

MR MERCURY - A BIOGRAPHICAL STUDY OF EDWARD BAINES WITH
SPECIAL REFERENCE TO HIS ROLE AS EDITOR, AUTHOR AND POLITICIAN

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is his own and that appropriate credit
has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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PREFACE

This thesis is the result of a total of nine years research. Four of those years were spent in completing an MPhil thesis on the thinking of Edward Baines and on which I have drawn considerably for the current work. I have been fortunate in being able to have access to the reference material of numerous academic institutions and for which I am most grateful. These are the Borthwick Insititute, British Library, Brotherton Library, University of Leeds, Brotherton Library Special Collections, Cambridge University Library, Duke University William R Perkins Library, North Carolina, Goldsmiths College Library, University of London, and Reading University. The following libraries have been equally as supportive; Armley Library, Bradford Reference Library, Eccles Local History Library, Leeds Library, Leeds City Libraries, Leeds City Reference Library, Leeds City Local History and Family History Library, and Preston Reference Library. Other institutions which have given invaluable information are: Leeds City Archives, North Yorkshire County Record Office, Northallerton, Public Record Office, Sheffield City Archives, Sotheby's and the Thoresby Society. I must also thank Lord Harewood for permission to consult the Harewood Estate Records and the Head of Leisure Services, Sheffield City Council and the Trustees of the Rt Hon Olive Countess Fitzwilliam's Chattels Settlement for permission to consult the Wentworth Woodhouse Muniments; Fourth Earl Fitzwilliam's Papers.

I would like to thank the following for their support and advice. Mr P Bardon, Mr E Baines, Mr G Baynes, Mr B Chippendale, Miss J Cooper, Mr J Cowton, Mrs E Fahey, Mr G Forster, Mr J Richardson, Mrs L Walker, Mr J West, and Mr C Wheaton.

I would particularly like to thank Dr Simon Green, my tutor, for the guidance and expertise he has so willingly given me through the whole of the nine years I have been engaged on researching Edward Baines. Finally, I would like to pay tribute to my wife, family and friends for all their encouragement and help through that period.

ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the life and work of Edward Baines, editor of the Leeds Mercury from 1801 to 1848 and Member of Parliament for Leeds from 1834 to 1841. It considers his political, journalistic and literary achievements and it investigates why no authoritative complete study of his life has been carried out since his son's filial biography written in 1851. The thesis examines the confusion which has arisen because Edward Baines Senior and Junior were both journalists editing the Leeds Mercury, both campaigning Dissenters, both Members of Parliament for Leeds and that much of their political and journalistic lives ran concurrently and not consecutively. Consideration is given to Baines's antecedents, his early years and the influences that helped shape his thinking. Baines's philosophy is examined, particularly as it was expressed in both his newspaper editorials and his academic writings. It shows that his fundamental beliefs were rooted in Protestant Christianity and how this was reflected in his views by his opposition to war and slavery, his lifelong support for individual freedom as expressed through Whig-Liberalism and the cause of Nonconformism. The thesis then follows a chronological approach. The years 1801 to 1815 witnessed his campaign on behalf of the merchants and manufacturers of the West Riding and the active political role he adopted from the election of 1807 onwards. The years 1815 to 1829 revealed Baines at the apotheosis of his journalistic career, with the revelations of the Government Spy scandal, his involvement in the campaigns for Parliamentary Reform, the commencement of his literary career and the launch of his strategy to establish a Whig power base in Leeds by taking control of the Parish Church vestry. The years 1830 to 1841 demonstrated Baines as an active politician, becoming the Member for Leeds and using his parliamentary position to campaign for the rights of the Dissenters. His final years 1841 to 1848 showed him still active in politics locally; an examination is also made of his final commitment to evangelical Congregationalism. Primary source material has been used throughout to illustrate Baines, his beliefs and the views his contemporaries held of him. Although few manuscript primary sources are available a considerable amount of printed primary source material is to be found in Baines's books and almost fifty years of his Leeds Mercury. The newspapers of his opponents, which cover the same period, offer a diverse range of views on the man and these enable a more balanced view of him to be reached than that found in his son's biography.

ABBREVIATIONS AND NOTATIONS

Numeration of newspapers was haphazard, particularly in the Leeds Mercury, consequently editions are referred to by date only. Two digits are used to denote a year in the nineteenth century eg 7 March 1801 is shown as 07.03.01. Eighteenth and twentieth century years are shown as four digits eg 4 October 1794 is 04.10.1794 and 15 November 1929 is 15.11.1929.

The following standard abbreviations are used; BL - British Library, DNB - Dictionary of National Biography, EHR - English Historical Review, JMH - Journal of Modern History, NH - Northern History, PRO - Public Record Office, SH - Social History, VCH:Lancashire - The Victoria History of the County of Lancaster, WWM - Wentworth Woodhouse Muniments; Fourth Earl Fitzwilliam's Papers.

Generally, the original spelling and the varying fonts in the newspaper extracts have been retained.

INTRODUCTION

A MAN CALLED BAINES

On Thursday 10 August 1848 an eerie stillness descended upon the town of Leeds. Shops were closed and thousands, clad in sober mourning attire, lined the streets. Gentlemen, merchants, traders, shopkeepers and artisans rubbed shoulders with each other as they stood in respectful silence in honour of the memory of a fellow townsman.¹ Class and political differences, even in this year of revolutions, had been set aside for the moment. Forgotten for the time being were the political divisions caused by the mass Chartist demonstrations held in the town that year at Vicar's Croft, on Woodhouse Moor and in Wellington Street as gentleman and journeyman expressed their mutual regard for the dead man.² In the words of Viscount Morpeth, the deceased was 'one of the foster fathers of my public life'.³ To J B Davison, an employee in the offices of the Leeds Mercury, he was simply

one of the best and kindest employers and one of the best and most benevolent of men.⁴

Thus people of every social class, religious denomination and political party set aside their opposing views and stood paying silent homage to a man whose influence had touched all their lives to some greater or lesser degree. Bradfordians rubbed shoulders with mourners from Huddersfield, Wakefield and the other West Riding milltowns as they lined the route awaiting the solemn cortège that would wend its way to the cemetery at Woodhouse.⁵

It was a town that in the recent past had grown used to the sight of black plumed horses and slowly moving hearses. Just over a year earlier typhus, 'the frightful Irish fever'⁶ had swept through Leeds.⁷ It had decimated the Irish immigrant population in the overcrowded Bank area of the town and carried off five Catholic priests and a curate from the Parish Church as they had selflessly continued ministering to the sick

¹ Leeds Mercury 12.08.48

² Leeds Times 15.04.48, 20.05.48, 29.04.48, 08.07.48

³ Leeds City Archives Baines Papers MS 1-41 No 4 Earl of Carlisle (Lord Morpeth) to E Baines (Jun) 06.08.48. All the documents in the Leeds City Baines collection are hereafter cited simply as Baines Papers.

⁴ Baines Papers: MS No 52.6 J B Davison to E Baines (Jun) 04.08.48

⁵ Leeds Mercury 12.08.48

⁶ E Jackson A Pastor's Recollections (Leeds 1890) No 5 p 110

⁷ See various editions of the Leeds Times between 10.04.47 to 07.08.47 for accounts of the epidemic.

and dying.⁸ They were not the only clergymen to perish in the town in those months. In October, the Reverend John Ely, the minister of the Independent Chapel in East Parade, had died.⁹ One of the mourners at his funeral was Edward Baines, late MP for the borough of Leeds and editor of the Leeds Mercury for over forty years. An ageing and sick man, he followed the cortège in Peter Willans's carriage¹⁰ reflecting on the death of a dear friend. It was a death, his family acknowledged, which had shaken him severely.¹¹ Nine months later Baines himself lay dying in his King Street home. Distressing news was brought to him that another dear and distinguished associate, Dr Richard Hamilton, Minister of Belgrave Independent Chapel, had been 'called to his rest' on 18 July.¹² Just over a fortnight later 'Old Edward Baines,' as he was affectionately known in the West Riding,¹³ was dead. He breathed his last on the night of Thursday 3 August 1848 at 'a quarter before twelve o'clock ... His death like his life was that of a good man.'¹⁴ He was seventy-four.

A meeting was called in the Courthouse at the junction of Park Row and Infirmary Street to discuss a public demonstration of sympathy and Darnton Lupton's proposal that Baines's friends should accompany him on his final journey was accepted.¹⁵ Thomas Plint, James Richardson and ex-mayor, John Darnton Luccock agreed to liaise with Messrs Joseph Smith and Son, the funeral directors. Thus it was that the streets of Leeds came to a halt that August Thursday as the cortège left Baines's home in King Street to make its way to the General Cemetery at Woodhouse.

It was an impressive turnout. The procession was headed by printers and local inhabitants followed by gentlemen from the county. Then came the mayors of Bradford and Wakefield, the Clerk of the Peace from the East Riding, printers employed by the Leeds Mercury, the Leeds Poor Law Guardians and the long-serving Chief Constable, Edward Read, mounted on horseback. Following him came the civic dignitaries of

⁸ S Burt and K Grady Illustrated History of Leeds (Derby 1994) p 174

⁹ R V Taylor The Biographia Leodiensis: Worthies of Leeds (Leeds 1865) p 426

¹⁰ Leeds Times 16.10.47

¹¹ E Baines (Jun) The Life of Edward Baines: Late MP for the Borough of Leeds (London/ Leeds 1851) p 339

¹² Ibid p 346

¹³ Leeds Mercury 03.03.90

¹⁴ Leeds Mercury 05.08.48

¹⁵ Leeds Mercury 12.08.48. Lupton was an ex-mayor of the borough.

Leeds itself with Mace-bearer Ulleart leading Mayor Francis Carbutt, the aldermen, councillors, magistrates, J A Ikin, the Town Clerk, the Clerk of the Peace, the Clerk to the Magistrates, Mr Paige, the Governor of the new jail at Armley and Mr Spencer the Town Crier.

Seven mourning coaches followed them. Charlotte Baines, the deceased's wife for the last fifty years and the Baines's three eldest children; Mrs Charlotte Bruce, Matthew Talbot MP, here by a compassionate release from the House of Commons Dublin Election Committee,¹⁶ and Edward Junior who had acted as junior partner and co-editor of the Leeds Mercury since 1827, were in the first. In the next coach were the remaining brothers and sisters; Mrs Jane Ritchie whose husband Alexander had been accepted as a partner in the Mercury,¹⁷ Mrs Caroline Phoebe Smith, Mrs John Wade, Thomas Baines, editor of Liverpool Times, and Frederick Baines, partner in the Mercury and still suffering from 'his most severe trial,'¹⁸ the death of his wife, Elizabeth at the end of January, only six months earlier. Fourteen more coaches followed on. Here were to be found Baines's contemporaries and competitors in journalism: Hobson, the proprietor and Bingley, the editor of the radical Leeds Times, who had written that 'Mr Baines ... had closed his career without leaving a personal enemy behind him;'¹⁹ Byles of the Bradford Observer whose paper had remarked of this 'venerable patriot ... he retired from public life amidst the regrets of all parties.'²⁰ Here also paying his respects was Christopher Kemplay, editor of the Mercury's arch-rival, the Leeds Intelligencer; a Tory newspaper that for half a century had waged turbulent war against its Whiggish-Liberal opponent. Yet Kemplay was gracious enough to admit that this 'experienced and indefatigable member of society' had

earned for himself an indisputable title to be numbered among the notable men of Leeds.²¹

The slow moving procession made its way to East Parade Independent Chapel for the service because the cemetery chapel at Woodhouse was far too small for the occasion. The Reverend Thomas Scales, pastor of Queen Street Chapel, officiated. He took as his

¹⁶ Baines Family A Father's Dying Addresses (London 1848) p 2

¹⁷ Leeds Mercury 28.06.75

¹⁸ Baines Papers: MS no 46. M T Baines to E Baines 04.02.48

¹⁹ Leeds Times and quoted in the Leeds Mercury 12.08.48

²⁰ More correctly Bradford Observer and Halifax, Huddersfield and Keighley Reporter 10.08.48

²¹ Leeds Intelligencer 05.08.48

theme the resurrection of the dead from Corinthians I. From here the cortège processed up Calverley Street, passed Park House with its extensive grounds and which a decade later would be the site of Cuthbert Brodrick's classic town hall, up Great George Street and finally to Woodhouse Lane and the General Cemetery there.

The Leeds Mercury claimed some 10 000, lined the entire funeral route, and quoted the Daily News which put the figure between 20 000 and 30 000.²² What was it about the man that so moved them to be there and display such respect and appreciation that August day in 1848? Perhaps another mourner, Collins of the Hull Advertiser, can provide part of the answer. In his paper the very next day he honoured

a great and good man whose sustaining and ennobling memory will live long in the hearts of the inhabitants of the West Riding.²³

But Edward Baines's name had reverberated far beyond the confines of the county of broad acres. The Illustrated London News of the 18 August saluted this 'highly respected gentleman' whose endeavours had turned the Leeds Mercury into 'one of the first provincial papers in England.' The September edition of the Gentleman's Magazine described Baines as holding 'an unwavering advocacy of the cause of liberty and good government.' The Manchester Guardian spoke of his 'natural strength and the equanimity of his temperament.'²⁴ The Times surpassed them all with a freakish scoop, announcing Baines's death literally only a few hours after it occurred. In fact, it purloined a report from the Manchester Examiner which it then re-published, including the wrong day of the death of this 'highly respected gentleman'!²⁵ But of all the obituaries published, it was that featured in the Patriot which best summed up the man for whom the town of Leeds had come to a standstill that August day.

In the annals of the British Newspaper Press few names will occupy a higher, and none more honourable place than his ... Whatever subjects engaged the attention of our Government, or ... the policy and legislation of other States, were sure to be found stated and explained

²² Leeds Mercury 12.08.48

²³ Hull Advertiser 11.08.48

²⁴ Illustrated London News 18.08.48, Gentleman's Magazine 09.48 Manchester Guardian 09.08.48

²⁵ It came about because the Examiner received a spurious report from 'a gentleman who had just arrived from Leeds' that Baines had died on Monday morning. On the Sunday morning Baines's the family were summoned from Belgrave Chapel when he assumed 'the aspect of death.' See Baines Family A Father's Dying Addresses p 2. The news spread rapidly that Sunday evening and led the gentleman from Leeds to carry his inaccurate report to Manchester. In fact, Baines lingered until the Thursday. The report which the The Times had picked up from the Examiner was published purely by coincidence in its Friday edition of 4 August.

in the Leeds Mercury in a manner which made the most difficult and intricate questions intelligible to uninitiated minds; and through its columns, the Airedale clothier or the Wharfedale farmer, became as good a politician as the merchants of Mincing Lane or the saunterers of Pall Mall.²⁶

It was vital that the Airedale clothier and the Wharfedale farmer did understand the momentous forces that had been unleashed on British society in those formative years of the nineteenth century. Britain was a nation standing at a watershed both politically and economically, as it watched its agrarian and rural based economy slowly transformed into an industrial and urban based one.²⁷ This was a nation caught up in the political maelstrom that followed the upheavals of the American and French Revolutions. It saw the *ancien régime* of British oligarchy threatened with a constitutional reform that would be the first hesitant step towards establishing the parliamentary democracy of twentieth century Britain. Compounding these complex historic influences was war; a protracted twenty year war against Revolutionary and Napoleonic France and a two year war against the fledgling United States of America.

Facing these national and international complexities, Leeds at this time was also a bitterly divided town. These divisions

produced a lively political life and, in the form of Baines's Mercury, a major cultural innovation in newspaper content²⁸.

But Baines in his Mercury produced more than simply 'cultural innovation.' Through the columns of his newspaper he responded to those bitter political divisions as he raised, analysed and commented upon every major political issue of the day. His leaders were not the sceptical outpourings of a journalistic cynic but contained the visionary convictions of a man dedicated to 'the interests and liberties of our country.'²⁹ Baines was the man whose editorials guided his readers through those turbulent times and complex issues, and turned the Leeds Mercury into the lodestar of Liberal thinking in the West Riding and beyond. He could claim by 1820:

There is not a town in the large and important counties of York and

²⁶ The Patriot and quoted in the Leeds Mercury 12.08.48. This was not the Leeds Patriot which ceased publication in 1833. See D Read Press and People (London 1961) p 95

²⁷ Agriculture in England, even as late as 1850, was still employing 25% of the adult workforce. See Asa Briggs The Age of Improvement 1787-1867 (London 1987) p 41

²⁸ R J Morris 'Middle Class Culture, 1700-1914': A History of Modern Leeds ed D Fraser (Manchester 1980) p 204

²⁹ Leeds Mercury 01.01.20

Lancaster ... to which our paper does not find access: besides having an extensive circulation through the large towns in ... the kingdom.³⁰

His paper became the 'mouthpiece of provincial middle class opinion.'³¹ Baines had the 'avowed intention to seek to mould local opinion.'³² He succeeded to the extent that his 'Leeds Mercury became the leading middle-class provincial journal of its day.'³³ But Baines did not simply provide a journalistic platform for the Whig-Liberal views he held; he assumed the mantle of politician and campaigned for those beliefs with the same energy and enthusiasm that were reflected in his editorials.

Baines was a committed politician both nationally and locally. When he did move on to Westminster and become, in Derek Fraser's words, 'a model Liberal MP',³⁴ he remained deeply involved in Leeds politics. In fact, Baines played a significant role in the establishment in the town of

nearly all the institutions for public utility and benevolence established in Leeds within the last half century.³⁵

Now, on that August Thursday, the town paused reverentially from its daily business to pay its final respects. No other figure in nineteenth century Leeds politics received a greater demonstration of public appreciation. Christopher Beckett, George Goodman, and Richard Oastler³⁶ all received impressive public support on their final journeys but not until Baines's son, Edward, half a century later in 1890³⁷ and then John Barran in 1905³⁸ did a civic funeral in Leeds compare with that of Edward Baines. Neither their public funerals nor those in the twentieth century of James Kitson, First Baron Airedale,³⁹ First World War local hero Sergeant-Major Ranyes VC, Lord

³⁰ Leeds Mercury 01.01.20

³¹ D Fraser 'The Life of Edward Baines: A Filial Biography of "The Great Liar of the North."' Northern History vol XXXI (1995) p 208

³² Read Press and People p 77

³³ Fraser NH vol XXXI p 211

³⁴ Ibid p 218

³⁵ These included the House of Recovery, the Dispensary, the Lancastrian School, the Philosophical Society, the Mechanics' Institution, the Literary Society, the New Library, the Tradesman's Benevolent Society, the Leeds and Yorkshire Insurance Company, the Provident Institutions, Waterworks, Railways, Commercial Buildings and Public Baths. See Leeds Mercury 05.08.48

³⁶ Leeds Mercury 27.03.47, 20.10.59, 31.08.61

³⁷ Leeds Mercury 07.03.90

³⁸ Yorkshire Post 08.05.05.

³⁹ Yorkshire Post 23.03.1911

Brotherton⁴⁰ or Lord Moynihan⁴¹ surpassed that of Baines.

But politics by its very nature is adversarial. Despite the laudations that were accorded him on his death, Baines was no exception to this axiom. A politician anticipates obloquy and invective and as a politician Baines expected and regularly received the vituperative verbal onslaughts of his enemies. Throughout his four decades as editor his opponents fired salvo after salvo in the direction of the Mercury offices. Often vicious, sometimes witty, always barbed and insulting, their words typified the internecine warfare of politics in early nineteenth century Britain.

Probably the most frequently quoted insults he received came from Alaric Watts, a minor literary figure and editor of the Leeds Intelligencer and the ebullient William Cobbett. Watts, in December 1827, answered Baines's criticism that the Intelligencer was in as parlous a state as it was between 1818 and 1822.

There is in short, no earthly ground for analogy between the Intelligencer, at the two periods pointed out, except the malevolent wish of Mr Baines to disparage a Journal which his envy and fear make him hate. As well might we say that the portly proprietor of the Mercury - the Sexagenarian dandy of Briggate - the Solon of the Leeds Workhouse - the Demosthenes of the Hunslet rabble - the father of Talbot Baines, Esq barrister-at-law - the sire of the *sola voluptas*, the travelled Adonis - the lord of the manor of a piece of Lancashire moss: as well, we repeat, might we say that the "old gentleman" who now combines in himself rare qualities, is still the same poverty-stricken adventurer that he was thirty years ago when he wandered into Leeds, his whole fortune centred on a "composing stick" and his head as empty of learning as his back was bare of clothes - as Mr Baines may say, that the Intelligencer in 1827 is in the same state that it was between 1818 and 1822.⁴²

Cobbett was equally scathing. In 1830 during his Rural Rides visit to Leeds

(T)his great *Liar of the North* hid his head while I was in town, (and) came sneaking to the playhouse, wrapped in a sort of disguise.⁴³

It was a description he used more than once, resurrecting it two years later in his Political Register.

⁴⁰ The funerals of Sergeant-Major Raynes VC see Yorkshire Evening Post 15.11.1929; Lord Brotherton see Yorkshire Post 24.10.1930 and Lord Moynihan see Yorkshire Evening News 10.09.1936 were all extensive civic occasions but none surpassed Baines's.

⁴¹ Yorkshire Evening News 10.09.1936. It should be noted that Sir Charles Wilson's funeral was private. He was accorded a civic memorial service. See Yorkshire Evening News 02.01.1931

⁴² Leeds Intelligencer 13.12.27

⁴³ W Cobbett Rural Rides vol II ed G D H Cole and Margaret Cole ed (London 1930) p 607

Brougham's grand puffer, THE GREAT LIAR OF THE NORTH, publisher of that mass of lies and nonsense called the Leeds Mercury ... this swelled up greedy and unprincipled puffer who has been the deluder of Yorkshire for twenty years past.⁴⁴

And there were other equally bitter philippics that have received less public notice. William Rider in The Demagogue lashed out at this 'veracious poison-monger, Baines.'⁴⁵ The Intelligencer's poet, Philo Griff, resorted to classical imagery in content as well as pseudonym when he penned this verse to the 'Mercury Apostate.'

In stealing and pilf'ring your Skill, we don't doubt,
But beware of the *flames*; your tricks are found out.
If GRIFF's circulation you'd steal, mind this warning,
Go MERC'RY and steal a little more learning.⁴⁶

A less poetic pseudonym was employed by a Huddersfield letter writer in 1807. Objecting bitterly to the proposed petition for peace, he condemned Baines as 'an obsequious tool' of the petitioners and left no-one in any doubt where his sympathies lay, signing himself 'Anti-Baines'. In the same edition another correspondent, 'A Briton,' in one of a series of letters to the paper, advised his readers to ignore 'a canting hypocrite, so shallow and paltry a scribbler as Mr Mercury.' He returned to the theme in February the following year.

Speak well of you Mr MERCURY! Where is the temptation to so foul a crime? ... Speak well of you! For my own part, I would as soon think of giving Belzebub (sic) my good word.⁴⁷

Nothing less would be expected by the readers of the Intelligencer whenever the 'sapient scribbler,' 'meddling, officious and impudent' was mentioned.⁴⁸ Joseph Ogle Robinson, co-owner of the paper, succinctly summed up the Intelligencer's attitude to Baines after Alaric Watts had taken up the reins as its editor in 1822. Writing from London on 24 February 1823, Robinson explained to Watts that he had received a letter from Rev George Croly complaining that as a new editor Watts was 'expressing (himself) too strongly when speaking of individuals.' However, such criticism did not

⁴⁴ Cobbett's Political Register 24.11.32 and cited by Fraser NH vol XXXI p 216

⁴⁵ W Rider The Demagogue - Extracts from the Unpublished Memoirs of Edward Baines Esq MP No 1 (Leeds 1834) p 4

⁴⁶ Leeds Intelligencer 10.02.06. Griffith Wright (Jun) was the owner of the Intelligencer from 1805-1818. See Anon 'Extracts for the Leeds Intelligencer and the Leeds Mercury 1777-1782'; Publications of the Thoresby Society vol XL (1955) pp i-xiii

⁴⁷ Leeds Intelligencer 09.11.07, 15.02.08

⁴⁸ Leeds Intelligencer 21.03.08

apply to his treatment of Baines. Robinson went on. When speaking of Baines, 'Nothing you can say is half bad enough for him.'⁴⁹

Invective towards Baines and his 'mischievous, disaffected, jacobinical faction,' and to his Leeds Mercury, (for was not Mercury 'the God of thieves and liars!')⁵⁰ was not restricted simply to that particular Tory journal. The Leeds Patriot under its editor, John Foster, bitter at his rival's attempts to destroy his business, was equally venomous if more reserved in his aspersions towards that 'convicted calumniator', the 'grand apostate - Mr Baines' who was 'beneath the notice of honourable men.'⁵¹ Nor were the abuse and insults restricted to writers in Leeds newspapers. In December 1839, 500 unemployed workmen gathered around the makeshift hustings of a wagon at the north-east end of Hunslet Moor. One of the speakers was a Mr C Connor, who turned his attention to the Leeds Mercury editor, 'a stamp distributor of lies.'⁵²

How did Baines respond to such attacks? After the contested Yorkshire election of 1807 in which the Whig, Lord Milton defeated the Tory, Henry Lascelles, eighteen months of bitter feuding between the Leeds Mercury and the Leeds Intelligencer ensued. Baines's son, also called Edward, commented in his biography of his father:

his biographer expresses with confidence his admiration at the combined vigour and gentlemanlike spirit maintained throughout.⁵³

II

It may well be true that he did demonstrate a 'gentlemanlike spirit' but we have only his son's word for it. Herein lies the principal difficulty for historians in assessing Baines. For Edward's biography, 'the first full-scale biography of a newspaper owner,' according to Linton and Boston,⁵⁴ is a filial biography and must be seen in that light. Moreover, in the past century and half since the son's work appeared no other historian has seen fit to embark upon a dispassionate, full-scale study of the man who made such an impact on his times and whose death brought the mourning citizenry of the town to a halt that August Thursday.

⁴⁹ A A Watts (Jun) Alaric Watts; a Narrative of His Life vol I (London 1884) pp 163-164

⁵⁰ Leeds Intelligencer 09.11.07, 06.11.15

⁵¹ Leeds Patriot 03.10.29, 20.06.29, 19.09.29

⁵² Baines was not the only subject to suffer that speaker's censure; he shared the honour with the Anti-Corn Law League, Daniel O'Connell and the Leeds Times. See Leeds Times 14.12.39

⁵³ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 64. See Chapter Three below for Baines's role in the election in more detail.

⁵⁴ D Linton and R Boston The Newspaper Press in Britain (London 1987) p 11

It is true that eminent historians such as Donald Read, Clyde Binfield and Derek Fraser have considered aspects of Baines's life.⁵⁵ But there has been no biography conceived in the light of modern scholarship and incorporating the vast increase in our understanding of early nineteenth century British society since Edward embarked on his filial work. This represents a major gap in existing historiography. It may well be that the dearth of manuscript primary source material has deterred potential biographers. Unfortunately, according to Professor J F C Harrison, the bulk of the family papers were deliberately destroyed as a precaution against incendiary bombs during the Second World War.⁵⁶ Pertinent documentation both from his time at the Mercury and from his days as a Member of Parliament is non-existent. The Yorkshire Post, the eventual owner of the Leeds Mercury, has no records for the paper dating from Baines's time. The National Liberal Club's archives only commence in 1882.⁵⁷ Baines's will, the correspondence of Peel, Hunter, and Roberts; the Fitzwilliam and Harewood Papers; Home Office Correspondence; and parish registers offer some valuable information. But generally the overall content in them is sparse with Baines very much a peripheral figure.

However, with regard to printed primary source material, the historian is much more fortunate. There are in excess of some 6 000 editions of contemporary local newspapers to draw on. An examination of these Leeds weeklies, published between 1795 and 1848, reveals well over 1 600 references to Baines or his thinking. The editorial columns of his Leeds Mercury which carried his ideas for almost fifty years give us an incisive insight into the mind of the man. His voluminous publications, in particular his four volume History of the Reign of George III and his classic four volume History of the County Palatine and Duchy of Lancaster give further insight into his philosophy whilst Hansard offers his Parliamentary contributions. Equally valuable are the opinions of him by his contemporaries and in particular those of his adversaries. Once again the historian is fortunate in that for nigh on fifty years the Tory Leeds Intelligencer, irrespective of who owned that paper or edited it, launched attack after

⁵⁵ Read Press and People; C Binfield So Down to Prayers (London 1977); D Fraser Urban Politics in Victorian England (Leicester 1976)

⁵⁶ J R Lowerson The Political Career of Sir Edward Baines (1800-1890) (unpublished MA thesis University of Leeds 1965) p 11

⁵⁷ Liberal Club records only begin in 1882 when the club was formed. See G Snell, National Liberal Club to the author 11.01.1990. See also; Mrs A McQueen, Yorkshire Post to the author 25.10.1994

attack on the Mercury editor. Thus, along with the critical comments of the Leeds Times and to a lesser degree - there are only limited copies extant - the Leeds Patriot, it is easy to assess what his contemporaries in journalism thought of him. Baines's critics and supporters are regularly found condemning or agreeing with him in their letters to the press; whilst journalists highlight in graphic detail the private and public meetings he attended, the speeches he made on the hustings or in the parish vestry and the bitter demonstrations that, from time to time, were held against him.

But undoubtedly the most important printed primary source for any study of Baines has to be his son's biography. Understandably, the younger Baines's records the commendable achievements of his father. Fraser in examining the value of the younger Baines's biography recognises it as a book which 'illuminates the evolving urban industrial society of provincial England.'⁵⁸ It is, he argued

an important source for an insight into mid-Victorian values and attitudes ...(and) ... became partly a guide to the values and ideals of middle-class social philosophy.⁵⁹

Throughout the younger Baines's work those middle-class mid-Victorian values are proclaimed repeatedly. However, there was a subtle difference between the moral values of Edward Senior and the mores of the later Baines family. What we find in his son's work is not simply the obvious, and expected, panegyric but rather a wider reflection of the mores of the Victorian Britain in which the younger Baines wrote. These are the specific values of the later Baines family; a family which

had their peculiarities ... their strict regard for the Sabbath ... (and) clung to many of the notions of the Puritans of an older generation.⁶⁰

Thus wrote Wemyss Reid, a man who through his association with the Leeds Mercury from 1866 to 1887, knew the family well. The reader does not have to assume a moral agenda in the book; Edward Junior specifically spells it out.

The aim of this Memoir is to do good ... It may be especially useful to the young to set before them a character of remarkable symmetry, in which great virtues are not neutralized by great failings, but in which every feature is well proportioned, and all conducive to masculine beauty.⁶¹

⁵⁸ Fraser NH vol XXXI p 210

⁵⁹ Ibid pp 218-219

⁶⁰ S J Reid ed Memoirs of Sir Wemyss Reid 1842-1885 (London 1905) p 99

⁶¹ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines pp 5-6

To C S Spence it was 'a most important book to be placed in the hands of any young man.'⁶² It is a classic Smilesean example of how industry and sobriety brings success; yet Smiles, who knew the elder Baines, does not include him in his book Self-Help.⁶³

The fact that Baines is held up by his son to be such an archetype should not impugn the merit of his biography. But if the book is to be of real value then its limitations must be recognised. It is a filial work and it is, as the author acknowledged, a deliberate exemplar; but it exemplified the ideals most cherished by the son and those were not necessarily the ones held by the father. This must raise some doubts regarding not merely the objectivity but also the historicity of the biography, valuable to historians as it is. Fraser, to a degree, pointed out some of its shortcomings commenting, '(t)o his son, Baines had no personal defects or blemishes of character.'⁶⁴ Hence the author only reluctantly mentioned the Leeds Association, a political body organised by Baines on the lines of Thomas Attwood's Birmingham Political Union⁶⁵ he

quietly ignored ... the deep and bitter mistrust of Baines felt by working men and their leaders.

Oastler's initial campaign 'gets only the briefest mention.'⁶⁶ It is a campaign dismissed curtly but politely by the younger Baines in one sentence.

It was in the month of October of this year (1830) that Mr Richard Oastler commenced his vehement and in a great measure successful agitation to shorten factory labour to ten hours per day.⁶⁷

There is no reason given why Oastler's letter dated 29 September was not published in the Leeds Mercury until 16 October; no mention of the violent attacks Oastler made on the Mercury editor or his allegation that Baines had sired an illegitimate child. Nor is reference made to Baines being burned in effigy during a demonstration in 1832.⁶⁸

⁶² C S Spence (A Leeds Man) Memoirs of Eminent Men of Leeds (London/Leeds 1868) p 26. Eight years later a second 'cheap and popular' edition of Baines Junior's biography was published as it 'had been considered to furnish so valuable and encouraging an example to the young, and to persons in the middle class generally.' See Preface to the Second Edition, (Leeds, May 1859).

⁶³ S Smiles Self-Help; with Illustrations of Character and Conduct (London 1860)

⁶⁴ Fraser NH vol XXXI p 210

⁶⁵ Ibid p 214

⁶⁶ Ibid pp 214-216

⁶⁷ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 1

⁶⁸ Fraser NH vol XXXI p 217, Anon Thoresby Society vol XL p xx

The younger Baines's wholesome editing is exemplified when he comments on the October 1819 meeting held in the Castle-yard at York and the treatment of Joseph Mitchell a draper, pamphlet-seller and journalist whom

Mr Baines knew ...(had been) a companion of Oliver on his tour of villainy ... Mr Baines stated his impression that the man was employed to do mischief ... On this the meeting at once refused to hear Mitchell.⁶⁹

This sanitized report contrasts sharply with John Belchem's description of the event in his Orator Hunt - Henry Hunt an English Working Class Radical.

Members of the Leeds Radical Committee, acting under instructions from Baines, provided the necessary muscle to dislodge Mitchell from the platform at the county meeting in October when he tried to raise the issue of reform.⁷⁰

Belchem also refers to an incident which the younger Baines quietly and artfully ignores; this time when Baines tried to silence Henry Hunt who had arrived in Leeds in November 1831. Hunt and his followers made their way to Bishopgate Street and the Kings Arms Hotel, more popularly known as Scarborough's Hotel after Sarah Scarborough the then part owner.⁷¹ It was here that Hunt was

rudely interrupted by Baines, who seized hold of his collar and tried to drag him from the window. After a scuffle, Baines started to address the crowd ... but was soon forced to withdraw by the jeers of the crowd.⁷²

At times the description of his father hints at banality and assumes the stereotypical mores expected of the dutiful father, husband and businessman of Victorian Britain.

Mr Baines at this period, was a perfect model for young tradesmen ... His punctuality and method were exemplary ... He would not spend more than half his income ... Husband and wife were of the same mind ... A main secret of his frugality was that he created no artificial wants. He always drank water. He never smoked ... He took no snuff. Neither tavern nor theatre saw his face.⁷³

It would be churlish to condemn such a description out of hand simply because it implies sanctimoniousness. Throughout his life Baines was indeed a sober, industrious and successful businessman, a passionate and concerned politician and a diligent

⁶⁹ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 109

⁷⁰ J Belchem Orator Hunt - Henry Hunt an English Working Class Radical (Oxford 1985) p 130

⁷¹ Baines and Newsome General and Commercial Directory of the Borough of Leeds (Leeds 1834) pp 268-269

⁷² Belchem Orator Hunt pp 247-248

⁷³ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines pp 34-35

journalist. His professionalism and the accuracy of his reports have been recognised by later writers. Robert Reid, for example, in Land of Lost Content claimed Baines's reports were so accurate on the York Special Commission, established to investigate the Luddite outrages of 1812, that

I have relied particularly heavily on his account of the York Special Commission of 1813 which is certainly as accurate and often fuller than that of the official record.⁷⁴

A genuine concern for humanity and a deep sense of civic responsibility was a recurrent theme in his editorials. And these, at times, were lubricated with a sense of humour, albeit at times an impish one. With regard to Devonshire farmer's daughter and religious fanatic Joanna Southcott, 'the Prophetess of Exeter,' Baines revealed a caustic humour. Between 1803 and 1804 she provided her followers with 8 144 sealed papers, 'the shibboleth of the Southcottian movement.'⁷⁵ It was held that the seals protected believers from danger. Baines, tongue in cheek, advised the local Volunteers 'to lay in a stock preparatory to the arrival of Bonaparte.'⁷⁶ When she died and her body was subjected to an autopsy, Baines smugly commented that poor Joanna 'so long under seal ... (is) opened up at last.'⁷⁷ His humour was also apparent in the Births, Deaths and Marriages column in April 1808 when under the heading 'Married - Just in Time' is found

On Saturday Mr Edward Bignal to Miss Margaret Wilson, both of Chapelallerton (sic) and on the following morning, the blooming bride presented her lord and master with a fine chubby boy. For a moment we hesitated whether the births or marriages ought to be honoured with this article but our choice was soon determined by the reflection that marriage, ought in all propriety, to take *precedency*.⁷⁸

Even in old age that impish spark was not extinguished. In 1847 he was sitting as a magistrate when the case of a cobbler, James Smith, came before the bench. This 'son of Crispin' had been found sleeping in Vicar's Croft 'in a most indecent state.' The man was unable to account for his behaviour claiming he had had 'rather too much to drink'

⁷⁴ R Reid Land of Lost Content - the Luddite Revolt of 1812 (London 1986) p 2

⁷⁵ J K Hopkins A Woman to Deliver Her People: Joanna Southcott and English Millenarianism in an Era of Revolution (Austin 1982) pp 104-105.

⁷⁶ Leeds Mercury 22.10.03. He made the comment on the occasion of Joanna's visit to Leeds. The following week Baines published a letter from 'A Believer' who produced a serious 'Explanation of the Seals.' See Leeds Mercury 29.10.03

⁷⁷ Leeds Mercury 14.01.15

⁷⁸ Leeds Mercury 23.04.08

but added

he was quite sure no-one could come into court and blast his character in the least. Mr Baines observed that ... (the man) appeared to be blasting his own character as much as possible.⁷⁹

That he never attended taverns is not strictly true, though it may be argued that the point is pedantic. In May 1834 he was at the City of London Tavern speaking on Dissenters; in February 1837 he was there speaking on church rates.⁸⁰ However, to say a theatre never 'saw his face' is clearly untrue and is a fact which the younger Baines inadvertently admits himself. In November 1805, Baines and his wife attended the Music Hall, a cultural venue, in Albion Street.⁸¹ It was not always used for the performing arts.⁸² In November 1805 Maillardet's Automata Exhibition was on show to raise funds for the widows and orphans of the men who perished at Trafalgar. In all, some £30 was made but the evening was marred by an incident at the Baines home in Park Square where the Baines children were being tended by the servants. A candle had fallen on some muslin and the house caught fire but a tragedy was averted by the prompt arrival of the fire engine. The event was well documented in both the Leeds papers and also in Baines's biography.⁸³ Baines makes no mention, however, of his father's other theatre visits or, in 1810, of his apology for not visiting the theatre on one occasion. In March that year, Baines announced in the Mercury that he had been forced to send a correspondent 'being ourselves prevented from attending the performance at the Music Hall on Wednesday evening.'⁸⁴ Readers would have appreciated why; the previous week a bald, single sentence had appeared in the Leeds Mercury;

Died on Thursday morning, William, the fourth son of Mr Edward Baines, the printer of this paper.⁸⁵

William had died on the 22 March, he was two years old. Baines, however, was certainly present at the Wakefield Music Festival in 1824. He actually comments 'we

⁷⁹ Leeds Times 27.11.47

⁸⁰ Leeds Mercury 24.05.34, 11.02.37

⁸¹ Burt and Grady The Illustrated History of Leeds p 159

⁸² In April 1817 a panorama of Waterloo was displayed there and in December that year Bonaparte's military carriage was exhibited. See Leeds Mercury 19.04.17, 13.12.17

⁸³ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines pp 59-60. See also Leeds Mercury 23.11.05 and Leeds Intelligencer 25.11.05

⁸⁴ Leeds Mercury 31.03.10

⁸⁵ Leeds Mercury 24.03.10

noticed' in describing the local celebrities gathered there.⁸⁶ In February two years previously, a graphic account was given in the Mercury of Madame Catalani at the Music Hall and though this could have been written by another correspondent⁸⁷ the frustrated passion noticeable in a report that appeared in February 1805 leaves little doubt that it was the Leeds Mercury editor himself who penned that particular piece.

One thing only was wanted to make the evening's entertainment complete, and that was *silence* ... (the) object in attending the Concert, was rather to be entertained by the *performers* than by the *prattlers*.⁸⁸

Baines Junior may well have argued that there was a distinction between these cultural venues and the theatre proper. His father saw no such distinction. With regard to Mr Fitzgerald's Leeds Theatre on Hunslet Lane, Baines clearly shows that not only did he not condemn theatres; he considered them a valuable cultural asset to the community. It was a point he made forcibly in the Leeds Mercury of the 10 June 1815. The theatre had been closed for some time but when Fitzgerald bought it he set about renovating and refurbishing the building; it was a transformation Baines was delighted to report.

For the space of four years, the town of Leeds ... has been deprived of one great source of national amusement by the closing of the Theatre ... an elegant, refined source of instruction and delight. We cannot ... find language adequate to our wishes, to congratulate Mr Fitzgerald, upon the taste and spirit he has evinced in metamorphosing dinginess, beggary and filth into brilliance, grace and elegance ... We are happy to give our sanction and testimony to an improvement so desirable and praiseworthy.⁸⁹

These are hardly the words of a man whose face never saw the inside of a theatre!

To understand this antipathy to the stage, it is necessary to appreciate the passionate beliefs Baines's biographer held on the subject. Wemyss Reid, editor of the Leeds Mercury from 1870-87 was well aware of those views.

Edward Baines, the second, regarded the theatre ... as being an agent for the demoralisation of the young, and he refused to allow any notice of it to appear in the columns of his paper ... he delivered himself as follows: You do not know the theatre as I do ... it is immoral and demoralising ... between the years 1819 and 1822 I attended the theatre frequently in London and can never forget the shocking immorality I witnessed."⁹⁰

⁸⁶ Leeds Mercury 02.10.24

⁸⁷ Leeds Mercury 16.02.22

⁸⁸ Leeds Mercury 23.02.05

⁸⁹ Leeds Mercury 10.06.15

⁹⁰ Reid Memoirs of Sir Wemyss Reid pp 100-101

That he 'only' drank water also raises certain doubts. Sobriety did play an important part in his life but was it as important as the views his son held on the subject? Wemyss Reid reminded his readers the younger Baines

was also a strict teetotaler. When he entered the House of Commons there was only one other teetotaler in that body.⁹¹

The elder Baines may well have generally been an abstainer.⁹² But did he only drink water at the numerous dinners he attended? He was present at: the Fitzwilliam public dinner in 1823, the one for the opening of the Commercial Buildings in 1829, and the celebration for the ending of slavery in the British Empire in 1834, the celebration victory for the Leeds election in 1835, and that for George Goodman, the newly elected mayor of the reformed town council in 1836, the Whig dinner in Leeds, the Liberal dinner, the Reform dinner at Salford, all in 1837, the Yorkshire Agricultural Society dinner, and that held to celebrate the close of the Leeds Exhibition both in 1839.⁹³

The young Baines was well aware of the difficulties that would be presented in undertaking to write a memoir of his father. In his introduction to his father's biography he clearly recognises that

the compiler of this narrative cannot pretend to impartiality. But he can and will endeavour to govern himself by the spirit of truth. With the authority of so many filial biographies before him, it is needless to apologise for following the example. Moreover, he believes that sons do not generally write the most eulogistic accounts of their fathers ... He writes openly in his own character, as a son inheriting his father's opinions, but also, he trusts, inheriting his father's love of truth.⁹⁴

On the publication of the second edition of the biography in 1859 the Patriot's review concurred fully that Baines had achieved his intended objective and claimed that the book had been written

without the blinded partiality of a son for a father, but with the honesty of a faithful reporter.⁹⁵

The book was equally well received by the Daily News which commented in its Critical

⁹¹ Reid Memoirs of Sir Wemyss Reid p 98

⁹² He certainly chaired the inaugural meeting of the Leeds Temperance Society in 1830. See Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 162. See also Chapter Five below.

⁹³ Leeds Mercury 01.11.23, 29.10.29, 09.08.34, 16.05.35, 03.09.36, Leeds Intelligencer 03.09.36, 21.01.37, Leeds Mercury 01.04.37, 09.09.37, Leeds Intelligencer 31.08.39, Leeds Mercury 19.10.39

⁹⁴ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines pp 9-10

⁹⁵ Baines Papers: Patriot 11.08.59

Notices column that it was a

valuable record of middle class sentiment, of the awakening of that class to political conviction.⁹⁶

Charles Knight, having read the draft manuscript, agreed to publish the memoir. He wrote to Baines on 25 January 1850 from St John's Wood recommending that additional historical background be included in the text and was delighted that the author had 'executed (his) delicate task with judgement, taste and rare impartiality.'⁹⁷

Fraser points out the

glorious tribute has led some to doubt the value of such a filial portrait... (However) what is presented here is not the private life, but the public career of an important provincial politician and the record to some extent speaks for itself.⁹⁸

Despite its self-evident flaws, Baines's biography of his father is a dutifully chronicled account of a provincial politician that places its subject carefully into the panorama of national events that unfolded during the first half of the nineteenth century. It was a considerable *tour de force* and certainly Baines felt pride in his achievement. Thirty-four years after publishing the book, he formally presented a copy to Leeds in gratitude for the erection of statue of his father in Leeds Town Hall and the hanging of his own portrait there.⁹⁹

It was not his own idea to publish such a memoir. His father had raised the issue back in 1834. A publisher, by the name of Fisher, of the firm Fisher, Son and Jackson, had approached the older man with the desire to compile a biographical account of him. It was to be published in the National Portrait Gallery of Illustrious and Eminent Personages of the Nineteenth Century with Memoirs and which had loftily declared when its first volume appeared in 1830

It is the grand object of the National Portrait Gallery to preserve and transmit to posterity, the features and memory of those who have earned greatness in the present age.¹⁰⁰

A volume had appeared each subsequent year with a brief biographical account and an

⁹⁶ Baines Papers: Daily News no date

⁹⁷ Baines Papers: MS no 52.7 C Knight to E Baines (Jun) 25.01.50

⁹⁸ Fraser NH vol XXXI p 209

⁹⁹ Baines Papers: MS no 26, 30.10.85

¹⁰⁰ Fisher National Portrait Gallery of Illustrious and Eminent Personages of the Nineteenth Century with Memoirs (London 1830) vol I p 8. Baines was well aware of the publication as he had advertised its first three volumes in 1832. See Leeds Mercury 05.05.32

engraved portrait of the subjects featured. In 1834, Baines found himself in some august company, albeit it he was featured last in the book.¹⁰¹ Initially, Baines was hesitant. He was all too well aware that a writer some distance from a subject was capable of inadvertently making errors, errors that then become enshrined with the cloak of authenticity and thus pass irrefutably into the canon of received wisdom. There was but one person capable of undertaking such a task and that was the person who had worked by his side, shared his opinions, and campaigned in his struggles; in effect, his son, Edward. He was, however very much aware that a continued rejection of Fisher's approaches could present future difficulties and consequently he wrote to Edward to that effect.

If I should continue to persist in my objection to give assistance or to allow any assistance to be given by you in preparing the memoir then a very inaccurate and inappropriate one will appear in this or in some other publication and that will continue to be transferred time after time into biographical works ... I feel assured that in anything in which my name and the credit and honour of the family are engaged the work cannot be confided to any hands more safely than yours.¹⁰²

However, he did allow his name to be included in Fisher's publication. It may well be that a deciding factor in finally agreeing was that as a young printer in Preston he shared his apprenticeship with, among others, Henry Fisher, the founder of the publishing house concerned.¹⁰³

His fear of inaccuracies appearing was fully justified. On page one of his biography in the National Portrait Gallery certain fundamental errors occur.

He succeeded in the year 1800, after the death of Mr Binns, to the proprietorship of the Leeds Mercury, of which he became the sole conductor. In the preceding year he married Charlotte, daughter of Mr Matthew Talbot.¹⁰⁴

Baines took over the Leeds Mercury in March 1801¹⁰⁵; Binns had died five years previously in 1796¹⁰⁶; and Baines married Charlotte in 1798 not the year preceding

¹⁰¹ Among the biographies included that year were those of the Marquis of Lansdowne, Edmund Burke, Michael Faraday, Sir Robert Peel the Elder, Henry Fuseli and Sir Francis Burdett.

¹⁰² Baines Papers: MS No 51.10 E Baines to E Baines (Jun) 1834

¹⁰³ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 20

¹⁰⁴ Fisher National Portrait Gallery p 1

¹⁰⁵ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 37

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid* p 21

1800!¹⁰⁷ On page two a couple of inaccurate dates appear. The date of the Baines and Son partnership is wrong.

In the hands of Mr Baines, the Leeds Mercury became a journal of extensive political influence in the north of England, which has been enlarged since he obtained the co-operation of his son, and partner in business, Mr Edward Baines in 1828.¹⁰⁸

The partnership was announced in Leeds Mercury on 6 January 1827. Baines, we are told was elected to Parliament on '17th February 1834.'¹⁰⁹ Baines was elected Member of Parliament on Saturday 15 February 1834 not 17 February!¹¹⁰

III

Baines was certainly correct in his fears that in the future confusion and inaccuracies would occur regarding his life story but the fault lay not so much with the errant biographer of the National Portrait Gallery or other irresponsible historians. The principal people responsible were none other than Baines himself, and his wife, Charlotte. On 17 February 1799, Mrs Baines gave birth to a son. The couple dutifully called him after his maternal grandfather, Matthew Talbot. Just over a year later on 28 May 1800 she brought forth a second boy into the world. Instead of following the same procedure and christening him this time after the paternal grandfather, Richard, the couple decided to call him after the child's own father, Edward.¹¹¹ It was an action that has bedevilled historians ever since for there now existed two Edward Baineses. Both would be editors of the Leeds Mercury, both would represent the borough of Leeds as Members of Parliament, both would be deeply involved in local politics and both would be Dissenters. Added to this confusion is the fact that one did not succeed the other but for over thirty years they operated contemporaneously.

Mrs Fawcett is only one of a number of writers who have fallen into the trap of confusing the two Baineses. In her Life of the Rt Honourable Sir William Molesworth Bart she describes the events in Leeds regarding the choice of candidates for the town in January 1837;

At a public meeting of the electors, a resolution was carried with great

¹⁰⁷ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 32

¹⁰⁸ Fisher National Portrait Gallery p 2

¹⁰⁹ Ibid p 2

¹¹⁰ Ibid p 2 compare with Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 188

¹¹¹ It was not until 1809 when their seventh child was born that the paternal grandfather was finally honoured! Leeds City Reference Library; Baines Genealogy SR 929.2 B161

enthusiasm, choosing Mr Edward Baines and Sir William Molesworth as candidates for the borough in the event of a dissolution.¹¹²

The elder Baines was the man in question. Later she concentrated on Palmerston's efforts to re-form his ministry.

When Palmerston was re-forming his ministry in February 1855 ... Sir William Molesworth wrote a letter to him containing some suggestions on the reconstruction of the Cabinet ... He also urged the promotion of Mr Baines (his old colleague at Leeds) to the India Board.¹¹³

The 'old colleague' had died in 1848. The Baines then serving in Parliament was Matthew Talbot, MP for Leeds and who in December 1855 would be appointed Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster¹¹⁴ In a footnote on page 216 she adds

Mr, afterwards Sir Edward Baines, editor and proprietor of the Leeds Mercury, was Sir William's colleague in the representation of Leeds. He also retired from ill-health, before the General Election of 1841

Edward Senior was Sir William's colleague who retired from ill-health; Edward Junior was knighted in 1880.¹¹⁵ An almost identical error occurs in the Yorkshire Post publication for the tercentenary of Leeds in 1926. In Leeds and Its History the anonymous author in the chapter 'Making Newspaper History' comments;

The first political leader in a Yorkshire newspaper appeared in the Leeds Mercury after its purchase by Mr (afterwards) Sir Edward Baines.¹¹⁶

R D Chambers in The Workshop of the World is quite right in referring to 'the historian of the cotton industry, Edward Baines.'¹¹⁷ He continues later;

Edward Baines, the historian of the industry, spoke in 1835 'of the strict probity and honour' invariably associated with the Liverpool cotton broker.¹¹⁸

But this was most certainly not the Edward Baines he indicates on pages 197-198 when

¹¹² M Fawcett Life of Rt Honourable Sir William Molesworth Bart (London 1901) p 128

¹¹³ Fawcett Life of Sir William Molesworth pp 333-334

¹¹⁴ E L Woodward Age of Reform 1815-1870 (Oxford 1939) p 640

¹¹⁵ I S Leadam 'Baines, Sir Edward'; Dictionary of National Biography ed S Lee Supplement vol I (London 1901) p 100

¹¹⁶ Anon 'Making Newspaper History': Leeds and Its History - Three Hundred Years of Achievement ed Anon (Leeds 1926) pp 189-191. The Barnsley Chronicle also claimed Baines's Leeds Mercury was the first northern newspaper to introduce 'the now indispensable "leader."' See Anon Yorkshire Journalism in the Eighteenth Century (Barnsley 1878) p 5. Donald Read gives the credit to Joseph Gales of the Sheffield Register. See Read Press and People p 69.

¹¹⁷ R D Chambers The Workshop of the World (London 1964) p 20

¹¹⁸ Ibid p 125

listing the title of one of Richard Oastler's pamphlets; 'The Huddersfield Dissenters Stark Staring Mad!!! The Fourth Letter to Edward Baines Esq., M.P.' This Baines was most clearly the father. The son did not become MP for Leeds until 1859; Oastler's virulent antagonism to Baines occurred in the 1830s.¹¹⁹ Chambers's index, like that of Stephen Koss's in The Rise and Fall of the Political Press in Britain, only cites the one 'Baines, Edward.' Hence we find in Koss;

At Westminster, the elder Edward Baines was governed by the conviction ... 'the influence of the press and public opinion will be substituted for the traditional influences of landlordism and feudalism.'

His two further references most definitely relate to the younger Baines but that fact is not brought out:

Looking beyond Palmerston, the Advertiser brushed aside Russell ... and pinned its hopes on Gladstone, who supported Edward Baines's annual motions to enlarge the borough franchise.

An electoral hornets' nest, the Leeds Liberal Association, was torn between the supporters of Edward Baines and radical enthusiasts for temperance and disestablishment nor forgot Baines's defence of the 1870 Education Act.¹²⁰

In Victorian Cities by Asa Briggs confusion is found again as a result of the Baines index fusing father and son simply as 'Baines, E.' Page 142 most certainly refers to the father who became MP in the February by-election that followed Macaulay's resignation upon his appointment as Member of the Council in India.

When Macaulay resigned his seat a year later Edward Baines defeated Sir John Beckett, the Tory candidate by only thirty-one votes in a high poll.¹²¹

However, it is the son we find referred to on page 183:

There was an inevitable lull in civic spending in Leeds after 1858. When Edward Baines urged that a fund should be raised to decorate the new Town Hall with paintings by eminent Victorian artists, a subscription fund was opened, but the subscriptions did not come in.

In Briggs's The Age of Improvement both individuals are listed in the index as 'Baines,

¹¹⁹ See for example R Oastler A Well Seasoned Christmas Pie (Bradford 1834)

¹²⁰ S Koss The Rise and Fall of the Political Press in Britain (London 1984) pp 61, 160, 225

¹²¹ A Briggs Victorian Cities (Harmondsworth 1977) p 142. The elder Baines's victory was in fact by thirty-four votes; Baines polled 1 951 votes, Beckett 1 917 and Bower, the Radical candidate, twenty-four. Baines's overall majority was then only ten. See H S Smith The Parliaments of England 1715-1847 2nd Edition ed F W S Craig (Chichester 1973) p 411. See also Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 188

Edward' and 'Baines, Edward, his son.'¹²² However, on page 51 confusion occurs where reference is made to Yorkshire Past and Present (1871-77) by T Baines and E Baines. It is quite clear that Baines the Elder is intended as the co-author but in fact the father had been dead some twenty-three years when Yorkshire Past and Present appeared.

F Singleton also falls into the trap of identifying only one Baines in his index for his book Industrial Revolution in Yorkshire.¹²³ On page 34 the elder Baines is clearly indicated when he refers to

men like Baines of the Leeds Mercury and Gott, dominated the political life of the town.

Considering the establishment of a Mechanics' Institute in the town on page 127, Singleton remarks that

Baines of the Leeds Mercury, Benjamin Gott and John Marshall MP (were) moving spirits in founding the Yorkshire Mechanics' Institute in 1824.

Marshall was not elected an MP until 1826 when he became one of the four members returned for the county of York¹²⁴ and the younger Baines was eager to show in his biography that he, as well as his father, played an active role in the establishment of the Mechanics' Institute.

Mr Gott, Mr Marshall, Dr Hunter, Mr Luccock, Mr Baines, and his son Edward, took a most active part.¹²⁵

On page 128 Singleton claims that 'by 1858 it was possible for Edward Baines to write in the Leeds Mercury' on the theme of the Mechanics' Institute; this is clearly a reference to the son as the father had been dead for ten years.

Confusion can lead to error and several errors are noticeable among different authors in referring to Baines and his various activities. Singleton on page 186, again writing on Baines, describes 'probably the greatest journalistic success of his whole career, the exposure of Oliver the Spy.'¹²⁶

In 1819 - the year of Peterloo - Baines pulled off a great scoop in his exposure of the nefarious Oliver, the police spy who attempted to incite .

¹²² Briggs The Age of Improvement pp 529, 51, 247

¹²³ F Singleton Industrial Revolution in Yorkshire (Clapham 1970)

¹²⁴ Smith HS The Parliaments of England p 393. The institute established was the Leeds Mechanics' Institution not the Yorkshire Mechanics' Institute. See Leeds Mercury 04.12.24 and Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines pp 124-130

¹²⁵ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 126

¹²⁶ Read Press and People p 113

radical working class leaders to acts of violence.

Baines revealed the Oliver scandal in edition number 2712 on Saturday 14 June 1817 in a report that covered two and half columns. However, it is true that the year 1819 did present the Mercury with something of a journalistic scoop when Edward Junior witnessed the events at Peterloo.¹²⁷

The complication as to which Baines did what was compounded by the fact that both worked on their paper together for over thirty years. On Saturday 6 January 1827 edition number 3208 changed the paper's legend for the first time since the Leeds Mercury came under Baines's auspices in 1801. Then the legend read 'Printed by Edward Baines, Mercury Court, Bottom of Briggate.' Now the legend had a significant addition for the paper was published by 'Baines & Son.'¹²⁸

By the early 1820s Baines was occupied with the production of his directories. The first volume of the History, Directory and Gazetteer of the County of York devoted to the West Riding appeared in 1822; the second volume on the East and North Ridings in 1823.¹²⁹ Not surprisingly, his son became more and more involved in the running of the newspaper¹³⁰ whilst Baines developed his role as historian as well as editor. According to Donald Read, young Baines 'joined the staff of the Mercury in 1815 and in 1818 contributed his first editorial.' Thus, though there was usually a consensus on editorial policy and 'in general the younger Baines shared his father's opinions'¹³¹ understandably there is some confusion at times as to who indeed was responsible for what.

Other mistakes occur. In the election of 1841 the reformer Joseph Hume stood as a Radical candidate alongside William Aldam, the Whig nominee, against the Tories, William Beckett, the Leeds banker and Viscount Jocelyn. In John Wigley's The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Sunday¹³² the author clearly states 'Edward Baines 1st had opposed Hume.' In contrast, Hach and Ziegler both stress

¹²⁷ Leeds Mercury 21.08.19 and 28.08.19

¹²⁸ It became Baines & Sons 01.07.37 when Baines's youngest son Frederick became a partner.

¹²⁹ E Baines History, Directory and Gazetteer of the County of York - West Riding vol I (Leeds 1822); History, Directory and Gazetteer of the County of York - East and North Ridings vol II (Leeds 1823)

¹³⁰ Leeds Mercury 23.09.48 Memoir 7. For a more detailed examination of Baines Junior's role see Chapter Six below.

¹³¹ Read Press and People p 79. 1819 is a more likely date. See Chapter Six below.

¹³² J Wigley The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Sunday (Manchester 1980) p 92

Baines was a free-trader and he had no hesitation to giving his considerable support to Hume ... Hume's name was officially placed in nomination by Edward Baines on 1 July. He told a large gathering on Woodhouse Moor ... men like Hume were needed in the House of Commons.¹³³

Baines Junior leaves no doubt as to what the truth was by quoting his father's words verbatim.

It is my duty to put in nomination as a candidate for your suffrages, at the present election, my Honourable Friend, Joseph Hume Esq.¹³⁴

Hume was pushed into third place by just ten votes and thus failed in his bid but it certainly was not due to the fact that 'Edward Baines 1st' had opposed him.

Even when historians have identified him correctly they have seldom agreed about Baines's true historical stature. Many enthuse over his contributions to the political scene in the West Riding, whilst others regard his very considerable and protracted efforts dismissively. This disagreement is clearly illustrated by the varying responses to the campaign that led to the election of Brougham as member for the county of Yorkshire in 1830. A two day poll saw Brougham run second to Viscount Morpeth as their Whig alliance saw off the Tory challenge of Duncombe and Bethel.¹³⁵ By then Baines was already an archetype of the emerging Whig bourgeoisie of provincial industrial England. He may have been viewed as an *arriviste* by his enemies. But if this were the case, he was an *arriviste* with a social conscience, a deep sense of humanity, a commitment to the principles of Whig-Liberalism and a passionate belief in the liberty of the individual, freed from the shackles of oligarchic aristocracy or landed squirearchy.¹³⁶

Michael Brock leaves us in no doubt of the crucial role Baines played in securing Brougham's nomination.

Edward Baines was not content to nominate a West Riding industrialist by leave of the squirearchy. He meant to show the world that he and his fellow liberals were independent of the county magnates and held the whip hand ... Brougham was a shrewd choice. Baines and his friends, for

¹³³ R K Huch and P R Ziegler Joseph Hume - The People's MP (Philadelphia 1985) pp 121-123

¹³⁴ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 276

¹³⁵ Smith HS The Parliaments of England p 393

¹³⁶ See Chapter Five below and also D Thornton A Study of the Social and Political Thought of Edward Baines (Senior) with Special Reference to the 'Leeds Mercury' (1801-1826) (unpublished MPhil thesis University of Leeds 1994) passim

all their defiance of aristocracy were not radicals.¹³⁷

Robert Stewart was equally certain about Baines's contribution to the nomination. Baines had 'secured for him the nomination to stand at the election as a candidate for Yorkshire' and 'praised Brougham to the skies.'¹³⁸ J T Ward in Popular Movements 1830-1850 is similarly adamant over the role Baines played.

There were some spectacular successes against aristocratic influence, the most notable of which was the election of Brougham for Yorkshire at the suggestion of Edward Baines of the Leeds Mercury.¹³⁹

Aspinall, in Lord Brougham and the Whig Party, disregards Baines's personal involvement but simply quotes the newspaper as having supported Brougham;

Leeds Mercury published a lengthy article on the subject of the Yorkshire election, and suggested ... Brougham ... as one of their four members.¹⁴⁰

G T Garnett goes even farther. In his Lord Brougham he makes no mention whatsoever of either the role Baines or the Leeds Mercury played in the nomination and electoral success.¹⁴¹ It may well be that he was influenced in no small measure by Henry Brougham himself. In Brougham's own biography The Life and Times of Henry Brougham he also makes no reference to the man who was instrumental in securing for him the nomination for Yorkshire.¹⁴²

The 'Oliver Affair' which brought the Leeds Mercury into the national political arena, despite the fulminations of the Leeds Intelligencer, is another example of the ambivalence of historians towards Baines. There are those who recognised the debt society owed him; there are those who have ignored his endeavours. The infamous affair emanated from a decision by the Government in the troubled years following the Napoleonic Wars to employ spies and *agent provocateurs*. One such was W J Richards, who, assuming the name of Oliver, volunteered his services to Lord Sidmouth, the Home Secretary, to 'ascertain the extent of unrest in the midland and the northern districts.'¹⁴³

¹³⁷ M Brock The Great Reform Act (London 1973) p 96

¹³⁸ R Stewart Henry Brougham - his Political Career (London 1986) pp 242-243

¹³⁹ J T Ward Popular Movements 1830-1850 (London 1970) p 37

¹⁴⁰ A Aspinall Lord Brougham and Whig Party (Manchester 1927) p 175

¹⁴¹ G T Garnett Lord Brougham (London 1955)

¹⁴² H Brougham The Life and Times of Henry Brougham vol III (Edinburgh/London 1871)

¹⁴³ R J White Waterloo to Peterloo (Harmondsworth 1968) p 162. For a fuller examination of Baines's involvement see Chapter Four below. The fullest account of the affair is given in of E Baines History of the Reign of George III (London 1823) vol I pp 72-90.

His role as an *agent provocateur* was revealed by Baines in the Leeds Mercury.¹⁴⁴ The Leeds Intelligencer rejected the allegations.

We have not room; nor is it now necessary, to say much more respecting Oliver and the 'Exploded Plots.' This grand hoax ... has 'exploded' in more than a downright *puff direct* for the Newspaper by which it was 'got up.'¹⁴⁵

Neither Baines nor the Leeds Mercury were mentioned by name.

Some historians, separated from each other by more than a century, take a less jaundiced and more objective view. Harriet Martineau writing in 1877 is in no doubt

these circumstances (the Oliver affair) were discovered by the activities of Mr Baines, of Leeds, who published them in his influential newspaper.¹⁴⁶

J Ann Hone concurred with her 105 years later. On page 328 of For the Cause of Truth - Radicalism in London 1796-1821 she is quite clear of Baines's contribution in exposing Oliver's undercover activities;

Probably the decisive factor in the Government's precipitate abandonment of the trials of Thistlewood and the others, was the revelation in Edward Baines's Leeds Mercury of the role of W J Richards - the spy 'Oliver.'¹⁴⁷

E P Thompson in his The Making of the English Working Class equally acknowledges the role the West Riding editor played in the exposure of the Government agent.

The reformers and Whig critics of the Government (such as Bennett in the House of Commons and Baines in the Leeds Mercury) were at pains to present every piece of evidence to show that Oliver was the main instigator of the events of 9 June.¹⁴⁸

R J White in Waterloo to Peterloo is content simply to credit the paper with the revelations.

The case of Mr Oliver had been a *cause célèbre* ... since the exposure of his activities at Thornhill Lees by the Leeds Mercury.¹⁴⁹

A Aspinall in his Politics and the Press 1780-1850 follows a similar vein.

The Leeds Mercury, whose leading articles during the disturbances of 1816-1819 assumed even national importance, and were occasionally

¹⁴⁴ Leeds Mercury 14.06.17

¹⁴⁵ Leeds Intelligencer 30.06.17

¹⁴⁶ H Martineau A History of the Thirty Years' Peace 1816-1846 vol I (London 1877) p 150

¹⁴⁷ J A Hone For the Cause of Truth - Radicalism in London 1796-1821 (London 1982)

¹⁴⁸ E P Thompson The Making of the English Working Class (London 1991) p 717

¹⁴⁹ White Waterloo to Peterloo p 181

brought to the notice of the Home Office and the law officers of the Crown.¹⁵⁰

G M Trevelyan in British History in the Nineteenth Century and After (1782-1919) chose to ignore both the Leeds Mercury and its editor.

But the notorious Oliver went too far in endeavouring to implicate some middle class reformers in Lancashire, whereupon the spy business ... was promptly exposed in Parliament by the help of the Whigs.¹⁵¹

Oliver's scheme, incidentally, was not exposed in Lancashire but at Thornhill Lees near Dewsbury in the West Riding and those involved were not strictly middle class; one was a cloth dresser from Leeds, another a shoemaker from Horbury,¹⁵² whilst a third was Thomas Murray, a linen weaver.¹⁵³ Sir Joseph Arnold's implication in Memoir of Thomas, First Lord Denham is also misleading. In a volume one footnote on page 116 about 'Mr Oliver' he states that Oliver was

a noted Government spy and informer of these bad times, ... In the summer of 1817, Sir Francis Burdett had specially brought this infamous person under notice of the House of Commons and accused the Government of employing him as an agent.¹⁵⁴

True, Burdett brought the allegations to the notice of Parliament but it was as a direct result of the revelations in the Leeds Mercury and he actually went on to quote the paper by name during the Commons debate on the issue.¹⁵⁵ E L Woodward in The Age of Reform 1815-1870 makes only a passing reference to the scandal without giving any specific details, ignoring both Baines and the Leeds Mercury.

Sidmouth again relying upon evidence from spies and informers, secured another commission of inquiry ... (but) important prosecutions broke down ... and Sidmouth himself was discredited when it was found that some of his information came from *agents provocateurs*.¹⁵⁶

Yet there is no reference to either the newspaper or the editor who was instrumental in revealing the truth to the general public.

Baines's role in the political strategies that culminated in the Reform Bill are

¹⁵⁰ A Aspinall Politics and the Press 1780-1850 (London 1949) p 350

¹⁵¹ G M Trevelyan British History in the Nineteenth Century and After, 1782-1919 (London 1937) pp 188-189

¹⁵² Baines History of the Reign of George III vol IV p 82

¹⁵³ Leeds Intelligencer 09.06.17

¹⁵⁴ J Arnold Memoir of Thomas, First Lord Denham vol I (London 1873)

¹⁵⁵ Leeds Mercury 21.06.17

¹⁵⁶ Woodward Age of Reform 62

similarly both acknowledged and ignored by historians. In 1831 the crisis over the Reform Bill had divided the nation and

possibly the necessity was contemplated of making a compromise, by raising the franchise to £15: at all events, it was necessary to be prepared with facts. Mr Baines, being applied to by Lord John Russell, obtained information ... which must have confirmed Ministers in their determination not to raise the qualification.¹⁵⁷

E P Thompson is in no doubt of the value of the facts revealed in the psephological study Baines undertook and which he

communicated to Lord John Russell in a letter which should be taken as one of the classic documents of the Reform Bill crisis.¹⁵⁸

Yet this vital study is completely ignored in The Passing of the Great Reform Bill by J R M Butler who is at great pains to point out that

Russell ... was soon struck by the extreme narrowness of the £20 householder franchise ... His own conviction was that nothing above £10 would be satisfactory, and this figure was finally fixed in the bill.¹⁵⁹

IV

To understand the political and social forces active in the formative years of the nineteenth century, it is essential to appreciate the role Baines played during that period both as editor and politician. He was a paradigm of the entrepreneurial bourgeois-Liberal who confronted aristocratic Whiggery. In 1837, he wrote how it was

a high personal honour for a man who commenced life in a very humble station, to have been twice selected by his fellow-citizens ... to fill the first station in the land that a commoner can fill independent of Court favour.¹⁶⁰

This burgeoning political coterie, of which Baines was a catalyst, aimed to move the power base of politics from Westminster to the provinces and in so doing capture the soul of the Whig Party. Richard Brent quotes Southgate's The Passing of the Whigs and comments

The Whig Party, he said, was nothing but the 'specialised subsidiary of an archaic aristocratic connection, which sustained itself with the fiction

¹⁵⁷ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines pp 156-157

¹⁵⁸ Thompson EP Making of the English Working Class p 899

¹⁵⁹ J R M Butler The Passing of the Great Reform Bill (London 1914) p 190

¹⁶⁰ E Baines to Mrs C Baines 05.03.37 and quoted in Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 304

that 'it *led* the liberal forces in the country.'¹⁶¹

Baines and his middle class colleagues attempted to change all that, much to the anger and consternation of the old order, an attitude which Melbourne typified when he remarked

I don't like the middle classes, the higher and lower classes, there's some good in them, but the middle class are all affectation and conceit and pretence and concealment.¹⁶²

Baines made no attempt to hide his concerns about any issue that threatened the delicate balance of the state. The fact was that the middle classes were unable to fulfil what he believed, was their rightful role in society was neither affectation nor conceit. Parliamentary Reform was crucial if they were to help to shape the destiny of the emerging industrial and commercial nation. In 1816 he commented;

Constituted as the House of Commons is at present, the commercial interest of the country is very imperfectly represented.¹⁶³

Parliamentary Reform did come but Melbourne need not have worried for as Mandler points out

England witnessed a reassertion of *aristocratic* power in the 1830s and 1840s ... the high Whig aristocracy (was able) - to revivify older ideals ... that the aristocracy's natural role was to rule ... from...Westminster.¹⁶⁴

However, thanks to the Municipal Reform Act of 1835 the middle classes were able to establish their power bases in the newly incorporated boroughs. Once again, Baines can be seen as a microcosm of that provincial movement in the influence that he and his family exerted when they 'dominated the political life of Leeds for so long.'¹⁶⁵ It was such a domination that Robert Perring, the editor of the Leeds Intelligencer, was moved on 29 July 1830, to coin the oft-quoted expression 'Bainesocracy.'

Baines was no Canning or Peel, Huskisson or Russell but he was most certainly a diligent and hardworking Member of Parliament deeply devoted to the welfare of his constituents and the beliefs for which he so assiduously campaigned. The letter he wrote

¹⁶¹ R Brent Liberal Anglican Politics; Whiggery, Religion and Reform 1830-1841 (Oxford 1987) p 21

¹⁶² D Cecil Melbourne (London 1955) pp 161-162. For Melbourne's critical attitude to society generally see L G Mitchell Lord Melbourne 1779-1848 (Oxford 1997) pp 21-40

¹⁶³ Leeds Mercury 13.04.16

¹⁶⁴ P Mandler Aristocratic Government in the Age of Reform 1830-1852 (Oxford 1990) pp 1-2

¹⁶⁵ C J Morgan 'Demographic Change - 1771-1911': A History of Modern Leeds ed D Fraser (Manchester 1980) p 49

to his wife on the evening of Sunday 5 March 1837 is, according to Derek Fraser ‘ the most important letter’ in his son’s biography. It gave an account of his day at Westminster that started with breakfast at eight and ended at two the following morning. For all his commitment to his responsibilities in the House of Commons, he never forgot his civic responsibilities in Leeds. Fraser is emphatic that ‘Parliamentary affairs did not prevent his participation in important local events,¹⁶⁶ and others claimed

it is worthy of note that, Mr Baines, ... has been appropriately designated ‘the Walter of the provincial press.’¹⁶⁷

The Leeds Mercury under Baines introduced ‘a major cultural innovation in newspaper content.’¹⁶⁸ But Baines’s greatest contribution was to turn his newspaper into a platform from which he could promulgate the ideas, beliefs and concepts of the society he and his Whig-Liberal colleagues strove to establish.¹⁶⁹ He was lauded by his supporters but as Derek Fraser points out

we must realise that a substantial portion of local opinion pilloried him as the symbol of the heartless grasping bourgeoisie.¹⁷⁰

Yet despite the bitter criticisms to which he was regularly subjected, on Monday 22 November 1841 Baines was accorded a civic presentation in the Music Hall in Albion Street ostensibly on his retirement as MP for the borough.¹⁷¹ In fact, it publicly recognised his undying commitment to the affairs of the nation in general and his forty years devotion to the welfare of the people of the West Riding in particular; a devotion that led Samuel Smiles, then editor of the Leeds Times to write on 27 November

this man is always deserving honour among his friends who by means of intelligence, industry and perseverance rises above the accident of birth and station.

The triangular based candelabrum that was presented to him was more than a dining-table centrepiece. It was a symbol. At each corner stood a frosted silver figure - Truth, Liberty and Justice; ‘three interrelated concepts that moulded his philosophy and

¹⁶⁶ Fraser NH vol XXXI pp 217, 213

¹⁶⁷ Anon Yorkshire Journalism p 5

¹⁶⁸ Morris History of Modern Leeds p 204

¹⁶⁹ For a more detailed analysis of Baines’s thought see Chapter Two below and Thornton Social and Political Thought of Edward Baines passim

¹⁷⁰ Fraser NH vol XXXI p 216

¹⁷¹ Leeds Mercury 27.11.41

dictated his life.¹⁷²

Baines was a man of many parts; an archetypal proto-Victorian liberal, a journalist, publisher, popular historian and a Member of Parliament. He never pretended to be anything other than a bourgeois-Whig. He admitted as much in 1819 but with the codicil

without being a tool of any, we confess we are strongly attached to the Whig Party. We are, however, as independent of them as we are of the Tories.¹⁷³

Like his fellow Whigs he was wholeheartedly committed to Parliamentary Reform as far as the needs of the middle classes of the country demanded it.

By a Reform of Parliament we mean such a mode of electing the House of Commons as ... shall render its members truly representative of the people.¹⁷⁴

But the people to be represented did not include the lower orders. For universal suffrage would 'create overwhelming Democracy ... (and) ... destroy the very liberty it would be expected to increase.'¹⁷⁵ It was a view that truly reflected the fears of the middle classes

whether or not they called themselves liberal, (for they) were a conservative-minded body who would dislike dangerous changes.¹⁷⁶

Baines gave voice to those fears and stood by them even when faced physically by considerable opposition as he did when he addressed a meeting of working class radicals on Hunslet Moor on 21 June 1819.¹⁷⁷

Consistent as he was in his political objectives, inconsistencies can at times be detected in his thinking. When Colonel Edward Despard was arrested and charged with treason following his crazy conspiracy to kill the King and seize the Tower of London and the Bank of England, Baines's editorial stated:

It is extreme arrogance in a few individuals to endeavour to impose any political system upon the majority which they do not choose to adopt: and so far are such people from serving the cause of real liberty, that they generally prove its greatest enemies.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷² Thornton Social and Political Thought of Edward Baines passim

¹⁷³ Leeds Mercury 23.10.09

¹⁷⁴ Leeds Mercury 08.11.16

¹⁷⁵ Leeds Mercury 03.07.19

¹⁷⁶ Cecil Melbourne pp 238-239. Melbourne's view regarding Parliamentary Reform was that 'the authors of the Reform Bill ought to be hanged.' See Mitchell LG Lord Melbourne p 21

¹⁷⁷ Leeds Mercury 26.06.19

¹⁷⁸ Leeds Mercury 27.11.02

He apparently saw no injustice or inconsistency in repeatedly denying the suffrage to one section of society whilst campaigning for it for another.

Historians for the century and a half since his death have concerned themselves with Edward Baines, the man who ‘opened a new chapter in the history ... of English provincial journalism.’¹⁷⁹ They have highlighted his strengths and weaknesses, his successes and failures as editor, local politician, Member of Parliament and civic dignitary. But confusion about him still abounds. This thesis attempts to clarify his role in the changing world in which he lived; to discover what qualities he possessed; what beliefs he espoused; what political conflicts he was engaged in; and to discover what it was about the character of the man that caused the people of Leeds to turn out in their thousands and stand in silent homage that August Thursday as his funeral passed by. It is to draw together the attributes and achievements, the weaknesses and failings of this man called Baines, that this biographical study is dedicated.

CHAPTER ONE

THE MAKING OF A JOURNALIST

It is a well established fact that both heredity and environment play a significant part in the intellectual and social development of any individual. It was certainly true with regard to Edward Baines. It is clear that he sprang from a family whose intellectual and social capabilities were well established over the centuries. His paternal forbears and near relatives were not lowly farm labourers but farmers and craftsmen. His own father ran several businesses and was land agent to the Duke of Derby until his death. Though not wealthy, Richard's 'circumstances were easy.' Baines Junior, in his father's biography, described some of his father's patrilineal relatives as 'scholars and gentleman.' John Baines of Rainton became the schoolmaster and curate, first at Well near Bedale and finally rector at Tanfield, a position he was succeeded in by his son, William. John's other son became a successful surgeon who practised at Masham for forty years. On the maternal side, the young Baines sprang from a family of prosperous merchants and, in earlier times, successful politicians and military commanders. He spent his early formative years in the near idyllic landscape of the Lake District. Here he attended a stimulating school that maintained a respected record of academic achievement. He then completed his formal education in an institution which emphasised the rudiments required by a man destined to a business life that was dependent on the English language.¹

Edward Baines was born on Saturday 5 February 1774, when Jane Baines presented her husband Richard with their second son. Their first child, Thomas, had been born two years previously and Jane would go on to bear four more children in the following twelve years; Elizabeth in 1776, Jane in 1779, John in 1783 and Mary Ann in 1786.² Edward's birth took place at Walton-le-Dale, a village in the Ribble valley a mile or so from Preston in Lancashire. Thus he was born a Lancastrian 'with undiminished attachment to his native county',³ and proud enough of the fact that he bequeathed the manuscript of his history of Lancashire to the Dr Shepherd Library in Preston.⁴ It was, however, on the east of the Pennines in the great, rambling county of

¹ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines pp 12-16

² The genealogical material quoted is extrapolated from the unpublished researches of Mr Eric Baines and the late Mr George Baines on material drawn from the International Genealogical Index. and the Yorkshire Parish Registers Society; Aldborough Vol 110. Reference has also been made to the Topcliffe Parish Registers (1695-1769) North Yorkshire County Record Office.

³ E Baines History of the County Palatine and Duchy of Lancaster vol II (London 1836) p 342

⁴ A J Berry The Story of Preston (London 1912) p 276

Yorkshire that he would carve out a career in journalism and make his mark in the political arena of his day. He did so first against the burgeoning industrial background of the West Riding and then on the national stage as Britain embarked on the long and complex metamorphosis of constitutional reform. His journey east was not so much a matter of striking out into a new and undiscovered country as a return to the land of his forebears, for the Baines family had lived in the county of broad acres for centuries. They claimed that their lineage in North Yorkshire went back at least to 1692.⁵ In fact, they were present in the area over one hundred and forty years before that date.

Married in 1551, Richard Baynes⁶ of Aldborough and his wife Isabel produced two children; Margaret, born the following year and Randall. Randall's first marriage, solemnized in 1588, was sadly terminated when Janet, his wife, died four years later. She had borne him two daughters. That same year he married Cat Jac and with her fathered a family of three; Richard in 1594, Agnes and one child designated only by the initials M A. All these children were born at Aldborough. Richard married Isobel Cooke in 1621, then moved his family several times in the Swale valley. After their first child, Mary, had been baptized and buried at Aldborough the following year, Richard and Isobel moved first to Minskip and then to Marton-le-Moor. But it was at Kirby Hill, about a mile and half from Marton that they had three sons; Randall in 1622/23, William in 1626/27, and John in 1630. Richard and his wife both died at Topcliffe in 1657. Their meanderings around the locality anticipated the diffusion of the Baines family throughout the area and branches settled at Rainton, Topcliffe, Dishforth and Marton-le-Moor.⁷ It was a fertile country of loam and sandy soil,⁸ but the climate being too cold for cultivating grain crops, grazing was preferred.⁹ Cobbett

⁵ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 11

⁶ The parish registers show no consistency of spelling with both 'Baines' and 'Baynes' regularly used and even, on occasion, 'Bain' and 'Baine.'

⁷ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines pp 11-12. He stresses that good relations were still maintained with the Masham branch of the family by both his father and grandfather see pp 12-13. Baines, the father, published his relative's comments on cow pox inoculation see Leeds Mercury 30.03.05. In 1821 there is further evidence of the family ties when Baines, the Elder, refers in a letter to a visit his daughter Jane made to Masham. See E Baines to Mrs C Baines 26.08.21 and cited in the biography pp 301-302

⁸ T Allen A New and Complete History of the County of York Book 2 (London 1826) p 215

⁹ T Baines Yorkshire Past and Present vol I part I (London 1871) p 152

claimed it was 'a country of graziers ... of pasture, and not a country for the plough.'¹⁰

The Marton-le-Moor area was owned by the Dukes of Devonshire and Baines, in the biography of his father, attempts to establish some link between the Cavendish family's Whiggery and the Baines family's Whiggish political convictions. But the argument to say the least is tenuous. The only thing certain about their beliefs is that the Rainton branch of the family were 'warmly attached to the Church of England' which might indicate possible Tory sympathies. His thesis was that

the most prevalent name in the family from 1692 downwards was 'William' which in those times indicated that the family were attached to the principles of the Revolution of 1688.¹¹

However, it is true only to the extent that of twenty-four Baines family male births entered in the parish registers between 1688 and 1760, 'William' appears most often at seven times. In the same period both 'Thomas' and 'Richard' occur five times, 'John' four times, 'Matthew' once and the names of two other male children born at Marton are illegible. The argument would have totally collapsed if the claim made by Brooke Herford, that one member of the family, who in 1717 endowed schools at Poulton, Marton and Thornton in Lancashire, was actually named James, was correct. Herford's claim, in fact, is spurious. Alexander Talbot Baines, Edward Baines's great grandson and an enthusiastic genealogist, is adamant that James was not a relative.¹²

It was to Marton-le-Moor that Randall Baines moved and there on 5 April 1655 a Mr Walters married the thirty year-old carpenter to Mary Bedford, a twenty year-old spinster, from Melmerby. They in turn produced six sons; John in 1656, Thomas in 1658, William probably in 1660, Richard in 1662/63 but who died in 1663, Raife (also known as Randall) in 1664 and another child called Richard in 1666. William and his wife Elizabeth proved to be an even more prolific couple than William's parents. From their marriage on 22 May 1692 they produced twelve children in the next twenty-five years. Their sixth was Thomas, born on 3 April 1703. William married again in 1723

¹⁰ Cobbett Rural Rides vol III (1930) p 697

¹¹ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines pp 11-13

¹² In the 1870 edition Herford makes the claim. See E Baines History of the County Palatine and Duchy of Lancaster vol II ed J Harland, continued and completed by B Herford (London 1870) p 515. Baines himself makes no mention of a James Baines. See E Baines History of the County Palatine and Duchy of Lancaster vol IV (London/Paris/New York 1836) pp 434-435. Alec Baines's rejection of the claim is quoted in Arthur G Pagett A History of Baines's Grammar School (Poulton-le-Fylde 1928) pp 28-30. Pagett also quotes another similar erroneous claim made by Bishop Gastrell in his Notitia Cestriensis.

but three years later a simple entry in the parish register sums up his six decades of life with the laconic entry; 'William Baynes a poor man of Marton buried 7 September 1726.' His son, Thomas, a farmer, married in 1730. That union produced three sons; Thomas in 1731, John in 1734 and Richard in 1737. The father never saw his youngest son; he was buried on 6 April that year. Richard was not born until 15 October.

It appears that he was brought up by other members of the family at both Well near Masham¹³ and at Rainton.¹⁴ When he came of age they directed him to seek a career in excise. Following his appointment to the department of revenue, he was assigned a position in Preston, a town at the head of the Ribble estuary with a population of between 5 000 and 6 000.¹⁵ Small vessels navigated by 'well-skilled' pilots could negotiate the river¹⁶ and by the 1730s a custom-house was in operation there. Pagett makes the suggestion that it was 'not impossible' Richard chose Preston 'because of some earlier family connection with that district'¹⁷ but gives no hard evidence to support this thesis. What is certain is that in 1760 the Exchequer appointed a commission to define the port and its legal quays;¹⁸ it may be Richard's appointment to the town was a result of implementing that commission's findings. He had definitely taken up his position by 1769, for that year he took lease of a house there.¹⁹

In Preston, he met and married Jane Chew, the daughter of Edward Chew, an East India trade merchant who was descended from the Rigby Family of Middleton Hall,²⁰ Goosnagh in the parish of Kirkham.²¹ Alexander Rigby, who died in 1621, held land in Aspull near Wigan.²² His sons distinguished themselves as staunch Parliamentarians. Alexander, born in 1594, sat in both the Long and Short Parliaments

¹³ Leeds Mercury 12.08.48

¹⁴ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 13

¹⁵ Baines History of Lancashire vol IV (1836) p 366. Baines claims in 1780 the inhabitants did not exceed 6 000.

¹⁶ W Farrer and J Brownhill ed Victoria County History: County of Lancaster vol VII (London 1912) p 80

¹⁷ Pagett History of Baines's Grammar School p 29

¹⁸ J Barron History of the Ribble Navigation (Preston 1939) pp 452-453

¹⁹ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 13

²⁰ *Ibid* p 13

²¹ Baines History of Lancashire vol II (1870) p 498

²² Farrer and Brownhill VCH: Lancashire vol IV p 121

as MP for Wigan, became a colonel in the Parliamentary army during the Civil War, was appointed baron of the Exchequer in 1649, and then in 1650, the year he died, became a commissioner at the High Court of Justice. His brothers George and Joseph, like his son Alexander, also took up arms against the King, with Joseph rising to the rank of lieutenant-colonel in 1650.²³ Alexander, who succeeded to the estate on his father's death, also became an MP in 1658 and was 'an Independent hostile to Presbyterianism and Episcopacy.'²⁴

Another maternal branch of the Chews was based in the very north of the county. They were the Rigge family who for many years had inhabited the Hawkshead area.²⁵ William 'Slaty' Rigge, of Walker Ground and his partner, Thomas Rigge, of High Keen Ground conducted a business quarrying and marketing Coniston green slates under the name of William Rigge and Son. The quarries here were 'the most considerable slate quarries in the kingdom' and the principal ones of these were in the hands of the Riggés, who exported 1 100 tons of slate a year.²⁶ Old 'Slaty' Rigge, a Quaker, was something of a butt for the Grammar School boys who, knowing his pacifist beliefs, took to giving him military style salutes when he rode by. Wordsworth tells how, in fury, he lashed out with his whip at them but later rode back to apologise for that momentary lapse from his pacific principles. Despite Slaty's short temper, it appears he and his partner ran a successful business. T W Thompson refers to Mr Rigge as being a wealthy slate merchant and 'something to do with building the Market House.'²⁷ The Rigge in question was Thomas. He was one of thirteen trustees appointed in 1789 when a contract was drawn up to erect a 'Market House and Shambles.'²⁸

When Richard Baines married Jane Chew he decided to resign from his position as an excise officer and in 1770 set up in business as a grocer in Preston.²⁹ It lasted for

²³ W A Shaw and C W Sutton 'Rigby, Alexander': National Dictionary of Biography ed S Lee vol XLVIII (London 1896) pp 299-302

²⁴ Farrer and Brownhill VCH: Lancashire vol IV p 197

²⁵ H S Cowper Hawkshead: Its History, Industries, Folklore, Dialect etc (London 1899) p 491

²⁶ Ibid p 293

²⁷ T W Thompson Wordsworth's Hawkshead (London 1970) ed R Woof pp 246-253

²⁸ Cowper Hawkshead p 29

²⁹ According to Baines (Jun) Richard was prosecuted 'having carried on business as a grocer in Preston for one month in the year 1770. See The Life of Edward Baines p 14. Baines, the father, however, states that it was in 1772 that the corporation renewed its prosecutions against 'merchant strangers.' See his History of the County Palatine and Duchy of Lancaster (1836) vol IV p 342.

one month. Since 1328 the inhabitants of the town had always taken great pride in their trades and guilds. These guilds had been celebrated every twenty years without an hiatus since 1542.³⁰ Their members jealously safeguarded their trading privileges until 1802 when the advent of machinery rendered the medieval system both archaic and counter-productive.³¹ One of the restrictions that directly affected the aspiring grocer Baines was that no-one but freemen of the town could trade there 'except he brought a new trade ... or a great necessity to introduce the same.'³² In the short term, the result of Richard's entrepreneurial endeavours was a prosecution at Lancaster Assizes under an Act of the 5th Elizabeth c 4 sec 31 and 'entailed upon him expenses amounting to several hundred pounds.' The prosecution of Richard Baines was the last time this antiquated law was used in Preston.³³ But in the years to come it germinated in the young Edward a bitterness and hostility to the injustice perpetrated by the Tory Corporation and to trade restrictions generally. Sixty years later, in January 1835, he raised it in a letter to the electors of Leeds when he remarked on

Close corporations, which are at once self-elected and irresponsible,
(and) are among the most pernicious of monopolies.³⁴

Those words reveal as much about Baines's psyche as they do about the Preston regulations.

Richard left Preston and set up his grocery business at Walton-le-Dale, a small village a short distance to the south of Preston. By the 1750s the cotton industry was well established in south Lancashire. The increased demand for calicoes and muslins in the subsequent decades, stimulated by major technological advances, saw the manufacture of cotton textiles flourish.³⁵ Recognising the industry's potential, Baines set himself up as a cotton spinner at Brindle, a few miles from Walton-le-Dale. The

If Richard Baines resigned his position with the excise and set up in business when he married, then 1770 would appear a more reasonable date. Thomas, the first child, was born in 1772.

³⁰ Farrer and Brownhill VCH; Lancashire vol IV p 73

³¹ Berry The Story of Preston p 224

³² E Baines History of the County Palatine and Duchy of Lancaster vol II (Liverpool 1825) p 492

³³ A Hewitson History of Preston (Preston 1883) p 297

³⁴ Leeds Mercury 25.01.35. Ten years previously he had used similar intemperate language to describe the restrictions that had existed in Preston; 'these pernicious and feudal restrictions, (had) contributed ... to stunt the growth of the place and to impair the wealth of the inhabitants.' See Baines History of Lancashire vol II ed (1825) p 492

³⁵ C P Hill British Economic and Social History 1700-1982 (London 1986) p 37

family later moved back to Preston and whilst the cotton business was carried on by his partner, Richard took on the role of land agent and steward to the Duke of Derby and combined this with running a business as a coal merchant.³⁶ Yet despite the wide variety of activities he was engaged in during his lifetime, on his death on 31 May 1811 Baines recorded in the Leeds Mercury that his father was simply a

coal-merchant ... (who) closed a long life of probity and active usefulness by the serene death of a christian.³⁷

II

Just two years after the birth of their first child Thomas, on 22 August 1772, Edward himself was born on 5 February 1774. Within four months of Edward's birth, Jane was pregnant again. Baby Elizabeth was born on 22 March 1776. That same year Edward was boarded with his maternal aunt and uncle, who lived near Hawkshead, in the Lake District. Thomas Rigge and his wife had no children of their own which may partly explain the choice of them to act as Edward's guardians, but Baines's biography gives no reason for Edward's move. It may be that his own parents, with a four year-old boy, a new born baby girl, and a fledgling business to attend to, felt that Edward would receive a better upbringing in his early years there. It was clearly a satisfactory arrangement for Edward stayed six years, and was probably over-indulged by his aunt and uncle at the family home of High Keen Ground.³⁸

Keen Ground lay by Penrose Beck in the foothills of the Furness Fells, which in turn rolled away westwards to the Cumbrian Mountains. To the south-east lay the grey-roofed village of Hawkshead, nestling in the Vale of Esthwaite, hugging the northern shore of Esthwaite Water. The lake, two miles long and half a mile wide, was

encompassed with a good carriage road ... On the banks (were) villages and scattered houses sweetly situated under woods and hanging grounds.³⁹

³⁶ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 15.

