealous opponents of the Conservatives and Tories was based on two complimentary factors. Firstly the precarious position of the Parliamentary Conservative Party in the wake of the General Election of 1832/3 necessitated

the broadening of the party's appeal. It had to become more flexible in the presentation of policy arguments to different social groups. It also needed a more expansive organizational structure. Secondly, there was the genuinely perceived fear amongst many Conservatives that the great cities and the manufacturing districts were the seed-beds of extreme radicalism and democracy. In the language of the time this was termed the revolutionary 'movement' - the very objects of which, as we pointed out in chapter two, Conservatism was pledged to oppose. One method of countering the effects of popular radicalism was to attempt a form of popular Conservatism, and, many argued this could best be achieved through the utilization of the press in the localities.

In July 1835, these factors were drawn together in an influential article the Conservative journal Blackwoods Edinburgh Magazine entitled 'Conservative Associations', and written by the great Tory historian Sir Archibald Alison.⁶⁶ The article called for the widespread formation of Conservative associations to act as, "a barrier against the forces of anarchy."⁶⁷ But the article went further and called on prominent Conservatives in the industrial areas to embark on a programme of political education amongst the working classes. It demanded to know:

How is this information to be conveyed to these classes? How is the truth or political knowledge to pierce the dense and cloudy atmosphere of our great manufacturing cities... It is here that Conservative Associations might operate efficaciously in aiding the cause of truth. The part they have to perform is to organize the means of sound constitutional journals among men of moderate principles, and thereby confirm those already gained and make converts among the disaffected.⁶⁸

Alison went on to suggest that local Conservatives should purchase the local journals and newspapers, "with a view to their diffusion, at an under-price, among the persons of an inferior grade."⁶⁹ However at the same time it warned the local Conservative leaders not to under estimate the political

sophistication of the working classes:

And, in making the selection, let them avoid the common error of supposing the working classes can understand nothing but works expressly intended for their illumination. There never was a greater mistake; they should be addressed by the same arguments as are deemed fit for their superiors; and, if only they can be got to read them, truth in the end will work its way in the humblest class as well as in the most elevated.⁷⁰

Thus, we see that the Conservatives at the local and national levels were attempting to organize their party and wider public opinion in the years immediately following the Reform Act, and in ways which had never been attempted before.⁷¹ In chapter two we outlined eleven criteria which the political scientist would look for as evidence of a modern political party. We can now see that the Conservatives after 1832 had gone some limited but significant way to fulfilling them. They had for example become aware of the need for recruitment of the local as well as the national political leaders; the party began to play a far larger role in the organizing of elections than had previously been the case. The party's national leadership began to outline policies alternative to those of the Whig government and also, through Peel, began to aim for party support of disparate social groups and individuals than had ever been the case before 1832. They began to disseminate their basic political principles on a far wider scale through the medium of the press than had occurred previously, they also attempted to impose a more disciplined aspect to the marshalling of their supporters and members. Finally - and this in an area we shall be concentrating on in later chapters - they gave a sense of legitimacy to those groups who they attempted to politically integrate into the orbit of Conservatism, as opposed to the politically and socially unacceptable principles and actions of the radicals.

In this chapter we have looked at Conservative party organization at the centre. Let us end by examining what the essential reasons

were which made such activity so vitally important to the Conservative party. Basically there were three reasons; firstly the activities of the Whig reformers and the Liberal progressives, secondly the loose nature of the Conservative party's organizational structure and finally the perceived growth of extreme radicalism among the working classes.

In the mid 1830's there seems to have been a genuinely held fear that the Whig reformers were going too far in their attachment to 'progress'. From 1829 and their defeat over the question of Catholic Emancipation the Tories and Conservatives felt the Whigs and Liberals were not only out to destroy them as a political force but were seriously endangering the Constitution. According to the view of most Conservatives in the 1830's, the Reform Act was a final and irrevocable act of appeasement to the popular clamour for reform - although arguably many Ultra Tories did not believe it was irrevocable. Similarly, it was believed by many Conservatives that any further drastic changes in the political constitution, especially in relation to the independence of the House of Lords and the position of the Established Church should be resisted at all costs. Increasingly throughout the 1830's, Peel and the Conservative front bench opposition sought to gain political advantage, both in Parliament and outside, at the expense of the Whig ministry. In the years 1834, 1835 and 1836 the front line of this attack was in the House of Lords, and it was to Peel's credit that he imposed the discipline of the party on the fiercely independent minded Ultras in the House of Lords. Peel faced real problems here. He had to maintain the central and ideologically binding constitutional principles of Conservatism as they had evolved from the theoretical abstractions of Burke and the conservative Whigs of the early 1800's. But also he had to concede the importance, after 1832, of the second chamber as an independent senate, whilst at the same time promote the rights of an elected House of Commons; for the Commons had the sovereign and prescriptive right to see that its Bills remained in some

semblance to their original form at the end of their passage through the Lords. On some occasions, it appeared to Peel that some of the Tory Lords were guilty of the charges laid at them by the Whigs. Throughout 1835/6 they disrupted Commons business to such an extent that virtually nothing was being sent up to the Lords for fear of being altered beyond recognition or being thrown out altogether.

Peel's problems here were three-fold. Firstly the Peers were beginning to lose the Conservatives the practical political benefits, in terms of the widening basis of support which their organization had built up in the constituencies. The Whig/Liberal charges that the Peers were intransigent was beginning to appear correct. Secondly he feared that the Whigs could be forced by the actions of the Lords to react by creating a host of new Whig peers thus destroying an important element in the Conservatives strategy of opposition, and, into the bargain destroy the independence of the Lords which above all Peel wished to preserve. Finally, as we noted above, he had to maintain and promote the right of an elected House of Commons to legislate on behalf of the nation as a whole. What the improved organization of the Parliamentary party achieved for Peel was that he was able to impose the discipline of the party on the recalcitrant and suspicious Tories not only in the Commons, but eventually in the Lords also.

This brings us to another reason why organizational reform was required for the party. This was that, although the fear of Whig extremism was a very real threat and did indeed serve to weld the conservative forces together, the fact was that in the aftermath of the Reform Act the party was very loosely bound together in a formal structural sense. There were still factions sitting on the conservative side of both the Commons and the Lords. There were as we have noted Ultra Tories, who, by varying degrees opposed all efforts of political innovation. There were more moderate Tories who had a faintly Liberal tinge and looked to the revered memory

of the younger Pitt for solace and guidance. There were radical Tories who wished to formally ally the party to the radical working classes in an effort to halt the 'pushy' middle classes who had gained their wealth from commerce and manufacturing, and of course there were the Conservative Peelites who advocated moderate reform whilst still preserving the tenets of the Constitution. The improved nature of the organization allied to the work of Lord Granville Somerset, Sir Thomas Fremantle and others in the Whip's office plus the fear of Whig reforms held these varying factors together. So too did the apparent success of the organizational changes outside Parliament which seemed to be pulling the party around from facing virtual extinction in 1833, to a party of Government in 1835, and, gaining electoral support in the most unexpected of places, such as the manufacturing districts of the North-West.

The final reason for necessitating a change in the organizational structure was concern on the part of the middle classes, as well as of Conservatives, about the growth of extreme and dangerous radicalism, especially amongst the urban working classes, (though not solely them as the Swing riots of the agricultural labourers in 1831 testified). In our next chapter we shall begin to examine the nature of Conservative party involvement and organization in the localities but let us end this chapter with an extended quote from Sir Robert Peel in a speech he made at the Merchant Taylors Hall in 1838, which in many ways encapsulates what this chapter has sought to explain.

My object for some years past, that which I have most earnestly laboured to accomplish, has been to lay the foundation of a great party (Cheers), which, existing in the House of Commons, and deriving its strength from the popular will, should diminish the risk and deaden the shock of a collision between the two deliberative branches of the legislature - which should enable us to check the too importunate eagerness of well-intentioned men, for hasty and precipitate changes in the constitution and laws of the country, and by which we should be enabled to say, with a

voice of authority, to the restless spirit of revolutionary change, 'Here are thy bounds, and here shall thy vibrations cease.' Gentlemen I was deeply impressed with a conviction of the necessity of forming such a party from the period when a great change was made in the representative system of the country ... Gentlemen, that conviction led me to the conclusion that it was necessary...by assuming a new position, (and) by the rejection of the old tactics of party, suited to other times and adapted to other circumstances--that it was desirable to form a party whose bond of connexion should be the maintenance of that particular measure of reform, but a determination to resist further constitutional changes.... There had lately been exhibited to the empire those events in France, in three short days had trampled to dust an ancient dynasty, and had shown physical power triumphant over constituted authority, and had engaged the sympathies of mankind not in favour of constituted authority, but of those who had resorted to a system of violation of all law and order. Our own party had been reduced by the Reform Act to little more than one hundred members...but I did not despair ... I looked forward ultimately to the formation of a party as now exists. I did believe that the good sense of the country would at length place confidence in a party which did not profess hostility to improvement, but which manifested a determination to abide by the leading principles of the British Constitution. Gentlemen, allow me to say that I did look with confidence to the ultimate formation of that happy union which now exists between us and men to whom we were formally opposed.⁷²

SUMMARY

In this chapter we have examined the nature of Conservative party organizations after 1832. In doing so we attempted to contrast these new developments with the old Tory party of the pre-Reform period. We looked at the impact of the hitherto unrecorded efforts of Alfred Mallalieu, and those of Francis Bonham and Lord Granville Somerset and finally we touched upon the reason for such changes in organizational structure. These were; to combat Whig reforms of the prescriptive constitution; the need to prevent the

break-up of a still loose and disparate party structure, and the fear of extreme radicalism among the lower middle classes and working class. It is this latter aspect on which we now focus our attention as our study moves away from the heady atmosphere of the party's headquarters in London to the more mundane - though no less interesting - environment of the industrial North-West.

1. The Croker Papers, ed. L J Jennings, vol.1 pp.368-72 London 1884.
2. C R Fay, Huskisson and His Age, London 1951 pp.46-7.
3. Quoted in L Namier, England in the Age of the American Revolution, London 1950 p.4.
4. See T H B Oldfield. Representative History of Great Britain and Ireland vol.IV. London 1816 pp.285-296.
5. Greville Memoirs, 2/12/1830. vol.II London 1938.
6. See 'Observations on the British Constitution'. (Anonymous Pamphlet 1831) p.112.
7. British Museum, Liverpool papers ADD Ms 38262 ff 323.
8. Quoted in A Aspinall 'English Party Organization in the Early Nineteenth Century' in English Historical Review Vol.XLI 1926 p.404.

9. Ibid, p.405.

10. Greville Memoirs, op.cit. 10/11/1830. Charles Greville was a particularly useful source as his position of Clerk to the Privy Council made him conversant with all shades of political opinion.

11. Quoted in G Himmelfarb, (ed), The Spirit of the Age: Essays in Politics and Culture, New York 1963, p.36.

12. Greville Memoirs op.cit. 25/7/1832. In a similar vein see the letter from Lord Granville Somerset to his father the 6th Duke of Beaufort, in September 1831, Drawer 10/2, The Beaufort Papers, Badminton, Gloucestershire. See also the Memorandum from the leading conservative, and colleague of Peel's dated 15/5/32. "The Tories must withdraw their opposition and by some compromise save the creation of Peers...so long as Peel, and Croker and Goulburn, Herries, Inglis, Dawson et cetera, hold back, it is impossible to do anything in the Commons. We only break up the Conservative party and prolong the inevitable (Hardinge's emphasis) Revolution. Nothing can save us but union..." Hardinge Papers, Hardinge to Londonderry 15/5/32, C2, File 11 McGill University Library, Montreal, Canada.

13. D Fraser, Urban Politics in Victorian England, Leicester 1976.

14. Ibid. p.10.

15. Blackburn Standard 8/11/1837.

16. Herries Papers, Brit. Mus. Ms 5742H104, Mallalieu to Lord Aberdeen 4/7/1832.

17. Croker papers, Vol Two p.216. Wellington to Croker 30/9/1833.
18. Herries Papers op.cit.
19. Herries, op.cit.
20. He suggested John Charles Herries.
21. Herries papers op.cit.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid.
24. Aberdeen papers British Museum, ADD Ms 43243, ff 126.
25. ADD Ms. Peel papers 40402 ff.231/33 Peel to Harrowby.
26. Aberdeen papers Brit. Museum ADD Ms 43243 ff 125.
27. See N Gash, Reaction and Reconstruction in English Politics, Oxford 1965, Chapter One. Or his Politics in the Age of Peel, London 1953, especially his Introduction.
28. T Nossiter, Influence, Opinion and Political Idioms in Reformed England, Brighton 1975.

29. Aberdeen papers ADD Ms 43246, 17/4/1846.
30. N Gash, 'F R Bonham, Conservative Party Secretary' English Heritage Revue, October 1948.
31. Bonham was in daily contact with Peel and weekly contacts with other party leaders, reports to the constituencies went out quarterly except at election times when they were obviously more frequent. See Peel papers ADD Ms 4061516.
32. ADD Ms Peel Papers Bonham to Peel 40422 ff 289.
33. ADD Ms Peel Papers 40424 ff 140
34. Peel papers ADD Ms 40404 ff 318/21. 8/12/1834.
35. Graham to Bonham, Peel Papers ADD Ms 40616 ff 162.
36. Sidney to Bonham 27/11/1839. ADD Ms 40617.
37. Peel papers ADD Ms 40426 Egerton to Peel ff 411 14/5/1839.
38. A Aspinall, English Party Organization in the Early Nineteenth Century, English Historical Revue Vol.XL1, 1926 pp.400-403.
39. Aberdeen Papers 43243 ff 126. Mallalieu to Aberdeen.

40. Peel Papers ADD Ms 40314 ff 177.
41. Peel Papers ADD Ms 40314 ff 178/9 12/5/1837.
42. Aberdeen papers ADD Ms 43243 ff 125. See also Croker papers, Clements Library, Letter book Vol 25. Croker to Lord Hertford, 19/9/1831. "Even Old Eldon I hear has offered 1000 pounds,...they may have all the money in a few days, but in a few days the opportunity may be lost...the only chance I see of stopping the revolution is by success in Dorset."
43. ADD Ms Peel papers, Rosslyn to Peel, 40409 ff 114/15, 146/7.
44. Quoted in Cash Organization of the Conservative Party 1832-1836 Part II in Parliamentary History, London 1983, p.138 or see Hardinge papers C2,2/21, McGill University Library, Montreal, Canada.
45. Ibid Box C2 file 14.
46. Ibid Box C2 File 10 also see C2 File 15 also C2 File 16.
47. Hardinge papers McGill op.cit. C2 file 16 6/2/1836.
48. Manchester Guardian 20/7/1837.
49. Hardinge papers McGill Box 6c File 1.
50. Peel papers ADD Ms 40424 ff 263.

51. Peel papers 40416 ff 328; see also Manchester Guardian 2/6/1841.

52. Hardinge papers McGill C2 file 15 (1835).

53. Gash op.cit. p.140.

54. Somerset papers, Badminton, letter dated 12/2/1836 Somerset to Beaufort.

55. Peel papers ADD Ms 40616 f 109, 10/11/1839.

56. Freemantle Manuscript, Buckinghamshire Record Office, Freemantle to Redesdale MSS 80/5.

57. C S Parker, Sir Robert Peel from his Private Papers, Vol 1 pp 115,116, London 1899.

58. Croker papers, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan. Vol 27 pp.345/6, Croker to Peel 17/12/1834.

59. The full story of the McEntagart affair can be traced in Herries papers Ms 57371 ff 18 to 22.

60. See Hardinge papers McGill University. Box C, File 9 dealing with a William Jordan of the Morning Herald which, in 1831 had cost the party 1,000 pounds.

61. Herries papers op.cit. f 26, 7/11/1833.
62. For a more detailed account of the relations between political parties and the press see S Koss The Rise and Fall of the Political Press, London 1978.
63. See Aberdeen papers ADD Ms 43243 ff 125. British Library.
64. Peel papers ADD Ms 40476 ff 70-73. British Library.
65. Speech reprinted in Preston Pilot 16/5/1835.
66. Blackwood Edinburgh Magazine, July 1835. For more information on Alison's contribution to Blackwood's see Volume 46 of the Wellesley Index of Victorian Periodicals.
67. Ibid p.9.
68. Blackwoods op.cit. p.8.
69. Ibid.
70. Ibid.
71. For a full example of the attempts of the Conservatives in London to set up a centralized Institution see Appendix Two pp 508-10 below.

72. Sir Robert Peel's Banquet Speech at the Merchant Taylors Hall, (1838), cited in F O'Gorman, British Conservatism, Harlow 1986.

CHAPTER FIVELOYALIST ASSOCIATIONS, PITT CLUBS AND THE
ADVENT OF CONSERVATIVE ASSOCIATIONS IN THE
NORTH-WEST.

In the last chapter we looked at some of the main developments in the organizational structure of the Conservative party after 1832. This was confined to changes which occurred to the party at the centre. We looked at how information and intelligence was gathered from all parts of Britain; we examined how the party altered its techniques of electoral organization; we looked at the first stages of party political proselytization through the medium of the written word, and finally we examined the financial structure of the party. However, whilst change was taking place to the party at its centre - there were developments similarly in the localities, and essentially for the same kind of reasons chiefly; the defence of the constitution in church and state, the fear of progressive Liberalism, the hatred of extreme radicalism - and the desperate need to keep the Conservative party afloat in the wake of the rising tide of Reform. In this chapter we intend to look at these organizational attempts to assert the Conservative party and its principles from the viewpoint of the geographical locality of the North-West, an area, because of its advanced industrial structure, not regarded at the time as being a natural constituency for Conservative success. Nevertheless we shall discover, the Conservative party was successful in this area between 1832 and 1870.

However, in order to assess the historical significance of the Conservative Associations after 1832, we must, by way of contrast and comparison look at the earliest form of political societies which, in the 1790's were termed Loyalist Associations. As we noted earlier the political cleavage wrought by the French Revolution served to polarize opinion in Britain into those who initially welcomed the events in France and those who feared that a dangerous precedent had been set in 1789. Those reformers, such as Thomas Paine who proposed improving or perfecting the constitution on theoretical grounds, could be viewed, however mild or moderate their proposed changes, as advocating that the English should embark on the same path as that travelled by the French. If anyone required propaganda to argue against change, the French supplied them daily. Burke for example argued that not only was the government of France mishandled by incompetents allowed into positions of authority allowed into positions of power under a weak constitution, but the very concepts and basic principles of the revolution were themselves endangered by the limitations of governmental authority designed to protect them. The English constitution in contrast served in practice the purposes of government and protected individuals within the state.

