

Abstract

Political Radicalism in the North East of England, 1830-1860:  
Issues in Historical Sociology

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This work aims to examine the growth, patterning and decline of working class political radicalism in the period 1830-60.

It does so by focussing on one region as a means of highlighting the limitations of simple structural explanations and analyses in detail the factors in culture, ideology, work regimes and labour processes which influenced class formation and class responses to developments in the law and the State.

Regional study is seen as having a crucial contribution to make to explanations at the national level but much existing local history is regarded as being empiricist and atheoretical in its approach. North East labour history in particular has been understudied and undertheorised, and the region's contribution to theoretical and historiographical debate has been less than that of similar regions.

The argument is advanced that there is a need for greater theoretical debate and that a fusion of History and Sociology provides the approach which is most appropriate for such studies to take.

The work proceeds through the consideration of three case studies and argues that the course of the radical movement was sufficiently different from that of other locations to call into question the generalisability of several well established theoretical models.

In such a way this work makes a contribution to the study of North East labour history, to wider debates concerning the historiography of the working class movement, to debates surrounding class and State formation, and to the development of a Historical Sociology which is seen as crucially important to realising the full potential of 'History from Below'.

**Political Radicalism in the North East of England 1830-1860:  
Issues in Historical Sociology**

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Chapter 1Against Parochialism: The Politics of Local Labour History

There were many reasons for wanting to undertake a study of political radicalism in the North East of England in the 1830s-60s. Firstly, no comprehensive study exists and on several grounds it can be argued that one is long overdue. As a region the North East was to the forefront of economic development in this period with coal, iron and railways forming a triple alliance of self generative supply and demand which was at least, if not more central to capital formation as any other set of industries.(1) Large scale capitalist enterprise brought to the region new forms of the labour process and an enlarged workforce at the point of production, suggesting once again that the position of the North East was potentially prototypical in respect of the development of class formation, class consciousness and working class ideologies. At this point the thesis clearly owes a debt to John Foster who has argued for the prototypicality of workers in Oldham as a vanguard group of the working class in the 1830s and '40s.(2) It can be argued, however, that a similar case can be made out for the North East. Yet it remains an area which is both understudied and undertheorised.

Studies of the making of the English working class tend to have been based either in the textile area of Lancashire and the West Riding of Yorkshire (the 'Manufacturing districts') or in the area



served by the memoirs of Francis Place.(3) Yet the North East's position both as an area of early intensive capital development, albeit within a regional framework of considerable feudal legacies, and as a centre of radical activity, logically demands serious consideration. Only by a close reading of local detail can sense be made of issues such as the periodisation, the temporal and spatial patterning of radicalism, the answers to questions such as why, how and where did the working class develop, and why it did, or did not, develop significant revolutionary potential.

Asa Briggs, who set out to purposely counterbalance accepted treatments of radicalism with a series of provincial studies, significantly failed to include the North East.(4) Hence there is a gap where the study of North Eastern radicalism should be.

Such a study would not be without its obstacles. In 1970 Martin Bulmer commented that

although there are a number of political biographies of prominent local figures, there does not exist any sociological study of the structure and dynamics of grass root politics in County Durham. (5)

Bulmer himself attempted to pull together a contemporary sociology of the area by editing a collection of works from different contributors. No similar work, however, exists for the nineteenth century. Instead there are a number of different types of isolated studies which not only fail to connect together, but which also tend to display a singular lack of overt theorisation. Firstly, there are a number of biographies and autobiographies of radical figures such as Robert Lowery, Chartist delegate to the convention of 1839 and later teetotal missionary, Devyr the Chartist plotter who fled to America, W.E.

Adams a subsequent newspaper proprietor and James Williams, a later liberal alderman.(6) Secondly, there are antiquarian collections which constitute a miscellany of 'interesting events' without attempts at categorisation or comment, such as those by Richmond, Sykes and Fordyce.(7) Next there are a number of works which are primarily concerned with other issues but which make important references to radicalism in passing such as the books on the miners' unions by Fynes and Welbourne.(8) Then there are a large number of shorter articles scattered through the volumes of local history publications, national journals, international journals and others.(9) In addition there are some collections of articles such as those gathered by McCord and Challinor and Callcott which might otherwise have found their way to disparate outlets.(10) Finally, there is a group of studies which do not fit neatly into the previous four categories and these are the full length studies by Cadogan, Challinor and Ripley, Colls and Foster.(11)

To date, John Foster's Class Struggle and the Industrial Revolution provides the only systematic attempt to link the North East to developments in general theories concerning the nature of the working class in the period 1830-60. Foster based his study on a contrast between Oldham, Northampton and South Shields, and claims to have found in Oldham a mass radicalism which was developing, or had developed, into a working class movement which was more advanced than that in the other two towns. As such it does provide an initial entry into the study of other regions. For Foster the key difference between Oldham and South Shields was that of its industrial experience. It was

this which enabled its radicals to win the conscious allegiance of organised labour and to secure the intellectual conviction which was the key element in the establishment of genuine class consciousness.(12) The 1830s and 1840s in Oldham saw organised working class agitation on a large scale and a number of features combined to produce this. Prime amongst these was the logic of the development of the cotton industry. According to Foster, the cotton workers had

long been accustomed to see their industry in overall politico-economic terms

and it was the contradictions within this system and the way in which sequences of capitalist crises developed which produced the milieu in which the discussions and arguments of the radicals could achieve support on a mass scale.(13)

South Shields, and by implication much of the rest of the North East, was considered by Foster not to have developed a mass working class political radicalism precisely because its crises did not reflect the contradictions of the overall system in anything like the same kind of way. South Shields' industry, and shipping in particular, did not have this same advanced capitalist logic

... Employees could very plausibly claim that the real causes of depression were beyond their control - more the result of the government's anti protectionist policies and competitive from abroad. And the obvious conclusion was that both masters and men should unite to defend their livelihood. So here ... one gets labour not developing its own perspective but captured by that of the employers. (14)

In this way South Shields' working class leaders are considered to have failed to develop the intellectual commitment which would have been decisive.

Foster weaves his narrative into a theoretical framework which encompasses Leninist notions both of state power and of the role of intellectual leadership of a cadre group. It also links the working class movement to developments in the regional and national capitalist economy and, through Oldham's radical members of Parliament, ensures that the influence of Westminster politics is not neglected. Foster's explanations for the long term failure of radicalism are similarly informed. He investigates changes in the labour process, in imperialism and its effects on the development of a labour aristocracy which removed part of the intellectualising leadership from the vanguard group to the extent that the wider working class movement lost its momentum. Education and other forms of liberalisation are also investigated as a ruling class response to problems of control. By 1847 the working class movement's leadership had

started to disintegrate. A significant number of previously loyal working class leaders now moved into alliance with certain sections of the bourgeoisie. It was this that really confused and dispirited the movement; and did so precisely because it resulted from a new plausibility in arguments for the existing order, not from outright repression. (15)

Criticism of Foster's work will be considered later but for the moment it remains the most theoretically informed of all the works on the North East, many of which have avoided the challenge presented by Foster's seminal study, which are covered by the present survey. As such, Class Struggle and the Industrial Revolution will remain a continual reference point for the present study in the way in which it remains suggestive of a number of frameworks against which North East evidence can be assessed.

Challinor and Ripley's The Miners Association: A trade union in the age of the Chartists lays no similar claims to theoretical sophistication. It is nonetheless a very important book which covers a similar geographical focus to Foster in that the North East and Lancashire also constituted the epicentres of the Miners Association of Great Britain. One of Challinor and Ripley's main arguments is that the common separation of trade union from political radicalism is not a tenable position. Instead political radicalism, in the form of Chartism, and mining trade unionism, are seen as intimately linked. Thus

the membership of the Miners Association could be divided into three groups. First, those who had come from Chartism into the Union, the Chartists-all-along brigade. Second, those who started with the limited objective of improving miners' conditions but who, in the course of the struggle, had come to see the wider social implications, broadening their horizons to include a critique of the political order. And, third, those miners who identified themselves with Chartism, not because they were particularly concerned about political rights, but as a gesture of defiance, an act of rebellion against their masters. (17)

Challinor and Ripley employ a straightforward class consciousness approach to both forms of working class activity. Thus as middle class radicals defected from Chartism, Challinor and Ripley consider that the movement

became a more genuinely working class movement, directing its message to the ranks of the proletariat. (18)

Such an approach is not without its difficulties, however, and is in many ways a retrograde step from the careful analysis of Foster. Challinor and Ripley cite with approval the comment by Schoyen that

in small villages lying out from Newcastle the exhortation to arms was being taken quite literally ... a strong tradition of owner-paternalism had been replaced by an extremely class conscious Chartism. (19)

The anomaly that class consciousness should be found in its most advanced form in 'small outlying villages' is allowed to pass without further investigation.(20)

Ultimately, however, the class consciousness approach gives way to a Whig interpretation whereby the only things which are seen as historically valid are those which are seen as having led in some way to an aspect of the present.(21) Chartism needs to be studied because five of its points ultimately became law while the role of the Miners Association becomes important for its contribution to later and current trade unionism with its moderation and class collaboration.(22) Thus Challinor and Ripley write of the significance of the Miners Association lying in the fact that

other, stronger and more enduring miners unions have risen from the ashes, and the lessons of their brothers in the 1840s are there for them to see. (23)

Equally its greatest success lay in that

its concern about Parliament and the need to secure legislation favourable to the working class has been inherited by successive generations of the miners right down to the present day. (24)

In the aftermath of the coal disputes of the 1970s and '80s it is likely that Challinor and Ripley would wish to re-write this last part of their conclusion, but in the late '60s economy the passage illustrated graphically the dangers of analysing history with contemporary values, producing an interpretation which the authors themselves may now be embarrassed by.

The third of the full length studies, The Colliers Rant by Robert Colls, also takes the issues of political radicalism and

coalmining as central concerns. Colls eschews what he calls 'the empirical tradition in social history' when a 'spurious objectivity is the scholars pride' and instead looks for evidence of class consciousness as lived experience through the words of 'the song and more general cultural evidence'.(25) Colls' overall thesis seeks to show how the miners' self image as embodied in the stereotype of Bob Cranky - a big hewer who was also a champion athlete, a bonny singer and a good fighter - underwent significant change as the miners experienced different forms of ideological incorporation into the changed nature of the later Victorian and Edwardian economy. Colls argues that

The National Miners' Association accommodated both Cranky and chapel instincts, but its organisation was mainly Methodist and its political principles were mainly Chartist. (26)

Despite Colls' noble intentions, however, the interweaving of information, argument and theorisation loses the power of his more orthodox work.(27) Norman McCord, in review, criticised The Colliers Rant as uneven, patchy, imbalanced, ingenious, selective, unreliable and a-historical.(28) Yet the wealth of evidence investigated by Colls, and the attempt to evaluate neglected areas which contribute to a fuller picture of working class consciousness in the nineteenth century, must be applauded.

The same unfortunately cannot be said of the final book length survey to be considered here. Cadogan's Early Radical Newcastle remains one of the few attempts to synthesise working class activity in Newcastle in the first half of the nineteenth century yet it fails dismally to produce illuminating insights into the vanguard nature of

that class or the conditions which spawned it.(29) Events and dates are chronicled in antiquarian fashion with the odd unsupported value judgement thrown in for good measure. Cadogan states blandly that

1829 and 1835 witnessed the spectacular advance of the theory and practice of political union between the middle and working classes ... this was the supreme political achievement of the whole of the nineteenth century in Newcastle. By 1839 however Chartism turned out to be an essentially working class movement and its collision with the authorities and middle classes was head on. (30)

Thus while Challinor and Ripley, Foster and Colls all cast an oblique, but nonetheless illuminating light across the issues of working class political radicalism in the North East, Cadogan provides little more than a guide to the general areas of neglect, and this antiquarian and non-cumulative approach to knowledge bedevils many of the other types of sources to which attention can now turn.

Antiquarian studies themselves, which are the second category of literature on North East radicalism, can now be turned to. Nineteenth century antiquarian studies did not make claims to be anything other than disconnected nuggets of information. Thus Fordyce can sandwich a section on Chartism between a report of a North Shields lady's one hundredth birthday and an announcement of the opening ceremony of the Blaydon to Elswick Shot Tower section of the Newcastle to Carlisle railway.(31)

Disconnected antiquarianism in more recent general studies, which leaves local history looking extremely parochial, is much harder to accept. Some of the popular histories of the North East not only fail to acknowledge developments in wider historiography but fail to mention the course of early nineteenth century working class movements

altogether, while others give them very cursory treatment. Examples of total neglect include Norman Sunderland's A History of Darlington, J.C. Dewdney's Durham County and City with Teesside, and Tom Corfe's History of Sunderland.(32) Other, more specialised books, make references to the working class movement which are both slight and misleading. Examples include T.J. Nossiter whose Influence, Opinion and Political Idioms in Reformed England: Case Studies from the North East 1832-74 included the statement that

though Chartism was strong in the early part of 1839, it disappeared overnight with the failure of the Sacred Month of strike action in August. (33)

Welbourne and Fynes, in their respective studies of the North East miners, also gave short shrift to issues of wider political radicalism. Welbourne wrote that

though the Chartist teachings had a welcome among the pitmen there was no readiness to sacrifice prosperity for political principle. The man who would starve to raise his wages would not strike in the cause of manhood suffrage. (34)

Fynes, even more remarkably, was able to pass from 1832 to 1844 without mentioning the intervening politicisation. Issue will be taken with each of these accounts at a later stage.(35)

These general histories do not provide much to work on with respect to working class political radicalism but there are two major autobiographies which are of direct relevance. Devyr's The Odd Book of the Nineteenth Century and Lowery's teetotal magazine autobiography which was reprinted as Robert Lowery, Radical and Chartist.(36) Devyr's Odd Book contains much of his later life in America, to which he fled after the Chartist plottings of 1839, which is of little consequence

to current concerns. But his insider's story of 1839 remains one of the few reminiscences for which no contemporary reputation was at stake at the time of his writing. Having successfully settled in America, Devyr had few constraints to worry him and his account possesses a vitality, though not perhaps an absence of exaggeration, which other accounts lack.

The same, however, cannot be said of Lowery. In 1839 Lowery possessed a reputation for intemperate speeches and muskets were available from his shop yet this is concealed in his later writings.(37) His subsequent career as a teetotal lecturer led Lowery to write the story of his earlier career from the perspective of his moral regeneration while at the same time glossing over his earlier excesses. In this context it was possible for his twentieth century editors to introduce his book with an approach which sought to stress Chartism's connection with later liberalism rather than as a class conscious movement.(38)

There are other autobiographies which touch on the impact of Chartism but little has survived concerning other forms of radicalism.(39) Generally speaking the major source of published material lies in the form of journal articles. Before going on to look at these it is necessary to state some major reservations. The most important point to note is that much of the research which has been done has failed to use theoretical models in an explicit way with the result that an alleged atheoreticity has stood as a substitute for the exposure and critical analysis of individual standpoints. Theoretical models have existed, quite naturally, but they have been implicit, and

their existence has often been denied. Perhaps the most prominent example of this has been the way in which David Rowe and W.H. Maehl engaged in an empiricist debate over the course of North East Chartism.(40)

In this confrontation each side held to a notion of some absolute historical truth and accuracy of interpretation which ultimately proved barren since the authors argued from opposing theoretical positions. Had the two opponents been prepared to acknowledge their different theoretical standpoints the debate could have been much more fruitful. As it was their absence of reflexivity produced an impasse whereby neither side made their position clear, and hence were not called upon or challenged to define, elaborate or modify their implicit theories in ways which would have produced greater clarity and sophistication of the positions held.

The major points of the Rowe-Maehl debate will be surveyed presently but it is worthwhile starting from this debate because of the limitations of labour history which it highlights. Many of the other North East studies also contain theoretical assumptions which have not been made explicit, and hence have gone unchallenged, to the detriment, not just of North East historical scholarship, but to theoretical debate as well. There has been very little attempt to locate local studies within the frameworks of wider reaching controversies. E.P. Thompson's The Making of the English Working Class and John Foster's Class Struggle and the Industrial Revolution, for example, contain assumptions about the region which should be either challenged or developed.(41) They provide models of explanation

against which local evidence could, and should, be measured. Yet local scholarship has not only failed to engage with the assumptions and findings of these key studies, but it has failed generally to enter into any serious debate with theory.

The range of theoretical frameworks within which Chartism, for example, can be located, have been identified and clarified by F.C. Mather.(42) He points to four main strands within Chartist historiography. First Chartism has been seen as a distress movement - a question of hunger politics and a straightforward cry of the oppressed against the hardship of the so-called 'hungry forties'.(43) Such an analysis, which characterises some local studies, denies to Chartism both a history and a historical legacy. As a temporary phase it is regarded as having carried little or nothing of long term significance and was destined to disappear with the conditions which are regarded as having spawned it. The second approach is to see Chartism as a defence of civil rights and an essentially retrospective movement seeking to restore the privileges of the 'free born Englishmen'.(44) Like the first approach, the 'defence of civil rights' fails to take cognisance of the changed economic position of the workers, of the change in the tempo of capital developments, and the change in the nature of the varying workers' relationship to that development.

The third and fourth approaches do contain this wider economic and political awareness. There are those who see Chartism as an early, if not the earliest manifestation of man's working class consciousness, arguing that since Britain had the first mass

industrial proletariat, it was inevitable that it should also have the first mass proletarian political movement.(45) In direct contrast stand those who see Chartism as an early manifestation of liberalism, noting that five of the Chartist's six points eventually became law and that many former supporters of the movement themselves became liberals in later years.(46)

Another set of contrasting approaches to Chartism is that of functionalism versus Marxism. To a degree the Marxian approach is covered by Mather's 'class consciousness' explanation but the role of the class struggle as the engine of social change in the Marxian model is not stressed by Mather. This model however stands in direct conflict with those models which can be described as functionalist, in which working class agitation is seen as an aberration from the 'normality' of a stable and harmonious society. Rather curiously, this approach contains within its own parameters two quite different explanations. In one Chartism is seen simply as dysfunctional to the wider society. In the other an approach similar to that of Coser is taken, whereby working class agitation is regarded as positively functional in that it let the government know that something needed to be done in order to ensure continued harmony.(47)

Studies of North East Chartism have tended not to display any great awareness of these models, yet have used them without acknowledgement. Several, for example, have combined elements of the distress model with that of the liberalism model, yet the distress approach fails to consider that the North East, at least until 1840, was enjoying considerable economic prosperity. Early Chartism

was strong despite an absence of the conditions which seemed to favour it elsewhere.(48)

In some respects North East labour history has fallen into the trap which has befallen much 'history from below'. The rediscovery of the lives and struggles of ordinary people which 'history from below' heralded, was originally regarded as a radical and necessary departure from history's preoccupation with the lives of royalty, politicians and other persons of power. In doing so, however, much of the new history has become trivial and insufficiently theorised such that separate findings are not related to each other, nor are they related to complementary studies of longer historical span or contrasting political focus.(49) The history of the working class in one area and one decade for example is studied in a vacuum without relating it to what was happening elsewhere in the country, to what changes were occurring in the economy, to what political developments were taking place at Westminster, and so on. 'History from below' may well have been a useful antidote to an excess of 'history from above' but it was never intended as a complete replacement.

The worst examples of this genre can be criticised for their parochialism, their narrowness of vision, their absence of theoretical consideration and their failure to consider developments in the wider society. They also tend to treat unrest as essentially episodic and to be guilty of what Donnelly terms the compartmentalisation of different types of activity.(50) According to Donnelly economic or political unrest are often taken as if they are different species, yet it is difficult, if not impossible, to categorise unrest in this way, and

since power flows from economic sources any distinction would seem to be largely without point. Not only is the distinction pointless in theory however - empirically its weaknesses can be demonstrated too.(51)

Compartmentalism is aided by the treatment of unrest as episodic. In 1831 the Reform riots took place in Nottingham, Bristol and Derby, in 1831-2 the miners' strike took place in the North East and in 1834 the Tolpuddle Martyrs were sentenced in Devon. In 1836 the London radicals campaigned for press freedom, in 1839 the first Chartist convention moved to Birmingham and in 1842 the Miners Association of Great Britain centred on Lancashire and the North East. Each of these 'episodes' can be read as a separate event, within a geographically limited area. If the unrest can be categorised as respectively political - industrial - industrial-political - political-industrial, then the fluctuations can be exaggerated into a notion of pendulum swings which in turn can be attributed to some form of economic motor.(52)

This myth has acquired some degree of acceptance yet even allowing for the fact that the categories of unrest stand up ill to close scrutiny, an investigation of the personnel involved in these activities reveals a remarkable continuity, even among the persecuted leadership. William Lovett, for example, was active in the National Union of the Working Class in the agitation leading to the first Reform Bill, campaigned for the pardon and return of the Tolpuddle Martyrs, was prominent in the campaign to repeal the taxes on knowledge and was a leading figure in the first Chartist

convention.(53) George Loveless, one of the Tolpuddle Martyrs, returned to attend the Chartist convention while Thomas Hepburn, the North Eastern leader, led the miners' strike of 1831-2 and played a prominent role in Chartism.(54)

Such examples are merely the tip of the iceberg but they serve to highlight the dangers and inadequacies of compartmentalism. Instead what is needed is a holistic approach which, in Donnelly's words, is

prepared to see the complex relationships between ...  
seemingly disparate phenomena. (55)

Taking account of all this leads to the possibility of constructing an ideal-type of 'history-from-below-within-a-regional setting' against which existing studies can be measured. Such an ideal type would display the following characteristics:

- it would be sensitive to the continuities and links with other events in its own region and those occurring outside its own region.
- it would recognise and seek to avoid the dangers of compartmentalism and would seek to avoid writing history as a series of disconnected events.
- it would be sensitive to developments in economics and politics both regionally and nationally.
- it would be sensitive to historical and historiographical controversies and to theoretical debates. It would make its own theoretical position explicit with the intention of making the fullest possible contribution to historical scholarship.

With this as a blueprint it becomes possible to assess the contribution made to the study of North East labour history by a wide variety of articles, and these can be taken in an order which

approximates to the periods which constitute the focal concerns of each. Thus it is possible to commence with H.T. Dickenson's Radical Politics in the North East of England in the Later Eighteenth Century. This useful and informative booklet recognises the role played by miners and keelmen in the various disputes of the late eighteenth century.(56) It uses, however, the imagery of a pre-industrial social order. At various points it invokes notions such as the common people, the ordinary working classes (sic) defined as 'those below the level of petty tradesmen and skilled artisans', the labouring classes and the labouring poor.(57) Despite this, Dickenson offers a fairly sympathetic sketch which points both to the links between industrial and political activity and to the vicissitudes of the radical movement - particularly with regard to its relationship to the progress of events in France.

The second author is one of the most respected historians of the North East of England. In 'Some Labour Troubles of the 1790s in North East England' (International Review of Social History, 1968) Norman McCord, along with D.E. Brewster, catalogued some of the disputes of the keelmen and miners while taking a line that was stridently opposed to the position held by E.P. Thompson and his supporters.(58) McCord and Brewster commented that

In the 1790s the working classes of Britain were not an oppressed proletariat, helpless before an unholy alliance of employer and authority. The reality was at once more complex and more healthy ... the background of these various disputes does not present the picture of a working class alienated from the established order of society. (59)

Indeed, were it not for the horrors of impressment

we would be left with a bright enough picture of social relations in North East England. (60)

For McCord and Brewster popular hatred of the press gang was a far greater threat to social stability and the acceptance of legitimate authority than any number of trade and political issues and this speaks volumes for McCord's views on politics and the State to which return will shortly be made.

In direct contrast, Alan Milburn looked at the same period and was able to adopt a thoroughgoing class based model for his analysis.(61) He wrote that

Seventy years before Chartism claimed its historical role as the first mass political expression of working class interests, the keelmen of the Tyne had recognised the need for independent action if (their) interests were to be defended. (62)

He points out that when keelmen were asked why they did not go to the magistrates with their grievances, they replied that since most magistrates were coalowners and fitters - the source of their grievances - then it was little use looking to that same body of men in different guise for redress. Relations of power and justice in this area were clearly weighted against working men so that their struggle against harsh conditions involved both political opposition (vis-a-vis the magistrates) as well as industrial opposition against their paymasters. Milburn does not make the mistake of differentiating economic and political struggle. On the contrary he writes that

'The Rights of Man' were sown in a fertile soil. The decade of the 1790s was one of economic uncertainty, high food prices and economic upheaval. In the North East, the early years of the decade were a time of mass labour unrest. In 1792-3 alone, there were at least twelve strikes, including major stoppages by both the seamen and keelmen. Although later analysis has tended to agree with

the opinion of the contemporary commentator 'that there seems nothing of a political nature in the (1792 seamen's strike)... and that the sailors appear heartily attached to the Government of the Country', other evidence points in a somewhat different direction. (63)

The connection of the political 'Rights of Man' with the industrial strike movement of the early 1790s is both perceptive and a step away from arid compartmentalism. The coalescence of Paine inspired unrest with traditional forms of popular protest became both a reality in itself and the great fear of the propertied class in a way which represents a major challenge to the McCord position. In support of his own view Milburn cites Powditch the shipowner as having remarked

When I look round and see this country covered with thousands of Pitmen, Keelmen, Waggonmen and other labouring men, hardy fellows, strongly impressed with the new doctrine of equality, and at present composed of such combustible matter that the least spark will set them in a blaze, I cannot help thinking the supineness of the Magistrates very reprehensible. (64)

Despite this evidence of political activity in the 1790s, and despite evidence of continuing politicisation, some authors still claim to find little evidence of radical opinion in the ensuing two generations. Norman McCord has again written on the 1819 disturbances where strikes and reform demonstrations took place in the aftermath of the Peterloo massacre. He takes a firm view that disputes can be separated into 'social' (which sometimes includes 'industrial') disputes and 'political' disputes. He argues that the keelmen, seamen and pitmen strikes of 1819, while taken seriously by the magistrates, never developed links with the demands for political reform. He further considers that the demonstrations held by the radicals after

Peterloo were not part of a wider political and trade union movement although the authorities were concerned lest one should develop. Thus he writes that

there is nothing to suggest that the strikers or other discontented elements involved were attempting to work for any long term political change ... there was not in fact to be much in common between the strikes of 1819 and the political agitation of that year. (65)

What happened was merely a

.. coincidence of the two activities ... a junction between the strikers and the political demonstrations.

To this extent

there was not a scrap of wider political purpose behind the two important local strikes of 1819. (66)

It is worth citing extensively from McCord because of his important position and the depth of his scholarship. While he has produced no single book on political radicalism his numerous articles, together with his general book on the region's development, sustain an anti-theoretical stance whose impulse has had lasting effects on North East studies.(67)

McCord's version, however, is hotly disputed by Milburn and the differences in approach are highlighted most graphically in the following passage. According to Milburn,

1819 was the year of popular disaffection. It saw strikes and monster political meetings, like that in Newcastle on the eleventh of October which was called to protest at the slaughter of people at Manchester - Peterloo - and which was attended by up to 100,000 demonstrators, including reform societies from Winlaton, Gateshead, South and North Shields and Sunderland. In communities like that of Winlaton groups of revolutionary radicals now assumed a greater importance than at any time previously. 700 of them turned up at the above meeting with pikes prepared for the revolution to start. (68)

In contrast, McCord adopts a functionalist approach in which stability and state control are paramount virtues and in which working class agitation is at best an irritant and at worst evil. According to McCord,

There seems little evidence ... for the existence of a continuous, very widespread, popular support for radical political agitations. (69)

The early 1830s saw two major developments in the form of the strikes of 'The United Association of Colliers on the rivers Tyne and Wear' and the reform demonstrations of 1831-2. Much has been written on the 'Hepburn union' of 1831-2 which achieved initial victories but was ultimately defeated. A recent article by Carol Jones gives a comprehensive account of the dispute which links it with the next wave of union activity in the 1840s but which otherwise fails to develop many wider or longer term implications save to argue that the actions of the employers was a

high handed display of power (which) provoked a violent response which was generated from the sub-cultural level and which was beyond the control of the rational reasoning behind the trade union. It was an emotional reaction to subjugation, a reaction of despair. (70)

A fuller analysis is, however, given in the thesis on which the article was based. Here Jones argues that the union was essentially a defensive attempt to hold on to perquisites and notions of craft status which had been granted in the eighteenth century but which were now under pressure from developments in market forces and capitalist rationalisation.(71)

The political crises of 1831-2 are similarly served by research which has been chiefly concerned with sketching the chronological

bones of the issue. Campey, for example, wrote of the 1832 election in South Durham while neglecting to consider the long term significance of that year or, indeed, of the ferment which surrounded the event. She writes simply, and somewhat cryptically, that 'the mood for reform was given a boost' and then concentrates on the speechifying and political philandering of the major parliamentary candidates.(72) Ian Hunter does run the rule over class relations in Newcastle only to conclude ruefully that

Tyneside during the struggle for the Reform Bill of 1832 was unusual both in the lack of any significant intransigent Tory opposition and, on the other hand, in having an unusually uninterested working class. (73)

If this is correct then Newcastle clearly sits at odds in comparison with other similar towns of the period. Indeed, in Sunderland, class relations evolved rapidly with radical leadership rising within different layers of society.(74) The movement for reform was a popular one and the consequences of reform for the town's political development were profound. If it is true that Newcastle did not experience these currents of agitation then the reasons for this and the consequences of it should surely make for concern and an issue for further research.

The measures of the Whig government elected in the post reform period sparked much opposition throughout the country. The wave of Owenite-related strikes in 1833-4 has been little researched for the North East although there is evidence of activity at Hetton, Bishop Auckland and Barnard Castle.(75) The 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act on the other hand has received fairly extensive treatment from Norman McCord and Peter Dunkley.(76) Both authors give a favourable view of

the operation of the New Poor Law, at least down to 1842. Dunkley considers the mid 1830s Poor Law to have been somewhat indigent, only giving way to the officially approved parsimony at a later stage. He writes that

As the pauper host increased, the means of its relief diminished, and the charitable impulses of the thirties disappeared in the scramble for solvency. Local attitudes toward poor relief were inextricably bound up with the willingness of the guardians and ratepayers to provide the required funds, and that willingness was almost entirely shaped by immediate economic conditions. (77)

Opposition to the New Poor Law was a contributing factor to the development of North East Chartism with J.R. Stephens an early popular figure in Newcastle. Dunkley's approach rests on fairly straightforward hunger politics assumptions, yet his terminology, incorporating vagrants, the indigent and notions of 'the pauper host' loses sight of the general and widespread fear held against the law and the way that such an impact can be interpreted in class terms. The contrast with E.P. Thompson, for example, is perhaps the most striking. For Thompson,

The Act of 1834, and its subsequent administration by men like Chadwick and Kay, was perhaps the most sustained attempt to impose an ideological dogma, in defiance of the evidence of human need, in English history. (78)

Thus there is a sense in which the opportunity to investigate local class responses to the Poor Law Amendment Act has gone begging. Again it is McCord who has argued that opposition to the poor law

can be shown to be exaggerated or unfounded. A political origin for many of the acts can be clearly demonstrated.

The poor law commissioner (Walsham)

was viciously attacked by left-wing radicals, but such journals as the Northern Liberator do not seem to have been widely representative.

Walsham himself, by contrast, was 'an eminently sensible man'!(79)

Politics is thus used as a label of abuse in the way in which opposition to the poor law is seen as political while the Act itself is not. In terms of method official poor law reports and the commissioner's private papers are seen as being more 'representative' than evidence of mass meetings and popular support for the radical press. Again there are grounds on which McCord's view can be challenged.

Hovell and Dolleans have pointed to the importance of opposition to the New Poor Law as a factor in the rise of Chartism.(80) Yet if Dunkley and McCord are correct in minimising the effect of hostility to the New Poor Law in the North East, how are explanations of Chartism's rise in the area affected? Conversely, if the New Poor Law became harsher in 1842, then why did Chartism not enjoy a stronger revival?

Two other major developments of the 1830s had an impact on the North East. The introduction, or threat of introduction, of the rural police aroused strong hostility although little work has been carried out in this area in the manner in which Storch approached the North West.(81) Owenism in the North East has however been examined by Ray Challinor.(82) In a trilogy of pieces Challinor gathers a series of interesting fragments on the Owenite Socialists and their relationship and attitudes towards organised religion, Chartism and the cooperative movement. Challinor contends that cooperatives, far from being a rallying ground, actually weakened the radical movement in the longer

term, writing that

the involvement of quite a lot of their leading members in managing these small cooperatives sapped the strength of their political organisation. (83)

Challinor's writings leave several major questions unanswered such as the nature of the composition of the socialist body in the North East, the nature of its geographical distribution, particularly between urban and rural areas, and the impact of its female speakers and egalitarian message on a workforce operating in a predominantly male economy.(84)

Challinor also fails to draw any contrasts between socialism in the North East and elsewhere leaving the impression that the progress of the movement in the region was typical of that of the country as a whole. By contrast, however, the comparative approach is central to the work of John Foster. In his 'South Shields Labour Movement in the 1830s and 1840s' (North East Labour History Society Bulletin, 1970) he emphasises precisely what he sees as a lack of militancy in South Shields when compared with Oldham and Northampton.(85) In part he points to the economic base of the town:

Technological stagnation in shipping, shipbuilding and dependent trades (employing three-quarters of Shields' labour force) meant that unlike the dominant industries of Yorkshire and Lancashire their sequence of prosperity and slump did not directly derive from the characteristic cycle of capitalist development. There was no locally demonstrated link between labour saving investment, lower commodity values and the crisis of profitability.(86)

Elsewhere he contends that for South Shields trade consciousness did not become class consciousness because the specific problems faced by South Shields did not in themselves suggest anti-capitalist solutions.(87)

The remainder of the North East however also shared the feature

of having its capitalist development out of step with that occurring elsewhere yet political radicalism did succeed in thriving among the working class. Clearly the conditions which hindered its growth in South Shields (according to Foster) seemed to permit if not to actually promote its growth in the rest of the region. Foster does acknowledge the existence of Chartists in South Shields, but alleges that 'the significant thing is that ... they achieved so little'.(88) The reasons for this, he states, were that

the movements success or failure depended not so much on the actual extent of the economic distress as on the degree to which labour's pre-existing understanding of the immediate industrial situation had already prepared the ground for a larger class analysis. (89)

Several points need to be noted here. Foster argues that the ground for a class analysis was prepared in the industrial situation. Issue can clearly be taken with this in that many Chartist leaders speakers and theoreticians were not themselves industrial products. Foster seems to underestimate the contribution to radicalism which could have come, for example, from oppression at the hands of the magistracy and the forces of property. The area had, in any case, vivid memories of the recent miners agitation as well as the history of unrest covered by McCord and Milburn. It had, after all, been a South Shields magistrate that had been murdered during the pitmen's dispute.(90) Foster seems to have underestimated the nature and the extent of South Shields radicalism altogether - particularly in respect of its Chartist activities. He states, for example, that the shipwrights made little contribution, yet this ignores the evidence of shipwrights in the nominations to the Chartist general council with at

least one shipwright as treasurer to the local party.(91)

In Class Struggle and the Industrial Revolution Foster devotes only one page to Chartism in South Shields - sufficient only to support his thesis that radicalism was disappointing in the town in ways which form the basis of a contrast with the situation in Oldham.(92) Yet he notes that a powerful Chartist movement developed in other North Eastern districts without offering any substantial explanation. Whether or not one accepts Foster's thesis concerning the basis of political radicalism it must be recognised that his employment of theory and his linking of local evidence to national questions constitutes a significant advance on the parochialism of many of the other articles discussed in this chapter and 'South Shields Labour movement in the 1830s and 1840s' marks a significant contribution to the region's labour history.

But if Foster's work is notable for its relative neglect of Chartism in the North East, the subject itself is reasonably well covered elsewhere. Rowe and Maehl have written on the region as a whole, though with an emphasis on Tyneside, and Rowlands has produced a similarly Newcastle based up-date.(93) Pat Storey has written on Sunderland while Hastings has covered the South of Durham county.(94)

Rowe and Maehl indulged in a controversy whose publications spanned fourteen years. Two major points of Maehl's first publication, 'Chartist disturbances in Northeastern England 1839' (International Review of Social History 1963) incited a heavy response from Rowe. The first was Maehl's somewhat overstated case that

Chartism in Northumberland and Durham attained a stridency and vehemence which was rarely matched and never excelled elsewhere. (95)

Chartism, according to Maehl, was a protest movement:

with the aid of a long radical tradition, dating at least from Peterloo (these) discontents focused on a political outlet. Chartism became grafted onto earlier demands for reform, such as requests for expanded franchise and the protest against the Poor Law Amendment Act already under way in the region. (96)

Yet while Maehl recognised the complexity of issues leading to Chartism's rise, he saw its fall in terms of hunger politics:

most of the workmen of the North East were too comfortable to want to strike. (97)

Rowe offers a different interpretation. In 'Some aspects of Chartism on Tyneside' (International Review of Social History, 1971) he argues that Maehl

tends to exaggerate the significance of Chartism in the area. (98)

According to Rowe the elements which led to Chartism in the North East were a coupling of a critique of 'old corruption' with a vision of Chartism as a road to higher wages and better living standards.(99) He expressly denies the significance of a developed or developing working class consciousness, stating that it

seems unlikely at such an early period and there is certainly little evidence in the North East at this time of the build up of such a feeling which might have led the working classes (sic) into Chartism. (100)

Somewhat paradoxically Rowe's explanation for the subsequent decline of Chartism involves a recognition that the working class interests could be identified since class collaboration, presumably suspended during the heady days of 1838-39, re-emerged:

In the months after the big London meeting the old accord between middle and working class reformers in Newcastle re-appeared. (101)

Rowe's terminology however shows that he views working class agitation generally as a malfunctioning of society and a problem for the state to handle. Successful handling brought society back to a position of stasis. In this way Rowe's conservative ideological assumptions are very close to those of McCord which were discussed earlier, and the way in which these influence the presentation of Chartism is nowhere more clear than over his analysis of the role played by the miners. Here Rowe and Maehl conflicted sharply. For Maehl 'the backbone of the movement were the coalminers'(102) while Rowe argues that Maehl

tends to exaggerate ... the extent to which the pitmen were active in the movement. (103)

This issue is taken up in detail later, yet it is important here because of the way in which the debate over the pitmen became the focus of the contrasts between the two approaches. Maehl went on to accuse Rowe of being 'sharply polemical', while Rowe chose to avoid citing Maehl as far as possible while continuing to present additional or re-worked material to support his interpretation of events.(104)

The central issue however appeared as a debate over the 'historians craft' rather than over the assumptions and models with which each worked. The value of primary sources such as Devyr, the reliability of magistrates reports to the home office and the degree of statistical exaggeration of crowd numbers in the press are all examples of the kind of evidence which was re-examined and marshalled to support one side or the other. Each side appeared to subscribe to a holy grail of the 'correct' interpretation which would be an achievable goal if only the other side would take off their blinkers.

The notion that each side based its case on different theoretical preconceptions which could, and should have been challenged at base, was altogether neglected. Yet Rowe and Maehl's work abounds with theoretical assumptions, of which the class collaborationist versus hunger politics distinction is but one. Rowe employs a variant of the pendulum theory, seeing a basic oscillation between trade union and radical activity according to economic circumstances.(105)

In both of his major works on North East Chartism Rowe contends that the movement was strongest in new collieries which had not developed conservative traditions and where the agitation was linked with 'social fragmentation'.(106) Rowe's incipient functionalism leads him to see order and stability as the natural order of things with movements such as Chartism mere aberrations. Again an ideological conservatism works to obscure rather than examine critical issues such as the nature of the state form and the working class challenge to it. Failure to recognise these assumptions leads to some amusing methodological gaffes. The Chartist Whit Monday meeting of 1839 for example, was attended by a crowd which was estimated at between 80-140,000. Rowe states that

many people were there out of curiosity and having nothing better to do. (107)

One is left wondering how he knows this!

The postscript to all this probably lies with John Rowlands' article 'Physical Force Chartism on Tyneside in 1839' in M. Callcott and R. Challinor (eds) Working class politics in North East England, 1983. Rowlands rehearses the debate and reviews the evidence with regard to physical force Chartism in the North East and arrives at a

conclusion not dissimilar to Maehl, that

few areas displayed the enthusiasm or preparations for violence which Tyneside manifested in 1839. (108)

The failure to build on this, according to Rowlands, was due to the absence of strong leadership and a cadre group, ready willing and able to organise the movement in the wake of Newport.(109)

While Rowlands narrowed his geographical focus to Tyneside, Pat Storey took up the issue for Sunderland. Work which started as background research for a M.Litt thesis eventually found its way into a series of publications.(110) Storey's work is meticulous and an essential starting point for a study of radicalism in the town, yet her overall thesis is framed by her wider efforts to locate the origins of later radical liberalism in Sunderland, and by the constraints imposed on any narrative by the liberalisation of one of Sunderland's key Chartist figures.(111) This provides Storey's work with an underlying model of liberal pluralism similar to that employed by Nossiter whose work on Sunderland was discussed earlier.(112)

The south of the region remained virtually uncovered by the work of Rowe and Maehl. Hastings took up the case for South Durham, recognising that Chartism had been weaker there and seeking to explain this by reference to the area's economic base and labour processes.(113) South Durham was largely rural, but it also contained a strong branch of the textile industry which included large numbers of the distressed outworkers who were so important to Chartism elsewhere. Their grievances however, are considered to have come to nothing in an economically diverse area:

Although South Durham and the North Riding had their centres of decaying industry and economic difficulty in which Chartism was usually strongest, they were part of an area which in all remained relatively prosperous during the first Chartist outbreak. (114)

The industries on which such prosperity lay included coal, shipbuilding, port activity, agriculture, lead mining in the Pennines and railways.

Hastings' overall thesis is that

Chartism in South Durham and the North Riding ... failed to take any serious root because the area lacked a strong Chartist centre equivalent to Newcastle or Sunderland ... in the absence of an effective centre the bid to carry the Chartist message to the depressed linen weavers and to the agricultural labourers ... was inevitably doomed to failure. (115)

Elsewhere Hastings employs an approach to Chartism's failure which is based on hunger politics rather than organisational deficiency. Thus he argues that

in the absence of sufficient economic hardship and discontent, the labourer knew nothing of politics. (116)

Despite this Hastings' stress on urban centres as a geographical focus of leadership and support is a new and potentially fruitful approach to analysing the radical movement.

A number of more minor studies of North East Chartism are available but for the present it is worth considering the depth and longevity of the movement.(117) Far from it 'passing overnight' as some have claimed, Chartist influence had a long term influence on the working population which was seen as insidious by the Miners Inspectorate over ten years on.(118) The inspectorate encouraged education as a means of combatting the Chartist legacy, and the way in which education came to be used in the North East has been addressed

by Robert Colls. He writes that

education ... was the climax in a struggle for cultural hegemony which owners and others had waged with the pitmen for nearly thirty years ... the new schooling policy had two primary objectives. First to break down the traditional patterns of working class self education by a process of substitution. Secondly to build up the new by an almost Jesuitical concern for the rising generation of pit children. (119)

Colls then offers a different approach to explaining the long term demise of political radicalism, incorporating these notions of cultural hegemony which are absent from many of the other studies reviewed here. A contrast of the major contributions to North East Chartism can now be attempted in summary form (Table 1).

In conjunction with the material surveyed for the pre-Chartist phase, these then constitute the elements which could be combined to make a history of North East radicalism in the first half of the nineteenth century. Yet apart from a few notable exceptions the criteria for good 'history from below' as laid out earlier are rarely followed, with some authors expressing surprise that anyone should find their work interesting or important at all. Thus there is little recognition of the nature and role of the State or of recent historiographical debates over theory and the region's potential contribution to them. Instead the region, and events within it, are taken in isolation in a way which remains parochial and unsatisfactory.

Most significant of all is the way in which local labour history, by neglecting these wider issues, has generally failed to be cumulative in its effects. Theoretical problems are either not considered or left unresolved with the result that much that has been

produced still tends towards the antiquarian.

In general then many of the studies can be characterised as thoroughly researched, but compartmentalised, episodic and atheoretical. This becomes clearer when one looks at what has been omitted. There are some notable gaps such as the impact of the Reform crisis outside Newcastle and Darlington, the impact of Owenism outside Newcastle and the impact of the Complete Suffrage Union generally.(120) Economically the south of the region came under the influence of textiles and the capitalist development therein, whereas the bulk of the region experience a mixture of capitalism and feudalism in the organisation of coal extraction. The major urban centres on the other hand had greater diversity of commercial interests and different forms of labour processes within those interests which in turn provided for different characteristics among their workforces.

The ideologies of workers and their employers and the way in which these interacted within the region is an area which has great significance but has been little examined, while the relationship between urban and rural forms within the region remains another major area of neglect. Similarly the relation of labour forms and ideologies to the economic structures within the region remains an underdeveloped issue. Paternalism for example has been researched by scholars looking at the later nineteenth century but for the earlier decades we have only accounts which are written in traditional form ('from above') rather than from the view of paternalism as experienced from below.(121) Paternalism itself is taken as monolithic and unquestioned

in a way which does not do justice to the variety of forms which paternalism took and the differential impact which this had on labour relations. Again this is an issue which will be taken up later.

Overall the general lack of theorisation of North East studies needs to be remedied and there are a number of important theoretical frameworks which can be tested against the evidence from the North East to mutual benefit. Indeed the variety of evidence within the region provides a major challenge to theories of class formation which have been developed mainly in relation to Lancashire and the West Riding. In return what these theories can offer a study of the North East are explanatory frameworks which bring in previously neglected variables. The most significant of these is the State, for since political radicalism challenged the State, the latter's stability cannot be taken for granted, and yet this is precisely the implicit assumption which has underpinned much of the previous work on the region's working class movements. Thus the State is referred to as 'clamping down' on political radicalism while the nature of the State and the changes which it was undergoing are left uncharted.

This then was the basis of the current project: to write a history from below of the radical movement in the North East which connected both with mainstream history and with pertinent historical controversies in a way which paid attention to theoretical concerns. It is to this latter that the next chapter turns.

Table 1Summary of Models Employed in Studies of North East Chartism

<u>Author</u>	<u>Explanation of Chartism's Rise</u>	<u>Explanation of Chartism's Decline</u>	<u>Basic Model Employed</u>
Rowe (1971, 1974, 1977)	A radical critique of old corruption and a demand for higher wages	Onset of 'prosperity'	Functionalism. Chartists as irritants to system
Maehl (1963, 1975)	Class consciousness growing. Protest movement	Hunger politics	Underdeveloped class model/ functions of social conflict approach
Rowland (1983)	Political discontent	Absence of strong cadre group	Ill defined Leninism
Storey (1979, 1981, 1984)	Split in radical ranks. Frustration of younger members. Link with coalfield distress	Moderation of leadership	Liberal pluralism. Whig interpretation
Hastings (1978)	Distress	Absence of strong urban centre. Organisational difficulties and hunger politics	Functionalist
Colls (1976, 1977, 1981)	Development of working class consciousness, traceable through song.	Assertion/ Reassertion of cultural hegemony	Class model. State power. Hegemony.

## Chapter 1

### Notes

1. Gareth Stedman Jones, 'Class Struggle and the Industrial Revolution', New Left Review 90, 1975 summarises the position in arguing that 'railway building is what, more than anything else, resolved the capitalist crisis of the thirties and early forties. It lessened the impact of cyclical crisis, stimulated coal, iron, steel and machine production, and resolved the crisis of profitability. More than any other single factor, it assured the successful transition to a modern industrial economy'. (p.66)
2. John Foster, Class Struggle and the Industrial Revolution, (Methuen, 1974).
3. E.P. Thompson's seminal, The Making of the English Working Class, (Gollancz, 1963) is an example of the former tendency while Neville Kirk, The Growth of Working Class Reformism in Mid Victorian England (Croom Helm, 1985) provides a more recent example. E.A. Musson, British Trade Unionism 1800-1875 (Macmillan, 1972) offers a critique of the latter approach.
4. Asa Briggs, Chartist Studies (Macmillan, 1959).
5. M. Bulmer, 'Social Structure and Social Change in the Twentieth Century' in Dewdney, J.C. (ed.), Durham County and City with Teesside (Newcastle, 1970), p.421.
6. Robert Lowery, Radical and Chartist by B. Harrison and P. Hollis (eds), (1979); W.E. Adams, Memoirs of a Social Atom (New York, 1903); T.A. Devyr, The Odd Book of the Nineteenth Century (New York, 1882); W. Brockie, Sunderland Notables (Sunderland, 1894).
7. T. Fordyce, Historical Register of Remarkable Events (1868); J. Sykes, Local Records or Historical Register of Remarkable Events (Newcastle, 1866); T. Richmond, Local Records of Stockton and Neighbourhood (1868).
8. R. Fynes, History of Durham and Northumberland Miners (Sunderland, 1873); E. Welbourne, The Miners Unions of Northumberland and Durham (Cambridge, 1923).
9. Local history societies with useful publications include Durham County Local History Society, Sunderland Antiquarian Society, North East Labour History Society. North-East based articles also appear in Northern History, International Review of Social History (IRSH), Durham University Journal, Albion, Economic History Review, Past and Present etc.

10. N. McCord (ed.), Essays in Tyneside Labour History (Newcastle, 1977); M. Callcott and R. Challinor (eds), Working Class Politics in North East England (Newcastle, 1983); R. Sturgess (ed.), The Great Age of Industry in the North East, (Durham, 1981); R. Sturgess (ed.), Pitmen, Viewers and Coalmasters, (Sunderland, 1986).
11. P. Cadogan, Early Radical Newcastle, (Consett, 1975); R. Challinor and B. Ripley, The Miners Association - A Trade Union in the Age of the Chartists, (Lawrence and Wishart, 1968); R. Colls, The Colliers Rant, (Croom Helm, 1977); J. Foster (1974) op.cit.
12. J. Foster (1974) op.cit., p.106-7.
13. ibid, p.117.
14. ibid, p.120.
15. ibid, p.206.
16. Chapter 7 returns to a more detailed consideration of some aspects of Foster's work.
17. Challinor and Ripley, op.cit., p.23.
18. ibid, p.23.
19. A.R. Schoyen, The Chartist Challenge (1958), p.42; Challinor and Ripley, op.cit., p.12.
20. As is the equally problematic issue of paternalism to which return is made in Chapters 5 and 6 below.
21. This incorporates issues of methodology as well as values. Methodologically that which has led to an aspect of the present is more likely to provide accessible data for historians to use. Thus Whig history favours the successful at the expense of the incompletely recorded. See F.K. Donnelly, 'Ideology and Early English Working Class History', Social History 1976, for a fuller discussion, and Chapter 2 below.
22. Thus Challinor and Ripley write of 'the road to moderation, which exists for workers today, offered little hope', op.cit., p.249.
23. ibid, p.250.
24. ibid, p.249.
25. R. Colls, op.cit., p.9-11. See also M. Vicinus, Broadsides of the Industrial North, (Frank Graham, 1975) and D. Harker, One for the Money: Politics and Popular Song (Hutchinson, 1980) for further

discussion of songs as evidence. M. Milne in 'The Tyne Mercury and Parliamentary Reform 1802-1846', Northern History XIV, 1978, similarly attempts to trace the temperature of radicalism through fluctuations in the fame and fortunes of The Tyne Mercury.

26. R. Colls, op.cit., p.152.
27. See for example 'Oh Happy Children, Coal Class and Education in the North East', Past and Present, vol.73, 1976.
28. Northern History, 1978, p.284-6.
29. Although published in 1975, little or no reference is made to any works after 1949. Important national issues raised by E.P. Thompson, E. Hobsbawm and others, and local issues raised by N. McCord and D. Rowe are simply ignored.
30. P. Cadogan, op.cit., p.134-5.
31. Fordyce, op.cit., p.111-112.
32. N. Sunderland, A History of Darlington (Darlington, 1967); J.C. Dewdney, Durham County and City with Teesside (Newcastle, 1970); T. Corfe, History of Sunderland (Frank Graham, 1973).
33. T.J. Nossiter, Influence, Opinion and Political Idioms in Reformed England. Case Studies from the North East 1832-74 (Harvester, 1975), p.149.
34. Welbourne, op.cit., p.54.
35. For Nossiter, see below, Chapter 3; for Fynes and Welbourne see below, Chapter 4.
36. T.A. Devyr, The Odd Book of the Nineteenth Century (New York, 1882), R. Lowery, Robert Lowery, Radical and Chartist (reprinted 1979), edited by B. Harrison and P. Hollis. See also B. Harrison and P. Hollis, 'Chartism, Liberalism and the Life of Robert Lowery', English Historical Review, 1967.
37. Northern Liberator, 9.3.1839. See also J. Rowlands, 'Physical Force Chartism on Tyneside in 1839' in M. Callcott and R. Challinor (eds) Working Class Politics in North East England (Newcastle, 1983) for a recent re-assessment of Devyr, Lowery and the region's potential for violent action.
38. B. Harrison and P. Hollis, op.cit.
39. W.E. Adams, Memoirs of a Social Atom (New York, 1903); John Wilson, Memories of a Labour Leader (1910); F. Mewburn, The Larchfield Diary (London, 1876); G. Halliwell, 'Fifty Years and After' (Newcastle Weekly Chronicle, 1895).

40. D. Rowe, 'Some Aspects of Chartism on Tyneside', IRSH, 1971; D. Rowe, 'Tyneside Chartism' in N. McCord (ed.), Essays in Tyneside Labour History (Newcastle, 1977); D. Rowe, 'Tyneside Chartists' NELHS bulletin 8, 1974. W.H. Maehl, 'Chartist disturbances in Northeastern England 1839', IRSH, 1963; 'The Dynamics of violence in Chartism: A case study in Northeastern England', Albion, 1975.
41. E.P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class (Gollancz, 1963). John Foster, Class Struggle and the Industrial Revolution (Methuen, 1974).
42. F.C. Mather, Chartism and Society (Bell and Hyman, 1980), especially pp.14-45.
43. For an assessment of the various positions taken in the debate over the 'Hungry Forties' see B. Inglis, Poverty and the Industrial Revolution (Hodder and Stoughton, 1971), foreword to the Panther edition, 1972.
44. The Chartists themselves thought that a democratic heritage had only recently been lost and that it was a restoration of civil rights for which they were fighting.
45. K. Marx, The Revolutions of 1848 ed. D. Fernbach (Penguin, 1973) p.100-101. See also F.C. Mather, op.cit., pp.131-2.
46. F.C. Mather, op.cit., pp.39-45; B. Harrison and P. Hollis, op.cit., J. Vincent, The Formation of the Liberal Party 1857-68 (London, 1966).
47. L.A. Coser, 'Continuities in the Study of Social Conflict' (New York, 1967); F.K. Donnelly, op.cit.
48. D.J. Rowe, op.cit., W.H. Maehl, op.cit. and R.P. Hastings, 'Chartism in South Durham and the North Riding of Yorkshire 1838-9', Durham County Local History Society bulletin 22, 1978, all stress the contribution of distressed workers to the Chartist movement while accepting the general relative prosperity of the region. There is no sustained attempt to reconcile the paradox.
49. See Chapter 2 below for a fuller discussion.
50. F.K. Donnelly, op.cit., pp.224-229.
51. A similar compartmentalism has attempted to categorise the activities of miners as industrial rather than political: Welbourne op.cit., p.54. See Chapter 4 below for a fuller critique of this approach.
52. E.A. Musson, British Trade Unionism 1800-1875 (Macmillan, 1972) provides a good summary and critique of the different variations

- of the pendulum theory. See also W.W. Rostow, The British Economy in the Nineteenth Century (Oxford, 1948) pp.122-125; G.D.H. Cole, 'Some Notes on British Trade Unionism in the Third Quarter of the Nineteenth Century' in E.M. Carus-Wilson, Essays in Economic History (1962).
53. G.D.H. Cole, Chartist Portraits (London, 1941); William Lovett, The Life and Struggles of William Lovett (London, 1876).
  54. Mark Hovell thought that George Loveless had not taken his seat at the Convention: The Chartist Movement (Manchester, 1918). It is now clear that he did attend early meetings of the Convention and retained an involvement throughout the 1840s. See The Northern Star 26.10.39; Dorothy Thompson, The Chartists (Wildwood, 1984). Similarly Hepburn's role in Chartism has been widely ignored or underestimated: W.A. Moyes, The Banner Book (Frank Graham, 1974); R. Fynes, op.cit.; E. Welbourne, op.cit. For a corrective to this view see The Northern Star 17.11.38, 25.5.39, 13.2.41, The Northern Liberator 27.4.39, 6.4.39 etc.
  55. Donnelly, op.cit., p.229.
  56. H.T. Dickenson, Radical Politics in the North East of England in the Later Eighteenth Century (Durham, 1979).
  57. ibid, pp.12, 16, 17, 19 respectively.
  58. N. McCord and D.E. Brewster, 'Some Labour Troubles of the 1790s in North East England', IRSH, 1968; E.P. Thompson, op.cit. (1963).
  59. N. McCord and D.E. Brewster, op.cit., p.381-383.
  60. ibid, p.376.
  61. A. Milburn, 'The 1790s and Radicalism in North East England', NELHS bulletin 17, 1983; 'The Radical and Labour Movement in the North East 1760-1838', Sunderland Trades Council May Day Magazine, 1982.
  62. A. Milburn (1983) op.cit., p.16.
  63. ibid, p.17.
  64. Home Office papers: Powditch to Home Office 3.11.1792. Cited in Milburn, ibid, p.18.
  65. N. McCord, 'Tyneside Discontents and Peterloo', Northern History, 1967, pp.91, 94.
  66. ibid, pp.94, 109.
  67. N. McCord, North East England. The Region's Development (Batsford, 1979).

68. A. Milburn (1982) op.cit.
69. N. McCord (1979) op.cit., p.79.
70. R. Fynes, op.cit; E. Welbourne, op.cit; C. Jones, Industrial Relations in the Northumberland and Durham Coalfield 1825-45; PhD thesis, Sunderland Polytechnic, 1985. C. Jones, 'Experiences of a strike: The North East Coal Owners and their Pitmen 1831-1832' in R. Sturgess, Pitmen, Viewers and Coalmasters (Sunderland, 1986), p.51.
71. C. Jones, thesis, pp.162-3; see also P. Sweezy, Monopoly and Competition in the English Coal Trade 1550-1850 (Cambridge, Mass., 1938).
72. L.H. Campey, 'The 1832 Parliamentary Election for the Southern Division of the County of Durham', Cleveland and Teesside Local History Society bulletin 42, 1982, pp.23-26.
73. I. Hunter, 'Tyneside and the Reform Act of 1832', NELHS bulletin 16, 1982, p.11.
74. See below, especially Chapter 3.
75. Durham Chronicle 21.2.1834, 14.3.1834. See also E. Welbourne, op.cit.; C. Jones (1985) op.cit.
76. N. McCord, 'The Implementation of the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act on Tyneside', IRSH, 1969; P. Dunkley, 'The Hungry Forties and the New Poor Law: A Case Study', The Historical Journal, 1974; P. Dunkley, The New Poor Law and County Durham, MA Thesis, University of Durham, 1971; see also A. Digby, P. Hastings, M. Rose, R. Wells, The New Poor Law (Middlesbrough, 1985).
77. P. Dunkley, 1974, op.cit., p.344, for J.R. Stephens and the anti poor law agitation see G.J. Holyoake, The Life of Joseph Rayner Stephens, Preacher and Political Orator 1881. See also Champion, 23.12.1838.
78. E.P. Thompson, (1963), op.cit., p.295.
79. N.McCord, (1979), op.cit., p.94-5, 106.
80. M. Hovell, op.cit.; E. Dolleans, Le Chartisme 1830-1848, (1949).
81. R.D. Storch, 'The Plague of Blue Locusts. Police Reform and Popular Resistance in Northern England', IRSH, 1975; see also C. Steedman, Policing the Victorian Community, (RKP, 1984) for a differing perspective.
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Contradictions' and 'Chartism and Cooperation in the North East', NELHS bulletin 16, 1982.

83. R. Challinor, 1982, op.cit., p.38.
84. See below, Chapters 5 and 6.
85. J. Foster, 'South Shields' labour movement in the 1830s and 1840s' NELHS bulletin 4, 1970.
86. ibid, p.5.
87. J. Foster (1974) op.cit., esp. Ch.4.
88. J. Foster (1970) op.cit., p.4.
89. Foster argues that politics in themselves were the key factor, ibid, p.5.
90. Nicholas Fairless. For accounts of Fairless' murder and subsequent events see Fynes, op.cit.; C. Jones (1986) op.cit.; British Labour Struggles: Contemporary pamphlets 1727-1850, Labour Disputes in the Mines (New York, 1972).
91. The Northern Star, 27.11.1841, 20.5.1843, 4.11.1843.
92. Foster (1974) op.cit., p.106.
93. D. Rowe, 1971, 1974, 1977; J. Rowland 1983; W.M. Maehl 1963, 1975, op.cit.
94. R.P. Hastings, op.cit.; P.J. Storey, 'Two Sons of the Wear who left their Mark', Sunderland Echo, 12.5.1981; Entries on G. Binns and J. Williams in J.O. Baylen and N.J. Gossman, Biographical Dictionary of Modern British Radicals, vol.2 (Harvester, 1984).
95. Maehl, 1963, op.cit. p.389.
96. ibid, 392.
97. ibid, 413.
98. D. Rowe, 1971, op.cit., 17.
99. ibid, 73.
100. ibid, 18.
101. ibid, 39.
102. Maehl, 1963, op.cit., 393.

103. Rowe, 1971, 17.
104. Maehl, 1975, op.cit.; Rowe, 1977, op.cit.
105. Rowe, 1977, op.cit., 79. He does, however, acknowledge that 'there was a long period in which the two movements were intermingled'.
106. Rowe 1971, op.cit., p.33. Rowe follows closely the position of Welbourne here, op.cit., p.32. The pitmen population was very mobile within the region and this produced differences in age structures between the various collieries. See M. Sill, Coal Mining Communities in County Durham in the Mid Nineteenth Century: Socio-economic structure and labour mobility (Newcastle); G. Patterson, 'Monkwearmouth Colliery in 1851' (Durham, 1977) for implications of these trends, and Chapter 6 below for further discussion.
107. Rowe, 1971, p.27.
108. J. Rowlands, op.cit., p.15.
109. For links between Newport and the North East see D. Jones, The Last Rising, (Oxford, 1985) and Chapter 3 below.
110. P. Storey, 'Sunderland Newspapers 1831-72', Antiquities of Sunderland XXVII, 1979; 'Two Sons of the Wear', 1981; 'George Binns' and 'James Williams', in J.O. Baylen and N.J. Gossman, 1984, op.cit.
111. James Williams. For details of his career see P. Storey, op.cit. and W. Brockie, Sunderland Notables (Sunderland, 1894).
112. T.J. Nossiter, 1975, op.cit.; Elections and Political behaviour in County Durham and Newcastle 1832-1874 unpublished D.Phil. thesis, Oxford, 1968.
113. R.P. Hastings, 1978, op.cit.
114. ibid, p.7-8.
115. ibid, p.13.
116. ibid, p.14.
117. Examples include How Darlington rode the Chartist Storm (Cutting-Darlington public library); The Sunderland By Election, Schools Council Project.
118. Parliamentary Papers, 1850, State of the Population in Mining Districts.

119. Colls, 1976, op.cit., p.96; note also the debate between Colls, B. Duffy and A. Heesom: 'Coal, Class and Education: Debate' Past and Present, 90, 1981.
120. See Chapters 3 and 4 below.
121. M. Kirby, Men of Business and Politics: the rise and fall of the Quaker Peace dynasty of North East England 1700-1943 (Allen and Unwin, 1985) and R. Moore, Pitmen, Preachers and Politics (Cambridge, 1974) have concentrated on paternalism in the second half of the nineteenth century. A. Heesom has looked at the paternalism of Lord Londonderry throughout this period in 'Entrepreneurial Paternalism: The Third Lord Londonderry (1778-1854) and the Coal Trade', Durham University Journal, 1974. For recent assessments of paternalism generally see P. Joyce, Work Society and Politics. The Culture of the Factory in Later Victorian England (Harvester, 1980); M. Burawoy, The Politics of Production (Verso, 1985) and Chapters 5 and 6 below.

## Chapter 2

### Service or Partnership: The Role of Theory in the Study of Radical Movements

North East labour history has therefore been noticeably bereft of explicit theory and has (with very few exceptions) kept itself outside the mainstream of historical debates such as those which have surrounded the making of the English working class, the nature and significance of the labour aristocracy, and the relationship between trade unionism and political radicalism.(1) Such issues must, however, be engaged with if the study of the region's labour history is to become anything more than parochial and antiquarian. Subsequent chapters will accordingly seek to relate North East developments to theories which have been developed elsewhere while the current chapter considers the primary need for greater theorisation in itself and the forms which this might take.

The majority of North East labour history has never made its theoretical frameworks explicit. In part this stems from a dislike or distrust of 'theory'. Where closer investigation is made, however, it is seen that theoretical assumptions frequently have been made, and that these invariably turn out to be assumptions of structural functionalism. Each of these issues can be addressed in turn.

On the question of the role of theory generally, the position of those who eschew its importance is difficult to understand. Von Ranke, writing in the nineteenth century, argued that History, understood in

developmental terms, supplied the key to the understanding of all things human while at the turn of the twentieth century Lamprecht, Berr and Turner all called for a closer integration of history and the modern social sciences.(2) Despite these early attempts to define history as a social science, narrative history has retained a stubborn appeal even when applied to areas which were opened up by wider developments in politics and society.(3) Regardless of their hundred year pedigree, social science based approaches are still disparagingly dubbed 'new history' or, worse still, accused of dallying with 'fashionable mushroom disciples'.(4)

Narrative history generally has recently undergone something of a revival.(5) According to Neild and Seed,

the concept of narrative intuitively appeals to historians for various reasons. It seems to capture the particular and factual qualities of history as against the universality and theoreticism of science ... narrative also emphasises the essentially human character of history, its concern for central subjects and their reasons for action, rather than the apersonal forces that drive them on. (6)

This underestimate of apersonal forces is even more problematical for studying a region as it is difficult to keep sight of national trends and developments as well as their differential geographic impact. Yet this is only one criticism which can be levelled at narrative history. More serious is the way in which narrative history poses as value neutral in a manner which is either epistemologically naive or politically adroit. All history involves assumptions and models, however well hidden they may be. As a bare minimum we may take recognition of the formative contexts in which historians work as well as the general view of society which underlies their work. Taking each

of these points in turn we can note first that historians perform their research and conduct their writings in a moment which is itself a product of historical forces. As Arthur Marwick has rather crudely put it,

Historians are captives of their own society and will interpret the past in accordance with the preoccupations and assumptions of that society. (7)

One might add that if the assumption of society's homogeneity which Marwick holds is not shared, then the historians' 'preoccupation and assumptions' deserve much closer scrutiny. If society is seen in terms of pluralism or conflict then the implications for reconsidering historians' interpretations are considerable.

