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Operative Conservatism in Lancashire, 1833-1846: Some Comments on a Changing Political Culture

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### APPENDIX 1

COMMITTEE MEMBERS OF BLACKBURN PITT CLUB (1824) WHO LATER WERE MEMBERS OF BLACKBURN CONSERVATIVE ASSOCIATION. (1834)

NAME

JOHN FOSTER

WILLIAM CARR

JOHN HARGREAVES

ROBERT HOPWOOD

JOHN HORNBY

DIXON ROBINSON

JOHN LISTER

JOHN FOWDEN HINDLE

ROBERT DEWHURST RICHARD MARTLAND

JOHN WHEELER

THOMAS LUND

STATUS

GENTLEMAN

11

MANUFACTURER

11

11

GENTLEMAN

SURGEON

GENTLEMAN

SOLICITOR SURGEON

GENILEMAN

MANUFACTURER

### APPENDIX TWO

COMMITTEE MEMBERS OF BLACKBURN OPERATIVE CONSERVATIVE ASSOCIATION WHO HELD THE FRANCHISE IN 1847 BUT NOT IN 1837.

NAME	OCCUPATION
JOHN MOLYNEAUX	WEAVER
WILLIAM MOOR	SHOPKEEPER
JOSEPH PARKER	SHOPKEEPER
JAMES PARKINSON	SHOPKEEPER
JAMES SINGLETON	CORN DEALER
WILLIAM STONES	PUBLICAN
JAMES WALSH	EMPLOYEE OF BLACKBURN OPERATIVE
	CONSERVATIVE ASSOCIATION
JOHN WARING	OPERATIVE
ROBERT WARREN	NOT KNOWN
JAMES WHITTAKER	NOT KNOWN

OPERATIVE CONSERVATISM IN LANCASHIRE, 1833-1846: SOME COMMENTS ON A CHANGING POLITICAL CULTURE.

#### DAVID WALSH

This paper has two main functions. Firstly it is an attempt to plot the changing nature of English political culture in the years which followed the passing of the first Reform Act of 1832 as it affected various social groups. These include the local and national Conservative party leadership and the working classes of the industrial north-west. Secondly, it endeavours to show in some detail how the level of Conservative party organization increased and how it attempted to integrate sections of the industrial working class into the party machine. Thus, essentially the paper comprises of two inter-connected halves. The first examines aspects of politics, which, we contend, changed as a result of the enactment of the 1832 Bill, and correspondingly changed the nation's political culture. The second half examines - in the form of a case study centred mainly on the town of Blackburn - how the party undertook the incorporation of the working class and sought to involve them in its organizational structure. For the sake of further clarification the first half of the paper contains three sub-sections and the second half six sub-sections.

In the first half we attempt to define political culture from the perspective of the historian. We then try to familiarize the reader with the prevailing notions of political opposition and political parties leading up to the Act of 1832 and in the years after it. The next section of this first half is primarily concerned with some of the developments in the last two decades or so in the related disciplines of political science and political sociology. It was felt that in the discussion of these the approaches of the political scientist and developments, political sociologist might be utilized to shed light upon an historical problem: namely the changes which occurred in the political society of Britain after the imposition of the Act of 1832. Also in this section we discuss the growth of social class as a factor in political life, especially of the working classes, and we end the first half of this paper by examining the growth of political conflict which we argue increased as a direct result of the terms of the Reform Act of 1832.

If the first half of the paper couples a discussion of the major areas of political change with a discussion of the political culture of Britain in the first fifty years of the nineteenth century, the second half is concerned with an exposition of these themes and perspectives in the form of a case study based on empirical findings. Thus opens with an examination of the role played by the local middle class Conservatives of Lancashire - more specifically of Blackburn - in the process of working class political integration. Our second section focusses on the role which issues may have played in convincing some working people and indeed some of the middle classes - to support the Conservative party during this period. The third section examines the crucial part played by religious belief in relation to operative conservatism and also the national leadership. Our fourth section looks at the various functions of operative conservatism and our fifth, at the decline of operative conservatism in the mid-1840's. We conclude the paper by examining the relationship between operative conservatism and party organization from the perspective of the approaches utilized by political science: ie in the functions and behaviour of political parties and of party members and supporters, and also any benefits the relationship produced.

PART ONE: SOME ASPECTS OF ENGLISH PARTY POLITICS AND POLITICAL CULTURE BEFORE AND AFTER THE REFORM ACT OF 1832.

# (I) A changing political culture: towards a definition of political culture.

Any definition and description in historical terms of political culture must out of necessity be impressionistic as the social actors involved in creating the culture usually no longer exist. All we can hope to do is to arrive at impressions of the political culture of a given period by examining carefully a balanced selection of the norms, values, attitudes and behaviour patterns of a cross-section of the social actors from the surviving historical evidence. Political culture has on occasions been somewhat loosely defined, and described as the prevailing 'spirit' of an age, or of a nations political character, or of the 'public mood'. An example of the use of the latter phrase can be found in the work of A.V. Dicey in his Law and Opinion in England, in which he maintained that one could trace the emergence of collectivist legislation on late Victorian England in changes in the public mood concerning the role of government; from a mood supporting laissez-faire to one supporting government intervention. However, we contend that loose and generalized phrases like the 'spirit of the age', or the public mood, or a nations political character, are virtually useless

unless they are accompanied by specific evidence relating to variables which can be substantiated. In the first half of this paper we shall attempt to identify certain independent variables (like party for example) which the political scientist or political sociologist would regard as essential to the study of an existing political culture and test them in the context of a given period in the case of this study the years 1832-1850. This is done in a effort to discover whether such variables have any relevance to that period, and in the second half of the paper we shall attempt to show - in the form of a case study - that indeed the variables have meaning to this period. We contend that concepts such as party opposition, and the effects of extensive political organization took on a new and more powerful dimension in the 1830's and 40's which in turn affected the nations political culture. However, before the charge of methodological anachronism is levelled let us counter by saying that this paper does not purport to suggest that everything present in the political culture of Britain today can be traced back to, or somehow transplanted to the political culture of the 1830's. We merely wish to argue that, by utilizing the methodology, and the areas of interest, of the political scientist we can suggest that what was occurring historically throughout this period was profoundly different than what had been the norm previous to it. Further, we maintain that by examining given areas of political life we may be able to plot these changes by comparing the same areas before and immediately after the 1832 Act. What we are not suggesting is that hard theoretical conceptualizations should be super-imposed on the events of the period in question, merely that by looking at certain variables, such as interest orientations, the political party, and the notion of political opposition, we may be able to view the period from a slightly different perspective.

Let us then attempt to define what is meant by the term political culture. For Roy Macridis political culture denotes the commonly shared objectives and commonly shared rules for the attainment of the objectives. 2 Political culture for Robert Dahl is a factor crucial to the explanation of different patterns of political opposition. 3 S.E. Finer defines the political culture of a nation as matters concerning the legitimacy of its rulers, institutions and procedures. 4 However Lucien Pye goes further by suggesting that it is the interaction of various factors which determine a nations political culture. These factors include the scope of politics; how wide the political involvement is in a society; also how objectives and aims, ends and means are related; further, what standards are available for the evaluation of political actions - (such as the accountability of legislators and representatives), and the values that are apparent (such as the limits of authority) for the political actions to reveal themselves. 5 Denis Kavanagh in his book <u>Political Culture</u>6 maintains that it is the predispositions or orientations to

political action (determined as they are by factors such as traditions, historical memories, motives, norms, emotions and symbols) which give a political structure or system its distinctive political culture. It will be noticed however that none of the above scholars are historians: thus our definition requires refinement.

We believe it is important to distinguish political culture from political systems or structures. Our interest as historians is to see how a nations political culture changes and develops over time: how the attitudes of the elites and non-elites change in regard to the political structure or systems. In this paper we are interested in the content of the attitudes and beliefs of social groups in the 1830's and 40's about their political system; and in the spread of these beliefs and attitudes. Also, importantly we are concerned with the process of politicization itself. We suggest that political culture is part - a vital part - of the larger and all embracing social culture of a nation. As we suggested, political culture may be best viewed in the way subjective evaluations, experiences and emotions reflect and affect the existing objective political norms and institutions. Such institutions and norms may include the legislature; the executive; the judiciary; political parties; interest groups; importantly, the prevailing political ideologies of a given period - in essence, people's political preferences and orientations. In the course of this paper we aim to show that, in certain fundamental areas of political life, the political culture if Britain did begin to change in the period 1832-1850, and change dramatically. The areas include the participatory role of the working class in legitimate political activities, the roles and functions of political parties, political socialization and political conflict and opposition.

# (II) The Changing Notion of Political Opposition and Political Parties.

For many Conservatives and Tories the Bill which passed its third reading in the House of Lords in June 1832 was seen as a great betrayal. As we shall discover later, this attitude really depended upon certain assumptions about the possible changes the Bill might produce. However, some Conservatives also felt themselves betrayed by that aristocratic class of political leaders who had pledged themselves to maintain the fundamental nature of English constitutionalism as laid down from the settlement of 1688. Many Conservatives blamed the 'base and bloody whigs', but also the pressure exerted by the rising middle classes in the manufacturing districts. Many 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, and protestantism versus catholicism. In general terms the Conservatives argued that although there had been occasions of political conflict throughout the eighteenth century, the constitution had remained intact primarily because of the placatory and consensual effects of the political settlement of 1688. The Reform Act, they argued, would wreck the old order, and to a significant degree the Conservative prognostications were correct. Less committed observers held similar opinions. John Stuart Mill, who could never be described as a Conservative, said in 1831 that England was in a 'transitional condition'. He believed that there were no persons to whom the "mass of the uninstructed habitually defer;...the ancient bands no longer unite, nor do the ancient boundaries confine".

For the conservatives the situation was perceived as being serious indeed. In order to plot the remarkable recovery of the Conservative party after 1832 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 Bill exemplified. The Bill was perceived by many to be merely the first stage in a range of sweeping reforms which would destroy the very foundations of British political stability. These reforms included the eradication of the political privilege which the property qualification for the franchise exemplified in the existing political system. One example of this was the destruction of the 'pocket' or (the most flagrant) the nomination boroughs, which were regarded as the breeding ground for future political talent. But most importantly, the destruction of the three plinths on which the constitution of Britain rested: firstly, the 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. It is one of the many paradoxes of British political development that, in seeking above all else to maintain the existing political systems the Tories (and, after 1830, the heirs the Conservatives) created a fundamentally new and far reaching political dimension. For it is the contention of this paper that the type of opposition the Conservatives engaged in during this time was a major contributory factor in the shaping of Britain's emerging political culture.

Of course there had been an opposition existing in Parliament throughout the eighteenth century, but this was composed chiefly of rival factions within the Whig party. In many respects, the

pattern was set during the early years of the century by Robert Harley. Harley possessed a determined mistrust of party: as Angus McInnes has pointed out: "At bottom, then, it was the secretary's (Harley's) unwavering opposition to government controlled by party which lay at the root of his conflict with Marlborough and Godolphin". 8 Thus eighteenth century political opposition took place mainly in Parliament and was made up not of concerted party action and reaction, but the loose coalition of various faction leaders and their respective supporters opposing other faction leaders - for example, Harley's Country whigs and tories versus the Junto whigs, Chatham versus Rockingham, Fox versus Pitt and so on. In general terms, this eighteenth century type of political opposition did not oppose the ministry as such, but was composed mainly of the opposition to certain key individuals who held influence over the monarch, and thus the ministry. The two most notable examples of this type of royal influence were the Earl of Bute in the 1760's and the younger Pitt in the 1780's and 1790's. Thus, in general terms, we can view the opposing political forces in Parliament before the 1830's as those who received royal favour and those to whom royal favour was denied. It was thus possible for seemingly incompatible political factions to unite as opposing coalitions, as was the case of the Fox, Portland, North opposition to the ministry of Pitt in 1783/4. Also it should be remembered that political factions revolved around individuals. Thus the various supporters of Harley, Walpole, Pelham, Granville, Rockingham, Fox, Pitt or whoever, tended in the main to owe their political position and place to the dominant individual or family, but it was still important however, that individuals gave support because their political reasoning matched that of the dominant faction leader. It should be reiterated that, from 1720, all the most powerful political factions were operating within the same political party, the Whigs. As far as holding office, or indeed having any real influence in Parliament whatsoever, the Tory party was virtually a rump of that which vied for power during the crisis years from 1714 to 1720 of the Hanoverian succession. No Tory held any political office between 1720 and 1790, and the first Prime Minister thereafter to call himself a Tory was the Duke of Portland in 1807, who, as a Whig, had been Prime Minister in 1783. Furthermore, issues and legislative initiatives rarely produced party factions or indeed opposition factions before the 1830's. Admittedly there were two notable examples when issues did act as vehicles for party feeling; the first was the question of slavery and the second was Fox's pro-French stance after 1789 which did so much to revive the fortunes of the Tory party. But these were the exceptions rather than the rule.

With regard to party organization outside Parliament there is little evidence of national co-ordination or centralized party control before 1833. Again the only exception of note was that of William Adam who acted in the Foxite interest chiefly in Scotland

in the 1780's and early 1790's. But Adam worked mainly alone and did not have the range of duties which the Conservative Party Organizing Committee - as we shall discover later - took upon itself in the 1830's. After, as well as before, the 1832 Act, elections were fought in the localities. However, before the implementation of the 1832 Act the general situation was that the overwhelming majority of the members of the House of Commons were reliant on the support of the dominant larger and lesser aristocracy in helping them secure their seats. After 1832, the trend was increasingly away from the 'politics of the market' and, beginning with the larger borough constituencies, towards the influencing of electors (and non-electors) opinions through the exposition of policy arguments, In this we differ with the position adopted by Norman Gash who has suggested that corruption and electoral malpractice was just as prevalent after 1832 as before. 9 We do not suggest that the 'politics of the market' disappeared altogether, merely that the politics of influence and opinion became increasingly apparent and important. Indeed, during the 1820's the Conservatives had witnessed telling examples of what was to follow. In general terms at least, it was the ability of the Whigs to stimulate and mobilize political feelings and opinions in a mass and national sense, (over the removal of the Test and Corporation Acts, 1828; Catholic Emancipation, 1829; and of course Parliamentary reform, 1830/2) which forced the Conservatives, both in national and regional terms, to organize themselves.

What is striking about the political culture of England before 1832 is the absence of political parties organized around a set of firmly held political beliefs and principles - of, in essence, a party ideology. What is noticeable about the period after 1832 is the rapidity with which party ideologies can be detected as the identifiable traits of the two dominant political parties. Before 1832 political parties were nothing more than a set of loose heterogeneous collections of groups dominated by their own respective individual leaders. After 1832 we begin to see the emergence of parties not only with clear and identifiable beliefs and principles, but also responding as agencies for the receiving of political demands from the wider political constituency, the so called 'aggregation of interests and demands'. 10 What was occurring in the 1830's was that political parties were becoming identified as representing certain principles, which in turn were reflective of certain social groups, interests and political orientations. This was, as a developing process, by no means completed by 1846, even by 1867, but it was beginning to be apparent even by the mid-1830's.

