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The Functions of Nineteenth-Century Political Parties

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THE FUNCTIONS OF NINETEENTH CENTURY POLITICAL PARTIES.

In recent years, we have come to realize that the notion that party intervention in municipal affairs started with, and was instigated by, the Labour Party is a myth. The truth, as we now know, is that conflict - particularly party conflict - was more or less endemic to the 19th century urban local political process.¹ We also know that it was often intensely fought, and that battle, once joined, was apt to reverberate through every level - from constituency election down to that of the lowliest assistant overseer.² Nevertheless, though this is a very important truth to have learnt (particularly given the intensity with which the original notion was held, especially by non-Labour activists), it does obscure some very real contrasts between the operation of parties in the nineteenth century and the pattern as it has existed since 1918. It is the purpose of this paper to throw some light on these areas, and I propose to do this by reference to the notion of party function: that is to say, I wish to enquire how far 19th century political parties contributed to the smooth running and maintenance of that system, at that time, judged hopefully by contemporarily acceptable standards. Although the focus will be primarily municipal, our survey will necessarily carry us into a look at the roles performed by parties in the urban scene and in the national political system in general. We may not learn much that is new, but the exercise should at least lend greater precision to what we know. More importantly, it may also lead us to question what has become the new orthodoxy - the idea that party conflict in municipal affairs was a thoroughly good thing.

At one time or another, political parties have been credited with a wide range of functions. However, reduced to bare essentials, parties in the late 20th century can be seen as playing at least some part in the fulfilment of around seven, at local as well as national levels: (1) they are central to the recruitment and selection of governing elites; (2) they play an important part in the organization of elections; (3) they have an important, though possibly decreasing and certainly intermittent, role in the generation of programmes and policies for government; (4) they play an important part in the coordination and control of government; (5) they play an important part in the integration of groups into society through the satisfaction, reconciliation and sometimes even the articulation of their demands; (6) parties help integrate a significant, though again probably decreasing, number of individuals into society by mobilizing their support for activity linked to the system, by political socialization and by the simple provision, of social contact; (7) they play a very important part in the provision of organization and ideas alternative to those of government.

If we are to stand a chance of discovering the relevance of these ideas to party activity in nineteenth century urban society, we obviously need to prepare the ground by exploring some of the main features of the very different context within which politics was conducted. The first and most obvious point here is that parties were

not operating in an environment which, either in theory or for the most part in practice, could properly be called 'democratic'. The circle of legitimate political participation was a restricted, if expanding, one. It was confined to those amongst the population who, in theory anyway, had earned and established their "political fitness" by the exercise of appropriate virtues - virtues both of the rational and well-informed sort, and those suggesting a decent degree of attachment to the broad outlines of the socio-economic system³.

However it is also important, if equally obvious, to note that the nineteenth century was a period in which the circle of legitimate participation - municipally as well as nationally - was being expanded to embrace major new groups thrown up by the industrial revolution. Less obviously, political parties, as we shall see, had potentially crucial contributions to make towards the management of that expansion. This was a stage when the political and social integration of social groups was not merely being maintained but also, in some very important cases, actually commenced.

Meanwhile, it is also worth noting that parties were operating in a context wherein the ambit of the "political" was at once both more and less extensive than in the late twentieth century. In one sense - in terms of the capacity of political activity to absorb the individual, and of political conflict to intrude upon a wide area of social and institutional life - politics were more all-embracing. Contemporary accounts constantly testify, both wittingly and unwittingly, to the excitement of nineteenth century politics for its activists. As we shall see, party conflict was also capable of spreading across all governmental institutions in the nineteenth century town, even into sociable and charitable activity - doing so in ways that had considerable implications for the functions that parties performed.

Yet, in another sense, politics at that time were more circumscribed than they have since become. Due to the influence of laissez-faire, the range of problems capable of being transmuted into political issues, and thus into potentially fit matters for governmental decision and alleviation, was far more limited. The agenda of politics, in other words, was more restricted, and it is arguable, as we shall see, that parties helped to keep it that way. Furthermore, whatever their role here, this point has implications for the processing of demands. If parties did have a part to play in this area, then the demands related to a narrower range of concerns.

It is also important to realize that parties operated within a framework supplied by another seeming paradox. On the one hand, local autonomy was extremely important - both in political and social terms. Because of the predominance of local improvement legislation and of discretionary national legislation as sources of municipal powers, municipal Corporations possessed great independence in determining what they did or did not do. Indeed, as Derek Fraser has pointed out⁴, the scope and pattern of local government powers in any given town was determined far more by the character and outcome of the local political battle than by any pressure emanating from the centre. Furthermore local elites, whether they participated in municipal government or not, performed their activities to the accompaniment of great attention and

often great respect from the local population. The notion of urban social leadership had a reality that it does not possess today; for it implied genuine celebrity in a highly visible local social and political arena.⁵ Furthermore, particularly in many industrial towns, this social elite stood at the head of a geographically self-contained socio-economic hierarchy, and was able to command high levels of social and political deference from its mass of dependents. The structure and operation of political parties in such places cannot be separated from this context. Overall, while not wishing to stray too near the controversy about structural functionalism, it is worth noting that nineteenth century urban political parties performed their functions within the context set by something that it makes far more sense to call a local political system than is the case now.

On the other hand, the nature of parties' interest in municipal politics often seemed to undercut the notion of local autonomy. For what frequently lay at the base of party "intrusions" in municipal elections was a primary interest in the town's parliamentary representation. In Wolverhampton, for example, such considerations were supreme and municipal elections were looked upon as "the equivalent of Autumn manoeuvres in military affairs".⁶ When the Conservatives decided to intervene in Salford's council contests in 1869, after a long period of non-partisan elections, they did so in response to the widening of the parliamentary franchise and because "the true way to the representation of the borough is through the municipality".⁷ Indeed the very appearance of that earlier period of municipal calm had been intimately connected with the fact that Salford's constituency battle has been all but suspended - as the result firstly of the electoral invulnerability of Joseph Brotherton, the Borough's first radical MP, and secondly of his succession by the party-spanning Palmerstonian Liberal, W N Massey.

As a consequence of such emphases, council election results were eagerly scrutinized by both local and national party organizers for the wider message that they contained; council candidates were looked upon as "bell wethers"⁸ for their party and when things went badly for the other side then "the writing was on the wall" for its constituency fortunes.⁹ In some ways, the pattern had been set very early on. The desire of Manchester's Liberal elite in the 1830's to have the town incorporated was directed, in part anyway, at providing the local shopocracy with an arena (ie the Council) for the satisfaction of its social, economic and political interests. This in turn was seen as a means of attaching that group to the Liberal Party for constituency purposes, and to the Anti Corn Law League in the battle for free trade.¹⁰ Meanwhile there is evidence that voters as well as leaders often came to see things in the same parliamentary way. As the Salford Weekly News remarked of one set of local elections, local issues "were but secondary considerations in the minds of nine out of ten of the burgesses".¹¹

On this evidence, the balance between local and national influences in the nineteenth century, if not actually identical to that existing since 1918, appears to be rapidly becoming so. In fact, the comparison is rather more complex than this - from both present and past angles. In the twentieth century, nationalizing trends have all but removed genuinely local perceptions of local affairs. At the same time, while

the news media and national party managers may view local election results with eyes only for their national implications, the capture of local power has a strong intrinsic interest for local parties.¹² This is due partly to the massive rise in local government functions since 1918, and partly to the fact that party cleavage now coincides with a deep division over local policy in a way that it rarely did in the nineteenth century.

At the nineteenth century end of the comparison, the position is similarly complex. It is certainly clear that national, or at least regional, influences on 19th century municipal politics were growing. Yet it is important to remember that local issues and local personalities were, and long remained, important to a degree inconceivable now. We should also remember that this was so even in constituency politics itself.¹³ Moreover, party interest in nineteenth century municipal affairs was not always so calculating as we have so far made it appear. The intervention by Birmingham's Liberal Caucus in local politics in the late 1870's, for example, seems to have originated in the desire of the Nonconformist inspired National Education League to capture control of the Education Board - for the purpose of controlling policies towards religious education. This motive was reinforced by a more general desire amongst the Liberal business elite to capture Birmingham's Council for municipal activism.¹⁴ In my own experience, Rochdale Liberals' determination to capture and maintain control over the town's local government structure was motivated at least partly by the assumption that local Toryism was a reactionary force that would run things badly.¹⁵ More generally, Derek Fraser has emphasised the essential inter-connectedness of party interest in the various levels of urban politics. Control at each level was the key to control at other levels, and Fraser implies that each represented an accretion of power worth capturing for its own sake.

All the same, party intervention in the 19th century local government structure, more often than not, had an abstracted air about it. Genuine conflict about local government policy, as we shall see, was rare. And, even when parliamentary considerations were not paramount, parties tended to take a total view of urban political power - the capture of power at one level was always partly calculative, always partly the key to victory in a battle at some other point in the structure. As will be evident later, this abstractedness had damaging implications for the performance of party functions.

Meanwhile, these functions must also be viewed in the light of another feature of the nineteenth century context - the fact that parties were not really supposed to inhabit the municipal scene at all. Although they participated almost universally, and often enthusiastically and with bitter recrimination, their presence seems to have been regarded as vaguely illegitimate and unconducive to good government by most politically salient sections of local society. Certainly, this conclusion emerges if one judges by the frequency with which they blamed each other for the appearance of party conflict in the municipal arena - for "spreading seeds of ill-will and dissension...(upon) a field previously bearing the fruit of good fellowship and mutual respect."¹⁶ One can draw the same conclusion from the readiness, at least of those who wrote to and for local newspapers,

to blame party politics for any shortcomings in municipal administration. In fact, of the towns with which I am familiar, only in Rochdale was municipal partisanship taken for granted, and indulged in without guilt.¹⁷ Elsewhere it was apologetic and thus in some respects inhibited.

One last contextual point is worth making - this time about the parties themselves. It is hard to know whether, particularly up to 1867, they should properly be seen as "institutions" having functions at all. In a way this is true of all organizations: they are after all only groups of people, and yet they all can be seen as having a "higher" life independent of the individuals who constitute them at any given time. However, in the case of many local parties before around 1860, constituted as they were not of regularized collectivities of office-holders but simply of informal groups of notables coming together only at election times, it is hard to decide whether they are institutions, organizations etc or merely extensions of the power of individual landowners or individual manufacturers.

