

SCOTTISH CHARTISM AND ITS
ECONOMIC BACKGROUND.

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INTRODUCTION

"'But what good came of it all?', quoth little Peterkin" might quite aptly be applied to the average man's view of Chartism. To which the erudite historian could retort (a little out of context) "Après moi le déluge", referring in a topsy-turvy way to the communal umbrella of the modern Welfare State. In any case, be on guard against loose talk about the 'failure' of Chartism. Early Christianity was a similar failure. But this point can be discussed later. What of Scottish Chartism? To be candid it does not exist - in the usual accounts of the movement. Events in Scotland are dismissed as mere incidents in a struggle whose centre was England. Now this is hardly fair; indeed, in many ways, Scottish Chartism was a movement apart. In origins, ideals and policy it bore the label "Made in Scotland". Obviously it had much in common with the English version, particularly in the opening phase, but there were many differences and this lack of internal unity helped destroy it.

Chartism is full of paradoxes, not the least being that its roots lie deep in economic conditions but its outward form is/

is purely political. Long hours, low wages and insecurity stimulated its growth; complete political impotence brought the movement into being. In essence it was confined to what were called the working classes, although its leaders came from many walks of life. From time to time, in the last two hundred years, popular discontent had flared up in violent action. Sometimes it expressed out and out Republicanism - in Scotland the 1793 'Political Martyrs' can be cited. More often it was a simple demand for political representation as in the disturbances of 1819. However after this last outbreak nearly all agitation became concentrated on securing Parliamentary Reform. The working class joined the middle class in a somewhat uneasy alliance to work for the abolition of 'rotten boroughs' and an extended franchise. The idea was that the working class would help the middle class to gain electoral power. In return they expected a measure of parliamentary representation. Demonstrations took place all over the country, particularly when the Reform Bill of 1832 hung in the balance. In Glasgow, Lanark, Jedburgh and Edinburgh (where the Lord Provost was stoned), large crowds gathered to shout "Reform Bill!" (Did the king shudder?). The revolutionary element of earlier agitations seems to have been absent. Thus in/

in Ayr there were no midnight meetings and midnight drills as there were in 1819'. Illuminations and monster processions were the order of the day. Wisely enough the authorities even provided two old boats for the inevitable bonfires!¹ Everywhere the Reform Bill was hailed as a panacea for all ills. Enlightened middle class opinion could well declare that if the Bill had been defeated 'an explosion must have taken place'.²

This knowledge did not bring wisdom. Working class hopes of further reform and improved conditions were soon dashed. The first elections held with the revised franchise showed that the new electors were only a little more liberal in outlook than the 'old régime'. Intimidation and corruption were commonplaces: candidates favouring further reform were everywhere unsuccessful. In Ayr, Dr Taylor - a future Chartist leader - although greatly respected locally was defeated by the Whig candidate. Yet on 'show of hands' at the hustings he had a clear majority. Significantly enough, certain newly-enfranchised electors, who owed their social positions to help received from the Taylor family, voted against him.³ To the Radicals (as they were now coming to be called/

¹ 'An Historical Account of the Town of Ayr', James Howie 1861. 100 et seq..

² Henry Cockburn, 'Journal'. 17th October 1832.

³ Howie. Op.cit. 100 et seq..

called) reformed rogues seemed to make the best policemen. Events after 1832 only confirmed this impression; the Government would consider no more reform. Had not 'Finality Jack' (Lord John Russell), when introducing the Bill of 1832, declared that it settled the question once and for all?

Two courses were open to the working classes after 1832. They could strive more ardently in the political sphere for redress of their grievances or they could take direct industrial action. England adopted this second course. The Unions pitted their strength against the employers and failed. In this context the Operative Builders Union and, more particularly, the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union come to mind. With the latter, the work of Robert Owen, there was also political action of a sort, in that it proposed forming a Workers Co-operative to supersede Parliament. Reprisals by employers, firm action by the Government, notably the 'Tolpuddle Martyrs' case, soon brought an end to this industrial phase. Conditions became worse and hunger was prevalent in many manufacturing districts. The Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 made matters worse and gave the last prod necessary to start off a new political movement.

Most of the Political Unions which had flourished up to the Reform Bill were moribund or defunct. However from three different/

different layers of society new associations sprang to life after 1834. There were the artisans of the London Working Men's Association and its branches seeking, under William Lovett, a brave new world through education. Life then being strictly a case of 'each to his ain', members of the middle class, enjoying the vicarious thrill that comes with the label 'Advanced Thinker', revived in 1837 the Birmingham Political Union. Naturally enough their leader Thomas Attwood, banker and Radical M.P., possessed the required virtues of crank and sound business man. Currency and electoral reform were their aims. Finally, made vocal by hunger and the new Poor Law, come the inmates of the 'dark satanic mills'. They found an appropriate Mephistopheles in Feargus O'Connor.

To draw these strands together a common policy was needed. It was soon forthcoming. In 1838 Lovett drafted what was called the 'People's Charter' and this was sponsored by the L.W.M.A.. Almost simultaneously a similar document called the National Petition was issued by the Birmingham Political Union. That the demands and aims of both groups were alike was not co-incidence. They had independently made a concise re-statement of earlier Radical ideas - ideas which always had been the stock-in-trade of the reformer. Only the presentation/

presentation was new - the familiar 'Six Points'. Here they are.

(1) Manhood suffrage. (2) Vote by Ballot. (3) Annual Parliaments. (4) Abolition of the property qualification of M.Ps. (5) Payment of members. (6) Equal electoral districts. [This last was not put forward by the Birmingham Political Union].⁴

The heady old wine of Radicalism proved very much to the public taste when served up in new bottles. Clubs and associations throughout the country were formed to advocate the 'Six Points'. Soon it became a national movement and by 1839 was strong enough to hold a Convention in London - a sort of 'Parliament of the Industrious Classes' as suggested by Owen in 1834. There was to be no guillotine and Tricolour about this meeting. Great care was taken to see that it was a legal assembly and that by coming together the members did not contravene any existing legislation. What was behind all this? Well, at least it would provide a rallying point for various shades of radical opinion and enable a programme of political action to be drawn up. Of course the more violent elements hoped that somehow or other this Convention might yet become the de facto Government of the country.

This/

⁴ G.D.M. Cole, 'Short History of the British Working Class Movement', 137-142.

This Convention marks the real start of Chartism. It went through many vicissitudes often becoming very violent in character, and suffered a major defeat in 1848.⁵ But it was a complex movement full of inherent contradictions. As the movement in Scotland is examined, something of its real nature, its virtues and failings, should emerge. Chartism as such petered out in a welter of froth and frustration; yet four of those 'Six Points' are at the very foundations of modern society. This is not eo-incidence. Chartism set in motion forces the full effects of which have still to be felt.

THE SCOTTISH BACKGROUND TO CHARTISM.

Out of economic distress came Chartism. In times of depression the urge to agitate for reform was strong, becoming weaker when comparative prosperity was in sight. 'Idleness begets Radicalism' was a very true political axiom. Now in England the Chartist movement was most dangerous - or nearest success - in 1839, 1842 and 1848, these three peaks all coinciding with acute unemployment. Scotland suffered in the same way, those three years bringing acute distress. However, this last statement must be qualified - unemployment in Scotland was never so intense and widespread as in England As it happened/

⁵ For general accounts of the Chartist movement refer to bibliography particularly. Cole, op. cit.. Hovell 'The Chartist Movement'. J. West 'The Chartist Movement'.

happened Scotland between 1830 and 1850 was undergoing the second phase of her Industrial Revolution, a phase which in England had been almost completed, the expansion and creation of metallurgical industries. Down to 1830 Scotland's main industries had been textiles, Linen and Cotton, both organised on a factory basis but not yet fully converted to using power. Cotton manufacturers began to instal power looms and spindles in their mills, an example followed rather more slowly by the linen industry.¹ Simultaneously there was a spate of railway construction going on - mainly to open up new coal and mineral deposits - whilst ship-owners began to think in terms of steam-propulsion for their vessels. All this added up to a vast demand for new machinery and clearly this would tax the productive resources of the iron and coal industries.²

The Scottish iron industry had not been particularly efficient or productive during the first three decades of the nineteenth century. Fortunately as these new demands just noticed were becoming apparent, two discoveries changed the course of the industry. In 1801 David Mushet demonstrated the valuable properties of native blackband ironstone. It was a rich ore, containing coal as well as iron. In certain cases it was possible to smelt it alone, without any additional coal, using/

¹ 'The Industrial Revolution in Scotland', Hamilton 118 et seq. 226-253.

² Edinburgh Courant. Jan.19, Mar.21 1834.



using the hot blast. This hot blast, the revolutionary discovery of James Wilson in 1828, together with large blackband ironstone deposits in Old Monkland, allowed the Scottish Iron industry to grow rapidly. From 1835 - 1870 it operated under boom conditions, and thanks to technical advances and natural resources was able, over much of this period, to produce iron at a price 10 shillings a ton below its rivals.³ With this ever-expanding ability to produce iron, it was possible to construct new cotton mills in Glasgow, woollen and hosiery factories in Hawick and to supply the necessary machinery for them. In 1839, too, the invention of the steam-hammer by Nasmyth, helped Scottish manufacturers to reap full advantages from the progress made in using malleable as distinct from cast iron. That the latter field was not ignored is clear from the experiments made in 1839 with prefabricated buildings. A cast iron school was made (for the children of Lady Byron) and manufacturers offered a sea-coast cottage of iron (6 rooms, kitchen and laundry) for £250!⁴ Add to all this the expansion of trade with India, bringing as it did increased demands both for additional port facilities and ships for trading, and it would appear that this was an era of great economic progress for/

³ Hamilton, op.cit. 179-192.

⁴ Edinburgh Courant Mar.25, 1839.

for Scotland.⁵ All this activity created an ever-increasing demand for labour. At the same time the cost of living, after the Repeal of the Corn Laws, took a downward course. These two trends, then, would seem to imply a reasonably contented working class, with an improving lot. In general that was the picture but there were some exceptions - a certain number of 'black spots' existed. First and foremost was the destitution in the Highlands and the steady drift of the crofters to the cities. From a manufacturing point of view this drift formed a welcome addition to the labour supply.⁶ Those who remained on their crofts in the Highlands were too engrossed with the struggle to maintain life under primitive conditions, too remote by tradition, to participate to any extent in urban-sponsored movements such as Chartism.⁷ Any urge in this direction was fully satisfied by the various church controversies of the period.

Next in importance were the hand-loom weavers, still settled mainly around Paisley. They were an anachronism, hand labour competing with machinery; by means of low wages they did this successfully for many years. But consideration of the hand-loom weavers must be deferred. Their special problem is linked/

⁵ See statistical Appendix A.

⁶ Marwick: Economic Developments in Victorian Scotland 131-132.

⁷ N.Macleod, 'Reminiscences of a Highland Parish' 405-8.

linked with that of the coal-miners who almost alone, in a world of gradually rising wages, saw their own meagre earnings decline steadily after 1840.⁸ These three groups apart - the crofters, hand-loom weavers, and coal-miners - Scotland was prosperous, with good opportunities for employment and with rising wages. Now this is not the orthodox background to movements for political reform and in this respect Scotland differed from England where economic distress was more widespread during the Chartist agitation. It is clear that conditions in Scotland being satisfactory, the forces of hunger and unemployment there would be damped down and the very nature of the movement for Scottish Chartism confirms this. Violent measures, born of acute misery, found less acceptance in Scotland than they did in England.

Now in this examination of economic conditions, two factors peculiar to Scotland must be considered both of which had a strong influence on the movement there. The first is the Scottish Poor Law. Amongst the events which, in England, finally convinced the working class of its complete political ineptitude was the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834. Prior to that date the Speenhamland system of poor relief had been in force whereby money grants were made to supplement wages.⁹

Agricultural/

⁸ See Appendix B for wages, trends, prices, rents.

⁹ G.D.M. Cole, op.cit., 109.

Agricultural wages in particular were made up to subsistence level, (a very low level), by poor relief grants, varying with the size of the family concerned. By 1834 these subsidies to low wages, despite every effort to reduce them had grown enormously. In England and Wales Poor Law expenditure averaged over 9 shillings per head of the population and in some counties rose to 15 shillings. The Act of that year swept away the relief in aid of wages. Outdoor relief was refused to all able-bodied poor. The principle of 'deterrence' and 'less eligibility' was ruthlessly applied : in future, relief would entail the workhouse - or nothing. It is not surprising that 'The Three Bashaws of Somerset House' (as the Commissioners under the Act were called) were hated and that the misery they helped create, even in the manufacturing areas, undoubtedly fanned the glowing embers of Chartism in England.¹⁰

Bad as this system was, it did offer some relief from actual starvation. The official Scottish Poor Relief system could not even do that. It was based on an Act of 1579 which had two avowed objects. The first was "the stanching of maisterful and idle beggars, away putting of sornares". A full description is given of all who form this class; "idle persons ... using subtil, crafty and unlauchful playes, as jugalarie, fast/

¹⁰ Cole, op.cit., 133-136.

fast-and-lous, and sik others". Of particular interest amongst them were those dangerous fellows, "all vagabound schollers of the Universities of Saint Andrewes, Glasgow and Abirdene not licensed be the Rector and Deane of Facultie of the Univer-sitie, to ask almes". The second part of the Act was concerned with providing proper lodging and relief for "pure, aged and impotent persones".¹¹ Provision was made for a regular assessment of parishes for this purpose, "to taxe and stent the hail inhabitants within the Parochin ... without exception of persones". The administration of this Act was soon transferred from the magistrated and justices to the kirk-sessions, but its main provisions - slightly modified - governed Scotch Poor Relief till 1845. The kirk-sessions preferred not to use the compulsory powers granted and relied on voluntary church-door collections.¹² Even in 1840 parishes could be classified as

(a) legally assessed - mainly large towns, 236 parishes with over 1,000,000 inhabitants.

(b) the voluntarily assessed; 126 parishes, 306,000 people.

(c) the non-assessed; 517 parishes, 873,000 people.¹³

Contributions in these last two were very small indeed.

The/

¹¹ Act 1579, c 74 (James VI).

¹² Lamond: 'Scottish Poor Laws' p.45.

¹³ Scotsman, May 22, 1839.

The poor themselves in Scotland were split up into "ordinary" or disabled poor, of whom a roll was kept, and the "occasional" or sick, but normally able-bodied poor. Only the former were entitled to relief and three years parochial residence without claim was the usual technical qualification. Sometimes people - frequently Irish - lived in one parish for fifteen years and were refused relief when needed. Several legal actions arose over this, but the practice was quite common as was that of shipping unemployed back to Ireland, at parish expense, to save paying relief. What was this relief so grudgingly bestowed? It was a grant in aid only. A pauper family in the Borders, which were the most liberal, could expect £4-1-3 per annum. Elsewhere the average was ninepence a week.¹⁴ In Glasgow the poor received just insufficient to pay the rent in many cases.¹⁵ Here is a typical example:

"Gordon's Close, 131, was examined. Mrs. Armstrong rents a house 9ⁱ x 12ⁱ for which she pays £2. She is a widow, aged 68: receives 3/- a month, or 36/- a year from the session, or 4/- less than the rent; is unable to do anything for herself; gets occasional help from a widowed daughter".¹⁶

Dundee was much the same, the poor receiving only the rent and seeking food and clothing from private charity.¹⁷ Peterhead

gave/

¹⁴ Nicholls G. History of the Scotch Poor Laws, p.45.

¹⁵ Smith, op.cit. 21-25.

¹⁶ Smith, op.cit., 21.

¹⁷ Alison: Further Illustrations of the Management of the Poor, 7-16.

gave relief at the rate of a halfpenny a day which by manual labour, help from friends, and a licence to beg on Fridays was raised by the poor to twopence a day. In the parish of Kilmuir, in Skye, with a population of 2375 only £3 per annum was shared out amongst 68 paupers. Usually a distribution was made only once in two years!¹⁸ As for institutional relief in 1839 there were but four workhouses in the whole of Scotland - three in Edinburgh and one in Paisley.¹⁹

at the usual count

The whole system, unlike that in England, emphasised that every individual was bound to provide for himself, as long as he could do so. Relations and neighbours were thus 'encouraged to assist them'. One report has it "... the parish funds are not designed to supply total maintenance, but simply to aid individual exertion and voluntary Christian benevolence".²⁰ However, these two did not seem able to give very much.

No major alterations were made by the Scottish Poor Law Amendment Act of 1845. Instead of the local kirk-session, there was a managing body representing the ratepayers, kirk-session, and heritors of property worth more than £20. A National Board of Supervision now tried to correlate standards of relief. Whether or not a parish was to be assessed, could be/

¹⁸ Scotus: op.cit. 62-65.

¹⁹ Nicholls G. op.cit. 112-115.

²⁰ Scotus: op.cit. 62-65.

be decided by a majority vote of the local boards. The unfortunate paupers gained in one respect, being granted the right to appeal to the Sheriff against a local Board's refusal to grant relief. On the other hand the residential qualification was increased to five years. Sheriffs were now given powers to remove persons becoming chargeable to the parish, to the unions where they were born, if they did not have "a settlement by residence"²¹

How did all this affect Scottish Chartism? One thing is clear, there was no upsurge of bitterness over relief questions such as arose in England after the 1834 Act, with its 'institutional policy'. The paucity of official relief in Scotland was taken for granted and counteracted by mutual help and much philanthropic endeavour. After 1845 the Scots pauper had a much improved lot for ten years, with increased funds available for his relief.²² Towards the end of that decade, a policy began to be implemented in Scotland of imposing a 'poor-house test', and many such institutions were built. Reaction to these was very similar to that of English paupers to the work-house policy of 1834. Within the period covered here, 1830-1850, it does not appear as if unrest over poor relief was a major factor in Scottish Chartism, although in England it helped/

²¹ Poor Law Amendment Act [Scotland] (8 and 9 Vict. <83).
²² Appendix C.

helped to foment the movement. At worst it was a constant irritant, perhaps rather more to those unemployed who never achieved a settlement. But there was a tradition of self-help and it looks as though this cause of Chartism in England was not a cause in Scotland.

From this it can be seen that Poor Relief was one of the factors peculiar to Scotland mentioned before. One result of this was that wages were not kept low by concealed subsidies (grants in aid). Traditionally wages had reflected the supply and demand for labour related to bargaining power. The Scots artisan did quite well in this respect but with one important reservation - and this brings in the second factor peculiar to Scotland, one often tending to make the economic struggle go against the Scot in certain trades - the Irish immigrant.

Scottish agriculture benefited greatly, though indirectly, from the Act of Union, 1707. With new links established between the two countries, Scottish farmers proved apt pupils and successfully imitated English methods of farming. By enclosing lands, amalgamating farms, adopting crop rotation on the English pattern; by improved ploughing (the old inefficient Scots plough was eliminated); by these and many other devices an agricultural revolution was effected. This was almost completed/

completed by 1815. However, much of this development depended for its financial success on the Industrial Revolution, which at a most opportune moment provided compact markets in the new towns for farm products. At the same time a spate of road-building made these markets easy of access. To meet these growing demands, grain output in the South of Scotland increased enormously. But the Scottish climate is extremely variable and there is a constant need to harvest ripe crops quickly. Before the advent of the mechanical reaper, this could only be achieved by having available a large and mobile labour force.²³ Fortunately - for Scotland - conditions in Ireland were atrocious, mainly the results of bad government. Equally fortunate was the existence of cheap and easy transport facilities between the two countries. Irish reapers began to come over every autumn, returning home after eight to ten weeks having earned about £3 for the season. Later the steam-ship provided a cheaper, and more frequent, shuttle-service all the year round.²⁴ Successive crop failures drove more and more Irish to emigrate, and increasingly many who might have been seasonal immigrants became permanent settlers. Industrial expansion meant a greater demand for labour, and this was largely satisfied by these immigrants. Canals such as the Crinan, Union and Caledonian, were largely the work of Irish/

²³ Handley, J.E. op.cit. pp.20-21.