On the second issue, that of the general view of society which underlies any historical work, there have been two dominant stands - Conservative historiography and the Whig interpretation of history. Conservative history has been described as

the view of the establishment - the historical perspective of the privileged and propertied minority. (8)

The Whig view of history on the other hand holds

the view that the important aspects of any period of history are those that seem to lead directly to some aspect of the present. (9)

Both Whig and Conservative history are concerned to present 'the facts' but in doing so not only are their assumptions not laid bare, but concepts and theories are smuggled in with a sleight of hand which may not do justice to the evidence to which it is meant to relate. Invariably these concepts and theories are of a structural functional nature but it is the failure to make them explicit and the absence of reflexivity which weakens the potency of the arguments advanced. When

doubt is thrown upon the narrative, however, the story tellers are likely to drop the facade of atheoreticism and value neutrality. As Abrams has argued:

respectable historians seriously committed to answering "how it happened" questions commonly can and do take up non-narrative strategies of explanation without appearing to feel that they are thereby betraying their integrity as historians ... in practice narrative historians tend to abandon narrative rather rapidly when the credibility of their stories is challenged. (10)

What they fall back on is what is 'taken for granted' yet this itself should be the subject of investigation.

Narrative then can provide at best only a partial explanation and any attempt to delve deeper necessarily involves embarking on a theoretical mission which, to the narrative historian may be seen as a digression, but which is central to any thoroughgoing attempt at a full understanding. Narratives themselves require that the facts be ordered, that a theme or themes be chosen, and that points of entry and exit be considered. In all this the historian's choice cannot be made in a theoretical vacuum. As Neild and Seed have noted,

the historian's way of colligating data into significant narratives always involves a value-laden perception of what constitutes particular historical wholes. (11)

Abrams goes a stage further and argues that historians must confront their own value laden perceptions and make them explicit:

because what is being represented is not just "the facts", however well researched, but an interpretative arrangement of the facts, historians must be able to discuss the arranging they have done ... if knowledge and debate are to accumulate it is necessary to place one's explanatory design with all its connections and weightings of connections, assumptions of significance and influences of structuring squarely before the reader. (12)

Such practices are of course rare amongst historians generally

but Whig and Tory histories are particularly lacking in explicit theorisation. Some historians, however, do attempt to acknowledge their theoretical practice. Marwick, for example, has argued that theory, in terms of its character, value and limits, is one of the two most central points in understanding the nature of historical enquiry, with the methods of analysis, criticism and interpretation as the other.(13) On the other hand, many historians are still either neglectful of, or openly hostile to, theory. John Roberts, for example, has recently held that there are four main avenues for future historical research: the study of neglected topics, the study of familiar topics by way of data not previously thought relevant, the review of familiar evidence for unexpected significance, and the use of new methods of examining and utilizing evidence.(14) Abstraction and theorisation are thus seen to have little or no place, while sources and methods are still seen as the touchstone of the historian's craft.

Gillian Peele alleges that historians' aversion to general theories and their unwillingness to examine the status or nature of their explanations is a specifically English trait.(15) She further accuses English historians for being unenthusiastic towards the insights, and even the methodological innovations which might be borrowed or adapted from kindred disciplines such as anthropology, sociology and political science. For Peele the contrast which is most marked is that between British and American history, yet a cross-disciplinary impetus can be found much closer to home.

Bloch, Febvre, Braudel and the Annales school, for example, have

conceived what can be regarded as 'historical social science' which attempts to produce

a comprehensive "total history" that emphasises structure over development, culture and society over politics, collective behaviour and attitudes over the ideas of individuals. (16)

According to Royden Harrison, however, this 'new' history, which

tries to be total with respect to its subject matter; interdisciplinary and comparative with respect to its method; gregarious in its disposition; and cooperative in its way of carrying on, falls down because it does not know how to identify triviality. (17)

Harrison believes that much 'new' history is in danger of becoming a 'folksy sort of antiquarianism' in that it fails to separate the random and inconsequential from that which is truly 'important'. Yet this is surely a justification for more interdisciplinary model transfer rather than an argument for retreating into narratives of individuals and events seen as important in the light of undisclosed theoretical premises. It is the lack of models rather than their existence which leads some 'new' history into blind alleys. Rather than abandoning attempts at synthesis, efforts should be redoubled to tighten up new history in ways which dissipate the danger which Harrison has identified. Theory can and must be incorporated into historical study and attention must now turn to how best this might be achieved.

The Centre for Contemporary Culture Studies have noted that the uneven and difficult relationship between theory and history calls for a renewal of effort rather than abandonment. They have been particularly concerned to analyse the period of the 1970s when theorisation was at a peak, engendering 'relentless epistemological

anxieties' and appearing to some to be barren of genuine advances in historical research. This 'moment of theory' led in turn to an anti-theoreticisation backlash which, they argue, is potentially more destructive of historical analysis than the earlier obsession with theory was. The members of the Centre have attempted to salvage some of the developments of that era, arguing that historical analysis must feed off and then modify theoretical elucidation.(18)

Two of the fiercest critics of self-avowedly atheoretical history are Nield and Seed. They argue that much of what currently passes as history fails to question its methodological assumptions and also fails to make reference to theoretical controversy and debate whether it is in its own field or in related areas of other social sciences. Thus they allege that

There is a vacancy where the field of critical historiography ought to be. (19)

Sociology has arguably been the field of social science most wantonly neglected by the type of historian against whom Nield and Seed take issue. Marwick has described the two disciplines as having

a love-hate relationship resulting from ancestral coupling and feuding as intense as any which bedevilled the lives of the Forsytes. (20)

Their practitioners have been scornful of each other's exertions with sociology caricatured as 'history with the hard work left out' and history as 'sociology with the brains left out'.(21)

Elsewhere history is parodied as 'the earnest and laborious pursuit of the insignificant' while sociology is involved in 'restating the obvious in the most obscure fashion possible'.(22)

A more vicious attack comes from Kenyon who writes of

the dog days of the 1960s when so many ... (historians) ... went whoring after the exotic delights of sociology ... when they were bowing down to the false gods of "relevance" or "contemporaneity", and hurriedly lowering their academic standards in search of ill informed student approbation. (23)

This rather extreme view enshrines several important notions. The first is that sociology has lower academic standards than history as properly conceived. Yet, as has already been argued, an unreflexive history is grossly myopic. Secondly, it sees sociology as a separate discipline to be of service (literally) to the more important (and implicitly masculine - for it is it which goes 'whoring') discipline of History.

Less extreme critics focus on specific weaknesses in Sociology such as its alleged proneness to passing theoretical fashions, the dubious nature of some of its laws, the insecure nature of some of its own theoretical foundations, the vagueness of its definitions and the non-cumulative nature of many of its findings. Yet despite these perceived weaknesses in the discipline, it remains substantially correct that Sociology has made the greatest impact of all the social sciences on the historiography of the post-war period. Raphael Samuel has argued that

hostility to theory, which has of course an ancient lineage, was probably at its height in the years of the Cold War ... the first major challenge to this confident, if self enclosed, empiricism, came from Sociology ... Sociology provided the empty theoretical boxes: it was for the historians to fill them with facts. (24)

Once again however we see sociology in the role of a service discipline, supplying that which improves the really important work of history. In addition the notion that theory comes in the form of

boxes, and that these boxes can in any meaningful sense be considered empty, is simply untenable.

Others are equally blyth in their reading of events. Iggers, for example, feels that, at least in the past, there has been a great gulf between history, conceived as a field of study concerned with unique human intentions and the other, more general social sciences, and that this gulf was established by history itself. In more recent years new generations of historians have begun to look at ways of understanding the interaction of individuals and collective behaviour yet the two subjects still stand apart from one another.(25)

Any narrowing of the gulf has not been achieved by mutual concession. Both Kenyon and Samuel saw the relationship between the disciplines as one of client and servant. Thomas and Kaye adopt similar approaches. The former, for example, has written that

historians must always depend for their general ideas upon non-historical work. They live parasitically upon other disciplines and they bring to their work assumptions about the way the world works which are derived from ... human scientists of all kinds.(26)

If this parasitism is generally true of 'new' history, then Kaye identifies a special relationship between Marxist history and sociology, arguing that both methodologies and the 'sensibilities' of sociologists have been selectively appropriated by the British Marxist historians.(27)

Not all historians would describe their borrowing in such deferential terms. Braudel, for example, berates other social sciences for not making the flow of intellectual traffic a reciprocal one. For Braudel, the new history has been renovated by the social sciences

while it is the latter which has been reluctant to accept the historical perspective.(28) Braudel's view does not fit into the service-client model outlined earlier and several authors have preferred to see history and sociology as essentially complementary. This has traditionally taken the form of distinguishing ideographic from nomothetic approaches where a concern for studying the unique (history) can be combined with a concern to study general laws (sociology).(29) A similar diad is proposed by Lipset and Hofstadter who treat sociology as a 'generalizing' discipline and history as a 'particularizing' one and point to ways in which the former can benefit from sound historical data and the latter can make better use of sociological concepts and analytic techniques.(30)

This potential complementarity is alleged by some to have already produced tangible results. Kaye, for example, considers that

the rehistoricization of the social sciences is quite evident alongside, and in relation to, the "socialization" of historical studies. (31)

While Abrams, in a book published in 1982, felt that over the previous thirty years the gap between history and sociology appeared to have narrowed dramatically.(32)

Erikson has identified two of the formal boundaries which still serve to divide sociology from history -

the notion that sociologists are enclosed to the present by the special logic of their methods and the notion that sociologists have a particular investment in the more general contours of social life. (33)

In highlighting these points Erikson echoes Weber who pointed out that

it has continually been assumed as obvious that the science of sociology seeks to formulate type concepts and generalised uniformities of empirical process. This

distinguishes it from history which is oriented to the causal explanation and analysis of individual actions, structures and personalities possessing cultural significance. (34)

Erikson, like Weber, does not regard the two disciplines as separate and entertains the hope that the best can be combined from both disciplines in any academic exercise. He argues that a neutral and scientific stance is impossible to take in either discipline. The historian and the sociologist are both products of their time and share generalised preconceptions and interpretations which will filter and reflect in the research which is done. A similar theme was taken up by Burke who rather sanguinely argued that a combination of the historian's sharp sense of change with the sociologist's acute sense of structure would produce a social history, or historical sociology as a unified venture. Burke feels that such an enterprise is not only desirable, but that it has already begun to take place.(35)

Abrams was more cautious, recognising that the idea of a rapprochement of the two subjects by means of piecemeal reciprocal borrowing was no longer tenable. The idea of taking bits of one subject to use in another paled in significance with a more important development which was seen as the production in some fields of theoretically self conscious historical work. This new work served to illuminate by comparison the weaknesses of history which failed to engage in the theoretical world of the other social sciences.(36)

If some see sociology as the servant of history, and others see it as a potential if not an actual symbiotic partner, there are others who see the subjects as 'coming together' in terms of methodology, analysis, interpretation, model building and subject matter, with

Abrams again arguing forcefully that

in constructing an event as an object of study and in accounting for it the historian selects significant detail from the plethora of available detail. To that extent the logic of historical work is indistinguishable from the logic of the work of the judge, or the sociologist. In all three cases it is the criteria in terms of which one observes detail that gives the work its force and validity. In this sense the difference between history and sociology is a difference of rhetoric not a difference of logic ... in both cases knowledge is achieved by abstraction. (37)

E.P. Thompson, too, has conceded that the subjects have come closer methodologically over the last twenty or thirty years. He criticises both disciplines for holding inaccurate and stereotyped visions of each other and reserves special hostility for sociology's ambivalence in refusing to accept historical analysis on methodological grounds while sociologists in their turn seem to suspend their habitual critical stance when borrowing the detail of historical background wholesale from historical texts.(38) In addition, some sociologists use historical works as evidence in themselves in a manner which is methodologically and epistemologically naive. For Thompson intellectual advance occurs through a dialectical interplay of theory and evidence which, as a method, is equally valid when applied to current events as it is when applied to the past.

The techniques of research are both the defining feature and the focus of commonality in distinguishing the work of historians and sociologists from other enterprises such as that of literature, and even when historians and sociologists are concerned with the construction of a narrative, it is the way in which evidence is established which marks the essential feature of the discipline's

understanding.(39) As E.P. Thompson has remarked,

when the materials are historical, there is no difference whatsoever in the methodology appropriate to the sociologist and to the social historian. (40)

Historical antecedent for many of the current positions in the history/sociology debate are easy to find - so much so in fact that there seems to be a danger of re-inventing the wheel. In another sense, however, it seems strange that so many classic works have been neglected in the search for history and sociology's 'proper' relationship. C. Wright Mills, for example, referred to biography, history and society as 'the coordinate points of the proper study of man' and referred to 'this classic tradition' which gave weight to all three'.(41) For Mills,

all sociology worthy of the name is "historical sociology" ... the historian's enterprise makes it one of the most theoretical of the human disciplines, which makes the calm unawareness of many historians all the more impressive ... if historians have no "theory" they may provide materials for the writing of history, but they cannot write it. (42)

In Mills' approach history and sociology were more than two logical partners. They were, indeed, two elements within a common enterprise. That this should be so was merely a reiteration of the approaches taken by many of the most important writers of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Tonnies, Durkheim, Weber and others were all concerned with the investigation of historically rooted conceptions, and the artificial separation which has occurred in the post war period seems largely to have stemmed from the institutionalisation of academic boundaries rather than from changes in the disciplines themselves.(43)

Thus the creation of a common enterprise or an inter-disciplinary borrowing, far from being a 'new' history, is rather a partial return to the practices of the past, and where there are new objects of study such as people's or women's history, or, for present purposes, regional labour history, these refound approaches offer considerable promise and the question again arises as to why studies of North East labour history have eschewed considerations of sociology in the past.

In practice, much of the history which has used or combined with sociology in a cross disciplinary endeavour has tended to take the form of either implicit or explicit structural functionalism.

A prime example of this approach is Smelser's Social Change in the Industrial Revolution.(44) For Smelser, the radicalism of the period with which this work is concerned was a temporary aberration from the normal, structural and functional harmony of society. Certain forces had disturbed the equilibrium of society but these were swiftly counterbalanced in ways which produced the restabilisation of society. Smelser argued that it was less embarrassing analytically to interpret cases of outright conflict between the social classes as disturbed reactions to specific structural pressures rather than as the manifestations of a permanent state of war between them, but this assumes that the structural pressures were ultimately self-correcting and that the pressure for reform mounted by working class radicals counted for little or nothing against the homeostatic forces within society at large.(45) Radicalism is seen as a product of the conflicts and tensions produced by the transitional processes which led to urban industrial society rather than an endemic feature of a new industrial

capitalist order. For the North West Smelser's position has been summarised and tested against empirical data and against other models which recognise the centrality rather than the temporary nature of conflict but for many histories long term stability remains a key assumption.(46)

This has been particularly true for the North East where the conservatism of McCord and Rowe has gone unchallenged for many years. Their assumptions of long term consensus are rarely stated explicitly, however, nor are they presented in a developed or sophisticated form. Instead, stability is taken for granted and conflict is seen at best as irrational and at worst as ideological.(47) Coser has maintained that such assumptions are not only illegitimate but ideological in themselves, tending to view the maintenance of stability as ethically desirable and hence regarding all forms of conflict as deviant.(48) In terms of its method this structural functionalism is further criticised by Donnelly for its inappropriateness to historical study. Its techniques were in many cases developed for the study of essentially stable and pre-industrial societies which renders them less applicable to the study of conflict in nineteenth century Britain. Above all, however, it is the 'deep rooted ideological conservatism' which gives the most cause for concern since this acts as blinkers which 'hide from history' all that is inconvenient.(49)

Structural functionalism is not the only conservative sociological model which has been smuggled in to historical works. Derek Fraser, for example, employs a somewhat less blatantly

functional 'circulation of elites' model to account for the changes in the personnel administering certain urban areas by the Municipal Corporations Act of 1835. Fraser writes of a 'municipal revolution' as newer forms of property wrested political control of the corporations from older forms yet it is clear that this is not seen as interfering with the overall structure of society. On the contrary it is regarded as functional for the long term stability of the large municipalities and for society as a whole.(50) Elites circulate almost without reference to the wishes of the labouring majority, despite the ostensibly democratic nature of the changes, and the overall framework remains one in which the upheavals of this period of rapid economic change were merely re-adjustments to a system which was basically functionally sound.

Structural functionalism has many critics and deficiencies and is perhaps a good example of that 'theoretically unproven' sociology against which warning was earlier raised. If history and sociology are to enrich each other and unite in a common enterprise then structural functionalism is not the way forward. A better programme for advance is formulated by Skocpol who argues that there are four key characteristics possessed by truly historical sociological studies. The first is that they should ask questions concerning social structures or processes which are understood as being 'concretely situated in time and space'. Secondly they should address 'processes over time, and take temporal sequences seriously in accounting for outcomes'. Thirdly, they should 'attend to the interplay of meaningful action and structural contexts' so that sense can be made of the

unfolding both of intended and unintended outcomes, whether it be at the level of the individual or at the level of societal transformations. Fourthly and finally they should highlight

the particular and varying features of specific kinds of social structures and patterns of change. (51)

Such a programme is more closely followed in the model which is most clearly opposed to structural functionalism - that of Marxism. Marxist historiography generally has made its theoretical premises much more explicit and open to critical analysis. Partially as a result of this, debates within Marxism have themselves been pronounced but have at least had the merit of bringing the relationship of theory and evidence in history writing to the forefront of attention. It is perhaps to the detriment of North East historiography that it has not engaged with these debates nor sought in any systematic manner to apply any of the more positive outcomes to have arisen from them.

The fiercest debate took place over issues surrounding the role of culture, structure and theory.(52) So rich was the disputation that it was alleged that debates within Marxism had become more important than debate between Marxism and other positions. Thus, according to Johnson,

So expansive has been the development of Marxist cultural theory that many of the most important questions in the theory and sociology of culture are now not between Marxist and other accounts but within Marxism itself. (53)

Having said that, however, there is also a danger that the encouragement of contentiousness risks potential destructiveness and (dare it be said?) anomie. Johnson himself notes the

contemporary intellectual practices among those considering themselves Marxists: the proliferation of

positions, the ephemerality of much debate, and the relative paucity of synthesizing or substantive works that do not merely criticise orthodoxies (Marxist or otherwise) but actually stand in their place. (54)

It is necessary therefore to look at all sides before deciding which is the best way forward.(55)

At one time the two sides looked very far apart. E.P. Thompson initially took Althusser to task for his elevation of theory and his over-deterministic structuralism. Thompson proclaims of Althusser that

his thought is the child of economic determinism ravished by theoreticist idealism

while Althusser's

repeated references to history and "historicism" display his theoretical imperialism in its most arrogant forms. (56)

Althusser, he argued, had overlooked the dialogue between social being and social consciousness. In a now-famous statement of anti-determinism, Thompson wrote of class formations that they

arise at the intersection of determination and self activity: the working class made itself as much as it was made. We cannot put "class" here and "class consciousness" there, as two separate entities, the one sequential upon the other, since both must be taken together - the experience of determination and the "handling" of this in conscious ways ... classes arise because men and women, in determinate productive relations, identify their antagonistic interests and come to struggle, to think and to value in class ways: thus the process of class formation is a process of self making, although under conditions which are "given". (57)

Perry Anderson praised The Poverty of Theory for the pioneering (from an English perspective) way in which it engaged with a major current in continental Marxist philosophical thought. He also praised Thompson's own historical practice for the way in which it affirmed the 'irreducible, independent reality' of historical evidence and the

fact that Thompson, by his own practice, showed the various ways in which the evidence itself can be interrogated.(58) Dawley, writing from America, thought that Thompson's position was clearly in the ascendancy, alleging that from the opposite side of the Atlantic, listening to the

lively structuralist-culturalist controversy is like listening to the sound of one hand clapping. (59)

In Britain, however, Thompson was seen as part of a cultural Marxism which had developed out of orthodox Marxism after 1956. Culturalism, according to Johnson and others, seemed to reject, or at least to avoid, the essential Marxist proposition that social being determines social consciousness, and that culture had been elevated to a status which was incompatible with basic principles. According to Kaye,

Johnson and his colleagues insist that much was lost in the development of culturalism ... one of the supposedly major problems with culturalism is that it eschews theory and "abstraction" in favour of "empiricism" and "lived experience". (60)

Johnson himself wrote that an important aspect of Marx's historical method was the notion of social relations that are structured, have a logic or tendency or force of their own and operate, in part, 'behind men's backs'.(61)

For Johnson the great strength of Althusserianism was that it recovered these genuinely 'structuralist' elements which were present in classical Marxism but which had been neglected by culturalist Marxism. Such a powerful critique of the culturalist position was felt to be necessary to halt what was seen as a drifting away from some notion of 'genuine' Marxism. Johnson did recognise the acknowledgement

which Thompson had given to structural forces, but was sceptical of the degree of centrality which had been given to culture and experience over a determination which was ill-defined. Hall, furthermore, argued that Thompson was guilty of using a sleight of hand to carry his arguments. Thompson, alleged Hall, spoke of a 'dialogue' between models and evidence without exposing the source of his models or providing the criteria by which evidence gathered was to be ranked in importance. Both criticisms pointed out that Thompson's position was untenable - that the neutrality of the historian was a myth, and that arbitrariness and ideological influence were far more profound than Thompson's 'historian's craft' stance allowed.(62)

Johnson saw The Poverty of Theory as 'mainly mischievous in its effects'. The reason for this was that

it contributes to the preservation of the very oppositions which we have to work through: between theory and history, between history and other disciplines, between structure or determinations and human practice, and between culture and ideology ... between Marx as a political economist and Marx as "historian". (63)

Whatever the merits of Thompson's case, it was overstated to the extent that it appeared to advocate (although it actually did not) the jettisoning of theory. Thompson's The Making of the English Working Class meanwhile was accused of swerving

too far towards idealism and voluntarism while giving short shrift to material and structural analysis. (64)

Trimberger acknowledges that historical processes and human agencies were neglected by static base-superstructure models and that in integrating a consideration of culture and consciousness into material life this contribution was a positive one. Thompson, however,

had gone too far:

In so strongly opposing economist and structuralist Marxism and in championing a theoretical method to analyse culture and incorporate human agency, Thompson fails sufficiently to integrate his own contributions with a properly reformed structural analysis. (65)

This neglect had left a crucial issue without reconciliation - that of how to engage in the necessary dialogue between the theoretical concepts of the historian and those of the historical subjects themselves while at the same time trying to analyse the structural determinants or limits to historical actions, the unintended consequences of actions, and the unconscious or ideologically obscured motives of the actors. The integration of a consideration of structural limits with an understanding of the way in which processes were subject to human intervention was a pressing need. Theory by itself is clearly unacceptable, but the opposite extreme - that of pure empiricism - is equally untenable. As Geoffrey Pearson has remarked,

Thompson is somewhat reluctant to make his theoretical framework wholly explicit. His own preferred model for intellectual production seems to be a furious (and brilliant) empiricism. It is therefore necessary to stand back from the detail for a moment to "read in" some of the theoretical shape. (66)

The Making of the English Working Class is a good case in point here, and while it provides many pointers to the way in which similar approaches could be taken to the study of the North East, its significant omissions also provide a guide to work which needs to be done. Thus while the importance of cultural resources and human intervention for social change and class politics was adequately stressed by Thompson, Trimberger has asked,

where is the reciprocal analysis of social change - the structured, material limits within which the English working class had to make itself? The absence of any systematic discussion of the ways in which English industrialisation concretely affected the given patterns of class and community relations makes it appear that history did not in any way happen behind the backs of the English working class. (67)

Here Thompson is accused of having fleshed out only one side of the dialectical process of being and consciousness which he himself has theorised as being central to historical processes. Others have taken an even stronger view, that consciousness and culture produce a definition of class which is the inverse of the traditional Marxist thesis that

a person's class is established by nothing but his objective place in the network of ownership relations ... his consciousness, culture and politics do not enter the definition of his class position ... class position strongly conditions consciousness, culture and politics. (68)

These weaknesses in Thompson's The Making of the English Working Class go some way towards explaining why the thesis contained therein sheds so little light upon developments in the period following the alleged 'making', and why a working class which was so long 'in the making' should find itself very swiftly 'in retreat' from the forces arrayed against it. The weaknesses of the English working class after 1832 are not particularly enlightened by Thompson's book and some critics would argue that the way in which these problems can be resolved is by marrying the best of Thompson's culturalist approach with the best that the structuralists can offer. Abrams puts it thus:

We have to find a way of living with the fact of the mutual interdependence and contamination of theory and evidence without resorting to either the anti-theoretical fetishism of history-as-evidence towards which the History

Workshop sometimes seemed to slide or the a-historical fetishism of theory-as-knowledge which some structuralists in their more extreme moments seem to espouse. (69)

The task of steering a course between these two positions or of involving aspects of both in a dialogue is a daunting one, yet it is one which needs to be tackled if the most fruitful approach to a study of labour in a regional context is to be taken.

In many respects the structuralism-culturalism debate marked a high water mark of awareness of the role of theory in history. Yet Marxist history generally also has other identifiable virtues. Herbert Butterfield, for example, while otherwise critical, identified some of these strengths as 'suspicion of biographical and unilineal histories', its contribution to 'social history' in which the totality is grasped at the 'structural' level of 'the interrelations between the various departments of life'; its posing of the social rather than the individual and its claim to a general notion of historical process to be ascertained empirically rather than deductively. (70)

Such a commendation is praise indeed, but Marxists themselves have not been remiss in stating the advantages of this approach. It is recognised that Marxist historians should be as interested as any other historians in discovering facts as data, and that events and processes in themselves can never be wholly constructed in theories and ideologies. The opposite extreme, however, is also unacceptable. The empiricist assumption whereby discrepancies between facts and theories are taken to indicate the deficiency of the latter is not satisfactory because facts in themselves come in varying degrees of

hardness. Thus while it is important for the adequacy of any explanation to account for that which is empirically known, such an explanation cannot rest on data alone.(71)

Marxist history invokes strong polarised reactions. For Neale, Marxist history is not only different from other history but is more 'correct', while Kenyon feels that Marxist history was never particularly significant or long lasting and had not endured beyond the original historians group of the British Communist Party.(72) Kenyon would even deny the existence of a 'tradition' since it had no inter-generational transfer. Such a view is likely to arouse wry amusement in certain quarters. The Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, for example, have recently offered a blueprint for their current approach to a Marxist informed research programme. Their five stage method involves the appropriation of material in detail (research), the analysis of its different forms of development (historical analysis), the tracking down of inner connections in the material (structural analysis), the presentation of real movements (presentation), and the reflection back of the subject matter in the form of ideas (validation).(73)

In practice, however, theory has still generally been lacking, and it comes as something of a surprise to learn that among the deficient can be counted a large proportion of labour history or 'history from below', the very area which intuitively one would expect to be informed by (Marxist) theory. Donnelly has forcibly argued the case for the greater democratic legitimacy of a Marxist history from below. He writes that,

Marxist historians have been at pains when dealing with social conflict and crime to write their histories "from below" and since those "below" usually represent the vast majority of any population, they may at least lay claim to a democratic interpretation of history. The same cannot be said for the conservative historians who view crime and conflict through the eyes of contemporary officialdom - however weak may have been the claim of these officials to democratic legitimacy. Conservative historiography is thus the view of the establishment - the historical perspective of the privileged and propertied minority. (74)

The desire to present an alternative or 'people's' history led to the establishment of the History Workshop movement. Originally contained within Ruskin College, History Workshop set out to

challenge the dominant institutional bias which had shaped the development of labour history in Britain

and to develop the study of areas previously 'hidden from history'.(75) It attempted not only to democratise the objects of historical study but also the means by which 'history' was produced and this involved breaking down barriers by means of workshops and opening up for inspection the clearly held socialist values with which the historical project was to be approached.

As Austrin has pointed out, however,

writing "the people" into history, (and) restoring to history those that have been left out of academic accounts of "history from above" does not necessarily link history to socialist theory ... (76)

Nor, one might add, does it necessarily link coherently with any other theory. In addition, Austrin notes that what people's history further illustrates is that while class has been approached through the study of culture for earlier periods, the implications of this for analysing more recent trends in society have scarcely been worked through.

For Donnelly the basic aims of history from below are sound and

to be welcomed.(77) In practice, however, much labour history tends to be just as episodic and compartmentalised as orthodox history, failing to appreciate the quality of the interconnections between events, processes, structures and personnel. Much mainstream history suffers from this deficiency such that an event is described, and then another and so on without the interconnections or underlying forces being examined. Theory, where it is used at all, is demoted to a minor enlightening tool rather than an integrating framework for understanding both the long term and the short term trends. The absence of theory in turn tends to produce a fragmented empiricism whereby the patterning of events is hidden. Different aspects of the same phenomena may be examined in different ways to produce explanations which are eclectic or based on a liberal causal pluralism. Equally the phenomena themselves are left free standing. Once a rationale has been supplied attention moves to a different phenomenon, this time requiring a different explanation.(78) Underlying the whole may be some assumed teleology yet the episodes have a distinct beginning and ending. Yet historical events, like those of the present, are part of a seamless web of interconnections. Everything is connected to everything else. We cannot therefore be justified in studying anything in isolation unless we are explicitly self conscious of our intentions.

The implications for all history is that the standard approach should be a holistic one which will treat the past in its full complexity. In pursuit of this, the role of overarching and connecting theory would seem paramount in order that history from below can be

connected to all other aspects. In practice, however, much of the history from below which is currently produced falls into the same form of causal pluralism that typifies explanations based on more liberal democratic assumptions and this again has been particularly true of work which has a strong provincial basis.(79)

Labour history generally has suffered other criticisms too. McLennan identifies four main weaknesses. Firstly much labour history has teleological connotations. It concentrates on that which can be demonstrated as having contributed to the long-term formation of the labour movement at the expense of things which do not appear as part of some assumed logical progression. Secondly, much history from below either ignores or fails to connect with complementary Marxist histories 'from above' where an appreciation of the links between the two levels is essential to a full understanding. Thirdly, he alleges that much oral history tends to be celebratory and lacking in critical analysis, while in the fourth, and final criticism, it is argued that the stress on understanding the past through 'experiential' approaches, such as oral history, often leads to an anti-theoreticism since theory is seen as a betrayal of the historical subject matter. This leads McLennan to argue that history from below (feminist, labour and working class history) will remain principally a descriptive category until it addresses itself seriously to the question of the role of theory and consensus is reached.(80)

An additional criticism of much history from below is that of partiality and patriarchy. Bridget Hill, for example, argues that labour history remains a celebration of masculinity and that the

notion of 'popular' or democratic history all too often turns out to be a study of free born Englishmen. Women generally and feminist concerns, are notable by their absence.(81)

The weaknesses of oral history and experiential approaches have attracted several commentators. Stuart Hall defends the approach, but warns of the dangers faced. He writes that

all experience is penetrated by cultural and ideological categories. This does not render it "false consciousness". But it must undermine the notion that "experience" can simply be read for its meaning, rather than being interrogated for its complex interweaving of real and ideological elements. (82)

Philip Abrams and Royden Harrison on the other hand, are more openly critical. Abrams writes that

the past ... can only be known in terms of some conscious effort to theorise it ... knowledge has to be an act of estrangement. (83)

He argues that much history from below simply does not follow this rubric and accepts too readily the version of reality given by the subject of the time. Thus oral history in particular is prone to charges of intellectual laziness where, in some cases, little attempt is made by the researchers to alienate themselves from the subject and assess the facade of human memories. Harrison identifies this trend towards face-acceptance as presenting a great danger that labour history may descend into triviality, while Richard Johnson has argued that

the world cannot be (wholly) understood in terms of the recorded experiences of individuals or classes. Sometimes these lie at the very heart of inadequate explanations of the world. The object of an adequate history must, then, not merely be "people" but the whole complex set of relations in which they stand, within which, indeed, they are made as social beings. (84)

Much labour history has failed to acknowledge this, and has failed further in that it has neither theorised adequately the results of empirical studies, nor made plain the starting points of further work. Too much emphasis has been placed on the concrete data without an adequate investigation as to its overall status, and as Johnson has again remarked,

there is a tendency to trust the "authentic" experiential text as the exclusive source of accounts. (85)

One approach which has attempted to incorporate the new questions of method and ideology which history from below has ushered in has been Abram's study of the interplay between meaningful actions and structural contexts. Abrams, preferring to use the terms agency and structure, and the dialectical interplay of one or the other as structuring, sees the latter as the key to that historical sociology earlier deemed to be one of the most fruitful paths for a study of political radicalism in the North East to take. According to Abrams,

the conventional debate on the relationship between history and sociology, both on the side of those who welcome convergence and on the side of those who deplore it, is essentially misconceived. In my understanding of history and sociology there can be no relationship between them because, in terms of their fundamental preoccupations, history and sociology are and always have been the same thing. Both seek to understand the principle of human agency and both seek to do so in terms of the process of social structuring. (86)

Abrams calls for a re-assessment of history and sociology's methodologies, a reassessment of the nature of the relationship between theory and empiricism, and a reassessment of the nature of the relationship between structure and action.

Abrams is not alone in this project. Several others have proposed

similar programmes with Giddens, perhaps a little confusingly, employing 'structuration' as his key concept.(87)

Giddens, like Abrams, takes Marx's dictum that 'men make history, but not in circumstances of their own choosing' and sees this as posing the problem of the interdependence of agency and structure. Unlike Abrams, however, Giddens ultimately upholds the primacy of agency, while criticising what he regards as the two extremist positions of the over dominance of structure on the one hand and the extreme of voluntarism and idealism on the other. According to Giddens,

the structural properties of social systems are both the medium and the outcome of the practices that constitute those systems. The theory of structuration, thus formulated, rejects any differentiation of synchrony and diachrony or statics and dynamics. The identification of structure with constraint is also rejected; structure is both enabling and constraining ... according to this conception the same structural characteristics participate in the subject (the actor) as is the object (society). (88)

Abrams, on the other hand, argues that present action is always constrained by historical structures while human agency can alter these historical structures in their current form. In this he is closer to the position identified by Engels where the materialist conception of history

starts from the proposition that the production of the means to support human life - and next to production the exchange of things produced - is the basis of all social structure. (89)

In terms of its consequences,

significant social and intellectual changes happen as and when they do, because they serve the development of the productive forces. (90)

Other Marxist historians have different views as to how they envisage the future of their genre. Foster and Stedman-Jones have both stressed the need to study language. While Foster simply makes the plea for more research on the language of radicalism in specific industrial circumstances, Stedman-Jones has already taken the initiative by studying the language of Chartist radicalism.(91) Stedman-Jones sees many of the theories surrounding the 1830s and 1840s as crude economic reductionism whereby declining living standards and unemployment led to the rise of the labour movement. Since the same economic factors have at different times produced different results, then the economic explanation, by itself, is necessarily incomplete. He argues, convincingly, that political orientations cannot be simply 'read off' from social locations and considers that political behaviour should be analysed on its own terms. In doing so, however, he runs the risk of being accused of seeking to replace one form of reductionism with another, arguing that the history of the radical movement can be understood by investigating the wider theoretical discourse through which the actors themselves understood their reality. The reality, however, may have been misunderstood by the actors and in any case such an understanding does not necessarily provide an explanation as to the genesis nor the subsequent development of that reality. Language may structure and organise experience and have a powerful role in the creation of meaning yet, as Cronin has pointed out,

it is a long way from this recognition of the mediating power of language to the notion that language is virtually all that matters. (92)

A language-based critique may contribute to an understanding but for a fuller analysis a materialist conception would need to underpin the whole.

Thompson meanwhile offers a different account of the way forward. Despite allegations that the theory of The Making of the English Working Class is well hidden, Thompson makes strong claims for an approach which involves a dialectic of theory and evidence. Thompson himself criticises both Foster and Smelser for imposing modern concepts and theoretical concerns on the historical evidence without interrogating that evidence for the concepts and theoretical concerns held at the time and in dialogue with which the historical evidence was 'created'.(93) In The Poverty of Theory Thompson states that

we must put theory to work, and we may do this either by interrogating evidence (research) or by interrogating historiography and other theories. (94)

In line with Abrams' dictum that historical sociology must be understood 'as a dialectic of theory and evidence', Thompson writes that

the disciplined historical discourse of the proof consists in a dialogue between concept and evidence, a dialogue conducted by successive hypotheses on the one hand and empirical research on the other. (95)

The same theme appears in other writings. Thus in People's History and Socialist Theory he states again that

we need research which is both empirically and theoretically informed, and the theorised interrogation of what this research finds. (96)

For Thompson the dialectic of theory and evidence should proceed in tandem. Abstract theory and conceptualisation can be tested and developed against the evidence. Concrete evidence (empiricism) can be

abstracted and used to refine the conceptualisation. As Trimberger remarks,

Thompson looks at history not to apply any pre-given theory or to produce a fixed general theory, but to use theoretical ideas in dialogue with the evidence to interpret particular historical processes. (97)

This methodological dialogue seems a long way from the 'furious empiricism' of The Making yet it does represent more of a middle ground than early reactions to The Poverty of Theory allowed. In The Poverty Thompson clearly felt that only a savage attack on theoreticism would serve to redress what he saw as a dangerous imbalance. In his own beliefs and practices, however, Thompson's assessment of theory was a far more positive one.

Greg McLennan, however, is still not satisfied. He regards the dialogue of fact and hypothesis as having an anti-philosophical impulse in that it neglects important issues such as the ideological frameworks which influence the assessment as to which facts are considered relevant. It omits, furthermore, the intellectual and social processes which impinge upon the way the hypotheses are formulated. McLennan calls for a theoretically and philosophically based methodology of history which is both realist and materialist without being rigidly so. In so doing he attempts to reconcile elements of Althusser and Thompson by bringing together

questions of epistemology, methodological problems, theoretical issues emerging from the Marxian tradition, and substantive historical interpretations. (98)

McLennan is constructively critical of both sides of the structuralism-culturalism debate. While culturalism has misplaced its emphases and displayed philosophical and ideological naivety,

structuralism alone cannot provide the way forward for

when theory poses as the answer to history, implying that hard empirical research can comfortably be ignored, Marxism has succumbed to idealism. (99)

The way forward then is to tie empirical investigation to sound theoretical constructs in a methodologically rigorous yet self-conscious manner. Underpinning everything, however, remains the mode of production with the base strongly limiting or determining the superstructure, with the latter causally affecting

material conditions according to variations generally compatible with structural constraints. (100)

Where then does this leave the study of labour history in the North East? Firstly, it is clear that evidence and theory needs to be linked together in a far more explicit way than has hitherto been the case. While there is still new evidence to be found and new interpretations to be made of that evidence, new or revised narrative histories will no longer be sufficient and any underlying theory will need to be made explicit. In addition, such theories as are used will need to serve as links to wider debates within historiography generally and to produce an explanatory patterning of events which have previously been treated in an episodic manner. In such ways it should be possible for North East evidence to be tested against, and hence to make positive contributions towards, wider debates concerning questions of method and ideology and the nature of the working class movement.

But the necessary dialogue between theory and evidence represents only one of the dualities which must be overcome to produce the holistic approach which is needed. In addition the tension between the

stress on agency and that on structure may be overcome by Abrams structuring approach and the recognition that while it is important to see the way economic and other forces work 'behind men's backs', these are in turn themselves formed by human agency. For the North East this means that the effect of local and national relations of economics and politics need to be taken into account in producing the conditions in which political radicalism developed, while the action of individual agency, again both at local and national level, can be seen as affecting in turn the subsequent tide of events.

The tension between cultural and structural determinants has been shown to be resolvable in terms of a middle road which, while recognising the primacy of the latter in the last resort, gives considerable scope to the relative autonomy of the former. If structural forces produce the tides of history, the way in which the waves can be ridden is still of great importance. Thus space is opened up for the study of the language used by the historical participants of the 1830-60 period which enables aspects of cultural and ideological forms to be studied in relation and in addition to the material changes which were taking place. In all this the role of the State as a mediator of politics, economics and class becomes amenable to analysis in a way which departs from much of the current history of the North East labour movement which has acknowledged only the de facto administrative and bureaucratic presence of the State at the local level.

On these grounds therefore it is hoped to re-construct a history of political radicalism in the North East which does justice to the themes which have been outlined in this chapter.

Notes

1. J. Foster's 'Class Struggle', op.cit. and 'South Shields labour movement', op.cit. are notable exceptions. For the labour aristocracy debate generally and the lack of North East material see H.F. Moorhouse, 'The Marxist theory of the labour aristocracy', Social History 1978; R. Gray, The Aristocracy of Labour in Nineteenth Century Britain, c1850-1914 (Macmillan, 1981). For debates on the 'Making of the English Working Class', see P. Anderson, Argument within English Marxism (Verso, 1980).
2. G. Iggers and K. Von Moltke (eds), The Theory and Practice of History, 1973.
3. Hence the products of History Workshop and Labour History Societies are often, ironically, conservative in their approach despite the initial impulse for their genre being radical, R. Samuel, People's History and Socialist Theory (RKP, 1981), p.410-417.
4. R. Kenyon, 'A Revolution in Tudor Studies', Times Higher Education Supplement, 18.3.1983.
5. L. Stone, 'The revival of narrative: reflections on a New Old History', Past and Present 85, 1979. E. Hobsbawm, 'The revival of narrative: Some Comments', Past and Present 86, 1980; G. Elton, The Practice of History (Sydney, 1967) and 'The Historians Social Function', Transactions of the Royal Historical Society (1977). See also E.H. Carr, What is History? (London, 1961), A. Marwick, The nature of History (Macmillan, 1970), G. McLennan, Marxism and the Methodologies of History (Verso, 1981).
6. K. Neild and J. Seed, 'Versions of Historiography: Marxism and the Methodologies of History', Economy and Society 1983, p.79.
7. A Marwick Review of E.H. Carr's 'What is History', THES, 16.11.1984.
8. F.K. Donnelly, 'Ideology and Early English Working Class History: E.P. Thompson and his critics', Social History, 1976, p.235.
9. S.R. Mealing, cited in Donnelly, op.cit., p.235.
10. P. Abrams, Historical Sociology, (Open Books, 1982), p.304, 303.
11. K. Neild and J. Seed, op.cit., p.81.
12. P. Abrams (1982), op.cit., p.310, 314.
13. A. Marwick (1984), op.cit.

14. J. Roberts, 'Signpost which is pointing in the wrong direction', THES, 4.11.1983.
15. G. Peele, 'The Professionalisation of History', TES, 1.4.1983.
16. G.G. Iggers, New directions in European Historiography, (1975).
17. R. Harrison, 'Totality or Triviality', THES, 4.11.1983.
18. Preface to Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, Making Histories (Hutchinson, 1982).
19. K. Neild and J. Seed, op.cit., p.277.
20. A. Marwick, (1970) op.cit., p.121.
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Chapter 3'Flowers of the Northern Wreath' Class Relations and Reform  
Movements in Sunderland

North East political radicalism can now be studied in the form of three case studies of Sunderland, Darlington and the pit villages. The logic behind taking a cross sectional approach is that although the North East is often, if not usually, characterised in regional terms, differences within the region are equally significant. While the area is often assumed to be one huge coalfield, its urban areas contained in Sunderland one of the largest shipbuilding towns in the country and, in Darlington, an outpost of that textile industry which has been central to analyses of class struggle which have been developed in relation to the North West.(1) Thus if the working class in the North East was 'making itself' it was doing so in very different contexts with remarkably different results.

By taking such a cross sectional approach it is hoped to construct an explanation for the patterning of working class activity - the degree of radicalism, the different ways in which it was expressed, the way in which it was related to different situations and the way in which it possessed its own inner logic - in ways which enable the relative strength of determining forces to be assessed.

In Sunderland, for example, a fluid class structure eventually resulted in the incorporation of the leading radicals into municipal

affairs while on the coalfield, with its more rigid class structure, similar individuals were blacklisted. In Darlington there was little victimisation but instead the material and ideological space available to the radicals was gradually denied. Explanations for these patterns need to be sought in terms which are both material and ideological. Once the patterning within the region has been established, the data, and the explanation which it suggests, can be held up for comparison with those models which have been constructed with reference to other regions. In addition the process of structuring can be studied by looking at the role of key individuals as they affected, and were in turn affected by the flow of events and the changes in class relations which were taking place around them.

Class relations in Sunderland were in a particular state of flux in this period. While a number of different groupings can be identified, their relative strengths, combinations and allegiances altered significantly throughout the Chartist period and much, though by no means all of this can be attributed to changes in the economic base of the town. This changed markedly throughout the nineteenth century such that an anonymous writer in 1894 could describe Sunderland in the following terms:

Sunderland is peculiarly situated, being both an important sea and river port, its position at the estuary of a broad navigable river gives it a two fold advantage. It is, so to speak, both the collecting and distributing port for a busy district, abounding in chemical works, iron works, bottle works, shipbuilding yards, and other industries which blacken and deface the loveliness of nature. (2)

Lloyds Register showed Sunderland to be

the most important shipbuilding centre in the country, nearly equalling as regards number and tonnage of ships built, all the other ports together. (3)

These descriptions, however, give only a hint of the economic and demographic pressures which the town had experienced in the early and middle parts of the century. Despite its diversity Sunderland had been dominated by the coal trade and by the building of ships to carry coal. Mitchell, writing in 1844, remarked that

there is not a trade nor a profession in this district that is not almost entirely dependent upon the working and prosperity of our coal mines. Except a very small proportion, the whole of the shipping of the Tyne, Wear and Tees is employed in the coal trade

while Joe Clarke has commented of Sunderland that

Nowhere else in England was a significant town so dependent upon merchant shipbuilding in the period of the industrial revolution. (4)

Many of the subsidiary industries depended upon the continued prosperity of the coal trade and shipping. Competition from the Tyne and from Londonderry's building of Seaham Harbour, as well as the development of railways transporting coal from other coalfields to the London market, all posed real threats to Sunderland's economic growth.(5) These threats failed to be lifted by the construction of the North Shore Dock by Hedworth Williamson in 1837 and it was arguably only with the election of George Hudson as MP in 1845 that the prosperity of the town was ensured.(6)

Hudson was elected on the promise that he would invest money to secure the success of the local railways and the construction of a new dock to be opened on the South bank of the river. Despite having its own operating problems, the south dock, opened in 1850, ensured a high rate of capital investment and the increased confidence of local businessmen which contributed in turn to the further development of

the town. By mid century Sunderland was regarded as one of the largest shipbuilding centres in the world with an annual launch of two hundred ships constituting a tonnage of 20,000.

Alongside shipbuilding there were potteries, glassworks, patent roperies, iron foundries, lime kilns and copperas works. Yet few of these reached a size of enterprise or work force to approach those of coal and shipbuilding. At the end of the century shipbuilding, sea faring and coal extraction accounted for nearly half the employees in Sunderland. Shipbuilding itself underwent a profound change in mid-century. In the first half of the century it was not uncommon for shipwrights to build cooperatively. Wood could be obtained on credit from timber merchants and made up into ships for subsequent sale. In slack periods the timber merchants might reclaim the vessel as payment in lieu. In this way many shipwrights claimed the title of shipowner, and the local trade directories fail to distinguish between those with a small, part share in a single boat and those who were magnates. According to Joe Clarke

Between 1800 and 1860 typically not more than half the shipyards which started production lasted more than two years and probably a third lasted a single year ... after 1870 about one in four survived nine years or more. (7)

By mid century technological change and capital intensification were altering this relationship as the small shipbuilders were unable to compete with the larger concerns and the 'horizontal community' of shipbuilding broke down.(8) In 1840 some sixty five shipyards employed 1,600 shipwrights to launch 251 ships averaging 250 tons. From that point onwards the ships got larger and their numbers fewer. While the shipyards themselves followed the same pattern (fig.1).

The major traffic through the port was the transport of domestic coal to the London market in coast-hugging colliers. Railways brought coal directly from the Hetton and Lambton collieries to the river bank but railways themselves eventually posed a threat to prosperity. In 1826 Sunderland gained its own colliery when Richard Pemberton began the sinking of Monkwearmouth pit producing an unusual combination of a pit community within an existing urban framework.(9) In 1841 this community consisted of 62 families comprising a total of 354 persons. By 1851 this had grown to 233 families and a total of 1,236 persons. £80-100,000 had been expended on the colliery by 1834, but it was not until 1846 that the lucrative Hutton seam was reached at a depth of nearly 2,000 feet. By 1857 Monkwearmouth colliery employed 1,200 men and boys, producing half a million tons of coal a year and making it one of the major sources of employment in the town.

Sunderland's economic growth went hand in hand with a growth in its population. From 25,000 in 1801 the population reached 51,000 in 1841 and 98,000 in 1871. In the 1830s the annual rate of population increase was 3% and both new house building and the overcrowding in older houses had their impact on social relations in the town (fig 2).

Such then was the background to Sunderland's politics in the period 1830-60. In a major study of party politics in the town T.J. Nossiter has pointed to what he sees as a number of unusual features.(10) Firstly shipbuilding in its labour intensive pre-iron and pre-steam period produced different kinds of relationships to those which appeared later. Nossiter describes these as 'horizontal' relationships in the contemporary absence of a pronounced class

conflict or sustained class analysis among the shipyard workers. Joe Clarke also reports that he approached the Wear shipyards of the nineteenth century looking for a proletariat that he was unable to find concluding that

the distance between employers and employed which seems typical of mid nineteenth century industrial relations was absent on the Wear. (11)

Ship ownership was further unusual in that as a general tendency it was more likely to produce Tory voters at a time when the laissez faire policies of the Whigs would seem to have been in the ascendancy.(12) Nossiter describes the varying groups in Sunderland as cells of influence, and Sunderland itself as an example of a cellular community.

What he then proceeds to identify, however, is more usually recognisable as a series of competing elites within the town, each vying for dominance. Nossiter alleges that

Sunderlands elections were normally fought far more on covert issues of personal and group politics than on overt ones of policy. (13)

At different times it can be seen that the battle to ensure municipal incorporation, the centralisation of the local authority and the centralisation of the port authority were all examples of one group of businessmen attempting to secure advantages of a political as well as a pecuniary nature over their rivals.

Party politics often became 'dock politics' as local interest dominated elections. Hudson was MP from 1845 to 1859 as a Tory, being elected regularly alongside a Whig.(14) Yet Sunderland had a reputation for radicalism which stretched back to the Civil War when

it had been a Parliamentary base against Royalist Newcastle. As late as 1883 it was still being remarked that Sunderland had 'a roundhead air' about it.(15) Nossiter remarks that

Both the shipwrights and the glassworkers had long been notorious for their tyranny over the masters

and the early nineteenth century saw many early examples of political radicalism.(16)

Fife of the Northern Political Union paid tribute to Sunderland's radical tradition at a meeting of reformers in 1831.(17) Radicalism was very much in evidence in 1819 during the nationwide movement which surrounded the Peterloo massacre and in 1822 when Hunt, the Peterloo orator, was freed from prison.(18) On this occasion Chalk, a Sunderland bookseller, flew a banner from his window inscribed with the words

One hour of glorious liberty is worth an eternity of bondage

while George Ord, a radical shoemaker of Union Lane, exhibited a flag from his window inscribed 'Hunt and Liberty'.(19)

The report of this activity, and the subsequent celebratory banquet, appeared in the Durham Advertiser. At this time Sunderland did not possess its own newspaper and it was not until 1831 when the Sunderland and Durham General Shipping Gazette and Mercantile Advertiser was established, to be followed rapidly by the Sunderland Beacon, Sunderland Herald and Sunderland Times that information on working class activity becomes readily available.(20)

For earlier periods information has to be gleaned from Newcastle

and Durham newspapers as well as such sources as magistrate's reports.

A fuller recording of working class political activity only began to emerge with the publication of the first mass circulation newspaper intended for working class consumption - the Northern Star. In its pages can be traced the continuity of activities which went together to form working class political radicalism in a vast number of towns throughout northern Britain. It is, somewhat ironically, through a Leeds, and later London-based newspaper that a start can be made in attempting to distinguish the fabric of working class political culture in Sunderland - who its key figures were, where they met and what sort of issues interested them.

In 1830 Sunderland's size, together with its commercial and maritime interests, suggested its inclusion in the lists of those towns likely to benefit from any re-allocation of parliamentary seats which was thought to be the likely consequence of any reform of parliament. By 1831 Sunderland itself

had grown into a bad example, and the worst in the North East, of an unincorporated and unenfranchised town

and the propertied middle class, as well as many others, were keen for reform.(21) In the atmosphere of expectation consequent upon the death of the King in 1830 and the election of a Whig government on a reform platform, political unions sprang up throughout the country, often based on the model provided by the Birmingham Political Union which was led by Thomas Attwood, a Birmingham banker.(22) The BPU had a middle-class leadership together with considerable working class support, as did many of the unions which emulated it.(23) Sunderland's

political union, however, does not appear to have been of this nature.

The 'Sunderland and the Wearmouth's Political Union' was an example of a 'low' union operating without the assistance of the so-called 'respectable' middle class who had in fact turned down an offer to hold the chair and preside over the union.(24) Among its members who can be identified were a Unitarian minister, a painter, a turner and a grocer. Their social composition led Nossiter to refer to the social basis of Sunderland's radicalism as the 'shopocracy'. According to Nossiter

this class had formed the rank and file of the reform movement in the 1830s. (25)

When a joint meeting was held between the Sunderland and the Wearmouth's Political Union and the Newcastle based Northern Political Union, it was the more prominent personalities of the latter who made most of the reported speeches.(26) These included Charles Attwood, brother of the Birmingham banker, Fife and Doubleday.(27) By later standards the aims of the Sunderland and the Wearmouth's Political Union were modest. While individuals called for triennial parliaments and vote by ballot, the majority were content with a step towards suffrage extension. Thus the formal aims of the Union were:

- the advancement of Political priveleges
- the removal of Civil and Ecclesiastical abuses
- the repeal of the taxes on knowledge (newspaper stamp duty)
- the preservation of peace and the protection of property in case of local disturbance
- the support of the friends of the people in both Houses of Parliament on all momentous questions

- in the event of the enfranchisement of Sunderland, the support of enlightened and liberal candidates for the representation of the town.(28)

By contrast the 'respectable' middle classes of Sunderland presided over their own reform meetings without formulating a distinct programme of aims and without seeking to obtain a broader basis of support as had their Newcastle counterparts. As their contemporary description implies, they were men of a more elevated social position than Nossiters 'shopocrats'. They included some of Sunderland's most prominent doctors and lawyers, such as Dr Clanny, inventor of a miners' safety lamp and one of the first doctors to diagnose cholera in England, J.J. Wright, described in his obituary as

Almost Sunderland itself ... in his prime the leading attorney and leading political agent in the whole county of Durham

and John Kidson, solicitor and clerk to the county magistrates during the Chartist disturbances. (29)

Such people seem to have had strange backgrounds, and subsequent careers, to be considered as political radicals, but in the absence of parliamentary representation for such an important commercial centre, and in the face of incomprehensible attitudes at Westminster, reform seemed inevitable. As the Wearmouth Magazine put it.

During this period in the political history of Sunderland there was very little diversity of political opinion. No matter of what political creed all were agreed on the advantages of reform. (30)

Thus Lord Durham's brother Lambton, speaking at one of the

Sunderland reform meetings, said that

When the Duke of Wellington declared against reform, civil war stared us in the face,

while according to Pattinson at the same meeting, 'since the bishops have opposed it, there is the greater need for reform'. Even J.J. Wright, later confidential adviser to Lord Londonderry, was moved to describe Londonderry's opposition to reform as 'arrogant and dogmatic'.(31)

It was, accordingly, the opponents of reform - Londonderry and the bishops who were singled out for special treatment by the mob which had gathered to hear the speeches of these so-called 'respectable' radicals and in a gesture direct from the repertoire of eighteenth century collective action, a crowd estimated at between 8-10,000 carried effigies of Lord Londonderry and a bishop through the town to be committed to the flames in the High Street 'amidst the groans and hisses of the population'.(32) Mock trials and executions communicated a kind of 'contingent subordination' and it is not difficult to see why the people were united in this way. Nor is it difficult to see the reasons behind their choice of targets. To those who felt that Parliament should reflect the interests of capital as well as land, Sunderland was an obvious candidate to receive an MP in any redistribution of seats. Since the bishops had come out against reform in the Lords, the generalised hostility to the Established Church exploded into anger over the bishops' refusal to reflect the wishes of the people.(33)

The choice of Londonderry as a target is more complex for he was an industrialist as well as a major landowner, controlling many

collieries in the North East.(34) His interests in coal however brought him into rivalry with Lord Durham, a supporter of reform and a popular figure. Moreover his construction of Seaham Harbour as an outlet for his coal threatened for a time to compete with Sunderland's domination of the coastal trade south of the Wear.(35)

Parliamentary reform promised towns like Sunderland a greater share in prosperity and the whole population anticipated that their own MP would advocate local claims and support the maritime and commercial interest. Thus in Sunderland, as elsewhere, a link could be forged between the respectable middle classes and the mass of the people which was instrumental in strengthening the resolve of Grey to persist with the Reform Bill. In 1832 when the Reform Act was finally passed, Sunderland duly received its two MPs while Gateshead, South Shields and Tynemouth received one each, and despite the efforts of some to keep the political unions operative, they soon lapsed as enthusiasm for further action waned in the immediate post-reform years.

In 1831 however there had been at least two identifiable groups of political radicals in Sunderland: an artisanal/shopkeeper group with a formal, long term political programme, and a respectable middle class group without such formalities. Somewhat surprisingly perhaps it was this latter group which touched the mood of the mass of the town's inhabitants most closely in 1831 and it could be argued that this developed from the way in which reform 'banquets' touched deep seated forms of deference to a paternalistic leadership which was not normally present. Of even greater surprise however is the extent to which this respectable group were to provide the milieu from which

subsequent forms of radicalism were to grow. Some of the men of 1831 for example, appear in a short lived Reform Association in 1835 while others revived their interest in parliamentary reform with a public discussion of the secret ballot principle in 1837.(36) Still others reappeared in the Complete Suffrage Movement meetings of 1842-44 and in Hume's 'Little Charter' movement of 1848, but by far the biggest regrouping took place in the Anti-Corn Law League where, once again, a parliamentary measure was seen to be of immediate and considerable importance for the town's prosperity, linked, as it was, to the volume of trade in and out of the port.(37)

The members of the Sunderland and the Wearmouth's Political Union on the other hand seemed, by and large, to withdraw from active participation in politics after 1832. Despite their having six hundred persons at a celebratory banquet when Reform was finally achieved, they were unable to maintain their enthusiasm in the post-reform period and the union quickly dissolved.(38) The radicalism of its social location, however, did not dissolve, and the heirs to its legacy were the Chartists. From its base among the artisans and shopkeepers, the Chartist leadership was able to widen its basis of mass support in a way which the old Political Union had been unable to do.

For the Chartist leadership however the road from 1832 to 1838 was not a straightforward one. In 1831 Binns, then just fifteen years old, had been serving his apprenticeship as a draper while Williams, four years older, was a confectioner.(39) Their first joint ventures were the setting up of a bookselling partnership in Bridge Street at

the same time as they became secretaries and librarians to the Mechanics Institute. It was the Mechanics Institute which brought them into contact with Thomas Thompson, a solicitor and one of the respectable radicals of 1831, now acting as treasurer to the Institute. The Mechanics Institute enjoyed middle-class patronage and thus the two men mingled with the respectables while at the same time becoming increasingly involved with the dissemination of more radical literature from their bookshop, such as the sermons of J.R. Stephens and the highly satirical attack on the New Poor Law, 'The Book of Marcus'.(40) The resolution of this increasing incompatibility occurred in a meeting called on the subject of the secret ballot in December 1837.

This meeting was called by a 535-name petition, most of whom were electors including 'many gentlemen of great influence in the borough and its adjacent neighbourhood'. It was chaired by the Mayor and its initial motion was:

That as the freedom of election has been almost destroyed by bribery and intimidation, this meeting is of opinion (sic) that some immediate remedy is required and that the most practical remedy is the vote by ballot. (41)

This was proposed by Alderman Lotherington and seconded by Dr Brown, both of whom had been prominent on the 1831 platforms.(42) Thomas Thompson then exhibited a ballot box to demonstrate to the meeting how it would work. Dissent occurred however when Binns, seconded by Williams, proposed an amendment to the effect that the ballot by itself was not enough. 'The Ballot and Household suffrage ought to be unitedly asked for', said Binns, for, as Williams said,

If you insult the millions by telling them that they are



not fit to be trusted with the franchise, you cannot expect them to join in your petition for the ballot.

Household suffrage clearly went further than the aims of even the old Political Union and it was certainly unacceptable to many of the so-called reformers present. Despite this the amendment was carried whereupon Thompson, desirous of healing the split in the ranks, proposed a joint committee spanning both sides of the division to supervise the petition which was to be prepared on the issue. But the respectables' attempt to constrain their prodigies had clearly failed and by June of 1838 they were being referred to as 'ultra' radicals advocating an extension of the franchise, shorter parliaments, secret ballot, abolition of the property qualifications and refraining from excisable items in rota to demonstrate to the government the size and importance of the working class.(43) Already they were in correspondence with the London Working Mens Association and by November of 1838 a Chartist branch was formed in Sunderland.(44) The Mechanics Institute and the radical bookshop had created the opportunities and the space for a more thoroughgoing radical critique to develop and this had dovetailed neatly into the growing Chartist movement.

The North East was particularly strong in the early days of Chartism and the meetings on Sunderland town moor attracted figures of national importance. Soon the Sunderland Chartist Association was re-named the Durham Charter Association to reflect its dominance in the County (despite the greater overall strength of Tyneside Chartism). Robert Knox, a slater, was elected as the Durham County delegate to the National Convention where he spent time in the chair,

while Binns and Williams took care of the local organization.(45) That they did so very effectively is seen in a Sunderland Herald article of March 1839 which reported that 74 Chartist meetings had been held in the previous quarter.(46) According to Gammage, the first historian of Chartism,

The County of Durham was not a bit behind its neighbours in manifesting its attachment to the rapidly advancing movement for Democracy ... Williams and Binns kept the County of Durham in a perpetual state of agitation. There was scarcely a day in the week that did not witness one or more meetings. (47)

Binns, a member of the Quaker and draper family, toured the North East lecturing on the distress of the country and the means of its alleviation. He was, by all accounts, a very able, forceful and at times emotional speaker who was popular throughout the county, particularly in the mining districts. His Quaker background, though renounced, shone through in much of the religious imagery employed in his speeches. He also advocated a form of the labour theory of value and incorporated this as well as the religious imagery, into a number of poems for which he gained something of a reputation.(48) Williams on the other hand was a more reserved speaker, more commonly taking the chair at meetings.

As a working class cultural form, Chartism in Sunderland signified a sustained peak of radical political activity between 1838 and 1843 with a continuing but lesser influence down to 1848 and beyond. Binns and Williams were the acknowledged leaders and the chief missionaries to the mining districts. The Northern Star eulogised that:

Within the short space of twelve months, they have secured to our cause the whole colliery population of the county and extended the bond of political union into almost every town and village in Durham.(49)

Binns and Williams held the centre stage of radical politics in Sunderland from 1837 to late 1842 when Binns emigrated and Williams became estranged from a large number of Chartists through his support of the Complete Suffrage Union. O'Connor called the two men the 'Castor and Pollux of Chartism in the North East,' the 'very flowers of the Northern wreath'.(50)

But Binns and Williams were not the only prominent figures. Hills, for example, a quaker merchant, remained a radical all his life and took an active part in most types of radical politics down to the Parliamentary Reform Movement of 1858.(51) The same, too, can be said of Chalk, another shopkeeper, whose radical career spanned at least twenty years, while Gamsby, a dairyman and an early 'fire eating' stalwart of Chartism, went on to become secretary to the socialists, an advanced freethinker, the founder of Sunderland's first secular society and the writer of pamphlets on religious and political matters.(52) In 1884, at the age of 77, he was one of a group of 1832 reformers who were invited to head the procession which marked the great County Franchise Demonstration of that year.(53)

Thomas Thompson, on the other hand, was not a shopkeeper but a solicitor. His involvement with radicalism took him from the 1832 demonstrations to Chartism. By 1837 he was treasurer to the Mechanics Institute and secretary to the North Durham Reform Association for the Sunderland district in favour of the ballot. After this he became rapidly attached to the Chartist principles of his friends Binns and

Williams (who were joint secretaries to the Mechanics Institute at this time) and by 1839 the tone of his speeches was very radical indeed. As a Chartist solicitor his advice and representation of arrested Chartists was of considerable importance. In 1842, however, both he and Williams began to turn more towards a policy of cooperation with the middle-class and the path they took subsequently led them both through the Complete Suffrage Union to the Anti-Corn Law League and from there to places on the Town Council.

The significance of these individuals is considerable. In later life they became celebrities partly through their age and partly through their success. Only then were they honoured by obituaries which saw fit to describe to the general public their role in activities which had been ignored by the newspapers of the day. But if a continuity of radical involvement is evident here, how much more must there have been in the lives of those whose life-span and subsequent careers in public office did not warrant obituary notices? Social movements are comprised of individuals and the development of those movements is both an expression of, and a factor in turn influencing, the developments of the individuals involved. Lessons learned, imprisonment suffered, setbacks received and success tasted, all contributed to a gradual development of specific forms of conscious political behaviour and it is through the tracing of individual biographies that these developments, and the dialectical structuring involved, can be understood.

From the pages of the Northern Star over 120 Sunderland men, as

well as a number of women, can be identified as having taken a prominent role in the formal organisation of Chartism - in standing for election to the council, in taking the chair at meetings, in making speeches and in proposing or seconding motions.

Among them we may note Robert Knox, a 24-year old slater who was Sunderland's delegate to the first National Convention and who chaired Convention meetings in London before returning to lecture extensively in the North East.(54) Dobbie, a cabinet maker active from 1841 to 1848 and James Taylor, a clock and watchmaker who was a lecturer to the colliery districts and active from 1840 to 1847. Perhaps the strangest Sunderland Chartist was Batchelor who was variously described as 'a Sunderland ship's carpenter' and 'a fellow townsman of Frost'.(55) According to Devyr, Batchelor was a 'witness' to the Newport rising and this might possibly explain why Sunderland should have heard of the truth of the risings failure before Newcastle.(56) Arrested in the purge of North East Chartists, Batchelor's was the only case to be thrown out by the magistrates, after which he disappeared from sight.(57)

The numbers following such men, on the other hand, varied considerably, with the biggest meetings taking place on the town moor.(58) At the Whit Monday meeting of 1839 for example, even the hostile Sunderland Herald acknowledged the presence of 10,000 people while the Chartists themselves claimed that up to 50,000 were present.(59) Thousands signed the petitions and large sums were paid in to the National Rent and various Chartist defence funds. Knox took £10 with him to the National Convention along with 4,500 signatures.