Before finally moving on to examine what functions parties performed in the nineteenth century urban context, two further preliminary points are worth making. Though it is not the purpose of this paper to become involved in the debate about structural functionalism, these points are clearly relevant to it - and also relevant to much that follows. Firstly, it will become evident that the effective performance of one function might well produce an inability or unwillingness to act in ways likely to result in the effective performance of others. For example, party success in recruiting the right sort of people to local government might well preclude the contesting of municipal elections. Secondly, it will also become clear that there was no automatic or natural coincidence between the functions that we might see parties as fulfilling, and their organisers' own view of their purposes. If parties performed functions, they normally did (and do) so inadvertently, while pursuing their own courses for their own reasons. The proximity of function and purpose was often coincidental and therefore, particularly in the context set by nineteenth century local politics, partial. As a result, parties might well carry out their activities in ways that were imperfectly functional, and sometimes actively dysfunctional.

(1) Recruitment and Selection.

Parties may be said to play three positive roles in relation to the process of political recruitment. Firstly, they may select candidates. Secondly, they may provide the prerequisites considered necessary to selection: for example, political and administrative skills, noteworthiness amongst the selectors and sometimes more general public celebrity - all of them normally acquired through party activity itself. Finally, and alternatively, parties may provide channels to selection for people who already have acquired desirable prerequisites by other means - either by virtue of social notability, business experience and economic weight, or through being spokesmen for pressure groups whose support is needed by the parties.

Increasingly since 1918, and especially at the municipal level, parties have been confined largely to the first two roles. They are the almost invariable selectors of candidates - at least of those with a realistic chance of success; and they are the normal providers of prerequisites to people who have no other means of acquiring them. The meaninglessness of community in the modern urban setting, the anonymous character of the urban environment, and the domination of mass perceptions by the national centre, all combine to produce a situation in which very few urban dwellers possess popularly visible local social notability. There are in other words no such things as social leaders in the late twentieth century town. Thus, in so far as a party performs the third role, it does so primarily in the sense of providing a channel to selection for people drawn from interest groups associated with that party - trade unions, business organisations and the like. This overall situation makes parties absolutely indispensable to the whole recruitment process.

In the nineteenth century town, they were not always the main agencies for the selection of municipal candidates. Their role here might, at the least, be heavily disguised - as it was in Wolverhampton up to 1914;¹⁸ or even non-existent - as was the case in Salford between 1850 and 1868. In such situations, municipal recruitment might be directly taken over by pressure groups, like the United Kingdom Alliance. Alternatively it might be assumed by sections of the socio-economic elite itself - eager to perpetuate the rule of men such as themselves. In Salford, for example, in 1848, "a dozen of the leading inhabitants met together and selected eight candidates with not the slightest attention to their political creeds but solely on account of their general standing in the borough and the amount of their rates assessments."¹⁹

Nevertheless, in most urban areas for most of the nineteenth century, parties do seem to have been central to the local government selection process - as they were of course to that of the constituency. Indeed, their sway in this aspect of recruitment might well extend a very long way down the local political system (to the level of lowly officers such as the assistant overseer or the surveyor of highways) and a long way into the municipal bureaucracy - with the posts such as those of town clerk, borough treasurer, salaried surveyor and even scavenger all being seen as part of the spoils of victory,²⁰ in a way that they rarely are now.

However, the main contrast with the twentieth century centres around party performance in relation to the other two aspects of recruitment mentioned above. It is true that, in towns and at times where social notables were in short municipal supply (normally because of political shyness on their part rather than because they did not exist), parties - just as they do now - provided the necessary prerequisites to otherwise unknown people. Moreover they were important in this respect. Through participation in party activity a variety of men of little substance were able to acquire political experience and (in the form of the party label) a satisfactory substitute for celebrity. Such individuals were thus enabled to enter the municipal circle. Nevertheless, parties' role here was more

restricted than it has become since around 1918. Because most nineteenth century towns did provide an arena encouraging to notability, political parties were often likely merely to be the providers of channels to selection for people who had already acquired desirable prerequisites by virtue of economic substance, and/or extensive visibility in the sociable and philanthropic sector of local urban life.

In fact, although performance of this final aspect of the recruitment function was widely considered essential to the effective working of the local political system - men of property and substance being regarded as those most likely to have acquired skills and predispositions appropriate to municipal government - parties often seem to have been rather ineffective and indeed actively dysfunctional. Social notables, it is true, were rarely without partisan attachments and often proved both enthusiastic and skilful in the arts of party political manoeuvre. Yet most of them were in the last resort, at best, ambivalent about party conflict - particularly where it impinged on the municipal scene. Indeed, they often expressed, and apparently possessed, considerable distaste for contested elections, and for being recruited to local office through partisan channels.

Well might they feel a little odd about it all; for parties and party conflict represented in a whole variety of ways a comprehensive, even a logical, affront to the whole phenomenon of social notability. The cut and thrust of party combat inevitably tainted it. Social leadership, in the eyes of both possessors and watchers, implied activity on behalf of the whole community, and at least a degree of detachment from the battles of lesser mortals. Unlike the partisans drawn from these lower orders, and unless also deeply divided by other issues such as religion,²¹ the social elite were apt to associate together in philanthropic and sociable activity: party conflict inevitably cut across these "amenities of social life". Moreover, however eagerly employees from rival factories might join battle on behalf of their respective employers, the mutual denunciation of election campaigns necessarily endangered deference - implying that respect for members of the elite was conditional upon something more from just high station, and that a goodly proportion of the elite was actively disreputable. Meanwhile, the very existence of the party label in elections implied the existence of a means of popular recognition rivalling the name and person of the notable. Ultimately, it spelt anonymity for the candidate who carried it. Connectedly, because, as we have seen, parties were the providers of political prerequisites for recruitment to those unable to acquire them by other means, men of substance increasingly found themselves forced into contact, cooperation and even competition for municipal preferment, with little men on the make. For many of them, the experience proved distasteful.²²

For these reasons, however intensely parties might wish to recruit the great and the graceful to municipal office, their conflicts undoubtedly helped preclude the realization of such desires. Whether one regards this as "dysfunctional" partly depends upon how essential one believes the municipal participation of social leaders to have been. Many contemporaries held that the skills and breadth of view acquired in running large scale business enterprises were uniquely applicable to

municipal administration, and greatly enhanced its efficiency. Some historians have agreed, even suggesting that a business-based political elite might well be essential to the active and imaginative handling of urban problems.²³ The view has something to commend it. At the same time, it is uncertain how automatically transferable business skills were to areas of local governmental activity outside of pure financial administration. There must be increasing doubt about this the more municipal business expanded, diversified and became more complex.²⁴ Martin Dauntton has argued that business-based councillors were in no sense automatic municipal activists, and that, where they were so minded, they tended towards 'structural' reform of municipal machinery rather than 'social reform' in terms of regulation and service provision.²⁵ There is also evidence that still economically active men of substance found the competing pressures of business and political life profoundly irksome,²⁶ and usually solved the problem at the expense of their municipal careers. As a result, the turnover amongst councillors from such backgrounds was often far higher than amongst those drawn from more modest occupations where business was sufficiently simple to be left in the hands of relatives.

Nevertheless, particularly in the early decades of municipal administration, business skills and perspectives were probably valuable - more so than those of, say, the shopocracy, whose members showed less reticence at being recruited through party channels. So too was the ability of great proprietors to acquire consents to council policies from others of their kind. It also seems reasonable to suppose that, even if big businessmen were not automatic big governmental thinkers, a municipality composed primarily of men of substance was more likely to be activist than one primarily drawn from small proprietors - a group ever conscious of the regressive nature of the rating system. Finally there do seem good prima facie grounds for believing with contemporaries that the dependency and deference, and the prestige which socio-economic leaders could command amongst the wider population, might well serve to enhance the legitimacy and authority of local government - and to procure popular consent for its operations. Overall then, they were probably the best of the groups contemporarily available for recruitment - and parties certainly did nothing to enhance their availability.

(2) The Organization of Elections.

If the effectiveness of party services to the recruitment process was somewhat questionable, their records as organizers of elections were even more dubious. Some commentators, such as Derek Fraser,²⁷ have seen parties as crucial in facilitating participation in local affairs. As we shall see, there is much to commend this judgement in electoral terms. However, it also requires heavy qualification. It will again become evident that the pursuit of party interest might well fail to coincide with the performance of supposed function. It is also clear that the effective performance of the electoral function might well prove incompatible with a party's role in relation to recruitment - at least in so far as the aim of the latter exercise was to draw the town's socio-economic elite into municipal service.

In the twentieth century, the function of political parties in the electoral process has normally been seen as entailing the purveyance of information and the presentation of choices to the electorate in regard to candidates and policies. In this way the political process is opened up to popular participation, or at least the performance of politicians is subjected to some sort of popular verdict. In addition, parties make the election popularly visible, and help get the electorate to the polls. So far as local politics are concerned parties probably perform these roles about as effectively as it is reasonable to expect of them, given the naturally low visibility of local elections, the widespread apathy about local government and the all-embracing presence of national government and national issues. In any case it is strongly arguable that popular perceptions of local elections as opportunities for verdicts upon the record of the national government are entirely realistic - given the accelerating domination of municipal policy by national governmental priorities. Moreover, whether or not this is so, the performance of function in this respect coincides reasonably well with the pursuance of party interest at least in the sense that the latter generally results in the municipal voter being presented with clear-cut, abiding and predictable alternatives if he cares to take notice and advantage of them. In some respects, this trend has even intensified in the seventies and eighties as the two main parties have abandoned the middle ground. Moreover choice presentation happens almost invariably - for party interest dictates that electoral contest must take place irrespective of the likely hopelessness of victory.

Before embarking upon comparison with the nineteenth century situation, we should make some preliminary points about context. Since at least 1927, party activity has taken place within the terms of general consensus about democracy. As noted earlier, no such consensus was present in the nineteenth century. There was an imprecise but nevertheless distinct sense that activity must be directed at the ranks of the "politically fit", plus -when party needs must - at a variable selection of the partially fit non-electors. For many voters in many towns moreover, local elections were hardly matters of opinion-based choice. Rather they represented a chance to reaffirm one's place in a local hierarchy by voting according to the stated or assumed predilections of one's employer. Equally often, particularly perhaps in country-towns²⁸ but also evident in lesser degrees elsewhere, elections were exercises in "market politics" - the means whereby men were given either decent remuneration or helpless inebriation for using the valuable commodity that was their vote in desired ways. All the same, particularly after whenever incorporation took place, opinion politics were normative in most towns in at least one sense: the consultation of popular opinions represented the formal terms upon which electoral contests were fought. Deference and bribery were discreet -influences normally at work behind the scenes, hidden as far as possible from public view.