One possible reason why, on the one hand, the Whig/Liberals began to formulate a set of policy arguments and initiatives, and the Conservatives a set of counter proposals on the other, was that Parliamentary and Cabinet government itself rose in importance.

This was set against a corresponding reduction in the importance of the political role of the monarch. As one historian of the period, Frank O'Gorman, has recently stated: "In the eighteenth century the King had been the first of party leaders. Now, (1833) a King's party no longer existed, the King was no longer the first of party leaders and his powers were being gradually curtailed". 11 Theoretically the minister of the crown was the choice of the King (although increasingly throughout the 1820's, and more so in the 1830's it was the choice of Parliament and to a lesser extent the electorate): thus to oppose the ministry was to oppose the King. In the eighteenth century, political leaders opposed the King at their peril - Charles James Fox for example, was denied office for almost thirty years. Throughout the 1820's, however, especially after the Reform Act, legitimate and concerted opposition to the King's ministry, both inside and outside Parliament, increased dramatically.

Some political leaders, however, were less susceptible to change than others. For, even after the tumults of the Reform crisis had passed and politics in the House of Commons had returned to some semblance of normality, the idea still remained that it was the duty of all good Parliamentarians to remain loyal to the ministry of the crown. As Sir Robert Peel noted in February 1835, when reflecting on the state of party feeling in the House of Commons;

...the assumption (is) that the House of Commons, since the passing of the Reform Bill, has been divided into two parties - the advocates and opponents of the reforming government. A reference to facts will show that such has not been the case; but on the contrary, that I, an anti-reformer, so far as the constitution of the House of Commons is concerned, have been a supporter of the government, and that it is the reformers themselves who have opposed them. 12

Peel then went on to list - much to the embarrassment of the Whigs - the fifteen occasions he had supported the Government in division since 1833. By 1846, however, Peel's views had changed, in December of that year he wrote to the former Conservative Chancellor of he Exchequer, Henry Goulburn, "the competition for power and the determination to take every legitimate advantage of your opponents in possession of it, are the indispensable cement of a compact and growing party". <sup>13</sup> Even by 1839 Sir James Graham had written to Peel the "constant legitimate object of an opposition is the overthrow of an administration they consider bad, and hope to replace it by a better". <sup>14</sup>

This was a profound shift of emphasis and one that was forced on Peel and the Conservative Party in the light of two dynamic forces. The first was the political effect which the policies of the Whigs had on the Conservative party throughout the 1830's. The second was the growth of party feeling - for both the Whig/Liberals and the Conservatives - outside Parliament. Firstly, the Conservatism of Peel and his party, as we noted earlier, was born out of a feeling that what the Whig/Liberal reformers were attempting to do would result in the destruction of the social and political fabric of Britain which had functioned so well and proved so durable since the settlement of 1688. One can argue that the philosophical content of 'new Conservatism' had its roots in the later works of Edmund Burke, especially his Reflections on the Revolution in France (1790), and his Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs (1791), but Peel, whilst sticking to the essential tenets of Burke, gave the philosophy a practical political dimension.

According to the view of most Conservatives at this time, the Reform Act of 1832 was a final and irrevocable act of appeasement to the popular clamour for Reform. Also it was believed by many that any further 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 Increasingly throughout the 1830's, Peel and 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 Ultra-Tories in the House of Lords. Peel faced real problems here. Firstly, he had to maintain the central, and ideologically binding constitutional principles of Conservatism as evolved from the theoretical abstractions of Burke and the Conservative Whigs of the early 1800's. But also secondly, he had to concede the importance of the second chamber as an independent senate, whilst at the same time promote the rights of the 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 the 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 altogether. 15 beyond recognition or being thrown out

The problems for Peel were three-fold. Firstly the Peers were beginning to lose the Conservatives the practical political benefits, in terms of the wide support which their organization in the constituencies (which we shall subsequently examine) had built up. The Whig charges that the Peers were intransigent indeed reactionary was beginning to appear correct. Secondly, he feared that the Whigs might be forced by the actions of the Lords to carry

out their threat to create 200 new life Peers and thus destroy the hereditary independence of the Lords, which at all costs Peel wished to preserve. Thirdly, as we have noted already, he had to maintain and promote the right of the elected House of Commons to legislate on behalf of the nation as a whole, whilst at the same time preserving the independent nature of the hereditary House of Lords. 16

The outcome of this constitutional struggle was, by the end of the 1830's, a victory for the Commons, and especially for the ideas that political parties should act in concert, and that ministries of the Crown may legitimately oppose within the confines of constitutional politics. These factors were again profoundly important in the creation of a British political culture, and profoundly different from that which had existed before the 1830's.

As to party organisation outside Parliament, the extension of political opposition and conflict is again important for the period 1833-50. This is especially so when one considers that, as a developing trend, one of the functions of political parties - which we argue may be traced back to the 1830's - is the integration into the established political system of the rival interests and demands of groups with differing political orientations.  $^{17}$  It is again one of the noticeable features of the 1830's and 1840 how various social groups - in the case of the working class with no actual political power in terms of the right to vote - were integrated and accommodated in both of the political parties. Patricia Hollis in her introductory essay in Pressure from Without says that the nineteenth century pressure group operated in two stages. The first stage was to apply pressure on the government from inside Parliament, the second stage was the establishment of a 'national voice' by way of a network of interlinked branches nationwide. 18 This we argue could not have been as successful, as it undoubtedly was unless legitimate loyal opposition had not first been established in Parliament itself through the political parties. The issues and pressure which these various groups impressed on the political parties were multifarious indeed; Parliamentary and municipal reform; anti-Poor law agitation; factory reform; church reform; anti-protectionism; educational reform; repeal of newspaper tax; and agitation surrounding issues such as public health, prisons, temperance and so on. At local and national levels, as well as in Parliament, all these issues had their representatives who exerted pressure on the parties, but the important point to note is that increasingly, from the 1830's, they acted through the political party. It is a further feature that the demands and interests which the various groups represented found, in the political party of the 1830's and 1840's, a vehicle sensitive enough to respond and articulate their various interests and demands.

Again this was a significant change in the political structure and culture of Britain, and one in part a result of the mechanics of the 1832 Act. However, it was also due - as we shall discover later - to the growing political importance of sectional interest within society as a whole.

# III. A Changing Political Culture: the Perspectives of the Political Scientist and the Political Sociologist

When examined from the perspective of the political scientist and the political sociologist - which incidentally the period seldom has - the importance of the impact of the 1932 Reform Act stands as a watershed in British political development. If the 1830's saw the consolidation of the parliamentary party, with its attendant disciplines and controls, and also the widespread recognition of legitimate political opposition to the ministry of the crown, then similarly the period also saw the dramatic growth of political organization in the localities. For the Conservatives in the regions and the localities the actions of the Whig government - the perceived threat to the constitution - acted as a spur to organize opposition in a way similar to that of the Parliamentary party. As Derek Fraser has pointed out, 19 local politics were used by the major parties as merely a pawn in the wider political game, as a means to an end in the wider political constituency. However, local politics often provided bitter contests, divided down party lines for the exercise and pursuit of power,... "from the 1830's onwards". 20 But the terms of the Reform Act itself also 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. As we noted earlier, this was in part due to the mechanics of the new Act; the process of the annual registration of electors, which meant that a local party caucus had to be operational at all times. It was also partly due to the effects of the Act in a politico-cultural sense. If we combine the former (which may be regarded as the territory of the political scientist) with the latter (the domain of the political sociologist) we may see a more complete picture.

Let us firstly consider the organization of the Conservative party in the immediate aftermath of the passing of the Reform Act. As we have 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 more extreme Whigs. The issues in the localities were virtually the same: the role of the House of Commons, the preservation of the privileges of the Church of England and of the Monarch, and the maintenance of the independent nature of the House of Lords. In order to mobilize opinion with regard to these issues along the lines of a consistent party strategy, supporters had to be rallied.

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) control of the often newly municipalized borough, and, as we noted above, often as a necessary first step towards eventual Parliamentary control. But 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 Conservative position. 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 the nation as a whole. This was important in that if the Conservatives were to survive the post-Reform years they had to show the opposing political forces they meant what they said: that Conservatism representative of the nation as a whole, and of all sections of society, not just the privileged elites or the county squirarchy. Local editors of the conservative press in all the manufacturing districts gave much publicity to the size of their working class support: partly on the one hand to embarrass the so called 'popular' parties of the Liberals or radicals, but also for the reasons outlined above. As the editor of the Blackburn Standard wrote 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 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 affections of the people. 21

As we shall shortly discover the registration process itself forced local party organizations to become permanent, but so to did the necessity of presenting the conservative case.

In July 1832, Alfred Mallalieu, the Conservative editor of the Public Ledger and Guardian, suggested to Lord Aberdeen that the new situation created by the recent Reform Act required the adoption of new tactics and techniques of electioneering. He argued that this was especially important in the boroughs, which, with the consolidation of the middle class vote, potentially presented the Conservatives with their most serious threat. 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 168 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". 22 He argued that: "The slow and easy process of country 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 were men representative of the electorate existing in the boroughs, able to match the Attwoods, the Humes, the Bowrings and the Pearsons, and further the Conservative cause:

Men who by their connexions and well judged combinations would enable the party powerfully to influence the town elections; who by their intimate acquaintance with the habits, prejudices, opinions and wants of particular places and districts would be able to point out the fitting sort of candidates to secure success, men who knew where to find such 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. 23

In the case of Bolton, Blackburn, Bury, Clitherce, Lancaster, Preston, Rochdale, Warrington and Wigan this is precisely what happened.

Mallalieu's memorandum goes on to suggest that a permanent organizing committee, comprising twenty four persons, be formed with an ex-Cabinet minister as chairman,  $^{24}$  to manage the elections from London. Half the committee was to be made up of Conservative members of Parliament, and half were to be representative of the commercial, shipping, distributive and manufacturing interests. He further suggested:

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 the metropolis, in some instances at their own cost entirely, in others with some small aid from the common fund.<sup>25</sup>

The members of the committee argued Mallalieu, should not be treated as people of inferior consequence; they should be given ready and confidential access to the party leadership. He suggested that it was only by drawing together the bands of common interest between the middle classes and the aristocracy in this way that the conservative party could perform its duty and recover from the effects of the Reform Bill.

The first organizing committee of the conservative party after the passing of Reform assembled at Joseph Planta's house at Charles Street in August 1832, its chief members were: John Charles Herries, Charles Arbuthnot, William Holmes, Sir Henry Hardinge, Sir John Beckett and Lord Lowther, all former ministers but only Herries of cabinet rank. During these early years there is not sufficient evidence to be able to suggest that Mallalieu's suggestion of a wide social and occupational base was fully incorporated into the organizing committees, but the fact that it was regarded as being important, that the differing interests be consulted, is indicative of a changing political culture.

By 1833 the committee was meeting (usually weekly) at the newly formed Carlton Club. However, its membership had now undergone a change of personnel in the wake of the disastrous Conservative election result under the terms of the new Reform Act. The most significant new appointment was that of Francis Robert Bonham who acted, as Professor Gash has noted, as the first full-time Conservative 'political secretary'. 26 Bonham acted in what we now term the capacity of a national party agent. His primary task was to collect and collate information from all the localities, and, importantly, keep the national party leadership informed as to the state of party feeling 'out of doors', and the level of party strength and organization. 27 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. A letter from a Mr Sidney in 1839 offers an illustration of the type of information Bonham received, and the help he 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 gt. 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 wd. make considerable difference in the county election (they say 30 votes) and probably in the town also:- Sir John Reid is Mauds partner, perhaps it might be managed through him. <sup>28</sup>

In the localities, organization was born of functional necessity. Under the terms of the 1832 Act, an elector qualified for the borough franchise if his property carried a rateable value of ten pounds or over. All the qualified electors were placed on an electoral register which was revised annually. There was nothing new in this procedure, but what was new was the importance the registration process was to have in the years after 1832 in the newly created borough constituencies, as we later discover. To be registered every borough voter had to pay an annual registration

fee of one shilling, (County voters paid no such fee) and, if the elector was a committed party supporter or member, his fee was paid for him out of party funds. Registration was expensive - totally £83,364 in 1833-34, it was also extremely complicated. Throughout the nation as a whole, there were a variety of qualifications for the franchise. In the counties the property qualification was set at 40 shillings for freeholders, £50 for leaseholders and £10 for holders of copyhold tenants. In the older boroughs - such as Preston - there was still the substantial remains of the 'scot and lot' franchise, whereby any rate payer who paid his own rates qualified for the franchise if he could prove residence of twelve months or more before 1832. Under the terms of the 1832 Act, however, as Sir Robert Peel pointed out, these older boroughs would eventually lose their larger numbers of working class electors, for new voters could only qualify by owning property of £10 rateable value. Thus, as the old working class voters died or moved away they were not replaced. Furthermore, any individual could challenge the registration of a voter on a number of grounds; change of address, failure to pay rates on time, the receiving of parochial relief, or simple ineligibility. What is important to note is that the annual registration of electors widened the area for party organization. They were now charged with arranging subscriptions in order to pay for the registration of the 'friends' of the party, assembling a list of objections, and to countering opponents objections - and this became a full-time activity. Furthermore, in the boroughs the annual registration battles in the courts not only served to force the pace of constituency organization, but also acted as a stimulus to party feeling and the self-identification of the supporter to the party; indeed, the process helped to sustain such feelings in a way that was not apparent before the 1832 Act.

In order to accommodate this new situation and also to maintain channels of communication with the party's supporters activists, local political clubs and societies were created. As we shall discover later, for the Conservatives, the growth of these was a truly remarkable feature of the 1830's. In 1832, only one existed on the English mainland. 29 By 1835 every constituency both county and borough had its Conservative Association, tailored to the needs and interests of those they represented, either agricultural or manufactory, elector or non elector. If the political clubs were to a significant extent the result of the changing needs of the organizational process, so also was the recruitment of the local political leaders and organizers, as we shall shortly discover. However in terms of sitting in the House of Commons finance was still the key, and no one who did not have 'adequate means' could ever hope to be successful at elections. This meant that, even after the 1832 Act, money and privilege were still supreme. However, increasingly, talent and merit were being rewarded, especially in the administrations of Sir Robert Peel,

(1834/5, and 1841/6). When his first administration was announced in December 1834 the radical Joseph Parks commented to Lord Durham: "Not a single old family. How the aristocracy are fallen". 30

In the provinces, the boroughs and to some extent the counties, the registration process and the pressing demands of a rapidly organizing party created a new type of political animal. These were men who, for the most part, acted as unofficial, unpaid full-time local party agents, and in the main they were the local solicitors. In Belfast in 1841, for example, the newly elected Conservative member, James Emerson Tennent, gave testimony to the party's chief whip, Sir Thomas Freemantle, of a Mr Bates who can be regarded as representative of the type. He said of Bates:

If there is one man in Ireland, to whom more than any other, Conservatism (Tennent's emphasis) is deeply indebted, it is Mr Bates. For ten years he has drudged like a slave for us in Belfast, attended our registries, conducted our elections, fought out petitions in Committee of the House, acted as secretary to all our societies, got up all our public meetings, subscribed largely to all our funds and at the same time never accepted one shilling, of a fee for all his long services. 32

All the boroughs of the north-west had such men who acted on behalf of their respective parties. For example, at Preston, the solicitors acting for the Conservatives were Mr J Myers and Mr F Armstrong in the borough, and Mr Ambler and Mr Monk in the county. These men were the back-bone of the party organization. In Blackburn the work fell between Richard Backhouse and William Makinson. The former received the following epitaph from his contemporary the Liberal, William Durham:

The late Mr Backhouse, solicitor, energetically and with almost superhuman efforts, attended to the registration of the Conservatives, and he saw his efforts crowned by the return, in but a few short years, of two Conservatives. (in 1841). Differing though we do in politics, from the above gentleman, we must record our testimony to his work, and say that to him the Conservatives of Blackburn owe a lasting debt of gratitude. 33

In the boroughs, the party structure was of the caucus variety, not the party of mass membership which evolved later in the century. The apex of the local party was made up of he solicitors in charge of the registration, and members of the local elites; large manufacturers and men of commerce, gentlemen of private means and members of the professional classes. These men decided tactics, but much of the drudgery of canvassing, persuading and arguing the party's position was done by the lower middle classes;

the small employer or shopkeeper, people who, as Derek Fraser has pointed out,  $^{34}$  could afford the time necessary for such activities. However it is noticeable and important that throughout the 1830's the 'respectable' working man was also increasingly encouraged to play his part on behalf of the local party. Again his role was the presenting of the party's position and arguing its benefits to his fellow workers, most probably in the place of work or the local public house. In return this new breed of political work horse gained a limited influence within the local party and increased local status.

