THE COMPLETE SUFFRAGE UNION OF 1842

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ABSTRACT

The Complete Suffrage Union of 1842 was a brief and unsuccessful attempt to combine the middle and working classes behind a solid, well-ordered agitation for the classic programme of Parliamentary reform, at a time when economic distress was sharpening reform demands in Britain, and class relations had turned sour in the penumbra of the Great Reform Bill.

What were the circumstances which favoured the new movement? Firstly, the existing popular reform movements were temporarily spent; the Chartist leadership was badly fragmented and the lessons of its 1839 agitation discouraging, the Anti-Corn Law League had lost momentum after the 1841 election and Richard Cobden was searching for some 'new move' to ginger up his flagging organisation. Secondly, the C.S.U. was led by the Birmingham Quaker, Joseph Sturje, who seemed to combine the necessary organisational ability, derived from his experience with the anti-slavery movement, with complete freedom from the stigma of class partiality. Thirdly, the C.S.U. was conceived in Birmingham, a city well known for its reform record and harmony between the classes, thus an ideal base for the national projection of such a movement.
Given such initial advantages, why did the Complete Suffrage movement fail? It failed because it never won an effective following in its Birmingham base, as the League did in Manchester. The political thermometer in Birmingham rose and fell with economic fortunes and its citizens thought of political reform as a means to some such economic palliative as, for example, currency reform. Sturge offered no attractive economic nostrum to follow on from suffrage reform, only a sort of moral catharsis. As the moral conscience of the city he won dutiful plaudits from all and the particular affection of the shopocracy, but such pleasing breezes of approval hardly constituted a wind of change. Sturge had only a contingent relationship with the vital centres of business leadership in the city and was at best a reluctant agitator of the people at large. The old harmony and dynamic of the Birmingham reform front had been severely mauled by the disturbances of 1839 and the C.S.U. failed to attract the full reform energies of the middle class, who were regrouping between the campaign for municipal incorporation and their later battle against the Corn Laws. Neither could it attract those of the working class who shared Feargus O'Connor's misgivings that it harbored a selfish bourgeois plot.
Sturge himself was an ineffective leader and the very probity which constituted a major propaganda appeal for the C.S.U. cut short the use of those tactics necessary to survival, let alone success, in contemporary politics. At the Nottingham bye-election of August, 1842, Sturge refused to sanction the normal electioneering skulduggery which would have brought the Union victory. In Birmingham and in the country as a whole, the C.S.U. failed to shut out hostile representatives to its major national conference in December, 1842. Finally the movement fell victim to the class discords it sought to allay, a defeat prefigured in the previous conference in April, and made obvious in December after the explosion of the Plug Plots, which heightened bourgeois fears of working class insurrection and confirmed the workers in their belief that the middle class sought to use them as a catspaw.

The Complete Suffrage movement collapsed because it failed to establish an effective grip on its home territory; it would not use the tactics which the tough political milieu demanded; and it proved unable to survive the corrosive mutual suspicion between the classes. These defects were compounded by inadequate leadership.
The C.S.U.'s failure seems incontestable but there is also a modest and significant success to be salvaged from its history. Its raison d'être meant the occupation of a marginal position which brought it under heavy attack from both classes, but in Birmingham at least the C.S.U. contrived to restore valuable contact between the middle and working classes.

The first chapter examines the industrial and political complexion of Birmingham in the 1830s, and the convulsions of 1838 and '39 which severely damaged the traditional harmony of the classes in the city. Chapter II introduces Joseph Sturge and considers his early moves to repair this damage in the context of both local and national reform politics. The third chapter examines the Complete Suffrage Union in action in the national conference held in Birmingham in April, 1842, and in Sturge's candidacy at the Nottingham bye-election in August of that year. It also looks at the composition and organisation of the Union's membership. The final chapter deals with the last conference of the movement, again in Birmingham, in December 1842, examining its failure in the light of the serious disturbances in the previous summer months and their effects on the climate of opinion.
There is much good secondary material on this particular period in British history. This material was made available through the facilities of the Library of the University of British Columbia, and the Inter-Library Loans service. Some newspaper files were available on microfilm through the same services but the bulk of research on original sources was done in England in the summer of 1966. Private papers were disappointing but the British Museum Newspaper Collection proved invaluable, together with the pamphlet and newspaper materials in the Birmingham Reference Library.
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CHAPTER 1

THE BREAKDOWN OF THE BIRMINGHAM REFORM FRONT; TRADITIONAL HARMONIES SUSPENDED

In the fierce fight for the Great Reform Bill of 1832 the greatest single force in the popular agitation for the measure was undoubtedly that of the Birmingham Political Union. Sustained by the solid unity of interests of both the middle and working classes within the city, the Union also recruited from the many elements of discontent in its industrial hinterland of the West Midlands.¹ The famous Union meetings on Newhall Hill were impressive parades of strength and Thomas Attwood, as leader of the Birmingham reformers, could well make play with the threat of a citizen army of some twenty thousand men, sprung up overnight from the determined Midlanders.² Attwood delighted in rehearsing his battalions and he relished the exhilarating receptions he received as a popular champion, but his volatile politicking would always stop short of revolution. The leaders of the Birmingham Political Union had the ear of the Grey cabinet and there was about their posturings an air of calculated intimidation rather than unyielding Jacobin resolve.³ The Union's motto was Peace, Law and Order.
and under this rubric, Attwood and his lieutenants were concerned with containing the turbulent discontent among the lower orders; thus Attwood's achievement in 1832 was as much one of discipline as of mobilization in the field of popular agitation. During the crisis John Stuart Mill spoke of the Birmingham leaders as,

... acting under the most intense consciousness of moral responsibility; (they were) very careful neither to do nor say anything without the most careful deliberation. We are indebted for the preservation of tranquillity to the organization of the people in political unions.

Among other telling tributes Lord Durham maintained that, "The country owed Reform to Birmingham, and its salvation from revolution."

The success of the B.P.U. rested upon the remarkable identity of interests which existed between the masters and men in this great expanding manufacturing city. This harmony sustained the reform endeavours of Attwood in the 1830s, of John Bright in the fight for the second Reform Bill in the 1860s and of Joseph Chamberlain in his campaigns, first for municipal reform and then for Protection, in the last quarter of the century. The foundations of this Birmingham reform front proved enduring but since the dynamic of reform was always discontent so was there a combustible element in the
popular forces of reform within Birmingham which could not always be contained by the traditional leadership of the middle class. Attwood recognized the brawling forces among his followers. They were, he said, "a most unruly flock." In the late 1830s came the aggravation of economic distress and the spread of a more desperate popular agitation which would in part push home its threats of an émeute in the face of governmental and middle class intransigence. The autonomy as well as the unity of the Birmingham reform front was to be temporarily broken and historians have noted that by 1839 "a new spirit of internal tension had come into Birmingham politics." In examining this hiatus we can see at work those forces of disruption which helped to kill the Complete Suffrage Union, a movement whose avowed mission it was to meet with and check such forces.

We must first examine the particular pattern of industrial relations in nineteenth century Birmingham which gave its reform politics a unique character. The city was principally concerned with the manufacture of light metal goods, the four staple manufactures being guns, jewellery, buttons and brass products. The predominant unit of production was the
small workshop and throughout the expansion of trade within the city during this period growth continued via the multiplication rather than the consolidation of this basic unit. Thus masters and men worked in close proximity. In 1835 De Tocqueville commented on the fact that in Birmingham there were "few large industries, many small industrialists ... at Birmingham the workers work in their own houses or in little workshops in company with the master himself." There was some increase in the size of the average firm in the second quarter of the century but the Commissioner of Child Labour reported in 1843 that the typical Birmingham workshop consisted of six to thirty workers only.10

There was no violent conflict between man and machinery in Birmingham. In the predominantly craft industries machinery was a supplement to, rather than a substitute for a highly skilled labour force. In the census returns of 1841 only 11% of the adult males were placed in the unskilled labour groups while of the 36% employed in industry the majority claimed a particular trade calling. Probably about half of the adult male population of the city were skilled or semi-skilled artisans in handicrafts or industry,11 and such was the aptitude of the Birmingham craftsman that his
various skills were interchangeable within the different manufactures, a fact which could sometimes counter the threat of unemployment in periods of depression.

Wages, working and living conditions compared most favourably with the rest of the country. A survey of 1840 which dealt with the wages of the members of a local provident society made up mainly of artisans concluded that their average wage of 24s. per week was "adequate for the necessaries of life," and another local survey by doctors found the workmen's income such that they could be prodigal in their expenditure on food. In 1843 the Factory Commissioner reported that, "On the whole, it may be stated that the hours of labour in Birmingham are probably shorter, and less fatiguing, than in any other large manufacturing town in the Kingdom."

Although the city had its pockets of squalor which were later to excite the energies of 'gas and water socialism' it survived the worst condemnations of Chadwick and the report of the Select Committee on the Health of Towns noted that "the general custom of each family living in a separate dwelling is conducive to comfort and cleanliness." The artisan too shared a strong tradition of self-help and there were many active friendly societies
in the city. It was a matter of pride to keep off the parish, but if driven to seek succour under the Poor Law the Birmingham pauper was spared the harsh provisions of the 1834 Amendment Act, for poor relief in the city continued to be administered under a local act and this persistence of outdoor relief earned the severest censures of the Bashaws of Somerset House.  

We might therefore agree with De Tocqueville that, "The workpeople of Birmingham seem more healthy, better off, more orderly and more moral than those of Manchester."  

Within the structure of the Birmingham economy there was a great deal of mobility, affording ample opportunity for the advancement of both masters and men. A shrewd, thrifty workman could hope to set himself up as master with but little capital outlay, usually starting by renting workshop space from his employer or working in his own home. In good years, "just as the energetic and ambitious underhand could become a small master, so could the energetic and ambitious small master become a factor." Trade in Birmingham was tied to an expanding export market which was always liable to fluctuations but throughout the vagaries of trade the discontents of the employers and employees generally moved together and for the most part there
seemed to be no overt class hostility. It was this amicable identity of interests which drew a constant note of approval from contemporary observers, from De Tocqueville in 1835 to Cobden in 1857. A government commissioner reporting on the trades of the town in 1849 supplies a useful summary together with a tell-tale caveat.

The variety of trades and occupations exercised is, in many respects advantageous to the population; it tends to move equal and general diffusion of wealth amongst the master manufacturers, and the means of acquiring it in moderation amongst the work people; there are few, if any, "millionaires" connected with trade in or near Birmingham... there are few who occupy the position of the 'cotton lords' of Manchester or the 'merchant princes' of Liverpool; but there is a numerous class of master tradesmen whose wealth tends to comfort rather than ostentatious show, and there is a race of work people comparatively independent and self-relying .... The diffusion and variety of occupation gives an elasticity to the trade of Birmingham unknown in towns and districts confined to the manufacture of one article, or one material, and it also gives to the workmen an aptitude which enables them to change their occupation should any form of trade die out .... The variety and independence of labour exercised produces freedom and independence of thought and action, which unfortunately has not always met with the best advisers and directors, so that one or two riotous errors have given to Birmingham a name very undeserved. In no place will there be found more freedom of intercourse between the employer and employed, or more general intelligence and comfort amongst the work people, or more forethought and kindness from the employer for the employed.
Before turning to the "riotous errors" it is worthwhile to see how Thomas Attwood and the B.P.U. capitalized on this solidarity of the classes.

Between 1812 and the fall of 1838 Thomas Attwood personified the politics of his native city, appealing alike to the employer and the employee, the middle class master and merchant and the working class artisan. He was born into a well-established local family of wide commercial and industrial interests and he followed his father's career as a local banker, maintaining factoring connexions with the Black Country and extending his business activities to a factory in Rouen. In 1811 he was elected as High Bailiff, an important office on the Street Commissioners Board, the dominant body in local government before incorporation. The following year he successfully petitioned against the Orders in Council which had attenuated Birmingham's export trade, on which occasion the artisans of the city cut loose the horses of his carriage and put themselves between the shafts to drag their hero home. They later presented him with a silver cup worth 200 guineas for his successful campaign against the East India Company's monopoly of the Indian market. Attwood was instrumental in re-establishing
the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce in 1813 and he frequently returned to London to push for his cherished currency reforms, appearing as witness before government enquiries and firing off barrages of letters and pamphlets into the inhospitable reaches of the Government and the House of Lords.  

To Attwood the implementation of his monetary policy would have been a panacea which would have revitalized the whole economy. He abjured the return to the gold standard of 1821 which, he claimed, led to the stinting of credit and an unnecessary restraint on the economy, and advised a return to paper money. Prices should be restored and maintained by a direct loan of banknotes to the landed and commercial interest which would stimulate demand, and create a confidence and willingness to enter new lines of production. He wanted a controlled currency and credit system which would effect a permanent condition of slightly rising prices and his monetary policy would ensure full employment, if necessary, through a supplementary programme of public works. "Employment," said Attwood, "is a right which a good citizen may claim of his country without any kind of degradation or obligation."
But Attwood's case was spoilt by poor presentation, and though he might report how he confounded government committees his haphazard case brought nothing but reproach from outside Birmingham.

Attwood was buoyed up in his battles by the support of his Birmingham connexion and in any case his defiant local pride had little respect for the posturings in the capital. Birmingham had the good sense to support his currency policy since it was the particular problems and character of the local economy which had called Attwood's proposals into being. Local men knew at first hand of the debasement of the metallic currency by their own gunsmiths and silversmiths, and masters and men alike welcomed a programme which guaranteed full employment and promised to alleviate the chronic fluctuations in trade which frequently visited the city. The new policy was to have been instituted through the country banks rather than the Bank of England which presumably warmed the local financiers in the city where six out of the eight banks were Birmingham owned. Despairing of effecting the necessary reforms through the existing lower House the Birmingham currency lobby threw its efforts into the campaign for Parliamentary reform with the foundation
of the Birmingham Political Union in January of 1830.

Attwood's support for the B.P.U. was not that of an iconoclast, and indeed his Tory connexions made him suspect to some of the leading local radicals. The Utilitarian lawyer Joseph Parkes doubted the legitimacy of Attwood's reform protestations and confided his misgivings to Francis Place, while another radical lawyer William Redfern complained that Attwood had given but "a small text of reform and volumes of currency" in his programme. Some local radicals such as the solicitor George Edmonds, and the businessmen Joshua Scholefield and G. F. Muntz were warm personal supporters of Attwood, and his currency proposals, but significantly there was no mention of currency reform in the avowed objects of the Union. Internal differences were submerged within the B.P.U. and Attwood's drive and commanding local standing took him to the forefront of the campaign for Parliamentary reform.

In 1832 Place considered Attwood "the most influential man in England" and this same man who had once declared that "real and beneficial reform of Parliament is the last object that can ever be effected
by popular excitement" was now revelling in the "moral agency of public opinion" substantialized by the thousands who crowded Newhall Hill. Attwood enjoyed the éclat which went with Reform; the bands, the choruses, the banquets and the enraptured crowds.

He believed that he held the key to successful popular agitation and in December of 1832 he declared,

The interests of masters and men are in fact one. If the masters flourish, the men are certain to flourish with them; and if the masters suffer difficulties their difficulties must shortly affect the workmen in a threefold degree. The masters therefore ought to take their workmen by the hand and knock at the gates of government and demand the redress of their common grievances.

There might be differences of opinion in Birmingham but a successful reform front had been erected and its political tactics vindicated. Its leaders lobbied the cabinet in London and organized the impressive meetings at home. It utilized the device of petitioning to the full and spread its message through a close liaison with the local press. It served as a model for other provincial reform associations and the passage of the 1832 Reform Bill was a triumph for the forces of popular agitation as drilled and disciplined by Attwood and his colleagues. The Birmingham
champion seemed to have lighted on an extremely successful formula for effective political action -- he was to be encouraged to repeat the experiment.

Sidney Smith, commenting on the explosion of optimism occasioned by the passing of the Great Reform Bill said that young girls expected to get engaged, schoolboys expected jam tarts to drop in price. The expectations of the Birmingham men were less fanciful but went just as unrewarded. By February, 1833, the B.P.U. was condemning "the atrocious conduct of the Ministry" and the neglect of working class distress.40 As Member for the newly enfranchised borough of Birmingham Attwood attacked the New Poor Law and supported the movement for factory reform, but the Commons, supposedly refurbished with the eager new brooms of industry, rejected his motion for a select committee into distress as a disguised currency move and he later claimed that he was kept off official committees.41 He himself was a failure in the House for reasons summarized in the Birmingham Journal in 1856 which remarked on his "excessive vehemence of manner, and unrestrained violence of expression, and to his incessant and not always seasonable or skilful advocacy of his monetary views."42
Attwood remained something of a maverick provincial politician, eschewing the entanglements of party politics, peppering the House with his invective, disparaging the "sordid and stupid M.P.s" and the "false and perjured Whigs." Despairing of effective Parliamentary action he was soon to return to extra-Parliamentary tactics, and at his Birmingham headquarters industrial depression refuelled his indignation and readied his supporters for a new campaign.

The years immediately following 1832 were years of prosperity in industry. Full employment was assisted by the construction of new railways and the growing volume of the British export trade. Harvests were bountiful and food prices were lower than they had been since the mid-eighteenth century, and real wages rose between 1833 and 1835. There was something of a speculative boom and a great deal of investment in mining and certain manufacturing industries, notably cotton. At the end of 1836 however the Anglo-American credit structure collapsed, bringing financial panic to the City and a severe curtailment of the American export trade. "The state of the American market was . . . the most important single factor in bringing prosperity or depression to British
export industries" and its failure precipitated a wide business depression which was at its worst between December 1836 and June 1837. Birmingham and district as the centre of the trade in manufactured ironware was greatly committed to the American market. In January 1836 the Gentleman's Magazine reported that "the iron trade in Staffordshire and neighbouring districts is at present flourishing beyond all precedent, and it is said that there is not one house in the manufacture within thirty miles of Birmingham, which has not more orders on hand than they can possibly execute within the next three months." By March 1837 Birmingham was suffering from a depression "almost unexampled in extent and duration" and there was severe unemployment in the neighbouring industrial areas.

The old leaders of the B.P.U. were men sensitive to the changing pulse of trade and as early as November of 1836 G. F. Muntz had warned a local reform meeting that "the prosperity now enjoyed would not be of long duration . . . a few short months, and the horizon would be darkened and they would have such a state of things as, perhaps, had not been for years in this country." In reporting this meeting the
Spectator, pointing to the influence of the principal speakers throughout the Midland countries recognized the Birmingham reform syndrome.

When men are prosperous and bread is cheap, all goes on quietly in Birmingham, and its extraordinary neighbourhood; but let furnaces be 'blown out', and the price of wheat and bacon rise, and then there are processions with black flags, meetings on Newhall Hill, demands for universal suffrage, and other troublesome symptoms. Well -- there were twenty furnaces 'cold' in Staffordshire last week -- throwing out of employ, as Mr. Attwood calculates, twenty thousand persons; an ugly fact to begin with. Bread and provisions are very much dearer; and behold! the Birmingham Radical leaders are meeting and discussing the propriety of holding the match to the barrel of gunpowder.\(^{48}\)

The response to the depression was not as immediately explosive as the Spectator's image. In March 1837 a deputation of Birmingham businessmen and the local M.P.s presented a memorial to Lord Melbourne signed by "merchants, manufacturers and other inhabitants of Birmingham" deploiring the "general state of difficulty and embarrassment," and seeking "remedial measures."\(^{49}\) In April deputations of workmen assembled at the former section houses of the B.P.U. and pressed for a revival of the Union. In May a Working Man's Distress Committee presented a petition for a thorough investigation of the state of trade which referred to the manufacturers as "our natural
allies," a joint committee of masters and men was set up, and the old pattern of co-operation was once again extended to political action with the formal revival of the B.P.U. in the same month. 50

Attwood moved back to his familiar role. He was more than ever convinced of the power of organized opinion.

We have set the human mind in motion, a nation of twenty millions is set to think, to study political rights and interests, and to learn how to guard, promote and extend them. Here is a giant power which the people possess in full operation — which no government can despise or neglect. The people want nothing but unity to make their legal power irresistible. Through you (the men of Birmingham) they will obtain unity. Two millions of the bravest and best men in Europe will answer to your call. They will appear under leaders appointed by you. They will clap their hands when you clap yours. 51

Attwood's hopes were sustained by a spurt of optimism while his endeavours were no doubt sharpened by his own financial difficulties. He was confident that his monetary reforms would now be put to the test and effect a successful business revival within three months. "The Ministers have, and I told them, no safety but to jump into our Birmingham boat." This was his jaunty assertion in September 1837. 52
To some in Birmingham this revival was like stirring up a hornets' nest and Joseph Parkes from his perch with the London Whigs renewed the misgivings which had nagged him in 1832. "Tom Attwood is as mad as a March hare . . . he is on the eve of a mob Currency Meeting . . . he told me all Representative Assemblies were humbugs, that Cabinet Ministers were anti-constitutional and a modern innovation." A group of Birmingham merchants and manufacturers protested the revival of the B.P.U. and scornfully rejected the Union's presumption in claiming to represent the city's interests, recalling that the 1832 assemblage had been nothing but those in debt and discontent. Attwood's new campaign put him right out of favour with the local Tories who had initiated this protest but the leaders of the Union were in fact men of substance. Joshua Scholefield was the city's other M.P., a merchant, banker and manufacturer who had impressed Althorp during the Reform Bill crisis as being of much greater ability and wider influence in Birmingham than Attwood himself. T. C. Salt, who had cut a dramatic figure at the Newhall Hill meetings was a local manufacturer employing a hundred or so workpeople. In 1837 he
was the secretary of the Joint Committee of Masters and Men organized to combat the distress and "a man of considerable influence among working people."

G. F. Muntz was a manufacturer who was to make a fortune out of his 'Muntz metal', a patent metal for sheathing ships' bottoms and he was strongly committed to Attwood's currency theories, supplying several pamphlets on the theme and succeeding to the latter's seat in the House on his resignation in 1839.57

Together with another old campaigner, Benjamin Hadley, warden of the parish church he had played a vigorous part in the battle over church rates.58 Among new recruits to the reform movement the most important was probably the Scotsman Robert Kellie Douglas, later author of the National Petition of the Chartists and editor of the *Birmingham Journal* which was the political clarion of the Union and most effective as such.59

It was the *Birmingham Journal* which first argued for playing down the currency question in the Union's propaganda, during that build-up of nationwide agitation which was to coalesce around the People's Charter in 1838.60 Douglas was obviously speaking for many local men as he tried to rid the Birmingham reform party of its obsessive advocacy of currency
nostrums. At a meeting outside Manchester in September 1838 he declared that the reformers must be

... all ready to lay aside the worship of idols to which they had long been attached. My excellent friend Thomas Attwood, for instance ... had a hobby which he rode with very considerable ferocity — currency; and it was one which was ridden by all the men of Birmingham: but Mr. Attwood has descended from it, or the people have made him descend from it, and he must now ride another one.61

Sectionalism must not be an obstacle to the successful formation of a truly national reform movement.

During 1838 the three main concentrations of articulate discontent in Britain were moving into the alliance which was Chartism. The credo of the movement, the People's Charter, came from the London Working Men's Association led by William Lovett, an exclusively working class organization driven less by the pinch of poverty than by the long tradition of metropolitan radicalism, maintained by Francis Place and Lovett, drawing its support from the superior craftsmen.62 Lovett lent moral weight and organizational ability to Chartism but no great mass following from the capital itself so that Attwood could remark, "the Charter ... proceeded from a little clique or junta of men who had little more influence over the workmen
of London than over those of Constantinople." The latter, as representative of the second main wellspring of Chartist support might well belittle the meagre deployment of the L.W.M.A. in numbers, for he himself thought in terms of massed battalions and maintained considerable personal pulling power. The popular appeal of the B.P.U. was amply demonstrated at a mass meeting in Glasgow in May 1838 when Attwood and other Birmingham delegates explained their plans for a National Convention and National Petition and were welcomed with much enthusiasm. In the event of Parliamentary intransigence they proposed a 'sacred month', a general withdrawal of labour which would bring the Government to its senses. The B.P.U. delegation dispersed after the Glasgow meeting and stumped the Lowlands. John Collins, the most prominent working class member of the B.P.U. Council returned via a lecture tour of the North of England, the third and most explosive major area of Chartist agitation, meeting at first hand the fiery champion of the North, Joseph Rayner Stephens. The introduction of the hated New Poor Law in the North had coincided with the distress of the 1837 depression and fired widespread popular resistance. Treating the matter as 'a knife and fork question' Stephens effectively echoed the
desperate temper of the crowds and his violent threats of direct action thoroughly alarmed Collins who communicated his fears to the men of the B.P.U. The agitation in the North took on more political purpose when Feargus O'Connor took over the Great Northern Union which backed the Chartist programme, but the fundamentalist threats of the use of 'physical force' remained. On August 6th the three movements, from London, the Midlands and the North converged at a great meeting in Birmingham.