17,000 signatures were collected for the petition for the Welsh victims. A further 10,000 signatures were taken in May 1841, and in May of the following year 13,000 more were taken.(60) In January 1840 Sunderland paid £20 to the Frost defence fund - a figure which compares favourably with Manchester's £21, Edinburgh's £17-9s-2d and Leeds' £7-9s-6d.(61)

As with the Sunderland and the Wearmouths Political Union, most of the Chartist leaders who can be identified by occupation were shopkeepers or artisans. Nominations for Sunderland's Chartist Council in 1841 contained a stationer, draper, gardener, two painters, a joiner, millwright and basketmaker. In 1842 the nominations included two cabinet makers, two masons, a tailor, a shoemaker and two weavers. In 1843 there were again two weavers, one of whom had also been among the 1842 nominations, an engineer, two cordwainers, a butcher, a rigger, a mason (who had also been nominated the previous year) and a labourer.(62) The Northern Star, furthermore, published lists of 'young patriots' who had been christened with the names of principal Chartists. In Sunderland a weaver named his new born son Feargus William Binns Helm and a Monkwearmouth miner called his children Mary Frost O'Connor Emmett and McDouall O'Connor Hebdin.(63)

As a political movement Sunderland Chartism sought to articulate a wide variety of grievances. Chief among these was the lack of political representation and the political monopoly over law making and law enforcement which was held by those who were also responsible, either directly or indirectly, for the exploitation of labour. In this way a wide range of grievances were covered such as poor working and

living conditions, adulterated food and so on. But certain grievances stood out more prominently in terms of their direct relationship to political developments. The first of these was the New Poor Law. There is some controversy over the role played by the New Poor Law in provoking hostile reactions in the North East.(64) Whatever the actual national impact however there was certainly a fear of the potential of the Poor Law Board. The popularity of J.R. Stephens in the North East is testimony to this, as is the kind of anti poor law sentiment expressed by local speakers.(65)

The second was the threatened introduction of the new rural police. Even the Durham Chronicle regarded the rural police as an unnecessary intrusion. It argued that the rural police should only be used to deal with robbery and violence, for otherwise it would be a standing army and 'a means of suppressing any public meeting disagreeable to Downing St'.(66) As a minimum safeguard the Durham Chronicle wished to see any such force managed by local ratepayers. Robert Knox declared that the New Police interfered with constitutional rights in a speech at Sunderland in 1839.(67) Binns hostility was declared more strongly. He felt that the new police were an additional form of oppression.(68) Williams, too, thought that the threatened introduction of the rural police was sufficient to justify the working class arming itself.(69)

This introduces the question of violence and physical force in Sunderland's Chartism. There is little doubt that some of the language used by the Chartist leadership was, at the very least, intemperate. Apart from the anti-police sentiments expressed above, the trial

proceedings of Binns and Williams provide further examples of their rhetoric.(70)

Robert Knox too is reported as having argued the need for the Chartists to arm themselves:

The majority has a right to use any means that will gain rights. If fighting in the field with the pike and musket will get those rights, the people have the right to use the pike and the musket. (71)

As Harney was later to write of Newcastle:

It was not only Dr Taylor and others in unison with his views who referred to the probable employment of force, but also those who, at least later, acquired a character for moderation, who held the same view and expressed themselves in like terms. The opinion was general. It was, so to speak, in the air. (72)

The Sunderland Chartist leadership, if a little carried away in 1839, were quick to renounce physical force, arguing that talk and threats of violence were 'just so much flourish'.(73) Instead they concentrated on education and propaganda, with Thomas Thompson arguing that

The people (are) not only the true source of legitimate power but they (are) the only source of wealth. (74)

This embryonic labour theory of value and call for greater equity in law creation were joined by further cries for a reduction in the exploitation of labour and for an increase in the awareness of its position. Thus an appeal for the reduction of false consciousness referred to

Your vision (which) has been obscured: you have been prevented from beholding your true condition - from viewing it as it really is. (75)

The articulation of these sentiments into a peaceful petitioning form reveals a considerable political awareness and maturity for the

period. Thousands travelled up to twenty miles to hear political speeches from Chartist platforms while families, and even whole villages, marched to Sunderland's town moor led by the Town's Chartist missionaries.(76) The more general tactics included the paying of a penny per week into the Chartist fund, abstaining from alcohol, withdrawing support from the savings banks, supporting the Mechanics Institute, forming Benefit societies, assisting cooperative ventures and promoting all working class education, particularly through Chartist schools.(77) Youth Chartist Associations were also to be formed and a Female Charter Association was instituted with Mrs Agnes Campbell as its president and Miss Williams, Mrs Gamsby, Mrs Porter and Miss Harrison among its leading figures.(78) The Sunderland Herald disparagingly referred to this association as 'the petticoated politicians of Sunderland' but the existence of such an organisation reveals the depth of political interest and the extent to which it was becoming a feature of working class activity in the town.(79)

Another prominent activity was the advocacy of temperance reform. It was noted that

The majority of the Sunderland Chartists have already pushed from them the intoxicating cup. (80)

Temperance and teetotalism were associated both with personal salvation from degradation and with the uplifting effect on workers generally if they could think and act through soberly the strategies which would improve their working and domestic lives. Furthermore, abstinence had the additional effect of reducing expenditure on taxable items thus depriving what was seen as a corrupt and wasteful government of much needed revenue.

Temperance increased the Chartists' difficulties in obtaining suitable accommodation for their meetings. No purpose-built hall was ever commenced in Sunderland, as occurred in some other towns, and the size and location of venues tended to vary according to the numbers expected to attend and the availability of rooms. At the peaks of Chartist enthusiasm meetings were held out of doors on the Town Moor. When Chartism was at a lower ebb they met at the houses of individual members such as the Smith's house at No5 Numbers Garth. In between they met variously at places such as the Life Boat House, the Bridge Street Store, the Athenaeum, and the Golden Lion in the High Street.

Rooms in public houses could be difficult to obtain because of the danger of the magistrates refusing to renew the licences of those who showed hospitality to radicals. In addition there was the problem that, since many radicals were teetotal, the revenue generated for the landlord was often not sufficiently lucrative. The Northern Star complained that

The Chartists of Sunderland, because they are almost universally teetotalers in practice, cannot get a room in a public house. (81)

Durham and Shields on the other hand had temperance hotels in which rooms could more easily be hired. Despite this, the Golden Lion continued to support radical gatherings. Alexander Fleming, editor of the socialist newspaper The New Moral World lectured at the inn in May 1841 and a number of other activities of the Utopian Socialists were held there.(82) Dances, soirees and banquets were held there by the Chartists, most notably that held to celebrate the release of Binns and Williams from prison in January 1841.(83)

Temperance and teetotalism took politically neutral as well as politically active forms. The same was also true of cooperation. Here the promise of unadulterated food, the cutting out of middlemen, the return of profit as dividend and the employment of some of their own number could be further allied to educational schemes, restraint from excisable items (again) and occasionally more grandiose schemes for political and social reform. In February 1840 for example there were in Sunderland two politically neutral cooperative stores, an Owenite cooperative which roughly followed their founder's inspiration of desiring to form a new social basis of society on the basis of cooperation and a Chartist cooperative operating in Bridge Street. This paid out a fixed interest to shareholders and a return of dividend to customers in proportion to their purchases in a manner which pre-dated the similar scheme supposedly pioneered in Rochdale.(84)

The Socialist cooperative was particularly successful. By 1840 it had purchased commodious premises in Lambton Street, Bishopwearmouth which provided, in addition to the shop, school rooms, lecture rooms and committee rooms. Several new branches were reported to have opened in the suburbs and there was sufficient excess capital and energy among the society's labour to recommend branching out its activities into shipbuilding.(85)

The Chartists also had a wider scope of activities beyond discussion and speeches. Soirees were held with singing and dancing

while excuses for celebrations such as the freeing of Binns and Williams from prison called for banquets and other forms of amusement. At a Durham County radical social tea party in February 1839, two sittings were needed to accommodate the 400 persons requiring a meal.(86)

In this way politics became a feature of cultural life with a vigour which defied any simple equation of Chartism with 'hunger politics'. The North East's failure to fit the usual pattern of trade-cycle linked political activity has already been touched upon, but Sunderland's divergence from expectations was particularly dramatic. The period, at least down to 1840, was one of considerable material growth and yet Chartism flourished in these less than 'favourable' circumstances. O'Connor's visit to Sunderland in June 1839 led him to state of the Chartists there that

Their devotion to their principles in their state of comparative affluence proves not only their love of the principles but also their sympathy for those who suffered more than themselves. (87)

It was to be 1840 before the peak of Wearside shipbuilding, with its consequent effect on the prosperity of so many linked business, was reached (fig.1).(88) The Northern Star reported in that year that

The principles of the Charter ... are rapidly extending in Sunderland ... Sunderland is, compared with other towns, and has been for some time, enjoying a high degree of prosperity ... this ... will be an additional puzzle to our fill-belly philosophers. There are the wants of the mind as well as the belly. Our rulers regard neither. (89)

By the following year the depression which had began four or five years earlier elsewhere finally arrived at Sunderland. That place

had been favoured with an exemption of the general misery but now the bubble had burst. (90)

Distress had arrived and, according to the Northern Star, 'many

a great ox has dwindled to a frog'.(91) Sunderland was still not experiencing the full rigours of the New Poor Law governing workhouse incarceration, but by 1842 there were 330 indoor paupers and 4,808 outdoor. Thomas Thompson commented that 'every fifth man in the population was a pauper' and the following table gives an indication of the size of the problem.(92)

Year	Outdoor Paupers	Indoor Paupers
1842	4,808	330
1843	6,161	343
1844	5,289	337
1845	4,433	255

(Source: Sunderland Herald 16.1.1846)

In February 1843 there were reported to be in the port, 1,000 empty houses, 31 empty shops in the High Street and 133 empty shops overall. The numbers employed as ships carpenters had fallen from 3,100 to 1,000 while the wages of those left in work had dropped from 31/6 in 1841 to 19/6 in 1842.(93) In June 1843 John Buddle wrote to Lord Londonderry that

half the shops in Newcastle are empty. In Sunderland and South Shields too, I hear that shops are being shut up daily. (94)

£4,000 was raised by public subscription in Sunderland to alleviate the distress. A public meeting was called to debate the problem and it was proposed that an 'Unemployment Relief Committee' be set up to oversee a programme of public work schemes such as the draining of the town moor to provide work for the unemployed. This represented advanced thinking for the period. Indeed the term 'unemployment' was not common in contemporary usage. The official

position still held that the able bodied poor were somehow 'undeserving' and should be deterred from making application for relief by the less eligibility principles of workhouse provision. Not only were Sunderland's civic leaders pioneers in recognising that unemployment could result from matters beyond the individuals' control, but they also produced a new approach for amelioration.

The magistrates and ministers who were to sit on this 'Unemployment Relief Committee' recognised the expediency of including

Men in whom the operatives would have full confidence ...  
(men) ... in possession of much valuable information  
relative to the condition of the working classes. (95)

It was further proposed that a working man should be added to the committee. Thus it was that three Chartists, Williams, Bruce and Pierce, came to be elected. It may have appeared to some that the Chartists were taking a more immediate and practical response to the problems of the working class. To others it may have looked more like an example of incorporation.(96)

Such incorporation had seemed most unlikely in 1839. The summer of that year saw a frantic pace of working class political activity. The town moor meetings drew large and volatile crowds and Binns and Williams were at the height of their popularity. Binns declared that

The people ... are nearly ready for the wild outbreak of  
sanguinary revolution

and 'as for me, give me liberty or death'.(98)

Other examples of violence, or at least the rhetoric of violence, can be found in their speeches. The authorities, already alarmed, issued warrants for Binns and Williams' arrest on the grounds of attending an illegal meeting and using seditious and inflammatory

language.(99) Lest the crowd rush to their defence, troops were put on standby, the arms of the coastguards were made available, special constables were sworn in and arrangements were made for the cavalry to be brought in if they were needed.(100) The men went peacefully and were released on bail pending a trial which did not take place for another twelve months.

In the ensuing period Binns was arrested again when he attended a peaceful meeting in Darlington. Here special constables had been sworn in and soldiers of the 77th foot regiment alternated between billets in Darlington and Stockton, taking advantage of the new railway.(101) The soldiers became bored and sought to arrest the Chartists under a local bye-law. On the basis of this 'Cattle Act' Binns and four other Chartists were arrested and sentenced to a choice of prison or a fine.(102)

In between the two arrests came the call for the 'Sacred Month' of strike action and the news of the Newport rising. The Sacred Month was observed most closely in the area between Stockton and Durham where it was reported that almost all the collieries had stopped work.(103) In Sunderland debates as to whether support should be given to the Sacred Month raged until the eleventh hour where, by a narrow margin, the decision not to strike was taken.(104) The Newport rising similarly failed to bring about major concerted action although there is some slight evidence to suggest that Newcastle and Sunderland were wanting to hear the fate of the Monmouth rising before deciding what action to take themselves.(105) Newcastle, strangely enough, received an initial report that the Frost rising had succeeded and it was only

a message from the Sunderland Chartists that gave Newcastle the true picture.(106)

This period also saw an initial overture by the Anti Corn Law League for a union with the Sunderland Chartists. Binns and Williams replied in the following terms:

What is our present relation to you as a section of the middle class. It is one of violent opposition. You are the holders of power, participation in which you refuse us: for demanding which you persecute us with a malignity paralleled only by the ruffianly Tories. We are, therefore, suprised that you should ask us to cooperate with you. (107)

The Chartists turned back to their own cause with renewed zeal. A petition to the Queen to plead for mercy for the Newport men was prepared and Williams went to Manchester as a delegate to the national conference at which the National Charter Association was established.(108) The trial of Binns and Williams eventually took place in July 1840 after considerable delay and, despite less than conclusive evidence, the two men were sentenced to six months imprisonment in Durham jail where they remained until January 1841.(109)

This term of imprisonment does not seem to have been particularly harsh. They received a reported 1,500 visitors and many presents. Binns composed a poem, 'The Doom of Toil' which was put on sale and which sold out of its initial printing. Williams was later to marry a girl whom he had met in prison where she had been residing with the family of the prison govenor.(110)

While they were in prison the Sunderland organisation they had left behind flirted with Urquhart's Russophobia movement.(111) The

Northern Star was dismayed:

Oh for Williams and Binns ... the flowers of the Northern Wreath ... who would dare to put such resolutions to a meeting at Sunderland if the shepherds were with the flock! Such namby-pamby work will ruin us'. (112)

The 'namby-pambies' included two ex-National Convention members in Lowery the South Shields tailor and delegate for Newcastle, and Deegan the Durham missionary, as well as other important Sunderland Chartists such as Helmsley, Monarch and Taylor.(113)

Russophobia receded as Binns and Williams were released from prison. Williams saw where Chartists alliances should lie - with the Oddfellows, Foresters, Moulders, Tailors, Joiners, Carpenters, Socialists and Mechanics Institute men.(114) On their release from prison Binns and Williams were met at Durham by a huge crowd and a public breakfast and were feted all the way back to Sunderland.(115) The following weeks saw them as guests at a series of celebratory banquets throughout the region as their release was used to recharge the local movement.

1841 was to be another busy year. In the General Election held in July, Williams stood as a Chartist candidate for Leeds alongside James Leach. In his election speeches, he claimed to stand as

an uncompromising advocate of free trade, the determined opponent of the existing Corn Laws and all taxes that made food dear, and, as a necessary consequence wages low.

He was also in favour of a scheme of national education, unconnected with religious creed; separation of Church and State; repeal of all laws which enroach upon rights of conscience; and the repeal of all taxes on the necessaries of life and their substitution with a property tax.(116) At the show of hands the numbers were very

even, but after a twelfth recount it was announced that the count had gone against the Chartist and, as 'true democrats', Leach and Williams retired.

Binns meanwhile stood for Sunderland. A crowd of 20,000 listened to him for two hours and he won the show of hands decisively before withdrawing from the poll. He was then carried home shoulder high before speaking again from the window of his house. Upon Binns' withdrawal however it had been deemed unnecessary for the poll to go ahead and in many eyes this meant that Binns had been rightfully elected and ought to be able to take his seat in Parliament. Talk of legal action ensued and Binns was for some time after referred to as 'our MP'. Hence when the seat fell vacant later that year, his potential influence on the outcome of the by-election was recognised by all concerned.(117)

This led to the affair of the £125 bribe which has been well documented as contributing to an election result which ran contrary to the national trend.(118) In an effort to split the Whig vote, the Tory candidate, Wolverly Attwood, endeavoured to persuade a Chartist candidate to go to the poll - either Thompson or Binns. A bribe of £125 was offered and Binns demurred until he could secure the repetition of the offer before witnesses. The subsequent publicity given to this 'Tory treachery' was sufficient to secure a major upset in the election.

The net effect of this activity seems to have been the seeds of an alliance between the Whigs and the Chartists. Williams' speeches at Leeds were remarkable for the bluntness with which he accepted the

need for Corn Law repeal at a time when most Chartist spokesmen were either hostile to the League or vacillated in the company of O'Connor's leadership. Other factors also played their part. The Tories, perhaps still incensed by the bribe scandal, brought an action for assault against Williams which, if it had been successful, would have caused great trouble since Williams was still bound over to keep the peace from his previous convictions. Fortunately for Williams and his securities the prosecution failed and it is perhaps significant that the local press switched its support to Williams over this case.(119)

The bookselling partnership did not survive all this activity and Williams continued alone. Binns returned to the draping trade in partnership with Kilvinton where he was obliged to decline requests from Barnsley to be their nomination to the National executive committee of the National Charter Association.(120) He also declined an invitation from Birmingham to be a full-time Chartist missionary there.(121) His new business ran into financial difficulties and he returned to Durham prison as a debtor. From there he emigrated to New Zealand in August 1842 to die of consumption a few years later.(122)

Williams in the meantime had been drawn into closer collaboration with the middle classes through the employment relief committee and through finding some unlikely supporters at his assault trial. In 1841 the Anti Corn Law League made a second overture to the Chartists. As

in 1840 they were rebuffed. The Northern Star was ecstatic: 'Another lesson for the Anti Corn Law League', 'Glorious triumph for common sense and equal justice' were the headlines. Binns and Williams were hailed as 'the very Castor and Pollux of Chartism in the North'.(123)

By 1842, however, a different situation was developing in Sunderland.

Chartism is now becoming popular even amongst the middle classes, and many of those who were before most bitter in their hostility, have now become warm and attached friends. (124)

At that stage Chartism and the Anti Corn Law League still seemed violently opposed to each other at a national level. Both bodies sought to enlist the support of the working class and employed 'proletarian bodyguards' to prevent the packing of their respective meetings.(125) New moves were afoot within the League however and Joseph Sturge, recently returned from America, addressed an informal meeting of the League after the main business had been completed. He put to this Manchester meeting a proposal for increasing the radical base of their movement to include a measure of Parliamentary reform which, they hoped, would broaden their basis of support.

Accordingly a conference was called for April 1842, to be held in Birmingham, and a declaration was circulated among likely signatories as a prelude to delivering a Complete Suffrage petition to Parliament in the hands of Sharman Crawford, MP. Williams was among those who signed this 'Sturge Declaration', and this brought a rebuke from O'Connor, which Williams was quite prepared to dispute. Also attracted to the Complete Suffrage Union (as it became known) were some of the more radical Anti-Corn Law League members as well as many disaffected members of the Chartist body.(126) It became, in effect, a rallying

point for all those who had fallen out with, or foul of, O'Connor, and he therefore watched developments with concern. Unexpectedly, however, and to Sturge's consternation, the conference rapidly adopted a programme which, in essence, supported the whole of the Chartist proposals in addition to Corn Law repeal. Thereupon an adjournment was made until December in order to formalise the motions and to solicit Parliamentary support.

For Williams, a movement which brought together the Whig reformers and Chartists without giving up any points of the Charter seemed a venture which should be given serious attention. By September, Complete Suffrage meetings were being held in Sunderland and a decision was made to send four delegates to the December conference: Williams himself, Thompson the Chartist solicitor from Sunderland, Joseph Sturge and W.P. Roberts, the 'miners attorney', solicitor to Chartism and a personal friend of O'Connor.(127) Roberts' selection did little to appease O'Connor, as he vented his spleen at the 'base compromise' effected by the Sunderland men.

Thompson became the secretary of the Sunderland Complete Suffrage Union branch and 1,700 leaflets, one for every burgess in the borough, were printed and distributed giving an account of the principles of the 'Union' and embodying the address of the Birmingham council to the middle and enfranchised classes.(128) The composition of the Sunderland CSU makes unusual reading. It included Lieutenant Colonel Beckwith and Alderman Bowmaker as well as representatives of the radical shopocracy in Bruce and Hills, and formerly committed Chartists such as Chappel, Dobby and James Taylor.

The first recorded meeting of the Complete Suffrage Movement in Sunderland comprised mainly of Chartist speakers and

the principles of the Charter were asserted and defended by nearly all the speakers and the Chartists strongly advocated the propriety of the working classes giving their support to the Sturge movement without however abandoning the National Charter Association. (129)

When Sturge himself visited the town, however, it was the middle-class radicals who were in attendance. Thus when the chairman called upon James Williams

as the leader of the people, as one who was capable of expressing the sentiments of the working classes of the town

to say a few words Williams' changing mood was already evident:

although he should still endeavour to keep the Charter Association ... he should bid good speed to the Complete Suffrage Union. (130)

The CSU seemed to hold out that prospect of alliance between the middle and working class which had proved so fruitful, yet ultimately so treacherous, in 1832. This ambivalence towards collaboration with the middle class manifested itself in different ways throughout the country. O'Connor secured his own election to the December conference, and throughout the county Chartists began to pack CSU meetings in order to secure the election of delegates who would be hostile to anything less than whole-hog endorsement of the Charter. Thus the conference started in the Birmingham Mechanics Institute with considerable division among its 374 delegates. Attention focussed on William Lovett. Having supported the CSU in April, it was expected that this respected elder statesman of Chartism would carry considerable support among those whose allegiances were similar to those of James Williams and Thomas Thompson. Whatever hope the CSU had however of winning the day was lost by clumsy tactics.

Afraid lest the violent connotations and previous history of the Charter should lose them too much support the Union had instructed two London solicitors to re-draft the April motions into a 'Bill of Rights', a legal document which, according to one Chartist, would take five hours to read.(131) Thus, although The Charter was to be adopted, its name was not to be used. In the words of Mark Hovell, they had swallowed the camel but strained on the gnat.(132) To add further insult, this 'Bill of Rights' was presented almost, but not quite, as a fait accompli by Thomas Beggs of Nottingham, 'a mere secondary member of the Complete Suffrage party'.(133)

All eyes turned to Lovett. Rather unexpectedly he condemned the 'Bill of Rights' since, in the words of Gammage,

to give up the name of The Charter was a sort of political sacrilege. (134)

Consternation then ensued as O'Connor stood up to gloat over his inevitable victory while recriminations flew in all directions. In an attempt to reconcile the warring factions Williams, together with Thomas Cooper, proposed that both the Bill of Rights and The Charter should lie on the table for discussion, but this received little support. Eventually, saddened and dismayed, the Sturgeites filed out of the Institute to continue their meeting elsewhere. With them went the Sunderland delegates, and Thomas Thompson was elected to the executive committee charged with looking after the interests of the Sturgeite minority.(135)

Back in the main hall O'Connor reigned triumphant, but in many respects the victory was a hollow one. Lovett, alongside whom he had spoken for the last time, departed to concentrate on his educational

schemes. Many others departed too. O'Connor was left as 'the monarch of a declining kingdom'. He had succeeded in maintaining his authority over the movement, but only at the expense of driving away most of its most sober and intelligent influences as well as its potential middle class support.

And after the confrontation came the recriminations and, true to his style, O'Connor chose to attack individuals rather than causes; but not individuals who would have the opportunity to reply. He rounded on Williams and Thompson. These supporters of the Suffrage movement he termed sucking pigs, and sucking pigs were of little value to a movement which, in O'Connor's opinion, required whole hogs.

Williams was quite prepared for O'Connors vituperation. As a continuing agent for the Northern Star, his correspondence could not be suppressed completely, and back in Sunderland he was more than a match for any whole-hog speaker. If the townspeople were to be whipped up against Williams, then it was evident that an outsider, a major Chartist figure, would be needed, and the man who stepped forward to fulfil that role was Samuel Kydd.(136)

Kydd was a virulent anti- Anti Corn Law League speaker who believed that repeal of the Corn Laws without the Charter would be a major disaster for the working class. Since ports stood to gain much from any expansion of trade consequent upon corn law repeal, it is strange that such a speaker should have received such an attentive hearing in Sunderland and Newcastle, but hear him they did and, in a short time, he had succeeded in whipping up whole-hog sentiments to the point at which Williams found himself excluded.(137) This marked the beginning of the end for Williams' involvement in Sunderland

Chartism, for, while he continued to take an interest in Chartist affairs and while he still commanded respect wherever he spoke, his voice increasingly became one of moderation.

In 1843 he stood as Parliamentary candidate for Durham City but stood down in favour of John Bright who was elected at the second attempt only after Thomas Thompson had exposed bribery among the Tory ranks.(138) At this stage both Chartists were gravitating rapidly towards full commitment to the Anti Corn Law League. Williams did on occasions return to speak on Chartist platforms as in 1848 when he once again addressed Town Moor meetings. But in contrast to the radicalism which characterised his speeches of ten years previously, this time he counselled the crowd

to become like him a teetotaller, abstaining from all intoxicating liquors, to save their money and cultivate their minds and thus show to the higher classes that they were worthy of and capable to exercise creditably any extension of privileges which might be granted to them. (139)

The Complete Suffrage Union itself did not long survive the failure of the Birmingham conference, and Sunderlands' last branch meeting was recorded in January 1844. (140)

The 'whole hog' Chartists re-assembled with a new list of nominees for the Chartist general council and Esket Riley, one of the two weavers in the new list, was particularly critical of Williams' defection.(141) The loss of Williams, Thompson and others was a great blow to the movement yet Sunderland remained an important centre for Chartism and it continued to attract figures of national importance in the 1840s such as O'Connor, Gammage, West and McDouall who all called to make lectures. Economically conditions improved in this period and

in order to take advantage of this, and to sustain interest in Chartism, the Land Scheme was devised whereby members paid in subscriptions each week which eventually purchased lottery tickets. Ballots were then held and the winners were established on smallholdings in Chartist-built villages.(142) Branches were set up in many places where Chartism had previously taken little hold such as Middlesborough, and there was renewed interest in places such as Darlington and in mining communities such as Easington Lane and Shiney Row. Barbara Vaughan of Sunderland turned out to be the first female lottery winner, and one of the first overall. She settled on O'Connorville in 1846 while George How, another Sunderland resident, won a place at Lowbands in the following year.(143)

The Land Scheme was based on a muddle of ideas such as a failure to appreciate what effect their land dealings would have upon the price and quality of land they were offered.(144) Ultimately however the greatest contradiction which was highlighted was O'Connor's opposition to the Anti Corn Law League. For if the Corn Laws were repealed the land prices looked set to fall and hence Chartist resettlement would be made considerably easier. By this time however most supporters of Corn Law repeal had been driven from the movement.

In Sunderland an Anti Corn Law Society had been active since December 1839 and it had presented petitions for Corn Law repeal in 1840, 1841 and 1842.(145) Between 1839 and 1846 the Society, later re-named the Sunderland Anti Corn law Association, was a thriving body with its meetings regularly reported in the local press.(146) Lists of those present and active in the various meetings reads like a Who's

Who of Sunderlands' nineteenth century middle class reformers covering such names as J.J. Wright, Ogden, A.J. Moore and Dr Brown from the platforms of 1831 alongside later key figures such as E. Backhouse, E.C. Robson and Jonasshon. These men were at pains to stress their positions of respectability in the town. At a congratulatory meeting in July 1846 for example the Association began a letter to Richard Cobden with the statement:

We the undersigned magistrates, clergymen, merchants, ship owners and other inhabitants of the borough ... (147)

The Anti Corn Law League was clearly a very affluent body. When the parent body established a campaign to raise £100,000 nationally, £170 was raised from a single meeting in Sunderland.(148) Yet the League members showed a genuine concern for the plight of the poor. A.J. Moore condemned the Earl Marshall of England for recommending to the poor that a pinch of curry powder in a cup of warm water would do much to cure the gnawings of the stomach.(149) A. White, the first mayor of Sunderland from 1835-7 and MP from 1837-41 had been involved in extensive commercial transactions for thirty years yet felt that he

could truly say that during the whole of that period he had no recollection of such severe distress among the great body of the working men and indeed among the tradesmen of the borough as that which existed in the early 1840s. (150)

The cause of this distress was considered to be the protectionist policies of the government which had stifled the shipping and local interests of the port. Thomas Thompson pointed out the hypocrisy of many League members' position who had voted for short term promises rather than long term benefits.

The men of England want not charity but justice.... if the free traders of Sunderland had done their duty at the last election and returned Colonel Thompson, the father of free trade.... (but) some were blinded at the late election by the railway mania to vote against their convictions ... they had lost a moral power in the town which it was impossible for them to regain. (151)

Thompson's vitriol was not meant to destroy. He had distanced himself from the Chartists and had taken the position of Anti-Corn Law Association branch secretary after the failure of the CSU and he now urged the League to 'abhor expediency and take their stand upon principle'.(152)

The Association no longer sought to compete with the Chartists for mass working class support and began instead to take an active part in the registration campaign, recognising fully the potential power of the forty shilling freeholder vote and forming the North Durham Reform Registration Society in response. Nossiter's figures, which show a lack of growth in the registered electorate, reveal that the Association was largely unsuccessful in increasing the number of voters in Sunderland.(153) Despite this the League continued to hold lectures and weekly soirees until repeal was finally enacted in 1846 whereupon the mayor proclaimed a general holiday in celebration.(156)

The Anti Corn Law League attracted a number of former Chartists such as Thomas Dickenson, 'the Manchester packer' and former O'Connorite who had at one time disrupted League meetings along with others of the whole hog brigade.(155) But voices such as Dickenson's tended to be submerged beneath the weight of the middle class presence.

With the success of the League's campaign, political radicalism in Sunderland became significantly quieter. The League held a commemorative meeting in 1849 and the Chartists enjoyed a mini-revival in 1848. 1848 also saw the setting up of a more moderate Reform Association composed of working men to press for a widening of the

franchise to include all male adults with a twelve months residence qualification, secret ballot, triennial parliaments and union with the middle class. Williams and Thompson, still desirous of class collaboration, spoke in favour of this new initiative while others on the platform included the veteran reformer Hills, Edward Capper Robson - a mill owner who was very prominent in public affairs, and Ernest Jones, possibly the most influential figure in later Chartism and a correspondent of Marx and Engels.(156)

A petition in favour of 'Humes Little Charter' as it became known was sent to parliament. It contained 3,467 signatures comprising, according to the Sunderland Herald, 525 middle class signatures, 2,791 working class, and 151 Southwick bottle makers!.(157) Again however little was achieved with Hume's proposal for household suffrage suffering a defeat in parliament by 286 votes to 82.(158)

By the early 1850s prosperity had returned to the town with the increase in the demand for ships occasioned by the Crimean War. This strengthened the hand of skilled labour and further delayed the creation of a great barrier between the shipbuilders and their workers.(159) In 1856 Louis Kossuth visited the town and his reception clearly indicates the direction in which Sunderland's politics had travelled in the intervening years. He was met by the Mayor, A.J. Moore formerly of the Anti Corn Law League. With him were members of the town council including, most noticeably, James Williams. Kossuth:

was delighted to see the sympathy which existed between the mayor and his fellow citizens and in this harmony and feeling so nobly exemplified between the people and those in authority he recognised a mutual insurance between freedom and order.

It seems that Kossuth's speech fairly accurately summed up the languid

state of radicalism in the town.(160) Kossuth gave two lectures to packed houses of 1300 in the Bethesda Chapel, Tatham Street and among those present was Joseph Cowen. It was from Cowen that the next initiative was to come.

Cowen had started working towards a new radical movement in 1854 and his first committee had comprised three middle class members, three trade unionists and three Chartists. As the Northern Tribune put it: 'men who can forget little differences'.(161)

On January 3rd 1858 the Northern Reform Union was officially established in Newcastle and support was sought from Sunderland, and James Williams in particular. Williams must have seemed particularly suitable for such an approach but he replied that he had

no hope of being able to organise and maintain a political association in Sunderland ... (although) a meeting to adopt a petition to Parliament ... might be got up. (162)

By February 1859 Williams was reporting that he expected 5,000 to sign the petition in favour of Cowen's proposals.(163) By this stage the first of the Chartist demands, the abolition of the property qualification for MP's, had now been achieved and when Sunderland's reformers were re-united on a public platform they displayed a little more of their old confidence. Williams spoke once again in favour of universal suffrage and the secret ballot saying that

the present restrictive franchise deprives a large number of our fellow countrymen of their just electoral rights; ... entails on the nation bad legislation, financial extravagance and an irresponsible foreign policy; and demands a radical reform in the representation of the People in Parliament based on manhood suffrage and vote by ballot. (164)

Once again long standing radicals such as Hills and Bruce were

present. Hills was described as 'a veteran reformer of nearly half a century's standing' while Bruce declared that since the Northern Reform Union 'went for manhood suffrage', he 'as a Chartist would support it'.(165)

Chartism, however, was not only dead in Sunderland by this time but also buried. Former Chartists chose not to dwell on that period of their life and scant mention was ever made of it. In 1884 when Sunderland was planning massive demonstrations in favour of reform the Chartist legacy was ignored. Pride of place at the front of the first section of the great reform demonstration went to the veterans of 1832, some of whom had to be taken by carriage as they could no longer march with the crowd. In looking forward to the demonstration the Sunderland Echo which, incidentally, had swallowed James Williams' Sunderland Times by this stage(166) said that

if all things went on well at the seven places they would have the biggest demonstration they had ever had in the north since 1832. (167)

But the July 1839 Chartist meetings had crowds estimated at up to 50,000 with the conservative Sunderland Herald conceding that there were 10,000 present. The largest meeting surrounding the 1832 Reform by contrast had between 8 and 10,000 present and the question must surely be asked whether the Sunderland Echo had genuinely forgotten about the Chartists or had preferred to ignore their former influence in the town.

Whichever is the case, it is clear that radicalism in Sunderland had developed into reformism with the onset of mid-Victorian prosperity as many key radical figures adopted pronounced liberal

colours in the second half of the century. Even George Gamsby, the former Chartist and staunch socialist became a member of the court of arbitration which looked into disputes concerning the shipwrights. Of the more militant, whole hog Chartists, little more is heard but this is partially due to the selectivity of the local press in choosing items for publication. If, for instance, we take the number of Chartists who were active in and lived in Sunderland we find that the Northern Star's 120-plus named male Chartists contrasts strongly with only 31 named by the Sunderland Herald. The Herald was in fact very hostile to the Chartists describing them as 'Chatterists' and the whole hog as 'the very fag end of society'.(168) As early as May 1839 the Herald had decreed that 'the Chartist fever is past its crisis', a judgement which was to be roundly turned on its head in the ensuing months.(169) When Binns and Williams were brought to trial in 1840 they were convicted almost entirely on the evidence of the Herald's reporter, Etherington.(170)

But the press cannot take the whole of the blame for the decline in Sunderland's working class political radicalism. Many of the major groupings of employees failed to develop a consistent Chartist or class analysis of their position. The glass and pottery workers did contribute some support to the movement but in a manner which stands in marked contrast to the wholehearted commitment of the miners and the support from older trades and the shopocracy. Thus while a strong class imagery was employed in calls to the alkali workers over the formation of a union, Hylton pottery workers contributed to the funds of the Anti Corn Law League.(171)

While many working men figured prominently in the movement there is little doubt that the major figures were not themselves workmen. Here the dialectic of structuring is most pronounced as the activities of individuals shaped the flow of events which in turn operated both openly and 'behind their backs' to constrain, mould and limit the subsequent range of activities open to them.

Binns and Williams may have remained minor dissident lower middle class figures in a different context, yet the tide of political radicalism thrust them to the forefront of the action where they exercised considerable influence for a time. Chartism itself was subject to fluctuations and influences of an impersonal character as well as the influences of its own key individuals and those of the government and military. Locally the economic structure produced competing groups with each attempting to increase its power. The Chartist leaders, though initially able to reject direct overtures from the Anti Corn Law League, eventually succumbed to the siren of power sharing in the Unemployment Relief Committee and this class collaboration marked a significant turn in the ultimate fortunes of its independent working class activity. The conditions which produced the massive increase in pauperism were not attributed to individuals, but the resulting Unemployment Relief Committee was, for some, the first step on the path which led through the Complete Suffrage Union to full allegiance with the respectable middle class in a way which led to a weakening of the Chartist body.

The various movements stand in a clear relationship to the social structure of the town. It is possible to identify five clear

groupings, the first of which was an aristocracy noticeable largely by its physical absence from the town but represented in the form of Londonderry and Lambton. Those who held political power both as MPs and on the corporation came from a second identifiable strata of businessmen, lawyers and doctors. These were frequently referred to as the 'respectables' and it is from their ranks that T.J. Nossiter distinguished competing cells of influence in the way in which, for example, the centralisation of the port authority struck at the roots of the shipowners influence while the centralisation of local authority was a reciprocal blow to the Whigs.(172) The third identifiable group is the 'shopocracy' while the fourth and fifth would be the skilled craftsmen and artisans followed by the labourers and the unskilled. Cutting across the neatness of this five fold classification would be the archetypal proletarian miners of Monkwearmouth colliery with perhaps the employees of the large alkali, pottery and glassworks. While there is some evidence of these groups using class imagery, the majority of workers in Sunderland's early factories do not seem to have contributed significantly to the Chartist movement and this constitutes a major problem for any interpretation which seeks to explain Chartism as a response to increasing proletarianisation.(173)

In 1831 it was the 'respectable' middle class who linked with the mass of the population to lead the great reform demonstration while the union of shopocrats and skilled workers remained relatively isolated. Some of the respectables were still known as reformers in the late 1830s but the events of 1837-9 produced differing alliances.

In this phase it was the respectable middle class who found themselves alone while the shopocrats and skilled artisans joined with the semi and unskilled, as well as the miners from outside, to produce Chartism. These links strengthened in the early years of the 1840's depression but by this time the respectables were courting the leadership of the shopkeeper/artisanal group to strengthen their own position and weaken the source of any opposition. By the 1850s the former tradesmen radicals were incorporated into the local system of council and electoral politics which removed them from their former followers among the pitmen. Faced with the defection of its articulate leadership, working class politics took a weaker, more fragmented, and ultimately a more institutionalised union-based form than it had done in the 1830s and 1840s.

Thus Sunderland's class relations were remarkably fluid in this period and, while they were ultimately based in economic structures, at an immediate and practical level they were bound up with the consciousness and action of their leading protagonists.

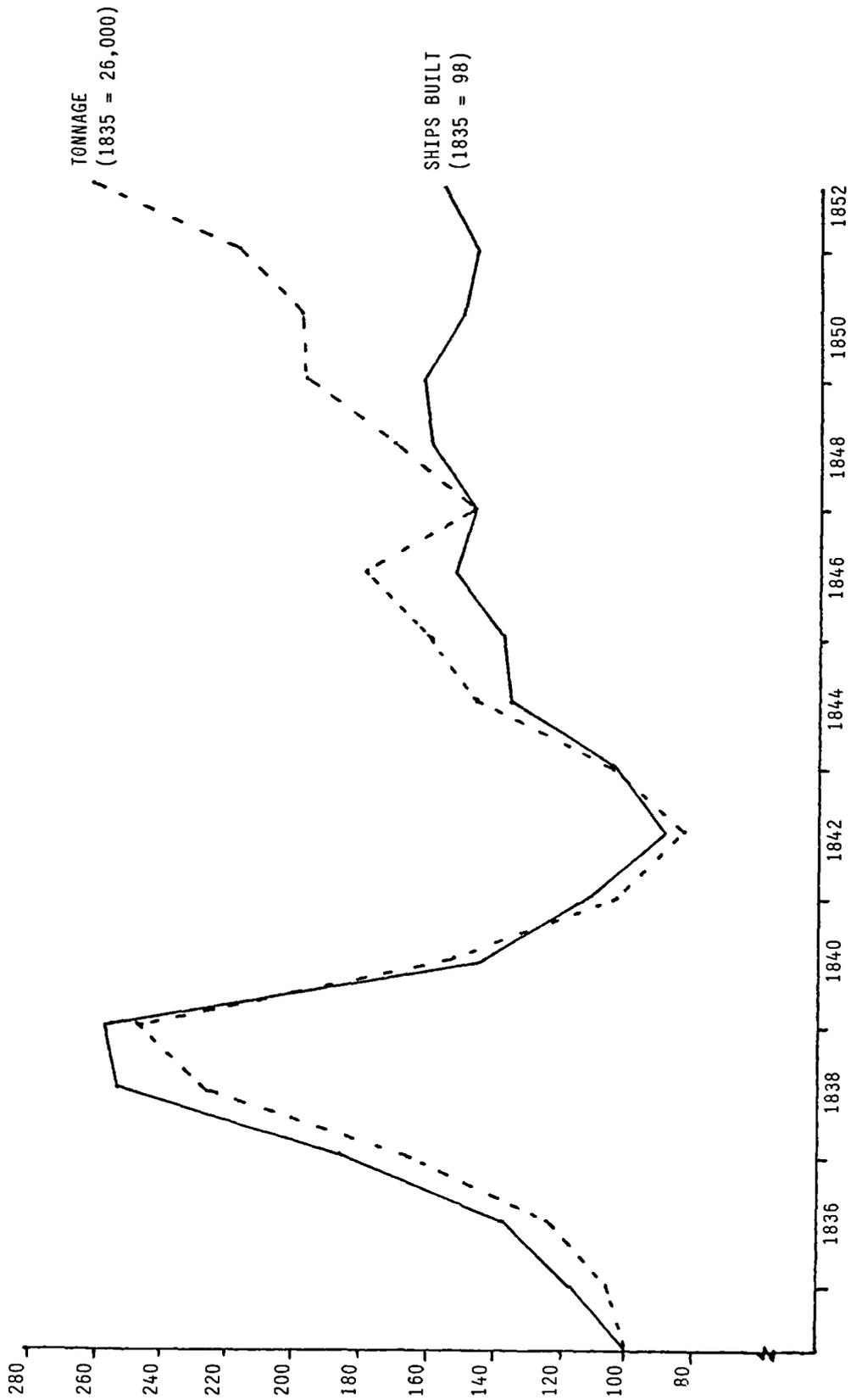


Figure 1: Index of Shipbuilding in Sunderland (1835=100)

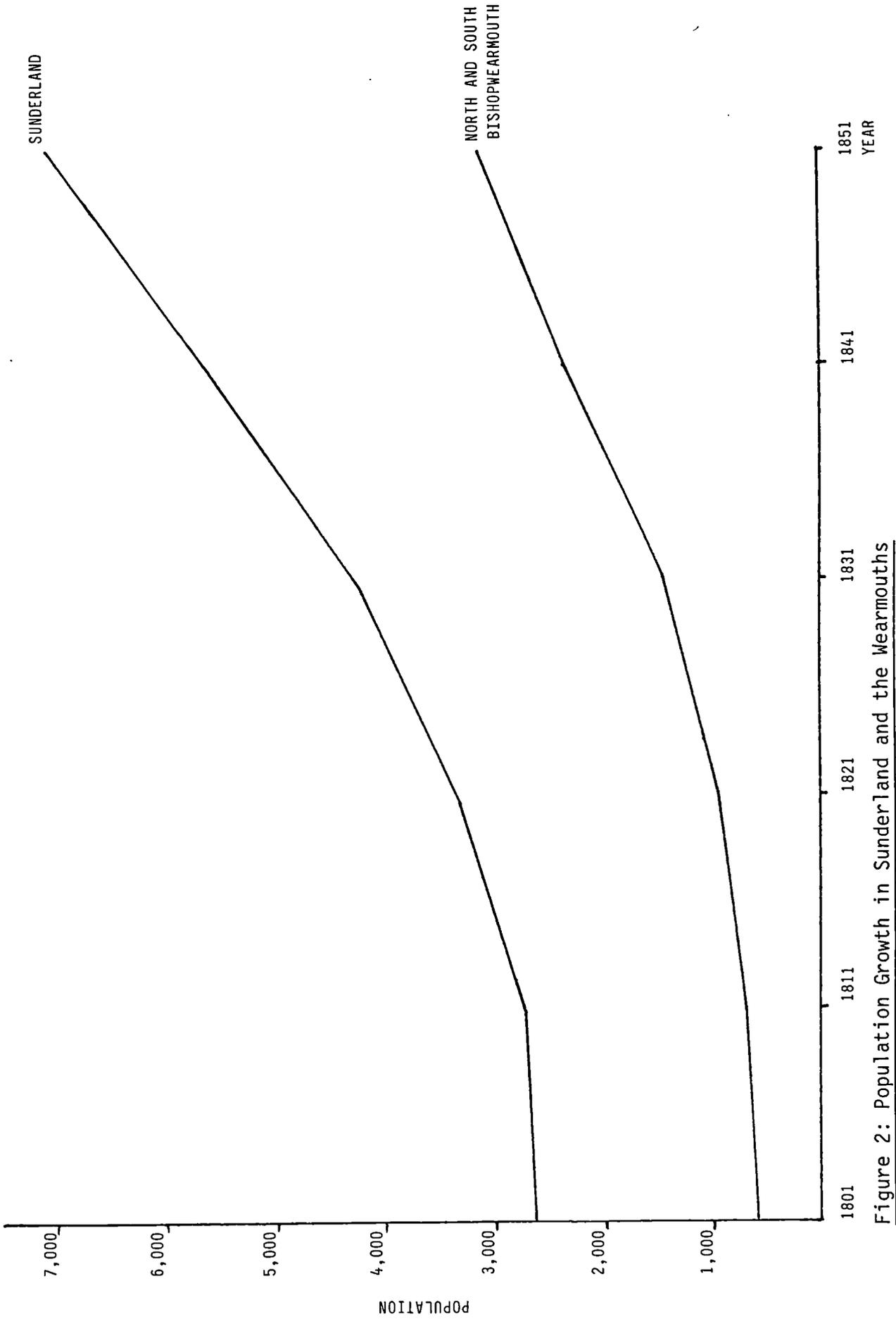


Figure 2: Population Growth in Sunderland and the Wearmouths

Chapter 3Notes

1. N. Kirk, The Growth of Working Class Reformism in Mid Victorian England (Croom Helm 1985); P. Joyce, Work, Society and Politics. The Culture of the factory in later Victorian England (Harvester 1980); J. Foster, Class Struggle and the Industrial Revolution (Methuen, 1974).
2. A descriptive account of Durham and District 1894 (anon).
3. Cited in N. McCord, North East England. The Region's development (Batsford, 1979) p.43.
4. W. Mitchell, What do the Pitmen want? (Monkwearmouth 1844); J. Clarke, 'Shipbuilding on the River Wear 1780-1870 in R. Sturgess, The Great Age of Industry in the North East 1700-1920 (Durham, 1981).
5. R. Sturgess, An Aristocrat in Business: The Third Marquis of Londonderry as a Coal Owner and Portbuilder (Durham, 1975).
6. T.J. Nossiter, 'Dock Politics and Unholy Alliances 1832-52' in H.Bowling, Some Chapters in the History of Sunderland (Sunderland, 1969).
7. J. Clarke (1981) op.cit.
8. See Nossiter, op.cit. for notions of horizontal communities in shipbuilding. Also his Elections and Political Behaviour in County Durham and Newcastle 1832-1874, D.Phil thesis (Oxford, 1968).
9. G. Patterson, Monkwearmouth Colliery in 1851 (Durham, 1977).
10. T.J. Nossiter, thesis op.cit. See also his Influence, Opinion and Political Unions in Reformed England. Case Studies from the North East 1832-1874 (Harvester, 1975).
11. A. Potts, 'The Wear shipwrights and the arbitration court of 1853-4', NELHS bulletin 7, 1973, p.30.
12. P. Storey, 'Sunderland Politics from 1832 to the 1860s' in her M.Litt thesis, Samuel Storey of Sunderland (1841-1925): His life and career as a local politician and newspaper proprietor up to 1895, Edinburgh, 1978.
13. T.J. Nossiter (1975) op.cit., p176.
14. T.J. Nossiter (1968) op.cit., P. Storey op.cit.

15. The Graphic 3.2.1883.
16. T.J. Nossiter (1975) op.cit., p.128.
17. Sunderland Herald 16.6.1831.
18. Durham Advertiser 11.12.1819. See also A. Milburn (1982 & 1983) op.cit.; N. McCord (1967) op.cit.
19. Durham Advertiser 2.11.1822. A banner containing the same message was also flown at Darlington during the Reform Bill celebrations. W.H.D. Longstaffe, The History and Antiquities of the Parish of Darlington (1854) p.167.
20. P. Storey, 'Sunderland Newspapers 1831-1872', Antiquities of Sunderland (1979).
21. T.J. Nossiter (1968) op.cit., p.141.
22. C. Flick, The Birmingham Political Union and the Movements for Reform in Britain (Folkestone Kent 1978). See also M. Brock, The Great Reform Act (Hutchinson, 1973).
23. The Northern Political Union was an example of this type of union with Attwood related to Thomas Attwood of Birmingham.
24. Sunderland Herald 26.5.1832.
25. T.J. Nossiter, (1975) op.cit., p.146.
26. Sunderland Herald 16.6.1832.
27. For an account of the Northern Political Union see P. Cadogan Early Radical Newcastle (Consett, 1975).
28. Sunderland Herald 26.5.1832.
29. Obituary of J.J. Wright: Sunderland Herald 28.8.1878.
30. 'A Parliamentary History of Sunderland' by 'R' in the Wearmouth Magazine 1884-1885.
31. Sunderland Herald 31.10.1831.
32. ibid 31.10.1831. See C. Tilly, Class Conflict and Collective Action (with L. Tilly, 1981) Chapter 1 for a wider discussion of the 'contingent subordination' communicated by mock trials and executions.
33. For religion in Sunderland see Nossiter thesis p.151-154.

34. R. Sturgess (1975) op.cit.; A Heesom, 'Entrepreneurial Paternalism: The third Lord Londonderry (1778-1854) and the Coal Trade', Durham University Journal 1974; D. Spring, 'The English Landed Estate in the age of coal and iron: 1830-1880', Journal of Economic History, 1951; R. Sturgess, 'The North East Coalmasters 1820-1855' in R. Sturgess (ed) Pitmen, Viewers and Coalmasters (Sunderland. 1986).
35. R. Sturgess, 1975, op.cit.
36. Sunderland Herald 18.7.1835, 9.12.1837.
37. By contrast, a significant number held office in the freemasons. Durham Chronicle 2.11.1839.
38. Sunderland Herald 1.9.1832.
39. P. Storey, articles on Williams and Binns in J.O. Baylen and N.J. Gossman op. cit. Williams obituary: Sunderland Times 3.11.1868. Binns obituary: Northern Star 5.2.1848, Sunderland Herald 21.1.48.
40. Advertisement in the Sunderland Herald 8.3.1839. 'The book of Marcus' recommended infanticide as a means of population control and was a spoof on Malthusian ideas which, it is alleged, was taken seriously in some quarters.
41. Sunderland Herald 9.12.1837.
42. Dr Brown, a veteran of Waterloo, played an important part in the life of Sunderland for over forty years. Politically active in 1831 and in the Anti Corn Law League, he was further renowned for his help to the poor of the town and for his efforts to improve sanitary conditions. In 1858 he was presented with 900 gold sovereigns and a 'massive silver inkstand' in recognition of his services and among those paying tribute to him was Thomas Thompson, Sunderland Herald 7.5.58 and 5.11.58.
43. Sunderland Herald 9.6.1838.
44. M. Hovell, The Chartist Movement (Manchester 1918) p.64.
45. For Knox see The Charter 24.3.1839, Portraits of Delegates No IV. 1 Prothero has discussed the way in which artisans such as Knox became radical with reference to their position, ideals and experience. Artisans and Politics in early nineteenth century London (Folkestone, 1979).
46. Sunderland Herald 1.3.1839.
47. R.C. Gammage, History of the Chartist Movement (1894) Merlin edition (1976) p.33.

48. Several of his poems appeared in the Northern Star, and of these the majority are reprinted in Y.V. Kovalev, An anthology of Chartist literature (Moscow, 1956). The Doom of Toil achieved wide circulation in its own right and does not appear in Kovalev. Pat Storey has recently discovered some additional verses held in a private collection. These were copied in the diary of an admiring fellow emigrant. I am grateful to Pat for supplying copies of them.
49. Northern Star 5.10.1839.
50. In mythology Castor and Pollux were the twin sons of Zeus - the horseman and the boxer. Initially one was mortal and the other immortal and when one asked to join the other they were made to spend alternate days in heaven and hell. They are held to be responsible for the warnings given to fishermen by means of St Elmo's fire.
51. It is notable that while Unitarians and Quakers feature in Sunderland's radical history, Methodists are significantly absent, despite their considerable numerical presence in the town.
52. Sunderland Echo 22.11.1888.
53. Sunderland Daily Echo 6.10.1884.
54. The Charter 24.3.39. 'Portraits of Delegates No IV', Northern Star 30.3.39. As early as February 1839 he had taken 4500 signatures and £10 National rent to the Charing Cross Coffee house meeting but his subsequent marriage led to his disappearance from active involvement in 1840. Northern Star 17.8.40.
55. Northern Star 8.2.1840.
56. Thomas Ainge Devyr: The Odd Book of the Nineteenth Century (New York 1882), p.196. Frost himself had intended to visit Sunderland in April 1839. Northern Star 20.4.39.
57. Northern Star 7.3.1840. Devyr states of Bachelor that he 'resided in Newport' and that he was a 'spectator to the conflict'. (ibid 196). It remains a faint possibility that he was a spy.
58. Other meeting places included the Life Boat House, No.5 Numbers Garth, the Golden Lion Inn, the Cooperative hall, Lambton Street, the Carpenters Hall, the Bridge Street Unitarian Chapel, the house of William Chalk at 31 Robinson's Case, the Chartist Association rooms in Church Street, in Clarke's passage off the High Street, and in Chartist rooms in Burleigh Street and in Ropery Lane. All figures for attendance at outdoor meetings must be treated with considerable caution.

59. Sunderland Herald 24.5.1839.
60. Northern Star 30.3.1839. 7.5.1842.
61. ibid 18.1.1840.
62. Northern Star 10.4.1841; 30.4.1842; 7.1.1843; 17.2.1844. See Appendix I for full details of these and other North East Nominations.
63. Northern Star 19.12.1840; G.Patterson op.cit., p.64; Malcolm Chase has recently discovered a young patriot in Middlesbrough named George Binns Newby Roberts. (Unpublished paper to Leeds University Day School on Chartism 16.5.1987).
64. P. Dunkley 1971 & 1974 op.cit.; N. McCord 1969 op.cit.
65. Northern Star 21.10.1839; 31.10.1840; 21.11.1840; 20.3.1841.
66. Durham Chronicle 5.1.1839.
67. Sunderland Herald 29.3.1839.
68. Northern Star 9.5.1840.
69. Sunderland Herald No.416, 10.5.1839.
70. Northern Star 15.8.1840, 22.8.1840.
71. Sunderland Herald 24.5.1839.
72. Newcastle Weekly Chronicle 29.12.1888 - 19.1.1889. Recollections of G.J. Harney.
73. James Williams letter to Sunderland Herald 8.3.1839.
74. Sunderland Herald 1.2.1839.
75. Northern Star 5.12.1840.
76. While it may be considered that the press of the time were exaggerating when they wrote of whole villages attending meetings, the evidence of military style marching in lines to political meetings is nonetheless impressive. See below, Chapter 4.
77. Northern Star 19.9.1840.
78. ibid 19.9.1840; 8.6.1839.
79. Sunderland Herald 7.6.1839.
80. Northern Star 3.4.1841.

81. ibid, 28.5.1842.
82. ibid, 8.5.1841.
83. ibid, 16.1.1841.
84. ibid, 1.2.1840. Sunderland Herald 3.12.1840, 17.12.1841, 7.1.1842.
85. New Moral World 22.2.1840.
86. Advertisement for the release of Williams and Binns giving details of the celebrations to be held. Northern Star 16.1.41; Sunderland Herald 1.2.1839 for earlier meeting.
87. Northern Star 29.6.1839.
88. Joe Clarke (1981) op.cit., p.91.
89. Northern Star 8.2.1840.
90. ibid, 15.5.1841.
91. ibid, 15.5.1841. It is interesting to speculate as to whether this refers to diet or to the status of failed businessmen.
92. Sunderland Herald 16.1.1846.
93. Sunderland Herald 25.1.1850, 15.1.1851.
94. June 7 1843, cited in R Sturgess (1975) op.cit., p.15.
95. Northern Star 18.6.1842.
96. Williams and Bruce were both nominated by Richard Spoor, a member of the town's 'respectable' class, and anti corn law league branch-again raising suspicions of patronage.
97. Sunderland Herald 12.7.1839.
98. Sunderland Herald 29.3.1839, 26.6.1839. For the Herald's account of the trial see 26.7.1840: 'driven to force, there were men amongst them to sit upon the whirlwind and guide the storm'. The differences between the reports of the Sunderland Herald and those of the Northern Star are interesting.
99. They were further changed with issuing a seditious handbill: 'An address to the middle classes' but this was later dropped at their trial.
100. Sunderland Herald 26.7.1840; Northern Star 15.8.1840, 22.8.1840.
101. R.P. Hastings 1978 op.cit.

102. Northern Star 9.5.1840. For further details see below, Chapter 5.
103. Durham Advertiser 19.7.1839.
104. W.H. Maehl (1963) op.cit., p.405.
105. T.A. Devyr op.cit. 193-206; A scurrilous contemporary pamphlet in Sunderland central library A.S. for M and A gives details of alleged collaboration between the plotters of Newcastle and Sunderland. It is likely that this was intended to embarrass James Williams at the municipal election of 1853.
106. T.A. Devyr, op.cit., p.196.
107. Northern Liberator 23.5.1840.
108. R.C. Gammage, op.cit., p.183.
109. ibid p.181. See below, chapter 8 for a fuller discussion. On the morning of the trial they were offered their freedom if they agreed to plead guilty and promised to keep the peace. This they refused indignantly, proclaiming their innocence. After hearing the evidence the jury retired and later returned to argue that while the men had used seditious language, the meeting at which they had made those speeches had not in itself been illegal. The judge then explained that such a verdict was tantamount to an acquittal and the jury were urged to retire again and re-consider. This time the jury returned with the desired guilty verdict, but with a general plea for clemency on the grounds of the accuseds' youth and inexperience. Binns and Williams objected to this as it implied that they had been led astray by others and the judge duly obliged by imposing six month sentences.
110. P. Storey., op.cit.
111. Russophobia was strong for a time in Newcastle but awaits fuller study. See J. Salt, 'Local Manifestations of the Urquhartite Movement', IRSH 1968.
112. Northern Star 7.11.1840.
113. Helmsley was a shopkeeper, a member of Sunderlands general council and variously treasurer to the Sunderland Chartist Association, the Cooperative store and the County association. Monarch was also a council member and lectured at meetings. Taylor was a clock and watch maker who travelled widely among the collieries as a Chartist missionary.
114. Northern Star 21.11.1840. Republican sentiments were also expressed on occasions. Northern Star 19.9.1840.
115. Northern Star 16.1.1841.

116. ibid 19.6.1841. At a time when many Chartists were hostile to the Anti Corn Law League it is surprising that Williams should have taken such a strong line on repeal.
117. ibid 22.8.1840; 10.7.1841; Sunderland Herald 2.7.1841.
118. A.J. Heesom, 'The Sunderland By Election September 1841', Northern History, 1974.
119. Sunderland Herald 3.1.1842, 7.1.1842, 25.2.1842.
120. Northern Star 1.5.1841.
121. ibid 13.2.1841.
122. Obituaries Northern Star 5.2.1848. Sunderland Herald 21.1.1848.
123. Northern Star 22.5.1841.
124. ibid 4.9.1841.
125. Lucy Brown, 'The Chartists and the Anti Corn Law League' in A. Briggs, Chartist Studies (Macmillan, 1959).
126. Engels states that the title 'Complete Suffrage' was only adopted after the split occurred in the meeting of December 1842 but he appears to be mistaken. The condition of the Working Class in England, Panther edition (1969) p.260. The Complete Suffrage Union generally has been relatively neglected in histories of Chartism. See J. Ryan, Religion and Radical Politics in Birmingham 1830-1850 unpublished M.Litt. thesis, Birmingham University, 1979.
127. Northern Star, 17.12.42 'Sunderland has made a base compromise, which is only in part relieved by the return of our excellent legal advisor Mr Roberts'. O'Connor's attack appeared to single out Thomas Thompson and Williams wrote a strong retort to O'Connor defending Thompson's credentials; 'Mr Thompson is not a mushroom professor of the principles of Chartism ...for six years he has repeatedly and publicly declared his attachment to and advocated those principles.' (24.12.42).
128. Nonconformist 26.10.1842, 14.12.1842.
129. Sunderland Herald 9.9.1842.
130. ibid 30.9.1842.
131. Northern Star 4.2.1843. For full conference reports see Nonconformist 4.1.1843.

132. M. Hovell, op.cit., p.249.
133. T. Cooper, op.cit., p.222.
134. R.C. Gammage, op.cit., p.243.
135. Nonconformist 28.12.1842.
136. Northern Star 7.1.1843; 14.1.1843; Sunderland Herald 4.1.1843, T. Cooper, op.cit., p.226. Ironically Kydd himself was later to favour moderation and arbitration. Northern Tribune, Vol.1, p.103,163-5. He later trained in law.
137. 'Glorious and triumphant defeat of all the robber factions by the whole-hog Chartist brigade of Sunderland'. Northern Star, 4.2.43. It is worth noting however that the account given in the Star differs significantly from that which appeared in the local newspapers which give a more favourable impression of the way in which Williams acquitted himself in the public debate with Kydd (eg, Sunderland Herald, 27.1.43).
138. Nonconformist 1843, 315,320,354,519,522,541,574. Lord Dungannon was alleged to have paid voters £1 per head. James Williams was among those signing a declaration of thanks to John Bright after his successful election.
139. Sunderland Herald 28.4.1848.
140. ibid 30.1.1844.
141. Northern Star 29.4.1843.
142. The best study of the Chartist Land Plan remains J. MacAskill, 'The Chartist Land Plan' in A. Briggs, Chartist Studies, (1959). For the topography of the scheme see A.M. Hadfield, The Chartist Land Company (David and Charles, 1970). See also D. Jones, Chartism and the Chartists (Allen Lane, 1975).
143. Northern Star 18.4.1846, 31.7.1847.
144. From a total of 70,000 subscribers, only some 200 or so gained cottages and the most optimistic estimates indicate that it would have taken at least 75 years to settle everyone. For this and other contradictions see The Chartist Land Scheme by M. Chase, (unpublished paper, Leeds University 1987).
145. Minutes book of the Sunderland Anti Corn Law Association held in private collection. I am grateful to Pat Storey for providing a transcription.
146. Sunderland public library have indexed the Sunderland Herald for the years of the League's activity and this provides an excellent guide.

147. Sunderland Herald 10.7.1846. This list itself present an interesting comment on the status of certain positions within the town.
148. Sunderland Herald 16.1.1846.
149. ibid 16.1.1846. Moore was a founder member of the Association and Mayor of Sunderland in 1854 and 1855. Obituary: Sunderland Echo 27.6.1876.
150. Sunderland Herald 16.1.1846. For A. White see W. Brockie op cit p.154-160 obituary: 30.10.1856 Sunderland Herald. See also Corder manuscripts in Sunderland Public Library.
151. Sunderland Herald 16.1.1846. The Herald of 5.5.1843 contains a biographical sketch of Colonel Peronnet Thompson.
152. ibid.
153. Nossiter thesis, p.157. The registered electorate figures read:  
 1832 - 1378  
 1835 - 1359  
 1837 - 1532  
 1841 - 1691  
 1847 - 1692  
 1852 - 1973  
 1857 - 2493  
 1859 - 2729 (Source - Nossiter).
154. Sunderland Herald 16.1.1846.
155. Northern Star 6.4.1844, Sunderland Herald 16.1.1846.
156. E.C. Robson obituary: Sunderland Echo 10.5.1893; Hills' obituary Sunderland Echo 1.2.1881. For Jones see G.D.H. Cole Chartist Portraits (London, 1941).
157. Sunderland Herald 5.5.1848, 26.5.1848, 23.6.1848, 9.11.1849 for details of Humes 'Little Charter' Movement.
158. J.T. Ward, Chartism (Batsford, 1973) p.222; D. Jones, Chartism and the Chartists (Allen Lane, 1978) p.179.
159. A. Potts (1973) op.cit.
160. Sunderland Herald 30.5.1856.
161. Cited in S. Scott 'The Northern Tribune: A North East Radical Magazine' North East Lab. Hist. Soc. bulletin 19, (1985). p.13.
162. Cowen papers, Tyne and Wear Records office: Williams to Cowen 22.8.1858.

163. ibid. Williams to Reed, 8.2.1859.
164. Sunderland Herald 26.11.58. Gamage, formerly of the Chartist executive and the first historian of Chartism, by that time resident in Sunderland, was also present.
165. Parliamentary reform meeting. Sunderland Herald 26.11.1858.
166. Pat Storey (1979) op.cit.
167. Sunderland Daily Echo 6.10.1884.
168. Sunderland Herald 24.5.1839, 10.2.1843.
169. ibid 17.4.1839.
170. ibid 26.7.1840.
171. Northern Star 30.9.1843.
172. T.J. Nossiter thesis op.cit., p.181.
173. See R.S. Neale, History and Class (1983) for an attempt to analyse class in Bath. Northern Star 30.9.1843 contains a call to the alkali workers of Tyne and Wear to form a union as 'Our masters are reducing us continually in our ways - they are accumulating immense fortunes while we become poorer and poorer every year'.

Chapter 4'One Huge Colliery': The Roots of Radicalism  
among the Durham Miners

Coalminers inhabit a strange place in the historiography of early British working class radicalism. As a group they have been understudied as well as undertheorised. This in itself is surprising when it is also considered that for many commentators miners have been taken to constitute the essential proletariat, with large numbers of wage contracted labour in an industry which was central to the industrial revolution.(1)

Recent trends in Chartist historiography have indicated the need to study particular occupational groupings in terms of their relation to the movement. Among the important questions which have been raised are those which investigate the extent to which Chartism appealed to the growing industrial proletariat rather than the decaying outworking trades.(2) If it were the latter who supplied Chartism's principal recruits the movement could be seen as an essentially conservative force attempting to protect the interests of a disappearing section of the workforce. Alternatively Chartism can be seen as the political expression of the new industrialised workforce.

The case can be argued that the miners were the first truly proletarian section of the workforce. Their industry, particularly in relation to the sinking of shafts, often involved heavy capital

investment while the workers themselves were gathered together in numbers which dwarfed those of any other industry at that time.(3)

Welbourne states that

for over two hundred years capital had played a part in coal mining almost unparalleled in a country where industry was in general still poorly developed ... for ten generations the pitmen had been wage dependent labourers of a kind rare until the invention of the factory system. (4)

Coal, alongside railways and iron and steel, formed part of a triangular relationship of supply and demand which was the dominant feature of the new forms of industrial capitalism, while the division of labour, often taken as a yardstick of industrial progress, was again well established in mines.

Yet miners are crucially absent from E.P. Thompson's The Making of the English Working Class and Thompson thus neglected the opportunity to engage his theories of the working class with an important group of workers who, moreover would have stood as representatives of a part of the country which was itself largely overlooked in The Making. As Perry Anderson has noted,

cotton, iron and coal together form virtually the sum of the first phase of industrialisation in Britain; yet the direct labour force of not one of these is treated in 'The Making of the English Working Class'. (5)

In this light a reassessment of the miners would seem long overdue, and the construction of a dialogue between the general theories of class which are available and the relatively overlooked evidence of class activity in the North East would appear to be a high priority.