²⁴ Handley, op.cit.,. 22-24.

Irish 'navigators'. Spinning, weaving, mining, building and later railway construction all attracted Irish labour, who settled in large numbers (particularly in Western Scotland).

Here was a vast body of unskilled, physically strong, labour 'competing' with the native worker. This might have caused a disastrous fall in wages. But the competition was more apparent than real for two reasons. The first was that the Irish did not compete unfairly, as a rule, and force wages down. Secondly, the Scots tended to leave the unskilled, labouring occupations to the immigrants. On this last point there is plenty of evidence. The quotation is from a Blantyre factory manager;

"The Irish ... are found to predominate in all spinning and weaving mills. This is owing to the aversion the Scotch had of allowing their children to go into a cotton-mill when the trade was started in the West of Scotland. ... they looked upon it as a sort of degradation".²⁵ Later, however, Scots did enter the mills but usually as foremen and tenters. The Irish were the general labourers of Scotland, satisfied with the better opportunities offered, compared with Ireland. They fetched and carried for Scots masons and bricklayers; laid gas and water-pipes; made roads, swept streets - in short, wherever the demand was for bodily strength, the Irish predominated/

²⁵ Ibid., p.107.

predominated. Skilled jobs were usually left to the Scot.²⁶
In most cases no conflict of interests arose between them.

However occasional cases of friction did arise, usually in the coal-mining industry. Despite the distressed condition of the immigrants, they did not as a rule try to under-cut wages. When they succeeded in learning some craft which was organised, they were enthusiastic Trade Unionists, very active among the rank and file but rarely appearing as leaders. The most successful union in Scotland over the period was the Spinners Union, badly discredited in 1837. None of its leaders were Irish²⁷ but a contemporary observer noted that "It is believed ... that the union could never have acquired that degree of consistence that it now possesses had it not been for the daring character of the Irish who scrupled at little in accomplishing their ends²⁸...". George Allen, a Glasgow weaver, before a Select Committee in 1833 stated that "one-third of our weavers are Irishmen, and possibly more, but not competing prices (sic)²⁹". In the more skilled trades they gave no competition at all. Here is the Rev. Andrew Scott, R.C. Bishop of Glasgow, on this topic; "there are scarcely any of the Irish immigrants who learn any trade in this country and scarcely any among/

²⁶ Select Committee on the State of Ireland 1825, Evidence of J. R. McCulloch, pp.823-5.

²⁷ Shaw: Justiciary Cases 1837, p.550.

²⁸ Handley, p.107.

²⁹ Ibid., p.105.

among them belong to the trades unions".³⁰ But wherever only a little skill was required to acquire the trade, employers were not slow to use the Irish as strike-breakers. The coal industry was the worst example of this.³¹ If colliers went on strike, Irish surface labourers and redesmen were rushed in to take their places, protected if necessary by troops. The factor to the Duke of Hamilton gave evidence to a Commission in 1844, "When the masters find that their men are attempting to impose unreasonable terms upon them, they are compelled to introduce new men at their pits. These are generally Irish labourers, who in a few weeks learn to hew coals and in time become tolerably expert colliers".³² Numerous cases of this type occurred and by 1848 two-thirds of the miners and a quarter of the colliers³³ were Irish.

All this had important repercussions on the Chartist movement. In the coal-mining areas there was clearly much unrest at the downward trend of miners' wages at a time when general wages were rising³⁴ (not to mention the Truck system and other evils). Yet the mining areas never gave Chartism the full-blooded co-operation that might have been expected. It would not be incorrect to attribute this to the 'infiltration' of Irish/

³⁰ Handley, p.149.

³¹ Shaw, op.cit., p.532 (1837), p.486 (1842).

³² Handley, p.111.

³³ Report on the Mining Districts of Scotland 1848.

³⁴ Appendix H.

Irish immigrants into the industry, workers who felt no keen interest in the domestic politics of Scotland. This reflection brings up one more aspect of the immigrant in Scotland. They formed the bulk of the hand-loom weavers (perhaps as much as 80% of them), that dwindling body of men still competing with the machines. Low wages alone made this competition possible. English hand-loom weavers, driven by appalling conditions, were active for electoral reform. Scotland had conditions equally (as) bad but there was no coherent movement amongst them for political action. Some, of course, were vociferous - a few even appeared as minor Chartist leaders; but, having regard to their downtrodden position, a surprising amount of apathy prevailed. Here, as with the miners, the movement for reform suffered a damping down through the relatively passive attitude of the Irish prior to 1848.

Two reasons, one practical and one psychological, can be put forward for this. Conditions in Ireland were so bad that even the poor comfort available in Scotland seemed highly desirable by comparison. In Ireland they knew actual starvation; a shilling fare attracted thousands to cross from Belfast to Glasgow, there to work at the looms or as labourers.³⁵ On a wage of 7 shillings a week as hand-loom weavers they survived, sometimes/

³⁵ Handley, Chapters III, IV.

sometimes even saving a little to help fulfil that ultimate hope, always present, of emigration to America. It would be ridiculous to say they were content but life, plus a little hope, was preferable to actual death by starvation. Perhaps it could all be summed up thus, that the Irish immigrant, from the economic point of view, pursued a policy of 'let well alone', even if that 'well' was but a poor thing.

The psychological aspect of the Irish attitude is equally important. Uneducated people suddenly transported to a strange environment do not readily adopt the ideals and aspirations of the native inhabitants. In fact the Irish have always managed to transplant much of this native heritage to the lands they adopted overseas. At least one or even two generations must go by before the immigrant (or rather his descendants) begins to identify himself with his new country. All this was singularly true of the Irish in Scotland. Politically from 1830 to 1848 they were a race apart. They rejoiced over the Reform Bill, forming part of a vast Glasgow procession held to welcome its passing. But the banners they displayed were those of Wolfe Tone, Emmet and Daniel O'Connell. Uneducated people usually have one hero, and O'Connell commanded the allegiance of these Irish because of his work for Catholic Emancipation and Irish Independence.³⁶ Chartism, too, had its great demagogue - Feargus O'Connor/

³⁶ -----
Handley, pp.296-300.

O'Connor - who was adulated in England but failed to move the Scots, or this potentially inflammable body of 'O'Connell-ophile' immigrants. This was not surprising since he was a bitter opponent of O'Connell. More to the point was that O'Connor had thrown over the cause of Irish Independence in favour of Parliamentary Reform and that he had identified himself not with Catholicism, or orthodox religion, but with Infidelity - a secular Church run by laymen. For the Irish it was a battle of allegiances with O'Connell clearly the victor. Only when O'Connell lost favour during the famine years for continuing to accept 'tribute' (funds for Irish political purposes) did his distressed followers take any marked interest in Chartism. Any urge they may have felt for active politics was satisfied by the militant Orangism of South West Scotland, opposed as it was by equally militant Ribbonmen. These factors together were responsible for the apathy they displayed. One other consideration must be stressed because it may have influenced the nature of Scots Chartism - the lack of education of these unfortunate people. What could a semi-educated immigrant make of the jargon of Chartism with its 'franchise', its 'equal electoral districts', and the socio-economic ideas of its leaders?³⁷

If/

³⁷ Anecdote in Edinburgh Courant, June 20, 1839.

If Chartism is regarded as being an explosive movement, bursting into violence, by analogy the peculiar part played by the Irish in Scotch Chartism can be shown. In England the powder, represented by unemployment and hand-loom weavers, was dry, ready for a spark to set it alight, a spark provided by discontent over Poor Relief and Economic depression. Scotland had some 'dry powder' - the Scottish miners, hand-loom weavers and occasional unemployed - but the main explosive (the Irish) was damp and refused to explode. The sparks supplied in 1839 and 1842, moderate economic distress, were not strong enough. Only in 1848 did the combined forces of European Revolution, Irish Independence, Chartism and distress set in train disturbances comparable to those in England. Scottish Chartism, for these and other reasons, steered a different course from England, one of enlightenment rather than disruption, one which years later led to the triumph of the principles it supported.

THE COURSE OF THE MOVEMENT.

Chartism was never a single, coherent, movement rising and falling in response to changing economic conditions. It displays all the faults of immature democracy - the internal dissensions/

dissensions, the factions breaking off and rejoining the main body, the conflicts of personalities - a hydra-headed movement with each head loudly proclaiming itself the one and only true Voice of Chartism. Yet in practice there were only two real divisions: those who advocated the use of Physical Force to gain their ends and those who resolved to stick to 'constitutional methods'. Perhaps at this point a generalisation (always dangerous) would be that England had more of the former, whilst in Scotland the latter greatly predominated. There is certainly much truth in the idea. Fortunately the general course of the Scottish movement seems to fall naturally into **three** fairly distinct phases:

First, the English phase up to mid-1839, when the movement took most of its leadership and inspiration from England.

Second, the Scottish phase 1839-1842. This had many features not found in England, and was largely self-centred.

Third, the Irish phase. After a period of stagnation, this saw the gradual entrance of the Irish into the movement in alliance with the Physical Force element. It culminated in the 1848 disorders.

I. THE ENGLISH PHASE.

Chapter I. Pre-Chartist Radicalism.

It would be a thankless, and probably fruitless, task to seek out the origins of Chartism. The ideas it put forward were by no means original, they were the stock-in-trade of all reformers. From time to time they turn up in Scottish history such as in the 'Edinburgh Gazetteer' of 1792. Here Johnston in some of the earliest-known genuine 'leading articles' advocated Radical reform, defended French revolutionary principles and (a grievance with Scots Chartists) attacked the 'profligate Pension List'.¹ Again in 1819 Gilbert Macleod and Alexander Rodger produced their weekly unstamped paper 'The Spirit of the Union'.² Its tone was abusive but it objected to the sale of parliamentary seats and seemed to favour annual parliaments and universal suffrage. Here, too, mention was made of radicals abstaining from buying exciseable goods, such as tea and alcohol, a policy partly implemented later by the Chartists. But there is no need to trace the gradual infiltration of Radical ideas into the Scottish press - that has already been fully investigated.³ All that need be noticed is the uneasy alliance between Whigs and Radicals to secure the/

¹ Cowan. 'The Newspaper in Scotland', pp.12-13.

² op.cit. 52-53.

³ op.cit.

the passing of the 1832 Reform Bill. Throughout it was implied that the middle-class, after gaining Parliamentary power with working-class help, should in return secure for the latter a measure of representation. These hopes were doomed to failure. Henry Cockburn could write in October 1832 'of the explosion which it is now evident must have taken place if the Reform Bill had been defeated'.⁴ Yet four years later he comments, 'Scotland had been teeming, in every village almost, with meetings which could only have arisen in a boiling population'.⁵

Several factors brought about this change. There were the old Political Unions which for a brief spell after 1832 were moribund. Though not active they were the motive force behind attempts to influence potential M.P.s in favour of reform. Thus in Glasgow the 'Chronicle', in July 1832, drew up a list of 35 "pledges" to which the ideal reformer should subscribe.⁶ They included Free Trade, abolition of slavery, reduced taxation, reduced expenditure on the Army and Navy, burgh reform, triennial Parliaments and the Ballot. In face of this it was not surprising that all six candidates in this 1832 election seemed, with some individual observations, in favour of reform! Despite this the Government appeared just as reactionary to the working class as had been its Tory predecessor/

⁴ Cockburn, Journal Oct. 12, 1832.
⁵ Cockburn, op.cit. Dec. 27, 1836.
⁶ Cowan, op.cit. 80-82.

predecessor. Vague feelings of betrayal and anger found expression in the growing 'radical' movement as it was now called, a movement mainly operating through the revived Political Unions. Significant of its strength was the issue of a new periodical, the Edinburgh 'Trades Examiner', which was to strive "for the working classes against all opposing parties".⁷ These unions were even reputed to have a travelling organiser in the person of A.J. Hamilton, an ex-soldier.⁸ As a result meetings were held all over Scotland. One observer describes them thus, "They are called soirées (pronounced 'soories' in Edinburgh and 'swurries' in Glasgow) being cheap evening public meetings attended by crowds ... who get tea and speeches for a shilling or sixpence or even for twopence.... they are the familiar conventicles of the Radicals.... receiving Fergus O'Connor, the Radical member for Cork".⁹ This is that same Fergus who was later destined to lead - and destroy - the Chartist movement in England.

From all over Scotland reports of this new radical spirit came in and with nearly every one was associated the name of a future Chartist leader. In Glasgow Abram Duncan addressed the Political

⁷ Scottish Notes and Queries, 3rd series vol.7 p.37. Other Radical papers, all short-lived, were 'Reporter' 1834, 'True Free Press' 1835, 'Radical' 1836.

⁸ Johnston; History of the Working Class, p.246.

⁹ Cockburn, op,cit. Dec. 27th 1836.

Political Unions and called on the Whig Government to resign. Dr. John Taylor, one of the most romantic figures in nineteenth century Scots history, made many fiery speeches. Undoubtedly he was behind the attempts made to fuse these isolated agitations into a single movement. In 1836 he was Chairman of the West of Scotland Radical Association.¹⁰ That same year a National Radical Association of Scotland was formed, its leaders being Dr Taylor, Fergus O'Connor, John Fraser of Johnstone and Alexander Campbell (curiously enough the first two proved to be ardent Physical Force men, whilst the latter pair were 'constitutionalists'). This new Association soon had many branches more or less loosely connected with it and tried to initiate a programme of boycotting Whig and Tory shops.¹¹ However this proved almost a complete failure (perhaps because of its curious mixed leadership) but the Association itself was a focal point for reform agitation and, under different names, supplied a rudimentary organisation which Chartism quickly exploited.

But even these early Radicals were not united. Standing apart from the Association was another faction which regarded Daniel O'Connell as their best hope for reform. O'Connell had been an out and out advocate of Irish independence; he was also/

¹⁰ Johnston, op.cit., 146-7.

¹¹ A.M. Mackenzie: Scotland in Modern Times, p.217.

also a shrewd political tactician. To secure support from the Whigs, in 1833 he tacitly 'played down' this dominant interest and concentrated his oratorical powers against the Irish Coercion Bill and the Irish Church Temporalities Act. The one involved, amongst other measures, suspension of Habeas Corpus, the other did virtually nothing to remove the abuses of the tithe system which were such a burden to the Irish. Whig reformers, and particularly Glasgow Liberal papers, condemned both measures, one as being too severe, the other as too lenient. Even the 'Scotsman' declared, "The Irish Church is at best useless, and in many respects monstrous".¹² O'Connell now received the support of the influential, but non-Radical, body of public opinion. Thus in 1835, having added a proposal to reform the House of Lords to his repertoire, he toured Scotland receiving a tumultuous reception everywhere. At a very large meeting on Glasgow Green¹³, he shared the platform with the Rev. Patrick Brewster of Paisley Abbey (a strong Chartist) and George Mills, son of the Provost, 'who had polled over 900 votes as a Radical in a recent election'. Prominent amongst the audience were the "Loyal Irish Reformers and United Labourers with a flag costing £10".¹⁴ If O'Connell meant to use the Whigs/

¹² Cowan, op.cit. 116-117, 181-182.

¹³ Mackenzie, op,cit. p.217.

¹⁴ Johnston, op,cit. p.247.

Whigs for his own projects, they reciprocated in kind. By leading a 'diluted Radical' movement he undoubtedly sapped the strength behind the harsher creed of O'Connor and Taylor. Anything which obstructed the growth of those strange political bedfellows of the Whigs, the true Radicals, would be only too welcome. Whatever the truth behind this O'Connell-Whig alliance may be, it is noticeable that the extremists studiously avoided the meetings he addressed.

So far no mention has been made of the part played by Trade Unions in all this activity. Organised labour in England did not participate officially in either Radicalism or Chartism; it was still licking the wounds inflicted in 1834.¹⁵ However several Scottish Unions were active and they appeared to have political connections. As early as 1830 the Trades in Glasgow had published an unstamped weekly known as the 'Herald to the Trades Advocate'. This was suppressed in 1831. The editor was John Tait, a very gifted Radical, and in the November of the following year founded the 'Liberator', which was to be the champion of the trade-union movement.¹⁶ It circulated mainly among artisans and few traces of the paper itself now remain. Its tone can be gathered from the following advice it gave on passive resistance in 1834. "The men may remain at leisure; there/

¹⁵ See introduction.

¹⁶ Cowan, pp.187-188.

there is, and can be, no law to compel them to work against their will". The writer then goes on to give a rather optimistic picture of the results of such a policy. "Bills are dishonoured, the Gazette teems with bankruptcies, capital is destroyed, the revenue fails, the system of Government falls into confusion and every link in the chain which binds society together is broken in a moment by the inert conspiracy of the poor against the rich".¹⁷

According to the Edinburgh Review, in 1834 calico printers employed by Messrs. Barr and Co., Kelvindock, Glasgow, actually followed this advice. Learning that the company had Bills outstanding, they started a strike. After a bitter struggle, in which troops were necessary to keep order, the strike ended with a compromise solution and work restarted in January 1835. The following July the company went bankrupt, a proceeding which was said (by the Review) to be a direct consequence of the Liberator's advice.¹⁸

From this it seems likely that the Liberator must have had semi-official Trade Union backing (if not something more, as in 1837). This supposition has a new significance when, on the death of John Tait in 1836, the future extreme Chartist Dr. John Taylor took over the paper, later changing its name to the 'New/

¹⁷ Liberator Feb. 1, 1834, quoted by Edinburgh Review Oct. 1837.
¹⁸ op.cit.

'New Liberator'.¹⁹ This Taylor has already been mentioned. He was a curious leader for a Radical movement; his parentage was most unsuitable. However, even that seems logical enough when his career is examined, for then it becomes clear that Taylor was a typical 'Continental Revolutionary' of the period. There were many such - but few in Britain - men of good family and education, filled with the love of Rousseau and Baboeuf, each one seeking to qualify for the title 'Scarlet Pimpernel of the Working Classes'. With Taylor it is difficult to sort out fact from fiction but the general picture of him is, to say the least, lively. Born into an Ayrshire landed family, by the time he was thirty he had qualified in medicine, become a naval surgeon, taken part in a revolutionary disturbance in Paris, spent his twenty first birthday in a French prison subsequently being deported, had something to do with the Greek War of Independence, fought two elections as a Radical, been sued for libel, declared bankrupt, challenged an M.P. to a duel (serving two months in prison as a result), required police protection from a Glasgow radical meeting, and started two Radical newspapers. All this and more besides is fairly well authenticated, including with it the delivery of numerous lectures and a connection with an Ayr chemical works.²⁰ There still remain the various legends both/

¹⁹ Cowan, op, cit. p.188.