In the middle of May 1792 George III issued a Royal Proclamation drawn up by Pitt and the Duke of Portland. This Proclamation called for an end of the circulation of 'seditious' literature. The Home Office issued instructions that the Proclamation be read aloud in all parishes and further that local parochial officials should call meetings for the purpose of drafting addresses of loyalty. Similarly the Proclamation was printed in most of the newspapers of the day, with - in the case of the ministerial papers - an attendant editorial urging the formation of societies and clubs for the purpose of organizing the addresses. This was the beginning of the loyalist movement, and throughout the nation as a whole 71 counties and 315 towns and cities reported

favourably to the Proclamation and the addresses of loyalty. The Proclamation had asked that the subjects of the crown should 'avoid and discourage' tendencies toward social disorder, but in reality every address was a pledge by a section of the local community to the existing constitution. It was almost as if the political community of 1792 was ratifying the constitution by open voting and overwhelmingly endorsing the existing political system and the conservative principles of the Pitt ministry. The focus of this loyalty by the associations was the King, the monarch being the symbol of their patriotic sentiments. The English Loyalists first appeared as the result of the theoretical and conceptual challenge made to the constitution by the radicals, the practical demonstration of the fruits of these theories was the situation as it unfolded in revolutionary France. Their chief significance at this stage was not only the equally abstract response to Paine's sentiments by Burke but that thousands of ordinary citizens gave a vote of confidence in the existing political constitution when it appeared to be under attack, thus displaying their loyalty openly by being prepared to stand up and be counted.

The horror felt by the elites at the 'September Massacres' in Paris and at the subsequent emigration to England of the supporters of the monarchy heightened the tensions between the Ministry and the reformers. Also worrying was the location, number and intended use of privately acquired arms, the links between radicals in Britain and France, but most of all the Proclamation of the General Convention of November 19 which declared the assistance of the French armies to all peoples wishing to follow the example of French republicanism. This was the crux of the crisis of 1792. The English radicals took new inspiration from this second Revolution which served to stimulate an increase in the activities of the various reform societies. The domestic tranquillity created by the May Proclamation vanished, only to be replaced by anxiety that the determined

revolutionary principles operating in France could be exported to Britain. After three months of rising tensions, Pitt and his ministers, backed up seemingly by wider political opinion concluded that a revolution was indeed possible in England and issued a Proclamation for all areas to prepare to form defensive militias:-

And whereas we have received information that in the breach of the laws, and notwithstanding our royal proclamation of the 21st day of May, the utmost industry is still employed by evil-disposed persons within this kingdom, acting in concert with persons in foreign parts, with a view to subvert the laws and established constitution of this realm, and to destroy all order and government therein; and that a spirit of tumult and disorder, thereby existed, has lately shewn itself in riots and insurrections.¹

Domestic subversives, acting in concert with foreigners, were seen as attempting to overthrow the state. Also their efforts were believed to have been at least partially successful. Thus the Loyalist Associations once again were regarded as being essential to the mobilizing of propaganda against all forms of radicalism and the collecting of information on radical activities, but also to the actual defence of the nation. Thus, in such a climate, it should not be surprising that the men such as Colonel Ralph Fletcher of Bolton as we saw in Chapter three, began their fiercely anti-radical campaign.

Thus it was that the spate of Loyalist Associations formed between November 1792 and January 1793, were in the main a response from the overtly patriotic sections of society in support of the nation which they perceived to be under threat by internal revolution and external war. However the impetus for the initiating these associations - estimated incidentally to be some 1,500 in number² - came from central government, albeit covertly. William Greville, the Foreign Secretary in Pitt's Ministry had written to his brother, the Duke of Buckingham in November 1792 about the necessity of mobilizing loyalist support. "The hands of the

government must be strengthened if the country is to be saved; but above all, the work must not be left to the hands of the government, but every man must put his shoulder to it, according to his rank or station in life, or it will not be done."³ Thus Greville, on behalf of the government, perceived that what was needed was more than force or the threat of force against the radicals and reformers: what was needed - as we shall show below - was the seemingly spontaneous demonstration by ordinary Englishmen in support of the existing constitution. The underlying motive however, went beyond simple resistance and was one in which those attempting to cultivate dissatisfaction with the existing state of society and the political order would be shown the hopelessness of their endeavours - though it is doubtful that Greville had any clear notion of how he might arrive at his solution.

The initial impetus for the formation of Loyalist Associations came from the Ultra-Conservative Whig and former Chief Justice of Newfoundland named John Reeves. Towards the end of November he and his associates formed the Association for the Preservation of Liberty and Property against Republicans and Levellers. The first advertisement appeared in the Star, a firm supporter of the Ministry, on November 23. Another Government Newspaper, the Sun, must have been appraised of the developments, for in an editorial on the same morning suggested, "The better order of Britons are at length roused by the boldness of domestic enemies, and are forming themselves into Associations, for the purpose of repressing and defeating the pernicious doctrines now afloat in this country."⁴ Similar advertisements followed in The Times and the Morning Chronicle. However the important link that there was some form of Governmental involvement comes from the fact that Reeves was a close friend of the Under-secretary of State at the Home Office, Evan Nepean, thus if he did not know the precise nature of the plans of the government he would be aware of their general desires and aims. Moreover, Reeves was not a rich man, but he somehow

found the money to finance one and a half columns of space in the most expensive newspapers of the day. There is also the sheer improbability of a man in government service doing exactly what the government wanted without having some sort of nod in the right direction.

Each Loyalist Association performed two important functions. By advertising its existence, it sent a message to all who were discontented that there also existed a group who were dedicated to the preservation of the constitution as it existed. The propaganda value of the literally thousands of groups which were formed to counter the relatively few radical organizations dedicated, as they were to politically opposed ends, may have been decisive in itself in reducing the threat of internal disturbances. The second function was much more practical. The standing committee chosen at the formative meetings of the Associations ranged in terms of numbers from ten to upwards of one hundred. Not including all other associations and counting only those actively involved, at a stroke the peace-keeping capability of the government had been increased by at least 15,000 individuals and probably many more. The important point to note is that this was not motivated from a party political stance, but was one in which the ministry of the day drummed up support to offset political revolution and to maintain constitutional government.

The rapidity with which the Loyal Associations were formed was remarkable, and it affected all regions of the country. Former constitutional societies - as geographically distant as Manchester, Penzance, Rotherham and Birmingham - changed their names to Loyal Associations and Defenders of the Constitution.⁵ Also the religious boundaries were overcome for at least sixteen dissenting congregations made known their loyalty either by advertising in the local paper or by joining as a group.⁶ By far the majority of the lower middle classes and emergent working

class who joined the Loyalist Association were those involved in the various trades or services; the Billingsgate Porters, the Worshipful Company of Butlers of London, the London Bakers; the debtors in York Gaol wrote an address of support.

However in the North West only Manchester, Stockport and Chester sent in addresses of Loyalty, and although in a few towns Associations of Volunteers were formed there is little evidence that the mass of working people flocked to join them. This further suggests that even as early as the 1790's the working class of the North-West were not susceptible to the manipulation of the forces of the state.

There are several possible reasons why the North-West region taken as a whole appears to have been relatively reluctant to join in the rise of government inspired loyalty against the possible war with France. Firstly, if we assume that the impetus to the forming of Loyalist Associations came from the middle ranks of society in the localities, then in Lancashire at least, those men were in the main involved in commerce and industry. The chief industry of the region was cotton textiles which was dependent on overseas trade both for its raw materials and the bulk of the sales of its finished product. A war on the seas therefore would probably result in the curtailing of trade, then the manufacturers of the middling ranks would be initially unwilling to support a potentially long and damaging war, until, that is the government contracts began to fill their order books. Secondly, labourers and skilled workers would be unlikely to support the government - for the reason stated above - or more importantly because these groups were becoming increasingly radical as the independence of workers was gradually being eroded by the factory system. As we noted in Chapter three this tended to make these groups increasingly hostile to the forces of authority. Nevertheless as we saw in Chapter three, as the war with France developed, and the taint of Jacobinism became widespread, men like Hulton and

Fletcher of West Manchester and Bolton did not find it difficult to fan the flames of reaction and draw-in some support from some sections of the emergent working class.

The most usual method employed by the Associations to gain adherents was to place copies of the address at various centres to be signed by those who were unable to attend the initial meeting of the declaration of Loyalty. For Associations representing large areas such as counties, divisions or hundreds, this was the practical and logical step to take. However, some of the Associations took a more direct approach. At Bolton, and in Wakefield, Yorkshire, not only did the leading members solicit every house for a signature or mark of agreement, they also made a list of those who would not sign, with their reasons for not doing so appended and sent to the Home Office.⁷

The Loyalist Association were important because they were the first organized movement of conservative, constitutional bodies which drew upon the support of all grades in society. However, they differed from the Conservative Association of *forty years* later in two important aspects. Firstly they were primarily government inspired, and not party political inasmuch as, though they opposed radicalism or Jacobinism, they did not support a set of political principles and policies inspired by one party and seeking to attract political support at the expense of another. Secondly, and following on from this, they were formed in an atmosphere of high tension, in effect of a war or the immanency of war: thus the main factor which bound them together was not just loyalty to the constitution - although this aspect was to be of lasting significance in some cases as we shall discover - but loyalty to the nation; in short, of overt patriotism. However, it should not be forgotten that the Loyalist Associations were innovative in that they broke all precedents. For here was a genuinely mass movement of those expressing conservative sentiments which did so much to subsequently revitalize the long

dormant principles of Toryism. For the historian it is normally the voices of the disaffected and of those who demand change which catch the attention and are most noticed. But, with the Loyalist Associations, we notice they were composed of people who were proclaiming that they were satisfied with the political situation as it existed and most decidedly did not want dramatic changes of the constitution. This is the important historical precedent for the Conservative Associations of the 1830s and 1840s, for these were people the historian normally never hears.

Undoubtedly the chief activators and organizers of the Loyalist Associations were of the lesser aristocracy or those of middling ranks,⁸ not surprising when one considers that as property holders they had most to lose from the success of revolutionary Jacobinism. As was the case with the Conservative Associations some forty years later, it was 'respectable' individuals who were usually elected to the committees, but the members were expected to spread the message to the lower orders. In the 1790's the Loyalist movement was based, (as was the impetus to form Conservative Associations in the 1830's) upon something broader than mere status or property, although these factors were of course important. It was primarily based upon emotion, a deeply felt relationship between the individual and his nation. In some respects this can be described as romantic conservatism. Patriotic sentiment in the present was reflected in a form of romantic sentiment about the past. This was given legitimacy by Burke in his veneration of history and prescription, but it became an inspirational reality. During this early period of the war the nations past became a treasure house of inspiration for the present. The adventures of great and patriotic heroes became constant subjects for novels, poems and works of art. Nostalgia for medievalism, for castles and chivalry, knights and ladies, heroism and mystery, honour and armour, gripped the emotions of many sections of society from the 1790's until well into the nineteenth century.

Part of the reason for this creation of a chivalrous utopia was the war and the threat posed for the nation, but part was also concerned with impact of industrialization and urbanization. This was felt most strongly by those who had some direct experience of the forces of modernity in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries; sections of the impoverished working classes of the rapidly changing industrial north, the agricultural wage labourers whose livelihood was under constant threat by enclosures and agrarian rationalization. These people looked back to a past which appeared idyllic, just and uncomplicated. In this sense the deep attachment to medievalism or the distant past was a direct repudiation of the values of commercial society, a rejection of the economic and social rationalism associated with the proponents of progressive reason, also a yearning for imagination as opposed to reality and for religion over atheism. This idealization of a past society with its stable community and the interlinking harmony of its social groupings remained one of the most compelling political and social visions of the nineteenth century. Tory Radicalism of the 1830's and 40's was strongly imbued with such sentiments and as we shall subsequently discover, attracted widespread support among sections of the working class of the North-West. However, the starting point of such sentiments was the 1790's and formation of the Loyalist Associations. Romantic Toryism began to flourish in an environment in which love of the nation became of greater importance than the concepts of liberty, equality and fraternity imported from across the Channel. With such a perception one can begin to understand the inclusion as Loyalists of Friendly Societies, Dissenting Congregations of Methodists or Quakers, liveried Companies, innkeepers and even the inmates of prisons. They were expressing at a time of national stress, the emotions which would prevail in the next century. In several respects, as we outlined above, these emotions knew no class boundaries. These early loyalists were the overt nationalists of England, made up of all ranks of society, whose

political legacy lasted much longer than the living memory of the tumult and eventual war which initially gave them life. The prime motivation which awakened this patriotism was a perception of a threat to the constitution. Whether appraised of the threat by the newspapers, by official proclamations and actions or by their own experiences of radicalism, the loyalists met the threat directly. What was happening was that political attitudes were being cleaved apart - between reformers and radicals of varying levels of intensity, and loyalists and conservatives, again of differing levels of determination; in essence between the extremes of radical republicanism on the one hand and Church and King zealots on the other.

In February 1793, the French declared war on England and the influence of Loyalist Associations were at once lessened. Now Englishmen of all political persuasions focused their attention on the winning of the war, thus the efforts of the Loyalists was merged into the larger stream of activities. This had the effect of broadening the specialized political message of Loyalism; namely that of defending the constitution. Many of the Loyal Associations became the local centres for recruitment and the raising of subscription for the war effort. At Manchester, for example, the Association decided to raise 'a Corps of Marines' and subscribed 5,000 pounds on the spot. By May, the associators were collecting money to assist those unemployed because of the war and had already subscribed 'upwards of 1,000 pounds.'⁹ Collections for this purpose were raised in Manchester churches, where 94 pounds 1s 0d was donated at one meeting. These funds were given to the unemployed upon application in the form of checks which could be exchanged for food. Also the Manchester Association attracted 1,700 enlisted volunteers.¹⁰ Furthermore they had shown that radical reform of the constitution could be halted, and indeed was so for almost forty years.

We saw in Chapter three how working class political aspirations were dealt with in the North-West by men like William Hulton and Ralph Fletcher. This suggests that the environment of intense hostility to reform was indeed continued during the early years of the nineteenth century. However, the Loyalist Associations fell into disuse not long after the war commenced, at least in comparison to the scale which had seen their dramatic introduction in late 1792.

Nevertheless, a form of Loyalist Association was maintained during the early years of the nineteenth century. This chiefly comprised societies formed to honour the memory of William Pitt who died in early 1806. These 'Pitt Clubs', as they were known, were composed mainly of a town's elite, the annual subscription of a figure varying from 2 pounds to 5 pounds ensuring that this was so. Pitt clubs were formed in most of the major urban centres of the North-West; at Stockport, Manchester, Salford, Oldham, Rochdale, Bolton.¹¹ Blackburn and Preston. Some were known simply as 'The Bolton Pitt Club' etc, but others varied their names, thus we have the Liverpool 'True Blue Club' or the Lancaster 'Heart of Oak' club. This was a continuation of the organized loyalist sentiment of the early 1790's, and, although such societies may have assisted the Tory or conservative Whig candidates during elections on an informal basis, there is no evidence that the club or society engaged directly in politics. The main object of these clubs and societies was to dine and eulogize upon some great event in the nations recent history; Trafalgar Day or the acknowledgment of the services of Pitt, 'the pilot who weathered the storm' upon the anniversary of his death.

Thus these societies were little more than annual or bi-ennial gatherings of the towns' elites who shared a similar set of political principles. It was right that this should be the case for, although occasionally a political celebrity may deign to

honour the assembly with his company, the government on the whole discouraged such potential displays of overt partisanship. The Loyalist Associations were justified in the early 1790's because it appeared a possibility that the constitution - and later the nation - could be threatened by an upsurge in radical reformism and a union between the French and English Jacobins. When the war was in its later stages and, at its conclusion when the majority of public opinion was loyalist, such external organizations were not as important. Their usefulness had been served; they had shown that the overwhelming majority of Englishmen were loyal. Even though - as we saw in chapter three - close watches were kept on reformers, radicals and the disaffected working class, local political associations, working outside and beyond the control of political leaders in London, could be a profound embarrassment, and give the opposition opportunities for pointing to ministerial double standards. Also the Liverpool administration claimed to be a broad based coalition of political interests, again such overt display of uncontrolled and unsanctioned partisanship would have been embarrassing.

However, the Pitt Clubs were for the most part maintained throughout the 1820's even though they were little more than middle class based debating and dining societies. The attitude of the Conservative Party's national leadership regarding these harmless (and only marginally useful) gatherings was reflected in a letter from Lord Granville Somerset to his brother the Duke of Beaufort

I received 3 or 4 days back an invitation to belong to a club of gentlemen...and inviting a subscription of 5 pounds per annum: the objects of the said club (so far as the prospectus is concerned) appear limited to dining 4 times yearly at Petty House: how (sic) I shall have the power of dining at Devizes unless I am at Badminton, and when there, I shall much prefer your dinner to the Petty House one. Therefore I have no inclination to pay 5 pounds a year. On the other hand if you wish to support this club and if its funds are to be applied to hustings objects and not to culinary ones, I

shall give you my subscription: but I have no mind to pay 5 pounds for Petty House gastronomists.¹²

This letter was written in the 1830's when, as we shall subsequently discover, the attitudes of the national party leaders had changed regarding political clubs. However, in order to plot this change, we must contrast the situation existing before 1832 with that after this date.

As we have already noted the Liverpool administration was based upon a fairly broad coalition of the conservative sentiments, principles and opinions of Britain's body politic. The attitudes of these conservative Whigs and Tories to the electorate and the wider general public was one of detachment. To be sure the electors were important, and the gentlemen of the counties were to be relied upon to keep the local peace, but the running of the nation and the formulation of policy was the domain of those in positions of power in the cabinet, executive and legislative. Outside interference from political societies - whether loyal or otherwise - was to be discouraged.

However, as we discovered in previous chapters, the growth of working class radicalism - in the North-West and elsewhere was disturbing, and Tory attitudes and perceptions coupled with a recent history of savage hostility to the working class served to widen the gulf between the governed and the governors. We saw earlier how even in the 1790's and at the height of national loyalism, the loyalist Associations were at their weakest in most of the North-West and we saw in chapter three how increasing levels of working class consciousness was manifested in the need to attain some form of working class representation in Parliament in order to redress the grievances of many working people. Throughout the 1820's, this movement continued, and it received

greater encouragement when influential members of the middle classes also began to call for parliamentary reform after 1829. Reform Associations or Political Unions, as they were termed, began to be formed throughout the industrial districts, especially in those areas such as Manchester, Sheffield, Birmingham and Leeds which had no representation. The year 1829 is important for it was in this year that the then Prime Minister, Wellington, bowed to increasing outside pressure and granted Catholic Emancipation. Much of this outside pressure had been manipulated by Joseph O'Connell's Catholic Association. The Catholic Association was formed in 1815 in order not only to gain Irish Catholics not only legitimate educational and political rights, but ultimately to repeal the Act of Union of 1800. In 1823 O'Connell introduced the Catholic Rent which was a mass subscription of a penny a month and gave the movement the impetus and resources to mount a truly national campaign. This mobilization of the Catholic interest produced in turn a Protestant reaction in the form of Brunswick Clubs and Protestant Associations. These organizations also raised money by subscription but were only intended to be effective in Ireland in opposition to O'Connell. They were also not overtly party political: although many Tories and Conservatives of national standing gave them tacit support, the Brunswick Clubs received no official sanction, and indeed many-Peel included - regarded these groupings (as was the case with the Orange Orders) as extremely unsettling and damaging to moderate opinion. Also of concern was the effect extra-Parliamentary activity and uncontrolled political mobilization might have on the national public peace on all political sides. But the fact remains that the Catholic Association was an extremely successful early form of pressure group and both it and the Protestant Association did show the way forward in terms of organizing a mass of supporters.

