

LEEDS CORPORATION, 1835 - 1905 :  
A HISTORY OF ITS ENVIRONMENTAL, SOCIAL  
AND ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the growth of local government services provided by the corporation of Leeds between 1835 and 1905. At the beginning of the period, the newly-established reformed corporation was assigned a very limited role in the government of the community which was practically confined to the management and finance of the police force. But over the subsequent seventy years its range of activities widened considerably and by the early twentieth century its policies had exerted a major influence upon the urban environment. Included in this survey are public health; public amenities, such as markets, parks, public libraries, and baths; municipal utilities, namely water, gas, tramways and electricity; slum clearance; labour relations and public assistance schemes for the unemployed; and those aspects of the regulation of private enterprise which were within the province of local government.

The introduction outlines the structure of local government in the eighteen thirties, and chapter one then examines the government of Leeds by the council, highway surveyors and the improvement commission upto 1842, the date at which the municipality became responsible for the administration of the new improvement act. The next chapter considers the activities of the council over the following twenty years, and chapter three assesses the uneven, and in many ways disappointing achievement of these years and suggests reasons for this.

In the post-1865 period the arrangement of chapters is thematic rather than chronological. Chapter four is concerned with public health over the forty years upto 1905, and chapter five with the marked expansion of public enterprise which occurred in the same period.



Chapter six deals with a subject which was of no significance in municipal policy before the mid-sixties, namely the 'housing problem' and slum clearance. Chapter seven contains a survey of labour relations and municipal unemployment programmes in the later decades of the period, and chapter eight examines some aspects of finance and administration over the whole seventy years. In the last chapter we consider some general questions of motivation.

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To my supervisor, Professor M.W. Beresford, I owe much gratitude for innumerable academic and personal kindnesses extending over seven years, and for two years Dr. N. McCord has shown considerable forbearance when I was preoccupied with the history of the world with special reference to Leeds, rather than with the North East of England. Mrs. D. Moran is responsible for the elegant appearance of what follows.

Brian Barber

University of Newcastle upon Tyne,

June 1975.

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ABBREVIATIONS

CM . Council minutes

CMIA Council minutes on 'improvement act' proceedings

RB Report book

RBIA Report book containing reports relating to  
'improvement act' proceedings.

These distinctions are explained in the bibliography.



**I N T R O D U C T I O N**

Although there may be considerable scope for differing interpretations of its causes, it is indisputable that in the course of the nineteenth century there was a transformation in the role of the state, characterised by administrative growth and reform and legislative and institutional innovation<sup>1</sup>. These processes, which are apparent in both central and local government, developed in response to the extensive changes which were taking place in the economy and in society. This study is concerned with the history of one of these innovations in the structure of local government, namely the reformed municipal corporation of Leeds. It analyses the development of the various services provided by the municipality over the seventy years from its establishment in 1835, up to the implementation of the Unemployed Workmen Act in 1905, which marked the furthest extension of municipal responsibility which was to take place before the inter-war years. At its creation, the functions of the council were virtually limited to ensuring representative local government, financial probity, and the maintenance of law and order. But by the early twentieth century, it exerted a far greater influence upon the community, so making it an institution of great significance in the evolving urban society of nineteenth century Britain. During this period there was an expansion of public ownership of utilities, such as the gas, water, electricity and tramway undertakings, an increasing responsibility for public health, housing, and associated environmental services, the growth of civic amenities, like public buildings, libraries, baths, and parks, and these naturally entailed increasing expenditure and taxation, and a growth of the numbers in municipal employment. It would not be possible to explain

<sup>1</sup>Valerie Cromwell, 'Interpretations of nineteenth-century administration: an analysis', Victorian Studies, vol IX 1965-66, pp. 245-255.

these developments without examining the various factors which influenced the formulation of policy. Political considerations, legislation, economic ideas, the influence of central government, and financial issues all operated, in different ways at different times to help to determine the council's social strategies. All of these matters will be taken into account in the following chapters.

But before we begin an examination of the organisation of local government in Leeds, we must first provide a necessary perspective, with a brief outline of the changing structure of local government institutions in the 'age of reform'.

Leaving aside the administration of poor relief, there were four different types of institutions which were responsible for local government in this period. These were the municipal corporations, improvement commissions, manorial courts and surveyors of highways. Only the highway surveyors, since they were the creation of general statute law were to be found in every parish or township in the country, and the presence of the others had been determined by local initiative and the idiosyncrasies of local history. In national terms, there was a remarkable diversity in the forms of local administration. By the eighteen thirties there existed some 263 municipal boroughs,<sup>1</sup> some in large towns like Liverpool and Leeds, some in very much smaller communities, whilst other large towns, particularly Manchester and Birmingham remained unincorporated and were still subject to manorial authority. Similarly, most large towns possessed improvement commissions, although Leicester for example was still without one in this period. Each body was responsible for different aspects of local government, and so often continued to exist together in the same locality.

<sup>1</sup>J. Fletcher, 'Statistics of the municipal institutions of the English towns', J.S.S., vol. v 1842, pp. 97-168.

Where they survived, manorial courts were of no great significance, and the oldest of these four institutions which were still of active significance were the municipal corporations, but their functions were of peripheral importance to most of the major problems of contemporary urban life. They usually possessed political significance because of their responsibility for returning members to parliament, and in all boroughs they had the right of criminal, and sometimes of civil jurisdiction. In addition, many controlled the local police force and administered the corporate estate in places which possessed corporate property<sup>1</sup>. But their powers did not extend beyond this to any important degree. To illustrate this point, we can take the examples provided by the administrative extremes which the corporations of Liverpool and Leeds represent. The former presided over a wide range of activities. It was responsible for the creation and administration of the town's docks, which were vital for the continued prosperity of the town, it provided and managed two elementary schools, initiated a policy of street improvements, and maintained a police force<sup>2</sup>. In contrast, the pre-reform corporation of Leeds lived in a virtuous penury. The civic responsibilities which it possessed were undertaken with honesty and efficiency, but beyond its two principal duties, the administration of justice and the management of the police force, it contributed nothing to the government of the town. In neither of these boroughs, nor for that matter in any other did the routine agenda of the corporation include the provision of those services such as sewerage, paving, the supply of water and street and building regulation, which were essential for the amelioration of urban

<sup>1</sup>See S and B Webb, The Manor and the Borough, Parts 1 and 2, passim.

<sup>2</sup>B.D. White, A History of the Corporation of Liverpool, 1835-1914, pp. 9-12.

conditions. But it would be incorrect to view municipal corporations as embryonic public health authorities. As we have noted, they were created as political and quasi-judicial bodies, and so they remained until the eighteen thirties. Moreover, the majority were oligarchic in constitution, for in 143 boroughs membership of the corporation was on a wholly 'self elect' basis and as a result it would have been by this period politically impossible to endow them with extended powers without making some allowance for a wider degree of participation in the processes of government. The desire to remove political corruption, and to allow the middle class to take part in local government by the creation of elected borough councils inspired the reform of municipal corporations in 1835<sup>1</sup>. In this context, it is easy to understand why the provisions of the Municipal Corporations act concentrated upon electoral and administrative matters to the exclusion of those aspects of local government functions which, in retrospect, would appear to have been of equal or greater importance. As the assistant secretary to the Royal Commission on Municipal Corporations observed,

'the predominance of the political character in the municipal authorities, and their alienation from large bodies of the inhabitants, although they retained the administration of justice, lost them to a great extent the public confidence as trustees for numerous measures of local improvement, to the execution of which no other body could otherwise have laid claim'.<sup>2</sup>

In fact those 'numerous measures' were to some extent the responsibility of another form of local government institution, namely the improvement commissions. From the seventeen forties to the eighteen thirties nearly every urban centre promoted a local act of parliament to create a commission endowed with the powers to carry out paving,

<sup>1</sup>G.B.A.M. Finlayson, England in the Eighteen Thirties, pp. 23-31.

<sup>2</sup>J. Fletcher, art. cit., p. 101.

street cleansing, public lighting and street improvements, and which operated alongside existing local government bodies. As the Webbs have observed, the commissions were 'the starting point of the great modern development of town government',<sup>1</sup> but in few localities did they have the powers necessary to improve the sanitary condition of the towns over which they presided. Here again the question of motivation is of primary importance for a correct understanding of their role in local affairs. Although many of their functions were those which later became part of the basic services of municipal authorities, it would be a misinterpretation to present them as eighteenth and early nineteenth century equivalents of local boards of health. Their primary concern, as we shall see in detail when examining the activities of the Leeds improvement commission, was not sanitary improvement but civic convenience and public safety<sup>2</sup>. At the worst, the work of the commissions was not simply ineffective, but to a greater degree irrelevant to the seemingly intractable problems created by urbanisation, and even the most efficient and comprehensive of them were far from ideal. For example, in Manchester, where the commission has been called 'the best example of a really energetic and successful body'<sup>3</sup> there was much to criticise. The cholera epidemic of 1832 exposed 'the lamentable inadequacy of the ... work in paving, soughing (ie. sewerage) and scavenging of the streets'.<sup>4</sup> Similarly in Liverpool, where although the deterioration of the environment had been causing public concern

<sup>1</sup>S. and B. Webb, Statutory Authorities for Special Purposes, pp. 235-6.

<sup>2</sup>ibid., p. 274.

<sup>3</sup>ibid., p. 256.

<sup>4</sup>A. Redford, The History of Local Government in Manchester, vol. 1, p. 337.

since the late eighteenth century, no effective remedial action was taken, so that by the eighteen forties it was, according to its own medical officer, the 'most unhealthy town in England'.<sup>1</sup> The manorial courts which were still functioning by the eighteen thirties were of little significance in regulating local affairs, at least in the large towns. The authority of the court leet in Birmingham was progressively whittled away as first the improvement commission and then the new corporation encroached on its functions, and it ceased to meet after 1854.<sup>2</sup> In Manchester the major influence of the manorial court was to act as an irritant to the emerging sense of civic dignity in the town, and it was Cobden's experience of its operations which caused him to launch the local campaign for incorporation.<sup>3</sup> The purpose of the highway surveyors, as the title suggests, was the repair of roads in their respective parish or township, and they operated under a variety of general statutes finally consolidated and amended by the General Highways Act of 1835. As the reformed corporations, and after 1848 the local boards gained responsibility for public health administration the surveyors powers were usually absorbed by these bodies in order to make the co-ordination of activities easier.<sup>4</sup>

From the eighteen thirties major changes took place in the structure and functions of local government as a result of reforms promoted both by central government and the localities themselves. In national terms, parliament made important institutional changes with the

<sup>1</sup>I.C. Taylor, 'The court and cellar dwelling: the eighteenth century origin of the Liverpool slum', Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, vol. 122, 1970 pp. 67-90, and B.D. White, op.cit., pp. 33-34.

<sup>2</sup>Victoria County History of Warwickshire, Vol. 7, The City of Birmingham ed. W.B. Stephens, pp. 318-319.

<sup>3</sup>A. Redford, op.cit., vol. 2, pp 10-13.

<sup>4</sup>W. Thornhill ed., The Growth and Reform of English Local Government, Introduction, pp. 6-7.

enactment of the Municipal Corporations act in 1835, the Public Health act in 1848, and the Local Government act in 1858. The 1835 act reformed the constitutions of one hundred and seventy eight existing municipal corporations, the most important change being to make their councils into elective assemblies, and allowed other towns to petition for incorporation. Both Birmingham and Manchester became corporate boroughs in 1838.<sup>1</sup> The significance of the act has already been mentioned, and as revived institutions commanding general local acceptance on account of their new elective basis, they began to absorb other local government authorities. Liverpool took over the powers of its improvement commission in 1835, Leeds followed in 1842, Manchester in 1843 and Birmingham in 1851. Similarly, the surveyors of highways capitulated before the advance of municipal centralisation. In non-corporate towns also improvement commissions and highway surveyors began to disappear largely as a result of the Public Health and Local Government acts, which enabled towns to set up local boards of health to initiate sanitary reforms.<sup>2</sup>

When discussing nineteenth century local government, and in particular in the decades before the Local Government act of 1871, it is important to distinguish between the administrative histories of large and small towns. The history of public health and local government is usually interpreted in terms of well-known general statutes, national figures, and central government departments: Edwin Chadwick, the 1848 act, and the General Board of Health; the local government act of 1858 and the Local Government Act Office; the Medical

<sup>1</sup>A. Redford, op.cit., vol. 2, p. 25, and V.C.H., op.cit., p. 329.

<sup>2</sup>W. Thornhill, loc.cit.



Department of the Privy Council and John Simon.<sup>1</sup> But an important part of the development of local government is not contained within this national chronology. By 1854, when the first General Board of Health was abolished the Public Health act had been adopted by about 180 localities, containing a total population of about two million individuals.<sup>2</sup> With these figures, arithmetic reveals an important aspect of the growth of local administration, namely that the act was largely implemented by medium-sized towns, that is, those with a population of about 10,000 inhabitants. For example, of the twenty six local boards of health in Lancashire, fifteen were located in townships with a population of under ten thousand in 1861, and eight in areas with between ten and twenty thousand, and only three in larger communities.<sup>3</sup> This trend continued under the Local Government act (1858), creating a proliferation of small independent authorities.

In 1863, it was found necessary to limit the creation of local government boards to places with a population of not less than 3,000<sup>4</sup>. But the history of local government in the major towns in this period

<sup>1</sup>R.A. Lewis, Edwin Chadwick and the Public Health Movement, R. Lambert, 'Central and local relations in mid-Victorian England: The Local Government Act Office, 1858-1871', Victorian Studies, vol. vi 1962-3, pp. 121-150, and R. Lambert, Sir John Simon, 1816-1904, and English Social Administration.

<sup>2</sup>G. Kitson Clark, The Making of Victorian England, p. 101.

<sup>3</sup>See: E. Midwinter, Social Administration in Lancashire, 1830-1860, p.82. The larger towns were Wigan (pop. 37,658), Bolton (70,396), and Preston (82,000). For the histories of some characteristic local boards, see: E. Midwinter, op.cit., ch.3, and the same author's 'Local boards of health in Lancashire, 1848-1858', Trans. Hist. Soc. of Lanc. and Ches., vol. 117, 1965, pp. 167-180; H.J. Smith ed., Darlington 1850, and W.H. Chaloner, The Social and Economic Development of Crewe. A list of the towns which adopted the 1848 act between 1849 and 1856 may be found in C.F. Brockington, Medical Officers of Health, 1848-1855. An essay in local history, Appendix II.

<sup>4</sup>The Local Government Act Amendment Act, 1863. 26 Vict., cap XVII, clause 2.

demonstrates that usually they did not participate in the permissive legislation enacted by the central government. In these towns, reforms were achieved by the promotion of local acts for a variety of purposes, endowing each town with what one historian has felicitously defined as 'their own individual constitutional histories'.<sup>1</sup> If to some extent they assisted the advance of general legislation through the evidence which their doctors and prominent citizens gave to royal commissions and select committees, they were nevertheless determined to be, and to remain self-governing communities. It was under the authority of these local acts that corporations made many of their major decisions, and the inhabitants of the major towns were largely governed, for better or for worse, until the later decades of the century. Even then, as we shall see, the Local Government Board was hesitant to confront a local authority determined on a particular course of action. Thus any enquiry into the history of local government in the principal towns of the nineteenth century must, like this study, be an investigation of local history.

<sup>1</sup>G. Best, Mid-Victorian Britain, 1851-75, p.39.

CHAPTER ONE

LEEDS AND ITS GOVERNMENT, 1830 - 1842

(1)

To avoid confusion, it is necessary to define the different applications which the place-name 'Leeds' possessed by the beginning of this period. In its widest sense, Leeds was the parish, parliamentary and municipal borough, covering an area of thirty two square miles, which was subdivided into eleven townships.<sup>1</sup> One of these, situated in the centre of the borough and straddling the river Aire was the township of Leeds and within this lay 'the compact and solid portion of the town',<sup>2</sup> the central urban area. In economic and demographic terms alike the town of Leeds was preeminent in the borough. During the eighteenth century, Leeds developed as the main commercial centre for the woollen textile industry of the West Riding, monopolising the marketing, finishing and exporting of broadcloths.<sup>3</sup> The construction of the Aire and Calder navigation at the beginning of the century and the development of an industry which exported up to seventy percent of its output overseas ensured the regional supremacy of the town.<sup>4</sup> The trade was dominated by the Leeds merchants, who in the course of the century extended their range of activities to include the control of the finishing processes, which helped to make the town a major cloth dyeing centre. Traditionally, the rural clothiers brought their products to the town for purchase by the merchants at markets which were held on Leeds bridge, and later in the cloth halls. These

<sup>1</sup> See Table 1.1.

<sup>2</sup> W. White, History, Gazetteer and Directory of the West Riding of Yorkshire .... (1837), vol. 1. p. 478.

<sup>3</sup> R.G. Wilson, Gentlemen Merchants, p. 54.

<sup>4</sup> W.G. Rimmer, 'The Evolution of Leeds to 1700', Thoresby Society Miscellany, vol. 14 part 2, 1967. pp. 122-123, and Wilson, op.cit., pp. 41-44.

halls, one for coloured cloth, built in 1758 and another for white cloth, built in 1775 were the visible symbols of the major economic activity of the town. Here the domestic manufacturer rented a stall to display his goods for purchase, the former hall having 1,800 stands and the latter 1,213. The movement of stall rents traces the rise and gradual decline of the independent clothier. At the beginning of the nineteenth century stalls in the white cloth hall sold from between £6 to £8 each, but by the eighteen thirties their value had fallen to £1.00, and a more spectacular demise occurred in the rents in the coloured cloth hall, falling from between £16 and £24 to £2.10s. over the same period.<sup>1</sup> This decline was of course completely unrelated to the amount of cloth manufactured in the industry as a whole, but indicates a change in the methods of production, for 'the factory system (has) so far prevailed over the domestic system, as to reduce the number of that valuable class, the clothiers attending Leeds market, from 3,000 to less than half that number'.<sup>2</sup> But the domestic system continued to survive, although its role was much reduced in importance.<sup>3</sup>

The late eighteenth century witnessed the appearance of the merchant manufacturer in Leeds, foremost amongst whom was Benjamin Gott.<sup>4</sup> In the 1790s he built his factory at Bean Ing, on the western edge of the town and here in the following decades he developed a remarkable industrial hybrid, a factory which used steam power for the fulling and scribbling process and depended upon the centralisation of traditional

<sup>1</sup>E.M. Sigsworth, 'The industrial revolution', in M.W. Beresford and G.R.J. Jones eds., Leeds and its Region, p. 146, and W. White, op.cit., p. 511.

<sup>2</sup>W. White, loc.cit.

<sup>3</sup>K.G. Ponting ed., Baines' Account of the Woollen Manufacture of England, pp. 99-100.

<sup>4</sup>W.B. Crump ed., The Leeds Woollen Industry 1780-1820, Thoresby Society vol. 32, 1931, chs. 3, 4, and 5.

'domestic' methods for the other stages of production. By the eighteen twenties, Gott was applying steam power to the spinning and finishing processes, but as the historian of the Leeds woollen industry observed, 'As far as weaving and finishing are concerned the industry in 1820 to what it had been in 1770 than in what it became in 1870'.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, the future development of the industry was foreshadowed in Gott's pioneering efforts, and he was not without imitators and rivals. In all these new developments the old merchant class of Leeds was conspicuous by its absence. Accepted modes of business behaviour and traditional assumptions of social status prevented it from participating in the mechanisation of the industry.<sup>2</sup> But despite this, the factory was not a typical institution in the economic life of Leeds, for the growth of a profusion of trades and professions meant that by the eighteen thirties, only about twenty five percent of the working population found employment in factories.<sup>3</sup>

South of the town and next in order of magnitude, were its 'two populous suburbs'<sup>4</sup> of Hunslet and Holbeck. The former numbered glass and bottle, pottery and engineering works amongst its manufacturing interests. Indeed engineering became the second largest local industry by mid-century, making textile and ancilliary machinery and meeting the growing demand of the railways.<sup>5</sup> In Holbeck flax spinning employed sixty percent of those working in steam-powered factories in 1848, (2,640 out of a total of 4,363) with the famous factory of John Marshall employing

<sup>1</sup> ibid., p.26.

<sup>2</sup> Wilson, op.cit. ch.6.

<sup>3</sup> W.G. Rimmer, 'The industrial profile of Leeds, 1740-1840', Thoresby Society, Miscellany, vol. 14 part 2, 1967, esp. p.134 and p. 147.

<sup>4</sup> W. White, op.cit. p. 482.

<sup>5</sup> The engineering industry employed 6.3 per cent (3,741) in 1841, and 8.8 per cent (7,415) of the total working population in 1851. W.G.Rimmer, 'Occupations in Leeds, 1841-1951', Thoresby Society, Miscellany, vol. 14 part 2, 1967, p. 162.

1,770 workers. Next in importance came iron and engineering (twenty three percent, or 984) and then a further 695 (sixteen percent) in woollen mills<sup>1</sup>. Despite the growth of urban tentacles along Meadow lane, Water lane and Humslet lane (the main roads between Leeds and its southern satellites) the physical fusion of Leeds, Hunslet and Holbeck had not been achieved by the eighteen thirties. But if the whole of the central area had not by this time definitely assumed the mantle of townscape, to travel further out from the centre was to move further down the urban hierarchy from suburb to village, for a journey to any of the outlying townships involved a transition from town to country. In general, the townships to the north and east of Leeds were predominantly agricultural in character, and to the south and west was to be found the domestic woollen industry, with the weaving villages of Armley, Bramley, Farnley and Wortley<sup>2</sup>. In addition, some of the villages to the north of Leeds were developing as middle class suburbs. This was especially true of Headingley, and the mansions of Leeds merchants which had appeared in other northern townships were portents of the middle class villa developments of the future.

Thus although by the eighteen thirties Leeds had become one of the major towns of the United Kingdom, it still retained a large rural penumbra, and despite rapid rates of growth, continued to do so throughout the nineteenth century. Hence it is important to remember that when we are discussing the condition of the urban environment and the problems of local government in Leeds we are generally concerned not with the borough as a whole, but with its central urban area. But if

<sup>1</sup>Holbeck select vestry, minute book. 'Steampower and number of hands working in mills etc. ... April 1848'.

<sup>2</sup>D. Ward 'The pre-urban cadaster and the urban pattern of Leeds', Annals of the Assoc. of American Geographers, vol. 52, 1962, p.151.

Leeds and its immediate suburbs were physically a small part of the borough in demographic terms the central trinity were of major importance, as table 1.1 shows.

From the later eighteenth century the upsurge in the rate of population growth, and the consequent pressure upon housing resources led to an expansion of the built-up area of Leeds township. Before this time, the response to increasing demand for accommodation was met by the development of 'in filling' which occurred in two ways. In the town itself, the open yards and gardens which existed behind the houses and shops fronting onto the existing streets were converted into courts lined with cottages, stables and privies, in a manner familiar to many other towns, so increasing the density of population in the existing urban core.<sup>1</sup> Likewise, on the outskirts of the town the building of cottages in the semi-rural 'fold yards' was creating 'quasi-ribbon development along the main roads from Leeds to the south, south east, east and north east'.<sup>2</sup> But neither of these types of development were important as a long-term response to population growth. The number of back-yards and fold-yards which were available for building in was limited and housing accommodation in back-yards had to compete with the demand for non-domestic buildings, such as warehouses and workshops. By the eighteen thirties, these yards could be numbered amongst the least salubrious parts of the town. For example, in 1832 when the cholera made its first appearance in Leeds it found its earliest victims in Blue Bell fold, off East Street,<sup>3</sup> and at the same time, and again in 1840,

<sup>1</sup>M.W. Beresford, 'Prosperity Street and others: an essay in visible urban history', in M.W. Beresford and G.R.J. Jones eds., Leeds and its Region, pp. 189-190, and J.R. Prest, The Industrial Revolution in Coventry, pp. 25-27.

<sup>2</sup>M.W. Beresford, 'The back-to-back house in Leeds, 1787-1937', in S.D. Chapman ed., The History of Working Class Housing, p. 98.

<sup>3</sup>Report to the Leeds Board of Health, 1833 p.6.



Table 1.1Population of the Borough of Leeds, 1801-1841

Township	1801	1811	1821	1831	1841
Leeds	30,669	35,951	48,603	71,602	88,741
Armley	2,695	2,941	4,273	5,159	5,676
Beeston	1,427	1,538	1,670	2,218	2,175
Bramley	2,562	3,484	4,921	7,039	8,875
Chapel Allerton	1,054	1,362	1,678	1,934	2,580
Farnley	943	1,164	1,332	1,591	1,530
Headingley	1,313	1,670	2,154	3,849	4,768
Holbeck	4,196	5,124	7,151	11,210	13,346
Hunslet	3,799	6,393	8,171	12,074	15,852
Potter Newton	509	571	644	863	1,241
Wortley	1,995	2,336	3,179	5,944	7,090
Total: out-townships	22,493	26,583	35,193	51,791	63,133
Total: Leeds borough	53,162	62,534	83,796	123,393	151,874

Source: Printed Census

The part of Seacroft township enumerated with Leeds in the 1841 census has been excluded here.

the Boot and Shoe yard in Kirkgate distinguished itself as a place of conspicuous insanitary notoriety.<sup>1</sup> By the eighteen thirties the yards in Kirkgate had become the subject of public complaint, and were amongst the first properties to be demolished by the council.<sup>2</sup>

In contrast to these piecemeal developments, the last two decades of the eighteenth century witnessed the annexation of wholly new urban territory with the laying out of new streets on both the east and the west sides of the town. In the east this took the form of streets lined with a new type of working class housing, namely the back to back house. After making its local debut in the seventeen eighties, this persisted as the commonest type of housing in Leeds until the twentieth century.<sup>3</sup> The first examples of this kind of development occurred immediately north of Kirkgate, in Union, Ebenezer and Georges streets, and in the following decades the Leylands to the north, the Quarry hill area to the east of Sheepscar beck, and the Near and Far Bank area in the east ward were colonised by the back to back. These newly annexed areas of building ground became the battle ground of the sanitary reformers in the eighteen thirties and forties and of the housing reformers of the eighteen nineties. Two important facts relating to the development of the eastern area of the town need to be noticed. In the first place, there is the speed at which building took place,<sup>4</sup> and secondly that when public health critics launched their attack on the east end in the eighteen thirties they were criticising the condition of a recently-created environment. Although the Boot and Shoe yard was mostly the

<sup>1</sup> See below p.43.

<sup>2</sup> See below, Chapter 2.

<sup>3</sup> M.W. Beresford in S.D. Chapman op.cit., p. 97 and p.117.

<sup>4</sup> See table 1.2.

product of speculative enterprise in the seventeen sixties,<sup>1</sup> and the first back to backs in Union, Ebenezer and George streets date from twenty years later,<sup>2</sup> much of the property singled out for criticism in the thirties was of more recent origin. In the Leylands, building had begun in the first decade of the century and was still the scene of building activity in the eighteen twenties. Similarly, none of the streets in the district east of Marsh lane was more than twenty five years old when it achieved notoriety in the report of the statistical committee of the council in 1839. The following table gives the statistics of house building in the township between 1801 and 1831. Unfortunately, it is not possible to compare these figures with subsequent decades because of changes in the ward boundaries in 1837.<sup>3</sup> As one authority observed,

'whole streets of houses have arisen in Leeds, in an inconceivably short space of time, and in many instances evidently for the sole end of speculation, without regard to the absolute wants of the tenants'.<sup>4</sup>

The sanitary problems created by the speculative builders' disregard for the environment will be discussed later in the chapter.

At first the back to back was to be found almost exclusively on the eastern side of the town, whilst the west end was the district

'to be preferred as a residence by those who have it in their power to make the selection'.<sup>5</sup>

The growth of Leeds, like many other towns, involved a

<sup>1</sup>W.G.Rimmer, 'Working men's cottages in Leeds, 1770-1840', Thoresby Society, Miscellany, vol. 13 part 2, 1960, p.169.

<sup>2</sup>M.W. Beresford in S.D. Chapman op.cit., p. 102.

<sup>3</sup>Reports of the Commissioners upon the boundaries and wards of certain boroughs and corporate towns, Part II, Parl. Papers 1837, vol. XXVII. Report ... upon Leeds. (No pagination).

<sup>4</sup>R. Baker, 1842 Report, p. 11.

<sup>5</sup>E. Baines, Directory General and Commercial of the town and borough of Leeds for 1817, p.1.

Table 1.2

Houses in Leeds township, 1801-1831

WARD	1801	1811	1821	1831
Middle and Kirkgate	866	901	1,045	1,117
Millhill	522	529	572	594
North East (Lower)	1,952	1,582	2,315	3,451
North East (Upper)		1,013	1,501	2,134
North West (Lower)	910	1,261	834	2,034
North West (Upper)			1,103	1,714
South	649	828	1,139	1,145
East	1,214	1,346	2,011	3,006
Upper	769	723(sic)	671(sic)	680
TOTAL	6,882	8,183	11,191	15,875

Source: Printed Census.

polarisation of social classes, with the east-end emerging as the working class and manufacturing area and the west as the middle class 'residential' enclave. But this simple social dichotomy had been considerably modified by the eighteen thirties. Some years before the first back to backs were being built in the east, the Wilson family, as the owners of the Park estate on the western edge of the town were promoting the development of elegant and expensive squares and terraces there.<sup>1</sup> But for several reasons the attempt to maintain the exclusiveness of the venture failed. By the seventeen nineties the estate had been inherited by absentee owners who were interested in the development in purely commercial terms, and moreover some of the residents were adding commercial premises, tenter grounds, dressing shops and warehouses to their property. But the greatest single factor in the decline of the west end arose from the problem of smoke pollution. Under ordinary circumstances the natural advantage of such west end sites is that prevailing westerly winds keep them free from the smoke of industry in the east. In this case, however, the Wilsons were unfortunate in that beyond the western boundary of their property a variety of industrial enterprises began to appear. These events culminated in the establishment of the factory complex of Wormold and Gott, woollen manufacturers at Bean Ing, who compounded the nuisance value of their steam engine by constructing a private gas works. The results were fatal to the Wilsons' project. Legal actions to secure smoke abatement were unavailing, and the wealthy residents, harassed by smoke and rightly apprehensive of falling property values moved out to

<sup>1</sup>R.G. Wilson, Gentlemen Merchants, pp. 198-203.

take up residence in the unpolluted suburbs.<sup>1</sup> The remaining empty building lots of the west end were abandoned to the only type of builders who were prepared to exploit them, namely the builders of working class dwellings.

A detailed examination of the social structure and environmental condition of Leeds in the eighteen thirties is possible only because of the contemporary research undertaken by Dr. Robert Baker.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, his survey did not extend beyond Leeds township, and so no comparable data are available for the industrial suburbs of Hunslet and Holbeck. But nevertheless as a result of his investigations we are able to analyse the effects of urban growth as represented by the major part of the urban area. By far the greatest percentage of housing growth was accounted for by the increase in working class housing (or 'cottage property' to use the contemporary term), that is domestic property with rentals of below £10 a year. In 1839, nearly seventy five percent of houses in the township fell into this category, and of these perhaps the majority had annual rentals of between £4 and £7.<sup>3</sup> At the lower end of the scale, houses with yearly rents of about £4 consisted of only two rooms, 'a kitchen and chamber', those renting at £5 were usually three roomed, with 'cellar, house, and chamber',

<sup>1</sup>There is a house in which I once lived at the west end of the town - a house belonging to my father in 1803 my father refused £2,500 for it - I should be very glad now to take it if I wanted to sell the place and I should not be able to get half the money for it; and that in consequence of the smoke coming to it - it now being surrounded by smoke, and formerly a pure clear situation.' The house was at Eyebright place, south of the coloured cloth hall. H.L.R.O., House of Commons Select Committees, Evidence 1842, vol 7, L.2, Committee on Leeds Improvements, 2 June 1842.

<sup>2</sup>See below, pp. 48-57.

<sup>3</sup>As might be expected in an 'industrial suburb', there was a higher percentage of cottage property and a smaller percentage of the most valuable housing in Holbeck than there was in Leeds township. In 1845, houses with a gross estimated rental of under £10 was 88.00% in the former (75.00% in Leeds in 1839) and 4.17% in the class £20 and above, compared to 11% in Leeds in 1839. Source: LM, 30 May 1846.

and dwellings in the £6 to £8 class generally contained a second chamber, or upstairs room. Not every house of course consisted of a single family unit, for the poorer the area the greater was the prevalence of sub-letting, and the more likely it was that the cellar of a house would be occupied as a separate dwelling, letting for about £2.10s per annum.<sup>1</sup> If we examine the distribution of classes and the quality of housing on the basis of municipal wards, a working class presence can be found in all areas. No ward was exclusively working class in composition, but in all except the two smallest wards, better quality housing was in a minority. Taking the township as a whole, seventy five percent of houses could be classed as cottage property, and using the overall figure as a basis for comparison, the three wards in the east (the north, the east and the north east) and the south ward can be defined as overwhelmingly working class areas, with the proportion of low-rental houses on and above the general average. The west and north west ward presented a more even social distribution, while in the two distinctly smaller central wards, Kirkgate and Millhill, more expensive properties predominated. The latter had traditionally been a district favoured by the wealthier Leeds residents, and after the boundary changes in 1837 also included the most expensive properties built on the Park estate. Moreover, both wards contained the developing central business district of the town.<sup>2</sup>

Not only was the greatest percentage of cottage property to be found in the east end, but more over the largest proportion of the cheapest quality housing was located there also. Hence the east end

<sup>1</sup>R. Baker, 1842 Report, p.11, p.13

<sup>2</sup>Rimmer, art.cit., p.170. There were many yards in the town centre which had developed along the lines of the Kirkgate yards, (eg. the Headrow and Briggate yards), but significantly none of the latter were a cause of complaint by Baker. Perhaps the buildings there had become purely commercial premises, whereas the Kirkgate yards, on the eastern periphery of the business district were too far from the commercial area to be affected.

contained both the majority of the working class in the town, and also the vast majority of its poorest members. The following table summarises the statistics.

In his Report of 1842, Baker made a stark contrast between the mortality rates experienced in different parts of the town. He observed that,

'by drawing a line through the centre of the map from north to south the deaths in proportion to population on the east side of the map were, in 1839, as to 1 every 24 (ie. 41.7 per 1,000); while on the other hand, in those parts of the town where the streets are spacious and wide, and the drainage sufficient, the deaths were only as 1 to 36 (ie. 27.7 per 1,000); both ratios being exceedingly high, but the difference remarkable'<sup>1</sup>

Thus we must now attempt to isolate those factors responsible for the differences in urban pathology. It is first necessary to clarify the statistical basis of Baker's statement. The town was in fact divided not into two, but into three registration districts. District number one comprised the north and north east wards; number two, the east, south and Kirkgate wards, and the west, Millhill and north west wards were contained in the third. In the year in question, the death rate in each district was 42.4, 35.0, and 27.7 per 1,000 respectively. Part of this difference can be accounted for by the variations in birth rates between the districts, for since infant mortality was a major component of the crude death rate in the nineteenth century, the level of the birth rate would significantly influence the level of the death rate. But there is no simple correlation here. The first district, which had the highest death rate also had the highest birth rate (45.5 per 1,000 living), but the disparity in mortality rates between the other two districts was not a reflection

<sup>1</sup>R. Baker, 1842 Report, p.19.



Table 1.3

Number and Percentage of Houses at Different  
Rentals in Leeds Township in 1839

WARD	Total Number	Number £5 and under	Percent £5 and under	Number under £10	Percent under £10	Number £20 and over	Percent £20 and over
East	3,361	1,662	49	2,947	88	73	2.0
North East	3,813	1,546	40	3,422	90	45	1.2
North West	2,141	700	33	1,465	68	240	11.0
West	3,305	340	10	2,104	64	370	11.0
North	2,794	540	19	2,100	75	110	4.0
Kirkgate	645	82	13	274	42	237	37.0
Mill Hill	984	102	10	348	35	444	45.0
South	1,236	300	24	943	76	77	6.0
Total	18,279	5,272	-	13,603	-	1,596	-

(2,640 houses, in the £10-£20 range have been omitted)

Source: 'Report upon the condition of the town of Leeds and its inhabitants', J.S.S., vol ii, 1840, p.408, Table 111.

of birth rate differentials, for in both instances the rate was 35.7. Clearly, the birth rate cannot be used to account for an important proportion of the differences in mortality rates which existed in the town.

One factor which has usually been regarded as an important influence upon vital statistics is the question of the density of habitation, measured by the ratio of the number of people to each inhabited house. If we take the statistics provided by the 1841 census, there appears to be little difference between the wards except that the houses in Kirkgate and Millhill have a higher density than the others.

Table 1.4

Number of Persons per inhabited house  
in Leeds in 1841

East	4.5
North East	4.5
North	4.7
North West	4.7
West	4.7
South	4.8
Millhill	5.2
Kirkgate	5.4

But these figures require interpretation in terms of the size of the houses in different wards, and here we can make use of the tables derived from Baker's report of 1839. As we have observed, every ward except Kirkgate and Millhill contained more than sixty percent of working class houses, but more significant still is the sharper contrast

which emerges from a comparison of the percentage of houses in each ward with rentals of £5 and under. In this case, marked differences emerge.<sup>1</sup> At one extreme, the Millhill and west wards have only ten percent of houses rated in this category, whilst at the other, the north east possessed forty percent and the east, forty nine percent. Hence a far greater percentage of families were living in relatively over-crowded conditions - four or five people in two-roomed houses - in the eastern area of the town than in the west. On the other hand, Baker doubted the importance of the density of habitation as a contributory cause of high mortality rates, and Professor Rimmer has done so as well.<sup>2</sup> But this influence cannot be wholly discounted. Neither Baker nor Rimmer take the question of differing house sizes fully into account, although on several occasions Baker vividly illustrated the degree of congestion in which many families were living, especially where the house had the double function of a home, and a workshop for a domestic trade.<sup>3</sup> Baker believed that the major cause of mortality 'exist(ed) in ratio of ventilation and drainage',<sup>4</sup> and in working class areas both of these were at a premium. If we can accept that current levels of working class incomes made high-density and overcrowded conditions inevitable under the circumstances, it is less easy to accept the other features of the environment created by the speculative builders of the early nineteenth century whose aim was 'to build the largest number of cottages on the smallest available space'.<sup>5</sup> Before the local improvement act of 1842,

<sup>1</sup>See table 1.3

<sup>2</sup>Rimmer, art.cit., p.177

<sup>3</sup>R. Baker, 1842 Report, p 12, pp. 18-19

<sup>4</sup>R. Baker, 1842 Report, p.20

<sup>5</sup>ibid., p.4

there was no legal restraint upon property developers, and so their desire to maximise profits led to the creation of narrow streets, culs de sac, and closed courts which reduced both light and ventilation. Some builders also failed to provide adequate (and in some cases, any) means of disposing of human and household refuse. For example, in three streets in the east ward, one hundred houses with 452 inhabitants were provided with only two privies 'neither of which is fit for human use', and in the north west ward a group of thirty houses with fifty inhabitants had only one privy.<sup>1</sup> These were certainly not isolated instances, for in 1852 there were very many houses which were without what the town council regarded as 'suitable necessary houses and middensteads'.<sup>2</sup> But in any case the problem of refuse disposal was exacerbated by the failure of local government, (in this case the improvement commission) to provide any refuse disposal service. As a result, 'the adult population use the offices of their respective places of employment, and that all the refuse of their dwellings is thrown into the street, where pools of water accumulate and stagnate'.<sup>3</sup>

The streets themselves were often in an insanitary condition, because there was no legal obligation upon either the owner nor the local authority (the surveyors of the highways) to have them paved and surfaced. This was not always the fault of the landlord, for in many instances the difficulty of getting agreement amongst the many owner-occupiers of a street prevented any improvement being made. But it is not surprising to discover that in the poorest areas of the town the

<sup>1</sup>LM, 2 Nov 1839

<sup>2</sup>CMIA, 11 Feb 1852, 12 May 1852, 9 Nov 1852, 9 Feb 1853, 11 May 1853, 10 Aug 1853, 16 Jan 1854

<sup>3</sup>'Report on the condition of the town of Leeds and of its inhabitants', J.S.S. vol. ii 1840, p. 404.

majority of streets were at best half paved and at worst could be characterised as 'broken and undulating surfaces ... which are at the same time a street, a pond and a midden, never swept, never cleansed, nor drained ...'.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, sewerage was also a question of private initiative except in a few cases where rudimentary provisions had been made by the highway surveyors, but in general, it was 'exceedingly deficient, and altogether inapplicable to the wants of so large a population'.<sup>2</sup>

Finally, we must mention three sources of disquiet for the public health reformers of the period, namely the question of the water supply, the extent of smoke pollution, and the state of burial grounds. The least important source of water, in terms of the number of consumers it supplied was the piped supply provided by the water works. Up to this period the water was drawn from the river Aire, which by the eighteen thirties was seriously polluted. In 1837 the ownership of the works passed from the improvement commission to a semi-public company which sought its source of supply elsewhere. But the services of the water works were available to very few of the inhabitants, for in 1842 only 3,000 houses were receiving water from the company, representing about sixteen percent of the houses in the town.<sup>3</sup> Most householders drew their water from pumps and wells, and we can expect that given the state of the environment, there would be a considerable amount of impurity present in these sources.

Contemporaries frequently referred, in very critical terms, to the 'smoke nuisance' but it must be emphasised that in this context

<sup>1</sup> art.cit., p. 400.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, p.403

<sup>3</sup> RBIA, 6 Aug 1851. A decade later 22,732 houses were being supplied (*ibid.*).

the term 'nuisance' is euphemistic. The degree of air-pollution seems to have been considerable for unfortunately two major industries of Leeds, woollen cloth dyeing and iron and engineering were notorious for the volume of smoke they produced. We have already noted the effect which smoke pollution had upon the embryonic west end of Leeds, and the fact that there was apparently no legal redress. Although smoke abatement provisions were obtained in the local improvement act of 1842, the dyers gained exemption from their operation, and in 1866 the iron trades were successful in opposing the extension of these clauses to cover their own works.

By the eighteen thirties, the problem of the local burial grounds was also creating some concern. The cemetery attached to the parish church was, despite successive extensions, inadequate to cope with the rising number of burials, and in any case, sanitary reformers had serious objections to the presence of burial grounds within towns, wishing them to be provided outside densely-populated areas.

Two conclusions can be drawn from this review of the urban condition of Leeds in the eighteen thirties. In the first place, major changes were necessary to improve the quality of the urban environment. The construction of a sewerage system, the enactment of building and street regulations to ensure minimum standards of construction, the provision of new burial grounds, and the control of smoke pollution were the most important items on the agenda of public health reform. Secondly, there were clearly remarkable deficiencies in the existing local government institutions of the town. The remainder of this chapter examines the powers and functions of the three local government institutions of the town, (the municipal corporation, the improvement commission and the surveyors of the highways), and describes the history of the local movement for sanitary reform.

(2)

The municipal corporation of Leeds was first created, by royal charter, in 1626 and reconstituted in 1661.<sup>1</sup> It continued to function under the terms of the second charter until it was abolished in the reform of 1835. The evidence provided by the earliest extant records of the corporation, the court books which begin in 1662, show that in its early years it was undertaking a wide variety of functions. If we examine its activities in the first two decades, it appears that it was issuing regulations for the common bakehouse, the markets, the assize of corn, bread and ale, the charities of the town, the provision for the poor, and the creation of gilds.<sup>2</sup> But in the following years many of these activities lapsed. Gild regulation never became an established feature of the town's trades, charities were administered by the independent Trustees of Pious Uses,<sup>3</sup> and apart from sporadic and minor incursions into the affairs of the community, by the nineteenth century the corporation was performing a very restricted role in the government of the town. But although it had only two major public duties, both of them were of importance. These were the administration of justice and the organisation of the police force.<sup>4</sup> The

<sup>1</sup>J. Wardell, Municipal History of the Borough of Leeds, pp. 20-21

<sup>2</sup>Thoresby Society, The Court Books of the Leeds Corporation, First Book, 1662 to 1705. Volume 35, 1933. See entries for 20 Jan 1662, 20 March 1662, 13 Sept 1662, 8 Nov 1662, 21 Sept 1669, 29 Sept 1670, 11 March 1674; and S and B Webb, The Manor and the Borough, vol. 2, pp 414-423.

<sup>3</sup>The committee of pious uses was created on 5 July 1620, and consisted of the vicar of Leeds and twelve other members, Further Report of the Commissioners for Inquiring Concerning Charities, volume 15, pp 660-677. Parl. Papers, 1826 (383) XIII.

<sup>4</sup>Unless a specific reference is made, all the details of the functions of the unreformed corporation have been drawn from the First Report of the Commissioners appointed to Enquire into the Municipal Corporations in England and Wales ... Part III (Northern and North Midland Circuits), Parl. Papers, 1835 (116)XXVI. pp. 1617-1624.

mayor and aldermen composed ex officio the bench of magistrates of the borough. One magistrate sat daily in the court house to transact routine business, twice a week the mayor and one or two aldermen presided over petty sessions, and at quarter sessions sat with the borough recorder, and brewster sessions sat annually to grant beer-house licences. The police force was appointed and managed by the mayor and aldermen in their capacity as magistrates under the sanction of the local act of 1815. The force was financed out of the court house rate fund, which was levied as the need arose in accordance with the 1809 local act. It consisted of a 'day police' a body of only nine men which at night was supplemented by a 'nightly watch'. This comprised two permanent officers and, during the winter months, eighty three watchmen and inspectors, reduced during the summer to a strength of fifty eight. The annual budget of the corporation was about £160, from which was paid the salaries of the few corporation officials, the cost of suits of clothes for its employees, and the rent of pews reserved for the use of the corporation in the town's churches. It seems that the corporation carried out its restricted obligations with efficiency, and no criticism on the grounds of corruption or ineptitude is evident either from local sources or from the report of the investigation made by the municipal corporations commission. Indeed, its efficiency was maintained despite the increasing pressure of work in the courts which rose as a consequence of the growth of the population of the borough. The office of mayor was 'the contrary of a lucrative office', and the growing volume of public business which fell upon the magistrates made it increasingly difficult to persuade members of the corporation to take up office. Many were prepared to pay the large fines imposed for declining to become aldermen or mayor,



and between 1803 and 1833, the corporation accumulated £4,800 in fines from recalcitrant members.<sup>1</sup>

These fines were a major source of income for the corporation, for it levied no rates (apart from the occasional rate necessary to finance the police), owned no corporate estate, and had incurred no debts. From the funds accumulated from fines and fees it had invested £6,000 in three percent consols, and £500 in the Leeds and Wakefield turnpike trust, which together gave the corporation an annual income of £220. Neither financial dishonesty nor administrative inefficiency could be levelled as charges against it, but one aspect of its organisation was not without its critics. The corporation was 'self elect', vacancies were filled by nominations made by the existing members, and as a result, 'family influence is predominant. Fathers, and sons and sons-in-law, brothers brothers-in-law succeed to the offices of the corporation, like matters of family settlement.'<sup>2</sup> Moreover, all the families involved were tories in politics, and this feature of the corporation gained increasing significance with the growth of the non-conformist community in the town. The corporation helped to promote the improvement act of 1755, and paid £50 towards its cost, and it also voted in favour of the 1809 act.<sup>3</sup> Its members were ex officio commissioners, and attended meetings of the commission until the eighteenth twenties. But by this time the liberal nonconformists were taking effective action to break the tory monopoly over the institutions of local government. It was impossible for the former to gain entry to the corporation, and so this group concentrated its efforts to secure

<sup>1</sup>S. and B. Webb, op. cit., p.423 fn.2.

<sup>2</sup>Municipal Corporations Report, p.1620.

<sup>3</sup>S. and B. Webb op. cit., p.421.

control of the vestry, and especially through the vestry elections, the control of the improvement commission. By the mid eighteen thirties the governing bodies of Leeds had become politically polarised, where,

'In cases where the election is popular, as in the choice of commissioners under the local acts, the persons selected are all of one political party, professing the opposite opinions to those entertained by the majority of the corporation; which is accounted for by the necessity of balancing the influence of the corporation.'<sup>1</sup>

The reform of the municipalities undertaken in 1835 was conceived solely as a political measure, as a counterpart of the parliamentary reform achieved three years before. As the Times stated in a leading article,

'the fact is the parliamentary reform, if it were not to include corporation reform likewise, would have been literally a dead letter, except in so far as the county representation be concerned,'<sup>2</sup>

and although Leeds corporation exerted no electoral influence, it was abolished along with one hundred and seventy seven others. Although we are interested in local government as the agent of urban improvement, this possible role for the new municipal corporations thus constituted neither the motivation nor inspired the enthusiasm of those promoting or supporting the measure. For this reason, the Municipal Corporations Act contained little which extended the powers of the councils of the reformed boroughs, least of all in this direction. Its one hundred and forty three clauses relate mainly to the provision of police, gaols, the administration of justice, local elections, questions of representation, council procedure, financial accountability and the regulation of trusts in corporate administration. Indeed, it has been argued that one aim of the act was to reduce local government expenditure

<sup>1</sup> Municipal Corporations Report, p. 1620.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in B. Keith-Lucas, The English Local Government Franchise, p.47. See also G.B.A.M. Finlayson England in the Eighteen Thirties, pp. 23-31.

rather than to increase it, and in some boroughs the new councils inaugurated their regimes with acts of ostentatious parsimony.<sup>1</sup> But nevertheless the act anticipated the major change in the structure of local government which was to come about in the following years, namely the demise of improvement commissions and the transfer of their authority to the new corporations. An immediate effect of the act was to remove the jurisdiction over the police which any local act may have granted to commissioners (as we have seen, this did not apply in Leeds, as the police force was controlled by the corporation), and gave councils the authority to ensure that whatever the provisions of the local acts, all parts of the borough could, where necessary, be provided with street lighting. A more important portent of future developments were the clauses which allowed the powers of improvement commissions to be transferred to corporate bodies.<sup>2</sup>

The first municipal elections in Leeds were held in November 1835, and the new council met for the first time on 31 December. It was overwhelmingly liberal in composition, and indeed remained so until the last decade of the century.<sup>3</sup> But there was little difference in social and occupational status between the members of the old and the new corporations. Nonconformists of all hues had replaced the tory-Anglican oligarchy of the closed corporation, but tory cloth merchants were succeeded by liberal ones, and liberal bankers, doctors and lawyers replaced their tory counterparts.

<sup>1</sup> See the remarks of R. Evans in H.J. Dyos ed., The Study of Urban History, p.338; W.L. Burn, 'Newcastle-upon-Tyne in the early nineteenth century', Archaeologia Aeliana, vol. xxxiv, pp 1-12, and R. Newton, Victorian Exeter, p.32.

<sup>2</sup> Municipal Corporations Act, 5 and 6 Wm. IV c.LXXVI, clauses 74, 75, 84, 87 and 88.

<sup>3</sup> E.P. Hennock, 'The Social Composition of Borough Councils in Two Large Cities, 1835-1914', in H.J. Dyos ed., op.cit. pp. 326-336.

As we have noticed, the powers of the newly-instituted council were relatively circumscribed, and in the first seven years of its existence it had little more executive power than its predecessor. The first major decision made in this period was the reorganisation of the police force. As directed by the act, the council appointed a watch committee, and in April 1836 the committee submitted a report on the current state of the police force and proposals for its reorganisation. Considerable discussion had taken place in the committee on the nature of the reconstitution of the force and in the course of this review enquiries had been made to Liverpool and Manchester. The council was recommended to adopt the metropolitan system, based on the concept of a preventive force so that 'both crime and expense' (a significant conjunction) might be reduced.<sup>1</sup> This involved maintaining the existing night watch and augmenting the day police from nine to twenty officers and men.

Several minor but interesting problems of social history arise from a study of the origins of the police. For example, how were they recruited, what was their income relative to other occupations, what educational standards and what standards of conduct were expected from them? Constables were paid 18s. a week in the eighteen thirties, and when the reformed corporation discontinued the practice of reducing the night watch in the summer season, they were guaranteed employment throughout the year. When compared to the contemporary rates prevailing for trades in Leeds, this emerges as a good rate of wages. In Baker's statistics for the late eighteen thirties, out of a total of thirty seven trades, twenty five of these were paying more than 18s. a week, but of these, in only ten trades could the worker expect to be employed,

<sup>1</sup>CM, 6 April, 1836.

like the policeman, for the full twelve months of the year.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, out of a sample of one hundred and fifty male Irish weavers, only one third received this wage for the period in which they had employment,<sup>2</sup> and a majority of the male employees of Benjamin Gott and Sons in 1830 were receiving less.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, the police received an indirect subsidy through the uniforms with which they were provided whilst on duty.

To qualify for employment, the applicant was expected to be able to 'read and write with facility'. The evidence for working-class literacy in this period is both fragmentary and difficult to interpret. Baker was not optimistic about the state of education in Leeds, but R.K. Webb suggests that literacy was widespread amongst working people.<sup>4</sup> But certainly if all the constables could indeed fulfil this condition, they could be said to have come from the upper strata of their class. But in Leeds as elsewhere, the most frequent cause of dismissal was for drunkenness on duty.<sup>5</sup> Discovering the sources of recruitment depends upon occasional references, and it is possible to be explicit about the senior members of the force only. In the upper ranks, an early trend towards the professionalisation of policemen can be discerned. Edward Reid, the chief constable under both the unreformed and reformed corporation had been an officer in the Hatton Garden police office before his appointment in Leeds in 1823, where his

<sup>1</sup> 'Report upon the town of Leeds and of its inhabitants', J.S.S., vol ii, 1840, p.422.

<sup>2</sup> R. Baker, 1842 Report, p.16.

<sup>3</sup> W.B. Crump, The Leeds Woollen Industry, 1780-1820, Thoresby Society, vol. 32, 1929.

<sup>4</sup> J.S.S., 1840 art.cit. pp. 416-418; R.K. Webb, 'The Victorian Reading Public', in Boris Ford ed., The Pelican Guide to English Literature, vol.6, pp. 205-226.

<sup>5</sup> W.L. Burn, The Age of Equipoise, pp. 172-174.

father was chief officer.<sup>1</sup> On his retirement in 1859, his place was taken by the former chief constable of Norwich.<sup>2</sup> Nine years before, an inspector and sub inspector had joined the force from the Manchester police and the Lancashire county constabulary, where both men had been inspectors,<sup>3</sup> and there was a like movement from Leeds to other towns. In 1844, one member became superintendent of Market Weighton police, and in 1859 a superintendent resigned to become chief constable of Bradford.<sup>4</sup>

It is impossible, except in the most general terms, to assess the efficiency of the police force in this period. There appear to have been no complaints received either by the council or by the press, and the watch committee appears to have undertaken its duties conscientiously. Although the reformed corporation increased its expenditure on the police force considerably in comparison with its predecessor, in terms of both numbers and cost the Leeds force was far smaller than those in Liverpool and Manchester, for example. In the last seven years of the unreformed corporation, an annual average of £3,495 was spent on the police, compared to an average of £6,404 spent annually by the new regime in the period 1838 to 1844.<sup>5</sup> In 1838 the Leeds force numbered 105, compared to a strength of 328 in Manchester and 413 in Liverpool, and the respective ratio of police to population was 1 to 845, 1 to 716, and 1 to 651.<sup>6</sup> This takes into account the fact that the

<sup>1</sup>J. Mayhall, Annals of Yorkshire, vol.1, p.732.

<sup>2</sup>ibid., p.733.

<sup>3</sup>LM, 13 July 1850.

<sup>4</sup>J. Mayhall, op.cit., p.733.

<sup>5</sup>Finance Committee minutes, 21 April 1836; Report on the Answers to Queries Addressed to the respective authorities entrusted with the distribution of the local funds (1850), Appendix, Table 1.

<sup>6</sup>C.M. 29 Sept 1838; A. Redford, The History of Local Government in Manchester vol. 2, p.67; W.R. Cockroft, "The Rise and Growth of the Liverpool Police Force in the Nineteenth Century" (unpublished MA thesis, Univ. of Wales, 1969), Appendix 1, p.276.

Leeds police patrolled only the town itself, and not the semi-rural townships. This was not inequitable, in so far as the latter were not rated for a service which they did not enjoy. But, at least in the case of Headingley, this was felt to be little consolation, as there were fears that the improved efficiency of police patrols would lead to an increase in crime in unpatrolled districts, as criminals would look for less well-protected victims.<sup>1</sup> But on the whole it appears that the arrangements were sufficient to satisfy most of the inhabitants.<sup>2</sup>

None of the other business with which the council concerned itself in this early period requires more than incidental reference here. Its role in the creation of the committee on statistics, and the statistical report of 1839, and its part in the promotion of the local improvement act of 1842 are dealt with in full later in this chapter. There remain three issues which need to be outlined here, namely, the chancery action between the council and members of the old corporation, the issue of the borough gaol, and the reform of the water-works administration. Much of the energy of the council at this time was absorbed by a lengthy legal action in Chancery to recover the funds of the unreformed corporation. As we noted above, the old corporation possessed no real estate, but did own investments in consolidated stock, and shares in the Leeds and Wakefield turnpike trust which was invested

<sup>1</sup> Watch committee minutes, 15 April 1836.

<sup>2</sup> 'We understand that no less than nine men are just about to leave this force to fill appointments in the rural police located in the neighbourhood of York. This, together with many other applications which have recently been made for policemen from this borough, is a gratifying proof of the general efficiency of our police force.' Leeds Mercury, 14 Oct 1843, and a brief reference in the Second Report of the Select Committee on Police, Parl. Papers, 1853 (715) XXXVI, Qu. 2961. Evidence of E. Denison, 'There is a good police in the town of Leeds ....'.

from funds obtained from the fines levied upon its members for the non-acceptance of office. When the old corporation realised that it was to be legislated out of existence, it alienated these resources, distributing them amongst local churches and charities.<sup>1</sup> The attempt by its successor (which was ultimately successful) to reclaim these investments generated much political acrimony, and has significance only as a political issue. The question of building a borough gaol was mooted in this period, as a result of the actions of the West Riding Justices. A small gaol had been incorporated in the Borough Court House, and was claimed to be the worst in the country,<sup>2</sup> but it was not used to house prisoners after conviction. Those convicted were interned at the House of Correction in Wakefield, and in return the council was naturally obliged to make contributions to the maintenance of the institution. In 1837 the West Riding justices decided to rebuild the female section of the prison, and began negotiations with the council over the size of its contribution towards the capital cost.<sup>3</sup> Thereupon, the council decided that it might be preferable to exercise its authority under the 1835 Act, and erect a borough gaol in Leeds. But, as a result of fluctuating local political pressures, the question was subjected to regular review as opinions as to the cost of construction

<sup>1</sup>See D. Fraser, 'Politics in Leeds, 1830-1852', (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Univ. of Leeds 1970), pp. 187-190. Judgment was given in favour of the council in 1841 (CM, 29 Oct 1841, Final Report of the Chancery Suit committee). The Leeds Improvement Amendment Act, 1856, section XXIII, authorised the council to dispose of two sums, totalling £6,206.12.9d in 3 per cent consols., to pay off mortgage debts. As it is known that the old corporation possessed a reserve of £6,500 (D. Fraser, thesis, p. 187), this sum mentioned in the 1856 act presumably represents the net amount recouped.

<sup>2</sup>W. White, History, Gazetteer, and Directory of the West Riding of Yorkshire ... (1837), vol. 1, p. 508.

<sup>3</sup>CM, 20 March 1837, 25 Aug 1837.



versus the cost of future contributions to the West Riding changed so that no final decision to build was taken until 1842.<sup>1</sup>

Finally, the reconstitution of the waterworks authority in 1837 was of far greater importance in the long-term for the development of the corporation as the administrator of urban services. Prior to this time, the administration of the waterworks was the responsibility of the improvement commission, but (for reasons considered in full below) its role was taken over by a curious executive hybrid. The new company was owned by shareholders in the normal way but the governing body was comprised of directors elected by the shareholders and members nominated by the council, each group providing half of the members of the board.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore the council had the option of purchasing the works from the shareholders, but did not exercise this right until 1852. Although the improvement commission had lost its control of the water supply, it still retained many other important functions, and we must now attempt an assessment of its role.

<sup>1</sup>CM, 4 May 1842.

<sup>2</sup>CM, 16 Sept 1836, 13 Jan 1837, 23 Jan 1837, 1 Feb 1837, 25 Aug 1837.

## (3)

The Leeds improvement commission was created by the local act of 1755, which was amended by acts in 1790, 1809 and 1824. The commission operated under the terms of this latter act until its dissolution in 1842. Both the text of the improvement acts and the proceedings of the commissioners make it obvious that it operated on a narrowly conceived concept of public welfare, although it must be remembered that in doing so it was little different from similar institutions elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> As S. and B. Webb observed in their history of improvement commissions,

'From 1748 to 1832 the long series of local acts were obtained, and all the expenditure on town improvement was incurred, not from any motives of sanitation, but in order to secure, incidentally, greater protection for life and property, and primarily and invariably greater comfort and convenience in passing along the streets.'<sup>2</sup>

It is apparent from an analysis of the urban condition of Leeds in the eighteen thirties that the institutions of local government were doing little to ameliorate the state of the environment. As we have seen, such an aim was not the responsibility of the unreformed corporation, nor, at first, of the town council created by the municipal corporations act. In this section we shall show that the improvement commission was not endowed with the legal authority to undertake the reforms necessary to improve public health conditions. To substantiate this claim about its functions, and to investigate its methods of operation we must investigate the details of its business. Its affairs can be grouped under six heads: street improvements, street cleansing, public lighting, the management of the public market,

<sup>1</sup>S. and B. Webb, Statutory Authorities for Special Purposes, Ch.4.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid, p. 274.

the water supply, and finally, the exercise of its miscellaneous regulatory powers.

The street improvements which the commission made were all designed to relieve traffic congestion in major thoroughfares, especially in the town centre. The 1824 act had given both compulsory and permissive powers in relation to property purchases.<sup>1</sup> Although at one stage in the drafting of the bill, it had been proposed that any property in the area of the commission's jurisdiction could be bought by compulsion if necessary, it was believed that parliament would refuse to sanction such a measure.<sup>2</sup> The commissioners ultimately asked for, and obtained compulsory provisions in relation to one group of properties only. This was the Middle Row, which, standing in the centre of Briggate, was, especially on market days a major potential hazard to traffic. Other properties could only be purchased if the owners were prepared to sell voluntarily. In the eighteen thirties, several large scale projects (at Quebec, Millhill, Swinegate and Water lane), and a series of minor improvement schemes were undertaken.<sup>3</sup> The absence of compulsory powers was not an important inhibition upon projects of this kind. Obviously, if owners refused to treat, the commissioners were obliged to abandon the scheme. But the real restraint upon their actions, and also upon subsequent plans of a similar nature by the council, arose from financial considerations. For a project could fail to materialise if no agreement could be reached over the price of

<sup>1</sup>1824 act, 5. Geo IV.c.cxxiv, clauses xiv and xxvii.

<sup>2</sup>L1, 13 March 1823.

<sup>3</sup>Improvements at Quebec and Millhill in 1836-37 cost £3,986<sup>12</sup>11d, those in Water lane in 1837 cost £1,500, and in Swinegate in 1837 and 1841 cost £1,650. Figures compiled from Imp. Comm. minutes, passim.

the property required. This issue was of most importance when improvements were proposed in the town centre, because of the relatively high property values. Thus it would be incorrect to argue that, if endowed with the authority to force individuals to sell, the commission might have been more ambitious. For, judging from the later experience of the corporation when it had obtained such powers, the evidence suggests that the legal conventions governing compulsory purchase operated strongly in favour of the property owner, and so worked as a deterrent to the initiative of local authorities.

But in the present context, such speculations are not of any great significance, as the commission showed itself to be cautious in such affairs. It undertook few major schemes, and always attempted to minimise the costs involved. In this respect it was fortunate, because part of the charitable bequests of the town had been specifically donated for such purposes, and requests were often made to the Trustees of Pious Uses for grants to subsidise the more costly improvements.<sup>1</sup> Sometimes the commission interpreted its role as that of encouraging privately financed improvements made for public benefit, rather than to initiate them, by offering to defray part of the expense incurred by public-spirited individuals, as in the cases of Wade lane and Water lane.<sup>2</sup>

Scavenging, that is to say, street cleansing was also the province of the commission. It was organised in conjunction with the workhouse board which improved on the principle of less-eligibility by hiring out its paupers on contract for this purpose. The arrangement was never very

<sup>1</sup>Imp. Comm. minutes, 2 Nov 1836, 31 May 1837, 11 Oct 1837, 7 Feb 1838, 7 Aug 1839, 7 July 1841. The trustees of the pious uses committee were themselves responsible for many street improvements both large and small. Between 1827 and 1842 a total of £15,018<sup>9s</sup><sup>0d</sup> was spent on street improvements, notably in the Calls, (1828-1842) £2,279<sup>18s</sup><sup>3d</sup>; in Upper Headrow, (1829-1836) £3,382<sup>9s</sup><sup>6d</sup>; and Wade lane, (1834-1842) £2,516<sup>4s</sup><sup>6d</sup>. Figures compiled from the Highway Estate minutes, 1826-1858, passim.

<sup>2</sup>Imp. Comm. minutes, 11 Oct. 1837, 1 Nov 1837.

satisfactory as the labour provided by the board was insufficient, and not surprisingly, consisted of the 'aged and infirm and ... lame and lazy'<sup>1</sup> and there were regular discussions upon how to improve the efficiency of the service. In this sphere also, the commission were primarily concerned with providing a service which aimed at maintaining civic convenience rather than public health. Street cleansing was undoubtedly an important function in the age of horse-drawn traffic but the disposal of private refuse of either the human or household type was not provided for. Under the terms of the 1824 act it was empowered to remove refuse from private premises only when it was deemed offensive,<sup>2</sup> and it operated not on a preventive principle but only upon specific complaints. The most extreme, although not in essence an atypical instance is the case of the Boot and Shoe yard in Kirkgate from which

'during the period of the cholera (sc. 1832) 75 cart loads of soil were removed by order of the commissioners.'<sup>3</sup>

But furthermore when the yard was revisited in the course of the enquiry conducted by the council's committee on statistics in 1839, it was 'reported not to have been cleaned out since'<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>1</sup>ibid., 21 Feb, 1838.

<sup>2</sup>1824 act, clause 70.

<sup>3</sup>'Report on the condition of the town of Leeds and of its inhabitants', J.S.S. vol. ii, 1840, p.400. In this context 'soil' means excrement.

<sup>4</sup>loc.cit. This is confirmed by the following: 'That from the representations made to this meeting by Dr. Hunter and a deputation from the workhouse board it is indispensable that some steps should be immediately taken for cleansing and preventing and removing nuisances and obstructions in the Boot and Shoe yard in order to prevent a recurrence of disease and contagion which have already taken place to an alarming extent.' A drastic improvement was obviously necessary, as £50 was voted for the purpose. Improvement Commission minutes, 1 July 1840.

Certainly, the statement of duties made by the superintendent of scavengers in 1841 refers exclusively to the maintenance of the condition of the streets, and not to the collection of domestic refuse. For two years the commission let the scavenging work out on tender, but reverted to the old system.<sup>1</sup> Although in 1842 there was renewed discussion of the possibility of employing independent rather than pauper labour, the council inherited the scavenging service based on the old arrangements.

Street lighting also gave the commissioners some difficulty, for the 1824 act limited the lamp rate to 4d in the pound, and experience showed this to be an insufficient amount to provide and maintain gas lighting in any but the main streets. It was remarked in 1857 that lighting was

'very inefficiently done; the back streets, where there are few shops, are not lighted at all.'<sup>2</sup>

The reformed corporation viewed this failure as a threat to public safety, 'a good lamp being equal to a policeman' as the press observed.<sup>3</sup> Hence in 1837 the council used its powers under the municipal corporations act to order the commission to extend its street lighting facilities to Hunslet.<sup>4</sup>

A more satisfactory feature of the commission's regime was the provision and administration of the public market. Before 1823 there was no exclusive market area in the town, and public markets were held in the streets, especially in Briggate and the Headrow.<sup>5</sup> Not

<sup>1</sup> ibid., 3 June 1840; 17 June 1841; 7 Feb 1842; 6 April 1842.

<sup>2</sup> Report of the commissioners upon the boundaries and wards of certain boroughs and corporate towns, Part II, Report ... upon Leeds (no pagination) Parl. Papers, 1837, XXVII.

<sup>3</sup> LM, 22 Oct, 1842.

<sup>4</sup> CM, 11 March, 1837; 5 April, 1837; 5 July, 1837; 2 Aug, 1837.

<sup>5</sup> A street market continued to be held in Briggate until the council obtained powers to discontinue it in the 1856 improvement act. 1856 Act, 19 and 20 Vict. c. cxv, clause 33.

surprisingly this was a major source of inconvenience as it added considerably to the congestion in the commercial centre of the town. Thus in 1823 the commissioners purchased the vicarage and its gardens at the junction of Vicar lane and Kirkgate, and on this site laid out an open-air public market covering about one thousand square yards. Besides providing a valuable public service, the new market also benefitted the finances of the commission, for the market tolls were leased to a contractor, and so provided a valuable source of supplementary income.<sup>1</sup>

But it was far less successful in the management of the water supply. Until 1790 the water works were controlled by a private concern, and in the improvement act of that year arrangements were made to transfer their management to the improvement commission.<sup>2</sup> The water supply was drawn from the river Aire, at a point near to Leeds bridge, and by the eighteen thirties this was not the most alubrious of sources. The growing frequency of complaints over both the quality and quantity available led in 1834 to a decision by the commission to locate a more copious and less suspect source of supply. But dissension amongst the commissioners and their consulting engineers caused considerable delay and greatly damaged the credibility of the commission to undertake the project satisfactorily. The merits of rival executive schemes were aired by the various interested parties. The vestry proposed a compromise between public and private control, the tory Leeds Intelligencer advocated a joint stock waterworks

<sup>1</sup>The tolls were leased for £1,310 in 1838; £1,405 in 1839, £1,530 in 1840; £1,575 in 1841; and £1,720 in 1842. Imp. Commission minutes, 24 May 1838, 16 May 1839, 13 May 1840, 10 May 1841 and 4 June 1842.

<sup>2</sup>Leeds Improvement Act, 1790 30 Geo III, c.1 xviii, clause 11.

company and the council recommended a board of management consisting of magistrates, councillors and commissioners. Finally agreement was achieved in 1837 when the commission relinquished its control of the water supply to a joint stock company which was controlled by nine members nominated by the council and nine representatives of the shareholders. The act also contained provisions which would enable the council to buy out the shareholders after twelve years.<sup>1</sup>

The other provisions of the improvement acts included powers to inspect meat offered for sale to prevent the sale of diseased carcasses, the licencing and regulation of hackney coaches, and the authority to order the removal of minor obstructions in the streets, such as projecting doorsteps, windows and shop signs.

It should be clear from this survey of the activities of the improvement commissioners that their operations were unlikely to have any major impact upon the environment, and in particular upon those aspects of urban growth which were creating increasingly severe public health problems. They possessed no powers for regulating the construction of new streets and houses nor authority to provide sewers, let alone plan a general sewerage system, to cite only two of the most important improvements necessary. The work of the commission, viewed in the context of the needs of the new urban society, was at best of marginal importance, and at worst, irrelevant. But by the later eighteenth thirties, the need for a major extension of local government services was accepted by the commission, and the planning of a new improvement act to incorporate these provisions began. We shall deal with the genesis of this new act later in the chapter, but first we must make

<sup>1</sup>The waterworks issue is treated in full in D. Fraser, 'The politics of Leeds water', Publications of the Thoresby Society. Miscellany, vol. 15, part 1, 1970, pp. 50-70.



some remarks upon another institution of local government which was concerned with the environment, namely the surveyors of the highways.

This body was responsible for the maintenance of those streets in the town which were legally recognised as public highways, and the issue of the legal definition of a highway placed a major restriction upon the value of the work of the surveyors. In addition to the maintenance of those streets which immemorial usage had adopted as public thoroughfares, they could adopt new ones for repair at public expense. But this could only be done if a street was already in an acceptable condition before it was offered for adoption,<sup>1</sup> and they had no legal right to oblige the builders of new property to level, pave and surface the streets which they created. The report of the council's committee on statistics speculated

'whether streets, which have long been used by the public, have not become highways, and are liable to the acts of parliament under which highways are regulated,'<sup>2</sup>

but the law was not so flexible. No matter how offensive or dangerous these streets might be, their legal status as private rights of way preserved them from the attentions of the surveyors. This situation continued until the 1842 improvement act provided the means of removing this anomaly.<sup>3</sup>

Thus in 1839, only sixty eight of the 586 streets in the town were repaired by the surveyors,<sup>4</sup> and according to one judgement,

'both the materials and execution are very bad, and constant repairs are required'.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Surveyors of Highways, Townships of Leeds, minutes, 21 Oct 1839.

<sup>2</sup>'Report upon the condition of the town of Leeds and of its inhabitants', J.S.S., vol. ii, 1840, p. 399.

<sup>3</sup>See below, p. 65.

<sup>4</sup>J.S.S., art. cit. p. 406.

<sup>5</sup>Municipal Corporations (Boundaries) Act (see fn. 2 p. 44).

Similarly, there were only thirty eight common sewers for which they had responsibility, and it seems that the purpose of some of these was merely to enable surface water to drain from the streets.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, the surveyors believed that they had no obligation to clean the common sewers.<sup>2</sup> Hence in these two important aspects, private initiative was paramount, and because there was no legal compulsion to make these improvements, public duty could be disregarded with impunity. The statistical committee of the council found that,

'in many instances, where the property of a street is in many hands, one half of them or more have originally completed their respective parts, as regards paving and sewerage: but the cupidity, obstinacy, or poverty, or all combined, of other owners, has prevented the improvement of the whole'.<sup>3</sup>

Clearly, in this situation the financial resources of inhabitants were a major consideration, and it is not surprising to discover that the condition of the streets in the western area of the town was, as we have seen, markedly better than those in the east.

(4)

As we have seen, the deterioration of public health conditions had not gone unnoticed or unexamined by contemporaries, and indeed it is well known that there is abundant evidence of the growing concern of the medical profession for the conditions which were being produced by rapid urbanisation. In Leeds, the local exemplar in this field of enquiry was Dr. Robert Baker, who during the eighteen thirties and early forties was the most active and influential advocate of sanitary

<sup>1</sup>Surveyors of Highways, minutes, 5 March 1838; 21 May 1838.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 6 Jan 1840.

<sup>3</sup>J.S.S., loc. cit.

reform.<sup>1</sup> The history of this period of his career can be seen as typical of a pattern which may be discerned in the careers of many other leading and supporting figures of the public health movement, from famous metropolitan figures like Southwood Smith, to obscure provincial medical officers, like Dr. Stephen Piper of Darlington.<sup>2</sup> Baker's intellectual development is characteristic of this class of doctors whose frequent contact with all kinds of social casualties (he was appointed poor law medical officer for Leeds in 1825), developed in them a comprehensive and sympathetic knowledge of the lives of the urban poor when many of their contemporaries were largely ignorant of such problems, and this experience frequently inspired them to become the vanguard of the demand for reform.<sup>3</sup>

The cholera epidemic of 1832 brought the twenty-nine year old Baker to local prominence with the writing of his report for the Leeds board of health.<sup>4</sup> This study sets out both the methods and the themes which he was to return in his two other important essays on public health matters. The method was that

<sup>1</sup>W.R. Lee, 'Robert Baker: The first doctor in the Factory Department. Part I. 1803-1858', and 'Part II. 1858 onwards', British Journal of Industrial Medicine, vol. 21 1964, pp 85-93 and pp. 167-179.

<sup>2</sup>M.W. Flinn, ed., Report on the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population of Great Britain in 1842. By Edwin Chadwick, Introduction pp. 18-26, and C.F. Brockington, Medical Officers of Health, 1848 to 1855: an essay in local history.

<sup>3</sup>G.M. Young and W.D. Handcock, Select Historical Documents, vol. XII(i), p. 769.

<sup>4</sup>Report of the Leeds Board of Health, (Leeds 1833).

of detailed investigation into the intra-urban differences in sanitary conditions to attempt to isolate the localised factors which generated disease. A comment which he made a decade later, in his report of 1842 defines concisely the analytical assumptions he had evolved when examining the history of the cholera epidemic:

'although condemned as a town in its entire locality at the first glance (it) may really have only peculiar points of local influence from whence the gross results are derived'.<sup>1</sup>

Thus in the report of 1833 the general comments upon the correlation between the incidence of cholera cases and the state of the environment was supplemented by a thirteen-page schedule of all the streets and courts which had housed cholera victims, with brief impressionistic notes on their condition. But far more striking was the 'Cholera Map', which was a plan of the town with the locales of cholera cases inked-in, giving a stark impression of the relationship between dirt and disease. Two themes given prominence in this report appeared regularly in his writings thereafter. In the first place, there was the imperative need to regulate and improve urban conditions by means of comprehensive legislation, and secondly that general liability to be assessed for local rates should entail a general distribution of the benefits of local government services. That is to say, scavenging, paving, sewerage and drainage should be facilities provided in all parts of the town, and not simply in the central streets.

Unfortunately, with the abatement of the cholera, public concern over sanitary conditions fell into abeyance, and no practical progress was made in the cause of reform until the planning of the new improvement act began in 1840. But in the meanwhile, Baker was not content to let matters rest. As a councillor on the reformed council, he made

<sup>1</sup>1842 Report, p.23.

several fruitless efforts to induce the council to intervene in public health affairs, by methods of tenuous legality. He attempted to persuade it to widen the scope of the bye-laws to include rules to improve

'the offensive condition of certain parts of the borough ..., particularly as to some of the streets and houses'.<sup>1</sup>

He was also active on the watch committee, and was largely responsible for planning the reorganisation of the police force. But these activities were of less importance than the project which he undertook in the late eighteen thirties. This was the creation of an investigation the purpose of which was to give a stimulus to public opinion in favour of urgent and large-scale sanitary reform.

In May 1837 he persuaded the council to appoint a committee to consider sanctioning a statistical survey of the borough

'to ascertain whether any and what steps are necessary to render more happy, or improve the moral or intellectual condition of the people'.<sup>2</sup>

The committee was appointed, and decided in favour of the proposal, and the council agreed to finance the enquiry. It is clear that Baker was the designer and supervisor of the project from the beginning, and managed it through all its stages. It was he who 'made a great variety of forms for the returns', he who was 'requested to take the superintendence of the collection of the information required' and was 'empowered to employ such other persons ... as he thinks requisite to obtain the information wanted'. Baker apparently wrote the report, and on the completion of the enquiry, was thanked for his 'unwearied zeal' by his fellow committee members.<sup>3</sup> The report was presented to the

<sup>1</sup>CM, 3 May, 1837, 12 Feb 1838.

<sup>2</sup>CM, 3 May, 1837.

<sup>3</sup>Committee on Statistics, minutes, Sept 1837, 16 Oct 1838, 13 Dec 1838, 19 and 22 Oct 1839.

council in October 1839, after two years of research and preparation.<sup>1</sup> It was received with considerable enthusiasm, and Baker made a long speech which united considerable statistical analysis with moral and practical exhortations to action. Dissenting voices came only from the Tories, with one of them claiming that 'after all the information they could get, they would remain just as they were' while another objected that:

'it was contrary to the feelings of Englishmen that their family affairs should be dragged unnecessarily before the public..... It was a species of the French police system which he should always set his face against'<sup>2</sup>

There is no need to recapitulate the evidence contained in Baker's enquiry since we have drawn heavily upon it in a previous section of this chapter, but we can indicate the form of the enquiry and enumerate the points which he found of interest and concern. The content of the report may be divided into three parts: the condition of the streets (in relation to the provision of sewerage, paving, cleansing, lighting and the existence of nuisances), the condition of working class housing (which is concerned with details of size, density of occupation, rents, ventilation, water supply and refuse disposal), and finally, the condition of the population. This third topic was dealt with under five heads, the "social economy" (to use Baker's terminology) which comprised family size, place of origin and employment structure, the "moral economy", an analysis of the criminal statistics, the "religious state"

<sup>1</sup>The text of the report as Baker wrote it has apparently not survived. The article published in the J.S.S. (see footnote 2, p. 47) is a precis prepared by Dr. Williamson, who was a member of the council. A very long article on the presentation of the report to the council appeared in the Leeds Mercury, 2 Nov. 1839, which contains some details absent from the J.S.S. article.

<sup>2</sup>LM, 2 Nov. 1839. cf. Lord Melbourne's definition of bureaucracy for the benefit of Queen Victoria: 'Bureaucracy, m'am, is something they have in France'.

of the population, as deduced from the number and seating capacity of churches and chapels of the various sects and denominations, the "intellectual state", as given by the number and location of schools, libraries and other educational institutions, and finally, the "physical state" of the inhabitants, an investigation into births, marriages and deaths, and the structure of wages and the seasonality of employment.

The comprehensiveness of his statistical curiosity can be illustrated from the variety of tables which the report contains. There are tabulations of the numbers of beershops, brothels, gaming houses, and places of worship, mortality statistics interpreted in terms of districts and occupations, streets paved cleansed and sewered by the public authorities, wage rates, house rents in each of the electoral wards, literacy figures and criminal statistics grouped by the trades and place of origin of the offenders. But we have not done great violence to his practical intentions by mentioning such a diversity of social statistics only in passing. For it is clear that although he recognised the importance of such data for comparative purposes (either with other towns or with future surveys of a similar nature for Leeds), it is equally apparent that his major concern was the practical relevance which his evidence possessed to substantiate his proposals for public health reform.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>It seems, however, worthy of consideration whether streets, which have been long used by the public, have not become highways, and are liable to the Acts of Parliament under which highways are regulated: otherwise your committee are not aware of any remedy; but they hope that it will form a subject of grave inquiry in the future deliberations of the town council, based on the statistical facts now presented.' and, 'One thing is certain, that the greater part of the town is in a most filthy condition, which demands an immediate remedy; a remedy which does not seem attainable under any local act now existing; but calls for an especial enactment, which is doubtless required not only for Leeds, but, more or less, for every town in the empire'. J.S.S. art.cit., p. 339 and p. 406.

It is difficult to assess the influence which the report may have had in quickening the demand that action should be taken and more particularly, that a new and more comprehensive local improvement act was required. It is indisputable that it demonstrated the magnitude of the public health problems of Leeds to an extent which appears to have been hitherto unknown, judging from the reaction of council members to some of its revelations, and it provided a convenient source which could be appealed to by those urging reform.<sup>1</sup> But any sense of urgency engendered does not appear to have had any immediate tangible result. Although the council sent petitions to the Home Secretary asking the government to take legislative action, it was not until 1841 that the process of promoting a new local act was set in motion, and as we shall demonstrate later, the direct catalyst in this case was the prospect of intervention by the central government. Furthermore, although the council authorised the publication and circulation of an abstract of the report, it refused to sanction the extension of the committee's enquiries to cover the out-townships and in August 1841 the committee was allowed to lapse.<sup>2</sup>

Equally problematical is Baker's role in the creation of the 1842 improvement act. The improvement commission was responsible for its inception, although shortly after its decision was taken, the commissioners agreed to create a joint committee with the council and magistrates to produce a draft of the bill. Baker was one of the six council delegates on the committee, but as no record survives of its

<sup>1</sup>References to the report of the committee on statistics appear frequently in the speeches made at public meetings held to promote the improvement bill in 1842. See Leeds Mercury 19 Feb, 26 Feb, 16 April 1842.

<sup>2</sup>CM, 9 Nov 1839, 16 Nov 1840; there are no entries in the committee's minute book after 4 Aug 1841.



deliberations, it is impossible to define what part he played in its business. As we know from other sources, the text of the bill owes much to clauses abstracted from government-promoted bills,<sup>1</sup> but from what we know of Baker it seems reasonable to infer that he would have used his expertise to exert considerable influence on the committee. Subsequently, he was called as one of the witnesses in support of the bill during the select committee hearings,<sup>2</sup> and significantly it was he who explained the provisions of the new act to the council at the first meeting convened for "improvement act" business.<sup>3</sup> But Baker was not solely preoccupied with superintending the progress of reform in Leeds at this time, for by December 1840 he was in correspondence with Chadwick who was then preparing the materials for his Report of 1842.<sup>4</sup> Chadwick had originally approached Dr. Williamson, who had given evidence to the 1840 Select Committee on the Health of Towns, to ask him to submit a report on Leeds. But he was intrigued by Baker's 'Sanatory Map of Leeds', and apparently impressed by Baker's detailed local knowledge. On his part, Baker seemingly refused to be cast in the role of mere collaborator, no doubt being determined to establish his reputation as the originator of a novel way of presenting social statistics. Chadwick, faced with the conditions demanded by Baker, decided to adopt him rather than Williamson since, as he wrote to the latter,

'the Commissioners (ie. Chadwick) were informed that Mr. Baker's peculiar means of observation in respect to the manufacturing population, as superintendent of factories and in other public capacities had given him peculiar information which

<sup>1</sup>See below p.71

<sup>2</sup>HLRO, House of Commons Select Committees, Evidence 1842, volume 7, L.2, Committee on Leeds Improvements, 30 May, 1842.

<sup>3</sup>CMIA, 3 Aug 1842.

<sup>4</sup>M.W. Flinn, op.cit., Introduction pp. 50-51.

they were desirous of obtaining. They were informed that he had declined to communicate the information to you or to any other person and that he could only communicate it in an independent form.<sup>1</sup>

Once the council was endowed with the powers of the 1842 improvement act, Baker became chairman of the streets committee, so taking responsibility for the committee which would carry into effect the most important of the reforms which he had advocated for a decade. As chairman he received praise for his "ability, zeal and perseverance"<sup>2</sup> as might have been expected, but ironically, he was not to preside for long over the carrying out of the reforms which for a decade he had envisaged only on paper. The trade depression of the early eighteen forties created a highly-vocal opposition to any increase in local government expenditure, and Baker, as a leading exponent of the improvement schemes, found himself exposed to considerable hostility from the electors. In March 1843 several ward meetings were convened at the request of the ratepayers, for the purpose of protesting against,

'the extravagance which had been displayed by the town council (which) had caused such an addition to the rates'

and to instruct the councillors for the ward to,

'convey the decision of the meeting to the council, and give its views the best support'.<sup>3</sup>

In the south ward, for which Baker was a councillor, the opponents of increased expenditure, roused him to an uncompromising defense of his views but nevertheless, because of the strength of the opposition he did not stand for re-election later in the year. It seems clear that the cause of the abrupt termination of his career in local government

<sup>1</sup>P.R.O. M.H. 12/15225, 31 Dec. 1840. See also E.W. Gilbert, 'Pioneer maps of health and disease in England' Geog. Jnl. vol 124, 1958, pp 172-183.

<sup>2</sup>Street committee minutes, 30 Oct 1843.