²⁰ Appendix D.

both of his early days and of his Chartist activities, and over all a fair comment on this stormy petrel by his contemporaries might have been (somewhat ante-dating the Baroness Orczy)

"Is he in heaven, or is he in hell,

That demned, elusive, Pimpernel?"

Such was the man who took over the 'Liberator'. The paper already had Chartist, as well as Trade Union, sympathies. Six months after Tait's death, the following article on 'Whigs and Radicals' appeared. "The Whig stops at the £10 franchise; but the Radical pioneers to universal suffrage and freedom of the classes. The Whig stops at quinquennial parliaments, but the Radical goes on to triennial parliaments. The Whig does not go as far as the Ballot forsooth..."²¹ Now under Taylor's guidance its policy was based on the 'Six Points' which were to be secured by force if necessary. It seems likely that the 'New Liberator' was financed by the Cotton Spinners Union, the most powerful and violent union in Scotland. This came out in evidence in the 'Cotton Spinners Trial' which took place in 1837. Because of trade depression the wages of spinners in Glasgow were reduced and on April 8, 1837 a strike was declared. The spinners were extremely well organised and fought hard against attempts by the masters to introduce non-union labour (or 'nobs') into the mills. There were many violent incidents, culminating/

²¹ Liberator, Oct. 26th 1836.

culminating in the death of one operative and the whole of the Guard Committee (controlling the strike) was arrested. They were charged with 'illegal conspiracy to keep up wages by sending threatening letters, setting fire to mills, invading dwelling-houses and assaulting and murdering workmen - or with Murder'.²² Evidence showed that the Union had a £5 entry fee and dues at the rate of five shillings a fortnight. It also made a grant of £10 to persons in the trade emigrating (thus making the Union position stronger) and restricted the number of apprentices that could be employed. Less desirable features included a £5 bonus for any idle spinner who could 'unshop' an illegal man (or nob). Various sums were also paid during the strike to several union men for attacking strike-breakers.²³ Finally "the [pickets] duty was to try to take out the new hands who were working at reduced rates and to prevent others going in. The means were by advising, treating to drink, or assaulting." The accused were found guilty on four counts and sentenced to seven years transportation.²⁴ There seems to have been some doubt about their guilt since the majority for conviction was only one. Cockburn was led to remark, "A jury may fairly think that the guilt can't be clear which it takes the Judge fourteen hours to unfold".²⁵ On the other/

²² Swinton: Justiciary Cases 1835-1837, p.550.
²³ Swinton, op,cit., 530 et seq..
²⁴ Swinton, Vol.IV 1838-1842, p.4.
²⁵ Cockburn, /Jan.15th 1838.

other hand he attributed this reluctance "on the most unquestionable authority that some of the Jury were terrified ... that their lives would be in danger if they convicted".²⁶ Whatever the truth of the matter, one fact did emerge - that in 1836-1837 the Union had contributed £978 to the Liberator.²⁷ Add to this that English Chartist leaders appeared in Scotland to exploit the trial for their own political purposes and it is clear that middle-class opinion found The Cotton Spinners Union - The Liberator - Dr Taylor - Chartism to be synonymous with Violence. This was most unfortunate for the Scottish Chartists. The alliance between organised labour and early Chartism did more harm than good as will become apparent later. Meanwhile the Cotton Spinners were not the only Union to take up "political action". In December 1836 the Masons and the United Iron-moulders had declared themselves in favour of such a course.²⁸ It is likely also that the Scottish Steam Engine Machinemakers Society followed suit since their Secretary, Pattison, later became a Chartist leader. However all these bodies never gave the support vouchsafed by the Spinners and are only of interest by contrast with England where the Unions were still dominant after 1834.

The/

²⁶ Cockburn, 23rd Jan. 1838.
²⁷ Appendix E.
²⁸ Johnston, op.cit., p.247.

The founding of the London Working Men's Association in 1836 by Lovett brought Chartism one step nearer. It was like many other Radical Associations which were springing up everywhere, a direct result of the deep disappointment felt over the 1832 Bill. But this Association differed in that it offered both education and constructive ideas. On Feb. 18, 1837 it drafted the "London Working Men's Association Petition to the Hon. the Commons of Great Britain and Ireland". This contained a clear exposition of the familiar "Six Points" and, in the form of a Parliamentary Bill, on May 9, 1838 were embodied in the Charter²⁹ - and so the movement received its name. Not all those who supported the Charter were Radicals. There was, for example, the Young Tory group (represented in Parliament by Michael Sadler); they were not so much concerned with electoral reform as with the harshness of the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act and the blatant evils of the Factory system. Two of the most prominent members (soon disowned) of this section were Richard Oastler and the Rev. Joseph Rayner Stephens - a surprising origin for men whose language, at least, advocated violence! Yet a third accretion of strength came from the revived Birmingham Political Union whose leader was Attwood. There was very much of the middle-class about this Union and yet, quite independently of/

²⁹ Text of Petition in Pollgate 'Revolution 1789 to 1909', pp. 113-116.

of Lovett, it issued a "National Petition" which contained five at least of the "Six Points"!³⁰ At this early stage there was much co-operation between all these sections: they managed to agree to send out lecturers to expound the "Six Points", to help form new Associations, and to hold a Convention in London, of duly-elected representatives of Radical Associations all over the country. Subsequent events showed that each faction intended the Convention to be moulded 'in its own image'.

Scotland also was affected by these activities and emissaries of the English Radicals came north to help organise associations and to disseminate these 'new' ideas. But before ever this took place, there is evidence that the Scottish middle-class were in favour of modified reform. The 'Edinburgh Review' talked of "intimidation and corruption" in the 1837 election³¹ whilst Henry Cockburn went even further, "I believe that in Scotland there have been as yet very few Conservatives returned with the honest consent of a majority of the real voters. The belief that the Ballot would cure this is multiplying the friends of that cause every hour".³² Again it was significant that on Dec. 6th 1837 two separate meetings could be held in Edinburgh in favour of the Ballot - one by the Whigs, over which the Provost presided, and one by the Radicals.³³ Middle-

class/

³⁰ See Introduction.
³¹ Edinburgh Review Oct. 1837.
³² Cockburn, op.cit. 27th August 1837.
³³ Ibid. 8th December 1837.

class support at this time for modified reform was strong and still growing.

It was, then, unfortunate for any hope of widespread middle-class support for the new movement, that four of the most outspoken English Chartists should use the occasion of the Cotton Spinners Trial as a sounding-board for their extremist views. These were Richard Oastler, the Rev. J. R. Stephens, Beaumont and Fergus O'Connor, those 'itinerant corruptors of the manufacturing population'.³⁴ Stephens in particular was quite bloodthirsty, declaring that 'authority would not dare to meddle with the [accused spinners]' but that if they did every cotton mill in Glasgow "would be wrapped in one sheet of devouring flame".³⁵ Beaumont and O'Connor did not go quite so far, but at a large Edinburgh meeting on the evening of the first day of the trial were constrained to refer to "five villains in scarlet" (the judges) and contrast them with the "five respectable gentlemen in black" (the prisoners).³⁶ Meanwhile Taylor, in the Liberator and on the platform, defended his patrons in no measured terms.³⁷ Add to all this, veiled hints of actual intimidation of the jury,³⁸ the nature of the evidence itself, and it is obvious that this English-sponsored movement became associated, in the minds of the middle-class Scot, with violence.

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³⁵ Cockburn, op.cit., 15th June 1838.
³⁶ Scotch Reformers Gazette 12.1.1839.
³⁷ Cockburn, op.cit., 15th Jan. 1838.
³⁸ Edinburgh Monthly Democrat, Sept. 1st 1838.
Cockburn, op.cit., 23rd Jan. 1838.

Chapter II. The Growth of Chartism.

Fortunately for Scottish Chartists these extremist agitators were not the only ones to appear in Scotland. Representatives of the Birmingham Political Union came to Glasgow at the invitation of the Trades to put forward their version of the National Petition and suggested policy of action. Yet at a meeting held on May 29th 1838 primarily to listen to the Birmingham delegates, a deputation from the London Working Men's Association also spoke. There was no friction between these two bodies of moderate Radicals. It may be of interest here to give a fuller account of this meeting as it shows clearly the aims and methods of the movement and was typical of many held all over Scotland (not all, however, had such 'star' speakers). The Birmingham delegates were Attwood, Douglas, Edmunds, Muntz and Hollins, not one of whom could be classified as articans - Attwood, indeed, was a banker. They were met at the east end of Glasgow by a large procession which "walked six deep and at a rapid pace while the streets along the whole line were thronged by a tense crowd.... There were forty bands of music placed at respective distances along the line of march and more than 200 banners" (one with the Strathaven contingent was specially mentioned as being a Covenanting banner carried at the Battle/

Battle of Drumclog). A member of the City Council was voted to the chair and all the visiting delegates spoke. Attwood, the principal speaker, made five points quite clear.

(a) the distressed condition of the working classes.

(b) the Reform Bill had been an utter failure in securing the good of the country.

(c) that the Birmingham Political Union would present its petition and hoped to obtain 2-3,000,000 signatures for it.

(d) if Parliament would not concede their demands they would petition over and over again.

(e) as an additional sanction to secure their aims there would be "a solemn and sacred strike from every kind of labour".

(f) a National Convention of the Industrious Classes to be held.

Reform, however, was not considered as an end in itself - it was to be used solely as a means for bringing into effect the Birmingham Political Union's specific cure for unemployment. This was the abandonment of the gold standard and the establishment of a credit system based on the real productive power of the nation. Attwood summed up the opposition he expected thus, "We have against us the whole of the Aristocracy, nine-tenths of the gentry, the great body of the Clergy, and all the pensioners, sinecurists and bloodsuckers that feed on the vitals of the people/

people" - strange sentiments in a respectable banker! However, it was left to Dr. Wade, a delegate from the L.W.M.A., to sum up this branch of the movement, most aptly, "We have sufficient physical power, but that is not necessary, for we have sufficient moral power to gain all we ask". At this meeting on Glasgow Green, there were reputed to be 200,000 people present; yet the proceedings throughout were marked by good temper and order.³⁹

Proceedings such as this, with the middle-class taking a benign interest, characterised the early growth of the L.W.M.A. and B.P.U. "Festina lente" might well have been the motto of these two bodies, a policy very distasteful to a demagogue like Feargus O'Connor who could not tolerate being led, instead of leading. A split between the 'moderates' (of) Lovett and Attwood and the rising O'Connor group was inevitable. The former appealed to the relatively prosperous artisans of the south, whilst the latter sought to utilise the driving forces of hunger and misery let loose in Northern England by the 1837 trade depression. Strangely enough the rift occurred over the Cotton Spinners Trial. Daniel O'Connell, for reasons best known to himself, used the revelations then made as a basis for an attack on Trades Unions in general, alleging that similar happenings had occurred in Dublin and Cork.⁴⁰ In February 1838 a

Parliamentary/

³⁹ Gammage. op.cit. 15 et seq.

⁴⁰ Mirror of Parliament Feb.14 1838. E.R. 1838 p.251.

Parliamentary Commission was appointed to enquire into the Combination Laws and it looked as though further repressive measures against the Unions were planned. Nothing actually came of it but O'Connor blamed the L.W.M.A. and its 'class-collaboration' for encouraging the "Whig Malthusians" to launch this attack. This charge was completely unfounded but George Harney, a Marat-like revolutionary and self-styled 'Ami du peuple', completed the work by a vicious attack on O'Connell and led a secession group out of the L.W.M.A. known as the London Democratic Association.⁴¹

This had its repercussions on the Scots. Here were three bodies (the L.W.M.A., the B.P.U. and the O'Connorites) all seeking their allegiance. Yet because the 'Physical Force' party (as it was to be called) had not yet shown its hand, it was possible for O'Connor to be received with acclamation in towns which a bare six weeks earlier had welcomed Attwood (The B.P.U. deputation went to Perth, Edinburgh, Kilmarnock. Stirling, Dundee, Cupar, Dunfermline, Elderslie(Renfrew)⁴²). The 'Scots Times' was converted by Attwood to Universal Suffrage on May 23, 1838: yet in July it gave precisely the same welcome to O'Connor.⁴³ In fact at this time there was little visible fraction between the three sections, and after Aug.6 1838/

41 Cole, Chartist Portraits, pp 46-47.

42 Howell, The Chartist Movement pp.105-6.

43 Cowan, op cit., p.194.

1838 following a meeting at Newhall Hill, it became customary to apply the generic term 'Chartists' to them all. The main battle was to be fought at the Convention in the following February. Meanwhile each canvassed actively in Scotland and the L.W.M.A. invited Scottish (and other) delegates to attend a pre-Convention meeting at the Palace Yard, London, on Sept. 17th 1838. The pretext for this was to elect eight delegates to the coming National Convention; the real reason was to assemble and unify the forces of the L.W.M.A. and its kindred associations to meet the challenge of O'Connor. Scottish delegates were actually present at the Palace Yard meeting.

This is a convenient point at which to see how successful these contending parties were in obtaining support in Scotland. Fortunately a Chartist newspaper - the Edinburgh Monthly Democrat and Total Abstiners Advocate - started by John Fraser on July 7th 1838 provides valuable information on the spread of the movement. From this it appears that the L.W.M.A. achieved most success in forming branches. Kilmarnock, Alloa, Stirling, Leven, Arbroath, Barrhead, Hamilton, Aberdeen, Glasgow are but a few. A report dated Sept. 1st jubilantly declares, "In Sorn and Ochiltree Working Men's Associations have been formed. Both these places were moral wastes as regards politics".⁴⁴ Ormiston reports "on Friday 24th August the first blow was struck/

⁴⁴ Edinburgh Monthly Democrat Sept. 1st 1838.

struck when in spite of the exertions of the parish ^Cslergyman we had a numerous and most respectable meeting" (an unfortunate sequel was that "N. Cluchan in the service of the Marquis of Lothian was discharged for participation").⁴⁵ The Birmingham Political Union had its successes too, such as in Perth where "the Old Radical Association had embraced the principles of the Birmingham Political Union; and the Trades, who invited the deputies to Perth, have cordially joined in one body". Notable, too, was the Whitburn Political Union (founded 1837) which had sent 'repeated petitions to the Legislature' against

1. money grants to the Established Kirk of Scotland
2. withdrawal of the King of Hanover's pension
3. abolition of the Corn Laws, and
4. recommended abstention from exciseable commodities⁴⁶

(one wonders if (2) was a result of Scotch thrift or Jacobite sentiment!).

John Fraser, helped by Abram Duncan, kept these associations informed by lectures and by the written word of the way they should take. He himself was connected with the Universal Suffrage Association, at this time peculiar to Scotland, which nevertheless held to the ideas of Lovett. However it also had a fundamental belief in temperance. Fraser was not above rebuking/

⁴⁵Edinburgh Monthly Democrat Sept. 1, 1838.

⁴⁶ibid.

rebuking 'backward areas'. The unfortunate folk at Cupar had formed a 'non-electors' committee', with 'no fixed political principles, and with men of different political creeds'. They were told by Fraser and Duncan to form a Universal Suffrage Association and the rebuke was driven home with "Cupar has often been represented as Whiggish, and spiritless in the cause of reform".⁴⁷ There were failures as well. Duncan lamented that "the Greenock Radicals are no more". Apparently they had sold their Radical inheritance to the Whigs and Tories in return for a metaphorical 'dish of pottage' - a Mechanics Hall. Such an attack on fellow-Radicals was no unexpected. Time and again in all these early movements, different sections, apparently almost indistinguishable as regards doctrine, attacked each other bitterly. The 'Democrat' (and Fraser) were no exceptions. Repeated attacks on 'that apostate Reformer' the 'Scotsman', can be understood: but other papers of a pink hue come under fire. The 'Scottish Pilot' "misrepresented" Fraser and, a heinous crime, depended on advertisements from middle-class merchants. A true Radical paper would educate the middle-class out of their 'heathen selfishness' but, of course, "the proud shopocracy of Edinburgh would not advertise in such a paper". The liberal Montrose Review edited by Troup was attacked for suggesting

⁴⁷ August 8th 1838 (E.M.D.).

suggesting some sort of intellectual franchise. Apparently no editor in Scotland (except Fraser) could do justice to the working classes.⁴⁸ Chartism certainly suffered from a glut of True Prophets, or does Radicalism beget a Messianic complex in its leaders?

One last quotation from the Democrat is interesting in that it throws light on the likely attitude of the Irish. Byrne, a follower of O'Connell, toured Scotland speaking on the Irish Question. On Sept. 4th 1838, he addressed a Radical meeting in Paisley, where there were many Irish hand-loom weavers. At the end the following amendment was carried, "That whilst this meeting ... sympathised with the wrongs of Ireland, they have not only lost all confidence in the policy pursued by O'Connell, with a view to their remedy, but also for his unprincipled support of the Whigs".⁴⁹ Clearly the followers of O'Connell would not appreciate this attitude on the part of the Chartists. As for O'Connor, the avowed enemy of O'Connell, his supporters lacked an organisation comparable to the W.M.A. or B.P.U. and at this time all initiative seemed to be with the 'moral suasionists'. They held meetings everywhere - many of them by torchlight - to select delegates for the Palace Yard meeting. Needless to say, Fraser and Duncan were chosen.

⁴⁸ E.M.D. Nos.1-4.
⁴⁹ E.M.D. Sept. 1838.

chosen. At the appointed time they travelled there and duly spoke for the Scots - Fraser in a 'warm, hopeful speech' whilst Duncan apparently performed 'exceptionally'.⁵⁰

The key to the failure of Chartism can be found in the personalities of its leaders. Those moral and mental inconsistencies which plagued O'Connor were reflected in the movement as a whole, John Fraser, the ex-schoolteacher, too, must take both credit and blame for the part he played. He was an intellectual revolutionary - part genius, part crank - but this did not prevent him serving a four months sentence for his complicity in a local insurrection of 1820 (he was later exonerated). Four great interests occupied his life, all of which he was capable of indulging at one and the same time - and with equal fervour. These were his music (achieving much popular success), his temperance (founding the Edinburgh Abstinence Society), his agency for Morison's vegetable pills (Morison was a Hygeist, or nature cure advocate) and reform - one is led to explain (or declaim)

" ... and still the wonder grew,

That one small head should compass all he knew",
a quotation all the more apt since Fraser was never so happy as when in didactic mood!⁵¹ Clearly such a personality was susceptible to attack and great care would be required to avoid jibes such/

⁵⁰ Gamage op.cit., pp.47-53.
⁵¹ See Appendix for career.

such as "Morisoniana" Fraser who professes to deal in radical cures equally for the physical health and political well-being". Typical of this need for care was the ridiculous accusation later made by the Scottish Patriot that Fraser had been the first to advocate Physical Force in Scotland. The charge was based on this excerpt, written by Taylor: "if soldiers come among us to violate the laws, then it would be time for the men of England and the men of Scotland to let them know what they should do".⁵² In fairness to Fraser it was one of his few lapses into the language of the demagogue which can say everything and nothing at the same time. His fellow-evangelist was Abram Duncan, quill-dresser by trade, a strong advocate of temperance who, as befitted a future Chartist preacher, felt strongly over the religious issues of his day.⁵³ Perhaps it was this last that led to this outburst at Aberdeen,

"The Tories are all religious men. They talk much about religion. They want more new churches and more stupid block-heads for ministers and each person for telling the truth(?) is to have a bond in the exchequer. The Tory parsons are our modern Pharisees; they make long prayers; they pray at the corner of the streets but devour widows' houses. The tyrant pays the priest, and the priest deludes the people for the sake of/

⁵² E.M.D., No.4.