Even more dangerous and threatening, however, were the Political Unions who, like the various types of religious/political

associations, operated mainly in secret and outside the pale of 'respectable' and legitimate politics. We have detailed the involvement of the working class of the North-West in the Political Unions in earlier chapters, but from the viewpoint of the Conservatives what made these organizations doubly dangerous was that in many areas they seemed to be not only tightly organized and well-disciplined but also led by many of the respectable middle classes, just the groups who Canning, and later Peel, wished to attract to the socially broader based principles and policies of Conservatism.

Tory and Conservative intransigence over the Reform question, although arguably based on sound political logic had the effect of alienating many groups who, in normal circumstances, could be expected to rally to the party expressing principles on the one hand of traditional political stability, and on the other the will to reform proven abuses and outdated practices.

This point was underscored by the results of the first general election held under the terms of the Reform Act . We saw in the last chapter how the Conservative party at the centre began to reorganize itself after the dreadful defeat of 1832/3. But in the Localities Tory and Conservative middle class activists took the lead in attempting to place their party back on a stable footing. The initial phase of these attempts was to firstly consolidate the existence Conservative support and secondly to woo those naturally inclined conservative middle classes back to the conservative side and away from the radicalism and reformism of the Liberals and progressive Whigs. This was seen as being immediately necessary for two reasons: firstly, in order to halt the disaffection to basic Conservative constitutional principles in the wake of the victory of Reform, this being intended to protect these principles from further assaults by the Liberals which many Conservatives believed would inevitably follow Reform; secondly, because of the structural working and operation of the Reform Act itself,

especially with regard to the registration of electors. To be able to attend to the annual Register of electors it was vital that the local party be organized on a permanent footing. This was one of those essential organizational functions forced upon the political parties after 1832, which indeed came about as a direct result of the Act itself.

In January 1833, as the elections of the first Reform Parliament were becoming known, Conservative Associations and Societies began to be formed. On the 19th of January it became known that, almost spontaneously, associations were formed in Berkshire, Gloucestershire, and societies at Bath and Bristol. The Tory newspaper John Bull reported the formation of the Bath society thus:-

The inhabitants of Bath have followed the example of those of Bristol, and have formed a large and highly respectable Conservative body, the first object of which is to declare that the present members for the city are the men of its choice, but their principles are in direct opposition to the views and feelings of the great majority of the people, and to make arrangements to secure, at the next election men of totally different politics, and who are likely to stand forward in defence of the Constitution - the avowed enemies of innovation and destruction.¹³

Thus, we can see that from their very inception the aims of these associations were primarily political (as opposed to the mainly social functions of the Pitt Clubs) in that their object was to oppose radical reformism. Later in January Conservative Associations were reportedly being formed in the counties of Durham, Essex, Suffolk, Worcestershire, Warwickshire, Cumberland, Hampshire, and Sussex.¹⁴ The South Lancashire Conservative Association was also formed in January 1833, at the Bay Horse Inn in the small town of Newton-le-Willows. The prime mover in its formation was the Bolton landowner William Hulton who, in 1837 recalled its beginnings.

When the men of Lancashire were borne down by the unfortunate result of Sir Thomas Hesketh's election, a few dependent individuals sat in the window of a common pot-house in Newton. It occurred to them that it was their duty to call upon every friend of the Monarch and the Church to counteract the machinations of the enemies to both...¹⁵

By August 1833 the South Lancashire Conservative Association had formed itself into branch districts covering the whole of the southern part of the region and the various representatives came together to hold a conference and a celebratory dinner, 200 persons attended, mostly of middle class social backgrounds, but the aristocratic elements of the party's hierarchy were also legitimising the proceedings by their presence. These included the Marquis of Salisbury, the Earl of Balcarres, Lord Kenyon and Lord Skelmersdale. Hulton again spoke, and it is interesting to note that, even by this early date, the middle class conservatives were turning their attentions to the lower orders. He said that the Conservatives,

"wanted that which would make the poor man happy and contented in his cottage, and would teach him a reverence for the laws which every man ought to feel... By disseminating Conservative principles amongst their equals - by kindness to all those who had just claims on their wealth - and by sheltering the poor from oppression they would secure the honour of the King, the prosperity of the country and, he trusted the true faith in which they had been brought up."¹⁶

This passage conveys the central aims of these Associations when they were first formed. Firstly, the middle class conservatives should begin to show a kindly demeanour to the working class in an attempt to steer them away from radical tendencies - a response which was a totally different tactic from the brutality and inveterate hostility these same men had shown during the earlier years of the century. Also law, order, property and the constitution must be preserved from rampant reformism. Furthermore middle class Conservatives must evangelize the principles of moderate Conservatism amongst their social equals.

These feelings were reiterated the following year at the second anniversary dinner when 703 persons attended, among their company the Parliamentary party's chief whip, Sir Thomas Freemantle. The chairman, the earl of Wilton, in his speech revived once again the need to go out and convince the middle classes of the need to promote Conservative principles and point out the danger of radicalism. But, interestingly he couched his speech in the tone of romantic Toryism, that is of the glory and happiness of England's past.

It was his sincere hope, as it was his honest conviction, that by the timely exertion of his friends, and societies such as this, the country might at no distant day be restored to that wholesome state in which it had once been the glory of all English breasts to behold her. They must endeavour to show the people the delusion which it had been the practice to contaminate them with. They must endeavour to convince them of their kindly feelings which the Conservatives held towards them, and to show them that instead of their being what their enemies would wish them to suppose - their oppressors, they were their friends.¹⁷

This call to a romantic and idealized view of the past we have noted earlier in this chapter, but to many social groups it was a powerful psychological tool. The past was painted as being comfortable and secure, the present, progressive, dangerous and insecure. It was a ploy the Conservatives in the Localities were to perfect and use over and over again in the three decades which followed 1832, as we shall subsequently discover.

Also this conference and dinner marked out most strikingly the distinction between the genteel and gentlemanly nature of the dining and debating Pitt Clubs of pre-1832, and the harsh reality of the post-Reform political world. The leader of the Rochdale Conservatives, the banker John Roby, pointed this out to the conference in no uncertain terms.

Their meeting was not assuredly for the purpose of merely eating and drinking and making speeches; no, their objects were to strengthen themselves against the great struggle which was inevitably approaching; in fact to revue their troops before the battle, and to see the extent of the enemies's forces; for sure he was that unless it was the fixed determination of the Conservatives to do their duty, and combat unflinchingly the democratic principles which threaten to overwhelm them like a moral pestilence, their labours were in vain. It was not only as a body, but individually they must work, as each man might do something to combat the Whig ridden monster begotten by French malice on English credulity.¹⁸

There were of course objections made by the opponents of the Conservatives to the latter's new-found zeal to organize themselves. Among the leaders of this reaction was the Liberal Manchester Guardian. As the first Associations began to be formed in early 1833, the Guardian in an editorial pointed out the contradictions of the Conservative position.

This is capital. A parcel of people who have almost made themselves hoarse by declaiming against political unions, are proposing, not only to establish a political union of their own, but to establish one having branch societies, (M.G.'s emphasis) and therefore directly in the teeth of the Delegations Act.¹⁹

However there was also opposition from within Conservative ranks when the North Lancashire Conservative Association was formed in June 1835, one of the Members of Parliament for North Lancashire, the now conservative Lord Stanley, engaged in a lengthy public correspondence with the Association's President, Sir Thomas Hesketh in an effort to dissuade him from pursuing the venture. Again Stanley posed questions as to the necessity of forming societies and associations: "You may say that you are numerous, and strong and united; that your opponents, even if numerous, are disunited among themselves and comparatively unimportant in wealth and station. If it is so, you have little to fear, and little need of an organization to oppose them."²⁰ But Stanley's main criticism was the political breach and possible consequences of

embittered conflict which such political societies might engender, and further, that the role of such societies might even undermine the functions of Parliament itself.

But if extending your views beyond local objects, you seek to form part of a general organization throughout the empire, of country clubs, and local clubs, and District Associations, acting in concert, usurping, in fact the power of government, and combining to carry on the affairs of the country through their instrumentality, I can conceive nothing more dangerous to public liberty, nothing more *injurious* to a stable or rational Administration, than such a state of things. Power vested in clubs acting in concert for national objects, was one of the most dangerous...symptoms of the early stage of the French Revolution. Thank God! I see no cause here to anticipate such scenes as there occurred: but if there be a course calculated first to control the House of Commons, next to call in question and put in jeopardy the House of Lords, the Church and the Throne, and in the progress of the operation to destroy the public peace, private happiness and national confidence...(there would exist) two rival sets of political associations engaged in a deadly struggle with each other for the maintenance of extreme principles - throwing over by joint consent, at the first onset, the incumbrance of all those who would lend themselves to the one, nor to the other, and then entering upon a *protracted* (and even more protracted, the more embittered and irreconcilable) warfare of opinion.²¹

The editor of the Preston Pilot jumped to the defence of the N.L.C.A. and, in an illuminating passage, stated that the cleavage of political opinions had already taken place, and that if the principles of Conservatism were not put before moderate opinion in an organized and systematic fashion 'those of another might',²² meaning of course radicalism.

Hesketh in his own defence replied that '...I believe I speak for the sentiments of all those who were present at the meeting in question, when I say, that they all felt and feel that such associations have been necessarily (his emphasis) and unavoidably forced upon the country; first, by the baneful effects of the Reform Bill, constituted as the elective franchise by that measure... and secondly, by the measures of the present

administration as now proposed, to despoil the rights of property both of Church and State, in addition to those encroachments already effected by that administration, when last in office."²³ The point worth noting here is that, for the first time in the history of Britain, a network of organisations had come into existence to actively promote a political party, not just a wide ranging set of political principles or, as we saw in Chapter One above, the example given by Frank O'Gorman²⁴ of a small faction like the Rockingham Whigs, on whose behalf William Adam worked in the 1780's. What we see in the 1830's is a national party constituted in the Houses of Commons and Lords whose central aim was to increase their numbers in the House of Commons, thereby attaining political power and to be able to put into effect the principles believed in by the rank and file in the country at large.

Hesketh's point about the need of association being forced by the effects of the Reform Bill, refers primarily to the registration clauses, and, although we have noted them earlier, it may be useful to outline them in some detail. Neither the Reform Act of 1832, nor that of 1867 allowed a person qualified to vote under the terms of the Acts to enjoy that right without fulfilling certain registration requirements. In country constituencies the law made the parish overseer the responsible official for the electoral register, and required all persons possessing the required qualification (40 shilling freeholders and 50 pounds tenants at will) to make out and send to him a formal claim to be registered. The annual list of claims, together with the existing list of voters, was required to be exhibited in public and any voter or claimant had the right to challenge any name on the list, whilst it was within the right of the overseer to reject a claim. This tells us, incidentally, something of the political importance of the power of the parish overseer, and, as we shall discover, explains the fierce political battles which occurred in order that one party may secure the election of the overseer of their choice.

The claimant whose claim was disputed could appeal to the revising barristers court, and was entitled to costs (at the barristers discretion) against an objector whose objection was deemed frivolous or who did not appear to support his objection. The objector on his part, was required to give notice of objection both to the overseer and to the person whose qualification he took exception to. The nature of the objections were numerous; failure to give adequate notification of a change of address, failure to pay rates on time, the receiving of parochial relief, or simple ineligibility.

The procedure followed in the boroughs was somewhat different.²⁵ Here, as in the counties the overseer was the official mainly responsible for the register, but the responsibility for the list of freemen voters, whose rights were preserved by both the Acts of 1832 and 1867, devolved upon the Town Clerk. As the Parish overseer and his officials were responsible for the collecting of poor rate, the names of all occupiers of houses, would in theory, be entered in the occupiers' column of the rate book, the overseer simply constructed his list of voters by transcribing the names which appeared in the occupier's column. There was thus no need for persons qualified either as occupiers under the term of the 1832 Act, or as residents under the Act of 1867, to make formal claims. The roll of the Freemen or burgesses as in the possession of the Town Clerk, who made up his list from the existing electoral roll of Freemen. But if, for any reason, the name of the person qualified for the franchise was omitted from these lists, he had the right to send in a claim for registration. Similarly any voter had the right to object to another voter under the terms of borough 10 pounds rateable value qualification.

It is here that the necessity for efficient organization of the local party becomes obvious. If a local party could get more names of their supporters on to the register, or strike more of their opponents supporters, they would win elections. This meant

that in the boroughs especially - the annual registration battles in the courts not only served to force the pace of constituency organizations, but also acted as a stimulus to party feeling and enhanced the self-identification of the supporter to the party; indeed the process helped to sustain such feelings in a way that was not apparent or necessary before 1832.

The differing nature of the various types of registration and qualification, explains in part, the need of the Conservative Associations and Societies to organize themselves according to the locality or district in which they were to function. For, as we have noted, one of their primary functions was to marshall their forces in the battle for the registrations. The North and South Lancashire Conservative Associations were responsible for their respective county divisions: they divided themselves into the branches in accordance with the various parish boundaries but reported directly back to their headquarters in Preston for the Northern division and Newton in the Southern. It was here that the party's registration records were kept and sent forward to Bonham at the Carlton. The various County Associations paid for all the registration expenses of their supporters out of central funds directly subscribed for that purpose.

The borough Associations were more autonomous, being solely in control of their own finances and records. It was right that this was so for each borough was peculiar to itself and only those with direct experience of a locality could be expected to supervise its organization. For the purposes of the registration, each borough was divided into branches or ward districts and branch societies set up in the wards or districts. Even though the registration was due on a yearly basis, the various ward branches appear to have met weekly, thus lending further support to our view that party political organization was operating on a permanent basis.²⁶ The meetings of the full borough Associations were usually four times per year - to exchange information and discuss tactics, and

once again to forward information to Bonham in London.

However, the county Associations acted as an executive body in overall control of all the various affiliated societies in the region as a whole. In the summer, all the Societies sent representatives to the annual county conference and dinner held respectively at Preston or Newton. Thus all the various branches fell ultimately under the influence of the regions two central bodies. Article seven of the general rules of the North Lancashire Association explains the procedure.

That, where any town or local district within the division shall have 30 or more members may (sic) form themselves into a branch or district association, and subject to its rules. That such branch or district association shall have the power...(to) act generally in their own affairs - admit members and hold local meetings; and that such branch and district associations shall from time to time communicate the admission of members, and report their proceedings to the secretaries of the general associations... but that no public proceedings shall act without the sanction of a subsequent general meeting.²⁷

Actual membership figures of the various societies at this early stage of their development are difficult to assess as no documents have survived. However, given the size of the various delegates annual conference and General Meetings - in South Lancashire over 1,000 in 1836,²⁸ and in North Lancashire over 400²⁹ - we can tentatively suggest that the overall membership was substantial. By the end of 1836, Conservative Associations existed at Stockport, Ashton, Manchester, Salford, Rochdale, Middleton, Oldham, Bury, Bolton, Warrington, Wigan, Leigh, Chorley, Liverpool, Preston, Lancaster, Clitheroe, Blackburn and Darwen. In Scotland the Conservatives formed a branch exclusively for women,³⁰ and at Warrington they formed a branch for juveniles.³¹

It must be stressed that the initial impetus for the organization of the conservatives of Lancashire (and elsewhere) came from amongst the professional and manufacturing middle classes, and from the lesser aristocracy and landed gentry of the counties. This reflected a broadening of the political representation of conservatism, and the rising power of the new bourgeoisie in this region. It was realized that the Reform Act was not only a triumph for this class, but that its very operation required a new approach to politics. Many 'respectable' members of the politically moderate middle classes had allied themselves with reform during the years 1830-32: it was vital that the Conservatives make an attempt to woo these sections back to political moderation, and not let them drift into radicalism or progressive Liberalism. This meant the party had to be flexible and approachable. As we noted in Chapter Four, Peel's Merchant Taylor's speech of 1835 recognized this,. But he also realized the need of party organization in the counties and boroughs - both to give the Conservatives a permanent presence and to accommodate the new factor of the register. In 1838 he wrote to the former Treasury Secretary Charles Arbuthnot, on the new state of political affairs. He said.

The Reform Bill has made a change in the position of parties, and the practical working of public affairs, which the authors of it did not anticipate. There is a perfectly new element of political power - namely, the registration of voters, a more powerful one than either the Sovereign or the House of Commons. That party is strongest in point of fact which has the existing registration in its favour. It is a dormant instrument, but a most powerful one in its tacit and preventative operation. What a check it is at this moment upon the efficiency and influence of the existing government, backed as it is by all the favour and private goodwill of the Crown, and by a small majority of the House of Commons. It meets them every day and every hour. Of what use is the prerogative of dissolution to the Crown, with an unfavourable registry, and the fact of its being unfavourable known to all the world. Then it is almost impossible to make any promotion, or vacate any office, for fear of sustaining a defeat. The registration will govern the disposal of offices, and determine the policy of party attacks, the power

of this new element will go on increasing, as its secret strength becomes better known and is more fully developed...substantial power will be in the registry courts, and there the contest will be determined.³²

Thus it was vital that the Conservatives make a vigorous attempt to attract the support of the mainly middle class electorate of the North-West boroughs. We suggest that in organizing the party after 1832, the Conservatives had embarked on a significantly new era of the development of the political party. These middle-class-based Conservatives correspond in form and practice to the type of political organization one noted political scientist has termed the party of 'individual representation'.³³ According to Sigmund Neumann the party of individual representation is characteristic of a society with a restrictive franchise and degree of political participation. Its organization is permanent and its members chief functions are canvassing proselytizing and, importantly, the recruitment of both supporters and political leaders in local and national areas of political activity.

The importance and success of the Conservatives in recruiting new political talent from their North-West associations is most striking in the period after 1832. Here was a party immediately after 1832 which many commentators believed was on the edge of extinction.³⁴ But in the years after 1832, it had remarkable successes amongst that group - the manufacturing middle classes - and in that locality - the industrial North-West - which had been for many decades the most hostile areas for Toryism. Many local middle class manufacturers became Conservative Members of Parliament. At Stockport there was T Marsland, at Blackburn there was a succession of Conservative members from W Feilden, J Hornby and his brother W H Hornby. Indeed this seat returned two Conservative mill owners to Parliament on three occasions, 1841, 1865 and 1868, and from the period from 1832 to 1862 never failed to return at least one member. At Preston there was Robert Townley Parker and at Bolton William Bolling. At Rochdale there

was J Entwistle and later C Royds. At Warrington the local Conservative member for many years was the brewer G Greenall, and at Wigan the mine owner J H Kearsley. All these men were recruited from the ranks of their local Conservative Associations.

Neumann goes on to explain that the party of individual representation allows the supporters much freedom with regard to issues of conscience and policy option, whilst retaining an embryonic form of party discipline. Also, although permanently constituted its members tended to meet less frequently in the periods between elections, reforming at the approach of a contest. For our period, this is only partially true for we have seen that the needs of attending to the register, and later the needs of the annual local governmental elections meant that the organization were on a more permanent basis than Neumann suggests, but importantly they were tailored to the needs of the specific locality.