The choice of Birmingham for the meeting acknowledged the primacy and experience of the city in reform politics and the funds and business ability which its leaders could contribute to the cause. Attwood and his colleagues had put their support firmly behind universal suffrage, and expediency had convinced some of them of the need to play down the currency reform, which labelled them 'Brummagem' and perhaps served to docket them in the popular mind as champions of the now-suspect middle class. But the old policy was there, though submerged. Universal Suffrage came first in the National Petition which R. K. Douglas had drafted, but repeal of Peel's Gold Standard legislation was a leading item and there was
a further oblique reference to currency reform, demanding the abolition of "the laws which make food dear and those which by making money scarce, make labour cheap," and a plea for the interests of employers begging that "the capital of the master must no longer be deprived of its due reward." 67

Much of the atmosphere of 1832 was recaptured and Attwood was again excited by popular response -- "we have got here masses of men for twenty miles around Birmingham." 68 But in 1832 the B.P.U. had acted as a single autonomous unit albeit a powerful one, now they were casting their net much wider than a twenty mile radius in a bid for national leadership. The Birmingham old guard were counting on the multiplication of the B.P.U., of the concerted action of many like units or cells, but they had laid themselves open to the powerful cross currents of more desperate movements for reform under more extremist leaders and thus they surrendered their autonomy and command within Birmingham.

The challenge to Birmingham leadership of the new movement came from the North. The B.P.U. leaders had been alarmed by the fulminations of Stephens
Collins had reported as a dangerous political incendiary, but Stephens had no ambitions to usurp the leadership of a suffrage movement, declaring the Birmingham men 'old women' and sharing his contempt with Richard Oastler. It was Feargus O'Connor who took over the dynamic of resentment in the North and put it behind the Charter and himself. The Birmingham meeting of August 6th gave him a national platform and he made a bold and politic bid for national leadership. He paid homage to Attwood but simultaneously censured the errant politics of the B.P.U. and the new city Council for their previous credulous support for the Whigs, and their perverse regard for currency reform. O'Connor was prepared to be charitable now that "the good men of Birmingham, who gave us the poison were now about to give us the antidote," but there was the clear suggestion that the Birmingham leaders were there on sufferance, that they had to prove themselves anew to a movement which had been saved from their mishandling by "the steady Northern Breeze . . . the virtuous, unflinching men of the North."

The discomfiture of his hosts was compounded by his violent language and "Irish bragadoccio about arming and fighting," for he concluded his address to an enthusiastic crowd with a defiant flourish.
Then onward, our green standard rearing,
Go flesh every sword to the hilt,
On our side is Virtue and Erin,
On theirs is the Parson and Guilt.72

O'Connor was no mere braggart, however,
and during the fall of 1838 he was a constant, though
often uninvited, attender of B.P.U. meets, defending
himself against the growing censures of the Union
leaders, particularly Douglas and Salt. He laid
claim to having effected the great union of forces
at the August 6th meeting . . . "remember that
Mahommed has come to the mountain and not the mountain
to Mahommed," he told his audience, chiding them for
taking their pace from the procrastinating manoeuvres
of their local leaders . . . "if time will admit of
this dalliance on your part, the operatives of the
North see death too close, and hope at too great a
distance to join you in your slow and weary progress."
He evoked cheers and sympathy with his claim that he
stood on trial before the honest workingmen of
Birmingham, the argument centering on his resolve to
fix a time limit on peaceful agitation, which posited
physical force as the logical alternative. The Union
leaders patched up a reconciliation with O'Connor and
a mutual but vague resolution was passed in December
condemning physical force, although the crowds at the
meetings cheered the Irishman and hissed a B.P.U. leader. O'Connor moved on to attempt a takeover of the London Chartists.

There was a new animus abroad among the Birmingham artisans, a new distaste for the leaders of the B.P.U. O'Connor's propaganda undoubtedly found ready ears among men who had complaints of their own against the old guard. In November the Council rejected a proposal by moderate artisans Henry Watson and Thomas Baker that the B.P.U. should use its machinery to assist collection of the Chartists' National Rent, and there was a note of resentment in Watson's disgruntled verdict on the decision, foreign to Birmingham.

He had learned that to ensure the success of a Notion in the Council it was necessary that it should proceed from some wealthy and influential individual of that body, and not from a mere working man like himself.

The artisans took the initiative and set up a Managing Committee for the Collection of the National Rent. O'Connor was elected chairman and Edward Brown became secretary. The latter had previously been secretary of the Joint Committee on Distress but he now eschewed
any such co-operation and had become a firm local supporter of O'Connor, also lending his endorsement to Stephen's reliance on "lead and steel". The O'Connorite Chartists in Birmingham soon took over the weekly meetings of the Committee for the Collection and successfully resisted attempts by the Council of the B.P.U. to dissolve it, though a running battle between the old guard and the O'Connorites proceeded throughout February and March, 1839, the latter organising regular extraordinary meets of the working-men members to keep a watching brief on the middle class element.

The final alienation between the two parties came with the resignation of the three Birmingham delegates from the Chartists' National Convention in London. Douglas, Hadley and Salt had been elected to sit at the Convention which opened on February 4th, 1839, Douglas taking the chair for a time although the other two had excused themselves for business reasons. Within the Convention the 'physical force' bloc had exercised an early supremacy and the wilder members were spreading the gospel abroad at public meetings, one of which at the Crown and Anchor on March 11th being so excitable that it precipitated
the resignation of the three Birmingham delegates. 80 Censure was duly passed on the three defaulters at a public meeting convened in Birmingham on April 1st, attended by O'Connor and two of his lieutenants, and the local working men formed the Birmingham Observational Committee, an ad_hoc rival to the B.P.U. which elected three of its members, Edward Brown, Powell and Donaldson to replace Douglas, Hadley and Salt. 81 At a meeting of the B.P.U. Council the following week a strong O'Connorite lobby howled down T. C. Salt and laughed derisively at a letter from Attwood urging caution. 82 The Union was adjourned sine_die on April 13th with the old guard in retreat. Birmingham Chartism seemed to have succumbed to the proselytising of O'Connor, which offered more immediate salvation than the counsels of the B.P.U. with its now-suspect interest in the working class, and its tired and discredited currency reforms.

The middle class leaders of the Birmingham reform front had wished to dissociate themselves from the excesses of the National Convention and Attwood's retreat from the battlefield of domestic politics was final. But this particular radical echelon in Birmingham was not extinguished, it was engaged in
another more select campaign, the diverting battle for the incorporation of the borough. A charter of incorporation would seem to have offered a more reliable instrument for reform in the local, and national interest than a People's Charter commandeered by undesirables like O'Connor. The passing of the Municipal Corporation Bill in 1835 empowered the Crown to grant charters to boroughs on the petition of the inhabitants and within the year a strong lobby for incorporation was organized within the city. Since the existing local government machinery was largely a Tory preserve, the incorporation issue was contested along party lines, the Liberals standing for reform, the Conservatives maintaining a vigorous and persistent opposition. The Street Commissioners had done some good work in pacing the rapid expansion of the city but the Birmingham Journal disliked its exclusive nature, "working in the dark, unseen by the public eye, irresponsible to the public voice."

The struggle was also seen as a part of a wider national contest between the advocates of popular rights and the advocates of privilege. A fighting committee was formed in October of 1837 and its membership reads like the B.P.U. Council roll, not unexpectedly, as initially
the reformed Union had broadcast incorporation as one of its aims, and the new municipal government was clearly envisaged as a weapon of reform, since in Edmonds' words, "it would establish a permanent body with powers to convene the people in a legal manner; with power to give expression to their wants and feelings; and with power to restrain and govern them without danger." Cobden later quoted with approval Attwood's assertion that local councils in previously unincorporated towns would be real and legal political unions, cheaper and more effective than unofficial political unions.\textsuperscript{84} The opposition was alert to this ulterior motive and Wharncliffe in the Lords warned that Attwood "had recommended the inhabitants to apply for a Corporation as a great engine for political purposes."\textsuperscript{85} Local opposition was more concerned with the annual 'excitement' incidental to municipal elections and the loss of party advantage to the Tories who formed the Loyal and Conservative Association in 1838, which sustained a powerful counter attack on the incorporation lobby.

After much petitioning the borough was granted a Charter of Incorporation in November 1838, though its legality was constantly attacked by the
Tories, who in some cases refused to stand for local election under provisions of such allegedly spurious authority. Given such abstention the radicals swept the board in the December elections. Half the original councillors were manufacturers, representing the outlying wards where most of the industry was established, other members were for the most part merchants or shopkeepers and overall there was a strong Nonconformist representation. The B.P.U. scored heavily; P. H. Muntz, the Scholefield brothers, Joseph and Charles Sturge, T. C. Salt and F. Pierce were returned to the new Council. Furthermore, William Scholefield, son of the borough M.P. was elected Mayor, William Redfern was appointed Town Clerk, R. K. Douglas, Registrar of the Mayor's Court, and George Edmonds, Clerk of the Peace. In the list of recommendation to the borough bench sent up to the Home Office by the new corporation fifteen out of twenty-one places went to the Liberals, mainly to members of the Council, and although Lord John Russell made some alterations in the Whig and Tory interests the balance of power remained with the Liberals.

In a celebration banquet, G. F. Muntz proposed the toast "the Charter (of incorporation) --
may it fulfil the warmest expectations of its friends."
The 'friends' of the municipal charter were limited to its immediate beneficiaries. The Tories remained on the attack and Donaldson of the Birmingham Observational Committee denounced the new Council, who had, he said, "trampled on the interests of the working men on whose shoulders they were carried to the eminence they now enjoy." With the withdrawal from the National Convention of Douglas, Hadley and Salt, all members of the new corporation, the theme of middle class betrayal became common to Birmingham political debate.

Attwood maintained a tenuous and distasteful connexion with the Chartists though he seems to have been away from Birmingham during the vital months in 1838 and '39. He had written to the B.P.U. counselling caution and he was greatly concerned with brushing off any associations with those who seemed bent on prolonging the people's misery by the advocacy of physical force. "I will have an unstained name behind me . . . I will not die the death of a fool or a scoundrel." He watched the deliberations of the National Convention in London with bitter indignation,
I had been the principal means of giving more power and unity to the industrious classes . . . yet their representatives here treat me with insolence, calumny and suspicion, merely because I resisted their brutal passions and pointed out to them, that they were ruining the public cause.  

Attwood and John Fielden were the M.P.s chosen to present the National Petition to the House of Commons on May 11th 1839, but by this time the former was an extremely reluctant supporter of what was initially a Birmingham reform credo. In his apartments prior to the presentation he told the representatives of the Convention that he thought the people were against the People's Charter and that it could never be carried, replying tetchily to Lovett's sturdy defence that "that was all gammon." Attwood's speech in the House was dispirited and any residual enthusiasm evaporated during the debate on the Petition when Lord John Russell produced a placard signed by the Convention denouncing "the power and corrupting influence of paper money." Thus the contumely which had fallen on the B.P.U. leaders at home was visited on Attwood in the most humiliating manner -- "at this very moment, out of my own camp, a mortal weapon was directed versus my heart." On July 17th he refused
to attend a meeting "for the purpose of restoring harmony and reconciliation amongst the different classes of our townsfolk in Birmingham" for he feared that "mischief of some kind would probably be produced and that mischief, whatever it might be, would most certainly be laid at my door." Attwood, erstwhile champion and darling of Birmingham could no longer be assured of a fair hearing within his own city's walls.

The reform front was broken and as yet there was nothing to take its place. The Birmingham Observational Committee was the obvious refuge of the O'Connorites but other artisans, though disgruntled with the behavior of the old reform champions thought the newly elected delegates presumptuous, "desperate characters . . . (who) have long been endeavouring to sow dissension among the men of Birmingham by preaching up bloodshed and revolution." These were the words of Edwin Thompson, working class member of the B.P.U. who organized a protest against Brown, Powell and Donaldson, alleging that their election took place at a meeting "attended by scarcely a tithe of what may be called the men of Birmingham." Certainly Donaldson was aware of the power vacuum in
Birmingham, complaining in the Convention that "the people there were completely at sea in consequence of the late affair, and it required the utmost exertion to produce a feeling of unanimity among them."\footnote{94}

The National Convention moved to Birmingham on May 13th after the failure of the National Petition. London had remained largely unmoved by the agitation but O'Connor declared that in their new venue the members of the Convention could "ensconce themselves behind a quarter of a million men ready to defend them." There were also funds, "said to exist in Birmingham . . . and they would rally round them all those disunited parties into one strong link of strength."\footnote{95} The new Birmingham delegates looked to the presence of the National Convention to consolidate their hold on the working-class radicals and its arrival heightened the enthusiasms of many local Chartists.

Such enthusiasms served to tauten the apprehensions of the old reform leaders in their new role as the city's peace-keepers, and the recent rupture in the old harmony between masters and men was compounded by one of those 'riotous errors' to which
Rawlinson had alluded; the Bull Ring Riots in Birmingham in July 1839. During the crisis of 1832 the B.P.U. had instituted regular readings from the press as part of its propaganda campaign and the Bull Ring, the wide, steep, open street in the centre of the city had been the regular choice of these well-controlled assemblies, thus becoming a traditional rallying spot. In May and July of 1839 the old practice was restored as people collected at lunchtime and evening to hear the new Birmingham reform leaders report on Convention proceedings and read from the radical press. The meetings were again seemingly well ordered but they interfered with traffic and irritated the shopkeepers in the vicinity. The newly appointed magistracy, many of them former Chartists, were nervous and Scholefield as Mayor sought to conciliate the throng and remove the obstruction by allowing them the use of the Town Hall, but the Street Commissioners refused permission. The Bull Ring became a persistent focus of popular agitation and the pressure on the magistracy from the local business interests grew. The bench brought charges for obstruction against Henry Wilkes, Fussell and Brown, prominent speakers in the Bull Ring and leading members of the Birmingham Observational Committee, the workingmen's successor
to the B.P.U. The defendants were quick to point out the irony of their position and Wilkes remonstrated with Justice P. H. Muntz,

It appears to me very strange that the working class should now be prosecuted. In the year 1832 when I took an active part there were no such interruptions nor prosecutions. The influential gentleman then took part with the people and there were no such objections raised.  

O'Connor himself defended Fussell and Brown in the magistrates court.  

To meet any escalation the magistrates called for a detachment of the Metropolitan Police since the local force boasted but thirty ill-assorted members and was obviously inadequate. The new 'Peelers' arrived on the night of July 4th and were promptly in action in the Bull Ring. They went in to arrest the speaker at the customary evening meeting and the crowd turned upon them with such vehemence and strength that they had to be rescued by a force of cavalry. There was trouble in the streets of the city for several days but the worst explosion came on July 15th when Lovett and Collins, leading members of the Convention were released on bail, having protested vigorously against the use of the Metropolitan Police, denouncing it as unconstitutional.
Their indignation was widely shared in Birmingham and their return was the signal for further defiant demonstrations, culminating in the sacking and firing of various shops in the Bull Ring itself. 100

The immediate reaction of the authorities was to order regular patrols of the city by a Dragoon regiment, while the Home Office ordered an immediate enquiry into the disturbances. 101

General Napier, in charge of security in the North, and a shrewd analyst of the possible pattern of revolution in Britain had not written off Birmingham as a site for the first outbreak, "where the mulcibers are bolder than the weavers." 102 Copies of Macerone's Street and House Fighting had been extensively circulated in the city, pikes manufactured after Macerone's design were seized and arms shipments by barge from Birmingham were intercepted at Ellesmere in August. 103 Might not Birmingham be the flashpoint, the central H.Q. for a national uprising which had been but narrowly forestalled, or perhaps postponed? The incendiary riots in the city in July seem to have been the spontaneous work of a largely juvenile mob in revolt against police brutality, and they were soon spent, the Colonel of the Dragoons stationed in
the town testifying that "the People appeared to be alarmed at their own Devastation, and had got away." 104 There was no direction from Chartist leaders, local or national, and there was considerable friction between different cells in the local movement which delighted the Police Chief Burgess and argues against any common resolve on direct action. 105 Frost's rising in Newport in November 1839 received no response in Birmingham despite allegation of the city's key role in a planned chain reaction of revolt throughout England. Frost's counsel, Sir Frederick Pollack effectively destroyed this notion though he could not have dispelled the general alarm of the bourgeoisie. 106

Birmingham then was not the focus of any national conspiracy, but the complexion of its politics had been altered by outside influences, notably O'Connor and the 'physical force' wing of Chartism. The response which his more violent teachings found within the city evidence the aggressive, class conscious attitude of a working population hit by depression and uncertain of their old leaders and their promises, though far from committed to revolution. But the keener edge to local politics may in part
have come from closer at hand than the itinerant O'Connor. The B.P.U. had always counted on calling in their 'battalions' from the city's industrial hinterland in the West Midlands, but just as the Union's leaders had forfeited working class support in Birmingham in 1839 so had they lost their grip on the workers in these contingent territories. On a missionary trip to the Black Country in March, T. C. Salt had failed to win support for his view of Chartism although in midsummer Donaldson could report that the people of Stourbridge, Lye and Dudley were impatiently awaiting further orders from the Convention. Trade was bad in these areas where old, enfeebled cottage industries such as nailmaking struggled alongside the mines, the ironworks and the potteries. The population had risen steeply from the 1820s and the Black Country was the scene of great industrial squalor with irregular housing, foul atmosphere, poor drainage and subsidence. The workers in this industrial collar were more militant than those in the city and connexions between the two groups were drawn closer so that by the end of 1839 Chartist classes in the hinterland had been established "through the influence of the Birmingham (Chartist) Association."
The outlying districts were closely connected to Birmingham geographically, particularly with the growth of the canal system in the first half of the century. The discontented workers from the West Midlands could thus readily make their way into the city as they had done in 1832, but there were more violent precedents, such as 1791 when Black Country colliers descended on Birmingham after the Church and King riots, returning home laden with spoils. That memorable occasion had left an imprint upon the minds of respectable citizens and in the summer of 1839 rumours were rife that the colliers were again preparing to march on Birmingham, under Chartist leadership. One obvious connoisseur journeyed in from Leamington, "on purpose to see the Disturbance." The colliers did not march on the city and the official enquiry revealed no Chartist master plan behind the riots, but its findings could not dispel the alarm of those of the bourgeoisie who remained firmly convinced of some deeper conspiracy. Some forty years later, an old Birmingham personality could still maintain, "there is good reason for thinking that the riots were premeditated and had been arranged
by some mysterious secret conclave in London or elsewhere. Contemporaries labelled the riots the work of "Chartist scoundrels", and the Tories in the Lords were convinced that they were "Chartist outbreaks against the respectable people of the town," instigated by the extremist wing of the B.P.U. which its leaders could no longer control. Despite the better-informed reassurances of Melbourne, the Duke of Wellington remained convinced that Birmingham "was worse treated than any town ever was treated when taken by storm." In this way were old memories stirred and new trepidations nourished and to some of the city's bourgeoisie the temperature of local popular politics must have seemed too dangerously high.

Birmingham had been sorely tried by the economic misfortunes of the late 1830's for which its popular leaders could offer no other antidote than the tired proposals of currency reform. The heroes of the 1832 Reform Bill campaign seemed to be the sole beneficiaries of the measure, and their feverish fight for incorporation confirmed their selfishness in the eyes of the lower orders who found more appeal in O'Connor's demands for direct action.
Some of the artisans held faith with their former leaders but the working class within Birmingham largely chose to effect its own salvation, and after the excitement of 1839 the taste for political adventures in the old style failed to pull the same crowds, either from the workers or the 'respectables'. In any case, the old reform front in Birmingham was temporarily broken and its principal architect commented bitterly,

    The master has been set against the workman, and the workman against the master. My friends in Birmingham, who for ten years have been the very life and soul of the Reform interest, have been rudely thrown aside as leaders of the people for merely standing on their known Rules and Regulations and refusing to lead the people astray.116
FOOTNOTES

Chapter 1


5 Ibid., p. 77.


12 S. Timmins, ed., Birmingham and the Midland Hardware District, 1866, p. 223.


14 British Association for the Advancement of Science, Birmingham and its Regional Setting, 1950, p. 200.


16 De Tocqueville, op. cit., pp. 94-95.


19 Attwood remains a difficult but vital figure who has received scant biographical attention. Wakefield's Life of Thomas Attwood is a useful but frustrating grab-bag of speeches and letters assembled by a dutiful son-in-law who disclaims any scholarly intention. G. D. H. Cole, Chartist Portraits, 1941 relates the main items in Attwood's political career and Ferguson (see above, n. 3) is working on a much needed modern interpretation.

20 Wakefield, op. cit., pp. 2 & 106.


22 Read, op. cit., pp. 56-61; Wakefield, op. cit., p. 28.


26 Link, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

27 "I have thus drawn together a variety of thoughts and opinions, desultory indeed, but such as I have neither leisure nor disposition to economise and arrange." Ibid., p. 7.

28 Tooke attacked the school of paper money as specious though he forbore naming names, T. Tooke, *History of Prices, 1793-1837*, 1838, vol. 2, pp. 217-228. Cobbett condemned Attwood's policy as "rag botheration" and Disraeli berated him as "a provincial banker laboring under a financial monomania." By the early 1840s the *Economist* was treating Attwood's theories as a joke. Wakefield, *op. cit.*, pp. 249, 296-298.

29 In 1812 Attwood wrote home from London, "Such a set of mortals as the members of both Houses are I never did expect to meet with in this world. The best among them are scarce equal to the worst in Birmingham." Though he received the Freedom of the City of London in 1832 he remained hostile to the capital, its Parliament and its cash nexus. Wakefield, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

30 Checkland, *op. cit.*, p. 3.


32 Attwood's wife and brothers were Tories and he was usually supported by the local Tory press. Wakefield, *op. cit.*, p. 128.


35 Checkland, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

36 Wakefield, *op. cit.*, pp. 145-149.


39 A useful and succinct examination of the B.P.U.'s role is given in Read, op. cit., pp. 86-94.

40 Wakefield, op. cit., p. 261.


42 Birmingham Journal (hereafter cited as B. J.), 4 April 1856.


44 Matthews, op. cit., pp. 43-44.


48 Spectator, 19 November 1836.


51 Spectator, 19 November 1836.

53 Buckley, op. cit., p. 152.

54 Protest Against The Political Union, 1837. Birmingham Reference Library (hereafter referred to as B. R. L.)

55 Buckley, op. cit., p. 86.

56 M. Hovell, The Chartist Movement, 1925, p. 100. This was the first scholarly examination of Chartism as a whole and remains extremely useful, particularly for the early stages of the movement. Hovell is however guilty of undue hostility to Feargus O'Connor and the 'physical force' Chartists though it must be allowed that the author's death prevented a revision of the book before publication so that it is somewhat raw despite the attentions of Professor Tout. Nobody since has attempted a comprehensive work on this subject.

57 Checkland, op. cit., p. 3.


59 Briggs, Dugdale Society Occasional Papers, no. 8 (1949), p. 9. In 1839 an official investigator found 71 weekly copies of the newspaper as far away as Dunfermline.

60 B. J., 1 May 1838. It is significant that the newspaper was part owned by the lawyers Parkes and Redfern who had been so opposed to currency reform in 1832 (see above). The other joint owner was J. Scholefield who played a less prominent part in Union activities in 1838-1839 than he had done previously.

61 Spectator, 29 September 1838.


63 Wallas, op. cit., p. 373. There was a legacy of suspicion between the L. W. M. A. and the B. P. U. which dated from 1832 and was never wholly eradicated.

64 A. Wilson, "Chartism in Glasgow," Chartist Studies, p. 252.
65 Hovell, op. cit., p. 106.

66 R. G. Gammage, History of the Chartist Movement, 1894, p. 91. Douglas and the Muntz brothers were trustees for the Chartists' national subscriptions. Gammage was a Northampton workingman and Chartist lecturer whose book was first published in 1854. Again, there is considerable bias against O'Connor, but the author's prejudices are so self-evident that they do not seriously impair this useful record.


68 Spectator, 11 August 1838.

69 Ibid.

70 Northern Star (hereafter cited as N. S.), 11 August 1838. O'Connor played a major financial role in the establishment of this, the leading Chartist newspaper, and despite occasional differences with the editor, William Hill, it remained his mouthpiece, see E. Glasgow, "The Establishment of the Northern Star Newspaper," History, vol. 39, no. 135 (February, 1954), pp. 54-67.

71 Lovett, op. cit., p. 185.

72 Gammage, op. cit., pp. 44-45. For an interesting analysis of O'Connor's oratory see D. Read & E. Glasgow, Feargus O'Connor: Irishman and Chartist, 1961, pp. 71-75. This short biography is better in examining O'Connor as an Irishman than as a Chartist but it does provide a more balanced and sympathetic treatment than earlier historians allowed.