⁵³ Marwick, Glasgow Herald, 10.2. 1934.

of the tyrant. We pay twelve million to support our men of war, and have not an enemy in the world. Twenty-five thousand bayonets are required to protect the Gospel of Jesus Christ in Ireland. Are you content to tolerate such a state of things?⁵⁴ Such oratorical skating on thin ice gave an impression of violent measures which Duncan, in fact, opposed vehemently. Similarly at Dumfries he was led to talk about "blue bonnets coming over the border"⁵⁵, implying armed invasion, and this clearly helped his election as Convention delegate for that burgh. The real importance of the Aberdeen speech was that it already showed the reaction to official religion which was to result in the setting-up of Chartist Churches. Although Fraser and Duncan soon learnt to weigh each word carefully, these early falls from grace provided ammunition for their opponents when the inevitable schisms occurred in the movement. Nevertheless there is no doubt that these two were staunch believers in the use of constitutional methods of reform - and in temperance. Their example made the pattern of the Scottish movement.

All this lay in the near future. Meanwhile Fraser after an intensive advertising campaign turned the Democrat into a weekly paper which he called the True Scotsman (to distinguish it from the false Scotsman!) He not only borrowed the title from/

54 Gamage, op,cit. p.81.

55 True Scotsman, 12.1.1839



from this staid contemporary but even copied its lay-out down to (or should it be up to?) the thistle emblem at the head of the front page. In return the Scotsman was attacked violently and christened, not with affection, "grannie". In quick succession in the early numbers the Caledonian Mercury, Argus and Montrose Review suffered equal derision - a rather precocious parvenu poking fun at the elders. An attack on the Scottish Pilot, a Radical-religious paper, was more serious, trying to win over the Dissenters who formed the readers of that paper by declaring that the Pilot had decided "to strike his colours of Radical green".⁵⁶ In fact Fraser did succeed partially in this object, probably because of his firm advocacy of temperance. The numbers might conceivably have been more but Fraser compounded large quantities of Morison's Pills into his Radicalism! Despite this inauspicious start the paper flourished for a long period and the presentation of news, articles, literary reviews and art critiques displayed much journalistic ability. There was very little of the 'yellow press' about the True Scotsman, and, for a Radical paper, the presentation of news was surprisingly impartial. The early issues were full of the steady progress of the movement with numerous accounts of the election of delegates to the 1839 Convention and of signatures being canvassed for the National Petition.

A few/

⁵⁶ True Scotsman Nov. 3rd 1838.

A few examples will suffice. Kilbarchan, with a population of 2400, had 246 members of the W.M.A. and had obtained 512 signatures to the Petition (this particular branch was affiliated to the B.P.U.⁵⁷). The Political Union at Kilbirnie collected £4 to defray the expenses of the Ayrshire delegate and sent a further four pounds to the general funds of the London Convention. To select their delegate Alloa W.M.A. held a grand procession of all the Chartists in the neighbourhood, with five bands and 32 flags. Halley was successful here and was also chosen as the Stirling W.M.A. representative at a similar meeting which, however, could only muster four bands and 19 banners! This Stirling meeting is interesting as it shows a link between the Covenanting tradition and Scots Chartism. Proceedings here (as in other meetings in the district) opened with a 'solemn prayer, like the Covenanters'.⁵⁸ There is at least a prima facie case for stating that Chartism was strongest in former Covenanting areas. In this strain was the meeting of the Dundee Political Union which elected Burns, a staunch temperance advocate, as their delegate. Abram Duncan gave him a public lecture on the duties of a representative and a severe warning against the "snares of London". Much impressed Burns promised to take down the Convention proceedings in shorthand/

⁵⁷ True Scotsman, 27th October 1838.

⁵⁸ True Scotsman, Nov. 17th 1838.

shorthand, give a weekly report to his constituents, assured them that he had lived in London for some time (presumably to show his immunity to snares) and declared that he had never visited a theatre.⁵⁹ Even in these early days Religion, Temperance and Education were actively considered, along with electoral reform, by the Scots.

Over half of the elected Scots delegates were of lower middle-class origin. There was even a small landed proprietor, Patrick Mathew, who was the chosen of the Perth Radical Association. At the meeting £200 was allocated to him for his expenses in going to London but he waived all claim to it on condition that it was used to pay the expenses of an itinerant lecturer in Political Economy.⁶⁰ This was done and a Mr. Sime toured many of the East coast towns. Here is one of his reports, "I went to St. Andrews on Wednesday the 7th ult.... I found the people still as the grave. The town-hall was occupied. I applied to two Dissenting meeting-houses, but was refused. I spoke however to a few sturdy Radicals and we got a hall from a Tory Dominie. We had a fine meeting. The students mustered for a row, it was said, but remained perfectly quiet. 46 enrolled their names to the true Birmingham creed.... I proceeded to Crail... it is a wild quarter but they will get on....
Your/

⁵⁹ True Scotsman, Nov. 3, 1838.

⁶⁰ True Scotsman, Nov. 17, Dec. 1. 1838.

Your [Fraser and Duncan] bold eloquence would do well to succeed my homely facts and pounds, shillings and pence arguments. I have broken up the ground and thrown in a few seeds ... make them grow up into such luxuriance as Whigs and Tories will be frightened at fields of blooming Radical flowers"⁶¹ Certainly, this Dundee flax-dresser made a notable contribution to the movement. Also interested in education were the Aberdeen Chartists: not only had they started the Aberdeen Patriot (Nov. 1838) but carried on 'mutual instruction' classes.⁶²

Activity was also noticeable in two other quarters. In Glasgow many of the Trades promised whole-hearted support, prominent amongst them being the Plumbers, Cabinet and Chairmakers, and the Upholsterers and Trimmers.⁶³ This example was followed in other towns. In addition the Operative Masons through their 'Journal' expressed Chartist sympathies, whilst the decaying 'Liberator' (still a tenuous link with the Cotton Spinners), now a monthly had come under the wing of a Chartist much less fiery, and less capable, than Dr. Taylor. All this would seem to imply that organised labour was at least giving its semi-official blessing to the National Petition. What was surprising and new was the speed, extent and efficiency with which women threw themselves into the movement, forming female sections, collecting/

⁶¹ True Scotsman, 8.12.1838.

⁶² True Scotsman, 13.12.1838.

⁶³ True Scotsman, 24.11.1838.

collecting funds and listening avidly to lectures on economic and political problems. Typical of this was the Forfar Female Political Union which 'canvassed the town for members' and collected respectable sums of money for the National Rent (a central fund for the Convention). Naturally this participation did not always meet with male approval. One die-hard Dunfermline Radical, observing many women present at a political lecture, grumbled "a lecture on domestic economy would perhaps be more suitable for them".⁶⁴ To this the feminists gave a sharp reply and a Female Association was quickly formed there. Kirriemuir (with 300 members), Stirling and Perth followed suit. Soon most large towns had separate associations for women with ambitious programmes of soirées, lectures and (sometimes) - dances. There were even two hybrids. A Gorbals Female Universal Suffrage Association was formed but the men appointed an exclusively male 'Committee of Guardians' to take charge of their accounts! Forfar apparently was more enlightened and ultimately there emerged the joint Forfar Male and Female Political Union. Fraser, much in advance of his time, gave space in his paper to their activities and a series of articles by 'Judith' appeared, giving such advice as 'don't look up to titled minions with awe! History does not record what effect this had!'⁶⁵

⁶⁴ True Scotsman, 24.11.1838

⁶⁵ Files of True Scotsman.

Chapter III. Schism.

Outwards the movement had managed to display some semblance of unity with the W.M.A., the B.P.U. and O'Connor working in a very uneasy alliance. Underneath, however, lurked the whole question of a resort to violence to secure the Charter. For various reasons the advocates of physical force found it more and more difficult to conceal their thoughts and as 1838 grew older they preached this doctrine with ever-increasing fervour. There was the Rev. J.R. Stephens, a Tory, convinced of the need to lead a crusade against the powers of evil, "these hell-hounds of Commissioners" set up by the 1834 Act and those responsible for preventing the people having a "comfortable maintenance". Fighting evil such as this, any methods were justifiable. "If the musket and the pistol, the sword, and the pike were of no avail, let the women take the scissors, the child the pin or needle"⁶⁶ He was deadly serious about this, his speeches were always inflammatory and, unfortunately, he supported the Charter. Stephens was bad enough from the point of view of the moral force brigade, but at least he was honest in his violence - he meant it. There was less justification for the demagogues. At Hartshead Moor in the West/

⁶⁶ Hovell op.cit. p.97. Cole, Chartist Portraits.

West Riding, Peter Bussey, speaking to a vast crowd on October 15th, advised them to buy rifles and concluded with this exhortation, "Every man of you who is determined to be a free-man or die in the attempt, let him now hold up his right arm!"⁶⁷ (Every arm apparently was held up). This type of leader was foreign to Scotland - a fellow-Chartist described him as "a happy specimen of the barley Old English publican . . . uncouth . . . his speeches always smacked of physical force, and he was pretty often complimented by Mr. O'Connor for the bravery of his language".⁶⁸ O'Connor was, in truth, the key to the situation. His appeals for the use of physical force became more and more overt. The one which stirred up the moderate Chartists was given at Manchester on November 6th, at a dinner commemorating Henry Hunt. The closing words were often to be repeated in numerous arguments, "but if peace giveth not law, then I am for war to the knife".⁶⁹ As a matter of record the rest of this particular speech was quite innocuous - which was rather unusual for O'Connor. Yet in his case, as with Bussey, it is quite evident that this martial spirit, this braggadoccio, was purely verbal, aimed at winning the allegiance of the miserable unemployed of Northern England. He would never have initiated actual warfare.

Up/

⁶⁷ Postgate op.cit., p.117 et seq..

⁶⁸ Gammage op.cit. p.74.

⁶⁹ Postgate, op,cit.: p.117.

Up to this point Scotland had been prepared willingly to accept leadership from over the Border - so long as that leadership held fast to constitutional methods. Speculation as to why the Scots stressed moral force and deprecated violent means would be interesting but inconclusive. One reason that comes readily to mind is that economic conditions were not bad enough to inspire extreme measures. But the problem is much deeper. Memories of the 1745 and the subsequent ruthless suppression of the Clans must have been still present. A far more likely cause was a keen sense of military realities - the ineffectiveness of a badly-armed, disorganised mob against well-trained, well-equipped, troops. With the military tradition of Scotland, and the contributions made in man-power to the British Army. there were at that time many ex-soldiers to shed a little light on the fog of violent talk emitted by the orators. One such was Alexander Somerville, the "Scots Grey", an ex-trooper who, because of his intelligence and initiative, was 'adopted' by the upper classes of society. A man of parts, in 1839 his "Warnings to the people on Street Warfare" was published, giving a clear account of what would happen in the event of an armed insurrection (mainly street barricades à la Paris). He demonstrated clearly that such an attempt would inevitably be suppressed with ease.⁷⁰ This timely warning must have curbed the/

⁷⁰ -----
A. Somerville, 'Warnings to the people on Street Warfare', London 1839.

the hot-heads a little. History proved the truth of his assertions. Nine years later 'hunger rioters' in Glasgow attempted just such an outbreak, and events thereafter proceeded exactly as Somerville had foretold.

In part this attitude was also a reflection of the character of the Scottish leaders. There were, of course, men of the O'Connor breed (such as Dr. Taylor, although even he was not consistent in his support). But the main direction of affairs in these early crucial years - the formative years of the movement - lay with a great moral force trinity: John Fraser, Abram Duncan and the Rev. Patrick Brewster. The first two have been mentioned, particularly their joint preoccupation with temperance and reform. Brewster was the moral force counterpart to the Rev. J.R. Stephens. Born in 1788, he was a son of the Rector of Jedburgh Grammar School and was brother to that eminent scientist Sir David Brewster, one-time Principal of Edinburgh University. As a youth he desired a military or naval career but, after passing through university, he was inducted into the second charge of Paisley Abbey in 1818. There he remained for forty stormy years.⁷¹ His attitude to his vocation was clear, "As teachers of religion, we are bound to be teachers of politics". To the best of his talents and ability (and they were both exceptional) he carried this aim through life, preaching/

⁷¹ Glasgow Herald 28th March 1859, obituary notice.

preaching Chartism, Poor Law Reform and condemning negro slavery. He spoke frankly and freely in church and on hustings; he mixed with reformers of all parties and as a result came into conflict with the Church authorities on several occasions. Fortunately much of his work survived in written form, particularly his apologia "The Seven Chartist and Military Discourses" - a series of radical sermons.⁷² The first of these emphasised his view that religion has always been opposed to unjust rulers and that he considered it his duty to oppose 'the ruling class which enslaved the workers' of his day. "The restrictions and prohibitions of unequal laws, enforced by all the machinery of Constables, Jails, Bridewells, Stocks, Collars and Treadmills and these instruments of torture being as much at the disposal of the ruling class in reference to the other class, as if each one of the Masters had a right of property in the labourer."⁷³ Like Stephens he felt strongly on the question of Poor Relief although his aim was to secure 'a fixed and legal provision for the poor', and so he castigated the middle-class. "But especially might we expect the zealous and active co-operation of those who have been so frequently pleading for collections.... on behalf of less urgent claims - for endowments and colleges to the Clergy of Canada - for libraries and academies/

⁷² Patrick Brewster 'The Seven Chartist and Military Discourses' Paisley 1843.

⁷³ *ibid.* p.76.

academies to the natives of Hindostan ... and for additional churches at home for those, many of whom have already passed into Eternity for want of the means of existence".⁷⁴ His net was cast wide and the following occurred in a Military Sermon preached at the Abbey to officers and men of the garrison "... count the number of idlers who are each consuming the bread of a thousand families, - consuming what neither their labour nor the labour of their fathers ever produced".⁷⁵ After which the Paisley Advertiser declared that "Capt. Laurie felt it his duty not to require the attendance of his men on the days Mr. Brewster preached"! Finally there could be no mistaking his opinion of Physical Force. "Though every man of the Physicals then were in possession in this moment of arms, though they were furnished with the best park of artillery that was ever brought into a field of battle and with the best leaders which Europe could produce, they would not even have a chance of success in present circumstances, discountenanced as they undoubtedly are, by the wiser, more intelligent, and more numerous portion of their own class".⁷⁶ Such a preacher must have been a tower of strength to the moderates. It was not likely, ⁿthem, that this able triumvirate of Fraser, Duncan and Brewster could tolerate in silence the extravagant language of O'Connor and his followers.

It/

⁷⁴ ibid. p.133.
⁷⁵ ibid. p.157.
⁷⁶ ibid. p.52.

It would be futile to suggest that all Scotland agreed with the policy of these three moral force advocates. O'Connor had a small but clamant following who did not mind strong language so long as it did not lead to bloodshed. There were those who disliked Fraser because of his artistic leanings and Brewster because of his cloth. Above all was the traditional rivalry between East and West, the desire to substitute a Chartism labelled 'Made in Glasgow' for the Edinburgh version of Fraser, although both were in essence identical. Thus early in November 1838, Brewster addressed a large meeting of the Renfrew Political Union in 'Mr. Braid's Church', Glasgow, on the subject of moral force. Popular and eloquent though he was, he encountered opposition from the members. Another advised the listeners 'not to trust too much to the mercy of the soldiers', whilst Nimmo expressed approval of violence as an ultimate sanction.⁷⁷ Significant, too, was a meeting in the Edinburgh Grassmarket to elect a delegate to the Convention. Fraser, apparently, was not considered as a candidate. There were 1500 present including a deputation from Dalkeith with a revolutionary emblem - "a tricolor flag" which had on it "a bundle of rods bound together, in which was a staff, surmounted by a cap of liberty". Their choice of representative was in line with the emblem - William Villiers Sankey, a doctor, whose father/

⁷⁷ True Scotsman, 10.11.1838.

father had been a member of the last Irish Parliament and who had constantly opposed union with Ireland.⁷⁸ Perhaps this gives a clue to this strange choice - was he 'voted in' by the Irish in Edinburgh? This seems very likely since the meeting took place in the Grassmarket, the poorest quarter in Edinburgh, where very few large Radical meetings were held (in fact this seems to be the only Chartist gathering there). Sankey later proved to be a good disciple of O'Connor's, blowing now hot, now cold, over Physical Force. These two meetings were straws-in-the-wind showing that the violent language of O'Connor was beginning to have an effect. Something had to be done to warn the English leaders that their ideas were not in agreement with the Scottish version of Chartism.

It was left to the True Scotsman to put into words what many thought. On November 24th there appeared a leading article addressed to O'Connor and Stephens entitled "A Voice from Scotland, I", written by Abram Duncan. What it declared was sound common-sense,

"If you are convinced that there are sufficient resources of moral means to effect the changes contemplated in the constitution - as a great proportion of what you say would lead me to suppose - what good purpose can it serve to allude to physical force as an ultimate resource?"⁷⁹ This drew a vituperative/

⁷⁸ True Scotsman, 1.12.1838.
⁷⁹ True Scotsman, 24.11.1838.

vituperative response from all the fire-eaters, but Duncan, with considerable dignity, went on to stress the point in a second article, concluding thus:

"Gentlemen, in denouncing the purpose of this communication you may style me a political coward and use the weapons of sophistry and sarcasm both of which ... you are perfect masters of; but I beg to assure you for myself, and in the name of the working classes of Scotland, that those same powerful weapons .. will never beat them into an admiration of physical force".⁸⁰

Meanwhile Brewster had decided to act. On November 10th he addressed the Paisley Political Union on the harm that O'Connor and Stephens were doing to the movement. After some opposition those present ultimately expressed approval of resolutions drawn up by Brewster to prevent the employment of violent language at their meetings. A copy of these resolutions was sent to the Birmingham Chartists and received their unanimous support. The next step in the campaign (after the articles noted above) was taken by Fraser and Duncan who despatched circulars to 'all the Universal Suffrage Associations in the country' inviting them to attend a delegate meeting in Edinburgh for the purpose of disclaiming all appeals to physical force. Nearly every association approached was in favour of the idea, a significant exception being that of Glasgow which repudiated/

⁸⁰ True Scotsman, 1.12.1838.

repudiated the circular as the "height of presumption" and "a distinct stroke at the unanimity of future proceedings". A torchlight meeting was held on the Calton Hill on Wednesday, December 8th, and a fairly representative turn-out of Scottish delegates, at least, took place. Amongst the speakers were Brewster, Duncan, and Fraser, together with Alex. Fyfe, a surgeon from Crieff, John Duncan, "President of the Mid-Lothian Universal Association", and others from Hawick, Aberdeen and Stonehouse.⁸¹ Brewster, of course, was the chief speaker and wanted to 'sweep the field clear of Oastlers and Stephens'. He did not include Feargus O'Connor with these because "with all his delinquencies he believed him to be an honest man". The only voice raised in dissent was that of John Duncan. Finally the meeting approved what became known as the Edinburgh Resolutions,

"That this meeting most decidedly and unequivocally condemns the conduct of those who have used such language as both illegal in itself and injurious to the people's cause.... [We] repudiate and renounce all connection with such individuals and all who approve of their conduct.... [and] refuse to co-operate with them either directly or indirectly... [We] disclaim all connexion with that very small portion of our countrymen who have not as yet seen it to be their duty to co-operate with us in the objects of the present meeting".