SUMMARY

Thus the Conservative Associations formed in the North West after 1832 were an important development in the history of the modern political party.³⁵ In this chapter we have attempted to describe the evolution of the organization of local political grouping from the government inspired Loyalist Associations - which, in the early 1790's, did set a precedent of sorts - to the purely party inspired, middle class based Conservative Associations of the early 1830's. The focus of the chapter has been the description of the evolution of Conservative party organization from the 1790's to the immediate post-1832 period. The analysis of the

Loyalist Associations and Pitt Clubs was two fold. Firstly we sought to explain the nature of party organization, suggesting that the wave of loyalism stemming from the wars, may have gone some way in assisting the resurgence of Old Tory principles in a national context. Secondly, we also make the very important point that in the North-West this call to loyalism was muted among the emerging working class. This seems to be constituted with the evidence gleaned from chapter three and the increasingly radical posture adopted by the majority of working people in the North West from 1790 to 1832. We noted that from the early 1830's the Conservatives in the locality began to use the party as a means of possibly altering working class political opinions and allegiances. It is the description of the attempts of the local conservatives to attract working class support in the 1830's to which we now turn our attention.

1. Annual Register for 1792, p.166.
2. See R R Dozier, For King, Constitution and Country, Kentucky U.P. 1983 pp.61/64 or A Booth, Reform, Repression and Revolution: Radicalism and Loyalism in the North West of England, 1789-1803, Unpublished PhD, Lancaster University 1979.
3. William Greville, Memoirs of the Courts and Cabinets of George the Third, 2 vols. London 1855, p.227/228. Nov. 14 1792.
4. The Sun, 23/11/1792.

5. Add Ms British Library, 16930/31.
6. Add Ms British Library, 16929.
7. Add Ms 16,929. British Library.
8. For the social composition see Dozier op.cit.
9. H.O. 42/28 Lodge to Nepean, also York Courant 4/3/93, 20/5/93, 27/5/93.
10. The Times 28/1/93.
11. List of Members of the Bolton Pitt Club 1813, Lancashire Record Office DDHU 53/82/11.
12. Somerset to Beaufort 28/9/1837. Beaufort Papers, Badminton.
13. Reprinted in the Preston Pilot 19/1/1833.
14. P(reston) P(ilot) 26/1/1833 and 13/4/1833.
15. Bolton Chronicle 15/7/1837.
16. P.P. 13/8/1837.

17. Speech of the Earl of Wilton at the South Lancashire Conservative Association Dinner, held on Thursday 4th of September 1834. P.P.13/9/1834.

18. P.P. 13/9/1834.

19. M(anchester) G(uardian) 23/2/1833.

20. P.P. 13/6/1835.

21. Ibid.

22. Ibid. 20/6/1835.

23. Ibid.

24. F O'Gorman, The Emergence of the British Two Party System 1760-1832 p.18. London, 1982. See also Chapter One above.

25. For a more detailed account of the registration process see J Alun Thomas, The System of Registration and the Development of Party Organization, 1832-1870. History 1950 pp.81-98.

26. For the importance of this aspect of permanency to political scientists see for example M Duverger, The Basis of Parties in Comparative Government, ed.J Blondel, London 1969, p.100.

27. Resolutions Six and Seven from the General Rules of the North Lancashire Conservative Association, P.Pilot 6/6/1835.

28. 10/9/1836.
29. 22/10/1836.
30. The Times 23/4/1838.
31. P.P. 14/2/1835.
32. Cited in C S Parker, Sir Robert Peel vol.2 p.368, London 1899.
33. S Neumann, Modern Political Parties, Chicago 1967.
34. Greville Memoirs op.cit.
35. For a full reciting of the full text of the National Conservative institution formed in April 1836 see Appendix One, pp.568 below.

CHAPTER SIX OPERATIVE CONSERVATISM I : ITS EARLY DEVELOPMENT,
STRUCTURE, ROLE AND FUNCTION.

In the last chapter we ended by looking at the development of the middle class based political associations. We also began to suggest that the nature of political parties both at the centre and in the localities began to change after 1832 in terms of the features they displayed and the functions they began to perform. We noted how it became important for those members of the classes committed to Conservatism to attempt to attract a wider basis of support (drawn initially from their own grouping middle and lower middle classes) in order to deflect the claims of the progressive reformers that it was they and not the traditionalist wing of British politics who were now in the ascendancy. In the present chapter we intend firstly to maintain this theme by considering the possible reasons why the middle class Conservatives of the North West began to attempt to attract the support of the industrial working class. Secondly we shall examine how Operative Conservatism developed in the North-West, look at the geographic spread of the working class branches, examine their financial basis, and finally look at the functions and roles the local bodies performed.

I THE MIDDLE CLASSES AND OPERATIVE CONSERVATISM

By the middle of the 1830's much middle class support was returning to the conservatives as the Parliamentary election results of 1835 and 1837 bear witness, partly due to the unpopularity of the Whigs, but also due to a greater flexibility within Peelite Conservatism. What was recognised after 1832 was that, in political terms, differing social and economic interests required specifically different approaches in order to placate the various demands emanating from these interests. This was the central theme of Peel's speech at the Merchant Taylors Hall and the Tamworth Manifesto which both appeared in 1835. This was also a primary reason for the local conservatives organizing themselves in the localities. We shall detail more with regard to the operation of interest and pressure groupings in the next chapter, but it should be noted at this stage that it was in the 1830's and 1840's that interest and pressure groups first became associated and assimilated into the existing political parties. Many, but not all, were middle class organizations: some were led by the middle classes but sought to place before a wider audience the plight of a disadvantaged group; others attempted to steer the masses away from profligacy, or drunkenness, or ignorance. All, however, sought public support and attempted to push their demands on the established political parties.

We noted in Chapter three the rising levels in working class consciousness from the 1790's and suggested that this was most concentrated and heightened in the industrial districts of the NorthWest. We also explained that this high level of class consciousness reached its peak and became most alarming in the 1820's and early 1830's, some years after the paranoia and extreme xenophobia of the Napoleonic wars. The crisis of Reform saw the high point of the political consciousness of the working class.

Many middle class Reformers allied themselves to the working classes, using the latter's weight and discontent as potential weapons against the authorities should Reform not be implemented.

Two important points must be reiterated at this stage of the thesis. Firstly, many beleaguered Conservatives dreaded the continued union of the moderate middle class reformers with the mass of the working class. The prospects of not only the party but the existing constitution were perceived as being minimal should such a union be continued after the passing of Reform. The promises and assurances of moderate whigs such as Lord Grey that the constitution would be safe did little to alleviate Conservative fears. In the counties and towns of the South and Midlands this was a primary reason for the formation of Conservative Associations in order to consolidate the middle class traditionalist sentiment against reformist alliances and initiatives.

In the North-West a second factor was important in the formation of the middle class Associations. This was not so much a concern about the possibility of a strong political alliance between the middle class reformers and the working class radicals as the increasingly alarming tendency for the extremely radical lower middle classes and working classes to operate independently of the control and discipline of their natural social and political betters. By the early 1830's industrial Lancashire had a political society which was sharply designated into three broad sectors. Firstly, there was the progressive and economically dynamic Liberals epitomized by Manchester Liberalism. This group was non-conformist in religion and reform orientated in politics and was made up of the majority of the areas manufacturers and men of commerce. Secondly, there were a substantial body of moderate, largely middle class Conservatives. This group, overwhelmingly Anglican in religion, believed in measured reforms of proven abuses, even to the extent of supporting the need of the 1832

Reform Act. They were mainly drawn from the fringes of the borough, but included several Anglican manufacturers. The political principles of one such man, John Fowden Hindle of Woodfold Park, near Darwen exemplify and were typical of this group. As a prospective Parliamentary candidate he wrote, in his election address of 1832:-

Entertaining in common with yourselves, a warm affection for every useful Institution, I am fully sensible of the duty of redressing grievances, and removing abuses, wherever they may exist, and I trust I shall always be found among the advocates of every constitutional Reform, having for its object the happiness of the community, and the extension of our Agricultural and Commercial interests. In particular, I shall be found a zealous advocate for the Abolition of the Slave Trade, for a careful Revision of the Corn Laws, of the Charter of the Bank of England, of the East India monopoly, and every other exclusive privilege which cramps the energies and depresses the manufacturing industry of the country.¹

In addition to these two groupings within conventional politics, there were the radicals. This group was made up of small tradesmen and shopkeepers, and, importantly many working class activists. They operated most effectively in the arena of local politics - the Vestry and Select Vestry, the Police and Improvement Commission and, in certain places, like Preston, in municipal politics. Up to 1835, and in certain cases beyond that date, the local politics of Blackburn, Ashton, Oldham, Bolton and Rochdale were under the control of this radical grouping supported, as they were, by those sections of the working class who had some commitment to political activity or opinion. In the main they had little truck with either of the two main political groupings preferring instead their own independent position. To the majority of working people, the progressive Whigs and Liberals were particularly untrustworthy in that it was they as a group who tended to be the most efficient and untractable of masters and in national government appeared to be implementing yet more legislation which demeaned the independence and perilous life

style of ordinary working people.

In this general context the aims of the Conservative Association was two-fold: firstly to influence as many working people as possible against the constitutional dangers of extreme radicalism, and secondly to use the unpopular 'reforms' and general principles of progressive Whiggery and Liberalism to widen the social basis of their support. These were the primary reasons why the North-West Conservative Associations began to form operative or working class based branches of their societies.

The distinction of being the first Operative Conservative Association belonged to the Conservatives of Leeds, who in February 1835 'met together for the purpose of discussing the propriety of forming a society.' In early March they issued an Address as to the reasons of forming a society designed for working people.

As we are jealous of being enslaved by the proud boasters of a mock liberty, we will at all times secure ourselves against the undue exercise (text emphasis) of authority; our liberties which are our glory, as the subjects of King William the Fourth shall be sacredly transmitted to our children, as they were received by ourselves but considerably enlarged. Our design in forming ourselves into a society is to secure these blessings, to resist the machinations and violence of those whose conduct leads, whether designed or not, to anarchy and confusion; and to furnish our minds by means of newspapers and other publications, with correct views on political subjects, and to furnish an antidote to those publications of a dangerous tendency which are everywhere obtruded upon us; and also to unite with our fellow townsmen and fellow-subjects in whatever would advance the national welfare, and to resist and oppose whatever would be detrimental to it. We invite persons of true Conservative principles to unite with us: especially we address this invitation to our Brethren, the Operatives. We ask them to aid us in our efforts to defend the rights of 'THE ALTAR, THE THRONE AND THE COTTAGE.'²

This notion of politically socializing the working classes away

from the dangers of extreme radicalism was thus one of the initial functions of Operative Conservatism and also one of the main reasons of middle class involvement. The role of the written word, as a means of combating the emotive language of radicalism was a point which was actively pursued by the leading national journal of Conservatism, Blackwoods, Edinburgh Magazine in the summer of 1835. In this article, entitled 'Conservative Associations', the distinguished historian, Sir Archibald Alison, outlined the state of the manufacturing districts in no uncertain terms. "It is in vain to conceal that in the present political condition of Great Britain, it is in the highest degree dangerous. The manufacturing class, the natural depository in every age of republican opinions, have more than tripled in the last half century."³ He argued that the Conservatives must waste no time in attempting to come to grips with this political situation, but warned it would be a long-term project: "As the democratic tendency of the great majority of the public press, and almost all that is addressed to the lower orders in the great cities, has thus arisen from ground causes of universal operation, so it is beyond the reach of any direct or immediate remedy." He argued that it was by slow degrees, 'by long and painful efforts, that the poison is to be expelled, from its social body, or an antidote provided for its malignity.' Alison went on to say that it was by the continued exertion of talent of every description, 'in the propagation of truth, that the evils arising from the enormous diffusion of democratic error are chiefly to be prevented.'⁴ Above all the channels for the diffusion of sound constitutional political information had to be extended to the working class. What worried the Conservatives was that the overwhelming majority of the most dynamic group in society might be forever lost to radicalism. Alison provided his readers with some solutions, however:

How is information to be conveyed to these classes? How is truth or political knowledge to pierce the dense and cloudy atmosphere of our great manufacturing cities... Some part of

the funds of every Conservative Association should be devoted to the purchase of the ablest journals and periodicals of the day, with a view to their diffusion, at an under price, among the persons of an inferior grade, whom it is practicable to win over to safe and constitutional principle. By doing so a double object is gained. Talent is encouraged to devote itself to such undertakings, and numbers, who never otherwise would get a glimpse of the truth, have the means of illuminating their minds afforded them.⁵

Thus at the core of Alison's article on Conservative Associations, lay the double purpose of encouraging a wider activism of the educated middle classes and proselytizing sections of the working classes. Of this second group, Alison warned that their intelligence should not be underestimated. "In making their selection, let them avoid the common error of supposing the working classes can understand nothing but works expressly intended for their illumination. There never was a greater mistake. He said that they should be addressed by the same arguments as deemed fit for their superiors, "and if they can only be got to read them, truth will in the end work its way in the humblest class as well as in the most elevated."⁶

In the same year (1835) the national party leadership were informed at the highest level of the need to court the working class - as a letter from the prominent Blackburn mill owner and Conservative member for the town to Sir Robert Peel during his first term as Prime Minister demonstrates

Permit me to state that I do, and must, believe that, if the truly sound portion of the operative classes would be united together, they would form a tower of strength to the present government: they are tired and disgusted with the Whig's professions and oppressions and naturally direct their attentions to their genuine patrons and friends.⁷

Other sections of the party's national leadership were also in favour of attempting to influence the working classes, especially through the written word, as this letter from the Duke of

Wellington's confidant, Charles Arbuthnot, to the former Treasury Secretary, John Charles Herries, reveals. Arbuthnot told Herries that he had informed the Duke what he was doing concerning the press and that the Duke thought his plans 'judicious', suggesting that the party should be doing 'a great deal more' and very quickly. The Duke of Wellington stressed that the party should specifically address itself to the previously neglected regional press, especially in the industrial regions:-

...there are papers at Leeds and Manchester that exercise immense influence in these manufacturing districts and I have thought too we might publish cheap penny pamphlets if we had clever people to write them.... I confess I would try to muzzle Cobbett who I believe is always able to be bought, and is certainly a most able writer...I think the country is (in) so critical a situation, and yet one in which a strong effort might be so successful.⁸

However, Lancashire Conservatives employed other means of political influence as well as the power of the written word. From 1836 the Conservatives employed a bankrupt Manchester barrister named Charles Wilkins as regional organizer and electoral agent. In the former capacity he toured the North-West advising Operative Associations about the latest policy positions adopted by the party in a national sense and suggested that their local grievances would be best remedied by the Conservatives. He also advised them in organizational strategies and matters concerning the registration, and how they might legitimately influence the electors. In Preston in July 1836, where the majority of electors were the working class by virtue of the old Scot and Lot franchise, he advised his audience of Conservative working men to recruit the women of Preston to their cause, brilliant tactic well in advance of its time. He said.

Make the women of Preston your allies in this glorious fight, and take my word for it, victory will be yours... And think you, when your radical neighbours wives see the fruits of

Conservatism so displayed, they will not content themselves till they have forced their husbands into your ranks.⁹

He was also active in his capacity as local or regional electoral organizer, as this letter from a Liverpool Merchant, Joseph Saunders to Sir James Graham illustrates in relation to a forthcoming contest. "I should be glad to confer with Mr Bonham on the question of organization, I am told Wilkins is going there with 12,000 pounds in his pocket."¹⁰

Thus we see that in the mid 1830's the national and regional Conservatives were completely re-thinking and re-defining the nature of their party's organizational structure, and, certain sections of the working class were an important part of their plans. We argued in the opening passages of this thesis that a new political culture was rapidly developing in Britain during the 1830's - one that now embraced all sections of society in the politics of the time. Even the accepted vocabulary and language of party politics underwent a mild revolution. The political and social outlook of the old Tory, compounded in part by complacent optimism, and in part by self-pride and importance, began to give way to a new forthright approach, more dynamic and appealing. The old Tory catchwords indicating the 'Church and King' loyalty of the eighteenth century - the political tags of 'Lord George and the Protestant Succession' - now gave way to phrases and idioms better suited to the times. Indeed, in certain cases, these were directed at specific classes, for example 'the Throne, the Altar and the Cottage', which reinforced the importance of working people maintaining the constitution, or the phrase, 'When bad men combine, good men must unite', which emphasized the need for Conservatives of all classes to join together in defence of their principles against the perceived attack by progressive Whigs, Liberals and Radicals. Also important however, during the mid 1830's, as we shall discover in the next chapter, was the growing trend towards a heightened sense of respectability and political

legitimacy which vitiated against the older forms of influence and corruption and more towards the politics of opinion. Crucial to this development was the use of issues, especially in the local context. We shall discuss more fully the role of issues in Chapter 7 but it may be useful here to briefly outline how they may have been utilized by the Conservative middle classes to capture the support of sections of the working class.

As we have noted, we contend that from the mid-1830's, a significant section of the working class found Conservatism in general, and Operative Conservatism in particular, attractive. We suggest further that two types of working men may have found Conservatism appealing at this time, and did so for reasons which had little to do with social or political deference, but more to do with political and social pragmatism. The first type of working class Conservative was concerned with questions which affected his daily existence, the second with the need to maintain traditional values and customs of the working class and, importantly, with religious questions.

This first type of Operative Conservative seems to have been persuaded that the New Conservatism of Peel, and his followers in the country committed itself to issues which directly affected working people in the manufacturing districts. These included firstly, resistance to the harsher elements within the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act. Indeed in certain places like Bury, Rochdale and Oldham the Tory Radicals opposed the Act's introduction altogether,¹¹ and it appears did so with the support of the local middle class Conservatives. A second issue which attracted broad working class support was that of the factory reform movement. It is possible that this first type of worker may not have been committed to Conservatism as such, but the issues which Conservatism allied itself in the manufacturing districts, at least in general terms, secured the support of this politically moderate working man, who saw in the rhetoric of Conservatism a

viable alternative to the apparent unfeeling self-righteousness of the progressive Liberalism favoured by so many employers in the North-West.

The second type of working man was firmly committed to Conservatism. He was the socially mobile Anglican or Presbyterian, with natural Conservative or traditionalist proclivities. He saw Operative Conservatism as a respectable way of opposing radicalism and the Liberal progressives, defending his religious convictions and possibly also as a route to social advancement. The majority of the members of the Operative Associations appear to have been literate¹² and politically articulate. Although they were not in possession of the franchise, they did engage in political activities.

In Blackburn, for example, one such member, Henry Kenyon (Junior) was typical. He was originally a power-loom operative, later he became a solicitors clerk and for many years he was Secretary of the Operative Association of his town, eventually becoming its President. He was also an active Vestry member, so too were other members of the Blackburn Operative Conservative Committee: Charles Tiplady, a bookbinder; Thomas Dewhurst, a joiner; Richard Caldwell, an operative spinner; Thomas Bennett, a dyer and cloth finisher. These men were also members of the non-electors committee of the successful Conservative candidate at the Parliamentary election of 1841, the local mill-owner, John Hornby.

An illustration of their social mobility can be seen if we look at those who gained the electoral franchise. Of the members of the 1837 Committee of the Blackburn branch, only the bookbinder Tiplady had the vote in the election of that year. Ten years later, however, although some of the names have changed, of the twenty man committee, fourteen now appeared on the electoral roll.¹³ This would appear to support the notion outlined above that active and loyal membership of the Operative Association

could act as a means of social advancement for some members of the working class. Some political sociologists, like Butler and Stokes, or David Lockwood have suggested that working class political pragmatism has been a feature of their support for Conservatism since 1945. We suggest that it may have a history which stretches back considerably further.¹⁴

Added to these two groups of pragmatic Conservatives were those members of the working class who were overtly deferential to their social and political superiors and to the religious and political offices they held. The Operative Conservatives of Leeds give us an example of this attitude.

reverence (sic) the King and all in authority, we pay due deference to all who are in high stations...because we believe that the different degrees and orders in society are so closely united and interwoven, that while we exalt them, we raise ourselves; as we should depress them, we proportionally lower ourselves. While we maintain their rights, we secure our own, and while we defend their privileges we increase our own.¹⁵

II THE DEVELOPMENT AND STRUCTURE OF OPERATIVE CONSERVATISM

Before enlarging any further on what influences and active roles pursued by the national Conservatives, and the middle classes in the localities, it may be useful to examine how these working class bodies came into existence and to take a brief look at their organizational structure.