Within this more restricted political context, it must be admitted at the outset that it is hard to believe that the function of electoral organization could have been performed effectively by anyone other than the political party. This is particularly evident given the fact that resentment against party "incursions" into municipal affairs often took

the form of irritation at "the ratepayers being put to the expense of a contest" at all. In other words, the absence of party from the electoral process was more likely than not to produce a total absence of contest.

At the same time, this in turn points to a real problem with using functional analysis in this area: the fact that there was no necessary consensus in the nineteenth century about the desirability of local elections being organized at all. In fact, this is one reason why, even though they were the only bodies capable of inducing regular electoral contest, parties often failed altogether to perform this supposed function. Indeed they were often the instrument whereby no elections took place. In many party-dominated towns, only a fraction of the wards in any given municipal election were actually contested. From the dates of their incorporation²⁹ up to 1880, for example, the average proportion of council wards contested in Salford, Rochdale and Bolton was 61%, 39% and 39% respectively. In these circumstances, some wards (and some Poor Law Union districts) might not see a contest for years, even decades at a time.

By no means all of this trend can be blamed upon political parties. Rather, as implied earlier, it was partly a tribute to the influence of anti-party feeling and to the limits of partisan emotion. "Amicable arrangements" might well also be a product of a desire by existing members of the local political elite to reinforce their ranks by ensuring favoured men of substance and station a free ride into the council chamber.

Yet the absence of contests was equally frequently a tribute to the very strength of party influence. Normally, it was party leaders, at ward and constituency levels, who negotiated the requisite deals, and such agreements once reached were normally sufficient to ensure that no contest took place. Only rarely in the middle decades of the century and, in any more frequent sense, not until the appearance of labour and socialist candidates, did outsiders appear and upset such cosy arrangements.

The motives that lay behind this quiescence were also often a venial sort of testimony to the strength rather than the weakness of party. It is true that "arrangements" might partly result from the absence of polarizing issues between the parties. However, they might equally stem from the fact that the weaker of the two parties in any given town had decided that no further advance was possible, whilst the other had concluded that no further advance was necessary. In other words the first had opted for, and the second had agreed that it should have, the status of a kept minority. Such lowly municipal ambitions certainly seemed to have characterized the Liberals in both Bolton and Salford for long periods from around the late 1870s through to the First World War. When contest was periodically joined, moreover, it was normally prompted by the anticipation of municipal victories not so much for their own sake as for what they might herald, and make possible, in constituency terms. Once again what was involved were partisan calculations of gain and loss, and these once again bear witness to the extent to which the performance of supposed function was affected, for ill as well as for better, by real calculations of party interest.

Other motives too bear witness to the same problem. One very frequent reason for party organizers deciding not to contest a given ward (or indeed constituency) was the assumption that they were going to lose - an assumption made in the light of fairly accurate knowledge about the state of the municipal electoral register. This, in turn, points to the fact that -in the situation created by a restricted electorate - parties had a crucial role in the process of electoral registration itself.

It was a role that interest led them to perform to the disadvantage of many potential voters. With regard to both constituency and municipal registers, the aim of each party was to get as many of its own known supporters as possible on to the voters list, and (by scattering objections broadside) to secure the removal of the maximum number of its opponents' supporters.³⁰ The process was fundamentally haphazard, and a man's place on the register was only partly dependent upon his "fitness" in terms of the possession of the requisite qualifications. Partly also, it was dependent upon the way in which unscrupulousness and efficiency were distributed between the party he supported and the party he opposed.

The overall result was that many potential electors were denied their rightful place on the register, many elections at all levels were decided well before they took place, and, as a consequence, many actual electors were denied the possibility of choice. In other words, parties- as well as being the means whereby elections were organized -might well become the willing vehicle whereby they were prevented. As a result they could become the means by which issues were suppressed and the political process closed down against effective popular participation.

Parties might also become the eager designers of systems whereby elections were distorted. There is now quite a lot of evidence suggesting that ward boundaries - particularly as they emerged after incorporation -were gerrymandered so as to give maximum advantage to the dominant party at that time. The long Conservative dominance in Bristol after incorporation, for example, was an expression not of electoral opinion (which showed a Liberal tendency) but of initial boundary manipulation.³¹

However, to leave the matter here, would result in an unbalanced picture, or one at least from which important areas of behaviour are omitted. We should also examine what happened when electoral conflict actually was joined. For there were periods when conflict became very intense indeed.

There is no doubt that, at such times, parties could bring considerable benefit to the nineteenth century local electoral process. Council elections became both highly visible and exciting, with ward polls of over 80% often being recorded. Though many council candidates were, in the inward-looking circumstances of the nineteenth century town, already well-known to the electorate, parties were probably

effective in spreading at least a prejudiced sort of information about the stances and predispositions of those who were not. Competing candidates also helped open up the policy process by forcing issues into open discussion that might otherwise have remained within the charmed legislative circle. These might range from apparently trifling disputes about official salaries to major policy matters such as the rates, gas or water municipalization, or projects to increase water resources.

Sometimes, this resulted in the electorate being presented with reasonably clear-cut policy choices - as for example in Leeds in 1890 when a newly sanitation-minded Tory Party faced a Liberal Party that was only slowly emerging from municipal economism.³² More often, some at least of the candidates - or their supporters in the press - might seek to defend or attack the majority party's "record" in office. This was normally rather vaguely defined in terms of competence or incompetence, but it did present the opportunity for a sort of electoral verdict. It also helped to impose a degree of sensitivity to popular wishes amongst politicians, particularly around election times.

When conflict was very intense, and when local institutional circumstances encouraged such a trend,³³ parties could so far fulfil their role as electoral organizers as to draw influentially into the political process those lower down the social scale and beyond the legalized circle of participation. As we shall see, this had important implications for other functions such as group political integration.

However, what ultimately limited both the scale of local political conflict, and its utility in terms of the performance of electoral function, was the absence of any hard and fast, ideologically based division between the parties over the scope of municipal activity. Such a division might exist in particular towns at particular times. However, unlike the twentieth century, its character varied fundamentally from place to place - with the Liberals becoming the primary repository of activism in one town (as in Birmingham in the late 1870's) and the Tories doing so in another (as in Leeds some dozen years later). It also varied over time - with the arrangement of parties on either side of the local divide often being determined by who was the majority party. In Bolton, in the early decades after incorporation in 1838, the majoritarian Liberals were the first to carry the activist flag with the Tories waving that of economy. When the latter became dominant in 1845, the roles were opportunistically reversed...and so on. Only in London, it seems, and only after the founding of the LCC in 1888, did there emerge a permanent and principled division between activist Progressives/Liberals and economy-minded Moderates/Tories.³⁴

Elsewhere the division was rarely either permanent or all-embracing. Even in Birmingham - normally cited as an example of the effects of deep party division - Chamberlain's expansionist Liberal businessmen took over the Council not from the Tories but from the still economically inclined rump of their own party. There were in fact few party-wide programmes - and economists and activists could normally be found on either side of the divide, regardless of the predominant emphasis of their parties. More frequently, there was no such emphasis. Candidates in individual wards might oppose each other over

general council policy, or over particular issues, but, as often as not, there was no defined party line. Part of the reason for such indistinctiveness is again the frequent primacy of constituency considerations in determining the level of strictly local competition -and the consequent absence of any real need to formulate policies for local government that went beyond opportunistic response.

The overall result in terms of the choices and opportunities presented to the municipal elector was likely to be considerable confusion. In few of the situations outlined above was there much guarantee to the voter that, if he voted for a particular candidate because of that candidate's policy-stances, his opinions would receive much consideration once his man got inside the atomistic world of the nineteenth century Council. Nor, given that world, could the voter often identify a party or a group as responsible for some policy or blunder, and thus use his vote to effectively pass verdict. Councils were responsive to general trends in public opinion (particularly of the penny-pinching sort). However that responsiveness was uncertain and hardly subject to fine control.* It also was more likely to stem from the general atmosphere of competitiveness induced by party rivalry than from policy alternatives presented for electoral decision, and mandates derived.

However, we are already moving on to ground that properly belongs to the next two sections, and it is to these which we must now turn, since what we have been saying can only be fully understood in those terms.

(3) Generation of Policies and Programmes for Government.

It follows from what has been said already that - unlike their 20th century counterparts, and unlike those at the national level after 1867 -local parties were only rarely involved on local policy and programme formulation. We need do little more here than summarize the situation.

Some urban historians have seen parties and party competition as the main inducers of municipal activism.³⁵ However, parties were always unlikely candidates for policy generation of any sort. Unlike what became increasingly true nationally, they had few basic ideological predispositions about what local government should or should not do. They were simply the passive receptacles for ideas about municipal action or inaction formulated by groups who temporarily captured them (like the Chamberlainites in Birmingham). Much more frequently such ideas were the product of entirely pragmatic calculations of local (often constituency) political advantage. Consequently parties were rarely clearly divided on major local issues and rarely discovered much need to formulate defined policy stances. If they did, outside of late 19th century London, they rarely maintained them for long.

* It is highly arguable of course that the national preoccupations of the voters leave present-day councils largely autonomous of the electorate, subject only to changes of opinion about the performance of national government. Not even the most dedicated presentation by the parties of programmatic choices can prevent this.

Parties might thus sometimes become transmission belts for changes in public mood in relation to municipal policy. Yet their effectiveness even in this respect was uncertain, given the strong, and often party-inspired, predisposition towards non-contest that we have noted in the previous section - and thus the predisposition (however inadvertent) towards closing the electoral system down. Moreover, unlike what may sometimes have been their role in the period since 1918, they could play no part in shaping the public mood. Furthermore, the needs of party competition could produce, in either party, bouts not just of municipal activism but, with at least equal frequency, of municipal passivism. It could produce either the sanitary-mindedness of late 19th century Leeds Conservatism³⁶ or the steady parsimony of post-incorporation Bristol Conservatism;³⁷ it could produce either the generous Poor Law of mid-century Liberal Rochdale,³⁸ or the penny-pinching policies of many other similarly controlled Unions.