These/

⁸¹ Scotsman, 8.12.1838.

These resolutions produced the expected results - a torrent of denunciation from O'Connor, Harney, Oastler, Taylor and others, and a strengthening of the moderate associations all over the country, many of which adopted the Edinburgh declaration. Many furious meetings were held - notably in London and Newcastle - with highly personal attacks made on both sides. An immediate result of this meeting was the repudiation of Fraser and Duncan by the Edinburgh and Mid-Lothian U.S.A. (which had elected Sankey), and a declaration that the True Scotsman was not a Chartist organ. Sheer jealousy can only account for this move, aided by a lack of tact on the part of Fraser. John Duncan, President of this Association, was rather an illiterate man. On one occasion he had written that 'the membership of the Kirkcaldy Radical Association amounted to 1000 400', a lapse which publicly amused Fraser and caused the Scotsman to brand Duncan as of 'orthographical notoriety'. There was also the question of an article which the True Scotsman refused to print [tactfully] on the grounds that the script could not be read. To this Duncan replied that if Scott, Byron and Jeffrey wrote 'in a bad hand', he was entitled to do the same.⁸² As a result of this wound to his amour-propre, and envy of Fraser, John Duncan threw in his lot with O'Connor. Later he supported the Scottish Patriot and the Glasgow moderates.

To/

⁸² Scotsman, 8.12.1839. Edinburgh Evening Courant, 3.1.1839.

To perpetuate this break in Edinburgh a new radical group was formed - the Edinburgh Political Union - stressing Peace, Law and Order, and supporting the stand made by Fraser.⁸³

More important was the effect on the movement at large. O'Connor realised that if the Resolutions were to stand unchallenged, much support would be lost. He hastened north to eradicate, if possible, the bad effects created by his speeches. On January 8th 1839, he addressed a full meeting of the Mid-Lothian U.S.A. in the Freemasons Hall, Edinburgh. It was in his best demagogic manner, covering a wide gamut of emotions. There was an appeal for sympathy at having 'to traverse this northern climate' in winter, because of his accusers; there was indignation, "Have I ever said a word in your presence which was calculated to create excitement?"; next an appeal to Scots pride, "the cowardly resolutions passed on the Calton Hill to save the Scottish Delegates at the expense of the English delegates"⁸⁴; a Mark-Antony-like reference to Abram Duncan. "When I first saw his face, I said, 'Beware of that man, for he is not to be trusted'". These and other remarks, insincere flattery of Fraser, a direct accusation that Abram Duncan preached physical force, made up a very polished performance which ended with, "Fraser, I love you; Duncan, I thank you; Brewster, I don't know you".⁸⁵ He displayed sound psychology in refraining/

⁸³ True Scotsman, 5.1.1839.

⁸⁴ True Scotsman, 12.1.1839.

⁸⁵ Gamage, op,cit. p.145 et seq..

refraining from an open attack on Brewster at this particular meeting - a meeting which almost revered Brewster and considered O'Connor as being on trial. As expected Sankey and John Duncan supported O'Connor - the former expressing thanks to the English Radicals and pledging all-out support. Despite this O'Connor's mission failed and the Resolutions were allowed to stand. However, O'Connor went on to Glasgow where his reception was much more favourable. In the Bazaar he spoke to vindicate Stephens and it was noticed that his speech was "studiedly temperate", although a few taunts at those Radicals who deprecated physical force were thrown in.⁸⁶ Included also was a venomous attack on Brewster who was called "a white-faced parson, whose heart was as black as his face was white!"⁸⁷ The Glasgow Association 'rescinded' the Resolutions, an action which Edinburgh (possibly with some justification) later classified as "impertinent". An interesting sidelight is here thrown on Dr. Taylor. In November he wrote to the True Scotsman advocating the formation of 'Dhurna Societies' - groups pledged to abstain from all exciseable commodities. As President of the Ayr Dhurna Society he told the members to 'put down every sensual indulgence and prove your moral power and fitness to have a vote.' Fraser welcomed this and advised his readers to form such societies.⁸⁸ Next month at Newcastle, Taylor/

⁸⁶ Scotch Reformers Gazette 13.1.1839.

⁸⁷ True Scotsman, 19.1.1839.

⁸⁸ True Scotsman, 22.12.1838.

Taylor was talking about 'writing his epitaph upon a tyrant's brow in characters of blood with a pen of steel'. On New Year's Day 1839 at Johnstone with the Renfrewshire Chartists, he debated fiercely with Brewster until 3 a.m., securing the rejection of a moral force resolution. Next day on Glasgow Green he boasted he had 'licked the parson' and denounced the degraded cowards who met in Edinburgh.⁸⁹ But on the 10th of the same month, with Brewster present and O'Connor using virulent language, Taylor, at Glasgow Bazaar, ignored the question of violence and spoke only about the local Factory Inspector (a Mr. Stewart) who was not enforcing the laws as to the hours, and the age, of child labour. That the local Chartists themselves were puzzled by him is shown by the fact that the Renfrew P.U., whose Convention delegate he was, later tried to pass a vote of censure on him. This failed and the secretary resigned.⁹⁰ Incidents such as this were fairly common and show the inherent contradictions which helped to weaken Chartism.

The moderates did not show any intention of not participating in the coming Convention. Quite clearly they hoped to be able to control (if not subdue) the Physical Force element at the actual meeting. Everywhere local associations were busy raising funds to pay the 'wages' of the delegates and to contribute/

⁸⁹ Hovell, op.cit. p.120 also Additional MSS 27,281 pp.13-16.
⁹⁰ True Scotsman, 19.1.1839.

contribute to the National Rent. These efforts were very successful and the Convention was able to start its sittings without any financial embarrassment.⁹¹ There were to be 49 delegates, this number being chosen to circumvent restrictive legislation which declared meetings of fifty persons and over to be illegal. Scotland did quite well in collecting funds for its delegates and generous allowances appear to have been made to them - at first. (Craig received £6 a week, whilst Dr. Taylor was allotted £150 per annum).⁹² As was to be expected the selected representatives of Scotland - eight in number - were mainly in favour of moral force. What was a little unexpected was that five of them came from the middle class. Two have already been mentioned - the soi-disant 'Doctors', Taylor and Sankey, who alone represented the extremists. (Doubt must be cast on their professional qualifications: Taylor would barely have had time to cram the necessary study into his short but eventful career; Sankey wrote poetry with the degree of M.A. appearing after his name.⁹³). Then there was James Moir, the Glasgow tea-merchant, a leading figure in all reform movements, who was destined to achieve much honour and respect as a Glasgow Town Councillor and Bailie. Representing Ayrshire was Hugh Craig, the son of a small farmer; he was apprenticed to/

91 Hovel, op.cit. p.124.

92 Northern Star, Sept. 7th, 1839. True Scotsman, 6.7.1839.

93 True Scotsman, 19.12.1840.

to a draper, spent three years as a salesman with Swan and Edgar's, London, and finally opened his own shop in Kilmarnock in 1818. Later he became a partner in the short-lived Radical paper - the 'Kilmarnock Chronicle' (1831-1832).⁹⁴ Its successor was the 'Kilmarnock Journal' run 'by a joint-stock company for the advocacy of reform principles' and Craig was on the Committee of Management which supervised its production. Despite his Radical convictions, Craig was appointed a Bailie of Kilmarnock and was serving in that capacity when elected to the Convention. The last of the middle-class members was Patrick Mathew, of Gourdie Hill, Perthshire - a landed proprietor who had travelled widely in Europe and lived for some time in Poland. He believed in education and was a staunch pacifist.⁹⁵ Of the three artisan delegates mention has been made of Abram Duncan and Burns, two strong temperance advocates. Finally, there was Alex. Halley from Dunfermline, confirmed supporter of moral force, who appears to have had the unofficial blessing of the civic authorities. The burgh Provost was chairman at the meeting which led to his adoption. Another Scotsman at this Convention must be noted - Peter Murray M'Donald, representing an English constituency, Ashton-under-Lyne. Born at Newton Stewart, he was both middle-class and a qualified doctor

'sandy/'

⁹⁴ 'Autobiographical Reminiscences' J. Paterson (1871) p.91 and Cowan, op.cit., p.160.

⁹⁵ True Scotsman, 12.1.1839.

"sandy haired ... of an ardent fiery temperament, impulsive to the last degree".⁹⁶ One of the youngest of the delegates, he was also one of the most fiery, and became an acknowledged leader of the Physical Force element. He also edited 'M'Donall's Chartist Journal' - a short-lived violent paper, published in England (Later he came up against O'Connor and was blamed for the débacle of 1842).⁹⁷ Although he made numerous tours of his native land, and was a popular orator, his branch of Radicalism failed, as did O'Connor's, to move the people of Scotland.

Chapter IV. The Convention.

From the Scottish point of view the Convention held on Feb. 3rd 1839 at the British Hotel, Cockspur St., Charing Cross, London (later at Bolt Court), was relatively unimportant. It was the climax, and anti-climax, of the English Phase of the movement. In Scotland itself a new version of Chartism, different in character, was already getting under way. This was for the Scots an interim period with one eye (not too hopefully) on the Convention, and the other turned steadfastly inwards/

⁹⁶ Gammage, op,cit. p.66.

⁹⁷ Cole, Chartist Portraits. pp.321-2.

wards to its own affairs. Support for the Convention existed, but it was not whole-hearted support. Within that body itself there was a fatal indecisiveness. Only one object was clear - to present the Petition to Parliament and to receive an answer. Clearly that answer was foredoomed to be unfavourable. Beyond that point all future policy was pure speculation. The true moral force delegates felt that, having presented the Petition, the Convention should disperse. In fact, J.P. Cobbett put Resolutions to that effect before the assembly on February 14th. They were rejected by 36 votes to 6 and he resigned. He was not, however, the first to go. Alarmed by the violent language, the middle-class Birmingham delegates failed to attend after the first session. The majority of the remaining members wanted the Convention, somehow or other, to turn itself into a real Constituent Assembly with power to legislate on behalf of the people. Even Lovett was half-prepared for this to happen, if it could be achieved without violence. O'Connor, as usual, was in two minds, Initially he spoke as though the Government would be overthrown by force. This was mere bluff and later he tended to deprecate violent action - he was quite unpredictable. Only Dr. Taylor, Harney, M'Donall, and Bronterre O'Brien from the very first were prepared to go all out to secure the Charter by revolution. (The Rev. Stephens was out of action, awaiting/

awaiting trial for sedition). O'Brien later became convinced that the mass of the people were either apathetic towards, or did not approve of, a policy of force and became a moral means supporter. All this background helps to clarify the hours of fruitless bickering and wasted effort that took place. In many ways the Convention was subject to payment by results; constituents wanted something for their hard-earned money, something tangible, not mere words.

The Convention was unlucky. They had too much time. Signatures for the Petition came in very slowly and it was only presented to Roebuck (the M.P. who was to bring it before Parliament) on May 7th. At the same time the Whig Government of Melbourne resigned and so the House only received the petition on June 14th, giving its verdict nearly a month later. For five months the Convention fought to maintain the enthusiasm of those who paid the salaries; at the same time it did not relish actual warfare. In avoiding the Scylla of growing public apathy, they were likely to run on the Charybdis of Government prosecution. For a time there was enough work to keep everyone busy. Hugh Craig, of Ayrshire, was appointed as first regular chairman. A week was spent in drawing up the "Rules and Regulations of the General Convention", which showed it to be a peaceful, agitating, body. They also were unanimous in/

in deciding to oppose fiercely the newly-formed Anti-Corn Law League, on the grounds that it was middle-class sponsored and intended to weaken their own movement. The Charter was to be secured first; Repeal would automatically follow. Another fruitful discussion led to the deppatch of certain members to lecture in areas as yet untouched by Chartism. It was also prepared that 'hustings' candidates be put up at every convenient election. All this - and it was not much for nearly three months' work - was practical politics. The rest was talk. Strangely enough restraint was practised at Convention meetings and violent language and ideas were kept for public meetings outside.⁹⁸ Thus Harney spoke at Smithfield wearing a red cap of liberty (per French Revolution) and with other members of the London Democratic Society expressed the view that 'If the Convention did its duty, the Charter would be law in less than a month' and talked of resistance. Later, at the Crown and Anchor Tavern, there was an even stranger outburst. Sankey, the Edinburgh **delegate**, averred that mere petitioning would not carry the Charter, however many signatures the Petition had unless they were "the signatures of millions of fighting men".⁹⁹ O'Connor backed this up by pointing out that millions of petitions would not dislodge a troop of dragoons. As the Physical Force section gradually assumed control, sentiments such as these/

⁹⁸ For an account of the Convention see Hovell and Gammage op.cit.

⁹⁹ Hovell op.cit. p.137.

these became the stock-in-trade of many Convention members. This had two important results; the moderates began to leave the assembly and the manufacturing districts of England became convinced that a revolution would take place. London, however, remained quiet. The Convention made no impression on the well-paid London artisans. Partly because of this and partly because they feared Government reprisals, the delegates decided to move, early in May, to Birmingham where there was much distress and consequently disaffection. This was one step nearer to incipient revolt. Proof of this was the issue of a 'Manifesto', to be submitted to all Chartist Associations for consideration and comment. Eight questions were asked of the people,

(1) Whether they would withdraw all savings from banks etc. if requested by the Convention?

(2) Whether they would convert paper money into gold?

(3) Would they support a Sacred Month, i.e. abstain from all labour during that period as well as from all intoxicating drinks?

(4) Whether 'they have prepared themselves WITH THE ARMS OF FREEMEN'?

(5) Would they put up Chartist Candidates at the next general election and, if returned by show of hands, consider them the real/

real representatives of the people, to meet in London later?

(6) Would they 'DEAL EXCLUSIVELY WITH CHARTISTS'?

(7) Whether they would hold out for the Charter and nothing but the Charter? (aimed at the Anti-Corn Law League).

(8) Would they obey 'the just and constitutional requests of the majority of the Convention'?

This document was signed by Craig and Lovett.¹⁰⁰ Almost immediately after it was issued, the Convention adjourned for six weeks. This interlude was marked by a growing urge to revolt amongst the depressed workers of England. Everywhere Convention members were active making seditious or semi-seditious speeches.⁵

/ In Scotland alone did a moderate tone prevail. Collins, for instance, avowed moral force principles at Greenock, Bannockburn, Alloa, Dunfermline, Montrose, Dundee, Perth and Edinburgh whilst nightly meetings were held on Glasgow Green under the presidency of Moir and others disclaiming any resort to force.¹⁰¹ Undoubtedly this period, with the Convention hot-heads let loose on the country, was very dangerous from the point of view of the authorities. A nervous middle class demanded, and received, protection. Fortunately for everybody the Government found the right man for the job in General Napier - a humane gentleman with real sympathy for the under-dog. He was rightly convinced that no armed revolt was planned, the only danger being/

¹⁰⁰ Gammage op.cit. p.110 et seq.. Full text in Postgate op.cit. p.124.

¹⁰¹ Gammage op.cit. p.115 and p.124.

being a spontaneous outbreak. By a judicious show of force and tactful handling, he curbed the extremists.

As a result the only disturbances of any note at this time were at Birmingham. The Bull Ring, a congested meeting-place, had been declared 'out of bounds' for political meetings by the Magistrates. However, carried away by excitement (at the proximity of the Convention?) a large crowd assembled there. The Mayor panicked and ordered the area to be cleared, using London Metropolitan police and soldiers to carry the order out forcibly. Strangely enough the two Scots extremists and medicos, Taylor and M'Donall, attempted to restrain the outraged mob from further violence and were arrested for their pains, without warrants, at two in the morning. M'Donall was released almost at once but Taylor was less fortunate. He was committed to Warwick gaol, bail was fixed at £1,000, his hair was cropped and he was treated as a common felon. Later the charges against him were dropped.¹⁰² The sequel to this affair was that the Convention issued a strong series of resolutions condemning the magistrates for their actions. Lovett and Collins, as a result, were arrested, for seditious libel. Half-frightened by the forces they had unleashed the Convention retaliated by resolving to put into operation some of the ulterior measures (withdrawal of savings, a run on gold, and abstention from exciseable liquor). Wisely they/

¹⁰² Gammage 127 et seq. Hovell op.cit. p.156.

they would not commit themselves to the Sacred Month since it was almost clear from the reports brought back after the recess that the country was not nearly ready for it. Events, however, proved too strong and ended these Fabian tactics. On July 12 the Petition came before the whole House and was rejected by 235 votes to 46. The delegates now had to make up their minds about the future. Feeling throughout the country was running high: the Convention either had to lead or resign. After two days' debate this 'Rump Convention' (only 24 were present) decided to carry on with the National Holiday (a euphemism for 'national strike') and fixed August 12th as the day on which it was to start. Even as they debated (back in London again) a second riot broke out in the Bull Ring, a much more serious affair with smashing of street lamps, looting and burning. The news of this Frankenstein monster they had evoked, and a timely report from the erstwhile Physical Force leader, Bronterre O'Brien, on the unpreparedness of the country for action, made them re-consider, One week to the day after it had been approved, the Convention rescinded the resolution calling for the National Holiday!¹⁰³ No movement, no directing body, could hope to survive such vacillation. It was indeed the death of the Convention and the obsequies were hastened by wholesale arrests all over the country, on charges ranging from illegal assembly to/

¹⁰³ Hovell op.cit. Chapter X. Gammage op.cit. p.138 et seq.

to high treason. Higgins, M'Donall, Richardson, Stephens, Lovett and Collins were amongst those leaders who received various sentences of imprisonment. The Convention had achieved virtually nothing either in the moral sphere or in terms of armed revolt. Typically it was Dr. Taylor who, having denounced many of his colleagues as a pack of cowards, proposed its final dissolution. He also seized this opportunity to ~~attack~~ O'Connor for making a complete volte-face on the subject of force at the moment when violent measures fitted in with the mood (and needs) of the country. Two committees, one under O'Connor to administer the remaining funds, the other with Taylor and O'Brien to write a valedictory address, were the last remnants of the once-proud Convention. Before this a suitable epitaph had been provided by Hugh Craig in the session which revoked the Sacred Month decision, when he declared that "It (the Convention) has committed political suicide".¹⁰⁴ Cynically - and equally aptly - contemporary opinion believed that it had talked itself to death, presumably another form of suicide!

¹⁰⁴Gammage op.cit. p.146-8

Chapter V. Scotland and the Convention.

(a) The Delegates.