Unquestionably the Conservatives of the North-West were influenced by the effect the Political Union had in galvanizing working class opinion between 1830 and 1834. However if we view Operative Conservatism as a simple reaction against radical political unionism, we shall overlook a great deal. It is true that the initial object of middle class Conservatives in attempting to involve a section of the working class in Conservatism was to direct them away from what the middle class perceived as the harmful effects of extreme radicalism. But, in the course of doing this, the process not only changed the working class conservatives, but also the political outlook of the middle class conservatives and the party itself. For, by incorporating sections of the working class into the party, and by accepting working class interests and their limited demands with regard to policy, the party leaders in the regions forged a tenuous, but perceptible link with the working class's political needs and aspirations. This is most notable in the Localities, for in most cases the party's national leadership, most specifically Peel, attempted to remain aloof from sectional interests and demands. But even he, with regard to economic and fiscal policy, agreed with his Home Secretary Graham that 'we must endeavour to redress the wrongs of the labourer.'¹⁶ This growing trust in the fitness of the working class to exercise their legitimate political rights began in the 1830's, and increased noticeably after the decline of Chartism, until, in the mid 1860's the Conservative leadership of Derby and Disraeli conceded the franchise on millions of working men with the removal of the property qualification.

However, let us return to the 1830's and the start of this shift in attitudes of both the middle classes and of sections of the working classes towards the Conservative party and conservatism. As we have seen, from their inception the operative associations were designed to fit into the organizational network of the Conservative party at county and borough level. They may have been intended to be purely working class organizations but, as we

shall discover, they were seldom wholly constituted of working men, and there was never any intention that they were to be solely controlled by working men. Conversely, and the distinction is important, many Political Unions in the North-West after 1832 were controlled by working men for working men. This was the case at Bolton as it was at Blackburn and Oldham.¹⁷ At Bolton and Blackburn the Political Unions were formed in 1830 by the strata of upper working class/lower middle class skilled men, tradesmen and small manufacturers. Both of the local historians of the day in the respective towns, (W Brimlow for Bolton and W Abram for Blackburn)¹⁸ agree that by 1834 in each of the towns the Political Union were radically 'democratic' and firmly in the hands of the 'lower' type of working man. The social, political and economic aims and objectives of Political Union were centred on working class advancement and stressed the separate and premier importance of the working class. The Conservatives (and the reforming Liberals) conversely stressed the inter-connectedness and plurality of society, and it was they who laid down the terms of the established political order. Anyone, or any groups, who did not accept this was not deemed a friend of constitutional politics as seen through Conservative eyes. One of the essential aims therefore of operative political clubs was convincing the members of the fundamental correctness of legitimate constitutional politics.

The language used at this time is an important indicator of the type of working class member the Conservatives were seeking to attract. The subtle slurs on the 'destructive classes' or on the Papist republicans, or the 'unpatriotic' Jacobin radicals, suggest disreputability of a kind typical of the organizations which existed beyond the pale of what was deemed respectable and proper, in the manner of the 'loyal' and 'constitutional' Conservative Association. The words of the editor of one of the region's leading conservative newspapers, William Simpson, himself a future honorary member of an Operative Conservative Association, offer

an illustration of the mood conveyed by the language of the period. It is worthy of extended quotation.

If, in times like these, it is necessary that all constitutional men should combine in order to resist the efforts of the disloyal and destructive, it is impossible that we can too earnestly urge the formation of such societies (Operative Conservative Associations) or too highly applaud their objects and principles. The Report* is fraught with all that is mainly sense and intelligence which is the characteristic of such bodies, and is eminently deserving of our best attentions. There is no surer sign of the advance of constitutional opinions, than the increase of Conservative Societies, and particularly among the operatives. How potent an answer it is to these contemptible charges which are so fondly and fervently directed against us, and how fatal to the assertion that we possess no hold over the affection of the people.¹⁹

From the mid 1830's and 1840's Operative Conservative Associations were designed to appeal to the hard-working, church-attending, self-respecting, usually Protestant working man. He was a man who had little time for organizations disrespectful to rank or wealth like those of the 'seditious' or 'infidel' combinations, that the trades unions, secular Owenites and republicans were often portrayed as being. Even as late as the 1840's Conservatives of the North-West were hanging effigies of Tom Paine and publicly burning his Rights of Man in the streets.²⁰

During this early phase, respect for property and deference to the Anglican Church and education, were constantly pressed as models of respectability which working people should be encouraged to emulate.²¹ However, the Conservatives endeavoured to give the working man far more recreational latitude than some of the progressive Liberals. For example the Conservatives frowned upon

* The Report of the Blackburn Operative Conservative Association for 1837.

excessive self-indulgence of any kind, but poured scorn on those groups who would deny to working people their simple pleasures in an attempt to morally improve them. For the most part, they were hostile to the Temperance Movement on this passage from Preston in 1833 reveals.

water worshippers assembled in considerable strength as before; and, as before their arch-enemies and relentless tormentors, the anti-hypocriticals, took up their position in still greater force within fair talking range. Accordingly, on the one side the air was rent with the loud bellowings of the fanatics, and on the other was to be heard the continued shouts of holiday mirth mingled with the incessant sound of escaping corks.²²

This apparent tolerance of the minor indulgences probably was an important reason why some sections of the working class found Conservatism more appealing than the rigidity of progressive Liberalism. However the Operative Conservatives also demanded- whilst concurring exactly with their social superiors about the need to preserve the constitution - that limited reforms be taken up by the Conservative party. In 1835 an Operative Conservative from Manchester (an operative spinner named Longton) told the third South Lancashire Association Conference and dinner that he felt the

sentiments of no ordinary class flowing in my mind. It may be said that you are interested in the spread of conservative associations throughout the Kingdom, I know, gentlemen, you are deeply interested; but is not the poor man deeply interested? Is not the operative deeply interested... We wish you to preserve not destroy - to strengthen, not weaken - the matchless constitution of our country, both in church and state, and what time and circumstances has rendered necessary for reforms, we wish to have reformed in the true sense of reformation, that is in removing the evil and preserving the good.²³

Nevertheless, the operative conservative, whilst suggesting measures for the redressing of working class grievance had-

regardless of which of the types who were attracted to Conservatism we outlined earlier - to remain subservient and obedient to rank and social station. Indeed, as we noticed above had to impress these traits on others, especially his children. An example of this aspect of operative conservatism came in April 1841, when, at a ceremony of presentation to the long-serving Secretary of the Blackburn Operative Association, Henry Kenyon, the then Chairman of the Association, Henry Elgin, asked how Kenyon had originally become a 'Conservative', when, in his own words he was 'surrounded by radicals'. He replied that he, "attributed his not becoming a radical to an early Church of England education, fear of God and honour of the King...and respect of his superiors. He mentioned these matters merely to impress on those gentlemen present who had children of their own, the necessity of giving them, early such an education."²⁴

In the mid 1830's and 1840's, the major difference between the radical associations and the Operative Conservative or Reform Associations, in terms of organization, aims and objectives, was this. In the main the former were controlled by working people themselves and it was they who dictated the political terms of reference. On the other hand, the organizations designed by the two main political parties for working people were never wholly constituted of working people, nor were they ever controlled by them, and, importantly the political terms of reference were dictated by the middle classes.

As we noted above, one of the essential purposes of Operative Conservative Associations was to direct sections of the working class away from the perceived dangers of extreme radicalism. Evidence that the middle class Conservatives were indeed attempting to attract working class support comes from the terms of membership and the subscription fees charged. By early 1835 the Conservatives realized that if they were to attract working men they had to reduce their entry fees and subscriptions. For

example in February 1835 the Blackburn Conservative Association - the parent body of what was soon to become the Operative Association - reduced its annual subscription from one guinea to five shillings, in order, they said "to afford an opportunity for such of the working classes who are disposed to stem the progress of revolutionary doctrines to become members of the association."²⁵ Those working men who did enrol complained that five shillings was still too high a subscription, and when the Operative branch was formed in November 1835, the annual subscription was reduced to two shillings.

Once the opportunities existed for working people to join the Conservative party, the speed at which the operative branches were formed and their geographical spread was truly remarkable. We noted earlier that the distinction of being the first Operative Association belonged to the working men of Leeds, formed as it was in February 1835. Immediately afterwards, Operative Associations were formed at Bradford, Barnsley, Sheffield, Ripon, Wakefield, Huddersfield and on the other side of the county boundary in Salford, and, in July 1835 the Manchester Operative Conservative Association held its inaugural dinner.²⁶ In August the Bolton Operatives formed their Conservative Society; the South Lancashire Conservative Association formed an operative branch based at Wigan in October, and, in November 1835 the Blackburn and Darwen branches were formed. In December, the Liverpool Operative Conservative Association was initiated and in early 1836 branches were formed at Preston, Chorley, Middleton, Ashton, Oldham, Rochdale, Bury, Stockport and Warrington. Throughout 1836 over 100 Operative Conservative Associations were holding their first inaugural dinners nationwide.

By 1837 places as geographically distant as Leicester, Nottingham, Salford and Preston had Operative Conservative Committees in every ward, as well as their central governing bodies.²⁷ The numbers of working people who were attracted to these associations could be

relatively large. For example in 1838, the veteran former radical Sir Francis Burdett - now acclaimed as the 'perfect specimen of an English country gentleman' - attended the third anniversary along with 2,000 others.²⁸ Again in 1838 at Salford a contemporary reported that, "the Operative Conservatives held a tea-party and ball, to which more than 3,000 persons attended, nine-tenths of them ladies."²⁹ These attendances reveal the popularity of Operative Conservatism at this time, as popular as anything the Liberals or radicals could muster, and this on the eve of the Chartist explosion. Indeed on the eve of the Sacred Month of August 1839, the Operative Conservatives of Preston claimed a membership higher than that of the Chartist organization.³⁰ However let us now look at some of the other features of these Operative Associations in the 1830's and 1840's, and consider their links with the central party structure.

III THE AIMS, OBJECTIVES AND FINANCIAL BASIS OF OPERATIVE CONSERVATISM.

One operative function of many of these operative associations was the prudential one of sick care and burial. The majority of the local associations copied the example of the existing purely profit-orientated Sick and Burial clubs. These had been in existence for many years in the industrial North-West, and acted as assurance organizations maintaining club funds for the relief of sickness, unemployment and death of their members. The importance of these sick and burial clubs to the vast majority of the working class should not be underestimated. Very often they were the only means by which a working person could obtain medical treatment and subsequently receive a non-pauper Christian burial.

The Conservatives of the North-West utilized this facility and, indeed began to add to the activities of such associations in their own interest. Also by 1836, the Preston branch of the Operative Association ran a building society for the benefit of their members.³¹ It is probable that these benefits were a source of new membership to the associations, but it is also probable - given the proliferation of such clubs - that the dividends realized were regarded as being a useful bonus for those working class members on fairly low incomes or experiencing short time lay-offs.

An ordinary working class member of the sick and burial club run by the Operative Conservatives paid between 2s and 2s 3d per month. This would appear to have been within the budgets of most working people who were in full time work. The average weekly wages of power loom weavers (usually women) were approximately 8s 6d at this time, operative spinners 2s per week, an engineer 15s per week and an overlooker, 40s per week. If an operative was disabled he was allowed 1 guinea per week, if his wife died he received five pounds to bury her, or if he died she received seven pounds. Surpluses, if any were divided equally amongst all the members, and there was usually a subsidised annual dinner.³²

Given that the rates of premium were slightly higher than for other, non-political, societies, and given that these were large differentials in wage rates, it would appear that the Operative Conservative Associations were seeking to attract the better off type of working class members. It is probable that the societies with the larger memberships - Salford, Manchester, Bolton, Wigan, Liverpool etc - would have realized a small profit from these sick and burial clubs and that this would be utilized for the purposes of the clubs, but it is difficult to see how these societies with only moderate membership could realize a profit. It would seem that, in these associations, the venture was operated for the benefit of the Membership, in all probability at a loss.

Most of the money used to operate the working class-based associations came from the middle classes: richer Conservatives and honorary members appear to have contributed significantly to the funds of the operative associations. All the parent bodies held annual balls and the monies raised were given over to the upkeep of the various subsidiary associations. The stocking of the libraries and newsrooms were donations from richer Conservatives. However, all the various Conservative Associations throughout the North-West seem to have been financially autonomous, there is little evidence of any central fund used to bail out a branch who encountered financial difficulties. As well as individual donations of money and gifts, fetes, tea-parties, whist drives, dinner and balls were all organized to provide money as well as entertainment to keep the operative associations afloat. Thus they provided a dual benefit: one of entertainment, amusement and education of the members, and secondly of keeping the various associations financially viable. Throughout the 1830's up until the terrible split of 1846, there is no evidence that any of the Conservative Associations folded through lack of financial support.

As far as the proposition that the party's national funds were used to assist regional Conservative Associations and Operative Associations is concerned, we must hold the verdict in abeyance. There is little evidence, in the periods between elections, that monies were sent from London to assist individual associations in the localities. However, during election periods, certain societies were assisted directly from London secretly and quietly. This secrecy was necessary to ensure that the Carlton was not inundated with requests for help that its funds could not possibly meet. Nor could their opponent cry bribery if such acts of financial assistance were kept secret and selective. But assistance was given as this letter marked 'very private' from Bonham to Peel reveals.

Sussex seats winnable. At all counts it will require the whole conservative strength to be organized and put forward with will and energy to ensure success. The whole influence of the court is arranged to support (the Whig) Dalrymple who is not popular... In fact the previous victory was achieved solely by the good management of the Conservative Association which was formed here two years ago. You will not be surprised that this Association is now (Bonham's emphasis) on the wane and requires our very intensive support.³³

Also we know that the Carlton did keep a special fund for just this purpose - as this piece from The Metropolitan Conservative Journal reveals:

A lamentable mistake in which Conservatives in remote districts fall, is in trusting to the metropolis for candidates and to the Carlton Club for funds. In the first instance, the London appointed members are the very worst, and in the second the Carlton Club rarely subscribes anything from the joint-stock purse but in very peculiar and urgent cases.³⁴

Also it is probable, judging from the general feeling of Conservative politics in the constituencies, that any systematic payment by the Carlton would have been regarded as an unwarranted intrusion in local authority by a London political organization and would have been bitterly resented. In the localities it was still universally believed that local political patronage began at home, and indeed it could have resulted in defeat if made known by ones political opponents that political finance was lacking and that the local party had to be propped up by outside influence. Thus the pattern in the majority of cases was that the local gentry, local industrialists and men of commerce found the money. This is not to say of course that Bonham and the Carlton had no influence. Their work however, was the gathering and the sending out of political information and intelligence and the organizing of elections.

As we have stressed throughout this chapter the influence of the middle classes in the setting up of Operative Conservative Associations was considerable. However by the end of the 1830's the nature of middle class involvement had undergone a subtle change. In 1833/4 when the Conservative Associations were originated it was the committed middle class conservative activists - like William Hulton of Bolton - who were in the forefront of both their organization and the dissemination of party principles. By the later 1830's however, what seems to have developed was that most Conservatives held the view that all the middle classes, not just the activists had a responsibility to influence those of a lower social station, and furthermore, the working class Conservatives should attempt a similar role with their social peers. Thus one of the central objectives of Operative Conservatism was the influence and political containment of the local community. These features are exemplified in a long quote from John Bennett, the headmaster of Blackburn Grammar School and acting President of the Operative Association. Speaking in 1839, on the eve of the Chartist disturbances he said:-

It is my opinion that a great portion of the lower classes are democratic... Now sir if we take into view the constant influx of new population, that from compulsion has been going on with increasing flow in our manufacturing districts for nearly half a century, the breaking up of the old framework of society, the dispersion of domestic circles, everyone left to his own resources, the consequent overflow of operatives, the reduction in wages, the poverty and discontent, the innumerable temptation to improvidence and vice which they are beset, we need seek no further for the present condition of reckless desire for change and for the facility of political excitement presented to every agitator among these classes... Now sir for improving the perilous situation of this class it is the duty of every wealthy Conservative to contribute by his wealth and influence to the diffusion of Conservative principles ... It is the duty of every Operative Conservative to invite and encourage his poorer neighbour to become a member of our Association, to attend out reading room, and thereby learn to be content in that station of life which providence has pleased to call him; he would thereby arm himself against the poisonous principles

which are promulgated by those rabid and fanatical revolutionists who would raise themselves on the ruin of our altars and our houses.³⁵

This statement is the epitome of Conservative principles and it also expresses the fears - very real in 1839 - that the working class, if left uncontrolled, would fall victim to the radical left. It was made when the Blackburn Conservative Association was reaching the height of its influence. As we shall discover subsequently, Blackburn and East Lancashire were peculiar as compared to other parts of the region at this particular time in that physical force Chartism did not become a mass movement, and the town remained relatively quiet throughout the agitated summer of 1839. This was a situation which the local conservatives were quick to take credit for, attributing it to their 'missionary' work amongst the lower orders.³⁶

In the next two years, the Operative Associations throughout the North-West continued to grow and attract members. 1841 was the high point. Nationally Peel was elected with a large working majority and in the county of Lancashire the Conservatives split the seats with the Liberals with each party returning thirteen members to the House of Commons. Local Conservatives applauded themselves that they had done their jobs well, that they had unity over most political questions, certainly over religious matters, and in the majority of boroughs for the first time since 1832 they had a favourable registration. Thus in the space of just ten years the party had undergone a remarkable transformation in terms of organization, both at the centre and in the localities. The threatened flooding of the House of Commons by the extreme Radicals returned by the new boroughs had not transpired, nor even during the height of the Chartist agitation did it look likely. We suggest that Operative Conservatism - the political integration of a key section of the industrial working class - was a small but significant part of this transformation of political attitudes.

Let us conclude this chapter by attempting to assess the significance of Operative Conservatism, particularly from the perspective of political science.

Significantly, Operative Conservatism was the forerunner of what later became in the 1870's the Conservative Working Mens Associations and clubs, and was, we contend, a primitive form of the party of 'social integration'. As we noted earlier this is a term utilized by the modern political scientist Sigmund Neumann to describe what he believed to be a relatively modern type of political party dating ostensibly from the growth of the mass socialist parties, particularly in Europe from the 1880's. It is probable that the middle class dominated county and borough Conservative Associations correspond to Neumann's other type of party, that of individual representation. This form of party, as we noted above, caters for the individual who allies himself to it primarily because it corresponds ideologically, and in terms of policy initiatives, to his personal political credo. This type of party, Neumann tells us is loosely organized for most of the time; coming together only as a potent political machine only at the approach of elections. For the rest of the time the party leaves the members alone. But in the mid to late 1830's the Conservative Party of the North West developed the traits and functions similar to the party of social integration. This type of party seeks to attract a mass membership and to organize the member not just politically, but in a variety of ways which affected directly his day-to-day existence; taking care of his wife and children in case of accident or death; informally educating him; politically socializing him so that he may conform to what the party regarded as legitimate political activities; and performing regular social functions for the members. The prime benefit for the party was that it possessed an army of political activists in the field and was operational at all times.

