

THE ORIGINS OF THE SOCIAL WAR IN SOUTH YORKSHIRE -
A STUDY OF CAPITALIST EVOLUTION AND LABOUR CLASS
REALIZATION IN ONE INDUSTRIAL REGION c.1750-1855.

BY

JOHN LINDSEY BAXTER, B.A.(Exeter), M.A.(Sheffield)

THESIS PRESENTED FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

UNIVERSITY OF SHEFFIELD

DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC HISTORY

DECEMBER 1976

VOL I



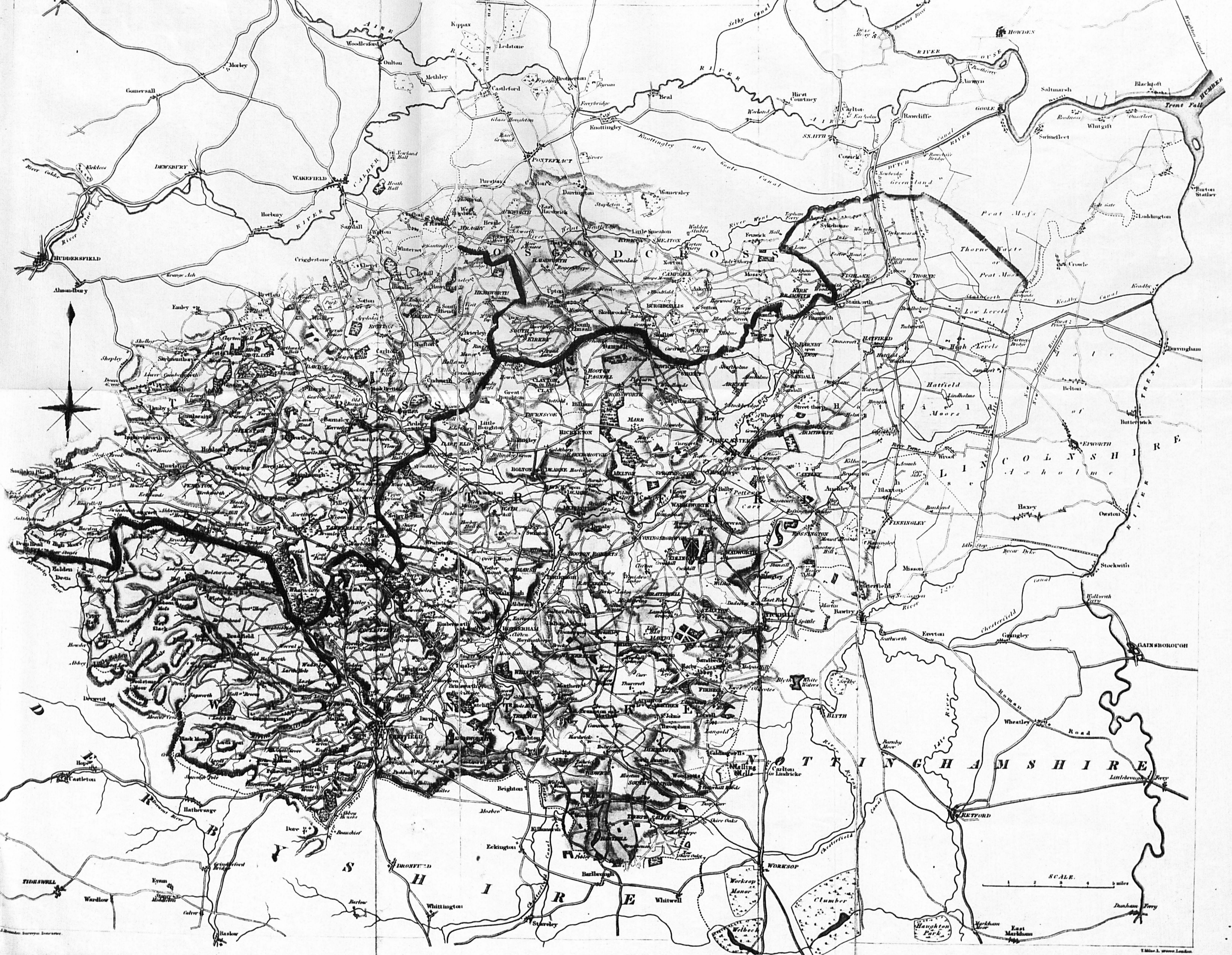
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Acknowledgements

My family, and particularly my wife, have put up with a great deal of erratic behaviour during the course of this study. They must be thanked for their tolerance. My supervisor, Professor Sidney Pollard, offered valuable criticism and helpful and prompt supervision. My wider intellectual debts will be obvious from the text. I should like to thank the following for the loan of documents and papers and for providing other information - Audrey Baxter, Fred Donnelly, Jim Epstein, John Goodchild, Ian Inkster, John Halstead, Mick Jenkins, Martin Happs, David Martin, Bob Mitchell, Bill Moore, Caroline Reid, John Salt, John Styles, Mick Thomas, Dorothy Thompson and Edward Thompson.

The SSRC, the Fidelis Scholarship Fund of Bishopshalt School, Mike Haywood and the Yorkshire Arts Association, Sheffield WEA, Leeds Polytechnic and the Douglas Knoop Fellowship and Research Fund of Sheffield University provided some of the means of subsistence during a large part of the period needed to complete this study.

The librarians and archivists in a range of institutions in London, Sheffield, Newcastle, Manchester, Leeds, Wigan, Carlisle, Wakefield, Doncaster, Barnsley, Rotherham and York have been in the main courteous and helpful and have made my task less difficult. Finally my thanks are due to Mrs Margaret Harrison and Mrs Lesley Baxter who efficiently typed the bulk of this manuscript.

DECEMBER 1976

J.L. BAXTER

THE ORIGINS OF THE SOCIAL WAR IN SOUTH YORKSHIRE -
A STUDY OF CAPITALIST EVOLUTION AND LABOUR CLASS
REALIZATION IN ONE INDUSTRIAL REGION, c.1750-1855.

SUMMARY

This study seeks to advance the possibility of producing 'total history' in which the working or labour class assumes its rightful place at the centre of interpreted action. This requires a practical and intellectual approach that is inspired by the Marxist tradition.

In chronologically ordered chapters dealing with economic realities (the organization and dynamics of an industrial economy where cutlery, related metalware manufacture, linen making, coal mining and iron and steel manufacture were dominant) and the realities of social conflict, the main focus remains on the latter. The periodization which orders this study is of course artificial. It derives a certain validity from the clustering of 'moments' in the progress of working people in their popular and class struggles with economic and political exploitation.

My main aim was to penetrate and evaluate the nature and levels of labour class consciousness. The sources dictated that I only encountered the consciousness of vanguard groups. My evaluation was largely situational but it also shows an appreciation of the unity of historical development created by the inheritance of traditions and experiences, a process that is reinforced by persistent and unyielding processes of economic conditioning.

This study mainly limits itself to what happened in one industrial region. This and the 'situational' approach restrict the level of generalization. When more regional and town studies have been attempted in a similar way progress can be made towards higher order generalizations. Hopefully my ideas and evidence concerning 'invisible exploitation', Methodist revivalism, the revolutionary 'underground', armed insurrection and its links with more recognizable

forms of constitutionalist struggle, the strength of organized labour, trade union economism and the 'economic' and 'political' labour aristocracies of the 1830's and 1840's may serve to complement other people's work and stimulate positive (and critical) reactions in the future.

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CHAPTER 1. The Revolutionary Struggle for Working Class History in a Bourgeois Society: Recent Marxist contributions to understanding the early English experience and their influence on the study of one industrial region.

I know the heroic struggles the English working class have gone through since the middle of the last century. These are struggles less glorious, because they are shrouded in obscurity and burked by the middle class historian.

Karl Marx (1856)¹

The Bourgeoisie turns everything into a commodity, hence also the writing of history. It is part of its being, of its condition for existence to falsify all goods. It falsified the writing of history and thus the best paid historiography is that which is best falsified for the purpose of the Bourgeoisie.

Frederick Engels (c.1870)²

This study begins with and is sustained throughout by anger at the way professional historians from the various ideological schools found in the wide spectrum of dominant bourgeois historiography (from Conservative to Fabian) have been active in 'burking' early English working class history.³ The conventional wisdom they maintain significantly diminishes the reality of the working class presence during the first half of the nineteenth century by a neglect, wilful or otherwise, of a mass of historical evidence and by various types of false approach. There are understandable reasons for the neglects and failures of bourgeois historiography. In the main it has been out of touch with the development of the various social sciences. Where there have been any contacts these have been with the most reactionary conservative traditions.⁴ Bourgeois historiography has tended to advance only through single discipline approaches. By virtue of their social origins or the social conditions they have succumbed to, as well as their current social situations within institutions and professional networks which have little independence from (and are really inter-dependent

with) bourgeois money and more subtle forms of Establishment patronage, bourgeois history's main practitioners are not able to avoid an imposed conservative blinkering. Thus their versions of history falsify the truth. Their truth achieves a wider and provocative political significance for it contributes historical vindications to politically expedient or 'functionally necessary' Establishment myths.

Common to the defective tendencies present in a variety of bourgeois interpretations of the early period in English working class history is the marked overemphasis of reformist personalities, of reformist institutions and of politer forms of constitutionalism generally.⁵ This emphasis helps perpetuate the myth of English moderation and capacity for compromise. There is a tendency for bourgeois interpretations to concentrate on internal divisions (particularly emphasizing clashes of individual personality) within all types of working class organization⁶ and there is a marked obsession with employing a phoney courtroom legalism to justify the rigid compartmentalism or separation of often complex interconnected forms of social action.⁷ More robust forms of constitutionalism, particularly those backed up by the threat of (or real employment of) revolutionary violence, the strength and depth of industrial and political organizations and the multi-dimensional nature of social action are all significantly underplayed.

The contributor of the more recent of the two major post-war inspirational Marxist works dealing with the early English working class experiences has correctly observed that, 'the concrete analysis of British social development has hardly begun'.⁸ Where there has been activity among Marxist historians, there have been signs of movement towards inter-disciplinary approaches which have drawn on the more progressive and open elements from the empirical and theoretical social science traditions.⁹ Work completed by Marxist historians has in the main shown greater regard for important class

organizations and has particularly looked at non-institutional forms of social action.¹⁰ However, structural constraints act to check the development of a Marxist social history. These are not only imposed from without but also created within the ranks of Marxist historians as a brief digression below the surface level of historiography may illustrate.

The traditions of Marxist history have been created in a hostile social-political and cultural environment. Despite this, some good work has been done, particularly by those shut out from the class-privileged world of elite educational and professional institutions. A few Marxist historians with the correct social credentials have freely entered this world. Others have permeated it by stealth. There is a danger that Marxist historians in this world will be entrapped into compromises and ultimate betrayal of their beliefs. Those within the walls of Establishment bastions are the most in danger of making Establishment postures. As those closest to the processes whereby 'knowledge' is made and packaged for wider distribution they have a particular responsibility to avoid providing 'functionally required' types of Marxist criticism which can serve to invigorate tired versions of the conventional wisdom.

There are no easy answers to the Marxist historian's problems of maintaining his integrity in a bourgeois social system. Part of one solution involves an answer to the urgent need for greater individual and collective energy to be expended in fashioning a non-sectarian separate Marxist social history outside the sphere of reformist or even mildly progressive bourgeois professional bodies.¹¹ The path ahead may be signposted by democratic and more participatory 'workshop' activity¹² but a more decisive and universal attitude to creating such points of activity must be generated among important Marxist groups like the Communist Party¹³ and

among smaller Marxist political factions. What is needed above all is the deeper rooting of the struggle for the liberation of working class history. Ultimately this will require a revolutionary social transformation in the wider society and not just the re-alignment of subordinate or minor intellectual activity among sections of the political vanguard.

Returning to the more acceptable discussion theme of post-war historiographic trends relating to early English working class history, it is important to note that there have been two really significant contributions by historians in the Marxist tradition. These studies, by Edward Thompson and John Foster,¹⁴ have provided different but none the less vital forms of inspiration for this study of labour class emergence in one industrial region. Some of the work presented here has already been published and thus has contributed to a historiographic debate which has centred principally around Thompson's work and which latterly is springing into life in response to Foster. Before discussing the specific unfolding of the approach used here it is necessary to look briefly at the relevant inspirational works and their wider historiographic context.

Thompson's 'The Making of the English Working Class' provided during the 1960's and earlier 1970's the one vital challenge to the conventional wisdom regarding early English working class history. Thompson's work was never intended to serve as a 'functionally required' critique. The hostile reception that bourgeois historians gave it in the 1960's showed how far they thought Thompson had passed the bounds of acceptability as they defined them.¹⁵ Over a decade after its first publication (1963) this work has at last been made to provide a more 'functional criticism'. There has been a delicate shifting of ground towards what is only superficially a more liberal interpretation of this

period of working class history. This has occurred among influential ideological schools in bourgeois historiography. This is represented in practical terms by the way for example the bourgeois historians of the Open University have 'packaged' Thompson's work. Their deferential (patronizing) velvet glove approach to Thompson's book hardly conceals the iron hand of ideological antagonism to Marxist historiography generally.¹⁶

Few Marxist historians have replied or responded to Thompson's work in a direct or positive way. While he received generous applause from his Marxist reviewers when uncharacteristically many sectarian barriers between Marxist historians were lifted, few have chosen in their academic writing to pursue his themes or to scan the wider skyline for politically significant historiographic trends. Excellent monographs on aspects of earlier working class history like those of Challinor and Ripley¹⁷ have appeared in the interim. Other solid work like that of George Barnsby on the Black Country has remained largely unpublished.¹⁸ Thompson's controversial themes have attracted some attention from both bourgeois and Marxist historians alike but more energy has been expended by historians in looking at less-controversial derived themes like leisure.¹⁹ Thompson himself has moved in different chronological directions with his work on crime. Others have followed.²⁰ There is a danger that in these new fields interests develop which do not relate to the central areas of struggle in working class history.

With less pressure from their research schools a few younger historians in the Marxist tradition have been able to find greater freedom to choose their own direction in carrying out their research.²¹ Consequently some of Thompson's noisiest and empirically emptiest critics have been confronted in full stride. Baxter's study of Methodist revivalism and political repression (1974),²² Baxter and Donnelly's studies of insurrectionism and the 'revolutionary tradition' (1974, 1975)²³ and Donnelly's look at the

ideological approach of Thompson's critics (1976)²⁴ have all pointed out lines of direction for a Marxist counter-attack. Support for a more favourable appraisal of Thompson has also come from empirical evidence produced by a few non-Marxist historians and these contributions must also be taken note of.²⁵

In the mid-1970's John Foster's 'Class Struggles in the Industrial Revolution' appeared. This other important Marxist contribution was closer to an Orthodox Marxist-Lenninist reading of early working class history and it was more critically received by Marxist reviewers than Thompson's work had been. To some Marxists Foster's work seemed to rest on crude historicist pre-conceptions of sub-structure - superstructure relationships supported by a bleak mathematical or scientific validation of these pre-conceptions.²⁶ There appears to be some forcing of evidence by Foster, especially relating to the earliest (pre-1820) periods of struggle and class realization.²⁷ There has been a tendency to back away from Foster's quantitative testing with only slight justification for doing so. If census and other social-demographic types of material are available and are adequately completed for the years for which we expect more consistent recording, then this data must be used in the way Foster used it. This type of information was not available in consistent enough quantities for such an exercise to be carried out for any one of the larger towns in South Yorkshire. Inconsistent recording by census enumerators and registrars of births, marriages and deaths alike and the various inconsistencies in the nomenclature of economic status in the region's dominant industries combined to make a repeat of Foster's quantitative work impossible.²⁸

Foster's notion of class is problematic, particularly where he dealt with the earlier period of working class history before the 1820's. His work on working class leadership in the immediate pre-Chartist decades of the 1820's and 1830's and during the Chartist years has however much to recommend it. The inter-relations between

industrial, political and wider class leadership is always neglected by historians of this period and Foster is right to emphasize the patterns of unity among leadership. The later chapters of the work presented here (6 and 7) seek to look at inter-related aspects of class leadership but they do not neglect factionalism. An extract from the final chapter of this study has already been published and it serves to give support to Foster's emphasis regarding class leadership during the early Chartist years. ²⁹

This study of the traditions of early working class struggle in South Yorkshire which is taken up in the following chapters began as an encounter with Edward Thompson's The Making. It was intended that it would provide a detailed study of the total experience of working people and particularly the class struggles entered into by the most politically advanced of them in a region which was undergoing industrialization. The region chosen was one which underwent a slower (a possibly more normal) process of industrialization than those whose experiences are usually used to justify the term 'industrial revolution'. The study of the experiences of the metal working workshop labour force of Sheffield and its immediate hinterland, of workers in the linen trade in and around Barnsley and of ironworkers and colliers scattered widely throughout the region (excluding its largely agricultural western and eastern margins), combined with some lesser investigation of the experiences of widely scattered general craft workers in the building, clothing and footwear trades, was intended to produce contrasts between workgroups and communities that would illustrate the relativist variety of class experience.

Initially it was intended that this study was to terminate in 1832. There was to be a particular emphasis on the class dimensions revealed by popular political struggle. Under various sets of influence the focus widened both by appreciating the extension of earlier political traditions into the Chartist period and by seeing

the fuller dimensions of class struggle involving economic and wider social-cultural struggle engaged in at every stage in the making of class traditions for struggle. The chronological boundaries were extended into the 1840's. Latterly Foster's work on the disintegration of the insurgent working class movement of the Chartist years during the mid-Victorian decades of industrial capitalist ascendancy, renewed interest in the notion of 'labour aristocracy' and related questions of social control, have pushed the boundaries towards the end of the 1850's.³⁰

Thompson's relativist notion of class has been influential throughout.³¹ There has been an attempt to recognize the uniqueness of the various class experiences and responses among different groups in varied communities at different times. Proletarianization and the creation and transmission of a body of increasingly consistent critical social-political and economic ideas from generation to generation have both emphasized the unity of class experiences over the period under study. Inevitably there are moments when absolutist notions of class make their appearance.³² The individual reader must weigh the justification for these against his own prejudices.

The organization of the study requires some brief comment. Each subsequent chapter is divided into two unequal sections. The smaller section, headed 'Economy' and sub-divided into sections on 'organization' and 'dynamics', deals with important aspects seen in the economic substructure. The larger section of each chapter follows, headed 'Society'. It concentrates mainly on the nature of super-structure activity involving working people in stratum (or non-class) and class struggles against various forms of real and perceived exploitation. In the first of these chapters (2) there is a five-fold division of areas of struggle. In all subsequent sections this is reduced to a two-fold division by concentrating economic, political and some wider struggles into a 'simultaneous' analytic narrative and by looking at residual social-cultural

struggles in a following smaller subordinate section. All these chapters are chronologically ordered. Attempts are made to summarize trends at the beginning and end of chapters. The 'simultaneous' narrative is an experimental form justified by the way compartmentalism of economic and political action by some historians and the complete neglect of one to emphasize the other by other historians has lessened our appreciation of the intensity and full nature of struggle. The experiment is an attempt to more fully recreate the experience of struggle. It is incomplete as yet. The aim of producing a form of 'total history' in which working people provide the central life force is still some way off. The lessons learnt here may hopefully bring the possibility of its creation closer.

Footnotes to Chapter 1

1. K. Marx and F. Engels, On Britain (Moscow, 1962), 467
2. K. Marx and F. Engels, On Ireland (1971), 211
3. Among contemporary historians whose contributions have given me greatest offence I include Thomis, Church, Chapman (all graduates of Chambers 'Nottingham School'), Bythell, Currie, Hartwell, Rowe, Dinwiddy and Stevenson.
4. N.J. Smelser, Social Change in the Industrial Revolution (Chicago, 1959) *passim*. represents the extreme result of a fusion of structural-functionalist sociology with conservative historiography. Another aspect of the relationship is explored by F.K. Donnelly, 'Ideology and early English Working Class History: Edward Thompson and his critics', Social History 2 (1976), 219-238. This follows an earlier critique of the Parsonian school in J.L. Halstead, 'Ideology in history', Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History, XXVI, (1973), 53-62.
5. As in the 'Fabian orthodoxy' criticized in E.P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class (1963, 1968), 12. My references are to the later Penguin edition.
6. Conservative historians of Chartism e.g. J.T. Ward, Chartism (1973) *passim*. are still overconcerned with the role of leadership figures, particularly Feargus O'Connor. Such pre-occupations belittle the strength and unity of organizations at the grass roots.
7. E.P. Thompson, *op.cit.*, 934-5 denotes this sort of treatment from Church and Chapman. J.R. Dinwiddy, 'A Rejoinder' which replies to J.L. Baxter and F.K. Donnelly, 'The Revolutionary "Underground" in the West Riding, Myth or Reality?', both in Past and Present, 64 (1974), 124-132, 133-5 expresses the legalism I refer to.
8. J.O. Foster, Class Struggle and the Industrial Revolution (1974), 337.
9. As in J.L. Baxter, 'The Great Yorkshire revival 1792-6: A study of mass revival among the Methodists', A Sociological Yearbook of Religion in Britain 7 (1974), 46-76.
10. An example of the study of non-institutional action is E.J. Hobsbawm and G. Rudé, Captain Swing (1969) *passim*.
11. For example the Society for the Study of Labour History. Marxist historians participate in this body but its direction is largely reformist.
12. The recently launched History Workshop journal and trend towards 'Workshop' conference activity is to be welcomed.
13. Our History, Marxism Today and the C.P.'s History Group have played a valuable role in the past in publishing work that would in the main be unacceptable to respectable journals. My own forthcoming contribution will shortly illustrate this point.
14. E.P. Thompson, *op.cit.*; J.O. Foster, *op.cit.*
15. These include, R. Currie and R.M. Hartwell, 'The Making of the English Working Class?', Economic History Review, 2nd series, XVIII (1965), 633-643, 183-188, J.D. Chambers, 'The Making of the English Working Class', History, 51 (June 1966), N.J. Smelser, 'The Making of the English Working Class', History and Theory, V, 2 (1966), 213-17.

16. C. Emsley, I. Donnachie, J. Golby (eds), Popular Politics 1750-1870 (Milton Keynes, 1974) *passim*.
17. R. Challinor and B. Ripley, The Miners' Association: A Trade Union in the Age of the Chartists (1968) *passim*.
18. But see G.J. Bānsby, 'The Standard of Living in the Black Country in the Nineteenth Century', Economic History Review, 2nd series, XXIV (1971), 220-239.
19. The recent Society for the Study of Labour History conference at Sussex University climaxed this surge of interest.
20. E.P. Thompson, Whigs and Hunters (1975); Douglas Hay, Peter Linebaugh and E.P. Thompson, Albion's Fatal Tree (1975) for signs of the directions being taken. For a highly critical and unsympathetic view of this direction see P. Foot, 'The Rule of Law', Books and Bookmen, November 1975, 9-11.
21. I am particularly grateful for my supervisor, Professor Sidney Pollard's enlightened approach in this regard.
22. Baxter, art.cit., *passim*.
23. Baxter and Donnelly, art.cit., *passim*. and 'Sheffield and the English Revolutionary Tradition, 1791-1820', International Review of Social History, XX, 3 (1975), 398-423.
24. Donnelly, art.cit., *passim*.
25. For example on the theme of Methodist revivalism see P. Stigant, 'Wesleyan Methodism and Working Class Radicalism in the North, 1792-1821', Northern History, vol. VI (1971), 98-116.
26. Reviews include, E.P. Thompson, 'Testing class struggle', Times Higher Education Supplement, 8 March 1974, D. Thompson, 'The Radical Workers of Oldham', Times Literary Supplement, 27 Sept. 1974, J. Saville, 'Class Struggle and the Industrial Revolution', Socialist Register (1974), 226-240, J.L. Halstead, 'Measuring Class Struggle', Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Labour History, XXX (1975), 55-9.
27. Thompson, art.cit., particularly criticizes Foster's treatment of the United Englishmen.
28. It will eventually be possible to make a detailed study of the local bourgeoisie using such data, particularly as I have recently acquired vital information about their social networks in the 1840's and 1850's. This is only slightly employed in my final chapter (7). The nomenclature problem arises because of the non-specification by enumerators and registrars of the distinction between masters and journeymen. This has been done in some districts of Sheffield in the 1841 census and thus I have been able to employ the census data relating to economic status to add detail to my appendices and particularly to analysis of Sheffield's revolutionary Chartist 'classes' of 1839/40.
29. J.L. Baxter, 'Early Chartism and Labour Class Struggle in South Yorkshire, 1837-40' forthcoming in S. Pollard and C. Holmes (eds.) Essays in South Yorkshire History.
30. Foster, op.cit., Ch. VII, 203-50 'Liberalization', Foster, 'British Imperialism and the Labour Aristocracy', in J. Skelley (ed.) 1926: The General Strike, (1976), 3-57; R.Q. Grey, 'The Labour Aristocracy in the Victorian Class Structure' and J.M. Cousins and R.L. Davis, 'Working Class Incorporation - A historical approach with reference to mining communities in S.E. Northumberland 1840-1890', both in F. Parkin (ed.), The Social Analysis of Class Structure (1974), 19-38, 275-297.

31. Spelt out by Thompson, The Making etc. op.cit., 12 and effectively discussed by Donnelly, art.cit., 220-23.
32. For an absolutist critique of Thompson see T. Nairn, 'The English working class', New Left Review, XXIV (1964), 154-168. Nairn suggests that relativism taken to extremes blunts the necessary political cutting edge that Marxist history must have.

CHAPTER 2. The Roots of Evil: Economy and Society
in South Yorkshire c.1750-1792.

Section A. Economy: Organization and dynamics c.1750-1792.

General note: In the following section and in similar introductory sections, an attempt is made to examine the economic sub-structure of society in order to more fully explain the developments in the social-cultural superstructure. To do this both the organization and dynamics of the industrial economy are briefly examined.

(a) The Economic Organization of Industry in South Yorkshire c.1750-1792.

It is not necessary to pursue an exhaustive investigation into the working of the eighteenth century regional economy, but merely to select the most important structural features in the organization of the various industries contributing to the industrial economy. The relationship between agriculture, the industrial economy and economic growth was very important in the region, especially on the large estates and in rural areas where the 'dual economy' functioned. The importance of this relationship is not denied. Our main concern is with the appearance of industrial workers who in the main were no longer dependent on the land and who represented 'free labour' (as opposed to 'subject labour' employed on the large estates). Similarly, while we recognize their importance in the struggles of ideas and action in the superstructure, we do not look at the organization of general craft trades like building, shoemaking and tailoring.

1) The Cutlery Trades.

The cutlery trades were the largest employers of industrial labour in South Yorkshire in 1750. This employment was concentrated in the Sheffield township and the five out-townships which made up

Sheffield parish.¹ It was also scattered throughout the villages and hamlets of the neighbouring parishes of South Yorkshire and north Derbyshire in a ten to fifteen mile radius around Sheffield. Cutlery manufacture in 1750 covered the production of knives, scissors, razors, edge tools, sickles, scythes and files. It was traditionally associated with the area known as the Lordship and Liberty of Hallamshire. This comprised Sheffield parish, Ecclesfield parish and the Belfry of Bradfield and covered approximately a fifth of South Yorkshire. Until the late eighteenth century manufacture was regulated in this area by strong guild-like controls and restrictions maintained by the Cutlers' Company. Regulation of the trades went back to at least the sixteenth century when the 'ancient customs and ordinances' controlling the organization of production were sanctioned by the Lord of the Manor. The earliest set of ordinances, dated 1565 and 1590 and devised by the 'whole consent of the Cutlery Makers of Knyffes and cutler occupation', set out regulations covering the need for trade marks, quality control, output control and rules of entry into the trade, particularly relating to apprenticeship.² This set the pattern for later regulations. In 1624 the power of regulation in the trades was placed in the hands of a corporate body (the Company) free from the jurisdiction of the Manor. The Cutlers' Company, in the terms of the 1624 Act, was to comprise, 'the Master, two Wardens, six Searchers and twenty-four Assistants and the Commonalty of the Company, fully incorporated, created, made and erected one body corporate and politique'.³

In practice the power of regulation was placed in the hands of thirty-three individuals in a closed, co-optive oligarchy. The 'Commonalty', although legally part of the Company, was given no rights to choose the executive. By law the oligarchy of thirty-three elected the executive of the Company annually. There was no

real challenge to this exercise of power until the 1780s when the oligarchy was revealed to have broken the trust of the Commonalty, to have betrayed the interests of the industrious class of master manufacturers, journeymen and apprentices who were the backbone of the Company. However, the control of the Company had provided an important measure of stability to the operation of the trades throughout the middle decades of the eighteenth century. By then, certain de-stabilizing processes were in motion. Before explaining these we examine the mid-eighteenth century equilibrium which stable non-expanding markets maintained.

The 1624 Act was intended to promote 'the good order and government of ye makers of knives, sickles, shears, scissors and other cutlery wares in Hallamshire in ye County of York and the parts near adjacent'.⁴ It gave the Company power over an area six miles beyond the boundaries of Hallamshire where the trades were practised. Its jurisdiction therefore extended not only over most of South Yorkshire, but also over a large part of north Derbyshire. The provisions of the 1624 Act, which remained largely intact until the 1790s, endorsed the earlier regulations. Most important was the regulation of entry into the trades through apprenticeship. Above all else, this maintained stability in the trades, guaranteed employment for those who traditionally practised them and preserved the close relationship of master and man in the workshop situation. Until the 1790s entry into the trades was solely on the basis of serving an apprenticeship. Seven years minimum apprenticeship had to be served with a master who was a member of or a freeman of the Cutlers' Company. Often apprenticeship was served by a son with his father, although he could be indentured to another master who was a freeman. Apprenticeship ended at the age of twenty-one, having been according to folk recollection, a period of personal hardship, but one to be endured

because its completion earned the right to practise the trade as an independent man. Having served an apprenticeship, a young man paid a fee and could then take out his freedom. He was then free to set up in his own right.⁵ He would need to rent a smithy ('stithy') and equip it, purchase raw materials and fuel and pay an annual fee to the Company for his trade-mark (mark-rent). In many cases a young man, having taken out his freedom, would remain a journeyman for several years and be employed by an established master manufacturer on a wage basis. In this role he would often take part in the training of new apprentices. In the mid-eighteenth century there was only a small group of life-long journeymen. These were usually men who had taken out a freedom but who had not set up as masters. They were often men with prized special skills who did not need to take on the responsibilities of the small capitalistic artisan producer.⁶ By the later decades of the eighteenth century, this group had grown considerably, for reasons examined later.

As a small producer the young man's business operations were strictly controlled by the ordinances of the Company. The regulations concerning the holding of a mark ensured that his activities would be confined to only one branch of the trade. Until 1748 he was not allowed to take on apprentices until he had worked for three years as a master manufacturer. When he finally took one on, he was not able to take another (apart from his son) for five years. However he could employ journeymen on a wage basis. Such regulation was critical to preserving levels of employment and to maintaining wages, standards of work and prices. Cutlery manufacture in the mid-eighteenth century in Sheffield and the surrounding area was thus largely in the hands of small independent producers (master manufacturers) assisted in their workshops by journeymen and apprentices. The smithy or 'stithy' was the technical name for the workshop. It was, according to

recollection, a crude affair:

...a building of stone, the same as common field walls are built with, about six or seven yards wide and about seven and a half feet to the commencement of the roof, with a door at the centre of the building and a fire placed opposite to it. At each end was a hearth (where the forging of blades was carried out) with the bellows in the corner and the stithy stack in its proper situation. The wall was plastered over with clay or wheel swarf, if it could be conveniently obtained, to keep the wind from coming through the crevices, sometimes a rough coat of lime was put on it. The floor was of mud; the windows about eighteen inches wide and three foot six inches high and seldom any glass in them, but white paper, done over with boiled oil. In fine weather they took the frame out, and were then exposed to the open air. In one corner was a place partitioned off 'for t'mester' as a warehouse or storeroom. On each side were workbenches for the hafters (journeymen employed in assembling the handle and blade into a finished product), the putters together, the lads etc. Over the fire place was posted a Paddy Watch Almanack, on other parts of the walls were pasted in great numbers Last Dying Speeches, Wilful Murders, Death and the Lady, the Bloody Gardener, Christmas Carols, and Lists of Races...Such was the generality of workshops in the town. Few if any were made with character in them, they were buildings erected b'et mester, his sen' and the neighbouring wheelwright and joiner.⁷

The master manufacturer, journeymen and apprentices worked together in the close confines of the smithy. The work situation engendered a degree of mutuality between master and man which was extended beyond the work situation. This was realized most fully in the shared pleasures of a robust artisan culture, one whose sub or pre-political mid-eighteenth century manifestations were found on the walls of this characteristic workshop.

Not all the processes of manufacture were carried out in the smithies. The basic processes involved in the manufacture of a knife and related wares were forging, grinding and hafting. These divisions applied with little variation to scissor, file, razor, edge tool, shear, sickle and scythe manufacture.⁸ The blade was first forged at the hearth on an anvil by a two-man team in the case of 'heavy work' and by a single man in the case of 'light work'. Hardening and tempering were also carried out

as part of the forging process. The forged product was then taken from the workshop to a grinding 'wheel' where it was shaped and given an edge. The 'wheels' were buildings situated along the rivers and streams of Hallamshire. The 'wheels' were divided into 'hulls' or 'rooms' in which the grinding operation was performed at 'troughs' in which the grindstone ran, drawing power from a central water driven wheel to which the grindstones were geared by means of leather straps or 'bands'.⁹ The individual 'troughs' were rented to grinders by an independent rentier who owned the whole wheel complex. Grinders were independent workers who were paid by the piece for their work by the master manufacturers.¹⁰ Not all manufacturers sent their work to grinders. Some did their own grinding. It is not possible until the end of the eighteenth century to establish with certainty the complete division of processes or to establish the existence of the grinders as a large distinct occupational group. As early as 1748 there was a Grinder's sick club in Sheffield.¹¹ Arthur Young, on his northern tour of 1769, described the grinders as an independent workgroup, marked out by their particularly high wages. He contrasted their average eighteen to twenty shillings per week with a general wage of nine to twenty shillings for male workers in other processes of cutlery manufacture. These wages, he observed, were the result of the danger involved in the work: grindstones frequently broke.¹² Phthisis and other lung diseases (the 'grinder's disease' which the nineteenth century medical profession in Sheffield investigated) were found not to be a serious threat to the eighteenth century grinder working at the rural water-powered wheels.

The final process in the production of a knife and related wares was hafting. This process involved the building up of the finished product, particularly the adding of a handle. The work was carried out in the smithy by the master manufacturer, his

journeymen and apprentices at their workboards using small tools. Handles were traditionally made from wood, iron and bone. The more commercially-minded mid-eighteenth century manufacturer turned to horn, ivory, mother of pearl and silver finishes for handles of cutlery wares. This increased the number of ancillary specialist functions and added such workgroups as handle and scale cutters and pressers. Some firms providing these ancillary functions also produced wares independent of the cutlery trades, e.g. horn made combs and buttons and those in silver and silver plated made domestic ware.

The master manufacturer or small master cutler of the mid-eighteenth century was in a position to control the overall production of the product. In most cases he was a small scale workshop capitalist producer. He was the employer of labour, paying the wages of those directly employed by him and piece rates to those such as the grinders whom he employed on a sub-contract basis. He bought the raw materials and, having supervised their working up, sold them as a finished product. Until the mid-eighteenth century he sold to the dealers or agents of the London merchants who marketed Sheffield wares. During the 1740s and 50s local merchants and factors finally ousted the London men as marketers of Sheffield wares. These local commercial men dealt as their predecessors had done in the raw materials of production. They 'put out' raw materials in the surrounding villages where they employed smallholders, cottagers and squatters, whose main living came from the land, in industrial by-employment. This enabled them to exert influence on the price of work finished in the town. Throughout the second half of the eighteenth century the economic power of the merchants and factors increased. Their development of the market for cutlery wares enabled them to build up considerable capitals and thereby take an even greater hold on the organization of production.¹³

In their path stood the Cutlers' Company which, at least until the 1780s and 90s, attempted to exercise its power to protect the interests of the small producers and to guarantee employment for all those who traditionally practised the trades. Those who held office in the Company until the later eighteenth century came from the same class of small producers as composed the vast majority of the commonalty of the Company. They shared the same identity of economic and social interests as members of the industrious producer class as distinct from the commercial class of bankers, merchants and factors and a rentier class of local aristocracy and gentry. The oligarchical power structure of the Company had led to abuses earlier in the eighteenth century. These had always been checked and the role of guardianship of the small producer interest had been maintained.

There were however important developments from the mid-eighteenth century which undermined this guardianship. The most important development was the growth of a local commercial class. Sections of the producer class joined the commercial class by combining marketing with production. They built their capitals up by disregarding the Company's regulations. This happened in the file trade where at various times ambiguities in the law were exploited by ambitious master manufacturers. Where new trades were established, the Company failed to apply its regulative powers to them. This was the case of the saw making and silver plated trades. In such old and new trades, ambitious men, often freemen of the Cutlers' Company, built up their businesses without regard for traditional practice and particularly that related to control of entry by apprenticeship.

During the years of the American War (1775-1783) and its immediate aftermath, there was a major breakdown of corporate control over the trades. The war greatly affected foreign markets,

especially the American one. The majority of small master manufacturers were in great distress and had to dismiss their journeymen. Unscrupulous larger master manufacturers disregarded the Company's rule and took on unlimited numbers of apprentices and brought men into the town from surrounding villages to employ them at low rates of pay. According to one contemporary, 'over half or more of those who had secured regular apprenticeship were standing idle for want of employment'.¹⁴ The majority of the commonalty of the Company, both small masters and their unemployed journeymen, turned to it for protection. It did little to enforce its regulations and was accused of supporting the commercial interests of the merchants, factors and larger master manufacturers who had turned their backs on the old economic morality practised in the trades. In the ensuing struggle between the small producer interest and the commercial and large producer interest can be seen a confrontation of old and new economic moralities. The old morality's roots lay in age-old guild-ideals. It embraced notions of 'just price' and 'fair wage' and recognized the right to employment of those who had served an apprenticeship. It rested on an acceptance of a sharp division between the producer function and the commercial function, a division which nevertheless involved a mutual acceptance of a common economic morality and reflected a sense of social responsibility. The new morality embraced free market ideals of 'natural price' in all commodities which was to be arrived at by free interplay of market forces. This morality emanated from a more aggressive merchant capitalist class. Sections of the commercial class and some of the producer class consciously worked throughout the 1780s to dismantle the regulations governing operations in the controlled trades. They sought to extend their operations in the unregulated trades. They pointed to the superior progress of Manchester and Birmingham:

At these places, free scope is given to genius, no shackles confine their trade, men of spirit and fortune are solicited to come to them and the towns are become immediate rich and prosperous. At Sheffield, where the opposite conduct has been observed, we are comparatively poor and our trade is dead.¹⁵

Their activities led to a new Act of Parliament in 1791.

Although this made concessions to their opponents it opened a major breach in the Company's powers of control over the trades. Their opponents, the bulk of the producer class, fought throughout the 1780s to use legal means to frustrate their ambitions. Their 'Freemen's movement' was led by both small masters and by journeymen. It sought to maintain the old morality and to wrest control of the Company from the oligarchy and sought to establish democratic control. In this struggle a 'labour interest' was revealed. This interest existed before the 1780s and was in part registered in the name of several of the town's numerous sick clubs and benefit societies.

2) Silver and Silver Plated Trades.¹⁶

With the greater commercial orientation of the eighteenth century cutlery trades silver was increasingly used in the finishing of cutlery wares. The discovery of a method of fusing silver plate to a copper base by Thomas Bolsover in 1743 led to the growth of an independent 'Sheffield plate' trade. The adoption of his methods in the production of domestic wares exploited a new depth in the eighteenth century middle class domestic market. Goods were also manufactured in solid silver by local silversmiths. In the silver plated trade progress was marked by the rapid increase in the number of firms (from six 'houses' in 1765 to seventeen in 1787). The silver refining industry also grew, especially after 1773 when Sheffield was granted its own Assay office.

The firms in both the plated and silver trades required larger capital than those in the cutlery trades. The nature of the raw

material precluded outwork. Large concentrated workshops and warehouses, albeit small scale units relative to factory production, were characteristic. Large profits were suggested by the social position and manifestation of wealth of the partners in the leading firms. The relation of labour and capital in these trades was less complicated than in the cutlery trades. In the early period when the silver plate trade was being established, skilled labour had to be imported from the traditional centres of the silver working trades such as London, York, Birmingham and Newcastle. This labour represented part of a labouring 'aristocracy' in terms of its wages and relationship with the masters. The silver and plated trades were unprotected by regulation. In these trades, as early as the 1770s, there was evidence of masters associating to fix prices and wages. Labour's position deteriorated rapidly in these trades but skilled workers still maintained a privileged position.

3) Steel Manufacture.¹⁷

Steel was the major raw material for the cutlery trades. It was manufactured locally in the early eighteenth century by local steel refiners. The blister steel produced did not always have a consistent quality. Swedish iron, converted mainly by a cementation process in local furnaces, supplied the bulk of the steel required by the Sheffield trades. The perfection of the 'crucible' method of production by Benjamin Huntsman during his stay at nearby Handsworth in the period 1747-72 provided the basis for the revitalization of steel production based on local raw materials. This renewal was concentrated around Sheffield. The town's 1774 Directory recorded five firms making steel, and that of 1784 five steel refiners and fifteen converters. Few of these units were large and they were often outgrowths of firms from the cutlery trades. The numbers employed in them were few and their

work situation was similar to that shared by the furnace and foundry workers in the town and region.

4) Iron Making and Manufacture.¹⁸

Iron smelting and forging had a long history in South Yorkshire. The charcoal-based furnaces of the earlier eighteenth century were scattered from north to south along the Tankersley ironstone seam where the ironstone was mined in bell-shaped pits. The forges were grouped along the rivers, the source of water-power. Here the pig iron of the furnaces was converted into bar iron and sold directly, or slit on the site for nail making and wire drawing. Very little local bar iron was converted into steel for use in the cutlery trades. The old charcoal-based iron industry was controlled in the early eighteenth century by the Spencer syndicate. Their extensive kinship network controlled both furnaces and forges in the South Yorkshire and north Derbyshire regions. They controlled the nail making and wire drawing trades, the major manufacturing trades in the region based on finished iron. They acted as merchant capitalists, putting out raw materials to domestic workers. By the mid-eighteenth century the competition of coke-made pig iron began to be felt. The Spencer syndicate declined and their partners, Cockshutts, Fells and Swallows, all yeomen families, began to withdraw their capital from smelting and invested it in the more profitable steel making.

The influence of war in the second half of the eighteenth century saw the emergence of large scale individual units of production in iron smelting. Coke-based production of pig iron characterized the large units which were set up in South Yorkshire and north Derbyshire during the years of the American War and the early years of the French wars of the 1790s. Dominating the later eighteenth century development of the iron industry were 'new men'. An early example of such were the Walkers. Their spectacular

progress from a backyard foundry in the hamlet of Grenoside in the 1740s to their industrial empire at Masbrough near Rotherham served as a model to others. They were helped by war contracts negotiated for them by the Marquis of Rockingham (their landlord) during the Seven Years' War. War demand and domestic demand induced other new men and traditional charcoal-based iron producers to follow.

In iron making capital requirements were significantly larger than in the cutlery trades. The higher need for fixed capital in the forges, furnaces and slitting and rolling mills dictated that there would be few 'new men' like the Walkers. There were many small units producing iron, especially those which supplied the hardware iron trade of Sheffield.

Labour was employed mainly on a wage basis in foundries and forges. As well as foundry and forge labour, miners of ironstone and sometimes of coal were also employed by the iron masters. Employment was on a daily wage or contract basis. In the outwork trades of nail making and wire drawing, payment was made to independent and semi-independent outworkers on a piece work basis. As in the cutlery trades, work was put out to smallholders, cottagers and squatters who derived part of their livelihood from the land. Nail making was widespread in the region in the eighteenth century but wire drawing was concentrated in the north western area. These, with the outwork production in the cutlery trades, provided the industrial basis of the 'dual economy' of rural South Yorkshire.

5) Coal Mining.¹⁹

Coal mining became significant in the economy of South Yorkshire with the development of coal resources on aristocratic estates. This development responded to the growing demand for coal. Transport improvement was critical to this process. This was not

significant until the end of the eighteenth century when canals were built. Little of the massive reserves of coal on the estates and holdings of the Duke of Norfolk, Marquis of Rockingham, Earl of Effingham, Marchioness of Bute, Earl of Stafford and Duke of Leeds were exploited. Norfolk and Rockingham (later Fitzwilliam), the two largest semi-resident South Yorkshire aristocratic landowners, contrasted in their more dynamic eighteenth century approaches to exploiting these resources. Norfolk was more active. He owned much of the land in the Sheffield and Ecclesfield parishes in the south. He leased mining rights in the earlier eighteenth century. These rights were taken up by yeoman colliery masters who employed wage-worker colliers and sub-contracted to independent colliers. In the second half of the eighteenth century Norfolk worked his pits directly through his agents. The pits in Sheffield, Attercliffe Manor, Handsworth, Parkgate, Chapeltown and High Green varied in size and profitability. River navigation improvement was critical in boosting Norfolk's activity, especially at Parkgate near Rotherham. In 1769 these pits were sending 30,000 tons of coal into the north Midlands along the Don Valley and the Trent.

Rockingham was less energetic in the exploitation of his coal resources. Much of his coal-bearing land was in the 'land-locked' middle of the region. Like the majority of other aristocratic landlords, he leased the coal-bearing land to yeoman colliery masters. He contemplated opening up his resources around Elsecar and Low Wood in the later 1770s. Nothing came of his plans until the 1790s when transport improvements 'unlocked' his resources and those of other landowners in the north of the region.

Most mining was carried out by tenants. The identities and the operations of the early coal masters remain obscure. Similarly the significance of mining as an occupation and its social significance are not easy to evaluate. The bulk of labour was non-specialist, working for part of the year on the land, either

as wage labour or independent smallholders and possibly receiving some supplement to family income through other forms of industrial by-employment. There was a large element of sub-contract involved in employment in smaller pits. In the larger pits such as those worked by Norfolk there was a significant wage labour force assembled.

6) Linen Weaving²⁰

The manufacture of linen yarn into finished cloth was an industry concentrated in and around Barnsley. It was introduced into the area in 1744 by William Wilson, a Quaker from Cheshire. The new industry replaced wire making and the old custom weaving part of a 'dual economy' in response to new market potential. The local distaff and tradition of custom bleaching became obsolete and a new set of economic relations emerged. There is little evidence to assess the pace of transition. Wilson brought in managers from Lancashire for his warehouse (where he stored the flax before putting it out, and also the finished product) and his bleaching ground, as well as weavers. He also took on local custom weavers on new terms as market weavers on piece rates.

There was significant expansion in the 1780s under stimulus of the bounties on flax. The growth of the weaving population is hinted at below:

Table 2:1 Designation of 'weavers' as
Occupation of husbands in marriage performed in
Barnsley 1760-1790

| | | | |
|--------|--------------|--------|----|
| 1760-4 | 5 references | 1775-9 | 9 |
| 1765-9 | 8 | 1780-4 | 10 |
| 1770-4 | 8 | 1785-9 | 35 |

There were estimated to be 500 looms working in the trade in the early 1790s. These were controlled by seven or eight partnerships of 'linen manufacturers'. Men such as Wilson rented out looms, weaving equipment and workspace (including housing). The

former custom weaver he employed might still own his own loom and his home. There appears to have been a growing scale of operations as the looms came to be worked by less independent master weavers and their journeymen and apprentices in rented 'shops'. The shop was a small unit of industrial production, although several looms might be found in it. In linen the relationship between master weaver, journeyman and apprentice was close, similar to that of those groups comprising the producer class in the Sheffield cutlery trades. The producer class in weaving was however bound more tightly by greater dependence on the employing commercial class of linen manufacturers. These had a greater monopoly hold on economic and social power, because of higher fixed and variable capital requirements to establish oneself. There was greater economic and social estrangement between the producer class and the commercial class in weaving. In the early nineteenth century, when the new system of production had fully matured, this made the realization of a 'labour class' interest or common consciousness among linen weavers more easy than for cutlery and other metal workers.

(b) The Dynamics of the Industrial Economy of South Yorkshire c.1750-1792.

In this section some brief observations must be made concerning the nature and significance of the dynamics exhibited in the industrial economy of South Yorkshire. These include both the day to day rhythms of its operation as well as the short and long term patterns of fluctuation and growth.

In the second half of the eighteenth century rhythms of the industrial economy slowly came to be dictated by other forces than that of nature. The part-time industrial out-workers of the 'dual economy' of the region still had their periods of industrial

employment dictated by the agricultural calendar. Increasingly, because of the long-term changes in power sources and raw materials, work processes became to be freed from the limitations imposed by nature. The switch to the use of coal and coke to provide steam power or heat and the decreased reliance on water power and charcoal heat in furnace, forge grinding wheel and workshop was a long-term process. This shift towards a rational work process was not fully worked out until well into the last half of the nineteenth century. By the end of the eighteenth century it had only just begun.

The 'natural' work rhythms of the artisans in cutlery and related metal working trades (the largest workgroup) were mirrored in those of the miners (coal and iron ore), iron workers and linen weavers. Such work rhythms could also be described as 'natural' in the sense that the workforce had some choice over its intensity. Such 'pre-industrial' rhythms should not be romanticized. They still required intense application sustained over long periods. The working week began often no earlier than Tuesday after the Sunday and 'Saint Monday' break. By Friday it was at its most intense, but continued until Saturday night when payments were made (to the master cutler a price for the finished goods, to his journeymen wages and to sub-contract master grinders and their journeymen prices for work done and wages respectively). Payment was the licence for the weekend spree. This burned itself out on Monday or Tuesday, when work began again. This rhythm was partly a response to continuous uncertainty about levels of employment. The trades rarely worked at optimal levels of production and it was often necessary to observe the Tuesday as a rest day in order to fill in the rest of the working week. The rhythm can also be explained as part of a culture which valued the spontaneity of its leisure. Natural seasonal factors, such as water shortage,

also affected this rhythm.

Similarly the behaviour of markets was important. Increasingly from the mid-eighteenth century, foreign markets, particularly European and American, provided an outlet for cutlery and related wares. The American orders came in April and August and accounted for surges of employment in spring and autumn. The European and home markets were steadier although there was usually a boost towards Christmas, followed by a lull lasting into early spring.²¹ In the majority of the cutlery and related trades this same marked influence was characteristic. In the silver trades, probably because of a different market, the majority of work was carried out in the first and last quarters of the year.²² There was a marked tendency for commercial activity to be carried out throughout the industrial economy at a much higher level in the last three quarters of the year.²³

The seasonal rhythm was disturbed by external factors, the most important of which was war. England was at war for at least fifteen of the forty-two years between 1750-92. Of the important wars, the Seven Years' War (1756-63) fitted the pattern of our earlier smaller commercial-imperial wars. It was of limited scale and did not disturb access to markets. However, during the American War (1775-83) the loss of control over the sea meant considerable dislocation of markets. We have only limited economic data to show this but the population figures for Sheffield particularly stress the marked effect of the American War on Sheffield's economic expansion.

Table 2:2 Sheffield's Population Growth 1755-1789²⁴

| | <u>Sheffield township</u> | | <u>Ecclesall Bierlow</u> | | <u>Attercliffe & Darnall</u> | |
|------|---------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|------------------|----------------------------------|------------------|
| | no. of families | increase p.a. | no. of families | increase p.a. | no. of families | increase p.a. |
| 1755 | 2,667 | 5.5% | | | | |
| 1763 | 3,842 | 1.8% | 805 | | 637 | |
| 1775 | 4,704 | 1.2% | 1,128 | 3.4% | 768 | 2% |
| 1785 | 5,256 | 3.5% | 1,140 | 0.1% | 864 | 1% |
| 1789 | 6,065 | | | | | |

These suggest the rapid economic growth taking place in the 1750's and early 60's, particularly throughout the years of the Seven Years' War. This growth results from the energetic development of domestic and foreign markets by a new local merchant and factor class. The growth of the 1750's had its roots earlier with the improvement of navigation on the river Don when the river was made navigable to Tinsley from its junction with the Trent. Road communication had been improved throughout this period but the 1750's were the high point of turnpiking. In the intervening years between the end of the Seven Years' War and the beginning of the American War, there appears to have been a period of steady, if unspectacular, growth. This is what the population data suggests. This is supported by the evidence provided by the Don Navigation profit return series, which also sheds more light on year to year fluctuations in the region's economy.

Table 2:3 Profits on the Don Navigation 1760-1792 (£s)

| | | | | | | | | |
|------|---|-------|------|---|-------|------|---|-------|
| 1760 | - | 4,654 | 1772 | - | 7,107 | 1784 | - | 6,332 |
| 1761 | - | 5,231 | 1773 | - | 6,737 | 1785 | - | 7,697 |
| 1762 | - | 5,767 | 1774 | - | 8,215 | 1786 | - | 6,751 |
| 1763 | - | 4,064 | 1775 | - | 8,551 | 1787 | - | 7,651 |
| 1764 | - | 3,884 | 1776 | - | 7,250 | 1788 | - | 5,660 |
| 1765 | - | 4,310 | 1777 | - | 8,033 | 1789 | - | 9,093 |
| 1766 | - | 5,793 | 1778 | - | 7,486 | 1790 | - | 9,264 |
| 1767 | - | 5,519 | 1779 | - | 7,234 | 1791 | - | 8,553 |
| 1768 | - | 4,935 | 1780 | - | 6,840 | 1792 | - | 8,947 |
| 1769 | - | 6,835 | 1781 | - | 5,993 | | | |
| 1770 | - | 6,403 | 1782 | - | 6,536 | | | |
| 1771 | - | 7,423 | 1783 | - | 7,557 | | | |

The years 1763-6 witnessed a checking of economic progress and general social disturbance throughout the region. Throughout the later 1760's there was a steady improvement in revenues, except for 1768. Considerable growth followed in the first half of the 1770's. The outbreak of the American War drastically disturbed this trend. The series showing the weight of silver marked at the assay office (opened 1773) similarly provide a picture of disturbed progress from the outbreak of the American War.

Table 2:4 Silver assayed in Sheffield 1774-1792 (troy pounds)

| | | | | | | | | |
|------|---|-------|------|---|-------|------|---|-------|
| 1774 | - | 2,823 | 1781 | - | 2,555 | 1788 | - | 2,475 |
| 1775 | - | 3,379 | 1782 | - | 2,269 | 1789 | - | 2,535 |
| 1776 | - | 4,140 | 1783 | - | 2,593 | 1790 | - | 3,374 |
| 1777 | - | 3,767 | 1784 | - | 3,378 | 1791 | - | 3,137 |
| 1778 | - | 2,280 | 1785 | - | 2,195 | 1792 | - | 3,666 |
| 1779 | - | 2,222 | 1786 | - | 2,602 | | | |
| 1780 | - | 2,530 | 1787 | - | 2,608 | | | |

The earliest figures of poor relief expenditure, both 'in-poor' and 'out-poor' for Sheffield and 'in-poor' for Barnsley, demonstrate this dislocation:

Table 2:5 Sheffield and Barnsley poor law expenditures²⁵
1772-1790 (£s)

| (a) <u>Sheffield</u> | <u>'in-poor'</u> | <u>'out-poor'</u> | | <u>'in-poor'</u> | <u>'out-poor'</u> |
|----------------------|------------------|-------------------|---------|------------------|-------------------|
| 1775-6 | 2,179 | 1,010 | 1784-5 | 3,138 | 1,621 |
| 1777-8 | 2,104 | 1,035 | 1785-6 | 3,728 | 2,029 |
| 1778-9 | 3,146 | 1,211 | 1786-7 | 3,926 | 2,160 |
| 1779-80 | 2,561 | 1,382 | 1787-8 | 4,114 | 1,761 |
| 1781-2 | 2,659 | 1,536 | 1788-9 | 4,561 | 2,089 |
| 1782-3 | 3,252 | 1,560 | 1789-90 | 4,184 | |
| 1783-4 | 3,279 | 1,593 | | | |

(b) Barnsley total (£s)

| | | | |
|---------|-----|--------|-----|
| 1772-3 | 183 | 1781-2 | 477 |
| 1773-4 | 189 | 1782-3 | 282 |
| 1774-5 | 287 | 1783-4 | 359 |
| 1775-6 | 189 | 1784-5 | 322 |
| 1776-7 | 181 | 1785-6 | 403 |
| 1777-8 | 230 | 1786-7 | 482 |
| 1778-9 | 258 | 1787-8 | 489 |
| 1779-80 | 292 | 1788-9 | 469 |
| 1780-1 | 341 | | |

The war seriously hit the workshop trades throughout the region. The cutlery and related trades were badly hit, especially at the end of the war when hostilities with France, Spain and America hit the European market. In the early stages of the war, masters had paid men advances to retain them but over the years of the war had, in order to maintain profits, taken on unskilled labour in defiance of the statutes of the Cutlers' Company. This was a source of great division within the trades.

The Barnsley poor law expenditure data reflects the depression

in that town's wire making and new linen weaving industries during the war. Other industries in the region benefitted. The demand for iron, especially in the making of cannons, stimulated production in the region's furnaces, foundries and mines.

The immediate post-war years saw some improvement in the trades badly hit by war. There was a slow process of recovery which was accompanied by a growing optimism. An early Sheffield political economist commented on the state of the town's trade in 1785:

As the flourishing condition of the Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce of a Kingdom depends on the increase of its people, it is found to be equally so with respect to county, town, parish or lesser division of it. It must be therefore a real satisfaction to everyone who is a friend to the town and parish of Sheffield, not only to hear or see that its Trade and Manufactures are in a state of improvement, its inhabitants opulent, its buildings increase and commerce extended but to be demonstratively convinced that these premises are well supported by the increase of inhabitants.²⁶

The population data reflects this optimism. The Sheffield Advertiser claimed in 1791 that there had been an increase of six thousand people in Sheffield's population in the previous six years.²⁷

The other statistical series and events cast doubt on the recovery in the region's industrial economy.

Section B. Society:The Myth of the Organic Society - Ruling Elite and Subject Mass

The poor the useful base supply
 On which ascends the structure high,
 The middle ranks, the squire, the peer,
 Hence step by step, their heads uprear,
 Nay the great Monarch at the top
 Should the base fail him, down must drop
 Each rank is needful in its place
 For strength, symmetry and grace.

Samuel Roberts (1769-1849), Sheffield silver plated
 ware manufacturer from his poem 'A Pyramid of Coins'.²⁸

A hanging day is wanted;
 Was it by justice granted,
 Poor men distress'd and daunted
 Would then have cause to sing
 To see in active motion
 Rich knaves in full proportion,
 For their unjust extortion
 And vile offences swing.

Joseph Mather (1737-1804), Sheffield street singer,
 from his song 'The File Hewer's Lamentation'.²⁹

1) Introduction

Any belief in the organic unity of eighteenth-century English society must be tempered by an awareness of class interests and antagonisms manifested in that social body. The once binding rituals of reciprocal exchange of paternalist benevolence for deferent subservience between the ruling elite and subject mass were being disturbed by 'latent' and manifest expressions of class antagonism. The actions of the economically most active section of the ruling elite, made up of aristocrats, gentry and commercial and industrial entrepreneurs from the third estate, were more rapidly creating the elements of a labour class of dependent wage workers formed out of the labouring masses of small masters, independent and semi-independent craftsmen. The growing awareness of economic exploitation involving the loss of independent status, forced wider horizons of social consciousness among the mass. In the day to day work situation, in the alehouse, on the street

corner and in the home, an awareness of the nature of cultural exploitation accompanying this economic exploitation was learned, particularly when the elite's self-righteous moral auxiliary, the Methodist evangelist, forced his way in. Intermittently at the hustings and other affirming rituals of the traditional ruling elite's political and cultural hegemony there was an opportunity for the nature of political exploitation to be understood. Especially after the American War, when the success of the young republic propagandized democratic ideas, sections of the mass began to recognize their manipulated 'sub-political' existence. We see the effect of this propaganda through Joe Mather's voice in the Sheffield taverns, on the streets and in the workshops. He articulated the social aggressions of the awakening labouring mass of the 1780's. His voice was one that would be heard for generations to come.

2) The Ruling Elite

Social power in the eighteenth century was still associated with land ownership and agricultural and commercial wealth rather than industrial wealth. At the top of the social pyramid were the aristocracy and land-owning gentry. Their social existence transcended the levels of 'county society' as measured by their attendance at the fashionable London seasons and their holiday adjournments to fashionable spa towns. Many of the aristocrats were socially 'cosmopolitan' but were still the backbone of county social life. Economically they were very powerful. Their management of the 'subject economies' of their estates meant involvement in agriculture, mining and to a small degree, manufacturing. Many of the aristocrats were absentees. Many were locally active through the agents who managed their affairs. The aristocrats were powerful politicians of national standing. Locally they were able through their economic power to manipulate the votes of their

tenants, to employ plebeian bully boys to intimidate those who were not dependent and totally to ignore the political rights of the mass. They were able to do this until the 1790's through popular default. By maintaining a benevolence-deference reciprocity through what Thompson has called, 'a studied and elaborate cultural hegemony'. By means of ritual and real displays of their social power they made sure their right was not questioned.

In South Yorkshire the large estate was not a dominant form of land holding, small proprietorship of under a hundred acres was more characteristic. The large number of yeoman proprietors and larger tenants on the aristocratic estates constituted the lower depths of 'county society'. Such men were accorded, like the new aspiring industrial and commercial leaders from the third estate, a subordinate social existence in 'county society'. The focus for their social existence came to be the institutions in which the rituals of town society were enacted. Town society reflected the local power structure as opposed to the regional power structure. It is not easy to examine eighteenth century town society in the smaller towns of the region but no doubt the social networks were there. Sheffield's size guaranteed the existence of institutions of 'town society', which left a record of their social transactions and thus it can be examined.

'Town society' in Sheffield in the second half of the eighteenth century was created by the commercial and industrial leaders and professional men. Particularly important were the commercial men, merchants and larger factors who came to have great economic power over the workshop and domestic outwork trades. The participants corresponded with the town's political elite carrying out local government functions in co-operation with the aristocratic Lord of the Manor. They were elected and co-opted onto several trusts and corporations which carried out these functions. They monopolized the control of the Church Burgesses, responsible for

the upkeep of communal properties including the Church, the Town Trustees, responsible for the streets and water supply, and the Vestry, which controlled the distribution of poor relief and whose highway officials watched over the upkeep of roads. They worked hand in hand with the Manor Court which regulated markets and settled petty debts. They increasingly found their membership becoming a dominant voice in the executive of the Cutlers' Company, which regulated the operations of the staple trade of the town. The Magistrates administered local justice in the Cutlers' Hall. They committed more serious offenders to Quarter Sessions and to the Assizes held in the major towns of the West Riding. They were drawn from good 'county society stock'. Increasingly town society was to produce men who could take on such roles.

Sheffield's 'town society' in the early eighteenth century had been the creation of local yeomen families who also played a subordinate role in county society. These had industrial interests but not in the staple trades of the locality. The 'town society' they created can be glimpsed in the assemblies held in two rooms of the Charity School from the late 1730's to the 1760's. The social origins of the presiding 'Queens of the Assembly' throughout the 1730's and 1740's confirm that early 'town society' drew its strength from local yeomen families whose wealth came from the land. An early subscription list (1747-8) shows the strength of these families and their dilution by shopkeepers, professional men (surgeons, apothecaries, lawyers, clergy and military) and a handful of commercial men with connexions in the staple trades.

The Assembly came to represent the growth of commercial and industrial wealth in Sheffield and its immediate hinterland during the economic progress of the later eighteenth century. The subscription list of 1784 contained a much higher proportion of 'new men' from the commercial and industrial world.³⁰ Within Sheffield society there was a fusing of the growing merchant capitalist

wealth created by the commercial development of the Sheffield trades with the new industrial capitalist wealth of the iron industry. Dancing, card playing, dining and horse racing provided the social nexus of town society. There was also a striving for a higher tone in town society. In the 1780's its members provided the bulk of subscriptions for the building of the Tontine Inn.³¹ This was a commercial venture, which sought to provide more palatial dining facilities for the Sheffield elite. The Monthly Club, instituted in 1783, was another manifestation of town society although it sought the patronage of the leaders of county society. Its membership adequately demonstrated the social unity of the wealth among the local elite.³² It met at the Angel Inn, owned by Samuel Peech an exceedingly wealthy man who prided himself on his stable-boy origins.³³ Both the Angel and Tontine Inns were to be a focus of loyalism and a target for popular violence in the turbulent 1790's.

The social unity of wealth in town society and between this wealth and that of county society transcended religious loyalties. A majority of the local elite at town and county level paid more than ritual observance to the Established Church. It had long ceased to function as a church for the people through worldly default. It still provided a focus for the social rituals of the elite. There was a strong cultural counter-weight provided by deep-rooted traditions of dissent amongst the elite. These were maintained by congregations at the Quaker Meeting House, the Presbyterian Upper Chapel and a multitude of lesser dissenting chapels, including those of the 'new dissenting' congregations of Methodists.³⁴ Some of the divisions between the Established Church and Dissent were relatively superficial. There was an atmosphere of sectarian harmony between the Establishment and Dissent. This was fostered by the Lord of the Manor, the Duke of Norfolk, a

Catholic. Wealth above all dissolved and transcended such differences. It was the real source of social meaning among the elite. However fearfully its members pursued wealth as a vindication of a harsh Calvinistic sense of 'predestination' or to follow the gentler gradient of the Arminian 'pursuit of grace', it was wealth itself that came to satisfy their need for spiritual fulfilment and to justify their economic actions.

3) Subject Mass I - cultural equilibrium c.1740-1780

The majority of productive industrial workers in the workshop trades and outwork trades outside the 'dual economy', masters, journeymen and apprentices, shared a common experience both in the work situation and throughout their social existence in the wider society. The totality of their experience represented a common mass culture of shared beliefs, ideas, rituals and institutions which will be briefly examined here.

The work situation was the ultimate source of mass experience. Its nature dictated the degree to which a worker could share in the common culture. It shaped his contribution. The majority of industrial workers, those in Sheffield's cutlery and related trades, the Barnsley wire and linen trades, in the iron furnaces and forges and those in the mines, were full participants in this culture. Physical and social isolation created by the 'subject economy' situation on the large estates such as at Wentworth, or that of the Walkers at Masborough, insulated some of these workers from full participation in this culture. This culture, in equilibrium with the social requirements of the ruling elite, could generate no challenges to the social power of that elite. In this state it positively contributed to the paternalist benevolence-deferential subservience reciprocity between the elite and the mass. Changes both within and without disturbed this equilibrium after the 1750's but not until the 1780's and 1790's did the sources of

disequilibrium work themselves out to present any real challenge to the cultural hegemony of the elite. In the following section the equilibrium state is briefly surveyed, particularly to illustrate the tradition of the mass.

The social relations of production within the majority of the trades contributing to the region's industrial economy were close with a minimum of status distinction between master and man. In the larger units of production, such as ironworks and mines, status distinctions between sections of the workforce were more blatant. In the smaller units, the workshops and domestic outwork situations, there was relative harmony between master and man. They tended to share the same moral economic notions of 'fair price' for labour and finished product and of the right to employment by those serving a qualifying apprenticeship. The direct exploitative relations of production were obscured by the pervasiveness of sub-contract. In such a situation a 'craft mentality' flourished. The 'craft mentality' was an important representation of the dominant social-economic ideals of the culture. Its existence inhibited the growth of a 'labour class' mentality among the mass. It stressed the virtues of the skills demonstrated by men as members of individual trades. This preserved fierce craft loyalties and inhibited the growth of horizontal association between workers in different trades. It stressed the mutuality of master and man in terms of social and economic interest (vertical association) within the individual trades. This similarly inhibited the realization of horizontal association between workers. It idealized small master status as a legitimate expectation. Because for many this expectation was fulfilled, there was as yet little likelihood of an appearance of any form of labour class consciousness. Slowly the craft mentality was being undermined by fundamental structural changes at work in the industrial economy and in the wider society. The growth of a permanent wage-labour force

among the journeymen came with the growth of larger scale industrial operation in light workshop and outwork trades and in heavier industry. The process was slow but steady in gaining momentum throughout the second half of the eighteenth century. In the branches of the cutlery and related trades still protected by the regulatory powers of the Cutlers' Company, the process was slow and did not begin until the 1780's. In the unprotected branches of the Sheffield trades (files, saws, silver, silver plate), in similar sections of light industrial production, in workshops and domestic outwork trades (linen, wire and nails) and in the heavy trades (iron and coal), the growth in the scale of operation and the accompanying growth of permanent wage-status labour began far earlier. This applied to both the 'subject economies' of the large estates where non-monetary wages persisted longer, and the 'free economy' of the towns and villages.

There is some tentative suggestion of the organization of a labour interest among workers in some trades before the late eighteenth century. In Sheffield the network of sick, friendly or 'benefit' societies created throughout the eighteenth century contained several who from their names suggest they represented the interests of a workgroup. The earliest of these, the Tailors', founded in 1720, carried out welfare functions and acted to improve the wages and hours of labour.³⁵ Similar occupationally named clubs may have performed such functions (e.g. Filesmiths' (1732), Cutlers' (1732), Carpenters' (1742), Grinders' (1748), Braziers' (1763), Masons' (1767), Watermen's (1768), Scissorsmiths' (1791)).³⁶ Many sick clubs contained members from all trades, both masters and journeymen. These merely provided a network of organizations guaranteeing welfare provision and, more important, provided subgroup identities which further inhibited the realization of a labour class mentality. This network was very extensive. By the 1780's there were over fifty clubs in existence. These paid out...

more than the parish in relief and contributed to the welfare of several thousand members and their families.³⁷ Such networks also existed in the smaller towns and villages of the region, but little record of their existence remains.³⁸

The craft mentality represented a form of traditionalism in the work situation. This traditionalism was also evident in other dimensions of the social experience of the mass and its culture in equilibrium states.

Shared notions of 'just price' and 'fair wage' which were observed in the relations between small masters and dependent journeymen and apprentices in the work situation, had their equivalent in relation to the common situation shared as consumers. Food markets were controlled by regulations enforced by the institutions of local government. They were regulated to preserve standards and in extreme cases to control prices. The magistrates had the power to interfere with the workings of the free market during shortages when the market price was prohibitive. They were empowered 'to set the price' in the market through compulsion or by organizing local subscriptions to buy grain and re-sell it at an uneconomic rate. This provided a very important social safety-valve in eighteenth-century society. When the authorities neglected or were too slow to operate it, the mass acted to carry out their role. The popular tradition of 'setting the price' by mass collective action was represented by the food riots. The little that is known about them locally all illustrates the traditional orientation of the mass. Of the three major years of market disturbances nationally before the 1790's (1740, 1756, and 1766)³⁹ only for 1756 are there records of local popular price setting. The following account of events in the early part of market day, Tuesday 24 August 1756, is highly instructive:

The mob on Tuesday last to the number of some hundreds rose, in order, as they pretended to redress some grievances, ye first step they took was to reduce ye price of Corn which was sold in this market at near a pound a load; they marched in a body to Mr. Nettleship's, who they pretended transported it to our enemies, and made forcible entry into his Granaries, where they distributed to any who was wicked enough to accept it, 140 loads of wheat at noon day;⁴⁰

A similar account in the Derby Mercury explained the motive for this disturbance as, 'the Dealers in Corn fixing the price of wheat at one Guinea, which had been sold at seventeen shillings the Tuesday before'. Its less hostile account showed the effectiveness of 'collective bargaining by riot'. At midday, after the attack on Nettleship's property;

The Gentlemen of the Town assembled to consider how to put an end to the Disturbance, when the Bellman was ordered to cry that wheat should be sold at fifteen shillings the load.⁴¹

This did not prove effective and the Riot Act was read followed by a running battle continuing throughout the day between the constables and their auxiliaries and the crowd. The authorities were chased off the streets. One dealer sold his wheat at ten shillings a load as the crowd took control of the town. On the Wednesday night more violent popular activity took shape:

They assembled about 12 o'clock and forced into ye Pond Mill and destroyed all ye corn and flour they could meet with, and publically declared they would destroy all ye mills, and afterwards pull down ye Houses of ye Factors.⁴²

Only after an appeal for order from the Marquis of Rockingham (a powerful local aristocrat) and a local vigilante force had fought a pitched battle with the mob, did the disturbances end on Friday.⁴³ These disturbances showed the traditional-orientation of the mass. Their aim was merely to maintain a reasonable price for their staple food in the face of manipulated shortage. The indictment of one dealer, who unpatriotically 'transported it to our enemies', expressed the crowd's loyalist position during this time of war.

We are left in little doubt as to the patriotism of the mass. Two weeks earlier a crowd had burned an effigy of Admiral Byng.⁴⁴ It is possible that this patriotic fervour spilled over into the market disturbances.

In Sheffield there was a similar disturbance over the price of coal in 1774. The introduction of a wooden railway to carry coal from the Duke of Norfolk's estate into the town by his agents, was used as an excuse to double the price of domestic coal. Again this caused widespread popular resentment. One account recorded:

These were alterations so disagreeable to the populace, that they assembled in a prodigious number, and destroyed several of their carriages, totally pulled down a watch house and counting house in their new coal yard, and set fire to all the timber machinery, erected for discharging their loading, brought one carriage in triumph through the town, afterwards kindled a fire in, and sent it flaming into the river.⁴⁵

Here again mass action was employed to replace a prohibitive market price with a 'just' and 'fair' price. While the records of other towns and villages in the region for the eighteenth century are more limited than those for Sheffield, it should not be assumed that they did not have similar experiences of consumer protest. Both Sheffield and Barnsley experienced market disturbances in the 1780's. In May 1788, doors and shutters from the Shambles in Barnsley were burned in the market place by a crowd protesting about the rise in meal prices.⁴⁶ In Sheffield the activities of speculators and hoarders were so common in the market that they were recorded in one of Joseph Mather's songs. 'Fish and Tommy Tintack', written in the 1780's, describes the struggle of Garbut, a 'Cheap John', against his unscrupulous fellow dealers and the market authorities. Mather abused Garbut's persecutors thus:

An alderman for satan's use,
In Tophet slipt the cable,
In order Garbut to reduce,
But will he not be able.
Though Sambourne, Wilkinson, and Shaw,
That base militia sergeant,

Ticktack and Bedford joins the cause,
And Fish, the devil's agent.

chorus:

Then butcher's boys
Let's all arise,
And drive that ruffin quick back,
And all that join
That black design,
With Fish and Tommy Ticktack.

See Garbut, like a busy bee,
Improve each shining moment,
And seeks his bread from sea to sea,
Which well deserves a comment.
While idle drones stay in the hive,
Extort from friend and stranger,
Conspire against him and contrive
Because their craft's in danger.

chorus:

Behold that black insulting crew,
Who wish to pass for gentry,
Has purchased waster goods, in view,
To take in all the country.
Such trumpery was never bought,
They scarce will hing together,
For which these rascals should be caught,
And flogg'd like Fish's father.

chorus:

Rooker in opposition stands,
With Gay in borrow'd habit,
Worse ne'er escap'd the hangman's hands,
Nor scarce disgraced a gibbet.
Those blacks are held in utmost scorn,
'Midst thousands of beholders,
Whilst Garbut through the streets is borne
In triumph on men's shoulders.

chorus:

May that infernal dog of hell,
Now absent from this region,
Soon repossess his native cell,
And take with him a legion;
Such as conspire to starve the poor,
Of every rank and station,
Likewise each rogue and private whore
That formed this combination.⁴⁷

Such sentiments reflected the shared collective morality behind consumer protest. Until the 1790's this morality was circumscribed by a traditional-orientation. It lacked a decisiveness to look beyond the market place for the source of misery. This was altered by the political education of the mass which was begun in the 1780's

and 1790's. Mather's songs anticipated this. In them lay a source of deeper social perspectives. This was especially so in those he composed and sang in the sorrow of his later years. His pain could only be shared when lessons that had begun during the early years of the American War had been completed by the rapid progress of mass radicalization during the 1790's.

The major residual area of experience of the mass, outside that of work and consumption, was that of leisure. Much has been made of the contrast between pre-industrial and industrial leisure celebration. The patterns examined here are closer to the natural or seasonal rhythms of pre-industrial society. There appeared to be a greater element of spontaneity and a suggestion of richer experience than are found in the alienated forms of leisure celebration of later industrial society. Leisure served the same function in pre-industrial and industrial society. It provided social and psychological safety valves from tensions created by the work situation and the wider social situation.⁴⁸ There is a wealth of evidence illustrating the patterns of mass leisure celebration in eighteenth-century South Yorkshire. Sheffield's traditions are the best documented but there are records of popular leisure in small towns and villages.

Leisure celebration was concentrated into the weekend spree which terminated (or began) the working week. The tavern or alehouse, where the weekly financial settlement or wage payment was made, provided the focus of the mass leisure culture.⁴⁹ The songs of the eighteenth-century Sheffield tavern world make it possible to re-create its images. 'Saturday Night', a traditional song probably first printed as a broadsheet in the 1780's, celebrated the commencement of the spree:

Of hammers and files no more their din is,
 Round the door of the workhouse the workmen are ranged,
 While the masters their banknotes and snug little guineas
 Are counting and strithing about to get changed.

Having reckon'd they ne'er stop,
 But job to the beer-shop,
 Where the fumes of tobacco and stingo invite;
 And the oven inhabits
 A store of Welsh rabbits
 To feast jovial fellows on Saturday night.⁵⁰

Drinking heightened leisure celebration. It was also a necessary part of the work routine itself. This is recorded in lines from the traditional 'Cutlers' Song':

Like his anvil, he's steady, to labour he's ready,
 He drinks then he works boys, again and again.⁵¹

The Sheffield alehouse was a scene of wild drinking parties. Mather celebrated one of these in the 'Guinea Club Feast'. The first verse issued the following statement of intent:

All we undermentioned have jointly agreed
 To banish contention and discard with speed,
 As friends to unite, and be nobly employed
 In tipping off bumpers to loosen our hides;
 Here's Pickering and Cooper, and Barber and Might,
 Have made an agreement to drink the whole night,
 Here's Sutton sits cross-legged clapping his breast,
 To loosen their hides at the guinea club feast.

It was followed by the chorus:

Then fill up a bumper and let it go round,
 Why should a stark hide or niggard be found?
 May Bacchus's children have flowing spring tides,
 And humming strong liquor to loosen their hides.⁵²

Mather's songs eulogised those such as the 'Nether Green Lad' who properly celebrate the joys of leisure:

The Nether-green lad had a spark in his throat,
 The ocean he drinks makes the landlady's note;
 Begot by old Bacchus, he calls him his dad;
 His tenets to follow by day and by night,
 In tipping a bumper he's exactly right,
 He'll dance, drink and sing, like a toper true-born,
 And scorns to give out until three in the morn,
 Then goes reeling home like a Nether-green lad,
 Who ne'er forgets tol de rol la.⁵³

There were as yet few reasons for most masters and men not to share the same alehouse. The same social lubricants were enjoyed by all. Tavern pastimes, usually gaming, were not designed

to emphasize status distinctions, as were the exclusive social activities of the status-conscious elite. Celebration spilled out of the tavern into the streets, alleys and squares where all pursued the same distractions. Mather described one street festival in the 'Cock-Tail feast'. This began in the Ball Inn at Furnace Hill and continued throughout the day with public races and a quota of blood sports in the neighbouring streets. It ended in the alehouse with singing and dancing into the early hours of the morning.⁵⁴ Such festivals were usually part of an extensive holiday calendar. Common half or full day holidays fell at Shrove-tide, Easter, Whitsuntide, and November 5th, as well as ten to fourteen days after the excessive labours of 'cow', 'calf' and 'bull' weeks which immediately preceded Christmas.⁵⁵ Particular local traditions were associated with these holidays. In Sheffield the sport of 'throwing at cocks' was associated with Shrove Tuesday, horse racing with Whitsun week, dog whipping with the Statutes (in Sheffield, Barnsley and Rotherham surviving into the nineteenth century) on the Feast of Saint Simon and Saint Jude (18th October) and the gentler art of wassailing with Christmas.⁵⁶ Blood sports provided the major forms of mass entertainment throughout the year. Bull, badger and bear-baiting, dog fighting and cock fighting were the most popular of blood sports in the region. Sheffield's cutlers and other metal workers were not alone in their involvement with blood sports. Barnsley's wire drawers, colliers and linen weavers congregated on May Day Green to engage in baiting of badgers, bulls or bears and in Beckett's Square for cock fighting.⁵⁷ The Ecclesfield filemakers were notorious (among the Methodists) in the mid-eighteenth century for their bear baits⁵⁸ and at Greasborough the colliers were noted for their 'neglect and profanation of the Sabbath by devoting it to cock fighting, gaming and other pursuits.'⁵⁹

Race week, held in Sheffield in the first week of June in

the greater part of the eighteenth century, provided an excuse for a mass exodus to Crookesmoor (west of the central township) to enjoy not only the racing but the whole range of blood sports. Joseph Mather's 'Sheffield Races' caught the enthusiasm of this celebration at the Crookesmoor races:

Bacchus O thou God of wine,
 This week hold us to exalt thee;
 Bastards only will repine,
 Free born sons disdain to fault thee.⁶⁰

Such enthusiasm was shared by the young. Arthur Jewitt, an apprentice son of a small master cutler, saw the joys of Crookesmoor through a more innocent eye.⁶¹ Similarly, the young Samuel Roberts, son of an affluent silver plate manufacturer, recalled with dewy-eyed sentimentality of an old man his childhood world of open moors and festive public squares at holiday time:

Spittal Hill was the grand mart for holiday folk...many of the more orderley public houses appropriated their best room to the accommodation of a youthful party, spending the penny.⁶²

Rotherham had a raceweek in the 1740's but this was discontinued. Barnsley had a similar race meeting held on the Common until 1776 when enclosure took away the land.⁶³ A similar fate overtook the Sheffield course in 1790, although racing ended in 1781. Doncaster's racing traditions were upheld more strongly.⁶⁴

Patronage and social expedience played a part in the way the elite allowed the continuation of blood sports and rowdy mass entertainment. This had roots going well beyond the seventeenth century Puritan Commonwealth which had sought to eliminate such practices. Patronage and expedient tolerance of the mass's leisure celebration contributed to the reciprocity between the elite and the mass. The mass reciprocated with deference. Their celebration of leisure reflected a required traditional orientation. Mather's early songs reflect this. His songs of the 1770's and 1780's lacked the bite of social criticism. Only in his later songs did Mather

develop a sense of social irony and political awareness. This reflected changes in the man but also wider social forces. The sub-political orientation and inspiration of Mather's earlier songs were reflected in his choice of subjects. The singer had to make a living entertaining his fellow artisans in the taverns and streets, and at markets, fairs and race meetings. Like fellow entertainers, his material was dictated by mass taste. Bawdy, vulgar songs were his staple.⁶⁵ These were balanced by more serious numbers pandering to mass enthusiasm for accounts of sensational crimes (particularly murders)⁶⁶ and for war-time patriotism (songs celebrating victories or commiserating over disasters).⁶⁷

There is little evidence anywhere to show that any section of the mass displayed any sense of political self-awareness, at least before the later 1780's and 1790's. Their political existence, or rather non-existence, was dictated by the elite both nationally and locally. At best some of them figured in the electoral antics of the aristocracy as bullies or thugs. There were times when they had more progressive roles to play. Samuel Roberts vividly recollected the time in the late 1760's when the people were summoned by the bell to celebrate 'Wilkes and Liberty' and 'Number 45!'.⁶⁸ The pro-Wilkes faction among the local elite pulled the bellrope as a puppeteer his strings. The people were jerked into lifeless political existence. There were moments when the people tried to reach out and snatch at the strings. They were doomed to fail. When the Marquis of Rockingham unsuccessfully intervened to put an end to the market disturbances of 1756, he was glad that the elite primitively reasserted itself. A chronicler recorded the elite's victory:

'...we agreed in the Town by Toll of Bell all to assemble with Clubs, and give them battle; which was put in execution and victory soon declared in favour of the Town. Thirty three prisoners taken and ye rest obliged to fly; they are gone with a guard to ye Marquis, and I hope and wish some may suffer for examples sake.'⁶⁹

It was not necessary to make a similar assertion until the 1790's. Then a blue-liveried Volunteer Corps, drawn from the elite and its auxiliaries, buckled on their sabres to defend their class interests.⁷⁰

There is one remaining area of mass experience which needs examining here. This can be called its spiritual existence. Formal religious observance was not entirely alien to the mass. The Established Church, while long demonstrating its lack of concern for Christ's poor, still drew the more submissive and deferential to sit in its free seats. Respectable artisans and other workers of modest means paid at least nominal respect. Increasingly, the most religious sections of the mass, the strata of small masters and petty tradesmen, found a spiritual home in the tightly-knit, ideologically-exclusive Dissenting congregations which sprang up in the eighteenth century in a region with strong earlier anti-Establishment religious traditions. Neither Dissenting groups nor the Established Church played any part in the life of the majority of the mass except in emphasizing to them growing property-owning classes with exclusive social rituals.

Only the Methodists showed concern for the spiritual condition of the mass. Their evangelist crusade to save 'Christ's Poor' began in the region in the 1740's. Their imaginative proclamation of universal forgiveness and grace for repentant sinners represented a warm human embrace, contrasting vividly with the cold comfort offered by the harsh self-assured members of the Calvinist elect or the disdainful Anglican priesthood.⁷¹ The early years of Methodism were characterized by the great personal sacrifice and endurance of the preachers and activists drawn from both the select band gathered around the patriarch and the humble lay membership. Their uncompromising confrontation with 'Satan's hordes' was maintained for over two generations. Wesley, the patriarch himself, provided the supreme inspirational example. In nearly half a century

of activity (1740-1791) he crossed and re-crossed the country exhorting wherever he went. During these years he visited South Yorkshire on forty-four occasions, each time breaking new ground, making new converts and renewing the faith of believers.⁷²

The central drama of Methodist evangelism lay in the climax of conversion. This manipulated climax, rising from the depths of orchestrated despair to artificial heights of ecstasy, was re-created wherever Satan could be cornered among the mass. The mass did not always have a passive role as emotional pulp sucked into the vortex of revivalist conversion.⁷³ It also played a confused role as antagonist of Methodist evangelism when its members were hired by sections of the elite. The Church of England priesthood (who were embarrassed by the energy of the usurping Methodists) and the local gentry (who had paranoid fears about Methodist social doctrine) were the most regular hirers. The existence of some of the mass as life-long members of a rapidly growing sect is well recorded by Methodist chroniclers. In Sheffield the Methodist society grew rapidly from a tiny cell congregating in the tiny Pinstone Lane Chapel (1741) to the increasingly large and prosperous sect established in Mulberry Street (1757) and Norfolk Street (1780). Similar growth can be seen in the progress of chapel building in the smaller towns of the region.⁷⁴ In the early years Methodism had few members. In 1761 the Sheffield circuit, covering Doncaster, Worksop, Retford, Mansfield, Chesterfield, Bakewell, Barnsley and Rotherham, contained 583 members.⁷⁵ In 1770 the circuit, now a little smaller with the creation of new circuits, contained 597 members. Many more people than were in the tight nucleus of the classes which made up the organizational framework of the societies were involved at some stage or other in their lives with Methodism. Mather, the ballad singer, was deeply moved by its message, both temporarily in his early years and more permanently in later life. Many of his later songs testify to the lasting effect of this

association.⁷⁶

Entry into the Methodist community represented a complete break with the past - a 'new birth' with the receipt of a new identity and confidence. In the community a tightly knit cell system (the 'classes') provided spiritual and material welfare. The community worked for its members. Its religious egalitarianism even began to translate itself into more worldly egalitarianism, despite the authoritarianism and political conservatism of the founder. However, it was a community which realized its limitations both in a real and an abstract sense. Its ideals, however demonstrably workable in a small community, were not embraced widely enough in the wider society. Yet its very existence in the eighteenth century meant the injection of its ideals into the mainstream of social thought.

Our concern for the moment is with the mass's antagonism to the Methodists, especially that exhibited in the middle years of the eighteenth century. The open violence displayed by the mass, both spontaneous and manipulated in form, was a widespread phenomenon for over thirty years from the time of Wesley's first visit to the region in 1742. Its most extreme manifestations appeared in the 1740's. In Sheffield the Methodist chapel was attacked and demolished by mobs on three occasions, 1743, 1744, and 1746.⁷⁷ In each of these instances the magistrates provided willing accomplices to the clergy who had hired the mob. Charles Wesley, an eye witness to the 1743 disturbance, recalled:

In the afternoon I came to the flock in Sheffield, who are as sheep among wolves; the ministers having so stirred up the people, that they are ready to tear the Methodists in pieces. At six o'clock I went to the Society-house next door to our brother Bennet's. Hell from beneath was moved to oppose us. As soon as I was in the desk, with David Taylor, the floods began to lift up their voices. An officer, in the army, contradicted and blasphemed. I took no notice of him, but sang on. The stones threw thick, striking the desk and the people. I gave out, that I should preach in the street and look them in the face.