³⁷ Leeds Mercury 08.06.11

³⁸ It was known as High Keen Ground as opposed to Low Keen Ground a 'typical north country farmhouse with round chimneys.' Baines Junior incorrectly refers to the place as 'King's Land.' The phonic similarities between 'Keen Ground' and 'King's Land' may explain why Baines, when writing the biography and drawing on the memory of his father's remarks rather than written evidence, made the mistake. Alternatively, it may be that Baines himself relying on his own memory in old age gave his son the wrong name. See Cowper Hawkshead pp 36-37. See also Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 16

³⁹ T West A Guide to the Lakes in Cumberland, Westmorland and Lancashire (London 1789) pp 54-56

To the east of the lake stretched woodland of hazel, birch and oak competing for survival with fern and thistle. The lake itself, rich in pike, trout and perch, offered an ideal environment of rocky promontories, wooded bays and tiny islands for the youth of the area to explore.⁴⁰ The village of Hawkshead today is dominated by the grey-towered church of St Michael and All Angels standing on a hillock to the south-west. The building dominated it even more so in young Edward's day when the sun gleamed, on what Wordsworth described as, 'the snow-white church upon the hill.'⁴¹

Wordsworth, like Baines, lived there as a boy. From his account of childhood in The Prelude it is possible to establish the kind of pursuits young Edward might well have engaged in; bathing on a summer's day, birds' nesting, flying kites, boating, exploring caves, climbing trees, and sliding on the ice in winter-time.⁴² Both boys attended Hawkshead Grammar School. Wordsworth commenced there as a nine year-old in 1779, Baines had arrived in Esthwaite Vale three years earlier and thus the two boys were school contemporaries, though Wordsworth was 'several years his senior.'⁴³ The school, of about a hundred boys, had a high reputation in the area. Reverend Gilbert Crackenthorpe commented; 'There is no better school hereabouts and no better school-master than James Peake.'⁴⁴ It was Peake who had built up the school's renown in mathematics during his long tenure as headmaster from 1766 to the first half of 1781⁴⁵ and Baines may well have started school under his influence. Without doubt, he was present when Peake's successor took over in July that year. The boy made a significant impact on the new incumbent. Edward Christian, brother to the more notorious Fletcher, and later a professor of law at Cambridge, was headmaster at Hawkshead from July 1781 to July 1782. He observed of his young student, according to Baines family history, 'he would either be a great man or be hanged!'⁴⁶ It was a school that could rightly claim to have produced 'great' men; apart from William

⁴⁰ M Moorman William Wordsworth; A Biography - the Early Years 1770-1805 (Oxford 1957) pp 22-23

⁴¹ W Wordsworth 'The Prelude' Book IV Wordsworth's Poetical Works ed T Hutchinson and E de Selincourt ed (Oxford 1978) p 515

⁴² Wordsworth The Prelude Book IV passim

⁴³ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 16

⁴⁴ Thompson TW Hawkshead p 50

⁴⁵ Anon Hawkshead Grammar School pamphlet (Hawkshead no date)

⁴⁶ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 16

Wordsworth and Edward Baines it could count amongst its luminaries Dr Christopher Wordsworth, Master of Trinity College, Cambridge and the poet's younger brother, the indefatigable Lord Brougham, Sir James Scarlett, the Whig MP and Attorney General in Canning's Ministry, and Dr Joshua King, the Master of Queen's College, Cambridge.⁴⁷ Of the young Baines's academic achievements nothing is known but he certainly spent those formative years in a school with a rich reputation for mathematics and classics and which catered for inquisitive and imaginative young minds.

On his return to Preston he attended the free grammar-school where his education took a very different turn. He was forced by the statutes of the establishment to remain in the lower school as only sons of freemen of the town were admitted to the high school. Here he was subjected to

instruction of a very inferior order; a pompous and ill-educated master who smote the boys liberally with cane and tongue, roughly drilled them into some knowledge of their mother tongue with writing and accounts, but scarcely ventured into the elements of Latin.⁴⁸

It made a deep impression upon Baines. Forty years later he wrote with some passion:

How many pedagogues ... practice no other means of reformation than the rod ... We know of no better recipe than this indiscriminate and cruel flogging, for making a set of schoolboys mischievous, reckless and obdurate.⁴⁹

But the impressions of a young boy are perhaps not the most reliable and objective criterion for judging the academic worth of a school.

In all probability, he would have been taught by assistant masters and not by either Thomas Fleetwood, who was headmaster when the young Baines arrived or Robert Harris, a fellow of Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, who succeeded Fleetwood and went on to hold the post for forty-seven years. Baines's biography quotes the anonymous teacher as claiming 'to be a practical schoolmaster and to teach English, but not be a classic.'⁵⁰ The assessment Baines Junior makes that this education was 'of a very inferior order' may have some justification. However, if it were so inferior, why was it felt necessary to appoint only two headmasters to the school in

⁴⁷ Cowper Hawkshead p 501

⁴⁸ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 16

⁴⁹ Leeds Mercury 08.06.22

⁵⁰ Leeds Mercury 08.06.22

sixty-five years; and how much of the criticism was generated by the various archaic Preston statutes which so infuriated the Baines family? It could be argued that from a practical point of view a good grounding in English and accounts was, probably, the best possible preparation for a person destined to make his living both by writing and running a business. But his young life was not all spent in learning. Out of school he was reputed to have indulged in boyish pranks; 'barring out' the teacher from school, frightening a woman by firing a pistol over her head and which resulted in him spending the night in prison, and making an abortive attempt at emigration to the United States which ended ignominiously at Liverpool.⁵¹

Baines originally followed his father into the cotton trade, learning the craft of weaving. In 1790, however, he realised that to fulfil himself he needed a more stimulating and intellectual challenge and his father accordingly apprenticed him to Thomas Walker, a Preston stationer and printer.⁵² Walker is variously described first in the Leeds Mercury of 12 August 1848 as

a Tory, a partizan of the Corporation and printer of a Tory newspaper called the Preston Recorder (sic)⁵³

but then in Baines's biography he appears as 'a decided liberal in politics and an Independent Dissenter.'⁵⁴ Surviving copies of the Preston Review, the correct name for the journal, show him to be a Whig-Liberal, and though the paper he founded was shortly to close he remained a Whig, voting for the Whig candidates Stanley and Hoghton in 1796.⁵⁵

Walker had commenced business in the town about the same year that Baines became his apprentice.⁵⁶ A year previously the French Revolution had exploded on the world. The reverberations of the social and political upheaval in France echoed across the Channel and resulted in an upsurge of radical sentiment throughout the country. It was followed in turn by repressive Government measures, violent reaction from 'Church and King' mobs and ultimately by war being declared on Britain by the

⁵¹ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines pp 17-18

⁵² Ibid p 18

⁵³ Leeds Mercury 12.08.48

⁵⁴ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 19

⁵⁵ Preston Guardian 27.09.84

⁵⁶ Preston Guardian 27.09.84

fledgling French republic. Walker realised the demand for news was paramount and decided to launch the Preston Review.⁵⁷

Thus young Baines was present on Saturday 1 June 1793 when the first edition of the Preston Review and County Advertiser left the Review office on Church Street proclaiming

A faithful historian is of no country; and an impartial newspaper is of no party.

Baines Junior states that the newspaper was conducted without any leading article.⁵⁸ Yet Walker repeatedly passed editorial observations and reflections and these in turn provided an intrinsic foundation for the future beliefs of the young apprentice. Here in Walker's words, is the genesis of the future editor's political ideals: his patriotism;

How happy amidst the raging extremes of the Continent at this day is the situation of Britons! who have a Sovereign on the Throne into whose heart a wish never yet entered that interfered with the happiness of his subjects;

his moderate radicalism; 'We believe Girondists should succeed against Jacobins.' And here in Walker's ideology can be seen the very kernel of Baines's own beliefs.

The bounds of the greatest nation or the most extensive empire cannot circumscribe the generosity of a liberal mind. Men in whatever situation they are placed, are still in great measure, the same ... a humane and good man is shocked at misery under whatever form or appearance ... Our pity excited, we assuage grief and cheerfully relieve distress.⁵⁹

Thus the impressionable young Baines grew up under the aegis of a man who abhorred slavery, passionately defended law and order, detested tyranny, and saw the long term social advantages of technological innovations.⁶⁰ He demonstrated, too, that impish sense of humour that would occasionally surface later in his young protégé. On receiving letters from France that Thomas Paine was about to marry Mary Wollstonecraft, Walker observed of the proposed marriage that 'the *breed* of

⁵⁷ He was flying in the face of precedent. Robert Moor had commenced the Preston Journal in 1745 without success and demand for news in the town seemed so poor that for nigh on the next fifty years no further newspapers were produced there. See D Hunt A History of Preston (Preston 1992) p 132. Hunt claims that Moor's paper was also called the True British Courant. Baines History of Lancashire vol II(1836) p 357 refers to it as the Preston Courant.

⁵⁸ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 20

⁵⁹ Preston Review 01.06.1793, 03.08.1793, 08.03.1794. See also Thornton Social and Political Thought of Edward Baines p 7

⁶⁰ Preston Review 29.06.1793, 01.06.1793 08.02.1794. In specific reference to canals Walker claims 'they relieve the industrious and labouring class of people ... from unhappiness and discontent.'

republicans may be expected to be a little improved upon.’⁶¹

Apart from Walker’s influence, the young Edward Baines would also be exposed to the maelstrom of political agitation and philosophical argument to which British society was exposed at this time.⁶² It would not be unreasonable to assume that young men witnessing such momentous events should want to understand the forces of revolution and counter-revolution that had been unleashed on the world. Baines Junior claims that his father and some friends formed a debating society and established a newsroom in order to improve themselves. A friend ‘who knew all their proceedings’ claimed that young Edward played a ‘leading part.’⁶³ E P Thompson goes even further stating that Baines ‘had once been secretary of a “Jacobin” club in Preston.’⁶⁴ Baines himself denied both allegations. When asked by a relative whether he belonged to any society or institution in the town, he replied

No such thing was known at that time in Preston, except old Dr Shepherd’s Library, nor until the year 1814.⁶⁵

Hewitson, also, when considering the literary establishments of the town in his History of Preston, makes no reference to such a society there in the 1790s.⁶⁶

III

At the beginning of 1795 Baines asked Walker for his indentures, despite still having two years to go before completion of his seven year apprenticeship. Why did Baines decide to break his contract, depart Preston and complete his term elsewhere? The reasons normally given are confusing. Edward Junior claims that the Review ceased after ‘about twelve months’ as a result of opposition from the Tory Corporation. Henry Fishwick in The History of the Parish of Preston concurs that ‘it only existed for about a year’ though he makes the mistake of thinking the paper was established in 1791.⁶⁷ Yet Baines, in his 1825 history of Lancashire, disputes that the paper terminated

⁶¹ Preston Review 16.11.1793

⁶² See Thompson EP Making of the English Working Class pp 19-83 and A Goodwin The Friends of Liberty; the English Democratic Movement in the Age of the French Revolution (Cambridge Mass 1979) pp 136-267

⁶³ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 19

⁶⁴ Thompson EP Making of the English Working Class p 519

⁶⁵ Leeds Mercury 12.08.48

⁶⁶ Hewitson History of Preston p 358

⁶⁷ H Fishwick The History of the Parish of Preston (Rochdale/London 1900) p 406

after only one year. He is quite clear that it was launched in 1793 and then ‘after languishing a few years with indifferent success, this Journal ceased.’⁶⁸ It certainly appears that by 1796 the paper had ceased to be published. Walker was described at the time of the 1796 election as a ‘stationer of Church Street.’⁶⁹ There is no mention of him being a newspaper proprietor. The Baines biography goes on to claim that with the decline in business as a result of the closure of the Review, young Baines sought ‘greater scope for improvement’⁷⁰ and thus with Thomas Walker consenting, the plans were laid for him to move away from his native Lancashire and complete his apprenticeship elsewhere. The Mercury’s Memoir of Baines published 12 August 1848 tells a very different story.

The apprentice ventured so far to differ from his master, that the latter threw his indentures in his face, and told him to go about his business. Whether this led to the termination of the engagement is not known.⁷¹

There is a third possibility and one which Edward Junior would never have countenanced either as a dutiful son or as an author writing in the high summer of Victorian morality. He was, after all, aiming to produce a biography that was intended as an exemplar of moral rectitude for future generations. Thus, understandably, Baines’s alleged sexual promiscuity finds no place in his son’s book. Did Baines in fact evince ‘more attachment to playing with females ... than working with males’? Did his alleged profligacy lead to an illegitimate offspring as ‘certain causes produced certain effects’?⁷² Or are those allegations made by Richard Oastler, at a time when the acrimonious dispute between the factory reformer and the Mercury editors was at its zenith, no more than the malicious slanders of a bitter opponent?⁷³ However, if Oastler were correct, it would explain Baines’s sudden departure from Preston particularly if

he promised marriage to a confiding fair one, and betrayed her;- he left her when he had seduced her; and she became chargeable on the Parish where they lived - *as did HIS babe*.⁷⁴

⁶⁸ Baines History of Lancashire vol II (1825) p 492

⁶⁹ Preston Guardian 27.09.84

⁷⁰ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines pp 20-21

⁷¹ Leeds Mercury 12.08.48

⁷² Leeds Borough Races (no date) Oastler and the Factory Movement No 562 (1) and quoted by Fraser NH vol XXXI p 217

⁷³ See Chapter Five below for a detailed examination of the Baines and Oastler dispute.

⁷⁴ R Oastler A Letter to a Run-A-Way MP (Leeds 1836) p 3

Baines was, if are to believe William Rider, 'not an hater of the other sex' and 'was running from his county on account of bastardy.'⁷⁵

It was Thomas Wright, a Leeds bookseller, who mentioned to Baines the possibility of completing his apprenticeship in Leeds with the firm of Binns and Brown, publishers of the weekly newspaper the Leeds Mercury. Richard Baines, on his way to visit relatives in Yorkshire, called at their office and confirmed that it might well be possible for his son to commence work there. Thus, at the beginning of 1795, young Baines crossed the Pennines.⁷⁶ To his family, it was the beginning of the great Baines legend. Taking leave of his friend at Clitheroe, they saw him striding manfully eastwards, staff in hand, his worldly wealth in a bundle on his arm; a veritable patriarch on his way to the promised land where, through diligent hardwork and honest, sober endeavour wealth, fame and fortune would be his. Here was a man who arrived at his adopted town alone and virtually penniless but who would one day be fêted by his fellow townsmen and sit amongst the highest in the land.⁷⁷ Ironically, his detractors, like Alaric Watts and Richard Oastler, simply added to the legend, for by maliciously emphasising his early poverty they inadvertently enhanced his later success. To Oastler, Baines was a 'very pauper ... (who) tramped on foot, ... all his sins and his "wardrobe" on him.'⁷⁸ To Watts, Baines arrived in Leeds with simply a 'composing stick' and his back 'bare of clothes.'⁷⁹ Baines himself was happy to perpetuate the story. Addressing a public meeting in Leeds in June 1819 he proudly admitted

I did come to Leeds originally with the greater part of my wardrobe on my shoulder, and what was not upon my shoulder, was upon my back.⁸⁰

Oastler elaborated further on the story, claiming that when Baines arrived in Leeds, he stretched his jaded, lousy limbs, at dead of night, on one of the old Oaken benches in the Market Cross ... when morning came he sought work, and found it.⁸¹

⁷⁵ Rider The Demagogue p 5. Rider's comments are to be viewed with caution. He was a vociferous opponent of 'poison-monger, Baines.' See p 4

⁷⁶ In later years he referred to it in Biblical terms; 'with my staff I passed over this Jordan.' See Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 21

⁷⁷ Ibid passim

⁷⁸ Oastler Letter to a Run-A-Way MP p 3

⁷⁹ Leeds Intelligencer 13.12.27

⁸⁰ Leeds Mercury 26.06.19

⁸¹ Oastler Letter to a Run-A-Way MP pp 3-4

Whether Oastler was correct that Baines spent his first night in Leeds sleeping rough we have no way of knowing. If he did, surely the younger Baines would have mentioned it in order to further the rags-to-riches legend of his father. But Oastler was in a position to know some intimate details of Baines's early life in Leeds. As a young child he could well remember Baines being invited to the Oastler home by his father, Robert Oastler, who befriended the young apprentice printer. There young Baines spent many hours after a meal chatting about the issues of the day; attacking Pitt, supporting Fox, condemning the war and praising Whiggery.⁸² And Oastler is certainly correct in saying he 'sought work and found it' for Baines approached the foreman at the Leeds Mercury and on entering the office, so the legend continues, swore 'he would never leave.'⁸³

This may well be true but the impression given that Baines arrived alone and virtually destitute, who through his own singular efforts rose to such eminence, is not strictly true. Baines was a self-made man, but he was a self-made man who had considerable help along the way. He could draw on the confidence of coming from a family background that knew success. He also knew when he arrived in the town that he was virtually certain of a position with the Leeds Mercury from the inquiries his father had made. When he set up in business on completing his apprenticeship, his father lent him £100.⁸⁴ When he wanted to embark on his most ambitious publishing project to date, Talbot's Analysis of the Bible, James Dickinson and Caleb Talbot were forthcoming with financial help.⁸⁵ And when he wished to purchase the Leeds Mercury the offers of loans from various people were so extensive he was forced to decline the advance proffered by John Clapham.⁸⁶ Baines repaid these loans in full. It would be wrong to detract from the success his undoubted talents and business acumen brought about, but it was success achieved in the knowledge that support was readily available to him.

Baines arrived in Leeds in 1795, the same year that Dr John Aiken visited there. Aiken, a man of scholarship as well as medicine, left a detailed description of the town

⁸² C Driver Tory Radical: The Life of Richard Oastler (New York 1946) p 45

⁸³ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 22

⁸⁴ Ibid p 28

⁸⁵ Ibid p 35

⁸⁶ Ibid p 47

he saw.

The parish of Leeds is situated on the River Aire, which runs nearly through the middle of it ... It is divided into ten townships, exclusive of the township of Leeds ... Leeds has a general infirmary ... an excellent workhouse, alms-houses, charity schools and other institutions belonging to a great town.⁸⁷

Although the woollen industry dominated the place, Leeds was not solely dependent on it, for there were 148 other distinct occupations offering employment.⁸⁸ By 1795 some of these were beginning to be affected by the great transformation of British industry that the advent of the factory age would impose, both on the town and on the lives of the people in it.⁸⁹ Overseeing this change was the town corporation,

consisting of a mayor, twelve aldermen, (and) twenty-four common councilmen who fill up the vacancies in their body.⁹⁰

This closed corporation failed to come to terms with the rapid expansion of the town. As local industries diversified and wealth spread 'well beyond the close knit ranks of the Tory-Anglican corporation,'⁹¹ it failed to understand the needs of the rising commercial and manufacturing entrepreneurs. Many of that middle class' political and religious philosophy differed so much from the local council members.

After 1783 when the town grew rapidly and new industries sprang up ... the corporation was overwhelmed by the scale of the expansion and the rise of the well-to-do manufacturing class whose outlook, politics and religion were so very different from its own ... In the economic and social development of the borough its actions had minimal effect (for) it had abandoned serious attempts to control either by the 1780s.⁹²

The exclusive, Tory-Anglican oligarchy had failed to recognise the changing needs of a society entering the metamorphosis of the Industrial Revolution. That failure would result in a few short years with the emergence of a conflict that would dominate the politics of Leeds for the first three and half decades of the approaching century. It was

⁸⁷ For a detailed description of Leeds at this time see J Aikin A Description of the Country from Thirty to Forty Miles Around Manchester (London 1795) pp 570-577

⁸⁸ W G Rimmer 'The Industrial Profile of Leeds' Publications of the Thoresby Society vol L part 2 No 113 (1967) p 135

⁸⁹ Burt and Grady The Illustrated History of Leeds p 87

⁹⁰ Aikin Thirty Miles Around Manchester p 572

⁹¹ Burt and Grady The Illustrated History of Leeds p 106

⁹² R G Wilson 'Georgian Leeds': A History of Modern Leeds ed D Fraser (Manchester 1980) pp 40-41. See also D Fraser 'The Leeds Churchwardens 1828-1850' Publications of the Thoresby Society vol LIII Part 1 (1971) p 1

a conflict in which the young Baines would be involved first as its mouthpiece and then as its political leader.

The town's population was close to 30 000 with a further 23 000 in the out township.⁹³ It was at the time served by two newspapers; the Leeds Mercury and the Leeds Intelligencer. The Mercury appeared on 1 July 1718 when John Hirst published his 5 000 word scissors and paste news-sheet. By 1735, James Lister ran the paper and did so until June 1755 when it finally closed down. One factor in its demise was no doubt the emergence on 2 July 1754 of Griffith Wright's Leeds Intelligencer.⁹⁴ Some historians claim that Wright took over his rival.⁹⁵ He certainly took over Lister's printing office at New Street End, 'the cradle of Leeds journalism,'⁹⁶ used Lister's wood blocks and continued to publish a cookery book previously printed by Lister.⁹⁷ What is not explained, however, is how when James Bowling came on the scene he was able to re-launch the Leeds Mercury in January 1767 if his rival held the rights of the title. Bowling continued to published the paper until 1794 when he sold it to Messrs Binns and Brown.⁹⁸ The reason for the sale appears ambiguous. Baines Junior states that

he retired with a moderate competence ... (and) fell into the infatuation of the alchemists ... (seeking) to convert everything into gold.⁹⁹

But a more political reason was given in the Mercury of 21 December 1833.

A poor printer, Mr JAMES BOWLING, the worthy editor of the Leeds Mercury, who had rendered himself obnoxious by having opposed the American War, was held up by the Magistrates, and he was so bullied and annoyed, that he was obliged to sell his newspaper, and retire from the field of conflict with a very slender competency.¹⁰⁰

Why did Baines Junior tone down the reason for Bowling's departure in the biography? Did he feel that the book should demonstrate a more moderate, seemly aspect than

⁹³ J Morgan A History of Modern Leeds p 52

⁹⁴ T W Hand 'Early Leeds Printing and Printers' in Handbook of the Old Leeds Exhibition July 8-23 1926 ed W Gardham (Leeds 1926) p 91

⁹⁵ M A Gibb and F Beckwith Yorkshire Post Two Centuries (Leeds 1954) p 2. See also Anon Thoresby Society vol XL p ii.

⁹⁶ Hand Leeds Exhibition Handbook p 91

⁹⁷ Anon Thoresby Society vol XL p ii

⁹⁸ Leeds Mercury 04.10.1794

⁹⁹ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 40

¹⁰⁰ Leeds Mercury 21.12.33

resurrect the passion and acerbity that exemplified the politics of the 1830s?

That same extract reminds its readers of the political climate of the 1790s in the town when Baines, the aspiring young apprentice printer, arrived in the Leeds.

We might venture to assert that there was in reality no such thing as what may be properly called "public opinion" in the place except on the one side ... The still small voice of wisdom was stifled and beaten down by the cry of "Jacobin," "Leveller."¹⁰¹

The 'one side' was the Tory side. From the 1790s the less than distinctive political allegiance that the Leeds Intelligencer had shown under Griffith Wright was slowly discarded by the new editor. Thomas Wright, succeeded his father in 1785 and under him it became the 'leading Tory organ in Yorkshire;' Pittite, ministerial and anti-Jacobin.¹⁰² The new owners of the Leeds Mercury were John Binns and George Brown. Binns, the principal partner and a Tory, was a 'spirited' bookseller and partner of the banking-house Scott, Binns and Nicholson. Brown, the junior partner, edited the paper. He held no political views and the paper reflected his anodyne opinions.¹⁰³ This was the paper to which the young Baines found himself apprenticed.

If the Mercury was anaemic in content, the world it reported was both sanguine and violent. In its turn, the events the young printer witnessed could not but influence his intellectual development and shape the views that he would hold all his life; particularly with regard to war, Government oppression and Ireland. For two years Britain had been locked in combat with the French Republic. Following the failure of the Allied expedition to the Low Countries, the threat of invasion hung over the country. This was a fear to some extent assuaged by a Wakefield correspondent to the Leeds Intelligencer who stressed that 'our navy is more than sufficient to defeat any fleet.'¹⁰⁴ But rumours of a major French offensive persisted in the Leeds press.¹⁰⁵ The fear of revolution, exacerbated by poor harvests, had led Pitt to suspend Habeas Corpus and introduce his Treasonable Practices Act.¹⁰⁶ Yet it was still possible for the West Riding public to read in the Leeds Mercury the Constitution of the French Republic and

¹⁰¹ Leeds Mercury 21.12.33

¹⁰² Anon Thoresby Society vol XL p xi

¹⁰³ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 40. See also Taylor Worthies of Leeds p 436

¹⁰⁴ Letter to the Leeds Intelligencer from 'D C' 09.03.1795

¹⁰⁵ Leeds Mercury 04.04.1795

¹⁰⁶ J S Watson The Reign of George III 1760-1815 (Oxford 1964) p 360

digest the 'Rights of Man in Society' - 'Liberty, Equality, Security, Property.'¹⁰⁷ Baines would have been aware of this as he would have been of Wilberforce urging negotiations for peace 'in the interests of the country'¹⁰⁸ and Duncombe's warning of the dire consequences of a people so 'overburthened' when the 'wildest principles of Democracy were abroad.'¹⁰⁹

In October that year the Leeds Intelligencer's¹¹⁰ report on the insurrection in Paris offered the hope that hostilities might be brought to an end. It was not to be and but for a short interval two more decades would pass before peace replaced war as the norm in Europe. Even longer had the running sore of Ireland infected British politics. In 1795, the Leeds public read of Fitzwilliam's recall from the island, the subsequent discussions that followed it in the House of Lords, and the Defenders' plot unearthed in the vicinity of Dublin in September that year.¹¹¹ The Leeds that the young Baines arrived in was not simply a bystander to these events. He would have read of its vestry meeting called to provide twenty-seven men for the navy. In March he would have witnessed the Second Battalion of the Royal Leeds Volunteer Corps marching off to serve in Kilkenny, or seen the large cheering crowds attending the Military Festival in the town in May and watched the troops march from the Coloured Cloth Hall up Briggate to Chapel Town Moor where 60 000 spectators witnessed the manoeuvres.¹¹² He would also have been aware that there were those who opposed the war and whose views on peace were readily made available to the public at large. Only the previous year a lecture, delivered in February in Sheffield by Gilbert Wakefield, the radical scholar, was published for a wider audience to peruse. It contained certain sentiments that could well have made their mark on the young Baines, for they were ideas he would adopt and defend all his life. Wakefield wrote:

War, is altogether a solecism in commercial politics ... Of all the evils which threaten the destruction of the Constitution, War is the most

¹⁰⁷ Leeds Mercury 19.09.1795

¹⁰⁸ Leeds Intelligencer 05.01.1795

¹⁰⁹ Leeds Mercury 06.06.1795

¹¹⁰ Leeds Intelligencer 05.10.1795; Leeds Mercury 03.10.1795

¹¹¹ Leeds Mercury 16.05.1795, 06.09.1795

¹¹² Leeds Mercury 30.03.1795, 09.03.1795, 30.05.1795; Leeds Intelligencer 01.06.1795. For details of the Leeds Volunteers see E Hargrave 'The Leeds Volunteers 1794-1802'; Publications of the Thoresby Society vol XXVIII (1928) passim

dreaded.¹¹³

Ten years later Baines would write;

War is so great - so enormous an evil - that it is the indispensable duty of every Government sedulously to avoid it.¹¹⁴

War was an evil and, like an apocalyptic horseman, brought with it to Leeds its concomitants in pestilence and famine. Contagious fevers frequently occurred 'among the Poor of the Town' whilst

the Distresses of our Fellow-Creatures are daily multiplying around us, and call so loudly for the charitable Exertions of every well-disposed Mind.¹¹⁵

It is a melancholy Truth, that ... (the) Cellars, Garrets and such like Places, exhibit ... abodes of human Misery, the wretched Inhabitants are frequently found either exerting the last Efforts of Nature to support themselves ... or languishing under the most powerful Influence of complicated Disease.¹¹⁶

Poverty and food shortages in the town were perennial problems that commanded the attention of Baines and his contemporaries for the next fifty years. When he arrived in Leeds the exceptionally severe winter weather of 1794-95¹¹⁷ was already compounding the difficulties of the poor. A meeting was held at the Rotation Office to discuss the problem¹¹⁸ whilst the Leeds Mercury urged its readers to show benevolence to the lower classes as a means to avert sedition.¹¹⁹ The last good harvest of 1791 had been followed by a series of moderate or poor ones.¹²⁰ The Leeds Intelligencer stressed the need for care with grain urging 'no unnecessary consumption of provisions' and reported that corn was to be provided for the poor in Leeds following the Rotation Office meeting. Proposals to combat the problem ranged from eating

¹¹³ G Wakefield Fast Day - Observed at Sheffield; A Serious Lecture Delivered at Sheffield 28 February 1794 (London 1794) p 7

¹¹⁴ Leeds Mercury 15.09.04

¹¹⁵ Anon An Address to the Members of the Stranger's Benevolent Society and to the Inhabitants of Leeds (Leeds 1797) p 2

¹¹⁶ Ibid p 10

¹¹⁷ J M Stratton Agricultural Records AD 220-1977 (London 1978) p 91

¹¹⁸ Leeds Intelligencer 02.02.1795. That same year the magistrates in Berkshire attempted to come to terms with the problem of poverty by establishing the Speenhamland System. See E J Hobsbawm Industry and Empire (London 1990) pp 104-105

¹¹⁹ Leeds Mercury 28.02.1795

¹²⁰ Stratton Agricultural Records pp 90-91

beans and barley flour to consuming less butter and eating more oatmeal.¹²¹ The authorities hoped that 'relieving the poor' would diffuse the volatile political situation 'and prevent them tumultuously assembling.' In Leeds tension ran high. The magistrates were forced into guaranteeing the safety of corn merchants visiting the town. Across the country a wave of grain riots broke out.¹²² Pitt placed orders for corn from Canada, the Baltic and the Mediterranean¹²³ and established a select committee that included Charles James Fox to investigate the problem.¹²⁴ But sedition rumbled beneath the surface and manifested itself in an attempt against the King's life.¹²⁵ A meeting was called at Moot Hall to congratulate King George on his escape and urged Parliament 'to enact such laws as may in future prevent seditious meetings and practices.'¹²⁶

The underlying fear percolating through the Leeds of 1795 was of revolution¹²⁷ and, inadvertently, the young Baines found himself under suspicion of being a Jacobin. In 1793, a small group of like-minded young men established a philosophical society for the discussion of literary and moral issues. Mr Skelton, a member of the Society of Friends was their leader. Others included George Fardely, a merchant, Messrs Martin and Harrison, papermakers, James Dickinson, a wool stapler, Christopher Heaps, a plumber and glazier, George Patteson, and John Talbot, a Kirkgate grocer and tobacconist. The aims of the Reasoning Society were innocent enough; to meet weekly to discuss any issue that was not political, religious or commercial.¹²⁸ Unfortunately,

¹²¹ Leeds Intelligencer 29.06.1795, 13.07.1795, 03.08.1795, 07.09.1795

¹²² Leeds Mercury 01.08.1795, Leeds Intelligencer 17.08.95 Leeds Mercury 22.08.1795

¹²³ Leeds Intelligencer 19.10.1795; Leeds Mercury 24.10.1795

¹²⁴ Leeds Intelligencer 09.11.1795

¹²⁵ Leeds Intelligencer 09.11.1795; Leeds Mercury 14.11.1795 reported 'The King entered the House of Peers ... and the first words he uttered were "My Lord I have been shot at."' It was hardly a serious attempt at assassination. Either a stone or an airgun pellet broke one of the windows of his coach. See S Ayling George the Third (London 1972) p 363

¹²⁶ Leeds Intelligencer 23.11.1795

¹²⁷ Leeds may have had something of a reputation for subversion. Grey, one of the mutineers at the Nore, was described by the Evening Mail as coming 'from Leeds *that hot bed of sedition.*' Brown of the Leeds Mercury, in quoting the Mail vehemently denied the charge and stressed that though Grey had worked in the town he had been forced to leave because of his 'Jacobinical principles.' See Leeds Mercury 10.06.1797. Two weeks later 'Citizen Robinson' (alias Davies) was arrested at Gomersall and sent to the Wakefield House of Correction for distributing seditious papers and pamphlets in the region. See Leeds Mercury 24.06.1797

¹²⁸ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines pp 24-25. The exclusion of issues that were deemed political or religious was not unique in such discussion groups. Rule 34 of the Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society (1819) declared that 'subjects ... may be selected from any branch of

their choice of a name was naïve for ‘reasoning’ and ‘rationalism’ could so easily be considered euphemisms for ‘radicalism.’ Only a year after the society’s formation, Thomas Paine published the first part of his scathing attack on established religion, The Age of Reason. Already the epithet ‘Tom-Painer’ had come to stand as a term of abuse alongside that of ‘Jacobin.’ In 1806, Ryley described the small circle as

a society for the discussion of literary and moral subjects; but the temper of the times was so adverse to every thing which suggested the idea of debate that the numbers were never considerable.¹²⁹

Conscious of a climate where sedition was foremost on the political agenda, Whittel Sheepshanks¹³⁰, the Mayor, demanded an explanation of the aims of the society. Baines was one of a deputation of four who were able to assure the magistrate of their apolitical objectives.¹³¹ Sheepshanks’s advice was to ignore their critics and continue. They did. And there was an added bonus for the young Baines in that he was able to hone his public speaking technique gradually eradicating, to a large degree, the rough hesitancy in his delivery and developing a style that relied on pithy, commonsense extemporization rather than loquacious lecturing.¹³²

By September 1797 Baines had completed his apprenticeship. Rather than act as a journeyman printer he set himself up in a business partnership. George Brown, his old employer, had introduced him to John Fenwick, and the two men set up their printing works in the Rose and Crown Yard off Briggate with a loan of £100 from Baines’s father.¹³³ It was not a happy association. Drink seems to have been at the root of the problem. Fenwick proved to be less than abstemious and the temperate Baines found little in common with him.¹³⁴ By 1798 the partnership was dissolved. Baines

philosophy or general literature, excluding discussions on politics and religion.’ See S J D Green ‘In Search of Bourgeois Civilisation: Institutions and Ideals in nineteenth Century Britain’; Northern History vol XXVIII (1992) p 236

¹²⁹ J Ryley The Leeds Guide (Leeds 1806) p 131

¹³⁰ Whittel Sheepshanks, Mayor of Leeds in 1795 and 1815, assumed the surname of York under royal licence. See Taylor Worthies of Leeds p 239. Sheepshanks had reasonable cause for concern. A radical club had been established in Leeds and was in contact with the London Corresponding Society by 1797. See Goodwin The Friends of Liberty p 513

¹³¹ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 25

¹³² *Ibid* pp 25-26

¹³³ *Ibid* pp 27-28. The yard stood at the Back of the Shambles off Briggate. It housed the Rose and Crown coaching inn. See T Bradley The Old Coaching Days in Yorkshire (Otley 1988) p 175

¹³⁴ *Ibid* pp 27-28

continued printing on his own producing a variety of publications. Some were printing orders for institutions - Forms of Prayer for the Use of the Protestant Dissenting Congregation at Mill Hill Chapel in Leeds; other works were privately commissioned - A Call to All the World, Nations and People Commanded by the Lord God by George Turner; some were ordered by publishers such as T Hamam, the Leeds bookseller, who contracted Baines to produce Nicholas Manners's autobiography A Concise Account of the Conduct, Conversion, Call to the Ministry and Course in It of Nicholas Manners.¹³⁵ Without any doubt his greatest publication during this period was a religious work, An Analysis of the Bible by Matthew Talbot. Ryley described it as a work of 'perseverance and application.'¹³⁶ Baines produced it in sections between 1799 and 1800. Funded by James Dickinson and Caleb Talbot,¹³⁷ it was 'an impartial collection of similar ideas arranged methodically.'¹³⁸ Thirty books were collated to form one volume of some 670 000 words and were arranged under such headings as 'Deity,' 'Christ,' 'Scripture,' 'Children,' 'Kings' and 'Marriage.'

Marriage also featured in Baines's personal plans. He had been introduced to Charlotte Talbot by her brother, John, and gained her father's consent, to marry her. But then the father, Matthew Talbot, changed his mind objecting to his putative son-in-law's membership of the Reasoning Society. He feared the local magistrates might misconstrue the organisation as being Jacobinical and result in its members being arrested under the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act. Baines Junior was at pains to point out that with regard to his father

the fear may seem absurd, for assuredly, there has seldom been a man less seditiously disposed, or more fully engaged with his own honourable pursuits.¹³⁹

What is not clear is why, if Talbot felt so anxiously about the society and believed the 'evil report' he had heard about it, he did not consult his own son, John, who was also a member. The couple, however, decided to ignore the father's objections and Charlotte

¹³⁵ See Anon Forms of Prayer for the Use of the Protestant Dissenting Congregation at Mill Hill Chapel Leeds (Leeds 1801).G Turner A Call to All the World, Nations, People Commanded by the Lord God (Leeds 1800).N Manners A Concise Account of the Conduct, Conversion, Call to the Ministry and Course in It of Nicholas Manners (Leeds c1800)

¹³⁶ Ryley Leeds Guide (1806) p 123

¹³⁷ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 35

¹³⁸ M Talbot An Analysis of the Bible (Leeds 1800) Preface

¹³⁹ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines pp 31-32

and Baines were married on 2 July 1798. The Baineses then moved to bigger premises at Dickinson's Court between Holy Trinity Church and Briggate, and Baines there accepted his fifteen year-old brother, John, as an apprentice.

The Reasoning Society was only part of Baines's educational and intellectual development. Through the next few years there were other influences that also contributed to his intellectual growth. He read, if not avidly, Addison, Shakespeare and Cobbett, and enjoyed the speeches of Fox and Grenville.¹⁴⁰ By 1805, he had become member number twenty-two of the New Subscription Library in Albion Street where he had access to his favourites Hume, Crabbe and Goldsmith as well as books such as Locke's Essay Concerning Human Understanding, Blackstone's Commentaries, Burke's Reflections on the French Revolution and Priestley's reply to it, Wyvill's Defence of Price and the Reformers of England, Wakefield's Examination of Paine's 'Age of Reason' and the translations of the classics.¹⁴¹ But his interests were also parochial and thus in January 1816 he became subscriber number 141 for the new edition of Ralph Thoresby's classic history of Leeds, Ducatus Leodiensis or Topography of Leeds edited by Reverend T D Whitaker.¹⁴²

Overriding all these influences was the example of Benjamin Franklin. The American patriot had long been Baines's idol to the extent that in 1822, Baines even attended the Preston Guild dressed as him. His costume was supplied by an individual designated only by the initials 'A L S' who pointed out that Baines 'from his religious scruples did not wish it to be publickly (sic) known.' The Leeds Intelligencer gleefully revealed the truth with the comment, 'MR BAINES personated Dr Franklin' whilst the Mercury made no mention of its editor's role.¹⁴³ 'A L S' further commented;

In person he was not unlike the Moral Philosopher, but in genius as

¹⁴⁰ Ibid pp 359-360

¹⁴¹ Catalogue of the Books in the New Subscription Library in Albion Street (Leeds 1805)

¹⁴² Leeds Mercury 20.01.16. Baines purchased the small paper edition in common with, among others, William Hey, Richard Oastler and the Leeds Library. The subscribers for the limited edition of one hundred large paper copies included such local luminaries as Benjamin Gott, Sir John Beckett and the Earl of Harewood. The book became available 01.07.16 see Leeds Mercury 15.06.16

¹⁴³ Duke University, North Carolina; William R Perkins Library - Baines Papers: 'A L S' to To Petitioners from Doncaster 28.04.34. All documents in the Baines Papers at Duke University are hereafter cited simply as Duke University: Baines Papers. See also Leeds Intelligencer 16.09.22 and the Leeds Mercury 14.09.22. This was not the only occasion Baines wore costume. At the York Musical Fancy Ball he dressed as an English yeoman, a 'misnomer' according to the Leeds Intelligencer 02.10.28!

widely deficient of the original, as a half civilized Yankee would be to his refined countryman, Washington Irving.¹⁴⁴

Baines Junior's remarks on his father's fascination with Franklin took a different view and sounded a different tone.

There were so many points of resemblance in the mental character of the two men that Mr Baines has been called, not without reason, the 'Franklin of Leeds' ... the life of Franklin helped to form the character of Baines.¹⁴⁵

An examination of Franklin's qualities, philosophy and achievements do reveal a marked similarity with those that the West Riding editor would pursue a generation later. Max Weber identified Franklin's ethic as:

The earning of money within the modern economic order is, so long as it is done legally, the result and expression of virtue and proficiency in a calling; and this virtue ... (is) ... the real Alpha and Omega of Franklin's ethic.¹⁴⁶

This ethic guided Baines all his life. The same could be said about Franklin's 'thirteen names of virtues;' temperance, silence, order, resolution, frugality, industry, sincerity, justice, moderation, cleanliness, tranquillity, chastity and humility.¹⁴⁷ These virtues, were the fundamental basis of middle class morality. Esmond Wright points out that middle class morality which

is still at the vital roots of American prosperity and is reflected in its industry, its native shrewdness, its frugality, its practicality ... found its first prophet in Benjamin Franklin.¹⁴⁸

In England, it found no better disciple than Edward Baines, demonstrating as he did through his 'energy, prudence and integrity,' a model 'to our active and intelligent middle classes.'¹⁴⁹ There was one other marked similarity between the two men, apart from the obvious one that Wright states of Franklin that 'he made books and he made news - and his books and news "made" Franklin.'¹⁵⁰ Both men had a high regard for

¹⁴⁴ Duke University: Baines Papers: 'ALS' to Petitioners from Doncaster 28.04.34

¹⁴⁵ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 27.

¹⁴⁶ M Weber The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism translated by T Parsons (London 1976) pp 53-54

¹⁴⁷ B Franklin Memoirs of the Life and Writing of Benjamin Franklin ed (London 1904) pp 99-100

¹⁴⁸ E Wright Franklin of Philadelphia (Cambridge Mass/London 1986) p 9

¹⁴⁹ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 5

¹⁵⁰ Wright Franklin p 9

their wives and generously acknowledged the support they received from them.

We have an English proverb that says, "*He that would thrive, must ask his wife.*" It was lucky for me that I had one as much dispos'd to industry and frugality as myself. She assisted me cheerfully.¹⁵¹

So wrote Franklin; and of all the influences that helped mould Baines into the man he became, there was none greater than that of his wife Charlotte. Her son recognised

It would be wrong to conceal that the influence of this excellent woman over her husband was very great ... he often allowed her to prescribe the course they should pursue.

Charlotte was a Congregationalist. When he arrived in Leeds he felt no strong commitment either towards or against the established Church. But the reforming zeal of the Dissenting ministers in the town attracted him more and more.¹⁵² He was befriended by these Dissenters, published their works and, when he assumed the mantle of Leeds Mercury editor, turned the paper into the 'secular Bible' of impartial Nonconformity, worshipping at both Mill Hill Unitarian Chapel and at Salem.¹⁵³ Only when a woman, aware of his commercial connection of publishing for the Dissenting groups, complimented him on being 'all things to all men' did he cease. From then on he restricted his worship to Salem and the preaching of Edward Parsons.¹⁵⁴ Parsons was one of three Dissenting ministers with whom Baines formed close friendships; the other two were Thomas Langdon, a Baptist, and William Wood of Unitarian Mill Hill. They in turn had an influence in helping to mould his opinions and beliefs. They were 'temperate but steady Reformers'¹⁵⁵ and Wood was circumspect enough to acknowledge

It is innovation which creates alarm; it is contradiction to what has been generally received, which excites indignation. Reform is never a pleasant word.¹⁵⁶

Cautious reform became one of Baines's basic tenets.

Likewise, the words of Edward Parsons had their effect on the young printer.

¹⁵¹ Franklin Memoirs p 95

¹⁵² Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines pp 33, 30

¹⁵³ Binfield So Down to Prayers p 71

¹⁵⁴ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 57. See also Chapter Six below for Baines's religious commitment.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid p 30

¹⁵⁶ W Wood Sermon Preached on 22 April 1804 at Mill Hill (Leeds 1804)

Parsons had taken up his post in Leeds in 1788 and would remain an influence in the town for forty-nine years. He was a man of tremendous energy and intellectual capacity.¹⁵⁷ To read his sermons and letters is to see expressed views that would, through the years, regularly grace the editorial columns of Baines's Mercury.

The fundamental basis of Baines's beliefs¹⁵⁸ was his Christianity, a view he made clear in December 1821 when he commented, 'Christianity alone is true.'¹⁵⁹ To Baines it unified society; to Parsons, if that belief were acknowledged,

due honour will be paid to superiors; among equals mutual kindness and friendship will prevail over the sentiments of prejudice and enmity.¹⁶⁰

For Baines stability in society could only be maintained by strict adherence to the law. In a letter responding to an attack on Dissenters by Rev W Atkinson of Bradford, a Church of England clergyman, Parsons commented:

As members of a civil society, and subjects of this realm, we think it incumbent on us, as matters of conscience, to be always obedient to the laws under which we are placed.¹⁶¹

Atkinson's diatribes against the Dissenters claimed they engaged in 'most atrocious villainy,' and that these 'Devil's children' were no more than 'Democratic cormorants.'

They introduce political sentiments into their very prayers ... stir up strife and sedition ... (and) have supported democratic candidates at an election.¹⁶²

Parsons's riposte was echoed and re-echoed by Baines in the years to come.

An affectionate, sympathetic and liberal spirit is the loveliest feature of our character ... the best security of our honour and usefulness in society ... (bigotry) was a canker that corrodes and eats up all the dignified principles of humanity¹⁶³

IV

Bigotry also dominated the Leeds press. The sentiments the Rev Atkinson

¹⁵⁷ F Griffin Salem; A Short History (Leeds 1984) p 2

¹⁵⁸ For a detailed analysis of Baines's beliefs see Thornton Social and Political Thought of Edward Baines passim.

¹⁵⁹ Leeds Mercury 01.12.21

¹⁶⁰ E Parsons The Temper of Jesus; A Sermon Preached in Mill Hill Chapel 24 February 1805 (Leeds 1805)

¹⁶¹ E Parsons A Vindication of the Dissenters Against the Charge of Democratic Scheming. Three Letters to the Rev W Atkinson of Bradford (Leeds 1802) Letter 2

¹⁶² Griffin Salem Chapel p 3

¹⁶³ Parsons Sermon (1805)

expressed were to be found appearing more and more in the pages of the Leeds Intelligencer which, under Thomas Wright, had become increasingly anti-Reform and anti-Dissent.¹⁶⁴ Meanwhile the Leeds Mercury, under George Brown's influence, was 'more Tory than Whig'.¹⁶⁵ In Leeds the voice of Whiggery, Reform and Nonconformism was silent. To redress this balance, a small group of like-minded men agreed that a new journal in the town was essential if their views were to find a wider audience. A platform was required from which a campaign could be launched in the West Riding to rectify the injustices of a Parliamentary system that an aristocratic oligarchy imposed on the nation, and to remove the religious inequalities under which that nation laboured. The group included John Marshall, the man who made Leeds the centre of the British flax industry,¹⁶⁶ Benjamin Hird, a physician at Leeds General Infirmary, Peter Garforth, a cotton spinner of Embsay near Skipton and James Bischoff, a wool merchant and manufacturer. It was he who announced, somewhat melodramatically, 'If you will find the money, I will find the man.'

His recommendation was the young Lancastrian printer, Edward Baines. Baines accepted, for his backers guaranteed him editorial independence, giving him an 'express stipulation ... that no influence, control or dictation should exist.'¹⁶⁷

The circulation of Leeds Mercury at this time hovered between 700 and 800 copies a week, a result due, in part, to the ineffectiveness of George Brown as an editor.¹⁶⁸ John Binns, the principal owner, had died in Grantham on his way back to Leeds from London in May 1796¹⁶⁹ and the supervision of the business had fallen on his widow. On hearing of the proposal to launch a third Leeds weekly newspaper, Esther Binns summoned Baines and offered the Mercury for sale, pointing out the advantage of building from an established newspaper base rather than having to establish one of his own and at the same time contend with two competitors.¹⁷⁰ Baines

¹⁶⁴ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 45. See also Anon Thoresby Society ol XL p xi

¹⁶⁵ Ibid p 44

¹⁶⁶ E J Connell and M Ward 'Industrial Development 1780-1914' : A History of Modern Leeds ed D Fraser (Manchester 1980) p 148

¹⁶⁷ Leeds Mercury 04.01.17

¹⁶⁸ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 40

¹⁶⁹ C H Timperley A Dictionary of Printing (London 1839) p 791

¹⁷⁰ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 46

saw the validity of the argument and accepted the suggestion. George Smith, a banker, and John Cusson, a merchant, acted as executors and with the agreement of George Brown, the price was fixed at £1 552 to be paid in three instalments; £700 down and then £500 on 28 August 1802 and £352 on 28 May 1803. The offer included the working tools, implements, frame presses, a spacious room for a printing office, two adjoining rooms near the staircase that led to the printing office and a dwelling house with warehouse, to lease for seven years at £45 per annum. Brown undertook not to act as a printer or to publish a newspaper; Baines undertook not to sell medicines during his occupancy. On Saturday 28 February 1801 six witnesses signed the articles of agreement; Josh Brooks, John Garforth (Jun), George Smith, John Cussons, George Brown and Edward Baines. On the following Monday Baines issued a bond to Peter Garforth of Embsay Kirk for the £1 000 loan to be repaid with interest. John Marshall, Thomas Bischoff, Thomas Johnson, John Hebblethwaite, William Walker, Peter Garforth (Jun), Richard Lee, Richard Slater Milnes and James Milnes each contributed £100; Benjamin Hird and J Pearson £50.¹⁷¹

On Saturday 7 March 1801 the first edition of the Leeds Mercury or General Advertiser published by Edward Baines was despatched from Mercury Court at the bottom of Briggate. It cost six pence and, like all papers of the time, bore the newspaper tax stamp. The single sheet was folded to produce a four page paper approximately 500mm x 360mm. As might be expected, it was sold throughout Yorkshire, but also in parts of Lancashire and in Warwick Square, London.¹⁷²

The only indication on the front page that the paper had changed hands was the simple statement 'Printed by EDWARD BAINES' under the title. Its appearance and content were typical of any early nineteenth century local weekly newspaper.¹⁷³ Four of the five columns on the front page were dominated by advertisements or notices, including a petition signed by Mayor John Brooke and over a hundred others

¹⁷¹ Baines Papers: No 43, 44. See also Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines pp 46-47

¹⁷² It sold in Leeds, Huddersfield, Halifax, Bradford, Elland, Wakefield, Pontefract, Rotherham, Barnsley, Dewsbury, Doncaster, Knaresborough, Ripon, Tadcaster, Settle, Keighley, Otley, Skipton, Pately, Grassington, Threshfield and Bingley but the paper also had a wider circulation, being available in Rochdale, Kendal, Lancaster, Colne, Burnley. By 1839 both the Leeds Mercury and the Leeds Intelligencer were sent regularly to 'America, India and Australia.' There were even reports of a copy of the Mercury appearing on Christmas Island! See Leeds Intelligencer 19.01.39

¹⁷³ 'First and foremost, the eighteenth century provincial newspapers were advertising sheets.' See Read Press and People p 62. For a detailed description of such newspapers see pp 59-107.

condemning the appeal for peace made by Leeds merchants and manufacturers as being 'peculiarly ill-timed.' The one single column of front page news featured reports of an engagement with the French Navy, the probability that William Pitt would make a statement to the House of Commons on the King's health and the resignation of Marquis Cornwallis over the Catholic Question. That news, like the whole of page two, was extracted from the London papers.¹⁷⁴ It was on page three that the significant announcement was made.

BINNS AND BROWN, RETURN Thanks to the numerous READERS of the LEEDS MERCURY ... inform them, That they have disposed of the Property ... to EDWARD BAINES. Leeds March 7th 1801.

Beneath Brown's notice the new owner made his first public statement as editor and revealed his definitive declaration of principles that would determine the Mercury's policy for the next half century.

EDWARD BAINES HAVING purchased the property of the LEEDS MERCURY, and entered on the PRINTING OFFICE occupied by Messrs BINNS and BROWN, respectfully informs the SUBSCRIBERS and the PUBLIC that this PAPER will be published as usual every Saturday Morning.

In selecting Articles of Intelligence, our Endeavours will be exerted to present our Readers with a correct Statement of Public Events, arranged in a Manner the best calculated to form an interesting Record of the Transactions of the present eventful Period.

To the Proceedings in Parliament we shall pay a peculiar Degree of Attention - Every Species of Commercial Information, particularly the State of Markets and the Fluctuations in the Public Funds will be exactly laid before our Readers - All Communications either of Local Intelligence, or upon any public Controversy, if written with Temper and Liberality will be duly attended to.

In our Political Department, while we ingenuously avow the Principles and support Measures we deem essential to the Existence and Prosperity of the British Constitution, it will be our Care to avoid the Intemperance by which Publications of this Nature are so frequently degraded;-

Endeavouring as much as possible to meet the Views of Men who can assert their Sentiments without violating their Friendships, and maintain their Argument without losing their Tempers - Our Paper shall never be made the Vehicle of Party or Personal Abuse ...

NB A Letter-Box for the Reception of any Communication with which the Public may please to favour us, will be placed in the Out-Door of the Printing-Office.

¹⁷⁴ Read Press and People pp 61-62. Provincial newspapers contained very little original material, most of it being simply taken from the London press, hence the term 'scissors and paste' newspapers.

Here were the first tentative steps towards his use of the editorial, a technique he would make his own in the coming years. The idea of editors commenting on matters of a political or philosophical nature was not new. After all, Baines had cut his journalistic teeth under such a man when he watched Thomas Walker use the Preston Review to good effect as he expressed views on a variety of topics.

Usually the comments editors made were short and pithy rather than detailed analyses on a specific theme. In Leeds both Thomas Wright of the Leeds Intelligencer and George Brown of the Leeds Mercury made their feelings known during the 1790s though, like Walker, their observations also tended to be made up of relatively brief comments rather than being contained in long leader columns. Nevertheless, the subjects they covered were wide ranging; defence of the suspension of Habeas Corpus, patriotism against 'our Gallic foes,' the 'hydra-headed monster JACOBINISM,' the dangers of children being left alone; boys sliding on carriageways, all appeared in the Intelligencer.¹⁷⁵ In a similar vein the Mercury covered such themes as '*profane swearing ... that depravity of the age,*' the corn crisis and reclaiming waste land but it did, however, venture at times to more elaborate arguments devoting a full half a column to urge the nation to unite when its defences were threatened in 1798.¹⁷⁶ The real pioneers in this field were the radical editor, Joseph Gales, of the Sheffield Register, and the equally radical editor of the Cambridge Intelligencer, Benjamin Flower, who during 1801 featured an editorial every week.¹⁷⁷ But it was Baines in his Leeds Mercury who systematically used the leader column week after week as an effective weapon against his political opponents, sometimes with the incisiveness of a rapier, at others with the bludgeoning power of a broadsword.¹⁷⁸ Thus in the first edition of the Leeds Mercury that he edited, Baines fired the opening salvo in his protracted war of support for the merchants and manufacturers of the West Riding.

The coarse and illiberal reflections which have been levelled at that truly valuable body of men, the Clothiers, for expressing their sentiments on a War that has reduced and every day continues to reduce

¹⁷⁵ Leeds Intelligencer 23.02.1795, 09.04.1798, 29.04.1799, 24.12.1798, 31.12.1798

¹⁷⁶ Leeds Mercury 17.01.1795, 13.02.1796, 24.06.1797, 05.05.1798

¹⁷⁷ Read Press and People p 69. Flower's paper was the Cambridge Intelligencer not the Cambridge Journal as Read suggests.

¹⁷⁸ For examples of Baines's style see Chapter Two below *passim*. For more extensive examples see also Thornton Social and Political Thought of Edward Baines *passim*.

numbers of them to poverty and wretchedness, reflect as little credit on the understanding as on the feelings of those who indulge them.¹⁷⁹

The postscript to his first leader indicated one of the new roles of the Mercury. A letter-box was fitted to the printing-office door, and thus the paper provided the opportunity for dialogue. Two years later he clothed his actions with words.

Our business is to enlarge the views of the our readers and to promote their advantage, by presenting a medium for the free, public discussion of all questions connected to interest of trade and with the prosperity and happiness of the country.¹⁸⁰

The first letter he published appeared on 21 March 1801. It was from 'Pacificus', its subject, not surprisingly, was peace. Some letters he paused to consider before placing in print; "Perfidious Defamation Well Rewarded" is under consideration,' some he flatly refused to publish; 'By inserting A HUSBAND'S communication - we should forfeit the favour of Ladies, at least of NINE of them - the Muses;' some, like that from 'Obadiah Overplus,' were critical of the press; 'Our Newspapers (no offence to you, Sir) contain *too many lies*;' and some were simply too verbose; 'The *Length* of 'Pontefract Correspondent's' Pastoral prevents its insertion.'¹⁸¹

In the nine months to the end of 1801, he outlined the basic tenets of his political philosophy. First was the need to end the war with France

which strikes at the very root of our commerce and which has been so fatal in every respect to our national happiness.¹⁸²

The fault for the erosion of trade did not lie solely with the French. One man in particular was culpable. Pitt resigned his seals as First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer on Saturday 14 March 1801 and a week later Baines launched a bitter rebuke at the late Prime Minister.

The prosperity of the country has been completely annihilated ... our trade has been ruined, our taxes enormously increased ... he has ...taken more from our liberties than any minister that ever existed.¹⁸³

Pitt's innovative income tax was Baines's *bête noire*; a tax

attended with much vexation, is notoriously unequal ...(and) ceases to

¹⁷⁹ Leeds Mercury 07.03.01

¹⁸⁰ Leeds Mercury 29.01.03

¹⁸¹ Leeds Mercury 11.07.01, 09.05.01,22.08.01,29.08.01

¹⁸² Leeds Mercury 28.03.01

¹⁸³ Leeds Mercury 21.03.01

be productive to the extent intended.¹⁸⁴

Other issues he also raised year after year and each made its appearance during his first few months as editor. One such was the slave trade and his condemnation of the men

who sanction this infernal traffic and still profess to be governed by the divine precept 'Do unto ALL men as you would they should unto you.'¹⁸⁵

Two others were religious toleration and the liberty of the individual. When the Elector of Bavaria encouraged the 'profession of all religions throughout his dominions' Baines pointed out the pragmatic political advantage of such a course.

The adoption of this liberal policy and the experience of both the present and past ages bears ample testimony ... that political prosperity and general liberty are ... inseparably connected.¹⁸⁶

Just as Baines was conscious of individual liberty, he was also conscious of a collective social responsibility. By November, an epidemic fever broke out among the 'lower classes of inhabitants' of Leeds and by mid-December it was rife. Baines gave graphic accounts of its horrors; a family of thirteen that saw five infected in four days and a further four on subsequent days; six adults sharing two forlorn beds covered only in rags with the dead and dying lying together. He was quick to endorse the proposal to open a House of Recovery in the town, anticipating adequate public support for 'so excellent an institution,' and even going as far as to urge Huddersfield, Bradford and Halifax to follow Leeds's example.¹⁸⁷ In the same edition he was proposing action to ease the suffering of the poor.

Numbers of the poor, have been obliged to dispose of their cloaths (sic) to buy food ... would it not be well to set on foot a general subscription.

Another social responsibility the nation should recognise was the need to provide education, for that in turn would help produce a better society. By 1818 Baines claimed that Leeds had less 'juvenile criminality' than any 'town in the kingdom of equal size;' the reason he gave was 'the general diffusion of education and religious instruction

¹⁸⁴ Leeds Mercury 24.10.01

¹⁸⁵ Leeds Mercury 31.10.01

¹⁸⁶ Leeds Mercury 26.09.01

¹⁸⁷ Leeds Mercury 21.11.01, 05.12.01, 12.12.01. The Leeds General Infirmary did not admit patients with infectious diseases. See S T Anning 'The Leeds Public Dispensary': Publications of the Thoresby Society vol LIV part 2 (1974) p 131

(there) ... the best safeguard against crime.'¹⁸⁸ But education embraced wider parameters than those defined by scholastic and religious institutions. An informed public was vital if society was to be a responsible one and thus by May 1801 he promised to include each week 'a complete epitome of Parliamentary proceedings.'¹⁸⁹ But an informed public also had to be kept abreast of political events outside the Palace of Westminster. It was his determination to fulfil that aspect of his journalistic credo that he found himself for the first time involved in a public and most acrimonious dispute with another newspaper editor.

The spring of 1800 was late and cold. The fine weather of July was followed by the rains of August and a disappointing harvest drove the cost of corn as high as 184s a quarter.¹⁹⁰ The inevitable result was deprivation and hunger among the poor. This spawned in its wake anger and civil discord among the disaffected. In Devon and Somerset mobs attacked local farmers, miners from the Mendips marched on Bristol whilst in the north discontent rumbled through the industrial districts.¹⁹¹ By March 1801, in the fourth edition he produced, the Leeds Mercury carried news that the

tranquillity of several parts of the country has been disturbed by reports of a very alarming nature, which appear to have been much exaggerated - though not totally devoid of foundation.

Baines went on to urge his readers to consider the remarks from a correspondent calling himself 'An Enemy to War and Tumult' from Leeds who wrote on 'these secret clandestine political' movements and put the blame for these affairs on stagnation of trade and the high price of provisions.¹⁹² Throughout the fine summer of 1801 meetings, held mainly at night, continued in the West Riding at Batley, Ossett, Saddleworth and Halifax.¹⁹³ By June, Baines was reporting on a 4am gathering of 300 in Lancashire near Bolton on the Sunday morning of 24 May. He described how the Light Dragoons were called out; a magistrate, Mr Fletcher, read the riot act; and twenty-one people were arrested.¹⁹⁴ In August he embarked on a detailed exposé of

¹⁸⁸ Leeds Mercury 01.08.18

¹⁸⁹ Leeds Mercury 16.05.01

¹⁹⁰ Stratton Agricultural Records p 93.

¹⁹¹ A Bryant The Years of Endurance 1793-1802 (London 1942) p 333

¹⁹² Leeds Mercury 28.03.01

¹⁹³ Thompson EP Making of the English Working Class p 518

¹⁹⁴ Leeds Mercury 06.06.01

further nefarious nocturnal gatherings this time in Yorkshire.

The Practice of holding political meetings at mid-night has now become very frequent in this county ... one of these meetings was held on Saturday night last at Hartshead-Moor ... the persons who compose these assemblies are influenced by bad designs; it is indeed thought that a secret correspondence exists betwixt them and the Government of France and that they are countenanced and supported by men of consequence in this county.- But though these conjectures may be void of all foundation, yet the privacy of the meetings, the hour at which they are held, the characters which compose them, and ... other suspicious circumstances must excite alarm ... If there are grievances to complain of (and that there are, we are not inclined to deny) why not oppose them with open constitutional boldness and not shrink into lurking holes like a lawless banditti ... These proceedings ... when a powerful enemy is menacing us with threats of invasion ... is absolute madness.¹⁹⁵

Baines's observations brought forth a scathing riposte from Benjamin Flower, the radical editor of the Cambridge Intelligencer,¹⁹⁶ that 'last national organ of intellectual Jacobinism.'¹⁹⁷ His paper endeavoured to instruct public opinion on Parliamentary business and whose acerbic editorials criticised party, authority and Government demanding

the removal of those ministers, whose folly and whose crimes have plunged their country into a frightful abyss.¹⁹⁸

His Intelligencer had a wide distribution, circulating as far away as Kent, the West Country, Scotland, Wales, Lancashire and Yorkshire. Ironically, its agent in Leeds was Edward Baines¹⁹⁹ and the edition of the Cambridge Intelligencer he distributed dated 8 August 1801 contained his own report of nocturnal meetings in the Leeds Mercury of 1 August and which Flower then followed with a bitter diatribe;

Had the above paragraph appeared in a ministerial print ... we should have passed it over unnoticed ... but the article appears in a paper professedly devoted to the cause of ... liberty ... The public ought to demand ... Who are the people referred to? What are their names? What are the precise objects of their meeting? What proof is there that they correspond with the Government of France? and WHO ARE THE MEN

¹⁹⁵ Leeds Mercury 01.08.01

¹⁹⁶ D Griffiths ed The Encyclopaedia of the British Press 1422-1992 (Basingstoke 1992) p 247

¹⁹⁷ E P Thompson 'Disenchantment or Default' in O'Brien and Vanech ed Power and Consciousness and quoted by M J Murphy Cambridge Newspapers and Opinions 1780-1850 (Cambridge 1977) p 42

¹⁹⁸ Cambridge Intelligencer 17.01.01. See also Griffiths Encyclopaedia of the British Press p 247

¹⁹⁹ Cambridge Intelligencer 03.01.01

OF CONSEQUENCE? ... If (the editor) does not give a satisfactory answer to these questions, he is justly charged with having widely circulated a gross and scandalous libel ... We have thought it our duty ... to take up this subject as our paper has a considerable circulation in the North of England.²⁰⁰

Baines claimed his article had been 'mutilated' by Flower, was adamant of the accuracy of his report, and then launched a personal attack on the Cambridge editor.

Midnight meetings have been of late very frequent ... (that) there was such a meeting is a fact ... we can no more doubt it than we can the illiberality of the Editor of the Cambridge paper ... Mr Flower's conduct ... in quoting the paragraph ... has totally omitted the last clause; it is there said 'the present crisis presents an important lesson both to the people and the Government; the duties of the first we have endeavoured to sketch, the latter ought not to be less solicitous to restore the country to its former prosperity and to remove ... dissatisfaction.'²⁰¹

On 22 August Flower continued the dispute;

The Editor of the MERCURY has, reproached US BY NAME. Ignorant of the name of our opponent, we have indeed no wish to be able to return the compliment. We cannot, however, conclude without doing that justice to the person whose name appears as the printer, MR EDWARD BAINES, (and whose name appears as the proprietor) as to declare that from what we have heard of his principles and character, we conceive it impossible he should have been the author of libels on the public, in which slander and stupidity are equally conspicuous: ... He is unable to produce the least degree of evidence for the truth of his confident assertions ... he entirely believes his own rash insinuations.²⁰²

In September Flower was still hammering away at the Yorkshire paper claiming that notices in the Leeds Mercury regarding 'several and most dangerous meetings ... held in the night time for Treasonable and Rebellious purposes' had been planted by two constables²⁰³ but no further mention of Baines by name was made. The Times with a report date-lined 'Leeds August 24,' clearly showed that meetings had been held in the area:

²⁰⁰ Cambridge Intelligencer 08.08.01

²⁰¹ That same edition of the Mercury carried a notice calling for a meeting in Halifax 'for the Purpose of counteracting the Designs of the Nocturnal Meetings of disaffected Persons in the Parish and the adjacent Districts for TREASONABLE PURPOSES.' See Leeds Mercury 15.08.01. The same notice appeared in the Leeds Intelligencer 17.08.01.

²⁰² Cambridge Intelligencer 22.08.01

²⁰³ Cambridge Intelligencer 05.09.01. The Leeds Intelligencer 17.08.01 also carried the notice. The notices in both newspapers clearly stated they were published by 'J Birkby and J Emmet, Constables.'

We learn on Saturday se'ennight in the evening ... the Huddersfield Volunteers were under arms ... there being reason to apprehend another meeting of the disaffected ... reports of that effect having been circulated ... We are happy to find there was no occasion for the services of the Volunteers.²⁰⁴

The Leeds Intelligencer had quietly ignored the contretemps and then, in September, sardonically reported the farcical conclusion of the whole affair.

The nocturnal meetings on Hatchet Moor (sic) ... are likely to be discontinued; not because the *Patriots* have renounced their plans, or been terrified into allegiance; but because the *Treasurer*, actuated by the private principles of these worthies, had decamped with their patriotic contributions.²⁰⁵

The dispute, however, marked a watershed in British radical politics. The 'Painite Radicalism' of Flower and the 'cautious "constitutional" Whiggish Radicalism of Baines' diverged. Baines's beliefs would grow in significance as the nineteenth century advanced²⁰⁶ and come to reflect the feelings of vast numbers of his fellow countrymen.

Within six months his views were acknowledged and approved by many of his readers. In April a Bradford correspondent had recognised

your weekly publication appears to be governed by that spirit of moderation and founded on those broad principles of liberality which are equally distant from ... attachment or aversion, to particular tenets.

In October that year, a Leeds correspondent, 'D S', summed up the Leeds Mercury :

Mr Editor, - I am very happy to find from a constant perusal of your paper, that it is conducted upon the enlarged principles of the British Constitution and equally distant from the wild chimeras of REVOLUTIONIST, as the arbitrary Dogmas of the INTOLERANT FACTION.²⁰⁷

Others thought differently. The Vicar of Leeds, Peter Haddon, writing to William Spencer-Stanhope MP weeks after Baines had become editor, observed that the paper

now endeavours to Enlighten the Public Mind and which has been since its change of Hands pretty severe upon the Clergy and Church Establishment.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁴ The Times 27.08.01. Leeds Intelligencer corroborated this 24.08.01

²⁰⁵ Leeds Intelligencer 07.09.01. The reader is left wondering whether 'Hatchet Moor' was a genuine typographical error or a deliberate satirical comment.

²⁰⁶ Thompson EP Making of the English Working Class p 520

²⁰⁷ Leeds Mercury 18.04.01, 31.10.01

²⁰⁸ R G Wilson Gentlemen Merchants: the Merchant Community of Leeds 1700-1830 (Manchester 1971) p 172 and quoting Stanhope-Spencer MSS 2169: Rev P Haddon to W Spencer-Stanhope

That October, however, the Yorkshire public had more on its mind than the political ideology of the Leeds Mercury. Addington, in his first speech to the Commons as Prime Minister, had pledged himself to make every effort to secure peace. He believed Britain needed an end to the conflict more than her enemy so that her economy could be rebuilt and her partners in Europe be given time to regain their strength. Now the new ministry saw what it believed was the opportunity.²⁰⁹ Bonaparte had offered a cessation of hostilities on condition that preliminary negotiations were completed by Friday 2 October. On the Thursday evening that week Lord Hawkesbury, the future Lord Liverpool,²¹⁰ signed the Preliminary Peace Treaty.²¹¹ The nation rejoiced. In London the carriages of French diplomats were towed from St James's Square to Downing Street. In Falmouth cows, calves and asses were bedecked with ribbons²¹² and on the eastern slopes of the Pennines, the people of the West Riding, like the rest of the nation, celebrated. The Mercury joyously observed;

in this neighbourhood, where the depression of trade and high prices of the necessaries of life had sunk numbers of the middle and lower classes of the people into beggary and wretchedness the news of Peace was, of course, received with unbound rapture and the general joy.

In Leeds a brilliant illumination was held.²¹³ Sheep 'finely decorated with ribbons' were taken from the town to the surrounding villages and roasted whole; the mutton washed down with 'copious libations of brown stout.'²¹⁴ With peace established Baines hoped he would be able to turn his full attention to modernising his Leeds Mercury, spread his political philosophy through town and village and begin his campaign to bring about the changes in society he and his associates so earnestly desired.

MP 19.04.01

²⁰⁹ P Ziegler 'Henry Addington, Viscount Sidmouth': The Prime Ministers ed H van Thal vol 1 (London 1974) p 242

²¹⁰ Robert Banks Jenkinson had been Lord Hawkesbury since 1796. He became Baron Hawkesbury in 1803. See J A Hamilton 'Jenkinson, Robert Banks' : DNB ed S Lee vol XXIX (London 1892) pp 311-312

²¹¹ Bryant Years of Endurance pp 344-345

²¹² Ziegler The Prime Ministers vol 1 p 242

²¹³ Leeds Mercury 10.10.01

²¹⁴ Leeds Mercury 17.10.01

CHAPTER TWO

THE THINKER OF MERCURY COURT

For forty-seven years Baines would wage that campaign. It was a relentless crusade employing a number of strategies and carried out in a variety of locations. He conducted it by addressing hostile meetings, as he did when he faced 10 000 Radical Reformers on Hunslet Moor one June Monday in 1819.¹ He promulgated it on the national stage when he addressed the House of Commons, and in the parochial atmosphere of the Parish Church vestry when he led the Whig-Liberal offensive to establish a power base in the town.² But his exhortations and evangelizing zeal reached their apotheosis not on the hustings nor in the debating chamber but through the printed word. Baines found the ideal medium for his political polemics and reforming zeal by utilising the columns of his newspaper, the Leeds Mercury, and the pages of his numerous books. These reached an audience far in excess of any that would listen to his speeches, wherever they were delivered.

To read his words is to understand the man. If words are the windows on a man's soul, then Baines's spiritual and philosophical psyche is laid bare for all to see through the millions of words he consigned to print in almost half a century of literary observation and comment. It was not by accident that when he concluded his four volume History of the Reign of George III, he did so not with a valediction to the man who had reigned longer than any English king but with an observation on that most powerful agent for social and political change - the press.

Whoever looks at the influence of the Newspapers ... at this day ... cannot but perceive that the press is now endowed with a power such has never before existed in any country ... It has poured forth the productions of the cloister and the cabinet into cottages and workshops ... Tending to the establishment of political, moral and scientific truth, it is the most noble instrument for meliorating the condition and raising the dignity of mankind.³

Baines was well aware that the press, through newspapers, books and pamphlets, was a moulder of public opinion; and that public opinion itself could influence governments in shaping the way a nation should move forward. In his words: 'All laws ... are influenced in their execution by public opinion.'⁴ This was not an original idea. It simply reflected the characteristic thinking of early-nineteenth century liberalism. Nine

¹ Leeds Mercury 26.06.19. See also Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines pp 105-106

² Leeds Mercury 27.02.41, 01.01.20

³ Baines Reign of George III vol IV pp 162-163

⁴ Ibid p 152.

years before Baines made that observation, the great Swiss-French political philosopher Benjamin Constant, returning to Napoleonic France in 1814, had expressed a similar view in his pamphlet on press freedom. There he claimed that newspapers ‘influence ideas all the time and ever more forcibly.’⁵

Baines was equally aware that the formal presentation of fact or opinion was not sufficient to make a polemic acceptable to the public at large. In extolling the virtues of the works of Hume, Robertson and Gibbon he reveals his own feelings regarding what he considers to be a captivating style.

(Their works were) narratives not in the dry and unattractive phraseology of the old chroniclers, but in all those classical graces which charm so much in Greek and Roman historians.⁶

He anticipated by over a century Peter Gay’s observation that the historian was under pressure to become a stylist while remaining a scientist; he must give pleasure without compromising truth.⁷

It was important to Baines that his presentation of truth was ‘pleasurable’ for his literary efforts were, in the end, commercial enterprises. To be a financial success they had to be accepted by the public. But that was only part of his problem. Either consciously or subconsciously, Baines also recognised another axiom; ‘Style is the art of the historian’s science.’⁸ He was a diligent historian and a fluent writer. He could not help but express himself as he did, and was living proof of Comte de Buffon’s epigram that the ‘style is the man.’⁹ Thus it was not sufficient for Baines to acknowledge that the people of Wakefield were simply ‘frank and urbane.’ To him they

unite the honest frankness of the manufacturing character, with the urbanity and polish of those places where the clack of the shuttle never breaks upon the ear of the stately citizen.¹⁰

At the expense of objectivity, at times, he painted his characters richly and dramatically. John Castle, involved in the November plot of 1816 was an associate of

⁵ B Constant Press Freedom for Pamphlets and Newspapers translated by D O’Keeffe ed (London 1997) p 7

⁶ Constant Press Freedom p 161

⁷ P Gay Style in History (London 1975) p 4. See also G M Trevelyan English Social History (London 1973) p x; ‘Truth is the criterion of historical study; but its compelling motive is poetic.’

⁸ Gay Style in History p 217

⁹ Ibid p 3

¹⁰ Baines Directory of Yorkshire vol I p 425

that 'desperate man' Arthur Thistlewood, 'an abandoned miscreant, blackened with every species of infamy ... a bully in a brothel.'¹¹ Even Baines's editorials were not immune from poetic outbursts. When a woman was attacked in South Parade, Leeds he likened the perpetrator to 'an animal bearing the form of man' and concluded melodramatically, 'O Shame, where is thy blush!'¹² But it would be wrong to assume that Baines thereby distorted either his journalism or his historiography. In the Preface to his History of the Wars of the French Revolution he is quite clear as to his objective;

to narrate ... in a connected and lucid order; and to furnish a memorial ... useful to the future historian ... Truth has been the pole star by which the author has shaped his course.¹³

It was an effective approach proved by the public's response. His Leeds Mercury circulation rose from 700-800 copies a week in 1801 to between 9 000-10 000 in the 1840s with an estimated readership of 150 000.¹⁴ His two volume History of the Wars of the French Revolution sold 25 000 copies in its first year of publication:

a larger number of copies, by perhaps ten thousand, have been circulated, than was ever sold at a first edition of any work in the English Language.¹⁵

It was also time consuming. The extent of the researches he undertook in producing his four volume history of George III and his four volume history of Lancashire, clearly demonstrates a considerable commitment. He spent ten years compiling his history of the palatinate and though he drew on the researches of William Robert Whatton for the biographical information, the vast bulk of the work was his own.¹⁶ How did a man who was a busy member of Parliament and editor of a thriving and influential newspaper, find the time to produce such voluminous works? Certainly, by the time he had embarked on his extended history of Lancashire, his son Edward was experienced enough to conduct the day-to-day affairs of the paper.¹⁷ But Baines's

¹¹ Baines Reign of George III vol IV p 31.

¹² Leeds Mercury 08.01.03

¹³ Baines History of the Wars of the French Revolution vol I (London 1817) pp 1-2

¹⁴ Read Press and People pp 78, 202

¹⁵ Baines Leeds Directory (1817) p 42

¹⁶ Baines History of the County Palatine and Duchy of Lancaster vol I (London 1836) pp v-ix. Baines (Jun) in the biography of his father claims the writing engaged him six years. See Life of Edward Baines p vi

¹⁷ His son Frederick did not become a partner until 1837. See Leeds Mercury 01.07.37. For a more examination of Edward's role see Chapter Six below.

Parliamentary duties meant that he had to commit every holiday, intervals between sessions 'and indeed every hour that could properly be appropriated to the work' of compiling his history. He was a hardworking man whose days were long and wholly filled. At Westminster he was used to rising between six and seven in the morning and not retiring until after midnight, sometimes as late as three the following morning.¹⁸ In a letter to his son of 15 March 1834 he explained that his time was 'fully occupied day and night with my attendance in Parliament and with correspondence.' He did, however, 'abstain entirely from business of a Sunday.'¹⁹ As a young printer he was prepared to be up and about from three or four.²⁰ This dedicated approach he employed systematically over the years. It was part of the work ethic of the Dissenting bourgeoisie whose views he espoused, and to which social group he belonged.

On 1 January 1820 he heralded the commencement of the new year with a reaffirmation of his role in the Leeds Mercury: 'a sincere attachment to the interests and liberties of our country.'²¹ He was ever conscious of his readers and on occasion left himself open to accusations of either excessive gratitude or even sycophancy. It was his ambition to 'render our publication worthy of the patronage with which it has been honoured'.²² But such gratitude would never be allowed to interfere with his editorial policy of freedom and independence which 'has hitherto marked and will continue to mark (the Mercury's) public conduct.'²³ That was essential, for if truth was impaired, the result would be to 'demoralize and to debase' society.²⁴

Admire as we may his tireless efforts, his diligence in researching and evaluating evidence; and the *tour de force* he achieved in consigning to paper well in excess of a million and half words in the four volumes on George III alone, Baines stands or falls by his ideas. Those ideas were born of an independent mind for he had 'made it a point of honour never to ask a favour of any public man.'²⁵ He saw his duty,

¹⁸ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines pp 194-195

¹⁹ Baines Papers; no 51.9 E Baines to E Baines (Jun) 15.03.34

²⁰ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 34

²¹ Leeds Mercury 01.01.20

²² Leeds Mercury 02.01.19

²³ Leeds Mercury 25.07.07

²⁴ Leeds Mercury 07.04.21

²⁵ Leeds Mercury 24.07.19

as a responsible journalist, to defend those opinions and beliefs publicly and to avoid the extremism of the ‘*Ultras* on both sides.’²⁶ Baines was thus in part both newshound and historian; but his overriding role was that of politician, indefatigably pursuing a political agenda.

It was an agenda that was steeped in the tradition of enlightened liberalism. We find the sentiments he expressed reverberating through the New World, enshrined by the Founding Fathers in the Declaration of Independence and in the appeal Jefferson made ‘to the sentiment of individualism.’²⁷ In the Old World they found a dedicated exponent in Benjamin Constant who

never wavered in his advocacy of the disestablishment of privilege, jury trials, popular sovereignty ... absolute freedom of speech and the press, unconditional religious toleration, and the laicization of politics and education.²⁸

Thus Baines found himself playing the role not of a simple provincial editor engaged in parish pump politics but rather as part of the mainstream of early nineteenth century western liberalism. With a style honed to appeal to his readership either in book or newspaper, he conducted his campaigns and promulgated his political and economic philosophy to an eager public.

The basis of that credo is to be found not in politics or economics but in a fundamental religious faith. From this Baines drew his inspiration and shaped his beliefs.²⁹ Once again he mirrors Constant whose political and religious liberalism ‘cannot be separated’ and whose ‘political thought is deeply rooted in religion.’³⁰ Baines’s beliefs emanated not from the ‘gaudy shows that human folly has ever been eager to substitute for rational devotion’ but from the ‘divine simplicity of pure religion’³¹ which to Baines meant the Christian faith; ‘the only basis on which the happiness of Kingdoms and States can be secured.’³² For Baines both ‘God who, ...

²⁶ Leeds Mercury 03.07.19, 26.06.19

²⁷ H Brogan The Penguin History of the United States of America (Harmondsworth 1990) p 181. J Bryce The American Commonwealth (New York 1902) p 448.

²⁸ S Holmes Benjamin Constant and the Making of Modern Liberalism (New York 1984) p 4

²⁹ For a detailed examination of Baines’s religious thinking see Chapter Six below and Thornton Social and Political Thought of Edward Baines pp 62-107

³⁰ G H Dodge Benjamin Constant’s Philosophy of Liberalism (North Carolina 1980) pp 122, 148

³¹ Baines Wars of the French Revolution vol I p 117

³² Leeds Mercury 17.02.16. See also Chapter Six below.

provides succour for the helpless, and forlorn,³³ worked in harmony with the 'divine philanthropy of the Gospel'³⁴ which formed the 'principles of integrity and habits of sobriety and industry'³⁵ so essential to society. 'Christianity alone is true.'³⁶ The classic Whig reaction to Christianity was 'of the broadest kind' recognising Roman Catholics, Presbyterians, Unitarians and Anglicans 'so long as they adhered to Christ's fundamental law of charity.'³⁷ Baines modified that view to the Christianity of the Reformation, 'one of the greatest events in the history of mankind.'³⁸ After all, it was Protestantism that offered society 'superior purity and efficacy.'³⁹

Even so, it was necessary to cultivate a 'spirit of Christian liberality'⁴⁰ towards Roman Catholics and that 'degraded race,' the Jews. He rejoiced that it was thanks to Bonaparte that Jews, for the first time, were to be treated with 'fairness and impartiality;' able to enjoy the same civil privileges as the members of other religious communities.⁴¹ Those same civil privileges were denied to Jews in England and though Baines held philo-semitic sympathies, he believed that the current political climate in the country during 1801 did not warrant the extension of 'the full benefits of the British constitution' to them.⁴² But it was a regret to him that Christianity 'has had its full share in the persecution of this unhappy people.'⁴³ But heathenism was totally unacceptable.

Mahomet was an imposter ... the Gentoo and the Chinese are in error ...
deistical principles (are) deadly poison.⁴⁴

He lamented that Richard Carlile's shop in Fleet Street, the Temple of Reason, 'is

³³ Leeds Mercury 10.03.10

³⁴ Leeds Mercury 17.04.13

³⁵ Leeds Mercury 11.10.17

³⁶ Leeds Mercury 01.12.21

³⁷ G F A Best 'The Whigs and the Church Establishment in the Age of Grey and Holland':History vol XLV (1960) p 106

³⁸ Baines History of Lancashire vol I (Liverpool 1824) p 39

³⁹ Leeds Mercury 04.07.12

⁴⁰ Leeds Mercury 21.01.26

⁴¹ Baines History of the Wars of the French Revolution vol II (London 1817) p 9.

⁴² Leeds Mercury 05.09.01

⁴³ Leeds Mercury 10.10.18

⁴⁴ Leeds Mercury 01.12.21. Much as he disapproved of Deism, Baines had to acknowledge that a 'Deist may be as honest as a Christian.' See Leeds Mercury 13.11.19

absolutely crowded with customers', eagerly buying 'the negative side of the (Christian) argument.' Baines deplored this situation 'for the sake both of the laws and of religion.'⁴⁵ Another abomination to Baines were those who would endanger religious freedoms, a phenomena which occurred when

the powers of this world were its patrons, and legislators the expounders of its doctrines and Kings the defenders of its faith.⁴⁶

It had occurred all too readily during the Tudor times when 'both Protestants and Catholics were then so prone to invent to the prejudice of each other' what Baines called 'pious fictions.'⁴⁷

Baines, like the Dissenting sects he associated with, believed there existed between himself and his God 'an intimate relationship, whose establishment does not require the mediation of a priest.'⁴⁸ Religion was a private matter. To Baines 'Religion is a thing between God and a man's conscience.'⁴⁹ The corollary to this posited that it was right to tolerate another's views, as long as those views fell within the ambit of the Christian faith and enjoyed the 'vivifying rays of Christian light' that dispelled 'the mists of heathen darkness.'⁵⁰ It was a corollary that also had political undertones. Not only was religious toleration ethically justified, it provided the bedrock on which a stable and just society could be established. The removal of political disabilities imposed for religious beliefs was called for, 'by every principle of justice.'⁵¹ Toleration of 'religious sects was beneficial to truth, and conducive ... to the tranquillity of the state.'⁵²

A stable society generated truth, justice and its concomitant, liberty.⁵³ Thus the

⁴⁵ Leeds Mercury 02.02.22. C Cohen 'Introduction' to T Paine The Age of Reason (London 1937) p xxx

⁴⁶ Leeds Mercury 27.12.17

⁴⁷ Baines History of Lancashire vol II (1825) p 87

⁴⁸ É Halévy A History of the English People in 1815 vol 3 (Harmondsworth 1938) p 24

⁴⁹ Leeds Mercury 04.05.11

⁵⁰ Leeds Mercury 03.04.13

⁵¹ Leeds Mercury 01.05.19

⁵² E Baines History of the Reign of George III vol I (London 1820) p 122. See also Benjamin Constant De la Religion vol I p 86 who argued that in all the 'epochs when the religious sentiment triumphed, it can be seen that everywhere liberty was its companion' and quoted in Dodge Constant's Philosophy p 127.

⁵³ For Baines's views on truth, justice and liberty see Thornton Social and Political Thought of Edward Baines pp 62-107

pursuit of truth was fundamental to Baines. In 1813, he categorically stated that 'Truth alone was *our* object.'⁵⁴ To reach truth required objectivity on the part of the observer. In writing his history of the French Revolutionary Wars, Baines assured his readers that he had not allowed his mind to be biased by 'national antipathies' or 'party asperity.'⁵⁵ He held definite views on most subjects but it was essential that his personal preferences should never be allowed to inhibit the search for truth. Both sides of an issue should be heard he argued, for by 'hearing both sides ... truth is elicited.' He went out of his way to 'condemn those ... who subject their readers to hear but one party.'⁵⁶

Two issues he campaigned passionately against were the war with France and the spy system of Lord Sidmouth.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, he was anxious 'That justice might be done to the subject' and proceeded to publish 'the speeches at full length on both sides of the question' over Government spies.⁵⁸ His presentation of both sides of the war issue was more dramatic, splitting his editorial column vertically in order to give the opposing views.⁵⁹ Baines recognised that only by evaluating all the facts and opinions on an issue could truth be discovered and error averted; which, in effect, meant listening to contrary arguments and publishing conflicting views.' The proper way to check error is by disseminating truth' he argued, but added it was also important to allow 'the dissemination of opinions contrary to our own.'⁶⁰

His summary of the evidence against Queen Caroline was 'an impartial view of the whole case ... excluding all comment and argument.' In the immediate aftermath of Peterloo where 'it was manifest a great wrong had been committed' and the magistrates 'were highly culpable if not criminal' Baines was vitriolic in his condemnation of the magistrates' action.⁶¹ Five years on he was more circumspect in the account he gives in his History of Lancashire. It was so objective he felt it

⁵⁴ He made the observation in terminating a squabble in the correspondence columns of the Mercury over the execution of George Mellor, the Luddite, at York. See Leeds Mercury 24.04.13.

⁵⁵ Baines Wars of the French Revolution vol I p 2

⁵⁶ Leeds Mercury 22.08.18

⁵⁷ White claims 'At no time was there a "spy system".' See Waterloo to Peterloo, p 116

⁵⁸ Leeds Mercury 21.02.18

⁵⁹ Leeds Mercury 02.04.03

⁶⁰ Leeds Mercury 01.12.21

⁶¹ Leeds Mercury 04.11.20, 02.10.19. Baines Reign of George III vol IV p 137

justifiable to claim his report was

divested of all party colouring, and in the fidelity of which, it is presumed, all parties will concur.⁶²

There were occasions, however, when he failed to demonstrate the objectivity on which he prided himself. One such was with regard to the murder of Spencer Perceval. At about 5.30pm of Monday 11 May 1812 one of 'the most horrible events in the pages of English history' took place when John Bellingham shot dead the Prime Minister, Spencer Perceval. It was, Baines claimed a manifestation 'that the public mind is in a most distempered state.'⁶³ In fact, Bellingham's vendetta against the Government had little to do with the economic and political crises of the day.⁶⁴

On Friday 15 May Bellingham was tried; on Monday 18 May he was executed. Saturday 23 May saw Baines carry a three column report in the Mercury of the events and summed it all up with the laconic comment; 'It is useless now to dwell on this subject.'⁶⁵ It was only later in his Wars of the French Revolution that he reflected on the indecent haste that characterised the proceedings against the assassin.