One historian, John Garrard,³⁷ in a paper investigating Neumann's

thesis tells us that: "None of the literature appears to regard the old middle class parties as capable of producing a party social integration."³⁸ He goes on to present a fairly conclusive case that both of the main political parties operating in Salford after 1867 came very close to being described as parties of social integration in the sense of the term being used by Neumann. We contend that this line of analysis can be taken back to the period before the 1867 Reform Act and the advent of a mass electorate.³⁹ It would seem from our study that Garrard's tentative conclusion regarding the immediate post 1867 period are sound, and in the case of the Conservatives of the North-West they were acting as a party of social integration for a section of the working class as early as 1835/6. The two important ingredients which were lacking at this time from the model used by Neumann were a truly mass membership and the electoral power of a politically organized working class - although with regard to this last point, in the case of Preston with its Scot and Lot franchise the evidence is interesting as we shall subsequently discover. However compared to the post-1867 situation Operative Conservatism never really attracted a truly mass membership in the 1830's and 40's. For example in Preston in 1839 the Operative Conservatives had a membership of over 600,⁴⁰ whilst the Chartist membership on the very eve of the Sacred month was placed at 'about 400'.⁴¹ What is worth noting and we suggest is an important indicator of the changing political culture of the period, is that for the first time a section of the industrial working class were continuously organized politically by a mainstream national political party.

As a matter of fact it is doubtful if the instigators and organized operative conservatism ever really desired a mass membership. They appear to have been seeking to attract a certain type of working class member:- respectable, self-improving religious and a social leader within his class, but without the utterly rigid high moral stance which some Liberal activists were perceived as adopting. For the Conservatives it mattered little

that this member did not have the vote, for the primary aims were political enlightenment, political socialization and to be able to direct working people away from the dangers of extreme radicalism, as well as the ability to canvass and put pressure on those who were electors. The evidence for Lancashire and the North-West suggests that the agitation which the working class had been engaged in from the 1790's to the 1830's had a profound effect on the middle class in terms of their perceptions of an organized radical working class. Operative Conservatism and Operative Reformism - attempts to politically integrate key groups into mainstream moderate legitimized politics - were just one of their responses. Others included the organization of formal education, the control of mechanisms for the relief of poverty, the discipline of the factory and control of other social necessities such as housing. It was crucial to the manufacturers particularly and the propertied middle class generally, that, after the consolidation of industrial capitalism in the 1830's, the overtly political nature of working class consciousness be reduced and nullified. By the 1850's this appeared to have occurred and was probably a source of satisfaction to many of the middle class and the state authorities.

But this process of political sectionalization was by no means complete by the mid-1830's. Nor was it a phenomenon which occurred evenly throughout Lancashire. The working class of East Lancashire for example, appear to have been politically sectionalized relatively early. However, the working class of radical Oldham and Rochdale were politically united well into the 1850's. Eventually, working class consciousness did fragment and political sectionalization was a major factor. Even during the years of Chartist activity there were working class Chartists who supported the Conservatives and Liberals as well as the six points. Operative Conservatism aimed its pitch at the literate, politically articulate, usually skilled working class men who would probably command respect from their peers, and who,

throughout the years of high class consciousness, may have been in positions of trades union or political leadership.⁴²

One of the major themes of this thesis is that working class political sectionalization can be traced back to the middle years of the 1830's. It may be that class solidarity in East Lancashire began to fragment so early because of the success of the middle class manufacturers in producing a network of social controls in a relatively short space of time. It is our contention that Operative Conservatism was an important part of this network of social controls and influences. Whether wittingly or unwittingly the middle class conservatives of Lancashire and the North-West were acting as political conciliators by allowing the working class - sections of it - into their party, a party who, within the living memory of many working people had acted so harshly toward the political aspirations of the working class. As a process, this changed not only those members of the working class who became involved in Conservatism, but the class as a whole - because they became so politically sectionalized. It also changed the middle class Conservatives, because they had to at least pander to working class interests and demands, and the party nationally, because it had to accommodate through policy initiatives to a wide social basis of political support. It may well have been that the high levels of class consciousness displayed by the workers of Oldham and the 'popular' style of Rochdale's politics was retained for longer because the radicals dominated politics in those towns and not the Conservatives who dominated much of East Lancashire or the Liberals who dominated Manchester. Thus the question becomes one of political leadership, which is something we shall discuss fully in a later chapter.

For the members of the operative associations, the personal benefits - as we have seen - were very similar to those described by Garrard in the 1870's and 1880's; trips and picnics; literary

and social facilities; guest speakers; contact with the party's hierarchy; the encouragement of legitimate political involvement and finally the sick and benefit facilities which could, at certain times have been of crucial importance to the very existence of some of the working class members. The members, on the other hand, were required to give up some of their time and to go out and argue the Conservative case and inform others of its benefits.

The chief reason why the national party leaders allowed the localities to set up the various types of Conservative Associations - for it would not be true to suggest that the national leadership were *directly involved in the initial setting up* of such bodies - was that such societies greatly improved party organization in the constituencies. Once the leadership at the Carlton realized that the various types of associations were politically respectable they utilized their benefits to the full, especially with regard to the Registration.

In the case of the local Conservatives, their aim was essentially to guide the more moderate, sober-minded and respectable working man away from the evil effects of extreme radicalism; in this sense their objective was one of attempted control, but in an unforced and open manner. Some working class members were drawn towards Operative Conservatism out of a sense of social deference to the local elites, others out of political deference to the office and officers of power. There were others attracted to Conservatism because of their extreme opinions and their hatred of Catholics or the Irish migrants: as we shall shortly discover there was always a racist and bigoted element within the various associations which some of the local middle class leadership attempted to turn to political advantage. However there were other working class members who were attracted to Conservatism because their opinions on certain key issues of the day coincided with the policies being expounded by the local and national

Conservative party leadership. It is to these questions of traditionalism, deference and, most notably, that of policies and issues within Operative Conservatism and of the wider working class of the North-West that we now turn our attention.

SUMMARY

In this chapter we have begun to examine the nature of Operative Conservatism from the standpoint of its inception, structure, role and basic political function within the context of the industrial North-West. We have looked at the changing relationship between the industrial working class and the middle class conservatives and noted the changing features of the political culture of the North-West in the 1830's and 40's. We must now look in more detail at the wider political behaviour of the working class and examine why some working people began to find Operative Conservatism in particular, and Conservatism generally, attractive from the mid-1830's up to the second Reform Act and beyond.

1. The Election Address of J Fowden Hindle, 29/5/1832, Blackburn Reference Library.

2. Paul, W M, Operative Conservative Societies of the United Kingdom, a Brief History, Leeds 1838.

3. Conservative Associations, Blackwoods Edinburgh Magazine, July 1835, p.6.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid. p.8.

6. Ibid.

7. Peel Papers, British Library 40418 ff 172. Feilden to Peel 26/3/1835.

8. Herries Papers, British Library 57371 ff 98. Arbuthnot to Herries undated.

9. P.P. 16/7/1836.

10. Peel Papers 40616 ff 328. Saunders to Graham 22/1/45.

11. Though it should be noted, not as strongly as some of the Liberal Radicals, especially at Oldham and Rochdale. On the other hand however, throughout the whole of 1837, the Conservatives of Bury, for example, refused to implement the new law. When the Poor Law Commission tried to impose the law, they were advised that no Conservatives would either vote for, or sit on the Board of Guardians, rendering the Act virtually useless. See Manchester Guardian 10/5/1837.

12. "The signatures of the declaration (of intent) show the members to be literate, and by availing themselves of the means the society affords, they must direct their education into a channel that will tend to their own welfare and add to the honour and prosperity of their native country." Second Annual Report of the Blackburn Operative Conservative Association. B.J. 2/11/1837.

13. See Blackburn Poll Books for 1837/1847 Blackburn Reference Library. See also Appendix Four.

14. See D Butler and D Stokes, Political Change in Britain, Second Edition, London 1974, or D lockwood, J H Goldthorpe et al, The Industrial Worker: Industrial Attitudes and Behaviour, Cambridge 1968.

15. Paul op.cit.p.9.

16. Graham Papers, Bodleian Library Oxford 2/9/18942. Graham to Peel. See also John Foster 'The Declassing of Language' in New Left Revue March/April 1985 p.33.

17. For Oldham see John Foster Class Struggle and the Industrial Revolution London 1974 p.101.

18. Brimlow, W, A Parliamentary History of Bolton, Bolton 1880.
Abram, W A, A History of Blackburn, Blackburn 1879.

19. Blackburn Standard 8/11/1837.

20. Ibid 11/11/1840.

21. For examples of this see Preston Pilot 7/10/1837 or Manchester Courier 11/6/1836. In the Blackburn Standard 21/4/1841, see pp ? below, for quote of Harry Kenyon, former secretary of Blackburn Operative Association.

22. Preston Pilot 27/6/1833.
23. Ibid 17/10/1835.
24. Blackburn Standard 21/4/1841.
25. Ibid 8/2/1835.
26. The Times 29/7/1835.
27. The Times 5/1/1837.
28. Ibid 20/4/1838.
29. Ibid.
30. British Library Ad Ms 34245B Walton and Halton to Lovett, July, 1839.
31. Preston Pilot, 26/3/1836.
32. The Times 8/1/1838.
33. Peel Papers, British Library, AD Mss 40424, ff 140. Bonham to Peel 23/9/1837.

34. The Metropolitan Conservative Journal 26/6/1837.
35. Blackburn Standard 27/11/1839.
36. Throughout the months of August and September 1839 the Blackburn Standard devoted the whole of its editorial space to a series of 'Friendly Words Addressed to Working Men'. Also the local Anglican Vicar, Dr Whittaker wrote a pamphlet condemning Chartism which ran into seventeen editions. Sermon Preached to the Chartists on Sunday August 4, 1839. Blackburn 1839.
37. J A Garrard, Parties, Members and Voters After 1867: A Local Study. Historical Journal 20,1,1977.pp.145-163.
38. Ibid p.146.
39. See T R Gourvish and A O'Day, (Eds.) Later Victorian Britain, Basingstoke 1988, p.145.
40. Preston Pilot 20/7/1839.
41. General Convention of the Industrial Classes 1839. British Library AD Ms 34245B ff 119 Robert Walton and George Halton to William Lovett, August 1839.
42. For evidence of this see the activities of W H Horby below in Chapter 10.

CHAPTER SEVEN OPERATIVE CONSERVATISM II) THE ROLE OF ISSUES AND
THE VARIOUS IDIOMS OF POLITICS.

In the last chapter we began the detailed examination of Operative Conservatism, concentrating on the basic structure and functions of these societies and focusing mainly on the impact they had in the North-West region. In this chapter we aim to continue this process but now with the aim of examining both the expectations of those traditionalistic and conservative members of the working class and, in contrast, what policy initiatives the local and national Conservatives produced in an attempt to placate the interests and demands of the working class whilst at the same time not alienating other sectional political groupings who also included themselves under the banner of Conservatism.

I THE TRADITIONAL ROLE OF POLICIES AND POLITICAL REPRESENTATION.

Early in this thesis we suggested that one of the major functions of a modern political party was the articulation of the wishes and aggregated demands of its members and supporters in the form of policy initiatives. Policies are also important in swaying those

not otherwise committed to a given party. At the beginning of the nineteenth century however things were rather different. Before 1832 ministries were primarily concerned with the maintenance of the defence of the state, internal law and order and of the exchequer. Policies enacted by a Ministry were therefore, mainly reactions to a constantly changing set of 'high political' events. It could be argued that in the eighteenth century Whig ministers were sympathetic to commerce and to religious dissent but if this was their traditional posture it was widely challenged in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. There was the attack of Whig economic policy in Adam Smith's Wealth of Nations, and in more obvious terms in the fact that no dissenter could send his son to an English university nor any Catholic to Parliament. There were of course great popular movements in the eighteenth century and early nineteenth century, for example Parliamentary reform, the question of slavery and Catholic emancipation. However the overwhelming view of politicians was that crusades conducted outside Parliament to influence policy should not concern the branches of the legislature. Such stirring of the passions of the masses was regarded as dangerous in the extreme and tantamount to infusing revolutionary feelings. Policy at all costs must be decided in Parliament by members acting independently of pledges given to sectional interests in the constituencies.

The justification for this position was two-fold. Firstly, party leaders believed that the general public, informed as they were by the dubious financial scruples of the public press, could never be adequately appraised as to the ramifications of a given policy as a Minister of State or a member of a Lords or Commons Committee. So on the eve of 1832, the prevailing view was that agitation 'out of doors' was at worst a dangerous and mischievous form of meddling. Thus it was that most policy decisions were made by the Prime Minister in close consultation with his Cabinet colleagues and the Monarch of the day. In the case of the Conservatives, the aloofness of Sir Robert Peel and his propensity for deafness when

addressed by his back-benchers, was for many years notorious.¹ Arguably Peel was merely carrying on a long tradition of leaving policy decisions to those in the highest positions of ministerial office. But even he eventually had to bend to outside pressure, and arguably these feelings of his back-benchers can be interpreted as a sign of the rejection of the old system and a feature of party politics.

The second justification of policies solely being the concern of the legislature was the traditional independence of both of the Houses and of the member. One of the chief fears of the Conservatives about the 1832 Reform Act, and one of the central cornerstones of their opposition to it, was that the House of Commons would become superior in importance to the House of Lords and that the Lower House would be swamped by the radical members of the boroughs brought in by their courting popular measures and pledges. Again, one of the chief reasons for organizing the party, both at the centre and in the localities was to prevent just such an eventuality.

With regard to the independence of the individual members, it was believed that he might ally himself to basic party principles and take the party Whip but only because he, quite voluntarily, had decided that those were the principles he wished to be identified with. In the main before 1832, the average Member of Parliament believed that he had been sent there to use his best judgment regarding the country's affairs and to vote accordingly. He could be a supporter or opponent of a Ministry, but he should have no obligation about how he should speak or vote on a particular occasion, and, although his patron might hold him accountable, the electors could not. The basis for this principle, which is still to some extent present in modern politics, was laid down by Edmund Burke as early as 1774. In a famous speech to the electors of Bristol, Burke said:

...it ought to be the happiness and glory of a representative to live in the strictest union...with his constituents. Their wishes ought to have great weight with him, their opinion high respect; their business unremitted attention. It is his duty to sacrifice his repose, his pleasures, his satisfaction to theirs, and above all, ever and in all cases, to prefer their interests to his own. But his unbiased opinion, his mature judgment, his enlightened conscience, he ought not to sacrifice to you; to any man, or to any set of men living. These he does not derive from your pleasures, nor from the law and the constitution. They are a trust from providence, for the abuse of which he is deeply answerable.²

Burke's conception of the duty of electors was that they should choose a good man and let him get on with the job; it would be open to them not to choose him again if he should disappoint their expectations, as, indeed the electors of Bristol did to Burke himself in 1780. Although this guiding principle of the independence of the member of Parliament never really changed as a principle throughout the nineteenth century, in reality the situation after 1832 meant that the candidate of a given political party had to be watchful that in representing the whole of constituency - the electors as well as the non-electors - he should not risk alienating his party's supporters merely by asserting his own independence in Parliament.

Post-reform electorates differed in two main areas from pre-Reform electorates. First, and most obviously, they were usually larger, and secondly, in areas where industrialization and urbanization had taken place the local society was more complex and thus more productive of political pressures. Thus there was an increasing tendency for the more numerous sections of the electorate to seriously argue the merits and demerits of policies and alternative policies. There was, in short, a greater propensity amongst the public to express opinions based on the serious examination of political questions and to express their own sectional interests in the form of political demands.

II THE VARIOUS IDIOMS OF POLITICS.

In a major work published in 1975 entitled Influence, Opinion and Political Idioms in Reformed England, Tom Nossiter³ elaborated an argument on the idioms or expressions of nineteenth century politics between 1832 and 1874. For Nossiter, there were three kinds of political relationship operating at this period. First there were the politics of influence. This rested on an organic notion of society whereby the societal gradations of a community were reflected in the disposal of patronage and political power. This type of political community was a remnant from the eighteenth century type of social organization based primarily on the large estate with each component having its use, duties and reciprocal responsibilities. According to Nossiter, the politics of influence were not purely a rural or market town phenomenon but one which could be "transferred with greater or lesser incongruity to the city or the company town alike."⁴ The point here is that influence was brought to bear not necessarily as a crude form of overt coercion, or of irresistible pressures at periods of elections, but a continuous realization on the part of an elector to take account of his total situation within the network of influences which made up his day to day existence. Thus there is a sense of pragmatism as well as deference to authority in Nossiter's view of the politics of influence, as indeed there is in the work of Frank O'Connor.⁵

Nossiter's second idiom or political variable was that of the politics of the market. Here the vote or political participation was seen as an "economic asset to be bought or sold according to the laws of political supply and demand."⁶ Again Nossiter stresses that this may not have been the crude buying and selling of votes, but often the paying of expenses, or the paying for lost time, or tipping for a service rendered or the giving of treats; food, travel, drinks etc. Nor again was this type of politics to

be found solely during periods of elections. It was expected that an M.P. or local politicians should give generously to local charities and reward local activists either as individuals or collectively through his contribution to the expenses of the annual dinner of the local political association or other gifts and treats. This operation was not considered as being immoral or corrupt but merely what was expected. Thus there was an element of social sanctioning this type of political behaviour which, according to Nossiter, (and here is in agreement with Norman Gash) the Reform Act of 1832 did little to remove.

Finally there was the politics of opinion and interest. Which he suggests was known as 'agitation' immediately after the passing of 1832 Act, and of 'conscience' during the 1850's and 60's and finally in the early 1870's gained expression during the final success in carrying the Secret Ballot in 1872.⁷ According to Nossiter, this was, "a conception of the political order which sought to exclude any other considerations than the political. For short, it might be called the politics of individualism, that individualism which was so evident in the economic and cultural movements of the time."⁸ It was individualistic in the sense that the citizen considered his political options and formed his opinions on the basis of his relationship with questions of policy, principles, his own interests, and the political party - or the individual candidate who represented the party - who could best suit his opinion won his support regardless of class.

Nossiter tells us that few constituencies could be described as fitting exactly to one or other of these three conceptions of nineteenth century politics but he suggests that his model helps to clarify a very confusing pattern of political development. His study is based on research of the North-East of England - a region which Nossiter admits was 'unique' in its especial attachment to Liberal politics.⁹ This points to the problem of Nossiter's three classifications of nineteenth century politics. All regions

were different, indeed areas within regions were different. What might have been common practice in one was different in another. This is something we shall concentrate on later, but it is worth making the point at this stage.