Furthermore, as we shall see later, the presence of party and party competition was as likely to prove positively inhibitive of policy production of any sort as it was to prove productive. Such situations were particularly evident in the years before and after incorporation when corporations, and their local legislative predecessors, became mere pawns in more general battles for power at all levels of the town. Policies became secondary to mere possession of power, and its use in other battles like those for control of the constituency or the parish. The result, as we shall see, was often not policy but paralysis - with the two parties sniping destructively at each other from power bases in the different institutions of the town. Alternatively, politically salient social groups might be given control of local government in return for support in wider and higher political conflicts. Thus, the shopocracy were given free reign by Manchester's Liberal elite to pursue policies of municipal parsimony and inaction in return for their support in battles for the constituency and repeal of the Corn Laws.³⁹ The character of the policy was entirely secondary, indeed incidental, to the need for support.

Corporate policies - and indeed the shaping of public attitudes towards them - emerged most frequently, in fact, from sources other than political parties. They were formulated by individual councillors with interests in particular policy areas. More frequently they emerged from the specialist committees of the council. With increasing frequency, policies were also formulated by the trained professional servants of the council - the medical officer of health, the gas and water managers, the borough engineer etc. Overall, parties played little part in developing effective local authority responses to the problems with which the rapidly expanding urban areas faced them. This will become doubly evident if we turn to the next function.

(4) Control and Coordination of Government.

Another of the reasons why parties were unlikely formulators of policy also helps explain why they were unlikely coordinators of government. However intense the electoral competition, it was

customary in most councils for party colours to be abandoned once inside the council, board of guardians etc. As one Salford conservative remarked schizophrenically in 1874

The proper duty of the councillor was to drop his politics before he entered the chamber and leave them outside in (the town hall) square to dry; when he got outside he was at perfect liberty to don them again.⁴⁰

Party colours, it is true, were never set aside quite as totally as this. Majority caucuses normally determined the distribution of the spoils of office - aldermanic seats, the mayoralty and quite often some or many paid official posts. Nevertheless, they only rarely became what they normally are in most urban (and increasingly in most rural) councils in the late 20th century, and what cabinets increasingly came to be in national government, - the central directing, coordinating and decision-making core of all governmental activity. Most major decisions are now arrived at not by the council as a whole, nor even by its individual committees as a whole. They are arrived at by the majority party caucus, and often effectively by its leaders, in consultation with leading corporate officials. Although some historians, dazzled by the example of late 19th century Birmingham, have seen the council caucus as the major provider of direction and discipline in the 19th century, such situations were rare at any time before 1918.

The role of party in relation to 19th century corporate decision-making varied considerably. Occasionally, parties were important coordinators of government, as in late nineteenth century Birmingham, Leeds and - subject to important qualifications to be outlined later - London. Rather more frequently, party influence was positively dysfunctional - to the point where it paralyzed rather than coordinated government. Most frequently of all, party had no impact one way or the other.

The role played was greatly influenced by the level of party conflict and, not surprisingly, by calculations of party political advantage - and these in turn were heavily related to the local institutional circumstances in which parties operated. Thus the first situation (coordination) and third situation (neutrality) outlined above were most likely to arise in places and at times where governmental functions were concentrated into one institution (the council) or at least clearly separated between a few (eg the council, the board of guardians and the education board). Paralysis, on the other hand, tended to emerge where savage levels of party conflict took place in the context of multiple governmental institutions uneasily sharing power. Such institutions tended to fall under rival party influence, and were then used as vantage points for mutual sniping in broader battles for control. These situations were particularly evident around the time of incorporation - partly because corporations were so often sought primarily as means of maximizing political advantage rather than of procuring better urban administration.

Two illustrations will serve to high-light the stultifying effect of party conflict in such situations. In Birmingham, prior to incorporation in 1838, there were three institutions which might have assumed some sort of administrative control over the town's burgeoning population and problems - the old manorial institutions of Court Leet and High Bailiff; the board of guardians established in 1783 and the street commissioners set up in 1769. It is evident, however, from Derek Fraser's account of them that the first two were prevented from assuming such a role by intense party rivalry - probably partly because of overlapping responsibilities and partly because party undermined the legitimacy of each institution by making it seem hopelessly partial in the eyes of around half of the town's politically aware inhabitants. Significantly, it was the studiously non-partisan street commissioners who, in the years prior to incorporation, were beginning to take on such functions.⁴¹ Thus the destructive effects of party in these respects were already evident before 1838.

The campaign for incorporation itself was an undisguised move for political advantage by the radicals and Liberals allied together under the banner of the Birmingham Political Union. As a result, the campaign produced bitter polarization. Incorporation was delayed for some time by a Tory counter petition. When it finally emerged in November 1838, the new Liberal corporation found itself challenged by the Tory dominated bench of county magistrates, the overseers and the coroner. In the subsequent legal and political battle, the corporation was deprived of the police power until 1842. Meanwhile, it also ran into damaging conflict for political authority with at least eight other administrative bodies within the town and its suburbs - a conflict in which party rivalry was probably involved, and which was not settled until amalgamation in 1851.

Bolton provides a still clearer example of the problems inspired by party conflict. Incorporation, as in Birmingham, was a Liberal inspired manoeuvre. A long period of near paralysis followed its granting in 1838. Here too, the Tories mounted a legal challenge to the Liberal controlled Corporation. With help from the Tory dominated magistrates bench, the corporation was effectively prevented from taking over the police power from the Tory boroughreeve and constables. The battle was not settled to the Corporation's advantage until 1842. Meanwhile, it was also subject to longer term challenge from its predecessors - the Great and Little Bolton Boards of Trustees. The first was controlled by the Tories, the second by the Liberals, and legally each was - until such time as it consented to disappear - the main improvement body for its half of the town. Party political calculation ensured that each resisted absorption. Early Liberal attempts to absorb the Trusts were successfully resisted by the Tories in Great Bolton. When the Tories took control of the council in 1845, similar essays at amalgamation were defeated - this time by the Liberals in Little Bolton. The overall result of such manoeuvring was governmental chaos. The council existed but had few powers. The trustees possessed considerable powers but had neither the will nor the legitimacy to use them to any effect.

The situation remained thus until absorption was finally achieved twelve years after incorporation in 1850. It was made worse still by the fact that corporation authority was being both challenged and constrained by the Tory controlled, and often thoroughly partisan, private gas and water companies. Thus the pursuit of party advantage spilled over destructively into the private sector also. Though the water company was municipalized in 1846, the gas company continued its generally bloody-minded and - so far as the corporation was concerned - obstructive course until its municipal absorption in 1870.⁴²

Overall, the verdict on the impact of party conflict in these critical periods of local government development may well be this. Party conflict made it more difficult to equip towns with local government institutions suited to nineteenth century needs, and prolonged the life of institutions that were often positively obsolete; it undermined the legitimacy and inhibited the development of the authority of new Corporations even when they did appear; more generally, it contributed to local governmental paralysis at a time when urban problems were at their most intense.

This general situation was evident to a greater or lesser degree in many towns.⁴³ It was admittedly most frequent during the first half of the century. However, this was also the period in which party conflict was at its most intense. In any case, it is arguable that a parallel situation developed in London after the formation of the LCC, and even more after the establishment of the London borough councils in 1899. London's may seem a curious case to argue since party (indeed both parties) was undoubtedly the main coordinator and controller of activity so far as the LCC itself was concerned.⁴⁴ The main difficulty lay in its role in the relationship between the county council at the centre and the borough councils at the periphery. Almost constant conflict focussed on the attempts by the LCC to exercise its functions - particularly those relating to housing, and particularly where these involved the building of overspill estates. The boroughs' suburban predisposition to see the LCC as "a wolf on the prowl" to be opposed at all costs was greatly exacerbated by party rivalry. They were normally handsomely Tory; the LCC was often Liberal/Progressive controlled. In these circumstances, the parties functioned in ways highly deleterious to governmental coordination and control. If it was to work effectively, London's governmental system required high levels of cooperation: political conflict helped ensure that such cooperation was of the most intermittent kind. In fact, here we have a case where the system was actually designed - again partly for party reasons - so that coordination should be limited. The borough councils were established by a Conservative Government partly at least as a Conservative-dominated counterweight to the Progressive controlled LCC. In other words, party was deliberately to be allied to institutional separation to produce a system of checks and balances.⁴⁵

(5) Group Integration.

With this fifth function we move into an area where parties were involved in 19th century urban life in much more positive ways. Here we need to move well beyond the ambit of municipal politics if we are to understand the roles that they were at least attempting to play. In

some respects, these roles will be familiar to twentieth century eyes; in other respects, the functions attempted arose directly out of the distinctive character of 19th century society and politics. We shall also find that intention coincided much more closely with function in this area than in those we have been studying thus far.

In the 20th century, parties assist in the process of group integration in two ways. Firstly, by competing for group favours and/or by attaching certain groups permanently to themselves, they become a channel through which demands, resentments and emotions can be transmitted to policy makers, and by which those demands can be at least partly satisfied. In this way, group attachment to the political system, and thus to the social system, can be strengthened or maintained. Secondly, parties are the means whereby group demands can be reconciled, and the groups thus integrated together.

In one sense, the integrative role of nineteenth century parties looks very similar to the present-day model - in that both parties, and particularly the Liberals, were involved in building alliances sufficient to give them a parliamentary majority within the expanding terms of the nineteenth century electoral system. In many ways, particularly after around 1860, the role was being played out more intensely than in the twentieth century (at least up to around 1964) since parties were far less able to rely upon substantial client groups permanently bound to them by ties of class. Partly as a result, and partly because ideology exercised a less dominating influence upon their activities and upon their sense of whom it was politically proper to climb into bed with, parties tended to see any group as fair game⁴⁶. The results were perhaps less evident for the Tories given their position as the more aristocratic party of the two, and their greater consequent ability to rely for their parliamentary majority upon the inbuilt electoral bias in favour of small town and rural areas of the country. They were less evident also because any group incompatibility was almost certainly heavily muted by the pervasive influence of deference. However, the Liberals were certainly intensely involved in the business of interest aggregation in the sense that they increasingly found themselves having to reconcile a rich variety of overlapping and less than naturally compatible groups - groups both of a social, and of an organised interest, kind. By the 1860's on a national basis, they were trying to cater for the demands for special consideration and/or emotional recognition from the majority section of the urban industrial middle classes, the shopocracy, the skilled urban working class, Nonconformists, Roman Catholics, temperance crusaders, some brewers, the Whig aristocracy along with the Irish, the Welsh and the Scots.