Tom Nossiter<sup>35</sup> has suggested that political support and success in the period prior to the introduction of the secret ballot in 1872 could be gained in three ways. Firstly through 'market' politics by which he means the buying and selling of votes and support, and by paying the unenfranchised to exert pressure on the enfranchised. Secondly, the gaining of influence and support by the calling on traditional loyalties and deference to the large landowners or other wielders of local patronage. Thirdly, through the influencing of political opinions by arguing, persuading, campaigning and agitating at public meetings and through the written word. Derek Fraser has pointed out in response to Nossiter36 that the latter's study contains only one city of any proportions: Newcastle, where after 1832 regional politics were still under the control of an aristocratic clique. Fraser argues that in most of the great cities politics could operate more freely than anywhere else, and that in the main the move after 1832 was towards the influencing of political opinions. Our research, although based mainly in industrial towns, appears to bear this out. This again is important when one considers the emerging political culture of Britain after 1832.

As we shall later discover, the level of organisation both at the centre and in the localities was most intense during the few weeks prior to a parliamentary election. But, significantly, organized party activity was much in evidence during the periods between elections, even in those boroughs which, during the 1830's and 1840's had not yet embroiled themselves in the fierce partizanship of local politics through the municipal incorporation of their towns. It is this organizational permanency, this heightening of the political consciousness, which marks the post-1832 period from the situation which previously prevailed. H.J. Hanham, <sup>37</sup> amongst others, has noted that the caucus only came into its own at periods of Parliamentary elections, and this mainly after 1867. We not only dispute the late periodization, but suggest also that the party caucuses, although more obviously effective at election times, were operational on a permanent basis from the mid 1830s.

One further point with regard to political recruitment and involvement which is worth noting here, for it is something we shall return to, is that, as a result of the broadening of party involvement and activism, the political consciousness of a wide section of society was heightened. Furthermore, in the case of the working class supporters, their involvement was perceived as legitimate and respectable, which may not have been the case on the Liberal side. Again this was especially important in the boroughs for it placed those of lesser social rank - for few below the rank of the squirarchy had ever been involved in organized politics before 1832 - the manufacturing middle class, the lower middle class and indeed sections of the working class, firmly in positions of being able to decide their local party's fortunes. This endowed them with a sense of responsibility for their party, but further, these people now felt themselves involved - to a greater or lesser extent - in determining their political future in an atmosphere which was deemed legitimate and respectable. Indeed it can be argued that their involvement conferred self-esteem and status and in some cases, public esteem and recognition. In short it gave them a feeling of political importance and worth.

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The effects of this tightening of organization at the centre and in the localities were profound - as we shall discover later when we examine the Lancashire region in more detail. However, the Reform Act had other social implications with regards the transformation of British political culture. Scholarly opinion as to the impact of the Reform Act is split between those who maintain it was virtually business as usual - Norman Gash, D.C. Moore, George Kitson-Clark and Tom Nossiter, 38 - and those who suggest that the Act had enormous impact; Eli Halevy, Michael Black, M Ostragorsky, Arthur Aspinall and Derek Fraser. 39 We belong to the second school of thought. Thus far, we have examined the development of the political party in the first half of the nineteenth century, we have also traced the emergence of legitimate political opposition, and looked at political recruitment and involvement at the local level, but we suggest the historian of this period can also learn from some of the methods commonly ascribed to political sociology. This is by no means an original, nor indeed a particularly novel methodological approach, not even for the study of the 1832 Act. In 1966 D.C. Moore wrote a paper 40 outlining the sociological importance of the 1832 Act, in which he considered the various schedules of the Act in relation to who was allowed onto the franchise and who was denied the vote, this in

terms of geographical distribution and social class. More will be said of these areas in due course, but we shall also attempt to examine other areas not touched on by Moore.

Nor is it indeed new or novel for political scientists to don the conceptual spectacles of the political sociologist from time to time. This was done initially in the mid-to-late 1950's and early 1960's by the school of political science who had close methodological ties with structural functionalist sociology. Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba's The Civic Culture was a trail blazer in this respect, as was Richard Rose's People in Politics, later Richard Dawson and Kenneth Brewitt's Political Socialization. As suggested, much of this early work owed a great deal of its epistemology to the work of structural functionalists, more specifically to the ideas of Talcott Parsons. He, in turn, owed much to the studies undertaken towards the end of the century by Emil Durkheim. Now, although one may disagree with the central tenets or indeed the moral implications of the structural functionalist approach, as a methodology it was one of the first to systematically attempt to understand, albeit in theoretical terms, the underlying and salient features of political society. It was Durkheim who first pointed out the implications of moral authority within the modern political system. Durkheim suggested that the conception of the 'political' has only come into being with the modern form of complex industrial society, since it presupposes differentiation at all levels, between the government and the governed. Durkheim was quick to point out, however, that political society should not be defined purely in terms of the existence of constituted authority, which may occur in a simple grouping or a community, (as in a peasant or feudal society) or indeed a family. An additional criterion is necessary, and this is the degree of complexity in a social organization: a political society is one which manifests clear cut divisions within a nation which is composed of a plurality of groupings, of communities, indeed classes. The members of a feudal society for example experienced what Durkheim termed 'mechanical solidarity' in that each party of that society was in a sense comparable to all the other parts. Thus each community or part could be viewed as a microcosm of the wider society. With the increase of the division of labour of an industrial society, new roles are required and the uniformity of beliefs decrease. This new form of society is characterized by the interdependence of different elements within the general acceptance of the need for differentiation, whilst at the same time the need increases for a more complex form of sovereign governmental process. This industrial political society operates on what Durkheim termed 'organic' solidarity'. In short he argues that a new form of social solidarity requires a new moral consensus; a differentiation in political controls and government in order to prevent society from collapsing and disintegrating. We aim to link this in our discussion of social class to political socialization and political integration in the immediate aftermath of the 1832 Act.

Political socialization is commonly defined as the process whereby the individual learns about politics and develops orientations of political preference. In the modern world there are many agencies of political socialization - the family; the school; the political party; the understanding of one's national history; one's own political experiences, and not least the media. However, if one examines political society in the manufacturing districts of the north-west before and after the 1832 Reform Act (say in 1826 and 1836), one discovers in the former year the virtual lack of these agencies, and in the latter year their abundance.

Let us look at this a little more closely, from the perspective of the working class. The working class family of 1826 may indeed have acted as an agency of political socialization, but in the majority of instances the aspect of politics presented was not complementary to the politics of the established order, that is of those groups of a higher social status who wished to see working people acquiesce to the existing political authority, whilst at the same time denying them any participatory role in the political process. If working class families exhibited any feelings whatever they were born of the shared misery in the seemingly endless cycles of industrial depression and the increasing regimentation of factory life. It was in the 1820's that the consistent growth of working class consciousness occurred in terms of the shared understanding of what being working class meant, both in an objective and subjective sense. In general terms the 'interest orientation' (the position from which a given group views political society) of the working class throughout the 1820's was directed against property, especially the factories and warehouses, and against those who represented authority; the mill-owners, the magistrates and indeed the clergy. In Blackburn, for example, in 1826, crude forms of bazookas were manufactured out of gas-pipes, 41 and entire factories destroyed, consequently the town was occupied by the military for a month before order could be restored. Nor were the working class unusual in their methods of showing disapproval; incidents of violence occurred throughout the north-west in 1826/7, at Rochdale, Oldham, Bury, Salford, Manchester, Stockport, Bolton, Accrington, Burnley, Clitheroe and Preston. It was no wonder that the perceived middle class views of the working class were of a violent and at times uncontrollably destructive force. Also, increasingly, the view prevailed that the old methods of controlling the 'lower orders' - by paternalism and deference - were by themselves no longer sufficient to contain this new industrial class of workers. It appears that in the 1820's and early 1830's, working people were developing their own cultural patterns and priorities.

As Gareth Stedman-Jones has recently pointed out, 42 the most obvious and effective form of social control was the wage system itself, but other means were employed in the 1830's. It could be argued that the intention to control was not explicit on the part of the middle class, but the results were effective nontheless. If we take the example of Blackburn, working class dependence on the middle class manufacturers increased, 43 especially in key areas such as housing, education, the relief of poverty and of course employment in the factories. Gradually, in the case of the Blackburn workers, their previously high levels of class consciousness began to fragment and decline. The mass call, throughout the 1820's and early 1830's, was for the re-assertion of working class independence and political rights. In the mid to late 1830's this gave way to sectionalized trade and craft protectionism and political reformism. This did not happen, however, before the full weight of working class feeling had been channelled from 1830 into the struggle for the reform of Parliament, which many working class radicals throughout the north-west regarded as the essential first stage in their eventual political emancipation. 44 The organisation for this working class involvement had been achieved through the local political unions and the radical unstamped press, the former was a primitive (but effective) form of radical party grouping and the latter a disseminator of popular aims, tactics and objectives. Both forms of political structure were later to be revived during the years of Chartist activity. However, by that time (1839-1850), the fissures within the working class had become visible, and as a class they were politically sectionalized, due in part to the increased levels of dependency and control, and the imposition of new methods of political socialization. 45

Also in the later 1830's, in the sphere of education, the institutions of secondary socialization - both formal and informal - were increasing and having a political effect on the political consciousness of the working class. In the 1820's, the only educational institutions open to working people were the Church Sunday Schools and the radical public houses. Whilst one may pay more deference to the principles of Christian teaching than the other, both could, and very often did, act as vehicles of working class political socialization. In the north-west during the 1820's some of the most popular Sunday Schools were those of the Primitive Methodists, and there were some extremely fiery preachers amongst this sect who expounded the need for working class resistance against the industrial system and its operators in chief. In Oldham, Preston and Blackburn for example the working radicals held their meetings of their respective Political Unions in the chapels of the Primitive Methodists. This probably served to reinforce working class solidarity whilst at the same time offering them a sense of legitimacy in their social and political objectives.

By the mid 1830's however, this situation had begun to change. Millowners began to open their own Sunday Schools, and indeed day schools attached to their factories. The Anglicans began to open National Schools with much greater frequency than had occurred previously. Various types of adult educational institutions began to be formed - the Mechanics Institutes, the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, and not least the political clubs and associations. All these institutions began to attempt to destroy the notion of the antagonism and seperateness of the various classes in society, and instead attempted to present the case for the mutuality of classes. The result was again one of working class fragmentation and sectionalization corresponding reduction in the levels of class consciousness. Another important result of this process was that some working people began to be socialized - especially in the case of the working mens political clubs - within the confines of a set of party political values and orientations, which may have differed in specifics but in substance were the same: they all proclaimed the sanctity of the British system of constitutional government, whilst attempting to present to the individual or group an ideological understanding of the political world from the perspective of the political party.

This integration and political socialization of sections of the working class into the national political parties in the 1830's was something which had never occurred before. Its significance should not be under valued simply because the majority of the working class were unable to vote. Because working people did not possess the franchise did not mean they had no political muscle. The efforts of the organized radicals during the reform crisis had shown both the main parties what the working class were capable of. Also it should be remembered that, in the era prior to the prevalence of democratic Liberalism and universal suffrage, the possessing of the franchise was just what the word means: it was a special privilege granted to individuals. The enfranchised were, in theory at least, supposed to represent faithfully, by their use of it not only their own interests, but the interests of their poorer neighbours who did not possess the franchise. Thus working people throughout the 1830's and 1840's seldom lost an opportunity in letting the electorate know precisely what working class interests were. For many Conservatives the integration of sections of the working class was an exercise in political socialization in an attempt to steer them away from the dangerous tendencies of the radicals.

For many liberal Conservatives, this working class integration was an essential first step in showing that they were 'fit and proper' persons to fully join in the political process by being granted the right to vote. Increasingly the feeling grew as the

1830's gave way to the 1840's and 50's that the restrictive franchise was not in keeping with what Sir James Graham called "the growing intelligence of the people".  $^{46}$  Sir James Graham was typical of liberal opinion which gradually came round to the idea that the respectable working class should be given the franchise. He was one of the four original cabinet draftees of the 1832 Act and publically supported Sir Robert Peel's protest that the£10 borough franchise in the 'scot and lot' constituencies (such as Preston) had the effect of destroying what limited representation the old constitution had conferred on the working class. In 1859 Graham recollected in a speech to the House of Commons the aims and objectives of the 1832 Act and the political role of the working class. He said: "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".47

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This statement of Graham's came some eight years before the 1867 Reform Act when it was regarded as safe to include the 'fit and proper' members of the working class into the electoral process. In endeavouring to show why in the political cultural climate of the 1850's, it was deemed safe for working class participation, but that it was most definitely not deemed safe in the early 1830's, we must again briefly return to the situation prevailing before the enactment of the 1832 Act. In order to do this we must return to the basic premises on which reform was based in the political world of the 1820's: the fear of serious political conflict.

One of the chief fears of the political elites in the late 1820's, and early 1830's concerned the possible consequences the increasing of the electorate would have for the constitution. Both the Whigs and the Tories were at pains to defend the existing constitution. Both attempted to justify their respective positions as pro - and anti-reformers on the grounds that it was the preservation of the Monarchy, Lords and Commons which dictated their actions. Thus the question of flooding the House of Commons with the representatives of popular opinion was never seriously considered except by the most optimistic of radicals. One of the key ingredients within the Act was the removal off, the county franchise of those electors resident in the previously unrepresented large towns and cities of the north and midlands.