Wesley led the believers to safety while the mob demolished the chapel. He continued:

We returned to our brother Bennet's, and gave ourselves up to prayer. The rioters followed, and exceeded in outrage all I have seen before. Those at Moorfields, Cardiff, and Walsall, were lambs to these.⁷⁸

The Methodist community in Sheffield in the 1750's and 1760's, despite its more respectable following in the community,⁷⁹ was never free from such violence either in the practice of its religion in the town or in its evangelizing outside it. Their evangelical excursions into the villages surrounding the town frequently degenerated into running battles with hired gangs of intimidators or antagonistic locals.⁸⁰ The village of Totley, a scythe-making, farming and lead smelting community on the Yorkshire-north Derbyshire border, had a strong reputation for anti-Methodist expression. In 1758 it was claimed (this was a typical explanation for the founding of Methodism in previously hostile communities) that the sudden unexplained death of a young persecutor had produced a critical change of attitude in the local people.⁸¹ In Sheffield, as late as 1760, Methodist preachers had been attacked in the pulpit and their wigs torn off and ripped in half.⁸² The leader of one gang of tormentors that operated very successfully in the mid-1760's, specialized in disturbing meetings in Mulberry Street chapel by climbing onto the roof and unleashing live animals on the congregation. His sudden death by drowning in the river Don after a drunken day at the races was inevitably claimed by the Methodists to have ended persecution in the town.⁸³

The same sort of violence occurred in smaller towns and villages to the north of Sheffield. Rotherham's traditions were violent, although propagandistic accounts claimed Methodism triumphed in the end. William Green, the foremost disciple of Wesley in the town, had been dragged through the streets by his hair in 1750.⁸⁴ Ten years later the Octagonal Chapel was being built to testify the

stability of the sect there.⁸⁵ Rotherham's preachers were still being attacked in the surrounding villages where the local clergy were able to maintain a strong hold on the superficial religious loyalties of the mass.⁸⁶ A similar story can be told of the tract of country between Sheffield and Barnsley. Open violence was more continuous here. In 1744 Charles Wesley had to fight his way out of an ambush at Thorpe on his way to Barley Hall.⁸⁷ In the 1750's and into the 1760's, Ecclesfield⁸⁸ and Wortley⁸⁹ were the scenes of particularly extreme expressions of anti-Methodism. Barnsley had an unchallenged reputation for opposition to Methodism. A preacher wrote to Wesley of his experiences in 1760:

'we have also preached at Barnsley, where they were very angry, cast rotten eggs at us, and give us heavy hoses. But I think the Lord will conquer them.'⁹⁰

Open anti-Methodist reaction died down in the later 1760's and 1770's. Only in isolated localities where the Methodists tried to break new ground was there a flaring up of earlier hostilities.⁹¹ As late as 1770 there was enough anti-Methodist feeling in Sheffield for a mob to rescue a Methodist baiter who had been arrested.⁹² Antagonism to organized religion, particularly that expressing the sort of vigorous moral puritanism such as the Methodists specialized in, was a deep rooted popular sentiment. Rather than reflecting any deep intellectual power of social criticism in popular feeling, it was a natural reflex to a challenge to mass culture. Spontaneous anti-Methodism, however limited a form of social action, was part of a real anticipation by the mass of its exploited state. It was part of a slow and unsteady step along the road to class realization of the nature of cultural exploitation. The bulk of anti-Methodist expression was of the manipulated kind, a reflection of the same traditional-orientation expressed in other dimensions of mass social existence. This orientation was part of the equilibrium state of mass culture.

4) Subject Mass II - cultural disequilibrium c.1780-1792.

The impact of the American War (1775-1783) and independent developments in the years following violently disturbed the traditional-orientation of mass existence and the equilibrium between large sections of the mass and the ruling elite. The traditional-orientation began to disintegrate in Sheffield, the largest and most 'cosmopolitan' urban centre. Here a new radical orientation began to emerge. In surveying the main areas of mass social existence - work, leisure, consumption, politics and religion, - the emergence of this new orientation can be seen as an active process during the 1780's and early 1790's.

The most important manifestations of the decline of a traditional-orientation appeared in the political and work-time experiences of the mass. The political impact of the American War upon England was profoundly important. The colonists' revolt and the struggle of their young republic against despotic monarchy both caught the popular imagination. In town and village alike democratic and loyalist factions debated the key issues. Samuel Roberts, serving an apprenticeship in his father's Sheffield silver plate manufacturing workshop, witnessed the dialogue among his father's workmen:

'Each had their separate flags, songs and abusive appellations. The war between parties never reached blows, nor often arguments. Taunts, shouts, and derision were the chief artillery on both sides.'⁹³

A staunch loyalist himself, Roberts found radical viewpoints in his circle of friends of similar social standing. These were associated with members of the more rational dissenting religious sects like the Presbyterians of Upper Chapel and more extreme groups like those who met at Dodderidge's schoolroom.⁹⁴ Such religious communities, although in general part of a world well removed from the religious experience of the mass (despite having some plebeian

members), provided critical forcing-grounds for radical political ideas more openly expressed in the 1790's by a largely petty bourgeois intelligentsia.

There were other sources for a growing awareness of democratic ideals within mass experience. The soldiers who returned from the war perhaps brought back confused but nevertheless real notions of democracy. This growing awareness was expressed and developed in the 1780's in a popular-based struggle for democratic control of the organization of the cutlery trades.⁹⁵ This struggle affected only the trades in Sheffield which had been protected by the Cutlers' Company. The struggle provided a dress-rehearsal for the breakthrough in popular politics in the 1790's. The region's other workgroups had already lost such battles. Their trades were not protected by corporate regulation. Their communities were still held in the vice-like grip of the local representatives of the ruling elite - the Squire and the Parson. Only because of the struggle of the Sheffield workers in the 1780's and 1790's were they able in any way to begin to contemplate loosening this grip.

The struggle in the Sheffield trades had begun as an economic one. Arthur Jewitt, apprenticed to his father who was in the 1780's a small master cutler and popular leader of the commonalty, left a detailed account of the origin of the struggle:

During the latter end of the war (1782-3) when England was opposed not only by America but by France and Spain, trade became very bad, and as was likely to be expected was still worse in the year preceding the peace[1782]. The Cutlers of Sheffield were in great distress for there was no employment for the workmen. What incensed the matter worse was the practice of the many masters manufacturing, taking, contrary to the Act of Parliament, an unlimited number of apprentices. Nor was this all. They fetched into the town, labourers from the field, and strangers from the neighbouring villages, and employed them in many branches of the cutlery trade at a price very much below what the Freemen could work at. The consequence was that a great deal of rubbish was made in the town to the injury of the interests of the trade, and half as more of those who had served a regular apprenticeship was standing idle and starving for want of employment.⁹⁶

Jewitt recalled how as individuals the unemployed and underemployed journeymen and small masters (all freemen and members of the commonalty) had confronted the Company with their neglect. Many of the officers of the Company were larger manufacturers who had themselves abused the rules and consequently the complaints were ignored. By 1784 the displaced freemen (a large bulk of the 7,000 said to exist in the mid-1770's), composed of small masters and a large number of journeymen, began to organize. Jewitt's father, brandishing a copy of the Company's parent act, purchased from an antiquarian, presided at a general meeting of the freemen, held at the Bell Inn in Campo Lane on Easter Monday 1784. A committee of twelve was elected to represent the freemen's interest in future negotiations and a low penny per week subscription was fixed to pay for any legal costs incurred. The committee went to the Cutlers' Hall to demand that the Company maintain a stricter control over the trades. They were haughtily dismissed. They then sought legal advice but found that no lawyer in the town would help. As Jewitt recalled, 'who would undertake the poor man's cause for fear of offending the gentry?'. They received help from a lawyer outside the town, Mr. Beckwith of Masborough. Similarly the Sheffield printers had refused to print handbills for the freemen and this work had to be done outside the town.⁹⁷

In the early stages of their struggle for leadership, the campaign was dominated by small masters like Jewitt's father. Their demands reflected a 'craft mentality' which mainly reflected the economic interest of small producers. The most important of seven criticisms made of the Company in 1785 illustrated this:

1. That the Company had at its Monday meeting permitted Freemen to take and bind apprentices, the sons of Non-Freemen, until, even binding but once a year they had sometimes six at a time, contrary to the Act of 21 James I.

2. That the Company had allowed journeymen, not the owners of their work themselves, to take apprentices in a like manner, contrary to the Act of 21 James I.
4. That it had permitted several cutlers to use marks not assigned; and also more marks than are, without prosecution, contrary to the Act of 21 James I.⁹⁸

The Company's words and actions demonstrated the commercial mentality of the larger producers who dominated it. They defended their actions in dealing with the freemen's charges. Their reply to the first charge was highly instructive:

That from the increase of trade and want of workmen, it was at different times thought proper to make resolutions permitting the above relaxation as to the sons of Non-Freemen. It could be proved that this indulgence had been of great public utility by increasing the number of workmen, and consequently thereby preventing them from raising their wages immoderately - which was what they wanted to do. But so far as lowering them too much, a good workman could get from ten to twenty shillings per week - and many got more. There was always plenty of work even of that sort to be had, and very more than three or four days of the week and would take such part of the week as was agreeable to them.⁹⁹

Here, in justifying the necessity of the removal of restraints of labour supply, the Company appealed to the freemen as small masters and fellow employers. The idea of a free labour market, as opposed to a regulated one, was the central aim of the larger manufacturers and commercial people who had come to dominate the Company. The remainder of their replies were blunt denials of their mismanagement of the Company. These did little to satisfy the freemen. The Company was so disturbed by their actions that it was decided to apply for a new Act to answer some of the criticisms. Their draft bill was on public display at the Cutlers' Hall in October 1785.¹⁰⁰ Its proposals can have brought little joy to either the small masters or the journeymen bulk of the freemen's support. The bill recognized the inadequacy of the Act of 1625. While suggesting ways in which control could be tightened up in areas like mark ownership, it scarcely concealed the free market mentality of its drafters. Parts

of the second and third proposals illustrate this:

2nd. That the increased demand at home and abroad, and the scarcity of workmen, has shown the restraints on apprentices to be too confused; wherefore it would tend to the benefit of the Corporation and the advantage of the public if masters were allowed to take an apprentice every two years; if workmen could take apprentices, if sons of Freemen might be employed by other Freemen; and if engravers and embellishers of goods were permitted to be employed.

3rd. It would be of great advantage if:-

(a) The striking of the Mark, or anything like the mark of any other member of the Corporation were restrained.

(b) If labourers were employed to work at the most rough and laborious parts of the business, in times of great demand and scarcity of workmen.

(c) If men of skill and judgement in the arts, manufactures and professions were encouraged to come and reside here, and were made Freemen on payment of a reasonable sum of money.

(d) If deceitful wares were forfeited to the poor, and the maker and seller subjected to a penalty.¹⁰¹

The Freemen's Committee initiated action through legal channels. They sought a writ of mandamus to restrain the Company from using its funds to push the bill through.¹⁰² The Company, having already spent money on the bill, temporarily deferred taking action because trade was poor and consequently there was no shortage of labour. Instead the Company began to tighten up its controls over apprenticeship and abuse of mark ownership.¹⁰³ The freemen were unappeased. They bombarded the Company with complaints in early 1786.¹⁰⁴ In a petition to the Company issued in March their fifteen-man committee repeated their charges concerning non-freemen operating in the trades, quality deterioration and frauds. These abuses they claimed had lost them markets, particularly in America.¹⁰⁵ The Committee of Freemen also issued another statement on 1 April 1786 as a printed handbill, bearing their solicitor's name and also that of the printer, Joseph Gales.¹⁰⁶ This informed the freemen of the Company's refusal to act, and urged continuous struggle. It called for a meeting of all the freemen 'at your respective COMMITTEE HOUSES' on

3 April. This suggested the organizational strength and form of the freemen's activity. Jewitt claims that at this point their strength evaporated. The leading members of the Committee were bribed and intimidated to discontinue their activities. Jewitt's father maintained his position but alone he was powerless. He also fell victim to suspicion of accepting bribes and had to carry two loaded pistols on his person for protection from embittered freemen.¹⁰⁷ This account of the sudden decline of the Freemen's organization was supported by evidence in the Cutlers' Company's accounts. The unexplained payment of £500 to certain freemen in March 1786 was possibly evidence of this bribe.¹⁰⁸ There appears to have been a temporary lull with the Company carefully watching to prevent excessive breaches of the regulations, and the freemen restraining themselves from taking further expensive legal action.¹⁰⁹ In the autumn of 1787 there was brief flaring up of trouble throughout the trades. Particularly in the file trade trouble began over the old issues of limiting apprentices and of journeymen taking on apprentices. The Company, in its more conciliatory position, promised action¹¹⁰ but little appears to have been done. In June 1788 the 'Committee of Journeymen Freemen Filesmiths' repeated these demands to the Company. They cited the case of Thomas Blake, a file manufacturer whose defiance of the Company had occurred a year earlier during the slight agitations then. They demanded that action be taken against unscrupulous masters employing unqualified men.¹¹¹ For the first time during the agitation, their's represented the voice of an organized labour interest. Their committee issued a clarion call to journeymen in all other trades. In September 1788 similar journeymen's committees, representing table knife cutlers, spring knife cutlers, razor smiths, scissor smiths, shear smiths, sickle smiths and grinders of several trades met at various public houses.¹¹² They met to elect six representatives to a 'General Committee' of all the trades. They firmly emphasized the democratic

mode of their organization of this committee. The filesmiths had already attempted to emphasize the lack of democratic forms in the organization of the Company. They suggested that a political change might serve to remove the abuses that had plagued them for so long.¹¹³ In late October the General Committee advertised their election of officers to manage the affairs of the Company. They called on freemen to inspect the poll books they had drawn up and to register if they had not been included.¹¹⁴ During the course of a three-day poll, 1,083 votes were cast for the freemen's candidates. Two were cast for the 'self-elected' candidates.¹¹⁵ This was sophisticated political mime from those who were traditionally excluded from national politics.

The growing mass political awareness that was reflected was an awareness that related only to Sheffield. Here in the region's only large and 'cosmopolitan' centre was a group of radical petty bourgeois intelligentsia who had access to a press. Their social network was open enough for contact with the town's industrial workers; a crucial conjunction for the existence of a popular struggle for wider democratic right. It was the press that was of key importance. Since the 1760's Sheffield's only paper (the Sheffield Public Advertiser) had been printed by William Ward, a bookseller in the Market Place.¹¹⁶ Jewitt recalled it as, 'a stupid Tory aristocratic thing devoted to the powers that be'.¹¹⁷ In June 1787 Joseph Gales (book seller, print seller, agent of the Royal Exchange Fire Office and vendor of patent medicines whose first printing job had been for the freemen) began to publish a more radical paper, the Sheffield Register. Gales was a member of a group of dissident, educated young men from various social backgrounds, who met weekly at 'Billy Hill's Parlour' - the Bull Inn in the Wicker. They discussed current social and political, theological and scientific issues.¹¹⁸ Gales' Register was far more cosmopolitan than its rival. It also covered local events more

thoroughly with far less prejudice against the rights of working people. Similarly during the 1780's, John Crome (listed in the 1787 directory as a book binder) arrived in Sheffield. Jewitt claimed him to be, 'a printer in his youth to the Pretender's army in 1745 and an inveterate enemy of the present dynasty, or rather an uncompromising Jacobite who was always ready to oppose the ruling power, whether of a town or a Nation'.¹¹⁹ Crome was possibly isolated from Gales' intellectual coterie by age and background. His voice and actions must be seen as an independent force, yet one no less powerful in arousing the political and social consciousness of a key section of the mass.¹²⁰ The final source of mass political awareness, although in some degree it reflected it, was in the radicalization of popular songs. The songs of Joseph Mather, the foremost popular entertainer, appear to take a new form in the 1780's. Mather's songs had always reflected the traditional orientation of mass culture. After the American War angry images crept in. The poverty created by the war and post-war conditions was one element in the equation. Mather experienced this in his trade. He became drawn into the freemen's agitation when it was generating a great deal of polemical literary activity.¹²¹ Mather's loyalties were those dictated by a life of experience as represented in the autobiographical 'File Hower's Lamentation':

Ordained I was a beggar,
 And have no cause to swagger;
 It pierces like a dagger -
 To think I'm thus forlorn.
 My trade or occupation
 Was ground for lamentation,
 Which makes me curse my station,
 And wish I'd ne'er been born.

Born in 1737, Mather had been a journeyman in the file trade. He may have set up as a small master (within the traditional expectations of the 1750's and 1760's) but he probably represented the small man squeezed out by growing abuses in his trade. The following verse of the song registers his decline in the trade:

I'm debtor to a many,
 But cannot pay one penny,
 Sure I've worse luck than any,
 My traps are marked for sale.
 My creditors may sue me,
 The bailiffs may persue me,
 And lock me up in jail.

Fatalism gives way to a growing sense of social irony which provides this interesting and direct (for his time) analysis of exploitation:

As negroes in Virginia,
 In Maryland or Guinea,
 Like them I must continue -
 To be both bought and sold.
 While negro ships are filling
 I ne'er can save one shilling,
 And must, which is more killing,
 A pauper die when old.

Measured irony gave way to anger:

At every week's conclusion
 New wants bring fresh confusion,
 It is but mere delusion
 To hope for better days,
 While knaves with power invested,
 Until by death arrested,
 Opress us unmolested
 By their infernal ways.

A hanging day is wanted;
 Was it by justice granted,
 Poor men distress'd and daunted,
 Would then have cause to sing.
 To see in active motion
 Rich knaves in full proportion,
 For their unjust extortion
 And vile offences swing.¹²²

Mather, through the means of Crome's press, reached a wider audience.¹²³
 His performances of satirical numbers in the alehouses and public places, particularly outside the Cutlers' Hall (where the officers of the Company and the magistrates also met), were an important testimony to his political significance.¹²⁴ He abused officials of the Company, prominent manufacturers and magistrates alike.¹²⁵
 His performances ritually demonstrated the sentiments of the mass and also inspired sympathetic action. Mather became well known for his activities in the 'Gods' or cheapest seats of the theatre.¹²⁶
 It was here that the mass of his admirers were coming to realize

elemental solidarities of a labour class in the passive crowd situation of theatre audiences. It was the stated ambition of those in the 'Gods':

To get reit into t' gallera, whear we can rant an roar,
 Throw flat backs, stooans, an sticks,
 Red herrins, booans, an bricks;
 If they dooant play Nansa's fansa, or onna tune we fix,
 We'll do the best as e'er we can to braik sum o' ther necks.
 t' yoller bellies [grinders] an t' nicker peckers [file
 cutters] are we us combined,
 An when we get i't' gallera, my lads, all in a mind;¹²⁷

It was in such antics in the 'Gods' that the effective power of a united labour interest could be ritually demonstrated. The case of Jonathan Watkinson, the Master Cutler in 1787 who in his official capacity was associated with an attempt to deny the journeymen employed by the master manufacturers their traditional right to surplus materials, significantly demonstrated the power of the 'Gods'. Under normal practice the master manufacturer allowed fourteen units to the sub-contracted grinder to complete a dozen ground knives. The master allowed thirteen units to the dozen to the directly employed hafters and finishers who usually worked in his workshops. The surplus materials were kept to be made up for independent gain as of right. Watkinson and the larger masters and the factors who 'put-out' work demanded thirteen units should be completed for the dozen from all those workers employed directly or under sub-contract. They agreed to pay for the extra unit produced. This appeared to be an attempt to make production more rational and to bring production fully under the control of the larger employers. Such intentions caused only a slight stir. Unscrupulous masters attempted to take advantage and pay for the newly demanded thirteen at the old price for a dozen. The journeymen, enraged at this attack on their traditional economic rights which were already threatened by the market dislocation induced by quality deterioration resulting from the Company's waning concern for regulation and its lack of concern for wider regulation, made Watkinson their target. Mather caricatured

Watkinson with typical viciousness:

This monster oppression, behold how he stalks,
Keeps picking the bones of the poor as he walks,
There's not a mechanic throughout this whole land
But what more or less feels the weight of his hand.
That offspring of tyranny, baseness and pride,
Our rights hath invaded and almost destroyed,
May that man be banished who villainy screens:
Or sides with big W.....n with his thirteens.

Chorus:

And may the odd knife his great carcass dissect,
Lay open his vitals for men to inspect,
A heart full as black as the infernal gulph,
In that greedy, blood-sucking, bone-scraping wolf.

This wicked dissenter, expelled his own church,
Is rendered the subject of public reproach:
Since reprobate marks on his forehead appear'd
We all have concluded his conscience is sear'd,
See Mammon his God, and oppression his aim,
Hark! how the streets ring with his infamous name,
The boys at the playhouse exhibit strange scenes
Respecting big W.....n with his thirteens.¹²⁸

In the sequel, 'Watkinson's Repentance', Mather indicted him for, 'a blackguard snatch of late he hath made, to pull down the prices of the cutlery trade'. His crime had brought the retribution of the 'Gods' whose capacity to employ sanctions was described later in the song 'Watkinson Confesses':

One night to the play I happened to go
But could not rest long, they troubled me so,
For before in the play-house long time I had been
The whole gallery shouted 'I will have thirteen'.
It is every night when I go to my rest,
My conscience doth constantly pierce through my breast,
I seldom can sleep, but I constantly dream,
I hear thousands shouting 'I will have thirteen'.¹²⁹

This cry pursued Watkinson to his grave four years later.

On three levels within the mass experience dissident voices were heard. Gales' intellectual coterie voiced the grievances of the petty bourgeoisie of tradesmen and small masters. Drawing on the intellectual traditions of old Dissent and striving towards more rational religious world-views, their radical intellectual interests embraced not only purely political questions but also theology, science and literature. Crome's was a shadowy, quasi-legal day to

day existence which left little time for sociable intellectual indulgence. He was equally as well read. His life experience prompted him to direct his actions towards the exploited plebeian heart of the mass. Mather, who lacked formal education and who was often able to be less independent in his political actions than the printers, looked in a similar direction. His role as an activist was politically more efficient, at least in the 1780's. It was with the support of such activists that the freemen's struggle generated a greater momentum. It was to arrive at a climax in the years 1789-91.

The Company greeted the freemen's electoral mummery of 1788 with suitable disdain. They promised to listen to grievances but little was done.¹³⁰ The various Freemen's Committees lobbied the Company with complaints. Early in 1789 the Filesmiths' and Razor-smiths' representatives demanded that action be taken over abuses of apprenticeship control. There was a repetition of demands for the protection of the Company's poor made by both trades' committees and individuals.¹³¹ One common panacea was the making of the election of the Company's officers a democratic one. Here within the limited confines of a trade dispute was being rehearsed a demand for a political solution for immiseration-universal suffrage. It was to be consistently repeated over fifty years throughout the struggles of English popular and working class radicalism from the Jacobins of the 1790's to the Chartists of the 1840's.

This demand for the democratic election of Company officers was voiced most articulately by Enoch Trickett, a small master in the file trade who was a prominent member of the General Committee of Freemen. He warned the Company that the freemen would seek a new Act of Parliament. He demanded that a statement of the Company's finances should be made public, and accused them of mismanagement of funds which should have been expended on the poor of the Company.¹³² The Company replied with denials of mismanagement. This only caused

the freemen to make positive attempts to obtain a new Act.¹³³ In their efforts they received the support of several sick and friendly societies and other clubs. Their actions suggested the existence of clubs which further reflected the existence of an organized labour interest.¹³⁴ The larger manufacturers lined up on the side of the Company. At a meeting held in May 1789 they decided to petition against the freemen's bill.¹³⁵ They were joined by the local gentry and other leading members of the town's elite. At a meeting of the 'Gentlemen, Clergy, Magistrates, Merchants and Principal Inhabitants of the Town' which was presided over by the senior magistrate, Vicar Wilkinson, the town elite hysterically denounced the freemen's demands. They claimed that, 'they would very much disturb the peace of the town, produce disorder and confusion and be greatly injurious to the trade and manufactures'.¹³⁶ Deputations from all concerned went to London to lobby the county Members of Parliament (Wilberforce and Duncombe).¹³⁷ The counter-petitioners gathered their strength. On two consecutive days in May 1789 they met to organize. They challenged the measure of democracy the freemen wanted and appealed to the small master interest within the body of freemen by warning that journeymen outnumbered masters in a ratio of ten to one. Their greatest fear was for the loss of the economic advantages that the 'free trade' their disregard for the Company's regulative powers had created. It was resolved at the meeting of 5 May:

That the alterations proposed by the bill now depending in the House of Commons will be greatly injurious to the inhabitants of the town, by laying improper restraints upon trade which ought to be as free and open as possible.¹³⁸

Such statements were supported by a violent attack on restrictiveness in the trades from the pen of 'the Votary of Freedom'. This local press correspondent advocated the principles of free trade and a free market in labour and other commodities so that the 'natural' laws of the market would fix employment and wage levels. Talking

of the protection the Company's regulation afforded the artisan in the cutlery trades, he exclaimed:

And why should a reprobate, idle Cutler be supported by any Priviledge that is not allowed a Silversmith or Button Maker of the same description. This doing away with Priviledge would bear hard on Characters of the above kind and probably lower their Wages, but the ingenius, industrious worthy mechanics would be rewarded according to his merit.....The removal of these Cramps from the Cutlers would assuredly have this effect. It would give an invitation to men of liberal Fortunes and Spirit to join in the manufacture of Iron and Steel wares here as well as at Birmingham, or of Cotton at Manchester.139

The 'Votary's' vision of the new social and economic order of the free market was seized with apocalyptic frenzy:

Do away with the Clog, and we shall have Money and Genius flow into the Town; the Trade will be pushed with ten times the Vigour it ever yet experienced to all parts of the Globe, Freedom will erect her god-like Standard among us, and Sheffield will presently arise to the Eminence of Birmingham.140

This voice of the new capitalistic spirit abroad among commercial and industrial leaders was answered in print. 'The Friend of Freedom' ridiculed his opponent:

Does he not act like the chief Captain of a desperate Gang of Highwaymen? Or like a Pirate who has discovered a large Booty, and summons up all his strength to attack and take away from the rightful owners? Does he not say as much that his Gang has signed the Corporation's death warrant?

The 'Friend' identified the source of this attempted disruption of the equilibrium of the economic organization of the trades. He pointed to the danger of ruining masters, 'by making them serve Men of Consequence and monied men of very great and extensive fortunes'. He also posed a very significant question regarding the position of labour:

Can we effectively ruin the Journeymen by making them our slaves as well as the masters? For have we not conquered the Silversmiths and the Button Makers, by taking a greater number of apprentices than ever the national Law would admit? That even when the Apprentice is out of his time, we send him about his business, or

he must work for less wages, for we have another in his place.

He was also little impressed by his adversary's comparison with other towns, noting:

Now then I must acknowledge the Birmingham and Manchester labouring poor has the advantage of Sheffield, for their children begin to work at three years of age.¹⁴¹

The freemen's deputation was in London throughout May and June. Their efforts to get a bill failed but they continued in their legal action. They continually harassed the officers of the Company with their demands. The Company toyed with the idea of initiating a new Act for itself. This was put off throughout the session 1789-90. The freemen moved again. A deputation of freemen with legal advisers went to London in November to obtain permission to introduce a bill which sought to amend the old Act regarding the appointment of officers, to give freemen the right to choose officers, to amend the regulation regarding apprenticeship giving journeymen the right to take them as well as masters, and to declare the filesmiths part of the Company. Opposition to this again came from the Company and the leading economic interests in the town. Wilberforce, the county member, brought both parties to a settlement. The freemen deferred to his better judgement in calling for five independent gentlemen to be appointed by the Company and the freemen. These were to prepare a new bill agreeable to both parties. This bargaining was in process throughout the first half of 1790.¹⁴²

While they had been attempting to obtain their own bill the freemen received the support of the labour interest in the town. Enoch Trickett, in a public statement of March 1790, talked of support from:

The clubs, who have been our greatest Friends, and best Hope. We do most respectfully solicit a Continuance of their friendly Aid and Assistance which may be called the poor Man's Store House.

A labour interest was coming to be expressed more openly. Trickett saw the potential:

If the Members of these Societies are greatly oppressed by a despotic or arbitrary power, would it not be just to join their spare Stocks, and to deliver Themselves from every Degree of Despotism and arbitrary power.¹⁴³

In August 1790, because their wages were being cut, one small group, the scissor grinders, struck work against the manufacturers who sub-contracted work to them. The master manufacturers in the scissor trade swiftly mobilized. They issued a statement at a meeting held in the Tontine Inn on 17 August to, 'consider the unlawful Combination of the Scissor Grinders, formed for the Purpose of advancing their wages'. This meeting noted favourably other employers' associations springing up in the other corporate trades and called for a meeting of all master manufacturers to be held in the Cutlers' Hall on 23 August.¹⁴⁴ The Grinders' Committee (representing masters and men in a trade where both worked as sub-contracted labour) blasted back with a vigorous assertion that illustrated a wider sense of grievance than that simply generated in a trade dispute:

A Good Cause wants neither Calumny nor falsehood for its support! - The Business of your Meeting at the Tontine, you say, was 'to take into consideration the unlawful Combination of Scissor Grinders, formed for the Purpose of advancing their Wages'. What in the Name of common Sense, could induce you to introduce your Performance with two most invidious Falsehoods? Are you confident that your bold Assertions will be implicitly received, without any Examination in the Scales of Truth and Reason? Or, that you are able to veil the Truth from the sight of every Man in Sheffield? What is an unlawful Combination? Is the assembling of the Gentlemen of landed Property, to consult on the most proper Mode of obtaining a more equal Representation in Parliament [shows awareness of Wyville's Yorkshire Association of gentlemen reformers in the earlier 1780's]? No. By no Means. Are the Meetings of a Number of Gentlemen to preserve or increase the Value of their landed Property? No. Are the Meetings of various Tribes of Cornfactors, Forestallers, Engrossers, and Hucksters (those Beasts of the English Nation, who prey on the labours of the Poor)? No. Is it the Meeting of the Master Filemakers, Scissor makers, and Others at the Hotel, the Tontine, and several other Places, to consult

on Means to keep their Journeymen to themselves, that they the more easily and effectually oppress them? Oh! No. What then is an unlawful Combination? Why, Strange to tell it, the Meeting of the Scissor Grinders, to put a final Stop, if possible, to the Master Scissormakers, throwing away the fruit of their honest Labour, to the great Detriment of the Trade in General.¹⁴⁵

Most important they asserted the true nature of the strike was not simply to advance wages, 'but to adjust and preserve them, as every industrious Man would his Property from Robbers'. At the master manufacturers' meeting, resolutions were passed to take action against the scissor grinders' leaders. A subscription was entered into and a second meeting called for 26 August.¹⁴⁶ The dispute widened. The journeymen employed directly in the scissor manufacturers' workshops, the forgers, filers and finishers, demanded that their wages should be protected from the masters' tendency to force reductions.¹⁴⁷ Direct confrontation of labour and capital was threatened. The adjourned manufacturers' meeting of the 23rd reconstituted itself at Beardsall's Hotel. A committee of twenty-seven leading manufacturers was elected to manage prosecutions. The meeting pledged itself to work for an amendment of the 1624 Act in line with the views of the Company of Cutlers.¹⁴⁸ The Corporation struggle reflected the same divisions of interest as the first major labour dispute in the trades. The scissor grinders, in an address to, 'the Freemen, and others of the different Manufactures, within the Liberty of Hallamshire', hit back and called the masters' threats of prosecution, 'wild and romantic'. They challenged the statements issued by the masters' meeting on the 26th, most particularly those relating the dispute to the wider implications of the Corporation struggle:

It is worthy of the attention of the Freemen at large, to consider the late malpractices of the Officers of the Corporation, in direct opposition to the Act of Parliament, by throwing more hands into the different branches of business than the said Act allows of whether the said practice was not introduced for the sole purpose of reducing the prices of labour ad infinitum.

The present union of the Scissor Grinders is to put a stop to reduction, ad infinitum—Ergo, the late Officers of the Company of Cutlers, having been the principal promoters thereof; and consequently the proper objects against whom persecutions should be commenced.¹⁴⁹

The manufacturers met again in early September and prosecutions were made later in the month.¹⁵⁰ Five scissor grinders were committed to Wakefield House of Correction for having kept work out for above eight days and refusing to finish it because they were being discounted.¹⁵¹ Joseph Mather's song 'Hallamshire Haman' satirized George Wood, a leading scissor manufacturer and Senior Warden of the Cutlers' Company who had played an active part in the prosecution. This suggests the existence of violent popular reaction towards the employers during the strike:

This 'Hallamshire Haman' keeps blacks at command,
To spread his dire mandates throughout the whole land,
Together they meet and their malice combine
To form a most hellish, infernal design.
On malice, on mischief, and tyranny bent,
Five poor honest grinders to prison they sent;
Though nothing they had of these men to complain,
But not paying discount for wearing a chain.

Chorus:

Then Haman he vowed that all Israel should die;
And Mordecai hang twixt the earth and the sky.
But though he on plunder and rapine was bent,
He never took discount at fifty per cent.¹⁵²

The strike produced little in the way of benefit for the grinders. It did demonstrate the potential of organized action to the grinders and other journeymen directly employed in the scissor trade. It was possibly these who organized a Scissorsmiths' Benefit Society in the April of 1791.¹⁵³ To other workers in trades where as yet there was no organization of a labour interest it was also a lesson.

A high level of activity in the Corporation struggle was reached in the autumn of 1790. This took place parallel and subsequent to the scissor grinders' struggle. This struggle had illustrated the practical application of the new economic morality

by those trying to dismantle the Company's protective apparatus. The Company, under increasing attack,¹⁵⁴ had decided to introduce its own bill to liberalize operations in the trades. This was planned for the coming sessions (1790-1). It launched its proposals at a meeting in late October 1790 where the free market caucus reiterated its arguments about the redundancy of the 1624 Act, describing it as, 'inconvenient and improper in view of the great increase of trade'.¹⁵⁵ Similar sentiments were expressed in subsequent contributions to the newspaper debate.¹⁵⁶ The Company's deputation was in London in November and December 1790. The Freeman's deputation met them to bargain over the inclusion into a new Act of more democratic forms of procedure for selecting future officers of the Company.¹⁵⁷ They had at least partial success. The new Act, ratified in June 1791,¹⁵⁸ contained a provision for a more open selection procedure for the twelve Assistants who formed the largest, though least influential, group on the Company's executive. It was enacted that in future they were to be chosen by the senior members of the executive using a list of twenty-four nominations from the body of master manufacturers meeting every 1 August. In reality this was merely a sop for the small master interest within the Freeman's ranks. It positively shut out the journeymen freemen from both standing as candidates or from nominating them. The procedure made little in the way of concessions to the small master interest either. The ultimate choice the executive exercised over suitable assistants led to an early abandonment of the procedure.¹⁵⁹

There were far more serious implications arising from the repeal of the 1624 Act. These related to the repeal of virtually all the regulatory clauses contained in the original Act.¹⁶⁰ For the journeymen and the bulk of small masters, who for over a decade had felt threatened by the rising waters of free market economic opportunism, the flood gates had burst. It was now possible for

small masters who had before worked illegally without a mark or without holding a freedom to purchase these and pursue the trade legally. Although apprenticeship controls remained in force, it was possible to purchase immunity by money payments. Thus journeymen could find their wage levels threatened by a cheaper supply of apprentice labour. Their expectation of achieving master status was to be disturbed by the increase of 'foreigners' setting up as master-manufacturers in cut-throat competitive conditions. This was a process which also threatened the existence of established small masters who had acquired the status and relative security by qualifying legally to enter the trades.

The destructive potential of the new Act was reflected in the most immediate consequence of its passing - the dramatic increase in the numbers of apprenticeships and freedoms taken out during the year following its introduction.¹⁶¹ The superficial reaction to the passing of the Act and the ending of seven years of agitation was one of rejoicing. A group of leading Freemen, at a meeting at the Fountain in Westbar, with suitable deference thanked the Duke of Norfolk (Lord of the Manor and Lord Lieutenant) for his support.¹⁶² Their declaration however, only reflected the views of a small section of the Freemen's movement. The journeyman bulk of its support had little reason to find any consolation in the termination of the dispute. They had increasingly less reason to retain traditional-orientated respect for aristocrats, who like their direct oppressors (the masters who employed them) and their indirect oppressors (the factors and merchants who controlled their masters' prices) were employers of labour. The journeymen increasingly organized a labour interest in exclusive, craft-based clubs. They provided sick benefit and burial fees for subscribing members. This was their above-ground function. In many clubs this may have been the only basis for association. By the early 1790's evidence suggests that many had a 'quasi-legal' submerged function as trade

unions. General trades like tailoring and shoe making had been organized in this way earlier on.¹⁶³ During the Corporation struggle there had been evidence of support for the Freemen from the trade union type organizations.¹⁶⁴ Similarly the strike in the scissor trade in 1790 illustrated the strength of organized labour in several branches of the cutlery trades. During the seven year upheaval (1784-91) in the corporate trades, there was evidence of increased polarization of labour and capital in a struggle which had wider dimensions than simply that of a struggle for economic power. The raising of fundamental political issues, particularly the relevance of popular democracy, anticipated questions that were posed more noisily in the following decade.

The conditions under which the Corporation struggle was fought out were peculiar to Sheffield and its immediate hinterland. None of the other industries of the region were regulated. Like the non-corporate Sheffield trades they were already submerged by the flood tides of free market economic opportunism of a more intense, 'rational' capitalistic system. Outwork trades like nail making, wire drawing, and the new market weaving in linen, came to be controlled by a more aggressive species of merchant capitalism that was taking on some of the characteristics of the industrial capitalism found in the heavier trades of iron smelting and coal mining. Here, as in agriculture, larger capitals (containing a higher proportion of fixed capital) and more direct employment conditions (hinged on a direct labour-wage nexus relationship between employer-employee) characterized the system of production. Non-monetary payments were being eliminated and full time specialist labour replaced by employment. The later eighteenth century saw a growing homogeneity in work-experiences. While this was a slow moving process, there was a move towards a situation in which the common interests of labour could come to be realized among the employed and one where the traditional-orientation of workers, once given

a glimpse of the wider political horizon, could be radicalized however insulated their social existence in village, small town and isolated industrial community.

In parallel, an early climax of long term impulses forming a disintegration of the traditional-orientation in mass experience can be seen to have begun in the leisure experience of the mass in the 1780's and early 1790's. Here the gradual progression towards confrontation with mass culture which the elite and its moralistic evangelistic auxiliaries had begun to embark upon, reached an important stage. The elite's condescending permissiveness and in some cases more involved patronage came to be replaced by overt hostility. This was generated by the political potential seen in crowd theatre and in alehouse rhyme. It was also governed by the desire for greater economic rationality.

The 1780's witnessed a 'moral panic' among the elite following a surge of criminal activity after the American War.¹⁶⁵ Certain forms of popular leisure were already effectively checked - cock throwing was abandoned in the 1750's following the example of Sheffield's Town Trustees, who as their accounts for 1757 showed, 'pd. cricket players on Shrove Tuesday to entertain the populace, and prevent the infamous practice of throwing at cocks'.¹⁶⁶ The majority of mass entertainment showed greater resilience throughout the eighteenth century. The antagonism of the elite and its Methodist evangelical auxiliaries grew. The question of public order was a vital element which explained the elite's changing attitude. The traditional machinery of law and order was proving inadequate to cope with the growth of urban and rural communities. Private protection societies began to form in the late 1780's under the patronage of key figures in town society and their equivalents in the villages.¹⁶⁷ The strain was also registered by the magistrates' orders from the Quarter Sessions.¹⁶⁸ The tone of elite social and intellectual life was also a basis for a 'progressive' critique of

mass entertainment. This argued against the dissipation of productive energies in pleasure seeking. It embraced the trend towards 'rational amusement' expressed in a developing intellectual milieu which embraced science, politics and literature and which was developing within the social networks of town society in the later eighteenth century.¹⁶⁹ This progressive viewpoint was expressed by those who had strong sympathies for popular rights. Joseph Gales' editorials illustrated how his religious moralism led him to share the antagonism of the elite towards mass entertainment. In an editorial of July 1790 which revealed his prejudices, he suggested the frequency of excesses had been checked:

The number of Feasts, or Wakes, held at this season in the surrounding villages, calls for attention from the serious part of the inhabitants of the places where they are held, to suppress as much as possible, the cruel and brutish practices of bull and bear-baitings, cock-fightings, etc,etc. We are happy to find these diversions are in some measure decreased: and if constables would adhere to the directions given them at the quarter sessions, to apprehend every description of vagrants who offend, not only against the laws, but trample on decency and morality, by promoting such practices, we doubt not but they would be totally annihilated.¹⁷⁰

The elite was reluctant to act directly to eliminate blood sports. They would have been in danger of losing face because such traditions were so strongly rooted. The churchwardens and constables of Barnsley who issued a proclamation against bull and bear-baiting in August 1783 were supreme optimists!¹⁷¹ Barnsley's last bull-bait was held in 1831 and the last bear-bait (the last in England it was claimed) in 1874.¹⁷² The Methodists were highly confident of the role they played in the diminishing of blood sports. Their propagandistic accounts dating from the 1740's seized on natural calamities to justify their success. Accidents at the 'bait' had for them divine inspiration. The lull in such activity which followed was always a consequence of their actions. Such accidents occurred from time to time. One such accident occurred at the Swinton Feast of

1790 and Joseph Gales exalted its consequences in his newspaper.¹⁷³

Sabbath breaking in general was always a challenge to the local authorities. The Sheffield magistrates, churchwardens and constables had not been able to control the problem, despite the vigorous assistance given them by the Methodists. Their proclamations served little immediate purpose. They suggest the strength of the popular leisure culture and the growing prejudice of the elite. Sheffield's magistrates pronounced on the selling of beer before the Church service in July 1790:

...disorderly Persons have of late been frequently seen in the public Streets of this Town on Sundays, in the Morning, intoxicated with Liquor, offensive objects to the View of religious and well-disposed People, and in Open Violation of the Law, and of the Rules of Morality and Decency.¹⁷⁴

Through the control of licencing and by example,¹⁷⁵ the Sabbath breaking habits of the mass were challenged. The Methodists' reasoned appeal made some converts, especially among intelligent artisans who came to perceive the links between intemperance and poverty.¹⁷⁶ The links between religious neglect and crime were exploited by moralists. Joe Mather's saviour in his song of the 1780's 'Loxley Edge' tells the impressionable Joe that:

...malefactors repeatedly tell,
That breaking the Sabbath doth often contribute,
To lead to the gallows, from thence to the gibbet,
So thou'rt on the road to Loxley Edge.¹⁷⁷

Wider economic changes initiated by the economically more aggressive sections of the elite presented the mass leisure culture with more fundamental challenge. The enclosure of open fields, commons, wastes and similar forms of marginal land was a long term process begun long before the growing use of private parliamentary acts facilitated the acceleration of enclosure in the mid-eighteenth century. As was characteristic throughout the West Riding, enclosure in eighteenth-century South Yorkshire was concerned more with common and wastes than with open fields.¹⁷⁸ In this way the economic

margins of subsistence for a large section of the region's working population (especially that of rural outworkers) were reduced throughout the later eighteenth century and early nineteenth century. Equally important, the physical margins of the mass leisure experience of both rural and urban workers were reduced. Allied to the more open challenge of the elite and the Methodists, this threat to mass leisure was considerable.

Although the period of greatest intensity in enclosure activity was in the first two decades of the nineteenth century, the eighteenth-century experience was important. The 1760's saw ten Acts passed which initiated enclosures within South Yorkshire in a twenty mile radius around Sheffield. These were mainly confined to the east of the region. Most were concerned with the conversion of common land and waste to private property. These gave limited compensation to the small number of legally recognizable customary users of such land. They excluded from any settlement the bulk of customary users. Without doubt in the main they were, 'plain enough cases of class robbery'.¹⁷⁹ The acts of the 1760's took on average approximately one and a half years to be implemented. This relatively short period suggested straightforward settlement with little opposition. The seven acts passed in the 1770's dealt with land more evenly distributed throughout the region. These took an average of three years to be implemented, mainly because of the time taken over the last of them - Ecclesall 1779-1788. Opposition is only suggested indirectly in the events of the 1780's. It must be recognized that the sources are loaded against finding evidence of articulate opposition. The 1780's saw only three acts passed, all relating to land in Sheffield and its immediate hinterland. These took on average five and a half years to implement, which suggested the growth of opposition.¹⁸⁰ Although seemingly traditionally orientated, the growing opposition of the late 1780's and early 1790's around Sheffield began to reflect the radicalization of the

mass.

The enclosure of commons and waste had a direct impact on mass leisure. Ardsley Common, Woodall Common, Tickhill's High and Low Commons, among others, were enclosed and thus turned into private property in the 1760's. Barnsley Common, where horse racing was held until 1776, was enclosed in the later 1770's. Similarly the last race was held on Sheffield's Crookesmoor race course in June 1781. Then enclosure commissioners moved in to do their work on this part of the Ecclesall enclosure. This controversial enclosure was being implemented during the years of the Corporation struggle (1784-92).¹⁸¹ The issue of economic exploitation, such as enclosure prompted, was not raised even as a side issue by the Freemen whose voice represented a mass interest. Despite the radical transformation of the social content of his songs in the 1780's, Joseph Mather made no mention of the impact of enclosure. Possibly the town artisans who supported the Freemen and who provided the bulk of Mather's audience were now mainly specialist industrial workers and had severed their ties with the land. Perhaps they felt the impact of enclosure less directly. They could not avoid the restrictions that enclosure forced on their leisure, especially during the next three decades when all the townships of Sheffield parish were enclosed.

Popular resentment began to focus in the late 1780's. In Ecclesall, where enclosure was almost complete, indirect criticism of what had occurred appeared when a public advertisement warned of further enclosure in Sheffield parish. Through the Sheffield Register several 'freeholders and inhabitants' warned that, 'if such an act should be obtained it will be attended with very bad Consequences'.¹⁸² Their threat of legal opposition had a short term effect of forestalling major proposals for enclosure in the parish.¹⁸³ An act for the north-eastern, Brightside township, was passed in 1788. Although only 150 acres were involved, it took seven years to make the awards

and complete the act.¹⁸⁴ The plan to enclose 6,000 acres of land in Upper Hallam, Nether Hallam and Stannington townships was deferred until 1791 as a result of this opposition. An act was passed for this enclosure in 1791 and a meeting of the proprietors of land in the townships was held in April.¹⁸⁵ This appointed commissioners to implement the act. On 11 July these met at the Tontine Inn and began their work by hearing the claims of those who had a legal right to compensation for their loss of use of the common land.¹⁸⁶ This minority of small holders and cottagers with a copyhold and squatters with thirty years proved occupancy were entitled to small plots in compensation. The vast majority of cottagers, smallholders and squatters without legal rights lost all access to a valuable margin of subsistence.¹⁸⁷

On 13 July the commissioners began a detailed 'perambulation of the out-boundaries' of the area concerned. During the rest of the week they began marking boundaries and seeking out encroachments on the waste and common land made by squatters and more established holders of land.¹⁸⁸ This produced a state of great anxiety among those who were partly or wholly dependent upon the use of such marginal land. On the following Monday when the commissioners reassembled to continue their work they were driven off the commons by an angry populace. An eyewitness recalled:

A mob assembled...to prevent the intended enclosure from going on. The commissioners had a narrow escape for their lives, but they were permitted to depart on the promise of not coming there again.¹⁸⁹

More violence occurred in the following week as a memorial to the Home Office demanding military aid suggested:

The peaceable Inhabitants are under very serious apprehension owing to recent disturbances at Birmingham (the Priestley Riots - a loyalist phenomenon) from whence some rioters have come to Sheffield and tried to influence disorderly peoples' passions, which seem violently bent on public mischief and deprecation. Moreover, considerable bodies of disorderly people in this neighbourhood have lately

several times assembled in considerable forces with riotous intention of preventing the Commissioners acting under the authority of an Enclosure Bill obtained in the last session of Parliament, from doing their duty, and not only drove them from the commons, but also menaced them with the greatest personal danger, if they attempted to proceed with the Enclosure, and have also actually burned the farming property and broke the windows of several houses, and menaced the lives and property of the freeholders friendly to the enclosure, and openly avowed their intention of laying open the enclosures in the neighbourhood already made...and burning the houses of all the freeholders who have countenanced the late enclosures.190

The Home Office reacted swiftly to the plea. At midday on 27 July a detachment of Light Dragoons arrived from Nottingham. They were in action within hours. An angry crowd gathered around the Tontine Inn which was the headquarters of the commissioners and where the officers were billeted. By nine o'clock in the evening the crowd numbered several hundred. A section moved off and attacked the gaol and gaoler's house in King Street (Mr Fox, the gaoler, was bailiff to the Duke of Norfolk, the largest beneficiary of the enclosure). Freed debtors joined the crowd which now moved on to Broom Hall, the house of the town's senior magistrate, Vicar Wilkinson. As titheholder he had a large economic interest in the enclosure. The insurgents entered the house and set fire to books and furniture in an attempt to burn the house down. Eight ricks were also set alight before a party of Dragoons arrived. They dispersed the attackers who escaped into nearby woods. There were similar violent attacks on the house of Vincent Eyre (Norfolk's steward) and the Catholic Chapel that night (both the Duke and his steward were Catholics). The following morning the local elite, reinforced by out-of-town magistrates, mustered its forces. Over 150 of the principal inhabitants of Sheffield were sworn in as constables. As angry crowds thronged the streets the new constables were called in to help the troops clear the streets. It was necessary to read the Riot Act at midday in order to effect this. The town was

quiet for the rest of the day. During the night some ricks were fired at Norwood Hall, the home of James Wheat who acted as solicitor to the commissioners. After this there was no more open violence.¹⁹¹ There were several reports of bills being posted and the chalking of slogans on walls. These hinted at new social perspectives. A visitor to the town observed: 'They stuck up all over Sheffield printed Bills, with the words No King in large characters. This I suppose is one mode of exerting the Rights of Man'.¹⁹² Vincent Byre, writing to the Home Office in his capacity as Town Collector asking for the troops to be allowed to stay, similarly saw, 'treasonable inscriptions on walls and doors' and frequent 'nocturnal exclamations in the streets such as "No King", "No Corn Bill" and "No Taxes"'. The troops were allowed to stay and Sheffield became a garrison town.¹⁹³ This had important implications for public order in the region as a whole.

While order was restored there was a continuing popular resentment against the enclosures. Popular feeling was hardened by the hanging of one of five youths arrested and tried for their part in the attack on Broom Hall.¹⁹⁴ Although this feeling found political expression of only the most primitive sort it had important implications. It appeared that the democratic propaganda of Joseph Gales' press was beginning to make its mark. Debate over changes in the basis of representation had hitherto been the monopoly of groups of 'respectable' reformers like the handful of local gentlemen who had joined Wyville's County Association of the early 1780's¹⁹⁵ and the slightly less respectable tradesmen who associated with groups such as the petty bourgeois intellectuals of Gales' coterie in the Wicker.¹⁹⁶ The artisans (both masters and journeymen) from the town's staple cutlery trades were familiar with the issue of democratic control for it had been at the heart of the Corporation struggle that had just finished. Gales' weekly Sheffield Register was now seeking to explain to a mass audience the implications of

greater democracy for the working of a political system at present dominated by an aristocratic monopoly. Gales and his circle pointed to France for inspiration. Gales had devoted a great deal of space to reporting events in France and his editorials increasingly commented favourably on the early life of the new democracy. From late 1790 he began to direct more energy into propagating the democratic gospel at home. He reprinted extracts from the respective writings of Price and Burke¹⁹⁷ and from Paine's counterblast to Burke in his Rights of Man, part I¹⁹⁸ which had been published in February 1791. Gales' paper also advertised early, exclusive editions of this work.¹⁹⁹ The renewed activities of respectable reform societies in London (the Society for Constitutional Information) and the provinces were recorded in the early months of 1791.²⁰⁰ It was from the SCI that important initiative was to come in the formation of the mass-based Sheffield Society for Constitutional Information (henceforth SSCI) which first took shape in the winter of 1791/2. Gales also reported on the growth of 'Church and King' loyalism in other counties as an increasing threat to democratic aspirations (July 1791 witnessed the Birmingham mob in full cry against the town's respectable reformers).²⁰¹

Throughout the remainder of the year Gales' press continued its work of promoting the democrats' cause. When in December 1791 the SSCI declared itself openly, it was through Gales' Register. Within three months the SSCI had 2,000 'ticket' members and the town's tradition for mass radical political action was launched.²⁰² The story of the dramatic political events that constituted the coming into being of the SSCI belongs to the following chapter. It is important to note here that these initial moments of mass awakening signalled the end, at least for the politically more advanced Sheffield artisans, of the long reign of apathy (dependent on ignorance) and deference (maintained by subjugation) as the dominant expressions of the mass's political existence.

Religion is the remaining area of social existence looked at here. The mass continued to be pushed further away from its traditional orientation of token deference (concealing indifference) to the Established Church. Sections of it moved towards a more radical orientation. This new orientation was expressed in some cases by more positive identification with the more democratic dissenting sects (about which we know all too little) and with Methodism. For a few, the new orientation was expressed in self-assertive withdrawal from all expressions of institutionalized religious practice.

The Established Church was in the later eighteenth century making some attempts to regain its credibility as the national church. In part this was a positive response to combat the challenge posed by Methodism. In Sheffield for example, the Church began from 1764 holding weekday evening prayer meetings.²⁰³ From 1778 it held evening services on Sundays.²⁰⁴ There was little change in the social composition of Anglican congregations. In the main, support came from the respectable part of the population. The pattern of religious observation in the Anglican congregation (as in the leading dissenting congregations) was part of the affirming rituals of a community's elite. In Sheffield the building of St. James Church which opened in 1788 illustrated the social significance of the majority of the town's Anglican congregation. The £3,000 required for the church was raised by over 600 subscriptions to £50 proprietary shares.²⁰⁵ This was the only church built in the town in the second half of the eighteenth century, a period when the town's population trebled.

The older Dissenting congregations were similarly subject to exclusive tendencies. This in part explained some of the schisms from the largest congregations of Dissenters in Sheffield (Upper and Nether chapels) which produced a spate of chapel buildings in

the 1770's and 1780's. Five new dissenting chapels were built in the town in the space of sixteen years.²⁰⁶ In the main, they were built by wealthy secessionist groups from the two parent bodies seeking to confirm their own 'elected' state behind the closed doors of proprietary chapels.²⁰⁷

The Methodists alone made progress in communicating with a mass audience. Their open embrace of repentant sinners guaranteed them continuous expansion. Their appeal was limited. Mass hostility, spontaneous or otherwise, turned to indifference by the 1780's and early 1790's. The Methodist expansion in the region was at the expense of the Established Church which, despite more flexible attitudes, was experiencing absolute decline.²⁰⁸ Within the Methodist community the exclusivist tendencies found in other dissenting congregations had not yet manifested themselves. The evangelical dynamism which asserted itself through preachers and lay readers, many of whom came from humble backgrounds, prevented Methodism from losing contact with the mass. In terms of membership, Methodism's growth was still significant in the 1780's and early 1790's. Membership of the Sheffield circuit which covered a large part of South Yorkshire and north Derbyshire, rose from thirty-three societies with aggregate membership of 1,070 in 1782 to fifty-one societies with 1,672 members in 1792. The Sheffield society less spectacularly increased from 512 to 700.²⁰⁹ Expansion was greater in rural areas where societies which were small in numbers exerted disproportionate influence on community life. In the villages the Methodists openly competed with the Established Church. In large and small towns they competed both with the more plebeian dissenting congregations and the Established Church. In the main, the exclusivist tendencies of organized religion alienated the mass. The Methodist attitude was exceptional. The closed doors of proprietary churches and chapels spelt out the exclusivism of the class rituals enacted within and in an indirect way fostered the class hostility which was to reveal

itself more fully in the following decades.

5) Conclusion

This section revealed only symptoms of a decline or disintegration of the traditional orientation among the most concentrated group of urban workers. In the areas of work, politics, leisure and religion because of a rising popular challenge slight cracks were appearing in the moulds the elite had always used to impose deference. In the industrial and semi-industrial smaller towns and villages it required more time for a popular challenge to emerge.

Footnotes to Chapter 2

1. Nether Hallam, Upper Hallam, Brightside Bierlow, Attercliffe and Darnall and Ecclesall Bierlow.
2. For the early history of the regulation of the trades see R.E. Leader, History of the Cutlers' Company in Hallamshire, 2 vols. (Sheffield, 1905), vol.I, 3-10.
3. ibid., vol.I, 10.
4. ibid., vol.II, 7-8, 21 James I cap.31.
5. Estimates average £20.
6. Leader, op.cit., vol.I, 20-36, vol.III, 7-13
7. Sheffield Times, 11 Aug. 1849, recollections of C.D.X.N., 'A picture of the Sheffield trades in the last century'.
8. J. Holland, A Treatise on the Progressive Improvement and Present State of the Manufacture in Metal, 3 vols. (1831), vol.II, 12-15 (knives), 25-40 (surgical instruments, scissors).
9. G.I.H. Lloyd, The Cutlery Trades (1913), 443, notes that in 1770 there were 133 wheels in and around Sheffield. These contained 896 troughs.
10. Leader, op.cit., vol.I, 38, notes the disappearance of the category of 'cutler-grinders' in the indentures registered with the Cutlers' Company over the years 1733-1784.
11. Sheffield Iris, 13 Oct. 1797, a list of 33 of town's original sick clubs.
12. A. Young, Six Months Tour through the North of England, 2 vols. (1751), vol.I, 122.
13. P.C. Garlick, 'The Sheffield Cutlery and Allied Trades and their Markets in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries', unpublished Sheffield University M.A., 1951, *passim*.
14. A. Jewitt, 'Passages in the Life of Arthur Jewitt to the year 1794', (written during the years 1844-9), Edwards Hall Mss. Collection in Wigan Public Library, 39. Henceforth referred to as 'Jewitt'.
15. Sheffield Register, 9 May 1789.
16. Based on S. Roberts, Autobiographical and Select Remains of Samuel Roberts (1849), A.T. Watson, Sheffield Assay Office (Sheffield, 1889), R.E. Wilson, Two Hundred Precious Metal Years : a history of the Sheffield Smelting Company (Sheffield, 1960).
17. Based on J. Sketchley, Sheffield Directory (Sheffield, 1774), J. Gales and J. Martin, Sheffield Directory (Sheffield, 1787), A.H. John (ed.), The Walker Family, Ironfounders and Lead Manufacturers, 1741-1893 (1951), S. Pollard, Three Centuries of Sheffield Steel (Sheffield, 1954).
18. Based on T.S. Ashton, Iron and Steel in the Industrial Revolution (Manchester, 1951), G.C. Hopkinson, 'The Charcoal iron industry in the Sheffield region, 1585-1775', Transactions of the Hunter Archaeological Society, (hereafter THAS) VIII (1958) 122-151, A. Birch, The Economic History of the British Iron and Steel Industry (1967), D. Hey, The Rural Metalworkers of the Sheffield region (Leicester, 1971) and 'A dual economy in South Yorkshire', Agricultural History Review, XVII (1969), 108-119.

19. Based on E. Sorby, Coal Mining in Sheffield, 1737-1820 (Sheffield, 1822), G.C. Hopkinson, 'The development of the South Yorkshire and north Derbyshire coalfield, 1550-1775', and 'The Development of inland navigation in South Yorkshire and north Derbyshire, 1697-1850', both in THAS, VII (1957), 295-319, R.M. Cox, 'The development of the coal industry of South Yorkshire before 1830', unpublished Sheffield University M.A. 1960, Goodchild Coal Mss. (systematic notes on the history of major collieries in the region compiled by Mr John Goodchild, curator of Cusworth Hall Museum, Doncaster and kept in a private collection there.
20. Based on J. Goodchild, 'The Barnsley Linen Trade', unpublished essay in manuscript form loaned by the author.
21. Wage books of Thomas Nowill and Co., Bradbury Collection in Sheffield Central Library, Archives Department (hereafter SCL).
22. Quarterly and annual figures of hall-marked silver given by permission of the Assay Master, Sheffield Assay Office (hereafter SAO).
23. Figures from Don Navigation Minute Books, Archives of the British Transport Historical Records, London.
24. T. Winder, T'Heft an Blads of Shevield (Sheffield, 1907), 112.
25. Sheffield figures from Sheffield Local Register (hereafter SLR) (Sheffield, 1830) and Barnsley data from Ms. Account book of the Poor 1772-1789, in Barnsley Public Library (hereafter BPL).
26. Winder, op.cit., 112.
27. Sheffield Advertiser, 17 July 1791.
28. S. Roberts, op.cit., 75.
29. J. Wilson, The Songs of Joseph Mather (Sheffield, 1862), 2.
30. Article by R.E. Leader from the Sheffield Independent in SCL Newspaper Cuttings series, Vol.XV, 160-170.
31. Tontine Inn Minute Book 1782-92, Special Collection, (hereafter SC), 17780, in SCL.
32. Rules and orders to govern the Monthly Club at Sheffield, including minutes of the proceedings 1783-1808, in Ms. form in Jackson Collection 1850, in SCL.
33. R.E. Leader, Sheffield in the Eighteenth Century (Sheffield, 1905), 102.
34. On the town's religious traditions in the period see E.R. Wickham, Church and People in an industrial city (1969), 33-69.
35. R.E. Leader, op.cit., 87.
36. Sheffield Iris, 13 Oct. 1797, contains the names of thirty-three clubs.
37. Sheffield Register, 1 March 1788; F. Eden, The State of the Poor, 3 vols (1797), vol.III, 873. Eden noted that Sheffield had fifty-two clubs paying out £3,670 in 1786.
38. Eden, op.cit., 814 noted the existence of four clubs in Ecclesfield, a growing nailmaking and filemaking community.
39. E.P. Thompson, 'The Moral economy of the English crowd in the Eighteenth Century', Past and Present, 50 (1971), 76-136.
40. G. Raynes to F. Hurt, 28 July 1756 in G. Sitwell, Letters of the Sitwells and Sacheverells 2 vols. (Scarborough, 1901), vol.II, 232-3.

41. Derby Mercury, 10 Sept. 1756.
42. Raynes to Hurt in Sitwell, op.cit., 232-3.
43. Raynes to Hurt in Sitwell, ibid., 232-3.
44. SLR, op.cit., 47.
45. SLR, ibid., 53.
46. Wilkinson Collection of newspaper cuttings in BPL, 36.
47. Wilson, op.cit., 74-5.
48. R.W. Malcolmsen, Popular Recreations in English Society 1700-1850 (Cambridge, 1973), Ch.I passim.
49. Eden, op.cit., vol.III, 395 estimated Sheffield has 395 alehouses - giving with a population of 35,000, a ratio of 1 alehouse to 88 persons.
50. Wilson, op.cit., 87.
51. ibid., 92; On the traditions of popular drinking habits see Leader, op.cit., 46-50, who explains the nature of 'reckonings' and 'wettings'; Jewitt, op.cit., 29 explains 'fuddling' or the periods of prolonged drinking of up to a week or fortnight.
52. Wilson, op.cit., 57-8.
53. ibid., 59.
54. ibid., 74-9.
55. S. Pollard, A History of Labour in Sheffield (Liverpool, 1959), 62.
56. Leader, op.cit., 42-6.
57. J.H. Burland, Annals of Barnsley and its environs, 4 volume Mss. (compiled in 1870's) in BPL, vol.I, 126-8.
58. J. Everett, Historical Sketches of Wesleyan Methodism in Sheffield and its vicinity (Sheffield, 1823), 75.
59. Sheffield Register, 12 Jan. 1788.
60. Leader, op.cit., 45.
61. Jewitt, op.cit., 41 and 109-119.
62. Roberts, op.cit., 21.
63. J.H. Burland, Miscellaneous Writings, 1 volume ms. in BPL, 254-8 contains the personal account of Fanny Barnes 1768-1856, who as a child worked on a stall at the raceweek fair.
64. SLR, 56, entry for June 1781; Leader, op.cit., 54.
65. Wilson, op.cit., 29-30 'Nell and the Journeyman hatter', 50-2 'The Cocktail Lady' and 81-3 'The Face Card'.
66. ibid., 6-7 'Spence Broughton's Lament' and 18 'Frank Fearnle'.
67. ibid., 69 'The Thanksgiving', 71 'The Royal George' and 74-7 'The Cocktail Feast'.
68. Roberts, op.cit., 16.
69. Raynes to Hurt in Sitwell, op.cit., 233.
70. See Chapter 3.
71. Wickham, op.cit., Ch.2 passim.; J.L. Baxter, 'The Methodist experience in Sheffield 1780-1820' (Sheffield M.A., 1970) passim.

72. Wesley's visits are recorded in his journals. See J. Wesley, Works, 4 vols. (Michigan, 1872).
73. See chapter 3 for a fuller exploration of this. On the author's ideas on conversion see J.L. Baxter, 'The Great Yorkshire Revival 1792-6; a study of mass revival among the Methodists' in A Sociological Yearbook of Religion in Britain (1974), 58-61.
74. J.L. Baxter, 'The Methodist experience etc.' op.cit., Ch.2 passim.
75. Everett, op.cit., 224-5.
76. Wilson, op.cit., 70-71 'Repentance'.
77. Everett, op.cit., 30, 50 and 57-8.
78. ibid., 261-2.
79. Baxter, op.cit., 47-9.
80. This aspect of Methodist history is emphasized by the many local histories of early Methodism: T. Seed, Norfolk Street Chapel (Sheffield, 1907), J. Graham, Methodism in Sheffield Park (Sheffield, 1914), G.C. Dungworth, Methodism in Bridge-houses (Sheffield, 1911), E. Binns, Methodism in Greasborough (Greasborough, 1964) and J. Dunstan, Totley Methodism (Sheffield, 1969).
81. Everett, op.cit., 123-4.
82. ibid., 146.
83. ibid., 211-13.
84. ibid., 84-86.
85. Wesley, op.cit., vol.III, 71, records a visit on 30 July 1761.
86. Everett, op.cit., 127-8.
87. ibid., 46-8.
88. ibid., 100 and 206-7.
89. ibid., 102.
90. ibid., 147.
91. Methodist Magazine (1782), 122; Everett, op.cit., 157-Norton and 201-Bradway.
92. ibid., 236-7.
93. Roberts, op.cit., 35.
94. ibid., 34.
95. The best account of this comes at first hand from the son of one of the journeymen's leaders - Jewitt, loc.cit., 39-43.
96. Jewitt, loc.cit., 39.
97. ibid., 39-43.
98. R.E. Leader, History of the Cutlers' Company in Hallamshire, etc. op.cit., vol.I, 79-80.
99. ibid., 79.
100. ibid., 80.
101. ibid., 81.
102. ibid., 80-1 and Jewitt, loc.cit., 43.
103. Leader, op.cit., 81.

104. Bundle of indictments laid before the Master Cutler, Tibbets Collection, (hereafter TC) item 415 in SCL.
105. Address to the Cutlers' Company, handwritten ms. dated 31 Mar. 1786, TC 416 in SCL. Only two of the committee were listed as masters by the 1787 directory.
106. Committee of the Freemen to the Freemen in general of the Company of Cutlers in Hallamshire dated 1 April 1786, TC 146.
107. Jewitt, loc.cit., 44.
108. Leader, op.cit., 44. A denial of this comes in a letter from Richard Yeomans to J. Dickenson 15 June 1789, in Yeomans Papers in SCL.
109. Leader, op.cit., 81; Jewitt, op.cit., 44.
110. Leader, op.cit., 27, 81; Sheffield Register, 22 Sept. 1787.
111. Address of the Committee of Journeymen Freemen Filesmiths to the Company of Cutlers, 27 June 1788, TC 146, their meeting was reported in the Sheffield Register, 30 Aug. 1788.
112. Sheffield Register, 13 Sept. 1788 lists the meeting places: The Filesmiths - the Barrel, the Table Knife Cutlers - the Flower de Luce, Spring Knife Cutlers - the Ball, the Razor-smiths - house in Rattan Row, Scissorsmiths - Fountain Head, Shearsmiths - Fountain Head, and Sicklesmiths - in Ridgeway. The grinders in all these branches were asked to attend at the respective public houses and meeting places.
113. ibid., 30 Aug. 1788.
114. ibid., 25 Oct. 1788.
115. ibid., 1 Nov. 1788.
116. R.E. Leader, Sheffield in the Eighteenth Century op.cit., 131-2.
117. Jewitt, op.cit., 77.
118. W.H.G. Armytage, 'The editorial experience of Joseph Gales 1786-1794', North Carolina Historical Review, vol. XXVIII, July 1951, 332-5.
119. Jewitt, loc.cit., 79.
120. See Chapter 3. Jewitt, loc.cit., 81, talks of Crome distributing all his types before any copies of his work had left the office.
121. ibid., 80, Jewitt described Mather as 'a natural poet without education except being able to read'.
122. Wilson, op.cit., 1-2.
123. Jewitt, loc.cit., 81.
124. Sheffield Evening Mail, 13 Nov. 1908.
125. Wilson, op.cit., 3-5 'Mr Batty's Mule', 31-2 'Hallamshire Haman', 33-4 'Sancho' and 59-60 'The Justass', 63-7 'Watkinson and his Thirteens' and 67-8 'Watkinson's Repentance'.
126. Leader, op.cit., 135-6. The theatre was first built in 1763. It was rebuilt in 1773 with a capacity of 800.
127. Wilson, op.cit., 94-5 'The Cutlin Heroes', anon. n.d.
128. ibid., 63-5.
129. ibid., 67-8.
130. Sheffield Register, 3 Jan. 1789.

131. Sheffield Register, 3 Jan. 1789.
132. ibid., 7 and 14 Mar. 1789.
133. ibid., 14 Mar. 1789. A popular petition was collected. The original is in the Miscellaneous Documents Collection (MD), item 591 in SCL.
134. R.E. Leader, History of the Company of Cutlers etc., vol.I unless specified, 84.
135. ibid., 84, 135.
136. ibid., 85.
137. ibid., 84.
138. ibid., 85.
139. Sheffield Register, 9 May 1789.
140. ibid., 9 May 1789.
141. ibid., 16 May 1789.
142. Leader, op.cit., 86-7, Yeomans Papers in SCL contain correspondence between participants during the years 1789-90.
143. The Committee of Cutlers to the Inhabitants of Sheffield, 1 Mar. 1790, JC 1396.
144. Statement from a General Meeting of the Manufacturers of Scissors, 17 Aug. 1790, JC 1536.
145. An Appeal to the second and better Thoughts of the Master Scissorsmiths, 19 Aug. 1790, JC 1370.
146. Resolutions of the Master Manufacturers, 23 Aug. 1790, JC 1371.
147. Resolutions of the Scissor Makers, 23 Aug. 1790, JC (not marked).
148. Resolutions of the Principal Manufacturers of Cutlery Wares, 26 Aug. 1790, JC 1584. This lists a 27-man masters' committee including 6 from the scissor trade, 9 knife making branches, 3 files, 2 silver and plated and several undefined.
149. Address to the Freeman, n.d., JC 1373.
150. J. Ward (the Master Cutler) to anon. 13 Sept. 1790, TC 352.
151. Sheffield Register, 24 Sept. 1790.
152. Wilson, op.cit., 31-2; noted in F.H. Hill, 'Trade Combinations in Sheffield' in Trades' Societies and Strikes (1860) report of the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science, 526; G.I.H. Lloyd, The Cutlery Trades (1913), 243-4.
153. Sheffield Local Register, 66, 3 April 1791.
154. R. Yeomans to Dickenson, 6 Sept. 1790, Yeomans Papers, describes violence (petty vandalism) at the time of the annual feast.
155. Sheffield Register, 22 Oct. 1790.
156. ibid., 29 Oct. 1790 - 'A Bystander', a free-market advocate countered by the reply in 12 Nov. 1790 of 'A Freeman by Servitude'.
157. Leader, op.cit., 87.
158. ibid., 87, a letter giving the royal assent arrived on 13 June.
159. ibid., 88, the only quorate meeting was held on the 1 Aug. 1791.
160. ibid., 88.

161. ibid., 89, during 1791 1,346 freemen were admitted and 482 apprentices enrolled, a high level maintained for several years.
162. Sheffield Register, 24 June 1791; Leader, op.cit., 87.
163. Leader, Sheffield in the Eighteenth Century etc. op.cit., 102 - tailors; Sheffield Register, 13 May 1791.
164. Leader, History of the Company etc. op.cit., vol.I, 84. notes a 'Button makers' committee' from the non-corporate silver plate trade, tailors, filesmiths and masons. Possibly behind the friendly societies like the 'Union Society', 'United Society' and 'Humane Society' there were similar groups carrying out trade union functions.
165. The 'crime wave' is illustrated by figures of committals to Wakefield House of Correction of felons for trial at the West Riding Quarter Sessions. These are printed in J.H. Turner, Annals of Wakefield House of Correction (Bingley, 1904), 176.

| | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| 1776-186 | 1780-166 | 1784-320 | 1788-296 |
| 1777-178 | 1781-208 | 1785-361 | 1789-346 |
| 1778-222 | 1782-303 | 1786-422 | 1790-383 |
| 1779-238 | 1783-277 | 1787-344 | 1791-337 |

On the nature of 'moral panics' the West Riding Quarter Session Order Books in West Yorkshire County Record Office (WYCRO), Wakefield for the decade are most revealing. 1786 was a high point in magisterial activity that was sustained for the remainder of the decade. I am indebted to Mr John Sykes of the Institute of Historical Research for an illuminating discussion on the 'moral panic' of the 1780's.

166. Sheffield Local Register, 47; Malcolmson, op.cit., chs.6 and 7 passim.
167. Burland, Annals, op.cit., vol.I, 172-3 notes associations in Penistone and Darfield formed in 1786; Sheffield Register, 5 Mar. 1790 notes Sheffield society and 22 April notes a Dronfield society.
168. Notable orders include those made at Bradford Sessions (July 1784)-alehouses, Pontefract (April 1786)-general, wide ranging vagrants, beerhouses and brothels, Pontefract (April 1787)-alehouses, Knaresborough (October 1787)-feasts, fairs, alehouses, a response to the Royal Proclamation on Vice. West Riding Quarter Sessions Order Books in WYCRO.
169. On the town's scientific milieu see I. Inkster, 'The development of a scientific community in Sheffield', THAS, X (1973), 99-131.
170. Sheffield Register, 2 July 1790.
171. Burland, op.cit., 164.
172. ibid., 127; Barnsley Chronicle, 22 Aug. 1879.
173. Sheffield Register, 20 Aug. 1790; on bear baiting in Ecclesfield see T. Winder (ed.), An Old Ecclesfield Diary (Sheffield, 1921), 10.
174. Sheffield Register, 16, 23 July 1790.
175. Sheffield Local Register, 63, entry for 18 Feb. 1790 - 'nine men put in the stocks for tipping in a public house during Divine service'.
176. Everett, op.cit., 224-5 for the transformation it made in the life of Francis Hawke.

177. Wilson, op.cit., 20. Loxley Edge was where Frank Fearne, the highwayman, had been gibbeted.
178. B.A. English (ed.), West Riding Enclosure Awards Handlist (1965)
179. E.P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class (1968), 237.
180. All information and calculations on enclosure rely on detail in English, op.cit.
181. C. Paulus, Unpublished pages relating to the Manor and Parish of Ecclesall (Sheffield, 1927), 27-30.
182. Sheffield Register, 6 Sept. 1787.
183. ibid., 13 Sept. 1787.
184. ibid., 28 Mar. 1789 and 26 Mar. 1791 (for its implementation); C. Paulus, Some Forgotten Facts in the History of Sheffield and District (Sheffield, 1907), 85-7 examines the enclosure's impact.
185. ibid., 75-9.
186. Sheffield Register, 24 June 1791.
187. Paulus, op.cit., 79.
188. Sheffield Register, 24 June 1791.
189. J. Barker to Thomas Wolsey Esq. of Platt nr. Manchester, 29 July 1791, letter in Archives Department, Manchester Central Library ref. M35/2/44/41.
190. Paulus, op.cit., 29-30, quoting from the original document now in the possession of the British Museum.
191. J. Barker to Wolsey, loc.cit.; V. Eyre to Dundas, 29, 30 and 31 July 1791 in Home Office Papers (henceforth HO), bundle 42/19 in Public Records Office (henceforth PRO).
192. J. Barker to Wolsey, loc.cit.
193. Eyre to Dundas 31 July 1791, loc.cit.
194. Sheffield Register, 19 Aug. 1791.
195. C. Wyville, Political Papers, 6 vols. (York, 1799) vol.I, 165-7 listed several local gentry among the Yorkshire Association's committee: these included John Parker of Woodthorpe, R. Althorpe of Dinnington, Rev. J. Stacey-Ballifield, William Harrison-Orgreave, Samuel Walker-Rotherham, John Booth-Brush Hall, C.W. Childers-Cantley, Earl of Effingham and Samuel Shore-Norton. It was interesting how quickly these people lost their enthusiasm when a popular dimension was added to the struggle in the 1790's.
196. Wilson, op.cit., 65.
197. Sheffield Register, 19 Nov. 1790.
198. ibid., 3 June 1791.
199. ibid., 1 July 1791.
200. ibid., 8 July 1791.
201. ibid., 19 Nov. 1790.
202. ibid., 2 Dec. 1790.
203. Wickham, op.cit., 54.
204. Sheffield Local Register, 55.

205. Wickham, op.cit., 48, a share entitled a holder to a freehold pew and a vault under the Church.
206. Coal Pit Lane (1774), Lee Croft (1780), Garden Street (1780), Queen Street (1784), and Howard Street (1790); Wickham, op.cit., 46-9.
207. Accounts of the early history of some of these in J.E. Manning, History of Upper Chapel (Sheffield, 1900) and W. Haylock, Queen Street Congregational Church (Sheffield, 1933).
208. G. Smith, Communicants at the Quarterly Sacraments in the Parish Church of Sheffield for the last twenty years (Sheffield, 1800). This gives the following figures for Easter communicants:
- | | | | |
|-----------|---------|---|------|
| 1780-5 | average | - | 336 |
| 1785-90 | | - | 388 |
| 1790-5 | | - | 273 |
| 1795-1800 | | - | 221; |
- Wickham, op.cit., 54 notes 850 persons were Easter communicants in 1764.
209. Class books of the Sheffield Circuit 1782-1820, at Carver Street Chapel Sheffield (now transferred to SCL).

CHAPTER 3. This is the Age of Liberty : Unite and be Free.
Economy and Society in South Yorkshire, 1792-1802.

This period was marked by the growing appearance of industrial capitalist forms of economic organization in the region's small heavy sector. This was because of the stimulus of war-time demand which greatly stimulated the industries in this sector. During this period the later sequences of a basic capitalist accumulation process continued to take place. This was furthered by sustained enclosure activity. There was also significant investing in transport and extractive industries. The new forms of capitalist organization were instantly recognizable in the coal and iron industries. In the 'light' sector of workshop and domestic outwork based trades of cutlery, related metal working and linen weaving, the growth of more exploitative economic relationships within varying systems of merchant capitalism continued as part of a slower transition to industrial capitalist domination.

Changes in the economic system, particularly the growth of 'free labour', selling its only possession in an increasingly free and unregulated market, were not the only influences on the lives of working people in this period. Harvest failure, war, market dislocation, inflation and democratic ideology and organizations provided other influences. In a period when traditional orientated social relationships between mass and elite began to be revolutionized it was the human agency of radical ideas and actions that provided the biggest influence for a large section of the region's working population.

Section A. Economy: Organization and dynamics c.1792-1802.

(a) Organization

1) The Cutlery Trades

The breach which the 1791 Act had made in the protective regulations that had previously governed the trades was widened by

a new act in 1801.¹ The 1791 Act had de-stabilized working relations in the trades. The flood gates of the free market had opened. 'Aliens' or unqualified master manufacturers who had practised in the trade illegally before the act, were now admitted as freemen on the payment of £20. Established master manufacturers and these 'new' men could now legally buy exemption from some of the apprenticeship regulations concerning the sons of non-freemen. They could have any number of freemen's sons as apprentices. The control on apprenticeship of non-freemen's sons remained largely in force until 1814 when all control was abolished. The 1801 Act reinforced the process of making entry into the trade freer. The regulating body, the Cutlers' Company, whose executive initiated the changes, lost a great deal of its credibility with the bulk of its membership during these years. There was an increasing temptation among those qualified master manufacturers who saw their economic birthright taken away from them, to ignore the Company's authority and cynically adopt the methods of the 'new' men. The democratic contrivance of nomination farcically repeated itself to remind these masters and their journeymen of their betrayal. Working relations deteriorated and the more openly exploitative relations found in the non-regulated trades became characteristic of the majority of cutlery trades. The chain of mutual expectation linking apprentices, journeymen, master manufacturer and merchant was broken at several points. Apprentices became a more common form of labour for they were cheaper to employ than the trained journeymen. For many, apprenticeship became a degraded state. There was a loss of expectation of certain employment after it had been served. The journeyman had less secure conditions of employment since he could be displaced by unqualified labour. His normal expectation of achieving master status was forgotten unless it was achieved in the periodic 'lemming stampede' of small masters suicidally competing in undercutting the established manufacturers during periods of falling prices. Among the work force

of apprentices and journeymen who were solely dependent on their labour for a livelihood, there were many who during the war years were to find military employment more secure. The master manufacturers either had to maintain traditional standards, observing the key restrictions on use of apprentice labour and raw materials, or they abandoned traditional standards and joined the ranks of those disregarding regulation. Those who tried to operate along traditional lines were both vulnerable to the undercutting of the short-lived 'small master' class and to that of the larger 'illegal' master manufacturers and their commercial allies who were now more directly involved in production. There was consequently a decline in their numbers. Similarly hit were merchants who still observed traditional standards and chose to employ only 'legal' established masters and declined to buy from the 'small masters' and 'illegal' manufacturers. A new race of merchants and factors, a disproportionate number of whom had made money from the non-regulated trades in the 1770's and 1780's, became dominant in the commercial control of the regulated trades.² That few large fortunes were made in this group because of intense competition, in part explains the relative absence of a conspicuous elite in Sheffield.

The dominant feature of these years was the growing polarization of economic relations between labour and capital within the cutlery and related trades. While the economics of small scale production preserved the existence of the hundreds of small workshops against the factory as the dominant production unit, there was a growing change in relationships within the workshop. The 'craft mentality' which had bound master and man together was beginning to be replaced by more explicit class mentalities among workers in town workshops. Among outworkers in the town and surrounding villages forms of economic dependence and the work situation restricted this.

2) Silver and Silver Plated Trades

In the small silver and silver plated trades there was more

growth than in the relatively sluggish cutlery trades. The silver trade was producing nearly a third more marked silver in 1800-2 than in 1790-2.³ The number of new partnerships in the trade grew at a rate maintained since the 1770's when the trade as a whole benefitted from the setting up of the Assay Office. Only after 1780 was there a slackening of this pace. The silver plated trade expanded at a similar rate.⁴ Production was carried out in large workshop units. The 1797 Sheffield directory listed 22 firms or 'houses' where silver and silver plated goods were manufactured.⁵ These were larger workshop units than those in the cutlery trades. Here employers grew more distant from the bulk of the workforce including the key skilled workers.

3) Steel

There was a similar growth in steel production during the period following the wider development of 'crucible' methods of production. Sixteen firms were listed in the 1797 directory as producers of refined steel.⁶ These were not significantly larger units of production than those found in the cutlery trades. Several steel making furnaces were operated by the region's ironmasters, such as the Walkers and Swallows. Over a third were operated by the new commercial men in the cutlery trades as part of their increasingly direct involvement in cutlery production. Little is known of working conditions, particularly regarding the position of the small labour force employed.⁷

4) Iron

The appearance of new large scale ironworks in the industry during these years marked the most observable appearance of industrial capitalist organization in the industrial economy. Official returns showed that there were six large ironworks operating in the region in 1796.

Table 3:1 Largest units in the South Yorkshire iron industry 1796.⁸

| <u>Name of works</u> | <u>Number of furnaces</u> | <u>Excise return on production (tons)</u> | <u>Operators</u> |
|----------------------|---------------------------|---|------------------------------|
| Park | 1 | 1,092 | Booth and Co. |
| Chapelton | 1 | 1,456 | R. Swallow |
| Thorncliffe | 2 | 1,092 | Newton, Chambers and Longden |
| Elsecar | 1 | 800 | J. Darwin and Co. |
| Bretton | 1 | 250 | Cook and Co. |
| Holmes | 3 | 6,000 | Walker and Co. |

Technical progress, improved raw material supply, favourable movements in the price of iron and war demand, all greatly stimulated the production of pig iron in these years. Of these large units, two had come into being only a year previously.⁹ Further additions to the region's iron making capacity came in 1800 when a second furnace went into blast at Elsecar and in 1801 when the nearby Milton ironworks operated by the active Walker partnership also commenced working.¹⁰

Each of these units employed a sizable, concentrated wage labour force. This workforce was involved in mining and preparing raw materials as well as the manufacture of iron in the furnace and forge. There were sharper lines of economic status drawn between employers and employees in this industry than in the workshops and among the domestic outworkers. Although numbers in the industry were small, they were concentrated in several largely rural communities which gave them great importance there.

Apart from these large units, there were smaller furnaces, foundries and forges engaged in various manufacturing activities. In Sheffield and Rotherham there were small foundries engaged in domestic hardware production. Wire and nails continued to be manufactured in the region with domestic outworkers being supplied with wrought iron from the forges and slitting mills of the region. The pattern of employment in the smaller scale units and the outwork trades was similar to that in the other metal-working workshop and domestic outwork industries of the region.

5) Coal

Growth in mining in the region took place in the western half of the region which covered the exposed part of the coalfield. The most active working of coal had been and continued to be in the southern part of the exposed coalfield around Sheffield and Rotherham. In the main, the pits were small except those of the Duke of Norfolk at Sheffield.¹¹ The middle and northern parts of the coalfield were relatively unexploited until the effects of the transport improvements made during the period were felt. The key problem was the lack of cheap transport from these land-locked districts. However in 1793 two bills were passed for the building of canals in the region. These opened the northern and central sections. The Barnsley Canal, begun in 1793 and completed at a cost of £140,000 in 1799, linked Barnsley and its hinterland to the market for coal in the woollen districts of the West Riding. It did this by a northern route which joined the Aire and Calder Navigation at Wakefield. The Dearne and Dove Canal, built between 1793-1804 at a cost of £130,000, linked the Barnsley area with the coal consumers in the Don and Trent valleys. It ran from Cawthorne to Swinton with two cuts along its course to Worsbrough and Elsecar. These gave the central section of the coalfield better access to the markets.¹²

The major impact of these improvements came after their completion. Some immediate expansion took place before completion. The Elsecar arm was being widely used early on by Earl Fitzwilliam who was actively expanding mining on his estate. The demand for coal from the new Elsecar ironworks that his tenants Darwin and Co. began operating in 1795, stimulated his activity.¹³ The level of employment also rose in areas around the terminal points of the canals. Cawthorne, Silkstone, Darton, Mapplewell, Barnsley and Elsecar also shared in the expansion.¹⁴ Little is known of the mining population of this period. Increasingly large scale production meant the replacement of non-specialist labour from the dual-economy by

specialist wage labour. Small pits still predominated. These were operated by yeomen colliery masters. A recognizable group of industrial capitalist coal masters was beginning to emerge.¹⁵

There were few mining communities as such. Miners comprised a small minority group of industrial workers in communities where the dominant industrial work groups comprised linen weavers and wire drawers (in the north), nailmakers and iron workers (in the centre and south) and cutlers (in the south). In several communities, especially in proximity to larger, expanding ironworks like Elsecar, Milton, Chapeltown, Masbrough, Thorncliffe, Park and Silkstone, they were concentrated in larger groupings. A tendency was emerging for industrialists to house their labour in purpose-built housing and in some cases engage in community building, as at Thorncliffe. This created concentrations of specialized labour.¹⁶ The mining proletariat was as yet small and divided. Where it was concentrated in its largest groupings there was potential for organization, although the means of concentration (i.e. community building) was also a means to inhibit its organization. Evidence of disputes during this period in some of the largest concentrations showed that new industrial labour was not the unquestioning, malleable human raw material its masters wished it to be.¹⁷

6) Linen

In the 1790's there were over 500 looms weaving linen in Barnsley and the surrounding villages. These were controlled by seven or eight partnerships of linen manufacturers¹⁸ who put out or rented out to their labour forces flax, looms, weaving equipment, 'shop space' and housing.¹⁹ The labour force was increasingly made up of dependent market weavers, including masters, journeymen and apprentices. All of these sold their labour power.

(b) Dynamics

The period began in and ended with a year of mild peace-time

prosperity. In the intervening years of war the economic growth of the industrial economy was retarded. The 'light' sector of cutlery, associated workshop and outwork metalworking and linen suffered greater dislocation than the 'heavy' sector whose foundation was coal and iron. The slow growth of profits on the Don Navigation illustrate the general sluggishness in the region's economy:

Table 3:2 Annual profits on the Don Navigation 1792-1802 (£s)²⁰

| | | | | | |
|------|-------|------|-------|------|--------|
| 1792 | 8,947 | 1796 | 8,570 | 1800 | 9,511 |
| 1793 | 8,687 | 1797 | 8,705 | 1801 | 10,130 |
| 1794 | 8,454 | 1798 | 8,573 | 1802 | 9,440 |
| 1795 | 8,626 | 1799 | 7,754 | | |

The improvement marked in the years 1800-2 possibly registered the stimulation of industrial production in the land-locked part of the coalfield caused by the building of the Dearne and Dove Canal.