The need to aggregate and reconcile, though still evident, was less pressing at the municipal level. As we have seen, parties rarely came before the burgesses with anything like an agreed set of policy prescriptions, or even concerted mutual denunciations. More often they were simply collections of individual candidates bearing common labels. In some respects therefore, parties were hardly collectivities at all, and the problem of group incompatibility scarcely arose. The need to aggregate was rendered less evident still by the absolute determination of some local leaders to come before the burgesses as representatives

rather than any sort of delegate -as men with a mission to exercise their own independent judgement on the issues of the day rather than as men sent to mirror the opinions of their constituents.

Nevertheless, political calculation was never totally absent even from the minds of paragons such as these. Moreover, there was often a collective readiness amongst many candidates of the municipal minority party to take advantage of popular dissatisfaction with the party supposedly in power. Such trends became particularly evident when general election considerations came to impinge on the municipal scene. Furthermore, the non-existent influence of party ideology upon attitudes towards municipal policy rendered both parties and individual candidates remarkably opportunistic. Thus their willingness to make a pass at any group with an articulated interest meant that both parties were trying to compete for the loyalties of ratepayers, shopkeepers, members of the drink trade, builders, landlords, Roman Catholics, and working men. In particular either party in any particular town was capable of becoming the champion of those groups driving for municipal economy.

It is evident then that nineteenth century parties were important means whereby demands and desires were aggregated, and wholly or partially satisfied - either through the governmental system, or (where the demands were for recognition or status) often through the mechanisms for participation of the parties themselves. Such processes were often performed both unwillingly and covertly since the idea that the appeasement of groups ("faddists") was a central task of politics was at least no more than partially legitimate. Nevertheless they did take place, and group conflicts were at least partially negotiated or shelved - as they had to be if the various constituent parts of each alliance were to live together even temporarily. As a result, parties became agencies whereby those groups were integrated into society, and whereby their integration was maintained.

This "gatekeeping" process of interest aggregation, at least at the national level, necessarily involved decisions about priorities and, in the case of clashing demands, decisions as to paramountcy. There seems evidence that party leaders found such tasks remarkably difficult. This appears particularly to have been the case with national Liberal leaders whose supporters expected more, and were less bound to them by ties of deference, than were those of the Tories. By the last quarter of the nineteenth century at least, they were seeking to perform or avoid the task in one, or both, of two ways. Firstly, the demands were simply added together into an "omnibus programme" - an amalgam containing something for everybody, but which posed great difficulty in the absence of clear ideologically based indication about who was to receive priority consideration. Alternatively, Liberal leaders sought to avoid the issues of priority altogether via the single issue appeal - a call to the various constituent groups within the party to forget their immediate interests, and rally round the leadership in an effort to solve some central problem which somehow summarized and symbolized the whole of Liberal ideological traditions. Solution was also argued to be necessary because the problem (normally either Irish Home Rule, or the reform of the House of Lords) constituted "a blockage" which had to be shifted out of the way before any satisfaction of more immediate demands could take place. In fact, though the blockage theory had some

validity (the Lords really did stand in the way of Liberal attempts at reform) it was probably also a convenient means of controlling the political agenda and thus diverting attention away from irresolvable clashes of interest within the party. D A Hamer sees this overall pattern of behaviour as symptomatic of Liberal decline - of a party whose ideological framework no longer provided a means by which internal conflicts over priorities could be authoritatively resolved.⁴⁷ In fact, it is doubtful whether ideology ever provides such a means of decisive resolution, especially on the political left. Moreover, the process that Hamer describes is probably no more than all major party leaders, particularly those on the left, adopt to cope with the effects of complex pluralism. Such behaviour should probably not therefore be seen as a portent of future political demise. Nevertheless, the problems of Liberal leadership that he highlights are certainly symptomatic of the difficulties of demand aggregation in the context of the sort of highly complex alliance of forces that Liberalism had become - difficulties that were particularly acute at a time when social division was making those forces increasingly incompatible*

In fact the resemblance with the 20th century, so far as group integration is concerned, may be rather misleading - and is certainly not total. It is arguable that parties were both more and less important in this respect than they have become since 1918. In one sense, they were less important since the widespread consensus about laissez-faire meant that groups were less likely to seek their material interests through politics, and thus this channel was a less important means of securing societal integration than it is today. The reconciliation, for example, of the middle classes to what remained in many respects an aristocratically dominated society and political system was at least as much produced by the ability of their wealthier members to find their way into the lower levels of the landed interest (or at least to achieve a degree of local social acceptability there⁴⁸) as it was by the political satisfaction of their demands. Even so, two qualifications should be made to this general point.

* It is interesting that group pressures were able to reach this problem-ridden state in spite of the fact that the late 19th century party machine was not well adapted for the transmission of the demands of its client groups. For all the democratic rhetoric of "the Caucus", it has become clear that, even more than its 20th century equivalent, it was much better adapted for the downward feeding of commands than for the upward transmission of messages.

Firstly, laissez faire required initial enactment in the early decades of the century (via the removal of the barriers to internal and external trade, the demolition of the framework of the Elizabethan State, the establishment of the infrastructure for rational commercial life, etc) and there had to be a series of continuing political decisions thereafter to leave economic and some social processes alone. Secondly, emotions and demands for status were quite as important as material interests, and nineteenth century politics were a highly important channel through which these could be satisfied. In many ways, this last trend was more evident than it is in the twentieth century because, as we noted earlier, though the ambit of politics was narrower, it involved more people more intensely.

In any case, in another sense, nineteenth century parties were more important to the business of securing social/political integration than are their successors. For, in the case of at least some groups, parties were literally in at the beginning. They were in soon after those groups had been created by the process of industrialization, and in at the point where they were being formally drawn into the political system, in the sense of being declared legitimate participants in the political process. In particular, parties were involved in reconciling the urban middle classes with an aristocratically dominated political system after 1832; they were also involved in securing the political and social integration of the urban working classes after (and even before) 1867.

So far as the urban middle classes - and the satisfaction of their fundamental demands for political status and economic freedom - were concerned, both parties, particularly the Liberals, were clearly important. Their actions here were probably differently directed from those of their present-day counterparts. Neither of the two sets of party leaders necessarily saw their role as one of politically appeasing the middle classes, or any other social group. The Whigs in particular, during their period of diffuse one-party rule in mid-century, viewed themselves as administrators rather than politicians. And the political figure whose action - more than any other - had inadvertently produced that Whig hegemony, Robert Peel, saw his actions in repealing the Corn Laws as directed more by a rational process of conversion than by pressure from the Anti-Corn Law League.⁴⁹ In fact, the achievement of societal integration was probably more the object of direct conscious intent in these middle decades of the nineteenth century, and less the indirect result of the competitive appeasement of small groups, than at any other time. In many ways Liberal/Whig policies in respect of franchise reform, municipal reform, and the moves towards free trade and laissez faire, were prompted primarily by a consciousness of the need to reconcile key groups in the new industrializing society to the constitution and to the aristocratically dominated political system. Whatever the motivations,

however, the result was almost certainly integrative - and key groups within the middle classes, who might otherwise have become alienated, were successfully drawn into the existing system.*

Meanwhile both parties were important to the integration of the urban middle classes at another level, and in connexion with other demands and needs - namely those for status and recognition. This is evident in at least two respects. Firstly, in many towns between approximately 1820 and 1840, the Liberals became the vehicle whereby the new Nonconformist industrial middle class were enabled to capture municipal power and position from the old Anglican mercantile elite.⁵⁰ This battle was rarely about the content of municipal policy. It was far more concerned with this group's attempt to achieve the social recognition that it felt its increasing economic role had earned it. Secondly, and in the longer term, the party apparatus itself provided opportunities for social mobility and recognition. This was perhaps particularly important to the lower middle class, many of whom were drawn in as key operators of the local political machine. Such little men were able to make themselves organizationally indispensable by doing jobs which those socially above them were unable, for reasons of time and inclination, to undertake. In this way, according to Derek Fraser,⁵¹ politics became a crucial means whereby social relationships were restructured, and thus presumably certain sorts of needs satisfied.

In all respects, the Liberals were the more important party so far as the urban middle classes were concerned - particularly during the key period of initial integration. However, it has become increasingly evident that the Tories also played an important role at least for some of the middle classes. They became particularly crucial at the end of the nineteenth century as the industrial middle class - alarmed at what they perceived to be the growing radicalism of the Liberals - removed themselves from the embrace of that party and migrated Torywards. Randolph Churchill's campaign for "Tory democracy" has increasingly come to be seen as symptomatic of their presence and of their demand for recognition.

Both parties, meanwhile, had - or sought to have - a key role in the integration of the urban working classes. It is important to note that, as in the case of the middle classes, political parties were operating at two simultaneous levels - the one semi-conscious and thoroughly familiar to twentieth century eyes, the other less familiar because more consciously aimed at integration. Always, it is important to remember that nineteenth century parties were creatures of their time - combining as they did elements that were 'political' and calculative with others that were patrician, elitist and philanthropic.

* This is true not just of the manufacturers etc but also - to judge by Geoffrey Crossick's argument - of the petit bourgeoisie as well. He suggests that one of the reasons why this group was less continuously and less vociferously united than its counterparts on the Continent was its successful absorption into mid-Victorian Liberalism. See Crossick, 'Urban Society and the Petit Bourgeoisie' in Derek Fraser and Anthony Sutcliffe (eds), The Pursuit of Urban History, (London 1983).

At a semi-conscious level, parties played an indirect part in working class integration through attempting to satisfy or anticipate demands for benefit and status. Nationally, particularly after 1867, this meant action on such issues as trade union legal protection, Factory Act extension and the like. Locally, partly because of the generally wider municipal franchise, such behaviour was often intermittently evident throughout the century. In many places, it meant giving at least symbolic support to working class causes such as Chartism, or supporting a digestibly modest number of working class radical candidates for local office. Where party competition was sufficiently intense, and the local working class sufficiently mobilized, it might involve giving more concrete signs of sympathy - such as humanizing the Poor Law, universalizing the gas supply, building public parks, and the like.⁵² Much later in the century it meant supporting improved wages and conditions for municipal wage-earners.