<sup>3</sup>LM, 18 March, 25 March 1843.

resulted from a lack of the tact, flexibility and conciliatory manner which are necessary qualities in the successful politician. The very absence of these qualities probably did much to make him a successful publicist in the cause of reform, and like Chadwick, whom he resembles in character, he probably failed to see the need to change his manner when changing roles. Fortunately, unlike Chadwick he still had a long and useful public career ahead of him.<sup>1</sup> In 1834 he had become a sub-inspector of factories, and in 1858 was appointed inspector of factories for the northern division, a post which he retained until his retirement in 1878.

## (5)

Six years of debate, at first hesitant, and later intense and frequently acrimonious preceded the enactment of the Leeds improvement act of 1842. The political aspects of these discussions have been outlined elsewhere, and so will not be a major preoccupation here. But in order to elucidate the questions of motivation and inspiration which lay behind the bill which ultimately became the largest act of the parliamentary session<sup>2</sup> it is necessary to trace the history of the bill from its conception to the royal assent. At first, initiative was evenly divided between the corporation and the improvement commission. Dr. Baker obtained the approval and financial support of the council for the preparation of the Statistical Report<sup>3</sup> which was to give

<sup>1</sup>See W.R. Lee art.cit., J. Prest, The Industrial Revolution in Coventry pp 133-135, and R. McCleod, 'Social Policy and the 'floating population'. The administration of the Canal Boats Acts, 1877-1899', Past and Present, Number 35, 1966 pp. 107-108.

<sup>2</sup>LM, 16 July 1842.

<sup>3</sup>CM, May 3 1837, June 5 1837, February 18 1838

considerable impetus to the reformers' case for legislative action, but his precipitate attempts to involve the council in regulating public health conditions proved unsuccessful.<sup>1</sup> The improvement commission was equally aware of the deficiencies in the local acts, and created a committee to consider the possibility of obtaining a new one.<sup>2</sup> But if its deliberations were ever recorded, they have not survived, and it was not until 1840 that the pace of active concern quickened perceptively. The major event of 1839 had of course been the presentation of the statistical report to the council, and although it refused to extend the survey to include the out-townships, it instructed the statistical committee to prepare an abstract of the research for circulation, and to consider what action could be taken, 'as to the best mode of improving the town'.<sup>3</sup> Similar concern was being expressed by the improvement commission, and both bodies sent memorials to the Home Secretary, asking for,

'such remedial measures as are practicable and consistent with the just rights of proprietors in the form of a general sewerage and building act applicable to all towns .....

The petitioners were quickly answered, but the proposed solution was not greatly to their satisfaction.<sup>5</sup>

Lord Normanby, the Home Secretary, acting upon the recommendations made by the Select Committee on the Health of Towns, introduced three

<sup>1</sup>See above p.51.

<sup>2</sup>Improvement Commission minutes 4 October 1837.

<sup>3</sup>C.M., 20 January 1840, 12 August 1840, 16 November 1840.

<sup>4</sup>C.M., 1 January 1841, and Imp. C.M. 16 December 1839.

<sup>5</sup>Imp. C.M., 17 February 1841.

bills to parliament. These bills, dealing with drainage, borough improvement and building regulation will be considered later. They were opposed by petition by the improvement commission, but the action of the Home Secretary had the effect of galvanising the commissioners into action, for opposition to the general bills was accompanied by the decision to promote a local act, with the purpose of obtaining exemption from the government's proposals.<sup>1</sup> By this time, the council was equally interested in taking measures to improve the sanitary condition of the borough,<sup>2</sup> and the prospect of intervention by the council strengthened the resolve of the commission to produce its own bill as quickly as possible.<sup>3</sup> The council proposed co-operation between itself and the commission and in October 1841 a joint committee of eighteen, consisting of six representatives from the council, the commission, and the magistrates (who had ex officio membership of the commission) was formed.<sup>4</sup>

The reasons which led the council, commission and vestry to prefer local rather than national legislation are not wholly apparent. One motive, no doubt a strong one as later events suggest, but never made wholly explicit was a general dislike of central government intervention in local affairs. A second and recurring theme was the question of finance. We have already referred to the urban geography of Leeds in this period, and remarked on the distinction between the 'urbanised' central townships and the semi-rural out-townships. Clearly, if local government was going to incur the expense necessary to improve the urban area in the borough, it would be necessary for the authority to possess

<sup>1</sup> Imp. CM., 21 May, 2 June 1841.

<sup>2</sup> C.M. 4 August 1841.

<sup>3</sup> Imp. C.M., 4 August 1841.

<sup>4</sup> C.M., 12 November 1841, and Imp. C.M. 6 October 1841.

the power to rate the townships separately. Otherwise, it would be inequitable for the whole borough to have to contribute to the alleviation of problems which were to be found mostly in Leeds, Hunslet and Holbeck townships.<sup>1</sup> But this argument in itself was no overwhelming reason for seeking a local act. An appropriate rating clause could have been submitted for inclusion into the government bills. It is possible that the vestry and the commissioners wished to obtain legislation in order to safeguard its continued existence, for while the bill was in preparation, the question of the future executive power, and the possible candidacy of the council for that role, had already been raised.<sup>2</sup>

By February 1842, the bill was in its final draft form, and was submitted to the first of a series of vestry meetings.<sup>3</sup> The politics of the vestry at this time may be studied elsewhere, and it is sufficient to say here that the commissioners were faced with a dual challenge. On the one hand, the vestry, dominated by the Chartists, was attempting to ensure that the commissioners under the new act would be susceptible to popular pressure exerted in the vestry meetings, and on the other hand, there was opposition from the council. The council rejected the offer of a commission of mixed membership (comprising commissioners elected by the vestry, sixteen councillors and sixteen justices)<sup>4</sup> and claimed the right to possess sole executive power under the new act.<sup>5</sup> The internal dissensions in the vestry almost

<sup>1</sup>LM, 5 February 1842, 26 February 1842.

<sup>2</sup>LM, 11 December 1841.

<sup>3</sup>ibid. 19 February 1842.

<sup>4</sup>Imp. C.M., 6 April 1842.

<sup>5</sup>C.M., 11 April 1842.

obliged the commissioners to give up the promotion of the bill, and finally decided them to entrust the parliamentary progress of the bill to a committee of councillors and justices.<sup>1</sup> It was also agreed that the constitution of the executive body should be decided by the House of Commons select committee. Meanwhile, the improvement bill was proceeding through its parliamentary stages, and by May came before the select committee, where it was joined by the hurriedly-promoted burial bill, to provide Leeds with a new cemetery.<sup>2</sup>

The preamble of the bill was proved with little difficulty and the only issue which was seriously contested was the formulation of the smoke abatement clauses. These were strenuously opposed by the woollen dyers on the ground that no smoke-consuming apparatus had at that time been used successfully to control the smoke produced in the process of dyeing. Although no-one contested that it was impossible to control the smoke produced by steam-engine finances, the dyers' case was that such methods were inapplicable to dyeing vats. The counsel for the bill, Edward Baines, called seven witnesses to give evidence in favour of the clause, but under cross-examination none of them were able to affirm that the apparatus they themselves used, or had seen in operation, would be applicable to the particular processes performed by the cloth dyers of Leeds. In contrast the dyers' witnesses gave a lengthy and cogent exposition of the processes and problems of the local trade.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Imp. C.M., 25 April 1842.

<sup>2</sup> Journal of the House of Commons vol. 97, 18 February 1842, and H.L.R.O., House of Commons Select Committees, Evidence 1842, volume 7, L.2.

<sup>3</sup> H.L.R.O., ibid, 2 and 3 June 1842.

Finally, a compromise solution was agreed upon. A clause was inserted into the bill to the effect that the practicability of smoke consumption in dyeing had to be proved to the satisfaction of a magistrate before legal proceedings could be undertaken. With this difficulty surmounted, the bill proceeded through its parliamentary stages and became law on the 16 July 1842.<sup>1</sup>

According to the historian of private bill legislation the Leeds improvement act of 1842 was,

'one of the most comprehensive and complete which had then been obtained by local authorities'.<sup>2</sup>

In the following pages we shall summarise the contents of the act, to demonstrate the extent of the powers which the council had obtained, and then attempt to explain the significance of the act both in its local and national context. Briefly, the council, (which inherited from the improvement commission the power to execute the act) was authorised to create a sewerage and drainage system, regulate the construction of streets and buildings, cleanse the streets, provide public lighting, regulate smoke pollution and other nuisances, clean the becks (that is, the natural watercourses flowing into the river Aire), provide, enlarge and administer public markets, widen some bridges and free other private ones from tolls, build a town hall, create a fire brigade, licence and supervise hackney carriages, and enforce a variety of provisions which affected public safety, in both the physical and moral senses.

To achieve these aims the council could appoint officers to assist it, and could levy rates and borrow money by means of mortgages on the rate fund.

<sup>1</sup>An Act for better lighting, cleansing, sewerage, and improving the Borough of Leeds in the County of York, 5 and 6 Vict., cap. civ.

<sup>2</sup>F. Clifford, The History of Private Bill Legislation, Vol.I, p.493.



Under the provisions of the improvement act there were three separate rates for particular purposes. A general rate could be collected from the whole borough to pay for sewerage and drainage. These sections of the act were later modified by the local amendment act of 1848. A special improvement rate could be levied on individual townships for the provision of services which were of benefit only to that particular locality. This applied especially to the costs of implementing the sections relating to markets, bridges and those street improvements specified in the act which were to be defrayed from the funds of the Leeds township rate alone. This is understandable if we bear in mind the particular features of the borough which were mentioned earlier. That is to say, the major urban area of the borough was contained with Leeds township, and that with the exception of Hunslet and Holbeck, the other townships were still largely rural communities. Thus Leeds township had needs peculiar to itself and moreover the financial resources (in terms of rateable values) to provide them. But it could be argued that the services mentioned above would also benefit those who, while living in the borough, were not residents (and ratepayers) in Leeds township, and hence the inhabitants of the borough as a whole might contribute to the cost of these improvements. This question was of some importance in the discussion of both the 1848 and the 1856 improvement acts. A separate rate was to be levied for street lighting. The general rate was not to exceed 4d. in the pound in any one year, the special rate was not to exceed 3d., and the lamp rate 8d.<sup>1</sup> The relatively high maximum figure for the lamp rate was on account of the serious deficiency of street lighting. A total sum of £100,000 could be borrowed in the form of mortgages and annuities on the credit

<sup>1</sup>1842 Act, clauses 334 to 336.

of the improvement rate.<sup>1</sup>

Several improvements involved the purchase of real property, some of which could be obtained by compulsion and some only by agreement with the owners. The properties specifically enumerated in the schedules (D) and (E) to the act, which were required,

'for enlarging widening or improving Leeds bridge, Bishopsgate bridge, and the approaches thereto respectively, and for widening and improving streets, and enlarging providing and establishing markets'<sup>2</sup>

could be acquired by compulsory powers which were to expire after five years, that is on 16 July 1847.<sup>3</sup> The exercise of compulsory powers involved adherence to a meticulously defined code of practice, which was not peculiar to this act, but was an incorporation of the general law relating to the subject.<sup>4</sup> It is necessary to explain the procedure involved in some detail, as the operation of the law in compulsory property purchases is an important factor in explaining certain features of the activities of the council, particularly in relation to slum clearance with which we shall be concerned later. If, after the offer to treat, the owner accepted the price suggested by the council, the latter paid the cost of the conveyance and the transaction was completed without complication. But where the two parties disagreed over the price, or the owner refused to negotiate, the council had the option to submit the case to arbitration. In claims which did not exceed £50 the issue could be decided by two magistrates, but when a larger sum was in question, adjudication was the responsibility of a jury of twelve summoned and presided over by the country sheriff. In

<sup>1</sup> clause 18.

<sup>2</sup> clause 38.

<sup>3</sup> clause 119.

<sup>4</sup> The general law was codified in 1845, in the Lands Clauses Consolidation Act (8 and 9 Vict. c.18), and its subsequent amendments. See Halsbury's Laws of England (1959 ed.) vol. 10, pp 16-17 and 92-95. 1842 act, clauses 38 to 124.

the presence of this court, expert witnesses from both parties submitted valuations. If the award of the jury was less than the sum offered by the council, half the costs of the action were to be paid by the owner and half by the council, but where the jury decided in favour of the owner, the whole of the costs were the responsibility of the council. Property could be bought to make any street improvement at any time, providing this could be done by agreement, but in cases where buildings which projected from the general building line were demolished by their owners, the council could in this event, buy the site, by compulsion if necessary. In all instances conveyancing costs were to be borne by the council. To prevent inconvenience to the owner, there was an obligation to purchase the whole of the building in question, and not simply any part necessary to an improvement scheme, and all surplus land remaining after the improvement had been made was to be sold within ten years. The planning and formation of streets became the responsibility of the council. It could order the owners of existing streets to drain and surface them. If they failed to do this, the council could have the work performed, and charge the cost to the owners. Plans for new streets, which specified their 'situation, length, breadth and boundaries' had to be submitted at least two months prior to construction. In general, streets were required to be at least thirty feet wide if they were a 'carriage way' (that is, open to traffic) and at least twenty feet wide as a 'foot passage'. Closed courts were not to be allowed in future. If streets were made contrary to the design which had been approved, they could be altered at the expense of the owners. Once a street was known to be in a suitable condition, an order of council might declare it a highway, and its future maintenance became the responsibility of the highway

surveyors<sup>1</sup>. Under the act, the cleansing, watering and lighting of the streets came under the aegis of the council.

Forty one clauses in the act regulated the internal and external construction of houses<sup>2</sup>. Building sites had to be laid by their owners with covered drains, so that each house could be connected with an artery of the sewerage system. In relation to external features, cellars were to have areas, doors must open inwards, roofs and chimneys constructed so as to avoid the risk of fire, rain water spouts and gutters were to be provided, and all potentially dangerous projections (such as porches, windows, steps, and signs) could be removed on both existing and new buildings. Internally, cellars occupied as separate dwellings were in future required to have a window and fireplace to ensure adequate ventilation, and all rooms in a house were to be eight feet high, except in the upper storey (of which there was to be no more than one in the roof), where the minimum height was fixed at seven feet six inches. Proposals to reconstruct existing buildings also required approval. Where a house was demolished to ground floor level, the foundations, if necessary, were to be raised so that the level of the lowest floor could be made to communicate with a main drain, and no building was to be increased in height unless the borough surveyor judged that the walls were strong enough. When building construction was going on, hoardings must be erected, and the position of potential hazards indicated by lights at night. Buildings and chimneys regarded as ruinous could be demolished at the expense of the owners, as could buildings constructed contrary to regulations.

<sup>1</sup> clauses 133 to 152, and 163 to 165.

<sup>2</sup> clauses 167 to 208.

One of the briefest sections of the act was perhaps the most important. Ten clauses only were concerned with provisions for the construction of sewers.<sup>1</sup> Many less important subjects received more attention in the act, and indeed when the council came to put its plans for a sewerage system into effect an expansion and redefinition of this part of the act was necessary by means of a second local act in 1848. It may be assumed that given the inexperience of the promoters of the 1842 act in this sphere they could hardly be expected to foresee the practical difficulties involved. One of the provisions of the act which had aroused very considerable opposition was the clause which regulated smoke pollution. We have already described the effective opposition made to this section by the cloth dyers before the parliamentary select committee, and we shall discuss the consequences of their successful battle for exemption in the next chapter. But with the exception of the dyers, it was now incumbent upon all manufacturers to make provision to consume the smoke emitted by their furnaces.<sup>2</sup>

The free market, which the council inherited as part of the property of the improvement commission, was to be enlarged by the demolition of adjacent property, and other markets could be provided at the council's discretion.<sup>3</sup> The act also contained a variety of miscellaneous provisions. Hackney carriages could only ply for hire if they possessed a licence, to be renewed annually, and which could be revoked for the infringement of the bye-laws. The building of a town hall, premises for drying clothes, and public lavatories could be financed out of the rates. Finally, public safety in the streets was to be promoted by the existence of penalties for numerous anti-social activities, and by the same means,

<sup>1</sup> clauses 153 to 162.

<sup>2</sup> clauses 249 to 251.

<sup>3</sup> clauses 284 to 316.

public morality was to be safeguarded from visible evidences of vice.<sup>1</sup>

To assess the full significance of this important act we must examine it in both a local and a national perspective. That is, as one of a series of Leeds local acts, and then as a major improvement act promoted in a period of increasing legislative concern for public health. The subjects in the act which are related to public improvement in the traditional sense consist of a revision or extension of powers contained in earlier local acts. Public lighting, which increased public security, 'a good lamp being equal to a policeman'<sup>2</sup>, street cleansing, street widening, and the provisions for supervising hackney carriages, for example were all subjects contained in the local act of 1824,<sup>3</sup> and the 1842 act merely amended these provisions as experience had found desirable. The compulsory purchase powers similarly were an enlargement of a principle already present in the previous act. As we have noted in the discussion of the activities of the improvement commission, very wide powers of purchase had been proposed in the course of the drafting of the 1824 Act, even if these were not finally implemented. Thus the intentions expressed in the 1842 Act had their inspiration twenty years before. The clauses dealing with public morality were a new feature, but these had begun to appear in improvement acts generally in the eighteenth thirties.<sup>4</sup>

The new subjects of legislation were sewerage, the power to order the making-up of streets, and building regulations, and these reflect the major preoccupations of contemporary sanitary reformers, more closely

<sup>1</sup> clauses 227 to 266.

<sup>2</sup> LM, 22 Oct 1842.

<sup>3</sup> 1824 Act, 5 Geo. IV cap. cxxiv, clauses 27-41; 42-55; 64-69; and 88-93.

<sup>4</sup> F.H. Spencer, Municipal Origins p. 216.

indeed than is apparent from a study of the act alone. It is in character with the improvement act tradition that the external features of buildings should have been controlled to some extent, for the existence of projecting windows, signs and steps could be a public hazard. But the new act also regulated the internal structure of houses for the first time, to improve their healthiness by ensuring minimum standards of space, ventilation and light. The new power of the council to order streets to be made-up, and to declare them public highways also assisted the improvement of public health. As we have observed, the highway surveyors had authority to repair streets only if they were in a satisfactory condition when put forward for adoption, and their condition hence depended initially on the initiative of the owners. Middle-class districts might be expected to have well-maintained streets, but in the new working class areas streets were frequently ill-made or wholly unmade, and so contributed to the degeneration of the environment. Similarly, the construction of a comprehensive sewerage system would benefit the whole town, but would be of especial value to the inhabitants of the working class districts. For as with streets, so with sewers: where the initiative was individual rather than collective, the middle class could afford to install drainage and the poor could not. Expressed in social and spatial terms, the transition from public improvement to public health as the motivation of local government in this period was a transfer of attention from the town centre and the middle class residential areas to the new working class enclaves of the large towns.<sup>1</sup>

When the act is interpreted in a national context, it can be demonstrated that there was a relationship between the inspiration of the authors of the local act, and the dominant interests of the national

<sup>1</sup>E.P. Hennock, 'Urban sanitary reform a generation before Chadwick?' Ec. H.R. 2nd ser., vol X 1957-58, p. 117.

public health movement which was even closer than we have suggested already. It has been argued by Professor Keith-Lucas<sup>1</sup> that despite the importance traditionally attached to metropolitan and parliamentary figures such as Chadwick, Kay, Southwood Smith, and Lord Morpeth, much of the initiative in public health reform in the eighteen forties came from the provincial towns, which in this period were obtaining 'new and remarkable powers'<sup>2</sup> in their local improvement acts. Indeed, after giving a list of the innovations to be found in a selection of these local acts, he claimed that the Public Health Act of 1848,

'was composed essentially of a collection of clauses from the local acts of the previous years'.<sup>3</sup>

The significance of much of his local evidence was effectively contested by Dr. Hennock,<sup>4</sup> but the important question of the relationship between local and national sanitary legislation has not yet been examined. We shall suggest here that Keith-Lucas is mistaken in ascribing an indiscriminate priority to these local acts, on the ground that his version of the legislative history of the public health movement in this period is oversimplified and as a result, inaccurate.

In our outline of the genesis of the Leeds act of 1842, we mentioned that the improvement commission had decided to promote a local bill to avoid being forestalled by the government's proposals for general legislation. The measures in question were the three ultimately abortive

<sup>1</sup>B. Keith-Lucas, 'Some influences affecting the development of sanitary legislation in England', Ec. H.R. 2nd. Ser., vol. VI 1953-4, pp. 290-296.

<sup>2</sup>ibid. p. 295.

<sup>3</sup>ibid. p. 296.

<sup>4</sup>E.P. Hennock, art. cit.



bills introduced by the Home Secretary, Lord Normanby, in 1841. These bills, for the Improvement of Certain Boroughs, for regulating Buildings in Large Towns, and for better Drainage of Large Towns and Villages,<sup>1</sup> were abandoned after the decision to appoint the Commission on the Health of Large Towns. As we have seen, the improvement commission had obtained copies of them in May 1841, and petitioned against them.<sup>2</sup> But it is clear that in drafting the Leeds bill, its authors transferred many of the clauses of these general bills into it. Of the twenty five clauses dealing with building regulations in the 1842 act, twenty of them originated in the building regulations bill, and of the ten clauses relating to sewers, five were translated from the government's drainage bill. Thus in the case of Leeds, the seemingly original provisions in the 1842 Act were, in several important instances, drawn from government proposals, and so Leeds was following in the footsteps of London, and not providing new locally inspired solutions for national problems, as Keith-Lucas would argue. Without detailed research into the history of other local acts of this period it is of course impossible to claim that their origins were identical to those of the Leeds act, but at least a strong suspicion may be entertained that this was so. If we examine the list of new provisions in those acts given by Keith-Lucas, six of the fourteen correspond to clauses present in Normanby's three bills, and with one exception, all the acts were obtained after

<sup>1</sup>Parliamentary Papers, 1841, volume I pp. 29-52 and (amended) 55-89, and 119-142, and 145-169; Volume I pp. 93-110; and Volume II pp. 221-236.

<sup>2</sup>Improvement Commission Minutes, May 21 and June 2 1841.

1841.<sup>1</sup> Although the public health movement achieved its major practical triumph in the Public Health Act of 1848, the act had been preceded by at least eight years of investigation and debate, and it seems unlikely that local authorities would have remained unaware of the views and suggestions being voiced in London.

Nevertheless, in the context of local government in Leeds, as in other large towns, the history of the national public health legislation is of little relevance in this period. Leeds, like Liverpool, Manchester and Birmingham, was governed by the provisions of its local acts. The 1842 act as we have seen, gave the council many opportunities to ameliorate the conditions of urban life, and we must now examine how these opportunities were put into effect.

<sup>1</sup>Keith-Lucas, art. cit. p. 295.

- (1) The prohibition of the building of new houses without drains, which had to be approved by the local authority, corresponds to clause one of the Drainage Bill.
- (2) Power for the local authority to order the owners of existing houses to provide drains connecting with the main sewers, corresponds to clause two of the Drainage Bill.
- (3) The prohibition of building houses without privies corresponds to clause twenty three of the Buildings Bill.
- (4) Prohibition of the letting as dwellings of cellars in courts, or of any cellar of less than a specified height and window area, corresponds to clause fourteen in the Buildings Bill.
- (5) Prohibition of building houses in close courts, corresponds to clause nineteen in the Buildings Bill, and
- (6) Minimum height of rooms in new houses 8 feet, corresponds to clause twenty one in the Buildings Bill.

CHAPTER TWO

THE ACTIVITIES OF THE CORPORATION, 1842 - 1865

In this chapter we examine the development of the council's policies of social administration from 1842, when it adopted the authority of the new improvement act, up to 1865, when the occurrence of a local crisis in public health provoked both local dissatisfaction with the corporation and severe criticism of its services by the Medical Department of the Privy Council.<sup>1</sup> Some of the functions for which the council was responsible were those which it inherited from the improvement commissioners, namely street lighting and cleansing and the administration of the public market. All three were extended in scope under the new regime. By 1848, the number of street lamps, which had long been a cause of complaint, was more than doubled; ten miles of streets had been added to the street cleansing district, increasing expenditure from £650 to £2000 a year; and, as we shall see, market facilities were improved at considerable expense.<sup>2</sup> Of more importance to the quality of the environment were the new services which were inaugurated under the sanction of the improvement acts. During the period under review, the council promoted two further acts. The first, obtained in 1848<sup>3</sup> amended and extended its powers to create a sewerage system for the central urban area. The second amending act in 1856<sup>4</sup> dealt with a variety of topics. It enabled the council to carry out further street improvements, to provide places of recreation, to ratify arrangements made for the new town hall, to change the smoke control regulations, and to regulate slaughterhouses.

But more than two decades after 'Mr. Baines vacated the chair and the meeting then closed ad infinitum'<sup>5</sup> at the last session of the

<sup>1</sup>See chapter three.

<sup>2</sup>RB, 25 Feb 1848.

<sup>3</sup>11 and 12 Vict., cap cii.

<sup>4</sup>19 and 20 Vict., cap cxv.

<sup>5</sup>Leeds Improvement Act, Proceedings of Commissioners, 1 Aug 1842.

improvement commission, the extent of public concern with the sanitary condition of the town indicated that there were severe deficiencies in the policies which the council had pursued. The reasons which restrained the council from acting more efficiently will be examined at length in a subsequent chapter, although some of the causes of public disquiet will be implicit in the discussion which follows here.

The various aspects of corporate activity in these years may be divided into six sections. These are:

- (1) public services, namely the sewerage system and public cleansing;
- (2) public utilities, which comprises the municipal purchase of the waterworks;
- (3) public buildings and amenities, which are the town hall, the purchase of the first public open space, the new markets, the burial grounds, the borough prison, and the abolition of tolls on bridges;
- (4) the regulation of private enterprise, by the regulation of new buildings, and of smoke pollution and the inspection of meat sales, slaughterhouses and common lodging houses;
- (5) the purchase of property for public improvements; and,
- (6) four services which the council did not provide, namely, municipal lodging houses, libraries, and baths and washhouses, and the contemplated, although unachieved, public ownership of the gas companies.

(1)

The major obligation which the council inherited when it took over the administration of the improvement act was the provision of a comprehensive sewerage system to serve the urbanised area of the borough, which lay in the townships of Leeds, Hunslet and Holbeck. The council clearly recognised the importance of this, for it received immediate attention. The committee of the council which went to London to supervise the parliamentary progress of the improvement bill spent part of its time there in consultation with the various metropolitan sanitary authorities, the commissioners of sewers, and at the first meeting of the council to conduct business under the authority of the new act, the town clerk was instructed to obtain written advice from these bodies and from the Poor Law Commissioners,

'who have lately been making very extensive enquiries on the subject',

so that the council could proceed with its sewerage scheme 'on the best modern plans and regulation'.<sup>1</sup> After the appointment of a borough surveyor in September 1842,<sup>2</sup> it was decided that the services of a London engineer or surveyor should be retained and the design of a general plan commissioned from him. Captain James Vetch of the Royal Engineers and a Mr. Dawley of the Westminster Commission of Sewers were contacted to ask if either would be prepared to act in this capacity.<sup>3</sup> Vetch was selected and he first visited Leeds in October 1842.<sup>4</sup> He

<sup>1</sup> RBIA 3 August, 1842. The 'extensive enquiries' being made by the Poor Law Commissioners were of course, those being conducted by Chadwick to provide material for his Report of 1842.

<sup>2</sup> CMIA, 21 Sept 1842.

<sup>3</sup> CMIA, 30 Sept 1842; Imp. Act. General Committee, 7 Oct 1842.

<sup>4</sup> IAGC, 21 Oct, 28 Oct 1842. For Vetch's career, see the Dictionary of National Biography, vol. 58 (1899), pp. 292-293.

submitted his report three months later, and this was followed in February 1843, by a special report on the Marsh lane district.<sup>1</sup> This was an area in the east ward of Leeds township, built during the eighteenth twenties, where,

'case after case of the most malignant typhus springs up among the inhabitants...seizing the houses in rotation'.<sup>2</sup>

As we have seen, its grossly insanitary condition had been one of the most striking revelations of the report made by the statistical committee. For this reason the streets committee had decided that this district required, and could be given, immediate attention. Since the site of these streets sloped westward to Sheepscar beck, its contour provided an adequate natural gradient for sewers, which could temporarily drain into the stream until later assimilated into the general sewerage system. An existing sewer had been laid only a few years before by the highway surveyors, but it was regarded as inefficient, and so Vetch was asked to provide a separate plan for the area.<sup>3</sup> But the first stage, the construction of the principal sewer in Marsh lane, was an inauspicious beginning to the work of the streets committee, for an error in the levels made the sewer little better than the one which it had replaced. In the ensuing recriminations the competence of both Vetch, and Child, the borough surveyor was called in to question. The committee finally decided that no blame attached to Vetch, and the borough surveyor resigned in protest.<sup>4</sup> The sewer was subsequently relaid, and although afterwards it gave intermittent trouble the scheme could continue as planned. A second main sewer in

<sup>1</sup>Streets and Sewerage Cttee. minutes, 9 Jan, 16 Feb, 1843.

<sup>2</sup>LM, 29 Oct 1842.

<sup>3</sup>SSC, 3 Nov 1842.

<sup>4</sup>IAGC, 15 March 1843; LM, 18 March 1843; 2 Aug 1845.

Saxton lane, to serve branch sewers in adjacent streets, was completed in 1846, and the sewerage of York street, and those joining onto it, in the following year.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile the concurrent preparations for the main sewerage system were encountering serious delays. Although Vetch had forwarded his report to the streets committee in January 1843, it was more than six years later, in October 1849, before the council authorised work to begin on a main sewerage system. The local press, of both liberal and tory affiliation, commented adversely on the delay, and the evidence of a Royal Commission produced an extensive critique of the council's supposed mismanagement of public health reform.<sup>2</sup> The reasons for this lengthy delay have never been defined,<sup>3</sup> and it will be argued here that for the greater part of the period in question, up to January 1849, the council was obliged to negotiate technical and legal difficulties which conspired to prevent its intentions from being realised at any earlier date. Although both the council and its critics deplored the delay, this long period of gestation has its advantages, for it provides a detailed case study of the various problems which could be encountered in pioneering attempts at major sanitary improvements.

The primary difficulties were those which arose from the problems of obtaining a suitably-designed general plan. In its search for a technically viable scheme, the council commissioned four reports: that

<sup>1</sup>SSC, 15 Jan 1844; C.M.I.A. 30 March 1846; SSC, 9 Feb, 27 April, 15 Sept 1846, 16 Aug 1847.

<sup>2</sup>For example, 'in Leeds we have to deplore both want of science and want of promptitude. The delay that has taken place in the drainage of this town is very generally complained of by those who regard the public health', L.M. 23 Aug 1845, and see also 31 Jan 1846, and the Leeds Intelligencer, 11 March 1848. The report to the Royal Commission is considered below.

<sup>3</sup>There is no explanation in Toft, op.cit., ch. VI.



by James Vetch in 1842, another by its borough surveyor, T. Walker in 1844, a third by a prominent local engineer, J.W. Leather in the same year, and finally a report by Thomas Wickstead of the East London Water Works company in 1848.<sup>1</sup> In this context, a detailed exposition of the engineering technicalities involved is unnecessary, but a brief outline of the principles embodied in the various plans is essential to understand the reasons for the decisions which the council and its streets committee made. But first we need to know the basic facts about the natural features of the area which any plan would have to take into account.<sup>2</sup> The geography of the area to the north and the south of the river Aire in which the three townships were situated presented a marked contrast, and posed several problems for the civil engineer. On the north the land had an 'undulating, ridgy, character...in the direction of the river from west to east'.<sup>3</sup> The western half of the town was built upon land which rose from the river bank ascending continuously for about one and a half miles, to reach a summit of two hundred and thirty feet on Woodhouse moor at the north western edge of Leeds township. On the east, Richmond Hill rose abruptly from the river side to a height of ninety feet. Between the lower reaches of the slowly-rising land on the west and the more rapid ascent of the terrain in the east and north on the east ran Sheepscar beck. This was an important tributary of the river, and on its course from north to south through the east end was lined by houses, workshops, dyehouses and factories, with the result that it had become an 'open sewer of the worst description'.<sup>4</sup> In addition, the river itself was severely

<sup>1</sup>See Bibliography for the titles of these works.

<sup>2</sup>This explanation is a synthesis of the observations to be found in the reports by Vetch and Leather.

<sup>3</sup>J.W. Leather, op.cit., p. 64.

<sup>4</sup>J. Vetch, op.cit., p. 19.

polluted both by towns upstream and by the refuse discharged into it by the tributaries which ran through the urban area of Leeds. This situation was exacerbated by the presence of mill weirs on both its banks as it passed through the central townships. These dams impeded the flow of the natural current and so caused much of the water-borne refuse to accumulate on the river bed. The geography of the land to the south of the river was completely different from that of the north. It was,

'so exceedingly low and flat for some distance back from the river that the watershed lines of...(the five southern tributaries of the Aire which flowed through Hunslet and Holbeck) can scarcely be defined'<sup>1</sup>

Both Vetch and Leather realised that the basic tenet of any proposed scheme ought to be the planning of sewers which prevented refuse from flowing into the natural watercourse; as Vetch wrote,

'it is in vain to suppose that the condition of the town of Leeds can ever be materially improved until the rivers and becks are saved from their present pollution'<sup>2</sup>

But if this was to be done, difficulties arose over the siting of sewers in the northern district. For Vetch proposed, and Leather concurred, that the sewers should run parallel to the river to a point downstream from the town, which meant that they must run from west to east. But the northern built-up area was indented by 'valley and watershed lines', of which the most pronounced was that created by Sheepscar beck. Thus a dilemma was created by the actual north-to-south rather than an ideal west-to-east orientation of the natural contour. It was therefore necessary to discover courses for the sewers which would, over the whole distance, reconcile the need for a sufficient west-to-east

<sup>1</sup>J.W. Leather, op.cit., p. 63.

<sup>2</sup>J. Vetch, op.cit., p. 16.

gradient to achieve a gravity flow, with the practicable limits on the depth at which sewers could be laid, so that they could drain buildings on the highest and the lowest points of every minor valley. The converse problem existed to the south of the river. The low-lying and level nature of the land made it very difficult to plot a path which would provide sewers with a natural incline.

Vetch's scheme had three important features. The first, as we have already noted, was his proposal to have sewers running parallel to the river on each side and so relieving the river and its principal urban tributaries of their role as common sewers. But it was not his intention merely to syphon away the sewerage of the town in order to pollute the river further downstream, but to make his sewerage system produce a profit through the utilisation of sewage to irrigate agricultural land. By means of sewage works to process the effluent, he believed that after ten years, the sewage of the northern district alone would produce an annual income of £10,000<sup>1</sup>. Perhaps he believed that this would create a strong inducement to a cost-conscious local authority: if so he was, as we shall see, radically mistaken. The third major aspect of his plans was his design for Sheepscar beck. On account of its natural suitability as a drainage artery he intended to divert it in order to straighten its course, and make it into a main trunk sewer for the eastern area. Vetch estimated that the total cost would be £22,639, excluding the cost of sewage works, which we know from other sources, he calculated at about £8,000, and also excluding compensation to property owners for damage to buildings, wayleaves and other items.

<sup>1</sup>First Report of the Commissioners for Inquiring into the State of Large Towns and Populous Districts, (1844), Qu. 5775.

Although the streets committee, under the chairmanship of Robert Baker, was anxious to commence upon the project, they understandably decided, since,

'the plan of drainage recommended by Captain Vetch involves a large expenditure of money'<sup>1</sup>

to subject it to detailed examination. The town clerk was instructed to review the legal difficulties which the scheme might involve, and the borough surveyor was to consider its engineering aspects.<sup>2</sup> These preliminaries took some time to complete, and the streets committee were not satisfied that their investigations had been exhaustive until February 1844, when it presented its findings to the council. The council met on the 28 February to consider the plan, the report of the committee, and an alternative plan prepared at the request of the committee by the borough surveyor. His scheme proposed a solution to the drainage of the northern area only, and even in this was less than perfect. He had no scheme to sewer the east of the township, presumably regarding the arrangements which centred on Sheepscar beck as sufficient. Furthermore, although his sewers drained the other parts of the town, they were designed to discharge into the river at the nearest possible points. After lengthy debate, the council rejected Vetch's plans and directed the streets committee to reconsider the question. These discussions attracted more than local interest, for amongst the members of the public then present was James Smith of Deanston, an acknowledged expert on drainage. In the Second Report of the Royal Commission on the State of Large Towns, published in the following year, he publicly castigated the conduct of the council on this occasion:

<sup>1</sup> SSC, 9 Jan 1843.

<sup>2</sup> SSC, 5 June 1843, 22 Jan 1844.

'I was present on one occasion for nearly six hours listening to a debate on this important subject, and much was said to satisfy me that such Court acting alone was most incompetent for judging and determining on such matters. The chief theme of the speakers, in opposition to the adoption of the plan of Captain Vetch, related to what they very erroneously supposed to be the means of saving the pockets of the rate-payers, with very little regard to sanitary results. The mover and seconder were the only parties who supported the motion for adopting Captain Vetch's plans. A counter motion was made and carried to consider a plan by their own surveyor, which plan was more calculated to save outlay than to insure efficiency. The main sewers by this plan were intended to discharge their waters into the river at several points as heretofore, thereby continuing the pollution and losing the benefit of the sewer-water for agricultural purposes.'<sup>1</sup>

In several respects Smith's comments are inaccurate, and the overall tone of his observations distorts the nature of the debate. Several important reasons were adduced to question the viability of Vetch's intentions, and the report of the streets committee enumerated five aspects which it regarded as dubious.<sup>2</sup> It was divided over the issue of the technical adequacy of the scheme, but had decided to give no opinion to the council, as it regarded this as a question which the committee were not competent to consider. Its other comments related only to the problems which would arise in the construction of the northern sewer network, as this was to be the first to be constructed on account of the greater population and area involved. The proposed main sewer outfall was, it believed, incorrectly sited as five feet of fall would be lost. But even if this location was to be adopted for the position of the sewage works, the council would have to negotiate with Mr. Meynall Ingram, the owner of the Temple Newsam estate. It had no statutory power to purchase land in this area by compulsion, and so the possibility of implementing this aspect of the scheme was wholly dependent upon his willingness to sell or lease land to the council.

<sup>1</sup>J. Smith 'Report on the condition of the town of Leeds', Second Report of the Commissioners on the State of Large Towns, vol. II, (1845), p. 148.

<sup>2</sup>RBIA, 14 Feb 1844.

The diversion of Sheepscar beck would also create 'insurmountable difficulties'. In the first place, the Aire and Calder Navigation Company had informed the town clerk that this proposal was detrimental to their interests, and the Navigation trustees were prepared to oppose it at law, and would in any case demand financial compensation. Similarly the owners of property adjacent to the beck, many of whom used its water for industrial purposes, and those with property on its intended new route, would require compensation. An additional complication was that the council, having no compulsory powers to treat with these property owners, would have to rely upon voluntary negotiations. Finally, there were two financial questions to be considered. Members of the committee differed in opinion over the financial returns which might derive from the utilisation of sewage. Some believed that the dyestuff wastes it would contain would make it valueless as manure, and while other members disagreed, the whole committee regarded Vetch's estimates as over-optimistic. The committee was also united in believing that the costs of construction estimated in the report were 'considerably too low'. Despite these reservations, the chairman of the streets committee moved that the council should agree to the construction of the northern sewer network, that is, the system draining the township of Leeds. Smith's assertion that the council as a whole was simply concerned with 'saving the pockets of the ratepayers' is not accurate. The remark that the 'people were more solicitous about draining rates from their pockets than draining the streets' was made by one of the tory minority, and did not have general approval.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>LM, 2 March 1844.

The principal opponent of the scheme at the council meeting did not oppose it on the grounds of expense alone, although its cost was one reason for his dissatisfaction. Alderman Luccock had by private enquiry come to the same conclusions as the streets committee, and advanced objections based on similar engineering questions.<sup>1</sup> Other councillors concentrated their criticisms upon Vetch's proposals for the treatment of sewage, claiming that the acidic properties of dye-house wastes would prevent its application for agricultural purposes. It seems reasonable to conclude that the issues raised in the discussion of Vetch's scheme were more complicated than James Smith claimed.<sup>2</sup> Naturally, the question of cost was important. The construction of a comprehensive sewerage system was to a public authority in the eighteenth forties an unprecedented enterprise involving an expenditure of unprecedented magnitude. In retrospect, it appears as only one of the major schemes of urban improvement which local government was obliged to adopt, but when compared to previous concepts of the functions of municipalities and traditional items in municipal budgets, the hesitation of the council is hardly incomprehensible. It is of course, impossible to decide whether the scheme would have been adopted had expense been the only drawback, but as we have seen, there were legal and technical grounds for doubting its viability.<sup>3</sup> One other issue appeared in the debate, the significance of which it is not possible to assess. In his report, Smith also wrote of the need to constitute

<sup>1</sup> loc. cit.

<sup>2</sup> After Smith's report had been published, his criticisms of the council debate were reviewed at length in a letter to the Leeds Mercury by one of the councillors, and this substantiates my own view of the motives of the council in rejecting Vetch's scheme. See LM, 2 Aug 1845.

<sup>3</sup> The council later approved of Leather's plans, and rejected the cheaper scheme of their borough surveyor which suggests that finance was not the primary criterion.

local government authorities which would be 'independent of immediate popular clamour', for perhaps he was aware of the political undercurrents present in the council discussions, created by the wariness of the liberals to tory and chartist opposition. One liberal member asserted that many of the tories had purposefully absented themselves from the meeting. By this means they could make political capital out of what would then be unequivocally a liberal decision to embark upon an expensive project.<sup>1</sup> The chartists were also opposed to increased corporate expenditure. On the day before the debate they had organised a public meeting which approved a motion to

'stop the supplies required by the town council, until the council shall comply with the demand of the ratepayers in the borough, and not expend any more of their money in an expensive police force, drainage, buildings, and what are termed by them improvements, until the people are better able to pay for them.'<sup>2</sup>

A deputation from that meeting was present at the council debate. By a majority of thirty one to two, the council rejected Vetch's scheme and instructed the streets committee to reconsider the possibility of a new plan for sewerage the area north of the river.

The committee decided to appoint J.W. Leather, a prominent local engineer to examine the scheme proposed by the borough surveyor, and to make proposals of his own 'at his earliest convenience'.<sup>3</sup> But unfortunately his rate of progress, at least on this project, appears to have been remarkably dilatory. By December 1844, nine months after his appointment, the committee were asking him to say how soon his review would be completed,<sup>4</sup> and he then adopted evasive tactics.

<sup>1</sup>LM 2 March 1844.

<sup>2</sup>LM 2 March 1844.

<sup>3</sup>SSC, 4 March 1844. For details of Leather's career, see Minutes of Proceedings of the Institution of Civil Engineers, vol. LXXXIX, (1887), pp. 473-479.

<sup>4</sup>SSC, 2 Dec 1844.



These were successful, and despite considerable protests from the committee, which culminated in a threat of dismissal, he managed by some means to retain his commission. It was not until May 1846 that he finally presented his report to the committee.<sup>1</sup> Leather's report falls into three parts, the first two containing an analysis of the proposals of Vetch and Walker, and the third being an exposition of his own scheme. Leather raised both technical and financial objections to Vetch's plans. It is unnecessary to repeat them here, but if the thoroughness of Leather's inspection of his predecessor's designs is equalled by his accuracy, it seems incontestable that the doubts which many members of the council had entertained were wholly vindicated. Leather believed that parts of these sewers would have to be laid at an excessive depth, but that elsewhere they would often be unable to allow for adequate drainage, especially of rooms below ground level. The gradients of the sewers were furthermore insufficient to allow for future extensions in some places, and in others the necessary raising of street levels to accommodate the proposed sewer gradients would involve considerable claims for compensation. The expedients to which Vetch was reduced in devising his plan were the result, so Leather claimed, of his insistence that the sewers on both sides of the river should run from east to west. On the north, this led to a conflict with the natural contours of the district, for reasons we have explained above. On the south, the flatness of the land created the problem of discovering a means of providing a sufficient gradient to ensure that the sewers were constantly self-scouring.

Leather proposed that most of these difficulties would disappear, if instead of treating the two sides of the river as separate districts,

<sup>1</sup>SSC, 4 May 1846.

they were regarded as one. On the north side of the river, the western district was to be drained by two main sewers, which instead of running eastward, were to be laid from north to south. At their southern extremities they were to be joined into one, and this single sewer then passed under the river by a dipping culvert. This sewer then crossed the southern area from east to west, so providing a main sewer for Holbeck and Hunslet. It then crossed the river on the east to join with the sewers from the Sheepscar beck district on the north east side of the river Aire. Instead of using the beck itself as a sewer, as Vetch had proposed, Leather's intention was to build two sewers, one on each side of it. These then joined into one, and connected with the other main sewer, from where a final length of sewer ran to a point where the land was sufficiently low-lying to provide an adequate uninterrupted fall. This scheme had two advantages over that envisaged by Vetch. In the first place, the main sewer in the north western district, by taking a north to south course, did not pass across the undulating terrain which Vetch's east to west sewer was obliged to do. This avoided the problem of the latter's varying levels. It had an uninterrupted natural gradient down to the river, where it crossed to the south bank. Here its second advantage became apparent. As it passed through the flat southern district, the relatively steep gradients provided by the northern area gave the whole length of the sewer a 'constant self-acting scour', which was obviously not possible in Vetch's design. Finally, Leather dismissed the optimism of Vetch's claims for revenue-producing utilisation of sewage. But since the council discussions had already shown a consensus of disbelief on this subject, it was unnecessary for him to discuss the matter at length. He estimated that the cost of constructing the northern network of sewers would be £25,545, and at a council meeting in June 1846 the council voted

£30,000 to the streets committee to carry this part of the plan into effect.<sup>1</sup> On this occasion, the favourable verdict of the council was clearly demonstrated by the fact that only two votes out of twenty seven were cast against the motion, giving further evidence against the contention of James Smith that the council was more concerned with expense than with public health.

At this meeting, two important issues had been raised in the course of debate. Alderman Shaw, who was also the solicitor to the Aire and Calder Navigation Company, spoke in favour of prior consultation with his clients, 'to avoid annoyance and probably litigation'. Another member, councillor Yewdall, in opposition then as he had been in 1844, mentioned that the council had already borrowed £50,000 and that the borrowing limit imposed by the improvement act was only £100,000.<sup>2</sup> Thus once the council had adopted Leather's plan, three further problems remained. It was clearly necessary to reach an agreement with the Navigation Company, and since Leather had adopted a site for the sewer outflow at Thwaites Mill Pool, it would be necessary to negotiate a settlement with Mr. Meynall Ingram, the proprietor of the land. Finally, the council decided that it was essential to promote a new improvement bill to solve the various financial and administrative problems which had emerged in the course of planning. As we have noted, the Navigation Company had already declared an interest in any sewerage scheme which might affect its legal rights over the river Aire and its tributaries within the borough boundaries. Hence it was an important interested party which required placation before the council could

<sup>1</sup>CMIA, 17 June 1846.

<sup>2</sup>LM, 20 June 1846.

proceed. In June 1846 the streets committee created a subcommittee on sewerage to negotiate with all parties

'interested in the waters of the river in passing through the town with a view to ascertain whether they consider the proposed plan of sewerage in any way objectionable'.<sup>1</sup>

Thus began a protracted discussion with the company. Consultation centred upon the need to avoid any diversion of the streams which flowed into the river, and the directors were extremely cautious in their dealings with the corporation. In October they presented their terms to the subcommittee, and insisted that the contract between the company and the council was to be ratified by legislation

'to be obtained for that purpose by the town council in the first practicable session'.<sup>2</sup>

This condition was a serious setback to the subcommittee, for a local act

'could not be obtained without considerable loss of time and at great cost to the ratepayers'.<sup>3</sup>

The directors were then asked to accept an agreement ratified by an order of council. They initially refused, but several weeks later recanted, and agreed on the understanding that the contract would receive parliamentary sanction when next the council promoted a local bill.<sup>4</sup> The company showed no inclination to hurry in defining the streams over which it claimed tributary rights, and negotiations dragged on until October 1847, sixteen months after they had begun.<sup>5</sup>

The subcommittee was also obliged to negotiate with Meynall Ingram, the owner of the land upon which the council proposed to site the main

<sup>1</sup>SSC, 22 June 1846.

<sup>2</sup>Sub Streets Committee on Sewerage, minutes, 10 Oct 1846.

<sup>3</sup>loc. cit.

<sup>4</sup>Sub SSC, 23 Nov 1846.

<sup>5</sup>Sub SSC, 21 Oct 1847.

sewer outlet. In October 1846 he informed the sub committee that, subject to adequate compensation, he had no objection to the sewers crossing his estate, but he also asked for the right to take as much sewage as he wished to manure his land.<sup>1</sup> When in May 1848, the new improvement bill came before the select committee of the House of Lords, Ingram's counsel was successful in securing for him a priority over the council in the disposal of the sewage for his own use.<sup>2</sup> This stratagem almost caused the bill to be withdrawn, as the council were determined that any agreement was to be 'founded on a money compensation for land required',<sup>3</sup> and that the bill should lapse if this could not be achieved. The progress of the bill was delayed by more than a month while a council deputation worked to reach a settlement with Ingram, who finally accepted an annuity of £300.

The bill itself was promoted to remove several difficulties which had become apparent, which had not been foreseen at the time when the 1842 improvement act was drafted. By December 1847, the council had already borrowed £52,000, and under the provisions of the 1842 act the borrowing limit was fixed at £100,000. In addition to the insufficiency of the borrowing powers, the fixed upper limit for rating would prevent the raising of a sufficient sum to pay the interest upon the necessary loans. These problems were to be solved by creating a Drainage District comprising the townships of Leeds, Hunslet and Holbeck, upon which could be levied a Main Sewer Rate, not exceeding 1<sup>6</sup>/<sub>d</sub> in the pound, with the power to raise not more than £200,000 on loan.<sup>4</sup> Finally, the

<sup>1</sup>Sub SSC, 10 Oct 1846.

<sup>2</sup>HLRO, Minutes of Evidence, House of Lords, Session 1848, vol. 1, 19 May 1848.

<sup>3</sup>CM, 26 May 1848.

<sup>4</sup>LM, 4 Dec 1847.

bill dealt with a technical, but most important issue. Where it was necessary to construct sewers of greater capacity than was necessary for the needs of the streets and houses adjoining it, because of the need for the sewer to carry the refuse of adjacent areas also, the extra cost would be defrayed from the rate fund, and not from rates levied upon these properties alone. This provision was necessary to remove the potential opposition of the ratepayers of Hunslet to the sewerage scheme, since they feared that the construction costs would fall inequitably upon the three townships. The bill became law in July 1848<sup>1</sup>, and there now appeared to be no reason why the plans should not be put into operation. Up to this time, the delay which had taken place was the result of difficulties over which the council had little or no control. Because of apparently well-founded doubts over the viability of Vetch's proposals, and the leisurely pace at which Leather conducted his investigations, no satisfactory plan existed until 1846. The following two years were taken up with negotiations with interested parties, and the promotion of an improvement act. Although the streets committee had tried to force the pace of planning, it was wholly dependent upon the decisions of others.

One further, although minor, delay occurred before the council considered giving its approval to begin the work of sewerage the drainage district. The streets committee appear to have had second thoughts on some aspects of Leather's plan, and decided to commission an independent engineer, Thomas Wicksteed to reconsider the

'propriety of carrying the sewerage to an outlet on the north or south side of the river Aire'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The Leeds Improvement Amendment Act, 11 and 12 Vict., cap. cii, 1848.

<sup>2</sup>SSC, 28 Aug 1848.

His report concerned itself with purely technical matters, mainly related to the optimal size and gradient of sewers, and the relative costs of sewer construction. Leather produced a supplemental report to deal with his criticisms, and apparently the committee decided not to alter its sewerage plans any further. But by the time the streets committee was satisfied that no further obstacles remained to delay the implementation of the sewerage scheme, considerable public pressure was being exerted in an attempt to prevent the council from going ahead. The trade depression of the late eighteen forties was causing a rapid increase in local government expenditure, as a result of the activity of the poor law guardians. In 1848 the cost of the poor law had climbed to £41,000. This was a far greater amount than had been spent in any of the previous fifteen years,<sup>1</sup> for the cost of an unprecedented volume of poor relief was supplemented by the exceptional expenditure on medical services. Meetings of electors in several wards expressed their hostility to any proposal to levy a sewerage rate

'until commercial prosperity and confidence are again restored'<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless, in January 1849 the chairman of the streets committee proposed that the council should proceed with the construction of the main trunk sewers for Leeds, Hunslet and Holbeck, and the motion was lost by only twenty votes to nineteen.<sup>3</sup> But in the following month, the

<sup>1</sup>Report on the Answers to Queries Addressed to the Respective Authorities entrusted with the distribution of Local Funds, (1850), Appendix, Table 8, part 1 and part 2. Between 1833 and 1847, the annual expenditure by the overseers and guardians varied from £18,638 to £27,928. The cost of the poor law medical department in 1848 (a sub-total of the annual expenditure mentioned) was £2,488. The highest sum previously spent by the medical department (in 1847) was £545.

<sup>2</sup>LM 20 Jan 1849.

<sup>3</sup>CMIA, 26 Jan 1849.

motion was reintroduced and lost by a more decisive vote of twenty seven to eighteen.<sup>1</sup> No attempt was made to raise the issue again until October, and by this time, the reappearance of cholera seems to have provided a cogent reason to persuade all but two members of the Council to change their attitude, and the streets committee was given authority to let the contracts.<sup>2</sup> The first contract was let in 1850, and Leather's scheme was completed in 1855.<sup>3</sup>

Leather had originally estimated that the cost of sewerage 30½ miles of streets, out of the total of thirty four miles of public streets in the drainage district would be £80,001, but by 1853 it was apparent that this sum would be exceeded by a considerable margin. By 13 October of that year, £67,877 had already been paid on account of sixteen miles of main sewers, and the streets and sewerage committee believed that to complete the plan would probably cost £119,936. Moreover, a decision made by the council in 1851 would entail a 'very large further expenditure'.<sup>4</sup> On 1 September the council had approved a suggestion of the committee to finance the sewerage of all streets, both highways and private streets, out of the main sewer rate fund.<sup>5</sup> This decision had arisen from the problems associated with the council's powers to order the sewerage and making-up of streets under the 1842 improvement act. Before the council could order a street to be put into a suitable state so that it could be declared a highway, it was obliged to provide a sewer outlet to which the street's branch sewer could connect. Only then could the order be issued, and the owners were allowed a three month

<sup>1</sup>CMIA, 14 Feb 1849.

<sup>2</sup>CMIA, 29 Sept 1849

<sup>3</sup>LM, 27 July 1850; A.W.W. Morant, Description of the Leeds sewage works, and of the various processes which have been tried for the purification of sewage, (1876), p.4.

<sup>4</sup>SSC, 21 Oct 1853.

<sup>5</sup>CMIA, 1 Sept 1851.



period before the borough surveyor could undertake the work on their behalf and at their expense. Moreover, the council were unable to order that a sewer should be built in a non-thoroughfare, but had to make an order for paving levelling and flagging also. Thus in

'cases of private streets communicating with, and forming the outlet for, each other, ... several separate orders might be necessary; and, as three months' notice in each case would be required, and some time further would be required to advertise for contracts, etc., and then an additional time in which to execute the work, that the attempt to drain in any systematic manner, and within any reasonable period, would be impossible'<sup>1</sup>.

In the event, the cost of the sewerage system up to the end of 1855 was £137,000, and even if this sum includes all the council's financial obligations to the contractors for Leather's plan, which is not certain but unfortunately not ascertainable, the council had exceeded its intended expenditure by £57,000, over what had been intended in 1849. We should not overlook the fact that this sum includes items other than payments for the actual works. A total of £65,000, representing 30 per cent of the final cost was made up of payments for wayleaves, compensation, legal expenses, salaries, interest payments on loans and the like. These details are set out in table 2.1. By May 1865, the council had spent £177,100 on sewerage, and it was estimated that a further £23,000 would be necessary to complete the sewerage of thoroughfares and of new streets.<sup>2</sup>

Unfortunately, the expense which the council had incurred provides little indication of the efficiency of the sewerage system in promoting house drainage. In December 1854 the streets committee noted that the contractor was receiving very few applications for house drains to be

<sup>1</sup>LM, 6 Sept 1851.

<sup>2</sup>LM, 11 May 1865. This sum presumably refers to 'works' alone.

TABLE 2.1. Expenditure on the Main Sewerage System, 1850-1862

	1850	1851	1852	1853	1854	1855	1856	1857	1858	1859	1860	1861	1862	Totals
Engineering and Surveying	1,295	206	820	1,439	702	173	281	-	-	-	-	-	852	5,768
Wayleave and Compensation	1,545	28	2,049	1,127	641	368	27	351	667	509	410	300	300	8,322
Works	1,035	14,821	36,672	25,267	10,949	19,857	3,831	2,635	3,010	3,351	8,504	8,611	8,117	146,660
Printing, Stationery & Advertising	336	132	68	80	51	62	2	3	24	13	15	8	11	805
Rates Expenses	86	153	82	124	130	195	137	208	256	218	207	219	226	2,241
Law Expenses	433	165	329	218	133	145	63	59	-	-	-	-	-	1,545
Miscellaneous Expenses	102	75	230	211	46	38	137	42	88	122	200	89	270	1,650
Proportion of Salaries and Office Expenses	-	-	245	323	340	321	-	356	344	389	342	338	330	3,328
Interest on Loans	59	1,047	1,358	2,768	3,171	4,621	2,281	4,519	4,398	4,417	4,296	3,965	3,936	40,836
	4,891	16,627	41,853	31,557	16,163	25,780	6,759	8,173	8,787	9,019	13,974	13,530	14,042	211,155

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Source: (1) 1850-1853, Streets and Sewerage Committee Minutes, 26 Oct 1854, (2) 1854-62, Annual Expenditure on Main Sewer Rate Account in Report Books, Improvement Act.

Notes: (1) 1850-1855, accounting year ends 31 Dec; 1856-62, accounting year ends 31 Aug.  
 (2) Figures have been rounded to nearest f.  
 (3) There are no accounts extant after 1862.  
 (4) J. Toft, thesis, p. 185a, includes balancing items and loans repaid in her annual totals. These have been excluded here.

installed<sup>1</sup>, and three years later the inspection sub-committee reported that after a two day tour through the drainage district, it

'regretted to observe the very large number of streets, either wholly or inefficiently drained, notwithstanding the excellent outlet which has in almost every instance been brought close to them by your main sewers; the owners of property having but in few instances been at pains to drain their side streets into the new sewers'<sup>2</sup>

The committee had already decided in the previous month that it would not sewer any more streets unless at least two thirds of the property owners agreed to connect their property with the sewer, and in September it decided to advertise this resolution in the newspapers.<sup>3</sup> Two years later, in May 1859, it rescinded this resolution, but the council thereupon directed the committee to revert to its former practice.<sup>4</sup> One member of the committee objected that,

'as the cost of connecting was nearly as great as of constructing the main sewers, the committee would only be able to drain two and a half miles of drainage (sic) yearly, instead of five',

to which one councillor understandably retorted that there was little purpose in building sewers which went unused.<sup>5</sup> The policy of the committee is, in this respect, difficult to understand. The council had explicitly adopted in the 1848 improvement act, all the provisions of the Towns' Improvement Clauses act of 1847, which related to public sewers and the drainage of houses.<sup>6</sup> Under these circumstances, it had, under section thirty five of the 1847 act, the power to order house drainage at the expense of the owners,<sup>7</sup> and thus it is not clear why it

<sup>1</sup>SSC, 1 Dec 1854.

<sup>2</sup>SSC, 22 May 1857

<sup>3</sup>SSC, 24 April, 4 Sept 1857.

<sup>4</sup>SSC, 27 May 1859; CM, 31 May 1859

<sup>5</sup>LM, 2 June 1859.

<sup>6</sup>1848 act, clause three.

<sup>7</sup>Town Improvement Clauses Act, 10 and 11 Vict, c.34, 1847.

failed to implement its authority from the beginning. Nevertheless, in December 1859, the committee instructed its visiting sub-committee to inspect all undrained yards courts and alleys and report when necessary to recommend places to be sewered at the owners' expense.<sup>1</sup> In the following three years the committee began to order the installation of house drainage: in eighty four streets in 1860, in eighty nine streets in 1861, and in sixty four streets in January 1862.<sup>2</sup> In that month the committee decided to apply this policy generally, and resolved that,

'the owners of property in every street in the Drainage District where the main drains are laid, be forthwith ordered to connect their several tenements with such main drains'<sup>3</sup>

It would appear that this policy proved to be inoperative.

James Hole, in his detailed criticism of the activities of the council observed that despite the large sums spent on the sewerage system, many houses in drained streets remained isolated as the council had not 'or fancies it has not' power to compel the owners to install house drains.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, the Leeds Mercury remarked in 1864 that

'the local Act is so defective that it is often impossible for the occupiers of cottage dwellings to get the benefit of its provisions, since owners cannot be compelled to connect the drains with sinks in the houses'<sup>5</sup>

and it was not until the council promoted the improvement act of 1866 that it obtained the power to order the provision of water closets. It is ironic, to say the least, that twenty years after the 1842 act, the intention of improving the sanitary condition of the town, gave least benefits to the type of property which had been, and still remained,

<sup>1</sup>SSC, 9 Dec 1859.

<sup>2</sup>SSC, 3, 24 Feb, 27 July, 31 Aug 1860; 28 March, 25 July 1861; 1 Jan 1862.

<sup>3</sup>SSC, 31 Jan 1862.

<sup>4</sup>J. Hole, The Homes of the Working Classes, p. 129.

<sup>5</sup>LM, 4 May 1864.

most in need of them.

But in another respect, the scope of the streets committee's activities were extended when in April 1863<sup>1</sup> it turned its attention to the sewerage and surfacing of

'all closed streets, courts alleys and squares, in a condition dangerous to health',

and in the subsequent two years spent a total of £6,179 in carrying its intentions into effect.<sup>2</sup> Then in May 1865 the council agreed that the resolution of September 1851, which charged the expense of sewerage all thoroughfares, whether highways or not, to the main sewer account, should be extended to all places in the drainage district which could legitimately be defined as a 'street' under the 1842 act.<sup>3</sup>

One question of recurring interest to the committee was that of the utilisation of the sewage. In June 1853, a sub committee was appointed to investigate the experiments made in other towns,

'with a view of turning the fertilising matters contained in sewage water to profitable account'<sup>4</sup>

and it reported its findings three years later. Leeds sewage was found to have comparatively little fertilising substance, and its utilisation would not be commercially viable, especially as the experience of other towns which had attempted to take advantage of a relatively high organic constituent in their sewage had been shown to be unencouraging.<sup>5</sup> In 1863 the committee decided to reconsider, and commissioned a chemical analysis of the sewage,<sup>6</sup> but no further action was taken for seven years, when the council was forced, by legal proceedings to take action.

<sup>1</sup>SSC, 10 April 1863.

<sup>2</sup>SSC, 29 April to 25 Nov, 1864; 24 Feb to 24 Nov, 1865.

<sup>3</sup>CM, 10 May 1865.

<sup>4</sup>SSC, 10 June 1853.

<sup>5</sup>SSC, 27 June 1856.

<sup>6</sup>SSC, 27 March 1863.

Although the completion of the main sewerage system in 1855, and the subsequent sewerage of other streets in the drainage district lead to an increase in the number of water closets in use, the majority of the population continued to rely upon the privy and the ashpit for the disposal of both human and household refuse.<sup>1</sup> It was not until the late eighteen fifties that the removal of domestic wastes became a municipal responsibility, and prior to the council's adoption of this as a 'free' service, refuse was removed at the householders' expense either by the council or by private contractors. But in many instances it was simply left to accumulate, and only at times of local crises in public health did the council and its scavenging and nuisance committee exert itself to ensure that private yards and streets were cleansed to minimise the danger of infection. Even at such times of emergency the committee did not abandon its sense of financial rectitude. Thus in 1847, the

'influx of Irish poor, and the destitution and sickness which prevails within the borough'

prompted the committee to undertake extensive cleansing operations. Refuse was ordered to be removed from the areas inhabited by the 'destitute poor', but

'in all cases where a quantity of manure...is deposited in middensteads or other places, in the occupation of persons able to pay the expense of removing the same, the necessary steps be taken forthwith to compel them to remove such manure'.<sup>2</sup>

Throughout the eighteen forties and fifties, private courts and streets claimed special attention, and exceptional votes of money for 'sanitary purposes' only when it was felt that they might become a

<sup>1</sup>The number of water closets supplied by the water works was 1,005 in 1856 and 3,221 in 1865, R.B. 11 Sept. 1867.

<sup>2</sup>Scavenging and Nuisance committee, minutes, 28 April 1847.

health risk. Thus a grant of £1,000 to the committee in August 1846 was a 'precautionary measure'<sup>1</sup> inspired by the fear of an epidemic, and further grants, one of £600 in October 1853<sup>2</sup>, and of £500 in March 1854<sup>3</sup> was obviously motivated by fear of the cholera. When the committee made its request to the council,

'some conversation took place upon the advisability of taking every sanitary precaution before the arrival of the cholera in Leeds, and then the sum asked for was granted nem. con.'<sup>4</sup>

Finally, in 1858 the committee successfully recommended to the council that it should take on the responsibility of the systematic cleansing of the whole of the drainage district at the expense of the rates.<sup>5</sup> Initially it decided on a policy of direct labour, renting only horses carts and drivers from private sources, until it could decide whether to continue this system permanently or to lease it to private contractors.<sup>6</sup> But three years later, the work was farmed out to three contractors. They were paid a fixed sum for each ton of 'night soil ashes and rubbish removed' which was transported to municipally-owned depots for removal by boat and rail. The contractors paid to the council all sums obtained by the sale of manure, so defraying the cost of the service. The committee obviously viewed refuse removal as a commercial proposition, and judged its success by ordinary business criteria. The cost of the service was regularly set against the sales revenue in simple profit-and-loss terms (although of course, there was always a loss). Typical of this attitude is the report of the superintendent inspector of scavengers, who observed in February 1862,

<sup>1</sup>LM, 15 Aug 1846, CMIA, 12 Aug 1846.

<sup>2</sup>CMIA, 5 Oct 1853.

<sup>3</sup>CMIA, 31 March 1854.

<sup>4</sup>LM, 8 Oct 1853.

<sup>5</sup>SNC, 24 Nov 1858, 22 Dec 1858; CMIA, 1 Jan 1859.

<sup>6</sup>SNC, 22 Dec 1858.

'The loss of this department depends a good deal upon the demand we may have for manure, during the former part of the year we have had a good demand, as a great deal of attention was paid to the sorting of the rubbish from the manure, and mixing the ashes, thus the farmers have been disposed to use more of it. I regret to say however that for the latter part of the year there has been a good deal of fault found with the quality of the manure, the rubbish not being sorted...and I hope there will be some improvement in future'<sup>1</sup>

The committee was not prepared to encourage an increase in the number of water closets because of the 'waste of water that would be thereby caused', and sought instead to perfect some method which would make ashpit cleansing less offensive, and to separate the disposal of 'house ashes' from 'night soil' so that the traditional 'deep and wet middenstead' could be abolished.<sup>2</sup> It believed that it had found a solution to its first aim in 1863, when a Dr. Bishop of Leeds established a company to make practical use of his patent deodorising and disinfecting powder. The committee proposed to the council that the Leeds Economic Sanitary Company should be awarded one of the contracts for cleansing the drainage district, and in October 1863, the company were allowed to take over the north and north east wards for one year.<sup>3</sup> After its apparent success in a limited area, the council agreed to dispense with its regular contractor, and accepted the company's tender for the whole district in September 1864.<sup>4</sup> But it seems that the company had underestimated the magnitude of the operation, and dissatisfaction was being voiced by the end of the year. Cleansing had never been organised on a systematic house-to-house basis, but was done either at the request of householders or on information received from the committee's inspectors. Thus the problem would have been even more serious than is immediately apparent, and the

<sup>1</sup>SNC, 5 Feb 1862.

<sup>2</sup>SNC, 12 June 1863.

<sup>3</sup>CM, 30 Sept 1863.

<sup>4</sup>CM, 30 Sept 1864.



situation was clearly desperate when the inspector reported that in December there had been '329, 2nd, 3rd and 4th applications for ash-pits to be cleansed from the inhabitants themselves'.<sup>1</sup> As a result, the committee resolved that unless the company immediately employed additional horses and carts, it would supply them at the company's expense, and in the following month it put its threat into action.<sup>2</sup> In fact, the company was on the verge of bankruptcy, for on 15 February 1865 it informed the committee that its bankers had refused to give any further advances, and so the committee was obliged to reassume the responsibility until a new contractor could be found.<sup>3</sup>

The timing of this crisis was, in a narrow sense, very unfortunate for the council, for at the height of its temporary difficulties, the town was inspected by one of the visiting inspectors of the medical department of the Privy Council.<sup>4</sup> But if the crisis was temporary it was also severe, for in the five months following the lapse of the company's contract, the inspector of night soil superintended the cleansing of 7,403 ashpits, only two thousand fewer than he had had cleansed in the whole of 1859.<sup>5</sup> Yet, despite the magnitude of the problem the number of horses and carts used were steadily cut down: sixty men and forty two horses and carts were at work in March, and this had been reduced to twenty nine, and 'the requisite number of men' by the beginning of June.<sup>6</sup> The committee decided to lease the work as soon as possible, and in September the council sealed an agreement with its previous contractors.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup>SNC, 6 Jan 1865.

<sup>2</sup>SNC, 7 Feb 1865.

<sup>3</sup>SNC, 15 Feb 1865.

<sup>4</sup>See chapter three.

<sup>5</sup> SNC, 3 March, 7 April, 5 May, 2 June, 7 July 1865. The number of ashpits cleansed in 1859 was 9,608, SNC, 4 Jan 1860.

<sup>6</sup>SNC, 3 March 1865, 2 June 1865.

<sup>7</sup> CM, 30 Sept 1865.

(2)

After the sewerage system, the waterworks was the next major undertaking in which the council became involved. Much has already been written about the history of the water supply,<sup>1</sup> and it is unnecessary here to provide yet another narrative of events, but for our purposes two issues are of importance in the period under review: namely the decision by the council to purchase the works, and the debate over the extension of the source of supply. In our discussion of the activities of the improvement commission, we noticed that the control of the water supply, which had been a public responsibility until the mid-eighteen thirties, passed into the ownership of a joint stock company in 1837 because the commissioners were unable to decide upon a solution to the problem of providing an adequate and unpolluted source of water. The question of whether the ownership of the waterworks should belong to a private or a public body was not finally decided by the 1837 act, but only deferred. For the act instituted an administrative compromise by creating a company which, while wholly owned by shareholders was controlled by a board on which half of its eighteen members were appointed by the council. Under the terms of the act, the council also had the right to purchase the company at any time after twelve years, that is after July 1849.<sup>2</sup> The ownership issue was finally decided in 1852, when the council exercised its option under the waterworks acts of 1837 and 1847<sup>3</sup> and bought out the shareholders, so

<sup>1</sup>See: J. Toft, chapter nine; D. Fraser, 'The politics of Leeds water', Publications of the Thoresby Society, Miscellany, volume 15, part 1, 1970, pp. 50-70.

<sup>2</sup>An act for better supplying with water the town and neighbourhood of Leeds in the West Riding of the County of York. 1 Vict., cap. lxxxiii, clauses 50 and 51, and clause 157.

<sup>3</sup>10 and 11 Vict., cap. cclxii, clause 23 and clause 75.

converting the water supply into a municipal enterprise. This came about in circumstances which closely paralleled the situation which had lead to the creation of the hybrid company in 1837, namely a disagreement amongst both administrators and engineers over the most suitable source of supply for future needs. Indeed, as we shall see, this problem was a recurring theme in the history of the Leeds water supply throughout this period.

During the years of semi-private control, the company extended its operations considerably. In May 1842 it was supplying piped water to 3,000 houses, and by a decade later the number of houses connected to its mains was 22,732.<sup>1</sup> This rapid increase in customers was, by the mid forties, obliging the directors to consider extending the water catchment area to cope with future demand. Thus in 1846 they decided to apply for an act to enable the company to draw water from a source at Bramhope, which had been discovered in the course of the building of a railway tunnel there. The supply promised to be plentiful and it could be relatively cheaply fed into the company's existing reservoir at Eccup. This decision involved the company in a conflict both with the Leeds and Thirsk railway company, which, having discovered this source, proposed to seek parliamentary powers to exploit it itself, and with various property owners in the Bramhope area.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, the company was successful in its aim, and by the act of 1847 obtained the necessary authority to take water from Bramhope, build new works, and increase its share capital from £91,500 to £250,000.<sup>3</sup> But it did not take advantage of the Bramhope supply, for subsequent investigation revealed that the cost of doing so was greater than had been anticipated,

<sup>1</sup>LM, 16 Aug 1851.

<sup>2</sup>LM, 23 Jan 1847.

<sup>3</sup>10 and 11 Vict., cap. cclxii, clause 13.

and so the plan was abandoned.<sup>1</sup> But the problem created by growing demand remained, and in 1851 was exacerbated by a severe drought, which both reduced the quantity and purity of the water supplied to the town. The company thus found itself in a situation analagous to the situation of fifteen years before, and it commissioned various professional opinions as to the course it should take. J.W. Leather recommended the company to adopt the River Washburn as its new source but the plan was strongly opposed by a landowner whose acquiescence was essential. The directors had only approved Leather's proposals by a majority of one, and in May 1852 they were decisively rejected by a meeting of the shareholders.<sup>2</sup> Instead, the directors made an agreement with Lord Harewood to draw further quantities of water from the river Wharfe for a seven year period. This contract was ratified by the Leeds Waterworks (Wharfe Supply) Act of 1852.<sup>3</sup>

Meanwhile, the corporation had been considering the possibility of exercising its option to purchase the works. The question of the municipal ownership of public utilities, namely the water works and the two gas companies had first been raised by Edward Eddison in December 1847.<sup>4</sup> This proposal lay dormant until in January 1850 the council created a committee to consider purchasing these three enterprises as part of a plan for a new improvement act.<sup>5</sup> The committee reported at great length on the waterworks proposal in August of the following year. The report, drawn up by the town clerk, is an interesting document on account of the wide range of policy issues it

<sup>1</sup>HLRO, House of Lords Select Committee, Minutes of Evidence, vol.2, Session 1856. Leeds Waterworks bill, 17 April 1856.

<sup>2</sup>LM, 12 Aug 1854.

<sup>3</sup>15 Vict., cap. cii.

<sup>4</sup>CM, 1 Jan 1848; LM 1 Jan 1848.

<sup>5</sup>LM, 1 Jan 1850.

considered<sup>1</sup>

There were three choices available to provide the means of providing an adequate supply of water. Firstly, the necessary new works could be undertaken by the existing company; secondly the council, or a group of private individuals could apply to parliament for the formation of a second company; or, finally, the council could implement the provisions of the existing acts of parliament and purchase the present works. The objection to the first proposal was that the works could be carried out more cheaply by the council than by private enterprise, since the council could raise the necessary loans, on the evidence of past experience, at four percent, which was a lower level than that at which any private concern could borrow from the public. In the second place, the creation of another company was both unlikely and undesirable. In tactical terms, the council would be in a difficult position if it made such an application to parliament. The terms of purchase in the 1837 act had been reinserted in the act of 1847 without opposition, and because of the composition of the board of directors, a complaint by the council against the management of the company would be self-incriminating. In economic terms also, the creation of a second company under any ownership was undesirable. Resources would be needlessly duplicated, and in any case the second company could not achieve an extension of supply any more cheaply than the first. Furthermore, competition did not in this case result in an improved service to the consumer, but in costly competition between the rival companies. Or, equally undesirable, the result was collusion between them to benefit shareholders at the expense of the public.

<sup>1</sup>RBIA, 6 Aug 1851. E.P. Hennock, Fit and Proper Persons, p.205, states that the report was written by alderman Hope Shaw, but Shaw himself remarked that the report 'came substantially' from the town clerk: LM, 16 Aug 1851. The following paragraphs are a precis of its contents.

Conversely, it could be argued that,

'if there must be a monopoly, and no doubt there must, let it be placed in the hands of the government, or some public body responsible to the consumers'.

If this were to happen, in addition to the advantages already mentioned, the public ownership of the works would supplement the council's acknowledged policy of improving public health conditions. When the sewerage system was completed, the sewers would require regular cleansing, and the supply of water to an increasing number of houses could only lead to improved standards of personal hygiene. As alderman Hope Shaw observed,

'Tastes and habits of cleanliness in houses and persons did not grow up in men's minds, but must be created, fostered and encouraged, as most essential in a sanitary and moral point of view. Striking proofs had been given in official documents of the evils arising from want of water. Cholera had been traced directly to the want of good water in the dwellings of the poor. Well, then, was it not the duty of the municipal body to look to the welfare of the people they represented?'<sup>1</sup>

The discussion incidentally touched upon the question of the proper sphere of municipal enterprise. Although enthusiastic for the purchase and the benefit which it would entail for the community, Shaw did not advocate it as a 'welfare benefit' in the modern sense. He pointed out that,

'he would not wish the council to take the water supply, if it should prove a loss; but if it would only bear its own expenses, and pay its own way, then upon the grounds of policy and public duty the council ought to undertake it'.

The opposite view was expressed by another alderman, who distinguished clearly the roles of public and private initiative:

<sup>1</sup>LM, 16 Aug 1851.

'there was a broad distinction to be drawn between the supply of water to a town, and administering the ordinary duties of a town council, such as sewerage, police matters, lighting, paving, etc. A parallel had been attempted between the water supply and the sewerage; but there was this wide distinction - that the idea of profit had never been entertained as derivable from the construction of town sewers'<sup>1</sup>

In September 1851, the council voted by twenty to eleven, in favour of purchase, and this was completed in November 1852, at a cost of £227,417.<sup>2</sup>

The second half of the resolution which the council had approved in September was that the council should in addition,

'join with the...company in an application to parliament for powers to obtain the Washburn supply'<sup>3</sup>,

but as we have seen, subsequent events prevented this aim from being realised. Leather's advocacy of the Washburn received support from J.F. Bateman, who was the engineer responsible for the extensive water scheme which Manchester corporation were then undertaking, and C. Tilney, the Leeds borough surveyor.<sup>4</sup> Hope Shaw, who had proposed the motion for purchase in 1851, agreed with the engineers over the Washburn proposal, was still in favour of it three years later when the council was obliged to consider what course it should take to increase its sources of supply.<sup>5</sup>

On this occasion there was a lengthy debate over the relative merits of the Washburn and Skirfare schemes, which would be gravitational, and the extension of the existing Wharfe pumping scheme.<sup>6</sup> In

<sup>1</sup>LM, 16 Aug 1851.

<sup>2</sup>J. Mayhall, Annals of Yorkshire vol.1, 25 April 1852.

<sup>3</sup>LM, 25 Oct 1851.

<sup>4</sup>LM, loc.cit. For Bateman's role in the planning and execution of the waterworks of Manchester corporation, see: A.Redford, The History of Local Government in Manchester, vol.2, chapter 20, pp. 184-204.

<sup>5</sup>The debate was reported at great length in LM, 12 Aug 1854.

<sup>6</sup>The question was further complicated in discussion, by the suggestion made by the chairman of the waterworks committee that no-one could consider a 'little insignificant scheme like the Washburn', and his concentration upon the rival merits of the rivers Wharfe and Skirfare, upon which all the financial calculations were based.

his report of 1865, Dr. Hunter of the medical department of the Privy Council, stated flatly that, the town's water

'is obtained by pumping at Arthington, about ten miles north of Leeds, and was chosen as being the cheapest source, although it was generally admitted that the quality of the water at the Washburn and Skirfare was better'<sup>1</sup>

The finances of a new source of supply figured prominently in the report of the waterworks committee when the chairman presented it to the council. The report calculated that an extension of pumping from the Wharfe would produce a profit, whereas a gravitational scheme, because of the land purchase and reservoir construction costs entailed, would produce considerable losses for at least the first decade of its operation. But other issues were also involved. Pumping ensured that supply could be regulated according to demand, but of towns where the alternative method was employed, such as Manchester, Bolton, Sheffield, Derby and Nottingham, there was,

'not one where a gravitation scheme furnished an ample supply of water at all seasons'<sup>2</sup>

Moreover, gravitational projects involved the large scale storage of water, which resulted in fermentation taking place in warm weather. The relative purity of the water in the three rivers was also important, and the committee had commissioned an analysis which suggested that the Wharfe had no greater degree of impurity than the other sources. For the opposition, Hope Shaw reiterated his claim that the Washburn was a preferable source, claiming the authority of Bateman and Leather in his support. He also contested the validity of the chemical analysis of the rivers, on the common sense grounds that the growth of

<sup>1</sup>LM, 1 Dec 1865.

<sup>2</sup>LM, 12 Aug 1854. On the difficulties experienced in Manchester, see: Redford, loc.cit.



small towns and industry in Wharfedale were causing noticeable pollution already, and would do so increasingly in the future. The discussion was further complicated by the question of future demand. Shaw contended that the cost of pumping from the Wharfe would rise at a far greater rate than the cost of gravitational supply as the demand for water increased over time.

The council divided by twenty eight votes to seventeen in favour of the Wharfe supply, and it would seem that, overall, the financial advantages of this scheme created the majority in its support. In 1856 the council promoted an act to authorise the pumping of 2.5 million gallons a day from the river, and in 1862 a further act enabled the waterworks to take six million gallons daily.<sup>1</sup> By this time, there were growing complaints over the quality of the supply, for the reasons which Shaw had predicted eight years before, and as we shall see, the remedy which the council was obliged to adopt was that which he had proposed from the beginning.

## (3)

The history of the town hall is not a subject which requires detailed attention here, since it is well known as a 'study in civic pride'.<sup>2</sup> But two aspects of its planning are of importance in the present context: the financial significance of the decision, and the fact that the building was the product of public rather than private

<sup>1</sup>The Leeds Waterworks (Wharfe Supply) Act, 19 and 20 Vict., cap lxxx, clause three, and Leeds Waterworks Act, 25 Vict, cap. lii, clause two.

<sup>2</sup>A. Briggs, 'Leeds, a Study in Civic Pride', Victorian Cities, chapter 4.

enterprise. Council meetings took place in the Court House which had been built in 1811-13 under the provisions of the local act of 1809.<sup>1</sup> The question of enlarging the building was first raised by the council in 1845. After the improvement act had been passed the council had set up an office called the Board of Works which occupied rented premises in Park Square, and in 1845, after a change of ownership the council was required to pay a 'considerably advanced rent'. One councillor then suggested that the council should provide its own accommodation for its offices, and suggested that the court house should be extended to house not only the board of works, but the town clerk, the chief constable and the overseers as well. It was estimated that the total cost would not exceed £9,000.<sup>2</sup> Another councillor proposed that they should take advantage of the power to build a town hall contained in the improvement act, and erect a building 'befitting the present size and importance of the borough'.<sup>3</sup> The issue was reconsidered in August, but a decision was deferred until the estimates for the cost of Leather's sewerage scheme were ready, otherwise,

'by involving (sic) the burden of this present measure upon the borough, they might hereafter be unable to carry out the drainage without applying to parliament to make (sic) further loans'<sup>4</sup>

But two months later, the council discovered that it had no legal authority to alter the court house, as its ownership was vested in the magistrates, and in any case, the 1842 act did not sanction the use of the improvement rate for enlarging the courthouse.<sup>5</sup> The magistrates were in control of the building because when the local act of 1809 had been promoted during the regime of the unreformed corporation, the

<sup>1</sup>49 Geo III, cap cxxii.

<sup>2</sup>LM, 17 May 1845.

<sup>3</sup>CMIA, 13 Aug 1845.

<sup>4</sup>LM, 16 Aug 1845.

<sup>5</sup>CMIA, 29 Sept 1845; LM 4 Oct 1845.

office of justice and alderman were synonymous, and the separation of the council from the bench which came about under the Municipal Corporations act meant that the court house unambiguously became the property of the magistrates.<sup>1</sup>

The matter was not considered again until 1850, and by this time the need for a public hall of some description had aroused the interest of others besides the council. If the latter had decided that its present accommodation was 'inconvenient and ill adapted', many prominent citizens had become aware of the 'insufficiency of the public rooms of Leeds' when they had gathered to hear Richard Cobden speak in the town during his campaign for government economy.<sup>2</sup> At first it was proposed to build a hall by means of a joint stock company, and a public subscription list was opened.<sup>3</sup> By August 1850, the private promoters had raised £2,600 out of a proposed total of £15,000, and the rate of response was considered disappointing.<sup>4</sup> Despite the admonitions of the Leeds Mercury, that the inhabitants of Bradford intended to build a public hall, and purchase land for a park, the private appeal failed.<sup>5</sup> Less than half the required sum was eventually subscribed, and it appeared that the hall could only be built if the council adopted the scheme, and financed the building from the improvement rate.<sup>6</sup>

In September 1850, Edwin Eddison proposed that the council should erect a public hall at a cost of £20,000, but it was decided to defer the issue until after the municipal elections, to test the

<sup>1</sup>LM, 6 Sept 1851.

<sup>2</sup>LM, 3 Aug 1850

<sup>3</sup>loc.cit.

<sup>4</sup>loc.cit.

<sup>5</sup>LM, 17 Aug 1850

<sup>6</sup>LM, 21 Sept 1850.

opinion of the electorate.<sup>1</sup> There appears to have been no opposition from the electors and in January 1851 the council appointed a committee to consider the desirability of building a town hall and municipal offices.<sup>2</sup> The committee reported that this could be achieved for £45,000, but the council decided to delay a formal vote until the committee could confer with the magistrates over the sale of the court house and the transfer of judicial business to the proposed municipal buildings.<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, at this time there was a distinct animosity between the council and the magistrates, which was largely the result of their conflicting claims over the administration of the borough prison. The magistrates were in a strong negotiating position, because of the terms of the 1809 act, and no agreement had been reached by September, and the council decided to erect a building for its own use only for £22,000.<sup>4</sup> In May 1852, the magistrates finally decided to accept the council's offer, and a further £13,000 was granted to provide the necessary extra facilities.<sup>5</sup> On July 25, 1853 the council sealed a contract to build the town hall for a sum of £41,835.<sup>6</sup>

The subsequent vicissitudes of the building of the town hall in the years between 1853 and 1858 need not be repeated. As Professor Briggs has observed 'pride was having to be paid for in good hard cash',<sup>7</sup> and far more indeed than had been originally envisaged. The scheme was at no time unanimously popular in the council, and

<sup>1</sup>CMIA, 30 Sept 1850; LM 5 Oct 1850.

<sup>2</sup>CM, 1 Jan 1851.

<sup>3</sup>CM, 9 July 1851.

<sup>4</sup>LM, 12 July, 9 Aug 1851; CM, 1 Sept 1851.

<sup>5</sup>CM, 12 May 1852. The agreement was ratified by clauses 20 to 22, and Schedules (B) and (C) of the 1856 improvement act. The council obtained the power to sell the court house by clause 19 of the act.