With the exception of linen the 'light' sector industries suffered during the war years. Sheffield's staple cutlery and other workshop trades were badly hit by the initial loss of overseas markets. The wage and employment data provided by one medium-sized firm in the cutlery trades illustrate the contraction even in a unit that was relatively successful:

Table 3:3 Annual wage bill and average weekly number of recipients in the firm of Thomas Nowill and Co.²¹

| | <u>Wages in £s.</u> | <u>number of workers</u> |
|------|---------------------|--------------------------|
| 1792 | 1,100 | 26 |
| 1793 | 890 | 23 |
| 1794 | 704 | 17 |
| 1795 | 708 | 18 |
| 1796 | 966 | 21 |
| 1797 | 832 | 19 |
| 1798 | 1,080 | 24 |
| 1799 | 1,566 | 30 |
| 1800 | 1,717 | 31 |
| 1801 | 1,961 | 32 |
| 1802 | 2,085 | 33 |

Similarly the data showing the quantity of silver marked at Sheffield's Assay office showed this pattern being repeated in the luxury trades:

Table 3:4 Quantity of silver marked annually at Sheffield Assay office 1792-1802 (troy pounds)²²

| | | | | | |
|------|-------|------|-------|------|-------|
| 1792 | 3,666 | 1796 | 3,339 | 1800 | 4,008 |
| 1793 | 2,979 | 1797 | 2,663 | 1801 | 3,662 |
| 1794 | 2,846 | 1798 | 2,517 | 1802 | 4,467 |
| 1795 | 2,797 | 1799 | 3,923 | | |

The deteriorating position of Sheffield's trade during the war years was also reflected in the decline in the town's rate of population growth:

Table 3:5 Sheffield's population growth 1785-1801²³

| | <u>families</u> | <u>average annual growth</u> |
|------|-----------------|------------------------------|
| 1785 | 5,256 | |
| | | 3.5% |
| 1789 | 6,065 | |
| | | 1.1% |
| 1796 | 6,565 | |
| | | .5% |
| 1801 | 6,754 | |

There was also a marked climb in the town's expenditure on poor relief:

Table 3:6 Sheffield poor relief expenditure 1792-1802²⁴
(figures in £s cover periods Easter to Easter)

| | | | | | |
|--------|-------|-----------|--------|---------|--------|
| 1792-3 | 4,234 | 1796-7 | 10,156 | 1800-01 | 12,344 |
| 1793-4 | 5,649 | 1797-8 | 8,685 | 1801-2 | 14,323 |
| 1794-5 | 7,524 | 1798-9 | 9,759 | 1802-3 | 9,922 |
| 1795-6 | 8,588 | 1799-1800 | 9,172 | | |

The figures reflect the inflationary effect of a succession of bad harvests in the period and the dislocation of the town's trades. The living standards of the great majority of the artisans in the town's workshop and outwork trades were badly affected by market place inflation, especially in the years 1795, 1799 and 1800. They were already working at reduced intensities, underemployed rather than unemployed.²⁵ The pressure on living standards provoked immediate violent responses in the market place. There were disturbances or significant threats of disturbance in 1793, 1795, 1796 and 1800. More violence would have occurred if the town's elite had not intervened with subscriptions to buy cheap grain in 1795

and 1800 and if the superior artisans had not had their friendly societies and had not had the initiative to set up a co-operative corn mill. There were other, similarly measured responses to inflation. The small group of workers in trade unions in the cutlery trades struck work in 1796. Industrially organized labour had no legal standing, it could only maintain a defensive position in the main protecting living standards through friendly society activity rather than industrial action. It was the bounties offered by the Government and the energies of the recruiting parties attracting workers from the insecure economic margins of half-time work and parish relief that provided a real safety-valve release of dangerous energies.²⁶ This limited labour supply and helped to keep up the town's wage level. Eden testified to this in 1796.²⁷ The working of this safety-valve created a more dependent population of widows, wives and children as a burden on the poor rates.

Little is known of the conditions in the other significant light trades in the region such as nailing, wire drawing and linen weaving. Nailing was part of the agricultural-industrial dual economy which gave workers a greater guarantee of basic subsistence. Wire drawing was declining and being replaced by linen weaving in the northern area where it was traditionally located. Weaving guaranteed greater employment security because it was expanding. Workers in all these trades faced severe market place inflation, but rural out-workers such as nailors, wiredrawers and some weavers were cushioned by more direct access to land. Such groups were geographically dispersed and thus inhibited from organizing collectively to bargain at the employer's warehouse or counting-house. Only urban workers such as Barnsley's working population appeared to leave behind any record of collective action. In 1794 the town's weavers staged their first 'turn-out' or strike for better wages. In 1795 the town experienced a market disturbance similar to those taking place nationally. Here too, as in many other smaller communities in the

region, the paternalist action of the local elite prevented a more violent reaction, particularly in 1795 and 1800.

In the heavy sector of coal and iron, the steadiness of domestic demand for coal and the appearance of unsteady but significant war demand stimulated growth. Employment increased in the new and expanding ironworks. This expansion stimulated the demand for coal which was already growing in response to local domestic and industrial demand. The demand for colliery labour increased. Both ironworks' and colliery labour were more fully employed than other industrial workers in the region. They were equally vulnerable to market place inflation. They suffered from geographical isolation and often the social isolation of an industrial community removed from the main urban concentrations of industrial workers. They were at this stage in a good position to bargain. Disputes in 1792, 1797 and 1799 at various of the region's larger pits hinted (prematurely) at the new industrial labour force's capacity to act. The specialist ironworks' labour force, which often also included miners of coal as well as ironstone, were better paid than other groups in their localities. Even so they were vulnerable to inflation and food shortage. In situations like the winter of 1800-1, only the paternalistic action of employers could prevent total breakdown and open violence in the communities where the ironworks were situated.

Section B: Society 1792-1802

Note: - In this and similar following sections, the relations between elite and mass are examined as part of an interpretive narrative which concentrates on the social experience of the mass, particularly on the conditions giving rise to the appearance of labour class consciousness. While it is important to understand the social elite and its social composition, the emphasis has been mainly on its assertion of itself in action towards the mass and the labour class formations within the mass.

1) Artisans and Sans-Culottes - Voices from below. 1792-6.

And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and by night.

Exodus XIII, v.21.

(a) Introduction

In the early 1790's events began to take place which fundamentally transformed the social existence of a section of the mass of working people in the region. In the whole range of their experience, in work, leisure, religion, consumption and above all politics, a significant level of radical social awareness was realized. These years were dominated by the first moments of popular struggle for political rights. While the struggle confronted the nature of exploitation in only one area of mass social existence, it encouraged resistance to exploitation in other areas. It forced new alignments in the relationship between elite and mass and also within the mass itself.

The political struggle of these years was not an open struggle of economic classes. Its result was that economic classes came to confront one another more openly. In the region the struggle was initiated by Sheffield's radical petty bourgeois intelligentsia of tradesmen, lesser professionals and small master manufacturers. Although they had learned lessons from the victory of the American Republic ten years before, they were directly inspired by current events in France. Their main concern was for the political rights of the men of small property. Because they needed mass support they

increasingly appealed to working people as a whole when they called for universal suffrage. Those other labouring strata to whom they directed their appeal included an unrealized or 'potential' labour class of wage-earning journeymen and apprentices. These responded dramatically to the political advances made to them. They shared many of the economic and social ideals of this intelligentsia. The persistent elements of the 'craft mentality' in the workshop trades contributed to the strength of the political alliance. Together they formed a political alliance or a 'Sansculotterie'. This, because it did not have economic unity, could not effectively operate for long periods. The threat of this alliance worked to increase the social unity of the social elite of landed, commercial and large industrial wealth. Its failure significantly helped to throw the elements of a potential labour class onto their own resources in confronting both political and economic exploitation in the years that followed.

In Sheffield was formed the first popular radical society in England. This was the Sheffield Society for Constitutional Information (henceforth SSCI). The strength of the radical culture it fostered in the town has justifiably provoked one historian to compare Sheffield with the revolutionary Fauborg Saint-Antoine in Paris.²⁸ In the region Sheffield provided the major arena for popular political debate. The smaller towns and villages of the region were held in the vice-like grip of the elite. The Sheffield radicals had only partial success in preaching the democratic creed in such communities. The open activity of political missionaries failed but the barrage of printed propaganda coming from the radical presses of Sheffield more steadily found its mark and prepared the ground for the later mass political radicalization of these communities.

(b) The Rise and Fall of the SSCI

The society began its operations in late 1791 a few weeks before

its London equivalent, the London Corresponding Society.²⁹ Both societies benefitted from their association with the respectable reformers of the London-based Society for Constitutional Information.³⁰ The Sheffield society, begun as 'an assembly of Five or Six Mechaniks', was soon able to stand on its own feet.³¹ Its first secretary, Samuel Ashton, wrote describing its foundation to Thomas Hardy, the secretary of the newly formed LCS:

We set out upon, when at first a very small number, some 4 or 5 of us, meeting in each other's houses in an evening, consulting and condoling the very low and even miserable condition of the People of this Nation were reduced to by the Avariciousness and Extortion of that haughty, voluptuous and luxurious class of beings, who would have us possess no more knowledge, than to believe all things were created only for the use of that small group of worthless individuals.³²

The earliest hostile description of the society was that made by a respectable correspondent of Earl Fitzwilliam, the largest resident land-owner in the locality who was looked to by the elite to take action. The correspondent observed:

The Club or Clubs I find consist of a small collection of persons of the lowest orders, who have hitherto met, and discussed some political subject over a cup of ale. Each person admitted pays 2d which purchases the ale; and defrays the expense of lighting the room.³³

The society made its first public statement through the pages of the Sheffield Register (the weekly newspaper run by the radical printer Joseph Gales) in early December 1791. This statement attempted to defuse the hostility of the elite by conciliation:

We are sorry to find that the public have been under any Apprehension of Alarm from the small association lately formed in the town through the reports probably of some designing people, who have ignorantly or insiduously represented them as dangerous mobs whose aim was to subvert the Constitution.³⁴

They stressed their basic aims to be 'a peaceable reform' and 'more equal representation in the House of Commons', but 'they would wait', they added deferentially, 'for whenever the people of property and consequence shall think fit again to come forward'.

The local elite of landed, commercial and industrial property, some of whom had been found in the ranks of the 'gentlemen' reformers of the Yorkshire Association during the American War years,³⁵ drew back in terror. The threat of mob violence, already witnessed in Sheffield earlier that year over enclosure, again caused panic among the elite. James Wheat, a Sheffield attorney who had already experienced the feelings of the mob, revealed his deep mistrust of the SSCI and their democratic principles:

...thinking as I do that all appeals to the Ignorance of the Multitude to sit in judgement on public Regulation is dangerous, and smarting as I do from the Recollection of the mischief arising from the recent violence of the mobs here (many of whom are the professed disciples of Mr Payne), I cannot be indifferent to such Dangerous Appeals for I am apt to suspect both the purity and policy of such designs.³⁶

Wheat at once saw the danger for his class in the doctrines expounded by the Rights of Man. The democrats of the SSCI, while few in number at this time, were gaining strength. Wheat commented in giving information to the active West Riding magistrate, Henry Zouch:

They are strangers to me but I understand they are of the lowest classes of manufacturers and amount to several hundred and that they profess to be admirers of the dangerous Doctrines of Mr Payne, whose pamphlets they distribute with industry and support his dogmas with zeal.³⁷

In the correspondence of the authorities in the winter months of 1791-2 there was an unrelieved sense of outrage at the presumption of these bodies of the 'lowest classes',³⁸ or 'inferior sort of manufacturers and workmen'.³⁹ Earl Fitzwilliam raged against the threat to 'peace and good order and indeed to society itself'.⁴⁰

To some extent this reflected the fear of the mob similarly expressed in correspondence with the Government demanding a permanent garrison.⁴¹

The SSCI's membership rose dramatically from a few hundred in January to at least two thousand in June 1792. The leadership was in the hands of the radical petty bourgeois intelligentsia from the

start. They were assisted by one or two renegade members of the elite and several journeymen. Many of the early leadership group of 1792 had dissenting religious backgrounds.⁴² This was a reflection of the extent of petty bourgeois leadership which the following table illustrates:

Table 3:7 SSCI leadership 1791-2⁴³

Key: S - Self-employed
M - Master employer
J - Journeyman,
waged worker
P - Professional
G - Gentleman

(a) Founders (not inclusive)

| <u>Name</u> | <u>Occupation</u> | <u>Status</u> | <u>Religious association</u> |
|-------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------|-------------------------------|
| John Alcock | leather inkstand maker | S | Quaker |
| Samuel Ashton | painter | S | Quaker |
| William Broomhead | cutler | M | Dissenter, later Methodist |
| William Camage | leather inkstand maker | S | Church of England |
| Benjamin Damm | filesmith | M | - |
| Henry Hill | cutler, shoe-maker's knife forger | J | Methodist |
| Abraham Sutcliffe | physician | P | Quaker |

(b) Presidents of Meetings 1792

| | | | |
|------------------|-----------|---|-----------|
| Benjamin Damm | filesmith | M | - |
| David Martin | engraver | M | Unitarian |
| Matthew Dodworth | cutler | J | - |

(c) Secretaries 1792

| | | | |
|------------------|---------|---|-----------|
| Samuel Ashton | painter | S | Quaker |
| James Horsefield | grocer | S | Unitarian |

(d) Leading members, affiliated to SCI in London in March 1792

| | | | |
|-------------------|--|---|-------------------------------|
| John Alcock | leather inkstand maker | S | Quaker |
| William Broomhead | cutler | M | Dissenter, later Methodist |
| Benjamin Damm | filesmith | M | - |
| Matthew Dodworth | cutler | J | - |
| Joseph Gales | bookseller, auctioneer, printer, agent for Royal Exchange Office | M | Unitarian |
| Robert Hadfield | - | - | - |
| John Harrison | razor manufacturer | M | - |
| James Horsefield | grocer | S | Unitarian |
| Joseph Lee | - | - | - |
| David Martin | engraver | M | Unitarian |
| John Payne | landowner and tenant farmer | G | Quaker |
| Joseph Smith | bookseller | S | Unitarian |

Debate at the society's early meetings reflected the political and economic interests of this dominant group. A detailed report on an early general meeting of the society, attended by six hundred people and held in late January 1792, showed their dominance. A platform speaker significantly stated that reform could only be obtained by the 'middle class of people who pay taxes'. Their early conception of a reformed franchise was limited. They particularly stressed the need for a moderate constitutional approach to obtaining reform. The economic interests of the petty bourgeoisie as tax payers motivated their criticisms of excessive public expenditure and corruption in high places. The concern for the Test Acts betrayed the interests more associated with petty bourgeois than proletarian elements in the society. Nevertheless discussion of the Corn Bill's effect on the price of bread for the poor, 'occasioned much murmuring among the Society, particularly when he (the speaker) told them the poor were not to have corn under thirty six shillings a quarter'.⁴⁴ The Society drew support from some sections of industrially organized labour⁴⁵ who represented the developing labour class interest in the town. Activists from the Freemen's struggle of the 1780's were involved with the SSCI from the start. Some of these were journeymen.

The growth of the Society posed problems of organization. The secretary wrote to his LCS equivalent in March 1793:

Our numbers kept increasing so that we found it necessary for the sake of Good Order to divide ourselves into small Bodies of Ten Persons each, and to hold a General Meeting once a Month; but of late our numbers have increased so rapidly, and only having Thirteen Meeting Places, all on the same evening, they are so crowded that we are adopting the plan we first set out with, and propose to Divide the whole (which do now consist of about two thousand members) into Tythings, or meetings of Ten Members each. Two hundred of these meetings will include the whole, from each of which a Delegate or leading man will be chosen, and appointed to attend at their respective places - Ten at each: these Delegates will form Twenty meetings of Ten members each; and lastly, from each of these meetings a Delegate will be appointed to meet at the appointed place, and these will form the Committee or Grand Council.⁴⁶

This plan was put into being not only to maximize democratic participation, but also to avoid trouble with the magistrates who licensed the taverns in which they met.⁴⁷ It was only partly implemented. The Society succeeded in making its major policy-making monthly meetings less conspicuous. Six hundred had attended the January meeting, ninety the March meeting and two hundred the meeting of May.⁴⁸ Possibly by then, a perfect system was operating and nearly the full number of delegates from the two hundred tythings was meeting monthly to decide policy. The committee at this stage appeared to have little but an administrative function. There were however powerful figures emerging. Joseph Gales, the publisher of the weekly Sheffield Register, became very influential. His columns were increasingly devoted to the democratic gospel. His experience of the propaganda war of the 1780's made him one of the Society's most valuable assets. Through the Register and a more intellectual weekly journal, the Patriot, which he began in March 1792,⁴⁹ the SSCI had the means by which to make an impact both nationally and locally.⁵⁰ Their immediate aim was to inform and educate local opinion and to bring about 'a revolution of sentiment' to force reform in the House of Commons. In extracts in the Register and the Patriot, and more fully in pamphlet form, the Society brought the political ideas of Sydney, Russell, Camden, Milton, Locke, Rousseau, Burke, Price, Paine, and later Volney and Mireabeau into open discussion. The Patriot, edited by Gales and Mathew Cambell Brown, 'a player turned attorney', provided the heaviest reading.⁵¹ It also contained more digestible information on political corruption. It also contained extracts from communications from other democratic societies. Similarly the Register carried reports on other societies and kept a focus on events in France. The most important printed work in radical culture was Paine's Rights of Man (part one) which was published cheaply in pamphlet and book form.⁵² The writings of Paine had enormous mass appeal. His message was of the moment, one

which called the English democrats into being and continually justified that being. He defended the right to question the infallibility of the political system which was established by the Revolution of 1688:

There never did, there never will, and there never can exist a parliament, or any description of men, or any generation of men, in any country, possessed of the right or the power of binding and controlling posterity to 'the end of time'.⁵³

As with the easily consumed political information contained in the Register and the Patriot, the message of Rights of Man could be easily communicated to a mass audience by public readings during social hours in the workshops⁵⁴ and the taverns and also at specific political meetings.

The SSCI took its educative function very seriously. In a statement of aims made in March 1792 there was a justification of this:

Considering as we do that the want of knowledge and information in the general mass of the people, has exposed them to numberless impositions and abuses, the exertions of the Society are directed to the Acquisition of Useful Knowledge and to spread the same as far as our endeavours and abilities extend.⁵⁵

Not only in early 1792 were they in communication with the two respectable London democratic societies (the SCI and the Friends of Liberty)⁵⁶ but they had also reached out to more plebeian democratic societies in London, Norwich, Stockport and Manchester.⁵⁷ They were also very active in their immediate locality. At the SSCI February meeting they had discussed application for assistance from several small towns and villages in the region, including Rotherham, Attercliffe, Ecclesfield and Stannington. They had also heard from others in north Derbyshire.⁵⁸ Societies were established in the surrounding districts and affiliated with the SSCI. They were relatively few in number. In many of the region's smaller communities relationships between the local elite, its officials and the mass made open political

discussions less easy. Through the strict control of licensing the radicals here were forced into tentative and furtive association. Magistrates throughout the region, while always tracing the origin of such activity to Sheffield, now however had to accept that the communities around them also contained activists in the democratic cause.⁵⁹

There was a growing demand that action be taken by the authorities against the SSCI. There were fears not only of the society's growing influence on the civil populace, but also of its attempts to tamper with the military. The garrisoning of Sheffield since the enclosure riots of July 1791 was not a popular development. Nevertheless the democrats had sought to fraternize with the troops.⁶⁰ An informed democrat claimed that officers of the garrison received secret orders from the Government to provoke the populace into attacking the military. It was hoped this would divide the rank and file troops from the townspeople and at the same time would justify clamping down on political meetings.⁶¹ If there was provocation it certainly succeeded. On three days in the first week of May hostile crowds assembled outside the Tontine Inn where the officers were stationed. Magistrates from nearby towns were called in on the second day to help preserve order. They and the leading inhabitants of the town, after holding a public meeting the following day when they discussed the cause of the violence with the assembled townspeople, issued a proclamation to prevent further clashes.⁶² They shared a general sympathy with the community for they recognized the provocative role of the officers.⁶³ The violence did not end immediately. Over a hundred townspeople had been injured and understandably public outrage continued to express itself in sporadic violence.⁶⁴ Writing to the SCI, the SSCI shrugged off any fears of loyalist counter demonstrations saying, 'we flatter ourselves that the Birmingham war whoop will never be sounded here'.⁶⁵

Publically the SSCI stood aside from this. It was continually

asserting itself with growing confidence through the Register.⁶⁶ Such confidence was expressed nationally and challenged the ruling elite to act. On 21 May 1792 a Royal Proclamation against 'diverse wicked and seditious writings' was issued. It called on 'all loyal subjects to guard against every attempt at the subversion of "regular government" within this kingdom'.⁶⁷ Loyalists all over the country responded. In smaller towns and villages in the region reciprocating addresses of approval were got up.⁶⁸ In Sheffield the town's elite struggled to get a hundred signatures. On 11 June they held an abortive meeting to approve their address. The SSCI took over the meeting by voting the radical Joseph Gales into the chair and by a show of hands negating the loyalist address.⁶⁹ A closed meeting at the Cutlers' Hall on 13 June approved the address, but this only further discredited the loyalist cause.⁷⁰ Joseph Mather, the popular street entertainer, celebrated the assertion of mass democracy in the lines of his 'Britons Awake'. The man who had all his life waited for such a moment spurred on his fellow workmen:

Awake from your lethargy, Britons, awake,
 Your lives and your liberties all are at stake;
 Why should you repose in security's arms,
 When every moment's exposed to alarms;
 The powers of darkness afresh are enrag'd,
 To work out your ruin they all are engag'd.
 See liberty banish'd! the clergy deprav'd!
 Religion in sack cloth! the people enslav'd!⁷¹

The event prompted the anxieties of local magistrates who feared a major challenge to their authority. The Secretary at War's agent, Colonel De Lancey, in Sheffield during June to investigate the loyalty of the troops and to supervise the completion of the barracks, was highly critical of the town's absentee magistrates.⁷² In late July a start was made on the building of barracks for two hundred cavalry. This bolstered the morale of the magistrates.⁷³ Troops would no longer be billeted in public houses and therefore would be less vulnerable to fraternization.⁷⁴

The SSCI's progress went unchecked. Membership was over two thousand five hundred. This was divided into small groups of thirty that met fortnightly and whose representatives to the monthly general meeting helped decide policy.⁷⁵ There was a managing committee whose role appeared passive and subordinate to the will of general meetings. Individuals like Gales and Brown, acting in their capacity as editors of the Patriot, influenced policy. They used their journal to encourage young democratic societies across the Pennines⁷⁶ and to strengthen contacts with the established societies in the south. In October 1792 they correctly prophesised to the LCS:

We clearly foresee that Scotland will soon take the head of this country, and conceive it will be necessary to take the greatest care that an universal Communication should be constantly kept up between the several Societies, however distant, and that all should determine to act upon the same Principles, and move together, as near as may be, in regular and active unison. Twas by this method France became so thoroughly united, and we ought never to lose sight of it.⁷⁷

The power of the press placed the SSCI in the forefront of the popular societies nationally. Sheffield led the way in celebrating the French Republic's victory at Jenappes in October. Bonfires were lit and sheep roasted and divided among the crowd. The normally traditional-orientated noisy celebration of a Saint Monday (when little or no work was done) expressed the new radical orientation of the crowd. Flags with bold inscriptions were displayed, including the American flag. Beside one of the main bonfires a standard crowned by a 'Cap of Liberty' bore the following statement written by a journeyman grinder:⁷⁸

As citizens of the World we rejoice that twenty-five million of our Brethren have nobly dared to break the Bonds of Slavery, under which they have for centuries groaned.⁷⁹

In late November an even larger crowd (five to six thousand) assembled to the echoes of cannons and paraded the streets celebrating the French victory at Valmy. The SSCI organized a procession which

featured a democratic tableau involving:

...a caricature painting, representing Britannia, Burke riding on a swine and a figure, the upper part of which was the likeness of the Scotch Secretary, and the lower part that of an Ass - the latter was dragging Britannia back into a pit, and the former was attempting to stab her with a spear - the pole of Liberty lying broken on the ground, inscribed "Truth is a libel" - the sun breaking from behind a cloud, and the Angel of Peace, with one hand dropping the Rights of Man, and extending the other to raise up Britannia.

Flags that followed were inscribed, 'The Republic of France', 'The Glorious Conquest of Brussels, in which Life, Liberty and Property were secured even to the vanquished' and, 'The French, by their arms, have conquered Tyrants, and by just Laws, Liberty, and Reason will conquer the world'. Lastly came a standard whose inscription concluded with the ringing echo:

O Gallia the page of history shall record their glorious achievements, and future ages will bless the memory of those brave heroes, who have nobly fought and bled - not to gratify the pride and avarice of Kings and Courtiers, not to degrade their fellow men to the level with the brutes that perish; but to propagate the heaven-born system of Liberty, and the Rights of Man. The flame is kindled, the influence spreads. Tyrants Tremble, the People are awake!⁸⁰

Similar celebrations were recorded in Sheffield's immediate out-townships⁸¹ and at Rotherham. Here the 'Friends of Freedom', possibly a society affiliated to the SSCI, master-minded the celebration.⁸² Other towns and the villages in the area remained quiet while the elite watched over known radicals.

Both in October and November the orderly conduct of the Sheffield crowd had given the local elite little justification to act against the SSCI.⁸³ The scale of the demonstrations and the firing of guns gave great concern and prompted them to take action. Some of Fitzwilliam's correspondents with first-hand experience of the enclosure riots were prone to alarmism.⁸⁴ Now there were reports of disaffection spreading among the West Riding militia from the 'little books' which Sheffield recruits carried.⁸⁵ In late 1792 the Govern-

ment reacted nationally by ordering Lords Lieutenant to instigate investigations into popular clubs, by calling out more militia, tightening control of the Post Office and increasing expenditure on counter-democratic pamphlets.⁸⁶ At a lower level local elites acted, drawing inspiration from the formation of the National Association for Preserving Liberty and Property against Republicans and Levellers begun by John Reeves (henceforth Reeves Association) in London in November. This institutionalized loyalism found few supporters in the region. In early December a loyalist bookseller wrote to the Reeves Association of local efforts to respond by 'some of the first People in our Town who much approve of your scheme'. He requested Association literature and sought advice about the organization of a 'rival society of ultra-loyalists subscribing to purchase arms at a rate of two and sixpence per week'.⁸⁷ The Church and King 'war whoop' was beginning to be heard. December saw a frenzy of loyalism both locally and nationally. The majority of leading citizens from Sheffield, Rotherham, Doncaster and Barnsley signed loyalist declarations made at meetings in mid-December.⁸⁸ Both members of the local Reeves Association and members of the ultra-loyalist society figured in the Sheffield declaration. In all there was evidence of a unity of landed, commercial and new industrial wealth. Another of Reeves' Sheffield correspondents described the social preliminaries to their declaration:

...at the public Ball on Tuesday Night, and at the concert on Thursday Night, a 'God Save The King' was sung, the whole crowded and Brilliant appearance of both sexes joined in almost incessant choruses.⁸⁹

The ritual of 'Paine burning' was employed by the elite to demonstrate their feelings vividly. There were fewer reports of loyalist phenomena in the region than in Lancashire and the textile districts of the West Riding.⁹⁰ Nevertheless this was offset by the seeming spontaneity of 'Paine burning' in Barnsley where 'the People made a collection of coals and would have burnt Mr Paine in effigy, but were

prevailed upon to desist by Mr Beckett (magistrate) who thought it more provident to keep quiet.⁹¹

The SSCI viewed such developments with increased wariness. Its fraternal societies in the North were increasingly hounded.⁹² Through its powerful press and correspondence, especially with the London societies, it voiced the need for united action to counter this.⁹³ Its own position was already weakening. Up to this time, the town's workshop trades had been relatively prosperous.⁹⁴ The SSCI's finances were sound, largely the result of one penny weekly contributions from over 2,500 'ticket members'. It had also profited from Gales' success in marketing the Register and the Patriot. In February war was declared against France. Not only did the SSCI begin to lose paying members through the unemployment of workmen and small masters, but because it continued to applaud the triumphs of the French Revolutionary Army, it lost the support of some of its respectable sympathizers among the town's elite and among more significant members of the petty bourgeoisie of tradesmen, lesser professionals and small masters. This trend, which was not marked until the end of the year, was accompanied by the growth of a stronger centralized leadership with stronger plebeian representation. This leadership increasingly contemplated the use of physical force if moral means failed.

The SSCI responded to the pressures of early 1793 by going on the offensive. It boldly sent political missionaries into the heart of Church and King territory in the Midlands and northern West Riding.⁹⁵ It held public meetings in March⁹⁶ and April⁹⁷ to condemn the legal prosecution of democrats nationally and to launch its petition for political reform. These events projected themselves against a mounting crescendo of loyalist and democratic cheer and counter-cheer as the Allies and the French alternately gained victories during the early months of the war.⁹⁸ The SSCI petition continued to collect signatures⁹⁹ despite the increased possibilities of intimidation

from a growing Church and King faction. The SSCI offensive began to be checked. Locally, the reinforcement of the garrison gave the authorities greater confidence.¹⁰⁰ This was reflected in their decreased indulgence of drunken democrats¹⁰¹ and was significantly marked in their blocking of the SSCI's attempts to hold their April public meeting in the Town Hall.¹⁰² At a national level in early May, the Commons threw back the SSCI petition of 11,000 signatures as 'insolent'.¹⁰³

Within a section of the SSCI leadership and its support there appeared a growing contemplation of using physical force to enforce their political objectives, which were increasingly defined around the twin principles of 'universal suffrage' and 'annual parliaments'.¹⁰⁴ The society had always publically avowed moral force, demanding a high level of self-discipline among its members and supporters. Superficially there was no connection between the SSCI and the groups of unemployed cutlers who were discovered drilling on Crookesmoor in early June. The authorities, after getting over the initial shock, dismissed this as the harmless leisure of unemployed cutlers.¹⁰⁵ A military report to higher authority was more suspicious of the claims of these self-styled 'Exercisers' who described their actions in a printed handbill as, 'the essential duty of every Briton, and demanded of him by the fifth article of the bill of rights'.¹⁰⁶ However innocent they may have been,¹⁰⁷ the same reasoned notions of political right were being used in inner councils of the SSCI.¹⁰⁸ Their use by the 'Exercisers' suggested a level of political awareness and social self-confidence in dealing with authority being created amongst the mass of the town's population by the SSCI.

There were serious long-term factors other than the growth of the elite's hostility which operated to undermine the SSCI's challenge. Mass support was being eroded by economic pressures. Unemployment produced by war and increasing market place inflation's effect on living standards¹⁰⁹ began to affect the number of

subscribing members. The unemployed were driven to enlist for there were few other choices.¹¹⁰ Their route to oblivion was shorter than that of their dependants and families who were thrown onto parish charity and into submission to the discipline of the Methodists with their dubious promise of the 'other world'. Elsewhere in the region working people suffered the same fate but had no articulate voice to fight for them. Furtive associations to discuss political affairs were no longer attempted.

Large sections of Sheffield's labouring mass were still strongly committed to the democratic cause.¹¹¹ Joseph Gales' description of an attempt in September 1793 to intimidate him illustrates the relative strength of loyalist and democratic factions in the town:

The C[hurch] and K[ing] party, accompanied by a recruiting party, with fife and drum, presented themselves before my house, and gave me most loyal music, firing and shouting: and someone was heard to say, that my house should not have a window in that night. This circumstance...had the effect of calling together a wall of defence, for in about an hour afterwards, upwards of a hundred stout democrats stood before us, singing, 'God Save Great Thomas Paine' to the royal tune. The party increased to 500, and paraded the streets peaceably (except for singing) all the day.¹¹²

Loyalism could never reach epidemic proportions in a town where working conditions traditionally bred sturdy independence. These conditions were changing, but not sufficiently to destroy the SSCI's mass base. The element of community pride in independence, however chauvinistic, protected the society. Joseph Mather thoroughly exploited this in his 'God Save Great Thomas Paine':

Thousands cry church and king,
That well deserve to swing,
All must allow,
Birmingham blush for shame,
Manchester do the same,
Infamous is your name,
Patriot's vow.¹¹³

If loyalists made little headway, neither did the democrats. The autumn of 1793 was a very static period for the society. The recruiting parties, claimed the Register, were used to incite noisy

celebrations and counter celebrations of the French and Allied victories to make the authorities act against the SSCI.¹¹⁴ In late October the society renewed its policy of holding mass meetings.¹¹⁵ The bold decision of the badly mauled Scottish democrats to call a convention in November to help co-ordinate the struggle nationally, shamed the English democrats into renewed action. The SSCI was acutely aware of the lull in activity and bitterly aware that its increasingly pauperized membership was less financially able to support its activities. While criticizing its inactivity, they told the LCS:

We have many thousands members, but a vast majority of them being working men, the war which has deprived many of them of all employment, and almost every one of half his earnings, we have been crippled more than any other in the kingdom.

They were incensed at the inactivity of the respectable societies over the Scottish persecutions. Their secretary wrote:

It appears to me, that if the Societies do not become more active, and more united in their Efforts in the Time to come, what they have done hitherto will be rendered useless, and arbitrary Power will trample on all that is dear and valuable to Freemen. The Measures lately adopted in the Sister Kingdom, measures as opposite to, a Free Constitution as Fire and Water, have hitherto been viewed only with a degree of apathy by the great Bodies of the Kingdom, which we little Folks in the Country look up to for example, styling themselves Patriotic, such as the 'Society for Constitutional Information' in London, the 'Friends of the People'...that we begin almost to think here, it is time to nip those Buds of Freedom which were beginning to blossom with so much Luxuriance, lest they should be exposed to the Danger of being blighted by those torpid Frosts which appear to have chilled every animating influence in those great Barriers which are looked to for Defence and Protection.¹¹⁶

Both the SSCI and the LCS, the foremost popular societies, acted. A mass meeting in Sheffield in November sent Matthew Campbell Brown (the SSCI's secretary) to Edinburgh.¹¹⁷ The Convention was broken up in the first week of December and leading figures arrested.¹¹⁸ The experience suggested to growing numbers of English and surviving Scottish democrats that further conventions should be protected by

armed force. There was a commitment to hold another,¹¹⁹ and for some this created a revolutionary fantasy - the calling of a convention protected by armed democrats as a prelude to overturning existing institutions.¹²⁰ This period was marked out in later testimonies of former SSCI activists as one when significant changes were taking place within the local society. Several recalled the period around the Scottish Convention as the one when the principle of universal suffrage was adopted.¹²¹ It also marked the time when although membership was declining,¹²² proletarian and quasi-proletarian membership became more significant in terms of number and influence. In step with this, revolutionary ideas articulated by those on the extreme political left of the society had increasing influence on its strategy.¹²³

The mass meeting held to condemn the suppression of the Scottish Convention demonstrated these trends in microcosm.¹²⁴ Among the resolutions was the first public affirmation of the twin principles of universal suffrage and annual parliaments. Even the strong language of the 1793 petition had not specifically demanded universal suffrage. The SSCI had now cast away most of its shallow petty bourgeois influenced associations of political rights with property ownership. The main speaker at the meeting, William Broomhead, was an unemployed cutler. He had been expelled from the society for advocating physical force in 1792 and had been invited to return in late 1793 as a full-time paid secretary.¹²⁵ Described by the loyalist press as a 'strait-haired mechanic', he was much closer to his audience in social origin than the majority of the leadership. His audience of several thousand in a disused coalyard in the Park district drew in not just metal working artisans but workers from the heavy trade - the new proletarians from the nearby pits and ironworks of the 'east end' of the town.¹²⁶ Broomhead showed little sign of justifying physical force to the meeting. However, its resolution to support the idea of a British convention would provide the means

for others in the society to further develop the idea that a convention protected by armed force could provide the prelude to revolution.

The idea of a convention held in England was increasingly looked upon favourably by constitutionalists and revolutionaries in the SSCI and other British societies.¹²⁷ A revitalized LCS was exhorting other weaker societies to support the idea of a British convention.¹²⁸ The SSCI, which had more consistently maintained an outward-looking policy, began to widen and strengthen its contacts also. In mid-February its secretary, William Broomhead, wrote to the strong Norwich society about the growing unity of the movement since the Scottish Convention. Broomhead, whose own position was undefined, wrote in restrained terms on behalf of a SSCI committee which was still dominated by moderate, petty bourgeois elements. He observed, 'perseverance with cool and manly fortitude cannot fail crowning virtuous efforts with the desired success'.¹²⁹ Public statements emphasizing moral force continued to characterize the SSCI's policy. In private meetings the arguments of physical force advocates were making an impact on growing numbers of disillusioned constitutionalists. Broomhead, in a later statement, talked of 'people.....not of their society, who had declared they must make a Riot, or nothing could be done'. Under duress, he was possibly deflecting attention from himself and others in the society who were advocating revolutionary violence.¹³⁰

The first mass meeting of 1794 sponsored by the SSCI was held on the fast day called by the Government for 28 February to represent an act of national humiliation and prayer for the success of the allied armies. The proceedings were dominated by an overwhelming display of moral condemnation of war and of the hypocrisy of the Church and State in offering prayers for its extension. Five to six thousand persons gathered on open land in West Street ('the Backfields') to hear a long address from Edward Oakes, one of the SSCI

moderates and a Methodist class leader.¹³¹ In a raging torrent of biblical quotations, he invoked the whole range of Old Testament prophets to lash the Government and the Established Church for their action. In his words there was more than the moral condemnation of war by a sincere Christian. The democrat's hatred of political despotism burned through. For Oakes and many other of the leaders, co-religionists and otherwise, the war was wrong because it challenged what they believed to be the will of their god. In a speech echoing and re-echoing with apocalyptic thunder, he assured his audience the war was the work of;

'a combination of crowned Despots, now leagued against the cause of Freedom; a combination which I believe to be odious in the sight of Heaven, although for its support we are commanded a second time from the Throne (not of God) to fast and pray for the success of our arms over our Brethren, who are struggling for everything that is dear to Man, and which is the will of God he should be possessed of - LIBERTY, natural, mental, civil, political and religious'.¹³²

In the progress of democracy in France, 'a Furnace heated by the Almighty to purge the World of Tyrants',¹³³ he saw the inspiration of a powerful, intervening God:

The God of Freedom is stronger than all his opposers; so that tyrants may combine, decree, and act; they may spend millions of the people's treasure, and spill oceans of human blood, the little stone REASON, "cut out of the mountain without hands, will smite the image and become very large, so as to fill the whole earth".¹³⁴

As a portent of the coming of the 'last days of judgement', he interpreted the prevailing cult of reason in France as creating an opportunity for a freer circulation of the Gospel message:

I am firmly persuaded, that before the Gospel can have an universal spread, great changes must take place in all the World. Idolatory and Superstition must fall, the prophecies in Daniel and the Revelations respecting the overthrow of the Antichrist, must be fulfilled.¹³⁵

For him, the 'divine principle of Reason and Religion' would triumph. Deists and atheists among the ranks of the SSCI intelligentzia may have smiled nearly as indulgently at such near-millennarian

fantasising as they did at his interventionalist god. Nevertheless, Oakes' visions were merely a public individual projection of a collective fantasy that the majority of the moderates in leadership and membership of the SSCI had begun to engage in now they were faced with a check to their worldly aspirations. The suggestion of a millennial 'coming' was associated with the increase of revivalist recruitment among the Methodists in the textile districts of the West Riding which had intensified since the beginning of the war. The revival fires now burned their way southwards into the region.¹³⁶ For those not yet emancipated from such superstition, moral force activists like Oakes and the majority of the 'sub-political' artisan audiences of the SSCI, an intervening god and the corresponding millennium all operated as powerful myths. These were dangerous challenging myths to the more rational activists. They opened a path to resignation. Oakes' lecture concluded:

How comfortable is it for individuals, Defenders of the Rights of Man, to reflect that the Eye of our Universal Parent is over the most remote corner of the Earth! Oh! that our suffering brethren in England, Ireland, and Scotland, may feel his peculiar care, whether Fire, Sword, Dens, Bastilles, or Banishment be their lot!...I once more entreat you, ye afflicted, you suffering for us all, look at the immaculate Lamb, 'whose back was given to the smiters, and his cheek to them that plucked off the hair!' If he humbled himself so low as to become the servant of the meanest; and to seal the truth of his mission died at last upon the ever memorable Cross; think it not strange concerning the fiery trial in which you are, rejoice, that you are counted worthy to suffer in defence of Truth.¹³⁷

The concluding resolutions condemning war, kings, the building of barracks, the landing of Hessian mercenaries ('a ferocious and unprincipled Horde of Butchers') and the verdicts against the Scottish patriots were put to the meeting by the more practical SSCI committee-men, Camage and Broomhead. They were carried unanimously.¹³⁸

The SSCI, while operating as 50 or 60 small clubs composed of 600 activists,¹³⁹ continued to issue public statements through the

Register.¹⁴⁰ Supporters continued an 'unofficial' war with wall daubings.¹⁴¹ Sheffield's popular radical culture was very much alive despite the growth of loyalism and the increasing activity of the State in repressing the popular societies nationally. There was an escalation of violence between the democratic and loyalist factions in Sheffield. In March there was an incident in the theatre when during the singing of the national anthem democrats threw printer's ink from the gallery onto the loyalists below.¹⁴² Loyalists were now becoming bolder and at last the Government found an attorney to act for them locally.¹⁴³

The harsh effects of war on the Sheffield trades were swelling audiences at SSCI meetings. The meeting held on 7 April on Castle Hill attracted 10,000-12,000. Its proceedings opened with an address to the King on behalf of the Scottish patriots. The meeting was dominated by a two-hour long speech from Henry Redhead Yorke.¹⁴⁴ Yorke, commenting on the savage sentences imposed on the Scottish democrats, noted that men now holding political office had participated in the convention held by the 'gentlemen' reformers of the 1780's. He was confident of the progress of rational political knowledge. Despite the savagery of the present sentences he observed that history had proved that 'Reason and Truth' would triumph over 'Prejudice and Superstition'. The voice of an awakened people would, he said, 'demand the annihilation of corruptions and abuses and a restitution of the original rights of human nature'. He proposed three resolutions, one approving the address and the others condemning the treatment of the Scottish patriots and the general abuse of the popular right to free speech and opinion. William Broomhead then moved that a petition be presented to the Commons demanding a reform of representation. This produced an angry murmur. Nobody would second the motion. The Sheffield crowd saw no use in petitions, their disillusion with the political nation was almost total. Broomhead's motion was in fact a pre-arranged ploy by the SSCI leadership

to test popular opinion and prepare it to approve the plan for a convention. This leadership was shifting leftwards. The less moderate constitutionalist leadership of Gales, Camage and Yorke were finding much in common with violent physical force advocates within the society. The hopes of this group rose when Yorke used the crowd's reaction to the petitioning proposal to introduce the convention idea. Dismissing the way political reform had been debated in the past, Yorke argued that it was 'time that the people should lay aside leaders, discard factions and act for themselves'. He then launched into the familiar story of the historical erosion of popular political rights from their Saxon purity under the constitution of Alfred. Suddenly he turned to face this constitutionalist mythology with Paine's sense of political realism:

Enough of precedent. The human race has long been rolling down the tide of ages neglected, unpitied and oppressed. It is high time that the devious course of human policy should not be left to the uncertain issue of storms and elemental wars; but that the machine of State should be guided by the polar star of reason alone, which is never seen but when the majesty of the people is resplendent.

Yorke did not reject all the lessons of historical experience. These lessons would stimulate but not in themselves fully awaken the people. Demanding and not petitioning for their rights as a body (the demand would be made by the representative delegates of the people assembled in a convention), he observed, would produce the 'grand political explosion which at the same time that it buries despotism...may raise up the people to dignity and sublime grandure of freedom'. Thus he called for renewed efforts by the enlightened to produce a 'revolution of sentiment which must precede the revolution of government and manners'. 'The popular energies', he continued, 'must be excited, that the popular voice may be felt and heard'. In conclusion he made a careful definition of the equality he was demanding as solely political. In no sense could he or the petty bourgeois leadership and bulk of the SSCI members conceive of

equalizing property. They were still prisoners of the 'craft mentality' which idealized the small scale production of petty capitalism. Yorke concluded powerfully:

Citizens, I repeat my former assertion. Go on as you hitherto have done, in the culture of reason. Disseminate throughout the whole of your country, that knowledge which is so necessary to man's happiness, and which you have yourself acquired. Teach your children and your countrymen the sacred lessons of virtue, which are the foundations of all human policy. Teach them to respect themselves, and to love their country. Teach them to do unto all men as they would others should do unto them, and their love shall not be confined to their country, but shall extend to the whole human race. When such a revolution of sentiment shall have dispersed the mists of prejudice; when by the incessant thunderings of the press; the meanest cottager of our country shall be enlightened, and the sun of reason shall shine in its fullest meridian over us; then the commanding voice of the whole people shall recommend the five hundred and fifty-eight gentlemen in St. Stephen's Chapel to go about their own business.

Amid thunderous applause the meeting passed four bold resolutions affirming their total approval of Citizen Yorke:

1. That in every country where the people have no share in their government, taxation is tyranny.
2. That therefore a government is tyrannical or free, in proportion as the people are equally, or unequally, represented.
3. Convinced of this truth, it is the opinion of this meeting that the people ought to demand as a right, and not to petition as a favour, for universal representation.
4. That therefore we will petition the House of Commons no more on this subject.

The meeting approved an address calling for united action to recover their lost political rights, uncompromisingly asserting: 'THE WILL OF THE PEOPLE SHOULD BE AT ALL TIMES THE SUPREME LAW'. The address wound itself up to an apocalyptic climax:

We desire to see the sanctuary of virtue created and the standard of liberty planted in our land, around which the people may rally as to an holy of holies. In short, we desire to see the altar of equality blazing in Britain, whose streams of fire, whilst they shall shock, convulse, and tear down the rotten pillars of prejudices; whilst they shall consume tyrants, and terrify public delinquents, shall pierce into the hearts

of the whole people, and confirm the wide empire of morals on the wreck of superstition and vice.¹⁴⁵

Yorke and the SSCI leaders were triumphally paraded around the town in a coach drawn by the crowd.¹⁴⁶ Afterwards Yorke and ten of the leaders met to discuss future action. This was necessary, particularly in view of growing threats of violence from 'official' loyalists as the town's elite began to arm itself in anticipation of Government licensing of Volunteer Corps.¹⁴⁷ Gales' house had been attacked again,¹⁴⁸ stones thrown through the nearby Watson's Walk billiard rooms¹⁴⁹ (which the society used as headquarters) and the lodgings of more humble members had been fired into by armed loyalists.¹⁵⁰ Under cover of darkness, street gangs of young democrats nightly smashed the windows of leading loyalists' houses.¹⁵¹ In view of mounting pressures the leaders of the society had to contemplate arming to defend themselves. Encouraged by Yorke and Richard Davison, a journeyman printer and the former Leeds Corresponding Society secretary who had found refuge in Sheffield, it was agreed to manufacture pikes for self defence.¹⁵² Members of the society who associated themselves with physical force means had already taken measures regarding arming.¹⁵³

Table 3:8 SSCI Committee in April 1794 ¹⁵⁴

| <u>Name</u> | <u>Occupation</u> | <u>Status</u> |
|-----------------------------|--|---------------|
| John Alcock | leather inkstand maker | S |
| Richard Beale | shopkeeper, landlord | S |
| William Broomhead | unemployed cutler, full time political activist | J |
| William Camage | leather inkstand maker | S |
| William Clarke | cutler | - |
| Joseph Gales | bookseller, auctioneer, printer, agent for Royal Exchange Office | M |
| George Kent | scissor manufacturer | M |
| Matthew Lodwin [⊠] | ? | - |
| David Martin | engraver | M |
| Edward Oakes | silver plater | M |
| Edward Smith | compositor | J |
| Geo Widdison [⊠] | hairdresser and turner | M/J |

⊠ possibly no longer on the committee.

The official SSCI leadership arranged for pikes and 'night cats' to be manufactured by members of the society.¹⁵⁵ Davison's entrepreneurial zest for pike manufacture led him to approach the Leeds and Norwich societies in an attempt to sell pikes to them.¹⁵⁶ Despite the evidence of the mobilization of counter-revolutionary forces, there were signs on the horizon which still gave the SSCI confidence in its hope for a 'revolution of sentiment'. In the West Riding a mass meeting was held near Halifax. Here democrats from Halifax, Bradford, Leeds, Wakefield and Huddersfield stepped outside the dark shadow of Church and King intimidation to reveal themselves.¹⁵⁷ This meeting planned to send delegates to a meeting in Bristol to prepare for a British convention - a plan which had been initiated by the London SCI and the LCS.¹⁵⁸ The Halifax democrats sent delegates to the leading northern society, the SSCI, to get their resolutions printed and ask for advice. The SSCI advised them to wait for further information from London. Advice was asked for in the last letter sent by the society before the arrests of May. It was written to Thelwall of the SCI by Broomhead and was dated May 11 1794. With an as yet unrealized irony his letter concluded with an observation on the freedom of democrats in Sheffield:

We are not in the least intimidated in Sheffield as we can call and hold a public meeting whenever circumstances render the same necessary.¹⁵⁹

Under licence from the Government to form a Volunteer Corps, loyalists were flexing their muscles.¹⁶⁰ Vicar Wilkinson, the senior magistrate who had spent little time in the town since falling victim to the enclosure rioters in 1791, savoured the prospect. His growing confidence was boosted by the role of the local 'jeunesse' in the formation of the Volunteers:

A considerable number of the most respectable young men of Sheffield having agreed to enroll themselves to act as a military corps for the defence of the Town and neighbourhood held a meeting yesterday at which Mr Athorpe, Mr Stoum and two other JPs and I attended:

It is the opinion of the Justices, that the appearance of this Body of young men in Arms will probably have a good tendency towards repressing the insolence of the disorderly, turbulent and seditious spirit apparent in some people among the multitude.¹⁶¹

Allied victories provided the loyalists with an excuse for demonstrating their affections. Such actions merely provoked counter demonstrations by the democrats.¹⁶² The SSCI, in a public statement calling for order among its supporters, justified its arming as a measure of defence against the 'War-hoop of Church and King' which had been sounded 'with such brutal Fury at Birmingham, Nottingham, Manchester and Royton'. It offered to assist the authorities in preserving order in the town.¹⁶³ The SSCI leadership outwardly manifested quietude as it waited for signs of life from the rest of the movement. Inwardly they realized that constitutional opposition to a corrupt political system was discredited and at least a section of them began preparing for insurrectionary action.¹⁶⁴

Suddenly in mid-May 1794, amid rumours from several quarters of impending insurrectionary activity,¹⁶⁵ the Government acted. The leaders of the London SCI and the LCS were arrested, the Habeas Corpus Act suspended and a round-up of leaders of leading provincial societies was begun.¹⁶⁶ Warrants were issued for the arrests of six Sheffield activists for 'treasonable practices' - Davison (now secretary), Yorke (orator), Gales (president in all but name), Broomhead (also secretary), Camage (senior committee man and ex-secretary) and Moody (who had made pikes).¹⁶⁷ Davison and Gales successfully escaped and eventually reached America. Yorke also escaped. He was soon captured¹⁶⁸ and taken to join the others in London awaiting interrogation.¹⁶⁹ There were several other arrests of lesser officials of the society in later May and early June.¹⁷⁰ Having made statements to the local magistrates, most of these were released. This lowered the political temperature locally.¹⁷¹ Several others were spared this because they had agreed to give evidence at the trials of leading

members of the London societies.

Throughout late May and June, faced with this assault, the surviving SSCI leaders covered their tracks. The society's books were burned.¹⁷² Gales, in hiding, began to wind up his business affairs. He still provided material for the Register. His protégé, James Montgomery, took over his publishing business and replaced the Register with the Sheffield Iris. Repression in the form of the arrests, the presence of Volunteers and attacks on agents of his press,¹⁷³ led Gales to lament:

Every wretch in the country, who has either through Malice or Envy, a dislike of his neighbour will now have an opportunity of gratifying his malicious intention...spies and informers will crowd the prisons with innocent people, as long as the Liberties of Englishmen are at the mercy of such debased and infamous characters.¹⁷⁴

The growth of Volunteer corps in the region led to subscription lists being opened to pay for equipment and managing committees.¹⁷⁵ In the villages and small towns the social and economic power of the county elite was stronger than in Sheffield. Their allies, the Anglican priesthood and larger property owners, including merchant and industrial capitalists and capitalist farmers, used their power as employers to manipulate their workforces into participating in this mobilization. In Sheffield the lead given by the county elite was taken up by similar groups of large property owners.¹⁷⁶ Overnight the action of the Government had swept the democrats off the streets. Church and King loyalists, institutionalized into the Sheffield Loyal Independent Volunteers, took their place in organizing public spectacles. Allied victories such as the 'Glorious First of June' provided them with a significant excuse for loyalist pageantry. The loyalist Sheffield Courant reported this and similar spectacles at Thorpe, Chapeltown, Ecclesfield and in other local villages.¹⁷⁷

The SSCI, still suffering from the shock of the May arrests, continued to meet furtively in their headquarters. Unlike the LCS

which continued to operate with a purpose,¹⁷⁸ the SSCI appointed a managing committee which did little to continue the struggle. Finance was the major problem. The loss of Gales' financial support,¹⁷⁹ and more significantly the mounting intensity of war-time dislocation, hit them hard. The 'hostages' in London and at the barracks also guaranteed a measure of restraint from organized democrats. On the margins of the society there were still physical force activists harbouring dreams of using their pikes. Aggressive young journeymen continued to get into fights with the military and Volunteers.¹⁸⁰ The loyalists were constantly satirized in street songs.¹⁸¹ Among the mass of the population there was a turning towards the 'other-worldly' promise of the Methodists, whose preachers, often to their own surprise and initial distaste, received an 'enthusiastic' response to their preaching. The effects of war, the prospect of a poor harvest, the emptiness of the militaristic noisy exhortation of their social betters¹⁸² and the failure of the political and social millenium promised by the SSCI, pushed the populace in this direction. One of the most dramatic outbursts of Methodist mass revival in the West Riding had begun in the northern textile districts in the winter of 1792. It continued and extended into surrounding districts until 1796. By the spring of 1794 the circuits covering South Yorkshire (Wakefield, Sheffield and the newly created Rotherham circuit) were experiencing revival. Revival appeared everywhere on the wings of repression. It partly had origins in the introspection within the Methodist community following Wesley's death in 1791. However the zealous 'enthusiasts' who sparked the revival found all-pervading worldly disillusionment to their great advantage.¹⁸³

In February 1794 the report of the religious 'outpourings' at Woodhouse in the Leeds circuit had spurred the Methodist Wakefield circuit into life and thus affected communities on the northern edge of the region. It was not until March, at the Lady Day love feast, that the revival caught hold of the Sheffield circuit. Only in the

summer months did communities in the Sheffield and Rotherham circuits fully experience the intensity of revival. The summer love feast in Norfolk Street Chapel prompted the appearance of revival as a mass phenomenon. During three days in June 'the mighty rushing wind' arrived.¹⁸⁴ Crowds gathered to gain admittance to the chapel. On the third night hostile elements in the crowd (possibly rational sceptics such as deists and atheists among the SSCI) abusively shouted 'Methodist madness'. This caused trouble. Twenty constables were required to restore order.¹⁸⁵ There was certainly a great sense of disturbance in the public mind during that summer and autumn. Amongst the serious Methodists there was a feeling of millennarian imminence. This feeling was not exclusively theirs.¹⁸⁶ In August the Sheffield Iris, maintaining its rationalist temper even under the mellowing Montgomery, printed under the heading 'Age of Nonsense' the following report of a collective hallucination:

On Monday last a most astonishing phenomenon was seen in the heavens by many credible or as some folks say, credulous eye witnesses...A man on horseback in an armoured cap and cape appeared galloping about in a disk of sun, but lo suddenly two martial figures attacked him and cut off his head.¹⁸⁷

The contagion of revival spread throughout the region that autumn. John Moon, the Methodist preacher who had reluctantly ministered to Norfolk Street's swollen congregation in June, noted the exceptional participation of the young. This description suggested the extremes of self-inducement:

Even little boys and girls have prayer meetings among themselves; and one company of lads meets constantly in a field, in the evening when the weather is fine; they form a circle, and pray for each other, till they have some signal and answer of divine approbation.¹⁸⁸

For those whose political, economic and personal disillusionment and despair prompted them to attend revivalist meetings, the Methodists offered more than temporary emotional release of cathartic conversion. For many, conversion was a 'new birth', the offer of the receipt of a

new identity and a new confidence. A participant in the Norfolk Street 'madness' testified:

The Almighty has sent down the offer of the present revival as a cure for every evil. When the soul is truly alive to God, every external disorder will be rectified.¹⁸⁹

The promise of a lasting sense of emotional reassurance for 'this life' and the hope for 'after life' in reward for the dutiful submission to the pains of 'this world' could be sustained for many by the closely knit relationships provided by the Methodist community. Here not only social identity and meaning was provided for the lonely and insecure, but also material comfort for the poor and hungry.¹⁹⁰

'New birth' was no answer for a great many of the people for whom the fundamental source of personal disorganization was the threat to their employment rather than the vague threat posed by the suppression of political aspirations which most of them had not realized. For them it was the alehouse which provided comfort, despite the fact that these were frequented by recruiting parties with plenty of money to spend.¹⁹¹ In several ways the alehouse provided a more direct route to oblivion. A few people associated with the loyalists. The description in the Courant of the 'fanatic joy of the Gallery' in the theatre when Colonel Athorpe (the Volunteers' commander) took his place, remotely hinted at an oscillation of mass loyalties. More likely this was a private or select performance or else it was a propagandistic distortion.¹⁹² The Volunteers were unpopular with the people.¹⁹³ Their militaristic conceit was satirized in Joseph Mather's street songs¹⁹⁴ and thus the radical orientation of the bulk of the Sheffield crowd was maintained.

Once again the SSCI began to stir. In early August 1794 it issued a public statement signed by the caretaker committee of six. This congratulated Gales on his escape.¹⁹⁵ The release of the 'hostages' from the barracks in early September¹⁹⁶ eased the problems

of the society. While so many of their leaders were detained in London little could be achieved. Moreover the threat posed by the Volunteers and free-booting recruiting parties was formidable.¹⁹⁷ The Iris under Montgomery was unable to provide an effective democratic propaganda vehicle. Montgomery recalled the pressures he was under in a statement made thirty years later:

I found myself visited with a punishment directly attended for another, in the withdrawal of all the county-advertisements from the Iris, merely because it took the vacated place of the Sheffield Register. It was years before those advertisements were allowed to me. Nay, such was the reign of terror at home, that persons, well disposed to serve me in the way of business, have brought their orders to the office, with express injunctions that no imprint should appear at the foot of their bills, etc., lest they should give offence, and come to harm for having employed an obnoxious press.¹⁹⁸

The loss of readership, especially in the out-districts, hit the paper badly. Montgomery fought his partners to continue his allegiance to the democratic cause.¹⁹⁹ In muted editorials he continued to attack war and militarism and he tried to use the paper's agents to distribute the anti-war propaganda which the SSCI had printed in earlier years. In October this last action led to the issue of a bill of Grand Jury at Sheffield Sessions. This bound him to appear at Doncaster Sessions in January to be charged with the distribution of seditious literature.²⁰⁰

With or without a radical newspaper, the SSCI found new heart, particularly when the news of acquittals in the State Trials arrived in November and early December.²⁰¹ The caretaker committee re-opened correspondence with the active LCS. They still had their problems, as William Chow, the secretary, told the LCS: 'The finances of this society have been for the last six months in so feeble a state that we have not been able to publish anything worth sending to you'.²⁰² Morale was still high. The return of the detained leaders in December was a signal for celebration. A group of respectable local democrats celebrated the acquittal of Hardy and Tooke with a dinner at the Bull Inn in the Wicker, toasting 'Independent Juries', 'Erskine and Gibbs',

'the King', 'the Queen', 'Earl Stanhope, Major Cartwright, the Bishop of Gloucester and Sheridan', 'the 1688 Constitution', 'Pitt and the Duke of Richmond' and 'Kosciusko and the Patriots of Poland'.²⁰³ The mass of the SSCI, conspicuously less euphoric about the Constitution of 1688, participated in a Saturday evening carnival celebration of the return of the detained democrats. The London coach, containing Camage and Hill, was met by a huge crowd of people and led through the town by several hundred torch bearers. Among several flags and banners displaying democratic sentiments was a huge 'transparency' representing the 'Goddess of Liberty' with a phrygian cap and bearing a scroll enscribed, 'To the memory of Erskine, Gibbs, Camage, Hill, Moody, Widdison and Broomhead'. On the reverse was a representation of the 'Rising Sun breaking through the Clouds of Ignorance and Superstition' and subtitled, 'A Reformation to all the World'. Behind this came a large orderly procession of SSCI followers, marshalled all the way by stewards appointed by the society. The evening passed quietly. The local elite used the occasion to make some conciliatory noises. Dr Brown, a well known local philanthropist (he was also the largest subscriber to Volunteers) who had some popular credibility, made a well received speech on the honesty of juries.²⁰⁴ Conciliation tied to philanthropic but paternalistic concern was increasingly better received by the people because there was a growing awareness of the common effect of war on profits and wages in the local trades. The appeal for consensus in the community weakened the SSCI's challenge.²⁰⁵

The society battled on into 1795. The number of activists fell away to a few hundred.²⁰⁶ Montgomery was being prosecuted,²⁰⁷ their returned leaders were under obligation to testify at Yorke's trial later that year and most significant of all, mounting unemployment and general pauperization eroded their funds and possibly support. Internal dissension²⁰⁸ in the early months of 1795 diminished any remaining potential they had as democratic propagandists. There was

also increasing evidence of a split between moral and physical force advocates²⁰⁹ as the worsening employment and market situations gave the latter scope for positive action.

In the early months of 1795 the effects of war on the region's lighter trades were overshadowed by those created by poor harvests and inclement weather.²¹⁰ Grain prices in the markets were between 50-100% up on the average weekly price of the same months of 1794. They rose steeply as shortages increased. From January onwards public meetings were held throughout the region to arrange for the purchase of grain by local philanthropic subscription and its resale at 'fair' prices.²¹¹ There were numerous instances of local acts of giving relief in kind, particularly the provision of coal and wheat.²¹² An influenza epidemic, whose effects were intensified by cold and damp weather²¹³ and famine-induced hunger and which were set against the background of war and political upheaval, prompted strange forebodings of the future. In the early months of the year millennial currents ran strongly in the 'collective psyche'. The repressed millenarianism present in Methodist revivalism, still affecting the region,²¹⁴ was briefly eclipsed by fuller expressions of millenarian fantasy. Local mystics appeared²¹⁵ and in a short while they gave way to London's Richard Brothers who was extending his search for the 'lost tribes' to the provinces in the spring of 1795.²¹⁶ Such developments symptomized the disturbed nature of the popular mind in these months.²¹⁷

Harsh reality glared through the haze of millenarian fantasy. Mass pauperization continued apace. Market place inflation put strain on the poor relief administrators who were already overburdened by the increased number of dependants created by the war.²¹⁸ Under-employment, rather than unemployment, kept the working population off the parish. This was only because the recruiting parties²¹⁹ worked a 'safety valve' in the labour market.²²⁰ The immediate reality was that of food shortage. Bad harvests, forestalling in the market and

hoarding in the granaries, combined to push the price of bread grains to near-prohibitive levels for the mass of the people. The June market price for wheat in Sheffield was 75% higher than in the equivalent month of the previous year.²²¹ In Sheffield, and probably other towns in the region, wheat and oatmeal were both expensive. In the villages oatmeal was cheaper and more available and other basic food substitutes were more freely available.²²² The bread crisis of 1795 appeared more a problem of the town than the country. From April onwards there was widespread food rioting nationally.²²³ In the region there was little violence.²²⁴ An open outbreak of violence was prevented by the action of the local elite in Sheffield and throughout the region buying up grain for sale at subsidized prices.²²⁵ Threats of violence in April and June in Sheffield²²⁶ were checked by the Corn Committee and other local attempts to cushion the poor.²²⁷

While the SSCI committee remained silent and inactive during these months,²²⁸ radicals on the outside and on the extreme left of the society began to act, exploiting current events for political advantage.²²⁹ Behind the semi-respectable front of John Crome's Waingate pressroom small groups of ultra-radicals, many of whom had received their basic political training from the SSCI, met and worked out revolutionary strategies.²³⁰ Some of these, like Crome, showed at least a token respect for the SSCI's faded dream of producing a 'revolution of sentiment' through political education. Between June and September, Crome issued a weekly intellectual radical journal, The Spy. This unsuccessfully attempted to fill the gap left by the Patriot which had folded up in 1794.²³¹ Inwardly Crome and the others had come to realize that violence was the only effective weapon.

In the first week of August members of such a group provoked an incident which was to significantly discredit the town's elite and colour the antagonism of elite and mass for over a generation. This group had first tried to cause trouble in the market place where the

purchases of the Corn Committee were as yet having little effect in lowering prices and relieving hardship. An inflammatory handbill was circulated, declaring:

Treason! Treason! Treason!
Against the People!

The People's Humbug'd! A plot is discovered!
Pitt and the Committee for Bread are combined
Together to starve the Poor into the Army and Navy!
And to starve your Widows and Orphans!
God help ye Labourers of the Nation!
You are held in requisition to fight in a bad cause;
A cause that is blasted by Heaven, and damned by all good men!

Every man to his Tent, O Israel;
Sharpen your weapons, and spare not! for all
The Scrats in the Nation are united against your
Blood! your wives and your little ones!
Behold good Bread at Six Shillings per store;
And may every wearer of a Bayonet be stuck with
Heaven's loudest Thunder, that refuse to help you!
Fear not your lives! Aristocrats and Scoundrels,
Cowards! Cursed be the framers and promoters
Of the Corn Bill! And let all the People say Amen!²³²

The handbills had been distributed among the crowd gathering at the parade ground in Norfolk Street on the evening of 4 August. Here soldiers of the newly raised Royal Sheffield Regiment of Foot refused to obey orders and staged a mutiny over the non-payment of 'bread money'. Among the crowd, radicals urged the soldiers to 'stand fast' and later, in a way which suggested common purpose, 'to push matters on' and 'not to forsake them'. A radical named Eyre repeatedly pointed at their commanding officer, Colonel Cameron, crying 'knock him off'. Squire Athorpe, the magistrate, arrived and attempted to arrest Eyre. The crowd closed ranks and blocked his path. Athorpe called up the politically more reliable Volunteers and read the Riot Act. Steeled by the radicals, the crowd stood its ground. When the statutory hour had elapsed the Volunteers had taken no action and the radicals imagined they had called Athorpe's bluff. They began to throw stones and rubbish at the Volunteers and sections of the crowd joined in. So did some of the soldiers. Athorpe ordered the Volunteers to fire. Two men were killed outright and many were injured. Amidst the confusion of the crowd's dispersal, Athorpe and other mounted Volunteers

rode into the crowd brandishing their swords and causing further injuries.²³³

The events of 4 August were of great significance. They may have been the outcome of a minority engineering a confrontation between mass and elite. Yet a large portion of the crowd played very positive roles. Their sympathy with the troops (fellow townsmen) reflected a natural hatred of war, the disastrous consequences of which they were all experiencing. It reflected their anti-authoritarianism. Both instincts had been confirmed by the political and social education which the SSCI provided. The crowd's moral temper illustrated the successful earlier progress of mass radicalization, progress marked also by the popularity of radical street songs. This progress had reached its limits. The Norfolk Street Riot, like 'Peterloo' in Manchester a generation later, aroused a bitterness and hatred which survived long after the event itself. Joseph Mather crystallized popular feeling in the lines:

Corruption tell me homicide
Is wilful murder justified,
A striking precedent was tried
In August 'ninety-five',
When arm'd assassins dress'd in blue
Most wantonly their townsmen slew,
And magistrates and juries too
At murder did connive.²³⁴

Mather's songs shouted defiance that was unchallenged by the authorities. The respectable Montgomery was prosecuted for libel for his partisan reporting of the incident.²³⁵ For many of the politically aware and for all the unrealized 'sub political' mass in the town and throughout the region, Norfolk Street was a well executed lesson in terror.²³⁶ Restated by the endless military display in the counter marching of the Volunteers and parading of Yeoman Cavalry,²³⁷ it hypnotized the mass into apathy, inertia and resignation. Moreover the hunger of large sections of the population and their dependence on the charity of the elite and its auxiliaries powerfully reinforced

the mechanisms of mass de-politicization.

The SSCI held a meeting on 10 August to protest about the war and to petition the King to call for peace. It was claimed that the meeting was attended by 10,000 people. Citizen Barrow, a travelling delegate of the active LCS, was present. Neither he nor the SSCI orators had anything practical to offer. The poetic appeals to an empty sky, gods and kings were no immediate cure for hunger. Political bankruptcy seemed to proclaim itself in Barrow's self-conscious ineffectualism:

O could I write with the pen of Junius or could I
thunder with the elegance of Demosthenes, I would
endeavour to rouse my countrymen from their dread-
ful lethargy.²³⁸

The authorities were not impressed by the meeting. Vicar Wilkinson, in his correspondence with the Home Office, described it as 'thinly attended'. He referred to 'great changes in the Minds and Behaviour of the People'.²³⁹ He anticipated the seemingly spontaneous reaction to the Corn Committee's activity later that month. Then a crowd of grateful women gathered at the Cutlers' Hall and offered to draw Dr Browne's carriage through the streets. Paternalism seemed to unite the community.²⁴⁰

Elsewhere in the region, where a traditional-orientation still dominated the actions of the mass, paternalism coped easily with the frustrations caused by the food crisis. Paternalism did not entirely cope in Barnsley, the second largest industrial community in the region where the growing population of weavers had organized their first 'turn out' in 1794.²⁴¹ On 12 August the town witnessed a 'dear bread' riot which was suppressed by the magistrates who ordered two women to be whipped.²⁴² In the weaving districts Jacobins still lingered in the darkness of illegality.

The SSCI was close to death. Continued repression at a local level, reinforced in November and December by the passing of the Two Acts, buried it as a popular society.²⁴³ Two public meetings

were held to protest about the Acts but these showed the society as a shadow of its former self.²⁴⁴ Nevertheless its activists continued the struggle in various ways. No amount of patrician cheap bread had bought their souls. During the intense repression of 1794 and 1795 some radicals, like William Broomhead (in deep spiritual turmoil) and several of the caretaker committee, found temporary refuge with the Methodists.²⁴⁵ Others turned their organizational skills to schemes of self help being discussed among the skilled journeymen, small master and shopkeeper members of the town's friendly societies.²⁴⁶ In all these re-directions of political energy, the original life force, a belief in democracy, was not destroyed but found new, less immediate expressions.²⁴⁷ Only in the tightly-knit circle of ultra-radicals and bolder constitutionalists was any political energy left. In a twilight world of illegality the debate continued and new organizations, ideas and strategies appeared. The first moment of popular radicalism was over.²⁴⁸

2) Repression and the Birth of the Revolutionary Tradition -
The Voices answered 1796-1802

I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it; and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it to him.

Ezekiel ch.21 v.27

I hope and trust that notwithstanding my fate, and perhaps the fate of many others who may follow me, that still the same principles of liberty, justice and humanity, will triumph over falsehood, despotism and delusion, and everything else hostile to the interests of the human race.

Edward Marcus Despard at his execution in 1803. 249

(a) Summary

While these years saw growing political repression and economic hardship borne by the region's working population, they also witnessed the first real moment of revolutionary challenge to the established political and social order. Significant developments, not unrelated, also took place in the struggle of wage labour to organize. These illustrated the continuing process of replacement of 'craft' by 'labour class' mentalities.

.....

(b) The Jacobin-United tradition

Despite continued paternalist activity by the elite,²⁵⁰ food shortages and market place inflation continued to provide the dominant influences on the lives of working people throughout the region during the early months of 1796. Politics were a secondary concern. The popular political instructors were no longer able to campaign in the open. A short-lived campaign against the Two Acts was to no avail.²⁵¹ Nevertheless there was evidence of at least the Sheffield crowd's continued radical orientation even though the channels for its expression in direct political agitation no longer existed. The continuance of the intimidatory military rituals of the local elite and the military garrison continued to sustain the bitter lessons of

earlier years.²⁵² In the popular leisure culture, Joseph Mather's angry satires, a vital element in radical folk memory, continued to be well received.²⁵³ In the expression of consumer protest, so often a 'traditional-orientated' form of behaviour, there were signs of a more articulate belligerence. A labourer, arrested during a disturbance in the butter market in Sheffield where there were incidents in both February and June 1796,²⁵⁴ defended his actions by saying, 'they lived in a land of Liberty where liberty ought to be had' and that 'he was very much surprised that it would see their wives and children starve when it might be otherwise'.²⁵⁵

Market place inflation was the most significant cause of rapidly reduced living standards among large sections of the region's industrial workers from late 1794 onwards. The inflationary pressure had been highest in 1795 but high market prices had been maintained well into 1796. Between December 1794 and June 1796 wheat prices in Sheffield market averaged levels 60% above those of 1793-4 (June-June) and 100% above those of 1791-2 (June-June). Retail prices of several basic commodities quoted in the press suggested the general spread of price increases.

Table 3:9 Pre-war prices in Sheffield compared with those prevailing in 1796.²⁵⁶

| | <u>Prices (old pence)</u> | | <u>% increase</u> |
|--|---------------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| | <u>pre-war</u> | <u>Nov-Dec 1796</u> | |
| Bread (per quartern loaf) | 6½ | 8½ | 27 |
| Meat (lb.) | 4½ | 8½ | 90 |
| Small beer (per gal. quality delicate) | 4 | 8½ | 112 |
| Butter (lb.) | 9 | 1/2 | 55 |
| Cheese (lb.) | 6 | 8 | 33 |
| Sugar (lb.) | 8 | 1/1 | 60 |
| Soap (lb.) | 6 | 10 | 66 |
| Starch (lb.) | 8 | 1/6 | 125 |
| Candles (lb.) | 7½ | 11 | 30 |
| Wine (bottle) | 2/9 | 3/3 | 12 |

Underemployment had some effect on the level of money wages in some of the 'light' trades, especially the largest employer - cutlery.

The recruitment of men for the war was still serving to reduce the supply of labour and to steady the fall in wage levels.²⁵⁷ In contrast, in the small 'heavy' sector the demand for coal miners, ironstone getters and for all forms of ironworks' labour was increasing, particularly because of the stimulus war demand provided.

In the hard-hit Sheffield cutlery trades there were signs of a reaction by organized labour. Possibly because of some improvement in trade in the spring with the arrival of the American orders, demands for increases in wages were made by the journeymen in the forging and hafting sections of the town's table knife, spring knife, edge tool and razor making trades and also among the town's cabinet makers.²⁵⁸ Demands were made first in March but the masters ignored them. The workmen gave them the customary month's notice in June in the table and spring knife trades and a strike was commenced in July.²⁵⁹ The masters organized rapidly, calling on the moral and financial support of employers in other trades.²⁶⁰ The two groups of striking journeymen did not appear to have similar support from other workgroups.²⁶¹ The cutlers' demands for a 16% rise for forging work and a 4-16% rise for hafting were not substantial.²⁶² The masters refused to pay and aggressively set about breaking the strike. This was achieved by mid-August by prosecuting the ringleaders for conspiracy.²⁶³

There were signs of a form of 'labour class' consciousness among the industrially active journeymen. Their public statements suggested a growing awareness of themselves as a distinct social category of wage earning 'Working Mechanics'.²⁶⁴ Their notions of class had no metaphorical perfection but they none the less still defined real social categories. The razor makers and strikers, explaining their economic burdens, noted:

At the present rate of almost all the Necessaries of Life, with the present Weight of Taxes, that lie upon every Branch of the Community, it is become a very hard matter, even for those in the middle class of life, to go through

the world with that comfort and credit which is so desirable to an honest mind; how much more difficult, yea, almost intolerable for us on whose labours alone are dependent our wives and our children.²⁶⁵

'Craft consciousness' persisted in the same area of activity. An anonymous 'Address to the Spring Knife Cutlers', written by a member of the journeymen's committee, observed in a conciliatory way after justifying their organization:

Let us likewise, strive by every honest method, to cultivate and improve a good understanding between our masters and us; and endeavour by our behaviour to convince them, that we esteem their interest and ours to be inseperable; that we are not actuated by a spirit of opposition; that our society is established with no other view, but to advise the good of the whole then, provided our proceedings are founded in reason and conducted with prudence and moderation, we may reasonably hope, that we shall be so far from incurring their displeasure that we shall merit their favour and approbation.²⁶⁶

It is possible that energies activated in the earlier political agitation were finding new expression in industrial action. The spring knife cutlers, perhaps still bound by a form of industrial 'craft consciousness', now believed their actions should be 'founded in reason'. 'Reason' was the force breaking the hard shell of deference and its political form was finding industrial expression.

Some of the energy created in political struggle had found other contexts in which to operate including the struggle for a more democratic church among the Methodists, the democratic operation of the friendly and sick societies and in oddfellowship.²⁶⁷ The energy was partly being consumed in being redirected into less direct political action. This and repression explained the silence of Sheffield's democrats. The democratic cause was not entirely forgotten. John Thelwall, travelling for the LCS, met many determined democrats when he visited Sheffield in 1796. He noted the existence of 'a great body of virtue, intelligence and well grounded principle among what may be called the Sansculotterie'. He noted the lack of direction among the democrats, particularly the absence of leadership from men of

'considerable property' which had kept the cause alive elsewhere.²⁶⁸

In Sheffield and the region as a whole, the democratic cause progressed little in 1796 and 1797. Not only was there a redirection of political energies amongst the leadership group, but there was the powerful operation of the machinery of repression. The elite firmly reiterated its social hegemony with aggressive military displays which combined with conspicuous acts of local paternalism to weaken mass allegiance to the democratic cause. Added to this, market place inflation and the threat of food shortage lessened after the harvest of 1796. While in the spring of 1797 the LCS tried to activate old centres such as Sheffield, its energies were at last being drained by repression.²⁶⁹ The Sheffield 'Friends of Liberty', an 'ad hoc' meeting of old democrats, told the LCS in May that they wanted nothing to do with the political nation, they were finished with addresses, petitions and the paraphernalia of constitutionalism. They hailed this hour in terms of impending crisis when the political nation would have to call on the people:

Let us wait then, with patience for the approaching crisis; and they who have so contemptuously rejected our petition will be obliged to petition us...By such a crisis, and by such alone, can this country be effectually emancipated. The arrival of such a crisis nothing can avert.²⁷⁰

Theirs was a revolutionary vision of a new political order. They advocated restraint and non-intervention by the people in the process of its disintegration for so strong were the forces of self-destruction that they saw within the old. The fierce energy expended in their denunciation of the existing system and the suggestion of the need for separateness from any of the paraphernalia of the old that might survive the crisis, suggested the general shifting of their thinking away from constitutionalism closer to the final step of advocating revolutionary intervention when the final crisis within the political nation failed to materialize. Taunted by the LCS that their recent quietude was 'inconsistent with their former struggles in favour of Liberty'

and that they had, 'slackened in the hour of danger', they rejoined that:

the persecution of Associates, the groans of imprisoned and expired Patriots, the death sighs of Gerald and Skirving, ring in our ears; the tears of their helpless families are present in our imaginations, and our hearts weep blood at the bitter recollection.

Extending their argument to claim that action such as the LCS advocated was superficial in the face of the inevitability of the end of a corrupt system, they continued by observing:

...in the midst of all these feelings, it is not the dismissal or the punishment of Ministers that could afford a moment's gratification to our minds.

They stressed that total reform of representation was needed:

Such Reform will never be obtained by the assistance of any Administration, connected with any faction of great proprietors and Borough mongers; the instruments of this great work must be in the hands of the people - and them alone; they must throw themselves on to the people and go, fairly and fully forward with the people; in short they must feel they are part of the people, and nothing more; and this the men who, in the event of the present change must succeed to power, will never do till they find there is nothing else to be done.²⁷¹

At this moment they lacked confidence but also did not contemplate the necessity of actively intervening to hasten the process. This private resignation was reflected in the public inactivity of the democrats. Although the local elite was in a panic in the summer, there were no public meetings held to carry the democratic confrontation into the open and to challenge the Two Acts as in London.²⁷² The elite's confidence returned. Vicar Wilkinson wrote to the Home Office in August:

I am persuaded indeed that the numbers of disaffected at this place are diminished, or else their hopes and spirits are much checked and abated, as to prevent them from showing themselves with so much confidence in their cause, and audacious reliance on the strength and number of their party as heretofore.²⁷³

An improvement in England's weak position in the war against France during the latter part of the year,²⁷⁴ an improvement in trade²⁷⁵

and an adequate harvest,²⁷⁶ all served to frustrate such hopes of an inevitable crisis in the affairs of the ruling class which democrats now waited on. Tense expectation produced 'eccentricity' in weaker minded democrats. William Broomhead walked the streets of Sheffield on the national fast day of 1797 (Dec.19) stopping to doff his cap and proclaim on every street corner:

The fast day is over; we need pray no more,
For we've renewed our licence to rob and starve the poor.²⁷⁷

This expectation produced a more hard-headed reaction in others, but one with the same consideration of 'social questions'. The small circle of ultra-radicals assumed greater importance. They had contact with the newly formed United Englishmen in Lancashire (and one suspects with those in London also) and began to adopt their methods of organization and revolutionary ideals.²⁷⁸

The immediate effects of the arrests of key United men in Manchester and London in the spring of 1798,²⁷⁹ the failure of the Irish rising²⁸⁰ and the general effect of the Government's additional repressive legislation of 1798 and 1799,²⁸¹ combined with the mass loyalism evoked by the English naval victories²⁸² to frustrate the early growth of the United movement. Political radicals, both social democrats and revolutionaries, disappeared further into the twilight of illegality. Behind locked doors new answers to old questions were produced. New and sharper social perspectives were shaped by minds that were digesting the writing of Paine, Volney, Voltaire, Helvetius, Mirabeau, Godwin, Rousseau and D'Holbach.²⁸³ Among these various critiques of the political arrangements of society, and highly significant for the development of a 'labour class' consciousness, was Volney's dialogue between the 'Privileged Class' and 'the People' in his fifteenth chapter, 'New Age':

People: (to the Privileged Class) 'Why stand you apart?
Are you not one of our number?

Privileged Class: No, you are the people; we are the privileged class; we have laws, customs, and rights peculiar to ourselves.

People: And what labour do you perform in the society?

Privileged Class: None; we are not made to labour.

People: How then have you acquired your wealth?

Privileged Class: By taking the trouble to govern you.

People: To govern us! and this is what you call governing?
We toil, and you enjoy; we produce and you dissipate;
wealth flows from us, and you absorb it. Privileged
men, class distinct from the people, form a nation
apart and govern yourselves.²⁸⁴

The radical cause still drew its strength from the alliance of the radical petty bourgeoisie of shopkeepers, lesser professionals, small masters and semi-independent craftsmen with quasi and more fully proletarian wage workers. They could see themselves as 'the People' whose voices Volney projected. Their social consciousness was developed further by political association. Economically they shared enough experiences in common to recognize themselves as the 'Productive' or 'Useful classes'. The mutualism of the small-workshop world which still maintained the craft mentality blunted their critical questioning of the immediate economic and social nature of production. Their popular political struggle threw up ideas relating to this, particularly notions of labour value. However, their major concern was for the nature of political arrangements. Not until the more proletarian elements repudiated the economic values of the petty bourgeoisie could such notions serve as the keystone of a new 'labour class' ideology which could confront the economic and social contradictions of the newly emerging forms of capitalism.

However underdeveloped, ideas about labour value were still important, especially when projected outside the immediate arena of political struggle. Where the more proletarian elements among the region's emerging labour class of cutlers, miners, linen weavers and other smaller groups of industrial workers were organizing to protect their economic position,²⁸⁵ these notions were added to the fund of self-discovered understanding. What was the relation between early radicals and industrial activists will never be known with certainty.

We should not begin with the negative assumption that there could be no contact. A hint of the possibilities can be read into John Crome's possession (for reprinting or distribution?) of a 1797 pamphlet 'The Rights of Swine'²⁸⁶ which was written by a 'Methodist preacher in the Nottingham circuit'. Crome had been on the fringe of the SSCI and was one of Sheffield's small circle of ultra-radicals. He had also worked for the cutlery workers during the Corporation struggle of the 1780's and presumably had contacts with the town's network of trade-friendly and sick societies. The pamphlet described the pauperization of the Nottingham stocking weavers in the mid-1790's. It used some interesting language. It suggested that stagnant commerce had not been the cause of the weavers' misery but that it had been the increased cost of necessities. Commenting that rents and provision prices had increased and wages had fallen, it argued that taxation of the poor was the final blow. 'Who but the labourer produces labour?', it asked, reminding its readers that 'labour alone is the price and payment of all things...the poor work all, pay all, and if they will not hire themselves to be killed (strange truth) they are all likely to be starved'. Such notions were part of the common currency of literate circles among the politically and industrially organized advanced sections of an emerging 'labour class'. As yet these circles were small and hemmed in by political and industrial repression.²⁸⁷

The popular radical political cause discovered little new energy during the severe winter months of 1799-1800. The harvest of 1799 had been poor. In October grain prices in Sheffield were 60% above those of October 1798.²⁸⁸ Public soup kitchens, selling cheap soup and giving away free bread, began operating in the town from December onwards.²⁸⁹ Montgomery commented in the Iris that, 'the severe necessities of the times, and the inclemency of the season impell the unfortunate to crowd for the relief in the most solicitous and eager manner so that enough cannot be made to serve all'.²⁹⁰ Subscriptions to help the poor were begun in December.²⁹¹ The soup kitchen at the

Cutlers' Hall was dispensing a thousand $1\frac{1}{2}$ quarts of soup three times daily per week throughout January 1800.²⁹² Such charity was understandably encouraged by the self-interested local elite.²⁹³

Throughout England the winter and early spring months of 1800 witnessed widespread market disturbances.²⁹⁴ Despite a second set of subscriptions, the local elite could not prevent similar occurrences in the region in April when wheat touched a 50-55 shillings per load peak in Sheffield market.²⁹⁵ A flour warehouse in Queen Street was attacked in what appeared to be an isolated incident.²⁹⁶ Throughout the summer and early autumn things got little better. During the last week of August a crowd of several hundred persons, mainly women, attacked mealsellers' premises in Sheffield.²⁹⁷ There were spontaneous gatherings of people in the open fields outside the town to discuss the price of bread.²⁹⁸ On 2 October, the next market day, parties of country people joined angry townsfolk in the market place. In an ugly mood, many of them armed with bludgeons, they surged out of the market and proceeded down the Attercliffe road towards corn mills situated outside the town. There was expectation of help from the collier population on the route. The magistrates, beset by problems of rousing the local Volunteers to act against their own townsmen, sent for military reinforcements. Earl Fitzwilliam, at Wentworth, on receiving a note telling him of 'a rising among the people', brought the two troops of Rotherham Yeomen Cavalry into the town along the Attercliffe road. In a brief confrontation the insurgents were scattered and returned in a disorganized state to the town later that evening. Only after the Riot Act had been read was the town quietened.²⁹⁹

Such incidents, treated as straightforward market disturbances, were confidently handled by the local elite.³⁰⁰ However, the late autumn and early winter, which saw intensified market place inflation after the poor harvest,³⁰¹ witnessed events which challenged this confidence. The tight knot of ultra-radicals had reactivated the networks of organization that had appeared to be unused since the

spring of 1798. They appeared to respond to a renewal of activity by 'United' men in Lancashire and London that year.³⁰² They made their presence felt by distributing leaflets and holding illicit meetings. Openly, John Crome printed a handbill (dated August 1800) which satirically recorded the lament of, 'Farmers, Corn factors, Millers, Badgers' at the fall in the price of corn.³⁰³ Other handbills, unsigned and probably dating from 1795 and attacking amongst others, 'Life and fortune Gentry...swindlers or cut throats, who sell the flesh of the swinish multitude at a stipulated price per stone; or Thirty Crowns Banco', were found in several Sheffield workshops in late September.³⁰⁴ In early November there were reports of 'seditious' literature being distributed to the Norfolk militia who were still billeted in the town after the October riot.³⁰⁵ Inflammatory printed literature had already been used to call a public meeting in the several villages around Tickhill, twelve miles east of Rotherham. One handbill talked of, 'a conspiracy of Badgers and Farmers to keep up the high price of provisions, and at the same time, to lower the price of labour'. It declared in the name of 'the People':

We think it our duty to Guard against this Oppressive and Tyrannical design, knowing if they succeed, we shall have nothing to look at, or expect but misery and want. We hereby give notice that a public meeting will be held of working people in the Parish of Tickhill, and its vicinity, of both labourers and mechanics on Bagerly Green on Sunday 19th Day of October 1800 at 2 o'clock in the afternoon; there to take into consideration and devise some method to prevent if possible the impending calamities.