Once, under the terms of the Act, they had qualified for the£10 franchise in one of the newly created boroughs, they could no longer vote in county elections. In referring to this provision whilst introducing the Bill, Lord John Russell, explained that once enacted townsmen would no longer be able to "interfere with the representation of the counties". 48 It would appear that the ministers had taken note of the electoral behaviour of different social groups, and as such had attempted, with as little alteration of the constitution as possible, to confine those social elements (the urban middle classes) who had been increasing in terms of members of the pre-reformed House of Commons within strictly urban constitutions. This had been achieved by virtue of the voting power of the large towns and cities in the county elections. As we suggested above, the state of the manufacturing districts was giving serious cause for alarm. But so too was the situation in many of the agricultural areas, 49 which is why some Ultra-Tories as defenders of the agricultural interest favoured reform. They favoured Parliamentary reform not as a means of furthering political individualism and freedom, but as a means of returning the balance (or imbalance) of the membership of the House of Commons in favour of the rural interest. In this the Ultras were fully supported by the conservative Whigs, as Lord Palmerston confirmed when he said that the Bill would "restore to the landed interest that influence which he thought indispensable to the safety and prosperity of the country".50

Thus it is misleading to think that the Ministers were simply endeavouring to provide a means by which the forces generated by new industrialism could be transmitted into the political structure. It would seem they intended the reverse in that they were attempting to prevent those factors over which they had no control from destroying the existing balance of political power and the long-standing forms of social power.

The ministers and their advisors attempted to define each constituency socially and geographically by franchise and boundaries in accordance with their conceived view of the interest orientation each area symbolized. The end result was successful, in some ways too successful in that the direct political conflict was not contained but was increased. The Act served to heighten the already serious political antagonism which existed between the urban and rural interests; the manufacturing versus the agricultural; the represented social groupings versus the unrepresented. In fact it required a new Reform Bill to rectify it. As Lord John Russell explained when introducing the Reform Bill of 1854, he said the original Act had "tended to divide the country in a way in which it was not divided before; in short into opposite camps according as the districts might be connected with

land or trade... Since the passing of the (First Reform) Act we have seen - what had not occurred before - county members too generally exclusive in respect of the interest they cared for, and the members of the great cities too exclusive for theirs."51

Thus, in another important sense, the political culture had been altered, for the years after the introduction of the First Reform Act were characterized more by conflict than by harmonious consensus: and by deep political animosity rather than unanimity of purpose. In their efforts to exclude certain social groupings (the working class) and to politically contain others, manufacturing and urban middle classes) the concession of reform created a political climate more alien than the framers of the Bill ever intended. This is why old Whigs like Russell, and liberal Conservatives like Graham attempted to halt the conflict by further concession. However, in many respects, it was too late, the British political culture had changed, and these changes could not be revoked: conflict, in a political sense, was by mid-century a permanent feature and every interest grouping of both major political parties sought to gain political advantage. In the borough constituencies of Lancashire, between radicalism and reformism within the unrepresented class, on several occasions between working class and middle class, and increasingly between the two main political parties. As Derek Fraser has noted: "Politics intruded into the whole urban experience and the limited world of parliamentary elections..., was not a political boundary recognized by contemporaries. The mid nineteenth century political activist pitched his tent in whatever battlefield was open to him. 52

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In this first section of this paper we have attempted to plot - in general terms - the changes in Britain's emergent political culture after the passing of the Reform Act of 1832. We have examined notions of political opposition, the organization of political parties, political recruitment and the integration of working people into the two main political parties. We suggested that political socialization amongst the working class underwent a profound change, and that this, in part, served to sectionalize them as a class and made their integration into the political system as a whole easier. Finally, we have examined how the terms of the 1832 Act served to heighten political conflict at various levels, not least between the two main political parties.

All these general factors should be borne in mind in part two of the paper, in which we shall detail the changes in the political culture by focussing on the attempts made by the Conservatives to influence sections of the working class through the medium of the

operative political club. Evidence will be forthcoming drawn from all parts of Lancashire, but the main thrust will take the form of a case study of the Blackburn area along with East Lancashire. We suggested above that both the main political parties attempted to legitimize their claims to be representative of all social groups in the nation by incorporating into their party structures sections of the working class. This, we argue, changed not only the members of the working class who were affected directly, but in certain respects those who were not, and further, we suggest it altered the political party itself. It is a detailed discussion of the operative political club that we now turn our attention.

PART TWO. OPERATIVE CONSERVATISM IN LANCASHIRE.

## I The Role of the Middle Class Leadership.

Recent research<sup>53</sup> amongst social and political historians has revealed that the creation of the Conservative Party organizational apparatus occurred ostensibly in the ten years following the passing of the 1832 Act. One reason offered is that a change in organizational tactics was required because of the growing political importance and economic expansion of the urban middle classes of the North and Midlands, the accommodation of whom Peel attempted to achieve by carefully adjusting the Conservative political machine. The effects of these adjustments and the attempts made to control the party faithful in the localities, are initially best viewed from the localities. There, even during the run-in to the first election under the new franchise, political organization was becoming more streamlined.

On the Conservative side, the memorandum written by Alfred Mallalieu<sup>54</sup> had not received the political recognition it deserves. It is clear that Mallalieu, and other leading Conservatives had been influenced and impressed with the organizing capabilities of the Whig/Liberals during the Reform Act agitation, especially by the Political Unions. Even Peel, who was deeply suspicious of extra-Parliamentary political organizations of any kind, reluctantly acquiesced to their use in certain circumstances.

But I certainly, if the necessity arises, shall form, and shall counsel others to form, quietly unostentatious associations, for the sole purpose of defence.  $^{55}$ 

However the growth of Conservative Associations only began in earnest once the full effect of the election results had begun to sink in. For the first and only time in its history the Conservative party had less than 150 members in the House of

Commons. In January 1853, Associations began to be formed in many of the counties and county towns, at Gloucestershire, Northamptonshire, Berkshire, Bath and Bristol. 56

In the North-West the South Lancashire Conservative Association was officially launched in February 1833, by the Bolton landowner William Hulton. At a speech in Bolton in 1837 he recalled its formation.

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

The Conservatives of South Lancashire, although made up essentially of the lesser aristocracy and squirarchy, were soon directing their energies towards their humbler social neighbours. At a dinner of the association in August 1833 Hulton spoke of the Conservative relationship with the poor and with the working classes:

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 upmost 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 heart-felt esteem as they entertain for the aristocracy. 57

Thus even at this early stage of development, three points can be made with some certainty. The first is that the Conservatives of Lancashire formed their associations as a result of their poor election showing. Secondly, and stemming from the first point, they endeavoured to bring together the Conservatives of the county who felt threatened by the reforming Whig Ministry. Thirdly, they realized the importance, in political terms, of the unrepresented class and attempted to rally support from this direction. As a lesson, the success of the radical Political Unions were not lost on the Conservatives of Lancashire. As the editor of the Manchester Guardian pointed out.

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 <u>branch</u> societies (Conservative italics) and therefore directly in the teeth of the delegations Act. 58

Let us examine in detail one of these local branch societies of Lancashire Conservative Association. In Blackburn, manufacturer-dominated Blackburn Conservative Association came into existence in July 1834, and in most respects was typical of its kind throughout the region. The names of the committee members not only reveal the associations middle class bias, but also show that it was an extension of the Blackburn Pitt Club, which as early as 1821 boasted - somewhat exaggeratedly - a membership of 300.59 If the core membership of the Conservative Association was effectively the same as the Pitt Club, the aims and objectives were different. The Pitt Clubs, formed to honour the memory of the younger Pitt, were little more than respectable debating societies - occasions, usually annual dinners, where Tories would get together and reminisce the grand old days and the battles between Pitt and Fox. The aims of the Conservative Associations were strictly party political, taking up Sir Robert Peel's statement that in the future, elections would not just be won on the ground but in the registration courts.60

The Blackburn Conservatives envisaged associations societies which catered for every rung on the social ladder. For the larger manufacturers and professional class there was the Conservative Association, with the local bourgeois elite - William Eccles (cotton), Thomas Brierley (cotton), William Henry and John (cotton), Robert Hopwood (cotton), Daniel Thwaites (Brewing), Joseph Harrison (foundry), and the Feilden family (cotton manufacturers and Lords of the Blackburn Manor) - at its head. The executive of this association was called the Blackburn Conservative Society; amongst its members were the members of the lesser aristocracy and squirarchy drawn from a six or seven miles radius of the town, precisely as advocated by Alfred Mallalieu in his memorandum of 1832. The local Conservative Society was affiliated to the governing body of Conservatism in the district, the North Lancashire Conservative Trades Association designed expressly to cater for the shopkeepers and small manufacturers. 61 Below this group came the Operative Conservative Association. 62 This body was formed in November 1835. At its inauguration it amounted to forty members: by the end of 1837 it boasted in its annual report: "When your committee intimate this number - 400 members - it does not include the honorary members of the Association, nor many of the trades people of the town, who are members of a similar association." Finally there came the Blackburn Conservative Sick and Friendly Society. Thus we can see that, by the end of 1835, the Conservatives of Blackburn were in a good position to take care of the registration, and possibly more besides.

The pattern of organizational development for the Conservatives for the whole of Lancashire appears to have been in the following manner. The county was split into two areas, north and south, the Parliamentary boundaries. The two associations were autonomous of each other. However, within the two areas, each possessed an executive made up of representatives from each borough or district society. For example, representatives from the Bury, Bolton and Manchester Conservative Societies sat on the executive of the South Lancashire Association, whilst those from Lancaster, Preston and Blackburn on the executive of the North Lancashire Association. The borough and district associations split themselves into branches according to the needs of the individual association. For example some had branches in the north, south, east and west of the district or borough, whilst others formed branches corresponding to the ward boundaries, if the borough had a municipal council, as was the case at Preston, Bolton and Liverpool. Then, of course, there were the branches designed to cater for the specialized social groups such as the operative associations and the trades associations. All the various branches, however, fell under the direction of the borough or district executive Conservative Society, who, in turn sent representatives to their respective county associations. Article seven of the general rules of the North Lancashire Association explain the procedure, it runs thus:

That, where any town or local district within the division shall have 30 or more members of this Association within a circuit of ten miles, such 30 or more members may form themselves into a branch or district association, and subject to its rules. That such branch or district associations 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 (sic) (shall) act without the sanction of a subsequent general meeting. 64

By the end of 1836, Conservative Associations and Operative Associations had been formed at Stockport, Ashton, Manchester, Salford, Rochdale, Oldham, Bury, Bolton, Warrington, Wigan. Leigh, Chorley, Liverpool, Preston, Lancaster, Clitheroe, Blackburn and Darwen, and by 1838 the Conservatives of Scotland had formed an operative branch exclusively for women. 65

It must be stressed that the initial impetus for the organization of Conservatives in Lancashire came from amongst the professional and manufacturing middle classes. This reflected a broadening of the political representation of Conservatism, and the

rising power of the new bourgeoisie in this region. Peel himself was not slow to realize that Conservatism had to appeal to a wider constituency. In a speech at the Merchant Taylors Hall in May 1835 he outlined his feelings:

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. 66

The view that Conservatism - of the highest status within the party - should address themselves to those social groups who previously had been known as zealous opponents of the Conservatives 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 parties appeal; its becoming more flexible in the presentation of policy arguments to different social groups; and necessitated also a more expansive organizational structure. Second, there was genuinely perceived fear amongst many Conservatives that the great cities and the manufacturing districts were the seed-beds of extreme radicalism, papism. republicanism, democracy, in short, of what was called at the time the revolutionary 'movement' - the very objects of which Conservatism was pledged to oppose. In July 1835, these factors were drawn together in an influential article in Blackwoods Magazine entitled 'Conservative Associations'. called for the widespread formation of conservative associations to act as a 'barrier against the forces of anarchy'. 67 Indeed the article called on the Middle Class Conservatives to embark on a programme of political education amongst the working class of the industrial areas. It demanded to know,

How is this 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... 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. <sup>68</sup>

The writer 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 but at the same time warned local Conservatives not to underestimate 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

However, the Conservatives of Lancashire employed other means of political socialization and party proselytization as well as the power of the written word. Throughout the summer of 1836 a Manchester barrister, Charles Wilkins was employed by the party to tour Lancashire advising the operative associations as to the latest policy positions and organizational strategy. Throughout the months of May, June, July, August and September he spoke at three, occasionally four venues per week. At Preston for example, in July 1836, he advised the workers to enlist the services of women in the political fight:

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.  $^{71}$ 

As we argued in the first part of this paper, 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 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 and dynamic approach. The old party 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 phases and idians 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 in the maintenance of the Constitution, or the phrase, 'When bad men combine, Good men must unite' which emphasised the need for Conservatives of all classes to join together in the defence of their principles. But importantly, as we shall see shortly, respectability became increasingly important: it became not only a natural catchword of the Englishman, but a positive force in politics.

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. But we suggest further that two types of working men found Conservatism appealing at this time, and they did so for reasons which had little to do with deference. One reason, which appealed to our first type of working class Conservative was that they were persuaded that the new Conservatism of Peel, and his followers in the country, was committing itself to the issues of the day which directly affected working people in the manufacturing districts. These issues included firstly, the resistance to the harsher elements contained within the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act - in certain cases (Bury, Rochdale and Oldham) the Conservative-radicals opposed the Act's introduction altogether. 72 A second issue which attracted broad working class support amongst a section of the working population was that of the reduction in the hours of work in the factories. 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 to in the manufacturing districts, at least in general terms, secured the support of this moderate working class member at this time.

A second type of working class supporter 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 or the Liberal progressives, defending the principles of his religious convictions and possibly also as a route of social advancement. The majority of the members of the Operative Associations appear to have been literate 73 politically articulate. Although the majority were not in possession of the franchise, many did engage in political activities. In Blackburn, Henry Kenyon (Junior), originally a power loom operative and later a solicitors clerk, was typical. Kenyon was President, and for many years secretary of the Blackburn Operatives Association. He was also an active vestry member. So too were other members of the Operative Committee: Charles Tiplady, (bookbinder), Thomas Dewhurst, (joiner), Richard Cardwell, (operative spinner), Thomas Bennett, (dyer and cloth finisher) and others. These men were also members of the non-elector committee of the successful Conservative candidate at the Parliamentary election of 1841, the local mill-owner John Hornby. illustration of their social mobility can be seen if we look at the gaining of the electoral franchise. Of the 1837 Committee of the Blackburn branch of the Operative Conservative Association, comprising some twenty men, only the bookbinder Tiplady had a 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. 74 This would appear to support the notion postulated above that active and loyal membership of the operative association could act as a means to social advancement for some members of the working class. It would seem that in certain cases the Conservatives were indeed taking care of the registration.

\* \* \* \* \* \* \*

Before enlarging any further on the active role which the Conservative middle classes of the region played in controlling the operations of the various types of Associations, and further still on how much Conservative headquarters in London pulled the strings in the localities, it may be useful to explain what operative conservatives thought of themselves and how much they were in control of their own organizations.

If we view Operative Conservatism as a simple reaction against radical political unionism, we shall miss a great deal. It is true that the initial object of the middle classes 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.