<sup>6</sup>CM, 25 July 1853.

<sup>7</sup>Briggs, op.cit., p. 166.

indeed voting figures reveal that at all stages of its planning there was a persistent and significantly large minority of council members in opposition. There were never less than a dozen opponents,<sup>1</sup> and their case contained two themes. The most straightforward was a simple, and fully justified disbelief that the ultimate cost of building would be as little as its supporters suggested. The fact that the pre-construction estimates rose from £22,000 to nearly £42,000 in less than two years<sup>2</sup> could only confirm such distrust, and in one sense it is fortunate that no-one could have contemplated that the final cost in 1858 would be £122,000.<sup>3</sup> But council members were also naturally aware that the town hall was only one project amongst the many for which the council had taken on responsibility, and it could hardly be classed as one of the most urgent. Even before the committee had presented its initial plans and estimates, one alderman thought that,

'considering the great amount of money they were borrowing continually, they ought to pause. They were now owing £110,000, the sewerage would cost £40,000 more, and if they expended £40,000 in this object, the amount would be nearly £200,000, making it something more than a borough debt - almost a National Debt'<sup>4</sup>

In fact, the debt incurred to build the town hall was liquidated, literally, it could be said, by the profits from the council's most remunerative undertaking. In 1872 the town clerk told a Commons'

<sup>1</sup>Vote to appoint a committee of enquiry, Ayes 24, Noes 12; CM, 1 Jan 1851;  
Vote to adopt the report, Ayes 23, Noes 18; CM, 29 Sept 1851;  
Vote to abandon the project, Ayes 14, Noes 28; CM, 11 Feb 1852;  
Vote to grant the committee a further £13,000, Ayes 21, Noes 15;  
CM, 29 May 1852;

First vote on proposed tower, Ayes 20, Noes 27, CM, 30 Sept 1853.

<sup>2</sup>CM, 1 Sept 1851, 25 July 1851.

<sup>3</sup>Briggs, *op.cit.*, p.182-3.

<sup>4</sup>LM, 17 May 1851.

Select Committee that,

'we have built the town hall out of the profits of the water within twelve years; or at least we paid £120,000 to the credit of the borough fund out of the water'<sup>1</sup>

We shall consider the question of finance and debt in a subsequent chapter.

Although by the eighteen thirties there was widespread recognition of the need for public parks in urban districts, little was achieved in most towns until some years later.<sup>2</sup> In 1845 the Royal Commission on the State of Large Towns observed that,

'the great towns of Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham and Leeds, and very many others, have at present no public walks,'<sup>3</sup>

and although at this very time, Manchester was acquiring several of them, no such initiative was taken in Leeds until the following decade. Upto this time, the central urban area of the borough had only those open spaces which were unenclosed common lands (known as 'moors') in the townships of Leeds, Hunslet and Holbeck. There was also a privately-owned 'zoological and botanical garden' in Headingley, but it was of little value in any sense, since

'perhaps in no small degree arising from the remoteness of their situation from the great bulk of the population (it has) from the first been in circumstances of exigency, which the public has never adequately met'<sup>4</sup>

The Leeds Mercury had proposed that the garden be purchased by public subscription, but this scheme came to nothing as the garden was sold privately and remained as 'well worthy of the notice of all who wish a

<sup>1</sup>HLRO, Select Committee of the House of Commons, Evidence 1872, I, volume 39, 25 April 1872, f.46.

<sup>2</sup>A. Redford, The History of Local Government in Manchester, vol. 2, pp. 213-318.

<sup>3</sup>Report of the Royal Commission on the State of Large Towns and Populous Districts, (1845), vol. 2, p.68.

<sup>4</sup>LM, 2 May 1846.

pleasant drive or walk' until it was sold as building ground in 1858.<sup>1</sup>

It was the threat of a similar fate for Woodhouse Moor which finally caused it to be taken into public ownership. No provision was made in the 1842 improvement act for the municipal creation of parks, but a few years after, the continuing expansion of the towns began to raise doubts over the future of the remaining vestiges of common land. At a council meeting in August 1845,

'a conversation arose incidentally relative to Woodhouse moor.. ..(It) had been suggested by Mr. Tottie that the council should purchase an interest in it, by which means they would be able to prevent its enclosure at any future time. Several members, however, thought that if the subject were sufficiently attended to by the council, an enclosure, if it were ever attempted, might be prevented without making the purchase alluded to'<sup>2</sup>

After this brief and inconclusive reference, the matter was left in abeyance for five years. The moor was a sixty acre common on the north west boundary of Leeds township which had long been used for recreation, military exercises, election meetings and other public events. Although used without hinderance by the public, it in fact remained in the ownership of the lords of the manor, and in 1850 the lords offered a piece of land in the south east corner of the moor for sale for speculative building.<sup>3</sup> The highway surveyors called a public meeting to protest at the lords' claim that they possessed the right to dispose of the land as they wished. The attendance was 'very meagre' but contained at least seven council members, and the meeting created a committee to discuss the situation with the lords of the manor.<sup>4</sup> No

<sup>1</sup>LM, 12 Oct 1844; K.J. Bonser and H. Nichols, Printed maps and plans of Leeds, 1711-1900, Publications of the Thoresby Society, vol. XLVII, No.106, 1958, p. xviii.

<sup>2</sup>LM, 23 Aug 1845.

<sup>3</sup>LM, 5 Oct 1850.

<sup>4</sup>ibid.

further report of the committee's activities appeared in the press, and there is no evidence of renewed interest in the future of the moor until 1854. It became known that the lords were now intending to allow a terrace of houses to be built on the north side. A public meeting was again convened, and considerable opposition expressed at the decision. Meanwhile, the council had already created a committee to consider the purchase of the moor, and twelve months later it confirmed provisional agreements for the purchase of both Woodhouse and Holbeck moors the former for £3,000 and the latter for £1,000.<sup>1</sup> The council later obtained an option for the purchase of Hunslet moor for £1,200, and since it required parliamentary sanction to ratify these proposed purchases, provisions for this purpose were inserted into the new improvement bill.<sup>2</sup>

But the council's proposal to charge the cost of purchasing the moors upon the borough was strongly opposed by the inhabitants of Bramley who contested the decision before the parliamentary select committee.<sup>3</sup> The result of the opposition was that the council obtained the right of purchase of Woodhouse moor only, and the other two moors were to be purchased only at the request of a requisition presented from a public meeting of the inhabitants of the respective townships. Similar provisions also applied in the case of any other township which wished to acquire recreation grounds.<sup>4</sup> In the event, these rights were not exercised, and Woodhouse moor remained the only municipal open space until the purchase of part of the Roundhay Park estate in 1871.

<sup>1</sup>CM, 29 Sept 1854, 28 Sept 1855.

<sup>2</sup>LM, 22 Dec 1855.

<sup>3</sup>LM, 29 Dec 1855; HLRO, House of Commons Select Committees on Private Bills (Group H), vol. 31. Evidence 1856. Group LI, 18 April 1856, ff 65-89.

<sup>4</sup>1856 improvement act, clauses 8-12.



When the council assumed responsibility for the markets, and obtained powers to create new ones, under the 1842 act, it had been apparent for some time that the existing facilities were inadequate. The Leeds Mercury had claimed in 1840 that,

'it is notorious to all our readers, that for fair and market accommodation there is not a town in the kingdom in so bad a condition as Leeds'<sup>1</sup>

Except for the cloth halls, there were no market places in the town apart from those traditionally held in the public streets until the eighteen twenties. But this decade witnessed the beginnings of both private and public enterprise in this field. In 1823 the improvement commission provided a public market at Vicar's croft, and within the next few years it was complemented by several joint-stock company ventures. A 'Bazaar, New Shambles and Fish Market' opened in 1826, the Central Market opened its doors in the following year, and a Corn Exchange began business in 1828.<sup>2</sup> But by the eighteen forties both the new markets and the traditional ones were the cause of complaint. Kirkgate market had become too small, the corn exchange, in one opinion at least, was an 'unsightly and illappropriated property',<sup>3</sup> and the holding of street markets, for fruit and vegetables in Briggate, and for horses in the Upper Headrow, especially, were the cause of traffic congestion, 'accident, and even loss of life'.<sup>4</sup> The attention which the press gave to the market situation at this time was probably intended to influence the provisions of the new improvement bill, and when the council took on the role of improvement commission it quickly

<sup>1</sup>LM, 5 Sept 1840.

<sup>2</sup>W. White, History, Gazetteer, and Directory of the West Riding of Yorkshire, (1837) p. 509.

<sup>3</sup>LM, 3 Feb 1844.

<sup>4</sup>LM, 18 Dec 1841.

set about to remedy the worst deficiencies. In January 1843 the council approved its market committee's scheme to enlarge Kirkgate market by the demolition of adjacent property, to more than double the area available.<sup>1</sup> The estimated cost was £15,000 but for reasons we shall examine in another part of this chapter, the ultimate cost was considerably greater. Indeed, by May 1846, the council had borrowed £25,000 to improve this market alone.<sup>2</sup> In the previous year the annoyance caused by the street horse and cattle markets had been removed. The council rented a field on the north west side of the town, on the edge of the built-up area to provide a site for the horse and cattle fairs, and forbade sales to take place elsewhere.<sup>3</sup>

The markets were not only a public service, but a source of revenue to the corporation. Under the improvement commission, tolls and stall rents had been levied at the Kirkgate market, and this practice was sanctioned by the 1842 act. Neither the commission nor the council operated the market directly, but let it on an annual lease by public auction. Thus the value of market improvements had a real and immediate return: in 1839 the lease was sold for £1,405 and ten years later it brought £2,500.<sup>4</sup> There were, therefore, tangible reasons why the council should wish to protect its market franchise from possible competition. One minor challenge, a private market established on an open ground in the town centre, in 1843 was easily defeated,<sup>5</sup> but a more serious threat came a decade later. In 1850, the council had considered the possibility of providing a fully-equipped cattle market,

<sup>1</sup>CMIA, 8 Jan 1843; RBIA 18 Jan 1843.

<sup>2</sup>LM, 30 May 1846.

<sup>3</sup>CMIA, 8 Oct 1845.

<sup>4</sup>LM, 16 May 1840, 12 May, 19 May 1849.

<sup>5</sup>CMIA, 14 June 1843.

and of covering over part of Kirkgate market, but allowed both plans to lapse.<sup>1</sup> But then in 1852, the Central Market Company promoted a bill to enlarge its accommodation, and the council decided to fight the bill before the Select Committee.<sup>2</sup> It did not have a very strong case, as the Central Market Company clearly offered superior facilities, and in order to frustrate the company's intentions it was necessary for the council to make two pledges to the Select Committee. These were, firstly, to build a covered market of its own, and secondly, to provide a proper cattle market and remove such dealings permanently from the Kirkgate site.<sup>3</sup> In accordance with the second of these promises, a cattle market site was purchased for £5,200 on 7 July 1853, and a maximum of £2,500 was granted for fittings.<sup>4</sup> In January of the following year, the council approved a plan to build an iron and glass structure covering approximately four thousand square yards on part of Kirkgate market at a cost of nearly £14,000.<sup>5</sup>

The final major investment in market facilities before 1865, was sanctioned in March 1859 when the council decided to purchase a site for the erection of a corn exchange.<sup>6</sup> Active dissatisfaction with the joint-stock owned market had been expressed by a number of factors millers and maltsters who petitioned the council in March 1856, asking it to provide a municipal exchange.<sup>7</sup> But nothing was done until three

<sup>1</sup>CMIA, 13 Feb 1850.

<sup>2</sup>CMIA, 1 Jan 1853; Parliamentary committee minutes, 27 Jan 1853; CMIA, 9 Feb 1853.

<sup>3</sup>RBIA, 4 Aug 1853; HLRO, House of Lords Select Committee, Minutes of Evidence vol.2, Session 1856 (Leeds Improvement Bill), f.4; J. Mayhall, Annals of Yorkshire, vol.2, p.633.

<sup>4</sup>CMIA, 7 July, 10 Aug 1853.

<sup>5</sup>RBIA, 4 Aug 1853; CMIA, 16 Jan 1854.

<sup>6</sup>CMIA, 31 March 1859.

<sup>7</sup>CMIA, 31 March 1856.

years later, when the council decided to buy out the existing shareholders, and build new premises on an estate which it purchased from the trustees of the grammar school.<sup>1</sup> The architect chosen was Broderick, the designer of the town hall, and in May 1861 the first contracts for building were let.<sup>2</sup> The completed structure, 'a magnificent building of elliptical shape' cost £32,292.<sup>3</sup>

The other amenities which the council provided in the eighteen forties were the prison and the new burial grounds. Little need be said of them here: the former has greater significance in the history of local politics, and the latter in the lengthy annals of conflict between church and dissent in the nineteenth century. The provision of municipal cemeteries was a well-established item on the agenda of public health reform in the eighteen forties. Indictments of the aesthetic and sanitary offence occasioned by existing parochial graveyards can be found in several contemporary works. The problem was caused partly by the increase in the number of deaths which was a natural result of urban growth, and partly from the financial difficulties caused by the rivalry between the established church and non conformity. Because of the inadequacy of parochial burial grounds, a vestry meeting was called in December 1841 to authorise the levy of a church rate to finance the purchase of additional land, but the non-conformists secured the rejection of the motion.<sup>4</sup> This caused

'the two great interests in the town, churchmen and dissenters, to combine for the purpose of providing additional burial grounds on the most satisfactory terms, for all parties'<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>CMIA, 10 Aug 1859.

<sup>2</sup>CM, 8 May 1861.

<sup>3</sup>Royal Commission on Market Rights and Tolls, (1889), volume IV, p.433, 1,(7) and p.434, 5,(d).

<sup>4</sup>LM, 18 Dec 1841.

<sup>5</sup>RBIA, 12 June 1851.

A burial bill was prepared, and it became law on the same date as the improvement act. Its administration was vested in the town council.<sup>1</sup> In 1843 the vicar of Leeds informed the council that accommodation in the parish grounds would be exhausted within a few months, and thus in August the council purchased nine and a quarter acres in Hunslet, and in the following month, sixteen and a half acres in Leeds township, to provide municipal cemeteries.<sup>2</sup> By May 1846, the council had borrowed a total of £11,000 for this purpose.<sup>3</sup>

Although the unreformed corporation, in its role as the ex officio magistrates had exclusive criminal jurisdiction within the borough, it possessed no prison, and on committal, offenders were sent to gaols in Wakefield and York.<sup>4</sup> This arrangement continued after 1835. But when, in 1837, the West Riding justices opened negotiations with the council over its contribution towards the cost of rebuilding the female prison at Wakefield, the council decided to consider providing the borough with its own gaol.<sup>5</sup> This became a subject of contention between the liberals and Tories on the council, and the decision to build a prison was not finally made until May 1842.<sup>6</sup> In March 1844, the council authorised the gaol committee to implement a design which would cost £40,560.<sup>7</sup> It was completed in July 1847, and cost £43,000,<sup>8</sup> but before it was finished, an unexpected complication arose.

<sup>1</sup>An act for providing additional Burial Grounds in the Parish of Leeds in the West Riding of the County of York, 5 and 6 Vict., c. ciii.

<sup>2</sup>CMIA, 9 Aug, 27 Sept 1843.

<sup>3</sup>RBIA, 25 May 1846.

<sup>4</sup>First Report of the Commissioners appointed to enquire into the municipal corporations in England and Wales, 1835 (116), XXVI, p.1621, paragraph 36.

<sup>5</sup>CM, 20 March 1837.

<sup>6</sup>CM, 4 May 1842.

<sup>7</sup>CM, 27 March 1844.

<sup>8</sup>LM, 7 Oct 1847; J. Mayhall, Annals of Yorkshire, vol.1, July 1847.

In December 1846, the justices claimed the right to appoint the governor, chaplain, surgeon and other prison officers, and the council instructed the town clerk to obtain counsel's opinion.<sup>1</sup> On the advice of the borough recorder, the council decided to make the appointments, on the understanding that the bench, if it wished to press its claim, would apply for a writ quo warranto, so that the respective rights could be judicially determined.<sup>2</sup> The magistrates adopted this course of action, and in June 1847 the court of Queen's Bench decided in their favour.<sup>3</sup> This division of responsibility, where the council was obliged to pay for expenditure sanctioned by the magistrates, led to occasional frictions which did nothing to increase the harmony between the two bodies. This situation continued until 1877, when the Prisons Act transferred the ownership of the gaol, and responsibility for all its expenses to the central government.<sup>4</sup>

By the eighteen forties, six bridges had been built across the river Aire. The most central and most important was Leeds bridge, which was maintained jointly by the council and the West Riding magistrates. During the eighteen twenties and thirties, Wellington, Monk, and Victoria bridges had been built to the west, and Crown Point and the Leeds and Hunslet Suspension bridges built to the east of Leeds bridge. These five were privately owned, toll-charging bridges, and in the early forties hopes were being voiced that they would be made free. The improvement act included provisions to allow the council to treat with the trustees of the bridge companies in order to

<sup>1</sup>CM, 7 Dec 1846, 10 Feb 1847.

<sup>2</sup>LM, 16 Jan, 20 March 1847.

<sup>3</sup>CM, 8 June 1847; J. Mayhall, Annals of Yorkshire, vol. 1, 10 June 1847.

<sup>4</sup>40 and 41 Vict., ch.21, clauses 4 and 5.

remove the tolls,<sup>1</sup> and in March 1846 the council created a committee to report on the costs involved in doing this.<sup>2</sup> In the following year the clerk to the board of works attended the annual leasing of the Wellington bridge tolls, and exercising the authority of the council, made an offer of £881 for the lease.<sup>3</sup> Under the terms of the Wellington bridge act, tolls on pedestrians were to cease so long as the other tolls were sufficient to yield five percent upon the debt of the company, and the sum which the clerk bid represented this amount. The trustees, however, were able to let the tolls for £960 to an independent bidder, and so, conveniently, the council was able to free the bridge to pedestrians at no cost to itself.<sup>4</sup> The council continued to bid the minimum sum necessary for this purpose at each annual leasing, and the trustees were always able to obtain a higher private offer, and thus the bridge remained partially free thereafter.<sup>5</sup>

There was notably less enthusiasm in the council when it appeared that the abolition of toll charges would involve actual expenditure. In 1851 a petition was received from the working class residents of the east ward, asking the council to free the Leeds and Hunslet suspension bridge. The toll bridge committee reported that the cost would be about £1,200, and would be a valuable service, since about three quarters of the income from pedestrians was derived from the working class users of the bridge

'who are thus subjected to a local and vexatious impost before they are at liberty to sell their labour in the best market'.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup>1842 act, clause 131.

<sup>2</sup>CMIA, 30 March 1846.

<sup>3</sup>CMIA, 11 Aug 1847; LM, 24 July 1847.

<sup>4</sup>LM, 28 Aug 1847.

<sup>5</sup>CMIA, 26 May 1848, 9 July 1851.

<sup>6</sup>RBIA, 31 March 1851.

Two east-end firms were prepared to contribute part of the cost, if the council were willing to provide the larger part, but the recommendation of the committee was decisively rejected.<sup>1</sup>

Another committee reconsidered the question of removing tolls in 1856, but rejected the possibility on two grounds. It calculated that the cost of achieving free passage for all types of traffic would be about £28,000, which was a sufficient objection in itself. But furthermore, because of the provisions of the 1842 act, despite the fact that general benefit would be conferred by the abolition of tolls, the cost would nevertheless be the responsibility of Leeds township alone.<sup>2</sup> No further action was taken until 1859, when the Leeds and Hunslet bridge company promoted a bill to allow an extension to the period during which it could levy tolls. The parliamentary committee of the council decided to watch the progress of the bill, and was successful in obtaining a clause which allowed the council to redeem the tolls.<sup>3</sup> The cost of redemption was to be borne by both Leeds and Hunslet townships, with the former contributing two thirds of the sum. In exchange for this payment to settle the 'debts, claims and demands' of the trustees the council was to become responsible for the repair and maintenance of the bridge, that is, in effect it became municipal property.<sup>4</sup> In January 1860, the council voted the requisite sum of £980 and the bridge became free, and passed into municipal ownership.

<sup>1</sup>Wilkinson and Co. and Holdsworth and Co. were prepared to give a total of £300. The motion was rejected by 28 votes to seven.

<sup>2</sup>RBIA, ibid; and 1842 act, clause 131.

<sup>3</sup>Parliamentary Committee minutes, 1 March 1859.

<sup>4</sup>The Leeds and Hunslet Turnpike Road Act, 22 and 23 Vict. cap. lxxxvi, clauses 31 and 32.



(4)

One important feature of the 1842 improvement act was the provisions which it contained to give the council power to regulate the construction of new streets and houses. But unfortunately, it appears that for twenty years the desire to oblige compliance was only intermittently present. Technically, the authority to supervise the building regulations was delegated to the streets and sewerage committee, but in practice it gave the matter very little attention. Before it created a sub committee to deal specifically with the review of building plans in 1862, the occasional inspection of designs was usually assigned to an ad hoc group of committee members, but even this expedient was taken only infrequently. For example, the committee considered seven building applications in 1854, three in 1855, none in 1856, one in 1857, none in 1858, 1859 and 1860, and only one in 1861.<sup>1</sup> It would seem that builders and property owners only approached the committee if they hoped to gain exemption from the specific provisions of the improvement act, although such exceptions were never in fact approved.<sup>2</sup> Otherwise, property developers were presumably left to their own devices. In 1866, one informed observer claimed that,

'if the cottage speculator chooses to disregard such regulations, he may do so with impunity. No summons has been issued for many years for any breach of building regulations. The authorities are great friends of 'moral suasion' pure and simple'<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Streets and Sewerage committee minutes, 3 Feb, 17 March, 7 April, 5 May, 19 May, 1 Dec, 15 Dec 1854; 16 Feb, 2 March 1855; 30 Jan 1857; 30 May 1862. The minutes refer to applications to erect 'houses' or 'buildings' and do not specify the numbers involved, naming only the streets where they are to be constructed.

<sup>2</sup>The committee refused to sanction five plans, and agreed to five after revisions.

<sup>3</sup>J. Hole, The Homes of the Working Classes, p.129.

If he was not strictly correct in objecting that the council had done little or nothing to enforce this most important aspect of environmental control, it would be pedantic to allow criticism on this account. For prior to 1865, there are only three recorded instances of the sanctions of the 1842 act being invoked. Perhaps even more significant than their paucity is their dating. The first case happened in February 1843, that is, at the time when Dr. Baker was still chairman of the streets committee.<sup>1</sup> The other two occurred in October 1863, after the creation of the building clauses sub-committee.<sup>2</sup> One reason for the council's unwillingness to act arose from the limitations of the improvement act. Under its provisions,

'the surveyor might object to have a house built contrary to his instructions, but he could not compel obedience; and the only resource he had was the rather cumbersome one of pulling down the house'<sup>3</sup>

Understandably, the council might wish to avoid invoking so extreme a penalty, but this could have been remedied by having this section of the act amended. Indeed, all the clauses applicable to buildings in the 1842 act remained unchanged until the improvement act of 1866. Thus nothing was done in the intervening quarter of a century to extend the scope of these regulations, which devised in the early years of the movement of public health reform, seemed increasingly inadequate with the passing of time. No change was made in the rules governing the occupancy of cellar dwellings,<sup>4</sup> nor in the construction of working class housing. If the council had obtained the necessary power 'to prevent houses being built on unhealthy principles' in the 1842 act, it

<sup>1</sup>CMIA, 8 Feb 1843.

<sup>2</sup>CM, 7 Oct 1863. The sub committee was appointed on 25 April 1862, (see SS cttee of that date).

<sup>3</sup>LM, 9 Feb 1865.

<sup>4</sup>This was commented upon by Dr. Hunter in his report to the medical department of the Privy Council in 1865. See: LM, 5 Dec 1865.

nevertheless did nothing to restrain the erection of back-to-back houses.

'the most unhealthy buildings which human perversity ever invented, with the rapidity of construction and ingenuity of disorder unequalled since the confusion of the tongues at Babel'<sup>1</sup>

Similarly, even if it had wished, it had no control over the design of new streets except to ensure that they were at least thirty feet wide.

Thus,

'there have not been a dozen straight streets of any great length laid out within the last thirty years, though the population has increased sixty seven percent in that period.'<sup>2</sup>

This last point is of great importance. In the two decades which elapsed between the 1842 act and the creation of the sub committee in 1862, 11,982 houses had been added to the housing stock of the borough, an increase of 35 per cent. There is of course no reason to suppose that the motivation of speculative builders, and the results of their activities were any different in these decades than the aims and their consequences which had been castigated by Dr. Baker in the early eighteen forties. Hence in this important sphere of local government policy, little effective action was taken before 1866, with no reason other than the negligence of the council.

One of the major deliterious influences upon the environment in Leeds, as in other industrial towns was the prevalence of atmospheric pollution caused by industrial smoke. The harmful effects produced by the almost universal use of coal in industrial processes in the

'one hundred and seventy mills and manufactories in the different parts of the borough'<sup>3</sup>

were made worse by the intermingling of factories with houses, offices

<sup>1</sup>LM, 20 Nov 1859.

<sup>2</sup>J. Hole, op. cit., p.142.

<sup>3</sup>LM, 13 April 1844.

and shops, as manufacturers had no legal restraints upon their choice of location. For example, in the mid eighteen sixties the smoke inspector noted that,

'one of the worst cases arises from (a firm)...situated in a yard in Briggate'<sup>1</sup>;

and he could do no more than enter an ineffectual protest that one individual was

'building premises to carry on the trade of a tobacco pipe maker, near to Burley street, a worse position for such a business could hardly be selected, as the smoke is sure to be a very great nuisance to the people in the vicinity'<sup>2</sup>

Moreover, the town was unfortunate in this sense insofar that two major industries, cloth dyeing and the iron trades which were principal offenders were successful in resisting any legal attempt to control the volume of smoke they produced. We have already mentioned that the location of industry had a noticeable impact upon the residential geography of Leeds from the eighteen twenties, and this influence did not diminish as the century advanced.

A major expression of public, or at least middle-class opinion came in January 1842 when a public meeting on the 'smoke nuisance' was organised by some of the leading inhabitants.<sup>3</sup> Its purpose was to act as a forum at which seven patentees of smoke consuming apparatus were present to discuss the utility of their equipment with a number of local manufacturers.<sup>4</sup> On this occasion a smoke prevention committee was established to examine the various methods of smoke consumption, and to 'report thereon from time to time to the subscribers and the public'.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Sub Scavenging and Nuisance (Smoke) Cttee minutes, 3 June 1864.

<sup>2</sup>Sub SN(S)C, 5 May 1865.

<sup>3</sup>LM, 15 Jan 1844.

<sup>4</sup>The patentees were from Leeds, Manchester (2), Cornwall, London, Edinburgh and Heywood, (Lancs.).

<sup>5</sup>LM, 15 Jan 1844.

But the meeting had a more important short-term aim, namely, to influence the contents of the new improvement bill. As we have explained in the previous chapter, the smoke abatement clauses were the subject of considerable opposition from the clothdyers, with the result that they gained practical immunity from prosecution in the revised clauses. The effectiveness of the smoke clauses in the improvement act were further reduced when in October 1843 the magistrates dismissed a prosecution brought by the council.<sup>1</sup> Many manufacturers then apparently regarded the provisions as a dead letter, and took no further steps to control their output of smoke.<sup>2</sup>

In January of the following year the smoke committee, after spending two years in investigations, published its report, recommending fifteen methods as viable ones. At its meeting it complained of the dilatoriness of manufacturers, and urged the council to employ an inspector to ensure that the 1842 act was 'vigilantly enforced'.<sup>3</sup> The council agreed to the appointment of an inspector,<sup>4</sup> but his efforts received little sympathy from the magistrates, and when he died in 1846, the office lapsed. It required a further concerted effort on the part of Edward Eddison, a councillor and secretary to the smoke committee, and the committee itself before the council agreed to employ a replacement.<sup>5</sup> The scavenging and nuisance committee favoured a policy of

<sup>1</sup>On the ground that the evidence against the manufacturer was not 'disinterested', LM 6 Jan 1844.

<sup>2</sup>LM, 6 Jan 1844.

<sup>3</sup>LM, 6 Jan 1844.

<sup>4</sup>CMIA, 14 Aug 1844.

<sup>5</sup>CMIA, 14 Feb 1849, when a committee was appointed to consider the appointment of a smoke inspector. On 14 Jan, a petition signed by 423 'owners of property and inhabitants' in favour of the appointment was presented, but the motion lost by 19 votes to 18, (CMIA, 14 Jan 1850), as did a second attempt in February (CMIA, 13 Feb 1850). The inspector was not appointed until 1853, (CMIA, 21 Feb, 31 March 1853).

conciliation, which was only a partial success. Firms which attracted the disapproval of the inspector were invited to attend committee meetings, and it seems that for a short period persuasion was effective, but by the winter of 1855 complaints were made that 'reform now decidedly flags'<sup>1</sup>. In 1856 the council received a further set-back in its attempts to control smoke pollution, when the House of Lords select committee seriously modified the smoke clauses in the new improvement bill.<sup>2</sup> As in 1842, the cloth dyers mounted parliamentary opposition, and were again successful, having made what the chairman referred to as 'a very strong case'<sup>3</sup>. But furthermore, the iron masters adopted the dyers' tactics, and gained express exemption from the smoke clauses. Although the council had not previously allowed prosecutions against the iron trade, there now existed a legal prohibition against interference.<sup>4</sup> The result was predictable: as the smoke inspector observed in 1858,

'the dense smoke complained of is principally made by those trades which are said to be exempt from the late amended act'<sup>5</sup>

By 1861, the situation had deteriorated further, on the admission of the inspector himself, and in 1865 the physician to the House of Recovery contended that

'it is notorious that any attempts to control the smoke and other nuisances in Leeds are a mere pretence, and indeed, rather hollow even for a pretence'<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup>LM, 10, 17 Feb 1855.

<sup>2</sup>HLRO, House of Lords Select Committee, Minutes of Evidence vol.2 session 1856 (on Leeds Improvement Bill), 16 June.

<sup>3</sup>ibid., f.153.

<sup>4</sup>ibid., f.24. The select committee did not think it justifiable to impose restrictions upon the Leeds iron manufacturers, since the government 'in a general bill which they have introduced into parliament have excepted the whole of the manufacturers of iron in the U.K. from that restriction'. ibid., f.155.

<sup>5</sup>Sub SN(S)C, 27 Oct 1858.

<sup>6</sup>LM, 16 Sept 1865.

It is important to decide how far such complaints are justified. Certainly, if the number of prosecutions is taken as an index of vigilance, the conclusions can hardly be encouraging. Between August 1857 and December 1861, nineteen firms had been fined the statutory forty shillings<sup>1</sup> but taken alone, this evidence is unduly pessimistic. As we have observed, the justices were not favourable to prosecutions of this kind, and allowed the plaintiffs considerable latitude. For example, in November 1861 the smoke inspector informed the committee that the magistrates had,

'repeatedly adjourned the cases at the request of the defendants'

and for this reason he had not taken any proceedings in the other outstanding cases.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, since an important sector of local industry was outside the operation of the smoke clauses, the conciliatory manner of the committee was the only possible approach.<sup>3</sup> It would however be incorrect to infer that the council itself was wholly in favour of the strict application of sanctions against delinquent manufacturers. The employment of a permanent smoke inspector had only been achieved through the persistence of one councillor, and the frequent application of pressure from outside the council chamber, and there is no evidence to suggest that attitudes changed in the following years. Indeed, two items of evidence confirm this interpretation. A clause in the 1856 improvement act prevented the inspector from initiating prosecutions except with permission from the council,<sup>4</sup> which was presumably intended to restrain any over-zealous official. In

<sup>1</sup>Sub SN(S)C, 14 Oct 1857, 28 April, 28 July, 27 Oct, 1858, 26 Jan, 25 May 1859, 23 Sept 1861.

<sup>2</sup>Sub SN(S)C, 25 Nov 1861.

<sup>3</sup>It culminated in a 'substantial tea and desert' provided in the town hall for five hundred enginemen and stokers, paid for by the committee chairman and several others; Sub SN(S)C, 4 March 1864.

<sup>4</sup>1856 act, clause 30.

answer to public criticism over the prevalence of smoke pollution, the council argued, admittedly with some justification, that its power to enforce smoke consumption was inhibited by the restrictions of the existing improvement acts. But such protestations were clearly convenient excuses, for when the text of the new improvement bill became public in 1865, it was discovered that the council did not propose to acquire any additional powers for this purpose.<sup>1</sup> But public opinion again reasserted itself, and in February 1866 a deputation presented its case to the council,

'who were scarcely prepared for so strong an opinion in condemnation of their wilful inertia'.

The reconstituted smoke committee employed legal representation to promote its draft clause before the House of Commons' select committee, and secured their insertion into the improvement bill.<sup>2</sup> This was not wholly successful, for again the dyers and iron manufacturers were able to protect their interests. But the committee was able to obtain approval for a regulation to enable the council to order chimneys to be raised to a height of ninety feet, so enabling the removal of a source of complaint which Robert Baker had made more than a quarter of a century before.<sup>3</sup> The strength of influential public opinion may indeed have come as a revelation to the council, for immediately after the bill became law its smoke sub-committee certainly proceeded more vigorously than before, making thirty seven successful prosecutions in the eight months from May to December 1866.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The details of the mobilisation of the pressure group is to be found in 'Extracts from the journals of John Deakin Heaton', Publications of the Thoresby Society, Miscellany, vol.15, part 2, 1971, pp.112-113.

<sup>2</sup>loc. cit. The expense of obtaining clause 70 in the 1866 act was £120.

<sup>3</sup>1866 act, clause 70, sub-section D, Baker, 1842 Report, p.9.

<sup>4</sup>Sub SN(S)C, 1 June, 7 Sept, 5 Oct, 26 Oct, 28 Nov, 28 Dec 1866.



The sale and consumption of unwholesome food became increasingly widespread as a result of increasing urbanisation,<sup>1</sup> although effective measures to combat adulteration did not become law until the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Before then, the control over the quality of foodstuffs seems to have been exercised under local initiatives, and in relation to one commodity only, namely butchers' meat.<sup>2</sup> In Leeds, prosecutions were undertaken by the court leet,<sup>3</sup> but under the 1842 improvement act, power to seize bad meat and prosecute the owner was vested in the council.<sup>4</sup> But this power does not appear to have been adopted until the eighteen fifties, for in July 1850 the scavenging and nuisance committee, noting that

'large quantities of bad meat unfit for human food is brought into this borough'

requested the watch committee to appoint a competent policeman as inspector to prevent this practice.<sup>5</sup> The council's authority over slaughtering and meat sales was enlarged by the 1856 improvement act.<sup>6</sup> This enabled it to register and regulate the condition of private slaughter houses, and on the recommendation of some members of the trade,<sup>7</sup> it obtained the right to provide municipal premises for this purpose. At this time there were 122 slaughterhouses in the borough,

<sup>1</sup>J. Burnet, 'The history of food adulteration in Great Britain, with special reference to bread, tea and beer', Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research, vol. 32, 1959, pp 104-107.

<sup>2</sup>See also: A. Redford, The History of Local Government in Manchester, vol.2, p.20, fn.1.

<sup>3</sup>Improvement Commission, Free market committee minutes, statement of Mr. Horner, assistant superintendent of lamps, which follows after minutes dated 6 Oct. 1841.

<sup>4</sup>1842 act, clauses 312, 313.

<sup>5</sup>SNC, 29 July 1850.

<sup>6</sup>1856 act, clauses 42, 43.

<sup>7</sup>CMIA, 12 May 1852.

a third of which were in Leeds township, and were in 'various states from clean to very dirty'<sup>1</sup>.

The administration of these provisions was delegated to the scavenging and nuisance committee which in October 1856 appointed an inspector to replace the watch committee's official, and in November created a permanent sub-committee to deal with these matters.<sup>2</sup> The following year the committee had drawn up a list of byelaws to regulate the internal arrangement and management of slaughterhouses, which the council approved in April.<sup>3</sup> But the combined efforts of inspector and sub committee do not appear to have been very effective, for two years later the justices were urging increased vigilance to promote prosecutions, since the sale of diseased meat,

'prevails to a very great extent indeed, and has been for some time greatly on the increase'<sup>4</sup>

In August 1859, a deputation of butchers informed the committee that its inspector did not have 'the confidence of the trade', and requested that a jury should be selected to assist him in doubtful and disputed cases. This, with reservations, was agreed to, and a panel of three 'respectable butchers' nominated by the committee was agreed upon, and the sub-committee disbanded.<sup>5</sup> But the healthiness, or otherwise, of meat was ultimately a scientific matter, and in April 1863 the committee authorised the inspector to consult an 'experienced medical man' in cases of dispute between himself and the jury.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup>SNC, 29 Oct 1856

<sup>2</sup>SNC, 1 Oct, 26 Nov 1856.

<sup>3</sup>SNC, 29 Oct 1856, 28 Jan, 22 April 1856.

<sup>4</sup>SNC, 19 March 1858.

<sup>5</sup>SNC, 8 Aug 1859. This did not apply to 'cases of meat kept, or concealed, or offered for public sale or view, such cases being expressly provided for by the improvement act'.

<sup>6</sup>SNC, 8 April 1863.

Unfortunately although monthly statistics of carcasses inspected, passed, and condemned are available from November 1859, the inspector examined only a selected number, and so did not enumerate the total number of cattle slaughtered annually.<sup>1</sup> Thus it is not possible to give an arithmetic statement of the effectiveness of his surveillance, although one source at least believed it to be insufficient.<sup>2</sup> The only means by which the council could ensure both sanitary conditions in slaughtering, and prevent the slaughter of diseased animals was by providing a municipal abattoir, and this was not done until the eighteen eighties.

The inspection of common lodging houses was undertaken in accordance with the general act of 1851. In August the watch committee appointed an inspector,<sup>3</sup> and five months later the council approved the byelaws to regulate them.<sup>4</sup> Public health, morality, and law enforcement provided three reasons for the authorities to superintend these institutions. Overcrowding and insanitary conditions would prevail if left unchecked,<sup>5</sup> precautions against 'moral as well as physical overcrowding'<sup>6</sup> were also taken, and the police had an interest in inspecting these houses in case they harboured criminals and prostitutes. Although in this period the sub-committee ceased to meet

<sup>1</sup> Apart from the inherent improbability of one inspector examining every beast slaughtered in about 150 slaughter houses (SNC, 2 July 1862 gives the number as 146), the numbers listed as inspected prevent this supposition. For example, in the year ending October 1864, 1,472 head of cattle only were listed as inspected, (SNC, 28 Oct 1864).

<sup>2</sup> On the sanitary condition of Hull, Bristol, Glasgow, Leeds, and Manchester; and on The Sanitary Act, 1866', Quarterly Journal of Science, vol.3, Oct 1866, p.492.

<sup>3</sup> Watch cttee. minutes, 22 August 1851; CM, 1 Sept 1851.

<sup>4</sup> CM, 1 Jan 1852.

<sup>5</sup> Sub Watch, common lodging houses committee minutes, 4 Aug 1854.

<sup>6</sup> This quaint euphemism is used by Lord Salisbury: R.C. on the Housing of the Working Classes, (1885), vol.2, Qu. 9796.

from the late eighteen fifties, the inspector or one of the two detectives assigned to this duty visited each of the lodging houses daily.<sup>1</sup>

(5)

In certain cases, public improvements could only be made by the purchase of real property, namely when the council wished to widen or change the course of an existing street, or to undertake slum clearance. This latter activity did not enter the council's agenda until the 1870s, and did not assume major importance in its activities until the last decade of the century.<sup>2</sup> But throughout the whole of the period from the eighteen forties and into the twentieth century, the acquisition of property by public authorities was governed by acts of parliament and quasi-judicial conventions which had a significant, and often adverse influence upon the willingness of local government to undertake improvements which involved the transfer of property from private to public ownership. As we shall demonstrate in a later chapter, the partial removal of these inhibiting factors had an important bearing, in Leeds and almost certainly elsewhere as well, on the attitude of local authorities towards working class housing.

The law relating to property purchases by public bodies had been already formulated before our period begins, and the relevant rules, outlined in our analysis of the 1842 improvement act, were a

<sup>1</sup>LM, 1 Dec 1865.

<sup>2</sup>See below, chapter 6

part of general public law, and were as such not subject to modification by local acts of parliament. The general legislative rules were codified in the Land Clauses Consolidation Act of 1845, and its subsequent amendments, and applied without exception to

'every undertaking of a public nature authorised by any act ... which empowers the purchase or taking of lands for that undertaking'<sup>1</sup>

Thus although the improvement scheme we are about to discuss was completed before the 1845 act, it was unavoidably put into effect under the rules created by general law, and not solely by the local act of 1842, and so to a great extent, illustrates the problems which would be encountered in Leeds and in other towns both in the eighteen forties and in any subsequent period when attempting public improvements through the acquisition of property. The scheme in question was the enlargement of Kirkgate market. Part of the property scheduled in the 1842 act for compulsory purchase consisted of the thirteen Kirkgate yards adjacent to the market.<sup>2</sup> The council's statistical report had firmly established the sanitary notoriety of the Boot and Shoe yard and its environs which lay next to the market, but it should not be assumed that when drafting the act, the improvement commissioners had intended to pioneer slum clearance. The act explicitly states that the property was required for market purposes,<sup>3</sup> and there is no reason to assume that this was not the decisive motive which secured these yards as candidates for demolition. There were other areas coupled in condemnation with Kirkgate in the 1839 report: for example, the Leylands, Skinner lane, Georges, Ebenezer, Union and Harper streets, and Goulden's buildings are in parenthesis company with the Wellington and Boot and

<sup>1</sup>Halsbury's Laws of England, third edition (1955) vol.10, p.17.

<sup>2</sup>1842 act, Schedule (D).

<sup>3</sup>ibid., clause 38.

Shoe yards. The selection of the Kirkgate area was made indisputably because of its proximity to the market. The revenue from the leasing of the market tolls was an important source of income to the commissioners, and by the eighteen forties the public market facilities of the borough had become inadequate.<sup>1</sup> Thus an extension of the market would improve both the commissioners' income (by increasing the leaseable value), and health, by removing some of the most insanitary property in the township.

When the council came to implement the intentions of the commissioners, it was activated by the same motives. In its report the market committee recognised that the Boot and Shoe yard was an affront to civic pride and a threat to public health, but its ultimate concern was finance.<sup>2</sup> It recommended the purchase of the Boot and Shoe, and four other yards, to increase the market area by 8,298 square yards at an estimated cost of £15,000. This was the least ambitious of the schemes reviewed, for the other two would have involved an expenditure calculated at £23,000 and £27,000 respectively, and the choice had been made solely on the ground of revenue. The committee argued that the value of the lease would not be augmented by an enlargement of the market area beyond that which could be achieved for £15,000, and the increased income would be sufficient to pay for the capital cost and interest without a subsidy from the rate fund. A further argument in favour of the scheme was the committee's belief that

'nearly the whole of the buildings to be purchased are old and but of little value'

But this assertion was unjustified, for reasons which will become apparent.

<sup>1</sup>See above p. 119.

<sup>2</sup>RBIA, 18 Jan 1843.

In February 1843 letters were sent to six of the property owners, asking them to name their selling price.<sup>1</sup> On its part, the committee obtained three valuations by professional surveyors and decided on reasonable offers which in general lay between the highest and lowest valuation. But on receiving the replies from the owners, the committee discovered that there was a considerable disparity between its proposed offers and the owners' claims: a difference of £6,819"10s, which was more than 150% greater than its estimates. The claims and valuations are set out in table 2.2.

It was therefore decided to submit a test case to arbitration, taking the property of John Purcheon, the largest in the group. The result was not encouraging. The committee had hoped to buy for £1555"10s, but the jury awarded £2,500. Furthermore, the council was saddled with all the legal costs, since it had lost the case, and these amounted to £157"12"6d.<sup>2</sup> Thereupon the committee quickly decided to revise the offers made in the other five instances, so increasing the total from £2,515 to £3,540.<sup>3</sup> Subsequently, further advances were made in the level of offers, but even then a second case ended in arbitration. Thus the first stage of the market project cost not the £4,070"10s which the committee had, sanguinely, hoped, but £6,230, or fifty per cent more than estimated, without taking legal and conveyancing costs of nearly £630 into account.

In 1844 the committee went to arbitration for the third time, again as the result of an irreconcilable difference between its offer (£7000 and £1000 for the goodwill for the 'London Tavern') and that of the owner (£9000 and £1,250). But again the council was the

<sup>1</sup>Market committee minutes, 24 Feb 1843.

<sup>2</sup>ibid, 16 Oct 1843, 22 Feb 1844.

<sup>3</sup>ibid, 23 Oct 1843.

TABLE 2.2

The initial valuations, offers, and owners' claims for property in  
the Boot and Shoe Yard, Kirkgate, 1843

Owner	Independent Valuations for Council			Committee Offer	Owner's Demand
	(1)	(2)	(3)		
Purcheon	2191	1555"10s	1258"6s	1555"10s	4,860
Dufton	840	895	1144	1025	2,000
Askin	918	720	971	850	2,500
Rhodes	380	480	503	480	1,120
Hirst	70	70	95	80	160
Metcalf	70	70	90	80	250
	4469	3790"10s	4061"6s	4070"10s	10,890

Sources:

- (1) for the independent valuations: Market committee minutes, 26 May 1843,
- (2) for the committee offers and the owners' demands: RBIA, 9 Aug 1843.



TABLE 2.3

The successive offers, finally-agreed prices and legal expenses for property in the Boot and Shoe Yard, Kirkgate

Owner	Successive offers by the Markets Committee	Final price	Legal expenses	Nature of settlement
Purcheon	1555 " 10s	2500	157"12"6d	Arbitration
Askin	850; 1,200; 1,273"16s; 1,300	1350	110" 3"4d	"
Rhodes	480; 700	700	56" 4"4d	Agreement
Hurst	80; 120; 140	140	39" 8"9d	"
Metcalf	80; 120; 140	140	33"17"2d	"
Dufton	1,025; 1,400	1400	123" 8"0d	"
Totals		£6230	£520"14"1d	

Sources:

Market committee minutes, 26 May, 16 Oct, 23 Oct, 16 Nov, 21 Dec 1843; 4 Jan 1844; 12 Sept 1844.

J. Mayhall, Annals of Yorkshire, vol.1, 11 Oct 1843.

Note: these references are to the date upon which the price for the property was agreed. For legal charges, see passim in the Market committee minutes.

TABLE 2.4

The successive offers, finally-agreed prices and  
legal expenses for other property purchased  
for the enlargement of Kirkgate market

Owner	Successive offers by the Market committee	Final price	Legal costs	Nature of Settlement
Westwood	1,000; 1,100; 1,000	1,000	66" 6"3d	Agreement
Langfield	800; 900; 950	950	n.a.	"
Prince	1,400; 1,450	1,450	48" 7"6d	"
Scholey	850	850	69"15"0d	"
Thwaites	800	950 <sup>1</sup>	64"12"4d	"
Kitchen	8,000	10,250	739"13"2d	Arbitration
Westwood	100	100	56" 6"3d	Agreement
(Sharp and ( (Horsley	950	950	165"18"6d	"
TOTALS		16,500	1,210"19"0d	

<sup>1</sup>£800 of this sum paid to his mortgagees by the market committee,  
4 April 1844.

Source:

Market committee minutes, 14 Dec, 21 Dec 1843; 4 Jan, 11 Jan,  
7 March, 14 March, 18 April, 15 Aug, 24 Oct, 1844; 13 Feb 1845.

Note: these references are to the date upon which the price  
for the property was agreed. For legal charges, see passim in the  
same source.

unsuccessful party, for the jury accepted the owner's claim in full, which left the council with a further £740 to pay in legal costs.<sup>1</sup> When all the purchases for the market extension had been completed in 1845, a total cost of £24,548 had been incurred, a sum sixty percent in excess of the prediction of 1843.<sup>2</sup>

This account has been given in some detail because it allows a clear illustration of the way in which the law worked, and the problems which local authorities encountered when they entered the property market. Both contemporaries who had experience of municipal intervention in this sphere, and legal historians have alleged that arbitration practices were biased in favour of the property owner,<sup>3</sup> and the present case confirms this contention. It is possible, nevertheless, that this particular instance somewhat exaggerates the degree of bias, since those eligible for jury service were relatively substantial property owners, who would be likely to be favourable to the claims of individuals of similar status.<sup>4</sup> But even where juries were replaced by professional arbitrators, the expense to the public body was not greatly reduced.<sup>5</sup> In the present case, it seems that the market committee had made a reasonable assessment of property values, since offers were decided on the basis of professional valuations. But in the three

<sup>1</sup> ibid, 15 Aug 1844. See also Table C.

<sup>2</sup> One interesting purchase was Zoar chapel, 'Prophet Roe's preaching room' (LM, 5 July 1845), which was a Southcoteite chapel in George's court (1842 Act, Schedule (D)), and had 186 sittings, (J.S.S. 1840, p.415).

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, the evidence of Joseph Chamberlain in R.C. on the Housing of the Working Classes, vol.II, esp. Qu. 12,378 to Qu. 12,390.

<sup>4</sup> For example, in Leeds in 1845 the jury list was composed of 1,500 individuals, at a time when there were 8,050 municipal voters; 6,000 parliamentary voters; and 24,292 'persons rating'. See: P.R.O., M.H. 12/15226, 31 Jan 1845.

<sup>5</sup> See; J.R. Kellett, The Impact of Railways upon Victorian Cities, Appendix III.

cases which were taken to arbitration the judgment was detrimental to the council, with an exaggerated price being exacerbated by considerable legal costs. Such circumstances would clearly exert an upward pressure upon all property prices involved in an improvement scheme. For the council this had a strong incentive to make voluntary agreements to avoid arbitration, and prices would be influenced by what both parties believed would be the likely result of an arbitrated settlement.

While the market committee was carrying on negotiations for the Kirkgate property, the streets committee was considering improvements elsewhere. Apart from the Kirkgate yards, the properties scheduled for possible compulsory purchase in the act were those required for projected street improvements. These were located at the approaches to five of the town's bridges (Bishopsgate, Leeds and Crown Point bridges on the river Aire, and Lady and Timble bridges on Sheepscar beck); in central thoroughfares, (Lands lane, Boar lane, Swinegate, Millhill, and Woodhouse lane); and in several approach roads to the urban area, (Camp road, Skinner lane, Mabgate, the York turnpike road, Ellerby -, Hunslet -, Meadow -, and Water -, lanes)<sup>1</sup>. Much of the property enumerated was situated in areas where the improvement commissioners had previously achieved or contemplated schemes of varying magnitude with the aim of widening streets to reduce traffic congestion and the risk of accident. By asking for wide compulsory powers in the new bill they were clearly intending to implement more comprehensive schemes than had been possible under the provisions of the 1824 improvement act.

<sup>1</sup>1842 Act, clause 38, and Schedule (D).

In 1844 the streets committee began to negotiate for property at Bridge End, by the Leeds bridge. This was the most important of the bridges in the township as its location ensured that it was the most heavily used, being

'the great line of communication with the railway stations and for the centre of the town'<sup>1</sup>

A traffic census taken in 1842 revealed that on two market days, 16,650 passenger journeys and 1,757 vehicle journeys were made on the first and 16,700 and 2,724 journeys respectively on the other day.<sup>2</sup>

The purchases were completed in October 1846. Improvements were undertaken in Mabgate, Swinegate and Skinner lane between 1844 and 1848, and schemes proposed, but unfulfilled, to widen Boar lane, Lands lane and North street. The reason behind the rejection of these plans has significance for the history of the property-purchasing activities of the council. In 1844 a minor purchase was made at the east end of Boar lane, one of the major thoroughfares of the town centre, and in May the borough surveyor presented an estimate of the cost of a major improvement. This he calculated at £9,290, which was far higher than the committee was prepared to entertain.<sup>3</sup> A second minor purchase proposal in May 1847 was also rejected, presumably on the ground of cost, as a pencilled note in the margin of the minute book added, '£8 " 8s per yard'.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, in 1845, 1846 and 1847 proposals to make purchases in Lands lane were considered and dismissed.

The central problem was that of urban land values, which deterred

<sup>1</sup>LM, 8 Feb 1840.

<sup>2</sup>HLRO, House of Commons, Select Committee on Leeds Improvements, Volume 7. Evidence, 1842. L.2., 30 May 1842, f.60.

<sup>3</sup>Streets committee minutes, 13 May 1844.

<sup>4</sup>ibid., 17 May 1847.

the council from town centre improvements, as they had done for the improvement commissioners. As we have seen, compulsory powers in no way mitigated the price of property, and no doubt with the example of the market committee before them, the streets committee was not prepared to press its plans in face of exorbitant demands from property owners. In June 1847 the committee decided that

'the amount required for making sewers in the borough is so large as to prevent the committee entertaining the subject of widening Lands lane at any considerable expense'<sup>1</sup>

Thus as the five year limit on compulsory purchases specified in the improvement act expired, the other commitments of the council were in any case making any further plans financially impracticable.

The council acquired further powers to undertake street improvements in the 1856 improvement act, with two major schemes in view.<sup>2</sup> These were to widen Boar lane and to construct a new street in the west end of the town. As we have seen the widening of Boar lane had been considered for more than a decade. Although one of the town's major streets it was in places only twenty feet wide, and the council proposed to increase its width to thirty six feet.<sup>3</sup> The proposed new street had no such strictly utilitarian motive. It was to be built for 'the purpose of improving the approaches to the town hall'<sup>4</sup> by a relatively inexpensive route running through the site of the stables and outbuildings behind the houses in East Parade. The estimated cost of these two projects was £27,918.<sup>5</sup> Neither was achieved. In August 1861

<sup>1</sup>ibid., 28 June 1847.

<sup>2</sup>1856 Act, clause 5.

<sup>3</sup>HLRO, House of Commons. Select Committees on Private Bills (Group H). Vol.31. Evidence 1856. Group L1., f.7.

<sup>4</sup>Parliamentary committee minutes, 29 Nov 1864.

<sup>5</sup>HLRO, loc. cit.

the council appointed a committee to report on the 'most economical way of widening Boar lane', but it advised the council against any scheme on account of the cost it would entail.<sup>1</sup> When the proposal was resurrected in the following year it was rejected by a decisive majority.<sup>2</sup> In the early eighteen sixties, the council sanctioned a number of minor improvement schemes, voting a total of £3,150 for this purpose, but resolutely avoided any proposals to undertake any major project.<sup>3</sup> Thus when it came to apply for a renewal and extension of compulsory powers in the 1866 improvement bill, it was obliged to admit that powers had been granted originally a quarter of a century before, and then renewed in 1856,

'but under neither of these acts have the corporation taken action'<sup>4</sup>

(6)

Three items of national legislation in the eighteen forties and fifties enabled local authorities to provide libraries, baths and wash houses and common lodging houses. But for various reasons, none of these amenities were created by the council in this period. Shortly after the enactment of the Baths and Washhouses Act, the council appointed a committee to consider the desirability of applying its provisions,<sup>5</sup> and in the following year one of the members of parliament for the borough offered to provide a site if the council was prepared

<sup>1</sup>CM, 14 Aug 1861; RB, 14 Aug 1861.

<sup>2</sup>CM, 12 Feb 1862. The voting was 21 to 8 against.

<sup>3</sup>CM, 9 Nov 1861, 9 Nov 1863, 1 Jan, 11 May, 30 Sept, 9 Nov, 1864, 31 May, 9 Aug 1865.

<sup>4</sup>HLRO, House of Commons Select Committee, Evidence 1866, vol 24, 24 April 1866, f. 27.

<sup>5</sup>CM, 14 Sept 1846.

to provide the buildings.<sup>1</sup> The committee reported that such facilities would be 'of great advantage and utility to the public', but nevertheless no action was taken, and the issue was not raised again. The possibility of implementing the Lodging Houses Act was never even considered by the council. A model lodging house was constructed in Wellington yard, Kirkgate to accommodate one hundred lodgers,<sup>2</sup> but this was the product of private philanthropy and if the intention was to encourage municipal emulation, it failed completely. The liberal press was undoubtedly articulating the attitude of council when it observed that,

'We do not say that a municipal corporation or a local board of health might not erect one or two model lodging houses if no-one else could be induced to make the experiment; but we would much rather they distributed widely the information which the General Board of Health offers them in proof that well-constructed and well-managed lodging houses will pay better than lodging houses of another description. As to their becoming builders to such an extent as to provide 'substitutes' for a large proportion of the existing lodging houses, we apprehend no body of ratepayers will ever permit such a use of their money.... The true parties to provide houses for the poor, as well as for the rich, are private capitalists.... '3

An even more instructive example of the social philosophy dominant in the council is provided by the debate over the proposed provision of a public library. In June 1855 the council received an offer from the Patent Office of copies of its published volumes of patent specifications, on condition that they would be available for consultation 'in a public free library of the borough'.<sup>4</sup> The council accepted the gift, and decided that since no such library existed, the volumes should be

<sup>1</sup>CM, 11 Aug 1847.

<sup>2</sup>LM, 15 March 1851; J. Mayhall, Annals of Yorkshire, vol.1, 14 April 1851.

<sup>3</sup>LM, 22 Nov 1851.

<sup>4</sup>CM, 11 June 1855.



kept in the town clerk's office,

'until a proper room can be provided for a library in the town hall at present in the course of erection....'<sup>1</sup>

The library question then remained dormant until March 1861,<sup>2</sup> when the council received a petition with nearly a thousand signatures

'which had been obtained by a few working men in two or three nights'<sup>3</sup>

In May, one councillor proposed that the council call the public meeting which it was necessary to hold in order to adopt the Public Libraries Act. The motion was defeated by thirty two votes to seven.<sup>4</sup> Moderates joined with the arch- 'economists' to reject the proposal, and the tone and content of the debate revealed attitudes which were hardly ever brought to the surface with equal clarity. One councillor, observing that the majority of inhabitants commuted their rates under the Small Tenements Rating Act, claimed that

'to refer this question to the burgesses would, therefore, be asking the majority of non-ratepayers to say what the middle classes should pay'.

Another, in the same vein, remarked that

'the memorial which was presented at the first meeting was got up by a section of the working classes, and did not represent the large ratepayers or shop keepers'<sup>5</sup>

Two gas companies operated in Leeds in this period: the Gas Company established in 1828 and the New Coal Gas Company formed in 1834. Unlike the water works company, the constitution of which allowed for a substantial element of public control, the gas companies were wholly independent joint-stock companies. Although the council

<sup>1</sup> loc. cit.

<sup>2</sup> CM, 30 March 1861.

<sup>3</sup> LM, 2 April 1861.

<sup>4</sup> CM, 31 May 1861.

<sup>5</sup> LM, 1 June 1861.

exorted a direct influence on the management of the waterworks, and in 1852 converted them into a municipal enterprise,<sup>1</sup> the gas companies did not pass into public ownership until 1870.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, in the eighties and early fifties the question of municipalisation of the gas supply was mooted several times. The council first intervened in the affairs of the gas companies in 1843, when the Old Gas Company was seeking to amend its constitution. The parliamentary committee was instructed to take any necessary action to prevent the company from obtaining powers to charge unreasonable prices for gas, to secure

'the benefits of fair competition between the two gas companies''

and to secure for the council

'such rights powers and privileges as may...be deemed for the benefit of the inhabitants and the improvement of the borough'.<sup>3</sup>

The committee appears not to have attempted to have a clause allowing for corporate purchase of the company inserted in the bill, believing perhaps that competition between the two firms was a sufficient guarantee of fair trading. It limited its objectives to proposing, and obtaining a clause which restricted the company to paying a maximum dividend of six percent upon its new share capital.<sup>4</sup> In the following year the other company sought a new amending act, but the council took no action.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>See above pp. 103-104.

<sup>2</sup>See below, ch. 5.

<sup>3</sup>CM, 29 March 1843.

<sup>4</sup>Parliamentary Committee, 20 March 1843, 7 April 1843.

<sup>5</sup>ibid. 13 March 1844. The committee considered the bill, but "after a long discussion thereon no resolution was passed relative thereto".

Four years later, the issue of the ownership of the gas and water supply reemerged. The proposal that these should be municipally-owned rather than privately owned services was made by Edward Eddison, a councillor who had been the town clerk and was active in various public improvement schemes promoted in this period.<sup>1</sup> His principal contention was that the ownership of public utilities was a potential source of income to the council, and he cited the example of the municipal gas works in Manchester, which enabled the council there to defray the cost of other public services from the surplus profits from this. Pressure of other work prevented Eddison from actively pursuing the matter further,<sup>2</sup> and he did not reintroduce his proposal until 1850, when on his suggestion the council appointed a special committee to review the possibility of purchasing the gas and water works and the toll bridges which existed within the borough boundaries.<sup>3</sup> On this occasion a new factor entered into the debate. The council itself had an important interest in the operations of the gas companies, since a large and recurring element in its budget was the cost of gas used for street lighting.<sup>4</sup> This question came into prominence a few months later, when, after the publication of a parliamentary return on the financial statistics of gas companies, it was possible to compare the prices, costs and dividends of the Leeds companies to those in other towns.<sup>5</sup> It was discovered that the price of gas supplied for

<sup>1</sup>CM, 1 January 1848, Leeds Mercury, 1 January 1848.

<sup>2</sup>LM, 12 May 1849. "The town clerk said Mr. Eddison had moved resolutions on the subject, but that that gentleman had been latterly so much engaged that he could not devote any time to the matter."

<sup>3</sup>CM, 1 January 1850.

<sup>4</sup>LM, 5 January 1850.

<sup>5</sup>ibid., 26 October 1850.

public lighting in Leeds was significantly higher than in other places, where the practice was to supply gas at net cost for this purpose, whereas in Leeds the companies treated the council as merely another private consumer. The Leeds Mercury was moved to object that

'a joint stock company has no right to calculate on deriving large profits out of a public rate'<sup>1</sup>,

and this view was echoed in both the vestry and in the council.<sup>2</sup>

On November 14 1850 the council appointed a committee to negotiate with the gas companies, and take the preliminary steps to apply to parliament for their purchase.<sup>3</sup> But the committee reported that before the council could apply for an act for this purpose they would have to have successfully negotiated for the conditional purchase of every share, and that parliamentary standing orders made it impossible for the committee to do this in time to meet the deadline for applications to promote a bill in the current session. It advised that the project be deferred, and that the purchase of the companies be incorporated into the terms of a new improvement act.<sup>4</sup> The committee created to consider the contents of a new improvement bill reported to the council in August, but it did not urge the purchase of the gas works. Instead it recommended that the proposed bill should adopt clause 120 of the Towns Improvement Clauses Act, which enabled the council to appeal to arbitration in case of a dispute over the price of gas.<sup>5</sup> Perhaps this retreat was motivated by a fear of the costs involved for in another part of the report the committee counselled against the extension of

<sup>1</sup>ibid., 26 October 1850.

<sup>2</sup>ibid., 2 November 1850 and 16 November 1850.

<sup>3</sup>CMIA, 14 November 1850.

<sup>4</sup>RBIA, 22 November 1850.

<sup>5</sup>RBIA, 6 August 1851.

compulsory purchase powers, on the ground that it would be inadvisable "in the present state of the finances of the borough"<sup>1</sup>. Moreover, it had already recommended the purchase of the waterworks and urged the council to consider the problem of obtaining new sources of supply,<sup>2</sup> and probably these seemed more urgent priorities than the municipalisation of the gas companies. In the early fifties the council was debating and acting upon many important issues: the sewerage system, the water supply, the building of a new town hall and many less significant matters. One councillor observed that,

'Nothing but the crowd of notices on the business paper had prevented his putting a motion on it for the purchase or formation of gas works'<sup>3</sup>

During the high-tide of public improvement in Leeds, the gas question was swept to one side and remained neglected for more than a decade.<sup>4</sup>

## (7)

In this chapter we have surveyed the entire range of the municipal projects and social policies of the corporation from the early eighties up to the mid eighties. As a result of the improvement act of 1842 and the subsequent local acts of 1848 and 1856, the municipal authority which had been established with a relatively restricted agenda of political and administrative reform in 1835 had been transformed into a local authority with potentially extensive

<sup>1</sup> loc. cit.

<sup>2</sup> Improvement bill committee, 14 July 1851.

<sup>3</sup> LM, 13 November 1852.

<sup>4</sup> The possible municipalisation of the gas supply appeared again briefly in 1862, when the council petitioned against the Leeds New Gas Company bill, RB, 12 Feb. 1862.

powers to regulate and improve the urban environment. By 1865, it had created a comprehensive sewerage system, taken the water supply into public ownership, instituted the removal of household refuse as a public service, and appointed inspectors to control smoke pollution, house building, and the supply of meat. Its other activities in this period included the building of a new town hall and borough prison, the improvement of public markets, the acquisition of Woodhouse moor, the provision of burial grounds, and several other minor improvements. These, viewed as a mere catalogue of achievements, would appear impressive. But as we have demonstrated there were many instances in which measures of urban improvement which the council adopted failed to realise their full potential social benefit. There were various reasons for this, but in general the piecemeal application or inefficient execution and development was the principal cause of the problem. By the mid sixties, the sewerage system was under-utilised, the water supply inadequate and increasingly polluted, and for seven years different methods of refuse removal were tried with the apparent sole intention of minimising costs. Smoke pollution and building regulation and the inspection of meat were all inadequately carried out.

If public health measures were implemented with variable efficiency, much the same can be said of other projects. The town hall may have been a monument to civic pride, but in the fifties the public market was improved only under pressure from a parliamentary select committee, and if Woodhouse moor was a public park, it was so only in name, for its condition was

'a standing disgrace to Leeds, being little better than a foul quagmire, decorated by all the diseased cattle in the town'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>LM, 30 Sept. 1871.

But the most comprehensive criticisms came from the Medical Department of the Privy Council. In 1858, 1865, 1870 and 1874, the sanitary condition of the town was examined by its officers and the facts which emerged gave little consolation. The next chapter examines the evidence upon which Simon based his assertion that the administration of public health in Leeds

'in proportion to the importance of the town may perhaps be deemed the worst that has ever come to the knowledge of this department'<sup>1</sup>

If Simon was correct, and there is little doubt that he was not, it is also necessary to examine the possible reasons which made the council unusually unresponsive to the need to implement effective sanitary policies, and to explain why there was no strong opposition to a regime of municipal enervation.

<sup>1</sup>R. Lambert, Sir John Simon, 1816-1904, and English Social Administration, p. 434.

## CHAPTER THREE

THE IMPACT OF URBAN REFORM UP TO THE MID-SIXTIES,  
AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT IN THE LATER NINETEENTH CENTURY



(1)

There are several reasons for pausing in our narrative in the mid-eighteen sixties to consider the effect which the council's environmental policies were having upon the town. By this time the council had been responsible for the public health administration of the borough for more than two decades, and this seems a sufficiently lengthy period upon which to base an assessment of its work. Furthermore, there is a substantial volume of evidence, dating from the late fifties to the early seventies which enables a detailed survey to be made.<sup>1</sup> That this evidence is largely to be found in reports made by members of the Medical Department of the Privy Council is an initial indication that there was some cause for concern over public health conditions in Leeds. Upto the early eighteen sixties, it appeared that the crude mortality rate was declining. In the decade 1851-1861 the annual average rate in Leeds township was 27.72 per thousand, but this average conceals a marked reduction in the late, compared to the early fifties. If deaths from cholera in 1848-49 are excluded, the annual average rate between 1848 and 1854 was 31.16, and in the years 1854 to 1858 it fell to an average of 27.18. The decline continued into the early sixties, with an average rate of 26.7 between 1855 and 1862.<sup>2</sup> But in the sixties as a whole, the average rose to 29.7 (1861-1870) while in the four years 1866 to 1870 was 29.9.<sup>3</sup> A further

<sup>1</sup>E.H. Greenhow, 'Reports on Diarrhoeal Districts', Second Report of the Medical Officer of the Privy Council, 1859, pp.133-140; H.J. Hunter, 'Report...on Circumstances endangering the Public Health of Leeds', Eighth Report of the Medical Officer of the Privy Council, 1865, pp.226-245; J. Braithwaite, An Inquiry into the Causes of the High Death Rate in Leeds, 1865; and Mr. J. Netten Radcliffe On the Sanitary State of Leeds with Particular Reference to Diarrhoea and Fever, (1871), P.R.O. MH12/15248.

<sup>2</sup>Hunter, art. cit., p.226; Greenhow, art. cit., pp.133-4; Braithwaite, op. cit., p.8, table 1.

<sup>3</sup>Radcliffe, o p. cit., p.37, Appendix, table 1.

disturbing factor, which we shall consider later, was one of the causes of mortality. Two further points need to be noticed. Firstly, the death rate in Leeds was considerably higher than the national average, but this of course is to be expected, and Leeds compared favourably with other large towns. For example in the period 1855-1862 the death rate in Manchester stood at 31.92, and in Liverpool at 32.31<sup>1</sup>. Secondly, it is not surprising that different levels of mortality prevailed in different parts of the borough, as table 3.1 demonstrates. If we also compare the mortality in the three registration sub-districts of Leeds in the eighteen fifties with the rates which existed in 1839 the extreme differences which Baker noted with concern are no longer present, and his own later research confirmed this (see table 3.2). But, as we have observed, in the eighteen sixties mortality rates began to rise, and the causes of this require explanation. In the first place, the effects of sanitary improvement were uneven in their incidence.

As Dr. Greenhow noted in 1858, there still existed,

'dense and often complicated congeries of narrow ill-kept streets and courts, which have but seldom been adopted as high ways by the municipal authorities, are often in a very foul state, and, ... are neither kept in order nor cleansed at the public expense. Many of these bye-streets are neither paved nor drained...'<sup>2</sup>

As we have seen in the previous chapter, the benefits of the main sewerage system were haphazardly bestowed, because of the reluctance of owners, in the absence of compulsion, to connect their property with the main drains. It also appears that the council's power to

<sup>1</sup>Braithwaite, loc. cit.

<sup>2</sup>Greenhow, art. cit., p.134.

TABLE 3.1

Annual average mortality rates per 1,000 in different districts  
of the borough of Leeds 1855-1862

<sup>1</sup> Potternewton	15.0	Holbeck	25.5
<sup>1</sup> Headingley	16.0	<sup>2</sup> Bamley	26.0
Chapeltown	17.0	Leeds West	26.3
<sup>2</sup> Famley	20.0	Kirkstall	26.8
Whitkirk	22.4	Leeds South East	27.2
Wortley	22.7	Rothwell	27.6
<sup>2</sup> Armley	23.0	<sup>1</sup> Burley	29.0
Hunslet	24.3	Leeds North	29.5

1 = on average of three years, 1860-1862

2 = on average of five years, 1858-1862

Source: J. Braithwaite, An Enquiry into the Causes of the High  
Death Rate in Leeds, p.11, table VII.

TABLE 3.2

Mortality per 1,000 in the three registration sub-districts  
of Leeds township in 1839, 1851, 1858, and the annual  
average of 1855-1862

Sub district	Wards	1839	1851	1858	1855-1862
North	North	42.4	35.7	28.6	29.5
	North East				
West	Mill Hill	27.7	27.3	22.2	26.3
	West				
	North West				
South East	Kirkgate	35.0	31.9	27.3	27.2
	South				
	East				

- Sources: (1) 1839 statistics, Robert Baker, 'Report on the Condition of the Residences of the Labouring Classes in the town of Leeds in the County of York', p.20.
- (2) 1851 and 1858 statistics, Robert Baker, 'On the Industrial and Sanitary Economy of the Borough of Leeds in 1858', J.S.S., vol. xxi 1858, p.433, table (E).
- (3) 1855-62 statistics, J. Braithwaite, 'An Enquiry into the Causes of the High Death Rate in Leeds, p.11, table VII.

order the making-up of streets and courts had been sparingly exercised. It is worth relating some of the detailed description of particular localities at length. In the course of his observations, Greenhow selected six groups of streets for specific comment. With one exception, the areas he examined possessed diarrhoeal mortality rates in excess of the average for their respective registration districts. Within each district, there were remarkable variations in standards of physical conditions. Some streets in the Templar street area were 'well kept', but others were

'filthy in the extreme, being unpaved, undrained, uncleansed and infected with effluvia from the privies'.

Likewise in the Castle street district,

'some of the streets and courts are in good condition, others are quite the reverse',

and in the east end, around Mill street,

'several...are in good condition, others are in a bad state, unpaved undrained with ill-formed channels'.

Two points, one general and one specific may be made. One of the major motives behind the public health legislation was to provide local government agencies with the authority to create and enforce minimum general standards of sanitation to remove the intolerable disparities existing in urban conditions which had been fully exposed by the researches of sanitary reformers. Obviously in Leeds this intention had only been very partially realised twenty years later. But specifically, the council had failed to remedy insalubrious conditions in some of the very areas which had inspired the promotion of the first local improvement act. The 'Templar Street District' of Greenhow's report was the area known as the Leylands, where in the words of

the statistical report of 1839,

'the condition of some of the streets and dwellings...is proverbial'<sup>1</sup>

The Mill street area was adjacent to Blue Bell fold, the scene of the first cholera case in 1832, and which contained the streets whose condition created, 'a great sensation' when described to the council in 1839.<sup>2</sup> The disturbing constancy with which such localities reappear as the focal spots of disease will be noted again later. Dr. Greenhow ended his report with the observation that,

'there seems indeed no reason why the mortality from this (i.e. diarrhoeal) disease should not be yet more largely diminished, if a more perfect system were adopted, for speedily removing the ordure of the inhabitants from the midst of the town'.

This was certainly an important consideration, for as there were only 3,321 water closets in the borough in 1865<sup>3</sup> the vast majority of the population disposed of both human and household refuse in privy middens, and it was 'unquestionably the state of the privies'<sup>4</sup> which caused the high diarrhoeal death rate.

In 1858 the council had instituted the cleansing of privies as a public service, but as we have seen, its operation was not conspicuously successful. Indeed, when the next visitation by an official of the Medical Department of the Privy Council took place, in 1865, the condition of the town's unemptied privies provoked a searing condemnation:

'to the eye of an inspector who had just left Newcastle and Sunderland, and who in the same week visited Sheffield, Leeds in August 1865 presented a surprising sight, bringing

<sup>1</sup> 'Report upon the condition of the town of Leeds and of its inhabitants. By a Statistical Committee of the Town Council', J.S.S., vol. ii 1840, p.400.

<sup>2</sup> LM, 2 Nov 1839.

<sup>3</sup> Radcliffe, op. cit., p.8.

<sup>4</sup> Greenhow, art. cit., p.139.

to rememberance the condition of many English towns of twenty years ago, but finding hardly a standard with which to be compared in the present state of any great town'<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Julian Hunter had arrived in Leeds in response to the unusually high death rate which had prevailed in the summer and autumn. The crisis caused by the temporary collapse of the council's refuse removal programme was partially the result of the insolvency of its contractors, but the situation was not improved by the dilatory action which the committee responsible took to deal with the situation. Hunter's reference to

'a few dawdling carts, under command of Mr. Sands the corporation officer'

was an excuseable exaggeration of the committee's policy. But, if as we have suggested in the previous chapter, the disposal of refuse was not ordinarily as negligent as at the time of Hunter's visit, he found many aspects of the sanitary administration of the town where inadequacy was not the result of recent nor temporary dislocation.

His criticisms may be considered under two heads: firstly, the public health services which the council controlled, namely the system of refuse disposal, which has already been mentioned, the sewerage network, the administration of building regulations, and the quality of the water supply; and secondly the operation of the sanitary administration of the town, which was undertaken by both the council and the poor law guardians. As has already been explained, the sewerage network was only partially effective, but Hunter noted in addition that the drains were also

'incapable of either ventilation or of flushing',

<sup>1</sup>Hunter, art. cit., p.233.

and this actually made them a potential hazard to health. Although the network had achieved some improvement in the disposal of wastes, it did so at the expense of the increasing pollution of the river Aire, which because of the absence of sewage works was 'but an open drain', as indeed was Sheepscar beck which carried the human and industrial effluent from the factories and houses of the east end of the town to the river.

The very widespread use of privies in the borough posed a dual threat to health, not only because of their size which allowed the accumulation of very large quantities of excrement, but also on account of their location. Many of them formed

'part of a ground floor above which is a shop, a parlour or bedroom or larder'.

For example, a district of two hundred and sixty one houses in Holbeck possessed forty nine privies of which twenty three were located under bedrooms, and five were actually in kitchens. Another structural defect noted was the existence of numerous cellar dwellings, the occupation of which was controlled only by the minimal standards laid down by the 1842 act, namely that they should have a window and a fire place. It appears that by the mid sixties the number of occupied cellars was increasing. Greenhow had believed that they were rare at the time of his visit (although this may be incorrect) but one of the guardians' officers claimed that many cellars inhabited by 1865 had been coal cellars ten years before. Another source estimated that there were five hundred such dwellings in the borough by this time.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>LM, 3 Feb 1865 (speech by F. Baines); Radcliffe, op.cit., p.31 gives the number as 612.



To deplore the existence of such homes was common, but finding other accommodation posed serious problems. One of Hunter's informants picturesquely observed that

'we are going to have a worse job than ever through the new railway, and if cellars are against the law you must send down 3,000 tents from London'<sup>1</sup>

This was not merely a local attitude, for a similar dilemma had appeared in enforcing the law in other towns.

Hunter also found the quality of the water supply was not to his satisfaction, and in doing so was in agreement with a substantial body of local opinion. Although Greenhow passed no adverse judgment in the late fifties, the water which the council pumped from the river Wharfe was unmistakably polluted a few years later. In 1861 the catchment area of the river had a population of about 30,000, and apart from the contamination caused by human wastes, especially from Ikley and Otley, bleach works, gas works, tanneries, papermills and cloth mills discharged their refuse into the Wharfe also.<sup>2</sup> Chemical analysis failed to establish the presence of any harmful ingredients in the water after it had passed through the filter beds, although given the state of analytic knowledge at the time, this conclusion cannot be accepted without reserve.

The administrative control of nuisances in the town was divided, anomalously, and as Hunter pointed out, illegally, between the council and the poor law guardians. The council employed only one inspector and an assistant officer to superintend

'the management of smoke informations, of structural defects, of millponds and offensive trades'.

<sup>1</sup>Hunter, art. cit., p.238.

<sup>2</sup>ibid., p.234, quoting a letter from C.L. Dresser, F.C.S.

Prosecutions were undertaken in accordance with the terms of the improvement acts rather than under general statutes, such as the Nuisances Removal Acts. Thus between 1861 and 1865, of the two hundred and fifty seven summonses taken out by the corporation, one hundred and forty were applied for under the powers of the local acts. The reason for this was that the town clerk doubted his authority to obtain a conviction under the Nuisances Removal Act, presumably because the council did not employ a medical officer to issue the necessary certificate. In contrast, the guardians were extremely active in abating nuisances in the two years since 1863 when it adopted the powers of the Diseases Prevention Act, which it had not the authority to do, although it did not realise this until Hunter's visit. The chairman of the guardians explained to Hunter that,

'they had a more direct interest in the health of the poor'

and from this motive its officers acted to report, and where necessary to prosecute cases of defective drainage, offensive smells, filthy privies, and other general nuisances, and visit lodging houses, cellars and houses to inspect conditions of cleanliness and overcrowding. As Hunter wrote, they

'supply by laborious voluntary exertion and through the good accord which exists among the officers much of the lawful authority's default!'

Dr. Hunter was certainly not alone at this time in condemning the sanitary condition of the town and depreciating the role of the council in public health affairs. He had apparently been sent on his investigation because of the complaints made to the Medical Department about the

'pollution of the Aire and Wharfe rivers and other nuisances'

by Edwin Eddison,<sup>1</sup> the ex-town clerk, who had been active after his retirement from public service in several local pressure groups. In fact, from the beginning of the year there had been considerable public concern over the state of the town as revealed by the mortality statistics produced by the office of the Registrar General, and

'at public meetings, and in printed letters and newspaper articles, it was repeatedly stated that disease was very excessively common, ... and that either the law or its administration was too weak to deal with some obvious nuisances which were universally asserted to exist'<sup>2</sup>

Criticism in the press came in frequent and pungent articles in the Leeds Mercury, which since the mid fifties had been directing its readers' attention to the deficiencies both of the local acts and of the council's measures. But the real catalyst was public awareness of the rising mortality rate, which we shall discuss shortly. In February 1865 an important public meeting was held to consider the sanitary problems of the town.<sup>3</sup> The principal speaker, Frederick Baines, reviewed the main criticisms: the inadequacy of nuisance inspection, the large number of cellar dwellings, the inefficiency of the sewerage system, the absence of comprehensive building regulation and the deficiencies of the local acts. Those members of the council who were present agreed with many of the defects mentioned, but stressed that their initiative was limited by what the electorate was prepared to accept as necessary. As the mayor remarked,

'they needed a public opinion to back them, for so long as the public were crying out 'economy, economy' and upbraiding the council for spending money on what they deemed most advantageous, they made the council what they were'<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>J. Hole, The Homes of the Working Classes, p.140.

<sup>2</sup>Hunter, art.cit., p.226.

<sup>3</sup>LM, 3 Feb 1865.

<sup>4</sup>loc.cit.

The implications contained in this statement will be examined at length later in the chapter.

But the council was far from conciliatory in its reply to the Medical Department when it presented it with a copy of the report. The petition to the Privy Council claimed bombastically that,

'we are not ashamed of our town, nor afraid to live in it. Dr. Hunter's Report is an exaggeration of every nuisance he has found, incorrect in many particulars, and is calculated, by his praising one Public Body at the expense of another, to excite bad feeling between the respective bodies, and by unfavourably contrasting Leeds with other towns, to injure its trade and disturb the peace and happiness of its inhabitants'<sup>1</sup>

The council suggested that the high death rate was essentially a statistical illusion. In Leeds there was a relatively large number of births in proportion to the total population, which caused an unusually high level of infant mortality. Moreover, inaccurate population figures used by the Registrar General's office which underestimated the rate of population growth, gave an upward bias to the mortality rate. In addition, the petition cryptically noted, the town possessed a 'large proportion of low Irish population'.

It is of course true that infant mortality was in this period a disproportionately large component of the total crude death rate. In the late eighteen fifties, 451 in every 1,000 deaths in England was accounted for by mortality in the under ten age group, and the ratio in Leeds township and borough were 528 and 523 respectively, with Manchester's rate standing at 518 and that of Birmingham at 541.<sup>2</sup> But nevertheless, there was no direct correlation between the birth rate and the infant mortality rate, as a comparison based on the demographic

<sup>1</sup>RB, 2 Dec 1865.

<sup>2</sup>Braithwaite, op.cit., p.8. Table 11.

experience of seven towns in 1870 shows. In the interests of simplicity, this is demonstrated in table 3.3. These figures lead to the conclusion that,

'there is no constant correspondence between a high birth rate and a large infantile mortality, and that the existence of the former cannot alone be assumed to explain the latter. They also show that a high rate of infantile mortality may occur as well with a low as with a high birth rate, and the converse'<sup>1</sup>

Whether the Registrar General's population estimates were accurate or not was not really the point at issue. What disturbed the Medical Department of the Privy Council was not only the high death rate in Leeds, but the contribution made to it by the relatively high number of fatalities from diarrhoeal diseases. As all three investigators noted the death rate from this cause was, in Leeds, exceptionally volatile from season to season and year to year, and this suggested that there were significant deficiencies in the council's sanitary policies. Between 1848 and 1858, 65.64% of all deaths from diarrhoea occurred in the months of July, August and September, and in the same months in 1870, the figure was 83.41%. The majority of these deaths occurred in children under one year old: 53.55% in the period 1854-1858, and 68.79% in 1870. Thus the concern of the Medical Department and the Registrar General in 1865 was not simply because there were 296 more deaths than in the corresponding period in 1864, but that in some parts of the borough the increase was caused,

'in a great measure from the continued fatality of diarrhoea, whereas this disease in an epidemic form is fast disappearing from nearly all the other large towns'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Radcliffe, op.cit., p.10.

<sup>2</sup>Hunter, art.cit., p.228, quoting the Weekly Return of the Registrar General for the 36th week of 1865.

TABLE 3.3

The birth rate and infant mortality rate  
in seven towns in 1870

National mean		National mean infant	
birth rate =		mortality rate =	18.3
36.0 per 1,000 living,		per 1,000 registered births	
in seventeen towns.		in seventeen towns.	
<u>Above mean</u>		<u>Above mean</u>	
Leeds	(40.2)	Liverpool	(25.9)
Salford	(40.1)	Leicester	(25.5)
Sheffield	(39.5)	Norwich	(22.1)
Bradford	(39.1)	Leeds	(21.7)
Leicester	(38.0)	Bradford	(20.8)
Liverpool	(37.0)	Salford	(19.1)
<u>Below mean</u>		<u>Below mean</u>	
Norwich	(32.9)	Sheffield	(18.0)

Source: Mr. J. Netten Radcliffe on the Sanitary State of Leeds  
with particular reference to Diarrhoea and Fever.

P.R.O. MH12/15248, p.10.

The reason for isolating this specific disease was that public health experts of the time were fully aware that it was one of a group of diseases which could be diminished as a cause of mortality by the efficient adoption of basic public health measures, such as sewerage, cleansing, and the adoption of a pure water supply.<sup>1</sup> As we have seen the provision of all these services had serious deficiencies in Leeds in the mid-eighteen sixties. Finally, there is no reason to suppose that the Irish population of the town,

'who crowd the dismal recesses of Ebenezer street or Union street'<sup>2</sup>,

and the east ward, had a greater influence upon the death rate in Leeds than similar colonies in other towns. As the Leeds Mercury observed, the council's petition, by

'hardly alledging a single fact in contradiction to his (ie. Hunter's) statements, and merely charging him with prejudice and exaggeration'<sup>3</sup>

was hardly likely to make a favourable impression on the Privy Council. When another member of the Medical Department produced a report on the sanitary state of the town in 1870, he commented that,

'it would have been instructive...to discuss the probable causes which, among a wealthy population like that of Leeds, advanced in political knowledge and in education, the seat of a celebrated school of medicine, have contributed to render abortive in several essential respects the measures of sanitary reform devised by its Corporation thirty years ago'<sup>4</sup>

(2)

In answer to Dr. Radcliffe's speculation, several reasons can be

<sup>1</sup>G. Rosen, 'Disease, Debility and Death', in H.J. Dyos and M. Wolff eds., The Victorian City: Images and Realities, especially pp. 638-9.

<sup>2</sup>LM, 16 March 1867.

<sup>3</sup>LM, 5 Dec 1865.

<sup>4</sup>Radcliffe, op.cit., p.4.

suggested for the deficiencies in the council's role in urban improvement.