73 N. S., 17 November - 1 December 1838.

74 Wakefield, op. cit., p. 341. Attwood was convalescing in the Isle of Wight during the winter months of 1838-1839.

75 Gammage, op. cit., p. 50. At Birmingham O'Connor had declared himself the representative for six towns, in London he claimed to stand for some forty to fifty.

76 N. S., 17 November 1838.

78 *B. J.*, 2 February - 9 March 1839.

79 Briggs, *Chartist Studies*, p. 28. They had decided on withdrawal before the Convention met.


81 *B. J.*, 6 April 1839.


83 Most of the following material is drawn from Bunce, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, ch. 6.

84 Read, *The English Provinces*, p. 131. Although Attwood was appointed to the borough magistracy he was not prominent in the fight for incorporation due to ill health.

85 Bunce, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 138.


88 *B. J.*, 2 February 1839.

89 Wakefield, *op. cit.*, pp. 343-344.

90 *Spectator*, 11 May 1839. Attwood claimed that he had never seen the Charter till it was thrust upon him at the great meeting of 6 August 1838, and that he had no time to examine it or he would not have supported it then or since. Attwood could not have been the easiest of political colleagues and became increasingly cantankerous, "un homme infatué de lui-même et de ses théories." E. Douléans, *Le Chartisme*, 1949, p. 101.


93 *Proceedings of the Working Men's Associations*, vol. 2, p. 3 (B. R. L.). These consist of newspaper cuttings, pamphlets and letters assembled by William Lovett, sometimes referred to more conveniently as the Lovett Collection.
94 Ibid., p. 7.

95 Spectator, 25 May 1839.


97 B. J., 22 June 1839.

98 Langford, op. cit., vol. 2, pp. 581-582; F. C. Mather, Public Order in the Age of the Chartists, 1953, pp. 201-205. Brown was a confirmed O'Connorite though Fussell was something of an opportunist, offering his services to the authorities as an informer, a role with which he was not wholly unacquainted.

99 Mather, op. cit., pp. 105-107, 119.

100 Dent, op. cit., pp. 459-460.


103 Annual Register, vol. 81, 1839, pp. 111, 139-140. Macerone was an Italian revolutionary, Hovell, op. cit., p. 138.

104 Mr. Dundas' Report and the Evidence Taken on the Investigation Respecting the Riots, 1840, p. 25 (B. R. L.). This government enquiry was ordered in response to the allegations of local Tories that the magistrates were guilty of a dereliction of duty. See also Report of the Committee Appointed by the Town Council into the Late Riots, 1840 (B. R. L.). The Committee was chaired by Joseph Sturge.


106 D. Williams, John Frost: A Study in Chartism, 1939, pp. 211, 278-279.


112 Mr. Dundas' Report, pp. 19, 35, 72.


116 Wakefield, op. cit., pp. 355-356. Quoted from Attwood's Farewell Address to the electors of Birmingham, on his resignation as an M. P., December 1839.
By 1839 Birmingham politics could be more obviously broken down according to class rather than party lines. The estrangement of the classes has perhaps been exaggerated but it was certainly exacerbated by the hostility of O'Connor's disciples in Birmingham who maintained a persistent agitation against the old leaders of the reform front, though the latter refused to trade blows with them in public debate, concerning themselves with the business of local government and temporarily abdicating their interest in reform politics. The rump of Attwood's reform party and the O'Connorite claque were irreconcilable, but between them they did not exhaust the resources of popular politics of Birmingham. Significant elements among the artisans could not stomach the gospel of physical force and remained loyal to the ideals of a harmonious society if not to its old protagonists. They looked to improvement via long established traditions of self-help while remaining susceptible to new overtures of middle class political initiative. All members of the middle class political cadre in Birmingham were not blackballed,
and in the early 1840s some practical reconciliation was effected between the classes, largely due to the promptings of the Quaker merchant and philanthropist Joseph Sturge, who constituted something of a 'third force' in Birmingham politics. Sturge was encouraged enough to attempt to translate his notions of reconciliation into national terms, sponsoring a movement for Complete Suffrage which challenged the Anti-Corn Law League and National Chartism in their bids for primacy in popular political agitation.

Joseph Sturge was prominent both within the Quaker community of Birmingham and in the broader sphere of public service, locally and nationally. Born in 1793 in Bristol, a West Country stronghold of the Friends, Sturge entered the corn factoring business with his brother in Bewdley, Worcestershire, moving on to Birmingham in the mid 1820s. There the brothers found something of a crisis of conscience among the local Quakers, several of whom as bankers in the city had allowed the rewards of business to erode their religious integrity, whereupon the stricter of their brethren disowned them. Sturge played a leading role in the purge and gained an early hold over the respect and affection of the Birmingham Quakers with their modest business connexions and vigilant concern for
propriety, at the same time establishing his respectability with the local bourgeoisie as a whole.\(^1\) He himself was worried that he might be afflicted by the blight of excess profits though the speculative nature of his own business and his regular donations to philanthropic bodies disallowed this. Sturge's Quaker peers could never fault him in this respect but they did censure him when he joined the Birmingham Political Union in 1832, the first of several occasions when Sturge excited such disapproval for venturing into the foreign world of politics.\(^2\)

The cause of parliamentary reform was, of course, a matter of strong personal conviction to Sturge and later fired his Complete Suffrage movement but at this date his greater preoccupation was in the fight for the abolition of slavery, to which end his membership of the B.P.U. was but one of several means. In 1826 he was elected secretary of the Birmingham Anti-Slavery Society and rose rapidly to the forefront of the national movement as one of the younger and more radical abolitionists who formed the Agency Committee in 1831, a ginger group within the national Society, largely responsible for its extensive propaganda campaign which in so many ways prefigured the tactics of the
Anti-Corn Law League. The Committee hired agents and lecturers, lobbied the local press and secured election pledges to the cause from parliamentary candidates. During their first year of activity the number of affiliated societies rose from 200 to nearly 1300. The campaign was largely financed by the Quakers on the Committee and was most effective in the Midlands where Sturge, using Birmingham as his base, stumped the surrounding areas as far afield as the West Country where his local connexions still proved useful. Sturge and his colleagues were disappointed with the 1833 bill abolishing slavery in British colonies, and they looked ahead to the complete extermination of slavery itself. When the momentum of the original Anti-Slavery Society slackened Sturge again formed an activist group within its tired husk, using the more determined energies of the Birmingham abolitionists and resurrecting the whole apparatus of petitioning, lecturers and mass meetings. The attack was directed first against the system of Negro apprenticeship which seemed to secure the perpetuation of slavery in the West Indies and Sturge's swingeing report upon the practice after a personal fact-finding tour in 1836-1837 contributed heavily to its abolition in 1838. Sturge was thus too preoccupied to join in the work of the reconstituted B.P.U.
Sturge's vigorous prosecution of the anti-slavery cause earned him the acquaintance and approbation of several national figures from Daniel O'Connell to Lord Brougham, but he could not have been an easy man to work with. Undoubtedly a generous and paternal employer and genuine philanthropist his ideals were nevertheless a straitjacket to his actions, and his integrity was often that of the smallminded; that which could be strong and admirable yet seem overly stubborn and intractable to less charitable but more worldly interpretations. Sir George Stephen in recalling the work of the Agency Committee in the anti-slavery fight mutters on about Sturge's "eccentric principles", his headstrong attachment to "peculiar notions of right and wrong" and declares Sturge's brother "more pliable and more practically useful." Elsewhere Sturge himself acknowledged his nickname as 'the impractical Sturge' and there were occasions when both Richard Cobden and John Bright let irritation pepper their normal respect and forbearance in correspondence with their difficult friend.

Sturge was not entirely persona grata with the political reform leaders in Birmingham either. His membership of the B.P.U. was brief, confined to the
crITICAL MONTHS OF 1832, AFTER WHICH HE CONSIDERED THE UNION'S MISSION COMPLETED AND RETURNED TO FULL-TIME SUPPORT OF THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST SLAVERY. THE UNION LEADERS HAD CONSIDERED THE LATTER A FATAL DIVERSION FROM OTHER VITAL TASKS AND EFFECTIVELY BROKE UP AN ABOLITIONIST MEETING IN THE CITY IN APRIL 1833 WITH A RESOLUTION BY G. F. MUNTZ,

THAT ANXIOUS AS WE ARE FOR THE EARLY BUT GRADUAL ABOLITION OF NEGRO SLAVERY, WE CANNOT ADMIT THAT IN THE PECCULAR CRISIS OF THE COUNTRY, IT IS A SUBJECT WHICH CALLS FOR THE ATTENTION OF HIS MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT, IN PREFERENCE TO THE MEASURES NECESSARY TO BE CARRIED INTO EFFECT FOR PROMOTING THE COMMERCIAL AND MANUFACTURING INTERESTS OF THE COUNTRY, NOR CAN WE SANCTION ANY PROPOSITION FOR THE ABOLITION OF NEGRO SLAVERY, UNACCOMPANIED BY AN OFFER OF GRANTING TO THE OWNERS OF WEST INDIAN ESTATES SUCH COMPENSATION AS PARLIAMENT MAY THINK PROPER. ¹⁰

But whatever offence Joseph Sturge might have given the old Birmingham reform leaders and however exasperating he might be to the political manager he was most certainly popular with the ordinary people in his home city. In September 1838 an anonymous Chartist addressed an open letter to Sturge through the Birmingham Journal urging him now to bend his labours to the extermination of white slavery. Though he stood aloof from the revived B.P.U. and the efflorescence of Chartism this served to immunise Sturge against the obloquy which fell upon the old guard leaders after their withdrawal from the Convention and he preserved his sympathetic image during and after the disturbances in the Bull Ring. He moved among the crowds enjoining them to keep the peace, meeting with none of the disdain reserved for other 'respectables'. Sturge fought hard to save the lives of the ringleaders convicted after the riots and moved for an enquiry by the Town Council, chairing the eventual committee which reported back in 1840, attributing a large share of blame to the brutal misconduct of the Peelers and censuring the magistrates for having made the services of these officers a subject of complimentary notice. This investigation made Sturge privy to the facts of the riots and rid him of any such alarmist fears as had
taken root in other middle class minds, fed by the exaggerations of Wellington. It also led him to a prominent place in the fight against the Government Police Bill which Sir Robert Peel introduced in the summer of 1839, whereby the Corporation would establish a local police force financed by a government loan but subject to overall central government supervision. There was opposition on all fronts; the Chartists fought it as an instrument of oppression, the Council were indignant at this encroachment upon their authority. There was much sarcastic laughter from the crowds at the Council's stand and Sturge alone of the Council members was received with respect as he argued against the bill as "a system of centralisation and espionage." This outspoken stand brought further censure upon Sturge from his fellow Quakers. He defended himself in terms which demonstrated his increasing sympathy for the working classes, and his likening of the situation to his previous experiences of oppression, for he remarked, "I am sorry to say that amongst some of the middle and higher class with us there is a feeling almost as bitter against the working classes as there was towards the slave, by the slave owners."
Upon Attwood's resignation from Parliament in December 1839 Sturge was persuaded to offer himself as a bye-election candidate but no great enthusiasm was evinced among the electorate and rather than split the radical vote Sturge retired. His election programme did not embrace the whole Chartist catalogue. He stood for "a greater extension of the elective franchise," the abolition of the property qualification, a shorter life for parliament and vote by ballot. He gave equal or more priority to the disestablishment of the Church and universal free trade, together with a demand for Sunday holidays and predictable appeals for the abolition of capital punishment, war and slavery. There was no outright condemnation of the New Poor Law though there was a rider deploring its harsh administration.\(^{17}\)

Sturge's sympathies reside in this manifesto but they hardly constitute a statement of political alignment for Sturge represented a classic case of the Quaker conscience at work in society, motivated by a strong sense of moral obligation which explicitly rejected the machinations of party and faction. His religion, his philanthropy, his stature as a 'good employer' largely sustained his public image as an unimpeachable third force, and though his fellow Quakers
censured any contact with the rumbustious B.P.U.

Sturge's level replies show how far he thought his own actions removed from the normal, unsavoury game of politics. Good works and the professions of good intention were some protection against the mudslinging of local politics, but could they survive the keener suspicions and sharper retorts of a wider, more ruthless field of action?

Joseph Sturge never ceased in his fight against slavery but in the early 1840s he became engaged in another struggle, the campaign against the Corn Laws. Actively engaged in the corn trade as he was, his commercial expertise was of great value to the Anti-Corn Law League and convinced him of the sound business arguments for repeal, but he was also driven by a desire to moralise the trade, mindful perhaps of how Cobbett had long pilloried the Quakers of Mark Lane as hypocrites. Sturge was indeed a prize acquisition for the League, Cobden dubbing him its 'moral conscience', and eagerly enlisting him for his early and insistent championship of nothing less than the total and immediate repeal of protection. In February 1841 Cobden wrote Sturge urging him to write a letter to the Anti-Corn Law Circular exhorting the uncertain to hold firm to immediate
abolition, "such a letter from you would be a rallying point for all the good men and true, and would shame the wanderers and bring them back to our ranks." The previous month Sturge had doubled his annual subscription and given £200 to the League towards the expenses of its contest at the Walsall bye-election.

By mid-1841 however, Sturge was beginning to turn away from the League on two counts. His conviction in the good cause of the League was based upon a conscience given to critical examination of the moral projections of its policy, to a nicety which upset Cobden who capitalized upon the more general passion and indignation aroused by a moral issue. The League had decided to work for the introduction of slave-grown sugar on the same terms as 'free-labor' sugar, but to Sturge slave-grown goods were stolen goods and he was soon at odds with this minor fact of League policy and Cobden's delicate and friendly attempts to dissuade him from his stand were of no avail. Furthermore, Sturge was increasingly drawn to the panacea of universal suffrage. He had demonstrated his sympathy with the Birmingham working-class and by 1841 there were strong reassurances of the continued probity and integrity of the local artisan. In addition his trip to the U.S.A. from April
to August of that year to investigate slavery had
revealed to him democracy in action, and whatever his
revulsion in the Southern States he had been greatly
impressed with social and moral conduct in the manu-
factoring towns of Massachusetts. On his return to
England he wrote Cobden,

I have been driven to the conclusion
that it is not only hopeless to expect
justice for the labouring population from
the representatives of the present
constituencies, but that the infatuated
policy which now guides our rulers will be
persisted in, until they plunge millions
into want and misery, if they do not bring
them into a premature grave. I therefore
think that the time is arrived when every
friend of humanity, of whatever class, sect,
or party should endeavour to obtain and
secure for the people a just and permanent
control over their own affairs.

Sturge attempted to flesh out this new intention
of his through his existing League connexions and in
November 1841 called a special meeting at the conclusion
of a League convention to discuss possible extension of
the suffrage. Francis Place was in the chair and the
League's official historian records that this appendix
to the official convention was "attended by nearly all
the deputies who had been present till the conclusion
of the delegates meeting." Together with Sharman
Crawford, M.P. Sturge drew up a manifesto subsequently
called the Sturge Declaration which condemned the evils of "class legislation" and called for the "full, fair and free exercise of the elective franchise at present denied the majority." The Declaration was to be printed and circulated through a central bureau in Birmingham. Potential supporters were requested to sign and return the document and pronounce upon the feasibility of a national conference to consider further action. In January 1842 a provisional committee for a Birmingham Complete Suffrage Association was formed among local signatories who included some 2000 of the city's electors, together with almost all the local Nonconformist ministers.

Complete Suffrage was to retain a strong Nonconformist flavour. Its early identification with dissent came from the pushful energies of Edward Miall, editor of the Nonconformist which became the official press organ of the new movement. Miall was a Congregationalist minister deeply involved in the radical politics of Leicester where he joined with another Nonconformist, the Reverend J. P. Mursell in the fight against church rates, looking towards the eventual disestablishment of the Church of England, to which end they formed a Voluntary Church society similar to
the one in Birmingham. Miall had contributed to the local radical paper the *Leicester Mercury* and became impressed with the potential of the press. He determined upon launching a paper which, as he wrote to his wife, "will ring a peal in the ears of drowsy Dissenters such as will startle the blood into their cheeks for very shame... when the trumpet is once up to my mouth I will not spare." Miall canvassed financial support in the urban strongholds of Nonconformity, in Birmingham, Bristol, Manchester and Leeds, and the *Nonconformist* appeared in April 1841, a new weekly pledged to "an equitable and peaceable severance of Church and State" as its priority, with the subsidiary wish to promote "a fair and full representation of all." Miall's attachment to the cause of suffrage reform was in compassionate response to the wide distress in Leicester and its environs where the hosiery trade was plunged into deep depression. He was disenchanted with the record of the established parties and wrote, "the question is no longer one of party, with more than half of our population it is one of life and death." The *Nonconformist* remained the focus of a new militant nonconformity though it met with the disfavor of Miall's Congregationalist seniors.
To promote suffrage reform Miall urged his readers to demonstrate their sincerity to the working class who had become dangerously alienated from middle class leadership after the disappointing aftermath to 1832. The majority of the former had nonetheless shown massive forbearance and eschewed violence and the calls of demagogy despite their increasing distress, thus establishing their basic stability and respect for property. A union of the two classes was logical and expedient to throw off the trammels of 'class legislation', that is, the government by the old-line parties dominated by the landed interest. Above all other benefits to emerge from this new move, wrote Miall, "we have no manner of doubt that the moral effects to be anticipated from the adoption of complete suffrage would be even more valuable than those which are purely political." Miall's articles on this theme in the Nonconformist attracted the attention of Sturge who had contributed capital to the paper. He collected and published them in pamphlet form under the title, A Reconciliation Between the Middle and Labouring Class furnishing a personal preface declaring that "the Patriot and the Christian fail in the discharge of their duty, if they do not, by all peaceable and legitimate means strive to remove the enormous evil of class legislation."
Society was to be cleansed of all the accretions of political self-interest, even of politics itself.

This then was the genesis of the Complete Suffrage movement; a new move led by middle class Nonconformists despairing of the existing machinery of government which lent itself to the exclusive rule of the landowners. The middle class would join anew with the working class and redirect them into the ways of mutually beneficial, responsible and effective popular agitation. Sturge's confidence that working class support would be both well-disciplined and forthcoming under his leadership came from his respect for the new reservoir of rectitude and organised determination in the Chartist Church in Birmingham and similar developments in Scotland and the West Country. These connexions will be examined later in this chapter, but at this point it is more relevant to consider the state of the League and its immediate relations with Complete Suffrage for Sturge used his contacts with the League, whether ingenuously or not, to launch the movement and the League afforded a ready made middle class reform body, partly cast in the image of the anti-slave societies which Sturge had helped work so effectively. Sturge considered the two
movements complementary and continued to attend League meetings, joining the procession of deputies who picketed the reassembled Commons in February 1842, but Cobden clearly viewed Complete Suffrage as a rival to the League.

Cobden had reason to fear the Complete Suffrage movement as a distraction to League members for during the autumn prorogation of Parliament in 1841 there was an uneasy hiatus in the League campaigning. Peel had gone into retreat to deliberate upon policy and Cobden feared that the new Tory Prime Minister would introduce free trade concessions which would weaken the League ranks, for as Cobden remarked, "the greatest evil that could befall us would be a bona fide concession . . . the middle classes are a compromising set." The League was in financial difficulty and the recent momentum from electioneering was spent. Cobden wrote Bright in October 1841 that "Something new is wanting to give novelty to our proceedings. The League has grown somewhat stale." If this move were not soon forthcoming under Cobden's direction Complete Suffrage might tap off much of his support, for letters from the provinces revealed the disaffection of members who were beginning to believe that the House of Commons
as then constituted shut out all hope of repeal of the Corn Laws and that an extension of the suffrage was an essential prerequisite. 35 When Sturge had first mooted his plans for suffrage reform Cobden had referred to it somewhat tetchily as "Sturge's new hobby," 36 but by February 1842 the danger was more sharply defined for Cobden confided in the Chairman of the League Committee that, "One thing is certain, unless we can strike a bold blow now, we shall be superseded very materially by the suffrage people." 37

At the worst then, Sturge's new move could collapse the League; at the very least it would compromise the League's already doubtful standing in Birmingham, though in any tactical count of its strength in the cities Cobden was no stranger to the disappointing progress of his cause there. Anti-Corn Law meetings called in the city in January 1839 during the build up of Chartist agitation had been strongly attacked by the Chartists as "the interested movements of Whig Corn Law intriguers," 38 and though the Town Council had adopted a petition to Parliament it had been opposed by Muntz, Hadley and Salt, the delegates to the National Convention. 39 In the fall of 1839, the League lecturer in Birmingham, J. H. Shearman, himself a local man, complained of
extensive apathy to the Corn Laws among the shopkeepers and though a local branch of the League was formally established in June 1841 and produced a sizeable petition for repeal it failed to sustain its early promise. After a visit to the city in October of that year Cobden reported back in disgruntled fashion,

I have been for a couple of days in Birmingham, trying to urge the respectables into action. The active workers in their association seem to be working men. Hitherto the leading and middle classes seem to have done very little. They promise to get up a meeting of some kind which I am to attend. Sturge and his brother are tending towards Chartism. I called along with Joseph Sturge upon Collins and two other leaders of the new move but they are not a whit more reasonable upon our question than the O'Connorites. We must never expect any co-operation from these old leaders. Our only plan is to leave the two Chartist factions to fight with each other and raise up a working class party of repealers independent of both. Vanity, conceit and gross ignorance of our question seem to be the characteristics of the very best of the old hack leaders. 

Though the League does seem to have made encouraging advances in the city in the early months of 1842 Cobden remained unimpressed, and presumably held firm to the final exasperated verdict of the above report which was that "Birmingham has never had a lucid interval yet." Sturge's defection hardly made for a new
enlightenment in the League's interest.

The antidote to the blandishments of a Complete Suffrage movement seemed then to Cobden to lie in the regenerative attractions of a new move for the League. "If we could find some work for our friends in all parts, that would be the best plan for uniting us." In the interim Cobden could hardly disown Sturge's new move for this might compromise the liberal image of the League. Cobden had long ago recognised the good sense of attaching other reform slogans to the small print of the League's demands -- the ballot, for example, was a moral question which would appeal to the Nonconformists -- but he was wary of over-emphasis. Previously Cobden had thought that these slogans would offend the middle class if they were hammered too persistently, writing privately in 1839 that "People's minds are nauseated with the battle cries of Triennial Parliaments, Vote by Ballot, and Household Suffrage -- I would avoid the terms if possible . . . which have been so much hackneyed and prostituted by political jobbers and shallow demagogues." Now, however, there was the battle cry of Complete Suffrage, championed by a man largely immune to charges of political chicanery, a fact clearly recognised by Cobden who confided to
Sturge, "You have so much of established reputation to fall back upon, that your standing with the middle class would not be endangered by a course which might peril the character and endanger the usefulness of most others." Sturge might prove a very powerful lodestone, and to disown him might polarise massive support around his movement from among the middle class elements who had supported the League as much for its general attack upon the establishment as for its specific aims of Free Trade. Cobden could not take a bludgeon to the new movement, neither in all conscience and political calculation could he choose to ignore it. Many Leaguers had signed the Sturge Declaration, whatever their future commitment might be, and so Cobden strained to exact some tactical recompense from his reluctant association with Complete Suffrage, concluding initially that there might be two distinct advantages to the League. Firstly, the Leaguers' endorsement of the Sturge Declaration might be a painless declaration of good faith in the cause of suffrage reform "to conciliate the people;" secondly, "it will be something in our rear to frighten the aristocracy -- and it will take the masses out of the hands of their present rascally leaders." By February
1842 at the same time as he was afraid of Complete Suffrage as a rival to the League he saw the movement as part of the increasing general pressure upon the government and wrote privately,

... we must keep the League as a body wholly distinct from the suffrage movement. But at the same time I think the more that individuals connected prominently with the League join the suffrage party the better .... After all, I hardly entertain a hope that we shall effect our object by old and regular methods; accidents may aid us, but I do not see my way in the ordinary course of things to beating down the power of the aristocracy.48

So Cobden's relations with the new movement remained somewhat equivocal as he sought to protect the League from this upstart new company which might appropriate too big a piece of the market in the free trade of popular political agitation.49

The Complete Suffrage movement sprang from middle class initiative and its earliest connexions augured well for a broadening support from this section, but it was also pledged to enlist the working class. Sturge's favorable prophecy of the viability of such an alliance was based upon his regard for the tenacious respectability and determination of certain sections of Birmingham Chartism, and it is necessary to examine local
working class politics following on the excitements of 1839.