Such an approach has been hinted at by Dorothy Thompson. With

respect to Chartism she commences from the generally accepted view that

the isolation of many mining communities, and the control exercised by a small number of powerful employees.... meant that theirs is one of the trades which seems not to have contributed to Chartism in proportion to its numbers in the country

She recognises, however, that this may be a misconception and considers that a reassessment of the role of miners in Chartism may be necessary, pointing out that

as with some other trades, the low profile kept by miners among the local leadership is compensated for by a much fuller representation in the land company and among arrested Chartists ... there were forty of them amongst the arrested Chartists in 1840 ... they form the largest occupational group among those transported for their part in the 1842 disturbances. (6)

Coal mining constituted the major industry of the North East outside the major urban centres and colliers were employed in such greater concentrations of number than were other occupants at the time.(7) Eric Hobsbawm has remarked that

in the 1850s a factory of three hundred in Britain would still be considered very large

yet in the North East alone nineteen collieries had already exceeded that size by 1844.(8) The neglect of such a group is difficult to justify, for there is ample evidence of their activities and their levels of consciousness both at trade union and political levels during the period covered by The Making.(9) In the period which surrounded the Peterloo massacre the Durham Advertiser wrote of the miners giving up arms which they had held under the delusion of radicalism.(10) The press were often dismissive of the level of

political awareness of the miners and such a view has sometimes been taken at face value by subsequent historians. This chapter seeks, among other things, to provide a corrective to such a view but first it can be noted that Hobsbawm was also dismissive of mid nineteenth century political awareness among the miners. In Labouring Men he wrote that

miners - whether of coal or metal - were an isolated body of men, often geographically separated from the rest of the working people and concerned less with politics than with their specialised economic struggles. Hence in most parts of the country they took surprisingly little part in the radical and Chartist agitations. (11)

To a degree such neglect may be attributed to the emphasis on London based sources which can restrict one's vision when surveying a provincial area and this may be exacerbated when one looks at specifically regional occupational groups. The capital's view of North East miners for example was one which accepted the Wesleyan claim that the colliers were

always in the first rank for savage ignorance and wickedness of every kind. (12)

According to Welbourne,

the pitmen were thought a violent, drunken, blasphemous race. (13)

Misconceptions abounded. In 1844 W. Palmer, one of the missionaries of the Miners Association, was asked by a London shopkeeper, 'What are you and where do you come from?'. 'I am a pitman' he replied, 'and I come from the County of Durham'. Palmer was taken to a tavern nearby where he was made to

walk around like a horse showing his paces at a fair, and the general cry was, 'Why, he can walk as straight as

ourselves. We thought those pitmen could only walk in a doubled-up posture owing to the cramped condition of their work and their continual residence underground. (14)

John Wilson, later to be an MP, was asked by a Shoreham barman how long had he been down the pit.

'Seven years', was the answer. In most suprised tones he (the barman) said, 'Have you not been up until now ....I thought you pitmen lived down there always. (15)

Pitmen were thus characterised as a separate race of deformed hunchbacks whose eyes could no longer tolerate daylight. If these creatures demanded political rights the whole thing could be treated as a joke:

Universal suffrage is understood by many to mean universal suffering and they explain it by saying that if one member suffers all must suffer! (16)

Such comments were however an insult to the miners political intelligence, as this chapter hopes to demonstrate.

Such antipathy however has been passed down to generations of historians. At best political activity is seen as part of a pendulum effect whereby the miners involved themselves in union activity when conditions were relatively prosperous, but were driven into an irrational 'hunger politics' in times of hardship. At worst the different recorded activities are regarded as mere episodes without connections or long term significance.

The Hepburn union of 1831-2 for example has been treated as a wave which broke and then retreated, only to return, less successfully, in the 1842-4 agitation of the Miners Association of Great Britain. This again receded until the formation of the Durham Miners Association in 1869. Where Chartism is mentioned it is referred

to as having 'broken out' - like acne, without antecedents and without long term consequences. Nossiter, for example, states that

though Chartism was strong in the early part of 1839, it disappeared overnight with the failure of the Sacred Month of strike action in August. (17)

Holbrook-Jones went further, alleging that miners did not contribute to Chartism in the North East.(18) Others have debated the Chartist involvement in the Miners Association of Great Britain (MAGB). A.J. Taylor considered that

the (miners) Association ....rejected ....the political Chartism of Feargus O'Connor, and this in spite of Chartist support and suspected Chartist sponsorship. ....the offer of O'Connor himself to address a national delegate meeting (was) declined and short shift given to the political manoeuvrings of W.P. Roberts, the Association's own lawyer. (19)

Challinor and Ripley on the other hand produced a full length study of the MAGB which was much more sympathetic to the Chartists' role, while a subsequent debate took place within the pages of the bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History where Challinor, Barnsby and Griffin made important contributions. Elsewhere W.H. Maehl and David Rowe took part in a somewhat acrimonious debate concerning the overall significance of miners' contribution to the Chartist movement in the North East.(20)

Rowe takes the view that miners were not politically very radical and that support for movements such as Chartism, when it existed at all, was restricted to certain events and certain collieries only. Thus he wrote, that

while there is no doubt that many pitmen attended the major Tyneside Chartist meetings and that there were Chartist organisations in a number of the pit villages, the extent to which pitmen were supporters of Chartism, especially in 1839 when the movement was at its height locally, has been exaggerated in the past. (21)

Elsewhere he writes that

Among the known occupations of speakers at meetings, or those Chartists who were arrested, only one was a pitman and in general it would seem that the pitmen were only of importance on the occasion of major meeting when they made up a considerable proportion of the crowds. (22)

He further states that the collieries which supported the Sacred Month were

noticeably the newer collieries which lacked a conservative tradition. (23)

In this he follows Welbourne who argued that

in every account of labour troubles it is plain that the centres of unrest were the new pits. ... The pitmen from the more established collieries ... seem to have been less involved (in Chartism) probably because their communities were more established and radical change did not appeal to the established pitman's conservative way of life. (24)

In addition Rowe dismisses claims as to the numerical support claimed for Chartism among the pitmen arguing that

as late as the 1880s only a few of the largest collieries on the East Durham plateau employed 1,000 workers and in 1850 the large Haswell colliery had an underground establishment of only 289 men and 139 boys. In 1839 there would not have been ten collieries in the whole region with average labour forces of even 500. (25)

In 1844 however there were twelve collieries with over 500 employees including two with 1,400 and 1,300 respectively.(26) In addition, while the term 'pit' referred to a single sinking, the term 'colliery' sometimes referred to the pits of one village or even the pits of different villages where the pits were controlled by the same company or owner.(27)

Rowe's general conclusion is that miners and Chartism were, at most, only temporary bedfellows and that statements to the contrary

are either inaccurate or exaggerated. Mining however is critical to any analysis of the North East, including the analysis of Chartism, and hence there are a whole series of issues which require further consideration.

In many ways the coalfield presented a set of circumstances which were not conducive to the growth of a class conscious radicalism. Among these may be noted the feudal legacy of the bond and tied cottages, the restrictive practices of the Vend, the nature of the markets for coal, the pattern and spread of technological change and population growth and mobility.

The Vend was a cartel of owners who operated an agreement to restrict output and thereby keep up the price of coal whose major market was that of the households of London.(28) This market produced seasonal variations in demand as well as a search for seams of the correct quality. Production became threatened by the development of other coalfields which were able to take advantage of the developing railway network to supply London without using the coastal route, and the thirties and forties saw the fear of this competition at its peak. New markets were opening up however as coal became central to that very economic expansion of which railways were a feature.

Diversification meant that the industry was no longer so prone to seasonal swings in demand as the industrial market grew. Roy Sturgess has remarked that

Not until 1850 did sales to British industry equal those to London's dominantly household consumers and thereby level out the sharp seasonal swings in sales of earlier years. From 1850 foreign sales increased also, and were particularly beneficial to the industry as they absorbed types of coal which were previously unprofitable elements in the household market. (29)

By this stage the Vend, which had operated as a restriction on the free market, had broken down and the principles of competition among owners now held free sway. Yet the pattern of ownership and control had been established under different circumstances and this was nowhere more true than in the field of employment. The annual bond, by which men were bound to an employer for twelve months, and which did not finally disappear until 1869, was a legacy of feudalism. The colliers described the bond as

the most disgraceful documentary engagement that any class of working men are subject to. (30)

Over the years the actual provisions of the bond had been neglected such that its terms were impossible to fulfil - a fact that left every pitman liable for prosecution, and this was demonstrated in the Thornley case of 1843 where W.P. Roberts showed that the miners could not make a living if the letter of the bond were enforced.(31) Contemporaries wrote of Lord Londonderry's 'genuine goodwill towards his serfs' while Scottish miners were bought and sold along with the colliery in which they worked.(32) Aristocratic forms of surveillance were apparent among the villages of tied cottages which further bound the collier to patriarchal relations outside as well as inside work. As M. Holbrook-Jones has remarked,

The fact that the employer was often landlord, magistrate and patron of the local churches, schools and libraries cannot be overlooked. Mass evictions were the most spectacular example of this source of power but its effect was more insidious and far reaching.

Londonderry became Lord Lieutenant of the County and this influenced his attitude to the 1844 strike (in contrast to his policies in 1831-2) since he not only had stockpiles to dispose of but

was in a position to assess for himself the need for military intervention and to dictate the severity of the clampdown on strikes.

Thorough examples such as these, Nossiter's remark that

mining reinforced the power of the aristocracy in the county for a generation

appears most pertinent. (33)

Thus the context within which working class consciousness developed in the North East coalfield was one in which entrepreneurial paternalist and aristocratic capital coexisted in an imperfect cartel with newer joint stock companies seeking, in some cases, deeper coal. The lack of poaching of colliers during strikes suggests that the vend also operated a gentleman's agreement which meant that any blacklegs who were recruited had to be brought in from long distances. Such an agreement indicates a degree of unity among the coalowners which operated despite their different background and composition, and throughout periods of expansion. Once strikes were over blacklegs tended to be laid off and skilled men re-employed. This operated to further restrict the numbers of outsiders applying for pit work and hence the solidarity of the indigenous workforce was increased. The annual hiring and quarterly cavilling whereby workplaces were allocated by ballot, were also occasions on which solidarity was displayed.(34) Cavilling militated against individualism and stressed both the role of luck and the importance of communal action to reduce managements' scope for victimisation.(35)

Another key feature of North East pits was the non-employment of females either above or below ground. In some areas the 1842 act restricted the employment of females to surface work such as tending

the screens, but for the North East even this had not been the prior case.(36) For some authors this sexual division of labour and the way in which it helped to construct attitudes which permeated throughout the region, remains a crucial factor explaining relations on the coalfield. Pit villages provided no scope whatever for paid female employment outside the home other than the domestic service available to single girls prepared to travel. Hence it is argued that the family units around which pit recruitment was based took on a form which was most appropriate to the hiring needs of the employers.(37)

With respect to children however employment practices prior to 1842 had been very exploitative and legislation was obstructed by the coalowners who felt that it was

an intrusion of government into what they conceived to be their private affair. (38)

The attitude of the owners may be judged from their reply to the Commissioners Report of 1842. Trapper boys they said

beguiled the time in fond and childish amusements, making models of wagons and windmills, drawing figures with chalk, modelling clay. (39)

The restriction on child employment was seen as contrary to the principles of the market. Yet the free market in coal mining labour had always been something of a myth. From the employers' side it was restricted by the vend and on the miners side it was restricted both by a lack of long distance geographical mobility and by the inability of adult newcomers to adapt to the conditions. Some viewers claimed that they could train anyone to be miners

it requires neither greater skill nor any long previous training to become an expert coalworkman, ... such labour is abundant and easily to be procured

wrote Brandling in 1832.(40)

In practice, however, such re-training of outside labour was rarely more than an emergency measure. Most miners were born in the area and while there was a fair degree of geographical mobility within the region there was little recruitment from beyond. Blacklegs in the strikes of 1831-2 and 1844 are significantly absent from subsequent census returns. Matthias Dunn claimed to have taken 1,200 men from Derbyshire, Staffordshire, Sheffield and Wales, and overall some 1,700 men are claimed to have been drafted in, yet very little trace of them remains by the census of 1851. What the 1851 census does reveal is that the predominant trend in labour migration was from the Tyne and Wear valleys to the new sinkings, and while a few did come from the lead mines and from other smaller coalfields the significant point is that there was no occupational shift involved in their migration.(41) Hewing in particular retained a craft status at the head of a hierarchical division of labour in the pit to which only indigenous apprentices had access.

Students of later periods of mining militancy (and non-militancy) have engaged in a search for the variables which should be taken into account when attempting an analysis of the patterning of militancy.(42) Campbell has listed thirty seven such variables which can be taken in any series of combinations and of which the most significant headings include geological, technological, economic, geographical, demographical, political and historical factors. Such a list may leave the impression that the search for meaningful patterns will find it difficult not to be caught in a maze of considerations.

Within the North East however certain features stand out in terms of their relationship to militancy. The first among these would be the pattern of ownership, for the aristocratic and landed interest in the North East coalfield, together with its semi-feudal labour relations, provided a milieu in which the presence of newer pits, sunk on a joint stock basis, produced variations in recorded levels of union and political activity which were independent of similar labour processes at the point of production.(43)

The newer collieries however did tend to be more expensive to sink as they attempted to reach the seams beneath the limestone. The investment at Murton for example was estimated at £ $\frac{3}{4}$  million.(44) Coal extraction and subsequent revenue from sales was considerably delayed, while the extra expense of deep sinking meant that joint stock companies were needed to provide the high levels of capital investment required. In addition the concern remained prone to industrial stoppages until its reserves had been reached and then built up and the bargaining power of the miners was temporarily raised by the delay in coal extraction. (See Appendix 2 for maps of coal and limestone measures.)

The other major form of colliery ownership was that of entrepreneurial paternalism in the guise of the Londonderrys, Lambtons and a number of smaller estates. In recent years it has become commonplace to attempt a rehabilitation of these coal owners.(45) As Roy Sturgess has remarked

labour relations at collieries in the early nineteenth century is an all but unexplored territory at the present, but it is clear that coal owners were not entirely the callous employers that legend would have us believe.(46)

These approaches employ a double edged argument: they contend that the conditions of the workers were not as bad as 'legend' has it - but if they were then it was the fault of the viewers rather than the owners. It is in fact possible to find evidence which would support such an early variant of the managerial revolution thesis.(47) George Hardy for example reminisced that

we had only the coal viewers to appeal to, and they were a very hard and impervious class without any sentiment or consideration of any kind, who rigidly kept the wages as low as possible. (48)

Again in a pamphlet published by the miners it is the viewers who are said to be the principal agents of coercion.(49)

Taken overall however the view that the pitmen felt themselves as oppressed by the coalowners as they were by the viewers is one which finds greater support in the evidence.(50) Paternalism, like fathers themselves, was Janus - faced with as much, if not more emphasis on the maintenance of standards and strict, authoritarian and all pervasive control as there was on the more 'humane' aspects of paternalism such as the provision of housing. In some respects the paternalists of the 1840s were similar to certain multinational corporations of today - comforting to be with so long as desires for independence are crushed, difficult to speak out against, and extremely unpleasant to fall foul of. Paternalists provided jobs and houses - but these were at a cost which some were unwilling to pay and which was harsh even upon those who succumbed to its temptations. If miners were more quiescent in the collieries of the big landowners, and this in itself is still debatable, its reasons may

lie in the greater fear of the consequences than in the absence of genuine grievances. Hence when Londonderry's pitmen were on strike in 1844 he warned that

all the shopkeepers and tradesmen in his town of Seaham that if they will give credit to pitmen who hold off work, and continue in the Union, such men will be marked by his agents and overmen, and will never be employed in his collieries again, and the shopkeepers may be assured that they will never have any custom or dealings with them from Londonderry's large concerns that he can in any manner prevent ....it is neither fair, just or equitable that the resident trades in his own town should combine and assist the infatuated workmen or pitmen in prolonging their own miseries by continuing an insane strike, and an unjust and senseless warfare against their proprietors and masters. (51)

It is highly unlikely that the colliers would mistakenly attribute such a policy to the viewers without seeing its real source. Events such as this became the memory and folklore which shaped the miners' perceptions, and attitudes to paternalism will be considered again later in chapter 6.

The different patterns of growth and ownership in the various collieries led to the creation of different patterns of community, with possible effects on the levels of militancy.(52) Yet despite this the experience of exploitation at work and in the community was similar. As Alan Campbell has noted, all workers have grievances but in mining communities all have the same grievance and this has important implications for the solidarity shown in disputes. These communities expanded with developments in the industry in the first half of the nineteenth century.

Two major features of these developments were the establishment of the joint stock companies themselves and the expansion of the workforce at a time when coalface technology was changing little and where increases in output could only be obtained by an increase in the number of colliers.(53)

Pit face technology did not change much in this period and the division of labour remained vertical rather than horizontal at least until the widespread introduction of machinery later in the century. Capitalist progress elsewhere in the pits did bring problems however for it was experienced by the miners themselves as injurious. As pits went deeper below the limestone in search of wider seams, the miners' journey to the face grew longer. To the time spent at work there had to be added the time taken to travel to the pit shaft, the descent time and the time from the shaft bottom to the place of work.(54)

Despite these difficulties, deeper pits were seen as an 'advance' by the owners. So, too, was the Davey lamp, although it was used as a justification for sending men into gaseous seams which had been considered too dangerous for previous working.(55) Contemporaries believed that

the Davey lamps do more harm than good. They are sometimes used to save the trouble of proper ventilation. (56)

According to the Northern Star the Davey lamp

brings on the mischief it is intended to prevent and on the pretended safety of which has been based the modern practice of carrying foul underground workings to the most dangerous extent. (57)

Self closing fly doors, introduced to replace child-operated trap doors, failed to operate correctly and allowed the build-up of

poisonous or explosive gasses while the introduction of larger corves also restricted the air flow.(58)

Thus the replacement of trap doors by fly door brought this comment from the miners:

Fly doors are frequently substituted for trap doors. The fly door is a door which closes, or SHOULD close, of itself. It has no trapper boy. His services are dispensed with. In effect a paltry saving of ten pence per day, though this is done at the risk of all in the mine, for, if the 'fly' does not FLY-TO, as it should do, choking, or exploding, must take place to a greater or less extent. Such doors are always objectionable, and ought never to be introduced. They are very liable, from various causes, to get out of square, and when so, will not fit close, by which the good air escapes. (59)

The use of larger corves, again to increase profits, was also seen as dangerous:

The principal objection to these large corves is that they greatly impede the ventilation of the mine. In passing through the air courses, they occupy the space, and leave none for the transmission of a due supply of air. (60)

Welbourne considered that the miners' opposition to these improvements was based on ignorance - 'the foolish opposition of workmen to all invention'.(61) Wire ropes for example were 'in the eyes of all progressive men' an improvement, for they 'made possible an immediate increase in the speed of winding.' The colliers who had to travel up and down the shafts by means of these wires were not convinced that increased speed was such a desirable thing, particularly when the early wire ropes were found to have a large number of broken strands and to be 'bound round with bandages of wire.'(62)

It was the owners who refused to allow an independent inspection of the wire ropes and the president of the Wingate miners was turned out of his cottage during the course of the subsequent dispute.

What the wire rope episode demonstrates above all is not that the miners were opposed to change per se, but that they were opposed to change which seemed to put increased profits ahead of standards of safe practice. This, coupled with the miners' overt hostility to the abuses of paternalism as practised by owners such as Lord Londonderry, shows that oppositional forces were able to grow within the essentially feudal relationships which pertained and which found their clearest expression in the bond and tied cottages. In addition the nature of the opposition can be seen as having structural determinants in the form of capitalist expansion, but that it also owed much to issues of ideology and morality in the refusal of miners to conform to the patterns of deference which the paternalist owners preferred.

On this basis there are clear grounds for reassessing the opposition to the coal owners and for looking again at the currents of influence which were present in the mining village.

For many of the miners the struggle was clearly perceived as a class one. In most villages there was little or no commercial or industrial activity which was independent of the pit and this had an important effect on the class structure of these villages. According to Kidson, clerk to the Sunderland magistrates, the existence of a two class system had an undesirable effect on the level of agitation among the miners. He wrote to Lord Russell that

the absence of a substantial middle class in the pit villages entailed a lack of that mixture of rank and intercourse between rich and poor which is so beneficially exercised in most parts of the kingdom. (63)

Tremenheere, the mines inspector, also appreciated the problem and it was his desire to see a middle class develop in pit villages which led

him to oppose the system of truck.(64) Middle class presence could have ambiguous results in that labourers in the towns could find allies among the grocers and solicitors, but were also more likely to relinquish leadership to them and to run the risk of incorporation. In the two class pit villages miners had to take the initiative and positions of leadership for themselves and this resulted in a greater polarisation of conflict. The nature of this conflict was spelled out clearly by Peter Rigby:

Employers here are both coal mine, cottage and slave proprietors, for if a man desires work and is willing to be a slave for twelve months, and after being thus bound he cannot abstain from work for a single day without a note from the colliery doctor, without being subject to imprisonment - neither are the colliers allowed to have a doctor of their own choosing - such gentlemen are to be selected by the master miners ... You may judge for yourself how things are here, when some of the coal masters are magistrates. They know too well that if the People's Charter was made the basis of all future legislation it would ere long be impossible for any of them to have a supreme control over the labour and lives of a thousand slaves and their families. (65)

This statement was offered as 'proof of middle class sympathy' - a contribution to the debate as to whether the Chartists should seek or accept middle class support. Rigby clearly felt that they should not.

The miners were acutely aware of the vulnerability of their position in the light of the bond and tied cottages. Edward Rymer stated that:

I always thought, and still believe that the Londonderry, Hetton and Lambton collieries, on the whole, treated both man and beast in their employ with less severity than I found in other mining districts. By this I mean in a general way, and apart from trade conflicts, such as the strike of 1844 when, no doubt, the full force of tyranny was let loose on the county, and brought capital and labour face to face in a struggle in which the Northern miners comported themselves bravely ... we were

transferred from the Leitch to the Buddle pit ... by such change of pits our time from home was often fifteen hours a day, thus converting existence into physical slavery; so much so that many weeks passed without an hour's recreation being offered to us. Under such a system it was found impossible to gain either instruction or to cultivate the better part of one's nature. (66)

Despite its faults, Chartism did offer a coherent strategy and an answer to many of the issues of morality and employer injustice which the miners had raised. A government which had failed to repeal the Corn Laws, they said, was clearly one which operated without the consensus of the majority, for it ensured the profits of the landowning few at the expense of the bread buying many. Universal suffrage would ensure the return of Members of Parliament who would have to protect the working class interest in order to secure the continuing electoral support of those workers. At a basic level even the 'Hunger Politics' supporters of Chartism know this and the recognition

that democratic control of the state was an essential means to the improvement of their condition ... was a truly major advance: only a generation earlier, 'No Popery' had been by far the most popular cry. (67)

The role of the miners in the Chartist events of 1839 has been well documented and it has been claimed that the miners constituted the main basis of Chartist support in the North East. Cadogan, referring to the Chartist Sacred Month, wrote that

with good reason the real struggle was expected to centre round the mining villages. The pitmen were the Chartist backbone. (68)

Maehl also states that

Chartism in Northumberland and Durham attained a stridency and vehemence which was rarely matched and never excelled elsewhere

while 'the backbone of the movement were (sic) the miners'.(69)

The Times, with some exaggeration, noted in October 1850 that County Durham was 'very little more than one huge colliery' and miners' support, or lack of it, could be crucial to the progress of the movement in the county.(70) Furthermore, as Hastings points out, a stoppage by miners would have an impact on many other trades, not least those connected with the ports, thus widening the effect of their action.(71)

Binns and Williams, the Sunderland leaders, claimed that they could call upon 20,000 miners at three hours notice and it is clear that fear of the miners was an important element in the deliberations of the middle class, the coal owners and the authorities.(72) According to Maehl,

even in towns where there was little likelihood of violence, the residents feared what might happen if men of the nearby mining areas should turn on them. (73)

In Darlington, Bowes justified his request for military aid on the basis that the collieries of South Durham were in close proximity, and in Richmond there was an offer to form a corps of Yeomanry Cavalry

in case of ... disturbances in the coal district of south Durham or the Mining Districts of the North Riding ... where a strong Chartist feeling prevails. (74)

The Durham Advertiser of July 1839 called for a hundred troops to be stationed in every colliery in which trouble was anticipated and Richard Pemberton, the part owner of Monkwearmouth pit, was not alone in asking

that a Troop of Horse soldiers should be stationed here and other (sic) in the more immediate neighbourhood of the pit so as to be ready at short notice to act and that some

notice should be taken of the Pikes which have been made and circulated amongst the men.

A letter from Russell to the Lord Lieutenant shows that the information concerning arms, particularly at Monkwearmouth, was being taken seriously.(75)

It was the numerical strength which caused alarm as much as the alleged arming. The great Newcastle upon Tyne meeting of May 1839 at which Tommy Hepburn spoke, for example, was said to have attracted a crowd of 140,000, some of whom had walked distances of 25 miles to be there.(76) Redhead, another pitman, addressed 5,000 men and an unknown number of women at Pittington Hill on good Friday, 1839. Most were pitmen and many had travelled eight or nine miles to the meeting.(77) The Sunderland town moor meeting of Whit Monday, 1839, was said to have gathered a crowd of 50 to 60,000. 'The great body of the people' according to Gammage, consisted of 'hardy colliers who evinced the most determined spirit.'(78) On the Sunday previous to this meeting,

Batchelor, Binns, Reaves and O'Neil were out in the neighbouring villages and preaching sermons and preparing the brave colliers of this county to attend the meeting next day. Mr Batchelor marched upwards of fifteen hundred men from Thornley, a distance of fifteen miles, who were joined by as many more of the colliers, led on by Mr Binns, who had brought the whole population of Coxhoe and the villages through which they passed to attend the meeting. About twelve o'clock in the day the combined columns met at Houghton le spring, about six miles from Sunderland, when the procession would consist of five thousand people ... the lines were again formed four abreast, and proceeded to the town which they reached about two o'clock. (79)

The following July, miners from Coxhoe and Quarrington Hill walked eighteen miles to another town moor meeting where they told Binns,

If the men of Sunderland are hesitating, the pitmen will come from their work any day at the bidding of their parliament (ie the Chartist Convention). (80)

This meeting, called at short notice, attracted a crowd of 20,000 swelled by men from Thornley, South Hetton and Haswell pits. They had been roused by Joseph Watson of Haswell and Reaves of Sunderland who had received news of Harney's arrest at Bedlington.

To accomplish their journey to Sunderland with the greater facility they actually took forcible possession of the waggons and Trains on the Durham and Sunderland Railway and compelled the Enginemen and others on the line to work the Engines etc so as to convey them to the place of Meeting.

According to Williams there were 1,000 pitmen in the hijacked waggons. They were given hospitality that night by the townspeople and in the morning two miners were arrested when they tried to commandeer another train to take them home.(81)

Two hundred special constables were sworn in, the troops were put on standby, the coastguards were provided with arms and arrangements were made for the cavalry to be brought in if they were needed. (82) The following week 10 to 12,000 were present on the Sunderland town moor while 4,000 from Moorsley, the Downs, Thornley, Hetton, South Hetton, the Raintons etc met at Easington Lane. At Coxhoe

the street was filled with colliers from Kelloe, Quarrington etc who unanimously resolved on a strike at the order of the Convention. (84)

These public incidents were climaxed by support for the ill fated 'Sacred Month', despite the decision of the Durham County Charter Association not to go ahead with it. Unusually it was from the south of the county that support was most firm. John Buddle, Lord

Londonderry's chief viewer, feared unrest in Thornley and Shiney Row.

Writing to Londonderry about Shiney Row he said,

it is difficult to find out their intentions as they hold private meetings every night to deliberate on the information they receive from Newcastle or Sunderland where there seems to be some ... authority under whose orders they act. (85)

The main action took place elsewhere.

By the 17th August ... all collieries between Stockton and Durham had ceased work,

and Lord Londonderry, one of the chief coalowners, was sufficiently concerned to bring the matter up in parliament.(86)

Overall the evidence of the miners contribution to the events of 1839 is impressive but too much emphasis on that year has distracted from the greater significance of the long term continuity of involvement with Chartism on the coal field in terms of personnel, ideology and activity. The context in which this continuity was found was one in which mining communities presented a great sense of solidarity in which oppositional forms could flourish. Almost all studies of pit villages provide testimony to the strong work, family and cultural ties which gave these communities a solidarity and a shared identity rarely equalled elsewhere.(87) Responses to problems were collective - from the borrowing and lending of foodstuffs between neighbours to the practice of cavilling at work. If management had been able to allocate hewing places by decree this would have had a divisive effect as it would have tempted individuals to vie for the management's favour. Allocation of workplaces by ballot (the cavil) however enabled both good and bad workplaces, and their subsequent generation of income, to be randomly distributed and redistributed

every thirteen weeks with an extra day's rest on cavilling day. Thus the problems of variable working conditions was handled in a way which increased rather than reduced the miners' solidarity and sense of collectivity.(88)

The paradoxical nature of individualism which is highlighted by cavilling is found elsewhere in mining. Freedom from supervision due to underground difficulties and to the miners' long established hostility to working in the immediate presence of management supervision bred an individual sense of responsibility which nevertheless recognised a communal duty to others in the pit. The labour process itself necessitated solidarity because of the interdependence of work groups and the villages themselves were homogenous to a degree that made a sense of unity almost axiomatic . As Patterson has remarked,

In a single pit ... (solidarity) ... may have sprung from the interdependence of the working team, but at every other pit in the North East were relatives, friends and workmates of the past and future, and more easily than most workers the miner could identify with struggles which affected more than his own village. (89)

Communal solidarity provided the basis on which consciousness raising could occur. In part this occurred through the activities of the Primitive Methodists who figured prominently among the spokesmen and fundraisers of the Miners Association of Great Britain.(90) But it also came from the activities of political radicals such as Chartists. E.P. Thompson has remarked that solidarity and its concomitant forms of action can be distinguished as falling into a feudal (plebeian) or proletarian form. Plebeian crowd behaviour contained three main features: the anonymous tradition such as the sending of letters (seen

as part of the counter theatre of the poor), the theatrical tradition such as effigy burning, and the capacity for swift, direct action.(91) Thompson speaks also of the way in which authorities handled disputes in this context and of the subtle way in which control was reasserted:

The plebs should be persuaded above all to abandon an insubordinate posture, to couch their demands in legitimate and deferential terms: they should learn that they were likely to get more from a loyal petition than from a riot. (92)

The mass meetings and demonstrations of miners however were clearly a long way from this pattern of behaviour and it was Chartism which provided a clear articulation of their grievances and the class nature of their oppression.

G.S. Jones has argued that Chartism was generally strongest in areas in which there was a strong sense of moral indignation, which were highly politicised and which had a radical tradition and sense of history.(93) Mining areas certainly fitted some of these conditions. The Bond was seen as tyrannous, with the Miners Association proclaiming that 'Rebellion is the wages of tyranny'.(94) At times this indignation turned to a plea for the rights of 'free born Englishmen'. Scott's pamphlet of 1831 expected that the army would be sympathetic to the obvious grievances and hardships of the miners and would therefore be unwilling to act against them.(95) The same pamphlet also urged 'Rule Britannia. For Britons NEVER shall be slaves.' Such righteous indignation and claims for freedom from men tied by bonds indicates the degree of radicalisation which was occurring. By 1850 the targets were more specific with the nature of legislative inequalities high on the list. Public complaints were made

of the gross injustice whereby Lords Londonderry and Lonsdale, as interested parties, should have the power to block mines bills in parliament against the wishes of thousands of their opponents.(96)

The miners were conscious of the steps they had made over time. In the eighteenth century miners in certain parts of Scotland were not allowed to be buried in consecrated ground. By 1844 Mitchell could argue that

we no longer occupy the outer margins of civilisation. Our present cessation from labour is distinguished by union, strict peacefulness and calm determination. (97)

Communal experiences and communal problems therefore provided the basis upon which the heightened political consciousness was raised.

However impressive this may have been generally, in disputes the effects were even more marked. Carol Jones notes how the communities closed up against blacklegs and how no-one could be found to break ranks and give evidence against local strikers.(98) Pit villages were typical of those areas described by Dorothy Thompson as being most militant in that they displayed

shared leisure and recreational patterns (which) made for speed of communication.

In addition community concerns in work and in political action, and the kind of mutual knowledge and trust which was essential for the maintenance of organisations which were always on the very frontiers of legality

made for circumstances in which the experience of the half century leading up to the Chartist period had produced a common sense of exclusion from the political system and a common alternative radical and politico-religious tradition. (99)

The practical manifestations of these developments could be very

impressive. As has previously been mentioned 'the whole population' of Coxhoe was said to have marched to Sunderland for the Whit Monday meeting of Chartists in 1839.(100) In July the Coxhoe miners again walked the eighteen miles to Sunderland's town moor together with those from Quarrington Hill. When one of their number broke both his legs while serving as a delegate to the July meeting, the Coxhoe community supported him financially for at least seven months while he was unable to work.(101) For the community to have helped a fellow worker in this way and for so long says much for their attitude towards the cause for which he was injured. It also says much for their powers of organising the regular round of collecting money for his support.

Funds were forthcoming for others who had suffered for the Chartist cause. Despite their own impecunious circumstances, money was poured into the Frost defence fund to attempt to have the sentences on the Welsh martyrs reduced or rescinded. According to Kidson, clerk to the Sunderland magistrates, Binns and Williams were

in receipt of several hundred pounds every fortnight from the Pitmen for the alleged purposes of defraying the expenses. (102)

(Kidson presumably felt this 'allegation' to be a cover for the real purpose of procuring arms.) In January 1840 Sunderland's contributions to the Frost defence fund were among the highest in the country, being only marginally surpassed by Manchester. Much of this money came from the collieries.(103) Other money came into the Durham prisoners fund which ensured that Binns and Williams' stay in Durham gaol was not too unpleasant. In September for example contributions were forthcoming

from the collieries of Bishop and West Auckland, Houghton, Middle Rainton, Thornley, Cornforth, Coxhoe, Wingate, New Durham, South Hetton, Quarrington Hill and Shincliffe. In addition to cash, gifts were sent including a pie from the Thornley pitmen which weighed over three stones.(104)

In the later 1840s money was channelled into the Land Scheme which allowed Shiny Row pitmen to dream of winning a cottage and small holding on one of the Chartist estates. By the 1850s money was needed for the 'O'Connor Honesty Fund' and here Murton colliery among others was active in fundraising.(105)

This sense of solidarity became heightened as their own spokesmen, and the missionaries from the towns, stressed the unique nature of the miners' work and exploitation. Binns, the Sunderland Chartist missionary and a beneficiary of the above mentioned prisoners fund, composed 'The Doom of Toil' as a Chartist ode while in prison. (106) It addressed itself directly to the miners' condition:

Explore the secrets of yon dismal mine,  
Where crippled colliers toil in darkest night;  
Where poison vapours round him sickly twine,  
And half extinguish the pale glim'ring light;  
Ten hours of ceaseless labour scarce will bring  
Enough of food to yield the call'd for strength;  
Whilst every proud and cruel coal-pit king  
Is floating gaily on a sea of wealth.

To see the hardships that these men endure,  
Would move a heart as hard as stone or steel;  
And blacker than the coal of Tyne and Wear,  
Must be the heart that cannot, will not feel.  
There's scarce a day but sneaking Av'rice tries,  
To cheat by measure, weight or grievous fine,  
And fortunes spring from treachery and lies,  
Like mushrooms in a night, in yonder mine.

Binns, a former Quaker, was one of the most popular Chartist

missionaries in the mining districts because of his eloquence and use of religious imagery. 'The Doom of Toil' sold out of its first edition and had to be reprinted. It was read out at meetings throughout the county and did much to raise the level of the miners' awareness of political matters. But political consciousness came in other ways too. The Chartist newspaper the Northern Star was distributed widely among the pitmen. According to Williams, Binns' bookselling and Chartist partner, they had

without any prospect of gain ... continued to send the Star (sic) through all your districts by means which ensured it to you in the most remote districts, with promptitude, regularity and no additional cost. (107)

In the middle of the 1844 strike copies of the Northern Star were provided free of charge to strikers who were unable to buy their own. The popularity of the paper, and the local Chartist newspaper, the Northern Liberator, is itself evidence of a growing political awareness.(108)

Some of the most politically conscious individuals achieved notoriety. Tommy Hepburn for example, the veteran leader of the 1831 union, regained prominence in the first phase of Chartist activity. Welbourne states that

During the Chartist troubles there were rumours that he had been seen at public meetings, rumours which the newspapers thought worthy of denial. (109)

Welbourne was singularly misinformed. As 'chairman of the pitmen delegates' Hepburn presided over a crowd alleged to number 140,000 on Newcastle town moor in May 1839 at which some two hundred banners were exhibited. Both the Northern Star and the Northern Liberator charted his radical activities throughout 1838 and 1839, and as late as 1841

'the well know leader of the pitmen', as he was still referred to, was at Coxhoe to pay tribute to Binns and Williams on their release from prison.(110)

If Hepburn was a link with an earlier phase of unionism, Martin Jude and David Swallow were links to the next phase. Both were miners and Chartists with Jude being nominated twice for the Chartist Convention before becoming a publican and treasurer of the Newcastle Charter Association. Both men went on to a career with the Miners' Association of Great Britain with Jude acting as treasurer and Swallow becoming the first General Secretary.(111)

Spanning all these events was the even more remarkable career of Benjamin Embleton. He had been active in the miners' strike of 1810 and was a member, though not a delegate, of the Hepburn union, speaking as a character witness in the trials of miners in 1832. By 1839 he was an active Chartist, touring at first with Hepburn and then taking on Binns' lecturing duties after the latter's imprisonment. He chaired local Chartist meetings and county delegate meetings. By 1842 he was already being described as a 'staunch old veteran' when he took an active part in the Thornley strike of 1842. He became one of the twelve 'apostles' or fundraisers sent round the country by the MAGB in 1842. In 1851, and again in 1854, the 'worthy old democrat', now in his eighties, was still making attempts to reestablish both union and Chartist activities. In August 1853 Embleton, Jude, Swallow and Harrison addressed a meeting at which resolutions were passed affirming the need for organisation, a uniform bond and mode of hiring, better ventilation and general regulation of mines, and

throughout the 1850s various attempts were made to establish a Provident Association from which, eventually, the new union developed.(112)

For the miners, democratic control of the State promised ameliorative legislation on such matters as safety standards and ventilation. Such far-sightedness is often denied but there is in fact considerable evidence to show that the miners did possess this wider vision. They wanted education and self improvement for themselves and their children, as the Rymer extract above suggest. In December of 1837 for example there was an advertisement for a schoolteacher for the Thornley miners while Edward Lawson, the Chartist schoolteacher of Coxhoe, was well known as a staunch friend, allowing 150 Chartist miners to meet in his schoolroom. By 1840 the Thornley miners had their own school, hired at a half yearly cost of thirty shillings. They had a treasurer, a secretary and a list of sixty members. This was not always seen in a favourable light by the employers. At South Hetton workmen were refused work

in consequence of having engaged a room to hold Chartist meetings, and to appropriate a reading room and other means of improving their minds, habits and character. (113)

Education was eventually seized upon by the employers as a means of extending control over the workforce and competitions were introduced to encourage a particular form of intellectual development among the children. Employer controlled education had a different focus of concern from that provided by self help efforts, looking more towards individual moral regulation than to notions of power through knowledge.(114) The Mines Inspectorate reported its unease over the

circulation of infidel and Chartist literature which threatened to create 'a great feeling of asperity against the upper and middle classes of this country' and saw employer provided education as a remedy.(115) In a similar vein the vicar of Shildon wished to open a reading room for adult workers

as they are at present in many circumstances taking Chartist and infidel publications just because they have no means of getting what is wholesome so conveniently - their disseminators of evil take care to bring it to their doors. (116)

Self improvement and education led directly to greater involvement in public affairs. Local branches of Chartism made nominations to the Chartist General Convention and a sample of these nominations were published in the Northern Star. Despite the threat of victimisation, six pitmen appear among the sixteen Byker Hill nominations of January 1842 - Martin Jude, Thomas Greener, John Hebden, James Harrison, John Ramsey and Thomas Rand. Hebden, Rand and Jude appeared again in December 1842 as nominations from Ouseburn on a list of nine. From Cramlington came William Thompson, James Lynn and John Johnstone on a list of seven (the secretary - Crosby Davidson - may have been a pitman too). West Auckland produced one miner, Frederick Burn, among its seven nominations while Sherriff Hill produced three among its nine; Cuthbert Peel, James Scath and John Southern, the latter acting as sub-treasurer.(117) Such lists need to be treated with caution. As David Rowe points out, nominations to the General Convention were often not important local leaders since their names do not appear anywhere else.(118) But this is precisely what makes them interesting for it shows the existence of a local network

of Chartist support, whose surface has only been scratched by the names mentioned here, and a willingness of this support to become involved in official organisation to the possible detriment of their livelihood. In addition it can be remarked that the nominations discovered so far do not cover some of those collieries known to be more militant. We do know, however, that some collieries needed new committees from time to time as the management had purged the former committee for their political involvement by removing activists at the yearly binding.(119) Understandably the names of these men were not widely publicised in order that they might stand more chance of work elsewhere and it remains for further research to uncover more of this type of involvement.

We know already that Parkinson, a collier, addressed Newcastle meetings in 1839. Redhead, 'a Pitman at a village called Thornley', used 'very inflammatory and seditious language' to the crowds at the great Sunderland meetings and addressed the 5,000 crowd at Pittington Hill as well as the Female Charter Association of Thornley. This alone is evidence of the depth of the Chartist influence. 320 women with Elizabeth Mallet in the chair heard Redhead speak at Thornley. The Haswell women also held meetings. Clearly their political involvement was not simply reserved for major occasions.(120) Story, a pitman of Rainton, was yet another key Chartist figure who went on to found a branch of Owenite Socialism while Muckleroy, another pitman, lectured to Haswell and Coxhoe.(121) Feargus O'Connor himself wrote of a visit he made to Seghill:

... a mining district to attend a Chartist meeting out of

doors and to my taste it was a most triumphant one; all colliers and all Chartists ... A fine young collier, Turnbull, was in the chair and Christopher Haswell, the honest delegate for the district, was in front of me. (122)

David Jones has examined the list of registered members of the Chartist National Land Company for 1847 and found that, from a study of members whose surnames began with the letters A, B and C, that miners were the ninth most common occupation from a list which covered some three hundred trades.(123) Clearly the claim that the miners were 'only of importance on the occasion of major meetings' cannot be substantiated.

Through the words of the Chartist missionaries and the miners themselves it is possible to look at the content of the miners' political consciousness. There is little doubt that there was a profound sense of exploitation. Redhead, a Thornley miner, spoke of this when he said,

I see the bees who make the honey. When the bees come out of their hives then the grey headed drones go in and get the honey. (124)

In more bitter terms Thomas Hay of Coxhoe announced,

Our masters ... have combined with each other for the purpose of reducing our wages and monopolising all the profits of our labour into their own pockets. (125)

The tradition of hostility to those who were not seen to be working, which had long shown itself in the works of Cobbett and in the hostility to the rural police (the 'blue locusts'), was used against the coal pit kings

floating amidst seas of wealth wrung from aching limbs and bleeding hearts. (126)

The words of the Chartist missionaries struck a popular note in

the villages, resulting in frequent requests for return visits. As James Williams said,

Lecturing is of all means the most efficient in diffusing political knowledge and exciting the dormant feelings of the people. (127)

Binns, the most popular speaker, fired his speeches with religious imagery, but they also contained invective against exploitation and an elementary version of the labour theory of value:

Your wages are better than many trades I could mention but they are far too little for the toil you endure and the dangers you brave ... one half of your earnings are STOLEN by the force of law, to support the extravagances of royalty - its lazy pensioners - its wealthy dignitaries - its heartless soldiery - and its brutal police.

The solution lay in demanding the right to a greater influence over legislation:

If laws make the taxes, then must industry make the laws; and then we shall be Masters. (128)

of the coal owners,

Their grandeur emanates from your industry; and if the loom were set up tomorrow ... and each labourer were to demand the Charter ... and if every department of industry were stopped at its source ... I ask, how these middlemen would shrink into the littleness of their nature. (129)

Williams, though less popular as a speaker than Binns, was even more firmly socialist:

Slavery and oppression ... are not to be rectified by the possession of the franchise alone, unless that franchise be so used as to realise a state of social equality, to arrest the individual accumulation of wealth, the monopoly of knowledge, and destroy the classifications which those are the means of upholding.

According to Williams 'there are no class of working men in Britain that are more villainously robbed and oppressed than the pitmen' and part of the reason for this was that

the honest labourer is TAUGHT to consider himself the recipient of a favour when a capitalist, or a money bashaw, condescends to buy his labour. The labour seller is the slave to the labour buyer, and ever will be so until labour shall be deemed and felt a privilege and duty equally agreeable to, and binding upon all. (130)

The grievances then were not simply concerned with wages but included inequalities respecting taxation, representation, education and knowledge, wealth and property accumulation, tenancy agreements and the iniquities of the bond. It was for these reasons that outside lecturers, who could articulate these grievances for the pitmen, received such attentive hearings. In these terms solidarity, raised awareness, acceptance of class conflict, self improvement and an alternative vision of how society might be ordered are measuring rods against which we can assess the degree of politicisation of the miners. Ten years after the initial Chartist peak the inspector of the mining districts still bemoaned the fact that

by far the greatest number of the young men who had learnt to read ... read very little else than the cheap penny periodicals ... or the newspapers and periodicals advocating Chartism and Socialism ... captivating theories that flatter the vanity of the ignorant and promise ease and enjoyment by some new arrangement of society. (131)

'For the miners Chartism offered an articulation of their problems, a potential avenue for their resolution, and a vision of how things might be otherwise ordered. For Chartism the miners brought not only numerical support which at times was vast, but a body of men who were fit, being used to hard physical work, and who were skilled in the use of hand tools and even explosives. The origins of this symbiosis lay in the diffusion of Chartist lecturers to the mining communities from Sunderland. According to Brockie, who wrote within

living memory,

the pitmen flocked in thousands to hear their impassioned harangues. (132)

The Northern Star commented that

within the short space of twelve months they have secured to our cause the whole colliery population of the county and extended the bond of parliamentary union into almost every town and village in Durham. (133)

A list of venues for Chartist meetings includes Cockfield, Ferryhill, Merrington, Evenwood, Toft Hill, Hetton, South Hetton, Easington Lane, Thornley, Moorsley, Broomside, Haswell, Middle, East and West Rainton, Collier Row, Lumley, Shiny row, Quarrington Hill, Pittington, Barnard Castle, West and Bishop Auckland, Shildon, Seaham, Hartlepool, Aycliffe, Fatfield and Coxhoe.(134) West Auckland was described as

the stronghold of Chartism is South Durham ... the colliers keep their lamp so well trimmed that aristocratic choke damp is almost powerless. (135)

The argument that the new collieries were more turbulent is explained by Welbourne in terms of the attraction such plans had for the dissatisfied, the idle and the dissolute. Carol Jones however maintains that despite these claims, an analysis of collieries stopped in August 1839 reveals the majority of them to be 'relatively old collieries, opened before 1820'.(136) She argues that it was simply the case that newer collieries attracted the younger miners, 'with small families to feed on one wage' who had travelled in search of higher wages and security and who were hard workers, but vocal in dispute, thus giving the appearance of being more troublesome.(137) Analysis of census information shows that geographical mobility within

the region was widespread, that recruitment tended to be intra-regional, and that one pit's newcomer was latterly part of another pit's stable populace. (138)

The Chartist themselves did not believe the relationship between a colliery's age and its militancy to be a simple one. While there was a difference between what the magistrates thought were the reasons for militancy and what the militants themselves believed, the former feared a transient population while the latter felt that fluctuating workforces were harder to educate and organise, complaining that the men at the newer collieries were less informed than those in the older ones. Batchelor, speaking at Haswell for example stated that

the people here are strangers, from a distance many of them, and will require a few more meetings to influence a proper spirit of liberty in their breasts. (139)

Lord Londonderry's colliers, far from showing a marked conservatism, responded to his paternalism and claims for allegiance by announcing that:

For the consideration of the Marquis of Londonderry we beg to inform him that a noble Radical meeting was held here among his pitmen, those over whom he would be feudal chieftain: and although the noble Marquis may be a good master he is a very bad public servant: the people will not swallow his political philosophy and he may therefore sing another doleful ditty about the Chartism of this country. (140)

As early as August 16th 1839 the Durham Advertiser was recording the arrests of Chartists from the collieries and men were being sacked for their part in the activities.(141) The Northern Star initially made light of this, claiming that the sacked men simply went to other collieries where they took the place of other sacked Chartists in what appeared to be a huge round of job swapping.(142) The reality however may well have been considerably harsher. In an article entitled

'colliery war of extermination', James Williams claimed that there was

a system of extermination which is now being put into operation against all who have been or are connected with the Chartist cause ... the owners of South Hetton, Hetton, Elemore and other collieries have marked all who had been guilty of doing their duty as men and as citizens ... all the leading Chartists working at these collieries were informed that they might leave the colliery, that their services were not particularly required, and therefore the masters were not disposed to bind them. (143)

Pitmen were dismissed merely for carrying Chartist circulars and even the employees of the Quaker paternalist Joseph Pease were driven to remonstrate:

Why do your colliery viewers threaten to turn old men off work if they should happen to be Chartists? Has not a collier as much right to his opinions as you have to yours? If your estate was to be confiscated because you were a Whig you would cry out at the injustice of the deed; yet your coal viewers are guilty of those very practices that you would condemn on others. (144)

Despite such victimisation a continuous strand of Chartist activity can be traced between 1839 and the early 1850s. In April 1840 for example, long after the initial excitement of Chartism had passed, a list of villages preparing petitions included Cockfield, Ferryhill, Merrington, Evenwood, Toft Hill, South Church, Bishop and West Auckland, the Batts and Etherley.(145)

In 1841 it was the miners who responded to the exhortation of Edward Lawson to attend Durham jail to greet the release of Williams and Binns and who were among them holding celebratory banquets.

By 1842 miners were openly joining lists of Chartist council nominations but then the coal owners once again turned the screws. By late 1842 John Mowbray of Durham was complaining that

many of the colliery districts, both on the Tyne and on the Wear, which were most forward in the movement of 1839 for the emancipation of our common country, have, as it were, fallen prostrate to our glorious principles. (146)

He felt that the absence of lecturers, rather than an absence of conviction, was the problem. Peter Rigby, who was a lecturer, saw things differently:

anyone who has the least desire for freedom cannot obtain employment upon the most tedious terms, that is to say they can only be employed from day to day, so that if it is found that any slave thus employed shall look into The Northern Star or any other liberal paper, such slaves are, without a day's notice, discharged from their employ and turned out of their cottages. (147)

It is this last phrase which gives the lie to the Northern Star's earlier jaunty remarks about job swapping, for the loss of employment had deeper significance for the miner than for most other classes of worker. Rigby was more perceptive when he remarked that the bond was a terrible thing that turned men into slaves, while at the same time to work without the bond was even worse. Work without a bond involved daily insecurity, and those who were refused re-employment were forced to apply for poor relief and were assigned to labour on the roads at very low rates of pay by the same masters who had just discriminated against them. (148)

The employers' control was total. As magistrates they could even control leisure activities.

If colliers are only found talking about politics over a pot of beer, it becomes hard work for the publican to get his licence renewed. (149)

One of the pitmen's own pamphlets described the situation in the following terms:

Local viewers are our accusers, judges and executioners, and we have no mediators, or no other court to which we have access; but what they say and do are the laws by which we are coerced. (150)

Seen in this light, the return to union activity in the form of the Miners Association is not the simple working out of some 'pendulum theory' explanation of events but a tactical and strategic response to a complex set of problems. As early as April 1841 there were threats to revive the union. Individuals had become too frightened to collect signatures for the Chartist petition because of the threat of victimisation.(151) Now the need was clear for collective action to counteract this intimidation. Challinor and Ripley have described the relationship between the MAGB and Chartism at great length and here it is only necessary to reiterate briefly certain points. Firstly, it is not correct to see unionism and Chartism as competing alternatives. The Northern Star openly encouraged the formation of the union and was, for a considerable time, its major organ of communication.

At the Shaddons Hill meeting of coal miners in May 1843 for example an estimated crowd of 10-12,000 rallied under flags and banners, bearing inscriptions such as 'The Northern Star, labour's best advocate' and a copy of the Star which had a representation of Hunts' monument and the Peterloo massacre.(152) A meeting in July at which 24,000 were alleged to have been present saw 120 flags and banners which included the Breckenbeds banner which carried the inscription: 'The Northern Star, the peoples' friend' with, once again, a picture of the newspaper carrying symbols of Peterloo and Henry Hunt.(153) At this meeting a motion, carried by deafening cheers, was couched in the following terms:

The best thanks of this meeting is due, and hereby respectfully tendered, to the proprietor and editor of the Northern Star for their readiness on all occasions to advocate the cause of right against might, being the only

journal in England which, in the opinion of the meeting, has unflinchingly taken up the cause of the oppressed colliers.

A meeting at Scaffold Hill in September 1843, attended by 12,000, moved that

the thanks of this meeting be tendered to the proprietor and editor of the Northern Star for the willingness with which they have always inserted the proceedings and advocated the proposals of the Miners Association in their valuable journal,

while tributes to O'Connor and the Northern Star became suitable subjects for banner decorations.(154) As has already been noted, the Northern Star was supplied free of charge to miners who were on strike and Buddle wrote that the union was

part and parcel of a Chartist movement. Their union meetings and lectures are merely a cover and drill for the ultimate object - the Charter. (155)

Secondly, the leaders of the union, though rarely miners themselves, were invariably men with a Chartist background. Jude and Swallow had been prominent in the Chartist movement while at least three of the twelve fund raising missionaries were Chartists too.(156) Thirdly, the extent to which the union embraced, or was embraced by Chartism, varied according to the leaders' perception of the political climate. Thus in 1842

it was definitely expedient for tactical reasons to dissociate the union from Chartism

but by 1844,

the leaders became less shy of revealing their political beliefs. In fact the Miners' association was transformed into a Chartist union since they saw that they would still be stigmatised as Chartists whether they nailed Chartist colours to their mast or not. (157)

W.P. Roberts played an important role in this respect. In October 1843 he proclaimed

I wish my position to be understood by all. The colliers do understand it. In the organisation of that body for the wages question I recognise a strong auxiliary Chartist force. These wrists - (showing them) - have had the handcuffs on them five different times for Chartism; and my poor colliers do not think so meanly of me as to suppose that I am going even to give up the name under which I suffered. (158)

O'Connor, in contrast, was keen to maintain the independence of the two bodies.(159)

By 1844 the Northern Star was running weekly bulletins on the progress of the strike. Gammage, later to be a member of the Chartist executive and its first serious historian, addressed a large meeting of miners at Coxhoe in County Durham, while on Sunderland town moor a pitmen's tent was erected and a collection for the striking miners was made at each Chartist meeting.(160)

In such a variety of ways Chartist activity among the miners took deeper root and survived more strongly than has sometimes been accepted by historians; so much so that the land scheme could attain wide popularity in the later 1840's. When the general revival of Chartist fortunes occurred in 1848 the collieries were quickly caught up in the general enthusiasm. Thirty five new Chartists were enrolled after West's lecture in Coxhoe and representatives from Hetton Lane, Old Pensher (Penshaw) and Mill pits met at Shiney Row. Meanwhile the men from Haswell, Hetton, South Hetton, the Raintons 'and all the surrounding collieries', met at Easington Lane.(161) This time, however, there was no repeat of the scenes of 1839 and the expected tumult did not materialise. But Chartism did not die out altogether.

In 1850 the 'Society for the protection of the labour of the miners', meeting at Heugh Hall colliery, recited Binns' Chartist poem, 'The Doom of Toil' while collieries continued to send donations to various O'Connorite funds.(162) In July 1850 the colliers of the North East presented Feargus O'Connor with a watch seal made of coal as a tribute to his efforts on their behalf and in 1851 attempts were made at re-launching both the union and Chartism as a joint venture.(163)

In conclusion the evidence here dispels the impression that Chartism only flourished among the North East miners for a very brief period in 1839. Clearly Nossiter's claim that Chartism

disappeared with the failure of the Sacred Month of strike action.

is no longer tenable. Nor is Welbourne's claim that

though the Chartist teachings had a welcome among the pitmen there was no readiness to sacrifice prosperity for political principle. (164)

Sacrifices, quite definitely, were made and the long term commitment of the miners stand in marked contrast to the support given to Chartism by the larger groups of employees in the urban centres.

Exception can also be taken to David Rowe's arguments: that Chartisms' support among the miners has been exaggerated, that it was confined to a limited number of events, and that it was a feature only of the newer collieries. These, together with his claim that the employers did not engage in a witch hunt against Chartist miners, do not stand up to close scrutiny.(165)

The involvement of miners was clearly more than flirtatious or the result of a crude pendulum swing to political activity in an otherwise barren period between the unions of 1831-2 and 1842-4. The

metaphor of the pendulum has been highly damaging to the integrity of those involved in these movements. It implies that workers were fickle and possessed no stable analysis of their condition. But the analysis of the miners' involvement in Chartism, both before and alongside their attempts at unionism, shows that the miners' analyses were not only stable but were both considered and clear.

The picture which emerges is not that the pitmen were the ignorant creatures depicted by Wesley, but that they were a group possessing a developed occupational and political awareness who, in the absence of established means, tried a variety of tactics to improve their working and living conditions. In so doing they produced, of necessity, a critique of the moral and ideological positions held by their masters.

In this way the analysis of radicalism in coalmining points to the factors which will need to be taken into account in studying the overall patterning of working class activity in the region. Clearly the activity cannot simply be 'read off' from economic factors such as the trade cycle or stages of capitalist development and the need to construct a wider analysis remains the crucial issue to which a return will presently be made.

Chapter 4

Notes

1. See R. Harrison (ed) Independent Collier: the coal miner as archetypal proletarian reconsidered (Harvester 1978) for a review of this position and a reassessment.
2. G. Stedman Jones (1982) *op. cit.*, D. Thompson (1984) *op. cit.*, J. Saville 'Some aspect of Chartism in decline' Bulletin of the Society for the study of labour history 20.
3. Reports of the Commissioner of Mines 1842, 1846, 1850.
4. Welbourne, *op. cit.* p.26. The coal industry had also employed a degree of the division of labour which had been uncommon in earlier times and which is more usually thought of as a feature of industrialisation.
5. P. Anderson 'Arguments' *op. cit.* p.34-5.
6. D. Thompson The Chartists (Temple Smith 1984) p.231. C. Godfrey in 'The Chartist Prisoners 1839-41' IRSH 1979 notes that miners are the third largest group among the arrested Chartists. Godfrey also makes the point that prisoners were frequently from the most common occupational group in the area in which the disturbances had occurred (p.231). It would seem likely that the North East displayed a similar pattern.
7. The picture is marginally complicated by the fact that both Durham City and Sunderland had pits within their boundaries. See G. Patterson, Monkwearmouth Colliery in 1851 (Durham 1973), P.A. Grant, The Coal Mines of Durham City.
8. E. Hobsbawm, The Age of Capital, 1848-1875 (London 1975) Report of the Commissioners into the state of the population in the mining districts 1846 (Act 516 Vic c99).
9. R. Fynes, History of Durham and Northumberland Miners (Sunderland 1873) E. Welbourne, The Miners Unions of Northumberland and Durham (Cambridge 1923), N. McCord and D.E. Brewster, 'Some labour troubles of the 1790s in North East England' IRSH, 1968.
10. Durham Advertiser 15.4.1820. The Durham Advertiser contains many reports of strikes and riots throughout the period 1818-1822. Most involved pitmen and keelmen.
11. E. Hobsbawm, Labouring Men (Wiedenfeld and Nicholson, 1964) p.30.
12. Wesley's Journal Vol.III, p.71, quoted in E. Welbourne, The Miners' Unions of Northumberland and Durham, Cambridge 1923.

13. Welbourne, p.18.
14. J.Wilson, Memories of a labour leader, 1910 (Caliban books 1980, p.96).
15. ibid, p.95.
16. Durham Advertiser 11.12.1819, but repeated elsewhere as a popular fable.
17. T.J. Nossiter, Influence, opinion and political idioms in reformed England. Case studies from the North East 1832-74, Harvester, 1975.
18. M. Holbrook Jones, Supremacy and Subordination of Labour (Heinemann, 1982) p.35.
19. A.J. Taylor, 'The Miners Association of Great Britain and Ireland 1842-8: A study in the problem of Integration', Economica, 1955, and 'Combinations in the mid nineteenth century coal industry', Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, 1953, p.47. For an opposing view see A. Hutt, British Trade Unionism. A Short History, Lawrence & Wishart, 1975.
20. Society for the Study of Labour History, Bulletins 20, 22, 23, 24, 25 & 27. W.H.Mael, 'Chartist Disturbance in North Eastern England 1839' in International Review of Social History (IRSH) Vol.VIII, Part 3, 1963. W.H. Maehl 'The dynamics of violence in Chartism: a case study in North Eastern England' in Albion Vol.VII, No.2, Summer 1975. D.J. Rowe, 'Some aspects of Chartism on Tyneside' IRSH Vol.XVI, 1971. D.J. Rowe 'Tyneside Chartism' in N. McCord (ed) Essays in Tyneside Labour History, Newcastle, 1977.
21. D.J. Rowe (1977) op.cit. p.71. N.McCord's North East England. The Region's Development 1760-1960 (Batsford 1979) concurs with Rowes view, p.79.
22. D.J. Rowe (1971) op.cit. p.23.
23. ibid p.33 and op.cit. (1977) p.71.
24. E. Welbourne, op. cit. ch.3.
25. D. Rowe (1971) op.cit. p.31.
26. Report of the Commissioner of Mines 1846.
27. I am grateful to Dr R. Sturgess of Sunderland Polytechnic for stressing this distinction.
28. P.Sweezy, Monopoly and Competition in the English Coal Trade 1550-1850 (Massachusetts, 1938).

29. R. Sturgess (1981) op.cit. p.26.
30. W. Mitchell, op.cit.
31. Supplement to the Miners Advocate (n.d.), R Fynes, op.cit. p.37-49, E. Welbourne, op.cit. p.69. R. Challinor and B. Ripley, op.cit. p.99.
32. A. Campbell, op.cit. p.9-10. Harriet Martineau cited in A. Heesom (1974) op.cit.
33. T.J. Nossiter (1975) op.cit. p.10.
34. For discussions of cavilling see: D. Douglas, 'The Durham Pitmen in R. Samuel, Miners, Quarrymen and Saltworkers (RKP, 1977), M. Holbrook Jones, op.cit., M. Daunton 'The Export Coalfields: South Wales and North Eastern England, 1870-1917' in R. Sturgess, Pitmen, Viewers and Coalmasters, (Sunderland 1986), T. Austrin & H. Beynon, Masters and Servants, Durham University working paper, 1979.
35. D. Douglas, op.cit.
36. A. John, By the Sweat of their Brow: Women workers in Victorian coal mines (Croom Helm, 1980).
37. T. Austrin and H. Beynon, op.cit.
38. A.J. Heesom (1974) op.cit.
39. Cited in E. Welbourne, op.cit. p.88. Reply of the Coal Trade to the Commissioner Report, 1842.
40. R.W. Brandling, Report of the Committee of the Coalowners respecting the present situation of the trade, Newcastle 1832. In similar vein a pamphlet by Scrutator; falsely claiming impartiality, said that 'Lead miners and other strangers have succeeded in many instances in working a quantity of coal equal to that raised by any ordinary pitmen' (Co. Durham, 1832).
41. M. Sill, Coal mining communities in County Durham in the mid nineteenth century: Socio economic structure and labour mobility.
42. See for example R. Harrison (1978) op.cit., A. Campbell, The Lanarkshire Miners (Edinburgh 1979), A. Nicholson, The Growth of Trades Unionism among the Cleveland Ironstone Miners 1850-1876, unpublished M.A. Thesis, Teesside Polytechnic 1982, R.J. Waller The Dukeries Transformed (Oxford 1983), M. Bulmer 'Sociological models of the mining community', The Sociological Review, 1975.

43. The position is complicated still further by the extensive landed interest within joint stock companies as at Murton. See for example R. Sturgess, 'The North East coalmasters' in R. Sturgess (ed) Pitmen, Viewers and Coalmasters (Sunderland, 1986), D. Spring 'The English Landed Estate in the Age of Coal and Iron: 1830-1880' Journal of Economic History, 1951.  
The efficiency with which levels of activity were recorded is also likely to have varied between collieries.
44. M. Sill, op.cit.
45. A.J. Heesom, 'Entrepreneurial Paternalism: The third Lord Londonderry (1778-1854) and the Coal Trade', Durham University Journal, 1974.
46. R. Sturgess, Aristocrat in Business (Durham, 1975) p.4.
47. J. Burnham, The Managerial Revolution, A. Berle and E.C. Means The Modern Corporation and Private Property (London 1934). R. Sturgess (1975) op.cit. (1986) op.cit. and 'Factors affecting the expansion of coalmining, 1700-1914' in R. Sturgess (ed) The Great Age of Industry in the North East, 1700-1920 (Durham 1981) all provide examples of this approach.
48. G. Hardy (1825-1917) The Londonderry Railway (Norwich, 1973).
49. An appeal to the public, from the pitmen of the Tyne and Wear.
50. The miners were very conscious of the mine owners influence in Parliament, particularly their hostility to the 1842 act. They also felt that the relationship between the owners and the magistracy was iniquitous. See below, Chapter 8.
51. Cited in A. Burton, The Miners (Andre Deutsch, 1976) p.94.
52. G. Patterson op.cit. p.65. See also M. Bulmer (1975) op.cit. for a discussion of community patterns.
53. R. Colls, The Colliers Rant (Croom Helm, 1977), M. Holbrook Jones (1982) op.cit., M. Daunton, 'Down the Pit: Work in the Great Northern & South Wales Coalfields 1870-1914', Economic History Review, 1981.
54. E. Rymer, 'The Martyrdom of the Mine', 1898, reprinted in History Workshop Journal, 1976.
55. E. Welbourne, op.cit. p.84.
56. Overman at Elescar colliery, cited in M. Pollard, The Hardest work under heaven. The life and death of the British Coal Miner (Hutchinson, 1984), E. Welbourne, op.cit. p.84-5, according to John Buddle in 1835, 'several collieries have been reopened with

the aid of the Davy lamp which must otherwise have lain dormant'  
Select committee on accidents in coal mines.

57. Northern Star 20.5.1843.
58. W. Mitchell, The Question answered: What do the pitmen want?  
(Bishopwearmouth, 1844).
59. W. Mitchell, ibid p.5.
60. ibid p.7.
61. E. Welbourne, op.cit. p.65.
62. Northern Star 29.7.1843. R. Galloway, Annals of Coal Mining and  
the Coal Trade Vol.2 (1836-1850) (London, 1904).
63. Kidson, clerk to the Sunderland magistrates, to Lord Russell  
13.7.39 HO 40/42. See also S.Cornish, Powerlessness in Peripheral  
Regions; the case of the non-militant miner, paper to the British  
Sociological Association conference 1983 for a discussion of the  
influence of a middle class.
64. Cited in A. Campbell, op.cit. p.103, M.Holbrook Jones, op.cit.  
p.93. Report of the Commissioner of Mines 1852.
65. The Northern Star 27.9.42.
66. E.A. Rymer, 'The Martyrdom of the Mine', reprinted in History  
Workshop Journal No.1, Spring 1976.
67. J. Belchem, 'English Working Class Radicalism and the Irish  
1815-1859' in the North West Labour History Society. Bulletin No.8  
1982-3.
68. P.Cadogan, Early Radical Newcastle, Consett, Co.Durham, 1975.
69. W.H. Maehl, op.cit.
70. Quoted in D. Spring 'The Earls of Durham and the Great Northern  
Coalfield 1830-1880', Canadian Historical Review Vol.XXXIII 1952.
71. R.P. Hastings, 'Chartism in South Durham and the North Riding of  
Yorkshire 1838-9' in Durham County Local History Society Bulletin  
22.
72. Northern Liberator 27.7.39.
73. Maehl, op.cit. p.406.
74. HO 40/42, 40/51 R. Bishoprick to Home Secretary (n.d. July 1839)  
cited in R.P. Hastings, op.cit. p.10.