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 initially intended as purely working class vehicles, but as we shall discover. They were seldom wholly constituted of working men, and there was never any intention that they were to be controlled solely by working men. Conversely, and the distinction is important, Political Unions after 1832 were controlled by working men for working men. This was the case at Bolton as it was at Blackburn. In both towns Political Unions were formed in 1830 by the strata of upper working class/lower middle class tradesmen and small manufacturers. By 1834, both the local historians of the day in the respective towns (W Brimlow for Bolton and W Abram for  ${\tt Blackburn})^{75}$  concur that in each of the towns the political unions were radically 'democratic' and firmly in the hands of the 'lower' type of working person. The social, political and economic aims and objectives of political unions 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 political reference. Anyone, or any groups, who did not accept this was not

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 on 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 associations. The words of the editor of the Conservative Blackburn Standard, William Simpson, himself a future honorary member of the 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 constitutional men should combine in order to resist the efforts of the disloyal and the 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 manly 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 affections of the people. 76

From the mid 1830's and the 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 'seditions' or infidel combinations, such as trades unions, secular Owenism, republicanism, or even during this early period, mild reforms of

<sup>\*</sup> The Report of the Blackburn Operative Conservative Association for 1837.

the Church of England. Even as late as 1840, the Conservatives of Blackburn burnt Tom Pains 'Rights of Man' and 'Age of Reason' in the streets.  $^{77}$ 

Respect for property, and deference to the Anglican faith and education were constantly paraded, during this early phase, as respectable traits which working men should adopt. In April 1841 at a ceremony of presentation to the long-serving secretary of the Blackburn Operative Association, Henry Kenyon, the Chairman, Henry Elgin wished to know 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. 78

In the mid 1830'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 earlier, one of the essential purposes of the operative conservative associations was to direct sections of the working class away from the dangers of extreme radicalism. In February 1835, the Blackburn Conservative Association - the parent body of what was later 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."79 Those working men who did enroll 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. the existence of Conservative However, Associations suggests that, indeed, some form of social distinction was intended amongst the local conservatives, although the Trades Association and the Operative Association did initially share the same newsroom, assembly rooms and Library. However, after 1839, nothing further was heard of the Trades Associations - the exception being Liverpool - and in most of the Lancashire towns the two bodies merged, retaining the name of 'Operative'. This last point may be evidence that the working class and lower middle class membership reserved for themselves a certain status; a reflection of pride of being both an 'operative' and a Conservative.

Although it appears that the Operative Conservatives of Lancashire were dominated politically by the bourgeois elements above them, there were occasions when they did have influence over their social superiors. For example, trades 'respectable', non-striking unionism - was by 1847, accepted by the majority of the Conservative employers of Preston, Bolton and Blackburn. Indeed by the mid-1850's, we see the emergence of Conservative Trades Unions, controlled locally by the Conservative working classes. At Blackburn for example, the Bookbinders Union was one such body, its local official being Charles Tiplady, an original member of the Operative Conservative Association. Evidence that this was more than just a 'kept' organisation is suggested by its subsequent history, for it negotiated on the same terms as other unions and in the 1860's was typical of the 'New Model' form of craft union. Its uniqueness was the fact that it formed to protect the interests of its predominantly Conservative working class members at a time when the radicals were in decline and the Liberals condemned all such agencies of working class restrictive 'protectionism'. This gradual influence of the operative associations on the local (and, to an extent on the national) parties was most noticeable in relation to the issues pursued by the Conservatives which had a direct relevance to working people. It is to a discussion of these issues that we now turn our attention.

#### II) The Role of Issues.

If the initial active membership of the associations of Lancashire Conservative Operatives was the 'respectable' working man, 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 played in the 1830's and 1840'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 proselytization, and that the local (and national) Conservative leaders and Conservative Associations as performing the role of explaining Conservative principles, but also in the case of operative associations, of steering sections of the working class away from extreme radicalism. Initially, at a general level Operative Conservative Associations resemble a form of Conservative Mechanic's Institute. They were places where discussions and debates could be held, Conservative newspapers and literature could be read and absorbed. Two points are important here. Firstly, for the Conservative leadership, this explanatory function was important for it steered the operative away from the company of radicals which he may have encountered in the public house or the place of work, and placed him in an informal educational environment with like-minded peers. The work-place and the public house were important once the operative was fully

committed and conversant with the argument 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 social superiors that he was willing to be improved.

The situation worked well for both sides. The Conservative leadership knew precisely who they could rely on and encouraged the converted to bring more into the fold, so that they to should see the light. The operative conservative 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, and possibly, in time may even attain the right of holding the franchise. Once he could vote, the association would take care of his registration. These functions were not, of course, peculiar to the Conservative party: the Liberals did the same sort of thing.

Of course the various types of Conservative Association would be of most practical benefit to the party during elections when committed working class Conservatives would be on hand to canvass electors and argue the Conservative case to non-electors. However, 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 first year and a half saw the most rapid rise in membership. The Preston branch formed in December 1835, began with an inaugural membership of 60 persons, by the end of September 1836 the Operative Conservatives of Preston boasted a membership of 400.80 At Wigan the membership was put at 850 in the summer of 1836,81 at Liverpool the membership was said to be in excess of 1000, with a branch in every ward in the city, in the same city in November 1836, the Tradesmen's branch attracted 120 new members in the course of a single meeting. 82 By 1837 the Lancaster Operative Conservatives had a membership of over 200, 83 and at Bolton it was over 1000.84 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, and 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 1844.85

The periods when the Operative Associations of Lancashire did increase coincided with the periods when the issues associated with Conservatism were at their strongest. Of these, three stand out; the campaign for shorter working hours in the factories, the anti-Poor Law movement; and the reaction to the Anti-Corn Law League. In particular localities, there were others. At Bolton, for example, the Conservatives mounted a vigorous campaign suggesting that the Liberal plan for the town's incorporation would

result in higher rates and the imposition of a new police force, both affecting the working class. Meanwhile, at Blackburn, one of the most important issues was religious reform - the relations between the privileged position of the established Church and the other denominations. The Conservatives attempted to rally support by pointing out that it was they who were operating the only system of free education through their mill schools and Anglican National schools. Again in Blackburn, another issue was the appalling state of the town in a physical sense. Far from being the obstructors of reform, the local Conservatives on the Improvement Commission provided a sewerage system for the town centre, gave the town its first regular supply of clean water, and imposed the first systematic health restrictions and building regulations, all of which may have appealed to the 'respectable' working man. During the mid-1830's the only exception to the Conservative posture of mild reformism was the issue of church rates but even on this issue Conservatives were beginning to show compromise and conciliation.

The imposition of the New Poor Law from 1837 served to galvanize opinion in support of the stance taken by the Tory radicals and the local reforming Conservatives. For the local Conservatives the issue was a difficult one; for the national leadership was, to a large extent in favour of the Whig measure, thus the popular clamour against the measure placed them in a difficult position. On the one hand they wished to oppose the Whigs and gain popular support; similarly they had to appease the feelings of the local operative membership who were generally opposed to the new Act. On the other hand they dare not risk upsetting the national leadership on whom they depended for their legitimacy and guidance in general policy. The line taken by the region's Parliamentary representatives was one of wait and see: if, once imposed the Act proved unsatisfactory, then repeal would be supported, or certainly a repeal of the parts of the Act which did not work. 86 In general, this was the position adopted by the Conservatives in most of the Lancashire boroughs.

The main aim of the Conservatives in this region was to use the the new Poor Law as an example of the inadequacies of Whig policy. In terms of the imposition and operation of the New Act, the general pattern seems to have been that there was less opposition in those Unions where the Conservatives held control of the Boards of guardians, ie at Warrington and Blackburn. Here the imposition took place smoothly. This was primarily because little changed, in effect the old system was continued. In fact it continued throughout the region, but the fiercest opposition came in those Liberal controlled boroughs where the imposition was hailed as a triumph for Whig/Liberal progressive reformism, such as Bolton or Manchester. Meanwhile at Blackburn a conscious effort was made by the Conservative guardians to explain to the local population that, whilst they would obey the law, little personal suffering would

ensue. Indeed, the Chairman of the Guardians, the Conservative Peter Ellingthorpe gave the Central Commission a curt reminder of the Blackburn situation when they attempted to impose restrictions, he wrote:

And, in all the tumults and electioneering contests which have occurred in this town, not a single voice has been raised against the Poor Law, or the generally obnoxious regulations of the Commissioners, I need not inform you, of the difficulty and impolicy, I most say utter impossibility in disturbed times like the present, of suddenly urging any severe regulations, with the hope of benefit or advantage... The result of any attempt to do so would be a popular revulsion against the law, one of the effects of which would be the resignation of most of the present board.<sup>87</sup>

Thus, in these districts, working people were constantly reminded of the benefits of Conservative administration. In districts where the Liberals were in control, Oldham, Todmorden, Bury, Ashton, Salford, Bolton - the Conservatives benefitted again because they were part of the opposition which pointed out the effects of the 'obnoxious' Whig legislation.

Another issue which aroused much working class passion and considerable Conservative middle class sympathy was that of factory reform. It was an issue which the operative Conservatives of Lancashire fervently supported. At Bolton the Conservative M.P. William Bolling was sympathetic; so too at Oldham was W.S. Crawford; and at Ashton the local cotton spinner and M.P. Charles Hindley was supportive. In 1845, at a county conference of the Ten Hours Committees, the delegate from Preston reported that several firms there had successfully adopted the eleven hour day and that the prominent Conservative mill owner, Robert Gardner, considering a further reduction in hours without cutting wages "and without the slightest fear of suffering a loss". 88 It could be that a certain amount of Conservative sympathy was born of the fact that they could stand the reduction in profit because of the size of their business and economy of scale, whilst at the same time gaining working class support and embarrassing the Whig/Liberals. In any event, throughout the latter 1830's and 1840's, factory reform became identified as being a Conservative issue.

At Blackburn, for example, the Operative Conservatives and the factory reformers found important backers in the Hornby family and their partner William Kenworthy. The heads of the family were William Henry, who ran the family business with Kenworthy, and John, who was Conservative M.P. for the town from 1841. Both the Hornby brothers were honorary members of the Blackburn Operative Conservative Association, and both were not averse to pandering to local working class sympathies. At the election of 1847, for

example, John Hornby was alleged to have coalesced with the Chartist lawyer, P.W. Roberts, and actively encouraged those electors with Chartist sympathies to vote for Hornby.

In William Henry Hornby - an employer of over 1400 workers - the Ten Hours Movement found a fervent supporter. When the Act was threatened with repeal in 1850, Hornby spoke at a public meeting on the subject. He called for fines of \$\frac{f}{100}\$ per day on those employers who transgressed the Act, and called for further legislation to ban the split shift system. \$\frac{89}{9}\$ He was reported to have been given the longest and loudest applause of all the speakers. \$\frac{90}{9}\$ This popular acclamation was being given to a man who, in the previous fifteen years, had been thrown bodily in the town's river by the 'mob', forced to barricade his house in 1837, and shot at in 1842. It may well be that Hornby was pandering to local popular opinion, but in a sense this is unimportant. What is important is that he was capitalizing - for whatever reason - on information he had received as to the popular mood of the working class at that time. He may, of course, have been able to glean his information from his own employees, but their dependence on him made their information less reliable than the Operative Conservative news room, to which Hornby was a frequent visitor.

If institutions like operative associations were the building blocks of working class Conservative political support in the localities, then issues were the cement. Furthermore the phenomenon was one not peculiar to Lancashire; throughout the whole of the industrialized north, the same pattern appears. At times however, issues could create some strange allegiances. For example at a public meeting held at Huddersfield, called to discuss objections to the introduction of the New Poor Law in December 1837, a man in the crowd seeing Richard Oastler seated alongside Feargus O'Connor, shouted derisively 'a tory and a radical!' Oastler, thus baited, turned upon his heckler and presented him with a savage verbal lashing, he went on to say, "it is perfectly true there is a wide difference in our abstract principles between Mr O'Connor and myself; but our ultimate object is the same. They know me perfectly", pointing at the crowd of operatives, "they know I am an out-and-out Ultra Tory". 91

The above statement illustrates how issues could unite seemingly incompatible political opponents, though it is highly doubtful if the Conservative elite of the Lancashire boroughs encouraged alliances with extreme radicals like Feargus O'Connor. However, radical Toryism did direct working class support into the wider ambit of Conservative principles, at least for a time.

This raises the problem of what Conservatism actually meant to the leaders and the led. For the local middle class elites, the preservation of the Conservative perception of what the existing system represented was all important. To a significant degree, they viewed the working class from the 1820's onwards as a threat to the existing order. Middle class Conservatives believed that danger could be averted if the working class, or at least a section of them could be persuaded and brought under Conservative influence. It was important that the working class be made to understand that the Conservatives were the only party seeking genuinely to improve the conditions of the working class whilst remaining loyal to constitutional politics. They therefore supported certain working class issues in order to attract wider sections of the working class who had never previously been Tory or Conservative supporters.

In this sense, principles were not that important - although many middle class Conservatives were, I contend, genuinely sympathetic to some working class causes. What was important was the impact of such a claim on working class opinion, and thus on the broader battle for supremacy between the parties. The significant point here is the drawing in of sections of the working class into the existing political system, mainly in order to help to preserve that system. Meanwhile this manoeuvring for party political advantage through the manipulation of issues was a departure from the situation prior to 1832, and again as such was an important part of the political culture that was emerging.

However, the utilization of issues, beginning in the 1830's in party-based campaigns to attract popular support was a feature of politics which was to be used throughout the rest of the nineteenth century. There is an important distinction to be made here from the situation which existed before 1832. In the first half of the paper we saw how, in the pre-Reformed Parliament, th Tories had utilized issues like the slavery question and the Whigs with catholic emancipation, and of course the Reform of Parliament. However these issues, and many like them in the eighteenth century, were issues fought predominantly inside Parliament and attracted cross-bench support. Thus before the 1830's and 1840's individuals or groups inside Parliament pursued issues regardless of party loyalties or the whips, if that is the issue was strong enough to claim such support. Thus one could have Canning, a Tory aligned with Grey, a Whig over the issue of Catholic Emancipation. Once the issue had been aired in Parliament, the campaign began in the country at large to support the Parliamentary measure. However, by the 1830's and 40's on the other hand, two changes can be noticed. Firstly we see whole parties united behind certain issues, for example the Conservatives becoming associated with factory reform. Secondly we notice the campaign for an issue being instigated initially outside Parliament and brought to the attention of the legislature through the sheer weight of pressure 'out of doors',

examples of this could be once again the question of factory reform, or the move to repeal the Corn Laws which became associated with the Liberal party.

As we have noted the campaign for factory reform became associated with the Conservative party, and it was an issue which became immensely attractive to working people - especially so after the idea of child-as-breadwinner had been scotched. The editor of the Blackburn Standard, William Simpson - by this time (1848) a committee member of the Blackburn Operative Conservative Association - showed a realization of the power which the issue of factory reform generated, and also served as a warming to the Liberal manufacturers of the town. Confident that on this occasion it was his party that controlled the popular issues and thus the support of the masses, he said.