Although strangers were reported in the area, no orator or leaders appeared on the afternoon of the appointed day. An anticipating crowd gathered and dispersed only when pressured by the Rotherham Yeomen cavalry. Similar pamphlets were distributed in loyalist Doncaster.³⁰⁶ Probably not serious attempts at political education, these distributions gave the radicals confidence that similar means could be used to lure the military out of position on a grander scale

at some later date. They were also effective blows in the 'war of nerves' the radicals waged upon the Volunteers and Yeomen cavalry and military. This was a war in which the populace, who resented the intimidating military presence of the men of property, could also participate.

In late November and early December there were large-scale nightly meetings held in open fields on the eastern edge of Sheffield on the skyline of the Park district.³⁰⁷ Over 600 people were claimed to be present at the first of these on 27 November. A local magistrate reported to Earl Fitzwilliam on 1 December that several meetings had been held previous to this. He said that at such meetings, 'an orator in a mask harangues the people...reads letters from distant societies by the light of a candle and immediately burns them'.³⁰⁸ That night 2,000 people attended the gathering.³⁰⁹ The magistrates, who promptly issued a proclamation against any further meetings,³¹⁰ were alarmed by a report from this meeting that was brought back by their spy, Captain Warris of the Sheffield Volunteers. This report makes fascinating reading. Warris, a respectable silverware manufacturer by trade, had no pecuniary motive for sensationalizing his report. That he was recognized and temporarily excluded from the gathering by a ring of accusers, makes his testimony subject to some slight suspicion. He claimed when excluded to have heard talk of arming for self-defence, of plans for arms making and boasts that they would 'overcome all their enemies'. Later he was led into an 'inner ring' of lively debators who provided the central focus of the mass gathering. This ring was surrounded by a largely spectator body among part of which he had been imprisoned. Warris was asked his reason for being present. He told the leaders that he thought it was a public meeting to discuss the best means to reduce the price of provisions. Asked what he thought the solution was, Warris said he thought, 'the master manufacturers should buy corn and handmills and sell it out to the

workmen at prime cost'. His captors replied, 'the master manufacturers would not be at the trouble...' that they should 'strike at the Root of the Evil', which was 'Government'. They claimed that, 'William Pitt and all his measures were execrable to Human Nature... that nothing could prosper in the hands, he would starve them all to death...that nothing would relieve them but a change of Ministers, exterminating Mr Pitt and putting Charles Fox in his place'.³¹¹

Night meetings continued after the proclamation.³¹² They appeared to end in late December. Local magistrates were clearly very disturbed by these events. They talked seriously of the existence of 'secret committees...digesting plans and preparing weapons'.³¹³ Earl Fitzwilliam, the Lord-Lieutenant of the West Riding, remained calm³¹⁴ but his magistrates did not. Their confidence was badly shaken. One of the Sheffield magistrates wrote privately to the Home Office claiming, 'no exertion of the magistrates, or disposition of the military force of the country, will prevent the most serious disturbances'.³¹⁵ Similar activity in Lancashire, where the United Englishmen were renewing their organization throughout 1800 and 1801, was prompting similarly concerned letters from that quarter. In the winter months of 1800-01 rumours abounded. In December 1800 there were reports of a 'general rising' to be signalled from London to begin in Lancashire,³¹⁶ of the once loyalist dominated Birmingham having to be crammed with troops to prevent an insurrectionary outbreak³¹⁷ and of progress being made by the radical cause outside traditional centres.³¹⁸

In January and February of 1801 to the Home Office came more substantial reports of extended United organization throughout Lancashire, of extensive oath-taking based on Ezekiel ch.21 v.25-7 and of completing dates for a 'general rising' in the spring.³¹⁹ In terms of the weight of correspondence with the Home Office, little appeared to be happening in the West Riding and particularly in its

southernmost manufacturing districts. In the communities of the region, the local elite extended its charity through more subscriptions to provide cheap grain and substitute foods (potatoes and rice) as well as cheap soup.³²⁰ Because of the price inflation and worsening trade, conditions deteriorated for the great mass of the working population. In March over 10,000 people in Sheffield were said to be in need of assistance.³²¹ Even the 'respectable' members of sick, friendly and benefit societies were beginning to be hit as societies financially folded up.³²² So great was the disorganization of the 'collective psyche' that millennarian fever once again overtook it in the early spring. The New Jerusalemites, the surviving followers of Richard Brothers, reappeared in the popular imagination.³²³ The colour and confusion they brought into the social equation explained the use of the term 'Ezekielites' to describe another more worldly political sect appearing at the same time in the Riding - the United Englishmen.³²⁴

From late March, magistrates in the West Riding, particularly in the woollen manufacturing districts of the north, inundated Fitzwilliam with reports of night meetings, the spreading of seditious handbills, oaths being sworn to 'twist in' new members and of rumours of imminent revolution.³²⁵ The temporary lapsing of the Two Acts of 1795 and the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act between March and April 1801 partly explained these meetings.³²⁶ More significant was the higher level of organizing activity among local radical cells. These were adopting the organizational forms and responding to the promptings of the political strategists of the United leadership in London and Lancashire.³²⁷ Little can be discovered about what was happening in the southern part of the West Riding during the spring and early summer of 1801. The Lancashire magistrates, more active than their West Riding counterparts in employing spies and informers, made some authentic contact with the United movement in Lancashire and wider afield.³²⁸ From the reports of their agents we could be led to

believe Sheffield's United organization was well developed and that its agents were involved in propagandizing the woollen districts and that these acted as couriers for the Riding as a whole with Lancashire, London and Scotland. There were wilder and more insubstantial reports of Sheffield providing arms for the movement as a whole.³²⁹ It was claimed that Sheffield delegates were expected at the important Rivington Pike meeting near Wigan on 24 May.³³⁰ Fortunately none came because this was the chance the magistrates took to counter-attack the growing movement by arresting activists.³³¹

Whatever the state of organization in Sheffield and the southern West Riding in these months, it can be proved without any doubt that the United organization was firmly established locally in late summer and early autumn. In June some interesting information regarding Sheffield came into the hands of the Lancashire magistrates. News that SSCI veterans Crome and Camage were involved in a revolutionary organization which was arming for insurrection was supported by a copy of a convincing blueprint for revolution obtained in Sheffield. Reprinted SSCI literature dated 1801 was also brought hot from Crome's press.³³² There were subsequent claims in early July of night meetings on the edge of town. The adoption of new and tighter methods of organization was also claimed.³³³ More open meetings were held in the woollen districts of the West Riding throughout July and August.³³⁴ The United men activated the people with propaganda. They were recruiting vigorously in all the towns of the area. Sheffield was no exception. Later confessions suggested significant efforts at recruitment were being made as late as September and October.³³⁵ Then a good harvest (with the promise of cheaper bread) and peace preliminaries (meaning better trade) intervened to take the sting out of the United men's campaign.

In August at the height of this campaign of 1801 there was a real penetration into the United organization in Sheffield by two agents of the Bolton magistrates who were working as delegates for

the Lancashire United men. They met the Sheffield leaders, eight of whose names, occupations and addresses they listed.³³⁶ They witnessed an initiation ritual (using the United Englishmen's oath) and testified to the tight organization of a group who planned to produce the 'fifteenth legion of 15,000 men brigaded like the London force'. Arming and drilling in small groups was widespread. The two agents also testified to the determination of these men, at least three of whom had been active members of the SSCI. They particularly noticed the radicals had been reactivated by the return from London of Caleb Taylor, a travelling United delegate from Lancashire who brought with him new directions for swearing in members.

In the event, the 'fifteenth legion' did not materialize in the late autumn and early winter of 1801 as the price of bread tumbled and mass celebration of the prospect of peace³³⁷ got under way. Lancashire radicals lost their initiative. In January 1802 Fletcher, the Bolton magistrate, commented that their activities were, 'at a stand because of the want of organization between the old mode and the new mode'. In Yorkshire he observed, 'the progress of disaffection not so much at a stand'.³³⁸

Despite the arrival of peace in March 1802, the level of radical activity was not diminished, indeed Fletcher's agents detected a quickening of pace. That month his agent Bent, acting as a delegate for the United men of Manchester, travelled to Leeds, Wakefield and Sheffield on United business. He brought back to his master a remittance listing names of a fifteen-man 'Wakefield and Almondbury' committee representing 645 members, credentials from Manchester signed by eleven men representing 1,872 members and a remittance from Sheffield signed by thirteen and representing 1,615 members. The thirteen Sheffielders were:

William Wolstenholm
 William Lee 'chief'
 Henry Barlow
 Thomas Troth 'chief'

Edward Green 'chief'
 William Mercer
 William Pedley 'chief'
 Jeremiah Elliot
 William Cochran 'chief'
 John Crome
 Benjamin Moore
 William Wrankley [Ronksley]
 George Howe 'secretary'

Five were listed as chiefs, the rest were probably 'conductors' or lesser officials of the United men.³³⁹ Independent sources show Ronksley had been a 'conductor' and Lee a 'chief' since October 1801.³⁴⁰ Two names were common to this and the earlier committee; John Crome and Thomas Troth. Of the whereabouts of the remainder of the August committee, there was certainty about only one. Timothy Gales was dead, having committed suicide in February.³⁴¹ With a knowledge of later developments in 1802 and 1817, it is possible to tentatively suggest that now there had been a complete takeover of the United organization in Sheffield by hard line physical force activists and that the more constitutionalist-minded SSCI veterans had withdrawn in despair.

In May and June 1802 there were reports suggesting a renewal of night meeting in the woollen districts of the West Riding. Radical political literature circulated and there was resumed talk of imminent revolution.³⁴² In July the Riding's magistrates in Quarter Sessions called for more troops to be drafted in.³⁴³ Trouble was confined to the woollen districts. Hugh Parker, the Sheffield magistrate, wrote in mid-August:

At no point were the Town of Sheffield and the surrounding villages more disposed to be peaceable and less interested in continuing plans and weapons hostile to Government.³⁴⁴

In the woollen districts July and August saw a continuation of meetings in which the United men were heavily implicated.³⁴⁵ This was in the face of military reinforcements being brought into these districts.³⁴⁶ Pamphlet literature circulated freely, particularly an 'Address to the United Britons' which incorporated all the characteristics of the

United Englishmen's political and social programme. It proclaimed:

Unanimosity and Perseverance

- 1st. To protect every member of the Community equally, in the fullest enjoyment of his natural rights from the force and injustice of any of his fellow subjects.
- 2nd. To protect the whole nation in all her Rights against Industry, and Commerce of any other Nation or Society upon Earth.
- 3rd. To instruct the Community in those branches of Education which are essential to form Useful Citizens.

You yourselves are the only men with whom the Deity has deposited the unalienable power of righting all your own wrongs; and it certainly is the highest of all Treason tamely to resign this power into the hands of Usurpers. No! You will not tamely resign it; No, you have resolved to obtain it.

1. An equality of Civil, Political, and Religious rights; This must effectually cut off Oppressors from power.
2. An equal representation in the Legislation of your Country. This is perfect liberty, with the power of preserving it.

Tyrants tremble, the People are awake.³⁴⁷

In August the United men in Sheffield and more widely in the West Riding³⁴⁸ were alerted to be ready to act in conjunction with expected action in London. This did not materialize and the United mobilization was temporarily deferred.³⁴⁹ Soon afterwards they prepared again³⁵⁰ despite the unfavourable political possibilities created by a good harvest.³⁵¹ News of expected action in London in November reached them and they fully reactivated their organization.³⁵² Despard's London coup failed. The arrest of Despard and his followers on November 16 killed off the revolutionary dream of the United men nationally.³⁵³

In Sheffield the loose talk of new converts led to the arrest of two of the leaders, William Lee (a 'director') and William Ronksley (a 'conductor'). The leadership of the local 'underground' movement was driven into disarray.³⁵⁴ The magistrates, so sceptical in previous months, woke up to the reality of the United organization³⁵⁵ as night meetings and rumours of further attempts at insurrection continued

throughout November and December. A Barnsley magistrate wrote to Fitzwilliam of the general turmoil in the town during late November:

The women all talk mysteriously. There is a general expectation of they know not what. Like the second advent, the time is coming, the day is at hand.

Reporting the existence of nightly meetings in the locality he made a connection with the Despard affair:

I entertain no doubt but that if Despard and his party had discovered themselves in London in numbers, there would have been a general Rebellion against Superiors throughout the country, a general throwing down of the drumsticks and an abandonment of themselves to the consequences.³⁵⁶

J.H. Burland, the mid-nineteenth century Barnsley annalist and historian who collected much of his information from oral sources, recorded that in 1802, 'adherents of Colonel Despard held secret political meetings at Carr Green in the township of Darton'.³⁵⁷ More confused folk recollections recorded that arms to be used by local radicals in 1802 were found thirty-five years later in a quarry in Clayton West.³⁵⁸ Other documentary evidence in a satirical song of these years suggests that local radicals were active after the Despard business and that in December the authorities were called out in anticipation of an attack on Wentworth House.³⁵⁹ The reliability of Burland's informants, if nothing else, confirms the reasonable suspicion that the democratic propagandizing begun by the SSCI had been effective in other communities of the region, particularly in the northern weaving districts.

Radical cells outside Sheffield appeared to have survived the ice frost of political repression that had descended in the middle and later 1790's. All too soon these groups saw after the Despard business that any potential mass support was fast slipping away. The return to a state of open war with France took only till May 1803. It was now a war against the imperial and commercial ambitions of Empire rather than the political idealism of the Republic. This produced a re-

alignment in mass attitudes towards a heightened sense of patriotism³⁶⁰ which did not favour the radicals. Thus for the moment the political struggle for democracy was over, the democrats' dream faded. Now however the traditional moulds of deference were noticeably cracked and other political generations were arising to break them.

Footnotes to Chapter 3

1. 41 Geo. III cap. 97 i . See R.E. Leader, History of the Cutlers' Company etc. op.cit., II, 15.
2. The 1797 directory listed the names of 27 merchant partnerships where at least one of the partners was associated with the non-regulated trades. 24 firms of factor-manufacturers were listed, 9 of which had associations with the non-regulated trades.
3. Figures from Sheffield Assay Office by permission of Assay Master.
4. A copy of the Register of the persons concentrated in the manufacture of silver wares and the marks extended to them 1773-1907 (Sheffield, 1911).
5. J. Robinson, A Directory of Sheffield (Sheffield, 1797), passim.
6. ibid., passim.
7. For a description of the works in progress see M.W. Flinn (ed.), Svedenstierna's Tour of Great Britain 1802-3 - the travel diary of an industrial spy (Newton Abbott, 1973), 92-6.
8. H. Scrivenor, A Comprehensive History of the Iron Trade (1841), 95.
9. Thorncliffe and Elsecar.
10. A.K. Clayton, History of Elsecar and Milton Ironworks, unpublished manuscript, 1956 in SCL.
11. An undated printed report (c. 1790) in SCL, MD 1745 in SCL gives daily production figures for the pits in the immediate vicinity of Sheffield: Ponds-150 tons per day, Attercliffe-150, Darnall-80, Gleadless-10, Thorpe Hesley-5, Masborough-5, Wortley-3 and Kimberworth-2.
12. R.M. Cox, thesis op.cit., 32.
13. A.K. Clayton, op.cit.
14. Goodchild Coal Mss. op.cit., 12.
15. This group included aristocrats like Fitzwilliam and Norfolk who employed managers, ironmasters like the Walkers and Newton Chambers and Co. as well as smaller gentlemen or yeomen coal-masters like Samuel Thorpe of Gawber and Jonas Clarke of Silkestone (a Barnsley attorney).
16. These aspects of Thorncliffe's development are covered in Baxter, thesis op.cit., ch. 3 passim.
17. Examined fully in the following section.
18. Directory of Barnsley copied in full in Burland, Annals I, 262.
19. J.H. Burland, Miscellaneous Writings Mss., 429 - the recollections of Robert Maclintock regarding the first weavers' turnout of 1794.
20. Figures from Don Navigation Minute Books, Archives of the British Transport Historical Records, London.
21. Wage Books of Thomas Nowill and Co., Bradbury Collection in SCL.
22. Figures by permission of the Assay Master, SAO.
23. Sheffield Local Register op.cit., ix.
24. ibid., various entries.

25. Letters of two Sheffield popular radical activists, Matthew Campbell Brown, a player turned attorney, and William Broomhead, a cutler, both in Treasury Solicitor's Papers (hereafter TS) 11/953/3597 in PRO, dated 1 Nov. 1793 and 28 May 1794 both comment on the matter of underemployment in the Sheffield trades.
26. See following section.
27. Eden III, op.cit., 874.
28. G.A. Williams, Artisans and Sans-Culottes (1968), 58.
29. T. Hardy (LCS) to Rev. T. Bryant (Sheffield), 8 March 1792, Place Papers British Library Additional Manuscripts Collection (hereafter Add.Mss.), 27811 f.5, Hardy to S. Ashton (Sheffield), 7 April 1792 also confirms respective dates of origin.
30. J.H. Tooke (SCI) to SSCI, 15 Jan. 1792, TS 11/951/3495, J. Alcock (SSCI) to J. Vintner (SCI), 15 Jan. 1792, TS 11/952/3496 iii.
31. English Chronicle, 15 Jan. 1792, cutting in TS 11/952/3496 ii.
32. SSCI to LCS, 19 Mar. 1792 in appendix to 'Report of the Committee of Secrecy 1794' printed in Journal of the House of Commons, vol. 49, 696.
33. Hunter to Fitzwilliam, 12 Dec. 1791, Wentworth Woodhouse Muniments (hereafter WWM) in SCL, F. 44 (a).
34. Sheffield Register, 2 Dec. 1791.
35. These local members are named by Wyville in his Political Papers, 6 vols. (York, 1799), *passim*.
36. J. Wheat (Sheffield) to H. Zouch (Wakefield), 28 Dec. 1791 WWM. F. 44(a). In a letter dated 11 May 1792 from S. Shore to C. Wyville, op.cit., V, 49 it is suggested that the SSCI was formed particularly as a result of the disorganized popular protest over enclosure in order to harness popular energies more effectively.
37. J. Wheat to H. Zouch, 28 Dec. 1791, WWM. F. 44(a).
38. *ibid.*
39. J. Wilkinson to H. Zouch, 6 Jan. 1791, WWM. F. 44(a).
40. Fitzwilliam to H. Zouch, 24 Dec. 1791, WWM. E. 234.
41. J. Wheelock (captain of King's Light Dragoons) to War Office, 24 June 1792 in War Office Papers (hereafter WO) 1/1055 in PRO.
42. Several references were made to the presence of dissenters in their ranks. Wilkinson to Zouch, 6 Jan., and Zouch to Fitzwilliam, 2 Feb. 1792, WWM. F.44(a).
43. Various sources investigated in local and national archives. For fuller list see Appendix 3.1
44. J. Wheat to H. Zouch, 31 Jan. 1792, WWM. F.44(a).
45. H. Zouch to Fitzwilliam, 2 Jan. 1792, WWM. F.44(a).
46. S. Ashton to T. Hardy, 19 Mar. 1792, 'Report of the Committee of Secrecy', *loc.cit.*, 697.
47. Sheffield Register, 24 Feb. 1792, listed 17 separate meeting places.
48. Reports contained in correspondence in WWM. F.44(a).
49. First advertised in the Sheffield Register, 23 March 1792, priced at 3d, it described itself as 'a work calculated to dessiminate (politics, morals, philosophy) those branches of knowledge among all ranks of people, at a small expense by a Society of Gentlemen pro patria'.

50. The Patriot, April 1792 - May 1793, bound in three volumes in SCL.
51. There was frequent correspondence between the Editors of the Patriot (Gales and M.C. Brown) and the respectable SCI. The first of many in TS 11/952/3496 was dated 11 June 1792.
52. SSCI to SCI, 15 Jan. 1792, TS 11/952/3496; SCI to SSCI, 2 March 1792, TS 11/951/3495 - a congratulation on their production of a cheap edition of the Rights of Man part I; J. Gales to SCI, 11 July 1792, ordered 500 part I and 500 part II, TS 11/952/3496.
53. T. Paine, Rights of Man (1969 edition), 63.
54. J. Wheat to H. Zouch, 28 Dec. 1791, WWM. F.44(a).
55. Sheffield Register, 30 March 1792.
56. Letters of SSCI to Friends of the People during May 1792 in Annual Register 1792, XXXIV, 84-5.
57. Letters of SSCI to SCI during 1792 and 1793 in TS 11/952/3496.
58. Draft account of meeting of SSCI 27 Feb. 1792, WWM. F.44(a).
59. H. Zouch to Fitzwilliam, 3 March 1792, WWM. F.44(a) mentions a discussion with Mr Edmunds of Worsborough near Barnsley.
60. Evidence of this in De Lancey to Dundas, 13 June 1792, HO 40/20, Zouch to Fitzwilliam, 13 May 1792, WWM. F.44(a); Historical Manuscripts Commission, Dropmore Papers, vol.II, 344-5.
61. J. Harrison, A Letter to the Right Hon. Henry Dundas M.P. Secretary of State (Sheffield, 1792)
62. Sheffield Register, 11 May 1792 ; letters in HO 42/20 and WWM. F.44(a).
63. F. Edmunds to H. Zouch, 10 May 1792, enclosed in Zouch to Fitzwilliam, 10 May 1792, WWM. F.44(a); H. Zouch to Fitzwilliam, 13 May 1792, WWM. F.44(a).
64. F. Edmunds to Zouch, 10 May 1792, loc.cit.
65. SSCI to SCI, undated May 1792, TS 11/952/3496.
66. Sheffield Register, 28 May 1792 - declaration of monthly general meeting; 8 June 1792 - 9 point resolution of a Select committee, a major policy statement.
67. Royal proclamation of 21 May 1792, copies in TS 11/41/151.
68. Sheffield Register, 15 and 22 June 1792.
69. H. Zouch to Fitzwilliam, 13 June 1792, WWM. F.44(a).
70. Sheffield Register, 15 June 1792.
71. Wilson, op.cit., 35.
72. De Lancey to Secretary at War, 13 June 1792, HO 42/20.
73. Sheffield Register, 27 July 1792; De Lancey to Secretary at War, 19 July 1792, HO 42/20 recorded the expenditure of £2000 on the barracks.
74. De Lancey 13 June 1792, HO 42/20.
75. SSCI to SFL, 14 May 1792, Annual Register 1792, op.cit., 85.
76. The earliest dates of formation of other popular societies included Manchester (May), Stockport (Aug.), Warrington, Newton, Liverpool and Leeds (Nov.) and Wakefield and Barnard Castle (Dec.) - list compiled from A.V. Mitchell, Radicalism and Repression in the North 1791-7, unpublished MA thesis, Manchester 1958. For ways in which SSCI made contact see advertisement in radical

Manchester Herald, 16 June 1794 and examples of inter-town correspondence in TS 11/952/3416.

77. Editors of the Patriot to LCS, 'Second Report of the Committee of Secrecy 1794', loc.cit.
78. Whether this was the genuine work of a journeyman or not, there was evidence of a general surge in plebeian activity brought about by the SSCI's activity, Editors of the Patriot to LCS, 22 June 1792, TS 11/965/3510, 'in a cause jointly engaged, it is the bold energetic language of the heart, we value infinitely more before the language of the schools'.
79. Sheffield Register, 19 Oct. 1792.
80. ibid., 30 Nov. 1792; Manchester Herald, 1 Dec. 1792.
81. Sheffield Register, 30 Nov. 1792.
82. ibid., 7 Dec. 1792; Manchester Herald, 1 Dec. 1792.
83. Sheffield Register, 19 Oct. and 30 Nov. 1792; Manchester Herald, 1 Dec. 1792; Bowns to Fitzwilliam, December n.d. 1792, WWM. F.44(b).
84. J. Wheat to Fitzwilliam, 18 Oct. and J. Wilkinson to H. Zouch, Oct. n.d. 1792, WWM. F.44(a).
85. HMC, Dropmore. vol.II, 344-5 - letter of Marquis of Buckingham to Grenville, 27 Nov. 1792.
86. For the best account of this Government activity see A.V. Mitchell thesis op.cit., passim.
87. T. Ward to J. Moore, 4 Dec. 1792, Add. Mss. (Reeves Mss.) 16920.
88. Sheffield Register, 28 Dec. 1792; J.H. Burland, Annals op.cit., I, 214.
89. W. Ward to J. Moore, 22 Dec. 1792, Ward published the Tory Sheffield Advertiser (only a few copies of which survive).
90. Manchester Herald, 24 Nov. 1792; Leeds Intelligencer, 24, 31 Dec. 1792, 7 Jan. 1793; Derby Mercury, 10 Jan. 1793.
91. Dr C. Brown to Fitzwilliam, December n.d. 1792, WWM. F.44(b); Manchester Herald, 15 Dec. 1792; Leeds Intelligencer, 31 Dec. 1792.
92. In Manchester Thomas Walker's house had been attacked in December and by March 1793 this paper, the democrats' vital propaganda machine, had been wound up.
93. SSCI to SCI, 16 Jan. 1793, 'Report of the Committee of Secrecy 1794' loc.cit., 703.
94. R. Althorpe to Fitzwilliam, 12 Dec. 1792, WWM. F.44(b) described trade as 'exceedingly brisk'.
95. John Harrison, one of the Sheffield leaders, went to Birmingham and Coventry to set up societies. A letter of his from Birmingham (where he was president of the society) appeared in the Sheffield Register, 22 March 1793 and in general correspondence between Harrison and the SSCI is in TS 11/953/3497, 4, 19 March (from Birmingham), 22 July (from Coventry). The Leeds connection is established in correspondence of the SSCI dated 8 July 1794, in HO 42/32.
96. Sheffield Register, 15 March 1793, the first public appearance of Henry Redhead Yorke.
97. ibid., 12 April 1793, chaired by Gales.
98. ibid. and Sheffield Courant, 12 April 1793.
99. Sheffield Register, 19 April 1793, 5,000 signatures. By May there were 10,000.

100. Sheffield Register, 22 Feb. (barracks enlarged), 12 July 1793 (more troops brought in).
101. Cases noted in ibid., 15 Feb. (joiner) and 12 April 1793 (a cutler and two gardeners).
102. ibid., 12 April 1793, 1000 attended the Castle Hill venue.
103. ibid., 10 May 1793, 'Report of Committee of Secrecy 1794', loc.cit., 723-4 voting against 109-29.
104. See below for discussion of popular political and social ideology.
105. W. Lunn to Rev Hunter, 10 Aug. 1793, WWM. F.44(b); Sheffield Register, 12 July; Sheffield Courant, 15 July 1793 (reported local panic in Rotherham when a house caught fire and the local authorities feared a Jacobin rising).
106. Handbill addressed to 'the Public' and signed by the 'Exercisers' enclosed in Captain Balne to Lord Amhurst (Adj. General), 5 July 1793, HO 50/2.
107. This was a questionable innocence - in a letter of Broomhead to SCI, 7 July 1793, TS 11/951/3495 the SSCI spoke approvingly of the 400-500 armed journeymen. Perhaps they were trying to impress their SCI 'betters', but possibly with some justification because they had organized them.
108. Testimony of William Camage before Sir Richard Ford, 23 June 1794, TS 11/956/3561 described the making of these claims by the SSCI's young orator and later secretary - Henry Redhead Yorke.
109. The autumn's harvest was mediocre but there was no marked rise in grain prices. The real surge came in 1795. It would appear there was a shortage of some products, particularly butter and milk. These caused market disturbances in Sheffield as noted in York Courant, 17, 26 June 1793; Sheffield Register, 26 July 1793.
110. Sheffield Register, 8 Feb. (records thirty recruiting parties in town) and 23 Aug. 1793 (emigration of Sheffield artisans to USA).
111. SSCI to SCI, 7 July 1793, TS 11/951/3495, 'An excellent spirit prevails here among the middle rank of society and delightful to every person who loves liberty is it to find so much information among the mechanical part of the people'.
112. J. Holland and J. Everett (eds.) Memoirs of the Life and Writings of James Montgomery, 6 vols. (1854), I, 168.
113. Wilson, op.cit., 35.
114. Sheffield Register, 20 Sept. 1793.
115. ibid., 18 Oct. 1793; Sheffield Courant, 26 Oct. 1793, Crookesmoor meeting presided over by Enoch Trickett.
116. SSCI to LCS, 1 Nov. 1793, TS 11/953/3497. For earlier correspondence with Edinburgh see SSCI to Skirving, 27 May 1793, 'Report of the Committee of Secrecy 1794', loc.cit., 717-18.
117. Sheffield Register, 15 Nov. 1793 - meeting held in open fields off present West Street. This paper noted that Brown wrote from Scotland, 'There are no more delegates from England than London and Sheffield, but we hope to be able to lay the foundations of another convention in a few months, which may consist of all the societies in both countries'.
118. Proceedings reprinted in H.W. Meikle, Scotland and the French Revolution (Glasgow, 1912), 239-273.

119. Sheffield Register, 22 Nov. 1793.
120. For a fuller exploration of the intellectual roots and practical experience of convention holding see T.M. Parssinen, 'Association, Convention, Anti-Parliament in British Radical politics 1771-1848', English Historical Review, vol. LXXXVIII (1973), 504-533.
121. Testimonies of William Camage and William Broomhead before Sir Richard Ford, 23 June 1794, TS 11/956/3561.
122. *ibid.*, Testimony of William Broomhead and Broomhead before Privy Council 29 May 1794 (3rd appearance), TS 11/963/3509, he said numbers increased with the division of the SSCI into 40-50 'little clubs'.
123. *ibid.*, Testimony of William Broomhead before Privy Council 28 May (1st appearance) noted, 'there were people at Sheffield, not of their Society, who had declared they must make a Riot, or nothing could be done'. This is a very ambiguous reference, referring possibly to Church and King activists or the military. In my opinion, as suggested later by fact of ultra-radical crowd manipulation, it referred to revolutionaries.
124. Sheffield Register, 20 Dec. 1793; Sheffield Courant, 21 Dec. 1793.
125. Testimony of Broomhead before the Privy Council 29 May 1794 (3rd appearance), *loc.cit.*
126. The largest pits in the vicinity of the town (those of the Duke of Norfolk) were situated here. As the rate books in SCL show, Collier's Row - 75 low rateable value properties owned by the Duke's superintendant were located here. The 1797 Directory shows two ironworks (Booth and Co's and Curr's) in the immediate area.
127. T. Parssinen *art.cit.*, *passim*. Other societies still holding together were agreeable as revealed by Norwich to LCS, 25 July 1793, 'Report of the Committee of Secrecy 1794', *loc.cit.*, 710.
128. E.P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class *op.cit.*, 141-142.
129. William Broomhead to Norwich Society, 21 Feb. 1794, TS 11/953/3497.
130. Testimony of William Broomhead before the Privy Council, 28 May 1794 (1st appearance), *loc.cit.*
131. Sheffield Register, 7 May 1794.
132. A Serious Lecture on the Fast Day (Sheffield, 1794), 3.
133. *ibid.*, 15.
134. *ibid.*, 14-15.
135. *ibid.*, 14.
136. J.L. Baxter, 'The Great Yorkshire Revival 1792-6 : A study of mass revival among the Methodists', in A Sociological Yearbook of Religion in Britain, No. 7 (1974), 46-76 *passim*.
137. A Serious Lecture, *op.cit.*, 16. (copies were 2d, one being found among Broomhead's sparse collection of papers when he was taken, TS 11/1071/5060).
138. This was followed by the singing of a hymn composed by the young radical printer James Montgomery. Montgomery later became respectable and in his later writings denied his close associations with the SSCI.

139. Testimony of William Broomhead before the Privy Council 28 May 1794 (1st appearance) loc.cit. George Widdison (hairdresser) a delegate from a division to the monthly General Meeting of the Society, stated the divisions met fortnightly. T.B. Howell, State Trials (1820), XXIV, 234.
140. The Register's circulation had risen from 1468 p.w. in October 1793 to 2025 by May 1794 - reflecting the growth of mass circulation in the face of repression.
141. Sheffield Courant, 15 Feb. 1794 - boy before the magistrates. The role of the young is always underestimated although admittedly their political acts were not as articulate as their elders.
142. ibid., 1 March 1794.
143. J. Brookfield to J. White, TS 11/1071/5060.
144. Howell, op.cit. vol. XXV, 615-626, contains full extract of the pamphlet 'Proceedings of the Public Meeting held at Sheffield in the open air 7 April 1794 (Sheffield, 1794)'. Regarding Yorke's life (1772-1813) his associations with the London, Derby and Sheffield societies see E. Fearne, 'Henry Redhead Yorke - Radical Traitor', Yorkshire Archaeological Journal, vol.XLII (1965), 121-135.
145. Proceedings of 7 April etc. op.cit., 7.
146. J. Holland and J. Everett, Memoirs etc. op.cit., I, 167, letter of Gales to Aston, n.d. April 1794.
147. The Government had circularized the Lords Lieutenant of various counties in March regarding the raising of Volunteer cavalry or corps of fencible cavalry. These were to be partly financed by the Government. The Duke of Norfolk, the West Riding's Lieutenant, for several reasons including radical tendencies, blocked local initiative - see J.R. Western, 'The County Fencibles and the Militia Augmentation of 1794', Journal of the Society for Army History, vol.XXXI, 1953 passim.
148. Howell, op.cit., XXIV, 238 - George Widdison at J.H. Tooke's trial.
149. Sheffield Register, 18 April 1794.
150. Howell, op.cit., XXIV, 666 - Henry Hill at Thomas Hardy's trial.
151. Sheffield Courant, 19 April (activities of young democrats) and 3 May 1794 (counter-violence of jeunesse beating up a stone thrower).
152. Davison was being watched in Leeds as S. Buck to Sir J. Scott (Attorney General), 19 Feb. 1794, TS 11/591/1936 noted. Similarly echoed in William Broomhead's 25 May testimony before the Privy Council in TS 11/963/3509.
153. Depositions of Luke and George Punshon before James Wilkinson, 12 June 1794 in J. Brookfield to H. Dundas, 14 June 1794, HO 42/31.
154. Various sources including PRO TS, PRO HO and Sheffield Press.
155. Testimonies of William Broadhead 27/28/29 May, William Camage 27/29 May and George Widdison 7 July 1794, all before Privy Council in TS 11/963/3509. It appears Camage and Davison ordered the arms to be made by various journeymen members of the society. Yorke played a key role in making the decision to arm.

156. R. Davison to Norwich society and LCS, 24 April 1794, in 'Report of Committee of Secrecy' op.cit., 656. Also quoted in Sheffield Register, 26 June 1794.
157. ibid., 2 May 1794 - a meeting on 21 April at Camp End, Warley.
158. Thompson, op.cit., 143, for general statement.
159. William Broomhead to J. Thelwall, 11 May 1794, quoted in Howell, op.cit. XXIV, 487-8.
160. Sheffield Register, 2 May 1794.
161. J. Wilkinson to Commander in Chief, 7 May 1794, HO 50/346.
162. Sheffield Register, 9 May 1794.
163. ibid., 9 May 1794.
164. Previous information of the local magistrates suggested this, particularly fragments of information in S. Marshall's letter to local magistrates. This found its way to the Home Office - HO 42/30 - and was noted in the Sheffield press - Sheffield Register, 16 April 1794; Sheffield Courant, 3 May 1794. However much Marshall was an alarmist, the later activities of Camage and Broadhead prove his point.
165. Letters in HO 42/30 from Manchester, Hull and London - all containing tentative suggestions of ultra-radical activity - some very violent expression in wall writing at Hull - Mayor to Home Office, 20 May 1794, HO 42/30, 'Comrades prepare the times not far when Freedom will shew its Injured hand. To arms! and quit yourselves of Tyrants they begin to quake! - below a Phrygian cap decorated flower, a fallen crown and broken mitre.
166. Thompson, op.cit., 142-3.
167. Warrants for arrest of Davison, 13 May and the rest 20 May, 1794, copies in HO 42/30.
168. R.E. Leader, Reminiscences etc. op.cit., 293-4, letter in Sheffield Independent, 7 Oct. 1848 and regarding Yorke's escape and capture, testimony before the Privy Council 17 June TS 11/963/3509.
169. Sheffield Register, 30 May 1794 - Camage, Broomhead, Moody and Widdison taken to London.
170. ibid., 30 May 1794 and depositions of George and Luke Punshon, 12 June 1794, HO 42/31 and Sheffield Register, 29 Aug. 1794 - their release.
171. R. Althorpe to Sec. of State, 18 June 1794, HO 42/31 - Althorpe hoped to be told by messenger what to do with the prisoners because as he noted, 'you are not aware how much it encourages the seditious spirit that prevails at Sheffield'.
172. Burnt by Charles Rhodes' wife - testimony of Broomhead before the Privy Council (2nd appearance), 28 May 1794, TS 11/963/3509.
173. Sheffield Register, 16 April and 13 June 1794.
174. ibid., 6 June 1794.
175. ibid., 27 June 1794 - account of a meeting at Pontefract 18/19 June to organize the various troops of West Riding troops of Yeomen cavalry - Leeds Mercury, 24 May 1794 shows the issue was first discussed at Pontefract Sessions in May.
176. See Appendix 3:2
177. Sheffield Courant, 7 June 1794; Burland, Annals op.cit., I, 233.
178. Thompson, op.cit., 146-8 on the continuity of the LCS.

179. Gales was bankrupt, his goods were up for sale as advertisement in Sheffield Iris, 15 Aug. 1795 shows.
180. ibid., 29 Aug. and 12 Sept. 1794.
181. Wilson, op.cit. and Anon. (Charles Sylvester), Poems on Various Subjects (Sheffield, 1797) passim, both contain examples of anti-Volunteer lyrics.
182. Continued reports in Iris and Courant. From June 1794 onwards there are almost weekly reports on drilling and military organization.
183. Baxter, 'The Great Yorkshire Revival' etc., art.cit., 46-76 passim.
184. W. Bramwell, Biography of Henry Longden (Liverpool, 1813), 89, quoted in Baxter, art.cit., 56.
185. J. Moon to T. Coke, 22 Aug. 1794, Methodist Magazine vol. XVIII, 414-415, quoted in Baxter, art.cit., 56.
186. See 'voices' quoted by Baxter, art.cit., 46 and 65 (J. Moon, Sheffield preacher Aug. 1794 and G. Sykes, Whitby July 1794).
187. Sheffield Iris, 7 Aug. 1794.
188. J. Moon to T. Coke, op.cit., 414-15.
189. J. Sigston, Life and Ministry of William Bramwell, 2 vols (1872) II, 377.
190. J. Baxter, art.cit., 60-1 - the Methodists had begun a Benevolent Society which supplemented the inadequacies of the local system of poor relief on a significant scale (1794 - relieved 444 cases - Sheffield Local Register, 74 and 77.)
191. Wilson, op.cit., 53 n. comment on recruiting song 'Shout em down balm' sung when 'beating up' for recruits.
192. Sheffield Courant, 19 July 1794.
193. Wilson, op.cit., 46-9, song 'Raddle-necked Tups'.
194. Sheffield Iris, 17 Oct. 1794 - case at Sheffield Quarter Sessions of insult to a Volunteer.
195. ibid., 1 Aug. 1794.
196. ibid., 5 Sept. 1794 - freed after 11 weeks confinement.
197. The Volunteers and the recruiting parties for the Royal Sheffield Regiment of Foot (Cameron's Regiment) as well as the West Riding Volunteer cavalry all made their presence felt on public holidays and any other day they could justify their military rituals e.g. Sheffield Register, 22 Aug. (presentation of colours), 24 and 31 Oct. (military ball), 21 Nov. 1794 (Doncaster assembly of all West Riding Yeomanry troops).
198. J. Montgomery, Poetic Works (1850) preface, x, reprint of farewell address in Iris of 1825.
199. Sheffield Iris, 8 Aug. 1794 - an attack on Montgomery calling him a 'milk sop traitor to the glorious cause of truth and liberty' showed he was not universally popular.
200. ibid., 17 Oct. 1794.
201. ibid., 28 Nov., 5 Dec., 12 Dec. 1794.
202. William Chow to R. Hodgson, 3 Dec. 1794, Add. Mss. 27813 f.11.
203. Sheffield Iris, 5 Dec. 1794.
204. ibid., 19 Dec. 1794.

205. There was a tradition of elite initiation of community projects in Sheffield with the precedents of the Fish Company 1790, Infirmary 1793-5 (initiation to completion).
206. Sheffield Iris, 2 Jan. 1795.
207. Montgomery was sentenced to three months imprisonment in York Castle. This was part of a Government strategy to smash the 'Associated clubs' as correspondence between the Attorney General and his local agent, lawyer Brookfield, showed. Ironically these letters containing the brief for the prosecution at Montgomery's trial wound up in Montgomery's possession later in his life and are now found in MD 1092 in SCL.
208. Sheffield Iris, 27 Feb. 1795 - the SSCI acquitted John Alcock after trial.
209. The moderates were associated in other ways as the Society of the Friends of Literature, although this was an organization serving to provide cover for political debate - ibid., 13 Feb. 1795.
210. Cold and floods worsened the local effects of influenza - ibid., 13, 27 Feb. and 6 March 1795.
211. ibid., 30 Jan. 1795 - a resolution by a town meeting called by respectable citizens, 'that the inclemency of the weather, the very high price of provisions, the obstructed state of trade, and the general want of employment, render necessary a subscription for the relief of the poor'. In Rotherham grain was sold at 1/6d per stone or 50% below the market dealers' price.
212. Burland, Annals op.cit., I, 241-2, several report for January from the northern part of the region - Bolton-on-Deerne, Brampton Bierlow and Wath-on-Deerne; Sheffield Iris, 13 Feb. 1795 (Sheffield, Rotherham), 20 Feb. 1795 (Ecclesfield).
213. Burland, Annals op.cit., I, 238-42; Sheffield Iris, 13 Feb. 1795 (floods) and 27 Feb. 1795 (influenza).
214. Baxter, art.cit., 56-7.
215. Sheffield Iris, 20, 27 Feb. and 27 March 1795.
216. Brothers' prophecies were advertised in the Iris in February and March - ibid., 13 March 1795 referred to his attempts to solicit support in Sheffield by sending 'tokens' (pieces of bread) to the Sheffield 'chosen'. The edition of 20 March described one of his supporters as an 'old woman who, we hear, places the prophecies of Brothers, and the Gospels of the Evangelists on the same shelf in the corner cupboard of her pericranium'. For his arrest and speedy termination of his prophetic career see C. Roth, The Nephew of the Almighty (1933). For some new light on his provincial impact in 1795 see Baxter, art.cit., 61.
217. Partly reflected in the incidence of suicide, a problematic variable in itself - see P.E. Hair, 'Deaths from Violence in Britain', Population Studies, March 1971 *passim*. My index is compiled from the Sheffield press, the coronor's reports not being systematically collected in the Quarter Sessions papers at Wakefield. Sources for Sheffield suicides - Iris, Register and Courant 1790-1, 1791-2, 1792-1, 1793-3, 1794-4, 1795-3, 1796-2, 1797-6, 1798-3, 1799-4, 1800-2, 1801-3, 1802-2. However inadequate the statistics I believe these represent one of the important 'psychic pulses' that historians should check. The appearance of the winter of 1794-5 as the climax of an early local peak was echoed in the Sheffield Iris,

- 217 (cont.) 24 April 1795 - 'But it is horrid to reflect on the many instances of suicide which have occurred within the course of the last twelve months in the town of Sheffield'.
218. The heavier trades employing a minority of industrial workers were expanding on the strength of war demand. The linen trade, more dependent at this stage on the home market, may have also been steadier.
219. Sheffield Iris, 3 April 1795 - 38 men wanted for the navy, bounties of 17-25 gns. offered.
220. Eden, op.cit., III, 873.
221. Prices published weekly in Sheffield Iris.
222. Eden, op.cit., III, 873.
223. R. Wearmouth, Methodism and the Common People in the Eighteenth Century (1945) for an inadequate list. Also wider references in Sheffield Iris, 10, 17 April, 1 May 1795.
224. ibid., 24 April and 26 June 1795 - threats, R. Althorpe to War Office, 1 July 1795, WO 1/1082.
225. Sheffield Iris, 3 July 1795 - list of subscribers to the Corn Committee; Papers of the Committee in WWM. F.47(b).
226. Sheffield Iris, 24 April and 26 June 1795.
227. ibid., 1 May (masters subsidising food) and 23, 31 July 1795 (cheap soup).
228. This leadership failure can be seen as the result of subpoenas issued against Broomhead, Camage, Moody, Hill and Widdison (Sheffield Iris, 27 March 1795). There was also a chronic shortage of funds (Iris, 13 March and 14 April 1795). Montgomery, released in April, was also less willing to publicize their cause. For parallel trends in London see Thompson, op.cit., 149-154.
229. Sheffield Iris, 25 April 1795, noted the appearance of a handbill calling on the people to meet and 'plant the Tree of Liberty in the market place'.
230. See below.
231. The Spy or Political Inspector (Sheffield, 1795) complete in SCL.
232. Leeds Mercury, 15 Aug. 1795.
233. This account is based largely on the briefs for the prosecution carried out against Montgomery for his libels of 1794/5. These are found in MD 1092 in SCL and comprise a draft prosecution brief and various depositions. Of these the deposition of Sgt-Major Hinde (Royal Sheffield Regiment) and those of assorted bystanders are extremely valuable. Letters in WWM. F.44(c) and accounts in the Sheffield Courant, Iris, and Leeds Mercury (7, 9 and 15 Aug. 1795) are useful supplements.
234. Wilson, op.cit., 38-40. For later local comparison with 'Peterloo' see J. Wood to Sidmouth, 24 Aug. 1819, HO 42/193.
235. R.E. Leader, Sheffield in the Eighteenth Century, op.cit., 296-7.
236. C. Brookfield to correspondent in York, 16 Aug. 1795, KB 33/6/5 - 'the Mob have learned they are not to be trifled with'.
237. Sheffield Iris, 10 April, 12 May 1795 - reported the field-day manoeuvres of the Sheffield Volunteers and the region's troops of West Riding Yeomen Cavalry. Burland, Annals, I, 249, describes Fitzwilliam's entertainment of the Sheffield, Rotherham and Barnsley troops.

238. The Proceedings of the Public Meeting held on Crookes Moor at Sheffield (Sheffield, 1795); Sheffield Iris, 14 Aug. 1795 and Thompson, op.cit., 353-6 for account of London parallel.
239. J. Wilkinson to Dundas, 11 Aug. 1795, HO 42/35.
240. Sheffield Iris, 28 Aug. 1795.
241. Burland, Miscellaneous Writings, op.cit., 429 - the recollections of 'Bobby Mac', a participant.
242. Burland, Annals, I, op.cit., 250-1 - the recollections of Fanny Barnes.
243. The Two Acts were 36 Geo. III, c.7 which made it a treasonable offence to incite the population to hatred or contempt of the Crown or Government and 36 Geo. II, c.9, which banned public meetings attracting more than fifty persons.
244. Sheffield Iris, 20 Nov. 1795 - meeting of the Friends of the Constitution of 1688 attracted several thousand people to Crookesmoor. It was dispersed by the magistrates who read the Riot Act. The edition of 4 Dec. noted a meeting in a field at Bridgehouses to thank the Duke of Norfolk for his opposition to the Acts. This was the last 'legal' public meeting discussing parliamentary reform until 1810.
245. Baxter, art.cit., 66-8 - the revival was still having an effect on the region until the spring of 1796.
246. Sheffield Iris, 21 Aug. 1795 - 17 sick clubs discussed the building of a corn mill. This was subscribed to by many more of the town's sick clubs and a co-operative mill erected. Iris, 13 Nov. 1795 describes the procession to laying foundation stone ceremony (significantly the 'labour aristocrats' and petty bourgeois associates met the Volunteers en route and these courteously stood aside). At the ceremony Edward Oakes, the apocalyptic voice of the 1794 February Fast Day, made a speech containing half veiled political assertions of popular democratic rights. This speech is fully reprinted in pamphlet, 'An accurate account of the Proceedings on the occasion of laying the Foundation Stone of a new Corn Mill (Sheffield, 1795)'. There was evidence of other co-operative activity among the shoemakers and coalminers.
247. An accurate account etc. op.cit. Oakes noted talking of sick societies and the democratic processes within, 'in all private associations the will of the people is the supreme law and the voice of the people is the voice of God...Every individual is in his own private person a legislator and the vote of the poorest is equal to the vote of the richest member in a club'.
248. This was true of other centres, even London which had shown tremendous energy in 1795.
249. Leeds Mercury, 26 Feb. 1803; The Times, 22 Feb. 1803.
250. Sheffield Iris, 22 Jan. 1796 - threat of a riot; The elite set an example with reduced consumption, Greaves to Portland, 19 Jan. 1796, HO 42/38.
251. Sheffield Iris, 12, 26 Feb. 1796 - lists of places where signatures to oppose the Two Acts might be added to petitions and also mentions a 'Whig Club' formed by several ex-SSCI members.
252. ibid., 13 May and 10 June 1796; Sheffield Courant, 21 Jan. and 7, 28 June 1796.
253. Wilson, op.cit., 38-41, 'Norfolk Street Riots'; Anon (Sylvester) op.cit., 5-7, 'Gallanty Show'.

254. Sheffield Iris, 26 Feb. 1796; Sheffield Courant, 7 June 1796.
255. West Riding Quarter Sessions Indictments 1796 at WYCRO - words of David Martin, labourer.
256. Sheffield Iris, 30 Dec. 1796.
257. Eden III, op.cit., 874.
258. Demand of razor makers dated 4 July, spring knife cutlers' and forgers' dated 6 Aug. and replies of cabinet makers and edge tool masters dated 8, 14 July all in Wilson Deeds Collection - Wil.D. 412 in SCL.
259. Sheffield Iris, 8 July 1796.
260. Statement from masters' meeting - Wil.D. 412; Sheffield Iris, 15 July 1796.
261. Address of Journeymen Spring Knife Makers & Table Knife Forgers to the Public 6 July 1796 (Sheffield, 1796) Wil.D. 412 - interesting use of membership cards to identify non-unionists.
262. Journeymen Spring Knife Makers to Master Manufacturers of Spring Knives 14 Aug. 1796 (Sheffield, 1796) Wil.D. 412. Other groups like the razorsmiths wanted restricted production and a minimum wage as against crude increases.
263. Sheffield Iris, 14 Oct. 1796 - several journeymen cutlers indicted for conspiracy at Sheffield Sessions were acquitted at Rotherham Sessions in October.
264. Address of Journeymen Spring Knife Makers and Table Knife Forgers etc. op.cit.
265. Resolutions of a Public Meeting 4 July 1796 (Sheffield, 1796), Wil.D. 412.
266. Address to the Spring Knife Cutlers (n.d.), Wil.D. 412 - again refers to the use of tickets by the spring knife and table knife workers. These bore the arms of the Cutlers' Company reflecting the lingering for guild controls, controls they were trying to maintain.
267. The Kilhamite secession among the Methodists took place in 1797. The Kilhamite New Connexion had many supporters locally including ex-SSCI leaders like Edward Oakes and Richard Beale; See Baxter, art.cit., 103 and list of local preachers of Kilhamites in 1797 Sheffield Circuit, Spedding New Connexion Methodist Mss. collection, vol.V, 4, in SCL; For same trends among the Odd-fellows see I. Inkster, 'The Development of a Scientific Community in Sheffield 1790-1850', THAS., X, pt.2 (1973), 90-131.
268. J. Thelwall, The Rights of Nature (1796), 20; Thelwall's visit is recorded in the Sheffield Iris, 23 and 30 Sept. 1796.
269. On London - Thompson, op.cit., 182.
270. William Camage and William Dewsnap for the Sheffield Friends of Liberty to LCS, 15 May 1797 in reply to the LCS address of 24 April (earlier correspondence is hinted at) in Place Newspaper Collection in BL.set xxxviii, vol.1, f.67.
271. ibid.
272. Sheffield Courant, 13 June 1797 (local panic); Sheffield Iris, 4 Aug. 1797 (Volunteers called out to prevent similar meeting as LCS, Montgomery bitterly commenting, 'Go eat your pudding Lads, and hold your tongues'; Thompson, op.cit., 182 - for London activity.
273. J. Wilkinson to Portland, 7 Aug. 1797, HO 42/41.

274. Survival of a year of invasion threats was followed by the Camperdown naval victory over the Dutch following the mutinies of April and June 1797.
275. This was despite the financial panic and the suspension of cash payments by the Bank of England earlier in the year.
276. A. Gayer, W.W. Rostow and A. Schwartz, The Growth and Fluctuation of the British Economy 1790-1850 2 vols. (Oxford, 1953), I, 27-9.
277. R.E. Leader, Sheffield in the Eighteenth Century, op.cit., 297-8.
278. Two Manchester delegates, Burke and Stansfield, had travelled throughout Yorkshire and the north Midlands in December 1797. A renewal of activity in centres such as Leeds and Nottingham, as well as Sheffield, took place - testimony of Robert Grey before Portland, 15 April 1798, PC1 41/139A. These Privy Council bundles contain a great deal of material on the Lancashire UE, PC1 /3117 contains a UE constitution and plan of organization. For additional material on UE in West Riding and north Midlands I have found letters in HO 42/43,45,46 useful. Sheffield radicals were already familiar with the UI through the Scottish convention of 1793 and the pages of the old Patriot.
279. Thompson, op.cit., 186-9.
280. T. Pakenham, The Year of Liberty (1969) passim for most recent account of the rebellion.
281. 1797 produced in addition 37 Geo.III c.70 (mutineers), c.123 (unlawful oaths). 1798 saw the passing of 39 Geo.III c.78 (Newspaper Act) and 1799, 39 Geo.III c.79 (Corresponding Societies Act) and c.81 (Combination Act).
282. Sheffield Iris, 23 Feb. 2 March (Defence of Country subscriptions begin), 5, 19 and 26 Oct. and 9 Nov. 1798 (celebrate Battle of Nile victory in Sheffield and out-villages).
283. The informer Barlow, whose reports to Sir R. Ford from Sept.-Nov. 1799 are contained in PC1/44/141A and 164A, listed the works of Volney, Godwin, Mirabeau, Helvetius and Voltaire as those with which Sheffield radicals were familiar. Barlow's evidence, despite what Thompson op.cit., 534 says, is not all bogus. For example this 'reading list' is quite justified. The Patriot had printed extracts from various of these authors and Gales' paper advertised translations of some of them.
284. C. Volney, The Ruins or Survey of the Revolutions of Empires (London, 1795 - 2nd English edition),
285. Weavers 1794, cutlery workers 1796, miners 1797.
286. Pamphlet in Barlow to Sir R. Ford, 9 Sept. 1799, PC 1/44/161A.
287. Common law was employed against combinations. The Combination Acts of 1799 and 1800 merely simplified proceedings.
288. James Wilkinson's reply to Portland's circulation of the Bishops to collect information regarding corn prices and the supply of grain, n.d. Oct. 1800, HO 42/54.
289. Sheffield Iris, 6 Dec. 1799.
290. ibid., 6 Dec. 1799.
291. ibid., 13 Dec. 1799.
292. ibid., 10 Jan. 1800.
293. ibid., 17 Jan. 1800 - advice on use of substitutes like potatoes.
294. ibid., 31 Jan. (Huddersfield) and 21 Feb. 1800 (Wolverhampton).

295. Sheffield Iris, 4, 11, 18, 25 April 1800.
296. ibid., 1 May 1800.
297. ibid., 28 Aug. 1800.
298. H. Parker to Fitzwilliam, 2 Sept. 1800, WWM. F.44(d) - noted a circulation of papers among the crowd assembled in the Backfields, see below.
299. Account based on various letters in WWM. F.44(d) and HO 42/52.
300. Parker to Fitzwilliam, 2 Sept., Fitzwilliam to Portland, 3 Sept., Fitzwilliam to Portland, 8,10 Sept. 1800 in WWM. F.44(d) and HO 42/51.
301. Wilkinson, report n.d. Oct. 1800, HO 42/54. This return gave figures which showed the 1800 harvest price of wheat, barley and oats 35, 50 and 30% up on 1799 price and 115, 125 and 120% up on 1798; it showed potatoes and beans 66 and 38% up on 1799 and 150 and 138% up on 1798, and beef and mutton 57 and 29% up on 1799 and 10 and 30% up on 1798.
302. Correspondence, particularly of Thomas Bancroft of Bolton to Home Office, HO 42/53,54 and 55.
303. Good News for Poor People (Sheffield, 1800), JC.1553 in SCL.
304. Printed handbill, 'A Word to whom it may concern', enclosed in J. Wilkinson to Fitzwilliam, 27 Sept. 1800 in WWM. F.44(d).
305. Commander of Norfolk Militia to Fitzwilliam, 3 Nov. 1800, HO 42/53.
306. Handbill enclosed in W. Taylor to Fitzwilliam, 21 Oct. 1800, WWM. F.45(a); Doncaster Gazette, 24 Oct. 1800 for similar reports further east.
307. Account based on letters in WWM.F.44(e) and F.45(a) and HO 42/54,55. Meetings also noted in Sheffield Iris, 4 Dec. 1800 - Bellows(Bellas) Plain on Sky Edge was a familiar location throughout Sheffield's radical history.
308. J. Lowe to Fitzwilliam, 1 Dec. 1800, WWM. F.44(e).
309. Testimony of Captain Warris before Sheffield magistrates, 2 Dec. 1800, WWM. F.44(e) - the leaders of the meeting told him 2000 were present but Warris estimated only 1000.
310. Official notice headed 'Caution' enclosed in Lowe to Fitzwilliam, 2 Dec. 1800, WWM. F.44(e).
311. Testimony of Captain Warris, loc.cit.
312. Lowe to Portland, 18 Dec. 1800, HO 42/55.
313. Lowe to Portland, 5 Dec. 1800, HO 42/55.
314. Fitzwilliam to Portland, 8 Dec. 1800, WWM. F.44(f).
315. Lowe to Portland, 5 Dec. 1800, loc.cit.; F.D. Cartwright, Life and Correspondence of Major Cartwright (1826) 2 vols. I, 260 - Major Cartwright had met a group of men prepared to organize a riot in December 1800.
316. Bancroft to Portland, 15 Dec. 1800, including depositions, HO 42/55.
317. ibid., and Birmingham correspondence, 26 Dec. 1800, HO 42/55.
318. Deposition of Thomas Ainsden before Sir Richard Ford, 9 Dec. 1800, HO 42/55.
319. Correspondence in HO 42/61, particularly letters of Bancroft (Bolton), 1,7 and 22 March, T. Coke (Manchester), 14 and 24 March and J. Singleton (Wigan), 24 March and 7 April 1801.

320. Sheffield Iris, 1 and 15 Jan. 1801.
321. ibid., 5 March 1801.
322. ibid., 7 May 1801.
323. J. Busfield to Fitzwilliam, 19 March 1801, enclosed in Fitzwilliam to Portland, 21 March 1801, HO 42/61 and copy WWM. F.45(a).
324. The usage of T. Coke, a member of the national Methodist hierarchy, in letter to Portland, 24 March 1801, HO 42/61 in referring to the progress of the UE in Huddersfield.
325. Letters in WWM. F.45(a) and HO 42/61 and 62. A West Riding example of this activity was testified to by Christopher Bennett in a 17 March 1801 deposition before Leeds magistrates which is found in Mayor of Leeds to Portland, 1 Aug. 1801, HO 42/62.
326. Letters, particularly Bancroft's, 9 and 23 June and Hay's, 7 and 23 June 1801, HO 42/62.
327. Thompson, op.cit., 517-18.
328. Bancroft and Fletcher of Bolton and Hay of Duckinfield were the most prominent.
329. Particularly in B. Markland, Blackburn magistrate employing the postmaster of his district, 10 June 1801 to Portland, HO 42/62 - he commented that his informant had heard that Sheffield had not sent representatives to Rivington Pike as expected but the town was a major provider of arms for the movement.
330. ibid. B. Markland.
331. At a significant time because there were strong suggestions that a general rising would be attempted in May. This is what Markland ibid. says.
332. Enclosed in Bancroft to Portland, 29 June 1801, HO 42/62 - the plan is described as 'the Leeds plan, much the same as at Sheffield and Wakefield'. Similar copies from the Nottingham area are enclosed in Fletcher to Portland, 6 July 1801, HO 42/62.
333. ibid., - some reference was made to 'civil' and 'military' committees.
334. J. Walker to Addington, 13 July; Fitzwilliam to Portland (with West Riding magistrates' enclosures), 30 July and 1 Aug.; Mayor of Leeds to Portland, 1 Aug. 1800; Mayor of Hull, 16 Aug.; T. Coke, 19 Aug. 1801, all to Portland, HO 42/62. Also WWM. F.45(a) for copies and retained correspondence.
335. Deposition of William Simnet before the Mayor of Chesterfield, 25 Nov. 1802, HO 42/66.
336. Information enclosed in Fletcher to Portland, 31 Aug. 1801, HO 42/62, Bent and Robinson working together provided the information. The eight committeemen were:
Francis Moody-shoemaker Timothy Gales-pressman
Matthew Shaw-silversmith John Crome-printer
Thomas Troth-silversmith William Camage-leather inkstand maker
William Wilkinson-tailor John Alcock-leather inkstand maker.
and mealman for a
society.
The Bent-Robinson partnership was commented on later by another agent, testimony of Sgt. J. Melling, 29 Nov. 1803, PC 1/3583.
337. Sheffield Iris, 8 Oct. 1801.

338. Fletcher to Portland, 7 Jan. 1802, HO 42/65.
339. Enclosed in Fletcher to King, 3 April 1802, HO 42/65 - details regarding the UI and UE in London and of plans for taking the Tower and the Bank.
340. Testimony of William and Edward Simnet, 25 Nov. 1802, HO 42/66.
341. Sheffield Iris, 25 Feb. 1802 - he had worked in the Hartshead printing office for ten years, first under his nephew Joseph Gales and then under Montgomery.
342. Flower, 18 May and R. Walker, 13 June 1802 to Fitzwilliam, WMM. F.45(d).
343. Statement of West Riding magistrates in Quarter Session at Bradford, 15 July 1802, WMM. F.45(d).
344. Parker to Fitzwilliam, 13 July, in Fitzwilliam to Portland, 20 July 1802, HO 42/65.
345. Confirmed in J. King to Major General Brownrigg, 28 July 1802, HO 51/154.
346. Letters of various magistrates, WMM. F.45(d).
347. Extract from a pamphlet entitled, 'An Address to the United Britons' in WMM. F.45(d), copy in R. Walker to Fitzwilliam, 28 June 1802, HO 42/64.
348. Various UE documents enclosed in Pelham to Fitzwilliam, 22 Sept., WMM. F.45(d).
349. Depositions of William and Edward Simnet and John Wilbone before T. Dutton, Mayor of Chesterfield, 23 and 25 Nov. 1802, HO 42/66 and deposition of William Simnet 2 Dec. 1800, WMM. F.45(d).
350. William Simnet deposition 2 Dec. 1800, loc.cit., noted they began to reactivate in August.
351. Gayer, Rostow and Schwartz, op.cit., 61.
352. John Wilbone deposition, 23 Nov. 1802, loc.cit., 'dispatches are constantly sent from one society to another and that money has been collected to pay the messenger'.
353. For Despard see Howell, op.cit. XXVIII, 345-528, Despard was reported to have admitted (427 - evidence of Emblin) that 'regular organization would be a moral impossibility'. In my opinion Despard was one of the masterminds of a London coup which had the support of sections of the London UE and UI. Similarly groups in the provinces like those in South Yorkshire knew of the plan and were prepared to act if the initial move succeeded.
354. These men were betrayed by the loose talk of the Simnet brothers while working with John Wilbone as colliers at Chesterfield, depositions in WMM. F.45(d) and HO 42/66. The interesting 'coincidence' of the names of Lee and Ronksley is explored in J.L. Baxter and F.K. Donnelly, 'The Revolutionary "Underground" in the West Riding: Myth or Reality?', Past and Present, 64, Aug. 1974, 124-132.
355. Parker (3 Dec. 1802) and C. Alderson (4 Dec. 1802) to Pelham, HO 42/66.
356. J. Beckett to Fitzwilliam, 22 Nov. 1802, WMM. F.45(d).
357. Burland, Annals, I, op.cit., 278.
358. E. Hoyle, History of Barnsley (Barnsley, 1924), (pages not numbered).

359. Burland, *op.cit.*, 297, a song 'The Radicals; or the Wath Wood Yeomanry, A tale of the nineteenth century by E. Duizem Esq.' found in the papers of the paymaster of the Wath Wood Light Infantry Volunteers in 1805.
360. Thompson, *op.cit.*, 494-499, deals with the implications of renewed war.

APPENDIX 3:1 - SSCI activists, 1791-1795

| <u>Name</u> | <u>Occupation</u> | <u>Status</u> | <u>Nature of Role</u> |
|---------------------|-------------------------------|---------------|-----------------------|
| John Alcock | leather inkstand maker | S | C |
| Samuel Ashton | painter | S | C |
| Francis Bagshaw | - | - | O |
| John Barber | table knife cutler | J | O |
| Richard Beale | grocer | S | C |
| James Brooke | turner | J | O |
| William Broomhead | cutler | M | C |
| Mathew Brown | player turned attorney | P | C |
| William Camage | leather inkstand maker | S | C |
| John Crome | printer | S | O |
| Cawthorne | - | - | O |
| William Chow | filesmith | - | C |
| William Clarke | cutler | - | C |
| Benjamin Dawn | filesmith | M | C |
| Richard Davison | printer | J | C |
| Benjamin Dawson | - | - | O |
| William Dewsnap | razor grinder | S | O |
| Mathew Dodsworth | cutler | J | C |
| 'Devil' Elliot | ironwork's clerk | J | O |
| Thomas Eyre | - | - | O |
| George Fish | compositor | J | O |
| Joseph Gales | printer | M | C |
| Timothy Gales | printer | J | O |
| John Grainger | - | - | C |
| Robert Hadfield | - | - | O |
| Henry Hall | - | - | O |
| Francis Hallam | tailor | - | O |
| John Harrison | razorsmith | M | C |
| Henry Hill | shoe maker's- knife forger | J | O |
| Robert Holding | striker | J | O |
| James Horsefield | grocer | M | C |
| Houndsfield | blacksmith | S | O |
| William Houndsfield | striker | J | O |
| William Huntsman | steelmaker | J | O |
| Francis Jackson | grinder | J | O |
| George Johnson | - | - | C |
| Arthur Jewitt | table knife cutter | J | O |
| George Kent | scissor manufacturer | M | C |
| Jonathon Leadbeater | compositor | J | O |
| Joseph Lee | - | - | C |
| Mathew Lodwin | - | - | C |
| William Malkin | - | - | C |
| Marshall | - | - | O |
| David Martin | engraver | M | C |
| William Mason | foundry worker | J | O |
| Joseph Mather | grinder/entertainer | S | O |
| James Montgomery | printer | J/M | O |
| Robert Moody | carpenter/joiner | J | O |
| Charles Needham | silver cutler | J | O |
| Edward Oakes | silver plate manufacturer | M | C |
| Luke Palfreyman | hosier | M | O |
| John Payne | yeoman | L | C |
| George Punshon | carpenter/enginewright | J | O |
| Luke Punshon | foreman/book-keeper | J | O |

| | | | |
|---------------------|---------------------|-----|---|
| Charles Rhodes | cutler | - | 0 |
| Henry Rock | - | - | C |
| Daniel Roper | striker | J | 0 |
| Robert Rowley | striker | J | 0 |
| Simon Runock | - | - | C |
| Edward Smith | composer | J | 0 |
| Joseph Smith | book seller | S | C |
| Abraham Sutcliffe | physician | P | C |
| Charles Sylvester | silversmith | J | 0 |
| James Taylor | - | - | 0 |
| Enoch Trickett | filesmith | J | C |
| Wadsworth | penknife cutler | J | 0 |
| James Watson | - | - | C |
| George Widdison | hairdresser/turner | M/J | 0 |
| Joseph Wildgoose | striker | J | 0 |
| John Wood | forger | J | 0 |
| Henry Redhead Yorke | intellectual/orator | P | C |

KEY

- J - Journeyman, apprentice and wage workers generally
- M - Master, manufacturer or tradesman
- P - Professional
- L - Landowner
- S - Self-employed
- C - Committee member - includes officials like secretaries, presidents of meetings, major speech-makers.
- 0 - Ordinary member - actual paying members and active sympathisers, particularly those engaged in weapon making.

APPENDIX 3:2

(a) Committee of the Sheffield Loyal Independent Volunteers

| <u>Name</u> | <u>Amount of Subscription*</u> | <u>Occupation/source of wealth</u> |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|---|
| Dr John Brown | 1000 | medical man, leadworks owner |
| Rev. James Wilkinson | 100 | Vicar, tythe owner and landowner |
| Vincent Eyre | 100 | banker and steward for Duke of Norfolk |
| George Woodhead | 100 | merchant |
| Joseph Clay | 100 | gentleman, landowner with interests in iron |
| Mrs. Fell | 100 | landowner, ironmaster's widow |
| Richard Swallow | 100 | ironmaster and steelmaker |
| George Greaves | 50 | merchant |
| Samuel Greaves | 50 | grocer |
| John Kenyon | 50 | merchant and file manufacturer |
| John Turner | 50 | retired foreign trade merchant |
| Samuel Peech | 50 | proprietor of Angel Inn and landowner |
| John Harrison | 31 | file manufacturer |
| Samuel Staniforth | 25 | wine merchant |
| Samuel Marshall | 25 | merchant |
| James Wheat | 25 | Attorney, official of the court, Baron, landowner |
| J. and B. Broomhead | 25 | factors, cutlery manufacturers |
| Joseph Ibberson | 25 | merchant and cutlery manufacturer |
| William Brightmore | 21 | merchant and steel refiner |
| Jacob Roberts | 21 | merchant |
| John Parkin | 21 | merchant |
| Thomas Holy | 21 | merchant |
| John Trevers Young | 21 | merchant |
| Rev. Alexander McKenzie | 21 | C.ofE. curate |
| John Roberts | 21 | gentleman |
| Samuel Staniforth | 21 | mercier and draper |
| Richard Morton | 21 | silver and plated ware manufacturer |
| Benjamin Blonk & S. Milcock | 21 | merchants |
| Joseph Ward | 21 | table knife manufacturer |
| Jonathon Greaves | 21 | merchant |
| William Shore | 21 | banker |
| Gamaliel Milner | 21 | banker |
| Wilson & Co. | 21 | snuff manufacturers |
| John Hendry | 21 | scissor manufacturer |
| Robert Hutton | 21 | gentleman |
| Henry Tudor | 21 | silver and plated ware manufacturer |
| John Rimington | 21 | Attorney |
| John Sauer | 21 | merchant |
| Mrs. Winter | 21 | widow of gentleman |

*In pounds

(b) Occupations of Volunteers 1794-6 (names taken from articles of enrolment)

| | |
|---|------------|
| Gentlemen | 3 |
| Merchants, factors, grocers | 10 |
| Professionals (attorneys, surgeons, teachers, editors, writers, musicians) | 10 |
| Artisans (no economic status given) | |
| i. Cutlery, tools and steel | |
| ii. Silver plate, silversmiths, weavers, shoe, hat, button, saddle, cabinet makers, blacksmiths | 165 |
| Services (hairdressers, servants, butchers, printers, compositors, salesmen) | 10 |
| Building (masons, bricklayers, plasterers, painters, joiners) | 15 |
| Labourers | 3 |
| Youths | 5 |
| Total | <u>221</u> |

APPENDIX 3:3Sheffield Ultra-Radicals - United Englishmen

| <u>Name</u> | <u>Occupation</u> | <u>Status</u> |
|----------------------|------------------------|---------------|
| John Alcock | leather inkstand maker | S |
| Henry Barlow | - | S |
| William Camage | leather inkstand maker | S |
| William Cockran | - | - |
| John Crome | printer | S |
| Jeremiah Elliot | - | - |
| Thomas Eyre | - | - |
| Timothy Gales | pressman | J |
| Edward Green | - | - |
| George Howe | - | - |
| William Lee | turner | J |
| William Mercer | - | - |
| Francis Moody | shoemaker | J |
| Benjamin Moore | - | - |
| William Pedley | - | - |
| Thomas Ramesekar | whitesmith | J |
| William Ronksley | turner | J |
| Edward Simnet | turner-collier | J |
| William Simnet | turner-collier | J |
| Thomas Troth | silversmith | J |
| William Wolstenholme | joiner | J |
| William Wilkinson | mealman | J |

CHAPTER 4. Freedom to become slaves: Economy and Society
in South Yorkshire c. 1803-15.

The dominant trends in the regional pattern of industrialization continued at new, higher levels of intensity during these years, especially in the heavy sector dominated by the coal and iron industries. War demand and basic processes of capitalist accumulation intensified this process in the heavy sector. In the light sector progress towards large scale production under industrial capitalism was significantly slow. However the final removal of the restraints on economic activity imposed by the Cutlers' Company removed the last barrier to a free market situation in the cutlery trades. All the industries in the light sector were now part of a free market economy where labour was an unprotected commodity.

In the lives of all the region's working people, structural changes in industrial organization, war-time dislocation and market-place inflation were dominant influences and provided a context for new levels of social awareness to be sustained by the positive action of the surviving radical activists and a small but growing number of labour leaders. These initiated confrontations with the political, economic and cultural exploiters of the working people. in an important prelude to a period of more open struggle.

Section A. Organization and dynamics c. 1803-15.

(a) Organization.

1) The Cutlery Trades.

The period saw the final dismantling of the eighteenth century paternalist code with the passing of the 1814 Act.¹ This opened the corporate trades to anyone and removed the controls on apprenticeship. The unqualified could now set up as master manufacturers and employ unlimited numbers of apprentices. The Cutlers' Company withered away to becoming a mark registering agency which had only certain ritual functions in the town's social calendar.² Engineered by Sheffield's

merchants and larger manufacturers, this dismantling of controls had serious implications for all those who worked in the trades, even for the relatively 'unproductive' commercial classes who had initiated this dismantling. The Act ended any remaining traditional regularity of expectation between commercial men (merchants and factors) who dealt in raw materials and marketed the final product, the manufacturer (large or small), wage labour (journeymen and apprentices) and sub-contracted wage labour (the master and journeymen grinders). A complete de-stabilization of the existing economic and social relations of production followed in the trades. A speculative class of commercial men (factors) entered the trades. They capitalized on bad conditions produced by market dislocation which had created a 'lemming herd' of 'small masters' or 'journeymen masters' who had left regular employment or were laid off and had set up as producers under the new conditions existing after 1814. Lax administration by the Company had meant these circumstances had partly arisen before 1814. They were more marked after the Act. The speculative factor class bought goods cheaply and stock-piled them for boom conditions. They did not always pay cash and operated a 'stuffing' system of payment in kind. In boom conditions they saturated the market and destroyed the livelihoods of all regular manufacturers and the established merchants who normally marketed the products of the trades. This bred cynicism among these tradesmen of the 'old school' and they too adopted speculative methods of production and marketing. The masters amongst them abandoned the practices of stock-piling at maintained prices, sharing work and maintaining or subsidizing their unemployed or partially employed work-forces.³

The magnitude of this de-stabilization was not fully seen until the post-war years and subsequent decades. It was frequently commented upon and traced back to the demise of the Cutlers' Company. It had very important implications for wage labour, both that employed directly or by sub-contract. Labour was badly hit by market-place

inflation and market dislocation and these structural changes precipitated more definite attempts at trade union organization among journeymen. There had been suggestions of sick, friendly and other benefit societies providing cover for the organization of labour to improve wages from the 1780's onwards. Several of the town's other trades, tailors,⁴ shoemakers,⁵ silver plated trade workers and saw-makers were organized in this way. In the years 1809-10 came signs of renewed labour organization among cutlery workers in the corporate trades. In these years there was the first public reporting of 'rattening',⁶ the damaging of equipment and tools used in production as a sanction on employers and 'black' labour. This heralded the advancing industrial power of organized labour.

2) Silver and Silver Plate Trades.

These years saw a slowing down of earlier expansion. The silver trade was producing nearly 20% more marked silverware in 1814-15 than in 1803-4 as against a 30% expansion in the 1790's.⁷ In the plated trades the number of manufacturing 'houses' remained stable, the rate of taking out new trade marks in both trades being half that of the 1790's.⁸ Labour here had faced a free market situation from the earlier eighteenth century and was probably organized to protect its wages throughout the period. This went on behind a facade of legal friendly and benefit societies in what were superior trades.

3) Steel.

The number of steel converters and refiners in Sheffield increased from 16 in 1797 to 39 in 1821.⁹ Expansion came from increased production in small scale 'melting holes' and from production in the town's and region's ironworks. Little is known of the labour in this relatively small industry in this period.

4) Iron.

The iron industry in the region grew rapidly in these years, stimulated by war demand and transport improvements. On the demand

side, both the cannon trade and the domestic market expanded. Progress was aided by the opening of the Barnsley Canal in 1799 and the Dove and Dearne Canal in 1804. There were now several large units of production scattered throughout the region.¹⁰ There were also several small foundries casting in both iron and brass. These were located in Sheffield and the smaller towns.¹¹

The expansion of the industry was mainly confined to the larger units of production in the central and southern parts of the region. To the north around Barnsley, transport improvements stimulated iron production and coal mining after the joining of the Barnsley to the Dearne and Dove Canal.¹² Several small furnaces operated and expanded production in the upper Dearne Valley north of Barnsley. This expansion was on a small scale.¹³ In 1811 and 1812 new foundries were built at Barnsley and Worsbrough.¹⁴ These were insignificant challengers to the 'village ironworks' in the central parts of the region (Thorncliffe, Chapeltown, Elsecar, Milton),¹⁵ and the urban foundries of Sheffield and Rotherham.

We know very little of ironworks' labour in this period. It is likely, given the pattern of growing demand, that its position was good, especially in relation to workers in the region's lighter trades. There is little evidence relating to the ironworking outwork trade, particularly nail-making. There appeared to be a parallel prosperity for outworkers because mechanized production had not made its mark.¹⁶ As with ironworks' labour, evidence of the condition of a small but significant group of industrial workers is lacking.

5) Coal.

This period saw a marked expansion in production and employment, particularly in the previously under-developed northern area around Barnsley and also in the central area. The completion of the Barnsley and Dearne and Dove Canals in 1804 was critical to this expansion,¹⁷ as the table below shows:

Table 4:1 Tonnages of coal carried on the new canals
(annual averages in tons)

| | <u>Barnsley Canal</u> ¹⁸ | <u>Dearne and Dove Canal</u> ^{*19} |
|---------|-------------------------------------|---|
| 1800-02 | 5,093 | 24,066 |
| 1803-05 | 25,052 | 26,290 |
| 1806-08 | 30,365 | 45,999 |
| 1809-11 | 47,900 | 72,532 |
| 1812-14 | 76,208 | 86,047 |
| 1815-17 | 95,104 | 95,438 |

* The Dearne and Dove figures are inflated by traffic from the Barnsley Canal passing southwards. In 1813 over one third of its coal tonnage was Barnsley Canal traffic. This proportion increased.²⁰

There was immediate growth around the terminus of the Barnsley Canal at Barnby. Here there was a large colliery owned by the Low Moor ironworks producing 10,000 tons per annum by 1804.²¹ At Banks Hall Samuel Thorpe of Gawber was sending 100 wagons of Silkstone coal per week to the canal wharf.²² The nearby village of Cawthorne had 31 miners among its 200 male working population in 1806.²³ The Barnby colliery ceased operating between 1806-11 and growth in mining production slowed in the area.²⁴ After 1810 when tramways had been built to bring coal from Silkstone to the canal terminus, there was further growth. Jonas Clarke of Noblethorpe Hall began to exploit the coal on his new Silkstone estate.²⁵ The Barnby colliery also began working again.

The Dearne and Dove canal provided stimulus for coal production in the central area of the region. Again progress did not immediately follow the opening of the canal. At Worsbrough in 1806 there were only eight miners among 114 adult workers. Francis Edmunds began to exploit his resources at about the same time as Jonas Clarke.²⁶ At Elsecar production was on a larger scale. Earl Fitzwilliam, the dominant coal master in this area, employed 100 men in this area in the Old and New collieries at Elsecar and 60 at Low Wood colliery.²⁷ There was little growth around Sheffield in the south where the Duke of Norfolk had been the largest coalmaster. In 1805 he leased all his

pits to the Sheffield Coal Company for twenty years.²⁸ Here as elsewhere the miner and his experience remained at this stage more elusive than his employer.

6) Linen.

Although there are few records relating to its operations, the linen trade can be shown to have expanded significantly in this period. In Barnsley in 1798 there had been seven large employers or linen manufacturers putting out work to weavers in the town and surrounding villages and employing 500 looms. By 1816 there were 28 linen manufacturers, employing 2500 looms.²⁹ Expansion was associated with a change of emphasis in production away from heavy products (towellings, sheets, dowlas and ducks) towards finer products (huckabacks, diapers, damasks, fine sheetings). This process was said to have begun in 1810.³⁰ In Barnsley there was also a growth of business associated with the finishing processes of bleaching and calendering. Here in 1806 30% of the adult working population were weavers and in all 44% worked in the linen trade. In nearby villages there were significant numbers of weavers but no finishers.³¹

The expansion of the industry locally was associated with the influx of Scottish, Irish and Lancashire weavers. These arrived in more significant numbers after the Napoleonic wars. Population growth before 1815 was mainly associated with short distance migration.

(b) Dynamics

Despite the effects of war on the industrial economy's largest employer, the cutlery trades, the majority of the region's industries in the light and heavy sectors expanded during these years. The driving force provided by capitalist accumulation through enclosure and the investment benefits from transport improvement prompted this expansion at every stage.

Table 4:2 Average number of enclosure acts in progress annually in five year periods in South Yorkshire within a 20 mile radius of Sheffield, 1790-1820.³²

| | <u>acts</u> |
|-----------|-------------|
| 1790-95 | 2 |
| 1795-1800 | 6 |
| 1800-05 | 4.8 |
| 1805-10 | 5 |
| 1810-15 | 9.4 |
| 1815-20 | 10.4 |

Table 4:3 Expansion of traffic on the region's waterways and average value of traffic per annum in three-year periods, 1800-17.

| | <u>1800-2</u> | <u>1803-5</u> | <u>1806-8</u> | <u>1809-11</u> | <u>1812-14</u> | <u>1815-17</u> |
|--|---------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| 1) Tolls on the Barnsley Canal ³³ | 826 | 2028 | 2464 | 3439 | 5808 | 6908 |
| 2) Tolls on Dearne and Dove Canal ³⁴ | 1112 | 1441 | 3026 | 5167 | 6698 | 7116 |
| 3) Amount of dividend to be distributed to shareholders of the Don Navigation. ³⁵ | 9693 | 8447 | 9310 | 12102 | 12478 | 12735 |

This driving force was reflected in the increased significance of the heavy sector. This sector, while still employing a tiny minority of the region's industrial workers, created an increasingly disproportionate share of its wealth.

At this stage the heavy sector was less vulnerable to the vicissitudes of the trade cycle and the artificial disruption of markets by war. The light sector industries, especially Sheffield's cutlery and related trades, were more seriously affected by the war. The wage and employment data provided by one medium-sized cutlery firm illustrates the severity of market dislocation brought about by the war:

Table 4:4 Wage bill and average numbers of recipients of payment of the firm of Thomas Nowill and Company.³⁶

| | <u>Wage bill</u> (£s) | <u>Employees</u> (average no. throughout the year). | | <u>Wage bill</u> (£s) | <u>Employees</u> (average no. throughout the year). |
|------|--------------------------|--|------|--------------------------|--|
| 1800 | 1,717 | 31 | 1808 | 506 | 10 |
| 1801 | 1,961 | 32 | 1809 | 781 | 12.5 |
| 1802 | 2,035 | 33 | 1810 | 847 | 12.5 |
| 1803 | 1,900 | 28 | 1811 | 1,203 | 16.5 |
| 1804 | 1,011 | 16 | 1812 | 1,356 | 16.7 |
| 1805 | 499 | 9 | 1813 | 1,794 | 23 |
| 1806 | 535 | 9 | 1814 | 1,204 | 18.8 |
| 1807 | 546 | 10 | 1815 | 1,783 | 22.5 |

The immediate dislocation of markets by renewed warfare was reinforced by the operation of trade embargoes. The Berlin decrees of 1806 and the Orders in Council played some part in this. New markets provided renewed stimulus after 1808 and explain the boom felt in 1809-10 when cutlery workers gained a new price list long after regarded as of great worth. The Nowill figures do not entirely bring out the influence of the dominant national business cycle which witnessed peaks in this period in December 1802, August 1806, March 1810 and March 1815, and troughs in October 1801, March 1804, May 1808 and September 1811.³⁷ They do not emphasize the depression of trade due to the operation of the Orders in Council with regard to the American market during 1811-12. This was very severe. It combined with the highest corn prices of the decade in 1812 to induce signs of a re-awakened radical temper in the mass. The dominant business cycle pattern is borne out more by the data for the silver trades.

Table 4:5 Quantity of silver marked at Sheffield Assay Office³⁸
(troy pounds)

| | | | |
|------|-------|------|-------|
| 1800 | 4,008 | 1808 | 3,691 |
| 1801 | 3,662 | 1809 | 4,471 |
| 1802 | 4,467 | 1810 | 4,497 |
| 1803 | 3,275 | 1811 | 3,363 |
| 1804 | 2,871 | 1812 | 2,929 |
| 1805 | 3,152 | 1813 | 3,242 |
| 1806 | 3,348 | 1814 | 4,366 |
| 1807 | 3,142 | 1815 | 4,903 |

As in the Nowill figures there was evidence of a steady recovery after 1808, climaxing in boom conditions in 1809-10 and 1813-15 in the closing years of the war. If the early census data are to be trusted, they show Sheffield and its out-townships' population growing slowly in the war decade 1801-11 but more significantly in the next decade.

Table 4:6 Population Growth³⁹ (% p.a. in periods of ten years).

| | <u>1801-11</u> | <u>1811-21</u> |
|-------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Sheffield | 1.44 | 1.7 |
| Ecclesall Bierlow | 2.2 | 3.8 |
| Brightside Bierlow | 2.15 | 3.5 |
| Upper Hallam | 0.9 | 1.8 |
| Nether Hallam | 2.09 | 3.5 |
| Attercliffe and Darnall | 1.72 | 1.87 |
| Bradfield | 0.06 | 2.1 |

The marked climb in the expenditure on poor relief in Sheffield particularly emphasized the effects of war:

Table 4:7 Sheffield's Annual Poor Relief Expenditure (£s).⁴⁰

| | | | |
|--------|--------|---------|--------|
| 1800-1 | 12,344 | 1808-9 | 18,831 |
| 1801-2 | 14,323 | 1809-10 | 16,061 |
| 1802-3 | 9,922 | 1810-11 | 16,453 |
| 1803-4 | 11,621 | 1811-12 | 18,327 |
| 1804-5 | 13,388 | 1812-13 | 27,005 |
| 1805-6 | 15,765 | 1813-14 | 21,720 |
| 1806-7 | 14,169 | 1814-15 | 16,715 |
| 1807-8 | 16,001 | | |

Market-place inflation was significant in 1805, 1809, 1810. Then the average level of wheat prices in Sheffield market were on a par with that of the average for 1795-6. In 1811 and 1812 an acceleration of market-place inflation saw wheat prices rising to levels 90% above this level by the late summer of 1812. After this the lower 1795-6 levels were maintained until the harvest of 1813.⁴¹ There was severe pressure on mass living standards prompted by market dislocation, the structural changes at work in the organization of the cutlery trades

and this market-place inflation. The greatest severity was that felt between 1803-9 and 1811-12. During the earlier period well organized groups of workers in the town, like tailors and shoemakers, attempted to get better wages to meet inflation.⁴² The workers in the cutlery trades had to wait until the boom of 1809-10 to obtain better prices for their labour.⁴³ The 'safety valve' of recruitment for war minimized the full effect of these pressures.⁴⁴ Elite paternalism also offset them. Public subscriptions were raised in 1808, 1809 and 1812⁴⁵ to provide assistance in money and kind. These were supported by continuous activity by voluntary welfare agencies.⁴⁶ However in 1812 such actions were not able to prevent an outbreak of popular anti-authoritarian violence which demonstrated the deep-rooted radical orientation of the mass against the town's elite. This was exceptional. For the majority of this period the common situation was influenced by a consensus that was created by war against an external enemy whose strategy threatened the livelihood of all.

Little is known of the dynamics in the region's smaller light trades, nailmaking, wiredrawing and linen manufacture. In nailmaking and the rapidly disappearing wiredrawing trade, the workforce was less dependent on industrial production. Enclosure was however threatening the agricultural margins of subsistence. Mechanized production had not yet loomed on the horizon. The linen industry expanded, although little is known about the level of production and employment and even less about the workforce. The weavers had initiated a tradition of industrial organization in the 1790's. Little is known of their union although when in 1812 Barnsley's weavers' connections with the Luddites were betrayed, there was some confirmation of the existence of labour organization.⁴⁷

In the heavy trades dominated by large scale capitalist production of coal and iron, expansion occurred which counteracted the major fluctuations of the business cycle. In iron, the levels of production managed by the firm of Newton and Chambers characterized an experience

shared by the other large units.