Apart from pronouncing the body defunct and providing an undertaker, the Scots played a part in this Convention out of all proportion to their actual numbers. By one of those paradoxes inherent in Chartism, they not only were the mainstay of the moderates but supplied two fiery leaders for the supporters of violence. As the latter were not representative of the true inclinations of the Scots it is perhaps advisable to deal with them at once. Mention has been made repeatedly of the two Scots 'doctors', Taylor and M'Donall. Somehow of the twain, at least during this phase, Taylor was the real leader probably because of his legendary background and flamboyant personality.¹⁰⁵ From the start both expounded the doctrine that 'all was fair' in the fight for the Charter, including revolution. M'Donall at the opening meeting emphatically declared that if the Convention was not going to proceed to ultimate measures he "would go home at once". Later, in Hyde, he urged his hearers 'to prepare themselves for the struggle' and advised them 'to use arms if soldiers were called out against them'. This was greeted/

¹⁰⁵ Taylor was described as "swarthy countenance^d fairly tall, small but piercing black eyes, black bushy grisly hair hanging in great abundance arranged à la Milton - blue jacket and trousers, red flannel shirt, black neckcloth". Sometimes he wore sailor's garb.

greeted with a fusillade of pistol-shots from the enthusiastic audience.¹⁰⁶ Subsequently in June he was arrested for his part in this affair and tried a month later for sedition and attending an illegal assembly. Of his association with Taylor in the Bull Ring riot enough has been said, but it was significant in that their efforts to restrain the mob showed sound tactical sense. Such disturbances were bound to fail and psychologically would have a bad effect. Only a national effort could succeed. With his trial and conviction M'Donall secured added prestige and stature as a leader. Sedition trials were excellent publicity for the movement in one way; they made martyrs and heroes at one and the same time. The accused leaders made long defence speeches which sometimes lasted for seventeen hours, in some cases hurling defiance at both Government and judges.¹⁰⁷ Such speeches were a sure passport to Radical immortality (evanescent though it was). M'Donall secured his own apotheosis with a mild effort of four hours!

Taylor seems to have been regarded as the military specialist of the Chartists, expected by many to lead in any actual fighting. His speeches bore the stamp of the true revolutionary with many, if vague, references to his activities in this sphere on the Continent. With great persistence he tried to make/

¹⁰⁶Hovell op,cit. pp.135,139,155.

¹⁰⁷Stephens' speech was of this type but Lovett made an excellent vindication of his principles.

make the Convention adopt all the ulterior measures. Yet he could show circumspection and during his May 1839 tour of Scotland (i.e. the recess) he confined himself almost entirely to eulogies of the effectiveness of 'exclusive dealing'. Gammage declares that "he never sought by clap-trap to win popular applause". Whether this was true or not is a matter for dispute; but unquestionably his approach was practical as this extract from a speech on Glasgow Green during this same tour shows,

"I have always said exclusive dealing is one of the best plans to bring our enemies to our feet. If you chalk up the doors on each side of the streets and mark every shopkeeper who will not assist you to gain your freedom, you will soon bring them to think that the working class is fit for the exercise of the franchise. As the music of the pennies - the only music the shopkeeper loves to hear - ceases, and the boxes become empty, he might be brought to acknowledge the right of the people to be represented".¹⁰⁸ His other activities were rather more sinister. That same month General Napier feared an outbreak in the Manchester area. The Chartists had got hold of five brass cannon and Taylor came down from Glasgow to lead them. Napier adopted the unorthodox but successful plan of inviting Taylor and the other local leaders to a demonstration of a battery/

¹⁰⁸ Gammage op.cit. p.115 et seq.

battery of artillery firing.¹⁰⁹ This undoubtedly cooled their martial ardour! After the demise of the Convention in which he played a leading part, he was still very optimistic about the future success of Chartism. Speaking at Carlisle he again advocated violence in such terms that the Magistrates issued a warrant for his arrest. He was at a meeting in Newcastle with Byrne as fellow-speaker, when advice was received that the Carlisle officers were on their way, to enforce the order. Taylor changed his somewhat distinctive clothing with Byrne and made his escape. Byrne, naturally enough, was arrested instead since the officers did not know Taylor by sight. Later on Taylor was arrested and bound over to appear at the Assizes when called (in fact he was never asked to do so).¹¹⁰ He played some part in the Frost rising in Newport - the only really violent outbreak involving an actual clash between Chartists and regular troops. There is reason to suppose that this might have been part of a co-ordinated national rebellion which went wrong. Bussey and Taylor are suggested as leaders organising the miners and weavers of the north. As far as Scotland is concerned there is absolutely no evidence of an intended participation in such a joint enterprise. Whatever the truth may be, Taylor was reported to have been in the Newport area at the time/

¹⁰⁹ Napier: Life and Opinions of General Sir C.J. Napier, II, 40.
¹¹⁰ Gammage op.cit. p.159.

time of the outbreak.¹¹¹ Arising from this is yet another 'Taylor legend'. Frost, the leader, was sentenced to be transported. O'Connor declared in 1845 that Taylor fitted a vessel out to waylay the convict ship which was taking Frost to America (sic) and rescue him!¹¹² This is highly improbable. The ^{most?} past positive evidence of Taylor's activities in England before ill-health drove him to Island Magee was a meeting in Manchester on Dec. 10th 1839. Here he was as fiery as ever, still as hopeful and offering the usual practical advice - that in the event of a revolt soldiers were to be harassed by systematic incendiarism!¹¹³

Such were the two Scots leaders of the violent faction in the Convention. They gave the Physicals what little unity of purpose they ever had and, through Taylor, a semblance of a practical policy. It may be argued that this is not fair to Frost who did at least participate in an actual rising. Facts, however, tend to show that Frost was swept along by a stream of events beyond his control. The Newport affair, although labelled Chartist, was but one more incident in the struggle of the Welsh miners for what have been termed 'the rights of labour'. The People's Charter provided a pretext for action which, in any/

111 Home Office Papers 40(45) Monmouth Nov.16th-19th 1839.

112 Hovell, p.184.

113 Gammage op.cit. p.181 et seq.. Hovell. p.182. This was apparently part of a plot to rescue Frost and assassinate his judges on their way to Monmouth!

any case, was almost inevitable. Frost, at heart a moderate, was drawn into the vortex. For the two 'doctors' the Six Points were an end in themselves which had to be gained. Furthermore through their middle-class and professional qualifications they lent prestige to the movement. Taylor most certainly had a very wide following through acting as reporter of the Convention for O'Connor's 'Northern Star' and by contributing articles to the 'Scottish Patriot'. Even though their opinions were unrepresentative of Scotland, they contributed much to the Convention, showing up its fundamental weakness, its inability to make a decision, and stick to it. In fact their influence over the extremists was greater than O'Connor's; for all his bellicose talk he lacked the firmness of character and of purpose so necessary to the true revolutionary and which these two possessed in no common measure.

In process of going from the extreme towards the moderate, a curious phenomenon appears. It is the lunatic fringe of the Convention, the gyrovagi from the moderate fold, amongst whom must be placed Sankey, the Edinburgh delegate. He might be termed 'a microcosm of O'Connor', playing with violence yet afraid to be hurt. He had all of his leaders' inconsistencies without O'Connor's superb though confused oratory and magnetic leadership. When Harney, early in February, was making revolutionary

revolutionary speeches outside the Convention and wearing that famous (or infamous) 'red cap of liberty', it was Sankey who brought forward a motion disapproving of members 'who were injuring the cause by using French terms and wearing French emblems'.¹¹⁴ Yet a month later he made the speech quoted already ("the signatures of millions of fighting men"¹¹⁵) at the Crown and Anchor Tavern. This change obviously reflected O'Connor's own strange mental processes. On April the 9th, debating in the Convention the right of the people to arm, he changed sides once more and came out strongly against the motion.¹¹⁶ After this confused effort, Sankey played no major rôle in the proceedings. He gained slight prominence by opposing the move to Birmingham. About this his feelings were so strong that, with Cleane and Halley, he entered a firm protest against the move and had the fact recorded in the minutes. However, he lacked consistency even in this and later struck out his signature from the protest.¹¹⁷ Clearly Sankey did not leave his mark on the Convention, achieving prominence only by one violent speech and by his vacillations. There were many like him in that body, men of good intentions and superficial abilities, pursuing no definite plan, who led the 'London Dispatch' to/

^{114&5} Gammage, op.cit. pp 105, 115.

¹¹⁶ Hovell op.cit., p.132.

¹¹⁷ op.cit. p.146 and also Add. MSS 34, 245 A p.432.

to declare, quite justly, that the Convention 'was more concerned to show how clever it was than to further the cause with good suggestions and sound measures'. Sankey, at the end, was probably once more a moral force man since he later made his peace with Fraser.

Still examining those Scots delegates with extremist tendencies, rather surprisingly Abram Duncan calls for inclusion. The heady wine of the Convention affected one who had always advocated peaceful methods as being 'cheaper in the long run'. His ability as a lecturer was soon recognised and he was despatched on a missionary tour of Cornwall with Lowery. Results were not as good as expected and they reported,

"... Were we not going to it neck or nothing, we should never get a meeting; the tradespeople are afraid to move and the working men want drilling before entering the ranks".¹¹⁸ Duncan was much in demand and formed part of a Convention 'circus' which toured large industrial towns during the recess. Undoubtedly he fell into the trap laid for all unwary political speakers; he started to tell his audience what they wanted to hear. Soon there was no difference between the sentiments he expounded and those of the Physicals; yet his religious outlook/

¹¹⁸ op.cit. 34, 245 A p.120.

look on life remained unchanged and at heart he was always in favour of moral force. A large audience arouses the worst in any demagogue. How else can this outburst of Duncan's at Newcastle be explained?

"Tens of thousands of men in our land are now in such misery, that even a field of battle and a death of pain present no terrors for them. It is of little use prophesying in these days, but I may be allowed to predict that the next time you meet in such numbers here, it will be to pass very different resolutions and that your conduct will be that of a people united in one solemn determination either to see their country free, or perish in one common conflagration".¹¹⁹

This much can be said for Duncan; having committed himself to a semi-violent policy he seems to have held to that line at the critical meeting which proposed to put ulterior measures into action (July 28th). He was quite unequivocal - those who had voted for the National Holiday ought to carry it through. No one today would question the wisdom of this advice - from the Convention's point of view. The decision not to hold the Holiday proved fatal to that body. Perhaps it was this possibility that Duncan had in mind. He was responsible in part for that spate of wild oratory which prepared the country (or should it be 'conditioned' the country) for something more than words/

¹¹⁹ Gammage op.cit. p.115.

words. Eloquence thus betrayed him into a false position - one which was to lead to much recrimination, and consequently dis-unity, amongst certain sections of the Scots Chartists.

Five delegates actually did carry out the wishes of their constituents - they were Matthew, Burns, Halley, Moir and Craig. The first of this quintet made little or no contribution to the ~~asse~~mbly. An enlightened landed proprietor, he soon got tired of these unusual surroundings and on April 22nd returned home. This was not unexpected since he was a pacifist and the Convention was - well, the Convention! Burns made several good speeches in favour of moral force, notably on May 6th when opposing an 'Address' of Lowery's which suggested armed resistance for the people. From a practical point of view he declared that the Chartists, so far from being a majority of the country, were only a minority - a struggling political party.¹²⁰ (This was confirmed by reports that later came in from the country). Of course there was an outcry from the delegates at this blow to their amour-propre and loud shouts of "No! We are ten to one!" Burns urbanely retorted that 'if that was the case they only had to show they were in such a majority and there would be no need to talk of arms'. Equally practical, too, was his support of O'Brien's motion to appoint/

¹²⁰ Hovell op.cit. pp 126-8.

appoint a Committee to find out what the people really thought of the Sacred Month (July 22nd). Burns seems to have fallen a little by the wayside in regard to violent language. At the end of May he was in Dundee reporting on the Convention. The 'Dundee Courier' commented, "Burns's system seems first to be - to burn the factories, throw the people idle, occasion a revolution and all this to obtain a common good". This was a very prejudiced report and Burns did not lack defenders. However the occasion probably proved too much for him and his expressions were a little warmer than usual. There could be no doubt of his belief in moral force. Working for the Convention he made a short lecture tour in the North of Scotland. The results are not known but it is recorded that in Arbroath he "was treated as a vagrant and made to move on".¹²¹ He deserves much credit for remaining true to his principles in the face of much opposition both in the Convention and in Dundee.

With Burns must be placed Halley - an eminently practical Scot. In the debate on "the right of the people to possess arms", he threw cold water into that heated discussion by asking a series of questions to which the Convention had no real answer.

(1) What was the practical value of the resolution?

(2) /

¹²¹Memoranda of the Chartist Movement in Dundee pp.9-15.

(2) Were they going to prepare for a campaign?

(3) Had they a large enough following in the country?

He always kept his remarks on ~~this~~ sober level, bringing a much-needed note of reality into the proceedings. With Burns he **emphatically** opposed Lowery's "Address" and refused to have anything to do with the Birmingham Manifesto.¹²² He left when the Convention adjourned in May, having made a worth-while contribution to its work. Truly he was "a powerful advocate of sober measures".

Moir must certainly be classed as one of the moderate leaders. Amongst his fellow-delegates he had great repute as a reformer and as a successful business-man. Like Abram Duncan he was appointed a missionary-lecturer and, with Cardo, carried the principles of the Charter into Devonshire without, however, much success. In the sessions themselves he always expressed his belief in peaceful methods. For the Glasgow area he formed the focal point of moderate agitation being in constant demand as chairman at Radical meetings. One such large meeting in May 1839 at Glasgow had amongst its speakers such Physcials as Frost, Taylor, Bussey and O'Brien. Strangely enough they confined their speeches to the peaceful sanctions (particularly exclusive dealing and a run on the banks). Moir's presence, and possibly advice, may have had something to do with this unusual/

¹²² Hovell, p.132 and p.146.

unusual tact, necessary when dealing with the moral force Scots.¹²³ Meetings at which Moir presided usually were of a quiet character. He was quite convinced that the measures proposed would prove successful and he had a high regard for the potent effects of a run on the banks. It was for this reason that in July he urged the Convention to return to London.¹²⁴ There had been a considerable flight of gold out of the country and he declared that the Convention should be on hand to profit from the consequent embarrassment of the Government. 'Rory' brought a little of the business world into the rarified atmosphere of the Convention.

Another of the same breed was Hugh Craig, the first regular chairman. Early on he put forward a motion to define 'ulterior measures' which unfortunately was dropped, otherwise much of the confused talk might have been clarified. When he spoke of "agitating the very bricks and mortar" at Newcastle, he effectively summed up his own policy. Meetings were still in progress when he was given leave of absence to contest Ayr as a Chartist in a by-election. An account of this will illustrate the problems of Radical candidates. In the streets of Kilmarnock his supporters paraded with flags and a band: amongst/

¹²³ Gammage, op.cit. p.115 et seq..

¹²⁴ op.cit. p.124. [Jan.20 - June 26th - 49,090 ozs of silver bars : 247,344 ozs silver coin : 11,750 ozs gold coin : 6,570 ozs gold bars - sent out of the country] .

amongst them, "what was certainly unbecoming, numbers of well-dressed women - the leaders of Chartist associations - from Kilmaurs and other villages [who] rode through the streets in cars, hurrying forward at the desire of their constituencies to Ayr". Altogether a crowd of 3-4,000 accompanied Craig to the hustings. He had two opponents. Lord Kilburne (Tory) declared a representative sent to Parliament under universal suffrage would not exercise his own judgement or listen to arguments but vote as directed by his constituents. He was also in favour of the Corn Laws. Campbell (Whig) wanted some extension of the suffrage but only because the Tories placed so many 'fictitious men' on the electoral rolls. Craig, of course, advocated the People's Charter and had a warning to give to middle-class voters (probably the result of listening to the Convention!) "if ten pounders did not do their duty with more propriety, an outburst would take place in some parts of England, the like of which had not been seen for two hundred years". On the show of hands only seven were put up for the Tory, and Craig was declared the victor even over Campbell. Of course a poll was demanded with the following results, obtained^{P5} after two days' voting.

Ayr/

¹²⁵Edinburgh Evening Courant May 2, 1839.

Ayr Election 1839 for M.P..

| Place | Kilburne (Tory) | Campbell (Whig) | Craig (Chartist). |
|-------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| Colmonell | 86 | 127 | - |
| Girvan | 97 | 195 | 1 |
| Maybole | 266 | 200 | - |
| Ayr | 328 | 194 | 2 |
| Cummock | 331 | 191 | - |
| Mauchline | 442 | 170 | 4 |
| Galston | 413 | 243 | 24 |
| Stewarton | 257 | 279 | 9 |
| Beith | 232 | 227 | 29 |
| Dalry | 292 | 107 | 6 |
| W. Kilbride | 327 | 204 | 2 |
| Kilwinning | 247 | 273 | 2 |
| | 3318 | 2410 | 79 |

After this effort Craig returned to the Convention and reported that the people of Ayrshire were willing to obey only the legal and constitutional orders it might issue. He seems to have become a little weary of the schizoid nature of the assembly and this led, on July 16th, to his declaration that the Convention/

Convention had 'committed suicide' and his resignation.¹²⁶ Perhaps this last step was hastened by a dispute that had arisen with his constituents. His original election had not been unanimous since Ayrshire had physical force elements. This split ultimately led to a dispute^t over his salary (which the Physicals wanted to withhold). It was a sad ending to Craig's worthy efforts that in the following November he was sued by a section of the local Chartists for 'repayment of a sum [£8-6-8] which they alleged had been overpaid under protest by the treasurer'.¹²⁷ His work in the Convention had brought about a schism in his own people. Nevertheless Craig had been a sound and well-respected delegate.

From this brief account of their activities it is clear that, with one or two exceptions, the Scots delegates upheld the principles of moral force. On several occasions they tried to bring a common-sense approach to the deliberations and suggested a practical line of policy. Unlike the Birmingham delegates who withdrew on seeing, and hearing, the temper of their colleagues, the Scots in nearly every case remained to fight a losing battle against the Physicals. They were defeated but not dishonoured. If Scotland gained nothing from the Convention, no harm was done to the cause by Scottish delegates. The English/

¹²⁶ Gammage op.cit. 146 et seq.
¹²⁷ Scotsman, Nov.25th 1839.

English movement, in several instances, suffered irreparable damage from the wild fulminations of delegates and much potential middle-class support was frightened away. The Scottish middle-class could view the Convention from a distance with amused tolerance, being reasonably sure that their own fellow-countrymen would not follow its advice on any large scale. The way was thus left clear for co-operation between middle and working classes in the future. There was even an unwilling respect for Taylor and M'Donall for their consistency and leadership. It was probably the result of a sentiment such as "See what the middle class can do, even in a wrong cause!"

(b) The People.

What effect did this confusing spectacle in England have upon the Scots? There had been much activity in collecting funds and the allowances made to delegates were quite liberal.¹²⁸ However, once the Petition was completed interest wilted. For this the talk of rebellion and the prolonged sittings were responsible. It was hard to pay out funds and receive nothing in return, except an occasional letter. Moral force supporters were steadily being absorbed into the rising Scottish Chartist movement/

¹²⁸ True Scotsman Oct. 17th 1839: "After Dr. Taylor was appointed to the Convention Physical Force Chartists in Paisley were triumphant. They paid the Dr. £20 a month and received a letter every week".

movement; the Physicals, of course, hung on the words of Dr. Taylor and O'Connor. A few examples will suffice. In March 1839 there was a difference of opinion amongst the Dundee Chartists and a break-away Association was formed. Obviously the dispute was over methods and a little later it was reported "a number of infatuated individuals have commenced drilling".¹²⁹ During the early days of the Convention Dr. Taylor received an enquiry from Aberdeen as to whether the constitutional maxims quoted, during a debate, justifying legally the possession of arms also applied to Scotland.¹³⁰ From the same quarter came grossly exaggerated reports that local members were heavily armed!