75. Pemberton to Russell 19.7.39 HO 40/42 Durham Advertiser 19.7.1839. Russell to the Lord Lieutenant 2.3.1839. Parliamentary Papers: Civil Disorder.
76. Northern Star 25.5.39. The Northern Liberator put the crowd at 80,000. 25.5.39.
77. Northern Liberator 6.4.39.
78. R.G. Gammage, History of the Chartist Movement 1854 (Merlin edition, 1969, p.116).
79. Northern Star 25.5.39.
80. Sunderland Herald 24.5.39.
81. ibid 12.7.39.
82. ibid 24.7.39.
83. HO 40/42 Kidson to Russell 13.7.39.
84. Buddle to Londonderry 11.8.39, 13.7.39 D/L0/C/142.
85. Hastings, op.cit. p.12.
86. Durham Advertiser 19.7.1839.
87. See for example Coal is our Life by N. Dennis, F. Henriques and C. Slaughter, London, 1956. For a guide to reading see Mining and Social Change by M. Bulmer (ed) Croom Helm, 1978. Carol Jones, op.cit. p.132-7, has recently studied North East coal communities for the period 1825-45 and confirms the high level of solidarity which existed.
88. T.Austrin and H. Beynon, op.cit., M. Holbrook Jones, op.cit.
89. G. Patterson, op.cit. p.41.
90. W.M. Patterson, Northern Primitive Methodism (London, 1909) p.100.
91. E.P. Thompson, 'Patrician Society, Plebeian Culture', Journal of Social History, 1974.
92. ibid.
93. G. Stedman Jones 'The language of Chartism' in J. Epstein and D. Thompson, The Chartist Experience (Macmillan, 1982).
94. W. Mitchell, op.cit.

95. W. Scott, An Earnest address and urgent appeal to the people of England in behalf of the oppressed and suffering Pitmen (1831).
96. Northern Star 20.7.1850.
97. W. Mitchell, *op.cit.* See also A. Campbell, *op.cit.* for comparison with affairs in Scotland.
98. C. Jones, *op.cit.* p.132-7. R. Sturgess, 'Social mobility of North East Pitmen in the Nineteenth Century', NELHS Bulletin 20, 1986 finds some exceptions to the norm of closed communities.
99. D. Thompson (1984) p.62, 106.
100. Northern Star 25.5.1839.
101. ibid 8.2.1840.
102. HO 40/42 Kidson to Russell 18.7.1839.
103. Northern Star 18.1.1840 carries a list of subscribing collieries.
104. Northern Star 12.9.1840.
105. ibid 11.1.1851.
106. 'The Doom of Toil' by George Binns, written in Durham prison and distributed from Williams and Binns booksellers, Bridge St, Sunderland, 1841. reprinted in the Northern Star 26.2.48.
107. The Northern Star 27.3.41 Literacy rates would seem to indicate that the newspapers were bought collectively and read out aloud to those who could not read themselves. In part also, the differences in the ratios of the population who signed the Chartist petitions can be accounted for by the variations in the numbers who could write.
108. See the Northern Liberator 20.1.38 for examples of circulation figures. The Northern Star 4.5.44 for account of free copies.
109. E. Welbourne, *op.cit.* p.43-44.
110. Northern Liberator 6.1.38, 6.4.39, 27.4.39, 20.7.39 etc The Northern Star 12.11.38, 25.5.39, 13.2.41 etc See also Newcastle Weekly Chronicle 27.2.1875. A. Burton, *op.cit.* p.69 is typical of many studies which have depicted Hepburn as a broken figure who drifted into obscurity after 1832. A reassessment is overdue.
111. Challinor and Ripley (*op.cit.*). Also D.J. Rowe 'Tyneside Chartists' in the Bulletin, North East Group for the study of Labour History No.8, 1974.

112. Fynes R., History of Durham and Northumberland Miners', Sunderland 1873. Labour disputes in the mines (collection of contemporary pamphlets). Northern Star 27.4.39, 28.11.40, 15.8.40, 27.8.42, 11.1.51 Bell collection Vol.II, Miners Advocate, June 44 etc.
113. Durham Advertiser 29.12.37. Northern Star 3.10.40, 3.4.41.
114. Report of the Commissioner of Mines 1850. See also the debate between R. Colls, B. Duffy and A.J. Heesom on the role of education; 'Debate: Coal, Class and Education in the North East' in Past and Present No.90.
115. Report of the Commissioner of Mines 1851.
116. Cited in B. Duffy, op.cit.
117. Northern Star 11.12.41, 1.1.42, 15.1.42, 12.2.42, 10.12.42. Organisational experience gained in this manner was to prove significant for many participants later.
118. D. Rowe (1974) (op.cit.) p.30.
119. Northern Star 18.5.39.
120. For Redhead see HO 40/42, Kidson to Secretary of State, also Northern Liberator 6.4.39, 27.4.39, Sunderland Herald 12.7.39, 19.7.39. Northern Star 4.5.39, 18.5.39 etc.
121. Northern Liberator 23.2.39 etc.
122. Northern Star 28.10.1843.
123. D. Thompson (1984) op.cit. p.231, D. Jones, Chartism and the Chartists (Allen Lane 1975).
124. Sunderland Herald 12.7.39.
125. Northern Star 4.5.44.
126. ibid 1.3.40.
127. ibid 14.9.42 For Williams and Binns see articles by P.J. Storey in J.O. Baylen and N.J. Gossman; Biographical Dictionary of modern British Radicals Vol.2 1830-1914.
128. Northern Star 1.3.40.
129. HO 40/42 quoted in R.Colls, The Colliers Rant, Croom Helm, 1977, p.126 Colls argues that political consciousness can be further traced through the words of the colliers songs.

130. Northern Star 3.4.41.
131. Report of the Commissioner to Inquire into the State of the Population in the Mining Districts 1850.
132. W. Brockie, Sunderland Notables, 1894.
133. Northern Star 5.10.39.
134. List of villages and itineraries of lecturers were published in the Northern Liberator and the Northern Star throughout 1839. One can turn to almost any edition of the above for examples.
135. Northern Star 29.8.1840,
136. C. Jones 1985, op.cit. p.111.
137. ibid p.84; E. Welbourne op.cit. p.47.
138. M. Sill, op. cit.
139. Northern Star 18.5.1839.
140. Northern Liberator 23.2.1839.
141. Durham Advertiser 16.8.1839.
142. Northern Star 3.4.1841 'the tyrants have in some instances, outwitted each other'.
143. ibid 3.4.1841.
144. ibid 6.11.1841, 11.7.1840.
145. ibid 25.4.1840.
146. ibid 27.9.1842.
147. ibid 1.10.1842.
148. W. Mitchell, op.cit.
149. Northern Star 27.9.1842.
150. 'An appeal to the public from the pitmen of the Tyne and Wear'.
151. R. Challinor and B. Ripley, op.cit. p.14.
152. Northern Star 20.5.1843.
153. ibid 15.7.1843.

154. Northern Star 23.9.1843. See also 25.11.1843, 9.12.1843 for reports from other areas which make reference to the Northern Star's influence.
155. Buddle to Londonderry 16.7.1843 Londonderry papers D/L0/C/42. Northern Star 4.5.1844.
156. Challinor and Ripley, op.cit. p.17.
157. ibid p.22. This contrasts markedly with the view of E. Royle and J. Walvin who argue that 'Only after the failure of the great coal strike of 1844 were the miners inclined to swing back to Chartism, attracted by the Land plan' English Radicals and Reformers 1760-1848 (Harvester 1982).
158. Northern Star 28.10.1843.
159. ibid 16.11.1844 Cited by A. Jenkins 'Chartism and the Trade Unions' in L. Munby (ed) The Luddites and other essays (London 1971) p.90.
160. Northern Star 27.4.1844.
161. ibid 1.4.1848.
162. ibid 19.1.1850, 11.1.1851.
163. ibid 11.1.1851, 13.7.1850. For further references to activities in the 1850s see B. Rees, op.cit.
164. E. Welbourne, op.cit. p.54.
165. D. Rowe (1971) op.cit. p.34.

Chapter 5Christianity and Priestianity : The Politics of Dissent in Darlington

Darlington, the third case study, provides another marked contrast in the patterning of its radical activity. Its economic base, its class structure, its ideological forms and the fortunes of its working class movement all varied significantly from that of Sunderland and the coalfield.

Darlington fits more closely the prototype of a northern town in the Industrial Revolution. In the 1831 census so many of the town's male population were engaged in textiles that the enumerators were obliged to make additions to the categories on their forms in order to differentiate between different grades of workers. The increase in linen and woollen manufacture, in addition to the railways, was held by the enumerators to have been responsible for a near 50% increase in Darlington's population in the previous decade.(1)

The linen industry dated back to Saxon times and in 1753 the York Courant gave an account of a big wool fair being held there.(2) Its links with West Riding textiles, and those of Bradford in particular, were very strong. By 1811

most Darlington families had a direct or indirect connection with the textile industry.(3)

500 looms were employed in linen and a further 300 on woollen cloth. Concentration had begun sometime earlier with J.F. Backhouse employing sixty weavers by 1770 as well as supplying flax to hand spinners who

worked under the domestic system to supply yarn for the weavers.(4) Increased competition and the concentration of production in town centre factories brought distress to the outworkers who had used textiles to supplement their agricultural income. By 1837 there were only 512 handlooms left and of these 273 were idle. In that year Pease opened up his 'Railway Mill' with 400 looms. Three years later Charles Parker, a flax spinner of Haughton in Darlington patented further improvements in the power looms used for linen weaving, thus reducing still further the demand for out-work.(5)

Textiles were central to the prosperity of the town but in addition Darlington was also important as a leather making centre. In 1827 there were two large tan yards and several carriers in the town. These trades, and the rapid population growth, did much to contribute to the parlous state of health in the town centre, most of which consisted of enclosed and poorly drained yards.(6) The death rate in some parts of the town was 47 per thousand at a time when the national average was 23 per 1000 and it is a cause of some surprise that Darlington was spared from each of the major Cholera outbreaks in this period. Refuse flowed to the Skerne which became dirty and polluted while still being used as a source of domestic water supply. The Skerne also provided the motive power for the town's mills driving, by 1810, seven corn mills, two linen spinning mills, a woollen mill, a fulling mill and a mill for grinding optical glasses.(7) There was also a thriving watch and clock making tradition in the town as well as its important market.

The tranquility of this unexceptional economy was broken by the

entrepreneurial spirit of its major Quaker families. Darlington contained a large proportion of non-conformists and this is reflected in the number of schools built by the educational societies of the different religious bodies. Between 1800 and 1870, for example, there were eight British and Foreign Society Schools as against the National Society's five.(8) Methodists were particularly strong numerically. In 1811 Darlington's Methodist Church could seat 1,400 at a time when the total population was only 5,059.(9) The greater influence however, extended out of all proportion to their numerical strength, was that of the Quakers. By 1850 there were only two hundred members of the Society of Friends in Darlington yet within their ranks were the powerful dynasties of the Peases and Backhouses.(10)

These families were close to Weber's ideal of the self sacrificing and all investing protestant.(11) In addition to the textile interests already cited, banking, coal ownership and railways figured highly among their concerns. Although they came late to coal ownership (as opposed to coal transportation) the Peases employed 3,500 people in their collieries by 1870.(12) Their activities contributed in no small measure to the collapse of the Vend but Darlington itself was not situated on the coal measures. Instead the Peases leased land in the west of the county after the success of the Stockton-Darlington railway brought down the cost of transporting coal from the Auckland field. The Stockton-Darlington railway, itself promoted by the Peases, had many other implications for the region, particularly concerning capital development. It is estimated that £120,000 was needed to build the line and while Pease put up £10,000

and Backhouse £20,000, extra funds had to be raised from the Gurneys of Norwich and Richardson of London.(13)

Earlier suggestions for coal transportation had centred on the building of a canal which, by skirting Darlington altogether, would have had entirely different consequences for the town. The Peases wished Darlington to have maximum advantage from the developments. The railway brought employment in its construction, its operation and in the many works which sprang from it. From being an essentially market and textile town Darlington changed rapidly to an engineering and metal based one. While the market and textiles continued to thrive, the railways created jobs on the through traffic, on the construction of railways and station buildings, and on the building and maintenance of rolling stock, engine sheds and locomotive works. From its inauguration in 1825 the Stockton-Darlington railway network was extended to take in Yarm in 1829, Middlesborough in 1830, York in 1841 and Newcastle in 1844. By 1840 the development had already produced a new housing district east of the line within Darlington. (14)

William Kitching's small foundry in Tubwell Row was greatly expanded through this new business by his son Alfred who established a new foundry at North Road adjoining the Stockton-Darlington Station in 1840. T Summerson and Sons in the same year established works for the manufacture of railway switches and crossings. Darlington employed all the major iron (and later steel) processes of the day. Smelting took place at the South Durham Iron Company and pig iron was cast into moulds at Harris's foundry (later Summersons). Wrought iron came from the Darlington forge where axles and wheelcentres were produced, and

from W. Barningham's 'Darlington Iron Company' which was probably the worlds largest iron rail manufacturers at that time. Rolling took place at the Rise Carr Rolling Mills and by 1863 locomotive engineering had been transferred from Shildon to the North Road Works bringing further housing development and population growth.(15)

Expansion fed itself. Coal was needed to power the forges and mills and the development of the Cleveland Ironstone field in the 1850s brought huge increases in demand. From the one million tons of coal carried by the Stockton-Darlington railway in 1850, two million were carried in 1860 and four and a half million in 1870. In addition the limestone which was also used in the smelting process was carried down by rail from Weardale.

In the centre of this growth sat the Quakers. They had provided the initial capital and entrepreneurial spirit and their fortunes grew with the general success. In 1863 for example the Stockton-Darlington was bought out by the London and North East Railway Company for £4,500,000. Their banking concerns underpinned most of the new commercial initiatives in the town, creating both a financial and a political indebtedness which could be called upon when needed. The importance of Quaker banking stability should not be overlooked. Norman McCord has shown that in other parts of the region unsound banking led to crises and occasional collapses which were detrimental to business confidence. Quaker banking however set its own high standards of propriety and, furthermore, enjoyed familial and religious ties to the Society's assets elsewhere.(16)

Middlesbrough, originally called Port Darlington, was a Quaker

creation. Prior to the building of the extension of the Stockton-Darlington railway, it was little more than a small group of houses. Under the financial and manufacturing stimulus of the 'Owners of the Middlesbrough Estate' - the Peases and four other Quaker partners - it was to grow from 'a few farmhouses' where 'perhaps 25 inhabitants have made their scanty living' into a town which ten years later had over five thousand inhabitants.(17)

Municipal affairs in Darlington were largely controlled through the local Board of Health which possessed much of the authority and many of the functions of a town council. This was subject to an oligarchic control by the Quakers. In 1850 for example its eighteen members contained ten Quakers including three Backhouses and three Peases, while plural voting increased their power still further.(18) This group was sufficiently powerful to resist demands for incorporation until 1867 and a mark of their continuing power after 1867 is shown by the fact that five Peases and seven former members of the Board of Health were elected to the first town council while Henry Pease became the first mayor and Edmund Backhouse the first MP.

In addition to textiles, coal and railways, their interests included ironstone mining, leadmining, ironworks, brick, tile and pipe manufacturing, waterworks and agriculture. They were among the leading employers of labour in South West Durham and North East Yorkshire and where they did not employ directly they could exercise their influence in other ways such as through Board of Health contracts, the magistrates bench and through the extension of loans to other employers.(19) Highly selective recruitment policies ensured that the

Peases' colliery villages conformed to their employers wishes. In Kirby's words they were 'moulded in their own image'.(20) The Peases' brand of paternalism also dominated Darlington. Nossiter described their approach as one of 'benevolent despotism' although there were many in the town who would have disputed that description.(21) As father figures they did seek to provide decent houses and schools and appeared genuinely reluctant to lay off workers when trade was slack. Thus Edward Pease's diary entry for June 6th 1842 reads:

Entered with my three dear sons into serious consideration as regards the Mill concerns, how far may be right at once to wind up. The distress it would cause to the poor, and the loss of £30,000 to £40,000 to the family, appear to render it prudent to try another year.(22)

On another occasion the family is alleged to have expressed greater concern for the livelihood of the workers than for their own premises upon hearing of a fire at the mill.(23)

Yet paternalism had its Janus-face and to step out of line meant risking dismissal and the likelihood of not finding work elsewhere in the town. Employees were warned not to attend the theatre and the Peases refused to supply gas to the Middlesborough theatre on a Sunday. As Quakers they did not proselytise their creed and they remained an exclusive and middle class party.(24) Yet through their influence they imposed upon their workforce, and much of the community from which their workforce came, as much of the ethos of Quakerism as they were able. Methodism was preferred, even sponsored among the colliery workforce, for the way in which it advocated notions of abstinence which paralleled Quaker principles. The Quakers themselves often went much further.(25) Edward Pease disliked his grandchildren

taking an interest in a flower show because it tended

to the increase of luxury ... and to gratify the lust of the eye. The simplicity of Quakerism ... is not in it.(26)

In other Quaker households books were divided into those suitable for weekdays and those which were Sunday books, while drapes were hung over colourful pictures on Sundays too.

Such puritanism was not a subject of local ridicule. On the contrary it represented a massive ideological and spiritual gulf between employers and employees which served to entrench still further those inequalities in wealth and political power which separated the Quakers from the population they served. There was, according to G.J. Scurfield

A sort of cloud or pall hanging over the town which served to swamp any kind of amusement.(27)

Pease even felt that trains should not be allowed to run on Sundays.

The event which stands in marked contrast to this picture was the passing of the first Reform Bill. The agitation in Darlington was fuelled by the problems which had been faced in getting Parliament to agree to the construction of the Stockton-Darlington railway. Hence Pease decided that he would stand as an MP and he subsequently became the first Quaker to sit in parliament. He stood on a platform of sectarianism, idealism and commercial interest, and was attacked by Shafto, his opponent, for having

Never heard his own mill bell awaken the children of Darlington at five o' clock in the winters' mornings.(28)

He was also opposed by Lord Cleveland and the Marquis of Londonderry who tried to persuade their tenant farmers to vote against him. Despite this Pease was returned in 1832 and subsequently in 1835 and

1837 and it was 1847 before a Tory took one of the South Durham seats.

Quaker support had ensured a strong movement for parliamentary reform in Darlington. On May 16th 1832 a large meeting outside the town hall listened to speakers in favour of reform upon a platform which included Thomas Bowes, Thomas Mewburn the railway solicitor and John and Joseph Pease.(29) The audience agreed unanimously to petition the King to recall Earl Grey and to withhold taxes until reform was granted. After the passing of the bill a procession of over 3,000 with two bands and dozens of banners marched around the town and the principal streets. Printed on the banners were slogans such as 'A day of liberty is worth an eternity of bondage', 'No Corn Laws', and 'England must be free as the thoughts of man'. This was followed by a revival of the old custom whereby the operatives indulged in a banquet at which they were served by their employers. The employers subsequently retired to the workhouse for their own meal.

Darlington was well pleased with the Reform Act. Although it did not gain its own MP, it was to have a virtual monopoly on at least one of the South Durham seats which would help to promote the economic interests of the town.(30) In addition the principal members of its community now benefitted from the franchise. As a result there was little middle class support for further parliamentary reform and this is reflected in the occupation of known Chartists in the town. The nominations to the Chartist general council for 1842 included two bookbinders, three woolcombers, two labourers, a tailor and a grocer.(31) The principal Darlington Chartist was Nicholas Bragg who was initially a carpet weaver.(32) He became the sub-secretary of the

local Chartist branch and was nominated for the General Convention. He ran the Chartist co-operative store in Priestgate and was described by the Northern Star as 'One of the Staunchest radicals in Darlington'.(33) After the decline of the Chartist co-operative he opened a grocers store on High Row and continued to be a thorn in the flesh of the Peases until his death in 1873. In the 1860s he sought to divide the town into wards to break the Quaker monopoly and give more influence to the poor areas of the town.(34)

The Reform Bill meetings showed that there was some support for political reform in the town but evidence of earlier political radicalism such as that which occurred generally in the Peterloo years has not come to light. Additionally in view of the strength of control held by the Peases and Backhouses it is perhaps surprising that a Chartist movement of any size could find the space in which to develop. There were of course major sources of discontent in the area, particularly concerning the plight of the distressed out-workers and the unequal way in which the townspeople were affected by the lack of public health measures. It seems however that discontent against the new poor law did not figure highly, if at all, among Darlington's discontents, and there is no sign of the virulent anti-police sentiment which characterised Chartism in Sunderland and the colliery districts.(15)

Chartist meetings were held above Braggs' shop and public meetings were held in the market square and on the Skerne Bridge. On July 19, 1839 the council of the Darlington District Durham County Charter Association passed a resolution that

We the Chartists of Darlington do hereby solemnly and faithfully declare that we seek to gain the rightful principles of the People's Charter, by no other than legal and peaceful means, and indignantly repudiate as a foul calumny the assertion that we have violent intentions respecting the persons and property of others; but having seen a marked disposition on the part of our Rulers, now to rake up tyrannical enactments of a Castlereagh, and to crush by brute force the moral power of the people, we do therefore believe it to be a sacred duty to inform all to be prepared for the worst.(36)

Hastings has noted that despite its longevity (1838-1853 at least), Darlington was not a strong centre for Chartism. He comments that

in the absence of an effective centre the bid to carry the Chartist message to the depressed linen workers and to the agricultural labourers of South Durham ... was inevitably doomed to failure. (37)

Nevertheless Darlington saw its fair share of activity. Lecturers went out to the neighbouring villages and secret meetings were held in the public house run by Coffey in Blackwellgate.(38) Soldiers of the 77th foot regiment were quartered in Pigott's linen factory in Northgate which was a sizeable building with 400 workers. Special constables had been sworn in already but Mewburn felt that these were not enough and he wrote on August 15th 1839 that

we have at length determined to send for a company of soldiers from Stockton - the Chartists persist in holding their meetings and although nearly 300 good men and true have been sworn in as special constables the influential men in the town think that they are not a match for the Chartists. (39)

If the Chartist threat was taken seriously, the action of the military served initially to inflame matters as the fife and drum were used to disrupt otherwise peaceful Chartist meetings. Hardy comments that

every night some of them (ie the soldiers) were taken up for drunkenness - they would seem to have caused more disturbance than the Chartists themselves. (40)

Even newspapers such as the Durham Chronicle and the Sunderland Herald

agreed that the authorities were guilty of allowing the military to cause disturbances and that they should make up their minds as to whether the meetings were going to be banned or not.(41)

This led to the most serious incident in the town when the Chartist leadership were arrested under the Darlington Cattle Act.(42) This was a local bye-law which said that cattle must not obstruct the pavement on market day and that it should at all times be possible to take a coach around the perimeter of the market place without obstruction. With this as the basis for arrest, George Bimm from Sunderland and Nicholas Bragg were arrested and sentenced to a fine of £5 or three months imprisonment, while Robert Atkinson, Thomas Yare and William Mead each received a £2 fine or one month's imprisonment. The fines were all eventually paid with Bragg's assistance coming from the co-operative store.(43) Miles Brown, a cordwainer and the other leading Darlington Chartist, had already been arrested and sent to prison in September 1839 for uttering seditious language, and the activities of the Chartists generally became more cautious throughout 1840 despite the support of the female Chartist association.(44) By October 1841 the second Chartist petition was lying in four shops: John Reid's of Church Street, Charles Foster's of Post House Wynd, William Charlton's of Bondgate and Nicholas Braggs'.(45)

In 1842 the Darlington Chartists helped to form a branch of the Complete Suffrage Union after two evenings of lectures by Henry Vincent.(46) They subsequently met in Johnson's Temperance Hotel where they resolved to send a delegate to the Birmingham conference.(47) They found themselves unable to enlist any middle class support and

hence felt themselves unable to apply to the bailiff for a public meeting.(48) The CSU initiative was therefore short lived in Darlington due, at least in part, to the absence of middle class radicalism carried over from the Reform Bill agitation. Pease had made his position clear on Chartism: In July 1839 he wrote that :

Unsettlement has been no uncommon occurrence amongst the inhabitants of this favoured (sic) isle and from it some of our best and most tolerant privileges have sprung. Though unpleasant and sometimes attended with distressing circumstances, I neither fear their operations nor dread their ultimate effects; to such I think we must look for an improvement in the Ecclesiastical state. (49)

Tacit approval of Chartist principles, however, did not imply more general support and there were still reports that Pease's viewers were turning off old miners who happened to be Chartists, while their employees in Darlington remained cowed such that the radical initiative remained with independent inhabitants such as Bragg.(50)

Running parallel to the Chartist movement was a branch of Utopian Socialism. In some localities the two movements competed for members but in the North East generally they were complementary. Darlington became the 50th branch of the Association of All Classes of All Nations (AACAN) or Owenite Socialists in November 1838. (51) Sunderland had been the 47th and Newcastle the 43rd branch. Owenite influence is normally considered to have climaxed with the Grand National Consolidated Trade Union in 1834 but both nationally and locally it shared its peak years with the Chartists.(52) In 1838 Owen himself wrote of Durham, Darlington, Hexham and Carlisle that

the harvest is quite ripe and requires only the reapers and labourers to secure and gather it in.(53)

In Darlington the number of committed socialists reached, by 1841, an

estimated 700 members. They had established their own institution, capable of seating 400 people, which they filled at weekly meetings.(54) That Owenism should have flourished in Darlington is a little difficult to understand. Owens' professed atheism led many critics to believe that all his followers were atheist too. In addition many practising Christians were further disturbed by the secular millenarism of Owen's appeal.(55) The successful propagation of Owenism in an area generally subject to a Quakerist regime therefore raises many questions.

Hostility was aroused by the contradictory nature of the Socialists' claims. Owenites argued for the importance of early experiences in formulating mens' character, yet were often themselves recent converts to this adult-centred message. In December 1838 for example Rigby gave to Darlington 'A Public lecture on the principles of Socialism, or Owenism' in which he claimed to have been converted to Owenism after thirty years as a Christian.(56) This was unlikely to create a favourable impression and indeed hostility was soon forthcoming.

In Newcastle socialism flourished without, or despite, a lack of opposition. Old dissenters, however, were less keen to have infidels in their midst. When, in 1838, the Owenites attempted to secure a room for their meetings in Darlington they were opposed by the Quaker banker, John Backhouse, and the meeting place had to be kept secret. 'We expect much opposition and persecution,' said their secretary R. Andrew, but they remained, nevertheless, determined to set up a co-operative shop.(57) An open letter was sent to Backhouse:

Sir, have you ever read the history of your sect, and seen recorded in that history the persecutions its founders and adherents have suffered for their faith's sake; and even, in the present day, meeting the sneers and taunts of the uninformed; and having this in view, does it produce no other effect than to make you turn persecutor, in the nineteenth century, and interfere with the lawful pursuits of your fellow townsmen. Your sect assumes to the practice of meekness, forbearance, charity and brotherly love ... what are the objects of Socialism? They are, in few words, to make the rich man happier, and the poor man as happy as the rich; not by physical force, but by reason alone. (58)

Opposition to the Owenites on religious grounds was immense and well publicised. Debates between Socialists and Christians took place throughout the North East. Bailey lectured twice to Darlington audiences on the subject of 'Socialism versus Christianity' while the Primitive Methodist Chapel in Darlington was the scene of four nights of debate between Campbell, the Newcastle Socialist missionary, and the Reverend Barker of Gateshead.(59) This series of meetings, held in the November of 1839 were 'crowded to excess' with an audience of 1,400 persons.

Barker accused the Socialists of all manner of atrocities and he subsequently went on to publish his claims in a pamphlet entitled The abominations of Socialism exposed, in reply to the Gateshead Observer.' As Challinor notes this pamphlet made outlandish claims of

prominent socialists who had abandoned their wives, made love to young girls, or thrown pregnant women off precipices. (60)

According to a socialist assessment, however, Barker was himself

an atheist, a maligner, a Perverter of Truth, a bearer of false witness, a shameless profligate fibber, an abettor of persecution, and consequently a bad member of society. (61)

Emma Martin, lecturing in Newcastle, said that she

noticed Joseph Barker's pamphlet to the Gateshead Observer; she said she would not insult the audience by reading any portion of so filthy a production: to say the least of it, it emanated from a mind that was grossly vicious and wicked in the extreme. (62)

Barker's views were by no means untypical. Edward Hancock, for example, explained of the Socialists that

when they met, it was customary for a member to take the first seat that was unoccupied and so on in rotation, the women sitting on one side of the table and the men on the other, no distinction made between married and single ... the consequence was that a common intimacy arose between all parties, and ... a number of illegitimate children were begotten. (63)

Another mistaken belief was that the Socialist advocated polygamy and this led angry crowds to protest at meetings in Newcastle.

Barker became a national figure. At a meeting of the Temperance Society, in the Darlington Friends' meeting house in Skinnergate, he gave a speech which was attended by (it is alleged) Feargus O'Connor. (65) At this meeting Jonathon Backhouse took the chair and Barker was introduced as 'the celebrated lecturer against infidelity'. The impact of the chapel debates reverberated throughout the region. Darlington socialists reported a one-third increase in membership as a consequence, and it became acknowledged that the principles of Socialism were making rapid progress in the south of the county.(66) 400 were present at a Socialist tea party with a further three hundred joining for dancing afterwards.(67) The opening ceremony of the Socialists' Hall, capable of holding 400 was reported to be so full that some of those who wished to attend could not obtain entry.(68)

By April 1840 lectures were being held every Sunday and it was claimed that around 400 were in regular attendance. Robert Owen paid the second of his visits to the town and missionaries such as Rigby together with Fleming, the editor of the New Moral World, were also in attendance.(69)

To some extent, the attack on Socialist infidelity was misplaced. The Owenites were not against Christianity but 'Priestianity', and they sought the word of God direct from the Bible rather than through religious establishments. As Barbara Taylor notes 'it was not the Word itself which was suspect but its spokesman.'(70) Emma Martin for instance received a presentation of a leather backed Bible from Richard Ayre and the Newcastle Socialists.(71) She herself was a former Baptist activist and could answer the religious arguments of any opponent. To some extent however the concern with answering the attacks from religion sidetracked Utopian Socialists from what many would see as more important goals such as cooperative production and greater equality. In Darlington the Socialists eventually became reconciled with the Quakers, although the exact reasons for this remain unclear. Whatever these were, the Society of Friends applied to use the Socialist Institution for their meetings in January 1840 and their request was granted subject to a rental of 7/6 per session. Subsequently 'the wealthiest Friends in Darlington' were to make use of the hall and their invitation was extended to working men and Socialists.(72)

Religious intolerance however was not the only source of opposition to the Socialists. The Owenites had advanced views on the role of women, family life, marriage and divorce, which failed to strike a sympathetic note with accepted orthodoxy. They believed that marriage should be a contract and that divorce should be freer with communal childrearing in the communities which the Owenites had established. In this sense Utopian Socialism's view of gender equality

was more progressive than later Marxist views. Indeed the position of women in radical movements generally has caused some difficulties.(73)

Dorothy Thompson for example has argued that the presence of women in Chartism serves to emphasise the community base of the movement. Despite its detail and its empathic concern however Thompson's cultural model unintentionally belittles the role of women. Hence the fact that women were present is taken to indicate the extent to which Chartism permeated everyday life. Female involvement is seen as an indication of the way in which Chartism became a feature of working class culture rather than assessed for its degree of politicisation.(74)

Thompson has relatively little to say on the uncomfortable issue of gender relations at Chartist meetings when the role of women in singing, dancing and the provision of refreshments was often stressed in reports. In this the opportunity for a useful contrast with Owenite beliefs and practices was neglected. Owenite schemes themselves however attempted to alter gender roles before the overall change which was expected to occur in society as a whole and it is this aspect of Owenism which has led to reassessments of the movement in recent years.(75)

The Quakers too, though standing for greater propriety, had a tradition of greater equality. It was, for example, a female friend who gave the first address to their number in the Darlington Socialists' Institution.(76) In Newcastle and South Shields, however, women, incensed by the circulation of unfounded rumours that the socialist Emma Martin had seven husbands, stormed her meetings with

the intention of causing severe bodily harm.(77) In Darlington, Fleming remarked that under the current marriage laws, women were like domestic pets such as dogs, just so much men's legal property without legal rights of their own. On this occasion a wag in the audience replied that women clearly had more rights than dogs because a man could not be sent to prison for killing his dog, but generally such views on women received a fairer hearing in Darlington than they did elsewhere.(78)

Women's emancipation was to become a neglected issue in later working class movements with the Chartists themselves taking names such as Fraternal Democrats. The Socialists however contained within their ranks two of the most popular and powerful touring lecturers in Mrs Chapplesmith and Mrs Martin.(79) By contrast the Chartists had no female members of the National Convention and no major female lecturers, although there were Female Charter Associations. Dorothy Thompson failed to stress the differences in attitudes taken towards women by the two movements. She writes that

the active presence of these Chartist women, and their occasional boldness in addressing mixed meetings, were in direct contrast to the behaviour of even the most radical middle class women of the time. It may indeed have been this freer attitude towards the participation of women in the Chartist and Owenite movements ... which engaged the interest of some of the more adventurous of the young radicals of the discerning middle class. (80)

Yet demands for female suffrage to be inserted in the Charter were favoured by Lovett but dropped on the grounds that they made acceptance of the whole Charter less likely. Even the most progressive Chartists were reluctant to concede that married women deserved to hold a vote independent of their husbands.(81)

The greater female emancipatory aspect of Owenism may account, to some extent, for its geographical particularism. Owenism never captured any of the Durham pit villages, nor any of the smaller towns outside Sunderland, Newcastle and Darlington. The only exception to this is Rainton, where Story, a pitman and former Chartist, tired of walking to Sunderland for each of their meetings, resolved to form a branch of his own.(82) Chartism, on the other hand, was strong in the pit villages, yet they still looked to the large towns for leadership. If the pitmen flocked to Chartism, why did they fail to respond to Owenism?

Firstly, the pit villages had no established petit-bourgeois class among whom notions of female equality arguably took strongest roots. Allied to this was the general practice in pit villages of an extremely rigid sexual division of labour. For a variety of reasons women's place was in the home with a clearly defined domestic role which extended, in the only form of paid work which was available to women, to domestic service. Women, to the miners, were not equal, and a doctrine which proclaimed the opposite was unlikely to gain much support.(83)

Miners, furthermore, had a political and economic outlook which precluded many of the Owenite solutions. In the North East's deep pits much capital was needed for shaft sinking. Return on capital was considerably delayed and cooperative working seemed difficult, if not impossible, to envisage. Wages and conditions, like profit, were tied to the state of the market and the volume of production. Both employers and employees stood to gain (at that time), from any

agreement to restrict the output coming on to the market. Socialism failed to address itself to the practical problems of the industry. Even after Owen's promised 'millenium' someone would still have to go underground to dig the coal, and while miners were opposed to capitalists, they were not opposed to capitalism. Instead they advocated that the owners should work out from decent wages, add on a return to capital and then set output accordingly instead of having ruinous competition.(84)

A third factor militating against pit village Socialism was again the religious issue. Those miners who were not under the influence of the priest or coalowner were either Methodists or God-less. The appeal of an intellectually based critique of religion was never likely to develop very far. Thus the Socialists of Darlington, Sunderland and Newcastle failed to develop the kind of ties with their economic hinterlands which proved so vital to the Chartists in this same period.

In many respects Chartism and Socialism shared much common ground. In Sunderland

meetings held to debate the Charter were attended by nearly the entire membership of the local Owenite branch, most of whom voted in favour of the Charter. (85)

Prominent Socialists became Chartists and vice versa. James Williams stood in as a Socialist missionary during the period of Campbell's illness and spoke to 'overflowing audiences.'(86) When Williams and Binns were released from Durham jail the Socialists of Newcastle provided a dinner in their honour.(87) At that time Williams tried to impress on the Socialists

'the propriety of (them) joining to the Charter as the most effectual mode of attaining their own rights'. (88)

Later, at the Golden Lion Inn, Sunderland, Williams conceded to Fleming that he would support the idea of communities as experiments to see whether cooperation or competition worked best but that wholesale socialism would not work unless Parliament were first reformed by the Charter.(89)

Williams felt unsure at the way in which Socialism was being conflated with the personality cult of Owenism. Betraying his own former religious background (Quaker/Unitarian), he argued that Socialism was not incompatible with Christianity because Socialism was not Owenism. He personally believed in a purer form of Socialism.

Both Socialist and Chartist cooperative stores sprang up throughout the North East and they tended to be organised on similar lines.(90) Their attitude to communities however was very different. The Chartists regarded the Socialist communities as 'asylums for the victims of class legislation' which did not contain a dynamism which could work for a changed order.(91) Such a dynamic was possessed by the Chartist scheme in so far as it was hoped to have a direct impact on the number and nature of voters, as well as an influence on the labour market. The Chartist land scheme involved private ownership of cottages and land whereas the Owenite ventures were communistic in practice.

Sometimes the conflict could be greater. Kipling, a Darlington Chartist who supported the local attempt to establish the Complete Suffrage Union in the town, went so far as to chair meetings called specifically to attack the Socialists, and he presented Joseph Barker

with books in gratitude for the latter's performance in his series of debates with Campbell.(92) Metcalfe, the Darlington editor of the Peoples Friend, a small Chartist periodical, also opposed Fleming in the Blackwellgate Theatre while in Sunderland the Socialists complained that

the Chartist agitation is strong in Sunderland and for the time usurps the place of a more efficient and useful subject. (93)

The test of a person's socialist principles was the extent to which they embraced the spirit of egalitarianism, especially in so far as it extended to women and the extent of the sacrifices they were prepared to make. The institution in Darlington was an example of this. According to John Gray, the Secretary in 1839,

through the united endeavours of our Branch. We have been enabled to erect an institution of our own ... we have likewise an excellent though small organ and a very good choir of singers. Each member has thrown all his books into the common stock and by this means we have been enabled to get up a very good library. (94)

The presence of the choir reveals the religious nature of Darlington's Socialism. The Owenites had their own hymn book and at a New Year's celebration 'the 73rd hymn was sung previous to tea and the 129th at its conclusion'.(95) When the Quakers used their hall to state that 'Many have taken the names of Christians who had done true Christianity harm' the Socialists agreed entirely.(96) Problems still arose over the Socialist encouragement of dancing, which was thought to encourage immorality, and the Socialist practice of meeting on Sundays for purposes other than worship. By 1841 however the Socialist body had grown to an extent where it was estimated that six to seven hundred held to their principles and a planned New Years Day meeting

proved unable to accommodate all who wished to attend.(97) By this time the Secretary, now E. Harrison, could state that

those who differ from us are compelled to admit that we are a sober, moral and peaceable people.

The socialists insisted on meeting in their own premises rather than in public houses in order to encourage female participation. The resulting sobriety would again have moved them nearer to the Quakers, as arguably, their views on marriage did too. The Quakers married by a declaration in front of their congregation and Owen argued that his own position was identical.(98)

In March 1841 Emma Martin, of London, gave a course of lectures to Darlington in which she claimed for the movement a higher religious and moral appeal than that provided by Established Religion. Her lectures on 'the Philosophy of Religion', 'False Religions of Ancient and Modern Times', 'Responsibility to Man and God', and 'Marriage and Divorce' attracted the most attentive of audiences. In the first lecture she proclaimed that 'all religion founded on particular creeds was false' and went on to argue in the second lecture that the rites and ceremonies of pseudo-Christianity were based on heathen mythology. She claimed that the ignorance of the mob was proof that the Established Church was not doing its duty. It was however the lecture on 'Marriage and Divorce' which attracted most attention. In this lecture she

animadvert(ed) on the unequal education of the two sexes and the ridiculous distractions created in society through excess of wealth and abject poverty ... (she) laid down the only system by which the union of the sexes ought to be regulated, viz, the mental, moral and physical fitness of the parties forming such union. (99)

For Darlington then it was the religious and sexual messages of

Socialism which were to the fore. In places such as Sunderland, the economic arguments were more prominent. Away from the paternalism of the Peases and Backhouses, the Sunderland workers could express a more direct class hostility.

The evil rests in the existence of a class doomed to labour and a class privileged to receive the profits of this labour without rendering an equivalent,

wrote Gamsby, a man who had become disillusioned with Chartism, and who argued that the state of trade and the evils of competition had made him a Socialist. In this he was opposed by James Williams who feared lest Gamsby's initiative should dilute Chartism. Gamsby argued that the problems of society lay not, as the Chartists had it, with institutions of government but with

the present social system - the exclusive institution of property and the gradation of classes; and as long as this system obtains, all our efforts to remove the evil through the government will be futile. (100)

The true wrong and the true remedy, he continued was

that the poverty and toil of the poor was a necessary consequence of the wealth and idleness of the rich ... the evils could not arise from inadequate producing power ... they proceed from the principles of competition in conjunction with those of private property.(101)

By 1842, the Darlington branch could not manage its own finances, let alone comment on the economy in general. It owed £2.7.10d to the Society's general fund and a further £2.9.10d for goods received and not paid for. Despite the listing of the address of the Darlington secretary (then W Stubbs) as 'the Social Institution' it seems likely that this had ceased to exist.(102) When Robert Owen visited Darlington again in October 1842 he lectured in the theatre, whose proprietor seems to have been sympathetic to working class causes,

rather than the socialists' room, which he did not like. Ironically Owen declared that 'the branch is but in its infancy'. It was, on the contrary, in terminal decline.(103)

Owen's legacies were nevertheless significant. The belief that labour was the source of all value, the belief that the aim of production should be use not profit, the belief that society should be based on cooperation not competition, and the belief in greater sex equality were all given a greater airing than would otherwise have occurred. As G.S. Jones states

none of these ideas were peculiar to Owen, but it was in the Owenist period that they received their maximum diffusion. (104)

Thus in Darlington there can be witnessed a town where economic transformation was a precise microcosm of the changes which were taking place nationwide. In terms of its population growth, its housing and public health problems, its unemployed handloom weavers, its new factory-based power looms, its coal and railway interests and its metal and engineering works, Darlington was nothing if not a prime example of early entrepreneurial capitalist development. Yet at this point comparison with places such as Manchester and Leeds stops, for working class consciousness and political radicalism failed to develop in the way that it did elsewhere. The Chartists and Owenites represented a brief fling of activity whose links with Fenian stirrings in the 1860s and the occasional labour dispute would at best be tenuous, if they could be demonstrated at all.(105) Darlington's working class became quiescent and failed to make a significant contribution to the political reform movements of the post

Chartist decades. By 1870 the official journal of the ironworkers was recording that

in the rising town of Darlington ... there will shortly be three working mens clubs, a Church of God institute, a good Mechanics Institute in the centre of the town, and another large institute for the benefit of the men employed by the North East Railway Company. (106)

Cheap and pure entertainment, together with 'the means for social and intellectual improvement' were the calls of the day while politics and conflict-based trade unionism had seemingly little place.(107)

Thus a town which bore all the hallmarks of early industrialisation, and which would appear to have held most of the conditions in which a strong working class movement could be expected to be found, was subdued at an earlier stage, and to a more complete degree than was to occur elsewhere, and the reasons for this require investigation.

In part the explanation may lie in the diversified nature of economic activities. Opportunities were available for workers to leave declining trades and take up expanding ones, while the mills provided part-time and full-time employment for women and children. The relative security given by this led Mewburn, the Solicitor, to write of the Chartists

trade is good, wages high and employment abundant ... of what have they to complain? (108)

Economic security alone however is not sufficient to explain acquiescence. In addition their employers displayed what appeared to be a massive moral and intellectual superiority which was both self evident and unassailable and which subsequently deprived space for criticism from any but the most stout hearted. In addition to their

moral and ideological dominance was the employers' own solidarity. Elsewhere in the North East employers were divided and in competition with each other commercially and often politically too. Elsewhere middle class Friends stood in opposition to Whig oligarchies. In Darlington however the Quaker grip on public life was all-encompassing and, at least in terms of their public face, no sign was shown of internal schism.

Paternalistic control which went beyond the field of employment to the wider community is now widely recognised as having been a characteristic feature of later Victorian entrepreneurial policy and much more common than was previously regarded.(110) In Darlington the practices commenced earlier and the degree of success was more complete than the norm elsewhere.

Patrick Joyce has detailed the forces which came together in the development of paternalistic practices;

Laissez fair ideology was only one shaping influence, and religion, the ideas of duty and progress, but above all the belief in the civilising mission of industry, are all seen to have contributed to the making of paternalism (111)

Joyce regards paternalism as

a logical outcome of laissez-faire ideology and not as its logical opposite

in that it became necessary for the successful operation of business that labour was no longer treated as a mere commodity. In most areas the manipulation and moulding of the workforce and the creation of economically rewarding ties of loyalty had to wait until later decades when

the source of earlier economic difficulties, the imbalance between the industrialised sector and the rest of the economy, was to be rectified above all in terms of railway building ... paternalism was now possible if for no other reason than the money and time that prosperity brought with it. (112)

It would be neat, though fallacious, to argue that the Peases' paternalism, being practised at an earlier date than that which was common for the area of Joyce's study, was similarly a product of the earlier, and pioneering development of railways. In truth however Peases' paternalism cannot be easily paralleled with that of Lancashire and the West Riding. In the latter districts control at the point of production had been exercised through patriarchal forms whereby the sexual division of labour in the home had been transferred to the factory in the ways in which authority patterns and working practices were instituted. Burawoy, following Cohen, has argued that the change in the nature of workplace production from the formal to the real subordination of labour as direct control of the means of production passed away from the workers themselves, was compensated by a shift in primary responsibility for adult males from that of operative to that of supervisor. This in turn was succeeded by paternalism which developed as an attempt to re-institute a community of classes.(113)

In Darlington, however, patriarchy was not the norm and the subordination of labour in the mills was both real from the outset and, for the males, compensated in terms of higher status and reward rather than in terms of authority and control. Thus in Peases' factories 'mill men' were hired and listed by name. Young men could be apprenticed, and experienced men were given long term contracts. Their wages, while varying considerably, were typically in the range of 16/- to 20/- a week.(114) The 1831 census, which lists all the male occupations in the town, shows that the men employed in textiles were

almost exclusively concentrated in the tasks of woolcombing, weaving and flaxdressing. Despite the employment of women in the mills and in laundry work, enumerators were instructed only to list female occupations where they were employed as domestic servants. As far as the mills were concerned women and children were classified (in contrast to the men) merely as 'hands' who were hired as both full-time and short-time workers independently of their husbands and fathers. Their tasks included jobbing, twisting and winding, carding and putting in rovings. While there was a hierarchy within the workforce of hands, the two most significant features were their general separation from the men in different rooms within the mill, and their substantially lower levels of income. Short time workers appear to have been the least thought of, while winders were paid more than twisters, who in turn were paid more than bobbin carriers. In contrast to the men, the wages of hands typically fell in the range of 3/- to 6/6 per week.(115)

Peases' workforce was thus highly differentiated by gender, task, status and wages, and was far removed from the patriarchal system practised elsewhere. In addition the Peases' paternalism was moral, ideological and educational from the outset. Thus while later entrepreneurs woke up rather belatedly to their responsibilities to the wider community and to the poor, such attitudes were apparent at a much earlier stage in Darlington. Burawoy has written that

the rise of paternalism was accompanied by a new entrepreneurial ideology which replaced employers earlier denial of responsibility to the poor with their leadership of a moral community shared by master and servant alike.

For Joyce too, paternalism 'shored up an often perilously unsteady

social standing.'(116) Yet in Darlington the Quaker employers had long recognised their responsibilities for the general, welfare of the community and for the poor. According to Douglas Chilton 'they believed in welfare before there was a welfare state', and for them deference patterns were to be earned rather than expected and such patterns were necessary if a moral leadership of the community was to be successfully exercised.(117)

Despite the activities of isolated individuals in highlighting business and local government practices which were less than open, and despite the accusations of corruption made by political rivals, complaints against the moral leadership of the Quakers failed to propagate in the community. As the Pease empire grew to take in coal, rail, textiles, banking and local health responsibilities, so the community of Darlington developed in ways which left little space either ideological or material, in which oppositional cultures could grow. Virtually all the major initiatives in the town were taken by (or connected with) the Quaker influence who thus shaped the sense of neighbourhood and community and the 'stream of social life' in ways which were deliberately (and successfully) different from those which pertained elsewhere at the time.(118)

Even on the coalfield, Peases' brand of liberal entrepreneurial paternalism produced a greater degree of quiescence than that which was found under the Tory and aristocratic paternalism of Lord Londonderry in which deference was to be expected rather than earned. The significance of these issues will provide part of the focus for the next Chapter but for the moment it is worth summarising some of

the features of Peases' brand of paternalism: its liberal nature, its greater degree of infiltration into community structures, the absence of any legacy of great conflict, its lack of association with corrupt or restrictive trade practices such as the Vend, its lack of association with anti-working class sentiments as expressed, for example, in Parliament, and its lack of association with electoral corruption.

If the Peases influenced the material conditions of existence in Darlington through their provision of employment, it is their ideological and moral dominance which presents itself as the most likely explanation for Darlington's post Chartist quiescence. Whatever may have been the realities of Quaker business and banking practices the thing which matters most is that they were generally seen as being incorruptible. For a working class movement which had based much of its critique of the status quo on the corruption of Parliament and the higher orders of society, the moral dominance of the Quakers proved a massive obstacle to the development of any practical strategy.(119)

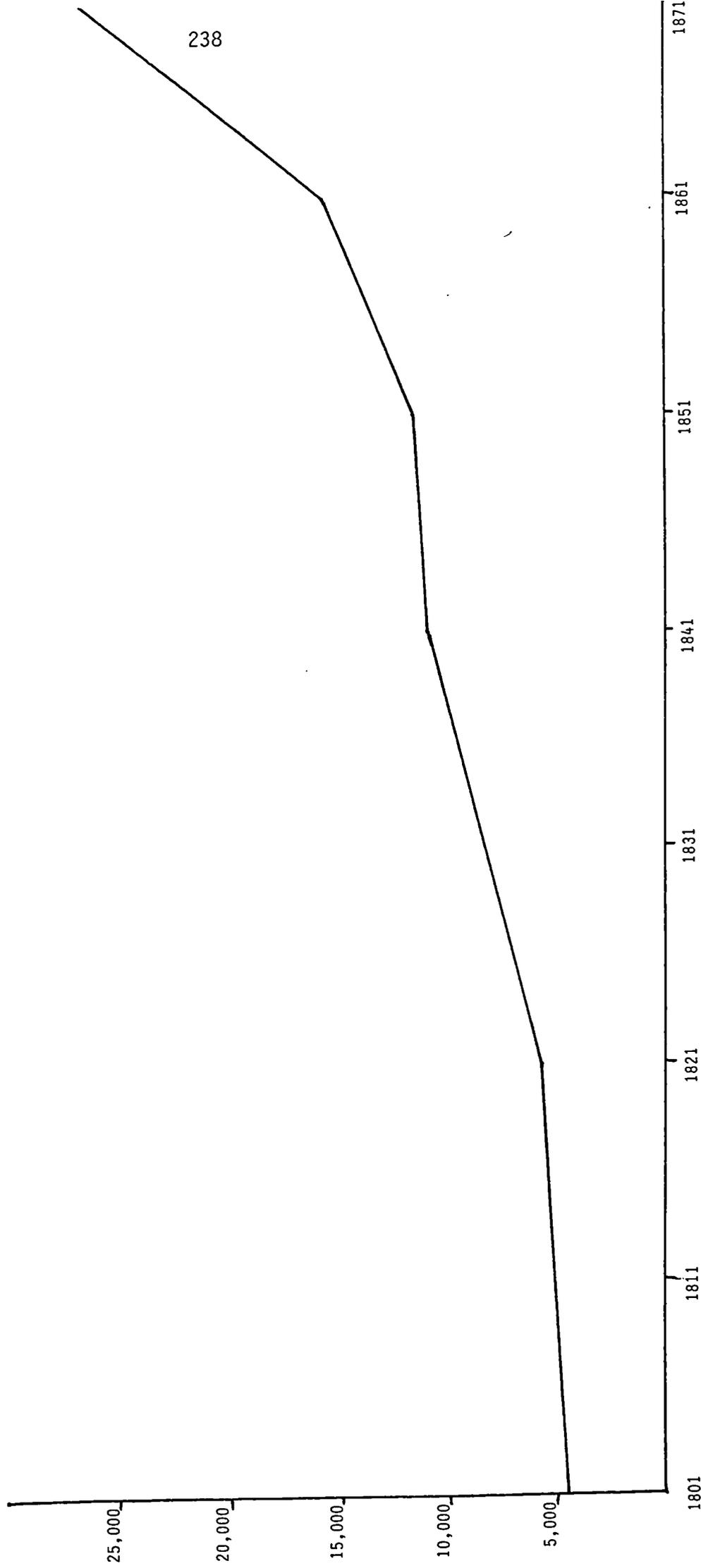


Figure 3: Growth of Darlington's Population 1801-1871

## Chapter 5

### Notes

1. Enumerators returns for the 1831 census are held in Darlington Public Library. See Figure 3 for graph of Darlington's population growth.
2. Cited in 'Iron works which flourished and failed' by S.L.Brennan in the Stockton and Darlington Times 3.10.1953.
3. W.J. Lee, 'Weavers of Darlington' (Newspaper cutting n.d.) Darlington Public Library.
4. W.J. Lee, 'Kendrew had the brains - Marshall made the money'. (Newspaper cutting from the Despatch n.d.) Darlington public library.
5. W.J. Lee, 'Weavers of Darlington', op.cit.
6. I. Smith, The Old Yards of Darlington. (Durham 1980) W. Ranger 'Report to the General Board of Health of Darlington', 1850
7. W.H.D. Longstaffe, The History and antiquities of the Parish of Darlington (1854 reprinted Patrick and Shotton 1973)
8. C. Stockdale, A Century of Elementary Education in Darlington (Durham 1972) p.25.
9. G.W. Weatherill, The Story of Darlington Methodism 1753-1953 (Darlington 1953).
10. P. Emden, Quakers in Commerce (London 1939); M. Kirby, Men of Business and politics: the rise and fall of the Quaker Pease dynasty of North East England 1700-1943 (Allen and Unwin 1985). For family trees of the leading Quaker families see H.J. Smith Darlington 1850 (Durham 1967) and Benwell CDP's The Making of a Ruling Class (Newcastle 1978). The two major families intermarried in 1774. Unfortunately the Darlington Quaker records are missing for the Chartist years but A.E. Pease's diary survives as The Diaries of Edward Pease (London 1907).
11. M. Weber, The Protestant ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism (1905, Allen and Unwin edition, 1974).
12. When the Stockton-Darlington railway was opened the Peases did not own the colliery. Joseph Pease took out leases on the West Auckland field from 1827 and opened the St Helens and Adelaide collieries.
13. M. Kirby, op.cit.

14. For the development of Darlington generally see N. Sunderland A History of Darlington (Darlington 1967); E. Wooler and A.C. Boyde Historic Darlington (Pitman 1913); D. Chilton Jottings over a Lifetime in and around Darlington (Private printing, Darlington 1981).
15. For the metal industry in Darlington See Brennan, op.cit.
16. M. Kirby, op.cit.; Lecture to the Darlington Historical Association 1985. See also 'The Quakers Bank' Ch. xxxii in E. Wooler and A.C. Boyde op.cit. N. McCord (1979) op.cit. p.58-65).
17. P. Emden, op.cit. p.51.
18. H.J. Smith, op.cit. p.5.
19. M. Kirby, op.cit.; H.J. Smith op.cit. p.1-18, Benwell CDP op.cit.
20. M. Kirby, op.cit.; p.8. See also R. Moore Pitmen Preachers and Politics (Cambridge 1974) for the Quaker preference for Methodist employees.
21. T.J. Nossiter (1975) op.cit. p.135. Nicholas Bragg the Chartist pursued a long running battle with the Peases over control in the town. See H.J. Smith op.cit.
22. E. Pease op.cit. Entry for 6th June 1842.
23. D. Chilton Henry Pease and Company (Centenary booklet, Darlington printing, 1952).
24. T.J. Nossiter op.cit. p.135.
25. M. Kirby op.cit.; R. Moore op.cit.
26. Cited in P. Emden op.cit. p.47.
27. Cited in H.J. Smith op.cit. p.13. Scurfield was a landed liberal who sat on the magistrates bench.
28. The Electors Scrapbook (Durham 1832) p.25. Copy in Darlington Public Library.
29. W.H.D. Longstaff op.cit. p.165-7.
30. See T.J. Nossiter (1975) op.cit. Chapter 5 for a general discussion of party politics in Darlington. Under the Reform Act the County of Durham was split into North and South Durham with two seats each. See also 'Stormy Elections in Old Time Darlington' (Darlington and Stockton Times 3.10.1959). Cutting - Darlington Public Library.

31. Northern Star 22.2.1842.
32. Home Office Papers HO 40/42 F357.
33. Northern Star 28.11.1840. See also W.E. Mountford Biographical and Historical notes on Bygone Darlington. Unpublished MSS Darlington Public Library. (N.D.).
34. H.J. Smith op.cit. p.15.
35. R.P. Hastings 'The New Poor Law in the North Riding, 1837-1847' in A. Digby, P. Hastings, M. Rose and R. Wells, The New Poor Law University of Leeds, Middlesbrough Centre occasional papers no.1 (Middlesbrough 1985) p.60, 70-71. Per capita spending and rates of relief were low in Darlington.
36. The Charter 21.7.39.
37. R.P. Hastings (1978) op.cit. p.13.
38. 'How Darlington rode the Chartist Storm' Cutting (n.d.) Darlington Public Library. F. Mewburn, The Larchfield Diary (Darlington 1876).
39. F. Mewburn op.cit (Darlington 1876).
40. C.E. Hardy John Bowes and the Bowes Museum (1970) p.53.
41. Durham Chronicle 25.4.1840. Sunderland Herald 25.4.1840.
42. Binns subsequently dedicated a poem to the magistrates involved. It is reprinted in Y.V. Kovalev, An anthology of Chartist Literature (Moscow 1956).
43. Northern Star 9.5.1840.
44. ibid 24.8.1839; 13.7.1839; 'How Darlington rode the Chartist Storm', op.cit.
45. Northern Star 30.10.1841.
46. Nonconformist 2.11.1842.
47. ibid 7.12.1842.
48. ibid 31.1.1844.
49. E. Pease diary, op.cit. Elizabeth Pease considered herself to have Chartist sympathies 'I reckon myself one of their body'. Cited in D. Thompson (1984) op.cit. p.150-51.

50. Northern Star 11.7.1840, 6.11.1841.
51. New Moral World 17.11.1838.
52. For Owen generally see J.F.C. Harrison, Robert Owen and the Owenites: the Quest for the New Moral World (1969) and, S. Pollard and J. Salt (eds) Robert Owen, Prophet of the Poor (1971).
53. New Moral World 8.9.1838.
54. ibid 16.1.1841.
55. E.P. Thompson (1963) op.cit p.882-887.
56. Durham Chronicle 7.12.1838.
57. New Moral World 15.12.1838.
58. ibid 2.2.1839.
59. New Moral World 4.5.1839, 9.11.1839; Northern Star 2.11.1839. See R. Challinor (1981 and 1982) op.cit for details of Joseph Barker and his exploits. See also Durham Chronicle 19.10.1839, 2.11.1839 for opposition to the Socialists from the Reverend John Thornton who was lecturing in the Bethel Chapel and intended to publish his lectures.
60. R. Challinor (1981) op.cit p.50.
61. New Moral World 18.1.1840.
62. ibid 27.3.1841.
63. Cited in B. Taylor, Eve and the New Jerusalem (Virago 1983) p.218.
64. New Moral World 4.1.1840.
65. Durham Chronicle 30.11.1839.
66. Sunderland Herald 7.2.1840.
67. New Moral World 1.6.1839.
68. ibid 13.10.1839.
69. ibid 16.11.1839, 22.2.1840.
70. Cited in B. Taylor, op.cit p.145.
71. New Moral World 27.3.1841.

72. ibid 18.1.1840.
73. D. Jones, 'Women and Chartism', History vol. 68, no. 222 1983; S. Rowbotham Hidden from History (Pitso 1973); S. Rowbotham 'Women and Radical Politics in Britain 1830-1914' Radical History Review 19, 1979; D. Thompson (1984) op.cit., ch.7; D. Thompson 'Women and Nineteenth Century Radical Politics: A Lost Dimension' in J. Mitchell and A. Oakley, The Rights and Wrongs of Women (Harmondsworth, 1976).
74. D. Thompson (1984) op.cit. Ch.7.
75. B. Taylor, Eve and the New Jerusalem op.cit. In Mrs Martin and Mrs Chapplesmith the Owenites had two very able platform speakers. There is little or no evidence of mixed Chartist meetings inviting female speakers onto the platform although female chartist meetings had mixed platforms.
76. New Moral World 18.1.1840.
77. ibid 4.1.1840.
78. ibid 9.12.1838, 16.3.1839.
79. ibid 17.4.1841 Mrs Martin gave a course of eight lectures to joint meetings of the Sunderland branch of the AACAN and the Chartists in the Goldon Lion. The topics covered were: 'The Political Rights of the People', 'Civil Law', 'Man's responsibility and God's moral law', 'The Character of Christ', 'Natural History' and 'Attributes and Characters of the Devil'.
80. D. Thompson (1982) op.cit p.150-151.
81. D. Jones (1983) op.cit.
82. New Moral World 7.5.1842. He may also be the pitman Chartist mentioned in HO 40/42, Pemberton to Russell 16.8.1839. Malcolm Chase has recently discovered evidence of atheist, socialist and republican sentiment in Stokesly and it is possible that information for other areas awaits discovery 'Deadly Effluvia and Atheistical Glare': Republicans in 19th Century Cleveland. NELHS bulletin 19, 1985.
83. For the sexual division of labour in mining and mining villages see A. John, By the Sweat of their Brow. Women Workers at Victorian coal mines (Croom Helm 1980); T. Austrin and H. Beynon, Masters and Servants. Paternalism and its legacy on the Durham Coalfield 1800-1872 Durham University Working Paper.
84. A single reference to an attempt at a coal mining cooperative is contained in S. and B. Webb (1919) op.cit. p.335. For colliers acceptance of the role of capital see A.J. Taylor 'The Miners Association of Great Britain and Ireland 1842-8. A Study in the problem of integration'. Economica 1955, p.53.

85. Northern Star 26.6.1841.
86. New Moral World 30.5.1840.
87. ibid 27.2.1841.
88. Northern Star 13.2.1841.
89. New Moral World 8.12.1838, 22.2.1840, Northern Star 8.5.1841.
90. New Moral World 22.2.1840, Northern Star 1.2.1840.
91. Northern Star 8.5.1841.
92. Durham Chronicle 19.10.1839, 30.11.1839, New Moral World 27.9.1839.
93. New Moral World 16.3.1839.
94. ibid 13.10.1839.
95. ibid 18.1.1840.
96. ibid 18.1.1840.
97. ibid 16.1.1841.
98. Cited in B. Taylor, op.cit p.221.
99. New Moral World 20.3.1841.
100. ibid 19.6.1841.
101. ibid 22.5.1841.
102. ibid 4.3.43.
103. Lectures in Middlesbrough and Darlington reported in New Moral World 29.10.1842 letter to NMW 15.11.1842.
104. G.S. Jones, 'Class Struggle and the Industrial Revolution' New Left Review 1975, p.57. See also G.S. Jones, 'Utopian Socialism reconsidered' in R. Samuel Peoples History and Socialist Theory (RKP 1981).
105. S.L. Brennan, op.cit.
106. T. Tholfsen, Working class radicalism in Mid Victorian England (Croom Helm 1976) p.286.

107. Tholfson makes the point that the 'lyrical' account of 'a communal celebration of shared values' usually occurred in the middle class press and it is quite significant that this account should be found in a trade union journal. Nossiter notes some of the economic and political opposition mobilised by the ironworkers union in the period 1863-1874. T.J. Nossiter (1975) op.cit. p.141-3.
108. The Larchfield Diary op.cit. p.50.
109. T.J. Nossiter (1975) op.cit. p.135.
110. P. Joyce, Work, Society and Politics. The Culture of the Factory in later Victorian England (Harvester 1980) p.153 Paternalists were not, of course, unknown in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, but the phenomenon is regarded as having become widespread only from the mid 1850's. (Kirk op.cit. p.31.).
111. J. Foster, op.cit. p.177-178 and G.S. Jones op.cit. p.45 also note the influence of religion among employers and employees and the way the relationship altered accordingly to locality.
112. P. Joyce, op.cit. p.138, 147.
113. M. Burawoy, The Politics of Production (Verso 1985) Chapter 2.
114. 1831 census; Pease and Co. miscellaneous papers esp. series D/HP, D/OL and D/XD (includes office diaries etc) all Darlington Public Library. The wages figures are from January 1831 (7.1.1831).
115. D/HP/63 The combing room employed '20 hands besides the 6 men'. Wages of hands were 3/- to 6/6 in 1835, depending on task within the hierarchy.
116. M. Burawoy, op.cit. p.98; Joyce op.cit. Ch.4.
117. Edward Pease diary, cited in D. Chilton (Henry Pease and Company (Darlington 1952). (Poor) - House earnings book 1801-2, Darlington Public Library; The Diaries of Edward Pease (London 1907); E. Wooler and A. Boyde, op.cit. D. Chilton was one of the last managers of H. Pease and Co. Ltd and was the Company's historian. The comment was made during an interview given in 1983.
118. P. Joyce, op.cit. p.145.
119. F. Mewburn notes in his diary for 1839 'I am amused at the tone assumed by the Tory press. For years past they have been charging Ministers with jobs and competition of every kind. The Chartists repeat their very words. When the Tories were in power they prosecuted those who charged them with competition!' For Mewburn see E. Wooler and A. Boyde op.cit.

Chapter 6Mapping the Variables: The Patterning of Radicalism Explored

Political radicalism in the North East can be seen to have been extremely variegated. It differed in strength, in form and in content according to a wide variety of factors, and it is to the patterning of these factors that attention must now turn. Neville Kirk has argued that

the provision of a satisfactory explanation for the diversity of local experience is surely crucial to the framing of an adequate explanation for trends at the national level

and any explanation of inter-regional differences should contribute to an assessment of intra-regional differences too.(1) Equally the facility with which the theories developed for one region can be applied to another should serve to endorse (or question) their general validity. In addition, care must be taken in any intra-regional comparison to ensure that problematic diversities within regions are not obscured by the procedure of conflating the region into a single 'representative' town. The North East presents all too well the complexities which could be found within a defined geographical area.