Table 4:8 Newton Chambers and Co. sales of pig iron 1800-15 (£s)⁴⁸

| | | | |
|------|--------|------|--------|
| 1800 | 15,090 | 1808 | 21,076 |
| 1801 | 15,379 | 1809 | 25,897 |
| 1802 | - | 1810 | 42,085 |
| 1803 | - | 1811 | 38,865 |
| 1804 | - | 1812 | 35,685 |
| 1805 | 20,982 | 1813 | 39,940 |
| 1806 | 21,986 | 1814 | 44,755 |
| 1807 | 17,964 | 1815 | 37,489 |

In 1812 at Thorncliffe and at the nearby Elsecar and Milton ironworks, it was necessary to lay men off. After 1812 war and domestic demand provided a basis for renewed impetus until 1815.⁴⁹ Labour made some attempts to organize in the ironworks. In 1809-10, when other groups of workers in the region were striving to obtain wage increases, there were similar demands from ironworkers at Thorncliffe.⁵⁰ Earl Fitzwilliam had similar problems with carpenters and masons employed on his nearby estate.⁵¹ Nothing is known of the demands made, the extent of organization or the outcome. Not until later did ironworks' labour develop organization. Even less is known about the levels of production, employment and the economic experience of labour in coalmining. The demand for coal for both domestic and industrial use was growing rapidly with less fluctuations than other commodities of the region's industrial economy. Little is known of labour organization among miners. They were mainly geographically isolated in small concentrations. Although there is evidence of wage demands being made at Thorncliffe and of attempts at organization by miners in the vicinity of Barnsley in 1810,⁵² there is little evidence of any permanent organization.

Section B. Society 1803-15; Working People and the War against Empire.

(a) Summary

There were few signs of a significant advance in popular political consciousness among the region's industrial workers in this period. Nevertheless the latter part of the period saw among the Sheffield workers a continuation of the process of political education begun in the 1790's. The intermittent leadership of a radical section of the town's elite of merchants and large manufacturers (those whose nerve had failed in 1792) provided between 1809-13 a renewed licence for popular political activity among both the radical petty bourgeoisie of tradesmen, small manufacturers and lesser professionals and among the increasingly proletarianized mass of industrial workers. All this activity provided the basis for a significant renewal in popular agitation in the immediate post-war years between 1815-20. In these years was also heard the first of three revolutionary echoes to the voice of Despard.

The progress of industrial workers organizing to defend a specifically 'labour class' interest continued throughout this period. Deliberately obscured by those involved in such illegal activity, there were nevertheless definite signs of association for industrial objectives given by industrial wage labour in the boom years 1809-10 and 1812-15.

(b) 'The Valley of Dry Bones' - The Voices silenced 1803-1808

The winter of 1802-3 had seen the last gasp of popular radical politics for a decade. In 1803 renewed war was accompanied by a regression in popular consciousness towards more 'traditional-orientated' patriotism. The enthusiastic reorganization of the Volunteers into corps of cavalry and infantry throughout the region in 1803-4⁵³ and the mass response to this militaristic renewal, particularly in thankful victory celebrations,⁵⁴ were to justify the claim of the Sheffield Iris in July 1803 that they were witnessing a

'general resurrection of Old English sentiment'.⁵⁵ The fear of invasion,⁵⁶ especially during 1803-5, produced fear and hatred of French military and commercial aggression among all sections of the community. While the immediate fears of invasion faded after 1805, patriotic obsession remained undisturbed as the dominant emotion ruling the collective psyche. The situation was thoroughly exploited by the elite who, in the absence of any direct political challenge to their authority, found time to co-ordinate and further develop the machinery of physical and moral control maintaining their hegemony. The war enabled them to supplement the military presence within the region with politically reliable volunteer corps of cavalry and infantry. They also recruited large numbers of special constables to be employed to maintain law and order in an emergency.⁵⁷ Private associations protecting tradesmen and employers from lawlessness were also encouraged.⁵⁸ Their accomplices in the religious bodies, particularly the Methodists, also received their assistance in the general war against crime, vice and general social insubordination.⁵⁹

The elite was aided in its counter-revolutionary action by the deterioration in the economic position of the region's industrial workers. Economic dislocation disturbed the social matrices of working people's lives and diminished their political potential even further. Family life was under great pressure because poverty not only brought immediate hardship but the promise of a permanent dismal hardship from the loss of one or more male breadwinners to the war.⁶⁰ Juvenile crime, whether it increased or not during these years, was causing greater concern than ever.⁶¹ In part, any increase was due to the strain on the family. It was also a reflection of less rigid apprenticeship in a more intense capitalistic system of production. Crime on the whole appeared to be increasing during the war years as a reflection of economic desperation. Signs of a 'crime wave' begin to appear more fully in the immediate post-war years as the following table suggests:

Table 4:9 Number of prisoners committed to Wakefield House of

| | | <u>Correction</u> ⁶² | | | |
|------|-----|---------------------------------|-----|------|------|
| 1804 | 520 | 1810 | 499 | 1816 | 1310 |
| 1805 | 567 | 1811 | 643 | 1817 | 1880 |
| 1806 | 532 | 1812 | 818 | 1818 | 1998 |
| 1807 | 492 | 1813 | 945 | 1819 | 2206 |
| 1808 | 578 | 1814 | 797 | 1820 | 2169 |
| 1809 | 643 | 1815 | 920 | | |

Social life outside the home, in the leisure world of the alehouse, back street, waste ground and village green and common, was more and more restricted, not only by poverty but also by the aggressive moral agents of Church and Chapel, ably supported by the economic agency of the urban developer and enclosure commissioner. The more formal aspects of social life outside the home were also under attack. Clubs and societies in any shape or form were hawkishly watched by the magistrates. They used their control over alehouse licences to harass would-be trade clubs and political debating societies into oblivion. There was a denial of vital organizational lessons to working people, particularly that lesson which emphasized the benefits of mutual association and co-operation. Paradoxically Wesleyan Methodism provided many working people with some of these basic lessons although it still provided a chiliastic outlet for mass frustration during periodic revival outbreaks.⁶³ The Sunday schools, but more likely the day to day participation in the working of more plebeian dissenting groups (like the Baptists), and also in the more democratic Methodist sects (i.e. the Kilhamites and Primitives), provided important education for potential labour class leaders during these years of repression. Similarly sick and friendly societies and other voluntary associations provided experience to further this education. Here politically minded skilled workers mingled in secret conclave with radical petty bourgeoisie to renew their 'sans culotte' vow of allegiance to the ideal of civil, political and religious equality. Here the old Jacobins and younger men with experience of industrial agitation met in anticipation

of a fuller stage of labour class realization which was to work itself out in the years immediately after 1815.

For the moment these developments were buried in the dark underground world of illegality. Above ground there was an all pervading silence. The 1807 county election passed without any dissident radical challenge. The two 'great houses' of Fitzwilliam and Lascelles attempted in their hegemony-reinforcing election activity to outbid each other by conspicuous display. The mass of working people had only the alienated role of 'bully-boys' and crowd extras to play. Hired by the factions of the local elite in town and village, only their more primitive energies were required to aid the 'political process'.⁶⁴ The war appeared to be removing any remaining traces of a 'radical orientation' among the mass of the region's working people. The effects of the Berlin decrees (1806), Orders in Council (1807) and the further escalation in the blockage of trade were being felt very keenly. In March 1808 the Iris commented that;

There perhaps never was a time when the manufacturers of Sheffield were in a state of distress, equal to that in which they find themselves at present, by an almost total stagnation of their trade.⁶⁵

The political significance of this was obliquely commented on by James Montgomery in correspondence with a literary friend in December:

The manufacturers at present are almost starving for want of employment...the merchants have nothing to do but complain that they have nothing to do.... As for the poor in this town, who were formerly great readers, they are reduced to ashes by the war, and if there be a spark of ethereal spirit among them, it is so hidden that the breath of heaven alone, that blew over the valley of dry bones, could quicken it into flame again.⁶⁶

That winter saw the reappearance of soup kitchens to help the poor.⁶⁷ Disillusion with the management of war produced new alignments within the elite. This, and the improvement of trade following a breakdown in the Continental blockade with the revolution in Spain, gave elements of the industrial and political leaderships among the region's industrial workers their head. The following year conspired the 'breath

of heaven' Montgomery secretly longed for.

(c) 'A Spark of Ethereal Spirit' - the first echo 1809-15.

The early months of 1809 saw little improvement in the economic positions of all sections of the community throughout the region, even where employment was not as depressed as in the Sheffield trades. Everywhere throughout January and February collections for the poor were being made.⁶⁸ Thereafter trade picked up and maintained an improved level which lasted until well into 1810. This improvement was registered in the wage demands of many of the region's workgroups during this period. There are slight records of several of these, including the Sheffield tailors (July 1809), cutlery workers (December 1809), colliers and ironworkers at Thorncliffe and carpenters and masons at Elsecar (1810).⁶⁹ This surge in labour organization was partly a response to mounting inflation in the market place. Grain prices in 1808-9 touched the high levels of 1795-6 following an almost unbroken sequence of poor harvests throughout the decade.⁷⁰ Boom conditions gave labour impetus to act. In the Sheffield trades especially, the employers acted. Here in December 1809 and April 1810 merchants and manufacturers hastily joined together to try and check the combinations of the workmen.⁷¹

The struggle terminated peaceably in most trades with a new high list of prices for the journeymen being won. The struggle was waged without violent means being adopted by the organized trades.⁷² Nevertheless the scale of organization prompted lively correspondence. One of the region's magistrates informed the Home Office at the height of the struggle:

The manufacturers in this place are in a sad situation. The men are associating together for an increase of wages, and the masters resist them. They are now completely at issue. How the contest will terminate I think would be difficult to say. In a riot most probably. They are writing on the walls 'Cutlers stand true'. Their plans are, I understand, very well organized. Amongst the grinders, Mr Brownell informs me, there is a regular committee appointed to examine the work, and if it is sufficiently done, as they suppose,

for the price given, they send a note to the master signifying their approval of it. Mr Rhodes, the late Master Cutler, has one of these notes, commencing with 'we the Committee', but bearing no signatures.⁷³

Parallel in significance for their self realization in social and political terms, working people were also influenced by the intervention of a section of the elite in the issue of parliamentary reform. This leadership, although only an intermittent force, helped during 1809-12 to recreate conditions favourable to the reappearance of the 'sans-culotte' alliance between the class of petty property and working people generally. Under the guiding hands of a group of radical-minded merchants and larger industrial employers, Sheffield once again became a northern focus for renewed nation-wide demands for political reform. At the root of renewed struggle was the burden of taxation on all sections of property owners to fight a war that was regarded as being less and less efficiently managed. In April 1809 a huge petition was signed by 15,000 Sheffield inhabitants supporting Colonel Wardle for his indictment of the Duke of York.⁷⁴ Support was growing for the anti-war, anti-corruption democratic band wagon. In January 1810 local subscriptions were paying for Wardle's defence. Ordinary working people, many of whom had signed the petition, sent in humble donations. Subscribers included such significantly anonymous blocks of support as that of '155 subscribers at Coulston Croft Grinding Engines' (working grinders) and '56 file grinders'. These illustrated the considerable depths of popular support.⁷⁵ Later that year the arrest and imprisonment of well-known reformers in London - Sir Francis Burdett and John Gales Jones (a former LCS president) - prompted the calling of a public meeting by the 'Friends of Constitutional Reform'. At least 7-8000 people attended this gathering in Sheffield's Paradise Square. A petition was organized to protest about the treatment of the London reformers. Platform speakers were all drawn from renegade members of the town's elite. In the main they advocated only partial methods of political

reform. Only Thomas Rawson, a wealthy brewer, who read them an extract from the 39th chapter of the Magna Carta, advocated universal suffrage and annual parliaments.⁷⁶ Burdett's liberation was celebrated at several of the town's larger inns in July and August.⁷⁷ There is little in the newspaper sources (on which we are entirely dependent) to suggest any great re-birth of a popular radical culture on the scale of the 1790's.⁷⁸ Nevertheless the town's 'Tories' reacted with a counter petition signed by over three hundred merchants and large manufacturers. Loyalists in general became more watchful, even in the as yet undisturbed smaller towns and villages of the region.

Throughout the latter part of 1810 and in 1811 trade worsened as the trade blockade tightened and American markets contracted. The commercial drives of the radical renegade section of the elite drove them away from direct political agitation into a campaign for economic reform and specifically for the removal of the Orders in Council. Their campaign came to a climax in 1812. As employers they, like the loyalist section of the elite and the majority of the smaller employers of lesser status, had to confront better organized industrial action by a growing 'labour class' interest among wage labourers. Not only had significant organization gone on in Sheffield's light trade in the boom years of 1809-10, but in Barnsley's linen trade and probably in the 'heavy sector' ironworks and collieries, attempts were also made to form trade unions or more 'ad hoc' associations seeking to raise the price of labour. Industrial violence, particularly the Sheffield practice of 'rattening', came more into public notice at this time.⁷⁹ Sheffield's file trade was worst affected. Here acts of incendiarism and subsequent prosecution outran the general settlement of the autumn of 1810 in the cutlery trades. They lasted till January 1811.⁸⁰

The decline of trade weakened the power of the 'labour class' interest throughout 1811 and 1812, especially in those Sheffield trades which depended upon the American market. 1811 was an exceptionally bad year in several trades where between 20-50% of the labour force was

turned off. Things were exceptionally bad among 6000 of the town's labour force who were said to be totally dependent on the American market.⁸¹ This was also a year marked by a renewal of Methodist revival in the region. This symptomized the deep seated anxieties of the labouring population.⁸²

In early 1812 things were still no better and would not improve until the Orders in Council were abolished and trade could flow more easily. Established manufacturers attempted to share work out but the appearance of a flood of small masters selling to less respectable commercial men destroyed any semblance of non-economic morality.⁸³ The position of the town's established merchants and manufacturers deteriorated and so did that of the labouring population. The established manufacturers and merchants reacted by organizing a petition against the Orders in Council. Organized labour appeared too weak to act to maintain the 1810 list. Everywhere in the region market-place inflation added to the troubles of the mass of working people. Sheffield market's price for wheat reached levels 90% above those of 1795-6.⁸⁴ Against a background of a local 'crime wave',⁸⁵ machine breaking in the north Midlands and woollen districts of the West Riding and widespread market disturbance, there were signs of a reappearance of popular radical politics, accompanied by signs of the recurrence of physical force ultra-radicalism - the revolutionary tradition that had been suppressed some ten years earlier. This re-birth mainly confined itself to Sheffield, the traditional radical stronghold in the south of the region. Elsewhere there were few signs of life.

A popular disturbance in Sheffield on 14 April provided an opportunity for the town's politically discontented to re-assert themselves.⁸⁶ The incident began in a curious manner when dozens of labourers, engaged in the building of a new burial ground, marched out at midday into the market place wearing 'wooden clogs'. The Iris claimed their intention was;

'to exhibit a spectacle of wretchedness which should work on the passions of the indignant manufacturers and excite indignation against the Provision Sellers'.⁸⁷

A crowd assembled. The labourers suddenly disappeared after making their gesture. The crowd, obviously agitated by this propaganda, began to attack the dealers and broke into the cellars of potato dealers and took away quantities of fish, grain and potatoes. The magistrates arrived and read the Riot Act and the turbulence subsided. Then a noisy group of men and youths arrived from another part of the town. Their leaders shouting 'all in a mind for the store room in the Wicker', led a section of the crowd to the Spital Hill Militia depot. These insurgents were seen to be led by a group of five or six men and fifty youths. They were followed by a mass of 4-5000 men and women. By three o'clock in the afternoon they reached the depot. With a cry of 'all in a mind', sections of the crowd, mainly youths, stormed the building. They overcame the guards and made off with weapons and other equipment. Older and more passive members of the crowd cautioned the younger, more volatile elements:

Do you know what you are about? You will all be hanged, if you are caught with those arms in your hands; you had better destroy them than carry them away.

The advice was heeded and the attackers had begun breaking the armoury's contents when a troop of Hussars from the garrison arrived and dispersed the crowd.⁸⁸ Of 864 weapons in the depot, 198 were broken and 78 stolen.⁸⁹

This was no simple 'rebellion of the belly'. There was definite evidence of manipulated insurgency by ultra-radical activists.⁹⁰ The absolute objectives are not clear. It may be that the arms stealing was to help arm a revolutionary group who may have been involved in the Luddite machine breaking. More simply it may have been an attempt to provide a challenge to local authority and to demonstrate the weakness of the local elite. The manipulators were skilled agitators. They were said by the Leeds Mercury to include 'two of the most ingenious

mechanics in the town', who in the week before, 'had received wages of...4 guineas and a half'.⁹¹ They included Thomas Wilson, an optician, and John Blackwell, a tailor.⁹² They drew on a general radical orientation amongst Sheffield's working people. This orientation was reflected in the crowd's attitude to James Montgomery, the Iris's editor and former radical. When he rescued a woman grain seller from them he was warned, 'Mester! Mester! get yo in - they'll mully crush yo else'. Reassuring voices cried, 'Nay, nay sir we won't hurt you - you were once our friend'.⁹³ A living radical folk memory saved James Montgomery.

The Home Office, much concerned about the widespread disorders and Luddism, had General Grey investigate the incident. He reported;

...that the affair was without plan or system, and I should suppose totally unconnected with the proceedings at Leeds, Huddersfield, etc., particularly as everything has since been perfectly quiet at Sheffield.⁹⁴

Contradicting the first part of his statement there was evidence to show obvious manipulation of popular emotions by a leadership group. There was also evidence of further activity by the Sheffield agitators. Men had travelled to Barnsley the following day to organize a similar attack at the depot of the militia there under cover of a market disturbance.⁹⁵ Here there was consumer protest in the potato market but nothing else.⁹⁶ In Barnsley several ultra-radicals were known to be operating⁹⁷ in direct political activity through the industrial organization of the weavers only recently begun.⁹⁸ Several weavers were known to be 'twisted in' to the secrets of the Luddites.⁹⁹ Whether the Sheffield radicals were familiar with their Barnsley counterparts as brother Luddites or not, some sort of contact existed between them and was also established throughout the radical underworld of the West Riding, north Midlands and Lancashire. It was no coincidence that these were the districts of Luddite activity. The crisis year of 1812, if not earlier stirrings, had shaken old radicals back into life.¹⁰⁰ Magistrates' correspondence with the Home Office

from northern industrial areas hinted, often in very insubstantial terms, at a threat of insurrection in April and May. These fears were to be proved groundless, possibly because of the lead taken by manufacturers in key towns in agitating for the repeal of Orders in Council. In Sheffield this political initiative must have lowered tension between elite and mass.

Local events in mid-April had intensified the anxieties of the authorities.¹⁰¹ In the region, as elsewhere in the northern and Midland industrial districts, the main preoccupation of the authorities was with getting military reinforcements¹⁰² to contain the supposed threat of insurrection.¹⁰³ Such anxieties were widespread throughout April, May and June. Fuelled by a rising generation of spies and informers, it did not subside until the end of the year. A spy employed by an officer of the Sheffield garrison reported Luddite organization among the Barnsley weavers, 'twisting in' at night meetings and delegates being appointed to represent both Sheffield and Barnsley in the chain of organizations being formed by more politically-orientated Luddites.¹⁰⁴ Ultimately his evidence led to the arrests of individuals who later were to prove themselves prominent in the weavers' industrial and political struggles.¹⁰⁵

Trade remained bad in the region despite the repeal of the Orders in Council.¹⁰⁶ Even the iron making and coal industries which were the region's strongest growth points were affected.¹⁰⁷ Inflation in the market place reached new heights later in 1812 as the following table illustrates:

Table 4:10 Monthly averages of wheat prices in Sheffield markets
in 1812.¹⁰⁸

| | <u>shillings</u> <u>per load</u> | | <u>shillings</u> <u>per load</u> |
|----------|-------------------------------------|-----------|-------------------------------------|
| January | 38 | July | 60 |
| February | 40 | August | 63 |
| March | 42 | September | 61 |
| April | 47 | October | 48 |
| May | 46 | November | 36 |
| June | 55 | December | 42 |

In August disturbances took place in Sheffield market. On 18 and 19 August meal sellers were attacked by angry crowds who enforced the sale of meal at three shillings per stone. Meal had been selling previously at seven shillings per stone. The Riot Act was read and the militia had to be called in to disperse the crowd. A section of this body had stoned the magistrates, including Lord Milton the son of Fitzwilliam. They threatened to come and burn Wentworth. Despite the 'traditional' methods used to enforce the collective notion of 'fair price' using a list of prices purporting to come from the magistrates, the holding of night meetings (as in 1800) suggested politically motivated activists organizing collective action.¹⁰⁹

Some of the antagonism was siphoned off by elite paternalism as subscriptions for the poor were hurriedly raised.¹¹⁰ Other energies were channelled into more constructive direct political action. The renegade members of Sheffield's elite and men of similar political sympathies in the region, having successfully agitated for the repeal of the Orders in Council, returned to agitating for political reform. The progress of radical politics was boosted by the veteran reformer Major Cartwright's arrival in Sheffield on his nation tour¹¹¹ to urge renewed organization in association with the newly formed London Hamden Club.¹¹² Cartwright was a 'thorough' reformer whose presence alienated the 'partial' reformers among the ranks of the respectable Sheffield Friends of Freedom. The only true friends the working people had here were John Payne (a small landowner) and Thomas Rawson (a wealthy brewer). They were the only advocates of annual parliaments and universal suffrage among the group. They were able to exploit Cartwright's visit to gain wider popular support and involvement. The journeymen and small manufacturers of little property who were the backbone of the Sheffield 'Sansculotterie' of the early 1790's and of the United organization of 1797-1802, together with similarly moved weavers, ironworkers and colliers outside Sheffield in the rising small industrial towns and villages, all looked to the

'violent men' like Rawson for leadership.¹¹³ However, the uneasy alliance of 'thorough' and 'partial' reformers within the Friends of Freedom was not broken. Men like Rawson realized the undivided support of respectable reformers was needed to prevent a repeat of the loyalist intimidation of democrats in previous years and they did not force a division in their body. This inhibited the progress of radical re-birth.

The new channel of popular expression provided short-term outlets for the political frustrations expressed in Luddism. In Barnsley the arrest of several weavers heavily implicated in the illegal industrial and political ventures of the Luddites served as a warning on others involved.¹¹⁴ By November it was felt Luddism was spent in the West Riding.¹¹⁵ Its energies had found new expression in open political agitation and probably more secret industrial agitation. The meaningless ritual of the October elections for the county's parliamentary representatives served to reinforce the heightened sense of political grievance.¹¹⁶ Cartwright's visit prompted the collection of local petitions for reform throughout the region. It brought in groups of workers who had never had the chance to make a significant political gesture before.¹¹⁷ Feelings still ran high. The patriotic currents which had run so strongly in earlier years during the war against the Empire were reduced to a trickle.¹¹⁸ A chance encounter in a public house between a leading 'partial' reformer (Thomas Asline Ward, a member of a local merchant family) and a group of Sheffield workers allows the historian to penetrate the opaqueness of early nineteenth century social relationships. Ward debated the political issues of the day with them, recalling:

It is their opinion that the kingdom cannot exist, without a change, until Christmas, and they seem scarcely startled at the idea of a revolution. Everything, they say, is wrong in this country, from the King to the Constable, and Bonaparte is an honest fellow. I insisted upon the despotic nature of the French Government, and the great freedom we enjoyed. They would not believe me. Speaking of Lord Wellington, they said he was driven from Madrid. I told them that he was in advance of it and pursuing the

retreating enemy. They said the rich always pretended to know better than the poor, who had, or ought to have, equal rights with them, - but George Foster (I suppose some alehouse demagogue) told them it would soon be 'all over' with Lord Wellington.

One of the men was recognized by Ward as being one of the 'Freemen of Lincoln' who had been active in the disturbances of August.¹¹⁹ This again reiterates the point that local popular disturbances in 1812 were much more than 'of the belly'. This is further justified by events in the Sheffield theatre in the last week of November. The officers of the garrison insisted on the audience singing 'God Save the King'. Those in the gallery objected. A guard had to be placed among them to maintain order. For his part in the proceedings, John Blackwell, the radical tailor who had led the insurgency of April, earned the title 'King of the Gallery'.¹²⁰

The new-found aggression was partly rooted in desperation. The promise of Cartwright's visit was not fulfilled. The 'violent men' among the leadership group of respectable political reformers were not strong enough to act alone. They had needed the support of moderates. They chose to act with them in a very ineffective partnership. Disillusion and feelings of betrayal were voiced amongst old Jacobins. William Broomhead, the former SSCI secretary and physical force advocate who had lost himself in later religious enthusiasm, now had tried to resume major political activity. His exclusion from a Friends of Freedom dinner in September hinted at the "respectables'" attitude to 'Old Jacks' and others who championed the working people's real political interests.¹²¹ Understandably the re-awakening of the spirit of 'sans-culotte' co-operation was short-lived in 1812.

Through 1813 and 1814 there was a turning away from political towards industrial action. Anticipation of the end of the war generated a speculative boom which gave organized labour a stronger hand in bargaining for better wages. There were signs of this in the wage demands of Sheffield journeyman tailors in May 1813.¹²² Similar

demands followed from branches of the town's cutlery trade early in 1814. Master manufacturers and merchants in some trades, seeking to capitalize on the opening of markets following the expected peace, made concessions after a strike in their branches of the trades.¹²³

A local correspondent told the Home Office in April 1814:

...three bodies of workmen had struck, and their employers have complied with the terms they demanded: another body called the filemakers demanded an increase in wages to take place 2nd May next: and they have set out to the masters the terms they will work in future after that period.... These filemakers get at present in six short days 25-35s per week: the enclosed paper is fifteen per cent above that price.¹²⁴

The main body of master manufacturers and merchants, angry at the way this capitulation was occurring, had in late March formed the Sheffield Mercantile and Manufacturing Union. This was an employers' association to prosecute trade combinations of the journeymen.¹²⁵ The Union was short-lived and relatively unsuccessful, despite some successful prosecutions early on.¹²⁶ It managed to damage the long term security of labour by getting an act passed to abolish the remaining protective powers of the Cutlers' Company. This 1814 Act removed apprenticeship and entry limitations in the cutlery trades. It stripped away the last vestiges of protection for qualified workers in the trades. The trades' committees or unions of the journeymen fought the passing of the bill through their legal agents in London.¹²⁷ They drew on the moral and material support of other groups of workers. A Nottingham magistrate talked of 'regular communication with these people of Sheffield where workmen have struck'.¹²⁸ Their protests were to no avail and the bill passed in law in September.¹²⁹ Organized labour in Sheffield lost an important battle in this fight against employing interests at this high point of success in raising wages, a high point shared by the weavers.

The spring tide of free market enterprise which followed, drastically hit the economic position of labour in Sheffield. Speculative over-production was more apparent throughout 1814 and early 1815 as

a result of the expectations of and arrival of peace. It was worsened by an increase in the number of 'small masters' producing goods at below market price, and selling to new 'pirate' factors and merchants who were encouraging them by 'putting out' raw materials in the town as well as the country. The system of 'truck' or non-monetary payment increased in the trades. Locally known as 'stuffing', this had been seen earlier in the town's trades. After 1814 it became more blatant.¹³⁰ The region's other industrial work groups, also beneficiaries of successful wage demands made during the later stages of the war, were about to see the long term erosion of these gains commence. The post-war boom of 1815 was short-lived. Conditions for labour in all the region's industries were deteriorating. The re-opening of the American market, blocked by war between 1812-1814, gave the cutlery trades only a temporary boost. The linen weavers faced reductions and in the heavy trades there was stagnation after the ending of ordnance contracts.¹³¹ Labour's potential to organize was thus severely weakened.

Working people emerged from the war with no real gains. Their economic organizations were weak. Sick and friendly clubs concerned only a small minority. They protected members of a minute 'aristocracy' of skilled workers. Trade clubs or unions protected growing numbers. Their existence was weakened by oncoming economic depression in the immediate post-war years, the aggression of capitalists facing falling profits and the viciousness of the law. Notions of 'labour value', primitive comprehension of capitalist market laws and some critical ideas on alternative means of organizing production existed, but were not sufficiently developed for a growing 'labour interest' to provide a fundamental critique of an increasingly exploitative capitalist system of production. This system was still in flux. Politically, the organization of working people did not advance, despite the renewed mass political involvement of 1809-13. Working people were too dependent on their social betters for leadership. Despite the activity of veteran ultra-radicals in Sheffield and in

other centres and the transmission of elementary ideas about popular democracy through the survival of Jacobin songs in popular culture, working people were not yet able to conceive of themselves as an independent political force.

(d) Social-cultural exploitation c. 1790-1815.

Working people were the weakest in the face of continued cultural exploitation. The assault on their leisure culture by evangelists and organized religious groups continued. These auxiliaries of the elite, having failed with adults,¹³² redirected their struggle against the mass culture to the minds of the children. The extension of Sunday schools was important here. Begun in the late 1780's, these were developed by all religious denominations in following decades. The Methodists showed the greatest energy of all. In Sheffield in 1812 they joined together with Dissenting groups to form a Sunday School Union. This body's annual reports provide some evidence of the scale of provision.

Table 4:11 Number of schools, scholars and teachers in Sheffield Sunday School Union.¹³³

| <u>Year</u> | <u>Schools</u> | <u>Adult Scholars</u> | <u>Teachers</u> | <u>Children</u> |
|-------------|----------------|-----------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| 1812-13 | 8 | - | 397 | 3186 |
| 1813-14 | 17 | 217 | 702 | 4330 |
| 1814-15 | 18 | 289 | 987 | 5446 |
| 1815-16 | 29 | - | 1243 | 6114 |

Within the Sheffield parish there was a child population of something like 11,000 of the age 4-15. An adjusted SSSU schools total added to a crude but generous estimate of 3000 other scholars suggested in 1815 that about 70% of eligible children in Sheffield parish attended Sunday schools. This high proportion suggests that at this stage Sunday schools were an agency of social control not to be underestimated.

In other ways the popular leisure culture was attacked at its roots. Continued enclosure of wastes, common land and particularly

village greens, limited the physical margins of leisure. Noisy evangelicals and rational dissenters alike, continued their propaganda war while the enclosure commissioner did his work.¹³⁴ Traditional blood sports began to recede into folk memory in some localities. In places like Barnsley a robust tradition survived.¹³⁵ The emphasis on 'rational amusement' among certain groups challenging the traditional patterns of popular leisure did not yet produce positive collective responses in terms of organized labour class self-education. Any attempts in this direction were minimized by childhood indoctrination in Sunday schools which emphasized fatalism as the most realistic perception of the human situation for working people.¹³⁶

In following chapters dealing with periods when a more positive class reaction from working people can be seen, this aspect of exploitation is more fully explored.

Footnotes to Chapter 4

1. 54 Geo.III c.119. For its content see R.E. Leader, History of the Cutlers' Company II, op.cit., appendix, 15.
2. ibid., ch. viii, passim.
3. This de-stabilization is most lucidly described by an observer quoted at full length in J. Holland, A Treatise on the progressive improvement and present state of the Manufactures in Metal, 3 vols. (1831), III, appendix ii, 12-13, the breakdown is most attributed to the immediate post-war years.
4. Sheffield Iris, 26 May 1807 (tailors), 11 July 1809 (shoemakers).
5. Rules and Orders of the Sawmakers (Sheffield, 1798).
6. Sheffield Iris, 14 Aug. 1810 - the practice of 'rattening' was traditional, especially among the grinders. Now it received treatment in the press because of its extreme nature and the current crime wave. For suggestion of its traditional nature see S. Roberts, Tom and Charles; or the two grinders (Sheffield, 1823).
7. Figures by permission of the Assay Master, Sheffield Assay Office.
8. A copy of the Register of the persons concentrated in the manufacture of silver wares and the marks extended to them 1773-1907 (Sheffield, 1911).
9. A Directory of Sheffield (Sheffield, 1797); Sheffield Directory (Sheffield, 1821).
10. Petition in WWM. F.64. Figures of production for the largest of these units in 1806 were given in the Sheffield Mercury, 25 Aug. 1849:

| <u>unit/operator</u> | <u>furnaces in blast</u> | <u>out of blast</u> | <u>total furnaces</u> | <u>production (tons)</u> |
|--|------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|
| Richard Swallow(Attercliffe & Chapelton ironworks) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 3737 |
| James Walker(Holmes & Milton ironworks) | 3 | 0 | 3 | 3000 |
| John Darwin(Elsecar ironworks) | 2 | 0 | 2 | 2495 |
| Booth & Co.(Sheffield ironworks) | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1905 |
| Longden, Newton and Chambers (Thorncliffe ironworks) | 2 | 0 | 2 | 2500 |
| John Kenyon(Middlewood ironworks) | | | | |
| Kenyon, Firth & Woolhouse (Sheffield ironworks) | | | | |
| Cockshutt & Armitage (Mousehole ironworks) | | | | |
| Samuel and William Smith (Wicker, Sheffield) | | | | |

no information about the following smaller units.

11. The Sheffield directories showed 12 and 18 firms categorized as such.
12. C. Hadfield, The Canals of Yorkshire and North East England, 2 vols. (Newton Abbott, 1972), I, 176 gives the following figures of iron tonnage carried on the Barnsley canal to

12.(cont.) markets to the north and south: (annual averages over three-year periods)

| | <u>tons</u> | | <u>tons</u> |
|--------|-------------|---------|-------------|
| 1800-2 | 773 | 1809-11 | 1599 |
| 1803-5 | 1334 | 1812-14 | 1329 |
| 1806-8 | 1976 | 1815-17 | 1132 |

13. W.N. Slatcher, 'The Barnsley Canal; its first twenty years', Transport History, I (1968), 48-66.
14. Goodchild Coal Mss., loc.cit., 21.
15. A.K. Clayton thesis, op.cit., 41, Milton's second furnace was put in blast.
16. Sheffield Iris, 13 Jan. 1803, Ecclesfield nailers gained an advance in wages.
17. Slatcher, art.cit., passim.
18. Hadfield, I, op.cit., 176.
19. Hadfield, II, op.cit., 287.
20. ibid., 286.
21. Slatcher, art.cit., 59.
22. Goodchild Coal Mss., loc.cit., 31.
23. Cawthorne Militia list 1806, Goodchild Collection, Cusworth Hall Museum.
24. Slatcher, art.cit., 59.
25. Goodchild Coal Mss. and militia lists for Silkstone (1806) and Dodworth (1806), loc.cit. These 11 and 7 miners among working male adult population of 72 and 42 workers.
26. Goodchild Coal Mss. loc.cit., 29.
27. Cox thesis, 131.
28. E. Sorby, Coal Mining near Sheffield 1737-1820, op.cit., 4.
29. Goodchild, 'The Barnsley linen trade', art.cit., 4.
30. Burland Annals, I, op.cit., 322.
31. Cawthorne Militia list 1806, loc.cit.
32. B.A. English ed., West Riding Enclosure Awards Handlist, op.cit., passim.
33. Hadfield, I, op.cit., 178.
34. Hadfield, II, op.cit., 287.
35. Don Navigation minute books, loc.cit.
36. Wage books of Thomas Nowill and Co., loc.cit.
37. Gayer, Rostow and Schwartz, I, op.cit., chs. I, II and III passim.
38. Day books, Sheffield Assay Office.
39. Census of Great Britain 1851.
40. Sheffield Local Register, op.cit., passim.
41. Prices published weekly in the Sheffield Iris.
42. ibid., 26 May 1807.
43. ibid., 4 and 11 July 1809.
44. ibid., 7 April 1807 - 40 recruiting parties in town.

45. Sheffield Iris, 13 Dec. 1808, 10,17,24,31 Jan. and 7 Feb. 1810.
46. Such as the Methodist Benevolent Society.
47. see section B.
48. Figures from Newton and Chambers ledgers, now housed at Cusworth Hall Museum.
49. There were developing problems at Elsecar with the supply of iron ore.
50. Warrant against James Parkin of Chapeltown for combining to advance his wages, n.d. Dec. 1810 in Box II, Newton Papers, Cusworth Hall Museum.
51. Clayton thesis, op.cit., 16.
52. F. Machin, The Yorkshire Miners (Barnsley, 1958), 30.
53. Sheffield Iris, 14 and 28 July 1803 (Sheffield Volunteer Infantry and the Southern Regiment of West Riding Yeomen Cavalry), 4 and 25 Aug. 1803 (Ecclesfield Volunteer Infantry), 5 Jan. 1804 (Rotherham Volunteer Infantry), 25 Oct. 1804 (Staincross Volunteer Infantry get their colours); J. Guest, Historical Notices of Rotherham (Worksop, 1879), 232 - provides more detail.
54. Sheffield Iris, 21 Nov. 1805, Trafalgar-day celebration in the region.
55. ibid., 28 July 1803.
56. ibid., 15 July 1805 reported the mobilization of troops because of the firing of a beacon. This report and detail in Guest, op.cit., 232 and Burland Annals, I, 299 tell us that the Rotherham Infantry mustered 381 men, Sheffield 578, Staincross 560, Wath Wood 127, Ecclesfield 184 and Thorne 84. There were also 301 cavalry from the 8 troops of the Southern Regiment of West Riding Yeomen Cavalry.
57. Sheffield Iris, 22 Dec. 1803.
58. ibid., 16 Feb. 1804, formation of Sheffield Association for the Protection of Private Property. It was composed of several hundred employers and tradesmen who used common funds to take action against felons.
59. See following section for information about the expansion of Sunday schools.
60. Again the 'psychic pulse' suicide data might provide suggests the most intense years of despair. While the data in this aggregative form has limited use, and this is why I have compiled and used it selectively to look at periods when the conventional sources tell us little or nothing, another qualitative or 'experiential' approach can be tried. The aggregates for Sheffield suicides provided by the press reports are as follows:

| | | | |
|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| 1800-2 | 1803-2 | 1806-1 | 1809-1 |
| 1801-3 | 1804-3 | 1807-4 | |
| 1802-2 | 1805-6 | 1808-3 | |

The 'experiential' or 'casebook' approach reveals something of the stresses involved:

Local suicides of 1805: (these include old age, poverty and the loss (to the war) of menfolk).

May 1805, William Jepson, aged 70, ex-Chelsea pensioner now a pauper in Brightside workhouse - hung himself.

July 1805, Buyers, 'a poor wretch', cut his throat in a privvy in West Bar.

60.(cont.)

- September, Mr Bridges, of St. James Street, for a 'long time in low spirits' hung himself in woods at Crookes.
- October, a grinder, suffering 'from domestic uneasiness and apprehension of want' cut his throat, 'in a fit of despondency' at a house in Edward Street.
- October, George Lee, parish officer at Kimberworth, hung himself in an out-building while 'mentally deranged'.
- November, shopkeeper at Attercliffe hung himself in a fit of despair.
- December, George Machon, razormaker, hung himself in his house in Hawley Croft after 'being in a low way for several years'.

Local suicides in 1807:

- January, Francis Hallam, retired butcher, 'troubled late in his mind', cut his throat with a knife.
- March, Mary Callensoe, 'in a fit of despair' smashed her head against the floor because her son was taken for a soldier to fight in the war.
- June, Lydia Kirk, because her husband was sent to Ireland as a soldier, cut her throat at her daughter's house in Orchard Street.
- July, William Longden, grinder, two attempts to throw himself to his death off Lady's Bridge.
- July, Abraham Phoenix, a 60 yr. old shoemaker with destitute family hung himself in his house at Wadsley.

61. Sheffield Iris, 4 April 1805.
62. J.H. Turner, op.cit., 176.
63. As in 1803-4, see statistics in f.n.132.
64. The 1807 election is given detailed treatment in E.A. Smith, 'The Yorkshire Elections of 1806 and 1807; a study in electoral management', Northern History II, (1967), 66-71. My account is based on Sheffield Iris, 19,26 May, 9,16 June and Leeds Intelligencer, 11 May 1807.
65. Sheffield Iris, 29 March 1808.
66. James Montgomery to S.T. Coleridge, 16 Dec. 1808, among papers in possession of the Wordsworth Trust, Dove Cottage Mss., Grasmere. My thanks are due to Mr. E.P. Thompson for this reference.
67. Sheffield Iris, 13 Dec. 1808 and 10 Jan. 1809.
68. ibid., 17,24,31 Jan., 7 Feb. and 15 March 1803.
69. ibid., 4 and 11 July 1809 (tailors), 5 Dec. 1809 (cutlers); Clayton thesis, op.cit., 37 (Elsecar); Machin, op.cit., 30 (Thorncliffe).
70. Prices published weekly in Sheffield Iris.
71. ibid., 5 Dec. 1809, 10 April 1810.
72. ibid., 14 Aug. 1810 (spring knife trade dinner to celebrate victory); 30 Oct., 18 Dec. 1810 and 29 Jan. 1811 (violence lingering in file trade).
73. Rev. T. Sutton to Rev. Stuart Corbett, n.d. April, in Effingham to Beckett, 14 April 1810, HO 42/106.
74. Sheffield Iris, 18 April 1809.
75. ibid., 30 Jan. and 6 Feb. 1810.

76. Sheffield Iris, 5,12 June 1810.
77. ibid., 3,10 July, 7 Aug. 1810. An intimate account of these events is provided by Thomas Asline Ward, a young 'partial' reformer who was associated with the renegade group, among extracts from his diaries published in A. Bell, Peeps into the Past (Sheffield, 1909), 162-3.
78. Sheffield Mercury, 6 June 1810; Ward, op.cit., 163.
79. The first public reportings of 'rattening' appear to be in the Iris of 1810.
80. ibid., 29 Jan. 1811, 4 filesmiths prosecuted.
81. ibid., 2,9 June 1812, reprints of testimonies of local manufacturers in London.
82. For statistics see f.n.132. For account of the revival, T. Harrison, Memoirs of William Bramwell (n.d.), 87.
83. Sheffield Iris, 2 June 1810 - testimony of Ebenezer Rhodes.
84. ibid., weekly prices for the year 1812.
85. Apart from increasing comment in the local press, the statistics of prosecutions entered into by the Sheffield Association for the Prosecution of Felons suggests the increase in local crime. The figures were extracted from the Sheffield Iris columns which contained the annual reports of the Association:
- | | | |
|----------|----------|-----------|
| 1804 - 3 | 1807 - 4 | 1810 - 12 |
| 1805 - 7 | 1808 - 3 | 1811 - 4 |
| 1806 - 9 | 1809 - 8 | 1812 - 14 |
- Turner, op.cit., 176 provides the figures of committals to Wakefield House of Correction, the 'lock-up' for prisoners awaiting trial at Quarter Sessions.
86. Bell, op.cit., 168, describes the proceedings at a public meeting concerning the mundane issue of local government. He noted the forwardness of Samuel Cartilidge, an old Derbyshire democrat who was involved in an incident with some connection with the militia rioting there and had come to live in Sheffield in 1800. Cartilidge was a member of the Scotland Street Kilhamite congregation in which were found the Wolstenholme family (provided a UE activist in 1801-2 and Union Society revolutionaries in 1816-17). Both the Cartilidges and the Wolstenholmes gave their children political names.
87. Annual Register, 1812, 56; Sheffield Iris, 21 April and Sheffield Mercury, 18 April 1812.
88. Detail provided by letters in WWM. F.45(f), particularly Parker to Fitzwilliam, 15 April and Fenton to Fitzwilliam, 16 April 1812; letters in HO 42/122, particularly W. Cochrane, Captain of Hussars, 17 April, Parker, 16 April, both to Secretary of State; letters in HO 50/291, particularly Fenton and Lt.Col. Standle to Secretary of State, 18 April 1812; Assize 45/46 pt.1 - includes depositions of onlookers.
89. J. Stuart Wortley to Home Office, 15 April 1812, HO 42/122.
90. Depositions of Thomas Wilson and John Poynton 14 April, William Denton and Thomas Smith 15 April, 1812, Assize 45/45 pt.1.
91. Leeds Mercury, 2 May 1812.
92. Depositions of Wilson and Poynton n.d. among informations and examinations of April 1812, Quarter Sessions Rolls, WYCRO. From all the available sources some of the activists in the affair of 14 April 1812 can be pointed to:

92.(cont.)

| | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| John Blackwell (tailor) | William Groom (edge tool maker) |
| Mary Gibbons (wife of a 'labourer') | Thomas Wilson (optician) |
| William Rodger ('labourer') | John Savage (sawmaker?) |
| John Rowan ('labourer') | William Denton (servant) |
| Joseph Wolstenholme ('labourer') | |
| William Shirtley/Shirecliffe (?) | |

93. J. Holland and J. Everett, II, op.cit., 133.
94. Grey to Sidmouth, 18 April 1812, HO 42/122.
95. F. Wood and Lt.Col. Standle to Home Office, 15 April 1812, HO 42/122.
96. Sheffield Iris, 21 April 1812; Leeds Mercury, 18 April 1812, both describe the Barnsley incident as a mild affair.
97. Burland, Annals I, op.cit., 329, noted the arrival in Barnsley of Thomas Pharimonde(Farrimond), a weaver who also worked as a barber. He was a significant influence in Barnsley popular radicalism until 1820.
98. Leeds Mercury, 24 April, 16 May 1812, J.S. Wortley to Beckett, 20 April 1812, F. Wood to Perceval, 21 April 1812, HO 42/122; handbill circular demanding all weavers meet on the Common on 20 April, written copy in WWM. F.45(f).
99. Barnsley 'Luddites' had attacked threshing machines and stacks had been set alight in April, F. Wood to Perceval, 21 April 1812, loc.cit.; examination of William Clegg, private in 33rd Regt. of Foot before G.W. Wentworth, 19 April 1812, WWM. F.45(f). The attackers blackened their faces for the attack, hence they were associated with Luddite machine breakers. The authorities, like many contemporary historians, were wrong to divorce forms of industrial, agricultural and political protest. The Luddite organizations provided points of contact between all these forms.
100. Thompson, op.cit., 569-659, for a fuller understanding of 1812.
101. F. Wood to Perceval, 19 April 1812, HO 42/122.
102. The West Riding magistrates met in special sessions at Barnsley on 18 April and also at a general meeting in May at Wakefield. They discussed the cost of the Watch and Ward Act being implemented in all parishes to tighten up on law and order, papers and correspondence relating to this in WWM. F.45(f), particularly Fitzwilliam to Rt.Hon. Richard Ryder, 16 May 1812, claiming the cost would be too great but that voluntary associations might do the job cheaply. Documents in WWM. F.45(g) dated 24 June 1812, list the size of troop concentrations in the Riding. Locally there were 443 troops in Sheffield, 168 in Barnsley, 101 in Penistone and 398 in nearby Wakefield. At least two thirds were South Devon Militia.
103. Letters scattered in HO 42 from 42/122-128. The worst case was that of 'Lawson' who kept the authorities interested until October 1812 when his wild talk was discredited.
104. Maj. Searle to Sidmouth, 30 June 1812, printed in G. Pellew, Life of Lord Sidmouth, 3 vols. (1847), III, 86-7.
105. See below and following chapter.
106. Sheffield Mercury, 27 June 1812, celebrations of this fact.
107. J. Biram to Fitzwilliam, 14 June 1812, WWM. St 4, on conditions at Elsecar; G. to T. Newton, 1 July 1812, Box I, Newton Papers, loc.cit., for situation at Thorncliffe.

108. Sheffield Iris, weekly price returns.
109. ibid., 18 Aug., Sheffield Mercury, 22 Aug. 1812; Maj. Searle to Sidmouth, 30 June 1812, Pellew, op.cit., 86-7; Bell, op.cit., 189-90; Maitland to Sidmouth, 22 Aug. 1812, T. Beckett to Sidmouth, 20 Aug. 1812, HO 42/126.
110. Sheffield Mercury, 15 Aug., 12,26 Sept. 1812.
111. For the importance of this tour, Thompson, op.cit., 665-68.
112. Sheffield Iris, 15 and 22 Sept. 1812; Cartwright to Payne, 29 Aug. 1812, Burland, Annals, I, op.cit., 337, 'For Heaven's sake John, bestir yourself for a Sheffield meeting - Ay, a public meeting - not withstanding the pusillanimity of men who sought to set a better example'.
113. Bell, op.cit., 191, Ward's epithet.
114. Sheffield Iris, 8 Sept. and Sheffield Mercury, 5 Sept. 1812, both recorded the committal of Craven Cookson and John Badon (both weavers) to York. They were tried at a special sessions in York during January 1813. Also indicted were William Thompson and Stephen Kitchenman (weavers). Material on the affair is found in J.S. Wortley to Sidmouth, 6 Sept. 1812 (with enclosures), HO 42/127, various depositions also in TS 11/813/2676. An account of the trial is found in Howell, State Trials, XXXI, 959-1170. On the 'Judas price' of betrayal, Parker to Beckett, 30 Oct. 1813, HO 42/135.
115. Fitzwilliam to Maitland, 2 Nov. 1812, HO 42/199.
116. Sheffield Iris, 6 Oct. and Sheffield Mercury, 10,17 Oct. 1812, Saxton addressed a crowd of 8,000.
117. Sheffield Iris, 24 Nov. 1812, petitions from Sheffield, Rotherham, Barnsley, Wath and Ecclesfield in the region.
118. Loyalism was found in Orange Lodges and True Blue clubs. Sheffield Mercury, 7 Nov. 1812, the 4th anniversary of the local Orange Lodge, 14 Nov. 1812, True Blue meeting.
119. Bell, op.cit., 192.
120. ibid., 196, who described the antics of the 'mobility' in the gallery.
121. Sheffield Mercury, 19 Sept. 1812.
122. ibid., 8 and 15 May 1813.
123. Bell, op.cit., 218-19; the newspapers give only the slightest hint of trouble among the tilters, table knife and scissor grinders and filemakers, Sheffield Mercury, 21,28 May 1812 and Sheffield Iris, 5 July 1812.
124. J. Spencer to Sidmouth, 14 March 1814, HO 42/138.
125. Sheffield Mercury, 21 May (prosecution of tilters), 28 May 1812 (prosecution of scissor grinders).
126. ibid., 26 March and 3 April 1812.
127. Bell, op.cit., 217.
128. L. Alsop to J. Beckett, 22 April 1814, HO 42/138.
129. Sheffield Mercury, 24 Sept. 1814.
130. Bell, op.cit., 217, on the prevalence of stuffing during this period. He gives examples of coffee exchanged at three times its value for labour and cloth at twice its value.

131. Mrs. Newton to Thomas, 3 Feb. 1815, concerning stagnation at Thorncliffe, 'There is nothing stirring in the church nor the work', George to Thomas, 30 Oct. 1815, '...our business is uncommonly slack and money very scarce. We are likely to be considerable sufferers by the old cannon at Phoenix foundry We have blown out a furnace and must do less till better times', both in Box I, Newton Papers, loc.cit.

132. Methodism continued to exert influence:

Wesleyan Circuits 1800-1815:

| | <u>1800</u> | <u>1801</u> | <u>1802</u> | <u>1803</u> | <u>1804</u> | <u>1805</u> | <u>1806</u> | <u>1807</u> |
|-----------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Sheffield | 2200 | 2175 | 2040 | 2010 | 2232 | 2110 | 2300 | 1780 |
| Rotherham | 498 | 490 | 495 | 505 | 548 | 561 | 650 | 680 |
| Barnsley | - | - | 500 | 550 | 620 | 598 | 600 | 680 |
| Doncaster | 500 | 493 | 560 | 431 | 424 | 438 | 430 | 412 |

| | <u>1808</u> | <u>1809</u> | <u>1810</u> | <u>1811</u> | <u>1812</u> | <u>1813</u> | <u>1814</u> | <u>1815</u> |
|-----------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Sheffield | 1900 | 1950 | 1850 | 2100 | 2300 | 2230 | 2350 | 2228 |
| Rotherham | 700 | 770 | 870 | 1300 | 1245 | 1150 | 1140 | 1041 |
| Barnsley | 664 | 660 | 670 | 820 | 900 | 916 | 485 | 470 |
| Doncaster | 408 | 465 | 530 | 560 | 630 | 690 | 640 | 620 |

Kilhamite Circuits 1800-1815:

| | <u>1800</u> | <u>1801</u> | <u>1802</u> | <u>1803</u> | <u>1804</u> | <u>1805</u> | <u>1806</u> | <u>1807</u> |
|-----------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Sheffield | - | 750 | 524 | 575 | 618 | 590 | 750 | 810 |
| Barnsley | -- | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |

| | <u>1808</u> | <u>1809</u> | <u>1810</u> | <u>1811</u> | <u>1812</u> | <u>1813</u> | <u>1814</u> | <u>1815</u> |
|-----------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Sheffield | 1046 | 842 | 818 | 801 | 841 | 827 | 500 | 480 |
| Barnsley | - | - | - | - | 274 | 225 | 230 | 230 |

133. Reports of the Sheffield Sunday School Union (Sheffield, 1812 onwards), passim.

134. Third Annual Report of the SSSU, op.cit., 25-6, a speaker, Rev. J. Gilbert developed the following interesting analogy, 'How many wastes and commons of mind have in past ages been allowed to lie in desolation? How has the fresh and vigorous ground of the youthful heart been suffered to cover itself with deleterious produce? You enclose these wastes, you cultivate these commons of immorality.'

135. Sheffield Iris, 11 July 1815, bear-bait at Mexborough; Burland, Annals, I, 126-7.

136. See last section of following chapter and those of following chapters for fuller evaluation of this process.

CHAPTER 5 Tomorrow shall be our day : Economy and Society
in South Yorkshire c. 1815-20.

The immediate post-war years witnessed significant checks in growth in both the light and heavy sectors of the region's industrial economy. Accelerated capitalist accumulation continued creating concentrations of capital and available labour. The end of the war produced a demobilization of soldiers who further swelled the ranks of a 'reserve army' of unemployed men and underemployed men being created by enclosure, changing industrial organization and commercial fluctuation. Only in the trough-bottom of the commercial stagnation of these years (particularly in 1816 and 1819-20) was the presence of such a 'reserve army' made obvious. For so long the war had concealed its existence. These years witnessed major economic and social crises in which working people began to achieve, through struggle, a more critical awareness of the political, economic and social-cultural arrangements of an evolving capitalist economic and social order. Their radical consciousness was rediscovered in a period when the term 'working class' first came into use.

Section A. Economy - organization and dynamics c. 1815-20.

(a) Organization.

1) The Cutlery trades.¹

Without the protection of the Cutlers' Company the organization of production underwent major alteration. Control of marketing and production fell more and more into the hands of 'factors' and 'factor-manufacturers'. By selling raw materials or putting them out to the swollen numbers of 'small' or 'journeymen masters', these took control from established merchants who traditionally bought from established master manufacturers. This transference of power to small commercial men was accompanied by the 'lemming rush' of 'journeymen masters' which was most marked during the slumps of 1816 and 1819-20.

The interloping small commercial men damaged the trades in good

times and bad. They devalued the price of products, profits and the price of labour by speculative over-production in good times and bad alike. They exploited labour more blatantly by 'stuffing' or 'truck'. These methods were employed defensively by respectable manufacturers and merchants. In a period when traditional business morality was breaking down, labour began to adopt a more definite position. The journeymen, realizing a common 'labour class' interest, fought the various forms of economic exploitation with trade union organization where possible. Organization was by trade and further limited by skill (i.e. in any trade there might be separate unions of forgers, cutlers, hafters and grinders). In some trades all sections might be organized. Usually only the grinders were in permanent union. Solidarity among the other groups was still however undermined by the facility with which journeymen could set up as masters and for a short period improve their position.

2) Silver, silver plate, Britannia metal and steel.²

In all these trades there were signs of health not seen in the cutlery trades. In silver, silver plate and newer, Britannia metal working, production continued in the hands of large manufacturers, operating in large workshops or small factories. These employed wage labour, the most skilled of which was organized. There were wide skill differentials, especially in silver plate where large numbers of women and children were employed in finishing. In steel, the other of these smaller trades, the scale of operation continued increasing but production and employment conditions were little different from those in the cutlery workshops which they were often attached to.

3) Iron.³

The region's iron industry was badly hit in the immediate post-war years. War-time demand had artificially stimulated production and in the early years of peace domestic demand did not expand sufficiently to compensate. Technical problems relating to raw material

supply also began to appear. Consequently there were no new units appearing in this heavy sector industry and production and employment contracted in existing units. The severe depression in the industry was especially felt at Milton, Elsecar, Worsbrough and Thorncliffe (the middle zone ironworks). This was registered in the 50% fall in pig iron tonnage carried on the Dove and Dearne Canal between 1814-15 and 1819-20. Under such conditions labour's position appeared weak and its level of organization low.

4) Coal.⁴

Coal mining expanded steadily in these years. The Dearne and Dove Canal carried 22% more coal (from Elsecar, Worsbrough and Wath on its own route and Silkstone and Gawber on the Barnsley Canal) in 1819-20 than in 1814-15. Increased production, employment and capitalization reflected the development of industrial capitalist organization. Larger scale operations concentrated labour and with this there were signs that labour was beginning to organize, especially in 1819.

5) Linen.⁵

The trade continued the expansion begun during the war years. Migrants from Lancashire (including many Irish) and returning soldiers found work in the trade. Employers overcame the general stagnation of the period by stock-piling and also by the reduction of wages. Large capitals were being built up and labour (masters, journeymen and apprentice weavers) was increasingly organized and in 1818 carried out a strike to try to maintain piece rates.

(b) Dynamics.

Despite the impact of commercial depression on both the region's light and heavy sectors, ongoing capitalist accumulation in primary industries still provided a crucial driving force to the momentum of economic growth in the region's industrial economy. Enclosure con-

tinued at the high level established in the last five years of war.

Table 5:1 Average number of enclosure acts in progress annually in five-year periods in South Yorkshire within a 20 mile radius of Sheffield, 1801-20.⁶

| | <u>acts</u> |
|---------|-------------|
| 1801-5 | 4.8 |
| 1806-10 | 5 |
| 1811-15 | 9.4 |
| 1816-20 | 10.4 |

New acts were introduced in every one of the years 1815-20. Enclosure aided the process of capital accumulation and created a pool of cheap wage labour. Rural depopulation was significant in the eastern agricultural margins of the area.⁷ The 'pull' provided by higher wage industrial employment figured only slightly in explaining it. It was enclosure, displacing those at the rural agricultural margins, that created the significant 'push' for rural workers.

Transport improvement continued with the Don Navigation's western terminus being extended to Tinsley, within easy reach of Sheffield.⁸ This added to the potential for long term growth despite the immediate stagnation in both sectors of the industrial economy. The general level of economic activity in the region appeared to be steadily increasing as data on water borne traffic suggests:

Table 5:2 Expansion of traffic on the region's waterways.⁹
(£s average p.a.)

| | <u>1812-14</u> | <u>1815-17</u> | <u>1818-20</u> |
|---|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Total tolls - Barnsley Canal | 5808 | 6908 | 6873 |
| Total tolls - Dearne & Dove Canal | 6998 | 7110 | 7630 |
| Dividend to be distributed to Don Navigation shareholders | 12,748 | 12,735 | 15,139 |

Growth reflected the expansion in the region's primary industries. The Don Navigation series reflect the dominant pattern of fluctuation in the regional and national economy.

Table 5:3 Profit on Don Navigation.¹⁰

| | | | |
|------|--------|------|--------|
| 1814 | 13,462 | 1818 | 14,969 |
| 1815 | 13,954 | 1819 | 15,543 |
| 1816 | 12,420 | 1820 | 14,905 |
| 1817 | 11,833 | | |

In the cutlery trades, the largest of the light sector trades, the troughs in the business cycle of 1816 and 1819 were marked by falling employment and production levels. The deterioration was concealed by speculative production which was partly counter-cyclical. This was especially true during part of 1815 and during 1817-18.

Table 5:4 Wage bill and number of recipients of payout from the firm of Thomas Nowill and Co.¹¹

| | <u>Employees</u> | <u>Wage bill (£s)</u> | | <u>Employees</u> | <u>Wage bill (£s)</u> |
|------|------------------|-----------------------|------|------------------|-----------------------|
| 1814 | 18.8 | 1204 | 1818 | 30 | 1913 |
| 1815 | 22.5 | 1783 | 1819 | 20 | 1166 |
| 1816 | 20 | 1647 | 1820 | 15 | 954 |
| 1817 | 38 | 2562 | | | |

Speculative production and facing stagnant export markets forced down the price of cutlery wares further. Low prices kept the quantity of exports up but undermined profits and wages.

Table 5:5 Exports of cutlery (£s million)¹²

| | | | |
|------|-----|------|-----|
| 1814 | 0.8 | 1818 | 1.6 |
| 1815 | 2.2 | 1819 | 1.2 |
| 1816 | 1.9 | 1820 | 0.8 |
| 1817 | 1.1 | | |

The town's silver trade, in a more healthy condition, also appeared to suffer in these periods of depression.

Table 5:6 Quantity of silver marked at Sheffield Assay Office.¹³
(troy pounds)

| | | | |
|------|------|------|------|
| 1814 | 4366 | 1818 | 6845 |
| 1815 | 4903 | 1819 | 5410 |
| 1816 | 3325 | 1820 | 5336 |
| 1817 | 4845 | | |

The deteriorating condition of the town's trades was also reflected

in the mounting level of poor relief expenditure.

Table 5:7 Sheffield Poor Law expenditure (Easter to Easter figures)¹⁴
(£s)

| | | | |
|---------|--------|---------|--------|
| 1814-15 | 16,714 | 1817-18 | 30,102 |
| 1815-16 | 17,865 | 1818-19 | 20,206 |
| 1816-17 | 23,662 | 1819-20 | 35,166 |

The level of money wages in the cutlery trades fell drastically from the levels established by the 1814 list. This fall reflected not only the depression of markets but also dilution of labour after the passing of the 1814 Act which abolished apprenticeship controls in the cutlery trades. For those in work there was less pressure on real wages because prices were steadier than in the war years. The market levels of 1812 were nowhere near approached even though in the peak years of 1816, 1817 and 1820 the levels of 1795-6 were reached.¹⁵ The deterioration of money wages was more severe than the Nowill data suggests.¹⁶ These represent the experience of a relatively successful firm not excessively 'stuffing' its workforce. Prices for work deteriorated rapidly. The 1814 lists were savagely discounted then abandoned. New lists were established especially in the cheaper ware trades. This was the case with the spring knife branch in which Nowill operated. This major branch, employing over a quarter of the 8000 workers in the cutlery trade, had two thirds of its members out of work throughout 1819-20.¹⁷

Table 5:8 Prices of work in the spring knife trade (price per dozen)¹⁸

| | <u>pen knives</u> | <u>slit spring knife</u> | <u>4 piece slit spring</u> | <u>6 piece slit spring</u> |
|------|-------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1800 | 1/6 | 2/7 | - | 6/3 |
| 1814 | 2/- | 3/3 | 5/6 | 7/6 |
| 1823 | 8d-9d | 10d | 1/3 | 1/9 |

Other trades were less severely hit in terms of employment but suffered the same fall in prices. 1819 was the main year in which the 1814 lists were re-negotiated throughout the trades. Prices for forging, hafting and cutlery were more vulnerable than those for grinding because of

the weak organization of labour among all but the grinding sections. The grinders in several trades began to earn a reputation for their aggressive defiance to the employers.¹⁹ The hardening of relations between labour and capital undermined the traditional pattern of elite paternalism in Sheffield. In 1816-17 general public subscriptions²⁰ were opened to help the distressed but during 1819-20 there was a tighter utilitarianism about public benevolence which suggested new, less conciliatory social orientations among the elite.²¹

Among the other light trades outside Sheffield there appeared to be less severe dislocation. Only for linen is there any strong evidence. Here the weavers were cushioned from the initial post-war slump by the stock-piling of the manufacturers. They had faced reductions since 1814. During the short-lived boom of 1817-18 the weavers struck unsuccessfully to maintain prices.²² Their decline then continued into the 1820's.²³

In the heavy sector, the iron workers and colliers were badly hit by the immediate post-war slumps. The pig iron sales figures for the Thorncliffe ironworks (one of the middle zone ironworks) illustrate this:

Table 5:9 Sales of pig iron from Thorncliffe ironworks (£s).²⁴

| | | | |
|------|--------|------|--------|
| 1814 | 44,755 | 1818 | 26,152 |
| 1815 | 37,489 | 1819 | 36,342 |
| 1816 | 23,633 | 1820 | 25,725 |
| 1817 | 18,601 | | |

The middle zone ironworks were all in trouble throughout late 1815, 1816 and 1817. At Thorncliffe the firm reduced production, employment and wages. The pressure appears to have been severest during the winter of 1816-17. After this trade improved and during 1818 the firm had three furnaces in blast. This expansion sustained itself into 1819. By 1820 the firm again had to contract production.²⁵ At Elsecar and Milton the experience was similar. At Elsecar no furnaces were in blast in 1816-17 but production was renewed in 1819. At Milton

the depression of the post-war years was so severe that the partners were forced to sell out in 1821.²⁶ The general malaise in these newer units in the middle zone (including Worsbrough) was reflected in the iron tonnages carried on the Dearne and Dove Canal during the period:

Table 5:10 Tonnage of pig iron carried on Dearne and Dove Canal.²⁷

| | | | |
|------|------|------|------|
| 1814 | 7601 | 1818 | 2554 |
| 1815 | 8847 | 1819 | 4298 |
| 1816 | 4647 | 1820 | 3639 |
| 1817 | 2015 | | |

There was possibly greater room for adaptation in the smaller units in the industry found in Sheffield. The industry as a whole was depressed, severely undermining the position of labour it employed. Because of its scattered nature, the power of employers and the divisive status structure of those employed there were no signs of labour organization in the ironworks.

In coal mining economic progress was temporarily checked by the general stagnation of the period. The coal tonnage carried on the Dearne and Dove Canal and data showing coal sales on the Fitzwilliam estate illustrate this:

Table 5:11 Coal Tonnage on the Dearne and Dove Canal and Fitzwilliam Estate coal sales.²⁸

(a) Dearne & Dove tonnage

| | | | |
|------|---------|------|---------|
| 1814 | 89,937 | 1818 | 107,000 |
| 1815 | 83,018 | 1819 | 89,270 |
| 1816 | 99,258 | 1820 | 122,740 |
| 1817 | 100,044 | | |

(b) Fitzwilliam sales (tons)

| | | | |
|------|--------|------|--------|
| 1814 | 75,417 | 1818 | 63,621 |
| 1815 | 85,662 | 1819 | 88,313 |
| 1816 | 76,324 | 1820 | 90,612 |
| 1817 | 51,879 | | |

Miners were as equally dispersed as ironworks' labour. Growth in their industry gave them greater potential power in bargaining for better wages. In 1819 a strike of colliers in the north of the West Riding

found support from several other groups of miners in the region, especially those in the northern Barnsley area. Their attempts at organization as yet amounted to no more than such sporadic efforts.

Section B. Society: Working People and the Post-war Depression
1815-20.

(a) Summary

Economic crisis gave an impetus to the renewal of mass political activity during these years. In old and new centres, embracing a wide range of occupational groups, two phases of political agitation occurred: that associated with Hampden Clubs, Union societies and Spencean revolutionaries during 1816-17 and that with the more widespread and more socially aggressive popular Union societies of 1819-20. The marked feature of both phases was the turning from constitutionalist agitation to revolutionary violence accompanied by a growth of participation and control by wage earners at the expense of respectable and petty bourgeois leadership. In Sheffield, where there was a persistence of small workshop employment, there were conditions which preserved a generally higher level of economic independence or semi-independence. Here the strength of the 'sans culotte' alliance of the 1790's still influenced the nature of popular politics. More proletarian characteristics of popular struggle were however appearing in Sheffield and particularly in Barnsley during these years of struggle. In the latter, workshop independence was fast disappearing.

As a nascent labour class began to see its identity through political struggle, its social manifestation through economic struggle became more obvious with continued signs of industrial organization among cutlery workers (particularly grinders), weavers and miners. Industrial unions were vulnerable and often short-lived but their organization began creating a confidence that the entire hegemonic might of the ruling elite could not crush. Industrial struggle paralleled the political struggle. At various points there were inter-relationships of activists and organization. In the main, the industrial struggle was limited to short-term 'economistic' goals. Given the realities of the power of the ruling elite, such a pursuit was more likely to be successful than political action.

(b) 'Bread or Blood' - the second echo 1815-18.

The end of hostilities in 1815 severely weakened the position of the region's industrial workers. The stagnation of markets that followed the end of the short-lived post-war boom and the flooding of the labour market with demobilized men created great hardship for the majority of the region's workgroups throughout 1816 and 1817. The short-lived boom of 1818 was to relieve some of the pressure. The economic organizations of the nascent labour class were thrown on to the defensive from the start. Industrial organization was of little use when labour had so little bargaining power. In the Sheffield cutlery trades there was a continuous resort to violent sanctions in industrial disputes. Unions who employed them were in the main weak, short-lived sectional craft unions. Among the grinders' unions such sanctions were used effectively. Already in 1817 the respectable Iris was attacking their power as a 'reign of terror'. It acknowledged a justification for their activity in the disruption caused by the evil doings of the opportunist factors. Other groups of workers in the cutlery and related trades may have been organized and using sick and benefit societies as cover for their activities.³⁰ Of the other workgroups only amongst the weavers was there evidence of industrial organization. This built on the organization established in 'Ludding' times.³¹

Only the expensive system of poor relief and charity prevented a complete social breakdown in the years following the war.³² In the West Riding indicted crime nearly doubled between 1814-1815 and 1816-1817.³³ The ruling elite had less powerful physical and moral resources for dealing with social disorder than in war time. In peace time it no longer had a standing army of auxiliaries to back up regular troops. Now the licensed magic of religion was continually being challenged as fraudulent. In this context there was a renewal of the popular struggle which had begun hesitantly in the 1790's and flickered all too briefly into life in 1812. The impetus was provided by the

spreading disillusion among all ranks of society with the burden of taxation and the state of agriculture and industry and the general absence of commercial prosperity in the immediate post-war years. A more respectable leadership than the 'sans-culotte' form appeared in intermittent, partly-related separate agitations over the Corn Bill,³⁴ taxation on property and import duties.³⁵ Mass support of a similar depth to that the 'sans-culotte' alliance had evoked was again encouraged. Throughout 1815 and early 1816 this agitation served to sharpen popular political perceptions. During this agitation the platform was jointly taken by radically-minded speakers including renegades from the respectable ranks of the town's growing middle class of larger industrial and commercial employers, radical intelligentsia from the ranks of the petty bourgeoisie or lesser middle class and more plebeian orators from the awakening labour class.

The political potential of this alliance of universal suffrage and annual parliament advocates and their discussion of economic issues was realized in the autumn. Amid signs of significant economic deterioration, political solutions were increasingly looked to. There was a national re-birth of popular radical politics. Major Cartwright and his allies among the various London-based radical reformers attempted to reactivate the campaign for radical political reform. The widespread national appearance of Hampden Clubs, political Union Societies and Spencean groups during the winter of 1816-17, represented a positive response to this call.³⁶ Locally, Sheffield and Barnsley formed Union Societies. These drew in smaller groups in the villages in their immediate hinterlands.³⁷ In Sheffield a small group of Spenceans also operated on the fringe of popular constitutionalist radical politics.³⁸

The Sheffield Union Society was formed in October 1816. Its leaders included Thomas Rawson, a radical brewer who was first drawn into popular radical activity in 1812, John Payne, a local landowner who had been involved with the SSCI in the 1790's and John Manners,

a small master who through his association with the Kilhamite Methodists was linked with a section of the petty bourgeois radical intelligentzia. Their supporters came in the main from the mass of journeymen and other wage earners towards whom democratic propaganda was directed by means of public meetings and pamphlet literature. The leaders sought to use local meetings called to deal with the local problems of unemployment and poverty as they became more serious throughout the autumn and winter months of 1816.³⁹ There was an attempt to argue that only political reform could provide the cure for economic ills. The mass were told to organize themselves through the Hampden Club and Union Society networks because, as Payne told several thousand Sheffield artisans at a September meeting, 'the rich could not be relied upon for they never cared about what the poor suffered'.⁴⁰ The theme of popular sovereignty was hammered home repeatedly at public meetings. The message was accompanied by Jacobin battle cries that echoed through the empty war years from Castle Hill in 1794. John Manners told a 10,000-strong crowd in Paradise Square in October:

The voice of a people is as the voice of God; and when universally lifted up, it is as impossible to be successfully resisted, as the lightnings of heaven! The voice of the oppressed poor is a sound, of which all others the most terrific for the conscience of the oppressor; for that conscience forced him to feel, that it calls most loudly for the cause of that Author of their mutual existence, who can crush the mightiest of the earth into the dust, as easily as man can crush the worm that crawls beneath his feet.⁴¹

Constitutionalism appeared to be making too slow a progress for an aggressive minority who foresaw the harsh winter ahead. In London the Spencean ultra-radicals had taken a lead in popular agitation. They had called a mass meeting in Spa Fields for 15 November. This led to a second mass meeting on 2 December. In London the Spenceans appeared to be engaged in revolutionary action to force political reform which would be accompanied by wider economic and social re-organization on a socialistic-communitarian basis. The Spenceans'

views were not widely shared or known but groups existed in the provinces. These were all a party to the Spencean plans for 2 December. Like the remainder of the popular radical movement who agreed on the need for physical force being employed, they were only prepared to act if the London Spenceans were initially successful. On 2 December the second Spa Fields meeting was held and was accompanied by Spencean inspired insurgency. They lacked the support of the body of the radical movement and were not able to carry enough of the London crowd. In the provinces it appears that Spencean and other groups of radicals awaited the outcome of the Spa Fields meeting, some simply because it was a major meeting for the constitutionalist mainstream of the movement nationally.⁴²

In Sheffield on 3 December⁴³ some highly significant events took place. The day (a Tuesday market day) began with a public assembly of radicals and their supporters in open fields on the edge of the town. Later in the day a public meeting addressed by radical activists took place in the market place. The radicals urged the crowd to disperse until Thursday when they said the outcome of the Spa Fields meeting (the constitutionalist one) would be known. A group of men detached themselves from the meeting. Led by John Blackwell, the crowd manipulator of 1812, a ragged 'army' of several hundred men formed up and marched through the town led by a symbolically blood-stained loaf held aloft on a pole. Scratched out on a banner suspended from the pole were the words 'Bread or Blood'. The insurgent group broke the windows of a flour dealer to emphasize the traditional aspects of crowd ritual they were engaged upon. Their timing, in relation to what had happened the day before in London and earlier in the day in Sheffield, suggested the political dimension in their action. Blackwell may have been the tool of local Spenceans or he may have been one of this small sect who were said to meet regularly at Saxton's shop. Saxton, a bookseller, was known to the London Spenceans. Blackwell's significance in the action was emphasized as it came to a close. The

insurgents had called a halt and were returning to the market place to disperse in orderly fashion. They arranged to join in the resumed political meeting on Thursday. By now the magistrates had assembled enough special constables to challenge them. The Riot Act having been read earlier, the authorities forcefully hurried the insurgents and their sympathizers off the streets. One obstinate character stood his ground and was promptly arrested. Blackwell shouted out from his supporters, 'Never mind, my lads, tomorrow shall be our day'. He was promptly arrested and amid angry scenes was sent off to York to await trial.

The political dimensions of the affair were again hinted at the following day when 60 persons were claimed to have attended (as delegates?) a secret meeting at the 'old' meeting place in the Park. This was addressed by an orator who;

...recommended a perseverance in meeting with a view of keeping the Military as much dispersed as possible and stated that similar meetings were held in Birmingham, Manchester and other places.⁴⁴

On Thursday the Dragoons from the barracks were used to supplement the special constables and local Yeomen cavalry in a systematic harassment of the radical attempt at meeting. Both constitutionalist and more violent elements among the local radicals wanted to hold a public meeting on the 'new burying ground' on the western edge of the town. This was packed with special constables long before the planned 10 a.m. start of the meeting. The radicals re-grouped later in the day but not till 5 p.m. were they able to hold a formal meeting. This took place in fields near the Wicker and drew only a few more hardy activists. That night another secret meeting was held in the Park.⁴⁵

Nothing more came to light regarding the local plotting until the following year. The authorities had treated the activity of 3-5 December very seriously. Fitzwilliam wrote to the Home Office that what happened was, 'not the consequence of distress - not the want of employment - not the scarcity and dearness of provisions,

but that it had been the offspring of a Revolutionary spirit'.⁴⁶ Elsewhere in the region things were quiet, at least on the surface. However, in Barnsley the radicals amongst the local weaving population began to come into the open and local constitutionalist activity gathered momentum.⁴⁷

In December 1816 the more moderate elements in London radicalism called for a convention for January 1817. Major Cartwright directed this appeal to the attention of the provinces.⁴⁸ Everywhere, including South Yorkshire, meetings were called to organize support for it. Sheffield and Barnsley radicals gave the convention plan their approval. On 30 December 1816 John Manners of the Sheffield Union Society and Joseph Mitchell, an itinerant political missionary from Liverpool, shared the same platform at a 3000 strong Barnsley meeting. Mitchell was to prove himself a physical force activist by his later actions. Manners showed himself more a moderate or a characteristic petty bourgeois democrat produced by the sans-culotte tradition of popular politics in Sheffield. In his speech, a reflected concern for, 'the Capital of the master manufacturers' which would soon be 'undermined and eventually destroyed by the mounting burden of taxation', betrayed concern for petty property among the existing radical leadership.⁴⁹ Furthermore, his emphasis on robust individualism and his attack on 'the Power of the Pope and the Inquisition over the Protestant religion' might seem ill-chosen in a community where workers were far from being as economically independent as in Sheffield's trades and where also there was a growing Irish immigrant weaver population.

The constitutionalist impetus for all its marked petty bourgeois leadership pushed the popular radical cause forward. The Hampden Club convention in London dissolved in late January and its plan for national petitioning for parliamentary reform began to be put into operation.⁵⁰ Various towns collected signatures. Sheffield, the most forward place in the region, had 21,000 by early February.⁵¹ Such constitutionalist activity was made irrelevant by political repression. The Government

re-enacted the Seditious Meetings Act and suspended the Habeas Corpus Act. The Hampden Clubs and Union societies went 'underground' immediately.⁵² In their councils physical force ideas ousted moderate ones and more plebeian leadership came to the fore in a 'left-ward' shift of policy. Throughout February and March rumours from several quarters hinted to the Government that a general rising on a national scale was imminent.⁵³ The Government went onto the offensive arresting large numbers of known radicals, particularly in Lancashire which appeared to be the most active region. In late March a Sheffield magistrate, Parker, informed Lord Sidmouth of a local connection with Manchester in plans for a proposed 'simultaneous rising'.⁵⁴ About this time a Sheffield silver plater named Bradley was drawn into a Sheffield organization with revolutionary intentions. This body centred around William Wolstenholme, a working joiner by trade and a man with a strong political pedigree which included the SSCI and United Englishmen.⁵⁵ Bradley became an informer for magistrate Parker and the activities of 'old Wolstenholme' and his son James were particularly noted.⁵⁶ Their group, the 'underground' survivors of the short-lived Union Society with a few Spencean associates, had no more than 200-300 active members. They probably saw their potential support in thousands. In the region they were now no longer the only significant ultra-radical group. In Barnsley, through the weavers' political and industrial organization, Thomas Farrimond was building a similar group.⁵⁷ Other groups in smaller communities were springing up under the inspiration of these two. The existence of these was to be proved in subsequent action throughout the immediate post-war years up to 1820.⁵⁸

More insight into the revolutionary 'underground' of 1817 was provided by the spring tour of Joseph Mitchell, the Lancashire itinerant radical who played a key role in linking the movement on a national scale. At the same time he destroyed it by unwittingly introducing the radicals of the North and Midlands to the notorious 'Oliver'. Mitchell was in Sheffield on 26 April with Oliver.⁵⁹ Who they saw

and what was arranged can only be guessed at. Nearly a fortnight later Oliver returned alone to the region, saying he represented 'London'. He visited Barnsley on 9 May and recalled, 'I found the people generally of the same disposition (as at Wakefield) and they talked of being so well prepared, but seem'd very poor'.⁶⁰ He may also have contacted Sheffield again. The reports of Oliver and Bradley, supported by later confessions,⁶¹ show that throughout May revolutionary groups connected with the seemingly defunct Union societies were active in Sheffield and Barnsley. They suggest that these groups acted together and that they acted with similar groups in the West Riding, the Midlands and Lancashire. Their aim now was to engineer a radical political reform by the traditional reversion to the use of armed force when all constitutional approaches were willfully blocked.

Professional historians in the bourgeois mould have always lacked appreciation of the logic of revolutionary violence. In the case of the English revolutionaries of 1817 (just as in 1795, 1802 and perhaps 1812, as well as 1820, 1839-40 and 1848) the decision was rooted in the last sequence of constitutionalist logic. A similar lack of appreciation of the revolutionary challenge has led historians to overlook the inter-regional level of organization, particularly in 1817. Similarly the nature and role of the revolutionary 'tradition' in assessment of the strength and nature of the revolutionary challenge has been neglected.⁶² The activists of 1817 in South Yorkshire and elsewhere were veterans of illegal political and industrial activity taking place since the early 1790's. They were acting in the strength of this experience.

Throughout May 1817 there was a great deal of planning and organization being carried out along various North-Midland axes. The most accepted plan for a rising appeared to be for 26 May. This was postponed to 9 June, allegedly because the Sheffield committee objected.⁶³ Oliver, known by the radicals of the North and Midlands as the 'London

delegate', played an important role in encouraging the radicals with promises of London support. His power as an agent provocateur has been too fully developed in the imaginations of Whig historians.⁶⁴ The plans for rising were in motion before he arrived and his views did not dominate inter-regional discussion. Some radicals were suspicious of him⁶⁵ and others possibly remembered London's failures in 1802 and 1816. The Sheffield committee were thoroughly convinced by him but they were exceptional. In the event Oliver's attempts to lead the Sheffield men into a trap were short-circuited by the independent initiative of Bradley and Parker. The Sheffield magistrates, knowing nothing of Oliver's employment by the Government, had become anxious with the intensification of local activity during the last week of May. On the night of 28-29 May they moved on a midnight meeting of local delegates held at a grinding wheel at Owlerton (a village just outside the north-west boundary of the town). About thirty delegates ran out into the darkness to escape the magistrates' encirclement. William Wolstenholme and three others were immediately arrested. Within a few days warrants were issued for several others and three more delegates were taken.⁶⁶ The names of the seven arrested are listed below with other details of relevance:

Table 5:12 Individuals arrested for involvement in revolutionary activity May-June 1817.⁶⁷

| <u>Name</u> | <u>Age</u> | <u>Occupation</u> | <u>Status</u> [*] |
|----------------------|------------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| William Bradwell | 35 | grinder | J |
| Rowland Hartle | 46 | hatter | M/J |
| George Robinson | 36 | cutler | M/J |
| James Rowan | 48 | cutler | M/J |
| James Wolstenholme | 36 | grinder | M |
| Thomas Wolstenholme | 30 | mason | M/J |
| William Wolstenholme | 60 | joiner | J |

* Key as for earlier tables and appendices relating to activists.

Those who escaped detection waited for action from more determined districts on the night of 9-10 June. Bradley remained at liberty and acted for Sheffield in the continued co-ordination of action between

the various groups involved. He probably falsified Sheffield's strength and contributed to the further downfall of the plan. He was present at Thornhill Lees when several of the important West Riding leaders were taken on 6 June.⁶⁸ This destroyed any remaining hopes of success that the revolutionary groups still clung on to. The hopeless gestures of the Derbyshire and West Riding radicals, who acted on the night of 9 June, came as the last act in the revolutionary tragedy of 1817.⁶⁹

Locally, as elsewhere, the activists of 1817 followed in the path of the United men of 1798-1802. There were some direct points of contact. William Wolstenholme openly boasted on his arrest that he 'was a Despard's man and had been twenty-eight years in the cause'.⁷⁰ He, and possibly several others in both Sheffield and Barnsley, had been active during the heroic days of the SSCI. Many of Barnsley's violent men had served their political apprenticeship in the more illicit Lancashire democratic societies and had been more fully initiated into the mysteries of the United movement. The Irish and Scottish immigrants among them had even more bitter memories of political repression. Nationalism gave their reactions more colour. There were few clear-cut social incendiaries among the activists of 1817. All had arrived at the decision to arm and rise by travelling the well-worn path of constitutionalist logic. Like Wolstenholme, many had arrived at the same decision in the same way during the 1790's. Seeing in the winter of 1816-17 the accepted constitutional means of formulating political demands being aggressively challenged by the Government, he turned (as he had done in the 1790's) towards revolutionary means. The right to carry arms was well established in radical mythology. The 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688 and the fifth clause of the Bill of Rights provided justifications for using them to resist oppression. Their actions were defended by James Wolstenholme, William's eldest son:

Our purpose for forming ourselves into a body in this manner, is to endeavour by force to effect the deliverance

of our common country from the greatest Slavery and Despotism that ever was suffered to exist in it. We have no representative Body who care for our interests in any way - and if we meet to petition we are pronounced traitorous and seditious. Our Commerce is gone, our Agriculture ruined, and our bodies liable to be thrown into prison. Where is the Briton that can or will endure this system of Tyranny and Taxation?⁷¹

The Wolstenholmes' ideas were influenced by the democratic egalitarian strain in Methodism. They were members of the Scotland Street Kilhamite congregation.⁷² Their notions of equality concerned political rather than wider notions of economic and social equality. Other evidence suggests that they were republicans who believed in the maxim, 'No King'.⁷³ Possibly the journeyman element among the ranks of their co-activists asked important social questions about the distribution of wealth and power. The master and journeyman elements found in the Wolstenholme family were not divided by social questions. Presumably all of them had faith that political justice would bring with it a measure of social and economic justice. In all likelihood they looked at the young American republic for a confirmation of this process. They did not however appear attracted by social ownership and the consequent development of economic and social equality. They clung onto individualist values in relation to the political, economic and social systems they idealized. It was understandable that, given the persistence of shared 'craft consciousness' between small masters and journeymen, the ideal of economic individualism should be strong. They may have been confronted by alternative thinking from Spenceans found locally and also among their immediate contacts. 'Tommy' Bacon, their respected Derbyshire correspondent, was a Spencean.⁷⁴ However until the emerging large scale capitalism ousted the small scale one and the myth of eventual masterhood for the persevering journeyman was totally discredited, the idealization of petty capitalism would continue. The surviving literature of popular radical groups from the SSCI, through the United men to the Hampden clubs and Union societies had showed this reliance on political

equality as the ultimate panacea for various degrees of economic and social justice.⁷⁵ Spence's thinking about social ownership did not appear to be appreciated to any significant degree.⁷⁶ How much the radicals had in common with organized labour is not known. Despite suggestions of their adherence to economic individualism as against organized labour's developing sense of collective survival and the impression of their political preoccupation as against labour's economic preoccupations, there were possible points of contact where the two shadows of illegality overlapped.⁷⁷ Among the weavers, far less trapped by the false logic that upheld 'craft consciousness', this was certainly the case already and it should not be ruled out with regard to the Sheffield metalworkers.

The arrests of May 1817 fundamentally weakened the physical force or revolutionary wing of the popular radical movement in Sheffield. In Barnsley and the northern weaving districts, where the authorities had not penetrated, armed preparation and democratic propagandizing continued. Through their influence on the weavers' industrial organization in these districts the radicals were able to build up their strength. Everywhere outside this area, the politically active lost the earlier momentum which the political platform had given them in the earlier post-war years. Throughout the remainder of 1817 and 1818 the cheap newspaper and pamphlet press enabled the radicals to keep up a slow but steady campaign of political conversion.⁷⁸

During the quieter periods of 1817 and 1818 there were few of the signs of the sort of mass political withdrawal that had taken place in the middle and later 1790's after similar checks to popular expectations. In spite of revivalist activity taking place on a significant scale in one small part of the region,⁷⁹ the 'quiet years' of post-war radicalism did not prompt any general outbreak of religious enthusiasm in the region.⁸⁰ Methodist groups, including even the democratic Kilhamites, were becoming more removed from the popular experience. They were becoming exclusive religious associations as against the

'unlimited' communities of former years. Millennarian excitement was missing. No new messiah was there to be sprung up in the popular imagination as Brothers and Joanna had during the war years. Possibly the radical agitation had created a more rational temper among the people. The absence of a mass revivalist response could also be explained by the relative absence of material hardship. In these years the hand of necessity pressed less hard on the people because the harvests of 1817 and 1818 were satisfactory.⁸¹ However, trade and employment prospects did not improve rapidly.⁸²

If there was no search for security in the 'other world' through religion, the rise in criminal activity (as measured by indicted crime throughout the West Riding generally as well as in the specific communities of the region) showed the alternative directions being taken to seek security:

Table 5:13

Crime 1815-1820

(a) Number of persons committed to Wakefield House of Correction for trial at West Riding Quarter Sessions.⁸³

| | | | |
|------|------|------|------|
| 1815 | 920 | 1818 | 1998 |
| 1816 | 1310 | 1819 | 2206 |
| 1817 | 1880 | 1820 | 2169 |

(b) Number of prosecutions entered into by Sheffield Association for the Prosecution of Felons.⁸⁴

| | | | |
|------|----|------|------|
| 1815 | 8 | 1818 | 22 |
| 1816 | 11 | 1819 | 15 * |
| 1817 | 22 | 1820 | 10 * |

* a local police force was operating during these years.

There was a strong association between the immediate economic stimuli provided by stagnant trade and crime. The more remote pressures on individuals created by economic re-organization of production was also significant. Those dispossessed by enclosure joined the already exploited members of the urban 'reserve army' of unemployed and under-employed workers facing material and spiritual destitution.