Two immediate causes had been mentioned at the public meeting in February 1865, namely the defects of the improvement acts, and the inadequate number of municipal inspectors. At the end of the century the then town clerk observed that,

'Leeds had an exceptional amount of local legislation, <sup>1</sup> taking it early and extensively out of the general law',

and it could be argued that unpredictable legal difficulties arising from the interpretation of the acts restricted the benefits gained from the measures of reform. To cite one obvious instance, the value of the sewerage system was constrained by the council's limited powers to order the installation of house drainage. The council had not adopted the Public Health Act of 1848 nor the Local Government Act of 1858, and this limited the scope of its action in certain cases. As far as the removal of nuisances was concerned, the town clerk believed that, as neither of the general acts were in force in the borough, and as the council had no authority to appoint a medical officer of health, its powers of prosecution under the Nuisance Removal Act were greatly circumscribed. But Leeds was not unusual in its preference for promoting local acts rather than adopting national legislation, for the same situation prevailed in Liverpool, Manchester and Birmingham, and lesser towns besides. Furthermore, there was no reason why the admitted omissions in the local acts should not be remedied by amending legislation, and some of these lacunae had been known to the public for more than a decade.

<sup>1</sup>Webb Loc.Gvt.Coll., volume 265, 'Personal Investigation - 1899. Interview with Harrison, ex-Town Clerk'.



Similar criticisms apply in the case of municipal officials. Leeds was no more dilatory than many other towns in appointing a medical officer of health. The early action taken by Liverpool, in creating such a post in 1846, was commendable but atypical. But the effective enforcement of building, sanitary and smoke regulations depended upon the employment of an adequate number of inspectors, and as we have seen, the council had no building inspector and created the post of smoke inspector only after the exertion of considerable public pressure. The smallness of the corps of inspectors was well known to both the council and its critics, but in mitigation the mayor had claimed that,

'if public opinion had supported the council, they would not now have had only one inspector, but three or four inspectors of nuisances'<sup>1</sup>

As this remark suggests, the issues of local acts and effective inspectors were essentially secondary reasons for the defective sanitary condition of the town and the executive timidity of the council. It was the councillors who determined policy, and behind the elected representatives lay the electorate. The relative influence of these two groups can be considered in various ways. The calibre and social standing of council members is something which was remarked upon both by contemporaries and by historians. In the most superficial sense the snobbery endemic in a highly class-conscious society found expression in equating civic honours with social status. For example, one Liberal councillor in 1864,

'anticipated a time would come when persons higher in social position than those at present in the council would have to fill their seats. He felt at present there were few members of the council who were fit to be aldermen, and fewer still who were at all qualified to be mayor'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>LM, 3 Feb 1865.

<sup>2</sup>LI, 15 Oct 1864.

But beyond this, there is a discernable relationship between social status and policy making. A commentator on local politics in Birmingham observed that the town's councillors were recruited from,

'the unprogressive tradesmen class - many of them worthy in their way, but of limited ideas. In their private business they were not accustomed to deal with big transactions and high figures, so that spending large sums of money, if proposed, filled the brewer, the baker and the candlestick-maker with alarm'!

This line of enquiry suggested itself to the Webbs, for in their research papers on Leeds town council there are several indications that they regarded the socio-economic status of its members as an important influence upon policy.<sup>2</sup> This interpretation has since been adopted by E.P. Hennock, and subjected to extensive analysis by him in two works.<sup>3</sup> As the sentiments of councillor Garside suggest, the social composition of the council was, by the mid sixties, not particularly exalted. Because of the lack of information about the local economy, especially on the micro level, even Dr. Hennock has been unable to distinguish which members of the council, amongst the industrialists, were the owners of small, medium or large firms. But at the two extremes, namely the professions and the retailing group - the shopkeepers - definite and significant changes took place in the strength of their representation on the council in the three decades following municipal reform.

After the first election in 1835, the occupational structure of the new council was little different from its unreformed predecessor.

<sup>1</sup> A. Briggs, Victorian Cities, p.208.

<sup>2</sup> Webb Loc. Gvt. Coll., volume 262, 'Leeds Town Council, 1835-1900', pp 9-10, p.24; volume 265, 'Personal Investigation - 1899' (no pagination) contains an occupational breakdown of council membership in that year, and two interviews with the Lord Mayor which are relevant to this issue.

<sup>3</sup> E.P. Hennock, 'The social composition of borough councils in two large cities, 1835-1914', in H.J. Dyos ed., The Study of Urban History; and Fit and Proper Persons: Ideal and Reality in Nineteenth Century Urban Government.

The change which reform had created was, as intended, a purely political one: liberal linen and woollen merchants, bankers and others ousted their tory counterparts. But in the decade after the improvement act, the shopkeepers increased their numbers considerably. In 1835 there were none; in 1842, six, and ten years later there were fifteen, out of a total membership of forty two. During the eighteen fifties, it became clear that this new element was a permanent one, and retailers formed about twenty percent of council members. At the other extreme, the doctors, lawyers, and other professional men retained their meagre numbers, with never half as many councillors as the shopocracy.<sup>1</sup> But this group had a greater importance in the council than mere numbers imply. Robert Baker is an obvious example of a highly influential member of this group formulating corporate policy, and when he retired from the council, T.W. Tottie, John Hope Shaw, and Edwin Eddison, all of them lawyers, played important roles. Eddison was an important initiator, campaigning for the appointment of a smoke inspector, and municipal ownership of the gas and water supplies. He was also active outside the council, in organising public opinion on municipal issues. John Hope Shaw was the major force behind the purchase of the water works. Apart from their active campaigning for urban improvement, Baker, Eddison and Shaw all had something else in common. They all experienced opposition strong enough to lead them to resign. Baker was virtually forced out by the south ward electors, Eddison spent considerable efforts in mobilising pressure groups, and presumably despairing of their value, was partly responsible for summoning support from the Privy Council. Similarly,

<sup>1</sup>Hennock, op. cit., table 15, p.203.

John Hope Shaw resigned over the council's short-sighted decision to ignore his advocacy of the Washburn water scheme, and instead obtain its new supply from the river Wharfe.

Throughout this period, and for many decades ahead, the political control of the council was vested in the Liberal party, which retained a majority of councillors, a majority of committee chairmen, and a monopoly of the aldermanic bench.<sup>1</sup> If the national liberal creed in the nineteenth century was 'peace, retrenchment and reform', retrenchment, or at least economy, was the major element in local liberal politics. The local party was not, however, monolithic in its ideas. The concept of economy was open to different interpretations. There was the small-minded 'economist' who objected to increasing municipal expenditure, who,

'went into the council to advocate what was called strict economy, which meant to take care of one guinea and spend five'<sup>2</sup>

as one conservative cynically, but not wholly unfairly observed, and there were the progressive Liberals who believed in the efficient administration of adequate municipal services. Similarly, there were such divisions amongst the Conservatives, but because of the continuing Liberal hegemony this was of little importance in this period. The Webbs believed that,

'the Moderate Liberals were chiefly drawn from the shopkeeping class, and the one article of their creed was economy'<sup>3</sup>

No survey of the relationship between politics and policy can be complete without an examination of the nature of the electorate which

<sup>1</sup> *ibid.*, p.204.

<sup>2</sup> LM, 3 Feb 1865.

<sup>3</sup> Webb Loc. Gvt. Coll., volume 262, 'Leeds Town Council 1835-1900', p.24.

voted its candidates into office. The act of 1835 gave the municipal franchise to all inhabitants who were ratepayers of three years' standing, but in practice the possession of a municipal vote was complicated by the existence of local customs relating to the payment of rates and compounding.<sup>1</sup> The uncertainty of the law on these questions, and more important, the differing local interpretations of the law, created some difficulties. In the case of a leasehold where the tenant paid the rates direct, there was no doubt about his entitlement to vote, but differences of opinion arose when rates were paid by the landlord. A further issue was introduced by the practice of compounding, that is, when the rating authority allowed a landlord a rebate upon his rate payments in return for the convenience of collecting one sum from him rather than his numerous tenants. Appropriately it was Edward Baines senior of Leeds, who, according to his son, had proposed

'an amendment (to the Municipal Corporations Act) which would have had the effect of allowing tenants to vote where their landlords compounded for poor rates'<sup>2</sup>

Baines junior then went on to observe that,

'By this practice of compounding, many thousands of small occupiers lose their municipal votes; and to such an extent does this prevail in Manchester, that the municipal electors of that city are fewer in numbers than the parliamentary electors, though in Leeds the former are more than double the number of the latter'.

Manchester and Leeds were in fact at the opposite extremes in relation to the municipal franchise. In Manchester the church wardens obtained a legal opinion in 1834 which justified them in excluding tenants of compounded property from the right to vote, and they later

<sup>1</sup>B. Keith-Lucas, The English Local Government Franchise: A Short History, pp. 64-74.

<sup>2</sup>LM, 7 April 1849.

TABLE 3.4

Number of municipal voters in the borough of Leeds  
in 1835, 1845<sup>(a)</sup>, 1865, 1874 and 1881

Date	Population (estimated)	Municipal voters	% age of population	Parliamentary voters	% age of population
1835	134,857	6,791	5.0	-	-
1845 <sup>(a)</sup>	93,782	8,050	8.6	6,000	6.4
1865	227,984	32,873	14.4	7,818	3.4
1874	274,184	54,285	19.8	-	-
1881	309,126	61,509	19.9	52,129	16.9

Sources: (1) 1835 and 1874, 'Return of the Area, Population, Rateable Value, and Number of Voters in the several Wards of the Borough...', CM; 21 Jan 1875.

(2) 1845, (township only) PRO, MH 12/15226, 31 Jan 1845.

(3) 1865, J. Mayhall, Annals of Yorkshire, volume 2, sub 16 Dec 1865.

(4) 1881, F.R. Spark, 'Collection of Extracts, Documents, etc., relating to Leeds City Council Proceedings', volume 4, (unnumbered pages).

Notes: (a) Refers to Leeds township only.  
 For a comparison with Birmingham, Maidstone, and Ipswich, see E.P. Hennock, Fit and Proper Persons, p.12.

refused to adopt the liberalising Small Tenements Rating Act of 1850. But there seems to have been no such strict interpretation in Leeds, with the result mentioned above. Indeed, the franchise pattern of the borough seems to have been completely different from the one which existed elsewhere, for in thirty nine boroughs for which accurate statistics are available, the total parliamentary franchise in 1837 was fifteen percent greater than the municipal.<sup>1</sup> Although it is not within the scope of this present essay to examine the structure of politics in Leeds, we can hardly ignore the implications of this situation, for it is possible that the unusually large electorate which the borough possessed had an important influence upon the type of councillor elected to office. There is some evidence, at present impressionistic, but persuasive, that the electorate included a highly-influential body of small shopkeepers, whose political vigilance was especially directed towards maintaining economy in local government. We have already noted that the Webbs regarded the shopkeepers on the council as an influential group, but outside the council chamber this class also exerted its presence. In May 1847, the secretary of the south ward sanitary association observed that,

'it has been said that Mr. Baker was turned out of the representation of the south ward, because he wanted to spend £20,000 in making a sewer to drain the ward. The shopkeepers now saw the matter in a different light'<sup>2</sup>

and again in February 1849, in the course of one of the debates on the sewerage question, one of the councillors presented a memorial from two hundred and sixty electors of the Kirkgate ward, expressing satisfaction at the recent decision to postpone the beginning of the sewerage scheme and requesting its deferment again. Significantly the petitioners were

<sup>1</sup>Keith-Lucas, *op.cit.*, pp. 60-63.

<sup>2</sup>LI, 1 May 1847.

'mostly shopkeepers'<sup>1</sup>. Urban reform was not, of course, an abstract political issue, but (and especially for this group), a question of practical finance. James Hole was well aware that councillors,

'and those who elect them are the lower middle class, the owners, generally speaking of that very property which requires improvement. To ask them to close cellar dwellings is to ask them to forfeit a portion of their incomes. Every pound they vote for drainage, or other sanitary improvement, is something taken out of their pocket'<sup>2</sup>.

To take another example, when Edward Baines junior was defeated in the general election of 1874, he mentioned the same motive as one of the causes of his defeat:

'a great number of retail dealers, offended by the Adulteration Act....Every milkman and every grocer in Leeds (I was told) voted against me'<sup>3</sup>

If Edward Baines, for much of the time, remote from his constituents in Westminster, or among the urban aristocracy of his native town, and enjoying the relatively high degree of deference accorded to a member of parliament felt such pressures, it can readily be assumed that a member of the local council, living amongst or in close proximity to his electors, and all too available for interrogation at ward meetings would feel electoral disapproval strongly and quickly. The reasons for the shopkeepers' creed of economy are easy to understand. They were not wealthy, and so the prospect of rising municipal expenditure was a direct threat to their standard of living because of rising rates. Furthermore as a group they were particularly susceptible to economic fluctuations, as this affected the purchasing power of their customers, especially when these were working class. As Robert Baker

<sup>1</sup>LM, 17 Feb 1849.

<sup>2</sup>James Hole, The Homes of the Working Classes, p.25.

<sup>3</sup>Quoted in J. Vincent, The Formation of the Liberal Party, 1857-1868, p.125.



observed in another context,

'few persons know better than the grocers and tea dealers of the town, how general trade is moving; the demand for the luxuries of life is a correct barometer of the means within the power of consumers'<sup>1</sup>

The rise of an expenditure-conscious group in local politics was of course by no means unique to Leeds. Dr. Hennock has shown it to be characteristic of other local authorities, once the electorate had its first experience of the cost of improvement,<sup>2</sup> and as we have shown, a large proportion of voters in Leeds were likely to have been particularly sensitive to rising local government expenditure. In addition, it may have been that the political stranglehold of the Liberals inhibited the adoption of more enlightened policies, or at least the more effective operation of public services.<sup>3</sup> Certainly, when the local political situation became more fluid in the early eightennineties, the inter-party rivalry forced the Liberals to produce a programme of municipal reform.<sup>4</sup>

(3)

In the first chapter, we outlined the economic and demographic growth of Leeds upto the eighteen forties, and we must now consider how the borough continued to develop in the succeeding decades of the period.

<sup>1</sup> 'Report upon the Condition of the Town of Leeds and of its Inhabitants', J.S.S., vol. ii 1840, p.422.

<sup>2</sup> E.P. Hennock, 'Finance and politics in urban local government in England, 1835-1900', Historical Journal, VI,2 (1963), pp.212-225. Financial matters are considered below, pp.377-396.

<sup>3</sup> There was certainly little pressure on the council from middle-class groups pressing for improvements: see, T.W. Reid, Memoir of J.D. Heaton, M.D., pp. 107-109, and 'Extracts from the journals of John Deakin Heaton', Publications of the Thoresby Society, Miscellany, vol. 15 Part 2, 1971, pp. 111-113.

<sup>4</sup> Hennock, op.cit., pp.253-255.

During the second half of the nineteenth century, the population of Leeds increased considerably: there were 172,270 inhabitants in 1851 and 428,988 fifty years later. By the eighteen fifties, Leeds, Hunslet, and Holbeck had almost achieved complete physical fusion. As Robert Baker observed,

'Holbeck is, and Hunslet is nearly, now united with Leeds in complete continuity'<sup>1</sup>

At this time, the three inner townships retained a clear numerical predominance, but already the pattern of demographic and industrial change had begun to change. As can be seen from table 3, Leeds continued to grow, and Hunslet maintained its ranking in the later decades of the century, increasing by between 10,000 and 12,000 at each census after the eighteen fifties. In contrast, Holbeck expanded at a much slower rate until the last decade of the century, by which time it was only marginally greater in numbers than Wortley and Armley. These two townships to the west of Holbeck gained approximately twenty thousand new inhabitants each during this period. Bramley also declined in relative importance, for although it was larger than the last-mentioned townships at mid-century, it was scarcely sixty percent of the size of either by 1901. Farnley and Beeston, on the south western periphery of the borough remained insignificant settlements in the second, as in the first fifty years of the century.

To the north of the river Aire, the various wards and census district of Leeds experienced differing demographic fortunes. The township as a whole remained, by a considerable margin, the most

<sup>1</sup>R. Baker, 'On the industrial and sanitary economy of the borough of Leeds in 1858', J.S.S., vol. xxi, 1858, pp. 427-443.

populous in the borough and the marked decrease in its rate of growth in the last decade must of course be attributed to the fact that it had reached the physical limit of expansion. But there were significant variations between the wards. The South, Kirkgate and Mill Hill wards were declining in numbers, but at the same time, the per capita rateable value of property in Kirkgate and Mill Hill increased markedly (see table 3.4). This increase is of course the result of the progressive transformation of the town centre into a 'central business district' with the replacement of houses by warehouses shops and offices.<sup>1</sup> As we shall see, this appreciation in commercial property values was partly the result of the council's street improvement policy. To the north west, Headingley-cum-Burley increased in numbers with growing rapidity to make it the third largest township by the turn of the century. Its notable expansion had two causes. Headingley itself was the major suburban residential district of the borough. As the census enumerators noted in 1861,

'the sanitary advantages of Headingley cum Burley have induced a large proportion of the mercantile community of Leeds to reside in the township'<sup>2</sup>

In Burley, however, which was contiguous with the west ward of Leeds township, it was the growth of working class, rather than middle class housing which contributed to the overall population increase in the township. Chapel Allerton and Potter Newton, located on the north eastern boundary of the borough were destined to become suburban areas and by the eighteen fifties this development had, falteringly, begun. But at this time they were still part village and

<sup>1</sup>ibid., pp. 431-2; Census 1871, vol. 2, p.440, footnote 'b'.

<sup>2</sup>Census 1861, vol. 1, p.613, footnote 'b'.

TABLE 3.5

Per capita rateable values in each  
ward in the township of Leeds in  
1843 and 1874

Wards	1843 (£)	1874 (£)
Mill Hill	11.38	27.38
Kirkgate	7.15	12.73
West	3.32	4.11
South	3.22	4.37
North West	2.55	3.19
North	2.07	2.45
East	1.84	2.49
North East	1.33	1.75

Source: 'Return of the Area, Population, Rateable Value, and Number of Voters in the several Wards of the Borough...', CM, 21 Jan 1875.

TABLE 3.6  
The Population of the Townships in the  
Borough of Leeds, 1851-1901

TOWNSHIP	1851	1861	1871	1881	1891	1901
<b>Leeds:</b>						
South East Leeds	27,435	29,196	29,124	30,368	33,385	34,299
North Leeds	36,048	41,136	49,628	55,849	60,618	59,281
West Leeds	37,860	47,234	60,610	73,892	83,520	84,340
<b>SUB TOTAL</b>	<b>101,343</b>	<b>117,566</b>	<b>139,362</b>	<b>160,109</b>	<b>177,523</b>	<b>177,920</b>
Armley	6,109	6,734	9,224	12,737	18,992	27,521
Beeston	1,973	2,547	2,762	2,928	2,962	3,323
Bramley	8,949	8,690	9,882	11,055	14,787	17,299
Chapel Allerton	2,842	3,083	3,847	4,324	4,377	5,841
Farnley	1,722	3,064	2,964	3,608	3,590	4,351
Headingley	6,105	9,674	13,942	19,138	29,911	41,561
Holbeck	14,152	15,824	17,165	19,150	20,630	28,294 <sup>1</sup>
Hunslet	19,466	225,763	37,289	46,942	58,164	69,064
Potter Newton	1,385	1,878	3,457	5,107	9,269	26,004 <sup>2</sup>
Wortley	7,896	12,058	18,923	23,530	26,854	27,456
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>171,942</b>	<b>206,881</b>	<b>258,817</b>	<b>308,628</b>	<b>367,059</b>	<b>428,634</b>

Source: Printed Census.

Notes: <sup>1</sup>Census 1901, County of York, table 12, p.91, gives the population of Hunslet in 1891, as 56,764 (ie. 1,418 persons fewer than given in the 1891 Census), and that of Holbeck as 22,048 (ie. 1,418 persons more than given in the 1891 Census). There was presumably a simple transfer of area for census purposes from the former township to the latter.

<sup>2</sup>ibid., table 12, p.92 gives the population of Potter Newton in 1891 as 9,284.

part suburb: the wealthy commuters owned the 'suburban residences' while the indigenous inhabitants, the 'poorer population' gained their living from local agricultural and quarrying work.<sup>1</sup> Chapel Allerton achieved a modest growth in this period, but Potter Newton grew more rapidly, and experienced a spectacular advance in numbers in the eighteen nineties.

Because of the exceptionally large area which lay within the municipal boundaries, practically all the urban growth which can be attributed to the economic momentum of the borough can be traced in its constituent townships. But by the beginning of the twentieth century, peripheral areas on its eastern and northern edges were being drawn into its orbit. From the eighteen seventies, the council had owned a substantial part of Roundhay, which had been purchased partly to provide a public park, and partly for sale as building lots. As we shall see, this large scale speculation at first produced financially disappointing results, but by the turn of the century, improved transport facilities had caused the population of the parish to almost double within a decade.<sup>2</sup> Seacroft, on the east of the borough, increased in numbers by more than twenty per cent between 1891 and 1901, but many of the two hundred and seventy one people enumerated in the latter year were in fact patients in the council's new isolation hospital.<sup>3</sup>

Now that the geography of demographic change has been surveyed, we must now attempt to explain the economic basis of growth, and suggest reasons for the differing rates of population growth in the

<sup>1</sup>Baker, art.cit., p.429, sub Chapel Allerton, and Potter Newton.

<sup>2</sup>Census 1901, County of York, p.92 asterisked footnote.

<sup>3</sup>ibid., daggered footnote.

various townships. Very little has been written on the development of the local economy in this period, and so the following survey must be tentative, but it hopefully, will be adequate for the present purpose. In 1851, the textile trades still retained an undisputed predominance as a source of employment for the working population of the borough but over the second half of the century it declined in importance in the occupational structure, employing 29,000 (34%) workers in 1851 and 20,000 (9.3%) in 1901.<sup>1</sup> In this period it was eclipsed as the major catalyst of growth by two industries: engineering and clothing. From the eighteen fifties the engineering trades employed between 12% and 14% of the rapidly growing labour force although in terms of the number employed, it did not overtake textiles until the eighteen nineties. It manufactured a wide range of products: stationary engines, locomotives, boilers, heavy and light armaments, machine tools, castings, traction engines, and not surprisingly, textile machinery. In at least two branches of the industry, machine tool making at Greenwood's and at Batley's, and Buckton's, and in Kitson's locomotive making plant, Leeds possessed firms which were amongst the most important in Great Britain.<sup>2</sup> By the second decade of the twentieth century the industry had achieved an exceptional export record, for in its different sectors it sold between fifty and ninety five percent of its output in foreign markets.<sup>3</sup> The dynamism of local engineering meant rapidly increasing employment, which in turn was reflected in the rapid growth of population in Hunslet, Wortley,

<sup>1</sup>W.G. Rimmer, 'Occupations in Leeds, 1841-1951', Publications of the Thoresby Society, Miscellany, vol. 14 part 2, 1967 pp. 158-178.

<sup>2</sup>S.B. Saul, 'The market and development of the mechanical engineering industries in Britain, 1860-1914', Ec. H.R., 2nd series, vol. XX 1967-68, p.115, table 3 and p.121, table 4.

<sup>3</sup>J. Buckman, 'Later Phases of Industrialisation, to 1918', in M.W. Beresford and G.R.J. Jones eds., Leeds and its Region, p.165.

Armley, and the west and north west wards of Leeds.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps the relatively slow expansion of Holbeck before the nineties was caused by its dependence upon textiles, especially since upto the mid eighties, it possessed the decaying industrial giant, Marshalls the flax spinners.

By the late nineteenth century, there seems to have been general agreement that the continuing prosperity of Leeds was the result of the diversity of its industries.<sup>2</sup> As we have noted, engineering rapidly moved to the forefront, but from the eighteen eighties it was, in numerical terms at least, overtaken by the other major local industry. In the last twenty years of the century the name of Leeds became synonymous with the ready made clothing industry. As the council's medical officer of health remarked at the time,

'a quarter of a century ago it was a little difficult to find large wholesale clothiers' shops when you wanted them, but now they occupy prominent positions in our main thoroughfares, so much so that it has become almost a matter of doubt in late years as to whether the cloth manufacturing or the ready made clothing trade is the principal trade of the two'<sup>3</sup>

Dr. Goldie might have been in doubt, but the census figures show the change very clearly. In the place of the borough's traditional source of pre-eminence, the manufacture of ready made advanced rapidly from the eighteen eighties.<sup>4</sup> Once the techniques of mass production, pioneered by John Barran, had been established, the industry expanded rapidly. Its products were far cheaper than those of the bespoke tailor, and indeed its competition reduced the number of the

<sup>1</sup>Census 1861, vol. 1, p.613, footnotes 'hh' and 'l'; Census 1871, vol. 2, footnotes 'c' and 'h'.

<sup>2</sup>Buckman, art.cit., p.156; M.W. Beresford, Leeds Chambers of Commerce, p.183, sub. 1888; Royal Commission on the Housing of the Working Classes, 1885, vol. 2, Qu. 9801.

<sup>3</sup>SC, 25 June 1888.

<sup>4</sup>Unless otherwise stated, information on the history of the ready-made clothing industry has been derived from the Royal Commission on Alien Immigration, 1903, Qu. 14,260-Qu. 14,471, Qu. 14,988-Qu. 15,085, Qu. 15,086-Qu. 15,131 and Qu. 20,366-Qu. 20,465.



latter from about 550 to about 250 by the beginning of the new century. Furthermore, the decline in price took place at a time when the national standard of living was indisputably rising. The prosperity of the industry is indicated by its importance in the occupational structure, and its expansion was assisted by the appearance of an unexpected source of labour. After the assassination of Tsar Alexander II, a series of pogroms caused a large-scale emigration of Jews from Russian-controlled dominions. As The Lancet observed,

'the greater part came from the province of Knovo; and at starting, (they) are of ten acquainted with but one word of English, and that word is 'Leeds'....It seems evident that, as a whole, they readily earned their living at Leeds, and to the Russian jew, in dread of obligatory military service, and suffering from religious persecution, the name of Leeds was but a modern term for an El Dorado'<sup>1</sup>

The industry, relying to a great extent upon cheap Bradford worsteds, was carried on in both factories and workshops. The simplest items of clothing, the jackets and trousers were almost exclusively made up in the factories, and the making up of coats and most 'juvenile clothing' from sections cut out in the factories, was carried on in homes and workshops. In the late eighties there were perhaps seventy six of the latter, usually owned by a Jewish master tailor and employing an average of twenty nine workers.<sup>2</sup> Fifteen years later there were 297 workshops, of which 180 were staffed by Jews. The immigrants had established themselves in a ghetto, which was centred on the Leylands.

By 1901 the three major industries of the city, textiles, clothing and engineering employed 9.3%, 14.2% and 17.5% respectively of the labour force in the city. The claims made of a healthy

<sup>1</sup>The Lancet, 9 June 1888, pp. 1146-1148, and 16 June 1888, pp. 1209-1210.

<sup>2</sup>SC, 25 June 1888.

diversity for the economy of Leeds were justifiable on two other counts also. There was diversity of markets, since the major sectors of the engineering industry were heavily export-oriented, whereas two thirds of the output of the clothing industry was sold in the domestic market.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, while engineering was an almost exclusively male-dominated occupation, the 'ready-made' trade and the textile industry provided a major source of employment for female labour.

<sup>1</sup>J. Buckman, art.cit., p.165.

CHAPTER FOUR

PUBLIC HEALTH, 1866 - 1905

(1)

The construction of the sewerage system in the central urban area in the early eighteen fifties provided Leeds with a basic sanitary infrastructure, but as its designer had realised, this was only a preliminary stage in the achievement of adequate urban sanitation. In his report, J.W. Leather had explicitly recognised the importance of devising a plan which would allow for the extension of the main sewer network as the urban area expanded; and although he had rightly discredited the proposals for sewage utilisation which had been made by James Vetch, he nevertheless accepted that some such scheme might be necessary and practicable in the future if serious river pollution was to be avoided. The history of municipal sanitary schemes then in the period from 1855 to 1905 is essentially concerned with these two issues: firstly, the planning of successive extensions of the sewerage system, and secondly the development of effective methods for the treatment and disposal of sewage.

In 1862, the streets and sewerage committee recommended the council to declare Headingley a drainage district under its powers derived from the 1848 improvement act, so that the township, (which had more than doubled its population over the previous twenty years) could be assimilated into the sewerage system provided for Leeds, Hunslet and Holbeck. However, a strong separatist movement appeared in Headingley, which claimed that a cheaper and more beneficial scheme could be put into effect without reference to the municipal network. In the face of local opposition, the council did not adopt the proposal of the streets committee, but warned the recalcitrant township that it was undesirable that it should

'expend a large sum in an indifferent system of sewerage, and that it is especially undesirable to turn the sewerage (sic) of Headingley-cum-Burley into the river Aire above Leeds'<sup>1</sup>

During the eighteen sixties, only one new drainage district was actually created, and several minor improvements were made, although plans for more extensive schemes were under consideration. The new drainage district, St. Johns, New Wortley, was adopted because of local pressure. In February 1866 a deputation from New Wortley which had been appointed at a public meeting there presented itself to the streets committee and urged it to improve the sewerage in the district. The deputation then appeared before the council to make its request, and the streets committee suggested that the parish of St. John's in which New Wortley was situated should become a drainage district, since as it lay on the west of the Holbeck drainage district it would not be difficult to make the necessary extensions to the existing sewers.<sup>2</sup> The scheme cost £14,650 and provided sewerage for 207 acres.

Otherwise, the practical results achieved in the sixties were of little significance. The committee authorised the building of sewers in Back lane and Bell lane, Bramley and in North lane, Headingley when prompted to do so, in the first case by the Bramley Guardians and in the second by the scavenging and nuisance committee.<sup>3</sup> But the streets committee was active in devising long term plans to integrate large areas of the borough into a comprehensive sewerage system. This was apparent even in the minor works which were undertaken, for the Bramley and Headingley sewers were designed so that they could later be assimilated into the overall plan.

<sup>1</sup>SSC, 27 Dec 1861, 24 March 1862; CM, 10 April 1862.

<sup>2</sup>SSC, 2 Feb 1866; CM, 14 Feb, 29 March 1866, 30 March 1867.

<sup>3</sup>SSC, 22 Feb, 1866, 30 Aug, 25 Oct 1867.

By the late sixties, two major schemes had been prepared by the borough surveyor. The first was for a South Western Drainage District, comprising Armley, Upper and Lower Wortley, Farnley, Beeston and the parts of Stanningley and Pudsey which lay within the borough, in all a total area of 5,764 acres, or about nine square miles. This was to be provided with five main sewers, at an estimated cost of £40,500<sup>1</sup>.

The second, the North Western Drainage District, covered a total of 2,880 acres (4½ square miles), taking in parts of Headingley-cum-Burley, Chapel Allerton, and Potternewton, and was expected to cost £30,250<sup>2</sup>. In August 1869, the council adopted the report of the streets and sewerage committee, but rearranged the plans so as to unite Armley, Wortley, Headingley, Chapel Allerton and Potternewton into a single Drainage District.<sup>3</sup>

The appearance of these proposals met with legal opposition, for landowners downstream from Leeds were apprehensive of the increase in the pollution of the river Aire which would be caused if the drainage area was extended further. By December 1869, the Attorney General, on the information of two riparian landowners, had applied for an injunction in Chancery to prevent impurified sewage from being discharged into the river by the corporation.<sup>4</sup>

On several occasions in the eighteen fifties and sixties, the streets and sewerage committee had considered, in a desultory way, the possibility of sewage utilization,<sup>5</sup> but the issue of an injunction now made the search for some solution imperative. One scheme which had

<sup>1</sup>A.M. Fowler, Report to the Streets and Sewerage committee of the Town Council upon farming a Drainage District for the South West portion of the Borough of Leeds, and the effectual sewerage of the same (1868).

<sup>2</sup>LM, 18 May 1871.

<sup>3</sup>CM, 19 Aug 1869.

<sup>4</sup>CM, 6 Dec 1869.

<sup>5</sup>See above, p. 98.

been proposed had been produced by the borough surveyor in 1868, and it bears an interesting resemblance to that which the council attempted to put into practice thirty years later. He proposed that land should be acquired at Thorne Waste, and that the sewage should be conveyed to the site by gravitation by means of a twenty-seven mile conduit. This location was chosen because of its remoteness and because the gradients between Leeds and Thorne Waste would permit the sewage to flow by force of gravity, which would make the great expense involved in pumping unnecessary. Even so, the project was very costly: he estimated that the cost of the conduit, the purchase of land, and the laying out of 2,000 acres to receive the effluent would cost £258,000<sup>1</sup>. Not surprisingly, when the committee was two years later, obliged to consider some proposal to meet the terms of the injunction, this was not the one which they selected.

The committee decided to carry out experiments on land adjacent to the existing main sewer outfall at Knostrop, and purchased twenty six acres of land for £5,196 from the Temple Newsam estate.<sup>2</sup> Despite the urgency of the matter, several years were spent in commercially-oriented experiment, to the dismay of a Local Government Board inspector, who commented that,

'the condition of a population subjected to the terms of an injunction similar to that which now affects Leeds, should forbid prolonged delays from experimental attempts to discover the best economic solution....Experiment is mis-timed when the danger it should have been directed to obviate has actually been incurred. Already considerable delay has happened in Leeds in instituting even an experimental measure...'<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A.W. Morant, Description of the Leeds Sewage Works, and of the Various Processes which have been tried for the Purification of the Sewage. (1876).

<sup>2</sup> RB, 23 Jan 1888.

<sup>3</sup> Mr. J. Netten Radcliffe on the Sanitary State of Leeds with particular reference to Diarrhoea and Fever, PRO, MH 12/15248, p.21.

From October 1871 to March 1873, the sewage works were operated by the Native Guano Company, which incurred financial difficulties because it could not make a profit from manure sales, and it was succeeded by the Leeds Clarifying and Utilisation of Sewage Company, which in turn gave way to other ingenious and unsuccessful entrepreneurs.<sup>1</sup> Ultimately, the committee decided in 1877 that the cheapest and most effective method was a lime precipitation process. In this, sewage was pumped into settlement tanks and treated with lime to precipitate the solids. The clarified effluent was then discharged into the river, and sludge deposited in the tanks was allowed to dry before being removed. When completed, the works had cost £57,524 to build, and cost between £4,000 and £5,000 a year to operate.<sup>2</sup>

Once an efficient means of sewage purification had been adopted, the extension of the sewerage system could begin again, and between 1877 and 1900, £593,662 was spent on sewerage and drainage works.<sup>3</sup> In the eighteen eighties and nineties, approximately 120 miles of sewers were being built in each decade, which more than doubled the size of the pre-injunction network, and this, combined with the increasing number of water closets which were being installed, greatly increased the problem of sewage disposal. By the turn of the century, so the chairman of the sewerage committee claimed,

'we are merely subsiding or settling the suspended solids in the normal flow, and we are doing that in a very imperfect way, because our settlement area is too small and we have no available area to deal with the large amount of sludge produced'<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>A.W. Morant, op.cit., and J. Toft, thesis, chapter 8.

<sup>2</sup>R.B. 23 Jan 1888, and T. Hewson, Description of the Leeds Sewage Works. (1884)

<sup>3</sup>Annual Reports of Committees, 1889-1900, 'Report of the Finance

<sup>4</sup>Committee'.  
House of Lords Select Committee on the Leeds Corporation (General Powers) Bill, 1 May 1901, Qu. 1365. Unless otherwise stated, all information on the Gateforth scheme comes from these minutes of evidence, especially Qu. 1195, 1196, 1269, 1270, 1290, 1372, 1375, and 1722. The council had begun sewage disposal experiments in 1894, under pressure from the West Riding Rivers Board, LM, 5 April 1900.



By 1900, the committee had finalised its plans to overcome this difficulty. In April, the council approved of the purchase of the 1,882-acre Gateforth Estate, near Selby for £85,000 and in November decided to obtain a local act to authorise the expenditure of about £700,000 to provide sewage disposal facilities on the site.<sup>1</sup> After preliminary screening at Knowstrop, to remove road grit and other substances washed into the sewers at times of heavy rainfall, the sewage would flow by gravitation to Gateforth where it would be fed into settling tanks. Each day the sludge would be run off into newly-ploughed trenches, and the soil would then be turned in, so that 'each day's trenching will dispose of each day's sludge'. The site had been chosen because it was the nearest which could be supplied by gravitation from Leeds, and hence would make the expensive process of pumping unnecessary, but in any case, it was the only site within reasonable distance

'of anything like an adequate area for the treatment of... sewage on any system'.

Unfortunately for the corporation, the scheme was rejected by parliament as a result of opposition from landowners, differences of opinion over the proposed method of sewage treatment, and the fear that it might endanger the water supply of Selby and Pontefract.<sup>2</sup> The sewerage committee were thus obliged to remodel the existing purification plant at Knowstrop, and to spend £34,000 on building a smaller sewerage works at Rodley, on the south western boundary of the borough to meet the requirements of Rodley and Bramley.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>CM, 4 April, 9 Nov 1900.

<sup>2</sup>YP, 6 June 1901.

<sup>3</sup>G.A. Hart, 'Description of the Sewerage and Sewage Disposal Works of Leeds, with special reference to the Sewage Disposal Works and Lands at Rodley', Journal of the Royal Sanitary Institute, XXIX (1908), 15-21.

(2)

Several of the most important features of the work of the sanitary committee in the last decades of the century were concerned with the problems posed by the need to ensure the efficient removal of human and household refuse. The inspectors of the Local Government Board identified two objectionable features in the system in use in Leeds in the eighteen sixties for the disposal of 'night soil' or excrement. Dr. Hunter referred scathingly to the inefficient method used for cleansing privies, with its reliance on sub-contracting, and the consequent threat to health which arose from a practice which made public health subservient to a profit-and-loss criterion. Dr. Radcliffe emphasised the importance of abolishing privies and middensteads which existed in considerable numbers in the borough, by replacing them with water closets, or at least modifying them so as to allow more frequent cleansing. Indeed, Radcliffe believed that their continued existence nullified the improvement in public health conditions which the council's extensive sewerage system ought to have achieved. As he observed,

'some of the most important objects for which the system was planned, and which principally affect the state of health of the population have been very imperfectly secured. As a means for obtaining the rapid removal of excremental matters from the midst of the houses, by the substitution of water closets for the abominable middenstead and cesspool, and the abolition of the latter, the facts...show that so small a result has been secured as to be practically inappreciable upon the state of health of the borough. The water closet is even now an exceptional luxury amongst the inhabitants, not a common convenience, and the middenstead and cesspool, with all their mischievous offensiveness, are still the ordinary methods of excrement disposal'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Mr. J. Netten Radcliffe on the Sanitary State of Leeds, with particular reference to Diarrhoea and Fever, PRO MH12/15248, p.19.

As we shall see, the council's attitude on this issue, as expressed in its building bye-laws, brought it into conflict with the Local Government Board.

As we demonstrated in an earlier chapter, the council's experience of contracting for the removal of refuse from the privies and ashpits of the drainage district was characterised by recurrent crises caused by the insolvency and inefficiency on the part of successive contractors, and that this culminated in 1865 in a serious breakdown of the service which, unhappily for the council, co-incided with a visit from an inspector from the Medical Department of the Privy Council. Unfortunately, in the following decades the situation changed very little, and the conflict between cost-consciousness and the need for efficiency caused policy to alternate between contracting and direct works. The council had let the work to a contractor in September 1865, but by February 1867, the scavenging and nuisance committee was receiving complaints of neglect, and after a tour of inspection the contract was revoked, and with the council's approval, a refuse removal department was created.<sup>1</sup> This decision was reversed in March 1876 when the council, on the advice of the sanitary committee, again placed the work out to contract for £15,650 a year.<sup>2</sup> It seems that the reason for this was the rising expenditure of the night soil department. In 1870, gross operating costs were £8,450, and the 'loss' was £4,958, but three years later, as a result of wage increases, the additional expense of the 'box system' in the east ward, and the falling revenue from manure sales, the gross cost had risen to £16,800, and the 'loss' to £15,444.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>SNC, 28 Feb, 1 March, 18 March, 25 March 1867, CM, 30 March 1867.

<sup>2</sup>SC, 14 Feb 1876; CM, 1 March 1876.

<sup>3</sup>SC, 27 Nov 1873.

There is an interesting parallel between this situation, and one in the late sixties, when the council was debating whether to construct a reservoir by private tender or direct works. The supporters of the latter referred to the illusory benefits of competition, and the inefficiency which resulted from accepting the cheapest tender, whilst their opponents regarded contracting as a salutary financial discipline, which also prevented the council's own officers from having 'an unlimited pull on the public purse'.<sup>1</sup> Although complaints were made over the inefficiency of the nightsoil contractors, little attention was paid to the more serious issue. When the contract came up for reletting in 1879, the Leeds Express, owned by the 'progressive' Liberal councillor, F.R. Spark, pointed out the inverted values implicit in the council's attitude. After commenting on the time spent in discussing municipal salaries, it continued,

'but mark the different proceedings on a question of grave importance, involving not a few pounds a year on an officer's pay, but many thousands of pounds annually, and the sanitary condition of the whole borough. Recently, the town council occupied some hours in talking about comparatively trivial matters, whilst the proposal to expend £37,000 on a contract for removing night soil was passed without a single word of explanation or discussion'<sup>2</sup>

In the same year it was also decided that street cleansing work should be leased, and the staff of the council's scavenging department was dismissed.<sup>3</sup> The department's running costs were about £10,000 a year, but the successful tender was for under £5,000.<sup>4</sup> It is hardly surprising that difficulties began almost immediately. Only two months after the contractor took over, the watch committee complained about the condition of the streets, and in December the North East Ward

<sup>1</sup> See below p.

<sup>2</sup> F.R. Spark, Collection of Extracts, Documents etc., relating to Leeds City Council Proceedings, volume 2, f.55, extract from Leeds Express, 14 May 1879.

<sup>3</sup> SC, 12 May, 11 Aug 1879.

<sup>4</sup> SC, 27 Nov 1873, gives the working costs of the scavenging department in that year as £9,786" 8 " Od.; SC, 23 July 1879 gives the cost of the three-year tender as £14,950.

Liberal Association protested that,

'the way in which our streets are neglected and the dirt allowed to accumulate to the serious inconvenience and discomfort of passengers is a disgrace to the borough'<sup>1</sup>

A few weeks afterwards, the sanitary committee suspended the contract, and a month later, terminated it, so that by 1 February 1880, a short and disastrous experiment was over, and street cleansing was again a municipal responsibility.<sup>2</sup>

Despite the usual problems,<sup>3</sup> the committee continued doggedly to maintain its policy of contracting for refuse removal. There was also a further source of friction between the contractor and the sanitary committee. The contractor objected that the committee's policy of connecting privies to the common sewers was depriving him of his source of income, and complained, in the accents of Shaw's Mr. Dolittle, that

'this is most injurious to me, as rubbish is worthless to me as manure, not having mixed with it any nightsoil, therefore its sale is lost to the farmer and not only that but the rubbish according to your experience and mine also is the most difficult thing to get rid of. Now I ask you as men of business is it fair? is it just?'<sup>4</sup>

We shall consider the solution to the problem of refuse disposal later in this chapter. Two years later, he claimed successfully for £1,000 in compensation for an estimated 2,000 tons of night soil which he was deprived of

'by the putting in of trough closets since the commencement of the contract'<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>CM, 13 Aug 1879; SC, 13 Oct, 8 Dec 1879.

<sup>2</sup>SC, 11 Dec 1879, 5 Jan, 30 Jan 1880.

<sup>3</sup>e.g. SC, 13 Dec 1880: 'numerous complaints having been made as to the unsatisfactory manner in which (the contractors) are emptying ashpits and doing their work the committee require that the terms of the contract be strictly adhered to'.

<sup>4</sup>SC, 8 Oct 1878.

<sup>5</sup>SC, 23 July 1879.

This at least is evidence that the committee was following a more enlightened policy in other matters.

The situation changed much for the worse in the next decade. In 1882, a new contractor proposed to take on the work at a lesser cost than the previous operators (£11,333 a year against £12,600), and the sanitary committee, having calculated that it would cost £12,436 if done by direct works, decided to accept the offer.<sup>1</sup> However, when the contract was drawn up, the proposed contractors refused to agree to the specifications, and the committee decided to reconsider the possibility of direct works. The committee then asked the council for permission to take the responsibility itself for twelve months, and received consent to do so.<sup>2</sup> The work was not done efficiently, for by February 1883 it was in arrears, and a sub-committee reported that complaints were 'more or less justified'. In fact, the previous contractors had removed more refuse, and at a lower cost, than the committee's employees,<sup>3</sup> and in November 1883 the committee reverted to its sub-letting practice.<sup>4</sup> But the story of sordid, dreary inefficiency repeated itself. The new contractor was inefficient, as was the next, (who went bankrupt), and so was his successor.<sup>5</sup> Somewhat belatedly, in February 1890, the committee resolved that,

'taking into consideration the unsatisfactory manner in which the cleansing of ashpits in the borough has hitherto been done by various contractors this committee consider that the time has arrived for the emptying of all the ashpits to be done under their control for a period of twelve months'<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup>SC, 13 Feb, 19 May, 1882.

<sup>2</sup>SC, 4 May 1882; CM, 7 June 1882; SC, 18 June 1883.

<sup>3</sup>SC, 18 June 1883 contains the report of the sub-committee on ashpit cleansing which reviews the events of 12 Feb 1882 to 12 June 1883.

<sup>4</sup>SC, 18 June, 9 July 1883; CM, 9 Nov; SC, 19 Nov 1883; CM, 26 Nov 1883.

<sup>5</sup>SC, 12 Jan 1885; 12 April, 13 Sept, 31 Dec 1886; 25 March, 13 April, 13 June, 11 July 1887; 27 Sept 1888; 14 Jan, 24 Oct, 27 Dec 1889.

<sup>6</sup>SC, 13 Feb 1890.

The council agreed, but this time the decision was not reversed, and the work remained a municipal responsibility.<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Radcliffe had stressed the deleterious effect of allowing the accumulation of refuse in privies and middensteads over long periods, and recommended that,

'with a system of scavenging, of which the longest interval for the removal of excremental refuse would not exceed a week, the receptacle for this refuse, as well as for the dry house-refuse need not be of larger capacity than the space between an ordinary privy-seat and the floor of the privy....They admit of the nuisance from accumulated excremental and house-refuse being restricted within the straitest limits; the receptacles are easily constructed so as to obviate danger from the soakage of excremental matter into the soil; and they can be readily and effectually cleansed'<sup>2</sup>

The sanitary committee urged the council to adopt the 'box system' to replace privies 'to carry out the spirit of Mr. Radcliffe's report', and the council agreed to allow this to be put into operation initially in the east ward.<sup>3</sup> The east ward, with a population of about 16,000 in 1871, had 699 ashpits each with a capacity of three tons which were emptied about twice a year, and 1,506 privies. The conversion involved filling in 690 of the former and altering 1,484 of the latter, replacing them with tubs for ashes and kitchen wastes, and installing a wooden box containing a galvanised pail in the closets. The committee had intended to finance the cost of these changes (about £2 a privy) but later on the ground of expense, decided to charge it to the owners. Initially, the system worked badly, as an insufficient number of pails was provided, and they were removed and emptied by the committee's workmen only twice a week. But in February 1874, daily emptying was begun, and this, combined with an instruction to householders to empty their fine ashes into the box, made a considerable improvement.<sup>4</sup> When Radcliffe reported

<sup>1</sup>CM, 5 March 1890; SC, 11 May 1891

<sup>2</sup>J.N. Radcliffe, art.cit., p.33.

<sup>3</sup>SC, 2 Aug 1871; CM, 9 Aug 1871. In contrast to the visit of Hunter in 1865, Radcliffe thanked the sanitary committee for 'the facilities which had been offered him' by its members and its officers on the day of his visit, see SC 19 Dec 1870.

<sup>4</sup>SC, 13 April 1874.

for a second time, in 1874, he noted that,

'the middenstead privies in the district were among the worst and most offensive in the borough, and the change effected by their removal and the substitution for them of pail closets is remarkable. The absence from the East Ward of the penetrating midden stink which is so characteristic of Leeds, even in well-to-do parts, is especially noteworthy'<sup>1</sup>

The medical officer of health and the superintendent of the sanitary department were themselves in no doubt over the advantages of the change. As the superintendent observed,

'in a sanitary point of view, the Box Plan, with its daily removal, is far superior to the old barbarous and offensive privy sump, and I trust that the council will not in future allow a single ashpit to be constructed, and that they will order all the existing 19,000 privy sumps to be filled up'<sup>2</sup>

But both officials were aware that, judged by the criteria customarily applied to cleansing and scavenging by the council, the system had one important defect. The council had decided that the use of the box system would not be extended until,

'it was found to be satisfactory from the sanitary and the financial point of view'<sup>3</sup>

The increased frequency of refuse removal had removed the sanitary objections, but the financial objection remained. The cost of the experiment in the east ward was £1,815 a year, against the cost of emptying ashpits in the area under previous conditions of only £734. Superintendent Newhouse further calculated that it would cost £29,037 a year for labour and cartage alone, exclusive of equipment, if the change over was implemented throughout the drainage district. Defensively, but understandably he added that,

'I wish you to understand that I do not advocate the ashpit system',

<sup>1</sup> J. Netten Radcliffe, 'On excrement nuisances', Reports of the Medical Officer of the Privy Council and Local Government Board, N.S. number 2, 1874, p. 192.

<sup>2</sup> SC, 13 April 1874.

<sup>3</sup> CM, 30 Sept 1873.



and Dr. Goldie, stressing the need for regular inspection to ensure that the system continued to work well added apologetically that,

'this, again, I know implies expense; that I cannot help'<sup>1</sup>

But local opinion was not so enthusiastic. One local author protested over the expense involved, and the Ratepayers' Protection Society believed that,

'the 'box system' for the removal of our sewage matter is neither so cleanly nor so healthy as the old ashpit system and any further extension of the 'box system' would be both unwise and inexpedient'<sup>2</sup>

It was, in fact, never introduced into any other district, although it continued in use until phased out at the turn of the century. The reasons for its failure cannot be decisively defined. In an internal memorandum of 1878, in the Local Government Board, Radcliffe claimed that,

'the experiment has been carried out so imperfectly and carelessly, that the system has been discredited and is now in disfavour'<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand, Hewson, the borough engineer, implied that the measure was a temporary one, undertaken during the period of the injunction, which prevented new drainage connections, and was set aside when this was lifted.<sup>4</sup> But the council did not then move to abolish the privy system elsewhere in the borough, and as we shall see, it did nothing to prevent its use in new properties either. The 'box system' may indeed have had an appreciable influence upon public conditions, for Dr. Goldie pointed out that the mortality rate in the east ward in 1870

<sup>1</sup>SC, 13 April 1874.

<sup>2</sup>T.B. Stead, Letter to the Sanitary Committee of the Council and the Borough of Leeds (Leeds, 1873); SC, 13 July 1874.

<sup>3</sup>PRO, MH 12/15248, notes by J.N. Radcliffe, attached to 73882C/77.

<sup>4</sup>Thomas Hewson, Description of the Leeds Sewage Works (Leeds, 1884), p.7.

was 49.2, and in 1873 was 43.8, although he refused to attribute the improvement solely to this innovation.<sup>1</sup> It seems probable that the operating costs involved was the most significant factor, as on a larger scale, it determined council policy on public cleansing in general. Further evidence not wholly conclusive, of the relationship between mortality, especially from diarrhoea, and the efficiency of municipal cleansing was produced in the early 'nineties.<sup>2</sup> As we noted in the preceding chapter, the death rate from this source was exceptionally high in Leeds in the middle of the century, and it continued to be so. In the decade 1882-1891, the average rate in twenty eight large towns was 0.88 per 1,000, whereas in Leeds it was 1.12, and a serious epidemic in the autumn of 1892 gave further cause for disquiet. Although the epidemic occurred in other towns also, its impact was, in most cases less severe. The average diarrhoeal death rate for twelve towns in Yorkshire and Lancashire in these months was 2.33, yet in Leeds it was 3.39, a rate exceeded only by Preston, Bolton and Sheffield. Hull, Salford, Bradford, Liverpool and Manchester had rates between 1.31 and 2.87. The medical officer of health further pointed out that the three towns where the mortality rate was lowest, Oldham (0.87), Huddersfield (0.57), and Halifax (0.14), were all places where the box system had been adopted 'pretty nearly in its entirety'. But by the last decade of the century the sanitary committee had, as we have seen, rejected the box system as a means of replacing the 'gulf-like middensteads', and had accepted the necessity of introducing water closets where practicable.

<sup>1</sup>SC, 13 April 1874.

<sup>2</sup>The details which follow are taken from, J. Spottiswoode Cameron, 'Diarrhoea in some Lancashire and Yorkshire towns in 1891', Public Health, VI (1893-94), pp. 152-153.

In the mid sixties there were relatively few water closets in Leeds, and there was in some quarters opposition to their introduction. One alderman stated that,

'he was very strongly of opinion that the water closet system ought not to be encouraged in any large town excepting as a luxury - a luxury to be paid for by those determined to have it, and by no means carried down to the lowest class of houses in the poor districts'<sup>1</sup>

His principal objection was to the volume of water which they would consume, and Radcliffe noted that

'the scale of charges for tumbler closets, adopted by the corporation, appears to have had a very detrimental effect in preventing their ready adoption, in cases where this form of closet would be the best substitute for the privy-with-middensteads....The scale of charges has, I believe, been based upon an exaggerated estimate of the quantity of water consumed by these closets'<sup>2</sup>

But on sanitary grounds there was perhaps a valid case against the introduction of water closets in all circumstances. In June 1867 the council instructed the streets and sewerage committee to consider the desirability of connecting 'small cottage houses' directly with the sewerage system,

'especially when the connections must necessarily be in rooms occupied by the inhabitants of such houses'<sup>3</sup>

Radcliffe shared these doubts, but stated that,

'this separate provision had been found to be an indescribable boon during sickness, and it obviated the necessity of the children and young women having often to leave the house again and again, in all states of the weather, to wait their turn at isolated blocks of privies or water-closets, at infinite discomfort, and leading to no little acquisition of bad habits among the children, and the blunting of modest feeling among the young women'<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>LM, 13 Aug 1868.

<sup>2</sup>PRO MH 12/15248, Mr. J. Netten Radcliffe on the Sanitary State of Leeds.... p.29.

<sup>3</sup>CM, 17 June 1867.

<sup>4</sup>Radcliffe, art.cit., p.31.

This problem, caused by the unbroken rows of back-to-back houses was yet another legacy of unregulated speculative building, and, it must be added, was partly the responsibility of the council itself through its failure to enforce building bye-laws before the mid eighteenth sixties. Moreover, the formulation and enforcement of stricter building regulations after 1866 actually perpetuated the privy and ashpit system, despite the protests of the Local Government Board.

Although the council regularly submitted its building bye-laws to the Board, as it was legally obliged to, there is no evidence that the Board was concerned with giving more than formal assent to their contents before 1873. It would appear that by this time it was subjecting byelaws to thorough scrutiny, and was attempting to establish standards which it believed should be generally applicable, rather than acting merely as a registration agency for local authorities' independent formulations. In 1873 the Board for the first time questioned some of the provisions of the byelaws, but the council clearly resented this interference, and the Board for the time being did not take the matter any further.<sup>1</sup> But when the new building byelaws were sent up for confirmation in 1876, the Board was much less amenable. It asked the council to delay in issuing them until it had completed the 'model' series which was being prepared, but the town clerk entered strenuous objections. The council seemed convinced that the Board was an instrument of centralised control (which to some degree it was), and the town clerk's reply, while protesting that delay would cause 'great inconvenience and injury' revealed greater concern over the implications implied by the Board's request. The council, so its clerk asserted,

<sup>1</sup>PRO MH 12/15246, 41470/73, 52240C/73, 66653/73.

had the right to make its own byelaws independently of the terms of the Public Health Act, 1875, and moreover,

'the corporation are so impressed with the necessity of the matter being attended to, and so alarmed at the suggestion that their position as an ancient corporation should be made subsidiary and subservient to a Central Authority that they have instructed me to seek an interview with the Board to give such further explanations as may be desired'<sup>1</sup>

One of the Board's officials noted that,

'there can I think be little doubt as to the necessity for the revision of the entire series'<sup>2</sup>,

but from the Board's standpoint there were two difficulties which obstructed its aims. A major local authority was unlikely to submit readily to outside pressures, and Leeds had clearly adopted a position of intransigence from the outset. If the Board pursued its plan of action it would lead to 'much irritation and controversy'<sup>3</sup>. Moreover, its previous acquiescence made a complete change of tactics difficult as,

'the code embodies many provisions which were confirmed by the Board at a time when the scrutiny of byelaws was less minute than at present. These provisions, chiefly on sanitary grounds (I think) are open to objection but as they have been once allowed by the Board, it would be difficult now to raise questions as to their propriety'<sup>4</sup>

On the other hand, as Lambert, the Board's Secretary pointed out to the President, to agree to the building byelaws without amendment would be an evasion of their statutory duty<sup>5</sup>. But the Board could rely in its negotiations upon one source of advantage. This was the expertise of its sanitary matters and legal, architectural and civil engineering

<sup>1</sup>PRO MH12/15247, 11754/76.

<sup>2</sup>ibid., internal note following letter 15185/76.

<sup>3</sup>loc.cit.

<sup>4</sup>PRO MH12/15248, endorsement on letter 69347/77.

<sup>5</sup>loc.cit.

practice, and when the town clerk received the proposed revisions in June 1876 he was moved to thank the Board for,

'the evident care and attention which has been bestowed upon them and for the valuable suggestions which have been made, in all of which the corporation cordially concur'<sup>1</sup>

But the contest was renewed in the following year, when the Board asked the town clerk for the loan of a set of the local acts to assist it in a review of the bye-laws. The internal memoranda of the Board make it clear that its officials were pressing for radical changes, as one minute notes that,

'so far as the clauses involve sanitary points, Mr. Radcliffe is decidedly of opinion that the proposed bye-laws must be entirely remodelled. In this opinion Mr. Smith, from the point of view of the Architect's Department, fully concurs'<sup>2</sup>

The principal subject of contention was the sanitary arrangements which the council was prepared to sanction for new property. The bye-laws, so Radcliffe asserted,

'contemplate, in fact, the perpetuation in Leeds of a form of privy-and-ashpit which has again and again been shown to be the prime source of some of the greatest sanitary evils in Leeds'<sup>3</sup>

In March 1878, representatives from the councils and officers of the Board met in conference to discuss their differences, and a compromise was reached whereby,

'the revised draft...will, we think, be found to comprise a selection of byelaws which, though not so complete as might be desired, are nevertheless such as the Town Council will accept and the Board may safely confirm'<sup>4</sup>

It is clear that what the council was not prepared to accept was the immediate abolition of the privy and ashpit system. Nevertheless,

<sup>1</sup>PRO MH12/15247, 40967/76.

<sup>2</sup>PRO MH12/15248, 73882C/77.

<sup>3</sup>ibid., notes by J.N. Radcliffe attached to 73882C/77.

<sup>4</sup>ibid., memorandum by A.D. Adrian attached to 28456/78.

in the eighties the sanitary committee began a systematic campaign against the most offensive examples, through reconstruction, or conversion into water closets.<sup>1</sup> But since there was no general policy on the matter laid down by the council, an anomalous situation developed through the failure of co-ordination between the sanitary and the building clauses committees. In accordance with the byelaws the latter was continuing to approve plans which proposed the construction of new properties with privy and ashpit facilities at the very time when the sanitary committee was abolishing them in existing properties. In 1889, the Leeds Mercury protested that the council should,

'see to it that the Building Clauses Committee does not sanction the creation of evils to be dealt with subsequently by their colleagues on the Sanitary committee'<sup>2</sup>

Two years later, the M.O.H. commented on this, observing that,

'in many of the lowest parts of the town - the districts in which the poorest people dwell in the most overcrowded conditions - trough water closets have been largely introduced to replace the former privy middens, and that the advantage is great would be at once confessed by any impartial person visiting these crowded courts and yards, and comparing them with similar yards in which this improvement has not been carried out. On the outskirts of the town, however, large numbers of new rows of houses are being rapidly put up, in which the old-fashioned system of privy midden has been reproduced'<sup>3</sup>

Although this situation was soon remedied, at least in its most blatant instances, the council's reluctance to make the necessary

<sup>1</sup>The first statistics of the work done by the sanitary department appear in the Annual Report of Committees for 1883, and thereafter. In the five years 1883-1887 the Annual Report records:- privies converted into water closets: 3,282; privies and privy middens repaired and reconstructed: 1,719; privy middens abolished: 631; cesspools abolished: 631.

<sup>2</sup>LM, 10 July 1889; see also YP 4 Dec 1890: 'the building clauses committee was passing plans for the erection of such closets as the sanitary authority had ordered them to be demolished'.

<sup>3</sup>SC, 13 July 1891; see also the report of the medical officer of health, SC 5 Sept 1892: 'this conversion of wet into dry ashpits is not taking place as rapidly as I think it ought, and a large number of new houses have recently been built, in which the objectionable system of privy middens has been sanctioned'.

amendments to its byelaws meant that the building clauses committee, 'consider that they have no power under the present byelaws to prescribe which kind of closet an owner shall erect'<sup>1</sup>

Nothing was done to alter this until seven years later. In October 1896, the sanitary committee recommended that power be sought in the next improvement bill to require that all new buildings should have at least one water closet,<sup>2</sup> and such a provision was included in the local act of 1899.<sup>3</sup> It was, however, subject to the proviso that if a sewer or sufficient water supply were not available in a particular location, the corporation could allow privies and ashpits to be provided,<sup>4</sup> and so the regulation was not intended to be invariably applied. That it was not immediately put into practice on all occasions is suggested by a resolution of the sanitary committee in August 1902, which recommended the building clauses committee not to approve house plans unless they showed that it was intended to provide at least one water closet for every house.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, by the turn of the century a considerable improvement had taken place in the proportion of dwellings which were provided with water closets, as table 4.1 demonstrates. As might be expected, there was still a marked contrast in this aspect between 'cottages', and houses with a rateable value of more than £10. In 1902, slightly more than one fifth of the tenants of low-rated property were dependent upon the privy-and-ashpit system, compared with less than one twelfth in the case of the tenants of more expensive

<sup>1</sup>J. Spottiswoode Cameron, Annual Report made to the Urban Sanitary Authority of the Borough of Leeds, 1892, p.143.

<sup>2</sup>SC, 1 Oct 1896.

<sup>3</sup>Leeds Corporation Act, 1899, 62 and 63 Vict., ch. cclxiii, section 49.

<sup>4</sup>loc.cit., Sub-section (2).

<sup>5</sup>SC, 14 Aug 1902.



TABLE 4.1  
Types of dwellings and number of tenants with and  
without access to water closets in the borough of Leeds  
in 1900, 1901 and 1902

(a)

Year	Description of property supplied with water	Number of tenants not using w.c.	% age of total	Number of tenants using water closets						Total number of tenants supplied by groups	% age of total number of tenants
				Cistern	% age	Trough	% age	Automatic	% age		
1900	Cottages (i.e. annual value of £10 and under)	19,091	30.9	19,774	31.9	22,699	36.8	180	0.3	61,744	64.0
1901		15,248	24.6	24,006	38.7	22,548	36.4	159	0.3	61,961	62.5
1902		12,800	20.6	26,926	43.4	22,142	35.7	169	0.3	62,037	61.5
1900	Houses (i.e. over £10 annual value)	2,782	9.8	24,488	86.3	1,064	3.8	2	..	28,336	29.4
1901		2,084	6.8	27,630	89.8	1,049	3.4	..	..	30,763	31.0
1902		1,937	6.0	29,326	90.7	1,067	3.3	4	..	32,334	32.0
1900	Houses and shops	1,009	17.9	3,334	59.2	1,285	22.8	6	0.1	5,634	5.8
1901		803	14.1	3,660	64.4	1,214	21.4	5	0.1	5,682	5.7
1902		722	12.4	3,883	66.7	1,214	20.8	3	0.1	5,822	5.8
1900	Public houses	97	13.6	495	69.6	118	16.6	1	0.1	711	0.7
1901		70	10.0	518	74.3	109	15.6	..	..	697	0.7
1902		58	8.3	539	76.9	103	14.7	1	0.1	701	0.7

(b)

Year	Total number of tenants supplied	Number with no w.c.	% age of total	Tenants of Cottages without w.c. as % of total tenants	Tenants of Houses without w.c. as % of total tenants
1900	96,425	22,979	23.8	19.8	2.9
1901	99,103	18,205	18.4	15.4	2.1
1902	100,894	15,517	15.4	12.7	1.9

Source: Report of the Waterworks Committee, Annual Reports of Committees, 1901-02

Note that the figures refer to tenants and not to houses, and further, only to tenants supplied with running water. This is not therefore a complete enumeration of the number of separate dwellings in Leeds at these dates, although it may be assumed that it is a very high proportion of them. The 1901 census gives the number of houses in that year as 98,460, and the number of 'families or separate occupiers' as 100,124, (Census, 1901, County of York, table 12, pp. 91-92).

housing. But on the other hand, the proportion of cottage-property dwellers so dependent had fallen by nearly a third between 1900 and 1902.<sup>1</sup>

In the last quarter of the century the council was obliged to find a solution to the associated problem of disposing of household refuse. The continuing disposal of all rubbish by tipping on vacant land was not a satisfactory prospect, and there were objections on sanitary grounds also. In 1876, some members of the sanitary committee visited Manchester, to inspect the municipal incineration plant, and recommended that Leeds should build a similar one, initially for experimental purposes.<sup>2</sup> This was agreed, and when a favourable report was made upon its operation, two further destructor plants were built.<sup>3</sup> These were increased in capacity in the eighties, and a fourth was erected in 1895, making the city 'very well provided for' at the end of the period.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The earlier statistics relating to water closets, are:-

1856	1,005)	
1860	1,628)	(RB, 11 Sept 1867)
1865	3,221)	
1870	6,348	(J. Netten Radcliffe, <u>art.cit.</u> , p.8)
1875	c.8,500	(A.W. Morant, <u>Description of the Leeds Sewage Works</u> ).
1884	20,281	(T. Hewson, <u>Description of the Leeds Sewage Works</u> , p.7. There were in addition 2,384 pail closets at this date).
1889	27,990	('Annual Report of the Sanitary Committee' in <u>Annual Reports of Committees</u> , 1888-89).

<sup>2</sup>SC, 11 Dec 1876, 9 April 1877.

<sup>3</sup>SC, 9 Sept 1878; RB, 9 Sept 1878; CM, 30 Sept 1878.

<sup>4</sup>W.F. Goodrich, Refuse Disposal and Power Production, pp. 264-265; and see also, 'The destruction of ash-pit refuse by heat', Public Health, IV(1891-92) pp. 36-40.

(3)

A third aspect of the sanitary history of Leeds in the later nineteenth century had also been anticipated in the sewerage schemes devised in the eighteen forties. Both Vetch and Leather were agreed on the importance of minimising the pollution of the river and its tributary streams (or 'becks' in northern dialect), since,

'Leeds can never be materially improved until the rivers and becks were saved from their present pollution'!<sup>1</sup>

and each produced plans which aimed to divert the flow of sewage from the becks and to avoid its discharge into the river, at least along its course through the town. Over the following twenty years the level of pollution increased considerably, and in the late eighteen sixties, the council took some action to improve the state of several of the most offensive becks.

The borough surveyor recommended that the course of the streams be cleansed and paved, and that the stream itself should flow along a stone invert. This increased the velocity of the current by concentrating the flow into narrower limits, and so caused a self-scouring action assisted by the smooth surface of the masonry, and any rubbish which was tipped over onto the sides of the channel could be easily removed by the scavengers.<sup>2</sup> In 1866 the council promoted a special measure, the Leeds Improvement of Becks Act, to allow it to improve the Sheepscar and Hol becks (the two lengthiest and most-abused streams in the borough) by removing weirs, straightening and narrowing the courses and paving and walling them. The act allowed the council to borrow

<sup>1</sup>Report of Captain Vetch R.E. on the Sewerage of Leeds, under the Leeds Improvement Act, (1843), p.16.

<sup>2</sup>Mr. J. Netten Radcliffe on the Sanitary State of Leeds, with particular reference to Diarrhoea and Fever, P.R.O. MH 12/15248.

upto £60,000 and where necessary to exercise compulsory powers, and the 1869 and 1872 improvement acts authorised further improvements to be made.<sup>1</sup> Much of the work was done between 1868 and 1873, when the council spent nearly £20,000 on these two becks.<sup>2</sup>

Far more difficult problems were posed by the condition of the river Aire. In 1868, the report of the Rivers Pollution Commission graphically described the river Aire, and its tributary, the river Calder, as being

'abused by...hundreds of thousands of tons per annum of ashes, slag and cinders from steam boiler furnaces, iron works and domestic fires; by their being made the receptacles to a vast extent of broken pottery and worn-out utensils of metal, refuse bricks from brick yards and old buildings, earth, stone and clay from quarries and excavations, road scraping, street sweepings etc. by spent dyewoods and other solids used in the treatment of worsteds and woollens; by hundreds of carcasses of animals, of dogs, cats, pigs etc...water poisoned, corrupted and clogged by refuse from mines, chemical works, dyeing, scouring, and fulling worsted and woollen stuffs, skin cleaning and tanning, slaughter-house garbage, and the sewage of towns and houses'<sup>3</sup>

The pollution of the Aire was not caused by Leeds alone, for within the 342½ square miles of the Aire basin, there were many other culpable communities, of which Bradford, the largest, was the most offending. But Leeds, because of its large population and extensive industrial development was indisputably pre-eminent. As the Rivers Pollution Commission observed,

'in regard to soluble matters, the polluting effect of the single town of Leeds is not much less than the aggregate fouling produced by all the towns above it...the river at Kirkstall being but slightly muddy, whilst below Leeds it presented a very filthy a repulsive appearance'<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The Leeds Improvement of Becks Act, 29 and 30 Vict., cap. cli, The Leeds Improvement Act, 1869, 32 Vict., cap. xi, secs. 7,8,9 and 11, The Leeds Improvement Act, 1872, 35 and 36 Vict., ch. xcvi, sec. 5.

<sup>2</sup>CM, 8 May 1867, 31 March, 4 June 1868, 31 Mar 1869, 11 May, 10 Aug 1870, 10 July 1873.

<sup>3</sup>Third Report of the Commissioners appointed in 1868 to inquire into the best means of preventing the pollution of rivers (1871) vol 1, p.46.

<sup>4</sup>ibid, p.4.

By the late eighteen seventies, the council's sewage works had done much to diminish this problem, but major difficulties remained over the discharge of industrial effluents. In 1887 the chairman of the sanitary committee informed the council that,

'between Joppa, on Kirkstall road and Messrs. Fairbairn's works, something like twelve million gallons of trade sewage, as they might call it, went into the river daily, and that at the works situated there, there was not an inch of available land to precipitate or do anything to purify what was sent into the stream'.<sup>1</sup>

Any scheme to improve the condition of the river involved major administrative problems, because it could only be achieved through the co-ordinated action of the numerous independent local authorities in the area of the watershed. Clearly, no one authority would be prepared to take expensive measures to purify its sewage effluents if its attempts to act with environmental responsibility were to be negated by the irresponsibility of others. Complaints about the state of the Aire were made to the Local Government Board by Tadcaster in 1885 and by Castleford in 1887, and the council, on receiving a letter from the Board concerning the second complaint, felt it necessary to enter a detailed defence, in which it stressed the joint culpability of the local authorities upstream and downstream from Leeds, and the difficulty of legally restraining pollution by industrial concerns.<sup>2</sup>

The Local Government Act, 1888 gave the council the opportunity to take practical action on this issue. Under the terms of the Act, a joint committee representing the administrative counties and county boroughs through which a river passes could be created, with the approval of the Local Government Board, and endowed with the powers of the

<sup>1</sup> MRP, no. , The polluted condition of the Rivers Aire and Calder and their tributaries. Report of the Sanitary Committee to the Town Council. January, 1888, pp. 31-32.

<sup>2</sup> op.cit., pp. 13-17.

Rivers Pollution Prevention Act 1876.<sup>1</sup> Thus in May 1890 the council decided to apply for the necessary provisional order, in conjunction with Bradford, which was the only other county borough in the area.<sup>2</sup>

This was, in fact, not the first occasion upon which the local authorities of the West Riding had attempted to bring the pollution problem under co-operative control. In 1870, Leeds, Bradford, Halifax and Huddersfield had united to promote a conservancy bill for the Aire and the Calder, but opposition from landowners, and from manufacturers in Leeds, with the consequent threat of a long and costly parliamentary struggle determined Halifax and Huddersfield to withdraw, and the bill was abandoned.<sup>3</sup> But on this occasion the proceedings were successful, and the Local Government Board agreed to sponsor a provisional order to establish a joint committee, and in December 1892 the council authorised the sanitary committee to confer with the other local authorities involved to arrange for the establishment of the West Riding Rivers Board.<sup>4</sup>

(4)

The care of the sick remained predominantly the concern of private semi-charitable institutions and of the poor law throughout this period. In Leeds as in other towns there were several types of hospital supported solely by public subscription supplemented by fees charged to those who were capable of paying for medical attention. The oldest and most

<sup>1</sup>51 and 52 Vict., ch 41, section 14.

<sup>2</sup>SC, 14 April 1890; CM, 7 May 1890.

<sup>3</sup>CM, 15 Dec 1870; MRP no. 29, The River Aire Proposed Conservancy Board. Public Inquiry at Leeds. Report of Proceedings before Inspectors of the Local Government Board, pp. 35-36.

<sup>4</sup>SC, 9 Feb 1891, 30 Nov 1892; CM, 7 Dec 1892.

important was the General Infirmary, founded in 1767 which in the course of its history was served by many distinguished medical and surgical practitioners. For many years it was located near the coloured cloth hall, but in the late eighteen sixties moved into large new buildings to the north of the town hall, designed by the ubiquitous Gilbert Scott.<sup>1</sup> But in one sense its utility was limited by its rules of admission, for it did not accept those suffering from infectious diseases. The growth of the urban population meant that there was an increase in the number of cases of the various types of fevers fostered by insanitary conditions, and it was a fever epidemic in 1801-2 which aroused public support for the establishment of a fever hospital, optimistically called the House of Recovery.<sup>2</sup> This was located first in Vicar lane, near the free market, but as the town expanded the site naturally became insufficiently isolated. Thus in 1846 the trustees opened a new hospital, at a cost of about £7,000, at Burmantofts in the north east ward. The medical care provided by these institutions was supplemented by three others. These were, the Public Dispensary, established in 1824, and provided with new buildings in the mid eighteen sixties, at a cost of about £7,000, the Hospital for Women and Children which was created in 1853 and was installed in new premises in Springfield Lodge, Woodhouse, in 1861, and the small Convalescent Home, begun in 1868 and moved to Ivy Lodge on the eastern outskirts of Leeds in 1872.<sup>3</sup>

The only public authority which had any responsibility towards the

<sup>1</sup>See S.T. Anning, The General Infirmary at Leeds, 1767-1965. 2 vols.

<sup>2</sup>S.T. Anning, 'Leeds House of Recovery', Medical History, XIII, no.3, July 1969, pp. 226-236.

<sup>3</sup>Kelly's Directory of the West Riding of Yorkshire, 1889, p.634; John Mayhall, Annals of Yorkshire, vol. 2, 21 Sept 1861.



sick was the poor law union, and since sickness was an important cause of pauperism, the medical services operated by the boards of guardians became an important aspect of their functions.<sup>1</sup> In 1852, medical relief financed by the Guardians of Leeds cost £900 a year, and this had risen to more than £2,000 in the late eighteen sixties, when a weekly average of two hundred were on its medical relief list.<sup>2</sup> In 1874, the Union built an infirmary at a cost of £18,000, which could accommodate 261 male and 195 female patients.<sup>3</sup> The council had no responsibility for hospital accommodation until the Sanitary Act of 1866 allowed local sanitary authorities to provide this service.<sup>4</sup> As we shall see, the acceptance of this new role was hesitant, grudging and parsimonious, and was only undertaken as a result of pressure from other bodies, and the regular reappearance of epidemics. The issue was first forced upon the attention of the sanitary committee by a smallpox epidemic in the winter of 1871-2.

In December 1871 the sanitary committee's chairman was authorised to make arrangements, as an emergency measure, with the workhouse hospital for the accommodation of non-pauper patients at municipal expense,<sup>5</sup> but the Guardians replied that their existing facilities were inadequate, and advised the council to build its own epidemic hospital. The committee believed that the poor law union was 'the proper authority to provide for such purposes'<sup>6</sup> but nevertheless began to plan for

<sup>1</sup> See R. Hodgkinson, The Origins of the National Health Service, The Medical Services of the New Poor Law, 1834-1871.

<sup>2</sup> Hodgkinson, op.cit., p. 293 and p. 469.

<sup>3</sup> Kelly's Directory of the West Riding of Yorkshire, 1889, p.634.

<sup>4</sup> 29 and 30 Vict., cap. XC, section 37, and also 31 and 32 Vict., c 115, section 10.

<sup>5</sup> SC, 18 Dec 1871.

<sup>6</sup> SC, 15 Jan 1872.

municipal premises when informed that the House of Recovery intended to discontinue the treatment of smallpox victims.<sup>1</sup> The council decided to exercise its authority under the 1866 act, and in January 1872 it granted the committee £1,000.<sup>2</sup> The sum was small, but adequate for the modesty of the plans. It was proposed to extend the 'cholera sheds' on land belonging to the Guardians next to the workhouse so that they could take at least forty patients.<sup>3</sup> This hasty improvisation received a setback in March, for as a result of rapid construction 'when the wind came it was blown down'.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, the committee was negotiating with the Guardians for the acceptance of cases from Hunslet, Holbeck and Bramley unions on the condition that the council granted a further £1000 for another hospital wing.<sup>5</sup> By April, the epidemic had increased in severity, and the committee took up a lease on Bank Lodge for use as a convalescent hospital.<sup>6</sup>

But municipal interest in the hospital question ebbed with the recession of the epidemic. The matter did not reappear until 1875, when after examining the new Public Health Act, the town clerk assured the committee that the erection of a fever hospital was entirely optional under the terms of the act. The committee contented itself with considering the recommendations of the Guardians for the repair of the existing buildings.<sup>7</sup> In the following year a subcommittee was created to consider the possibility of constructing a 'more substantial building' on the existing site or elsewhere.<sup>8</sup> But interest again lapsed, with the

<sup>1</sup>SC, 20 Jan 1872. Anning's statement, (art.cit., p.231) that the House of Recovery did not admit smallpox cases is incorrect, as this minute demonstrates, since the House had forty cases at this time.

<sup>2</sup>CM, 29 Jan 1872.

<sup>3</sup>LM, 30 Jan 1872. This report quotes the figures of accommodation as being for between 80 and 120 patients, but SC, 29 Jan 1872, gives the figure as forty.

<sup>4</sup>LM, 29 March 1872.

<sup>5</sup>SC, 18 March 1872.

<sup>6</sup>SC, 5 April 1872.

<sup>7</sup>SC, 23 Sept 1875.

<sup>8</sup>SC, 11 Sept 1876.

result that, understandably angered by the continual procrastination the Guardians retaliated in 1878 with a unilateral decision. They gave notice that they would revoke their agreement for the use of the existing buildings with the council and were determined to refuse admittance to future patients because the hospital was out of repair. To make their position clear, they added that they were

'of opinion that they had not received that courtesy and attention at the hands of the Town Council, which as an important body they were entitled to claim especially considering the serious nature of the subject, which they had by two deputations of their members brought under the notice of the corporation'<sup>1</sup>

In the next month a new sub-committee was appointed to review the question and it began negotiations with the House of Recovery on its possible transfer to the corporation, and made an unsuccessful approach to Lord Cowper over the purchase of land near the municipal refuse disposal depot at Burmantofts.<sup>2</sup> The sub-committee recommended that a new hospital should be built on 'the upper portion of the sanitary depot at Burmantofts',<sup>3</sup> but yet again the committee failed to take positive action. The medical officer reminded it of its obligations when in his monthly report in December 1880 he hoped,

'before long to see the Sanitary Authorities of Leeds in possession of a Small Pox Hospital worthy of the town'.

Four months later he reminded the committee that,

'they are totally incapable of isolating effectually a single case, far less in dealing with the disease in an epidemic form'<sup>4</sup>,

and in the next year his fears were realised when another smallpox

<sup>1</sup>SC, 9 Dec 1878, (The two deputations had met the committee on 13 Sept 1875 and 14 June 1878 respectively) and 21 Dec 1878.

<sup>2</sup>SC, 13 Jan, 10 Feb, 10 March, 12 May, 1879.

<sup>3</sup>SC, 12 July 1880.

<sup>4</sup>SC, 13 Dec 1880, 11 April 1881.

epidemic began. The first victim, a prisoner in the borough gaol at Armley died on the 11 January and in the following months the disease affected the Armley road district very severely. One hundred and seventy cases were reported to the medical officer of health, of which thirty one proved fatal.<sup>1</sup> Despite their previous statement, the Guardians gave their assistance, but made it clear that this was only a temporary concession.<sup>2</sup> The committee hurriedly advertised for a two acre site, and quickly accepted an offer of land at Stoney Rock, Burmantofts.<sup>3</sup> It was hoped to build a permanent hospital there, but this the council refused to sanction. Some members objected that Burmantofts, the 'tradesman's suburb', already had the workhouse, House of Recovery, municipal cemetery and the council's refuse destructor in uncomfortable proximity, and strongly objected to the addition of a permanent fever hospital.<sup>4</sup> Opposition threatened to be vociferous: police were engaged to patrol the site while the 'temporary wood building' was under construction, and the inhabitants of the north east ward considered applying for an injunction to stop the works.<sup>5</sup> By September 1882 the building had been completed at a total cost of nearly £3,000,<sup>6</sup> but it gave little cause for satisfaction, at least to the medical officer of health. There were in his opinion, major structural defects, from cellar to roof. The basement had upto three inches of water in it; the privies could not have been in a

'worse position for such dangerous and unsightly structures than the present one'.

<sup>1</sup> SC, 14 Jan 1884.

<sup>2</sup> loc.cit.

<sup>3</sup> SC, 9 Jan, 31 Jan, 1882.

<sup>4</sup> LM, 2 Feb 1882

<sup>5</sup> SC, 9 Feb, 13 Feb, 13 March 1882.

<sup>6</sup> SC, 11 Sept 1882.

The louvres let in air, and rain and snow besides, and as a result the heating stoves, 'most unsightly and injurious structures', were cracked and rusty. The roof leaked, and the design of the windows was 'opposed to all known principals of hospitalism'<sup>1</sup>. The committee nevertheless asked the council to spend more money on the building, to provide a boundary wall without which the hospital was

'little short of a huge centre from which infection must be spread'<sup>2</sup>

The number of patients was still increasing rapidly, and by June the hospital was full to capacity, so the committee purchased a tent to take convalescent patients.<sup>3</sup> Such desperate measures aroused the opposition of others besides the medical officer. In a debate over future hospital plans, one councillor objected to,

'the tinkering manner in which the works was done, which rendered the hospital a disgrace to any town in England'<sup>4</sup>

The committee was directed by the council to consider the possibility of erecting a permanent hospital, but this scheme was put aside when the trustees of the House of Recovery announced their decision to have the charity wound up.<sup>5</sup> It had for a long time been dependent upon local boards of guardians for its income, and these fluctuated with the incidence of epidemics, thus making the financial management and staffing of the institution very difficult, as fees from private patients, subscriptions and investments were inadequate. For example, in 1878, only £49 had been recouped from private treatment. In the following year this source had yielded £104, at a time when income from poor law

<sup>1</sup>SC, 16 May 1883.

<sup>2</sup>loc.cit.

<sup>3</sup>SC, 28 May 1883.

<sup>4</sup>LM, 7 June 1883.

<sup>5</sup>SC, 25 June, 19 Nov, 1883.

unions was £982, or 46% of the total.<sup>1</sup> Since the House had become an adjunct of public provision for the sick, independent enterprise, at least in this instance, was no longer necessary. Negotiations began between the sanitary committee and the trustees, but they started in an atmosphere of continuing criticism, over both past acts and future plans. In council, one member referred to the hospital at Stoney Rock as

'that abortion of an hospital for which Alderman Wood was responsible. At the time of its erection the borough engineer and the medical officer of health declared the hospital abominably unfitted for its purpose'<sup>2</sup>

Dr. Goldie had little further to say about the building itself, but commented that the approach road,

'is in wretched repair, in fact, during winter, is almost impassable, and is certainly very dangerous. The difficulties with respect to these roads have very sadly crippled the administration of the various necessities of the hospital'<sup>3</sup>

He had already issued a report damning the proposal to purchase the House of Recovery, criticising all its structural defects, which were numerous. The wards were small and cramped and the main corridor had no through ventilation, and in the administrative area

'from kitchen to scullery I condemn the lot, they are ages behind the times'.

The drainage required complete renovation, and above ground,

'the whole aspect of the surroundings of the hospital is dismal and calculated to depress the most cheerful disposition'<sup>4</sup>

The committee nevertheless decided to recommend the purchase of the House as a temporary hospital, if the Local Government Board could be persuaded to allow the council to raise a loan for this purpose, as

<sup>1</sup> Anning, art.cit.

<sup>2</sup> LM, 3 Jan 1884.

<sup>3</sup> SC, 14 Jan 1884.

<sup>4</sup> SC, 10 Dec 1883.

loans were, strictly, intended for the finance of permanent works.<sup>1</sup> The Board agreed to do this, providing that the council would carry out certain structural alterations, and so in April 1884 the council approved of the purchase of the House of Recovery for £6,000 and in the following year borrowed a further £900 to make the necessary improvements.<sup>2</sup> Even when the council owned both a smallpox hospital and a fever hospital, a severe epidemic put a great strain upon its resources. For example, an epidemic in the winter of 1887-8 induced the sanitary committee to hurriedly plan new extensions, and search around for rented premises to accommodate the overflow of patients.<sup>3</sup> The committee was certainly not making any long term plans to solve the problem of hospital facilities. The sums which the council granted to renovate the House of Recovery make it plain that, whatever the initial intention, the building was not long regarded as a temporary solution for the situation but as a permanent one.<sup>4</sup> As one councillor observed in protest,

'the council through ignorance or design had been misled into the belief that the hospital was only for temporary purposes'<sup>5</sup>

The sanitary committee's self-inflicted problems over the treatment of cases of infectious diseases continued throughout the eighteen nineties, as recurrent epidemics filled existing premises to capacity and forced the adoption of desperate expedients of corrugated iron and canvas. Thus an outbreak of both typhoid fever and small pox in 1891 obliged the committee to ask the corporate property committee for

<sup>1</sup>SC, 10 March 17 March 1884; CM, 2 April 1884. The Local Government Board was supposedly bound, on the question of permanent works, by 38 and 39 Vict., ch. 55, section 234, (1).

<sup>2</sup>SC, 20 March 1885; CM, 2 April 1884, 26 Feb 1885.

<sup>3</sup>SC, 20 Dec 1887, 5 Jan, 26 Jan, 13 Feb 1888.

<sup>4</sup>The largest sum granted was £1,300 for the construction of a laundry: CM, 9 Nov 1887.