Not surprisingly, such political displays of sympathy for those towards the bottom of the social scale were considerably rarer than for those further up. Moreover, at least at local level and in the earlier decades of the nineteenth century, they tended only to occur in certain critically aligned sets of circumstances - where party conflict was very intense, where the local political system was very open to lower class participation and where that class was intensely politically mobilized.* Furthermore, not all procurements of supposed benefit were the result of reaction or anticipation of working class demand. Measures such as the 1870 Education Act, together with housing, public health and improvement legislation, were often altogether more paternalistically inspired - passed because they were deemed to be good for the working classes. This was one reason why they were often disastrously inappropriate to working class circumstances - and thus hardly integrative in effect.

Quite apart from whatever obstacles the political system placed in the way of working class participation, the relevant point here is that it is often doubtful whether there actually were a set of working class opinions to be appeased, aggregated or otherwise politically catered for. For a start, there was little need to appease the opinions of the very poor. They were rarely articulated, and, even if they had been, their possessors were not even on the "non voter" or compounded ratepaying margins of the legitimate political system. Except at

* Nevertheless, given that party competition is one of the crucial preconditions for working class demands being let into the system, party must be seen as absolutely central to any satisfaction of working class demands that went on.

points of maximum party conflict, no appeasement of "the residuum" was therefore necessary. Parties played little part in their integration. Anyway such people were too apathetic to be dangerous. So their alienation, if regrettable, was hardly likely to be system-shattering.

Furthermore, in many places - particularly factory towns - for long periods, parties were to a large extent simply repositories for the politics of influence so far as the working class were concerned. One voted Conservative or Liberal as an expression of one's deferential place in a dependent local community. In the long term, it is true that party competition - and even more the mutual denunciation that accompanied it - was probably destructive of defence, and thus productive of opinion politics. However, in the shorter term, for many factory employees, party competition often involved little more than becoming excited participants in the rivalry of dependent factory teams.⁵³ In these areas, and for these periods, the competitive appeasement of demand played little part in the process of integration. Rather, in this sense, parties were simply the expression of a form of societal integration that had already taken place through other, non-political, channels - through the factory, the factory neighbourhood and the network of social organizations that were attached to both.

Yet to leave matters here would be misleading. It is worth noting that, even in paternalistic and hierarchical urban communities, working class support apparently could not be taken as unconditional. A certain implicit quid pro quo had still to be paid - certain basic working class needs had still to be catered for. It is symptomatic of the type of society that we are looking at, and of the influence of laissez faire in that society, that such political debts should be paid for through the philanthropic sector. Nevertheless, parties were involved in paying them. This helps explain the appearance in some towns of such bodies as the Bolton Operative Conservative Burial and Friendly Society, or the Rochdale Conservative Equitable Co-op.

In any case, this leads us directly into a consideration of the second - and to twentieth century eyes, less familiar - sense in which parties were involved in the business of integration. Here, it becomes doubly important to remember that we are looking at the beginning of the process whereby the working classes were formally brought within the pale of the Constitution. For - as I have argued elsewhere⁵⁴ - parties (and here I mean local constituency and ward organizations) were deeply involved in attempts to ensure that degree of "political fitness" amongst the working classes that the supporters and the terms of the 1867 Franchise Reform Act assumed but could not absolutely guarantee. And here, the attempt at integration was quite conscious, and in many respects non-partisan and system-preserving in its emphasis. Furthermore, it consciously linked needs in the political sector with others in the social sector.

Activity aimed at procuring political fitness was conducted at two levels - appropriate to the dual meaning of the term itself. At one level, the pursuit of political fitness entailed procuring rationality, ensuring that the new voter was well-informed and that his thought processes were tolerably rational. This involved much more than mere propagandizing. It also entailed a genuine attempt at general

political education. For the working class member, and for whoever else could be tempted in, reading rooms were provided "where papers shall be read and where conversations shall take place on various subjects..."⁵⁵ It was "in institutions of this sort (that) the opinions of the people should, by reading and discussion, be formed and guided upon a good basis, and towards satisfactory and useful ends." In such places "they had admirable newspapers" and members were advised, like the political pupils that they were conceived to be, to "read them, not carelessly, but critically, especially in those points which concerned the welfare of themselves, and their neighbours. Take notes sometimes, preserve cuttings..."⁵⁶ The process of procuring fitness also entailed running regular programmes of debates, essay competitions, mock parliaments and lectures. Many of these last occasions were of course frankly partisan. Yet others were less so, and, like the parties' other activities, all were aimed at political education - not just in party terms, but also in the more general sense of making the recipients fit to take on the new responsibilities of political citizenship. In this way, "those who formed the great masses of the people should become intelligent and well-educated... (and) able to think clearly on all subjects."⁵⁷

At the second level, the pursuit of political fitness brought out still more clearly the essentially middle class preoccupations that underlay the way in which parties attempted to perform their functions in this area, just as they underlay the money that parties used to do so. For it entailed ensuring that the new voter was properly attached to the socio-economic status quo. Here contemporaries were attempting to link political and social integration in rather different ways from those familiar to the twentieth century. The attempt was not at social integration through the satisfaction and aggregation of political demands. Rather the aim was social integration via the instilling of social attitudes and habits of mind. At their most ambitious, parties were trying to ensure that the new voters were drawn into the political system without disrupting either it, or the social order that underlay it. Certainly they became one of the many institutions in Victorian society whose aim was to transmit appropriate sets of integrative values to "our working classes". If successful, then the effect (however unconsciously sought) of this activity was likely to be some limitation of the political demands that they were supposed to be processing - in the sense that a working class properly imbued with self helping ideas was less likely to make unacceptable demands on government. Parties thus potentially became rather elevated sorts of "gatekeepers" in twentieth century terms: not merely were they making decisions about priorities amongst demands in the familiar way: they may also have been exercising a degree of control over what was presented at the gate and got on to the political agenda in the first place.

There is no room here to do more than briefly illustrate these broader sorts of concerns. There was already an indication of them in the earlier discussion of education for rationality where "the opinions of the people" were to "be formed and guided upon a good basis". We get a stronger hint by examining the content of some of the lectures delivered in the party clubs that were the focus of constituency and ward activity. Many were about famous men, and accounts of them read like moral homilies on the rewards available to the suitably virtuous.

Thus Richard Cobden was sometimes held up as an example of what could be achieved by "the son of a small farmer of moderate means" through the exercise of "diligence and aptitude for business".⁵⁸ On the other side of the political fence, a leading Salford Conservative, speaking to "young men who are just embarking on the sea of life" could find no more "encouraging example than Benjamin Disraeli" who commenced life "the son of an outcast, with but a small fortune", and rose to the top "by his genius, force of intellect, untiring energy (and) marvellous patience under defeat."⁵⁹

We get another indication of what was intended from the huge range of social activities that local parties mounted for their members, families and friends. These ranged from regular mass constituency picnics and outings to country houses, seaside resorts etc to the more mundane activities of local political clubs - billiards, draughts, chess, cards, dances, smoking concerts et al. At one level, the intention was simply to provide rewards for services rendered by the party faithful, and allurements into the party for their less political friends. Viewed in this light, there was always the worry that the social means might come to outweigh the political ends. However, from the viewpoint of the broader sort of political fitness we are talking about, it could all be seen as grist to the moral mill. Members of local middle class elites saw such activities as the means of affording "rational" pleasure "free from the endangering and contaminating influence of the public house".⁶⁰ They also saw the clubs as "places where you shall improve yourselves",⁶¹ and as having "a tendency to improve the moral as well as the social conditions of young men".⁶² They also helped procure social peace and better family life through that controllable and limited form of social mingling beloved of middle class Victorians whereby -

a working man and a gentleman could spend a comfortable evening, and afterwards go home to their firesides, and enjoy the company of their wives, and sweethearts... what they learned at that club would have the effect of making young men good husbands in the future⁶³

As this evidence suggests, the expressed aims of such activities, like those that underlay other attempts at social control, varied considerably. Sometimes ambitions were minimal - limited simply to keeping party followers happy. More often, they were more certainly integrative and also included discouraging working class drunkenness, and encouraging thrift and self help. Sometimes, they might include the procuring of social peace through sociable contact. Just occasionally, we get a hint of forms of social engineering sufficient to encourage a neo-Marxist. For one member of Salford's Conservative elite, contemplating party aims at the very outset of working class enfranchisement in 1867, "The object of the Constitutional Association was to prevent the lower classes combining with the rough class, and governing those above."⁶⁴

In passing, it is worth noting that attempts at integration in these wider senses had begun - as we have already hinted - long before 1867, in some places at least. One indication is provided by the activities of the Operative Conservative Associations widely established

in Northern England in the 1830s and 1840s. They were set up as a means of attracting working class non-voters to the Conservative cause, with the purely (or more properly, impurely) political aims of registration and of pressurizing registered voters in Tory directions. Yet their activities spilled over into the social field also. Amongst other things this was evidenced by the almost invariable attachment of a Sick and Benefit Society to the main Operative Conservative organization. In part, like all the other social activities we have been examining, the Benefit Societies were a further means of attaching people to a political cause - a material form of inducement natural enough in an age of mass poverty. Yet these broader activities were also motivated by concerns for social stability in an age when it seemed under threat. As John Bennett told the Blackburn Operative Conservative Association of which he was President -

if we take the constant influx of new population...(into) our manufacturing districts.. the breaking up of the old framework of society.. the breaking up of domestic circles...the reduction of wages, the poverty and discontent, the innumerable temptations to improvidence,.. we need seek no further for the perilous situation...it is the duty of every wealthy Conservative to contribute.. towards the diffusion of conservative principles. It is the duty of every Operative Conservative to encourage his poorer neighbour to become a member...attend our reading room and thereby learn to be content in that station of life which providence has pleased to call him.⁶⁵

It is, of course, hard to demonstrate that all this activity had an effect, hard to show that the aims were transmuted into successfully performed function. As with other areas of 'social control',⁶⁶ it is fairly easy to demonstrate a set of intentions to influence; rather more difficult to show that all intended the same things. It is possible to show that the working classes acted as if they had received the messages that others wished to transmit. The real problems lie in showing that the attempts at transmission actually produced the working class attitudes in question, and that those attitudes had the same meaning in the minds of the intended recipients as they had in the minds of the hopeful transmitters.⁶⁷ Probably, in this case, it depended to a considerable extent upon the degree to which links between the classes built up at the level of party were backed up by other more substantial connexions - most notably by that of employment.⁶⁸ Whatever one's verdict, it is clear that the intended function of political parties in the nineteenth century in this respect differed markedly from the roles performed by their counterparts in the twentieth.