Derek Fraser¹⁰ has pointed out that the North-East region was unique in that, although it contained that mix of agriculture and industry which was typical of Britain during the consolidation of the industrial revolution, in political terms, it was still locked into the single interest type of political orientation typical of pre-Reform Act politics and more akin to the political environment of the eighteenth century than the nineteenth. Fraser points out that, the region as a whole did contain one large city, Newcastle, but the region as a whole did not contain the mixture of interests capable of creating the diversity of opinions found in areas containing large metropolitan conurbations such as London, Birmingham or Manchester and Liverpool in the North-West. In the North-East of the 1830's and 1840's the principle interests were the land, shipping and coal, whilst in Lancashire we find economic interests linked to politics in commerce, various forms of textiles, mining, engineering and other industries undergoing rapid mechanization. The North-East was also, on Nossiter's own evidence largely protestant:¹¹ and although at times the Anglicans and Nonconformists clashed violently, the region did not contain any numbers of that important third element - Roman Catholics - to provide the Conservatives with the opportunity to exploit sectarian hatreds, as they did in parts of the North-West. Thus it was that the North-East could be neatly compartmentalized into Nossiter's three conceptualizations of politics because here elements of the old system were retained longer and emphasis could be given to the politics of influence and the market.¹² As Nossiter himself says.

...The protagonists of individualism (opinion based politics) often found themselves engaged in a rearguard action in face of the influence of landowners in the country, industrialists

in the company towns and trade union leaders in the cities.¹³

Derek Fraser's own work¹⁴ on the large cities of the North and Midlands suggests, (like our own) that it was opinion which, after 1832, was the salient feature of local politics at least in these sorts of urban area. Fraser cites The Times as evidence for his case.

What The Times said of the West Riding to a greater or lesser extent applied to the larger cities: 'with its 30,000 voting men and its unequalled concentration of interests (it) is beyond the reaches of all influences but those which appeal to the conscience of man. No threats, no frowns, no quarter day,... Here if anywhere is a free election.'¹⁵

We suggest that although influence (especially all patronage) and the politics of the market are to be found in the North-West, the increasing trend after 1832 was towards the politics of opinion, based largely upon social groups concerned either with purely political issues or with social, economic and religious questions which became political issues. We agree with Fraser when he asserts that Nossiter's study is based on a conception of nineteenth century politics which is somewhat narrow.¹⁶ For although Nossiter has devised these three conceptualizations of political activity, this activity is itself primarily concerned with the formal participation in politics encapsulated in the act of voting. Thus, for Nossiter, the 1872 Secret Ballot Act attains a huge significance: because the Act made it much harder to influence or buy votes. This because those attempting to influence or corrupt had no longer any guarantee that the client voter had stuck to his bargain or pledge. If one seeks to understand nineteenth century politics purely from the standpoint of the act of registering a vote then this is a plausible argument. However we, in this study, are suggesting that nineteenth century politics must be understood in a far wider context, one that embraces the changing nature of the political

party and the political attitudes of the non-electors as well as the electors. The vote was merely the culmination of a long process of political stance formation in which opinion and bargaining may well have played a part irrespective of whether the outcome is influence or opinion based in an immediate sense. As we shall discover the benefits accruing to the members of the local Operative Conservative Associations (sick and benefit provisions etc) gives support to this point.

Taken individually Nossiter's three categories impinge too exclusively on the separate nature of the explanatory context of the given idiom. It would seem that the various inter-linking factors came into play in different places at different times in the political world of Britain after 1832. Thus it was that certain principles, issues or policies in a given locality over-rode the constraints and limitations inherent within Nossiter's various idioms, especially with regard to the non-electors.

Increasingly after 1832, in the North-West at least, local politicians attempted to gain support and power on the basis of issues which directly affected the working class. On the Conservative side, examples of this can be found as we shall see, in the agitation surrounding the imposition of the New Poor Law after 1836 or the Factory Questions. Increasingly from the 1830's onwards as we shall discover in later chapters it is evident in religious questions linked expressly to Irish migration. Of course there were occasions when local landed or industrial magnates attempted to influence electors and non-electors, but this we suggest was part of a wider network of social controls which the elites operated after 1832. Of course there were occasions of corruption after the first Reform Act, but here too we suggest that the growing tendency towards political respectability, coupled with the increasing size of electorates in the constituencies of the North-West, rendered this idiom of Nossiter's though still of significance, increasingly marginal.

Increasingly, therefore the tendency of parties and politicians at the local and national level was to appeal for support on the basis of principles, policies and issues, and importantly, leadership.

However we suggest that Nossiter's three idioms of political activity must be borne in mind when we come to discuss the regional variation of North-West politics, for, although limiting and at times confusing they do enable us to compare and contrast over time and space the changing political culture of the North-West.

III WORKING CLASS ISSUES, OPERATIVE CONSERVATIVES AND RADICAL TORIES.

As we noted in the last chapter, the initial active membership of the associations of Lancashire Operative Conservatives was the 'respectable' working man. However, there were occasions when the great mass of working people were called upon to support Conservatism. This brings us to the role which actual issues play in the 1830's 1840's and 1850's, and how they were utilized by the local conservatives. So far we have suggested that the role of Operative Conservatism as a political institution was one of political socialization and proselytization, and that the local and national Conservative leaders supported the Conservative Associations as being not only useful organizational bodies but also fulfilling the role of explaining the essential Conservative principle of preserving the existing constitution in Church and State. Also, importantly, in the case of the Operative Associations, of being able to steer sections of the working class away from the dangers of extreme radicalism.

Initially, at a general level, Operative Conservative Associations resembled a form of Conservative Mechanics Institute. They were places where discussions and debates could be held, Conservative newspapers and literature read and absorbed. Two points are important here. Firstly, for the Conservative leadership, this explanatory function was important, for, as we noted above, it steered the operative away from the company and influence of radicals, republicans and the like which he may have encountered in the public house or the place of work, and placed him in an informal educational environment with his like-minded peers. The work-place and the public house were important once the operative was fully committed and conversant with the arguments of Conservatism. Then he could influence and persuade his fellow workers, but the initiation and instruction had to take place in a less disruptive atmosphere. Secondly, the Operative, for his part was displaying to his said superiors that he was at least willing to be improved and wished to be regarded as a respectable and legal member of his party and class. This differed from the political of influence in that this was a voluntary activity on the part of the individual and one based on an appeal made by the political party to gain his support.

The situation worked well for both sides. The Conservative leadership knew precisely whom it could rely on and encouraged the converted to bring more into the fold, so that they too could defend the constitution against the encroachments of the Destructives, the Reformers, the Radicals, the republicans and others who advocated wholesale changes in society. The Operative Conservative on the other hand, was not just a passive member of political society like other non-electors, but an active one in that he campaigned vigorously for the Conservative cause which was firmly within the mainstream of political legitimacy. In time, the working class Conservative might attain the right of holding the franchise by virtue of his gaining better employment

opportunities and a larger rated home. Once he could vote, the Association would take care of his registration. These functions were not, of course peculiar to the Conservatives, the Liberals did the same sort of things, especially with the faggot votes created by the Anti-Corn-Law League in the early 1840's. However, in the 1830's the first aim of the local Conservatives was to instil into a section of the working class the basic Conservative opinions. If Dr Nossiter wishes to call this 'agitation' as he terms opinion based politics, then the local Conservatives of Lancashire gloried in the term as a Mr Cheetham, a local National Schoolmaster told a meeting of Chorley Operatives in November 1836.

At the commencement of the Association our opponents charged us with agitation. It was said that our design was to cause masters to be against their servants, fathers against their sons; but he would say that if to endeavour to instil right views and implement sound constitutional principles in the hearts and minds of the working classes - if to endeavour to create a kind and good feeling amongst our fellow townsmen by showing them the duties they owe to each other, be agitation, then he would say we glory in agitation...¹⁷

However, without doubt, the various types of Conservative Association would be of most practical benefit to the party in organizational terms in a national sense during the periods of Parliamentary elections when committed working class Conservatives would be on hand to canvass electors and argue the Conservative case to their fellow non-electors. Yet not all the members of the various Operative Associations were so committed throughout the whole of our period. The membership was prone to fluctuation. The Preston branch formed in December 1835 began with inaugural membership of 60 persons, by the end of October 1836 this branch had increased its membership to 450.¹⁸ In December 1836, the Warrington Operative Conservative Association claimed a large membership of 500,¹⁹ and in May 1838 they boasted 740 members and, as well as the usual social amenities, an Operative

Conservative Brass Band.²⁰ At Wigan the membership of the Operative Conservative Association was 850 in the summer of 1836,²¹ at Liverpool the membership was said to be in excess of 1,000 with a branch in every ward in the city, in the same in November 1836 the Tradesmen's branch attracted 120 new members in the course of a single meeting.²² By July 1837 the Bolton branch had a membership of 1,500 with an additional 200 female members;²³ in April 1838 the membership of Salford Operative Conservative Association was put 1,700²⁴ and Manchester claimed 900 members for its Operative Association.²⁵ The initial membership of the Blackburn Operative Association was 40 in November 1835, by 1838 it was over 400; the following year the membership fell, not picking up again until 1841, but not increasing anything like as fast as its initial spurt. According to the annual reports of the Blackburn Operative Association the membership for the town - not the parish - never rose higher than 600 in 1844.²⁶ Blackburn therefore ranks as an Association of middling membership compared to those of its larger neighbours at Manchester, Liverpool, Salford and Bolton. But there were also small associations at Rochdale with 400 members,²⁷ or Heywood²⁸ (350 members in 1837) or Chorley (300 in 1836)²⁹ and others with no recorded membership at Burnley or Poulton-le-Fylde or Upholland and many, many more.

The periods, however, when the Operative Associations of the North-West did increase coincided with the periods when the issues linked in some way to regional Conservatism were at their strongest. At periods of high social tension, political issues, strong leadership and organization can act as conduits which bring previously apathetic members of society into the political arena. This appears to have been the case in the North-West between 1832 and the mid 1860's; especially with regard to issues concerning the relief of poverty, the ten hours movement, the Corn Laws, Parliamentary reform and Church reform specifically with regard to the Church rates question and education. Added to these were those which affected working people only indirectly or

spasmodically such as public health, temperance and, of course trades unionism.

In the next chapter we aim to look at the issues themselves in some detail, when we examine Operative Conservatism comparatively. But here it may be of use to explain the actions of many North-West Conservative activists with regard to issues and principles. To do this we must introduce a new ingredient and elemental strand of the Conservative party of the post-Reform period. This group has come to be known, somewhat confusingly by the apparently contradictory term of Tory-Radicals or Radical Tories. The Manchester Guardian, writing in May 1837 attempted to clarify their seemingly incompatible pieces of political terminology. It said:

Tory Radicals are those persons who, by professing the most extreme radical opinions in politics, are yet always ready to play into the hands of the Tory Party. The Radical-Tories are those who, calling themselves Conservatives, and pretending the highest veneration of the constitution, are nevertheless always ready to preach resistance to the law, and to support any incendiary whom they may consider likely to annoy their political opponents.³⁰

Although tinged with the usual sarcasm, which the Manchester Guardian was unable to decline indulging in whenever it addressed itself to the politics of its opponents, there is a grain of truth in these definitions. An example of this can be found in the Reform Crisis itself and the years immediately following. As many have noted there was, in these years an informal union of the Ultra Tories and the Ultra Radicals. Their common bond was an intense hatred of all things industrial and the new bourgeoisie who typified such forms of manufacturing. The Ultra-Tories feared the flooding of the House of Commons with the new men of the individual boroughs; the Ultra-Radicals, that such men were exploiters of labour and once in Parliament would gain the

political power to increase the levels of exploitation. Also both groups shared the type of romantic atavism we noted in Chapter Two.

A detailed analysis of this strange union has been written by the historian D.C. Moore.³¹ He suggests further that in Parliamentary terms both groups found themselves on the same side in their detestation of the Tory/Conservative leader from 1828 to 1833, the Duke of Wellington:³² the Ultra Tories because of his apparent capitulation over the Catholic Question and the Radicals for his hostile attitude towards the labouring classes. The Manchester Guardian continued to maintain throughout the Parliamentary elections of the 1830's and 40's that there was collusion between the Tory section of the Conservative party and sections of the extreme radicals, and, as we shall shortly discover, with some degree of justice. However its distinction between 'Tory-Radicals' and 'Radical Tory' was rather cosmetic and for our purposes confusing - for the terms could at the time be interpreted, and should be interpreted by historians, as interchangeable. We suggest that one of the major factors which drove many radically inclined members of the working classes into the arms of the Conservatives was the salient issues of the day which directly affected the working class as a whole. However before examining these issues in detail we must first outline the basic theoretical stance which both the Tory inclined Conservatives and the radically inclined working class began to share in the political world of the industrial North-West after 1832.

IV PATERNALISM AND THE WORKING CLASS.

We noted above, and in Chapter two, the atavism about, or the yearning for, the perceived romantic picture of a past age,

especially on the part of the remnants of the Old Tory Party and the so called 'Romantic Tories'. Many of the Radicals in the industrial North-West shared this highly effective illusion of the past. The key for both was the natural justice, responsibilities and rights apparently available to all groups in the past. For the Tories this was based on prescriptive property rights and responsibilities relating to paternalism. That is to say that the elites had a responsibility to tend to the needs of the social order below them when those lower orders fell upon times of distress. For the Radicals, it was based on a perceived view of natural rights and justice of a former age. When viewed from this standpoint and the need for security felt by both groups in a period of thrusting entrepreneurs and progressive reformers, an affinity of interest can be seen and the alliance appears less contradictory than it does at first sight.

We shall now suggest that during the 1830's, 40's and 50's many insecure and impoverished members of the working class began to accept the leadership of the local and national conservatives for three basic reasons. Firstly, many Conservatives of the Tory variety and a section of the working class were unwilling to accept the changing nature of society as perceived by the progressive Liberal middle classes, especially with regard to traditional definitions of security and independence. As the devices of social organization, constraint and control - for example the New Poor Law, or changes in the old form of local government - were introduced by the Whig/Liberals as the 1830's developed, so the political conflict increased and non-Liberals attempted to resist their implementation. Secondly, North-West (and indeed very many Yorkshire) Conservatives of the traditional Tory strain began to develop a comprehensive social theory which attempted to guarantee the security, if not the progress of Labour through a reformulation of paternalistic responsibilities and natural rights and justice. Thirdly these Conservatives of the North attempted to give practical effect to their social

philosophy by advocating issues and policies which reflected their concern for the working class, and of course to gain adherents. These issues included advocating factory reform, the opposition to the New Poor Law, non-political trades unionism and, indeed in certain cases in the mid to late 1840's they allied themselves with the rural utopianism which many workers of the North-West associated with independence and security, especially those who were relatively new to the urban situation.

As we have tried to show above and as we shall relate in greater detail in the following three chapters, one important factor which drew sections of industrial workers and traditionally inclined Conservatives together in the North-West was their common resentment of the middle class Liberal progressives.³³ The vast acceleration of daily life and the resultant changes in the centres of political power which industrialization brought to the North-West, left many Conservatives and many (especially the unskilled and semi-skilled) members of the working class feeling bereft of power. The rural Tories and the Conservatives of the market and county towns such as Chester, Clitheroe or Lancaster, as well as the lesser skilled working class took a long time to be convinced that industrialization was an adequate way of life, or that 'laissez-faire' individualism would be a solution to individual and social problems.

The unstable social, and especially economic conditions of the North-West convinced many of the working class that they should reject the theories of linear progress insisted upon by the Liberal middle classes. Many working men found that they were a limited and dispensable part of the industrial process. Instead of the promised long-range progress of the Liberals, many of the unskilled and semi-skilled workers of the North-West demanded an immediate remedy for the iniquities of industrialization. Many of those who migrated to the towns prior to the mass influx of Irish men and women who attempted to escape the famine of the mid

1840's, came from the rural or semi-rural villages and hamlets situated some five to ten miles from an urban area.³⁴ These people preferred the kind of predictable life typical in a rural society because a real lack of economic security and independence made it increasingly difficult to believe that industrial progress - beset as it was from an apparently endless succession of booms and slumps - would include them. It was asking a great deal of this section of the working class that they should accept the unknown direction of 'progress' in which they had only a very partial share. Increasingly these types of workers responded to leaders who promised simple political solutions to the complex problems raised by industrial life.

There were occasions when some of the semi and unskilled workers of the North-West turned to Chartism from 1838, but they did not automatically accept the leadership of skilled working class as had been the case during the Luddite disturbances of the period 1795 to the 1820's, and indeed continued to be the case among the more independently situated workers of Birmingham or London. By far the most popular Chartist leader in the North - including most of Yorkshire - was a 'gentleman', Feargus O'Connor. It can be strongly argued that O'Connor's leadership of Northern Chartism was built upon Radical Tory and Conservative success in persuading workers to rely upon external leadership instead of fully developing a political ideology and tactics which they had begun to do during the 1820's and the Reform crisis. O'Connor was benefiting from the work began for him by the Tory radicals such as Michael Thomas Sadler, Richard Oastler, Parson George Stringer Bull and Joseph Raynor Stephens. Several working class Chartists such as Richard Marsden³⁵ from Preston, Edward Nightingale³⁶ from Manchester and the Bradford Chartist John Jackson,³⁷ argued that, while O'Connor was a Radical, he also shared Tory prejudices and assumptions and further that O'Connor had stepped into the vacuum in the Radical tory leadership left by the arrests of Oastler and Stephens. While O'Connor did pursue the need of political reform,

his ultimate solution to the working man's problems was a return to a simpler life on the land, something which Conservatives had toyed with since 1841.³⁸ O'Connor's radicalism was always supplemented by his pose as a landed gentleman of aristocratic birth.³⁹ One of the reasons why William Lovett and the London Chartists increasingly rejected the tactics of the labourers of the North was that they believed that this group could not be persuaded that they had more in common with the skilled workers than with the gentry.⁴⁰

The paternalism of the Tory radicals and the Conservatives of the North-West reinforced the willingness of a section of the working class to believe that their loss of independence and lack of security was not solely due to loss of political rights - arguably they had never had them at any time before 1832 - but was more to do with the criminal irresponsibility of the Liberal middle class manufacturers and their Whig representatives in Parliament. An often missed element of North-West Chartism was that given to it by the Tory-Radicals which was that, despite its ostensible purpose of political reform a viable explanation for the plight of many workers was the culpability of the 'progressive' Liberal middle classes.⁴¹

Liberal leaders tended to dismiss the willingness of a section of the working class to follow Conservative and Radical Tory leadership as a desperate strategy for attacking the Whigs, especially when they were in government in the years after 1832. The Manchester Guardian in particular was disgusted at the shortsightedness of sections of the working class in allowing their resentment of Whig policy to shape their actions.⁴² However, to many of the semi-and unskilled workers involved in spinning, weaving and labouring the Liberal middle classes were new men attempting to foist a theory of gross exploitation on to the working class, and wantonly destroying the traditional patriarchal relationship between the governed and the governors.

If this type of worker had not come to this conclusion himself there were several channels through which it was conveyed. As early as 1833, Henry Hethrington in the Poor Man's Guardian was writing that: "The middle classes, or profit men are the real tyrants of the country. Disguise it as they may, they are the authors of our slavery for without their connivance and secret support no tyranny could exist. Government is but a tool in their hands to execute their nefarious purpose."⁴³ The worker heard the same kind of argument over and over again at the mass meetings called in support of the Ten Hours Movement or protesting against the New Poor Law as we shall discover when we look in more detail at the impact these issues had at different parts of the reign in the next Chapter.