<sup>5</sup>LM, 5 Aug 1886.

permission to place temporary buildings on part of the Ivy House estate, and the council approved plans to erect there 'two pairs of galvanised corrugated iron cottages' as a sanatorium, on the understanding that they would be removed within twelve months.<sup>1</sup> The committee had nevertheless begun to make plans for a permanent hospital, and in April 1892 the council agreed to pay £10,000 for the buildings and 97½ acres of land of the Manston Hall estate at Seacroft, outside the borough.<sup>2</sup> A few months later, when the fever hospital was 'very much taxed for room',<sup>3</sup> and as the council was informed 'patients were lying on the floor',<sup>4</sup> because of the number of scarlet fever patients, it was decided to build four iron cottages for convalescents on the Manston Hall property.<sup>5</sup>

Even more serious was the small pox epidemic of 1893, when the iron structures on the Ivy House estate continued in use, despite of the fact that the site had been sold in a surplus lands auction, with the corporate property committee and the unfortunate purchaser pressing for possession, and at Manston, convalescents were being housed in marquees.<sup>6</sup> By October 1893, the epidemic had receded; the marquees were taken down, disinfected and stored for future emergencies, and the small pox hospital at Stony Rock, a wooden, and supposedly temporary structure, was, ten years after its erection, dismantled and burned.<sup>7</sup> At a special committee meeting convened at the height of the epidemic the borough engineer was directed to draw up plans for a permanent small pox hospital at Manston to replace the temporary structure there.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup>SC, 14 Sept 1891; CM, 20 Oct 1891.

<sup>2</sup>SC, 11 March, 21 March, 31 March 1892; CM, 6 April 1892.

<sup>3</sup>SC, 8 Aug 1892.

<sup>4</sup>LM, 17 Feb 1893.

<sup>5</sup>SC, 5 Sept 1892.

<sup>6</sup>SC, 24 Jan, 10 April, 9 Oct 1893.

<sup>7</sup>SC, 10 Oct, 13 Nov 1893.

<sup>8</sup>SC, 10 April 1893.



But it was not until June 1894 that the committee had agreed upon a design, and it recommended the council to apply to the L.G.B. to borrow £18,000 to build four hospital pavilions.<sup>1</sup> The Board delayed its reply, and it was not until the end of the year that it informed the committee that it objected to the treatment of small pox patients on the same site as others.<sup>2</sup> Despite representations, the Board refused to waive its opposition, and the council ultimately agreed to its stipulation.<sup>3</sup> In March 1896, contracts for the construction of the hospital were let for £22,436, the additional expense being probably for the addition of kitchens and a disinfecting station, which the council had approved a year before.<sup>4</sup> In the previous decade, the committee had offended the Guardians in its handling of the hospital question, and in the nineties other public bodies criticised it. The board of management of the Infirmary complained over the lack of facilities for the treatment of infectious diseases,<sup>5</sup> and the management committee of the Dispensary withdrew its medical services from patients who had to be treated at home because of inadequate hospital accommodation.<sup>6</sup> The failure of the sanitary committee to provide for the isolation of all affected reacted adversely on others for there was not only the risk from the spreading of infection, but the enforced isolation of those living in the same house, which created financial hardship. Thus for example in October 1898 the clerk to the Hunslet Guardians wrote to the

<sup>1</sup>SC, 14 June 1894.

<sup>2</sup>SC, 8 Oct, 31 Dec 1894.

<sup>3</sup>SC, 31 Oct 1895; CM, 14 Nov 1895.

<sup>4</sup>CM, 6 March 1895; SC, 26 March 1896.

<sup>5</sup>SC, 21 Nov 1895.

<sup>6</sup>SC, 26 Jan 1898.

committee to say that,

'the Guardians do not think that persons ought to be made paupers under such circumstances, and I am instructed to request that whenever the corporation are unable to remove an infected case to an isolation hospital they will make such arrangements in regard to isolation at home as will obviate the necessity of anyone becoming a pauper and disfranchised in consequence'<sup>1</sup>

In December the council approved the committee's proposals to make a marked increase in accommodation in municipal hospitals. The persistent problem of providing sufficient beds for scarlet fever, typhoid, typhus and diphtheria cases was to be remedied by building further wards to hold a further 260 beds, bringing the total to 400, and the L.G.B's insistence that small pox patients should be treated separately was met by the purchase of the land and buildings on the 144 acre Killingbeck estate for £21,250<sup>2</sup>.

As the council was proudly aware, the formal opening of the two hospitals in September 1904

'marks an epoch in the sanitary administration of the city'<sup>3</sup>

The Seacroft isolation hospital, built on the Manston estate had cost an estimated £241,863, the Killingbeck hospital, built to take a hundred small pox patients had cost £69,505, and the sanitary committee reassured the public, with a certain antiseptic logic, that,

'the desire of the corporation has been to make the (Seacroft) hospital complete and perfect from an administrative standpoint, but as infectious hospitals (sic) are not usually visited for pleasure there has been every desire to minimise outlay on the architectural side'<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>SC, 13 Oct 1898.

<sup>2</sup>CM, 7 Dec 1898; LM, 8 Dec 1898.

<sup>3</sup>MRP, unnumbered, Leeds City Hospitals. Seacroft and Killingbeck September 29, 1904, p. 5.

<sup>4</sup>ibid., p. 17.

Although the sanitary committee refused to consider a suggestion from the Leeds Board of Guardians that it should provide facilities to treat cases of venereal disease,<sup>1</sup> in 1902 it began to give financial support to alleviate another widespread and serious complaint, namely tuberculosis. Initially, it recommended the council to grant £500 to the Leeds Tuberculosis Association, an independent medical charity. But the council referred the recommendation back, asking the committee to consider a larger sum, and in December 1902, the committee proposed giving £1,000. In January 1904 the grant was raised to £1,500, and in the following year to £2,000.<sup>2</sup>

One contentious issue of the early nineties was the adoption of the compulsory notification of infectious diseases, raised by the Infectious Diseases (Notification) Act of 1889. Leeds trailed behind many other towns in this, for between 1877 and 1883, twelve towns had adopted compulsory notification, including Bradford, Leicester, Nottingham, Salford and Manchester.<sup>3</sup> The question was not simply one of medical significance, at least in Leeds, where the act was condemned in council debates as a 'sacrifice of their personal liberty', and a measure which would 'terrorise the people' since 'poorer people would be at the mercy of the sanitary inspectors'.<sup>4</sup> The act was finally adopted in February 1893, when, perhaps influenced by depositions from the medical school and the Sanitary Aid Society, the council voted in favour by twenty five votes to twenty one.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>SC, 5 March 1896.

<sup>2</sup>SC, 13 April 1899, 20 Nov 1902; CM 3 Dec 1902; SC, 11 Dec 1902, 14 Jan 1904, 12 Jan 1905. According to LM, 2 Feb 1905, there were 1,800 known cases of tuberculosis in Leeds at that time.

<sup>3</sup>SC, 9 June 1890.

<sup>4</sup>LM, 8 June 1893, 15 Feb 1894.

<sup>5</sup>CM, 14 Feb 1894; LM, 15 Feb 1894.

(5)

In addition to its direct responsibilities for the provision of environmental services, the council was also involved in the regulation of some aspects of private enterprise in matters related to public health, such as living and working conditions and the sale of food and drink, and of these, housing was the most important. As we saw earlier, no permanent administrative arrangements were made for examining building plans until 1862, twenty years after the council had obtained powers to give it some control over building development. Thereafter byelaws were issued regularly and the building clauses committee was created to inspect plans. But it was not until 1875 that new houses had to be certified by the building inspector as fit for human habitation before they were allowed to be occupied. This practice began as the result of a complaint made to the building clauses committee by the medical officer of health over the condition of some 'perfectly new houses'<sup>1</sup>, and in the virtual absence of further complaints we can perhaps assume that the byelaws were effectively enforced in later years.<sup>2</sup> We also need to review the actual contents of the byelaws, at least insofar as they established minimum standards of design and amenities for new houses. We have established that they approved the provision of privies and ashpits in new properties, despite the objections raised by the council's own medical officer and the medical

<sup>1</sup>SC, 12 July 1875.

<sup>2</sup>SC, 19 Nov 1878 records the case of eight houses (in Lorn terrace, Woodhouse street) inspected by the medical officer at the request of the building clauses committee. He commented: 'I am at a loss to comprehend on what plea they have been built and allowed to be occupied'. The sanitary committee ordered the owner to take the necessary measures to make them fit for human habitation.

inspectors of the Local Government Board. Furthermore, the council continued to sanction the building of back-to-back houses when a considerable body of medical opinion believed them to be inimical to health. In an earlier chapter it was noted that this type of housing first made its appearance in Leeds in the late eighteenth century, and back-to-backs continued to be built in large numbers upto the end of our period.

The byelaws of 1866 instigated a slight departure from the traditional building practice by enacting that such houses were to be built in blocks of no more than eight (that is, a maximum of four houses backing on to each other), with a space of not less than 150 square feet between the blocks,

'free from any erection above the level of the ground, excepting privies'<sup>1</sup>

Subsequent regulations increased the minimum air space around the blocks, and improved the ventilation requirements for the houses,<sup>2</sup> but the standard format laid down in 1866 remained unchanged over the next forty years. Throughout the period, the majority of houses built in Leeds were of this type, forming from two-thirds to three-quarters of all house plans approved annually by the building clauses committee.<sup>3</sup> Towards the end of the century, the healthiness, and the economic and social rationale of the back-to-back was increasingly coming under attack from some quarters, and from others, was ardently defended. In a report to the Local Government Board, Dr. Barry and Mr. P. Gordon Smith

<sup>1</sup>Bye-laws as to New Streets and Buildings, etc., 1870, number 8. The index states that the byelaw was made under the authority of the local act of 1866.

<sup>2</sup>MRP, 165, Housing, Town-Planning, etc., Bill, 1908. Statement of the Lord Mayor, Aldermen and Citizens of the City of Leeds, pp. 1-3.

<sup>3</sup>M.W. Beresford, 'The back-to-back house in Leeds, 1787-1937, in S.D. Chapman, ed., The History of Working Class Housing.

set out the threefold disadvantages of the back-to-back, compared to the through house. They suggested tentatively that the absence of through ventilation had 'an unfavourable influence upon health', as did the relatively high density, the 'huddling of houses' which this type of building made possible, and that,

'in some cases grave disadvantages to health and decency accrue from the custom, still prevalent in certain districts of grouping privies in blocks at an excessive distance from the houses, a practice which is still more objectionable when each such privy has to serve the inhabitants of two or more houses'<sup>1</sup>

The principal argument in favour was financial. It was claimed that,

'no through house could be built to let at a less rent than 5s. a week, and it was impossible for a working man to pay that sum'<sup>2</sup>

The alternatives were flats or multiple occupation. The latter was regarded as undesirable on public health grounds, and the former as being unpopular with the Leeds working class.<sup>3</sup> The question of rents and profits on back-to-back and through houses was often inconclusively rehearsed, with the proponents of each producing appropriately supporting figures. The pro and anti groups were largely, but not entirely, a division between doctors and laymen. In 1891, the annual provincial meeting of the Society of Medical Officers of Health, held appropriately, in Leeds, passed resolutions condemning the back-to-back as

'essentially insanitary and...prejudicial to the health of the inhabitants',

and to petition the L.G.B. to introduce legislation to make them illegal.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>'Back-to-back houses', Public Health, 1 (1888-89), pp. 146-147.

<sup>2</sup>LM, 27 Nov, 1891.

<sup>3</sup>loc.cit. See also, E. Wilson, 'The housing of the working classes', Journal of the Soc. of Arts, vol. XLVIII (1899-1900), p. 254, for the unfortunate flat-building experiment of the Leeds Industrial Dwellings Company.

<sup>4</sup>'Discussion on the Housing of the Working Classes Act and as to back-to-back houses', Public Health, IV (1891-92), pp. 43-44.

The division of opinion on the subject was emphasised in what was for the council, an embarrassing manner, in 1893. The new local bill of that year sought to safeguard the powers of the council to allow back-to-backs to be built. They produced several witnesses who spoke in favour of the clause, including four doctors, but opposition came not only from the L.G.B., but from the council's own medical officer of health, who referred to the building of such houses as 'utterly wrong'.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, the select committee refused to strike out the clause, and no restriction was put upon this type of building until the Housing and Town Planning Act of 1909. As we shall see in a later chapter, the council was to propose the rehousing of the population displaced from the slum clearance areas in new back-to-backs, but was presented from doing so by the Local Government Board. It seems that at the time no conclusive evidence had been produced to convincingly condemn the back-to-back as a definite factor promoting ill-health in the community, and in the absence of this, the council's attitude was no worse than a tenacious attachment to custom.<sup>2</sup>

Of clearly-established relevance to public health standards, and to domestic amenity, was the supply of piped water. During the middle decades of the century the number of houses supplied increased rapidly

<sup>1</sup>House of Commons Select Committee on Police and Sanitary Regulations. Leeds Corporation (Consolidation and Improvement) Bill, 20 April 1893, Qu. 1157.

<sup>2</sup>The validity of the criticisms made in the Barry and Gordon Smith report were strongly contested seriatim by the corporation's counsel, see ibid., 19 April 1893, pp. 161-165, and the case for allowing the council to retain the right to sanction back-to-back houses was supported by its inspector of buildings, ibid., qu. 716-966, and four local doctors, ibid., qu. 981-1087. This is technically ex parte evidence, but the medical officer of health was not able to make out a clear case to support his opposition to this type of housing, see ibid., 20 April 1893, qu. 1088-1176.

as, more importantly, did the proportion of total houses supplied. Whereas in 1842, only three thousand houses (less than 10% of the number in the borough) consumed water supplied by the water works company, by 1851 nearly two thirds (22,732 out of 36,165 houses) drew their water from the mains, and by the mid sixties about 95% of all houses were connected to the municipal water supply.<sup>1</sup> On the enactment of the Public Health Act, 1872, it became the council's statutory duty to extend the supply still further, and regular orders were issued to property owners to connect their houses to the mains where this could be done at a charge which did not exceed 2d. a week. A circular from the L.G.B. in July 1874 on the council's obligation as the urban sanitary authority to make a sufficient water supply available in all parts of the borough led the sanitary committee to confer with the waterworks committee,

'to urge the necessity of extending the water mains throughout the borough with all possible despatch'<sup>2</sup>

A week later, the waterworks committee agreed to pipe water to the outlying settlements of Farnley, Pudsey and Bramley.<sup>3</sup> By the turn of the century, the waterworks was supplying 99,103 tenants, representing 99% of all 'families and separate occupiers' numbered in the census of 1901.<sup>4</sup> A somewhat different type of 'dwelling' came under the council's aegis in September 1878, when the Canal Boats Act obliged local authorities to inspect and register these vessels which operated on inland waterways within the sanitary district.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>RBIA, 6 Aug 1851; RB, 1 Aug 1867.

<sup>2</sup>SC, 13 July 1874.

<sup>3</sup>SC, 22 July 1874.

<sup>4</sup>'Report of the waterworks committee', Annual Reports of Committees, 1901-02; Census, 1901, County of York, table 12, pp. 91-92.

<sup>5</sup>SC, 30 Sept, 21 Dec 1878; see also R.M. MacLeod, 'Social policy and the 'floating population', the administration of the Canal Boats Acts 1877-1899', Past and Present, number 35 1966, pp. 101-132.



In the previous chapter we noted the development of the ready-made clothing trade which was taking place in Leeds in the later decades of the century. In June 1888 the appearance of two articles in The Lancet, drew the attention of the sanitary committee to the working conditions, in both homes and workshops, of the immigrant Jewish clothing workers.<sup>1</sup> The medical officer and the superintendent of the sanitary department reported at length on the subject, finding the articles in The Lancet 'very highly coloured',<sup>2</sup> and the committee decided that they should have a meeting with the factory inspectors to improve the efficiency of the supervision of these premises, and decided to begin regular inspections of Jewish houses and work places by its own staff.<sup>3</sup>

The appointment of a public analyst is dealt with in another chapter, and here, we shall look at the measures taken in the attempt to ensure the purity of one particular item of consumption, namely milk. By the later nineteenth century, it had been established that milk was capable of carrying various diseases, particularly typhoid fever, scarlet fever and tuberculosis,<sup>4</sup> and in 1879 the Contagious Diseases (Animals) Act obliged local authorities to inspect dairies, cowsheds and milk shops to ensure that adequate standards of cleanliness were being observed. All those involved in supplying milk were to be registered

<sup>1</sup> 'Report of The Lancet special sanitary commission on the sweating system in Leeds', The Lancet, 9 June 1888, pp. 1146-1148, and 16 June 1888, pp. 1209-1210.

<sup>2</sup> SC, 25 June 1888.

<sup>3</sup> See for example, SC, 8 April, 8 July, 12 Aug, 9 Sept, 14 Oct, 9 Dec 1889, 13 Jan, 10 Feb, 10 March, 14 April, 12 May 1890. More than 2,000 Jewish workshops and houses were inspected during this twelve month period.

<sup>4</sup> See, Ministry of Health, A Memorandum on Bovine Tuberculosis in Man with Special Reference to Infection by Milk, Reports on Public Health and Medical Subjects, No. 63, 1931; and M.K. Robinson, Report on the Sanitary Condition of Leeds for 1872, pp. 11-15 for an epidemic of typhoid fever trace to an infected supply of milk.

with the local authority, and its inspector could recommend that suppliers be struck off if they failed to reach the standard required.<sup>1</sup> The effective surveillance of the milk supply was hampered by two deficiencies in the law. First, milk vendors were not obliged to report the presence of disease on their premises and so the inspector had to rely solely on information gathered on his own tours of inspection. Secondly, the council had no power to intervene in the case of milk which was brought from outside the borough. This was a potentially serious defect, as about half the milk consumed in Leeds came from other places.<sup>2</sup> It was not until 1899 that the council took action to remedy the situation. In the local act of that year the council obtained powers to ensure that it was notified by dairymen of the existence of tuberculosis amongst their cattle, and to prosecute sellers of infected milk. The medical officer, or his deputy, was also given authority to inspect animals and take milk samples for analysis, not only within Leeds, but, with the permission of two justices, in areas under the jurisdiction of other local authorities.<sup>3</sup>

By this time, the sanitary committee had already decided on a measure which improved the prospect of prosecutions for the sale of adulterated milk. In 1895, the inspector of food and drugs reported<sup>4</sup> that many of those responsible for adulteration were immune from legal proceedings because they did not,

'dilute their milk below the low standard of Somerset House'

<sup>1</sup>41 and 42 Vict., ch. 74, section 34; SC, 10 Feb, 16 April, 14 July 1879, 12 Jan, 13 Sept 1880.

<sup>2</sup>yp, 6 April 1899 states that the Leeds milk supply came from 309 different sources. In Leeds, 173 cowkeepers supplied half the milk consumed, about 6,500 gallons, 53 others sent 1,800 gallons a day by train, and a further 83 sent 4,500 gallons a day in by road.

<sup>3</sup>Leeds Corporation Act, 1899, 62 and 63 Vict., ch. cclxiii, part VII, sections 29-39.

<sup>4</sup>SC, 5 Dec 1895.

upon which he was obliged to base his evidence. He suggested that he should be allowed to follow the practice which had been adopted in Oldham. There the food inspector, on receiving a complaint from a purchaser, visited the dairy from which the milk had come. He took a specimen of milk, and if this, when compared with the milk purchased, gave evidence of dilution, a prosecution was made on this basis. The inspector remarked that this would increase his expenses, and perhaps for this reason the committee came to no decision, although three years later it decided to allow the inspector to do this.<sup>1</sup>

In 1905, a small-scale experiment was attempted to improve the quality of milk available for feeding infants.<sup>2</sup> The project was started by two voluntary bodies, the Yorkshire Ladies' Council of Education and the Leeds Sanitary Aid Society. Their aim was to provide 'humanised' milk, and in March 1905 they approached the sanitary committee for financial assistance in this scheme to try to reduce the high level of infant mortality. The committee agreed to give a grant of £500, but this had to be abandoned as the resolution was deemed to be ultra vires by the council. The mayor, however, gave a donation of £250 to the organisers, and the money was used to supply pure, cooled, bottled milk to about one hundred infants in the south east registration district, which had a comparatively high infant mortality rate. Even had the sanitary committee's proposal not been ruled out of order, opposition would have been encountered for another reason, for one of the Conservatives argued that the proposal represented,

<sup>1</sup>SC, 13 Oct 1898.

<sup>2</sup>'Some aspects of the milk problem from within', Journal of the Royal Sanitary Institute, XXVI (1905), pp. 546-548; SC, 9 March, 2 Aug, 1905.

'the first step in the direction of municipalising the milk traffic, which was not a monopoly, and ought not to be tackled by the municipality'<sup>1</sup>

Measures for inspecting slaughter houses and for preventing the sale of bad meat seem to have been no more effective in the later decades of the century than they had been previously. In 1869 it was reported that as a result of the action taken against dealers in diseased meat in central Leeds, small farmers and butchers in the out-townships were killing unsound cattle on their premises and cutting them up before sending the meat direct to butchers in town.<sup>2</sup> This illustrated the crux of the problem, in that the area of the borough was so large that to inspect all its slaughtering places efficiently would require many more inspectors. As it was, the medical officer of health observed laconically,

'Leeds can boast nearly 300 slaughterhouses, all told. There are two meat inspectors to watch them all. I hold such administration to be little short of a farce'<sup>3</sup>

Yet in 1892, there were still only two inspectors, although their duties were made somewhat easier as a result of the decline in the number of slaughter houses by more than half.<sup>4</sup>

The control of smoke pollution from the late eighteen sixties also operated with the same indifferent results as before. As we suggested in an earlier chapter, even if the enforcement of smoke consumption by industry had not been hampered by the effective exemption of two major local industries (cloth dyeing, by this time declining in importance, and iron manufactures), the equivocal attitude of the

<sup>1</sup>LM, 6 July 1905.

<sup>2</sup>SNC, 24 Feb 1869.

<sup>3</sup>MRP no. 5, Report upon the Slaughter-Houses in Scotland and England...by Dr. Goldie, 1879, p.24.

<sup>4</sup>SC, 5 Sept 1892, notes that there were two inspectors to supervise 130 slaughter houses.

council prevented any considerable reduction in the smoke nuisance from being achieved. As the town clerk said to a Commons' select committee:

'we try and enforce the (regulations), but as Leeds is so dependent for its prosperity upon its industry that we are anxious not to do too much'<sup>1</sup>

The periodic organisation of local pressure groups had been necessary to counteract the council's indulgent attitude towards business interests, and it was only through the vigilance of one of these groups that new smoke abatement provisions had been inserted into the 1866 improvement act. The situation changed if at all, then for the worse in the later decades of the century, as urban and industrial growth increased the magnitude of the problem. In 1872, one of the reasons given for the probable potential of the Roundhay Park Estate (about three miles from the town centre), as a new residential area, was that,

'there is no place within the same distance which is so free from smoke'<sup>2</sup>

Twenty years later, scientific investigation showed that soot deposits fell over an area which extended to almost nine miles from Leeds.<sup>3</sup>

Obviously the problem was worse in the inner urban areas, and the press complained that,

'we do not know what quantity of smoke is sufficient to constitute a nuisance, but those who give themselves the trouble of watching the tall chimneys in the Kirkstall and Meanwood valleys, and in the neighbourhood, must frequently ask themselves whether the act after all is not a dead letter. Dense volumes of smoke are poured forth at frequent intervals, and for several seconds, and the air is polluted, with a calm indifference to the law and as a sort of standing challenge to the inspector'<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>HLRO, Select Committee of the House of Commons, Evidence 1872, volume 39, 25 April 1872, f 44.

<sup>2</sup>ibid., f 52.

<sup>3</sup>J.B. Cohen, 'A record of the Leeds Smoke Abatement Society', Journal of the Royal Sanitary Institute, vol XXVII (1906), pp. 71-73; and see also J.B. Cohen and A. Rushton, 'The nature and extent of air pollution by smoke', Nature, 14 Oct. 1909, pp. 468-9.

<sup>4</sup>LM, 30 Sept 1879.

Although in the earlier part of this period, references to prosecutions appear frequently in the minutes of the sanitary committee,<sup>1</sup> but according to one critic they had become 'ludicrously few'<sup>2</sup> by the early years of the present century. The same source also contended that the Leeds bye-laws were less stringent than those in other towns. Local opinion mobilised itself in the nineties, with the Sanitary Aid Society urging the sanitary committee to take more action, and with the Leeds Smoke Abatement Society investigating the scientific evidence on pollution to support proposals for changes in national legislation.<sup>3</sup> Neither were successful. The smoke inspector's investigations on methods which had been tried to reduce the volume of smoke in iron and steel works elsewhere in Yorkshire, and in Scotland, forced him to conclude that only indifferent results had been obtained, and it seems that the committee felt that there were no firm legal grounds upon which to coerce the cloth dyers.<sup>4</sup> On the national level, the Smoke Abatement Society's attempts, in conjunction with similar bodies in Manchester and Sheffield, to press the Local Government Board for stricter controls were disregarded.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>See for example, SC, 19 March, 11 May, 8 June, 13 July, 14 Sept, 12 Oct, 19 Nov 1874, 8 Feb, 12 April, 10 May, 14 June, 1875.

<sup>2</sup>J.B. Cohen, loc. cit.

<sup>3</sup>SC, 11 July 1894.

<sup>4</sup>SC, 11 Dec 1893, 12 Feb 1894, 21 Nov 1895; see also, 'Report of the Sanitary Committee', Annual Reports of Committees, 1899-1900, 'It will be remembered that the powers of the inspector are confined almost entirely to boiler furnaces. The worst offenders in Leeds, however, are the protected trades....'

<sup>5</sup>J.B. Cohen, loc. cit.

(6)

In his discussion of the contribution which public health legislation made to the 'elimination of the causes of preventable mortality' in nineteenth century Britain, Professor Flinn has argued that,

'there are two chronologies of public health reform...: the familiar story of royal commissions and public health acts; and the less well-known progress of the actual state of the health of the general public.... In 1875 the death rate stood at almost exactly the same level as it had in 1838 when civil registration began.... In short, there was very little real improvement in public health before the last quarter of the nineteenth century.... The two chronologies - the legislative and the mortality scales - moved forward only with a substantial time-lag between them'<sup>1</sup>

What has been said in this, and in the preceding chapter, of the development of environmental services in Leeds in the latter part of the century confirms his judgment. Table 4.2 shows the movement of the crude death rate in this period, and it can be seen that a clear downward trend does not occur until the mid seventies. Why it failed to fall before then should be abundantly clear from the evidence which has been presented. The actual reasons for its later decline must await the detailed investigation of a historian of public health. Our purpose in this chapter has been simply to indicate the scope of the council's role in the provision of environmental services, and to show how effectively, or ineffectively, they were administered. The conclusions cannot be very optimistic. The recurring inefficiency of public cleansing, whether by contract or direct works, continued for forty years, from the eighteen fifties when the service was inaugurated upto

<sup>1</sup> A.P. Stewart and E. Jenkins, The Medical and Legal Aspects of Sanitary Reform, 1969 ed., with an Introduction by M.W. Flinn, pp. (7) and (8).

TABLE 4.2(a)  
Crude death rates in the borough  
of Leeds, 1865-1905

Year	Rate per 1,000	Quinquennial Average	Year	Rate per 1,000	Quinquennial Average
1865	31.0		1885	19.9	
1866	32.5		1886	21.9	
1867	26.2		1887	21.1	
1868	28.3		1888	20.6	
1869	26.6	28.9	1889	22.1	21.1
1870	28.7		1890	22.6	
1871	26.4		1891	22.9	
1872	27.9		1892	19.8	
1873	27.6		1893	22.4	
1874	28.8	27.9	1894	17.9	21.1
1875	26.5		1895	20.6	
1876	25.1		1896	18.9	
1877	23.0		1897	20.1	
1878	24.7		1898	19.4	
1879	23.5	24.6	1899	19.4	19.7
1880	22.0		1900	20.4	
1881	21.6		1901	19.3	
1882	23.2		1902	17.6	
1883	23.5		1903	16.6	
1884	24.2	22.9	1904	18.1	18.4
			1905	15.7	

Source: See table 4.2(b).



TABLE 4.2(b)  
Infant mortality rates in the borough  
of Leeds, 1890-1905

Year	Rate per 1,000 births	Quinquennial Average
1890	173	
1891	177	
1892	168	
1893	206	
1894	156	176.0
1895	191	
1896	169	
1897	190	
1898	183	
1899	172	181.0
1900	183	
1901	188	
1902	160	
1903	153	
1904	176	172.0
1905	152	

Sources:- Table 4.1(a): J. Spottiswoode Cameron, Annual Report made to the Urban Sanitary Authority of the Borough of Leeds, 1903, table 1a p.2, table 1b p.3 table 1 p.5; 1904, table 1 p.2; 1905, table 1 p.3.

Table 4.2(b): ibid., 1905, p.17, p.23.

the end of the eighties. The sewerage system had little impact upon sanitary conditions from its inception in the mid-fifties upto the eighteen seventies, and it could be argued that it was not until the eighties, when the number of water closets in use began to increase considerably was it likely to have made any significant contribution to the diminution of the death rate. As we have shown, the council's spirited defence of the privy-and-ashpit system did nothing to hasten this. Similarly, the history of the municipal hospitals before the very end of the century was less than edifying.

In many respects of course, Leeds with its middens, its epidemic victims lying under canvas, and its dilatory record of sewage disposal was perhaps little different from other municipalities at this time.<sup>1</sup> But nevertheless, it is clear from the evidence presented in these two chapters why the aims of the public health propagandists of the eighteen forties took so long to achieve.

<sup>1</sup>For a comparison with Manchester, see: A. Redford, The History of Local Government in Manchester, ch. XXVII, 'The Manchester Sewage Scheme', and pp. 404-410, on hospitals.

CHAPTER FIVE

MUNICIPAL ENTERPRISE AND PUBLIC SERVICES, 1866 - 1905

In the remaining forty years of our period, there was a considerable expansion in the scope of municipal enterprise. Up to the eighties, the waterworks represented the sole utility in public ownership, but in the eighties it was joined by the gasworks, and in the nineties by the tramways and the electricity supply. The public services which the council began to provide in this period included public parks, allotments, baths, libraries and an art gallery. Two traditional aspects of local government policy were also prosecuted with increased vigour in the later decades of the century. From the eighties, the improvement commission had adopted responsibility for market facilities and street improvements as a part of its agenda, and these were amongst the duties inherited by the council in 1842. Because of external pressure, the markets had been improved in the eighties, but street improvements had been of only minor and intermittent concern up to the eighties. After this time, several important and many minor schemes involving the improvement of the town's major thoroughfares were executed, and much attention, although some of it indecisive, was given to the public markets.

In the eighties, the council for the first time became involved in education, and after the Education Act of 1902, became directly responsible for the organisation and management of primary and secondary education in the city. By 1902, the history of state education already had a thirty-year history independent of municipal control, and for this reason, and because the council's involvement begins almost at the termination of our period of study, nothing will be said here on the demise of the School Board, and the transfer of its functions to the municipality. But nevertheless, we shall consider the

council's response to the issue of technical education. But this chapter begins with an examination of the improvements made to the water supply after the criticisms made in the Hunter report.

## (1)

In the mid eighteen fifties, the council had chosen to remedy the increasing inadequacy of the water supply by pumping water from the river Wharfe, in preference to adopting a far more costly scheme, strongly advocated by the chairman of the waterworks committee, which would have involved reservoir-building to supply the town with water from the river Washburn by gravitation. As we have seen, within a few years, the result of the decision was a water supply which was both insufficient for long-term requirements, and polluted by the towns and villages of upper Wharfedale. The solution suggested by the borough engineer was basically the same as the scheme which had been proposed a decade before.<sup>1</sup> He advocated the impounding of water from the river Washburn by the construction of a series of reservoirs along its valley, and this was adopted as municipal policy with the enactment of the Leeds Waterworks Act of 1867.<sup>2</sup> The project was undertaken in three stages. The Lindley Wood reservoir, with a capacity of 750 million gallons was built between 1869 and 1875, the Swinsty reservoir, designed to hold 960 million gallons was begun in 1871 and completed in 1877, and the Fewston reservoir, of 870 million gallons was constructed between 1874 and 1879.<sup>3</sup> The overall cost was £508, 173, which represented nearly half of the total sum which the corporation had spent on the

<sup>1</sup>RB, 1 Aug 1867.

<sup>2</sup>30 and 31 Vict., c. cxli.

<sup>3</sup>LM, 4 Nov 1879.

waterworks in a quarter of a century of municipal ownership.<sup>1</sup> In addition, the council obtained powers in the 1877 improvement act to enlarge Eccup reservoir to hold 1,400 million gallons, representing,

'a supply of water to Leeds equal to half a year's consumption, thus rendering...Leeds secure, in the driest possible of seasons, of a supply of water sufficient to meet the growing demands of its population for years to come'<sup>2</sup>

Thus by the eighteen eighties the scale and design of the waterworks had completely effaced the effects of the myopic policy of the fifties, which had been a threat to public health and an affront to public opinion. But the quest for a pure water supply did not end here. Although the population in the Washburn valley was small and declining, having 2,902 inhabitants in 1801 and 2,027 in 1861, J.N. Radcliffe, in his report to the L.G.B. believed that there was a real possibility of pollution from 'excremental matter, human and bestial' reaching the reservoirs by means of the natural watercourses from the houses and farms in the valley.<sup>3</sup> The waterworks committee was aware of the problem and

'endeavoured for years to prevent the fouling of the Washburn water and its tributaries but with indifferent success, quiet but determined hostilities having met them at every point. The local authorities were indifferent. The supposed powers of the Rivers Board had also proved futile and helpless to assist us'<sup>4</sup>

Finally, in 1896 the committee proposed that the council should follow the example of other major towns and obtain parliamentary powers to

<sup>1</sup>The preamble to the Leeds Improvement Act, 1877 40 and 41 Vict., ch. clxxviii, states that the council had spent £1,188,144 on the waterworks.

<sup>2</sup>RB, 26 Sept 1877. The history of the water supply is treated at length in J. Toft, thesis, ch. IX.

<sup>3</sup>J.N. Radcliffe on the sanitary state of Leeds, with particular reference to diarrhoea and fever, P.R.O. MH 12/15247, pp. 26-27.

<sup>4</sup>LM, 8 Oct 1896.

purchase all the land in the area of the watershed. This provision was included in the local act of 1897,<sup>1</sup> and extensive areas of land were bought in the following years.

The large scale reservoir building programme raised the question of how the work was to be undertaken, with opinions divided over the relative merits of direct works, and independent contractors. In 1869 the council approved the committee's proposal to construct the Lindley Wood reservoir by direct works. In this the committee had the support of Hawksley, one of the leading civil engineers of the period who had told it that

'it would no doubt be better and in the end cheaper for the corporation to make their own works, but he very much feared whether the ratepayers would be satisfied unless they had the advantage of what was commonly called competition, which meant a considerable number of tenders varying from sixty to a hundred percent. It was almost impossible...to decline one or the other of the low tenders, but then the work was often 'scamped' and the contractors broke, and at last the corporation had to finish the work upon its own responsibility and at its own expense'<sup>2</sup>

Opposed to this view was one which stressed the importance of financial accountability, as when one councillor claimed that,

'if their engineers constructed the works they would have an unlimited pull at the public purse...because there would be no check over them. In the case of an outsider, if he did not do the work satisfactorily the engineers would not pass it, but what was to be done if they undertook the work themselves?'<sup>3</sup>

The debate was renewed in 1905, when the committee was beginning to plan a new reservoir complex to meet the growth of demand. In financial terms, the direct labour experiment at Lindley Wood was a

<sup>1</sup>Leeds Corporation Act, 1897 60 and 61 Vict., ch. cxcix, section 20.

<sup>2</sup>LM, 12 Aug 1869.

<sup>3</sup>ibid.

strong argument against repetition, for an estimated cost of £55,000 had turned into an actual expenditure of £119,000<sup>1</sup>, and the council decided by a large majority to let the work on contract<sup>2</sup>. There had never been any decisive case for either method of construction, but perhaps in this instance some members shared the view of the chairman of the waterworks committee, who

'gathered from some of the remarks of those who advocated direct administration that they regarded this as only a stepping stone to the complete abolition of the capitalist class'<sup>3</sup>,

and so voted according to their political convictions.

But nevertheless, by the eighteen seventies, the question of the water supply had practically ceased to be contentious, and the major issues of municipal enterprise arose from other sources, beginning with the policy of the gas committee.

(2)

The proposed municipal purchase of both the gas and the water supply in the late eighteen forties has been considered in chapter two, and as was noted there, the council then acquired only the waterworks and did not pursue its original aim of taking the gas companies into public ownership. On the grounds of public health, the improvement of the water supply was clearly a priority, and the cost of buying the gas companies at the same time was probably regarded as too great an expenditure. Moreover, the purchase of the waterworks was, in administrative terms, an easier proposition. The company was already

<sup>1</sup>LM, 2 Feb 1905.

<sup>2</sup>CM, 1 Feb 1905. The direct works proposal was defeated by 42 votes to 8.

<sup>3</sup>LM, 2 Feb 1905.



partly under the control of the council, through the latter's representation on the board of directors, and the council also had, under the company's acts of 1837 and 1847, statutory powers to buy the undertaking. In contrast, the gas supply was wholly independent of corporate intervention, and since there were two companies, the Leeds Gas Light Company created in 1818, and the Leeds New Gas Company of 1835, negotiations would have been more difficult. The issue of acquiring these two firms was raised again in 1868<sup>1</sup>, and this time it was carried to a successful conclusion with the enactment of the Leeds Corporation Gas Act of 1870.<sup>2</sup>

There were three arguments in favour of buying out the shareholders. By superceding the surveyors of the highways and the independent bridge and turnpike trusts in the borough, the council by the late eighteen sixties was establishing an absolute control over the highways, and in one respect, the merging of the two companies under municipal ownership was an extension of this policy, for

'there would not be that breaking up of the roads and streets which now prevailed for the purpose of laying pipes first by one company and then by another'<sup>3</sup>

But the most important aspect was financial, for it was well known that

'no corporation had yet undertaken the lighting of a town without being able to supply cheap gas and realise at the same time a handsome revenue'<sup>4</sup>

The cost of gas for street lighting had been one of the factors which had induced the council to consider purchase in the late forties, and although the price per thousand feet had fallen from 5/0 to 3/6,

<sup>1</sup>CM 1 Jan 1868, 11 Aug, 6 Dec, 1869.

<sup>2</sup>33 and 34 Vict., ch. lvi.

<sup>3</sup>LM, 2 Jan 1868.

<sup>4</sup>LM, 12 Aug 1869.

it was believed that the price might be reduced still further. It could not be said that the unification of the gas supply under the council would offend against economic orthodoxy, by creating a monopoly, since

"there was virtually no competition between the gas companies at present nor had there been since the new company had obtained for itself a firm footing in Leeds. Those who were connected with the lamp committee would know very well that the price charged by one company was exactly what was charged by the other; in fact, the two companies seemed to have an understanding as to what they would charge all around the town"<sup>1</sup>

Negotiations were completed by late 1869, on terms which seem to have been very favourable to the shareholders. The 1870 act authorised the council to pay upto £140 for every £100 worth of stock, and when the transfer had been achieved, the transaction had cost the council £763,244 " 10s " 4d<sup>2</sup>. The Leeds Mercury commented that,

'no corporation has ever paid so handsomely for the purchase of gas undertakings, but at the same time, no town had ever obtained gas works with a better prospect of making a profit out of them either directly or indirectly'<sup>3</sup>

It certainly appears that a handsome price had been paid for some partly obsolescent plant. At the Meadow lane works the council's inspector found in September 1870 that of the 612 retorts, 93 needed to be replaced, 102 were 'very much worn' and the remaining 417 were 'a mixed lot, some good and some bad'. In addition, the engine house was 'in a very bad and delapidated state'; the boiler was 'entirely worn out and requires a new one immediately'; and some of the purifiers were

'in a most dangerous state, and will require an entire new set, as the present ones are rusted through in hundreds of places'.

<sup>1</sup>LM, 2 Jan 1868.

<sup>2</sup>J. Hepper, Leeds; from a surveyor's point of view, (Leeds, 1899) p.8.

<sup>3</sup>LM, 1 April 1870.

Overall, his judgment was that

'the whole of the buildings are bad, with the exception of No. 3 Retort House, the arrangement of which might be considerably improved'<sup>1</sup>

Similarly, the New Wortley plant, built by the Leeds Gas Light Company in 1857, had been extensively rebuilt by 1884, and the York street gasworks, which had possessed gasholders built in 1818, had undergone 'almost complete reconstruction' by the mid eighties.<sup>2</sup>

Dr. Hennock has observed that,

'the council spent £763,225 and then discovered that the equipment was so worn out that the operations ran at a loss. In 1873 and again in 1874 the works had to be subsidised out of the rates to the tune of £14,000 in all. There was nothing wrong with the policy and it paid handsomely in the long run. What was wrong was the valuation at which the purchase had been made'<sup>3</sup>

Unfortunately, there now seems to be no record extant of the details of the negotiations, and so there is no means of ascertaining the basis of the council's valuation of the works. If it paid more than a realistic value for the establishments, this may possibly have been because it feared that parliamentary sanction would not be obtained without the prior appeasement of the shareholders, and thus a relatively disadvantageous settlement with them was preferable to a protracted battle before a parliamentary select committee, which the council might lose. But it is certainly incorrect to suggest that the loss made by the gas enterprise in 1873 and 1874, which actually amounted to £27,509<sup>4</sup> was caused by the inefficiency of the works. These years were

<sup>1</sup>Gas Purchase Committee Minutes, 9 Sept 1870.

<sup>2</sup>LM, 18 Jan 1884.

<sup>3</sup>E.P. Hennock, Fit and Proper Persons, p.213.

<sup>4</sup>F.R. Spark, Collection of Extracts, Documents etc., relating to Leeds Gas Matters, 1878-1885, vol. one, f.132.

the period of the 'coal famine' when the great export boom in coal, amongst other products, forced up domestic prices dramatically, and inspired a Commons' select committee to enquire into the reasons for its 'dearness and scarcity'.<sup>1</sup> In 1871, the Leeds gas committee was paying an average of 9/1d a ton for coal, and 9/5 in 1872. But in the next two years the average price rose first to 14/5 and then to 17/9 a ton. In the following year (1875) it fell to 13/6 and had declined to 7/8 by 1880.<sup>2</sup> Had the council been free to pass on the full effect of this temporary rise in costs to the consumer, there would have been no deficits in 1873 and 1874. But under the terms of the 1870 act, the maximum price which it was able to charge was 3/9 per thousand cubic feet.<sup>3</sup> Under these exceptional circumstances, escalating costs combined with a statutorily-fixed maximum price produced losses in these years, but the situation was redressed in the second half of the decade, and over the first ten years of operations the gasworks produced a profit of nearly £40,000.

When, in 1881, the town clerk gave evidence before the House of Commons select committee on electric lighting, he was asked,

'Then you don't look upon the making of gas as a means of making profit?',

and replied,

'No; we give the gas consumers the benefit'.<sup>4</sup>

In purely financial terms, the statement was incontrovertable. The gas committee took as its priority the supplying of gas at the cheapest possible rate. From the 'famine' prices of the early seventies the

<sup>1</sup>Select Committee of the Present Dearness and Scarcity of Coal, Parliamentary Papers, X, 1873, 313.

<sup>2</sup>F.R. Spark, loc. cit.

<sup>3</sup>33 and 34 Vict., ch. lvi, section 22.

<sup>4</sup>LM, 12 May 1881.

price of gas was progressively reduced until by 1881 the 40,409 consumers were paying only 1/10d per 1,000 cubic feet.<sup>1</sup> But by this time, the consumers, and some members of the council were not concerned over the price, but over the quality of the product. In January 1877, the Chamber of Commerce had protested that,

'the quality of gas is now much inferior to that formerly supplied by the companies'<sup>2</sup>;

and this was not merely an ex parte statement, for the Leeds Mercury, and other local newspapers noted that,

'the gas supplied, though undoubtedly cheap has been decidedly nasty'<sup>3</sup>

The nastiness arose from the high sulphur content in the gas. The first complaints were made in 1878, and in May of that year the borough analyst reported that the average sulphur impurities amounted to 35 grains per 1,000 cubic feet.<sup>4</sup> The sulphur level fluctuated considerably: in the last four months of 1879 it varied between 25.89 and 43.10 grains, and in the first quarter of 1880, from 34.69 to 47.4 grains. By comparison, Bradford gas in January 1880 held 36.57, Huddersfield gas 29.13, and Newcastle gas in February yielded 20.15.<sup>5</sup>

In July 1880, the gas committee ordered its engineer to ensure that the sulphurous contamination did not rise above twenty grains, the

<sup>1</sup>CM, 11 Aug 1880.

<sup>2</sup>F.R. Spark, Collection of Extracts, Volume one, p.142, quoting an unidentified source. Spark, a publisher and newspaper proprietor, was a prominent member of the council, and a member of the gas committee. This collection contains much administrative information on the gas enterprise which has not survived elsewhere. For Spark, see F.R. Spark, Memories of my Life, (Leeds, 1913)

<sup>3</sup>LM, 14 Aug 1879.

<sup>4</sup>F.R. Spark, Collection of Extracts, vol. one, Report of the Gas Committee, 26 January 1882.

<sup>5</sup>ibid., Reports presented to the Gas Committee...by the Borough Analyst upon Tests made of the Gas consumed in Leeds, Bradford, Huddersfield, and Newcastle.

level fixed by the select committee of the House of Commons for metropolitan gas companies.<sup>1</sup> After a series of experiments the engineer, by substituting lime for the iron oxide previously used as a purifying agent, managed to ensure that the impurities fell to a more acceptable level by the early eighties. Another complaint associated with the question of the purity of the gas was its illuminating power. Under the conditions of the 1870 act, this was fixed at a minimum of sixteen candle power. In April 1881, the committee found it necessary to order that the statutory minimum should be adhered to, and in November instructed the engineer to maintain a minimum of seventeen candles.<sup>2</sup>

These two problems of purity and illumination were the result of the gas committee's attitude towards the undertaking: it wished to produce both cheap gas and a financial surplus. When in 1885, the gas engineer was asked to account for the low yield of gas per ton of coal in Leeds compared to other towns, he pointed out that the committee chose coals which produced high yields of tar and ammonia but which by their nature had

'gaseous properties...which have been almost contemptable'.

But given the cheap gas policy, the by-products were of relatively high value, for

'when tar preponderated, it was more profitable to us, than if the corresponding weight (of coal) had been accounted for in gas'<sup>3</sup>

We can see here an obvious parallel between the council's concern to produce cheap, but poor quality gas in the seventies and its decision to obtain a cheap, but inferior water supply in the eighteen

<sup>1</sup>Gas Committee Minutes, 26 July 1880; F.R. Spark, Collection of Extracts, vol. one, Report of the Gas Committee, 26 January 1882.

<sup>2</sup>Gas Committee Minutes, 11 April, 28 Nov, 1881.

<sup>3</sup>F.R. Spark, Collection of Extracts, vol. two, part two, Report of Gas Engineer on low yield of gas per ton, 3 July 1885.

sixties. The improvement in the gas supply came about through two influences, one technical and one political. In 1883, a newspaper observed that,

'no public official in Leeds has been the object of so much grumbling as Mr. Woodall, the gas engineer. For years the wretched quality of Leeds gas has been one continual source of complaint, and it must be admitted that the complaints were fully justified. But the more the subject is ventilated, the more clearly it is shown that Mr. Woodall has been made the scape goat, and that the real offenders are the members of the gas committee, whose parsimonious policy deprives the gas engineer of the requisites for the manufacture of good gas'<sup>1</sup>

Woodall indeed seems to have been a remarkably capable man, for when in 1885 he emigrated to become the manager of the Suburban Gas Company in Melbourne, Australia, the Manchester District Institution of Gas Engineers, praised him for his 'marvellous success...in Leeds' and on his 'very distinguished mark as a gas engineer'<sup>2</sup>.

The gas question created dissention within the ruling Liberal party in the council. As one of the 'progressive' Liberals, F.R. Spark, observed,

'There were advocates of cheap gas, however nasty, and advocates of good gas, though nominally dear.... The Gas Committee - managed by a Liberal majority - had decided in favour of cheap and inferior gas. Though then a member of the Liberal party, I could not support the 'Liberal' Gas Committee's policy'<sup>3</sup>

Spark's campaign embarrassed his party's candidates at the 1884 municipal election, and led to the defeat of several Liberal candidates, and party feeling was such that he was elected as an alderman by a majority of only one vote, but his policy prevailed. If, by the mid

<sup>1</sup> ibid., vol. two, part one, unidentified newspaper cutting of 17 Feb 1883.

<sup>2</sup> ibid., vol. two, part three, Manchester District Institution of Gas Engineers, Report of 64th Quarterly Meeting, 28 November 1885, pp. 23-24; LM, 21 Nov 1885.

<sup>3</sup> F.R. Spark, Memories of my Life, pp. 21-22.

eighties, Leeds gas was cheap, bright and relatively pure, it had become so only after persistent protests, both inside and outside the council, against the policy of the gas committee.

But in the nineties the cheap-gas policy experienced a set-back. Throughout the eighties the price remained at 1/10d per 1,000 feet, but from 1 January 1890, it was increased to 2/2d, and then to 2/4 from the beginning of 1894. In 1899 it was brought down to 2/0d, but increased to 2/3 in July of the following year.<sup>1</sup> These changes were determined, at least until the Conservatives took power, solely by movements in operating costs. In the late eighties the works were accumulating large deficits, and this forced the committee both to reduce illuminating power from nineteen to eighteen candles, and raise the price by twopence. Further difficulties were caused in 1892 by a coal strike which obliged the committee to import coal from Durham at greatly increased cost.<sup>2</sup> There was no intention on the part of the gas committee to subsidise gas consumers. Its policy seems to have been that of a publicly-responsible monopoly, charging prices which were as low as seemed to be compatible with maintaining a reserve to meet probable contingencies. Unfortunately it only required unexpected changes in the cost of production to upset a finely-calculated balance. The implications of this policy for the gas workers will be considered in a later chapter.

<sup>1</sup>CM, 4 Dec 1889, 6 Dec 1893, 4 Oct 1898, 13 June 1900.

<sup>2</sup>MRP, no. 57, Verbatim report of a conference between the Gas Committee and the Gas Workers Union as to wages of men, February 1896, p.18.



(3)

Two of the motives which determined the council to purchase the gas companies, control over the highways and the public ownership of remunerative utilities, were also present in the initial discussions on the creation of tramways. In October 1869, the council received a letter from a London firm of solicitors informing it of their clients' intention to apply for an act of parliament to enable them to establish a tramway company in Leeds.<sup>1</sup> When the question came up for consideration in December, the council decided to oppose the application, and two months later agreed to promote a bill on its own behalf to enable it to provide this service if it was found that the inhabitants thought it desirable.<sup>2</sup> The arguments in favour of this course were compendiously expressed by Alderman George, who maintained that,

'if there was a great benefit derived from laying down tramways, and if there was to be great profit derived from tolls for the passage of carriages, the inhabitants of Leeds ought to have the benefit. The corporation had spent £60,000 in the purchase of the tolls, and had expended a good deal of money in the improvement of the streets; they were at present asking parliament for powers to take over the gas companies, so that the streets might be under no control but their own, and it would be hardly consistent to allow the promoters of these tramways to assume the powers over the highways which they wanted'<sup>3</sup>

Some months later the Tramways Act of 1870 became law, and so removed the need for a private or a local act. This measure gave local authorities the right to obtain a provisional order from the Board of Trade to construct tramways and to lease the right of user to any

<sup>1</sup>CM, 6 Oct 1869.

<sup>2</sup>CM, 10 Dec 1869, 9 Feb 1870.

<sup>3</sup>LM, 10 Feb 1870.

individual or company, or to allow general public access. But it expressly forbade the local authority to provide and manage the tram-cars itself, although the permanent way and rolling stock could be purchased from the private leasees after twenty one years.<sup>1</sup> In October, the council voted to support a private application to make tramways in the town, which the act allowed, providing the local authority gave its assent. No explicit reason was given for this change of plan and when the lease was confirmed in the following month, a plea for municipal ownership made by one councillor received no response whatsoever.<sup>2</sup>

The council let the tramway franchise to William and Daniel Bushby for £1,000 and a confirming act of August 1871 approved the partners' plans.<sup>3</sup> They were apparently unable to fulfil their obligations and a limited company was incorporated in the following year to take over from them.<sup>4</sup> A third act in 1877 gave the company power to make additional tramways, and ratified an agreement made in January to allow the council to purchase the company within six months.<sup>5</sup>

The council failed to do so, but this did not imply a general satisfaction with the company's operations. In 1881 it was discovered that the tramdrivers and other employees were working a sixteen-hour day from 7 am to 11 pm, which as one councillor observed was,

'a system of oppression and nothing but English slavery'.<sup>6</sup>

Furthermore, although the council had in 1877 called upon the company

<sup>1</sup>The Tramways Act, 1870, 33 and 34 Vict., ch. 78, sections 4, 19 and 43.

<sup>2</sup>CM 28 Oct 1870; LM 29 Oct 1870; CM 9 Nov 1870; LM, 10 Nov 1870.

<sup>3</sup>Leeds Tramways Order, 1871, in Tramways Orders Confirmation Act, 34 and 35 Vict., ch. clxxxix.

<sup>4</sup>The Leeds Tramways Act, 1872, 35 and 36 Vict., ch. clxxiv.

<sup>5</sup>The Leeds Tramways Act, 1877, 40 and 41 Vict., ch. clxix, section three.

<sup>6</sup>LM, 4 June 1881.

to fulfil the clause in the provisional order which made provision for workmen's fares, it was still refraining from doing so four years later, and apparently workmen's cars were not introduced until 1889.<sup>1</sup>

In the early nineties there appears a new, and recurring complaint about the management of the tramways. During a council meeting in January 1891, a discussion took place on the 'dangerous and disgraceful' condition of the Headingley tramway and further complaints were voiced in July and November.<sup>2</sup> It seems that the wear and tear of the permanent way was causing danger to other road users, and the poor state of the lines was the result of the increasing use of

'that most objectionable of urban complaints - the steam tram',

which was introduced onto lines designed to carry the lighter weight of horse-drawn tram cars only.<sup>3</sup> Despite several admonitions, the company did little or nothing to repair the damage, and by April 1893, it was recognised that firm action had to be taken, for,

'it was common knowledge that the Leeds tramway lines were in a shameful state of repair. They had used all kinds of persuasion with the company without any effect. They had spared the tramway company in the past, but the company had been stupid, and the committee (ie. the council's highway committee) were now determined to enforce their powers as far as they were able'<sup>4</sup>

These powers were now extensive, for the twenty one year monopoly which the company possessed by virtue of the 1870 act was to expire in 1893, and the council was now at liberty to exercise its option to buy the company out. In anticipation, it had already decided in November

<sup>1</sup>CM, 3 Oct 1877; LM 16 June 1881; CM, 2 Oct 1889.

<sup>2</sup>LM, 8 Jan, 2 July, 10 Nov 1891.

<sup>3</sup>'Leeds Electric Tramways', The Electrical Review, vol 41 1897, pp. 275-279.

<sup>4</sup>LM, 6 April 1893.

1892 to give the company notice of its intentions, and after arbitration in July 1893, the purchase was completed for £114,950. The council formally entered into possession on 2 February 1894.<sup>1</sup>

The highways committee had created a sub-committee to supervise the temporary management of the undertaking, since

'it was at least necessary that the lines should be worked by the corporation until they had been put into a proper state of repair'.<sup>2</sup>

but, at this time, there was certainly no intention of adopting it as a municipal service. One immediate objection was that, under the terms of the 1870 act, the council had no option but to lease the actual operation of the concern to private enterprise. But there were, so it was believed, other reasons in favour of a policy of delegation. The highways committee argued that, unlike the gas and water supply, the tramways were used by only a small proportion of the population, so that if they were unprofitable, and required subsidising, a minority would benefit at the expense of all the ratepayers, and conversely, if they made a profit, the whole community would benefit at the expense of the tramway users. It seemed probable that the former objection was more realistic, for at that time only two corporations had experience of municipally-owned public transport, namely Huddersfield and Glasgow, and the latter had lost nearly £30,000 since 1882. In addition, the activities of local groups of socialists in organising meetings and deputations to advocate municipalisation, aroused Conservative objections to interference with private enterprise.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, in November 1894, the council decided to apply for an act to allow it to

<sup>1</sup> CM, 4 May, 16 Nov 1892; LM, 26 July 1893; Council of the City of Leeds, Committees, Officers of the Council, etc., December 1900 (ie. the Corporation Yearbook).

<sup>2</sup> LM, 10 Nov 1893.

<sup>3</sup> LM, 15 Feb 1894.

operate the tramways, but in the debate it was stressed that this was simply to be a permissive measure, and did not imply its conversion to the principle of public ownership.<sup>1</sup> In the event, however, it proved impossible to lease the undertaking on satisfactory terms, and so the council, albeit unwillingly, was obliged to use the powers of its new act,<sup>2</sup> and move from the provisional into permanent management.

There are several aspects of the development of this new municipal service which require comment. By October 1894 the tramways committee had increased the tramway staff by thirty eight, reduced the hours of work and increased wages,<sup>3</sup> and despite previous doubts, the tramways were indisputably profitable. We shall review these topics elsewhere, and here we shall consider what was done to improve the services offered to the public. One important feature of municipal administration was the marked reduction of fares which took place between 1895 and 1905. Although the tramways committee steadfastly maintained its objection to the proposals for ½d. stages and transfer tickets,<sup>4</sup> cheaper fares were progressively introduced, culminating in the decision in January 1905 that on every route the first penny stage from the starting point in town was to be extended to two miles.<sup>5</sup> Overall, by 1903 the fares charged were about 60% lower than they had been under the tramway company regime.<sup>6</sup> But still the service catered for only a minority, and

<sup>1</sup>CM, 14 Nov 1894; LM, 15 Nov 1894.

<sup>2</sup>The Leeds Corporation Tramways Act, 1896, 59 and 60 Vict., ch. lxxv.

<sup>3</sup>LM, 24 Oct 1894.

<sup>4</sup>CM, 5 July 1899, 1 Jan 1902; Traffic sub-committee, 19 March 1906; CM, 4 April 1906, 2 Oct 1907, 1 Feb 1911.

<sup>5</sup>Sub Highways (Tramways) committee, 16 Jan 1905.

<sup>6</sup>G.C. Dickinson and C.J. Longley, 'The coming of cheap transport - a study of tramway fares on municipal systems in British provincial towns, 1900-14', Transport History, vol. 6 1973, p. 114, table 1.

in this period there was little improvement in the facilities offered to workmen, despite the city engineer's hopes that there was

'the sanitary or the health aspect of the question, the enabling the artisan to live in more airy surroundings than he does at present'<sup>1</sup>

Workmen's cars were run every morning, with perhaps the earliest journey beginning at Wortley at 5.20 am, and upto 7.45 am workers could travel in these special carriages at concessionary rates. The fare was one penny for any distance between the town centre and the city boundary (in either direction), but there was no transfer provision, so that changing routes involved paying a second fare. Moreover, the concession was available in the early morning only, and workers returning home in the evening were treated as ordinary passengers.<sup>2</sup> Transfer tickets for early morning travel, to allow a two mile journey for one penny were introduced in 1904, but a proposal to extend the concessionary period to 8.30 am, and to make cheap fares available between 4 pm and 6 pm was rejected by the council in January 1905.<sup>3</sup> Thus it is not surprising that the number of workmen using the tramway service was only a small proportion of the total passenger traffic. In 1906, those using the workmen's trams were only 3.3% of total passengers.<sup>4</sup>

The reduction of fares achieved by the corporation was possible because of cheaper operating costs, and this was essentially the result of the adoption of electric powering, an innovation made in 1897. The council already had some experience of this, for in September 1890 it had been approached by the Thomson-Houston International Electric

<sup>1</sup>RB, Jan 1895.

<sup>2</sup>Sub H (T) C, 8 Dec 1902.

<sup>3</sup>CM, 4 Oct 1904, 4 Jan 1905.

<sup>4</sup>Dickinson and Longley, art. cit., p. 122, table 3.

Company with a proposition to install and operate electric cars on the line which the council had built from Sheepscar to Roundhay. The tramway company had been unwilling to build the line, and so the council, presumably anxious to improve communications between the town and Roundhay Park, had acted on its own initiative, and the line was opened in February 1890 with horse-drawn trams. In November, the council made an agreement with Thomson-Houston to lease the line to them for use by their electric vehicles, with the company paying a nominal rent of £110 a year.<sup>1</sup> A year later, an extension along Harehills road and Beckett street was constructed, and the whole venture, according to informed opinion was 'eminently successful'.<sup>2</sup> One duty of the tramway committee created in December 1893 was to 'enquire and recommend as to the best system of traction', and in June 1895 it advised the council to construct an electrified system.<sup>3</sup> Two years later, seven miles of track from Kirkstall to Roundhay had been converted for this purpose, and another thirty miles had been relaid in anticipation.<sup>4</sup> By 1900, capital expenditure on the tramways had reached £587,580, and track mileage, which had been 22.44 at the time of purchase in 1894, had risen to 62.88 in 1900, of which more than half (36.65 miles) were operated by electric trams.<sup>5</sup> Electrification reduced operating costs per mile by about 40%,<sup>6</sup> and this saving was partially passed on to passengers in lower fares, which in turn

<sup>1</sup>The Telegraphic Journal and Electrical Review, vol. XXVII, p. 369; CM, 10 Nov 1890.

<sup>2</sup>'Leeds Electric Tramways', The Electrical Review, vol. 41 1897, p. 275.

<sup>3</sup>LM, 4 Jan 1894; RB, June 1895.

<sup>4</sup>art. cit. fn. 28.

<sup>5</sup>Council of the City of Leeds...(ie. Yearbook).

<sup>6</sup>Dickinson and Longley, art. cit., p.115, table 2.

increased the number of tramway users: in 1895, 10.5 million passengers were carried, and a decade later the number was 64.2 million.<sup>1</sup> In financial terms also, the results were irreproachable, for the net surplus of £4,749 in 1895-96 had grown into £55,000 in 1904-1905.<sup>2</sup> Except perhaps on the issue of workmen's fares, municipal tramways in Leeds were an unquestionable success, essentially because the opportunities offered by electric power were recognised and fully exploited. But in contrast, the council was far more hesitant in its attitude towards the potential of electricity as a form of lighting.

## (4)

The practical implications of the development of electric lighting were considered by a Commons' select committee in 1878-79, and three years later the Electric Lighting Act, 1882, laid down a code of administrative practice.<sup>3</sup> The act allowed the Board of Trade, by means of provisional order, to authorise any local authority, company or individual to supply electric lighting for public or private purposes. A local authority could obtain an order, and if it then wished, could contract with a private firm to undertake the works, with the right to acquire them after twenty one years. During the early eighties there was a marked, and indeed financially unstable 'boom' in the promotion of electricity companies,<sup>4</sup> and in August 1882<sup>5</sup> the council received a letter from one company asking for approval for its proposed application

<sup>1</sup>Annual Report of the Tramways Committee, 1895-96, and 1905-06.

<sup>2</sup>loc. cit.

<sup>3</sup>Electric Lighting Act, 1882, 45 and 46 Vict., ch. 56.

<sup>4</sup>I.C.R. Byatt, The British Electrical Industry 1875-1914, (unpublished D. Phil thesis, Oxford, 1962), pp. 27-36.

<sup>5</sup>CM, 25 Aug 1882.



for the necessary order for Leeds. A committee was set up to consider the matter, and reported that there were eight applicants, including both companies and individuals, who were intending to seek a provisional order, and recommended that the council should do so itself.<sup>1</sup> This was agreed, and in May 1883, the council allowed the electric lighting committee to spend up to £10,000 in installing an experimental lighting system in the municipal buildings.<sup>2</sup> The committee began with lighting trials in the new public library and by October 1885 the system, using incandescent lamps, was in full working order.<sup>3</sup> In the following year the Victoria Hall, in the town hall, was fitted with arc lamps, and in 1887 incandescent lighting was extended to the mayor's rooms and the new art gallery. In all, the committee had spent £10,234 on plant and equipment,<sup>4</sup> and in July 1889, asked the council to approve plans to light the council chamber, law courts, and the offices in the town hall and municipal buildings for an estimated £3,000.<sup>5</sup>

More important than this was the committee's proposal for

'a scheme of lighting to form a nucleus for...lighting the town of Leeds'.

It recommended that it be allowed to build a new generating station, and to supply interior lighting to houses, shops and offices in a central portion of the town, for enquiries had ascertained that

'the desire to have electric light was almost unanimous'.

The cost of the whole project was estimated to be £68,000, but the committee advised an initial investment of £25,000. Although the cost

<sup>1</sup>RB, 20 Sept 1882.

<sup>2</sup>CM, 2 May 1883.

<sup>3</sup>Report of the Electric Lighting Committee, 26 October 1885, (in Annual Reports), pp. 9-10.

<sup>4</sup>RB, July 1889.

<sup>5</sup>CM, 3 July 1889.

of electric lighting was 20% more than that of gas, at current Leeds prices, (and perhaps 40% if replacing light bulbs was taken into account) there were,

'the indirect but great advantages of electric lighting when compared with gas lighting, as affecting health, goods, furniture, books, decorations etc., and the absolute freedom of the electric light from explosions and personal injury'.

Whatever the advantages to the consumer, the committee saw several valid reasons why the council should embark upon the proposed scheme. There had already been six years' delay since experiments had begun, and the Board of Trade had shown itself willing to grant licences to private companies where local authorities had proved dilatory. The committee urged that the council should retain control over 'what may prove eventually a very important business', and repeated the argument previously used in relation to the tramways and the gas companies, that the council should not allow any other body to interfere with the streets. In addition, consumers would benefit, as a municipal undertaking could supply lighting at about  $\frac{1}{4}$ th of a penny per hour, whereas a private concern could only do so at at least double the cost.<sup>1</sup>

The report was presented to the council in July 1889, when a proposal to adopt it was rejected, and the whole issue was referred back to the committee.<sup>2</sup> Many council members favoured an amendment which claimed that lighting 'can be advantageously provided by private enterprise', but perhaps their motives were not to restrict municipal initiative for the benefit of private industry, for as one speaker remarked,

<sup>1</sup>RB, July 1889.

<sup>2</sup>CM, 3 July 1889.

'no evidence had been produced to convince the council that in passing the resolution they would be undertaking a profitable concern. In fact they were asked to embark in an enterprise of a most speculative character, and there was not a single member of the committee who supported it that would invest his own money in it if it were to be carried out by the electric lighting committee.... They need not have any fear that the town would not be provided with electric light. As certain as the summer brought them new potatoes, there would be fools who would invest their money in electric lighting'!<sup>1</sup>

In October the issue was revived, but it was decided to defer reconsideration for six months while the committee produced a new report.<sup>2</sup> Shortly after, letters were received from three companies stating their intention to apply for provisional orders, and in January 1890 the council decided to oppose the applications, pending the committee's report,<sup>3</sup> which was not presented until October. It reiterated the arguments of the previous year, and added two new ones. In the first place, the existence of two or three companies in the borough would not, as might be believed, result in competition working to reduce charges to the lowest possible level, for each company would have a monopoly of one district. Secondly, the establishment of different companies with different systems would create great difficulties if and when the council decided to purchase them.<sup>4</sup> None of these reasons induced the council to cast off its earlier scepticism. One councillor believed that,

'by allowing a company to come into the town they would avoid the risk, while they could always buy the company out'

although another

'warned the council lest it should have to repeat the experience it had with the waterworks, the gasworks and the tramways'<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>LM, 4 July 1889.

<sup>2</sup>CM, 2 Oct 1889.

<sup>3</sup>CM, 9 Nov 1889, 28 Jan 1890.

<sup>4</sup>RB, September 1890.

<sup>5</sup>LM, 7 Oct 1890.

The Leeds Mercury was in no two minds on the issue. Editorially it remarked that,

'the speakers never seemed to realise that they were discussing seriously the question whether, in one of the largest and most prosperous boroughs in the kingdom, the council should undertake the providing of 'the illuminant of the future' or should stand aside and leave the work to be done by others, thus in effect declaring itself incompetent to take upon itself an essentially municipal responsibility... ..The question is whether or not the electric light should be provided by the council as a municipal work, or should be left to private enterprise - for say some half-dozen companies to come into the borough and create for themselves severally vested rights which must some time or other be bought out at the usual cost'!

In April 1891, the council gave its assent to the Board of Trade's provisional order in favour of the Yorkshire House-to-House Electricity Company.<sup>2</sup>

At this stage, we need to consider the advisability of the council's decision. Council members were almost certainly correct in questioning the prospect of financial viability, given the experience of previous years. In the eighteen eighties, commercial electric lighting projects were essentially speculative ventures, and often not particularly successful ones either. The 'boom' of the early eighties resulted in widespread financial losses, as companies tried to compete with gas by fixing prices so that electric lighting was as cheap as gas lighting, whereas it was (for incandescent lamps), three times as expensive to provide.<sup>3</sup> More important was the question of technical development. Lighting technology was still in its experimental stages at this time, and rapid advances in design and invention made previous

<sup>1</sup> ibid.

<sup>2</sup> CM, 7 Jan, 17 April, 1891.

<sup>3</sup> I.C.R. Byatt, thesis, pp. 42-43.

systems obsolete, or at least much less competitive. In this situation, expert advice was at a premium, and here the deliberations of the electric lighting committee can perhaps be faulted. In its first report, it pointed out that it was

'buying the engines, dynamos, and other materials in the open market, and employing ordinary workmen on the installation, thus avoiding not only excessive trade profits on the material, but all profit on the labour, as well as high professional charges'<sup>1</sup>

But at the same time, a leading trade journal, commenting on the delays taking place in Leeds, observed:

'we trust, however, that the forthcoming installation...may give as much satisfaction to the inhabitants, in a practical sense, as the confidence which the committee have in their own ability, without the aid of professional assistance, to carry out the same successfully, does to that body. Something must have been learned in six years'<sup>2</sup>

The attitude of municipalities in general has been characterised as one of being 'very ready to trade, yet careful to avoid speculative enterprise'<sup>3</sup>, and this is certainly an understandable position, since their funds were not intended, like those of shareholders, to finance risk-bearing projects. In 1890, electric lighting schemes, viewed in terms of the council's public responsibility, still possessed what might be termed the taint of novelty. On the other hand, other local authorities had decided to adopt lighting as a public service, as for example Manchester in 1890<sup>4</sup>, and it could be said that Leeds took a short-sighted attitude to the issue. Indeed, the predictions of the Leeds Mercury proved to be partially correct, for in 1897 the question of public ownership was re-opened.

<sup>1</sup>RB, July 1889.

<sup>2</sup>The Telegraphic Journal and Electrical Review, vol. xxv (part 2), 19 July 1889, p.71.

<sup>3</sup>I.C.R. Byatt, thesis, p.93.

<sup>4</sup>A Redford, The History of Local Government in Manchester, vol. 111, pp. 98-99.

In September, the parliamentary committee was instructed to report on the possibility of purchase, and in January 1898, recommended that this should be done.<sup>1</sup> The speculative aspect which had made council members wary eight years before was no longer present, and as one member remarked,

'the day when the acquisition of such an undertaking had an undue element of risk about it had gone by.... He was prepared to take his share of responsibility with the council for having allowed the company to come in at all. But they should remember that the experiment the corporation made of lighting the town hall and municipal buildings did not prove a success, and money was lost upon it. The invention of transmitters had, however, changed matters'<sup>2</sup>

One councillor had already raised an old complaint when he said that,

'no one...could have observed the state of the public thoroughfares along which the House-to-House company had recently laid wires without feeling that it was desirable that the entire control of the streets should be vested in the corporation'<sup>3</sup>

In August, the company was given notice of the council's intentions, and in November 1898, the agreement was ratified.<sup>4</sup> The council paid dearly for its new acquisition. Under the terms of the Leeds Electric Supply Order 1891, the council could purchase the undertaking with an issue of 5% corporation stock to the value of the company's capital assets, but if it did so before ten years had elapsed, it would have to make a further, compensatory payment. This was to be calculated as a five percent dividend on capital expenditure, less the aggregate amount of the dividends which the company had declared upto the date of purchase.<sup>5</sup> The capital value of the company in 1898 was

<sup>1</sup>CM, 1 Sept 1897, 5 Jan 1898.

<sup>2</sup>LM, 6 Jan 1898.

<sup>3</sup>LM, 2 Sept 1897.

<sup>4</sup>CM, 3 Aug, 9 Nov 1898.

<sup>5</sup>MRP no. 61, The Yorkshire House-to-House Electricity Company Limited and the Leeds Corporation. Agreement for taking over undertaking 8 November 1898.

£154,409<sup>1</sup>, but the payment actually made was £217,420 in 5% irredeemable stock<sup>2</sup>, which represented a sum forty percent in excess of the value of the works. In the next six years, the scale of operations rapidly expanded. By April 1906, capital expenditure on electric lighting had reached £847,592 (which presumably includes the cost of purchase), and the number of consumers had risen from 980 to 5,467<sup>3</sup>, or slightly more than 1% of total population, which was about average for the early twentieth century.<sup>4</sup>

(5)

Many aspects of municipal policy were influenced, directly or indirectly, by the council's underlying, if not always active, concern for the condition of the streets and highways. As we have suggested, the issue of interference with the streets was, to a greater or lesser degree, one which appeared in the discussions over the proposed municipalisation of the waterworks, gasworks, tramways and electricity supply, as there was a clear dislike, on the part of the council, of independent agencies possessing such powers. This dislike naturally extended to bodies which had a most direct interest in the roads, namely, the surveyors of the highways and the turnpike trusts. In the mid eighteen fifties it was said that,

'Leeds can boast of having not less than thirteen separate Boards of Surveyors of Highways - (and) nineteen separate turnpike trusts, having, respectively, jurisdiction over

<sup>1</sup> loc. cit.

<sup>2</sup> Council of the City of Leeds...December, 1900, (ie. Municipal Yearbook).

<sup>3</sup> Report of the Electric Lighting Committee, 1899-1900, and 1905-6, Report of the Finance Committee, 1905-6, (in Annual Reports).

<sup>4</sup> I.C.R. Byatt, thesis, p.90, quotes a calculation made in 1910, that in 80 inland towns electricity consumers were estimated to be 1.5% of the population.

certain roads situate within the boundaries of the borough'<sup>1</sup>;

and in the following years the council worked to obtain their extinction. The 1842 improvement act had divided responsibility for the state of the streets between the council and the highway surveyors. Before this, the latter had maintained those thoroughfares traditionally repaired at public expense, that is, the main streets of the town centre, and in addition, those new streets which were put into an acceptable condition by their owners before being offered for adoption as highways. The 1842 act transferred the initiative from the owners of private streets to the council, which could order owners to have their streets made up at their own expense, which in effect meant that,

'it is always done by the council and charged to the owners - that is almost the invariable practice'<sup>2</sup>

When this had been done, the council made an order declaring the streets as highways, whereupon their future maintenance became the duty of the surveyors. There was no reason why this situation should continue, and when in 1850, a bill to amend the law of the highways came before parliament, the council petitioned that a clause should be inserted to transfer the powers of the highway surveyors to borough councils.<sup>3</sup>

There were, from the council's point of view, several arguments in favour of this. As the duties of the council and the surveyors overlapped, it would be preferable to have the whole superintended by one authority, rather than the thirteen now in existence in the borough, for one organisation could

'manage the business more efficiently and more economically'.

The council naturally regarded itself as the proper body to do this,

<sup>1</sup>LM, 3 Feb 1855.

<sup>2</sup>HLRO, House of Commons Select Committee, Evidence 1866, volume 24, 24 April, f.17.

<sup>3</sup>RBM, 8 May 1850.



as it,

'represented, as faithfully as any body could do, the views and feelings of all classes in the borough'<sup>1</sup>

Nothing came of this proposal, and it was not until 1866 that the council sought to supersede the surveyors by provisions in its new improvement bill. The issue was fully considered by the select committees of both Houses, and the council did not emerge very creditably from the enquiry. One of its witnesses, the distinguished civil engineer, Rawlinson, stated that

'in a walk through Leeds I found it (i.e. the paving and flagging) exceedingly defective in many of the bye streets: many of the undedicated streets are in a very defective condition'<sup>2</sup>

but these were the very streets which were the council's responsibility, and thus were evidence of its negligence. Another witness confirmed that there were 511 private streets still in existence, and that

'several of these streets (are) actually scheduled in the 1842 act'<sup>3</sup>

Nevertheless, the opposition was unsuccessful, and the council was permitted to assume the surveyors' powers.<sup>4</sup>

The 1866 local act also extended the council's authority to negotiate for the purchase and abolition of toll rights exercised in the borough by the bridge and turnpike trusts.<sup>5</sup> As we have seen, the council already possessed, in the 1842 improvement act, the right to purchase toll rights on bridges, but it had used it sparingly. In the five years after 1866 the parliamentary committee began negotiations to

<sup>1</sup>LM, 11 May 1850.

<sup>2</sup>HLRO, *ibid.*, f.51.

<sup>3</sup>HLRO, House of Lords Select Committee on Leeds Improvement Acts Amendment Bill, volume 14, 1866. 14 June, ff. 97-98.

<sup>4</sup>The Leeds Improvement Act, 1866, 29 and 30 Vict., cap. clvii, section 32.

<sup>5</sup>ibid., sections 34-38.

treat for the removal of toll bars, and spent large sums of money in extinguishing tolls on both roads and bridges. In this period, the trusts were in financial decline as a result of growing competition from the railways, and for this reason, coupled with increasing hostility to such enterprises, caused parliament to intervene regularly in their affairs. From the eighteen thirties a series of acts was promoted to extend the statutory life of trusts which remained in debt, and abolished those which had achieved solvency.<sup>1</sup> On their demise, the highways became the responsibility of the local authority. As table 5.1 shows, many of the trusts in the Leeds area were still deeply in debt the late eighteen sixties.

Between January 1867 and July 1869, the council approved agreements for the cesser of tolls on twelve roads and the Victoria, Crown Point and Wellington bridges,<sup>2</sup> and by November 1869 had spent £66,027<sup>11</sup> for these purposes.<sup>3</sup> The disappearance of toll bars had a tangible, if minor, influence upon the pattern of urban growth. In 1868 the borough

<sup>1</sup>Beginning with 4 and 5 Wm. IV, cap. X. When the regular series started, each yearly measure was entitled The Annual Turnpikes Acts Continuance Act. To help trusts in severe financial difficulties an Act of 1851 (14 and 15 Vict., cap. XXXVIII), allowed them to reduce the rate of interest on their debts with the consent of two thirds of their creditors and the approval of the agreement by the Home Secretary.

<sup>2</sup>These were the Leeds and Harrogate; Leeds and Roundhay; and Leeds, Woodhouse and Meanwood Carr turnpike roads (CM, 1 Jan 1867); the Victoria Bridge (CM, 21 Jan 1867); Leeds and Otley turnpike, (CM, 13 Feb 1867); the Leeds and Homfirth lane end turnpike, and Wellington Bridge (CM, 6 March 1867); the Leeds and Dewsbury; and the Kirkstall, Otley and Shipley turnpikes (CM, 1 Jan 1868); the Leeds and Elland turnpike; and Crown Point Bridge (CM, 31 March 1868); the Shipley and Bramley turnpike (13 May 1868); the Leeds and Whitehall; the Wellington and Tong lane end; and the Wortley and Pudsey turnpikes, (CM, 2 July 1869). See also, 30 and 31 Vict., cap. CXXI, 1st schedule; 31 and 32 Vict., cap. XCIX, 1st and 3rd schedules; 32 and 33 Vict., cap. XC, 1st, 2nd and 4th schedules, 33 and 34 Vict., ch. 73, 4th schedule, and 34 and 35 Vict., ch. 115, 10th schedule.

<sup>3</sup>RB 5 Nov 1869.

TABLE 5.1

The indebtedness of bridge and turnpike  
trusts in Leeds in 1867

Name of Trust	Amount of Debt
Leeds and Whitehall	£31,232
Shipley and Bramley	3,600
Leeds and Birstall	13,685
Kirkstall, Otley and Shipley	2,000 (approx.)
Wellington and Tong Lane End, )	10,232 (1865)
Wortley and Pudsey )	
Wortley, Armley and Bramley	30,785
Leeds and Elland	4,400
Leeds and Dewsbury	1,638 " 14 " 2d
Crown Point Bridge	61,495 " 19 " 8d

Source: 'Report of the Parliamentary Committee as to the Proceedings taken in respect of making provision for the cesser of tolls on certain Turnpike Roads within the Borough', Report Book, 9 August 1867.

surveyor observed that,

'when we consider how rapidly our population has increased in past years, we must expect the further growth of the borough to affect considerably the outlying districts, especially now the tolls from the roads are being removed',<sup>1</sup>

and the 1861 census had noted that the growth of Wortley was

'mainly attributed to the abolition of the toll on a bridge, and the proximity of the township to the railway station'<sup>2</sup>

The railways also contributed to the growth of road traffic of all kinds. For example, coal supplies for the west of the town 'where there is a very great consumption' arrived at Marsh lane station, on the east, and so had to be transported across the town centre,<sup>3</sup> and cattle destined for the North street cattle market were brought by rail to the Wellington road and Central stations had to be driven northwards through the main streets.<sup>4</sup> Apart from traffic generated by the railways, there must have been a considerable growth in the numbers of goods and passenger vehicles caused by 'internal' commercial developments. There is no information available on the expansion of private and goods traffic, but public passenger transport facilities increased considerably. It was claimed that in 1821 there were no hackney carriages, and 'only a few old fashioned post carriages and not many private carriages'

but sixty years later there were 159 hackney cabs, 200 omnibuses and waggonettes and 54 tramcars.<sup>5</sup> These changes could not fail to have an important environmental impact. Even in the early eighteen forties it

<sup>1</sup>A.M. Fowler, Report to the streets and sewerage committee of the Leeds town council, upon forming a drainage district for the south west portion of the borough, and the effectual sewerage of the same, (1868).

<sup>2</sup>1861 Census, vol. 1, p.312, footnote 'n'.

<sup>3</sup>HLRO, House of Commons Select Committee, Evidence 1866, volume 24, 24 April, f. 11.

<sup>4</sup>LM, 15 Feb 1881. This had presumably been going on since the creation of the North street cattle market in the eighteen fifties.

<sup>5</sup>loc. cit.

was recognised that the arrival of the railways would increase the volume of road traffic, and oblige the authorities to improve both streets and bridges to accommodate it. In 1840, the Leeds Mercury, advocating the widening of Leeds Bridge, remarked that it,

'will continue to be the great line of communication with the railway stations'<sup>1</sup>

and the failure, in 1846, of the ambitious plans for a single central station for all the railway companies<sup>2</sup> meant that the streets continued to bear the increasing traffic between the separate termini. Likewise, in 1844, the chairman of the council's streets committee, when moving a proposal to widen Swinegate,

'said that the improvement would be a very valuable one, especially as it was likely that before long there would be a railway station in the neighbourhood'<sup>3</sup>

As we have seen, the council achieved very few street improvements before the mid eighteen sixties, but from this time there was a considerable increase in the number and magnitude of the schemes which it carried out. By the late eighteen eighties, the council's expenditure for these purposes totalled £369,015, of which £317,598, or eighty six percent, had been spent in the township of Leeds.<sup>4</sup> This sum was second only to the amount spent on sewerage, and so on this ground alone demands some examination here.

The first major project to be undertaken was in Boar lane. This had long been recognised as desirable, as improvements there had been authorised by the 1842 and 1856 acts, although nothing had been

<sup>1</sup>LM, 8 Feb 1840.

<sup>2</sup>LM, 11 July 1846.

<sup>3</sup>LM, 7 Sept 1844.

<sup>4</sup>RB, 25 March 1888.

achieved. The 1866 bill embodies intentions virtually identical to those of the previous act, but these did not satisfy public opinion, which was now anxious for a more ambitious plan. In 1856 the council's proposal had been condemned in a letter to the press, which had declared it to be,

'no doubt an important improvement, but a very inefficient measure, when the immense traffic which now passes along Boar lane is taken into consideration. The three railway stations in Wellington street have so greatly increased the persons on foot, and the carriages with passengers and goods passing along Boar lane, that it has now become a dangerous throughfare'<sup>1</sup>

and it could hardly be regarded more favourably a decade later. So strongly were the public's views expressed at a meeting held to consider the provisions of the bill, that the council was 'almost forced' to plan a larger scheme.<sup>2</sup> Between 1867 and 1869, almost 2½ acres of land was purchased, at a total cost of £192,841 which includes the cost of land and buildings, compensation to tenants, and legal charges.<sup>3</sup> The other major improvements of this period were less expensive. Brigade was extended northwards to join North street at a cost of £32,475, and at the southern end of Brigade, £22,146 was spent in purchasing property at its junction with Duncan street.<sup>4</sup> Nearby, in Call lane and Kirkgate £31,450 bought property which included the Central Market, the council's private enterprise rival, which continued in use as a municipal market until destroyed by fire in 1893.<sup>5</sup> In the eighteen seventies, further acquisitions were made in

<sup>1</sup>LM, 5 Jan 1856.

<sup>2</sup>HLRO, *ibid.*, f. 32.

<sup>3</sup>RB, 27 Oct 1869.

<sup>4</sup>*loc. cit.*

<sup>5</sup>CM, 4 Oct 1893.

Duncan street and Call lane, an improvement was made in East street, and in 1876 a major project in Hunslet, costing about £22,000 provided a new street from Dock street to South Brook street, running into Hunslet lane.<sup>1</sup> In this decade also, at least £44,000 was spent in rebuilding Leeds, Wellington and School Close bridges, and improving their approach roads.<sup>2</sup>

The major targets for the council's street improvement plans in the eighties were the Quebec Buildings and the Coloured Cloth Hall. Early in the century, these had stood on the western periphery of the town, but by the 'thirties the buildings in this area were already causing inconvenience, and the improvement commissioners attempted to remove the worst obstructions.<sup>3</sup> By the end of the century, their position was close to an important focal point, where Park Row, Wellington street and Boar lane met, and was moreover adjacent to two of the railway stations. They had become major obstructions, which the council was anxious to purchase and demolish. In May 1882, the council entered into an agreement with the Post Master General, who was to introduce a bill to purchase the Hall, and to take half the area for a new post office, and presumably sell the remaining land to the council. But in October the Post Office withdrew, but stated that if any independent body was prepared to promote a bill with this object, it would be prepared to consider taking part of the site.<sup>4</sup> In the following year the council decided to promote a new improvement bill and incorporated provisions to acquire the Hall, but it had apparently

<sup>1</sup>CM, 19 June 1871 (Duncan street, Call lane), 31 March 1874 (East street, Call lane), 2 Aug 1876 (Hunslet).