In July a meeting was called on the Calton Hill mainly to protest against the action taken by the authorities in the Birmingham (Bull Ring) riots and to raise funds for defending those arrested. There was a very poor attendance. Peddie, a staymaker, referred to the "base, bloody, cowardly Whigs" and was reproved by Dr. Glover for using such language.¹³¹ A similar meeting in the Bazaar at Glasgow proposed to send 'memorials' to the Legislative on "the illegal, unconstitutional attack made on the people of Birmingham by the London Police". This was a full/

¹²⁹ Memoranda op.cit. p.12.
¹³⁰ Add. MSS. 34,245 A p.260.
¹³¹ Scotsman July 18th 1839.

full-blooded Physical demonstration with advice being given to 'use any money they had saved for the Fair to buy pistols'. Brewster, of course, was attacked and a threat made that "if Lord John Russell persisted in sanctioning and encouraging such illegal attacks ... [he] would suffer what ^PSoencer Percival suffered in the Lobby of the House of Commons". Two things call for comment in both these meetings (1) the small attendance, and (2) their surprisingly peaceful conclusions. At Glasgow the Chairman summed up in a phrase which epitomised the feelings of the Scottish Physicals "it was not worth while getting themselves into a scrape because the Birmingham chaps had done so".¹³²

So much for the extremists: what of the 'in-betweens', the Faint Hearts? Sankey was the prime example in the Convention and his constituents were no better. They met in Whitefields Chapel, Carrubers Close, on July 13th and were told that implicit obedience to the orders of the Convention was the test of a true Radical. A proposal was then made that - to enforce exclusive dealing - each should subscribe ten shillings to open their own shop. The response was so poor that the idea was dropped. John Duncan then complained that few of them had signed a pledge to refrain from spirituous liquors, tea and coffee/

¹³² Scotsman, July 18th 1839.

coffee. "If they could not do this, how could they stand by the Convention?" was his theme. Once more the attendance was sparse and there were only two speakers. No wonder one contemporary remarked, "The Chartists are not of much importance here".¹³³

Fortunately there is even better evidence of what the Scots Chartists were prepared to do. After the Convention had changed its mind about the National Holiday, a Committee was set up to enquire into the real wishes of the people on this matter. In connection with this a delegate meeting in Glasgow during August heard the following reports from various localities.

Ayr - is not ready to demand its rights nor to appeal to ulterior measures.

Barrhead - no money to withdraw from Savings Bank. Exciseable articles had been practically given up, but they were not generally prepared for the Sacred Month.

Dundee - unprepared for the Sacred Month entirely. They had run on the Savings Banks with considerable effect.

Musselburgh - exclusive dealing was carried so far that they had formed an association of 50 members each of whom had contributed ten shillings to carry out that grand object.

Elderslie - (a small village) agreed entirely to the ulterior measures and ready for the Sacred Month.

Irvine /

Irvine - not in favour of ulterior measures; in need of organisation.

Juniper Green - Moral means only. Any man using violent language in their Association will be turned out.

Kilbarchan - 223 in the Association. Friendly 119, Whigs 36, Tory 30; Indifferent 38.

Old Cumnock - 120 in the Association; 40 were Physicals.

Tillicoultry - all ulterior measures except the Sacred Month.

Aberdeen - 1800 Chartists; not a few prepared for physical force.

Paisley - run on the Savings Ban taking great effect. One friendly society had lifted £200 and another £100. A great number of individuals were determined to arm. Several societies getting money to buy some articles; they did not say what they were, but they cost about 15/8d.

Tollcross - favoured a run on the Savings Bank.

Calton - Exclusive dealing will be tried. They will abstain from exciseable articles as far as will not affect their health.

Bathgate - in favour of exclusive dealing and abstention from exciseable articles.

Falkirk - 180 Chartists.

Fife - 32 Radicals in the Association.

Gourock - in favour of exclusive dealing, withdrawals from the Savings Bank, and abstention from exciseable articles".¹³⁴

From/

¹³⁴ True Scotsman, Aug. 17th 1839.

From this it can be seen that very few associations were in favour of all the ulterior measures. Most of them were prepared to adopt exclusive dealing, usually by forming their own local co-operatives. This was in the best Robert Owen tradition. Perhaps the best example of this was in Hawick where there were over a thousand Chartists. On September 9th 1839 they opened their own Provision Store and received a loan from the Stocking Makers Society to tide them over their early difficulties. That store still exists today as the 'Hawick Co-operative Store'.¹³⁵ As for withdrawing money from the banks, this was not so popular. Few people had money they could withdraw and if, as was suggested, they took their savings out in the form of gold and silver, where could they safely keep it, under the crowded working-class conditions of that period? (One unfortunate mason withdrew £15, his total savings, in silver only to have it stolen shortly afterwards.¹³⁶) Again abstinence from exciseable articles presented difficulties - few could afford them and fewer still could do without the comfort derived from a little tea or whisky! Finally, apart from the usual hints in Paisley and Aberdeen and the militant Elderslie, no association sanctioned the use of force. Scotland had no real interest in rebellion. Perhaps the last word on the Convention from a moderate point of view was given at a delegate meeting/

¹³⁵ History of the Hawick Co-operative Store 1889.

¹³⁶ Scotsman Aug. 6th 1839.

meeting in Montrose, which referred to "Political quacks living in idleness on the contributions of honest labour".¹⁴⁰

The English Phase of the movement was ended and its failure left surprisingly little mark on the Scots. From England had come the initiation of the Charter and the Convention, ideas to which the Scots had given full practical support. That support was forfeited when violence began to rear its head in the speeches of O'Connor, Bussey, Stephens and O'Brien. After the Edinburgh Resolutions the way was clear for a type of Chartism native to Scotland to develop under the guidance of those believing in education, moral force and the possibility of middle-class coöperation. Few in Scotland felt any real disappointment over the failure of the Convention. The rejection of the People's Charter was deplored, of course, but only the followers of Taylor and M'Donall felt any pangs of regret when the assembly dispersed. Even they were probably more preoccupied with local vendettas against moral force advocates than with English affairs. The Convention had lasted too long (there may be truth in the notion that O'Connor kept the Convention alive to 'boost' the sales of his 'Northern Star'.) This time there were to be no Scottish troops riding south to save the Rump!

¹⁴⁰Edinburgh Evening Courant. June 24th 1839.

II. THE SCOTTISH PHASE, 1839-1842.

Chapter I. Eastern leadership - or abstraction.

By the end of August the English movement was more or less moribund. The sharp reaction of the authorities resulting, as it did, in the imprisonment of many leaders, and acute disappointment over the failure of the Convention, had left the English Chartists spiritless. After the Frost rebellion, activity for the next six months was confined to raising Defence and Relief funds, with several petitions for clemency to be exercised in the cases of those sentenced at Monmouth. In Scotland, the picture was very different. No leaders had been imprisoned (Taylor and M'Donall were really 'English' leaders). There had been a resurgence of middle-class interest in reform and this fitted in with the Scottish version of Chartism which owed its inception to the stand taken by the Edinburgh Radicals and Brewster over the question of physical force. Circumstances demanded that this leadership should remain for a while with the East of Scotland Radicals. Fraser controlled the most successful Chartist newspaper and was committed only to a formal support of the principles of the Convention. He could, and did, stand aside from its deliberations and developed his own ideas, knowing that he would gain the approval of those areas/

areas where his paper circulated. That support was not negligible: at one time his Chartist weekly had a larger circulation than the 'Scotsman', after which it was named!¹ Another factor making for this temporary hegemony of the east, was that Glasgow had given an equivocal answer on the question of moral force. Moir, the Glasgow delegate, did believe in it but as a leading member of the Convention had neither the time nor the inclination to pursue a separate Scottish policy. Quite unjustifiably his moral force fellow-countrymen tended to visit the sins of the Convention upon his innocent head! For these and other reasons Fraser and Brewster had a free hand at first in expounding their ideas.

Signs of the new approach were soon apparent in the 'True Scotsman'. On January 12th 1839 there appeared a long article setting out a suggested programme of reform. It was surprisingly comprehensive and went far beyond the 'Six Points'. Fraser was not the author of it but had a share in drawing out ^t many of its proposals. For comparison, later, with the ideas of the West of Scotland moderates, here is a brief account of the main points;

(1)/ .

¹ Cowan, op.cit. p.170.

(1) there was to be a general system of education for the Empire. Parishes of 5-6,000 people were to be formed, for each of which there would be a school accommodating 5-600 pupils, each with the requisite schoolmasters and apprentices. A teacher would receive £1 to £1-10-0 per pupil, with an average income of £80 per annum. He was also to have a good house and a large garden which, for one hour a day, the pupils would cultivate for him. All instruction was to be free, with no religious teaching. The subjects suggested were Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, Geography, the first six books of Euclid, practical mathematics, natural philosophy, chemistry and botany!

(2) a national system of colonisation.

(3) sanitary police for dwellings, factories and workshops.

(4) a ten hours day in industry and no children under 12 to be employed.

(5) all exports and imports to be free of duty, except on intoxicating liquors and the produce of slave labour.

(6) abolition of the laws regarding entail and primogeniture.

(7) Civil laws to be embodied in a short, intelligible Code.

(8) "That all writings and mouldy parchments regarding land tenure and property - mere instruments of lawyer pillage - be made a bonfire of, and no evidence of title right admitted but possession and the Register Book kept in a fireproof apartment in each county town".

(9)/

(9) Taxes prejudicial to health to be removed (for some reason those on fire insurance and public rroup were included).

(10) Degrading punishments in the Army and Navy to be abolished: the rotten port~~ion~~^{ion} - 12,000 half-pay officer pensioners - to be lopped away. Promotion to be by ballot vote and enlistment reduced to five years only. Education in the services to be compulsory.

(11) Nineteen years leases now on grain rents to be convertible into money ^erents by the feu^ars at the average rental paid for the last seven years.

(12) Lecturers on Political Economy to be appointed in every district. ["Political Economy, in its wide sense, is the queen of sciences. It compasses the whole moral and physical condition and even our existence - all other sciences are quite subordinate".]^a

Whoever drafted these was no narrow reformer and some of the proposals would have been opposed by English Chartists. Ideas were apparently 'borrowed' from out-and-out revolutionaries (the reform of land-holding, a Civil Code, and the military changes), the Young Tories (Factory reform and the Ten Hour Day), and the Free Traders (later the Anti-Corn Law League). The proposals for education anticipated those of Lovett which later/

^a True Scotsman, 12.1.1839.

later received so much publicity. Altogether it was an ambitious programme but it contained no suggestions as to how these reforms were to be achieved. Herein lies the great weakness of Fraser - nothing he engaged in (except his music and, presumably, Morison's Pills) ever produced a practical result.

This period of eastern leadership lasted virtually unchallenged until August 1839, when the collapse of the Convention made an organised Scottish movement even more of a necessity. It saw a rapid growth in Chartist Association, particularly female branches. There was no coherent, central, organisation but plenty of bright ideas. A County Delegate Meeting in Kilmarnock at the end of March proposed that a Petition be organised by, and for, all female Chartists. More interesting was the decision to draw up a 'Statistical Account of the physical, moral, intellectual and political condition of the working classes in the country'. Unfortunately that is the only reference to that ambitious, and socially valuable, project.³ A little later there raised its head in the 'True Scotsman' what was to be a perennial topic - every Chartist should subscribe £1 per annum to buy land and so acquire Chartist votes.⁴ So it went on, one project after another but no action ever followed.

³ True Scotsman, 13.4.1839.

⁴ True Scotsman, Aug. 10th 1839.

followed. Perhaps this was just as well; on the few occasions when Fraser and his followers attempted something positive, the results were never quite those anticipated. Two instances of this will suffice, to give an insight into 'Eastern leadership'.

One of Fraser's chief aims had always been to win the confidence and support of the middle class. To further this, from time to time the Edinburgh Chartists attended middle class meetings to put forward the case for the Charter in an orderly and logical manner. Thus on Monday, April 1st 1839 the Lord Provost called a meeting in the Waterloo Rooms at 3 p.m. to pass a vote of confidence in the Government on its handling of Irish affairs. The Radicals - despite the awkward time of the meeting from their point of view - attended in force. It was proposed that the Lord Provost should take the chair but Fraser immediately opposed this and put forward Douglas, a working class man, as a candidate. The matter was then put to a vote by show of hands. According to one report the Lord Provost's friends held up their hats as well as their hands, but despite this there was very little between the two factions. Ultimately the result was given in favour of the Lord Provost. Fraser was not satisfied with this and proposed that there should be two chairmen and Douglas came forward to the platform. At this the Lord/

Lord Provost declared the meeting dissolved and left with his supporters. The remaining Radicals voted Douglas to the chair and proceeded to pass a series of resolutions. Dr. Glover, a druggist, after attacking the 1834 Poor Law Act and the 'vacillating policy in Canada' declared that "Ministers have abandoned those liberal principles which they professed before they came to power" and called for a vote of "no confidence" in them. This motion was passed. Other resolutions were in favour of universal suffrage and of dismissing Ministers for bungling Irish affairs. Finally Grant brought forward a resolution to censure the Lord Provost and the Whigs for calling a meeting at such an inconvenient hour.⁵ In thus exactly reversing the original object for which the meeting was called the Chartists were playing at orthodox party politics. Their intervention shows at best a lack of prudence on Fraser's part. Middle class opinion was alienated by the arbitrary manner in which the meeting was taken over. It was one thing to put forward the Six Points in the course of a discussion, quite another to upset the meeting itself. The Whigs justifiably resented this ill-timed attack on their principles and the Tories were equally ready to disown these uncomfortable allies. Here is an enlightened middle-class Whig, Henry Cockburn, commenting on this affair/

⁵E.E.C. 4.4.1839.

affair, "The newly-risen 'Chartists' ... though excluded by the advertisement, not being friendly to the Govt., attended in organised force and broke up the meeting with violence.... I did not think so blackguard a scene would occur in Edinburgh.... It shows a rise in the Radical Party here, and may not merely affect our next election but may prevent respectable public meetings in Edinburgh for a long time. The Conservatives are delighted - 'the natural consequences of the elevation by the Whigs of the Rabble'."⁶

Equally/

NOTE:

Out of this affair one person, at least, emerges with some credit. Douglas, the working-class chairman, sent a copy of the resolutions to Lord Brougham. He received a prompt, courteous and statesmanlike reply.

Paris. April 8, 1839.

Sir,

I have had the honour of receiving your letter, and the enclosed resolutions of the Edinburgh meeting; and as soon as I arrive in London ... I shall hasten to obey the commands of the meeting, signified through you.... I assure you there was no necessity to apologise for a working man conveying them to me. I have an unalterable respect and affection for the industrious classes of my fellow-citizens.... I hope that nothing will occur at Edinburgh to split the friends of Liberal principles. The Whigs are for the present very likely in the wrong but I believe their error is only in judgment.

Brougham. " 7

⁶Cockburn op.cit. April 6th 1839.

⁷E.E.C. 18.4.1839.

Equally disastrous was Fraser's next attempt at practical politics. A Parliamentary by-election was to be held in Edinburgh in June 1839 and the Radicals decided to support any suitable Whig candidate against Macaulay who had aroused their anger by his consistent - and effective - opposition to Chartism.^a A meeting was held in the Waterloo Rooms to find a candidate of the correct Radical hue. Fraser and Glover wanted to exact a pledge from each nominee to support the Six Points, but after some discussion this idea was dropped. However, Aytoun, one possible candidate, expressed himself as in favour of universal suffrage and Tait, another, supported an extended franchise, shorter Parliaments, and vote by ballot. Another name put forward was that of Sharman Crawford who definitely had

Chartist/

^a E.E.C. 1.6.1839. John Duncan, President of the Mid-Lothian U.S.A., asked Macaulay at this election a series of questions. The answers throw light on his attitude to Chartism. One only need be quoted:

'Q. Why have nine-tenths of the people not got a franchise?

A. They are unfit for universal suffrage by their method of asking.'

Chartist sympathies but this nomination did not find favour mainly because Fraser, supported by Robert Wilson (a Leith printer), wanted a pledge from Crawford that he supported universal suffrage. To a logical person it appeared that the Chartists would support Aytoun who was finally preferred by the Whigs. Yet when the election took place Fraser put up Sharman Crawford as a hustings candidate, an action made all the more incomprehensible because Crawford had made it quite clear he did not want to stand. Fraser declared that he did not consider Aytoun to be an 'out and out reformer'. Because of a sore throat this nomination speech by Fraser was not impressive since the Lord Provost had to supply him every few minutes with water, whilst Macaulay handed him an orange! Macaulay replied to this weak effort with a magnificent speech and secured the hustings vote and Fraser refused a poll. Aytoun's comment about this affair certainly had some truth in it, "I ask you if this [the nomination] is not a proof that principle is nothing in Mr. Fraser's eye in comparison with what he conceives to be his own importance?"^a

By this ill-conceived action Fraser had forfeited middle-class support once more and damaged the cause of Chartism. If there was one activity in which the movement had achieved universal/

^a E.E.C. 30.5.1839. 1.6.1839. 6.6.1839.

universal success, it was in hustings nominations. Yet at Edinburgh they had lost on show of hands and this permitted their opponents to declare that their strength was more apparent than real and that only a minority supported the Charter. Matters did not end there. The Whigs subsequently tried to charge the nominators of Crawford with £15, one half of the expenses of the hustings. As Crawford had not gone to the poll, Fraser and his associates repudiated this claim. The Whigs instituted proceedings and a long legal battle followed. The case came before Sheriff Coles, then on appeal to Lord Cunningham, and a final decision ^{was} given by five judges in the Inner House. At every stage a verdict was given in favour of the Radicals but they were made liable for their expenses in defending the action.¹⁰ Naturally this litigation proved expensive for the Edinburgh Chartists. Fraser to meet this tried to make the case into a national crusade to defend the 'constitutional rights of the individual'. (He met with fair success - even Aytoun sent ten shillings towards the legal expenses!) In one way Fraser was right: if the Whigs had been successful in this claim, no Radical could have put up as a hustings candidate without being called upon to pay a share of the election expenses. Thanks to Fraser it was still possible for a working man/

¹⁰ True Scotsman, 7.11.1839. 19.12.1839. 26.12.1839.

man to make the gesture of being elected to Parliament by 'show of hands', and this had considerable propaganda value. On balance, however, the Hustings Case did not help Chartism forward. The original candidature of Crawford had brought dis-unity amongst reformers and his defeat on his own chosen ground as it were, was a major one. The subsequent litigation was probably necessary tactically but from a strategic point of view it was tending to preserve an electoral system which Chartism was seeking to destroy. As such the results gained were not worth all the effort and expenditure involved.¹¹

Fraser's original intervention was a bad mistake, although there is justification for his later actions. The unfortunate impression is left that his nomination of Crawford was done on the spur of the moment without any conscious planning. Fraser's leadership was essentially in ideas and on paper only; he did not/

¹¹How much effort and sacrifice was involved is seen in lists such as this,

[Extract] Subscriptions from the Aberdeen Chartists' towards the Hustings Case.

| | | | |
|---|----|-----|-----|
| Sums at under one shilling | £0 | 12s | 8½d |
| Tanners and curriers per Mr. Waddell | 0 | 2 | 1 |
| From workmen in New Market St. per D.D. | 0 | 2 | 6 |
| " flax-dressers at Broadford Works | 0 | 7 | 7½ |
| " Coach-makers per W.R. | 0 | 3 | 1 |
| " shoemakers shop per G.M'K. | 0 | 2 | 11 |

[A total of £2-0-4 was collected on this list.]

not have the qualities necessary for successful practical action. One other point which will become clearer later was his unfortunate 'gift' of making enemies - often quite unnecessarily. A man of great abilities, high ideals, and good business sense, his egocentric outlook led him to outrage the susceptibilities of his associates.