It is desirable ... that no unnecessary time should be lost between the commission of the crime and the infliction of the punishment ... but it is equally desirable that ... justice should be answered ... These observations are suggested by the precipitancy of the proceedings instituted against Bellingham.⁶⁶

It is surprising that Baines, who so prided himself and his newspaper in upholding the principles of justice whenever they were threatened, should have made no comment on such a judicial lapse at the time and to have allowed himself to be carried along by the feelings of the majority of the country, raising no objection to the sentence.⁶⁷

It was not the only time he allowed his political sentiments to influence his objectivity. When he viewed the reign of George III, he saw it from a decidedly Whig perspective. The Whigs, according to Baines

⁶² Baines History of Lancashire vol II (1825) p 127. He felt so assured of his objectivity he retained this assessment verbatim for his 1836 history of the county. See History of Lancashire vol II (1836) pp 325-329

⁶³ Leeds Mercury 16.05.12

⁶⁴ J Marlow 'Spencer Perceval' : The Prime Ministers ed Van Thal H vol I (London 1974) p 281

⁶⁵ Leeds Mercury 23.05.12

⁶⁶ Baines Wars of the French Revolution vol II p 205

⁶⁷ Marlow The Prime Ministers p 281

guard the rights and liberties of the nation with the strictest vigilance; and ... assert that the influence of the crown is excessive and ought to be diminished. The King is the first object of Tory reverence, the people of the Whigs's attachment.⁶⁸

His introduction to volume one of his Reign of George III clearly demonstrates his Whiggish views regarding the constitution. He repeated the Whig thesis that the constitution was born of the Anglo-Saxons, 'strengthened by *Magna Carta*' and ultimately reached its maturity under the 'Glorious Revolution of 1688.' This reflected the thinking of Rapin de Thoyras and his 'classic expression of the pre-Macaulay "Whig" interpretation of English history.'⁶⁹ In Baines's own words;

It was during the Saxon era that the principles of free government first developed themselves in Britain ... that the constitutional control of the subjects over the ministers of the crown was advanced.⁷⁰

That was followed by 'the guarantee of English liberty, designated by the name of *Magna Carta*' and ended with the 'revolution, justly called glorious of 1688.'⁷¹

The government of England had been since the Revolution of 1688, the envy and admiration of the world ... The subjects shared the councils of the King ... an enlightened and patriotic nobility (formed) a counterpoise to the democracy.⁷²

Whig history was then, in the words of J W Burrow:

a success story; the story of the triumph of constitutional liberty and representative institutions.⁷³

That story according to Baines, suffered an hiatus during the reign of George III and the premiership of North. The Crown had been capable of 'upholding a noxious minister', whose Government 'was characterised by injudicious plans.'⁷⁴ The King, with his

narrow intellect ... destitute of imagination ... temper intractable ... jealous of his own prerogative ... regarded the Tory party alone as his friends⁷⁵

⁶⁸ Baines Reign of George III vol I p 11

⁶⁹ H Trevor-Roper 'Introduction' to Lord Macaulay The History of England ed (London 1986) pp 9-10

⁷⁰ Baines History of Lancashire vol II (1825) p58

⁷¹ Baines History of Lancashire vol I (1824) p 150. History of Lancashire vol II (1825) p 13

⁷² Baines Reign of George III vol I pp 5-6

⁷³ J W Burrow A Liberal Descent (Cambridge 1981) p 3

⁷⁴ Baines Reign of George III vol I p 400, p 346

⁷⁵ Baines Reign of George III vol IV p 154

and had generated, what Steven Watson described as ‘a different climate’ during his reign. Watson identified the affairs of Wilkes, America, and Ireland as political issues that were ‘different in intensity from those of the previous forty years.’ New strains, he claimed, were placed on the old system of government resulting in a change in working, whilst the Crown’s selection of its servants created more public criticism.⁷⁶ A hundred and forty years previously Baines had identified those issues similarly. The actions taken against Wilkes were ‘illegal and harsh measures’, even if he were of a ‘flagitious character;’ the Americans ‘were wise and brave enough to resist the invasion of their rights;’ and Ireland had suffered ‘through many centuries of singular mismanagement on the part of England.’ The workings of the Government at this time, according to Baines, ‘characterised by injudicious plans .. by rashness without vigour, obstinacy without magnanimity’⁷⁷ produced ‘one of the weakest and most blundering administrations of modern times.’⁷⁸

Such incompetence inevitably led to a demand for Parliamentary Reform and Baines regularly raised that issue in the columns of his Leeds Mercury. But it was not a new political topic. It had been debated well before George III ascended the throne. In 1742 Pitt argued that MPs should be made ‘responsible to their constituents.’⁷⁹ When the ‘Great Commoner’ was dismissed office in April 1757, London and some eighteen other cities honoured him for his stance against ‘an unrepresentative Parliament.’⁸⁰ Baines’s portrayal of an idyllic constitution operating in an ideal land simply ignored that there was, even at the opening of George III’s reign, a need to establish a House of Commons that deprived ‘the Aristocracy and the Crown of undue influence in the election and ... render its members truly the representatives of the people.’ The words he used in November 1816 could equally be aptly applied to pre-1760 England.⁸¹

It is also possible to accuse Baines of inconsistency at times; though that was a fault he readily acknowledged. Indeed, he steadfastly refused to support a party ‘in

⁷⁶ Watson George III p 2

⁷⁷ Baines Reign of George III vol I pp 52-53, 206, 94 346

⁷⁸ Ibid p 300

⁷⁹ J Black Pitt the Elder (Cambridge 1992) p 47

⁸⁰ B Williams The Whig Supremacy 1714-1760 (Oxford 1962) p 376

⁸¹ Leeds Mercury 08.11.16

all circumstances ... Our sense of public duty will not permit us.’⁸² One example was when he changed his mind on the efficacy of flogging. When vandals were active in Leeds in the summer of 1805 he believed ‘a little correction in the flogging way might be very useful.’⁸³ By 1822 only ‘half informed and carelessly reasoning persons’ supported the use of ‘indiscriminate and cruel flogging’ on ‘schoolboys, mischievous and obdurate’ and ‘children of longer growth.’⁸⁴ In the same way, the ‘celebrated’ Thomas Paine’s Common Sense, supporting the Americans in their struggle for independence and a cause of which Baines approved of was

most able, striking and influential ... happy in illustration, ingenious in argument ... unscrupulous in statement, (Paine’s) work was admirably calculated to produce popular effect.⁸⁵

Three hundred pages later in his Reign of George III, Baines considers Paine’s attempts to introduce republicanism into ‘the mother country,’ and finds the radical writer’s work has now become ‘obnoxious ... a panegyric on the French constitution ... held in the utmost contempt and detestation.’⁸⁶

When William Hone sold 100 000 copies of a political parody on the Anglican litany, Baines claimed it was ‘an offence against decorum’ rather than blasphemy but nevertheless, ‘strongly condemn this mode of conducting political discussion.’⁸⁷ However, when Pitt resigned the seals of office in 1801, Baines was content to employ a similar mode of conducting such discussions when he observed that as the ex-Prime Minister was reduced to being a ‘spectator’ ‘he should be careful of what glasses he next employs;’ a direct reference to Pitt’s ‘compensatory drinking.’⁸⁸ Education was another area where some shift in position can be detected. Baines was always a passionate believer in education. In December 1801 he accepted that

had half the expenditure of any one year during the late war been appropriated for establishing and endowing public schools ... we should

⁸² Leeds Mercury 05.11.08

⁸³ Leeds Mercury 22.06.05

⁸⁴ Leeds Mercury 08.06.22

⁸⁵ Baines Reign of George III vol I p 212

⁸⁶ *Ibid* p 503

⁸⁷ Leeds Mercury 27.12.17. See also Woodward The Age of Reform p 29

⁸⁸ Leeds Mercury 21.03.01. Pitt died ‘a victim of overwork and compensatory drinking.’ See L. Colley Britons: Forging a Nation (London 1992) p 151.

have done a vast deal more for religion and social order.⁸⁹

That same editorial extolled his envy of Scotland where education was a success 'though Government did not much interfere, the magistracy 'pays this subject peculiar attention.' Yet Baines Junior insists that when he led the campaign for voluntarism in education his father supported the movement 'at every step of the controversies' opposing taking schools 'into Government pay.'⁹⁰

In 1808 the Spanish patriots rose against Napoleon. Baines identified himself with the mood of the country, when 'for a moment the whole nation was united.'⁹¹ For Baines 'the most prompt and efficacious assistance should be afforded them.' By September the following year he was complaining to his readers;

We do not believe the great mass of the people of Spain want our assistance; they have no cordiality towards us; we are too heretical for them.⁹²

When Wellington withdrew his forces to the lines of Torres Vedras, Baines scoffed at 'the Marlborough of the present day,' yet in 1812 he was celebrating both the victor and the victory of Salamanca heralding 'the gallant Wellington.'⁹³ With regard to women we find a similar discrepancy. In 1811, he observed that 'the culture of the female mind ... is too often expended on far less valuable pursuits than (science).' Yet by 1820, he was indignant that 'ladies (we know not why) ... in general (are) thought not quite such competent judges' on political matters. During the 1809 Registership election for the West Riding he considered why women with the correct qualifications were not allowed to vote on the issue. He believed that every candidate, given the opportunity, would have had 'gallantry enough to extend the elective franchise to the Ladies.' To him women were like comets:

Comets are incomprehensible, beautiful and eccentric: so are women ... comets confound the most learned ... so do women ... the nature of each being inscrutable.⁹⁴

⁸⁹ Leeds Mercury 12.12.01

⁹⁰ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 331

⁹¹ A Bryant Years of Victory 1802-1812 (London 1944) p 228

⁹² Leeds Mercury 05.11.08, 09.09.09

⁹³ Leeds Mercury 27.10.10, 22.08.12

⁹⁴ Leeds Mercury 02.02.11, 18.03.20, 05.10.11, 16.09.09. Baines's indignation in 1820 arose from an Intelligencer criticism of the political influence of a Mrs Lawrence. However, he gave no further consideration to extending the franchise to women.

II

At other times he was simply incorrect. In his Leeds Directory for 1817 he cited the foundation of the Cistercian abbey of Kirkstall near Leeds as 1153 and its dissolution as 1540.⁹⁵ It should have read 1152 and 1539. He claimed that Sir Edward More of Bank Hall was created a baronet in 1663 and John O'Gaunt died in 1361. Brooke Herford corrected both dates to 1675 and 1399.⁹⁶ His most ironic mistake regarding dates occurs in his Directory of Yorkshire of 1822, though it was one for which he could hardly be held responsible. In it he gives 1720 as the date for the establishment of the Leeds Mercury. It was not until October 1826 he acquired back copies of the paper proving its establishment in 1718.⁹⁷ Herford claimed to have identified several errors in Baines's History of Lancashire. He criticised certain of his observations in particular on Warrington and claims that his report of the siege of the town by Royalist 'Manchestrians' in 1643 is a fusion of two separate investments.⁹⁸ Herford also claimed that Baines confused the Domesday entries for Neutona with another place of the same name,⁹⁹ and states Baines's entry for Stainton and Adgarley that 'the principal mineral production of this parish is iron' is completely inaccurate. 'There never was iron ore at either of these places.'¹⁰⁰

But where Baines realised a mistake had been made, he was prepared to acknowledge it and, in the interests of truth, to correct it. On Christmas Eve 1803 he carried a report of a fire at Horsfall's mill caused by chemicals. The following week he announced the report was 'erroneous'; though he implied the fault was, in part, not his because the item had been 'copied from a neighbouring paper.'¹⁰¹ However, he did publish an extensive correction to rectify a mistake in his Wars of the French Revolution. This was one for which Baines admitted that he was culpable. In his 1817

⁹⁵ Baines Leeds Directory (1817) p 45

⁹⁶ Baines History of Lancashire vol IV (1836) pp 50, 745. See also History of Lancashire vol II (1870) pp 290, 689

⁹⁷ Baines Directory of Yorkshire vol I p 31. Leeds Mercury 28.10.26

⁹⁸ Baines History of Lancashire vol III (1836) p 550, p 652 and pp 664-665. Compare with Baines History of Lancashire vol II (1870) pp 219, 227

⁹⁹ Baines History of Lancashire vol IV (1836) p 623. Compare with Baines History of Lancashire vol II (1870) p 627

¹⁰⁰ Baines History of Lancashire vol IV (1836) p 555. Compare with Baines History of Lancashire vol II (1870) p 646

¹⁰¹ Leeds Mercury 24.12.03, 31.12.03

publication, he explained the operation of the Sinking Fund.¹⁰² In 1820, his first volume of the Reign of George III carried an extensive footnote on the same theme explaining in detail Dr Price's plan.¹⁰³ It was a subject 'greatly misunderstood, not only by the public at large but by successive parliaments.' Baines admitted that he had included Price's 'full exposition' because when he had published the previous history, he had 'fallen into the then general error' and his information had on reflection not been correct. But probably, his most embarrassing error involved Sir Robert Peel. On 29 August 1842, Peel wrote to Baines complaining that an entry in his History of Lancashire was incorrect. It concerned Sir Robert Peel the Elder. Baines explained in reply that 'the biographical department of that work' was compiled by 'Mr R Whatton, as indicated on the title page' though Baines did not lay the blame for the error on Whatton's shoulders. He explained that it resulted from an inaccurate transcription from Mr Corry's History of Lancashire. Corry had written to the elder Peel for details about his family. In transcribing the information to the Lancashire history, credit for the authorship had wrongly been attributed to Robert Peel Junior. Peel's objection was that the entry implied sentiments that 'are at variance with my feelings.' Baines offered to send corrections to all public libraries that had copies, cancel the offending leaf in the hands of the publishers and send amendments to members of both Houses of Parliament who owned the book. Peel, however, 'had no wish to cause so much trouble and expense.'¹⁰⁴ Why Peel waited until 1842 to raise the point when the offending work had appeared six years previously is unclear.

Baines amended material where it was shown to be wrong, for to him:

(o)ur determination is as far as it lies in our power to publish the truth - the whole truth and nothing but the truth.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² When a Parliamentary committee announced in 1786 that an annual surplus of £1 million was anticipated, Pitt established his Sinking Fund. He appointed commissioners as administrators and they invested the surplus in Government stock, using the interest accrued to buy more stock. Thus by using compound interest the intention was to pay off loans. The idea was universally accepted and initially helped restore public faith in the Government's financial integrity. The advent of war with France in 1793 and the subsequent economic conditions the conflict generated, led to the Sinking Fund losing its credibility. See J W Derry William Pitt (London 1962) p 48 and Watson George III pp 290-291.

¹⁰³ Baines Reign of George III vol I p 442

¹⁰⁴ BL, Correspondence of Sir Robert Peel Add MSS 40515 Folio 243/244/245. Letters from E Baines to Sir R Peel 20.09.42, 23.09.42 and from Sir R Peel to E Baines 22.09.42. See also Baines History of Lancashire vol II (1836) p 670

¹⁰⁵ Leeds Mercury 02.09.09

That necessitated researching the facts and presenting both fact and opinion in a balanced and objective way. The policy of the Mercury was also to allow its readers to use the newspaper as a platform to present their views if those views were reasonable and objective. Over the registership election for the West Riding in 1804 he stressed his columns were ‘open to all parties’ if the comments made were ‘temperate.’ It was his cherished belief that

truth suffers not by discussion, and ... any communication ... written with candour and ability ... shall find regular insertion.

In only the third edition he edited he assured his public that ‘any liberal reply shall find a place in our paper.’¹⁰⁶ Much as he was opposed to the Leeds Races, even to the extent of signing the objection to them, he would ‘not on that account shut the door against discussion’ and went on to publish the promoter’s letter.¹⁰⁷ When George Waddington complained that

(m)achinery is throwing the ingenious and industrious artizans (sic) of England out of employment by thousands;

Baines inserted the letter in its entirety ‘though we by no means agree with his assertion.’ On the sentiments letter writers expressed, he claimed he would refrain from passing an opinion. In reality, however, there were times when he did so; for example when ‘Pacificus’ failed to draw the correct distinction between the constitution and the administration and used language ‘more severe’ than was justified; and when ‘Hermes’ gave him a ‘salutary Rap-on the Knuckles.’ He was rapped again when a correspondent, calling himself ‘A Friend,’ wrote complaining of the state of the roads in Leeds and criticised Baines for not raising the issue when the Mercury editor used those very roads three or four times a day. One duty ‘of the Editor of a public paper consists in pointing out public abuses,’ ‘A Friend’ wrote and then sadly reflected, ‘Thou dischargest that part of thy business very indifferently.’¹⁰⁸ There were also certain conditions that Baines laid down for a letter to be included in the Mercury. From a practical point of view it had to be submitted by Thursday for publication on Saturday.¹⁰⁹ Editorially there were other stipulations he insisted upon. The name of the

¹⁰⁶ Leeds Mercury 31.03.04, 13.12.06, 21.03.01

¹⁰⁷ Leeds Mercury 14.02.24

¹⁰⁸ Leeds Mercury 12.08.26, 29.01.03, 02.03.05, 05.09.07, 13.04.05

¹⁰⁹ Leeds Mercury 28.01.09. He was also incensed about correspondents not paying postage. ‘“Truth” ought to have paid the postage on his letter.’ See Leeds Mercury 09.08.23.

letter writer had to be appended even though it was not used for publication.¹¹⁰ Its content must not be potentially dangerous to society as Baines considered that of 'Philopatus' to be. His article was 'alike inimical to sound policy and true humanity.'¹¹¹ Nor should its content be damaging to individuals. He flatly refused to publish one anonymous letter from Longston near Preston on marriage explaining that it would be 'not even inserted when accompanied by a bribe.'¹¹² And it should not be verbose:

If our young friend Cato was less copious and more argumentative, he would make a valuable newspaper correspondent.¹¹³

Editorial caution was exercised both with regard to either the letters he published or the reports he featured. No better example of that can be found than when a Mr Locke wrote to the Leeds Mercury in response to an attack on the Dissenters in the Leeds Intelligencer. Baines withheld it not 'from any disrespect to our Correspondent' but to avoid stimulating 'divisions and agitations from religious animosities.'¹¹⁴ On another occasion, his editorial zeal was too excessive when he edited a letter from 'Philosotes.' He felt obliged to apologise to the injured correspondent and guaranteed that in future the correspondent's articles would be 'intire.'^(sic)¹¹⁵

Libels and innuendos were excluded and caution was exercised regarding unproven accusations and spurious reports.¹¹⁶ When certain sections of the British press were euphoric about a reported victory over the French, Baines was more cautious:

We must wait for more circumstantial details before we can .. announce that fortune has deserted the standard of Napoleon.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁰ Leeds Mercury 20.02.08, 12.02.14. Authors of letters appear in the Leeds Mercury under various names:- some wrote under their own names eg John Kaye Leeds Mercury 07.02.18; some under an initial eg 'X' Leeds Mercury 13.02.19; some under a 'nom de plume' eg 'Common Sense' Leeds Mercury 24.09.14; some under their profession eg 'A Clergyman of C of E' Leeds Mercury 22.03.17; some carried no name eg Leeds Mercury 23.11.22. Baines, however, insisted on knowing the writer's name. See Leeds Mercury 20.02.08. For more details on the above see Thornton Social and Political Thought of Edward Baines p 103 footnote 63.

¹¹¹ Leeds Mercury 25.01.06

¹¹² Leeds Mercury 08.10.03

¹¹³ Leeds Mercury 08.06.16. Baines did offer to publish Cato's revised work if he received 'a short paper from his pen.'

¹¹⁴ Leeds Mercury 16.04.08

¹¹⁵ Leeds Mercury 21.01.09

¹¹⁶ Leeds Mercury 20.09.06, 19.10.05

¹¹⁷ Leeds Mercury 31.01.07

His caution proved well justified and he was subsequently able to claim, rather smugly, that 'in many instances Editors did probably little more than announce ... rumours current in the Metropolis.'¹¹⁸ He exercised a similar caution for the well-being of his readers. When a correspondent calling himself 'Apothecary' submitted a cure for typhus fever, Baines refused to publish it, advising his public it was better to take professional advice.¹¹⁹

The veracity of Baines's work was acknowledged across the years by various writers; Charlotte Brontë, researching the Luddite disturbances for her novel Shirley, borrowed copies of the Leeds Mercury for that period; one hundred and thirty-seven years later Robert Reid claimed that he relied on Baines's report of the York Special Commission of 1813 because it was 'as accurate as and often fuller than that of the official reports.'¹²⁰ If the truth hurt, nevertheless, Baines felt obliged to publish it;

Magna est veritas is our motto, and we shall not be deterred from speaking the truth ... however, difficult of digestion it may prove.¹²¹

Despite that commitment to truth, he never abandoned his sense of humanity and fairness. If he felt it justified, he even complimented his enemies. When the Tory landowner Lascelles pleaded with the Secretary of State for the life of Matthew Nicholson, the Harewood gamekeeper, Baines acknowledged that he could not 'allow a political difference to prevent the publication of the above fact.'¹²² On one occasion his sense of fairness faced a dilemma and as a result his objective reportage was impaired when he refused to publish the name of a defendant in a court case. It was a dilemma he claimed that faces a 'Country Publisher' who has

the painful option betwixt waving part of his public duty, and giving lasting offence to those he wishes not to make his enemies.¹²³

The report of 'The King versus ****' at Leeds Borough Sessions was of an assault of a 'very singular nature' in which a ten year-old boy was knocked down and had his ear cut by a man with a knife at the corner of Park Square and St Paul's Church. Baines

¹¹⁸ Leeds Mercury 07.02.07

¹¹⁹ Leeds Mercury 10.12.25

¹²⁰ E C Gaskell The Life of Charlotte Brontë ed (Oxford 1961) p 323. See also Reid R Land of Lost Content p 2

¹²¹ Leeds Mercury 05.05.10

¹²² Leeds Mercury 31.03.10

¹²³ Leeds Mercury 31.01.07

gave no reason why the brutal assailant - the man was found guilty - should not be named other than that of 'giving lasting offence.' Yet in the same court report he was content enough to identify William Dawson for stealing 'two turkeys' (sic).¹²⁴ To compound the puzzle, two weeks later Baines announced that his action was 'solely from motives of delicacy.' But in that same edition carried an advertisement for a publication on the same trial 'of Benjamin Clayton of Park Square, Leeds, cattle dealer.'¹²⁵ One possible explanation for this omission, which perhaps explains why he did not wish to make 'enemies,' was that in 1807 when the case was heard, Baines himself lived on the south side of Park Square and would thus be a neighbour of Clayton.¹²⁶ Perhaps he felt he could justify his action by applying to himself the aphorism he employed in defence of Benjamin Franklin over the Hutchinson letters; 'There are occasions when the ordinary rules of life must be departed from.'¹²⁷

Journalistic decorum also played its part in censoring certain facts. When Harriet Halliday, 'a rather pretty girl', was raped one Good Friday in a yard off Briggate, Baines included 'a report of considerable length on the last page' of the Mercury. It was an article written

to give in a way as little offensive to delicacy; (but) with as much fidelity as possible.¹²⁸

His commitment to truth meant a diligent approach to researching the facts. Journalists, he believed had a responsibility to ensure their readers were given the facts; academic historians had a responsibility to ensure that their scholarship was not influenced by personal prejudices. In Baines's own words;

It was undoubtedly in the interest of the printer to make their reports impartial, since their value depended solely on their truth.¹²⁹

As early as March 1806 he directed a reporter to the assizes at York 'to present to the

¹²⁴ Leeds Mercury 17.01.07

¹²⁵ Leeds Mercury 31.01.07

¹²⁶ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 59. He moved to Park Square in 1806. See Leeds Mercury 26.08.48

¹²⁷ Baines Reign of George III vol I pp 148-149. Baines was defending Franklin against the charges of Wedderburn over the publication of the Hutchinson letters. See also p 148 and Watson George III p 178.

¹²⁸ Leeds Mercury 10.08.11

¹²⁹ Baines Reign of George III vol I p 122

public a correct statement of every trial.¹³⁰ In June 1808, the civil disturbances in Lancashire saw Baines assuring his readers that ‘we have taken some pains to collect correct information’ and a week later stressed that the reports ‘furnished by Gentlemen resident in the respective places’ could be ‘relied on implicitly.’¹³¹ The Mercury account of Peterloo was also an eyewitness report by one, according to Baines, ‘on whose fidelity of representation we could implicitly rely on.’ The reporter concerned was his son, Edward Junior.¹³² When news of the Oliver Spy Conspiracy first broke, Baines went to Dewsbury to investigate the case himself, to gather at first hand the most accurate information available.¹³³

Strive as he might to achieve that objectivity in the Mercury, his newspaper was a political vehicle and as such, at times, fact and opinion becomes inextricably linked. However, in his academic work he is generally more circumspect. In the Leeds Mercury of 1802, we read that

Mr Pitt and his colleagues were justly censured for precipitating the country into every quarrel, whether important or trifling.¹³⁴

Twenty years later, as editor, Baines still maintained his assault on the ‘mad and ruinous measures of Mr PITT.’¹³⁵ Yet as a historian in his Wars of the French Revolution, he treated his *bête noire* far more judiciously. William Pitt was

a person of the most rare and splendid qualities ... an expert and enlightened financier ... sincerely attached to the honour and welfare of his country. But whether the appellation of illustrious statesman, has been justly applied to him, is a question on which men may reasonably differ.¹³⁶

That circumspection, objectivity and desire for accuracy is noticeable in all his books. In the Preface to his Directory of Yorkshire he expressed his objective was to

to guard as much as possible against errors, a large portion of the following sheets have been submitted to the revision of intelligent

¹³⁰ Leeds Mercury 08.03.06

¹³¹ Leeds Mercury 04.06.08, 11.06.08

¹³² Leeds Mercury 21.08.19, 28.08.19. For details of the Peterloo report see Chapter Four below.

¹³³ Baines Reign of George III vol IV p 81

¹³⁴ Leeds Mercury 16.10.02

¹³⁵ Leeds Mercury 05.01.22

¹³⁶ Baines Wars of the French Revolution vol I pp 509-510

gentlemen resident in the places where they describe.¹³⁷

Where he could, he drew on expert advice and contributions. When he compiled his 1817 Leeds directory, Baines employed W Parson of Manchester 'to render it as complete as possible.' Parson had previously compiled several publications and in Leeds he visited every house and building occupied in trade both in the town and the outlying townships and hamlets.¹³⁸ When he began his histories of Yorkshire and Lancashire Baines asked experts to verify his facts. Once again he employed Parson to supervise the directory department of both volumes of his Yorkshire histories and his 1824 and 1825 volumes on Lancashire. For his *magnum opus* on Lancashire in the 1830s he turned, among others, to Edwin Butterworth, a publisher who specialised in Lancastrian historical and biographical works.¹³⁹ It was not sufficient to record facts but to verify their authenticity as well. Butterworth undertook to visit

all the parishes and townships of the county, without a single exception
... to verify facts already obtained.¹⁴⁰

When he borrowed various books and scripts from a Liverpool upholsterer and antiquarian, W J Roberts, he wrote in January 1824 asking about one paper in particular, the Land Revenue of ye Crown in Lancashire. Baines's concern was whether it 'may be relied upon.' He asked for any details that may 'establish its authenticity,' and requested any other useful information Roberts had on the town.¹⁴¹ That same pursuit for accuracy led him on 7 June 1831 to contact Rev Doctor Joseph Hunter, Keeper of the Records in the Tower of London, on the advice of their mutual friend Thomas Haywood, to ask for any details he may have on the historical or topographical knowledge of Lancashire and whether he possessed 'curious information ... to connect ... Shakespeare with that county.'¹⁴² Similarly, when he wished to decipher the inscription on a Danish runic cross found in St Mary's churchyard of Lancaster Parish,

¹³⁷ Baines Directory of Yorkshire vol I p i

¹³⁸ Baines Leeds Directory (1817) Preface

¹³⁹ W E A Axon 'Butterworth, Edwin' DNB vol VIII pp 96-97

¹⁴⁰ Baines History of Lancashire vol I (1836) p xi

¹⁴¹ BL, Correspondence of W J Roberts MSS 22651 fols 29/30. Baines misplaced one Roberts's books, the Account of the Siege of Lathom for which he duly apologised. See MS 22651 fol 74. E Baines to W J Roberts 07.01.30

¹⁴² BL, Correspondence of Rev Jos Hunter MSS 24864 fols 70/71. E Baines to Rev J Hunter 07.06.31. Hunter devoted much of his middle age 'to the illustration of the text of Shakespeare's plays.' See T Cooper 'Hunter, Joseph' in NDB vol XXVIII pp 296-298

Baines presented a makeshift translation only after referring to Dr George Hickes's Anglo-Saxon and Maeso-Gothic Grammar and considering Dr Whitaker's hypotheses. He also asked Dr Hibbert-Ware to send a plaster cast to Professor Finn Magnusen, 'the best antiquary in Denmark,' for interpretation. Unfortunately, the translation arrived too late for publication.¹⁴³ The Preface to his history of Lancashire reveals the extent to which he consulted available authorities in specific areas and what primary sources he could and did draw on.¹⁴⁴ The Preface to the Wars of the French Revolution comments on the state papers, official dispatches and periodical publications he analysed.

Over one state document he took exception to David Hume; rather than, as might be expected, expressing the usual criticisms that early nineteenth century Whig historians levelled at the Scottish writer who in their eyes was 'like a hair in the mouth; inescapable and intolerable.'¹⁴⁵ Baines, despite his Whiggish views, was prepared to acknowledge that Hume was 'one of our best historians.' However, he did point out that Hume had apparently failed to consult the Rolls of Parliament I Edward VI (1461) No 8 in discussing the pedigree of the rival claimants in the Wars of the Roses.¹⁴⁶

Baines's use of authentic sources did not deter him from writing as a Whig historian. Nor did it occasionally prevent him including his personal observations on events. He makes a point, in the introduction to his Wars of the French Revolution, of reminding his readers that he had 'witnessed the events it has fallen his lot to record.'¹⁴⁷ And when discussing Preston's Catholic School he points out he was old enough 'to recollect a time when protestants and catholics were worrying each other.'¹⁴⁸

III

To Baines, toleration was the panacea for civic harmony and social cohesion. Intolerance was a cancer in society that not only imposed 'extensive and severe legal

¹⁴³ Baines History of Lancashire vol II (1870) p 552. Brooke Herford explains that the original draft of the translation was lost when Mr MacDougall, a curator at one of the Royal Libraries in Copenhagen and entrusted to bring the manuscript to England, was drowned in a boating accident at Largs in Scotland in the autumn of 1835.

¹⁴⁴ Baines History of Lancashire vol I (1836) pp v-xii

¹⁴⁵ Burrow A Liberal Descent p 26. See also passim for a detailed analysis of Whig historiography..

¹⁴⁶ Baines History of Lancashire (1836) vol I p 407. Baines quoted an extract from the document See pp 407-408.

¹⁴⁷ Baines Wars of the French Revolution vol I p 2

¹⁴⁸ Baines History of Lancashire vol II (1825) p 490

disqualifications' on the Dissenters,¹⁴⁹ and treated the Catholics with 'injustice, folly and bigotry'¹⁵⁰ but it struck at the very heart of both liberty and justice. His belief was, once again, a classic statement of the doctrine of early-nineteenth century liberalism. As Jonathan Parry points out in the introduction to his The Rise and Fall of Liberal Government in Victorian Britain:

If nineteenth century Liberalism meant anything, it meant a political system in which a large number of potentially incompatible interests - whether nationalities, classes or sects - were mature enough to accept an over-arching code of law which guaranteed each a wide variety of liberties.¹⁵¹

Baines was in no doubt that 'religion is purely a personal matter, every individual should be left at perfect liberty'¹⁵² to worship how he believed and follow the example set in Liverpool.

In no place perhaps in this free country is party feeling either in religion or politics, more chastened with liberality ... as every man takes this liberty to think for himself, so he extends a portion, at least, of that liberty to his neighbour.¹⁵³

That religious liberty, however, operated within very definite parameters. The unifying factor that gave credibility to any religion was knowledge and acceptability of the Bible for therein was contained 'the word of Divine truth.'¹⁵⁴ Both Roman Catholics and Jews were to be tolerated, but with regard to those of other faiths, all efforts should be made through Christian missionary zeal to

ameliorate the conditions of ... people in this life, and open to them bright and well founded prospects for another.¹⁵⁵

Baines saw nothing contradictory in writing those words only weeks after asserting that

when religious privileges or civil rights of *any* community of men are attacked ... we consider it our duty to support the party assailed.¹⁵⁶

¹⁴⁹ Baines Reign of George III vol I p 450

¹⁵⁰ Leeds Mercury 12.03.25

¹⁵¹ J Parry The Rise and Fall of Liberal Government in Victorian Britain (New Haven/London 1993) p 3

¹⁵² Leeds Mercury 27.02.13

¹⁵³ Baines History of the County Palatine of Lancaster vol I (Liverpool 1824) p 203

¹⁵⁴ Leeds Mercury 14.10.26

¹⁵⁵ Leeds Mercury 01.05.19, 05.09.01, 03.04.13

¹⁵⁶ Leeds Mercury 27.02.13

There was 'an allurements of liberty (that was) so congenial to the heart of man.' When liberty is denied

it is right that the people should extend their claims till all their reasonable demands are satisfied.¹⁵⁷

When governments refuse such demands social chaos and political anarchy follow; 'continuance of unnecessary and oppressive restrictions ... eventually exhaust(s) the patience of the sufferers.'¹⁵⁸ In effect, it leads to civil war 'that greatest of all political evils.'¹⁵⁹ To Baines it was a truism that

every blow directed against the liberties of a nation has a tendency to recoil upon the hand that inflicts it.¹⁶⁰

It was up to governments to adopt the correct balance by granting what they consider to be compatible with the just pretensions of the claimants, and the general interests of the community.¹⁶¹

Echoing the words of Constant, Baines argued that it was the responsibility of the press to act as the 'bulwark against encroachment of ... the liberties of the country.' After all, 'the press is the thermometer of government.'¹⁶² It acted in concert with that other 'great bulwark of British freedom, Magna Carta'¹⁶³ which was unquestionably 'the guarantee of English liberty.'¹⁶⁴ The liberty to hold 'personal and political rights' was to achieve 'the truest dignity of man.'¹⁶⁵ And these liberties were held 'not through sufferance, nor through courtesy, but of right.'¹⁶⁶ But when those liberties are threatened and 'Government violates the principles of law and justice, no man in England is safe.'¹⁶⁷ No better example of justice and its effects on society could be found than in the 'pacific' administration towards the Indian tribes by Thomas

¹⁵⁷ Baines Wars of the French Revolution vol I pp 147, 219-220

¹⁵⁸ Baines Wars of the French Revolution vol II p 37

¹⁵⁹ Baines Wars of the French Revolution vol I p 218

¹⁶⁰ Ibid vol I p 164

¹⁶¹ Ibid vol I pp 219-220

¹⁶² Leeds Mercury 11 17 29, 04.09.02

¹⁶³ Baines History of Lancashire vol I (1836) p 246

¹⁶⁴ Baines History of Lancashire vol I (1824) p 150

¹⁶⁵ Leeds Mercury 19.11.08

¹⁶⁶ Leeds Mercury 07.04.10

¹⁶⁷ Leeds Mercury 15.09.21

Jefferson under whom the 'United States of America continued to flourish.'

The tranquillity of the Indian frontier was secured by the wise and just policy of government ... and by their unceasing attention to promote the happiness and welfare of their uncivilised neighbours.¹⁶⁸

Safeguarding justice in Britain was the jury system, 'an integral part of the British constitution,'¹⁶⁹ and upon which 'the country most especially depends for the protection of lives, liberty and property.'¹⁷⁰ But ever threatening the lives, liberty and property of its inhabitants was war.

War is so great - so enormous an evil - that it is the indispensable duty of every Government sedulously to avoid it.

For war brought with it 'fields of blood ravaged plains, smoking depopulated cities; and ...pestilence and famine.' Not only did it deluge mankind in 'seas of human blood,' it also imposed a 'burdensome load of debt and taxes' on its participants and brought about a disruption to trade and commerce. By November 1801, when the preliminaries of the peace had been concluded, Baines ruefully acknowledged the effects the French war had inflicted on the economy. 'The war has left us in a much less eligible situation than it found us.' In January 1808 in answer to objections being raised to a petition for peace meeting being held in Leeds he identified those members of the local community whose lives had been so acutely affected by the continuing struggle with Napoleon; they were 'the distressed Merchants - the impoverished Manufacturers, and the unemployed and half-employed Mechanics.'¹⁷¹ 'The frame of society ... was disordered by this long and exhausting contest.'¹⁷² That disorder was inimical to a peaceful and productive nation.

It is one of the baneful consequences of a long continued state of warfare that it gives to a large portion of the population habits of living and modes of thinking, very adverse to a state of peace.¹⁷³

One of those new modes of thinking related to murder. Was it not possible, Baines asked, that the increase in assassinations was a direct result of 'the frequent

¹⁶⁸ Baines Wars of the French Revolution vol I p 535

¹⁶⁹ Leeds Mercury 21.06.17

¹⁷⁰ Leeds Mercury 25.09.19.

¹⁷¹ Leeds Mercury 15.09.04, 22.05.13, 23.02.05, 07.11.01, 09.01.08

¹⁷² Baines Directory of Yorkshire vol I p 295

¹⁷³ Baines Wars of the French Revolution vol II p 407

incentives held out in the public paper to assassinate an enemy'¹⁷⁴ War and the passions it 'engendered and gratified ... (were) irreconcilable both to the precepts and spirit of Christianity.'¹⁷⁵ There was a moral dimension to be considered for

Every man who does not ... endeavour to stop the effusion of human blood ... must be considered as consenting to the death of their fellow creatures.¹⁷⁶

That moral dimension reared itself in August 1814 when General Ross captured Washington and destroyed

edifices consecrated to the purpose of civil government ... an indulgence of animosity, more suitable to the times of the barbarians.¹⁷⁷

And there was a lesson to be learnt from more than twenty years of bloody conflict.

It is at all times in the interest of Great Britain to sacrifice at the altar of peace; to ply the loom and the shuttle, to cultivate the surface of the earth ... to raise minerals from its bowels ... to unbind the sail of commerce to the gale; and never to engage in any but a just and necessary war, the aim of which is defined, and the object attainable.¹⁷⁸

Yet if Baines was so critical of the futility and brutality of war, why, when the cannons were finally silenced on the 18 June 1815 and victory was assured, did he enthuse that

The annals of the world do not produce a military achievement of more distinguished merit or sublime importance, than Waterloo?¹⁷⁹

The answer lies in his editorials written in the immediate aftermath of victory. 'It has changed the whole aspect of affairs ... annihilated the power of Napoleon,¹⁸⁰ and in so doing may well have secured for Europe 'permanent peace.'¹⁸¹ And permanent peace meant a world where trade could once again flourish unimpeded by the hostilities of national conflicts and the 'unhappy effect of war.'¹⁸²

¹⁷⁴ Leeds Mercury 12.06.13

¹⁷⁵ Leeds Mercury 26.08.09

¹⁷⁶ Leeds Mercury 14.11.12

¹⁷⁷ Baines Wars of the French Revolution vol II p 400

¹⁷⁸ Baines Wars of the French Revolution vol I p 364

¹⁷⁹ Baines Wars of the French Revolution vol II p 476

¹⁸⁰ Leeds Mercury 01.07.15

¹⁸¹ Leeds Mercury 08.07.15

¹⁸² Leeds Mercury 29.02.12

Britain was 'a commercial nation' facing a 'great epoch of improvement.'¹⁸³ To exploit it manufacturers must be unimpeded by fiscal restrictions. 'The principles of free trade are unquestionably wise.'¹⁸⁴ They are 'the best policy for every nation.'¹⁸⁵ There was, however, one situation where free trade could be 'ruinous' and that was where the British manufacturer was taxed 'on *importations* and *exportations* and ... the foreign merchant on neither.'¹⁸⁶ A successful, Britain must be free from government restrictions and 'sell to all the world' but on an equitable basis; a situation that could only be achieved 'by allowing the world to sell to us.'¹⁸⁷

But government policies had debilitated the manufacturing community. The Corn Laws, Baines argued, interfered 'with the free operation of trade'¹⁸⁸ though he was forced to acknowledge in 1817 that the true effect of those laws

neither realised the sanguinary expectations of the agriculturalist, nor the gloomy foreboding of the manufacturing and labouring classes.¹⁸⁹

Nevertheless, it was true to say that British Merchants had been

humbled to a state of pauperism and pawnbrokerage ... (by) the system of William Pitt - a system of War, Debt, Taxation and Paper Money.¹⁹⁰

Given the opportunity Britain was ideally placed to lead the world in an industrial and economic miracle. In Halifax alone the manufacturers

have transformed a sterile wilderness into a fruitfull (sic) country, full of people, of wealth and of comfort.¹⁹¹

It was good that there were places like Lancaster, one of Lancashire's 'few retreats

¹⁸³ Baines Reign of George III vol I p 12. Baines History of Lancashire vol II (1825) p 112

¹⁸⁴ Leeds Mercury 02.03.22

¹⁸⁵ Leeds Mercury 14.06.23

¹⁸⁶ Leeds Mercury 22.03.23

¹⁸⁷ Leeds Mercury 28.10.26

¹⁸⁸ Leeds Mercury 26.06.13

¹⁸⁹ Baines Wars of the French Revolution vol II p 502. By the 1840s he was again adamant of the damage the Corn Laws caused. See Chapter Six below.

¹⁹⁰ Leeds Mercury 16.03.11. Baines frequently condemned the 'mad and ruinous measures of Mr Pitt.' See Leeds Mercury 05.01.22. In his editorial obituary on Pitt he stated the late Prime Minister's faults were 'of his head and not his heart.' See Leeds Mercury 01.02.06. In the same edition he advertised a booklet price 6d of An Impartial Account of the Life and Death of the Late Right Honourable Mr Pitt (Leeds 1806) in which he claims 'There is no man in the kingdom better acquainted with the principles of trade than he was ... By the close attention he uniformly paid the mercantile interests, he has also secured to himself an exclusive basis of support.' See p 29.

¹⁹¹ Baines Directory of Yorkshire vol I p 183

from the bustle of active life.¹⁹² But if the environment contained those 'three great requisites for manufacturing prosperity ... building materials, coal and water communication' as it did at Todmorden, then utilised effectively, commercial and industrial success should naturally follow.¹⁹³ Baines identified the fundamental reasons why Britain should enjoy industrial prosperity; the nation had capital exceeding other nations, coal mines indispensable to that 'most potent and valuable of all machines - the steam engine,' and excellent workmen. Its greatest disadvantages were high taxation and the high cost of labour.¹⁹⁴ Apart from natural resources, the local infrastructure needed to be able to accommodate the new demands made upon it. Consequently, Baines heralded such improvements be they monumental feats of engineering or simple local modernisations or improvements. The Leeds-Liverpool Canal to Baines was a 'great public work,' linking as it did Liverpool to the 'German Ocean.'¹⁹⁵ But he was equally enthusiastic about the efforts made by the inhabitants at Wensley in the North Riding where 'for the benefit of trade and the safety of the inhabitants' the bridge had been widened and repaired in 1818, much to the chagrin of the 'lovers of antiquity.'¹⁹⁶ At Leigh, on the other hand, the authorities were not so imaginative, maintaining a 'public nuisance' which was 'a toll-gate ... totally incompatible with the present trade and traffic.'¹⁹⁷

Unquestionably, the greatest developments that stimulated the Industrial Revolution in Britain were the improvements made to the steam engine. Baines quickly recognised the value of steam locomotion and its potential as the harbinger of a new national transport system.¹⁹⁸ As early as 1812 when steam engines began operating from Brandling's Middleton Colliery near Leeds on the old waggonway, he enthused

¹⁹² Baines History of Lancashire vol II (1825) p 31

¹⁹³ Baines History of Lancashire vol II (1836) p 650

¹⁹⁴ Baines Wars of the French Revolution vol II p 507

¹⁹⁵ Baines History of Lancashire vol II (1825) p 611

¹⁹⁶ Baines Directory of Yorkshire vol II p 570

¹⁹⁷ Baines History of Lancashire vol II (1825) p 45

¹⁹⁸ T S Ashton has no hesitation in acknowledging that steam power which developed during the eighteenth century, was 'the pivot on which industry swung into the modern age.' See T S Ashton The Industrial Revolution 1760-1830 (London/Oxford/New York 1970) p 58. C P Hill points out how steam power extended 'the range of man's economic activities' and when applied to transport in the form of railways produced 'another vast acceleration of industrial production.' He best sums up its value by quoting Matthew Boulton; 'I sell here, sir, what the world desires to have - Power.' See C P Hill Economic and Social History p 34.

about this

machine ... substituting the agency of steam for the use of horses in the conveyance of coals.¹⁹⁹

By 1824, Baines acknowledged the far reaching effects steam railways would have both for the people and the economy.

This mode of communication and conveyance is ... superior to those at present in general use ... we shall not think the speculation excessive, till a railway is constructed on every much-frequented line of road in the kingdom. Easy and expeditious internal communication is of great importance to every country ... We have no doubt, that railways will ultimately prove of great public utility.²⁰⁰

But steam engines had also heralded industrial modernisation and that itself had come in the form of the factory system and the machines employed within it.²⁰¹ Baines recognised that both machinery and the mills and factories that utilised it, could have an adverse effect on a community. In Lancashire, as early as 1492, objections had been made regarding the introduction of machinery and Baines admitted that it was regarded as 'an evil, and sometimes a ruinous one' to the workers whom it displaced. But the greater good of the nation was served by employing it.

Viewed as a public question, involving the interests of the nation, these improvements are beneficial, and to them ... the manufacturing and commercial greatness of this nation is to be attributed.²⁰²

However, its faults had also to be recognised. In Leeds cloth market

that valuable class of men, the clothiers had been reduced from upwards of three thousand to about one half that number.²⁰³

At Helmsley Upon the Black Moor in the North Riding, spinning linen by hand had been carried on to

a considerable extent, but the introduction of machinery has destroyed

¹⁹⁹ Leeds Mercury 27.06.12

²⁰⁰ Leeds Mercury 24.12.24. Surprisingly, for a man whose 'mind seemed full of the subject of railways,' he made no reference to the letter from 'Mercator' proposing a 'rail way' (sic) from Leeds to Selby. See Leeds Mercury 16.01.02. Nor did he refer to the one from 'XYZ' proposing adapting 'the Patent Steam Carriage, as now in use at Middleton Colliery' for use on a railway between Leeds and Selby. See Leeds Mercury 30.07.14. See also Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 59

²⁰¹ For an analysis of the impact the new technology had on both the economy and society in early nineteenth century Britain see M Berg The Machinery Question and the Making of Political Economy 1815-1848 (Cambridge 1980) *passim*.

²⁰² Baines History of Lancashire vol I (1824) pp 37-38

²⁰³ Baines Directory of Yorkshire vol I p 20

this domestic system, and introduced in its stead a process of manufactures more conducive to national wealth, but less conducive to public morals.²⁰⁴

In particular the West Riding of Yorkshire, with its 'rapidly augmenting population,' had seen the factory system produce a 'tendency to deteriorate the public morals'²⁰⁵ by 'indiscriminately huddling together the sexes.'²⁰⁶

Physical and environmental degeneration were two more by-products of this fledgling industrial age:

the occupations of the great body of the inhabitants in the manufacturing towns may be supposed to be unfavourable to health.²⁰⁷

Pollution was another problem. Bradford was but one place that had 'suffered considerable annoyance' from smoke from 'steam engine furnaces.'²⁰⁸ But for all the social problems it generated, the Industrial Revolution brought with it great rewards for those prepared to grasp the opportunity. In Rochdale merchants and manufacturers had

attained a considerable degree of opulence, the appropriate reward of judicious enterprise, persevering industry, and commercial integrity.²⁰⁹

How much greater could that success have been had it not been for excessive Government expenditure and its concomitant high taxation. The solution was clear.

An extensive retrenchment in the public expenses ... (is) the only practicable mode of lessening the disproportion which exists between revenue and expenditure.²¹⁰

'Improvident waste ... has generally attended the administration of the public expenditure.'²¹¹ Even the prodigal French Government's national debt 'sunk into

²⁰⁴ Baines Directory of Yorkshire vol II p 452

²⁰⁵ Baines Directory of Yorkshire vol I p xii

²⁰⁶ Leeds Mercury 30.09.20. see also Baines History of Lancashire vol IV(1836) p 367

²⁰⁷ Baines History of Lancashire vol I (1824) p 80

²⁰⁸ Baines Directory of Yorkshire vol I p 147

²⁰⁹ Baines History of Lancashire vol II (1825) p 531

²¹⁰ Leeds Mercury 10.01.18. Boyd Hilton points out that among economic solutions considered in relation to agricultural distress 'large tax reductions going beyond what might be saved by retrenchments' was one. There were, however, other solutions posed to deal with the economic distress of the time; 'tax cuts or occasionally new taxes; cheaper money; either public lending and spending, or public saving and parsimony.' See B Hilton Corn, Cash, Commerce; the Economic Policies of the Tory Governments 1815-1830 (Oxford 1977) pp 132, 73.

²¹¹ Leeds Mercury 27.01.16

insignificance when placed besides the national debt of England.²¹² Taxation was needed to service that national debt and principal amongst the taxes employed was 'the odious machinery of income tax;²¹³ 'inequitable in its principle and inquisitorial in its operation.'²¹⁴ Baines objected that it was

calculated to lay open the affairs of every commercial man ... to tear from himself and his family the means of supporting their credit and appearances - it is indeed nothing less than a tax on industry for the profits of trade ... (are) merely stock and therefore ought not to be taxed.²¹⁵

It was 'an impost the most galling and oppressive ... ever levied on a free people,' 'unequal in its operation' and effecting people with 'annual incomes from £55 to £200 ... (not) the higher classes of society.'²¹⁶ When finally the 'bloodless victory' was achieved in 1816 and income tax was repealed, Baines argued 'the work is only partly done.' What the people of England required was not 'substitutes in taxation, retrenchment is their object.'²¹⁷ Other taxes also needed to be removed; one even more objectionable than income tax was

an impost on Malt - an article of the first necessity, and principally consumed by the labouring poor.²¹⁸

Baines's critique of other fiscal impositions included the window tax, *inimical to* 'public health;' and the tax on paper and timber.²¹⁹

Such taxation bore 'ruinous consequences' for the nation.²²⁰ It was a 'deep and all pervading cause of distress,' generating not only 'pauperism' but striking at trade which 'is oppressed and paralyzed'(sic) and forcing 'vast numbers of small farmers, worn down by the pressure of taxation' to emigrate.²²¹ Britain had reached a point

²¹² Baines Wars of the French Revolution vol II p 416

²¹³ Baines Reign of George III vol IV p 17. It was also known as 'property tax.' 'I'll be deng'd if I like th' Property , or t'Income Tax as folks call it.' Letter from 'Ould Squair Toas' Leeds Intelligencer 12.02.16

²¹⁴ Baines Wars of the French Revolution vol I p 337

²¹⁵ Leeds Mercury 27.03.02

²¹⁶ Leeds Mercury 07.01.15, 24.10.01, 24.02.16

²¹⁷ Leeds Mercury 23.03.16

²¹⁸ Leeds Mercury 18.06.03

²¹⁹ Leeds Mercury 02.03.05, 04.02.15, 07.03.01

²²⁰ Leeds Mercury 17.03.10

²²¹ Leeds Mercury 23.02.22, 17.07.19, 12.06.19

where taxation had

attained its utmost limit. Under such circumstances, the government is imperiously called upon to use the most rigid economy in every branch of public expenditure to secure the happiness of the governed.²²²

There was to Baines but one way to guarantee that the Government would act in accordance with his views.

We repeat once more that we know not how an economical system suited to the country, can be either instituted or supported without Parliamentary Reform.²²³

He insisted that only such reform could ensure that the nation would be safe from 'the future improvidence and the folly of a court or minister.'²²⁴ His clarion call was 'to condemn abuses wherever or by whomsoever practised.'²²⁵ Those abuses were wide ranging. The House of Commons in reality was the representative of only 'the Treasury, seventy-one peers, and ninety-one Commoners,'²²⁶ Old Sarum, which Baines believed, 'did not contain an individual except the returning officer and his family' sent two members to Parliament, 'while Manchester, Birmingham and Leeds do not send one.'²²⁷ Corruption at elections was endemic; 'gross, open and almost universal bribery' was regularly indulged in by the inhabitants of Barnstaple, Penryn, Camelford and Grampound²²⁸ whilst Liverpool was renowned for its 'bribery and corruption at elections for chief magistrates and members to serve in Parliament.'²²⁹ The cost of elections often meant that responsible potential candidates were unable to meet the exorbitant expenses of a campaign and thus were unable to afford to stand - 'the greatest evil in the whole system of the English Government.'²³⁰ Such a situation excited 'discontent in the body of the people' and a strong conviction was growing that

²²² Baines Wars of the French Revolution vol II p 510

²²³ Leeds Mercury 26.01.22

²²⁴ Leeds Mercury 05.01.22

²²⁵ Leeds Mercury 27.05.09

²²⁶ Leeds Mercury 20.05.09

²²⁷ Leeds Mercury 03.06.09

²²⁸ Baines Reign of George III vol IV p 129

²²⁹ Baines History of Lancashire vol IV (1836) pp 129-130

²³⁰ Leeds Mercury 26.06.02

'parliamentary reform was indispensable to the security of freedom.'²³¹

Reform could only come about by 'the loudly raised voice of the people' and 'a radical reform in the representative part of our Government.'²³² This would 'save the fair fabric of our Constitution,' for the reformers' object was not to annihilate it 'but to restore it to its original intention.'²³³ Its implementation would result in a nation benefiting from limited involvement in war, increased commerce and a reduction of 'the burthens on the country'²³⁴ Baines may have called for radical reform but his radicalism had clearly defined parameters and was as far removed from the radicalism of Henry Hunt and the 'Ultra-reformers' as he was from the 'Ultra-royalists.'²³⁵ Hunt, in Baines 's eyes was;

this coarse but fluent and dexterous orator ... (who) gave up his whole time to public business, to the great admiration of the radicals, disgust of intelligent men, and real injury of the cause he espoused.²³⁶

Baines was never a supporter of universal suffrage for that would result in bringing to the polls 'soldiers in battalions, paupers in crowds, menial servants and even vagrants' with a result that liberty itself would be destroyed.²³⁷ For him it was a matter of 'Reform, not Revolution'²³⁸ and that itself could only be achieved through constitutional means. The employment of physical force was counter-productive. Hunt and his followers created a fear of anarchy throughout society and thus it was vital for the security of the country that the 'friends of constitutional reform ought to discountenance men of this stamp.'²³⁹ To attain those constitutional ends was simple;

²³¹ Baines Reign of George III vol IV p 133. For a detailed analysis of the unreformed electoral system of the eighteenth century see F O'Gorman Voters, Patrons, and Parties: The Unreformed Electoral System of Hanoverian England 1734-1832 (Oxford 1989)

²³² Leeds Mercury 23.10.19, 25.03.15

²³³ Leeds Mercury 29.04.09, 31.10.12

²³⁴ Leeds Mercury 27.04.11

²³⁵ Leeds Mercury 27.06.18

²³⁶ Baines Reign of George III vol IV p 133

²³⁷ Leeds Mercury 03.07.19. By 1841 he was forced to recognise that the franchise should be extended 'as the humbler classes grow in information and improve their moral and social condition.' See Baines Papers; Leeds Mercury Editors Household Suffrage and Equal Electoral Districts Shown to be Unfavourable to Good Government and Purity of Election as well as Calculated to Destroy the Influence of the Towns, Strengthen the Aristocracy and Perpetuate the Corn Laws in Letters to Hamer Stansfeld (Leeds/ London 1841) p 3

²³⁸ Leeds Mercury 12.05.10

²³⁹ Leeds Mercury 10.07.19, 23.11.16

restore to the people the influence they had formerly; give a suffrage to every man who pays direct taxes.²⁴⁰

Let reform be gained 'step by step' for that would bring 'real advantage than one hurried on by impetuosity and obtained by violence.'²⁴¹ There was an inevitability about the eventual success of Parliamentary Reform, for its needs were not born of bigoted indoctrination and flamboyant demagoguery but were the result of the careful deliberations of 'observing men.' For its case was 'founded on truth, and truth will in the end prevail.'²⁴² But reform must come only within the framework of the law²⁴³ for it was the law which stood between a civilised society and ochlocratic tyranny.

IV

Law was the bastion of freedom against oppressive government. When governments behaved as Liverpool's had at Peterloo 'the safety of the constitution' had been placed in jeopardy and the '*rights of the people of England* ha(d) been invaded.'²⁴⁴ They were invaded when the House of Commons committed John Gale Jones to Newgate for his imprudent remarks near Covent Garden in 1810.²⁴⁵ Baines did not approve of the radical's viewpoint but he recognised that a sacred constitutional mainstay had been threatened, pointing out:

(i)f the King cannot inflict punishment without trial, we cannot conceive how such a privilege can belong to any other branch of the legislature.²⁴⁶

Such an abuse of power could well 'produce evils more dangerous and alarming than those it is intended to remedy.'²⁴⁷

Justice required fairness. Magistrates were honour bound to exercise impartiality. When they did this, Baines 'held them in respect and esteem.' But he assured his readers should the magistracy err, he would never 'be cajoled into a

²⁴⁰ Leeds Mercury 03.07.19

²⁴¹ Leeds Mercury 09.01.19

²⁴² Leeds Mercury 02.12.20

²⁴³ Leeds Mercury 24.07.19

²⁴⁴ Leeds Mercury 26.05.21

²⁴⁵ Thompson E P Making of the English Working Class p 511

²⁴⁶ Leeds Mercury 31.03.10

²⁴⁷ Leeds Mercury 04.07.12

connivance at acts of intolerance, oppression and corruption.’²⁴⁸ It was not Baines and his like, however, who were the true defenders of public freedoms but the British jury responsible for ‘the protection of lives, liberty and property.’²⁴⁹ That jury system was ‘the most admirable the world ever knew for securing fair administration of justice.’²⁵⁰ But this could be endangered by editors of newspapers. It was the duty of journalists

to state all the particulars ... in a fair, unbiased and unimpassioned manner, and to be cautious inserting any thing that may prejudice the accused in the public mind.²⁵¹

It would be endangered too, if the accused were prevented from presenting his case before a verdict was reached²⁵² and when guilt was pronounced then magnanimity should never be far away. It demonstrated ‘superiority of mind’ and could at times be a pragmatic political manoeuvre.²⁵³ Should ever doubt arise in a case it was a fundamental of English law ‘to give the accused the benefit of the doubt.’²⁵⁴

It is much better that many guilty persons should escape punishment than that the safety of every innocent person should be endangered.²⁵⁵

When punishment was inflicted it should be done without ‘vindictiveness and malice.’ In 1822, Baines complained that such was the treatment meted out to Henry Hunt in Ilchester Jail and the following year raised the case of Mary Carlile. Then he argued the law had forgotten the principle enshrined in Magna Carta, that ‘*no fine shall be levied on (a person) to his utter ruin.*’²⁵⁶ Justice was not reserved simply for Britons. Foreigners too deserved the protection of the law. Justice had an international dimension. Was it justice that deprived a ‘*legitimate monarch*’ of his throne?²⁵⁷ The

²⁴⁸ Leeds Mercury 11.09.24

²⁴⁹ Leeds Mercury 25.09.19

²⁵⁰ Leeds Mercury 28.05.25. In this he is at one with both Benjamin Constant and Alexis de Tocqueville. Both were strong exponents of the value of the jury system. See Holmes Benjamin Constant pp 4, 283. See also A de Tocqueville Democracy in America vol I (London 1862) p 339; ‘The Jury ... is the most energetic means of making the people rule.’

²⁵¹ Leeds Mercury 22.11.23

²⁵² Leeds Mercury 24.08.05

²⁵³ Leeds Mercury 14.07.04, 01.11.17

²⁵⁴ Leeds Mercury 23.12.09

²⁵⁵ Leeds Mercury 21.06.06

²⁵⁶ Leeds Mercury 30.03.22, 05.04.23

²⁵⁷ Leeds Mercury 15.06.16, 19.11.14. The incident occurred at the Congress of Vienna. The monarch in question was the King of Saxony.

British Government had to be conscious of its international role in establishing justice within the comity of nations.

It had to be conscious also of its responsibilities towards British society. Paramount amongst these was an awareness of its need to exercise vigilance when it came to 'public economy' for that was 'one of the first requisites of a public officer.'²⁵⁸ To ensure that due consideration to expenditure had been employed by public bodies, a publication of the accounts was essential. 'Not only the bastardy accounts but every other account.'²⁵⁹ As early as 1805 Baines was demanding that it would be an advantage if 'a more clear and perspicacious method of stating public accounts were adopted.'²⁶⁰

Responsibilities lay not simply with governments. Individuals too had a responsibility to do as 'much as possible for themselves, and to rely as little as possible on others.' Those responsibilities also extended to local inhabitants, who had to come to terms with the problems caused by an increasing population in the towns and the environmental effects of the burgeoning industries spawned by the Industrial Revolution. Among these was pollution from the mills and factories, which has 'contributed so materially to impair health and diminish the comforts of the inhabitants.' Baines was emphatic; 'No man has the right to contaminate the air which the public breathes.' Health was an issue that had to be addressed and efforts to improve it encouraged. When smallpox inoculations became available in Leeds it was in the 'interest of every parent, of every individual, and every nation to adopt the practice.'²⁶¹ When fever was rife in the town and it was proposed to open a House of Recovery he enthused;

we have no doubt but so excellent an institution will meet with every adequate support.²⁶²

An improved water supply was urgently needed; Leeds was 'very ill supplied ... the quality is very indifferent.'²⁶³ At the same time, help for the poor 'obliged to dispose

²⁵⁸ Leeds Mercury 28.04.21

²⁵⁹ Leeds Mercury 13.03.19

²⁶⁰ Leeds Mercury 27.04.05

²⁶¹ Leeds Mercury 01.06.16, 28.10.20, 22.06.22, 16.04.03

²⁶² Leeds Mercury 05.12.01

²⁶³ Baines and Newsome Leeds Directory (1834) p 416

of their cloaths (sic) to buy food' required that a 'general subscription' should be raised to clothe 'the naked.' Among the most vulnerable group in society were children. It was 'disgraceful, in a land distinguished for its humanity' that boy sweeps were employed 'trained up to deformity and disease.'²⁶⁴ Meanwhile in the factories, children working in 'close rooms for so many hours in a day' resulted in 'so many constitutions in infancy' being destroyed and at the same time being exposed to 'all kinds of profaneness and obscenity.'²⁶⁵

The way to break that mould of immorality 'of the lower classes of society' was by education, 'the boon most valuable to man.'²⁶⁶ It could not 'fail ultimately to effect a great mental improvement.'²⁶⁷ It was to 'the honour of Manchester' that

great attention is paid to the education of youth, and especially the children of the poor.²⁶⁸

He recognised that as literacy skills could not be acquired six days a week whilst children were employed in factory or mill, 'Sunday schools are of the greatest utility.'²⁶⁹ The manners and morals of a society depended on the education it received. It had failed in Ireland where education was 'an instrument for poisoning when it should have been free from ... party or sectarian spirit.'²⁷⁰

Here sectarian spirit had actually been encouraged by the Government with the Orangemen 'protected ...connived at; and the bulk of the people treated with jealousy and harshness.' Living as they did in 'utterly deplorable' conditions and subject to 'disabilities which they feel degrading'²⁷¹ it was hardly surprising that the Irish were an embittered people as they gazed on the 'prosperity of England which they are not allowed to share.'²⁷² Since the reign of Henry II the people there had 'never been cordially reconciled to the English' nor had the British Government attempted to

²⁶⁴ Leeds Mercury 05.12.01, 20.11.02

²⁶⁵ Leeds Mercury 06.03.02, 22.01.25

²⁶⁶ Leeds Mercury 29.06.16, 10.09.25

²⁶⁷ Baines History of Lancashire vol III (1836) p 308

²⁶⁸ Baines History of Lancashire vol II (1825) p 141

²⁶⁹ Baines History of Lancashire vol I (1824) p 537

²⁷⁰ Leeds Mercury 12.04.23

²⁷¹ Baines Reign of George III vol IV p 157

²⁷² Leeds Mercury 30.12.26

'produce a reconciliation.'²⁷³ Thus Ireland, 'the scene of oppression and misgovernment' slid irrevocably into rebellion, 'the natural consequence of bad government';²⁷⁴ government which had repeatedly 'considered the bayonet and the gibbet as the most effectual *soothers* of discontent.'²⁷⁵ It was right that the Irish should demand justice 'till all their reasonable demands are satisfied.' But for Baines no action was justifiable if it transcended the law. Consequently, the revolt of 1798 could have been averted if the protagonists had 'conducted themselves with temper and moderation.' By 'peaceable and constitutional' means they would have obtained their 'political and civil rights.'²⁷⁶

His pacific beliefs were based more on hope born of an ethical desire than a recognition of harsh political reality. By 1822, he accepted violence was inevitable; 'men whose families are starving have little fear of death.'²⁷⁷ His solution was pragmatic. Identify what it was in Ireland that prevented 'the ordinary development of germs of wealth, before we lavish charity upon her,' then 'capital will flow into Ireland.' One hindrance preventing improvement was that the people there were

heavily taxed, for the support of a religious establishment, to which one fourteenth of the people are attached.²⁷⁸

Easing taxation would also be a way of keeping 'the Irish gentry and magistrates on their estates.' Ireland had to be made more agreeable to live in and to achieve that meant regulating tithes, reforming the police, liberalising the laws and spreading education.²⁷⁹

The condition of the farmers and peasantry must be improved. Pernicious systems must be swept away. Monopoly of privileges must give place to liberality - Ireland must no longer be treated as a

²⁷³ Baines Wars of the French Revolution vol I p 219

²⁷⁴ Baines History of Lancashire vol I (1836) p 353. See also vol IV (1836) p 498. Baines's analysis is supported by late twentieth century historians. 'Failure to deal equally with Defender and Orange disturbances ... precipitated the cycle of violence and repression ... which ended in the outbreak of 1798.' See O MacDonagh 'Ireland and the Union 1801-1870': A New History of Ireland ed W E Vaughan vol V (Oxford 1989) p xlvi

²⁷⁵ Leeds Mercury 03.09.14. For examples of the brutality used by the British forces see R Kee Ireland, a History (London 1981) p 63

²⁷⁶ Baines Wars of the French Revolution vol I pp 219-220

²⁷⁷ Leeds Mercury 02.02.22

²⁷⁸ Leeds Mercury 15.05.24

²⁷⁹ Leeds Mercury 27.04.22

conquered nation but as an integral part of the United Kingdom.²⁸⁰

The people of Ireland were indignant that they were 'tamely enduring the same yoke which America had bled to throw off.'²⁸¹

Fortunately for the sacred cause of freedom and the interests of mankind, the Americans ... were wise and brave enough to resist the invasion of their rights.²⁸²

The revolt of the American colonies had clearly demonstrated 'the folly of violently opposing the wishes of a whole people.'²⁸³

The independence of the United States, though it may have been prejudicial to England, has been of advantage to mankind ... The American Revolution promoted the cause of freedom throughout the world.²⁸⁴

Equally as vital as the liberty of individuals was the freedom of nations. Britain should acknowledge the rights of all subjugated peoples to throw off the shackles of despotism. Not only was it 'proper in itself, but (it was) politically desirable.' When Mexico and Chile had freed themselves from the thralldom of Spain, Baines insisted 'Great Britain should hasten to acknowledge as independent ... the emancipated states of ... America.'²⁸⁵ 'Enlightened opinion' would always condemn the 'utter helplessness of despotism.' Baines perceived the liberalising influence which 'the rapid advance of knowledge and the increased cultivation of the mind' had brought to Europe. With the end of French domination, a new dawn of international co-operation was developing; 'the incipient formation of a covenant amongst the different nations of Europe.' Though not formally agreed it would 'incite them by a sympathetic bond to resist oppression.'²⁸⁶

However, such ardour for collaboration in foreign affairs had to be tempered by political pragmatism. He warned that British interests could never be aided by a European alliance where 'the purpose was hostile co-operation;' that the great powers were all too often 'disposed to aggrandize themselves at the expense of their weak and

²⁸⁰ Leeds Mercury 16.02.22

²⁸¹ Baines Reign of George III vol I p 347

²⁸² *Ibid* p 206

²⁸³ *Ibid* p 386

²⁸⁴ *Ibid* p 386

²⁸⁵ Leeds Mercury 13.04.22

²⁸⁶ Leeds Mercury 08.04.20

defenceless neighbours;’ and that faith in treaties was to be suspect. Even the Christian nations of Europe were prepared to sacrifice principles ‘to expediency;’ among the ‘barbarians the very meaning of the term is unknown.’²⁸⁷

Some of the worst barbarians were to be found on the subcontinent of India. There the ‘perfidy and cruelty of the Hindoo character,’ unstable government and the savagery of roving tribes rendered the history of that country no more than a catalogue of ‘intrigue, revolution and massacre.’ But this situation had been compounded by the English whose ‘acts of violence and treachery’ had satiated ‘their avarice by rapacity and extortion.’ This was the history of British India²⁸⁸; a history accentuated by the ‘cruel avarice of the monopolists ... (which) added infamy to ... the English name in Bengal.’²⁸⁹ The chief architect of ‘that detestable policy’ was Warren Hastings, ‘one of the ablest governors ever known in British India’ but ‘deserving severe reprobation ... (as) the author of the crying wrongs of Hindustan.’²⁹⁰

As liberty was essential for individuals and nations, so too was justice. Was it justice the British Government exercised in Jamaica when the Maroons rose in revolt and the suppression was ‘carried on with a spirit of hostility never before practised by Englishmen’?²⁹¹ Britain had to learn the lesson of the American revolution and act justly regarding her empire. In acknowledging that, Baines donned the mantle of the seer, anticipating the demise of British colonialism a century before it occurred.

She has foreign possessions, which it is her interests by liberal policy to preserve, and which it is her destiny, when they shall have attained strength and knowledge, to lose.²⁹²

Among Britain’s foreign possessions were the islands of the West Indies where slavery was practised wholesale and the ‘wretched’ natives of Africa were forced to ‘labour like beasts of burden under the lash of the West India planters.’²⁹³ Slavery had as injurious an effect on those very planters as on the slaves themselves, for it ‘perverts

²⁸⁷ Leeds Mercury 14.09.05, 03.12.14, 21.09.16

²⁸⁸ Baines Reign of George III vol I p 58

²⁸⁹ Ibid p 134

²⁹⁰ Ibid p 384. Baines’s views are very similar to those of Edmund Burke. To Burke, ‘Hastings was absolute master of British India,’ ‘had committed terrible crimes in India,’ and deserved ‘trial and punishment.’ See C C O’Brien The Great Melody (London 1993) pp 296, 271 and 313.

²⁹¹ Baines Wars of the French Revolution vol I p 147

²⁹² Baines Reign of George III vol I p 386

²⁹³ Ibid p 8

the intellect ... (and) renders them vigilant and inveterate enemies of reason.²⁹⁴ Toussaint Louverture had clearly demonstrated on St Domingo that when slavery, 'so repugnant to every principle of nature,' was abolished domination by 'the few over the many was not necessary to the existence of civil society.'²⁹⁵ It was here in these Caribbean islands 'the luxuries of Europe were manufactured' to satisfy the 'ruthless avarice of slave dealers.'²⁹⁶ What hypocrisy was shown by those who sanctioned the slave trade and whose injustice excited 'in the bosom of every virtuous man, emotions of mingled indignation and regret.'²⁹⁷ It was left to Grenville's Ministry of All the Talents to provide a 'Magna Charta' for the peoples of Africa by the passing of the bill to abolish 'this detestable traffic'. 'Thus ended one of the most glorious contests.'²⁹⁸

Baines accepted that slavery in the islands could not be swept away without running the risk of the freed Negroes 'abusing freedom;' it was impossible to succeed until 'their moral and civil condition shall be greatly improved.' The intervention of missionaries was required for they could impart not only moral but 'religious habits.' Thus once again Baines felt that it was religion and its civilizing influence that should provide the foundation for the emerging society of the newly freed people.²⁹⁹ He had never any doubts about the abolition of slavery. When Louis XVIII reintroduced the slave trade, Baines announced the British nation had called out 'as one man' in protest.

The call will vibrate through Europe, it will reach the shores of Africa, and it will ultimately prevail, for it is the voice of God.³⁰⁰

It was that voice of God and Baines's deep commitment to the Christian faith which acted as the catalyst for his political and social convictions. They were the foundations on which a society devoted to truth, liberty and justice could be built. It was a social order he would ceaselessly endeavour to establish for almost half a century through edition after edition of his weekly Leeds Mercury and thousands and thousands of pages of his published works.

²⁹⁴ Leeds Mercury 17.07.24

²⁹⁵ Baines Wars of the French Revolution vol I p 336

²⁹⁶ Baines Reign of George III vol I p 8

²⁹⁷ Leeds Mercury 09.03.05

²⁹⁸ Baines Wars of the French Revolution vol II pp 35-36

²⁹⁹ Leeds Mercury 25.10.23

³⁰⁰ Leeds Mercury 09.07.14

CHAPTER THREE

MR MERCURY - MAN OF PRINT: 1801-1815

When Edward Baines took over the Mercury in 1801 Leeds was a town already in the throes of a social, political and economic transformation.¹ Its traditional wool textile industry was well established whilst commercial and manufacturing entrepreneurs, developing new businesses and industries, were quickly grasping the opportunities this rapidly changing society was beginning to offer.² It was a town with a future. John Ryley, mathematician and headmaster of the local Bluecoat school, summed up its prospects succinctly:

the cheapness of Coals, combined with the large capital of many of its Merchants and Manufacturers, will, in all probability, long insure it a pre-eminent rank among the manufacturing and commercial towns of this kingdom.³

Its position at a crossing of the River Aire had long made it the focal point of the surrounding West Riding villages. Despite being a manor with its clearly defined boundaries, the town was always intimately connected with the out-townships of the surrounding manors.⁴ These out-townships, along with the town itself, formed the rambling parish of Leeds, administered from St Peter's, the Parish Church in Kirkgate.⁵ The 1801 census shows Leeds, with a population of 30 699. Scattered on the western slopes of the Aire valley, were the out-townships where the principal industry was the manufacture of mixed woollen cloth.⁶

Much of that cloth was made by individual clothiers in their own cottages but there was already a drift towards manufacturing on a larger scale in factories where

¹ Wilson RG History of Modern Leeds pp 24-43; and D Fraser 'Politics and Society in the Nineteenth Century' : A History of Modern Leeds ed D Fraser (Manchester 1980) pp 270-300

² Rimmer Thoresby Society vol L pp 130-157

³ Ryley Leeds Guide (1806) p 111

⁴ The townships were Farnley, Headingley, Osmondthorpe, Armley, Wortley, Bramley, Beeston, Gipton, Allerton, Hunslet and Holbeck. See Burt and Grady The Illustrated History of Leeds p 13

⁵ B Chippendale and D Thornton The Story of St John the Evangelist Church, Wortley-de-Leeds (Leeds 1998) p 8. It was not until Dr Hook introduced the Leeds Vicarage Act (1844) that the old parish was finally divided into separate parishes. See also H W Dalton 'Walter Farquhar Hook, Vicar of Leeds: his Work for the Church and the Town, 1837-1848' Publications of the Thoresby Society vol LXIII (1988) p 54

⁶ The combined population of the out-townships was 22 607. The total population of the conurbation was 53 276. See Morgan History of Modern Leeds pp 46-61 Mixed cloth was made from dyed wool. Undyed or white cloth was manufactured in the villages that lay between the Vale of Aire and the Vale of Calder. Both types of cloth were sold in the respective cloth halls of Leeds. see JH Leach A Walk Through Leeds or Stranger's Guide (Leeds 1806) p 14. See also Ryley Leeds Guide (1806) p 100. The following paragraph is based on Ryley's guide pp 99-115

every process of production was carried out.⁷ Gott's factory on the banks of the Aire was both the archetype and the largest of these. But there were other industries; John Marshall pioneered the production of linen, canvas and thread-yarn, whilst several cotton mills and foundries were also operating in the area. At the same time, commerce, in particular the export of woollen goods, featured strongly in the local economy.⁸ The Aire-Calder Navigation, the nearly completed Leeds-Liverpool Canal and a series of arterial roads, built during the eighteenth century and linking the major towns of the West Riding, provided essential transport communication for goods and raw materials; and incidentally, stimulated a growing coaching industry.⁹

The town of Leeds was heavily concentrated into a relatively small area. This was principally around Kirkgate which was the site of the original settlement; and Briggate, the new town founded by Paynel's charter of 1207.¹⁰ The old and the new Leeds had long since coalesced but by the end of the eighteenth century middle class housing had been developed to the west of the old borough in Park Row, South Parade, East Parade, Park Place and Park Square. Here Baines himself was to set up home for several years in one of the new houses on the south side of the square.¹¹ To the east of the town, in such noisome areas as the Bank, Marsh Lane and Quarry Hill, cottages crammed into existing folds and yards, and mean two storey back-to-back terraces, many with cellar dwellings, scarred the landscape.¹² 'In this neighbourhood ... work people ... compose(d) the principal part of the population.'¹³

The town boasted several fine public buildings and at least eighteen places of

⁷ For a contemporary description of this cottage industry see James Nichols 'A Brief Memoir of the Life of the Late John Ryley' in The Leeds Correspondent vol II ed J Gawthorp and J Whitley (Leeds 1818) p 97.

⁸ By 1810 the cotton mills had all but disappeared. See Connell and Ward History of Modern Leeds pp 144-155

⁹ By 1800 forty coaches were entering or leaving Leeds daily. See R W Unwin 'Leeds Becomes a Transport Centre' : A History of Modern Leeds ed D Fraser (Manchester 1980) pp 113-141. The Leeds-Liverpool Canal not only carried goods and materials but also operated a regular passenger service. See C Hadfield British Canals; an Illustrated History (Newton Abbot 1970) p 170

¹⁰ Burt and Grady The Illustrated History of Leeds pp 12-15

¹¹ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 59. See also M W Beresford East End West End: the Face of Leeds During Urbanisation 1684-1842 (Leeds 1988) pp 127-170

¹² For the most detailed analysis of housing development in Leeds see M Beresford East End, West End passim and M Beresford 'The Face of Leeds 1780-1914': A History of Modern Leeds ed D Fraser (Manchester 1980) passim.

¹³ Ryley Leeds Guide (1806) pp 136-137

worship.¹⁴ The Infirmary, standing in its own gardens was, according to John Howard, the penal reformer, 'one of the best Hospitals in the kingdom'. Among its distinguished staff was the surgeon William Hey. Its secretary was Matthew Talbot, Baines's father-in-law. There were three principal schools in the town; the Free Grammar School, a Bluecoat Charity School and a School of Industry catering for fifty 'poor girls.' It was left to the numerous Sunday schools to educate the majority of poor children. The weekly cloth markets were held in the extensive White Cloth and Coloured Cloth Halls.¹⁵ Tate Wilkinson's theatre on Hunslet Lane, the Concert Room in Albion Street, the Assembly Rooms in Kirkgate, and the Circulating Library all contributed to the cultural life of the town.

Three banks supplied financial support for merchants and manufacturers. Two of them, Old Bank and Commercial Bank, stood in Briggate. This street was the nucleus of the town, leading to the bridge over the Aire.¹⁶ It was generally 'very broad and spacious.' But about half way up was reduced in its width by Moot Hall, the local court of justice, and a row of buildings which divided the thoroughfare into two 'miserable' alleyways. Beyond that, where Briggate widened again, was Cross Parish where the markets were held here on Tuesdays and Saturdays.¹⁷

At the top of Briggate was New Street End and the office of Thomas Wright's Leeds Intelligencer. At the opposite end, almost at the bottom of Briggate and behind the Golden Lion coaching inn, was Mercury Court, the home of the Leeds Mercury and

¹⁴ These included five Anglican churches and six chapels; three Methodist, two Presbyterian and an Inghamite. There were also both Quaker and Baptist meeting houses, and a Roman Catholic place of worship. The majority of this paragraph is based on Ryley Leeds Guide (1806) passim. For details of the public buildings in Leeds see K Grady The Georgian Buildings of Leeds and the West Riding (Leeds 1987) pp 160-170.

¹⁵ Burt and Grady The Illustrated History of Leeds pp 60-62. The White Cloth Hall had 1 213 stalls; the yard of the Coloured Cloth Hall could hold 20 000 people. A third hall in Albion Street, the 'Tom Paine Hall' or the 'Irregulars' was used by unapprenticed clothiers. Private schools, such as Kemplay's Academy and Tatum's Quaker School also rose to some prominence in the town. For Leeds during the eighteenth century see also S Burt and K Grady The Merchants' Golden Age: Leeds 1700-1790 (Leeds 1987) passim. For the architecture of the town during the same period see D Linstrum Historic Architecture of Leeds (Leeds 1969) pp 20-28

¹⁶ This paragraph relies heavily on Ryley Leeds Guide (1806) passim

¹⁷ Saturday evening was the busiest time when working people arrived to buy food, redeem pledges from pawnbrokers and 'dissipate a large proportion of (their money) at the alehouse.' See Ryley Leeds Guide (Leeds 1806) p 95. One of the more unusual sales 'in the public market at Leeds' occurred in May 1804 when a husband sold his wife there for five guineas to 'a man acquainted with her *merits*.' See Leeds Mercury 26.05.04

its new editor.¹⁸ From March 1801 to the end of 1806 Baines operated his newspaper from here. Then on the first Saturday of 1807 he announced he had moved to new premises. Number 76 Briggate was on the east side of the street facing onto the junction with Boar Lane and Duncan Street and next to the newsrooms there.¹⁹ He retained it as the paper's base for the rest of his life.

Both the Intelligencer and the Mercury were weekly papers. But whereas the Intelligencer appeared on Mondays, Saturday was publication day for the Mercury. It had been published on that day since 1792 and Baines saw no reason to change.²⁰ When the pressure of news was great Mercury Saturday supplements were often produced. During the general election of July 1802 Baines published the full addresses that both Wilberforce and Lascelles made during the unopposed Yorkshire election of that year.²¹ In 1813, he issued a special supplement on Monday 5 July to commemorate Wellington's victory at Vittoria.²² The following year, on Tuesday 22 March 1814, when news of more British victories spread through the town he produced a special news-sheet. Crowds besieged the Mercury offices and the premises were 'literally invested.' Fearing a serious accident, Baines decreed that ingress should be by one door and egress another. The 'rapid operations of the press ... every hour diminished the number of claimants' and in the end no serious mishap occurred.²³

Two editions of the paper were produced each week. At about 6pm on Friday

¹⁸ Mercury Court was also known as Mercury Yard, Heaton's Yard and Heaton's Court. See Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 46.

¹⁹ Leeds Mercury 03.01.07. The yard behind the newspaper's new office became known as Mercury Office Yard. See Capt Tucker RE Ordnance Survey Map of Leeds sheet no 11 surveyed 1847 under the direction of Captain Yolland RE and published by Lt Col Hall RE, Superintendent 22 April 1850.

²⁰ The only exception he made was when Christmas Day fell on a Saturday when he published his paper on Friday 24 December. The first time he did so was in 1813. See Leeds Mercury 24.12.13. In 1802 when Christmas Day fell on a Saturday he published on that day. James Bowling changed publication day from Tuesday. See Ryley Leeds Guide (1806) p 132. The Leeds Mercury became a tri-weekly in 1855 with the removal of the stamp duty and was published on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays. It became a daily paper in 1861. See Hand' Leeds Exhibition Handbook p 92.

²¹ Leeds Mercury 17.07.02

²² Leeds Mercury 05.07.13.

²³ Leeds Mercury 26.03.14. Everything was not conducted with such exemplary efficiency. Both the numeration and dating of the paper left much to be desired. There was no edition number 1791; the edition dated 06.03.02 and 13.03.02 shared the same number - as indeed did 06.03.24 and 13.03.24; edition number 2793 appeared on 14.11.18 and 12.12.08; edition number 2773 dated 04.07.18 was followed a week later by edition number 2773 and dated 04.07.18!

evening the first edition of between 200 to 300 was run off the presses and distributed by the mail coach to the East Riding. About 11.30pm, the London Express arrived with the latest news. Amendments were made to the Mercury's text and a little before midnight the Saturday second edition was produced.²⁴

When Baines took over the paper the initial circulation hovered between 700-800. By 1804 it had reached 1 500; it had climbed to 1 950 in 1806; and in September 1807 it was selling between 2 000 and 3 000 copies every week.²⁵ When in 1811 the Halifax Journal closed after ten years, Baines saluted its 'honourable' achievements, and boasted that his Leeds Mercury circulated 'more generally in the Western Part of this County than any other Newspaper.' That increased circulation was not achieved without occasional hiccoughs. In July 1809 the postman flatly refused to carry copies of the Mercury to Huddersfield and district. It was 'more than his horse could carry,' he claimed. A fortnight later, however, the postmaster resolved the dispute and the readers of Huddersfield were once more accommodated.²⁶ There were, after all, three Mercury readers to every one Intelligencer reader in that town; a ratio replicated in Craven, Halifax and Bradford. In Ripon the figure was four to one; in Knaresborough and Otley five to one, and in the numerous other clothing districts as much as six to one. In Pontefract the ratio was two to one. Only in Wakefield where the papers were evenly matched and in Barnsley where the three to one ratio was reversed, did the

²⁴ Leeds Mercury 05.09.07. There were exceptions to these times. The second edition of 19.02.14 is date-lined 'Saturday Morning 8am.' Baines comments how he inserted a report on the condition of William Hey (Jun) as late as 10pm on the Friday. Hey had been injured in a road accident earlier in the week. See Leeds Mercury 14.02.11. The Leeds Intelligencer was provided with a copy of the earlier edition.

²⁵ Read Press and People p 210. Accurate circulation figures are difficult to determine. Newspaper stamps issued for 1832-1833 and 1835-55 are one source for assessing the true figure. Prior to that, reliance has to be placed on claims made by the newspapers themselves. Read believes that 'papers of obvious integrity such as the Manchester Guardian, Leeds Mercury, Sheffield Independent, and Manchester Times ... can probably be trusted.' See p 209. It is difficult to compare the Mercury circulation with other papers for 1807. Read's Appendix shows no other papers making claims for that year. The Sheffield Register claimed 2 025 in 1794 and the Manchester Chronicle 4 750 in 1793. Other papers' claims commence much later; Manchester Observer 4 000 in 1819, Sheffield Independent over 1 600 in 1819, Manchester Gazette 1 100 in 1821-24, Manchester Guardian 1 000 in 1822 Manchester Times 1 400 in 1828, Manchester Currier over 1 800 in 1828, Leeds Patriot 1 200 in 1829, Leeds Intelligencer 1 500 in 1831 Manchester and Salford Advertiser over 2 300 in 1832, and Leeds Times over 1 200 in 1835-36. Leeds Mercury comparable figures are; none given for 1819 and 5 200 in 1829. By 1836 the Mercury circulation reached over 5 000. Its peak was 10 274 between April and June 1841. See pp 209-217.

²⁶ Leeds Mercury 02.03.11, 15.07.09, 29.07.09

Intelligencer make any real showing. In Leeds, Baines claimed the circulation was about the average of the other places.²⁷ His rival queried the accuracy of the figures and pertinently asked why it was that his figures for Leeds were so vague when acquiring them for that place was easier than anywhere else. Baines ignored the gibe. Instead, he gleefully commented that for years the Mercury's circulation success had been 'a very sensitive spot' for his adversary. The Intelligencer claimed that the 'cultivated' Mercury readers of the Marsh Lane slum district were clubbing together to pay a farthing each to buy his paper.²⁸ Baines was delighted, though he had no idea how many did this. 'We hope thousands; the more the better,' he sardonically wrote. He cheerfully admitted that croppers and weavers read his Mercury but then so did those who hired servants or were engaged in 'freighting ships ... (and) buying and selling estates.'²⁹

Achieving that remarkable increase in circulation reflected both his skill as a journalist and his flair as a publisher. William Rider, in 1834, suggested another reason:

All night he spouted forth politics at the pot-houses, and encouraged jolly toppers to buy his paper and curse "Tom Wright" ... Thus it was, that his paper obtained such an extensive circulation..³⁰

Not only had he to contend with bitter critics like Rider and the competition of rival newspapers, but the Leeds Mercury, like the rest of the British press, had to face increasingly exacting fiscal measures designed by the Government to raise both revenue and limit freedom of expression. Stamp duty had first been introduced in 1712 at a halfpenny a sheet with a duty on advertisements at one shilling each. By 1797 the newspaper duty was threepence halfpenny, the advertisement duty three shillings each and the cost of buying a provincial paper had risen to sixpence.³¹ This was the cost of the Mercury when Baines took it over. He held it at that until 1809 when the high cost of paper forced the price up to sixpence halfpenny. When he announced the increase he offered a sop to his readers; the Mercury now ranked 'with the first Provincial papers in the United Kingdom,' and its news department was on the point of being

²⁷ Leeds Mercury 14.05.08, 21.05.08

²⁸ Leeds Intelligencer 23.05.08, 29.03.13

²⁹ Leeds Mercury 03.04.13, 14.05.08

³⁰ Rider The Demagogue p 5

³¹ Read Press and People pp 66-67

‘nearly doubled.’³²

He achieved this remarkable turn round of the Mercury’s circulation fortunes by applying the same strategies to his publishing business that the great entrepreneurs of his day had done in manufacturing. He identified a need in society, adapted his production to meet that need and was prepared to employ the latest innovations in supplying it.³³ Two weeks after arriving in Mercury Court, Baines began a clear out and advertised that he had ‘to be disposed of a quantity of printing materials’ plus two large presses, a large quantity of type, cases and frames.³⁴ The kind of handpresses in use at the time were made of wood and had a tendency to smudge type. By 1809 he had taken advantage of the Earl of Stanhope’s new printing innovation. This adapted the principles of the old hand-operated seventeenth century presses but was made of cast-iron. Though cumbersome, it was nevertheless manageable and considerably reduced the demanding effort required on pressmen to execute every manoeuvre of the printing process.³⁵ Thus in October that year, he proudly announced that his Mercury was being printed ‘at the Stanhope Press;’ and, as if to emphasise the change this would bring about, introduced six columns per page in place of the previous five.³⁶ The Leeds Intelligencer did not install its Stanhope press until July 1813.³⁷

Most editors were seeking to improve printing techniques. On Tuesday 29 November 1814 the first leading article in The Times heralded ‘the greatest improvement connected with printing, since the discovery of the art itself.’³⁸ On the Saturday of that week Baines featured a report of this use of the world’s first steam printing machine, the Koenig Press. The following week he described how in the early part of May 1814 he had travelled to London to see this major breakthrough in printing

³² Leeds Mercury 30.09.09. Read Press and People pp 66-67. Other papers also increased their prices. See Leeds Intelligencer 21.08.09

³³ In Leeds itself he had three classic examples to follow in Benjamin Gott, John Marshall and Matthew Murray, the engineer. See Burt and Grady The Illustrated History of Leeds pp 47-92. See also Taylor Worthies of Leeds; Murray pp 298-302, Gott pp 377-380 and Marshall pp 411-415.

³⁴ Leeds Mercury 21.03.01

³⁵ Read Press and People p 63 and A Smith The Newspaper an International History (London 1979) p 80

³⁶ Leeds Mercury 07.10.09

³⁷ Gibb and Beckwith Yorkshire Post p 4. See also Leeds Intelligencer 09.08.13 for its use of the ‘Stanhopian Press.’

³⁸ Anon The History of The Times; ‘The Thunderer’ in the Making 1785-1841 (London 1935) p 115

technology. At Mr Donkin's in Bermondsey, he was fascinated by a machine capable of printing between 1 000 and 1 400 sheets an hour. It was, Baines claimed, the same type of machine now in use at John Walter's Times. But Baines declined to install one in Leeds, feeling, no doubt, that his present circulation did not warrant such capital outlay. It was not until June 1837 that steam was first used to print the Mercury.³⁹ His attention was also directed to the different founts. He kept abreast of new fount designs and varied the type used in his paper to enable him to enlarge it by increasing the amount of news he offered in his four pages and to make for easier reading.⁴⁰

Within six weeks of taking over the paper, he emphasised the change in ownership by introducing a new masthead. The Leeds coat-of-arms and Mercury brandishing a caduceus were dropped and a neat gothic style banner replaced it.⁴¹ By 1809 he was simply using the Leeds arms.⁴² Another change he wrought in the appearance of the paper was the use of a black mourning border. Its first appeared in 1806 to acknowledge the demise of his Whig favourite Charles James Fox. He had made no such gesture when Pitt died only months earlier. Whether this decision was made to ensure he could not be accused of hypocrisy - he had regularly condemned 'the crooked policy of the school of Pitt' - or was an act of personal, petulant prejudice, will never be known.⁴³

Baines also realised that visual information had a role to play in imparting information and thus as the war with France dragged on in its different locations he would occasionally include, a 'chart of the seat of war.' These were crude, simple maps showing the approximate positions of the armies in the Netherlands, Portugal and

³⁹ Read Press and People p 78. Baines did install new handpresses to speed up production in 1828. See Leeds Mercury 10.05.28

⁴⁰ Leeds Mercury 05.03.03, 07.01.09. Baines announced his intention of introducing William Caslon's new fount See Leeds Mercury 24.12.08

⁴¹ Leeds Mercury 11.04.01. He reverted to the old masthead when he moved offices. See Leeds Mercury 03.01.07.

⁴² An escutcheon charged with a fleece and a chief containing Danby's three mullets. This was surmounted with the Prince of Wales feathers and beneath was the motto 'Early Intelligence.' Leeds Mercury 20.05.09. At the time Baines was still an enthusiastic supporter of the Prince of Wales. See Leeds Mercury 01.12.10. The Leeds Intelligencer, now known as Wright's Leeds Intelligencer, also used the Leeds arms at this time with the motto 'Hic et ubique.' See Leeds Intelligencer 28.08.09

⁴³ Leeds Mercury 25.01.06, 20.09.06. Baines was still carping about Pitt's policies years after his death. See Leeds Mercury 19.07.17, 05.01.22. His first royal mourning border appeared around the page announcing the death of Princess Charlotte. See Leeds Mercury 08.11.17

Spain, where Salamanca and Valladolid were clearly designated.⁴⁴ In 1811, he accompanied a report on a new comet with a diagram-illustration showing its position in relation to Ursa Major. In 1812 he used a very detailed and neatly labelled engraving of the steam engine, 'Mr Blenkinsop's Machine,' at Middleton Colliery.⁴⁵ The first time Baines used the technique of labelling illustrative material was to accompany the report of a murder case. In 1806, Richard Patch shot Isaac Blight in London. The Mercury carried a plan of the area where the murder had been committed. It showed the house, yard and ships on the adjacent Thames, all clearly designated. Supplementing this was a picture of Patch himself standing at the bar during his trial.⁴⁶ The only other occasion when Baines resorted to using an illustration in those early years was of John Bellingham and that when the paper carried the news of Spencer Perceval's assassination.⁴⁷ Additional illustrations he used were simple woodcuts to embellish the Mercury's advertisements, and these, at times, did allow the public to see things they may not have seen before; Sadler's balloon was a case in point.⁴⁸

The staff required to produce early nineteenth century newspapers was relatively small. The Leeds Mercury was no exception. Even by 1826, less than a dozen men were employed to produce the paper.⁴⁹ Within a matter of three months of taking over, Baines was advertising for a new pressman 'Master of his business.' The following year an ambitious printing project 'on a voluminous periodical work' forced him to seek two compositors and another pressman - 'liberal wages will be given.' In November, he was looking for a journeyman printer 'who thoroughly understands his business.'⁵⁰ For the most part, the names of the men who, in those early years, helped launch the Mercury on its long and successful career, remain forgotten. Only a few have survived. Young David Battersby was an apprentice on the paper in 1804; 'esteemed for unremitting industry,' he was just nineteen when he died that year after

⁴⁴ Leeds Mercury 20.10.10, 20.04.11, 22.08.12, 19.02.14

⁴⁵ Leeds Mercury 21.09.11, 18.07.12. The Leeds Intelligencer 27.07.12 also carried the identical illustration of the same engine. The Mercury carried no other illustrations during this period.

⁴⁶ Leeds Mercury 12.04.06. The Times had featured a similar plan on 07.04.06

⁴⁷ Leeds Mercury 23.05.12

⁴⁸ Leeds Mercury 10.09.14

⁴⁹ Read Press and People p 64 quoting Leeds Mercury 13.05.26.

⁵⁰ Leeds Mercury 27.06.01, 17.07.02, 06.11.02. The 'voluminous periodical work' was the ten volume Works of the Rev P Doddridge DD published between 1802 and 1805.

a 'long illness.'⁵¹ On a happier note, in 1810, David Brayshaw, one of the printers, was married to Mrs Susannah Hirst.⁵² Baines's family was more readily acknowledged. In 1804, he employed his brother-in-law, John Talbot, as his first reporter and also to act as accountant and assistant editor.⁵³ On moving to 76 Briggate in 1807, Baines set up his younger brother, John Baines, in the front office of the Mercury as a stationer, specialising in selling schoolbooks.⁵⁴ Edward remained a sleeping partner.