<sup>2</sup>CM, 11 May 1870, 8 March 1871 (Leeds bridge), 14 May 1873 (Wellington bridge), 12 Aug 1874 (School Close bridge).

<sup>3</sup>Improvement Commission Minutes, 3 March, 6 July, 17 Aug, 2 Nov 1836, 31 May 1837.

<sup>4</sup>CM, 18 May, 13 Oct 1882.

not realised the tenacity of the trustees' independence, and faced with 'serious and unexpected opposition' it withdrew its proposals.<sup>1</sup> Nothing further was done until 1888, when the council opened negotiations with the trustees of the Hall, and the owners of the Quebec Buildings, after being informed by the Pious Use Trustees that they were also interested in financing a street improvement in that area.<sup>2</sup> The committee which the council had appointed to meet with the parties involved recommended the council to break off 'in consequence of the exorbitant sums which are being asked' but nevertheless it was agreed to offer £66,000 for the Hall, although the demand for £25,000 for the Buildings was rejected as excessive.<sup>3</sup> In July, the offer was repeated, and £28,000 was offered for the Buildings, but on being rebuffed by the owners of the latter, it was decided to go ahead with the purchase of the Hall alone.<sup>4</sup> Four years afterwards, the council agreed to purchase the Quebec estate for £33,000.<sup>5</sup>

Part of the land was purchased by the Post Master General as the site of a new post office, to replace the old Court House, which the council had sold to the government in 1861.<sup>6</sup> On the remaining land the council laid out a paved and ornamented area, known as City Square. It was, in a lesser but nevertheless ostentatious manner, another example of civic pride. It was completed during the 'new era' of Conservative power in the council, and the history of its design nicely characterises

<sup>1</sup>CM, 1 Oct, 26 Nov, 1883, 6 March 1884.

<sup>2</sup>CM, 1 Feb, 13 April 1888.

<sup>3</sup>CM, 18 June 1888.

<sup>4</sup>CM, 16 July, 1 Aug, 9 Nov 1888.

<sup>5</sup>CM, 20 Oct 1891, 6 Jan 1892.

<sup>6</sup>CM, 1 Jan 1861.



the difference between the two parties. Alderman Scarr, the Liberal 'arch economist' had offered to provide a fountain as a centre-piece, as

'he had a desire to put up something which should teach the people to live cheaply and comfortably, and nothing taught that better than a supply of one of the first necessities of life - water'<sup>1</sup>

But the Conservatives preferred to accept a gift from one of their new aldermen, T.W. Harding, who presented

'a central equestrian monument and eight bronze figure lamps'<sup>2</sup>,

and the statue of the Black Prince and 'Alfred Drury's lamp standards, nudes representing Night and Morning'<sup>3</sup>, later joined by figures of Leeds worthies, stand there at the present.

We must now consider why in the years after 1866 the council was prepared to spend such large sums for street improvements. Part of the answer lies in its previous neglect. In cross-examination before the Commons' select committee on the improvement bill, one witness, when asked,

'That act (i.e. of 1842) was renewed in 1856 but under neither of these acts have the corporation taken action? And Boar lane remains in its former state?'<sup>4</sup>

was obliged to reply in the affirmative. Many of the improvements had now become imperative, and as we have seen, there was strong pressure

<sup>1</sup>LM, 7 Jan 1897.

<sup>2</sup>CM, 6 Jan 1897.

<sup>3</sup>John Betjeman, 'Leeds - a city of contrasts', First and Last Loves, p.32.

<sup>4</sup>HLRO, House of Commons Select Committee, Evidence 1866, volume 24, 24 April, f.27. A proposal that the widening of Boar lane should be carried out was decisively defeated in 1862, by twenty one votes to eight; CM, 12 Feb 1862.

on the council over the design of the Boar lane scheme. Furthermore the size of the scheme cannot be judged by expenditure alone. Between 1895 and 1905, £1,289,527 was spent by the improvements committee. But if we examine expenditure on purchases in 1899-1900 made in the central business district, £134,130 (more than 10% of the total) had to be spent to acquire 4,121½ square yards, or 0.85 of an acre. The prices paid range from £76 " 18 " 5½d a square yard to £17<sup>1</sup>. Thus the high price of land in this area obliged the council to spend large sums even on small-scale improvements. But a most important point is that, in most cases, the council was able, both directly and indirectly, to recoup part, and sometimes a large part, of the cost of its schemes. This was done in two ways. In 1866, the council attempted to include in its bill the power to take more land than was strictly necessary to carry out the improvements. The borough surveyor justified this intention by arguing that,

'in taking the limits of deviation we have kept sufficiently outside the net width of the street to enable us to put frontages to the street. That has been done in some of the largest towns in the kingdom. It has been done at Manchester, Liverpool and in the metropolis. It is found that if we only buy the net quantity for the purpose of the street we have to pay an enormous value for the land, and the owners of the land on each side get the benefit of the frontage. The recent course of legislation has been to enable them /ie. local authorities/ to erect frontages on the street and thereby cover a small portion of the expense'<sup>2</sup>

On this occasion, the attempt was not successful, but three years later, in the 1869 improvement act,<sup>3</sup> power was granted to compel owners

<sup>1</sup> Calculated from Annual Report of the Improvements Committee, 1889-1900, 1904-5, and 1905-6.

<sup>2</sup> HLRO, ibid., f. 105

<sup>3</sup> RB, 5 Nov 1869.

to sell all the land scheduled, and not that simply required for the actual widening, thus

'giving to the ratepayers the advantage and benefit of the improvement for which their money has been spent, and, not as hitherto has been the case, paying the owner for the front land at a high rate, and then bringing his back land to the front, of which he and not the public reaped the advantage'<sup>1</sup>

This certainly helped to reduce the cost of improvement, and in some of the instances quoted above, the revenue from the auction sales of surplus land must be offset against the gross cost. Since the formation of a new street generally increased the prospective commercial value of the sites abutting onto it (and it must have increased values still more, as the improvement obviously reduced the area of available land), the prices offered for them was, naturally, higher than those which prevailed before. The average cost of purchasing property in Boar lane by the council was about £16 " 5s a square yard (exclusive of legal charges and compensation, but including the buildings standing on the land), whereas the estimated average price realised at resale was about £19 " 1s. In 1869, it was estimated that the value of surplus lands in Boar lane was £131,571 (land to the value of £108,571 had already been auctioned, and the residue was valued at £23,000), and this meant that the actual cost of the scheme was about £60,590.<sup>2</sup> In the case of the Briggate extension, there was a much smaller proportion of surplus land to be disposed of (566 square yards out of 7,152 square yards purchased), but here there was another compensating feature, which also applies to some of the other schemes.

<sup>1</sup>RB, 27 Oct 1869.

<sup>2</sup>RB, loc. cit. Although the land was purchased before the powers of the 1869 act were acquired, many owners had objected to selling part of their land, and the purchase of property committee had taken the opportunity of buying the whole where possible.

The purchase of property committee observed that,

'there is no doubt that New Briggate will soon be lined on both sides with buildings of a considerably increased rateable value. The property which was on the ground taken for the street was of very little value, and a very great proportion of the expense will be recouped by the increase in the rateable value of the new property'.<sup>1</sup>

By 1869 there was already evidence of the increase in rateable values as a result of the Boar lane scheme, and it was calculated that the increased revenue from the rates would yield an 'interest' of 4½% on the cost of the improvement.<sup>2</sup>

But such satisfactory results were not always achieved as the case of the new street in Hunslet, where

'the old street (i.e. Hunslet lane) went along in one line, and (the borough engineer) suggested a straight street to join at right angles the main road at the other end. The corporation carried out this straight street and left the old way as it was, and the consequence has been that the property in the old street...is not worth one third of what it was before the alteration; and the property in the new street is not worth one third of what it was supposed it would be worth when the new street was projected. The cause of that is that the traffic has been divided between the two ways, neither of which are good enough to support the trade in the two streets'.<sup>3</sup>

One final issue which arose in the eighteen nineties was over the best way of dealing with surplus lands. Hitherto the council's policy had been to sell the freehold by auction, but in March 1895 an unsuccessful amendment was moved to propose that the site of the Central Market be let on long leases.<sup>4</sup> It was argued that street improvements provided a 'return' of only 5/- in the pound, and that by introducing leasehold,

'in many instances the corporation might with advantage stick to properties in view of their prospective value'.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>RB, loc. cit.

<sup>2</sup>RB, loc. cit.

<sup>3</sup>Evidence of John Barran, Report from the Select Committee of the House of Lords on Town Improvements (Betterment), Session 1894, qu. 3577.

<sup>4</sup>CM, 6 March 1895.

<sup>5</sup>LM, 2 May 1895.

A committee was set up to advise on the possible benefits if this suggestion were adopted, and it recommended that

'it is desirable under certain circumstances, chiefly in central situations to dispose of surplus lands by way of building leases',

and that each case should be considered on its merits.<sup>1</sup>

The report was adopted, but its suggestions were not put into practice, for in the council elections of 1895, the Conservatives achieved a majority. The question became a party one, with the Liberals advocating leasehold, and the Conservatives firmly opposing this. The Liberals based their case on the secular rise in the value of urban land, and held that leasehold would enable the ratepayers to participate in benefits which otherwise were exclusively enjoyed by private landowners. On their part, the Conservatives argued that land prices had risen rapidly in Leeds precisely because it was the local practice to sell freehold, and that if leasehold had been more common, prices would not have risen to the same extent. This, they contested, had obvious implications for the future rate of appreciation of prices if the council were to adopt a leasehold policy. On several occasions over the next few years, the Liberals attempted to contest decisions to sell surplus lands,<sup>2</sup> and in January 1905, shortly after their return to power, they decided to offer a site near the new City Square, on a ninety nine year lease. By July there were still no offers to take it up, and so the Liberal policy proved still-born.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>RB, June 1896.

<sup>2</sup>CM, 1 Sept 1897, 4 Oct 1898, 9 Nov 1901.

<sup>3</sup>CM, 4 Jan 1905; LM, 6 July 1905.

(6)

By the late eighteen sixties, the council owned and managed four public markets: that in Kirkgate inherited from the improvement commission, the Smithfield cattle market in North street, created in the eighteen fifties, the corn exchange which had only recently been built, and the central market in Duncan street. The latter had been a private concern, until bought for street improvements in 1868, although it continued in use until destroyed by fire in 1893<sup>1</sup>. The first covered area on the Kirkgate site had been built only under duress, for the House of Commons had accepted the council's representations to refuse the Central Market company powers to enlarge its premises only on condition that the council improved their own, and this

'obliged the council, if they are to preserve their market rights, to erect a covered market on...part of the Kirkgate Market Place'<sup>2</sup>

But thereafter, it showed no reluctance to make further extensions and improvements, and by 1889, about £160,000 had been spent for these purposes. By this date, the market area had increased from the two acres originally purchased in 1823, to just over five, and was divided into six sections. In addition to the original covered market of the fifties of nearly one acre, there was a fish, a pig and calf, and a bird markets, also roofed over, with an area of 3,690 square yards; a fruit and vegetable market (14,364, or nearly three acres, partly open

<sup>1</sup>CM, 7 Dec 1868, 4 Oct 1893.

<sup>2</sup>RBIA, 4 Aug 1853.

and partly occupied by shops); and an open space of 3,000 square yards, used as a hay and straw market.<sup>1</sup> There was little complaint over the adequacy of the premises, as the relatively trivial criticisms voiced before the Market Rights and Tolls commissioner implicitly confirm. The council's activities culminated at the turn of the century with the planning and construction of a completely new market hall, to replace the piecemeal complex of buildings which had arisen over the previous forty years. The markets committee was authorised to make plans in December 1898, and contracts for building were let in 1901.<sup>2</sup> The completed market, 'designed in Renaissance style, with details of a classical outline', covering more than five acres, and costing about £100,000 was opened in July 1904.<sup>3</sup> There were several reasons why the council should take such care over these facilities. Market trading was in Leeds as elsewhere a long-established practice, and from various motives, the council came to control it entirely. The creation of specific market grounds enabled it to abolish street trading, and so remove a source of inconvenience, and of accidents for traffic and pedestrians. Moreover, this was a remunerative investment, as the council derived an income from tolls and rents which in most instances was greater than the sums required to meet interest and sinking fund charges on capital expenditure. The continuing growth of trading made market improvement a profitable enterprise, at least upto the late eighties, by which time the borough accountant reckoned that the markets as a whole had a deficit of £100 a year. This did not mean that every market, least of all Kirkgate, was operating at a loss. The

<sup>1</sup>Royal Commission on Market Rights and Tolls, vol. IV, 1889, pp. 433-434.

<sup>2</sup>CM, 7 Dec 1898, 3 July, 7 Aug 1901.

<sup>3</sup>MRP unnumbered, Opening of the New Market Hall...1 July 1904.

source of this minor financial difficulty was two fold. In the first place, the council decided to transfer the cattle market to another site, and in March 1888 agreed to use the vacated land in North street as a recreation ground. Since this was an unremunerative service, the whole of the charges outstanding on the original cost of purchase, and equipping it as a market fell upon the market revenues alone.<sup>1</sup> Second, the new market, on which nearly £40,000 was spent, was a less successful venture than the others. Indeed, the new cattle market, and its slaughterhouses, became one of the most contentious subjects of the period.

Local authorities might be prompted to establish public slaughter houses on several grounds. A humane, but perhaps from a local authority's standpoint, the least important motive, was that promoted by the R.S.P.C.A., which petitioned the council on the necessity for public slaughterhouses in August 1868.<sup>2</sup> To the public health administrator, municipally-managed abattoirs had two principal advantages over private ones. The latter were housed in cramped, insanitary buildings where

'you are introduced to a disgusting spectacle of butchers, beasts, and blood in all directions...The visitor is struck with the total absence of order and cleanliness. On killing days blood is flowing in all directions...The flooring of each and all is imperfect: they are flagged, and the flagging is broken here and there, and the drainage is incomplete, filth repleted'.

Furthermore, the existence of nearly three hundred such establishments in the borough made adequate inspection impossible, so that, as the

<sup>1</sup>Royal Commission, loc. cit. The commissioner's inability to understand the details of the markets' finances (see 5(e), p.434) arose from his confusion in thinking that the expenditure on the Kirkgate market represented total expenditure for all the markets. This is apparent from his figures in 5(d) p.434. For the North street recreation ground, see CM, 28 March 1888.

<sup>2</sup>CM, 12 Aug 1868.



medical officer of health observed,

'the avenues for diseased cattle and diseased carcasses are so numerous at present that I state fearlessly that this bad meat question is hardly touched'.

Many of the slaughter houses were located in the town itself, and were a threat to the health of those living in the adjacent houses, and indeed a danger to the public in general, for

'cattle of every kind must be driven through almost a mile of thoroughfares before they get to the approach of our present slaughter-yards. Sheep are seen daily running furiously up and down the street, rushing people about for safety and shelter'<sup>1</sup>.

It was probably under the influence of Dr. Robinson, who had been appointed a few years before as the first medical officer of health, that in August 1869 the council decided by a narrow majority of sixteen votes to thirteen, to obtain powers to create public slaughter houses when it next promoted an improvement bill.<sup>2</sup> Such provisions were included in the bill of the following year, but as a result of the opposition of the butchers and private slaughterhouse owners, the clauses were deleted by the parliamentary committee.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, opposition from this source was to recur every time the council took up the question. The Public Health Act, 1875 gave the council the powers it had unsuccessfully asked for five years before, and in June 1876, the markets committee was instructed to investigate.<sup>4</sup> A deputation visited twelve other towns to inspect their facilities, and recommended the council to take action. The committee was then directed to confer with the cattle dealers and butchers on the possibility

<sup>1</sup>The quotations are taken from, MRP, no.5, Report on the Slaughter-houses in Scotland and England... by Dr. Goldie.

<sup>2</sup>CM, 19 Aug 1869.

<sup>3</sup>HLRO, House of Commons Select Committee, Evidence 1870, LI, Leeds Corporation Gas etc. Bill, 22 March 1870.

<sup>4</sup>The Public Health Act, 1875, 38 and 39 Vict., ch. 55, sections 166-169; CM, 12 June 1876.

of moving the cattle market from the North street site, and on providing an abattoir. The trade objected to the market being transferred elsewhere, and preferred that the abattoir should be built at the present market site, or on vacant land in Union street, near the Kirkgate market.<sup>1</sup> In February 1881, the council discussed the committee's recommendation that it should buy a new site at Copley Hill, New Wortley. This had been selected because its situation on the south western edge of the urban area, and its convenience for railway access would allow for future expansion, and prevent the disruption currently caused by driving cattle through the centre of the town. Most of the butchers and dealers continued to object to any but a central location for these facilities. In the council debate, the opposition was essentially concerned with the question of cost, and contended that the proposed venture would be an unprofitable one. The motion to adopt the committee's scheme was defeated by thirty one votes to twenty one.<sup>2</sup> The local press commented that,

'after all this expectation and excitement the public should behold equal and hopeless division in...the bench of aldermen, and find science, morality and aesthetics outvoted by twenty six...councillors against sixteen, is anything but edifying. Is it to be considered that the question has been decided on its merits, and that medical officers and official inspectors, and even practical butchers of forty years' standing, are all in the wrong? Or is it to be considered that the question has been 'shelved' as one beyond the capacity of the corporation of Leeds?'<sup>3</sup>

The council returned to the issue in the following year, authorising the markets committee to report on suitable sites on the outskirts of town.<sup>4</sup> It recommended one on Whitehall road, not

<sup>1</sup>MRP no.7, Report of the Markets Committee on the subject of the removal of the Cattle Market, and the erection of a Public Abattoir, 1880.

<sup>2</sup>CM, 14 Feb 1881; LM, 15 Feb 1881.

<sup>3</sup>YP, 15 Feb 1881. This was not a partisan statement by the Conservative press, as the Liberal Mercury had a similar editorial, LM 15 Feb 1881.

<sup>4</sup>CM, 31 March 1882.

far from the one which had been rejected in the previous year. In June 1882 the council bought sixteen acres of land there for £14,352, and in August 1885, granted £2,834 to build eight slaughterhouses.<sup>1</sup> By 1889, the market had cost nearly £40,000.

In one respect it was unsatisfactory, as there was insufficient demand for the slaughterhouses. By the late eighties, only five had been hired, and a decade later 'not one of the eight...was used by a butcher in the city'.<sup>2</sup> In order to provide premises which would be more widely used, the council decided to build a new abattoir and a dead meat market. In effect this was a capitulation to the demands of the traders, for the buildings were sited on New York street, adjacent to Kirkgate market. The contracts were let in July 1898, and were completed twelve months later, at a cost of about £25,000.<sup>3</sup>

## (7)

During this period, the council began to provide one form of civic amenity which had already become a popular form of conspicuous expenditure in other large towns. By the early eighteen seventies, many other towns possessed public parks, through both gift and purchase. Nearby Bradford owned two parks, Peel park, purchased by public subscription, and Lister park, named after the individual who donated one third of the cost, with a combined area of 109 acres; Birmingham corporation had spent £26,000

<sup>1</sup> CM, 5 June 1882, 5 Aug 1885; MRP no. 14, Report of the Markets Committee as to the New Cattle Market in Whitehall road, Leeds, 1886.

<sup>2</sup> Royal Commission, p. 456; LM, 5 Aug 1897.

<sup>3</sup> CM, 4 Aug 1897, 6 July 1898; MRP unnumbered, Opening of the New City Meat Market and Slaughterhouses...24 July 1899, p.8.

in purchasing the forty three acres of Aston park, and had received two others, Calthorpe (30 acres) and Adderley (10 acres) through gifts; and Manchester had 126 acres of park land, half of which had been municipally purchased at a cost of £70,000 and half which had been presented to the city.<sup>1</sup> Leeds, in contrast, received no private benefactions until 1889, when J.T. North purchased the ruins of Kirkstall Abbey, Abbey House and adjoining land in the auction sale of the Cardigan estates, and presented them to the borough, and then in April 1901, J. Warburton of Headingley gave fourteen acres of land on Woodhouse Ridge, adjoining land which the council had agreed to purchase to add to the existing area of open space.<sup>2</sup> Upto the late sixties, the only municipally-owned open space in Leeds was the sixty acres of Woodhouse Moor. This had been purchased as a result of public demand to prevent its threatened demise into building lots, and the council had left its traditional character undisturbed, as the Leeds Mercury testified, when in 1871, when it complained that,

'in its present state it was a standing disgrace to Leeds, being little better than a foul quagmire, decorated by all the diseased cattle of the town'.<sup>3</sup>

But in the following years, there was a marked change in the council's attitude, and in two decades it built up an impressive collection of public open spaces. The 1866 improvement act authorised the council to spend upto £50,000 to provide places for public recreation, but although it purchased eighteen acres at Bank Lodge, in the east of Leeds township in 1869,<sup>4</sup> and ten acres in Bramley in the

<sup>1</sup>LM, 30 Sept 1871.

<sup>2</sup>CM, 2 Jan 1889, 3 April 1901.

<sup>3</sup>LM, 30 Sept 1871.

<sup>4</sup>CM, 11 Aug 1869.

following year<sup>1</sup> it was apparently found to be difficult to obtain land which was suitable for this purpose<sup>2</sup>. Nothing more was done to provide recreation grounds until the eighteen eighties, when land was bought at New Wortley (31 acres), Famley (4 acres) the east end of Leeds (78 acres), Rodley (10 acres), and Cross Flatts (41 acres),<sup>3</sup> and so by 1890 the council possessed about two hundred acres of land in all, well distributed within, or in easy reach of, the expanding urban area.

These however were almost insignificant in terms of size and cost when compared to the council's great prestige project, the purchase of Roundhay Park. In 1871, the Roundhay Park estate, which comprised a mansion house, extensive landscaped grounds, and farmsteads in the township of Roundhay was offered for sale at public auction by order of Chancery.<sup>4</sup> A month before the sale took place the grounds were opened to the public, and a petition was begun to urge the council to purchase part of the estate. The leading advocate of the purchase was the mayor, John Barran, who was one of the largest manufacturers in the town, and one of its future members of parliament. In September 1871, the council considered the proposition, and he presented a lengthy case in its favour. He spoke of it as a means of enhancing civic pride, since

'if they got Roundhay Park, it would be as great a credit to them as their town hall. It would give them a status in a way few things would, and he thought they should take pride in trying to obtain it'<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>CM, 9 Feb 1870.

<sup>2</sup>HLRO, House of Commons, select committee, Volume 39, Evidence 1872, L, 25 April 1872, evidence of C.A. Curwood (town clerk).

<sup>3</sup>CM, 1 Oct 1884, 1 Jan 1886, 3 Feb 1886, 6 March 1889, 1 May 1889.

<sup>4</sup>HLRO, House of Commons, select committee...25 Feb 1872, evidence of John Barran.

<sup>5</sup>LM, 30 Sept 1871.

But ranged against this were practical objections of distance, size and cost. Roundhay, on the north east perimeter of the borough was three miles from Boar lane, and much further from the industrial suburbs on the south side of river. Moreover, public transport, as even Barran himself admitted, was 'not what it ought to be'. This obstacle led one councillor to observe that,

'Roundhay park was very well as a park, but not suitable as a people's park'<sup>1</sup>

The size, and consequent cost, of the park, were also open to criticism. The mansion house and grounds were to be sold in one lot of 601 acres, and in addition, Barran was in favour of buying a second lot of 172 acres to the south, which would allow the park to be entered half a mile nearer the borough. An integral part of the project was to set aside about three hundred and fifty of the seven hundred and seventy three acres for 'first class residences' so that part of the cost of purchase could be defrayed by selling land for villas to the 'magnates of Leeds'. Barran claimed that,

'the land would be eagerly bought up in small lots, there being no finer site for villas in all Leeds'<sup>2</sup>,

but not everyone accepted his sanguine judgment, since in the opinion of some,

'Roundhay has long been regarded as the most unsuitable suburb of Leeds to reside in, and (it was) doubted very much whether building sites would be disposed of so readily as was imagined'<sup>3</sup>

Nevertheless, the rate payers seemed, for once, strongly in favour of incurring new expenditure. At a public meeting on

<sup>1</sup>LM, 14 Oct 1871.

<sup>2</sup>LM, 30 Sept 1871.

<sup>3</sup>LM, 14 Oct 1871.

29 September 1871 in the Corn Exchange, at which about ten thousand were claimed to be present at one point, there was strong support for the scheme.<sup>1</sup> At a council meeting on the same day, a committee, which included Barran was authorised, by 33 votes to 16, to attend the sale and buy 'such parts as they may think desirable' for a public park, if these could be obtained at a fair market price.<sup>2</sup> On 4 October Barran and three others attended the sale, where he purchased the two lots for £139,000.<sup>3</sup> At that time, the council had no authority to spend this amount on recreation grounds. The local act of 1866 had limited the sum to be used for this purpose to £5,000, and £10,000 had already been spent. Hence the 1872 improvement act included provisions which allowed the corporation to raise £150,000 for this purpose, and to sell part of the estate for building purposes.<sup>4</sup> The purchase was a personal triumph for Barran, but seen in a wider perspective, it was of dubious value to the council and the population at large, at least in the short term.

The accuracy of Barran's belief that the park,

'would be a great advantage to the working classes, by promoting their health, improving their morals, enlightening their judgement, and in making them in every way better citizens'<sup>5</sup>

is, in the nature of things, hardly susceptible to proof. In fact, the working classes would have had some difficulty in putting his faith to the test. In 1889, nearly twenty years after the park became

<sup>1</sup>HLRO, loc. cit.

<sup>2</sup>CM, 29 Sept 1871.

<sup>3</sup>HLRO, loc. cit.

<sup>4</sup>Leeds improvement act, 1872, 35 and 36 Vict., ch xcvi, Clauses 50-55.

<sup>5</sup>LM, 14 Oct 1871.

municipal property, a local directory noted that,

'at present this magnificent place of recreation can only be reached from Leeds by omnibuses running from Briggate or by special conveyances; several railway and tramway schemes have been devised since 1873, with a view to rendering it more accessible but without success'<sup>1</sup>

One of these was the Leeds, Roundhay Park, and Osmondthorpe Junction Railway Company, created in 1874, with the intention of building a railway from North street, in Leeds township to Roundhay. But three years later the promoters, amongst whom was John Barran, had to admit the impossibility of raising the necessary capital, and the scheme was abandoned.<sup>2</sup> However, in 1890 the council built a tramway to Roundhay, which, in the following year became one of the first electrically-driven tramways in the country.<sup>3</sup>

But it took even longer for the council's plans for suburban development to materialise. The council had based its hopes on the fact that,

'there is a great demand for sites for villas, and there is no place within the same distance which is so free from smoke as the Roundhay Park Estate'<sup>4</sup>

but it seems that less importance was attached to pure air than to transport facilities. There were 'plenty of villa sites on the different lines of railway'<sup>5</sup> and that purchasers presumably preferred these became apparent when the council held auction sales of its land

<sup>1</sup>Kelly's Directory of the West Riding of Yorkshire, 1889, p.636.

<sup>2</sup>Leeds, Roundhay Park and Osmondthorpe Junction Railway Act, 37 Vict., ch. xv, 1874; and Leeds Roundhay Park, and Osmondthorpe Junction Railway (Abandonment) Act, 40 Vict., ch. xi, 1877.

<sup>3</sup>G.C. Dickinson, 'The development of suburban road passenger transport in Leeds, 1840-1895'. Journal of Transport History, iv 1960, 214-223.

<sup>4</sup>HLRO, House of Commons, select committee...25 April 1872, evidence of Thomas Fenwick, C.E., f.52.

<sup>5</sup>ibid., f.55.



at Roundhay. The first auction was held in June 1876, and in all twenty five lots, at an average of 2/3d a square yard. But at the second sale in September prices offered ranged from 1/10d to 2/1d; only eight of the forty lots were sold and the others were withdrawn since bids failed to reach the reserve price. A further sale in June 1877 disposed of only two lots at 2/6d a square yard, and no sales at all were made in the auction of July 1879.<sup>1</sup> Altogether, the council obtained £31,588 for about sixty acres of land, and no further sales were made until 1902.<sup>2</sup>

The financial implications of this were, of course, that the expense of the park, in terms of the size of the debt which had to be serviced, was far greater than had been originally imagined. But the responsibility for this miscalculation cannot be placed solely upon the council. Barran's persuasive advocacy and the clear approval of a large number of the electors, was too much to resist. But it is significant that when Barran mentioned that the park, after surplus land sales, would cost 1½d in the pound, 'a sum which would not be felt heavily by anybody',<sup>3</sup> he claimed, neither ratepayers nor council objected, yet a few years before, the council had cavilled at the proposal to adopt the Public Libraries Act, with its maximum rate of one penny.

The increasing concern to maintain public access to long-established open spaces, which found expression in legislation,<sup>4</sup> and

<sup>1</sup>RB, June 1896.

<sup>2</sup>Corporation Surplus Lands, Register of Sales, consecutive numbers 114-133, and 136-137.

<sup>3</sup>LM, 14 Oct 1871.

<sup>4</sup>An Act for facilitating the regulation and improvement of Commons, and for amending the Acts relating to the Inclosure of Commons, 39 and 40 Vict., ch. 56.

the creation of the metropolitan Commons Preservation Society<sup>1</sup> became apparent in Leeds in the eighteen seventies, with the eruption of local protests over encroachments on the remaining common lands. If the purchase of Roundhay Park is an example of patrician influence at work, the municipal acquisitions of common land were made as a result of plebian pressure. The first dispute arose at Woodhouse Ridge, where in 1875, one Samuel Brumfitt started to build several houses. Local inhabitants regarded his intentions with suspicion and at a public meeting at Woodhouse Carr, he agreed to cease building while the question of common rights was submitted to arbitration. Despite his promise, work continued, and some progress was made with the foundations of the contentious buildings. As a result, on a July evening, a large crowd assembled in front of his house. Some of the rioters partly demolished the garden wall, destroyed the hedge, despoiled the garden, tore up the offending foundations, and pulled down an outhouse claimed to be built across a public footpath. Brumfitt's own house was untouched.<sup>2</sup>

Subsequently, twelve defendants, four labourers, two gardeners, two blacksmiths, a cowkeeper, mason, carter, and a carrier, appeared at the Assize charged with riotous assembly, and were bound over to keep the peace for one year.<sup>3</sup>

A month after the trial, a petition was presented to the council, proposing the purchase of the Ridge, and after negotiations with the lords of the manor, the 16½ acres were bought for £1,105.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Leslie Stephen, Life of Henry Fawcett, ch. VII.

<sup>2</sup>LM, 8 July 1875.

<sup>3</sup>LM, 12 Aug 1875.

<sup>4</sup>CM, 3 May, 29 Sept 1876.

It seems that the local reaction to the threatened curtailment of common rights at Woodhouse Ridge stimulated the council to consider what could be done to safeguard the remaining urban commons in the borough. Although the 1856 improvement act had allowed the council to negotiate for the purchase of both Hunslet and Holbeck moors upon receiving a requisition from the inhabitants of the respective townships,<sup>1</sup> and to charge the cost to their improvement rates, these provisions had never been set in motion. In July 1876, while the acquisition of Woodhouse Ridge was being finalised, the corporate property committee recommended the council to purchase Holbeck moor,<sup>2</sup> and was given permission to begin negotiation with the manorial lords.<sup>3</sup> When the council decided to promote a new improvement bill in October, it included provisions to buy both Holbeck and Hunslet moors, but later removed Hunslet moor from the bill, as it intended to obtain land for recreation grounds elsewhere in the neighbourhood.<sup>4</sup> After the bill became law, a three acre section of Holbeck moor, known as the Intake was bought for £2,538, but by this time, it was the future of Hunslet moor which was giving cause for concern.

Across the moor ran a waggon-way, which had been sanctioned by a private act of 1758, to convey coal from Middleton colliery to Leeds.<sup>5</sup> The dispute in 1877 arose over the Middleton Estate and Colliery Company's decision to build a new, unauthorised, line over the moor,

<sup>1</sup>19 and 20 Vict., cap. cxv, clauses VII-X.

<sup>2</sup>RB, 27 July 1875.

<sup>3</sup>CM, 2 Aug 1875.

<sup>4</sup>CM, 1 Jan 1878.

<sup>5</sup>G. Rimmer, 'Middleton Colliery, near Leeds, (1770-1830)' Yorkshire Bulletin, vol. 7 no. 1, March 1955, p. 48.

to which the commoners raised objection. Their protest movement, although like that of Woodhouse, local in origin, acquired the dubious asset of the leadership of John de Morgan, an activist from the metropolitan Commons Preservation Society. De Morgan addressed local meetings in November and December of 1877<sup>1</sup> and wrote to the council to urge it to take action.<sup>2</sup> His letters were referred to the corporate property committee, which in April 1878 was given permission by the council to treat with the manorial lords, and in September, the transfer of about sixty nine acres of the moor was agreed for £4,000.<sup>3</sup> The sale was ratified by a specially-promoted act, in the following year,<sup>4</sup> since the town clerk believed that proceedings under the Commons Act, would be 'complicated, prolonged and costly'.<sup>5</sup>

By 1890, the council had spent £194,228 on the provision of open spaces: £139,000 on Roundhay Park, £47,585 on recreation grounds, and £7,643 in acquiring common lands. Over the next fifteen years, new parks were created in Armley, Stanningley, Chapel Allerton, Burley, Harehills, Lower Wortley, and Chapeltown.<sup>6</sup> In 1900 the remaining nineteen acres of Holbeck moor became public property, and public access

<sup>1</sup>LM, 26 Nov, 10 Dec 1877. For De Morgan's role in the protest, see G. Branston, 'The development of public open spaces in Leeds during the nineteenth century'. (Unpublished M.Phil, Leeds, 1972), pp. 50-52.

<sup>2</sup>CM, 1 Jan 1878.

<sup>3</sup>CM, 30 Sept 1878.

<sup>4</sup>The Leeds Corporation Act, 1879, 42 and 43 Vict, ch. 23.

<sup>5</sup>CM, 1 Jan 1878.

<sup>6</sup>CM, 6 Jan 1892, 15 Nov 1893, 7 July 1897, 4 Jan 1899, 5 Sept 1900, 2 Oct 1901, 4 June 1902.

to Woodhouse Ridge was increased in 1901 and 1902 by gift and purchase.<sup>1</sup> Expenditure on the purchase of parks in these years was more than £135,000.

From the early nineties the council also provided land for use as allotments. Early in 1891 deputations from Burley, the north and north east wards, and memorials from Wortley, New Wortley and Armley urged the council to adopt the Allotments Act of 1887.<sup>2</sup> In June it did so, and purchased 9½ acres in Burley for £3,545 and some months later obtained 5½ acres for £2,471 at Harehills.<sup>3</sup>

## (8)

In 1861 the council had rejected the suggestion that it should adopt the Public Libraries Act of 1856, and provide a free public library, but seven years later it authorised the mayor to hold the public meeting which the Acts of 1856 and 1866 required to allow the electors to vote on the issue. Those who supported the creation of a library could point to the fact that the cellars of the town hall already held 2,500 volumes of patent specifications which had been presented to the borough for public use by the Patent Office, and files of local newspapers for the previous twenty seven years.<sup>4</sup> Opposition to the scheme did not arise simply on financial grounds, as some members of the council, and in particular Alderman Luccock, who was chairman of the Mechanics' Institute, were concerned over the possible injurious

<sup>1</sup>CM, 3 April 1901, 4 June 1902.

<sup>2</sup>CM, 7 Jan, 4 Feb 1891.

<sup>3</sup>CM, 3 June, 5 Oct 1892, 16 Feb 1893.

<sup>4</sup>LM, 13 Feb 1868.

effect which a free library would have upon the numerous voluntary institutions in the borough.<sup>1</sup> One council member claimed that,

'it was a well known fact that there was scarcely a portion of the borough which was above 200 yards distant from an institutional or congregational library'?

There were sixteen institutional libraries with stocks of between 300 and 13,000 volumes, and eighteen Wesleyan schools with libraries of 300 to 1,200 books. The former were not free, but were accessible for a subscription of 1½d to 2d a week.

The necessary public meeting was held, and discussed whether a public library would injure those already established. It decided that it would not, and accordingly voted in favour of a municipal library.<sup>3</sup> The council then adopted delaying tactics, and decided that the question should be deferred until after the November elections,<sup>4</sup> but in January 1869 a motion to appoint a committee 'to enquire and report on the carrying into effect' of the acts was defeated by three votes.<sup>5</sup> Seven months later the issue was still in abeyance, and Sir Andrew Fairbairn, the engineer, addressed a letter to the council, urging it to take action.<sup>6</sup> A few weeks after the arguments for and against were rehearsed, and a committee was appointed to carry the acts into effect.<sup>7</sup> The size of the majority (30 votes in favour to 2 against) was probably not the result of sudden conversion, but of the town

<sup>1</sup> ibid.

<sup>2</sup> LM, 20 Aug 1869.

<sup>3</sup> LM, 12 March 1868.

<sup>4</sup> CM, 31 March 1868.

<sup>5</sup> CM, 1 Jan 1869.

<sup>6</sup> CM, 11 Aug 1869.

<sup>7</sup> CM, 20 Aug 1869.

clerk's declaration that the council was legally bound to act since the town meeting had voted in favour and thus

'that if the council do not within a reasonable time...carry this act into effect, the law may be put into motion by any individual ratepayer and we shall be compelled to carry it into effect'.<sup>1</sup>

The committee decided to hire rooms in mechanics' institutes in Wortley, New Wortley and Holbeck for use as branch libraries, since this could be done cheaply, and to let the library rate fund accumulate until it was sufficient to provide a central building.<sup>2</sup> Barran, the future promoter of the Roundhay Park purchase, protested that,

'a town which had perhaps the finest hospital in Europe (ie. the General Infirmary), and one of the finest and most complete of town halls, should not be content with other than a noble building for a free library'<sup>3</sup>

But there was some justice in Alderman Gaunt's riposte:

'the three libraries mentioned were well used, and each was in a situation where it was most needed. Mr. Ald. Barran talked about a centre. Where could he get a better centre than Hunslet? That was where the masses lived. It was not in the neighbourhood of Boar lane or the railway stations, which was the centre round which Mr. Barran moved'<sup>4</sup>

In June 1870, a borough librarian and manager was appointed at a salary of £200 a year.<sup>5</sup>

The council obtained the nucleus of the museum stock in 1882, when it was offered, and purchased, the

'implements and weapons of stone, bone, bronze and iron, and also a pretty considerable collection of pottery'

from John Holmes of Roundhay, for about £250.<sup>6</sup> The sum was found by

<sup>1</sup>LM, 21 Aug 1869.

<sup>2</sup>LM, 1 April 1870.

<sup>3</sup>ibid.

<sup>4</sup>ibid.

<sup>5</sup>CM, 4 June 1870.

<sup>6</sup>CM, 2 Jan 1882.

economising on new acquisitions for the library. This was not an indefensible decision as by this time the council possessed twenty one branch libraries and a stock of over 117,000 books, which in total had cost £48,000.<sup>1</sup> The creation of branch libraries entailed relatively slight expense, as they were accommodated in buildings, principally police stations, the need for which there was no reason to dispute, and it was not until 1902 that, with the opening of the Armley branch, there was any building provided solely for library purposes.<sup>2</sup> Like so many nineteenth century social measures, public libraries were seen to have a moral influence on the community. When local debate began in 1869, one councillor instanced with approval the experience of Salford where

'during the year the demand for works of fiction had continued to decrease whilst the issue of works on history, science, and political economy had increased'<sup>3</sup>

and in 1890, Alderman Spark urged that the council,

'must not look at the direct expenditure, but at the indirect saving in the creation of a more healthy moral tone and in the diminution of juvenile crime'<sup>4</sup>

By 1886 the central library had twenty five branches, and

'the proportion of books to population (was) greater than any other municipal library in the kingdom'<sup>5</sup>

In the following year, the council agreed to appoint a committee to consider the possibility of providing an art gallery and museum.<sup>6</sup>

The committee accepted that,

'in the present condition of trade the ratepayers might not approve the erection of a costly building on a conspicuous site'

<sup>1</sup>F.R. Spark, Collection of Extracts, volume three, f. 35b.

<sup>2</sup>MRP, box 12, Armley branch library.

<sup>3</sup>LM, 20 Aug 1869.

<sup>4</sup>LM, 2 Oct 1890.

<sup>5</sup>RB, 4 Aug 1886.

<sup>6</sup>CM, 8 April 1886.



and recognised that it would be impracticable to suggest that the council should obtain parliamentary powers to increase the maximum rate which could be levied for this purpose, which under the Library Acts was fixed at one penny. It recommended that the scheme should be achieved within existing arrangements, by appropriating £800 a year from the income of the library rate, a sum which represented about sixteen per cent of the current library rate yield. Of this, about £400 would be absorbed by running expenses, and the remainder would be sufficient to service the interest and sinking fund charges on an outlay of more than £8,000 to provide a building.<sup>1</sup> The council accepted the report, and in March 1887, approved a plan which was to cost nearly £9,000.<sup>2</sup> Thus despite initial evasions, the council's record over the provision of library services may be said to have been creditable. In 1890, a new subject of immediate relevance to the improvement of educational facilities came before the council. The Technical Instruction Act of 1889 allowed certain local authorities to levy up to a penny rate to finance this kind of instruction, either by providing it directly, or by giving financial assistance to existing institutions.<sup>3</sup> The act was adoptive, and in January 1890 the council received petitions and deputations from many local bodies including the School Board and the Chamber of Commerce asking it to put the act into operation in Leeds.<sup>4</sup> The council was not enthusiastic: a motion proposing the appointment of a committee to consider how to carry out the terms

<sup>1</sup>RB, 4 Aug 1886.

<sup>2</sup>CM, 15 March 1887; RB, 10 Dec 1886.

<sup>3</sup>Peter Gosden, 'Technical instruction committees', in History of Education Society, Studies in the Government and Control of Education since 1860, pp. 27-41.

<sup>4</sup>CM, 1 Jan 1890. For the educational activities of the Chamber, see M.W. Beresford, The Leeds Chambers of Commerce, ch. VIII.

of the act was defeated, and an amendment to set up a committee simply to report on the question was accepted only as a result of the mayor's casting vote.<sup>1</sup> It is hardly surprising that the council should be unwilling to increase the rates, when we consider its previous reluctance to adopt a similar rating power to finance the public library, and indeed in October of that year, it rejected a proposal to include a clause in the planned improvement bill which would raise the maximum library rate from a penny to twopence.<sup>2</sup> The situation was saved by the enactment of the Local Taxation (Customs and Excise) Act in 1890, which increased duties on beer and spirits, and allowed the extra revenue to be distributed as subsidies to county and county borough councils.<sup>3</sup> These local authorities were empowered to spend the money on technical education, if they wished to do so. As a result of this, the council devoted between £6,000 and £7,000 a year from the proceeds of its grant for this purpose, although from 1892 the library received a sizeable portion of it (£500 in 1892, raised to £1,000 in 1894 and thereafter upto 1902), to buy technical books and drawings. Of the remainder, at least £4,500 a year was given to the School Board, the Yorkshire College of Science, (later the university) and the Leeds Institute, and smaller sums were given to science classes in working men's institutes and to church and chapel schools.<sup>4</sup> What little controversy there was over the annual allocation of funds arose between the nonconformists and Anglicans over the size of the sums paid to the latter.

<sup>1</sup>CM, 1 Jan 1890.

<sup>2</sup>CM, 1 Oct 1890.

<sup>3</sup>Gosden, art. cit., p. 29.

<sup>4</sup>See table 5.2.

TABLE 5.2

Grants made by the council to institutions  
providing technical instruction, 1891, 1895,  
1900 and 1905

	1891	1895	1900	1905
School Board	£3,000	2,500	1,920	-
Yorkshire College of Science	1,000	1,000	1,500	1,550
Leeds Institute	1,000	1,000	1,250	2,000
Evening Science and Arts Class Association	200	-	-	-
Yorkshire Ladies' Council of Education	100	100	220	150
Holbeck Mechanics' Institute	141"10s	-	60	80
Woodhouse Mechanics' Institute	141"10s	40	50	100
Y.M.C.A.	100	20	-	-
Armley Higher Grade School	100	-	-	-
Wortley Working Men's Institute	50	40	50	100
Working Men's Hall Institute	50	-	-	-
Leeds Working Men's Institute	-	20	20	-
Public Library Committee	-	1,000	1,000	-
Armley Evening Science Classes	-	40	50	-
Leeds Parish Church Middle Class Schools	-	150	500	175
St. Peter's Church Schools	-	15	25	-
Primitive Methodist Science School, Hunslet	-	15	-	-
Rodley Science Class	-	10	10	20
Institute for Blind, Deaf and Dumb	-	-	50	60
Hunslet Mechanic's Institute	-	-	40	50
Stanningley Church Schools Science Class	-	-	10	20
Central and Cockburn Secondary Schools	-	-	-	2,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,883</b>	<b>6,009</b>	<b>6,755</b>	<b>6,305</b>

Source: Council Minutes, 20 Oct 1891, 9 Oct 1895,  
3 Jan 1900, 1 Feb 1905.

Although about three quarters of the money was given to three recipients, there were doubts over the utility of making small donations to possibly less competent bodies. In July 1899, the technical instruction sub-committee reported that it was,

'impressed with the waste resulting from the present system of distribution of money among small classes where multiplicity necessarily means weakness, both financial and technical'<sup>1</sup>,

but it saw several reasons for taking no immediate action. A sudden end to these grants would disrupt 'good work' currently going on, but probably of more importance was that the creation of a municipal technical school would entail further (and rate-financed) expenditure in addition to the amount received under the 1890 Act. Despite the evidence which the report offered as a result of its investigations into the educational activities of other major municipal authorities,<sup>2</sup> no action was taken before the structure of educational administration was changed by the 1902 Act.

The possibility of providing public baths and wash houses had, like the public library question, been considered some years before, in this case in 1846 when the first general act permitting their public provision had been made. Thirty two years later, in 1878, the council formally adopted the measure, and appointed a committee to consider its applicability,<sup>3</sup> and it recommended that about £6,000 be spent to build baths and washhouses on corporate land in Leron street.<sup>4</sup> This was opposed by alderman Scarr, on the ground that many towns had incurred losses from these services, and the committee was instructed to

<sup>1</sup>MRP no. 63, Technical Instruction. Report of the Sub-Finance Committee, (July 1899).

<sup>2</sup>op. cit., and see also A. Redford, The History of Local Government in Manchester, vol. 111, pp. 155-156.

<sup>3</sup>RB, 1 Aug 1878; CM, 7 Aug 1878.

<sup>4</sup>CM, 31 March 1879.

consider the desirability of building washhouses only.<sup>1</sup> The committee then advised that washhouses be built on the same site for £2,250, but this proposition was also defeated.<sup>2</sup> Then in 1886, the corporate property committee was allowed to spend £500 in providing a swimming bath at the New Wortley recreation ground.<sup>3</sup>

The matter was brought up for reconsideration in the early eighteen nineties, and in March 1893, it was suggested that two baths should be built, one on land which had been cleared of slums near Kirkgate market, and a second on Kirkstall road.<sup>4</sup> The chairman of the committee admitted that, although

'he could hold out no hopes of the scheme paying...there were many things carried out by the corporation which could not be weighed up in pounds shillings and pence, and baths were of the number. They were as necessary as recreation grounds, and though there might be a financial loss they might hope to see an improvement in the health of the people'<sup>5</sup>

Over the next ten years the council built eight bathing establishments, and purchased the premises of a private company in the centre of Leeds.<sup>6</sup> The distribution of swimming baths was not as extensive as that of recreation grounds, as six were in Leeds township, and one in Hunslet and one in Holbeck, but in a decade the council had spent more than £114,000<sup>7</sup> on a service which it had previously totally neglected.

<sup>1</sup>LM, 1 April 1879.

<sup>2</sup>CM, 5 June 1879.

<sup>3</sup>CM, 3 Feb 1886..

<sup>4</sup>RB, March 1893; CM, 5 April 1893.

<sup>5</sup>LM, 6 April 1893.

<sup>6</sup>CM, 7 Feb 1894 (Kirkstall road baths); 4 April 1894 (Union st.); 16 March and 9 Nov 1896 (Hunslet); 1 July 1896 (Holbeck); 7 April and 9 Nov 1897 (Meanwood road); 2 March 1898 and 6 Dec 1899 (purchase and alteration of the premises of the Oriental and General Bath Company, Cookridge st.); 1 Aug 1900 (York road), 6 Feb 1901 (York road and Bramley); and 4 May 1904 (Jewish baths).

<sup>7</sup>Council of the city of Leeds. committees, officers of the council, etc. 1905. (ie. Municipal Yearbook.)

CHAPTER SIX

THE 'HOUSING PROBLEM' AND MUNICIPAL

SLUM CLEARANCE, 1866 - 1905

(1)

The later nineteenth century was a period of increasing concern over the housing problems of large towns, as the 'housing of the working classes' issue began to evoke a practical response from both private organisations and public authorities. Pamphlet and periodical literature<sup>1</sup> and the appearance of semi-philanthropic housing companies<sup>2</sup> was matched in the public sector by government enquiry and local and national legislation. The bipartate attack upon substandard housing conditions in Leeds began with the creation of the Leeds Industrial Dwellings Company in 1866, representing the private initiative, and with the adoption by the council of new legal powers in the improvement acts of 1870 and 1877, and the beginning of slum clearance, at first tentative, but later very extensive. Of course, not all working class housing was the object of concern, and to understand the nature of the housing problem it is first necessary to outline the process of urban change which created slum areas and examine the reasons why they continued to attract tenants.

As we demonstrated in an earlier chapter, the 'east end' of Leeds township, comprising the east, north east and north wards was already attracting unfavourable comment in the eighteen thirties. Although much of the property was then of relatively recent construction, it already exhibited most of the pre-conditions for the making of a slum. The activities of several generations of small-scale speculative builders, working without co-ordination and without the constraint of

<sup>1</sup>See Andrew Mearns, The Bitter Cry of Outcast London, edited with an introduction by Anthony S. Wohl, for a review and a selection of contemporary writings.

<sup>2</sup>See David Owen, English Philanthropy, 1660-1960, ch. XIV, "'Philanthropy and Five Per Cent': Housing Experiments'.

building bye-laws, had left a legacy of high density back-to-back housing, often without sanitary facilities of any kind, built in a spatial jumble of closed courts, yards, and narrow streets which were usually undrained and unsurfaced. The passage of time rapidly added decrepitude to this catalogue of defects, for by the eighteen sixties, it was being said of some of the properties, built scarcely forty years before, that

'the said messuages are very old (sic) and require continual repairs'<sup>1</sup>

and of others of the same age, that,

'the said cottages required constant repairs and the yearly expense of making such repairs was about £70, the entire annual income was about £390'<sup>2</sup>

There were several barriers which inhibited the maintenance, let alone improvement, of many properties. Small-scale landlordism meant that,

'the owner of two or three cottages cannot afford to pull one down in order to make the rest of his property decent, especially if to do so would improve an adjoining estate more than his own'<sup>3</sup>

Furthermore, there was a high degree of absentee ownership, and this was accentuated through the division of property amongst legatees whose interest in the property solely as a source of income led them to 'ignore the duties of ownership'. Since the thirties, the east end was notorious as an area where diseases characteristic of an insanitary environment flourished. In the streets to the east of Marsh lane,

'case after case of the most malignant typhus springs up amongst the inhabitants of this undrained district, seizing the houses in rotation'<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Leeds Corporation Deeds, no. 8670.

<sup>2</sup>ibid., no. 4860/12/69.

<sup>3</sup>Edmund Wilson, 'The housing of the working classes', Journal of the Society of Arts, volume XLVIII (1899-1900), pp. 253-263. Wilson, the secretary to the Leeds Industrial Dwellings Company, also provided information to the Webbs, see Webb Loc.Gvt.Coll., volume 265, which elaborates slightly on the information given in his article.

<sup>4</sup>LM, 29 Oct 1842.



the press reported in the eighteen forties. Twenty years later, the Leeds Mercury published an article on the 'hotbeds of fever in Leeds', and gave a list of the streets and localities which had produced patients for the fever hospital, nearly all of which were 'of a very malignant form of typhus fever'.<sup>1</sup> All the streets were situated in the east and north east wards, and practically all of them were in four areas. These were, the Union-Ebenezer-Millgarth streets district, the Leylands and the streets to the north, the south-western corner of the Quarry Hill area, and the streets in the district to the east of Marsh lane. The high death rate in the east end continued unabated into the eighteen nineties. When the council submitted evidence on the state of the district which became the 'York street insanitary area', it showed that the average mortality rate there between 1893 to 1895 was 39.16 per 1,000, against an average for the city as a whole of 20.26, and in the 'Quarry Hill insanitary area', the rate in the years 1898 to 1900 was 28.00, compared to the city's overall average of 19.8.<sup>2</sup>

By the eighteen eighties there was clear evidence of rising standards in working class housing conditions in Leeds, achieved largely through 'self-help', or more specifically through building societies, of which the most important were the Leeds Permanent Benefit Building Society, established in 1848, and the Leeds Provincial Building Society.<sup>3</sup> The manager of the former stated that in the thirty six years of the

<sup>1</sup> ibid., 20 Feb 1866.

<sup>2</sup> YP, 13 March 1896; House of Commons Select Committee on the Local Government Provisional Orders (Housing of the Working Classes) (No.2) /Leeds Order/ Bill, 2 July 1901, Speech by Mr. Balfour Browne, p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> The following information is taken from the evidence of Mr. Thomas Fatkin to the Royal Commission on the Housing of the Working Classes, volume II, esp. Qu. 10,791; 10,799; 10,800; 10,862; 10,871; 10,879.

society's existence at least 13,000 houses in Leeds had been built with the help of mortgages which it had provided.<sup>1</sup> Evidence of this kind led some contemporaries, including the medical officer of health, to believe that houses in the inner urban area,

'are gradually being depopulated as residences, and people get more into the country'<sup>2</sup>

presumably by exchanging houses in the east end, 'which mostly consist of only two rooms altogether',<sup>3</sup> and in other inferior inner city working class areas, for suburban homes financed through the building societies, which as the manager of the Leeds Permanent stated,

'are three-roomed or four-roomed cottages, ...we have none with less than three rooms in them if you count the bedrooms'.

Although this may be true in the case of skilled workers, it was certainly not an accurate description of the housing situation amongst the unskilled, and for them the sanguine view of urban morphology held by Dr. Goldie cannot be substantiated. The opportunities offered by the building societies were limited to the better-paid workers. The average wage of the members of the Leeds Permanent was about 30/- to 35/- a week, and amongst its shareholders it had 'a few common labourers, but not many'. The houses which the society was prepared to finance cost about £160, and these would have cost a tenant at least 4/3d a week to rent. This was beyond the means of the 'substratum', earning 18/- to 22/- in unskilled occupation,<sup>4</sup> who found accommodation

<sup>1</sup>On a rough calculation (from the printed census), about 32,-33,000 houses were built in the borough of Leeds between 1851 and 1885.

<sup>2</sup>R.C. on the Housing of the Working Classes, volume II, Qu. 9,790.

<sup>3</sup>House of Commons S.C., 2 July 1901, Qu. 202.

<sup>4</sup>R.C. on the Housing of the Working Classes, volume II, Qu. 9,811.

in the east end. A survey of five hundred houses in the York street area in the mid-nineties<sup>1</sup> showed that 75% of them were let at rents of upto 3/- a week, more than a third below the minimum which would be paid for a newer, larger house, which if built since the mid sixties, would be located in an area laid-out under the provisions of the building bye-laws. As one newspaper commented,

'slum property still seems to be popular, owing to the small rent. To-day, in consequence of the increased cost of land, labour, and building material, and to the greater restrictions imposed by the authorities, a house cannot be erected, which will yield a return to the owner if let at less than 2s. 6d. a week'<sup>2</sup>

We may disagree over the level of rent, but the statement is otherwise incontrovertable. Apart from rent, there was a second factor which accounted for the continuing demand for accommodation in the slums of the east end. In the mid-nineties, of a working class population of slightly more than 3,000 living in the York street district, 24% were living in common lodging houses and a further 20% were defined as 'people depending on casual employment'<sup>3</sup>. Thus nearly half of the inhabitants were gaining a living from irregular jobs, and it was necessary for these to be close to potential sources of employment, such as the markets, railway goods yards, warehouses and wharfs of the canal and Navigation companies. One council official remarked that,

'the area itself from its position in the town and especially its proximity to the Public Markets, is one in which many of the poorer classes prefer (sic) to reside. The truth of this statement is proved by the present over-crowded state of the area, and also the fact that there is scarcely an empty house in it'<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>G.F. Carter, 'Operation of the Housing of the Working Classes Act in Leeds', Journal of the Royal Sanitary Institute, volume XVIII, pp. 465-472.

<sup>2</sup>YEP, 14 Jan 1896.

<sup>3</sup>G.F. Carter, art. cit., p. 467.

<sup>4</sup>ibid., p. 469.

The east end had a long history as the home of the most deprived groups in the community. The Irish had established themselves there by the thirties, and from the eighties the Jewish migrants from Eastern Europe were moving in, so that by the end of the century, the latter comprised, according to one estimate, more than half of the population in the Quarry Hill area.<sup>1</sup>

(2)

One result of the growing awareness of the working class housing problem was the appearance of joint-stock companies which aimed to cater specifically for this type of demand. The creation of the Leeds Industrial Dwellings Company in 1866 was the first indication that the new social problem of the age was producing a response in Leeds, and a brief outline of its history is obviously relevant here, as it exemplifies both the potential and the limitations of private initiative in this sphere. The company was founded in February 1866, and incorporated in July, with the aim of,

'providing healthy and comfortable dwellings, shops, and premises, and acquiring land, buildings and dwellings'<sup>2</sup>

Established within a few years of the Peabody Trust and the Improved Industrial Dwellings Company, its aim, like that of its metropolitan models, was to show that sound finance and philanthropy were not incompatible partners in the housing market.<sup>3</sup> At first its emulation of these two bodies went further, for presumably inspired by its London counterparts, it built a block of flats, the first of its kind to be

<sup>1</sup>House of Commons S.C., 5 July 1901, Qu. 1201.

<sup>2</sup>PRO BT31/30751, Memorandum of Association of the Leeds Industrial Dwellings Company, 12 July 1866.

<sup>3</sup>W. Ashworth, The Genesis of Modern British Town Planning, pp. 82-86.

erected in Leeds. The block consisted of three floors, with six dwellings on each, alternately two and three roomed. Water was laid on to each living room, and there was a washhouse on each floor, and water closets on the landings. This building, begun in 1866, cost £1,440.<sup>1</sup> The venture was unsuccessful, as this type of accommodation was not only new to the town, but unwelcome, for it was felt that,

'they resembled a barrack or workhouse; the idea of patronage and charity was suggested, and there were many practical objections besides'<sup>2</sup>

When one of the L.C.B.'s inspectors visited Leeds four years after they were completed, he reported that,

'these buildings were not more than half occupied at the time of my inspection, and they show signs of great neglect'<sup>3</sup>

After this failure, the company languished for a decade until in 1876 it was reanimated by a new group of shareholders. Of the original ten, only W.B. Denison, the owner of the town's 'model' lodging house, remained.<sup>4</sup> Acting on the advice of Edmund Wilson, the company's secretary, it was decided that their policy should be to purchase existing property and renovate it.<sup>5</sup> In January 1876, the company made its first purchases, both in the east ward. These were twenty eight houses in one of the fold-yards, and twelve back-to-backs in Upper and Lower Cross streets, in the district to the east of Marsh lane.<sup>6</sup> Not until November 1886 were there any further purchases, but from then the company began

<sup>1</sup>The Builder, volume 25, 9 March 1867, p. 173.

<sup>2</sup>Edmund Wilson, art. cit., p. 254.

<sup>3</sup>PRO MH12/15248, Mr. J. Nethen Radcliffe on the Sanitary State of Leeds, with particular reference to Diarrhoea and Fever, p. 31, daggered footnote.

<sup>4</sup>Edmund Wilson, art. cit., p. 255.

<sup>5</sup>loc. cit.

<sup>6</sup>Leeds Corporation Deeds, no. 1988, 'Particulars of certain freehold estates...valued on 12th and 13th June 1889'.

to expand its activities in earnest. By June 1889 it owned two hundred and seventy nine houses, of a total value of £19,230, which it mortgaged to the council at 3½%<sup>1</sup>. Five years later, it owned 504, in January 1899 850, and by January 1900 it possessed one thousand houses standing on fourteen acres of freehold ground.<sup>2</sup> In financial terms also progress was satisfactory, with shareholders receiving a regular 4% dividend by the end of the century.<sup>3</sup>

Not surprisingly, the company's largest estates were in the north and east wards of Leeds township, but other large holdings were to be found in the west ward, and in Hunslet and Holbeck. As the company realised, the solution to the problem of balkanised ownership, which we noted was a prevalent feature of the 'east end', was to purchase groups of adjacent properties in order to put relatively large blocks of property under its unitary control. For example, one group of eighteen houses was acquired through five separate purchases. The first was of four houses without any conveniences and 'in a very delapidated state', the second was of five houses owned by 'a collier' who did not live in Leeds, the third of two houses where, 'their doors and windows had been walled up for years', the fourth was of two houses without conveniences, and the final purchase was a group of five houses.<sup>4</sup> Once this was done, the company could carry out repairs and if necessary demolish the least salubrious property to make way for sanitary accommodation or simply to allow improved ventilation.

<sup>1</sup>loc.cit.

<sup>2</sup>Webb Local Gvt. Colltn., volume 265, six pages of notes, headed, 'Leeds 1899 Housing'.

<sup>3</sup>loc.cit.

<sup>4</sup>loc.cit.

If the company was not increasing the volume of rented property available to the lower-paid sector of the population, it was ameliorating the conditions in which it lived, and its programme of refurbishing existing property rather than attempting demolition and reconstruction was probably a wise one under the circumstances. Contemporaries were well aware that housing companies which built their own tenements were catering not for the unskilled worker but for the artisan class. As one local newspaper observed,

'the Peabody Buildings, and the buildings of Alderman Waterlow and the rest are all far beyond the means of the classes of people among whom fever is bred. These houses, at rents of four and five shillings a week, supply the well-paid mechanics with homes, and a very good work this is, but they are as inaccessible to the crossing-sweeper and his wife, to the matchbox-maker and his daughter, as Buckingham Palace itself'.<sup>1</sup>

Admittedly, this claim is made on the experience of the metropolitan housing companies, but had this policy been adopted by the Leeds Company it would have increased operating costs, and unless it charged higher rents, would thereby have reduced dividends. But nevertheless, the company's operations had two serious drawbacks which made its contribution to the solution of the working class housing problem of less than major significance. Firstly, in aggregate terms, the number of houses it owned, even by the beginning of the present century, was a very small proportion of the probable amount of sub-standard housing in Leeds township alone, and if the volume of such property in Hunslet and Holbeck was also included, the percentage would fall still further. Secondly, the way in which the company operated brought it ultimately to a problem which, within its own terms of reference, was insuperable. It was really performing a 'holding' operation, for although it might

<sup>1</sup>YP and LI, 1 April 1866.

arrest the degeneration of the buildings it purchased it could do nothing to halt the process. Furthermore, the ownership of relatively small estates in the midst of large slum areas adversely affected the company's good intentions. Edmund Wilson, its secretary,

'knew that the Industrial Dwellings Company would have to spend a large sum of money on the property to make it habitable, and...knew from experience that that expenditure would be largely thrown away so long as the adjoining houses were kept in an unsatisfactory condition'<sup>1</sup>

Demolition and rebuilding were in the long-run the only effective answer, and here the latent tension between philanthropy and finance were bound to emerge. As Wilson observed to the Webbs,

'the directors were timid, and never liked to knock down 'bricks and mortar'.<sup>2</sup>

The only institution capable of planning and financing large-scale urban redevelopment was the local authority.

(3)

The ultimate solution to the problem of substandard housing is demolition, and both local authorities, with Liverpool in the forefront, and central government, promoted legislation for this purpose from the eighteen sixties. The local history of legislation in Leeds began with the improvement act of 1870. In January 1868, a sub-committee of the scavenging and nuisance committee visited Liverpool to investigate the adoption of different types of water closets there. But it would seem that it was impressed by another of Liverpool council's pioneering schemes, namely the slum clearances it was undertaking under the

<sup>1</sup>YP, 31 Oct 1896.

<sup>2</sup>Webb Local Gvt. Colltn, loc.cit.



sanction of its local act of 1864. For when the subcommittee reported, it concluded by,

'expressing their conviction that the pulling down of buildings so as to admit a free circulation of air in the courts, would necessarily constitute one of the chief advantages and contribute largely to the improvements effected'<sup>1</sup>,

Thus in 1870, the council obtained powers, explicitly modelled on those in the Liverpool act,<sup>2</sup> to purchase and demolish property in 'any court or alley or any premises' which the medical officer of health declared to be,

'unfit for human habitation, or in a condition, state or situation injurious, dangerous or prejudicial to health'<sup>3</sup>

In examining the history of slum clearance in Leeds, two distinct periods can be distinguished. The first, between 1870 and 1890, in which the council only sparingly exercised its new powers, and the second, that of the subsequent fifteen years during which large-scale clearances were planned and put into execution. We shall consider the reasons for this change of attitude later in the chapter.

But demolition alone merely exacerbated the wider social problems which helped to create slum areas. Since, as contemporaries were aware,

'a slum represents the presence of a market for local, casual labour'<sup>4</sup>

a reduction in the number of dwellings meant that those workers who were obliged to remain in close proximity to possible sources of

<sup>1</sup>SNC, 29 Jan 1869.

<sup>2</sup>HLRO, House of Commons Select Committee, Evidence 1870, volume 17, Leeds Corporation Gas and Improvements Bill, 30 March 1870, ff. 4-11, (evidence of C.A. Curwood, town clerk).

<sup>3</sup>The Leeds Corporation Gas and Improvements etc., 1870, 33 and 34 Vict., ch. xciii, sections 11-31.

<sup>4</sup>Quoted in H.J. Dyos, 'The slums of Victorian London', Victorian Studies, volume 11 1967-68, p. 34.

employment had little alternative but to remain in the area, and so increase the density of habitation still further. It is well known that street improvements and railway construction were often applauded as the beneficent agents of destruction,<sup>1</sup> as for example when in the late sixties in Leeds the press commented favourably upon the new railway building in the east end, claiming that,

'in opening up many of the slums in this district, the North Eastern Railway Company has proved a most effectual sanitary reformer. The works in connection with the new line to Marsh lane have cut right through some of the dismal recesses where fever was bred and disseminated; destroying overcrowded courts by wholesale, and spreading the blessings of light and ventilation in all directions'<sup>2</sup>

But those with a close experience of urban conditions took a different view. It was, not unexpectedly, a poor law officer, who speaking of the same event observed that,

'we are going to have a worse job than ever through the new railway, and if cellars are against the law you must send down 3,000 tents from London'<sup>3</sup>

For the same reason, the council was told, the sanitary committee,

'had not pushed the extinction of cellar dwellings to the extent to which they might have pushed it, for the very simple reason that houses at such a rent as such poor persons could afford to pay were not available, and that therefore to turn those persons out of cellar dwellings at a greater rate than had been done would have been simply to turn them into the streets without houses and without homes'<sup>4</sup>

For this reason, the Artisans' and Labour<sup>s</sup>' Dwellings Act of 1875, whilst allowing urban sanitary authorities to make clearance schemes for

<sup>1</sup>H.J. Dyos, 'Urban transformation: a note on the objects of street improvement in Regency and Early Victorian London', International Review of Social History, volume 11 1957, 259-265,

<sup>2</sup>LM, 9 Feb 1869.

<sup>3</sup>'Report by Dr. Henry Julian Hunter on the circumstances endangering the public health of Leeds', Eighth Report of the Medical Officer of the Privy Council, 1865, p. 238.

<sup>4</sup>LM, 16 Jan 1877.

entire districts, also contained provisions to ensure that evicted occupiers were rehoused. This raised questions about the proper sphere of municipal enterprise, which as we shall see, were debated locally in the eighteen seventies and again in the nineties, and forms another aspect of the council's slum clearance programme which we shall consider in the following pages.

Once the council's improvement bill became law in July 1870, the medical officer of health quickly took the opportunity to recommend suitable areas where the powers to order demolition could be exercised. Before the end of the year, Dr. Robinson informed the sanitary committee that houses in East lane, off Kirkgate were unfit for human habitation, and in January 1871 he submitted a comprehensive report on the courts and alleys in the borough.<sup>1</sup> He suggested that demolition should be undertaken in three areas, all situated in

'the registration district where the death rate is highest, and additional free space urgently required'<sup>2</sup>

These areas were East lane, the Old Post Office yard, and Wellington yard, adjacent to Kirkgate market and adjoining the site of the once-notorious Boot and Shoe yard; the courts between George, Harewood, Union and Millgarth streets and Pollard's yard, lying immediately north of the first mentioned; and finally several courts near the gasworks at Quarry Hill. The sanitary committee appointed a sub committee to consider these suggestions.<sup>3</sup> The sub committee decided that it was desirable to deal with the Kirkgate yards immediately, and began negotiations with the property owners, presumably to ensure that there

<sup>1</sup>SC, 6 Dec 1870, 19 Jan 1871.

<sup>2</sup>SC, 19 Jan 1871.

<sup>3</sup>loc.cit.

would be no serious opposition. In March 1871, the medical officer presented to the council his report on,

'the houses and appurtanances included between the east side of East lane and the west side of Wellington yard, Kirkgate'.

He provided a classic description of a slum, where,

'the houses generally are in a delapidated condition, and in very many instances have been so modified and altered to suit the various occupants from time to time, that from an exterior view it is impossible to ascertain where an individual tenement begins and ends, so intimately do the rooms ramify one into each other. In some instances lower rooms are cut off from the staircases communicating with bedrooms above, and access to the latter gained either from the outside or by a way broken through from an adjoining house. Some of the houses are divided into separate appartments, and farmed out as furnished rooms, and others are let as common lodging houses. Several houses have been closed as unfit for human habitation...and others are unoccupied on account of their untenantable condition'.

The site, covering slightly more than half an acre, nominally contained sixty houses and twenty one cellar dwellings, providing accommodation for about six hundred individuals, most of whom were 'migratory characters'.<sup>2</sup> The council made the necessary order, and instructed the town clerk that it was to be carried out 'with as little delay as possible'.<sup>3</sup> By May 1873, the conveyancing was completed, and the sanitary committee ordered demolition to begin.<sup>4</sup> Sixteen months later, the whole area had been cleared, and had already acquired an unsavoury reputation of a different character, for the Leeds Social Improvement Society complained of,

<sup>1</sup>Sub-sanitary (courts and alleys) committee minutes, 14, 27, Feb 1871.

<sup>2</sup>CM, 31 March 1871.

<sup>3</sup>CM, 5 April 1871.

<sup>4</sup>SC, 26 May 1873.

'the disgraceful state of a large open space owned by the corporation, where whole streets have been pulled down, and vacant land allowed to become a depot of every kind of filth a scene of immorality and debauchery both by day and night'<sup>1</sup>

In May 1871, the sub committee visited the courts in the Union street area, the second of those featured in Dr. Robinson's January report, and in the next month it asked the terms upon which the owners were prepared to treat.<sup>2</sup> According to the medical officer's submission to the council, the area had one hundred and sixty three houses and forty six cellar dwellings, which housed a population of about a thousand. The death rate in these properties had for the previous five years averaged 50.3 per 1,000 which was,

'a ratio vastly disproportionate not only to that of the entire borough, but also immensely in excess of the registration district in which the property is contained'<sup>3</sup>

On 13 October 1871 the council agreed to let purchase and demolition go ahead. Neither was achieved quickly. In September the sanitary committee had appointed a land surveyor to negotiate with the owners,<sup>4</sup> and these continued for nearly five years, as the committee

'believed arrangements could be made without having resort to the costly mode of arbitration'<sup>5</sup>

But by June 1876, the purchases had been completed, and plans for demolition were made. It was decided to build a mortuary and police station on the vacant land on Millgarth street,<sup>6</sup> and another part of the site was later used for a public bath house. It has not been

<sup>1</sup>CM, 30 Sept 1874; SC, 12 Oct 1874.

<sup>2</sup>Sub S(CA)C, 18 May, 16 June 1871.

<sup>3</sup>CM, 13 Oct 1871.

<sup>4</sup>SC, 27 Sept 1871.

<sup>5</sup>LM, 1 April 1876.

<sup>6</sup>SC, 13 June 1876, 8 Jan 1877, 9 Sept 1878; CM 1 Jan 1876, 7 Feb 1877.

possible to discover the total cost of demolishing the Old Post Office and Wellington yards, but most of the property was purchased for £12,697.<sup>1</sup> The cost of purchase and clearance of the Union street yards was £24,940.<sup>2</sup>

No further action was taken to clear away unhealthy property until the mid eighties. In November 1884, the streets and sewerage committee recommended the closure of houses in Holmfirth yard, Meadow Lane to the sanitary committee.<sup>3</sup> The medical officer suggested that the houses should be acquired and demolished, as this

'would remove a lot of houses totally unfit for human dwellings, and ventilate a now overcrowded and dirty locality'<sup>4</sup>

and in February 1885, he certified thirty one houses in Holmfirth yard and Shepherd's fold as unfit for human habitation.<sup>5</sup> Two members of the committee were authorised to negotiate for the property, and in August the council approved the purchase of twenty four cottages and a foundry for £1,130.<sup>6</sup> The owner of the remaining cottages demanded £1,100 for them, and the committee, refusing to pay this obviously exorbitant sum, ordered him to make them habitable. In the following year, five houses in Holmfirth yard, presumably belonging to the recalcitrant owner were certified as unfit for human habitation and, when their defects were not repaired, they were ordered to be closed.<sup>7</sup>

These were the three only occasions on which the provisions of the 1870 improvement act were put into operation. Indeed, they were

<sup>1</sup>SC, 21 April 1871; Leeds Corporation Deeds, nos. 264, 265, 269, 277, 280, 281 and 308.

<sup>2</sup>F.M. Lupton, Housing Improvement, a summary of ten years' work in Leeds, (1906), p.13.

<sup>3</sup>SC, 17 Nov 1884.

<sup>4</sup>SC, 12 Jan 1885.

<sup>5</sup>SC, 9 Feb 1885.

<sup>6</sup>CM, 5 Aug 1885.

<sup>7</sup>SC, 12 Oct 1885, 10 May, 7 June 1886.

such isolated incidents that when, early in the next century, the chairman of the council's unhealthy areas committee surveyed its work in slum clearance, he believed that the courts in the Union street area had been demolished 'under the ordinary provisional orders for street improvement'<sup>1</sup> and did not even mention the East lane and Holmfirth yard schemes, presumably because he was unaware of them. There are numerous instances of the sanitary committee using its powers, derived from the bye-laws, to declare houses unfit for habitation,<sup>2</sup> often in order to put pressure on owners to repair them, rather than with the intention of permanent closure.<sup>3</sup> But the number of houses so dealt with was very small in relation to the probable number in need of renovation, and in any case this could only be at best a palliative measure. Although no measures were taken to rehouse the slum dwellers who were affected by the council's clearances, this question had not gone unconsidered. In a report upon the legislation of the previous parliamentary session, the town clerk drew the attention of the sanitary committee to the Artisans' and Labourers' Dwellings Improvement Act, and suggested that a sub-committee might be appointed to consider its application, since

'it is needless to say there is great scope for the action of this committee in Leeds'<sup>4</sup>

He noted that a major problem created by slum clearance was the need to

<sup>1</sup>F.M. Lupton, *op.cit.*, p. 11.

<sup>2</sup>The Leeds Corporation Gas and Improvements etc., Act, 1870, 33 and 34 Vict., ch. xciii, section 33, and Bye-Laws as to New Streets and Buildings, etc. (10 Aug 1870), number 18.

<sup>3</sup>See for example SC, 8 March, 12 April, 7 June, 12 July, 11 Oct, 15 Nov, 13 Dec 1886, 24 Jan, 14 March, 13 April, 13 June, 11 July, 8 Aug 1887. There are few references to the use of this power before this date, but SC, 14 July 1884, suggests that previously the medical officer of health may have invoked it without the need for the specific approval of the committee.

<sup>4</sup>SC, 15 Nov 1875.

rehouse, and suggested that the vacant land should be offered for sale, perhaps to the Industrial Dwellings Company, but in any case,

'restricting the use of it to the erection of suitable dwellings for the labouring class'.

In doing this the town clerk had anticipated a problem which the board of guardians brought to the attention of the council a few months later, when in January 1876 it sought the council's assistance.<sup>1</sup> It emphasised the 'great deficiency' in working class accommodation in the town, which was so severe as to force people to apply to enter the workhouse for lack of any alternative, and urged the council to exercise its powers under the 1875 act. The council thereupon directed the sanitary committee to consider means for the rehousing of those displaced by market extensions and the closing of houses as unfit for habitation. The reports of the town clerk and the medical officer were not sympathetic to the implementation of the act.<sup>2</sup> The latter, calling it 'tedious and cumbersome', observed that it contained a 'paradoxical provision', for it required that the council should,

'reaccommodate on those areas condemned as once overcrowded, ill ventilated and poorly lighted, as many persons as we have unhoused'.

This seemed to imply the construction of blocks of flats as the only way to avoid reproducing the previous unhealthy conditions. Dr. Goldie was opposed to this on medical grounds, and as we have seen, the Industrial Dwellings Company had found this type of building to be unacceptable for other reasons. The town clerk recommended the council to obtain power to purchase land on the outskirts of the town and to build houses there

<sup>1</sup>F.R. Spark, The Leeds Record of Current Events for 1875, volume 1, p. 191 for the guardians' meeting of 29 December; CM, 1 Jan 1876.

<sup>2</sup>SC, 14 Feb 1876.



for the 'very poor', who he defined as those earning less than 25/- to 30/- a week. He disagreed with the view that it was necessary for them to live in the town centre, and stated that they 'should be compelled' to live on the outskirts where accommodation could be provided at moderate rents, and where they would be removed,

'from the temptations of drunkenness and other vices which beset them in their present abodes'.

Such a scheme would have the advantage of being financially viable. Cottages with four rooms and conveniences erected on land which would cost about 4/- a square yard would yield a profit from rents of more than 4%, which was greater than the cost of capital which the council was able to borrow. The town clerk countered the argument that this would interfere with private enterprise by claiming that those who would benefit from his proposals, the 'very poor' were in a different situation from the artisan class, and

'as a special evil exists it must be dealt with out of the ordinary way'.

The council would not be acting in conflict with the principles of private enterprise, since the rents from its houses, whilst they would not yield a return sufficient to attract the private builder, would be sufficient to cover the interest charges on a local authority loan.

The sanitary committee accepted these recommendations, and advised the council to obtain powers in its next improvement bill to buy land on the outskirts of the town, 'and provide dwellings for the poor'.<sup>1</sup> The council agreed to do this in August 1876, and in the following year incorporated provisions in the improvement bill, which enabled it,

<sup>1</sup>SC, 10 July 1876; RB, 10 July 1876; CM, 2 Aug 1876.

'to purchase and hold land for the purpose of having erected thereon, suitable dwellings for the labouring classes...and if they are unable to enter into any agreement with other persons, they may erect houses, and lease or let them'<sup>1</sup>

The parliamentary committee informed the council that these powers were ones which 'no other corporation has', but if they were at that time pioneering, they nevertheless remained passive, and the question of the public provision of housing did not re-emerge until the eighteen nineties.

## (4)

As we noted earlier, the tentative manner in which the council approached the problem of the slums in the seventies and eighties changed completely in the following decade. Whereas about £40,000 was spent on the demolition of slum property in the twenty years after the council adopted powers to enable it to do so, in the subsequent fifteen it inaugurated two major and several lesser clearance schemes which by the end of our period had cost more than three quarters of a million pounds. This clearly indicates that some new element had appeared to influence municipal policy making.

One conceivable influence is perhaps to be found in the political motive. Since the establishment of the reformed corporation in 1835, municipal government had been securely under the control of the Liberals, but by the early nineties the political allegiances of the electorate were beginning to change, and the conservatives were emerging as serious rivals. The two parties vied with each other to

<sup>1</sup>RB, 26 Sept 1877, section headed 'As to Sanitary Matters' in the report of the parliamentary committee; and see The Leeds Improvement Act, 1877, 40 and 41 Vict., ch. clxxviii, section 25.

present themselves as the parties of effective reform, and for the first time local elections were being contested on party programmes which promised the improvement of public services. At the head of its list in 1893, the Liberal manifesto promised,

'the immediate clearing of insanitary areas, with due regard to the provision of accommodation for persons displaced by demolitions'<sup>1</sup>.

This was probably an important factor then, but the sanitary committee's preparation of a comprehensive scheme pre-dates the appearance of such election promises, although the threat to their hegemony may have strengthened the political nerve of the Liberals when the time came to decide whether to implement it. Another part of the reason might have been financial. The scale of municipal expenditure and the growth of rateable values would have made the slum clearance programme seem less of an impossibly costly venture, in the context of the total municipal budget. For example, the improvement act of 1893 envisaged new capital expenditure on the gas and water works, and on street improvements and sewerage to a sum of nearly £1,120,000.<sup>2</sup> But it seems that the decisive influence was the changes in the law of land purchase by local authorities brought about by the Housing of the Working Classes Act of 1890,<sup>3</sup> under the sanction of which the council's clearance programme was carried into effect. If we accept the usual verdict on the 1890 act, the question is difficult to answer, as it is commonly regarded as being merely a consolidating measure, and so containing nothing

<sup>1</sup>Quoted in E.P. Hennock, Fit and Proper Persons, p. 254.

<sup>2</sup>The Leeds Improvement Act, 1893, 56 and 57 Vict., ch. ccx, preamble.

<sup>3</sup>53 and 54 Vict., ch. 70.

significantly new<sup>1</sup> But in fact there is clear evidence that this statute was regarded in Leeds, and perhaps elsewhere, as enacting a most important advance, since the Land Clauses Consolidation Act had hitherto inhibited the municipal purchase of property for slum clearance purposes. We have already provided an instance of the law of compulsory purchase in operation when we outlined the history of the extension of Kirkgate market in the eighteen forties, but we must now look at the question in somewhat greater detail.

The Land Clauses Consolidation Act came into being in 1845, as one of a trio of bills, the other two being Company Clauses Consolidation acts.<sup>2</sup> As their titles imply they did not contain any legal innovations but like other 'consolidation acts' of the period,<sup>3</sup> had as their object

'simply to embody in one uniform act the various enactments relative to the subjects which were scattered through many acts of parliament. There was an immense number of statutes relating to these matters, which occasioned great uncertainty as to their provisions and effect; and to remedy this inconvenience the bills in question had been framed'<sup>4</sup>

The act dealt with the procedures to which all incorporated bodies were subject when purchasing real property, and although introduced specifically to meet the needs of railway promoters it thus applied to municipal corporations also. Whilst the practices which it codified were legitimate

<sup>1</sup>For example, according to H.J. Dyos ('The slum attacked', in The Origin of the Social Services, no pagination, but nominally p.7), the act 'apart from increasing the penalty on landlords for failing to deal with unhealthy houses..., and relaxing the definition of an unhealthy area to one that was injurious to health rather than actually disease-ridden, made no changes of importance...'. W. Ashworth (op.cit., pp. 99-105) considers the question of compensation, but assigns no particular significance to the 1890 act.

<sup>2</sup>H. Parris, Government and the Railways in nineteenth century Britain, pp. 99-100.

<sup>3</sup>F.W. Clifford, History of Private Bill Legislation, volume 1, p. 321.

<sup>4</sup>Parliamentary Debates, third series, volume LXXVII, column 170, 6 Feb. 1845; see also op.cit., volume LXXIX, columns 588-589.

where commercial transactions were involved, these had a deleterious effect upon the cost of acquiring land where the motive, as in slum clearance, was not private or public profit. One eminent barrister defined the principal involved as follows:

'the Land Clauses Acts were originally passed in respect of property to be acquired by trading companies and others working for private profit, and it was said: 'You must pay not only the market value of the lands that you are going to take, but you must pay something in respect of the property, so as to give the landowner a profit out of those lands, and it is not unfair that you should pay something in respect of that profit',<sup>1</sup>

In framing the law, then, parliament was allowing a limited infringement of the rights of property, but on the other hand it was felt necessary to acknowledge that such interferences were exceptional privileges and this was recognised by correspondingly large concessions to the owners affected. They were to be treated as unwilling parties to the transaction, and were to receive not simply the market value of their property, which would have assumed a willingness to sell, but in addition compensation for an enforced deprivation of their rights. As one legal authority observed,

'the true measure of compensation under these acts is the value of the land to the owner, and this may in cases be quite independent of the market value'<sup>2</sup>

We suggested in an earlier chapter that contemporary opinion believed that the law greatly inflated the cost of land purchases, and provided an instance of the law in operation in Leeds in the early eighties, which confirmed the truth of this. Such experience led the

<sup>1</sup>Speech of Lord Robert Cecil, House of Lords Select Committee on the Local Government Provisional Orders (Housing of the Working Classes) (No. 2) /Leeds Order/ Bill, 26 July 1901, p.6. The reference to 'Acts' refers to the subsequent acts amending the original measure, in matters not relevant to the present discussion.

<sup>2</sup>J.H. Balfour Browne and Charles E. Allan, The Law of Compensation, second edition, 1903, p. 543.

council to act very cautiously in these matters, and provided the reason why it failed to adopt the national housing acts of 1868 and 1875. In a discussion upon Torren's bill in 1867, one councillor observed that,

'the value of the property was to be arrived at under the Land Clauses Consolidation Act. Everybody knew that that was a tedious and expensive process...corporations buying under it generally had to pay double the value of what they purchased'<sup>1</sup>

Similarly, on the subject of the 1875 act, the town clerk wrote to the Home Secretary informing him that,

'practically the present measure was valueless because of the enormous cost involved'<sup>2</sup>

In 1886, a private members bill, the Compulsory Purchase of Land Compensation bill,<sup>3</sup> proposed to amend the law in this respect, and the council petitioned in its favour, one of its members observing that although,

'it was only fair that a man who had to part with his property unwillingly should be fully and fairly compensated...it was argued that extravagant sums had to be paid, and that instead of property being injured by compulsory sale, it was sometimes materially benefitted'<sup>4</sup>

Although the proposer of the bill noticed in passing, that the Land Clauses Acts imposed a serious disadvantage upon local authorities, the main purpose of the bill was to reduce the costs incurred by railway companies. For this reason it encountered serious opposition, which forced its promoters to drop their bill at the end of the session.

<sup>1</sup>LM, 26 March 1867.

<sup>2</sup>LM, 3 Jan 1876.

<sup>3</sup>See Parl. Deb., third series, volume CCV, columns 855-868, 12 May 1866.

<sup>4</sup>CM, 4 June 1886; LM, 5 June 1886.