Those manufacturers who do not implement the (ten hours) Act will lead the operative classes to thoughts of retaliation...No wonder the operative portion of the community should be political malcontents...it cannot create astonishment if they take with any doctrine, however unsound or unsafe, which has for its purpose an increase in their means of defence. 92

This again is a good example of the kinds of fears the middle class of the northern towns harboured towards the working class. It also shows that at least some amongst the middle class, were aware of the need to appease, or be seen to appease working men by the taking up and supporting of 'safe' issues which primarily concerned them. The use of the word 'safe' here is important. Safe issues were those which aroused working class passions and support for the party but which would not firstly be a threat to the constitution, or the party's view of the constitution, or secondly split the party down the middle. Two typical issues of this period serve to illustrate the kind of problems faced by local and national Conservative leaders. Franchise reform was revived in the late 1830's and 1840's. Its most active supporters were the Chartists, and they gained substantial working class backing in Lancashire. But the Conservatives at this time felt that they could not support the extension of the franchise or the secret ballot because to do so would threaten the constitution, which they as a party were pledged to maintain. Yet Chartism was concerned with other issues apart from the 'six points'. These included trades union recognition, factory reform and the New Poor Law. As we have seen Conservatives could and did offer significant support in these areas, but franchise reform they could not.

A second example of an untouchable issue (for the Conservatives) was the Corn Laws. Many middle class Conservatives in the North-West were unhappy with the Corn Laws and urged some

revision or an alteration. But the party nationally - up to 1845/6 - was pledged to retain the Corn Laws. It is again an example of the strength of party feeling at this time that the Conservatives of the North remained loyal and consistent with the line taken by the national leadership. In a sense they could do little else, for in all probability the issue would have split the party sconer than it eventually did.

Indeed, northern Conservatives were ingenious in the way they linked various issues together in a bid to retain the support of sections of the working class. They argued that factory reform, for example, was consistent with the central conservative tenets of conserving and protection. A further example of this imaginative exercise in political logic is to be found in an editorial in the Blackburn Standard of 1851 directed at the town's working class.93 It stated that working men were by nature 'protectionist', that the Ten Hours Act was a form of protection, that the New Poor Law was a form of 'Free Trade', that trades unions were also a form of protection against unfair competition and the masters reducing wages. The use of the word 'protection' in this context is one in which preservation and conserving are brought to the fore. It is therefore not surprising that membership of Operative Conservative Associations increased when agitation over Ten Hours or the New poor Law reached their height, and declined when high food prices were attributed to the 'tax on bread'.

It would appear that Operative Conservative Associations performed valuable political services for the party in relation to issues like factory reform...the New Poor Law, for they acted as a channel of information about the current sentiments of the majority of working people. Indeed, there were occasions when the line of policy pursued by the Blackburn Operative Association, for example, was at variance with that of the local Conservative party leadership. Examples of this can be found if one compares the editorials of the Conservative Blackburn Standard, with statements issues via the annual reports of the Operative Conservative Association. The latter's report for the year 1838 for example, hints at necessary changes in the operation of the New Poor Law and a tightening up of the regulations of the 1833 Factory Act. 94 It was not until the following year that the Blackburn Standard gave its lukewarm support to the issue of factory reform, although it did consistently criticize the unfeeling operation of the Poor Law Amendment Act, if at times somewhat reservedly. 95

We suggest that certain issues galvanized popular support for Conservatism, and that they helped to preserve the existing political and social system by drawing working people - or certainly some sections of the working class - into the political orbit of the constitutional political party. It must also be stated that this in turn had an effect on the party in that the

local and national leadership had to be seen to appease popular support. The point being that if, whilst in opposition, the party had been claiming to be representative of all interest groups in the nation, some legislative demonstration of this had to be given once in government. To a limited extent Peel's administration did this with regard to the working classes in the early 1840's, a point we shall return to later.

In the first half of this paper we argued that the British political culture began to be transformed after the passing of the first Reform Act. We focussed on the formation of political which increasingly revealed traits which distinguished them from other parties; in effect of political ideologies. One of the means by which one may detect a party's political ideology is by an examination of the issues it pursues and the legislation it carries out once in government. We suggest that, by the end of the 1830's, the Conservative party had a distinctive political ideology. With regard to the working class, this was revealed by the stance the local and national leadership took with certain issues; the New Poor Law, Factory reform and so on, a stance that was formed within a fundamental adherence to its version of what the constitution represented. The main tenets of which were the prerogatives of the monarch, the independence of the House of Lords and Commons and the maintenance of the established Church of England. This latter area was a vital element in the Conservatism of the 1830's and 1840's and it is to a discussion of this, coupled with the role the national Conservative leadership played in the dissemination of the party's creed, that we now turn.

# III) The Role of Religion and the National Leadership.

One cannot examine the politics of the first half of the nineteenth century at any level without coming up against the question of religion. However, it is a debatable question just how influential religion was to the industrial working class as a whole. Nevertheless, the important point is that the middle class elites believed that it should be influential. In this section we discuss the relationship between the Church of England and the Conservatives, especially their fear of Roman Catholicism. We examine how the preservation of the state Church of England was regarded by the Conservatives of the 1830's and 40's, as being integral to the preservation of the Constitution. We shall also discuss the relationship between the Operative Conservatives and religion - focussing especially on how on the one hand the local (and national) Conservative leadership attempted to utilize religion as a central guiding tenet of political constitutionalism, and how on the other hand, the non-Conservative members of the lower middle and working classes attempted to point out the injustice of the privileged position of the Established Church.

Furthermore, we look at how this situation served to sectionalize the working class and assisted in the reduction of their class consciousness in the 1830's.

A major factor which bound Conservatives of all classes together in the 1830's, and the 1840's was religion, most notably, but not exclusively, the Anglican Church. It was widely believed by Conservatives that the Church of England was not only the true form of religious worship, but also that it was symbolic of the independent character of the English people, who would never submit to the yoke of Roman Catholicism. Thus the preservation of all the Anglican church stood for, and indeed, all its privileges within the state, became a central principle of Toryism, and of the Conservatism of the 1830's and 40's. Conservatives of all classes - if they were Anglican - were passionate with regard to the defence of the Established Church, and it was in this area that the regressive side of popular Conservatism most obviously revealed itself. Bigotry, prejudice, and racism are all to be found in the annual reports and speeches of the operative Conservatives especially when they addressed themselves to the defence of the Anglican Church, or to the necessary predominance of Protestantism. A report of 1840 will serve as an example.

The now silent, though ostentatious, but even onward march of popery - the open advocacy of principles that lead to anarchy, and thence to despotism - the spread of notions which once wrought ruin to a neighbouring land, when the reign of boasting philosophers became nothing better than a charmel house, from which the miasmata of death stemmed forth and filled Europe with desolation. 96

The report of the Operative Conservatives of Blackburn in 1837 described the Irish as a "set of murderous lawless rabble, ignorant and bigoted hoards led on by traitorous knaves." 97

In order to understand this prejudice we must look more closely at the relationship between Anglicanism and Conservatism. Throughout the whole of the first half of the nineteenth century, English Conservative Anglicans fought a rear-guard action against what they perceived as the constant encroachments upon natural Anglican supremacy. The agitation surrounding the emancipation of Catholics had been supported by William Pitt in the 1790's. but King George III would not concede the measure. The question revived at the conclusion of the Napoleonic wars and by 1829 the aims of the Catholics had been achieved, and this through a Tory administration led by the Duke of Wellington. The concession of Catholic emancipation was seen by most Anglicans as a defeat, but the Tory leadership regarded the measure as necessary to avoid open recellion. However, most Conservatives regarded the 1829 Act as

the final concession. During the 1830's at Blackburn for example, another Conservative newspaper, The Blackburn Alfred, summed up the situation in a manner which was typical of the period. The church reformers were: "a power so anti-social and revolutionary in its principles, and constituted for the avowed purpose of plundering our Church and her revenues...but let them succeed in dismantling one single barrier of our now almost tottering constitution, and a revolutionary flood will rush in." It was in this editorial, written in 1833, that it was first urged that a union of all the classes be formed amongst Conservatives in order to curb the threat to the constitution. 99

Initially, the early 1830's saw a series of Conservative victories in terms of defending the rights of the Established Church. First, there was the defeat of the Appropriation Clause - which sought to divide funds equally amongst the Irish clergy of all denominations - then, of the Irish Tithes Bill, and eventually the abandonment of the Bill altogether. 1838 was seen as a setback for the Conservative position by the die-hards of the party with the compromise agreed by the leadership over the reintroduced Irish Tithes Bill, but without the detested Appropriation Clause. The 1840's saw another set back for the Anglican Conservatives when a substantial annual grant was given to the Catholic seminary at Maynooth. However, in the country, the continued resistance over the issue of Church reform served to strengthen the resolve and bind the Anglican/Conservatives together.

Protestant England had for some time murmured against the 'Popish' sympathies of the Whig government. Conservative opposition, hard on the heels of the policies pursued by the Whigs in Ireland, automatically drew towards itself considerable Protestant support in this country. People had not forgotten Catholic Emancipation - though they may have temporarily have forgotten Peel's part in it - and the cause of Protestantism possessed an electoral importance of which Conservative managers were quick to avail themselves. Next to denouncing the New Poor Law or campaigning on behalf of shorter hours in the factories, there was nothing an Operative Conservative Society enjoyed more than welcoming a Protestant delegation from Ireland. During the 1830's, when Parliamentary reform was one of the great questions of election campaigns, Conservative candidates and their followers accustomed to link the defence of Anglicanism with Parliamentary reform; electoral reform was essentially a conflict between the friends of the Established Church and its enemies. As we have suggested above, the position of the Conservatives during the first years of the 1830's was that any tampering with either Church or Parliamentary reform would, in time lead to the collapse of the Constitution. In 1832 the radicals of East Lancashire confirmed the Conservatives fears that Church reform was on the agenda. In September of that year the radicals of Blackburn asserted that the real issue of reform related to the abuses of the Established Church and was concerned with equal representation after taxation. The future Chartist, and then secretary of the Blackburn Political Union, George Meikle said "...of the electorate two thirds of them are actual ? payers yet have no influence. The main argument was that every sect should support itself."

It would seem that, although relatively few of the working class were actual Church attenders in this period (although numbers did increase in the 1840's), the middle class of both political sides still attempted to utilize religion to arouse working class political passions. The interest is how frequently they succeeded. Also the middle class believed that religion could be an important agency of socialization and control, whether in fact it was to the majority of the working class is another question. However, it is possible that people could be affected and swayed by the issue of Church reform even though they were not fervent church-goers for they all had to pay church rates.

By 1838 the lines of conflict had narrowed and the issue was a straight fight between Protestantism and Roman Catholicism. Indeed it becomes difficult to distinguish between Protestant Societies and Conservative Societies at certain times. In Preston, for example, the Operative Conservatives met in committee on a Monday night, they often re-assembled on a Thursday as the Preston Protestant Society for the Observing of the Sabbath. 101

At the same time, the national leadership of the Conservative party held scrupulously aloof from a formal union with the more extreme Protestants, who followed the Duke of Cumberland. In 1835 the dubious activities of the Orange Societies were made the subject of a Parliamentary Enquiry on the motion of Joseph Hume. 102 Documents produced with the report suggested that in 1833 the Orangemen were making an attempt to create an Orange-Conservative alliance. The Committee cited an 'Address to the Members of the Carlton Club and the Conservatives of England' in support of their contention. 103 The address was more than just a religious appeal; it also showed a perception of the issues utility as a means of drawing the classes together - and doing so in a way that would benefit the Conservative causes. It said:

The Orange institution is the only society peculiar to Great Britain and Ireland, which includes individuals of every rank and grade, from the nearest to the throne to the poorest peasant. The society is useful for the purposes of intercourse between the higher and lower orders... a time may come, nay is not too far distant, when a combination against all property...must be repelled by, organized loyalty; what better means of co-operation can be offered them than the Orange Institution? 104

It must be stated that at certain times, in certain localities, Operative Conservatism and extreme Protestantism were closely linked. This was especially so where the town or city had experienced a large influx of Irish migrants. Orangism was popular in Liverpool, the colliers of Wigan also had a reputation for Orangism. As one witness told the Committee of Enquiry, "all miners...as black as my coat with dust and dirt, but very loyal men."105 There can be no doubt that Orangism was used on occasions as a vehicle to stir up English working class resentment against Irish Catholics. But it also appears that, from 1835, when the Orange Lodges were ordered to be disbanded by order of the Committee of Enquiry, that the Conservative Associations, like their national leadership, attempted to curb the reactionary excesses of Orange bigotry. It must be remembered that Conservative Associations strived to be respectable, and after 1835 Orangism was not respectable politically.

However, the alliance between the various sorts Protestantism on the one hand, and the Conservative party on the other, offers an example of Peel's desire for moderate reform, and his search for political compromise and consensus. It only alienated those who held extreme opinions on either side of moderation, whilst showing the moderates how reasonable Peel was attempting to be. For the Operative Conservative, regular Church attendance also gave him, and showed others, his credentials of respectability, an element, as we discussed earlier, which was central to the politics of the 1830's, 40's and 50's. But the operative was also drawn into the bitter division between Catholics and Protestants. The great interests of the nation, both landed and manufacturing, gradually woke up to the fact that there was a reservoir of active support over religious questions amongst same sections of the working class. The middle class conservatives in the country at large also believed that Peel was riding in the saddle of a nationwide reaction against the insecurity of unlicensed radicalism and reform. Peel's maxim of preserving that which had proved to be durable and good, and reforming that which required reform seems to have caught the political consciousness of the moderate Conservatives of all classes in the mid-to-late 1830's.

In terms of national party organization it is to Peel's credit that, in constructing his vast political machine, he carried out the work with the minimum of error. The greatest mistake he could possibly have made would have been that of over-centralization. Had he attempted to make his London headquarters an absolute

bureaucracy, he would have soon broken the Conservative party in the country to pieces. How close the party came to making that error can be estimated from the following letter from Bonham to Peel. It relates to a Central Conservative Association and of certain advances which were being made by one Hunter, disreputable newspaper promoter, to Lord Sandon, (M.P. for Liverpool) a member of the Conservative party's electoral council, he writes, "I hope Lord Sandon has not allowed himself to be duped by him as, (between ourselves) he was (Bonham's emphasis) about the National Conservative Association, 106 which many of us, under the sanction of his name, have not yet absolutely escaped the consequences in the form of various threatened legal actions."107 It was as natural to local Conservatives to control their own party machine as it was to control their own municipal or county magistrates courts and other elements of local government, and, indeed, their own poor relief. If, however, the Conservative Associations, representing the various grades in society, were not absolutely controlled by the national Conservative leadership in London they certainly looked to them for advice and information. and of course the process worked in reverse. We noted in part one of the paper how Francis Robert Bonham acted as national party agent and how vital he was to the smooth operation of the party's organization. The notes between Bonham and Peel include several letters which offer clues as to how Bonham acquired information; from John Hornby and John Fowden Hindle in Blackburn, Robert Townley Parker in Chorley, John Roby in Rochdale, Sir Thomas Hesketh in Preston, William Hulton in Bolton and so on. Bonham was then able to give precise information to Peel of how such and such was 'on the ground' at Leicester, or Newcastle, Glasgow or Lancaster or wherever, and this intelligence naturally increased during the run-up to elections.