His reporters in those early years also remained anonymous. In March 1806 'anxious to render the Leeds Mercury the vehicle of every species of information' Baines despatched a reporter to York Assizes for the first time.⁵⁵ Other reporters he used were stringers; that is, contributors employed on a casual basis. He employed such stringers two years later when, in the spring of 1808, the effects of Napoleon's Continental System was beginning to bite deep into the British economy. With the cotton trade from the United States virtually strangled, Lancashire weavers found themselves and their families on the point of starvation. Resentment led to frustration; frustration to civil discord. By the end of May riots had broken out in the county.⁵⁶ In the first week of June, Baines turned to an 'intelligent friend resident in Manchester' to furnish him with the details of the 'tumults in Lancashire.' A week later he was drawing on inhabitants of Manchester, Bolton and Rochdale to elaborate on the situation.⁵⁷ Three years later violence again erupted, this time in Nottinghamshire when Luddism made its first appearance. On 23 November, he carried the first of a series of reports from the troubled area describing how a rioter was shot dead and an employer's home gutted.⁵⁸ In January his reporter commented that 'a regiment of foot would be necessary for the protection of the town.' The details Baines published - including the

⁵¹ Leeds Mercury 09.06.04

⁵² Leeds Mercury 10.03.10

⁵³ Leeds Mercury 26.08.48. See also Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 56 and Read Press and People p 78. Talbot remained at the Mercury until his death in 1839. Baines described him as 'assistant editor' in his Directory of Yorkshire vol I p 81.

⁵⁴ Leeds Mercury 04.07.07, 26.08.48. The address of the stationer's was listed as 77 Briggate according to Baines's Directory of Yorkshire vol I p 103. Later the business became known as Baines and Newsome when Reid Newsome became a partner.

⁵⁵ Leeds Mercury 08.03.06. He continued to do so every year thereafter.

⁵⁶ Bryant Years of Victory pp 225-226

⁵⁷ Leeds Mercury 04.06.08, 11.06.08

⁵⁸ Leeds Mercury 23.11.11, 21.12.11.

contents of a letter from General Ludd - were followed avidly by the croppers of the West Riding. Legend has it that the Mercury's reports were actually read out in the local workshops to eager listeners.⁵⁹ Lt General Maitland concurred. Viewing the situation from Wakefield in August 1812, he commented on the Mercury's influence among the discontents. Writing to John Beckett, Permanent Under-Secretary at the Home Office, he remarked on 'the Leeds Mercury, a very mischievous Paper (which is) universally read among them.'⁶⁰ Oastler went even further asserting that as far as the Luddites were concerned it was 'reading the Mercury that sent them to the gallows.'⁶¹ By December 1812, the Mercury's Huddersfield Correspondent was commenting that Luddism in the area was being 'raged with more than usual violence.'⁶² When in January 1813, George Mellor and two companions were executed at York for the murder of William Horsfall, Baines featured an eyewitness account of the death of the young cropper from Longroyd Bridge near Huddersfield in a Mercury Extraordinary or supplement.⁶³

But Baines did not believe the Mercury should dwell totally in the 'boisterous region of politics.' In June 1801 he began his theatre criticisms;⁶⁴ and in May 1809 he started reviewing the Northern Society show at the Exhibition Rooms in Albion Street. He paused to consider why critics tend to 'expose blemishes rather than point out beauties,' but refused to 'enter into (a) metaphysical analysis ... of this perverse habit.' Yet he was perverse enough to condemn Mr Haugh's portraits as 'cold and lifeless,' a

⁵⁹ Thompson EP Making of the English Working Class pp 605-608. Baines was conscious of the Mercury's responsibility. When 'J T' of Halifax wrote about a letter that had appeared in the Leeds Intelligencer on the disturbances at Rawfolds Mill, Baines felt 'it our duty to insert, but we must ... cautiously abstain from every measure calculated to reanimate the dying embers of discord.' See Leeds Mercury 24.04.13

⁶⁰ PRO, Home Office Correspondence; 42.126/63. Lt General Maitland to John Beckett 29.08.12

⁶¹ Oastler A Well Seasoned Christmas Pie p 31

⁶² Leeds Mercury 18.01.12, 05.12.12.

⁶³ Leeds Mercury 09.01.13. The report was disputed in the Leeds Intelligencer by 'Attentive Hearer' and rebutted by 'Diligent Enquirer' in the Mercury 23.01.13. The Chaplain at York finally offered a solution to the dispute. See Leeds Mercury 30.01.13.

⁶⁴ Leeds Mercury 13.06.01. He reviewed The Provoked Husband and The Deserter very favourably though he pointed out with regard to Mr Matthews's 'well conceived' grimace, 'it is possible to have too much of a good thing.' Baines was rather parochial in his musical tastes and was particularly critical of 'Italian compositions' which the 'majority of hearers would have understood ... equally well if they consisted entirely of Tol de rol lal's.' He argued such music was not required 'in this place; we have excellent native productions.' See Leeds Mercury 05.12.12

criticism the Doncaster artist responded to with some fervour.⁶⁵ April 1811 saw a correspondent calling himself 'Amateur' offering his services to write on 'Painters, Pictures and other matter relating to the Fine Arts.' Baines was delighted to accept the proposal and the following week his art critic attended the opening of the Northern Society show, held once more in the Exhibition Rooms.⁶⁶ Sport also found an outlet through his columns, be it a round by round account of the Cribb-Molineux fight or the 'degrading exposure of the female character' in the 500 guineas cricket match between 'eleven *women* of Hampshire and eleven of Surrey.'⁶⁷

The variety of the contents of the Mercury gave the paper its wide appeal, a fact corroborated by its increasing circulation.⁶⁸ Baines knew his readership. Many were Whig-dissenting sympathisers engaged in commerce and manufacturing. Thus in August 1801 he began featuring regular agricultural and commercial reports as well as shipping news from Hull and Liverpool.⁶⁹ Moreover, he had the acumen to listen to his critics. When in October that year his 'Commercial Correspondent' raised the issue of featuring the 'weekly current price,' he arranged for a new fount to be produced so that by 14 November he could publish the 'state of the London markets,' and 'a very extensive and correct *Statement of Current Prices*' plus a promise to insert regularly the London Gazette's list of bankrupts.⁷⁰ In December 1802, when criticisms were levelled about him curtailing certain foreign and domestic reports, he promised to rectify the problem 'as soon as necessary Arrangements can be made.' By March the following year he had enlarged the paper's content.⁷¹

⁶⁵ Leeds Mercury 06.05.09, 13.05.09

⁶⁶ Leeds Mercury 13.04.11, 20.04.11

⁶⁷ Leeds Mercury 05.10.11, 28.09.11. After the match was played Baines relented and acknowledged that 'great skill and dexterity were displayed on both sides.' Leeds Mercury 12.10.11. Tom Cribb's victory over the American ex-slave, Tom Molineaux, was greeted by a wave of xenophobia. The general popularity of pugilism, at that time as many as 20 000 gathered to see such fights, may explain why Baines devoted so much space to the report. See J Ford This Sporting Land (London 1977) p 20

⁶⁸ Generally its contents were of a serious nature but Baines showed a sense of humour in those early years. It is hard to imagine his report that dollmakers were growing alarmed at the number of elopements from boarding schools, and that 'the little Misses have determined in future to *manufacture their own babies*' would have found its way into the paper of a later period. See Leeds Mercury 16.11.05

⁶⁹ Leeds Mercury 08.08.01, 15.08.01

⁷⁰ Leeds Mercury 17.10.01, 14.11.01

⁷¹ Leeds Mercury 25.12.02, 05.03.03

Advertisements were an important source of revenue for any newspaper and the Leeds Mercury was no exception. Nevertheless, when the news warranted it, Baines was prepared to hold in abeyance 'those that did not press for immediate insertion' in order to give adequate space for the details of some important event. This he did when reports of the victory at Trafalgar in 1805 and the arrest of Sir Francis Burdett in 1810 reached Leeds.⁷² The war with France understandably occupied column after column with much of the information culled from the London Gazette and other London papers. He splashed the report of Wellington's victory at Salamanca across four columns of his front page though he usually used the front page for advertisements with just one column devoted to extracts from the London Gazette.⁷³ He had previously used his front page for the occasional piece of news, such as the announcement that the Honourable Henry Lascelles had withdrawn from the General Election of 1806.⁷⁴

Politics and the Leeds Mercury were inseparable. Thus political matter was always featured strongly in its pages, whether it was of a local, national or international nature. Only two months after occupying the editor's chair Baines introduced a Parliamentary Register that would 'exhibit to our readers a complete epitome of Parliamentary proceedings.'⁷⁵ He published Madame Toussaint's private letter describing her husband's sufferings 'from Bonaparte's tyranny.'⁷⁶ He included 'without abridgment' the Moniteur's full text of Napoleon's speech to the legislative body,⁷⁷

The local events which found their place in the Mercury's pages were varied and detailed; a vivid description of the town's illumination held to celebrate the fall of Bonaparte in 1814;⁷⁸ or the ascent of Mr Sadler by balloon from Pontefract the same year.⁷⁹ Crime inevitably found its way into Baines's paper; crimes of national

⁷² Leeds Mercury 09.11.05, 14.04.10. Such was the increased demand for news of Trafalgar and Nelson's death, Baines had to cater for it by using unstamped paper. See Anon Thoresby Society vol p xi

⁷³ Leeds Mercury 22.08.12

⁷⁴ Leeds Mercury 01.11.06

⁷⁵ Leeds Mercury 16.05.01. Previously a column entitled 'Imperial Parliament' had carried summarised reports of debates. See Leeds Mercury 14.03.01

⁷⁶ Leeds Mercury 20.10.04

⁷⁷ Leeds Mercury 27.02.13

⁷⁸ Leeds Mercury 16.04.14. A somewhat premature celebration as it turned out.

⁷⁹ Leeds Mercury 17.09.14. Sadler flew some fourteen miles to Grimston Lodge near Tadcaster in fifty minutes.

importance like the Luddites executed at York, or squalid local affairs like a sordid rape case. There were also entertaining features like fashion reports and poems.⁸⁰

II

However, the two most important features in Baines's paper were the opinions he expressed through his editorials, and the opinions he enabled other people to express through the Leeds Mercury's letter columns. These were the twin pillars on which the whole concept of Baines's Mercury rested. Those letters brought to public view the issues that concerned the men, and occasionally women, of the West Riding and beyond. Not all letters received could be published; others had to be altered.⁸¹ But those that did appear offered solutions, launched criticisms, or simply entertained. Their value was that they gave an opportunity for laymen, as opposed to the politicians, journalists or men of letters, to put forward their personal views to the public at large. Baines's own views he expressed week by week in the leaders that gave him his reputation. In them he espoused the Whig-Liberal cause, speaking 'the language of the middle class,'⁸² and seeking to mould the opinions of his West Riding readers, an act which, at that time, was in itself a 'revolutionary intention in a provincial newspaper.'⁸³ It is wrong to think of Baines as the inventor of editorial writing. There had been experiments some years previously in the Sheffield Register and the Manchester Herald, whilst Benjamin Flower's Cambridge Intelligencer carried a leader virtually every week during 1801.⁸⁴ And in 1795 both the Leeds Intelligencer and the Leeds Mercury regularly carried short editorial observations on a variety of themes.⁸⁵ But it was Baines who used editorial analysis to such effect.⁸⁶

⁸⁰ Leeds Mercury 18.07.12, 09.01.13, 17.08.11, 15.08.01, 18.12.13

⁸¹ For a detailed examination of the content of such letters see D Thornton 'A Letter to the Editor; Readers' Letters to the Leeds Press 1795-1850': Aspects of Leeds ed L Stevenson-Tate. (Barnsley 1998) pp 37-56 Sometimes he had no room to include a letter, even one sent in French. 'Nous sommes fort obligés à notre correspondante, 'Amelie' pour sa communication; mais nous regrettons l'impossibilité de l'admettre faute de place.' See Leeds Mercury 19.03.08. For an amended letter see 'Philosotes' on house tax Leeds Mercury 07.01.09

⁸² Fraser NH vol XXXI p 211

⁸³ Read Press and People p 77

⁸⁴ Ibid p 77. See also Cambridge Intelligencer editions for 1801. See also Chapter One above.

⁸⁵ Leeds Intelligencer 09.02.95, 23.02.95, 13.04.95 etc Leeds Mercury 17.01.95, 07.02.95, 28.02.95

⁸⁶ For a detailed analysis of Baines's editorials see Thornton Social and Political Thought of Edward Baines passim.

Not everyone agreed with his forthright, opinionated and dogmatic comments.⁸⁷ In January 1805 the Leeds Intelligencer announced that from that date the paper would be conducted by 'Thomas Wright and Son.' The son was twenty-one year-old Griffith Wright (Junior), grandson of the founder, a Tory, an anti-Jacobin, a true 'Church and King man.' That January edition contained a promise to its readers and a pithy rejoinder to the numerous editorials Baines had featured; the Intelligencer's content would be 'unencumbered with a load of obtrusive opinions.'⁸⁸ Griffith Wright (Junior) brought to the Intelligencer office a political passion to rival Baines's, an acerbic wit and a 'power of sarcasm ... not to be provoked with impunity.'⁸⁹

At the beginning of March that year the Leeds Mercury had recorded the death of the forty-eight year-old Intelligencer editor.⁹⁰ Griffith Wright (Junior) took up his father's pen and embarked on a course of encumbering his own journal for the next decade with a series vitriolic outbursts, directed, in the main, at Mercury Court and the editor who resided there.⁹¹

Baines had, as far as Wright was concerned, 'bespattered with the foulest venom of sedition' the pages of his Mercury. Nothing 'Mr Mercury' wrote was 'dictated by principle.' He was but 'the great promoter of discord, faction and disunion in this neighbourhood ... (an) ostentatious, vaunting puffing and pother of a neighbouring Printer.'⁹² Nor were these attacks the sole province of Wright. There were others who felt equally as bitter about 'Mr Mercury' and unleashed their wrath in the columns of the Intelligencer at a man whose conduct was 'hostile to the real advantage of this country.' So wrote 'Britannicus', whilst 'A Briton,' in a series of letters to Wright's paper, classed Baines as a 'hired traitor.' 'True Blue' was convinced, 'The *Devil* must surely preside over his *press*.' And 'An Englishman' was convinced that the Mercury's 'poison' was already reducing 'this happy island to anarchy and

⁸⁷ 'Ephraim' in the Intelligencer said as much; 'Is it any symptom of a wise man to be dogmatical?' See Leeds Intelligencer 06.02.09.

⁸⁸ Leeds Intelligencer 07.01.05

⁸⁹ Taylor Worthies of Leeds p 418

⁹⁰ Leeds Mercury 02.03.05

⁹¹ Wright remained active as editor until 1815 when he employed George Mudie of the Nottingham Gazette to take over. He sold the Intelligencer in 1818 only days after the death of his grandfather, the founder, Griffith Wright. See M A Gibb and F Beckwith Yorkshire Post p 8 and Anon Thoresby Society vol XL p xiii

⁹² Leeds Intelligencer 17.11.06, 25.04.08, 16.05.08

confusion.⁹³

Baines responded. The Intelligencer's 'Printer, is open to all sorts of dark and cowardly insinuations'. Here was a man who 'instead of a sword, seizes a *muck* fork.' His paper was no more than 'a mere second rate publication'.⁹⁴ Undeterred by their attacks, Baines continued his evangelizing mission to foster social and political improvement and create an educated society. But the education required had to reach beyond the bounds of political polemics. Some issues were of immediate public interest like the position of the warning beacons if the invasion came.⁹⁵ Some were designed to improve the quality of everyday life. Health was a particular field where Baines felt the Mercury could help initiate such changes. In 1801, a virulent fever epidemic swept through Leeds.⁹⁶ In December, it was still rife. Baines supported the proposal that a House of Recovery should be established in the town and was convinced that 'so excellent an institution will meet with every support.'⁹⁷ In February the following year, Dr Disney Thorp, a physician at Leeds Infirmary, published a pamphlet on Hints and Observations Relative to the Prevention of Contagious Fevers. Baines was delighted. Dr Thorp's handling of the subject was 'not treated in a professional style but a popular style.' Its one failing was that it was not explicit enough on the introduction of quicklime as a whitewash. To rectify that, Baines promised that in the next edition of the Mercury he would include a recipe for making 'a milk paint, the basis of which is lime.'⁹⁸ In 1805, he asked his relative, John Baines, the Masham surgeon, to contribute an article on cow pox explaining just how effective the remedy was and he urged the Leeds poor to take advantage of the free vaccinations available to thwart smallpox.⁹⁹

Baines recognised there were other responsibilities his paper had to

⁹³ Leeds Intelligencer 04.01.08, 15.02.08, 22.06.07, 20.01.12

⁹⁴ Leeds Mercury 14.01.09, 05.12.07, 27.08.14

⁹⁵ Leeds Mercury 19.11.03. The nearest beacon to Leeds was on Seacroft Moor Top.

⁹⁶ W Parsons and W White Annals, History and Guide of Leeds and York vol I (Leeds 1830) p 195. Among the dead were two 'young surgeons.' In one case it proved a cure! William Atha, a 'pauper lunatic' from Holbeck Workhouse regained his reason after two years of wandering the town dressed in old 'regimentals' and demanding that Pitt should be hanged!

⁹⁷ Leeds Mercury 05.12.01. Leeds General Infirmary did not cater for people suffering from venereal disease or infectious fevers. See Ryley Leeds Guide (1806) p 44

⁹⁸ Leeds Mercury 20.02.02

⁹⁹ Leeds Mercury 30.03.05. John Baines showed that out of 300 cases he had had inoculated not one had contracted smallpox. For the small number taking advantage of inoculation see Leeds Mercury 16.11.05.

acknowledge; then act upon or not act upon as the case might be. When a measles epidemic swept through the town in 1809, he refused to publish the fact until it was over, for fear of 'augmenting' alarm.¹⁰⁰ Another example related to the case of William Newell of Dewsbury, who was accused of being a deserter and wrongly imprisoned. After Patrick Brontë had sent him the facts of the case, Baines offered to publish all the relevant correspondence.¹⁰¹ Then, when Wilberforce intervened, Baines refused to publish; to do so would be 'nugatory,' he explained. Only when Newell was finally freed did he publish Patrick Brontë's long letter giving the details.¹⁰² Most times, however, he took a positive approach offering practical help either to groups or to individuals. With local manufacturers 'sinking rapidly into poverty and decay' as a result of the war¹⁰³ the Mercury published a letter from 'A Yorkshireman' on the depression that was affecting the wool trade in the West Riding. The correspondent pointed out how successful the trade had remained in the west of England and advised his readers to use prime wools, spin wefts slacker and dress more carefully.¹⁰⁴ Baines offered to pass on such information to any manufacturer who cared to contact him. When fourteen year-old Harriet Wilson of Lucas's Yard in Marsh Lane was working in a local factory, she was caught up in a machine which 'tore off one of her arms and so dreadfully mangled the other as to require amputation.' He pleaded with Leeds ladies to befriend her, asking them to co-operate with her employers, and provide Harriet with an education to 'prevent her becoming a wretched mendicant dependent on society and precarious charity.' Seven months later he was still urging public support for her. By 1813, he had reached the nation's conscience; subscriptions arrived from the Duke of Devonshire and the Lords Dundas, Fitzwilliam and Harewood as well as William Wilberforce.¹⁰⁵

The Mercury was the main vehicle for Baines's political and commercial

¹⁰⁰ Leeds Mercury 10.06.09

¹⁰¹ Leeds Mercury 11.11.10. see also J Lock and W T Dixon A Man of Sorrow; The Life, Letters and Times of the Rev Patrick Brontë 1771-1861 (London 1965) p 72

¹⁰² Leeds Mercury 01.12.10, 15.12.10. Brontë wrote under the pseudonym of 'Sydney.' See Lock and Dixon Life of Patrick Brontë p 74.

¹⁰³ Leeds Mercury 31.10.07

¹⁰⁴ Leeds Mercury 25.06.08. Croppers 'dressed' cloth. See B Nelson The Woollen Industry of Leeds (Leeds 1980) p 13.

¹⁰⁵ Leeds Mercury 09.12.09, 21.07.10, 30.01.13. The Leeds luminaries Bischoff, Baines, Beckett and Hey were all subscribers. The receipts were invested in Government securities.

activities. But he also developed a range of other commercial enterprises.¹⁰⁶ In 1802, Baines was acting as agent for Beetham's Patent Washing Machine¹⁰⁷ and five years later, he established his brother John as a stationer. However, his main subsidiary business was printing and publishing. John Ryley employed him in 1806 to print The Leeds Guide Including a Sketch of the Environs and Kirkstall Abbey, and two years later Ryley again employed him to produce The Leeds Guide; Giving a Concise History of that Rich and Populous Town, and the Circumjacent Villages and Kirkstall Abbey.¹⁰⁸ He published practical guides such as The Desideratum of Penmanship by G C Rapiet,¹⁰⁹ and more academic works by divines like the doctors Watt, Doddridge and Williams whilst with Edward Parsons, he produced a new edition of Daniel Neal's History of the Puritans.¹¹⁰

Among his most successful publishing ventures were his topical pamphlets. His An Impartial Account of the Life and Death of the Late Right Honourable William Pitt was available to the public even before the late Prime Minister's coffin had been made; 'the plate upon the outside is not yet finished' the text commented.¹¹¹ Other pamphlets had a more local appeal. Reports of crime, particularly of a salacious and violent nature, had long been recognised by editors as holding a fascination for the public and thus being commercially viable publishing ventures. Baines, also quickly realised this. At about 7.10pm on Good Friday, 12 April 1811, sixteen year-old, Harriet Halliday, 'a rather pretty girl,' was raped in a stable off Briggate in Leeds. The culprit was an apprenticed wool sorter, nineteen year-old William Hodgson. In August, Hodgson stood trial and was found guilty. The following week Baines announced that a one shilling pamphlet would be available in seven days' time of The Trial at Length of William

¹⁰⁶ Despite this his tombstone in Woodhouse Cemetery, now within the precincts of the University of Leeds, bears no mention of him being editor of the Leeds Mercury. See Thornton Social and Political Thought of Edward Baines p 337

¹⁰⁷ Leeds Mercury 13.11.02. It was capable of cleaning 190 sheets in ten hours.

¹⁰⁸ It was simply a reprint of the previous book, even to the extent of including the same errata! See J Ryley Leeds Guide: Giving a Concise History of the Rich and Populous Town, and the Circumjacent Villages and Kirkstall Abbey (Leeds 1808)

¹⁰⁹ Leeds Mercury 31.03.10

¹¹⁰ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 56

¹¹¹ Baines Life of Pitt The book, which Baines published, carried no author's name. Credit of authorship is given to Baines as much of it is verbatim with the report in the Leeds Mercury 08.02.06. Even so, some of this report may have been lifted from the London papers.

Hodgson 'taken by a shorthand writer' and included in it would be 'a GENUINE LETTER from WILLIAM HODGSON to his MOTHER after conviction.'¹¹² His greatest pamphlet success, however, was the Extraordinary Life and Character of Mary Bateman, the Yorkshire Witch. Mary, was a notorious local confidence trickster. At York Assizes in 1809, she was found guilty of the murder of Rebecca Perigo at Bramley. Baines devoted three and half columns of his Mercury to an extensive report of the case and announced that the following Saturday he would be publishing a pamphlet, The Life of Mary Bateman, at one shilling. On publication day he gave his reasons for bringing this to the public's attention;

to hold her up as a Beacon both to the present and future ages; to deter some from treading in her footsteps ... persons purchasing the Book with this in view will be furnished with them at 9d a dozen.¹¹³

Baines claimed it had a certain moral value for it could be 'disseminate(d) amongst workpeople' but it was also a commercial masterstroke. In four days 1 000 copies had been bought; in two months 7 000; and eventually, 'at least 10 000 copies were sold'¹¹⁴

Baines had long been planning a major publishing project for himself and one which would see him exchange the role of journalist for that of historian; of editor for that of scholar.¹¹⁵ In April 1814, Baines made the announcement that he had decided to produce a popular history of the recent conflict with France. It was a venture that would enhance his reputation and become a significant success.

In the Press - Price One Guinea in Boards. HISTORY OF THE WAR, from the Rupture of the Peace of Amiens in the Year 1802 to the Year 1814 compiled by Edward Baines from official Documents and other Sources of Political Information, with Strict Impartiality, and a

¹¹² Leeds Mercury 17.08.11. See also E Baines The Trial of William Hodgson (Leeds 1811)

¹¹³ Leeds Mercury 18.03.09, 25.03.09, 01.04.09

¹¹⁴ Leeds Mercury 01.04.09 to 03.06.09. Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 69. It appears Baines published this in conjunction with John Davies see E Baines Extraordinary Life and Character of Mary Bateman, the Yorkshire Witch (Leeds 1809) title page. No author is actually cited and only an occasional paragraph is taken from the Mercury's reports. Davies published the 12th edition on his own. Topham's engraving of Mary was redrawn, the type was reset but the text was retained verbatim. See J Davies Extraordinary Life and Character of Mary Bateman, the Yorkshire Witch 12th ed (Leeds 1811) title page. There were also other pamphlets on Mary available: Webb and Millington The Yorkshire Witch or the Extraordinary Life and Character of Mary Bateman (Leeds 1809); J Johnson The Life and Trial of Mary Bateman the 'Yorkshire Witch' (Leeds 1809)

¹¹⁵ Another excellent example of a twentieth century journalist successfully completing such a transfer was William Shirer of the Chicago Tribune and later CBS. Hugh Trevor-Roper in the Sunday Times described Shirer's The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich as 'the standard, indeed the classic history of Nazism.' See Sunday Times 06.11.1960

scrupulous Regard to historic Truth ... sold either entire or in numbers (6d each)¹¹⁶

In all it would take him about two and half years to complete his task¹¹⁷ but his public was not kept waiting. On 21 May 1814 he proudly declared 'This Day is published - History of the Wars of the French Revolution - Number 1 (6d).' The change of title, if commercially more appealing, was somewhat unfortunate. In 1803 Alexander Stephens had published The History of the Wars Which Arose out of the French Revolution. That similarity of titles would eventually encourage his enemies when they embarked on their campaign accusing him of plagiarism.¹¹⁸

III

They were wars with which he was well familiar. As a young Preston apprentice printer, he had watched the French Revolution 'burst upon an astonished world'¹¹⁹ and, following the execution of Louis XVI, saw the revolutionary government declare war on Britain. He had seen the British army humiliated in the Low Countries but her navy triumph on the seas at Camperdown, St Vincent and the Battle of the Nile. By that March day, when the first editions of Baines's Mercury left Lower Briggate, Bonaparte had been established as First Consul; and though Britain controlled the seas, France was now reigning supreme in Europe.

Eight years of endless, seemingly futile, conflict were intolerable. Baines believed that war was 'the diminution of the human species' and this one had struck at the 'very root of our commerce' and 'national happiness.' Nothing short of 'an enlightened administration (could) save the country.' When Pitt resigned the seals of office, and brought to an end an administration that was 'the most calamitous that ever afflicted this country' there was hope. By the end of March the Mercury was carrying rumours of 'an English messenger being sent to France.' Despite English newspapers

¹¹⁶ Leeds Mercury 16.04.14

¹¹⁷ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 84. The completed work occupied two quarto volumes. In 1820-23 it was extended into his four volume History of the Reign of George III. See Chapter Four below.

¹¹⁸ A Stephens The History of the Wars Which Arose Out of the French Revolution to Which is Prefixed a Review of the Causes of That Event. (London 1803). The Leeds Intelligencer levelled the allegations of plagiarism. See Chapter Four below.

¹¹⁹ Baines History of the Wars of the French Revolution vol I p 2. The general details of the French Revolutionary Wars and the Napoleonic Wars are taken from J Innes '1660-1801' and D Englander '1801-1914' in The History Today Companion to British History ed J Gardiner and N Wenborn (London 1995) passim and also Bryant Years of Victory passim.

'indulging in a vein of low abuse' against the French Government, by October 1801 peace had been achieved. Baines was delighted and so were his West Riding readers.

We have letters from Bradford, Halifax, Wakefield, Huddersfield, Otley etc ... stating, that the animation and joy produced in these places by the return of Peace beggar all description.¹²⁰

But Baines was less than rapturous about the possibility of Bonaparte being elected First Consul for life; the tyrant of liberty had 'struck its death blow.' Nevertheless, after a vitriolic attack on the Corsican's ambitions, he claimed he would suspend his observations until the 'French nation' decided. When the people of France approved, and the French press published a eulogy of Bonaparte, the Mercury presented its entire text but added an aphoristic rider on 'this fulsome trash. *O tempora! O Mores!*' Two months later, the fragile Peace of Amiens was beginning to fracture. Piedmont and Elba were annexed; the Swiss threatened. Baines resorted to irony: 'The Great Consul' would probably 'take the whole country under his disinterested protection - how kind!'¹²¹ Baines's one heartfelt hope was that Addington's composure and 'the adoption of a firm and conciliating conduct' might induce Bonaparte to abandon 'his unjust and tyrannical proceedings towards neighbouring states.' If he did not 'the energies of the whole country will be roused'¹²²

On Wednesday 18 May 1803, the British Cabinet declared war. Baines still clung to the desperate hope that the Emperor of Russia might mediate between the belligerents but at the same time left no-one in doubt where he and his paper stood in the patriotic stakes.¹²³

Is there then a man with a drop of British blood in his veins that would suffer himself, his family and his country to be placed in the power of the French Consul and his enraged soldiery?¹²⁴

If we unite as one Man, and ... convince imperious France, that though in common times we may be distinguished by party names ... in the hour of danger, every name is lost in that of BRITON.¹²⁵

A July meeting was called at the Rotation Office in Leeds to express patriotic support

¹²⁰ Leeds Mercury 14.03.01, 21.03.01, 28.03.01, 28.03.01, 29.08.01, 10.10.01

¹²¹ Leeds Mercury 22.05.02, 28.08.02, 09.10.02

¹²² Leeds Mercury 16.10.02, 23.10.02

¹²³ Leeds Mercury 11.06.03, 25.06.03

¹²⁴ Leeds Mercury 18.06.03

¹²⁵ Leeds Mercury 09.07.03

for the King,¹²⁶ a further one in August to raise a new volunteer force because the original corps had been stood down on 1 June 1802.¹²⁷ Only twenty men turned up! Baines was furious and refused to bite his editorial tongue;

This is not a time to speak smooth things, the humiliating truth must come out, that the town of Leeds is within an ace of being eternally disgraced by its apathy.¹²⁸

A week later, a thousand of 'her chosen sons' came forth. 'The number is sufficient,' Baines cooed, 'more than sufficient, and "Leeds is herself again!"'¹²⁹ Their uniforms and equipment, other than arms, were supplied by the townsfolk. The volunteers were formed into two battalions of infantry, the Leeds Volunteers, under Colonel Lloyd and two troops of the Gentlemen Volunteer Cavalry under Captain Rhodes.¹³⁰ Women were invited to make contributions and Baines suggested they ignore the recommendation of contributing half a guinea, and encouraged them to donate 'without limitation.'¹³¹

That autumn the threat of invasion, 'one of the greatest calamities that fall on any country,'¹³² hung heavy in the air. Baines's call for national unity, for 'reliance upon ourselves,' even went so far as to recommend that ammunition should not be wasted 'shooting at *Guy the First*' on 5 November; it should be preserved 'to fire at *Guy the Second*.' By the middle of November the Mercury's solemn analysis of the impending catastrophe held little cheer for its readers; 'it is not possible for any power on earth to prevent it.'¹³³ Baines was so swept up in the national hysteria that he

¹²⁶ Leeds Mercury 16.07.03

¹²⁷ Parsons and White Annals of Leeds vol I p 198

¹²⁸ Leeds Mercury 13.08.03. Leeds was not alone in lacking enthusiasm. In July, the Government had been forced to introduce a Levy en Masse Act which empowered it to train every able-bodied man unless sufficient volunteers were forthcoming. See P J Haythornthwaite The Armies of Wellington (London 1998) p 178. For the Leeds Volunteers see also Hargrave Thoresby Society vol LIX passim.

¹²⁹ Leeds Mercury 20.08.03

¹³⁰ Ryley Leeds Guide (1808) pp 134-136. The Quakers conscientiously refused to support any military appeal, instead they raised £1 400 for Leeds Infirmary. The volunteers were part-time soldiers similar to the Home Guard of World War Two. The principal home defence force was the local militia who served full-time but only in Britain. The fencibles were virtually regular soldiers but could not be used outside the country without their consent. For a detailed explanation of the auxiliary forces at this time and their role see Haythornthwaite Armies of Wellington pp 172-193.

¹³¹ Leeds Mercury 19.11.03

¹³² Leeds Mercury 08.10.03

¹³³ Leeds Mercury 15.10.03, 29.10.03, 12.11.03

sacrificed one of his journalistic principles. With regard to news of the invasion, he was prepared to give whatever information came into his hands 'without pledging ourselves to the fallacy or truth thereof.'¹³⁴ The invasion never did materialise. Napoleon withdrew his 'Army of England' from Boulogne and Nelson's victory at Trafalgar was able, according to the Mercury, 'to release this country from all reasonable dread of invasion.'¹³⁵ At Austerlitz the Emperor wreaked his revenge and Baines ruminated;

We may now calculate the value of the Victory of Trafalgar by estimating the loss of Europe in the Battle of Austerlitz.¹³⁶

Once the threat of invasion had disappeared Baines argued the political situation had now radically altered and he vehemently demanded peace, for war now had 'no definite object and ... strikes at the roots of our Manufacturers and Commerce.' With Pitt dead, the obvious step for Grenville's new Government was to pursue a policy of peace and this the 'illustrious Statesman,' Foreign Secretary, Fox did, for he would ignore 'no reasonable pacific overtures'.¹³⁷ However, on 13 September 1806 Fox died and with him any hope of an armistice.¹³⁸ Baines wrung his hands and lamented;

To lose a man in high office, whose known preference ... (was) securing ... the blessings of Peace, is a disaster the extent of which can scarcely be calculated.¹³⁹

Grenville's 'Ministry of All the Talents' fell and Portland's not only failed to pursue a more pacific policy, it bombarded Copenhagen to prevent the Danish fleet being used by the French. When news of the impending attack reached Leeds Baines argued it would be a 'disgraceful' victory; one 'achieved at the loss of National Honour.'¹⁴⁰ When reports of the attack finally did reach the West Riding, he fulminated that

henceforward our affairs are to be conducted on the *Bonapartian System*, on this maxim, that what we have the *power* to do, that we have

¹³⁴ Leeds Mercury 28.01.04. This is a marked departure from his normal belief that; 'It is the duty of a weekly journalist to sift his materials, and to present his readers with a detail of facts, unencumbered with fictions.' See Leeds Mercury 02.04.14

¹³⁵ Leeds Mercury 16.11.05

¹³⁶ Leeds Mercury 11.01.06

¹³⁷ Leeds Mercury 05.07.06, 12.07.06

¹³⁸ Bryant Years of Victory p 201

¹³⁹ Leeds Mercury 20.09.06

¹⁴⁰ Leeds Mercury 05.09.07. For Grenville's Ministry of All the Talents and its fall see Watson George III pp 437-443

the *right* to do.¹⁴¹

By now the consequences of war had bitten deep into the clothing districts bringing an 'alarming stagnation of trade.' Throughout the autumn of 1807, agitation for an end to the war echoed through the West Riding. In the cloth halls of Huddersfield and Leeds manufacturers could be found 'sinking rapidly into poverty and decay.' Baines confirmed what many of his readers already believed; 'war is the harvest of Ministers' offering opportunities for 'extensive patronage;' but it was

a time of *famine* to merchants, to manufacturers, and to tradesmen ...in the manufacturing districts of Yorkshire.¹⁴²

In Leeds 28 628 people signed a petition for peace; another 20 000 more signed one in Huddersfield.¹⁴³ But there were others in the West Riding just as adamantly opposed to peace and who believed that the nation would be in imminent danger as a direct consequence of such lobbying. They were just as passionate, sincere and vociferous in their arguments as the peace petitioners were. 'Peace without security is both delusive and dangerous,' wrote William Hey, the town's most respected surgeon and twice mayor. There was no guarantee of Bonaparte's pacific desires, he argued. Baines published Hey's letter but condemned his correspondent's reasoning.¹⁴⁴ At the same time, the Mercury editor's own reasoning was under attack; it was deemed both spurious in its conclusions and inimical to the nation's safety. 'A Briton,' writing to the Intelligencer, warned that peace at this junction would lead to irretrievably ruin, and claimed that 'our only chance, our only hope of safety ... is in war.'¹⁴⁵ By August he was adamant that Baines and his peace petition 'DOES NOT ... speak the public voice in these parts.'¹⁴⁶

For Baines, the war with France was dragged on by a vacillating Government seeking refuge in untruths. 'The rumour-manufactory in Downing Street, was kept at work night and day.' Its claim that Bonaparte's army had been destroyed at Wagram

¹⁴¹ Leeds Mercury 26.09.07

¹⁴² Meetings petitioning for peace were called at Idle, Eccleshill, Shipley and Morley. See Leeds Mercury 31.10.07, 21.11.07

¹⁴³ Parsons and White Annals of Leeds vol I p 211

¹⁴⁴ Leeds Mercury 16.01.08. For details of William Hey see Taylor Worthies of Leeds pp 267-274

¹⁴⁵ Leeds Intelligencer 09.11.07

¹⁴⁶ Leeds Intelligencer 15.02.08

was a spurious report which 'gulled the public.'¹⁴⁷ By August 1809, he was despairing that 'the Continent is lost, irretrievably lost.'¹⁴⁸ In Spain, the struggle stuttered along and here, once again, the 'elegant *cheezers*' of the Government raised the expectations of the public. That same month it heralded the victory at Talavera which, Baines acknowledged, 'exalts the British soldier above any nation in Europe;' but what was the true significance of the victory and how right were the Government to eulogise its success? Baines had no doubts;

Five thousand brave British soldiers have been killed or wounded ... our army is retreating ... woe betide your system of cheering.¹⁴⁹

Salamanca was a different matter; it was 'a victory equal in magnitude, and resembling ... the victory of Blenheim.'¹⁵⁰ But war was not always confined to battlefields. After the fall of the fortified town of Almeida to the French in 1810, Baines stressed to his readers the impact the protracted conflict had on the local Spanish communities.

War ... enters every village, and converts every dwelling into a field of blood, war then becomes a state of suffering which language can afford no adequate terms to express.¹⁵¹

For years the Mercury had clamoured for peace and not solely for economic reasons, war was, after all, 'in direct contradiction of the holy religion we profess.'¹⁵²

But soon Britain had not just war with Bonaparte to consider. Compounding war with France were the Orders in Council. By these, neutral American ships, attempting to break the English blockade of France, found themselves seized and at times their protesting crewmen pressed into the Royal Navy.¹⁵³ Baines saw at once the injustice of these acts;

The seizure of American Vessels ... has been carried to an alarming extent ... the Impressing of American seamen, is also, a serious charge

¹⁴⁷ Leeds Mercury 29.07.09. In fact Napoleon's victory at Wagram brought the continent from the Urals to the Atlantic under French domination. See Bryant Years of Victory p 344. Baines was not the only critic of Government propaganda deceptions in the British press. Both Cobbett and The News 30.07.09 made such accusations. See Haythornthwaite Armies of Wellington p 9

¹⁴⁸ Leeds Mercury 05.08.09

¹⁴⁹ Leeds Mercury 19.08.09, 02.09.09

¹⁵⁰ Leeds Mercury 22.08.12

¹⁵¹ Leeds Mercury 22.09.10

¹⁵² Leeds Mercury 26.12.12

¹⁵³ Some 3 800 American seamen were pressed into the British Navy. See Brogan History of USA p 260

against Great Britain ... we cannot but express regret, that a measure so obviously unjust ...should have been persisted in.¹⁵⁴

The United States did more than express regret, it retaliated with an embargo on British goods but offered to suspend it if the Orders were discontinued. It could be done, Baines argued, 'without the smallest sacrifice of national honour on our part.'¹⁵⁵ Liverpool's Government decreed otherwise. The orders were not suspended and their retention precipitated the Anglo-American War of 1812.¹⁵⁶

Baines, not wishing to appear unpatriotic, applauded the 'gallant achievement' of the crew of the frigate Shannon when it captured the American vessel, Chesapeake, but lamented that two nations 'united by a common descent ... should meet each other as enemies.'¹⁵⁷ He showed similar ambivalence over the capture of Washington:

one of those daring enterprises which could only be planned by the intelligence of British Officers, and executed by the valour of British Troops

but nevertheless it reflected 'no honour on our national character;' the destruction of the public buildings served 'no military purpose.'¹⁵⁸

Despite his constant opposition to war, when the people of Leeds decided to hold an illumination in 1813 to celebrate the emancipation of Holland, Baines felt that his paper should join in the celebrations. The Mercury office and the Commercial Newsroom displayed an effigy of Victory inviting Peace to take up residence on Earth with, appropriately, Mercury on the alert 'ready to communicate the news.'¹⁵⁹

On 16 April 1814 Baines's desire for peace was answered and his Mercury proclaimed 'NAPOLEON BONAPARTE has ceased to reign.'¹⁶⁰ In December he was ecstatic that the North American war was over. 'There is at last "Peace on Earth",' he

¹⁵⁴ Leeds Mercury 01.03.06

¹⁵⁵ Leeds Mercury 03.12.08. Just over month later Baines made another pertinent point; the rescinding of the decrees would be more harmful to Bonaparte than the loss of a battle. See Leeds Mercury 14.01.09

¹⁵⁶ The Orders in Council were eventually abandoned but too late to prevent hostilities breaking out. The war was, in fact, opposed by the maritime states of New England and, according to John Randolph of Virginia, was fought in the imperial and expansionist interests of the Western States. See R B Nye and J E Morpurgo A History of the United States; The Birth of the United States vol I (Harmondsworth 1961) pp 296-299

¹⁵⁷ Leeds Mercury 17.07.13

¹⁵⁸ Leeds Mercury 01.10.14

¹⁵⁹ Leeds Mercury 04.12.13. It also celebrated recent Allied victories.

¹⁶⁰ Leeds Mercury 16.04.14

declared.¹⁶¹ There was, however, to be one final, brutal coda that ended on the bloody battlefield of Waterloo.¹⁶² In one laconic sentence, Baines summed up two decades of bitter conflict; 'The Duke of Wellington has fought and conquered NAPOLEON.' When news of Bonaparte's fall reached Leeds, he rushed a copy of Wellington's despatch down to the Leeds Theatre on Hunslet Lane; the performance was interrupted and the dramatic announcement made from the stage to a euphoric audience.¹⁶³

IV

There was much else that Theatre Royal audience could have cheered that evening. Since the Peace of Amiens had been shattered and hostilities resumed, changes had occurred in Britain that Baines saw were part of a general 'moral progress' in society. Drakard and Cobbett had given the 'deathblow ... to the cruel, degrading and impolitic punishment of flogging in the army;' Brougham had raised the need for the 'speedy extinction' of gagging in the Navy; Sir Samuel Romilly had devoted himself to 'humanizing our criminal law.'¹⁶⁴ And at long last the first bastion of man's inhumanity to man, 'the diabolical traffic in human blood,' that 'disgraceful monument to our natural depravity,' the slave trade, had finally been breached with its abolition in 1807.¹⁶⁵

Leeds itself had seen changes. Baines applauded those and urged that more should take place. The roads of the West Riding had been markedly improved in recent years and locomotive steam power had been demonstrated on the Middleton Railway in 1812, a 'vast public utility,' according to the Mercury editor.¹⁶⁶ There were other proposed improvements to the town he supported; the purchase of the Soke of the

¹⁶¹ Leeds Mercury 31.12.14. In reality, Baines was somewhat premature. The Peace of Ghent, bringing an end to the American hostilities, was signed on 24 December 1814. The news had still to reach the United States when the Battle of New Orleans was fought on 9 January 1815. See Brogan History of USA p 233

¹⁶² Baines, like the leading Whigs of the day, opposed the recommencement of hostilities on the grounds that this was interference with the right of the French people to choose their own ruler. On reflection, Edward Junior admits that 'Mr Baines may have been led by his abhorrence of war into a political error, for which, if it were such, his biographer is not careful to apologize.' See Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 85

¹⁶³ Leeds Mercury 01.07.15

¹⁶⁴ Leeds Mercury 03.08.11

¹⁶⁵ Leeds Mercury 17.12.03, 02.06.04, 14.02.07. For a general account of the abolition of the slave trade see E G Wilson Thomas Clarkson; a Biography (Basingstoke 1989) pp 105-116

¹⁶⁶ Leeds Mercury 22.07.09, 27.06.12

King's Mills in Leeds and the removal of Middle Row to make Briggate 'one of the finest business streets' were but two.¹⁶⁷

He was also prepared to lower his editorial sights from the lofty themes of war and economics to look at the needs of private individuals. He pointed out such dangers as leaving children alone where there were fires, the hazards of unguarded cellar openings on public streets, and he condemned the use of boy chimney sweeps 'a most degraded class of beings.'¹⁶⁸ He pointed out the way to a healthier society, suggesting the bringing of water carts to Leeds from Holbeck where a 'proper beverage' was available.¹⁶⁹ He congratulated those who had originated the idea of the Leeds Female Society,¹⁷⁰ but though he supported that society he showed an ambivalent attitude to establishing a society in the town for the suppression of vice. Prostitution was a major social problem in Leeds with 'a swarm of Cyprians ... every evening infest(ing) ...(the) streets' and demonstrating open 'profligacy and profaness(sic).' Baines was happy to publish the views of his readers on the subject but as far as the Mercury was concerned; we by no means wish to pledge ourselves to either the negative or affirmative side of this question.¹⁷¹

By 1821, he began to take a more positive view of the problem. With others, he called for, and spoke in favour of, setting up a society for the 'purpose of reclaiming females, who have departed from the path of virtue.'¹⁷²

On other issues, both social and religious, he not only focussed his attention but was prepared to take positive action. Poverty and distress were recurrent themes through the years and none more so than during 1812. In May a meeting was called at

¹⁶⁷ Leeds Mercury 19.12.12, 07.01.15, 09.12.15. Middle Row was finally removed in 1825. See E Parsons The Civil, Ecclesiastical, Literary, Commercial and Miscellaneous History of Leeds vol I (Leeds 1834)I p 148. The soke to King's Mills was purchased as late as 1839. See Burt and Grady The Illustrated History of Leeds p 107.

¹⁶⁸ Leeds Mercury 19.03.14, 16.04.03, 20.03.19

¹⁶⁹ Leeds Mercury 29.08.07

¹⁷⁰ Leeds Mercury 20.06.01

¹⁷¹ Leeds Mercury 02.10.13, 10.02.10, 07.06.13

¹⁷² Leeds Mercury 01.09.21, 22.09.21, 29.09.21. The Guardian Society was established in 1821 in St James's Street for the purpose. For the first meeting of and Baines view of see Leeds Mercury 24.11.21. See also Baines Directory of Yorkshire vol I p 27. Grady lists the 'asylum for prostitutes' in 1821 in St Peter's Square. See Grady Georgian Buildings of Leeds p 165. The matter was further resolved in 1842 when the Leeds Lock Hospital was founded. See Thornton Aspects of Leeds p 45. There is no definitive study of prostitution in early nineteenth century Leeds. Passing press references in the earlier part of the nineteenth century are to be found in Leeds Intelligencer 07.06.13 and Leeds Mercury 10.02.10, 02.10.13, 12.06.13, 15.05.13.

he Rotation Office in Leeds to consider what action should be taken to relieve the suffering of the poor. One proposal was for soup, rice and dried and salted fish to be sold at reduced prices. Baines approved of a diet of dried cod and ling but took exception to the reduction in prices. Speaking with 'great deliberation' he extolled his *laissez-faire* beliefs arguing it was

pernicious in times of scarcity to sell such things as were scarce at reduced prices. It aggravated calamity ... causing increased consumption.¹⁷³

Suffering was not just restricted to the West Riding. For two decades the German people had suffered as warring armies had invaded their homeland, and Napoleon's blockade had taken its toll. He viewed a Germany where was to be found

an immense hecatomb of human victims ... offered upon the bloody Altar of War ... and all those horrid spectres (which) follow the march of war.¹⁷⁴

The conscience of Britain was moved. Public meetings were called to discuss the plight of the suffering Germans and Baines was one of the signatories demanding such an assembly in Leeds. It was held on Wednesday 9 March, where Baines was appointed to be responsible for the collections taken in the Middle Division of the town.¹⁷⁵ At another public meeting, this time in the Music Hall in Albion Street, he supported a petition to Parliament calling for provision to be made for the propagation of Christianity in India. No such provision was proposed in the new charter for the East India Company to bring the 'divine philanthropy of the Gospel' to the inhabitants of the subcontinent lost in the 'mists of heathen darkness.'¹⁷⁶

But heathen darkness and ignorance needed dispelling in England also. And to achieve this Baines was quite clear that education was the solution, a 'boon most valuable to man.'¹⁷⁷ The question was how to bring that boon to the mass of the people. The most cost-effective method of addressing a problem of such magnitude, was

¹⁷³ Leeds Mercury 09.05.12, Leeds Intelligencer 11.05.12. When the meeting broke up, a councilman, Mr Hind accused Baines of insulting the magistrates in a comment made in the Mercury. Baines considered Hind 'impertinent' but assured the local magistracy that he meant 'no disrespect to the bench.'

¹⁷⁴ Leeds Mercury 22.05.13

¹⁷⁵ Leeds Mercury 05.03.14, 12.03.14. He was also one of the auditors of the House of Recovery. See Leeds Mercury 22.01.14

¹⁷⁶ Leeds Mercury 17.04.13, 03.04.13

¹⁷⁷ Leeds Mercury 10.09.25

considered to be a system based on the teachings of Joseph Lancaster and Andrew Bell. The monotorial system claimed that one teacher could teach up to 1 000 children. The teacher taught the older pupils and they in turn, taught the younger ones.¹⁷⁸ In 1808 the British and Foreign School Society was formed to educate children of all religious denominations; three years later there followed the National Society for Promoting The Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church.¹⁷⁹

Lancaster was invited to Leeds and on 3 February 1809 spoke in the Music Hall to a gathering of interested parties.¹⁸⁰ Not everyone in Leeds was interested, in fact some were positively antagonistic. 'No Changeling,' in the Intelligencer, succinctly summed up the opposition attitude when he condemned Lancaster's 'deep-laid schemes' and argued that the town should 'let the poor be educated as they hitherto have been.'¹⁸¹ Nevertheless, a meeting at the Rotation Office in January 1811 decided to establish such a Lancasterian School in Leeds. Baines made no editorial comment on it. His support, however, was never in doubt. He contributed five guineas to the subscription that was being raised and could see no valid reason for a National School to be opened in Leeds when it was proposed to do so.¹⁸² Baines was adamant that the Lancasterian establishment was adequate for the whole town. It answered the needs of society by preparing its pupils for a 'reputable and useful life, instead of becoming vagabonds and mendicants,' and offered them an education where 'children of *all* christian parents can ... receive instruction.'¹⁸³

Baines's hope was that an educated people would become a law-abiding people,

¹⁷⁸ Neither were in fact inventors of the method. A similar system had been in use at Winchester College, Manchester Grammar School and other grammar schools. See S J Curtis History of Education in Great Britain (London 1967) p 207.

¹⁷⁹ Curtis History of Education p 208. The British and Foreign School Society was originally formed as the Royal Lancasterian Society but changed its name shortly afterwards. For the way in which the two societies developed in Leeds see Anon Education in Leeds; a Backward Glance and a Present View (Leeds 1926). See also J Lawson and H Silver A Social History of Education in England (London 1973) pp 241-246.

¹⁸⁰ Leeds Mercury 04.02.09

¹⁸¹ Leeds Intelligencer 15.10.10

¹⁸² Leeds Mercury 08.06.11. Mrs Baines contributed ten shillings and sixpence to a fund set up to open a Lancasterian School for girls. See Leeds Mercury 11.04.12.

¹⁸³ Leeds Mercury 02.11.11, 12.10.11. In Leeds it was particularly noticeable that children who had lost 'their legs or arms, or to be otherwise maimed ... are generally most apt at their learning.' See Leeds Mercury 12.10.11

bringing both order and stability to, what he termed, this 'insurrectionary era.'¹⁸⁴ He had long argued that the concomitant of war was economic paucity and civil distress. Time and again through those years violence erupted on the national scene. In August 1801, rebutting Benjamin Flower's allegations in the Cambridge Intelligencer, Baines clearly stated his attitude to any civil disobedience and the Government's reaction to it.

We have firmly and will oppose any disposition towards revolt in the people or in the oppression in the Government.¹⁸⁵

War, he acknowledged, had inflicted an 'immense and burdensome load of debt and taxes' on the populace.¹⁸⁶ But violence was never the solution to such economic ills. When the clothworkers of Leeds were in dispute in the winter of 1803, they embarked on an orgy of violence; daubing 'inflammatory sentences on the walls,' and destroying cloth on the tenter frames of the town. Baines was outraged at behaviour that was 'highly dangerous for the mind.'¹⁸⁷ The following week he delighted that the more responsible Leeds clothworkers had offered a reward for the detection of the 'wretches.'¹⁸⁸ Responsibility for civil obedience lay not solely on the shoulders of dissatisfied workers. The following year, William Cobbett featured a report in his Political Register. In it he reported that incensed West Riding clothworkers had hung an effigy of Henry Lascelles, the Yorkshire MP, fired muskets at it and finally burned it as a response to his attitude to the clothing trade. Cobbett claimed, 'We are not far from the eve of revolution.' Baines condemned as out of hand the 'disorderly practice of burning effigies' but considered Cobbett's remarks as the 'stuff ... dreams are made of' and then refuted Cobbett's further remarks as being by

a writer unwilling to admit he is wrong, and unable to prove that he is right.¹⁸⁹

Though he deplored violence he was well aware that such violence was often rooted in genuine grievances. When the Lancashire disturbances reverberated across the county in the summer of 1808, he agreed that the 'lower classes of the people

¹⁸⁴ Leeds Mercury 25.04.12

¹⁸⁵ Leeds Mercury 15.08.01

¹⁸⁶ Leeds Mercury 23.05.05

¹⁸⁷ Leeds Mercury 12.02.03

¹⁸⁸ Leeds Mercury 19.02.03

¹⁸⁹ Leeds Mercury 04.08.04, 18.08.04

labour under great distress.’ But

however great the embarrassment of trade ... every true friend to this country will deprecate all attempts to seek for the removal of these calamities by riot and outrage.¹⁹⁰

Almost four years later, General Ludd and his followers made their dramatic entrance onto the political stage in Nottinghamshire. To Baines their distress was truly genuine but their judgement widely inaccurate and their solution indefensibly anarchic.

They imagine, it seems, that the low rate of wages and scarcity of work arise from some improvements in the Stocking Weaving Frames ... the real cause of the evils ... is ... a heart-sickening war ... we do most sincerely commiserate their situation, but we utterly condemn the means by which they seek to obtain redress.¹⁹¹

When the croppers of the West Riding joined in the disturbances he implored them and their Nottinghamshire conspirators ‘to seek relief ... by legal and authorized application to Government.’¹⁹² ‘The destruction of all the machinery in the Kingdom’ would not relieve their distress. It was not just machinery that was destroyed; at the Leeds finishing shops of Dickenson, Carr and Shann in Water Lane, £500 worth of cloth was also ‘torn and cut into shreds’.¹⁹³ In fact, the ‘reprehensible and destructive’ action the vandals had taken would ‘destroy the very bonds of society,’ leading either to ‘general anarchy or a complete military despotism.’¹⁹⁴

Wilberforce viewed the situation from another perspective laying the disturbances emphatically on the press.¹⁹⁵ Baines agreed with him but with this proviso:

the press has done immense mischief ... the press that fattens on the wages of corruption, that fans the flames of war - the intolerant

¹⁹⁰ Leeds Mercury 28.05.08.

¹⁹¹ Leeds Mercury 23.11.11. For a detailed account of Luddism in the West Riding see Reid Land of Lost Content passim. For the causes of Luddism see also Reid pp 278-284. Dinwiddy supports Baines’s analysis, arguing that Nottinghamshire Luddism ‘had little political content.’ See J Dinwiddy ‘Luddism and Politics in the Northern Counties’ Social History vol IV (1979) p 36

¹⁹² Leeds Mercury 25.01.12.

¹⁹³ Parsons and White Annals of Leeds vol I p 228

¹⁹⁴ Leeds Mercury 29.02.12

¹⁹⁵ Wilberforce had a passionate belief in the constitution that had evolved after 1688 and in his Christian faith. He believed that anything that threatened a stable society had to be suppressed. Despite the fact the Combination Act of 1799 was actually suggested by him, Wilberforce considered himself a friend of the workers, guarding them against agitators. Hence he condemned the press for its agitation. For details of Wilberforce’s attitude to social unrest see G Lean God’s Politician; William Wilberforce’s Struggle (London 1980) pp 145-153.

persecuting press.¹⁹⁶

Reason and understanding were required to

ameliorate the distressed conditions of the poor ... conquer the lawless by force, but win the peaceable and well-deposed by kindness.¹⁹⁷

He might well have added justice. In August 1812, rioting broke out in Briggate, the windows of Shackleton's corn mill in Holbeck were smashed, outrages were committed in Hunslet, and a demonstration took place outside the King's Mill by the River Aire.¹⁹⁸

Baines, identified the cause as the abuse of power by a Government that deprived its people of their liberty 'by the unsupported testimony of ... a spy by profession and an informer by trade.'¹⁹⁹

But Baines's call for a compassionate understanding of the workers' plight met with hostility. A 'Common Councilman,' at a public meeting called to raise a subscription to help the poor, laid the blame for the continuance of anarchy on

those who, *affecting* to promote the welfare of the labouring classes, have, *alienated their affections from a mild Government.*

Griffith Wright went even further, claiming the outburst of Luddism was the result of the agitation for peace and Parliamentary Reform. Baines was furious;

Such an assertion ... is too stupid to impose even on a shallow coxcomb that admits such trash into his paper.²⁰⁰

In a more rational moment, Baines identified the fundamental causes of the outbreaks: a national debt that had increased from £300 000 000 to £900 000 000; bankruptcies that had increased from 560 to 1 857; the aggregate number of paupers in England and Wales that had risen from 500 000 to 1 200 000; and added to these facts were the running sores of unemployment and scarcity of food.²⁰¹ His conclusion was a

¹⁹⁶ Leeds Mercury 25.07.12

¹⁹⁷ Leeds Mercury 09.05.12

¹⁹⁸ Leeds Mercury 22.08.12

¹⁹⁹ Leeds Mercury 05.09.12. Baines little realised it when he wrote this, but it was on this very theme of Government spies that he would make his greatest journalistic coup. See Chapter Four below.

²⁰⁰ Leeds Mercury 19.09.12

²⁰¹ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 77. É Halévy History of the English People in 1815 vol II (Harmondsworth 1937) gives the National Debt in 1802 as £499 783 063; in 1815, if debts incurred on behalf of the Empire, Portugal and the Irish debt are included, the amount becomes £832 197 004. pp 216, 220. The Annual Register claims the number of bankruptcies was 2 029 in 1816. See Annual Register 1816 (London 1817) p 352. With regard to the increase in pauperage, Mitchell and Deane quote expenditure on relief as; 1803 - £4 268; 1814 - £6 295; 1815 - £5 419 but give no specific figures of the number of paupers. See B R Mitchell and P Deane Abstract of

summation of his beliefs with regard to achieving any social or political change;

The remedy I have uniformly recommended is, to seek for a redress of public grievances by peaceable means.²⁰²

There were other issues rumbling through that first decade and a half of his editorship which threatened the stability of the kingdom. Closely related to Luddism was the issue of workers' combinations. Pitt had already seen the inherent danger of organised labour entering into an unholy alliance with Jacobinism. From 1799 to 1800 the Combination Acts were passed.²⁰³ Both Baines and his readers saw in this nascent trade unionism dangers to both the peace and prosperity of the nation. In 1805 a writer, signing himself 'B' took the unusual step of addressing his letter not to the 'Editor' or 'Printer' of the Leeds Mercury but to 'Mr Baines.' He was in no doubt

if the spirit of combination amongst workmen is persisted in ... the consequences will be fatal to the prosperity of the country.'²⁰⁴

It was a view Baines condoned and restated when the Luddite disturbances of 1812 were at their peak. In the same edition that carried news of William Horsfall's murder he advised 'Correspondent'

We have warned (the poor) to avoid combinations that may, and that indeed must, overwhelm themselves and members of their families in irretrievable ruin.²⁰⁵

Attempts at redressing workers' grievances 'by the assumption of power ... cannot be tolerated.'²⁰⁶ Yet by 1824, at a Leeds meeting called to demand the repeal of the Combination Laws, the Mercury reported that Baines was 'an enemy of the

British Historical Statistics (Cambridge 1962) p 410. William Smart quotes Brougham speaking in 1817 that among cloth dressers 'two men in nine ... had full employment;' in Birmingham a third of the workforce was unemployed. Handloom weavers in Lancashire, he said, on average earned 13/3 a week in 1800 were now having to exist, at times, on as little as 3/3 a week. see W Smart Economic Annals of the Nineteenth Century, 1801-1820 (London 1910) pp 594-596

²⁰² Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 77

²⁰³ Thompson EP Making of the English Working Class p 543-569. See also H Pelling A History of British Trade Unionism (Harmondsworth 1963) pp 26-32.

²⁰⁴ Leeds Mercury 20.04.05

²⁰⁵ Leeds Mercury 02.05.12. This is in marked contrast with his view expressed thirteen years later. 'To fair open combination ... we can see no objection.' See Leeds Mercury 16.04.25. As early as 1803 he was happy to support a meeting of schoolmasters in Manchester to 'establish a society for the mutual aid and benefit of this respectable and highly important class of men.' See Leeds Mercury 23.04.03.

²⁰⁶ Leeds Mercury 28.10.15. On this occasion he was remarking on a 'confederacy' of seamen.

Combination Laws, and he considered them unjust in principle.²⁰⁷

V

Not all crimes at this time had political overtones though some may well have had political undertones. By 1813 Baines had detected ‘an alarming change’ in the British national character. When Philip Nicholson, a footman, murdered his employer, a Russian merchant-banker and his wife, Baines saw an iniquitous pattern in social behaviour emerging. He linked the murders of Mr and Mrs Thomson Bonar with those of Spencer Perceval and William Horsfall and asked if ‘twenty years ...of imbruing the hands in human blood’ had ‘no influence in operating this change on the character of our countrymen.’²⁰⁸ Griffith Wright had another explanation for Perceval’s assassination; not only ‘he who strikes the blow’ was guilty; but he who had the ‘cool and deliberate villainy to arm and fortify the heart!’ was equally culpable. Consequently, he decided to refrain that week from ‘noticing the CONNIVANCES of a LANCASTRIAN!’ and let his readers draw their own conclusion.²⁰⁹

But crime, even if less bloody, occurred regularly on the streets of Leeds. Baines was quick to advise people to lock their doors, take action against the ‘wretches’ who profited from the pilfering by ‘unhappy’ eleven to sixteen year-olds, and give a ‘little correction in the flogging way’ to the vandals who smashed windows in the Park Row area, ripped up the railings at the Infirmary and stole the gate at St John’s Church.²¹⁰ Hence he welcomed the establishment of a night watch in the town.²¹¹

There were other causes also inimical to the prosperity of the nation; causes that eroded the economic infrastructure and financial stability of the country. Irresponsible fiscal policies, damaging inflation and a ruinous monetary strategy, made their respective contributions. First was taxation; income tax ‘a more unpopular tax never existed,’ and the window tax and its effects on public health, each in its way damaging

²⁰⁷ Leeds Mercury 10.04.24

²⁰⁸ Leeds Mercury 05.06.13, 12.06.13. Nicholson had recently been discharged from the 12th Light Dragoons. See Haythornthwaite Armies of Wellington p 143

²⁰⁹ Leeds Intelligencer 18.05.12

²¹⁰ Leeds Mercury 04.05.11, 22.06.05. The last recommendation led to an anonymous letter signed ‘A Royal Flanker’ arriving at Baines’s office telling him to ‘be silent’ or ‘forfeit every bit of glass in your windows.’ See Leeds Mercury 29.06.05

²¹¹ Leeds Mercury 14.10.15

to merchants and manufacturers alike.²¹² Not only did Baines write on the theme, he, along with other signatories, demanded that a petition be raised to draw the Government's attention to the public's concern over this continuing taxation.²¹³ But for him the worst of all the proposed taxes was the one to be put on malt. Even 'Income Tax is less objectionable' he argued and is 'more equitable.' Malt, after all, was 'principally consumed by the labouring poor.'²¹⁴

The high price of food generally was a matter of concern. The Leeds riots of 1812 were a direct result of the high cost of corn. By market day on 18 August, best quality wheat sold in the town that Tuesday for £9 per quarter.²¹⁵ The high price and regular shortages of corn had long been a source of dissension, frustration and anger. January 1796, saw the cost of corn in Leeds hovering between ninety-six shillings and 104 shillings a quarter and the inhabitants deciding to reduce family consumption by a third in order to drive the price down to about sixty-four shillings. Four years later, with the price of mutton higher than it had ever been before and corn soaring to 133 shillings and fourpence a quarter, a 'great RIOT' ensued in the town.²¹⁶ Although the fine summer and excellent harvest it produced in 1801 saw a rapid fall in wheat prices,²¹⁷ the problem of grain shortages did not quickly disappear. Five consecutive wet summers from 1808 produced poor crops but an abundant harvest in 1813 saw prices drastically cut. There were rumblings of discontent among the landed interests and suggestions that Government legislation was needed. Baines was appalled. Such legislation

interferes with the free operation of trade ... leaving the price ... to be fixed by an assembly of landowners.²¹⁸

²¹² Leeds Mercury 27.03.02, 02.03.05, 07.01.15, 04.02.15

²¹³ Leeds Mercury 11.02.15

²¹⁴ Leeds Mercury 18.06.03. This is something of a contradiction when compared to his comments in Leeds Mercury 19.12.01; 'The food of five thousand persons must be destroyed to prepare a beverage ... more destructive than any other poison.'

²¹⁵ Parsons and White Annals of Leeds vol I p 229. The year 1812 saw the price of wheat reach its highest annual average, £6.6.6d, during the Napoleonic Wars. See Stratton Agricultural Records p 96.

²¹⁶ Parsons and White Annals of Leeds vol I pp 185, 192

²¹⁷ Stratton Agricultural Records p 94

²¹⁸ Leeds Mercury 26.06.13. See also Briggs The Age of Improvement pp 201-202 and Stratton Agricultural Records pp 94-97

The following year it was proposed to introduce a Corn Law prohibiting the import of foreign wheat until it reached eighty-seven shillings a quarter.²¹⁹ There was outrage in the manufacturing districts.²²⁰ Baines urged action but it must be legitimate action.

We cannot impress too strongly the policy for *timely Petitions ...* to counteract the endeavours of the landed interest.²²¹

At 1pm on Wednesday 8 June the London coaches arrived in Leeds with news that the bill had been defeated 116 to 106. Crowds swept into Briggate and congregated outside the Mercury office for confirmation of the reports. There Baines had erected a placard:

The House of Commons with becoming deference to the public voice has REJECTED THE CORN BILL!²²²

But its deference did not last long. By February 1815 the Government's new proposals had Baines railing that these putative laws would be 'injurious to every class of society.' Their effects, he believed, would permeate across the nation with the logical inevitability of Greek tragedy:

The high price of provisions must produce a corresponding rise in labour ... commerce will decay, our manufacturers will be out of employ, and the value of land will be deteriorated.

Such was the response from his West Riding readers that he had to apologise for not being able to 'insert numerous communications received' on the subject, and the people of Leeds were so incensed that they petitioned John Brooke, the Mayor, to call a public meeting. On Wednesday such a crowd gathered at the Court House that the assembly was forced to adjourn to the extensive open courtyard of the Coloured Cloth Hall. The gathering behaved with 'order and decorum' and Baines proposed that they should approach Milton and Lascelles, the Yorkshire MPs, with their concerns.²²³ The

²¹⁹ Corn laws were not new to Britain. They had been adopted under the later Stuarts and further laws had been enacted in 1773, 1791 and 1804. See Trevelyan Social History pp 270-271 and Watson George III p 520. For the Corn Law of 1815 see Hilton Corn, Cash and Commerce pp 3-30.

²²⁰ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines pp 81-82

²²¹ Leeds Mercury 14.05.14

²²² Leeds Mercury 11.06.14

²²³ Leeds Mercury 25.02.15, 04.03.15. Two years later Baines had to admit that the implementation of the laws had less effect than either the landed interests had hoped or manufacturers and labourers had feared. See Baines Wars of the French Revolution vol II p 502. The meeting in the Coloured Cloth Hall yard demonstrated Baines's humanity. Once it was decided to adjourn to the open air of the Cloth Hall yard, Baines proposed that Mr Whittel-York take over as chairman as John Brooke's poor health would have been impaired by the elements. There are other occasions of Baines's humanity being demonstrated in particular his willingness to support local appeals. When Jacob Wright, a local glass stainer, was blinded by a wood splinter, Baines contributed two

resolution was unanimously carried but in the end it was to no avail. In March the House of Commons discussed a new Corn Law Bill. Riots broke out in London and in Leeds Baines appealed to

the good sense of the people of this district ... to avoid everything that has the appearance tumult.²²⁴

But on 23 March the Royal Assent was given and the Corn Laws were established. They would remain a political bone of contention for the next three decades.²²⁵

The immediate crisis, however, was an economy that was under great pressure. Companies had been forced into liquidation; banks had failed. In 1810 alone there were some 1 912 bankruptcies listed. That September, Seaton's banks in Pontefract, Huddersfield and Selby stopped payment.²²⁶ There was no doubt in Baines's mind what the underlying causes of this disturbing trend was;

(t)he high price of Bullion, the excessive issue of Bank paper, and the Bank not taking up their Notes in specie ... this is the root of the evil.²²⁷

Those roots had been established at least fifteen years previously. The Bank of England had warned Pitt as early as January 1795 of an impending financial crisis. By 1797 Britain's overseas balance of payments had become disorganised as a result of large imports of corn, naval stores, and the maintenance of Britain's armed forces abroad. Coupled with these facts, wealthy investors who had withdrawn gold reserves from France during the turbulent early years of the Revolution, now began to withdraw it from Britain as conditions in France stabilised. Then on 22 February that year another factor occurred. Four enemy ships appeared off the coast of Wales²²⁸ and a force of some 1 200 French troops landed near Fishguard. In no time the invaders were rounded up and an insignificant military operation brought to a satisfactory conclusion. However, if the intention was a covert strategy employed to destabilise the economy, it was a masterstroke. News of the 'attempted invasion' spread across the country

guineas to the appeal. See Leeds Mercury 26.02.14

²²⁴ Leeds Mercury 11.03.15

²²⁵ Hilton Corn, Cash and Commerce pp 303-314. See also N McCord The Anti-Corn Law League: 1838-1846 (Oxford 1968) pp 15-33, pp 188-207 and N Gash ed The Age of Peel: Documents of Modern History (London 1968) pp 107-134

²²⁶ Parsons and White Annals of Leeds vol I p 218

²²⁷ Leeds Mercury 29.09.10

²²⁸ W H B Court A Concise Economic History of Britain from 1750 to Recent Times (Cambridge 1954) p 98. See also Leeds Mercury 11.03.1797

igniting a financial panic and a rush on gold began. The Bank of England's already depleted reserves had fallen to less than £2 million. Pitt acted swiftly. On 26 February he imposed an Order in Council on the Bank stating 'the Bank of England should forbear issuing any Cash in Payment.' Thus the 'Restriction Period' began; and in Leeds, as in other places, the merchants, gentry and 'principal inhabitants' declared their support for the Government's temporary measure.²²⁹ However, it was the issue of low denomination £1 and £2 notes, that eventually precipitated an economic crisis. In 1809 foreign currencies went up 20%, the price of commodities soared likewise and sterling almost went into free-fall.²³⁰ A committee was appointed to investigate and in June 1810 reported to the House of Commons. It concluded that an excess issue of low denomination notes had generated the classic formula for inflation; too much money chasing too few goods. Baines also recognised the symptoms and proffered the cure.

The evils long foreseen ... (the) unavoidable consequence of the paper bubble ... in place of a solid circulating medium, seems hastening to a crisis which threatens wide and universal ruin ... if Government does not instantly interfere.²³¹

But the Government did not interfere and ten months later Baines was left to wring his hands and despair once more, that the remedy could only be found 'by the removal of ... the Bank Restriction Act ... and the payment in specie resumed.'²³²

VI

Compounding the economic difficulties of government was an unstable monarchy. From 1765 George III had suffered bouts of illness which many described simply as 'madness.' Until 1810 the total period of his incapacity came to no more than six months, though from 1801 there were longer periods when his behaviour was moody and unpredictable.²³³ Baines was loath to comment on the situation. When the King turned over two pages whilst reading a speech, the Mercury's editor dismissed it

²²⁹ Parsons and White Annals of Leeds vol I pp 186-187. In reality the restriction lasted until May 1821.

²³⁰ J Keyworth From Gold to Paper Currency; the Suspension of Cash Payments 1799-1821 (London 1997) passim

²³¹ Leeds Mercury 21.07.10

²³² Leeds Mercury 11.05.11. It was not until 1819 that the question was next considered at Westminster.

²³³ It appears that the correct medical condition or rather series of conditions was 'acute intermittent porphyria.' See Ayling George III pp 122-123. See also J Brooke King George III (London 1972) pp 318-343.

as a 'trivial incident.'²³⁴ But by 1810 the situation had deteriorated. The Government announced it would introduce a regency bill. Like Pitt's bill of 1789, it was to be a restricted regency. Baines was incensed. It was 'a proposition too monstrous to be entertained'; the Prince was, after all, forty-nine years of age!²³⁵ He saw beneath the proposal a more subtle subterfuge. Echoing John Dunning's words of three decades earlier, he agreed that the; 'influence of the Crown has increased, is increasing and ought to be diminished' but not by laying 'violent hands on the legitimate powers of the executive.' In the midst of this constitutional turmoil the Prince of Wales, 'like a rock ... maintain(ed) a firm and dignified attitude.'²³⁶ Baines, like his fellow Whigs, hoped the new Regent would sweep away the old administration and replace it with a more enlightened one But the Regent did not. Instead he retained the Old Regime; turned on his wife, to Baines's chagrin- 'would to God he knew how to estimate such a woman';²³⁷ and continued a policy of anti-Catholicism. Baines despaired the behaviour of 'His Royal Highness ... makes us fear we have been deceived.'²³⁸

The Prince of Wales was not the only member of the Royal Family to provoke the Mercury editor's ire. On 27 January 1809, a Member of Parliament, Colonel Wardle, demanded a Committee of Investigation to be set up to examine allegations about the conduct of the Commander-in-Chief, the Duke of York. It was alleged his mistress, Mrs Mary Anne Clarke, had used her influence to obtain promotions and exchanges for officers, prepared to pay for her to intercede on their behalf.²³⁹ Baines's concern was the effect the relationship had on national security 'if our military secrets are entrusted to ... a courtesan.' He hoped for the Duke's dismissal and if Parliament

²³⁴ Leeds Mercury 11.08.04. When the King was incapable of carrying on his duties he reported the matter but did not elaborate on it. See Leeds Mercury 14.03.01.

²³⁵ Leeds Mercury 01.12.10

²³⁶ Leeds Mercury 05.01.11. In 1780, the Commons in Committee passed Dunning's famous resolution following the 'national disasters,' and Burke argued, it had occurred as a result of the Government departing from the principles established by the Glorious Revolution of 1688-1689. See J H Plumb England in the Eighteenth Century (Harmondsworth 1963) pp 138-139.

²³⁷ Leeds Mercury 17.04.13

²³⁸ Leeds Mercury 24.08.11. Despite his growing concern at the Regent's policies, Baines felt obliged to join a town meeting set up to congratulate the Prince on the series of recent 'glorious' events in the war. Even then, he insisted that no controversial issues should be raised that might divide the unanimity of the gathering. See Leeds Mercury 18.12.13

²³⁹ A H Burne The Noble Duke of York (London/New York 1949) pp 287-315

failed in its duty, for 'the people to discharge *their* duty and petition the King.'²⁴⁰ In the ensuing court case Mrs Clarke was found not guilty but Baines, despite deploring 'this woman's boundless extravagance,' rejoiced!

Mrs Clarke ... certainly ought not to have been convicted on the evidence brought against (her) ... it is the benign principal of English Law to give the accused the benefit of all reasonable doubt.²⁴¹

It was the same deep awareness of injustice to others the caused him to lament the continued restrictions on Roman Catholics and Dissenters, impositions that constantly moved Baines to critical outbursts.

Religion ought never be made the criterion on any subjects' fitness or unfitness to serve the state.²⁴²

When Sidmouth tried to introduce his celebrated bill in 1811, placing restrictions on Dissenters, Baines reminded the Lord President of the Council; 'the interference of the civil power in matters of this nature is always ... mischievous.'²⁴³ A fortnight later Baines advised that legislators were better leaving such spiritual matters to 'Him before whom the wisdom of human law-givers is folly.'²⁴⁴

But in Ireland this was not true. There the Catholic question was not simply a theological issue, it was also a political one. In 1803, with the threat of a French invasion dominating the thoughts of the nation, Baines readily identified the British Achilles' heel.

Ireland is our only vulnerable point, and she has been made so by the miserable policy of withholding the privileges of citizens from the majority of her people on the ground of religious difference.²⁴⁵

But the injustices in Ireland remained to Baines's mortification. 'We have teased her with impolitic restrictions ... and ... deprived her of our excellent constitution.'²⁴⁶

²⁴⁰ Leeds Mercury 28.02.09, 18.03.09

²⁴¹ Leeds Mercury 23.12.09. The Duke resigned his position in March 1809. See Burne The Noble Duke of York pp 314-315. Baines's keen sense of justice was again highlighted the following year when his critic Cobbett was prosecuted for libel. Cobbett's punishment was 'more severe than ... necessary in cases of libel.' See Leeds Mercury 14.07.10

²⁴² Leeds Mercury 27.02.13

²⁴³ Leeds Mercury 04.05.11

²⁴⁴ Leeds Mercury 18.05.11. see also Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 78

²⁴⁵ Leeds Mercury 10.09.03. 'Numbers would either receive (the French) with open arms or oppose no resistance to them.' See Leeds Mercury 01.10.03

²⁴⁶ Leeds Mercury 03.09.14

For Baines the solution to all the ills that afflicted the British people of whatever country were symbolised in one specific issue: Parliamentary Reform. If that were achieved 'every other grievance will fall off of itself.'²⁴⁷ Year after year, from the first grumbling reference he made on Horne Tooke's election for Old Sarum in March 1801, Baines hammered away on the same theme.²⁴⁸ 'Something must be done to save the fair fabric of our Constitution,' he wrote.²⁴⁹ The Intelligencer and its supporters were not convinced and promised to 'refute the dangerous Jacobinical dogmas disseminated around us.'²⁵⁰ After six years as editor, Baines realised that expounding those so-called 'Jacobinical dogmas' week after week was certainly helpful to the cause of reform but that a more positive and personal commitment was required if he were ultimately to achieve his aims. It was the famous Yorkshire election of 1807 that saw him depart on that road.²⁵¹

In February that year, Baines was ecstatic that at long last the campaign to end the slave trade, the 'National disgrace', was virtually over. On 21 March he announced in his columns the third reading of the bill to abolish it and a sense of euphoria ought to have been apparent in his feelings. It was not. In the same paper he reported that a new 'Catholic Bill' designed to give Catholics the right to hold commissions in the Army and Navy, was under consideration. He reflected sadly,

We regret to say that a serious misunderstanding exists between His Majesty and the Members of the Cabinet Council.²⁵²

King George was intractable on the issue of Catholic relief and dismissed the Government. A week later the Mercury lamented that;

an Administration possessing the full confidence of Parliament and the Country, should ... be displaced by an act of the King's prerogative.²⁵³

The King turned to the sixty-nine year-old Duke of Portland to form an administration. Portland decided to seek the mandate of the people in a general election. It would be

²⁴⁷ Leeds Mercury 12.05.10

²⁴⁸ Leeds Mercury 07.03.01. For examples of his comments on Parliamentary Reform during those first years see Leeds Mercury 31.12.03, 06.05.09, 28.04.10, 15.06.11, 20.02.13 and 25.03.15.

²⁴⁹ Leeds Mercury 29.04.09

²⁵⁰ Leeds Intelligencer 06.02.09

²⁵¹ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 64

²⁵² Leeds Mercury 14.02.07, 21.03.07

²⁵³ Leeds Mercury 28.03.07. See also G I T Machin The Catholic Question in English Politics (Oxford 1964) pp 12-13

fought on two main issues; 'No Popery' and 'No Corruption.'²⁵⁴ In Yorkshire, however, a more localised topic clouded the campaign.

Henry Lascelles had been one of Yorkshire's two MPs since 1796. But he had annoyed the small clothiers of the West Riding by his attitude to their objections to new systems being introduced by the larger manufacturers in the industry.²⁵⁵ These major cloth magnates wished to be rid of all restrictive practices in textile production. The Government set up a committee to investigate the industry but Lascelles's offensive treatment of the witnesses from the small manufacturers' turned resentment into vehemence.²⁵⁶ Such were the feelings in the West Riding that in the general election of 1806, Lascelles stood down and Walter Fawkes joined Wilberforce as one of the two Yorkshire members. In 1807, however, Fawkes decided to withdraw from the oncoming contest. He felt the expense was too great, thus giving credence to Baines's view, expressed five years earlier, that as a result of the current electoral system

men of probity and talents are often deterred from offering themselves as Candidates ... from the ruinous expense ... (of) Contested Elections.²⁵⁷

Wilberforce offered himself for the sixth time; Lascelles decided to stand again and then young Lord Milton, scion of the Fitzwilliam Family, announced his candidature.²⁵⁸ Yorkshire was to have its first contested election since the by-election of 1741.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁴ Watson George III pp 445-446.

²⁵⁵ E A Smith 'The Yorkshire Election 1806-1807; a Study in Electoral Management' in Northern History vol II (1967) p 67. Objections were also raised by Yorkshire croppers who urged the abolition of gig mills. See The Times 06.06.07. Yorkshire voters were still very conscious of the Catholic issue in the election. Responding to a letter in the Leeds Intelligencer 'Observer' in the Mercury referred to the Test and Corporation Acts as an 'awful prostitution of a religious ordinance.' See Leeds Mercury 11.04.07

²⁵⁶ Wilson Gentlemen Merchants p 169

²⁵⁷ Leeds Mercury 26.06.02. Fawkes also admitted that he found the work extremely onerous and Baines Junior, acknowledging that Fawkes was not a 'man of business,' wondered whether he was the right man to 'watch over the interests of the largest of English constituencies.' See Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 63.

²⁵⁸ William Wilberforce was a philanthropist, anti-slavery leader, supporter of Catholic Emancipation and friend of Pitt. Henry Lascelles was a Tory supporter of the of the agricultural interests. Charles William Wentworth Fitzwilliam, the Viscount Milton was a free trader, a supporter of Catholic Emancipation but initially opposed to Parliamentary Reform. See A Gooder ed 'The Parliamentary Representation of the County of York 1258-1832' The Yorkshire Archaeological Society; Record Series vol II (1938) pp 112-114 and p 154

²⁵⁹ Leeds Mercury 02.05.07. Milton had come of age in May 1807. He had served as MP for the family borough of Malton for six months. See Smith EA NH vol II p 72. See also Smith HS Parliaments of England p 392

It was a bitter, acrimonious and, at times violent election, with the Yorkshire press playing its part, promoting ideas and provoking the electorate. For the Tories, Griffith Wright Junior hammered home Lascelles's arguments in the Leeds Intelligencer; for the Whigs, the York Herald and the Leeds Mercury responded in kind.²⁶⁰ The new merchants and manufacturers, predominantly Whig or Radical, marshalled their forces behind Milton.²⁶¹ In the Cloth Hall yard at Leeds, Milton was received with enthusiasm; Lascelles was shouted down.²⁶² Baines observed that Lascelles's family was the greatest slave owner in Yorkshire and asked, 'What then have the Friends of Humanity to hope from such a family?'²⁶³ The Intelligencer poured scorn on the '*green-ey'd calumny of such wretched scribblers as Mr Mercury*' whilst 'Philo-Ecclesia' condemned the Mercury's 'hostility to our Established Church.'²⁶⁴ Baines continued his diatribe against the Intelligencer and its contributors; 'Their stupid lucubrations on our political principles are beneath contempt,' he scoffed.²⁶⁵

The violence was not just verbal. The Mayor of Leeds assaulted a young Milton supporter and then turned out the cavalry. With drawn swords they galloped down the footpaths of the town terrorizing the inhabitants whilst Lascelles's supporters pelted Milton's people in the streets.²⁶⁶ The hooliganism was not all one-sided. At Stanningley a party of Miltonians ambushed a waggon of voters from Haworth and blockaded the Bradford Road. Benjamin Gott scribbled off a warning note to Mr Popplewell at Harewood warning of the danger to Lascelles people in Otley where the cry was

²⁶⁰ E A Smith felt that the Whig papers were 'clearly superior' to the Tory Intelligencer. See Smith EA NH vol II p 85.

²⁶¹ They were also predominantly Dissenters. See Fraser Thoresby Society vol LIII pt 1 p 1. A Leeds Unitarian solicitor, Thomas William Tottie, became one of Milton's principal agents. He was considered so successful in the role, he continued as the principal agent as long as Yorkshire remained an undivided constituency. He became a member of the Church of England in 1850. See Taylor Worthies of Leeds p 487.

²⁶² E Baines Yorkshire Contested Election: a Collection of the Speeches, Addresses and Squibs (Leeds 1807) p 102

²⁶³ Leeds Mercury 09.05.07

²⁶⁴ Leeds Intelligencer 07.09.07. Baines lamented that 'The moderation of ... *Catholics* presents a striking contrast to the conduct of certain *Protestants* in this town and neighbourhood.' See Leeds Mercury 02.05.07

²⁶⁵ Leeds Mercury 06.06.07

²⁶⁶ Leeds Mercury 23.05.07. Baines himself was prepared to resort to violence; as when an officer stormed into the Mercury office and threatened the editor for his remarks about the conduct of the military during the election. The officer withdrew when he realised Baines was not intimidated at all but prepared to meet violence with violence. See Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines pp 66-67

Milton forever. Lascelles down river
With a Knife in his Heart and
Fork in is (sic) Liver.²⁶⁷

On the evening of Wednesday 27 May, Baines himself was subjected to an outburst of abuse. Walking down George Street in York, he was accosted by a group of Lascelles men who discharged 'a battery of hisses and hootings' at him. One of them was the Mayor of Leeds. Baines lost no time in reporting 'such indecorum' to his readers though, as he pointed out, he was 'not in the habit of obtruding himself personally on the public.'²⁶⁸ Griffith Wright gleefully admitted that he was one of the culprits!²⁶⁹

In the same edition that Baines 'obtruded himself on the public,' he had more joyful news to report; 'Lord Milton has been returned one of the Representatives of this county.' The poll had dragged on for fifteen days. William Wilberforce was the eventual winner registering 11 806 votes with the young Milton nudging Lascelles into final place by 11 177 to 10 989.²⁷⁰ The houses of Harewood and Fitzwilliam were left to pick up election expenses bills of almost £100 000 each.²⁷¹ It had been a bruising, vicious battle and one to which at least one Yorkshireman took exception.

Mr Baines - I have read the Leeds Intelligencer and the Leeds Mercury of this and some preceding weeks and must say you two Printers are ... 'both in the wrong;' candor (sic) and a love of proper regard to the Public who read your respective papers compels me to think you both go far beyond the line of decent propriety and insult the understanding of your readers.²⁷²

'An Impartial Friend to Truth''s letter never appeared in the columns of the Mercury.

VII

Baines the public man was also a devoted husband and father. Before he had walked into the Mercury office as editor, he and Charlotte had two sons; Matthew

²⁶⁷ Leeds City Archives: Harewood Estate Records; Local Affairs - Elections Box 1: 10. L Nicholson to T Slingsby 20.05.07; Box 1: 11B Gott to Mr Popplewell 04.06.07; M Spencer to T Ingham 22.05.07. All records from the Harewood Estate are hereafter simply referred to as Harewood Estate Records.

²⁶⁸ Leeds Mercury 06.06.07

²⁶⁹ Leeds Intelligencer 01.06.07

²⁷⁰ Gooder Yorkshire Archaeological Soc vol II p 154. Though Lascelles missed out on the prestigious Yorkshire seat he was still returned to Parliament as MP for Westbury.

²⁷¹ Fitzwilliam eventually paid £96 614; Harewood, as near as can be estimated, £93 600. see Smith EA NH vol II p 86.

²⁷² Harewood Estate Records: 'An Impartial Friend to Truth' to L Nicholson copy of letter to E Baines 16.05.07

Talbot born 17 February 1799 and Edward born 28 May 1800. Their first daughter, Charlotte, was born on 25 November 1802, Jane on 5 August 1804, Thomas on 8 April 1806, William on 17 January 1808, Richard Samuel on 1 September 1809, Frederick on 5 September 1811, and Caroline Phoebe on 9 April 1814. Anna was born on 28 June 1816 and eighteen months later their youngest child Margaret was born on 14 December 1817.²⁷³ Edward and Charlotte created a happy, loving family.²⁷⁴ It was also a lucky family. In an age when infant mortality was commonplace, only twice in fifty years did a funeral procession leave their home. On 22 March 1810, two year-old William died; six weeks later, eight month-old Richard Samuel was carried off.²⁷⁵

It had always been intended that Matthew Talbot would follow in the family business. Educated first at a local grammar school by John Foster and then at the Dissenter's School, Leaf Square, Manchester, he finally commenced work in the Mercury office. William Tottie, a local solicitor, advised Baines that a legal career was more suitable for him.²⁷⁶ Thus Baines sent Matthew to Rev James Tate in Richmond to prepare him for Cambridge.²⁷⁷ The Mercury mantle now fell on Edward Junior.²⁷⁸

In February 1815 Edward wrote to his father from school, saying that Matthew Talbot had told him there was an opening for him at the Mercury.

I wish to know if you think the Printing Business will be a good one; will not ... a cessation of War ... take off much of the curiosity of the Public concerning affairs of State.²⁷⁹

Young Baines need have had no qualms. In the coming years the Leeds Mercury would grow from strength to strength; and during that time Edward Baines, its editor, would achieve his greatest journalistic coup.

²⁷³ Leeds City Libraries; Baines Genealogy

²⁷⁴ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines pp 294-309.

²⁷⁵ Ibid 71. Richard Baines, Edward's father died 31.05.11. See Leeds Mercury 24.03.10, 12.05.10, 08.06.11

²⁷⁶ Taylor Worthies of Leeds p 487

²⁷⁷ Leeds Mercury 24.01.60. Matthew Talbot was the only member of the family to become an Anglican. It may have been a 'marriage of convenience' on going to Cambridge. See Lowerson Political Career of Sir Edward Baines p 19

²⁷⁸ Little is known about the education of Thomas Baines or the girls in the family but it is obvious Baines was eager to give his children as good an education as he could. When Thomas Wright Hill moved his experimental school from Hazelwood near Birmingham to Bruce Castle, Tottenham, he sent his youngest boy, Frederick, there. See Leeds Mercury 01.03.93

²⁷⁹ Baines Papers 45.1. E Baines (Junior) to E Baines 27.02.15

CHAPTER FOUR

THE GREAT LIAR OF THE NORTH: 1815-1830

The war was over; the political life of Napoleon, that 'mixture of good and evil'¹ had been terminated; the hegemony of France in Europe had finally been destroyed.²

Great Britain ... has come out of the contest, not merely with her liberties and invaluable institutions unimpaired, but with her national character exalted.³

Baines's panegyric was understandable. A bloody war, which had drained the national resources and threatened the country's very existence, had been brought to a satisfactory conclusion. Britain stood foremost in the world as 'the *only* industrialized economy, the *only* naval power ... and virtually the only colonial power.'⁴ But lurking behind that glittering façade of success lay the apocalyptic forces of social dissatisfaction, economic crisis and political discontent. The Annual Register reported the Prince of Wales's claim for 1816 that 'manufactures, commerce and revenue ... are in a flourishing condition;' but, on the very same page it stated that in 'the first year after the restoration of peace ... widely-extended distress' was endemic across the country.⁵ Writing a century and a half later, Eric Hobsbawm was equally emphatic about the wretched social, political and economic state of the nation at that time:

At no period in modern British history have the common people been so persistently and, profoundly, and often desperately, dissatisfied.⁶

That dissatisfaction manifested itself in outbreaks of violence across the country the like of which had not been seen in England since the Civil War.⁷ The Government feared that radicals would exploit this distress for political ends. Historians still disagree as to the extent to which revolutionary elements influenced that radical movement.⁸ However, there can be no dispute about the social and economic crisis the country faced. Demobilisation of between 300 000 and 400 000 men, at a stroke, from

¹ Baines Wars of the French Revolution vol II pp 497-498

² Hill Economic History and Social History p 68

³ Baines Wars of the French Revolution vol I p 3

⁴ Hobsbawm Age of Revolution 1789- 1848 (London 1996) p 106

⁵ Annual Register 1816 (London 1817) p 91

⁶ Hobsbawm Industry and Empire p 73

⁷ A Bryant Age Of Elegance (London 1952) pp 373-374

⁸ J W Derry Politics in the Age of Fox, Pitt and Liverpool; Continuity and Transformation (Basingstoke 1994) pp 178-180. For an exposition of the problems faced during this period see also Derry pp 174-187. For an earlier view see also Bryant Age of Elegance pp 351-403

the armed forces placed an intolerable burden on a peacetime economy that could not possibly absorb such numbers.⁹ Added to that were the impact of new technology and a series of bad harvests. Baines view was clear that the present difficulties were the direct result of 'the long exhausting war,' an 'establishment that we are so impolitic to maintain' and the vast multitude of sinecurists saddled upon the country.¹⁰ He accepted that the problem of the poor demanded 'some mode of relief' but equally, that the people with incomes 'from £55 to £200' were 'very seriously affected' by income tax.¹¹ By 1815, the cost of the war had driven the yearly tax bill from £19 million in 1792 to £72 million.¹² Income tax in particular was a 'grievous impost' that not only forced an individual to reveal the 'state of the his private affairs,' it was also 'burdensome in its exactions.'¹³ The cry was raised to return to cash payments, abandon the Corn Laws and introduce Parliamentary Reform.¹⁴

Against this background of economic crisis and social discord, Edward Baines had seen his newspaper become a journalistic force to be reckoned with in the West Riding. In subsequent years, he saw it grow in both prestige and influence and also his political ambitions burgeon to such an extent that he eventually emerged as the prime mover behind the Liberal strategy in the town. Baines became so dominant that when Robert Perring, became editor of the Leeds Intelligencer in 1829, he was driven to reflect bitterly that the Mercury editor had established no less than a personal fiefdom in the West Riding and one which he later derisively dubbed, a 'Bainesocracy.'¹⁵

Baines achieved that dominance by sheer force of personality. Physically, he had a commanding appearance; he was above average in height, his features were regular, his frame evenly proportioned, his movements graceful, his step agile. His hair was soft brown.¹⁶ To his supporters, he was the man who symbolised the emerging entrepreneurial Britain of the early nineteenth century, who by diligence and enterprise

⁹ Derry quotes 300 000 in Politics in the Age of Pitt, Fox and Liverpool p 174, p 178; Trevor May gives 400 000. See T May The Economy 1815-1914 (London/Glasgow 1972) p 64

¹⁰ Leeds Mercury 03.08.16

¹¹ Leeds Mercury 24.02.16

¹² In 1815 it accounted for a fifth of the national income. See Bryant Age of Elegance p 355.