The significance of the 1890 act was that its provisions extensively revised the disadvantageous conditions imposed by the Land Clauses Act where corporations intended to purchase property for slum clearance purposes. Under the act, property within an insanitary area was to be valued by new terms of reference. Arbitrators were explicitly directed to estimate the value of lands 'upon the fair market value' and 'without any additional allowance in respect of the compulsory purchase'. In making his assessment, the arbitrator was to take into account whether or not the rental of the property was enhanced by its use,

'for illegal purposes or being so overcrowded as to be dangerous or injurious to the health of the inmates, or if it was 'in a state of defective sanitation', or if it was incapable of being repaired so as to make it fit for human habitation'<sup>1</sup>

The fact that this revision of the law was crucial in its influence upon the council's policy was attested many times in the evidence which the corporation's witnesses and legal counsel gave before L.G.B. enquiries and before select committees of both Houses of Parliament. As the chairman of the sanitary committee stated in evidence to the L.G.B. inspectors in 1896,

'as to dealing with the properties with in the area under the Land Clauses Act, such a course would mean the 'killing' of the scheme on account of the enormous additional cost that would be entailed'<sup>2</sup>

The property owners who petitioned against the schemes also testified, by implication, in support of this and similar statements, in claiming that their own properties should, for various reasons, be

<sup>1</sup>See Charles E. Allan, The Housing of the Working Classes Acts, 1890-1900, second edition 1901, pp. xxxvii, and 26-35 for commentary on section 21 of the act.

<sup>2</sup>YP, 20 March 1896.

valued under the Land Clauses, rather than the Housing of the Working Classes Act.<sup>1</sup> There is some evidence on both the negotiated and arbitrated settlements with property owners in Leeds under the 1890 Act, which suggests that the new principles of compensation acted, as we have claimed, to allow less exorbitant compensation to property owners than would have previously been possible. Of the transactions with the one hundred and fifty two owners involved in one of the council's major slum clearance projects, the York street insanitary area, financial details are available in seventy three cases where purchase was made by agreement, and in the ten cases where arbitration was involved. The aggregate amount initially claimed by the owners who eventually settled without arbitration was £91,342, and that offered by the insanitary areas sub-committee, £55,221. The total amount finally agreed came to £65,322, or about 30% less than the owners' total demands, and about 20% more than the sub-committee's original offers.<sup>2</sup> Those who took their cases to arbitration fared less well than this. They claimed compensation to a total amount of £21,854, in contrast to the sub-committee's offers of £12,160. The L.G.B. arbitrator, however, awarded only £12,970 in all, thus virtually confirming the estimates of value which the sub-committee had made.<sup>3</sup> F.M. Lupton believed that the total cost of purchasing the sixty seven acres within the council's two principal slum clearance areas, York street and Quarry Hill, was

'probably between 10 per cent. and 20 per cent. over the actual value of the properties, had they been offered for sale in the open market';<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See, for example the remarks of Sir George Morrison and Mr. Hepper before the L.G.B. local enquiry, YP, 13 March 1896.

<sup>2</sup> Notebooks drawn up in the City Engineer's Office, and consulted by permission of Professor M.W. Beresford.

<sup>3</sup> Sub Sanitary (Unhealthy Areas) Committee minutes, 12 June 1900 gives details of the claims, offers, and awards.

<sup>4</sup> F.M. Lupton, op.cit., p. 9.



but there is every reason to believe that these were far more favourable terms than would have been obtained under the Land Clauses Act.

The slum clearances which the council planned and put into effect between 1890 and 1905 can be divided into three groups. In the first, and by far the most important were two projects, the York street insanitary area, and the Quarry Hill insanitary area, which were designed under Part I of the 1890 Act. This allowed local authorities, subject to the approval of the Local Government Board, to purchase the whole of the property in any district regarded as beyond regeneration to enable them to make a comprehensive redevelopment. Part II of the Act enabled a selective approach to be taken where local authorities believed that a district was capable of improvement by the removal of only some of the properties in it, leaving the remaining houses as suitable for occupation as a result. Only one area, Camp Field, was dealt with in this way. The third group of clearances were those which were not carried out under the 1890 Act. Neither primary sources nor commentaries actually specify under what authority this was done, but it seems probable that the council used its powers under the improvement act of 1877.<sup>1</sup> Since we have claimed that the Housing of the Working Classes Act was responsible for a major change in the attitude of the council towards slum clearance, we ought first to consider why these exceptions were made. The first of them involved the total demolition

<sup>1</sup>Lupton, *op.cit.*, p.12, notes that the council had originally intended to use Part II, but was able to come to agreements in all cases. He does not specify under what legislation this was done. W.T. Lancashire, 'Operation of the Housing of the Working Classes Act in Leeds', Journal of the Royal Sanitary Institute, XXX 1909, p. 378, simply noted that 'the corporation have in various parts of the city effected improvements by removing obstructive buildings, though not always under Housing Acts'.

of East King and East Queen streets in the east ward of Leeds township. This was a group of 104 houses on one and a half acres of land which the sanitary committee purchased between 1892 and 1895 for £11,127, although slightly more than half of this sum (£5,645) was spent in acquiring two public houses.<sup>1</sup> This was followed a few years later by a scheme of selective demolition in Holbeck. Following a meeting with a deputation from the Holbeck Social and Sanitary Association in June 1898,<sup>2</sup> the sanitary committee decided to 'open out' a few courts in the streets off Meadow road. Several open spaces were made by removing 137 houses at a cost of about £16,000.<sup>3</sup> A similar project in the district of West street in the west ward of Leeds township involved the demolition of 115 houses, costing about £12,000. A further £8,000 was spent around Mabgate and the Bank in the east end of Leeds, and in several parts of Hunslet in purchasing 93 houses for 'sanitary improvements'.<sup>4</sup> In all, then, about 450 houses were purchased at a cost of some £46,000 without reference to the 1890 Act. The most probable explanation for this is that it had been possible to reach agreement with all the owners involved, and they were prepared in virtually all cases to settle for reasonable amounts.<sup>5</sup> Thus it was unnecessary to invoke either the compulsory purchase powers, or the compensation provisions of the Act. Although additional borrowing powers for slum clearances could only be obtained if they were made under the Act, the

<sup>1</sup>Lupton, op.cit., p.11; SC, 8 Feb 1892; CM, 16 Nov 1892, 16 Feb, 15 Nov, 6 Dec 1893, 6 Feb 1895.

<sup>2</sup>SC, 9 June, 8 Sept 1898.

<sup>3</sup>Lupton op.cit., p. 12. Lupton wrote before several of these schemes were completed, and where the figures given here differ from his, they have been taken from the Report of the Unhealthy Areas Sub-committee, 1902-3 to 1908-9.

<sup>4</sup>loc.cit.

<sup>5</sup>Lupton, op.cit., p. 11 and p. 12.

cost involved was small enough to be raised from current revenue, and the sanitary committee received an annual subvention for this purpose. But there was, perhaps, another factor which influenced the sanitary committee's decision to undertake these schemes under the local act. Any scheme sanctioned under the Housing Act had to make provision for the rehousing of displaced tenants,<sup>1</sup> and, as we shall see, there was considerable reluctance on the part of the committee to accept this responsibility.

One modest scheme was, however, carried out under Part II of the Act. This was in Camp Field, a district of about three acres in the south ward of Leeds township on its boundary with Holbeck. There were about a hundred back-to-back houses with the front houses facing onto three streets and the rear ones onto courts which had been partially built over with houses and out-houses. In April 1892, the medical officer of health first brought this district to the attention of the sanitary committee,<sup>2</sup> but no decision was made until January 1895, when it was agreed that it should be improved under the Housing Act.<sup>3</sup> The L.G.B. approved the scheme, but insisted that the council should provide ten houses to partially replace the fifty nine which were to be demolished. The council had these built at a total cost of £2,845, and they were let at rents of 5/6d and 6s a week.<sup>4</sup> They remained the only houses which it owned upto the end of our period. It seems that the reason why the committee decided to undertake the scheme under the Act was because it had been impossible to reach agreement with the owners

<sup>1</sup>53 and 54 Vict., Ch. 70, section 11 sub-sec. (1) and section 40.

<sup>2</sup>SC, 11 April 1892.

<sup>3</sup>SC, 11 Jan 1895; CM, 6 Feb, 7 Aug 1895.

<sup>4</sup>CM, 3 Feb 1897, 1 June 1898; Lancashire, art. cit., p. 378.

of the property to be demolished,<sup>1</sup> and so it was forced to invoke compulsory powers which had been unnecessary elsewhere.

The inception of the council's two major clearance schemes can be dated from an outbreak of typhus fever in the east end of Leeds township in 1890.<sup>2</sup> The outbreak, which began in April and continued into June was not a major one as there were only forty six cases altogether, but there were two disturbing features about it. The first arose from the nature of the disease itself. As the medical officer of health observed in exculpating his colleagues in private practice from any possible charge of negligence,

'there seems to be a certain amount of difficulty on the part of many medical men in recognising typhus fever. This is not very much to be wondered at, considering how improved sanitary conditions have almost banished this disease from England'.

Secondly, all the victims lived in the north east ward, and a third lived in Allison's Buildings, Quarry Hill. The medical officer reviewed the history of epidemics in this area since 1867, and concluded that,

'the neighbourhood seems therefore to be one surrounded by property in which infectious diseases are more or less habitually prevalent'.

In 1888, the streets and sewerage committee had actually visited Allison's Buildings and had advised the sanitary committee that,

'the purchase by the corporation of the site of the premises in consideration of its being left permanently open, would be a great sanitary improvement of the neighbourhood'<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The council decided to go to arbitration on 6 April 1898, see CM for that date.

<sup>2</sup>SC, 6 May 1890 contains the report of the M.O.H., from which the following quotations are taken.

<sup>3</sup>SC, 8 Oct 1888.

but no action had been taken on this. Dr. Cameron now suggested the possibility of cutting two intersecting streets through the northern part of the Quarry Hill district, as

'to do so would enable you to destroy a considerable number of unwholesome dwellings. It would give more air to the streets around, and would do some little towards relieving this neighbourhood from the opprobrium of being a hotbed of fever'.

The committee, however, was prepared to consider a more ambitious project than the one he suggested. It directed him to prepare a report on the particulars of all the property in the area bounded by Quarry Hill on the north, Mabgate beck on the east and Marsh lane on the south,

'with recommendations as to what property should be demolished for sanitary improvement',

and an alternative scheme was to be prepared for two new streets, one on a north-south and the other on an east-west axis to be driven through the area.<sup>1</sup> This was presumably to be done under the powers the council possessed to remove dwellings unfit for human habitation, acquired under the 1870 improvement act, and made perpetual under the local act of 1877.<sup>2</sup> It was probably not until four months later, September 1890, when

'a copy of all acts of parliament passed in the last session having reference to sanitary matters together with notes upon them prepared by Dr. Cameron'<sup>3</sup>

were circulated to members of the committee, that they became aware of the 1890 act, and we cannot be certain at what date its beneficial provisions were realised. In September 1891, Dr. Cameron certified the

<sup>1</sup>SC, 6 May 1890.

<sup>2</sup>RB, 26 Sept 1877, see under heading 'As to Sanitary Matters'.

<sup>3</sup>SC, 8 Sept 1890.

area within the boundaries mentioned above as an unhealthy area within the meaning of the 1890 act, and the committee decided that he and the borough engineer should co-operate to produce a report on the best way of dealing with it<sup>1</sup>. The scheme which they had drawn up, which now incorporated an adjacent area to the north west, the Leylands, was presented to the committee in January 1892, and they were directed to calculate the probable cost involved, and work out a plan for improving the area in small sections<sup>2</sup>. It is not apparent at this stage what exactly was envisaged. Although we cannot be precise about the chronology, we do know that the committee,

'at first hoped that it might be dealt with under Part II of the Act - that is to say, by taking a house here or a house there, or a little bit here or a little bit there, and dealing with that: but prolonged examination convinced them that that was a perfectly impossible way of dealing with this area, and they came to the conclusion that it must be dealt with under Part I'<sup>3</sup>

Considering the sheer size of the area involved, that is, about sixty seven acres, it is hardly surprising that it took the committee some time to acclimatize to the implications involved in redeveloping it. Here, perhaps, political considerations exerted an influence. In January 1892, the mayor broached the subject cautiously in public, observing that,

'the time might come, though he did not think that it would come just yet, when the corporation would see its way to apply for powers to purchase the insanitary property..., pull it down, and provide for the erection of habitations fit for people to live in. In doing this, however, it must not be forgotten that those who might enter upon the enterprise would require a fair return for money invested'<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>SC, 14 Sept 1891. (See maps in map-pocket).

<sup>2</sup>SC, 11 Jan 1892.

<sup>3</sup>House of Lords S.C., 26 July 1901 (Speeches), p. 2.

<sup>4</sup>YP, 15 Jan 1892.

But, as we have noted, just over a year later, the promise of immediate action on this issue figured prominently in the Liberals' municipal manifesto. Even so, it was some time before planning preparations were completed. By May 1894, the committee had decided upon its strategy, and six members were delegated to work with the town clerk, city engineer, and medical officer to co-ordinate plans for dealing with 'Insanitary Area No. 1'.<sup>1</sup> This, the York street insanitary area containing a population of 3,844 of whom 2,119 were defined as working class, was a 16½ acre segment in the south west corner of the area specified in the medical officer's report of September 1891. A year later, the legal and engineering details had been finalised, and the council was asked to approve Dr. Cameron's deposition declaring that the

'sanitary defects in such area cannot be effectually remedied otherwise than by an improvement scheme for the rearrangement or reconstruction of the streets and houses within such area or of some of such streets or houses'<sup>2</sup>

When in April 1895, the matter came formally before the council the Leeds Property Owners Association petitioned for the decision to be postponed, but an amendment to refer the scheme back to the sanitary committee until it had 'completed the work already in hand' was supported by only four council members, whilst forty seven voted to instruct the committee to present its plans for approval.<sup>3</sup> In September the committee decided to exclude property on the south-east side of Marsh land from its plans,<sup>4</sup> and in the following month, presented its scheme

<sup>1</sup>SC, 7 May 1894.

<sup>2</sup>CM, 3 April 1895.

<sup>3</sup>loc.cit. We have considered the 'work already in hand', above, pp.336-337.

<sup>4</sup>SC, 25 Sept 1895.

for the York street insanitary area to the council for confirmation. This the council did with few dissentients, the voting being fifty in favour and only five for delay<sup>1</sup>. The net cost would, according to the committee's submission be £106,971. The purchase of land and buildings was expected to cost £129,185, and a further £36,259 would be spent in the alteration and construction of streets. But to offset this, the city engineer estimated that the value of surplus land to be disposed of after the works had been completed would be £58,473<sup>2</sup>.

In conformity with the provisions of the 1890 act, the council thus applied to the L.G.B. for a preliminary enquiry to be held, so that if satisfied with the scheme, the Board could promote the provisional order which would allow the council to go ahead. The enquiry was held in March 1896<sup>3</sup>, and the council was opposed by some of the property owners involved who claimed that the scheme was merely intended to enable the council to make street improvements, and so was not within the terms of reference of the Housing of the Working Classes Act. Amongst the objectors was Edmund Wilson, the secretary to the Industrial Dwellings Company, who likewise condemned it as,

'an attempt to make a city improvement under the guise of sanitary reform'<sup>4</sup>

Obviously, in the process of redevelopment, it would be necessary to construct new streets, but of course the real aim of the owners was to avoid having their property purchased under the 1890 act, and so sacrificing the financial advantages which would have been gained by a valuation under the Land Clauses Acts. The Board accepted the council's

<sup>1</sup>CM, 9 Oct 1895.

<sup>2</sup>loc. cit.

<sup>3</sup>YP, 13-20 March 1896.

<sup>4</sup>YP, 20 March 1896.



proposition, and granted its provisional order in May.<sup>1</sup> The confirming act became law in August 1896.<sup>2</sup> Four years later, arrangements had been completed to purchase all the property in the York street insanitary area,<sup>3</sup> but by this time, plans were already in preparation to acquire the far larger remaining area with a population of 10,577, originally certified in 1895. The sanitary committee had realised that it would be impossible to redesign the area in successively purchased sections, and so recommended that the council now apply for powers to take the district of about fifty acres designated as the Quarry Hill insanitary area. The net cost was calculated to be £298,034, with the probable cost of acquiring the land and buildings, at £450,567 and the additional expense of altering and constructing streets, at £72,467, offset by sales of surplus land at an estimated value of £225,000.<sup>4</sup> The same procedure of local enquiry, provisional order, and confirming act took place. The objections rehearsed before the L.G.B. inspectors were the same as those advanced five years before,<sup>5</sup> but in the Commons the bill encountered some opposition, for reasons we shall consider later in the chapter. Nevertheless, the confirming bill became law,<sup>6</sup> and purchases began in 1902.<sup>7</sup> The council succeeded in buying the greater part by agreement, and had acquired virtually the whole of the property by the end of our period.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup>SC, 4 June 1896.

<sup>2</sup>59 and 60 Vict., Ch. ccxxxviii.

<sup>3</sup>SC, 14 June 1900.

<sup>4</sup>SC, 14, 26 June 1900; CM, 4 July 1900.

<sup>5</sup>LM, 2-7, 9, 22, 23, March 1901.

<sup>6</sup>1 Edw. 7, Ch. clxxi.

<sup>7</sup>Report of the Unhealthy Areas sub-committee, 1902-03.

<sup>8</sup>W.T. Lancashire, 'Operation of the Housing of the Working Classes Act in Leeds', Journal of the Royal Sanitary Institute, XXX, 1909, p. 379, states that out of 555 owners involved in the Quarry Hill scheme, only 24 resorted to arbitration. This source gives the cost of purchasing the York street area as £191,000, and Quarry Hill as above £565,000, total £756,000. Lupton op.cit., p. 13 quotes £718,456 which was presumably the cost of purchases which had been negotiated at the time of publication, about three years before Lancashire's article.

Although by the turn of the century the council owned about sixty seven acres of the worst slums in the city, and so had great potential scope to make major environmental improvements, the sanitary committee was very cautious in carrying out its clearance programme. In 1902, its chairman declared that it,

'did not intend to make a tremendous clearance all at once. Alderman Lupton, chairman of the Insanitary Areas committee computed that twenty five or thirty years would be required for the completion of the scheme'<sup>1</sup>

Lupton, a Conservative alderman who became chairman in December 1896,<sup>2</sup> was a keen exponent of this gradualist approach, and under his guidance the sub-committee followed a 'conservationist' policy. This entailed the removal of only those houses which were in an irremediable condition, whilst at the same time working to extend the life of the less derelict property. As the sub-committee reported in 1904:

'whilst aware of the fact that many of the houses are uninhabitable, (it was) repairing those which are capable of being made reasonably habitable and not required for immediate demolition'<sup>3</sup>

This was combined with an equally cautious financial policy, as evidenced by the statement that,

'the income derived from and the expenditure on the reasonably habitable houses is being carefully watched and recorded'<sup>4</sup>

By the end of our period three hundred houses or under half of the York street area had been cleared, and at Quarry Hill,

'excepting that a few houses have been pulled down to open up the most congested places..., the only work of demolition has been in regard to a wide street which is ultimately to run through the area from east to west'<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>LM, 4 Dec 1902.

<sup>2</sup>Sub-Sanitary (Insanitary Areas) Committee minutes, 10 Dec 1896.

<sup>3</sup>Report of the Unhealthy Areas Sub-committee, 1903-4.

<sup>4</sup>loc.cit.

<sup>5</sup>Lupton, op.cit., p. 7, and p. 8; Lancashire, art.cit., p. 379, stated that by 1909, 'on the basis of the number of persons displaced, two-thirds of the York street area and one quarter of the Quarry Hill area have been cleared'.

By this time, the council, with an income from rents in these two areas of £22,569<sup>1</sup>, must have been by far the largest slum landlord in the city. It will be obvious that this policy was, in essentials, that of the Industrial Dwellings Company writ large, and indeed since 1901, Lupton had been one of the Company's directors.<sup>2</sup>

In the last years of the century, the most important issues which arose in relation to the slum clearance schemes were those related to the council's rehousing obligations under the 1890 Act.

In approving the York street scheme, the L.G.B. had specified in the provisional order that the work was to proceed in four stages. Once the first was completed, and before the second stage of demolition could begin, houses for 500 displaced tenants had to be built to plans approved by the Board. Again, before stage three was carried out, 500 more were to be rehoused, and before beginning the last stage a further 1,000 were to be provided with accommodation.<sup>3</sup> This accounted for slightly less than two thirds (2,000 out of 2,119) of the inhabitants of the area who were defined as working class. These stipulations resurrected a problem which had been discussed in Leeds in the seventies, that is, the proper sphere of municipal enterprise in the housing market.

In February 1897, the insanitary areas sub-committee decided to send a deputation to the L.G.B. to ask its opinion on the possibility of building through houses for 1,000 persons on part of the Ivy Lodge estate.<sup>4</sup> This was an estate of 78 acres a mile from the insanitary area

<sup>1</sup>Report of the Unhealthy Areas Sub-committee, 1905-6.

<sup>2</sup>PRO, BT 31/30751; Lupton's own views on the value of these schemes is expressed unequivocally in Lupton, op.cit., p. 14. For the view of the secretary to the L.I. D. Co. on the schemes, which was as unenthusiastic as Lupton's, see Edmund Wilson, art. cit., pp. 258-259.

<sup>3</sup>59 and 60 Vict., Ch. ccxxxviii, section 6.

<sup>4</sup>SS(1A), 1 Feb 1897.

which the council had bought in 1886, intending it for a recreation ground.<sup>1</sup> Later in February the sub-committee applied for permission to erect fifty houses initially, which the Board approved.<sup>2</sup> The sub-committee then reversed its decision to build these houses as municipal property, and agreed that land for fifty six houses should be sold by auction, and that the houses which were to be built were to conform to plans approved by the council and the L.G.B.<sup>3</sup> This decision raised opposition from several radical political groups. In July, a deputation representing the I.L.P., the National Labour Party, the Leeds Reform Union, and the Trades Council appeared at a council meeting

'and urged that the land should be retained, and the dwellings erected by the corporation'<sup>4</sup>

The leader of the deputation argued that the council should provide houses at rents which were as near as possible to those which tenants were already paying, and that it could do this because it could borrow money on more favourable terms than those available to private builders.<sup>5</sup> An amendment to ensure that the land was retained in municipal ownership, and that the council should build the necessary houses was defeated by thirty votes to eighteen. The amendment was moved again on 1st September, and again lost.<sup>6</sup> Its proposer supported his case by claiming that housing was only another service which should be added to an already well-established municipal agenda, observing that

'some members might object to the corporation entering into what they considered the domain of private enterprise; but its possession of the gas works, the water works, and many other works for the public benefit showed that it was already a great trading concern, and he could not see that it would enter into any new departure in building suitable dwellings for the people in question'.

<sup>1</sup>CM, 3 Feb 1886.

<sup>2</sup>SS(1A), 10 Feb, 3 May 1897.

<sup>3</sup>SS(1A), 3 May, 9 June 1897.

<sup>4</sup>CM, 7 July 1897.

<sup>5</sup>LM, 8 July 1897.

<sup>6</sup>CM, 1 Sept 1897.

Alderman Lupton, not surprisingly, spoke against the motion, and claimed,

'that it was not the duty of the corporation to compete with private traders; that they had no right to use public money for the purposes of such competition, even if it could be shown to produce a profit to the city'<sup>1</sup>

As we noted earlier, the town clerk had considered this objection twenty years before when he argued that there would be no unfair competition, since the council would only be providing houses for those whose incomes were too low to be a source of effective demand for the private sector. The question of rents naturally remained central to the debate, and here arose another problematic issue. The houses which were built on the Ivy Lodge estate were, by the standards of the period, well-designed, soundly-constructed homes, but let at rents much higher than most of the inhabitants of the insanitary areas could afford. This was only partly the result of private builders' costs. The L.G.B. set the standards for these houses and,

'the lowest rent of a house complying with the central authority's requirements was 5s. 6d. per week'<sup>2</sup>

This was true whether they were erected by the public or the private sector. The two-bedroomed houses erected by the council in Derwent Avenue as part of the Camp Field scheme were rented at 5/6d and 6s, but still failed to meet the sum required to cover the loan charges.<sup>3</sup> Under these circumstances the argument in favour of municipal housing which the then town clerk had put forward in 1877 no longer applied, or at least had to be severely modified. As Lupton observed,

<sup>1</sup>LM, 2 Sept 1897.

<sup>2</sup>LM, 4 Dec 1902.

<sup>3</sup>Lupton, *op. cit.*, p.10.

'the type of houses erected...would be of the 5s. 6d. a week class, and he did not believe in the corporation building houses for people who could afford that amount. If they did anything at all, it should be for the very poorest of the people'<sup>1</sup>

It was presumably with this difficulty in mind that in November 1898, the insanitary areas sub-committee sent a deputation to the Board to try to persuade it to allow back-to-back houses to be built on the York street area when cleared; predictably, the Board refused to consider this.<sup>2</sup> Some cheaper accommodation became available when in 1900 the council sanctioned the building, again by private enterprise, of a tenement block containing two and three-roomed flats to house 198 people, in the York street area.<sup>3</sup> But the sub-committee did nothing to meet the Trades Council's request to adopt Part III of the 1890 Act, and build working class lodging houses.<sup>4</sup> Alderman Lupton stressed the superiority of private enterprise, based simply on financial considerations, when he opposed municipal lodging houses in January 1905. Noting that those in other provincial towns yielded a return of between 1.9% to 6%, he continued.

'in London, the municipal lodging houses made 4% on their capital, whilst a private company - Lord Rowton's - declared 6%, and so far as he could make out from the accounts, made about 11%. That was the difference between private and municipal management. The municipality always rushed into some extravagance or other, and in the end did not give better accommodation'<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>LM, 2 March 1905.

<sup>2</sup>SS(1A), 29 Nov 1898, 24 Jan 1899.

<sup>3</sup>SS(1A), 26 Sept 1900; Lupton, *op. cit.*, p. 7. These flats are still in occupation (1975).

<sup>4</sup>SS(1A), 29 Jan 1896. The Leeds Housing Reform Council sent a deputation to the sanitary committee with the same request in 1901, see SC, 16 April 1901.

<sup>5</sup>LM, 5 Jan 1905.

By the turn of the century, arrangements had been made, in theory at least, to accommodate 906 displaced tenants on the Ivy Lodge estate. But, in fact, although these houses had been built to compensate for the numbers demolished in the York street area, they

'did not provide for a single person displaced by the clearance of the insanitary area...the rents being from 5s. to 6s. a week'<sup>1</sup>

Accommodation for a further 198 individuals was available in the cheaper Brick street flats, but this is most unlikely to have been sufficient to meet the demand for cheap housing in this neighbourhood. Furthermore, the council's assistant engineer had noted in 1896, that,

'there is a great need in Leeds for some really good common lodging houses'<sup>2</sup>;

but no action had been taken to meet this need. We can thus imagine that many residents must have been put to some hardship by this first stage in the council's slum clearance programme. This point was taken up again when the council applied to obtain a provisional order to allow it to redevelop the Quarry Hill area. But on this occasion, opposition to its proposals came not from local radical groups, but from some members of the House of Commons. The confirming bill proposed to enable the council to demolish on a first clearance houses accommodating a total of one thousand residents before any rehousing was obligatory. When this stage had been reached, dwellings were to be built for seven hundred people, after which a further thousand could be displaced and another seven hundred rehoused. This process was to be

<sup>1</sup>YP, 5 Sept 1901.

<sup>2</sup>G.F. Carter, 'Operation of the Housing of the Working Classes Act in Leeds', Journal of the Royal Sanitary Institute, XVIII, 1897, p. 469.

repeated until six thousand 'persons of the working class' had been provided with alternative accommodation,<sup>1</sup> out of a total working class population in the area of an estimated 9,234. The remainder were expected to move into the five hundred empty houses within a mile radius of the area.<sup>2</sup>

When the bill was brought up for its second reading, several M.Ps. questioned the decision to allow demolition to take place on so great a scale without any initial provision for rehousing, although their opposition was insufficient to prevent the bill from going to the select committee.<sup>3</sup> Thus in one sense it was, paradoxically, fortunate that the council did not adopt a more vigorous approach to slum clearance. To the working class residents of the insanitary areas this would have involved considerable upheaval, leading either to greatly increased housing densities in adjacent districts, or considerably higher rents if they were able to move away from the east end. The only way in which the council could have provided accommodation at a comparable cost would have been through subsidised municipal housing, which it was not prepared to contemplate. During the council debates in 1897, when this question was discussed, one speaker said,

'the town clerk would tell them that they could not carry out the Socialistic idea of the corporation remaining the landlord'<sup>4</sup>

and another that,

'he objected to five hundred people being benefitted at the expense of the rest of the community. The scheme proposed was Utopian, and he hoped the council would not adopt it'<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Edw. 7 Ch clxxi, article III, sub-section 5.

<sup>2</sup> House of Commons S.C., 2 July 1901, qu. 194-197.

<sup>3</sup> Parl. Deb., 4th series, volume XCV, columns 388-398, 14 June 1901. The bill received its second reading by 307 votes to 52.

<sup>4</sup> LM, 8 July 1897.

<sup>5</sup> LM, 2 Sept 1897.



It was to be several decades before municipal policy in Leeds came to adopt the 'Socialistic idea' urged upon it at the end of the nineteenth century.

CHAPTER SEVEN

MUNICIPAL LABOUR RELATIONS AND

UNEMPLOYMENT RELIEF SCHEMES

One aspect of municipal policy which became increasingly important towards the end of the century arose from the involvement of the council in trade union and labour affairs. This involvement with the labour movement arose from several sources. By the late nineteenth century the corporation had become a major employer of semi skilled and unskilled labour, and at the end of our period employed nearly four thousand men in various departments. As the size of the sanitary department increased, especially after the decision to create a direct works department to deal with scavenging and ashpit cleansing, and with the purchase of the gas works in 1870 and the tramways in 1894, and consequently the transfer of a large number of workers into municipal employment, labour relations understandably became an important part of the work of the council's committees. These became a significant feature of policy and politics with the arrival of the 'new unionism' in Leeds in 1889, and the subsequent activities of the Gasworkers' and General Labourers' Union. In the following pages we shall examine the impact which the union had upon the labour conditions of the men employed by the three most important labour-employing committees, the gas, sanitary and tramway committees.

After 1891, the council was exerting a limited influence over wages in private industry, insofar as independent firms took on municipal work, through the adoption of the 'fair wage' clause in council contracts. Besides the conditions of those in employment, the problems of the unemployed became an important issue. Unemployment and the means of alleviating it became an item of debate, and from the eighteen nineties, the organisation of relief schemes was added to the

municipal agenda. Hence this chapter falls into three parts: the first begins with a review of the gasworks dispute of 1889-1890, and examines the efforts of the Gasworkers' and General Labourers' Union to improve the conditions of workers in municipal service, the second describes the acceptance and enforcement of the 'fair wage' stipulation in council contracts, and the third reviews the local history of schemes to assist the unemployed.

## (1)

The first experience which the council had of 'new unionism' was in October 1889, when the gas committee received a series of demands from the stokers, firemen, coal wheelers and labourers of the three gas works at Meadow lane, York street and New Wortley, which had been formulated at a meeting held on Vicar's Croft on 29 September.<sup>1</sup> The men asked for an eight-hour day for stokers, firemen and coal wheelers, with 5/- for the shift, time and a half for Sundays and all overtime, and double time for the day and night shifts on Sunday and Good Friday. They also wanted a week's paid holiday a year for all permanent employees, an increase of 4d a day for yard men and purifiers, and a modification of the work load of firemen and stokers. The committee yielded upon hours and wages for the time being, but refused to issue a new set of rules detailing all the concessions demanded, so as not to be bound, and awaited the falling away of the seasonal demand for gas would allow it to adopt a less conciliatory position. In April, it refused to negotiate with the local secretary of the G and GLU<sup>2</sup>, and in

<sup>1</sup> Gas Committee Minutes, 17 Oct 1889. This well-known dispute has been widely noticed, particularly in E.P. Thompson, 'Homage to Tom Maguire', A. Briggs and J. Saville eds., Essays in Labour History, especially pp. 299-301, and E.P. Hennock, Fit and Proper Persons, pp. 237-234; here we have confined the description to the detailed causes and results of the lock-out.

<sup>2</sup> GC, 17 April 1890.

May issued a new set of rules. These embodied the accepted eight-hour day, in shifts beginning at 6 am, 2 pm and 10 pm, reiterated the wage and overtime terms, but increased work loads and offered only two days' paid holiday a year, Christmas Day and Good Friday. A second version of the regulations contained a wholly new condition, namely, that no worker could give notice between October and January, the period when demand for gas was at its height, a provision obviously intended to reduce the bargaining power of the union.<sup>1</sup>

In June, when informed that no signatures had been received as agreeing to the new rules, the committee gave a fortnight's notice to all stokers and firemen,<sup>2</sup> and on 1 July the lock-out began. A brief but violent dispute followed, with riots, military intervention and about 10,000 made unemployed by the failure of the gas supply.<sup>3</sup> Under these pressures, the gas committee was obliged to negotiate with the union. On 3 July an agreement was drawn up. It was agreed that 28 days' notice should be given by either side, or 14 days when a bed of retorts was to be closed down, and the rule preventing stokers from leaving work between October and January was abolished. The union did not press its claim for a week's paid holiday, and accepted Whit Monday and the first Monday in August, besides the existing two holidays on Christmas Day and Good Friday, as holidays with pay, or for those required to work, days on which double time was paid. It was also agreed that the stokers were to charge the retorts with 60, instead of 55 cwts. a shift, and that the firemen were to do the extra

<sup>1</sup>GC, 15 and 20 May 1890.

<sup>2</sup>GC, 16 June 1890.

<sup>3</sup>YP 4 July 1890. The clothing trade was apparently worst affected, since it relied on gas for motive power.

work which this entailed for them.<sup>1</sup>

The borough accountant later estimated that the cost of the claim conceded in October 1889 had been to increase the wage bill in the first six months of 1890 by 27% compared to the same period in 1889. He also calculated that the stokers' agreement to increase their work load would in effect save the committee 13% on the increased cost of carbonising coal, and that the acceptance of two extra days', instead of one week's paid holiday would cut the cost of the concession from £790 to £264 a year.<sup>2</sup> The strike itself had cost the gas and watch committees £3,069.15.5, the major items being food, beer and tobacco, beds and blankets for the men imported, and compensation and railfares paid to them when the gas committee revoked their guarantees of employment, and payments to the military and police borrowed from other towns.<sup>3</sup>

In February 1891, another dispute seemed imminent when the stokers at New Wortley complained that notice had been given to men who had previously been employed throughout the year, so reversing the previous custom that men hired for the winter months should be discharged first. Negotiations began with the G and GLU, and the committee agreed to amend the rules to make the previous understanding explicit.<sup>4</sup>

The events of 1889-1890 had established the viability of the union, and in the following years it made regular representations to the labour-employing committees of the council to improve its members' conditions. Its policy had six principal aims: the creation of

<sup>1</sup>GC, 3 July 1890.

<sup>2</sup>RB, Oct 1890.

<sup>3</sup>loc.cit.

<sup>4</sup>GC, 9, 16, 19, 21, 23, 24 Feb 1891.

'closed shops', the general establishment of the eight-hour day, the improvement of conditions of work, increases in wages, the extension of overtime payments, and an increase in the number of holidays with pay. The committees defeated all attempts to oblige them to employ only unionised labour. In December 1891 and August 1892 the gas committee resisted pressure to dismiss non-union men, as did the sanitary committee in January 1896.<sup>1</sup> It would seem, however, that the success of the union's recruiting campaign had made this into a secondary issue, as it complained of no more than sixteen men as not being members at the Meadow land and New Wortley works, and only two men in the ashpit cleansing department had refused to pay their subscriptions, and were transferred by the sanitary committee to other work.<sup>2</sup>

Although the 1890 dispute had guaranteed the stokers an eight-hour day, other classes of labour in the gas works remained on longer hours, many working for twelve hours a day. An eight-hour day for purifiers and cinder-throwers was agreed in February 1896, for yardmen in October 1896 and for pipelayers in June 1899,<sup>3</sup> but the union had little success in improving wages and overtime. In December 1895, it asked for increases of 9d a shift for stokers, coal wheelers and firemen (to give them 5/9, 4/9 and 5/9 respectively), 6d for purifiers (to give them 4/0) 4d for yardmen (to give them 4/0) and 5/- for engine men, as well as an eight-hour day for the last three groups.<sup>4</sup> Negotiations took place in February, and were re-opened at the union's

<sup>1</sup>GC, 17 Dec 1891, 18 Aug 1892; SC, 13 and 15 Jan 1896.

<sup>2</sup>GC, 17 Dec 1891; SC, 13 Jan 1896.

<sup>3</sup>GC, 20 Feb, 15 Oct 1896, 2 June 1899.

<sup>4</sup>GC, 19 Dec 1895.

request in October 1896, but the committee refused to accept any demands except those already mentioned, for the introduction of the eight-hour day.<sup>1</sup> The men claimed that although there had been a reduction of hours for stokers and others in 1890, there had been no increase in earnings, and that in other respects, conditions of work had since changed for the worse. They stated that the works were using larger quantities of lower-grade coal, and that the reduction in the number of Sundays worked made work on Mondays more laborious because of the extra effort involved in repairing retorts which had 'cracked' in cooling, and in refiring them. On its part, the committee claimed that wages in the Leeds gas works compared favourably with those paid in other towns.<sup>2</sup>

In November 1898, the union asked for a general increase of 4d a day, and the committee granted 2d to all except yardmen and purifiers, and a further increase of 2d was agreed to for stokers, firemen, coal wheelers, machine attendants and cinder throwers in June 1902.<sup>3</sup>

The union's dealings with the sanitary committee appear to have been attended by more success. In November 1891, it applied for an improvement in scavengers' wages and conditions, asking for a half day holiday on Saturday, a full shift's wage for Saturday night work, instead of the 2/- then paid, double time for Sunday work and that existing rates of 18/-, 20/- and 22/- be increased by 2/- all round.<sup>4</sup> The committee agreed to pay time and a half on Sundays, a full day's pay for Saturday night, a half day, where possible, on Saturday, a

<sup>1</sup>GC, 20 Feb, 15 Oct 1896; MRP, no. 57, Verbatim report of conference between Gas Committee and Gasworkers Union as to wages of men, February and October 1896.

<sup>2</sup>Verbatim report (February, pp. 3, 8, 9, 11-12, 16 and 21; and Verbatim report (October), pp. 6, 12, 18-20.

<sup>3</sup>GC, 23 Nov 1898, 29 March 1899, 23 May 1902.

<sup>4</sup>SC, 23 Nov 1891.



48 hour week and a general increase of 1/- at all levels. A later request for time and a half on Good Friday and Christmas Day was also granted.<sup>1</sup>

In December the union asked for an advance of 2/- in the wages of men in the Ashpit Cleansing Department, and a three-shift eight-hour day for furnace men at the destructors. The furnace men were given an eight-hour day, and the ashpit men a ten hour day (day shift 6 am to 4 pm, night shift 6 pm to 4 am) with meal breaks of one and a half hours. Wages were also increased, as follows:-<sup>2</sup>

Day throwers out	22/- to 23/-
Day East ward sweepers (old men)	18 to 19
Day cartmen	22 to 24
Night throwers out	25 to 26
Night throwers out (Bramley men)	25 to 26
Night wherry men	25 to 26
Night cartmen	23 to 25

In February 1898, a similar improvement was requested, namely a general 2/- advance, a week's paid holiday, double time for Good Friday and Christmas day, and an eight hour day for the 'lads' employed. The committee gave an eight hour day, exclusive of meal times to all, and an increase of 1/- a week to most classes of labour.<sup>3</sup> Again, in October 1903, the union asked for an advance of 2/- and 1/- was given to most of the committee's workmen.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>SC, 23 Nov, and 9 Dec 1891.

<sup>2</sup>SC, 14 Dec 1891, 19 Jan 1892.

<sup>3</sup>Sub-sanitary (scavenging) committee, 8 Feb, 10 March 1898; SC, 30 March 1898.

<sup>4</sup>SC, 8 Oct, 19 Nov 1903.

Thus over the same period, the employees of the sanitary committee had achieved a much greater financial improvement in their working conditions than had their fellow workers under the gas committee, although they did not have the same number of holidays. No request was made on this subject until July 1904, when a week's paid holiday a year was asked for, as only two days was then allowed.<sup>1</sup> This was not granted, but in January 1905, the committee increased the number of holidays to four, in line with a recommendation made by the recently-created committee to consider labour questions.<sup>2</sup>

To tramway workers, municipalisation in February 1894 meant a great improvement in wages and hours, with wages being increased by twenty per cent, and hours reduced from 81 to 67 a week,<sup>3</sup> and as table 7.1 shows, wages for most groups of workers were increased at least three times up to 1903, and in the latter year the tramways committee introduced a six-day, sixty-hour week.<sup>4</sup> But this improvement was not as advantageous to the committee's employees as it may seem, for in 1903 the 'split turn' system was introduced. This meant that the total number of hours worked was spread over the day, with 'free' time interspersed between periods of work. In January 1904 it was estimated that 12½% of the labour force would have a spread of more than twelve hours (from 7 am to midnight), about once every three weeks.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>SC, 14 July 1904.

<sup>2</sup>SC, 14 Sept 1905. The committee referred to was the Consultative Committee, created on 1 Feb 1905 (see CM of that date) to consider questions of 'workmen's wages, holidays and hours and conditions of labour'.

<sup>3</sup>Sir Bosdin T. Leech, 'Tramways and their municipalisation', Journal of the Manchester Statistical Society, session 1897-1898, p.138. In 1881, one councillor had referred to the working conditions of the tramway company's employees as 'a system of oppression and nothing but English slavery', (LM 4 June 1881).

<sup>4</sup>Sub-Highways (Tramways) Committee (hereafter TC), 27 July 1903.

<sup>5</sup>LM, 7 Jan 1904.

TABLE 7.1

Wages in the Tramways Department, 1894-1903

(hourly rates in old pence)

Occupation	April 1894			June 1894	July-Aug 1897			Feb 1900		July 1903			
	On appt-ment	After three months	After six months		On appt-ment	After three months	After six months	First six months	After six months	First six months	Next twelve months	Next twelve months	There-after
Three horse drivers	4½	4¾	5		4¾	5	5¼	5¼	5¾				
Two horse drivers	4¼	4½	4¾		4½	4¾	5	5	5½				
One horse drivers	3¾	4	4¼		4¼	4½	5	-	-				
Steam car drivers	5	5¼	5½	6	5¼	5½	6¼	6¼	6¾				
Electric car drivers					4¾	5	5¼	5¾	6¼	6	6¼	→	6½
Conductors:													
horse cars	3½	3¾	4		3¾	4	4¼	4½	5				
steam cars								4¾	5¼				
electric cars								4½	5	5	5¼	5½	6

Source: Sub Highways (Tramways) Committee minutes, 20 April, 1 June 1894, 9 July, 10 Aug 1897, 26 Feb 1900, 27 July 1903.

Notes: The increase in the rates of steam car drivers on 1 June 1894 applied only to the maximum (5½d) rate. The rates of electric car drivers were decided on 10 August 1897. There was no intermediate stage in electric car drivers' rates between the second and the maximum.

TABLE 7.2

Paid Holidays of Corporation Workmen  
in August 1908

Department	Approx. number of workmen employed	Men with no holiday paid for	Holidays with Pay (Days)							
			2	3	4	6	7	10	14	18
Electricity	136	35	49			17	35			
Gas (summer)	925				815			43	64	3
Highways	320		311					9		
Parks	108					89	19			
Sanitary	709		699			10				
Sewerage	100			100						
Tramways	1345	146	214			905	43	5	32	
Street Lighting	165						165			
Waterworks	101				76					25
	3909	181	1273	100	891	1021	262	57	96	28

Source: Consultative Committee minutes, 31 August 1905.

Understandably, the men resented this innovation, and pressed without success for its abolition.<sup>1</sup> The committee refused to pay higher rates on Sundays, Bank Holidays, Christmas Day or Good Friday,<sup>2</sup> but some compensation for this was given by paid holidays. In 1905, 67% of the department's staff were receiving six paid holidays a year, although 14% had only 2 days, and 11% had none at all.<sup>3</sup> In September of the same year, the committee adopted the suggestion of the consultative committee, and gave all workers at least four days a year.<sup>4</sup>

(2)

In July 1891, a deputation from the trades council requested the council to include in future specifications for municipal contracts a provision requiring the contractor to

'pay his work people (whether artisan or labourer) not less than the minimum standard rate of wages of the district in each branch of the trade where the work is performed, and to observe the recognised hours and conditions of labour of each respective trade'<sup>5</sup>

Such conditions had already been adopted in contracts let out to tender by the War Office and the Metropolitan Board of Works, but they were not readily accepted by the council. Whilst one member believed that

'he thought it would tend to equalise the conditions of competition...they would be setting a good example to other employers of labour in the borough',

<sup>1</sup>TC, 21 Sept 1903.

<sup>2</sup>TC, 17 June, 15 July 1901. Double time on Christmas Day was paid from 1905, TC, 6 Dec 1905.

<sup>3</sup>Consultative Committee, 31 Aug 1905.

<sup>4</sup>TC, 18 Sept 1905.

<sup>5</sup>CM, 1 July 1891.

another asked if the council was to decide

'that each tradesman in the borough of Leeds was not to conduct his business to the best of his judgment? because if they passed the resolution, he would know directly that they were interfering with the way in which he conducted his business'<sup>1</sup>

and this attitude was further reinforced by references to 'dictation' and 'species of terrorism'. The proposal was narrowly defeated, but when in the following month it was re-introduced, it was carried by an equally narrow majority.<sup>2</sup> In 1893, the question of the legal validity of these stipulations was raised, and a committee was set up to consider what was to be done.<sup>3</sup> It made enquiries of other local authorities, and consulted the trades council,

'as to the best mode to be adopted for enforcing any conditions which may be imposed'.

The town clerk also considered the legal problems involved, and a satisfactory form of words was ultimately agreed upon.<sup>4</sup>

The vigilance of the unions and the trades council ensured that infractions of the 'fair wages' agreement were brought to the attention of the committees, although it would seem that such cases were few, and were generally rectified.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>LM, 2 July 1891. The proposer of the motion was F.R. Spark, a 'progressive' Liberal, who had previously campaigned against the gas committee's policy in the eighties.

<sup>2</sup>CM, 5 Aug 1891; LM, 6 Aug 1891.

<sup>3</sup>CM, 6 Sept 1893.

<sup>4</sup>MRP, no. 41, Report of the Special Committee as to Fair Wages; MRP no. 42, Supplementary Report....; CM, 9 May, 5 Sept, 1894.

<sup>5</sup>See, for example, SC, 31 Dec 1894, 8 Jan, 12 Feb 1903.

(3)

In the last decades of the nineteenth century, the problem of unemployment was beginning to be publicly recognised as an important social issue, and Leeds corporation, like many other local authorities, became involved in schemes designed to alleviate it. In a national context, the 'Chamberlain circular' issued from the Local Government Board in 1886 has often been interpreted as a significant advance in the recognition of the need to make some public provision for the unemployed which was separate from that offered by the poor law. It encouraged local authorities to provide work for the unemployed in parks, cemeteries, roads and sewage works as an alternative to recourse to relief from the guardians. This proposal had two purposes: it enabled 'those who do not ordinarily seek poor relief' to take work provided by public authorities which was free from the 'stigma of pauperism', and in doing so, it would prevent the working classes from being 'familiarised with poor relief', so reducing the deterrent aspect of the poor law, and leading to a growth in poor law expenditure.<sup>1</sup> The 'historical and practical significance'<sup>2</sup> of the circular has recently been contested<sup>2</sup>, and, as we shall see, it would certainly seem to have had no influence upon the development of municipal policy in Leeds.

The council first participated in a large-scale unemployment relief scheme eight years before the circular was issued. The project was inaugurated in response to the 'long continued and continually increasing depression' combined with an early winter of 'unusual severity'

<sup>1</sup>Sixteenth Annual Report of the Local Government Board, 1886-87, pp. 5-7.

<sup>2</sup>J. Harris, Unemployment and Politics: A study in English social policy, 1886-1914, pp. 76-78.

in 1878-79. A public meeting held on 28 December 1878 decided to create a committee to organise the distribution of a voluntarily-subscribed fund of £5,717.<sup>1</sup> The distress committee, with the mayor as president and the deputy town clerk as secretary, established a code of detailed rules and administrative method. Applicants were sent to register with their ward committee, and they were then assigned to a visitor, who was usually a member of the Benevolent Society or the Charity Organisation Society. The visitor came to the home and investigated the circumstances of the case, and later this was supplemented by an enquiry made to the applicant's last employer. When this had been done, the committee reviewed the case, and made a decision on what relief, if any, was to be granted. Certain applications were automatically ineligible, as in instances where the family income was more than 10s. a week; where distress had been caused by 'extravagance or intemperance', or the individual was classed as 'unworthy'; where the unemployed person lived in a common lodging house, or was clearly a transient; where there was an opportunity for employment; where distress was not 'temporary' but 'chronic'; and finally, where parochial relief was already being received. Despite disagreement on the committee, it was decided to enforce this last provision, since although on the one hand it seemed unfair that

'persons obtaining a miserable pittance by test work should be refused relief, while others received it on condition as it seemed of remaining idle...it seemed...that every effort should be made to keep respectable persons from resorting to poor-law aid, and so making themselves paupers'.

The maximum allowed to each family was 10s. a week, (in the form

<sup>1</sup>LM, 1 Aug 1879. All the following details come from the 'Report of the Leeds Distress Fund Committee' printed therein.



of credit notes for food and fuel), exclusive of rent, but in fact upto the middle of February 1879, the weekly average amount given had been 4/7½d. per family. By this time, the committee had decided to try to introduce relief work as a condition of assistance, since the ward organisations had collapsed as a result of their efforts,

'to see that only those who were in extreme need and most deserving got relief'<sup>1</sup>

It approached the corporate property and the streets and sewerage committees of the council, and these agreed to employ men referred to them in improving municipal property, while the relief payments remained the responsibility of the distress committee. This arrangement lasted until the end of March, when, with the voluntary funds nearly exhausted, and the unemployment situation still urgent, the council agreed to take on the financial obligation also, leaving the committee still in charge of the administration. The scheme continued until the end of June, by which time between 700 and 1,000 men had been employed. They received credit notes for 1/6d. for each five-hour shift worked, with no-one being allowed to work more than three shifts in a week. By the time the distress committee issued its final report, it had made 'grants of relief' to some 4,515 workers. Of these, labourers formed the largest single group, (1,508 or 33%), a further 20% were classed, unhelpfully, as 'miscellaneous', 15% were women, 16% came from the building trades, 9% from metals and engineering, and 7% from textiles. The history of this scheme has been given in such detail because it establishes several important points. By the late seventies it was already locally agreed that the poor law was an inappropriate and indeed, degrading method of dealing with 'respectable persons' who temporarily

<sup>1</sup>LM, 6 June 1879.

found themselves without a livelihood. To this end, it was necessary to ensure that the relief funds were directed solely towards

'the needy and deserving, to the exclusion of the multitude of drunkards, idlers and imposters, who are ever found eager to profit by the genuine distress of more deserving persons'.

Hence the committee employed the officers, and methods of the C.O.S., with the implicit assumption that the problem of unemployment was to be treated merely as an aspect of voluntary charitable work, and within the context of current economic, social and moral orthodoxies.<sup>1</sup> The transfer of the project from private to public responsibility did not, of course, change the criteria. One local newspaper emphasised that,

'so long as the council only pays for the work actually done, there is no violation of sound economic principles; and so long as work is not created, there is no danger of the theories of socialism being reduced to practice'.

Certainly, the unemployed were not receiving relief on a scale which would discourage them in any way from taking work if it were available. Yet even these small sums, paid to a selected group of the workless, exhausted the committee's financial resources within three months. Privately-raised funds were insufficient to cope with the alleviation of unemployment on a regular basis, and where the private section failed, the initiative then lay with the local authority. Some years before the issue of the L.G.B. circular, then, the basic principle of the organisation of unemployment relief schemes had been established in Leeds. The municipal authority was the only body capable of providing a viable alternative to the poor law in the alleviation of a cause of poverty for which the traditional agency was increasingly regarded as inappropriate.

<sup>1</sup>See also T.W. Hutchinson, A Review of Economic Doctrines, 1870-1929, 2P. 410.  
<sup>2</sup>LM, 7 June 1879.

But in fact for more than a decade, the council paid no further attention to the issue. In the eighteen eighties it was raised only once, when in 1887 the council received a memorial asking it to provide work during the winter months.<sup>1</sup> The response was wholly negative. When, two months later, the chairmen of two of the labour-employing committees were asked what action had been taken they said that,

'little had been done. No grant had been made for the purpose. The question dropped, further remarks being ruled out of order'.<sup>2</sup>

But in the early nineties, municipal relief works in Leeds were suddenly revived. In the winter of 1892-93 the Labour Department of the Board of Trade reported that,

'the most important relief works carried out by English local authorities were undoubtedly those provided by the corporation of Leeds'.<sup>3</sup>

In November 1892, the council decided to allocate £10,000 to be spent on relief works,<sup>4</sup> and a register of the unemployed was opened in the city engineer's office.<sup>5</sup> Applicants were questioned on their family and financial situation, and enquiries were made to the applicant's last employer, but no further selection was attempted, and there was no systematic co-operation with the guardians or the voluntary societies as there had been on the previous occasion. Between 15 Dec 1892 and 15 March 1893, 1,874 men had registered. Of these 771 were rejected as ineligible, or withdrew their names, and the remaining

<sup>1</sup>CM, 18 Nov 1887. The source of the memorial is not given.

<sup>2</sup>LM, 2 Feb 1888.

<sup>3</sup>Board of Trade, Labour Department, Report on the Agencies and Methods for Dealing with the Unemployed, 1893, p.219.

<sup>4</sup>CM, 16 Nov 1892.

<sup>5</sup>The following details are taken from the Board of Trade Report, pp. 222-228.

1,103 were employed in 'spade labour' at six of the municipal parks. Each worked a nine hour day and a three day week, for 5d. an hour, so earning 11/3d a week. In addition, during the winter months, men were employed by the scavenging and the highways departments in moving snow. The relief works were closed on 26 April, although a small number of men were allowed to continue work on the same terms for at least another four months. In the following year, 1893-94, similar schemes were re-introduced.<sup>1</sup> A total of 2,486 men registered with the corporation, of whom 1,665 were found work of the same kind, and on the same terms as before. In the winter of 1894-95, only snow-clearing work was offered by the council, although this was supplemented by relief provided by a voluntarily-organised distress relief fund.<sup>2</sup> This raised £5,200 for distribution in the form of food tickets, and operated in much the same way as before. It adopted the procedure formulated by the committee of 1878-79, and like its predecessors, the ward relief committees found,

'ample scope for the exercise of their charity, and also of their discretion'<sup>3</sup>

We now have to explain the re-emergence of municipal relief activity in Leeds in these years. As we have said, the L.G.B. circular of 1886 did not create any local response and although the re-issue in 1892 is mentioned as a contributory cause in the Board of Trade Report,<sup>4</sup> we can assume that, taken alone, it had no appreciable influence on the council. The importance of economic conditions is also debatable. By 1892, according to the Board of Trade,

<sup>1</sup>Second Report from the Select Committee (of the House of Commons) on Distress from Want of Employment, 1895, pp. 36-37, 38-39, 43-44, 325-326, 341-344.

<sup>2</sup>MRP no. 48, Report of the Central Committee, for the information of the Subscribers to the Fund, 1895.

<sup>3</sup>Second Report from the Select Committee..., p.44.

<sup>4</sup>op.cit., p.222.

'for some time past Leeds has suffered from a somewhat acute depression in the iron trades'<sup>1</sup>;

and as can be seen from table 7.3, iron workers were consistently the second largest category of those employed in relief works. But the largest group was composed of unskilled labourers, and in any case, given the relative numerical importance of those employed in the iron trades in Leeds, we might expect, ceteris paribus, that this would be reflected in local unemployment statistics. Moreover, although these are not available, in national terms the figures provided by the trade unions which made monthly returns to the Board of Trade<sup>2</sup> show that unemployment was just as severe in the winter months of 1886-87, when the council took no action, as in the winter of 1892-93, when it was promoting relief works.

If the L.G.B. circulars and local trade fluctuations alone were contestable influences on the council's actions, it is clear that working class pressure was of decisive importance. As the Board of Trade Report observed:

'there were a few centres, such as Leeds..., where...the 'unemployed' agitation attracted a special amount of public attention.... A series of meetings were held in the Town Hall Square, demanding work, before the corporation undertook the extensive relief works'<sup>3</sup>

We have already outlined the influence upon municipal labour relations which the appearance of 'new unionism' had in Leeds, and the new spirit of the labour movement was obviously exerting itself in matters concerning the unemployed as well. The local trades council, which had ignored the 1890 gas strike,<sup>4</sup> was now itself involved in the agitation

<sup>1</sup>loc.cit.

<sup>2</sup>Board of Trade, Labour Department, op.cit., p. 181.

<sup>3</sup>ibid., p. 183.

<sup>4</sup>E.P. Thompson, 'Homage to Tom Maguire', in A. Briggs and John Saville eds., Essays in Labour History, p.297.

TABLE 7.3

Municipal relief schemes 1892-1895and 1902-1905

	1892-93		1893-94		1902-03		1904-05	
	Number of workers registered	1,874		2,486		3,758		7,010
Number employed	1,104		1,665		1,625		2,384	
% of number registered	58.9		66.9		43.2		34.0	
Expenditure £	(12,465)		14,301		5,453		12,899	
Occupations	No	%age	No	%age	No	%age	No	%age
Labourers	927	49.5	1277	51.4	2174	57.8	4186	59.7
Iron workers	423	22.6	564	22.7	646	17.2	921	13.1
Woollens	100	5.3	196	7.9	107	2.9	184	2.6
Building trades	108	5.8	89	3.6	192	5.1	653	9.3
Leather	73	3.8	128	5.1	234	6.2	524	7.5
Miners	20	1.1	9	0.4	20	0.5	72	1.1
Miscellaneous	223	11.9	223	8.9	385	10.2	470	6.7

Sources: (1) 1892-93 and 1893-94, Second Report from the Select Committee on Distress from Want of Employment, 1895 pp. 342-343.

(2) 1902-03, 'Report of the Parliamentary Committee', Annual Reports of Committees, 1902-03.

(3) 1904-05, MRP no. 112, Report on the Unemployed, 1904-05.

Notes: (1) £1,423 was spent in snow-clearing in 1894-95, see (1). MRP no 112, p.9, states that £9,477 had been spent, 'during the previous register', presumably in 1903-4.

(2) For a comparison with Birmingham, see, F. Tillyard, 'Three Birmingham relief funds - 1885, 1886 and 1905', Economic Journal, XV(1905), pp. 505-520.

for relief works, and pressing the council to take action, as were other groups, including the I.L.P.<sup>1</sup> The vigorous organisation of the unemployed, and the vigorous tactics used<sup>2</sup> grated on the sensibilities of the middle class. The mayor observed, dismissively, that,

'the decision...not to allow the unemployed to assemble in the crypt of the town hall...provided the labour leaders with another topic for the exercise of their oratory'<sup>3</sup>

and at a meeting of the distress relief committee,

'fear was expressed by more than one speaker lest some intemperate language on the part of the unemployed might prejudice intending subscribers against the fund'<sup>4</sup>

In April 1895, the council decided to appoint a committee to discuss with the trades council and the I.L.P.,

'the best methods of dealing either permanently or temporarily with the questions of the unemployed, and with severe distress in the town, in the event of its being overtaken by either question in the future'<sup>5</sup>

and the Chamber of Commerce and representatives from the Boards of Guardians were invited to co-operate.<sup>6</sup> An interim report in October recommended the establishment of a permanent register of the unemployed, and the council decided to do this.<sup>7</sup> The attitude of the labour representatives towards this proposal was equivocal. In 1892 a labour 'bureau' had been temporarily established, and

<sup>1</sup>CM, 7 June 1893, 7 Feb 1894, 6 Feb, 6 March 1895.

<sup>2</sup>See LM, 7 Feb 1895 for an account of the various public protests of the unemployed.

<sup>3</sup>Second Report from the Select Committee..., p. 39. The mayor, alderman Gilston, had been responsible for the gas committee's tactics during the 1890 strike.

<sup>4</sup>MRP no. 48, Report of the Central Committee..., p. 6.

<sup>5</sup>CM, 3 April 1895.

<sup>6</sup>CM, 3 July 1895.

<sup>7</sup>CM, 9 Oct 1895; MRP, no. 56, Final Report of the Committee appointed by the Council to consider and advise on the question of the Unemployed, p.1.

'attempts have recently (sc. 1893) been made to make the bureau permanent, and connect it with the principal employers by telephone; but the organisation as hitherto conducted has met with no sympathy from the local trade unionists, who are of opinion that, while valueless as a means of diminishing want of employment generally, it might easily become a centre for the supply of non-union labour at the time of a trade dispute'<sup>1</sup>;

and in one instance at least, their suspicions were verified.<sup>2</sup> The final report of the committee was far from sympathetic to the position of the unemployed. It assigned a minimal role to municipal relief works, suggesting that they be 'strictly limited to exceptional and temporary conditions', and expressed the belief that

'the legislature having delegated to Boards of Guardians the care of the destitute poor, it is obviously advisable that, as a general rule, the task of relieving the unemployed should be left to them, and that only in times of very exceptional trade depression, should other agencies be called into action'<sup>3</sup>

This was certainly very far removed from the policies being advocated by the trades council and the I.L.P., which proposed the general introduction of the eight hour day, the establishment of a municipal direct works department, and a more efficient municipal relief scheme.<sup>4</sup> These two bodies also attacked the council's attitude towards the unemployed, declaring that in the winter of 1894-95,

<sup>1</sup> Board of Trade, Labour Department, op.cit., p. 225; see also, John Saville, 'Trade unions and free labour: the background to the Taff Vale decision', in Briggs and Saville, op.cit., p. 337, for the early use of 'informal' labour exchanges as a means of recruiting strike-breaking labour.

<sup>2</sup> MRP, no. 56, p.6.

<sup>3</sup> ibid., pp. 2-3

<sup>4</sup> ibid., 'Minority Recommendations', pp. 6-8, signed by four members of the delegation from the I.L.P. and the trades council. See also, The Unemployed: A discussion of the causes and remedies for scarcity of employment, with special reference to Leeds, prepared by a committee appointed jointly by the Leeds Trades and Labour Council and the Leeds Independent Labour Party, June 1st 1895, especially pp. 10-16.



'when the frost had prevailed several weeks, a large deputation of the unemployed waited on the council to complain about their inaction; but the council passed on without one word of reference to the complaint.... This is the third consecutive winter in which relief, either in work or charity, has been necessary in Leeds - and with each of these successive winters the council remained uniformly callous and incapable'<sup>1</sup>

Municipal relief works were not resumed until January 1902, and they followed the now familiar pattern: 3,758 men registered, of which 1,625 were selected for work for three days a week, receiving 11/3d.<sup>2</sup> The same practice was followed in subsequent years, with the number offered work, and the cost of the schemes gradually rising, although the percentage classed as ineligible increased considerably.<sup>3</sup>

In July 1905, the council,

'believing idleness to be demoralising to the individual and ruinous to the state, and the provision of useful work for the unemployed poor at once a national and a local need',

petitioned in favour of the Unemployed Workmen bill.<sup>4</sup> When it became law, they applied to the L.G.B. for an order to establish a 'distress committee' under the act,<sup>5</sup> the provisions of which enabled the committee to register and provide work for the unemployed, supported by the proceeds of a ½d rate.<sup>6</sup> The committee, consisting of eighteen members of the council, fourteen poor law guardians and eight persons 'experienced in the relief of distress' was set up in October.<sup>7</sup> The act

<sup>1</sup>The Unemployed..., pp. 3-4.

<sup>2</sup>'Report of the Parliamentary Committee' Annual Reports of Committees, 1902-03.

<sup>3</sup>MRP, no. 112, Report on the Unemployed, 1904-5; CM, 27 Oct 1904.

<sup>4</sup>CM, 5 July 1905.

<sup>5</sup>CM, 6 Sept 1905.

<sup>6</sup>MRP, no. 194, Unemployed Workmen Act, 1905. Report on the provisions of the act as affecting Leeds.

<sup>7</sup>CM, 19 Oct 1905. The eight were the vicar of Leeds, the president of the Free Church Council, the chairman of the chamber of commerce, the president and secretary of the trades council, a representative of the Salvation army and 'two women'.

did little more than give a definite statutory sanction to informal practices which had already been evolved in Leeds and in other towns,<sup>1</sup> but the local Liberal press hoped that,

'the very limited powers granted by the grudging government measure for the assistance of the unemployed will doubtless be exercised to the full in Leeds'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>J. Harris, Unemployment and Politics, pp. 157-180.

<sup>2</sup>LM, 20 Oct 1905.

CHAPTER EIGHT

ASPECTS OF FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION,

1835 - 1905

On introducing his account of Gladstone's budget of 1853, his biographer remarked,

'certainly if anything can be more odious than a living tax, it is a dead one'<sup>1</sup>,

and if this observation is applicable to the subject of national financial policy, then it applies a fortiori to the history of municipal finance. Local authority finance, however, must necessarily occupy some place here. The development of accounting conventions and the debate over the appropriate methods of rating assessment are technical topics, which will not be considered. But an outline of the council's sources of income, from rates, borrowing, grants in aid, and municipal enterprises is of obvious relevance.<sup>2</sup> By far the greatest proportion of its income came from taxation and borrowing, for there was a

'great difference between Leeds and many other towns, such as London, Liverpool etc., where there were large incomes derived from borough and corporate property; but in Leeds the corporation possessed no property, and had to levy upon the burgesses rates for the smallest improvement'<sup>3</sup>

Although this was not strictly correct, the investments inherited, (or perhaps more appropriately, wrested) from the unreformed corporation,

<sup>1</sup>J. Morley, The Life of William Ewart Gladstone, 1905 ed., vol., p.461.

<sup>2</sup>A detailed analysis of income and expenditure is not possible within the scope of the present work. The abstraction, reassembly and aggregation of information from the various separate tables of accounts which comprise the corporation's annual financial statement, (in which close attention to accounting conventions would also be necessary in order to properly distinguish between current and capital expenditure and interest charges), is a task large enough to require an independent study. For one such exercise, see D. Gregory, The Public Accounts of the County of Lancashire from 1820 to 1889, unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Leeds, 1966. At present, then, the basic choice is between either providing a superficial outline, or probably misleading the reader: we have been obliged to choose the former.

<sup>3</sup>LM, 23 Nov 1850.

and the real estate, in the form of Kirkgate market, transferred from the improvement commission in 1842, were of slight financial significance. Rates for several purposes were levied by the council, and upto 1893, their number increased as the range of municipally-controlled services expanded. The Municipal Corporations Act authorised the levy of a 'borough rate' to cover the cost of the obligations which it imposed. In financial terms the most important of these was the maintenance of the police force, which in the eighteen forties, accounted for about three quarters of municipal expenditure.<sup>1</sup>

The council's acquisition of the powers of the improvement act in 1842 gave it, as we have already seen,<sup>2</sup> the right to make two further assessments, namely an improvement rate and a lamp rate. The second improvement act in 1848 enabled it to impose a 'main sewer rate' on any area which it designated as a drainage district. The act provided for the establishment of one such district comprising Leeds, Hunslet and Holbeck, and allowed the council to create others. This power was exercised once only, when the district of St. John's New Wortley was formed in 1866, and when the sewerage system was extended in the post-injunction period, the cost was recouped from the township improvement rate.<sup>3</sup> The fifth and last rate added to the municipal list was the

<sup>1</sup>Report on the Answers to Queries addressed to the respective authorities entrusted with the distribution of local funds, (1850), Appendix, table 1.

<sup>2</sup>See above p.63.

<sup>3</sup>J. Toft, thesis, p.257 states, incorrectly, that an 'Outer Drainage District' was created in 1880. The proposition from the streets and sewerage committee that this should be done was rejected by the council, and never revived, (see SSC, 21 April 1880; CM, 5 May 1880). The city accountant stated that 'there are two main sewer districts in Leeds, but where no drainage district has been declared the cost in connection with the drainage is upon the improvement rate...', House of Commons, Select Committee on Police and Sanitary Regulations, Leeds Corporation (consolidation and Improvement) Bill, 18 April 1893, Qu. 687.

highway rate, when as a result of the local act of 1866, the functions of the highway surveyors in all the townships devolved upon the corporation. Upto 1893, the council made sixteen separate rate assessments annually. These were the borough, lamp and highway rates, which were of a uniform amount throughout the borough, two main sewer rates, and a separate improvement rate for each of the eleven townships, to meet the expenses incurred in each of these administrative units for services sanctioned by the improvement acts. But in 1893, the council, with the aim of equalising the cost of local government among the townships and rationalising the rating provisions,<sup>1</sup> obtained the authority to amalgamate the main sewer, improvement and lamp rates, and thereafter a single, equal assessment for these purposes was made for the borough as a whole.

Table 8.1 sets out, in a concise form, the details of the improvement and main sewer rates levied from 1848 to 1905<sup>2</sup>. The townships of Leeds, Hunslet and Holbeck, in which, at the beginning of the period, urban development was most advanced, were conspicuously the most heavily taxed for these purposes until the eighteen eighties. Indeed, the decadal average rate assessment increased by very considerable proportions in the sixties and seventies successively. The fact that rates were consistently higher in Holbeck than in Hunslet from 1857 arises from the lower rateable value of the former. The 'improvement' rates in these three townships declined on average in the eighties, but

<sup>1</sup>RB, 21 May 1891.

<sup>2</sup>Unless specifically stated, all the statistics have been taken from a manuscript compendium of 'Financial Statistics' prepared in the city accountant's office, and now in the archives of the Civic Hall, Leeds.

TABLE 8.1a

Improvement and main sewer rates levied in Leeds, Hunslet,  
and Holbeck, and the average of the improvement rate  
levied on the eight other townships, 1848-1893  
(expressed in old pence)

Year	Leeds	Hunslet	Holbeck	Others	Year	Leeds	Hunslet	Holbeck	Others
1848	4	4	1	1.75					
1849	8	8	5	1.88					
Average	6.0	6.0	3.0	1.8					
1850	8	8	5	1.13	1870	19	15	23	4.13
1851	7	7	5	0.75	1871	18	14	22	3.88
1852	8	8	6	1.13	1872	23	16	23	4.19
1853	10	10	8	1.13	1873	34	25	30	8.38
1854	12	12	10	1.13	1874	34	24	28	6.81
1855	4	2	4	-	1875	38	24	29	11.00
1856	8	8	8	-	1876	32	18	24	9.38
1857	15	9	15	1.13	1877	33	20	25	11.88
1858	15	10	15	1.13	1878	30	21	29	12.25
1859	16	10	16	1.06	1879	25	19	30	14.88
Average	10.3	8.4	8.2	0.86	Average	28.6	19.6	26.3	8.67
1860	16	10	16	0.63	1880	25	19	27	15.6
1861	17	11	17	1.00	1881	26	19	24	17.5
1862	18	12	17	2.00	1882	26	22	27	25.3
1863	20	12	17	1.00	1883	27	19	24	20.1
1864	20	12	17	1.00	1884	27	20	25	20.8
1865	16	12	17	0.63	1885	27	19	26	22.6
1866	20	12	17	1.00	1886	27	20	25	20.5
1867	20	16	20	3.13	1887	27	20	24	22.1
1868	20	16	20	3.63	1888	27	20	24	23.1
1869	19	15	22	4.00	1889	29	20	27	25.0
Average	18.6	12.8	18.0	1.80	Average	26.8	19.8	25.3	21.2
					1890	30	21	29	26.0
					1891	29	22	27	25.4
					1892	30	22	29	25.4
					1893	32	25	30	27.8
					Average	30.3	22.5	28.75	26.15

Source: Calculated from 'Financial Statistics. City Accountant's Office', pp. 25-27.

TABLE 8.1b

Total rates levied under the improvement acts, in  
the townships of Leeds, 1890-1905  
(expressed in old pence)

Year	Armley	Beeston	Bramley	Chapel Allerton	Headingley	Holbeck	Hunslet	Leeds	Potter- newton	Wortley	Farnley	Main Sewer Rate		Lamp Rate	Highway Rate
												(1)	(2)		
1890	28	17	29	33	23	24	16	25	30	27	21	5	4	4	9
1891	27	16	29	33	24	22	17	24	28	25	21	5	3	4	9
1892	29	15	30	33	23	24	17	24	26	25	22	5	3	4	9
1893	30	19	33	33	26	25	20	27	28	30	23	5	2	4	9
1894							36								9
1895							35								9
1896							35								9
1897							35								9
1898							35								9
1899						30	36								8
1900							36								8
1901							36								8
1902							40								8
1903							51								8
1904							54								8
1905							60								8

Source: 'Financial Statistics City Accountant's Office', pp. 27-28.

- Notes: (1) Main Sewer Rate (1) is that levied on Leeds, Hunslet and Holbeck, and  
(2) Main Sewer Rate (2) is that levied on the drainage district of St. John's, New Wortley.  
(2) From 1894 the improvement, main sewer and lamp rates were consolidated and levied throughout the borough in one equal rate, known as the Consolidated Rate, under the authority of the Leeds Improvement Act, 1893, 56 and 57 Vict., ch. ccx, section 37.  
(3) The decadal average for the lamp rate and highway rate were as follows:-

Year	Lamp	Highway
1842 - 1849	4.75d	-
1850 - 1859	5.25d	-
1860 - 1869	4.45d	(16.67d)
1870 - 1879	4.45d	12.40d
1880 - 1889	2.90d	10.00d



TABLE 8.2

Decadal average of the improvement rates levied in  
eight townships, 1850-1889, and average 1890-1893.  
(expressed in old pence)

Years	Armley	Beeston	Bramley	Chapel Allerton	Heading- ley	Potter newton	Wortley	Farnley	Aggregate Average
1850-1859	0.8	0.7	0.75	0.7	0.8	1.7	0.8	0.8	0.9
1860-1869	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.8	2.0	1.8	2.3	1.5	1.8
1870-1870	8.5	6.7	8.7	7.5	9.9	8.9	11.5	6.5	8.5
1880-1889	23.5	12.9	23.8	27.2	22.5	26.8	19.6	12.7	21.1
1890-1893	28.5	16.8	30.3	33.0	24.0	28.0	26.6	21.8	26.1

Source: Calculated from 'Financial Statistics. City  
Accountant's Office', pp. 25-27

resumed their upward movement in the following decade. There is no clear trend in the movement of the improvement rates for the other eight townships in aggregate until the late sixties, and not until the mid seventies did the amount assessed start to rise markedly. This was largely the result of the gradual assimilation of new areas into the main sewerage network. A summary of the differences in rating between the townships is given in table 8.2.

Table 8.3 shows the amount of the borough rate levied between 1843 and 1905. In the forties and fifties, the decadal average remained virtually static, but more than doubled in the sixties. This new level was maintained in the seventies, but then almost doubled in the next decade, and rose again, but to a lesser extent, in the last decade of the century. There seems to have been two principal causes of this. Expenditure on the police force, which was the largest single component of the total, was rising almost continually: between 1869/70 and 1890/91 it rose from approximately £19,000 to approximately £38,000, an increase of one hundred percent.<sup>1</sup> But an even larger sum raised through the borough rate was not for municipal purposes at all. The School Board raised its funds by means of a precept issued to the council, and charged on the borough rate. The amount demanded increased explosively: in 1874/75 it was £13,000, and at the end of the decade (1879/80) it was £49,000. By the early nineties (1890/91) it had reached £66,800 and rose to £81,500 five years later (1895/96).<sup>2</sup>

Naturally, over the course of the sixty years between 1845 and 1905, the rateable vale of the borough increased considerably, as table 8.4 shows. The rate of growth was remarkably rapid from the mid sixties to the mid seventies, but during the next decade expansion was

<sup>1</sup> See the Borough Fund Revenue Accounts for these financial years.

<sup>2</sup> ibid.

TABLE 8.3

Borough rate levied in Leeds, 1843-1903  
(expressed in old pence)

Year	Amount	Year	Amount	Year	Amount	Year	Amount
		1850	2.50	1860	13.00	1870	7.50
		1851	4.00	1861	13.50	1871	8.00
		1852	4.50	1862	13.50	1872	8.00
1843	6.25	1853	4.50	1863	13.00	1873	10.00
1844	5.75	1854	4.75	1864	14.00	1874	14.00
1845	5.25	1855	6.25	1865	12.00	1875	11.00
1846	5.75	1856	7.00	1866	13.00	1876	13.75
1847	6.75	1857	5.75	1867	14.00	1877	14.50
1848	7.50	1858	7.50	1868	8.00	1878	15.00
1849	5.00	1859	10.50	1869	8.00	1879	15.00
Average	6.04		5.73		12.2		11.68
1880	19.00	1890	23.00	1900	26.00		
1881	20.50	1891	25.00	1901	27.00		
1882	20.00	1892	25.00	1902	27.00		
1883	21.00	1893	25.00				
1884	22.00	1894	25.00				
1885	22.00	1895	26.00				
1886	23.00	1896	26.00				
1887	23.00	1897	26.00				
1888	24.00	1898	26.00				
1889	23.00	1899	26.00				
Average	21.75		25.30		26.67		

Source: 'Financial Statistics. City Accountant's Office', pp. 19-22.

very modest, and although an improvement in the growth rate is apparent from the early nineties, it was not as fast as before. The economic and demographic pre-eminence of Leeds township is evident from its valuation in comparison to the others. It represented two thirds of the total rateable value of the borough in 1845, and at the end of the period, still accounted for more than half of it. Hunslet retained its ranking as the second most highly valued township, with very rapid growth taking place in the sixties and seventies. Holbeck, however, lost its position as third in the late fifties, when it was displaced by Headingley.<sup>1</sup> It was relegated further by Wortley and Potternewton at the turn of the century. Throughout the period, Leeds, Hunslet, Holbeck and Headingley represented about three quarters of the total rateable value of the borough.

Current revenue alone was not sufficient to finance projects which involved capital investment, and hence borrowing was an integral part of municipal finance.<sup>2</sup> Already by 1846 the council had borrowed nearly £29,000 for the erection of the borough gaol and £50,000 for improvements and burial grounds,<sup>3</sup> and some members looked askance at this development, as for example when the building of the town hall was under discussion, and one alderman,

'thought, considering the great amount of money they were borrowing continually, they ought to pause. They were now owing £110,000, the sewerage would cost £40,000 more, and if they expended £40,000 in this object, the amount would be nearly £200,000, making it something more than a borough debt - almost a National Debt'<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The economic development of the borough in the later nineteenth century is considered above, pp.179-188.

<sup>2</sup>The Second Schedule in the Leeds Corporation (General Powers) Act, 1901, 1 Edward VII, ch. cclv contains details of borrowing powers under all local legislation from 1842.

<sup>3</sup>LM, 30 May 1846.

<sup>4</sup>LM, 17 May 1851.

TABLE 8.4

Rateable value of the borough of Leeds, and the constituent townships, 1845-1903, (£)

Year	Borough Total	Armley	Beeston	Bramley	Chapel Allerton	Farnley	Headingley	Holbeck	Hunslet	Leeds	Potternewton	Wortley	Hamlets
1845	415,467	11,532	5,774	22,408	11,162	4,561	19,852	26,374	35,729	258,430	7,470	10,009	2,176
1850	420,787	11,942	4,388	19,800	9,510	5,902	22,302	26,331	34,419	261,969	8,438	12,927	2,859
1855	453,554	13,928	4,479	20,995	9,726	8,724	26,479	27,484	34,734	279,322	9,291	14,623	3,769
1860	504,885	17,125	7,074	25,622	11,746	11,031	31,228	29,708	45,183	298,896	10,455	22,270	3,546
1865	578,426	18,655	7,652	26,873	12,054	13,015	36,137	32,055	55,342	329,597	12,663	30,306	4,077
1870	763,453	20,734	7,395	29,053	15,259	12,318	52,484	36,847	68,752	425,396	20,424	42,354	5,437
1875	973,648	28,008	12,116	36,554	18,527	13,696	63,528	46,098	90,924	534,414	27,374	55,307	10,802
1880	1,109,526	34,938	13,438	39,975	21,538	15,475	88,028	51,720	111,654	624,563	32,802	65,770	9,625
1885	1,169,590	40,776	14,283	44,631	20,946	15,488	96,966	54,161	118,693	649,323	33,085	71,387	9,878
1890	1,253,333	46,341	14,897	48,891	21,276	14,607	113,699	57,757	139,794	674,798	36,224	76,055	8,994
1895	1,405,894	58,362	14,844	54,239	22,451	14,797	137,078	67,570	157,124	721,956	67,621	81,193	8,659
1900	1,680,883	77,379	16,188	66,370	26,489	17,264	161,526	92,858	189,836	828,710	95,152	97,466	11,645
1903	1,857,065	86,127	21,190	70,576	34,314	17,972	180,486	104,875	214,244	894,989	119,357	101,384	11,551

Source: 'Financial Statistics. City Accountant's Office', pp. 5-10.

Notes: (1) The 'Hamlets' are Coldcotes, Seacroft, Osmondthorpe, Skelton and Thomes and Temple Newsam. These were not rated for the improvement rate.

(2) 'Financial Statistics', p.11 gives the rateable value of the city as £2,075,905, and distinguishes separately the townships of Leeds (R.V. £1,335,976), Hunslet, (£273,680) and Holbeck (£134,485).

Upto the mid eighteen fifties the council was not paying a standard rate of interest upon loans. Some were obtained at 3½% and some at 5%, but most appear to have been at 4 to 4½%. In November 1856, the finance committee decided to reduce its maximum rate on borrowing to 4½% and informed its few creditors (eleven in number) who were receiving more that they could accept the reduction, or have their loans paid off.<sup>1</sup> Two years later, the same action was taken over some mortgagors who had lent at more than 4%, although the adoption of 4% as the standard rate was not finally decided upon until 1859.<sup>2</sup> Thereafter, new loans were accepted at this rate only.<sup>3</sup> Table 8.5 gives a break-down of the loans made to the corporation between 1855 and 1862, which amounted to some £500,000. The most numerous single group of loans, slightly more than a quarter, were those in the £200-£299 range, but as can be seen there were some very substantial loans indeed. These were provided by institutions, and other, less affluent institutions, all of them local, were also represented. But there were also many large loans from private parties: 141, or just under a quarter, loaned sums of between £1,000 and £9,999. It seems reasonable to say that by this time, local authority investment, at least as far as Leeds was concerned, had achieved the status of high class securities, an impression reinforced by the fact that the council was able to progressively reduce its price of borrowing without difficulty, which implies there was no shortage of potential investors. Some credit for the relatively low interest rate on loans perhaps belongs to the borough

<sup>1</sup>Sub Finance Executive Committee minutes, 28 Nov 1856.

<sup>2</sup>*ibid.*, 30 April 1858, 21 Jan 1859, 20 May, 17 June, 24 June, 8 July, 7 Oct, 18 Nov 1859, 6 Jan 1860.

<sup>3</sup>*ibid.*, 3 Aug 1860, 30 Aug 1861.

TABLE 8.5a

The number and size of loans made to Leeds corporation, April 1855 to May 1862

Amount (£)	Number
1-99	2
100-199	32
200-299	170
300-399	74
400-499	45
500-599	70
600-699	26
700-799	27
800-899	14
900-999	5
1,000-1,999	88
2,000-2,999	24
3,000-3,999	11
4,000-4,999	2
5,000-5,999	10
6,000-6,999	5
7,000-7,999	1
8,000-8,999	0
9,000-9,999	2
10,000+	3

Total number of loans of ascertainable amount = 611

Total amount borrowed = £510,015

Source: See table 8.5b.

TABLE 8.5b

Loans made by institutions to Leeds  
corporation, April 1855 to May 1862

Name of Institution	Amount (£)
Clydesdale Banking Company	50,000
Leeds and Yorkshire Assurance Company	25,000
Bank of England	10,000
Trustees of the West Riding Medical Charity	4,000
Trustees of Trinity Church	600
Trustees of the Unmarried Women's Benevolent Society	500
Leeds Tradesmen's Benevolent Society	500
Tradesmen's Benevolent Institution	500
Lily of the Valley Lodge of Oddfellows	300
Trustees of the Friendly Drop Lodge, Armley	300
Trustees of the Earl Grey Lodge of Oddfellows	300
Clothiers' Benevolent Society, Wortley	250
Trustees of the Tulip Lodge of Oddfellows	200
Trustees of Bramley Loyal Friendly Society	200
Trustees of the Sun Dew Lodge of Gardeners at Chapel Allerton	140

Source: Sub Finance Executive Committee minutes, 1855-1862.



treasurer, of whom the town clerk said;

'we have a very cleyer financier as Treasurer, and somehow or other he gets money cheaper than other people. Liverpool is a substantial place, and why they should have to pay more I do not know unless it arises from the skilful management of our Treasurer'<sup>1</sup>

Although it was successful in attracting loanable funds, the council found the practice of borrowing on the relatively short term of three to seven years inconvenient, for

'when the time has come for repayment, they (ie. the council) have either to renew the loan, or to take up the money on other loans for the purpose of paying off the mortgage, which has always involved considerable risk, trouble and expense'<sup>2</sup>

To remove this difficulty, the council followed the example set by the Metropolitan Board of Works, and the corporations of Manchester and Bradford, and obtained powers in the 1877 improvement act to raise money by the issue of debenture stock, with a dividend of upto 4%<sup>3</sup>. The net debt, which stood at £3.8m. in 1884/85 increased only slowly over the next ten years, to £4.7m. by 1895/96, But it then grew by nearly sixty percent by the beginning of the new century (£7.2m. in 1900/01), and by more than sixty percent (to £11.8m.) in the subsequent five years.<sup>4</sup> Table 8.6 shows the distribution of the council's capital expenditure by the end of the period.

Whilst rates were the only considerable source of income for the corporation, some financial assistance was received from two other sources, namely grants in aid from central government, and profits

<sup>1</sup> HLRO, Select Committee of the House of Commons, Evidence 1872, volume 39, 25 April 1872, f.47. The county authority of Lancashire was paying more than 4% on average until 1881, see D. Gregory, thesis, pp. 145-186.

<sup>2</sup> RB, 26 Sept 1877, p.311.

<sup>3</sup> loc.cit.

<sup>4</sup> 'Report of the Finance Committee', in Annual Reports of Committees, for the years mentioned.