Minor acts which the larger property owning classes defined as criminal became in times like these a necessary part of the new social

existence of the town and village poor. Their petty thefts and vandalism represented 'social crime' when they were directed consciously at genuine oppressors. Such acts as taking waste materials from a grasping employer, cutting a 'blackleg' grinder's wheelbands, removing the tools of the 'knobstick' collier or cutler, cutting the 'black sheep' weaver's warps, stealing grain from a forestaller's warehouse or upsetting his market stall, killing game on the encloser's fenced section of common land or breaking his boundary markers and physically abusing Methodist moralizers and vandalizing their chapels, all fitted the pattern. These were ways in which individuals could seek personal redress in a way that usually the majority of the community, particularly the most productive section or the labouring strata, could accept as morally justifiable. This is why the authorities found it so hard to eradicate varied organizations like trade unions, political societies and poaching gangs. It explained why they had not unravelled the secrets of Luddism in 1812.

(c) Liberty or Death - the third echo 1818-20.

Britons arise and yet be free,
 Defend your rights and liberty!
 Borough mongers long have shared the spoil,
 The working class shares all the toil;
 Now or never strike the blow,
 Exert yourselves and crush the foe!!

political rhyme 'Liberty or Death' c. 1819 ⁸⁵

The political hopes of the region's working people did not revive much throughout 1818. The insult offered by the ritual of parliamentary election passed by unnoticed from the empty tribunes of Paradise Square, Sky Edge and May Day Green.⁸⁶ The weavers, at least, found new strength through industrial organization during the short-lived prosperity of 1818. Better trade prompted the weavers to make demands for a restoration of prices for work achieved between 1810-14. The masters' refusal prompted a 'turn out' which began in September and lasted eleven weeks.⁸⁷ Some concessions were made in the new list

prices that were offered to the weavers in October.⁸⁸ The Weavers' Union, with a strong fund built up from years of prosperity, refused to accept these terms and kept the strike going. Increasingly it had to employ violent sanctions to maintain solidarity. During the turn out at least 30 weavers were arrested for various acts of intimidation and neglect of work.⁸⁹ A dialogue was kept up between the forces of labour and those of capital. This suggested there was more at stake than the price of labour and it must be looked at in detail for it tells us much about the consciousness of the working people of the weaving districts.

The debate began with accusations that the linen manufacturers had tried to insist on new lengths of completed work for the old prices. The 'Weavers' Defence', printed in the Leeds Mercury, argued that many weavers worked for less than 12 shillings per week under the present conditions despite the improved state of trade.⁹⁰ The voice of the linen manufacturers⁹¹ talked of average wages of 16-25 shillings per week and of 31-41 shillings as the family earnings of a master, two apprentices and one journeyman. The manufacturers argued that although trade had been relatively sluggish in the immediate post-war years they had stockpiled. When trade improved as it had done recently, they argued, there was less need for additional production. High prices of Barnsley wares relative to those in other centres in England and the rest of the United Kingdom as well as the continent, could not be sustained, they continued. The manufacturers accused the weavers of ingratitude. They saw political objectives behind the weavers' resistance. The Union's leaders were attacked as being, 'totally subversive of all social order'. The leaders included among their numbers men who had been active in the quasi-political industrial organization of 1812 and the more explicit political organization of 1816-17. It was not surprising that the manufacturers should make such inferences. 'A Manufacturer', writing in the Leeds Intelligencer after having seen men with such pedigrees among those

in the 'ring' at the centre of a May Day Green weavers' rally, expressed his fullest fears:

But what appears to me to be the mainspring of the present unpleasant disposition manifested in the labouring classes is the revolutionary spirit which was so plentifully infused into their minds at the time of the meetings of the self-styled Reformers. Ever since that time to the great grief of all well wishers to their country, symptoms of insubordination and impatience of control have been manifested by them, both against their employers, and also against every person who had authority over them whether church or state.

He further commented that;

the present turn out is combined with certain political purposes, though disguised as much as possible from the public eye. For it is pretty generally circulated through this town, that various subjects are discussed in the ring totally irrelevant to the ostensible purport of the meeting.⁹²

Later reflections of weavers, who had for the first time become involved in political debate during the months of the strike, showed that such fears had real substance.⁹³

The strike ended in late November with a partial victory for the Union with a compromise offer being made by the linen manufacturers.⁹⁴ This gave the leaders of the adolescent weaving labour class greater power. Their concentration on limited economic goals and on a wider political goal put them in the van of the region's emerging labour class.

Other workgroups in the region hardly stirred. Sheffield's cutlers and associated metal workers were organizing defensively against the disintegration of traditional relationships brought about by the 1814 Act and against wage reductions. Where labour was organized in the cutlery trades it tended to look back to the past for solutions. Many cutlers participated in the further disintegration of the once stable balance in the trades by setting up as small masters. Only the grinders' unions and those of workers in local trades like silver and plated ware were used to confronting the

economic force of the free market and were able to act firmly in a forward looking way. They accepted the reality of the free market and ruthlessly used their power to restrict the supply of labour, the one factor of production over which they had any control. In this way if their trade could be organized they could keep the price of labour up. Their use of violence to control labour supply appeared to hostile employers to have become an end in itself.⁹⁵ The leaders of the organized trades did not ignore the political struggle taking place, as later recollections of the years 1818-19 suggested.⁹⁶ However, much of the activity of organized labour was clothed in secrecy and hidden from magistrate and historian alike.

Looking at the region's other important industrial workgroups, it can be seen that the colliers were better placed than many workgroups in 1818. Like the various forms of ironworks' labour they were in a more proletarian, less independent work situation. The ironworks' labour force, who had experienced the post-war depression more directly than the colliers, were glad to be in full work again in 1818.⁹⁷ In the villages producing labour for Thorncliffe ironworks (Ecclesfield and Chapelton) Methodist revival on a significant scale greeted the renewal of industrial expansion during 1818 and continued well into 1819.⁹⁸ Local factors produced this revival. It was highly significant that here the employers, their foremen and other key workers were all members of the Methodist body. Through their employing and wider power they were able to mould the workforce and dependants in a model community where employers could maintain cultural dominance without challenge. This was still the case, although possibly to a lesser degree, in many other isolated ironworks and mining communities in the region.

The signs of returning industrial depression in the early months of 1819 marked the end of any strength organized labour had begun to feel. There appeared to be a turning away from industrial towards political action during the winter months of 1818-19. The political

Union society was re-organized among the weavers in Barnsley with the immediate aim of intensifying popular discussion and circulating pamphlets and periodicals. There was already a commitment to arm in preparation for revolution if all constitutional means should fail. Not only weavers were claimed to be involved in the Barnsley society. Other groups in the town and villages of the weaving districts, shoemakers, colliers and quarrymen all appeared to be drawn in. The political mobilization of this district had begun as early as January 1819. The Barnsley leadership managed the whole northern area. Other Union societies were said to be organized at Ecclesfield (a large nail making, weaving and filemaking village in the middle zone adjacent to the ironworks' communities of Elsecar, Thorncliffe and Chapel-town), at Rotherham (a small town with a dominant ironworks' labour and collier population), at Greasbrough (a colliery village on the eastern edge of the region) and at Sheffield.⁹⁹ Evidence of a network of organization outside the Barnsley area was only partly confirmed by subsequent events. The limited information the magistrates obtained was the result of a tight rein held by the political leadership upon the membership. Most of the secrets of this last phase of early nineteenth century popular radicalism were carried to their graves by their possessors. Its progress can be re-created from fragmented recollections.

In the summer of 1819 the radicals in Lancashire, the West Riding, Midlands and London began to co-ordinate their forces. Their leadership sought to hold to constitutional means. Increasingly their actions and demands implied a more aggressive challenge. Ideas of withholding taxation and the practice of electing 'legislative attorneys' as true representatives of the people with the idea of having a new representative body ready when the old withered away through lack of finance, suggested a shifting towards more aggressive approaches including the use of force.¹⁰⁰ In the West Riding large meetings were held in the clothing districts in June.¹⁰¹ These inspired smaller

local meetings throughout the area in the following weeks. The radical press, particularly the widely read Manchester Observer which was helping to create a national awareness of the radical movement in a way the Northern Star was to do twenty years later, urged political organization and increased mass agitation.¹⁰² As a response to this, and in imitation of the larger meetings held earlier, the Barnsley radicals called a mass meeting for 12 July. The local Union Society was active in mobilizing support for this with printed handbills.¹⁰³ The Sheffield radicals appeared backward by comparison. A Sheffield correspondent of the Manchester Observer commented on 10 July that, 'the people are wanting a rallying point whereby they can draw their sentiments into one common focus'. The Observer's reply suggested that a Union Society had survived from the agitation of 1816-17. It was too weak to exert great influence as is explained later.¹⁰⁴

The Barnsley meeting on May Day Green attracted 6,000 people.¹⁰⁵ It marked a very important stage in the second phase of post-war popular radicalism. Popular political societies in communities where labour was semi or wholly proletarian could no longer keep in step with the constitutionalist leadership of the radical movement. Suddenly the Union Societies in places like Barnsley had aggressively pushed themselves forward. They disavowed moderate means and drew sharp social contrasts between their increasingly pauperized existence and the wealth of the politically powerful. Below we examine the spelling out of this contrast in Barnsley to see how the local images of class were shaping.

The chair at the Barnsley meeting was taken by Thomas Farrimond, a self-confessed 'zealous reformer for twenty years' who had been at the centre of the weavers' industrial and political struggles since his arrival in the town in 1810. His speech attacked 'taxation', 'ministerial corruption' and 'borough mongering influence' in familiar terms. His and successive speeches drew in sharp outline the contrast

between 'the landed interests' and 'labouring interest'. There was an implicit understanding that the 'labouring interest' could no longer find support from the radical middle class of commercial, minor landed and industrial wealth. The use of the language of class by the speakers suggested stronger notions of a 'labour class' of wage earners than had been heard before. The idea that all wealth was ultimately 'derived from the circulation of the product of labour', was linked by Brayshaw (a visitor from the clothing districts) to the contrasted existence of the beneficiaries of this 'circulation' - the merchants and manufacturers - and the creators of the means of circulation - the 'working classes who were now deprived of the means of obtaining bread'.

The employment of plural sociological categories like 'working' and 'labouring classes' reflected persisting objective realities of economic status differentials within the groups or strata traditionally referred to as the 'industrious classes' or 'labouring poor'. The new plural categories now incorporated elements of a more aggressive, more positive and less fatalistic definition of social existence amongst groups containing a potential labour class of wage workers. The progress of self definition in public debate in part reflected new spokesmen from lower levels of existence within the traditional categories. It also reflected an objective reality in which a majority of those in these traditional categories were losing their economic independence as more exploitative capitalist relations of production were imposed on their trades. The physical actions of the employers and their definitions of themselves and their workforce was reinforcing this process. The term 'working class' was locally recorded for the first time in 1819 in a Barnsley linen manufacturer's description of what was becoming an increasingly homogeneous wage labour workforce in the weaving district.¹⁰⁶ Given the inadequacy of sources relating to the language of class, it is difficult to see how representative this usage was. In other communities in the region it may

not have been so precise. Objective realities were slightly different in most other communities in the region. Sheffield's labour force in 1819 was far from being homogeneous because of the persistence of great diversity in the nature and the scale of operation within a variety of contrasting trades. In the ironworks' and collier communities there were significant concentrations of wage labour and the objective conditions for labour class realization were there. This realization did not take place as yet because of the power of the local gentry and employers to check the spread of political or industrial insurgency into their spheres of local dominance. This form of inhibition applied to some small weaving villages in the north of the region where objective conditions were beginning to take shape. In the metal working villages around Sheffield and lacking like the town the development of objective conditions, there was also this local dominance. This control was to be challenged as a major climax moment in local labour class history approached. The narrative of the events of 1819-20 must be rejoined to arrive at this climax.

The sharper social perspectives articulated from the Barnsley platform in July 1819 were prompted by the drastic deterioration of working conditions among the weavers. William Leake, a weaver, had stated at the meeting that in the prosperous pre-war years of the early 1790's they had expected to work eleven hours a day for a weekly wage of sixteen shillings. He claimed that now they worked fifteen to sixteen hours for ten to eleven shillings per week. Prices of basic foodstuffs had meanwhile doubled - flour had risen from 1/6 to 3/- per stone, meal from 1/2 to 2/6 per stone and potatoes from 3d to 8d per peck. The Corn Laws had, he claimed, kept prices artificially high and the Combination Laws had prevented them from bargaining effectively for better wages. The pressing hand of necessity was becoming a politicizing force of significantly increased importance. 'The road is not long to that respectable walk in which the labouring class ought to tread; but we must confess it is extremely rugged', commented Leake

obscurely in preparing his audience for more direct political instruction. 'If you do not attempt to recover it', he continued, 'you will be trodden into the dust'. A more explicit message came from the Union Society's leading orators. Eighteen year old Richard Jackson and his mentor Thomas Farrimond provided the vital call for action. The younger man spoke:

I see you have been deluded by those who said the war was commenced to preserve our country; you have found it quite the contrary. They further deceived you by saying, let peace come and you shall have plenty. You bore your sufferings with patience till patience was exhausted. You believed your wicked and deceitful minister till a voice sounded, the Time is come! but you see Taxes are increased, and we are reduced to a state of Slavery that never before was witnessed. We have to work fifteen or sixteen hours a day for ten or twelve shillings per week. Parliament respected gentlemen no more than weavers; the late petition was a proof of right. I call upon you to raise your voice as it is the sound of justice, and I wish success to the cause of reform. In its aid I will lend my hand and my heart, either in public or private.

Farrimond, aware that little was needed in the way of persuasion to turn men away from bankrupt constitutional means to revolutionary ones, concluded the meeting with carefully chosen words:

The voice of reason and justice will unite us together as one man. We shall then make a lasting demand for our rights; we do not mean by bloodshed but by manly perseverance. 107

This use of the words 'lasting demand' echoed the sentiments of schemes for 'legislative attorneys', 'conventions' and 'anti-parliaments' that the national leadership and regional groups began to contemplate in more than theoretical terms during the summer months of 1819.

There were no other reports of local meetings in the region during the remainder of July and early August. 1819. The local focus was on the large meetings held in the clothing districts of the West Riding and in Lancashire. The monster Hunslet Moor meeting of 19 July adopted the principle of electing a 'legislative attorney' established by the Birmingham radicals' election of Sir Charles Wolseley.¹⁰⁸ It advocated a 'National Union' accompanied by a 'national petition'. Similarly a

Manchester meeting was planned for 9 August to adopt the same procedure. In panic the Government arrested the leading Birmingham radicals. The Manchester meeting was postponed and a mass meeting held there on 16 August to protest about the arrests was dispersed in the bloody disorder of St Peter's Fields.

'Peterloo' accelerated the radicals' progress towards open violence. Reports from local people who had gone to Manchester filtered back to the radicals in the region. At 'Peterloo' had been several Barnsley weavers and miscellaneous groups of Sheffield people, including the 'nine men...from one workshop in Sheffield' reported to Lord Lonsdale by a local correspondent.¹⁰⁹ In Sheffield the outrage had prompted daily gatherings of several thousand workmen on the burial ground. These meetings had begun before the 'Peterloo' affair. They were ended abruptly after the magistrates and their auxiliary army of special constables made their presence felt.¹¹⁰ The Sheffield Mercury reported that, 'the fatal results of the meeting at Manchester have excited strong sensations of alarm in the public mind'.¹¹¹ Other immediate local protest escaped the notice of the press. Mass meetings were held throughout the country. In the West Riding huge meetings on Hunslet Moor in late August and September were dominated by moderates. A respectable county meeting at York condemned the affair.¹¹² Following the county meeting on 14 October, a large scale local protest was organized in Sheffield for 18 October. This was under the licence of Earl Fitzwilliam and progressive members of the Sheffield elite. Between 20-50,000 people,¹¹³ most of them from Sheffield and the immediate out-villages, but also with a 300 strong contingent marching in from Ecclesfield and from Barnsley, gathered in the Brocco, an open place on the northern edge of the central area of the town. The rich pageantry of the arriving radicals must have been impressive. With men in the procession wearing white hats with green sashes or cockades, the women with green ribbons in their hair as they marched in under the various divisions of their own recently formed Female

Reformers section,¹¹⁴ the radical procession to the ground expressed the ordered strength more associated with Chartism twenty years later. Bands of music (reed bands rather than the brass bands of a generation later) were in the procession playing such popular political airs as 'The Downfall of Paris', 'Scots, wha ha wi Wallace bled', 'Erin go Bragh', 'A man's a man for a that', 'Ca-ira', 'Mary le More' and the tune of the 'Dead march in Saul'. Hundreds of banners and flags fluttered on the slopes of the Brocco. Their wide ranging inscriptions read: 'Order, Order, Hold to the Laws', 'Englishmen, demand your rights', 'The Rights of Man - Liberty, Truth and Justice', to 'The immortal memory of the Reformers massacred at Manchester', 'Hunt and Liberty', 'Innocent blood crieth aloud for Vengeance', 'From Battle, Murder and Sudden Death, Good Lord deliver us', 'Britons unite and be free', 'The land is full of bloody crimes, and the City full of Tyrants', 'A gift to the Burial Ground Men', 'Civil and Religious Liberty is our Birthright' and 'Thou shalt do no murder' (accompanied by a design of 'the figure of Justice weeping at the tomb of departed' and reverse 'a Yeoman sabring a poor woman, in the attitude of imploring mercy - a child lying on the ground, which she had dropped from her arms').

From the platform Thomas Rawson, the former Sheffield Union society president of 1816-17, warned the assembled masses of ministerial repression. Rawson was accompanied on the platform by Fitzwilliam's son, Lord Milton, and several moderate reformers from the town's respectable commercial and industrial middle class. They were there to affirm their polite but reserved disapproval of 'Peterloo' and also to give the meeting a sense of security that the events would not be repeated in their town. Rawson was careful to restrain his language. The gesture of Milton and the others was well received, but Milton did not please the 'thorough' radicals on the platform when he argued that visitors from the woollen districts should not be

allowed to speak. These included familiar speakers at more radical earlier public meetings in Sheffield and Barnsley - Willan, the Dewsbury Quaker, Mason of Leeds and Wooler, the editor of the radical periodical Black Dwarf. Most of these were not 'respectable' enough to be 'recognized' from the platform, although Payne and Rawson would have been willing to acknowledge them as equals. While the meeting drew to a close, Milton and several of the other platform speakers left. Willan, Mason, Wooler and Jackson of Barnsley took the platform. None spoke explicitly of using force. Mason and Wooler particularly, urged continuous struggle and called on those assembled to 'bury dissensions and unite as common soldiers in a common cause'. The crowd stirred anxiously during the remaining minutes of the meeting. Their respectable 'hostages' had gone and, as 'Peterloo' had shown, the right of public assembly was threatened. Consequently the crowd rapidly hurried away fearful for their safety.

The meeting added to the important lesson which the town and the region's emerging labour class were learning. In Sheffield there had been hidden depths to the organization of the meeting. A well organized Union society appeared to have been lacking, although one that had sections of Female Reformers was in existence. The meeting nevertheless had been well attended by ordered groups of working people. The new source of disciplined public activity was provided by young industrial activists. This was not revealed by any of the current reports of the meeting. The banner inscriptions did not appear to contain any belonging to trade union bodies, yet trade unionists participated. Twenty years later, two trade union veterans, Joseph Kirk of the filesmiths and Thomas Booth of the Britannia metalsmiths, recalled how as young trade unionists they had defied the threats of their employers and led the members of their trades and others to take part in the meeting.¹¹⁵ On what scale this took place is not possible to discover but it did happen and helped to explain the filling of some of the gap in labour class political leadership vacated by a weak

Union society. Possibly the Union Society radicals were organized in a more clandestine body. Key figures in the Barnsley Union society, itself going 'underground' during these months, testified to links with a shadowy Sheffield group at this time.¹¹⁶ Rumours of arms dealers in Sheffield¹¹⁷ and the return of John Blackwell and his subsequent re-embarkation on a revolutionary career,¹¹⁸ provide additional fragments of evidence that a radical organization of some sort was in existence in the town during the last months of 1819 and the early months of 1820. The Barnsley radicals and their mass of supporters in the weaving districts of the north of the region now took the initiative. Their mass protest on 8 November was attended by 8,000 people. These participated in a similar sort of pageantry as was indulged in in Sheffield. Contingents from nearby villages, Dodworth, Barugh, Mapplewell, Kexbrough and Cawthorne, as well as parties from as far south as Sheffield, joined the procession to the Fair field. Chaired by a dissenting minister, Rev. Ellis, the platform speakers at the meeting included Mason of Leeds, John Payne, Thomas Farrimond and Richard Jackson.¹¹⁹

Behind a facade of constitutionalism in Barnsley, a 'Secret Acting Committee' was preparing to fight. This committee included:¹²⁰

Table 5:14

Barnsley's Revolutionary Command

| | |
|---|--|
| Richard Addy - weaver of Barnsley - | probably a United veteran from Lancashire. |
| Thomas Ashurst - weaver of Barnsley - | ditto |
| Arthur Collins - weaver of Barnsley - | ditto |
| Craven Cookson - weaver of Barnsley - | ditto and 'Luddite' leader of weavers' industrial struggle of 1812. |
| Thomas Farrimond - weaver of Barnsley - | ditto and secretary of Union society 1816-17 and probably similar role in the organization after. |
| Richard Jackson - weaver of Barnsley - | too young to have a history but one of the orators at Union society public meetings. |
| Stephen Kitchenman - weaver of Dodworth - | perhaps United veteran but certainly a 'Luddite' leader of the weavers' industrial struggle of 1812. |

Table 5:14 (cont.)

James Lowe - weaver of Barnsley - perhaps a United veteran from Lancashire.

Benjamin Rodgers - weaver of Barnsley - ditto

This group co-ordinated the various local branches of the Union Society which was now made up of 40-50 small 'classes' of 12-36 members. These 'classes' operated on two levels¹²¹ - that of the 'penny reading club' which purchased periodicals, and that of the 'two penny club' which financed travelling delegates and arms purchases.¹²² The 'Secret Acting Committee' had met since January 1819 in weekly Monday sessions which drew in delegates from the 'classes' at Farrimond's and other houses. They had discussed the national movement and worked out their own position among themselves and with corresponding groups in the region and outside of it. Since midsummer, and before 'Peterloo', they and other groups had been fully committed to arming. They seemed to accept the inevitability of an insurrection. The events of 16 August pushed them very firmly onto this path.¹²³

In the weeks following the constitutionalists' last throw at the Barnsley Church Field meeting, mass 'simultaneous' meetings were held throughout the West Riding.¹²⁴ These took place in the face of the re-organization of the apparatus of repression which had even respectable people claiming the Government was 'substituting Power for Law'.¹²⁵ In the textile districts of the West Riding the magistrates urged the Government to send military aid and they asked for permission to form volunteer corps of cavalry to cover the large areas of moorland villages. Here radicals were active and the current disposition of civil and military power could not check them.¹²⁶ In contrast, the magistrates in the southern part of the Riding, except around Barnsley, appeared quietly confident. Their confidence was partly based on ignorance. In the textile districts there were signs of a growing physical force radical strength represented by arming, drilling and a general disregard for authority which included the 'hidden' challenge

of 'church going' and 'exclusive dealing'.¹²⁷ These last two aspects of post-war radicalism illustrate its fuller dimensions which are often underestimated by historians who expect to find only such depth in the following Chartist political generation. In Barnsley the 'Secret Acting Committee' ordered its rank and file to bring their weapons from hiding and take part in drilling. They procured more arms from dealers, particularly at Birmingham and Sheffield.¹²⁸ Drilling began during the last week of November. Several groups, including an Irish group, met nightly and, under the watchful eyes of ex-military instructors in moonlit fields and isolated wasteland, began to learn their military drill.¹²⁹ This commitment to physical force was matched elsewhere in the West Riding, in Lancashire, in the west Midlands and in London.¹³⁰ In Sheffield and in nearby Nottingham and other east Midland towns which were well forward in revolutionary activity in 1817, the absence of reports might suggest weak organization or lack of real revolutionary commitment after the disappointments of the past. Something of what happened in Sheffield in 1820 confirmed this.

In Sheffield in 1819 much energy was being directed by the cutlery workers into a struggle going on to maintain the traditional pattern of organization in the once protected or regulated trades. The commercial men, factors, merchants and some large manufacturers, had exploited the post-war flood of labour into the trades. The huge number of small or 'journeyman' masters, making wares for often as little as one third the old (1810-1814 list prices) price, had pulled down the price of labour in many of the trades, particularly the large spring knife trade. Those journeymen working for established masters who sold their wares to accredited merchants and dealers were tempted to join the ranks of the small masters and pull the price down even further. In the spring knife trade work was being done for 30-50% of the 1814 list prices. In the file trade alone of all the once regulated trades were prices set during 1810-1814 in any way held onto.¹³¹

This better placed trade was the trade most likely to have been politically active at the time of the 'Peterloo' protest. Other non-corporate trades were industrially organized like the Britannia metal, silver and silver plated trades. In these the level of wages was kept up and organized labour had a more secure economic base from which to launch itself into radical politics. Such strength and breadth of involvement were exceptional.

More trades in Sheffield and elsewhere were becoming industrially organized. The grinders in all branches of the Sheffield cutlery and related tool trades were also well organized. They had fought the attempts to reduce the levels for prices for work established between 1810-14. They used industrial violence to fight 'blacklegs' working under the price and the employers who encouraged them. The violence was intense throughout the winter months of 1819-20. In February 1820 there was an incident which recaptured the intensity of 'Ludding' times when fifty 'black faced' armed men attacked a large grinding wheel and smashed the driving mechanism under cover of night.¹³² Locally the other cutlery workers talked of the grinders as 'the champions'.¹³³ In the trades there were partly counter-active attempts by employers to try and get the workmen to engage in co-operating with the established merchants and master manufacturers to bring the trades back to the guild-ordered pattern of the past.¹³⁴ This looking backwards was a persistent element in the thinking of sections of organized labour at the time. Organized labour had begun to wake up to free market realities. However much workers were distracted at this time from popular radical politics by such schemes, they increasingly shared in this industrial awakening. It was an awakening taking place as trade worsened in Sheffield.¹³⁵ Trade had begun to deteriorate again in the autumn and winter of 1819 and the effects of past speculative over-production and stockpiling were felt even more keenly.

The industrial prospects of the region's growing wage labour forces at the collieries and iron works were better than for other

groups in 1819. Here, as against the weavers, cutlery and related workshop metal workers, the workforces had faced more impediments to industrial organization imposed by the organization of their work and domestic situations. The employer's control of their lives through a control of housing, religion, retail credit as well as employment had worked with geographical isolation to impede the industrial and political organization of the ironworks' workers and the colliers. Nevertheless, the larger concentrations made it inevitable they would come into contact with those with some experience of industrial and political struggle. It would be foolish to forget that radical weavers, shoemakers and tailors shared the community life of some of them in the northern and central districts of the region and that in the east and southern part of the region some such workers lived in or close to urban centres like Sheffield and Rotherham. Whatever the real situation, colliers in the north of the region became involved in the short-lived 'Miners' Union Club' whose strength was in the Wakefield, Dewsbury and Leeds districts of the coalfield.¹³⁶ The miners' limited involvement in a strike taking place mainly in the northerly part of the coalfield was short lived. The strike appeared to have little or no relationship to political activity. If miners or other groups working in the 'heavy' sector had any political views, these were channelled through the organizations dominated by politically more advanced workgroups.

For most workers in the region the winter of 1819 offered little hope of better prospects. The economic reality hardened the resolve of the politically active minority now rapidly advancing down the road to insurrection. Events in the last week of November throughout the northern weaving districts of the region thoroughly disturbed the authorities. Sheffield and the southern districts, Rotherham and the eastern districts and the central areas were quiet on the surface. In Barnsley, open drilling was taking place. This had magnified in the eyes of the authorities even the modest and limited industrial

activity of the colliers. Viscount Lascelles, the new Lord Lieutenant replacing the 'liberal' Fitzwilliam in an hour of crisis, received the following description of the situation in Barnsley:

...no neighbourhood is more infected than this. We abound with Weavers, Colliers and Ironstone getters, who are very violent in their menaces; and we have no protection. They are ripe for any mischief which they may be set upon. There are many pikes and pistols amongst them. We cannot be said to be in the King's peace... Now pray can you afford in any assistance?¹³⁷

General Byng, the northern commander-in-chief, was aware of the situation. He had already been warned of various groups in the country trying to organize a 'simultaneous rising' for 13 December involving the radicals of England and Scotland. He was prepared.¹³⁸

In Barnsley the Union Society called a public meeting for 13 December,¹³⁹ possibly to deflect attention from a more violent purpose. Drilling continued throughout the first week of December, despite the loss of secrecy for which inquisitive spectators and watchful loyalists had been responsible.¹⁴⁰ On 7 December the magistrates were assembled at Barnsley to take action regarding the drilling.¹⁴¹ In this they were supported by the promise of the bill for the first of the 'Six Acts' being rushed through Parliament. Dealing with military training, rights of search, size of public meetings, the stamp duty on periodicals and sedition and libels, these were hastily passed throughout the month.¹⁴² There appeared to be a lull in the drilling. December 13 passed quietly, despite the heightened sense of popular expectation expressed generally throughout the West Riding. At Barnsley the authorities were prepared and the public meeting and any other planned action was forestalled.¹⁴³ Reports of a body of 700 men exercising in Stainborough Park suggested the Barnsley Union Society's 'Secret Acting Committee' were still ready to initiate revolutionary action.¹⁴⁴ They kept up communication with other groups, especially with organizations in Lancashire through their direct communication with Manchester.¹⁴⁵ Throughout the radical

movement in the West Riding there were recriminations towards moderates whose loss of nerve had prevented action on 13 December. Some 'penny clubs' were abandoned in the woollen districts.¹⁴⁶ In Barnsley the revolutionaries held firm.

In Scotland, Cumberland, Northumberland, Durham and Lancashire and in the west Midlands and London, the strength of radical organization held and the momentum towards revolutionary action was sustained.¹⁴⁷ Throughout the remainder of December 1819 and January 1820, despite the lull in activity, delegates were passing between districts carrying out 'negotiations' to co-ordinate revolutionary action.¹⁴⁸ Regional meetings were being held, including meetings in the West Riding and east Midlands where organization appeared to be backward. Significant co-ordinating regional meetings were held in the central areas such as at Manchester and at Nottingham.¹⁴⁹ Arthur Thistlewood, speaking for London's 'physical force' men, travelled widely afield in December.¹⁵⁰ His voice was only one of several dictating the pattern of events. The voices of Scottish and other English provincial leaders were equally important.

South Yorkshire's radicals were mainly cast in a subordinate role. Throughout the West Riding and east Midlands there was a lasting distrust of revolutionary initiatives after the experiences of 1817. South Yorkshire was less well organized than the woollen districts. Later reports testified to widespread organization in the region, with main centres in Barnsley, Rotherham and Sheffield and with smaller centres in villages like Ecclesfield, Dodworth and Greasbrough.¹⁵¹ The Barnsley leadership, controlling the northern part of the region, appeared very forward in comparison with that at Sheffield. Sheffield's radicals' recollections of the disaster of 1817 and a current consensus in the town maintained by a community approach to solving the economic ills of the town's staple cutlery trade combined to weaken the local leadership and the potential for mass support.

In a national framework political and military leaders showed a

steadiness based on a knowledge of real strength despite signs of local hesitation among lesser representatives of the ruling class.¹⁵² This confidence was somehow transmitted to the revolutionaries and consequently 13 December became the first of several discarded dates given for the 'general rising'. The arrest of leaders in Lancashire in late December pushed hopes for 1 January aside.¹⁵³ Any realistic hopes were deferred until the spring. Thistlewood and his personal followers' hopes of murdering the Cabinet to provide the 'spark' for revolution were nurtured on frustration at this deferment as much as in the rich imagination of Edwards, the spy.¹⁵⁴ It is likely that provincial leaders knew of Thistlewood's intentions for 23 February. They were not confident of being able to match his enterprise. General Byng, the northern commander whose professional detachment well qualified him to size up the vast quantity of conflicting information provided by frantic spies, enthusiastic informers, hysterical magistrates and contrastingly collected Lords Lieutenant, noted:

I cannot but think that what occurred on the 23rd in London was expected by the leaders of the Disaffected in the Country, and as there was no preparation for any general commotion, if the plot had succeeded, assassination of marked persons would have followed.¹⁵⁵

More realistic preparations were being made throughout February and March 1820. Delegates from the English provincial centres were attending almost permanently convened 'national meetings' in various centres. Delegates from Scotland attended these and agreed to a 'general rising' for the night of 31 March.¹⁵⁶ For reasons that have remained obscure the events of that night were a fiasco. In Scotland there had been arrests in the previous week which may have held them back.¹⁵⁷ In Lancashire however, the weavers stopped work in several districts in anticipation of the rising. Only in one area (Wigan) was there an assembly of armed men on the chosen night. In Lancashire there was an expectation that Scotland would act first.¹⁵⁸ In the West Riding several thousand radicals from the woollen districts

assembled for a moonlit attack on Huddersfield. This was the 'spark' intended to ignite both Yorkshire and Lancashire. Conflicting messages provided by the arrival of the Manchester delegate to set them in motion and another warning them to hold back, led to the attack being abandoned.¹⁵⁹

The Barnsley radicals and those in the Sheffield area were told to hold themselves in reserve and come forward only after the initial phase of the rising had been successful. When it failed they continued discussions with the West Riding leadership.¹⁶⁰ During the following week the 'Scottish insurrection' began.¹⁶¹ It had hardly flickered into life when the English provincial leaders decided to re-take the initiative. It was decided to use the 'reserve troops', such as those from Barnsley, to join a second attack on Huddersfield on the night of 11/12 April. This would be supported by a limited rising in the northern part of Lancashire and the two combined would serve to deflect the military's attention from a rising in Manchester.¹⁶²

The events of 11-12 April in South Yorkshire demonstrated the existence of a significant revolutionary organization which had been effectively concealed from the authorities. In Sheffield¹⁶³ throughout the earlier part of 11 April, a group of several hundred men led by John Blackwell (the manipulator of crowds in 1812 and 1816) charged around the town firing guns. In the evening they marched into the centre of the town from several directions and assembled in military formation. An eye-witness recalled:

The mob that was with him (Blackwell) then fell into order, and one division marched down King Street, and another down Apple-market, and both met in the Hay-market.

Another recalled that:

...he heard a pistol fired, and...saw the assembled crowd fall into regular rank, perhaps there might be five abreast.

Members of a gathering crowd called out admiringly, 'that's Jacky Blacker, the King'. With cries of 'Hunt and Liberty', 'the Revolution,

the Revolution' and 'when we have stopped the mail we shall do', they marched off to attack the barracks. Somewhere along the route they abandoned their plans with cries of 'we must adjourn to the 14th'.

While Blackwell and his men seemed to be creating a diversion¹⁶⁴ (if this was his intent or that of his manipulators we will never know), fifteen miles away at Bank-top outside Barnsley the main force of the region's radical army was being assembled for a march to Grange-moor.¹⁶⁵ Here they planned to meet a promised 40,000 men from the woollen districts for the attack on Huddersfield. The Barnsley leadership organized the muster. All week they had been uncertain of the rising. Only that afternoon had they received final confirmation from a Huddersfield directing committee with the return of two delegates, ex-Luddites Craven Cookson and Stephen Kitchenman. At Bank-top their lingering uncertainty was increased by the poor support which the Ecclesfield contingent provided. The beat of a drum and the confidence of two 'white hatted' military commanders (ex-soldiers Richard Addy and William Comstive) boosted their morale. The march began at midnight as the 'ragged army' and its banners and flags marched through Barnsley. Its numbers swelled to 400 when the Dodworth contingent joined them. All along the route they raided houses for arms. At 2 a.m. they reached Darton, at dawn they passed through Flockton and at 5.30 a.m. they arrived at their rendezvous. Instead of the promised 40,000 they were met by only a handful of Huddersfield men who warned them to go home. The authorities had expected an attack on Huddersfield from one direction or another on 11 April and their alert had deterred local radicals from acting.¹⁶⁶ The insurgents scattered, leaving pikes, guns and flags on the moor. Troops and yeomanry who had watched the last stage of the march arrived a little later and arrested 17 stragglers, including Addy and Comstive who were returning from a visit to Huddersfield to find out the reason for the lack of support.¹⁶⁷

While the Sheffield constables were arresting Blackwell in his

garret workshop on 12 April,¹⁶⁸ over a hundred warrants were being issued for the arrests of Barnsley, Dodworth, Ardsley, Silkestone and Cawthorne men.¹⁶⁹ Many went into hiding. A few days later it was reported that over 100 men were missing from home.¹⁷⁰ Several key leaders evaded capture but thirty subsequent arrests were made.¹⁷¹

Despite the flickering signs of revolutionary action, often kept alive by the vested interest of spies and informers rather than by real activists, the 'English insurrection' of 11/12 April was the last real revolutionary moment of post-war radicalism. Almost as an epilogue to the region's revolutionary tradition of the pre-Chartist years, the following notice was posted on walls and doors in Sheffield shortly after the intended rising:

BE ON THE ALERT!!!!

THE BUTCHERS ARE READY FOR HUMAN SLAUGHTER

The Committee for Organisation for this district make this unusual communication to their patriot fellow citizens, in consequence of our enemies having received information, from some traitor, of our intention to assert our rights forthwith, the grand central committee have thought it advisable to defer the period till the 7th day of the 5th term, at which time prepare your bodkins, tellers and feelers for execution of duties necessary for every good subject to perform.

4 term 20

J.G. Secretary.¹⁷²

In the aftermath of the rising the authorities reinforced the military by calling out the militia.¹⁷³ The prisoners in York Castle, including twenty-five of the Barnsley insurgents and John Blackwell, served as 'hostages' for the good behaviour of the unsettled districts of the West Riding. In the face of these realities, radicals were forced back towards using more moderate constitutionalist means of agitation. The Queen Caroline affair provided one such opportunity to carry on the democratic challenge. In Sheffield the radicals organized a mass meeting. This was chaired by Rawson, the brewer,

who was still forward in the popular constitutionalist struggle for universal suffrage. At the meeting 8,000 signatures were collected on behalf of the Queen.¹⁷⁴ This activity illustrated a reformist drift with important consequences.

The final nails were driven into the coffin of post-war insurrectionism with the sentencing of 22 of the Barnsley men to transportation for life.¹⁷⁵ By contrast, John Blackwell received only thirty months imprisonment in York Castle.¹⁷⁶ Still some wilder incendiaries clung onto hopes of revolution. As late as December 1820 General Byng was still seriously contemplating some of the reports coming to him from the main centres of earlier activity.¹⁷⁷ When radical culture survived it was now because there was a broadening out to embrace those moderates who had deserted the cause in earlier more intense moments. Gentler, reformist social criticism crept in with the involvement of sections of the petty bourgeoisie.¹⁷⁸ The radical democratic ideology that an emergent labour class was poised to reach for in 1819 was snatched away.

The checking of popular political aspirations may have been marked again during 1819-21 by an explosion in 'social crime'.¹⁷⁹ This is suggested by the crude criminal statistics shown below:

Table 5:15 Prisoners committed to Wakefield House of Correction
1812-21

| | | | |
|------|------|------|------|
| 1812 | 818 | 1817 | 1880 |
| 1813 | 945 | 1818 | 1948 |
| 1814 | 799 | 1819 | 2706 |
| 1815 | 920 | 1820 | 2169 |
| 1816 | 1360 | 1821 | 1712 |

There was also a suggestion of a surge of positive mass responses to Methodist revivalist¹⁸⁰ approaches. This is examined in the following section.

(d) Social-cultural struggle c. 1800-201) Leisure

The attack on popular culture continued through these years. Controlled by the magistrates, big employers, evangelicals and other species of moralist, it sought to further eliminate the irrational and excessive elements in popular recreation and to replace them with rational ones. This particularly involved restricting the quantity of leisure and more significantly changing its quality.

Apart from the regular keeping of Saint Mondays in the bulk of pre-factory trades the local holiday calendar was supplemented by a multitude of feast, wake and market days which presented excuses for petty carnival. Many of these celebrations survived from pre-industrial days and were largely rural. There was as yet no clearly defined urban popular culture and rural traditions were still observed by town workers. Often town workers returned to their villages for seasonal rural festivities.¹⁸¹ There was no actual attempt to restrict the number of these holidays but there was an attempt to restrict what happened during them. Thus through control of licensing the magistrates restricted drinking habits. They also tried to stamp out 'irrational' leisure expression like blood sports. The communities of the region had strong resilient traditions regarding blood sports. Barnsley had a reputation for its bull, bear, dog and cock fighting in this period.¹⁸² Sheffield had not kept up its traditions as well. Bear-baiting and dog-fighting continued but cock-fighting and bull-baiting were claimed to have disappeared.¹⁸³ Village traditions were kept up in Mexborough where a bear-bait was recorded in 1815¹⁸⁴ and in Ecclesfield where the war between Methodists and blood sports continued unabated.¹⁸⁵ Enclosure and the power of the magistrates served to restrict this form of leisure expression. Sheffield's traditions were under great pressure because of the loss of common land. In the villages to the south-east of Sheffield a similar pattern emerged. The village of Woodhouse saw

its last bull-bait in 1800 and its last cock-fight in 1806. Here bear-baiting was ended when all the 'bull land' was finally enclosed in 1816.¹⁸⁶ Signs of public suppression demonstrated the conscious attempts at cultural re-making by the authorities. It is difficult to measure their success as we know little of the illegal underworld of blood sports and related popular leisure.

In the place of such 'irrationality' the authorities and their moral auxiliaries sought to encourage forms of restrained rational pleasure seeking. Their main emphasis was on the restriction and destruction of the irrational on the grounds that they offended public decency and encouraged wider social insubordination. Only later when changes in the economic base demanded different forms of labour discipline and also when the limits of negative cultural control were shown up was a positive attempt made to mould working people. This was done by creating a counter culture of respectability.

2) Religion

Organized religion continued to serve the seemingly contradictory ends of forcing class identities into the open while at the same time its ideology was used to mask inequalities or to sublimate their recognition. The identification of Church and Chapel with 'respectable' upper and emerging middle class styles of life, and the consequent reactive alienation of working people from religion, sharpened the lines of social demarcation. At the same time organized religion maintained a hold on some working people, not only 'deferentials' (especially in the Church of England), but also 'seculars' - those identifying with groups (particularly the Methodists) by reasoning rather than blind inertia.¹⁸⁷ It was the child-world that organized religion had the most impact upon. Sunday schools were powerful institutions of control in the child-world. They sublimated social consciousness through childhood and youth and produced mutated perceptions in adulthood. The following attempted 'calculation of Sunday

school attendance must be treated with caution.

Table 5:16 The child population of Sheffield as Sunday school attenders, 1811-41 188

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|------|---|--|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|--|
| | <u>Child population aged 4-15 years</u> | <u>Labour class children aged 4-15 years</u> | <u>Sunday school 'member-ship'</u> | <u>Attendances as % of 1.</u> | <u>Labour class attendances as % of 2.</u> |
| 1811 | 11,000 | 8250 | 5550 | 50% | 34% |
| 1821 | 13,000 | 9750 | 9500 | 73% | 64% |
| 1831 | 20,000 | 15,000 | 10,500 | 50% | 37% |
| 1841 | 18,250 | 13,686 | 12,904 | 70% | 60% |

We know little about the regularity of attendance or duration of stay. Later evidence suggests irregular attendance and short stays. There is a danger of overestimating the impact of the Sunday school scholar on his family. The evangelical propagandist might claim that he had a big influence on his family. More realistically the family and later the work environment undid much of the indoctrination.

There was a significant expansion of Sunday school provision in the first two decades of the nineteenth century in the region. Expansion was particularly concentrated in the immediate post-war years. Figures relating to the Sheffield Sunday School Union suggest this:

Table 5:17 The Sheffield Sunday School Union's growth 1812-21 189

| | <u>No. of schools</u> | <u>No. of adult scholars</u> | <u>Child scholars</u> | <u>Teachers</u> | <u>Pupil-teacher ratio</u> |
|------|-----------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|
| 1813 | 8 | - | 3186 | 397 | 8:1 |
| 1814 | 17 | 217 | 4330 | 702 | 6.4:1 |
| 1815 | 18 | 289 | 5446 | 987 | 5.6:1 |
| 1816 | 29 | - | 6114 | 1243 | 4.9:1 |
| 1817 | 32 | 154 | 7291 | 1541 | 4.1:1 |
| 1818 | 33 | 107 | 7450 | 1551 | 4.4:1 |
| 1819 | 40 | 36 | 8252 | 1783 | 4.6:1 |
| 1820 | 44 | - | 8521 | 1859 | 4.5:1 |

The propagandistic claims of the SSSU and other such bodies that the schools were combatting the social diseases of crime, idleness,

drunkenness and political agitation were inflated to encourage gentry and industrial employers to support them. Their functions regarding economic and social indoctrination were heavily stressed. A typical recommendation as to their function in creating work-discipline came from Sheffield's Manor coal pits in 1819:

Numbers of the children employed in the pits are paying considerable attention to the instructions given them. Instead of employing their breath in cursing and swearing and singing profane songs when in the bowels of the earth, they are frequently heard singing Immanuel with apparent heart-felt joy and likewise evince the reality of moral change in their conversation and practice.¹⁹⁰

Other reports stressed the improvement in social discipline during leisure time. In Wadsley, a small cutlery making community five miles north of Sheffield, a report of 1816 observed:

The moral conduct of our boys, who are chiefly grinders' apprentices is much altered, that the inhabitants of the village and neighbourhood acknowledge the change. Formerly they were notorious for blaspheming the name of God, singing profane songs, breaking the Sabbath day, strolling in the fields, breaking fences and robbing gardens. Instead they spend Sunday frequently in the companies of them met in the fields and woods to sing hymns and spiritual songs, making the country resound with the praises of the Redeemer.¹⁹¹

At Ecclesfield in 1818 a similar transformation had occurred:

In the streets of this village, which a short time ago were thronged with disorderly children on the Sabbath day, there is peace. There is a cheering prospect of increased blessedness from year to year when all was waste and profitless before.¹⁹²

The Sunday school educators were locked in fierce combat with popular culture. The Wesleyans were particularly aware of the way popular pleasure reclaimed the young as their focus on the growing problem of juvenile 'criminals' showed. Their separate Sunday school organization in Sheffield claimed in 1818 that this problem, 'deplorably prevails, occasioned...by depraved examples of parents and the vast numbers of alehouses and dram shops in this town and neighbourhood open on a Sunday'.¹⁹³

The rote learning of scriptural texts and Bible reading, prompted by the 'carrot' of trivial gifts and the 'stick' of religious terrorism, were the limits of educational practice amongst most of the educators.¹⁹⁴ Only a small minority of progressives were interested in the teaching of writing and developing other basic skills. Such people were found among the Kilhamite Methodists and more plebeian dissenting groups like the Baptists. Social indoctrination, emphasizing to the children the caste-like determinacy of their present social situation, was carried out using the organic metaphors of class which relied on the words 'orders' and 'ranks'. These emphasized the pre-arranged nature of social positions while at the same time they stressed the mutualism of unequal classes in the total social body. The language was underwritten with a strong 'other-worldly' emphasis which encouraged fatalism concerning life chances in the 'this world'. It also stressed the compensatory rewards of 'after life'. The literary colouring is provided by a poem 'Upon Life', the epitaph for a model pupil who died in 1817:

Lord what is life, tis like the bow
That glistens in the sky
We love to see its colours glow
But while we look they die
Life fails as soon, today is here
Tonight perhaps will disappear

Six thousand years have passed away
Since life first began
And millions once alive and gay
Have found their time a span
For life in all its health and pride
Has death still waiting at its side

And yet this short uncertain space
So foolishly we prize
That heaven, that lasting dwelling place
Seems nothing in our eyes
The worlds of sorrow and of bliss
We disregard compared with this

Lord, what is life if spent with thee
In duty, praise and prayer
However long and short it can be
We need but little care
Because eternity will last
When life and even death are past. 195

It is important not to forget that the Sunday schools failed with adults. Nevertheless a host of adult lay educators acquired skills and confidence which, in the main they used to become more effective crusaders in the 'holy war' against the 'excesses' of the working people.

In this period a new dimension was introduced into the 'holy war'. The Primitive Methodists who returned to the aggressive street and field evangelism of the founder really established themselves for the first time in the region in the summer of 1819. They re-lived the sufferings of the early Methodists as victims of both the 'official' prosecution of the magistrates and the 'unofficial' action of the populace. Jeremiah Gilbert, a Primitive preacher working in the southern part of the region during the years 1819-1821, was prosecuted seven times in fifteen months for preaching on unlicensed premises.¹⁹⁶ The preachers were subject to all sorts of personal violence and the Sheffield chapel was flattened by an angry mob in 1821.¹⁹⁷ Significant progress was still made. Throughout the latter part of 1820 and early 1821 a small scale religious revival was taking place throughout the region. Its origin could be traced to the energetic Primitives, but it spread to the parent Wesleyan body. It had begun among the Primitives in 1819 and had gained momentum through 1820. In 1821 it climaxed with the huge 3 June camp meeting on Mexborough Common which was attended by 10-20,000 people from all over the region.¹⁹⁸ This revival showed up only slightly in the membership figures for the various Methodist connexions.

Table 5:18 Membership of all Methodist bodies in the region
1815-1822 199

| <u>Wesleyans</u> | <u>1815</u> | <u>1816</u> | <u>1817</u> | <u>1818</u> | <u>1819</u> | <u>1820</u> | <u>1821</u> | <u>1822</u> |
|------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| <u>circuit</u> | | | | | | | | |
| Sheffield | 2228 | 2300 | 2370 | 2450 | 2550 | 2515 | 2500 | 2600 |
| Barnsley | 470 | 520 | 565 | 558 | 501 | 486 | 560 | 621 |
| Rotherham | 928 | 966 | 1000 | 1020 | 950 | 930 | 930 | 1060 |
| Doncaster | 620 | 660 | 650 | 670 | 710 | 756 | 1020 | 1106 |

Table 5:18 (contd.)

| | <u>1815</u> | <u>1816</u> | <u>1817</u> | <u>1818</u> | <u>1819</u> | <u>1820</u> | <u>1821</u> | <u>1822</u> |
|-------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| <u>Primitives</u> | | | | | | | | |
| Sheffield | | | | | | | | |
| Barnsley | | | | | No data until 1822 although activity begins in 1819. | | | 1129 704 |
| <u>Kilhamites</u> | | | | | | | | |
| Sheffield | 480 | 500 | 519 | 512 | 550 | 526 | 503 | 522 |
| Barnsley | 230 | 300 | 304 | 264 | 265 | 378 | 300 | 326 |

The Wesleyans appeared to share in the Primitives' advance in 1819-21. Such movements in the 'spiritual barometer' partly reflected a chiliastic response to the failed promise of post-war radicalism. Primitive Methodism and more democratic Methodism were not entirely unproductive forces in the development of articulative class consciousness among the region's labouring mass. In smaller towns and villages, where the Squire and the Parson had for too long dominated and where the Wesleyans had not yet established themselves, a new bridgehead for religious dissent (and thereby a solvent of traditionalism) was created.

3) Summary on cultural struggle

There were many other aspects to this residual area of social-cultural struggle. Some of these are picked up in later chapters. What can be established at this stage is limited by the availability of sources. In the absence of information it would be easy to see working people and the emerging class conscious sections within their ranks as passive. They plainly were not but what they really thought about these areas of social existence is elusive. Was a sense of cultural separateness developing in parallel with the political and industrial awakening of vanguard sections? What for example did popular music contribute to this? The post-war radicals inherited Mather's Jacobin ballads, new political anthems had been acquired and the local reed bands had been hired to play them at local mass meetings.²⁰⁰ What did this represent in terms of an emergent labour

class's cultural consciousness? Similarly the post-war radicals, like those of an earlier generation, made some progress regarding self-education outside institutions dominated by the authorities. This did not appear to extend as far as creating separate Sunday school organizations as in Stockport in Lancashire,²⁰¹ but in the radical 'classes' at least some adults strove to educate themselves individually and collectively outside institutions dominated by the elite. Their's were strivings towards forms of cultural independence which must be seen as a vital part of class realization. As will be seen in later sections this aspect of development was often an after-thought to statements of political and industrial intent. Nevertheless it was being considered and we must follow it through.

Footnotes to Chapter 5

1. Section based on R.E. Leader, History of the Cutlers' Company etc. op.cit.; Lloyd, op.cit.; J. Holland, A Treatise on the progressive improvement etc. II and III, op.cit.; Bell, op.cit. and Garlick thesis, op.cit. passim.
2. Section based on A.T. Watson, op.cit.; R.E. Wilson, op.cit.; Pollard, Three Centuries of Sheffield Steel etc. op.cit. passim.
3. Newton Papers Boxes I and II, loc.cit.; Clayton thesis, op.cit.; Annual Reports of Dearne and Dove Canal, Elmhurst Muniments, 772 in SCL.
4. Goodchild Coal Mss., loc.cit.; Hadfield II, op.cit., 287; Machin, op.cit., 31-4.
5. Goodchild, art.cit., passim.
6. English (ed.) op.cit., passim.
7. Villages like Orgreave, Treeton, Bramley, Ulley, Dalton, all south and east of Rotherham all experienced a net loss of population during the years 1811-21. In at least three of these examples, Orgreave, Ulley and Dalton, enclosure had been completed within twelve years of this period of marked decline. The Orgreave enclosure 1808-10 suggested the most blatant association of enclosure and depopulation.
8. Hadfield II, op.cit., 271-272.
9. Hadfield I, op.cit., 178, Hadfield II, op.cit., 278 and Don Navigation Minute books, loc.cit.
10. ibid.
11. Wage books of Thomas Nowill and Co., loc.cit.
12. Lloyd, op.cit., 481
13. Day books, Sheffield Assay Office, loc.cit.
14. Sheffield Local Register, op.cit., various entries.
15. See Appendix 5:2
16. The Nowill wage books contain entries for workers at weekly to two-weekly intervals of payment. A Christmas bonus was also paid. By adding all the payments for the year including the bonus payment the wage bill can be calculated. The number of different workers employed during the year can be calculated by using monthly averages related in terms of numbers and actual names with the list of those receiving a Christmas payment. Possibly some workers were not full members of the Nowill workforce, i.e. grinders and other out-workers which would deflate the 'average' money wage payments. The Gayer, Rostow and Schwartz wholesale index (vol. p.468) provides some indication of relative price movement.

| <u>Year</u> | money wage index Average of 1790- 92 = 100 | G.R.S. wholesale prices 1790-92 = 100 |
|-------------|--|---|
| 1814 | 192 | 176 |
| 1815 | 213 | 144 |
| 1816 | 216 | 137 |
| 1817 | 175 | 156 |
| 1818 | 165 | 165 |
| 1819 | 153 | 155 |
| 1820 | 165 | 141 |

See full index in Appendix 5:3

17. H. Parker to Hobhouse, 1 May 1820, HO 40/13 - in the penknife trade 450 of 1451 adults had work and 200 of the 700 apprentices.
18. P.P.1823(51) Fifth Report of Select Committee on Artisans and Machinery, 405, Adams testimony.
19. Sheffield Iris, 24 Dec. 1816, 7 Dec. 1819; Parker to Sidmouth, 11 Feb. 1820, HO 64/1 described the grinders as 'a class of workmen at all times unmanageable'; Parker to Fitzwilliam, 5 Dec. 1816, WWM. F.45(h) for earlier expression of such sentiments.
20. Sheffield Mercury, 1 Oct. 1816; Sheffield Iris, 7,14 Jan. 1817.
21. Sheffield Mercury, 15,22 and 29 Jan. 1820 - suggestions of this at public meetings called to produce community solutions to problem of mounting unemployment.
22. See below.
23. This reduction process was already in motion before the strike. Ten items for which prices were given in P.P.1840(43-11) XXIII, Assistant Commissioners' Report on Handloom Weavers, 282, average a 20% fall during the years 1811-14 (the high point) and 1818.
24. Figures from Newton Chambers letters, loc.cit.
25. Letters in Newton Papers, loc.cit., boxes I and II.
26. Clayton thesis, op.cit., 36
27. Annual Reports of Dearne and Dove Canal, loc.cit.
28. ibid.
29. Machin, op.cit., 31-4.
30. Sheffield Iris, 17 Dec. 1816; Sheffield Mercury, 21 Dec. 1816, a court case concerning the scissor grinders revealed a two tier organization, an outward facade of a sick club and behind this a trade union.
31. Report on Handloom Weavers loc.cit. 480, Weavers successfully resisted attempt to reduce wages by taking fent away in June 1816.
32. Sheffield Mercury, 1 Oct. 1816; Sheffield Iris, 7,14 Jan. 1817.
33. See figures in text below included in Table 5:13
34. The Corn Bill agitation was confined to 1815, reports being found in Sheffield Mercury, 25 Feb., 25 March and 1 April 1815 and Sheffield Iris, 7 March 1815 - 19,000 signatures collected in Sheffield against the Corn Bill. In other centres, particularly London and Norwich, there was rioting associated with this agitation in March as correspondence in HO 42/143,144 illustrates. Political activists played a role in the agitation locally as the presence of Saxton, the Spencean printer, and Alcock, the SSCI veteran, on the public platform suggested.
35. The agitation concerning property and income tax, as well as on the import duties, were more continuous subjects of discussion, Sheffield Iris, 31 Jan. 1815, 5,26 March 1816. The issues were incorporated into the radical political meetings of the autumn.
36. Thompson, op.cit., 665-711 passim; information on the formation of Hampden Clubs in HO 40/3 and 42/153-156.
37. Parliamentary Debates, vol. XXXV, 415-417 and 532-533, mentions of the Sheffield society. The date of formation of the Barnsley

37. (contd.) society cannot be discovered but must have emerged around the time of the radical meetings of December 1816.
38. Confirmation of this in the information of 'G.R.', an agent in London, 29 Jan. 1817, HO 42/158.
39. Sheffield Iris, 15 Oct., 10 Dec. 1816, 7 Jan. 1817; Sheffield Mercury, 7 Sept., 12 Oct. and 7 Dec. 1816; letters and enclosures in WWM. F.45 (g,h); similar in HO 42/153-156.
40. Sheffield Mercury, 7 Sept. 1816.
41. Sheffield Iris, 15 Oct. 1816.
42. The following factual detail is contained in Thompson, op.cit., 672-697; T. Parssinen, 'The Revolutionary Party in London, 1816-1820', Bulletin of the Institute for Historical Research, xlv (1972), 266-82 *passim*. My interpretation has been influenced by existing interpretations but has also been extended by examining some of the original material contained in HO 42/156-158.
43. Sheffield Iris, 10 Dec. 1816; Sheffield Mercury, 7 Dec. 1816; The Times, 9 and 10 Dec. 1816; Wortley to Sidmouth, 3 and 12 Dec. 1816, Fitzwilliam to Sidmouth, 7 Dec. 1816, HO 42/156; H.J. Milner and Wortley to Fitzwilliam, 3 Dec. 1816, WWM. F.45 (h); Assize 45/50.
44. Fitzwilliam to Sidmouth, 7 Dec. 1816, HO 42/156.
45. Sheffield Iris, 10 Dec. 1816; Sheffield Mercury, 7 Dec. 1816; Fitzwilliam to Sidmouth, 7 Dec. 1816, and Wortley to Sidmouth, 12 Dec. 1816, HO 42/156; Parker to Fitzwilliam, 7 and 9 Dec. 1816, WWM. F.45(h).
46. Fitzwilliam to Sidmouth, 7 Dec. 1816, HO 42/156.
47. Wortley to Fitzwilliam, 30 Dec. 1816, HO 42/157; Sheffield Iris, 7 Jan. 1817, for reports of meeting on 30 Dec.
48. Thompson, op.cit., 691
49. Sheffield Iris, 7 Jan. 1817.
50. Thompson, op.cit., 699
51. Sheffield Iris, 14 and 21 Jan. and 4 Feb. 1817, meetings and petitions collected.
52. Thompson, op.cit., 700-702; local repression of meetings recorded in F. Fenton to Sidmouth, 27 Feb. 1817, HO 42/160.
53. Various letters in HO 42/160-162.
54. Parker to Sidmouth, 30 March 1817, HO 42/162; the connection that existed between local radicals and those in Derbyshire was hinted at earlier, Rawlinson (Matlock) to Sidmouth, 8 Feb. 1817, HO 42/159.
55. Information of Thomas Bradley, 21 May 1817, HO 42/165, 3 June 1817, HO 42/164 and 29 June 1817, HO 42/167 for details of Bradley's infiltration.
56. Bradley information *loc.cit.*; summaries in HO 40/9 (4).
57. 'Narrative of Oliver', HO 40/9 (2), in his May entries Oliver listed Thomas Ferrymont or Ferrystone (Farrimond) as the Barnsley leader; actual information contained in letter of W.J. Richards (Oliver) to Home Office 8 May 1817, HO 40/10 (2).
58. These included the weaving villages around Barnsley as far south as Ecclesfield. The events of 1819 give some justification to this 'speculative' interpretation.

59. Thompson, op.cit., 716 fn. Oliver's itinerary can also be worked out from the 'narrative' in HO 40/9 (2) and letters in HO 40/10 (2).
60. 'Narrative', loc.cit., entry for 9 May 1817.
61. Examinations of various Sheffield radicals in HO 42/165 include the confession of William Bradwell who throws much light on Sheffield activity.
62. J.L. Baxter and F.K. Donnelly, 'Sheffield and the English Revolutionary Tradition 1791-1820', art.cit. for a preliminary discussion of the nature of the 'tradition'.
63. Information of Thomas Bradley, 21 May 1817, HO 42/165.
64. The classical argument that Oliver was an agent provocateur is found in J.L. and B. Hammond, The Skilled Labourer, (1919), 353-357. Their main critic A. Freemantle, 'The Truth about Oliver the Spy', English Historical Review, vol.xlvii (1932), 601-616 diminishes this argument but does not sufficiently deflate it.
65. The Nottingham radicals eventually saw through Oliver but the damage had been done.
66. Newspaper reports did not appear until after the later Thornhill Lees arrests. The first of these was found in the Sheffield Mercury, 14 June 1817. The actual manoeuvring of the magistrates following Bradley's information can be traced in Parker to Fitzwilliam, 28 and 29 May 1817 and 2 June 1817, WWM. F.45(i) and Parker to Sidmouth, 29 and 31 May in HO 42/165.
67. Various sources including Sheffield Iris, Sheffield Mercury, HO 40/6(4), 40/5(7), 40/9(2), 40/9(4), 40/10(1).
68. Wood to Fitzwilliam, 6 June 1817, WWM.F.45(i), lists all those taken and notes the presence of a 'Sheffield delegate' (Bradley who was not arrested).
69. The Pentridge rising and the 'Folley Hall' affair are described in some detail by Thompson, op.cit., 723-726. I have consulted TS 11/1014/4134 which contains details of the prosecutions of the Folley Hall activists. This evidence and the various depositions concerning the Pentridge affair I have seen, particularly depositions in HO 42/167, all reinforce the picture of inter-regional relationships which the evidence of Oliver, Bradley and Bradwell all sketches out. A study at a regional level makes it possible to corroborate some of the reports. Thompson appears to be less confident about inter-regional contacts although he undoubtedly thinks they exist. J. Baxter and F.K. Donnelly, art.cit. looking at a limited region and its contacts with adjacent regions are able to be a little more confident.
70. These words appear as the marginal notation of some official on the 'Information of Thomas Bradley', 21 May 1817, HO 42/165.
71. ibid.
72. Birth and baptism registers of Scotland Street Chapel, 1797-1837, R.G. 4/2018 in PRO.
73. A paper read by the Pentridge radicals before their rise, 'The Constitution and People and NO King' was printed at Sheffield and presumably reflected the opinions of the radicals locally. Information in 'draft brief of the defence for the Pentridge prisoners', photocopy in Derbyshire Record Office and passed to me by Mick Thomas.

74. Thompson, op.cit., 719
75. A great deal of Hampden Club literature can be found in HO 40/3 (2).
76. Thompson, op.cit., 178 (Thomas Evans, the post-war voice of the Spenceans), 886, Spence's socialism.
77. We must not make a deliberate effort to exclude this possibility.
78. Thompson, op.cit., 739-744 Cobbett's Register and Wooler's Black Dwarf were the most important locally in the early stages.
79. Through a period of general stagnation in Methodist society membership in the region the growth of the Thorncliffe and Ecclesfield societies stood out. Figures from Sheffield circuit class books in Carver Street Chapel (now SCL)
- | | <u>1817</u> | <u>1818</u> | <u>1819</u> | <u>1820</u> |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Ecclesfield | 38 | 51 | 126 | 126 |
| Thorncliffe | 114 | 134 | 186 | 161 |
80. For discussion of this see Thompson, op.cit., 427-431, 919-923; Baxter, art.cit., 46-48.
81. Gayer, Rostow and Schwartz I, op.cit., 140-1.
82. ibid., 151
83. Turner, op.cit., 176
84. Figures reprinted annually in Sheffield Iris.
85. Extract included among Union Society literature from Birmingham in HO 40/11.
86. Sheffield Iris, 23 June and 7 July 1818.
87. First hand account by John Vallance in Report on Handloom Weavers, loc.cit., 480-1 recalls the strike began on 8 Sept. and ended on 28 Oct. The Leeds Mercury account, particularly in 21 Nov. 1818 edition shows the strike continued till late November.
88. Report on Handloom Weavers, loc.cit., 480-1.
89. Sheffield Iris, 13 Sept., 10 and 24 Nov. 1818; Leeds Mercury, 31 Oct., 7, 14 and 21 Nov. 1818; Leeds Intelligencer, 2, 9, 16, 23 Nov. 1818.
90. Leeds Mercury, 31 Oct. 1818.
91. Leeds Intelligencer, 2, 9 Nov. 1818.
92. ibid., 2 Nov. 1818.
93. Examination of Thomas Morgan (Grange Moor insurgent in 1820) n.d. April 1820, TS 11/1013/4133, 'before the turn I was not in the habit of reading many Books, but the Bible. After I began to read political pamphlets and newspapers such as Cobbett, the Black Dwarf and the Cap of Liberty, the Blanketeer and other bad books...'
94. Leeds Mercury, 21 Nov. 1818; Leeds Intelligencer, 23 Nov. 1818.
95. See footnote 19.
96. For the activities of young workers, Joseph Kirk, filesmith and Thomas Booth see below narrative dealing with local reaction to Peterloo. These individuals were life-long activists in labour class economic and political struggle whose pedigrees were discussed during commemorative dinners twenty-eight years later - Sheffield Independent, 11 Jan. 1846.

97. Various letters in Newton Papers Boxes I and II, loc.cit.
98. Figures quoted in footnote 79.
99. Evidence of Michael Downing, weaver of Monk Bretton, near Barnsley, n.d. April 1820, TS 11/4134; in 1817 there were suggestions of support for the Barnsley and Sheffield activists in the middle zone of the region, Corbett to Sidmouth, 25 May 1817, HO 40/10 (2) noted the involvement of 'Saxby of High Green' as well as 'Mr Dickinson of Bramley' (possibly the village east of Rotherham). As later narrative concerning the Peterloo protests and the Grange Moor affair, the central district around Ecclesfield contained radical activists.
100. The best account of these months is contained in Thompson, op.cit., 734-768. The idea of legislative attornies is examined in T. Parssinen, 'Association, Convention, Anti Parliament etc.', art.cit., 516-517.
101. Leeds Mercury, 12,19,26 July 1819.
102. On the emerging radical press of these years see Thompson, op.cit., 739-744, who rightly points to the Manchester Observer's significance in 1819. This is fully explored in W.W. Kinsey, 'Some aspects of Lancashire Radicalism 1816-1821' (unpublished Manchester University MA, 1927) where particular emphasis on the paper's role in directing the movement to the left.
103. Printed handbills enclosed in Ripley (Wakefield) to Beckett, 16 July 1819, HO 42/198, printed by Willan of Dewsbury and signed by George Watson (on the platform at the Dec. 1816 meeting), William Hoadley, Edward Birkhill, George Rogerson, Samuel Atherton, James Barber (mason) and James Mason. The majority were weavers described as 'very low men' by the writer. A detailed account of the organizational history of the Union society through 1816-1820 is contained in the 'Voluntary confession of Thomas Farrimond made at York' enclosed in W. Mence to Sidmouth, 8 March 1821, HO 40/16.
104. Manchester Observer, 10 July 1819.
105. The following account is based on reports in the Leeds Mercury, 17 July 1819; Sheffield Mercury, 24 July 1819; Burland, Annals I etc., op.cit., 388-389.
106. E. Taylor to Ld. Lascelles, 9 Nov. 1819, Harewood Lieutenancy Papers, 2 boxes held in Leeds Public Library Archives, Sheepscar, Leeds, this letter comes from Box I.
107. Burland, Annals I etc., op.cit., 388.
108. The proposals of this meeting are reprinted in G.D.H. Cole and A.W. Filson, British Working Class Movements - Selected Documents 1789-1875 (1965), 160-163.
109. Examination of John Balls, n.d. April 1820, TS 11/1013/4133, who recalled being in Manchester on the day and who returned home to Barnsley with the news; J. Butler to Ld. Lonsdale, 5 Oct. 1819, Lonsdale Mss, Cumberland, Westmorland and City of Carlisle Record Office. I am grateful to my colleague Mr Donnelly for this extract.
110. Sheffield Mercury, 28 Aug. 1819.
111. ibid., 28 Aug. 1819.
112. ibid., 28 Aug., 4 and 25 Sept., 2,9,16 Oct. 1819.
113. The following account is based on the reports and information in the Sheffield Iris, 26 Oct. 1819, Sheffield Mercury, 30 Oct. 1819 and Manchester Observer, 30 Oct. 1819.

114. ibid., 10 July 1819, for comment on widespread nature of female participation in the radical movement.
115. Sheffield Independent, 11 July 1846, Kirk and Booth were to be active labour leaders throughout the rest of their lives. See Chs 6 and 7.
116. Farrimond to Sidmouth 15 Feb. 1821 and 'Voluntary Confession of Farrimond etc.', 8 March 1821, both in HO 40/16.
117. Arms transactions involving Sheffield were mentioned by a Nottingham correspondent of the Home Office, J.H. Barber to Sidmouth, 12 May and 29 Oct. 1819, HO 42/189 and 197. Michael Downing, an arrested Barnsley insurgent in 1820 mentioned one Sanderson, a Sheffield arms dealer, Downing testimony, n.d. April 1820, TS 11/1014/4134.
118. Blackwell had received a two year sentence in 1817 for his role in the 'Bread or Blood' incident in early December 1816, Sheffield Iris, 25 March 1817.
119. Manchester Observer, 13 Nov. 1819; Burland, Annals I, op.cit., 391.
120. Compiled from testimonies and summaries of testimonies of the Barnsley insurgents of 11-12 April 1820 found in TS 11/1013/4133, TS 11/1014/4134. The most revealing is that of Thomas Morgan, n.d. April 1820, TS 11/1013/4133. Farrimond's 'Voluntary Confession etc.' in HO 40/16 is even more instructive.
121. Testimony of Thomas Morgan etc., loc.cit.
122. Testimony of Michael Downing, n.d. April 1820, TS 11/1014/4134, who describes a dual system of organization in his village (Monk Bretton). He lists the names of 28 members of the 'penny club' which purchased Black Dwarf, and the Political Register and cheap pamphlets. He listed 9 of these as members of a 'two pence club' which he claimed collected money to pay for delegates.
123. Morgan's and Farrimond's statements, loc.cit.
124. On this strategy see Thompson, op.cit., 765-766, Nov. 1 and 15 were planned for these. Thistlewood and a group of Spencean associates working within the framework of London's Union societies were looked to for a lead.
125. J. Ramsden to Lascelles, 4 Nov. 1819, Harewood Lieutenancy Papers, Box I.
126. J. Plumbe to Lascelles, 24 and 29 Nov. 1819, Harewood Lieutenancy Papers, Box I.
127. W. Prest (Leeds), 5 Nov. 1819 and Anon. (Dewsbury merchant), 8 Nov. 1819, T. Horton (Halifax), 9 Nov. 1819 and M. Wilson (Keighley), 9 Nov. 1819, all to Lascelles, Harewood Lieutenancy Papers, Box I; Lascelles to Sidmouth, 2 Nov. 1819 and J. Todd Naylor (Wakefield) to Hobhouse, 10 Nov. 1819, both on HO 42/198.
128. Morgan's and Farrimond's testimonies, loc.cit.
129. J. Beckett to Lascelles, 1,3,5 Dec. 1819 (including eye-witness depositions), Harewood Lieutenancy Papers, Box I; Lascelles to Sidmouth, 3 Dec. 1819 and Wortley to Sidmouth, 6 Dec. 1819, both in HO 42/200.
130. Various communications to the Home Office in HO 42/198,199 and 200; correspondence between General Byng and Lascelles in Harewood Lieutenancy Papers, Box II, particularly letters dated 28 Nov. and 2,4,5,10,12 and 15 Dec. 1819. These show initial concern about Lancashire and the West Riding but the

130. (contd.) fears quickly subside with the anticipation of the effects of the Six Acts. Other correspondence in the same box illustrates the fears of the West Riding magistrates, particularly strong in J. Beckett (Barnsley) 7 Dec., C. Bolland (Leeds) 9 Dec. and J. Maule (Wakefield) 10 Dec., all to Lascelles.
131. Sheffield Iris, 23 Nov., 7 and 14 Dec. 1819.
132. ibid., 8 Feb. 1820; Parker to Sidmouth (including depositions) 11 Feb. 1820, HO 64/1.
133. Sheffield Iris, 7 Dec. 1819.
134. ibid., 21 Dec. 1819, for first stage in this initiative. The paper contains the 'Address of the Master Manufacturers and Workmen in the Spring Knife Trade to the payers of Poor Rates in Hallamshire'.
135. ibid., 10,17 Aug. 1819, noted Sheffield's trade was not as badly depressed as in 1816. By December, ibid., 14,21,28 Dec. 1819, distress was being severely felt.
136. Little can be discovered about this strike, various accounts including ibid., 21 Dec. 1819 and 11 Jan. 1820; Leeds Intelligencer, 29 Nov., 6 Dec. 1819, tell us a little. The involvement of colliers in the Barnsley area is noted in letters in Harewood Lieutenancy Papers, Box I, particularly J. Beckett to Lascelles, 30 Nov. and 3 Dec. 1819.
137. J. Beckett to Harewood, 24 Nov. 1819, Harewood Lieutenancy Papers, Box I.
138. Gen. Byng to Harewood, 28 Nov., 2,4,5,10 Dec. 1819, Harewood Lieutenancy Papers, Box II. Harewood (Lascelles after father's death) was warned by a correspondent too, J. Maule (Wakefield) 10,11 Dec. 1819, Harewood, Box I.
139. Gen. Byng to Harewood, 5 Dec. 1819, Harewood Box II. Byng observed on the Barnsley meeting, 'by so doing it appears as if they did not act in concert with other places, as our information names that day as intended for Simultaneous Meetings'; for similar observation, Corbett to Harewood, 7 Dec. 1819, Harewood Box I.
140. J. Beckett to Harewood, 1,3,5 Dec. 1819 and J. Haigh, B.H. Allen and J. Horsfall to Harewood (including Barnsley depositions), 7 Dec. 1819, Harewood Box I; Lascelles to Sidmouth, 3 Dec. 1819, HO 42/200.
141. J. Haigh, B.H. Allen and J. Horsfall to Harewood, and Beckett to Harewood, both 7 Dec. 1819, Harewood Box I.
142. Cole and Filson, op.cit., 167-170; Thompson, op.cit., 767-768.
143. E. Taylor to Lascelles, 13 Dec. 1819, Harewood Box I.
144. E. Taylor 13 Dec. etc., Harewood Box I.
145. Corbett to Wortley, 13 Dec. 1819, HO 42/201, E. Taylor 13 Dec. etc., Harewood Box I, 'but I feel confident that they have it still in contemplation and are only waiting to know how their Association in Manchester mean to proceed as I find there is a regular correspondence carried on by messengers'.
146. J. Maule to Lascelles, 18 Dec. 1819, Harewood Papers I.
147. My assessment of the disturbances correspondence between the magistrates and the Home Office contained in HO 42/200,201, 202,203,44/1 and 'private and secret' correspondence in 79/4.

148. Reports in bundles HO 42/201,203 and 44/1. These suggest a great deal of activity throughout the remainder of December with a significant lull thereafter.
149. A Nottingham meeting on 20 Dec. was attended by three delegates from the 'North of England' and also by a Scottish delegate, report in Cartledge (Nottingham) to Sidmouth, 21 Dec. 1819, HO 42/201 and corroborated by G. Palmer (Carlisle shoemaker) when examined before Carlisle magistrates, in W. Hodgeson (Carlisle) to Sidmouth, 5 Jan. 1820, HO 42/203. A Manchester meeting on 23 Dec. which had similar planning functions was interrupted by the magistrates who arrested several delegates (including William Toothill, the Nottingham delegate). This is reported in J. Norris (Manchester) to Sidmouth, 30 Dec. 1819, HO 42/201.
150. There was wild talk of Thistlewood going as far afield as Glasgow and Dublin. See Durham County Advertiser, 2 April 1820. He was without doubt in Lancashire where he 'negotiated' for action, Byng to Lascelles, 2,4,5 Dec. 1819, Harewood Box II.
151. Testimony of Michael Downing (Barnsley weaver), n.d. April 1820, TS 11/1014/4134.
152. The contrast of Viscount Lascelles' (Lord Harewood) 'in-correspondence' from magistrates and his 'out' letters to Byng amply illustrate this, Harewood Boxes I and II.
153. J. Norris (Manchester) to Sidmouth, 29 and 30 Dec. 1819, HO 42/201. There had been earlier arrests in Bury, Norris to Sidmouth, 16 Dec. 1819, HO 42/201.
154. For critical comment on Edwards role see Thompson, op.cit., 772-773.
155. Byng to Lascelles, 2 March 1820, Harewood Box II; letters in bundle HO 40/11 from several localities suggest a provincial foreknowledge of Cato Street, particularly B.H. Allen (Huddersfield) to Hobhouse, 28 Feb., J. Lyon (Manchester) to Byng, 29 Feb., and J. Sanderbrook (Birmingham) to Sidmouth, 29 Feb. 1820. Recriminations against Thistlewood are recorded in Cartledge to Alsop (also Nottingham) in Alsop to Sidmouth, 2 March 1820, also HO 40/11.
156. An early 'national meeting' is mentioned as being held in Nottingham in late December by Farrimond in his 'Voluntary Confession etc.' in HO 40/16. A Leeds meeting sitting every fortnight there 'until two months since (April 1820) when they removed it either to Huddersfield' was recalled in Thomas Morgan's (Barnsley weaver) n.d. April 1820 testimony, TS 11/1013/4133. This is supported in part by George Palmer (Carlisle radical) in his statement of 30 April 1820, enclosed in Hodgeson to B.H. Allen, 4 May 1820, HO 40/12 who claimed a 'Provisional Government was held at Huddersfield since their dispersal at Nottingham'. The existence of a 'provisional Government' is commented on by B.H. Allen in correspondence with Hobhouse, 8 May 1820, HO 40/13. T. Sharpe (Manchester) to Sidmouth, 19 March 1820, HO 40/13, 30 delegates had left Glasgow; B.H. Allen and J. Haigh to Lascelles, 5 April 1820, noted Glasgow delegate in Huddersfield on 30 March on his return from Birmingham and Manchester, Harewood Box I.
157. Durham County Advertiser, 2 April 1820.
158. Information on Lancashire, particularly bundle HO 40/12 J. Lyon (Manchester) to Byng, W. Chippendale (Oldham) to Byng and T. Sharpe (Manchester) to Sidmouth, all 1 April 1820. Both Manchester letters comment on the radicals waiting for the

158. (contd.) non-arrival of the northern mail, the signal the Scots were up in arms. On the Wigan affair when 300-1000 men met and then hurriedly dispersed, deposition of J. Smith (Warrington weaver) 5 April 1820, enclosed in Nicholson to Sidmouth, 5 April 1820, HO 40/12.
159. Material on Huddersfield affair mainly summarized in 'Brief for the Crown' TS 11/1013/4132; correspondence and enclosures in B.H. Allen to Sidmouth, 2,3 April 1820, HO 40/12, evidence of the initiative and the recall of the activists.
160. Testimony of Thomas Morgan, n.d. April 1820, TS 11/1013/4133.
161. Significant events took place in Scotland between 3-6 April.
162. Insight into the thinking of the English provincial radical leadership comes from agents (Alpha, Ben and others) employed by various magistrates in Lancashire and the West Riding, particularly HO 40/12. There seems to have been anticipation of a second attack on Huddersfield, B.H. Allen to Hobhouse, 8 April 1820, HO 40/12, Allen was warned of in a letter from Manchester, Sharpe to Allen, 11 April 1820, also in HO 40/12. Similar anticipation is registered in Huddersfield Magistrates to Lascelles, 5,6,10,11 April 1820, Harewood Box I.
163. The following account is based on depositions in Assize 45/53(2) (particularly those of Marshall and Waterfall, constables); Sheffield Iris, 18 April 1820 and reports of Blackwell trial, Sheffield Mercury, 22 July and Sheffield Iris, 25 July 1820.
164. This I regard as a piece of 'constructive speculation' given the interesting information that a Nottingham agent with a message to deliver arrived in Sheffield early on the 11th, this information is recorded in Hobhouse to Rev. Alderson (Sheffield magistrate) in 'private and secret' bundle HO 79/4. Several Barnsley men testified to Sheffield's role in providing guns and to contact with violent men interested in assassination as a strategy more realistic than an open rising, Downing etc., TS 11/1013/4134 and Farrimond 'Voluntary Confession' etc., HO 40/16.
165. The following account of the preliminaries and the march is based on summaries of evidence and statements in 'Brief for the Crown', TS 11/1013/4132, 4133, 4134. Banners and flags from the post-Peterloo meetings were used. They included a green flag (with black fringe) inscribed, 'he that smiteth a man so that he die, shall surely be put to death', a red flag inscribed, 'Hunt the intrepid champion of the Rights and Liberties of the People' and a white flag 'You have condemned and killed the just', 'he that hath no sword let him sell his garment and buy one'. See Appendix 5:1 for list of marchers named in source material.
166. Magistrates in Manchester and Huddersfield as well as General Byng, the northern commander, all suspected an attack on Huddersfield. This is borne out in Allen to Lascelles, 5,6,10 and 11 April 1820, Harewood Box II. His letter of 6 April noted, 'the disaffected are very active in endeavouring to bring about another rising, chiefly in connection with Manchester and Barnsley'.
167. One explanation for the failure was given by Palmer, the turn-coat Carlisle radical in his 30 April deposition etc. HO 40/12 who said Brayshaw of Leeds had told the Editor of the Leeds Mercury of the rising and the Government tipped off. An account of the military manoeuvres is found in Allen to Sidmouth, 12 April 1820, HO 40/12.

168. Assize 45/53(2), depositions of constables Marshall and Waterfall particularly.
169. List of names (27 Dodworth, 2 Silkestone, 7 Ardsley, 2 Cawthorne and 76 Barnsley) in Corbett to Hobhouse, 16 April 1820, HO 42/12.
170. Corbett to Sidmouth, 17 April 1820, HO 40/12.
171. Farrimond was eventually captured in September in Cumberland, Major Heywood to Corbett, 16 Sept. 1820, HO 40/14. After being held in York Castle he was tried and then transported like the rest of the leading insurgents. During his captivity at York he expended much energy in confessing in order to obtain his freedom, W. Mence to Sidmouth, 8 March 1820 contains a long 'voluntary confession' and two letters, Farrimond to Sidmouth, 15 Feb. 1821 also HO 40/16 and Farrimond to Sidmouth, 10 March 1820, HO 44/7 also contain detail.
172. Copy enclosed in Byng to Hobhouse, 17 April 1820, HO 40/12; Sheffield Mercury, 22 April 1820.
173. Col. of 1st West Yorkshire Militia to Lascelles, 3 May 1820, Harewood Box I.
174. Sheffield Iris, 15 Aug. 1820.
175. The fullest account of their trials is contained in the Annual Register (1820). A list of the names of the 25 tried for high treason and those among them transported is found in the Criminal Registers, HO 27/20:

| <u>Name</u> | <u>Charge</u> | <u>Consequence</u> |
|--------------------|---------------|------------------------------------|
| John Johnson | High Treason | No prosecution |
| Abraham Jackson | " " | " " |
| William Comstive | " " | Death - commuted to transportation |
| Richard Addy | " " | " - " |
| Charles Stansfield | " " | " - " |
| Benjamin Hanson | " " | " - " |
| Joseph Chapiel | " " | " - " |
| James Flowers | " " | " - " |
| Benjamin Rodgers | " " | " - " |
| William Price | " " | " - " |
| John Burkinshaw | " " | " - " |
| William Holland | " " | " - " |
| Michael Downing | " " | " - " |
| John Lindley | " " | " - " |
| Joseph Firth | " " | " - " |
| John Vallance | " " | " - " |
| John Farrimond | " " | " - " |
| Abraham Ingham | " " | " - " |
| George Brien | " " | " - " |
| John Hobson | " " | " - " |
| George Burkinshaw | " " | " - " |
| Nathaniel Buckley | " " | " - " |

175. (contd.)

| <u>Name</u> | <u>Charge</u> | <u>Consequence</u> | <u>Comment</u> |
|------------------|---------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Thomas Blackburn | High Treason | Death - commuted to transportation. | |
| John Peacock | " " | " " | |
| Thomas Morgan | " " | " | Admitted evidence |

176. Sheffield Iris, 25 July 1820.

177. Byng to Harewood, 3 Dec. 1820, Harewood Box II, continuous reports in bundles HO 40/12-16.

178. As illustrated by names attached to an address to the Queen, Sheffield Iris, 18 August 1820.179. Turner, op.cit., 176, the post-war surge in indicted crime began to slacken in the early 1820s.

Committals to Wakefield House of Correction

| | | | |
|------|------|------|------|
| 1818 | 1998 | 1821 | 1713 |
| 1819 | 2206 | 1822 | 1649 |
| 1820 | 2169 | 1823 | 1776 |

180. Primitive Methodism was making its appearance in the region. Spedding, the local Methodist historian, notes in his 'Primitive Methodism in Sheffield and District', unpublished Mss. in SCL that it made its first appearance in May 1819 when preachers from Nottingham arrived in the area.

181. Sheffield Times, 20 Sept. 1851; Sheffield Iris, 1 Nov. 1873.182. Barnsley Chronicle, 24 May 1879; Burland, Annals I etc., 126-128.183. R.E. Leader, Reminiscences of Old Sheffield (Sheffield, 1876), 209-212, describes the atrocities of Runcorn, a local 'bearward', who took his bear to local feasts and wakes until the bear killed him in 1824; Sheffield Iris, 9 May 1820, a bear-bait at the small village of Crookes on the north-west edge of Sheffield; Burland, Annals I etc., op.cit., 126, for Barnsley.184. Sheffield Iris, 11 July 1815.185. T. Winder (ed.), An Old Ecclesfield Diary 1775-1845 (Sheffield, 1924), 47,60; A. Gatty, Life at One Living (Worksop, 1884), 25.186. Sheffield Independent, 23 June 1900.187. The distinction between 'deferentials' and 'seculars' is developed in relation to the problem of political identification in R. MacKenzie and A. Silver, Angels in Marble (1968), passim.188. Calculations based on data of SSSU membership from annual conference reports in SCL, estimates for non-SSSU membership supplemented by actual data for 1838 and 1840-1 in G.C. Holland, The Vital Statistics of Sheffield (1843), 219-229 which also provides information on age and class distribution upon which the calculations are based.189. Annual Reports of the Sheffield Sunday School Union, 1819 onwards, (Sheffield) passim.190. ibid., 1819, 5.191. ibid., 1816, 4.192. ibid., 1818, 6.

193. ibid., 1818, 3.
194. On educational practice, ibid., 1819-1829 inclusive; Annual Reports of The Methodist Sunday Schools in Sheffield, 1816-1822 (Sheffield); J. Salt, 'Early Sunday Schools and their educational importance', Trans Hunter Arch.Soc. 196499, vol.IX.
195. J. Montgomery and J. Smith, The Life of a Sunday school scholar - the memoir of Henry Crookes of Sheffield, (Sheffield, 1817), 5.
196. 'Primitive Methodism in Sheffield and District', Spedding Mss., loc.cit., 67-8.
197. ibid., 21.
198. Sheffield Iris, 5 June 1821.
199. Printed and bound Conference Reports (annual) of the respective groups held in Methodist Central Archives, City Road, London.
200. On local reed-brass transition, see J.L. Scott, 'The evolution of the brass band and its repertoire in Northern England', unpub. Sheffield University Ph.D., 1970, passim.
201. Thompson, op.cit.