¹³ Leeds Mercury 07.01.15, 04.02.15

¹⁴ Derry Politics in the Age of Pitt, Fox and Liverpool pp 175-178

¹⁵ Leeds Intelligencer 29.07.30

¹⁶ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 358

had built himself a successful business empire and understood the vicissitudes and pressures of commerce and trade. But Baines not only understood the problems of the middle classes, he was able to articulate them and do so in language that was both meaningful and stimulating. In him, they saw not an economic and political adventurer but a man of vision, passion and sincerity. Here was a man whose ideas and observations they read week in and week out in the columns of the Mercury and who was prepared to stand shoulder to shoulder with them to voice his and their beliefs. For those beliefs accurately reflected the thinking of the West Riding Whig-Dissenting middle class; a commitment to free trade, a demand for retrenchment and the pursuit of Parliamentary Reform. By 1828, Macaulay observed that the press had become the fourth estate of the realm.¹⁷ Baines expertly used the power inherent in that fact to edify his readers and guide his supporters. His grand design proved successful. He and his followers wrestled control of the parish vestry from their Tory-Anglican opponents and dictated the Whig-Liberal election strategies of the 1830s.¹⁸ Perring was correct. Baines had established an effective power base in the West Riding of Yorkshire; a Bainesocracy had indeed been created.

Baines's opinions were respected by thousands and were anathema to thousands more. However, his commercial success could be denied by none. Although he was never extremely wealthy and never kept a private carriage, he was still able to afford a new house to be built on King Street and to lease a property at Chat Moss near Manchester.¹⁹ Well might his son write that by 1818 'Mr Baines was ... in his meridian ... he was ready at every call of duty.'²⁰ That duty entailed producing a newspaper that was 'a record at once instructive and entertaining,' and which inculcated 'sound and liberal opinions.'²¹

In 1816, those liberal opinions acknowledged the national crisis and identified a number of areas of concern. 'The situation in the agricultural districts is distressing in the extreme;' 'unbounded expenditure ... demand retrenchment;' 'the national debt

¹⁷ T B Macaulay Critical and Historical Essays Contributed to the Edinburgh Review ed (London 1883) Review of Hallam's Constitutional History 1828 p 95

¹⁸ See below and Chapter Five below.

¹⁹ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 122, p 364. See also Baines Directory of Yorkshire vol I p 38. For Baines's involvement at Chat Moss see Chapter Six below.

²⁰ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 97

²¹ Leeds Mercury 01.01.25

is a millstone;’ ‘inordinate commercial speculations’,’ and the property tax; each in its turn contributed to the overall malaise of the nation.²² Not everyone agreed. At the Leeds Anti-Property Tax meeting,²³ which the Tories viewed as a ‘motley assemblage’ and to which the Mayor refused to come, the ‘most ridiculous and offensive observations were made.’ The Intelligencer’s reporter was so incensed by the proceedings that after an hour and half, he ‘threw down his pen in disgust.’²⁴ Baines was objective enough to observe that the sufferings of the poor locally was ‘not ... as severe as are experienced in many parts of the kingdom.’²⁵ George Mudie, the new editor of the Intelligencer, unequivocally denied that it even existed.²⁶ However, the Leeds public did not agree. Two days after Mudie’s comments, a crowd of several hundred gathered outside the Intelligencer’s office, ‘without committing any riot or excess,’ in order to demonstrate that ‘distress is a reality.’²⁷ Baines emphasised that he had never denied

the distress ... has no existence ... It is not sufficient that the public should feel; it is necessary they should act.

In 1816 they did act but not as Baines would have wished. He believed such action should never be violent, for violence simply destroyed the ‘very bonds of society.’²⁸ But in June that year, serious disturbances broke out in East Anglia where the labourers of Ely demanded a minimum wage and price maximums.²⁹ Baines always condemned violence but also looked beyond such ‘outrages’ to identify the causes of

²² Leeds Mercury 24.02.16, 06.04.16, 11.05.16, 03.08.06, 17.08.16

²³ The tax was originally called ‘Income Tax’ when Pitt introduced it in 1799 but it was re-introduced in 1803 as the ‘Property and Income Tax.’ See É Halévy A History of the English People in 1815 vol II p 225.

²⁴ Leeds Intelligencer 04.03.16. It also took Baines to task for omitting the ‘offensive observations’ from his Mercury report.

²⁵ Leeds Mercury 17.08.16

²⁶ Leeds Intelligencer 23.09.16. By November, it carried a report that by that month the ‘excellent ... Soup House’ had been forced to open in Leeds. See Leeds Intelligencer 18.11.16. Griffith Wright (Junior) appointed George Mudie as editor in 1815. He had previously worked for the Nottingham Gazette. Mudie was a talented journalist but had a suspect temperament. See Anon Thoresby Society vol XL p xiv. Mudie closely followed Griffith Wright Junior’s policy of attacking the Mercury and its editor. In that year forty of its fifty-two editions kept alive the ‘spirit of hostility and acrimonious dissension.’ See Leeds Mercury 28.09.16

²⁷ Leeds Mercury 28.09.16

²⁸ Leeds Mercury 16 28.09, 29.02.12

²⁹ Thompson E P Making of the English Working Class pp 249-250

discontent.³⁰ At Ely, he felt, ignorance on the part of the dissidents was the key factor and pointed out that those 'engaged in acts of riot and outrage, are persons totally illiterate.'³¹ Many of the disaffected across the country, he believed, were of limited education or intelligence. For example, in the manufacturing districts where numerous societies had been established, Baines admitted that some of them did include 'violent and dangerous' members; but he insisted that these organisations

entirely composed of the lower orders ... not meaning what they said, and not knowing what they meant ... were not ... calculated to endanger the safety of the government.³²

The same criticism he applied to the Blanketeers in his History of the Reign of George III. Writing about a public meeting of spinners and weavers that had been called in Manchester for 3 March 1817, Baines's choice of adjectives clearly reveal his feelings about this 'wild' scheme. The proposal to march 'to London, to present their grievances to the prince regent' was, in his eyes, a 'foolish or wicked proposal.'³³ The magistrates swiftly stamped out the protest but 'were severely blamed for imprisoning (some) of the men.' No weapons were found and Baines pointed out that had a more circumspect approach been used towards the protesters, and the 'folly and danger of their conduct' been indicated at the outset, the whole incident could have been averted.³⁴

For many, the immediate reform of Parliament offered the only viable solution to avert an impending catastrophe.³⁵ As Baines reflected, 'revolutions are the dreadful

³⁰ For an example his response to the Nottingham disturbances of 1812 see Leeds Mercury 22.02.12. By 1826 he even acknowledged that riots could have 'one beneficial effect' by calling the attention of 'the Government and the country' to the distress which produced violence. See Leeds Mercury 06.05.26

³¹ Leeds Mercury 29.06.16

³² Baines Reign of George III vol IV p 43. Contemporary historiography appears to agree with Baines. John Derry asserts that more recent debate on the impact of revolutionary-radicalism on the situation at the time 'has shifted to slightly new ground. The majority of English radicals are deemed innocent of complicity in revolutionary plots. The consensus is that revolutionary elements constituted only the extreme fringe of the radical movement, and that they were neither its most representative nor its most effective manifestation.' J Derry Politics in the Age of Pitt, Fox and Liverpool pp 179-180.

³³ Baines Reign of George III vol IV p 73

³⁴ He cited as an example the abortive protest of the colliers in Staffordshire in 1816 where this strategy had worked. See Baines Reign of George III vol IV pp 73-74. For further details of the Blanketeers see Thompson E P Making of the English Working Class pp 711-712; White Waterloo to Peterloo pp 163-164. For a sympathetic view of the Blanketeers see J L and B Hammond The Skilled Labourer 1760-1832 (Abingdon 1995) pp 341-342.

³⁵ See Chapter Five below and also Colley Britons: Forging a Nation p 338. See also M Brock The Great Reform Act p 43 and Belchem Orator Hunt p 3. For a contemporary views see Leeds

fruits of reformation long delayed.³⁶ However, the reformers themselves fell into two distinct camps; the moderates and the radicals. John Cartwright, the 'Father of Reform,' identified the radicals' demands; 'universal freedom, equal representation, annual election, voting by ballot.'³⁷ The most 'popular and flamboyant figure' in that radical movement was the gentleman farmer 'Orator' Henry Hunt, who 'shed his loyalism and progressed rapidly ... to radicalism.'³⁸ Baines, ever cautious, belonged to the moderate reform movement. If Cartwright sneered that the moderate movement was no more than a 'burlesque on patriotism,'³⁹ the Mercury editor was equally scathing about the radicals, with Hunt singled out for particular abuse as a trouble making demagogue. His damaging 'harangue' at the Spa Fields meetings had been 'injurious to the cause of Parliamentary Reform.' Baines warned if Hunt and his radicals employed 'physical violence ... to obtain their object ... it can only be through seas of blood;' and he stressed his opposition to 'Universal Suffrage and Annual Parliaments.'⁴⁰

Nevertheless, he was deeply committed to Parliamentary Reform. In January 1817, he addressed an open air meeting in the yard of the Coloured Cloth Hall for a full hour as snow fell. The audience listened attentively as he insisted that the time for reform was now but that 'they should employ no other force than the force of argument.'⁴¹ On 27 February he was speaking again; a meeting had been called to congratulate the Prince Regent on his lucky escape when his coach had been attacked on his return journey from opening Parliament.⁴² Baines had not intended to speak but 'public favour called him forth' to denounce the attack as an 'atrocious calumny.' He also took the opportunity to reject the 'foul, slanderous and malignant' accusation that he was a 'traitor.' The accuser, Griffith Wright Junior, was present, but he 'shrank back

Mercury 27.04.11 and J Cartwright The English Constitution Produced and Illustrated (London 1823) passim.

³⁶ Leeds Mercury 19.10.16

³⁷ Cartwright English Constitution p xix

³⁸ Belchem Orator Hunt p 3

³⁹ Cartwright English Constitution p 367

⁴⁰ Leeds Mercury 23.11.16, 07.12.16, 10.07.19, 21.08.19

⁴¹ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines pp 88-89.

⁴² On his way to Carlton House from the Palace of Westminster, demonstrators in the Mall hurled stones at his coach. When a small hole was found in the window, it was thought an air-gun had been fired. The Prince was certain it had been a serious assassination attempt. See A Palmer The Life and Times of George IV (London 1972) p 149.

in silent dismay' and 'did not utter a syllable in support of it.'⁴³ Wright and others still viewed Baines's demonstrations of loyalty to the Crown as 'proofs of a treasonable conspiracy' and his opposition to violence as hypocritical cant. Did he not, every Friday, show his proposed articles to 'a conclave of wiser patrons ... in order to ascertain the utmost degree of treason' that might be published without fear of prosecution?⁴⁴

As the storms and floods of winter gave way to spring,⁴⁵ Baines ruminated on the tranquil manner in which the suffering people of England had borne their ordeal.⁴⁶ Steps were taken in Leeds to alleviate the distress⁴⁷ but Baines was forced to admit that such times had seen an increase in crime, for 'the devil finds a man idle but always gives him a job;' however, he insisted 'of sedition, treason and rebellion, we see no evidence.'⁴⁸ General John Byng, in part, concurred with the Mercury editor. Writing to Earl Fitzwilliam, the Lord Lieutenant of the West Riding of Yorkshire, in April 1817, Byng said that only on the border between Lancashire and Yorkshire did he fear any danger and steps had already been taken to alert the local Yeomanry Corps. The only other place of which he had fears was Leeds where 'alarming news' from the town had led him to advise the Mayor what steps to take.⁴⁹ But Liverpool's Government, conscious of what it perceived as an anarchic situation developing, had already acted. On 4 March 1817 Habeas Corpus was suspended and re-enacted in July that year.⁵⁰

Baines, like his fellow Whigs, insisted that the suspension 'was uncalled for by the state of the country.'⁵¹ Their opponents, however, saw the dark danger of revolution

⁴³ Leeds Mercury 01.03.17. See also Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines pp 89-90

⁴⁴ Gibb and Beckwith Yorkshire Post p 15 quoting Leeds Intelligencer 13.12.27

⁴⁵ Stratton Agricultural Records p 98

⁴⁶ Leeds Mercury 15.03.17

⁴⁷ Subscriptions raised at the *George and Dragon*, *Golden Fleece*, *Bee Hive* and *White Swan* provided beef, potatoes, soup, bread and coal for some 2 000 families. See Parsons and White Annals of Leeds vol I p 251

⁴⁸ Leeds Mercury 19.04.17

⁴⁹ Sheffield City Archives: Wentworth Woodhouse Muniments; Fourth Earl Fitzwilliam's Papers 45/154, 45/168. John Byng to Earl Fitzwilliam 03.04.17, 01.04.17. All documents in the Fitzwilliam Collection are hereafter cited simply as WWM MS. In November, violence did break out in Leeds when, it was claimed, incendiaries set fire to Willan's gig mill in Hunslet Lane and the hoses of the fire engines were cut. See Parsons and White Annals of Leeds vol I p 251.

⁵⁰ Thompson E P Making of the English Working Class p 700

⁵¹ Leeds Mercury 09.08.17

looming ahead and to them the Government simply took what steps it felt necessary to ensure the protection of the nation.⁵² The Intelligencer condemned ‘the Factious Editor of the Leeds Organ of Sedition’ and indeed anyone who denied that treason was in the air.⁵³ Did not Baines, after all, suppress for a week the Report of the Secret Committee of the House of Commons?⁵⁴ With no police force available to furnish intelligence on the volatile situation, Viscount Sidmouth, the Home Secretary, felt it necessary to rely on the reports he received from the spies and informers who were operating across the country.⁵⁵ But as Malcolm Thomis and Peter Holt point out, it is difficult to draw a clear line between the informer and the *provocateur*.⁵⁶ Many agreed that Sidmouth’s action was fully justified; others argued that the natural liberties enshrined in Magna Carta had been impaired. Historians still dispute where the truth lies between these entrenched views and nothing exemplifies that difference of opinion better than the Oliver Affair. In this, Baines and his Mercury were among the leading protagonists. His exposé was, according to the Hammonds, ‘the most sensational revelation that ever newspaper published,’⁵⁷ it gave Baines the greatest ‘journalistic success of his career’ and made the Leeds Mercury the ‘accepted leader of the English provincial press.’⁵⁸

II

In March 1817, the magistrates in Manchester, fearing ‘a most daring and traitorous conspiracy,’ arrested eleven men. None was brought to trial or even indicted. But Baines realised that *agent provocateurs*, in the employ of the Manchester magistrates, had been at work. A spy scandal had begun to emerge.⁵⁹ Baines admitted;

⁵² Bryant Age of Elegance 376-377. Woodward Age of Reform p 61. Derry Politics in the Age of Pitt, Fox and Liverpool p 182

⁵³ Leeds Intelligencer 03.03.17

⁵⁴ Leeds Intelligencer 10.03.17

⁵⁵ Derry Politics in the Age of Pitt, Fox and Liverpool p 182. Sidmouth was less gullible in believing these reports than is often claimed. See Derry p 182

⁵⁶ M I Thomis and P Holt Threats of Revolution in Britain 1789-184 (London/Basingstoke 1977) p 60

⁵⁷ Hammonds The Skilled Labourer p 362

⁵⁸ Read Press and People p 113

⁵⁹ The following is based heavily on Baines’s own account in his History of the Reign of George III vol IV pp 72-83. Other accounts of the episode also used include Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines pp 92-96; Thompson E P Making of the English Working Class pp 715-726; and the Hammonds The Skilled Labourer pp 353-376. Though many historians consider the Hammonds today as discredited, Thompson insists that their ‘scholarly’ interpretation ‘remains the most

it is possible that a Government may employ spies from laudable motives ... (but) such a measure must be pregnant with fraud, hypocrisy and contamination. The good is doubtful, but the evil is certain.⁶⁰

W J Richards, alias William Oliver, a carpenter,⁶¹ on his release from prison for debt, began to take an interest in political associations. He was introduced to Joseph Mitchell, a leading radical. The two men agreed to embark on a tour of England 'with the object,' Baines tells us, 'of stirring up the people to insurrection.' Oliver offered to fund the project. They set off on 23 April. However, unknown to his radical associates, on 28 March Oliver had already approached Viscount Sidmouth, the Home Secretary, with an offer to furnish him with details of any seditious plots he unearthed on his journeys.⁶² Sidmouth agreed to finance the operation.

In the North, Mitchell introduced his new colleague to radicals in Derby, Yorkshire and Lancashire and announced that Whit Monday, 26 May, was the day fixed for a general rising. Oliver, claiming to be the delegate for London, asserted that at an hour's notice 150 000 men could be raised in the capital; other large contingents were expected from Birmingham, Manchester, Leeds, Sheffield and Nottingham. At the same time he assured Sidmouth that the plan was a 'weak and impractical scheme.'⁶³

On 4 May, however, Mitchell was arrested and transported to Cold Bath Fields Prison, London. The rising itself was then delayed until 9 June which was the eve of the treason trials of Watson, Thistlewood, Preston and Hooper for their part in the Spa Fields riot.⁶⁴ To the Hammonds, Mitchell was 'a hot-headed and unbalanced enthusiast;' to E P Thompson, he was 'an amateurish and foolish conspirator, but he

authoritative reconstruction of the career of the notorious Oliver.' See p 713. The most surprising fact is that no contemporary historian appears to draw on Baines's own graphic 10 000 word record in vol IV of his History of the Reign of George III. His work is, after all, not simply an historical narrative but printed primary source evidence from the man instrumental in making the whole episode public.

⁶⁰ Leeds Mercury 30.08.17

⁶¹ He was also described as a builder and surveyor.

⁶² Government employment of spies was not uncommon, Pitt's administration in 1794 used several. see Baines Wars of the French Revolution vol I pp 126-127. They were, according to Frank Darvall, 'an integral and essential part of the system of internal government.' See F O Darvall Popular Disturbances and Public Disorder in Regency England (London 1969) p 275

⁶³ Thompson E P Making of the English Working Class p 717.

⁶⁴ In December 1816, a meeting of radical reformers at Spa Fields, in London, degenerated into a riot in which a pedestrian was killed. The authorities quickly defused the situation and arrested the leaders. See White Waterloo to Peterloo pp 151-152

was not a spy.' Baines took a different view; '(Mitchell) was the coadjutor and not the dupe of Oliver' he wrote and justified his belief, by arguing that Mitchell knew Oliver was impoverished yet could afford to finance their journeys; that the proposed insurrection was not feasible; and that Oliver had free access to him whilst he was in prison.⁶⁵

Meanwhile, Oliver continued his agitation in the north.⁶⁶ His activities came to the notice of the Sheffield justices of the peace and one of the magistrates, a Mr Parker, drew the Home Offices's attention to them. Sidmouth responded at once, advising the diligent Mr Parker that 'O. is employed by me.'⁶⁷ Then in June, Oliver arranged a meeting at the *Sportsman's Arms* in Thornhill Lees about two miles south of Dewsbury. Ten individuals, pretentiously described as 'delegates,' arrived from the area. Oliver had forewarned General Byng of the intended gathering and both men agreed it would be better to monitor the situation rather than take direct action. Unfortunately, the zealous Mr Parker, hearing of the meeting, proposed that the so-called delegates should be arrested. Byng reluctantly felt obliged to act accordingly but led the yeomanry arresting party himself in order to connive at Oliver's escape.

News spread quickly both of the arrest and that the prisoners now languished in Wakefield House of Correction.⁶⁸ The next day, John Dickinson,⁶⁹ a Dewsbury linen draper and reform enthusiast, was surprised to see Oliver free and preparing to leave Wakefield by the Sheffield coach. He knew Oliver because the secret agent had tried to inveigle him into the abortive plot, impressing upon him and the others that 'force must be used.'⁷⁰ Dickinson was further baffled when he saw Oliver in conversation with one of General Byng's servants who confirmed that Oliver and the General had met only days before.⁷¹ The same day, the Leeds Mercury carried a simple report of the

⁶⁵ Mitchell vehemently denied Baines's allegation. See below.

⁶⁶ For Oliver's itinerary see Baines History of George III vol IV p 79

⁶⁷ Hammonds The Skilled Labourer p 356

⁶⁸ This acted as the prison for the West Riding. See Baines Directory of Yorkshire vol I p 424

⁶⁹ Historians use both 'Dickinson' and 'Dickenson.' Baines lists the linen draper as 'Dickinson, John' see Directory of Yorkshire vol I p 164.

⁷⁰ WWM MS: No 45/177; Sworn statement by J Dickinson before J P Heywood 16.06.17

⁷¹ For a verbatim report on the exchange see R Reid The Peterloo Massacre (London 1989) p 77 quoting HO 42.166.

Thornhill Lees arrests.⁷² That weekend insurrections erupted at both Huddersfield in the West Riding and Pentrich⁷³ in Derbyshire but both were abortive fiascos.

A few days later, James Holdforth, a friend of Edward Baines, was in Dewsbury where he met up with James Willan, a local bookseller and reformer.⁷⁴ Willan explained to Holdforth how Oliver had arrived at his shop on the morning of the notorious Thornhill Lees meeting and urged him to attend. Holdforth sensed something amiss and, before departing for Manchester, wrote to Baines, on 13 June, to that effect. The first editions of the Mercury had already been put to bed when, 'at a late hour (on Friday) afternoon,' Holdforth's letter arrived. Baines, accompanied by his son, Edward, immediately made for Dewsbury where he interviewed both Willan and Dickinson. Baines was back in Leeds in time to meet the second edition deadline and thus the following day the entire episode was dramatically revealed in two and half columns of the Mercury.⁷⁵ Baines fulminated of Oliver:

somebody has employed him. What the trade of this man may be, we cannot pretend to say - but that he is a *Green Bag Maker* by profession, is, we think sufficiently obvious.... we call upon the Magistrates of this Riding, ... to go to the bottom of this nefarious transaction ... We ask it in justice to all advocates of Parliamentary Reform.⁷⁶

Oliver always claimed he 'simply noted down, without encouraging, what information was brought forward.'⁷⁷ Byng, in a letter to Baines, stated that he had never employed Oliver; that he had been apprised of the intended uprising whilst Oliver was still in London. Furthermore, he stressed he had never met Oliver before the 4 June when the alleged spy simply corroborated the information Byng already had. Baines

⁷² Leeds Mercury 07.06.17

⁷³ Historians differ as to whether the name is 'Pentrich' or 'Pentridge.' 'Pentrich' was the name used in the nineteenth century; 'Pentridge' in the sixteenth century. See K Cameron Place Names of Derbyshire Part 2 (Cambridge 1959) pp 490-491

⁷⁴ Both 'Willans' and 'Willan' are used. Baines Directory of Yorkshire vol I p 163 lists 'Willan, James' as a bookseller and stationer in Dewsbury.

⁷⁵ Leeds Mercury 14.06.17

⁷⁶ Leeds Mercury 14.06.17. Baines Junior included the similar quote at length in his biography. See Life of Edward Baines pp 93-94. A 'Green Bag' was an attorney. They were said to carry clients' deeds in green bags. See F Grose A Dictionary of Buckish Slang, University Wit and Pickpocket Eloquence (London 1811) p GRE

⁷⁷ Thomis and Holt Threats of Revolution in Britain p 59

accepted that, but argued ‘when a spy cannot find a plot, he will make one.’⁷⁸ As far as he was concerned, Oliver was no less than an *agent provocateur* and at a stroke the Mercury editor fixed the ‘stigma of infamy’ on the man and destroyed his reputation ‘for good and all.’⁷⁹

The news spread rapidly as the press picked up the story. That same day, Rowland Hurst of the Wakefield Journal reproduced the entire Mercury report from Baines’s second edition.⁸⁰ On Tuesday 17 June, The Times, under a heading ‘Horrible Plot of Spies and Informers to Excite Insurrection,’ carried the Leeds Mercury’s entire report, acknowledging its source and giving it such editorial precedence, that it dropped entirely its financial report to make room.⁸¹ Sidmouth ‘abused Oliver for a great fool, for being detected.’⁸² But the greatest repercussions were to occur in Parliament.

On Monday 16 June, Viscount Sidmouth, speaking in the House of Lords on the Habeas Corpus Suspension Bill, argued that ‘a traitorous conspiracy’ existed in the country. Earl Grey, in opposition, was emphatic in his condemnation ‘against the invasion ... of the constitution ... and here read from the Leeds Mercury the statement respecting Mr Oliver.’ In the Commons, that doyen of radical reformers, Sir Francis Burdett, rose to call the attention of the House to a subject ‘of the greatest importance’ He then went on to read the ‘statement contained in the second edition of the Leeds Mercury.’ Two days later Milton announced that the Mercury’s report had been confirmed by both the magistrates of the West Riding and the Lord Lieutenant. Liverpool was forced to admit that the Government had ‘always employed spies;’⁸³ and Sidmouth acknowledged that Oliver had been employed ‘to avert imminent danger.’⁸⁴ It

⁷⁸ Leeds Mercury 21.06.17, Leeds Intelligencer 23.06.17. John Dickinson was also incensed by the Intelligencer misrepresenting the truth about him and wrote an open letter to Griffith Wright Junior in the Mercury of the same edition.

⁷⁹ A F Freemantle ‘The Truth About Oliver the Spy’; English Historical Review vol XLVII (1935) pp 603-604. Freemantle is another historian who confuses Baines the father with Baines the son. See p 603. A year later, The Times carried the story that Oliver, as an *agent provocateur*, had incited the attack on the Prince Regent in January 1817. See footnote 42 above and Leeds Mercury 14.03.18

⁸⁰ WWM MS: No 52/46. Wakefield Journal 14.06.17

⁸¹ The Times 17.06.17. There was considerable pressure for space that day. The paper was also carrying reports of the Spa Fields Trials.

⁸² H Hunt Memoirs vol III (London 1822) p 503

⁸³ Hansard (1817) XXXVI 975-996, 1016, 1084, 1006

⁸⁴ Baines Reign of George III vol IV p 86

simply confirmed Baines's long held belief that the Tories would if they had the power crush ... everybody of men, that dare to differ in opinion with them on any subject of Trade, Politics or Religion.⁸⁵

The result of Baines's revelations was that seven of the ten West Riding prisoners were released, two were despatched to London for further interrogation, one was detained in West Yorkshire.⁸⁶ The Government's case against the Huddersfield insurgents and the Lancashire blanketeers virtually collapsed for lack of evidence. The jury acquitted Watson in the Spa Fields trial and the Attorney-General decided not to continue with the prosecutions of Thistlewood, Hooper and Preston. Only in Derbyshire did the full weight of the law take effect against the insurgents.⁸⁷

On 16 October, Jeremiah Brandreth and thirty-four others stood trial in Derby. Scrawled across the courthouse wall were the words, 'JURYMEN REMEMBER OLIVER.' But the jury ignored the graffiti and sentenced Brandreth and two gullible accomplices, William Turner and Isaac Ludlam, to death.⁸⁸ Turner piteously declaimed from the scaffold, 'This is all Oliver and the Government.'

The turmoil that the Oliver revelations created caused the principal inhabitants of Dewsbury, led by John Buckworth, the vicar, to declare publicly that no conspiracy existed in the town.⁸⁹ Across the country, Oliver became a marked man. The Liverpool Mercury even gave a description of him - 'tall, good-looking ... near six foot in height' - whilst in London, poor James McCullim, the butler to a Mayfair family, was violently attacked in Oxford Street by some individuals who had mistakenly identified him as the spy.⁹⁰ The 'Ministerial paper,' the Courier, claimed Oliver had twice paid Baines a visit in Leeds and been received 'with civility,' and that the Mercury had suppressed certain facts of the case. Baines vehemently denied the charges and offered to publish

⁸⁵ Wilson R G Gentlemen Merchants p 113, quoting Leeds Mercury 31.10.12

⁸⁶ Hammonds The Skilled Labourer p 365. Baines Junior claims eight were released. See Life of Edward Baines p 94. His father's account agrees with that of the Hammonds. See Baines Reign of George III vol IV pp 81-82.

⁸⁷ Baines History of the Reign of George III vol IV p 88. See also Thompson E P Making of the English Working Class pp 727-731

⁸⁸ Reid Peterloo Massacre pp 81-82. Fifteen years later, James Mann, the Leeds radical, made the point that if Baines had acted immediately when he received the information from Willan, Brandreth and his accomplices might not have died. See Leeds Intelligencer 02.08.32. The other conspirators were pardoned in 1833. See The Poor Man's Guardian 04.10.34

⁸⁹ Leeds Mercury 28.06.17

⁹⁰ Leeds Mercury 12.07.17

any evidence the Courier could present.⁹¹

But the question remains today as it did in 1817, was Oliver a genuine informant operating at a time when, without an established police force, the use of 'agents and spies' was the only way a government could discover what was going on in the country? Was he, in fact, 'a sprig from which the Criminal Investigation Department of New Scotland Yard has grown'?⁹² Or was he, as Baines, suggested 'a double-distilled traitor.'⁹³ Reginald White claimed that with regard to the Derbyshire uprising, the Defence did not produce one witness 'who could swear that he had heard Oliver inciting people to insurrection.'⁹⁴ A F Freemantle asserted that Oliver's role was 'to convey information to his superiors, and not to influence events,'⁹⁵ whilst White was quite clear in his mind that, with regard to the spy system, 'there was none.'⁹⁶ Joyce Marlow agreed. In The Peterloo Massacre she expressed the view that the claims Sidmouth sent out Oliver as 'an *agent provocateur* now seem doubtful.'⁹⁷ Yet E P Thompson famously rebutted these arguments; 'They cannot be sustained,' he wrote,⁹⁸ whilst Thomis and Holt acknowledged that Oliver's 'villainous reputation within traditional Whig historiography remains largely undamaged.'⁹⁹ There seems little doubt, from the Home Office correspondence, that Oliver was indeed a spy, as Sidmouth clearly stated both on 31 May in his letter to Mr Parker, the Sheffield magistrate, and confirmed again in Parliament.¹⁰⁰ But whether he was, as Whig historiography would have it, an *agent provocateur*, in Thompson's words 'the

⁹¹ Leeds Mercury 26.07.17. The Courier had been a 'Treasury newspaper from more than a quarter of a century.' See Koss Rise and Fall of the Political Press p 48 quoting Arthur Aspinall Politics and the Press pp 101, 242.

⁹² Darvall Popular Disturbances in Regency England pp 276-277. Darvall makes clear that there was always the danger of informers exceeding 'their original limits,' and that both Stones in 1812 and Oliver in 1817 had done so. See Darvall pp 278-279

⁹³ Leeds Mercury 14.06.17

⁹⁴ White Waterloo to Peterloo p 181

⁹⁵ Freemantle EHR vol XLVII p 616

⁹⁶ White Waterloo to Peterloo p 173

⁹⁷ J Marlow The Peterloo Massacre (London 1970) p 65

⁹⁸ Thompson E P Making of the English Working Class p 723

⁹⁹ Thomis and Holt Threats of Revolution in Britain p 60

¹⁰⁰ Hammonds The Skilled Labourer p 356 quoting HO 79.3 and Baines History of the Reign of George III vol IV p 86.

archetype of the Radical Judas'¹⁰¹ or simply a loyal patriot committed to saving the nation from revolution and chaos as Sidmouth insisted, will never be known.

Baines, of course, was never in doubt. His researches had been diligent, his conclusions, he felt, justified. In writing the history of the affair in his Reign of George III, he stated that he had consulted 'private information' which had either corrected or confirmed his initial findings; and he had not relied on the evidence of anyone implicated 'in the transactions recorded, except when ... such statement is supported by less exceptionable evidence.'¹⁰²

The real significance of Baines's exposé was that it not only damaged the reputation of the Government but brought home to the middle classes the fact that the sacred principles of English liberty and justice had been so impaired.¹⁰³ For doing so, 'torrents of abuse'¹⁰⁴ were heaped upon him and none more so than in the columns of the Intelligencer.¹⁰⁵ Whilst its editorial claimed it had been able to expose the 'artificers' of 'the Author of the base falsehoods' of the Oliver scandal, its letter writers were equally as busy denouncing Baines and his Mercury. Had he not

fanned every kindling spark of disaffection ... given broad expression and circulation to every rising unfavourable suspicion ... of men in office ... perverted their words, magnified their mistakes'?¹⁰⁶

William Cobbett was equally as critical of the Mercury editor. It was Mr Dickinson, who detected the spy, Oliver, and thereby saved, perhaps, scores of the lives of his countrymen; a merit, however, which was claimed by the great '*Liar of the North*.'¹⁰⁷ But the 'Great Liar' stood fast. Baines was smugly adamant that 'we were merely the instrument in the hands of Providence.'¹⁰⁸ That hand of Providence and William Oliver

¹⁰¹ Thompson E P Making of the English Working Class p 726

¹⁰² Baines History of the Reign of George III vol IV p 82

¹⁰³ For an excellent summation of the value of the Baines exposé see Thompson E P Making of the English Working Class p 726.

¹⁰⁴ Leeds Mercury 16.08.17

¹⁰⁵ The 'poisonous Leeds Mercury' was not alone in suffering vilification from Griffith Wright's Intelligencer. Other 'nauseating channels of Yorkshire Jacobinism' were the 'crawling' Wakefield Journal and the 'immeasurably stupid York Herald.' See Leeds Intelligencer 07.07.17

¹⁰⁶ Leeds Intelligencer 15.12.17 and also a letter from 'Observator' Leeds Intelligencer 22.12.17

¹⁰⁷ Cobbett Rural Rides vol II p 607. Oastler also condemned Baines who took all the credit himself for the Oliver exposé. See also A Well Seasoned Christmas Pie p 30.

¹⁰⁸ Leeds Mercury 16.08.17 Oliver, departed for South Africa where he died in August 1827. For a full account of 'Oliver's Later History' see the Hammonds The Skilled Labourer pp 382-383.

combined to give Baines a national reputation and made his Leeds Mercury, 'for a generation ... the accepted leader of the English provincial press.'¹⁰⁹ But Mitchell came back to haunt the Mercury editor in the years ahead.

III

Meantime the national juggernaut for Parliamentary Reform trundled relentlessly on. In February 1819, an Association of the Friends of Radical Reform was established in Leeds. At its meetings in Union Court off Briggate, Wooler's Black Dwarf, Carlile's Republican and Cobbett's Political Register were read.¹¹⁰ On 14 June, George Petre, a tailor by trade and a radical by political inclination, urged the throng on Hunslet Moor that 'Nothing but assembling yourselves in bodies ... will ever release you.'¹¹¹ The inherent threat to civil order horrified the middle class reformers of Leeds and thus on the evening of Monday 21 June 1819 Edward Baines took it upon himself to act. Accompanied by his son, Edward Junior, he joined the 10 000 people on Hunslet Moor who had come once more to listen to Petre.¹¹² Bravely, in the face of strident opposition, Baines stood up and restated his principles with regard to reform; 'I am not a friend to Annual Parliaments ...(or) Universal Suffrage.' There was uproar. Baines nevertheless continued. Such things, he declared, were incompatible with the British constitution and for him only men with 'property at stake' or who paid 'direct taxation' should be granted the vote. If the people there wanted change, they should petition Parliament and give up the threats embodied in organising unions and holding mass meetings. Once again the crowd responded vociferously, this time with cries of, 'No petition,' and 'We have petitioned in vain.' When a vote was finally taken, Baines was 'almost alone' in opposing the motion.¹¹³

Only days after that Hunslet Moor gathering, Baines was called upon to be true

¹⁰⁹ Read Press and People p 113

¹¹⁰ J F C Harrison 'Chartism in Leeds': Chartist Studies ed A Briggs (London 1958) p 66. But it was not just in Leeds that meetings were held. Reformers gathered in Sheffield, Wakefield, Heckmondwike, Horsforth and Holmfirth. See Leeds Mercury 25.01.17

¹¹¹ Belchem Orator Hunt p 100

¹¹² *Ibid* p 100

¹¹³ *Ibid* pp 100-101. Baines made no claim that Petre was a possible *agent provocateur* but James Mann, the radicals' leader in Leeds checked out Petre's credentials with Henry Hunt. Hunt stated Petre was unknown in London and thus warned Mann to be wary of him. See also Leeds Mercury 26.06.19.

to his editorial principles and open his columns for 'free public discussion.'¹¹⁴ Thomas Mason, from the Little London district of Leeds, wrote a long and well reasoned letter to Baines which the Mercury published. In it the writer complemented the editor on his 'candid, manly and gentleman-like speech' but painstakingly rebutted his arguments.¹¹⁵

That summer four major meetings had been arranged across the country by the Radicals to gain maximum publicity for their cause. The first was held in Birmingham to cover the Midlands; the third at Smithfield for the London area; the final one in Manchester was for Lancashire. The second meeting, the one for Yorkshire, was scheduled to be held on Hunslet Moor.¹¹⁶ Thomas Mason spoke before a Leeds gathering of some 6 000. 'A much larger proportion of women made up this meeting than the last.' Baines also came forward to speak and pithily warned the gathering 'Remember the maxim ... HOLD TO THE LAWS.'¹¹⁷

The fourth of the scheduled Parliamentary Reform meetings, the one in Manchester, was to be addressed by Henry Hunt and had been arranged for Monday 9 August. At the last minute, however, it was rescheduled for the following Monday, 16 August. Baines decided not to cover the meeting himself but to send his son instead. That was not because, as Robert Reid asserts, 'Baines had set off for Scotland to inspect Owen's experiments in proto-socialism.'¹¹⁸ Baines left Leeds for New Lanark on 26 August¹¹⁹ There would have been ample time for him to travel to Manchester and still join the Leeds delegation to Scotland; nor did Baines remain in Leeds in order to be able to listen to Owen's lecture. That was held on 12 August.¹²⁰ He knew that the magistrates had warned people about attending St Peter's Fields; that the meeting was 'illegal' and that a 'large body of troops' were standing by. He believed that the event could not be viewed 'without feelings of anxiety, though not perhaps of very serious

¹¹⁴ Leeds Mercury 29.01.03

¹¹⁵ Leeds Mercury 03.07.19

¹¹⁶ D Read Peterloo: The 'Massacre' and Its Background (Manchester 1958) pp 111-114

¹¹⁷ Leeds Mercury 24.07.19. See also letter on 21.07.19 Earl Fitzwilliam to Earl Stamford and published in the Leeds Mercury 07.08.19.

¹¹⁸ Reid Peterloo Massacre pp 163-164

¹¹⁹ Leeds Mercury 04.09.19. See also Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 104. The confusion of dates probably arose because Baines Junior included a letter from Edward Baines to his wife, Charlotte, written in New Lanark and dated 19 August. It was obviously a printing error. Probably a '1' was transposed for a '2' as Baines was in Lanark on 29 August. See Baines (Jun) pp299-301.

¹²⁰ Leeds Mercury 07.08.19, 14.08.19

alarms.¹²¹ He felt it would offer his son, who had accompanied his father to similar meetings in Leeds, a valuable experience and offer him an ideal opportunity to hone his journalistic skills.¹²² His report, in fact, became an invaluable source for historians ever after. And thus it was that the elder Baines failed to witness the event that would become a milestone in nineteenth century radical politics and enter into the lexicon of British history, as 'The Massacre of Peterloo.'¹²³

Henry Hunt had gone to St Peter's Fields 'in the hopes of mounting a great display of irresistible force.'¹²⁴ The exact numbers gathered will never be known; figures vary from 60 000 to 200 000. But the show of force came not from the people but the incautious magistrates who despatched the local and incompetent yeomanry into the crowd. Chaos and panic followed. Upwards of 400 were injured and 'at the very most' fifteen people were killed.¹²⁵ Sidmouth, the Home Secretary, congratulated the magistrates.¹²⁶

Young Baines, standing on the hustings alongside John Tyas of The Times, John Smith of the Liverpool Mercury and Richard Carlile, the radical publisher of Tom Paine's works, witnessed the unfolding tragedy of that Monday afternoon.¹²⁷ He had the advantage over Tyas, in that he 'took an account of the (event) in shorthand which Mr Tyas (could) not write.'¹²⁸ Baines Junior stated emphatically that 'MR HUNT was neither treasonable nor seditious' despite the fact that the Mercury 'has no partiality to

¹²¹ Leeds Mercury 07.08.19

¹²² By now, he was nineteen with some four years experience in journalism. Edward Junior had worked through every department of the paper, learning typography, reporting - for which he learnt shorthand - and leader writing. See Lowerson Political Career of Sir Edward Baines p 21. For an example of Baines Junior's shorthand see Baines Papers; No 80 Letter to the Unemployed Workmen of Yorkshire and Lancashire on the Present Distress and on Machinery 04.05.26 which he began writing in ink in longhand but for the majority of it used pencil and shorthand.

¹²³ Robert Walmsley argues Baines Junior was 'a minor witness' as his testimony was 'incomplete.' See R Walmsley Peterloo: the Case Re-opened (Manchester 1969) pp 163, 225. Belchem insists that 'Read remains the best study' of the events at St Peter's Fields that day. See Orator Hunt p 107. Baines's own account in his History of Lancashire (1836) vol II pp 325-329 gives a detailed and objective account of the event 'divested of all party-colouring.' The word 'Peterloo' was first coined by the Manchester Observer. See R Reid The Peterloo Massacre (London 1989) p 189.

¹²⁴ Belchem Orator Hunt p 106. For full details of the events of the day at Peterloo see Reid Peterloo Massacre pp 165-189 and Read Peterloo pp 126-141

¹²⁵ Marlow Peterloo pp 125, 150.

¹²⁶ Thompson E P Making of the English Working Class pp 749-750

¹²⁷ Reid Peterloo Massacre pp 163-164

¹²⁸ WWM MS: No 53/58; C Cooksey to Earl Fitzwilliam 18.12.19

MR HUNT.’ The following week it carried a more detailed report of the ‘scene of danger and dismay’ this time under the initials ‘E B’, in which the young Baines claimed ‘I heard no Riot Act read.’¹²⁹

Some, like the reactionary Lord Eldon and the Liberal-Tory, George Canning supported the magistrates.¹³⁰ But the Mercury believed ‘a great wrong had been committed.’¹³¹ Eight days later some 4 000 people soberly gathered on Hunslet Moor; not a flag was visible, not a cap of liberty was to be seen. The band played ‘Rule Britannia’ and James Mann reflected on the moderation of Yorkshire’s magistrates.¹³² Four weeks later, a different mood prevailed in the town. Thousands crowded into Briggate; men and women with their flags and banners descended on Leeds from the surrounding villages to join with the townsfolk. One black banner proclaimed, ‘We mourn for our murdered friends in Manchester;’ a white one urged ‘Hold to the Laws.’ From thence they marched to Hunslet Moor where among other speakers, Isabella Blackburn read an ‘Address of the Female Reformers of Leeds to Their Townsmen.’¹³³

At the beginning of September, those in Leeds who feared reform and its revolutionary consequences called for the establishment of a local corps of Volunteer Infantry to be formed. Baines was incensed. To him the very concept of raising troops ‘to war against their own countrymen .. is abhorrent to every liberal mind.’¹³⁴ The events at St Peter’s Fields equally struck an abhorrent note in every liberal mind.¹³⁵ Lord Grey, the leader of the Whigs, recognised that Peterloo offered an ideal opportunity to his party. He argued that the Whigs should establish themselves in the eyes of the nation as the party of ‘all moderate and reasonable men,’ opposed on the one hand to Hunt and his radicals, and to the Government’s erosion of the constitution on the other. In so

¹²⁹ Leeds Mercury 21.08.19, 28.08.19. The Times devoted seven out of twelve columns to Tyas’s report in its edition for 19.08.19. See Anon History of the Times 1785-1841 p 235

¹³⁰ White Waterloo to Peterloo p 197

¹³¹ Leeds Mercury 02.10.19

¹³² Leeds Mercury 28.08.19

¹³³ Mr Chapman, the Chairman, finished reading the address. Isabella’s voice was ‘too feeble.’ See Leeds Mercury 25.09.19. Women played an active role during the reform campaign often forming their own branches of the Union Societies. See Marlow Peterloo pp 75-76.

¹³⁴ Leeds Mercury 04.09.19

¹³⁵ An officer in H M Royal Navy wrote a bitter poem to the Mercury on the theme; ‘Man once was went to fight with *man*/ But these would sabre *women* too,/ So high the matchless courage ran,/ On the great day at Peterloo.’ See Leeds Mercury 02.10.19

doing his party, embraced the middle class Liberals, the men of property, 'particularly in the growing towns, such as Manchester, Leeds, Liverpool and Birmingham.'¹³⁶ A series of Whig meetings was called across the country to discuss the tragic affair; the most important were to be held in Norwich, Durham and York.¹³⁷

On Thursday 14 October, the Yorkshire county meeting was called in York Castle yard, to condemn the magistrates at Peterloo and to call for a full enquiry.¹³⁸ Fitzwilliam, Milton and 'the whole of the Whig gentry' of Yorkshire were gathered there.¹³⁹ The crowds that flocked to the ancient city had hired every available vehicle and horse in the neighbourhood. Hundreds walked. Very late on the Wednesday evening Baines's chaise overtook some of them and he stopped to plead, 'Let our conduct this day be worthy of our cause.' He went on to ask the crowd to furl their flags and banners when they reached the city walls. 'We will,' they responded.¹⁴⁰

It was a volatile crowd of between 20 000 and 30 000 that gathered. Walter Fawkes's reception was enthusiastic; Stuart Wortley, the Yorkshire Tory MP, was howled down. Baines, after having difficulty making himself heard, urged that they should give Wortley a hearing but he showed far less tolerance, however, when Joseph Mitchell rose to speak. Mitchell intended to pour scorn on the Whig proposal to present an address to the Prince Regent. The Radicals rejected him and Baines vigorously denounced him. He argued that Mitchell was there but to 'do mischief';¹⁴¹ that he had assisted the discredited Oliver and used treasonable language to incite violence. The crowd responded with applause and gasps of astonishment. Griffith Wright, standing behind Mitchell on the hustings, urged the accused to stand his ground.¹⁴² Thomas Wooler, editor of the Black Dwarf, asked Mitchell to desist from speaking, until the allegations could be proved or rebutted. The Mercury editor, he pointed out, could have

¹³⁶ A Mitchell The Whigs in Opposition (Oxford 1967) p 137

¹³⁷ Read Peterloo p 192

¹³⁸ Leeds Mercury 16.10.19. Two years later Baines was still demanding action. 'Repeated attempts have been made in vain to obtain judicial inquiry ... the laws have been violated with a daring hand.' See Leeds Mercury 26.05.21

¹³⁹ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines pp 108-110. See also Leeds Mercury 16.10.19.

¹⁴⁰ Leeds Mercury 23.10.19. This a good example of the high regard some sections of the public held Baines. His request regarding the flags was acknowledged. Of the thirty flags seen en route, only three appeared in the castle yard.

¹⁴¹ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 109. See also Read Peterloo pp 194-195

¹⁴² WWM MS: No 52/44; T W Tottie to Fitzwilliam 22.07.20

been misinformed, but he knew 'Mr Baines was an honest man.' The meeting refused to hear Mitchell and then, according to Baines Junior, it passed off 'in tranquillity.'¹⁴³ Other reports tell a different tale. The Blanketeer, Mitchell's own paper, alleged that Baines deliberately incited members of the Leeds Radical Committee that were present to resort to violence and physically remove Mitchell from the platform.¹⁴⁴

But Mitchell was not prepared to let the matter rest. On 1 December, he was at a meeting in Leeds of some 300 people at the New Inn. There he spoke for five hours in his defence. Baines pointed out he had done what he had done simply 'to prevent the public suffering further injury by Mr Mitchell.' The Mercury editor had his way. It was resolved Mitchell should cease from taking part in further public meetings.¹⁴⁵ That did not stop Mitchell. He launched a series of scathing attacks on Baines in his paper The Blanketeer and People's Guardian writing in his Letter Number I;

While you "grin a ghastly smile," and point, "There goes the villain unmasked" ... the public step in and say, "Proof is wanting."¹⁴⁶

Mitchell was not without his supporters. He published a letter from Blackburn that condemned Baines as 'a money getter; all he does proceeds from a wish to amass wealth.' It went on to assure Mitchell; 'He has done you great injury in Yorkshire.' From Liverpool, T. Smith wrote that Baines's conduct 'was extremely unmanly ... unworthy of a friend to freedom and justice.' Henry Hunt assured Mitchell, Baines's charges were 'unwarranted.'¹⁴⁷ The real significance of the Mitchell episode is not that Baines was 'unmanly' or that Mitchell was 'one of the most dangerous and mischievous men of the day';¹⁴⁸ its significance is that Baines had reached such a position in West Riding politics that his views were not only listened to, but acted upon.

Meanwhile, in December, the Government, anxious that another Peterloo

¹⁴³ It is interesting to note that Baines (Jun) here admits that he did not believe Mitchell was 'a spy directly employed by Government' but that he was 'a deliberate traitor, a wilful deceiver, and a purveyor of sedition.' See Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 109.

¹⁴⁴ Belchem Orator Hunt p 130.

¹⁴⁵ Leeds Mercury 30.10.19, 04.12.19

¹⁴⁶ WWM Papers; 52/45; The Blanketeer and People's Guardian 23.10.19

¹⁴⁷ Blanketeer 13.11.19

¹⁴⁸ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 110. Twenty years later the Oliver and Mitchell affair still caused concern. See Leeds Intelligencer 10.02.31

should never occur again, increased the military establishment and invoked the Six Acts.¹⁴⁹ To Baines, they constituted an assault on the ancient freedoms Britons had cherished through the centuries and he said as much in his Mercury:

We cannot now boast ... there was not a freer people on earth than ourselves... we are losing, by the severity of penalties on ... the press, and by the restriction on public meetings ... our distinguishing happiness in which you can may think what you will and say what you think.¹⁵⁰

At the end of December, Leeds had its hopes raised of gaining a Parliamentary seat. The voters of the borough of Grampond were convicted of 'the grossest corruption' and it was proposed their seat should be offered to the town.¹⁵¹ To Baines it was 'a most beneficial step' offering, as it did, representation to the 'genuine *middle class* ... (whose) stake in the country is immense.'¹⁵² He was to be disappointed. Parliament granted the two additional seats to the county of Yorkshire instead. However, it was some consolation to be able to propose the toast to the two victorious Whig candidates, Milton and John Marshall, at the election celebration dinner in York in 1826 and to sit in the gallery of the House of Commons and see his friend, Marshall, take his seat.¹⁵³

IV

Thursday 12 August 1819 saw the town diverted for a moment from pressing political issues. Robert Owen, the social reformer, arrived to speak in the Leeds Court House. He was to explain his novel system of social organisation which Baines Junior explained 'is that called Socialism or Communism.'¹⁵⁴ At the meeting, the elder Baines suggested that such a system was economically unfeasible for a place like Leeds; that the aged and the deranged would become a burden; and that such a system would

¹⁴⁹ Read Peterloo p 189. They raised some 10 000 additional troops and 2 000 marines. The Six Acts prohibited drilling, restricted the right to bear arms, regulated the right of public meetings, checked and punished libels and taxed newspapers. See White Waterloo to Peterloo p 197

¹⁵⁰ Leeds Mercury 11.12.19

¹⁵¹ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 116-117. See also Briggs The Age of Improvement p 229. For a detailed account see Smith HS The Parliaments of England pp 393-394

¹⁵² Leeds Mercury 24.12.19, 01.01.20

¹⁵³ Leeds Mercury 24.06.26, 25.11.26. Baines's toast was 'The Liberty of the Press.' The additional seats were granted to Yorkshire in 1821 but did not come into effect until the General Election of 1826. See Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 117. Baines had recommended Marshall as MP. See W J Rimmer Marshalls of Leeds Flax-Spinners 1788-1886 (Cambridge 1960) p 111

¹⁵⁴ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines pp 103-104. For Robert Owen and Owenism see Thompson E P Making of the English Working Class pp 857-878.

reduce every individual to the same level. Owen discounted his arguments.¹⁵⁵ The following week, the Guardians of the Poor despatched a deputation to New Lanark. Its brief was to see Owen's establishment and report back on any strategies they found there that would help combat the enormous social problems Leeds faced. Robert Oastler, John Cawood and the sceptical Edward Baines were the delegates appointed.¹⁵⁶

About a mile from Lanark, they found the model village sited in a beautiful spot by the River Clyde. Here some 2 600 'contented and healthy' people were employed spinning cotton yarn. Owen showed the deputation the schools and commented of the older children, 'All are readers.' Demonstrations of dancing and singing were performed. Baines, the sceptic began to have second thoughts. 'It has been the fashion to stigmatize Mr OWEN'S plans as visionary and utopian,' he wrote, admitting that he had felt the same. Now he 'began to suspect that our conclusions were hastily formed.' He had to admit there may be something in the system for the 'distressed labouring poor' and in the application of the 'moral training' for the children of the workhouse.¹⁵⁷

The Leeds delegates' report commented on the 'moral culture of the place': 'no quarrelsome men or brawling women,' 'the absence of public houses,' 'exemplary' moral habits, and the fact that, though wages were lower than in Leeds, 'comfort prevails here.' It acknowledged that a similar model village near Leeds would require 'Mr Owen's presence to impart it sufficient animation,' and that 'considerable funds would be wanted.' They concluded by urging the committee to introduce the 'system of moral culture' used at New Lanark with orphan children in the workhouse.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁵ Leeds Mercury 14.08.19

¹⁵⁶ Leeds Mercury 14.08.17, 21.08.19

¹⁵⁷ Leeds Mercury 04.09.19, 11.09.19. See also letter E Baines to Mrs C Baines 19.08.19 (sic) and quoted in Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines pp 299-300. Much of this personal letter was reproduced as part of the Leeds Mercury report of 04.09.19. The delegation left Leeds 26.08.19; arrived on Saturday evening 28.08.19; and had intended leaving on the Tuesday evening but Owen prevailed on them to stay overnight. They left on Wednesday morning 01.09.19. Baines Junior, however, stressed that the deputation refrained from commenting on 'Mr Owen's new social system.' See Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 104

¹⁵⁸ They also incorporated a report on the work of Mr Falla, an eminent nurseryman of Gateshead who pioneered experiments in 'spade husbandry.' In 1838 the Leeds District Board of the Association of All Classes decided to re-publish the report in full under the title Mr Owen's Establishment at New Lanark, a Failure!! as proved by Edward Baines MP (Leeds 1838). The report, of course, did not show the establishment was a failure and the title was deliberately chosen to be ironic. The association decided to use the report as publicity in its campaign to improve society. It argued that it was a report written by men of 'high and uncompromising,' character, 'unconnected with them or Mr Owen,' and 'whose views of the Constitution of Society are known to be widely different.' See pp 2-12

From 1820, as Baines devoted more time to writing his histories and being involved in local politics, he left the day to day running of the Mercury to his son.¹⁵⁹ However, he still undertook the role of investigative journalist. In the winter of 1820, he went to investigate the extent of poverty in the town. 'Such scenes of misery were never before witnessed in this place,' he concluded. 'How different to New Lanark.'¹⁶⁰

To Baines, the Tory Government had contrived to destroy the prosperity of the country and 'annihilate its liberties.'¹⁶¹ But he did approve of certain Tory policies where they accorded with his beliefs. By the 1820s, the Government began to adopt a less rigid economic policy.¹⁶² In 1823, Baines welcomed 'Prosperity' Robinson's budget as 'liberal in its ... principles ... pleasing ... (on) taxation.'¹⁶³

But the Queen Caroline affair was a different matter. With George III's death in 1820, the new King's estranged wife, returned to Britain to claim her rights as Queen. She received massive public support and the Whigs saw a political opportunity and took up her case.¹⁶⁴ The Government responded by invoking a Bill of Pains and

¹⁵⁹ Read Press and People p 78-79. For a detailed examination of Baines Junior's role see Chapter Six below.

¹⁶⁰ Leeds Mercury 29.01.20. He described how 7 000 people were living in 'penury and wretchedness,' forced to sell their furniture and 'even clothing' to pawnbrokers. The 7 000 figure here quoted related to an overall population of between 36 000 and 40 000 (Baines's figures).

¹⁶¹ Leeds Mercury 15.01.20

¹⁶² It had been signalled in 1819 by the Currency Commission, the return to the gold standard and Vansittart's budget; and received its 'first authoritative exposition in Liverpool's speech on free trade in 1820. See N Gash 'The Earl of Liverpool': The Prime Ministers ed H Van Thal vol I (London 1974) pp 293-294

¹⁶³ Leeds Mercury 01.03.23. Two years later, he complimented Peel, the Home Secretary, Robinson, the Chancellor and Huskisson, President of the Board of Trade on 'their beneficial reforms.' See Leeds Mercury 28.05.25. James Bischoff, Baines's long time friend, claimed Huskisson was 'the best commercial statesman England ever knew.' See Taylor Worthies of Leeds p 410 The emergence of the more liberal Tories producing 'the policies of Robinson, Huskisson and Peel did much to make businessmen feel that the government was sensitive to the needs of the time.' See Derry Politics in the Age of Pitt, Fox and Liverpool p 183 and also Trevelyan British History 1782-1919 pp 195-197. The changes came about not because of 'any significant liberalization of policy' or change of ministers but were a result of a revenue surplus and an improvement in the Government's political situation. See Hilton Corn, Cash and Commerce p 165.

¹⁶⁴ Palmer George IV pp 172-177. For the extensive support Caroline received from middle class and working class women see Colley Forging a Nation pp 265-266. For the Whigs 'renewing the old and natural alliance (with) ... the People' see Briggs The Age of Improvement p 191. As an indication of public interest in the affair, Cobbett claimed that over two million copies of the Queen's Answer to the King were published in England alone. See T Lacqueur 'The Queen Caroline Affair; Politics as Art in the Reign of George IV'; The Journal of Modern History vol 54 (1982) p 429.

Penalties.¹⁶⁵ For six months the sordid and salacious details of the so-called 'Queen's Trial' filled the press.¹⁶⁶ Baines acerbically observed in his Mercury: 'a troop of witnesses more suspicious never bartered their consciences for blood money.'¹⁶⁷ At 4pm on Monday 4 September, a crowd of between 5 000 and 6 000 gathered in the shadow of Gott's great mill at Bean Ing to express support for the Queen. The principal speakers were to be the Parliamentary Reformers Mann, Whincup, Ward and Brayshaw but when Baines was seen to be present, he too was invited onto the hustings. He left no-one in doubt where his sympathies lay, declaring;

I would rather be defeated on the side of the Queen, than be triumphant
in the ranks of her enemies.¹⁶⁸

The bill was finally withdrawn¹⁶⁹ but within a year Caroline was dead.

The same week she died, the newly crowned George IV arrived in Ireland.¹⁷⁰ Charlotte Baines witnessed his ceremonial entry into Dublin and wrote to her husband describing the event. Baines wrote back to her saying, somewhat sourly, he believed her rather sympathetic view of the King's manner was a result of her 'charity' towards her monarch and concluded the point by adding, 'He is, it is said, speedily to console himself with a new queen.'¹⁷¹ But Baines had high hopes that the visit itself might initiate something positive. It would bring together Protestant and Catholic and would also take over 'a considerable number of Irish absentees whose estates ... would ... benefit from ... inspection.'¹⁷² But Ireland was a volatile country.¹⁷³ In November that year disturbances broke out once again. Wellesley, newly appointed as Lord-Lieutenant

¹⁶⁵ This was an archaic means of using Parliamentary powers without resorting to the proofs necessary in a court of law. See Palmer George IV p 175

¹⁶⁶ Baines published reports and comments on the trial. See Leeds Mercury 19.08.20, 26.08.20 which included a supplement, 09.09.20, 07.10.20, 14.10.20 which included a supplement, 21.10.20, 28.10.20, 04.11.20, 11.11.20, 18.11.20. The Leeds Intelligencer carried reports from 28.08.20

¹⁶⁷ Leeds Mercury 19.08.20

¹⁶⁸ Leeds Mercury 09.09.20

¹⁶⁹ Palmer George IV p 177

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid* p 185.

¹⁷¹ Letter E Baines to Mrs C Baines 26.08.21 and quoted in Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines pp 301-302

¹⁷² Leeds Mercury 25.08.21. For a more detailed qualification of Irish landlord absenteeism see R F Foster Modern Ireland 1600-1972 (London 1988) pp 179-180

¹⁷³ Even in a relatively peaceful period like 1826-1830 some eighty-four people were killed and 112 wounded in clashes with the police. See Foster Modern Ireland p 294.

or Ireland, acted in the 'old coercive way.'¹⁷⁴ Baines agreed; 'to repress these atrocities ... the strong hand of power' was needed.¹⁷⁵ But the rebellion was neither religious nor political. 'It proceeds from sheer misery and want in the midst of plenty.'¹⁷⁶

The Catholic Association, which emerged in 1823, brought a new and decisive influence to bear on the complex problems of Ireland.¹⁷⁷ The Association's founder, Daniel O'Connell, would become the 'focal figure of Irish politics' in the subsequent years of the 1820s.¹⁷⁸ To Baines, he had 'considerable talents ... (but was) indiscrete, hot-headed, ... (and) of very questionable political principles.'¹⁷⁹ O'Connell's Association, however, was a different matter. It was 'one of the natural fruits of the injustice done to Catholics.' Baines fervently rejected any proposition to suppress it.¹⁸⁰ He had partaken in the 'arduous struggle' over the Catholic Claims for 'four and twenty years,'¹⁸¹ just as he had campaigned as long over the Test and Corporation Acts. They were 'as injurious to the Church of England as they are insulting and tyrannical to the Dissenters.'¹⁸² In 1828, these acts which discriminated against the Nonconformists, were removed and Baines reflected that such an action was 'happily yielding to the enlightened spirit of the age.'¹⁸³ It now seemed to Baines, and like-minded thinkers, that the case for taking similar action on the Catholic Claims was even stronger. But there were others, equally as adamant, in opposing any such move.

Across the country local Ultra-Tory Brunswick Clubs were formed.¹⁸⁴ Leeds

¹⁷⁴ Machin The Catholic Question pp 33, 36

¹⁷⁵ Leeds Mercury 08.12.21. For an analysis of the Catholic Question 1820 to 1823 see Machin The Catholic Question pp 21-41

¹⁷⁶ Leeds Mercury 16.02.22

¹⁷⁷ Machin The Catholic Question p 42

¹⁷⁸ Foster Modern Ireland p 300. O'Connell also gained an international reputation.

¹⁷⁹ Leeds Mercury 04.12.24. For a different view of O'Connell see O MacDonagh The Hereditary Bondsman; Daniel O'Connell 1755-1829 (London 1988) p 3. 'He was an extraordinarily resilient being, but steadfast in his resilience; and his life was singularly purposive and patterned.'

¹⁸⁰ Leeds Mercury 12.02.25

¹⁸¹ Leeds Mercury 12.03.25

¹⁸² Leeds Mercury 02.10.24

¹⁸³ Leeds Mercury 03.05.28. He particularly singled out the bench of bishops in the House of Lords for having 'done themselves great honour by the tolerant spirit' shown. The Intelligencer claimed that churchmen were 'revolted' by it. See Leeds Intelligencer 08.05.28.

¹⁸⁴ Foster Modern Ireland p 304. The original was called the 'Protestant Club' but changed its name to 'Brunswick Constitutional Club.' Its founders felt that the House of Brunswick was 'peculiarly

was no exception. The pro-Catholics gathered behind the Leeds Mercury, and the anti-Catholics the Leeds Intelligencer. It furiously accused Baines of 'wantonly inciting ... popular violence' and categorically denied Baines's allegation that the Brunswickers were 'lighting up the flame of religious hostility.'¹⁸⁵ They saw a hidden agenda behind the reformers' motives; no less than the destruction of the 'pre-eminence' of the established Church.¹⁸⁶

The rival groups drew up declarations¹⁸⁷ and a public meeting of some 16 000, including, according to the Intelligencer, 'a number of low Irish,' gathered in the Coloured Cloth Hall yard, Leeds. John Marshall MP was chairman.¹⁸⁸ The anti-Catholics had prepared their ground well; notices had been displayed and handbills readily distributed. At 10am on Friday 28 November a demonstration left the Intelligencer office bearing 'Vote Against Popery' placards. Marshall insisted there should be no music or banners in the yard itself but little order was observed. Speakers could not make themselves heard and Baines was shouted down with cries of 'Pope Neddy,' and 'Thou will print anything for a pint of ale!' The meeting broke up in disorder. Missiles were thrown and some minor injuries occurred.¹⁸⁹

The issue dragged on into the next year. In January, Richard Oastler and Patrick Brontë, in letters to the Intelligencer, expressed their anxiety over granting the Catholic Claims.¹⁹⁰ In June, 'Philanthropos' wrote on the same theme in the same paper.

The Pope remains in Rome ... but the way is rapidly preparing for the transition of his throne to the British capital.¹⁹¹

committed to the Protestant Ascendancy' in view of its accession to the British throne because of its protestant beliefs. See Machin The Catholic Question p 132. Such was the feeling in Leeds that a Mercury reporter was refused admission to a Friends of 'Protestants' dinner on Thursday 6 July. See Leeds Mercury 08.07.26

¹⁸⁵ Leeds Intelligencer 25.09.28

¹⁸⁶ Taylor Worthies of Leeds p 273

¹⁸⁷ The Protestant Declaration claimed to have 1 000 signatures. Baines argued that many people who were listed did not know their names had been used. See Leeds Mercury 06.12.28.

¹⁸⁸ Machin The Catholic Question p 144. It had originally been intended to meet in the Court House but the meeting adjourned to the Coloured Cloth Hall yard in order to accommodate the vast crowd. See Leeds Mercury 06.12.28 and Leeds Intelligencer 04.12.28.

¹⁸⁹ Leeds Mercury 06.12.28, Leeds Intelligencer 04.12.28. Marshall was chairman because the Mayor had declined the invitation to act.

¹⁹⁰ Leeds Intelligencer 08.01.29, 15.01.29

¹⁹¹ Leeds Intelligencer 18.06.29

But it was Baines's 'enlightened spirit of the age' that finally held sway. In 1828, the Prime Minister, the Duke of Wellington, faced the explosive political reality and urged the King to support a bill granting emancipation.¹⁹² On 13 April 1829, George IV gave his Royal Assent. Catholic Emancipation had at last been achieved.¹⁹³

There were other issues about which Baines was equally as forthright. The economic crisis of 1825 was precipitated by speculation in the newly recognized South American states.¹⁹⁴ Baines warned against 'hazardous' investments, but insisted that 'a man ought to be free in employment of their (sic) money.' He did, however, sign a declaration expressing confidence in Leeds bank notes, hoping to diffuse panic in the area.¹⁹⁵ But speculation in railways was another matter. Baines realised that 'railways intersecting the whole kingdom ... will ultimately prove of great public benefit.'¹⁹⁶ On 29 December 1824, he was elected onto the committee of the Leeds and Hull Railroad Company at a meeting in Leeds Court House. Baines envisaged a time when a rail line would stretch from the 'German Ocean to the Irish Sea' but the depressed financial state of the country and the improvement in transport to the East Coast by the opening of the Ferrybridge-Goole Canal, delayed further action.¹⁹⁷

He argued that those very South American states which offered such wide scale speculative ventures should be recognised and the Monroe Doctrine acknowledged.¹⁹⁸ The United States itself he admired and forecast a time 'at no very distant period' when it would render itself 'independent of foreign supplies.' Hence it was essential to encourage both imports and exports.¹⁹⁹ Free trade was 'the best policy for every

¹⁹² J Clarke 'The Duke of Wellington': The Prime Ministers ed H Van Thal vol I (London 1974) pp 328-329.

¹⁹³ Machin The Catholic Question p 178. It was not without a price. The Irish electorate was reduced from 216 000 to 37 000. See Foster Modern Ireland p 302

¹⁹⁴ Woodward Age of Reform pp 57-58

¹⁹⁵ Leeds Mercury 29.01.15, 12.02.25, 19.12.25

¹⁹⁶ Leeds Mercury 24.12.24

¹⁹⁷ Leeds Mercury 01.01.25. See also W W Tomlinson The North Eastern Railway: its Rise and Development (Newcastle/London 1914) p 202. The committee reconvened on 20 March 1829 to pursue the project further. Baines also became a director of the Leeds-Thirsk Railway in 1845. See Tomlinson p 463. For Baines's involvement with railways see Chapter Six below.

¹⁹⁸ Leeds Mercury 08.11.23, 03.01.24. The Monroe Doctrine proclaimed that the American continent was no longer to be considered as an area 'for future colonization by any European powers.' See Brogan History of USA p 262.

¹⁹⁹ Leeds Mercury 28.10.26

nation.²⁰⁰ The free trade policies which Huskisson proposed in 1825 'will be productive of great advantages,' Baines's approving editorial claimed.²⁰¹ His Mercury readers could well have been excused for surmising such a point of view. His leader columns had expressed such opinions regularly through the years²⁰² as they had on the Corn Laws, the Poor Laws, and the repeal of the Combination Acts;²⁰³ three subjects about which he felt so strongly, he not only wrote about, but spoke publicly on them.

IV

By now, Baines the Mercury editor, had become Baines the active politician, ever prepared to voice his fears or beliefs from the hustings or in the relative calm of the committee room. Through these years a plethora of social and political issues had surfaced in Leeds. An increasing population and developing industries created major crises as the town's infrastructure was found wanting and the effects of the vicissitudes of a volatile economy, seriously impaired by a twenty year war, took its toll. New policies needed devising and new institutions establishing to combat these pressing exigencies. And it was the Leeds middle class that took upon itself the social responsibility for providing the solutions.²⁰⁴

The Leeds bourgeoisie was a diversified group. Over half were shopkeepers and tradesmen; nearly a quarter were manufacturers and merchants whilst a smattering of professional men and people of independent income made up the rest.²⁰⁵ Most

²⁰⁰ Leeds Mercury 14.06.23

²⁰¹ Leeds Mercury 16.04.25. 'All mercantile free trade at this time was sectarian.' See Hilton Corn, Cash and Commerce p 175. Even Baines himself was not immune from sectarian interest. Until 1824 he had consistently opposed the removal of the prohibition on the export of British wools. It was 'his only heresy as a Free Trader.' See Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines pp 134-135.

²⁰² Among some of the national and international issues he commented on during this time in the Leeds Mercury were; sinecures and pensions 11.01.17, the penal code 28.03.18, 08.04.26, slavery 17.07.24, 21.01.26, British imperialism in India 24.07.24, the Game Laws 15.04.26 and Greek independence 20.05.26. For a more detailed examination of his editorial views see Thornton Social and Political Thought of Edward Baines passim.

²⁰³ Leeds Mercury 04.02.26, 18.11.26, 20.03.24, 10.04.24. This was something of a contradiction; he condemned combinations as 'mischievous.' See Leeds Mercury 29.08.18. 'He had always been an enemy of the Combination Laws.' See Leeds Mercury 10.04.24. A year later he wrote, 'To a fair open combination ... we can see no objection.' See Leeds Mercury 16.04.25. And yet less than three months later he condemned, 'as a tremendous evil ... a Combination overawing orderly and peaceable workmen.' See Leeds Mercury 02.07.25

²⁰⁴ For a definition of the middle class see R J Morris Class, Sect and Party; the Making of the British Middle Class, 1820-1850 (Manchester 1990) p 12

²⁰⁵ *Ibid* p 26

surprisingly, in a town so dependent on the textile trade, only a minority was actually involved in that trade. The middle class in Leeds was equally divided both politically and spiritually; between Whigs and Tories, Dissent and Anglicanism. What brought together such a disparate group and unified it into a cohesive whole was its sense of communal responsibility. It was a responsibility owed to the town in general but to the working classes in particular. Baines perfectly summed up its attitude in 1819;

Whenever a plan is proposed for the benefit of the lower orders of society, we feel ourselves bound in duty to them, to look at it with a scrutinizing eye.²⁰⁶

That scrutinizing eye was applied through a series of public meetings which discussed the issues involved. These meetings sustained the various voluntary organisations which had been formed to originate and implement the remedial strategies that it was felt were required.²⁰⁷ In the past such meetings had received no more than a cursory mention in the local press and that usually in the shape of public advertisements. Now Baines and other reform editors realised the true value of them as opinion forming forums and began giving detailed accounts of their proceedings.²⁰⁸ And it was here at such public meetings and as a member of these voluntary organisations that Baines became one of the town's leading players on the stage of local politics.

In February 1818, a meeting was called at the Court House²⁰⁹ to discuss children employed as chimney sweeps. Baines was present. 'No one could be more fully convinced ... of the necessity of putting an end to this inhuman practice,' he declared.²¹⁰ But of all those gathered there, it was Baines who had the presence of mind to use the occasion. His friends would see it as a demonstration of his altruism and sense of fair play; his enemies as but another example of his authoritarian demagoguery. Baines took it upon himself to help Joseph Haddock put the opposite point of view to the one

²⁰⁶ Leeds Mercury 27.02.19

²⁰⁷ S J D Green NH vol XXVIII (1992) pp 233-237

²⁰⁸ D Read 'Reform Newspapers and Northern Opinion c1800-1848': Proceedings of the Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society vol VIII (1956-1959) p 305

²⁰⁹ The Court House was frequently used for public meetings following its opening in 1813. Its great room could hold some 800 people. See J Sprittles Links with Bygone Leeds (Leeds 1969)p 70. Should greater numbers have to be accommodated, the yard of the nearby Coloured Cloth Hall was used. It could hold about 20 000. See Burt and Grady The Illustrated History of Leeds p 60

²¹⁰ Leeds Mercury 14.02.18. He had condemned the practice editorially over the years. See Leeds Mercury 04.05.11.

he himself held. He read out the master sweep's letter which pointedly claimed that banning the practice would remove the boys' sustenance.²¹¹ In December, that same year Baines was at the Courthouse again, this time in response to a proposal that a Philosophical and Literary Society should be formed in the town.²¹² Correspondence had started in the Mercury in September when 'Leodiensis' made the suggestion.²¹³ By the end of November it was Baines, fanning the flames of enthusiasm for the project, who observed 'There is a point at which deliberation should end and action begin.'²¹⁴ His point was taken and a fortnight later, he was present on 11 December when the Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society was founded. It was Baines who dominated numerous Court House meetings; in June and September 1821 he was there speaking on Scarlett's Poor Bill and on establishing a women's penitentiary so such females might be 'coerced into decent demeanour, if not virtuous habits.'²¹⁵ At another Court House meeting in December 1823, he urged the Government to recognise the newly emerging South American states.²¹⁶

Church matters also claimed his attention. In September 1828, he was present at the Leeds Branch of the Missionary Society and applauded its efforts 'to civilise and evangelise ... the barbarous nations of Africa and the South Seas.'²¹⁷ And at 10.15am on Monday 7 July that year, he called for the gathering in the Court House to petition Parliament over the New Churches Bill. It was a bill which he claimed 'smelt strongly

²¹¹ Leeds Mercury 14.02.18. Another occasion he acted on behalf of others whom he felt unable to help themselves was when 'A Young Milliner' wrote to the Mercury. She asked him to 'lay aside musty politics for one week ... (and) read a good round lecture to the ladies of Leeds ... upon their unreasonableness.' Baines acknowledged that the letter had 'peculiar claims upon our attention' for the young women concerned 'cannot meet in taverns or elsewhere, to make speeches, pass resolutions and publish petitions, like so many men.' See Leeds Mercury 17.09.25, 24.09.25

²¹² A previous Leeds Philosophical Society had been established in 1783. See Taylor Worthies of Leeds p 269

²¹³ Leeds Mercury 26.09.18. Lowerson and Morris both claim that Edward Baines Junior was probably the author. See Lowerson Political Career of Sir Edward Baines pp 60-61 and R J Morris Class, Sect and Society p 228. Di Vernon wrote to the Mercury expressing the hope that the new society would include women. See Leeds Mercury 20.02.19. It chose not to do so.

²¹⁴ Leeds Mercury 28.11.18. See also Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines pp 102-103.

²¹⁵ Leeds Mercury 09.06.21, 29.09.21. Scarlett's Bill addressed the issue of the legal settlement of paupers. Baines argued that self supporting residence for five years in a place should justify settlement.

²¹⁶ Leeds Mercury 01.01.24. Baines argued that recognising Buenos Ayres, Chili (sic), Peru, Mexcio and Colombia would aid trade.

²¹⁷ Leeds Mercury 06.09.28

of the smoke of Leeds' and had originated as a result of the 'signal defeats experienced by the New Church party in the Parish Church.'²¹⁸ His forceful arguments held sway and 19 712 people signed the petition.²¹⁹

But not all his views were so well received. In 1828, a protracted strike developed in Barnsley when employers tried to reduce the wages of weavers. The Tory and Radical politicians laid the blame firmly at the door of William Huskisson and his free trade policies. Baines, a passionate defender of free trade, determined to set the record straight and went to Barnsley to do so. The crowd taunted him, then listened to his point of view but still voted 'That Free Trade is an injury to the operatives.'²²⁰

Another occasion when he was attacked occurred at the Annual General Board meeting of the Leeds General Infirmary. Doctor Hunter accused Baines of publishing anonymous letters condemning the hospital.²²¹ Baines was present at that meeting as a trustee of the Infirmary. He was also called upon to act in similar capacities; as one of the auditors of the House of Recovery,²²² and as a member of the committees of the Leeds Commercial Buildings, Leeds Dispensary and the Relief of the Unemployed Poor.²²³ He found time to attend the annual meetings of the Leeds Library and the Leeds Mechanics' Institute; and to join the Annual Dinner of York Whig Club.²²⁴ But no day better exemplifies the frenetic social involvement to which Baines had committed himself than Monday 12 December 1825. At noon he was at the Court House attempting, with others, to dissipate the panic that had ensued following the cluster of

²¹⁸ Leeds Mercury Extraordinary 09.07.28. Baines considered the matter so important an issue he published this special edition on Wednesday following the Monday morning meeting. After granting £1 million in 1818 as a thanksgiving for Waterloo, the Government had already supplemented this with a further grant of £500 000 in 1824. See J R H Moorman A History of the Church in England (London 1973) p 323. Baines opposed the idea. For the defeats of the 'New Church party' and Baines's struggles at various parish vestry meetings see below.

²¹⁹ Leeds Mercury 09.07.28

²²⁰ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines pp 144-145. Here the date of the meeting is given as 1829. The correct date was 1828. See Leeds Mercury 03.10.28. Huskisson had ceased to be President of the Board of Trade and from September 1827 was Secretary for War and Colonies first in Goderich's administration and then in Wellington's. See Woodward Age of Reform p 634.

²²¹ Leeds Mercury 06.10.27. A letter from 'D' argued for an increase in the number of surgeons. See Leeds Mercury 15.09.27. One from 'Senex' claimed that LGI surgeons were devoting too much time to private practice. See Leeds Mercury 22.09.27.

²²² Baines Directory of Yorkshire vol I p 26

²²³ Leeds Mercury 20.05.26, 16.07.25, 24.06.26

²²⁴ Leeds Mercury 11.06.25, 16.07.25, 09.11.22.

bank failures that year and found himself voted onto the committee to help carry out the meeting's stabilising policy. In the evening he was back again, this time at an Anti-Slavery meeting and speaking on behalf of the proposal to petition Parliament.²²⁵

Baines had long realised that if the Whig-Liberal Dissenters of the town, the middle class merchants and men of business, were to make a serious political impact they must have a base from which to operate. From here they could launch their assaults against the Tory-Anglican oligarchy that had dominated the Corporation for so long. All the inhabitants of Leeds were eligible for election to the town council but as Baines pointed out 'the election uniformly falls upon Churchmen in religion, and generally upon Tories in politics.'²²⁶ The existing situation ruled out the Corporation as a suitable battleground. But Baines identified another; the Parish Church vestry.

The Corporation had originally been established in 1626 to regulate the woollen trade. By the mid-eighteenth century, it concentrated on a variety of civic responsibilities. It administered justice at the Quarter Sessions and Petty Sessions through its rota of aldermen. It controlled the Improvement Commission, set up by an act of Parliament in 1755 for regulating the pavements and introducing street lighting. It supervised the overseers of the Workhouse Board and the constables through its magistrates. It ran the Committee of Pious Uses which administered the town's charities, and held the patronage of the town's three churches.²²⁷ But if the means of influencing these civic amenities was denied to the Liberal-Dissenters of Leeds through the Corporation, Baines and his colleagues knew full well that there were other ways and that the parish vestry offered them such an opportunity. The skirmishes they fought there would also provide an invaluable experience for the great political campaigns to be waged by them in the 1830s and 1840s.²²⁸

²²⁵ Leeds Mercury 17.12.25

²²⁶ Baines Directory of Yorkshire vol I p 16. There Baines states that 'All the inhabitants were eligible for office.' Wilson R G History of Modern Leeds p 35 states, 'In theory there were no restrictions to debar any male residing within the borough from becoming a member of the Corporation.' Derek Fraser confirms the allegation regarding who in reality were elected. 'Favoured merchants and gentlemen could be invited to become members without any reference to the citizens at large.' See Fraser History of Modern Leeds p 270. 'The close constitution of the Corporation is obvious ... Family influence is predominant.' See Burt and Grady The Illustrated History of Leeds p 124 quoting PP 1835 Reports from Commissioners on Municipal Corporations in England and Wales pp 1615-1624.

²²⁷ The above is based on Wilson R G Gentlemen Merchants pp 162-165; Wilson R G History of Modern Leeds pp 39-41; Burt and Grady The Merchants' Golden Age p 18

²²⁸ Morris Class, Sect and Society p 123

Every rate-payer in Leeds had the right to attend the vestry meetings at the Parish Church to elect the churchwardens and these eighteen appointees²²⁹ exercised considerable parochial influence in both ecclesiastical and non-ecclesiastical matters. They were involved in levying the rate on property in the town for the running costs of the Church.²³⁰ It was a rate resented by the Dissenters, being legally forced to maintain a building they did not use, and by some Anglicans.²³¹ The churchwardens also shared with the council in administering the Improvement Commission, the Highway Surveyors and the Workhouse Board which in turn administered the Poor Law.

The vestry had a vital role to play in addressing various local issues. In November 1818, it was called to consider the increasing number of vagrants in Leeds. Many towns, in times of distress, had to contend with the arrival of 'vagrants, impostors and travelling beggars;' Leeds was no different.²³² As Baines put it at a vestry meeting, abolishing vagrancy 'would be to confer a public benefit upon every group of society.'²³³ A Vagrant Office was set up in Vicar Lane and achieved some degree of success.²³⁴ But Baines and his associates felt there were also other policies that the vestry needed to adopt.

At 4pm on Easter Sunday 1819 it met to re-elect the churchwardens. Suspicions had been raised of peculation by the vestry treasurer.²³⁵ Baines stood up and after praising the five years service of Mr Cawood in the past, accused him of refusing to publish the parish accounts. There was uproar. John Hardy, the Recorder, called

²²⁹ Baines Directory of Yorkshire vol I p 17. There were eight churchwardens for Leeds and a further ten from the out-townships.

²³⁰ Fraser History of Modern Leeds p 273. These running costs included maintaining the fabric of the church building and the cost of bread, wine, gas, printing etc etc. For the most detailed examination of the Leeds vestry disputes see Fraser 'The Leeds Churchwardens 1828-1850; Thoresby Society vol LIII pt 1 pp 1-22

²³¹ Fraser Thoresby Society vol LIII pt 1 pp 3-4. Churches like St John's and Holy Trinity, like the chapels of the out townships, had to maintain themselves as well as make their contribution to St Peter's.

²³² F Beckwith 'The Population of Leeds during the Industrial Revolution'; Publications of the Thoresby Society vol XLI (1954) p 170. This was not simply a matter affecting Leeds. By 1823 the introduction of vagrant offices in 'almost all the great towns in the kingdom' had greatly reduced mendicity. See Baines Directory of Yorkshire vol II p 255

²³³ Leeds Mercury 28.11.18

²³⁴ Baines claimed that by 1822 street beggars had 'greatly diminished.' See Baines Directory of Yorkshire vol I p 17.

²³⁵ Fraser Thoresby Society vol LIII pt 1 p 3

upon Baines to prove his allegations and Cawood's re-election was finally confirmed.²³⁶ But the issue did not go away. A fortnight later Baines assured the vestry meeting he was accusing no-one of using money for his own purposes but warned that '*Publicity* is a watchman always at his post.' Cawood furiously responded. 'I fear nothing ... I will never consent to pay one penny of the parish money for publication.' Nevertheless, Baines had his way. The motion to publish was carried unanimously.²³⁷

By the end of December nothing had appeared in print. The vestry was called again ostensibly to consider demolishing the old buildings to the east of the churchyard and to erect a new church wall. But the issue of the accounts reared itself once more. Cawood this time argued that it was illegal to publish. Baines, in a moment of high drama, demonstrated to the assembly the weakness of that argument by flourishing, the published accounts of the churchwardens of the Parish of Christ Church, in Surrey.²³⁸

Retrenchment of public expenditure had long been Baines's economic mantra. In 1820, he was delighted at the economy exercised by the vestry in the previous year. Cawood bitterly disagreed arguing that the money saved could have been put to good use. Baines, accepted some expenditure was necessary to the point of seconding the motion to rent twenty acres of land to be used for the employment of the poor. Expenditure had become 'more moderate and judicious' according to Baines²³⁹ but by 1822 the accounts still had not appeared. Finally, it was resolved to publish those for the five years from 1817 onwards.

Public interest in vestry expenditure reached such a height that in 1821 the choir of the Parish Church could not accommodate the numbers who turned up to a meeting to discuss the appointment of a new organist and between 6 000 and 8 000 met in the nearby White Cloth Hall yard instead. It was Baines who proposed the rate of £50 a year.²⁴⁰ Once more public economy was central to the theme of the meeting when the commutation of the vicarial tithes, an 'ungracious impost,' according to Baines, was

²³⁶ [Leeds Mercury](#) 17.04.19

²³⁷ [Leeds Mercury](#) 01.05.19

²³⁸ [Leeds Mercury](#) 01.01.20

²³⁹ [Leeds Mercury](#) 10.01.18, 10.02.20, 28.04.21

²⁴⁰ [Leeds Mercury](#) 07.07.21

discussed.²⁴¹ Two years later, the most numerous attended vestry meeting ever, assembled to consider the 'Inclosure of New Churches.' Baines's amendment that it was 'inappropriate' for parishioners to pay for erecting fences and walls for the new churches built in the parish, was carried.²⁴²

He was equally opposed to the payment of choristers. In 1818 Richard Fawcett, the Vicar of Leeds, introduced a robed and surpliced choir at St Peter's.²⁴³ Baines had no objection to the choir. What concerned him was that the choir was to be paid. The crucial issue was; should the revenue come from the ratepayers or from private subscriptions? By 1826, He pointed out that, since the choir's inception, between £700 and £800 had been spent on it. He had no wish to raise cries of 'No Popish ceremonies,' but did move an amendment that no part of the rates raised to repair the church should in future be directed to paying for music.²⁴⁴ That did not mean that if 'the public refused to pay, the Choristers must cease to pipe,' he caustically declared.²⁴⁵ In the end, the vote on the original motion to continue payment was indeterminate. The chairman thought it was carried and £90 made available. The following year Baines was back on the attack, arguing that the Parish Church had managed to survive without a choir since the days of Henry VIII. This time he had his way.²⁴⁶

The year 1827 saw the vestry adopt a policy of individually voting on each item of expenditure. This war of attrition at last paid off. A year later, the Liberals gained a majority of churchwardens for the first time. Under John Buttery as senior Churchwarden, a period of considerable retrenchment in parish expenditure began.²⁴⁷ In a packed and unruly vestry meeting at Easter 1833, Baines attacked the proposed list of Tory churchwardens claiming that under Buttery's leadership outgoings had fallen

²⁴¹ Leeds Mercury 20.09.23. Richard Fountayne Wilson had offered to pay half the amount required to 'effect a commutation of certain Vicarial Tithes and Easter Offering.' See Leeds Intelligencer 18.09.23

²⁴² Leeds Mercury 15.10.25

²⁴³ Sprittles Bygone Leeds p 1. It was the first such choir to be seen in England since the Reformation.

²⁴⁴ Ibid pp 1-2

²⁴⁵ Leeds Mercury 25.11.26

²⁴⁶ Leeds Mercury 24.11.27. See also Sprittles Bygone Leeds p 3

²⁴⁷ Buttery, a wool stapler, was an Anglican. See Fraser Thoresby Society vol LIII pt 1 pp 4-5

from £1 500 to £500.²⁴⁸ After 1835, no church rate was ever again levied in the town.²⁴⁹

Baines's manipulation of the vestry for political purposes was an effective strategy. It was successful because he ensured he was actively involved in the vestry's numerous activities. He chaired the committee investigating the accounts of Mr Evers, Treasurer of the Vagrant Office, the meeting to consider removing obstructions from Timble Beck, and the meeting to appoint the commissioners for the water works. He was appointed; to the sub-committee to investigate the stopping up of watering places in the town; as a trustee on the Workhouse Board; and as a commissioner for carrying out the Improvement Act.²⁵⁰ And, as ever, he was prepared to speak from the floor of the vestry to make his point be it on improving the environment such as the removal of Moot Hall and Middle Row from Briggate, "a consummation devoutly to be wished;,"²⁵¹ or on humanitarian issues such as in the tragic case of Maria Sleddin and over which Baines demanded the dismissal of John Littlewood, the inspector at the Workhouse.²⁵² In 1832, the vestry met to consider the Anatomy Bill which empowered the overseers to give surgeons the unclaimed bodies of dead paupers for dissection. Up to then only the bodies of executed criminals could be used. Robert Baker defended the idea amidst uproar. But it was Baines, rising above a 'volley of hooting and hissing,' who made the most dramatic impact, stating he was quite prepared that his body 'should be given up for the benefit of science.'²⁵³

Baines may have been the mouthpiece of his Whig-Liberal supporters and his views met with their approval but the opinions he raised and the stratagems he employed were anathema to others in the town. They were ever ready to attack and

²⁴⁸ Fraser Thoresby Society vol LIII pt 1 pp 4-5. Bitter disputes continued in the vestry throughout the 1830s but by the mid-1840s the churchwardens had been rendered powerless. See Fraser p 18.

²⁴⁹ Burt and Grady The Illustrated History of Leeds p 106

²⁵⁰ Leeds Mercury 08.05.24, 24.02.27, 04.01.23, 27.08.25, 10.05.23, 07.01.26

²⁵¹ Leeds Mercury 03.08.22. See Baines Directory of Yorkshire vol I p 18 for his critical view of this 'obstruction.'

²⁵² Maria, a pauper, had been directed to Leeds by Burnley magistrates. Littlewood was accused of failing to give her adequate support on her arrival in the town. According to Mr Garlick, the surgeon who examined her, she was 'murdered by the ill-treatment of being bandied about.' See Leeds Mercury 17.05.23.