Despite the sloughing off of the 'respectables' in 1839 local Chartism was far from consolidated under its new leadership and was further hit by the imprisonment of such prominent O'Connorites as Brown and Wilkes. When the National Charter Association was formed in July 1840 under the increasing personal domination of O'Connor the Birmingham branch could boast only 26 members, but the militancy newly associated with the city was sustained by the accession of a new leader, George White. White was an Irishman, a wool-comber by trade, whose political apprenticeship had been served in the Leeds Working Men's Association, then as the Secretary of the Leeds Northern Union when he had described himself as "not so much a Radical as a Revolutionist." He seems to have been a boorish, violent man, conscientious in his duties, whether drumming up funds or staving in a constable's head. In 1839 he was arrested for threatening behaviour to shopkeepers while collecting the National Rent in Leeds and received six months hard labour. Hailed as a hero on his release he made a triumphal tour of Scotland and North East England and then gravitated to Birmingham as a reporter for the Northern Star where he annexed the
local O'Connorite rump, steadfastly refusing to treat with the middle class, of whom he entertained the gravest suspicions, hearking back to his hatred of 'Bainesocracy' in Leeds. In 1840 in Birmingham, J. T. Shearman, the one-time local lecturer for the League had advanced a scheme for adult suffrage based on a literacy proposal which was abruptly condemned by White, one of his lieutenants dismissing it as "altogether a middle-class proposition, and as such, not deserving of the confidence of the working class." White led uncompromising attacks upon the League and forced the dissolution of a town meeting in November of 1841 which was attended by Cobden, a dismal fact for the latter's fact-finding tour of the city. White was manhandled by angry Leaguers and was rescued from the brawl by the intervention of Sturge, presumably acting spontaneously on his Quaker brief of non-violence but in a fashion which might to some have represented his singular sympathies for the Birmingham working man, however unprepossessing the example to hand.

But, as has been suggested, the story of Birmingham Chartism in this period was not simply that of the roisterings of White and his physical force followers. The legend of a new found militancy in
Birmingham sat uncomfortably with other elements of the working-class. Those Chartists who organised a reception for Lovett and Collins upon their final release in July 1840 were anxious to avoid any disturbances and asked the local police chief, Burgess, to assist in keeping order during the reception. Thus Birmingham Chartism was not all alarums and excursions. The city's working men had been most active politically under the stress of falling economic fortunes when they had taken their lead from the middle class. Now they turned to tackle such problems alone and many left the politicking behind them.

Trade was still depressed in 1840-1841, and in particular the continued slackness in the trade with America stunted Birmingham's commerce. In June 1840 "the oldest, most extensive and respectable merchants, manufacturers and traders agreed in representing the present depression as unprecedented in their experience." Emigration applications increased and the number of untenanted houses and shops grew. Bankruptcies for 1840 were nearly double the number for 1839. An Anti-Corn Law meeting which opened the new year in 1842 revealed a grave catalogue of distress throughout the whole range of the metal trades and quoted examples
from surrounding districts. But all was not unalloyed gloom. The mobility of labour in the city could turn any new orders to good account and the Birmingham Advertiser commented thus on the acquisition of new contracts for the arms trade in the fall of 1841.

"Numbers of our artisans are able to work at various kinds of employment and many being drawn from other branches to those which are brisk, will leave more work for those which are slack." Considerable orders from the U.S.A. were still coming through and Cobden could remind the Birmingham men that their distress was slight compared to that in Lancashire. The figures for deposits and withdrawals to and from the Birmingham Savings Bank, which served the working class as well as the middle class, tend to reflect the economic fluctuations in the city and deposits outstripped withdrawals in both 1840 and 1841, (unlike other crucial years, 1837, 1839) while the number of new accounts rose steadily. As remarked before, the Poor Law in Birmingham was still administered under a local act and while it was a matter of some pride to the local artisan to keep off the parish relief was generous. This relative prodigality was still receiving censure from Somerset House some years later, and it seems reasonable to suppose that the fall in the local cost
of Poor Law maintenance in 1841 and 1842 was due to a slackening of the demand for relief rather than any Pecksniffian stringencies on the part of the Guardians. This slackening of demand cannot cancel out other cumulative evidence of distress but it suggests that the Birmingham worker was tackling such problems of depression as existed through self-help.

The return of John Collins is significant here for he attempted to buttress the spirit and morale of the Birmingham workers through the institution of a local Chartist Church. He was the man who epitomised the political moderation and restraint which had long been the stamp of the Birmingham working man and his imprisonment enhanced his standing with the artisan community, though White and his followers generally detested him. Collins had been one of the B.P.U. missionaries in the crescendo of Chartist agitation in 1838-1839 and had sounded an early alarm against the fulminations of the physical force wing, speaking out against O'Connor in the tough in-fighting in the B.P.U. Council in November and December of 1839. During the outcry following the withdrawal of the original Birmingham delegates to the National Convention Collins attempted to defend them as "the known and tried friends of the people," but he himself
continued to support the Convention and was sentenced for sedition, together with Lovett, for his attack on the Metropolitan Police action. During his trial there were many testimonies to the excellent character of Collins; from his employer Joseph Gillot, the famous steelpen manufacturer whom Collins had served six years, from William Scholefield, then Mayor and chairman of the bench who had previously asked him to use his influence to keep the people peaceable, and from T. C. Salt.\footnote{70} The imprisonment left Collins unembittered and he retained his aversion from the excesses of popular politics, confiding his horror of the mob in a letter to Place.\footnote{71}

On his release Collins refused any dealings with the National Charter Association and turned his energies to the establishment of a Chartist Church in Birmingham, which he opened in December 1840.\footnote{72} The existing Churches largely regarded popular politics with abhorrence, the Nonconformist seniors offering little more sympathy than the established Church.\footnote{73} The strictures of the Wesleyans upon democracy earned them the fierce hatred of the Chartists,\footnote{74} while we have noted the censures of their co-religionists upon the political activity of Miall and Sturge.\footnote{75} The disappointments of 1839 had turned the Chartists towards other means of
salvation and it was noted in Leeds, for example, that their meetings "get ever more respectable, are better conducted, less uproarious, and partake more of the reasoning and intellectual qualities." The main strength of the new Chartist Churches came from this moderate demeanour, and the first Church was started in Glasgow where the moral force party had fought a successful rear guard action against O'Connor in 1839.

The Birmingham Chartist Church became the most famous of these under the leadership of Collins and Arthur O'Neill, an ex-university student in his early twenties who had been very active in the Chartist cause in Scotland. The Church was something of a political association in prayer, causing an observer to remark, "On Sundays they say they preach Bible politics, and on weekdays any other kind of politics they like." Despite the politics and the exclusive working class membership of this movement its stern injunctions to propriety and its aspirations to respectability earned the co-operation of at least one local employer who allowed the Church use of his premises outside working hours, while Burgess, the police chief saw no course for interference other than an initial routine surveillance. Membership grew and schools were organised for the children and
young men. A significant new convert was Edwin Brown, former O'Connorite agitator who joined the Church soon after his release from prison.\footnote{82} The first anniversary of the Church was marked by a tea party in the Town Hall where O'Neill could report the purchase of a printing press, a library of some 300 volumes and funds standing at L.840 — hardly the effects of a completely indigent community. The meeting was crowded, "being principally filled with well-dressed ladies," and the guests of honour were Colonel Perronet Thompson of the League and the Sturge brothers, Charles and Joseph.\footnote{83}

Joseph Sturge was attracted to the sturdy respectability of the Birmingham Chartist Church but the attractions of this self-generating and determined body were repeated outside of the city, and 'Christian Chartism' was only one of the various centrifugal diversions which threatened Chartism as the personal empire of Feargus O'Connor. O'Connor had been imprisoned in 1840 for sedition but his privations for the cause were well publicised and he emerged from gaol the following year to find membership of the National Charter Association healthy and his own personal stock high. He stumped the country lashing out at the defectors. In Birmingham in the fall of 1841 he resumed his attack upon the old
reform leaders, "the hairy faced mayor (P. H. Muntz), and that slippery fellow, R. K. Douglas," and accused the old Union of misappropriation of funds. There was also significant chastisement for other, more recent backsliders,

As for Collins and O'Neill, they must come over to us, or they will be stranded. They must know that their Christian Chartist Church never can carry the Charter . . . everybody knows that in order to carry the Charter they must destroy the connexion between Church and the State . . . What is the use of the Chartists complaining of these fellows the parsons, while they are trying to get up another established church.84

Knowledge Chartism was another red rag to O'Connor. This was the new panacea promoted by Lovett. He had emerged from Warwick gaol in 1840, his health impaired, but his mind set firmly against the ruination of "passionate invective, party spirit, and personal idolatry." He looked now towards working class rejuvenation through a system of comprehensive education promoted by the National Association of the United Kingdom for Promoting the Political and Social Improvement of the People,85 a body which would be sustained by the subscriptions of former Chartist petitioners and the support of the Parliamentary Radicals such as Mill, Grote,
and Brougham. This move was apostasy to O'Connor who condemned Lovett as "a traitor, humbug, and miscreant." The scheme did not prove very fruitful but initially it moved well enough and among his assistants Lovett counted upon his former gaol mate Collins, who collected a substantial subscription from Sturge. Other significant members of Lovett's Association in Birmingham were Edwin Brown and Arthur O'Neill.

The third element in this new efflorescence of moral force Chartism was Temperance Chartism which worried O'Connor less since it lacked any specific organisation and was largely subsumed by the other two movements, though all three were often complementary and seem to have called upon a common membership. Temperance Chartism was driven along by Henry Vincent, previously a violent advocate of physical force who emerged from imprisonment considerably chastened. Vincent travelled across England administering the teetotal pledge and working for the formation of public libraries and lecture rooms in the cause of abstinence and the enlightenment of the masses.

Sturge was closely attuned to these developments which accorded so well with his own Quaker tenets and which were so well represented in his own city, reinforcing
his belief in the basic responsibility and respectability of the working class. His own record in local politics and his widely acknowledged work against slavery gave him a probity which as yet rendered him immune to the invidious class antagonisms which had so unsettled Birmingham. Thus Sturge was in a strong position here to re-establish middle class initiative in a reunion of the classes behind a common reform front, a takeover which might well be successfully duplicated at a country-wide level given Sturge's connexions with the anti-slavery movement and the League, and his respect for the work of the moderate Chartists. Miall believed that the effect of the Sturge Declaration would be "the fusion of all the more orderly and progressive workers of the Anti-Corn Law movement with the moral-force Chartists."  

To both men it appeared a critical moment in which the country was nearing violent calamities if 'class legislation' was not rooted out.  

It was a critical moment, but to them and others it was far from hopeless. The radical newspaper Tait's Edinburgh Review remarked, 

There were cheering symptoms of renewed good understanding between the Working Men and the Middle, whose objects and interests rightly understood are one ... to the Humes, Grotes and Thompsons are added a new class, powerful from moral weight represented by such men as Joseph Sturge.
Chapter 2

1 S. Hobhouse, *Joseph Sturge: His Life and Work*, 1919, pp. 5-14; E. Sturge, *The Sturges and Early Quakerism*, 1930, pp. 21-35. There is no really good biography of Sturge though Hobhouse is generally reliable and avoids the shortcomings of hagiography which afflict the work of Richard and Peckover, see below. There is a useful chapter on Sturge in G. D. H. Cole, *Chartist Portraits*, 1941.


5 Hobhouse, *op. cit.*, pp. 40-41. This further measure of emancipation was wildly received in Birmingham just a few days before the great Chartist meeting of August 6th. *B. J.*, 4 August 1838.


7 Stephen, *op. cit.*, pp. 211-212, 218. There were obvious personal differences between the two men but Stephen generally tends to play down Sturge's contribution to the cause. At the time of publication in 1854 Sturge was most unpopular because of his peace mission to the Czar just prior to the outbreak of the Crimean War and his uncompromising pacifism. But Stephen's criticisms are basically valid.

8 *Nonconformist* (hereafter cited as N. C.), 23 February 1842.
9 Sturge Papers, Additional MSS, 433, 722 (B. M.). The Papers are disappointing in their references to Complete Suffrage and the League and refer mainly to Sturge's various peace missions.

10 B. J., 30 April 1833.

11 Ibid., 15, 20 August 1840, 26 April 1841.

12 Ibid., 8 September 1838.

13 M. Hovell, *The Chartist Movement*, 1925, p. 156n. W. Scholefield, the Mayor, was always received with groans when he walked by.


20 N. McCord, *The Anti-Corn Law League*, 1958, p. 85. This is the only balanced and objective history of the League and readjusts the older, more idealist treatments. McCord makes extensive use of hitherto unused primary sources.

21 Richard, *op. cit.*, pp. 281-283. Cobden sent Sturge a humorous playlet in which the latter protests to the Brazilian ambassador against slave grown sugar while himself wearing a hat and coat lined with slave grown cotton. Cotton was later banned from the Sturge household.
22 Sturge to B. J., 2, 9 October 1841.

23 Hobhouse, op. cit., p. 71.


25 For the full text see Hovell, op. cit., p. 243. Crawford was to be the Parliamentary representative of the Complete Suffrage Union. He had already argued for an extension of the suffrage to the working class in the debate on the Address in the Commons, Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons, 25 August 1841, col. 232.


28 A. Miall, Life of Edward Miall, 1884, p. 45.

29 N. C., 24 May 1841.

30 Salter, op. cit., p. 110. A session of the Congregational Union in 1841 was anxious to emphasize that the redress of civil grievances was of no proper concern at all to the church, H. U. Faulkner, Chartism and the Churches, 1916, pp. 24-25.

31 A Reconciliation between the Middle and the Labouring Class, 1842 (B. M.). The articles were also reproduced in the Glasgow Chartist Circular, from December 1841.

32 Spectator, 12 February 1842.

33 McCord, op. cit., p. 117.

34 G. M. Trevelyan, Life of John Bright, 1925, p. 65.

35 McCord, op. cit., p. 120.
36 Trevelyan, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

37 Wilson Papers, Cobden to Wilson, 25 February 1842, Manchester Reference Library (hereafter referred to as M. R. L.). George Wilson was chairman of the League.


42 See below, chapter 4.

43 Wilson Papers, Cobden to Wilson, 16 February 1842.


46 Wilson Papers, Cobden to Wilson, 25 February 1842. Cobden suspected that many of those who had signed the petition to the new House of Commons were more against Peel than for repeal.

47 J. B. Smith Corn Law Papers (M. R. L.) Cobden to Smith, 4 December 1842. Smith was a prominent Manchester free-trader and one of the founders of the League.

49 There were other attempts at 'new moves' and the fusion of middle and working class political reform forces, see J. F. C. Harrison, "Chartism in Leeds," Chartist Studies, pp. 83-85, but Birmingham provided the most embarrassing cuckoo in the League's nest.

50 B. J., 19, 26 April 1840.


54 Spectator, 29 May 1841.

55 B. J., 20 November 1841.


58 B. J., 27 June 1840.

59 Loc. cit; A. Redford, Labour Migration in England, 1800-1850, 1964, pp. 120-121. Void houses were regarded as an index to trade depression.

60 J. Jaffray, Hints for a History of Birmingham, 1857, ch. 50, unpaged. Jaffray was a local journalist and this is a collection of cuttings from articles originally published in the Birmingham Journal. The city's official historians, Gill and Briggs have found this a reliable source.

61 B. J., 29 January 1842.
62 Quoted in *Spectator*, 27 November 1842.

63 Ibid; B. J., 4 December 1841.

64 B. J., 1 January 1841.


66 Special General Meeting of the Guardians of the Poor, 1845 (B. R. L.).

67 The Guardians at this time included Douglas, P. H. Muntz, Salt and Edmonds who could not be accused of neglecting the interests of the local working class in this respect, Report on the Administration of Relief to the Poor in the Parish of Birmingham, 1845 (B. R. L.).

68 See above, chapter 1, pp. 21-22, 25-26.


70 Lovett Collection (B. R. L.), vol. 2, pp. 76-77.


73 See above, n. 30.

74 Gammage, *op. cit.*, pp. 55-56.

75 K. S. Inglis, *Churches and the Working Classes in Victorian England*, 1963, p. 13. The Quakers were hardly the most gregarious of denominations and were noted for the scarcity of poor folk in their ranks. Bright remarked that "It (the Society of Friends) keeps out multitudes."

76 Harrison, *Chartist Studies*, p. 82.


79 Wallas, *op. cit.*., p. 379.
81 Wearmouth, *op. cit.*., p. 176.
82 B. J., 31 July 1841.
89 Miall, *op. cit.*., p. 84.
90 N. C., 19 January 1842.
91 *Tait's Edinburgh Review*, February 1842.
CHAPTER 3

THE COMPLETE SUFFRAGE UNION IN ACTION; A NATIONAL CONFERENCE AND AN ELECTORAL APPRENTICESHIP

During the early months of 1842 Joseph Sturge worked hard to give his movement for 'full, fair, and free representation' of the people a national standing, and to this end he drew some favorable response from the middle classes. But the problem of enlisting substantial working class support upon Sturge's terms was aggravated by the workers' old allegiance to the Charter. In the first major conference of April 1842, at Birmingham, when the National Complete Suffrage Union was officially established, this question revealed the strong suspicion between the two classes and prefigured the eventual collapse of the movement. The conference clearly indicates the main sources of support for the C.S.U., and though it was Birmingham which provided the main executive strength, Sturge failed to mobilise the full weight of the local reform front and seemed reluctant, if also perhaps unable, to recall the old battalions of popular support to the colours.

Sturge was determined to avoid the license and vulgarity of mass politics, though he accepted the
assistance of Feargus O'Connor, one of its most flamboyant practitioners. O'Connor had been an outspoken critic of the 'new move' and attempted to wreck the April conference, but as part of his bid to strengthen his position within the Chartist movement he entered into an expedient, if uncomfortable alliance with the C.S.U. in the Nottingham bye-election in August. Sturge was narrowly defeated in the election and his performance was considered the high water mark of the Complete Suffrage movement, though it also revealed the limitations which a Quaker conscience could impose upon practical politics.

First, however, it is necessary to look at the build-up of Sturge's new movement from the early months of 1842. As the first returns of the lists of signatories to the Sturge Declaration came into the central clearing house in Birmingham the nature of the immediate response was very clear.

Very little opportunity has yet been afforded for receiving signatures to the declaration; but the parties who have already attached their names or expressed their willingness to do so, comprehend ministers of religion, members of corporations and individuals well known as supporters of peace, anti-slavery and temperance societies and advocates of the total and immediate repeal of the Corn Laws, including a majority of the council of the Manchester League, and a number of prominent members of the Society of Friends.
Sturge's appearances on public platforms to promote his cause were limited but he made direct appeal to the most obvious sources of favour. In mid-January he addressed a conference of dissenting ministers in Edinburgh, in February he called Complete Suffrage meetings among the League's members who were in London to petition the Commons. The signatures to Sturge's Declaration were returned upon a printed form which asked for a distinction between electors and non-electors and made a further enquiry as to which non-electors were of the middle class. Special mention was to be made of any magistrates, ministers of religion or members of corporations who signed the Declaration. As the volume of returns built up the Nonconformist emphasised "a cordial concurrence ... on the part of the middle classes, and especially of philanthropic and religious individuals."

Sturge's earliest biographer claims that great care was taken to ensure that both the middle and working class secured equal representation at the proposed national conference in April, but the greatest publicity was expended in attracting middle class support for the movement. Archibald Prentice, later official League historian and an early supporter of
Complete Suffrage, publicly interpreted the move in even more select terms, declaring that "Mr. Sturge does not ask the non-represented, but only the electors, to join in this movement." Thus Sturge's overtures to the middle classes seem designed to give them preponderance in the new alliance. In the conference they could outface any intransigent Chartists, in the country at large they could guide and discipline the bulk of the working class. Sturge was afraid that the middle class might continue to operate on their own, striving for the abolition of the Corn Laws, alienated from the working man by indifference to the latter's plight. In Sturge's estimate the workers had generally shown an admirable restraint but he feared the provocative leadership of the 'physical force' men. If the demands of the working class were not met and contained by the bourgeoisie there would be disaster, for, "underneath the surface of external quiet, are materials enough for an explosion which, if permitted to take place, will rend society to its very centre." The middle class had to be alerted to their responsibilities and so the Nonconformist explained that the Sturge Declaration was meant to seize on their attentions, "for that the unenfranchised classes would subscribe to the Declaration is taken for granted."
Sturge's basic confidence in the unenfranchised classes was marred by the fear of sabotage by a "small obstructive minority." This referred to O'Connor who was still working to establish his claims to indisputable leadership of a revived Chartist movement, which would subsume the whole of working-class political activity. The columns of the Northern Star were swollen with his lectures on the need for solidarity. The Leaguers were considered the principal threat and in December 1841 O'Connor was disquieted by their new tactics.

I have shewn you that when the lust of Whiggery ran through the land with a slack rein, that then the middle-class Whigs, who are the Leaguers, were, as a body, always in advance of the tyrant corps; but now they would seduce us as individuals, using for that purpose the names of the best, such as Sharman Crawford, Mr. Sturge and Colonel Thompson. We must however view their acts as the acts of a party and not as the acts of individuals.

When the programme for Complete Suffrage became better advertised O'Connor attacked it more specifically. It was "a more wily move . . . to which the aid and countenance of Mr. Sturge have been obtained; in which the vague principle of Universal Suffrage is recognised, but with a careful exclusion of all those necessary fences of detail which are alike important for the
obtaining, guiding, and retaining of it." Here now was a familiar theme; universal suffrage without the rest of the Charter was a travesty which would deprive the working class of safeguards against bourgeois hegemony in a reformed House, and was evidence of a vicious middle class conspiracy engineered by the League through a variety of respectable front men, of whom Sturge was now most prominent, "equipped with ample funds for his purpose of seduction."  

O'Connor visited Birmingham in March 1842 surviving an alleged attack by the League's hired bullies and alerting the working class to Sturge's blandishments. Defiantly he claimed that Collins and O'Neil were taking bribes from the League to support the Sturge Declaration, which was "a contemptible piece of vague and indefinite verbiage." Complete Suffrage was 'Complete Humbug' and O'Connor was come to deliver the brave men of Birmingham from "the old women, the infidel Christians, the old rump and the new traitors . . . these moral force ruffians (who) have got my Irish blood up." O'Connor at first spared Sturge from personal attack but then declared him "a foolish or bad man," who was using the Complete Suffrage movement to win the repeal of the Corn Laws, which would redound to his great personal gain in the
As a direct challenge to Complete Suffrage, O'Connor decided to call a rival conference in Birmingham to coincide with that of Sturge. If he could not quash this new move from within perhaps he could demonstrate its political bankruptcy by holding a massive counter demonstration in its home territory, which would emphatically confirm his hold on the working class and disabuse the middle class of hopes for class reconciliation. Sturge's apprehensions at the machinations of the 'small, destructive minority' were well-founded.

The Birmingham Complete Suffrage Conference assembled in the Town Hall on April 5th, 1842. Of the working class representatives Lovett attended as the champion of the moderate Chartists, together with such obvious sympathisers with Complete Suffrage as Collins and Vincent. The Chartists Bronterre O'Brien and R. J. Richardson were less obvious supporters of the 'new move' but they were dissatisfied with O'Connor's leadership and had been accused in the Northern Star of plotting to unseat him. In all, no fewer than nine of the Chartist Convention of 1839 were present at the Birmingham conference. But it was
the middle class who were most heavily represented.

Outside of the Birmingham bloc, which will be examined in detail later, it is possible to identify the class of nearly half of the eighty three other delegates, and of this sample two-thirds are of the middle class. With some, the identification is obvious, as in the case of John Bright, who is incontestably of the middle class. With others, they themselves declared their class in addressing the conference or were introduced by the chairman as representatives of a particular class. So, Charles Cummings acknowledged his middle class in prefacing a speech to the assembly, and James Dewhurst and William Parker confirmed their introduction as representatives of the workingman. The Nonconformist gives occasional clues, for example, in identifying John Ellis as a manufacturer with rail interests, which therefore justifies his middle class label. The Northern Star lists those few representatives, in this case the Bradford delegation, whom it alone considered to be truly working class in their background and loyalties. It seems reasonable at this stage in the history of the Anti-Corn Law League to assume that the majority of those 14 delegates from outside of Birmingham who
are clearly identifiable as League members were of the middle class. Bright, Prentice and the Reverend Thomas Spencer have obvious credentials. Thomas Potter, a former mayor of Manchester, was a cotton merchant and founder member of the League. If we allow ministers of religion a middle class rating this helps confirm the thesis of middle class predominance, for there were eleven of them, other than those from Birmingham, in attendance.