(6) Individual integration.

The last two functions can be dealt with briefly since they overlap with much that we have said so far. Local parties, for a start, clearly played an important part in the integration of individuals into urban society. As with the integration of groups, 19th century parties were arguably more important in this respect than their twentieth century counterparts because they were in at the beginning of the process. The party was one - and an important one - of many institutions inadvertently involved in integrating rural migrants (along

with people of more established urban lineage) into urban society. Alongside bodies such as the churches, the temperance movement and the pub, parties did this by providing avenues for advancement for some, a sense of involvement for rather more, and an abiding means of simple sociability for many more still.

Party offices often provided relatively lowly individuals with channels for social mobility. As we have noted earlier, this was especially the case with people drawn from the lower middle class, who often became key individuals within the local party apparatus by performing time-consuming and humdrum tasks that others above them were unwilling or unable to do. Here of course individual integration overlapped with group integration since the demands that groups made in Victorian society were as likely to be for status and recognition as for material benefit from the state - with individual advancement perhaps often being taken as a marker of group acceptance.*

This last respect apart, there is perhaps little to choose between the avenues for advancement offered by nineteenth century parties and those offered by their counterparts since 1918. However, in terms of the opportunities for a sense of involvement, 19th century parties were surely far more important than their rather pallid successors - at least in the form that they have existed since around the early 1960's. Not much is known directly about the world of the nineteenth century party activist in all his varieties of dedication. However, most of the evidence that does exist - in terms of press reports of elections, audience reaction at party meetings and the like - testifies to the intense excitement that urban mass politics was capable of engendering in rather large numbers of people. At the very least, mass political occasions must have provided a sense of colour and of release from the drab and often dreadful conditions of urban existence. And the elections that parties fought, along with the mass excitement, rituals and involvement that they engendered, very likely helped to give large numbers of people - including first generation migrants - a sense of belonging in the potentially anonymous urban environment.⁶⁹

Similar things can be said of the often spectacular sociable life of local urban parties. By the last three decades of the century, these ranged from party galas and mass outings on the one hand to altogether more mundane facilities and activities offered by the political clubs at ward level on the other. The former offered to the

* If this is true, then one of the key ultimate failures of the Liberal Party, so far as the working class was concerned, was its failure to provide sufficient working class individuals with avenues for advancement (through the party organization, councils, parliamentary candidacies) to satisfy the working class demand for recognition and status. The denial of parliamentary and council candidacies was certainly a key reason for the foundation of the LRC. It may be that status was important in itself rather than simply for the possibilities that political office provided for the advancement of social reform.

thousands who often participated the chance of bright lights and spectacular diversion that was available from few other single occasions. The latter provided the political and not so political with opportunities for warm, friendly and varied social contact available nowhere else outside the pub. One example of each type will serve to illustrate the possibilities. In 1879, the Manchester and Salford Liberals held a joint "demonstration" at Mandley Park, Salford. Aside from "a few short political addresses", the 50,000 who are said to have attended were entertained by a "glee party", numerous recitations, brass bands, a cricket match, archery, gymnastics, conjuring, marionettes, Punch and Judy, performing dogs, and - in the evening - "dancing and a grand ascent of Montgolfier Balloons".⁷⁰ In that same year, there opened, in one of Salford's poorest and dirtiest districts, the Greengate Liberal Club. At its inauguration -

dancing and other amusements were indulged in until a late hour. Mr Wooley provided an electric battery, and, by permission of the patentee, a splendid telephone; Mr William Leach exhibited a polariscope, a microscope etc; Mr Arthur Shafto amused the people vastly by a series of electric shocks administered to the audience by his battery...⁷¹

(7) Organization Alternative to Government.

The nature of the final function has already been implicit in much of the foregoing. It will have already been evident that there are important differences between nineteenth and twentieth centuries in this respect.

It is fairly obvious that 20th century opposition parties do provide organization and ideas alternative to those of the government party. Subject to whatever maladies may be afflicting the main opposition party, they clearly do so at the national level. Given the often stark polarization over policy that has tended to emerge since 1945 and even more since 1970 (a polarization backed up by disciplined caucus organization) it is clear that they also do so at the municipal level. The main doubts about function performance in this latter sphere - and they are highly important ones - are two-fold. Firstly, in 'one party towns', the opposition is too feeble to offer much in the way of effective challenge or alternative to the majority. Secondly, there must be real doubt about how far the local alternative - however effectively presented - is actually noticed by the majority of the municipal electorate, given the near total domination of local electoral behaviour by perceptions of the national government.

In the nineteenth century, the obstacles in the way of effective performance of this function were even greater, and rather different. Performance was thus markedly less effective. There were no great problems at the national level - at least after the rapid emergence of almost total parliamentary discipline, and of the main opposition party as the clearly perceived alternative government. This at least

provided an alternative elite - and increasingly also an alternative set of ideas and policies, shaped and made predictable partly at least by a degree of ideological polarization.

However, except in rare cases (the London County Council being the most notable, and the only enduring, exception), nothing on this scale ever emerged locally before 1918. Conflict, it is true, certainly played a major part in nineteenth century municipalities. Power also changed hands - and did so partly at least because the minority party was seen to represent an acceptable alternative at times when the majority party was perceived to be misgoverning in some way. More generally, the minority party - particularly in periods of intense party conflict - provided a potential vehicle for challenging the actions of the party in power.

Nevertheless, the popular prejudice against party politics in municipal affairs, and the absence of anything other than intermittent and at best opportunistic divisions over municipal policy, ensured that the provision of alternatives was normally likely to be muted and unclear. So too did the tendency for parties to see their municipal battles as being subsidiary parts of larger wars for control of the constituency. More important still in preventing the emergence of a clear cut opposition in most councils was the tendency for party division to break down once inside the council, and once aldermanic seats had been suitably maldistributed. It was the frequent practice in many towns for the minority party to be given a number of committee chairmanships. This made the distinction between 'government' and 'opposition' still more hazy. Consequently maladministration or corruption might well go politically unpunished because the minority party had become too involved in the governing process to issue any sort of effective challenge.

A dramatic illustration of the possible consequences of such situations may be drawn from Salford in the late 1880s. Here, it was discovered that the gas manager, Samuel Hunter, had been taking extensive bribes for municipal contracts for the past eleven years. In spite of growing clamour from a scattering of councillors, and in spite of the unexplained and dramatically increasing opulence of their official, nothing was done to investigate his activities - either by the gas committee or by Salford's Tory dominated but ultimately cross-party administration. Moreover, though attracting massive popular attention, Hunter's misdeeds and the council's neglect of them never became more than a very minor election issue. Even when their manager was reluctantly brought to justice and sentenced to four years in gaol, the majority of the council felt sufficiently safe from political challenge to petition for his release on the grounds that his misdemeanours had been no more than errors of judgement by an ultimately respectable man of affairs.

Conclusion.

It is evident that 19th century urban parties had a rather mixed and certainly different record so far as the functions that a 20th century political scientist might see them as properly performing. As integrators of groups and individuals, they may well have been

remarkably effective in many respects, and were certainly remarkably active and ambitious. This was partly because mass political participation was relatively novel, and partly because parties were consciously in at the beginning of some very crucial integrative processes. Nineteenth century parties were also part of a society amongst whose controlling groups there resided high and optimistic ambitions about changing the hearts and minds of the masses.

In more mundane areas of local politics, the record of 19th century parties is less impressive, and is certainly very different from patterns established since 1918. It is probably true that the functions that they so partially performed could not have been undertaken by anything else. But this said, the pursuit of party interests cannot be said to have served local political processes very well. As recruiters of municipal leadership, parties were best at tapping the services of those whom they had bred and trained themselves. They were far less effective as a channel for, and could become a positive barrier to, the recruitment of others - particularly of those at the top of the social scale, but also, later in the century, of people drawn from near the bottom. When engaged in intense conflict in open political systems, parties organized elections to the participatory advantage of at least some of the socially humble. Yet, when disinclined to battle, or when their interests in battle dictated otherwise, party services to local elections became at best intermittent, inefficient and rather venial. Only occasionally did parties produce policies for government. They were rarely involved in coordinating local government; much more frequently their role was largely neutral; sometimes interest led them to become active promoters of governmental chaos. Overall, while parties were capable of performing considerable services to "responsible government" - in all the various senses in which that term is used - they could also render it nearly impossible so far as the local scene was concerned.

At the same time, we should avoid being too judgemental in utilizing the notion of function. The context in which these parties were operating was a very different one from our own. Questions about how far they fulfilled certain functions need to be put with caution since it is not clear that there would have been consensus amongst contemporaries about the need for all of those functions. Furthermore, the system itself was changing fast and expanding. Indeed, as we have seen, some of the distinctiveness about nineteenth century function performance stems from the crucial role parties played, or attempted to play, in the management of that change and expansion. This suggests that the functions that required performance - or certainly that contemporaries agreed required performance - were likely to change over time.

The need for the performance of some functions is pretty self-evident. Thus any political system requires an effective channel for the renewal of elites. Equally, it is hard to think of a system wherein there is not a need for coordinated government - and this is doubly evident in the nineteenth century given the mounting problems with which urban local authorities were faced. Furthermore, most

systems - certainly those in which mass political participation is even a possibility - operate better, by their own lights anyway, if groups and individuals are socially integrated.

The invariable need for the performance of other functions is rather more problematic - though certainly still worth arguing. There is a strong case that any urban government operates better if it has a prepared set of policies rather than, as often happened in the nineteenth century, a series of hurried responses to crises and revelations. However, it is perhaps hard to expect parties to supply such policies given the obstacle that the widespread belief in laissez-faire placed in the way of governmental anticipation of problems. On the other hand, at the point towards the end of the 19th century when some parties - like the Liberals in Birmingham and the Tories in Leeds - did begin to generate policy, it becomes possible at least to wonder about the majority who did not.

Whether one grants the universal need to organize elections partly depends upon one's vantage point. From that of efficient government, the need is challengeable - and many contemporaries might well have wished to do so. From the viewpoint of the elector, on the other hand, it is hard to deny the need - though, to judge by frequent justifications of non-contest in terms of "saving the ratepayers the expense of a contest", some voters might just have done so. Moreover, at least one historian⁷² has argued that the ineffectiveness of early local authorities in coping with urban problems was due to the absence of effective channels of communication between governors and governed. However, here one has to say that it is by no means certain that popular local government in the nineteenth century necessarily meant active government. Indeed, given the predispositions of "the ratepayers" - including perhaps some of those classifiable as working class - it often meant the reverse.