Like 'the manufacturing districts' of the North West, the North East has often been presented as homogenous and therefore susceptible to sweeping and overarching explanations. A good example of this approach is that of W.H. Maehl who argues that

unlike other parts of the country north eastern Chartism was regional rather than local. (2)

Were this to be true it would be of great significance since many of the deterministic theories of Chartism argue that the movement's temporal and spatial incidence can be mapped with reference to stages of economic development and/or the levels of economic distress which pertained.(3)

This stress on the economic has long been one of the first avenues to be explored in any attempt to explain the patterning of radicalism. At its simplest the argument contends that Chartism grew at time or in places where economic distress was in evidence, and faltered or failed to develop where conditions were more comfortable. Hence if Chartism in the North East was found to be regional in character, this would presuppose a degree of homogeneity of economic conditions. Such homogeneity, however, was not apparent. As Maehl himself continued

the regional movement had a high degree of unity although there was diversity within it. It was held together largely by the association of coal miners dispersed throughout the two counties (*Northumberland and Durham*), but also by the normal cooperation between the two main urban centres, *Newcastle and Sunderland*, and their missionary work in the outlying areas. Further it was a heterogeneous area economically, embracing both rising and declining industries as well as traditional crafts. (4)

Maehl acknowledged that Chartism in the North East differed considerably from those areas described by Asa Briggs as being the characteristic location of the movement and Maehl clearly struggled with the paradox of trying to reconcile economic disparities with political similarities without abandoning an essentially economist

model. The same can be said of Hastings.(5) He argues that Middlesbrough was too prosperous to be strongly Chartist but then fails to relate this to the general picture of Chartism in a bouyant area. Thus he writes that

although South Durham and the North Riding had their centres of decaying industry, these were part of an area which in all remained relatively prosperous during the first Chartist outbreak. (6)

Again an attempt is made to remove the paradox by aggregation to a regional level of analysis yet this not only fails to match the standard economic explanations of hunger politics, but it also fails to address the equally important issue of explaining differences within the region. If some of the most depressed areas did not turn to Chartism, and some of the most prosperous did (Middlesbrough not withstanding), then how much of the economic explanation can be salvaged?

Economic explanations of the movement have taken both right wing and left wing forms. Rostow developed an analysis which saw Chartism as related to fluctuations in the trade cycle, while Smelser attributed Chartism's rise to a break in patriarchal relations in the new factories.(7) Engels, on the other hand, saw Chartism as the product of the new factory based proletariat.(8) The question which arises from the latter two explanations is that if factories produced Chartism, why did the further expansions of the factory system after 1850 fail to produce more of the same? Such a criticism also affects attempts such as those by Briggs to locate the strength of Chartism by region on a continuum which encompasses industrialisation, polarisation and class consciousness.(9) This in itself has given rise

to the further question as to whether Chartism was a movement of declining pre-industrial groups such as the handloom weavers or whether it was a movement of the factory workers.(10) For the North East the simple answer is that it was neither.

The diversity of experience within the region merits further attention and serves to highlight the potential dangers of taking any one town as being representative of the area as a whole. Within the County of Durham there were considerable variations. The Chartists in Gateshead, for example, were very active, but fell within Newcastle's sphere of influence rather than Sunderland's. Sunderland itself was easily the most important Chartist centre in Durham county, with Darlington second in importance and generally taking its lead from Sunderland.(11) Durham City itself was largely inactive, although it did have a hard core of enthusiasts and made nominations to the general council.(12) Whenever larger meetings were held it was Sunderland which provided both the stimulus and the speakers. South Shields was fairly active and fell within the influence of both Sunderland and Newcastle and it too made nominations to the general council on at least two occasions.(13) Other Durham towns for which nominations were made were Bishop Auckland, West Auckland and South Hetton.(14) Stockton is noticeable by its absence from the nomination lists and while some Chartist activity did take place it was on a small scale, while Chester le Street seems to have had almost no Chartist activity at all.(15) The dales, as is perhaps to be expected, were very quiet and it was left to the pit villages to provide the bulk of Chartism's support outside Sunderland and Darlington.

Each of these places had its own unique characteristics and its own political complexion. Durham, for example, was generally written off by political radicals as a 'stronghold of corruption', a 'Priest-ridden' or 'Whig and Tory ridden city' where aristocratic and ecclesiastical connivance made a mockery of any pretence to obtain genuine representation.(16) It was dominated by the Cathedral and University, and while there were some small collieries within the city boundaries, the only major employer of note was the carpet manufacturer of Hendersons which had been originally established as a charity.(17) Otherwise Durham's trades encompassed standard market town business. The 1848 directory for the city reveals that apart from Hendersons and the four colliery owners which included Bell, Backhouse and Co. of Shincliffe and the Northern Coal Mining Co. of Framwellgate Moor, there were three corn mills, three dyers, one engine builder, two pawnbrokers and four worsted and woollen yarn manufacturers. In contrast there were five saddle makers, four tallow chandlers and thirteen straw hat makers.

According to Grant, the population of the city was approximately 4,000 in 1800

many being involved in textile manufacturing, mainly of woollens, market and ecclesiastical functions. (18)

At the time of the 1851 census there were 671 mineworkers living in Durham from a population of 12-14,000. Most of the miners, some 5-600, had been born outside the area. Ainsley, in his Historical and descriptive sketches of the city of Durham published in 1849, said that

a stranger cannot fail to be struck by a certain quaint charm which seems to permeate the place ... there is a piquancy in the air.

Later he conceded of Durham that it was 'in no sense a metropolis'.(19) This absence of industrial capital and the continuation of semi feudal forms in Durham gives support to the idea that the relative weakness of political radicalism in the city was a direct consequence of determining economic forces.

Sunderland, by contrast, was much more industrial with a variety of factories along the riverbank serving the shipping and shipbuilding trades. Two major features of Sunderland's demography were its heterogeneity and its growth. According to The Graphic

The population of Sunderland has been gathered together from almost every nation, and kindred, and people and tongue. In addition to the heterogeneous element which is a necessary consequence of a sea port, and in which the German and the Jew predominates, the ironworks have drawn largely from Ireland, Wales and Staffordshire, the bottle trade from Northumberland and the coal trade from the agricultural districts. (20)

B.T. Robson has noted that the key to understanding Sunderland's demography in the nineteenth century was the expansionary relationship between population, shipbuilding and coal exporting.(21) During the 1830s there was an average annual population increase of 3%.

Workers were flocking to the prosperous town, mostly from the surrounding counties but also from as far afield as Wales, Scotland and Ireland. (22)

As the town grew, the more wealthy industrialists retreated to the suburbs and the countryside, increasing the prospect of greater proletarian and working class solidarity in the crowded town centre.(23) While population growth per se was important, the

disturbance to the town's social structure and its political relations was even more significant. The cellular community, described by Nossiter became increasingly one in which conflict, albeit in a form which was often clearly circumscribed, was nevertheless a constant feature. Nossiter writes that

the structures of economic, religious and political life reinforced a basically pluralist pattern... political power was disseminated among evenly matched cells of influence and authority,

and the fact that a lower proportion of the population had the vote than in comparable towns was also significant.(24) Local rather than national politics tended to be the most important issues and hence no party gained overall dominance throughout this period. Shipownership, dock construction, coal exportation and the port authorities may have all been expected to favour the free trade party but such was the rivalry between them, coupled with the distorting presence of George Hudson, that the Whigs were unable to make the impact which might have been expected.(25)

This cellular community began to change under the pressure of technological developments, particularly in shipbuilding. Previously the employers had had close links with their workforce and many of them had worked alongside the craftsmen for many years. At least down to the 1850s there was no

great social barrier between the shipbuilder and his workers ... For both employer and employed, shipbuilding was full of uncertainty and punctuated with bouts of feverish activity. Shipbuilding was truly more than an occupation or business: it was 'a way of life'. (26)

But this way of life was altered by the increasing amounts of capital concentration needed in the development of iron and steamships. In

addition, the centralisation of authority in the corporation and the river commission further altered the balance of power at the basis of Sunderland's politics while industrial relations also changed to take on a more bureaucratic form suitable to the changed circumstances.(27)

In the meantime, Sunderland had shown itself more liberal in its application of the New Poor Law than most other areas of the North East. Gateshead, Sunderland and Easington were the only areas to remain outside the Outdoor Relief Prohibitory Order as the authorities declined to implement the deterrent aspects of the poor law which were being applied elsewhere.(28) The number of widows and orphans left by the seamen as deserving cases may well have had some bearing on the general attitude, but the overall effect was to blunt working class antagonism to the efforts of the authorities in handling the unemployment crisis of the early 1840s which might otherwise have had more serious repercussions. Sunderland's working class leadership became involved with the Unemployment Relief Committee which acted as a cross-class and cross-party organisation which would have been barely conceivable in the hostile climate of the later 1830s.

If Sunderland's working class politics moved rapidly in the direction of incorporation, the South Shields labour movement failed to develop through its own weaknesses. Foster argues that three factors militated against the presence of a strong Chartist or radical movement: the formal weakness of the working class movement, the lack of continuity in working class leadership, and the lack of social solidarity among the labouring population in terms of housing, marriage, religion and ethnicity.(29) In addition technological

stagnation in Shields' key industries meant that the distress of the town could not be directly attributed to the problems of industrial capitalism. Proffered solutions to the crisis could involve cooperation with the shipowners equally as well as overt conflict. Politics, rather than capital development, came to be seen as the cause, and hence the most likely avenue of resolution of Shields' problems and hence the labour movement was prevented from developing a more sustained critique of capitalist oppression along the lines taken in Oldham.(30)

Darlington, by contrast again, followed more closely the development of Lancashire and the West Riding with a market and textile base developing rapidly to encompass railways, coal and iron and steel manufacture. As Sunderland has remarked

Coal, iron and the steam engine were the foundations of the first Industrial Revolution, and upon these the fortunes of Darlington were built. (31)

Yet whatever impact such development had in other areas, Darlington, as was shown earlier, demonstrated that industrialisation did not lead in any automatic manner to specific determinations of working class radical activity. The form of paternalism applied by the Quakers, alongside their oligarchic control of public affairs, profoundly influenced the content and direction of working class activities in ways which can not be derived from a straightforward analysis of economic conditions.

Given this diversity of experience, a variety of long standing approaches which have sought to explain the patterning of activity can be considered. Among them can be numbered the nature of population growth, the influence of community structures, the role of the

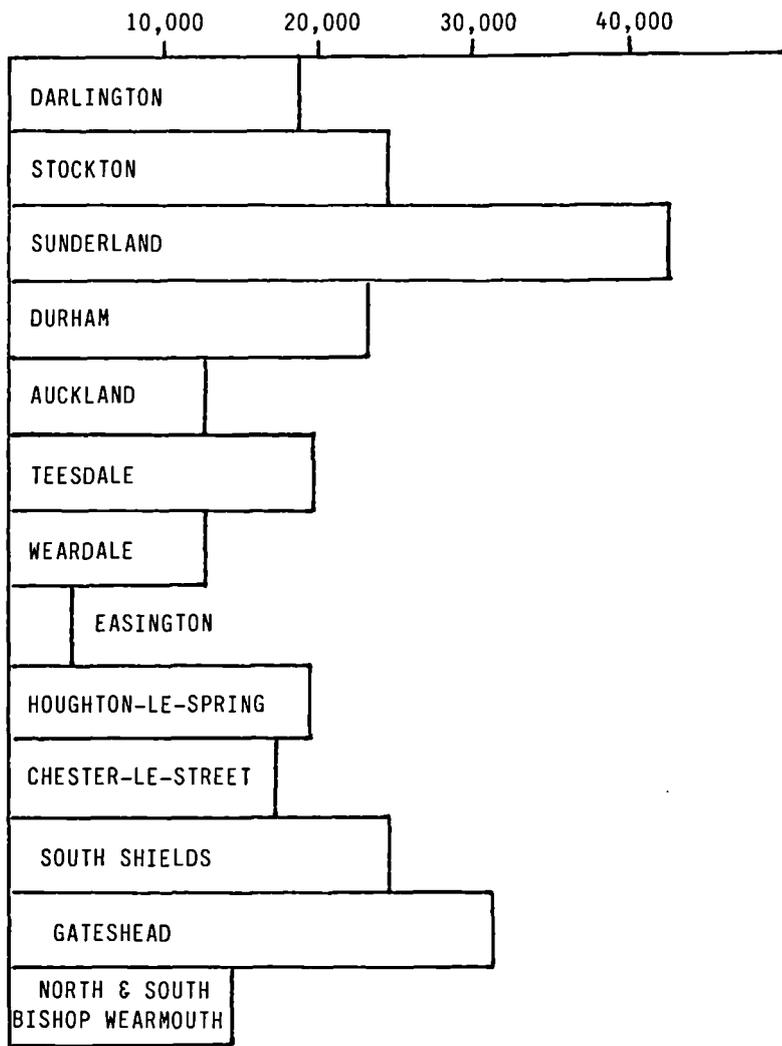


Figure 4a: The Population of County Durham 1831 (Total = 239,256)

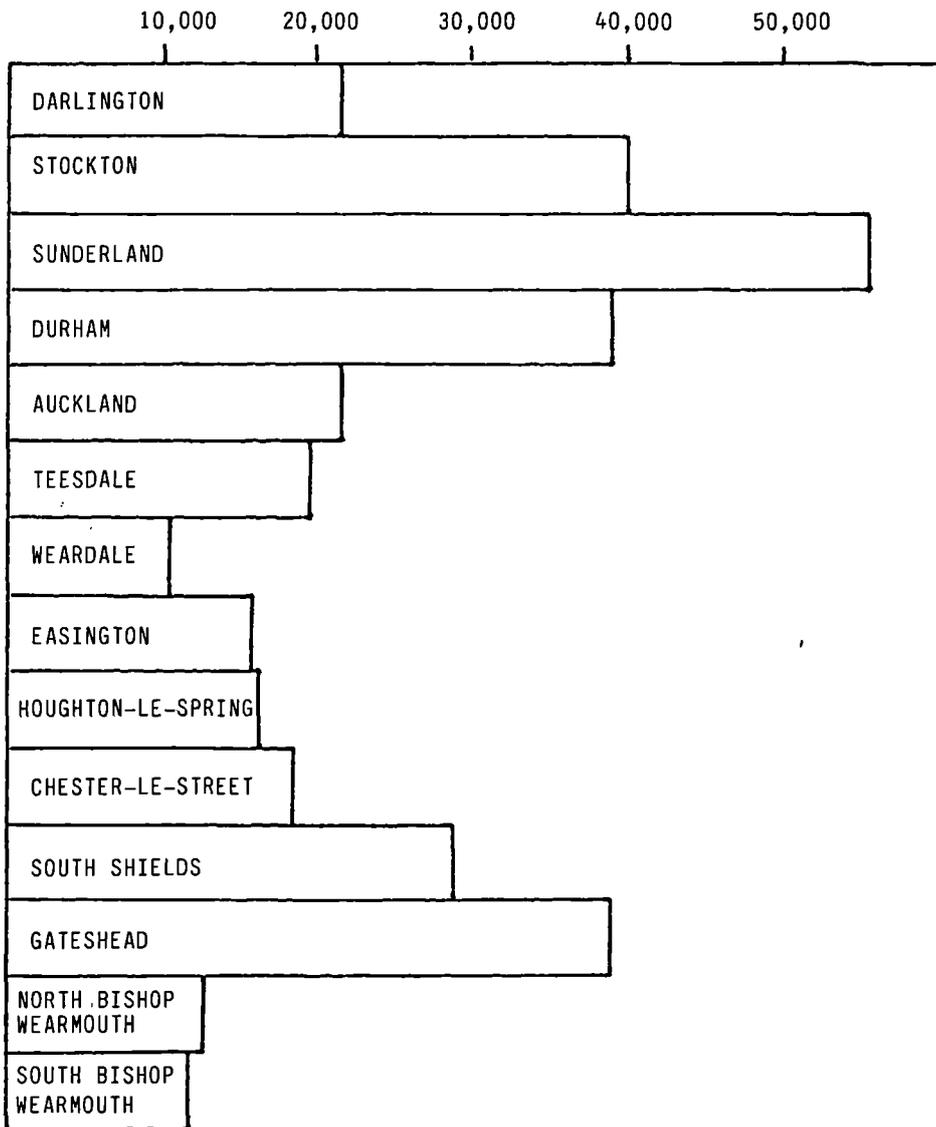


Figure 4b: The Population of County Durham 1841 (Total = 307,963)

shopocracy and the impact of the New Poor Law.

With regard to population, the most striking feature of the North East was that its rates of growth were far above those of the rest of the country (Figure 4). Between 1801 and 1831 the county of Durham grew by 60%. Between 1831 and 1861 it grew by 100% with the bulk of the growth occurring in areas which were already the most densely populated.(32) These were essentially the Tyne and Wear mouths with Durham as the administrative capital, and Darlington, with its textile industries as the only other major towns by the standards of the day. Stockton was developing as a market centre for the Tees lowland and both Barnard Castle and Bishop Auckland were sizeable market towns but there was little more. From 1801, however, there were profound changes. According to Dewdney:

the nineteenth century saw a dramatic transformation of the regions landscape in which coal mining and heavy industry became the dominant elements in the economy and the main determinants of population distribution. (33)

The population figures for 1831 and 1841 reveal the importance of the main urban centres and show that, despite the overall sparseness of the areas population, the urban concentration was relatively high.(34) The rural parts of the area show low population figures as well as a virtual absence of growth in Teesdale. By comparison, the colliery areas were sizeable and Easington in particular underwent convulsive growth associated with the sinking of pits south of Hetton (Appendix 2). South Shields, the object of Foster's study, was growing at a slower rate than its neighbours, while the growth of North and South Bishopwearmouth, somewhat obscured by their separate classification from 1841, was considerable. The overall pattern of

population growth was varied, with Chester le Street static and all other centres registering different rates of growth. The most prominent features however remain the dominating size of Sunderland and the relative size of the colliery areas, with Easington attaining a larger size than Teesdale as early as 1841.

The increase in population was fuelled by migrant labour. According to Dunkley, Durham had an

unusually large and fluid non resident population, mostly migrant labour, drawn to the county in the thirties by the extensive public and private works then underway such as mining and railway construction. (35)

A slightly different picture emerges from the work of Mike Sill, who shows that for mining villages at least, long distance immigration was uncommon.(36) From a study of the birthplaces of residents in mining villages in 1851 he shows that by far the major source of labour recruitment was from within the county and to a lesser degree from Northumberland and the implication from this is that the increase in the population was a product of higher birth rates. In South Hetton for example 19% were born in the town, 51% elsewhere in Durham, 21% in Northumberland, 4% from Cumberland, Westmorland, Yorkshire and Lancashire and only 6% from other areas, Ireland included. For Thornley the figures were also 19% town born, 52% elsewhere in Durham, 10% Northumberland and 7% from outside the north generally.

Thus size, distribution, growth and intra regional mobility rates were all significant factors in determining the character of the region's population.(37) The relation of these to the strength of the working class movement, however, is still not clear. Newcastle, for example, is often cited as a major centre of Chartism. Meetings were

regularly held there, it possessed its own Chartist newspaper, speakers of national stature visited regularly, huge demonstrations were held on the town moor, and there were incidents of violence and insurrectionary plotting.(38) Yet for Rowe

Newcastle was a psychological centre rather than the actual centre of Chartist support. The usual support came from the decaying iron making centre of Winlaton. (39)

Rowe clearly sides with the view that sees Chartism as a movement of despair among declining groups rather than the muscle-flexing of expanding groups as seen by Engels, but quite apart from that there remains the question of the usefulness of the concept of a 'psychological centre'. If there was a material base of organisation, meeting houses, numerical support and activities it is difficult to see how this can be described as being merely psychological rather than 'actual'.

In effect, what Rowe is beginning to highlight is the way in which the nature of urban space took different forms according to the degree of control exercised by magistrates, landlords and paternalist employers. Dorothy Thompson has pointed out that Chartism flourished in closed communities where individuals could be trusted, and this helps to explain the solidarity of Winlaton and pit villages where the origins and background of the population was known.(40) Space for Chartism declined as cities grew and became more heterogeneous, yet this does not explain why the movement was strong in Sunderland and Newcastle. In addition the importance of homogeneity and solidarity is likely to have been of greatest significance in times of conspiracy rather than in times of general tumult or in more institutionalised

forms of opposition such as the National Charter Association and the Land Scheme.

For Nossiter, the distinctive feature of North East radicalism, and one which would help to explain its concentration in the towns, was the prominent role of the shopkeepers. He argues that

the shopkeepers often possessed an acute political consciousness, heightened by their marginality in the class structure. (41)

This gave them the opportunity to articulate the grievances of both the urban working class and the mining areas which had few independent shopocrats of their own. In organising the resultant movement the shopkeepers, according to Nossiter, played a political role which was as significant as that played elsewhere by the labour aristocracy, and this issue will be returned to later.

Unfortunately Nossiter does not elaborate on the concept of marginality or the nature of the class structure implicit in the way the concept is used. Similarly, the notion of the labour aristocracy which is employed is different from that of other recent studies which have incorporated it. While the wider debate surrounding the labour aristocracy will be considered in the next chapter, the dominant approach has been to see the labour aristocracy as somehow responsible for the decline in working class political radicalism (particularly from the mid point of the nineteenth century), rather than for its rise.

The overall difficulty lies in the inability to relate changes in the patterning of radicalism to developments in the shopocracy itself. If the shopocracy was present and instrumental in radicalisms rise,

why did it not rise everywhere, where did the shopocracy's own radicalism come from, and what role, if any, did the shopocracy play in radicalism's decline? Underlying these questions are the further issues of why this group was marginal and what changes were taking place within it. These issues remain unaddressed and it would appear that while the shopocracy may have been a distinctive feature, its explanatory value remains extremely limited.

The next characteristic of the region which needs to be taken into account is the impact of the New Poor Law. Nationally opposition to the Poor Law was seen as one, if not the most important, of the agitations which fed into Chartism.<sup>(42)</sup> Mark Hovell lay the greatest stress on the contribution of the anti-poor law movement to the popular discontent with Parliament and, for places such as Todmorden in the North West, anti-poor law sentiment remained a central feature of political radicalism for many years. Yet Chartism grew in the North East at a time when the poor law was still benefitting from lenient interpretations in the area.<sup>(43)</sup> Despite visits from J.R. Stephens and genuine worries as to what the New Poor Law might bring, the region's experience of it was not particularly harsh. Thus Chartism expanded without the conditions which fuelled it elsewhere. Conversely when unemployment and the poor law did become harsher, Chartism failed to display a corresponding increase. Clearly the use of the poor law to explain trends in North East radicalism is very limited.

In contrast however Brown has argued that in Lancashire the tumult of 1842 occurred because the working class experience of both poverty and the poor law came closer to the political language of the

Chartists.(44) In Durham the period 1840-43 saw the number of poor receiving alms increase by a half and the proportion of the able bodied indigent doubling over the same period. At the same time the quality of relief declined sharply due to a reluctance to deal with administrative abuses.(45) Despite all this Chartism not only failed to expand but it failed even to reach the peaks attained at a time when the poor law was more benevolent. Either the region's circumstances were very exceptional, or Brown's explanation of the strength of Lancashire Chartism is somewhat sanguine.

If the variables which are normally held to explain radicalism's patterning do not seem to apply to the North East, the reasons may well be linked to the distinctive nature of the coalfield. This was perhaps the major characteristic of the region and the essential difference between Durham and Lancashire. The centrality of the coalfield and the concentration of its ownership in the hands of a landed elite mark a crucial way in which the North East differed from other areas. Coal had an influence over the economic, political and social structure which was unparalleled in the manufacturing districts. As Nossiter writes

Mining reinforced the power of the aristocracy in the county for a generation, and at the same time inhibited the development of that industrial elite which contributed elsewhere to the conflict between urban and rural society symbolised by the Anti Corn Law League.(46)

In the cotton manufacturing districts new forms of capital and capital ownership were challenging the older forms of authority and influence. On the Durham coalfield however, relational patterns between capital and labour were not only firmly based on the rural model bestowed by

aristocratic ownership, they were also (new collieries notwithstanding) older and more firmly established.(47) Hence the matrix of social relationships in which Chartism grew in the North East was fundamentally different from that which existed in Lancashire, despite any surface similarities, and this serves to provide both an explanation of the lack of synchronicity in the Chartist movement between the two areas and the parameters within which the study of differences in the North East's radicalism can be made.

At this point it is perhaps worth summarising the ways in which the variables themselves were patterned throughout the region and these are shown in Table 2. Among the major differences within the region were patterns of authority and economic structures. Contingent upon these, or in some cases independent in their own right, were a variety of other factors. The sexual division of labour, female employment generally and the extent and nature of domestic service with its effect on family patterns, all varied throughout the region. In the towns domestic service could be found near to the parental home while for girls in pit villages service was often an alternative to early marriage.(48) In the North West, radicalism's growth and decline touched upon aspects of changing patterns of authority and gender roles at work under patriarchal and later paternal regimes of workplace organisation.(49) For the North East however there was little or no direct parallel since, with the exceptions of agriculture and Darlington's textiles, North East industry was essentially heavy and male employment dominated. Even in Darlington female employment did not pose the threat to the employment or higher work status of men

that it seems to have done in Oldham.

In agriculture the landowners remained in close control of the population and Campey notes the interference they made in elections by putting pressure on their tenant farmers as to how they should vote.(50) In general the rural areas were protected from the industrial slump of the early 1840s and this is reflected in the impact of the New Poor Law. Dunkley writes that

the areas that experienced economic problems at one time or another during this period were situated chiefly in the unions of Chester le Street, Darlington, Durham, Easington, Gateshead, Houghton le Spring, South Shields, Stockton and Sunderland. In the more agricultural unions, the economic malaise was less evident. (51)

The harshness and inappropriateness of the New Poor Law was therefore felt most sharply in the more urbanised areas of the region.

The towns themselves varied considerably with regard to such things as religious composition. In Sunderland old dissent was very prominent with Methodism particularly strong. Yet the factions within Methodism deprived it of a greater influence over public affairs and, despite the presence of many Quaker businesses, the Anglicans were able to operate without significant threat.(52) In Darlington Primitive Methodism was strong among the working class while the numerically small Quaker group controlled public life.

In the pit villages Methodism was again a strong influence with many Methodists attaining prominent positions in the union through their chapel experience of public speaking and their presumed honesty with union funds. Of the 'twelve apostles' who were appointed as missionaries and fund raisers for the Miners Association of Great Britain no less than seven were Primitive Methodists.(53) According to Patterson, an admittedly partial source,

Table 2

The Matrix of Variables influencing the patterning of Radicalism

	POPULATION GROWTH RATE	SOCIAL STRUCTURE	RELIGION	LEVEL OF CAPITAL INVESTMENT	IMPORTANCE OF SHOPOCRACY	LEVEL OF PATERNALISM	AMOUNT OF FEMALE EMPLOYMENT AVAILABLE	STRENGTH OF UTOPIAN SOCIALISM	STRENGTH OF CHARTISM
SUNDERLAND	HIGH	POLARISING	NON CONFORMIST	HIGH	HIGH	LOW	LOW	HIGH	HIGH
DURHAM	LOW	FEUDAL	ANGLICAN	LOW	LOW	HIGH (FEUDAL)	LOW	LOW	LOW
DARLINGTON	HIGH	DIFFERENTIATED	QUAKER/METHODIST	HIGH	LOW	HIGH (LIBERAL)	HIGH	HIGH	HIGH
COLLIERY DISTRICTS	HIGH	BI-POLAR	METHODIST	HIGH	LOW	HIGH (TORY)	LOW	LOW	HIGH

Religion has done much in the colliery villages in awakening a sense of manhood, which made the servitude in which they were bound galling to many, and they sought by combination to improve their situation... were not the foundations thus laid ... of the huge superstructure of unionism afterwards raised?. (54)

Again it was a minority who extended an influence out of all proportion to their numerical strength in the community.

For the owners both teetotal conscientious Methodists and ale loving blacklegs had their advantages if manipulated correctly, but Moore has shown how Methodists were particularly favoured by the more enlightened paternalist employers.(55) Methodist and Quaker colliery owners provided company houses, schools and an administrative structure for their communities. They made donations to Methodist funds, found sites for their chapels, appointed missionary and temperance workers to their villages and overwatched their activities. In the majority of colliery villages however there was a bipolar social structure in which the middling layers such as shopkeepers and minor professionals were noticeably absent. This helps to explain the impact of class imagery-laden teachings and may also explain the strength of the links between the urban centres and the colliery villages at a time when class relations in towns such as Sunderland seemed to be polarising too. These similarities notwithstanding however, there remained distinct differences in the cultural forms of local identity between the urban and colliery environments.(56) The towns had different traditions, institutions and historical legacies which contributed to a culture which, in its everyday practice, was significantly different from that found in the pit villages.(57) Yet the links between the two types of area were important and this was

recognised by Hastings who attributes the weakness of Chartism in the South of the region to the very absence of such links.(58)

The overall conclusion which can be drawn from all this is that the standard explanations which are normally put forward as guides to the patterning of Chartist and other radical activity, do not appear to be particularly helpful when looking at the North East. There has however been a series of newer explanations which have been developed with particular reference to Lancashire and the West Riding of Yorkshire and it is to these that attention can now turn.

One attempt to explain intra-regional difference in Lancashire and the West Riding has been made by Brown whose work has been referred to earlier.(59) He has analysed the relationship between Chartism's strength, measured in terms of numbers of meetings held in each parish, and a series of likely variables in what he describes as

an empirical mapping of the concatenation of structural conditions, social relations and political processes central to the historical logic of working class formation. (60)

Leaving to one side the thorny methodological problem of using the recorded incidence of activity as a measure of the strength of working class consciousness, Brown posits two hypotheses; firstly that Chartist and similar activity was produced by the disruption of an economy and a society in the process of fundamental change such that the conflicts and tensions produced by the process of transition become the key to any understanding. If this hypotheses were to be supported then the explanation for the decline in working class contention can be similarly explained in that it faded with the ending of the tension-producing stage of society's transition.

The second hypothesis is that conflict is endemic to industrial capitalist society and that Chartist contention was merely one of the forms which this conflict might take. Thus Chartist activity levels would be related more to the degree to which industrial capitalism was established than to the pace with which any transition was occurring. Variations in the rate of Chartist activity by parish in Lancashire and the West Riding were found to conform to this second hypothesis. In specific terms levels of activity were found to correlate positively with indices of industrialisation, proletarian concentration and class organisation:

the overall social geography of working class contention... was fundamentally shaped by the economically structured class relations of ... industrial capitalist order. (61)

Following Engels, it was the urban concentration of factory proletarians with their differentiated class interests, class formation, polarisation and conflict which were the foundations for Chartist contention. The variables which followed from the first hypothesis were found not to be related to levels of activity. Thus the 'transition' variables of rates of urban growth and rates of industrialisation failed to explain the inter-parish difference in Chartist activity. For Brown the rejection of the transition or friction model in favour of the endemic conflict explanation enables the 1842 disturbances to be seen more clearly. Thus in 1842 the depression accentuated the polarisation of labour and capital relations and shifted the political advantage towards the Chartists as the workers' experiences drew closer to the imagery and logic of the Chartists' political language and programme.(62)

The limitations of Brown's approach are apparent when an attempt is made to apply the structure/transition framework to a different regional context. For the North East there are a number of variables which are likely to have had considerable impact on the levels of recorded working class activity which are not covered by Brown's framework. Some of those, such as the level of capitalisation, patterns of ownership, differing ideological traditions and the extent of paternalist relations inside and outside work are factors which may well have been significant for Lancashire and the West Riding had they been considered. In an area such as the North East where superficially similar localities produced widely differing degrees of Chartist support there is little doubt that the indices of industrialism, urbanism, proletarian concentration and class organisation, as used by Brown, do not give a particularly full explanation. In effect the North East displayed differences between each of its urban centres, between the urban centres and rural hinterland, between mining and non-mining villages, and between mining villages themselves.

The theme of differences within mining will be taken up again, but for the moment attention can turn to a second study of Lancashire - that of John Foster's study of Oldham. Again a central element of Foster's Class Struggle and the Industrial Revolution awaits more detailed treatment in the next chapter where his theories of the labour aristocracy are considered for their relevance to a different regional context. But the labour aristocracy provides only one of the major stands in Foster's work.

For Foster, Oldham was at the forefront of capitalist development

through its cotton industry and this enables him to compare radicalism there in a favourable manner to that in South, Shields and Northampton.(63) His basic thesis is that Oldham had a long developed occupational, labour or trade union consciousness which passed over into a wider class consciousness in the 1830s and 1840s.(64) By class consciousness Foster refers specifically to a revolutionary class consciousness with a theoretically derived model of an alternative economic and political system and this he claims to find in Oldham on two occasions: the first being the 'National Society for Regeneration' led by Fielden and Doherty in 1834 and the second being the Plug Plots or General Strike of 1842.(65) In both of these cases the radical leadership, which displayed considerable continuity, was able to move from narrow occupational interests to wider political ones without losing their bases of mass support and, in 1842 at least, the disturbances took on a semi-insurrectionary or revolutionary tone.(66)

Since Oldham was at the forefront of industrial capitalist development it is also taken to have been at the forefront of class development. Foster implies that Oldham was proto-typical in these respects, with its radical MPs and revolutionary groups in the vanguard of the class struggle.(67) Within the cotton industry the economic demands for short time working involved a critique of overproduction and competition and its direct consequences for wage cutting and unemployment.(68)

Merely to appreciate that the solution to the economic crisis involved fundamental changes was not however in itself sufficient to

produce class consciousness. What was needed in addition was an overcoming of sectional loyalties and evidence of an intellectual commitment to an alternative order and Foster claims to have found both of these present in 1834 and 1842.(69)

On these grounds Foster argues that Oldham's working class was not just a class in itself but was on its way to becoming a class for itself with a developed revolutionary class consciousness. The reasons why this class consciousness declined are similarly subject to detailed analysis and two strands can be identified as being of major importance. Firstly the bourgeoisie are seen as having embarked upon a conscious policy of liberalisation which had the effect of disorientating, and then disarming working class agitation. This policy may originally have been accidental but its effectiveness quickly became apparent whereupon it was pursued with greater vigour. Liberalisation is thus seen by Foster as a conscious collective ruling class response to a period of sustained growth in working class consciousness which had produced, as far as the bourgeoisie were concerned, an unwanted instability in the social system.(70) Not only were changes within the bourgeoisie crucial, but the realignment of class forces which this involved, whereby the shopocracy moved over to the side of the employers, suggests a more fruitful approach to class development than that which derives from Nossiter's approach to the same issues.

Secondly, this disorientation of the working class was accompanied by a restabilisation of the labour process. Foster argues that the economy of the cotton industry had become very unstable and

in consequence was prone to crisis of overproduction. Simultaneously the introduction of machinery meant that women and even children could now perform what had previously been men's tasks at lower wages.(71)

These two interrelated problems were solved by a mixture of good fortune and strategy. The crisis of overproduction and capital shortage were solved by railway development because of the vast amounts of capital released and the way in which it brought many other industries into step with the advanced capitalist structure of the cotton industry. As G.S. Jones has confirmed,

there was undoubtedly a connection between a change in British capitalism and the decline in working class struggle... railway building is what, more than anything else, resolved the capitalist crisis of the thirties and early forties. It lessened the impact of cyclical crisis, stimulated coal, iron, steel and machine production and resolved the crisis of profitability.(72)

The second problem was solved by the continual growth of the economic unit. Increased plant size increasingly meant that supervisory and pace setting grades were required and these were given to adult males (thus incidentally, re-stabilising the sexual division of labour). In doing so a new labour aristocracy was created whose *raison d'etre* and whose role in the class struggle was to be different from that of the skilled artisans of earlier periods.

Foster asserts that this labour aristocracy was bought off or bribed by the owners and in consequence they ceased to be a source of opposition. The bribe is considered to have come either from a redistribution of wages away from the less privileged (ie their own wives and children) or from the profits of imperialism, which is Foster's preferred solution. This thesis will be examined in more

detail in the next chapter but for the moment the labour aristocracy, together with liberalisation, remain the key elements in Foster's explanation of Oldham's failure to continue its radical activity into the late 1840s and 1850s.(73)

Despite these criticisms it is clear that while Foster may not have all the right answers, the agenda he has set for posing questions remains most pertinent and the position in the North East can be used as a contrast to assess the extent to which Oldham really was proto-typical of the country at large.

Unfortunately it is one of Foster's most innovative developments which constitutes the first major problem for making wider application of his work: For while his stress on the labour process as a determinant of action is a welcome departure from cruder economic theories, the experience of the North East remains problematic. Here, similar labour processes such as occurred on the coalfield, produced widely dissimilar forms of action. Clearly, a study of the labour process by itself cannot provide the complete answer and that which would provide the necessary complement - a study of the language, the ideas and the organisation of the works themselves - is unfortunately largely absent.

Secondly the entire issue of authority patterns at work and gender relations both at work and in the community remain fundamental points of difference between the two areas. Thus to take but one example, cotton operatives could couch their demands for working shorter hours in terms of protecting women and children. Since children had been banned from working underground in 1842, (and whose

hours, again unlike those in cotton, did not in any case effect those of the adult workers), miners' hostility to the owners over hours and conditions was of necessity more explicit. The language of radicalism therefore differed, not only in accordance with economic distress and moral indignation, but in relation to the familial patterns through which these were experienced. Thus gender and kinship relations are critical to the way in which radicalism developed and the forms which its language took.

Consideration of authority patterns at work brings us to the contributions of Burawoy and Joyce.(74) For Burawoy the crucial element in explaining working class responses to their conditions was the 'Politics of Production' which derived from the forms of authority employed at work and the degree to which labour's subsumption to the means of production was formal or real. Under formal subsumption workers (males) could still enjoy a control over the means of production itself and, for the cotton areas at least, worked almost as sub-contractors employing their wives and families under an overall system of patriarchal despotism. Real subsumption on the other hand occurred when workers no longer had control over the means of production and where unskilled labour was employed directly by the masters.

Although Burawoy's scheme was developed in relation to textiles, it nevertheless throws up many points which are germane to any analysis of the North East. Thus when looking at the differences between the mills of Darlington and the outlying coal mining areas it can be seen that the forms of paternalism which were respectively

employed were different and that the subsumption of labour on which they rested was different too. Hence in Darlington an urban liberal paternalism was based on the real subordination of labour where the employers provided the moral leadership of a moral community. In the majority of collieries, by contrast, there was a semi-feudal paternalism which was based on the formal subsumption of labour in conditions which were not universally inimical to strictly capitalist paternalism.

This discussion, however, has taken us away from the inter-regional comparisons which were the initial focus and further utilisation of Burawoy's framework will be returned to shortly. In terms of regional comparisons however the earlier problem of reconciling the economic similarities of Darlington and the North West with their differences in working class consciousness is seen to be resolvable by an explanation which goes beyond the labour process itself to consider authority patterns and the wider politics of production.

The introduction of paternalism as a significant element in the equation leads us briefly to the work of Patrick Joyce. Joyce, with only a slightly different geographical focus to Foster, takes exception to much of the latter's explanation for the decline of radicalism, preferring to locate the relative quiescence of workers in the third quarter of the century in the efforts made by many factory owners in recreating a moral community in and through the culture of the factory. Thus for Joyce the later voting and political allegiances of the workers were shaped by the powerful influences of the factory

and the employer upon the local community.(75)

For the North East such an explanation is not without its attractions. As has been noted, Darlington can be regarded as having followed a similar, if earlier, pattern, but paternalism on the coalfield was productive of changes which were far less smooth in their consequences.

Paternalism by itself, however, was unlikely to have been solely responsible for any dilution of revolutionary intentions. Neville Kirk, in yet another North West based study, has placed overt stress on the ways in which ideological forms were manipulated. He argues that, for Manchester and the surrounding cotton towns, the perceptions of the working class leaders in their institutions changed. They saw that the realistic way ahead for them was through gradual improvements via teetotalism, education and respectability which they held up as a model for the rest of their class.(76) While this description could be applied to certain of North East Chartism's leaders there are notable exceptions and, more importantly, the analysis has little or no applicability to the coalfields generally where such 'improvements' were impressed on the colliers from above. Company houses, donations for funds, sites for chapels, aid with temperance work and, above all, schools with their array of prizes for conformist essays, were all ways in which the coal owners sought to manipulate the ideology of their workers.(77)

Finally we may note the contribution of G. Stedman Jones to this clutch of North West studies. Jones' contribution comes in the form of a critique of Foster, but the points he makes are particularly strong

ones. He argues that one of the weaknesses of Fosters' work, which it holds in common with a good many others, is that it fails to find answers to many of its questions because the object of the questions has itself been misconceived. This he contends is particularly true of Chartism where a plethora of unanswered questions have been produced through the error of seeing Chartism as class consciousness.

In fact, he argues, Chartism was merely a variant on the older tradition of radicalism and as such the search for a class conscious factory based proletarian core of Chartism is not only misguided but is a cul-de-sac of investigation which has prevented analyses both of the movement and of subsequent reformism from taking realistic positions.(78)

Others have gone still further in their denial of the class basis of Chartism and this has led Foster to dispute what he sees as their simplistic claims.(79) According to Foster recent years have seen several challenges to the accepted view of Chartism as an early expression of mass class consciousness. Critics have argued that the 'class struggle' language of its leaders was no more than a rhetorical top dressing, and that the movement itself did not go beyond a confused reaction to economic distress.(80)

But Foster has found that Stedman Jones' criticism was not to be so easily disposed of, to the extent that the latter's approach has gained wide acceptance as a major revisionist position. Pointing out that one of the major weaknesses of Foster's work is its failure to analyse the content and language of working class movements, Stedman Jones proceeds to attempt to show that Chartism was not only the

historical heir to earlier forms of activity, but that at no time did any elements of Chartism's vocabulary shift beyond the less-than-class-conscious repertoire of radicalism.(81) Such a claim may be thought to be at odds with much of the content of Chartist speeches such as the repeated references to 'class made laws' and the like, and in any event Stedman Jones' distinction between radicalism and working class consciousness is worthy of more detailed investigation.(82)

Nevertheless, Jones continues to argue that Chartism depended on the appeal of its demands to a wide range of constituencies (which seems reasonable) and that these constituencies were linked by the common language of radicalism as a political discourse (which seems much less so). For Jones Chartism's great strength derived not from some diffuse social or economic discontent but from its politics, while it gathered momentum in the 1830s precisely because the actions of the Whig government seemed so fully to endorse the analysis provided by Chartism's politics. In so doing Stedman Jones claims to have used a non-referential and, by implication, a purer model of analysis. Cronin, however, has pointed out that what Stedman Jones has done is simply to exchange economic referents for political ones, which is altogether a different matter.(83)

Hence despite being in general agreement with much of Stedman Jones's argument it still remains the case that Jones fails to explain variations in the movement's support and that the language of Chartism can be 'read' as class consciousness with a conviction equal to Jones' reading of it as 'radicalism' Thus when Foster attempts to analyse South Shields the very failure of Chartism to develop along the same

lines as it did in Oldham forced him back to the issues of class in that

the movement's success or failure depended not so much on the actual state of economic distress as on the degree to which labour's pre-existing understanding of the immediate industrial situation had already prepared the ground for a larger class analysis.(84)

In sum, these 'new' approaches of Foster, Brown, Burawoy, Joyce, Kirk and Stedman Jones have been very fruitful and have done much to expand our understanding of the working class in the manufacturing districts of Lancashire and the West Riding, but their limited applicability to the North East highlights continued omissions and the failure to resolve the problems of spatial and temporal variations which are critical to any discussion of Chartism. What they have done however has been to introduce or re-emphasize certain important variables and, at the same time, to have been suggestive as to the potential role of a range of others. With these in mind it is now appropriate to turn back to the North East coalfield in order to assess its differences while acknowledging the debt to the models developed for the North West.

Colliery districts in the North East displayed major differences in character and this has not passed unremarked. As detailed earlier, collieries differed as to whether they were controlled by a landowning elite or by joint stock companies, whether they were old established or newer concerns, and whether they were based on the limestone measures with the higher levels of capital investment and increased vulnerability which this entailed. These all had an impact on labour relations, as did the various degrees of paternalism involved.

For Heesom, this paternalism is of great significance in any assessment of coalfield relations.(85) He has pointed out that in Lord Londonderry's collieries, employees received free medical aid and payment while injured. They were provided with free housing or were paid travelling expenses, and they received free education through the endowment of night schools. After contributing £100 to the subscription fund commenced after the Haswell explosion of 1844 Londonderry remarked that the scheme was wrong in principle since it should be the duty of the company to provide relief for the victims and their families. A public subscription helped the company as much as it did the victims and undermined the owner's authority and responsibility.(86) Proprietors such as Londonderry were not only highly visible in the coal trade but their paternalism was also more direct. Their agricultural interests were left in the hands of agents and the tenants themselves were responsible for the employment of labour. With coal, however, the owner was seen as the employer and could be appealed to over the head of the colliery agents.

Paternalism was pursued as a deliberate strategy. George Eliot, who rose from putter to Londonderry's chief viewer (and subsequently Baronet, MP and Deputy Lieutenant) told the Royal Commission on Trade Unions that

in Northumberland and Durham we find every man his house, his firing and garden and everything of that sort. (87)

In addition he endeavoured to keep wages as uniform as he could whether trade was good or bad arguing that

a little of the paternal system is very useful, because

you can keep your men in times of difficulty.

Paternalism then was essentially a strategy as much as it was a legacy of tradition and the obverse of its benevolence is easy to read. The miners had free medical aid but not the freedom to choose their own doctor. The doctor's verdict, once given, was binding and could not be challenged, while anyone wishing to do so could be prosecuted under the bond. Similarly houses were free but the threat of eviction was ever present and extra had to be paid if lodgers were taken in. In places such as Seaham Harbour, built expressly on a paternalist pattern, authority over shopkeepers ensured that no credit was advanced to anyone on strike. In these ways paternalism can be seen as a strategy and struggle rather than as description presented in the guise of explanation. During the 1844 strike, for example, Londonderry's colliers engaged in machine wrecking. They refused to allow furnacemen to tend the furnaces and refused to allow small coals to be moved to the pumping engines so that gas and water collected in the pit. They tipped waggons down the shafts and set shafts on fire. Buddle wrote to Londonderry that

the pitmen boast they will hold out to the last extremity  
... and live on grass before they give in. (88)

So much for 'the established pitman's conservative way of life!'

Clearly, other factors have to be taken into account. In 1831 Londonderry had given in to his workers' demands not because of his paternalism but because he had had too many obligations to be able to hold out against the workers' demands. By 1844 his position was stronger, his responsibility as Lord Lieutenant greater and

consequently his attitude to the disturbances was much firmer.(89) In times of crisis 'paternalism' was a weapon to be used rather than the description of a cosy relationship and any deeper explanation needs to take this into account. If certain collieries were more quiescent than others it may well have been that coercive and suppressive aspects of paternalism were to the fore.

The problem lies with the term paternalism which turns out to conceal as much as it reveals. For textiles Burawoy identified the determinants of paternalism as including the separation of the workers from the means of subsistence, the real subsumption of labour, a labour supply in surplus and limited enter firm competition.(90) For the collieries however the first three determinants were not present while the fourth was removed by the collapse of the Vend. In coal the labour process, market forces, the form of reproduction of labour power and the form of the State could be identical and yet different regimes came to be imposed by the owners which in turn were productive of different worker responses.

The variety of management control covered by the term paternalism can be analysed using examples from the region Table 3 locates three patterns of management-ownership which are generally regarded as paternalist. Textile manufacture under the Peases in Darlington fits the classic location of paternalism where, following Burawoy, the mills operated in a smallish community, with limited local competition, where the subsumption of labour was real and whose recruitment practices took on workers who were related, but did not take them on as teams.(91)

Table 3

Different Forms of Paternalism: A Comparison of Management Strategies in Coal and Textiles

	Textile paternalism	Coal based Paternalism	
	Pease's mill in Darlington)	(Pease's Auckland Collieries)	(Londonderry's Collieries)
Political allegiance of owners	Liberal	Liberal	Tory
Paternalism pursued through	Moral guidance	Moral guidance and material provision	Material provision
Subsumption of labour	Real	Formal	Formal
Access to means of subsistence	Absent	Smallholdings	Smallholdings
Moral leadership as seen by owners	Needed to be earned	Needed to be earned	Regarded by owners as a right
Moral leadership of owners as seen by workforce	Unassailable	Unassailable	Corrupt
Market strategies	Open	Open	Associated with the restrictive practices of the Vend
Parliamentary record of owners as seen as by workforce	Sound	Sound	Unjust
Levels of overt worker disaffection	Low	Low	High
Religious affiliation of owners	Quaker	Quaker	Anglican

← Different politics of production —————→

← Different forms of workplace struggle —————→

The contrast can be drawn with the paternalism practised in the colliery districts by the long established Tory landowners and the Peases themselves as relative newcomers applying as far as possible the techniques which had operated successfully in an urban setting. Through allotments and gardens the miners did have some links with the means of subsistence, however slight, but the crucial feature of the collieries was that their techniques of extraction meant that the subsumption of labour was not complete. Real subsumption of labour was a long way off and the paternalism, if seen in terms of that which applied in textiles, was a clear aberration.

Given this, it can be seen that while the Pease's pit paternalism was an attempt to transfer successful management regimes to a different context, Londonderry's paternalism remained a feudal legacy. With identical labour processes and management strategies which have been given the same name, it becomes clear that differences in the condition of the workplace which were productive of different levels of working class struggle, require explanations which go beyond the labour process to incorporate the ideas and consciousness of the workforce and the ways in which this interacted with the ideology of the coal owners.

An example can be made of Utopian Socialism. Owenism achieved a substantial following in Darlington since the dissenting milieu of the town did not regard Socialism's criticisms of the existing order as treacherous. Owen's paternal appeal mirrored that of the employers while the Quaker attitude to females meant that the Owenites' egalitarian messages found greater acceptance. In the colliery districts, however, Owenite appeals to gender equality received a

cooler reception. Similarly the Owenite attitudes to economics and religion failed to strike a chord with the experiences of the miners. If paternalism was associated with Owenism in Darlington, the two failed to go together in mining communities while in Sunderland Owenism flourished in paternalism's absence.

Thus, ideological currents among the workforce prospered or faltered according to a variety of contexts. In some areas an unexpected complementarity occurred such as that between Quakerism and Socialism over the position of women, and that between Quakerism and Methodism over issues of industry and sobriety at work.(92)

Elsewhere, ideologies could be found in conflict such as the failure of Socialism in the context of colliery paternalism. Socialism's diversity meant that its relationship to Chartism could vary between hostility and complementarity. Hence James Williams could espouse what he took to be the principles of both, while Gamsby came to feel that not only was socialism of more fundamental importance, but that in the short run too, Chartism was more of a distraction.(93) Elsewhere the two movements disagreed over their response to the issue of gender equality, while all the movements suffered from internal contradictions such as socialism's stress on early experiences and adult conversions which served to weaken their attraction. The greatest ideological clash, however, was that between paternalism and Chartism, for while the Chartists believed in equality and the worth of individuals, paternalism regarded inequalities as inevitable and the masses as morally inferior. Hence, Londonderry was distressed to find that some of his men had gone over to the Chartists despite all

that he had done for them. In addition he felt that Parliament, even as it was then constituted, should have no right to interfere with his business.(94) The gulf between this position and that of the Chartists who wanted a democratically elected, accountable Parliament to legislate in the interests of the majority, was unbridgeable.

In general then, the centres of North East Chartism can be characterised as the new collieries, the urban centres, collieries run by joint stock companies, areas with a bi-polar or polarising class structure, areas of rapidly changing class structure and, despite its somewhat tautologous nature, areas containing a significant presence of activists. Non activist areas by contrast tended to be agricultural or to be characterised by paternalism, whether benevolent or repressive, by the presence of a substantial middle class or by the presence of a dominating upper class and priests. Any attempt to conceptualise the relationship between Chartism and its industrial, social, economic and moral context for any given area must also consider whether the centres of support were those whose moral indignation was strongest or most completely justified, and whether these were already highly politicised with a radical tradition and sense of history. In addition the conflict or otherwise between established and emerging ideologies must be ignored.

Some measure of the importance of these points can be gained by looking again at the explanation for Oldham's radicalism which is given mainly in the form of the labour process. Changes in the labour process in Oldham are alleged to have led to a highly significant period of working class activism which subsequently subsided when

labour processes were transformed still further.(95) Yet while a labour process approach may go some way towards explaining the similarities between Sunderland and Darlington radicalism, its explanation is far from being a full one. In terms of explaining the differences between collieries its contribution is negligible. Hence the political and ideological traditions need to be overlayed on to the experience of work. In Darlington capitalist labour processes operated in the context of paternalism while Socialism and Chartism temporarily flourished. In Sunderland small capitalist enterprises coexisted with large amounts of self employment where both Chartism and Socialism were found in the absence of major forms of paternalism. On the coalfields it was Socialism which failed to take root irrespective of the presence of paternalism, while Chartism generally thrived. Finally in Durham city the absence of large scale capitalism and the continuing legacy of feudal relationships produced an environment in which there was little space or succour for working class movements.

In sum, the factors leading to or promoting working class radicalism were exceedingly complex. Economic and structural factors were central, but so too were issues of ideology, culture and tradition. In a sense Rowe's remark that

the standard factors suggested as background to the development of the Chartist movement do not seem to have been of particular importance in the North East

turns out to have been particularly perceptive. (96)

Traditional explanations for the rise and patterning of radical activity do not serve the North East particularly well and the

revisionist explanations which have been developed to explain the patterning in Lancashire and the West Riding can not be uncritically transferred to the study of a different region. Nevertheless, the latter have given a number of important starting points with Burawoy, for example pointing out the importance of seeing the complexity of class formation as going beyond the labour process such that analysis needs to be made of market forces, the reproduction of labour power and the form of the State. Foster too has stressed the importance of taking an approach which takes full account of the workforce, the employers and the State as three interdependent determinants of the form of the class struggle. In specific terms however the various strategies involved - the aristocracy of labour, employer liberalisation and State regulation - all took forms which were specific to individual locations.

It seems that all of this is highly suggestive of approaches which can be taken to a study of the North East, yet there still remain largely unexplored issues involving the culture and ideology of the workforce and of their notions of rights and citizenship. Without wishing to belittle the importance of studying the full range of explanations of class formation it is clear that the analysis of the precise nature of working class radical activity still needs to go further. Thus while the next chapter will proceed to look in detail at the applicability of Foster's theory of the labour aristocracy for the North East, the subsequent chapter will return to the issues raised here to analyse more closely the cultural and ideological currents within radicalism and their relationship to the State form and its attendant developments.

Chapter 6Notes

1. N. Kirk The Growth of Working Class Reformism in Mid Victorian England (Croom Helm, 1985) p.x.
2. W.H. Maehl (1963) op.cit. p.106.
3. A. Briggs, Chartist Studies (Macmillan 1959).
4. W.H. Maehl (1963) op.cit. p106.
5. R.P. Hastings (1978) op.cit.
6. ibid p.7. In an unpublished paper entitled Chartism on Teesside, Malcolm Chase take issue with Hastings over the strength of the movement in the area.
7. W.W. Rostow The British Economy in the Nineteenth Century (Oxford 1948); W.W. Rostow, 'The take off into self sustained growth' The Economic Journal 1956; N.J. Smelser, Social change in the Industrial Revolution (1959).
8. F. Engels, The Condition of the Working Class in England (Panther edition, 1969) p.254-266.
9. A. Briggs (1959) op.cit. Ch1.
10. M.I. Thomis and P. Holt, Threats of Revolution in Britain 1789-1848 (Macmillan, 1977) p.129-130.
11. See Northern Star 26.2.1842 for nominations, 13.7.1839 for female involvement. R.P. Hastings op.cit. for general picture. Gateshead Chartists sat on the general council for Newcastle. Northern Star 27.11.1841
12. Northern Star 11.9.1841, 22.1.1842, 26.3.1842, 11.6.1842.
13. ibid 27.11.1841, 20.5.1843, 4.11.1843.
14. ibid 28.5.1842, 15.1.1842, 3.10.1840 respectively.
15. A search of the Northern Star reveals very few Chartists from Chester le Street. For Stockton see Malcolm Chase Chartism on Teesside and R.P. Hastings, op.cit.
16. Northern Star 8.5.1841, 24.7.1841, 4.6.1842.

17. For Durham mines see P.A. Grant, The Coalmines of Durham City For Hendersons see A descriptive account of Durham and District. 1894 (anon). Hendersons was commenced in 1814 and by 1894 employed 400.
18. P.A. Grant, op.cit p.7.
19. W. Ainsley, Historical and Descriptive Sketches of the City of Durham (1849).
20. The Graphic, 1883.
21. B.T. Robson, Urban analysis: a study of city structure with special reference to Sunderland (London, 1969) p/5-88.
22. T. Corfe History of Sunderland (Frank Graham, 1973) p.93.
23. T.J.Nossiter, 'Dock politics and unholy alliances 1832-1852' in H. Bowling, Some Chapters on the History of Sunderland (Sunderland, 1969) p.86-7.
24. T.J. Nossiter (1968) op.cit. p.140.
25. A.J. Heesom (1974) op.cit. 'A Parliamentary History of Sunderland' in the Wearmouth Magazine 1882, 1884-5; N. McCord and P.A. Wood, 'The Sunderland Election of 1845' Durham University Journal 1959-60.
26. J.F. Clarke, 'The Wear Shipwrights and the arbitration court of 1853-4' NELHS Bulletin 7, 1973 p.20.
27. ibid; see also J.F. Clarke, 'Shipbuilding on the River Wear 1780-1870' in R. Sturgess ed. (1981) op.cit.
28. P. Dunkley, op.cit. p.337.
29. J. Foster (1970) op.cit.
30. J. Foster (1974) op.cit.
31. N. Sunderland, A History of Darlington (Darlington 1967) p112.
32. J.C. Dewdney, 'Growth, Distribution and Structure' in J.C. Dewdney (ed) Durham County and City with Teesside (Durham 1970); R.C. Fox, The Demography of Sunderland 1851 Occasional papers, Dept of Geography and History, Sunderland Polytechnic; M. Sill, Coal Mining Communities in County Durham, op.cit.
33. J.C. Dewdney, op.cit. p.355.
34. Nationally it was to be 1850 before the urban population equalled that of rural areas.

35. P. Dunkley, 'The Hungry Forties and the New Poor Law: A Case Study', The Historical Journal 1974.
36. M. Sill, Coal mining communities in County Durham in the Mid Nineteenth Century Newcastle upon Tyne polytechnic occasional Series in Geography.
37. G. Patterson (1977) op.cit. p.38 plots the movements of two mining families to illustrate general patterns of mobility, discussing their implications for mining communities in terms of understanding, solidarity etc. See also E. Rymer, The Martyrdom of the Mine (1898) and J. Wilson, Memories of a Labour Leader (1910) for descriptions of the semi-itinerant life of mining families.
38. T.A. Devyr (1882) op.cit. W.H. Maehl (1963, 1975) op.cit. D.J. Rowe (1971, 1977) op.cit. J. Rowlands (1983) op.cit.
39. D.J. Rowe (1971) op.cit. p.26.
40. D. Thompson (1984) op.cit. p.106.
41. T.J. Nossiter (1975) op.cit. p.146.
42. M. Hovell op.cit. Ch; E. Dolleans, Le Chartisme 1830-1848'.
43. P. Dunkley (1974) op.cit. R.P. Hastings (1978); N. McCord (1969) op.cit.
44. B.R. Brown 'Industrial Capitalism, conflict and working class contention in Lancashire, 1842' in L.A. Tilly and C. Tilly Class Conflict and Collective Action (1981).
45. P. Dunkley op.cit. p333.
46. T.J. Nossiter (1975) op.cit. p.10.
47. R. Sturgess (1975, 1981, 1986) op.cit. D. Spring, 'The Earls of Durham and the Great Northern Coalfield 1830-1880' Canadian Historical Review 1952; D. Spring, 'The English Landed estate in the age of coal and iron 1830-1880' Journal of Economic History 1951; A. Heesom (1974) op.cit. C. Jones (1986) op.cit. Ch1.
48. The 1831 census returns list males by occupation but make no provision for enumerating the female workforce apart from domestic servants. All other working women are classified as dependants.
49. M. Burawoy, The Politics of Production (1985) Ch.2.
50. L.H. Campey, 'The 1832 Parliamentary election for the Southern Division of the County of Durham', Cleveland and Teesside Local History Society Bulletin 42, 1982, p.25.

51. P. Dunkley, op.cit. p.331.
52. T.J. Nossiter (1968) op.cit. p.151-154.
53. George Charlton, Christopher Haswell, Thomas Pratt, John Tulip, Charles Parkinson, Benjamin Embleton and Mark Dent were all Primitive Methodists. The remainder were Nicholas Morgan, Wilson Ritson, Alex Stoves, William Mitchell, Fairby and W. Palmer.
54. W. Patterson, Northern Primitive Methodism (1909) p336.
55. R. Moore, Pitmen, Preachers and Politics (1974).
56. Many townspeople were frightened of miners and their drunken visits on pay day. For the miners culture generally see M. Pollard, The hardest work under heaven. The life and death of the British Coal Miner (Hutchinson 1984); PEH Hair Social History of British Coal Miners 1800-1845 (1955); J. Benson, British Coal Miners in the Nineteenth Century. A Social History (Gill and McMillan, 1980).
57. For urban culture see J. Walvin, English Urban Life (Hutchinson, 1984).
58. R.P. Hastings, op.cit. p.13.
59. B.R. Brown (1981) op.cit.
60. ibid p.112,117.
61. ibid p.136.
62. ibid p.137.
63. An interesting debate on the nature of capitalist development and radicalism has developed with respect to London: D.J. Rowe, 'The failure of London Chartism' Historical Journal 1968; D. Goodway 'Chartism in London', Labour History Society Bulletin 20, D. Goodway, London Chartism (Cambridge 1982).
64. J. Foster (1974) op.cit. p.131, 147.
65. ibid p.74, Ch.4 generally see also M. Jenkins, The General Strike of 1842 (Lawrence and Wishart 1980) for which Foster also wrote the introduction.
66. J. Foster, ibid p.104,114.
67. ibid p.229.
68. ibid p.80, Ch4.

- 69 ibid p.107, 148.
- 70 ibid p.208-9, 250.
71. ibid 231-237.
72. G.S. Jones, 'Class Struggle and the Industrial Revolution' New Left Review, 1975, p.66.
73. ibid p.47-8.
74. M. Burawoy (1985) op.cit. P. Joyce, Work, Society and Politics. The Culture of the factory in later Victorian England (Harvester, 1980).
75. P. Joyce, op.cit. Ch.4.
76. N. Kirk, The Growth of Working Class Reformism in Mid Victorian England (Croom Helm, 1985).
77. See for example the debate between R. Colls, A. Heesom and B. Duffy, 'Coal Class and Education: A Debate' Past and Present 90, 1981. See also Reports of Commissioners 'State of the population in mining districts' 1844-1859.
78. G.S. Jones, Languages of Class (Cambridge, 1983).
79. See F.C. Mather, Chartism and Society (Bell and Hyman, 1980) for a discussion of different approaches to Chartism.
80. J. Foster (1970) op.cit. p.4.
81. G.S. Jones (1983) op.cit. See also criticisms of Stedman-Jones' view: 'J. Foster, 'The Declassing of language', New Left Review 150, 1985; J. Cronin, 'Language, Politics and the critique of Social History', Journal of Social History Vol.2, 1986.
82. See Chapter 8 below.
83. J. Cronin (1986) op.cit.
84. J. Foster (1970) op.cit. p.4.
85. A.J. Heesom (1974) op.cit.
86. Cited in Heesom op.cit.
87. Eliot to Londonderry, Londonderry Manuscripts 21.4.1852 cited in T.J. Nossiter (1975) op.cit. p.82. For Eliot See W.D. Lawson, Tyneside Celebrities (1873); R.W. Sturgess, 'Social Mobility of North East pitmen in the nineteenth century', NELHS Bulletin 20, 1986.

88. Cited in A.J. Heesom (1974) op.cit.
89. R. Sturgess (1975) op.cit. p.30.
90. M. Burawoy, op.cit. p.91.
91. ibid p.98.
92. R. Moore, Pitmen, Preachers and Politics (Cambridge, 1974).
93. New Moral World 3.7.1841, 28.8.1841, 20.11.1841.
94. Cited in A.J. Heesom (1974) op.cit.
95. For labour process theory generally See H. Braverman, Labour and Monopoly Capitalism (New York 1974). See also R. Glen, Urban Workers in the early industrial revolution (Croom Helm, 1984).
96. D.J. Rowe (1971) op.cit. p.21.

Chapter 7Prototypicality reassessed: Foster's Theories of Class Struggle  
and the North East

One of the most innovative studies of working class political radicalism in recent years has been the attempt by John Foster to explain the temporal patterning of activity in Oldham in the second and third quarters of the nineteenth century. With its similarity of concerns, Foster's seminal study provides many points at which direct comparison can be made with the circumstances which pertained in the North East in the same period. Foster himself did consider the North East, and took South Shields as the area's representative in a cross sectional study which incorporated Northampton as well as Oldham(1). To the extent that the focus of Foster's work bears many similarities with that held by the current study, it would seem most appropriate to consider both the internal validity of Foster's points and the extent to which they may, or may not, be applied to a North East context.

Perhaps the most controversial of Foster's arguments has been his contention that part of the explanation for the decline of radical activity from the late 1840s lay in the development of a specifically anti-revolutionary labour aristocratic strata among certain elements within the working class.(2)

The general, and widely held thesis of the labour aristocracy contends that from approximately the mid point of the century certain

groups of workers found themselves or indeed sought to be in a definable strata above that of the mass of the working population. In earlier times skilled artisans had possessed a reputation for radicalism which had often been associated with the possession of skills of literacy. (3) Around mid century however a differently constituted upper stratum is alleged to have emerged which was far less likely to lead the mass of the working class into movements of revolt. These labour aristocrats are charged with having failed to perform a task for which they were historically and strategically suited. As such they were guilty of a betrayal in the sense that they had allowed their class horizons to be limited by the possession of a relatively privileged material and status position.

Before looking at the applicability of this concept to the North East it will be necessary to analyse in more detail the concept itself. For Hobsbawm there were six criteria by which occupations could be assessed as to their labour aristocratic status: their prospects of social security, their conditions of work, their relations with strata above and below them, their general conditions of living, their prospects of future advancement and the level and regularity of their earnings.(4) It is the last of these which Hobsbawm stresses as the most crucial and he is at pains to point out that the way in which the level and regularity of earnings was maintained was largely through strategies which operated to exclude other members of their class from following their profession. Hobsbawm comments that

only certain types of workers were in a position to make or keep their labour scarce enough, or valuable enough, to strike a good bargain. But the relatively favourable terms they got were, to a large extent, actually achieved at the expense of their less favoured colleagues.(5)

The development of labour aristocracies were thus steps towards a weakening of any class solidarity which had been developed in periods of radicalism.

Hobsbawm's criteria have been criticised on a number of points. There are thought to be four major omissions and these involve discussion on the levels of unionisation, the extent of sub-contracting, the strategic importance of particular groups of workers to an industry, and the possession or otherwise of scarce skills. This last criterion has aroused much debate as it provides the grounds on which new claimants for labour aristocratic status can be assessed. As a warning however it should be noted that the notion of 'skill' is not a fixed one and the successful definition of a task may be a result of bargaining whereby some occupations have been more successful than others in having the attribute of skill acknowledged.