The conference membership as a whole offers specific proof of Sturge's successful exploitation of his existing reform connexions. The ministers for example were, with but two exceptions, Nonconformist, mainly Baptist. Five of the total fourteen were undoubtedly League members but, in any case, all but four of the fourteen had attended the famous Conference of Ministers on the Corn Laws, called by the League in August, 1841. The Reverends T. H. Morgan and Thomas Swann were staunch anti-slavers. Reform sympathies were reinforced by personal friendships, as with the ties between Sturge and Bright. Sturge was a close friend of the Reverend Spencer of Bath (the uncle of the philosopher, Herbert Spencer) and Spencer, in turn, was an intimate of Lawrence Heyworth
of Liverpool. Both the latter were League members and strong Temperance men. Miall was well acquainted with the Reverend J. P. Mursell of Leicester, and with John Childs of Bungay who had provided some of the capital to launch the Nonconformist.

Geographically and economically the pattern of the conference was rather obvious. The representation was overwhelmingly urban and in general the towns were manufacturing towns, whether ones with new and expanding industries in the North or centres of declining industry such as in the small cloth-working towns in the West. Birmingham and the Midlands returned the main strength though the city was powerful enough in its own membership and it is doubtful if small towns such as Newark and Mansfield identified themselves with any strong Midlands block interest. Manchester sent six members, Bradford five. Otherwise distribution seemed determined by the strength of Sturges's previous connexions with a district, and the extent to which local initiative was already working at class reconciliation. So, Edinburgh sent four members, in response to Sturges's personal campaign, and the probable influence of Miall who had longstanding contacts with the local Voluntarist movement. Edinburgh had a strong
Chartist Church and generally enjoyed happier class relations than Glasgow where a more militant and extensive working class gave strong support to O'Connor. In the West Country, Bath and the cluster of adjacent small towns were well represented. This was Sturge's homeland and Bath boasted a strong Chartist Church as well as a 'new move' of its own which had given a ready welcome to the Sturge Declaration, and disturbed O'Connor who labelled this exercise in class co-operation "piebald, half and half Chartism." 

The complexion of Birmingham's membership to the conference is most instructive. It was heavily represented with eight delegates and twelve members of the Provisional Committee. There was little identification with the two main political groupings in the city. Firstly, there was little connexion between the C.S.U. reformers and the old B.P.U. The Sturge brothers' membership of the latter body had been somewhat politic, as noted. The Reverend Hutton had been a member in the first B.P.U. but not in its reconstructed form from 1837 onwards. Only John Winfield, a later recruit to the C.S.U., and Collins, a leading B.P.U. missionary had any appreciable record of service. Secondly, there was practically no connexion between the C.S.U. and the Birmingham Tory
interest, though it is difficult to find exact information on Tory sympathisers in the city. The B.P.U. published a list of over 1000 citizens who protested against the reformed Union in 1837 and were thus stigmatised as enemies of the liberal reform interest. None of the C.S.U. members appear on the list. The local government body, the Street Commissioners, was of strong Tory persuasion and Joseph Pumphrey, a later member of the C.S.U. Council served on this body but this seems an insignificant coincidence.

There was only a sprinkling of public office among Birmingham C.S.U. men as a whole. The Sturge brothers were elected to the new municipal Council in 1838, though Joseph Sturge resigned by 1842. Charles Goodrick and Alfred Lawden, a later C.S.U. member, were elected in the fall of 1841, but overall this was slight representation compared to the strong grip the old B.P.U. leaders enjoyed in Council. Moreover the lists of candidates to the two elections reveal no one else of subsequent C.S.U. persuasion. John Hollingsworth was a Poor Law Guardian but this exhausts the list of C.S.U. men in public office.

So the Birmingham champions of Complete Suffrage were hardly political activists or leading
figures in the city, apart from Sturge. Nor do they seem to have been prominent in the business community in the city. The local Chamber of Commerce had occupied an important place in the development of the city but had fallen into decline in the 1830s, because of the political excitements and the campaign for incorporation. In February 1842 it was revived with a new extensive programme and the support of men like William Scholefield and the Muntz brothers. None of the C.S.U. men figure in the large committee for re-constituting the Chamber. The Sturge brothers were party to railway investments in the city but Joseph had withdrawn in protest against Sunday service on the lines.

Who then were the Birmingham men who supported Joseph Sturge and the Complete Suffrage movement? Of the 21 who attended the April Conference only Joseph Corbett and Collins pass as working class; the remainder were clearly middle class. Fourteen appear on the list of electors published in the Birmingham Journal the previous year, but more positive identification comes from the annual directories of the city which provide extensive listings of the professional and merchant classes and leading tradespeople.
Here, we learn that the Birmingham C.S.U. included two professional men; D. T. Rawlinson, an attorney who was Sturge's agent in his 1840 election candidature, and William Morgan, a solicitor. The others for the most part were small businessmen or shopkeepers. Of the members of the Provisional Committee James Perry was a grocer and tea dealer, Francis Dickenson a sign painter, John Hollingsworth a tailor, Edward Bryan a confectioner, George Goodrick a rope and twine spinner. The other Birmingham men included an ironmonger, a baker, a pocket book manufacturer and a brassfounder. The Sturge brothers with their grain trade seem the only men of real substance with the possible addition of their fellow Quaker, Arthur Albright, a manufacturing chemist.

There was some connexion with the Anti-Corn Law League. The two ministers, who were Baptists, had attended the Manchester Conference the previous August, and Joseph Corbett was a League member. More significant however is the strong anti-slavery element in the Birmingham Complete Suffrage movement. Including the Sturge brothers, eight of the members sat on the committee of the Birmingham Anti-Slavery Society, for which William Morgan was the secretary, a post which
he subsequently doubled in the C.S.U. The committee later reported a hiatus in the Society's activity for 1842, no doubt due to the new preoccupation with politics. Perry and the Reverend Swann were strong Temperance men, and so the composition of the city's delegation to the April Conference of the Complete Suffrage movement reflects the reform connexions of Joseph Sturge and his respectable standing with the middle class.

But perhaps a better designation for these Birmingham men, particularly with reference to their callings, would be petit bourgeois. They professed a sympathy and a common brotherhood with the workingman but they were a little nervous in dealing with his more assertive representatives. At the meeting in the city in March to choose the local delegation for the approaching conference the workingman John Collins was rejected. The exact grounds for this rejection remain obscure but presumably Collins was more readily identified as the agent provocateur of 1839 than as the respectable mentor of the Chartist Church. He did sit at the conference eventually, as the member for Newtown, Monmouthshire and later sat on the C.S.U. Council where he found his initiative restricted
and his character rebuked. All men were equal in the Complete Suffrage Union but some were more equal than others.

The conference itself sat for three days. Here Sturge was faced with a basic dilemma. He wished to effect a union of the classes, to promote a political programme already pre-empted in the public mind by the Charter. At a Birmingham meet in February he had been reported thus,

They were all aware of the great prejudice in the minds of large portions of the middle class against what was known by the name of the People's Charter; but being one of those who fully concurred in all essential points of that document, his object was to frame his Declaration in such a way as to overcome the prejudices of the middle class while simultaneously they recognised all the great principles in the Charter.

Complete Suffrage had to be cleansed of any of that Chartist contamination which would scare off the middle class, while it must appear as a distillation of all that was best in Chartism, minus the name, to the working class.

The agenda to the conference, printed in advance by the Provisional Committee, advised the discussion of "five provisions for the exercise of Complete Suffrage."
These were the five outstanding points of the Charter following the demand for universal suffrage; the secret ballot, equal electoral districts, abolition of property qualifications for M.P.s, pay for M.P.s and annual parliaments. These items were subsequently passed with almost complete unanimity, proposed and seconded by a mixed bag of the classes, Leaguers and Chartists. There was some altercation over annual parliaments, John Bright arguing for the practicality of 'shorter' parliaments of one to three years duration, but the classic original item was carried. Miall ventured a protest against the annual parliament being considered "not simply on its own merits, but as forming an item in the system recommended by the Chartist body." This particular debate raised the temperature of the conference and George Palliser of Finsbury contended that if they carried annual parliaments it would be said that they had adopted the Charter, and the next point in question would be its name. It was thus inevitable that a discussion of these items, though initially conducted with the delicate but unnerving avoidance of all reference to their Chartist authorship, would eventually throw up the whole question of the Charter itself.
In a clumsy attempt at forestalling this prickly issue Sturge remarked that he had thought that if they could agree to the first four points it would be desirable to have another conference rather than go into further detail. He regretted that so many had come to the conference as

... pledged men (to the Charter), lest it should disturb the moral effect of anything which might be done. There were, in any case, a number of Chartists who were as anxious as the middle class to get rid of the name. Persons however, should not look at the name, but at the thing.55

Lovett immediately sprang to the defence of the Charter, whose name "has been widely recognised by millions as an epitome of their political rights." The story of its support, he continued, had often been the story of great suffering, and it would be outrageous to spurn it contemptuously, for quite simply it was "the textbook of the working class."56

Lovett's support for the new movement was vitally important to Sturge for he represented the soundest moral and political aspirations of the working class, and possessed long administrative experience. He had been nominated to the General Executive Committee of the Conference upon promptings from Sturge and he and Vincent were lodged at Sturge's house.57
Ill and other such moderate Chartists as Collins were still deeply committed to Chartism and were in some trepidation at the conference, in case they should be trapped into any compromise or concessions which might damage their characters in the eyes of those who had delegated them, even if the Chartist movement itself were not otherwise injured. Bright, as a personal friend of Lovett was aware of their predicament and had withdrawn his opposition to the resolution for annual parliaments, to save their discredit for its failure and to avoid forcing concessions on their part. Lovett had apparently intended to move the adoption of the Charter per se but was persuaded to shelve such a direct proposition and be content with the passage of the following resolution.

That this conference having adopted such just principles of representation, as are necessary for giving to all classes their equal share of political power; resolve at some future period, to call another conference, (in which the whole people may be fully represented) for the purpose of considering any documents which embody the necessary details for the working out of the above principles.

This postponed the issue, though it did register Lovett's implicit dissatisfaction with the heavy middle class weighting of the conference membership, and later ensured that the elections to the December conference gave a more balanced representation to the
classes.

The debate upon the Charter was the flashpoint, if a low one, to the conference. There was obvious restraint on both sides and Bronterre O'Brien was not alone in remarking upon the cordiality evinced by all representatives. The Chartists at the conference had not been forced to climb down; Sturge and the organisers had been spared the stress and humiliation of an O'Connorite invasion. Propriety had been preserved on both sides, a point underlined by the joint proposal of Bright and Lovett,

... that it will be highly inexpedient and improper to interfere with public or other meetings, called to consider subjects unconnected with the question of parliamentary reform, by the introduction of the principles and objects of the Complete Suffrage Union in opposition to the arrangements under which such meetings have been convened.

The new movement was not to filibuster and heckle like the O'Connorites, and Bright was concerned when this resolution was omitted from the first press hand-outs from the conference. He confided to Lovett, "I am sure it would tend to make the middle classes look more favorably on the movement."
Bright was favorably impressed with the
conference. "I have never attended one more satisfactory," he wrote to Cobden. "The Chartists were I think the best speakers . . . the best possible feeling prevailed and I think there is a great probability of real good being done, but not without some risque of failure." In a letter to Wilson, Bright again remarked upon the good feeling of the conference and the admirable conduct of Sturge, but also cautioned cryptically that the Manchester representatives and fellow Leaguers, Gardner, Potter and Warren were "for going pretty near all lengths." Bright here seems cast in the role of stalking-horse for the League, reporting back on the participation of possible defectors, assessing the viability of the new movement. His verdict on the conference as a cordial talking shop is reasonable. The C.S.U. seemed to have established a middle ground between the classes though the disposition towards truly cohesive union was still bedevilled by the issue of the Charter. The qualified enthusiasm engendered in the conference was largely dissipated thereafter by the continuing attempts of the C.S.U. leadership to avoid this issue.
At least Sturge's conference had survived the threat of O'Connor's donnybrook tactics. The latter's rival meeting had been convened in Birmingham on April 5th but it had been a feeble affair. O'Connor had talked of hundreds of thousands who would flock in from the Staffordshire manufacturing districts but they had not materialised. In fact the National Chartist Association was very low in funds and could not finance the extensive counter-demonstration O'Connor had envisaged. The latter spluttered ineffectually against Sturge and the C.S.U., warning that "the people should have nothing to do with them." His spleen was directed more against the Chartist transgressors, such as Bronterre O'Brien, who were collaborating with the C.S.U. Again O'Connor claimed to have intelligence of a move to supersede him in the N.C.A. and his suspicions were fixed on O'Brien whom he attacked extensively at the conference and in the *Northern Star*. O'Connor withheld O'Brien's letters of defence so the latter published a pamphlet in reply. Here he argued the merits of Sturge's new move, conditional upon its acceptance of the Charter, and strongly countered O'Connor's 'billingsgate'. The duel carried over into the National Convention of the N.C.A. which opened in London on April 12th.
The West Country delegates, R. K. Philp and W. P. Roberts defended themselves and others against O'Connor's calumnies and demanded "that the resolutions of the Birmingham conference (of Sturge) be read by the chairman and considered by the convention." O'Connor was able to head off the worst recriminations but there was much overt dissatisfaction with his leadership, a development which led him to search for a new move of his own to strengthen his precarious position.

Meanwhile the Complete Suffrage Union was working to provide itself with an effective organisation to sustain and maximise its agitation. The General Council of the Union was too unwieldy for day to day management, responsibility for which devolved on a Committee for General Purposes which comprised the leading Birmingham members of the Council. The Committee soon organised the conventional apparatus of reform politics; subscription cards, pamphlets, advertisements in the press, and itinerant lecturers. The Committee paid scrupulous attention to the statutes on political association and in all their proceedings there seems a greater concern to avoid offence of any kind rather than any positive drive to promote the C.S.U. The lecturers gave their services unpaid though they were
allowed travelling expenses. They were given strict instructions which forbade attendance at the meetings of any other political society or any form of membership poaching. They were to emphasise the need for temperance and avoid meetings in public houses. 72

Such caution was evidence of the C.S.U.'s respect for the law and nice regard for political manners. "But such lectures, though they are no doubt useful, need following up by local organisations to be of much permanent value. And that was not done." 73

This was the verdict of the Reverend Solly who was a C.S.U. lecturer in the West Country. Solly himself was mortified by the counterattack of the local establishment. The treasurer of his Yeovil congregation withdrew his salary because of his political activities, workingmen who spoke in support of his fellow lecturer, Charles Clarke from Bath, were sacked and the services of the town-crier in Totnes were refused to the C.S.U. 74

But, to Solly, the biggest shortcoming was this absence of strong local organisation which could outface such opposition. Cobden, in February 1842, had remarked, "but as respects the movement for suffrage, I look upon such proceedings as of little importance unless they are to be followed up by work in an organised way." 75
The C.S.U. laid claim to active support in some fifty to sixty towns in Britain. Some thirty to forty local Complete Suffrage organisations were definitely acknowledged in the *Nonconformist*'s reports during the summer of 1842, and requests for membership cards to the General Purposes Committee confirm similar activity in another dozen towns, so the claim is fairly justified. The list of towns very largely duplicates that of the conference and the only obvious geographical focus was in Scotland, with Edinburgh boasting a local membership which included some 850 electors. But in the absence of a C.S.U. letterbook it is virtually impossible to assess the real strength and complexion of these local organisations. There are scraps of evidence which bear out the known composition of the C.S.U. as revealed at the April conference. The *Nonconformist* was quick to note the attendance of ministers of religion or members of the Society of Friends. At Falmouth, a large summer meeting was chaired by a local Quaker, though the occasion was marred by the alleged presence of Bow Street officers, reporting on the activities of lecturer Clarke. The Aberystwyth supporters of Complete Suffrage reported that "the majority of us are what you may term religious chartists." At Sheffield the middle class were a
little reluctant to come forward but "we have got the
cream of the working class with us." At Kettering,
the secretary was a grocer, the treasurer a silk
manufacturer.

In September and October Sturge himself,
together with Albright and Vincent made a speaking
tour of some fifteen towns in the North of England
and Scotland. On their return the C.S.U. announced
a new organisational move. The country was to be
split into ten subdistricts, each with its own
superintendent. But this was never carried out and
the ineffectiveness of the local organisations was
revealed in their inability to secure the return of
their favoured candidates to the conference of the
movement in December 1842. Here was failure at the
glass roots level.

It is also evident that the leaders of the
Complete Suffrage Union fought shy of drumming up
extensive popular support. In Birmingham itself
John Collins appealed for more frequent meetings of
the General Council of the Union, and the admission
of the general public, but he was rebuffed. Collins'
campaigning proved embarrassing to the C.S.U. respectables
and in the late summer he was accused of some financial
irregularity. He was exonerated on these charges after a personal investigation by Sturge and James Perry but was temporarily suspended during the enquiry. Damaging evidence of Collins' frequent meetings in public houses demanded that he forswear such practices before reinstatement. But it was more than Collins' peccadilloes which restrained the C.S.U. Council. Following on the April conference Lord Brougham, an old associate from anti-slavery days, had written to Sturge,

I cannot sufficiently impress upon you and all friends of reform and adversaries of the Corn-Law - how necessary it is that you avoid all inflammatory topics and show yourselves determined to repress all violent proceedings and to assist as far as you have the power in preserving peace ... absolutely necessary to show that reformers of all respectable kinds are determined enemies of illegal proceedings - I know that you don't require this admonition but others whom you may see, do.

So Collins, trusted lecturer for the B.P.U., mentor of the Chartist Church, friend of Lovett was muffled by the C.S.U. for infringements of this strict code of behaviour, a move most likely reinforced by the stern injunctions from above. The C.S.U. held no public meetings in Birmingham from April through to November of 1842.
What was happening to the Anti-Corn Law League as the Complete Suffrage Movement moved hesitantly on to the offensive? In fact the League was on the threshold of consolidation and the re-organisation which boosted its fortunes from 1842 on was well in hand, but this was small joy to Cobden who was still striving to pull the League out of a depression. The local branches were restless and dispirited and the Council of the League was divided. The London Conference in July demonstrated this confusion. Here the extremists at one end threatened violence against the government, while the extremists at the other end talked of dismantling the League and throwing in their support for suffrage reform. The latter were a minority who go unrecorded in the League histories but they were excellent copy for the Nonconformist. The Reverend William Stokes from West Bromwich wrote to Miall from the conference remarking on the poor attendance and speaking for those members who had met separately and considered moving the dissolution of the League, regretting that "such a giant in promise should have become such a ghost in result." Those at the meeting included the Rawson brothers and John Brooks, prominent Manchester Leaguers. Stokes subsequently joined the C.S.U. His lobby slid into
limbo with the resurgence of the League, but, even allowing for the Nonconformist's probable exaggeration of this disaffection, there seems no doubt of the parlous state of the League in the summer of 1842.

The Nonconformist was quick to light upon its rival's weaknesses but it made no mention of the League's modest but significant gains during this period, particularly in Birmingham. As remarked, the progress of the League's cause in the city had been slow and, in Cobden's eyes, perverted by the conflicting claims of Chartism, Complete Suffrage and the squabble over Church Rates. But progress accelerated in 1842, as League lecturers persistently attributed the current distress to the malevolent operation of the Corn Laws in stinting trade with America, trade which was so essential to the local economy. The theme had been introduced to a Birmingham audience in November 1841 by an American guest of Cobden, a Mr. Curtis from Ohio, who declared,

There is no limit to the American demand for goods but their ability to pay. If this is increased by the purchase of their produce, so will be their consumption of the manufactured goods which those who buy have to give in exchange.

This happy prospect for Birmingham was, however, marred
by the virtual exclusion of American grain from Britain due to the Corn Laws. The League's argument was attractive to men who traditionally let political action wait upon a plausible economic interpretation of their problems. The introduction of new American tariffs in August 1842, was interpreted as a retaliation against the Corn Laws, and as directly responsible for the laying off of hands at the large screw factory of James James, the new mayor of Birmingham. The fight against the Corn Laws, and not the campaign for Complete Suffrage, absorbed the old middle class reform dynamic in the city, and by October of that year Joshua Scholefield, M.P., while lamenting "some painful interruptions to the unanimity which hitherto existed amongst the people of Birmingham," recognised a new resolve in the city to carry the repeal of the Corn Laws.

While the League enjoyed mixed fortunes the Chartist movement, or rather, the National Chartist Association under O'Connor's tutelage, slogged on with no success. On May 2nd the second National Petition was presented in the Commons demanding enactment of the six points of the People's Charter. The House dismissed the petition and in the course of the debate
J. A. Roebuck, one of the authors of the original Charter, attacked O'Connor as a "malignant and cowardly demagogue." Macaulay supplied his classic argument against the principles of the Charter but both Peel and Lord John Russell extended Roebuck's contention and damned universal suffrage for its leaders. O'Connor was thus officially stigmatised and the great hopes which went with the petition were again deflated. Lovett later observed that the failure of the petition "caused a great number of the working classes to avow a resolution that they would never again pray or petition the House of Commons in any form." Thereafter Chartism was to lose much of its vitality but to O'Connor this setback meant only the need for a change of tactics rather than a change of faith. The change of tactics took Feargus O'Connor into alliance with Joseph Sturge and the Complete Suffrage Union.

The C.S.U. had itself presented petitions to Parliament in April 1842 through the good offices of Sharman Crawford and Lord Brougham, but the most outgoing move of the C.S.U. was Sturge's candidacy in the Nottingham bye-election in August. He had been prevailed upon to stand by the local branch of the Union and here again former reform connexions explain
much, for the Nottingham men included Sam Fox, an anti-slavery associate of Sturge and a frequent visitor to Birmingham.\textsuperscript{99} Sturge accepted nomination in May, on the following conditions,

That no money be spent, or any improper influence used, to bias a single vote in my favour; and that in the event of my return to parliament, if I should find from experience that I could not conscientiously retain my seat, or I could be of more service to my country by resigning it, I should be at liberty to do so . . . . I am not insensible to the kindness and favorable opinion of those who are anxious to promote my election, but I most strongly deplore a single word or expression that can justly excite any angry feeling against those who differ from them.\textsuperscript{100}

Sturge was hardly straining at the leash. In private he was acutely disturbed by the censures of fellow Quakers on this political excursion, so foreign to Sturge and those of his sect. He confided to Bright that he stood in a position of "danger and difficulty . . . . I hope thou and all my kind friends will watch over me and give me a word of advice when they see me take or likely to take a false step."\textsuperscript{101} Indeed Sturge later confessed that, "when he first consented to have his name put in nomination, one thing that reconciled him was the assurance that there was no probability of his return."\textsuperscript{102} He felt that some of the strictures from fellow Quakers were probably attributable to the
"mad and wicked conduct of some of the Chartists," so his discomfitures must have been acute when O'Connor changed the party line and announced a common front with Sturge in the Nottingham election.

O'Connor's justification for this volte-face was rather tenuous in the light of his previous calumnies against the C.S.U. The people should have nothing to do with the C.S.U. as such, he argued, but should support its principles where consonant with the Charter. O'Connor argued therefore that he was supporting the Charter in supporting Sturge, who was playing a merely incidental and subordinate role to him. O'Connor's ulterior motives are debatable. Perhaps he sought to disarm the revisionist opposition to his leadership by accommodating the Sturgeites under the Chartist umbrella. Perhaps he wished to embarrass Sturge and discredit him with his middle class supporters by pulling him down into the degrading exchanges of street politics in a local election. More likely O'Connor needed some 'new move' of his own and was bidding for some measure of middle class support for himself.

From June 1842 onwards the Northern Star addressed an appeal to "the Industrious Portion of the
Middling Classes.\textsuperscript{104} Here O'Connor dropped his previous scorn for the "squeaking meetings" of the shopocracy. The latter were now the victims of the same evils which afflicted the working class, "... the owners of machinery are the shopkeepers' greatest enemies, whilst those employed at manual labour are their only support." Consequently the two afflicted elements in society should combine against "an overgrown moneyocracy."

This is O'Connor the conservative, preaching against the machine age and the big manufacturer, representing himself as the champion of the small man. But above all it was O'Connor the opportunist responding to the growing discontent among the shopkeepers in society, advertised in meetings in Manchester, Liverpool and Burnley where they declared their support for the Charter.\textsuperscript{105} In Birmingham a meeting of shopkeepers, innkeepers, tradesmen and retailers talked of co-operation with the Northerners in a common petition for relief to the government.\textsuperscript{106} At Nottingham then, O'Connor was bidding for the shopocracy, hoping that some of Sturge's respectability and some of Sturge's support would rub off on him. He could count upon a ready audience from the workers in the depressed hosiery trades in Nottingham and district and there was always the electoral fight itself to relish.\textsuperscript{107}
Sturge's opponent in a straight contest was John Walter, proprietor of *The Times* and former Tory Member for the notoriously corrupt borough until defeated in the General Election in 1841. In that election O'Connor had ordered his followers to support the Tory candidates rather than the Whigs, who had deceived the people and introduced the New Poor Law. Walter was a leading opponent of the Law and had thus been an ideal candidate for Chartist support. In the summer of 1842 he still maintained his stand against the New Poor Law and in this he was joined by J. R. Stephens, who provided the fire in the belly for the Tory campaign, but his old local Chartist allies were now in opposition. The Leicester Chartist, Thomas Cooper, who had doled out Tory bribes in Nottingham in 1841, was now O'Connor's lieutenant in the common front with Sturge.