Overall then, the notion of function provides us with a useful way of comparing what nineteenth century parties did with what they do now. It provides more limited certainty in criticizing them.

What this discussion has hopefully made clearer is what the advent of the Labour Party has brought into local politics. It certainly did not introduce party conflict and party calculation - these were endemic to urban politics. Nor was the bitterness of conflict new. What Labour's appearance did do was to ensure that party considerations were always expressed in overt electoral competitiveness. What had previously been intermittent and intermittently bitter now became sustained. The politics of class provided a reason for contesting local elections even when defeat was certain, and even when constituency considerations did not require local electoral competition. The nineteenth century's nearest substitute as an enduring source of political division - religion - was of insufficiently continuous pertinence to the activities of local government (outside of the Education Boards) to produce the same competitive effect. Class politics also meant sustained programmatic competition and, partly as a result, helped ensure that the capture of local power was consistently valuable in itself - and not just a means to constituency ends. Thus

Labour did not introduce national influence into local politics. Indeed, its appearance arguably lessened the abstractedness of party interventions in the local arena.

All of this has had a major effect on the sort of functions that parties now perform in the local political system. Labour's advent meant that parties by and large ceased even to try to recruit to local government people outside the ranks of those whom they themselves had equipped with the prerequisites to office. It also meant that local elections were always organized, and that all three parties were rival producers to local officialdom of policies for government. From this point on, party discipline would always be a major force in coordinating local government. Finally, Labour's appearance entailed the rejection of a certain sort of conscious, middle class oriented social integration. In this sense, contrary to expectation, parties have become more purely political in the channels through which they seek influence than their nineteenth century predecessors.

Occasional paper 1

FOOTNOTES

¹The references are endless, but see especially Derek Fraser - Urban Politics in Victorian England (Leicester 1978); Ken Young - Local Politics and the Rise of Party: The London Municipal Society and the Conservative intervention in local elections 1894-1963 (Leicester 1975). Young argues that it was the Conservatives who invited party conflict in London.

²See Fraser, op.cit.

³For discussions of these sorts of concerns, see Robert Blake, Disraeli (London 1966) ch XXI; Asa Briggs, Victorian People (Harmondsworth 1965) esp pp 240-71; Maurice Cowling, Disraeli, Gladstone & Revolution (London 1967) pp 50-67; Gertrude Himmelfords, Victorian Minds (London 1968) ch XIII; et al.

⁴Power and Authority in the Victorian City (Oxford 1979).

⁵For development of these ideas, see John Garrard - Leadership and Power in Victorian Industrial Towns 1830-1880 (Manchester 1983) p 26f.

⁶A Bird, Conservative M P for Wolverhampton, 12th October 1912 quoted in George Jones Borough Politics (London 1969) p 48.

⁷W T Charley, Conservative M P for Salford, Salford Chronicle 3 April 1969 p 3.

⁸Salford Chronicle 22 October 1870 p 2.

⁹Salford Weekly News 8 November 1879 p 2.

¹⁰V A C Gattrell in Derek Fraser (ed) - Municipal Reform in the Industrial City (Leicester 1983).

¹¹Salford Weekly News, 9 November 1972 p 4.

¹²See Young, op cit.

¹³It is worth noting, however, that, because of the influence of laissez-faire, local issues were arguably far less common in 19th century parliamentary elections than they are now. By and large local issues centre around implicit or explicit demands for government action, or allegations of governmental neglect.

¹⁴See E P Hennock - Fit and Proper Persons (London 1973).

¹⁵See Garrard, op. cit., p 110f.

¹⁶Jesse Bryant, Salford Weekly News 13 February 1869 p 2.

¹⁷Garrard op.cit. p 110f.

¹⁸Jones op.cit.

¹⁹Manchester Guardian 25 October 1848 p 6.

²⁰See Fraser - Power and Authority op.cit.; the same trends were also evident in Bolton, Rochdale and Salford - the subjects of my own study.

²¹Of the towns I am familiar with, only in Rochdale was religion (specifically) the division between Anglicans and Nonconformists sufficient to lessen non political contact and to polarize philanthropy to any serious extent for any long period.

²²See, amongst other references, the regular comments on the effects of party in the Bolton Chronicle after every set of November council elections in the 1850s and 1860s (eg: 5 November 1859 p 5.)

²³See especially E P Hennock op.cit.

²⁴See Garrard op.cit. p 67f.

²⁵Daunton op.cit. ch.9.

²⁶Garrard op.cit. p 67f.

²⁷See Fraser - Power and Authority in the Victorian City, op.cit. p 161; see also P J Waller - Town, City and Nation: England 1850-1914 (Oxford 1983) p 292f.

²⁸See Tom Nossiter - Influence, Opinion and Political Idioms in Reformed England (London 1975) ch.12.

²⁹Bolton was incorporated in 1838, Salford in 1844 and Rochdale in 1856.

³⁰See Neal Blewitt - "The Franchise in the United Kingdom 1885-1918", Past and Present, No 32 (1965).

³¹See Owen Bush - Bristol and Its Municipal Government 1820-51 (London 1976) ch.7. It is tempting to place electoral corruption in the same category - though it is hard to see parties as active agents here, since they were arguably responding to voters.

³²See Hennock, op.cit. ch 5.

³³As for example in Rochdale before incorporation in 1856 where high levels of party conflict took place in the context of multiple and mainly popularly elective local government institutions. See Garrard, op.cit. ch.7.

³⁴See Young op.cit. It is also worth noting that conflict also centred around the issue of borough centred localism and LCC centred centralization and waged between the Moderates and Progressives respectively. See Ken Young and Pat Garside - Metropolitan London: Politics and Urban Change 1837-1981 (London 1982).

³⁵See especially Hennock op.cit.; see also Daunton, op.cit., ch.9. For counter - see B J Barber, "Aspects of Municipal Government 1835-1914" in D Fraser (ed). A History of Modern Leeds. (Manchester 1980) p 310f.

³⁶See Hennock, op.cit.

³⁷See Bush, op.cit. ch.11.

³⁸See Garrard op.cit. p 150f.

³⁹See V A C Gattrell, "Incorporation and the Pursuit of Liberal Hegemony in Manchester 1790-1839" in Fraser (ed) - Municipal Reform and the Industrial City op.cit.

⁴⁰Councillor Bonsor, Salford Weekly Chronicle, 21 November 1874 p 4.

⁴¹Fraser (ed) - Power and Authority, op.cit., p 82.

⁴²See Garrard, op.cit., p 198f.

⁴³Certainly evidence, in my experience in Rochdale, Bolton and pre-1844 Salford.

⁴⁴See Young, op.cit.; Young and Garside, op.cit. esp. ch.3.

⁴⁵See Young and Garside, op.cit., esp. ch.4.

⁴⁶See John Vincent - The Formation of the British Liberal Party 1857-68 (Harmondsworth 1972); and Pollbooks: How Victorians Voted (London 1967).

⁴⁷D A Hamer - Liberal Politics in the Age of Gladstone and Rosebery, (London 1972).

⁴⁸See Tom Nossiter's arguments about the lack of middle class militancy in Northumberland in Influence, Opinion and Political Idioms, op.cit. Though aristocratic participation in the predominant coal industry was one factor here, so too were the close links that resulted between local aristocracy

and local middle class.

⁴⁹See Norman Gash - Reaction and Reconstruction in English Politics 1832-52 (Oxford 1965); Politics in the Age of Peel (London 1953 & 1977).

⁵⁰See Fraser (ed) - Power and Authority op.cit.; also Urban Politics in Victorian England op.cit.; Bush op.cit.

⁵¹Urban Politics in Victorian England op.cit.

⁵²See Garrard op.cit., ch.8 (on Rochdale).

⁵³See Patrick Joyce - Work, Society and Politics (Brighton 1980) ch.6.

⁵⁴"Parties, Members and Voters after 1867: A Local Study", Historical Journal 20,1 (1977) pp 145-163.

⁵⁵C E Cawley MP, At inaugural tea meeting of St Matthias Constitutional Association, Salford Weekly News, 27 January 1872 p 2.

⁵⁶Arthur Arnold, to inaugural meeting of Greengate Liberal Club, Salford Weekly News 17 March 1879 p3.

⁵⁷Henry Lee, at 'annual soiree' of St Stephens Liberal Club, Salford Weekly News 11 March 1876 p3.

⁵⁸See for example, lecture by G Southern to Pendleton Liberals, Salford Weekly News 29 January 1870 p 3.

⁵⁹Joseph Snape to Broughton Constitutional Club, Salford Weekly Chronicle, 22 March 1879 p 3.

⁶⁰Ald. William McKerrow, to Crescent Ward Liberal Club, Salford Weekly News, 16 May 1874 p 3.

⁶¹C E Cawley, to St Matthias Liberal Club, Salford Weekly Chronicle 27 January 1872 p 2.

⁶²C E Cawley to St Phillips Constitutional Association, Salford Weekly Chronicle 23 April 1870 p 3.

⁶³J L Barrett, Salford Weekly Chronicle 30 January 1875 p 2.

⁶⁴Joseph Snape, proposing formation of Salford Constitutional Association, Salford Weekly News, 7 February 1867 p3.

⁶⁵Blackburn Standard 27 November 1839 p 4.

⁶⁶For summary of problems here, see Garrard op.cit. p 53f; also same author's "Social History, Political History and Political Science: The Study of Power" in Journal of Social History, Vol 16 No 3, Spring 1983 pp 105-121; also F M L Thompson 'Social Control in Victorian Britain', Economic History Review, XXXIV (1981).

⁶⁷See G Crossick - An Artisan Elite in Victorian Society (London 1978); T R

Tholfsen - Working Class Radicalism in Mid-Victorian England (London 1976).

⁶⁸For polar opposites in terms of possibilities, see Joyce op.cit., and Gareth Stedman Jones - Outcast London: A Study in the Relationship between Classes in Victorian Society (Harmondsworth 1976).

⁶⁹See forthcoming Occasional Paper by Michael Hamilton on 19th Century Election Rituals.

⁷⁰Salford Weekly News 30 August 1879 p 3 and 6 September 1879 p 3.

⁷¹Salford Weekly News 17 March 1879 p 3.

⁷²F Vigier, Change and Apathy: Liverpool and Manchester during the Industrial Revolution (Massachusetts 1970).