Debate also surrounds some of Hobsbawm's other criteria. Pelling has argued that high wages, supposedly a mark of aristocratic status, may in fact have been a form of compensation necessary to attract workers to occupations with high rates of accident and disease.(6) Tholfsen argues that for at least one group of labour aristocrats, the iron moulders, joblessness was an omnipresent threat for which sectionalism, elite pretensions and other labour aristocratic strategies offered little real defence.(7) According to Tholfsen, the only trait of the labour aristocracy which mattered with the masters was their subservience and this is echoed by Keith Burgess who alleges that

in all the major industries the privileged minority of "labour aristocratic" trade unionists usually performed managerial functions. (8)

This separation at work found its mirror in the community as the labour aristocrats sought better housing away from the less respectable working class. In other respects however Burgess is happy to accept the view of labour aristocrats as a privileged section of the working class with much higher material rewards and much lower rates of unemployment and in many respects Burgess's description is almost archetypal in its assessment of this politically quiescent strata.(9) Foster by contrast has taken the analysis much further in his study of Oldham, Northampton and South Shields.

Foster stresses four new aspects of the labour aristocracy which are the possession of authority at work, the intentionality of its creation by the bourgeoisie, its use as a form of social control and its position as a response to technological demands.(10) Of these it is perhaps the second point which requires the most serious attention.

The idea that the labour aristocracy was deliberately created by the bourgeoisie derives from Lenin who regarded such groups not merely as self seeking and privileged workers but as lackeys. They were

the stratum of workers turned bourgeois ... who are quite philistine in their mode of life ... the labour lieutenants of the capitalist class, real vehicles of reformism and chauvinism. (11)

Foster, following Lenin, saw this strata as new and qualitatively different from the old craft elite and as being funded by the bourgeoisie from the increased profits of imperial expansion. This strata emerged in the 1840s and the key to its new position lay in the possession of industrial authority. By the 1860s Foster asserts, about one third of all workers in engineering and approximately a third of all male workers in cotton were acting as pacemakers and task masters

over the rest, and in doing so made a decisive break with all previous traditions of skilled activity.(12) In this way the political vanguard of Oldham's working class who had been so prominent in the class based agitations of 1834 and 1842 came to fill, in Burgess's terms, 'the functions of capitalism' by the late 1840s and 1850s.

Foster is clear that the creation of a pace setting grade represents a buying off or a deliberate bribe of a section of the working class by management and this adherence to Leninist explanations has led to criticisms from, among others, E.P. Thompson and G Stedman Jones.(13) Thompson considers that Foster has developed a model from contemporary theoretical concerns and then imposed it upon his historical subjects without entering into a dialogue with the cultural concepts held by those subjects. Although Foster himself claimed that his study was 'experimental' G Stedman Jones still finds it a source of criticism that the Oldham narrative is read through Leninist concepts in ways which perform a disservice to the issues of historical methodology discussed earlier.(14) In Foster's work facts are fitted to a predetermined framework rather than the facts and theory being allowed to interact with one another. Partly in consequence of this Foster remains prone to allegations that his framework prevents him from making an appropriate assessment of details which do not accord neatly with his hypotheses. Hence others have stressed the sectionalism, division, continuity and modest aims of the Lancashire skilled workers in a way which has clear

discrepancies with the evidence provided by Foster.(15)

Musson for example argues that differentials in reward were not the result of bourgeois bribes but the outcome of custom and conflict, while the 1840s remains far too early a period to make any specific connections of wage differentials with imperialism. Musson further considers that the labour aristocracy was not the result of bourgeois intentions and that the alleged anti-radical influence of the strata cannot be convincingly demonstrated.(16)

In this he echoes Henry Mayhew who, writing in the 1860s, felt that in his experience it was the non-artisans who were the least radical sector of the working class.

The artisans were almost to a man red hot politicians ... the unskilled labourers are a different class of people. As yet they are as unpolitical as footmen, and instead of entertaining violent, democratic opinions, they appear to have no political opinion whatever.(17)

In addition, grave doubts have been expressed about the usefulness of the general thesis of the labour aristocracy. G.S. Jones, perhaps Foster's severest critic, has argued that

the term has often been used as if it provided an explanation. But it would be more accurate to say that it pointed towards a vacant space where an explanation should be. (18)

Field has argued that

the concept of a labour aristocracy has at best a limited explanatory value and even this must be used carefully to avoid undue functionalism. (19)

The explanation which is sought is that of the fate of working class activity after its peak in the years prior to the close of 1848. Some would argue that the extent of true revolutionary fervour in the period has been exaggerated and that the explanations of a slump in

radicalism following years of boom is misconceived. It is argued that labour aristocratic theories are not needed as explanations for Chartism failure for example because its failure lay elsewhere - in such factors as the way in which the State form altered and the way in which Chartism's targets altered their positions in ways which deflected and ultimately emasculated the potency of Chartism's threat. These issues will be pursued more fully later, but the sum of the approach is the contention that the labour aristocratic thesis is unimportant because the supposed conditions to which it is alleged to constitute a response of betrayal simply did not exist.

Foster, however, remains firm in his view that the political crisis of the 1830s and 1840s was one in which a definite revolutionary potential existed and that sections of the workforce developed a class consciousness which was revolutionary in character.(20) In this Stedman Jones and others have expressed misgivings by pointing out that Foster's claims go beyond normally accepted views of class antagonism and polarisation. According to Stedman Jones:

Foster's claim involves more than this, 'class consciousness' as he employs the term, is virtually synonymous with "revolutionary class consciousness". This is ... debatable. Absence of sectionalism and "intellectual conviction" by no means of themselves entail a revolutionary standpoint. (21)

In similar vein Grey has argued that

it is not valid to introduce the role of a corrupt labour aristocracy as a special pleading to explain the absence of revolutionary politics.

The labour aristocracy cannot have betrayed a revolutionary working class if the object of betrayal did not exist in the first place.(22)

A further line of attack on the thesis has been to allege that the labour aristocrats were not class collaborators at all but the very vanguard of the labour movement. Such a position was hinted at by Mayhew, cited earlier, and finds resonance in several more recent works. Crossick, for example, has argued that

the labour aristocracy achieved its position through struggle and conflict, not capitulation

while McLennan argues that

such militancy as the class showed, the aristocracy participated in. They were responsible for the preservation of class institutions as much as for their incorporation. (23)

This emphasis on institutions marks the point of departure of these particular critics from the framework used by Foster himself. Foster, it is argued, has concentrated too much on the labour process and relationships within the production process, and has given short shrift to aspects such as the culture of the workers, their attitudes to employers and the State, and their conceptions of political and citizenship rights. This is then alleged to have produced an insensitivity on Foster's behalf towards the richness, and indeed the ambiguities, of working class culture.(24) Foster's pacemakers for example enjoyed supervisory control at the workplace but this stratification at work was not merely one of aristocrats and non-aristocrats. It was stratified both by gender and age in ways which cut across patterns of family and kinship. Thus a pacemaker's charges included the wives and children of his friends, relatives and neighbours. The impact of this on cultural patterns outside work has not been touched upon.

An opportunity to look at these matters is provided by the North East yet analysis of the labour aristocracy in this region has been rare. Nossiter for example has commented that

it is striking that so little part was played by a labour aristocracy in electoral radicalism

in the North East.(25) This seems to assume that a labour aristocracy did exist but begs the question as to who they might have been.

Nossiter further comments that

perhaps there are special features in the character and history of the North East which makes the shopocracy more important, and the labour aristocracy less so, than elsewhere ... (26)

Again this seems to assume the physical presence of an aristocracy without attributing to it any specific role.

The strength of Foster's analysis however lies in the explanatory force which he gives the labour aristocracy and its relationship to the changing class structure. Nossiter's aristocracy and shopocracy on the other hand remain little more than descriptive categories whose influence over developments is left largely unexplored. Given this it would seem appropriate to look again at the role of the labour aristocracy in the North East and, given the miners' contribution to Chartism, an investigation can be made of the extent to which they substantiate elements of Foster's analysis. If the colliers were part of the mass working class movement of the Chartist period can subsequent quiescence be explained in labour aristocratic terms, bearing in mind the reservations originally applied to the entire labour aristocracy thesis?

First impressions would not be particularly optimistic. For the 1850s and 60s it would be very difficult to demonstrate that the leaders of the miners had been bribed or bought off by the super profits of imperialism. On the contrary many of the miners' leaders were victimised, or held on to their jobs only by keeping low profile.

Similarly it is difficult to argue for the existence of imperial super profits when the major market for coal was the domestic hearths of London and when the dominance of the North East coalfield was threatened by competition from other fields opened up by the new forms of transport. Subcontracting or the butty system, while employed on other coalfields, had no place in the North East and the creation of a pace-setting grade, similar to that in Oldham, cannot be demonstrated.(27)

Thus the initial signs are not encouraging, and the opponents of the labour aristocracy thesis generally, and of Foster in particular, have not been slow to exploit this apparent weakness. One review of the labour aristocracy literature for example praises Pelling for drawing attention to this very issue, arguing that

One of Pelling's more telling points is that no-one has managed to find an aristocracy among the coal mining labour force.(28)

The anti-aristocratic theme in coalmining has a long pedigree. In the early nineteenth century viewers were keen to point out the ease with which colliers could be replaced by blacklegs as a bargaining ploy in negotiations. In 1832 for example Brandling wrote that

it requires neither greater skill nor any long previous training to become an expert coalworkman, and that such labour is abundant and easily to be provided. (29)

As indicated earlier however the experience of blackleg and diluted labour tended to prove the opposite point - that the best colliers were born and bred to the work. Coal mining was a difficult job for an adult to take to afresh and this is demonstrated by the swift disappearance of outside men once disputes were over.(30)

Despite the problems of dilutees, many authorities endorsed Brandling's assertions. Hobsbawm points out that

contemporary statistics ... habitually isolated 'labourers' - ie the unskilled, the miners and similar groups - as a separate class. (31)

If Brandling saw replaceability as a major factor preventing skilled or aristocratic status, Pelling locates other factors. Within mining, he argues,

there was no apprenticeship system ... and all students of mining villages have stressed their extraordinary social cohesion, which must be ascribed in part to their isolation and concentration upon one type of employment, in part to the common dangers of the miner's life, and in part to the absence of social cleavage such as might apply where a labour aristocracy existed. (32)

Each of these points can be contested. Some studies have pointed to a de facto apprenticeship system in coal mining whereby progression to the position of hewer could only be obtained by passage through the grades of lesser tasks. The term apprenticeship was in common use by observers and the men themselves in Scotland, while at least one observer described the progression from trapping to hewing as 'a regular apprenticeship'.(33) Against this Pelling would argue that the top miners or top earners were characterised by attributes of age and physique rather than skill, and the concept of skill in mining itself merits further investigation.

Royden Harrison for example has pointed out that the features of pit work run contrary to Hobsbawm's criteria for a labour aristocracy in several important areas. Firstly the nature of the work was significantly heavier and dirtier than that of other labour aristocracies. This however begs the question somewhat, presenting the

defining features of an aristocracy in terms of lightness and cleanliness in ways which are dangerously close to being tautological. In so doing miners are 'checked off' against an unseen list of aristocrats whose identities and qualities are left assumed. One is almost left wondering whether the presence of factory or foundry noise is regarded as a necessary condition of the aristocracy.

It is alleged (if not perhaps taken seriously) that the dirt in which the different tasks underground were carried out made recognition of status inequalities through appearance difficult to make. Further, pit earnings peaked earlier in life than those of other aristocrats and thereafter fell. They were, in any event, much more prone to wide fluctuations due to the risk of accident. (34)

For Foster the major factor indicating the absence of a labour aristocracy in mining areas, (and he concedes the weaknesses this places in his overall scheme), is that there was no deliberately created pace setting grade or class of workers which performed managerial functions. He writes for example that

there was a considerable, if not complete, change in the political attitudes of the mining population. The real question is whether it amounted to the development of a labour aristocracy. In the strict sense the answer is probably no. There was no creation of a distinct grade within the labour force (like the piecemasters or spinners) exercising authority on behalf of the management. (35)

Having defined the labour aristocracy in a new and novel manner, Foster has found that self imposed criteria lead him to exclude an occupational group whose inclusion, had it been possible, would have strengthened his overall thesis.

As Holbrook-Jones has shown however, pacemaking is not necessarily the sole basis on which claims to aristocratic status should be referred.(36) On the contrary while the cotton labour aristocracy formed part of the management's strategy to promote pace-setting, aristocratic status in engineering was based on skill. In this sense the debate between Pelling and Hobsbawn is resolved in that the labour aristocracy cannot be linked exclusively to any one process but was created and reproduced in different ways in different industries. In addition, Holbrook-Jones argues that the forces which reproduce labour aristocracies are in themselves forces which reproduce capitalism too. Hence if a labour aristocracy is sought in mining, skill or pace-setting do not necessarily have to be the criteria. With respect to coal mining in the North East, Holbrook Jones argues that a number of factors operated to provide a different basis for a labour aristocracy. These included the nature of direct State regulation of the mines and mine employment, the exclusion of women workers, the use of kinship networks and family organisation in recruitment policies and, somewhat later, the employees' direct recourse to the law. It was the status of the hewer, reinforced by notions of masculinity, which was crucial:

The specialised role of the hewer and the de facto apprenticeship combined with the reality that their work was the fulcrum of the pits' operations, gave them a high status in the community and in the life of the local lodge. (37)

The sexual division of labour was at its most extreme on the coalfield and the question of placing males in supervisory or pace-setting roles over females simply did not arise, thus making a precise Oldham-cotton

industry type of labour aristocracy impossible. At the same time the strategies of the men themselves over issues such as reductions in hours, were shaped differently from Oldham in accordance with this absence of female employment.(38)

Foster however insists that the failure of the miners to adopt authority positions at work excludes them from labour aristocratic considerations. They are also excluded on two further grounds. Firstly, Foster defined the labour aristocracy as a group deliberately created and subsequently bribed by the masters in cotton. The creation of a hewer grade simply would not fit into this form of analysis. Coal employers, if anything, were more inclined to want to break the power of the hewers than to bribe them. Secondly it is difficult to see where surplus profits for bribing coal aristocrats would have come from unless some notion of a switching fund be incorporated into the analysis. It is with regret then that Foster abandons hope of incorporating colliers into the labour aristocracy thesis of radicalism's decline and cotton, or rather capitalist developments in the cotton industry, is left as the major support to sustain the analysis.

Yet there is considerable evidence to support the notion that a labour aristocracy existed in coal mining. Alan Campbell, writing of Scottish coal miners, argues that

the activities of the Lanarkshire and Ayrshire colliers ... are resonant with examples of the artisanal consciousness developed by the Scots colliers in the years following their emancipation.(39)

Among these activities were semi-masonic 'brotherings' of a type traditionally a feature of tradesmen. In the 1830s, argues Campbell,

colliers and miners were located in the category of 'skilled labour' alongside cotton spinners, iron founders, engineers, tailors and bakers. Although this in itself would hardly constitute aristocratic status, it stands in contrast to Hobsbawm's inclusion of miners among the unskilled. For the Durham coalfield Sturgess refers to the hewers as the 'aristocrats of the workforce.'(40) Hewers

worked shorter hours than putters, an indication not merely of their higher status, but also of the inability of the putters to keep up with their rate of coal getting. (41)

Campbell cites Jevons and Goodrich as saying that miners were craftsmen and highly skilled and cites examples of the great pride colliers took in their work such as was shown by ceremonial occasions such as hole boring competitions.(42) In 1853 'A Traveller Underground' wrote that

to hew coal well is a peculiar and difficult work. The men have been brought up to it, or brought into it, through the successive grades of trapping, teaming and putting. Hewing is the topmost promotion - the colonelcy of the regiment. (43)

The argument that miners should still be omitted from a list of labour aristocrats because their skills were not transferable does not stand up to scrutiny. The skills of several traditionally accepted aristocrats had very limited transferability too. (44) In Harrison's words the evidence on skill impresses upon us how reasonable were the miners' claims to the title of craftsmen and how legitimate were his aspirations to labour aristocratic status.(45)

For the North East coalfield Welbourne pointed out that the miners generally held a privileged position. Women underground, truck (after 1832), the butty system and pauper apprentices were unknown in

the north and there was

none of that hopeless starvation common in the trades where machinery was steadily displacing labour. (46)

Carol Jones, in a recent thesis which unfortunately fails to engage with Foster's themes, takes a firm line in arguing that the North East coal miners' special skills warrant their description as labour aristocrats. She contrasts notions of the 'independent workman' with those of 'degraded slaves' and concludes that in the nature of their skill, their privileges and working patterns and their power struggle with the coal owners, the miners were indeed aristocrats with the hewer 'at the apex of the pit hierarchy'.(47)

The notion of stratified work is endorsed by Martin Daunton in a comparative study of North East and South Wales miners where he also argues that hewers enjoyed a privileged position at work and in the community. The threat to this status did not come until much later when

the switch from pick and shovel work to mechanised work ... meant an assault upon the craft status of the hewer and the replacement of a vertical by a horizontal division of labour. (48)

Although the two coalfields shared much in common, the differing geology of the two areas contributed to a difference in winning costs and in the ways in which work was organised. In the North East an even more differentiated and hierarchical workforce was thereby produced.(49) As Daunton remarks

the hewer in the North East and the collier in South Wales were both at the top of the social hierarchy in their villages ... (but) ... the pitman in the North East was conscious of a more variegated pattern of income and privilege than was his peer in South Wales. (50)

The records show that income was higher, hours less and rent free houses more easily obtained for the hewers.(51)

In direct contrast to Pelling, Daunton perceives the way that work was stratified by age as being an argument in favour of seeing the hewers as aristocrats. While Pelling considered that age stratification marked miners apart from aristocratic groups in that older miners suffered reduced earnings, Daunton's stress is on the way in which adolescent peer groups were stratified into occupations which were quite clearly perceived and defined as inferior. Within the community former hewers retained a status, despite their loss of earnings, which was yet to be earned by juvenile aspirants. Daunton does however go too far in locating these age-specific work grades as the only or indeed the major source of generational conflict in coal mining communities. Despite the allegation that

entry to work was always outside the orbit of the family  
and any generational conflict was on a more general basis

it remains, on the contrary, well documented that for many the family was an essential part of the entry to work.(52) Hewers were more likely to be given cottages if they had sons rather than daughters, with the implication being that the sons were expected to follow into the pit. In addition fathers were expected to be present in order to sign on their sons for work.(53)

The determination of the owners to recruit indigenous youths stemmed from the belief held by many, in contradiction to the sentiments expressed by Brandling, that the best colliers were bred to the work.(54) Such a policy ran great risks of labour shortage however

and this may have contributed again to aspects of aristocratic conditions found in mining. While other occupational groups protected their status through formal restrictions on entry, colliers enjoyed a natural restriction through demographic factors. Then again most of the occupations normally classified as aristocratic were characterised by an absence of women and children from the trade and on these grounds coal mining, or at least hewing, may once again be considered aristocratic.(55) Hewers moreover remain the key group underground able to control the speed at which coal was won and hence the pace at which many others worked. Set against this however remains the fact that hewers were not overlookers or in direct control over other grades of miner.

Some of the criteria of a labour aristocracy do seem to be met by coal miners and as G S Jones has remarked,

in mining there emerged the ideological presence of a labour aristocracy but no tangible pace making structure in the labour force. (56)

What this implies is that the acquisition of aristocratic status and ideology is not necessarily determined by the possession of pace-setting functions and in that sense Holbrook-Jones' view that differing strategies could be utilised to endorse claims to aristocratic status is supported. If one accepts this however the question of Foster's insistence on pace setting as the exclusive determining factor of the labour aristocracy remains unresolved. What remains is the unsatisfactory and uncomfortable conclusion that whether or not one accepts miners as labour aristocrats depends upon

how the term is defined in the first instance. Thus if skill is taken as the defining feature, the conclusions reached will be very different from those which would derive from different definitions such as those based on pace setting.

Hence to apply Foster's analysis to coalmining in the North East would require a departure from the central tenets of pace making and bribery from the superprofits of imperialism and such a departure may be considered too radical to remain within the general framework of Foster's argument.

The challenge to Foster therefore takes two major forms. Firstly within his own chosen field Foster's definitions of and approaches to the labour aristocracy is seen as being too narrow. Secondly, and partly as a result, the inflexibility in the definition of terms severely limits the potential held by Foster's general framework for analysing areas in which labour aristocracies did not fit the Oldham pattern.

The roots of this inflexibility can be traced back to the assumptions which underly Foster's work generally and these are best exemplified in referrals to

the logic of capitalist development expressed in particular industries. (57)

Despite all the digressions into patterns of marriage, cultural institutions, political affiliations, work attitudes, vanguard groups and bourgeois liberalisation, economic motors remain the essential factors which explain the patterning of activity and it was Oldham's cotton industry, as it experience the full force of the economic contradictions of the first phase of the industrial revolution, which

provided the recruits to radicalism's cause.

In Oldham's surrounding area, the coalmining industry did not develop a political radicalism until after the years most crucial to cotton militancy. Thus Foster writes that

it was only after 1842, during the brief career of the Miners Association of Great Britain, that one starts to get the miners emerging into the mainstream of local politics ... just at the time when cotton's militancy was dying down. (58)

Cotton, having experienced the contradiction in capitalism first and produced working class radicalism accordingly, was followed in subsequent years by other industries as they began to display the same contradictions with the same (lagged) results.

Hence the thrust of Foster's argument with respect to South Shields and by inference the North East is that Shield's labour movement was less class conscious because it was not as far to the forefront of capitalist development as Oldham. The problems of South Shields' industries did not present themselves to the workforce in ways which were amenable to an anti-capitalist analysis and hence the radical movement was deprived of a clearly defined target.(59) This absence in turn contributed to the failure of trade consciousness to grow into class consciousness.(60) While this may have been true for the shipping interest, however, this does not provide a justification for denying that other industries in the area provoked this kind of response. In addition criticism can be made of the lack of specificity in the way in which the term 'anti-capitalist' is used. Logically this could be taken to refer to hostility to the physical aspects of capitalism's presence. Equally it could refer to a desire to halt or

limit capitalism's growth, and this desire may or may not be based on a coherent set of anti-capitalist principles and a vision of alternative economic and social arrangements.

Thus Foster rests much of his analysis on the way in which trade union or labour consciousness came to be transformed into class consciousness through the logic of capitalist development. Yet radicalism cannot simply be read off from unilinear developments in the nature of industrially specific capitalist development. 1839 for example was a year in which revolutionary fervour was in evidence and in which South Shields itself displayed belligerence.(61) Oldham on the other hand was relatively quiet and the problems which this poses for Foster's model leads him to maintain a diplomatic (or embarrassed) silence over the events of that year.

Stedman-Jones suggests that the reasons for Oldham's passivity may be found from a reconsideration of Oldham's relative isolation from the poor trade conditions which prevailed elsewhere in that year but to take such a move would serve merely to take the analysis back a step to cruder economic explanations which have already been found wanting.(62) If Oldham's quiescence in 1839 is explained in terms of affluence, then the North East's radicalism at a time of relative prosperity remains even more problematic.

In effect the stress on the logic of capitalist development, despite an initial appealing tidiness, remains overdeterministic and Foster implicitly recognises this by stressing the active role of vanguard groups and the importance of the working class and middle class leadership at times when the economic model fails to correspond

with the historical record.

Thus politics is brought into the model at times when economic developments alone cannot provide adequate explanations yet the source and content of the political initiatives is itself left largely unexplored. In this sense the labour aristocracy in cotton is seen as a product of capital's growth while its language, leadership and ideas remain of secondary consideration.

This neglect has been taken up by Burawoy who has attempted to show how different production regimes produced different types of politics and his concept of the 'politics of production' helps to link together labour processes and worker responses at a more complex level than that which derives from the stress on pace setting and supervision which in turn rests heavily on the presence of female and juvenile labour in cotton.(63)

Burawoy's work helps to identify the specific features of Oldham's factory regimes and the possible ways in which these related to the development of working class politics. From this point a number of other reservations can be made as to the wider generalisability of the Oldham findings. Indeed Oldham seems to have been untypical in several respects. Firstly its early radicalism incorporated Paineite and Cobbett inspired appeals to small producers which were not always applicable elsewhere. Secondly Oldham's working class appeared to have been able to overcome sectional loyalties and display a level of intellectual conviction which again was not universal. Oldham's radicals were split when some of them joined the Tories over the Ten Hours agitation while in the North East the radicals were split when some joined the Whigs over Corn Law Repeal.(64)

In the North East there was considerable concern over suspect banking practices, while it is a criticism of Foster's work that the potential implications of banking instability were not considered.(65) In the North East there was, at least temporarily, a genuine attempt by socialist semi-intellectuals to politicise the mining areas while in Oldham the leaders of the working class movement were essentially artisans.(66)

This list could be extended but that would take us further from rather than closer to an analysis of class development and the patterning of radical activity on the coalfield. To be more positive stock must be taken of what remains of substance in order to provide a number of starting points from which an analysis of the local picture can proceed.

Firstly it seems clear that radicalism developed not simply as a result of the capitalist economic crises of specific industries, although this undoubtedly played a major part, but that its basis of support went wider to include, at the very least, a number of specific political grievances consequent upon the 1832 Reform Act. The content of radicalism therefore requires close investigation and a failure to perform such an analysis has been one of the most severe criticisms levelled against Foster's work. John Saville has remarked that Foster has

offered nothing which helps us define the political ideas of this working class leadership

and he continues to say that

it is precisely the failure to define and then to examine language and ideas that makes Foster's argument for a mass revolutionary consciousness in Oldham so unconvincing.(67)

This failure is seen as contributing to the plausibility of the analysis rather than its irrefutability. Stedman-Jones has pointed out that political consciousness was as much a response to the political breaches of the 1830s as it was due to the growth of industrial capitalism.(68) He also criticises Foster's concentration on the form rather than the content of class consciousness, arguing that an analysis of the content of the leader's speeches may well reveal the degree to which the radical vanguard genuinely held a revolutionary class consciousness, while the way in which the radicals saw the State and the political agencies by which control of the State was to be gained, remain important areas for investigation.

Yet the content of political radicalism is available for the North East and a study of its language does indeed reveal a picture somewhat at odds with that presented for Oldham, with far greater stress being placed on notions of tyranny and oppression and the way in which these were buttressed by a corrupt legislature and judiciary.(69) In addition the language of North East radicalism was affected by the different gender relations which prevailed in that demands for shorter working hours were not couched in terms of protecting women as they were in Oldham.

The content of radicalism is accessible through the recorded speeches of its leaders and through knowledge of the extent to which certain themes achieved greater resonance with their audiences than others. James Williams' speeches at the Leeds election are available for inspection as are various trial reports, while the press carried almost complete texts from missionary speeches to miners and other

large crowds. In terms of resonance it is noticeable that religious imagery was particularly successful, together with the themes of exploitation and expropriation. These could advance as far as the principles of socialism and the beehive analogy, yet purely Owenite message had only limited geographical acceptance while republicanism received even less.(70)

The resources are therefore available to build upon the work of Foster and Burawoy and to look at the language, ideas and leadership of the working class and to the forces which lay behind their ideas and understanding. In this the importance of capitalist development and factory regimes is not denied but rather taken as an essential part of an explanation which needs to consider further the way in which these interacted with aspects of political consciousness as it developed both inside and outside the place of work. Political grievances were often precisely that, and notions of citizenship rights, attitudes to the State and perceptions of the law are essential complements to workplace based accounts of political radicalism.

In conclusion the applicability of Foster's theories of class struggle to the North East remains questionable, not least in terms of the stress which is placed on the nature and significance of the labour aristocracy. Despite these reservations however Foster's work remains a crucial starting point and the task which remains is to develop the analysis further by taking into account the content and language of working class politics, and the forces behind them, in ways which provide a balance to any over emphasis on production forces.

Chapter 7Notes

1. J. Foster, Class Struggle and the Industrial Revolution (Methuen 1974) also 'South Shields' labour movement in the 1830s and 1840s' North East Labour History Society bulletin 4 (1970)
2. For the labour aristocracy generally see J. Field, 'British Historians and the concept of the labour aristocracy.' Radical History Review, 19 (1979); E.A. Musson, 'Discussion: Class struggle and the labour aristocracy, 1830-60.' Social History 1976; J. Hinton, 'The Labour Aristocracy' New Left Review 32, 1965; G. Crossick, 'The labour aristocracy and its values: A study of mid-Victorian Kentish London' Victorian Studies 19, 1976; R. Gray The labour aristocracy in Victorian Edinburgh (Oxford 1976); E. Hobsbawm, Labouring Men Weidenfeld and Nicholson 1964; R. Penn, Skilled workers in the class structure Cambridge; 1985; H. Pelling 'Popular politics and society in late Victorian Britain (1968); R. Gray The aristocracy of labour in nineteenth century Britain c 1850-1914 (Macmillan 1981); H.F. Moorhouse, 'The Marxist theory of the labour aristocracy', Social History 1978.
3. D. Vincent, Testaments of Radicalism (Europa 1977); Bread Knowledge and Freedom (Methuen 1981)
4. E. Hobsbawm (1964) op.cit. p273
5. ibid p.322
6. H. Pelling (1968) op.cit.
7. T. Tholfsen, Working class Radicalism in Mid-Victorian Britain (Croom Helm 1976) p.193.
8. K. Burgess, The Challenge of Labour (Croom Helm 1980) p.27.
9. ibid p.16.
10. J. Foster (1974) op.cit. p.229.
11. V.I. Lenin, Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism (Moscow 1975) p.14.
12. J. Foster (1974) op.cit. p.237.
13. E.P. Thompson, 'Testing Class Struggle', Times Higher Education Supplement 8.4.1974; G. Stedman Jones, 'Class struggle and the Industrial Revolution', New Left Review 90, 1975.

14. G. Stedman Jones (ibid) p.46-9.
15. See for example R. Glen (op.cit.).
16. E.A. Musson op.cit. p.335-356.
17. H. Mayhew, London Labour (1881 edition vol III) p.233.
18. G. Stedman Jones (op.cit.) p.61.
19. J. Field (op.cit.) p.77.
20. J. Foster (1974) op.cit. p.149.
21. G. Stedman Jones (op.cit.) p.48.
22. R. Gray (1981) op.cit. p.38.
23. G. Crossick op.cit. p.15; G. McLennan, 'Marxism and the Methodologies of History' (Verso 1981) p.221.
24. J. Field op.cit. p.76.
25. T.J. Nossiter (1975) op.cit. p.160.
26. ibid p.161.
27. R. Harrison (ed) Independent Collier: the coalminer as archetypal proletarian reconsidered (Harvester 1978) introduction.
28. J. Field op.cit. p.75.
29. R.W. Brandling, Report by the Committee of the Coal owners respecting the present situation of the trade (Newcastle 1832).
30. M. Sill, Labour migration in the Durham coalfield in the Nineteenth Century (1985).
31. E. Hobsbawm (1964) op.cit. p.276.
32. H. Pelling (1968) op.cit. p.47.
33. Andrew Miller, cited in A Campbell The Lanarkshire Mines (Edinburgh 1979) p.60.
34. R. Harrison op.cit. p.4.
35. J. Foster (1974) op.cit. p.236.
36. M. Holbrook-Jones, Supremacy and Subordination of Labour (Heinemann 1982) p.3-10, 199-200. See also his PhD thesis Work, Industrialisation and Politics. A study of the work experience of spinners, coalminers and engineering workers, 1850-1914 University of Durham, 1979, p.351.

37. ibid p.224.
38. In textiles it was an accepted strategy that the campaign for shorter hours should concentrate on women and children. Curtailment of their hours was expected to restrict the number of hours which men could then work. Such a policy was clearly not feasible for coal.
39. A. Campbell, op.cit. p.61.
40. R. Sturgess, The great Age of Industry in the North East (Durham 1981) p.24.
41. ibid p.25.
42. A. Campbell op.cit. p.39-40.
43. Cited in A. Campbell p.40.
44. R. Harrison op.cit., C. Jones, Industrial Relations in the Northumberland and Durham Coal Industry 1825-1845 (1985) ch.3.
45. R. Harrison, op.cit. p.4.
46. E. Welbourne op.cit. p.94.
47. C. Jones op.cit. p.37, 51.
48. M. Daunton, 'Down the Pit: Work in the Great Northern and South Wales Coalfields 1870-1914'. Economic History Review, 1981, p.584.
49. M. Holbrook Jones (1979) op.cit. p.73.
50. M. Daunton op.cit. p.585.
51. Durham Records Office NCB 1/10/86 668, NCB 1/10/86 1
52. M. Daunton op.cit. p.590.
53. For recent testimony see Strong Words But the world goes on the same (Durham 1975) and K. Armstrong, Hornden Miners (Durham 1984).
54. Buddle to Londonderry 16th May 1842 DR0 D/L0/C/42 cited in T. Austrin and H Beynon (1979) op.cit. p.24.
55. E. Hobsbawm (1964) op.cit. p.310.
56. G. Stedman Jones (1975) op.cit. p.63.
57. J. Foster (1974) op.cit. p.124.

58. ibid p.102.
59. ibid Ch.4; J. Foster (1970) op.cit.
60. J. Foster (1974) op.cit. p.121.
61. The Operative 3.2.1839; T.M. Parssinen, 'Association, Convention and anti Parliament in British Radical Politics', English Historical Review 88, 1973, p.523.
62. G. Stedman Jones (1975) op.cit. footnote to p.46.
63. M. Burawoy, The Politics of Production (Verson 1985) Ch.2.
64. J. Foster (1974) op.cit. p.207.
65. For the importance of stable banking practice see M. Kirby, Men of business and politics: the rise and fall of the Quaker Pease dynasty of North East England 1700-1943 (Allen & Unwin 1985).
66. J. Foster (1974) op.cit. p.151-2. See also I. Prothero Artisans and Politics in early Nineteenth Century London (Folkstone, 1979); R. Glen Urban workers in the early Industrial Revolution (Croom Helm, 1984)
67. J. Saville Review of Foster's 'Class struggle and the Industrial Revolution' in the Socialist Register 1974. p.239-40.
68. G. Stedman Jones (1975) op.cit. p.57.
69. See below Ch.8.
70. Northern Star 12.7.1839 contains Redhead's speech on the beehive, 13.2.1841 for an example of republican sentiment.

Chapter 8'Iniquitous Acts', 'Nefarious Statutes':  
Senses of Injustice and the Course of Reform

One of the criticisms which has therefore been levelled at studies of working class radicalism in this period has been the absence of any great concern with content and ideology, particularly as it was expressed through language.(1) It is often argued that Chartism failed because it was unable to develop a consistent theory and that coherent analysis of its aims and methods was absent. In large part the apparent dilettantism of Chartism is attributed to the influence of O'Connor whose activities over the land scheme and his attitude to both Corn Law repeal and the Anti-Corn Law League betrayed a meagre understanding of that capitalist development which constituted the parameters within which Chartism's activities occurred. Some attention has been paid to the influence of theoretical currents within Chartism such as the labour theory of value and the espousal of a more socialist programme, which included land nationalisation, the separation of Church and State, and the creation of a rational system of secular education, which was approved by Chartism's rump.(2)

For much of Chartism's history, however, more has been made of O'Connor's failure to engage with theory - particularly that which was being developed on the continent. Because of this it is alleged that Chartism lacked any theoretical unity and that this remained a fatal

flaw in the movement throughout its existence.

Yet when an analysis of the content of Chartism is made, certain consistencies do appear and the chief of these represents a programme which possesses the coherence which the movement is so often accused of lacking. The argument which runs throughout, and to a degree underpins much of its appeal to a wide variety of constituents, concerns the role of the State and the laws under which the working class lived. The Chartists' central criticism was that they laboured under laws which were morally unjust, which were discriminatory in their effects, which operated to maintain the oppression of the strong over the weak, and which emanated from an unrepresentative and self seeking body. The working class needed the vote in order to pass laws which would be to the benefit of the majority, and to see that the law itself should be administered with an even hand. This programme, almost simplistic in its idealism, is the thread which unites all the apparently disparate elements of Chartism. Even the land plan would increase the number of Chartist voters with the necessary qualifications.

Clearly such a critique of Parliament and the law could only attain currency if it resonated with the experiences of the people to whom it was appealing, and it can be argued that these institutions had lapsed into a state in which they were no longer held in confidence by large numbers of the population, and that a decline in confidence from eighteenth century levels was precisely the background to Chartism's rise.

Many studies have seen the eighteenth century as one of

governmental *laissez-faire* in contrast to the interventionist policies of the nineteenth century. Such a view has been criticised by those who argue that the State was very involved with capitalist economic policy from the start, particularly in the field of regulation(3). Corrigan writes of

the substantial presence of the State, not least in the crucial areas of agrarian change, taxation and law

and goes on to argue that the State's links with economic development took the form of a

double articulation of capitalist policies through a shared ideology and local systems of rule. (4)

The importance of law in the eighteenth century has been taken up by Hay et al who argue that

the law assumed unusual pre-eminence ... as the central legitimizing ideology, displacing the religious authority and sanctions of previous centuries. (5)

Thus the state was responsible not merely for providing the practical context in which capitalism could grow, it also contributed to the moral ethos for development, and it did this largely through the agency of the law. Poulantzas, too, has remarked upon the way in which legal forms came to dominate moral order. According to Poulantzas,

The centre of legitimacy shifts away from the sacred towards legality. Law itself, which is now the embodiment of the people-nation, becomes the fundamental category of state sovereignty; and judicial-political ideology supplants religious ideology as the predominant form. (6)

Hay argues that the law was used by the gentry, the judiciary and the manufacturers to re-create previously threatened patterns of deference and in so doing contributed to their power to rule. Law, while not quite a mask, served sectional interests by the way in which

it contributed to the subordination of the lower classes. As Taylor has said

the law became the arena within which a particular class interest gave itself the appearance of universal interest. (7)

Eighteenth century law operated both as justice and coercion with the gallows and, perhaps more importantly, the power to pardon from the gallows appearing as the high point of each. The law, justices of the peace, quarter sessions, assizes and Tyburn became the theatres through which hegemony was expressed rather than the possible alternatives of military might, the priesthood or the press. As Thompson has said,

Eighteenth century law... existed in its own right, as ideology: as an ideology which not only served, in most respects, but which also legitimized class power. (8)

Thompson departs from Hay, however, in the degree of intentionality believed to exist within the evident partiality of the law. For while Hay is clear that the law is an instrument of class rule, Thompson prefers to believe that a disembodied essence of law and legal justice still prevailed. While Thompson would not agree with the way the law was systematically used and abused by those with power he insists that the law itself may transcend sectional interest. Hence, Dawley has accused Thompson of depicting the eighteenth century State as

an exquisite balance of social forces rather than a mere reflection of the collective will of the dominant interests. (9)

Thompson's insistence on the notion of law as essence, remaining, at least in part, separate from a base in the class structure, is one

which sits at odds with many of his contemporaries. R.S. Neale, for example, argues strongly that in the eighteenth century a commercially orientated aristocracy used its power to redefine property law in its own interest and secure conditions without which industrialisation could not have developed.(10) Hall et al also argue that the concepts and practices of the law were changing in parallel with changing concepts and structures of bourgeois property.(11) In consequence of this, Hall argues, much of the class interest of the law was disguised, yet remained quite firmly class based. The possibility remained, that should the 'rough harmony' in which law and property rights were moving ever break down, then the disguise would cease to be effective. This, it will be argued, is what happened in the period after 1832, but first it will be appropriate to consider some of the elements which comprised eighteenth and early nineteenth century law.

The law can be subdivided in several ways for purposes of examination with stress being placed on civil, criminal or constitutional aspects. Thompson, among others, is also alert to the value of studying law as theatre, as personnel, and as ideology. The law as ideology serves to legitimate existing relations of power, in part through a process of masking. As Abrams has pointed out, the essence of legitimation is that

what is being legitimated is, we may assume, something which if seen directly and as itself would be illegitimate, an unacceptable domination. (12)

Thompson asserts that

the law ... may be seen instrumentally as mediating and reinforcing existent class relations and, ideologically, as offering to these a legitimation. (13)

Yet while many who would agree with this statement subsequently find little of redemption in the law, Thompson himself draws opposing conclusions. While the law is used both instrumentally to support and ideologically to sustain class inequalities, Thompson believes that law retains an essence of real justice which lies above class interest. Critics might argue that genuine justice remains a class device for, as Thompson himself writes,

the forms and rhetoric of law acquire a distinct identity which may, on occasion, inhibit power and afford some protection to the powerless. Only to the degree that this is seen to be so can law be of service in its other aspect, as ideology. (14)

Yet the notion here that the law remains 'of service' can still be interpreted two ways; that the law is manipulated to be of service to the ruling class, even if at times this requires the law to give the appearance of going against the (short term) interests of that class. Alternatively, and this is Thompson's approach, the law is of service precisely because it retains some measure of genuine independence from class relations:

If the law is evidently partial and unjust, then it will mask nothing, legitimize nothing, contribute nothing to any class's hegemony. The essential precondition for the effectiveness of law, in its function as ideology, is that it shall display an independence from gross manipulation and shall seem to be just. It cannot seem to be so without upholding its own logic and criteria of equity; indeed, on occasions, by actually being just. (15)

The occasions on which the law is impartial and just are therefore seen as demonstrating the pure essence of law which, for Thompson, lies in the 'logic of equity'. Hence,

"the law" as a logic of equity, must always seek to transcend the inequalities of class power which, instrumentally, it is harnessed to serve. (16)

Thompson's views have received more than their fair share of criticisms, and some of these will be taken up in the last section of this chapter. Anderson, one of the fiercest of critics, has made an accusation of weakness in alleging that Thompson has not made sufficient attempt to draw out the differences in civil, criminal and constitutional provisions.(17) It could be argued, however, that if Thompson had indeed run together these three elements it can still be justified by the argument that this was the way in which the law was perceived by those who were subject to it - as an entity. Its effect as ideology and the effects of the logic of equity would gain little from a treatment which sought to unravel the differential impact of its varying elements. Then again the criticism of conflation may not be a valid one with regard to its own assumptions. Thompson, to the contrary, is profoundly aware of the constituent parts of the law. Thus he has written that

the law when considered as institution (the courts, with their class theatre and class procedures) or as personnel (the judges, the lawyers, the Justices of the Peace) may very easily be assimilated to those of the ruling class. But all that is entailed in "the law" is not subsumed in these institutions. (18)

Such an approach is not compatible with criticisms of simplification and conflation.

Some of Thompson's pointers have been taken up by others. The stress on rules and procedures within a framework of law analysed as theatre has led Hay to study the effects of the apparent paradox whereby a savage penal code was coupled with the extensive use of pardons and mercy. For Hay the use of pardons re-inforced patterns of deference at a time when they were otherwise under threat. Allegiance

was sworn anew and complaints, where they arose at all, were directed against the penal code rather than the men who operated or perpetuated it. Hay further identifies other factors in the way in which apparent inconsistencies in the law served to buttress its legitimating function. These included the acquittal of 'guilty' felons on what, to the general public, would appear as ridiculous grounds:

When the ruling class acquitted men on technicalities they helped instil a belief in the disembodied justice of the law in the minds of all who watched. In short, its very inefficiency, its absurd formalism, was part of its strength as ideology. (19)

The apogee of this formalism, however, was far from absurd. For in the institution of trial by one's peers, or trial by jury, the formalism of the law attained an element (albeit restricted) of democracy whose touchstone, in contrast to other elements of the law, was its common sense and flexibility. T.A. Green has argued that, far from being the mere instruments of a class based legal system, juries actively exploited their powers in ways which imposed upon the courts community concepts of liability.(20) Hence in opposition to formalism there was as much reliance placed on the defendant's character and social standing as there was on the act with which the defendant had been charged. Evidence would be structured to enable the defendant to escape the gallows, and juries acquitted defendants whom they believed to be guilty where they also believed that the sanction which would have to be applied was too severe, where they believed the sanction to be inappropriate, or even where they felt that the act in question was not unlawful. Green argues that when the role of the jury is taken into account it throws doubt on the view which sees the legal system as a class tool. In doing so Green adds to Thompson's belief that

elements of a disembodied justice did exist in the eighteenth century and that they contributed to the acceptance of the legitimating role of the rule of law.

Thompson himself argues strongly for the historical contribution of the jury to the legitimacy of the legal system, believing that the jury system is important for political reasons rather than for reasons of legality or efficiency. He has cited approvingly Lord Devlin's comment that 'The jury is the lamp which shows that freedom lives'.(21) Thompson, to be fair, recognises many of the problems in seeing juries as the personification of the logic of equity, chief among which is the issue of the class base from which juries were drawn. Nevertheless, as an institutional practice, and in popular belief, juries were important for their contribution to the notion that the law could, on occasions at least, be fair. These limitations have been clearly recognised by Hay who has pointed out that an accused could only be tried by a 'jury of equals' if the defendant possessed property. Often

the twelve men sitting opposite him were employers, overseers of the poor, propertied men. In most cases they were the equals and neighbours of the prosecutor, not the accused. (22)

Nevertheless, the concept of 'equality before the law', as exemplified by juries, possessed great ideological strength, and contributed in no small measure to the overall stability of law and order in the eighteenth century. As Anderson has written, law was

the primary means of ruling class legitimation ... but its very "hegemonic" capacity depended on the credibility of legal rules and procedures as a system of justice to the dominated classes, and this in turn imposed objective limits and restraints on its manipulability by the

dominant classes. To be socially effective, English law could not be mere fraud. (23)

The converse of this would therefore be that if the rules and procedures lost their credibility then the legitimating power of the law would be shaken; if the manipulation of legal rules and procedures exceeded normal limits and restraints then the law's effectiveness as ideology would falter; and if English law came to be seen as fraud, then the very foundations of hegemony would be threatened.

This, it can be argued, is precisely what happened in the first half of the nineteenth century as the 'old corruption', which at least had a basis in tradition, gave way to a new corruption whose class basis was more self evident. 1832 can in many ways be seen as a watershed and a point where old corruption was recognised as anachronistic and harmful to the moral ethos required for capitalist development.(24) Old corruption itself, however, was brought to the point of crisis by both economic and political factors.

The economic factors involved the capacity of Parliament to respond to pressures upon it to rule in the interests of capital. Corrigan has made much of the state's involvement in economic affairs in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries(25) and by the period of Huskisson's presidency of the Board of Trade a number of free trade steps had already been taken which were clearly in the interests of industrial rather than agricultural capital- reduction of duties, reciprocity agreements, relaxation of the navigation acts and the introduction of a (unsuccessful) sliding scale for corn. Thus it was not industrial capital which complained most of the pre-Reform Parliament but the smaller commercial interests and banking, both

allied for a time to the labouring masses.

The businessmen's rallying cry came from Birmingham whose merchants believed that restrictions on their trade were a direct result of the government's refusal to allow greater expansion of the money supply. Birmingham therefore adopted plans for a paper currency scheme which, it was felt, would free its trade from the restricting grip of cash shortage.(26) Should the government not accept Birmingham's plan, and if the government would not respond to the economic needs of new industrial centres such as Birmingham, then steps would have to be taken to ensure that Parliament become more interested in, and representative of, commercial interests. And if Parliament was not prepared to widen the basis of representation voluntarily then it would have to be pressured to do so. In this way the Birmingham Political Union, led by Thomas Attwood who had devised the paper currency scheme, became the focus of discontent in the immediate pre-reform period. As Fraser has said,

'Contemporaries believed, and historians confirmed, that Birmingham led the nation in these years, which in effect meant that Attwood led the nation. (27)

Political factors were also crucially important. O'Connell's victory in the County Clare election presaged a Tory retreat on the issue of Catholic Emancipation which ran contrary to the wishes of the vast majority of the population and which brought into question the entire issue of representative democracy. The government's pursuance of a policy which ran contrary even to the wishes of its own supporters, made reform of Parliament that much more pressing. The Irish experience gave political agitators everywhere not merely a

justification for their criticisms, but a lesson in organising mass support for a cause in ways which could influence government policy.

Faced with such pressures the government's first response was that of principled opposition. Change of any kind was to be firmly resisted and the landed interests were to remain of primary importance. Hence, when rural disturbances broke out in 1830, characterised by incendiarism and the breaking of threshing machines, the government decided to act punitively. Despite the fact that no lives were lost as a result of the Swing riots, nineteen were hung, five hundred transported and a further five hundred given lesser sentences.(28) In many respect these punishments were the last vengeful fling of the eighteenth century aristocracy who, in blindly asserting what they took to be their authority, revealed a profound inability to assess the deeper forces which lay behind this challenge to traditional authority. In all the troubles which were to follow, particularly with respect to the Chartist disturbances, there was never again to be so vicious a policy of repression.

The tactics which had been used with agricultural workers were quickly seen as inappropriate to the mobilisation of the middle class and the industrial working class which took place during the reform crisis, and when the Reform Bill was finally passed it was clear that concessions had been made to these pressures: the new industrial towns were given the bulk of the redistributed seats, and the uniform franchise qualification had been astutely calculated to include the industrial and commercial middle classes, but no more. Thus when Parliament reassembled some five hundred of the six hundred and fifty

eight MPs were still aristocrats or had significant ties with the land, and it was apparent that, despite the changes which had taken place, Parliament in no sense represented a perfect reflection of the economic forces which were developing in the country.

It is in fact possible to identify a number of interpretations as to the nature of the relationship between the changes which were taking place in the economy and those which were taking place in the state. In the Whig version, the significance of 1832 lay in its recognition of the rights of capital. Despite the fact that it had to contend with old established electoral practices, and despite the fact that many industrialists did not care to stand as MPs, the annual increase of industrial and commercial wealth brought more and more of the population within the franchise qualifications. In the Whig version it is the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846 which marks the major symbolic victory of the industrial classes over the landed interest. In the words attributed to Cobden, '1846 made 1832 a reality'. Henceforth, the State was to rule in the interests of capital and it was through formal Parliamentary political procedures that the rising industrial capital would seek to maintain, promote and legitimate its position.

The Conservative version would see the Whig interpretation as naive. Far from 1832 and 1846 being symbolic victories for the middle class they were, on the contrary, successful rearguard actions fought by the landed aristocracy to preserve their power in the face of pressure from below. At each stage the reforms granted were calculated in such a way as to divide the forces of the radical front whatever

its contemporary form. While the Anti Corn Law League celebrated its victory, the aristocratic government quietly continued to wield effective power and the radicals were left without a platform.

Paul Richards has similarly identified two versions of state formation in this period which he describes as 'Tory' and 'Fabian'. The Tory explanation combines elements of both the Whig and the Conservative approaches outlined above, seeing 1832 as but one small step in a progress with an air of the inevitable. Thus he describes as Tory

those historians who insist on the piecemeal and pragmatic character of State formation. (29)

In contrast there are the Fabian historians:

those who contend that the planning of Bentham and his disciples had had a major influence on the shape of the modern State. (30)

Yet Benthamism as a form does not imply Benthamism as a causal factor and the attribution of 1832 to pragmatism or utilitarianism avoids this central issue.

Within Marxism on the other hand, the debate has ranged over the degree to which changes in the State were determined by changes in the economic structure. Hall et al, for example, argue that

the position can only properly be assessed when set within the framework of the transformation of the modes of capital as the regime of industrial capital gradually wins out over landed capital. (31)

For structuralists the State as political superstructure is determined by the economic infrastructure. Changes in the forces and relations of production therefore determine changes in the form of the State to produce correspondence. The existence of frictions means that the

development of this correspondence is not smooth, but remains jerky and uneven, with events such as 1832 providing laggardly adjustment. It is this kind of economism which constitutes the focus of E.P. Thompson's critique, with his attack coming, not on the overall position of the State, but on its specific relations to the law. Thompson argues that any notion of correspondence is too crude, and that an overemphasis on the economic base is illiberal, unrealistic, and unfaithful to the complexity of the historical evidence itself.(32) Thompson further argues that there is a core component in the idea of law which is not locatable in a base-superstructure approach and which is not reducible to the logic of a crude class based model. Such models, according to Thompson, are both functionalist and instrumentalist.(33)

Again, however, it can be argued that Thompson's target here is a 'straw man' and that the 'correspondence' model he attacks is a stereotype rather than a valid description of currently held positions. Recent work on the State tends to stress the very complex and uneven nature of the relationship between the State and economic factors, while concerned with the determining nature of the latter only in the final analysis.(34) Thus the correspondence of the law to changes in economic relations was also necessarily uneven. Hall et al consider this to have been deliberate policy. They argue that the state initiated

legislative measures which provide(d) a stabilising "equilibrium" for the dominance of capital to continue without massive working class revolt by seeming to operate apparently at capitals expense. (35)

In a similar vein Richards also argues that

the interests of the bourgeoisie had to be "rationalised" and to do this the relative autonomy of the State from society was essential. (36)

This produced a dilemma in the post reform period. Political power had been wanted by the middle class not for its own sake, but for the control which it gave over the production and the passing of legislation which affected it. Once power had been achieved its exercise was most likely to be trouble free if its interests could be concealed. The most successful legislation in this sense was that concerned with reducing the hours of child and female labour in factories. This appeared to operate against the immediate short term interests of industrial capital yet in the long term it created fairer and more stable competition while providing the working class with confirmation of the law's impartial status.(37)

But factory legislation was the exception in the early post reform years. Elsewhere there was plentiful examples of naked class interest which fuelled the Chartist critique and prolonged the crisis of legitimacy which had developed in the pre-reform years. The Whig government of the 1830s, elected on a platform of reform, established an early reputation for its class based legislation. The affair of the Tolpuddle Martyrs, where six labourers were transported for joining the Grand National Consolidated Trade Union on the pretext that they had administered illegal oaths, was seen as an attempt by the employers, through the government, to break the power of trade unions and deny them the right to operate effectively. Two statutes which had never been intended for use against trade unionists were invoked to secure conviction, and it was recognised at all levels of society that

the oaths of the GNCTU were different from those of the freemasons, orange lodges and a host of other semi-secret organisations, only in their likely impact on economic relations with capital. And if the government was not directly responsible for the prosecution then it undoubtedly conspired against the defence with Melbourne, for example, claiming that George Loveless had already sailed for the colonies when he was still being held in the hulks at Portsmouth harbour.(38)

The Tolpuddle case was of momentous importance in revealing the partiality, and the class basis, of the political and legal system. Although the martyrs were later given pardons, the damage to unionism had been done, and while unionism recovered but slowly, capital was granted a much freer hand to expand in its own way. This crude exhibition of class interests had its repercussions in the organisation of the working class. Many of the radicals who came together to defend, and later to seek the pardons of the martyrs developed a critique of the political and legislative system which was based on the law's inability to sustain its claim to legitimacy. As such, Tolpuddle brought together different elements of the radical movement and in this respect was a direct precursor of Chartism. George Loveless was a delegate to the first Chartist convention upon his return from exile while William Lovett and Feargus O'Connor, Chartism's two principal leaders, were very active in the Tolpuddle agitation.(39)

1834 also saw the passing of the Poor Law Amendment Act which was one of, if not the most, unpopular act of the nineteenth century among

the working class.(40) In particular the refusal of outdoor relief gave guardians the power to send unemployed workers en-bloc to areas which could use them, introducing forced mobility or a directed labour system which benefitted industries which were short of workers.

The New Poor Law spawned a movement to secure its abolition which was quite novel in that it was not a campaign to promote a piece of legislation but a campaign against a specific law which was shown to be absent of support in the community and without a popular base of legitimacy. Agitation against the New Poor Law cut across both party and class lines, as indeed had that against the Tolpuddle sentences.(41) Even in places where the worst effects of the New Poor Law were not felt - such as the North East - there was an outcry against its injustice.(42)

Richards identifies the New Poor Law as one of the key issues reflecting the government's protection and promotion of industrial capital, arguing that the workhouse system

forcibly discipline(d) working people to the basic demands of capital. (43)

The second key issue was the failure of the government to act to relieve the distress of the handloom weavers who were left at the mercy of the open market. According to Richards,

the "sacrifice" of the handloom weavers to industrial capitalism represents a major transformation in British society. (44)

The introduction of the rural police was seen as a further example of repressive and self interested government. The police were considered to be 'blue locusts' who lived at the taxpayers expense and contributed nothing to National Income. Their introduction had

inspired riots in many parts of the country.(45) In Sunderland they inspired the normally placid James Williams to say

I who have hitherto been, and still am, a moral force man, will never allow the Rural Police Law to be enforced without arming myself, and I declare that I will stab to the heart that man who would be the wretch to sell himself to so base and mercenary a government. (46)

This feeling was echoed throughout the colliery districts and was seen as another instance of State repression intended to clamp down on all aspects of working class life. The miners, for example, felt that they were under sufficient surveillance and control already without the introduction of strangers intent on enforcing the move on system and restricting not just undesirable sports but also extended drinking hours and a wide variety of other collective activity.

By the late 1830s a breakdown of consensus was developing. The crisis of legitimacy of old corruption had been replaced by a self evidently class based rule which had to be met by the working class with resistance. The extent to which consensus had broken down was recognised by people such as James Williams. At his trial in 1839 he remarked that

a verdict of guilty will only widen the breach that now exists between the middle and working classes, the government and the people, and thus frustrate the object which the law has in view ... virtually committing the offence with which we stand accused. (47)

Williams perceived the normal stabilising function of law and the extent to which this had broken down. This antipathy was clear from the treatment of the Tolpuddle Martyrs, but evidence was even closer to hand. At the Durham assizes of 1832, for example, the judge had remarked of the miners union that

these combinations must, one day or another, be put down ... this case arose out of the lamentable system of combination which existed to so alarming an extent in this part of the kingdom ... it showed the demoralised state of society to which the Colliers Union had reduced the country. (48)

In the judge's eyes the combination of pitmen was a 'fertile source of crime' yet it did not go unnoticed that, when it suited them, the middle and upper classes, including the coal owners, could flaunt laws with impunity.(49)

Seen in this light the Chartist challenge appears almost as an inevitable response to a political, industrial and judicial system whose common base was exposed by the very pace and unevenness of economic development. Far from being 'Hunger Politics', Chartism represented a fundamental challenge to the basis of consent necessary to the smooth running of the hegemonic order, and while Chartism is often criticised for its failure to develop a coherent body of theory, this does not mean that theory was entirely lacking. On the contrary its critique of society, industrialism and the political and legal systems revealed the class basis of the law and the partial nature of the system of representation in a manner which presented a sustained challenge to the government's attempts at re-establishing consensus. And if Chartism's critique was more unified and theoretical than is often acknowledged, then the explanations for Chartism's decline may equally be subject to review. The eventual waning of working class radicalism generally may have had more to do with the way in which the government re-asserted its legitimacy than with explanations which rest on developments within the working class such as those explanations which invoke notions of 'pendulum swings' to trade

unionism, the increasing liberalisation of working class leaders and the allegedly divisive effect of the creation of a labour aristocracy.

The central issue for Chartists, and an issue which is often overlooked in the scramble to identify the movement's multifarious elements, was the argument that all men should have the vote because Parliament made the laws. As long as the franchise was not universally held, Parliament would continue to pass and sustain legislation which favoured the few at the expense of the many. The experience of the Whig's new laws served only to reaffirm this belief. As Stedman-Jones has pointed out, the concern with reforming the law making process was so central to Chartism that efforts to stress the movement's diversity seem fundamentally misconceived.(50) Moral force, physical force, new move, knowledge, Christian, teetotal and total abstinence Chartists all possessed this unifying aspect - a profound sense of injustice, and the belief that the root cause of this injustice lay with the partisan nature of the government. As O'Connor himself said:

there was no vice in the people for which he could not assign a legal reason. (51)

National and local grievances and demands with respect to such things as wages, living and working conditions, truck and taxation, were all at base the responsibility of bad government. Rather than dissipate energy on individual causes, no matter how worthy, the working class should stick to their Charter, for when it was achieved, all bad laws would be repealed.

The law had lost its semblance of neutrality and the law making body was no longer seen as the impartial arbiter of conflict between

the different sectors of society. According to Dorothy Thompson, the agitation over the repeal of the stamp duty had led the radicals to draw three major conclusions from the events of 1836.(52) The first was that they came to appreciate the need to gain access to the law making process. The second was that they became convinced of the essentially property defined nature of the social attitudes of the existing legislature. Finally they realised that they could not expect support or sympathy from the higher classes in their campaigns.(53) These were the very same people who, upon the reduction of the stamp duty, turned to the wider agitation which became Chartism. Time and again examples can be found of these sentiments finding expression in the words of Chartist leaders, regardless of the position of these leaders within the Chartist spectrum.

Thus, the moderate Henry Hetherington wrote that:

Since their accession to the franchise conferred by the Reform Bill, the middle classes thought only of themselves ... the spirit in which they desire to exercise the franchise is as exclusively selfish as the aristocratic spirit which gave them a monopoly of it was arbitrary and unjust.(54)

Mason, a Birmingham shoemaker, argued that

All ... reforms the Whigs boast to have effected have been for the benefit of the middle classes (55)

while O'Connor decreed that all current laws were fiction because

they have been made for the protection of fictitious money, which represents nothing but the produce of your wealth while in a state of transition from one pack of moneymongers to another pack of speculators. (56)

According to Bronterre O'Brien, law making was a

monopoly by virtue of which property owners are enabled to keep continually augmenting their property out of the labourer's plundered wages. (57)

The accusations levelled against the government were sometimes

couched in general terms. At others they took the form of precise grievances. Examples of the former include Gammage's comment that 'all our evils spring from class-made laws'(58) and the Non conformist's view that

class legislators can no more be expected to refrain from class legislation than can water from finding its own level. (59)

Embodied in this sentiment is a belief that the law was biased both as statute and as practice. The links were spelt out clearly over the Sunderland bribe scandal of 1841, detailed earlier, where the Tories had attempted to split the radical vote with a bribe to secure a favourable election result.(60) The Northern Star wrote that

we cannot but admire the boundless liberality of this truly generous offer. £125 for a seat in Parliament! £125 for the power to pick pockets according to law. (61)

With great regularity expression was given to the belief that the rich had it all ways. They not only made the laws but could selectively flaunt them with impunity if they wished. The hostility of the colliery owners who sat in Parliament to demands for safety improvements in the mines, was considered a perfect example of the problem. Thus Martin Jude, in a letter to the Northern Star, complained of the behaviour of Londonderry and Lonsdale in the following terms:

Here then we have a long, tedious and expensive inquiry made into the cause of these dreadful events, which carry off so many lives, and render miserable so many widows and orphan children, and which commission of inquiry, with

every other official inspection that has been made for the last four or five years, and more, all going to establish the necessity of inspection of mines, and detailing the amount of negligence of the managers and agents of the same, together with the numerously signed petitions of the miners themselves; and when the government have introduced a short bill, just to gently touch the enormous evil, two noble proprietors of collieries set themselves in opposition thereto, and coolly move "that the bill be read that day three months". What a state of things to contemplate: two individuals, and interested ones too, have influence and power to overthrow the work of thousands of persons, and on which the government themselves expended a vast sum of money; all of which labour and anxious thought of the people, and the inquiries of the government are threatened with destruction by the efforts of these two noble lords, who are thus empowered to exonerate themselves from the responsibilities consequent upon the want of inspection. (62)

Chartists generally were advised that

laws were made by others, by the idlers, the drones, and therefore for them, and not for him. (63)

John Knight, a Manchester leader, was clear that political solutions were needed for the ills of the working class and that these solutions were barred by the existing form of State power: 'the making and administering of the laws' he said,

is exclusively enjoyed by men of property, and, therefore, in the promotion of their own interests they are continually diminishing the rights of all the labouring classes. No plan hitherto laid for the benefit of the labourers has been successful; and so far as the legislative power remains exclusively in the hands of the men of property, no such plan will ever be effectual ... such is the phalanx of power opposed to the working class that until their influence does actively preponderate in the House of Commons there is no possibility of their circumstances being bettered. (64)

Knight's solution was one which was attractive to many. Yet despite the identification of Parliament as the source of the problem, the proffered solutions were remarkably reformist. At a Durham

meeting, for example, the argument was put forward that

the Charter was a comprehensive and sufficient scheme for improving the legislative power of the country. It was embraced by a larger number, and therefore was more likely to be sooner carried. The repeal of the Corn Laws originated with the middle classes but it could never be carried without the support of the people ... to obtain a repeal of the Corn Laws would convulse the country from end to end ... that it would bring the country to the very verge of a revolution, and if so why should they be called upon to pass through so terrible an ordeal as that - to remove one evil when the system which had called that evil into existence was to be suffered to last? (65)

Revolution, then, was not desired, and remedial legislation, together with a share of effective power in the making of laws, was seen as a sufficient solution:

Let us labour zealously and faithfully for the People's Charter. It is the only remedy for our grievances. We cannot protect the poor till we obtain the power of making the laws. Then we can do justice to all men. (66)

The middle class case for corn law repeal threw the whole issue of representation into perspective. The middle class wanted the working class to support the case for repeal, but if the working class were intelligent enough to be persuaded by the logic of one particular case, why couldn't they be trusted to have the vote? As the Northern Star pointed out, a person does not need to be medically trained to be trusted to pick a doctor, nor theologically trained to be allowed to choose a religion. Why therefore were men not allowed to choose their own leaders? (67)

The value of working class participation was stressed repeatedly.

Institutions must ever be a reflection of the national mind, else they will cease to represent the wants and wishes of the community and become antagonistic to them ... our institutions must bend to the republican sentiments springing up in the minds of the people ... class legislation is to be remedied by but one means - the grant of universal suffrage. (68)

The people should have the vote as a means towards ensuring fairer legislation and more equitable treatment from that legislation. In addition, it was argued that there were other logical claims for franchise reform. W.P. Roberts, for example, argued that the people who were the subject of the law should be included in its creation. Roberts

might be called to defend the oppressed pitmen from the tyranny of their masters, but he never would rest satisfied until the whole of the British Empire should be fully and fairly represented in the making of those laws which they were called upon to obey. (69)

Binns and Thompson, both Sunderland Chartists, suggested that Parliament should reflect the true wealth creating forces of the country. According to Binns:

If laws make the taxes, then must industry make the laws: then we shall be masters.(70)

Thompson, himself a solicitor, held that the true source of legitimate power lay with the masses.(71)

Chartism's focus on the law served to attract legal minds such as that of Thompson to the movement. In Durham it was reported that

it is a singular and honourable fact that, amongst the regular supporters of the cause are several respectable young men connected with the legal profession. (72)

John Mowbray, the Durham secretary and nominee to the General Council, was an attorney's clerk.(73)

The most prominent member of the legal profession associated with Chartism was W.P. Roberts. Originally a solicitor from Bath, he was an early adherent to Chartism, a relative of the Lord Chief Justice, and a personal friend of John Frost. As such his potential role in the Newport rising and the subsequent trial has not been fully

investigated.(74) Roberts himself had been arrested earlier for sedition but had been released from prison on health grounds. He subsequently became active in the Complete Suffrage Union (where he was nominated from several towns, including Sunderland), the Land Scheme, and the Miners Association. As the legal adviser to the Land Scheme it seems strange that he failed to see its essentially illegal nature as both funds and land ownership became vested in O'Connor. On the other hand he emerges with considerable credit from his position as the 'miners attorney' as he fought tenaciously to redress the invidious legal position of the miners.(75)

Other solicitors figure prominently in the Chartist movement such as Ernest Jones and Samuel Kydd who again had a strong Sunderland connection.(76) The legal profession was apparently tolerant of a wider range of opinions and behaviour among its members than was later to be the case, yet there must have been something in the Chartist critique of the law which aroused the curiosity, and later the indignity, of such men. Later, once the Chartist critique of the law had been disarmed, victories gained in the courts by the likes of Roberts could be held up as examples to show that the law was indeed less biased and unfair than the Chartists had claimed, and that the courts could, on occasions, treat everyone as equal. In practice, however, such concessions as were held out by the courts and the State generally had the paradoxical effect of restoring faith in the impartiality of law while buttressing the inequalities that it served.