Sturge and O'Connor first spoke together in Nottingham in early June, and the Irishman was suitably restrained. The *Nonconformist* claimed to detect large numbers of the middle class in the audience, while the *Northern Star* was enthusiastic at the allegedly massive acclaim accorded O'Connor. References in that paper to Sturge were respectful but
minimal, and further reports from Nottingham treated the occasion as a showcase for O'Connor rather than an experiment in the reconciliation of the classes, which was Sturge's persistent theme. To the Northern Star, Sturge was a subordinate figure and indirectly sniped at in a continuing barrage against the League.\textsuperscript{114} Sturge had officially notified the League that his first priority was suffrage reform, but his election would obviously have benefited the Anti-Corn Law lobby, and the local League lecturer, a Mr. Murry, did speak on his behalf in Nottingham.\textsuperscript{115} The Times later claimed that the repealers had provided extensive funds for Sturge, which had been used in bribes.\textsuperscript{116} Such misuse was unlikely because of Sturge's refusal to countenance misappropriation, and the League would hardly have chanced their money with O'Connor, but another report held that "several gentlemen connected with the Corn Law Repealers have put down L.500 towards the expense of Mr. Sturge's election,"\textsuperscript{117} and so Sturge was still identified with the League, a charge which O'Connor held in reserve against him.

Though Sturge seems to have enjoyed indirect League support it was his dissenting connexions which he chose to exploit. In the week prior to the election he appeared in Nottingham flanked by ten dissenting
ministers from Birmingham, all pledged to Complete Suffrage. The Reverend Swann, Sturge's associate in the anti-slavery and temperance movements, emphasised the national importance of the election and urged the middle class in Nottingham to return Sturge as evidence of their sincere intentions to succour the depressed workers. This impressive deputation also included O'Neill from the Birmingham Chartist Church and George Edmonds, the Town Clerk.

Sturge's platform was predictable. He emphasised the urgent need for reconciliation between the classes, and demanded all but one of the points of the Charter, without reference to the Charter itself. He also supported demands for free trade, the abolition of church rates and the severance of church and state ties, the abolition of capital punishment, and continued campaigns against war and slavery. This was almost a duplicate of the programme he had offered in 1840 in his shortlived candidacy for the Birmingham bye-election. Again Sturge was non-committal on the New Poor Law, excusing himself by pointing out that the system had not been introduced in his neighbourhood so that he had no experience of its workings.

John Walter taunted his opponent for his equivocation
on this point but made his final appeal as the candidate for sound constitutional government against a new revolutionary movement led by "the Chartist Sturge."  

The election took place amid the brawling and disorders that Joseph Sturge loathed. The Tory interests in Nottingham had long maintained a strong-arm squad known as the 'lambs'. During the evening meeting prior to polling day the lambs, led principally by butchers in blue linen coats, stormed the wagon from which Sturge and his entourage were speaking. Sturge and Vincent managed to extricate themselves while O'Connor climbed down and headed Thomas Cooper's Chartist electoral gang in a spirited counter-attack. Thus ensued "one of the most notable of all British election fights." After the evening's excitements Sturge withdrew, issuing a final warning against bribery or any other sharp practice. The more practically minded Cooper spent the late evening patrolling the town to warn off the Tories, but his supporters melted away and by six o'clock on the morning of polling he was left with a few "half-starved, lean stockingers" who were unable to secure the polling booths against the return in strength of the Tory lambs. Those who would vote for Joseph Sturge were thus denied protection.
They were also denied the normal perquisites of the English voter. There was no free ale, there were no bands, no handouts. But the greatest tactical error in Sturge's campaign was the abrupt departure of both Sturge and O'Connor before polling, for without their presence and encouragement Cooper's squads were useless.

Sturge polled 1801 votes to Walker's 1885, a very creditable performance. Henry Vincent contested an Ipswich bye-election as a Complete Suffrage candidate in the same month, and won some small support in a heavy field, but Sturge's candidacy at Nottingham was the test-case for the movement, and the Nonconformist's mood of self-congratulation belied the shortcomings of the C.S.U. as an electoral pressure group. Sturge commanded respect, but he would not command an organisation with the ruthlessness and muscle necessary to win a tough election. When the League contested its first election, at Walsall in 1841, it had mobilised the whole apparatus of bribery and intimidation, using the business influence of its members in the district and even convincing a few local Quakers to assist in intoxicating the voters. Sturge would never countenance such tactics and so his sober and respectable image was
at once the strength and the weakness of the C.S.U.\textsuperscript{125}

In retrospect, Joseph Sturge and his colleagues had succeeded in the formation of a promising new national reform movement. But their first conference had been a triumph of good manners rather than of real political achievement, and the subsequent local organisation of the Complete Suffrage Union maintained that middle class preponderance which was so marked in the conference, and which seemed to vitiate widespread and effective reconciliation of the classes. The Nottingham alliance was uneasy and short-lived\textsuperscript{126} and largely unheeded outside of Nottingham.\textsuperscript{127} In any event Sturge and his steering committee in Birmingham had little stomach for popular politics, and though concerned to rescue society from distress and dislocation they were uncomfortable when such work meant accommodating strange running mates and exposing themselves to the obloquy of their own class. These discomfitures were to be compounded by the outbreak of the Plug Plots in August 1842, almost coincident with the Nottingham bye-election.
FOOTNOTES

Chapter 3

1 N. C., 5 January 1842; "Rise and Progress of the Complete Suffrage Movement," Tracts of the Complete Suffrage Union, no. 2, 1843 (B. R. L.), p. 14. "The active exertions of Mr. Sturge for the abolition of slavery, and for the promotion of peace and temperance, opened to him special facilities for carrying out his designs. He put himself in communication with the known and prominent friends of these causes."

2 Tait's Edinburgh Review, February 1842.

3 N. C., 16 February 1842.

4 Ibid., 2 February 1842.

5 Ibid., 23 February 1842.


8 N. C., 16 February 1842.

9 Ibid., 19 January 1842.

10 Ibid., 23 March 1842.

11 N. S., 18 December 1841.

12 Ibid., 22 January 1842.

13 Ibid., 19 February 1842.

14 B. J., 19 March 1842.

15 O'Connor's report of his visit and subsequent appeals to the men of Birmingham occupy several issues of the Northern Star, 5, 12, 19, 26 March 1842. To secure himself against strong arm tactics from the League, he declared his intention of taking a fifty man escort to all meetings.
16 Ibid., 19 March 1842.

17 A full list of delegates to the conference is given in Appendix I.

18 N. S., 5, 12, 19 February 1842.

19 N. C., 13 April 1842.

20 N. S., 16 April 1842.


23 See below.


25 A. Miall, Life of Edward Miall, 1884, p. 22.


27 Bradford's members were all workingmen, strong O'Connorites sent to test the security precautions of the conference. The seating committee questioned their credentials and only accepted them with reluctance, N. S., 9 April 1842.


29 Pugh, Chartist Studies, pp. 202-203.
30 N. S., 1 January 1842.

31 John Collins attended as a delegate for Newtown, Monmouthshire. To save the expense of financing a long trip some towns would nominate an inhabitant of the host town to represent them. This seems to have been a common device.

32 See above, chapter 2, pp. 57-58.

33 Names of Parties Who Have Been Connected with the Birmingham Political Union. MS by Joseph Parkes, 1836 (B. R. L.). See also the list of members of the reconstituted Union in N. S., 11 August 1838.

34 Protest Against the Political Union, 1837 (B. R. L.).


36 J. T. Bunce, History of the Corporation of Birmingham, 1878, vol. 1, pp. 154-156, 158-159 provides a list of all candidates and the victorious Councillors and Aldermen.

37 B. J., 20 November 1842.

38 Ibid., 25 February 1843.

39 G. H. Wright, Chronicles of the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce, 1913, pp. 112-121.

40 Richard, op. cit., p. 83.


42 B. J., 24 July, 7 August 1841.


44 Spectator, 29 August 1840.

45 P. H. Emden, Quakers in Commerce, 1939, p. 166.

47 B. J., 2 April 1842. James Perry was also president of the Birmingham Peace Association, N. C., 9 November 1842.

48 N. C., 23 March 1842.

49 See below.

50 The conference was reported in full in N. C., 13 April 1842 and in Minutes of the Proceedings at the Conference of the Middle & Working Classes of Great Britain, 1842 (B. R. L.).

51 N. C., 23 February 1842.

52 Proceedings, p. 38.

53 Ibid., pp. 14-17.

54 N. C., 13 April 1842.

55 Ibid.

56 Ibid.

57 Ibid.

58 H. Solly, These Eighty Years, 1893, vol. 1, pp. 376-377, 380. Solly also gives an interesting account of the Manchester Conference of Ministers. A C.S.U. missionary, he later became known for his extensive work in establishing workingmen's clubs.

59 Proceedings, p. 18.

60 N. C., 13 April 1842.

61 Proceedings, p. 33.

62 Cobden Papers, Additional MSS, 47, 663F (B. M.), Bright to Lovett, 18 April 1842.


64 Wilson Papers, Bright to Wilson, 7 April 1842.
65 Bright remained sympathetic to suffrage reform but his earlier enthusiasms for Sturje's move had been tempered by Cobden's caution, see G. M. Trevelyan, *Life of John Bright*, 1925, pp. 66, 78.

66 See below, chapter 4.

67 B. J., 16 April 1842.

68 N. S., 9, 16 April 1842.

69 Ibid., 9, 16, 23, 30 April 1842.

70 Mr. O'Brien's Vindication of his Conduct at the late Birmingham Conference, 1842 (B. R. L.).

71 N. S., 23 April 1842. O'Connor and O'Brien joined in moving that all Chartists avoid quarrelling.

72 Minutes of the Council of the National Complete Suffrage Union (B. R. L.); Minutes of the General Purpose Committee (B. R. L.).

73 Solly, *op. cit.*., vol. 1, p. 390.

74 Ibid., vol. 1, p. 398.

75 N. C., 20 July 1842.

76 Wilson Papers, Cobden to Wilson, 16 February 1842.

77 Committee Minutes, in passim.

78 N. C., 29 June 1842.

79 Ibid., 10 August 1842.

80 Ibid., 28 September 1842.

81 Ibid., 25 May 1842.

82 Ibid., 28 September - 12 October 1842.

83 Ibid., 19 October 1842.

84 See below, chapter 4.

85 Council Minutes, 13 July 1842.
Committee Minutes, 15 August 1842.

Sturge Papers, Additional MSS, 43, 845 (B. M.), Brougham to Sturge, 17 April 1842.

McCord, op. cit., ch. 5.

Stokes to N. C., 3, 10, 17 August 1842. Bright replied for the League and took the opportunity to criticise Sturge's association with O'Connor in the Nottingham bye-election.

Prentice, op. cit., vol. 1, pp. 72-73, 105-106. William Rawson was subsequently League treasurer. (The Manchester representatives to the C.S.U. conference were not party to this splinter group and had presumably been successfully won over by Cobden.)

See above, chapter 2, p. 71.

B. J., 20 November 1841.


B. J., 24 September 1842.

Ibid., 29 October 1842. Scholefield's son William, Birmingham's Mayor in 1839, made several business trips to the U.S.A., see G. H. Osborne Collection, vol. 1, unpaged (B. R. L.). This is a collection of local newspaper cuttings, including many useful obituary notices.


Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons, 21 April 1842, cols. 907-983.

Fox's name crops up many times in the Minutes of the Birmingham Anti-Slavery Society between 1839 and 1842.

N. C., 11 May 1842.
101 Sturge Papers, Additional MSS 43, 723 (B. M.), Sturge to Bright, 28 May 1842.

102 N. C., 17 August 1842.

103 Sturge Papers, loc. cit.

104 N. S., 18 June - 16 July 1842.

105 Ibid., 25 June, 23 July 1842.

106 B. J., 9 July 1842.

107 The Northern Star ran a special feature on the distressed hosiery workers in the city, N. S., 15 January 1842, and O'Connor was extremely well received there in a visit the following month, D. Read & E. Glasgow, Feargus O'Connor, Irishman and Chartist, 1961, pp. 97-98. He was returned as M. P. for the borough in 1847.

108 Nottingham was traditionally a Whig seat but some complex bargaining kept the Whigs out of this particular contest, see N. Gash, Politics in the Age of Peel, 1953, p. 130, 258-260.


111 T. Cooper, Life of Thomas Cooper, 1872, pp. 148-149. Cooper was an itinerant journalist who had commandeered the local Chartist movement in Leicester and district. He had little patience with middle class reformers or the moral force Chartists he usurped, but as a dedicated follower of O'Connor he now gave his support to Sturge.

112 N. C., 8 June 1842.

113 N. S., 11 June 1842.

114 Ibid., 23 July 1842.

115 N. C., 25 May, 20 July 1842.

116 The Times, 8 August 1842.
117 Lovett Collection, vol. 1, p. 141, from an unidentified newspaper report.

118 B. J., 6 August 1842.

119 N. C., 25 May 1842.

120 The Times, 15 August 1842.

121 Read & Glasgow, op. cit., p. 102.

122 Thirty years later Cooper could still scarcely contain his indignation at this desertion and felt constrained to criticise his hero, O'Connor. Cooper, op. cit., p. 160.


124 The League narrowly lost this bye-election but their experience contributed to their several victories in the General Election of that year. Joshua Scholefield, the Birmingham businessman, controlled the marketing of much of the saddlers' ironmongery manufactured in Walsall, and wrote a letter to the League candidate J. B. Smith, intended for publication in the right quarters. He wrote that, "Any friends with whom I am acquainted, or with whom my house has dealings, cannot do better to promote their interest, and to gratify my feelings than by voting for you." McCord, op. cit., pp. 86-90. Even if Sturge had comparable influence, which is not so unlikely, he certainly had no such lack of scruples.

125 Contemporary assessments of Sturge emphasised his Christian rectitude which was seen as a welcome restraint upon political views, "somewhat tinged with a democratical complexion." J. Grant, Portraits of Public Characters, 1841, vol. 2, pp. 89-90. See also Illustrated London News, 9 July 1842.

126 O'Connor refused to allow sentiment, especially specious sentiment, to interfere with business. He presented Sturge with a bill for the services of Chartist lecturers at Nottingham, R. G. Gammage, History of the Chartist Movement, 1854, p. 208.
127 Cooper, who laboured so resolutely in Sturges's cause in Nottingham, at the same time refused to give Vincent, the C.S.U. missionary, a hearing in Leicester, N.C., 3 August 1842.
One of Joseph Sturge's aims in forming the Complete Suffrage Union was to prevent an insurrection among the working class. In August 1842 a series of strikes and riots broke out which contemporaries immediately labelled the Plug Plots. The plugs were those the strikers drew from factory boilers, to force their fellows to turn out; the plots behind the disturbances were those attributed to both the Anti-Corn Law League and the Chartists. In fact the convulsions were largely spontaneous and there was no central conspiracy. The government extinguished the outbreaks successfully, but in the welter of recriminations which followed the Complete Suffrage Union suffered severely. The implication of the Chartist leaders in the strikes reduced to a vanishing point the possible acceptance of the People's Charter as the central demand of the C.S.U. In the Press, in the middle class mind, that 'small, obstructive minority', the O'Connors and the Coopers, were condemned as agent provocateurs. O'Connor retaliated with a fierce attack upon the Leaguers for fomenting the strikes to their own end.
His blanket condemnation of the middle class as party to this deceit included Sturge and the C.S.U., and O'Connor determined to expose the Sturgeites as fraudulent champions of class reconciliation in the December conference of the movement in Birmingham.

The elections to this conference were designed to return a balanced representation of the classes, in the spirit of rapprochement which had characterized the April meeting. But the Sturgeites and the O'Connorites contested the elections as class interest groups anxious to secure a majority, by gerrymandering where necessary. In the conference the key issue was the Charter, by now the touchstone of class loyalties, and though Sturge attempted to supersede it by a special C.S.U. Bill of Rights his party was outvoted by a Chartist front which embraced Lovett and the moderates, as well as O'Connor's men, thus destroying the C.S.U. as an effective union between the classes. Sturge withdrew from the conference, and, in effect, from politics. A rump of the Complete Suffrage Union remained in existence till 1844, but as a popular political force the movement was liquidated in December 1842.
It is first, however, necessary to examine the ramifications of the Plug Plots in so far as they spread tension and suspicion among society as a whole, and the reformers in particular. In the summer of 1842 it was clear that Sturge's apprehensions at the disgruntlement of the workers were well founded. This was a time of continued industrial depression, productive only of extensive distress and unrest among the working class. This distress, "was on the whole endured with an incredible and inexplicable patience," but in the summer of 1842 the patience snapped. The first disturbance came in the Dudley coal and iron area in late April with riots among the miners and nailers, which spread into the Potteries and continued sporadically well into July. These rumblings were now commonplace for the times. To some, the only solution seemed to lie in the prospect of a bountiful harvest; to the ministers there was hope in the new tariff measures introduced by Sir Robert Peel. But if the rumblings were unfortunately commonplace, they were still unsettling and the Prime Minister noted confidentially in early August that, "without improvement we are on the brink of convulsion, or something very like it." The convulsion came, almost coincident with Peel's prophesy. On August 5th, weavers in Staleybridge
rebelled against a threatened reduction in wages and, determined to enlist the assistance of their fellows in a protest strike, trekked from town to town in the area pulling out boiler plugs to stop all work. These demonstrations snowballed and the 'turn-outs' found allies in the adjacent counties in the North and in the already inflamed West Midlands. Some workers refused to join the throng and even joined in attempts to disperse the strikers, but disaffection was widespread and difficulties in restoring law and order were compounded by the pusillanimity of local magistrates. Before the government got a grip of the disturbances towards the end of the month whole towns, including Manchester, had been pretty much at the mercy of the strikers.

What caused the Plug Plots? The strikers demanded "a fair day's work for a fair day's wage," and protested recent wage reductions, coincident with the rise in the price of wheat. There were other more localised complaints, for example, among the Staffordshire miners, who inveighed against the continuing practice of truck and the butty system of contracting, but overall the strikes bore the character of an industrial dispute aggravated by the
fear of continuing, and worsening distress. Some grievances were fairly recognised by the government, Sir James Graham the Home Secretary, confessing in private that the labouring classes very often "had just cause for complaint against their masters." But the government could not believe that this was the full story, nor that distress furnished an adequate further explanation, for by mid-August Peel was convinced that the crucial 'improvement' he had strained for was now fact. To the Queen he wrote, "the movement is not one caused by distress. The demand for labour has increased, and the price of provisions has rapidly fallen, within the last three weeks." The Special Commission appointed to try the ringleaders of the strikes and riots subsequently reported that, "It does not appear, from any evidence seen or read, that the parties engaged in these excesses either complained of the high price of provisions or the want of labour." Given the fact of Peel's improvement, however minimal, the spontaneous outburst of several thousand workingmen was only explicable to the official-mind in terms of a conspiracy. Both Peel and Graham were convinced of this, and saw the machinations of both Chartist and the League behind the Plug Plots.
In truth, the strikes took the Chartist national leadership by surprise. The Plug Plots marked a recourse to direct economic action after the much vaunted Chartist stratagem of the national petition had failed once again. When the strike-leaders assembled in the hurriedly called Trades Delegates Conference in Manchester on August 11th, their main resolution called for a return to the wage rates of 1839, and though they urged the adoption of the Charter, it was certainly not given priority.

By coincidence a meeting of the National Chartist Association was scheduled for August 17th in Manchester. There was a deep split in the N.C.A. executive between the O'Connorites and the moderates, and this was now compounded by a serious division of opinion among the Chartist leaders as to their response to the strikers' movement which encompassed them in Manchester. The N.C.A. meeting eventually decided that a general strike be called and that the strikers be urged to stay out till the Charter itself was won. O'Connor endorsed the strikes with reluctance, convinced that they were the work of the League. He repeatedly emphasised the necessity of keeping the peace, but the manifesto which pledged the N.C.A. support for the strikes and their extension carried a violent amendment
by Dr. Peter McDouall, appealing to the 'God of justice and battle'.

The manifesto involved the executive committee in the charge of conspiracy and by October virtually all of them were under arrest. But McDouall's incitement had found no extensive response among the strikers who made few acknowledgements to political leaders who were hurriedly and uncertainly attempting to exploit their 'turn-out' movement.

Thomas Cooper was excited by the defiant mood of the crowds in the Potteries and urged positive support of the strikers but later admitted that he was the instrument rather than the leader of the people.

The only real Chartist initiative came from local leaders who pushed to the front of the marchers, their faces blackened to escape identification by the authorities, blankets strapped to their backs in anticipation of a march on the capital itself. The strikers generally resented the 'Chartist strangers', who came from outside their district and sought to manipulate them, and overall there was no causal connexion between Chartism and the outbreak. But the Chartist leaders, national and local, went into the bag, together with the members of the Trades Delegates Conference and the riotmakers.
In defence and retaliation the Chartists countercharged the League. O'Connor claimed that the League missionary, Richard Acland, had confided in him in July that the League contemplated stopping the mills to precipitate a workers' insurrection, and that during the strikes the League had paid agitators to spread the turnouts from town to town. To the official mind such protestations only served to lump the two movements together as chief suspects for the disturbances; the League had precipitated the strikes and the Chartists had aggravated them. So the government not only moved in on the Chartist leaders, but investigated the charges against the League and the possibility of a clandestine alliance between the Chartists and the League, despite the bitter denunciations of O'Connor.

The government's case against the League was put most forcibly in an article by Croker in the Quarterly Review, which sought to prove, through extracts from speeches by the League leaders in the summer months prior to the disturbances, that they had indeed threatened violence against the government and that the employers who had cut wages were primarily League members. There was no doubt about the
truculence of the League during its London conference in June and July, where the notion of a wholesale lock-out by employers had been openly canvassed. There had been an extensive private debate in the League Council on this very scheme but the actual reductions in wages, though initiated by employers of League membership, were introduced independently of instructions from the top and were the traditional response of hard hit masters who, in this case, were not unsympathetic to their men. Yet the League had talked loosely and Cobden had acknowledged that "whatever they could to embarrass the Government they were bound to do." Such talk, retailed with less and less restraint by the League's agents in the field, had helped inflame the populace in the manufacturing districts of the North. Then too, the charge of League complicity in the Plots was lent substance by the reaction of local magistrates who were League members. In Manchester particularly the strikers were met with a kind of deferential reproach which the Home Office interpretated as a dereliction of duty. Given such evidence, the government intercepted Cobden's correspondence and prepared cases against certain magistrates of League membership. Cobden, however, sensitive to the hazardous position of the League, counselled caution,
restraining the more extremist members of the League, including Bright, who were prepared to hitch the League to the strikers' cause. His reading of the situation proved a shrewd one,

All that is necessary to rise higher than ever is for us to keep aloof in Manchester from all connection with the present commotions. The result of the present disturbances will be to weaken the government by the unpopularity which it will acquire in putting down the rioters. - The trades and Chartists will be weakened by their reverses. 28

The Leaguers survived this dangerous, but to them ultimately salutary crisis, due to the caution of Cobden, though the threat of prosecution hung over them until well on in 1843. The Chartists were hit hard. Although many of them were allowed bail, and several were acquitted in the following spring, they stood accused of violence and were thus tainted in the eyes of the middle class.