APPENDIX 5:1 - Participants on the Grange Moor March

| <u>Name</u> | <u>Occupation (where known)</u> | <u>Place of Residence</u> |
|--------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Richard Addy | weaver | Barnsley |
| William Archer | weaver | Dodworth |
| George Arnold | - | Ardsley |
| Thomas Ashurst | - | - |
| Thomas Ball | - | - |
| John Balls | weaver | Barnsley |
| - Baner | foundryman | - |
| Thomas Barlow | weaver | Barnsley |
| James Beattie | - | Smithies |
| Jonathon Beck | - | Ardsley |
| George Beeves | weaver | Dodworth |
| George Benton | weaver | Barnsley |
| George Bisley | - | Barnsley |
| George Birton | weaver | Dodworth |
| Thomas Blackburn | - - | Barnsley |
| Johmathon Booth | weaver | Burton |
| George Brien | weaver | Dodworth |
| William Brooke | - | Barnsley |
| Josiah Bruliana | - | Barnsley |
| George Burkinshaw | weaver | Dodworth |
| John Burkinshaw | weaver | Dodworth |
| Wid. Burrough | - | Barnsley |
| Samuel Burrough | - | Barnsley |
| George Carlisle | - | Barnsley |
| John Charlesworth | - | Barnsley |
| Joseph Chapiel | cordwainer | Barnsley |
| Thomas Charryholme | - | Barnsley |
| George Colombine | weaver | Barnsley |
| William Comstive | weaver | Barnsley |
| Craven Cookson | weaver | Barnsley |
| Thomas Crossland | weaver | Barnsley |
| George Crowe | joiner | Dodworth |
| Arthur Collins | - | Barnsley |
| Michael Downing | weaver | Monk Bretton |
| Josiah Ecorsal | - | Barnsley |
| Thomas Farnsworth | - | Barnsley |
| John Farrimond | weaver | Barnsley |
| Thomas Farrimond | weaver | Barnsley |
| James Farris | - | - |
| John Fawcett | - | - |
| John Fenton | weaver | Barnsley |
| George Firth | - | - |
| James Firth | weaver | Barnsley |
| William Firth | bleacher | Monk Bretton |
| James Flowers | weaver | Dodworth |
| Robert Flowers | weaver | Dodworth |
| John Glover | - | Barnsley |
| John Hall | - | Barnsley |
| Benjamin Hanson | weaver | Barnsley |
| William Haynes | - | Silkestone |
| John Hibbet | - | Barnsley |
| William Hibbet | - | Ardsley |
| John Hilton | - | Barnsley |
| Thomas Hilton | - | Ardsley |
| Amos Hilton | - | Barnsley |
| John Hobson | joiner | Dodworth |

| | | |
|-----------------------|------------|--------------|
| John Hobson | - | - |
| William Holland | weaver | Dodworth |
| Henry Holt | weaver | Dodworth |
| William Holt | weaver | Dodworth |
| Barthe Hood | - | Ardsley |
| John Hopkin | - | Barnsley |
| John Horton | - | - |
| Samuel Horton | - | - |
| Charles Hutchinson | collier | Dodworth |
| George Hutchinson | collier | Dodworth |
| Job Hutchinson | collier | Dodworth |
| John Hutchinson | collier | Dodworth |
| Thomas Hutchinson | - | Barnsley |
| Abraham Ingham | weaver | Dodworth |
| James Irving | weaver | Dodworth |
| Abraham Jackson | - | - |
| Thomas Jackson | - | - |
| James Jarvis | weaver | Barnsley |
| John Johnson | weaver | Dodworth |
| Jonnes Kelly | - | - |
| James Kenney | - | - |
| Amo Kilton | - | Barnsley |
| Stephen Kitchenman | weaver | Dodworth |
| Thomas Kitchenman | weaver | Barnsley |
| John Lindley | - | - |
| James Lowe | - | Barnsley |
| William Luke | - | - |
| John Manfield | - | Dodworth |
| John McKenzie | - | Barnsley |
| James McNichol | weaver | Barnsley |
| John McNichol | weaver | Dodworth |
| Charles McNichol | weaver | Barnsley |
| James Mealand | weaver | Barnsley |
| William Micklethwaite | weaver | Dodworth |
| William Miller | - | - |
| William Milner | - | - |
| John Mitchell | weaver | Barnsley |
| Thomas Morgan | weaver | Barnsley |
| John Moss | - | Barnsley |
| John Moss | - | Ardsley |
| - Murray | - | Barnsley |
| Joseph Nichols | weaver | Barnsley |
| John Opkin | - | Barnsley |
| John Peacock | - | - |
| William Peech | - | - |
| Thomas Pendlebury | weaver | Barnsley |
| John Penge | weaver | Barnsley |
| Richard Penge | weaver | Barnsley |
| George Pickering | weaver | Dodworth |
| John Pickering | weaver | Dodworth |
| Joseph Pickering | weaver | Dodworth |
| Mathew Pickering | weaver | Burton |
| Thomas Pickering | weaver | Dodworth |
| George Purston | - | Barnsley |
| John Rainsforth | weaver | Monk Bretton |
| Joseph Sansome | - | Barnsley |
| Joseph Haynor | - | - |
| William Haynor | - | - |
| James Heid | weaver | Dodworth |
| William Rice | cordwainer | Dodworth |
| Benjamin Rodgers | weaver | Barnsley |
| Benjamin Hollison | weaver | Barnsley |

| | | |
|--------------------|--------------|-----------|
| William Scott | - | Dodworth |
| Joseph Sagar | weaver | Barnsley |
| Charles Seddon | - | Dodworth |
| Isaac Seddon | weaver | Dodworth |
| William Seddon | warehouseman | Dodworth |
| Johnathon Sellers | - | Cawthorne |
| John Slater | - | Barnsley |
| Charles Stanfield | weaver | Barnsley |
| Samuel Summers | - | Cawthorne |
| Joseph Staton | - | Barnsley |
| Joseph Swift | weaver | Dodworth |
| George Swift | - | Barnsley |
| Joseph Sykes | weaver | Barnsley |
| William Sykes | - | Ardsley |
| Samuel Sykes | - | Barnsley |
| Robert Sykes | - | Barnsley |
| George Taylor | - | - |
| Johnathon Taylor | weaver | Dodworth |
| Thomas Taylor | weaver | Dodworth |
| David Thompson | weaver | Barnsley |
| Robert Thompson | weaver | Barnsley |
| William Thompson | - | Barnsley |
| John Vallance | weaver | Barnsley |
| Abraham Wainwright | - | Barnsley |
| Amos Wainwright | - | Barnsley |
| David Wilkinson | weaver | Barnsley |
| Johnathon Wilson | weaver | Dodworth |
| Thomas Woodhead | weaver | Dodworth |
| James Wood | - | Barnsley |
| Henry Woodcock | weaver | Barnsley |

APPENDIX 5:2 - Wheat prices in Sheffield 1790-1820 (annual average price of a load of wheat - 1 load=2 quarters)

| | | | | | | | |
|------|-----|------|-----|------|-----|------|-----|
| 1790 | 27s | 1800 | 44s | 1810 | - | 1820 | 32s |
| 1791 | 23s | 1801 | - | 1811 | 32s | | |
| 1792 | - | 1802 | - | 1812 | 48s | | |
| 1793 | 20s | 1803 | - | 1813 | 40s | | |
| 1794 | 21s | 1804 | - | 1814 | 29s | | |
| 1795 | 30s | 1805 | - | 1815 | 20s | | |
| 1796 | 29s | 1806 | - | 1816 | 30s | | |
| 1797 | 18s | 1807 | - | 1817 | 32s | | |
| 1798 | - | 1808 | - | 1818 | 31s | | |
| 1799 | - | 1809 | 36s | 1819 | 24s | | |

Summary

The nature and problems of the majority of the manufacturing industries in the region's larger 'light' sector held the region's industrial economy back from taking a full step forward towards full industrial capitalist organization. These industries did not need to be in the van of technological change and did not need large capital investment. This did not apply to the small but growing 'heavy' sector represented by coal and iron production. Here large units were being created. The scale on which the mines and ironworks were operating was beginning to be imitated in some of the lighter trades which were now being reorganized in larger workshops and small factories under the control of smaller-scale industrial capitalists. This was already true in linen manufacture before the introduction of the power loom in the late 1830's. It was generally true of cutlery and related metal trades in Sheffield. The older merchant capitalist control continued side by side with these larger integrated units. Even merchant capitalism was taking on new and more aggressively capitalistic characteristics. In cutlery and linen commercial men controlled large numbers of workshop craftsmen and domestic outworkers who were becoming less independent and more like directly employed wage-labour. Merchant capitalists became more involved directly in production, finishing and marketing. Throughout the region's industrial economy, in a slow but nevertheless perceptible way, the transitional process in economic organization was shaping industrial capitalist forms. This was accompanied by more definite social polarization of economic classes representing labour and capital.

One major economic reality dictated the intensity of this polarization. This was the fall in the prices of industrial products as a result of increased competition from cheap labour and mechanization within the regional economy and outside it. The collapse of

prices also reflected the slower expansion of demand relative to supply. This resulted from 'substitution effects' between such industrial products as cotton and linen and the relative slowness of demand to advance when mass purchasing power was reduced or held by wage cuts necessary to pay for the capitalization of industrial progress and to maintain profit levels. A profit crisis was central to the explanation of capitalists' behaviour in this phase of industrialization within the non-mechanized and some new industries of the region. Employers were forced to reduce wages to maintain profit levels. In linen and cutlery this process had been going on since the victories of organized labour between 1810-14 had carried piece rate levels to their highest peak. Later peaks achieved by colliers (and perhaps ironworks' labour) were also subject to downward pressure from employers during the 1820's and 1830's. There was only slight relief during the two mid-decade booms of the 1820's and 1830's. Then organized labour clawed back some of its losses. The labour class which emerged in these years remained on the defensive throughout the majority of the period in its economic, political and cultural struggles. Nevertheless, progress was made by its vanguard sections towards the creation of exclusive class organizations to counteract the exploitation it was subject to. At the end of the period the organized labour class was significantly stronger and more ready for full-scale class war than in 1820.

Section A. Economy - organization and dynamics 1820-37.

(a) Organization.

1) The Sheffield Cutlery Trades

The laws of the free market now reigned supreme in the old corporate trades as well as in those never under corporate protection. Throughout these years, and especially after the immediate post-war economic anarchy had worked itself out in the early 1820's, a slow stabilization of the organization of the trades began. Many of the

factor class who had speculatively set up as dealers, putting out work to the swarms of small masters and 'journeymen-masters' which free market anarchy had called forth, became part of the respectable commercial and industrial leadership group. Designated 'merchants and manufacturers' by the town's directories of the 1830's, through commercial control they dominated the bulk of the manufacturers, both small and medium sized. Much of the town's trade was still 'non-respectable' and controlled by small commercial men putting out work to heavily dependent outworkers in the town and surrounding villages. The 'non-respectable' sector still created instability for the more established commercial men and the established manufacturers. However, the mingling of old and new blood among a changing commercial leadership group in the 'respectable' part of the trade (with the old merchants finding better return for their capital elsewhere, retiring or in some cases joining more commercial minded master manufacturers and ambitious and successful factors in new partnerships) counteracted the existence of the 'non-respectable' sector. The town's directories of the 1830's reflect some of these trends. The directories excluded the 'non-respectable' factors contemporaries complained about (although one suspects their names are buried among the town's 'cutlery dealers' and petty shopkeepers) and illustrated the retirement of the town's old merchant class:

Table 6:1 Commercial leadership in the Cutlery trades as suggested by Sheffield Directories.¹

| | |
|---------------|---------------------------------|
| 1822 (Baines) | Merchants 47 |
| | Factor-merchants 66 |
| | Factors 43 |
| 1833 (White) | Merchants and Manufacturers 129 |
| 1837 (White) | Merchants and Manufacturers 136 |

The actual number of producing units went unrecorded by the directories, especially the 'non-respectable' small masters working in the majority of the trades in the town itself and in the surrounding villages where more dependent domestic outwork was concentrated.

The following numbers are those of firms significant enough to pay for a directory entry:

Table 6:2 Numbers of firms producing in major cutlery trades which were listed in directories.

| | <u>1822</u> (Baines) | <u>1833</u> (White) | <u>1837</u> (White) |
|------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Pen and Pocket Knives | 285 | 288 | 289 |
| Table knives and forks | 233 | 236 | 233 |
| Files | 85 | 70 | 80 |
| Razors | 82 | 57 | 78 |
| Scissors | 119 | 130 | 120 |
| Saws | 64 | 80 | 79 |
| Edge Tools | 46 | 59 | 53 |
| total | <u>914</u> | <u>910</u> | <u>932</u> |

Estimates of numbers employed in the producing units in these trades show a steady growth in employment in most trades:

Table 6:3 Estimates* of numbers employed in major cutlery and related trades in Sheffield for 1824, 1830 and 1833.²

| | <u>1824</u> | <u>1830</u> | <u>1833</u> | <u>Growth % per annum</u> 1824-30 1830-33 | |
|------------------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|---|---------|
| Pen and Pocket Knives | 2190 | 2380 | 2680 | +1.5 | +4 |
| Table Knives and Forks | 2720 | 3199 | 3689 | +2.1 | +4 |
| Files | 1284 | 1458 | 1768 | +2.1 | +6 |
| Razors | 478 | 654 | 754 | +6 | +6 |
| Scissors | 866 | 887 | 600 | +1.4 | -10 |
| Saws | 400 | 463 | 563 | +2.5 | +7 |
| Edge Tools | 541 | 603 | 703 | +1.9 | +5 |
| total | <u>8419</u> | <u>9644</u> | <u>10817</u> | av.+2.3 | av.+3.3 |

* They ignore ancillary workers in bone and other finishing materials.

Little is known about the size of producing units. The 'average' workforce of each unit (employed directly and indirectly by sub-contract) produced by relating directory listed firms to employment estimates has some validity. These figures show the variability of the scale of operations within the trades:

Table 6:4 Numbers employed directly or indirectly in the 'average' unit in the cutlery trades in 1822-4 and 1833.

| | <u>1822-4</u> | <u>1833</u> |
|-----------------------|---------------|-------------|
| Pen and pocket knife | 7.7 | 9.3 |
| Table knife and forks | 11.6 | 16 |
| Files | 15.2 | 25.2 |
| Razors | 5.8 | 13 |
| Scissors | 7.3 | 4.6 |
| Saws | 6.2 | 7 |
| Edge tools | <u>12</u> | <u>12</u> |
| average | 9.2 | 11.9 |

Although it must be allowed that most of these averages could be depressed by adding in the number of small masters and their employees (especially in the ailing penknife trade where more than half the production was carried out by small masters), this could be offset by making allowance for the fact that firms could be involved in several trades. For example, of the 236 table knife and fork manufacturers in the 1833 directory over 50% (135 firms) were involved in producing one or several other wares. There were increasing numbers of large units in production, especially those controlled by 'merchant and manufacturer' partnerships. In 1826, after a period in the early 1820's when the first 'cutlery factories' integrating all the processes of production and using steam power had been built near the new canal terminus, a local paper listed six large firms employing 'several hundreds' of people.³ The trend towards larger scale units, however slight throughout the 1820's and 1830's, was still perceptible.⁴ Small and medium as against large capitals were the rule amongst capitalist employers whether involved in production alone or production and marketing combined. The size of capital ownership did not prevent the largest of them from exhibiting the characteristics of industrialist bourgeoisie in both their economic and social activity.

Labour was still employed in a tangled web of economic relationships which produced status situations varying from dependent time-rate workers and piece-rate workers to semi- and fully-independent piece-rate workers. The trade-by-trade breakdown of the employment estimates showed the proportions of workers involved in the various processes. One quarter were grinders, another quarter were forgers and strikers and the remainder were made up of finishers (cutlers and hafters) and undefinable specialist groups like file hardeners and cutters.⁵ Labour was becoming more permanently organized, particularly amongst the grinders but also amongst other groups during the short periods of boom conditions of the middle 1820's and 1830's.

In the context of falling prices, labour was in the main under incessant pressure for money wage reductions. This was achieved by a day-to-day means of discounting the ruling list prices, by demands for more work at the old prices, by continuous truck or 'stuff' payments and by the periodic forced re-negotiation of price lists for work. High levels of unemployment and underemployment were in evidence throughout. The cutlery trades faced increasing foreign competition in the important export markets where over half the town's production was sold.⁶ The necessity of keeping cutlery wares competitive with those produced in low wage industrializing nations led employers to confront organized labour in an effort to force wage reductions. There were other problems, particularly with major markets such as the USA. Here native industry, tariffs and financial speculation disturbed the potential for exports. Ultimately, only by lowering costs through wage cuts and dilution of labour could exports and profits be maintained. To some extent the employers achieved this in the 1820's and 1830's but the declining profitability of cutlery was suggested by the search for better returns from building and transport investment and the partial switch of capital within producing units from cutlery to steel production.⁷ Throughout the period labour looked back to the prices set by the 1810 and higher 1814 lists and sought unsuccessfully to have these re-introduced.

2) Silver, silver-plated and Britannia metal.⁸

In most branches in these Sheffield trades, contrasted with the cutlery trades, there were continued signs of health in the 1820's and 1830's. However, some decline is suggested for the earlier 1830's. The average annual quantity of silver hallmarked in the town had risen from 4372 troy pounds in the decade 1810-19 to 4996 troy pounds per annum in the 1820's. In the 1830's this fell to 4024 troy pounds per annum suggesting some decline. The number of new marks taken out by silverware firms rose from 3.4 in 1810-19 to 4.6 in 1820-9 but fell to 3.3 in 1830-9. Much of the silver trade was conducted by cutlery

making firms on workshop lines with relatively small scale working and close contact between master and men. The silver-plated and growing Britannia metal trades were organized on large workshop and factory lines with average workforces of at least 30. This is suggested by the data from Sheffield's directories and various estimates of employment in these trades:

Table 6:5 Data on silver, silver-plated and Britannia metal trades.

(a) Firms listed by the directories of 1822, 1833 and 1837.

| | | <u>1822</u> | <u>1833</u> | <u>1837</u> |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| <u>Silver</u> | silver fruit knives | | 20 | 20 |
| | silver refiners | 2 | 2 | 3 |
| <u>Silver and plated</u> | silver and plated rollers | 2 | 3 | 2 |
| | silver plate manufactures | 22 | 24 | 18 |
| <u>Britannia metal</u> | | | | |
| <u>German silver</u> | Britannia metal manufactures | 13 | 14 | 13 |

(b) Various estimates of workforces in the trades.

| | <u>1824</u> | <u>1830</u> | <u>1833</u> |
|---------------------------|-------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Silversmiths | - | - | - |
| Silver and plated workers | 1500 | 896 | 500 |
| Britannia metal workers | - | 443 | 643 |
| | <u>1500</u> | <u>1339</u> | <u>1143</u> |
| | | (exclude silversmiths) | (exclude silversmiths) |

Several large but exceptional works like James Dixon's 'Cornish Place' (employing 300-400 workers in 1831) operated in production of all three types of wares. The generally higher scale of operation reflected by similar concentrations of capital and labour was found in several other minor 'heavier' trades in the town such as brass-founding.

Labour was employed as dependent, piece rate wage labour. It was divided in these large-workshop or factory trades into three broad groups - production-preparation (designers, modellers and die-cutters), production (chasers, stampers, braziers, piercers, engine men and spinners to work lathes) and finishers (polishers, burnishers, scourers and buffers). In the last category women predominated.

In 1830 22.7% of the silver and plated and 48.75% of the Britannia metal workforces were women, 15.9% and 18.9% respectively were boys. In composition such workforces were more like that of the new industrial factories in textiles. They had better wages and conditions than most of the other groups of Sheffield metal workers yet their situation was more proletarian than that found among workers in the cutlery trades. The cost of the raw material alone prevented any of them setting up in their trade, unlike the cutlers. Sections of them were industrially organized throughout and involved in various forms of political activity outside the conventional sphere of trade union politics.

3) Steel⁹

The period, particularly the 1830's, saw a rapid expansion in steel production in Sheffield and the surrounding region. There are no indications of production before the 1830's but the directory listing of firms suggests something of the growth of the industry:

Table 6:6 Number of firms involved in the conversion and refining, rolling and tilting of Steel, as suggested by Sheffield directories.

| | <u>1821</u> | <u>1833</u> | <u>1837</u> |
|-------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Steel converters and refiners | 39 | 26 | 79 |
| " tilters and rollers | - | 16 | 30 |

The steady demand from the metal manufacturing trades provided a stimulus. Until the railway development in later decades, potential for demand was limited. Returns to capital were good and this induced many cutlery firms to go into steel production. This explains the existence of so many small furnaces in the town. In 1835 an estimated 554 cast-steel furnaces (small melt-holes) existed in the town as well as 56 larger blister-steel furnaces. Within ten years the number was to double. Little is known about workers involved in steel manufacture. There were several hundred employed in relatively large 'heavy' industrial units working principally in iron and in scattered small 'light' industrial units in the cutlery trades. It is assumed that

their wages were better than average because of the higher price of their product. Later evidence shows that there were significant differentials between the skilled and unskilled steel makers.

4) Iron

There was slow and unsteady expansion in the region's iron industry after the slump of the immediate post-war years. Throughout the 1820's and 1830's prices and profits continued to fall, reversed only in the short-lived mid-decade boom of the 1830's.¹⁰ Towards the middle and later parts of the 1830's a steady impetus of growth had been established despite additional restraining technical problems caused by deficiency of local raw material supply, particularly ironstone. The estimates of production for the largest units and county estimates show this slow expansion and the relative insignificance of the region in relation to other districts:

Table 6:7 The Iron Industry

(a) The largest units in the region's iron industry.¹¹

| | | <u>1823</u> | | <u>1830</u> | |
|--------------------|----------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|
| | | <u>furnaces</u> | <u>production</u> (tons) | <u>furnaces</u> | <u>production</u> (tons) |
| <u>North</u> | Bretton | 1 | 1381 | 1 | 1664 |
| | Worsbrough | 1 | 2450 | 2 | 4590 |
| <u>Middle zone</u> | Chapelton and Swallow Hill | 1 | 1400 | 1 | 1631 |
| | Elsecar | 3 | 1400 | 3 | 1460 |
| | Holmes | 2 | 2187 | 3 | 1000 |
| | Milton | 3 | 2000 | 2 | 1715 |
| | Thorncliffe | 3 | 2909 | 3 | 2188 |
| <u>South</u> | Sheffield Park | 2 | 2018 | 2 | 2801 |
| total | | <u>16</u> | <u>15745</u> | <u>17</u> | <u>16329</u> |

(b) Pig iron production in Yorkshire in relation to that of major producing districts. (tons weight)¹²

| | <u>1823</u> | <u>1830</u> | <u>1840</u> |
|---------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Yorkshire | 27,000 | 29,000 | 56,000 |
| S. Wales | 182,000 | 278,000 | 505,000 |
| Staffordshire | 134,000 | 213,000 | 420,000 |
| Shropshire | 58,000 | 73,000 | 87,000 |
| Derbyshire | 14,000 | 18,000 | 31,000 |

Capitals were large relative to other industries of the region.

Employment, while probably not exceeding 100 workers in any of these

units (including ironstone getters, colliers, labourers and specialist ironworkers), was significantly more concentrated. In these units such was the range of skills and consequently status differentials that labour lacked a real potential for organization.

The region also had smaller urban foundries for iron and brass. Sheffield had 33 smaller foundries, Rotherham and Barnsley three each in 1833. In 1837 40 were listed for Sheffield, 3 for Rotherham, and 4 for Barnsley. These probably gave as much employment as the larger units combined. In these units workers were less geographically isolated and potentially able to see their interests common with those of other workers. In this industry labour was all dependent wage earning, but little more can be discovered about its conditions of employment. The outworking domestic trades using wrought iron continued to shrink. Nailing survived for mechanized nail making posed no real threat as yet. Hand-made nails continued to be made by domestic outworkers in traditional centres at Ecclesfield, Thorpe, Hoyland and Darton.

5) Coal

As with the iron industry, progress appeared slow throughout the 1820's¹³ and the 1830's. The mid-decade booms were exceptional. This is partly reflected in the growth of tolls collected on two of the region's coal-carrying waterways:

Table 6:8 Growth in tolls on Barnsley Canal and Don Navigation.¹⁴
(£s)

| | <u>Barnsley (yearly average)</u> | <u>Don (yearly average)</u> |
|--------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1821-3 | 9743 | 16230 |
| 1827-9 | 10323 | 18305 |
| | 5.9% increase | 12.79% increase |
| 1830-2 | 10737 | 19859 |
| 1836-8 | 12460 | 25273 |
| | 16% increase | 27.5% increase |

Until 1841 there is little information to suggest the numbers employed in the industry. Before then there is little material to prompt any comment on the organization of production. The information provided

by the Children's Employment Commission (Mines) report of 1842 provides a valuable source of information that can be projected back because it represents the conditions that existed in the region's pits during the 1830's and probably earlier. From its estimates of employment in the whole of Yorkshire it can be constructively speculated that over 2500 people were employed in South Yorkshire's pits in the later 1830's and that over half of them were children.¹⁵

Directories of the region list the names of at least fifty employers.¹⁶ These range from the owners of the small thin seam pits on average employing up to ten workers (found in a north south line along the western edge of the region) to the large coal masters (in the central belt and parallel eastern north south belts) whose pits employed up to a hundred workers.¹⁷ Of 77 collieries in the West Riding whose workforces were enumerated in 1842, 33 employed 50 men or more. Fifteen collieries employed over a hundred. In South Yorkshire there were probably several collieries of the largest sort including Clarke's Silkestone pits, Newton and Chambers' Thorncliffe pits, Fitzwilliam's Elsecar and Parkgate pits, Booth's Tinsley Park works and the Sheffield Coal Company's Manor workings. The smaller pits, especially the thin seam ones, employed higher proportions of children. The larger pits, especially in the central and northern parts of the region, also appeared to employ large numbers of children.

Labour in the collieries was divided into several basic groups. Those who mined the coal were composed of colliers or 'getters'. Those who transported it in the mine were 'fillers', 'hurriers', 'trammers' and 'jenneyers'. There were also ancillary workers ranging from the ancillary engine men and banksmen down to the child 'trappers' who were employed by the owner and spent all day huddled in the pit opening and shutting communication and ventilation doors. The labour force was not uniformly dependent wage earning in relation to the coal masters. Only the ancillary workers, particularly those transporting the coal underground, were directly employed in most pits.

Most fillers and hurriers were employed by the colliers who were in turn employed by 'undertakers' or subcontractors. In one Thorncliffe pit for example, five or six 'undertakers' employed 25 men and boys in this way.¹⁸ Labour was hard, lasting at least 10-12 hours with few breaks. The mining proletariat took a long while to stir. Signs of trade union organization occurred only in boom years like 1825 and 1836¹⁹ which reflected the mid-decade bursts of expansion affecting all industries in the region. The system of sub-contract partly obscured the nature of economic exploitation. Nevertheless it was there and was expressed in grasping capitalist action, giving advances when prices improved as in the mid-decade booms and then clawing back the rates and imposing heavier workloads when prospects worsened. Geographical and physical isolation, the large numbers of women and children and religious and wider social indoctrination in tightly managed communities where housing was a crucial employer's weapon, all added to the explanation of slow industrial and political arousal among the collier population.

6) Linen

The linen trade can be seen as expanding in terms of production and employment throughout the period. The various directories covering this period provide several estimates of the number of employing units in the trade and of the number of looms at work.

Table 6:9 Number of firms listed as 'linen manufacturers' and estimates of looms in Barnsley and the neighbouring villages.²⁰

| | (1) | (2) | |
|------|---------------------|--------------|----------------------|
| | <u>no. of firms</u> | <u>looms</u> | <u>(1):(2) ratio</u> |
| 1816 | 28 | 2500 | 1:89 |
| 1823 | 32 | 3000 | 1:93 |
| 1837 | 33 | 4050 | 1:122 |

The populations of the townships in Silkstone and Darton parishes where the industry was concentrated continued to expand in the 1820's and 1830's. This was through natural increase, short distance

migration and particularly the long distance migration of Irish and Scottish weavers.

Table 6:10 Population increase in various townships in the northern weaving district of South Yorkshire 1811-41

| | <u>% increase over the decade</u> | | |
|--------------|-----------------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| | <u>1811-21</u> | <u>1821-31</u> | <u>1831-41</u> |
| Barnsley | +65% | +24% | +19% |
| Dodworth | +72% | + 4% | +19% |
| Monk Bretton | +73% | +52% | +23% |
| Ardsley | +53% | +14% | +19% |
| Baraugh | <u>-6%</u> | <u>+39%</u> | <u>+33%</u> |
| Total | <u>+59%</u> | <u>+25%</u> | <u>+20%</u> |

Capitals were large among the 'linen manufacturers' who controlled the industry. The increase in the ratio of manufacturers to looms from 1:89 in 1816 to 1:122 in 1837 pointed to a further concentration of capital. The higher number of multi-family partnerships increasing from a seventh to a third of the firms listed in the directories of 1822 and 1837 possibly suggests the means of acquiring wider capital sources.

Labour was in a bad position throughout. Despite the shift to higher quality, finer wares and the much needed stimulus of mid-decade upswings, the industry faced a general trend of secular decline. Prices were declining because of the competition of cotton goods and Scottish, Irish and German linen in the home and in export markets.²¹ In Barnsley the weavers were said to be the best paid of all those in English centres of the linen industry. This was partly the result of the strength of the weavers' industrial organization which resisted the employers' attempts to drastically reduce the price for labour to protect its own profit levels. In the main the employers succeeded in reducing the price of weaving, both of fine and coarse work. They also imposed heavier workloads on the weavers who became the most economically desperate of all the region's large industrial workgroups.

(b) Dynamics.

The region's industrial economy appeared to enter and pass through the first of two difficult periods of adjustment in its slow transition to industrial capitalist domination. In the heavy sector of iron and coal the legacy of overstimulated war-time production was not quickly offset by peace-time demand. This was slowly overcome as demand lag lessened. In the light sector similar problems had to be faced. Both sectors had not only technical and structural problems to overcome, but also that of the secular fall in commodity prices and cyclical and less 'natural' disturbance of the business cycle throughout. The trough-bottom years of 1826, 1829, 1832 and 1837 were marked by high unemployment and short-time working in both sectors. The years immediately surrounding these were little better except during the short-lived boom periods of 1824-5, 1828, 1831 and 1835-6.

Capitalist accumulation in the agricultural sector, as marked by enclosure, was slowing down. This sequence of accumulation had worked itself out by the mid-1820's.

Table 6:11 Number of enclosure acts annually in progress in South Yorkshire within a 20 mile radius of Sheffield 1816-20 (averages for five-year periods).²²

| | |
|---------|-----------|
| 1816-20 | 10.4 acts |
| 1821-25 | 6.8 " |
| 1826-30 | 2.6 " |
| 1831-35 | 0.8 " |
| 1836-40 | 1.2 " |

The process of capital accumulation for investment was still going on. Capital requirements for manufacturing industry were still small, it was for investment in transport and extractive industry that capital was mainly necessary. Labour was plentiful. The inflow of Irish, Scottish and English workers, all displaced by accumulation in the primary sector, combined with locally displaced labour to provide a local pool of cheap labour.

Transport improvement continued unspectacularly in this final pre-railway period. The traffic on the region's main waterways was unaffected until the end of the period by the competition of steam locomotion. The available data on tolls and profits on these waterways illustrates the general expansion of water-bound commerce (coal being the largest individual commodity carried in terms of cash returns and bulk). The Don Navigation figures provide the only indicator of how the year-to year fluctuations of commercial activity followed the general business cycle.

Table 6:12 Commercial growth as suggested by the expansion of traffic on the region's waterways 1820-37.²³

(a) Tolls on the Barnsley Canal (£s average p.a.)

| | |
|--------|--------|
| 1824-6 | 12,150 |
| 1827-9 | 12,497 |
| 1830-2 | 13,302 |
| 1833-5 | 13,013 |
| 1836-8 | 15,273 |

(b) Tolls on the Dearne and Dove Canal (£s average p.a.)

| | |
|--------|--------|
| 1821-3 | 7,630 |
| 1824-6 | 10,430 |
| 1827-9 | 10,686 |
| 1830-2 | 11,715 |

(c) Don Navigation dividend (£s)

| | | | | | |
|------|--------|------|--------|------|--------|
| 1821 | 14,905 | 1827 | 18,611 | 1833 | 19,465 |
| 1822 | 14,204 | 1828 | 18,201 | 1834 | 20,640 |
| 1823 | 16,675 | 1829 | 18,104 | 1835 | 21,979 |
| 1824 | 18,221 | 1830 | 19,605 | 1836 | 30,398 |
| 1825 | 20,123 | 1831 | 19,931 | 1837 | 24,644 |
| 1826 | 17,988 | 1832 | 19,981 | | |

For the cutlery and related workshop metal trades there are few statistics which present the picture of cyclical fluctuation. The pattern imposed on the operation of the trades by the business cycle is partly illustrated by national figures of cutlery and hardware exports:

Table 6:13 U.K. exports of Cutlery and Hardware at current prices
1819-37 (£m) 24

| | | | | | |
|------|-----|------|-----|------|-----|
| 1818 | 1.6 | 1825 | 1.4 | 1832 | 1.4 |
| 1819 | 1.2 | 1826 | 1.2 | 1833 | 1.5 |
| 1820 | 0.8 | 1827 | 1.4 | 1834 | 1.5 |
| 1821 | 1.1 | 1828 | 1.4 | 1835 | 1.8 |
| 1822 | 1.1 | 1829 | 1.4 | 1836 | 2.3 |
| 1823 | 1.1 | 1830 | 1.4 | 1837 | 1.5 |
| 1824 | 1.2 | 1831 | 1.4 | | |

The amount of silver assayed for use in the town's silver trades appeared to fluctuate in a similar fashion, again with significant low points in 1826, 1829, 1832 and 1837.

Table 6:14 Silver assayed at Sheffield Assay Office 1820-1839
(troy pounds) 25

| | | |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| 1820 - 5336 | 1826 - 4063 | 1832 - 2835 |
| 1821 - 5069 | 1827 - 4708 | 1833 - 3555 |
| 1822 - 4411 | 1828 - 4334 | 1834 - 3401 |
| 1823 - 4522 | 1829 - 3795 | 1835 - 4094 |
| 1824 - 6454 | 1830 - 3848 | 1836 - 5125 |
| 1825 - 6972 | 1831 - 3382 | 1837 - 4085 |

The large silver plate, Britannia metal trades and the steel and other smaller metal trades did not provide similar indicators. Sheffield's figures of poor relief expenditure illustrated the severity of depression years, although the tightening up of relief-giving and the growth of self-help amongst organized labour diminished the contrast of good and bad years.

Table 6:15 Sheffield Poor Relief Expenditure 1819-1838 (£s Easter to Easter) 26

| | | |
|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| 1819-20 - 35,166 | 1826-27 - 12,544 | 1832-33 - 22,593 |
| 1820-21 - 32,301 | 1827-28 - 14,101 | 1833-34 - 17,603 |
| 1821-22 - 18,832 | 1828-29 - 19,173 | 1834-35 - 16,079 |
| 1822-23 - 14,719 | 1829-30 - 18,691 | 1835-36 - - |
| 1823-24 - 15,764 | 1830-31 - 17,086 | 1836-37 - 10,458 |
| 1824-25 - 12,944 | 1831-32 - 17,342 | 1837-38 - 14,084 |

The level of money wages paid to workers in the cutlery trade fell significantly in relation to the levels established during the period 1810-14 by the favourable lists of that time. For a few months only, under boom conditions as in 1824-25, 1831 and 1834-36, were these prices for labour in any way approached. In some trades, particularly those producing mainly common wares (all branches had

common ware sections) such as spring knives, table knives and scissors, the position was more drastic than in others like the file or saw trades. The marked distinction between the wages of workers in superior branches of the various trades and the common branches was illustrated by a statement in 1830 that one twelfth of the town's workforce earned 25s and a quarter earned around 20s per week. These represented the workers in the superior branches. It claimed the remainder represented the common branches and earned on average 16s per week.²⁷ Whether the twelfth represented an 'aristocracy' of any sort is difficult to establish.

Such an estimate does not allow for the effect of unemployment and underemployment on earnings. Nor does it allow for deductions. Full employment was only realized for short periods of boom conditions. An employer's testimony of 1833, a year of slow improvement in anticipation of the boom of 1834-6, estimated only half the workmen were fully employed.²⁸ This was a 'normal' condition of the cutlery trades throughout most of this period. Money wages fell, but real wages did not fall as drastically because of a fall in the cost of living. We have no data to compile a local cost of living index and are dependent on national data for an indication of trends:

Table 6:16 Gayer, Rostow and Schwartz's Index of Wholesale Prices of Domestic and Imported Commodities, 1820-37. 29

| | | |
|------------|------------|-----------|
| 1820 - 115 | 1826 - 100 | 1832 - 91 |
| 1821 - 99 | 1827 - 99 | 1833 - 88 |
| 1822 - 88 | 1828 - 96 | 1834 - 86 |
| 1823 - 97 | 1829 - 95 | 1835 - 84 |
| 1824 - 102 | 1830 - 94 | 1836 - 95 |
| 1825 - 113 | 1831 - 95 | 1837 - 94 |

In the region's other sector light trades, including miscellaneous types of metal-working like nailmaking, but particularly in the larger linen trade, similar cyclical fluctuations and long term structural changes were at work. Little is known of the small domestic metal trades at this time but much more about linen. Here cotton wares made significant inroads on the linen industry nationally. Barnsley maintained its position as the leading English linen-manufacturing

town by further switching to high quality handloom weaving, employing power looms by the end of the period to weave lower quality, heavy products.³⁰ Significant reductions in the price of finished work had to be made. This had been going on since 1818. More drastic was the reduction of 1823 when not only was the weavers' right to the 'fent' (1½ yard of cloth in every 90 yard bundle) abolished but prices for finished work were reduced. Reduction continued generally throughout the 1820's, 1826 being a particularly bad year in the trade for labour. In 1829 further major formal reductions in prices for work took place. Steady reductions continued until 1836 when better prices were obtained for a short while. In 1837 wages were again reduced.³¹ Overall prices for 19 representative items woven in the trade fell on average 44% between 1818 and 1837 (54% taking contrast of 1811-14 - 1838 on nine of these items). The most drastic fall came in the 1820's. For 17 items listed for 1818-29 there was an average reduction of 34% and for 12 of those listed for 1829-38 an average reduction of only 11%. The weavers lost the fent (worth 4-5% of the finished piece) and in several lines had to weave 10% more cloth to the piece.³² There is no hard evidence on actual money wages over time. The contrast of manufacturers talking of gross wages of 16-25s per week in 1818³³ and their acceptance with their employees before a Royal Commission of 1842 that they averaged gross 10s per week³⁴ (net 7s 8d - 7s 11d per week) is of limited significance. In bad years they may have fallen even lower during the late 1820's and 1830's (particularly 1829-31). One respectable estimate for 1830 talked of 6-7s gross (3s 10d net) per week.³⁵ Even failing to allow for the one week in eight the weaver did not work at all because he was soliciting new work and changing over from one piece of work to another,³⁶ these were starvation wages. Despite a fall in the cost of living the only time the weavers did not face hardship was the boom period of 1834-6.

In the heavy sector trades little is known of the nature of

fluctuations. A limited picture can be built up using indirect evidence to supplement what is available. In the heavy ironmaking industry there was slow progress until the mid-1820's boom. The discontinued pig iron sales from Thorncliffe data illustrate this:

Table 6:17 Sale of pig iron from Thorncliffe Ironworks 1820-25.³⁷
(£s)

| | |
|---------------|---------------|
| 1820 - 25,725 | 1823 - 23,339 |
| 1821 - 23,267 | 1824 - 37,352 |
| 1822 - 21,822 | 1825 - 49,493 |

The prosperity of the industry in the region during this period was commented upon by a visiting ironmaster in 1825. Most of the region's small furnaces were in full blast, Thorncliffe being the most prosperous as a result of good orders for cast ironware from London gas companies. Some like Darwin at Elsecar and Chapeltown and the Walkers at Rotherham were in difficulties for both financial and technical reasons.³⁸ At Milton there were several changes of partners. In 1828 when the same visitor returned, he found low levels of production. Darwin had gone bankrupt and new tenants installed at Elsecar and Chapeltown. Only one furnace was working at the Holmes complex and several smaller ironworks situated at Sheffield, Attercliffe and Brightside had been run down. The price of iron had fallen and local ironmasters were selling at even lower prices than the Staffordshire ironmasters.³⁹ The effect and nature of the pattern of fluctuation is further suggested by the limited figures for poor law expenditure in the parish of Hoyland where labour working at Milton and Elsecar lived:

Table 6:18 Hoyland Parish poor law expenditure 1822-1832
(incomplete) (£s)⁴⁰

| | |
|------------|------------|
| 1822 - 630 | 1828 - 393 |
| 1823 - 510 | 1829 - 465 |
| 1824 - - | 1830 - - |
| 1825 - 279 | 1831 - 576 |
| 1826 - 271 | 1832 - 603 |
| 1827 - - | |

The intervening years between 1828 and the boom conditions of 1834-6 were bad. The region's aggregate production figures for 1830

show a level of production little better than that of 1823. Only when prices began to improve, slowly from 1833 onwards but significantly from 1836, did the industry return to full capacity working.

Nothing is known of money wages in the industry. It is likely that in full work ironworks' labour was better paid than most handicraft trades, although employers may have used their role of landlords and retailers to 'invisibly' exploit labour and reduce wages. In boom periods they could restrict labour. In bad times employers, like Earl Fitzwilliam and Newton and Chambers, often cushioned labour from the hardship faced by urban workers who were less familiar with their employers. The demand for coal was broader than that for iron and other industrial products and the industry was less subject to the same sort of depression in production in slump periods. The canal toll and profit indices suggest the range of fluctuations to which coal was subject. Actual figures for coal carriage for the first half of the period for the Dearne and Dove Canal suggest a stronger growth (at least in terms of quantities carried) than the toll figures do. The Fitzwilliam estate figures particularly suggest the strong growth of the 1830's.

Table 6:19 Coal Industry Growth 1820-38.⁴¹

(a) Average quantities of coal carried on the Dearne and Dove Canal, 1818-1832 (tons average p.a.)

| | | | |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 1818-20 | 106,337 | 1827-29 | 159,667 |
| 1821-23 | 106,284 | 1830-32 | 181,000 |
| 1824-26 | 138,500 | | |

(b) Fitzwilliam estate coal sales 1820-38 (tons)

| | | |
|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| 1820 - 90,612 | 1827 - 132,563 | 1834 - 117,607 |
| 1821 - 67,300 | 1828 - 132,062 | 1835 - 154,367 |
| 1822 - 87,870 | 1829 - 119,062 | 1836 - 186,185 |
| 1823 - 114,530 | 1830 - 127,586 | 1837 - 175,095 |
| 1824 - 118,736 | 1831 - 116,453 | 1838 - 194,641 |
| 1825 - 142,553 | 1832 - 124,501 | |
| 1826 - 128,367 | 1833 - 133,208 | |

Carried forward by the mid-decade boom of the 1830's, production increased at an even more rapid rate with new shafts being sunk, creating new employment.⁴² Of the level of money wages little is

known. Coal mining created employment for whole families, children, young adults and parents, (although the collier often tried to keep his wife and children out of the pit) and this must not be ignored in any attempted assessment. In the following chapter the limited wage data for the 1820's and 1830's is combined with that for the 1840's to produce a more coherent picture. This data suggests the coalmasters were making labour suffer to maintain profits.

Section B : Society. Working People and their Struggles in the pre-Chartist years, 1820-37.

1) Summary

Throughout the period working people were faced with pressures on their living standards created by reduction in the price of their labour by employers. There was a significant amount of employment insecurity reflected in short-time working which additionally reduced money wages. At various moments, sections of an increasingly industrially self-conscious labour class in the region organized themselves to attempt to overcome these pressures on behalf of themselves and labour collectively. Much of the social aggression of this emergent labour class was worked out in the struggle against economic rather than political and other forms of exploitation. Nevertheless in the mid-decade periods of better trade when its industrial organization was more certain, prompted by Radicals and Owenites and their periodicals, the economic struggle came to take a broader focus.

2) 'Machines in Constant Motion' - Class Voices 1820-29.

For a short while in 1820 labour organization in the Sheffield cutlery trades nearly compromised itself in a community plan for the co-operation of workers, employers, local philanthropists and the poor law administrators to create a common fund to pay the unemployed surplus labour in the trades, to create work by 'spade husbandry' and to provide doles.⁴³ It was hoped that this would reduce the pressure in the labour market and raise the price of labour to that given by the 1810 lists and which respectable employers were prepared to pay. In the large and most depressed trade, the spring knife trade, the journeymen had dissolved their union as part of the compromise.⁴⁴ The plan failed because the free market anarchism of 'non-respectable' factors and small manufacturers continued to force down the price of the town's wage labour. This depression of prices continued unopposed by organized labour in many branches of the cutlery trades throughout

1821 and 1822. In Barnsley the linen weavers continued to be under pressure from their employers' reductions. The slow growth of demand and a surplus of labour were problems they shared with the workers in cutlery and related trades. The region's ironworks' and colliery labour similarly faced the pressure of reduction. Nothing is known of their attitudes. Popular interest in politics was forgotten throughout the region in a day-to-day struggle for material subsistence. The Queen Caroline issue of 1820-21 had been left for the petty bourgeoisie and others of their social betters to bicker over. Now the key priority was the organization of labour for its economic self-defence.

Workers in Sheffield's trades were still in the main intermittently organized. They had longer traditions of organization. They had more opportunity, given their generally greater degree of economic independence from their employers. In July 1822, fifteen organized branches of the town's trades united as the Sheffield Mechanical Trades Association.⁴⁵ This was described as 'an Association for the protection of the Spring knife, Table knife, Scissor, Pressers, Fork and File Trades, and such other trades as may be hereafter admitted'. Its existence suggested a strong core of more permanent unions. It appointed a highly democratic 'Committee of Directors' to implement its collective aims of maintaining employment and wages rates and controlling entry by apprenticeship. Its power lay in being able to demand conformity of its affiliates through the delegates comprising it, particularly regarding the amount of work to be done. In 1822 its common fund, to the tune of £2500, financed a 26-week defensive strike in the file trade. This forced the employers to reduce an anticipated 33% reduction in piece rates to one of 12%⁴⁶ It was defended by labour leaders who stated:

We were driven to it from necessity; for wages were so very low in some concerns, it was conceived we were doing justice only to ourselves, we were willing to risk the hazard, in consequence of the men being so reduced.⁴⁷

Nothing more was heard of the Association. A trades' council of the sort it represented continued in the town throughout subsequent years (evidence emerges from time to time in our later narrative). It was supported by a core of strongly organized trades like the fender makers, saw makers and grinders and Britannia metalsmiths. These represented an 'economic aristocracy'.⁴⁸

Trade continued to be poor throughout the region until the middle and later part of 1823. The price of labour continued to fall in branches of the Sheffield cutlery trades in which cheaper or common wares predominated. The spring-knife cutlers were now working for only 25% of the 1814 prices for work.⁴⁹ Thus the grinders in their trade were suffering.⁵⁰ Trades dominated by higher quality, higher value products were less badly affected, in part because the organization of labour was stronger. To talk of an 'economic aristocracy' composed of skilled workers in the saw, fender, Britannia metal, silver and silver-plated trades, is not premature even at this stage.⁵¹ However, the mass of labour in the town's trade was in a very depressed, low wage and partially employed situation.⁵² In the Barnsley linen trade where weavers had continued to earn a reasonable living despite the fall in earnings from the levels of 1811-14 and earlier, 12s per week (including a fent) was said to be an average wage in 1823.⁵³ The town's linen manufacturers (the employers) began to attempt to further reduce wages more vigorously. On 1 May 1823 they announced the fent was to be abolished and the price of work lowered.⁵⁴ If sold, a yard long fent could be worth about 5% of weekly earnings of an adult weaver.⁵⁵ If used at home for family clothing, which was traditional, it had even more value.⁵⁶ The announcement was greeted with a strike accompanied by violence that lasted into July and August. Then the weavers, many of whom had left the town temporarily, returned to work. The press reports and more popular reporting in verse and rhyme tell us little about the level of organization among the weavers.⁵⁷ There were definite leaders like Patrick Flanagan.

The 'Valiant Patrick' who 'marshalled all his men' was celebrated in a verse of 'The Memorable Battle of Greenfoot'. This celebrated the weavers' triumph over blacklegs ignoring the strike call.⁵⁸ Whether a weavers' union had survived from the earlier years is not known. Trade union activity was still concealed in a twilight of illegality.

Trade began to improve generally in the autumn of 1823. In July the Sheffield Iris had noted the falling off of casual payments to the out-poor.⁵⁹ By early 1824 recovery was much more marked. Against this background the winter of 1823-4 saw further evidence of the strength of organized labour among the Sheffield trades. This was in a response to the national campaign to repeal the Combination Laws. In December 1823 a public meeting was held at the Town Hall. This was openly addressed by several of the town's labour leaders. Chaired by John Sheldon, a sympathetic 'respectable tradesman', the meeting was addressed by Robert Wright, Joseph Bullock (filesmith), Anthony Yates and a man called Evans. Their speeches show they had an understanding of the nature of labour and its true worth. Wright observed of the Combination Laws:

I believe them to be a direct infringement on the rights of a British subject. To whom or what man has the Almighty given power to dictate to me what price to fix on my own property, the labour of my hands, by which myself and dependants are to subsist? I have no right to dictate to our master at what price he shall sell his goods. Are they not his own property? Why, then, should these laws dictate by what means a workman should obtain a proper price for his labour, and subject him to penalties and imprisonment for adopting such measures as his circumstances may render absolutely necessary?

Seven resolutions were passed. These included, a demand for a petition, a request for the help of county members, a proposal to set up a local committee of action, an assertion of the right to petition and local complaints about the use of the poor law system to lower wages. The language emphasized the class nature of the law. The second resolution read:

That it has been found, that the law, as it now stands, precludes the industrious mechanic from even attempting to obtain a fair remuneration for his labour. But on the

contrary, it empowers the employer under the protection of these partial laws to use their united efforts to reduce the price of labour to so low a pitch as totally to destroy the possibility of the employed supporting their respective families.⁶⁰

Trade continued to improve in 1824. The price of labour was low. Mild inflation, accompanying the boom, began to reduce real wages even more than pressure of the employers on money wages. Working people were prompted to act on a wide range of issues to maintain their living standards. In Sheffield and elsewhere they participated in the agitation against the Corn Laws. They were led by sections of the petty bourgeois and superior bourgeois classes.⁶¹ In the parallel agitation against the Combination Laws, with which working people could more fully identify, the town's labour leaders played a central role.⁶² Working people were drawn into direct industrial action especially with the recent repeal of the Combination Laws. Even the weaker groups of industrial workers like the Sheffield spring-knife cutlers were active. In May over 1600 of them struck work for the price of 1810. They claimed they were receiving only 50% of this price, averaging 9-11 shillings per week. With the help of better organized Sheffield trades such as the Britannia metalsmiths they gained an improved price close to the 1810 level.⁶³

Throughout the year deputations of local labour leaders attended the parliamentary committees relating to the Combination Laws and trade union activity. A 'Committee of Mechanics to Promote the Repeal of the Combination Laws' was meeting regularly throughout the earlier part of the year at the 'London 'Prentice' tavern in West Bar in Sheffield.⁶⁴ The local deputies reported back to what represented the equivalent of a trades' council. The organized Sheffield trades appeared to be working with others from nearby towns. Resolutions made at a meeting in July showed they were in contact with the Barnsley weavers.⁶⁵

The industrial activities of the weavers and the region's other workgroups, the colliers and ironworkers (both outworkers and iron-

works' labour), were unreported. The weavers, despite better trade, because of the competition they faced were not in a position to do more than fight defensively for existing levels of wages. They had a tradition of organization like the colliers and ironworkers. Ironworks' labour was still too fragmented to struggle for improved wages. The miners had begun to organize a 'Coal Miners Union of Sheffield and its Neighbourhood' in 1824-25. This tried to regulate entry and maintain wages in the trade. Colliery labour was still too fragmented and the union's survival beyond the boom years 1824-5 is doubtful.⁶⁶

Trade continued to improve in the earlier part of 1825.⁶⁷ Working people continued to be drawn into a wide range of agitations. In March the Sheffield Iris, referring to the number of petitions being organized, backhandedly commented on the connection between the low level of political and social aggression and period of relative prosperity:

But there is another rather curious circumstance connected with the rage for petitioning at the present time, and that is, the apparent indifference of the people at large, respecting the petitions which are recommended for their adoption.... their absence from the meetings proves that they were much better employed than in losing their precious time, for the gratification of idle curiosity. Had our warehouses, workshops, and smithies not been more thronged with the business which belongs immediately to each, we should have witnessed clamorous and impatient multitudes at each of these opportunities, struggling to vent their indignation against the real or supposed authors of their hardships and privations.

More interestingly the Iris demanded:

What is become of all the radicalism, that was abroad throughout the manufacturing districts, six or seven years ago? It is vanished like the fumes of intoxication after a night's sleep.⁶⁸

Below the levels of 'respectable' social activity that the Iris condescended to observe and comment on, the popular radical cause was still kept alive in Sheffield (and probably Barnsley). Throughout the earlier 1820's Carlile's Republican, Cobbett's Register and Moralist and Wooler's Black Dwarf had been sold (and bartered for) by democratic sympathizers among the labouring population by a number

of highly motivated radical activists. One of these, William Holmes, had come to Sheffield in 1823 to act as an agent for Carlile. At his 28 Westbar Green address he plied his trade as a shoemaker while running a radical bookshop-reading room. In 1824 he installed a press on the premises. His shop, described in 1825 as the centre for 'Paine, Palmer, Carlile, Volney, Voltaire...and all the best writers on Anti-Christian subjects', was the centre for the mysterious 'Paine Club' which existed in the mid-1820's.⁶⁹ Despite the activity in this 'underworld' the Iris was correct in suggesting a period of political stillness regarding the issue of parliamentary reform.

However, some of the latent or suppressed political energy found outlets in the new mature social aggression expressed by the town's labour leaders. A resolution made at one of several meetings of trade unionists⁷⁰ called in April and May 1825 to mobilize support against the proposals to re-enact the harsh Combination Laws stated:

In order to preserve those privileges to which as mechanics, we are entitled, it is imperiously necessary, on the present occasion, to unite for the mutual support of each other, against the attempts at present making, to place the working classes in that state of enthrallment from which they have been so recently released.⁷¹

In part this energy could be found in the continued industrial aggression maintained in this boom period. All at once in August there was a surge of this aggression throughout the region. The Sheffield edge tool forgers struck for a 15% rise on average wages of 17-22s per week.⁷² There were suggestions of colliers in the region demanding improved wage standards⁷³ and of Barnsley weavers attempting to win back some of the losses of 1823.⁷⁴ These demands were made against the returning tide of industrial depression. In November the edge tool forgers went back to work without an advance.⁷⁵ In the face of this the regional and inter-regional unity of organized labour was illustrated by the positive reception a delegation of Bradford weavers and woolcombers got when they arrived in the region to solicit funds to maintain their four month old strike.⁷⁶

The winter of 1825-6, marked by slight local symptoms of national financial panic, saw the trades of the region in a very depressed condition.⁷⁷ This depression continued throughout 1826. Organized labour was in a weak bargaining position.⁷⁸ In Sheffield the weakest groups like the spring knife cutlers had no power at all. This group's funds were exhausted and they threw themselves on the mercy of the charitable instincts of the community. In adversity such a group appeared to maintain a dignified self-control.⁷⁹ Vicar Sutton, writing to the Government to obtain relief for Sheffield in June, noted, 'twice a day the most numerous body of workmen, the spring knife cutlers, call over the names of those of their body who are unemployed to prevent them spending time in public houses'.⁸⁰ The wages of workers in the town's other common ware trades also deteriorated. The workers in such trades saw their decline as long term. A worker in the spring knife trade described the situation thus:

Since the commencement of the French Revolution, every article and necessary of life, in this town, had materially advanced: has the price of labour of its artisans in the trade to which I belong? I will boldly answer; No; that even those prices given in the factories of the most respectability, such as Messrs J. Rodgers and Sons, are not above the prices paid for work forty years ago.⁸¹

In some of the Sheffield cutlery trades, labour organization had recovered some of its earlier position, especially that achieved by the 1810 and 1814 lists. This was true up to 1823. Well organized groups like the filesmiths suffered only half the loss of the spring knife cutlers.⁸² Grinders in all branches lost far less than the other workers because of their industrial strength.⁸³ Outside the cutlery trades, as within, skilled workers maintained a significant differential. A correspondent of the Sheffield Mercury noted in June 1826, 'the respectable part of the working classes were never so well off in this town, as they have been, generally during the last thirty years'. This he justified in purchases of clothing, bedding and furniture.⁸⁴ The town's 'economic aristocracy' was small and contained

at best no more than a tenth of its workforce. Even within this group there was a threat of fluctuations in earnings.⁸⁵

The region's other workgroups were badly hit by the depression. The Barnsley linen trade was described as being in a very depressed state. General Byng, surveying the industrial districts of the West Riding to assess the claims that radical political activity was re-appearing in industrial agitation in Lancashire and the West Riding, observed in May:

There certainly is much distress in this Riding. The several failures of the winter have created a scarcity of money which is felt by all descriptions but most so in the Manufacturing part. There have been persons going about in all parts endeavouring to excite disturbances, and several engaged in the riots in Lancashire are vagabonds about this part of the country.... The People however generally are disposed to be quiet - a revival in trade would ensure their continuing so.

He noted many of Barnsley's linen weavers were out of work and others on two-thirds work. An isolated strike at a nearby colliery did not indicate new found social aggression amongst the region's small collier population.⁸⁶ Like ironworks' labour, the colliers appeared to bear the effects of depression in silence. Lord Wharnccliffe, a leading member of the local elite, wrote to the Home Office in August hinting at expected social disturbances in the coming winter:

I do not believe that there will be any revival of trade sufficient to give employment to those immense bodies of people, and it is quite impossible to suppose that the present distress when it is increased by the season can be patiently borne.⁸⁷

Popular reaction found only limited political expression in the winter of 1826-7. Locally it had little political shape. Despite the insult of another electoral charade that year,⁸⁸ there were few voices naïve enough to advocate the old isolated political strategies of constitutionalist petitioning and pressuring supported by the potential threat of an armed rising of the people. The leaders of the emergent labour class were too realistic to be drawn into schemes for a purely political revolution. They generated and channelled constructive energies

into economic organization with subordinate political purposes. When these failed too, the mass found no appeal in isolated political strategy. They lived out the crisis using their own resources. This self-sufficiency was reflected in the likely growth of criminal activity in the middle and later 1820's.

Table 6:20

Criminal activity 1820-30(a) Commitals to trial for felonies and Game Law offences ordered by the Sheffield magistrates 1819-1830 (April-April) 89

| | <u>Felonies</u> | <u>Game Law offences</u> |
|---------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| 1819-20 | 157 | - |
| 1820-21 | 150 | - |
| 1821-22 | 94 | 1 |
| 1822-23 | 106 | 1 |
| 1823-24 | 110 | - |
| 1824-25 | 122 | 1 |
| 1825-26 | 98 | - |
| 1826-27 | 142 | 12 |
| 1827-28 | 182 | 2 |
| 1828-29 | 161 | 8 |
| 1829-30 | 127 | 4 |

(b) Felons committed in West Riding to Wakefield House of Correction 90

| | | |
|------------|------------|------------|
| 1819 - 168 | 1824 - 194 | 1829 - 297 |
| 1820 - 240 | 1825 - 175 | 1830 - 269 |
| 1821 - 157 | 1826 - 215 | |
| 1822 - 152 | 1827 - 265 | |
| 1823 - 119 | 1828 - 276 | |

Religious 'enthusiasm' played a diminished role in providing a psychological 'safety valve' for mass aggressions. Expansion among all three Methodist connexions - the Wesleyans, Kilhamites and Primitives - had been more a feature of the earlier part of the decade. Even then there were few suggestions of any rise in the psychic 'barometer'. Wesleyan expansion, prompted by the explosion of Primitive recruitment in the first two or three years of the decade, was continuous but on a low level.

Table 6:21

Methodist expansion 1820-30 ⁹¹

Years (numbers reported at annual July Conferences)

| <u>Connexion</u> | <u>1820</u> | <u>1821</u> | <u>1822</u> | <u>1823</u> | <u>1824</u> | <u>1825</u> | <u>1826</u> | <u>1827</u> | <u>1828</u> | <u>1829</u> | <u>1830</u> |
|------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Wesleyan | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <u>Circuit</u> | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Sheffield | 2515 | 2500 | 2606 | 2700 | 2820 | 3000 | 3100 | 3140 | 3200 | 3100 | 3090 |
| Barnsley | 480 | 560 | 621 | 650 | 700 | 700 | 710 | 917 | 940 | 700 | 668 |
| Doncaster | 756 | 1020 | 1106 | 1080 | 1080 | 1100 | 1190 | 1120 | 1130 | 1132 | 1200 |
| Rotherham | 930 | 930 | 1060 | 1150 | 1300 | 1200 | 1100 | 1120 | 1150 | 1170 | 1216 |
| <u>Total</u> | <u>4681</u> | <u>5010</u> | <u>5383</u> | <u>5580</u> | <u>5900</u> | <u>6000</u> | <u>6100</u> | <u>6297</u> | <u>6420</u> | <u>6102</u> | <u>6174</u> |

Primitive

Circuit

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------|--|-------------|-------------|------------|--|--|--|--|------------|------------|
| Sheffield | | 1129 | 500 | 395 | | | | | 260 | 422 |
| Barnsley | | 704 | 869 | 500 | | | | | 498 | 375 |
| <u>Total</u> | | <u>1833</u> | <u>1369</u> | <u>895</u> | | | | | <u>758</u> | <u>797</u> |

Sheffield Society

99 86 90 91 96 128 114

Kilhamite

Circuit

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Sheffield | 526 | 503 | 522 | 492 | 540 | 570 | 544 | 532 | 512 | 556 | 673 |
| Barnsley | 378 | 300 | 326 | 312 | 286 | 288 | 290 | 390 | 520 | 500 | 440 |
| <u>Total</u> | <u>904</u> | <u>803</u> | <u>848</u> | <u>804</u> | <u>826</u> | <u>858</u> | <u>834</u> | <u>922</u> | <u>1032</u> | <u>1056</u> | <u>1113</u> |

Between mid-1826 and 1827 there appeared in both Barnsley Wesleyan and Kilhamite circuits signs of significant revivalist expansion (29.1% Wesleyan and 33% Kilhamite growth). Primitive Methodism's energies locally appeared very limited. A Rotherham camp meeting in August 1826 failed in an attempt to imitate the huge Mexborough meeting of 1821.⁹² Local factors were more relevant to explain this than the general economic depression of local trades because the revival was not universal. Other forms of popular plebeian religion existed, like the Baptists and sects like the Southcottians. The insignificant expansion of Methodism, the most widespread popular religion, generally continued to emphasize the cultural alienation of the emergent labour class from the classes trying to dominate it and to reflect, even in a negative form, the cultural self-assertion of a class in the making.

The pressure of harvest shortage and hunger directed the energies of stronger elements of organized labour into renewed agitation against the Corn Laws. A public meeting at Sheffield Town Hall on 20 November

1826 saw the leading labour class Sheffield trade union and political leaders, Joseph Bullock (Filesmiths), Joseph Kirk (Filesmiths), Thomas Booth (Britannia metalsmiths), Robert Wright, John Sheldon and several less familiar names (Bradshaw, Hill, Bishop), sharing a platform with James Montgomery and several other patrician members of the local elite.⁹³ Over 2600 signatures were collected against the Corn Laws and by December 7500 had been obtained.⁹⁴ The depression of trade had not totally paralysed the emergent labour class.

Not until the spring and summer months of 1827 was there a sign of upturn in the region's industrial economy. The winter months of early 1827 had been exceptionally severe⁹⁵ with widespread short-time working. Sheffield families pawned their bedding, clothes and furniture to supplement 'working' family incomes of 10-11s per week.⁹⁶ Economic revival in the region was slow and based on low prices for labour and finished products and hence low profits.⁹⁷ When it came it was confined to certain sections of the region's industries. Of the Sheffield trades, the razor trade and the hardware trades were fully employed.⁹⁸ Lighter and cheaper ware trades were not.⁹⁹ With the competition of cotton goods, only a third of the looms in the linen trades were said to be in use in September and heavy stocks piled up in the manufacturers' warehouses.¹⁰⁰ The region's ironworks and collieries were only slowly picking up work.¹⁰¹ Labour everywhere was economically weak, except for groups like the Sheffield Britannia metalsmiths, filesmiths and the grinders. The latter group in their various sections continued 'rattening' non-union men and the irresponsible masters who used them and demonstrated their greater degree of economic independence irrespective of the phases of the business cycle.¹⁰²

Through 1828 a slight upturn continued. The American tariff hit the cutlery trade and related Sheffield trades with strong dependence on this market.¹⁰³ Any progress was based on low prices and profits in all the region's trades. Labour's wages in cutlery, related workshop metalworking, linen weaving, coal mining and iron

founding deteriorated with little fight back from organized labour. In the cutlery trades there was a short-lived attempt in 1828 by an 'association' of journeymen cutlers to get the Cutlers' Company and the manufacturers to work out a system of regularized production and take it out of the hands of 'small masters' and 'factor-masters'. A public declaration of the journeymen declared to the regular masters in August 1828:

We submit for your consideration the inconsistent manner in which cutlers working for different warehouses are paid for their work, whereby they can seldom obtain a living price, consequently, they are deprived of all the comforts of life, and many cases get into debt to relieve themselves and their families.

At the same time this section of journeymen interest deferred to the employers:

At the same time, you, as masters, are labouring under many inconveniences peculiar to yourselves, whereby our trade is much discouraged, and your profits and real interest much obstructed.¹⁰⁴

Despite the growing polarization of master and man in the workshop situation the 'craft mentality', uniting master and man in adherence to traditional guild ideals of 'fair price', 'just wages' and guaranteeing employment to those who had served apprenticeships, was not dead. This 'association' however was short-lived and no more was heard about it.

Trade continued to improve on the same terms of low wages, prices and profits, in the winter months of 1828-9.¹⁰⁵ One group of Sheffield workers, the table knife grinders, attempted to obtain better wages.¹⁰⁶ Industrial struggle and political agitation continued on a low level despite the political activity involved in petitioning and counter-petitioning relating to the issue of Catholic Emancipation.¹⁰⁷ During the spring and summer of 1829 trade severely deteriorated for a short time and against this background workers in the cutlery and linen trades faced considerable reductions. In Sheffield's healthy file trade some masters were discounting the men between 1d and 3d in the

shilling on finished work.¹⁰⁸ This prompted a strike spanning several weeks in July and August. With the picking up of the trade this was amicably ended.¹⁰⁹ In the other cutlery trades labour was too weak to fight. The linen weavers, after nearly six more years of wage reduction since 1823, were forced to fight because of the starvation level the employers had driven them to. The history of the 1829 strike warrants a detailed study because in a moment's anger we see dominant attitudes built up in the weaving districts in the 1820's. Its results significantly affected the class struggle in Barnsley through the 1830's.

The strike began with one employer's attempts to impose a 30% reduction on his paying rate for weaving 'ducks', a common item.¹¹⁰ The weavers met to confront this master only to find the other masters were behind him with a new proposed list of prices. Over several days angry negotiations took place and the magistrate had to swear in 150 special constables and call in some Lancers from Sheffield barracks. A new list of prices was worked out against a violent background of confrontations between employers, military and magistrates on the one hand and weavers on the other. Because of some compromise between the parties a short-term peaceful solution was obtained.¹¹¹ The worsening of trade and particularly the competition in a shrinking market of other English linen manufacturing towns (like Darlington) hit the Barnsley area's trade even more. In July 500 weavers were led by two of their leaders (Patrick Flanagan and William Ashton) in a march to Wentworth (Earl Fitzwilliam's seat) to ask for help. Fitzwilliam and other local gentry, as well as the public of Barnsley, contributed to a 'Weavers' Distress Fund'.¹¹²

Throughout August masters pushed for a further reduction as looms ceased to work through loss of trade.¹¹³ By then, of 3763 looms in the Barnsley and surrounding districts, only 170 looms were said to be in full work, 1689 were partially employed and 1844 were totally idle.¹¹⁴ A new list was proposed which drastically undercut the 2 June list.

The weavers replied with mass meetings and angry resolutions. Two meetings were held on the Monday (24) and Wednesday (26) during the last week of August. The Monday meeting heard the angry voices of the weavers' leaders (particularly William Ashton, Patrick Flanagan and Peter Hoey) spelling out the class conscious social aggression of the weavers. Ashton, sneering at a petty tradesman who had been asked to chair the meeting, observed:

It seems rather extraordinary that we have not one friend in the town that is inclined to take the Chair. They all decline the honour which we wish to confer upon them, for I say it is an honour to be elected Chairman by poor people. When a meeting was held [Feb. 1829] to petition against the Catholic claims, a person was proposed, and he had no hesitation in taking the Chair. We must stand opposed to manufacturers for they are a tyrannical set of men.

The other speakers concentrated on the economic aspects of the question. They talked of a 'famine price' for labour, of the similar conditions of weavers in Spitalfields, Norwich and Ireland, and of the rapid decline of trade since the better days of the early 1820's. They attacked the masters' hypocrisy in reducing prices after saying a week earlier that they could make profits on the levels set by the 2 June list. Ashton went on to sharpen the weavers' social and political consciousness with some strictures on the 'lessons of history':

When we were petitioners for reform, the manufacturers came forward to give you bullets instead of bread; and on a late occasion when petitioning for the rights of Catholics, they were the first to come forward to oppose the motion. But you were determined not to be put down, and it gives me great gratification to see you animated by the same Spirit now.

At the Wednesday meeting similar sentiments were echoed. Ashton, who talked of the wider exploitation of working people with references to proposed legislation to allow dissection of the dead and to the Corn Laws, tellingly confronted the weavers with the social contradictions of the society in which they lived. He referred to 'the law that allows Prince Leopold to receive £50,000 a year, while there are 500 men here that have not a bite of bread'. Frank Mirfield spelt out

this social contradiction in more direct terms, drawing their attention to low wages, 'the cause of our meagre faces and emaciated constitutions racked up by famine and distress'. In his words was contained more than a suggestion of a fundamental understanding of the nature, value and rights of labour:

The labouring class constitute the greatest mass of people in every country; they are the machines that keep it in constant motion: they feed and clothe the rest, and surely for doing this they are entitled to a belly-full themselves.

There were hints of desperation characteristic of starvation politics in the speech despite the dignity of the resolutions passed. Ashton's final words were forming on the lips of many hungry weavers:

My determination is this - before I would die for want of bread I would exterminate two or three of the tyrants that were the cause of it.

Following the masters' decline of the final demand of the 'Weavers' Committee' to re-think the new list, the houses of three large manufacturers were attacked by over 500 weavers. The military were called in from Sheffield and more special constables were sworn in. The magistrates sat all Thursday managing the town's return to order. William Ashton was arrested for inciting violence and was later released on bail. With the other leaders he went to address a mass meeting on May Day Green later that day. Caution was advised and the violence temporarily subsided.¹¹⁵ On Monday (31 August) the weavers, despite the magistrates' restrictions, held a mid-day meeting in the Market Place to discuss the issues further. Throughout the week mounting frustration was expressed in acts of incendiarism. The employers were in turmoil. As the Leeds Mercury reported, 'almost every warehouse in the town is converted into a sort of garrison, with arms, ammunition'.¹¹⁶ There were rumours that the burning of barns on the outskirts of town were a diversion in order to let the weavers attack the warehouses in the town. The magistrates banned another mass meeting the weavers planned for Thursday 3 September. More

troops arrived on Thursday as the linen manufacturers began to implement the new list prices. These represented a 9-10% reduction on the June 1829 lists.¹¹⁷ The weavers' turnout, which had only been partial and intermittent since June, now became total. A new 'Weavers' Committee' took over direct management of the strike. On 7 September this body called another mass meeting on Market Hill. Leading members of the Committee, including William Ashton, Frank Mirfield, Samuel Hoyle, William Richards, Patrick Flanagan and Terence Kelly, addressed the meeting. This time Ashton was not alone in forcing wider issues into the open. Richard Jackson, the young weaver demagogue of the post-war struggles of 1816-20 now fulfilling his political calling while travelling as a tea dealer, returned to the platform to remind his brothers in labour:

I am well aware that if we gain our object, it will not restore us to freedom, happiness and comfort. Even the list prices are a famine price, and if we work at the list prices we are obliged to rise up early in the morning and work late at night; and yet be clothed in rags and plagued with twinges. We must look for Parliamentary Reform, and petition for a redress of grievances under which we suffer.

Jackson echoed the old radical demands for abolishing political corruption and mismanagement. He was particularly aggressive about the £7 million cost of a standing army, 'this to give us bullets when we cry for bread'. He claimed 'fat and jolly soldiers' alone kept the English subjugated. This was, he claimed, 'an indication that the system is fast approaching to a conclusion'. For he recalled, 'the celebrated Mr Paine said, if Mr Pitt lived to the age of man, which I suppose is three score and ten, he would live to see the end of his system'.¹¹⁸

Throughout the week strike-breaking labour was attacked as the strike was vigorously enforced. Several arrests followed.¹¹⁹ The following Monday (14), a thousand weavers met in the Market Place to organize a deputation of their number to present a memorial to the Prime Minister (the Duke of Wellington) who was visiting Doncaster

Races. At this time delegates were also sent into Lancashire and further afield in the North to seek out the facts on comparative prices for labour. The memorial, which attacked Free Trade which it claimed as the root cause of distress, was accepted by the Duke who promised to put it before the Board of Trade.¹²⁰

The strike was solidly kept up during the next week with a collection of funds being organized among those weavers not in a distressed state who were employed by masters paying the June prices.¹²¹ On the following Monday a public discussion involving the editors of leading Leeds newspapers (Edward Baines (Mercury) and John Foster (Patriot)) and the town's employers and weavers' leaders took place.¹²² Baines tried to show that Free Trade was not the cause of distress. The weavers' leaders would not accept this. They, like Foster, saw Free Trade as one of several important causes including taxation and currency shortages. They agreed with Baines that political corruption was also at the heart of the matter. Ashton cut right through the Free Trade propaganda. Coming back on Baines' argument that exports had increased threefold in the three years, he noted that now only a third of the old level of production was maintained:

The cause of the increase of exports is, the poor have not got the money wherewith to purchase shirts to their backs, and therefore they are forced to send, on speculation abroad, that which the poor ought to consume at home.

He provided some interesting political arithmetic:

A thousand looms produced 2,600,000 yards of cloth more for the same money in one year (1828), as they did in 1825, and if these 2,600,000 were in the same ratio as in 1825 the weavers would receive £13,000 more than they do at present. You know that there are 4000 looms in Barnsley and its vicinity, so that they ought to produce 10,400,000 yards more now, than in 1825 for the same money. But if these were paid for as in the above year, (and why not since provisions were nearly as dear; and taxes doubled) it would put in circulation £52,000 more a year than is in circulation at present.

Mixed in with the several familiar explanations of distress was some solid anti-capitalist sentiment generated by the experience of con-

tinuous wage reduction. Ashton stated, 'I believe competition does no good to the poor, for the manufacturer throws the evil from his own shoulders upon that of the labourer'. There was as yet however little thinking about alternatives, although this was to be the year when a new surge of co-operative energy was discovered among the region's labour class.

Such encounters of ideas were replaced in the next few days by the commencement of the strike's disintegration into open violence. On Thursday 1 October the climax to some earlier skirmishes between striking and strike-breaking weavers came.¹²³ Several hundred weavers attacked strike-breakers' houses in Dodworth. The troops and special constables were called in to restore order and nineteen arrests were made. Warrants were issued for the principal speakers at a meeting on the Barebones before the violence on Thursday. Of these Ashton, Mirfield, Jackson and Kelly escaped and only Flanagan was immediately arrested.¹²⁴ The Weavers' Committee survived this blow and the violence towards strike-breakers continued in the first three weeks of October.¹²⁵ In the first week weavers taking work out in the nearby countryside at Hoyland Swaine were attacked.¹²⁶ During the second week some weavers tried to return to work in Barnsley but were forced to rejoin the strike.¹²⁷ More arrests of strikers were made but the violence, and with it the general solidarity of the weavers, continued.¹²⁸ Meetings to boost morale were kept up by a shadowy committee. Women were particularly prominent in the last stages of the strike.¹²⁹ Solidarity was maintained despite arrests and intimidation until the end of October.¹³⁰ The weavers were forced back to work at the new list price during the first two weeks of November.¹³¹ The pursuit of their leaders continued. Ashton and Mirfield were taken in November¹³² but Jackson remained at liberty until March 1830.¹³³ Subsequently Ashton and Mirfield were sentenced to fourteen years transportation at the Yorkshire Lent Assizes in March 1830.¹³⁴ Most of the eleven weavers tried at the West Riding Quarter Sessions in

October had received short (1-3 months) terms of imprisonment with hard labour in Wakefield House of Correction.¹³⁵ The majority of the others were tried at the Assizes with Ashton and Mirfield. As if to compensate for the anticipated harsh verdicts on Ashton and Mirfield, the Jury found these not guilty.¹³⁶

The weavers' organization was badly weakened for the moment. There were hints of a co-operative production being attempted. These took place in the context of wider co-operative activity in the weaving districts.¹³⁷ During the winter of 1829-30 there was vindication of claims made during the strike that life in Barnsley was worse than it had been in Ireland.¹³⁸ In January 1830 the Sheffield Iris reported on the desperation of journeymen weavers earning 3s 10d per week after deductions.¹³⁹ The same month the Mercury revealed the terrible situation in the surrounding villages of Kexborough, Darton, Cawthorne, Hoyland Swaine, Clayton, Denaby and High Hoyland. Here unemployed weavers were said to be working on the roads to support, 'half naked, starved, hungered and death-like children'.¹⁴⁰ Such conditions were not exclusively restricted to this northern edge of the region. Outside it, the woollen districts to the north were suffering as badly.¹⁴¹ Although the metal working districts around Sheffield were not as badly hit by the depression of trade, an investigation of a Parliamentary Select Committee revealed the prevalence of low wages in the Sheffield trades. This claimed that over two-thirds of the workmen earned no more than 16s a week.¹⁴² Talk of the 'spirit of emigration fast extending itself' and of grinders and filemakers emigrating to the United States in the pages of the March editions of the Sheffield Mercury hinted at what was going on.¹⁴³ The increase in the level of indicted crime further indicated the town's economic stagnation. On the eve of the Reform Bill crisis the working people of industrial South Yorkshire, including cutlers, related workshop metalworkers, weavers, colliers and ironworks' labour, and among whom there was a labour class in the

making, found their potential political energies drained in the day-to-day struggle for material existence.

3) Betrayal! Old Echoes and the New Voices Heard during the Reform Crisis 1830-32

The level of commercial activity in the region increased only slightly in the spring of 1830.¹⁴⁴ The amount of work available increased, but prices, wages and profits remained low. Labour was in a weak bargaining position, largely because of the surplus of labour. Even among the Sheffield trades where there were groups of workers like the sawmakers, filemakers, filesmiths and Britannia metalsmiths who were able to maintain continuous industrial organization, the weakened ranks of organized labour were struggling to maintain a newly formed defensive alliance. A 'Trades' General Union' of united trade unions was unsuccessfully trying to get the employers to collaborate in a joint fund to keep surplus labour out of the market.¹⁴⁵ Outside Sheffield labour was less united. Colliers and ironworks' labour were un-organized, only in boom conditions were they strong enough even to think about organization. The weavers no longer had an active union. Isolated groups attempting co-operative production as a new solution reflected a temporary turning away from direct collective mass action.

Throughout the remainder of 1830 the region's emergent labour class was forced towards renewed political activism. Already among certain groups, in certain situations, the political temper of the labour class had been demonstrated. Among the Barnsley weavers and Sheffield metalworkers, the Catholic Emancipation issue had forced politics into the open in 1829. The depth of the weavers' economic desperation had already forced them to reconsider the question of political reform. Cobbett's Register was still widely read, and this was reflected by the large audiences Cobbett drew in January 1830 when he visited the region on a lecture tour.¹⁴⁶

The issue of political reform was being raised in the political nation and was being taken up by the disenfranchised bourgeois and petty bourgeois classes.¹⁴⁷ Birmingham was the new focus for a new extra-parliamentary campaign conducted by these classes in the early part of 1830. In other large industrial towns such as Sheffield a process of petitioning for limited reform began in this period.¹⁴⁸ It was however the death of the King and the holding of an election against the background of the July revolution in France which really gave impetus to the struggle for political reform. In this working people were to play an increasingly significant independent role. The new parliament contained groupings more favourable to some measure of reform. The West Riding had sent four reform candidates to Westminster. In the autumn of 1830 against a national background of rural violence in the south, industrial unrest in the north and the extension of revolution on the European continent, it became apparent that reform would become a reality. The formation of a new ministry was accelerated by popular violence in London in November. In the provinces the political significance of the working people assumed greater proportions.

In Sheffield respectable or bourgeois reformers prepared to launch a political association similar to the Birmingham Political Union. In November a preparatory meeting of 'Friends of Parliamentary Reform' took place in the Albion Hotel.¹⁴⁹ In early December they presided over a 5000-strong mass meeting to launch their petition for reform.¹⁵⁰ The leadership they gave was typical of that of bourgeois and petty bourgeois political radicalism. It was against corruption but it had no definite commitment to universal suffrage and had a limited vision of the wider dimensions of social justice. Working people saw political reform as the key to remove the many other impositions upon them. They saw the reform campaign as a potential channel for all their grievances to be articulated. The hold of this leadership group continually prevented this. Working

people lacked a consistent political leadership from below. What political education they were receiving came from diverse, uncoordinated sources, including respectable reformers, Cobbett's Register, the unstamped press generally, trade union politicians and itinerant political orators. Regarding this last influence, the region had been visited during 1830 by Cobbett and John Thelwall (the SCI veteran).¹⁵¹ In November, at both Barnsley and Sheffield, two other less familiar itinerants, 'Elias' and 'Shiloh' (Southcottian 'prophets'), went through a very interesting political routine. The Sheffield Mercury reported:

The 'Prophets' opened the campaign by a volley of the coarsest abuse on the bishops and clergy of the Establishment, and on the 'black coated' gentry in general, sparing neither sect nor party. The bishops were compared to cabbage stalks and all other ministers of religion were styled reverend devils, and thieves and robbers. The whole county was next denounced as in a state of complete vassalage to priestly domination; and then a sudden and inflammatory transition was made to colonial slavery and white slavery in the mills of Bradford, Leeds and elsewhere, ridiculing the emancipation of the former while the latter existed at home.¹⁵²

Despite these active influences, the mass of working people, and the labour class emerging from it, had no strong voice on the public platform. Isaac Ironside, a young petty bourgeois who was associated with the respectable reformers, and Charles Alcock, a tradesman of similar standing who was related to John Alcock the SSCI veteran, came closest to representing the social and political perspectives of the working people at the mass December meeting. They sought to introduce a radical petition for more thorough reform. Other under-reported voices joined them, particularly that of Bishop, a workman and local labour leader. Bishop observed;

I am a working man, and I know that a working man has as much right to give his opinion as a nobleman has. I have heard men, on these steps, say that I have not a right to vote because I have no property. I have property, my labour is my property.¹⁵³

The labour class continued to find its identity in economic struggle against the wider background of a nation-wide surge in trade

union, co-operative and radical political organization. In December two Manchester delegates, possibly from a branch of the National Union of the Working Classes (NUWC), met Sheffield's labour leaders in an attempt to get them to adopt similar principles of organization.¹⁵⁴ The results of this approach are not known. Trade was now picking up in early 1831. A magistrate observed that in Sheffield, 'a good feeling prevails among all classes of the population and happily they are pretty well employed'.¹⁵⁵ The Sheffield 'Trades' General Union' came out more into the open acting as an aggressive trade union alliance defending the actions of various trades. In the early months of 1831 it helped sections of the table knife trade in a successful strike for prices closer to those of 1810.¹⁵⁶ The bulk of the locally organized labour class passively watched the struggle for political reform unfolding. In Parliament the Whigs were drafting a reform bill. This was presented in March. Accompanying this process mass petitions were collected nationally by the newly-formed respectable Political Unions. The Sheffield Political Union declared itself in January 1831.¹⁵⁷ A petition with over 13,000 Sheffield signatures was presented along with other petitions from the region's smaller towns where similar extra-parliamentary activity was also going on.¹⁵⁸ Mass meetings were held in all the active towns.¹⁵⁹ In April 1831 the bill met significant opposition and parliament dissolved. Again mass meetings were held and funds were collected to urge the reforming interest in the May elections onwards.¹⁶⁰ The Sheffield Trades' Union voted £20 to the reform candidates in the coming county election.¹⁶¹ Organized labour was making a political commitment and it was one distinct from the respectable reformers.

The ritual of local parliamentary elections attracted large crowds in an election where as usual the mass of working people had no meaningful role to play.¹⁶² In the new Parliament in which the four newly elected West Riding reform members sat, a new reform bill was being passed through the summer and autumn of 1831. In late

September the threat of the House of Lords to destroy the bill caused political unions like the SPU to organize petitions and mass meetings to urge the Lords to pass the bill.¹⁶³ Petitioning failed and the Lords' rejection in early October led to an angry reaction in the country. Noisy but managed mass meetings accompanied by violence took place at Nottingham, Derby and in the West Riding.¹⁶⁴ Political unions dramatically expanded, reflecting significant mass initiative during this and the months immediately following. In London signs of popular organizations existing apart from the respectable unions were seen.

Locally there was little hint of a striving for political independence in the way the political aspirations of the emergent labour class were articulated. The progressive press was the organ of 'respectable' political reform and likely to under-report labour class action. The SPU and other smaller local branches of a now national reform organization totally dominated the field.

Throughout the winter months of 1831-2 and into the spring of 1832 when a new bill was formulated and was being passed through the Commons by the Whigs, local and national pressure through constitutional means was kept up. Throughout popular aggression was 'managed' and directed into potentially less revolutionary channels.¹⁶⁵ This was true in October 1831 after the Lords' rejection of the bill. This was particularly so in the stormy weeks of April and May 1832 when the new bill was blocked in the Lords.¹⁶⁶ During the 'Days of May' when Earl Grey 'resigned', the SPU's membership grew dramatically by 1500 a week.¹⁶⁷ Like many other similar bodies of respectable constitutional-minded democrats, it made the best revolutionary noises it knew to contain the violent potential of the mass. In imitation of the English Jacobins' idea of the 'Convention' it sat 'permanently' to agitate for reform during the May crisis.¹⁶⁸ Labour leaders increasingly saw that the SPU did not represent the best interests of the labour class and working people generally. They saw it did not

consistently embrace universal suffrage and was prepared to accept the £10 householder qualification as the maximum concession of the political nation.

When the Reform Bill was won and passed into law in early June, the SPU presided over the public celebrations.¹⁶⁹ It was active in sponsoring popular candidates for the coming election in which Sheffield would elect two MPs. What had been won for the labour class? It had no vote. It would be represented only in the loosest sense of the word by barrister John Parker, a local banker's son, Samuel Bailey, a 'stuffing' merchant-manufacturer turned gentleman philanthropist, John Silk Buckingham, professional politician and opportunist and Thomas Asline Ward, a wealthy merchant. The mass of the working people began to see some of the contradictions with the electioneering of July.¹⁷⁰ Their class conscious leadership of trade unionists and political instructors emerged into the open from the unrecorded, unreported radical debating clubs, reading rooms and trade union committees. This was the world of 'unstamped' readers where Paine and Volney were still sacred texts. It was a world where the practical politics of economic struggle were as important as the more philosophical politics of political struggle. A challenge to the political ascendancy of the Bourgeoisie began to be mounted here.

This leadership organized the political agitation of the mass of workers excluded from representation. On 23 July a 'Non-Electors' meeting took place in Paradise Square. A band, a Union Jack and orange banners inscribed 'Our Civil Rights secured by peaceful and united efforts', 'Our Country is dear to us; our Liberty is dearer' and 'England for all thy faults, I love thee still' led a procession which filled up the Square. The meeting was chaired by John Sheldon, a 'respectable' tradesman who had chaired the 1823 Combination Law meeting. It was addressed by the labour class's political and industrial leaders and 'friends'. These included Joseph Kirk and Thomas Booth, from the filesmiths' and Britannia metalsmiths' respectively.

They were active in 1819 over Peterloo and in the mid-1820's active over the Combination Laws and the Corn Laws. Other platform speakers like Brown, Wardle, Robert Wright, Berry, Bishop, Tyas, Dixon, Johnson, Oxley and Brooks also had records of labour class activity in the 1820's.

The organization of this protest meeting showed that much had been learnt about mounting an orderly demonstration. The procession had cleverly been shielded from any threat of magisterial interference by the employment of symbols of loyalty. The political objectives of the labour leaders represented a fairly pragmatic compromise. They met to mobilize mass support for the most progressive of the respectable candidates who had promised to consider universal suffrage more favourably. The leadership eschewed extreme tactics. John Wardle, 'a mechanic' who stood on the platform at a 'Non-Electors' meeting in October, denounced a handbill from 'An Old Reformer' which was said to be circulating the town. This handbill advocated that 'exclusive dealing' be used against enemies of universal suffrage.¹⁷¹ What effect the 'Non-Electors' campaign had is more easily assessed by looking at the eventual number of votes T.A. Ward received. Its real importance was in demonstrating the possibilities of political independence to working people.