²⁵³ Leeds Patriot 03.11.32. Apart from aiding science, the bill was intended to bring to an end the theft of bodies. Resurrectionists had been busy in Leeds at this time for some years. At Wortley the parishioners built a stone watch-house from which new graves could be guarded. See Chippendale and Thornton History of St John's Church p 7.

abuse him. When he spoke on the Improvement Bill in 1824 he was faced with continued groans and hisses as his opponents attempted to drown his words.²⁵⁴ To his critics, Baines and 'his parish terriers,' 'his radical imps,'²⁵⁵ heaped nothing but 'vexatious hostility ... (on) the respectable inhabitants' of Leeds.²⁵⁶ And there was no one more critical of Baines than his competitors in the local press.²⁵⁷

V

By the 1820s there were four weekly newspapers published in Leeds; the Leeds Mercury, the Leeds Intelligencer, the Leeds Independent and the Leeds Patriot.²⁵⁸ In 1822, John Ogle Robinson and John Hernaman took over the Intelligencer and appointed the imaginative Alaric Watts as editor.²⁵⁹ The Independent staggered along under several different owners until it was absorbed by the Leeds Intelligencer in 1826.²⁶⁰ The Leeds Patriot, founded in 1824 by Forthergill and Thompson, appears to have been a Tory paper but in 1828 it became the property of John Foster, who converted it into a radical organ of working-class opinion.²⁶¹ After a somewhat hesitant start by 1829 its circulation almost rivalled that of the Intelligencer.²⁶²

But none of these papers' circulations could compare with that of the Mercury. By 1829, the Patriot was producing 1 200 copies a week, the Leeds Intelligencer 1 500

²⁵⁴ Leeds Mercury 28.02.24

²⁵⁵ Leeds Intelligencer 24.07.28

²⁵⁶ Leeds Intelligencer 24.11.27

²⁵⁷ Baines, Hernaman and Perring of the Intelligencer and Foster of the Patriot did agree on specific business matters. In 1829 they announced they would charge one third more for advertisements that extended over two columns. See Leeds Mercury 28.11.29.

²⁵⁸ A fifth newspaper, the Leeds Gazette was launched in 1820. See Leeds Mercury 01.01.20. It was a short-lived and ill-fated venture. See Gibb and Beckwith Yorkshire Post p 16. The Leeds Times was first published in 1833. See Read Press and People p 93. The Leeds public, however, did have access to daily newspapers in the Coffee House and Commercial newsrooms. In 1819 the Commercial Newsroom offered the dailies; The Courier, The Globe, The Sun, The Star, The Statesman, The Times, The New Times, The Morning Chronicle, and The Public Ledger. See Leeds Mercury 09.01.19. Leeds did not get its own daily paper until the Mercury became a daily. See Leeds Mercury 01.10.61.

²⁵⁹ Anon Thoresby Society vol XL pp xiv-xxvii. See also Gibb and Beckwith Yorkshire Post pp 10-16

²⁶⁰ Leeds Independent was absorbed in the Intelligencer in 1826. See Gibb and Beckwith Yorkshire Post p 16.

²⁶¹ Read Press and People p 95. See also Hand 'Early Leeds Printing': Leeds Exhibition Book p 93

²⁶² In May 1824 it summoned up only eighteen advertisements. See Baines Papers: No 47; Mrs C Baines to E Baines (Jun) 26.05.24

copies, whereas the Mercury could boast of a circulation of 5 200.²⁶³ The reasons for its success are clear. It voiced the hopes and opinions of a large and influential group of people. But Baines also saw that his paper was continually improved by classifying the adverts; enlarging the news and editorial departments; and adopting smaller fonts for advertisements thus creating more space for news. By 1829 the Mercury carried double the amount of material than it had ten years earlier.²⁶⁴ The Intelligencer also knew the Tory-Anglican views of its readers and continued its ministerial support.²⁶⁵

Understandably, his rivals envied Baines his success and none more so than John Foster of the Patriot. Foster had written for the Mercury in an unpaid capacity for fourteen years. Now as a rival, who had committed no other crime 'but settling in Leeds,' he claimed that Baines's methods appalled him.²⁶⁶ Foster was incensed that the Mercury editor had 'shamefully abused a public confidence.' Foster had failed in business in 1823, and Baines chose to make the matter public. Not only that, the 'Grand Apostate,' had led the public astray over the Catholic Relief Bill. Now Baines was intent on the 'mean and base object to injure the Patriot.' William Cobbett was full of venom for Baines and full of sympathy for Foster who suffered from the 'lies and audacity of a grub-worm ... who can dupe none but ... perverse fools.'²⁶⁷ The 'grub-worm's' ploy of attacking the Patriot was 'seen by every sensible man,' as was Baines's attempt to injure the advertising interest of the Intelligencer by claiming a false circulation for his own paper.²⁶⁸ In effect, Baines was 'beneath the notice of any honourable men.'²⁶⁹ And it was on the question of Baines's integrity that the Mercury owner's foremost rival, the Intelligencer, returned time and again to make the most serious and damning accusations.

²⁶³ Read Press and People pp 210, 216. By the 1830s the Mercury's circulation had the largest sale of any provincial newspaper. See A Aspinall Politics and the Press p 368.

²⁶⁴ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines pp 145-146

²⁶⁵ William Gawtress, one of the Intelligencer's owners succinctly summed up the political philosophy of the paper when he took his leave in October 1822. He strove for 'social order,' and to uphold the constitution and inculcate the principles of religion and loyalty. See Gibb and Beckwith Yorkshire Post p 11. For examples of the Intelligencer's views over the years see Leeds Intelligencer 06.02.09, 04.06.16, 23.06.17, 08.05.28.

²⁶⁶ WWM MS: No G2/24; J Foster to Lord Milton 01.08.30

²⁶⁷ Cobbett Rural Rides vol II p 607

²⁶⁸ Leeds Patriot 20.06.29

²⁶⁹ Leeds Patriot 19.09.29

In 1817, Billinge's Liverpool Advertiser came on the market and Baines, in concert with a 'worthy and much esteemed friend,' bought shares in the paper. His main reason was 'to make a reversionary provision for a member of his family.'²⁷⁰ Baines was ever conscious of his family responsibilities.²⁷¹ At the time, Matthew Talbot, the eldest son, was preparing for a legal career. Edward Junior, had already commenced work two years earlier in the Mercury office and it may well be Baines had plans for his second son to take over the Mercury. It was no surprise in January 1827 when Baines announced that the paper was now owned by 'Baines and Son.'²⁷² But in 1817, Baines felt he needed to make provision in the future for eleven year-old Thomas and six year-old Frederick. To Baines's enemies, however, the Liverpool purchase had nothing to do with family responsibilities but more the pursuit of commercial self-interest. It offered a golden opportunity to reveal the apparent hypocrisy of Mr Mercury and it was one the Intelligencer and Geōrgē Mudié, its editor at the time, was quick to exploit. Mudié exuberantly proclaimed that Baines was 'selling loyalty in Liverpool and Jacobinism in Leeds,' for 'patriotism with him is but an empty name.' The paper then quoted at length a pamphlet which an author by the name of Henry Cullingworth had printed and which revealed that Baines's new purchase was a 'LOYAL, MINISTERIAL, CONTENTED TORY NEWSPAPER.' And thus in Liverpool, Baines was an 'anti-reforming, loyal, strenuous PITTITE!' The reforming Whig who for years had damned Pitt's policies now 'puts the money in his pocket, and laughs at all parties.'²⁷³ It was a damning indictment if it were true.

Baines admitted he had a 'contingent share in the newspaper,' but was desperate to prove it was an innocent involvement. Two days before the Intelligencer had gone public he had already seen a copy of the 'paltry pamphlet' and pointed out that Billinge's was a paper that had 'always maintained the character of impartiality.' It was 'equally distant from the extremes of either party' concentrating principally on shipping intelligence. Baines insisted he had never 'wrote or dictated a single line' for

²⁷⁰ Leeds Mercury 15.03.17.

²⁷¹ He had already set up his own brother John as a bookseller and was employing John Talbot, his brother-in-law at the Leeds Mercury. He took on his son Frederick in 1837 as a second partner. See Leeds Mercury 01.07.37. He also accepted his son-in-law Alexander Ritchie, the husband of his daughter Jane, as a partner. See Leeds Mercury 28.06.75.

²⁷² Leeds Mercury 06.01.27

²⁷³ Leeds Intelligencer 17.03.17

the paper and that it was edited 'solely by the resident partner without any superintendence.' To prove his point he displayed copies of it at the Mercury office for public inspection.²⁷⁴ Baines was probably correct in those assertions. The Leeds Commercial Newsroom, advertising the papers it carried, placed the Leeds Intelligencer and Courier in the list headed 'Ministerial;' the Leeds Mercury and Globe under the heading 'Anti-Ministerial;' Billinge's Liverpool Advertiser, however, appeared under the 'Neuter' heading.²⁷⁵

Baines's foresight in planning for his family eventually paid off. In early 1829, the twenty-three year-old Thomas was despatched to Liverpool to become the editor, though by now the paper was called the Liverpool Times.²⁷⁶ Edward Junior, with some years experience of running the day-to-day management of the Mercury, was sent to Liverpool to guide him.²⁷⁷ He made a considerable impact, changing it from 'the dull to the animated' and improved its circulation.²⁷⁸ But the conflict with the Intelligencer continued irrespective of its owners and editors.²⁷⁹

In 1824 the squabbling ended in a libel action against Baines taken out by Alaric Watts, the Intelligencer's new editor. It was heard in York Courthouse on Monday 29 March, before Mr Justice Bayley with Mr Scarlett acting for the plaintiff Watts, and Mr Williams for the defence. The issue was over a letter the Mercury had published from a John Merryweather, an auctioneer of Skipton and the Mercury's agent there. Watts alleged the letter had libelled him and many felt that the real author was none other than the editor of the Mercury himself. Scarlett, better than anyone, identified the real cause that lay behind the affair in his opening remarks.

When there was a dearth of political news, nothing was more common for one Editor to attack another, and the public appeared to find

²⁷⁴ Leeds Mercury 15.03.17

²⁷⁵ Leeds Mercury 02.01.08

²⁷⁶ Leeds Mercury 02.11.81. Thomas remained in the position for thirty years. Originally founded as the Liverpool Advertiser in 1756, it later changed its name to the Liverpool Times. See Baines History of Lancashire vol II (1870) p 371.

²⁷⁷ From 1822 Edward Junior assumed more and more responsibility for running the Mercury. See Lowerson Political Career of Sir Edward Baines p 30.

²⁷⁸ Baines Papers: E Baines to E Baines (Jun) 02.03.29

²⁷⁹ Gawtress and Co owned the paper 1819-122 with William Cooke Stafford as editor. Robinson and Hernaman took over as proprietors from 1822-1833. Their editors were Alaric Watts 1822-1825 and Robert Perring 1825-1842. See Anon Thoresby Society vol XL pp xix, xxiii.

amusement in their squabbles.²⁸⁰

The jury found for the plaintiff but the derisory one shilling damages saw Baines exultant, declaring;

If a shilling will heal the wounded reputation of the plaintiff, either the wound has not been very deep, or the character assailed, is not very estimable.²⁸¹

Baines was ordered to pay the forty shillings costs but Watts refused to let the matter go. He insisted that Baines had only carried a summary of the plaintiff's counsel's argument but had published the entire speech of his own counsel. More damning, however, was Watts's allegation that attempts had been made to bribe Mr Codd, The Times journalist, into suppressing reports of the case. John Talbot, the Mercury reporter at the court, was accused of making the offer. He categorically denied the allegation and Thomas Barnes, the editor of The Times, wrote to the Mercury insisting that Codd had never mentioned such an incident.²⁸²

There was a further threat of legal action when Baines published the deliberations of a committee that had been formed to petition against the Corn Laws in 1826. The Intelligencer, like the other papers in the town, had displayed the petition at its office for people to sign. But the committee was infuriated when, on inspection, it became apparent that the paper had turned the event into a farce by allowing various fictitious names such as 'Peter Short' and 'John Long' to be entered on it. The committee directed Baines to reveal the irresponsibility of the paper. Robinson and Hernaman, the Intelligencer's owners threatened to sue.²⁸³ The issue gradually faded away but the carping continued even to the extent of who wrote what.

On Monday 24 April 1826, a mob of distressed workers met in Lancashire. It set about destroying the power looms at Accrington; by nightfall not a single one was operational within six miles of Blackburn. The disturbances raged all week.²⁸⁴ Baines saw at least one beneficial side to the violence. It called attention 'of the Government

²⁸⁰ Leeds Intelligencer 01.04.24. If the public found it amusing, the question must be asked if both editors deliberately exploited their natural antagonism towards each other to stimulate circulation. See also Thoresby Society vol XL pp xxix-xxx

²⁸¹ Leeds Mercury 03.04.24. Leeds Intelligencer 01.04.24

²⁸² Leeds Intelligencer 08.04.24, 22.04.24, 13.05.24. Leeds Mercury 17.04.24

²⁸³ Leeds Mercury 02.12.26, 09.12.26

²⁸⁴ Hammonds The Skilled Labourer pp 127-128

and the country in general to the distress.²⁸⁵ Baines Junior, however, was out of the country. After spending eight months in London during 1824, his father had sent him on a tour of Europe during 1825 and 1826.²⁸⁶ When news of the Lancastrian disturbances reached him, he decided to write An Address to the Unemployed Workmen of Lancashire and Yorkshire on the Present Disturbances and on Machinery. Written between Rouen and Havre in pencilled shorthand, it was a strong defence of mechanisation. His covering letter left his father to make the decision whether to publish or amend 'as your judgement dictates.' And he added his own name as the author 'because a real name gives an authenticity.'²⁸⁷ Not only did Baines publish the letter in the Mercury on 13 May 1826, but, after numerous requests, he re-published it, and 'to facilitate its dissemination ... (did so) in a cheap form.'²⁸⁸

The Intelligencer and its readers were suspicious. How was it possible for Young Baines to have written 'Neddy's flimsy?' asked 'Will' in his letter to the paper. The following week the Intelligencer showed that it took eight or nine days for information to reach Rouen from Leeds. It was impossible for the news of the disturbances to have reached Baines Junior and for him to respond by the date he claimed he did. Baines, the elder, was the obvious author!²⁸⁹ He, in turn, protested and displayed the envelope to prove his point.²⁹⁰ But there were many in Leeds suspicious

²⁸⁵ The distress was also felt in Leeds where the local Pitt Club cancelled its annual dinner and gave the cost to the poor. An act of 'wisdom and benevolence' according to Baines. See Leeds Mercury 06.05.26. There was a 'good deal of excitation amongst the labouring classes' in Leeds but they were 'properly subordinate.' See Baines Papers; No 51.6 E Baines to E Baines (Junior) 02.05.26

²⁸⁶ Baines (Jun)Life of Edward Baines p 136. An extensive account of his visits to Waterloo, the Netherlands, the Rhine Valley, Switzerland, Rome, Mont Blanc, Italy, Venice, Bologna, St Peter's, Naples, Vesuvius and Pompeii, the Vatican and Verona, the Appennines and Hadrian's Villa can be read in a series of letters to the Leeds Mercury commencing 05.11.25.

²⁸⁷ Baines Papers: No 24, No 80; E Baines (Jun) to E Baines 07.05.26.

²⁸⁸ Baines Papers: No 80; E Baines (Jun) Letter to the Unemployed Workmen of Yorkshire and Lancashire on the Present Distress and on Machinery 04.05.26. See also Leeds Mercury 13.05.26 To effect an even wider circulation, Baines also negotiated with James Ridgway and Effingham Wilson to publish it London. See Baines Papers: E Baines (Jun) An Address to the Unemployed Workmen of Yorkshire and Lancashire on the Present Distress and on Machinery (London 1826). It was also published the same year by Edward Baines in Leeds.

²⁸⁹ Leeds Intelligencer 25.05.26, 01.06.26. Several 'gentlemen' exhibited letters at the Intelligencer office letters recently received from Rouen. The shortest period for delivery was eight days.

²⁹⁰ Leeds Mercury 20.05.26. The envelope can still be seen in the Baines Papers. It is addressed to 'Mr Baines, Leeds, Angleterre' and carries a rubber stamp of 'Rouen' on it but there is no date. The Leeds Intelligencer 01.06.26 explained that French postmarks had no date. Baines Junior claimed he wrote the whole address travelling from Rouen to Le Havre in the 'Diligence.' See Baines Papers: No 24 E Baines (Jun) to E Baines 04.05.26. If he then returned to Rouen, Baines's claim

of the dubious methods of 'Mr Mercury' and in 1824, an even more damning accusation had been levelled at Baines. He was accused of being a blatant plagiarist.

The real mystery is why Baines's enemies took so long to unearth the scandal as the material in question had been in the public domain for eleven years. In May 1814 Baines began the publication in parts of his History of the Wars of the French Revolution;²⁹¹ and then in August 1817 it appeared in two quarto volumes.²⁹² But as far back as 1803, Alexander Stephens's The History of the Wars which Arose out of the French Revolution had appeared in print. It covered the years up to 1803 and did so in far greater detail than Baines's history: 217 pages were devoted to the year 1792 alone; a forty-five page chapter concentrated solely on Ireland.²⁹³ It was a detailed resource waiting for any subsequent historian to come to draw upon. Baines did so extensively.

In 1823, Alaric Watts had recently settled into his position as editor of the Intelligencer. Watts was a man with some pretensions to cultural and aesthetic pursuits²⁹⁴ and it may be that he was more familiar with both publications than many people. The matter arose over of the Mercury's report of the York County meeting held in January 1823.²⁹⁵ Watt's criticised the report but then raised the spectre of Alexander Stephens.²⁹⁶ Baines's response was to resurrect the critical review in the Quarterly of Watts' book on the Kit Cat Club.²⁹⁷ Watts then launched a savage attack on the 'most unblushing literary plunderer of which the nineteenth century can boast.' He went on;

All that portion of the work which relates to the *Wars of the French Revolution* up to the year 1801 inclusive, is transferred, *without the shadow of an acknowledgement* ... from a work ... by the late Alexander Stephens²⁹⁸

would appear good. If, however, Baines Junior was journeying from Rouen to Havre and then on to another destination, it could not have been the envelope that contained the contentious address.

²⁹¹ Leeds Mercury 21.05.14

²⁹² Leeds Mercury 30.08.17

²⁹³ A Stephens The History of the Wars Which Arose out of the French Revolution to Which is Prefixed a Review of the Causes of that Event vol I, vol II (London 1803)

²⁹⁴ He had only taken the job as editor because his literary pursuits could not sustain him. See Anon Thoresby Society vol XL p xxvi

²⁹⁵ Leeds Mercury 23.01.23.

²⁹⁶ Leeds Intelligencer 20.02.23

²⁹⁷ Leeds Mercury 22.02.23

²⁹⁸ Leeds Intelligencer 06.03.23

A year later he was still hammering away at 'one of the most disgraceful literary frauds ever attempted.'²⁹⁹ And Watts was quite correct. Large sections of Stephens's book were lifted verbatim by Baines with no reference to Stephens. Even his opening paragraph;

Towards the close of the fifth century, the Franks, a nation, the very name of which implies the free conditions of the individuals who composed it, determined to leave their native forests³⁰⁰

is taken word for word from Stephens's work. At times, he purloined entire paragraphs from Stephens's pages; at others he minimally edits it. Baines wrote:

In the meantime a great change had taken place in the public mind in Paris, and the conduct of the King had given rise to suspicions.³⁰¹

Stephens had written;

In the meantime a great change had taken place in Paris. The conduct of the king had given rise to suspicion.³⁰²

Baines lifted not only the words but even the same variations of type face; a typical example of which is found on page five of Baines and page xxi of Stephens; 'they granted certain subsidies *during the war* only.' He used the identical detailed footnote references as for example the one regarding La Fayette.³⁰³ Baines defended himself by claiming that he had always said his work was a 'compilation.' He went on to argue that only 'in about two hundred out of 1 100 pages' had he used Stephens's words and that he had consent to use them from the publisher and owner of the work.³⁰⁴

The allegations lost some of their impact not only because they were made six years after the material had appeared in book form but because Baines's introduction to his subsequent histories had made the situation perfectly clear. And that was three years before Watts raised the issue. In 1820, following the death of the King, Baines

²⁹⁹ Leeds Intelligencer 01.04.24

³⁰⁰ Baines History of the Wars of the French Revolution vol I p 5 and compare with Stephens A History of the French Wars vol I pp xiv-xv.

³⁰¹ Baines History of the Wars of the French Revolution vol I p 26

³⁰² Stephens A History of the French Wars vol p 21. Another transparent example occurs when the description of the Battle of Cape St Vincent saw another textual modification by Baines. Stephens had written that the victory 'acquired for the British Admiral, the appropriate title of Lord St Vincent.' Baines used the identical phrasing but substituted 'Earl' for 'Lord.' See Stephens A History of the French Wars vol II p 173; Baines Wars of the French Revolution vol I p S182.

³⁰³ Baines History of the Wars of the French Revolution vol I p 32; Stephens A History of the French Wars vol I p 60

³⁰⁴ Leeds Mercury 11.09.24

decided to enlarge the two volume work on the war into one of four volumes and re-name it; History of the Reign of George III. In his Preface to this, written and published three years before the Watts revelations, Baines acknowledged his principal source;

To facilitate ... progress, and at the recommendation of the publisher and proprietor of Mr Alexander Stephens's History of the Wars published in 1803, nearly half the details of the first volume were abridged from that work.

Watts did not give up. He further accused Baines of plagiarising much of the historical section of his Directory of Yorkshire from the works of Whitaker and Langdale.³⁰⁵ Despite Watt's carping, it did not deter the Mercury editor from further literary pursuits as he developed into a fully-fledged 'man of letters.'

VI

Baines was reviled by the radical universal suffragists as much as he was by his Tory enemies. In 1829, he was accused, by the Leeds Patriot, of 'doing serious injury to the labouring classes.' It argued, he had claimed 'work is plentiful' and thus the overseers turned down applications for relief 'on the authority of Mr Baines.' Furious at his continuing attitude, a mob marched to the Mercury office in Briggate, demanding that its editor should come out and face them. 'He did not make an appearance,' the Patriot laconically reported.³⁰⁶ Baines dismissed the affair, claiming the mob was made up of 'boys and passing spectators' and these quickly dispersed. He dismissed them as he did both aristocratic reactionaries and labouring class radicals for he was a middle class Liberal embracing wholeheartedly their political, economic and cultural values. And consequently, by 1830, he had brought down the wrath of William Cobbett on his head. Cobbett, passionately in favour of annual Parliaments, universal suffrage and vote by ballot³⁰⁷ viewed with splenetic fury

Ned Baines, publisher of that mass of lies and nonsense called the Leeds Mercury ... (a) swelled up, greedy and unprincipled puffer, who

³⁰⁵ Leeds Intelligencer 16.09.24, 27.03.23, 16.09.24. Langdale intimated that only the 'heavy expense of the law' prevented him suing Baines. The Intelligencer's claim that Baines's work was 'almost all a verbal re-print' of Langdale is not true. Baines's work is far more extensive but by the very nature of the publications many of the same facts are repeated. See T Langdale A Topographical Dictionary of Yorkshire (Northallerton 1822) passim.

³⁰⁶ Leeds Patriot 28.11.29

³⁰⁷ W B Pemberton William Cobbett (Harmondsworth 1949) p 163

has been the deluder of Yorkshire for twenty years past.³⁰⁸

But the 'deluder' ignored the gibe and turned in part from his 'mass of lies and nonsense' to don the mantle of a 'man of letters.' During the eighteenth century it had principally been the aristocracy that indulged itself in self-conscious cultural pursuits. But by the early years of the nineteenth century the Leeds middle classes were able to enjoy similar activities. This was not simply a matter of satisfying their own personal pleasures. There was also a profound social dimension involved as they tried to make a public statement that they were not simply 'the money-makers of mucky Leeds.'³⁰⁹ By 1820, one of the wealthiest of that Leeds middle class, Benjamin Gott, was satisfying his passion for fine art by displaying works by Caravaggio, Claude, Poussin and Murillo at his Armley mansion. Those with the same passion but not the same wealth as Gott, were able to visit the Northern Society for the Encouragement of Art Exhibitions held in the town.³¹⁰ If they could not emulate the fine libraries at Harewood House or Templenewsam, they could become members of the long established Leeds Library, or join the numerous circulating libraries or book clubs in the town.³¹¹ And many sent their sons off to tour Europe, 'in the ardent pursuit of knowledge.'³¹²

Society's enthusiasm for knowledge also generated the man of letters, for the written word had achieved a potency never before known. Baines recognised that 'The press is now endowed with a power such as never before existed.'³¹³ But there was a marked difference between journalism and literature. Literary historian, John Gross,

³⁰⁸ Cobbett Rural Rides vol III ed G D H Cole and Margaret Cole ed (London 1930) pp 866-867. What is surprising are the number points on which Baines and Cobbett agree. Like Baines, Cobbett wanted the 'constitution of England undefiled by corruption,' was opposed to the Corn Laws, believed in Free Trade, reduction of the National Debt, abolition of paper money, a rejection of the 'Pitt System' of finance, and both men believed that machinery did not cause distress. See Pemberton William Cobbett pp 59, 86-88

³⁰⁹ Morris History of Modern Leeds p 200

³¹⁰ Ibid pp 208-210. For an examination of Gott and his interest in art see V M E Lovell 'Benjamin Gott of Armley House 1762-1840; Patron of the Arts'; Publications of the Thoresby Society vol LIX part 2 (1986)

³¹¹ Baines Directory of Yorkshire vol I p 26

³¹² Thus reads the epitaph of Benjamin Gott (Jun) who died at Piraeus in 1817 on his tour of Greece. See Morris History of Modern Leeds p 208. Baines sent Edward (Jun) to London for eight months in 1824 and then on a tour of Europe during 1825-1826. The experience caused young Baines to write; 'I quitted London ... the seat of power and grandeur ... to reside in a ... small mean and empty place ... my native Leeds.' E Baines (Jun) MSS Diary of a Tour 20.09.24 and cited by Morris History of Modern Leeds p 211.

³¹³ Baines Reign of George III vol IV pp 162-163

highlights that distinction; and emphasises that many viewed the growth of the press 'as a very mixed blessing'; one was a 'career,' the other a 'vocation.'³¹⁴ Baines attempted to bridge that gap by becoming a 'man of letters.' He was a man of his time. Twenty years later, Thomas Carlyle delivered his lecture on 'The Hero as a Man of Letters,' and claimed that 'such a man is altogether a product of these new ages.'³¹⁵

That Baines was prepared to adopt the role of a man of letters reflects a transformation in the public perception of writers as such. A year after he had taken over the Mercury in 1801, Francis Jeffrey, a Whig lawyer, became editor of the Edinburgh Review. 'It was no job for a gentleman.'³¹⁶ According to general contemporary consent the eighteenth century press 'had been synonymous with bribery and journalistic scurrility.'³¹⁷ Yet by 1829, Sir Walter Scott's view that to accept an editor's chair would be 'socially ruinous,' was becoming more and more out of date. James Perry at the Morning Chronicle, Daniel Stuart at the Morning Post and John Walter II at The Times each made their contributions to raising the standards of the national press;³¹⁸ and from his office in Briggate, Baines did as much in the provinces.

There was also a growing demand for culture by the middle class.³¹⁹ The Intelligencer, appointed the literary-minded Alaric Watts as editor in 1822 who promised to give the paper 'a more aesthetic and critical character than was then common in the provincial press.'³²⁰ John Ryley, had begun publishing his six-monthly Leeds Correspondent³²¹ whilst Baines's Mercury also featured cultural reports.³²²

³¹⁴ J Gross The Rise and Fall of the Man of Letters; Aspects of English Literary Life Since 1800 (London 1969) p 26

³¹⁵ T Carlyle 'The Hero as a Man of Letters'; Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History ed (London 1888) pp 300-308. The lecture was delivered on Tuesday 19 May 1840.

³¹⁶ Gross Rise and Fall of the Man of Letters p 2

³¹⁷ Smith A The Newspaper; an International History p 97. In 1821, Baines was still able to write 'the licentiousness of the Press is a great evil.' See Leeds Mercury 29.09.21.

³¹⁸ Gross Rise and Fall of the Man of Letters p 23

³¹⁹ *Ibid* p 24

³²⁰ Gibb and Beckwith Yorkshire Post p 12

³²¹ The Leeds Correspondent was first published in 1815. It was devoted to mathematical, literary and philosophical issues. See Taylor Worthies of Leeds pp 262-263.

³²² These included Southey's invention of a new metre, Goodacre's lectures on astronomy at the Leeds Theatre and Madame Catalani's performances at the Music Hall. Leeds Mercury 04.07.21, 03.11.21, 16.02.22. The musical concerts in the town 'enabled Leeds to boast of concerts inferior to no town in the kingdom, except the metropolis.'

These editorial initiatives can be seen as commercial responses to the burgeoning cultural *Zeitgeist* of middle class England.³²³ Baines went farther. Apart from cultural material in his newspaper, he also wrote extensive, informative and academic publications to edify and entertain this eager social class. He had become a man of letters but one with a decidedly commercial viewpoint.

In 1817, he published the Directory General and Commercial of the Town and Borough of Leeds.³²⁴ Directories were nothing new. From around 1760 they had been produced quite generally in order to meet the commercial needs of a developing economy.³²⁵ Wright's Leeds Directory appeared in 1797 and Baines himself published one in 1809 but neither had the vision of Baines's 1817 venture. Nothing so far produced in Leeds could match its content.³²⁶ He then embarked on an even more ambitious project, the two volume History, Directory and Gazetteer of the County of York. Its dedication to the 'Nobility, Gentry and Clergy and to the Merchants, Manufacturers and Traders'³²⁷ clearly identifies its bourgeois focus.

Eighteenth century directories, at times, included articles on geology or flora and fauna. Baines decided to go even farther. As well as 'Pointing out the precise situation of every town, village and hamlet in the county' he announced he would also 'present to the public a popular HISTORY OF YORKSHIRE.'³²⁸ In 1824 and 1825 he

³²³ Halévy points out that the middle class were 'too hard worked and too puritanic to encourage art' but nevertheless quotes the combined readership of the Edinburgh Review and the Quarterly at 100 000. See É Halévy A History of the English People in 1815 vol III (Harmondsworth 1938) pp 116, 134. In the words of R J Morris, however, 'They came 'increasingly conscious of the need for culture ... Their cultural achievements ... complimented their economic status.' See Morris History of Modern Leeds pp 200-201. For middle class culture in Leeds in general see Morris Class, Sect and Society pp 228-248.

³²⁴ The Intelligencer took great delight in publicising the criticism of Baines by the Royal College of Surgeons for printing an inaccurate list of its Leeds members in the directory, when he already had the correct list 'in his possession.' See Leeds Intelligencer 13.01.17.

³²⁵ J E Norton Guide to National and Provincial Directories of England and Wales (London HMSO 1974) pp pp 1-2

³²⁶ Baines claimed in an advertisement in 1809 that a Leeds directory similar to his had 'never been attempted.' See Beresford East End; West End pp 375-376 for an examination of the claim. In the directory itself he modified the claim to 'no tolerably correct Directory has hither to appeared.' See E Baines The Leeds Directory for 1809 (Leeds 1809) p 3. However, in his 1817 publication he reverts to the claim that such a work 'has never been attempted.' See Baines Leeds Directory (1817) Preface.

³²⁷ Baines Directory of Yorkshire vol I 'Dedication.' Volume I was published in 1822; volume II in 1823.

³²⁸ Norton Directories of England and Wales p 14. Baines employed William White as a compiler who in turn went on to develop this approach in his own directories. See Norton pp 17, 15. Baines

then published his two volume History, Directory and Gazetteer of the County Palatine of Lancaster.³²⁹ By combining the practical value of a directory and gazetteer with ‘popular history’ he answered the cultural and commercial needs of the aspiring middle classes. But even as he worked on that work a far greater project was forming in his mind; his four volume History of the County Palatine and Duchy of Lancaster.³³⁰

Why Baines chose the county of his birth for such a study rather than the county of his adopted home is a matter of conjecture. Certainly, Baines was a shrewd businessman with an eye on potential markets. His claim that ‘as a manufacturing station Manchester is ... the metropolis of the British Empire’ simply confirmed that cotton was king and an eager readership lay waiting in the county where it reigned.³³¹ But he was not only a shrewd businessman, he was also a genuine man of letters and one who took a delight in the works of Addison, Goldsmith, Crabbe, occasionally Shakespeare, and Hume.³³²

Hume was important to Baines for ‘of all the studies ... that of history justly claims the pre-eminence’ both with regard to ‘dignity and utility.’³³³ Thus it was no surprise in 1817 when he produced his two quarto volumes of History of the Wars of the French Revolution; or when George III died, he decided to extend the work by adding a volume covering the years up to the French Revolution and a further volume for the years 1815 to 1820. His History of the Reign of George III; King of the United Kingdom appeared in 1820 and 1823. It was a monumental achievement; well researched and eminently readable. Sales of the Wars of the French Revolution outstripped, by some 10 000, any other first edition ‘work in the English Language.’ In 1824, a second edition, with notes and additional text by an ‘American Editor’ was

acknowledged his debt to other historians. See Directory of Yorkshire vol I p ii

³²⁹ He claimed that on producing the history of the Civil War in the County, he was ‘not aware that this task has ever been done.’ See Baines History of Lancashire vol I (1824) p 71.

³³⁰ Baines History of Lancashire (1836) vol I p 5

³³¹ Baines History of Lancashire vol II (1825) p 57. Over 140 years later Eric Hobsbawm claimed, ‘No other industry could compare in importance with cotton in the first phase of British industrialisation ... in the post-Napoleonic decades something like *one half* of the value of *all* British exports consisted of cotton products.’ See Hobsbawm Industry and Empire pp 69-69.

³³² Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines pp 359-360. Hume was an interesting choice in that his interpretation of history was ‘allegedly Tory,’ whereas Baines was distinctly Whig. See below and H Butterfield George III and the Historians (London 1957) p 50.

³³³ Baines Wars of the French Revolution vol I p 1

published in Philadelphia.³³⁴ Although Baines drew on original source material such as Washington's official letters or Franklin's correspondence, he also relied heavily on other historians like Belsham and Tomline as well as Alexander Stephens.³³⁵ It may be that because of the populist and eclectic nature of the work Herbert Butterfield chose to ignore it when he wrote his seminal classic George III and the Historians.³³⁶

Baines wrote objectively; making every effort to 'soften down the asperities of party feelings,' even to putting a 'liberal construction' on the 'conduct of the Stuarts.'³³⁷ But his history was Whig history which was, according to an eminent modern critic, J W Burrow, a 'celebration ... (a) national jubilation at which the shades of venerated ancestors are honoured guests.'³³⁸ Baines recognised the debt owed to those ancestors; Magna Carta was 'the guarantee of English liberty,' and the Revolution 'justly called glorious of 1688' was 'one of the most impressive lessons ever read ... by subjects to a sovereign.'³³⁹

By the beginning of 1830, the future augured well for Baines and his Whig colleagues. With the nation gripped in the worst winter for a century, discontent again reverberating across the country and George IV nearing death,³⁴⁰ they hoped a Whig victory was virtually inevitable in the general election that would necessarily follow the king's demise. The door would finally be opened for Parliamentary Reform.

³³⁴ Baines Leeds Directory (1817) p 42. A third two volume edition with 'an original history of the late war between the United States and Great Britain by W Grimshaw' was published in New York in 1852.

³³⁵ Baines Reign of George III vol I pp 215, 388; 49, 481

³³⁶ H Butterfield George III and the Historians passim

³³⁷ For a classic critique of the Whig interpretation see H Butterfield The Whig Interpretation of History (London 1968) passim

³³⁸ Burrow A Liberal Descent pp 3, 150

³³⁹ Baines History of Lancashire (1825) vol II p 13; Directory of Yorkshire vol II p 239

³⁴⁰ Clarke The Prime Ministers vol I p 333

CHAPTER FIVE

BAINESOCRACY: 1830-1841

At about fifteen minutes past three in the early hours of Saturday 26 June 1830, George IV propped himself up on his pillow and gasped to his physician, 'O God! I am dying.' Minutes later he was dead; according to the post mortem from 'a diseased organization of the heart.'¹ At six that same morning, the Duke of Clarence was roused from his bed at Bushy Park and told of his elder brother's death.² As William IV, the new King immediately called for a dissolution of Parliament. Speculation began as to the outcome of the forthcoming general election; whether it would end almost a quarter of a century of Tory governments and herald in an age of Whiggism and Parliamentary Reform?³ William IV had 'no hostility to the Whigs, collectively or individually.'⁴

Word of the King's death reached Leeds at noon on Sunday when the 'Rockingham' Coach rumbled across Leeds Bridge and turned into the yard of the Golden Lion at the bottom of Briggate. For Baines, that news had a political as well as a journalistic significance. In the same edition that carried the details of the King's death and the royal funeral arrangements, Baines considered the implications of the state of political affairs. The two present Whig Members of Parliament for Yorkshire, Lord Milton and John Marshall, the Leeds linen manufacturer, had announced their decisions not to stand for Parliament again. In view of the age of his father, Earl Fitzwilliam, Milton anticipated being elevated to the Lords in the near future; John Marshall, at sixty-five, felt the burden of representing the nation's largest constituency too great for a man of his age. What was needed, Baines wrote, were men of 'liberal principles' dedicated to economy and Reform.⁵ Within a fortnight the Mercury named one such possibility; Henry Peter Brougham, an energetic Scottish lawyer, the defender of Queen Caroline, a fervent enemy of slavery and supporter of Parliamentary Reform.⁶ It was not the first time Baines had considered Brougham as a possible candidate for Yorkshire. He had done so in 1812. What was needed now, he wrote, was a man devoted to 'freedom ... national improvement ... humanity ... public economy and

¹ J Watkins The Life and Times of England's Patriotic King, William IV (London 1831) p 604. See also The Times 28.06.30

² A Somerset The Life and Times of William IV (London 1980) p 107

³ Briggs The Age of Improvement p 233. See also Watkins William IV pp 612-613 and The Times 30.06.30.

⁴ Mitchell A The Whigs in Opposition p 251

⁵ Leeds Mercury 03.07.30

⁶ Stewart Henry Brougham passim

Reform ... that man is MR BROUGHAM.'⁷

But the election was not necessarily a contest which the Whigs could be confident that they would win. The 'illiberal' label attached to Wellington's administration had been somewhat diffused by the success of its financial policy, the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts and the passing of the Catholic Emancipation Bill. Even a Whig newspaper, the Morning Chronicle, had been forced to recognise that the relief legislation had turned Wellington from a party leader into a national one.⁸ Moreover, the Duke's heroic military reputation meant that few Whigs attacked him personally and Brougham even called for a coalition under the present Prime Minister.⁹

However, it was a different story in Yorkshire. Here the struggle was not simply between Whig and Tory but also between Whig and Whig. Many of the Whig traditionalists believed that Parliamentary Reform would herald a new age in which a regenerated Whig aristocracy would lead the country.¹⁰ But the merchants and manufacturers of the West Riding had other ideas and challenged the great landowning Whig grandees of Yorkshire, who had dominated the county's politics for so long.¹¹ An alliance, of sorts, had been established between that aristocracy and the 'Whig-Liberal minded townsmen' as early as the election of 1826.¹² Now those townsmen meant to have their say in who should represent their interests in the forthcoming contest.¹³ More than a few sympathised with William Cobbett when, in January 1830, he delivered a series of lectures at the Leeds Theatre. Pit, gallery and orchestra were

⁷ Leeds Mercury 17.07.30, 03.10.12

⁸ Parry The Rise and Fall of Liberal Government pp 55-56. However, Peter Jupp points out that at times Wellington failed to capture either the mood of the House or the public. See P Jupp British Politics on the Eve of Reform; The Duke of Wellington's Administration 1828-1830 (Basingstoke 1998) p 50

⁹ Despite the economic crisis generated by the depression of the winter of 1829-1830, many of the Whigs openly endorsed Wellington and his Government. In the ensuing election London, Middlesex, Westminster, Coventry and Leicester held no contests. See Parry The Rise and Fall of Liberal Government pp 57-59

¹⁰ Parry The Rise and Fall of Liberal Government p 78

¹¹ F M L Thompson 'Whigs and Liberals in the West Riding 1830-1860': English Historical Review vol LXXIV (1959) p 215. The Whig grandees were Norfolk, Scarborough, Devonshire, Effingham, Carlisle and that doyen of Yorkshire Whig aristocracy, Fitzwilliam. Their Tory equivalents were Hartford, de Grey, Cardigan, Wilton, Wharnccliffe and Harewood.

¹² Ibid p 218

¹³ In 1826 Whig county society had acknowledged the needs of industrialisation in Yorkshire when they accepted Marshall for one of the four county seats. Baines was simply developing that trend in 1830 by asserting the rights of the 'new urban middle class within the country's political system' when he proposed Brougham. See Fraser NH XXXI p 214

packed to hear him. John Marshall and his friends occupied a stage box, and Baines arrived, according to Cobbett, 'wrapped up in a sort of disguise.'¹⁴ Cobbett declared that it was 'aristocratical gentlemen' who were opposed to Parliamentary Reform and went on to blame each and everyone present for

our blind submission to the will of the aristocracy that has brought these evils upon us. ¹⁵

Cobbett's remarks reflected a more general sense of contemporary dissatisfaction with the aristocracy. By August, the Ultra-Tory Durham Advertiser was forced to admit that the aristocrats' power was 'fast crumbling beneath their feet.'¹⁶ When Lord John Russell lost Bedford in the 1830 election, the first family defeat there for forty years, his father identified one cause as 'anti-aristocratical feelings.'¹⁷ Thus the moves that Baines and his colleagues were making in the West Riding were not an isolated expression of dissatisfaction with local patrician Whiggery but rather reflected a sense of national alienation by the middle classes from the aristocracy of England¹⁸.

The key factor that would determine how the electoral battle lines in Yorkshire would be drawn was money. The normal practice for the last century and half had been for an agreement to be reached between Whigs and Tories so that no crippling expensive contest was necessary. Only in 1734, 1741 and 1807 had contested elections been forced on the county; the last occasion costing the houses of Harewood and Fitzwilliam almost £100 000 each.¹⁹ In 1826, John Marshall and the Fitzwilliam Family had spent some £53 000 preparing for a contest that never even took place. Milton had remarked after the 1826 'election' that the heavy expenditure which the candidates had been forced to expend was 'unworthy of the Yorkshire freeholders.' Then on 10 July, a letter appeared in the Mercury from John Murgatroyd of Bradford. It posited a solution to the problem of expenses. He agreed to vote and though 'my means are very

¹⁴ Cobbett Rural Rides vol II (1930) p 607

¹⁵ Leeds Patriot 30.01.30

¹⁶ Brock The Great Reform Act p 98.

¹⁷ Ibid p 90. Brock also states that the same fate applied to the Marquis of Anglesey's brothers see p 90.

¹⁸ Parry asserts that it was 'a certain image of the aristocracy as idle and decadent' that contributed to the anti-aristocratic sentiments of the middle class. See Parry The Rise and Fall of Liberal Government p 28. Macaulay left no reader of the Edinburgh Review in any doubt of his views. 'Our political opinions are by no means aristocratical,' he wrote. See Macaulay Critical and Historical Essays p235

¹⁹ Stewart Henry Brougham p 242. See also above Chapter Three.

limited ... I will attend ... (and) bear the expense myself.'²⁰Baines quickly followed up the suggestion, stressing that in his view 'returning members without expense to themselves' was one of the 'most efficient steps towards Reform in Parliament.'²¹

The issue might not have been so crucial had not the process for nomination for the four vacant Yorkshire seats taken such an unexpected turn. The Whigs decided to nominate two members to replace Marshall and Milton; the Tories had already secured the offer of William Duncombe to stand again but needed a replacement for Richard Fountayne Wilson. Richard Bethell of Rise offered to stand but was cautious regarding the matter of finance. Lord Wharncliffe of the Tories wrote to Milton suggesting that neither party wanted a situation to develop whereby excessive expense might deter candidates of real worth from standing. Uncontested elections in the county in the past had produced results satisfactory to both parties and would no doubt have done so again had not a rogue candidate suddenly appeared in Martin Stapylton of Myton Hall. He announced his intention of standing on a platform of 'purity of election' and would do so as long as any freeholder would vote for him free of expense.²²

On 21 July, Bethell consented to stand for the Tories. For the Whigs, one candidate at least was easily agreed upon; Lord Morpeth. George Howard, the son of the Earl of Carlisle was the natural successor to Milton. It was his colleague that posed the difficulty. There had been hopes of persuading Marshall to reconsider his decision but the linen manufacturer stood firm and thus Sir J V B Johnstone, Sir George Cayley and Charles Wood all became possible contenders. In mid-July George Strickland and Johnstone met up with several other Whigs at Northallerton to consider the situation. Meanwhile in the West Riding, a Whig cabal, in which Baines, Samuel Clapham and John Marshall were prominent, was formulating its own policy.²³ Strickland and Johnstone arrived in Leeds on 14 July where they first met Thomas William Tottie, the Leeds solicitor who had acted as Whig-Liberal agent in the town since the election of 1807. They next faced the Leeds Liberals and suggested to Baines and his associates

²⁰ Leeds Mercury 10.07.30

²¹ Leeds Mercury 31.07.30

²² N Gash 'Brougham and the Yorkshire Election of 1830'; Proceedings of The Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society vol VIII (1956-1959) p 21

²³ These paragraphs rely heavily on Gash Leeds Phil and Lit Soc vol VIII pp 21-23. It was not the first time the West Riding had influenced Yorkshire politics; in 1784 it was support from here that led to the election of the young William Wilberforce. See Stewart Henry Brougham p 243

that two candidates should be selected at no expense to themselves. Morpeth was grudgingly accepted as one of the nominees but Baines and his companions flatly rejected the other proposed candidates. Their adamant assertion was that no man would travel to York to vote for them without being paid expenses. In the end a disgruntled Strickland and Johnstone left; the only matter firmly resolved was to hold a general nomination meeting in York on 23 July at which the West Riding Liberals would be entitled to make a nomination.²⁴

The Whig gentry had previously met in a small room at Etridge's Royal Hotel to discuss tactics in the hope of pre-empting whatever moves Baines and his West Riding counterparts might engender. The Intelligencer was adamant that Brougham would not stand for Yorkshire for he must know the electorate of Yorkshire 'will not ... be moulded to the arrogant dictum of a newspaper scribbler.'²⁵ When the full meeting began, Morpeth was unanimously accepted but the Whig squirearchy was still committed to the principle of selecting as its potential member 'a man of property and influence in the county ... a regular Game-preserving Yorkshire squire.'²⁶ George Strickland was convinced that Brougham 'not being a Yorkshireman would not do.' Too late, he and his friends realised how wrong they were and how deeply the Brougham proposition had taken root. To oppose it was 'quite unavailing.'²⁷

Brougham had been a shrewd proposal: his anti-slavery stance guaranteed him enormous support from both the Dissenters and the anti-slavery societies in the county. As Tottie remarked later to Lord Milton; 'There is enthusiasm in the cause, and anti-slavery is the basis of it.'²⁸ It then became patently obvious that the West Riding group were not prepared to compromise further. A tentative proposal that J C Ramsden should stand as the second candidate was withdrawn and after 'one or two trivial objections,' according to Baines, Brougham was selected on a show of hands with a two thirds majority. Baines and his colleagues had been in no mood to compromise. In the Mercury he later went on to point out that had Ramsden stood, there would have

²⁴ Gash Leeds Phil and Lit Soc VIII p 23.

²⁵ Leeds Intelligencer 22.07.30

²⁶ WWM MS: G2/16 T Dundas to Lord Milton 27.07.30

²⁷ WWM MS: G2/23 G Strickland to Lord Milton 31.07.30

²⁸ Thompson FML EHR LXXIV p 218; Brock The Great Reform Act p 96. Brougham wrote to Zachary Macaulay after the election, 'It is an anti-slavery triumph.' See Butler The Great Reform Bill p 89 quoting Lady Knutsford's Life of Zachary Macaulay.

been 'an inevitable split in the Liberal interest' for 'never was there a stronger feeling ... than now prevailed for Mr Brougham.'²⁹ For three hours they had wrangled before agreement was reached, but in the end it had become clear that the object of selecting two Liberal candidates at no expense to themselves could only be achieved by accommodating the wishes of the West Riding delegation. It had been left to John Marshall to propose Brougham and the Reverend Thomas Scales to make the most spirited speech in support of him. His conclusion made it abundantly clear that whatever decision the meeting arrived at, Brougham would definitely be nominated from the hustings.³⁰ But it was clear to most people who had orchestrated the whole affair from the very beginning. Thus Robert Perring, the editor of the Leeds Intelligencer, issued a cryptic caution:

Let it be proclaimed, as a warning to the race that the Whig Aristocracy of the great county of York have been compelled to succumb to the Bainesocracy of Leeds.³¹

Baines, Thomas Tottie and George Rawson, all members of the Leeds Committee for the election of the candidates, were despatched to meet Morpeth and Brougham.³² Brougham claimed he was 'beyond measure astonished' at being selected for the county without having property or family ties there and relieved that he would not be burdened by any expense.³³ No non-Yorkshireman had stood as a candidate for the county since the Reformation; no lawyer since the days of the Commonwealth.³⁴ For Brougham it was a hectic campaign. He was in court at the York Assizes during the day, preparing his cases in the evening and still had to find time to address 70 000 electors per day.³⁵ It was speaking to a crowd of 10 000 at one such meeting in the yard of the Coloured Cloth Hall in Leeds, that Brougham succinctly summed up what the

²⁹ Leeds Mercury 24.07.30. Parry points out that the Whig Reformers began increasingly to use the term 'Liberal Party' from the mid 1830s. He cites Halévy who claimed that, officially, the Reform Party stood in the 1837 and 1841 elections but newspapers tended to use the word 'Liberal.' See Parry Rise and Fall of Liberal Government pp 131, 353. In The Poll Book for the Leeds Borough Election 1835 (Leeds 1835) the term used is 'Orange Party.' For an analysis of when the 'Liberal Party' came into being see T A Jenkins The Liberal Ascendancy 1830-1886 (Basingstoke 1994) pp 34-40

³⁰ Gash Leeds Phil and Lit Soc VIII 2 pp 26-27.

³¹ Leeds Intelligencer 29.07.30

³² Leeds Mercury Extraordinary 27.07.30

³³ Brougham Life of Brougham vol III pp 38-39

³⁴ Brock The Great Reform Act pp 96-97

³⁵ Stewart Henry Brougham p 244; see also Brougham Life of Brougham vol III

Yorkshire election of 1830 was truly about;

We don't live in the days of Barons, thank God - we live in the days of Leeds, of Bradford, of Halifax and of Huddersfield.³⁶

The Intelligencer issued a cautionary note that 'A vast number of influential men object to Mr Brougham on principle.'³⁷ If they did, it made little difference. The election itself turned out to be a farce. At the end of the first day Morpeth and Brougham had both polled over 1 000 votes with the two Tories, Duncombe and Bethell, nearing 900 each. Stapylton, whose determination to stand had forced the contest, polled just sixty-three! He left immediately for London. The trickle of voters that came on the Friday boosted the final total to; Morpeth 1 464, Brougham 1 295, Duncombe 1 123, Bethell 1 064 and the embarrassed Stapylton, ninety-four.³⁸

Brougham later claimed that his victory in Yorkshire was 'my greatest victory' surpassing even his success in getting the Orders in Council repealed.³⁹ But within a week of this 'greatest victory' Perring in the Intelligencer was musing on the future of the new Yorkshire MP. 'We think that Mr Brougham has an eye on something more substantial,' he wrote.⁴⁰ Lord Durham had similar thoughts and wrote to Brougham considering him as possibly the next Lord Chancellor.⁴¹ But for the moment Baines was content to gloat that in Yorkshire the Tories were 'completely gone down.'⁴²

Socially, the mood of the country was changing. It was becoming more aware of the enormous problems it faced, and was beginning to take steps to alleviate them.⁴³ One cause for concern was excessive drinking. Sickened at the enormous social evils it posed, temperance societies were established across the country. Henry Forbes

³⁶ A S Turberville completed by F Beckwith 'Leeds and Parliamentary Reform, 1820-1832'; Publications of the Thoresby Society vol XLI (1954) p 31

³⁷ Leeds Intelligencer 29.07.30

³⁸ Gash Leeds Phil and Lit Soc VIII p 30, p 35. The Times considered it an 'extraordinary contest.' 07.08.30, 09.08.30

³⁹ Brougham Life of Brougham vol III p 42. See also Stewart Henry Brougham p 244

⁴⁰ Leeds Intelligencer 12.08.30

⁴¹ Brougham Life of Brougham vol III p 44. He even suggested the title he might use - 'Yorkshire'!

⁴² Leeds Mercury 21.08.30

⁴³ For the '*fundamental social change*' brought about by the Industrial Revolution see Hobsbawm Industry and Empire pp 79-95. For the different objectives that various groups in society had see Briggs The Age of Improvement p 245. For social reforms pursued from this time see Hill Economic and Social History pp 175-188 In 1834 the Statistical Society of London was established to produce facts that would 'illustrate the Condition and Prospects of Society.' See T May An Economic and Social History of Britain 1760-1970 (Harlow 1992) p 114.

formed one in Bradford and then strove to create others elsewhere. Baines applauded the idea and it was the Leeds editor who was called to chair the inaugural meeting of the Leeds Temperance Society.⁴⁴ But there was also another mood perceptible in the country and one summed up succinctly by Charles Greville; 'The signs of the times are for Reform and retrenchment.'⁴⁵ The July revolution in France stimulated new calls for change in England, whilst outbreaks of rural violence known as the 'Swing' riots, and a stuttering economy compounded the Government's difficulties.⁴⁶

Brougham gave notice that on 16 November he would ask for a committee to be established to look into Parliamentary Reform. However, events overtook him when on 2 November, Wellington made his classic *faux pas* that the English constitution was incapable of improvement.⁴⁷ Rather than being incensed, Baines loftily responded that he expected no better from the Duke. 'He *always* feels it his duty to *resist*', he observed and went on to comment that Wellington had shown a similar intransigence to both the Test and Corporation Acts and the Catholic Claims. In the end he had been forced to remove both. So, Baines claimed, it would be with Parliamentary Reform.⁴⁸ Before Brougham could make his demand, Wellington was defeated on 15 November. He resigned the next day and the King sent for Earl Grey to form an administration.⁴⁹

Two days later the West Riding public was reading 'Resignation of Ministers! A New Ministry!' The Intelligencer went on to suggest that 'Mr Brougham will probably obtain office.' On Saturday of the same week, Baines was equally adamant that Brougham would 'not be a member of any Administration that may be formed.'⁵⁰ He was wrong. After some prevarication, Brougham finally accepted the Woolsack.⁵¹

⁴⁴ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 162. See also Morris Class, Sect and Party p 185 and B Harrison Drink and the Victorians; the Temperance Question in England 1815-1872 (London 1971) p 105. For an analysis of 'Drink and English Society in 1820s' see Harrison pp 37-63

⁴⁵ Somerset William IV p 128

⁴⁶ N McCord British History 1815-1906 (Oxford 1991) p 44. See also Woodward Age of Reform p 75

⁴⁷ For a detailed analysis of Wellington's remarks giving the reason why he eulogised the existing system see D C Moore The Politics of Deference (New York 1976) p 217. See also Stewart Henry Brougham p 247

⁴⁸ Leeds Mercury 06.11.30

⁴⁹ Stewart Henry Brougham p 247. The division was over the civil list. Stewart argues the real cause of the resignation was to avoid having to face Brougham's forthcoming resolution. See also E A Smith Lord Grey 1764-1845 (Oxford 1990) pp 258-259

⁵⁰ Leeds Intelligencer 18.11.30, Leeds Mercury 20.11.30

⁵¹ Brougham Life of Brougham vol III p 80

Perring was ecstatic in the Intelligencer; 'Just as we predicted! Mr Brougham has thrown his West Riding friends overboard,' he sneered.⁵² Baines ate humble pie:

The elevation of Lord Brougham ... disappoints the expectations which we ... had formed ... We do not pretend Lord Brougham was uninfluenced by personal considerations ... but this is not dishonourable ... unless ... they interfere with public duty.⁵³

A by-election was now called and Baines, voicing the feelings of the disappointed West Riding Liberals, proposed Daniel Sykes, the current MP for Beverley, as a possible choice for the more prestigious county seat. On Saturday 27 November, Baines and Samuel Clapham were in London pressing their arguments on Sykes. But the Whig squirearchy was not to be caught out a second time. On Tuesday 30 November, a dull cheerless day in Leeds, they held a meeting in the Coloured Cloth Hall yard to consider their preferred candidate, Sir John Johnstone. The West Riding men who had been successful in getting Brougham elected, Marshall, Rawson, Hamilton and Scales, all failed to attend. Baines and Clapham were still in London, returning the following day from the capital disappointed men. Sykes had refused to stand. Baines and his colleagues had to accept the inevitable and drew what consolation they could from the fact that the Tories could not even find a suitable candidate.⁵⁴

With Grey in Downing Street, one single issue now dominated British politics; Parliamentary Reform.⁵⁵ It was obvious to the West Riding Whig dissidents that an effective organisation was needed to fight further elections if that goal were to be finally attained. To this end, in December, the Leeds Association was formed, dominated by the families of Edward Baines, John Clapham and John Marshall. Marshall was chosen as its chairman. The object of these 'Lords and Masters of the county' was to promote in Yorkshire 'the free return of its representatives to Parliament.'⁵⁶ Baines in supporting it went further, proposing other towns should set

⁵² Leeds Intelligencer 25.11.30

⁵³ Leeds Mercury 27.11.30

⁵⁴ Gash Leeds Phil and Lit Soc VIII p 33. Turberville and Beckwith Thoresby Soc XLI p 33. Leeds Mercury 27.11.30, 04.12.30. Leeds Intelligencer 02.12.30,

⁵⁵ Turberville and Beckwith Thoresby Soc XLI p 33. Grey was the last Prime Minister to use Downing Street until Disraeli in 1877. See C Jones No 10 Downing Street; the Story of a House (London 1985) p 183. Though Grey had long supported Reform, he saw it now as a necessary means to diffuse the dangerous state of the country and to 'preserve the aristocratic system of government.' See Smith EA Lord Grey p 259

⁵⁶ D Fraser 'The Fruits of Reform; Leeds Politics in the 1830s': Northern History vol VII (1972) p 93. The association's unwieldy correct name was Leeds Association for Promoting within the

up similar associations so that a Yorkshire Association could eventually be formed.⁵⁷ One Bradford reader of the Leeds Intelligencer spotted what he believed was an inconsistency in the idea. 'Is this PURITY of election?' he asked. Was not the practice of paying people to go and vote one that had been repeatedly condemned by Baines and his Mercury?⁵⁸ But the criticism did not deflect Baines from his first priority any more than the attacks he was subjected to over the secret ballot. He had been heckled over his opposition to this in December in the York meeting and a series of letters had appeared in the Mercury criticising its editor for his stance. Baines defended his position and asked for support to attain a greater goal. With regard to the ballot

It would deprive all voters in England ... of the manly and gratifying privilege of registering our suffrage ... Let not the question of ballot or no ballot prevent the Reformers from co-operating freely.⁵⁹

II

Leeds had been involved in the struggle for a change in the electoral system as early as the seventeenth century. In 1639, the newly established Corporation had raised a petition to Charles I in order to complain that the town had no burgesses in Parliament.⁶⁰ More generally by the end of the seventeenth century John Locke had observed in the second of his Two Treatises of Government:

We see ... a town, of which there remains ... (only) ruins ... (yet) sends *as many Representatives* to the grand Assembly ... as a whole County, numerous in People and powerful in riches.⁶¹

Sporadically, throughout the eighteenth century the demand for Parliamentary Reform was thrust into the public domain. Letters appeared in the press. The Elder Pitt cynically viewed 'the rotten part of the constitution.'⁶² Reform was a cry taken up by

county of York the Free Return of Fit Representatives to Parliament. See Fraser NH vol XXXI p 214

⁵⁷ Leeds Mercury 18.12.30.

⁵⁸ Leeds Intelligencer 23.12.30. Letter from 'W' of Bradford 21.12.30

⁵⁹ Leeds Mercury 11.12.30, 18.12.30, 24.12.30, 08.01.31. Baines had raised the issue of co-operation as early as 1809. See Leeds Mercury 06.05.09

⁶⁰ Turberville and Beckwith Thoresby Soc XLI p 2. Technically this is not strictly true. Adam Baynes represented the town during the Commonwealth in 1654 and 1656. Leeds lost the seat at the Restoration. See Taylor Worthies of Leeds p 103 and Burt and Grady Illustrated History of Leeds p 256

⁶¹ J Locke Two Treatises of Government ed P Laslett 2nd ed (Cambridge 1980) p 390

⁶² J Cannon Parliamentary Reform 1640-1832 (Cambridge 1973) p 53

the Association Movement and supported by Charles Lennox in 1780 and the young William Pitt in 1783. Both raised the issue at Westminster but without success. The French Revolution gave greater focus to the desire for Reform and Reform clubs of both the middle and working classes continued campaigning. However, the heavy defeat of Grey's 1797 motion indicated that change was unwanted by most men of influence and during the Napoleonic Wars calls for Reform became more muted.

Nevertheless, Baines's editorials, at times, still returned to the theme.⁶³ By the end of the war the demand for change emerged again. The middle classes were 'determined to ... have some say in ... government.'⁶⁴ During the 1820s the Yorkshiremen, Walter Fawkes, Daniel Sykes and Sir George Cayley had joined the veteran campaigner, the Reverend Christopher Wyvill, to force the issue once more.⁶⁵ The Whigs, in particular, felt that the Commons should reflect the wide ranging interests of the nation as a whole and that Reform would establish a national unity by reconciling the different classes and reaffirming social stability.⁶⁶

To Baines and his Whig-Liberal associates, the anomalies in the old system were well known. The mushrooming towns of the Industrial Revolution, had not one MP between them and yet many of the ancient, decaying boroughs still returned members.⁶⁷ Voting rights were haphazard; in scot-and-lot boroughs, every ratepayer could vote, in potwalloper constituencies anyone resident for six months and not on relief had the right, other places were dominated solely by the local corporation. Nomination or pocket boroughs were controlled by single individuals. Bribery was endemic,⁶⁸ and the system reached farcical proportions in some of the rotten boroughs

⁶³ Englander History Today Companion p 584-586. For examples of Baines's persistence to raise the issue see for example Leeds Mercury 26.06.02, 25.11.09, 27.04.11 and 20.02.13

⁶⁴ Cannon Parliamentary Reform pp 165-166

⁶⁵ J R Dinwiddy 'Christopher Wyvill and Reform 1790-1820'; Borthwick Papers No 39 p 2

⁶⁶ Parry The Rise and Fall of Liberal Government p 78

⁶⁷ Leeds had a population of 123 393, Manchester 182 812, and Birmingham 123 393. See Butler The Great Reform Bill p 60. In his classic critique of that Whig point of view, Lewis Namier argued that the unreformed Parliament 'represented men rooted in the soil of Britain ... (even if they had no votes) ... by "virtual representation".' See L B Namier England in the Age of the American Revolution (London 1930) p 28. Frank O'Gorman also questions the orthodox and critical Whig interpretation of that electoral system. See his Voters, Parties and Patrons; the Unreformed Electoral System in England pp 1-26. For the Government's response to Reform see Jupp Wellington's Administration pp 417-432

⁶⁸ McCord British History p 63-65. For a detailed analysis of the old system see Brock The Great Reform Act pp 18-24. 'Scot-and-lot' is derived from the medieval 'to pay scot and bear lot;' a 'potwalloper' is one 'who had a family and boiled a pot there.' See Brock p 18.

where the number of voters had shrunk virtually to a handful.⁶⁹

Baines was well aware that almost every anomaly in the national system was also to be seen in Yorkshire. Knaresborough returned two MPs under the patronage of the Duke of Devonshire yet most of its electors did not even live in the town. At Ripon, Elizabeth Lawrence, of Studley Royal, dictated local political affairs and, in describing the situation there, Baines descended into sarcasm:

The electors generally coincide with the lady patroness ... in this way the tumults of contested elections are avoided.

In Kingston-upon-Hull, he observed, 'a 'very small proportion of the inhabitants ... enjoy the elective franchise;' whilst Scarborough's two representatives were selected by the forty-four members of the Corporation under the patronage of the Duke of Rutland and the Earl of Mulgrave.⁷⁰

The majority of articulate and influential voices in the country regarded the system as highly unsatisfactory. All Wellington's Tory ministers, with the exception of the Duke himself, recognised that some degree of Reform was necessary.⁷¹ But it was the Whigs who rallied to the cause and determined to introduce, in the words of Grey's committee, a plan that would satisfy the reasonable demands 'of the intelligent and independent portion of the community.'⁷² It was a policy for which Baines had argued for years; to make the House of Commons no longer representative of 'Peers, Nabobs and the Treasury, but of the people of England.'⁷³

There were many areas of agreement between the two parties. Both accepted the monarchy as fundamental to the constitution. Both were oligarchic and aristocratic and opposed democracy. But what divided them was their differing interpretations of the effects Reform would bring about. The Tories feared for the balance of the constitution and the diminution of the power of the Crown and the House of Lords.

⁶⁹ Visitors went to view Old Sarum which by now was reduced to a field and an earthwork yet still returned two MPs. See Brock The Great Reform Act p 28.

⁷⁰ Baines Directory of Yorkshire vol I pp 224, 250; vol II pp 253, 525. Miss Peirse of Northallerton and Miss Lawrence of Ripon - Baines refers to her as 'Mrs' - were 'the only two petticoated electoral magnates of their day.' See N Gash Politics in the Age of Peel (London 1953) p 219

⁷¹ Grey H Earl ed Correspondence of Earl Grey with HM King William IV vol I (London 1867): Grey to Sir H Taylor 22.03.3 p 186

⁷² Grey Correspondence vol I Appendix A: Report on Reform signed Durham et al p 461

⁷³ Leeds Mercury 28.04.10. The 'people' he defined as 'every man who pays direct taxes' not 'menial servants,' or all those who would create 'an overwhelming democracy.' See Leeds Mercury 03.07.19

They saw in the emphasis on the manufacturing and commercial sector divisions arising between industry and agriculture. One correspondent in the Leeds Mercury went so far as to say that improved representation would be 'no boon ... but ... a real evil to the towns.'⁷⁴ To counteract those arguments, the Whigs claimed that their proposed legislation was moderate, extending the franchise to no more than 500 000 middle class voters. Yet Peel's rebuttal of that argument had a prophetic ring about it:

I was unwilling to open a door which I saw no prospect of being able to close.⁷⁵

But the Reformers were already hammering on that door with every intention of forcing it open. The Reformers of Leeds were no different, with Baines and his Whig middle class supporters working in harmony with the Radicals of the town. However on Monday 29 September 1829, a Reform meeting was called for 8pm in the Free Market Tavern. Here a rupture in that relationship became noticeable. Baines refused to act as chairman, objecting on the grounds that, though he had come to the meeting 'in the spirit of goodwill' he vigorously protested to it being a nocturnal meeting and one which did not unite all the people. He then stressed that the vote should be granted to 'every man who contributes towards the expenses of the State.' He went on to rebut calls for Universal Suffrage, Annual Parliaments and election by ballot, for these extreme proposals drove otherwise public spirited men away from the cause of Reform. Cries of disapproval were raised and John Forster, the Leeds Patriot's Radical editor, who had risen from his sick bed to be there, attacked his Mercury counterpart. Baines finally agreed to draw up a petition to the Mayor to demand a public meeting on Reform and urged his listeners on the need to develop a plan to unite. But the divisions that were already there were given a greater emphasis when James Mann, the Radical leader in Leeds, stated clearly that the Leeds Radicals were already committed to supporting the Union for Radical Reform. On reflection later that week, Baines laconically commented that he considered the Radical Reformers of Leeds had 'fallen off' since 1819 and were 'wholly unfit to take the lead.'⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Leeds Mercury 01.01.31. The letter was from a correspondent called 'Dives.'

⁷⁵ Gash Politics in the Age of Peel pp 4-8. Less than two decades later, Lord John Russell was calling for further Reform.

⁷⁶ Leeds Mercury 19.09.29. See also Turberville and Beckwith Thoresby Soc XLI p 27. Baines had explained the folly of universal suffrage in his pamphlet A Political Dialogue Between a Whig and an Intelligent Radical Reformer. See the letter from 'Neither One Nor the Other' of Huddersfield in the Leeds Intelligencer 03.03.31

Only a week or so after taking office, Grey turned to Lord Durham as they walked down the steps of the House of Lords and asked him to take 'our Reform Bill in hand.' Russell, then not a member of the Cabinet, was invited to join him, and Graham and Duncannon were co-opted onto the committee.⁷⁷ It was no sudden or tactical manoeuvre but one based on a long-standing and genuine desire to see Reform implemented.⁷⁸ To keep up pressure on the Government, meetings were held across Yorkshire; in Leeds 'unanimity among Reformers of all classes was demonstrated'⁷⁹

The committee's draft bill addressed the problem of over-representation by drawing up two lists; Schedule A which disenfranchised sixty boroughs with less than 2 000 inhabitants, and Schedule B which reduced the number of MPs available to boroughs of a population between 2 000 and 4 000. Ninety-seven new seats were to be created with twenty towns being given one member and four districts of London, and Leeds, Manchester and Birmingham two MPs each. The counties, too, had their representation increased. The franchise was to be available in towns for householders who paid rates of £10 or more per annum, and in the counties to £10 copyholders and £50 leaseholders whilst the forty shillings freeholders kept their rights.⁸⁰

During the second week of March 1831, whilst the Commons gave the Reform Bill its first reading, a mass meeting gathered in the Coloured Cloth Hall yard to discuss the same issue. Baines issued a Leeds Mercury Extraordinary, a supplement which carried reports of the event, and the following week, his paper gave extensive coverage to the meetings in other West Riding towns.⁸¹ Though Grey's Bill was passed by 302 to 301, the Prime Minister was defeated on a later amendment and decided to go to the country.⁸² In Leeds, the supporters of the Bill, the Friends of Constitutional Principles and their Tory opponents, the Friends of Sound Constitutional Principles, descended on the Courthouse. 'Mr Baines and his party assembled in formidable strength' the Intelligencer commented; the Leeds Mercury exultantly reported that only

⁷⁷ Brock The Great Reform Act pp 132-136. Smith EA Lord Grey p 263-265

⁷⁸ Parry The Rise and Fall of Liberal Government p 72

⁷⁹ Leeds Mercury 22.01.31, 12.02.31, 19.02.31

⁸⁰ Woodward Age of Reform pp 77-78. 'A copyholder was a tenure of medieval origin' held 'by copy of the court roll.' By 1830 it was similar to freehold. See Brock The Great Reform Act pp 138-139.

⁸¹ Leeds Mercury 12.03.31, 19.03.31

⁸² Brock The Great Reform Act pp 189-192

eight of its opponents turned up!⁸³ The Leeds Association urged all Reformers to enroll as members for the forthcoming battle; meanwhile the Leeds Corporation organised a petition against Reform that produced just thirty signatures.⁸⁴

In another Extraordinary, Baines covered the selection of the four Whig candidates; Morpeth, Johnstone, Strickland and Ramsden. And then demanded:

Let every man in Yorkshire, do something for the Bill, every man, even though he be not a freeholder, may yet assist the great object.⁸⁵

The Tories fell into disarray; the 'Leeds Dictators' dominated the issue. Lascelles and Wortley refused to stand, Duncombe withdrew and the four Whig 'patriots' were returned unopposed.⁸⁶ Both in the counties and the open boroughs, the Reformers were successful and Grey was returned to Westminster to continue the fight.⁸⁷

There was already speculation in the local press as to whom the Leeds MPs would be once the Reform Bill was passed. The Leeds Patriot reported that one name being considered was John Marshall Junior, the son of the previous Yorkshire member. The Intelligencer sniffed that the Leeds Association did not want Marshall, only his money! The other name being bandied about was that of Edward Baines. Baines categorically denied having any ambitions in that direction, commenting in the third person:

he never did and never shall aspire to the honour of representing the borough or any other place in Parliament.⁸⁸

It was premature speculation anyway. In October, the Lords defeated the Bill by forty-one votes⁸⁹. The chamber heard the result almost in silence but an outcry of protest reverberated across the country. There were riots in Nottingham, Derby and Bristol where, Baines stressed, 'the Corporation is strongly Tory.' In Leeds, effigies of Wellington, Wharnccliffe and the Lord Lieutenant for the West Riding, the Earl of

⁸³ Leeds Intelligencer 14.04.31; Leeds Mercury 16.04.31

⁸⁴ Leeds Mercury 23.04.31. Milton had presented a petition from Leeds in 1830 in support of Reform that contained 13 000-14 000 signatures. See Leeds Mercury 15.05.30

⁸⁵ Leeds Mercury 27.04.31, 30.04.31

⁸⁶ Leeds Intelligencer 05.05.31, Leeds Mercury 07.05.31

⁸⁷ Brock The Great Reform Act pp 196-197

⁸⁸ Leeds Mercury 27.08.31, Leeds Intelligencer 15.09.31. Baines was also 'deeply engaged in his ... History of Lancashire.' See Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 165.

⁸⁹ Brock The Great Reform Act pp 243-244. See also Leeds Mercury Extraordinary 10.10.31

Harewood were paraded round the streets by a mob that was letting off crackers and squibs. At the free market Wellington's effigy was burnt but the Intelligencer ridiculed the whole affair blaming it on boys and men simply making a loud noise and delighted in the fact that it rained on them!⁹⁰ Whilst the mob had demonstrated outside the Intelligencer office, Francis Fawkes of Farnley Hall was inside the Mercury office drafting out a plan to organise a mass walkout by factory workers, millhands and farm labourers in protest at the House of Lords' action.⁹¹

More than vociferous protests and burning effigies were needed if the campaign for Reform was to be successful. The troika of Baines, Marshall and Clapham had formed the Leeds Association in December 1830. It demanded Parliamentary Reform, reduction of taxes, extinction of monopoly, the abolition of colonial slavery and the non-interference in the internal affairs of sovereign states. It had grown out of the committee that had been established to elect Brougham and Morpeth and had then secured the return of four Whig members in the 1831 election. As far as Baines was concerned, its only weakness was that it advocated vote by ballot. Nevertheless, its was a success, and that, according to Baines, was due to 'prudence and patriotism.' It had nothing to do with 'treacherous, hypocritical Judas-like Reformers.'⁹²

In Birmingham, Thomas Attwood, noting the effectiveness of O'Connell's Catholic Association, set the example for forming a mainland political organisation in December 1829 when he established the Birmingham Political Union. It catered for both lower and middle classes and was committed to Parliamentary Reform.⁹³ Across the country other political unions were formed. In some places, like London and Manchester, rival ones were established; in Bolton the Radicals who favoured universal suffrage broke away from the more moderate Reformers.⁹⁴ In Leeds, a similar division in the Reformers' ranks was becoming unavoidable. As late as September 1831, Mann and Foster of the Radicals had shared the same platform as Baines, Bower

⁹⁰ Leeds Mercury 15.10.31, 05.11.31. Leeds Intelligencer 13.10.31

⁹¹ Turberville and Beckwith Thoresby Soc XLI p 37

⁹² Leeds Mercury 18.12.30, 21.1.32. Leeds Intelligencer 20.01.31, 17.02.31. At the time only one other provincial association had been formed. It was at Paisley. See Belchem Orator Hunt p 199.

⁹³ Brock The Great Reform Act pp 58-62. The union was more correctly called the 'Birmingham Political Union for the Protection of Public Rights.'

⁹⁴ Thompson E P Making of the English Working Class p 897

and the other leading Whigs.⁹⁵ But the rupture between Whigs and Radicals that had been apparent in 1829 was exacerbated when James Mann and his supporters invited Henry Hunt to Leeds to help them establish a 'Political Union of the working classes.'⁹⁶

Baines was furious that the 'political charlatan'⁹⁷ should be invited to the town and did everything in his power to stop him. Foster of the Patriot and others warned Hunt of the very real physical danger to which he would be exposed by coming. They claimed that Baines had enlisted the services of John Smithson and the local 'Carlilites' to 'Bristolize' Leeds should he arrive in the town.⁹⁸ The intention had been to hold meetings at the Coloured Cloth Hall and on Woodhouse Moor but the arrangements had to be changed. Hunt was suffering from a heavy cold and with his voice affected it was felt that an open air meeting on the Moor would be unsuitable.⁹⁹ Equally, the Coloured Cloth Hall was denied him as a venue when the trustees refused permission. Foster accused Baines of influencing them; the trustees denied he had played any part in their decision.¹⁰⁰ So it was decided that Hunt should speak from a window in Scarborough's Hotel, where a crowd of 10 000 in Hunt's estimation - 3 500 in Baines's - gathered to hear him.¹⁰¹

It was a fractious affair. Baines pushed himself to the window where Hunt stood, and demanded to know what right Hunt had to be in Leeds. Hunt retaliated that he needed no passport from Edward Baines to visit the town. There was a struggle as the two men wrestled to control the window opening. According to the Intelligencer, Baines then grabbed Hunt's coat and attempted to drag him from the window; but another eyewitness - 'Old Yorkshire' writing in the Mercury - insisted Baines had
unavoidably come into contact with the Boroughmonger's Blacking
Brush ... (and Hunt) ... threw himself into the attitude of a man seized

⁹⁵ Turberville and Beckwith Thoresby Soc XLI p 45

⁹⁶ Belchem Orator Hunt p 247

⁹⁷ Leeds Mercury 07.05.31

⁹⁸ Belchem Orator Hunt p 247. Richard Carlile, a Radical and one time supporter of Hunt, had broken with him over the Reform Bill. Carlile, a pragmatist, supported the Bill, Hunt opposed it. See p 222. Already John Smithson, the leader of the Leeds 'Carlilites' had caused difficulties to both the Leeds Association and Mann and his Leeds Radicals. See pp 199, 233. Hunt raised the issue of Baines's threatened violence in an exchange with Lord Morpeth in the House of Commons see Leeds Mercury 17.12.31

⁹⁹ Turberville and Beckwith Thoresby Soc XLI p 45

¹⁰⁰ Leeds Mercury 19.11.31

¹⁰¹ Turberville and Beckwith Thoresby Soc XLI p 45. Turberville claims it was the Becketts Arms.

by the collar and violently fell backwards.¹⁰²

Foster, Mann and others came to Hunt's assistance; Merryweather to Baines's. Hunt declared 'I come here to visit the working classes and no other.'¹⁰³ Baines, attempting to address the crowd from another window, was howled down. Petty insults were hurled backwards and forwards; Hunt called Baines a 'liar'; Baines called Foster 'a blackguard'; Foster called Edward Junior 'an empty-headed puppy', and Edward Junior resorted to banal advice: 'Don't talk to such a man, father.'

If the meeting itself was an ill-tempered petulant affair, the ultimate object of Hunt's visit was achieved. A week or so later at the Falstaff Inn in St Peter's Square, Mann called a meeting of Leeds Radicals. It condemned the Mercury's report of the Hunt meeting but more importantly established the Leeds Radical Reform Union. Meanwhile, at the Cross Keys Inn in Holbeck, Baines and his associates launched the Leeds Political Union, an organisation intended to unite both operatives and middle classes.¹⁰⁴ Baines quickly distanced himself from the organisation, and 'disclaimed any connection with the Leeds Political Union' though the Intelligencer was in no doubt it was 'Bower's and Baines's electioneering political Union.'¹⁰⁵ The Patriot went further claiming it was 'the sole property of Mr Edward Baines.'¹⁰⁶ But it was left to Joshua Bower, a wealthy Hunslet glass founder and coarse speaking Wesleyan, to establish an effective partnership in the union between operatives and middle class. The Tories themselves were not idle. The Leeds True Blue Constitutional Association was established to play the same role for them that the Leeds Association was doing for the Whigs. A fifth organisation had also been formed in March 1831, the Leeds Committee of Operatives.¹⁰⁷ Then with the Leeds Radical Union, it formed an unlikely alliance with the True Blues. Baines viewed the coalition with 'contempt and abhorrence.'¹⁰⁸

He himself played an active part as the events unfolded. In March and June 1831, he was present at Westminster whilst the Reform debates raged and through

¹⁰² These paragraphs are based on Leeds Mercury 12.11.31. Leeds Intelligencer 10.11.31

¹⁰³ Belchem Orator Hunt p 248

¹⁰⁴ Leeds Mercury 19.11.31. Belchem Orator Hunt p p248. Fraser NH VII p 93. It was frequently referred to as the Hobeck Union. See Turberville and Beckwith Thoresby Soc XLI p 47

¹⁰⁵ Leeds Mercury 10.12.31. Leeds Intelligencer 22.03.32

¹⁰⁶ D Fraser Politics in Leeds 1830-1852 (unpublished PhD thesis University of Leeds 1969) p 48

¹⁰⁷ Fraser NH vol VII pp 93-95

¹⁰⁸ Leeds Mercury 02.06.32

those months he maintained a flow of correspondence to members of both Houses of Parliament. It was not all one sided. Russell contacted Baines on 3 November to ascertain the effect a £10 as opposed to a £15 franchise would have on the inhabitants of Leeds. Baines despatched canvassers to investigate the matter and in his reply explained that a £10 franchise would not admit anyone to the vote who would not use it 'safely and wisely': indeed he pointed out that a qualification 'above £10 house-rent would make the Reform Bill ... unpopular.' In a place like Holbeck, with a population of 11 000, there would only be 150 voters; if the franchise was raised to £15, the number would drop to about fifty. In the opinion of the canvassers, he said, a £10 a year house rent was 'rather too high than too low.' For himself, a higher level would 'greatly diminish the blessing' the Bill was intended to give.¹⁰⁹

The prospective candidates for the town had already been decided should Leeds be granted the two MPs that had been proposed. The Whigs in Leeds had settled for John Marshall Junior and Thomas Babington Macaulay;¹¹⁰ Macaulay had been Baines's choice in the hope that a celebrated political figure would give the Whig campaign greater lustre and another factor was probably still fresh in the mind of the Leeds editor. In March, Macaulay, the sitting member for Calne, had cogently argued the case for Parliamentary Reform and a franchise restricted to the middle class.¹¹¹ Thus Baines was happy to be one of the delegation sent to approach Macaulay. After the proposed candidate had read his response to the Leeds Association delegates, Baines despatched it to Baines Junior for immediate publication with a covering note that it was 'very satisfactory.'¹¹² Others felt it a less than satisfactory arrangement. The Radical magazine The Cracker pointed out that Baines had two sons and if Macaulay were elected, he would 'find a couple of lucrative births(sic) for these two brainless sons.'¹¹³

¹⁰⁹ Edward Baines to Lord John Russell 07.11.31 and quoted in Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 158 see also pp 153-161

¹¹⁰ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 165. See also J Clive Macaulay, the Shaping of a Historian New York 1979) pp 221-229

¹¹¹ Hansard 3rd Series (1831) II 1190. That Commons' speech came to be regarded as one of the great Parliamentary orations of the century. Not only did it captivate friends and foes alike with his oratory, but its words reflected Baines's thinking exactly. Both the Speaker and Peel, who were criticised in it, complimented Macaulay and he found himself being compared with those great orators Burke, Fox and Canning. See Clive Macaulay pp 162-163

¹¹² T Pinney ed The Letters of Thomas Babington Macaulay vol II (Cambridge 1974) p 103 Iowa University: T B Macaulay to the Leeds Association 05.10.31.

¹¹³ The Cracker 29.11.32. At a Reform dinner it was put to Marshall Junior that if Macaulay were chosen, it would only benefit Baines's 'own private interest.' He refused to reply and was

The Tory-Radical alliance had opted for Matthew Thomas Sadler. Macaulay, 'the apostle of the middle classes,' had already twice savaged his Tory opponent in the Edinburgh Review.¹¹⁴

However the choice of Sadler was a subtle one, for it helped cement a coalition of political extremes between James Mann and the Leeds Radicals, still demanding universal suffrage and vote by ballot, and the man whose opposition to the Reform Bill was well known. Sadler had voted against the Bill and seconded Gascoigne's amendment that had led to Grey being forced to go to the country.¹¹⁵ But Sadler was an acknowledged humanitarian and a tireless campaigner for factory reform. This was the unifying factor.

Marshall was the son of the manufacturer who had established Europe's largest flax spinning business and whose mill on Water Lane provided ample propaganda for the factory reformers. Understandably, he was opposed to a reduction of working hours to ten a day; Macaulay's opposition was more considered. As the 'spokesman for the individualist', he proclaimed a *laissez-faire* philosophy that workers should be free, and the state should not interfere except with regard to children who could not defend themselves. Baines was in complete agreement¹¹⁶.

However, there was one individual above all who was to dominate that issue through the troubled years that followed.¹¹⁷ This was a Leeds born man, Richard Oastler, 'the Factory King.' Thus, in Leeds, the campaigns for factory reform and Parliamentary Reform became interrelated and ultimately led to a rancorous dispute developing between Oastler and the Mercury editor. In September 1830, Oastler had become aware of the appalling conditions in the mills of the West Riding, where 'long protracted hours of incessant labour,' were imposed and children were frequently 'seized by the hair or limbs and dashed with violence ... upon the factory floor.' He wrote an impassioned letter headed 'Yorkshire Slavery' in which he graphically drew

barracked, 'He daren't do *owt* else for fear o' old Neddy.' See The Poor Man's Guardian 07.07.32

¹¹⁴ Clive Macaulay p 222

¹¹⁵ Taylor Worthies of Leeds p 357. See also Leeds Mercury 26.03.31

¹¹⁶ Fraser NH vol VII pp 90.-91. Leeds Mercury 03.12.31. That children 'should be inured to labour at the earliest possible age had long been a social ideal.' See D George England in Transition (London 1931) pp 117-133

¹¹⁷ The Whigs had 'been practising acts of oppression and intimidation.' See The Cracker 08.12.32 At this time Leeds also found itself caught up in the outbreak of cholera that swept the country. Between May and November 702 people died in the town from the disease. See R Baker Report of the Leeds Board of Health (Leeds 1833) p 33

attention to this ‘horrid and abominable system,’ and signed it, ‘A Hater of Slavery.’ He took it personally to Leeds and gave it to his old friend Edward Baines. Baines read it twice and ‘declared his “utter astonishment at such a system.”’ Oastler told Baines to edit it if he felt he should. ‘I cannot improve it, and shall not alter a word,’ Baines responded. Then the older man hesitated, explaining that such allegations needed to be investigated and further added, ‘I cannot publish it without your name.’

On 9 October the Mercury readers were puzzled to read an editorial comment that appeared to bear no relation to any topic in the paper. It mystifyingly stated that some of the working class did suffer privations but then added that to compare the ‘evils of Colonial Slavery with English labour’ was wrong, as they were ‘totally different things.’¹¹⁸ The following week the issue became clearer when Baines published Oastler’s unedited letter and commented on its ‘generous and honest’ feeling but warned of its ‘undue warmth and violence.’ Oastler’s letter became one of the most famous in the social history of nineteenth century Britain but it placed Baines in a dilemma. On the one hand his social conscience was moved; on the other it was his own people, the ‘respectable class of manufacturers’ who were accused of perpetrating the evil. With the subtlety of a sophist, he switched the emphasis of the blame and laid it clearly on the absence of any law on the matter. But the reality was that wherever the truth lay, Oastler had launched a controversy that divided the nation.¹¹⁹

In February, John Cam Hobhouse introduced a bill at Westminster which proposed some degree of factory reform.¹²⁰ Baines himself was in London the following month for the debate on the first Reform Bill. Had he not been, the subsequent rift with Oastler may have been avoided. The thirty year-old Baines Junior, left in charge of the Mercury, showed a far less tolerant attitude than his father. Thus it was that when a further letter from Oastler arrived at the Mercury office, the young editor felt it was ‘of such unmerciful length’ it needed editing and further more contained language that went ‘beyond the bounds of reason and justice.’¹²¹ Oastler was furious at being treated

¹¹⁸ Leeds Mercury 09.10.30

¹¹⁹ The above paragraphs are based on R Oastler Facts and Plain Words on Everyday Subjects (Leeds 1833) pp 5-6. C Driver Tory Radical; the Life of Richard Oastler (Oxford 1946) pp 42-51. Leeds Mercury 16.10.30

¹²⁰ Leeds Mercury 05.03.31

¹²¹ Driver Tory Radical p 72. Leeds Mercury 19.03.31

'rather cavalierly by the Junior Editor of the Leeds Mercury' and turned to Baines's arch rival the Leeds Intelligencer urging it to publish the letter in full. Robert Perring, its editor, was delighted to oblige.¹²²

The support for Hobhouses's Bill was growing. In Leeds, a petition of 10 746 signatures was raised. The overlookers of Bradford were sympathetic to the cause but feared the 'injurious regulations' it proposed. The columns of the Mercury were open to both sides of the argument,¹²³ and Baines went on to assure his readers that 'none of the Leeds manufacturers, so far as we know, objected in principle to the Bill.' Macaulay and Marshall supported it and he himself felt it 'just and necessary.'¹²⁴

But the third reading saw Hobhouse's Bill emasculated as woollen, worsted, silk, linen and flax mills were deleted from the original draft and its regulations were left applicable to cotton mills only. It was the only way they could be sure to get any legislation onto the statute book in view of the opposition of 'Scotch members,' Morpeth explained to Baines.¹²⁵ Throughout the debates on it Sadler had been in close touch with Oastler.¹²⁶ Now incensed at its ineffectiveness, various Short Time Committees were set up in the West Riding to carry on the propaganda war.¹²⁷

Baines regretted that Oastler, by associating with Sadler, was turning the campaign into a political rather than a humanitarian one; and that he still continued using language of such 'ridiculous violence.' Nevertheless, plans were already being laid by the Short Time Committees and Oastler to campaign for a further factory bill - this time demanding a limit of ten hours work. Sadler would introduce it. The Mercury's position was clear, Baines maintained; it advocated 'entire freedom of industry' for workers except for young children, with eleven hours a day the optimum period for work. But it was important that Parliament should not '*prevent*' children working eleven hours a day 'whose necessities *compel* them to work so long.'¹²⁸

On the evening of Saturday 10 December, the Leeds Committee of Operatives

¹²² Leeds Intelligencer 24.10.31

¹²³ Leeds Mercury 26.03.31, 23.04.31, 15.05.31

¹²⁴ Leeds Mercury 29.10.31

¹²⁵ Leeds Mercury 29.10.31, 05.11.31

¹²⁶ Driver Tory Radical p 93

¹²⁷ Ibid p 82. Huddersfield and Leeds both claimed to have set up the first such committee but 'before the year was out similar ones were to be found in all the provincial towns.'

¹²⁸ Leeds Mercury 03.12.31

called a meeting at its headquarters, the Union Inn. Oastler had ridden over that afternoon for the occasion. He was infuriated by yet another attack on him by the Mercury that very day.¹²⁹ A deputation arrived at Baines's home in King Street at 6.45pm with a letter inviting the Baineses, father and son, to address the gathering. Baines insisted they would come to discuss the proposed Ten Hour Bill but nothing else. Once there, he argued that eleven hours was the limit of economic viability. A reduction in hours meant reduced output and higher prices followed by their inevitable concomitants, contraction of markets, reduction of demand and inevitable unemployment. It should be recognised that though the bill identified children, in reality, its proposed reduction in hours would inevitably apply to adults. However, he emphasised that the interests of masters and men were the same and, if ten hours was what they both wanted, they should have it - his own staff worked on average ten and not thirteen hours a day. According to Baines the meeting was conducted in good temper and good order. The Intelligencer described a different scene, with groans and protests interrupting Baines throughout. Only Oastler's intervention - 'If you will not hear Mr Baines, I will not reply' - ensured that Baines Junior had a fair hearing.¹³⁰ When a vote was finally taken half an hour before midnight, only about ten supported father and son; the rest of the 300 present supported Oastler. As the new year dawned, Oastler and Sadler were ready. That year, 1832, was to see the Ten Hour Bill campaign launched and the struggle for Parliamentary Reform reach its climax.