However, working class distrust of the Whigs and the Liberal manufacturers was nurtured not only by Radical Tory and Conservative rhetoric but by the bitterness of cumulative disappointment. The Reformed Parliament had turned out to be much the same as its predecessor, indeed worse in terms of the attacks made on trades unionism, their lack-lustre performance regarding factory reform and the perceived punitive provisions of the New Poor Law. For many workers of the North-West the indictment that the Whig governments of the 1830's sought only to represent the interests of the middle class Liberals was proved by the severity of the Whigs in dealing with the Dorset labourers in 1837 and the spinners of Glasgow in the same year.

Despite, in a national sense, their traditional roots in the land, many Conservatives felt as insecure as the anonymous working class. As we noted above, the Reform Act, in theory if not immediately in fact, abruptly ended the coalition of Conservative Whiggery and Toryism which had held power more or less continuously since 1784. In addition, theories of political economy questioned the economic function of the Tory element of Conservatism and accused them of being parasitic countrymen or the

'stupid party'. The political economists argued that the nation would benefit if the power centres were shifted from ;and to industry, from the traditional paternalism and parochialism of the local gentry to the individualistic and centralized rule of an efficient, rootless, meritocratic bureaucracy clearing the way for mechanistic progress.

V ISSUES AND POLITICAL RE-ALIGNMENTS.

Old school Tories could not admit that their role as a patriarchal country gentry was superfluous in the changing society nor could they welcome the direction of that change, begun as it was in the reforming Whig ministries of the 1830's. The Whigs and progressive Liberals appeared to be attacking everything the Tory element deemed inviolable; the established Church, the House of Lords, Local Government, and the very social relationship which, the Tories (and many Conservatives) argued, had separated Britain from despotic Europe and republican America. The Conservatives of the North-West developed a defensive social reform ideology partly as an expedient to attack their political opponents, but also because many of them felt a genuine sympathy with the isolation and insecurity of many working people. As we shall see in the next three chapters, the manner in which this was put over to the great mass of working people was through the pursuance of certain issues combined with a sense of the threat posed to working people by Whig/Liberal policies with the central tenets of old style Tory paternalism and Conservatism.

Of course the Conservatives and Tory Radicals were not the only social reformers operating in the North-West between 1832 and the 1860's, and in the next chapter we shall examine these regional

variations in some detail in order to account for the differences in political allegiances among working people in different parts of the North-West. There were many Radicals, Liberals and Whigs pledged to support working class causes. However, it is interesting to view the issues these groups supported in the light of what we know of their ideological traits and their political aims and objectives. As we noted above, the Liberals and progressive Whigs lent heavily on the economic, social and political theorists of the classical school of economics associated with Adam Smith and David Ricardo, and on the social theories of Thomas Malthus and the utilitarianism associated with Jeremy Bentham, James Mill and his son, John Stuart Mill. In the North-West, along with their advocacy of major issues linked primarily to economics and industry - the repeal of the Corn Laws and the freeing of trade, which, they contended, would result in a beneficial improvement in society for all its members - the Liberals and Whigs championed issues such as educational reform, church-rate reform, temperance, and public health, all of which had direct or in-direct relevance to the working class.

There were more leftwardly inclined radicals, moral force Chartists, who adopted the strictly peaceful tactics in pursuit of the Six Points, there were republicans, secularists, primitive socialists and physical force Chartists. These groups pursued the issues which had a direct bearing on working class existence. The best way one can gauge the extremity of their respective positions was not the degree to which they advocated the use of physical force to gain their objectives - most were prepared to contemplate it at one stage or another - but rather their willingness to operate within the existing constitution. We must ask just how revolutionary they were in terms of their complete and total rejection of the existing social and political order? It is the view of this thesis that apart from a very brief period in the early 1830's - at the height of the Reform Crisis and immediately afterwards - the majority of these groups either wished to operate

within the existing constitution, or if they did not, never carried a sufficient level of mass revolutionary class consciousness in a Marxian sense to carry out their objectives at any time up to the 1870's.

However, there seems to have been three distinct approaches to the manner in which the three main groups linked the issues they actively supported to their basic political principles. The Liberal reformers stressed the necessity of moral improvement through direct action on the baser instincts of the late Georgian, early Victorian working man. This meant focusing attention on the pursuit of objectives which would both morally and physically improve him and make him less susceptible to the temptations of the 'residuum'⁴⁴ These 'progressive' reformers rejected the Tory and Conservative premise of paternalism stressing instead the need of the individual to take care of himself rather than relying on the good works of others.

The radicals essential guiding principle was egalitarianism, especially in terms of social and political rights. They affected a high moral tone which concerned itself with specific issues - such as religious, political and social equality - but it was not a fully developed system of political thought in the way that Liberalism or indeed Conservatism was. The basis of early nineteenth century radicalism was what was seen at the abuse of natural justice with many writers focusing on aspects of exploitation. However, although writers such as Thomas Wooler or Bronterre O'Brien pre-date the works of Marx by two or three decades, they did not develop the philosophic rigour which the continental Radicals achieved. Nor, according to Patricia Hollis⁴⁵ and Gareth Stedman-Jones,⁴⁶ did they adequately identify the real enemy of the working class: the capitalist middle classes and the system of production itself. Thus it was that, although at times popular, Radicalism found itself squeezed between the progressive Liberals on the one hand and traditionalistic

Conservatives on the other. As Stedman-Jones suggests that the decline of Chartism was not due to prosperity or economic stabilization or an immature class consciousness, "but to the changing character and policies of the state - the principal enemy upon whose actions the radicals had always found their credibility depended."⁴⁷

As we have noted above, the third main ideological strand which operated in the years after 1832 was that of Conservatism, imbued as it was with the strong Tory paternalistic element. Overall, issues, principles and policies arguments were selected and presented within the framework of these developing ideologies.

VI THE MAIN WORKING CLASS ISSUES.

Let us end this chapter by briefly outlining the main issues which the Radical Tories and Conservatives exploited with regard to the working class of the North-West. As we shall subsequently discover, the relevance and potency of these issues varied from area to area within the region as a whole and, indeed over time, but basically two issues stand out. They were factory reform, and the opposition to the imposition of the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act. Added to these were a series of issues relevant to working people which local Conservatives promoted from time to time. These included trades union recognition, public health questions and education.

Historically, paternalistically orientated Conservatives and Tories had a long association with factory reform throughout the Northern manufacturing districts. The first Sir Robert Peel had placed an Act on the statute book in 1802 which regulated the hours of work of cotton apprentices to twelve hours per day.

However when steam-powered factories employing 'free' children developed in urban areas, the primitive socialist mill owner Robert Owen began a campaign in 1815 to limit child labour to ten and a half hours. Investigations by Committees in the Commons and the Lords under the chairmanship of the sympathetic Lord Kenyon led only to a widening of Peel's Act of 1802 applying to all children employed in cotton mills. In 1825 three Tory manufacturers from Bradford, John Rand, John Wood and Matthew Thompson, unsuccessfully appealed for a voluntary 10 hour day in the worsted industry, whilst a group of Lancashire trades unionists under the leadership of James Turner and John Doherty maintained a campaign in the cotton areas of Lancashire, eventually with Conservative support.⁴⁸

A host of 'experts' from medical men to Anglican priests published information in an effort to influence Parliament. To many Liberals and progressively inclined manufacturers, such tampering with the free operation of labour and wages was, of course, an anathema when the rising fashion of the age was laissez-faire.

It was in the later 1820's that Richard Oastler⁴⁹ and the Radical Tories burst open the scene and gave dramatic life to the issue which, as we discover in subsequent chapters, was to be for the next three decades one of the most important questions of social reform in North-West politics. Also in the mid-1830's came the question of the implementation of the New Poor Law with its centralized commission in London to administer it. Operative Conservatives and Radical Tories as well as many middle class Conservatives asserted the hypocrisy of the Whig/Liberal position and pointed to the fact that Liberals would not interfere with the free market with regard to the hours which workers laboured, but were willing to interfere in matters relating to the dispensing of poor relief.

We suggest that these issues particularly linked working class politics to the paternalistic principles of Conservatism/Toryism. It was the inability of a substantial section of the working class of the North-West to harmoniously adjust to changing industrial and social conditions which played a large part in explaining their receptivity to the paternal theory. But some of them were also attracted to the security of an ordered, if hierarchical social order, and they were repelled by the laissez-faire implications of an industrial society, apparently free but very precarious. It could be argued that such members of the working class who were attracted to Conservatism did so out of a sense of social deference - to rank or those of a superior social station - and indeed some may, but the support given, and given freely, becomes more meaningful when seen in the light of the issues which the Conservatives of the North-West supported. This was not the politics of influence which Nossiter describes in the North-East, but more to do with the politics of the conditioning of opinions emanating from the social and political environment working people actually existed in during the 1830's, 40's and 50's. What appears to have developed in these years was a mutuality of interests between traditionalistic Conservatives and a section of the working class. It was given theoretical justification in a re-working of Tory paternalism and a practical application in the struggle surrounding issues which directly affected working people, and vociferously agitated by the Tory-Radicals such as Oastler and Stephens. Thus it was that the size and the scale of the transformation of the support given to Conservatism in the North-West should not be gauged merely by the functions or membership of the Local Operative Conservative Associations. These were important, but probably only the tip of a support which ran deeply into the working class. We suggest that the Conservative electoral success amongst the working class in the later 1860's and early 1870's in the mill towns of the North-West had a long gestation period, dating back in fact to the devices of political leadership and control which began to be place into

position from the mid-1830's, both practically and theoretically.

The middle class traditionalistic-orientated conservative urged the working class to follow him away from the laissez-faire individualism of middle class Liberalism.⁵⁰ The Conservatives of the North-West rejected liberalism because it appeared to assert unlimited progress and simplified human nature contrary to all religious and historical evidence. To the Tory theorist, (such as Samuel Taylor Coleridge) human nature was not a product of economic self interest. Man was rather a complex ethical social being, dependent on direction on the communal guidance of family, church, society and, in the 1830's the proselytizing efforts of the political party. Progress was limited by the traditions of the past and by providential design. This position was taken up by traditionalistic Conservatives against the extreme Radicals just as forcefully as it was against the progressive Liberals. This was highlighted in a sermon preached by the vicar of Blackburn in 1939 when the physical force faction of the Chartists invaded his church during the disturbances of the summer of that year. He told them,

The doctrine of equal right to property...amounts to nothing less than this:- You are first to covet, next to demand, and then, if your demands be not conceded, you are directed to take by violence your neighbours goods... You have many excuses my friends. I do not, and I cannot believe that doctrines so frantic and outrageously preposterous as these...can have imposed on many of you...no equality of property can exist so long as God endows man unequally with gifts mental and personal? And is it not clear, that, if all were made equal in respect of property at some imaginary point in time, they could not,...remain equal for a single week?⁵¹

The point that those with wealth had a responsibility for those less fortunate was of great significance for the Conservatives of the North-West. As early as 1833, the founder of the South Lancashire Conservative Association, William Holton, exemplified

their position.

Conservatives had a duty to perform on behalf of the poor which they ought never to forget: and no man deserved the epithet of a true conservative who did not to the utmost of his power listen to the wants and relieve the sufferings of the poor. I call for a toast to the operatives of England, and may every conservative show them, that while the upper classes are enriched by their labour, they hold them in the same degree of heartfelt esteem as they entertain for the aristocracy.⁵²

The importance of the issues such as factory reform, poor relief, or public health for the Conservatives of the North-West was that not only did they fit their theories of paternalism, they also revealed that they were not adverse to the reality of change. They argued that change had to be guided by a systematical policy unless this was so change would not be ameliorative. They realized that local action could not meet national problems effectively and insisted that Parliament must intervene to ensure that the stronger did not prosper at the expense of the weaker.⁵³

The rapidly changing conditions of life in the industrial North-West dismayed many Conservatives almost as much as they did the working class. But for the Conservatives they did so because they saw urban life compounding the natural weakness of men; their irrationality, helplessness and dependence. To combat these conditions the Conservative reformers of the North-West became almost like missionaries to the lower classes preaching a millennium rooted in social harmony. This mission was almost evangelical, comprising of both Anglicans and Wesleyan Methodists,, whose moral and political code came largely from their religious conscience. Unable to accept a morality glorifying individual success instead of social harmony, they emphasized Burke's dictum that social status and social responsibilities were inseparable. To persuade the working class, these Conservatives and Radical Tories combined Conservatism with

social welfare. Richard Oastler echoed the banner of the Leeds Operative Conservative Association 'The Altar, the Throne and the Cottage' with his own heading above the weekly Fleet Papers of 'Property has its duties as well as its Rights'. He was accepted by many working class people as the 'Factory King', but he denied the need for political change in terms of the political contract. This was similarly unacceptable to many Conservatives in the 1830's and early 1840's, but by the end of the 1840's this position too was changing. Writing in the 1850's Sir James Graham said in Parliament that,

The operation and object of the Bill of 1832 was to transfer power to the middle classes. But it is a mistake to hold that the humbler classes also do not take a real and deep interest in elections... Speaking in a strictly Conservative sense, I am convinced that it is infinitely more prudent to make timely concessions to reasonable demands than obstinately to resist them. The demands of the working class for the franchise are reasonable, and can no longer safely be refused.⁵⁴

We suggest that in the North-West at least the basis of this change of attitude was primarily caused by changes in political culture - of perceived attitudes to political institutions. In this region the politics of opinion in relation to a wide range of issues, political parties, and pressure groupings was the important engine of social and political change. This, we argue fits Nossiter's definition of 'opinion' based politics and more besides. For what was happening in the 1830's and 40's was that sections of the working class began to support Conservatism because that party positioned itself, in the localities particularly, in such a way that working class issues could be presented as meaningful without betraying the fundamental tenets of Conservatism. These were questions which were addressed to working people and made attractive to them in a class sense; that they were beneficial to them as a class. It was this cultivation of working class opinions coupled with a sense of their insecurity

and loss of independence in the industrialized world which began to attract working class support.

SUMMARY

We opened this chapter by outlining the rising importance of questions of issues and party policy in the wake of the 1832 Reform Act. We also summarized the Nossiter thesis - and pointed out that it was too rigid a set of definitions to be meaningfully applied to the North-West. We then introduced new elements into the description of post-1832 Conservatism; those of Radical Toryism and of reformist Conservatism. We looked at the theory of paternalism advocated by such groups and also examined the various issues pursued by other political groups in the light of their ideological principles.

So far we have only looked at the role of issues - not the issues themselves - in the light of the increasing working class support for Conservatism after 1832, and further how they related to the changing political culture of the North-West region. In our next few chapters we intend to examine Operative Conservatism comparatively over several differing parts of the region, looking also at the politics of the elites especially with regard to the questions affecting working class existence.

1. See N Gash, Peel, London 1976 p.141.

2. Burke, E. Speech to the Electors of Bristol at the Conclusion of the Poll, in Worcs, London 1815-1827 Vol 3 pp.19/20.

3. T Nossiter, Influence, Opinion and Political Idioms in Reformed England. Hassocks 1975 p.6.

4. Ibid.

5. F O'Gorman, Electoral Deference in "Unreformed" England, 1760-1832 in Journal of Modern History 56 1984 pp.391-429.

6. See Nossiter op cit p.6.

7. Ibid. p.7.

8. Ibid.

9. Nossiter op cit p.2.

10. D Fraser, Urban Politics in Victorian England, Leicester 1976 p.185.

11. Nossiter op cit pp.1/2.

12. Ibid. p.194.

13. Ibid.

14. Fraser op.cit, chapters 8 and 9.
15. Ibid p.185.
16. Ibid pp.184/185.
17. Report of Chorley Operative Conservative Association First Annual Dinner, 21/11/1836, in Preston Pilot 26/11/1836.
18. 19/11/1836 Preston Pilot.
19. Preston Pilot 3/12/1836.
20. Manchester Guardian 26/5/1838.
21. Preston Pilot 16/7/1836.
22. Ibid 12/11/1836.
23. Ibid 22/7/1837.
24. Manchester Guardian 18/4/1838.
25. Manchester Courier 21/4/1838.
26. The Annual Reports of the Blackburn Operative Conservative Association for 1837, 1838, 1839, 1840, 1841, 1842, 1843, 1844, 1852, 1853 in Blackburn Standard of those years.

27. P.P.13/8/1838.

28. M.G. 14/1/1837.

29. P.P. 19/11/1836.

30. M.G. 10/5/1837.

31. D C Moore, The Other Face of Reform, Victorian Studies, September 1961.

32. Ibid p.7.

33. Here we are referring to radical Tories and Conservatives and not sections of mainstream radicals who saw the idle classes and aristocrats as the real enemy. Thus our focus is somewhat different from that of historians like G Stedman-Jones, Languages of Class, and Patricia Hollis, Pressure from Without.

34. The standard work on this aspect of social change in the nineteenth century is probably still A Redford, Labour Migration in England, Manchester 1976 ed. p.41.

35. See Blackburn Standard 9/7/1848.

36. Manchester Guardian 6/12/1841.

37. J Jackson, The Demagogue Done Up: An Exposure of the Extreme Inconsistencies of Feargus O'Connor. Bradford 1844.

38. T Carlyle, The Conservative Land Plan, in the Quarterly Review. September 1841.

39. D Read and R Glasgow, Feargus O'Connor, London 1959 p.20, also see J Epstein's view in Lion of Freedom, London 1979 who makes a rather different assessment of O'Connor than the one offered here.

40. See G Stedman-Jones, Languages of Class, Cambridge 1983 pp.98/8.

41. Evidence of the Stockport power-loom weaver and trades unionist William Smith speaking in Blackburn in 1835. Blackburn Standard 15/7/1835 'Tories were the best masters...those who assessed the appellation of 'Liberals'...should look to their own conduct before they talked of reforming others.'

42. Manchester Guardian 10/11/1837.

43. Poor Man's Guardian 2/11/1833.

44. See Chapter 9 below for the example of Joseph Livesey of Preston or the study by A Howe, The Cotton Masters, Oxford 1982.

45. Hollis op.cit.

46. Stedman-Jones op.cit. p.107.

47. Ibid p.178.

48. See Chapter 10 below.

49. Oastler openly admitted his Tory principles. See Manchester Guardian, 24/9/1836, or C Driver, Richard Oastler, Life of a Radical, New York 1948.

50. For example see T M Kemnitz and F Jacques, J R Stephens and the Chartist Movement, International Review of Social History, Vol.19 1974. Or J Seed, Unitarianism, Political Economy and the Anatomies of Liberal Culture in Manchester, 1830-1850, Social History Vol.7 No.1 1982. Or J F Glaser, English Nonconformity and the Decline of Liberalism in American Historical Review, Vol.63 No.2, 1958.

51. Rev T D Whittaker, A sermon preached to the Chartists at the Blackburn Parish Church on Sunday August 4, London 1839 pp.19/20.

52. Preston Pilot 31/8/1833. For more on Tory Paternalism see D Roberts, 'Tory Paternalism and Social Reform in Early Victorian England, The American Historical Revue Vol.63 No.2 1958 or W O Aydolotte, 'The Conservative and Radical Interpretations of Early Victorian Social Legislation.' Victorian Studies December 1967. Or R Kirk, The Conservative Mind, London 1954.

53. See speech by W B Ferrand at Bolton, Bolton Chronicle 23/12/1843.

54. See C S Parker, The Life of Sir James Graham, London 1907, Vol.II p.370.