The Chartist analysis was a deep one. It included an argument that the laws as currently practised were in conflict with a notion of natural or God-given justice. Deegan, a North East missionary, described the New Poor Law in these terms, stating that

no earthly power can annul or dispense with the laws imposed upon man and upon society by the sovereign Lord of all ... to submit to earthly laws in violation of the laws of our Creator, would be a dereliction of duty ... (77)

An anonymous poet from Cockfield in South West Durham echoed this theme when he wrote that

the deepest, the hottest; the best place in hell shall be theirs who concocted the law. (78)

George Binns also used religious imagery to convince his followers that their oppressors could find no biblical support for their behaviour and that the Charter appealed to a higher sense of morality than that currently exercised by those with power. At his trial in 1840 he said that

the people are fulfilling the laws of their God when they employ a nation's time and a nation's talent in destroying a system of legislation which has no other foundation than error, robbery and fraud. (79)

This sense of Christian outrage was cleverly entwined with a class imagery in which the workers were depicted as the only true creators of wealth. The employers took this wealth for themselves and left its creators to manage as best they could on subsistence wages. Only remedial legislation and a share of effective power in the making of laws would alter things.

The Chartists were firm in their assertion that justice was not being provided by a government whose class basis had been laid bare by the developments which had surrounded the first Reform Act. This sense

of moral outrage coupled with a class analysis was captured by James Williams who stated that

Every great event of history is built upon the experience of the past ... the last great feature in the political world was the passing of the Reform Bill. It was the masses who cooperated with, and gained that boon for, the middle classes; but only by flattery, and by promises of a further extension of reform, all to be broken in the hour of triumph. Thank heaven for that! To it you are indebted for the proud position you now occupy, exhibiting a self reliance never before displayed, and a determination to rely on your own resources which does honour to human nature. (80)

The record of the reformed Parliament did not stand up well to a class analysis. The new poor law was seen as a way of cutting the rates burden of the rich while imposing a nightmarish threat of institutionalisation and family break-up on the poor. The new police were regarded as an unconstitutional break with the tradition of not having a standing army in peacetime, and a threat to customary working class practices such as street gatherings and outdoor sports.(81) George Binns again had this to say of the new police:

Good God! the very idea of being a policeman ought to make us blush for very shame. What is a policeman? A man who has sold his usefulness - his honesty, his mind - his time and his industry - to hurl the death dealing damnation of tyrants against the poor, the defenceless and the oppressed. Avoid him as you would a viper, a pestilence or a dagger! (82)

Chartists divided society into producers and non producers and it was the non producers - the drones and the incubuses on the labouring population who were the targets of their rhetoric:

the aristocrats and non-producers know full well that if they cease to exist at all society must still continue; but if the working people stood still society must be destroyed ... but, say the idlers, the law is on our side:

the law protects us in the enjoyment of our property; the law will punish any person who may attempt to deprive us of it, no matter how it may have come into our hands. (83)

The Chartists were thus driven to challenge the entire basis of authority on which the law rested:

the law ... is often monstrously unjust, being enacted by knaves and rogues for the purpose of sheltering themselves. The law is frequently in direct opposition to reason, honesty and justice ... many of the wealthy class have extensive estates to which their ancestors had no right except that which was founded upon plunder, rapine, robbery or conquest. Iniquitous acts of Parliament have been passed to secure them in the enjoyment of them. The people must clearly see then that their enemies invariably appeal to the law ... (84)

The government was no longer trusted to be fair. Chartists spoke of government as 'authoritative iniquity' and the period as one of governmental persecution

when an all abhorred Whig government uses its might to crush and condemn rights and horribly despicable villains drive honest men out of the land. (85)

These criticisms found concrete expression in the daily experiences of the workers and the miners were particularly good examples. John Wilson wrote that

at that time there was one law for the employer and another for the workman. It was criminal for a workman to do that which his employer could do with impunity. He could arrange with his colleagues to reduce wages, and lock men out if the terms were not accepted, and turn them out into the street to compel acceptance. There was no law to interfere with him. Let the workman want a higher price for his labour he was liable to find the machinery of the law ranged against him, and there was a class connection, if not an open compact, between the magistracy and employers.

The repressive legislation ranged against them was impressive and thorough. They were controlled as employees and as tenants of tied cottages. The Bond, which many could not read, tied the miners to

conditions of employment which were sometimes impossible to fulfil. Yet failure to fulfil left the miner liable to legal prosecution and when this happened they were brought before magistrates who were coal owners or related to the coal owners themselves. Small wonder then that the law was not seen to have a basis in any true sense of justice and equality. In this way too the Chartists' analysis came to fit closely the experience of the miners in a way which brought them into the movement for political reform. Challinor and Ripley cite the case of miners who were imprisoned for refusing to work in a part of a mine which they considered to be unsafe. The collapse of the roof during the trial, which would have killed the men had they been at work, was not considered to be sufficient evidence for a successful defence.(87)

In one of their own pamphlets, the pitmen had this to say of the bond:

According to the present construction of the bond we have little or no claim upon magisterial interference relative to disputes between them and us, but things of this nature are to be decided by two or more coal-viewers. Here are fine laws for men, yea Englishmen, men that boast of liberty, and men that are endeavouring to put an end to West Indian slavery, to be governed by. (88)

The fact that the bond was a legal document served only to bring the law into disrepute. The colliers themselves had long expressed dissatisfaction with the bond and the way in which its terms had become impossible to fulfil.(89) This in turn brought further charges that the courts who enforced the bond were inhumane.(90)

Indignation against the law increased with evidence of selective enforcement. Publicans who took radical newspapers were more likely to be fined for serving after hours drinks or refused licence renewals if

they allowed Chartist meetings on the premises.(91) The Darlington Chartists were arrested under the 'cattle acts' when all neutral observers, including the normally anti-Chartist Durham Chronicle were agreed that it would have been more appropriate to have prosecuted the soldiers for disorderly acts.(92) The law and its bias became suitable topics for public lectures.(93) J.R. Stephens pointed out that discretionary powers within the legal system could be used to increase still further the nature of its class-based oppression:

Men are sentenced to "imprisonment" by the judges but the magistrates can "regulate" it into "solitary confinement", - and by withholding all food but bread and water can compel men to hard labour who were not sentenced to anything of the sort. (94)

The miners provided the worst examples of abuse by the magistrates. Reynold's Political Register spelt out the problems at length:

a large body of men, like the miners, - denied by their employers every privilege that the laws of nature intended should be vested in ... when arrived at years of discretion, crushed and enslaved by the power of wealth and at the mercy of that blundering, tyrannical, obstinate class of men, the unpaid magistracy ... Most of the principal coal proprietors are themselves in the commission of the peace, so it is next to impossible for a poor miner to obtain justice, or even its shadow, from any county Midas, no matter how strong the case may be in favour of the oppressed collier. Instances are constantly occurring of colliers being brought before these unpaid magistrates, and upon the sole representation of their employer, perhaps also on the commission, sentenced for the most trivial offences to a long and tedious imprisonment. (95)

David Philips in a study of the Black Country magistrates, has also noted how the magistrates bench was changing in its composition in this period. More industrial employers were included who then sat in judgement of cases in which they or their colleagues had a vested

interest or were even participants. In addition, he notes how industrial crime (theft from work, erosion of perks etc) came to be redefined by these magistrates in daily practice in ways which suited their own ends.(96) Contemporaries too were not slow to see the connection. In Manchester John Knight spoke thus:

In all disputes between employers and workmen ... the magistrates almost invariably protect the employers. (97)

The pattern for the courts had been set by the Tolpuddle verdict when the extent of the government's connivance was recognised.(98) When Binns and Williams were brought to trial for the activities described in Chapter 3 such thoughts were uppermost. They had been offered their freedom in return for a promise to plead guilty and keep the peace but they had refused. At their trial they were charged with attending a riotous and seditious meeting and using seditious and inflammatory language. The jury returned with a mixed verdict. They considered that their language had indeed been seditious but that the meeting itself had not been illegal, whereupon the judge proclaimed that they must say that it had been an unlawful meeting, otherwise their verdict constituted an acquittal. Despite wishing to recommend the judge to mercy, the jury accepted its brief and retired for a second time. They returned with verdicts which enabled the judge to impose sentences of imprisonment.(99) According to the Northern Star, it was

plain that the jury considered their conduct indiscreet, but not criminal; and why did the Judge refuse to accept that verdict? Has he some promotion in view and can't obtain it without such mean acts as this. Is it true that

under the accursed system our very judges must owe their elevation to injustice? (100)

Binns and Williams, like many others, felt that their hearing had been anything but fair. In addition, they had experienced a further example of injustice with regard to cost. Their trial had been postponed on several occasions and they had had to attend three sessions of the assizes at considerable cost to their trade and that of their witnesses. This 'unseen' cost in witness's time, travelling expenses and loss of trade or employment reduced still further the possibility of working class defendants securing a favourable verdict. Witnesses for the defence simply could not be afforded.

The role of the jury in the trial of Binns and Williams introduces the most ambivalent aspect of Chartist attitudes to the law. For many the concept of trial by jury remained the last bastion of the common people's right to justice. It was a legacy of ancient rights which had been lost in so many other fields and it was one of the finest safeguards against unfair imprisonment. At the same time, however, it was recognised that jury packing was destroying many of its crucial features. When Sir Wilmot Horton introduced a bill to the House of Commons which aimed to abolish trial by jury for juvenile offenders the Northern Liberator had this to say:

trial by jury is one of the most ancient legal institutions of the land. It seems to have been co-eval with the first rudiments of government in this island ... if young persons, who stand most need of the protection and sympathy of a jury, be punished solely at the will of a Magistrate, we think the accused of riper years may well give up all hope of retaining for any length of time his privilege of being tried by our peers. In fact we see every year monstrous inroads on all the ancient and valuable principles of law and justice, and though we are very grievously mortified at this attack on the Jury Law,

we are not surprised at it, knowing as we do that the present men in power have not the slightest regard for anything intrinsically sacred and valuable in the constitution of this country. (101)

Trial by jury was considered to be 'the glory of the English law' yet its desuetude was a result of the action of human agency. It was not the law which was at fault but the people currently involved in its interpretation and enforcement. If the Northern Liberator provides an example of the faith which remained in the historical legacy of juries, the trial of Binns and Williams paints a different picture. Binns spoke of

the cold blooded edict of a jury's malignancy ... Would to God that my jury may sustain their honour by doing me justice; but when I look back at the fate of Lovett, Collins, Vincent and O'Connor I am compelled to prepare for the worst. (102)

Later he asked

has the form of trial by jury in a court of law degenerated into an empty show, to screen an act of stately vice from its natural and irredeemable deformity? (103)

Williams identified the class composition of the jury as the key feature in determining its bias and the likely outcome of the trial. He accused them of being unable to overcome deep-rooted prejudices, while he himself was on trial for

offences which are hostile to the strongest principles and feelings of the class from whom the jury who are to try me are drawn. (104)

Williams noted that in the past the government had used the device of swearing in special juries to deal with the radicalism of the Hunt and Cobbett era. These juries had been drawn from the governing class, but now that the middle class had the vote, common

juries comprised of the middle class, would suffice to prosecute working men. He told his own jury that in the 1820s,

Special Juries were ... invariably drawn for the same reason as the Attorney General of this day now relies upon the faithfulness of the Common jury ... special juries had the same bitter prejudices against the Reformers or Whigs as your class have now against the poor and persecuted Chartists. You are therefore gentlemen, expected to display a similar spirit of vindictiveness. (105)

If the class background of the jurors was still not sufficient then use could be made of the tactics of drawing the jury from different and selected hundreds as well as the device of lodging selective objections against any juror suspected of holding sympathies towards the defendant's case (as occurred at another trial involving Williams).(106)

These contradictory attitudes which the Chartists held towards trial by jury find expression in the Darlington disturbances of 1840. Arrested on what were correctly perceived to be unjust grounds, the Chartist defendants elected for jury trial:

We have made up our minds to submit this piece of rascally effrontery of the Darlington magistrates to a jury of our countrymen. These magistrates are far more ignorant of the law than the most illiterate Chartist is ... (107)

But if a jury was not automatically so biased as a magistrate, a doubt nevertheless persisted. As Binns wrote,

Try whether your honest leaders are to be imprisoned by the ignorance of a majority, the croaking, fawning meanness of class conceit or the stupid interpretation of a Darlington cattle act. Try the effects of a jury's honesty, or the depths of a jury's prejudice. (108)

The mere existence of a second avenue of legal procedures served a political purpose in increasing the apparent flexibility and fairness of the legal system, whatever the imperfections of the jury

system in practice. E.P. Thompson has pointed out that defendants sometimes received better treatment from judges, and that free thinkers in particular received a hard time from middle class juries.(109) The relative leniency of juries vis-a-vis judges, and the geographical and temporal variations in these relativities, is something which is amenable to further empirical investigation. In the Chartist period certainly the social profile of juries did not reflect accurately the changes which had occurred in the social structure, and defendants were unable to challenge members of the jury over such matters as whether they had been employed as special constables during the Chartist disturbances. Many cases did not get as far as trial by jury. A minor charge could be handled by the magistrates' bench and made to stick, whereas a fuller list of charges, taken to a higher level, may have received more stringent, and ultimately fairer treatment. Thus people were prosecuted for offences lighter than those they had committed only for their hearing to be briefer and their imprisonment more certain.

Cases which did come before juries were not assured of success even when the defendants had strong cases. The costs of legal aid were enormous and many elected to defend themselves, often condemning themselves in the process. Some juries were in the pockets of specific landowners and hence could not give an independent judgement had they been able to form one. Similarly, the use of objections by the prosecution meant that unsuitable (ie sympathetic or neutral) jurors were excluded and new jurors called up. To the extent that packing did take place, its practice clearly lay in the hands of the established

order, for the opportunity and facilities for packing simply were not available to the accused. Finally, the prohibitive cost of appeal meant that it was rarely resorted to by Chartist victims. The government on the other hand, could and did appeal against decisions of juries not to their liking and the overturning of the Culley verdict is but one example of this.(110) The cost of appeal, like the cost and practice of calling witnesses, showed that what was fair in terms of abstract principle could have discriminatory effects in practice, resulting in a lack of even-handedness towards the poorer sections of society.

The diminishing faith in the power of jurors to protect the rights of the free-born Englishman was part of a wider belief that ancient rights had been lost, and that Parliament no longer warranted the allegiance of its people. Williams, writing from 'Durham Chartist College' (ie prison) asked,

What is law now? Royal proclamations, or the letters of a servant of the Crown. Sheets of foolscap upon which a Minister of State records his will, have more authority than the most venerable statute book or the most ancient charter, however solemnly ratified. (111)

Appeal was made to a notion that fair laws had existed at some stage in the past, and that this ideal had been corrupted by systematic abuse. Deegan, another North East missionary, wrote that

nearly every valuable privilege enjoyed by your forefathers under the English constitution has been taken from you. (112)

Chartists talked frequently of inalienable rights and the question of whether they were factually correct in their assessment of loss is largely immaterial. The fact that they believed that these

rights had been taken from them was sufficient to lead to the conclusion that those who had done this were not worthy of allegiance. The depths of crisis to which this led can be illustrated by Binns:

though it may lead to prison, my answer is, go to prison till you can get redress, and if redress is impossible, fill the prisons rather than allow these bulwarks of British liberty (ie the right to meet to petition Parliament) to be torn away which have been handed down to us by our ancestors and sealed with their blood. (113)

Throughout all this, however, the Chartist analysis remained confused and it was not merely the issues of juries which provoked an ambivalent response. If a current government could be blamed for the attack on inalienable rights then the crisis of legitimacy could be restricted to a crisis of one particular party. If the blame could be levelled at individuals and specific provisions in the manner of the Northern Liberator's attack on the proposal to reform juvenile hearings, then the overall structure of injustice could remain intact. These ambivalences were a major source of weakness to the Chartist arguments. At times they were critical of the system itself, yet at others they displayed a naive faith in the long term worth of the system, blaming only its current office holders. Examples of the two lines of thinking can be found within the same edition of the Northern Star. For the former is found the following:

The elements of a good constitution exist in your wish for freedom. The natural result of bad government is resistance to it ... In the coming struggles let us never forget that it is the system - not the men, we wish to extinguish.

An example of the second line of thought, however, is found within a frame of reference which is bound by reformist conceptions of justice whereby the Chartists are urged to

seek by all the means in your power to obtain that justice which those who have so long tyrannised over you will be slow to give ... physical misery is the consequence of a system of legislation whose sacred function is abused. (114)

Thus, in this second view, legislation has a 'sacred function' which has been corrupted by a series of office holders but which, in essence, is necessary to the successful running of society.

Such a division weakened the thrust of Chartist criticism, but there were other side issues too. James Williams, for example, railed against the expense of justice, again in a manner which suggested that it was the practice rather than the principles of the law which were at fault. Speaking before he stood down in favour of John Bright as Parliamentary candidate for Durham City, Williams spoke strongly against

The denial of justice and comparative impunity to the crimes of the wealthy, by unexpoundable and incomprehensible laws, and the monstrous expense of all law processes. (115)

This approach is in marked contrast to the words of his former colleague Edward Lawson, the Coxhoe schoolmaster. When Williams had been imprisoned in Durham gaol he attacked the 'stupid and demented juries who convicted them' and went on to ask

What is the crime of Williams and Binns ... stepping forward to protect defenceless innocence against the attacks of powerful guilt. This you will exclaim is no crime ... But I assure you it is the most heinous crime that can be committed in the eyes of those abortions of the creation under whose iron rule you have the misfortune to live. (116)

These arguments give a flavour of the variety of Chartist attitudes to the law and are examples of the content of Chartist belief which so many studies of Chartism have been criticised for

lacking.(117) Nevertheless, the ambivalence of Chartists towards jury trials and towards the system/office holders dilemma reveal how the challenge mounted against law as legislation, law as practice and law as systematic abuse failed to develop a coherence sufficient to see it through its own period of crisis.

In addition, the Chartist case possessed a naivety which was not shared by their opponents. Deegan called upon the Chartists of South Church, County Durham, to

endeavour to repeal those unjust, tyrannical and misery producing enactments. They must abolish these nefarious statutes and substitute good, wise and equitable ones. (118)

Whatever the merits of this idealism it contrasts markedly with the realism of those who actually possessed power. The Lord Chief Justice, for example, recognised both the material base of legislation and the sectionality of interest in making and administering laws in his remarks at the trials of the strikers of 1842. He warned that

if those who had no property should have powers to make laws, it would necessarily lead to the destruction of those who had property. (119)

For many Chartists the pursuance of the logic of their argument failed to extend this far and so it remained a source of weakness.

Nevertheless, the fact that the basis of authority had been challenged at its source was a factor causing the government to re-assess its position. According to Brian Harrison, the government's path out of the crisis involved the reassertion of law and order. He writes, in the introduction to the autobiography of Robert Lowery, the South Shields Chartist, that

Lowery's autobiography is important ... for its self

consciousness about class relations, its appreciation of the growth of class harmony by the mid 1850s. This harmony had been gained through a combination of economic recovery, the reassertion of law and order, and above all the active attempts by the bourgeoisie to win back mass allegiance. (120)

Yet it is difficult to accept that law and order actually broke down in the Chartist period in any widespread manner. It was certainly challenged physically at Newport, in the Bull Ring at Birmingham, in the Plug Plots and in the disturbances of 1848, but there was rarely a moment when the authorities felt that things were genuinely out of hand. Napier, in charge of the Northern command, was certain that in any display of real physical force the Chartists would be no match for the army.(121) More worrying than the physical challenge to law and order was the ideological challenge presented by the Chartists' refusal to accept the existing state of much of the legal apparatus. They were critical of the ability of Parliament to pass fair laws, of the claims of MPs to be impartial, of the rights of the MPs and voters alike to possess the very property which qualified them to sit in Parliament and possess the vote. They were critical too of the magistrates, judges and juries, of the way laws were selectively made and enforced and of the ways in which laws offended natural justice, ancient rights and the laws of God. Such a malaise required more than the assertion of 'law and order'.

For Hay, who argued that in the eighteenth century the law assumed pre-eminence as the central legitimizing ideology, the nineteenth century represents a period in which this was in turn superceded by other stabilising ideological forces. This contrasts with the approach of Thompson who argues that the nineteenth century

actually saw a return to the rule of law after a period in which the crisis of hegemonic equilibrium had been (unsuccessfully) met by a policy of repression.(122) Hay, however, denies this return and identifies economic sanctions, the ideology of the free market and political liberalism as the new stabilising forces.(123) Yet these factors by themselves could not solve the crisis of legitimacy which had developed within the previously dominant ideology. The legitimacy of the law had to be re-established before it could be replaced.

Given this, it became clear to sections of the government that repression of Chartism in a manner similar to the way in which the Swing disturbances had been repressed would simply fuel the opposition by giving further evidence of the validity of its claims. Chartism had succeeded in presenting and developing a general sense of injustice and hence a certain amount of backtracking by the State became necessary. If the hegemonic order was to accommodate itself to Chartist pressure without seriously risking the loss of its power, its approach would have to be more subtle and to this extent the policy of not creating martyrs was a major triumph for the government. As Godfrey has written,

the British government displayed remarkable sophistication in its handling of the Chartists.

Yet this was neither an inevitable policy nor one without its problems.(124) Factional struggle took place within the State and the dominance of a response which sought to disarm Chartist criticism of the law, by showing the law to be just and humane, was by no means inevitable. The emergence of this policy, however, meant that in marked contrast to the Swing trials, no Chartist was executed and the

death sentences originally passed on Frost, Williams and Jones after the Newport rising were tactfully reduced to sentences of transportation on the advice of the Lord Chief Justice, Nicholas Tindal. The Judge at Newport was originally to have been Justice John Williams who had delivered the Tolpuddle sentences. In this sense Tindal's decision to take part in the trial and his subsequent recommendations for mercy may be seen as crucial and a significant turning point in the fortunes of the Chartists and the State.

The second policy involved the effort to impose definitions of legality and illegality which traded upon the legal credibility which still existed. Essentially there remained a fundamental agreement on what ought to be the role of the State and legal system with respect to that which was defined as 'crime' since this could be seen to operate in the interests of the majority. Thus if riots and disturbances could be defined as criminal rather than political then the government could rely on greater support for its punitive policies. Accordingly, considerable effort was spent to ensure specifically criminal prosecutions, for such things as damage to property, in each of the major Chartist episodes.(125)

Similarly, despite some Chartists suffering terribly in prison, others enjoyed considerable privileges. Binns and Williams, for instance, enjoyed considerable freedom in Durham gaol, being able to entertain a stream of guests and receiving regular parcels of food and other presents. O'Connor was able to continue to wield his influence through the Northern Star throughout his sentence and many of the imprisoned Chartists used their time to compose books and poems.(126)

Some prisoners were treated very cruelly, and some died, if not from prison itself, then from the aggravation of their physical condition brought on by prison life.(127) But against this the system was at least open in the sense that everyone knew where people were, what they were there for, and what would be the date of their release. Complaints of ill treatment were dealt with, noticeably in the case of Thomas Cooper(128) and overall the conditions of imprisonment were less fearsome than those existing elsewhere at the time. It would appear, in fact, that many Chartists did not fear imprisonment at all if their speeches are to be believed, and hence it could be argued that there still remained a sense of 'fair play'.

A fourth factor, outlined earlier, was the role of the legal profession itself. Peter Burke has noted that the law had long been an avenue of social mobility and the openness of the profession meant that at least some of its members were felt to possess professional integrity.(129) In addition to the radical lawyers discussed earlier there were others who, in explaining to prisoners what their rights were, how they should plead, and how they might mitigate their sentence, gave the impression that the repressive State apparatus was not total and omnipotent.

Through the successful defining of aspects of Chartist activity as criminal rather than political, through the continuing if wavering faith in the jury system, through the essentially lenient treatment of the Chartist leaders, and through the often professional detachment of defence solicitors, the established order sought to restore or re-stabilise confidence in the workings of the legal machinery. There

remained, however, the question of the legislation itself. Here the government sought to disarm the Chartist critique by accepting certain parts of it as legitimate and hence channelling it. The government needed to show that it could genuinely legislate in favour of the downtrodden and disaffected, and if the Newport verdict of 1839 provided a turning point in government strategy, then it was 1842 which provides the first clear evidence of the new direction. In that year the passing of the Coal Mines Act against the parliamentary opposition of the coal owners, together with the free trade budget which reduced import duty on a large number of items and introduced, for the first time in peace time, an income tax of 7d in the pound on incomes over £150 per year, may be seen as a move by the government to implement policies which did not reflect so clearly the interests of any one particular class in society as the legislation of the 1830s had done. The repeal of the Corn Laws was perhaps a logical extension of this policy. Whatever the impact repeal actually had on bread prices, the message conveyed was that the government was responding to genuine hardship at a clear monetary cost to its own landowning members. If the government could rise above sectional interests in this way to legislate 'for the good of the country as a whole' then the force of the Chartist critique was severely weakened.

In addition, initiatives were taken to present the role of the State as a civilizing and educative power through such measures as those concerned with public health, water supplies, burials and education itself. According to Richards,

the stabilisation and reproduction of capitalist social relations required the medium of the state as a

"moralizing" or educational agency - not as a repressive one. (130)

Through grants to education, public health measures, the relaxation of poor relief restrictions and mines and factory legislation the government sought to present itself as holding the general interest of the nation to heart.

Another aspect of change was in the field of foreign policy. The Chartists had argued that an unpopular foreign policy was yet another reason why Parliament should be reformed.(131) From 1842, however, military victories in North West India and Afghanistan, coupled with the new treaty with China, served to use imperial expansion as a distraction from domestic problems.(132) When these were followed by the Factory Act of 1844 it became apparent that the government was beginning to enjoy a re-stabilised confidence, and the refutation of Chartist allegations began to make the latter's credibility falter, and its dogmatism to look anachronistic.

Symptomatic of the government's success was the way in which the Chartists themselves began to formulate different tactics which assumed a greater degree of impartiality in the law. Far from criticising the law in all its aspects, policies were drawn up which involved not only accepting but using the law to secure redress of grievances within the existing framework of government - something the Chartists at their peak had denied was possible.

In the light of the changed State strategy, working class organisations changed their tactics too in order to exploit the new conditions and the greater accessibility of justice. As A.J. Taylor has written with respect to the MAGB:

The Association's law department, by turning the interests of the miners first to the courts through litigation and then to parliament through statute law, gave a decisive and permanent twist to the long term development of the miners' movement. (133)

At first the Association looked to amelioration through existing law but this rapidly developed into lobbying of Bills in passage and for the passing of new legislation. The miners became determined to use the law as a weapon, arguing that however corrupt the law may have become in practice, there was still a prospect of obtaining a degree of justice, particularly on matters of safety, through existing channels. This 'new realism' best exemplified itself in the appointment of W.P. Roberts as the miners' attorney at £1,000 a year. According to Challinor and Ripley,

Roberts threw everything he had got ... his energy, invective, venom - into the struggle against the Bond ... Hitherto the law had been used against the colliers; now, for the first time, it was being made to work their way. A local paper conceded "he was more than a match for all the legal skill the owners could engage, though it had the favourable ear of a biased court." (134)

By the 1850s the perception of the law had changed still further to the extent where it was seen, not as partial or the province of the employers, but as territory which could be struggled over and used as a tactic. It is of some significance that the mining militants of the 1850s who wanted to rebuild the union, such as James Watson, were castigated by the press for their very desire to use the law. The Newcastle Weekly Chronicle of 1859, for example, advised the coal owners to support the Miners Provident Association for fear of driving the moderates into the camp of those who were arguing for legislative interference in the coal industry and protection of miners by the

law.(135)

In view of the earlier attitudes towards the law, such a turn around is quite extraordinary and a tribute to the government's success in defusing the Chartist challenge by a subtle mixture of concession and distraction. By the 1850s the Chartists themselves had a new line of argument which stated that since working people were the most law-abiding section of the community, they should have a say in the making of the laws.(136) Such a sentiment, however, was a long way from the criticism of 'nefarious statutes, malignant juries and the blundering and tyrannical magistracy' which had inspired and unified the Chartist movement at its peak.

Where does all this leave Marxist theories of law? In one version the crisis of legitimacy can be seen to have arisen through the transformation brought by capitalism. As Hall et al put it,

The position can only properly be assessed when set within the framework of the transformation of the modes of capital as the regime of industrial capital gradually wins out over landed capital. (137)

Governments in prior periods had been able to secure loyalty by claiming to look after the general interests of society through the interests of an elite. The economic transformation which was taking place however required that governments should increasingly look after the interests of industrial capital and hence a new basis of legitimacy was needed. This was found, ultimately through measures such as those involving legal relations. This position is rather bluntly summed up by Fleischer who argues that 'the law is merely a product, a reflection of the economic structure' and while he

recognises that

this does not mean that law does not exercise an influence on the economic base and does not play an active part in social changes and upheavals ... nevertheless ... a relationship of service makes its appearance: the state, the legal system, morality, religion etc invariably serve the interests of social classes. (138)

It was the very pace of economic change which resulted in the relationships and correspondences between the determining material base and the determined ideological structure being exposed to critical analysis.(139)

Such an approach provided the focus for E.P. Thompson's attack on structural Marxism. 'From this standpoint', he writes,

the law is, perhaps more clearly than any other cultural or institutional artefact, by definition a part of "superstructure" adapting itself to the necessities of an infrastructure of productive forces and productive relations. As such it is clearly a de facto instrument of the ruling class: it both defines and defends these rulers' claims upon resources and labour power - it says what shall be property and what shall be crime - and it mediates class relations with a set of appropriate rules and sanctions, all of which, ultimately, confirm and consolidate existing class power. Hence the rule of law is only another mask for the rule of a class. (140)

Thompson does not accept such a position, yet it was clear for many Chartists, at least for a time, that the law was indeed a mask. Moreover, as Fine has remarked, 'law is not just a mask, it has an objective social base' and for the Chartists the mask had slipped to reveal the class nature of the entire legal and political system.(141)

For Thompson, however, the logic of equity which was embodied in the law transcended inequalities of class power. Law is not just an ephemeral mirror of class relations for, if it were, it would cease to be effective.(142) The evidence, however, shows, to the contrary, that

the law was seen, at least for a time, as being partial and unjust. Under those circumstances the law was not 'transcending the inequalities of class power' but had lost its precondition for effectiveness with large sections of the population. Such evidence is difficult to reconcile with Thompson's position, while Anderson goes further and criticises Thompson for reifying the concept of the 'rule of law'. Anderson argues that law cannot rule by itself but only through human agency.(143) He further argues that

Law can be empirically omnipresent in a society as he (Thompson) has shown, yet remain analytically a level of it, as Poulantzas maintains, and that level can indeed be elevated as a superstructure above an economic base, even while being indispensable to it. (144)

Pearson also accuses Thompson of reification, arguing that the law cannot be separated from the actions of men in the way that Thompson proposes. According to the latter, when the law is partial it is because it is abused. Pearson, however, argues that this presentation of law as a separate essence is itself a mystification.(145) For Pearson the more accurate picture is that provided by Hay whose analysis

shows precisely that law's function as an ideology (to mask class rule) necessitates the appearance (but never the reality) of fairness and justice.(146)

And even if the law had been fair and impartial in essence, only the rich could ensure freedom before it in terms of such aspects as the quality of research evidence and representation.

Thompson's insistence that the law possesses an independence and a transcendence of class relations has found few wholehearted supporters. While Thompson argues that the law, however much it may be

a creature of class interests, sometimes serves to inhibit crude unmediated class rule, others argue that such 'successes' are necessary to enable its deeper purposes to operate in the longer term. The law is part of the State and as Abrams has pointed out, the prime purpose of the State is legitimation. The entire raison d'etre of legitimation work is that without it the relations of domination which it serves would be seen as illegitimate and unacceptable.(147) Law and the legal system do not exist separately from the class structure and neglect of their mutual involvement turns out to be a weakness in studies which have, in so many other ways, done much to improve our understanding of nineteenth century class struggle.

Thompson's creation of a gulf between himself and structural Marxists, however, is criticised by McLennan as being based on unwarranted assumptions. He accuses Thompson of aiming his discussion of cultural forms such as the law at those who keep the fundamentals of class power more steadily in view and notes that

Thompson argues that the law does indeed, on balance, serve ruling classes, but that its modalities require some element of real justice ... (but) ... none of this is a denial that legal institutions and ideologies do have structural causes. (148)

Thompson, he alleges, has simply misunderstood Althusser and others since their recognition of the relative autonomy of the law can be reconciled with his own. Thus Anderson and McLennan remain closer to the position of Engels, seeing that a power apparently (but only apparently) standing above society can be a necessary part of the process by which conflict is moderated and kept within the bounds of order.(149)

Anderson further offers an explanation for what he sees as Thompson's lapses. He views Whigs and Hunters as retrospectively influenced by the libertarian analysis of Writing by Candlelight thus suggesting that Thompson has fallen into the trap he himself so often warns against of approaching the study of history with inappropriately modern concepts. Thompson's support for the fight to preserve the law against contemporary right wing incursions, and in particular to preserve the jury system from its current detractors, leads him to praise its earlier manifestations and to diminish the significance of the role played by the law as a tool of the ruling class.(150)

Hall, Anderson and Pearson all seek to rehabilitate Thompson's contribution into a framework which stands closer to that of his colleague Hay. Attack from a different angle comes from Peter Burke. He criticises the view which sees 'law' as simply a mechanism for keeping the ruling class in power as too reductionist, arguing instead that the term hegemony should replace that of ideology, whereby what develops is

the acceptance by the subordinate classes of the culture of the ruling class without either rulers or ruled necessarily being aware of the political consequences or functions of this acceptance. (151)

Burke follows here the notions expounded by Raymond Williams that

the pressures and limits of what can ultimately be seen as a specific economic political and cultural system seem to most of us the pressures and limits of simple experience and common sense. (152)

The notion of hegemony in other words is preferable to that of ideology because it is both more subtle and less visible. Yet the evidence from the 1830s and 1840s clearly shows that the forms of

dominance being exercised were not invisible to large sections of the population and that the idea that the law was a mechanism for keeping the ruling class in power was a view held not only by the Chartists but by the power holders themselves.(153) As such Burke's approach fails to do justice to the perceptions of those who lived through that particular period of crisis.

Hall, et al maintain that it was the crisis, or series of crises, which altered the nature of the law. They write that

at every critical turning point in the nineteenth century ... the law enforcement agencies, and then the law itself, was on hand in a crucial role ... but not only was the law forced, above all by the growing working class presence, to perform this task more circumspectly and impartially, legitimating itself, not in the prerogations of a propertied class but in the universal appeal to 'public order' and the general interest; it was constantly forced back to a more impartial position. (154)

Hence the law was primarily determined by economic forces as an instrument of class rule, while it was subject to modification from working class pressure. The way in which it responded produced greater instantiation of Thompson's 'real' justice and this in turn succeeded in restabilising the basis of legitimacy for the hegemonic order.(155) In this way a crisis of economic, political and legal relationships which was sufficiently deep to expose its correspondences to Chartist criticisms, and which threatened for a time to disturb, if not to destroy, the status quo, was ultimately resolved through changes within the legal and political superstructure.

Successful re-stabilisation required that the state adopted the appearance of being separate from both relationships of production and from 'politics' by reconstructing its appeal to abstract, universal

principals and to ritual, all of which was achieved so successfully through the law.(156) 'Reading through' such appearances, however, is the purpose of inquiry and as such Conservative and Whig claims that it was at least 1846, if not later, before industrial wealth was given an opportunity to pursue its own interests, do not emerge well from an analysis of the Chartist position and the State's response to it. For the Chartists themselves it was their ideology which, in the earlier part of the movement, gave them their force and their wide appeal. Ultimately, however, it was their ideology which let them down as it failed to come to terms with an alteration of state strategy.

While the clear class base of the law had thrust politics to the centre of working class agitation, the obscuring of the law's class base by the reworking of State strategy undermined the radicals case, and as Chartism's ideas failed to make an appropriate response to these changes in state policy the momentum of its earlier phase was lost.

Chapter 8Notes

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46. Sunderland Herald, 10.5.1839.
47. Northern Star, 15.8.1840, 22.8.1840.
48. Report of the Trials of the Pitmen and others, concerned in the late Riots, Murders etc in the Hetton and other Collieries, at the Durham Summer Assizes 1832, including a full report of Mr Justice Parkes' Charge to the Grand Jury (Durham, 1832).

49. See, for example, the Northern Star, 28.10.1843, for examples of continuing truck law abuse; 'The Coal Kings and their Law breaking'.
50. G.S. Jones, Languages of Class (Cambridge, 1983).
51. Cited in G.S. Jones, 'The Language of Chartism' in J. Epstein and D. Thompson, The Chartist Experience (Macmillan, 1982) p.18.
52. The reduction rather than the abolition of stamp duty had the effect of cheapening the newspapers purchased by the better off while at the same time leaving the price of newspapers for the poorer sections of society at a level higher than that which they could afford.
53. D. Thompson, The Chartists (Temple Smith, 1984) p.41. Tilly further argues that it was the focussing of power in the national State which produced the particular forms of nineteenth century working class activity as they came to see the importance of national politics rather than seeing their fate as determined only by landlords, guilds and Church. In this respect the Poor Law centralisation presented the working class with new ways of looking at their condition.
54. Poor Man's Guardian, 6.4.1833.
55. T. Cooper, The Life of Thomas Cooper (Leicester UP, 1971) p.137.
56. G.S. Jones (1982) op.cit., p.18.
57. Northern Star, 13.10.1838. Elsewhere O'Brien wrote that 'the monopoly of land and the monopoly of machinery as an instrument of production were basically attributable to the still more glaring injustice of the monopoly of law making as an instrument of distribution', Northern Star, 20.4.1838.
58. Northern Star, 9.12.1843.
59. Nonconformist, 1842, p.25.
60. A. Heesom, 'The Sunderland By Election, September 1841', Northern History, 1974.
61. Northern Star, 25.9.1841.
62. Northern Star, 20.7.1850, Jude's address on this occasion was given as the British Coffee House, Agar St., Strand, London.
63. Northern Star, 16.7.1842.
64. Manchester Advertiser, 25.9.1834; cited in J. Foster, op.cit., p.148.

65. Northern Star, 8.1.1842.
66. Northern Star, 21.11.1840.
67. Northern Star, 26.6.1841.
68. ibid.
69. Northern Star, 28.10.1843.
70. Northern Star, 22.8.1840, Binn's use of the term 'industry' was cleverly ambiguous in this context.
71. Northern Star, 1.2.1839.
72. Northern Star, 8.5.1841.
73. Northern Star, 11.6.1842.
74. R. Challinor, 'W.P. Roberts, The Miners Attorney', NELHS bulletin 1986; D. Jones, The Last Rising (Oxford, 1985); D. Thompson (1986) op.cit., and D. Williams, John Frost (Cardiff, 1939) provide the most useful insights to date.
75. Ray Challinor has made a substantial unpublished study of Roberts' career. He notes that it was Roberts' style which failed to appeal to later union officials - lecture to the North East Labour History Society, 1986.
76. For Ernest Jones see G.D.H. Cole, Chartist Portraits, op.cit.; Kydd was a member of Sunderland's 'Whole Hog' brigade, private secretary to Oastler, author of History of the factory movement under the pseudonym of 'Alfred' etc. For sketches of his life see A. Wilson 'Chartism in Glasgow' in A. Briggs, Chartist Studies (Macmillan, 1959); R.G. Gammage, op.cit., p.286, 331 etc; T. Cooper, op.cit., p.321.
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78. Northern Star, 26.10.1840.
79. Northern Star, 15.8.1840, 22.8.1840.
80. ibid, 19.9.1840.
81. R. Storch, op.cit.
82. Northern Star, 9.5.1840, Carol Jones, op.cit., Chapter 5 gives a more general view of common dislike of the police among mining communities.
83. ibid, 5.12.1840.

84. ibid, 5.12.1840.
85. ibid, 15.8.1840, W.E. Adams further wrote that 'the whole governing classes - Whigs even more than Tories - were not only disliked, they were positively hated by the working population', W.E. Adams, op.cit., p.237.
86. J. Wilson, Memories of a Labour Leader (1910, Caliban books, 1980 edition) p.188.
87. R. Challinor and B. Ripley, op.cit., p.106.
88. 'An Appeal to the Public from the Pitmen of the Tyne and Wear' reprinted in British Labour Struggles: Contemporary pamphlets 1727-1850: Labour Disputes in the Mines (New York, 1972).
89. W. Mitchell, The Question Answered: 'What do the Pitmen Want? (Monkwearmouth, 1844).
90. Supplement to the Miners Advocate (n.d.); Fynes, op.cit., 37-49; Welbourne, op.cit., 69; Challinor and Ripley, op.cit., 99.
91. Northern Star, 13.6.1840.
92. ibid, 9.5.1840, Durham Chronicle, 25.4.1840.
93. Northern Star, 4.12.1841.
94. Letter from Chester Castle published in the Northern Star, 23.11.1839.
95. Reynolds Political Register, 9.2.1850. For Londonderry's active role as a magistrate in 1831 see The Tyne Mercury 12.4.1831. T. Hayter in The Army and the Crowd in Mid Georgian England (London, 1978) gives an account of the role which magistrates played in troop movements, while the Webbs, A History of Trade Unionism 1660-1920 (1920) p.182-5 gives accounts of Roberts' views and dealings with magistrates.
96. D. Philips, 'The Black County Magistracy 1835-60; a changing local elite and the exercise of its power' Midland History, 1967; D. Philips, Crime and Authority in Victorian England (Croom Helm, 1977) p.191.
97. Manchester Advertiser, 25.9.1834. For a more sympathetic view of magistrates see N. McCord, North East England. The Region's Development (Batsford, 1979) p.82.
98. Lord Melbourne had argued that appeals were pointless as the prisoners had already sailed when it was later discovered that George Loveless, through illness, had not left the docks. J. Marlow, op.cit., TUC (1934) op.cit.

99. Sunderland Herald, 31.7.1840. A second change, that of issuing a sedition handbill, was dropped.
100. Northern Star, 15.8.1840.
101. Northern Liberator, 25.1.1840.
102. Northern Star, 25.7.1840.
103. ibid, 15.8.1840.
104. ibid, 22.8.1840.
105. ibid, 22.8.1840. Williams was sufficiently astute then to realise that which has been forcibly repeated since, that 'however great an improvement this form of trial is on trial by ordeal, this should not prevent us from trying to grasp its bourgeois characteristics and limitations'. S. Picciotto, 'The theory of the State, class struggle and the rule of law' in National Deviancy Conference/Conference of Socialist Economists Capitalism and the rule of law (Hutchinson, 1979) p.173.
106. Sunderland Herald, 25.2.1842. The manipulation of jury trials in Ireland has also been noted by John Saville in an as-yet unpublished paper delivered to History Workshop 20, November 1986.
107. Northern Star, 22.8.1840.
108. ibid, 22.8.1840. A further example of Binn's ambivalence on such matters involved the 1841 election which he 'won' on a show of hands but at which no poll was taken. Binns threatened to argue in the courts that he had been rightfully elected. Sunderland Herald, 2.7.1841, Northern Star 10.7.1841.
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113. Northern Star, 22.8.1840.
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116. Northern Star, 22.8.1840.
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118. Northern Star, 5.12.1840.
119. J. Foster in the introduction to M. Jenkins, The General Strike of 1842 (Lawrence and Wishart, 1980) p.15.
120. B. Harrison and P. Hollis in the introduction of Robert Lowery, Radical and Chartist (1979)
121. F.C. Mather, Public Order in the Age of the Chartists (1959).
122. E.P. Thompson, Whigs and Hunters (Allen Lane, 1975) p.269; P. Anderson Arguments within English Marxism (Verso, 1980) p.199.
123. D. Hay, op.cit., p.263.
124. C. Godfrey, 'The Chartist Prisoners 1839-41' IRSH, 1979, p.222. Both Godfrey, op.cit., p.213 and D. Thompson in 'Chartism as a Historical Subject' Society for the study of labour history bulletin 20, 1970, p.12 point to the watershed nature of the Newport death sentence commutation. For the rising and trial generally see D. Jones, The Last Rising (Oxford, 1985).
125. As Hall et al have put it, 'The "criminalisation" of political and economic conflicts is a central aspect of the exercise of social control', op.cit., p.190.
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127. The most prominent example was the death of Samuel Holberry, for which see D. Thompson (1984) op.cit., p.280-81.
128. See Cooper's autobiography The life of Thomas Cooper, (Leicester University reprint 1971). J. Epstein and C. Godfrey, 'HO 20/10 interviews of Chartist prisoners, 1840-41' Bulletin, Society for the Study of labour history, 1977, Godfrey (1979) op.cit.
129. P. Burke, Sociology and History (Allen & Unwin, 1980) p.70.

130. P. Richards, op.cit., p.66.
131. Northern Star, 7.11.1840.
132. M. Jenkins, op.cit., 254-5.
133. A.J. Taylor, 'The Miners Association of Great Britain and Ireland 1842-8: A Study in the problem of integration', Economica 1955, p.48, 59.
134. R. Challinor and B. Ripley, op.cit., p.97-8. As R. Challinor has more recently pointed out the miners tactics still involved something of a contradiction in that they wished to 'smash' the employers but by legal means and through the courts, with Roberts encouraging such fantasies by talk of making the coal owners 'bite the dust'. In this sense Roberts eventually became the victim of his own tactics as his confrontational style appealed less and less to those who wanted more amicable arrangements (R. Challinor, 1986, op.cit.).
135. Newcastle Weekly Chronicle, 22.10.1859.
136. Thomas Gregson in the Peoples Paper, 16.1.1858.
137. S. Hall et al (op.cit.) p.193.
138. H. Fleischer, Marxism and History (Allen Lane, 1973) p.42, 479.
139. S. Hall et al (op.cit.) p.197.
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141. B. Fine, 'Law and Class' in National Deviancy Conference/Conference of Socialist Economists Capitalism and the rule of Law (Hutchinson, 1979) p.39.
142. E.P. Thompson (1975) op.cit., p.263.
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148. G. McLennan, 'E.P. Thompson and the discipline of historical context' in Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, Making Histories, Studies in history-writing and politics (Hutchinson, 1982) p.119.
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150. E.P. Thompson, 1975, op.cit.; Writing by Candlelight (Merlin 1980; P. Anderson (1980) op.cit., p.201. See also H. Harman and J. Griffith, Justice deserted: the subversion of the Jury (NCCL, 1979).
151. P. Burke, op.cit., p.78.
152. R. Williams, Marxism and Literature (London, 1977) p.108-114.
153. See, for example, the comments of the Lord Chief Justice cited earlier, note 119.
154. S. Hall et al, op.cit., p.193.
155. As P. Corrigan and D. Sayer point out in The Great Arch. English State Formation as Cultural Revolution (Blackwell, 1985) States prefer to maintain their repressive existence through cultural forms rather than brute force - through a mystifying cultural conspiracy rather than by actual physical repression.
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Chapter 9Summary and Conclusions

The language and content of radicalism within a region therefore provides an important means of studying a period of change which was itself critical to the development of modern society. Issues of class and the State, together with the labour process, have been analysed in detail at the local level and found to be crucial to an understanding of the overall patterning and fate of political radicalism both at a regional and at a national level.

Thus while many approaches to political radicalism rest on simplified economic determinants, the view which is taken here is that it declined because it lost the battle over ideas. John Saville has remarked that the end of Chartism was distinguished by an important shift in social psychology. Yet this shift, if that is what it was, was preceded in Saville's view by a failure of the working class movement to respond to a challenge. This challenge lay in the attempt by the authorities to alter the grounds of debate, while at the same time emasculating radicalism's ideological appeal.(1) The previous chapter has attempted to show the centrality of law to this process, while Prothero, Tholfsen and Foster have all pointed to the government's endorsement of liberal rhetoric as the chief means of undercutting radicalism.(2)

Foster has argued that if

the "language of liberalism" was victorious in 1843, as in a certain sense it was, it was not simply because of some organic flaw in the language of radicalism. It derived from a calculated and specific use of state power to achieve, at least temporarily, the ideological demobilisation of the National Charter Association as a political organisation. (3)

For Foster liberalisation, as the language of government, sounded the 'death knell' of Chartism and this, alongside the labour aristocracy thesis, remain the two key issues to be faced.

Gareth Stedman-Jones, on the other hand, eschews the notion that liberalism per se was sufficient to turn the working class leaders into teetotalers, educationalists and mechanics institute men. The crucial factor for Stedman-Jones was the way in which the government (rather than the bourgeoisie generally) cut the ground from under the radicals' feet, recasting the State and the constitution in a way which, by seeming to provide improvements for all sections of society, succeeded in strengthening the position of those with power.(4) The principal way in which this occurred, it has been argued here, was through the State's response to the radicals' critique of the law.

Within the government itself, strategies of liberalism were up for debate over such matters as the form in which new State institutions would be cast. The Benthamites, for example, wanted to eliminate the illiberal face-to-face deference patterns associated with the old poor law, in favour of a uniform bureaucratic efficiency. Yet the Benthamite vision in practice was translated back into older forms with face-contact charity practised up to and beyond the end of the century.(5)

Perhaps it is the utilitarian contribution which ultimately turns

out to be the central issue in radicalism's decline. The 1830s and 1840s were decades of profound hegemonic crisis. In this the restabilisation of hegemony was only achieved by a concerted range of policy. This encompassed concessions to working class pressure (slower implementation of the new poor law), transformation of certain economic relations (through the factory acts), and the construction of new and less overt forms of cultural control (education and the reduction of stamp duty on the press). Together these effected a systematic weakening of the grounds upon which the major forms of governmental criticism rested.

In many of these fields the Benthamite influence was paramount and it is the relationship of Benthamism to changes in government policy as well as to changes in the economy which take precedence over hazier notions of liberalism. This also departs markedly from the approach of Stedman-Jones. Jones has argued that emphasis should be placed on the study of language since this was the terrain on which the battle took place. One set of languages (Chartist radicalism) was gradually excluded by a different set of languages - that of governmental liberalism.(6) Yet apart from the fact that the Chartists' language can equally plausibly be read as supporting a class model of agitation, as considered earlier, it also remains the case that the Chartists lost their debates because of changes in the material base of their arguments. The reassertion of the government's hegemony involved, as Stedman-Jones has himself pointed out, the alteration of material relations as well as a change in ideology and in linguistic forms. Ultimately there was no huge public debate in

which the Chartists were finally and decisively defeated, but instead there was an alteration to the economic, political and ideological conditions on which their arguments were based.

Thus the material and cultural should be seen as two arms of the same strategy. Such a view is supported by the work of Richards who has similarly stated that the State's need to contain class struggle and give 'coherence to the economic and social system' led it to develop a strategy which linked

concessions to the working class and measures to stimulate industrial capitalism. (7)

For Richards this strategy took its clearest form in the field of culture and ideas with the foundation of the Education department in 1839 marking

an important moment in the formation of what Gramsci calls "the cultural state" as the ruling classes closed ranks against the threat to their domination. (8)

The argument that the authorities feared a loss of control and then sought by wide ranging strategies to close ranks against the working class threat, is one which accords closely with the North East experience. Glib explanations which cite 'the economy' or 'the actions' of the authorities without further elaboration simply fail to come to terms with the complexity of the phenomena they seek to describe. Political radicalism in the North East rested on complex grounds including the development of industrial capitalism in the region, the way in which it connected with patterns of ownership, and the forms of the labour process found there. But it also depended upon the differing ideological traditions and the resonance of Chartism's message with the experiences of its constituency.

In a very important sense, radicalism's battle was lost at an ideological and cultural level, in terms of the arguments over the Corn Laws, control over education and cultural institutions and, most important of all, over the arguments and political analysis which surrounded the central role of legislation and the legal system as a form of repression. Yet the determining factors behind the government's strategies remained structural and it is the way in which government policies came to reflect economic interests, particularly through utilitarianism, which remains a central focus of concern. Thus both structural and cultural analyses are necessary to produce a more complete explanation which, in effect, operates to conceive of the transformations which were taking place as having complex and multi-levelled determinations.

The rise of North East radicalism can therefore be seen as having taken place in a context which was economically structured at a local level as well as a national one. This context then provided the necessary pre-requisite for a radical critique of the State which owed its strength to the way in which its ideological message and its language coincided with the experience of its supporters. The patterning of radicalism in the region likewise reflected differences in economic structures as well as the cultural and ideological traditions which existed in different places. When analysing the decline of radicalism, however, it becomes clear that determinacy of economic structures in the last instance becomes paramount, for not only did changes in the economy of themselves alter the context in which radicalism had flourished, but through their reflection in

government policy they succeeded in altering the material base on which opposing ideologies had been constructed. In terms of Chartism's decline it appears that while local structures were not unimportant, it was the overall nature of economic changes, the way in which they were reflected in the policies of the State, and the way in which these policies interacted with the culture and ideology of the working class which was crucial to the patterning, and ultimately the faltering of the Chartist initiative.

All this is not to suggest that such a process was inevitable, nor that self correcting tendencies in the State were apparent. At the time events may well have moved in different directions and, as a minimum, the existence of working class radical pressure acted as an agency which influenced the direction and speed with which the State moved. Changes were not made in a vacuum and somewhere along the line arguments had to be won and pressures brought to bear. If the State stumbled towards a successful reassertion of its hegemony, the possibility of blundering in the opposite direction was always present and was a path occasionally taken elsewhere. The British State itself had not been afraid of savage repression in earlier decades and indeed was still not afraid to pursue such a policy in Ireland. It is far from idle to speculate as to what may have happened had mainland radicalism in this later period been handled in similar fashion.(9)

Jessop has written that

state power is a complex social relation that reflects the changing balance of social forces in a determinate conjuncture

and it is just such a reflection which has been traced here.(10) The

state is not reduced to the economic, seen as an instrument of the dominant class, or regarded as having

a straightforward one to one relationship with the development of the capitalist economy. (11)

The development was necessarily uneven, fragmented, piecemeal and faltering. Nevertheless the extent to which State power restored the conditions required for capitalist accumulation indicates the extent to which the relationship between State power and capitalism was developing.

This particular thesis began with a concern for the uniqueness of the locality which was its intended focus of study. It concluded by emphasising the centrality of the State, for while the origins of North East radicalism may have been local as well as national, the resolution of the crisis ultimately became State led. In this way departure is taken from Foster's emphasis on the employers as having been responsible for the bribing of the labour aristocracy, and hence the achievement of re-stabilisation, and instead attention is brought firmly back to a consideration of the importance of the central State.

At this stage it would have been desirable to analyse in greater depth a number of the issues surrounding economic development and the formation of State policies. In particular the role of the Benthamites, their precise relationship, both intellectually and materially, with newly emerging economic forces, and the reasons for their ascendancy in terms of their influence over policy all remain major problems.(12)

What has been demonstrated, however, is that Historical Sociology provides a far more fertile point of access to key issues of the

period than that which can be achieved by narrative and empirical approaches. Thus the task which presents itself as a matter of some urgency is the need to capitalise on important developments in local history, oral history, History Workshop and the like, and to create a fusion of these initiatives with a theoretically informed Historical Sociology. In such a way 'History from Below' can re-capture its potential and provide a clear way forward for further study.

Chapter 9

Notes

1. J. Saville, 'Some aspects of Chartism in Decline', Bulletin of the Labour History Society, No.20.
2. I. Prothero (1979) op.cit.; T. Tholfsen (1976) op.cit.; J. Foster (1974) op.cit.. See E.J. Hunt, British Labour History 1815-1914 (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1981) for a recent multi-factorial approach.
3. J. Foster (1974) op.cit., p.43.
4. G. Stedman Jones, chapter 3 of Languages of Class (Cambridge 1983) and 'Unemployment and Politics in the Nineteenth Century - Parallels and differences', LlaFur, 1982 on which this discussion is based.
5. G. Stedman Jones (1982) op.cit.
6. G. Stedman Jones (1983) op.cit.
7. P. Richards, 'State formation and Class Struggle 1832-48' in P. Corrigan, Capitalism, State formation and Marxist theory (1980) p.76.
8. ibid, p.75.
9. John Saville makes the point that Irish police were armed with carbines and cutlasses as a matter of course. Mainland police were only armed in rare emergencies. On the whole there was a determination not to shed British blood on British soil which was a legacy derived from Peterloo. See Ireland and 1848 unpublished paper to History Workshop 20, 1986.
10. B. Jessop, The Capitalist State: Marxist theories and methods (Martin Robertson, 1982) p.221.
11. J. Urry, The Anatomy of Capitalist Society (RKP, 1981) p.83.
12. P. Richards has noted how the activist MPs in crucial policy fields tended to come from urban and industrial constituencies and exerted an influence over policy which was out of proportion to their numbers. He also argues that the Benthamites themselves did not have a class base. (1980) op.cit.

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These are arranged in the following sequence:

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  - a. Newspaper and journals
  - b. Manuscript collections
  - c. Government publications, miscellaneous reports and transactions
  - d. Books, articles and pamphlets by contemporaries
  
2. **Secondary sources**
  - a. Unpublished dissertations and other manuscripts
  - b. Books
  - c. Articles

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 Durham County Advertiser  
 Newcastle Weekly Chronicle  
 Northern Liberator  
 Sunderland Herald  
 Sunderland Beacon  
 New Moral World  
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 Northern Star

1b. Manuscripts and other papers

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Brockett Papers

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Electors Scrapbook

Pease & Co miscellaneous papers and office diaries

Election handbills, poorhouse earnings book, cashbooks of

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Private papers

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Appendix 1Details of nominations to the Chartist General Council (taken from the Northern Star)Sunderland

<u>Name</u>	<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Address</u>
<u>10.4.1841</u>		
James Williams	Stationer	Bridge Street
John Deegan	Chartist Missionary	Bridge Street
George Binns	Draper	High Street
James Morratt	Gardener	Infirmary
Thomas Wilson	Painter	Woodbine Street
Robert Fenwick	Joiner	Sussex Street
John Small	Chairmaker	East Cross Street
J.G. Kirker	Millwright	Millfield Cottages
George Walker	Basket Maker	
Thomas Robson	Painter	Low Quay (treasurer)
John Hemsley		Bridge Street (secretary)
<u>30.4.42</u>		
William Dobbie	Cabinet Maker	
James Young	Mason	
James Smith	Mason	
Thomas Graham	Tailor	
William Clark	Shoemaker	
Edward Slater		
Mclean	Cabinet Maker	
John Blenkhorn	Weaver	
Esket Riley	Weaver	
<u>7.1.63</u>		
Heskett Riley	Weaver	Ropery Lane
Robert Watken	Weaver	Ropery Lane
Robert Heppell	Engineer	Middle Street
William Chalk	Cordwainer	Robinson's Street
John Chalk	Butcher	High Street
Daniel Mitchell	Rigger	John Street
James Hall	Labourer	South Pier
Andrew Wilkie	Mason	Titters (Fitters) Lane
(sub-treasurer)		
John Esplin	Cordwainer	30 Robinson's Lane
(sub-secretary)		

17.2.44

Robert Walker		
Charles Bell		
Bernard Monarch		
Robert Johnston		
Christopher Scott		
John Grundy		(sub-treasurer)
Andrew Wilkie	Mason	Fitters Row (sub-secretary)

Durham11.9.1841

John Longstaff		
William Liddell		
Benjamin Hill		
John Bray		
William Ward		
John Watson		sub-treasurer
John Mowbray		sub-secretary

26.3.1842

John Jones	Tallow Chandler	
John Dreghorn	Carpet Weaver	
William Craig	Shoemaker	
Hugh Richmond	Tailor	
Robert Harrison	Shoemaker	
John Langstaff	Baker	
William Liddell	Tailor	
Benjamin Hill	Labourer	sub-treasurer
John Bray	Cooper	sub-secretary

11.6.1842

Hugh Richmond	Tailor	Claypath
Michael Coyne	Tailor	Elvet
John Dreghorn	Carpet Weaver	Crossgate
Robert Harrison	Cordwainer	Milburngate
William Craig	Cordwainer	Milburngate
John Mowbray	Attorney's Clerk	Framwellgate
John Bray	Cooper	Framwellgate
Benjamin Hill	Labourer	Framwellgate
		(sub-treasurer)
John Jones	Tallow Chandler	Claypath
		(sub-secretary)

South Shields/Banks of Tyne27.11.1841

John Douglas	Shoemaker	Waterloo-vale
John Strickland	Shoemaker	King Street
William Cory	Bootcloser	Salem Street
John Bunn	Bookbinder	Waterloo-vale
William Dalrymple	Shoemaker	East Street
William Wilkinson	Shoemaker	Thames Street (sub-treasurer)
Thomas White	Cabinet Maker	Dairy Lane (sub-secretary)

20.5.1843

George Eliot	Joiner	North Street
William Gillfillan	Joiner	Price Street
William Corry		Thomas Street
William Caizly	Tailor	East Holborn
William Oliver	Smith	West Holborn
John Gilchist	Mason	West Holborn
Robert Randell	Mason	Price street
James Southern	Joiner	Long Room (sub-treasurer)
William Wilkinson	Glazier	Thomas Street (sub-secretary)

4.11.1843

John Carr	Shipwright	Price Street
Nathaniel Frankland	Quarryman	Com. Road
John Strickland	Cordwainer	King Street
John Caisley	Tailor	East Holborn
William Gillfillan	Joiner	Price Street (president)
Donkin	Shipwright	Shadwell Street (treasurer)
Robert Randall	Mason	Price Street (sub-secretary)

(all letters to Robert Randall, c/o Mr Southern, Tyne Dock Tavern, Long Row, South Shields).

West Auckland15.1.1842

Francis Myers	Mason	Evenwood
Christopher Hodgson	Quarryman	Evenwood
Frederick Burn	Miner	Evenwood
Richard Lee	Shoemaker	West Auckland
Duncan M'Queen	Shoemaker	West Auckland

Joseph Ayer  
Thomas Mycroft

Carpenter

West Auckland  
West Auckland  
(sub-secretary)

South Hetton

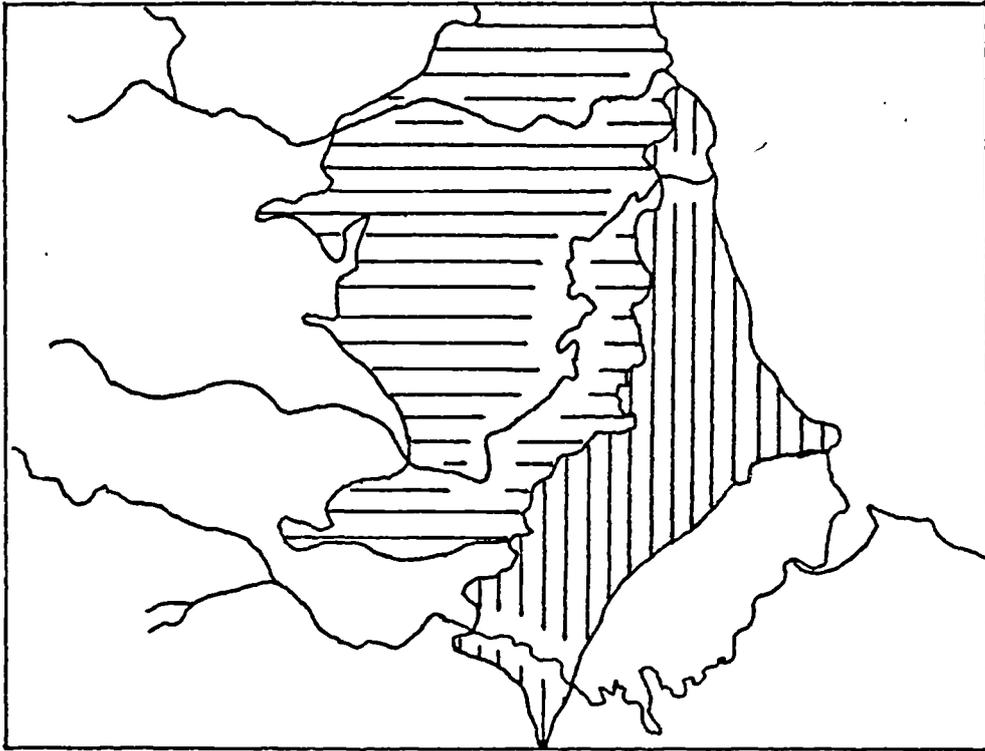
3.10.1840

John Graham  
Anthony Ridley  
John Hunter  
R. Bainbridge  
William Mason  
George Blake  
W. Weech

Chairman

Appendix 2

Maps of North East England Showing Coal Measures,  
Extent of Magnesian Limestone and Principal Places  
Mentioned in the Text



Key:

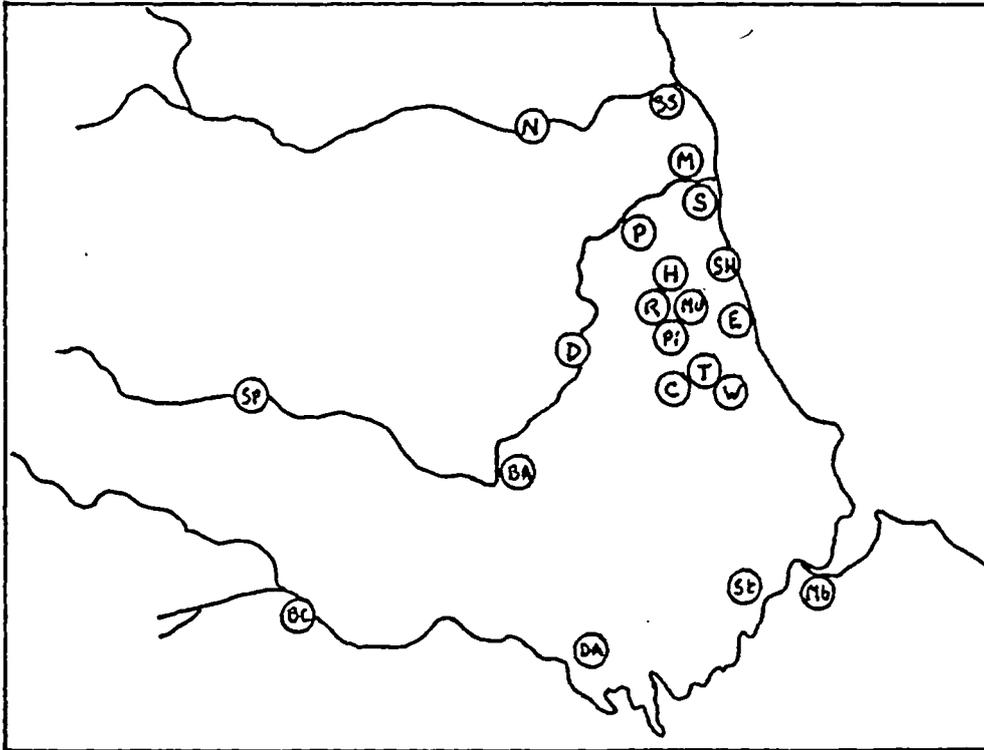
Uncovered coal measures



Extent of magnesian limestone



Map of North East England showing  
coal measures and extent of magnesian limestone



## Key

N	Newcastle	SH	Seaham Harbour	C	Coxhoe
SS	South Shields	R	Rainton	T	Thornley
M	Monkwearmouth	Mu	Murton & South Hetton	W	Wingate
S	Sunderland	Pi	Pittington	Sp	Stanhope
P	Penshaw	E	Easington	BA	Bishop Auckland
H	Hetton	D	Durham	BC	Barnard Castle
DA	Darlington	St	Stockton	Mb	Middlesbrough

Map of North East England showing  
principal places mentioned in the text