On Friday 16 March 1832, Sadler, speaking for three hours in the Commons, 'surpassed all his oratorical efforts' when he introduced his Factory Bill. It proposed a ten-hour day for all factory workers under eighteen and prohibited any child under nine entering a factory. It became, in Cecil Driver's words, 'one of the classics of British oratory.'¹³¹ In April, a mass county meeting in York added strength to Oastler's arguments. The Leeds Radical Union then met to support to the Bill. It also expressed 'universal disgust' at the 'splenetic abuses' and 'unblushing misrepresentations' that had appeared in the Mercury's report of that York meeting. On Saturday 28 April, the streets of Leeds echoed to the tramp of 200 operatives marching down Briggate defiantly demonstrating their own splenetic fury against the man who had repeatedly

¹²⁹ It had condemned Oastler for using 'violence of accusation.' See Leeds Mercury 10.12.31

¹³⁰ Leeds Mercury 24.12.31. Leeds Intelligencer 15.12.31. See also Driver Tory Radical pp 118-124

¹³¹ Driver Tory Radical pp164-165. Leeds Intelligencer 22.03.32.

argued against their right to vote and against an improvement in their working conditions. At the head of the column they bore a copy of the Mercury, tied to a pole with a piece of black crepe. At the Mercury office they halted and there burnt the offending paper to the accompaniment of 'hisses, hootings and groans.'¹³²

But their day was not done. They had not finished with their old adversary yet. At 8.30pm that evening, a large crowd gathered at the Union Inn. Once more they marched but this time bearing an effigy of Edward Baines, the man they had come to detest. Placards on its back and front repeated Cobbett's slur; 'The Great Liar of the North.' At the Mercury office the band played 'The Rogue's March' and then the whole procession, numbering some thousands, moved off through the streets of the town. At the Leeds Patriot office they gave three cheers, and again at the Intelligencer office on Commercial Street, only here they added insult to injury by making the effigy pay obeisance to its Tory rival. Then the climax of the evening was reached. At the Mercury office, they paused again and there, with great ceremony and glee, the effigy was burnt. Baines and some friends watched from the darkened windows of the building.¹³³ He wrote to the Radical Union protesting about this 'blackguard attempt to control the liberty of the press.' Mann responded at the meeting that considered the letter with, 'Baines will swallow lies as big as jack asses.'¹³⁴ It was not just a matter of political differences between the moderates and the Reformers. A personal rivalry had developed between Baines and his critics; Foster, the editor of the Patriot, James Mann, Ayrey, the President, and Rider, the Secretary of the Leeds Radical Union. In an open letter 'To Mr Edward Baines of the Leeds Mercury' John Ayrey summed up their feelings; 'I view with suspicion and distrust every man that is eulogised by you.'¹³⁵

The same week that Mann and his union had received Baines's letter, Westminster was thrown into turmoil and Baines and his colleagues found themselves with more to think about than burning effigies and personal insults. On 7 May, Lyndhurst's motion in the House of Lords defeated the Government's Bill for Parliamentary Reform by 151 to 116. The Times was adamant; 'The people are

¹³² Leeds Intelligencer 26.04.32, 03.05.32

¹³³ Leeds Intelligencer 03.05.32. See also The Poor Man's Guardian 05.05.32

¹³⁴ Leeds Intelligencer 10.05.32

¹³⁵ Fraser Politics in Leeds pp 55-56

unscathed and they are resolute.’¹³⁶ Grey, the Prime Minister, was also resolute and asked the King to create fifty new peers to ensure the Bill would be passed; William was only prepared to create twenty. Grey resigned.¹³⁷ The Mercury’s headline said it all; ‘THE BOROUGHMONGERS HAVE TRIUMPHED! THE REFORM BILL HAS BEEN STRANGLER!’ and the Leeds True Blue Constitutional Association congratulated the King.¹³⁸ Many took a decidedly opposite view to the Leeds Tories; Manchester and Birmingham refused to pay taxes, on Saturday 12 May, Francis Place urged a run on the banks with his famous slogan, ‘To stop the Duke, go for gold’. The Common Council of the City of London warned that ‘bad advice had “put to imminent hazard the security of the throne.”’ whilst in Leeds, Baines’s Association met at the Commercial Buildings and demanded that a public meeting be called in order to express dissatisfaction with the current turn of events.¹³⁹ James Mann, John Foster and the rest of the ‘Huntite Radicals’ along with their Tory counterparts moved to pre-empt the Association’s actions. On the day before the meeting they plastered the walls of the town with orange posters vehemently denouncing Grey as a nepotist and claiming he had introduced a bill that would deny the working classes the vote forever.¹⁴⁰

On Monday 14 May, the yard of the Coloured Cloth Hall was crowded. Many local employers had allowed their workers to leave early for the four o’clock meeting and so it was estimated, when the proceedings started, that some 30 000 were inside the yard, and another 50 000 were unable to gain admission. Banners declared the sentiments of the majority of those gathered there; ‘The Bill, the whole Bill and nothing but the Bill,’ ‘We will pay no more taxes,’ ‘No petticoat government.’ The Tory-Radical alliance was also present in the figures of John Foster of the Leeds Patriot and Robert Hall, a local Tory barrister. Both men were manhandled on their way to the meeting with Foster finally being forced to escape to a nearby hotel. Hall did manage to speak against Reform and the dangers it presented to the constitution. But the crowd would have none of it. Its ears were for men like George Wailes, John Clapham,

¹³⁶ The Times 08.05.32

¹³⁷ Smith EA Lord Grey p 276. Woodward Age of Reform p 81. The Times 09.08.32

¹³⁸ Leeds Mercury 12.05.32. Leeds Intelligencer 17.05.32

¹³⁹ The Times 12.05.32. Woodward Age of Reform p 82 Turberville and Beckwith Thoresby Soc XLI pp 51-52. Cannon Parliamentary Reform pp 236-237 Leeds Mercury 12.05.32

¹⁴⁰ Turberville and Beckwith Thoresby Soc XLI pp 51-52. See Leeds Mercury 02.06.32 for the expression ‘Huntite Radicals.’

George Rawson, the chairman, and John Marshall Junior. But it was Baines who made the greatest impact with his scathing and risible reference to ‘petticoat government.’ Queen Adelaide was already unpopular for her known anti-Reform sentiments. Now rumour had it that she and her ‘Royal sisters’ were exerting undue influence on the King.¹⁴¹ Baines assured his listeners this was a ‘backstairs junta’ whose intrigues had succeeded. He went on, ‘The Sovereign was pledged to the Bill.’ But Baines insisted that the country should not be placed under ‘petticoat government’ and certainly not ‘German petticoat government.’ The Queen and her ladies feared that Reform would mean their allowances being reduced to £500 pa. ‘And what then would they do for their pin money?’ he asked. The audience burst into ribald laughter. He continued; the Royal ladies had promised to tease the King by day; the Queen had pledged ‘she would tease him by night!’ There was a delighted uproar. As the noise subsided Baines Junior proposed three cheers for Reform; three groans for the Duke and three groans for the Queen. The crowd then made its way to the Mercury office where Baines addressed them from a balcony ‘We have this day done our duty like men and like Britons,’ he asserted.¹⁴² Not everyone agreed this was how ‘men’ and ‘Britons’ should conduct themselves. One correspondent to the Leeds Intelligencer was appalled at Baines’s ungallant conduct. Signing herself ‘An Englishwoman,’ she chided the Mercury editor, ‘Oh England! England! Where is now thy chivalry?’¹⁴³

For an uncertain week England teetered on the brink of a civil unrest. Exactly how close this was to a ‘revolution’ is still a matter of dispute.¹⁴⁴ On 15 May Wellington advised the King to recall Grey and the Mercury was able to declare; ‘The King has given ... full powers to ensure the passing of the Reform Bill’.¹⁴⁵ On 4 June the

¹⁴¹ On one occasion a crowd of Reformers had attacked her coach when she was returning from a concert. See Somerset William IV p 149

¹⁴² Leeds Intelligencer 17.05.32. Leeds Mercury 19.05.32

¹⁴³ Leeds Intelligencer 24.05.32. It was relatively rare for a woman to write to the press. When ‘Laone’ wrote to the Leeds Times on the inequality of the law regarding women, the paper subtitled the letter ‘by a woman.’ See Leeds Times 20.03.41

¹⁴⁴ E PThompson believed ‘Britain was within an ace of revolution.’ See The Making of the English Working Class p 898. Asa Briggs comments that the ultimate passing of the Bill did remove the ‘danger of revolution.’ See The Age of Improvement p 259. John Cannon demonstrates the seriousness of the situation but does not refer to ‘revolution’ as such. See his Parliamentary Reform pp 236-237. Michael Brock claims ‘it is impossible to say how close Britain was to revolution.’ See The Great Reform Act p 307.

¹⁴⁵ Leeds Mercury 19.05.32. All the social discord was not provoked by the demand for Parliamentary Reform. Cholera, major industrial disputes and local grievances were all additional factors. See McCord British History p 133

Bill passed its third reading. With the exception of a few amendments it was virtually the same as the first Reform Bill and became 'both a landmark and a turning point.'¹⁴⁶

On 7 June Morpeth scribbled an urgent note to Baines;

I just write a line to say that the Royal Assent has this moment been given to the Reform Bill, by the Lords Commissioners.¹⁴⁷

When the London Mail arrived with the news in Leeds, Baines made the announcement to a crowd of several thousand. The church bells rang, the bands played, the banners of the Leeds Association and the Leeds Political Union were unfurled, and an orange flag floated above the Mercury office. It was a different story in the office of the Leeds Intelligencer. There Robert Perring prophesied, 'Lord Grey will soon become (a) hated and scorned person.' The Prime Minister had 'sacrificed his duty to his King and his country.'¹⁴⁸ As John Phillips pointed out, 'The Great Reform Bill failed to reform much that needed reforming.' Its greatest long term impact was not so much the enfranchisement of the middle classes, but that it 'catalysed partisan politics and reshaped the political process in constituency after constituency across England.'¹⁴⁹ But in Leeds it was not a time for political analysis. It was a time for either celebration or recrimination. Already thoughts were being focussed on the forthcoming election that would give the town its first MP since the days of Cromwell.¹⁵⁰

III

By August, Baines was supplying free copies of registration forms to new voters and urging them to go and register with the local overseers. But apathy and the one shilling cost of registration deterred some.¹⁵¹ 'An unaccountable, senseless obstinacy,' he railed when 'The Tory Association and Tory landlords are most

¹⁴⁶ Gash Politics in the Age of Peel p x. For other assessments of the Act see Cannon Parliamentary Reform pp 242-263 and Moore Politics of Deference pp 188-189.

¹⁴⁷ Baines Papers; No 4 Lord Morpeth to E Baines no date. Reform Bills were also passed for Scotland and Ireland the same year. See Woodward Age of Reform pp 82-83. Brock The Great Reform Act p 310.

¹⁴⁸ Leeds Intelligencer 14.06.32. Leeds Mercury 09.06.32. To Robert Peel, however, it was 'a final and irrevocable settlement of a great Constitutional question.' See J Ramsden An Appetite for Power, a History of the Conservative Party Since 1830 (London 1998) p 54

¹⁴⁹ J A Phillips The Great Reform Bill in the Boroughs; English Electoral Behaviour 1818-1841 (Oxford 1992) pp 10-11. Austin Mitchell has no doubt 'the new system created an environment favourable to the Whig-Liberals. See Mitchell A The Whigs in Opposition p 252.

¹⁵⁰ Leeds Mercury 09.06.32. Leeds Intelligencer 14.06.32.

¹⁵¹ Registration was one of the most important consequences of the Act. For a detailed account of it see J Prest Politics in the Age of Cobden (London 1977) pp 10-22

vigorously at work' ensuring their supporters were registered even to the point of paying their shillings. The Intelligencer hammered back at the Mercury's 'incessant stream of lies' and accused Baines of pursuing 'private interests.'¹⁵² At a meeting of distressed workers on Woodhouse Moor, the cry was, 'Neddy ought to be choked with his paper.'¹⁵³ It was the kind of acrimony that permeated the whole campaign.

The Leeds Association was accused of using 'bludgeon-men' to perpetrate 'acts of oppression' against Sadler's supporters. The Mercury actually named those Whigs who had suffered a similar fate at the hands of 'blue-bludgeon men'¹⁵⁴ On the Saturday night of 8 December, 'Orangeists' raced through the streets declaring they had ample means to 'put down the blues forever.'¹⁵⁵ Oastler urged 'every Leeds lad (to) do his duty.'¹⁵⁶

On nomination day, those Leeds lads had their opportunity. Nominations were to be made in the yard of the Coloured Cloth Hall. Sadler's supporters marched four abreast from Briggate with flags flying. One was a 200 foot long banner with 4 000 signatures, another provoked a riot. It showed a snowstorm at Marshall's Mill with half-naked factory children dragging themselves to work.¹⁵⁷ There was no doubt where the scene was set. Blazoned across it were the words, 'Water Lane at five o'clock in the morning.' Marshall and Macaulay's supporters attempted to obstruct the Tory arrival. Once in the vast yard, Baines Junior decried the offensive banner and several Orangeists tried to pull it down. In the struggle that followed the Blues attacked and tore to pieces the Leeds Political Union flag. In retaliation, Orangeists clambered on the roof of the Cloth Hall and hurled tiles at their opponents. It took half an hour to

¹⁵² Leeds Mercury 11.08.32, 18.08.32 . Leeds Intelligencer 27.09.32

¹⁵³ Leeds Intelligencer 02.08.32

¹⁵⁴ William Pullan and an illiterate warehouseman, and Joseph Holroyd, were attacked at the New Cross Inn. William Hall was assaulted in Cookson's Yard, Kirkgate. See Leeds Mercury 15.12.32, 04.01.34. See also The Cracker 08.12.32

¹⁵⁵ Orangeist were Whig supporters; Baines flew an orange flag over the Mercury office when the Reform Bill was passed. See Leeds Mercury 09.06.32. The Tory colour was blue, hence the Leeds Tories formed the Leeds True Blue Constitutional Association . See Fraser NH vol VII p 95.

¹⁵⁶ Fraser Politics in Leeds p 63

¹⁵⁷ Oastler quotes evidence of several cases of children abused at Marshall's Mill given in the Report of the Select Committee in the Factories' Regulation Act 1832. See The Fleet Papers 03.04.41. It was not the first time that Marshall, 'Lord of the City of Holbeck,' had been so condemned. In 1826 he was accused of 'keeping his poor WHITE SLAVES in bondage, Day and Night.' See J O Robinson and J Hernaman An Historical Account of the Late Election for the County of York (Leeds 1826) p 231. Understandably, Marshall rejected the accusation. See W J Rimmer Marshalls of Leeds Flax-Spinners 1788-1886 (Cambridge 1960) pp 217-220

restore order before the Battle of the Standard, as it came to be known, was over.¹⁵⁸

On election day, Macaulay and Marshall were burnt in effigy.¹⁵⁹ But the result was a clear cut victory for the Whigs; Macaulay polled 2 012 votes, Marshall 1 984 and Sadler 1 596.¹⁶⁰ For Baines it was a 'sober, honourable' triumph over 'bigotry, faction, delusion and violence.' Perring's Intelligencer thought otherwise. 'The next struggle if there be one, will have a different termination' it prophesied.¹⁶¹

Viewed most ways, the year 1832 had been a successful one for Baines. The Reform Bill was passed and his preferred candidates elected. The Mercury's first editorial for the new year prophesied a glorious future.

Vast commercial and agricultural monopolies are to be abolished. The Church is to be reformed, and we ... hope, severed from its ... connexion with state. Close corporations are to be thrown open. Retrenchment and Economy are to be enforced.¹⁶²

The Mercury's circulation was now five times that of the Intelligencer. In July, when Baines doubled its size to eight pages and introduced a new font, he claimed he now gave his readers twice the amount of material he had in 1825.¹⁶³ The year of 1833 began equally as successfully. Once again he was speaking at various Court House public meetings; in March on the need for 'the strict and religious observation of the Sabbath Day'; in April on Corporation Reform when he demanded that the people of Leeds should have the right of 'choosing their own corporation;' in July he was supporting the policy of paying £2 000 000 compensation to colonial slave owners 'if that sacrifice was necessary to obtain the liberty of the slave.'¹⁶⁴

¹⁵⁸ Leeds Intelligencer 13.12.32. Marshall's Mill was in Water Lane. See also Turberville and Beckwith Thoresby Soc XLI p 77-78. For electoral violence generally see Gash Politics in the Age of Peel pp 137-153

¹⁵⁹ The Cracker 21.12.32

¹⁶⁰ Baines recorded his votes for Macaulay and Marshall in polling booth B as elector number seventy-five on the electoral roll. See The List of Persons Entitled to Vote in the Election for the Members for the Borough of Leeds (Leeds 1832) p 5 and The Poll Book for the Leeds Borough Election (Leeds 1833) p 2. Despite being caught up in the hurly-burly of electioneering, Macaulay still found time to write his classic review of Lord Mahon's History of the War of the Succession in Spain. For further details of Macaulay in the Leeds election see Clive Macaulay pp 221-229.

¹⁶¹ Leeds Mercury 15.12.32. Leeds Intelligencer 20.12.32.

¹⁶² Leeds Mercury 05.01.33. For the Whig attitude to the Church at this time see G F A Best 'The Whigs and the Church Establishment in the Age of Grey and Holland'; History vol XLV (1960) pp103-118

¹⁶³ Leeds Mercury 20.10.32, 14.07.32. The Mercury sold 5 000 copies to the Intelligencer's 1000.

¹⁶⁴ Leeds Mercury 23.03.33, 13.04.33, 27.07.33

But the spectre of Oastler still cast a shadow which kept falling with annoying regularity across Baines's path.¹⁶⁵ In 1834, Oastler launched a series of pamphlets directed at Baines with A Well Seasoned Christmas Pie for "The Great Liar of the North," Prepared, Cooked, Baked and Presented by Richard Oastler.¹⁶⁶ In May 1833, John Drinkwater, Alfred Power and Dr Loudon, members of the Royal Commission, arrived in the West Riding to investigate factory conditions. Oastler vilified 'these Commissioners of Child Murder - the Friends of Baines.' The Short Time Committee urged Oastler to produce a pamphlet explaining why they would not co-operate with the enquiry. The Commissioners in turn responded and Baines printed and published their reply.¹⁶⁷ When the Commissioners finally left, Oastler addressed a meeting on Great Wibsey Moor. It gave three groans for the Mercury editor and in the Market Place burned the effigies of Drinkwater and Power.¹⁶⁸

In November 1832, Baines had received a note from Macaulay for his 'kind and very able defence of my character and interests.' The Leeds Mercury editor had speedily responded to an attack on Macaulay by 'a writer signing himself "Common Sense" and whose 'insidious and sophistical "Letter to the Electors of Leeds" has been extensively distributed.' Baines produced a pamphlet, The Tables Turned, that refuted the 'slandorous attacks on ... Earl Grey, Lord Brougham and Mr Macaulay.'¹⁶⁹ Now a year later at the Whigs' celebration dinner in the Commercial Buildings, Baines proposed the toast to 'Thomas Babington Macaulay, and the extension of knowledge, liberty and commerce in the East.'¹⁷⁰ It proved to be ironic.

By June 1833, Macaulay was already tiring of his role as member for Leeds. That month he had written to his sister, Hannah saying, 'I am sick of Lords with no

¹⁶⁵ Oastler accused Baines of trying to 'embroil me in disputes with my master, and thus deprive me of my bread.' See Oastler Facts and Plain Words p 7

¹⁶⁶ In 1835 four more followed; Slavery in Yorkshire, Monstrous Barbarity ... to E Baines; then Yorkshire Slavery. The Devil-To-Do Amongst the Dissenters in Huddersfield; a letter addressed to E Baines; The Huddersfield Dissenters in a Fury. And Why? Because the Mask is Falling. A third letter addressed to E Baines; and The Huddersfield Dissenters Stark, Staring Mad Because the Mask Has Fallen; the fourth letter to E Baines; in 1836 came his Letter to a Run-A-Way MP.

¹⁶⁷ Driver Tory Radical pp 228-234

¹⁶⁸ Ibid p 236. Leeds Mercury 06.07.33. The Poor Man's Guardian resorted to verse; "'Power's" brief authority/ Cannot send out King to "Quod"/ Neddy Baines perfidy/ Cannot lay him 'neath the sod.' See The Poor Man's Guardian 08.06.33

¹⁶⁹ Pinney Letters of Macaulay vol II p 202. T B Macaulay to E Baines 14.11.32. See also Leeds Mercury 10.11.32

¹⁷⁰ Leeds Mercury 23.03.33, 13.04.33, 27.07.33, 09.11.33

brains ... and politics and politicians.¹⁷¹ By August, he was hoping to be appointed to a seat on the Council of the Governor-General of India. 'It is a post of the highest dignity and consideration,' he wrote to Hannah, adding he would eventually be able to return to England 'with a fortune of £30 000.' On 4 December 1833 his hopes were realised when the directors of the East India Company elected him to a seat on the Council of India.¹⁷² For the second time in three years, the Member of Parliament Baines had personally promoted reneged on him and the voters of the town.

By the end of November Baines had anticipated Macaulay's departure and tried his best to find some consolation from the fact that Macaulay would now be making laws for some 100 million people. 'A nobler object is not possible to conceive,' Baines lamely observed whilst Edward Junior later described Macaulay's resignation as 'not a little mortifying.' Perring in the Intelligencer was more forthright. 'All we have said of Mr Macaulay ... is now justified,' he smugly commented. 'We blame the Electors of the Borough.' Then he went on to raise the pertinent issue of who would now represent Leeds; Benjamin Wrightson, Matthew Talbot Baines or his father, Edward.¹⁷³ One thing everyone seemed agreed upon was that whoever was chosen should have no expectation of high office and should remain dutifully and solely committed to their responsibilities as the member for Leeds.

On 6 December, at a meeting of Leeds Whigs, David Musgrave proposed Edward Baines. He was, after all, the man who was responsible for 'prostrating Toryism ... in the borough of Leeds and the county of York.'¹⁷⁴ On 13 December Baines was formally proposed by Musgrave once again. Baines wrote to Edward Junior that he would accept the nomination 'if the call from our party be general' and then only after he had discussed it with his four sons.¹⁷⁵ He then stipulated certain conditions;

Send me *freely*, and I will serve you *faithfully* ... I will go without coat and serve you without profit.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷¹ Pinney Letters of Macaulay vol II p 255; T B Macaulay to Miss H Macaulay 14.06.33. See also G O Trevelyan The Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay (London 1876) pp 298-299

¹⁷² Trevelyan Life and Letters of Macaulay p 323, pp 343-348. See also Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines pp 178-179 and Clive Macaulay pp 232-237

¹⁷³ Leeds Mercury 30.11.33. Leeds Intelligencer 07.12.33. Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 179. Matthew Talbot Baines, a practising barrister, became MP for Hull in 1847. See Taylor Worthies of Leeds pp 483-484.

¹⁷⁴ Leeds Mercury 14.12.33. Fraser NH VII p 97

¹⁷⁵ Baines Papers; No 51.4. E Baines to E Baines (Jun) no date

¹⁷⁶ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines pp 182-183

Then, emulating Brougham, he held up his hands with the declamation, 'These hands are unsullied.' The Intelligencer impishly reported that the black gloves that covered those hands were 'not of the purest exterior.'¹⁷⁷ But irrespective of whether his gloves were in pristine condition or not, Baines was, without doubt, the popular Whig choice. In all, 13 000 potential voters signed the requisition pledging him their support with a further 400 promised.¹⁷⁸ Macaulay, who only in November had referred to 'my excellent friend, Mr Baines,' viewed the choice differently, writing to his sister,

I do not think they have chosen well. He is a highly respectable man ...
But he has not quite so much polish or literature as the persons among
whom he will now be thrownhowever I shall give him all the support
in my power.¹⁷⁹

The other candidate proposed at the meeting was Joshua Bower. He was rejected. But the growing division between the Leeds Association, now known as the Leeds Reform Association, and the more radical Leeds Political Union and its chairman, saw Bower refuse to back down. He would 'state his sentiments' on nomination day.¹⁸⁰ By throwing up a second candidate, the danger was that Bower's presence would split the Whig-Liberal vote and allow the Tories in by default. They in turn had adopted Sir John Beckett of the Leeds banking family.¹⁸¹

Baines meanwhile was determined there would be no repeat of the violence that marred the previous Leeds election. He warned 'any intimidation or corruption 'by either party' would see him expose it in the Leeds Mercury.¹⁸² That did not stop him launching a 'determined and malignant' attack on Sadler who placed the attempted character assassination in the hands of his solicitor. Baines made what the Intelligencer described as 'one of the meanest and most pitiable apologies.'¹⁸³ As the campaign developed, Bower employed Joseph Lees of York on a retainer of £65 to provide

¹⁷⁷ Leeds Intelligencer 14.12.33

¹⁷⁸ Leeds Intelligencer 21.12.33

¹⁷⁹ Pinney Letters of Macaulay vol II p 361. T B Macaulay to Miss H Macaulay 16.12.33. Also cited in Fraser History of Modern Leeds p 278

¹⁸⁰ Leeds Intelligencer 14.12.33. See Fraser Politics in Leeds p 88. A third candidate, Dr John Bowring, was withdrawn immediately. See also Fraser p 102.

¹⁸¹ Sadler, whose health had seriously deteriorated, had just been beaten in a bye-election at Huddersfield and declined to stand. See Fraser NH vol VII p 98 and Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 186. See also Driver Tory Radical p 259.

¹⁸² Leeds Mercury 07.12.33

¹⁸³ Leeds Intelligencer 28.12.33

election propaganda and fixed a meeting for 1 January at the Free Market. Baines upstaged him by calling one the day before but his speech was 'poor and flat;' and in the words of the Intelligencer, 'Mr Baines pledges much ado about nothing.' Bower, suffering from a heavy cold, refused to speak.¹⁸⁴

But Bower's presence in the contest was a threat. Baines needed to attract more support from the Radicals and thus decided on a dramatic change of policy. After years of opposing the secret ballot it, he announced he was now in favour of it. He assured his readers it was 'not Reformers' that had changed his mind. It was the Tories! Their use of 'flagrant and detestable violence' in recent elections left him with no option. As the Mercury dramatically put it, '*The Electors MUST BE PROTECTED.*' Baines made it clear that adopting the ballot was a '*a protection against private injustice.*' He visited the out-townships; Holbeck, Wortley, Bramley and Hunslet whilst his committee, organised by Thomas Luccock and John Clapham, poured out their election literature. It accused Beckett of having voted against 'every Reform, every popular measure' and stressed that the forthcoming contest was 'not for *an individual* but for *a cause.*'¹⁸⁵ Oastler, too, entered the fray, publishing a front page letter in the Intelligencer. 'Friends and Countrymen,' he declared, Baines pretended to 'honour "Religion"' but still 'demands the continuance of a system which robs the poor.'¹⁸⁶

Wednesday 13 February was a fine sunny day in Leeds. It was also nomination day. The Tories, after breakfasting at the Music Hall, left Albion Street with bands playing and some sixty flags flying as they marched to Woodhouse Moor. The Tories, according to Baines Junior, had spent 'great sums of money' on the campaign; Baines, on the other hand, had exercised economy. and only spoke at public meetings. His supporters made their way in silence with no banners to be seen. Bower's supporters arrived as individuals. As the different groups gathered, a line of special constables separated the parties. Blue was the predominant colour, with Bower's greens also visible but there was no orange to be seen.¹⁸⁷ It was no surprise that Beckett and Baines were jeered as they tried to speak. The surprise came, when Bower was the convincing winner of the show of hands. Naturally, Beckett and Baines demanded that the matter

¹⁸⁴ Leeds Intelligencer 04.01.34

¹⁸⁵ Leeds Mercury 01.02.34. Leeds Intelligencer 25.01.34

¹⁸⁶ Leeds Intelligencer 01.02.34

¹⁸⁷ There had been such a demand for blue material in Leeds that the local mercers reported a shortage. See Leeds Intelligencer 15.02.34.

be put to a vote. The crowd departed and prepared for two days of election fever.¹⁸⁸

The poll commenced the next day and by eleven o'clock Beckett had surged into the lead by 200 votes.¹⁸⁹ Throughout the afternoon, Baines clawed back some support but by the close of the first day he still trailed Beckett by seventy; Beckett had 1 663, Baines 1 593 and Bower registered an embarrassing nineteen. The Whig-Liberals, mortified as they were, were not prepared to leave the advantage with the Tories. They hired vehicles in which to bring any supporters needing transport from the out-townships; they spread a malicious rumour that Bower had withdrawn from the race and had advised his supporters to vote for Baines. Allegations were made that the Whigs had produced voters who had been rejected on the first day, encouraged some voters who had not been registered and, in one case it was suggested, someone voted in the name of a dead elector. When William Stead, a fruiterer in Briggate, had the effrontery to vote for Beckett, the Whigs demanded he take the bribery oath to assure them he had not been induced to do so. For what other reason could there be for a man who was a tenant of Edward Baines, voting for the opposition?¹⁹⁰

William Rider insisted Baines spent a sleepless Thursday night, pacing the room, and muttering, 'Oh dear, I can't get in!' It certainly rings truer than Rider's other allegation that Mrs Baines had to hold her husband by the shirt 'lest he should jump out of the window.'¹⁹¹ But Baines need not have worried. By 4pm on Friday when the poll closed, he had acquired 1 951 votes, Beckett 1 917 and Bower twenty-four; - a majority of just thirty-four. At the charring ceremony on Monday, Baines assured the crowd it was the 'proudest day of my life.' Now orange ribbons were seen in profusion as the victory procession set off through the streets, with carriages, chaises, gigs, horsemen and Baines's own carriage given an escort of constables.¹⁹² It was a famous victory for the Whigs; a victory won by 'fraud and falsehood' according to the Tories.¹⁹³ But it was

¹⁸⁸ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines pp 186-187. The first single day election in Leeds was in 1837. See The Poll Book of the Leeds Borough Election July 1837 (Leeds 1837) Flyleaf notice.

¹⁸⁹ This paragraph is based principally on Leeds Intelligencer 15.02.34 and Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines pp 187-189

¹⁹⁰ Leeds Intelligencer 15.02.34. The Poll Book of the Leeds Borough Election 1834 (Leeds 1834) p 46.

¹⁹¹ Rider The Demagogue p 6

¹⁹² Leeds Mercury 22.02.34. Leeds Intelligencer 22.02.34.

¹⁹³ Leeds Intelligencer 22.02.34. The Tory Scrutiny Committee under Robert Hall argued that there had been voting abuses on both sides but predominantly for Baines. If all the abuses were removed, Beckett would have been the overall winner. See Leeds Poll Book 1834 p 86

a victory that turned the editor of the Leeds Mercury into the Honourable Member for Leeds.¹⁹⁴

IV

When Baines left the 'Rose and Crown' to take up his seat in the Commons, thousands crowded Briggate to cheer him on his way. The six horses pulling the 'Courier' were bedecked with orange ribbons and the guard and coachman each sported orange jackets. It was a fitting tribute to this 'guardian of our liberties,' as one Wakefield writer described him.¹⁹⁵ He arrived in London at about 3 o'clock on Saturday 26 February. Morpeth and Marshall introduced him in the Commons and after shaking hands with the Speaker he took his seat

on the back benches of the ministerial side ... which is most consistent with my politics. A great number of members came to congratulate me and several expressed their gratification with the result of the Leeds Election.¹⁹⁶

They would have shown less gratification at the manner in which the Leeds Tories stole a march on their Liberal opponents at the annual revision of the electoral register that year. Too late, the Leeds Liberals and their Reform Association realised they had been outmanoeuvred. Some 1 500 cases were heard; the cost was £1 000. About two thirds of the objections came from the Tories.¹⁹⁷ The Blues gained 171 additions to the register; in another close fought election those votes could well prove vital. It was an election that was to come sooner than anyone expected.

In London, however, Baines devoted himself tirelessly to his duties. There were political dinners to attend, at Lords Althorps', Durham's, and Brougham's where he mixed with Melbourne, Morpeth and Fitzwilliam. At one reception, he met, the ageing philosopher, William Godwin and the diminutive writer, Harriet Martineau. But he had little time for pleasure as his weekly Parliamentary commitment clearly shows:

Monday - Rose at six ... corresponded with constituents ... at twelve attended the House to present petitions ... attended committees til four ... House resumed at five; ... real business ... continued til three.

¹⁹⁴ Baines Junior took full control of the day-to-day running of the Mercury from then on. See D Fraser 'Edward Baines': Pressure From Without in Early Victorian England ed P Hollis (London 1974) p 183

¹⁹⁵ Leeds Mercury 01.03.34

¹⁹⁶ Baines Papers; No 51.1 E Baines to E Baines (Jun) 27.02.34

¹⁹⁷ Fraser NH VII pp 98-99. See also Fraser Politics in Leeds pp 118-124. Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 203.

Tuesday - Rose at seven ... read over petitions ... correspondence ... committee til three ... House ... sat til half past eleven.

Wednesday - Rose at seven ... correspondence til twelve ... at the Board of Trade for information ... House at five ... sat til half past eleven.

Thursday - Rose at half-past six ... perusal of Poor Law reports ... (A bill should be introduced to enable Members to read and think by steam power.) ... two committees ... House met ... at five ... sat til half-past one.

Friday - Perusal of documents at eight ... committee from twelve to four ... House sat at five ... til three.

Saturday - correspondence reading ... bill of fare for next week.¹⁹⁸

He insisted he would vote for 'each measure upon what I think its merits.'¹⁹⁹

In that first session he spoke on a wide variety of issues: supporting the establishment of local boards of trade, condemning the Corn Laws - 'agriculture was never in a more flourishing state than before their existence' - bribery at elections, Government involvement in industrial disputes, urging a milder punishment for the 'Dorsetshire Labourers, criticising the property qualification regulations for voting rights - '(in Leeds) a pigsty was ... (able to send) a member to this House'- commenting on the Poor Law Amendment Bill whose object was to 'save money of the rich and to make the poor more independent'- and supporting Friendly Societies and Observance of the Sabbath.²⁰⁰ But through the spring and summer of 1834, he made it abundantly clear that he saw his first priority as being the mouthpiece of the Dissenters. He raised their grievances over church rates and the refusal of the universities to admit Nonconformists. The House of Commons had not been made worse by the admission of Roman Catholics and Dissenters, he argued.²⁰¹

When Althorp introduced a bill to relieve Dissenters from paying church rates, Scottish, Irish and English Dissenters objected to it in principle. Baines was called upon to chair a conference at the City of London Tavern attended by several MPs and

¹⁹⁸ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 192, pp 194-195. Norman Gash cites Baines's Monday as a typical example of a day in the Commons at this time. See Gash Politics in the Age of Peel p 106. For a further example of what Baines termed 'this daily and nightly drudgery' see E Baines to Mrs C Baines 05.03.37 and cited in Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines pp 303-304

¹⁹⁹ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines pp 192, 199-200. He only partially supported the Poor Law Amendment Bill, objecting to it applying to areas where no abuse by the authorities was apparent, and to the separation of married couples in the workhouse. He exercised such discretion as long as the Ministry was not in danger.

²⁰⁰ Hansard 3rd Series (1834) XXI 1146, 1197, 1399; (1834) XXII 171, 735; (1834) XXIII 2, 1289; (1834) XXIV 333, 389, 929, 1293; (1834) XXV 195. See also Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 200

²⁰¹ Hansard 3rd Series (1834) XXII 5, 395, 628, 927, 1056; (1834) XXIII 783, 1003; (1834) XXIV 356; (1834) XXV 653

deputations from across the country. The question of the severance of the Church of England from the State was raised. Baines agreed with disestablishment but he and several other delegates felt that this was an inappropriate time to raise the issue. However, he and his supporters were overruled and it was agreed he should head a delegation to Althorp to raise the conference's objections to the proposed legislation.²⁰² Althorp dropped the bill. In 1833 the Emancipation Bill was passed.²⁰³ In July 1834 Baines jubilantly wrote to his son, Edward of 1 August as, 'that memorable day ... (when) slavery shall be utterly ... abolished ... through the British Colonies.'²⁰⁴

But that same month of July saw a series of events begin which eventually plunged the country into an unwanted election. In July 1834, the Irish Coercion Bill which had been introduced to combat disorder in the island, was due for renewal. A dispute with his colleagues over the matter saw Grey resign and the King ask Melbourne to form a ministry. It was not to be. On 10 November Lord Spencer died and, his son, Althorp, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, moved up to the Lords. Melbourne suggested Russell to succeed him. William IV's response was simple; 'Lord Spencer is dead I hear. So is the Government.'²⁰⁵ Brougham felt Melbourne's dismissal was the result of intrigues by 'Ladies-in-waiting about the palace ... under Tory influence,' others felt that the Melbourne administration 'had never been anything but a passing convenience.'²⁰⁶ Wellington filled the breach until Peel returned from Italy to form an administration but in January 1835, he decided to go to the country.²⁰⁷

The Reformers in Leeds were furious and demanded a public meeting to protest at Melbourne's dismissal. Griffith Wright, the Mayor, refused on the grounds that such an act was a 'direct interference with the Royal Prerogative.'²⁰⁸ Baines, speaking at the

²⁰² Although reducing the amount of the church rates, it would have imposed a permanent charge on the Consolidated Fund. It was to this the Dissenters objected. See Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 196-197. Leeds Mercury 24.05.34. Baines also explained their position to Peel.

²⁰³ McCord British History p 182

²⁰⁴ Baines Papers; E Baines to E Baines (Jun) 30.07.34

²⁰⁵ Cecil Melbourne p 230; McCord British History pp 140-141. He dismissed his ministers because they were 'unpalatable' to him. See also Gash Politics in the Age of Peel p xii. This was the last occasion a British monarch dismissed a ministry. See J Harvey and L Bather The British Constitution (London 1968) p 199. See also Mitchell L G Lord Melbourne p 144-148

²⁰⁶ Brougham in conversation with Baines. See Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 208 Mitchell L G Lord Melbourne p 147

²⁰⁷ D Marshall 'Viscount Melbourne': The Prime Ministers ed H Van Thal vol I (London 1974) p361. See also Parry The Rise and Fall of Liberal Government p 128

²⁰⁸ Leeds Mercury 22.11.34

Coloured Cloth Hall, was quite clear on the constitutional position;

It is for the King to choose his servants, and it is for you to say what you think of the propriety of the choice.²⁰⁹

At the Commercial Buildings, he stressed once again he had 'no ambition to be in Parliament,' but assured his listeners, 'I will stand at my post.' In the electioneering that followed, the Intelligencer accused him of writing to the Blackburn press offering to stand for the town as he feared 'certain defeat at Leeds,' and quoted the Blackburn Alfred to that effect. The Blackburn Gazette refuted the claim that it had received any such correspondence. He was taunted with the name 'Herring Soup,' a reference to him years before publishing a recipe for the poor, but one consolation for him was that the breach with Bower was now healed.²¹⁰

Neither side in the town wanted a contested election. The Liberals realised the new register favoured the Tories whilst both sides were conscious of the financial toll the revision of the register had cost. They would have been quite content to see Beckett and Baines returned unopposed but a rump of Tories, meeting at the Rose and Crown, decided to add Colonel Lumbe Tempest of Tong Hall to the list of candidates. In response, the Liberals nominated William Brougham, brother of the victor of the 1830 election. A scandal over Tempest's treatment of Wesleyans on his estate forced him to withdraw but the Liberals felt it hardly appropriate to drop Brougham who had made a hurried dash of over 200 miles to get to the town. To the delight of the Tories, when voting ceased, Beckett headed the poll with 1 941 votes, Baines came second with 1 803, and Brougham third with 1 665. Two people voted for Tempest.²¹¹ This Leeds election was the first in which one of the newly enfranchised towns returned a Tory MP. The Intelligencer was ecstatic for there had been a 'reaction' in Leeds that could inspire the rest of the country, it claimed. Oastler was appalled. 'Beckett ... has separated the Blue cause from the factory child's cause,' he wrote.²¹²

The Tory battle of the register had proved effective. Despite the Mercury's support, Baines had lost out to Beckett by 148 votes.²¹³ Baines reminded Hamer

²⁰⁹ Leeds Mercury Extraordinary 25.11.34

²¹⁰ Leeds Mercury 29.11.34, 06.12.34, 17.01.35. He also approved a diet of dried cod for the poor. See Leeds Mercury 09.05.12 and Chapter Three above.

²¹¹ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines pp 206-207. See also Fraser Politics in Leeds pp 133-134

²¹² Fraser NH VII p 101

²¹³ In April 1833 the Mercury circulation was about 5 580. The Intelligencer's was 1 920. See Read Press and People pp 210, 216

Stansfeld, 'Enthusiasm is no match for a majority on the register' and stressed to Edward Junior the need to continue the Leeds Reform Association.²¹⁴ But Baines was still one of the two members for Leeds and felt a sense of satisfaction at being elected despite the odds. He summed up his feelings and his hopes in a letter to Peter Whittle, a Preston antiquary.

It will afford me of serving my country and advancing the cause of Civil and Religious Liberty ... this proud distinction, conferred by my fellow-citizens, was awarded ... without any canvas or any cost on my part, and without the exaction of a single pledge by the constituents.²¹⁵

Peel still formed the Government and the opposition was a broad coalition of the Whigs under Russell, the Radicals under Warburton and the Irish Anti-Unionists under O'Connell. They met frequently at Lord Lichfield's House where Baines, a regular attender, and the others, listened to Russell outline Opposition strategy.²¹⁶ In the chamber of the House Baines was once again active.²¹⁷ When Peel introduced a bill for the relief of Dissenters in celebration of their marriages, Baines was delighted with it. Despite raising minor objections, he even descended into humour, as the newspaper reports indicated; he hoped 'that the measure might be carried to a happy consummation. (Laughter).'²¹⁸ He supported Russell's proposal to use surplus revenues from the Irish Church to educate Irish people. The division on this was taken in the early hours of 3 April and Russell's motion was carried. Baines scribbled an urgent note; 'We have just *floored* Peel and his Ministry.'²¹⁹

Peel had struggled on for a few more months with a minority government but when he was beaten on the issue of the revenues of the Irish Church, Melbourne found himself back in power.²²⁰ The next piece of radical legislation undertaken by his Government was that of Municipal Reform. As Baines remarked, the proposal

²¹⁴ The Liberals had 120 supporters struck from the list. Fraser Politics in Leeds pp 129-137, 118. See also Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines pp 204-207

²¹⁵ E Baines to P Whittle 16.01.35 and published in the Preston Guardian 05.05.83

²¹⁶ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 209

²¹⁷ The Commons sat in the House of Lords following the fire in October 1834. See Leeds Mercury 18.10.34. See also M MacDonagh The Book of Parliament (London 1897) pp 88-91

²¹⁸ Hansard 3rd Series (1835) XXVI 1097, Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 210. Leeds Mercury 21.03.35

²¹⁹ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines pp 212-213. Leeds Mercury 11.04.35

²²⁰ Cecil Melbourne p 232. See also Mitchell L G Lord Melbourne pp 151-153

achieved its 'main principle of destroying close corporations.' At 6pm on Tuesday 8 September, Baines proudly wrote of his own role in this historic event. It was he, along with Bernal, the Chairman of the Committee and another member, who took this 'Magna Carta of Municipal Government' to the House of Lords. It had been 'a high honour to be in Parliament when this Bill was passed.'²²¹

For all its Reforming zeal, it had been Grey's ministry with Melbourne as Home Secretary, that had condemned several Dorsetshire labourers in March 1834 to transportation for forming a trades union. A mass protest meeting had been held on Hunslet Moor, Leeds and in July the following year, Baines was asked to present a petition from 12 506 people in the town on behalf of the 'Dorset Unionists.' When he did so, he made the point that these were 'not men of dissolute lives - they were of sober and industrious habits.' The inhabitants of Leeds pleaded for 'Royal Clemency.'²²² And on top of all his other Parliamentary duties, Baines found himself presiding at the Baptist Irish Society, chairing the Irish Evangelical Society and attending the British Coffee House on Cockspur Street as a committee member of the Reform Association.²²³ It had been formed in May 1835 to co-ordinate registration centrally and searching for a name that better reflected their belief in open and flexible government, the Reformers began to refer to themselves as the 'Liberal Party.'²²⁴

The campaign for factory reform still continued to attract attention. In January 1836, Baines called two meetings in Leeds to ascertain the feelings of his constituents. On Wednesday 27 January, he met the local manufacturers at the Court House, then on 30 January, the 'workpeople'. From 7pm to 9pm that Saturday night they voiced their opinions and at the end of the day, on a show of hands, it was clear what they felt. Some 400 voted for an eleven hour day as opposed to only eight who voted for ten hours; 400 voted for the age of commencement in factories to be nine years of age with only six people opting for ten.²²⁵ In May a delegation of West Riding manufacturers

²²¹ Baines Papers; No 5.13 E Baines to E Baines (Jun) 08.09.35. Baines spoke on several occasions about the Bill. See Hansard 3rd Series (1835) XXVIII 243, 507, 525, 574, 0149, 1060, (1835) XXIX 213, 370. See also Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines pp 215-218. Melbourne considered that the bill ended further need for reform and had 'decided against changes that were not already in the pipeline.' See Mitchell LG Lord Melbourne p 188

²²² Leeds Mercury 04.07.35. See also Thompson E P Making of the English Working Class pp 250, 560. The 'Dorset Unionists' are more commonly known as the Tolpuddle Martyrs.

²²³ Leeds Mercury 30.05.35. Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 219

²²⁴ Parry The Rise and Fall of Liberal Government pp 130-131

²²⁵ Leeds Mercury 30.01.36, 06.02.36

arrived in London to lobby MPs. Its members saw Poulett Thompson, President of the Board of Trade, and, among others Morpeth, Beckett and Baines. Thompson proposed a bill removing the restrictions of the current law and allowing children of twelve to work twelve hours a day. Peel suggested that Baines should be asked to introduce it. When Thompson introduced the bill, Baines supported it but argued for an eleven hour day for children and no restrictions at all on adults. Despite Peel's support and being carried at the second reading by a majority of two, it was in fact dropped.²²⁶ A year later another meeting was convened in the Court House for 9 November which was Leeds Fair Day, 'usually spent by operatives in frolic and amusement.' The intention was to attract only supporters of Baines and the mill-owners' faction but the strategy backfired. Despite Baines acting as chairman, a 'most patient and impartial chairman,' the 'Leeds (Old) Short Time Committee' argued the question 'deliberately and the People of Leeds SETTLED THE QUESTION.'²²⁷

It is little wonder that Oastler and his supporters viewed Baines with loathing and disgust. For he took the stance of generally supporting the new Poor Law, prevaricated over the proposed Factory Act 'for fear of unemployment', arguing that 'all sides should be heard,' and then claimed, a year, later that in the woollen mills there were no children in Britain 'better fed, better clad, better lodged or more healthy'.²²⁸ The Poor Law of 1834 aimed at ensuring that no able-bodied man received help other than that available in the workhouse where inmates were isolated and only the very basics of life offered.²²⁹ To Baines it was 'one of the greatest Reforms that ever yet occurred.'²³⁰ As agitation against the New Poor Law reached its zenith, Baines, the anathema of the operatives, found himself burnt in effigy time and time again in various West Riding towns. In York the Baines antagonists even paraded him through

²²⁶ Baines Papers; W Edmondson to C Edmondson 04.05.36. See also Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 224

²²⁷ Anon A Report of the Proceedings of a Public Meeting on the Factory Question (Leeds 1837). It was published by the Chartist, Joshua Hobson of the Northern Star. A few posting bills 'purposely made small ... and printed in remarkably small type' advertised the meeting. The body calling it took the name the 'Leeds Short Time Committee' knowing full well one already existed. Baines claimed he went to 'collect the sentiments of the persons' to convey 'into another place.'

²²⁸ Hansard 3rd Series (1835) XXVI 527; (1836) XXXIII 763. See also Leeds Mercury 14.05.36

²²⁹ Parry The Rise and Fall of Liberal Government pp 125-126. For the operation of the Poor Law in Leeds see Chapter Six below.

²³⁰ Leeds Mercury 02.12.37

the streets on a donkey where his journey was terminated with a ceremonial shooting.²³¹

In Parliament, however, he was still very much alive speaking on a wide range of issues and presenting a petition from 20 000 in Leeds 'deprecating all taxes on knowledge.'²³² It was a subject he returned to in the May Budget debate.²³³ It was a timely interjection. On 25 April, at 33 Fleet Street, a meeting of provincial newspaper proprietors interested in forming an organisation to lobby Parliament had been convened. Reid Newsome represented the Mercury but it was Edward Baines who was elected a Vice-President of the Provincial Newspaper Society.²³⁴ The Government acceded to its request and the duty was reduced from 4d to 1d. In May the following year, he, along with Robert Perring of the Leeds Intelligencer, was part of a delegation to the Chancellor of the Exchequer urging further concessions.²³⁵

But Baines the active politician and the most successful provincial newspaper proprietor in Britain, was also engaged in a mammoth publishing project.²³⁶ When he published his two volume brief history of Lancashire in the 1820s²³⁷ he decided to produce a far more comprehensive work. For ten years he researched and wrote it. Despite the inordinate demands of being an MP he still continued at his labours giving up holidays, intervals between sessions and every spare moment he had.²³⁸ He realised the enormity of the task for though several attempts had been made previously, none had succeeded. By 1836 Baines finally brought to fulfilment his *magnum opus*. In 1831

²³¹ Driver Tory Radical p 352

²³² He spoke as a member of the committee established to investigate the treatment of natives in British colonies, supported the registration of births, deaths and marriages and the abolishment of church rates, opposed the establishment of an Ecclesiastical Commission, and argued that the First Fruits could be better used for providing for poor clergy. See Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines pp 221, 227-232. See also Leeds Mercury 19.03.36, 13.05.37.

²³³ Hansard 3rd Series (1836) 699. He has previously spoken on this. See Hansard 3rd Series (1835) XXX 213, 856. See also Leeds Mercury 14.05.36

²³⁴ Anon The Newspaper Society, 1836-1936; a Centenary Retrospective (London 1936) pp 5-6

²³⁵ Anon Thoresby Society vol XL p xlv. The sale of newspapers soared and the Mercury's circulation leapt from 5 000 to 9 000 a week between 1835 and 1837. See Read Press and People p 210

²³⁶ Macaulay described it as 'the most widely circulated provincial paper in England.' See Pinney Letters of Macaulay vol II p 361. T B Macaulay to Miss H Macaulay 16.12.33. As an editor he faced several actions for libel including one by Cobbett. Nothing came of any. See Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines pp 175-176

²³⁷ Baines's History of Lancashire vol I was published in 1824 and vol II in 1825; not 1826 as stated in Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 171

²³⁸ Ibid p 171, p 195

he had commenced releasing the work in monthly parts.²³⁹ Now at last the History of the County Palatine and Duchy of Lancaster was made available in four volumes. Its publishers were Fisher, Son and Company of London and New York. The biographical department had been left in the hands of W R Whatton and Edward Baines Junior contributed 'an original and comprehensive history - the first ever written' of the cotton industry, whilst Edwin Butterworth visited 'all the parishes and townships of the county without a single exception' collecting information and verifying facts. It was the most authoritative historical account of the county published to that date.²⁴⁰ The first part covered the history of the county; the second the hundreds, parishes and townships.

His sources were voluminous: Rolls of Parliament, Charter Rolls and Hundred Rolls; the contents of records in the Chapter House at Westminster, the College of Arms, the Ecclesiastical Court at Chester, the Record Office of the Duchy; the chartularies, registers and ledgers in the Harleian, Cottonian, Lansdowne and Hargrave collections, and manuscripts of numerous writers, all carefully acknowledged as he sought to avoid the embarrassment of accusations of plagiarism again. Liberally scattered through the work were some 200 engravings of portraits, views, maps, antiquarian subjects and drawings of manufacturing machinery, all executed by 'artists eminent in their profession' and the whole written in 'an easy agreeable style.'²⁴¹

The work was loyally dedicated to William IV but as events transpired, it was a dedication that had an ironic ring about it. Baines had remarked

when ... you shall be called, by that power by whom Kings reign, to descend to the tomb of Your illustrious ancestors, the appropriate inscription upon Your monument may be - "the Father of his People."²⁴²

In less than a year the 'Father' received the call. On 20 June 1837, the Lord Chamberlain and the Archbishop of Canterbury arrived at Kensington Place from

²³⁹ Leeds Mercury 17.09.31

²⁴⁰ In 1868 and 1870 it appeared as a two volume work. Initially edited by John Harland, the second volume was completed by Brooke Herford on the death of Harland. In 1888, 'a new, revised enlarged edition' edited by James Croston was released in five volumes. Baines Junior was pressed into extending his contribution and publishing it separately. See E Baines (Jun) History of the Cotton Manufacture in Great Britain. (London 1835). It had originally appeared as one of the monthly parts of his father's history in 1833. See p 9

²⁴¹ Liverpool Courier commenting on the fourth part when it was issued and quoted in the Leeds Mercury 03.11.32

²⁴² Baines History of Lancashire (1836) vol I pp v-xii.

Windsor with news that William IV was dead.²⁴³ The eighteen year-old Princess Victoria was now Queen and a general election must follow.

In the preceding months the political organisations in Leeds had not been idle. Immediately following the 1835 election, the Leeds Operative Conservative Association was formed, devoted 'to King and all in authority.'²⁴⁴ It was a positive manifestation of the Tory 'revival' that the Intelligencer had so eagerly proclaimed. Both sides continued paying particular attention to the registration and Leeds Liberals played a prominent part in establishing the West Riding Reform Association in January 1837.²⁴⁵ Two months previously, in November, they had gathered at the Commercial Inn to select their candidates for the next election, whenever that should occur. At sixty-four, Baines, and indeed his family, would have preferred him not to stand but he reluctantly accepted the nomination. It was proposed this time that his colleague should be Sir William Molesworth, a young Cornishman, 'a man of great influence and great talent,' but he was also a Radical. Some feared voters might be 'frightened by that term.' But the Radicals resolved to have him. An uneasy peace was established as both factions realised that the need for unity was paramount.²⁴⁶ To the Tories voting for Molesworth 'was tantamount to abandoning the word of God.'²⁴⁷

On 18 July, Baines once again found himself in the Cloth Hall yard addressing the crowd that had gathered there, knowing that the requisition of support he had received was the largest he had ever been given. He asked pointedly did they

prefer to be ruled by the Government of Lord Melbourne, or by the Government of Lord Lyndhurst?... prefer to be governed by the policy of the House of Commons ... or ... the House of Lords, .. prefer justice or injustice ... to Ireland ... Whether ... the Reform Bill shall become a vital principle ... (or) a dead letter.²⁴⁸

The Tories main hope was that the Whig-Radical alliance would be ruptured by Molesworth's religious views. Not only the Leeds Protestant Association opposed him but several Liberal Dissenters turned to Beckett in protest at Molesworth's

²⁴³ J McCarthy A Short History of Our Own Times (London 1890) p 2

²⁴⁴ Fraser NH VII p 101. Leeds Poll Book 1835 refers to the parties of the election as; 'Conservatives,' Conservative Whigs,' 'Whigs (thoroughgoing),' and 'Radicals.' See p 81

²⁴⁵ Fraser NH VII pp 101-103

²⁴⁶ Leeds Mercury 19.11.36, 26.11.36. See also Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines pp 233-236

²⁴⁷ Fraser Politics in Leeds pp 224-225

²⁴⁸ Ibid p 237

secularism.²⁴⁹ It was to no avail. On Thursday 27 July Baines topped the poll with the highest number of votes yet cast for any Leeds candidate, 2 028; Molesworth had 1 880 and Beckett 1 759. Baines had won his third election in four years.

Back at Westminster he voiced his opinions on the proposed tolls on railroads, supported elections being held on a single day, encouraged benefit societies, voted against the passing of a new Poor Law as the 'manufacturing districts (were) against it' and then changed his mind, and continued his role as, in Norman Gash's words, 'the leading Dissenter' in the House.²⁵⁰ In 1836, he had tried to introduce a bill to relieve Quakers, Moravians and others wishing to serve on local corporations from being forced to make the declaration required by the Municipal Reform Bill. It had failed because he had included Jews in the proscribed group. Now he tried again, this time deliberately leaving them out, but not through any anti-Semitic feelings; to include them would have been to court defeat a second time. His strategy proved correct and in December the bill received the Royal Assent. He did stress that as far as the Jews were concerned it was 'highly desirable that they should have relief.'²⁵¹ Four years later, it was Baines who presented a petition from the Corporation of Leeds;

In favour of the Jews Declaration Bill and in support of equality of religious privileges and political rights.²⁵²

Now the issue of compulsory church rates emerged as a national controversy. There was a legal requirement on all the community, including Dissenters, to maintain the fabric of local Anglican churches. Naturally it was resented by Nonconformists and had long been a source of chagrin in local politics.²⁵³ In 1837, Spring Rice proposed a new fund to replace church rates. When it was claimed in the Commons during a debate that Dissenters were eager for a break between Church and State, Baines vehemently denied the allegations despite constant heckling. He spoke cogently in

²⁴⁹ Fraser NH VII pp 103-104

²⁵⁰ Hansard 3rd Series (1836)XXXIV 1310, (1836)XXXV107, (1837)XXXVI 603, 1283,(1837) XXXIX 330, Gash Politics in the Age of Peel p 110. As such he was asked to preside over the annual meeting of the Congregational Union of England and Wales at Bristol in 1840. See Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 265

²⁵¹ Hansard 3rd Series (1836) XXXV 1056, (1837) XXXIX 517Leeds Mercury 09.12.37. See also Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines pp 242-243

²⁵² Leeds Mercury 27.03.41

²⁵³ Liberal Anglicans sympathised with the Dissenters views. See Brent Liberal Anglican Politics pp13-15 and G I T Machin Politics and The Churches in Great Britain 1832-1868.(Oxford 1977). pp 337-343. The issue was finally resolved in 1868. See Moorman History of the Church in England pp 348-349

Committee, supporting his arguments with a variety of statistics and was so respected by the Dissenting community nationally, that he was asked to present numerous petitions on the subject.²⁵⁴ When Sir Robert Inglis introduced his bill to acquire money for Church extensions, Baines spoke at length opposing the measure.²⁵⁵

He also argued that the reform of First Fruits and Tenths was urgently needed. This would generate a source of revenue which could contribute to repairing churches and be used to bring greater justice to the poorest clergy.²⁵⁶ As early as September 1802, Baines had complained that curates needed their stipends augmenting in order to maintain 'a decent style of life.' Failure to do so 'would expose religion to contempt in the person of its Ministers,' he claimed.²⁵⁷ In May 1837, he alleged in the Commons that the present fund was being 'grossly misapplied' and went on to quote examples. A year later he engineered a discussion that lasted for four hours in the hope of changing this 'mockery' into a 'substantial provision.' By 1839, he was still remonstrating on the same theme 'to obtain more adequate payments to poor clergy from the Bishops.'²⁵⁸

His most celebrated defence of Dissenters arose over the Thorogood case. John Thorogood of Chelmsford had been imprisoned for his refusal to pay church rates. Baines coupled the affair to the whole issue of church rates and wrote to Thorogood on 21 December 1839, offering to help him either through Parliament or 'the medium of the press.'²⁵⁹ Thorogood wrote back from Chelmsford Jail, thanking the MP for his

²⁵⁴ Hansard 3rd Series (1837) XXXVI 637,1279, (1837)XXXVII 477,(1837) XXXVIII 934, 1626, Leeds Mercury 27.05.37, 28.03.40. See also Brent Liberal Anglican Politics pp 14-15 and Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines pp 227-229

²⁵⁵ Hansard 3rd Series (1840) LV 341. See also Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines pp 261-264

²⁵⁶ First Fruits and Tenths was an old mediaeval tax that had originally been paid to the Pope, but was then purloined by Henry VIII. In 1704, it was used by Queen Anne to form a fund. Queen Anne's Bounty, as it became known, was a subsidy to augment the stipends of poor clergy. See Moorman History of the Church in England p270. For an exposition of Church Reform and the part Queen Anne's Bounty played see G F A Best Temporal Pillars (Cambridge 1964) pp 78-136

²⁵⁷ Leeds Mercury 25.09.02

²⁵⁸ Where the Archbishop of Canterbury should have made a contribution of £19 182, he in fact gave £2 682; the Bishop of Exeter offered £450 and the Bishop of Bangor £118; when in fact they should have contributed £2 713 and £4 464 respectively. Hansard 3rd Series (1837) XXXVIII 530, (1838) XLI 280, 1207, (1838) XLII 997, (1838) XLIII 1314, (1839) XLV 1293, (1840) LII 338, 862, 872, 874, 116. Leeds Mercury 13.05.37, 27.07.39. Some Anglicans also agreed with him. See the letter from 'A Curate' in Leeds Mercury 08.04.37. See also Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 229, pp 246-247

²⁵⁹ Baines did raise the issue in the Commons see Hansard 3rd Series (1839) XLVII 684, (1840) LII 103, (1840) LV 951. See also Leeds Times 11.01.40

offer but assuring him his own friends were doing all they could. The Leeds Times introduced a sour note into Baines's altruism. Why, it asked, if the Member for Leeds was so eager for Thorogood's release, had the Leeds Mercury, been 'almost, if not entirely, mute on the subject'?²⁶⁰

This was not the only occasion the Mercury and its master appeared to have had a difference of opinion. In 1839, war broke out between Great Britain and China. The Chinese argued that the British wished to protect its dealers in the lucrative yet illegal opium trade, and to force China to engage in political relations with the West.²⁶¹ A correspondent, writing in the Leeds Times under the pseudonym of 'Q in the Corner,' made a valid point:

How comes it that Mr Baines writes *against* the Opium War in the columns of the Leeds Mercury and votes in *favour of it* in his place in the House of Commons? ... Is his an India-rubber conscience?²⁶²

However, he showed no such double-standards over the Canadian situation. When separate outbreaks of violence occurred in both Upper and Lower Canada, Baines viewed them as matters of 'national importance.' He supported the policy of despatching Lord Durham in 1838 to the troubled province but insisted the use of force was wrong when Canadian rights had been violated by the British Government.²⁶³

Over slavery, he was as consistent as ever. He presented petitions calling for the end of the apprenticeship scheme in the West Indies where Baines claimed, a 'cruel injustice had been done to the Negro apprentices.' In fact, he supported the various lobbying groups in Parliament to abolish the apprenticeships once and for all.²⁶⁴

Baines recognised that there was still much need for reform. In 1838 he spoke fervently of the need to change the practice of the East India Company's Government

²⁶⁰ Leeds Mercury 23.11.39, 01.02.40, 29.02.40. Leeds Times 11.01.40. Machin Politics and The Churches pp 103-106

²⁶¹ J McCarthy Short History of Our Own Times p 26. Historians differ as to the reasons behind the war. Some argue it was to open up China to 'the drug traffic and ... other profitable activities.' See Hobsbawm The Age of Revolution p 107. Others believe the British 'were not forcing opium on the reluctant Chinese.' See J Bowle The Imperial Achievement; The Rise and Transformation of the British Empire (London 1974) p 277.

²⁶² Leeds Times 25.04.40

²⁶³ Hansard 3rd Series (1838) XL 91, 149, 510. Woodward Age of Reform pp 361-367. Leeds Mercury 20.01.38. Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 243-245

²⁶⁴ Hansard 3rd Series (1837) XXXIX 1081, 11845, 1185, (1838) XLIII 151, 400. See also Leeds Mercury 24.03.38. Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines pp 245-246. It came to an end on 1 August 1838. 'Apprenticeship' was virtually a euphemism for 'slavery.'

subsidising the worship of idols. It was ‘an outrage against Christian principle,’ he declared²⁶⁵ At home, he presented petitions from across the West Riding on the Beer Act in the hope of diffusing the ‘demoralising effect’ of drink.²⁶⁶ He raised the issue of imprisonment for debt and sat on the Commons Committee that considered the state of education. He pointed out that Dissenters in London were in favour of the increasing Government help to both the National, and the British and Foreign Schools Societies, and clearly stated that ‘education ought to be attended to by the State.’²⁶⁷ But factory reform, he argued, would produce lower wages and, for the operatives, ‘be injurious.’²⁶⁸

As the decade drew to a close, two major controversial issues dominated the political landscape. In the Cloth Hall yard, Leeds they both manifested themselves. Baines was addressing a meeting for the repeal of the Corn Laws when a group of Chartists tried to disrupt it. They were unsuccessful. Feargus O’Connor, the Chartists leader, was defeated on his amendment and the Mercury headline announced, ‘Chartists Routed.’²⁶⁹ But Chartism itself was not. This movement had been born out of the frustration of the failure of the 1832 Reform Bill to cater for the needs of the mass of the people.²⁷⁰ It was, ‘the first great working-class political movement in the history of the world.’²⁷¹ O’Connor and the London Working Men’s Association helped form groups across the country to campaign for change.²⁷² In Leeds in late August 1837, the Leeds Working Men’s Association was set up but it was replaced a year later by the more radical Great Northern Union with the vow ‘physical force shall be resorted

²⁶⁵ Hansard 3rd Series (1838) XLIV 646. Leeds Mercury 21.07.38. Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines pp 247-248

²⁶⁶ Leeds Mercury 23.03.39

²⁶⁷ Hansard 3rd Series (1838) XLIII 727, (1839) XLVIII 748. This is in marked contrast to the view Baines Junior claimed his father held in the 1840s which rejected Government interference in education as it would ‘impair the habits of self reliance.’ See Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 331. See also p 247. Brent Liberal Anglican Politics p 248

²⁶⁸ Hansard 3rd Series (1839) XLVIII 1081

²⁶⁹ Leeds Mercury 04.01.40. A Prentice History of the Anti-Corn Law League (London 1853) vol I pp 95-96

²⁷⁰ In the words of Carlyle, it was ‘bitter discontent grown fierce and mad’ and ‘provided a new symbol of unity’ to face the economic and social crisis of the times. See T Carlyle Chartism ed (London 1888) p 4. See also Woodward Age of Reform p 126; Briggs The Age of Improvement p 293. ‘Chartism was born not in 1838 but 1832.’ See E Royle ‘Chartism’: New Directions in Economic and Social History ed A Digby and C Feinstein (Basingstoke 1989) p 159

²⁷¹ J T Ward Chartism (London 1973) p 11

²⁷² F C Mather ed Chartism and Society; an Anthology of Documents (London/ New York 1980) ‘Introduction’ p 9-10

to if necessary.²⁷³ In May 1838 the People's Charter was published.²⁷⁴

It was Chartist policy to try to gain control of public meetings and then utilise them for propaganda purposes. The Anti-Corn Law meeting in the Coloured Cloth Hall yard was a case in point. To Baines, Chartism was anathema. As if to emphasise that it was he and not simply his son writing, he published a letter in the Mercury to a Mr Jas Ibbetson, a Bradford bookseller, and signed it 'from The Editors.' He left no-one in doubt as to his view of the Chartists. 'Violence is the element of these men, and confusion their harvest,' he wrote.²⁷⁵ The Chartists responded at their first opportunity. Less than a month later they attempted to take over a meeting of the British and Foreign Schools Society to be held at the Commercial Buildings Leeds. When the meeting opened it was expected Baines would take the chair, but George White, the local Chartist leader had other ideas. He had packed the room with Socialists and Chartists and succeeded in getting his own nominee, Joshua Hobson, publisher of the Chartist Northern Star, elected. Lieutenant Fabian, who had called the meeting for the Society, declared it dissolved. Uproar broke out. Fabian and Baines stormed out of the room and only after the intervention of the police and the trustees was the building finally cleared. The following week, the meeting was reconvened; admission was by ticket only.²⁷⁶

Chartism was a 'great working-class' movement' but the campaign against the Corn Laws brought together both Radicals and middle classes.²⁷⁷ Corn Laws had been passed from 1773 culminating in the law of 1815.²⁷⁸ In 1836 an Anti-Corn Law Association was founded in London but it was the one formed in Manchester in

²⁷³ JFC Harrison 'Chartism in Leeds': Chartist Studies ed A Briggs (London 1953) p 75. Ward Chartism p 89

²⁷⁴ D O'Connell et al: 'Six Points of the People's Charter' 07.06.37 - a summarising broadsheet' ; Mather Chartism and Society p 47. It demanded; universal manhood suffrage, vote by ballot, no property qualification for MPs, payment of MPs, equal constituencies and annual Parliaments.

²⁷⁵ Leeds Mercury 03.08.39

²⁷⁶ Leeds Mercury 07.09.39, 14.09.39. Morris Class, Sect and Party pp 189-190. Harrison J F C Chartist Studies p 79. The Mercury claimed the second meeting produced 'a most respectable and intelligent audience.'

²⁷⁷ A very considerable literature is extant on Chartism; excellent studies are A Briggs ed Chartist Studies (London 1965) and D Thompson The Early Chartists (London 1971). A vast body of literature has also been devoted to the Corn Laws which ranges from A Prentice History of the Anti-Corn Law League (London 1853) to contemporary historical studies of which N McCord Anti-Corn Law League 1838-1846 (Oxford 1968) is an outstanding example. Both movements, which reached maturity during the 1840s, did so at a time when Baines's intense and active involvement in politics had been markedly reduced. See Chapter Six below.

²⁷⁸ This restricted the import of foreign corn until the domestic price had reached eighty shillings a quarter. Hilton Corn, Cash and Commerce p 6

September 1838 that provided the effective leadership in the campaign for repeal.²⁷⁹ Associations sprang up across the country. The Manchester Association convened a conference and invited representatives of other associations to a banquet. Baines was unable to attend.²⁸⁰ But in 1815, he had made his position clear; the Corn Laws were 'a fatal error'.²⁸¹ Thus on 4 February 1839, when delegates from the great manufacturing towns assembled at Brown's Hotel, Westminster and Hamer Stansfeld and Baines Junior represented Leeds, the elder Baines was also present.²⁸²

Baines spoke out for repeal at the Liberal dinner in Bradford and at the Yorkshire Agricultural Society banquet in Leeds. Here he was hissed when he broached the subject of the Government gathering statistics to ascertain how much grain there was in the country. His opponents saw this as a ploy to embark on the repeal theme and heckled him with cries of 'Corn Laws.'²⁸³

But demanding campaigns, long hours, business pressures and advancing years began to take their toll. Towards the end of 1840 he developed inflammation of the liver. He reduced his Commons attendances but he was never the same again. In May 1841, he informed the Liberal electors of Leeds the 'impaired' state of his health 'will incapacitate me from serving you longer in the House of Commons.'²⁸⁴

Just before 8pm on the evening of Tuesday 15 June, he rose in a sparsely attended Commons chamber to speak on the distress of the unemployed. He stressed it was therefore desirable, as well for the safety of our public institutions as for the improvement of the condition of the labouring classes, that an end should be put to this state of suffering.²⁸⁵

Only twenty-four members heard him. The House was counted out and the Parliamentary career of Edward Baines, was over.²⁸⁶

²⁷⁹ Prentice History of the Anti-Corn Law League pp 64-77

²⁸⁰ He had already been invited to attend the North Ward dinner in Leeds. Molesworth and James Holdforth, the Mayor, represented Leeds. See Leeds Mercury 26.01.39. See also McCord Anti-Corn Law League p 41.

²⁸¹ Leeds Mercury 25.02.15

²⁸² Leeds Mercury 16.02.39. History of the Anti-Corn Law League p 107

²⁸³ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 253, Leeds Mercury 31.08.39

²⁸⁴ Leeds Mercury 29.05.41. Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines pp 266-268, 272

²⁸⁵ Hansard 3rd Series (1841) LVIII 1543. Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 271.

²⁸⁶ The Times 16.06.41, Leeds Mercury 19.06.41, Leeds Times 19.06.41

CHAPTER SIX

A WELL SPENT LIFE: 1841-1848

When Baines spoke about distress that June evening, he highlighted only one of the problems which beset the final years of the Melbourne administration.¹ The Government's handling of the dispute between Upper and Lower Canada and the Earl of Durham's subsequent resignation in 1838 generated considerable public unease.² Baines himself was adamant that the Government must retain its sway over Canada 'because a vast number of its own subjects had settled in that country.'³ In April the following year, an even greater crisis flared up over Jamaica. The legislative body there had systematically refused to implement Westminster's directive to introduce prison reform. Melbourne accordingly proposed to suspend the island's constitution. But the enabling measure passed the Commons by only five votes. It was a bitter humiliation for the Prime Minister. He resigned and Sir Robert Peel was asked to form an administration. However, Peel's insistence on certain changes in the Royal Household, replacing those ladies-in-waiting related to Whig ministers with Tory ones, created a constitutional crisis. The Queen refused his request and at fashionable dinner parties, Victoria was toasted that she would not 'let her belles be peeled.'⁴

In Leeds, the Liberal Mayor, James Holdforth, was requested to call a public meeting to support the Queen. The Intelligencer sneered he had deliberately chosen a day when the local Chartists were previously engaged and that 'very few persons of rank or consequence attended it.' Baines did attend, however, and declared that 'nobody suspects these ladies of being unduly attached to Whig principles'; used the occasion to remind his audience the present Whig Ministers had brought in more reforms than 'all the Ministers for 250 years' and urged his constituents to 'stand by their gallant sovereign.' Peel, he claimed, was attempting to surround his Sovereign with Tory ladies and 'aiming at a power which the constitution never intended him to possess.'⁵ But Peel had no wish to head a minority government and used the

¹ He identified 10 000 people in Leeds 'wholly unemployed or dependent on others who were not so.' See Leeds Times 19.06.41

² Cecil Melbourne pp 305-311. See also Marshall The Prime Ministers p 365. For a detailed examination of the ills that beset Melbourne's administration from 1837-1841 see Mitchell L G Lord Melbourne pp 189-208

³ Leeds Mercury 03.02.38

⁴ McCarthy Short History of Our Own Times p 39

⁵ Leeds Mercury 25.05.39. Leeds Intelligencer 25.05.39. Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 256 Reputedly, Holdforth was, the first Roman Catholic mayor elected in England since the Reformation. See Taylor Worthies of Leeds p 499 and Burt and Grady The Illustrated History of Leeds p 183.

Bedchamber Crisis as an excuse to decline to form one. So Melbourne once more picked up what had become for him the poisoned chalice of the premiership.⁶

Since 1837 a depression in trade had produced wide scale unemployment and economic distress. The Leeds Times rounded angrily on the Mercury for its claim that there was no country 'where the labourers ... are so well fed, so well clothed, or so well housed' and then stated what it saw as the truth of the situation:

Work is everywhere diminishing, and want increasing ... fever and other fatal diseases are becoming prevalent ... aggravated, no doubt by a want of the ordinary necessaries of life.⁷

This state of affairs, in turn, fuelled bitter resentment across the country as attempts were made to implement the new Poor Law Amendment Act.⁸ At home, Chartism rose to cast its revolutionary spectre across the nation and Baines warned that Chartists were 'subversive of the constitution and the rights of property.'⁹ Compounding Melbourne's problems were the Corn Laws. His Cabinet was split as demands were raised for their repeal. To him, repeal was 'the wildest and maddest scheme ever entered into the imagination of man.' To Baines, it was essential 'that these laws should be swept away.' Russell and six of Melbourne's colleagues demanded a committee to investigate the possibility of change.¹⁰ Moreover, Melbourne's difficulties were not restricted to internal affairs; his ineffective leadership almost resulted in a major war with France.¹¹

During the first months of 1841, the Whigs were defeated in four successive by-elections.¹² Their policies had lost public appeal and the Tories sniffed victory ahead¹³.

⁶ Cecil Melbourne pp 314-320. See also Marshall The Prime Ministers pp 365-366; Woodward Age of Reform pp 99-100; D Marshall Life and Times of Victoria (London 1972) pp 53-57. Victoria's opposition to Peel was not that she was losing her ladies but that she was losing Melbourne. See N Gash Sir Robert Peel; the Life of Sir Robert Peel after 1830 (London 1972) pp 220-227.

⁷ Leeds Times 30.11.39

⁸ Marshall Victoria p 49

⁹ Leeds Times 19.06.41

¹⁰ See above Chapter Five. See Leeds Mercury 04.01.40. See also Woodward Age of Reform pp 95-96 and Cecil Melbourne pp 312-313. Melbourne was also isolated from his Cabinet on the question of the ballot. See Mitchell L G Lord Melbourne pp 195-197. See also Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 253

¹¹ The issue was over British interests being threatened by France's patronage of Mehemet Ali who was intent on dislodging Egypt and Syria from the Ottoman Empire. See Mitchell L G Lord Melbourne pp 200-207

¹² Woodward Age of Reform p 103

¹³ 'Office seemed only a handsbreadth away.' See Gash Robert Peel pp 237-238. There was a distinct movement of public opinion to the Tories discernible in the 'more open constituencies.' See Ramsden History of the Conservative Party Since 1830 p 62

In Leeds, Robert Perring editor of the Leeds Intelligencer, sensed this growing aversion to Whig-liberalism and on 6 January 1841 launched the Leeds Wednesday Journal. His intention was to fulfil two long felt needs. First it would 'advance the Conservative cause'; Perring made it abundantly clear what he meant by that:

Are we real Tory or milk-and-water Conservative? ... We are genuine not mock Conservatives ... we *are* for Church and King or Queen ... we do not intend to coquette the enemies of the Constitution.

Secondly, the Journal was designed to appeal to the Sabbatarians. Published on a Wednesday, the paper could be read during the week, whereas the rest of the Leeds papers, being published on a Saturday, were often read on a Sunday; which 'is not a day for political discussion or amusement.'¹⁴

The Tories had not long to wait. In May, the Government was defeated on the Budget and the Leeds Mercury warned its readers to expect a dissolution.¹⁵ On 4 June, Peel introduced a motion of no confidence and saw it carried by a majority of one.¹⁶ 'Parliament is dissolved' the Mercury proclaimed and announced polling day was to be Thursday 1 July.¹⁷ It knew exactly what was needed and why.

The last four years have been a period of the severest and most unmitigated distress ... *Manufactures* cannot flourish under the *repulsive* and *anti-commercial system of Monopolies*.¹⁸

For four years, Melbourne's Government had been slowly disintegrating. He knew its survival was dependent not on repelling attacks from Radicals or Tories but by defeating the intriguers within his own party. His cabinet was divided. He himself was at odds with Britain's growing industrial society, considering it no more than a 'distasteful inconvenience.' And compounding these difficulties, a conspiracy to replace him as leader of the Whigs rumbled beneath the surface.¹⁹ Why then did Baines support

¹⁴ Leeds Wednesday Journal 06.01.41. The paper lasted only until the 24 February that year. See Gibb and Beckwith Yorkshire Post p 17. The only extant copy of the Journal is in Bradford Reference Library. See also Anon Thoresby Society vol XL p xxxvi. To partisans, 'Tory' represented 'something purer and less sullied by compromise than "Conservative".' See Ramsden History of the Conservative Party Since 1830 p 56

¹⁵ Cecil Melbourne p356. Mitchell L G Lord Melbourne p 207-208. Leeds Mercury 22.05.41

¹⁶ The division took place at 3am on 5June. See Gash Robert Peel pp 263-264

¹⁷ Leeds Mercury 26.06.41

¹⁸ Leeds Mercury 29.05.41. Baines Junior signed the article himself. This shows a contradictory view to that expressed by the Mercury to James Ibbitson, that the country was 'well fed' etc. See Leeds Times 30.11.39 and also page 261 above for fuller quotation.

¹⁹ Mitchell LG Lord Melbourne pp 189-190

this moribund administration? The answer, Baines Junior explains, was purely political: 'to unite all classes of Reformers and keep out the Tories.'²⁰

But the Tories in Leeds were ready, with William Beckett of the Leeds banking family and Viscount Jocelyn agreeing to stand.²¹ The Chartists opted for James Leech and James Williams. Chartism had made little impression in the town.²² The dominant form of radicalism there had already made its move. In August 1840, Samuel Smiles, the newly appointed editor of the Leeds Times, forged an alliance with the leading Leeds Radicals Hamer Stansfeld, George Goodman and James Garth Marshall to establish the Leeds Parliamentary Reform Association.²³ Its aims were the

furtherance of Reform and the improvement in our Political Institutions, and the Extension of the Franchise to the great Mass of the People by all legal and constitutional means.²⁴

Feargus O'Connor, of the Chartist Northern Star sneered that it was no more than a 'Fox and Goose Club.'²⁵ The two Baineses also took exception to its objectives. In a series of letters written by the 'Editors of the Leeds Mercury' to Hamer Stansfeld, during the November and December of 1840 and early January 1841, they spelled out their objections and then arranged for them to be published in both Leeds and London. They agreed with the association's views on the ballot: 'the most efficient preventive ... (against) intimidation and bribery.' They agreed with Parliaments of five years duration and an abolition of the 'unnecessary, inefficient and impolitic' property qualification for MPs. But on one crucial matter they were adamant:

To Household Suffrage and the Re-distribution of Electoral Districts on

²⁰ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 253

²¹ Lord Ashley had been approached but refused. See Fraser Politics in Leeds pp 298-299.

²² Fraser History of Modern Leeds p285. The Northern Star was published initially in Leeds until it moved to London in 1844. See also Harrison JFC Chartist Studies pp 68, 82-83. Founded by Feargus O'Connor in 1837, it was considered of so little significance, neither the Leeds Mercury or the Leeds Times made any mention of it when it was first published. See E Glasgow 'The Establishment of the Northern Star Newspaper; History vol XXXIX (1954) pp 54-67. However, the paper is now considered to be 'probably the most important element in the Chartist organisation.' See Royle Economic and Social History p 161

²³ D G Paz 'William Aldam, Backbench MP for Leeds, 1841-1847: National Issues Versus Local Interests': Publications of the Thoresby Society Second Series vol 8 (1998) p 22. The Leeds Times was established as a middle class Radical paper in 1833. See Read Press and People pp 93-94. The association was sometimes referred to as the Household Suffrage Association. See Burt and Grady The Illustrated History of Leeds p 186

²⁴ Leeds Mercury 02.01.41

²⁵ Fraser History of Modern Leeds p 285

... numerical proportion we are decidedly opposed.

Rather the franchise should be gradually extended 'as the humbler classes grow in information and improve their moral and social condition.' To enfranchise every man in the United Kingdom 'would overwhelm all the upper and middle classes.'²⁶

The Reform Association planned to hold a 'Grand Festival' in January 1841 in Marshall's new, architecturally unique, mill in Holbeck.²⁷ James Garth Marshall, the Chairman, sent out invitations and on Boxing Day 1840, Edward Baines wrote his reply. He told Marshall he fully supported 'a co-operation among all classes of the Reformers ... for securing good government.' But he re-iterated his opposition to household suffrage and equal electoral districts and declined to attend.²⁸ Nevertheless, between 6 500 and 7 000 people did accept. In the course of the meeting, Marshall left no-one in any doubt why the middle classes had so far not rallied to the cause: 'They have been misled and deterred by the Editors of the Leeds Mercury.'²⁹

But the co-operation between 'all classes of Reformers' of which Baines approved was a pragmatic suggestion. The Liberal coalition of 1837 had proved satisfactory when Baines and Molesworth were returned. Stansfeld, and Smiles now proposed such a strategy again.³⁰ On Tuesday 25 May, a meeting of some 1 200 Liberal electors met in the Music Hall, Albion Street. After some wrangling, two candidates were agreed upon; Joseph Hume, a Radical with a penchant for budget scrutiny, and William Aldam Junior, a businessman-squire from Leeds.³¹

A mass meeting in the Coloured Cloth Hall yard, Leeds was arranged at which

²⁶ Baines Papers; Baines and Baines Household Suffrage and Equal Electoral Districts pp 2-3. See also Fraser Politics in Leeds pp 289-290. Baines was consistent. He had repeatedly opposed universal suffrage which would 'destroy the liberty it was expected to increase.' See Leeds Mercury 03.07.19. For another example of his opposition to this see Leeds Mercury 05.07.17. Baines was not alone in his fear. Walter Bagehot expressed similar concerns, writing in 1872: 'A combination of the lower classes ... is an evil of the first magnitude.' See W Bagehot The English Constitution 2nd ed (London 1973) p 277

²⁷ The design of the building was based on the two thousand year old temple at Edfu in Egypt. See Linstrum Architecture of Leeds p 51

²⁸ E Baines to J G Marshall 26.12.40 and published in the Leeds Mercury and the Leeds Times 23.01.41 James Garth Marshall was the third son of John Marshall, the linen manufacturer and Yorkshire MP. See Taylor Worthies of Leeds p 414.

²⁹ Leeds Times 23.01.41

³⁰ Fraser Politics in Leeds p 296

³¹ Leeds Times 29.05.41. Leeds Mercury 29.05.41. Paz Thoresby Society vol 8 pp 18, 24-27. The main area of contention was Aldam's political ideology. To the Radicals he was suspect on the secret ballot, Corn Law repeal and the privileges of the Church of England.

the candidates from both the West Riding and the town spoke. Baines, the late MP, was also present. With bands playing and blue and yellow banners flying the rally began. The Mercury published an Extraordinary of the event; the Northern Star sneered at the banners 'borne by hired dupes,' assured its readers that there was only one party 'moving in all the dignity of conscious superiority,' mocked Baines's '*Extraordinary liar*' and queried the veracity of 'Neddy's statements.'³²

Some 80 000 gathered on Woodhouse Moor for the nominations. It was left to Edward Baines to second the proposal of Joseph Hume and he took the opportunity to give a summary of the work he had undertaken in three successive Parliaments. He spoke 'amidst considerable interruptions and groaning,' and 'loud cheers from the Liberals,' but he made his points above the catcalls and the heckling:

I told you, that as a Protestant Dissenter, I should claim in Parliament equality of privileges for the Dissenters with our brethren of the Established Church. I told you ... that I should by every means in my power endeavour to promote the advancement of the education of the people ... I told you I would watch over the interest of trade and manufactures ... I told you I would oppose all laws which ... are intended to give privileges to certain classes ... I told you in particular that I would oppose that law which enhanced the price of provisions ... I told you I would advocate a rigorous economy in the public expenditure ... I told you, Gentlemen that I would maintain my independence ... Whether I have so discharged my duty, is not a point for my decision, but for yours. I have come amongst you no more noble than when I left you ... I come amongst you no richer than when I left you.

He then nominated Joseph Hume with a ringing endorsement promising them that the candidate would fulfil his duties 'with zeal, with fidelity and to your satisfaction.'³³

In the West Riding the campaign was also underway. The Liberals, Milton and Morpeth, faced the Tory challenge of Wortley and Denison. The candidates embarked on a canvassing tour. Baines made his way to Wakefield and from the hustings he urged the Whigs to 'buckle on their armour' in support of Milton and Morpeth.³⁴

It was all to no avail. Milton and Morpeth were defeated. In Leeds, Williams and Leech, the Chartists, dropped out before the Mayor called for the customary show

³² Leeds Mercury 23.06.41, 26.06.41. Northern Star 26.06.41

³³ Leeds Mercury 03.07.41, Leeds Times 03.07.41, Northern Star 03.07.41. Baines's son laid such store by he address he published it in full - interruptions included! See Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines pp 273-276

³⁴ Leeds Mercury 10.07.41. Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines pp 276-277

of hands at the nomination.³⁵ On polling day itself Beckett and Aldam topped the poll and were returned; Hume was pushed into third place.³⁶ Baines was bitterly disappointed. Smiles was mystified. His Leeds Times, out of a sense of chagrin, published the names of the 'Tory Shopocracy of Briggate', to show 'how many men in one street have not come to their senses.' But the gleeful Blues paraded through the streets of Leeds with 'Brown-bread Joseph's' yellow coffin.³⁷ Peel and the Tories could well claim victory. But the reality was that an irresolute Administration had killed itself. Melbourne resigned.³⁸ And thus in London, on 30 August, an open carriage bore the lone figure of Sir Robert Peel on the road to Windsor to be offered the premiership by a reluctant Queen. It was the end of a decade in opposition for him and the beginning of a new life.³⁹

For Edward Baines, it was more a refocusing of his life. He donned the mantle of elder statesman and devoted himself, in his last six years, to do his best, as far as his health permitted, to fulfil, what he saw, were his civic responsibilities. Not that this was something new. Baines had long accepted positions of responsibility within the local community. Like his old friend Tottie, he believed implicitly that the inequitable ranks of society were bound to each other by 'mutual obligations and duties.'⁴⁰ Thus in 1822, he acted as an auditor of the House of Recovery and sat on the Committee of the Dispensary. By 1830, he was a commissioner for executing the Leeds Improvement Act and a trustee of the Workhouse Board. In 1837, he was listed as a Leeds magistrate.⁴¹

³⁵ Leeds Poll Book 1841 p i

³⁶ Beckett could count among his supporters Hook, the Vicar of Leeds who cut short a visit to the Continent in order to support him personally. See E D Steele 'Imperialism and Leeds Politics c 1850-1914': History of Modern Leeds ed D Fraser (Manchester 1980) p 328

³⁷ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines pp 276-277. Leeds Mercury 03.07.41, Northern Star 03.07.41, Leeds Times 17.07.41, Fraser Politics in Leeds p 301, Paz Thoresby Society vol 8 pp30-31

³⁸ Mitchell LG Lord Melbourne pp 207-208. Parry disputes this. He claims Melbourne fell 'because Liberalism was in advance of opinion among the electors who mattered.' See Parry Rise and Fall of Liberal Government p 128

³⁹ Gash Robert Peel p 270. Before Peel's ministry ended the Queen's attitude to him had changed. She referred to him as 'our worthy Peel.' See L Strachey Queen Victoria (Harmondsworth 1971) p 113

⁴⁰ Morris Class, Sect and Society p 253

⁴¹ Baines Directory of Yorkshire vol I p 26. W Parsons General and Commercial Directory of the Borough of Leeds (Leeds 1826) p 256. W Parsons and W White Directory of the Borough of Leeds (Leeds 1830) pp 199, 206. W White History, Gazetteer and Directory of the West Riding of Yorkshire vol I (Sheffield/Leeds 1837) p 507. Baines was also a West Riding magistrate. See Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 312

His position as a justice of the peace made him an *ex officio* member of the Improvement Commissioners and the Board of Guardians. Nor did he ignore the pressing national issues of the day be they the Corn Laws, education or Ireland.⁴² Baines Junior claims that on medical advice, his father avoided, where possible, protracted sittings and public meetings and that he 'accepted the conditions of age ... (and) turned to the more private and tranquil methods of usefulness.' He also suggested the family tried to dissuade him from being too much involved in political activities. The old man may well have reduced the intensity of his commitments but an examination of the reports in the Leeds Mercury and the rest of local press between 1842 and 1848 show the considerable extent to which he was still very much involved in the affairs of the town.⁴³ Baines had always shown a sense of community awareness and had been personally involved in helping to improve the local environment. Now as his religious faith deepened, he redoubled his efforts to fulfil his commitment to good works and to promote the happiness of his fellow men⁴⁴.

There was no greater way of promoting that happiness than by sweeping away the appalling living conditions that existed in Leeds. Robert Baker's reports of 1832 and 1842 left no-one in any doubt of the extent of the problem.⁴⁵ Poor and overcrowded housing, insanitary living conditions and an inadequate water supply had all been highlighted by the cholera epidemic of 1832. At this time, the responsibility for effecting the improvements that were necessary lay not with the town council but with the Improvement Commissioners; nineteen ratepayers elected each January at a meeting of the vestry plus the town's justices of the peace.⁴⁶ Baines, as a magistrate,

⁴² Nor did he forget slavery. At a Leeds meeting on the subject in 1842, he maintained, 'Great advantages were likely to be derived from the permanent existence of Anti-Slavery Societies in England.' See Leeds Mercury 26.03.42. For a contemporary view of these issues and others see Carlyle Chartism *passim*.

⁴³ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines pp 310-312. Leeds Mercury 03.03.90. With the younger Baines now also very active in local politics - he was after all turned forty - there is a danger that the casual reader may confuse father and son. The Leeds Mercury allows for no such confusion always drawing a careful distinction between 'Edward Baines Esq' and 'Edward Baines Jun.'

⁴⁴ For his religious commitment and the development of his faith see below pp 290-296.

⁴⁵ R Baker Report on the Condition of the Residences of the Labouring Classes in the Town of Leeds in the West Riding of the County of York (Leeds 1842) pp 1-6 and Baker Report of the Leeds Board of Health pp 9-14. See also F Engels The Condition of the Working Class in England ed (Moscow 1977) pp 72-73. Beresford gives a graphic account of the conditions in the town and asserts that the cholera epidemic also caused a 'shift of attention from economic impoverishment to environmental impoverishment.' See Beresford East End, West End pp 381-441

⁴⁶ Burt and Grady The Illustrated History of Leeds p 162. See also Harrison JFC Chartist Studies p 6.

was one of these *ex officio* members. At the January meeting in 1842, Joshua Hobson and the Chartists finally took control of the commissioners. In 1840, a legal dispute had denied it to them; in 1841, they shared power with the Liberals. But in 1842, both the Liberal and the High Church Tory candidates were rejected by the vestry. That success gave the Chartists control of the commission at a most appropriate time.⁴⁷ It was generally acknowledged that a new Improvement Act was required if any significant changes were to be wrought. Baines pointed out that 'the health, the comfort and the lives of a large body of people in this borough' was at stake. Some 30 000 people of the labouring classes 'were exposed to the injury of breathing an impure atmosphere.'⁴⁸ He drafted the bulk of the proposed bill. The committee responsible for launching it wanted it implemented by a collaboration of magistrates, councillors and commissioners. The Chartists sought control through the vestry which they dominated. The council wanted the powers to be invested in itself. Baines viewed the radical changes the Chartists introduced into the draft as a deliberate attempt to destroy it.⁴⁹ In the wrangling that followed, vestry meeting after meeting had to be abandoned with Baines assuring his enemies 'he was too old a stager to be put down.'⁵⁰ But the changes introduced were so radical that the proposed bill was eventually abandoned.

Now the council and the magistrates took up the challenge. The bill was amended, Baines and Baker testified before a Parliamentary Committee and in July, it received the Royal Assent, giving full power of implementing the 392 clauses of the Act to the town council.⁵¹ The old Improvement Commissioners gathered at the Court House for a final meeting. Baines was unanimously elected to the chair, and advised them 'the change altogether would be beneficial.'⁵² He was not to know, as he made

⁴⁷ The Chartists also secured seats on the town council during the 1840s. See Fraser History of Modern Leeds pp 285-286.

⁴⁸ Leeds Mercury 08.01.42, 19.02.42, 16.04.42. Smoke pollution was but one factor to be considered. At a special meeting called at the Music Hall on the subject Baines proposed that 'Smoke arising from steam engine fires can be consumed.' See Leeds Mercury 15.01.42. It was no new concern of his. Twenty years before he had expressed the hope that smoke pollution could be 'speedily removed, probably with legislative interference.' See Leeds Mercury 28.10.20. Baines sat on the sub-committee that published a report on smoke pollution. See Leeds Mercury 06.01.44.

⁴⁹ D Fraser 'Improvement in Early Victorian Leeds'; Publications of the Thoresby Society vol LIII part 1 (1971) pp 76-77

⁵⁰ Leeds Mercury 28.04.42, 30.04.42

⁵¹ Fraser Thoresby Society vol LIII pt 1 pp 78-79

⁵² Leeds Mercury 06.08.42.

his way to recuperate at Barton Grange, his farm on Chat Moss in Lancashire, after his exertions of the past few months, that all the sanguine hopes he held for the future would be disappointed, as the council 'failed to sustain the expectations of the Act.'⁵³

Whilst Baines was relaxing at Barton Grange that August, the Chartist 'Plug Riots' erupted across the north and spread from Lancashire to the West Riding.⁵⁴ Chartist insurgents, driving the plugs out of boilers, brought mill after mill to a stop by depriving them of power. The 'Holiday Insurrection' swept through the outlying townships but at Leeds, itself, they were finally halted by Major General Bretherton's troops, Prince George of Cambridge's 17th Lancers, and Chief Constable Read, his police force and 1 500 special constables. An uneasy peace hung over the town and for a week business and social life was disrupted.⁵⁵ Across the north, the workers whose mills were closed went to ask for help from local gentry and farmers. At Chat Moss, Baines was approached by about forty men, women and children. He said he sympathised with them; he agreed food was dear and wages were low. But he pointed out that these deficiencies could not be remedied by actions such as had taken place. He told them theirs was 'a dangerous and hopeless a contest.' He would offer them no financial help and his advice was that they should return to work and get as good a wage for their labour as they could.⁵⁶ He simply echoed once again, sentiments similar to those he had expressed thirty years ago at the height of the Luddite disturbances:

We grant that their distresses and privations are great; but they will not, they cannot be lessened by the present dreadful system of rapine and blood⁵⁷

⁵³ B J Barber 'Aspects of Municipal Government 1835-1914'; A History of Modern Leeds ed D Fraser (Manchester 1980) p 302 It was 'one of the most comprehensive and complete (private bills) which had then been obtained by local authorities.' See F Clifford The History of Private Bill Legislation vol I p 493 and cited by Barber p 302. See also Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 313.