What Bonham and Peel feared was precisely the conclusion reached by the <u>Manchester Guardian</u> as early as 1833: that the Conservatives in the localities were resorting to the extra-Parliamentary thug tactics better suited to the opposition, once again respectability and legitimacy were seen as vital to eventual success. Lord Stanley, (a future Cabinet Minister under Peel, and future Prime Minister, at this time M.P. for North Lancashire) made known his feelings to Sir Thomas Hesketh, the President of the North Lancashire Conservative Association.

...but if you fear the democratic influence in the manufacturing boroughs. If you wish to create, to foster, to envenom it, interfere in the elections by your Conservative Associations, bring an extraneous influence to bear on their internal proceedings; and if there be a democratic spark in the town you will kindle it into a flame. But if extending your views beyond local objects, you seek to form part of a general organization throughout the empire, of county clubs

and local clubs, and district associations, acting in concert, usurping in fact, the power of the government... I can conceive of nothing more dangerous to public liberty  $^{108}$ 

The prevailing view in the localities at this time was that many Conservatives felt that those groups not previously known as Conservative supporters - the manufacturing middle classes, the lower middle classes and sections of the working classes needed to be drawn inside the political system, however peripherally. The first stage was the setting up of the Conservative Associations and then their attendant branches. It was therefore important to get national leaders involved and to see at first hand that the various associations were respectable, legitimate and politically useful. Indeed these views were shared at the party's centre by several of its leaders. Sir Thomas Fremantle, the party's chief whip spoke at the dinner of the South Lancashire Association in 1834 109, similarly Lord Francis Egerton was a keen supporter, as were the party's 'treasurer', Sir Henry Hardinge and the Chairman of the organizing committee at the Carlton, Lord Granville Somerset. 110 However, at this early stage in the development of Conservative Associations, what Stanley, Bonham and Peel were afraid of was that the societies, more specifically the operative associations, might become, or even threaten to become, a more efficient and better organized version of the eighteenth century 'church and king' mob, acting as a counter-force to the Whig or radical mob. Stanley was concerned that these associations might run out of control of the party leaders in the localities and in London. Eventually Bonham and Peel began to rely on the services of the constituency associations, but Stanley never fully trusted their purpose. Throughout the whole of his public career he never subscribed or joined any political club, not even the Carlton.

Thus far in this section of the paper we have considered the vital role of the local middle class leadership in attempting to steer the working class away from the dangers of extreme radicalism. We have examined how the Conservative party adapted itself in the localities and successfully accommodated issues which were of direct significance to the working classes of the industrial north, and how this may have been a source of a wider basis of political support. We have examined the role of religion and how this was important to the ideological content of conservatism, and how the middle classes of the north saw religion as a further means of possibly subduing the working class and socializing them. Finally we have seen how the national leaders were wary of the various associations, but that the majority came to view the associations as useful to the organizational structure of the party. All these changes took place in the first ten years after the passing of the reform of 1832 and may be viewed as examples of the change in the nations political culture, in the sense that people were doing things and making assumptions about

political activity that had not been present before. However, what we have not yet examined are the detailed functions of Operative Conservatism. This we now intend to do with a discussion of the growth of these associations and the various functions they fulfilled.

## IV) The Functions of Operative Conservatism.

The distinction of being the first Operative Conservative Association - or, as they termed themselves, Conservative Operative Society - was claimed by Leeds. The printed rules of this Association are dated February 1835. 111 The Leeds society possessed a club room of their own and rendered useful service in the first municipal elections for Leeds in 1838. These early printed rules give us a valuable indication of one trend within Operative Conservatism. As we suggested above we are chiefly interested in the operative Conservatives who arrived at their position through political reasoning, through opinion politics. However, there were working class Conservatives who expected some form of financial payment for their support, as well as those who gave their support out of a sense of deference, the quote below is an example of the latter. After a somewhat typical preamble in which the Conservative Operatives of Leeds acknowledge the 'being of God', they then turn their attention to other elements in society they respect and admire:

We reverence the King and all in authority, we pay due deference and respect all are in high to who 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 should we 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. We profess no sympathy with those persons who think they degrade themselves by 'giving to every man his due' ... 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.  $^{112}$ 

The rate of formation of these Operative associations throughout 1835/6 was truly remarkable. Immediately after the Leeds operatives, associations were formed at Bradford, Barnsley, Sheffield, Salford, Huddersfield, Ripon and Wakefield. In July (1835) the Manchester Operative Association held its inaugural dinner. In August the Bolton Operative formed a Conservative society. The South Lancashire Conservatives founded an operative society based at Wigan in October. In November 1835 the Blackburn

and Darwen branches were formed, in December a branch was constituted at Preston as was the Liverpool branch. Throughout 1836 over 100 Operative Conservative Associations were holding their first inaugural dinner nationwide.

By 1837, Leicester, Nottingham, Salford and Preston had Operative Conservative committees in every ward, as well as central governing bodies. 114 The following year the veteran radical, Sir Francis Burdett, now acclaimed as a 'perfect specimen of an English country gentleman', attended the third anniversary dinner of the Manchester society along with 2000 others. 115 Again in 1838 at Salford, the Operative Conservatives held a tea party and ball, to which more than 3000 persons attended, nine-tenths of them ladies, so states the report. 116 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.

One important 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 Sick and Burial clubs in existence at the time - societies that maintained club funds for the relief of sickness, unemployment and death of their members. Also by 1836, the Preston branch of the Operative Association ran a building society for the benefit of their members. 117 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 an essential prerequisite for the less committed members.

An ordinary working class member of the sick and burial club run by the Operative Conservatives of Blackburn paid between 2s. and 2s.3d. per month. The average wage of a power-loom weaver at this time was 8s.6d. per week, spinners 25s. per week, engineer 15s. per week, an overlooker, 40s. per week. If an operative was disabled he was allowed one guinea per week; if his wife died he received five pounds to bury her, or if he died his wife received seven pounds. Surpluses, if any were divided equally amongst all the members, and there was usually a subsidized annual dinner. 118

Given that the rates of premium were slightly higher than other, non-political societies, and given that there were large differentials in wage rates, it would seem that the operative Conservative associations were seeking to attract the better-off type of working class member. It is probable that the societies with the larger memberships - Salford, Manchester, Wigan, Bolton, Liverpool etc - would have realized a small profit from the venture and that this be utilized for the purposes of the clubs, but it is

difficult to see how those 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 operative associations came from the middle classes; richer conservatives and honorary members appear to have contributed significantly to the funds of the operative associations. Every year from its formation in 1835, the surplus funds of the Blackburn Conservative Association were handed over to the Operative Association. 119 Fetes, tea-parties, whist drives, dinners, balls, all were organised to provide money to keep the operative association afloat. The dual benefits of the societies were that they kept the membership involved and socially entertained.

As far as the proposition that central funds were made available for the running of the operative associations, we must hold the verdict in abeyance. There is no evidence at the moment to suggest that monies were sent from London to assist the operations of Conservative Societies in the localities. Certainly we know that the Carlton club kept a small fund for political purposes, 120 but there is no material evidence to suggest that the Carlton Club in its collective capacity, was in the habit of contributing to the maintenance of any particular local society. There are fairly solid reasons for assuming that subsidies came from more localized sources. It is probable, judging from the general feeling of conservative politics in the constituencies, that any systematic payment by the Carlton Club would have been regarded as an unwarranted intrusion of authority by a London political organization, and would have been bitterly resented by local Conservatives, who still almost universally believed that local political patronage began at home. The assumption is therefore that the local gentry, local manufacturers and other well-to-do members of the county and borough Conservative Associations, and not party headquarters, found the money. This is not to say that Bonham and the Carlton had no influence. Their work was the gathering and sending out of information and intelligence and the organizing of elections, but to suggest that their work extended beyond this requires more evidence.

However, as we pointed out earlier, the influence of the local, lesser and greater bourgeoisie was considerable. At the end of 1839, the stand-in President of the Blackburn Operative Association was the headmaster of the towns Grammar school, Mr John Bennett. He addressed the operative Conservative dinner, and his words are worth repeating as evidence of the belief that the middle class conservatives should devote time and energy in the spreading of

Conservative principles and influencing the working class, but further that the working class Conservatives should also spread the virtues amongst their fellow class members. He said:

It is my opinion that a great portion of the lower classes of operatives in our manufacturing districts 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 the consequent overflow of operatives, resources, reduction in wages, the poverty and discontent, the inumerable 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 our 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 alters and our houses. 121

This statement is the epitome of Conservative principles and it also expresses the middle class fears 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, it was made at the years end 1839, the year of the first serious Chartist outbreak. In this respect, Blackburn was peculiar compared to other north western towns in that it remained relatively calm throughout the summer of 1839. The local Conservatives attributed this to their 'missionary' work amongst the lower orders. 122

For the next two years, the Operative Associations throughout Lancashire continued to grow and attract members. 1841 was the high point. Nationally Peel was elected with a working majority and in the county as a whole the Conservatives split with the Liberals in terms of how many each party returned to the House of Commons. The local conservatives applauded themselves that they had done their jobs well, that they had unity over most political questions. Certainly over religious matters, and they had taken care of the registration. In the space of ten years the party had undergone a transformation in organizational terms, both at the

centre and in the localities. The threatened flooding of the House of Commons with the extreme radicals returned by the boroughs had not transpired, and the Conservatives were once again comfortably in Government. The only dark cloud was the question of protection, which most conservatives in Lancashire agreed was necessary, but not to the extent which the landed interest proclaimed.

## V). The Decline of Operative Conservatism.

Within six years of the Conservative triumphs at the General Election of 1841, which in part was due to the organizational efforts of the local associations, the same associations had been smashed to pieces. It would be too facile to suggest that the issue of free-trade, and more particularly Peel's treatment of it, was the sole cause of the break-up. But it did play an important part, in and out of Parliament. By the time of Peel's first tariff amendments in 1842, it had become apparent to all that something had gone wrong with the party machine. Rumours of dislocation were reaching the opposition camp: and those who in 1840 had been lamenting on the apparent permanence of Peel's power, and the 'docile idiots behind him who cheered his platitudes', were now by 1843 exalting over the unpopularity of the Prime Minister even amongst his own Cabinet. In the manufacturing localities of the north, same Conservatives were now beginning to feel confused and alarmed.

In Blackburn, for example, the Operative Conservatives, like their parent body the Conservative Association, showed no inclination to accompany Peel along the road to economic, religious and political compromise, especially over the issues of Catholic or Jewish tolerance or Free Trade, at least not initially. But, during the early 1840's, few knew the workings of Peel's mind, and few realized that even as early as the 1842 Budget, he was beginning to have grave doubts of the efficacy of blanket protectionism. In terms of economic affairs. Peel's New Conservatism was a complete departure from anything seen before. His conviction was that certain forms of economic management were still a primary function of government, and that fiscal policy could be a regulator of social harmony; 123 the removal of economic constraints by the removal of tariffs.

In 1844, there came a host of pamphleteers violently denouncing Peel, industrialism and political economism. On the religious front, over the Maynooth grant the Operative Conservatives of Blackburn expressed "regret, as true Protestants, that the revered church of which a large majority of the society are members, and warm-hearted supporters, should be rent into unnecessary divisions, and be disturbed by angry discussions". 124

The repeal of the Corn Laws came in February 1846, although as we have seen, disaffection was evident long before that. The Conservatives of Lancashire were split down the middle over repeal. Blackburn's two M.P.'s supported opposite sides, though both claiming to be Conservatives, William Feilden for repeal and Hornby against by his refusal to attend the crucial vote in the Commons The Feilden family, still Lords of the Blackburn manor, took some of the towns most important families with them; the Forrest's (cotton), the Polding's (flour millers), the Townley's (cotton) the Sharples (cotton). These effectively joined the Liberal families of long-standing such as the Pilkington's (cotton), Dickenson's (foundry), Briggs's (cotton): these last three families alone employed over 5000 people in their factories. Amongst the operative Conservatives, dissension was rife. In March 1846 a letter from Charles Tiplady, William Brooks (Vice-President that year), Thomas Forrest, William Moor and George Jackson, on behalf of the majority called for a speedy enactment of the repeal, this group subsequently drifted towards mainstream Liberalism. The rump of the Operative Conservative Association appears to have been left in the hands of the Hornby family although after 1845, no more of the annual reports of the Association were published in the local press, and its affairs were reduced to a mere mention in the Blackburn Standard.

However, in September 1853, the Operative Conservatives of Blackburn paid tribute to William Henry Hornby in spite of his recent defeat at the local Parliamentary election by the Liberal Montague Feilden. Earlier that same year, Hornby had provided the Operative Conservatives with a trip to Blackpool and a ball and banquet on their return. To mark their gratitude, the Operatives presented Hornby with a silver candelabrum. In his speech Hornby congratulated them on their continued existence and on the recent success of the town's working class in staving off an attempt to reduce weavers wages by 5%, and in gaining an increase of 10%. He defended the legitimacy of trades unionism, and denounced the 'tyrannical masters' like Montague Feilden. 125

This was the beginning of what one leading historian of the period 126 has described as 'flamboyant Hornbyism'. Effectively, by 1846, operative Conservatism - as an amalgam of radical toryism, moderate Conservatism and the Anglican 'Ultras' - was dead. What came after was virtually under the control of one family. It could well be argued that Operative Conservatism was firmly under the control of the middle class elite all through its early life. But there were occasions when its opinions showed manifest signs of independence and were canvassed and taken note of.

### VI) Operative Conservatism and Political Science: some conclusions.

Significantly, Operative Conservatism was the forerunner of what later became the Conservative Working Mens Associations and clubs, and was, we contend a primitive form of a party of 'social integration'. This was a term utilized by the political scientist. Sigmund Neumann to describe what he believed to be a relatively modern type of political party, that is dating from the growth of the mass socialist parties, particularly in Europe in the 1890's. There are, in Neumann's model, two types of political party. Firstly there is the party of individual representation, which, as its name implies, caters for the individual who allies himself to it primarily because it corresponds ideologically, and in terms of its policy initiatives, to his personal political credo. This type of party 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 the party leaves its members alone. This type of party corresponds in some ways to the functions of the middle class dominated Conservative Associations operational nationwide throughout the 1830's and 1840's.

The second type of political party, however, that of social integration, is organized on a more permanent basis, seeking 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, performing a regular social function for the member. The prime benefit for the party, on the other hand, was that it had an army of political activists in the field, operational the whole time.

John Garrard<sup>128</sup> in a paper investigating Neumann's thesis, has suggested that: "None of the literature appears to regard the old middle class parties as capable of producing a party of social integration".<sup>129</sup> But he goes on to produce evidence 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 used by Neumann.