This was the complex state of affairs in August and September of 1842. But how were the disturbances interpreted by the onlookers, and how did this affect Sturge and the Complete Suffrage Union? The public reaction, as mirrored in the press, generally followed the government line. The outbreaks were initially attributed to some extensive conspiracy;
"there seems to have been a spreading organisation of a most formidable and disciplined character . . . not the loose outbreak of a merely infuriated crowd."\textsuperscript{29} The fomenters of this conspiracy were identified as the Leaguers, or the Chartists, or both. The strongly protectionist\textit{Times} hit out hard at the League, heading its reports from the strike areas, "Anti-Corn Law League Riots."\textsuperscript{30} Other reports held that the disturbances, "had been arranged for some time by Chartists,"\textsuperscript{31} and a Staffordshire employer testified to the Commission that the combined nature of the strikes could only be attributed to Chartist organisation.\textsuperscript{32} Eventually the most common interpretation was that League incitement triggered off the outbreaks, which were then commandeered and exacerbated by the Chartists. The\textit{Illustrated London News} found evidence for this in the persistent theme it reported at every strikers' meeting,

\begin{quote}
The Anti-Corn Law League have caused us to make this movement, but it is our own fault if we do not get more than they think; we will have the Charter, and not be deceived by the middle classes on this question as on the Reform Bill.\textsuperscript{33}
\end{quote}

The Radical press largely exonerated the League and attacked the Tory government for failing to alleviate distress, and for a perverse encouragement of the
Chartists which had originated in their alliance in the General Election of 1841.\textsuperscript{34} When the government brought no prosecutions against the League these attacks generally subsided, but Chartism remained the \textit{bête noire} to all parties, "the loudest in retarding the return of tranquillity."\textsuperscript{35}

It is worth noting that there were relatively few acts of violence during the strikes. A Chartist agitator at Stockport apostrophised thus on the restraint of his fellow strikers, "I have been instrumental in making you all ladies and gentlemen," though he warned too, that, "this movement shows to the aristocracy of the country that you could annihilate them if you thought proper."\textsuperscript{36} Such warnings and such violence as there was probably weighed more heavily with the middle classes than the strikers' forbearance. The \textit{Spectator} thought Sturge's timing of a new appeal to the middle class particularly inopportune when the former were "just recovering from a bad fright brought on by agitation."\textsuperscript{37}

Sturge's response to the excitements of August was to issue an \textit{Address to the Middle and Working Classes}, which charged the former with being
mainly responsible for the outbreaks in their failure to effect full reconciliation with the workers, who in turn, were urged to keep the peace and thus increase the respect of the middle class. If the classes worked together "no government on earth can long resist your moral, peaceful agitation." Sturge called for another conference, to be held in Birmingham in September, to hurry through a bill for Complete Suffrage. This was postponed because the magistrates refused to grant the use of the Town Hall for a political meeting and Hill, the editor of the Northern Star, addressed a public letter to Sturge asking for a postponement, because the Chartists were confused over the recent arrests and working class representation might be unfairly affected. The magistrates' ban was part of a general one on public assembly given in the last week of August, following certain disturbances in Birmingham itself.

There were no Bull Ring riots in the city in 1842. There were some colliers begging in the streets, but the Black Country strikers marched north rather than east, apart from a handful who bypassed Birmingham on their way to rouse the miners around Coventry. The garrison in Birmingham was
heavily reinforced and the town stayed quiet until the last week in August when many of the troops were despatched to the Potteries. Handbills posted in town encouraged the workers to strike while the garrison was depleted, and although there were no strikes there were meetings to debate sympathetic action with the strikers. These meetings were banned by the magistrates and George White was arrested for defying the ban. The Chartist Church announced a mass meeting on the question but Sturge prevailed upon them to obey the authorities. He was unable to restrain Arthur O'Neill, who continued to placard the town demanding active sympathy with the turn-outs and was arrested for incitement. The fact that it was Sturge's brother Charles, and not Sturge himself who bailed out O'Neill may have been the finely judged reproach of a man who could not allow himself a display of temper. O'Neill was arrested again for speaking at a riotous meeting at Cradley Heath, and though by now he was counselling moderation he was certainly in excitable company, and his association with Sturge no doubt prompted the reference in The Times to the latter as a "man of peace, if it be not a mockery to talk of peace in conjunction with the tumults which this man has been attempting to excite."
There were other similar attacks on Sturge and the C.S.U. in the London press, so although Birmingham escaped a serious affray the disturbances as a whole reflected poorly on Sturge, who was widely referred to as a Chartist in these discomforting attacks from his own class. When he announced his proposals for a Complete Suffrage conference for December, the *Birmingham Journal* was heavily discouraging,

The riots that accompanied the late strike, in many instances, its proved folly in all, have given a hearty blow and a sad discouragement to the most sanguine believers in the capacity of the people to wield, with peace and prudence, those powers which the concession of six points would invest them . . . the people have suffered seriously in the opinion of their friends, as well as of their enemies.

Not only the people, but Joseph Sturge and the C.S.U. "suffered seriously in the opinion of their friends . . .," and so the December conference was to be an attempt to redeem respectability rather than to patch up the rift between the classes widened by the Plug Plots.

The electioneering for the December conference revealed the crucial weakness of the C.S.U. in its home territory, for Sturge was still unable to reconstruct
the old Birmingham reform front in any strength. The old guard of the B.P.U., the Liberal middle class reformers, largely remained aloof. Already well ensconced in the new municipal government, they were greatly heartened by the confirmation of the charter of incorporation, passed at Westminster in August 1842.

Everything we wished from the Whig ministry, more than we ever looked to get from them, some things which we did not even think of asking from them, have been freely, frankly, and in good spirit, and in the best manner granted by the Tory ministry. Let us not grudge them one jot of the praise deservedly due to conduct which has been marked by as much liberality as sound judgement. 

Such gratification was in fact short-lived for the Council found its authority limited by the continuing powers of antique local bodies like the Street Commissioners, but for a time enthusiasm was high and such reform energies as were left after the press of Council duties went to support the local branch of the League.

With the middle class reformers pre-occupied with other matters the C.S.U. was left to fish in the waters of working class politics. These were discoloured by the resurgence of the militant
O'Connorite wing under George White. White's group had been a poor second in strength to the ranks of the moderates in the Chartist Church, and had been left shouting the old taunts of middle class betrayal from the backs of the halls whenever the League or the C.S.U. met. But Sturge's refusal to stand bail for White in August, or even to co-operate in the Committee of Defence which his followers raised on his behalf, gave new edge to the O'Connorite charges against the middle class. Among the heated recriminations of that summer following the Plug Plots White and the *Northern Star* found ample fuel for a fierce attack upon Sturge and his movement. Here is a typical assault,

> All the paltry dregs, the riddlings and refuse of the 'Liberals', together with a few of our would be amateur, half-gentleman Chartists, have thought to work wonders, and make an honest penny by the dodge. These Chartists who will bow and scrape before a middle class money-grubber and acknowledge that O'Connor is too violent are sure to meet with a warm reply.

Tempers were perhaps not as high as in 1839 but they were sufficient to sabotage the December conference.

Aware of Chartist hostility, the Council of the C.S.U. called a special meeting in Birmingham in September to prepare for the next conference.
With Lovett's experienced assistance they issued precise instructions on election procedure. Representatives were to be elected by public meeting. Each town with less than 5000 inhabitants could return two members, larger towns returned four, with the exception of London, Birmingham, Glasgow and Liverpool which could send six each. It was further laid down,

... that one half of the representatives be appointed by the electors and half by the non-electors. The meetings for their election to be held separate, unless both classes can agree in having all the representatives chosen at one meeting, which we earnestly recommend; but where they do not so agree the two classes are not to interfere with each other's meetings, otherwise the election will be void.

By November the Council had dispensed with its earnest recommendation of one single meeting in an area and, "in order to prevent any unfair interference in the elections," urged separate elections for electors and non-electors to be held "on the same day and hour." This was done to prevent the O'Connorites from packing the single election meets, voting their candidates into all the places, and sending them to the conference at the expense of the local C.S.U. branch.
O'Connor's aims were explicit. He was not going to boycott this conference and stage a counter-demonstration as in April. The N.C.A. could not afford this, and in any case O'Connor needed a spectacular coup after the failures and confusion of the summer. So he was determined to storm the C.S.U. from within. He argued that Sturge was leading a dishonest movement and had planned the conference "to hand over the Complete Suffrage and Chartist movements to the Free Traders." O'Connor would forestall this by engineering a working class bloc in the conference which would quash the compromising designs of these thinly disguised agents of the League. "This conference," announced O'Connor, "will be the most important ever held . . . a trial of strength between sham and real principles." His followers were briefed on electoral tactics; they must attend the election meetings on time and in strength, to forestall what O'Connor termed the 'committee dodge' (the election of a hostile chairman and committee who would railroad through nominations and limit debate); they must protest the calling of meetings during working hours, designed to minimise working class attendance; they must prepare a list of reserve candidates in case their first choices were gaolod after the impending trials of those implicated
in the Plug Plots. The first elections were held in Birmingham in November and were a signal success for the O'Connorites. "The Birmingham lads have done their work nobly," the Northern Star exulted, "In the very H.Q. of Complete Suffrage, with Mr. Sturge in the chair they have elected four good Chartists out of a delegation of six." The 'good' Chartists included George White and O'Connor himself in absentia. The Nonconformist attributed the result to "a packed hall and local soreness." Here and elsewhere O'Connor's men successfully packed meetings, often pulling in supporters from a wide radius. The Northern Star had published an appeal to the workingmen of the iron district to the West of the city to attend the election meeting, but the significant support in Birmingham came from those workingmen still nursing a 'local soreness' against the bourgeois establishment. Then too, a later official report of the C.S.U. attributed the Union's weakness to "the existing apathy of the middle class, occasioned chiefly by the violent conduct of some professed Chartists." The outcome of the Birmingham election rattled the C.S.U. leaders. The Nonconformist joined battle with O'Connor in his
own language, accusing him of treachery, reviving the old taunt of his cowardice in 1839, and reviling him for insincere opportunism at Nottingham. The C.S.U. Council provided local organisations with a list of approved Birmingham men who would represent distant towns at the conference, thus promoting the Sturgeites and cutting down on expenses.

The elections continued on into December. The O'Connorites organised their own list of Birmingham men for the outside towns, under the central direction of White. Some local C.S.U. associations countered by declaring elections void or by springing elections at short notice. The O'Connorites successfully packed meets in London, Leeds and Bristol, and Glasgow, where they rallied support from some 10 miles around. At Bradford they broke a 'gentleman's agreement' to split the candidates between the official Complete Suffrage men and the Chartists, and returned a solid Chartist list. The C.S.U. Council grew extremely concerned at irregularities and the return of candidates "so entirely at variance with the spirit and letter of the invitation." It was decided that if O'Connor was elected chairman at the opening of the conference, "the friends of Complete Suffrage ought immediately to
retire and reassemble elsewhere. It was as though Birmingham was preparing for a siege, rather than a political meeting.

The size and complexion of the December conference of the National Complete Suffrage Union defy precise analysis although the course and outcome were clear enough. The conference, still denied the use of the Town Hall, met in the Mechanic's Institute on December 27th, 1842. The Council apologised for the inadequacy of the room which was crammed with some 400 people, although these could not have all been members. The only available list of members is found in the *Birmingham Journal* and this contains several inaccuracies. There were three separate lists presented to the conference. The first list contained the names of delegates who were considered fairly elected; the second listed those with whose election some irregularity had been noted, but whom the Council recommended should be admitted to the conference; the third list contained those whose election had been clearly contrary to the terms of invitation and whom the Council could not admit. A committee was appointed to examine the credentials of those on the third list, the occasion for an
ominous wrangle between O'Connor and the Reverend Patrick Brewster of Edinburgh, but the examination could not have been too taxing, for list three, which included Thomas Cooper, was eventually admitted though denied a vote. The combined total of entries in the three lists was 256. Since several members were returned for more than one town their names are listed twice or three times, so the actual number of delegates on the list was 220. Of these, making the same allowances for double returns, sixty eight were Birmingham men and the most certain attenders at the conference. So, this December conference was some three times the size of its forerunner, boasting a membership probably in excess of 250, one quarter of which was from the host city itself.

Out of the eighty seven members of the April conference, thirty two were returned in December, and of this group, twenty three eventually supported Sturge at the crucial division. League representation within this group and in the conference at large was much smaller in number than in April. Bright had withdrawn from the Council in December, an unexplained and discreet move, but an indication of Cobden's waning apprehensions of the counter threat of the C.S.U.
to the League. Another absent League worthy was Thomas Potter from Manchester, and although Prentice appears on the list of members there is a question mark against his name. The secretary of the Birmingham Anti-Corn Law Association, J. A. Lander, was a member of the conference but none of the big names in that body were present. There was but one more minister of religion at the December meeting than in April, and though this number included the Reverend Brewster, a formidable Edinburgh reformer and enemy of O'Connor, it also included the Reverend William Hill, editor of the *Northern Star* and enemy of Sturge.

Once again there was a good sprinkling of moderate Chartists to whom Sturge had always looked to effect the most likely bridge between the classes. Lovett and his cultured ally John Humffreys Parry attended, together with Henry Vincent, and Collins and O'Neill. But this could have been small comfort to the C.S.U. Council as they scanned a list of members heavily packed with Chartists of O'Connor's stamp. George White was now operating under the eye of his leader and was well supported by the strong O'Connorite Birmingham contingent, including John Mason and Fussell, the prominent 1839 troublemaker.
From Glasgow came six redoubtable desperadoes with much experience in the sabotage of political meetings. There were other well-known extremists such as Harney of Sheffield and the election reports in the Nonconformist had been scattered with the names of those who declared themselves 'whole-hog' Chartists. "Our delegates were the most numerous party in the Birmingham conference," observed Cooper with satisfaction.

The conference opened amicably, but Sturge, who was unanimously elected to the chair, soon voiced reproof for the recent conduct and language of "some professed friends of the People's Charter" which had so degraded the name that "the great bulk of the electors and nine tenths of the middle class considered the word synonymous with violence and bloodshed." Thus alerted the O'Connorites spoiled for a fight over the admission procedure and when Thomas Beggs, the middle class delegate for Nottingham, rose in the evening session on the first day he was obviously nervous. His task was to introduce the crucial motion presenting Sturge's answer to the Charter, the National Complete Suffrage Union's Bill of Rights. Beggs referred back to the April conference. Then, he said, it had been decided that the future conference
should consider all documents relating to the six points of principle approved in that meeting, preparatory to drafting a bill to be presented in Parliament. As a point of procedure however Beggs proposed that the bill to be presented by the Council of the C.S.U. be taken as the basis of discussion and that each clause as it was read should be considered, step by step, with the correlative clauses of the other documents. This was the casus belli between the Sturgeites and the Chartists, both O'Connorite and moderate.

The Bill of Rights presented by Beggs on behalf of the C.S.U. Council was clearly meant to relieve the Union of the embarrassment of association with the Charter, and with O'Connor's party. The Nonconformist had hinted at the introduction of such a bill during December, but it had been prepared in secrecy, and was presented to the conference without notice. "Who," asked Cooper, "could be expected to read and digest a mass of print amounting to many pages, in the lapse of a few hours, or while listening to exciting speeches, and then give a judgment on it?" But to Cooper's "utter amazement" it was not his chief, O'Connor, who first questioned
this sharp practice but Lovett, whom Cooper had regarded with great suspicion when the conference opened. Although Lovett was a member of the Council he had not been privy to the drafting of their bill and had only learnt of its existence when the conference opened. Lovett was dedicated to the Charter which had won its priority through the sufferings of its supporters, himself included, and moved an amendment that the Charter, rather than the Bill of Rights, be acknowledged as the basis for discussion. This was a matter of conscience to Lovett but he was still anxious to avoid the collapse of the conference, and urged that the debate on his controversial motion be delayed overnight to afford Mr. Beggs and his friends time to consult together. He was hoping that Sturge and his colleagues would acknowledge the unyielding temper of the majority of the conference on this issue and either withdraw their bill or propose a compromise. While he thus gave the Sturgeites time to regroup, O'Connor rushed to record his support for this new and unexpected ally, expressing his deep regret for ever having mistaken Lovett's "honest views." O'Connor's eulogy was distasteful to Lovett but nonetheless the party lines were now clearly drawn, and the Chartists offered a virtually
united front against Sturge and the middle-class element.

The conference exploded on the following day with the debate on Lovett's amendment. The Sturgeites would not budge and their abhorrence of the Charter led them into some extremely heated exchanges. They were obviously working to the plan raised in the Council before the conference, that they would force a division which would slough off the O'Connorites, even though it now meant alienating the moderates under Lovett. The temperature and volume of debate rose. The Reverend Thomas Spencer declared that the middle class had made all the concessions that could be expected, and that they refused to bow to the tyranny of the Charter and its violent advocates with their "levelling, destroying and dividing." A proposal that all relevant bills and documents be considered across the board found little support in a conference now polarised between the parties. The Reverend Brewster chose to see the imprisonment and transportation of those who had championed the Charter as just deserts for the intemperance of their politics, hardly a conciliatory statement in an assembly containing several such men.
and others with charges still hanging over them. Lawrence Heyworth, a League member from Liverpool, who had represented that city in April but had been forced to seek a seat elsewhere for December, hit harder and more specifically. This, he insisted, was not a contest of principles, for he yielded to no one in his support of the six points in the Charter; it was a contest of leadership. He had placed himself under Sturge and as to the rest, "he revered their principles, but he would never identify himself with their leaders." They were leaders in bloodshed and plunder, said Heyworth, concluding his speech amid uproar. Joshua Hobson, the Leeds Chartist, called for quiet, that Heyworth might continue in this unwitting condemnation of himself and his kind — "Let him go on, he is a sample of his class." Sturge intervened from the chair to prevent a scrimmage, but his party had long since given way to impatience and talked themselves into defeat. O'Connor had shots to spare; he never raised the charge of liaison with the League, he scarcely even raised his voice. Lovett's amendment was carried with a heavy majority and the conference split in two. Sturge and his party withdrew to the Temperance Hotel, clutching about them the ninety nine clauses of the Bill of Rights,
while O'Connor took over the chair in the Mechanics Institute and turned the meeting over to official Chartist business.

Why had the Sturgeites been defeated? In a sense they had been defeated before the conference started, in failing to match O'Connor's manipulation of the Birmingham vote. Forty five Birmingham men voted for Lovett's amendment as opposed to twenty three who supported the Council's original motion. These twenty three were mainly the same men, petty bourgeoisie, who had sat on the Birmingham Provisional Committee in April; sixteen were electors. Sturge did however hold on to the support of John Collins, Joseph Corbett and Arthur O'Neill, so the common front with the moderate workingmen of Birmingham Chartism was maintained. Outside the city Henry Vincent and R. K. Philp also supported the Sturgeites but other moderate Chartists could not stomach the rejection of the Charter however much they might detest O'Connor. The Charter was the touchstone of class loyalty and in unloading it Sturge had unloaded most of the working class.

But it was obvious that Sturge thought of this loss as a necessary though drastic purge. The censures of his own class were more difficult to ride
than the expected tirades of O'Connor, and before quitting the chair Sturge had sought to explain to the conference why the middle class members had acted as they did.

If only they knew how these men were taunted by the class to which they belonged for identifying themselves with the present movement, they would make some alliance for their irritation.\textsuperscript{86}

To the Nonconformist, the conference was a victory for Complete Suffrage because the movement had "escaped confinement within the dogmas of an intolerant sect." Some of this was perhaps whistling in the dark but it was whistling which was well in tune with the determination to return to "a quiet and dignified course of agitation."\textsuperscript{87} Editor Miall was among those of "Mr. Sturge's friends, (who) felt thankful that this result left him at liberty honourably to withdraw from much uncongenial fellowship."\textsuperscript{88} So the disapproving pressures of the middle class destroyed the Complete Suffrage movement as much as the intransigence of the working class in their dedication to the Charter.
In reviewing the December conference the Birmingham Journal judged that "injurious as risings and tumults are to the progress of reform, we look upon the exhibitions of Tuesday and Wednesday as yet more fatal." The Journal objected to the rowdiness rather than to the principles of Complete Suffrage, and as the movement contracted and became more localised so did it become more respectable within the city. One year after the rebuke for bad behaviour, R. K. Douglas himself, editor of the Journal and former Chartist, attended a meeting of the Birmingham C.S.U. in the Town Hall, together with the city's two M.P.s and thirty town councillors! So the question of suffrage reform was kept alive in Birmingham though it took a poor second place to the work of the League. The city was never as passionately involved in the League as Manchester, but it made a solid contribution to the campaign for repeal, becoming more and more "reasonable," according to John Bright, after the excitements of previous years.

George White returned from a prison sentence to heckle at League meetings but Chartist strength generally declined after 1842. A National Chartist Convention was scheduled for April 1843 in Birmingham
but such was the confusion among the executive that it was not held until September, and then it was seriously restricted due to lack of funds. Plans for O'Connor's National Land Company were finalised in Birmingham in 1846 and five branch offices were opened in the city, but the response was slender. The Christian Chartists continued to support the attenuated Complete Suffrage Union, but in 1844 Arthur O'Neill took them into union with the Baptists, and they were absorbed into the mainstream of Nonconformist reforming zeal in Birmingham, as a new burst of activity began under the ministries of Vince and Dawson. Economic recovery took the edge off Chartist political activity. At the same time as the delegates had filed into Sturge's conference in December 1842, new orders had begun to trickle through to Birmingham, and 1843 marked a general revival of trade throughout the country.

Joseph Sturge was glad to see better times economically, for he had been in serious financial trouble towards the end of 1842. He stood again as a bye-election candidate but was defeated at Nottingham in 1843, Birmingham in 1844, and in the General Election of 1847 in Leeds where he stood as
a voluntaryist under the auspices of Edward Baines junior. In any case, politics was just an interlude to Sturge who continued to concern himself with the causes of peace, temperance and anti-slavery. During the 1840s he also became involved in education, both for adults and juvenile delinquents, and was increasingly respected in the city as "a friend to all measures of social betterment." His moral stature was enormous and when Birmingham was swept up by the wave of anti-Popery feeling in 1850 Sturge was one of the few people who could gain a hearing in his plea for tolerance. Inevitably his pacifism during the Crimean War brought him some unpopularity in a city whose livelihood depended on the arms trade, but at his death in 1859 the tributes from all classes and parties were genuine and overwhelming.

Joseph Sturge's political testament was as important to the city of Birmingham as were his good works. When political agitation revived in 1848 it was his proteges from the old Complete Suffrage Union, Henry Vincent and Arthur O'Neill, who took a leading part in the formation of the Birmingham Reform League, later the Reform Association. At a mass meeting in the Town Hall they were joined by such old middle class
reform stalwarts as the Muntz brothers, George Edmonds and R. K. Douglas, as well as Sturge himself. It was unanimously voted "that this meet is of the opinion that these reforms will be best effected by uniting the middle and working classes." These were words in the old tradition of Birmingham politics; a tradition which Sturge had nursed through the difficult days of 1839-1842.
1 H. Martineau, History of the Thirty Years Peace, 1878, vol. 4, p. 157. Even Greville, who was usually too preoccupied with high politics to notice the condition of the lower orders, was moved to remark upon the "huge mountain of human misery' which afflicted the people, C. C. F. Greville, The Greville Memoirs, 1896, vol. 5, p. 121.

2 Annual Register, vol. 83, 1842, pp. 76-77; Spectator, 16, 30 July 1842.

3 Spectator, 2 July 1842.

4 C. S. Parker, Sir Robert Peel, 1899, vol. 2, p. 541. Graham, the Home Secretary, put great faith in the pacifying effects of "cheap bread, plenty of potatoes, low-priced American bacon, a little more Dutch cheese and butter ..."


7 F. Peel, The Risings of the Chartists and Plugdrawers, 1888, p. 340. Workmen were often constrained to enroll as special constables by the pressures of their employers, F. C. Mather, Public Order in the Age of the Chartists, 1959, p. 82.

8 See below.

9 Rude, op. cit., p. 184. Prices were at their highest in June, falling considerably from the middle of August, T. Tooke, History of Prices, 1848, vol. 4, pp. 12-13.


14 In a letter to his newly appointed C. in C. the Duke of Wellington, Peel argued that, "There must have been a very extensive system of organisation" behind the outbreaks, Parker, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 540. Graham explained to the Queen that there was an extensive conspiracy of some twelve months standing, Parker, Life and Letters of Sir James Graham, 1907, vol. 1, pp. 321-322.

15 See above, chapter 3, p. 122-123.

16 Spectator, 20 August 1842.

17 N. S., 4, 18 June 1842.

18 Even The Times, 22 August 1842, credited O'Conn or with a strong appeal for discipline and moderation.


20 T. Cooper, Life of Thomas Cooper, 1872, pp. 186-194, 197, 207. Cooper advocated physical force if necessary and privately thought O'Connor's new moderation was evidence of a failure of nerve. At this time Cooper seemed bent on pushing himself for the Chartist leadership.


23 N. S., 20 August 1842. O'Connor specifically indicated the League member, William Taunton of Coventry, who was also a member of the General Council of the C. S. U., ibid., 13 August 1842.


26 The Spectator, 9 July 1842, reported "the hint of some formidable coercion."

27 Kitson Clark, op. cit., p. 367, Mather; op. cit., p. 64. Tory J. P.s were also reprimanded for negligence. They were sympathetic to the workers, believing that the League manufacturers had indeed driven their men to strike in order to embarrass the Tory government. Mr. Orford, a Cheshire magistrate residing near Stockport told the master manufacturers of the town that unless they would exert themselves to keep their men at work, they need not apply to him for military assistance. The Queen was greatly indignant at the timidity of her magistrates, Parker, Life of Sir Robert Peel, vol. 2, p. 540.