⁵⁴ For details of Baines's involvement at Barton Grange on Chat Moss see below pp 281-282

⁵⁵ Leeds Mercury 20.08.42. Northern Star 20.08.42. For a more detailed account of the insurrection and the success Chartists had in local elections in Leeds when between 1843 and 1853 eighteen were elected to the council, see Harrison JFC Chartist Studies pp 88-91. See also W Clay ed The Leeds Police 1836-1974 (Leeds 1974) p 21-23. The Freemasons of Savile Lodge No 677 held no meetings in August 'members being engaged in keeping guard over the peace of the town and neighbourhood.' See R D Matthews The History of Freemasonry in Leeds (Leeds 1954) p 51. For the national picture see also F C Mather Public Order in the Age of the Chartists (Manchester 1959) passim. The townships affected were Armley, Bramley, Farnley and Holbeck.

⁵⁶ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 313-314

⁵⁷ Leeds Mercury 02.05.12

When Peel took office in 1841, it was obvious that such civil disturbances were almost inevitable as the effects of the propaganda from the Anti-Corn Law leaguers and the Chartists combined with widespread unemployment, galvanised the dissatisfied into action.⁵⁸ Use of the Riot Act and the deployment of the local militia and police might subdue the insurgents temporarily but steps had to be taken to alleviate the genuine suffering that was a direct result of the nation's economic distress. At a public meeting to discuss the problem, one that cut across party lines, Baines, who had been 'received with cheers,' pithily summed up the situation: 'The poor did not ask for charity but for employment.'⁵⁹ According to his son, 'He was known among the poor as their benefactor and champion.' Certainly, he did more than speak about it. Previously, as an MP he had used his privilege of franking letters, to help poor Irish immigrants in Leeds write home when the cost for them to do so would have been prohibitive.⁶⁰ He chaired the public meeting to consider the 'distressed poor' in February 1842 and the following year took a pragmatic stance over the Soup Kitchen Fund. The proposal had been made that the committee should purchase its own premises from which to operate. Baines disagreed. The money 'would be better spent in purchasing soup, bread and potatoes', he claimed.⁶¹

But it was not just the working classes that suffered. A meeting of shopkeepers was called to consider the state of trade in Leeds and in October 1843 Baines was present at the establishment of the Leeds Tradesmen's Benevolent Institution. It was an organisation that would support a man from, in Baines's words, 'sinking into decay, without a fault of his own.' When it met in 1845 to consider distributing its funds, Baines, as chairman, was able to congratulate it on its growing success, it was, indeed, an institution 'invaluable in its nature'.⁶²

Emigration was another solution to the problem of distress which Baines had previously considered. In July 1842, a lecture on it was delivered at the Court House

⁵⁸ Gash Robert Peel p 330. John Marshall, who had retired to Cumberland, wrote to Baines giving his reasons for the depressed economic state of the country quoting 'the reduction of the productive industry of the nation' and 'the worship of pelf in the middle ranks.' See J Marshall to E Baines 07.07.43 and cited in Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 318.

⁵⁹ Leeds Mercury 22.01.42. Beckett, Hook, J G Marshall and Henry Hall were all present. See also Leeds Times 22.01.42

⁶⁰ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 312

⁶¹ Leeds Mercury 29.01.42, 05.02.42

⁶² Leeds Mercury 02.07.42, 28.10.43, 08.02.45.

by Rev John Roaf of Toronto. Baines chaired the meeting and sadly reflected that unhappily at the present time there are too many causes why men felt dissatisfied in their own country; and why they were driven to seek another.⁶³

Baines had always argued that emigration was something that 'ought never be resorted to on slight grounds.' In 1818, he refused to publish a 'too warmly coloured' letter from the United States. His reason:

We would do nothing to excite still higher that spirit which is daily depriving this country of some of its most valuable citizens.⁶⁴

But by 1819 he had been forced to recognise that

the national dinner is too scanty for the number of people that have to sit down to it ...Emigration in such a case, is rather a good than an evil.⁶⁵

However, there were thousands who either would not or could not contemplate emigration and the town had a legal responsibility to accommodate them.

The Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 laid down the strategy to be applied. Fear was the instrument. That, it was hoped, would prove an incentive to drive people to find work and reduce the burden on the rates. Outdoor relief was to be ended to the able-bodied. Relief inside the workhouses - 'Bastilles' as they became known - was to be as stringent and severe as possible with poor food provided, strict discipline enforced and segregation of the sexes imposed.⁶⁶ In Leeds, the cost of implementing the Poor Law was the largest single item of local expenditure. To cater for the vast number of inmates anticipated by the new legislation it was obvious that a new workhouse would have to be built in the town. The old one on Lady Lane, built in 1629 and enlarged in 1736, was totally inadequate. It was overcrowded, insanitary and deemed immoral.⁶⁷ The Workhouse Board which ran it was comprised of overseers

⁶³ Leeds Mercury 30.07.42

⁶⁴ Leeds Mercury 26.09.01, 26.09.18

⁶⁵ Leeds Mercury 24.04.19

⁶⁶ Briggs The Age of Improvement pp 280-281. See also Hill Economic and Social History pp 182-183 and May Economic and Social History pp 123-125. Baines disapproved of segregating the sexes. See Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 200

⁶⁷ The close proximity of a refuse tip gave the place 'a permanent noxious stench' and children of twelve to fourteen 'were found copulating in the privies.' See D Fraser 'Poor Law Politics in Leeds 1833-1855'; Publications of the Thoresby Society vol LIII part 1 (1971) pp 23, 34-35. See also Burt and Grady The Illustrated History of Leeds pp 172-173. The bulk of these paragraphs rely heavily on both Fraser's classic account and Burt and Grady's careful summary.

appointed by the town council, and Trustees appointed by the vestry. It was a ready-made battlefield where an on-going conflict between Tories and Liberals was fought throughout the 1830s. By 1842, Baines, as one of magistrates, agreed that the election of overseers should be held 'excluding all party and political feelings;' and again in 1844 he urged that magistrates should elect the overseers by considering their 'fitness for office.'⁶⁸ The Workhouse Board had chosen to ignore the 1834 Act, arguing that its application was inappropriate to Leeds. But in December 1844 part of it was implemented with the establishment of a Board of Guardians.⁶⁹ The Tories who won the recent Poor Law election, dismissed Christopher Heaps, the Clerk to the Guardians, and in his stead proposed John Beckwith, an assistant editor of the Leeds Intelligencer and something of an expert on the Poor Law. Baines argued that Beckwith was opposed to the Poor Law and to elect him would be a 'dereliction of duty.' The Mercury wrote him off as 'the most complete party hack in the town.' It mattered not what the Baineses said. The Tories had their way and Beckwith was elected.⁷⁰

The Tories were also obdurate in refusing to build a new workhouse. But they did, however, offer to build an industrial school to cater for 499 orphans and pauper children on land bought from the Beckett family at Burmantofts to the north-east of the town. It would teach gardening, tailoring, shoe-making, and training for domestic service.⁷¹ On Monday 12 October 1846, Baines, one of the Vice-Chairmen of the Board was part of the procession that made its way from the old workhouse to witness the laying of the foundation stone of the Moral and Industrial Training School.⁷²

Frequently, magistrates had to exercise their authority with other issues dealing with pauperism, in particular when they were approached by paupers who had been

⁶⁸ Leeds Mercury 09.04.42, 13.04.44. He had been as partizan as anyone. Writing to John Ikin in January 1837, Baines had urged him to 'give attention and get other persons to do the same to the approaching Election of Guardians ... so that we may at all counts have a Liberal Guardianship.' Baines Papers: MS No 35 E Baines to J A Ikin 30.01.37

⁶⁹ Burt and Grady The Illustrated History of Leeds pp 172-173

⁷⁰ Leeds Mercury 04.01.45

⁷¹ It only scratched the surface of the problem. For every child who entered the school many more were left to roam the streets. Eventually, the workhouse itself was finally moved in 1861 to newly built premises next to the school. These buildings ultimately formed part of what eventually became St James's University Hospital. See P Bedford and D N Howard St James's University Hospital, Leeds. A Pictorial History (Leeds 1989) pp 1-3, 28

⁷² As well as the Board of Guardians, the procession included the Mayor, the Chief Constable, the adult inmates and children, Dr Hook and William Beckett MP. See Leeds Mercury 24.10.46.

denied help.⁷³ Thus Baines, in his capacity as a justice of the peace, found himself again acting as the champion of the poor when he interceded on behalf of paupers who had been denied relief by Alfred Moore, the Relieving Officer of the Poor Law Guardians. For example, Baines demanded to know why Thomas Schofield, a seventy-four year-old man, had been refused relief and threatened with being 'walked out of Leeds the next morning.'⁷⁴ Similarly, he was aghast at the treatment meted out to Maria Fisher, a gypsy woman of Paley's Galleries, where she lived with her husband and eight half-starved children. Three of the children had smallpox. They lived in a two-roomed house, devoid of furniture, with a straw covered floor to sleep on and their horse in the adjacent room. The police claimed they had 'never witnessed such a state of misery and destitution.' Yet after waiting three hours at the Parish Office where she had gone being 'entirely destitute of food', she had been dismissed with no help whatsoever. Moore claimed she did not belong to the parish and was a drunkard. Beckwith tried to justify Moore's actions but Baines's intervention resulted in help eventually being granted. The sick children were taken to the House of Recovery for treatment and a month later the family had been sufficiently restored to health to be able to leave the town. Moore wrote an 'impertinent letter' to the Mercury. It never appeared in its columns.⁷⁵

As a magistrate he came face to face with the usual gamut of petty cases and to comment accordingly. He condemned soldiers who rioted outside the Green Parrot on Harper Street as demonstrating 'outrageous conduct ... unfit for civilised society'; damned Samuel Vickers and his wife Elizabeth for causing several people to be admitted to the Dispensary in the 'most atrocious case of adulterated flour that has been discovered in the town'; warned the public to be 'cautious of the company they keep' when he heard the case of Ann Blogg and two accomplices charged with stealing two guineas from John Carlton in a local brothel; and showed 'considerable emotion' when he was obliged to direct Alexander Blenkinsop, a manufacturing chemist from Meadow

⁷³ Fraser Thoresby Society vol LIII pt 1p 40. Occasionally, it was too late to help some vagrants; for example Henry Halstead, twenty-four years old and 'given to intemperance,' starved to death in the town. See Leeds Mercury 19.11.42. Another equally distressing case reported was that of Peter Brabson, an eighty-seven year old Irish vagrant. He was found dead in East Lane off Kirkgate, having died from starvation. See Leeds Times 08.01.48

⁷⁴ Leeds Mercury 20.05.48.

⁷⁵ Leeds Mercury 15.02.45, 22.02.45, 15.03.45. The full extent of the problem of pauperism in the town can be truly ascertained when it is appreciated that 18 915 vagrants sought help in Leeds in 1847. See Leeds Times 27.11.47 At times Baines found difficulty determining which were genuine cases of hardship and which were not. See Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 312.

Lane, to York Assizes to answer charges of forgery.⁷⁶

Apart from his duties as a magistrate he was also helped administer various charitable institutions. For twenty years he had been a trustee of Leeds Dispensary. He sat on the Special Board of Leeds General Infirmary when it met to discuss the valuation of land wanted by the Leeds-Thirsk Railway Company for building a new station on Wellington Street.⁷⁷ He expressed the hope that when the Infirmary eventually moved to a new site, the Board would opt to build it on freehold land.⁷⁸ He was also a trustee of the House of Recovery, an institution he had long supported. In 1801, with fever raging in the town, he had been delighted at the proposal to establish a hospital which would deal with such infectious diseases. His Leeds Mercury had no doubt 'so excellent an institution will meet with every adequate support.'⁷⁹ In 1843, the Committee of Pious Uses decided to increase the annual rent of the House of Recovery from £23.10.0 to £120 per annum. Baines was one of three trustees, along with Beckett the local MP, who met the Committee in the library of Leeds Grammar School to plead with its members to reconsider the proposal. But the Committee, arguing that the new rate had been set by 'competent valuers,' was unable to accommodate the request. An angry Baines retorted, 'A greater hardship was never inflicted.'⁸⁰ Shortly afterwards, he presented the report that had been drafted on the proposal to build a new House of Recovery. It was accepted. Almost a quarter of the putative cost was pledged there and then and two and half years later the new building was opened.⁸¹

The problems the Trustees of the Leeds House of Recovery faced were nothing

⁷⁶ Leeds Mercury 15.06.44, 13.11.47, 27.11.47, 18.12.47. For a detailed account of the Green Parrot riot see Clay The Leeds Police pp 23-24

⁷⁷ Leeds Mercury 11.11.43, 28.03.46. It was to be built to the west of the Leeds-Braford Railway's Wellington Station. See Burt and Grady The Illustrated History of Leeds p 141

⁷⁸ The move took over twenty years. It was not until 1869 that the first patient was moved into a new Infirmary on Great George Street. The Leeds General Infirmary should not be confused with the Leeds Union Infirmary which was built as part of the new workhouse complex at Burmantofts in 1874. See Burt and Grady The Illustrated History of Leeds p 175

⁷⁹ Leeds Mercury 05.12.01

⁸⁰ Leeds Mercury 02.12.43, 16.12.43, 20.01.44. Leeds Intelligencer 16.12.43. The Committee of Pious Uses was responsible for administering the town's charities. See Wilson RG History of Modern Leeds p 40. For the position and powers of the Committee see Anon ed 'The Committee of Charitable Uses, Leeds; extracts from the minute book'; Publications of the Thoresby Society vol XXII part III (1914) p 355.

⁸¹ The probably cost was placed at £4 500; some £1 000 was pledged. See Leeds Times 06.04.44. Leeds Mercury 07.11.46. It opened in Beckett Street almost opposite the Moral and Industrial Training School. See Burt and Grady The Illustrated History of Leeds p 174

compared to the difficulties Peel's Government had to contend with when it took office in 1841. In an attempt to eradicate the dangers and difficulties generated by Britain's newly burgeoning industrial society, Peel launched his revolutionary 'Great Budget' in 1842. It was 'the worst year, perhaps... British people endured in the ... nineteenth century,' and his budget was aimed at halting the deterioration of the state of the country.⁸² The Leeds Times accepted it was 'revolutionary', but considered Peel's proposal to re-introduce income tax was a 'most rash experiment in taxation.' Baines had rejoiced at its repeal in 1816 as a 'bloodless victory.' Now it was back on the fiscal agenda. A meeting was called at the Music Hall to consider the issue. Baines, who had spent his life opposing it, was called to the chair but did not speak. He left that to Edward Junior who now, more and more, became the public voice of Bainesocracy.⁸³

There was another great hardship that the British people had endured for years and it was one that Baines had passionately fought to have removed. The Corn Laws had stirred his pen for over three decades and his leaders had echoed with barbed phrases aimed at their repeal. They were laws that 'interfere(s) with the free operation of trade;' 'better fitted to promote the interests of private individuals than the public good,' 'this most iniquitous and cruel system (must) be abandoned.'⁸⁴ Now the Anti-Corn Law agitation was reaching a climax. Tracts and newspapers campaigning for repeal were freely circulated and meetings across the country were organised.⁸⁵ Leeds was no exception. In December 1842 one such assembly was called in the Rotunda of the Coloured Cloth Hall. Baines, still feeling keenly about the issue, took the chair. But his deteriorating health meant that he was unable to attend the League's soiree that evening at the Music Hall.⁸⁶ Bad health also prevented him being present at the Anti-Corn Law League dinner held in Wakefield in 1844. He wrote to J G Marshall, apologising for his absence owing to the 'state of my health.' But he went on to stress:

There is no way so effectual for relieving the public burthens ...or for

⁸² Gash Robert Peel p 329. For a detailed examination of 'The Great Budget' see Gash pp 295-329

⁸³ Leeds Times 26.03.42, 02.04.42. Leeds Mercury 23.03.16. Baines had condemned it as early as 1802. See Leeds Mercury 27.03.02. Forty-six years later, he headed the list requesting a public anti-income tax meeting to be held and a week later attended it. See Leeds Mercury 26.02.48, 04.03.48

⁸⁴ Leeds Mercury 26.06.13, 28.05.14, 04.02.26. For the first attacks on the Corn Laws in the 1820s see Hilton Corn, Cash and Commerce pp 269-301

⁸⁵ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 314

⁸⁶ Leeds Mercury 10.12.42

... securing ... the commercial, agricultural and manufacturing prosperity of the country, as that of the Principle of Free Trade.⁸⁷

Over twenty years before he had preached that same belief; 'We have strong faith in the principles of free trade'; 'security takes away the mainspring of industry.'⁸⁸ Now the Select Committee on Import Duties claimed that the 'battle for free trade was about to be *won*' and pointed out that the import revenue on 142 articles had only managed to raise £2 million. Peel's budget in 1842 began the first cautionary measures towards winning that battle.⁸⁹ The Anti-Corn Law Leaguers maintained the momentum, repeatedly raising the call for a repeal of the Corn Laws and an opening of the ports to allow goods in free. At noon on Wednesday 3 December 1844, Baines attended a meeting at the Court House, in Leeds to support the 'free importation of provisions of all kinds.' It was he who proposed the Mayor, John Darnton Luccock, to act as chairman. Again he made no speech. Once more, he left that to Edward Junior who played an active part throughout the whole of the Anti-Corn Law campaign.⁹⁰

The other great issue that dominated the nation's politics through those years was that for the provision of a system of national education.⁹¹ On this, Edward Junior came to his political maturity and in so doing became a national figure in his own right. It was he who became the great driving force behind the campaign for voluntaryism in education. Sir James Graham's Bill of 1843 had proposed to set up 'factory schools' which would have been dominated by Anglicans. Voluntaryism in education had always been preferred by Nonconformists to state intervention. The impending legislation now converted their suspicions of state control into outright

⁸⁷ E Baines to J G Marshall 30.01.44 and published in Leeds Mercury 03.02.44. Edward Baines and Sons contributed £150 to the League. See Leeds Mercury 17.01.46.

⁸⁸ Leeds Mercury 14.06.23, 16.04.25

⁸⁹ May The Economy pp 135-137.

⁹⁰ Leeds Mercury 06.12.45. The two pamphlets the younger Baines had previously written on behalf of the cause became part of the canon of Anti-Corn Law literature. See E Baines (Jun) On the Moral Influence of Free Trade and its Effects on the Prosperity of Nations (London 1830) and E Baines (Jun) Reasons in Favour of Free Trade in Corn and Against a Fixed Duty; Three Letters to the Rt Hon Lord John Russell (Leeds 1843). They were republished in A Kadish ed The Corn Laws; the Formation of Popular Economics in Britain vol V (London 1996)

⁹¹ Forty years before Baines had argued for a system of national education. 'It is in vain to multiply criminal laws while national education is neglected ... contrast ...the number of crimes in England and Scotland - in the one public education does not at all enter into the system of Government, in the other, though Government do not much interfere, the subordinate Magistracy pays this subject peculiar attention, and ... (thus) not half the crimes are committed in Scotland as in England, taking the same extent of population.' See Leeds Mercury 12.12.01

opposition of state aid.⁹²

In Leeds, protesters gathered at the Commercial Buildings to object to the Government's Bill and the 'sectarian and exclusive system' that it proposed. Baines the Elder chaired the meeting, Baines the Younger spoke. The bill was eventually dropped.⁹³ But the dispute rumbled on with the younger Baines the spokesman for the Nonconformists, adamant that it was 'far better for Government not to interfere.'⁹⁴ Baines Senior was again called to chair subsequent meetings in East Parade Chapel, the Rotunda and the Coloured Cloth Hall yard. Here an unlikely alliance of Tories and Chartists along with Dr Hook, the Vicar of Leeds, and the clergy were ranged on the one side; the Liberals and Nonconformists on the other. The Liberals had urged the elder Baines to join them and speak. For an hour, he energetically and passionately made their case. Even his opponents had to admire the effectiveness of his delivery. His warning echoed his long held belief in voluntarism:

There is one thing this measure will do for the poor. It will deteriorate their condition. It will deprive them of their independence and lead them to look up for state supplies when they ought to look to their own industry. It will make them look upon the State instead of themselves.⁹⁵

Edward Junior asserted that his campaign had the 'full hearted concurrence' of his father at 'every step.'⁹⁶ Baines even presented a petition of 25 000 signatures to Lord John Russell, the new Prime Minister, who 'courteously received' them.⁹⁷

⁹² Stephens W B 'Elementary Education and Literacy 1770-1870'; A History of Modern Leeds ed Fraser D (Manchester 1980) p 230. See also Binfield So Down to Prayers p 83. For details of the failure of the educational reform in 1843, see G I T Machin Politics and The Churches in Great Britain 1832-1868.(Oxford 1977) pp 151-160

⁹³ Leeds Mercury 25.03.43. Curtis History of Education p241

⁹⁴ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 315. The younger Baines then produced two open letters to Robert Peel containing a mass of statistics to justify his voluntarist stance. See E Baines (Jun) The Social, Educational and Religious State of the Manufacturing Districts with Statistical Returns in Two Letters to The Right Honourable Sir Robert Peel (London 1843). Voluntarists 'became known everywhere as the Baines Party.' See Fraser Pressure From Without p 198

⁹⁵ Leeds Mercury 06.03.47, 13.03.47, 20.03.47. The Wesleyans did accept State help. By 1851, however, there were fifteen Nonconformists schools in Leeds including three Roman Catholic ones. By 1867, Baines Junior had to admit that a complete voluntary system was not viable See Stephens WB History of Modern Leeds pp 231-232

⁹⁶ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines pp 331-332. The family were not united on the issue. Frederick supported voluntarism but Baines's other sons, Matthew Talbot and Thomas, supported the Government. Matthew Talbot was quite emphatic stating; 'I for one, rejoice greatly over the improved prospects of national education.' See Leeds Times 24.04.47

⁹⁷ Leeds Mercury 27.03.47. Peel resigned in June 1846 and Russell formed his administration in July. See Woodward Age of Reform pp 118, 638. The other delegates were the Mayor, George

One other great educational issue arose during the 1840s causing a bitter, national, furor and placed Baines in a most ambivalent position. In 1845, Peel chose to increase the annual grant to the Roman Catholic seminary at Maynooth from £9 000 to £26 000. He hoped that by improving the status of the college, he would generate a more conciliatory attitude from the priests of the future and hence improve relations with Rome. Many Conservatives were incensed, Gladstone resigned and opposition was launched by a wide spectrum of political and religious interests.⁹⁸ Protest meetings were called across the country. In Leeds, Baptists, Wesleyans, New Connexion Methodists and Independents flocked to East Parade Chapel to voice their concern. Baines was called to the chair. It was a difficult time for him, he explained. He found himself 'placed in a new position.' For forty years he had campaigned for the rights of Roman Catholics and had repeatedly objected to the impositions placed upon them. Time and again he cried out that 'the Catholic claims should be granted.'⁹⁹ Now, in effect, he found himself arguing vigorously against them as far as Peel's proposal was concerned. His concluding remarks were greeted with rapturous applause as he outlined the ways opposition must be carried out at

public meetings, by petitions to Parliament, and if necessary by going to the foot of the throne itself.¹⁰⁰

But although the Tory party was split on the issue, Peel was supported by four fifths of the Opposition, and his bill triumphed with a greater majority than he expected.¹⁰¹

The provision of Catholic colleges paled into insignificance in the autumn of 1845 as the last major famine to strike the Western world descended on Ireland.¹⁰² What exactly happened in the country during that cataclysm is still the subject of impassioned historical debate. But what is known is that mass starvation swept across

Goodman, John Wilkinson, Peter Fairbairn and Francis Carbutt, all of them Whig-Liberals..

⁹⁸ Parry Rise and Fall of Liberal Government p 162. Peel also hoped to set up colleges in the north, south and west of Ireland with a sum of £30 000 set aside for buildings. It was not intended that Maynooth should be used solely for training priests. See Woodward Age of Reform pp 336-337. Opposition came from 'ultra-Protestants in Britain ... (and) irreconcilables among the Catholic hierarchy.' See Foster Modern Ireland p 315

⁹⁹ Leeds Mercury 30.12.09. He argued there was also a pragmatic reason for such action. 'The most effectual way of checking ... their errors ... (is) to treat them with liberality.' See Leeds Mercury 18.05.05

¹⁰⁰ Leeds Mercury 19.04.45

¹⁰¹ Gash Robert Peel pp 472-481

¹⁰² E M Crawford 'Preface'; Famine the Irish Experience; 900-1900 (Edinburgh 1989) p v

the land and left in its wake a myriad dead.¹⁰³ Baines had long felt sympathy with the Irish. They were a people whom he claimed

live not only on the lowest kind of food, but in the most wretched cabins and clad in the meanest garb¹⁰⁴

That 'lowest kind of food' was the potato, useful not only for feeding families but also for rearing pigs, cattle and fowls; and upon it the Irish people were totally dependent.¹⁰⁵

When famine had struck in 1822, Baines had urged speedy help; 'he who gives earliest, gives most,' he had written.¹⁰⁶ In the summer of 1845 it seemed no such help would be required that year for in August, the Leeds Intelligencer cheerfully reported;

The potato crop in the north of Ireland will this year be the most abundant ever known.¹⁰⁷

But that same August, Peel received information from the Isle of Wight that a fungal blight had struck the potatoes there.¹⁰⁸ By October, the Mercury reported that there would be 'a deficiency in many parts of the kingdom' but it was also able to quote the optimistic Dublin Evening Post that the crop in Ireland 'was much less damaged than was anticipated.'¹⁰⁹ A fortnight later, the grim reality became clear. The disease had decimated the crops in the south and west of that country.¹¹⁰ It was the beginning of a series of disastrous crop failures that occurred in Ireland each year between 1845 and 1850.¹¹¹ By the end of 1846, the extent of the devastation was known. Three quarters of the Irish crop had been destroyed. In Scotland, too, there was whole scale failure. It became apparent to many that emergency help was needed; others adamantly

¹⁰³ For a recent analysis of the historiography of the disaster see Foster Modern Ireland pp 318-344

¹⁰⁴ Baines Reign of George III vol I p 157

¹⁰⁵ C Woodham-Smith The Great Hunger; Ireland 1845-1849 (London 1964) p 35

¹⁰⁶ Leeds Mercury 18.05.22

¹⁰⁷ Leeds Intelligencer 16.08.45

¹⁰⁸ It was first reported in North America in 1843 and in Europe in June 1845. See P Solar 'The Great Famine was no Ordinary Subsistence Crisis'; Famine; the Irish Experience 900-1900 (Edinburgh 1989) p 112. The blight was caused by the fungus, *Phytophthora infestans*. See Woodham-Smith The Great Hunger p 94

¹⁰⁹ Leeds Mercury 04.10.45

¹¹⁰ It also ravaged the crops in England with the Leeds area losing 20% of its winter harvest. See Woodham-Smith The Great Hunger p 39 and Leeds Mercury 15.11.45. Ironically, in 1845, the potato harvest in Scotland 'was one of the finest ever known.' See J Prebble The Highland Clearances (Harmondsworth 1970) p 171

¹¹¹ In 1847, the disease 'had nearly exhausted itself, but still appeared in different parts of the country.' See E M Crawford 'William Wilde's Table of Irish Famines 900-1850'; Famine; the Irish Experience 900-1900 ed E M Crawford (Edinburgh 1989) pp 23-27.

disagreed.¹¹² The more compassionate citizens of Leeds met in the Court House on Friday 5 January 1847, to consider the situation. There was no doubt there of the gravity of the state of affairs and all were agreed upon the 'necessity for relief.' It was Baines who made the rallying cry. He pointed out that the Government may well have to provide 'the great amount of assistance that would be required' but stressed 'it was exceedingly desirable to mix with it public benevolence.' And the room echoed with cheers when he emphasised the need to 'supply the present urgent needs ...of our fellow subjects in Scotland and Ireland.'¹¹³ Peel's Government responded to the immediate situation and repealed the Corn Laws as a means of alleviating the crisis.¹¹⁴ However, the subsequent policy of Russell's Administration failed to address the problem adequately and between 1 million and 1.5 million Irish people eventually perished in the catastrophe.¹¹⁵

II

The compassion and the eagerness to attempt to alleviate some of the Irish suffering which Baines had demonstrated that day in the Court House typified the man. He had been unstinting in his public service through the years and could justifiably claim to have fulfilled his hope to promote the happiness of his fellow men. Thus it came as no surprise to many that on 1 June 1846 the council elected him an alderman. It was a token gesture. Every man present in the chamber knew that he would never accept. When the suggestion had first been mooted, he had indicated he would be forced to refuse 'his health being in a precarious state.'¹¹⁶ He finally had had to recognise that there were limits even to his public life. He had acknowledged it as early as 1841 when after the election that year he had realised that his health was in a poor state and he must make every effort to recuperate. Withdrawing then for some months

¹¹² Solar Famine: the Irish Experience pp115-118. Prebble The Highland Clearances p 173 The Times and others in England maintained that, once again, the Irish were exaggerating their situation. See Kee Ireland p 91.

¹¹³ Leeds Mercury 09.01.47. Leeds Times 09.01.47

¹¹⁴ Peel was already determined on repeal; the famine 'was no more than an excuse.' See Ramsden History of the Conservative Party Since 1830 p 70

¹¹⁵ J S Donnelly 'Famine and Government Response 1845-1846'; 'The Administration of Relief 1847-1851; Excess Mortality and Emigration'; A New History of Ireland vol V ed Vaughan W E (Oxford 1989) pp 276-285, 316-331, 351-356. See also Woodham-Smith The Great Hunger p 408 and Foster Modern Ireland p 324

¹¹⁶ Leeds Times 06.06.46, Leeds Mercury 13.06.46. For his letter declining the position see E Baines to J A Ikin, Town Clerk, 09.06.46 and cited in Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 326

from the turbulence of local politics and the hurly-burly of the Mercury office, he relaxed at Wentworth House as a guest of Earl Fitzwilliam. He visited old friends in Cheshire and Wrexham, stayed at Southport and spent much of his time on his beloved farm, Barton Grange on Chat Moss.¹¹⁷

Chat Moss lay in the parish of Eccles between Manchester and Liverpool and was a sprawling 2 500 acres of bogland wilderness. It was owned by the de Trafford Family and attempts had previously been made by tenants to reclaim it. Land reclamation was not new. From Stuart times, efforts had been made to utilise some of the vast areas of waste land in England and Wales but at the beginning of the eighteenth century about a quarter of the nation still remained either as neglected wilderness or sparsely used terrain. The great upsurge in land reclamation was prompted by the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars and became particularly urgent after 1802.¹¹⁸ The reclamation of Chat Moss typified that development. In 1798 William Wakefield began a major scheme there. Seven years later, William Roscoe bought out Wakefield and endeavoured to complete the project. Roscoe was an attorney, one-time MP and a man of letters but he had little farming experience and bankruptcy followed in 1820.¹¹⁹ Baines, however, recognised the potential of Chat Moss, particularly as the proposed Manchester-Liverpool Railway was planned to run across it. Thus when William Roscoe went bankrupt, Baines and a Warrington businessman, John Arthur Borran, decided to undertake the operation. Borran leased about 1 300 acres and Baines the remainder. Initially, Joseph Nelson of Leeds was appointed as farmer by Baines but in a short time he formed a farming company with Edward Evans and seven others. It was known as Edward Evans and Co. and it appointed William Reed as its farming expert. Later, John Bell was brought from Scotland to act first as farm bailiff and then as farm manager. It was he who made the most significant improvements to the area.¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 278. The break was evidently beneficial. He wrote, whilst staying with the Rawsons at Pickhill Hall near Wrexham; 'I found in this delightful retreat the blessings of health of body and tranquillity of mind.' Entry in Mrs Rawson's album 01.09.41 and cited in Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 294

¹¹⁸ Court Economic History pp 20-21

¹¹⁹ J Goodier Early Days in Irlam Village (1896-1914) (Salford 1977) pp 35-37. See also Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 122. Among Roscoe's works were his Life of Lorenzo de Medici and his Life and Pontificate of Leo the Tenth.

¹²⁰ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines pp 121-122. See Goodier Irlam Village pp 35-37 see also C Wheaton Barton and Irlam Moss (Irlam 1990) pp 6-7, 11-12. Barton Moss and Irlam Moss are part of Chat Moss.

The extent of the problems which Baines and his company faced was considerable. The area was so marshy that it was possible to push an iron rod eighteen feet into the ground by hand. But a strategy was designed for improvement and work soon began. The area was systematically drained. The surface was then peeled off and burnt. Night soil from Manchester was brought by barge on the River Irwell and spread over the fields. Tons of marl were dumped to add body and nutrients to the land. In order to transport such bulk from the river to his estate, Baines had a light railway built. The small waggons were drawn by horses which, when they reached the boggier parts, wore pattens over their rear hooves.¹²¹ Small movable railway lines were laid over the fields to carry the compost to the areas that needed spreading. Then hand shovels and forks were used to scatter the nightsoil and marl abroad. When that was done, good roads were constructed, plantations of larch and fir trees were established and root and grain crops grown. A steam engine was installed to power the threshing and chopping machines and a 'beautiful estate was eventually formed.'¹²²

Baines sublet most of the land to William Nuttall, Thomas Redfearn and Joseph Higham. But he retained about 200 acres for himself, staying, when at Chat Moss, in Barton Grange Farm and also maintaining an interest in Boysnape Farm.¹²³ He had a deep passion for country life, an echo, perhaps, of his North Riding farming ancestry. He was certainly never happier than when he was actively involved in hoeing or pruning at Barton Grange or supervising the harvest. It was an interest he retained for the rest of his life. But it was an expensive interest. The railway from the River Irwell alone cost over £900 to build. Nonetheless, Baines Junior claimed that if his father did not improve his fortune at Chat Moss, he 'did not materially impair it.'¹²⁴

Baines had other business interests as well as farming and in them he still exercised that degree of concern that characterised his attitude to society generally. He did so as a shareholder of the waterworks company. Leeds had long had a problem with

¹²¹ It is impossible for horses to walk if they also wear them on their front hooves. The author in conversation with Cyril Wheaton, a ninety year-old horseman, who worked Cadishead Moss adjacent to Barton Moss. 21.03.1999

¹²² Most of this paragraph is based on Goodier Irlam Village pp 35-43. See also Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines pp 122-123

¹²³ Today it is known as Boysnope Farm.

¹²⁴ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines pp 122-123, 307-308. See also Last Will and Testament of Edward Baines; 21.07.48 (Borthwick Institute) hereinafter referred to as Baines Will. There is still a road named after him in Lower Irlam called Baines Avenue.

its water supply. Its inhabitants either drew water from the polluted river, from wells and standpipes or bought it from water vendors.¹²⁵ Letters had appeared in the press from time to time complaining that ‘the inhabitants of Leeds were not supplied with water of a wholesome quality.’¹²⁶ In 1837, a joint stock company was established to provide an improved supply. It was run by councillors and shareholders’ directors. Baines was a shareholder.¹²⁷ At the 1846 shareholders’ meeting, which discussed increasing the town’s water supply, he left his colleagues in no doubt where their responsibility lay, stating that:

It was extremely desirable that attention should be directed to the manner of supplying the cottages of the humbler classes with water.¹²⁸

Railways were another example of an extremely desirable ‘vast public utility,’¹²⁹ and one for which Baines had long held a passion. In 1802, he featured a report in the Mercury of Richard Lovell Edgeworth’s claim to have invented railways, for at that time his mind was full of railways, or so an old friend from Preston claimed.¹³⁰ And so also, it appeared, were the minds of other imaginative individuals. Letters on the advantages of railways began appearing in the columns of the Mercury as the full potential of this new means of transport became recognised by more and more people.¹³¹ By the end of 1824 Baines observed ‘that the nation is going “Railway Mad.”’ He went on optimistically;

We have hitherto seen no thing in the new zeal for Railway speculations which we have not hailed with pleasure.¹³²

¹²⁵ Beresford East End, West End p 385. Burt and Grady The Illustrated History of Leeds pp 107-108

¹²⁶ Leeds Patriot 19.09.29. See also Leeds Mercury 21.01.26. ‘Aquarius’ argued that the lack of wholesomeness was due to the use of lead pipes which had ‘disadvantages very serious.’ Leeds Mercury 27.01.10.

¹²⁷ Barber History of Modern Leeds p 316. Leeds Mercury 04.06.42

¹²⁸ Leeds Times 02.01.47. See also Leeds Mercury 09.01.47. The company, however, did not anticipate the growing demand for water and in 1852 the council exercised its right to buy it out. See Barber History of Modern Leeds p 317-318 and Burt and Grady The Illustrated History of Leeds p 163

¹²⁹ Quoted from his description of Murray’s steam engine when it was successfully tested on Brandling’s Middleton Railway in 1812. See Leeds Mercury 27.06.12

¹³⁰ Leeds Mercury 21.08.02. Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p59

¹³¹ In 1814 a series of letters appeared in the Mercury proposing the building of a railway between Leeds and Selby using a ‘Patent Steam Carriage as now in use at Middleton Colliery.’ See Leeds Mercury 30.07.14, 13.08.14. As early as 1802 ‘Mercator’ had proposed a horse drawn railway between Leeds and Selby. See Leeds Mercury 16.01.02

¹³² Leeds Mercury 24.12.24

The following week his readers realised that his interest was not purely that of a dispassionate editor. The Mercury announced that Baines was now a committee member of the newly formed Leeds-Hull Railway, and a visionary one. He stated his hopes for the proposed line:

It is very narrow of the subject to consider it as a mere medium for the carriage of merchandise We have little doubt that ultimately the railway communication will extend without interference from the German Ocean to the Irish Sea.¹³³

But the adverse economic situation that developed in 1825 coupled with the opening of a new canal between Ferrybridge and Goole saw the scheme fall into abeyance. Between 1828 and 1829 it was, in part, resurrected. It was proposed to build a railway between Leeds and Selby and from there goods would be transported to Hull by steam packet. On 16 July 1830, the first general meeting of the Leeds-Selby Railway Company was called with Baines appointed a director.¹³⁴ The line opened in 1834.¹³⁵ Between 1836 and 1837, 1 500 miles of railway were authorised by Parliament. The first railway boom was underway.¹³⁶

By 1842, Baines had become a shareholder of the North Midland Railway.¹³⁷ Then from 1844 to 1847, railway speculation rampaged across the country almost out of control. Baines Junior explained 'the epidemic raged for many months, and entailed ruin on thousands.'¹³⁸ It has been estimated that the economy at the time had an annual surplus of some £60 million waiting for investment.¹³⁹ Public interest was excessive in the various schemes. The Mercury endeavoured to educate its readers on the issues involved in buying shares and dealing with stockbrokers by employing a 'professional

¹³³ Leeds Mercury 01.01.25

¹³⁴ Tomlinson The North Eastern Railway pp 202-205

¹³⁵ The route was extended to Hull in 1840. See Unwin History of Modern Leeds p 132.

¹³⁶ May Economic and Social History p 154

¹³⁷ Leeds Mercury 19.11.42, 25.02.43. Leeds Times 19.11.42

¹³⁸ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 321

¹³⁹ Hobsbawm Industry and Empire p 112. Hobsbawm argues 'such a vast economic stimulus' came as the country was 'passing through its most catastrophic slump.' See p 114. May disputes this, arguing that railways did not 'almost single-handedly' bale out the capitalist system. May Economic and Social History p 155. Eric Evans also claims Hobsbawm's view 'may be an exaggeration.' See E Evans The Forging of the Modern State: Early Industrial Britain 1783-1870 (London 1996) p 125

gentleman' to explain them.¹⁴⁰ Such was the escalation of proposals for new railways that the Saturday paper had to issue three supplements to carry details of them all.¹⁴¹ And the Leeds Intelligencer, like so many others, referred to it simply as 'Railway mania.'¹⁴² Baines, however, was too shrewd to be caught up in the general frenzy of wild speculation that took place. He only invested a moderate amount in a few local railways and thus his losses were small. Thousands, however, were ruined.¹⁴³

In the spring of 1844, a meeting was held of those interested in the possibility of building a Leeds-Thirsk Railway. Baines was present. In March 1845 he was nominated as a director, and in July, Parliament authorised its construction.¹⁴⁴ In his capacity as a private individual and director of the company, he still insisted on the same integrity that he claimed he had exercised all his public life. At one of the earliest meetings of the company it had been suggested that land should be purchased from the River Ure Navigation Company. About eighteen months later some of the directors had become hesitant over the proposal. It was left to Baines to point out the unethical nature of renegeing on such a deal. He stated clearly that 'they were bound by all honour and honesty to ratify the bargain.'¹⁴⁵

The line itself, although just over forty-six miles long, required some remarkable engineering feats to complete it. It was necessary to construct the 3 763 yards long Bramhope tunnel and a series of viaducts over the rivers Aire, Wharfe,

¹⁴⁰ Leeds Mercury 16.08.45. The Mercury had previously explained economic and other important issues. For examples see 03.09.08 for the Small Note Act, 06.10.10 for 'Omnium', 30.11.16 for rendering 'VERY unsound corn ... into good bread.'

¹⁴¹ Leeds Mercury 23.08.45, 04.10.45. The following week, as well as the supplements, the Mercury distributed 17 000 maps of the railways in Yorkshire and Lancashire. To achieve meeting the deadline sixty men and boys worked from Thursday to Saturday morning non-stop. Some of the printing had to be carried out on Leeds Times machines. The range of the railways being proposed ranged from Essex-Suffolk, East Lancs-Airedale to Great Paris-Strasburg. See Leeds Mercury 11.10.45. See also Baines Papers: MS No 61.10 E Baines (Jun) to E Baines 17.10.45.

¹⁴² For the use 'railway mania' see Leeds Intelligencer 18.10.45. The expression had been used several years previously. See W Constable Diary 1836 (unpublished and in the possession of the author) 'Railway Mania ... Gt Western Railway shares at £30.00 prem.' Entry for 29.02.36. Between 1845 and 1848 some 650 Acts authorised the construction of 9 000 miles of line. See May Economic and Social History p 154. Such was the eagerness of promoters to attract investors, the Lancashire-Yorkshire North Eastern Railway claimed in its prospectus that Baines was a provisional committeeman without his knowledge. See P E Baughan The Railways of Wharfedale (Newton Abbot 1969) p 44

¹⁴³ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 321

¹⁴⁴ Leeds Mercury 04.05.44, 07.03.45. See also Tomlinson The North Eastern Railway p 463 He was re-nominated in 1846. See Leeds Mercury 07.03.46

¹⁴⁵ Leeds Mercury 01.02.45, 05.09.46

Crimple and Nidd. On Monday 30 March at 11am Baines witnessed part of that construction. Along with his fellow directors, he stood on the banks of the River Wharfe to watch the laying of the foundation stone of the 470 yards long Wharfedale Viaduct.¹⁴⁶

Baines had warned that 'grand opposition will be made to the railway companies.'¹⁴⁷ He was right. Canals and coaching concerns realised the danger that the new transport system posed. They were correct in their fears, for eventually both older modes of carriage suffered at the expense of the new steam locomotives. In ten years, from 1840 to 1850, the railways changed England's perception of itself. A country whose outlook had been regional had become one whose outlook was national.¹⁴⁸ But though the coming of the railways had an adverse effects on certain sections of society, it undoubtedly had a major, and beneficial, social and economic impact on the nation as a whole. Baines had been correct. Railways did 'prove a great public benefit.'¹⁴⁹

He relished the new technology the railways offered. To be sure, whether in business life or private life, Baines was ever aware of, and eager to employ, new technologies where he could.¹⁵⁰ Hence it was not surprising then that when Mr Huggan, a photographer, opened his Portrait Gallery in Park Row, Baines paid him a visit to

¹⁴⁶ Tomlinson The North Eastern Railway p 500. Leeds Mercury 04.04.46. This section of the line was built not without cost. So many men died in constructing Bramhope Tunnel a memorial to them was erected in Otley Churchyard. See Baughan The Railways of Wharfedale p 57. It was building this section of the line by the viaduct that hundreds of drunken railway navvies fought a pitched battle with each other on Wescoe Hill. It left at least one man dead. See T Coleman The Railway Navvies; a History of the Men who Made the Railways (Harmondsworth 1972) p 107. The viaduct today is usually referred to as 'Arthington Viaduct.'

¹⁴⁷ Leeds Mercury 24.12.24

¹⁴⁸ A Bryant English Saga: 1840-1940 (Glasgow 1961) p 103. For an assessment of railways on 'the "nationalization" of life' see K Robbins Nineteenth Century Britain: England, Scotland and Wales, the Making of a Nation (Oxford 1989) pp 23-30. The integration of industry, trade and finance quickened 'with the new iron roads bringing every part of the country into close touch with each other.' See J Saville The Consolidation of the Capitalist State, 1800-1850 (London 1994) p 12

¹⁴⁹ Wellington would have disagreed with Baines. He deplored the fact, 'They encourage the lower classes to travel about.' See A Burton The Rainhill Story; the Great Locomotive Trial (London 1980) p 150. For an examination of the effect of railways on Britain see May Economic and Social History pp 150-164. For the effect railways had on canals see Hadfield British Canals pp 196-213. In Leeds the railways did not have so disastrous an effect on the Aire and Calder navigation. See Burt and Grady The Illustrated History of Leeds p 142. Baines would have been conscious of the effects of railways on the coaching industry as Leeds, by this time, was a major coaching centre. In 1838 some 130 coaches were arriving or leaving Leeds daily. See Bradley Coaching Days in Yorkshire p 148 For the decline of coaching in the area, see Bradley p 207. For Baines's comment on the value of, and the probable opposition to, railways see Leeds Mercury 24.12.24.

¹⁵⁰ For Baines's use of innovations in printing see above Chapter Three.

acquire a daguerreotype of himself in a morocco case.¹⁵¹ Nor was he averse to more general change where he felt it was beneficial. By 1842, the Leeds Literary Institution was in serious financial trouble.¹⁵² It had been founded in 1834 to offer a wide range of cultural activities to the 'intelligent middle class.' But when the Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society changed its membership terms and attracted a considerable number of new members, it sounded the death knell of the Literary Institution. The Mechanics' Institute, had also faced a financial crisis but thanks to its elite patrons, the organising abilities of Thomas Plint, and a broadening of its activities, it managed to survive. Indeed, so successful was its recovery, it had managed, by 1840, to raise sufficient capital to purchase its own premises in South Parade. At a meeting in March 1842, to consider the future of the ailing Literary Society, Baines recommended that it should combine with the Mechanics' Institute. The suggestion made sound economic sense and the merger was completed in May that year. The result was that the expanded and diversified programme which the new society pursued attracted a growing membership. This in turn generated an increased income. Its future was thus secured and as John Hope Shaw, a local solicitor, pointed out the two institutions were now 'joint proprietors of a building from which they were not likely to be ejected.' The union was heralded by a grand soiree in the new premises.¹⁵³

III

But unquestionably the grandest social occasion Baines was a party to was held in November 1841. When Baines returned to Leeds from Barton Grange at the end of summer that year, the dust of the recent election disappointment had finally settled and the Liberals had had time to consider what public tribute they could make to the man who had been for so long the pole star of Whig-liberalism in the West Riding.¹⁵⁴ It was decided that a subscription should be raised and a public presentation made. The firm of E and J Barnard was commissioned to produce the gift. The Mercury carried a

¹⁵¹ He was not alone; Dr Hook, Rev Hamilton and William Peel, the Prime Minister's nephew, did likewise. See Leeds Intelligencer 28.05.42, 01.06.44 and Leeds Mercury 27.08.42. Daguerre had invented his improved form of photography only five years previously in 1837. See S Lubar Infoculture; the Smithsonian Book of Information Age Inventions (Boston/New York 1993) p 51

¹⁵² This paragraph relies heavily on Morris Class, Sect and Society pp 306-311.

¹⁵³ *Ibid* p 309. See also Leeds Mercury 19.03.42, 07.05.42. Baines was also for some years an active member of the Leeds Library. See F Beckwith The Leeds Library 1768-1968 (Leeds 1994) pp 35, 36,

¹⁵⁴ The Liberals were also in celebratory mood at having beaten the Tories in every contested seat in the Leeds Municipal elections. See Leeds Mercury 06.11.41

detailed description of it in preparation for the great event. The tribute took the form of four silver covered dishes bearing the arms of Edward Baines and a triangular silver candelabrum centrepiece in frosted silver some thirty-one inches high. Three palm trees rose from its centre; from their foliage came six branches to hold lights. Engraved tablets on two of the sides depicted Baines's interests. One showed an agricultural scene with a railway in the background; another a printing press with Mercury's wand and bales of cloth. The third bore the inscription:

Presented to Edward Baines Esq by his friends and fellow-townsmen,
in admiration of the integrity, zeal, and ability with which he has
advocated the principles of civil and religious liberty during a public
life of more than forty years; and to evince their gratitude for his
important services as the faithful and indefatigable Representative of
the Borough of Leeds in three successive Parliaments.

Leeds, November, 1841.

But the most symbolic feature was the three figures which were poised at each corner; Truth, Liberty and Justice, appropriate symbols for the man who had devoted his life to the pursuit of each.¹⁵⁵

The presentation took place on Monday 22 November in the Music Hall. It was oversubscribed. Hundreds of ticket applications had to be rejected. The male members of the audience packed the auditorium; the ladies were seated in a temporary gallery that had been erected. Everyone was sitting facing the empty orange draped platform when shortly before noon the platform party arrived. All eyes were on one man, Edward Baines. He was a man above average height, some five feet ten and half inches tall, erect in his carriage, elastic in his step. His soft brown hair was tinged here and there with grey but his face showed no trace of the forty turbulent years he had spent in politics and publishing.¹⁵⁶ Now, surrounded by his wife and all his family he was a come to the apotheosis of his career.¹⁵⁷

His old ally Thomas Tottie was asked to take the chair and the tributes flowed. John Hope Shaw stressed that Baines had 'realised the most sanguine hopes of his old friends.' George Goodman, the first mayor of the reformed Leeds Council,

¹⁵⁵ Leeds Mercury 06.11.41. Sotheby's Catalogue 17.06.1965 Lots 114, 115. See also Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines pp 278-279

¹⁵⁶ This paragraph and the others describing the presentation are drawn from the reports in the Leeds Mercury 27.11.41, Leeds Intelligencer 27.11.41 and Leeds Times 27.11.41 and also Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines pp 279-284

¹⁵⁷ This is not strictly true. His eldest son, Matthew Talbot Baines, had been detained in London.

appropriately, thanked him for 'his unwearied exhaustions in accomplishing Municipal Reform.'¹⁵⁸ Alderman Bateson spoke of his 'great exertions' on behalf of 'a system of free commercial intercourse between the nations of the world.' William West, Secretary of the Leeds Anti-Slavery Society, complimented him on his efforts to gain 'unfettered admission of Dissenters to the privilege of the English Universities,' and also on the fact that he had 'asserted the rights of men.' Hatton Stansfeld summed up Baines's life as 'spent in trying to gain the development of civil, religious, and commercial freedoms.' The Rev Richard Winter Hamilton acknowledged the debt they all owed him. Then Tottie made the presentation and Baines responded.

It has been an ambition of my life ... to deserve the confidence ... the estimation of those who have had the best opportunities of appreciating my character and conduct ... this day that ambition has been gratified in the highest possible degree ... This brilliant trophy ... is an indication of the bloodless victories ... that we have won for this age and for posterity. These are the triumphs of "Truth," animated by the spirit of "Liberty," and directed by the even hand of "Justice." This brilliant tribute with which you have presented me shall descend to my posterity untarnished.

That posterity in the first instance was to be Edward Junior whose management of the Leeds Mercury and his other affairs whilst he was away at Westminster had allowed him to carry out his duties unimpeded. But Baines also insisted

that the said Testimonial shall be kept entire as presented to me and be retained in Leeds with which place it is so pre-eminently associated.¹⁵⁹

But for all the euphoria displayed in the Music Hall that day, it must never be forgotten there were many in the town who believed that the Baineses were, in Clyde Binfield's words, 'a dynasty of ruthless, calculating, high-minded, doctrinaire, coldly Christian grandees.'¹⁶⁰ There were those who had not forgotten how Baines had manipulated political meetings and had been accused of hiring 'rascals and base cowards' physically to abuse his enemies; nor how his 'Jezabel print of the Whigs' was 'always on the side of wealth and party.'¹⁶¹ Nevertheless, the Leeds press gave full

¹⁵⁸ This is not strictly true. Goodman was the third choice. Thomas Benyon and William Williams Brown both declined the office. See J Wardell The Municipal History of the Borough of Leeds (London 1846) p 96

¹⁵⁹ Baines Will. The testimonial was eventually sold by Colonel E F Baines at Sotheby's in June 1965. See Sotheby's Catalogue 17.06.1965 Lots 114, 115.

¹⁶⁰ Binfield So Down to Prayers p 62

¹⁶¹ The Poor Man's Guardian 21.10.32, 07.07.32, 09.02.33, 08.06.33. Oastler had suffered at the hands of the 'Bainites' and 'exhibited the back of his tattered garment.'

coverage to the event but Robert Perring in the Intelligencer, could not resist a sardonic gibe. 'Mr Baines descanted at considerable length.' Samuel Smiles in the Leeds Times was more wistfully reflective:

Mr Baines has influenced public opinion ... for the good, during the last forty years ... We look back ... to the time when he had to fight the battle of freedom ... almost single-handed ... (but) the recent .. defection of Mr Baines from the Liberal ranks ... we ... regret.¹⁶²

Baines had no such regrets. His mind was already occupied with matters of even greater import than the exigencies of party politics. Some time previously he had realised that the time had arrived when he must come to terms with nothing less than his personal relationship with God and a more explicit commitment to his religious beliefs.

On 3 January 1840, Edward Baines was finally admitted as a member of Salem Church.¹⁶³ This is not to imply that he had finally left the wilderness of agnosticism and found sanctuary in some oasis of faith. In this respect, Adrian Hastings claims that he 'appears as somewhat reluctantly religious.' But in fact throughout all his journalistic life Baines had been a committed Christian as an examination of his writings clearly show.¹⁶⁴ Nor do we find his religious sentiments expressed solely in his written words. In June 1819, whilst addressing a hostile crowd on Hunslet Moor, he reminded them that religion 'will be useful to you in this world, and will prepare you for another.'¹⁶⁵ When called upon to speak to the mass meeting held to support Queen Caroline at Bean Ing in early September 1820, he felt it incumbent to begin with a prayer

to that Being whose bounty had afforded to the country the auspicious season with which we were blessed with gathering in the abundant fruits of the earth.¹⁶⁶

Moreover, his son insists that he was 'attentive to the ordinary observances of religion, and not without zeal for it.'¹⁶⁷

¹⁶² Leeds Intelligencer 27.11.41, Leeds Times 27.11.41

¹⁶³ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 291. For more on Baines's religious beliefs see Chapter Two above and also Thornton Social and Political Thought of Edward Baines pp23-61

¹⁶⁴ It was certainly true he was reluctant to become a member of a particular sect and that he 'represented the Leeds spirit of religious seriousness fuelling secular improvement exceptionally well.' See A Hastings 'The Role of Leeds Within English Religious History' in Religion in Leeds ed A Mason (Stroud 1994) p 9.

¹⁶⁵ Binfield So Down to Prayers 68

¹⁶⁶ Leeds Mercury 09.09.20. For details of these meetings see Chapter Four above. His optimism was justified. The warm, dry summer that year had resulted in a plentiful harvest. See Stratton Agricultural Records p 99

¹⁶⁷ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 287

His faith was the fundamental belief on which his political and social philosophy was based. To him those who were unfortunate enough not to share that belief dwelt in the 'miseries of intellectual darkness,' lost in the 'mists of heathenism' which only 'the light of Christianity ... (could) dispel' for 'Christianity alone is true.'¹⁶⁸ He made it abundantly clear that, 'as we are Christians we owe our first duty to our MAKER and PRESERVER' and that the most effective way of fulfilling that obligation was through 'the efficacy of the Protestant religion.'¹⁶⁹ True, the 'mysterious dispensation of the Supreme Being (may well be) inscrutable to human wisdom' and man may not 'penetrate the impervious veil, that for beneficent purposes, has been cast over the future.'¹⁷⁰ But

God, who ... provides succour for the helpless, and forlorn ... will not forsake them in the evil day: His blessings will sustain them in the vicissitudes of life'.¹⁷¹

Be it for a harvest safely gathered in, the ending of a drought or the fall of Napoleon, mankind should 'express the most devout ascriptions of praise' to 'the Dispenser of all good.' and 'demonstrate his gratitude to the Supreme Being.'¹⁷²

He asserted that 'religion is a thing between God and man's own conscience.' Hence he believed that priests and politicians should leave religion to stand 'on its own immovable basis without attempting to elevate one sect ... or depress another.' In that sense, for him 'religion is purely a personal matter.'¹⁷³ And the way to pursue religion and a more fruitful life was through the Bible.

If we could enter every cottage in the Kingdom ... we should find, that in the same proportion that this invaluable book was read, there would be formed principles of integrity and habits of sobriety and industry.¹⁷⁴

On arriving in Leeds, Baines found himself philosophically attracted to the Dissenters. He was happy to worship with both the Congregationalists at Salem and the

¹⁶⁸ Leeds Mercury 10.04.13, 01.12.21 Baines History of Lancashire vol I (1836) p 23

¹⁶⁹ Leeds Mercury 07.01.09, 04.07.12

¹⁷⁰ Leeds Mercury 26.09.18, 26.09.12

¹⁷¹ Leeds Mercury 10.03.10

¹⁷² Leeds Mercury 09.09.20, 29.06.22, 16.04.14, 30.11.05. In this case a man should show his gratitude by 'the extent of his contributions to the widows and orphans of those ... who fell for the safety and honour of Britain' at Trafalgar.

¹⁷³ Leeds Mercury 04.05.11, 23.09.15, 27.02.13

¹⁷⁴ Leeds Mercury 11.10.17

Unitarians at Mill Hill but when he was accused of being 'all things to all men' he settled for Salem where the thinking of Edward Parsons, the minister, was more in accord with his own.¹⁷⁵ However, though he worshipped with his friends and family, he would not take the ultimate step of becoming an actual member of any particular church group, believing

there is an union indeed which may comprehend all names and denominations, of Christians ... that bond of Charity which is large enough to cover all the discrepancies in human creeds.¹⁷⁶

And it may well be that in later life, his passion for Dissent, which was acknowledged nationally, was not tarnished in the eyes of the public by association with any specific sect. He was thus the ideal man to be the spokesman for the Dissenters in Parliament and indeed, when he was returned to Westminster in 1837, he was the only 'Evangelical Dissenter' in the lower house.¹⁷⁷ But influences were at work that would eventually bring him into the Congregationalist fold.¹⁷⁸

He had long been conscious of man's limitations. When Samuel Romilly committed suicide, Baines was left to lament how 'short sighted and weak are men! How dark and wonderful the footsteps of Providence.'¹⁷⁹ The Christian life was 'the only *sure* way of preparing for death.'¹⁸⁰ Baines had been fortunate that in fifty years of marriage death had only twice struck in the family home and that was when his two young sons had died in 1810. Then, in the late 1830s, the deaths of several near relatives, two brothers, a sister and his brother-in-law, John Talbot, in a matter of only two or three years, starkly brought home to him a reminder of his own mortality. 'My generation is rapidly passing away', he realised.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁵ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines pp 29-30, 57

¹⁷⁶ Leeds Mercury 16.11.11. See also Binfield So Down to Prayers p 71

¹⁷⁷ 'Not a single peer professed Nonconformity.' See R T Jones Congregationalism in England 1662-1962 (London 1962) p 207. Baines Junior may well have taken exception, to the word 'evangelical' used here in relation to his father. He claimed that the 'evangelical Christian' was one who 'had a deeper sense of spiritual things,' a sense which the Elder Baines had yet to acquire at this time. See Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 285

¹⁷⁸ Historically, the terms 'Congregational' and 'Independent' are considered to be synonymous, though this was not the case under the Commonwealth and Protectorate. For a more detailed exposition see R W Dale History of English Congregationalism ed A W W Dale (London 1907) pp 375-376

¹⁷⁹ Leeds Mercury 07.11.18. Romilly slashed his throat. See Colley Forging a Nation p 151

¹⁸⁰ Leeds Mercury 31.08.16

¹⁸¹ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines pp 288-291

But it was not simply the impending inevitability of his own death which finally galvanised him into accepting membership at Salem. It was the result of a slow spiritual transition that emerged only in his latter years when a growing awareness gradually overtook him of 'the unspeakable importance of, and interest in, things spiritual and eternal.' He became more keenly conscious of his personal defects. He recognised, now, the deeper sense of gratitude he owed to God for elevating him to such a position of trust as a Member of Parliament. He was grateful for the divine munificence that had granted him a family which was both successful and united. And he saw the hand of Providence at work when, Margaret, his youngest daughter, recovered from a serious and protracted illness.¹⁸²

In London, he spent much time in the company of several deeply religious individuals, among whom was Charlottes' cousin, Dr John Pye Smith, one of 'the most eminent Evangelical Nonconformists of that time.'¹⁸³ Their influence, no doubt, slowly contributed to his change of heart. Subconsciously too, he was also absorbing the emerging religious *Zeitgeist* of the time, a spiritual trend which was beginning to influence so many prominent Whigs. For Russell, Howick, Morpeth, Baring and 'very many others' gone was the old Whig anti-clericalism. In its place there emerged a recognition of the vital part religion played in maintaining a stable society and which granted 'an inner experience providing man with a sense of something beyond his powers.' By 1839, a 'frighteningly "serious"' devoutness was discernible, particularly in Howick and Morpeth.¹⁸⁴ In Baines it was no less so.

He had spent his life in a town where the Church was ineffective and Dissent was dominant. It was estimated that Nonconformists in Leeds were twice as numerous as Anglicans.¹⁸⁵ In the reformed council of 1835, over half the councillors were Dissenters as were all its mayors for the first ten years.¹⁸⁶ The '*de facto* religion' may well have been Methodism, as the new vicar Walter Hook suggested,¹⁸⁷ but

¹⁸² Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines pp 287-288

¹⁸³ Ibid pp287-288. Dale History of English Congregationalism p 633

¹⁸⁴ Parry Rise and Fall of Liberal Government p 135 and more generally see Brent Liberal Anglican Politics pp 104-143

¹⁸⁵ Dalton Thoresby Society vol LXIII p 32

¹⁸⁶ Binfield So Down to Prayers pp 61, 69

¹⁸⁷ N Yates 'The Religious Life of Victorian Leeds': History of Modern Leeds ed D Fraser (Manchester 1980) p 250

Congregationalists formed a substantial minority in the town. It was against such a background and subjected to those influences that Baines slowly eased towards a deeper commitment to that specific sect. His dearest friend, Rev John Ely had, by 1837, detected an awakening of a greater spiritual awareness in him and wrote:

Have you not, my dear sir, felt for sometime past a growing sense of the spirituality of religion? ... You have seen in one and another of your family what a spiritual change is ... how precious is the Lord Jesus in their esteem - how heavenly minded! ... A similar change is indispensable to us all ... May I beg that you will ... spread the whole case of your own spirit before God, and that you will surrender yourself to be saved by a Saviour's merit, and dedicated to his glory. A solemn personal act of humble application and self-devotement cannot be in vain.¹⁸⁸

To become a member of a Congregationalist Church such an 'act of humble application' was required. A person seeking fellowship had to satisfy the minister and two deacons that he understood the fundamental truths of the Evangelical faith, trusted in Christ for eternal salvation and determined to keep His commandments. Then the Church - sometimes only the male members - voted whether to accept or reject the would-be candidate.¹⁸⁹ The members at Salem included Charlotte Baines, the Baines offspring and many of their family friends.¹⁹⁰

But undoubtedly, it was Charlotte Baines who made the greatest impact in Baines's final recognition of where his spiritual home lay. She was a deeply committed Christian, a woman of 'earnest prayer and lively faith.'¹⁹¹ For generations her family had worshipped at Call Lane Chapel but it was Charlotte, then only a young woman, who had the strength of character and sincerity of faith that led her to break that trend. Recognising that the minister and many of the congregation were drifting towards Arianism, she decided to move her allegiance to a place more in accordance with her own beliefs.¹⁹² She opted for the recently opened Congregationalist Church at Salem.

¹⁸⁸ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines pp 289. The letter was written on the death of Baines's brother John. Baines felt so keenly about his friendship with Ely that he made him a trustee of his will and left him £10 to buy a mourning ring. See Baines Will

¹⁸⁹ Dale History of English Congregationalism p 590

¹⁹⁰ Morris Class, Sect and Society p 155

¹⁹¹ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 32

¹⁹² *Ibid* p 32. Arianism 'protects the absolute sovereignty of God. ... If Christ is divine, it can only be in the sense that he is "divinized" by his association with God.' See J Bowker ed The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions (Oxford 1997) p 88.

It stood south of the river by Leeds Bridge on Hunslet Lane next to the Leeds Theatre and opposite the South Market.¹⁹³ She led the way; her family eventually followed. As a mother, she brought up her own family in a home dedicated to sound Christian values. 'We cannot serve God and Mammon' she wrote to Edward Junior, whilst Baines himself wrote of he and his wife 'conforming our conduct to the standard of the Christian religion.'¹⁹⁴ For years she had prayed that her husband would eventually commit himself to the Congregationalist fold.¹⁹⁵

In November 1839, John Ely once more approached Baines who this time acknowledged to Ely that the moment was finally come, and was brought about

under your powerful ministry and under a domestic ministry little less persuasive, ... I cannot longer delay.¹⁹⁶

When John Pye Smith of Homerton heard of Baines's intention, he wrote on Christmas Eve of the joy which 'your excellent and beloved family are favoured to feel on this great occasion.'¹⁹⁷ Thus Baines became a member of Salem Congregational Church, a place dear to the heart of the Baines Family. As Charlotte Baines recalled to her son Edward, it was

a place that will live in all our recolection (sic) - to some of you - the place of your first serious impressions and the nursery of your infant faith.¹⁹⁸

The Leeds of the 1840s was an overcrowded, unhealthy, insanitary town. The daily pollution from its factories and mills was ever present. The constant threat of cholera or typhus lurked in the minds of its inhabitants.¹⁹⁹ By 1838, the area south of the River Aire around Salem had become more industrialised and by then four fifths of the chapel's congregation now lived north of the river. So it was decided to move to a new location. Baines and his sons contributed £500 to the £15 000 required and on

¹⁹³ Salem opened in 1791. See Griffin Salem Chapel p 1

¹⁹⁴ Baines Papers: MS No47 Mrs C Baines to E Baines Junior 26.05.24 and MS No 51.7 E Baines to Mrs C Baines 19.06.21

¹⁹⁵ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 293. Baines's lack of commitment 'was intensely painful to her.' See Binfield So Down to Prayers p 71

¹⁹⁶ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 291

¹⁹⁷ J Pye Smith to E Baines 24.12.39 and cited in Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 292-293

¹⁹⁸ Baines Papers: MS No47 Mrs C Baines to E Baines (Jun) 29.05.41

¹⁹⁹ Dalton Thoresby Society vol LXIII p 31. For a graphic analysis of the situation see Beresford East End; West End pp 381-405. For attempts to rectify the problem see D Fraser 'Improvement in Early Victorian Leeds'; Publications of the Thoresby Society vol LIII part 1 (Leeds 1971)

6 January 1841 the Baines Family along with the Whig families of the Rawsons, Plints and Willans, in all 374 members and all adherents, followed their pastor to their new spiritual home at East Parade Chapel.²⁰⁰ Charlotte Baines lamented with a heavy heart:

Nothing but a change of circumstances would have induced us to leave -
and to worship in the new and larger sanctuary .²⁰¹

But at least she now knew that her husband had at last announced he would devote the rest of his life 'to the glory of God and ... the happiness of my fellow men.'²⁰²

Charlotte, who played such a vital part in her husband's life, appears rarely to have been involved in the social events he attended. Baines enjoyed attending the soirées of the Mechanics' Institute and Literary Society in the company of such luminaries as Lord Morpeth and the Earl Fitzwilliam or listening to the likes of George Stephenson and Charles Dickens. In December 1847, some 1 200 gathered in the Music Hall to listen to the great author, despite the fact he was suffering from a 'disastrous cold.' In the audience were Edward Junior, his wife, Martha, and his ageing father but Charlotte Baines does not appear to have been present.²⁰³

Nevertheless, Charlotte had a significant influence both on her husband and her family.²⁰⁴ It was a close family and one in which Baines took considerable pride.²⁰⁵ He was not ashamed to show his affection for his children, caressing them when small, playing games with them as they grew older, and displaying understanding as they reached puberty. Above all, he encouraged them to think for themselves.²⁰⁶ He demonstrated that love all his life. When his Parliamentary duties prevented him from attending his daughter Anna's twenty-first birthday, he wrote apologising for his

²⁰⁰ Griffin Salem Chapel pp 10-12. Morris Class, Sect and Society p 155. Binfield So Down to Prayers p 74. See also Leeds Times 09.01.41

²⁰¹ Baines Papers: MS No47 Mrs C Baines to E Baines (Jun) 29.05.41. The chapel would seat nearly 2 000. See Binfield So Down to Prayers p 74.

²⁰² E Baines to J Ely January 1840 and cited in Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 292

²⁰³ Leeds Mercury 15.02.45, 24.10.46, 04.12.47. There are few accounts of Mrs Baines in public life. It is known she was a contributor to the Leeds Girls' Lancasterian School in 1812, and with her daughter, was a member of the committee of the Leeds Infant School Society in 1839. See Leeds Mercury 11.04.12, 11.05.39

²⁰⁴ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 372

²⁰⁵ Baines Papers: MS No51.7; E Baines to Mrs C Baines 19.06.21

²⁰⁶ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 365. That he achieved this is demonstrated by the fact that Matthew Talbot was an Anglican whereas the rest of the family were Dissenters, and that both Matthew Talbot and Thomas opposed the rest of the family over voluntarism. Taylor Worthies of Leeds p 483 and Leeds Times 24.04.47

absence and said he wished to give her a gold watch as a token 'of my paternal affection.'²⁰⁷ His letters to his family indicate a warmth and humanity. His deep concern for the well-being of his children was summed up in 1840, when he wrote his children's 'comfort and prosperity has been among the most strongly animating principles of my life.'²⁰⁸ When his wife, Charlotte, went for a month's recuperation to Scarborough in 1818, he showed considerable anxiety when he found out that she had had an accident there. Writing to Edward Junior from Southport in 1844, Baines summed up exactly his feelings towards his family.

Our gratitude for all the bounties of Providence towards us as a family, cannot be too fervent.²⁰⁹

He believed that 'one of the greatest domestic blessings (is) to be a member of a united family.' With regard to their family, it was both united and one for which Edward and Charlotte had much to be grateful to Providence.²¹⁰ Their eldest son, Matthew Talbot was successful in both the legal profession and politics. Called to the bar in 1825, he achieved the distinction of being unanimously proposed for the post of Recorder for Leeds. He declined because his father was MP for the borough but, as he wrote to the Mayor, for it to be 'ratified by the unanimous vote of the assembly ... is indeed an honour.'²¹¹ He became Recorder for Hull and then MP for Hull and later, Leeds. As Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, he sat in Palmerston's Cabinet.²¹²

Their second son, Edward Junior, became an experienced editor, MP for Leeds, led the national campaign for voluntarism in education, and was ultimately knighted.²¹³ His publications included, in 1835, his classic History of the Cotton Manufacture in Great Britain. Young Baines certainly helped in 'the editorial labours' at the Mercury and from the early 1820s was involved in the 'more active management'

²⁰⁷ E Baines to Miss A Baines 27.06.37 and cited in Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 305-306

²⁰⁸ Ibid p 306

²⁰⁹ Ibid pp 298-306

²¹⁰ Ibid p 219

²¹¹ Baines Papers: MS No 35; M T Baines to Mayor J Williamson, 06.02.37.

²¹² Leeds Mercury 24.01.60. See also Taylor Worthies of Leeds pp 482-486

²¹³ On his knighthood in 1880, a public subscription fund was launched and Baines directed that a part should be donated to help fund the erection of 'the proposed new buildings' of the Yorkshire College. Known as the Edward Baines Memorial Wing, it is now part of the University of Leeds. See Anon Baines Memorial Wing Centenary, 1885-1985 pamphlet (Leeds 1985)

of the paper.²¹⁴ But it is incorrect to state, as Alon Kadish claims that ‘by 1818 he edited the paper, and in 1827 became its proprietor.’ Certainly, in the 1820s Baines Junior did take on more responsibilities, possibly writing his first editorial in 1819 when his father was in Scotland at New Lanark. But he makes it abundantly clear that his father kept a careful reign on his activities.

Mr Baines had ... been assisted by his son upon whom he gradually devolved the more active management of the Mercury though still under his superintendence, and with very frequent contributions from his pen.²¹⁵

Moreover, in Baines’s 1822 directory, there is a significant entry and omission. On page eighty-one is found, ‘Talbot, John, reporter and assistant editor of the Leeds Mercury’ yet there is no mention at all of Edward Junior.²¹⁶ Had his son held the position of editor or even assistant editor, Baines would surely have included such an entry. For long periods of time Edward Junior was not even in Leeds. From 1819 to 1822 he was frequently in London,²¹⁷ in 1824, he spent a further eight months in the capital and during 1825 and 1826 he ‘made a long tour of the continent.’²¹⁸ Again in March 1829, Baines asked Edward to remain in Liverpool for ‘the whole of the present year’ in order to help Thomas with the Liverpool Times.²¹⁹ It is not true to say that, in 1827, he became the Mercury’s ‘proprietor.’ He became a partner when the his father announced ‘a partnership’ had been formed, and as late as 1831, Richard Oastler refers to him as ‘the Junior Editor of the Leeds Mercury’.²²⁰ As late as 1838 the Intelligencer was still speaking of the ‘senatorial gravity of the Senior Editor’ as opposed to the ‘Junior Editor.’²²¹ As Baines concentrated ‘many hours of every day’ completing his History of Lancashire, responsibilities on his son increased.²²² When Baines became an

²¹⁴ 1821 would seem a logical year for him to increase his involvement as Baines would have been devoting some considerable time to preparing his Directory of Yorkshire vol I that year. It was published 1 January 1822.

²¹⁵ Kadish The Corn Laws vol V p 1. Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 121.

²¹⁶ Baines Directory of Yorkshire vol I p 81

²¹⁷ Reid Memoirs of Sir Wemyss Reid pp 100-101

²¹⁸ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 136

²¹⁹ Baines Papers: MS No51.4; E Baines to E Baines (Jun) 02.03.29

²²⁰ Leeds Mercury 06.01.27 Leeds Intelligencer 24.10.31

²²¹ Leeds Intelligencer 19.05.38

²²² Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 171

MP in 1834, Edward Junior inevitably assumed full control of the paper in Leeds.²²³ But whenever Baines was in Leeds he continued to contribute regularly to the paper.²²⁴ The important point is not whether the Mercury's leaders were written by father or son, but that the editorial views in its columns for four decades reflected those of the father.²²⁵

Baines's third son, Thomas also went into journalism. In 1829, he became editor and proprietor of the Liverpool Times and remained there thirty years.²²⁶ Thomas Baines, however, had financial difficulties. What they were is not clear, though they may well have contributed to his father sustaining 'some extremely heavy losses.'²²⁷ It appears they came as something of a shock to the old man. In April 1847, when Baines made his will, Thomas was made a trustee and executor along with his brothers. As Baines lay dying in July 1848, he added a codicil revoking Thomas's role. He directed the remaining executors to grant Thomas £1 000

in the event of him emigrating to a British colony or other place abroad. But I especially direct that the said £1 000 shall not be applicable to the payment of any debt or debts.²²⁸

Frederick, the youngest son, endured poor health and spent much of his time abroad which may explain why Baines admitted, if he had a 'pet' it was he. Eventually, the youngest son became a partner in 1837 and concentrated on the business side of the Mercury's affairs though he also had the ability to write 'tersely and gracefully.'²²⁹

Four of Baines's five daughters appear to have married well; Jane to Alexander Ritchie who became a partner in the business²³⁰; Caroline Phoebe to John William Pye-

²²³ Fraser Pressure From Without p 183

²²⁴ Taylor Worthies of Leeds p 440

²²⁵ 'Never were too who walked together more perfectly agreed.' See Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 10

²²⁶ Leeds Mercury 02.11.81. His father had shares in the company. See Lowerson Political Career of Sir Edward Baines p 18

²²⁷ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 364

²²⁸ Baines Will 24.04.47. First Codicil 21.07.48. A second codicil 28.07.48 increased the amount to £ 1 500.

²²⁹ Leeds Mercury 01.01.37. Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 349. When Baines made the remark he stressed he hoped he had not shown any partiality. Consequently, he reduced the legacy left to Matthew Talbot by £1 000 because he estimated his son's education had cost that amount when the others had not had such an expensive schooling. See Baines Will

²³⁰ See obituary of Alexander Ritchie in Leeds Mercury 28.06.75

Smith, a solicitor; Anna to John Wade, a wool merchant; and Margaret to Charles Reed who became an MP and was later knighted.²³¹ Whether his daughter Charlotte married well is not certain for it is possible that William Bruce, her husband, may also have contributed to Baines's losses. As a result Baines made 'special and limited provision' for Charlotte as he had already made 'large advances of money ... to ... her husband.'²³²

In 1847, he saw his son, Matthew Talbot, elected MP for Hull in the general election of that year but he also had the disappointment of seeing the Leeds Liberal Party split, and Edward Junior's preferred candidate, Joseph Sturge, beaten into third place. Baines's health was now gradually deteriorating.²³³

On 10 July 1848, he suffered a serious haemorrhage. Nine days later his condition seriously deteriorated. His appearance became shrunken and wan; he lost his appetite; his strength was gone. His seventy-four year old body was simply exhausted. His dutiful children made their way to the family home on King Street for their last goodbyes. The final days of Edward Baines's life are recorded in precise detail in the family's publication A Father's Dying Addresses. It tells how he spoke individually to each of his children and clearly shows that the love he had shown to them all his life was still very much in evidence. As he lay there he considered both his life and his faith, and remarked to his son, Edward

I see nothing to regret or wish altered, either in regard to our politics or the moral principles ... in our paper ... Our position is independent.²³⁴

The last words he uttered were a simple, 'Thank you' when they tried to moisten his lips with a little brandy and water. At a quarter to midnight on Thursday 3 August 1848, Edward Baines died.²³⁵

As he lay dying he lamented; 'so much I ought not have done ... so much I ought to have performed.'²³⁶ But there were many who recognised just how much he had performed and these included his journalist colleagues and competitors. His had been

²³¹ Baines Genealogy .

²³² Baines Will. It is interesting there is no mention of the Baines Family in Charlotte Bruce's obituary. See Leeds Mercury 06.06.90

²³³ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines pp 336-337. Fraser History of Modern Leeds pp 291-292

²³⁴ Baines Family A Father's Dying Addresses p 3

²³⁵ For a graphic account of his death see Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines pp 344-353 and Baines Family A Father's Dying Addresses passim

²³⁶ Baines Family A Father's Dying Addresses p 2

‘a career distinguished by so much merit’ - Morning Advertiser. He was ‘the Franklin of his country’ - Christian Witness. ‘A man before his age’ - Evangelical Magazine. He raised himself and his family ‘without any sacrifice of independence’ - Manchester Examiner and Times. He possessed ‘persevering industry and undeviating integrity’ - Bradford Observer. He displayed an ‘unswerving attachment to the principles of civil and religious liberty.’ - Hull Advertiser. His paper became ‘one of the most powerful organs of public opinion in the provinces.’ - Preston Chronicle.²³⁷ The Leeds Intelligencer’s observation was a simple one; his had been a ‘well spent life.’²³⁸

The dynasty he had founded continued to run the Leeds Mercury for another half century. But in 1886 Gladstone’s Home Rule Bill split the Liberal Party.²³⁹ As its fortunes plummeted the Liberal press was also affected. In 1901, the Baines Family sold the Mercury to Harold Harmsworth.²⁴⁰ Then in 1923, it suffered, what to Edward Baines would have been its greatest indignity. It was bought by the Yorkshire Conservative Newspaper Co Ltd, owners of the Yorkshire Post, the daily paper born of the Mercury’s arch-rival, the Leeds Intelligencer.²⁴¹

Baines’s paper is now no more. His statue stands at the back of Leeds Town Hall, ignored. His neglected tomb lies forgotten in a deserted graveyard within the precincts of the University of Leeds. Historians confuse him with his son.²⁴² And yet the legacy he left behind, the principles for which he fought and the ideals which he cherished have become part of the political and moral infrastructure of modern Britain. To his son he was an example of ‘energy, prudence and integrity.’²⁴³ The Mercury claimed he spent his life ‘among memorable events and names of renown.’²⁴⁴ Eulogies

²³⁷ Baines Papers; Critical Notices. Reviews of E Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines (1851)

²³⁸ Leeds Intelligencer 05.08.48

²³⁹ R C K Ensor England; 1870-1914 (Oxford 1936) p 99.

²⁴⁰ Anon Souvenir of the Sixth Annual Meeting of the Federation of Master Printers (Leeds 1906) p 45. ‘It was sold for a song ... it had got into the hands of an inefficient group who mismanaged everything.’ Extract from a letter from Honor Baines and quoted by Miss M Hughes to E Baines 18.06.1979. (In the possession of Eric Baines)

²⁴¹ Burt and Grady The Illustrated History of Leeds pp 139, 209

²⁴² Alexander Llewellyn confuses both in The Decade of Reform; the 1830s (Newton Abbot 1972). His index lists only ‘Baines, Sir Edward’ see p 215 but of the eight references made in the text only two, pp 14, 128, refer to Sir Edward; pp 29, 108, 111, 117, 149 refer to Edward Senior. The reference to ‘Baines Mercury’ of 1835 could be either see p 126 For further examples of confusion of father with son see Introduction above.

²⁴³ Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 5

²⁴⁴ Leeds Mercury 12.08.48

these may have been but they were eulogies based on truth. He was indeed involved in memorable events and walked among the renowned men of his time.

His was a remarkable success story. It was that of a young man crossing the Pennines on foot to seek his fortune; seeing the newspaper he shaped become recognised as the leading provincial paper in the country; becoming the national voice of the religiously oppressed; and finally being presented at court, invited to the coronation of the Queen²⁴⁵ and ending his days fêted by his contemporaries.²⁴⁶

Nothing better symbolises his life than the presentation candelabrum he received in 1841 and the three figures at each corner of that table centrepiece. There in simple eloquence stood the figures of Justice, Truth and Liberty. These were the ideals he had spent his life pursuing; in the parochial politics of the vestry in Leeds and on the national stage of the Commons at Westminster. He was a tireless Member of Parliament, indefatigable in his pursuit of a more just and tolerant society. But his greatest contribution of all was the newspaper he had shaped and nurtured. Week after week, in the columns of his Leeds Mercury, he expounded those beliefs. Here he was able to bring to the notice of the West Riding's merchants and manufacturers, its artisans and its operatives, those ideas which would form the bedrock of the newly emerging industrialised society of nineteenth century Britain.

His enemies, and there were many, accused him of political manipulation, of hypocritical cant, of perverting the truth, even of malevolent treachery. But on his death, when party rancour was tempered with reason and they viewed his life dispassionately, even his lifelong antagonists had to acknowledge a certain sincerity about the man. What Baines did and said and wrote, he did selflessly with the interest of his country at heart. And it was that commendable aspect of his personality more than any other which brought the streets of Leeds to a halt that August Thursday as his funeral procession moved by. Irrespective of party loyalties, they came together and stood bareheaded to salute a man whose life had been devoted to civic duty. They recognised that here was a man who had a vision of a more just, tolerant and humane society and who had devoted his life in attempting to see it realised.

²⁴⁵ In the madcap race MPs traditionally indulged in at coronations, he fell and damaged his teeth. See Baines (Jun) Life of Edward Baines p 248

²⁴⁶ Ibid p 364. Contrary to popular belief Baines was not extremely wealthy. He maintained a large family and suffered some heavy losses. He never owned a carriage and employed only two servants; twenty year-old Sarah Ackroyd and twenty-five year-old Rachel Milner. See also Census 1841 HO 107 Folio 26 p 6

CONCLUSION

Anyone looking at the tombstone of Edward Baines today can be forgiven for being puzzled. Baines turned his Leeds Mercury into the most influential provincial newspaper in the country and it held that position for nigh on half a century, yet not one word of his career as its editor appears on his monument. The inscription simply states:

In memory of EDWARD BAINES Representative of this borough in
three Parliaments. Died Aug 3rd 1848

It may be that his family felt that mention of his business role was inappropriate for such a dignified memorial and that his achievement of being elected the Member of Parliament for Leeds was more worthy. True, he did not achieve lasting national fame as a politician. But he was, in his day, the principal voice of Nonconformism at Westminster and he took it upon his shoulders to campaign assiduously for all who were denied justice because of their religious faith. He was a hardworking, industrious member. He protested he was independent but his soul always lay in Whig-liberalism. To him, Toryism was anathema, even to the extent of maintaining an inept administration to keep the Tories out.

Yet if he was an idealist, he was no political plaster saint. He realised that politics required ruthlessness and machiavellian cunning and he was quite capable of using both when the need arose. His strategy for attacking the Tory-Anglican axis in the vestry in order to establish a Whig-Liberal power base in Leeds was masterful. He also realised that the changing nature of English politics required a greater comprehensiveness with regard to party organisation. Thus he was in the forefront of establishing a political structure to meet those changing needs. Society itself was undergoing a metamorphosis and having to come to terms with social and political pressures that the world had never before faced. Addressing such enormous and complex difficulties required a concerted effort. Baines accepted the challenge, demanded change and argued that Parliamentary Reform was fundamental if Britain was to develop into a modern and efficient industrialised nation. But, for him, such change had always to be achieved only within the ambit of the law; for it was the law which stood between an orderly society and ochlocratic tyranny.

His guiding light was his fundamental belief in freedom, toleration, social responsibility and Christianity. He recognised that social responsibility and Christian compassion were interrelated and believed they should be followed whenever possible. But he was also a man of the middle class who propagated middle class values and

shared middle class fears. He fought middle class battles both nationally and locally from the Whig-Liberal-Dissenter perspective. Many shared that perspective and were grateful for his efforts and achievements. There were, however, equally as many who did not and who saw his Whig radicalism as inimical to the stability of the British constitution. His son's sanitised biography understandably ignores those areas of political manipulation and skullduggery of which his enemies accused him. They condemned him either for being too radical or not radical enough. But he feared every kind of extremism. He rejected the democratically minded because he believed democracy threatened the very fabric of the constitution upon which the stability of the nation rested. At the same time, he condemned the reactionary elements of society for their abuse of power which in turn eroded that same constitution.

Of all things, he was a man of his time. He was an archetype of his generation. His tenets were, indeed, something of a microcosm of the attitudes and beliefs of middle class nineteenth century Liberal England. It was as if he possessed a subconscious ability to identify and reflect society's changing attitudes and moods. As a greater spiritual awareness manifested itself in society Baines, too, became more conscious of his spiritual needs and finally committed himself passionately to evangelicalism. Along the way, his desire to become a man of letters revealed the growing awareness among the middle classes of the value of self-conscious cultivation and liberal education. He held the same hopes and aspirations of that middle class and the industrial and commercial interests in society; but he not only held those beliefs, he acted as a beacon to the way he believed that society should achieve them.

For him the effective way to acquire them was through freedom. That was his watchword. Free trade was a fundamental necessity if Britain's growing industries were to develop. Individual freedom to worship, to live a life unimpeded by government, to be educated away from the dictation of Church or State: each were an essential in a free society. For Baines, a man's destiny should not be dictated by either Church or State but left to the individual himself. It was incumbent on a man to provide for his own needs, his own family and to strive for his own success. But when anyone fell into destitution, there was a moral obligation on each member of society to endeavour to help. To offset such catastrophes, every effort should be made to make the poor self sufficient. This raft of beliefs formed the credo for which he argued from the hustings, stressed in the Commons and the parish vestry, and preached for almost

half a century through the columns of his newspaper. For Baines was a shrewd enough politician to realise that political causes are won only when a public is educated and informed of the value of the policies being pursued by a party; and are made aware of the fallibility of the opposition's case. Here his Leeds Mercury proved invaluable to the Whig cause.

If one quotation only were chosen to illustrate Edward Baines and his achievements, that which appeared in The Patriot and was then quoted in the Leeds Mercury of 12 August 1848 would be the most appropriate:

In the annals of the British Newspaper Press few names occupy a higher, and none more honourable place than his ... Whatever subjects engaged the attention of our Government, or ... the policy and legislation of other States, were sure to be found stated and explained in the Leeds Mercury in a manner which made the most difficult and intricate questions intelligible to uninitiated minds; and through its columns, the Airedale clothier or the Wharfedale farmer, became as good a politician as the merchants of Mincing Lane or the saunterers of Pall Mall.

The Leeds Mercury under Edward Baines was not simply a newspaper dedicated to carrying news, advertisements and the usual trivia of the provincial weekly press. He turned it into a political pulpit from which its owner-editor could preach to the middle class, Whig-Dissenters and the entrepreneurial merchants and manufacturers of the West Riding. But his voice also reverberated in the cottages, the workshops and the barnyards of the humble 'Airedale clothier and Wharfedale farmer.' That voice echoed out week after week in his editorials, as Baines's leader columns became renowned and his use of the editorial itself gained him a place in the history of British journalism.

The subjects he referred to were not parochial nor the observations he made platitudinous. He focussed attention on a diversity of complex intellectual, political, economic and social issues: Parliamentary Reform; the morality of war; the evil of slavery; the impact of mechanisation on society; the erosion of the constitution, the relevance of Christianity to everyday life; the cancer of poverty; the need for retrenchment in government expenditure; the urgency for the repeal of the Corn Laws; the affect religious bigotry had on society; the mismanagement of Ireland and the ever present need for vigilance to ensure that the fundamental liberties enshrined in Magna Carta were never endangered by oligarchic governments or dictatorial monarchs. Baines had the vision to realise that it was crucial that these difficult concepts, and the

ramifications they generated, had not only to be drawn to the attention of the changing society of Britain's Industrial Revolution but had also to be understood by it. He was fortunate in that he had the perspicacity to identify the issues which were fundamental to the development of the nation and possessed the journalistic flair to make them palatable and meaningful to his West Riding readers.

But Baines also realised that ideas are not unproblematic statements; they are declarations of belief, open to different interpretations and capable of developing and being changed. He recognised that an enlightened society had to be informed but it had also to be given the opportunity to discuss and exchange its views on the polemics of the day. From the very first edition he edited, he announced his intention of making the columns of his paper available to anyone who had a reasonable point to make. Through the years his readers' letters appeared, often supporting, and sometimes condemning, the views the of the editor of Mercury Court. Thus his paper became a springboard not only for his own ideas and beliefs but for those of the community in general.

Baines was a pragmatist and a shrewd businessman. He ran his newspaper to make a profit and was extremely successful in doing so. To achieve that success, he answered what he perceived were his public's needs. He identified his readers' interests, carried local news, supported campaigns for local improvements, and he was ever ready to implement new technology to provide his readers with a better service and to keep ahead of his competitors. His business acumen led him to publish numerous successful pamphlets, local directories and histories, and to write several eminently readable academic works. Though his success in business could never emulate the financial achievements of his local contemporaries Benjamin Gott and John Marshall, Baines, nevertheless, died a reasonably wealthy and successful man.

Seen from the perspective of the late twentieth century, it is easy to criticise both Baines, the politician and Baines, the editor, for his patronising views and his repeated denials to the lower classes of the same freedoms he demanded for himself and his colleagues. But Baines both influenced and was influenced by the society in which he functioned. He and his compatriots faced problems that no society had ever experienced in the history of the world. They had to devise strategies to contend with economic and political crises the like of which mankind had never addressed before. What Baines did was to approach those difficulties with solutions which he believed were always in the best interests of all classes in society. His denial of certain rights to

the uneducated working classes was a manifestation of the middle class fears that universal suffrage would bring in its wake social chaos and the extinction of the constitution on which the whole fabric of British society was based.

Though an editor and businessman, he was, nevertheless, always a politician, thrust into a political imbroglio which inevitably created him as many enemies as friends. He was also a human being who demonstrated all the weaknesses and foibles of a human being. He was passionate and sincere in his beliefs, a talented journalist, a successful publisher and a caring husband and father. Today, outside the academic world of the historian of the nineteenth century few have ever heard of Edward Baines. What attention that is given to the family tends, generally, to fall on the achievements of Edward Baines Junior. Certainly, the younger Baines deserves much credit for his own contributions to society but without the inspiration, guidance and encouragement of his father, his own life would have been vastly different.

It was to draw attention to the life of Edward Baines Senior that this thesis was conceived; to examine his writings, to explore his vision of society and to assess his ultimate achievements. He claimed that truth was his polestar and summed up his own approach to politics, to journalism and to life in general, in a reply he made to a correspondent on 13 December 1806; 'Truth suffers not by discussion.' His political campaigning certainly helped to change the world of nineteenth century Britain and helped to lay the foundations of today's modern state. He turned the Leeds Mercury into a newspaper that pioneered provincial political journalism and the use of regular editorial comment, and saw it become a milestone in the history of the British press. No-one could question that as a man, as an editor and as a politician he had worked indefatigably for a better society as he perceived it. On his death the Leeds Intelligencer, his arch enemy for half a century, claimed he had 'an indisputable title to be numbered among the notable men of Leeds.'¹ It was a fair and objective assessment and one which has stood the test of time.

¹ Leeds Intelligencer 05.08.48

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