From our evidence, it would appear that we can trace this lineage even further back, in fact to 1835 in the case of the Conservatives of Lancashire. The two main ingredients lacking at this point in time from the model used later by Neumann are a mass membership and the electoral power of a politically organized working class. Operative Conservatism never attracted a truly mass membership amongst the working class in the 1830's and 1840's, but what is important is that for the first time a section of the

working class were continuously organized. Indeed it is doubtful if the initiators of Operative Conservatism ever really wanted a mass membership. They were seeking to attract a certain type of working class member: - respectable, self-improving, religious, and a social leader within his class who could spread the Conservative message amongst his fellow workers. It mattered little that he did not have the vote, for the primary aims were political enlightenment, socialization and control, as well as the ability to canvass the electors. The evidence for Lancashire suggests that the agitation the working class engaged in throughout the 1820's and up to the mid 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 were but one of their responses. It was crucial to the manufacturing middle classes that, after industrial consolidation in the 1830's, working class consciousness be reduced and they become politically sectionalized. This fact alone may have been regarded by many of the middle classes as a mark of their success.

The process of working class 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 Blackburn for example, appear to have been politically sectionalized relatively early; however, the working class of radical Oldham and Rochdale were politically united until 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 levels of working class consciousness may have been in positions of trades union or political leadership.

What is being asserted in the paper is that working class political sectionalization can be traced back to the middle years of the 1830's. It may be that the previously high levels of class consciousness attained by the workers of Blackburn 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. 130 It is our contention that operative Conservatism was an important part of this network of social controls and influences. It may well have been that the class consciousness of the workers of Oldham and Rochdale was retained for longer because the radicals dominated politics in the towns - and not the Conservatives (who dominated Blackburn) or the Liberals. But eventually the political support of working people

throughout the region was, in general terms, subsumed within, and polarized between the two parties with each party able to control and direct their working class supporters.

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 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 certain working class members. The members were required also to give up some of their time to go out and argue the Conservative case and inform others of its benefits. But, further, this period marked the start of the 'political' relationship between the middle and working classes.

The chief reason why the national party leaders allowed the localities to set up Conservative Associations and operative societies - for it would not be true to suggest that the national leadership were directly involved in the 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.

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 temptation of extreme radicalism; in this sense the objective was one of attempted control, but in an unforced uncovered manner. Some were drawn towards operative Conservatism out of a sense of deference to their employer who happened to be a Conservative. There were others attracted to Conservatism because of their extreme opinions and their hatred of Catholics or the Irish; as we have noted there was always a racist and bigoted element within the various associations. But there were others who were attracted because their opinions on certain issues of the day coincided with the politics being expounded by the local and national Conservative party leadership.

What we are suggesting here is that Operative Conservatism in the 1830's and 1840's contained both deference and opinion based models of political behaviour, whilst not forgetting that there is also an element in the early Victorian political group of the supporter who offers his favours in return for some kind of non-legislative material inducement. So along with deference and opinions a third element must be included, the so called 'politics of the market'.

However, in terms of the changing political culture of Britain at this time, the most relevant type of Operative Conservative to this study was the working class member who increasingly arrived at his opinion through political reasoning. He was important, because previous to the 1830's, the opinions of working people could find no legitimate outlet and were not regarded of any consequence within the political system. The emergence of the opinion based model of political behaviour is close to the model of class behaviour in a political society postulated by Max Weber. In Weberian terms, by making political choices based on rational reasoning, the working class Conservatives (or Liberals) were exhibiting rational forms of 'social action'. Social action is subjectively meaningful behaviour which is influenced or orientated by or towards the behaviour of others, in our case the Conservative party, who attempted to integrate working class members into their party, and offered an understanding of the needs and requirements of the working class by their pursuance of working class issues and reforms. For the 'opinion' based working class conservative, the objective reality of his class position coupled with the subjective experiences of his existence has led him to the political path of Conservatism. This has, in a sense, determined his political rationality which on Weber's terms has led "to the methodical attainment of a definitively given and practical end by the use of increasingly precise calculation of adequate means  $^{\circ}131$  As we suggested the 'adequate means' to the operative Conservative of the later 1830's and 1840's was the Conservative party.

Let us finally attempt to assess the benefits accruing to the working class members who became operative Conservatives, and also the benefits accruing to the political party. The benefits we refer to are the political benefits to the non-electing working class member which arose when he became a member of the Conservative party, or at least a committed and long-standing supporter. They do not refer to the bribes and treats offered to some non-electors in order to induce those who could vote to cast their vote in a certain direction.

Firstly the working class Conservative had the benefit of operating politically within the structure of an official and legitimate political party: he was given a legitimate platform from which to air his opinions and arguments, presenting to the party a working class perspective, and to his uninitiated fellow class members, the arguments inherent within the Conservative position of the time. This may have conferred social and political respectability (and thus a raising of self-esteem and status) on the individual, which might not have been as evident in some of the less legitimate political groups, such as the extreme radicals or the physical force Chartists. This conforming to Conservative constitutionalism may in turn have led to an increased level of

social acceptability and respectability in relation to the individuals peers and certainly with regard to his social superiors. This enhancement of the individuals social esteem may have led to the possibility of increased social mobility in an objective sense, in that the individual may have increased his chances of 'getting on', but also subjectively in that he may have regarded himself of a higher social status than some of his fellow class members.

Secondly, in practical terms, the individual or group had all the benefits that were available in the party of 'social integration': the libraries, club and assembly rooms, social facilities, and the sick and benefit provisions, which as we noted above, may have been of critical importance at times of personal tragedy, sickness or downfall in economic circumstances.

Thirdly, and finally, the individual or group had the possibility of influencing the direction of policy in his political party. This was most obviously so at the local level where he would have contact with the party hierarchy, attempting to persuade and influence them with regard to the New Poor Law or factory reform, or even as to the general state of working class living conditions in the area as a whole. But it may also, have been evident, at a national level as well. In short there was the possibility of being able to use the party as a channel for his interests and demands, as well as a platform from which he could display his general political orientations.

The benefits to the party were, firstly, that it increased its level of support to include sections of the non-elector working class, and thus could rely on a more representative base. This was important because one of the charges working class radicals levelled at the established political parties was that they were merely the vehicles for the preservation of middle and upper class privilege. It was therefore of value to show that this was not the case: that the party was not only concerned with those who had the power to place it in office, but also those who had no such power. This was particularly important to the Conservative Party in the 1830's, in the wake of their initial resistance to Reform and their poor showing in the first general election under the terms of the Reform Bill. The feeling grew that, as a party, they were rapidly losing support in the country at large which may have threatened the party's very existence. Thus it was crucial to halt the slide. This widening of the Conservatives representative base served to break the apparent monopoly of the Whig/Liberals claim that they alone were the popular party of the masses, in that the Conservatives could claim - my the mid 1830's - that, whilst still sticking to the principles of constitutionalism, they were still representative of all sections and groups in society, even amongst the urban dwelling working class. This restored the confidence of

the wider electorate 132 that the Conservatives were a party capable of governing in the interests of the country as a whole and not just narrow sectional interests. That political parties had to resort to such tactics as being broadly representative after 1832 is highly indicative that a new political culture was developing at this time.

A first consequence of the support offered by sections of the industrial working class to 'new Conservatism' was the damage that it inflicted on early nineteenth century radicalism. This found its fruition in Sir Robert Peel's second administration in the early 1840's. It was at this time that Peel's ideological liberalism became manifest. This especially so in Peel's notion that government was a trust to be exercised on behalf of the entire people, and to this end he attempted to remove the main material basis of popular discontent - cutting the length of the working day, repealing the Corn Laws to allow cheaper bread and - through the appointment of the Health of Towns Commission - showed the first major governmental interest in urban public health. The equation that political power and authority lay at the roots of economic misery - so often claimed by the radicals of the early nineteenth century - no longer held water. Again, this was a fundamental change in the political culture of Britain at this time. As Gareth Stedman-Jones has pointed out, 133 the language of radicalism was fatally unable to cope with the transformation of government ideology and ideas, in spite of there being no change in the political contract at this time. The result was that in the later 1840's radicalism and Chartism failed to hold the loyalty of the masses.

The Conservative Party gained a second advantage from the development of local party organization, in that it acquired a broader base, manifestly so, as we pointed out in the first half of this paper, if one compares the state of the party in 1841 with that of 1831. Along with the broader organizational base, the party also gained electorally from the tighter controls it was able to exert over its supporters both inside and outside Parliament. With the advent of the Conservative party as one in which all shades of political opinion and interests were identified, the local and national leadership had greater scope with regard to the selection and implementation of policy options. As long as the leadership did not alienate a substantial group or body of opinion within the party (as Peel eventually did with the landed interest with his repeal of the Corn Laws) with its policy directives, the majority of its multi faceted membership would be content.

Finally, the Conservatives gained the opportunity of influencing a section of the most potentially dangerous and insurrectionary class towards a set of attitudes which related to political society and the place of the working class in it. Furthermore it was possible that these Conservative attitudes would become permanent as one generation politically socialized the next in terms of the loyalty shown to Conservative party authority.

One of the main aims and objectives of the urban middle classes in the later 1830's and the 1860's was to acquire legitimate authority over the working classes. This was essential if political and social stability was to return after the disruption which the high levels of working class consciousness had wrought in the 1820's and early 1830's. There were several control-devices utilized by the urban middle classes. One method was to increase the levels of working class dependence. It is relatively unimportant to this paper whether this was done wittingly or These areas of unwittingly. increased dependence employment, housing, public and private charity, religion and education. 134 The local middle elites also dominated local parties in the 1840's, wrenching control of the vestries from the radicals and subsequently consolidating their power by virtue of the 1835 Municipal Reform Act by the incorporation of many of the Lancashire boroughs.

However, as we have suggested above, the purpose of influencing and controlling the working class was not merely to secure power, but also to establish the <u>right</u> to wield power; this was vital if middle class authority was to be legitimized, for if it were not the situation of the 1820's and early 1830's would continue. Further, the ideal situation for the middle class elites would be to have this power of authority given and accepted freely by the majority of the working class over which they exercised control. However, this was not always the case and the means by which the urban middle classes attempted to achieve this end ranged from overt coercion, through to the raising of dependence levels, to new techniques of political socialization, to gestures of paternalism; with such a battery at their disposal the eventual sectionalization of the working class in political terms should not be thought of as remarkable.

The legitimation of political authority was extensively analysed by Max Weber. He maintained that there are three basic sources by which this might take place. Firstly, and this applies particularly to those members of the working classes who displayed signs of deference to their employers and political leaders, authority may emanate from tradition, where the ruling groups may rule because 'they have always done so'. Secondly, authority may develop from charisma, where the leaders of ruling groups have the personal magnetism to induce people top follow them and accept their authority. Thirdly, and finally, legitimized authority may be achieved by utilizing what Weber termed 'rational' means: whereby ruling groups secure power by using the legal and judicial machinery at their disposal. This may be applicable to the use of

overtly coercive devices of influence and control. Once their power is asserted, the ruling groups must ensure that their legitimacy is maintained in the eyes of the subordinate group. Weber maintained, as did Marx before him, that this may be achieved through the directional control and the dissemination of leading ideas (ideology), and partly through the sanction of state law. But further, as we have attempted to show in this paper, through the political party and its organizational structure.

At the outset we set out to show that, in the period 1832 and 1850, Britain experienced the beginning of a new political culture. In the first half we attempted to define what the term 'political culture' meant to the historian and outlined in general terms the areas which were integral to this process of political change. These included the termination of recognisable political parties. the notion of loyal legitimate political opposition, political organization, political socialization and finally the rise of political conflict which was due in large part to the terms of the 1832 Reform Act. In the second half of the paper we took these concepts out of the laboratory, and into the field of empirical research. Here we detailed the changes within the Conservative party in Lancashire and the efforts of its local and national leadership to integrate sections of the working class into the party structure. Our main focus was on Blackburn, obviously, other towns should be considered, and hopefully this, in time will be done. Nevertheless, there seems enough evidence to suggest that a qualitative cultural change was taking place in these two decades.

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- As I have pointed out elsewhere (Walsh op cit) the class consciousness of the Blackburn workers began to fragment from 1833/4. Furthermore, it must be stated that this analysis of the early fragmentation of working class consciousness is a departure from that of other historians of working class development, (for example see Foster, J., Class Struggle and the Industrial Revolution, London, 1974) who have offered a later date the 1840's and 1850's for the decline of working class consciousness, however, our analysis is only applicable to the workers of Blackburn.
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- <sup>56</sup> P(reston) P(ilot) 19 January 1833.
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- $^{59}$  See Appendix One B(lackburn) M(ail) 18 April 1821.
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- 65 The Times 23 April 1838.
- 66 Speech reprinted in P.P. 16 May 1835.
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- 69 Ibid. The North and South Lancashire made donations to the following newspapers. The Manchester Courier, Bolton Chronicle, Blackburn Standard and the Preston Pilot.
- 70 Ibid.
- 71 P.P. 16 July 1836. For a catalogue of the dates and speeches of Wilkins see <u>Preston Pilot</u> and <u>Manchester Courier</u> for the months of May, June, July, August and September. For a critical appraisal of Wilkins see Manchester Guardian 18 June 1836.
- 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 Poor Law. When the Poor Law Commissioners tried to impose the Law, they were advised that no Conservatives either vote for or sit on the Board of Guardians, rendering the Act virtually useless. See Manchester Guardian 10 May 1837.

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- 95 B.S. 6 December 1843. "The operation of the (Poor Law) Act is legislation for the rich against the poor. Yet for our part we are not disposed to fall in with the opinions of either party on the subject.
- 96 B.S. 18 November 1840.
- 97 B.S. 8 November 1837.
- $^{98}$  B(lackburn) A(fred) 21 January 1833.
- 99 Ibid. Apparently just such a union had been formed at Wigan in December 1832.
- 109 B.A. 17 September 1832.

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- 112 Ibid p.9.
- 113 The Times 29 July 1835.
- 114 Ibid 5 January 1837.
- 115 Ibid 20 April 1838.
- 116 Ibid 23

- 117 P.P. 26 March 1836.
- 118 The Times 8 January 1838.
- For funds handed over to B.O.C.A. from the B.C.A. see B.S. for 11 January 1837, 10 January 1838, 16 January 1839, 16 January 1841, 12 January 1842, 25 January 1843, 24 January 1844, 15 January 1845, 21 January 1846, 16 February 1847.
- 120 From The Metropolitan Conservative Journal 26 June 1837. "A lamentable error into which Conservatives in remote fall, is in trusting to the metropolis for candidates and 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."
- 121 B.S. 27 November 1839.
- Throughout the months of August and September 1839 the Blackburn Standard devoted the whole of editorial space to a series of 'Friendly Words addressed to Working Men'. 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.
- 123 See letter from Peel to Croker, in Jennings op cit Vol II pp.382/4.
- 124 B.S. 15 January 1845. B.O.C.A. Annual Report for 1844.
- 125 B.S. 14 September 1853.
- 126 Joyce, P., Work, Society and Politics, Brighton 1980.
- 127 Neumann, S., Modern Political Parties, Chicago 1967.
- 128 Garrard, J.A., 'Parties, Members and Voters After 1867: a Local Study', in <u>Historical Journal</u> 20, 1, 1977 pp.145-163.