28 McCord, op. cit., p. 128.

29 Illustrated London News, 20 August 1842. This paper marked a new style in journalism, and from its first appearance in this year it appealed strongly to the Shopocracy, with its plentiful pictures and "cleverly opportunistic milk-and-water Liberalism," see S. Maccoby, English Radicalism, 1832-1852, 1935, ch. 25 for the press of this period.

30 The Times, 12 August 1842.

32 Spectator, 10 September 1842. Editorial opinion in this moderate Radical weekly tended to be lenient to both the League and the Chartists.

33 Illustrated London News, 20 August 1842.

34 Examiner, 20 August, 3 September 1842; N. C., 17 August 1842. For the election alliance of 1841 see above, chapter 3, p. 127.

35 Illustrated London News, 3 September 1842.

36 Spectator, 20 August 1842.

37 Ibid., 27 August 1842.

38 N. C., 24 August 1842.

39 Ibid., 31 August 1842.

40 Gammage, op. cit., p. 241.

41 N. C., 31 August 1842.

42 Examiner, 27 August 1842.

43 B. J., 27 August 1842; N. C., 24 August 1842.

44 B. J., 3 September 1842. Also arrested was John Mason, a strong O'Connorite Chartist who had come to Birmingham from Newcastle on Tyne and served as White's lieutenant. As a Chartist missionary he was, however, frequently absent from the city, Gammage, op. cit., pp. 149, 227.

45 The Times, 2 September 1842.

46 B. J., published a selection, 10 September 1842.

47 Ibid., 8 October 1842.

48 Ibid., 6 August 1842.

49 A. Briggs, Victorian Cities, 1963, p. 188.

50 N. S., 17 September 1842.

51 Ibid., 1 October 1842.
52 Minutes of the Council of the National Complete Suffrage Union, 12 September 1842.


54 Council Minutes, 28 November 1842.

55 N. S., 3, 10, 17 September 1842.

56 Ibid., 5, 12 November 1842.

57 Ibid., 19 November 1842.

58 N. C., 16 November 1842.

59 N. S., 5 November 1842.

60 Quoted in B. J., 13 May 1843.

61 N. C., 23 November 1842.

62 The Reverend Solly, attender at the April conference and C. S. U. missionary had decided against attending in December, and "was not a little surprised when a letter came from the conference committee in Birmingham to say I had been appointed by a Scotch burgh to represent them at the Conference, and that they, the committee would pay my travelling expenses." H. Solly, These Eighty Years, 1893, vol. 1, p. 406.

63 N. S., 10 December 1842.

64 Both sides evidently used the same trick, see N. S., 3, 10 December 1842; N. C., 21 December 1842.

65 N. C., 30 November 1842.

66 Ibid., 14 December 1842.

67 Council Minutes, 24 December 1842.

68 The only account of the conference in any detail is given in the supplement to the Nonconformist, 31 December 1842. References are from this account, unless otherwise stated.

69 B. J., 31 December 1842. Surprisingly, there is no such list in the Nonconformist.
70 N. C., 7 December 1842. The Reverend William Stokes from West Bromwich, a League rebel, attended. Other members of his group had corresponded to the C. S. U. Council but do not seem to have taken an active part in the movement, *ibid.*, 14 September 1842; see above chapter 3, pp. 120-121.


72 Parry is an interesting figure. He was a barrister who later achieved considerable prominence, taking part in such celebrated cases as those of Overend and Gurney, the Tichborne claimant and Whistler vs. Ruskin. A constant friend of reform, he supported women's suffrage, *Dictionary of National Biography*, Sir Leslie Stephens, ed., 1917.

73 See above, chapter 1, p. 36-37.


76 Cooper, *op. cit.*, p. 221.

77 N. C., 21, 28 December 1842.

78 Cooper, *op. cit.*, pp. 222-223.


80 See above, chapter 3, p. 101.

81 "Mr. Heyworth of Liverpool approached as near the truth as any of the speakers -- as any at least who could be heard." *Examiner*, 31 December 1842.

82 Hobson was the publisher of the *Northern Star*, although together with many other leading Chartists, he later parted company with O'Connor. He was also leader of the Leeds Short-Time Committee, E. Glasgow, "The Establishment of the *Northern Star* Newspaper," *History*, vol. 39, no. 135 (February 1954), pp. 61-62.

83 Cooper, *op. cit.*, p. 225.
84 N. C., 18 January 1843, lists those who supported the introduction of the Bill of Rights. The voting went as follows; For the original resolution 94
For Lovett's amendment 193
Absent 73
Declined to vote 14

85 Cooper later claimed that O'Neill voted with the O'Connorites but the official account clearly states otherwise, Cooper, *op. cit.*, pp. 226-227.

86 N. C., 31 December 1842, supplement.

87 Ibid., 4 January 1843.


89 B. J., 31 December 1842.

90 Ibid., 20 December 1843.

91 Sturge Papers, Additional MSS 43, 723 (B. M.), Bright to Sturge, 15 February 1844.

92 Gammage, *op. cit.*, p. 248. Birmingham was several times the meeting place for Chartist conferences and conventions; probably because of its central location.


96 B. J., 24 December 1842.
97 "Today, most economic historians would place the turning point between the post Napoleonic period of difficulty, and the 'golden age' of the Victorians rather earlier than was once fashionable -- in 1842-1843 rather than in 1848 or thereabouts." E. J. Hobsbawm, Labouring Men, 1964, p. 67. This is a collection of several of Hobsbawm's articles which previously appeared in learned journals, and includes his contributions to the debate upon the standard of living in Britain during this period. Birmingham's exports doubled in 1841-1851, Stephens, op. cit., p. 136.

98 A. Peckover, Life of Joseph Sturge, 1890, p. 78.

99 Edward Miall never appeared again in public in support of Complete Suffrage, but the Nonconformist campaigned for three successful bye-election candidates in 1843 with the "new trinity" of suffrage, free trade and religious liberty. Miall himself was later M. P. for Bradford. R. G. Cowherd, Politics of English Dissent, 1956, pp. 115-116.

100 Gill, op. cit., pp. 380-381, 393.

101 B. J., 14 December 1850. This question was contested in a day-long meeting in the Town Hall, "the noisiest meeting, beyond all comparison, ever seen or heard in Birmingham."

102 Ibid., 17 May 1859.

103 Ibid., 6 May 1848.
There has been much emphasis recently on the role of the provinces in the reform politics of nineteenth century Britain. It was here, in the cities and their environs outside the metropolis that popular political agitations were drilled and marshalled, even though the final campaign was fought in Westminster. The city of Birmingham was in the thick of this fight, and the spirited politics of Thomas Attwood and Joseph Chamberlain typify the pugnacity and enterprise of the new provincial pressure groups.

Birmingham then, offered itself as a valuable case study in provincial politics, as an archetype, but also as something of an exception, for the city laid claim to a harmonious class structure almost unique in industrial Britain. In the battle for the 1832 Reform Bill Birmingham was a political powerhouse, drawing great strength from the solidarity of the classes. The city's attachment to the Chartist cause in 1838 promised even greater victories, but in fact, brought disillusionment and division to the local reformers. Into the maelstrom of debate and recrimination
came Joseph Sturge, the Birmingham Quaker, not a compelling figure in himself, but a man so concerned with the threats to the whole fabric of society, that he was drawn, against his true nature, into politics and into the establishment of the Complete Suffrage Union in 1842. In Birmingham, in Britain, he hoped to refashion society, and the halting progress of this political innocent afforded a useful focus and limitation in the study of Birmingham's politics and class structure.

On the whole Birmingham did enjoy political stability and an absence of class friction during the nineteenth century, but the strength and resilience of this tradition was most obvious when it was most threatened, and so the stress of the 1830s and early 1840s is more instructive than the political passivity of mid-century. Sturge was operating in a most volatile political milieu, and Attwood's career demonstrated that inside one generation, within one community, a man could be both champion and outcast. The latter's story was not just one of normal political obsolescence but reflected the turmoil of the times. What caused these upsets?

In Europe as a whole the pace of industrialisation increases rapidly in this period and the well known
growing pains of such a process were aggravated by abrupt lurches from intense activity and growth to stagnation and distress. In seeking remedies to this situation the middle and working classes in Britain differed in their prognoses; the middle class went for the repeal of the Corn Laws, the working class for the Charter. The split was some evidence of the growing alienation between the classes, particularly where the spread of the factory system bred greater class consciousness among the workers and their accusations of middle class betrayal grew sharper.

In Birmingham industrialisation involved no radical change, no invidious segregation into factory and office, simply more of the same, the multiplication of the existing small units of production with masters and men working side by side.² The city's industrial society was long established, pre-dating the precipitate growth of newer manufacturing centres, and its highly skilled working class could be securely numbered among the labour aristocracy. R. K. Douglas was obviously invoking the typical Birmingham artisan when he addressed this appeal to the great Chartist meeting in the city in August 1838,
Who can doubt the sagacity of a workingman's choice of M. P. when he is a man who has the power to execute the most delicate pieces of machinery, who can make his own private contracts with his master, who can discuss his social rights in his club, and in fact can manage everything relating to his private affairs with judgement.\(^3\)

It was not the internal strains of accelerated industrialisation, nor the frequent incidence of business depressions which upset the harmony of Birmingham society; it was the incursion of vigorous outside pressures which caused the sudden breakdown of the city as a discrete political entity. Bronterre O'Brien recognised this when reviewing the same mass meeting at which Douglas had spoken. "Birmingham politics are now no longer party politics, no longer the politics of faction; they are national politics, the politics of twenty millions of the oppressed people."\(^4\)

Traditional politics were distorted by economic stress, but in Birmingham the breakdown of the city's isolation by the improvement of communications, particularly the railways, proved more disruptive still. If older interpretations focussed too much on Westminster as the only crucible of political action, there is the danger that the new emphasis on provincial studies could lead to the misconception that each major city and its
environ was a self-contained political unit which delivered one massive, unanimous and unique injection of political influence into the central system. On the contrary, in the 1830s the cities were thrown wide open to many new cross-currents of influence. In 1838 and 1839 O'Connor aggravated discontent among the Birmingham working class which might otherwise have been contained by the old reform leadership in the city. He was also free to go hell-raising in Nottingham and London and Brighton in the same week. The new facilities for cross country travel, the penny post, the relaxation of Stamp duty on the press, served to raise the tempo of political life, to transmute the provinces into one great political forum, to put them into political flux. Of course, these new facilities did not work simply to the advantage of the political agitator, the railway which brought the Chartists' National Convention from London to Birmingham in 1839 brought the Metropolitan Police in its wake, but the arcane debate of local politics was newly open to sudden and explosive interruptions from outside.

Birmingham men of all classes were scared of what might happen. It is perhaps not too fanciful to suggest that the Birmingham reformers saw the revived
agitation of 1838 as a political application of the city's unique economic arithmetic; expansion of political success would simply require more of the same, the multiplication of the proven basic unit, the countrywide establishment of Political Unions, each possessing the discipline and concord of the B.P.U. But the rest of the country did not conform. The North and its leaders in particular, were inflamed with a desperate anger and a class hatred foreign to Birmingham politics. So Attwood turned from his enthusiasm for numbers to a querulous rejection of the Charter and its mass message, and Birmingham's middle class delegates to the national Chartist convention decided to withdraw before it opened. O'Connor judged their conduct correctly. "Mr. Salt is a good man, but a little too nervous . . . Mr. Hadfield is a good man but has caught the infection."  

The working class in Birmingham were nervous too. Might not O'Connor's harrowing reports of conditions in the North be a premonition of similar disasters which could overtake their own city? There was evidence to hand of middle class self-interest in the engrossing of municipal office and the later use of the Metropolitan Police, and the working class Birmingham Observational Committee which elected replacement delegates to the
Chartist convention, objected to one candidate because he was considered middle class. The Committee, and its successors in the local branch of the N.C.A. under George White, were a militant minority among Birmingham workers, and no doubt included the potential troublemakers who exist in every city. But even the traditionally moderate local workingmen were alienated and made the Chartist Church an exclusively working class institution.

The fact that Birmingham's class accord could be shaken so badly is some indication of the alarms, suspicions, and disappointed expectations which suffused society. But the fact that the traditional harmony could be resurrected is a measure both of its inherent strength, and of Joseph Sturge's achievement. Continuity, however tenuous, was assured by the efforts at reconciliation made by Sturge and the C.S.U. Within its own ambitious terms of reference the movement was a failure. It failed nationally, and it did little of immediate political moment in Birmingham itself, but what it did do was to maintain the social a prioris of local tradition; dialogue between the classes, the respectability of the tea party. Henry Vincent's verdict on Complete Suffrage holds good for Birmingham at least,
It brought a better feeling between the middle and working classes, and allayed the fiercer exasperation of the people by proving that men of Christian character were willing to risk popularity with the wealthy and the powerful in their desire to serve them.11

Sturge's local aides in this goodwill operation were drawn from the shopocracy, the petty bourgeoisie, less a distinct class than a floating bridge between the middle and working classes, a link between the two, dependent on both alike. They were afraid of further economic deterioration, they were afraid of middle class isolation and withdrawal and they were afraid of the working class. The Bull Ring Riots had not been as traumatic as Peterloo but they were a reminder of the temper of the city masses and the activity of agitators such as O'Connor gave a new dimension to the fear of the mob. The working class therefore had to be contained, wooed away from the provocateurs.

To Sturge the ideal working man would probably have been a cross between the well-disciplined factory hand of Lowell and the traditional English freeman, forming a sort of citified yeoman class, suitable for incorporation into the bourgeoisie. The respectability of the Chartist Church in Birmingham
encouraged the Sturgeites to approach the local working class with talk of alliance but they still had misgivings about the liaison. The Chartist Church leader John Collins was well respected in Birmingham but he had been imprisoned as an agitator in 1839. His attempt to give the C.S.U. broader popular support in Birmingham was resisted and he was twice snubbed by the C.S.U. Council. Cobden could talk confidently of the 'brickbat argument', of having, "something in our rear to frighten the Aristocracy," but while he coolly soldiered on, Sturge and his colleagues were too busy looking over their shoulders in case they be overrun by their rank and file. By December 1842, Sturge was more concerned with sloughing off the recalcitrants than holding onto the moderates among the working class.

It is argued then that in Birmingham, Sturge and the C.S.U. kept the peace between the classes. But his trepidation in this local undertaking is an example of that lack of political awareness and nerve which precluded greater gains in the city, and in the country at large. One of Sturge's principal failings here was that he misjudged the firepower of moral conviction. Working from the example of the anti-slavery campaign, he clearly believed that a massive
moral conviction on the part of a middle and working
class alliance would sweep away the landed monopoly
of government, and with the optimism typical of all
third parties, would sweep away politics itself, or
at least the evil inherent in politics. But the
example of the anti-slavery agitation was misleading.
True, it was highly charged with moral indignation,
but it was indignation largely uncomplicated by class
allegiances and class suspicions. The issue then
was much clearer and the whole problem was safely
quarantined. The anti-slavery campaign was like some
exciting relief expedition; the C.S.U. was operating
in a situation more like that of a civil war. The
great consensus which Sturge envisaged was sabotaged
by the fifth columnists; the skeptical, politicking
Leaguers, the demagogues of O'Connor's stamp. Where
another man might have tried to hack his way through
the thicket of conflicting loyalties Sturge drew back
and relied upon those whose credentials were most
reliable; the old anti-slavery and temperance connexions,
personal friends within the League. Frightened by
the passions of political life, restrained by the
remonstrances of his respectable friends Sturge eventually
presided over a small moral lobby rather than a mass
political movement.
Joseph Sturge, in any case, was unfitted for politics, although even under superior leadership the C.S.U. was a dubious proposition. Government now had to be carried on in the new circumstance of the political emancipation of the middle class, and the adjustment of government to accommodate this new phenomenon was necessarily gradual. But the middle class at least had their foot in the door; the workers remained shut out. Success in reform came with middle class support in these years, and this was largely pre-empted by the Anti-Corn Law League which emerged from the trials of 1842 as the 'Great Fact'. The League was both efficient and tough. It was said of John Bright that if he had not been a Quaker he would have been a prizefighter but in fact he and the League contrived to play both roles simultaneously, for behind the moral glitter lay a well organised branch system and the muscle and bone of realpolitik.

The League's success is a well known story and thrown into relief by the C.S.U.'s failure. What also emerges from this enquiry is the frequently unacknowledged fact of the growing political capacities of the working class. After the failure of the second National Petition in May 1842 the Chartist momentum
disintegrates. The workers turned rather to socio-economic action, from the Plug Plots to the campaign for factory reform, the later institution of the National Land Plan and the Co-operative movement. But whatever the fragmentation of effort and the debilitating effects of personality clashes the working class organised a country wide representation which could commandeer a national conference, as in Birmingham in December 1842. Even in this destructive role they were serving a valuable political apprenticeship. It remains unfortunate that they exercised their new talents at the expense of Joseph Sturge and the Complete Suffrage Union.

2 In 1913, Austen Chamberlain could still report the continuance of class harmony and the prevalence of the small manufacturing unit in the city, G. H. Wright, Chronicles of the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce, 1913, pp. 656-657.

3 N. S., 11 August 1838.

4 Ibid., 18 August 1838.

5 Ibid., 17 November 1838. There are many other examples.

6 Spectator, 11 May 1839. Attwood declared that under universal suffrage the English would be swamped by the Irish, "the most miserable people in the world." The Irish were generally prominent among the physical force Chartist, R. O'Higgins, "Irish Influence in the Chartist Movement," Past and Present, no. 20 (November 1961), pp. 83-96. There is some evidence to suggest that the militant working class element in Birmingham were largely Irish, but as a whole the Irish were never as substantial a minority in the city as they were in the Northern towns.

7 N. S., 6 April 1839.

8 See above, chapter 1, p. 25.

9 N. S., 27 April 1839.

10 "In a sense, it was only after the Reform Act had passed that the real crisis began: the post-Reform crisis of adjustment between what had been done and what men thought should be the consequences of what had been done." N. Gash, Reaction and Reconstruction in English Politics, 1832-1852, 1965, p. 2.

12 See above, chapter 2, p. 73.
Abbreviations

B. M. British Museum.
B. R. L. Birmingham Reference Library.
M. R. L. Manchester Reference Library.

Personal Manuscripts

Cobden Papers. Additional MSS 47,663 F. (B. M.)
J. B. Smith Corn Law Papers. (M. R. L.)
Sturge Papers. Additional MSS 43,722; 43,723; 43,845. (B. M.)
Wilson Papers. (M. R. L.)

Miscellaneous Manuscripts

Minute Book of the Council Meetings of the National Complete Suffrage Union. (B. R. L.)
Minute Book of the Committee for General Purposes of the National Complete Suffrage Union. (B. R. L.)
Minute Book of the Birmingham Anti-Slavery Society. (B. R. L.)
Names of Parties Who Have Been Connected with the Birmingham Political Union. MS by Joseph Parkes, 1836. (B. R. L.)

Government Publications

Hansard's Parliamentary Debates.
Contemporary Pamphlets and Special Collections

Mr. Dundas' Report and the Evidence Taken on the Investigation Respecting the Riots. Birmingham, 1840. (B. R. L.)


Lovett Collection. (B. R. L.)


O'Brien, B. Mr. O'Brien's Vindication of his Conduct at the Late Birmingham Conference. Birmingham, 1842. (B. R. L.)

Osborne Collection. (B. R. L.)


Protest Against the Political Union. Birmingham, 1837. (B. R. L.)


Report of the Committee Appointed by the Town Council into the Late Riots. Birmingham, 1840. (B. R. L.)


Special General Meeting of the Guardians of the Poor. Birmingham, 1845. (B. R. L.)


Sturje, J. A Reconciliation Between the Middle and the Labouring Classes. Manchester, 1842. (B. M.)
Tracts of the National Complete Suffrage Union. 


Contemporary Press

Annual Register; Birmingham Journal; Blackwoods; 
Edinburgh Review; Examiner; Fraser's Magazine; 
Gentleman's Magazine; Illustrated London News; 
Nonconformist; Northern Star; Quarterly Review; 
Spectator; Tait's Edinburgh Review; The Times; 
Westminster Review.

Articles in Learned Journals


**General Works**


Cooper, T. Life of Thomas Cooper. London, Hodder & Staughton, 1872.


Peel, F. *Risings of the Chartists and Plugdrawers*. Heckmondwhite, Stonks, 1888.


Wakefield, C. M. *Life of Thomas Attwood*. Birmingham, Cornish, 1885.


Wright, G. H. *Chronicles of the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce*. Birmingham, Cornish, 1913.


APPENDIX I

MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS AT THE CONFERENCE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE MIDDLE AND WORKING CLASSES OF GREAT BRITAIN (p. 4)

The following is the correct List of the Members and attendants at the Conference, at the close of its Sittings

**Visitors from Ireland**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Members</th>
<th>Members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>W. Sharman Crawford, M.P.</td>
<td>Thomas Steele</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles Crawford</td>
<td>James H. Webb</td>
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**Members of the Birmingham Provisional Committee**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Members</th>
<th>Members</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Joseph Sturge</td>
<td>John Hollingsworth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles Sturge</td>
<td>Rev. James Alsop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arthur Albright</td>
<td>Edward Bryan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Charles Perry</td>
<td>George Goldrick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christopher Dickenson</td>
<td>William Morgan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Francis Dickenson</td>
<td>D. T. Rowlinson</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Members of the Conference**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Members</th>
<th>Members</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adam, James, Aberdeen</td>
<td>Cobley, Joseph, Birmingham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aitken, Thomas, Sumfennlins</td>
<td>Collins, John, Newtown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beesley, Benjamin, Birmingham</td>
<td>Cook, Abel D., Bisley, near Stroud</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beggs, Thomas, Nottingham</td>
<td>Cooper, Francis, Southampton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Borrows, William, Bradford</td>
<td>Corbett, Joseph, Birmingham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bright, John, Rochdale</td>
<td>Cumming, Charles, Leeds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brook, Joseph, Bradford</td>
<td>Curr, William, Kirriemuir and Forfar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charleton, William, Kidderminster</td>
<td>Dewhurst, James, Bradford</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childs, John, Bungay</td>
<td>Dunlop, John, Edinburgh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarke, Charles, Bath</td>
<td>Earp, George, Derby</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarke, James, Street, near Glastonbury</td>
<td>Ellis, John, Mansfield</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarke, T. R., Market Harborborough</td>
<td>Fox, Samuel, Nottingham</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Gardner, Richard, Manchester
Glover, Thomas, Edinburgh, St. Andrews
Gretton, James, Birmingham
Grubb, Isaac, Oxford
Grundy, Samuel, Market Harborough
Halkett, William, Dundee
Hardy, Robert, Worcester
Hasler, John, Islington
Hewetson, Henry, Kendall
Heyworth, Lawrence, Liverpool
Hodgson, Henry, Bradford
Hollis, William, Cheltenham
Hughes, Henry, Stourbridge
Hunt, John, Birmingham
Jenkinson, Rev. W., Kettering
Jones, Rev. Noah, Derby
Kirkland, Rev. Charles, Newark
Lawdwn, Alfred, Birmingham
Lees, Thomas, Roydon
Linney, Joseph, Eccles
Lovett, William, London
Martin, Robert, Leeds
McCartney, Bernard, Liverpool
Miall, Rev. Edward, Stoke Newington
Mills, James, Oldham
Mitchell, John, Aberdeen
Morgan, Rev. T. Harwood, Stourbridge
Murseill, Rev. J. P., Leicester
Neal, Nathaniel, Derby
Neesom, Charles H., Spitalfields
O'Brien, James B., Wotton-under-Edge
Palliser, George, Finsbury
Parker, William, Leicester
Parry, John Humffreys, London
Potter, Thomas B., Manchester
Prentice, Archibald, Manchester
Pumphrey, Josiah, Birmingham
Redfern, F., Manchester
Richardson, R. J., Salford
Ritchie, Rev. John, D.D., Edinburgh
Rowland, O. J., Dundee
Rumney, Robert, Manchester
Sidey, Elias, Finsbury
Solly, Rev. Henry, Yeovil and Bridport
Snowdon, Winisppear, Doncaster
Spencer, Rev. Thomas, Bath
Stevens, William, Banbury
Stonehouse, John, Cranbrook, Kent
Stott, J. H., Edinburgh
Swan, Rev. Thomas, Birmingham
Taunton, William, Coventry
Thomas, Rev. William, Fairford
Thompson, F. J., Bridgewater
Tullis, William, Markinch
Vincent, Henry, Bath
Vines, Jabez, Reading
Warren, Frederick, Manchester
Westerton, Charles, London
Whittem, J. S., Coventry
Witherspoon, J., Kirkaldy
Wright, Thomas, Doncaster