The months of electioneering between June and December 1832 were disturbed by forces other than popular political discontent. Sheffield and the wider region struggled through a cholera epidemic which was at its height in August and September. In Sheffield it eventually claimed 400 lives before the year was out.¹⁷² Sheffield's trade deteriorated in these months, particularly with the failure of the autumn's American orders to reach normal levels. Similarly the other industrial communities of the region faced economic hardship in the face of a downturning business cycle and longer term structural problems. Linen's problems in the face of the strong competition of cotton meant the weaving population of the northern districts continued

to face the worst problems. Everywhere in the industrial economy labour was organizationally on the defensive and money wage levels were driven downwards.¹⁷³ Against this background three interesting currents can be observed. These were a surge of interest in co-operative activity, an outbreak of Methodist revival and a rapid increase in indicted crime. Each of these said something about the conditions of the mass of working people and had implications for any class conscious vanguard seeking to revolutionize this mass.

Since late 1829 co-operative societies had been established in the region to provide sections of the working population with cheaper food, employment and new forms of social meaning. The small scale production of linen cloth by co-operative means since 1829 has already been commented on several times. At the third national Co-operative Congress held in London in April 1832 seven local societies with a combined membership of around 350 were represented. One of these (Barnsley) had been established in 1829, two in 1830 (Sheffield's 'first' and 'second' societies), two in 1831 (Cumberworth and Ardsley) and two in 1832 (Barnsley West and Denby). In the months following the Congress, reports in the co-operative press, particularly the Crisis and the Lancashire and Yorkshire Co-operator, showed a vigorous propaganda campaign was being conducted by co-operators in various of the region's communities, particularly in Ardsley, Barnsley, Silkstone and Sheffield.¹⁷⁴ The report of the fourth Congress held in Liverpool in October 1832 showed the organizational advance of these groups and their growing interest in 'labour exchanges' and other schemes linking them into the national development of an important anti-capitalist creed.¹⁷⁵ Enthusiasm for co-operation was the least significant of the three currents noticeable in the latter half of 1832 but it was the most relevant in terms of educating labour class leadership, particularly shaping its economic ideas but also its ideas concerning cultural separateness. Co-operative ideas were more important than co-operative organizations. It is difficult to discover direct links

in terms of personnel between Owenite and other co-operative activists and the labour class's industrial or political leaders. There were some and these were revealed later in the 1830's and 1840's.

Methodist revival was marked during the latter months of 1832. It was marked among all three major Methodist groupings as the following statistics show:

Table 6:22 Methodist expansion 1830-37 176

| <u>Connexion</u> | <u>Circuit</u> | <u>Years</u> | | | | | | | |
|------------------|----------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| | | <u>1830</u> | <u>1831</u> | <u>1832</u> | <u>1833</u> | <u>1834</u> | <u>1835</u> | <u>1836</u> | <u>1837</u> |
| Wesleyan: | Sheffield | 3090 | 3070 | 3436 | 4300 | 4900 | 4630 | 4579 | 4616 |
| | Barnsley | 668 | 640 | 607 | 677 | 687 | 684 | 710 | 710 |
| | Doncaster | 1200 | 1300 | 1274 | 1328 | 1327 | 1369 | 1330 | 1274 |
| | Rotherham | 1216 | 1217 | 1194 | 1450 | 1480 | 1520 | 1513 | 1451 |
| | Total | <u>6174</u> | <u>6227</u> | <u>6511</u> | <u>7751</u> | <u>8394</u> | <u>8201</u> | <u>8132</u> | <u>8051</u> |
| Primitive: | Sheffield | 422 | 360 | 364 | 407 | 438 | - | 469 | - |
| | Barnsley | <u>375</u> | <u>381</u> | <u>421</u> | <u>441</u> | <u>441</u> | - | - | - |
| | Total | <u>797</u> | <u>741</u> | <u>785</u> | <u>848</u> | <u>879</u> | ? | ? | ? |
| Kilhamite: | Sheffield | 673 | 683 | 827 | 1150 | 1400 | 1308 | 1282 | 1037 |
| | Barnsley | 440 | 364 | 374 | 384 | 320 | 331 | 340 | 350 |
| | Doncaster | | | | | | <u>137</u> | <u>128</u> | <u>114</u> |
| | Total | <u>1113</u> | <u>1047</u> | <u>1201</u> | <u>1534</u> | <u>1720</u> | <u>1776</u> | <u>1750</u> | <u>1501</u> |

Between July 1832 - July 1833, and heavily concentrated in the first half of this period, there was a 25% growth of membership in the Wesleyan Sheffield circuit, 11% in Barnsley, 21% in Rotherham and 4% in Doncaster. The region's two Primitive circuits, Sheffield and Barnsley, showed 11% and 5% rises. The Kilhamite circuits showed rises of 30% and 39%. Revival was a response to the cholera outbreak, to the trade depression and to political betrayal. Revival enthusiasm was mainly a response to the cholera and in no way was there as strong a response to political defeat as in the 1790's. Methodism, although still an important cultural factor in South Yorkshire, especially in agricultural and semi-industrial rural villages, no longer had the same significance it had in Wesley's life-time.

The rise in criminal activity suggested by the rise in indictments showed the desperation of less organized sections of the region's working people.

Table 6:23

Crime 1826-33.¹⁷⁷

| | |
|---|------------|
| (a) <u>Felons committed to Wakefield House of Correction for trial at Quarter Sessions</u> | |
| 1827 - 279 | 1831 - 327 |
| 1828 - 286 | 1832 - 399 |
| 1829 - 269 | 1833 - 430 |
| 1830 - 279 | |
| (b) <u>Number of felons in Wakefield House of Correction for trial at Spring Sessions (held in April at Pontefract)</u> | |
| 1826 - 70 | 1830 - 119 |
| 1827 - 115 | 1831 - 136 |
| 1828 - 116 | 1832 - 138 |
| 1829 - 131 | 1833 - 191 |

The cholera outbreak was over by late November but it significantly disturbed the atmosphere for Sheffield's first parliamentary election.¹⁷⁸ There were only 3504 eligible electors in the new constituency. This represented 8% of a 43,458 adult male population.¹⁷⁹ The poll was conducted over three days, 12-14 December.¹⁸⁰ Working people had no vote but they gave support to T.A. Ward, a progressive employer and the SPU's candidate. Ward was not their choice, but he was a reformer (of sorts). Ward won the 'show of hands' from a 30,000 strong crowd at the hustings on the first day of the poll. The 'official' procedures took their course over the next two days.

On 14 December the poll closed at 4 p.m. with an unofficial return showing John Parker ahead, closely followed by Buckingham and with Ward last. At 6 p.m. a crowd of men and boys assembled outside the Tontine Inn and began to throw stones. At 7 p.m. this attack ceased and a group of these 'political hooligans' moved on to attack Mr Palfreyman's house in Bank Street. The Riot Act had to be read, special constables were assembled and a dispatch was sent to Rotherham for the regiment of infantry stationed there. Between this time and 10.15 p.m. two troops of the 18th Irish Foot, commanded by Captain Graves and accompanied by magistrates T.B. Bosville, Hugh Parker and Henry Walker, marched up Waingate, formed up in front of the Tontine Inn (which was still being stoned) and confronted the swollen crowd of angry towns-

people. Bosville was hit on the head by a stone and his colleagues ordered the front rank of troops (twenty men and a corporal) to fire ball cartridge into the crowd. Several volleys were fired and the crowd, in panic, dispersed in all directions carrying some of the wounded away and leaving others in the street. Three men and two boys lay dead. The Sheffield, Rotherham, Barnsley and Kiveton troops of Yeomen Cavalry were called out to reinforce the civil and military forces in the town. They remained all the following day. The public feeling of outrage was restrained by this military presence. No open acts of violence followed, despite the provocation of a 'justifiable homicide' verdict of the coroner on the three men and two fourteen year old boys killed. Thus the new political order was christened with the blood of working people.

The political and industrial leaders and other activists among Sheffield's organized labour class appeared to have no part in fostering the violence. The violence appeared as a spontaneous reaction of the sub-political or semi-political mass to a sudden awakening to their political betrayal. Its crudity might seem to have reflected the intellectual malnutrition amongst the sub-political. Yet their violence was rational. It was class violence. They smashed the expensive window glass in the faces of men of significant property because they had denied them, the men of no property or little property (for they had their labour), the right to a minimal say in the government of their country. They saw the political nation was still an exclusive arena for the old landowning and commercial classes as well as now for the newer industrialist 'big bourgeoisie' and many of the 'small' or petty bourgeoisie of lesser employers, tradesmen and shopkeepers. Henceforth the alienation between the multiplying elements making up the labour class and the property owning classes could only be more complete. A growing vanguard of class leadership, gaining experience and understanding in trade union, co-operative and political activity, was now in the last phase of its preparation to lead the masses openly onto the historical stage.

4) Judas Unmasked - the Voice will not be silent 1833-37.

The trade of the region improved only slightly through the early part of 1833. Underemployment and short-time working rather than unemployment were the dominant realities in the work situation of most trades in the region.¹⁸¹ The emergent labour class of the early 1830's was a lean and hungry one. The level of production, prices, profits and money wages remained low. In the cutlery trades where the fall in finished ware prices was significant (30-40% since 1814-15), the rates at which money wages were calculated were estimated to have fallen even further in several trades.¹⁸² One estimate for 1833 suggested a fall of 60-70% in the scissor trade, 30-50% in the table knife trade, 40-50% in the pen and pocket knife trades and 30-40% in the fork trade. The estimates of 10% in the hardware trades, 10-15% in the razor trade and a negligible fall in the file trade showed that not all the local trades were as badly affected.¹⁸³ Little is known of money wages in the region's collieries and ironworks although figures quoted over ten years later (during the 1844 miners' strike) suggested peaks in money wages achieved in 1825 had been reduced 20-30% or more by the end of the decade and that increased industrial activity had done little to redress this during the first years of the following decade. The demand for their products was not expanding particularly fast and they shared in the general stagnation. In the Barnsley linen trade weavers were now in a sorry plight. They now worked for less than 50% of the rates for the finished piece established in the peak years of 1811-14 (10 items 1811-14: 1829 showed an average 50% fall in list prices).¹⁸⁴ They were also having to produce more work for the finished piece and had lost their right to a fent. Other workers also suffered from increased demands for the quantity of work and lost marginal payments. The coalmasters increased the size of corves (trucks) and began to contract out of paying for less productive (but necessary) forms of underground work.¹⁸⁵ Such falls in the rates of payment upon which money wages were earned,

the loss of marginal payments and the extra demands of work to complete set tasks, all combined to reduce money wages. At this time, such drastic reductions as were involved exceeded any compensatory falls in retail prices and the labour class continued to experience immiseration. This represented a more or less continuous process throughout the post-war decades from the high-points of 1810-1814.

There were a few signs of organized labour taking advantage of slowly improving conditions. The unions of grinders in the various Sheffield cutlery trades still exerted influence on their wages through their industrial power. They justified the Sheffield Iris early in 1833 reprinting an article entitled 'War in the City of Soot'.¹⁸⁶ The rest of the region's industrial workforce appeared to remain for the most part passive in the face of its poor economic situation. The level of popular political activity also appeared to remain low. In Barnsley a popular Political Union had briefly flickered into life at the end of the Reform struggle.¹⁸⁷ It was kept alive into the early months of 1833. The radical political consciousness of the weavers was stronger than any other group in the region. It is quite understandable that their organization was longer lived and stronger than the sporadic reporting in 'respectable' and radical press alike suggested. It is however too dangerous to speculate with mere shreds of uncorroborated evidence. Regarding the level of popular political activity in Sheffield, there is more certainty. The SPU struggled on into 1833 as a more popular society. It discarded its more respectable elements at various stages as it was infiltrated by activists more favourable to universal suffrage and the wider struggles of the labour class. Trade unionists were involved in its activity during the latter months of 1832 and into 1833 when it became the Sheffield Political Union of the Working Classes.¹⁸⁸ This organization appeared extremely short-lived and its non-involvement in wider national political radical activity (as measured through the columns of the Poor

Man's Guardian) suggested that the disbandment proposed by the remaining 'respectables' was successful.¹⁸⁹

The region's active labour class and the potential class dormant in the wider labour stratum obtained new friends as a result of the surge of angry reactive popular radicalism that followed the betrayal. These included several sellers and printers of the 'unstamped'. In Sheffield during 1833 the arrival of Thomas Patrick Bready,¹⁹⁰ a former shopman of Richard Carlile the veteran London radical publisher, signified a more intensive phase of Sheffield's 'unstamped war' was about to commence. Another local unstamped dealer, Joseph Linguard, had shops in both Sheffield and Barnsley. In Barnsley Joseph Crabtree, another veteran radical, was engaged in the trade.¹⁹¹ In Sheffield, Bready's shop in the Hartshead (designated the 'Office of the Unstamped' by the Poor Man's Guardian), the True Sun Office, the Vine Tavern and a radical bookshop-library in Fargate owned by an ex-London radical William Slater, provided multiple foci in the radical underworld of post-Reform crisis years.¹⁹² Bready became involved in producing a local unstamped weekly called Figaro in Sheffield.¹⁹³ This he produced in collaboration with William Slater who was described by the town directories as, 'a printer, bookseller and circulating library owner'. The first edition of Figaro in Sheffield had appeared in December 1832 with the promise of its editor that, 'it is my intention to bring to your notice your actions and conduct, sparing neither rank nor station, whenever such conduct and actions shall be characterized by meanness, oppression and cruelty'.¹⁹⁴ It maintained a populist line close to that of the petty bourgeois democrats of the SPU. While praising the Iris it provided an alternative and more critical voice regarding civic affairs and occasionally reprinted interesting political literature such as the 'New Age' chapter from Volney's The Ruins.¹⁹⁵ A poem by 'H.B.' entitled 'Poverty - a poem in imitation of Mather', which it published in July 1833, illustrated its essential sympathies:

Poverty that vile oppressor
 Reigning with despotic sway,
 Brings down thousands to distress, or
 Leads them on to sore decay.
 Thousands we may daily see
 Clammed and starved by poverty.

Gentry their big bellies cramming,
 Taste the sweets of luxury,
 Whilst the poor Mechanic's clamming,
 Feels the weight of poverty.
 Hunger and distress we see
 Daily rise from poverty.¹⁹⁶

Bready, involved in this venture as well as being the major seller of 'unstamped' literature, also ran a short-lived infidel paper, the Free Inquirer.¹⁹⁷ Bready was also active in the last moments of SPU activity. He had appeared at one of their last meetings when the body had probably begun to describe itself as a Political Union of the Working Classes.¹⁹⁸ This meeting in May 1833 forced the resignation of the moderate and 'respectable' elements in the society which led to an official winding up of the SPU. What survived, however short-lived, was much more wholeheartedly proletarian in terms of its membership and ideals. How meaningful the 'left-ward' shift was for the town's labour class, given the wider failure of mass political response to the political betrayal of the Reform Act, is a matter of speculation. What influence the local ultra-radical literary 'underground' had on the industrial leadership of the labour class in Sheffield as elsewhere in the region is not easily discovered. The unstamped press circulated in both small and large industrial communities in the region throughout the 1830's. Later in 1833, in October, Carlile lectured in Sheffield to presumably a wider audience than 'unstamped' and infidel activists.¹⁹⁹ But how much wider? In Barnsley Joseph Crabtree, agent for the unstamped Voice of the West Riding, was a member of an infidel Zaetic Society about which nothing else has come to light. The circulation of 'unstamped' papers stimulated the flow of economic and political ideas. It also improved the contact between those engaged in the many streams of radical struggle against the dominant social order.

Industrially organized labour had already developed some wider connections through general unions that had been emerging in the late 1820's and early 1830's. In 1830 and 1831 Sheffield had some contact with the National Association for the Protection of Labour centred in Lancashire and may have had contacts with the separate and regional Yorkshire Trades Union which outlived the NAPL. There had also been contacts with the NUWC.²⁰⁰ The Barnsley linen weavers, who were intermittently organized as the Linen Trades Union²⁰¹ during these years, had strong reasons for some sort of relationship with the YTU.²⁰² They may have had wider contacts. In October 1833 a plan for a new national General Union of the Productive Classes which was drawn up by Robert Owen proposed to hold its conference in Barnsley in the following March.²⁰³ This union became the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union at a London conference early in 1834. In the meantime Sheffield's trade unions had formed six lodges which affiliated to the transitional General Union, as Sheffield correspondence with the Owenite paper, the Pioneer, suggested. Their affiliation was to give support to the Derby lock out which represented a fundamental challenge to trade unionists everywhere. Industrially organized workers in Sheffield and Barnsley both sent money to Derby during the winter of 1833-34.²⁰⁴ With the further attack on trade unions represented by the prosecution of the Tolpuddle trade unionists in March 1834 came further local activity. In Sheffield a mass meeting was held in April. It was significant that the respectable press did not report this.²⁰⁵

While Owen's influence could be seen in relation to general unionism of the period, labour leaders in the region, particularly Sheffield's, appeared to remain aloof from specifically Owenite organizations and from related co-operative ventures. As has been observed, since 1829 a number of Owenite and other co-operative groups had appeared locally.²⁰⁶ In Sheffield in early 1834 a local branch of the Society for National Regeneration was established. Owen was

directly involved in this body which sought amongst other things the passing of an act to limit factory work to eight hours per day. The five signatures of a letter in the Sheffield Iris which recommended this body appeared to follow a peculiar 'social-fascist' line. None of them had a record of industrial leadership among the town's labour class, indeed one of them, James Somerset (a 'working grinder'), had demonstrated himself to be a pro-Free Trade, anti-Corn Law advocate who was hostile to trade unions.²⁰⁷ Their position was confronted by articulate voices from the town's labour class industrial leadership, a leadership which included radical political activists. James Needham replied to these 'regenerators' through the pages of the Iris. He denounced Somerset's anti-union attitude and advocated universal suffrage and working men in Parliament as a true labour class position.²⁰⁸ Although largely 'silenced' by the biased reporting and editorial selection of the local respectable press, the leadership and the vanguard of class conscious workers in the town and in other communities like Barnsley were alive to their situation during this part of the 'anticipation stage' of Chartism.

Politics remained an undercurrent in the labour class's fight during the middle years of the 1830's. Industrial struggle, especially with the slow but steady improvement in trade, provided the main opportunity for expressing class hostility. Labour class leaders could not avoid politics in the face of rumours of legislation for the suppression of trade unions²⁰⁹ and the imminence of the passing of the Poor Law Amendment Bill.²¹⁰ Political action could not be ignored but the potential for industrial struggle produced by better economic conditions was greater. Sheffield's bricklayers struck for weekly wages in May 1834 as they attempted to take advantage of a building boom which anticipated commercial expansion.²¹¹ The pages of the local respectable press were filled with hostile discussion of the rise of trade unions.²¹² This suggested an industrial resurgence of the organized labour class. Against such a favourable background

Owenite ideas regarding co-operative production were projected into labour class thinking. In the autumn of 1834 agents for Owen's 'New Social Regeneration' schemes lectured in Sheffield and Barnsley.²¹³ Possibly they were better received than the earlier 'regenerators'. The existence of practical co-operative retailing and production ventures in the region possibly helped to stimulate a positive response. However, given the limited sources, it is impossible to evaluate the influence of such propaganda for the co-operative principle.

Politics came more to the fore as trade continued to improve throughout 1835. The county and borough parliamentary elections revitalized the respectable middle class political interests locally. This was marked in the formation of Reform Associations which sought to increase the number of 'qualified' voters on the electoral register.²¹⁴ The neglect of 'non-electors' stimulated a reaction from below. Among the radical weavers of the northern part of the region around Barnsley, as well as among workers in Sheffield and in the surrounding metal-working south, this political reaction soon assumed open forms of expression.

In Barnsley there had been public meetings to protest about the 'taxes on knowledge' and the fate of the Tolpuddle labourers in May 1835.²¹⁵ By December a mass-based Radical Association had been formed here. It imitated others in the northern West Riding. It was headed by the radical veterans of the post-war years, subsequent labour leaders from the struggles of the 1820's and a sprinkling of new men.²¹⁶ It was almost wholly an organization of the weaving labour class although it involved one or two workers from general trades such as shoemaking. In Sheffield there were less distinct suggestions of radical resurgence. Angry noises at the hustings did however serve warnings on the politically privileged.²¹⁷ Feargus O'Connor, who was touring the country during the latter part of 1835 and was trying to organize more Radical Associations, arrived in the region in December.

He visited Barnsley and then came to Sheffield. His public address outlined the five familiar political reforms that veteran radicals knew so well - annual parliaments, universal suffrage, vote by ballot, equal representation and abolition of property qualifications. He also spoke on the feared suppression of the 'unstamped' press and on the punishment of the Tolpuddle labourers.²¹⁸ No strong local Radical Association was formed here during the following weeks. Yet in Sheffield there was a strong political commitment among the leaders of the labour class's industrial leadership, there was an active radical 'literary underground' and the radical tradition was strong among the mass of working people. Possibly there was no need for the creation of a separate Radical Association.

Trade was extremely good throughout the whole region during the early part of 1836. In the weaving districts it was possible for labour to turn simultaneously to industrial and political action. Here the weavers demanded and obtained an improved set of prices for finished work.²¹⁹ Among the Sheffield trades the struggle was mainly economic. In the traditionally depressed spring knife trade workers were able to obtain a 'file money' bonus for the first time in ten years.²²⁰ The advance in wages was not obtained without a fight in some trades. In the file trade the union had demanded an average 14% increase.²²¹ The selective 'shelving' of one firm in February led to a general lock-out attempt by the employers. This represented an attempt not only to resist the demand but also to break the union.²²² The scale of the strike mounted with the town's other capitalist employers, both commercial and industrial, mobilizing through a newly formed Chamber of Commerce to support the file manufacturing employers.²²³ Negotiations between the two sides conducted before the magistrates failed.²²⁴ The employers were uncompromising in their stand against the union and unions generally. The combined employers were now 'shelving' the file makers and other workers in the trade.²²⁵ The town's other trades rallied to the support of the filemakers. Finan-

cial support also came in from workers (mainly in the file trade) in Birmingham, Wolverhampton, Manchester, Warrington and Leeds.²²⁶ Capital and Labour were coming into full-scale opposition. In April the filemakers compromised. They obtained their increase in exchange for allowing the employers to take more apprentices, although they refused to instruct those apprentices who were not 'sons of freemen'.²²⁷ In correspondence thanking their supporters in Sheffield, particularly the delegates from the trade unions and the publicans, their leaders, Joseph Kirk, William Stork and Thomas Staniland, recalled the wider dimensions of the local labour class tradition. They observed:

We have before united with them to overthrow Tory domination, robbery and misrule, and to improve the Legislature and Institutions of our beloved country.

They expressed a class conscious faith that;

the union of the Productive Classes will enable the workmen of England, and the whole Empire to reap the fruits of their honest industry, and raise them to their proper station, that they ought, from their ingenuity and wealth they produce, to hold in society. Whatever others may think, we find that 'Union is strength'. Without it, the greatest objects for the improvement of the social edifice could never have been accomplished.

They forcefully concluded their statement:

Why should the workman alone be degraded for uniting to protect his only property - his labour? To prevent them is now impossible. Superior Education, and with it superior information, has taught them the position they are capable of holding in society; and by this principle alone, they find they can break the badge of vassalage, and the chains of feudal power.²²⁸

The town's building workers also struck at this time.²²⁹ Elsewhere in more isolated pockets of industrial activity workers were hinting at the existence of their growing industrial labour class consciousness. The Elsecar colliers, despite the paternal eye of Earl Fitzwilliam, pushed for an advance.²³⁰ There were hints that, industrially speaking, the adolescent labour class was coming of age. In Barnsley among the weavers the industrial union had been reorganized.²³¹ Here

industrial and political action were much more closely united through the Radical Association which discussed both industrial and political questions. Throughout the first half of the year it discussed such things as the Poor Law Amendment Act,²³² the privileges of the Established Church,²³³ the stamp duty on popular newspapers,²³⁴ the fate of Arthur O'Connor²³⁵ (the Irish veteran radical) and the question of the ten hour limit on child labour in the factories.²³⁶ The weavers were involved in a further attempt to advance the wages given by the new January 1836 list during the summer and early autumn.²³⁷ A limited strike took place. In July colliers in the Barnsley area, just as those in the central districts, obtained an advance by employing the strike threat.²³⁸ Building workers in this area also took industrial action at this time.²³⁹

In Sheffield during the autumn of 1836 there were at last signs of a quickening into life of the town's labour class leadership regarding direct political action. The need for the borough MP, John Parker, to submit to re-election after taking ministerial office prompted John Bell, a radical journalist and 'unstamped' veteran from London, to oppose him from a universal suffrage platform. While the contest was unsuccessful and short-lived, Bell's appearance helped to impress important lessons upon the disenfranchised.²⁴⁰ Bell 'won' the contest on a popular show of hands²⁴¹ but had found the 3500 restrictive property franchise voters pledged to a man against him. To the excluded 26,500 male electors, Bell recommended the organization of a Radical Association and the use of exclusive dealing as a short-term electoral strategy.²⁴² He reminded them of the real basis of the present representation. Sheffield was not represented by Parker. Bell claimed, 'he may go to London, and say he represents Sheffield; the bricks and mortar, and perhaps the money of the town he may represent, but not the honour, the intelligence and the ingenuity of the place, as exhibited by the working classes'.²⁴³ The political awareness of organized labour and the ad hoc relationship its leadership

may have had with groups of radical activists still perhaps precluded the need for a Radical Association in Sheffield. Whatever the case, the industrial struggle continued everywhere throughout the autumn and winter of 1836.

The trades of Sheffield, both industrial and also of a more general sort, left behind some records of their struggles during these months. Much industrial action was unrecorded but we know the scissor grinders were fighting for a 15% rise in September²⁴⁴ and that the tailors struck in December.²⁴⁵ Other local actions in motion before had come to be resolved. In parallel, the Barnsley weavers kept up selective action against reducing employers.²⁴⁶ The solidarity between the Sheffield trades was re-emphasized during the last months of 1836. The tailors' strike in November was supported by twenty-four other organized trades in the town.²⁴⁷ At the same time delegates from the Sheffield trades met to discuss and organize support for the strike of the Staffordshire pottery workers.²⁴⁸ They sent three delegates with money to the Potteries. In return the Sheffield trades received a delegation from the Potteries at a town delegate meeting in December.²⁴⁹

Table 6:24 Sheffield labour class leaders active over the Potteries strike November 1836-January 1837.²⁵⁰

| | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------|
| - Booker (grinder) | James Ironside (sawmaker) |
| Thomas Bunting (?) | Joseph Kirk (file cutter) |
| William Carlier (?) | William Lomas (shopkeeper) |
| Charles Colley (?) | James Reaney (edge tool forger) |
| - Crampton (?) | William Stork (filemaker) |
| Richard Haywood (?) | Jonas Whitaker (?) |
| Joseph Holmes (sawmaker) | |

In late December a delegation went to the Potteries to assist in the negotiations between the potters and their employers.²⁵¹ This involvement, which included co-operation with other trade union delegations arriving in the Potteries to offer similar assistance, continued in this direct form until mid-January.²⁵²

This high point in industrial agitation among the region's trades,

particularly the Sheffield ones, came to an end with the signs of the end of the mid-decade boom. A financial panic, particularly affecting the important American market, badly hit trade in all the region's industries except coal mining between December 1836 and June 1837. The dark gathering clouds of industrial depression ²⁵³intensified fears of the implementation of the Poor Law Amendment Act in the region. The voice of protest from the industrial and political leadership of the region's labour class began to be heard. In March the delegates of the 'United Trades' of Sheffield met at the George and Dragon public house in Westbar to organize a public meeting to protest against the Act.²⁵⁴ In Barnsley the Barnsley Radical Association (BRA) and the Weavers' Union²⁵⁵ were very active in raising the issues in private discussion. The weaving population of the northern district faced the severest hardship. Hundreds of families were reported to be on half-time working, earning 6-7 shillings per week before deductions.²⁵⁶ Sheffield's own economic problems were concentrated amongst the largest, cheaper ware, cutlery trades.²⁵⁷ In the table knife trade, for example, a third of the workers were unemployed and short-time working was widespread.²⁵⁸ In Sheffield a public meeting was held in May to support a local petition against the introduction of the new harsh methods of relief-giving.²⁵⁹ Into the open again came the town's labour class leadership, including both those more easily described as industrial leaders and also those who were more politically active. On the platform William Lomas, Thomas Booth, James Ironside, John Sheldon, Timothy Haywood, John Wilkinson, William Carlier and George Douthwaite were joined by a visitor, the Rev. William Hill, the Barnsley-born weaver's son best described as a Swedenborgian minister turned radical publisher.²⁶⁰ The well organized BRA held its own meetings in Barnsley and sent delegates to the huge West Riding anti-Poor Law meeting held in the heart of the woollen districts on Hartshead Moor on Whit-Monday 1837. Joseph Crabtree of the BRA spoke from a platform which he shared with other national and local radical

notables and other leading anti-Poor Law campaigners including, John Fielden MP, Feargus O'Connor, Rev. J.R. Stephens, John Bell, Robert Owen, Richard Oastler, Bronterre O'Brien and George Douthwaite. In the same week, an Assistant Commission arrived in the region to implement the re-organization of the local systems of poor relief. Poor Law Unions for Sheffield, Eccleshall, Rotherham and Doncaster were set up but the re-organization of the system in Barnsley was deferred. The transition appeared smooth. The Commissioners found few changes needed making and, unlike the woollen districts of the Riding, no violence accompanied the transition.

What pent up aggression there was at the introduction of the system of 'less eligibility' found a mature political outlet at the election meetings held during the preparations for the Sheffield borough and West Riding county parliamentary elections in the summer of 1837. Social aggressions hardened in response to the deteriorating economic conditions of the spring and early summer. The weavers of the northern district were in a particularly bad position. In June it was reported that over 200 families in Barnsley were destitute and that 1000 more were only a quarter employed. The linen manufacturers were unofficially discounting heavily on the January 1836 list prices. Everywhere in the region social antagonisms were rising to the surface. This was reflected in the sullen reactions of the working people to the Coronation celebrations in June. The labour class's leaders took full advantage of the limited political freedoms the elections gave them regarding open public dialogue with their 'political overlords'. Verbally at the hustings they attacked the members of traditional and new elite groups of industrial, commercial and financial wealth who were managing, or hoping to manage the affairs of the nation without the labour class's consent. Joseph Crabtree, a BRA leader, stood as candidate in the Sheffield election in an attempt to demonstrate to the people the political deprivation they suffered. The betrayal of the labour class by the middle classes

five years ago was not forgotten. Articulate voices representing Sheffield's 'non-Electors' hit out at the Sheffield middle classes for trying to use the people in the electoral process in the faction fighting between Whigs and Tories.²⁶⁸ At the Sheffield and West Riding elections all the candidates received rough verbal treatment from 'official' labour class questioners stating the popular case for universal suffrage, abolition of the Corn Laws, dismantlement of the New Poor Law and the abolition of tithes and state pensions.²⁶⁹ All this had little effect on the final results of the election but it was an important part of building up the political confidence of the labour class vanguard and the awakening of the semi-conscious masses behind it. Ten thousand hands voted for universal suffrage when the county candidates visited Barnsley.²⁷⁰ Political solidarities like that were to provide the backbone of Chartism.

While in the autumn there appeared signs of better trade in the region,²⁷¹ the weavers still continued to suffer. Their energies were for a short while consumed in trying to prevent a new lower list of wages being imposed on them by the employers.²⁷² The Weavers' Union, revived in 1836, organized a short-lived resistance against the new list which represented a 15% reduction on the January 1836 list.²⁷³ In the end the new prices for labour were accepted. More work, especially in the fancy trades, provided some compensation.²⁷⁴ The dispute, lasting through August and early September, confirmed the integration of the weavers' industrial and political leadership. Of seven of the Union representatives, three were key men among the BRA leadership. The BRA did not openly act in the dispute but discussed it, both specifically and in the wider context of political action to improve the legal position of organized labour.²⁷⁵ This integration was to give Barnsley Chartism much of its character and strength.

Table 6:25 Barnsley's Labour Class Leadership 1834-1837 ²⁷⁶

| <u>Political Leaders</u> | | <u>Industrial Leaders</u> |
|--------------------------|-----------------|---------------------------|
| - Bullock | Joseph Linguard | J. Edelstein |
| Arthur Collins | Isaac Lister | Peter Hoey |
| Joseph Crabtree | Joseph Lister | Thomas King |
| Aeneas Daly | John Mooney | James Mower |
| - Dence | James Newton | George Savage |
| Fenel Dwyer | Thomas Preston | Joseph Uttley |
| John Elliot | John Robinson | John Vallance |
| B. Fairclough | George Savage | |
| John Green | - Smart | |
| B. Haigh | George Uttley | |
| William Hartle | John Vallance | |
| Benjamin Hatch | - Ward | |
| Joshua Hydes | Robert Webb | |

In Sheffield, while there was an integration of the labour class's industrial and political leadership, there was not a complete integration. Unlike Barnsley, it represented the unity of a strong industrial leadership with a weaker, more marginal political leadership. This was to dictate the character of Chartist leadership in Sheffield. While the Chartist political impetus was to provide the town's labour class with a more explicit political leadership there was never a chance of wholly involving organized labour. At the moment of birth of the first effective national political organization of the English labour class, key sections of the Sheffield labour class were moving towards economic strategies in the struggle for class power.

Table 6:26 Sheffield's Labour Class Leadership 1834-1837 ²⁷⁷

| <u>Name</u> | <u>Occupation - Status</u> [£] | <u>Involvements</u> | | |
|---------------|---|------------------------------------|---|-----------------------|
| | | (a) Politics (i.e. suffrage) | (b) Convergent issues (New Poor Law, Corn Laws, Factory Reform, Taxes on knowledge, Dissection. | (c) Trade Union |
| William Ashby | sawmaker (J) | X | | X |

Table 6:26 (contd.)

| <u>Name</u> | <u>Occupation - Status</u> [⊛] | <u>Involvements</u> | | |
|-------------------|---|------------------------------------|---|-----------------------|
| | | (a) Politics (i.e. suffrage) | (b) Convergent issues (New Poor Law, Corn Laws, Factory Reform, Taxes on knowledge, Dissection. | (c) Trade Union |
| William Barker | bricklayer (J) | X | X | X |
| - Barnby | iron moulder (J) | | X | X |
| Michael Beale | watchmaker (J) | X | | |
| James Booker | table knife hafter (J) | | | X |
| Thomas Booth | Britannia metalsmith (J) | X | X | X |
| - Bradshaw | - | | X | X |
| - Brown | - | | X | |
| T.P. Bready | bookseller (S) | X | X | |
| Thomas Bunting | - | | | X |
| William Carlier | - | | X | X |
| Charles Colley | - | | | X |
| - Crompton | - | | | X |
| Simeon Dewsnap | scale and spring maker (M) | X | | |
| George Douthwaite | - | X | | |
| James Duffy | beerhouse keeper (S) | X | | |
| Ebenezer Elliot | stove grate manufacturer (M) | X | X | |
| John Fenton | silversmith (J) | X | X | X |
| William Gill | scale cutter (J) | X | X | X |
| Richard Haywood | - | | X | X |
| Joseph Holmes | saw maker (J) | | | X |
| James Ironside | saw maker (J) | X | X | X |
| Isaac Ironside | debt collector (S) | X | | |
| Joseph Kirk | file cutter (J) | X | X | X |
| James Levick | - | X | | |
| William Lomas | shopkeeper (S) | X | X | |
| Joseph Linguard | bookseller (S) | X | | |
| John Litherland | filesmith (J) | X | | |
| Thomas Needham | - | X | X | |
| James Nicholson | warehouseman (J) | X | | |
| Richard Otley | tobacconist (S) | X | | |

Table 6:26 (contd.)

| <u>Name</u> | <u>Occupation</u> - <u>Status</u> [⊠] | <u>Involvements</u> | | |
|------------------|---|------------------------------------|---|-----------------------|
| | | (a) Politics (i.e. suffrage) | (b) Convergent issues (New Poor Law, Corn Laws, Factory Reform, Taxes on knowledge, Dissection. | (c) Trade Union |
| James Reaney | edge tool forger (J) | | | X |
| - Riddison | - | | X | |
| John Sheldon | - | | X | X |
| - Sorby | - | X | | |
| Thomas Staniland | filesmith (J) | | | X |
| William Stork | filesmith (J) | | | X |
| M. Taylor | tailor (J) | | | X |
| - Wainwright | - | | X | |
| Joseph Waller | bricklayer (J) | X | | |
| David Waller | bricklayer (J) | X | | |
| - Ward | - | X | | |
| John Wardle | spring knife cutler (M) | | X | X |
| Jonas Whitaker | - | | | X |
| - Wild | - | X | | |
| George Wilkinson | table knife hafter (J) | | X | X |

⊠ Key: J = Journeyman and wage labour.
S = Self employed not employing labour.
M = Employer or master.

In October 1837 these different traditions gave birth to Chartist organizations. The Sheffield Working Men's Association²⁷⁸ and a similar Barnsley organization appeared.²⁷⁹ For the mass of working people in the rest of the region the following years were to seem like the dawn of their political and wider social emancipation from generations of bondage. From furtive backrooms and garrets old Jacobins and younger Radicals and a new generation of 'unstamped' readers and trade unionists came out into the daylight. The unchaining of the mighty labouring Prometheus had begun.

5) Cultural control and cultural struggle c. 1820-32.

(a) The Elite, its counter-culture of respectability and the contradictions of bourgeois social ethics.

As part of their conditioning and part of their being, the emergent labour class and the wider stratum continually suffered from cultural exploitation. In the region throughout this period the classes making up the social elite and providing its auxiliaries continued to be energetic in creating their own exclusive social cultural institutions and in designing what was increasingly recognizable as an imitative counter-culture of respectability for working people. It was designed to foster their social subordination. The social elite at the levels of national, county and, most important for the conditioning of working people, town society, maintained its distinctive social cultural institutions. At the level of 'town society' where the emergent bourgeois or middle classes were increasingly realizing a common economic, political and social-cultural identity, the increased intensity of their 'respectable' social-cultural activity was marked out in intellectual societies, dining clubs, recreational associations and self-help welfare institutions.²⁸⁰ The tone of the whole pyramid of respectable 'town society' was kept up by institutions like Sheffield's assemblies. In their social 'seasons' the butterflies of lesser county society lent their colours to the more drab hues of town society.²⁸¹

Bourgeois social ethics predominated throughout the whole pyramid of respectable town society, extending down to the levels in which the imitative counter-culture was being experimentally fabricated on the levels in which the petty bourgeoisie of lesser tradesmen mingled with the 'aristocratic' elements of the labour class. These presented as personal ideals, the rationalistic, individualistic, self-interested pursuit of respectability and thus personal protection from the mortal sins of poverty, idleness, wickedness and vice. The observation of the ethic needed the increasingly more intense and urgent support of 'personal restraint' the further down the social pyramid of respect-

ability one progressed. For the majority of the labouring population below the 'golden ladder', the added burdens 'personal restraint' involved were too heavy to carry upwards. Economic restraint in the form of withholding personal consumption (particularly that of drink) in an effort to increase the possibility of accumulating savings to provide economic security was hardly ever possible for the great majority of workers in a period of predominantly falling money and real wages. Drink was an essential biological and psychological part of the routines of work and leisure as well as a cultural reality of labouring life. Sexual restraint and 'propriety' within and without the institution of marriage (necessary to conserve energy for labour, limit family size to improve living standards and to minimise the offence to the over-developed and hypocritical sensitivity of the respectable bourgeois mind) were unlikely given the increased pressure on normal labour class family life prompted by the employment of women and children outside the home, the new problems of urban living and the growing class hostility to moralistic critics. The labour class was also required by the counter-culture to exhibit political restraint, to ignore its caste-like subordination and its lack of real opportunity despite (but as much because of) growing opportunities of at least a crude elementary education through Sunday and day schools.

Workers' minds had to be stretched to near breaking point to be forced to believe in individualistic self-help while seeing this fail so many times in practice. Most workers had little opportunity to set themselves up. Certainly the weavers, ironworks' labour, larger workshop and small factory metalworkers and many colliery workers had none. Some metal workers, especially those with skill and willing to gamble on surviving the rough water of competition among the metal-working small masters, had some opportunity. A few colliers as 'butty masters' might also be able to better themselves. However, among both groups of opportunity takers there were probably many failures. The journeyman cutler who set up in one of the branches of the Sheffield

trades as a 'small master' with a few tools and some rented shop room was all too often driven back to the ranks of the journeymen as quickly as he had sprung from them. To believe in such opportunities while seeing so many drowning in the whirlpool of individualist despair was too much to expect. Whatever the strength of the psychological 'safety net' the fatalistic, 'other-worldly' emphasis the Methodists and other popularly orientated religious bodies provided the labour class with, it was not strong enough to induce many working men to mount the tight-rope across a void of eternal damnation. The creation of the counter-culture of respectability meant that many could reach out for second class citizenship in the bourgeois nation without having to tread the precarious wire. Of course many lessons about organization which the labour class found useful in building its own institutions were learnt within and from without the counter-culture. Many of the basic lessons were self-taught or self-assimilated and adapted to the labour class's more collective ideals of social action. In this, the significance of the alehouse should never be underestimated in the role it played as the working man's academy.²⁸² Inside its separate and independent traditions had been (and continued to be) worked out in the name of and exclusively for the labour class. What went on in the counter-culture was important, as will be briefly examined below, but it was a peripheral reality only of longer term significance for the labour class through the steadier process of permeation of labour class values. Only when the 'sociating' influence of struggle against economic and political exploitation had ceased to be as 'normal' a condition of labour class existence after the stormy and 'creative' first five decades of the century, could the permeation process work effectively. The labour class, throughout the earlier decades, in recognizing itself recognized the existence of the counter-culture and resisted it in both negative (by ignoring it) and positive (by criticizing it and building separate institutions) ways.

(b) Blood sports, gambling and the 'Demon Drink'.

Throughout, the counter-culture continued to seek to eliminate the 'irrational' elements in popular recreation, a process that had gone on hand in hand with enclosure for over a century. Blood sports were forced into an illegal world by legislation and harassment by the authorities. Bull and bear baiting and cock fighting largely disappeared in the 1820's and early 1830's²⁸³ although Barnsley, where the last bull bait was held in 1831, kept up its bear baiting traditions.²⁸⁴ Blood sports which could be more easily disguised continued. Examples of such were pugilism, dog baiting and fighting.²⁸⁵ The colliers were renowned for the prowess of their bull dogs. Dog fighting combined with illicit petty gambling continued on marginal and open land on the outskirts of communities. In the 1830's, for example, there were many complaints about the abuse of Hyde Park on the eastern edge of Sheffield.²⁸⁶ Prize fights, on which side bets were placed, also belonged to the same world of illicit out-of-town locations.

Gambling and other petty pleasures of an evolving urban mass leisure culture were concentrated in the public house and gin shop. These provided physical and emotional comforts that individually the workers' homes could not. Here they obtained warmth, hot food, sanitation, reading matter, music, laughter and sensual delight. At the end of the eighteenth century Eden had estimated that Sheffield had 395 public houses selling beer as well as gin shops and other spirit drinking establishments.²⁸⁷ The derived ratio of drinking places to population was probably much lower therefore than 1:114. The ratio had increased with tighter licensing in the following three and a half decades, a tightening that was part of the counter-revolutionary process initiated by the ruling elite. By 1830 in Sheffield, immediately before the Beer Act, there were only 330 public houses and two dozen 'dram shops'. This gave a crude 1:246 ratio. The Beer Act, designed to encourage beer against spirit consumption, made

beer-selling licences more easily available and a rapid increase in the number of beer houses followed. Many of these were licensed for consumption on the premises and they replaced some of the town's unrecorded gin shops and illicit drinking places. The number of drinking places increased rapidly as the following statistics suggest:

Table 6:27 The number of public houses, beer houses and dram shops and the ratio between these and population in Sheffield parish.²⁸⁸

| | Public houses | Beer houses | Dram shops | Total | Population | Ratio |
|------|----------------|-------------|------------|-------|------------|-------|
| 1830 | 350 (combined) | | 20 | 370 | 91,000 | 1:246 |
| 1834 | 388 | 323 | 70 | 781 | 95,000 | 1:121 |
| 1841 | 425 | 483 | 124 | 1032 | 112,492 | 1:109 |

It was in the public house and increasingly the beer shop that the new, separate rational recreational patterns of the labour class as well as the 'irrational' ones continued to evolve. The back rooms hired by trade union committees, political discussion groups and reading clubs were just as valuable a training ground for labour leadership as the chapel. The chapel, increasingly an instrument of the counter-culture, still had some positive contribution to make of course. However, the working man was more at home 'with his own' in the public house. Drink gave him as much (probably more) social confidence as religious dogma.

Thus it was against the 'Demon Drink' that the organizers of the counter-culture crusaded vigorously, particularly during the 1830's as a consequence of the Beer Act but also because of the association of drink with a decline in standards of public order. An organized temperance movement began operating in the region from 1831 onwards.²⁸⁹ There are few early statistics of membership except for Barnsley. Before 1837 we have little in the way of an index of efficiency. Sheffield's society needing 'reviving' in 1834²⁹⁰ and Barnsley's Temperance Society claimed only 129 members in a town of 8-9000 adults.²⁹¹ Rotherham's Society was not begun until 1837.²⁹² Membership statistics

do not of course measure the absolute influence of an idea. As a consequence of the rising indicators of general social disorder (even in periods of relative prosperity such as the middle of the 1830's) the movement was looked to even more by a growing number of respectable patrons.

Table 6:28 Persons committed for trial in Sheffield and number of 'disorderly' offences. 293

| | Committals for trial | Population : Offenders | 'Disorderly' offences | Population : Offenders |
|------|-------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1834 | 217 | 294:1 | 747 | 85:1 |
| 1835 | 205 | 314:1 | 1009 | 63:1 |
| 1836 | 200 | 325:1 | 1424 | 45:1 |
| 1837 | 317 | 207:1 | 1624 | 40:1 |

There was also a positive, self-directed response to the propaganda by working people who began to appreciate the 'excessive' element in popular drinking habits. Thus in this period in several ways, and with various consequences for the emerging labour class, the pursuit of rational and 'dry' leisure was begun.

(c) Religion

The moral agencies of organized religion still worked some of their old magic with the young. The Sunday schools were still important in the transmission of the values of counter-culture respectability. Like the parent churches and chapels they did not keep pace with the growth of population in the existing large and expanding smaller urban centres. Despite the amount of improvisation with the few existing statistics, the numbers of Sheffield Sunday school attenders as proportions of the child population can be shown to have been static in the 1820's and to have slightly fallen in the 1830's:

Table 6:29 Sheffield and Barnsley: estimates of the 3-14 year old child population and its Sunday school attendance 1821-1841.²⁹⁴

| | (1) Child population | (2) Labour class children | (3) Sunday school attenders | (4) | (5) |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----|-----|
| (a) Sheffield (Parish) | | | | | |
| 1821 | 14,360 | 10,770 | 9,000 | 62% | 50% |
| 1831 | 16,504 | 12,378 | 10,500 | 63% | 51% |
| 1841 | 21,107 | 15,830 | 12,904 | 61% | 48% |
| (b) Barnsley | | | | | |
| 1831 | 2,272 | 1,704 | 1,000 | 44% | 25% |
| 1836 | 2,492 | 1,869 | 1,100 | 44% | 26% |

Only a minority of the children of the labour class in Sheffield and Barnsley attended Sunday school. This statement holds even when the effect of high turnover and the schools' influence on non-attenders through contacts with attenders inside and outside the family is offset against the high level of absenteeism. In the early 1820's, when high levels of attendance had been established, much complacency about the influence of the schools prevailed.²⁹⁵ Throughout the later 1820's and 1830's the various estimates of labour class children's non-attendance made by interested voices in the respectable bourgeois press were complacent understatements.²⁹⁶ The children of the labouring population were winning 'the battle for Sunday', albeit in the culture of petty pleasures like gambling, drinking and sexual cavorting. These did little to educate them to critically understand the nature of their class's social condition. The life experience of the working week provided enough lessons in this. At least the 'liberated' Sunday kept them free from the social indoctrination of those who proclaimed themselves their moral superiors and protected their right to self-direction if even for a few hours.

Organized religion had a decreasing influence on adult workers. In terms of the provision of places for religious worship, despite the 'Million Act' churches of the 1820's and the general increase in

free seating,²⁹⁷ the limited provision of seats barely kept pace with population growth.

Table 6:30 Provision of accommodation for the people by religious bodies 1821-41.²⁹⁸
(seating as % of population)

| | <u>1821</u> | <u>1831</u> | <u>1841</u> |
|--------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Sheffield Parish | 26% | 31% | 36% |
| Rotherham Poor Law Union | 54% | 60% | 55% |
| Wortley Poor Law Union | 42% | 52% | 65% |
| Barnsley Poor Law Union | 40% | 52% | 48% |

Bricks and mortar did not create religious experience. Groups like the Primitive Methodists demonstrated this with their success. Even so, their wayside out-of-door evangelism had burnt out most of its energy during the 1820's, at least in urban areas. In the main, working people rejected organized religion throughout. The association with religious bodies served to demarcate to them the lower limits of respectable bourgeois or at least petty bourgeois styles of life. Interestingly there is one set of statistics for the region which helps to quantify this labour class alienation two decades before the 1851 official census confirmed it. Figures for Barnsley in 1831 showed that 34% of the adult population of 7747 were participants in organized religious activity.²⁹⁹ These figures implied the almost complete absence of the labour class. In rural areas, where the provision of places for worship was higher and the people were dominated by the Parson and Squire, religious attendance was probably higher. Often it was marked in reactive affiliation with the Methodist or other dissenting sects to express more openly latent hostilities to these tyrants. Methodism, particularly Primitive Methodism, was much stronger in the region's villages. Here it can be argued that it may have played a significant part in training rising labour class leaders. Again in an urban setting, association with dissenting religious groups was often part of a labour leader's political education, it provided the organizational grounding and the Bible and its study provided an

intellectual grounding. While the labour class was hostile to organized religion, it was not hostile to primitive Christianity although its infidel-rationalist fringe were.

(d) Popular and class reactions to the counter-culture of respectability.

The reaction of the labour class to the counter-culture was not always as mild as the patterns of avoidance, tolerance or superficial acquiescence allowed. Occasionally the violent reactions of the labour class were reported in the respectable press. How representative these were is another matter, but they should not be ignored by those who argue for the cohesiveness and integration produced in the social body by the creation of the counter-culture. For example, in Sheffield in 1823 there were three attempts in one month to burn the Peacroft Sunday schools.³⁰⁰ Two years earlier a mob had forced its way into the Primitive Methodist chapel in the town. Who did this and why? The language of violence is not always articulate but some violent actions were accompanied by recorded dialogue. In 1834 temperance lecturers were attacked in the 'All Nations' public house in Sheffield's notorious Water Lane by drinkers who cried, 'all in a mind lads, let us cure them of taking anybody from here again'.³⁰¹ All too little of what happened as the counter-culture tried to impose itself on popular culture is withheld from us by the privileged recorders of history.

(6) The Pre-Chartist Years: Conclusion

Throughout the period covered in this chapter, a labour class was 'emerging' in the region as a coherent economic class 'in itself' and 'becoming', as represented by its thoughts and actions, a class 'for itself'. The various labouring strata were coalescing into one labour stratum from which a class emerged. The process of emergence was largely the result of changing forms of capitalist production. The 'becoming' was conditioned by this but was a result of the thought and action (or consciousness) of individuals in relation to the real-

ities of their economic, political and social-cultural exploitation. These individuals formed the class vanguard of leaders and key activists. Around them gathered ordinary workers in increasing numbers, especially during periodic bursts of conflict which had both political and industrial origins. Because of these periods of 'sociation' (association through conflict) the unity of workers in the region transcended craft and community barriers. The class mobilization of industrial workers was as yet far from complete but the class vanguard was powerfully driving forward into the margins of social and political backwardness.

Footnotes to Chapter 6.

1. Baines, West Riding Directory, 2 vols.(Leeds, 1822); W. White, History and General Directory of Sheffield (Sheffield, 1833) and (Sheffield, 1837) *passim*.
2. Sheffield Local Register, 176-177; Samuel Jackson's testimony in P.P.1830(590) X, Report from Select Committee on Manufactures, Commerce and Shipping 1833, 175.
3. Sheffield Mercury, 6 May 1826, firms included Messrs Rodgers, Wolstenholme and Son, Butler, Barber and Thompson, Crawshaw and Co. and Arundel and Co.
4. Pollard, *op.cit.*, 55, understates the growth of the scale of operations commenting, 'by 1850 there were perhaps half a dozen firms which could count their workmen by the hundred'.
5. J.R. McCulloch, A Statistical Account of the British Empire, 2 vols. (1837), I, 116.
6. P.P.1833(590)x, Report of the Select Committee appointed to consider the means of lessening the evils arising from the Fluctuation of Employment in the Manufacturing Districts 1830, 15.
7. Garlick, *op.cit.*,
8. This section is based on the same set of employment statistics as are employed earlier in the chapter and on Watson, *op.cit.*, R.B. Wilson, *op.cit.*, *passim*.
9. This section is based on directories cited above and on Pollard, *op.cit.*, *passim*.
10. Gayer, Rostow and Schwartz, I, *op.cit.*, 176,214,246.
11. H. Scrivenor, History of the Iron Trade (1854), 132.
12. *ibid.*, 132-135; A.H. Birch, The Economic History of the British Iron and Steel Industry 1784-1879, 140.
13. Sheffield Iris, 23 Dec. 1823 - Worsbrough colliery opened; Sheffield Local Register, 170 - Sheffield colliery of Holy and Newbould opened.
14. Hadfield I, *op.cit.*, 287 - Barnsley Canal figs.; Don Navigation Minute Book, *loc.cit.* - for Don Navigation figures.
15. P.P.1842(381) XVI, Children's Employment Commission (Mines) 1842, Appendix to First Report, pt.1, *passim*, report of J.C. Symons on the Yorkshire coalfield.
16. W. White (1833, 1837) *op.cit.*, *passim*.
17. The thin coal seams followed a north-south line from Penistone to Loxley, Stannington, Crookes, Millhouses, Owlbar. The Silkestone seam followed a parallel line from Silkstone through Pilley, Mortomley, Thorncliffe to Sheffield and the most eastern seam, the Barnsley one, ran parallel to that from Gawber, through Worsbrough, Elsecar, Parkgate to Woodhouse Mill.
18. Children's Employment Commission loc.cit., 243,239 - testimony of witness '67' for similar ratio - 10 or 11 'undertakers' employing 60 men and boys.
19. F. Machin, *op.cit.*, 35, 39.
20. J. Goodchild, *art.cit.*, *passim*.
21. Report on the Handloom Weavers, *loc.cit.*, S. Keyser's report 475-476.
22. Hadfield I, *op.cit.*, 178,184, II, 287, supported from data from Don Navigation books, *loc.cit.*

23. B.A. English, op.cit., passim.
24. B.R. Mitchell and P. Deane, Abstract of British Historical Statistics (Cambridge, 1962), 302.
25. Day Books, Sheffield Assay Office.
26. Sheffield Local Register, passim, listed annually in May.
27. Report on Employment in the Manufacturing Districts 1830, loc.cit., 5.
28. S. Jackson testimony, loc.cit., 176.
29. Gayer, Rostow and Schwartz I, op.cit., 486-508, constructed yearly average from monthly data. For new work on cost of living indices see T.R. Gourvish, 'The Cost of Living in Glasgow in the Early Nineteenth Century', Economic History Review, 1974.
30. Goodchild, art.cit., passim; Sheffield Iris, 29 Nov. 1836; Sheffield Mercury, 5 Nov. 1836; Leeds Times, 31 Dec. 1836.
31. Report on Handloom Weavers, loc.cit., 480-481 - testimony of John Vallance, a Weavers' Union leader.
32. ibid., 482; Burland, Miscellaneous Writings Ms., 429-431, the personal account of Robert McClintock ('Bobby Mac').
33. Leeds Intelligencer, 7 Nov. 1818.
34. Report on Handloom Weavers, loc.cit., 479.
35. Sheffield Iris, 2 Jan. 1830.
36. Figures from sales ledgers of the firm, now held in Cusworth Hall Museum, Doncaster.
37. Report on Handloom Weavers, loc.cit., 479.
38. Birch, op.cit., 160-161, the visitor was Thomas Butler of the Kirkstall forge.
39. ibid., 160-161.
40. From local vestry minutes quoted in A.K. Clayton, The Story of Elsecar and Milton Ironworks, unpublished mss., loc.cit.
41. Hadfield II, op.cit., 287; G. Mee thesis, op.cit.,
42. Goodchild Coal Ms. loc.cit., one important example was the Oaks colliery at Barnsley.
43. Sheffield Iris, 4 July 1820.
44. ibid., 1 Feb. 1820.
45. Fifth Report on Artisans and Machinery, loc.cit., 401,404, deals with local trade union activity in 1822. The 'respectable' press provides little or no coverage.
46. Lloyd, op.cit., Appendix XIV, 472-473, reprint of the articles of association of this body.
47. Fifth Report etc., loc.cit., 401.
48. Justified by the activities of representatives of those unions in activities in 1820's and 1830's. The grinders in most branches were in union continuously throughout with frequent complaints in 'respectable' press concerning their 'tyranny' - Examples of inter-trade assistance are rare, as is to be expected from prejudiced sources. When examples are found they correspond to what we should expect from class conscious labour class groups, i.e. the unreserved support of the strongest for the weak - the Britannia metalsmiths aided the spring knife cutlers in 1824 - Sheffield Iris, 1 June 1824.

49. Fifth Report etc. loc.cit., 405, the witness Adams testimony provided detail of prices for finished work:
- | | | | |
|-------------|-------------|---------------|---------------------|
| <u>1800</u> | <u>1814</u> | <u>1823</u> | |
| 1/6 | 2/- | 8-9d per doz. | common penknives. |
| 2/7 | 3/3 | 10d per doz. | slit spring knives. |
50. Sheffield Iris, 1 June 1824, comments on the spring knife grinders.
51. ibid., 24 June 1824, comment to this effect.
52. ibid., 9 Dec. 1823.
53. Leeds Mercury, 12 July 1823.
54. Report on Handloom Weavers loc.cit., 481.
55. ibid., calculated from figures given there.
56. Burland, Annals II, 414-415, report of speech at meeting 5 May 1823, explains value of fent.
57. Report on Handloom Weavers loc.cit., 481; Leeds Mercury, 5,12, 19,26 July 1823; Burland, Miscellaneous Writings Ms., 429-430, Robert McClintock's testimony of the weavers' 'pantomime' during the strike - a shirtless man on a loom was carried in procession to the employer's warehouse by striking weavers; Burland, Annals II, 413-416.
58. ibid., 413-414.
59. Sheffield Iris, 15 July 1823.
60. ibid., 9 Dec. 1823.
61. ibid., 9,16,23 March 1824 (Artisans and Machinery discussion, Window tax debate) similar reported in 15 March 1825.
62. ibid., 9 Dec. 1823 (public meeting), 13 July 1824 (meeting of trade union leaders).
63. ibid., 1,29 June 1824.
64. ibid., 13 July 1824.
65. ibid., 13 July 1824.
66. P.P.1824-5 (417)iv, Report from the Select Committee on the Combination Laws 1825, Appendix no. 15,51 - 'Rules of Coal Miners Union near Sheffield'.
67. Sheffield Iris, 22 March, 5 April 1825.
68. ibid., 15 March 1825, 22 March 1825 - the agitation involved the Corn Laws and the Window tax.
69. R. Carlile to T. Turton, 21 Nov. 1822, 10 Dec. 1822, 23 June 1823; R. Carlile to W. Holmes, 18 Nov. 1823, 14 July 1823 all in Richard Carlile Collection, Huntingdon Library, San Marino, California; Sheffield Independent, 29 Jan. 1825, 4 Feb. 1826.
70. Sheffield Iris, 19 April, 3 May 1825.
71. ibid., 19 April 1825.
72. ibid., 20 Aug. 1825; Sheffield Mercury, 29 Oct. 1825.
73. Machin, op.cit., 35-36.
74. Sheffield Iris, 2 Aug. 1825.
75. Sheffield Mercury, 19 Nov. 1825.
76. ibid., 8 Oct. 1825, delegates led by Tester; brief account of Bradford strike in A. Peacock, 'Bradford Chartism 1838-40', Borthwick Papers, no.36 (York, 1969), 4-5.

77. Sheffield Mercury, 17 Dec. 1825.
78. ibid., 13 May 1826, table blade forgers attempting to raise wages.
79. ibid., 6 May 1826.
80. T. Sutton to Peel, 14 June 1826, HO 40/20 (i), the problems of the spring knife cutlers were described in an earlier letter, 6 June 1826 in the same bundle.
81. Sheffield Mercury, 24 June 1826.
82. Fifth Report etc. loc.cit., 404.
83. Their organized strength was frequently commented upon in connection with 'rattenings', examples Sheffield Iris, 8,15 Feb. and 8 March 1825, Sheffield Mercury, 18,25 Feb., 4 March 1826.
84. Sheffield Mercury, 24 June 1826.
85. E.J. Hobsbawm, Labouring Men (1964), ch.15, minimizes the nature of the earlier nineteenth-century aristocracy. While I agree with such emphasis I feel this should not entitle us to deny degrees of economic stratification within the working class. Whether or not the economic 'aristocracy' had conservative tendencies is something I take up at a later stage.
86. Gen. Byng to Hobhouse, 11 May 1826, HO 42/19.
87. Ld. Wharncliffe to Peel, 5 Aug. 1826, HO 42/21.
88. Sheffield Mercury, 24 June 1826, the hypocritical Milton claimed he had been converted to reform.
89. Sheffield Local Register, xxxv.
90. Printed summaries of felons committed to Wakefield House of Correction for trials at quarter sessions from 1816 onwards.
91. Compiled from printed conference returns for all three bodies. Bound in volumes at Methodist Archives, City Road, London.
92. Sheffield Mercury, 19 Aug. 1826.
93. ibid., 25 Nov. 1826.
94. ibid., 2 Dec. 1826.
95. Sheffield Iris, 30 Jan. 1827 - comment on the severity of the season.
96. ibid., 16 Jan. 1827, extracts from reports of visitors for local charity.
97. Sheffield Mercury, 6 Jan. 1827.
98. ibid., 2 June 1827 - the decrease in applications by 'light cases' to the workhouse from 60-70 per week to 8.
99. ibid., 27 Oct. 1827.
100. Sheffield Iris, 18 Sept. 1827, casts doubt on the nature of the upturn claiming £30,000 worth of goods in the warehouse.
101. Newton Chamber figures and coal carriage figures, see this chapter tables 7 and 11.
102. Sheffield Mercury, 3 Nov. 1827, contains a characteristic attack on the power of the unions, commenting on the 'injury done to employers' in the saw, file and fender trades by 'their own tyrannous and oppressive rules'.
103. ibid., 5 July 1828.
104. Sheffield Iris, 5 Aug. 1828.

105. Sheffield Mercury, 15 Nov. 1828, remarks about low wages, especially because of 'stuffing' made by 'a recent Merchant' who in his letter described the Sheffield cutler as 'a poor slave'.
106. ibid., 1 Nov. 1828, for signs of it - rattening the Globe works.
107. Sheffield Courant, 27 Feb. 1829 - claimed 30,000 signatures in Sheffield were obtained; Leeds Mercury, 21 Feb. 1829, repeated this but provided no coverage of Barnsley where there were a large number of Catholic Irish weavers and Protestant (Orange) employers - Booth and Kirk in 1846.
108. Sheffield Mercury, 11 July 1829.
109. ibid., 11,25 July, 1,8 Aug. 1829.
110. Report on Handloom Weavers etc. loc.cit., 481.
111. Sheffield Mercury, 6 June 1829; Leeds Mercury, 6 June 1829; letters in HO 40/23 (iii), particularly Stuart Corbett to Peel, 30 May 1829, describing 3000 weavers confronting master's warehouse, M.B. Taylor to Peel n.d. and Byng to Philips, 30 May 1829, also Gen. Bouene to Peel, 2 June 1829, HO 40/24 (i) mentions Manchester delegates 'endeavouring to incite them to violence', also Corbett to Peel, 2 June 1829 in same bundle developed similar theme.
112. Leeds Mercury, 4 July 1829.
113. ibid., 1,22 Aug. 1829.
114. ibid., 29 Aug. 1829.
115. ibid., 29 Aug. 1829; Sheffield Mercury, 29 Aug. 1829; letters and depositions in HO 40/24, particularly Bouene to Peel, 28 Aug. 1829, Corbett to Peel, 29 Aug. 1829.
116. Leeds Mercury, 5 Sept. 1829.
117. ibid., 5 Sept. 1829; more letters/depositions in HO 40/24 (ii).
118. ibid., 5 Sept. 1829.
119. ibid., 12 Sept. 1829; Bouene to Peel, 5 Sept. 1829, HO 40/24(ii).
120. Leeds Mercury, 19 Sept. 1829; Sheffield Mercury, 26 Sept. 1829.
121. ibid., 26 Sept. 1829.
122. Leeds Mercury, 3 Oct. 1829; Sheffield Mercury, 3 Oct. 1829; Baines, Life of Baines, 112.
123. Leeds Mercury and Sheffield Mercury, 3 Oct. 1829.
124. Leeds Mercury, 10 Oct. 1829; Wharncliffe to Philips, 22 Oct. 1829, HO 52/5 - on public order question.
125. The Doncaster deputation included the following: William Ashton, Samuel Hoyle, Patrick Flanagan, Richard Jackson, Terence Kelly, Frank Mirfield, James Bosomworth, Peter Hoey and Thomas Tattersley, other speakers/chairmen of meetings and secretaries included: James Shaw, George Wood, George Mitchell, Jim Newton, John Widdop, John Vallance, Thomas Dodd and Thomas Murray - sources - mainly Leeds Mercury; HO 42/23,24.
126. Leeds Mercury, 10 Oct. 1829; Corbett to Peel, 10 Oct. 1829 (with depositions), HO 42/24(ii).
127. Leeds Mercury, 17 Oct. 1829; Bouene to Philips, 14 Oct. 1829 (with depositions), HO 42/24(ii).
128. Sheffield Mercury, 10 Oct. 1829, a suggestion of breakdown in community solidarity with Barnsley weavers travelling down to London and Birmingham to beg.

129. Leeds Mercury, 17,24 Oct. 1829; Sheffield Mercury, 24 Oct. 1829.
130. Leeds Mercury, 31 Oct. 1829; Sheffield Mercury, 31 Oct. 1829.
131. Leeds Mercury, 7,14 Nov. 1829.
132. ibid., 14 Nov. 1829.
133. Sheffield Mercury, 6 March 1830, arrested in Sunderland.
134. ibid., 3 April 1830; Leeds Mercury, 3,10 April 1830.
135. Leeds Mercury, 31 Oct. 1829.
136. ibid., 3,10 April 1830; Sheffield Mercury, 3 April 1830.
137. Sheffield Iris, 2 Feb. 1830; Proceedings of the Third Co-operative Congress held in London (1832). Appendix quotes letter from Barnsley Society which began in June 1829.
138. Leeds Mercury, 29 Aug. 1829 - Peter Hoey's speech at 24 Aug. meeting.
139. Sheffield Iris, 5 Jan. 1830.
140. Sheffield Mercury, 23 Jan. 1830.
141. ibid., 23 Jan. 1830 - mentioned Huddersfield and Knaresborough (wool and linen centres) as being badly affected; Leeds Mercury, 23 Jan. 1830 - unemployed meeting near Leeds.
142. Report on Manufacturing Districts 1830 loc.cit., 5.
143. Sheffield Mercury, 6,20 March 1830.
144. ibid., 1 May 1830.
145. Sheffield Iris, 4 April 1830 - a letter from John Barker, the Trades General Union president - this appears to be the first public proclamation of its existence.
146. ibid., 2 Feb. 1830, reports his lectures in Sheffield and Barnsley.
147. The wider national background to these years is derived from J.R.M. Butler, The Passing of the Great Reform Bill (1963). In the following section only references to local events are footnoted.
148. Sheffield Mercury, 20 Feb. 1830; Sheffield Iris, 23 Feb. 1830.
149. Sheffield Mercury, 27 Nov. 1830.
150. ibid., 4 Dec. 1830; Sheffield Iris, 7 Dec. 1830.
151. ibid., 2 Feb. 1830 (Barnsley and Sheffield); Sheffield Mercury, 19,26 June 1830 (Thelwall in Doncaster and Sheffield); Sheffield Independent, 27 Jan., 6 Feb. 1830.
152. Sheffield Mercury, 6,13 Nov. 1830.
153. ibid., 4 Dec. 1830; Sheffield Iris, 7 Dec. 1830, for Ironside's speech and Alcock's comment - the following extracts will have to suffice:

Ironside: What has the wisdom of Parliament done for you?... Has it not filled your master's warehouse with goods which they cannot dispose of, although hundreds of thousands want to purchase them. Gentlemen, it has done this for you, and what has it done for others in other parts of the country? It has brought the labourers of Kent 1/6 a day, and the Duke of Wellington £95,000 per annum, brought 13,000 labourers of Huddersfield to 2½d a day, and the Bishop of Durham £63,000 per annum. It has made the poor weavers of

153. (contd.)

Barnsley consider potatoes as their beef; made the cruel absentee Irish wealth; and sunk the poor peasantry in the lowest depths of misery.

Alcock: It has been said that wealth should be represented, but wealth gives no right by nature, wealth is a mere chance possession.

154. Sheffield Mercury, 18 Dec. 1830; Sheffield Courant, 17 Dec. 1830; a letter in HO 40/26, Parker to Melbourne, 18 Dec. 1830 describes these as members of the National Union of the Working Class.
155. Parker to Melbourne, 18 Dec. 1830, HO 40/26.
156. The table knife workers were in union - Sheffield Iris, 2 Feb. 1830. The Trades Union published statements through the Iris see 18 Jan., 12 April, 19 April, 24 May and 6 Sept. 1831. The strike was also reported in the Sheffield Courant, 14 Jan. 1831.
157. Sheffield Iris, 25 Jan. 1831; Sheffield Mercury, 15 Jan. 1831.
158. Sheffield Iris, 8,22 Feb. 1831; Sheffield Mercury, 19 March 1831.
159. Sheffield Iris, 8 March 1831; Sheffield Mercury, 12,19 March 1831.
160. ibid., 2,30 April 1831.
161. ibid., 30 April 1831.
162. Sheffield Iris, 3 May 1831.
163. Sheffield Mercury, 24 Oct. 1831.
164. ibid., 15 Oct. 1831; Sheffield Iris, 11 Oct. 1831 (18,000-20,000 in Paradise Square).
165. Sheffield Mercury, 19 Nov. 1831, the SPU leaders offered to act as special constables during the troubles of November; Wharncliffe to Melbourne, 4 Nov. 1831, HO 52/15, comments on local events, 'to all appearances the excitement hereabout has subsided and everything is peaceable. Fortunately the people at Sheffield have a fair share of employment.'
166. Sheffield Mercury, 12 May 1832.
167. ibid., 19 May 1832; Sheffield Iris, 14 Feb. 1832, report suggested a 'Political Reading Room for the working classes' was set up by SPU in Sheffield.
168. Sheffield Mercury, 12 May 1832.
169. ibid., 23 July 1832; Sheffield Iris, 19 June 1832. The fuller Iris account describes the procession through the town. Led by the SPU, it was followed by the town's secret societies (Odd-fellows, Druids, Orangemen etc.), then by friendly societies and finally by miscellaneous groups including some trade unions as well as large manufacturers and their workmen. In the huge procession the number of trade union bodies was relatively small - in the final section of the march were included the smiths or Vulcan Society, Brush Makers' Union, United Society of Carpenters, Comb makers, letter press printers and type founders. Other trades known to be organized (many of those officially in the procession were unknown to me until using this report) which may have been represented by trade-based friendly societies in the second part of the procession, included filesmiths, masons, scissor-smiths. Many trades may have officially had 'no politics' rules, although several industrial leaders were active in the SPU, including Kirk of

169. (contd.)

the filesmiths and Booth of the Britannia metalsmiths. From their later actions at the 'non-electors' meetings afterwards, it may be that they saw through the betrayal and abstained from the SPU. They may have felt, like the Hartshead* dissident who draped a flag inscribed 'Is this Reform' beneath a picture of a man in rags when all the houses around were draped with flags echoing unqualified praise for the Act, that their activity had been in vain.

* The Hartshead contained one of the 'unstamped' sellers' shops, occupied by Bready.

170. ibid., 10 July 1832; Sheffield Mercury, 7 July 1832.

171. Sheffield Iris, 24 July 1832.

172. Sheffield Local Register etc. op.cit., 245, the cholera had appeared in the town in early July, was at its height in August and died out in November. 1347 were affected, 945 of these recovered and 402 died.

173. Sheffield Iris, 21 Aug. 1832; Sheffield Independent, 11 Oct. 1832; Select Committee on Manufactures, Commerce and Shipping 1833, loc.cit., 186 - witness described the action of several trades pressuring members to remain in the union through 'bonds' or deposits held by the union.

174. Proceedings of the Third Co-operative Congress held in London 23rd April 1832 (1832) appendix; The Crisis, 5 May, 23 June, 27 Oct. 1832; Lancashire and Yorkshire Co-operator, June, July 1832.

175. Proceedings of the Fourth Co-operative Congress held in Liverpool, 1 Oct. 1832 (Manchester, 1832).

176. Figures from Methodist Archives, City Road, London. Comparable expansion in other West Riding towns can be seen, e.g. Leeds - 19.8%, Huddersfield - 17.27%.

177. Printed annual returns in WRCRO.

178. Sheffield Local Register, 245.

179. Sheffield Independent, 17 Nov. 1832.

180. The following account of the election of December 1832 is based on descriptive evidence in the Sheffield Iris, 18, 25 Dec. 1832 and Sheffield Mercury, 15 and 22 Dec. 1832, and upon correspondence in HO 40/30, 50/20.

181. Select Committee on Manufactures etc. loc.cit., 176, evidence of Samuel Jackson claimed half workmen were in full employment. 176 - Jackson again, that half the plated trade workers were unemployed. 184 - Jackson again commenting that other half of Sheffield workers were partly employed two-three days per week - 'there are not many entirely out of employment. 182 - condition the same as 1825 regarding employment and living standards.

182. ibid., 180.

183. Sheffield Iris, 7 May 1833.

184. Report on Handloom Weavers etc. loc.cit., 482.

185. Much of this type of exploitation during the 1830's was described during the 1844 strike, see Sheffield Independent, 25 May and 1 June 1844 and later text of my chapter 7.

186. Sheffield Iris, 8 Jan. 1833.

187. Poor Man's Guardian, 5 Jan. 1833, mentions an address on the 'Fund Laws' being made to a Barnsley Political Union.
188. Sheffield Independent, 25 May 1833; Sheffield Mercury, 25 May 1833; Gauntlet, 2 June 1833, also quoted in J. Weiner, The War of the Unstamped (Ithaca, 1965), 249.
189. Poor Man's Guardian for 1832 shows through its correspondence columns a wide provincial response to metropolitan plebeian radical leadership in the National Union of the Working Classes.
190. A. Paterson, Yorkshire Journalists : Past and Present (Barnsley, 1901), 9; Weiner, op.cit., 161 on Bready's 'silent shop', 205, 249 on Bready's pedigree.
191. Crabtree was listed as an 'unstamped' dealer by the Voice of the West Riding, copies of which are scattered among bundles HO 40/31 and 32.
192. Poor Man's Guardian, 29 June 1833, a £1 subscription for the Cold-bath Fields Outrage victims from 'the Vine Tavern and the Office of the Unstamped, Hart's Head'.
193. Figaro in Sheffield, 6 vols. (Sheffield, 1832-38) copies in SCL.
194. Figaro, 15 Dec. 1832.
195. ibid., 29 June 1833.
196. ibid., 27 July 1833.
197. A Funeral Oration on the Death of the Free Inquirer, n.d. in SCL - hostile attack on the publisher from the 'Society of Infidels in the Hartshead'; Sheffield Iris, 12 Aug. 1834, Bready prosecuted.
198. Sheffield Independent, 25 May 1833; Weiner, op.cit., 249.
199. Figaro, 5 Oct. 1833.
200. Sheffield Mercury, 18 Dec. 1830; Sheffield Courant, 17 Dec. 1830; contacts with the politically and industrially motivated National Union of the Working Classes may have also existed - see fn.154.
201. The weavers' organization was never described in formal terms by the 'respectable' press of the 1820's. The first formal term is in Leeds Times, 26 July 1834.
202. On YTU see Cole and Postgate, British Working Class Movements etc. op.cit., 276-7.
203. ibid., 270, quoting the Crisis, 19 Oct. 1833.
204. Pioneer, no.17, 31 Dec. 1833, 2 Feb. 1834, 'Operative of Barnsley' sent £3, 'Operative of Sheffield' sent £8.
205. Poster advertising a meeting for 8 April 1834 in HO 40/32.
206. Details of local co-operative activity, relating to Sheffield, Barnsley, Ardsley, Cumberworth, found in the Crisis, the Pioneer, Lancashire and Yorkshire Co-operator, and printed Co-operative Congress reports for 1831, 1832, 1837 (in Library of Co-operative Union, Manchester).
207. Sheffield Iris, 21 Jan. 1834.
208. ibid., 18 March 1834.
209. Leeds Times, 12 April 1834; Sheffield Iris, 15 April 1834.
210. ibid., 29 July 1834, second reading.
211. Sheffield Mercury, 10 May 1834, quoting Samuel Jackson's testimony, Select Committee on Manufactures etc., comments on local trade union organization, inter-trade in the Sheffield

211. (contd.)

building trades between masons, bricklayers, plasterers and carpenters.

212. Sheffield Mercury, particularly. For example see dialogue of 'Civis' 26 April with 'Veritas' 10 May 1834.

213. ibid., 28 Aug. 1838, Reid and Grant of Huddersfield were the visitors.

214. ibid., 13 June 1835; Sheffield Iris, 16 June 1835.

215. Leeds Times, 23,30 May 1835.

216. ibid., 5 Dec. 1834, 9 Jan. 1835, for names.

217. Sheffield Mercury, 9 May 1835.

218. Sheffield Iris, 22 Dec. 1835, Mrs Bready had just been committed to three months in York Castle for selling 'unstamped', presumably her husband was also there.

219. Report on Handloom Weavers etc. loc.cit., 481; Leeds Times, 23,30 1836.

220. Sheffield Mercury, 18 June 1836, claimed they had received this since October; Sheffield Iris, 5 April 1836, claimed Messrs. Rodgers were paying 2/6 in the £ file money to their 300 men.

221. ibid., 9 Feb. 1836.

222. Sheffield Mercury, 13 Feb. 1836.

223. ibid., 20 Feb. 1836; Sheffield Iris, 23 Feb. 1836, action taken by employers against 'systematic unions entered into by the workmen of most of the branches of the cutlery and other trades'.

224. ibid., 23 Feb. 1836.

225. Sheffield Mercury, 19 March 1836.

226. ibid., 19 March 1836, hinted at support through masters' accusations; 16 April 1836 confirms this in letter of thanks published by file trade to 'Inhabitants of Sheffield'.

227. ibid., 16 April 1836; Sheffield Iris, 19 April 1836.

228. Sheffield Mercury, 16 April 1836.

229. ibid., 21 May 1836.

230. Machin, op.cit., 39.

231. Leeds Times, 30 Jan. 1836.

232. ibid., 5 March 1836.

233. ibid., 17 March 1836.

234. ibid., 9 April 1836.

235. ibid., 11 June 1836.

236. ibid., 18 June 1836; Sheffield Mercury, 18 June 1836.

237. Sheffield Iris, 14 June 1836, prosperity of Barnsley trade, especially fancy drills, 9 Aug., 13 Sept. 1836 demand and strike.

238. West Riding Herald, 16 Sept. 1836; Machin, op.cit., 39.

239. Leeds Times, 9 April 1836, involving stonemasons.

240. Sheffield Mercury, 13,20,27 Aug. 1836.

241. ibid., 20 Aug. 1836.

242. ibid., 27 Aug. 1836.

243. ibid., 20 Aug. 1836.

244. ibid., 10 Sept., 8 Oct. 1836.
245. ibid., 5 Nov. 1836; Sheffield Iris, 15 Nov. 1836.
246. ibid., 27 Sept., 4 Oct. 1836.
247. ibid., 15 Nov. 1836; Sheffield Mercury, 5 Nov. 1836.
248. Sheffield Iris, 15 Nov. 1836.
249. ibid., 6,20 Dec. 1836.
250. Compiled from reports in Sheffield Iris, Sheffield Mercury and Sheffield Independent, Nov. 1836 - March 1837; W.H. Warburton, The History of Trade Union Organisation in the North Staffordshire Potteries (1931), Appendix F, 262-282 contains a reprint of the minutes of the delegate meeting held in the Potteries over 28-30 Dec. 1836.
251. Sheffield Iris, 3 Jan. 1837.
252. ibid., 31 Jan. 1837; the story of the strike is covered in J. Boyle, 'An account of strikes in the Potteries in the years 1834 and 1836, Journal of the Statistical Society, 1838, 37-45 and in Warburton, op.cit., 90-99.
253. Sheffield Mercury, 22 April 1837.
254. Sheffield Iris, 14 March 1837.
255. Leeds Times, 4 Feb. 1837, BRA organising a public meeting to petition against the Poor Law Amendment Act.
256. ibid., 13 May and 3 June 1837.
257. Sheffield Iris, 16 May 1837, noted the problem of American debts not being paid and of the drying up of orders.
258. Sheffield Local Register, 294, 22 April 1837.
259. Sheffield Mercury, 6 May 1837; Sheffield Iris, 9 May 1837.
260. Founder of the Northern Star, for biographical details see Burland, Annals II, 71.
261. Sheffield Mercury, 20 May 1837; Sheffield Iris, 23 May 1837; Leeds Times, 20 May 1837.
262. Sheffield Mercury, 20,27 May 1837.
263. Reports of Mr Gulson, Assistant Commissioner, May-Nov. 1837 in PRO MH 32/28 (Assistant Commissioners' and Inspectors' correspondence).
264. Sheffield Mercury, 3,17 June 1837.
265. Sheffield Iris, 30 May, 13 June 1837.
266. Leeds Times, 24 June 1837.
267. ibid., 1 July 1837, Barnsley procession contained Yeoman Cavalry, Cordwainers Society and the Orange Lodge; Sheffield Mercury, 1 July 1837, Sheffield Iris, 30 May, 4 July 1837, for Sheffield reaction.
268. ibid., 4 July 1837, letter to editor, 'I am well aware sirs, it is the practice of the Whigs and the Middle Class generally whenever they want their views serving, to call upon the un-represented to support them'.
269. ibid., 18 July, 1,8 Aug. 1837; Sheffield Mercury, 15,22,29 July, 5 Aug. 1837; Leeds Times, 29 July, 5 Aug. 1837.
270. ibid., 29 July 1837, Peter Hoey was the 'official' questioner and confronted Morpeth, Strickland and Wortley.

271. ibid., 12 Aug., 30 Sept. 1837; Sheffield Iris, 29 Aug. 1837.
272. Report on Handloom Weavers etc., 272; Leeds Times, 19 Aug. 1837.
273. ibid., 26 Aug., 2 Sept. 1837; Sheffield Iris, 5 Sept. 1837.
274. Leeds Times, 16 Sept. 1837; Sheffield Iris, 5 Sept. 1837.
275. Leeds Times, 30 Sept. 1837.
276. Compiled from Leeds Times.
277. Compiled from Sheffield Mercury, Iris, Courant and Independent.
278. Sheffield Iris, 17 Oct. 1837, WMA met at the Town Hall on Monday 16. The meeting was presided over by James Needham and Henry Hetherington of the London Dispatch (the former publisher of Poor Man's Guardian) was the main guest.
279. Leeds Times, 21 Oct. 1837.
280. In Sheffield the working of 'respectable society' is more easily traced because of the immediate press coverage. The following list covers (although there may be some gaps) most of the key institutions and associations which in functioning formed the common cultural social and economic nexus of the bourgeois classes and sub-classes. They are ranked (perhaps arbitrarily) in order of 'respectability' descending to levels where the 'counter culture' was being manufactured to involve the petty bourgeoisie, labour 'aristocrats' and 'deferential' working man generally.
- The Assemblies (eighteenth century origins)
 - Town Trustees (pre-eighteenth century)
 - Church Burgesses (pre-eighteenth century)
 - Chamber of Commerce (1834)
 - Guardian Society (1830)
 - Cutlers' Company (pre-eighteenth century)
 - Pitt Club (1810)
 - Association for the Prosecution of Felons and Protection of Property (1804)
 - Association for opposing insolvent debtors ()
 - Sheffield Literary and Philosophical Society (1822)
 - Yorkshire Amateur Music Society (1807)
 - Shakespeare Club (1818)
 - Sheffield Botanical Gardens (1836)
 - Sheffield Library (1771 and 1825)
 - Sheffield Fire Office (1811)
 - Sheffield Music Hall (1823)
 - Sheffield Circus and Theatre (1836)
 - Newsrooms (subscription membership, 1816, 1825, 1835)
 - Book Society and Law Library (1836)
 - Bible Missionary and Tract Societies of the various religious denominations
 - Mechanics Institute (1832)
 - Savings Bank (1819)
 - Sick and Friendly societies of a non-trade union character
 - Mechanics Library (1822)
281. Sheffield Courant, 15 Jan., 19 Feb., 30 April 1830, reported assemblies making up the 'season' of 1830. This report suggested the revival of the tradition after (an implied) suspension for several years.
282. B. Harrison, Drink and the Victorians (1971), ch.2, 37-63 for a strongly argued case for the value of the public house in working class life.

283. Sheffield Iris, 9 May 1820, bear bait at Crookes, 1 June 1824, death of a local bear ward who no longer baited in the immediate locality.
284. Barnsley Chronicle, 24 May 1879.
285. Sheffield Iris, 19 Feb. 1825, 300 persons at boxing match, 12 April 1831, female pugilism, 30 April 1833, death of local pugilist; Burland, Annals II, 44.
286. Sheffield Iris, 25 Sept., 2 Oct. 1832.
287. Eden, op.cit., III, 874.
288. Figures from G.C. Holland, The Vital Statistics of Sheffield (Sheffield, 1843), 259-260; Children's Employment Commission (Sheffield Trades) etc.
289. Sheffield Mercury, 6 Aug. 1831.
290. Sheffield Local Register, 270.
291. Leeds Times, 2 Jan. 1836; T. Begg, 'Sketches of the Life and Labours of Mr Alderman John Guest' (Worksop, 1881), 24 - claims 100 total in Barnsley and 400 'Moderates'.
292. ibid., 11, Rotherham Society founded March 1837
293. Holland, op.cit., 150.
294. ibid., 221, figures of attendance for 1840, figures for earlier attendance derived from same source 219-223 and combined with statistics from annual printed, Reports of the Sheffield Sunday School Union (Sheffield, 1820 onwards). These provide information on all groups except the Established Church. Here it has been necessary to estimate using the Holland data as a basis for calculation. For Barnsley data see Burland, Annals II op.cit., 31; Leeds Times, 28 May 1836.
295. T. Ramsey, View of the Town of Sheffield (Sheffield, 1824),
296. Sheffield Iris, 30 Dec. 1823, estimated there were 1200 children not in Sunday school.
297. New Churches in the region had been built in the 1820's with money under the 'million' scheme. These included:

Sheffield:

| | | | | | |
|---------------------------------|------|----|------|-------|------|
| St George's (1821) | 1000 | of | 2240 | seats | free |
| St Philip's (1828) | 650 | " | 1850 | " | " |
| Christ's Ch. Attercliffe (1826) | 500 | " | 1100 | " | " |
| St Mary's (1830) | 800 | " | 2000 | " | " |
| also Methodist | | | | | |
| Ebenezer (1823) | 366 | " | 1579 | " | " |

Greaseborough:

| | | | | | |
|------------------|-----|---|-----|---|---|
| St Mary's (1828) | 241 | " | 661 | " | " |
|------------------|-----|---|-----|---|---|

Barnsley:

| | | | | | |
|--------------------|-----|---|------|---|---|
| St Mary's (1822) | 224 | " | 1015 | " | " |
| St George's (1827) | 800 | " | 1200 | " | " |

Wickham, op.cit., 71-81, for discussion of the expansion of these years.

298. Calculated from 1851 census returns regarding accommodation which were projected backwards using information given about

298. (contd.)

date of building, changes in capacity from this and a multitude of available institutional church histories. A little improvisation was needed but very little that would alter the estimates calculated. Census data in PRO, HO 129/508 (Sheffield), 129/509 (Rotherham), 129/505 (Barnsley), 129/506 (Wortley).

299. Burland, *Annals*, op.cit., II, 32.

300. Sheffield Iris, 8 Feb. 1825.

301. Sheffield Mercury, 5 July 1834.