TABLE 8.6

Capital Expenditure by Leeds corporation  
upto 31 March 1906

	£
( 1) Drainage, sewage works, street improvements, highways, bridges, unhealthy areas, etc. )	5,420,719
( 2) Waterworks	2,953,605
( 3) Tramways	1,308,468
( 4) Gasworks	1,185,990
( 5) Electricity	847,593
( 6) Parks	543,167
( 7) Markets	487,856
( 8) Corporate buildings	301,124
( 9) Baths	122,274
(10) Cemeteries	94,091
(11) Police stations	91,449
(12) Fine art gallery: works of art	33,197
(13) Allotments	9,436
	£14,064,969

Source: 'Report of the Finance Committee', Annual Reports of Committees, 1905-06. Note that sums have been rounded to the nearest pound.

appropriated from municipal undertakings. Grants in aid, which may be defined as,

'a subvention payable from the Exchequer of the United Kingdom to a Local Government Authority, in order to assist that Authority in execution of some or all of its statutory duties',<sup>1</sup>

were already available by 1835, to defray the cost of criminal prosecutions, although this of course, was not a municipal matter. Government funds were provided to assist law enforcement in another respect in 1856, when the County and Borough Police Act provided a subsidy equal to a quarter of the cost of pay and clothing of those forces which the Home Office inspectors certified as efficient.<sup>2</sup> The act was strongly condemned as a 'centralising' measure,<sup>3</sup> and more than a third of the council opposed the continued acceptance of the government grant in 1858.<sup>4</sup> Apart from any spirit of local independence,<sup>5</sup> the Act aroused opposition because it increased the cost of the police force. Upto 1856, only Leeds township, and parts of Hunslet, Holbeck, Wortley and Potternewton had been patrolled,<sup>6</sup> and in 1855 the Home Office had complained of insufficient numbers in the Leeds police.<sup>7</sup> As a result of the act, the watch committee decided in favour of policing the whole borough,<sup>8</sup> in order to qualify for the grant, and this involved a

<sup>1</sup>Sidney Webb, Grants in Aid: a criticism and a proposal, p.6.

<sup>2</sup>J. Watson Grice, National and Local Finance, p.39.

<sup>3</sup>LM, 23 Feb 1856.

<sup>4</sup>CM, 1 Jan 1858.

<sup>5</sup>cf. the reaction to the County Constabulary bill in 1840, when one alderman complained that, 'its object, in the first instance was to establish a local constabulary force wherever that force might be required, but he thought its ultimate object was to put the whole machinery into the hands of a body in London, and thus in effect alter the administration of justice in the whole Kingdom. He had always felt it to be one of the privileges peculiar to this county, that they had the administration of justice in their own hands', LM, 16 May, 1840.

<sup>6</sup>LM, 16 Aug 1856; see also CM, 22 May 1844, and 12 May 1847.

<sup>7</sup>CM, 9 May 1855.

<sup>8</sup>CM, 29 Sept. 1856.

'very considerable increase in the number of men'<sup>1</sup>. Further relief came from central government in the eighteen seventies. In 1874, it decided to increase the contribution to police finances from a quarter to a half, and the Prisons Act of 1877 vested ownership of prisons in the central government, and so relieved local authorities of the cost of management. The increased subsidy to the police meant that the proportion of total expenditure provided from this source as a proportion of the cost of the 'borough fund' account increased from 15% in the early seventies to 20% by the early eighties, and remained at about one fifth thereafter. The nationalisation of the prison resulted in an important reduction in the council's obligations, since in the years 1870 to 1877, the maintenance of the prison was costing on average about £12,000 a year, which represented 15 to 20% of the municipal budget on the 'borough fund' account.<sup>2</sup> For our purposes, the only material result of the changes from the late eighties in the methods by which parliament channelled funds into local government was the beginning of grants for technical education, which have been previously considered.<sup>3</sup>

A second source of rate relief came from the profits of municipal enterprise. The possibility of using these to alleviate the rate burden was realised at a relatively early date, being an important issue in the discussions over the possible purchase of the gas works in the eighteen fifties. Although in the fifties and sixties the water-works were making substantial profits they remained as an accumulating

<sup>1</sup>LM, 16 Aug 1856.

<sup>2</sup>Percentages calculated from the Borough Fund Revenue Account for 1869/70 to 1876/77, 1886/87, 1890/91, and 1899/1900.

<sup>3</sup>See above pp.305-308.

'balance in hand' until 1867, when £80,817 was paid into the borough fund account. An average of about £10,000 was paid in annually over the next four years, so that by 1872 the town clerk could tell the Commons' select committee that,

'we have built the town hall out of the profits of the water within twelve years; or at least we have paid £120,000 to the credit of the borough fund out of the water'<sup>1</sup>

The municipalisation of the gas supply in 1870 created a new potential source of income. In 1871 and 1872, £26,561 was appropriated to the borough fund, but after this, only in 1878 and 1884 were any profits paid over. It seems that the Liberals preferred to pursue a 'cheap gas' policy by fixing the price of gas to cover costs, interest and sinking fund charges, and did not budget for a profit margin which would allow regular subsidies to be made over for rate relief. This would be consistent with their tenet that no group of rate payers should benefit at the expense of others, which also initially influenced their attitude to municipal tramways.<sup>2</sup> This, at least, seems a more probable explanation than any possible desire to supply cheap lighting to the shop-keeping caucus.<sup>3</sup> When the Conservatives came to power, however, there was a change of policy in this respect. From the late nineties, as table 8.7 shows, all municipal undertakings were obliged to contribute to the city fund. Although the Liberals, in accord with their previous practice, at first opposed this, arguing that any benefit should be passed directly to the consumers in the form of lower prices,<sup>4</sup> this policy was in fact continued after they regained a majority in 1904.

<sup>1</sup>HLRO, *ibid.*, f. 46; and see table 8.7.

<sup>2</sup>LM, 15 Feb 1894.

<sup>3</sup>See E.P. Hennock, *Fit and Proper Persons*, p. 277-278.

<sup>4</sup>LM, 2 June 1898.

TABLE 8.7a

Profits from municipal enterprises paid into  
the Borough Fund, 1867 to 1884

Year	Waterworks (£)	Gas works (£)
1867	80,817	
1868	9,819	
1869	10,428	
1870	10,723	
1871	8,980	13,803
1872	7,142	12,758
1873	3,757	
1874	3,852	
1875	2,217	
1876	3,961	
1877		
1878		11,279
1879		
1880		
1881		
1882		
1883		
1884		10,000
Gross total	141,696	47,840

Source: See table 8.7b.

Notes: (1) Sums have been rounded to the nearest pound.

(2) The following sums were paid from the Borough Fund to cover deficiencies in the utilities:-

Waterworks, 1883 £21,332; 1887 £6,425

Gas works, 1874 £935 ; 1884 £4,582

Thus the net total profit paid in in this period was £113,939 from the waterworks and £42,324 from the gas works.

TABLE 8.7h

Profits from municipal enterprises paid into  
the Borough Fund, 1897-1914

Year	Waterworks (£)	Gasworks (£)	Tramways (£)	Electricity (£)
1897	-	18,000	-	-
1898	18,000	-	-	-
1899	16,819	20,351	10,325	-
1900	6,552	12,737	8,031	-
1901	24,000	-	6,167	4,000
1902	13,942	6,420	21,058	6,000
1903	14,500	-	47,000	3,170
1904	33,725	37,561	114,000	3,430
1905	11,940	16,120	55,000	-
1906	19,497	17,681	51,500	-
1907	14,979	15,274	154,262	3,410
1908	26,990	14,709	97,550	20,608
1909	9,021	2,068	47,557	5,248
1910	16,673	6,017	55,318	8,931
1911	15,819	18,101	51,888	9,993
1912	20,944	22,223	61,163	16,065
1913	13,227	24,727	61,375	15,509
1914	12,451	-	70,004	14,314
Total	289,079	231,989	912,198	110,678

Source: 'Financial Statistics. City Accountant's Office',  
pp. 45-46, and 49.

Note: No profits were appropriated to the Borough Fund between  
1885 and 1897.

(2)

The council, of course, did not undertake the management of its services, or the day to day application of its policies in full session, but delegated administration to its officers and committees. The committees can be classified into three groups: those which transacted business for the council in its role as a municipal corporation under the 1835 Act, those created to exercise powers obtained under the improvement acts, and the committees set up to administer the utilities, water, gas, tramways and electricity, when they were taken into public ownership. The municipal committees were five in number, namely the watch, finance, parliamentary, gaol, and printing committee, and the functions of each are for the most part evident from their titles. Of these, the watch committee was in two respects the most important, for its creation was specifically enjoined by the 1835 Act 'to appoint constables for the borough'<sup>1</sup>, and expenditure on the police force was the largest single item in the municipal budget. As we have seen in an earlier chapter, the committee quickly set about the reorganisation of the existing day and night watch forces, and remodelled it, under the guidance of Robert Baker, into a preventive force on the metropolitan design. The finance committee examined and passed bills for payment, drew up estimates of corporate expenditure, arranged the borrowing of money from the public, and made up the annual accounts. The business of the parliamentary committee was to,

'watch the progress of any bills which may be introduced into parliament affecting the borough'<sup>2</sup>;

and to advise the council what steps should be taken to support or

<sup>1</sup>5 and 6 Wm. IV, cap. LXXVI, sections lxxvi and lxxvii.

<sup>2</sup>Parliamentary committee, 9 Nov 1843.



oppose them. This involved taking notice of a wide range of local and national legislation, from turnpike, waterworks and railway company bills to general legislation of all kinds which proposed changes in local government. The gaol committee was instituted to select a site for the borough prison, and recommend a design for it, and was then entrusted with the administration of the building. But as we have seen, it had to concede control to the magistrates, which offended against the council's strongly-held belief that there should be no division of responsibility in the administration and finance of local government services.<sup>1</sup> Finally, the printing committee was responsible for the provision of stationery and electoral registers. The supply of these was let out to tender, and here then was one of the few remunerative appointments which the council had at its disposal. The printing contract was clearly regarded as one of the spoils of office, for it was given to Edward Baines, a prominent Liberal and proprietor of the influential Liberal paper, the Leeds Mercury. As the rival tory press tartly commented,

'Mr. Baines, besides being appointed Printer to the council, would also seem to have been retained as Trumpeter also; for the office is likely to be anything but a sinecure'<sup>2</sup>

In 1842, the number of council committees was increased by six on the assumption of responsibility for the burial ground, and

<sup>1</sup>See for example, ibid., 31 May 1844, petitioning against a bill which proposed to vest the appointment of smoke inspectors in borough magistrates, and not in town councils which are 'the proper guardians of the Borough Fund', and ibid., 11 July 1845, petitioning against a bill which proposed to finance pauper lunatic asylums out of borough rates, on the order of borough magistrates. It was claimed that, the council would (in the absence of other funds) 'have the odium of laying a rate for an amount over which they have no check, and over the expenditure of the proceeds of which rate, when collected, they would have no control'.

<sup>2</sup>LI, 23 Jan 1836.

improvement acts.<sup>1</sup> The lamp, market, scavenging and nuisance, and hackney coach committee took over the functions which the superceded improvement commission had exercised, and the other two were established to administer the new items of legislation. The 'burial act' committee managed the affairs of the new municipal cemeteries, and appointed the necessary spiritual and manual employees. The most important opportunities which the improvement act had created for the improvement of environmental conditions, those of ordering the paving of streets and the creation of a sewerage system, were vested in the streets committee, which was initially under the chairmanship of Robert Baker.

In the following decades, the expansion of the committee system reflected the growth in the range of municipal services. New committees were created to supervise the highways (1866), the libraries (1869), baths and washhouses (1878), allotments (1891), technical instruction grants (1895), and unemployment 'distress' relief (1905). But in many respects, of equal or greater importance, were the sub-committees which proliferated as the major committees had new functions added to their agenda. The most important were those of the streets and sewerage committee, the building clauses (1862) and utilisation of sewage (1866) sub committees, and of the sanitary committee,<sup>2</sup> the hospitals (1882), rivers pollution (1886-1894) and the insanitary areas (1894) sub committees. One aspect of the council's increasing activities was the increasingly large amount of property which it owned. A

<sup>1</sup>CMIA, 3 Aug. 1842.

<sup>2</sup>The scavenging and nuisance committee was retitled as the sanitary committee from November 1869.

'repairs' committee was established in 1836, and this took on nominal responsibility for Woodhouse Moor in 1858. This committee, and the town hall committee (1851) were amalgamated in 1868 to form the corporate property committee which superintended all municipal offices and recreation grounds.

## (3)

The widening scope of municipal business entailed an increase in the numbers employed in municipal service at all levels. We have already considered the growth of the municipal labour force which resulted from the municipalisation of the utility companies, and the council's early experiences in labour relations. This section is concerned with matters relating to the council's employees in other grades, namely the professional staff, the inspectorate, and the police force. On coming into office in 1835, the council inherited its two principal officers, the town clerk and the chief constable, from the unreformed corporation. The office of town clerk was obviously important, and to its holder, lucrative. Initially, the council was content to continue the existing clerk, James Nicholson, in office. But he did not retain the position for long, as after six months he resigned when the salary was fixed at £250 a year.<sup>1</sup> This has been interpreted as a political move by the council, a suspicion strengthened by the fact that his replacement, Edwin Eddison, was a Liberal, whose salary was later increased substantially.<sup>2</sup> But there was perhaps a more important reason for effectively enforcing Nicholson to resign, by the award of an unrealistically low salary, than simply the desire to avoid the compensation for

<sup>1</sup>CM, 24 June 1836.

<sup>2</sup>D. Fraser, thesis, p. 196.

loss of office which his dismissal would have entailed<sup>1</sup>. Had the council been hostile to him from the beginning, it would hardly have offered its thanks for his 'able impartial and faithful services'<sup>2</sup> which it did in January 1836. These inferred qualities were presumably forgotten when the council discovered that the funds accumulated by its predecessor had been alienated before its dissolution, and that Nicholson had failed to inform them of this, having said that

'there are no goods, securities, effects or property belonging to the body corporate except the mace and certain pews'<sup>3</sup>

He certainly paid dearly for his reticence, for in the eighteen forties the town clerk's income from salary and fees was always above £500 a year.<sup>4</sup> The existing chief constable, Edward Ried, appointed in 1823, managed to survive the transition from the old to new regime, but not without difficulty. When the force was reorganised in 1836, the post, at £250 a year, was given to one William Heywood<sup>5</sup>, who retained it until November 1837 when Ried was reinstated.<sup>6</sup> The council also appointed a treasurer, which simply involved the appointment of a banker to receive money from municipal officers and make payments on orders signed by the finance committee.<sup>7</sup>

In August 1842, the officers of the improvement commission were re-engaged with the exception of the accountant, and the law clerk, whose

<sup>1</sup> 5 and 6 Wm. IV, cap. LXXVI, section lxvi.

<sup>2</sup> CM, 1 Jan 1836.

<sup>3</sup> CM, 5 Feb 1836.

<sup>4</sup> Report on the Answers to Queries addressed to the respective authorities entrusted with the distribution of the local funds, (1850), Appendix, table 1.

<sup>5</sup> Finance Committee and Watch Committee minutes, 25 March 1836.

<sup>6</sup> J. Mayhall, Annals of Yorkshire, vol. 1, 1 Jan 1859, and D. Fraser, thesis, pp. 198-199.

<sup>7</sup> CM, 15 Jan 1836. The council was also statutorily obliged to pay salaries to the Recorder and Coroner, but these are not strictly municipal employees.

duties were taken over by the town clerk. The only new professional post created was that of borough surveyor which was filled by a local architect, at a salary of £120.<sup>1</sup> The post was part-time until January 1845, when the salary was raised to £200,

'with the privilege of taking pupils, on the understanding that he will not be allowed to take private business, nor to receive any remuneration from the council for the labour of such pupils'<sup>2</sup>;

and in February 1851 it was increased to £300 under the same proviso.<sup>3</sup> Two years later, an assistant borough surveyor was appointed at £75. The salary for this post rose to £105 in January 1857 and to £130 by February 1861.<sup>4</sup>

The possibility of engaging a medical officer was first mooted in 1862, when the council asked the scavenging and nuisance committee to consider whether there was a need to employ a 'medical man' as inspector of nuisances.<sup>5</sup> The committee, however, considered that

'the staff at present employed is fully competent to exercise all necessary sanitary supervision in the borough',

and rejected the suggestion.<sup>6</sup> But in the following year, the committee sought approval to allow the meat inspector to employ a medical officer presumably on a consultative basis to give expert advice on meat considered unfit for consumption, but the council refused permission.<sup>7</sup> The need for a medical officer was made apparent by the local

<sup>1</sup>CM, 21 Sept 1842.

<sup>2</sup>CMIA, 6 Jan 1845.

<sup>3</sup>CMIA, 12 Feb 1851.

<sup>4</sup>CMIA, 10 Aug 1853, 9 Nov 1858, RB, 13 Feb 1861.

<sup>5</sup>CM, 1 Sept 1862.

<sup>6</sup>RB, 26 Sept 1862.

<sup>7</sup>CM, 31 March 1863.

public health crisis in 1865 and the attendant public concern and publicity, which inspired a memorial

'requesting that a Medical Gentleman may be appointed as Sanitary Inspector'<sup>1</sup>

The council agreed, and included an enabling clause in the new improvement bill. In August 1866, M.K. Robinson, the M.O.H. at Birkenhead was appointed at a salary of £500 a year.<sup>2</sup> Pressure to establish the post of public analyst came not from local but metropolitan promptings. Following the enactment of the Adulteration Act of 1872, the L.G.B. wrote to ask what was being done 'with regard to the appointment of a public analyst',<sup>3</sup> and in May 1873 the council gave the position to Thomas Fairley, at £100 a year.<sup>4</sup> Some correspondence with the Board ensued, as it wished to make certain that he possessed 'the competent medical, chemical and microscopical knowledge' which the Act demanded, but his testimonials proved highly satisfactory, and the Board gave its formal approval in July.<sup>5</sup>

The establishment of public libraries made the appointment of a librarian necessary, and the decision to create an art gallery was followed by the appointment of a curator.<sup>6</sup> The growth of the municipal hospital service made it necessary to create posts for medically-qualified staff to supervise the fever and small pox hospitals.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup>CM, 29 March 1866.

<sup>2</sup>Leeds Improvement Act, 1866, 29 and 30 Vict., cap. clvii, section 9; RB, 9 May 1866; CM, 16 May 1866.

<sup>3</sup>PRO, MH12/15245, 61049B/1872.

<sup>4</sup>CM, 14 May 1873.

<sup>5</sup>PRO, *ibid.*, 32755/73, 32755B/73, 35257/73, 35257B/73, 39529/73, and 43583B/73. The post was not full time; the £100 was a basic retaining fee, on top of which the analyst was paid extra for analyses over a certain number.

<sup>6</sup>CM, 4 June 1870 and 3 Feb 1889.

<sup>7</sup>CM, 30 Sept 1885.

Similarly, the municipal purchase of the water, gas, tramway and electricity undertakings meant the addition of engineers and works managers to the council's payroll.<sup>1</sup> The council possessed no officer with the specific duty of overseeing its finances until the appointment of a full-time treasurer at £300 a year in 1855,<sup>2</sup> to replace the manager of the Leeds Banking Company, who had acted as treasurer since 1836.

The council's principal officers were allowed only a strictly limited independence of action, as the council and its committees intervened to restrict initiative, and indeed, impare efficiency. When the scavenging and nuisance committee defined the duties of the new medical officer of health, it decided, despite Robinson's protests, that he must,

'receive the consent of the committee before taking any proceedings affecting the mode of carrying on the trade of the town, or interfering with the general usage of the people'<sup>3</sup>

Five years later, when the council refused to accept the government grant towards the medical officer's salary, the Leeds Mercury complained that the council,

'deliberately shutting its eyes to the plain path of duty...has resolved that the Officer of Health should continue under the dictation of a committee, the incompetence of which we know by sad experience, and upon the integrity of which town councillors themselves have not been slow to cast reflections.... The public should know by now what that means'<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>CM, 2 Jan 1871 (gasworks), 7 July 1897 (tramways).

<sup>2</sup>CM, 30 March 1855.

<sup>3</sup>SNC, 10 April 1867.

<sup>4</sup>LM, 3 Dec 1872.

As an example of what was implied, the same source mentioned that Dr. Robinson had been threatened by a member of the sanitary committee 'if he dared move against cellar dwellings'. In the same month, noting that the medical officer had to receive the approval of the committee before prosecuting in food adulteration cases, the Mercury asked

'is this not the reason why prosecutions for adulteration are so few and so ineffectual in Leeds?'<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Robinson resigned his post in June of the following year.<sup>2</sup> When Sir William Nott-Bower wrote his memoirs in 1926, he still remembered his three years as chief constable in Leeds (1878-1881) with obvious exasperation, and implied that in his period of office there were numerous instances of behaviour by council members which shaded from the cantankerous to the corrupt.<sup>3</sup>

What evidence there is on municipal salaries suggests that they were generally inferior to those paid by towns of comparable importance, and it is evident from council minutes that there was an influential lobby which opposed salary increases. When Dr. Robinson resigned in 1873, it was proposed to pay his successor at the same rate of £500 a year, but this was reduced on amendment to £400.<sup>4</sup> The original salary was restored in 1882, but a motion to pay £600 was defeated.<sup>5</sup> It is hardly possible at this distance in time to assess Dr. Goldie's competence. He was certainly willing to criticise the sanitary committee's policies, for example, over the continued existence of privies, the inadequate number of inspectors, and the facilities for treating fever

<sup>1</sup>LM, 2 Dec, 3 Dec 1872.

<sup>2</sup>CM, 5 June 1873.

<sup>3</sup>J. W. N. Bower, Fifty Two Years a Policeman, pp. 40-42.

<sup>4</sup>CM, 5 June 1873.

<sup>5</sup>CM, 28 Sept 1882.



for patients. But he was strongly criticised for his mishandling of the typhoid epidemic in Headingley in 1889, and forced to resign.<sup>1</sup> Even then, the council refused to offer a much higher salary. It refused to pay a proposed £900, or £800 to the new medical officer, but agreed on £700.<sup>2</sup> Professional opinion observed that

'it is to be regretted that the sanitary authority offer so small a commencing salary as £700 per annum, which is scarcely suitable to the responsibility of the post'<sup>3</sup>

In 1877, when the town clerk resigned to become solicitor to the Great Eastern Railway Company he said that he had decided to move because

'there was no further promotion for me to be hoped for in the service of the corporation'<sup>4</sup>

He was receiving a salary of £1,250 a year, which had been unchanged for nine years, but nevertheless the council advertised the post at £1,000, increased the salary to the previous level after four years, and then raised it to £1,500 five years later.<sup>5</sup> The town clerk appointed in 1892 was less fortunate. Awarded a salary of £1,250, he resigned after seven years, claiming that,

'when I accepted the appointment I did so in full reliance upon the confident expectation expressed to me by several leading members of the council, belonging to both political parties, that the salary then offered me would, within a very short period be increased by the council to the amount which previously attached to the office. I should not otherwise have accepted the position, as in relinquishing private practice as a solicitor I made a considerable financial sacrifice'<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup>LM, 8 Aug 1889; SC, 22 July 1889.

<sup>2</sup>CM, 7 Aug 1889.

<sup>3</sup>Public Health, vol II (1889-90), p. 139.

<sup>4</sup>CM, 3 Dec 1877.

<sup>5</sup>CM, 16 Jan 1878, 2 Jan 1882, 31 March 1887.

<sup>6</sup>CM, 1 March 1899.

This may have been a reflection of the council's assessment of his ability, as his successor rose in income and estimation very rapidly, being appointed at £1,500 and gaining two annual increments of £250 before resigning to become a barrister.<sup>1</sup> The new town clerk, appointed in January 1904, received £1,500.<sup>2</sup>

The police force, at all levels, also suffered from the zeal for cheese paring which was especially strong in the eighteen seventies and eighties. J.W.N. Bower remarked that the salary of £300 offered in 1878,

'was simply ridiculous, considering the importance of the town, the strength of the police force, and the heavy responsibility of the office - indeed it was...hardly more than I was receiving as a sub-inspector in Ireland';<sup>3</sup>

and when he resigned in 1881, he moved to be head of the Liverpool police at £750 a year.<sup>4</sup> At least it was always possible to find a chief constable, but there was protracted delay in finding a superintendent of the detective force. In 1876 when the post became vacant, the watch committee asked permission to advertise it at £200, but the council was only prepared to agree to £150.<sup>5</sup> The result was that of ten applicants, the committee reported that seven were 'altogether out of the question',

<sup>1</sup> CM, 3 May 1899, 4 July 1900, 1 Jan 1904. The eulogy produced by the council on his resignation was wholly sincere, as it retained his services as counsel on several subsequent occasions.

<sup>2</sup> CM, 1 Jan 1904.

<sup>3</sup> J. W. N. Bower, *op.cit.*, p. 39. J. W. N. Bower quotes (p. 41) the remarks of the leading Liberal 'economist', councillor (later alderman) Scarr, who moved an amendment to reduce the amount by £100; 'The office of Chief Constable isn't worth the figure. We'd 'ave lots of applicants put up at 'alf the wages. We don't want one of these 'ere Gentlemen who can play lawn tennis and go a-fishing, or make a nice bow in the Mayor's drawing-room, or say 'Ow-d'ye-do without dropping 'is H's. What we want is a man as can catch a thief when a chap's 'ouse is broken into.'

<sup>4</sup> W.R. Cockroft, *The Rise and Growth of the Liverpool Police Force in the Nineteenth Century*, unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Wales 1969, p. 248.

<sup>5</sup> CM, 2 Feb 1876.

and the other three 'had neither the training, education or necessary experience'. The position had been widely advertised, and so the committee concluded that the poor response was caused by,

'the onerous nature of the office and the smallness of the salary',

and again recommended that £200 should be offered. In support of its request, it reminded the council that the Prevention of Crimes Act, 1871 had never been fully enforced in Leeds because of the

'absence of closer connection between the preventive and detective systems of the force'<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, the council again refused to agree. In May 1876, the question of a higher salary was again rejected, as it was in March and in April 1879<sup>2</sup>. At this time, the police superintendents were receiving markedly lower salaries than those paid by other forces: an average of £118, compared to £170 in the West Riding and Birmingham, £180 in Lancashire and £200 in Liverpool. The total strength of the Leeds police force was also inferior to that in five out of ten other large towns. Furthermore, in the late seventies and early eighties from the evidence presented by the chief constable, medical officer and the town clerk in support of their claims for increases in salaries, it can be seen (table 8.9) that Leeds emerges poorly from comparisons with other major towns in this respect also.

Apart from the municipal enterprises, the police force, the burial grounds committee, which employed the necessary complement of chaplains, registrars and grave diggers, and the borough gaol, which the council financed but did not administer, the only other sector of municipal

<sup>1</sup>RB, 24 March 1876.

<sup>2</sup>CM, 3 May 1876, 31 March, 31 April 1879.

TABLE 8.8

The strength of the police force in ten large towns in England in 1871 and 1881

Town	Population to each constable in:	
	1871 (Ranking)	1881 (Ranking)
Liverpool	435 ( 1)	458 ( 2)
Manchester	470 ( 2)	454 ( 1)
Bristol	602 ( 3)	580 ( 3)
Salford	701 ( 4)	644 ( 4)
Hull	706 ( 5)	757 ( 5)
Leeds	822 ( 6)	869 ( 7)
Sheffield	856 ( 7)	917 ( 8)
Birmingham	857 ( 8)	770 ( 6)
Bradford	917 ( 9)	925 ( 9)
Nottingham	1,527 (10)	941 (10)

Source: F.R. Spark, Collection of Extracts, Documents, etc., relating to Leeds City Council Proceedings, volume 3, f. 24.

TABLE 8.9

Salaries paid to the Chief Constable (1876), Town Clerk (1877),  
and Medical Officer of Health (1882) in Leeds  
and in other large towns

Town	Chief Constable Salary (Ranking)	Town Clerk			Medical Officer Salary (Ranking)
		(1)	(2)	(Ranking)	
Liverpool	£1,000 ( 1)	£2,500	£3,500	( 1)	£1,000 ( 1=)
Glasgow	800 ( 2=)	n.a.			850 ( 3)
Manchester	800 ( 2=)	2,500	2,550	( 2)	n.a.
Birmingham	700 ( 5)	1,200	2,000	( 3)	1,000 ( 1=)
Sheffield	750 ( 4)	n.a.			
Newcastle	550 ( 6)	n.a.			630 ( 6)
Nottingham	n.a.	1,600	1,000	( 4)	650 ( 5)
Salford	n.a.	1,300	900	( 6)	n.a.
Bradford	400 ( 7=)	1,500	1,050	( 5)	500 ( 7)
Hull	400 ( 7=)	n.a.			n.a.
Middlesbrough	350 ( 9=)	n.a.			n.a.
Stockport	350 ( 9=)	n.a.			n.a.
Leeds	300 (11)	1,250	786	( 7)	400 ( 8)
Edinburgh	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.		750 ( 4)

Source: Chief Constable - F.R. Spark, Collection of Extracts, Documents, etc., relating to Leeds City Council Proceedings, volume 1, f. 40.

Town Clerk - *ibid.*, f. 18.

Medical Officer - volume 3, part 2, f.16.

Note: The sums given in the town clerk's statement are,  
(1) Salary, and (2) Office Expenses.

administration which employed any number of individuals was the sanitary department.<sup>1</sup> The council inherited two officers from the improvement commission, a superintendent of scavengers and another who combined the duties of inspector of lamps, of nuisances, and of hackney coaches, and clerk of the market. By the early eighteen fifties, a full-time inspector and assistant inspector of nuisances were employed, and an inspector of smoke nuisance, and by the early sixties, an inspector of meat and slaughter-houses, and an inspector of buildings (from 31 March 1860) had been added. As a result of the enterprise of the first medical officer, the corps of inspectors was augmented by drafting in men from the police force.<sup>2</sup> The borough was divided up into fifteen divisions, and a policeman-inspector assigned to each. In the suburban divisions, this took the men off regular duties on one or two days a week, but in the eight which comprised the central urban area, nearly all the men's time was devoted to sanitary work. This practice continued until 1875, when stopped by the action of the Home Office inspector of police. In 1874 he refused to continue to recommend that the wages of the men seconded to the sanitary department be subsidised from the government police grant, because they were not employed full time in police duties.<sup>3</sup> Thereupon, the committee decided to employ six permanent inspectors to replace them.<sup>4</sup> By the early eighteen eighties, the committee employed fifteen inspectors, two for meat, and thirteen

<sup>1</sup>The only comprehensive enumeration of those employed in all capacities by the corporation is to be found in RB, 13 Feb 1861. A partial enumeration is also to be found in RB, 8 Feb 1854.

<sup>2</sup>M.K. Robinson, 'The sanitary improvement of Leeds', Trans. of the Nat. Assoc. for the Promotion of Social Science, Leeds Meeting 1871, pp. 486-7.

<sup>3</sup>SC, 11 May 1874.

<sup>4</sup>SC, 8 Feb, 8 March 1875.

for sanitary purposes.<sup>1</sup> The medical officer of health regarded the number as insufficient. When reporting on a case of defective house drainage, he remarked

'but this leads us to the unpleasant suspicion that this is by no means an isolated case. Then how are we to obtain the knowledge of those hidden conditions? The answer is simple. House to house inspection. The Leeds sanitary committee have appointed an increased number of inspectors to meet this demand, and I may be allowed to add that this increase in staff is, in my opinion, still short of what it should be'<sup>2</sup>

But no expansion of the department's inspectorate occurred until the end of the next decade despite recommendations from the medical officer, and a deputation from the Sanitary Aid Society, to increase the number to allow the process of house to house inspection to be speeded up.<sup>3</sup> In 1899, the committee finally agreed to the appointment of seven extra assistant inspectors, two of them female, and a third one Polish-speaking who was to take charge of the houses and workshops in the Jewish district.<sup>4</sup>

In contrast to the council's principal officers, who necessarily had 'professional' qualifications for their positions,<sup>5</sup> the lesser figures in the administration came from more varied backgrounds. For example, the first chief clerk of the Board of Works, who later became the first borough treasurer in 1853, was an ex-tea dealer, and the sub

<sup>1</sup>SC, 9 Oct 1882.

<sup>2</sup>SC, 12 Jan 1885.

<sup>3</sup>SC, 2 July, 1 Oct 1896.

<sup>4</sup>SC, 10 March 1898, 9 March, 18 May, 2 Nov 1899.

<sup>5</sup>Clearly, the town clerk had to be a lawyer, and the surveyors, at least in the earlier decades, presumably some 'apprenticeship' to an already-established surveyor; the chief constables came from police or military backgrounds, cf. Liverpool where the chief constable in 1844 had been with the Glasgow police, then the governor of Glasgow prison and then superintendent of the prisons of Lanarkshire; his successor (1845-52) began in the Metropolitan police force, and the chief constable 1852-1881 was an ex-army officer, see W.R. Cockroft, thesis, pp. 203, 206-208, 227-245.

clerk an overseer.<sup>1</sup> Of the four shortlisted candidates for the post of superintendent of scavengers, one was a joiner, another a butcher, another an engraver, and the fourth a joiner.<sup>2</sup> One of the inspectors of weights and measures appointed in 1849 had previously been a brass founder, and the other a summoning officer with the police force.<sup>3</sup> Samuel Sands, who became inspector of nuisances in 1851 was formerly on the staff of the Leeds Overseers office, and his rival for the job was a schoolmaster from Armley.<sup>4</sup> This diversity was to be expected, for no distinctive corps of local government officials could have emerged by this period, when such posts were being created for the first time. There seems to have been no lack of competition, for the three last-mentioned vacancies attracted thirty eight, eighty, and seventy applicants respectively.<sup>5</sup> This situation naturally changed as local government service became established. In 1891, the sanitary committee decided that no inspector would gain a salary increase after the end of his second year after appointment if he did not possess the certificate of the Sanitary Institute,<sup>6</sup> and at the end of the century the Webbs, in an interview with the medical officer, noted that,

'inspectors are now, for the first time, required to have the certificate on their appointment - this put in the advt. by chairman of the committee off his own bat. Formerly, no certificate required and placed jobbed: then certificate required before second increment of salary: then lately before first increment. Dr. Cameron emphatic in praise of requiring certificate as preventing jobbery, excluding local preference, and actually widening the effective field of choice by attracting qualified candidates from other parts'.

<sup>1</sup>LM, 13 Aug, 3 Sept 1842.

<sup>2</sup>LM, 15 July 1843.

<sup>3</sup>LM, 2 June 1849.

<sup>4</sup>LM, 20 Sept 1851.

<sup>5</sup>(source as last three footnotes).

<sup>6</sup>SC, 13 July 1891.



Unfortunately, as the Webbs were also told by Dr. Cameron, he was,

'very anxious to raise the salary of inspectors so as to retain the services of the best men, who now leave it for better places'<sup>1</sup>

One reason for the council's unwillingness to vote larger salaries was the organised opposition from the ratepayers which often arose when these matters came up for discussion. For example, in 1870, the proposed increase in the borough treasurer's salary,

'was received by many of the ratepayers with great dissatisfaction'<sup>2</sup>

Protest meetings were held in the north, north east and Kirkgate wards, and a deputation which was sent to the council saw the proposition voted down. Again, in May 1878 the gas inspector was refused an increase which had been the subject of a deputation from the north east ward,<sup>3</sup> but there was never a constant need for grass roots opinion, expressed through ward meetings and deputations, to make its views known to its representatives. Many councillors were not only aware of the views of their electors on this issue, but actively sympathised with them. At one extreme, the leading 'economist' of the period, A.W. Scarr declared, at a meeting of ratepayers protesting over salary increases in 1877, that

'he was a radical, and believed in the people ruling, and therefore unless the people told him to vote for an increase he should not do it'<sup>4</sup>

On the other hand, the attitude which the council often adopted did not go uncriticised by some of its members. One alderman voiced the fear that,

<sup>1</sup> Webb Local Gvt. Colltn., volume 265, 'Personal Investigation 1899' - Interview with medical officer of health. The inspectors appointed in 1899 were initially paid 33/- a month.

<sup>2</sup> LM, 4 June 1870.

<sup>3</sup> LM, 2 May 1878.

<sup>4</sup> F.R. Spark, Collection of Extracts, volume 1, f. 14b.

'there was a disposition to be stingy instead of liberal in the pay of their officials, and this would result in their having inferior officers'<sup>1</sup>

Another alderman made a more general and a more telling point, when he declared that it was,

'surprising that less importance should be attached to the voting away of thousands of pounds than was done to any proposed increase, say £100 or so to a man's salary'<sup>2</sup>

One significant criterion was made explicit in a salary debate in 1879, when the proposed increase was opposed by one councillor who, he claimed,

'spoke not only for the working classes, but for a class he represented, the shopkeepers of the town, who felt that if ever there was a time that pressed upon them it was the present',

and by another, who

'sympathised with the shopkeepers, who could scarcely make ends meet'<sup>3</sup>

These references to the shopocracy have an obvious relevance to the outline of municipal politics given in an earlier chapter.

One final issue which arises in relation to administrative staff is that of pensions. When a long-serving member of the police force retired in 1849,

'there was a long discussion as to the propriety of granting pensions to any public servant, one party condemning pensions as bad in principal, and contending that such pensions ought not to be paid out of the public rates raised from the hard earnings of the poorer ratepayers; whilst those who supported the motion argued that in such cases as this it was both good policy and economy to grant the money'<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>LM, 1 Oct 1870.

<sup>2</sup>LM, 11 Aug 1870.

<sup>3</sup>LM, 2 Jan 1879.

<sup>4</sup>CM, 1 Jan 1849; LM, 6 Jan 1849.

Although in this instance a pension was granted, the council decided at its next meeting that in future allowances or pensions would only be given to policemen when they incurred,

'wounds, or other severe injuries in the performance of their duties'<sup>1</sup>

In 1860, a police pension scheme was created on a contributory basis,<sup>2</sup> and five years later, it was agreed by a narrow majority that,

'similar powers be taken in the new improvement bill as the Guardians and Overseers of the Poor possess, in respect of granting annual allowances to such persons in their employ as shall be incapacitated from age, or otherwise, from the further performance of their duties'<sup>3</sup>

As a result, section 118 of the 1866 improvement act gave the council discretion to award pensions of not more than two-thirds of an employee's salary. This power was exercised very sparingly, and only in the favour of long-service workmen.<sup>4</sup> When the council's consolidation bill was being discussed in 1891, the section allowing pensions to be paid was deleted, since as one member observed,

'it would not apply to labourers, but he took it that it would be applied to a few of the most highly-paid officials, and he considered that it was not necessary to make special provision for them'<sup>5</sup>

Such a sentiment was in accordance with the provident ideas of the age, but this did not prevent the council from granting pensions

<sup>1</sup> CM, 26 Jan 1849.

<sup>2</sup> CM, 8 Aug 1860. The contributions ranged from 3d a week for those earning 18/- to 19/-, to 7d for those earning 27/- to 30/-. The scheme was created under An Act to amend the Law concerning the Police in Counties and Boroughs in England and Wales, 22 and 23 Vict., cap. XXXII, sections VII to XXI. The provisions were obligatory.

<sup>3</sup> CM, 15 Dec 1865; the voting was 20 to 17.

<sup>4</sup> CM, 5 June 1872 notes the award of £35 a year to John Lapish, appointed in 1843 (see CMIA, 19 July 1843), and CM, 9 Nov 1887 records a gratuity of £20 given to a lamplighter who had retired through age and infirmity.

<sup>5</sup> LM, 1 Dec 1891.

to less well-paid employees, which it did in a small number of selected cases.<sup>1</sup>

One result of the expansion of municipal employment was the need to find permanent office accommodation. In 1842, the council's 'Board of Works' was established in Park row, first in a warehouse, and then in a nearby house, rented at £80 a year, containing a committee room, and the rate, chief clerk's and surveyor's offices. The cost of the lease was defrayed by £20, the sum which the chief clerk paid for living on the premises.<sup>2</sup> Five years later it became necessary to find a larger building, and another house, again in Park row, was taken at £150 a year.<sup>3</sup> As we noted in an earlier chapter, the council was already aware that the Court House was inadequate for its requirements, but because of more urgent financial obligations it allowed the matter to lapse. But when the construction of a public hall was mooted in the eighteen fifties, the council, when it adopted the project, made arrangements for the town hall to accommodate its growing staff. Twenty years later, the planning of new corporate offices became necessary as,

'the accommodation of the present town hall, especially in assize times, was perfectly inadequate, and there were regular complaints on the subject'<sup>4</sup>

Initially, the council made an agreement to provide offices for its own staff and that of the School Board, and bought a site adjacent to the town hall from the Board, which had intended to build its own

<sup>1</sup>MRP, no. 146, Information obtained...as to Allowances to Persons who have ceased to work; (21 Feb 1908) gives a list of twenty four manual and clerical workers in receipt of allowances ranging from 2/6 to 25/-. Twenty were permanent pensions, (1 = 2/6; 6 = 5/-; 1 = 6/-; 7 = 7/6; 1 = 10/-; 1 = 20/-; 3 = 25/-), generally given for long service and infirmity.

<sup>2</sup>Offices committee, minutes, 2 Sept 1842, 9 May 1843.

<sup>3</sup>CM, 1 Jan, 9 Feb, 31 March, 1848.

<sup>4</sup>LM 4 Oct 1877.

headquarters there.<sup>1</sup> But the Board had second thoughts, and reverted to its original scheme, since it believed that it would be cheaper to borrow the money for a separate building from the Public Works Loan Commissioners than to rent accommodation from the council.<sup>2</sup> The council agreed to a division of the site, and authorised the corporate property committee to proceed with its revised plan at an estimated cost of £50,000.<sup>3</sup> As the building was approaching completion, the committee recommended that it should be responsible for providing the internal fittings rather than letting the work out to contract. The council at first rejected the idea, but finally acquiesced,<sup>4</sup> and the new offices were ready for occupation in 1883.

<sup>1</sup>RB, 24 March 1876.

<sup>2</sup>RB, 19 July 1877.

<sup>3</sup>CM, 3 Oct 1877.

<sup>4</sup>CM, 21 July, 8 Nov 1882, 7 Feb 1883.

**CHAPTER NINE**

**'MUNICIPAL SOCIALISM' REVISITED**

This concluding section has two purposes. The first is to briefly outline the changes in the organisation of local government insofar as they involved the corporation, and secondly, to consider the reasons for the growth of the functions of municipal government in Leeds over the seventy years following the reform of 1835. In one sense, these two themes are inter-related, for in part the lengthening agenda of the council was the result of its absorption of two other local government agencies, the improvement commission and the surveyors of highways. Viewed in a national context, this was characteristic of a general trend away from ad hoc bodies towards multi-purpose authorities,<sup>1</sup> and a local counterpart to the movement towards administrative uniformity which central government was attempting to impose upon the localities in this period.<sup>2</sup> As we stated in the Introduction, the major municipalities of the nineteenth century, Leeds amongst them, to a large extent managed their affairs independent of much of the general legislation dealing with local government affairs. Whereas smaller communities, which in adopting the institutions of government created by general acts, such as local boards of health and local government boards, were more susceptible to pressures from central government departments,<sup>3</sup> before 1871 the only occasions upon which the corporation came into contact with any central institution was when parliamentary select committees considered its improvement bills. After that date, the council was obliged to take the existence

<sup>1</sup>W. Thornhill, The Growth and Reform of English Local Government, p.3.

<sup>2</sup>R.M. Gutchen, 'Local improvements and centralisation in nineteenth-century England', Historical Journal, iv, 1961, pp. 85-96.

<sup>3</sup>Royston Lambert, 'Central and local relations in Mid-Victorian England: the Local Government Act Office, 1858-1871', Victorian Studies, 1962, pp. 121-150.

of the Local Government Board into account. The Board could exert its influence on the council in two ways, through its power to approve bye-laws, and through the reports on the contents of local bills which it made for the information of parliamentary select committees. By neither method was the Board successful in imposing its views upon the council. As we have shown, it adopted a conciliatory attitude over the question of the building bye-laws when it became clear that the council would oppose any serious interference with its independence, and was obliged to agree to a compromise which involved the abandonment of at least one of its principal objections. Likewise, it failed to make any major alterations to municipal policy when it attempted to do so by means of criticisms of the improvement bills. In 1900, the town clerk informed the Joint Select Committee on Municipal Trading that these L.G.B. reports were,

'rather a terror to the promoters of these Municipal Bills. We never know what the Local Government Board are going to say about a Bill, and we are most unhappy until we hear what they have to say, because they never by any chance, according to my experience, let any point slip, and I may say that we often think they take many points that they might very well have left alone'<sup>1</sup>

But he went on to say that there were two cases known to him where the Board,

'being dissatisfied with the decision given in the first House, have notwithstanding that decision, sent in a supplementary report to the second House to enforce their views against the decision of the first House. Luckily, in those two cases the second House agreed with us, and not with the Local Government Board'.

One of these instances must certainly have been the approval given in 1893 to allow the continued building of back-to-back houses. On

<sup>1</sup>Joint Select Committee on Municipal Trading, qu. 3070.



what was regarded as a most important issue, then, the recommendation of the Board had been rejected, and the council, as one M.P. protested, had

'obtained power to set aside the almost universal law of this country against the erection of back to back houses'<sup>1</sup>

Although after 1866, it might be a general truth that,

'the grammar of common sanitary legislation acquired the novel virtue of an imperative mood'<sup>2</sup>,

the change had very little impact as far as the corporation of Leeds was concerned.

We can divide the services provided by the corporation into four groups. In the first is public security, that is police and the prison; and in the second are those which relate to public health: sewerage, cleansing, paving, burial grounds, hospitals, building regulations and the control of atmospheric and river pollution. Thirdly, we can class together amenities such as public libraries, baths, markets, and parks. Finally, there are the municipal 'trading' concerns, namely, the waterworks, gasworks, tramways and electricity supply. The reason why the functions in the first two groups were undertaken by the 'public sector' is simple to define: they were essential but unremunerative ones. As one alderman had said,

'the idea of profit had never been entertained as derivable'<sup>3</sup>

from them, and so in default of private initiative the responsibility for them fell upon the public authorities. The same could in effect be said of the institutions in the third category. Although some attempts were made by private enterprise or voluntary associations to

<sup>1</sup>Parl. Debs., 4th series, volume XCV, 14 June 1901, column 392.

<sup>2</sup>J. Simon, English Sanitary Institutions, p. 299.

<sup>3</sup>LM, 16 Aug 1851; and see next footnote.

provide these, to make them available on a scale appropriate to the size of the community involved the mobilisation of the superior financial and organisational resources of local government. But the criterion of 'non-profitability' could certainly not be applied to the utilities in the fourth group. The waterworks operated as a privately-owned concern between 1837 and 1852, and the two gas companies were also carried on successfully by joint-stock companies until 1870. From the seventies to the mid-nineties the tramway company was an independent enterprise, and for seven years the Yorkshire House-to-House Electricity Company likewise enjoyed a profitable existence before it was bought out by the corporation.

There are several problems to be considered on the issue of municipal trading. In a society in which private enterprise was the norm, we need to define the reasons why the council was prepared to take these concerns into municipal ownership. We have already referred to the definition of the legitimate functions of local government made by one council member in 1852 in opposing the municipal purchase of the waterworks,<sup>1</sup> and his objection to the council stepping outside them applies equally to the other enterprises listed here. We must also ask if the council followed any consistent policy in defining the grounds for intervention in the private sector. In a famous passage, Sidney Webb described the 'unconscious permeation' of municipal councillors by 'socialist' ideas:

'The "practical man" oblivious or contemptuous of any theory of the Social Organism or general principals of social organisation, has been forced by the necessities of the time, into an ever deepening collectivist channel. Socialism, of course, he still rejects and despises. The Individualist

<sup>1</sup>ibid; and see above p.107-108.

Town Councillor will walk along the municipal pavement, lit by municipal gas and cleansed by municipal brooms with municipal water, and seeing by the municipal clock in the municipal market, that he is too early to meet his children coming from the municipal school hard by the county lunatic asylum and municipal hospital, will use the national telegraph system to tell them not to walk through the municipal park but to come by the municipal tramway, to meet him in the municipal reading room, by the municipal art gallery, museum and library, where he intends to consult some of the national publications in order to prepare his next speech in the municipal town-hall, in favour of the nationalization of canals and the increase of the government control over the railway system. "Socialism, sir" he will say, "don't waste the time of a practical man by your fantastic absurdities. Self-help, sir, individual self-help, that's what's made our city what it is".<sup>1</sup>

Webb's contention that there were no principles involved in the definition of this area of municipal policy might indeed seem to be given support by the council's parliamentary committee. In May 1900, after discussing the implications of the recently-appointed Joint Select Committee on Municipal Trading, it decided that,

'the principle heretofore followed by each case being decided by inquiry into the merits thereof in relation to the particular facts has worked to the public advantage, as attested by the results attained in the various matters undertaken by the municipalities, whether considered from the point of view of the consumer and user, or of the ratepayer, and that it is not desirable in the public interest that any hard and fast line of limit should be drawn, but that, on the contrary, the principle and the practice which have worked well in the past should continue to be followed, and each particular question considered and decided upon its merits'.<sup>2</sup>

But in fact as we have shown incidentally in the preceding chapters, the grounds upon which the council justified its incursions into the private sector were clearly articulated and consistent ones. The basic reasons for municipalisation were substantially the same in

<sup>1</sup>Sidney Webb, Socialism in England, pp. 116-117.

<sup>2</sup>Report of the Parliamentary Committee', in Annual Report of Committees, 1899-1900.

all four cases.<sup>1</sup> These were first set out in 1852, in the town clerk's report on the future of the water supply. In this he argued that because of the scale of the operations involved, the alternatives were either a monopoly or a duopoly. The latter would involve unnecessary and wasteful duplication of resources but would probably not result in any price competition for the benefit of the consumer, but in price-fixing or other forms of collusion between the two companies. If a monopoly was to be sanctioned, it ought to be controlled 'by some public body responsible to the consumer'. The existence of a local monopoly of supply was a characteristic common to all four utilities. Ten years before the debate over the waterworks, the council had sought to amend the bill promoted by one of the gas companies to secure 'the benefits of fair competition between them', and their common pricing policy, which was detrimental to the council, was an issue which was brought up again in the debate over municipal acquisition in 1868. The probability of monopoly was a reason why the council was urged to pre-empt private enterprise in the supply of electric lighting. In the cases of gas and electricity, there was another reason which prompted public ownership, since,

'light is required by a municipality for the purpose of performing their duty in connection with watching'<sup>2</sup>

This made the council a major purchaser of gas, and as one newspaper remarked,

'a joint stock company has no right to calculate on deriving large profits from the public rate'.

<sup>1</sup>In the following paragraphs we draw on material to be found on pp. 151-153, 249-250, 257, 259-260, 266-270.

<sup>2</sup>J.S.C. on Municipal Trading, qu.3045.

The operations of all these four utilities impinged upon another of the council's statutory duties, that of maintaining the highways, since they all required the right to interfere with the public streets to lay pipes or lines. This was a source of much complaint, and provided another reason for municipalisation. In the case of the tramways, there was the additional reason that often the laying of double tracks could only be done if the streets were widened, and so the council would be making street improvements at public cost, for a private company's benefit.<sup>1</sup>

Financial considerations were an influential subsidiary factor, but in a strictly qualified sense. Until the late nineties, when the conservatives imported Chamberlainite ideas into local finance, public enterprise as a source of profit was not an issue of major importance in Leeds. The water supply was regarded as an aspect of the council's obligations in public health, and the profits it produced, though undoubtedly welcome, were almost incidental. They had been allowed to accumulate untouched until 1867, and thereafter paid over into the borough fund only for the next decade, when receipts ceased until the change of policy twenty years later. Similarly, after 1870 gas profits were paid into the borough fund in only four of the subsequent fifteen years of Liberal government. The Liberal policy seems to have been to provide these essential services as cheaply as possible to the consumers, and in doing this they were assisted by the financial advantages which local authorities had over private enterprise. As Bernard Shaw wrote, when he publicised this fact more than fifty years after it had been recognised by the town clerk of Leeds,

<sup>1</sup>ibid., qu. 3107.

'sultans and South American Republics may beg round the world in vain; chancellors may have to issue national stock at discount; but a Borough Treasurer simply names a figure and gets it at par'<sup>1</sup>

Conversely, where these features were not present, the council did not countenance intervention. Tramways might be legitimately subject to municipal purchase, but there was no suggestion that the council should buy out competing omnibus or cab owners. Despite the problems created by slum clearance, the council consistently refused to invade the preserves of the private builder, and at one extreme, there was even opposition to the supply of 'humanised' milk for infants on the ground that the milk trade was not a monopoly. As one economist observed,

'we cannot regard the large and increasing amount of public municipal trading in these (sc. tramways, gas, electricity) goods and services as by itself showing that industry in general is on the way to be brought into public hands'<sup>2</sup>

If we use the term 'municipal socialism' to describe these activities it is essential that it remains firmly enclosed in inverted commas.

<sup>1</sup>Quoted in W. Thornhill, op. cit., p. 186.

<sup>2</sup>D.H. MacGregor, The Evolution of Industry, p. 215.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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## BIBLIOGRAPHY

(i) Unpublished and Manuscript Sources

- (1) The Council Minutes begin on 31 December 1835 and are in manuscript form only until the printed series begins in 1897. Between August 1842 and September 1859 council proceedings under the improvement acts were entered in separate volumes.

On 12 November 1841, the council resolved that

'all Reports, Returns and other Documents or copies thereof respectively now required to be inserted in the Council Minutes be in future inserted in a separate book called the 'Report Book' which shall for all purposes be considered a part of the Minutes of the Council, to commence from 1st January next'.

The Report Books thus begin in 1842, with a separate series from August 1842 to August 1859 for reports filed under 'improvement act' business. The 'Municipal' and the 'Improvement Act' series were amalgamated in 1859.

The committee structure of the council has been outlined in Chapter Eight, and each committee, and each permanent, or long-living sub-committee had its own minute books, which are referred to in the text.

All the above records are currently (April 1975) held in the Committee Clerk's strongroom in the Civic Hall, Leeds.

In other strongrooms may be found the 'Financial Statistics' abstract, used in Chapter Eight, and the Leeds corporation deeds and conveyancing papers.

- (2) At present also in the Civic Hall are:-  
 the minutes of the Leeds Improvement Commission from 30 October 1835 to 1 August 1842, and those of its Free Market committee, 1833-1842,  
 the Surveyors of the Highways, Township of Leeds minute book, 25 July 1836 to 3 April 1850, and  
 the Holbeck Select Vestry minute book, 1839-1853.
- (3) Amongst the records held in the vestry of Leeds parish church, (St. Peter's), are the minute books of the Highway Estate, 1826-1858), (reference: Pious Use 71/2) and 1859-1866, (reference: Pious Use 71/3).
- (4) The Webb Local Government Collection is housed in the British Library of Economic and Political Science (London School of Economics). Volumes 263, 264 and 265 contain material relating to Leeds corporation since 1835; see Ruth Atkins, 'Report on the Webb Local Government Collection', unpublished typescript, British Library of Economic and Political Science, esp. pp. 221-226. (The experience of working for the Webbs on this project is documented by one of their research assistants in F.H. Spencer, An Inspector's Testament, (London, 1938), ch. VIII.)
- (5) The letter books of the Local Government Board which contain correspondence between the Board and the corporation (1871-1896) are to be found in the Public Record Office, call numbers MH 12/15244-15274.

The extant records of the Leeds Industrial Dwellings Company, filed in accordance with company law, are to be found in PRO, BT 31/30751.

- (6) The minutes of evidence of the select committees of the Houses of Parliament on local bills are kept in the House of Lords Record Office. The following manuscript volumes were consulted:-

House of Commons Select Committee on Leeds Improvements, Evidence, 1842, volume 7.

House of Commons Select Committee on the Leeds Improvement Bill, Evidence, 1847-48, volume 1.

House of Lords Select Committee on the Leeds Improvement Bill, Session 1848, Minutes of Evidence, volume I.

House of Commons Select Committee on Private Bills (Group H), Evidence, 1856, volume 31.

House of Lords Select Committee on the Leeds Improvement Bill, Session 1856, Minutes of Evidence, volume 2.

House of Commons Select Committee, Evidence, 1866, volume 24.

House of Lords Select Committee on the Leeds Improvement Acts Amendment Bill, Session 1866, Minutes of Evidence, volume 14.

House of Commons Select Committee on Leeds Corporation Gas etc., Bill, Evidence, 1870, volume 17.

House of Commons Select Committee, Evidence, 1872, volume 39.

For references to printed minutes of evidence, see section (ii)(4).

- (7) Two compilations of documents made by alderman F.R. Spark are in the possession of the Leeds City Libraries (Reference Department), namely:-

'Collection of Extracts, Documents, etc., relating to Leeds City Council Proceedings, 1876-1885' in four volumes, and

'Collection of Extracts, Documents, etc., relating to Leeds Gas Matters, 1878-1885', in two volumes.

(ii) Printed Sources

- (1) Continuous series of published records of the corporation begin comparatively late; as we have noted council proceedings were not printed until 1897.

Annual Accounts were published regularly from 1869-70, but Abstract of Accounts were published in 1850 to 1854, 1856, 1860, and 1865-7, or at least, these are the only years for which printed accounts are extant.

On 30 September 1878 the council resolved that in future the annual reports of the committees should be printed uniformly in Royal Octavo and supplied, bound in one volume, to council members. The Annual Reports of Committees are thus available from 1878-79.

The third medical officer of health, Dr. J.S. Spottiswoode Cameron regularly produced an Annual Report made to the Urban Sanitary Authority of the Borough of Leeds from 1890, the first year of his appointment. Prior to this date there is no continuous series of annual reports extant from either of his predecessors. Bound together in one volume in Leeds City Libraries (Reference Department) are printed reports by Dr. Robinson (the first m.o.h.) for 1867, 1870, 1871 and 1872, and by Dr. Goldie for 1875 and 1877. When interviewing Dr. Cameron in 1899, the Webbs noted that, '(He) makes lengthy annual report full of statistics, predecessor ceased to do this about 1877. Cttee don't care about this report', (Webb Local Government Collection, volume 265).

The series of miscellaneous reports and papers, of which the only complete series is to be found in the

Committee Clerk's strong room in the Civic Hall, begins in the eighteen seventies. They comprise reports on a wide range of specific, non-routine matters, printed for circulation to council members.

- (2) In this period the two principal local newspapers were the Conservative Leeds Intelligencer, later the Yorkshire Post (and Leeds Intelligencer), and the Liberal Leeds Mercury. Both contain extensive coverage of local affairs, including council meetings reported on a mixture of precis and oratio obliqua. For convenience, the Mercury has been used as the preferred, but not sole source, on admissible procedure since we have not been concerned with political issues, except in incidentals.
- (3) In a strong room in the Civic Hall Leeds are printed minutes of evidence taken before parliamentary select committees. The following have been referred to in the text:-

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Select Committee of the House of Lords. Leeds Corporation (Consolidation and Improvement) Bill, 1893.

House of Lords. Select Committee on the Leeds Corporation (General Powers) Bill, 1901.

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(4) Leeds local acts

The short title has been given where one is specified in the act.

(a) Improvement acts

An act to amend and enlarge the powers of an act passed in the thirtieth year of his present majesty for the better supplying the town and neighbourhood of Leeds, in the County of York, with water; and for more effectually lighting and cleansing the streets and other places within the said neighbourhood, and for removing and preventing nuisances and annoyances therein; and for erecting a court house and prison for the borough of Leeds, and for widening and improving the streets and passages in the said town.

49 Geo. III, cap. cxxii, (1809).

An act to amend and enlarge (49 Geo III, cap cxxii); to provide for the expense of the prosecution of felons in certain cases; and to establish a police and nightly watch in the town, borough and neighbourhood of Leeds aforesaid.

55 Geo III, cap. xlii, (1815).

An act for lighting, cleansing, and improving the town and neighbourhood of Leeds in the county of York.

5 Geo IV, cap. ccxxiv, (1824).

An act for providing additional burial grounds in the parish of Leeds in the West Riding of the County of York.

5 and 6 Vict., cap. ciii, (1842).

An act for better lighting, cleansing, sewerage and improving the borough of Leeds in the County of York.

5 and 6 Vict., cap. civ, (1842).

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(b) Water supply acts

An act for better supplying with water the town and  
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(c) Housing acts

An act to confirm certain provisional orders of the Local Government Board under the Housing of the Working Classes Act 1890 relating to Birkenhead and Leeds. 59 and 60 Vict., ch. ccxxxviii, (1896).

Local Government Board's Provisional Orders Confirmation (Housing of Working Classes) (No. 2) Act, 1901.

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(d) Tramways acts

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(e) Other relevant local acts

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Plan  
OF THE  
(TOWN)  
OF  
**LEEDS**  
AND ITS  
**ENVIRONS.**

Surveyed by  
NETLAM and FRANCIS GILES  
of New Inn London.  
1816.

SPEAKER & PUBLIC BUILDINGS	
Churches	Various names and descriptions
Chapels	Various names and descriptions
Public Buildings	Various names and descriptions
Charitable Buildings	Various names and descriptions
Markets	Various names and descriptions
Public Houses	Various names and descriptions
Workshops	Various names and descriptions
Warehouses	Various names and descriptions
Stables	Various names and descriptions
Yards	Various names and descriptions
Fields	Various names and descriptions
Water Works	Various names and descriptions
Canals	Various names and descriptions
Roads	Various names and descriptions
Streets	Various names and descriptions
Alleys	Various names and descriptions
Walks	Various names and descriptions
Parks	Various names and descriptions
Plantations	Various names and descriptions
Enclosures	Various names and descriptions
Boundaries	Various names and descriptions
Distances	Various names and descriptions
Directions	Various names and descriptions
Remarks	Various names and descriptions



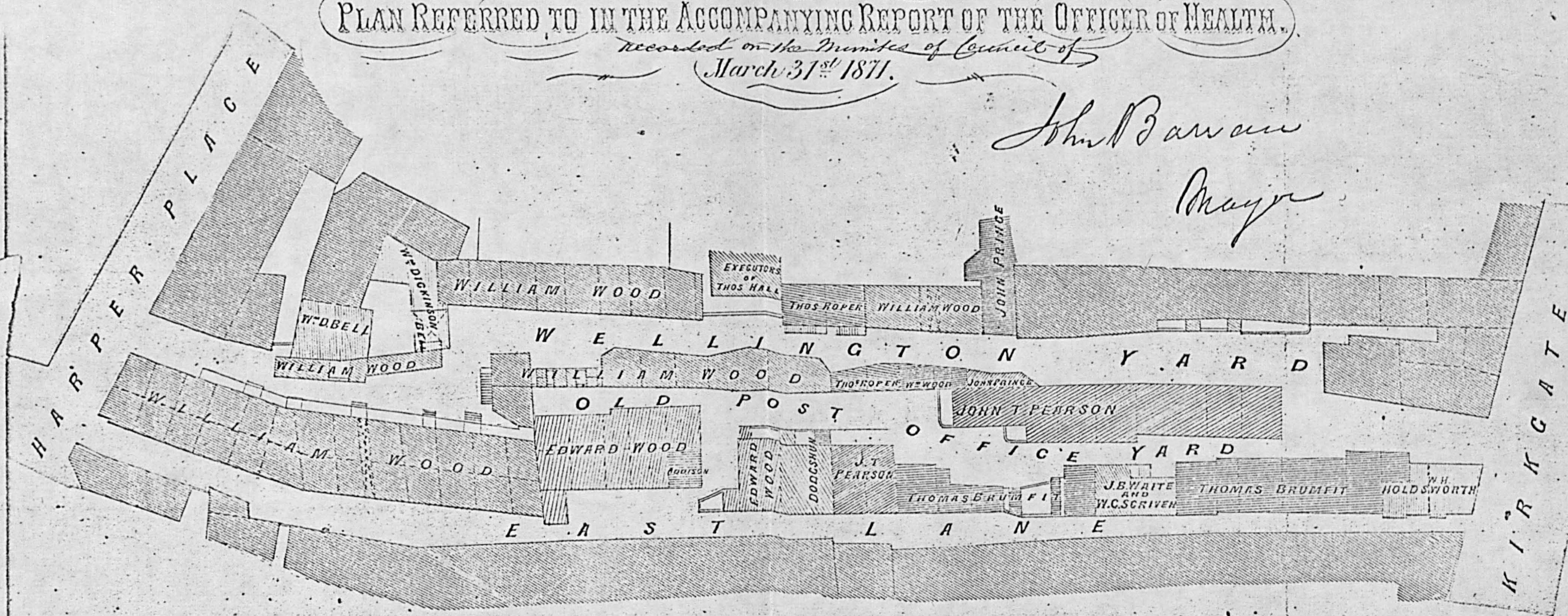
University  
of Leeds  
theses, A



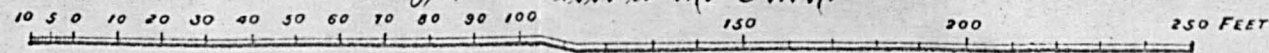
# Borough of Leeds.

PLAN REFERRED TO IN THE ACCOMPANYING REPORT OF THE OFFICER OF HEALTH,  
*Recorded on the Minutes of Council of*  
March 31<sup>st</sup> 1871.

*John Barrow*  
Mayor

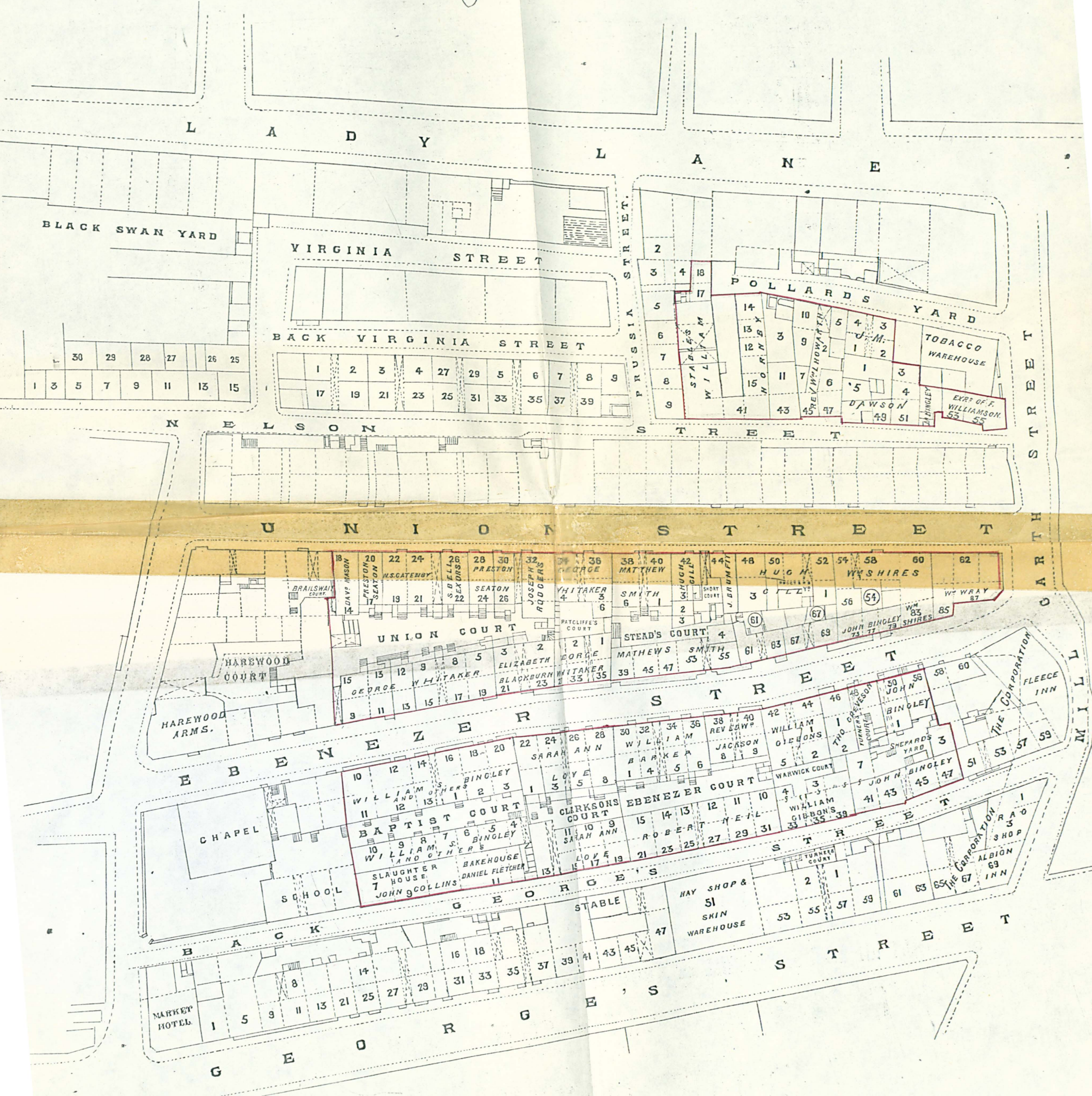


Scale 44 feet to the Inch.





REFERRED TO IN THE ACCOMPANYING REPORT OF THE OFFICER OF HEALTH.  
 MAY 30<sup>TH</sup> 1871.



Scale 44 Feet - 1 Inch



of Leeds





HOUSING OF THE WORKING CLASSES ACT.  
**LEEDS IMPROVEMENT SCHEME.**  
 Scale—12 Inches—1 Mile.

Area of Official Representation shown surrounded by a dark line.  
 The "York Street" Insanitary Area Indicated thus [horizontal hatching]  
 The "Ivy House" Estate Indicated thus [vertical hatching]  
 The "Camp Field" Insanitary Area Indicated thus [diagonal hatching]

[Diagonal hatching symbol]

LA S

EAST END  
 TORIA RARK

St. Peter's

Rishworth Hill

Black Bank

Black Bank

CITY SQUARE

ST. PETER'S CHURCH

ST. EDMUND'S VICAR

WENBLE HILL GALLERY

GREAT GEORGES ST

SOUTH PARADE

QUEEN STREET

NEVILLE ST

GOVERNOR STREET

SOUTH BROOKE STREET

WILSON STREET

NEW OCH

WICK STREET

WATERLOO STREET

BEVERIDGE WALK

ST. PETER'S CHURCH

ST. PETER'S GRAVE YARD

VICARS CROFT

ST. PETER'S CHURCH

ST. PETER'S CHURCH

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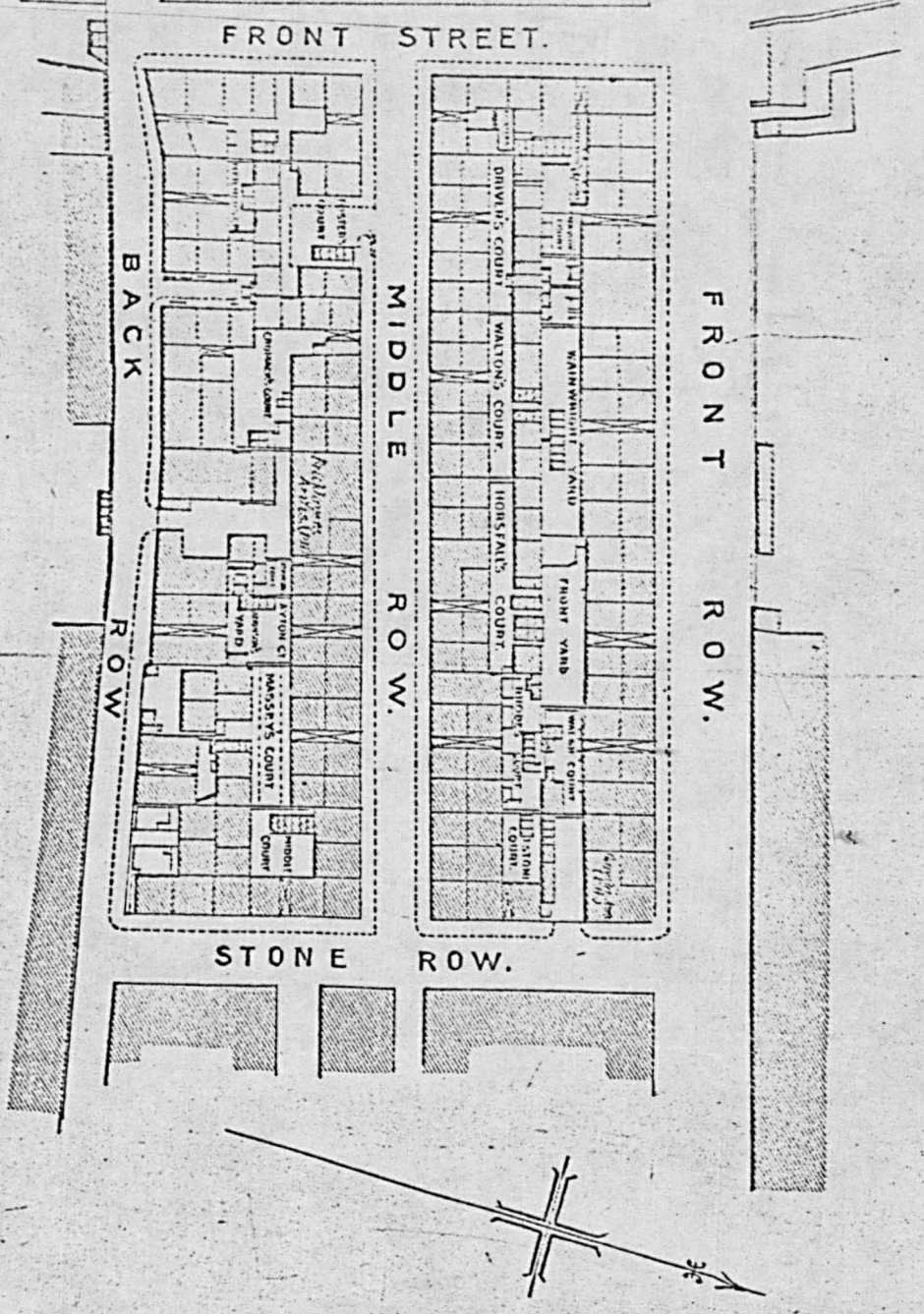
ST. PETER'S CHURCH

ST. PETER'S CHURCH



CAMP FIELD BEFORE IMPROVEMENT.

PLAN 4.



Scale 1 Inch = 83.33 Feet.

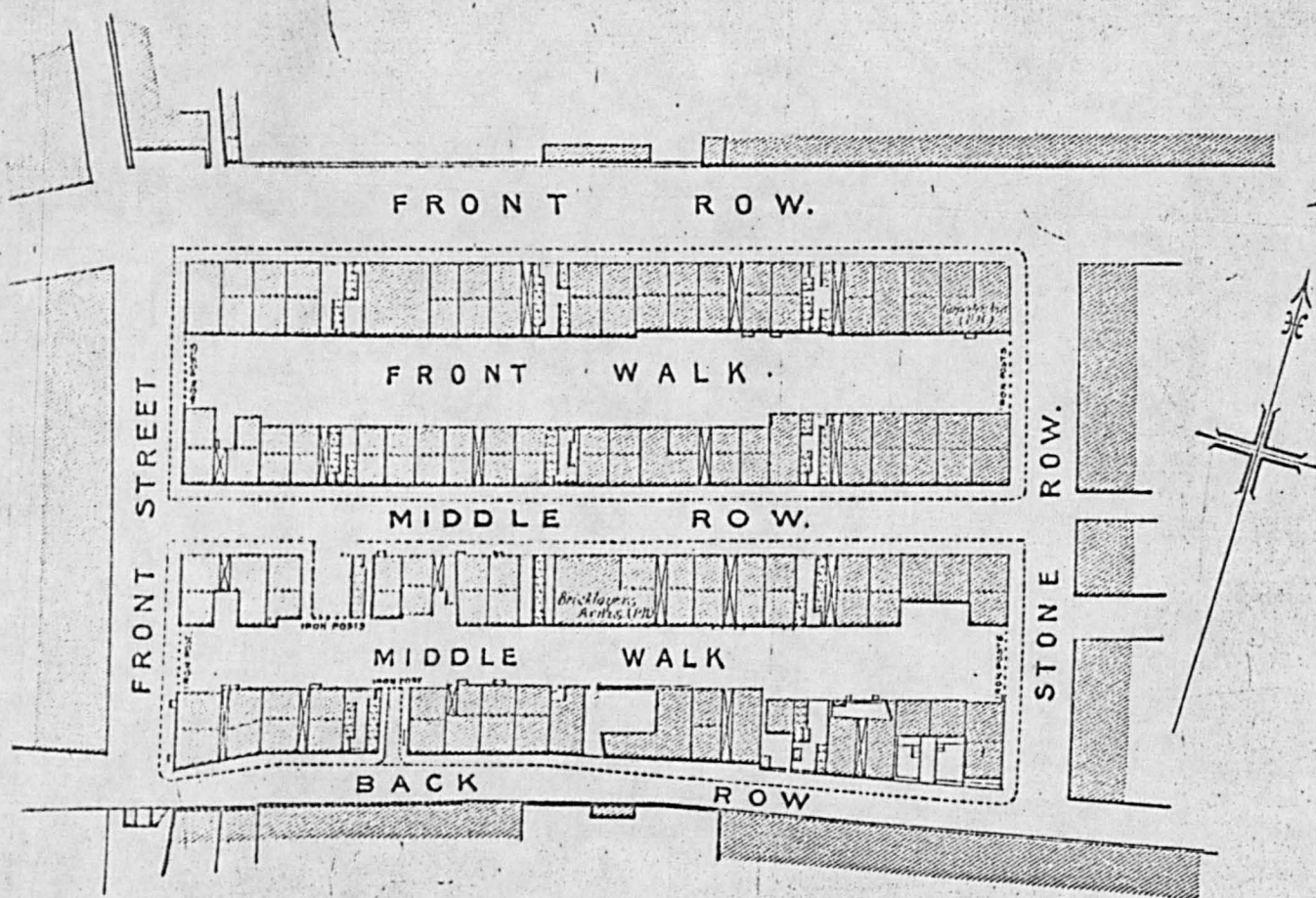


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theses, A

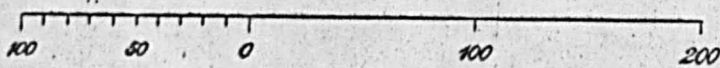


PLAN 5.

# CAMP FIELD AFTER IMPROVEMENT.

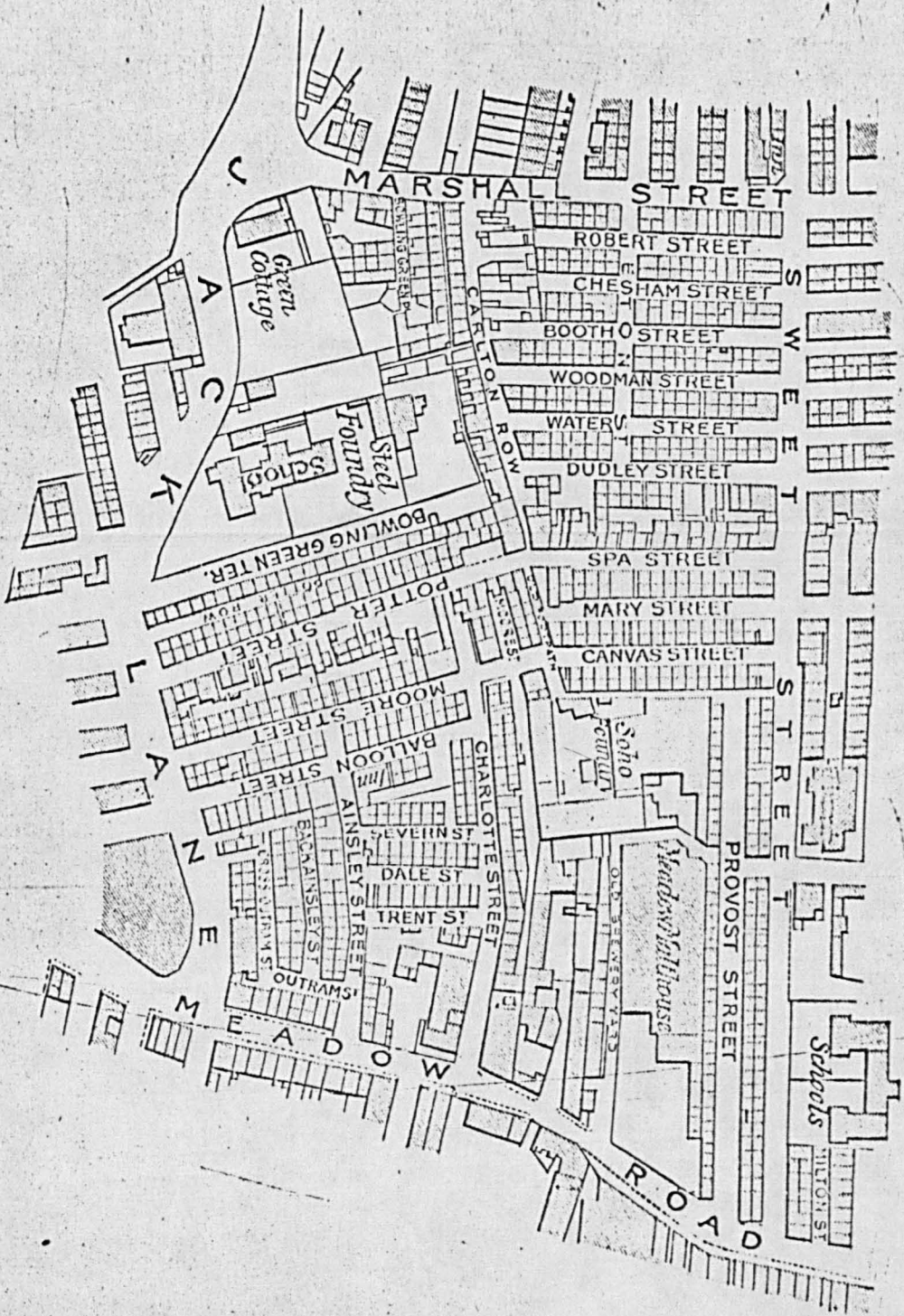


Scale 1 Inch = 83.33 Feet

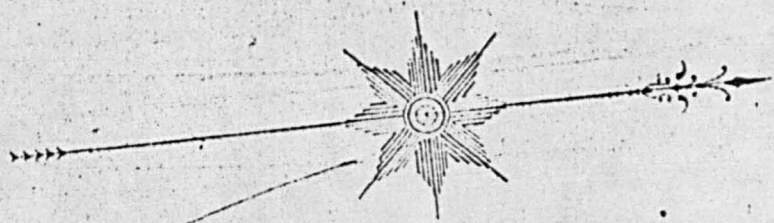




HOLBECK DISTRICT BEFORE IMPROVEMENT.



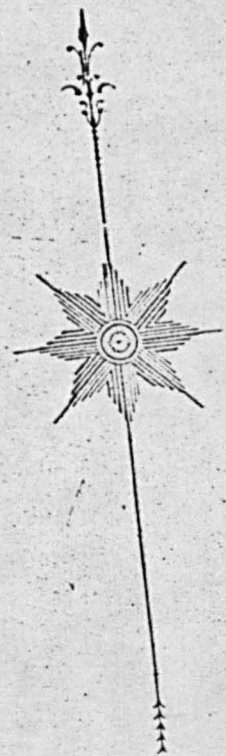
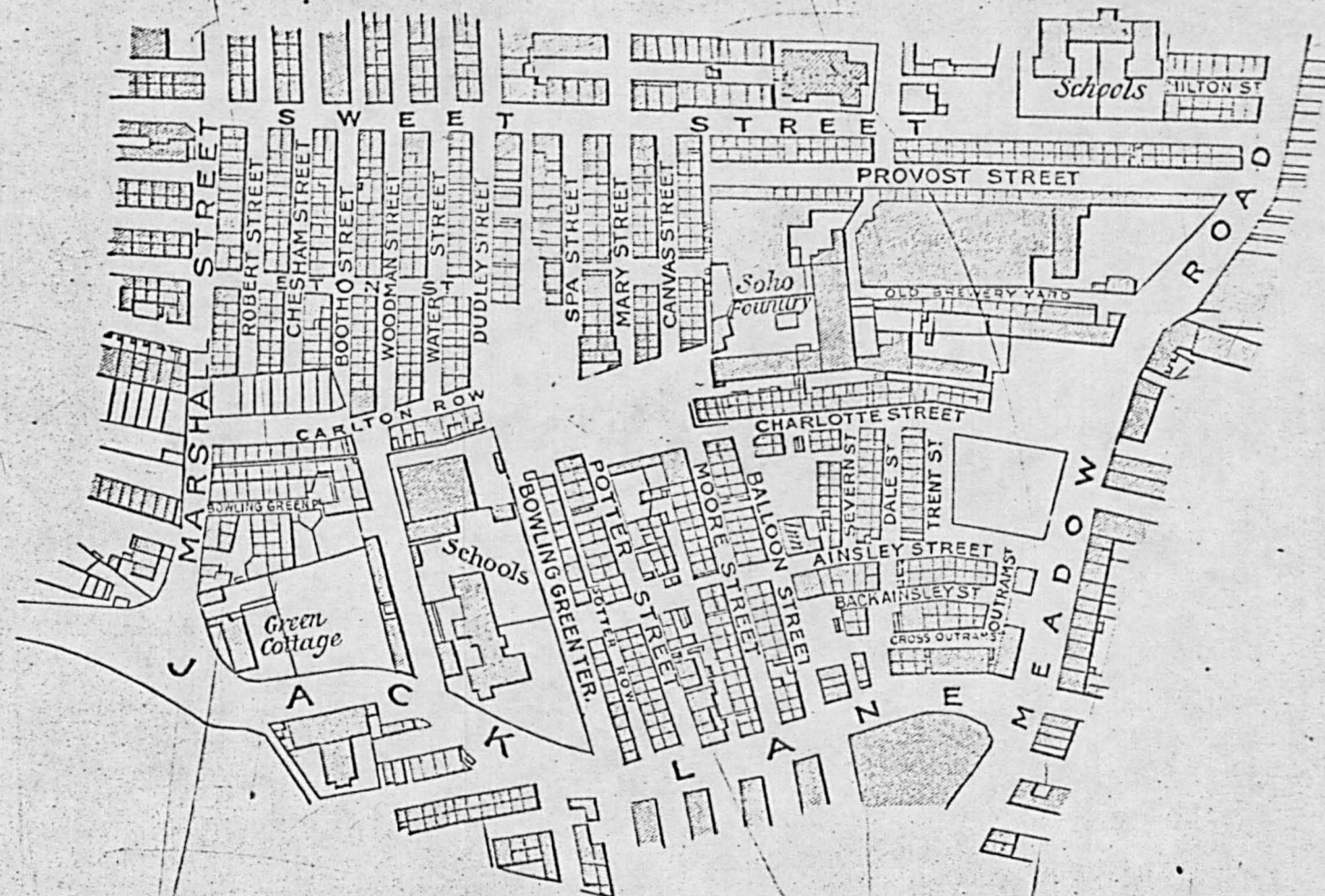
SCALE 1/32 BEING 208.33 FEET TO AN INCH.



University of Leeds  
Archives, A



# HOLBECK DISTRICT AFTER IMPROVEMENT.



SCALE  $\frac{1}{2500}$  BEING 208.33 FEET TO AN INCH.