Chapter II. Western Leadership - or distraction.

Section A. The Plan.

For nearly seven months there was no challenge from the West but the critical debates of the Convention on ulterior measures brought matters to a head. Fraser in the 'True Scotsman' had always tended to ignore the actions of that body and the only full reports of its deliberations appeared in the English 'Northern Star' and 'Northern Liberator'. Undoubtedly in the West of Scotland there were a number of moderates who, though not in favour of violence, still looked to the Convention for guidance and were eager to know how their representatives (particularly Taylor and Moir) had acquitted themselves in that assembly. Fraser's arrogance and tacit disparagement of the West led to the publication in Glasgow of a new Chartist weekly/

weekly. This was the 'Scottish Patriot' and the first number appeared on July 6th 1839. This contained an 'Address' which made quite clear the reasons for its appearance, "to fill the need for a national journal advocating sound Radical principles". Of other Radical papers it claimed that 'only two local or isolated attempts had been made', and that "The cause of their limited encouragement is obvious enough. They were the attempts of single individuals unidentified with the great interests of others and possessing little more than political tact and cleverness, combined with much honesty of purpose.... [they] do not combine all that is necessary to the prosperity of a national newspaper". This was signed by John Proudfoot, W.C. Pattison, John Cumming and Thomas Gillespie (the elected Officers) and twenty Committee members of the Glasgow Universal Suffrage Association. Two representatives of the Committee of Trades Delegates were among the signatories.¹² Apparently this was a reaction against the unique control exercised by Fraser over Chartist journalism. But the situation was not as simple as all that. The 'Patriot' was printed, published and edited by Robert Malcolm, who was also in charge of the Whig 'Scots Times'.¹³ He was by no means an avowed Chartist and the reasons for this curious alliance between the editor of a reputable journal and the Glasgow Chartists remain obscure. It may be that Malcolm had/

¹² Scottish Patriot July 6th 1839.

¹³ True Scotsman Oct. 5th 1839.

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¹² Scottish Patriot July 6th 1839.
¹³ True Scotsman Oct. 5th 1839.

had adopted the Six Points in toto, and this seems feasible since the 'Scots Times' was at least half-Chartist. Again most Radicals realised that something more than revolutionary fervour was needed to carry on a successful newspaper. Taylor, who had managed the 'Liberator' and 'Examiner', was too busy with the Convention. Fraser, who possessed a journalistic flair, was out of the question. The next best solution was to suggest that the nearest approach to a Chartist journalist, Robert Malcolm, be asked to run a Radical paper for the Universal Suffrage Association under the supervision of a Committee of Control. In fact Proudfoot later explained Malcolm's presence on the grounds that 'he had undertaken the editorship gratuitously for the first year on the one stipulation that he suffered no loss'. However in view of the impecunious nature of the Glasgow U.S.A. it seems most likely that the 'Patriot' was an attempt on the part of Malcolm to emulate O'Connor's 'Northern Star' for both financial and egotistical reasons. There was also much jealousy - and hatred - of Fraser. Whatever the reasons for its birth, the 'Patriot' foreshadowed a more organised and constructive movement with Glasgow as its focal point.

Fraser was not the man to give up leadership without a struggle and these two papers were soon to be engaged in an acrimonious/

acrimonious circulation battle which did much harm to the movement. For the moment, however, there was no open conflict (the 'Patriot' was probably not yet strong enough). In view of later events there was a remarkable similarity of outlook between the two. From its inception Malcolm laid down a policy for the 'Patriot' which went far beyond orthodox Chartism and certainly this must have had a wide national appeal. The initial number set out the following aims,

- (1) the Charter.
- (2) reform of the House of Lords.
- (3) abolition of naval and military flogging.
- (4) free trade and abolition of the Corn Laws.
- (5) reduction of naval and military establishments.
- (6) direct taxation.
- (7) Post Office reform.
- (8) amelioration of the criminal code and abolition of capital punishment.
- (9) simplification of the civil code.
- (10) abolition of the laws of Primogeniture and Entail.
- (11) a national system of education.
- (12) social institutions to be purified and the funds of hospitals etc. to be applied to proper uses - e.g. the relief of the poor.
- (13) reform of corporations.
- (14)/

(14) an improved monetary system.

(15) the right of working men to unite and to protect their labour (there was a surprising reservation to this; it was a duty 'to expose the errors of trade unions and to suggest proper means for future improvement').¹⁴

Both the 'Patriot' and 'True Scotsman' emphasised free trade, the need for education, abolition of primogeniture and entail, simplified civil laws and condemned flogging. Indeed the main differences were of detail only but of the two the Eastern paper certainly placed the greatest^T stress on education. The 'Patriot' on the other hand seemed more concerned with contemporary public grievances (i.e. burgh reform, Post Office failings, poor relief and the need for an improved monetary system).¹⁵ In practice there was little or no difference in outlook between these two journals.

The 'Patriot' started its career by giving long non-controversial reports of the Convention debates. A little later there appeared a full account of the Delegate meeting held in the Universalist Church, Glasgow, on August 15th, which made it quite clear that Scotland was not in favour of ulterior measures.¹⁶ That same meeting had as its avowed objects the devising of 'a system of enlightened organisation and of suggesting such measures/

¹⁴Scottish Patriot 6.7.1839.

¹⁵cf. True Scotsman 12.1.1839.

¹⁶Scottish Patriot 17.8.1839.

measures as might be considered necessary to promote sound and constitutional agitation'. The aim was not only to educate their own people but to try and eradicate the unfortunate impressions of thoughtless violence which non-Chartists had gained from the Convention. After three days debating 'a Constitution for the people of Scotland was drawn up'. What this amounted to was a plan for positive action along educational lines with a central co-ordinating body. There were three main proposals.

(a) Paid lecturers or "missionaries" were to be sent out everywhere "to arouse the enslaved masses from their deadening apathy".

(b) "to disseminate ... a complete body of sound political information, embracing in its scope the cause, nature and extent of our wrongs, the rights which civilised society owes to us, and which we inherit from our Creator; as also the appalling details of legislative misrule ... and the power which an organised nation would have in redressing its own grievances". This was to be carried out by means of tracts and pamphlets.

(c) A National Council of fifteen members was elected to organise and raise funds for both these purposes. It was known as the Universal Suffrage Central Committee for Scotland.¹⁷ Its members came almost exclusively from the West. John Duncan of Edinburgh'

¹⁷ Preface to Chartist Circular 1841, Scottish Patriot 17.8.1839.

Edinburgh, an old enemy of Fraser, was the only Eastern representative. Two of them, Proudfoot and Pattison, had already helped to sponsor the 'Patriot', whilst another important member was Moir, late of the Convention. Matthew Cullen, an intensely religious Powerloom Dresser, and Moir were appointed joint chairmen. Radicals of all conditions, from tea-merchant to unskilled labourer, were successfully blended together on this Committee. One other resolution which was sponsored by Abram Duncan and included in this programme was that all Chartists should be advised to take a Total Abstinence pledge.¹⁷

Fortunately for the movement the Committee was able very soon to implement the second point of this programme. Inspired by the success of the 'Anti-Corn Law Circular', Pattison (now termed a prudent, ingenious and highly intellectual lecturer in the principles of the People's Charter) suggested that a cheap weekly journal on the same lines should be started.¹⁸ It was to be a sort of Digest containing 'articles extracted from the first periodicals and the best authors, besides popular original essays - all bearing directly on the moving principles of the present agitation'. Funds for its publication, over two hundred pounds, were supplied by George Ross, a prosperous Glasgow shoemaker (St. Crispin and advanced ideas have usually gone well together!)¹⁹ It was edited by William Thompson, christened the "Chartist/"

¹⁷ Preface to Chartist Circular 1841, Scottish Patriot 17.8.1839.
¹⁸ Scottish Patriot, 7.9.1839.
¹⁹ Scottish Patriot, 4.1.1840.

"Chartist Circular" and its first number came out on Sept. 28th 1839 at the low price of one halfpenny. For a Radical paper it was unbelievably staid, if not stodgy. Personalities were avoided and few attacks were made on other papers. From the first its approach was didactic and constructive. Copious extracts from Godwin ('Moral Effects of Aristocracy'), Lamennais ('Book of the People'), mixed up with John Knox, Cromwell and Bentham - a curious Trinity - alternate with eulogies of America, regarded as an example of practical Chartism, and articles on currency, reform, education and teetotalism. The only lapses into 'yellow' journalism were the fierce attacks on the Established Church and the sporadic vitriolic outbursts of Bronterre O'Brien. Undoubtedly the 'Circular' set the general tone of the Scottish movement and its non-controversial attitude allowed it to influence both moral and physical force elements. It had over 20,000 subscribers.²⁰

Section B. Practice.

For the sake of simplicity, it would be tempting to assume - as did the Universal Suffrage Central Committee - that there was now one united body speaking for, and to, Scotland through the powerful voices of the 'Patriot' and 'Circular', with lecturers employed/

²⁰ Files of 'Chartist Circular'.

employed by them expounding Chartist principles everywhere. This was not the case. If Fraser had been accused of running a one-man movement, the U.S.C.C. could be, and was, considered a mere extension of the Glasgow U.S.A. Under the circumstances it seems an incredible blunder on the part of the U.S.C.C.S. to commit Scotland to a policy of 'Petitioning Parliament' about the Six Points, without taking the trouble to find out if the country whole-heartedly approved of the project. At the meeting in August delegate after delegate had stated that their constituents would sign no more petitions. Even O'Connor, who was present, took the same line and declared he would never put his hand to another petition.²¹ Acute disappointment and frustration at the failure of the National Convention probably accounted for this attitude. Yet on the 12th September 1839, the Committee recommended all local associations to start petitioning and a month later instituted this as an official policy.²² Obviously no attempt had been made to canvass public opinion on this matter. Once again the familiar Chartist failings of internal dissension and the formation of 'splinter groups' were displayed. Even the Glasgow U.S.A. was divided. They held a meeting to 'arrange a uniform ticket for the country' - a common membership card and a common petition policy. Pinkerton, a prominent local Chartist/

²¹ Scottish Patriot 17.8.1839.

²² Scottish Patriot 9.11.1839.

Chartist, wanted the association to wait for England to be consulted before starting a petition movement. W.C. Pattison (also on the U.S.C.C.S.) replied, throwing much light on the Scottish attitude, "As to consulting England ... had England on any occasion consulted the people of Scotland before taking a decided part in connection with the movement? Who were they to consult? Was there a Convention or Central Committee there to be consulted or in fact was there any large properly organised district that they could communicate with?..." Pinkerton and others then resigned, joining the newly-formed Glasgow Northern Democratic Association, composed of those who disapproved of the Central Committee, who wanted to co-operate with England and were prepared to use violence, if necessary, to gain the Charter.²³ The Renfrew Political Union also objected and demanded of the Committee, "That you do not proceed with your petition plan until you test Scotland, and communicate with England and Wales".²⁴ In Aberdeen the 'True Scotsman' had at one time attained a circulation of 1000. Consequently it should have been no surprise when the secretary of the Aberdeen W.M.A., George Ross, sent a strong protest on its behalf against this obnoxious policy. He went further, declaring that the Committee was only the Glasgow U.S.A. in disguise, that it had done/

²³ Scottish Patriot 7.12.1839. True Scotsman 14.12.1839.
²⁴ Scottish Patriot 21.12.1839.

done nothing, and had 'never been supported by any but a small fraction of the Chartists'. Even his opponents seemed to agree with this last, the Committee itself replying, "We admit ... we have not been supported as we at first anticipated".²⁵ That body also had to suffer a strong attack from one of its own members, Gillespie, over this petition question, after which he took no further part in its activities.²⁶

This was not the only example of the Committee's faulty judgement. Although it had taken a stand as a supporter of moral measures, it allowed itself to be identified with violent elements. The 'Patriot' published extracts from the 'Northern Star' and carried articles by those three extremists O'Connor, Harney and Bronterre O'Brien.²⁷ Admittedly these were not very inflammatory in tone but the very names of the writers were enough to arouse the suspicions of true moderates. Worse still, Harney was allowed to associate himself with the Committee as a lecturer.²⁸ It is doubtful, indeed, if he was paid by that body but it tacitly approved of his activities and Committee members presided over meetings at which Harney spoke, making laudatory references to him. Harney at this time/

²⁵ Scottish Patriot 4.1.1840.

²⁶ Scottish Patriot 16.10.1839.

²⁷ It also gave a 'History of the General Convention' by Dr. Taylor 26.10.1839 onwards.

²⁸ His language at many meetings in 1840 was still violent according to Fraser. True Scotsman, 1.2.1840.

time, like O'Brien, was awaiting trial for seditious utterances and, of course, he was an avowed revolutionary.²⁹ His presence in Scotland resulted from the complete collapse of the English movement and his marriage, at this time, to "a Mauchline beauty of the Amazon type, whose heroism was notable".³⁰ Another controversial decision of the Committee was that Chartists should attend Anti-Corn Law League meetings and move amendments in favour of the Charter. This was one of O'Connor's favourite stratagems and usually led to the discomfiture of any unfortunate workman who attempted thus to attack the Repealers, since the Chartist case against them was very weak.³¹ Nearly all classes in Scotland wanted to see the end of these restrictive laws. The spirit of Adam Smith was very much alive and Scots Chartists were quite willing to enjoy the real advantages of cheap bread whilst awaiting the as yet visionary benefits of the Charter. (O'Connor believed in a policy of "The Charter - or nothing": for once it was Scotland who compromised). When the Committee discussed this motion, Pattison opposed it strongly on the grounds that the Trades ~~believed~~ that Repeal of the Corn Laws would mean a rise in real wages and more employment.³² Once more they pursued a course/

²⁹ Associated with Marx and Engels in the Fraternal Democrats.

³⁰ Cole G.D.H. 'Chartist Portraits'.

³¹ Hovell, op.cit. pp.213-219.

³² Scottish Patriot 16.11.1839.

course of action contrary to the general wishes of those people they were supposed to represent.

There were also 'sins of omission'. No clear lead was given to Scotland over the question of collaborating with the resurgent English movement, stirring into life on the release of its imprisoned leaders. Grand official receptions were held all over Scotland to welcome Lovett, Collins, M'Donall and White on their triumphant post-incarceration tour. The Committee raised its voice in welcome; but it was almost dumb as to which of the two new English Associations Scotland should support. There was the National Charter Association, soon to come under the personal control of O'Connor, preaching class warfare yet pledged to resort only to constitutional methods. Against this was Lovett's National Association - urging co-operation with the middle-class - firmly based on a comprehensive plan for education^{ing} the working class in preparation for the duties of the Charter. Its methods and aims did not differ very much from those put forward in the 'Patriot' and 'Circular'. However, the Committee emulated Brer Rabbit, and so missed a chance of displaying real leadership. Later still, on the occasion of the re-election of the Committee, it was full of good intentions and more willing to seek allies. Proposals were made to send delegates to Ireland and Hunter referred/

referred to the 'necessity of looking at home', meaning by that a delegate to England. Nothing, however, was done about this. Next they decided to institute one great National Petition. Pathetically enough, the Central Committee's plan for carrying this out was for each county to organise as it thought best.³³ 'Delegation' and 'Dereliction' are almost synonymous in such circumstances. Paradoxically when its strength had been sapped by the demise of both 'Patriot' and 'Circular', and the Committee no longer functioned as a corporate body, its members took a firm stand against O'Connor at a Delegate meeting in Glasgow (January 1842) and inflicted a severe defeat on him over the question of co-operating with the middle-class. They also reversed the Committee's policy of moving amendments to Anti-Corn Law Resolutions.³⁴ The Committee had made up its mind at last to support Lovett - but it could speak only as a shade from some Radical Elysian Fields.

The achievements of Western leadership were those of the 'Chartist Circular'. Throughout its career the Central Committee was short of funds and so could not employ paid lecturers as it had promised. The sums which were subscribed to it were incredibly small, and it was soon in debt. For this there were several reasons. Its failure to consult the country over major issues/

³³ Scottish Patriot 26.9.1840. True Scotsman 3.10.1840.
³⁴ Scotsman 12.1.1842.

issues and its close (and rather dubious) relationship with Robert Malcolm (a Whig) and the Glasgow U.S.A. have already been noted. More important was the state of war between the 'Patriot' and 'True Scotsman' - the latter, backed up by Brewster, was still a force in the land. Paisley, Dunfermline, Aberdeen, Edinburgh and the Borders, to name but a few, largely believed in Fraser's principles and paid only lip-service to the U.S.C.C.S. whose 'unofficial' voice was the 'Patriot'. Again the Committee, on its inception, had made no definite arrangements for collecting funds, an elementary precaution which O'Connor most certainly would have taken in their position. This failure was never rectified. Perhaps the generosity of George Ross over the 'Circular' (and later the 'Patriot') gave them the false impression that money for agitation was easily obtainable. To the Chartist man-in-the-street anything sent to such an indeterminate body could produce no worthwhile results. A more desirable and practical application for his help was available - the families of the imprisoned Chartists. Money was given readily for this purpose which was also usually associated with signing a Petition to Parliament for clemency in the cases of Frost, Williams and Jones - the Welsh leaders. More was probably sent to England for this purpose than was ever subscribed to the funds of the Central Committee.³⁵

Suffering/

³⁵ O'Connor received £100 for the Frost Fund alone. S.P. 8.2.1840

Suffering, then, from continual financial embarrassment Western leadership achieved no practical political results (unless the nuisance value of a spate of small petitions to Parliament be included). Disunity and indecision were its outward symbols. Yet it must not be condemned in such a summary fashion. Judged by the 'Circular' alone, the Committee justified its existence. The Glasgow leaders helped to give Scottish Chartism its peculiar educational outlook, a semi-religious approach, which together lifted the movement from a mere bread and ^bnutter agitation and produced permanent good results for the Scottish working classes.

GENERAL NOTE:

The 'Patriot' gave every variant of Chartist policy without, however, committing itself. In February 1841 it seemed to favour a policy of union with the middle class and support of the Anti-Corn Law agitation. On the first of these topics Collins and O'Neill contributed a series of Addresses, whilst Malcolm and O'Brien debated this issue at length in its columns. However in April it gave a semi-official blessing to the Manchester 'National Petition' and a week later printed a vicious attack by O'Connor himself on Christian Chartism, Teetotal Chartism, Knowledge Chartism and Household Suffrage Chartism. On the 17th of that same month it reprinted, from the 'Northern/

'Northern Star', the whole of Lovett's 'Address to the People' (education and middle-class union through a National Association) together with O'Connor's extremely adverse and sarcastic criticism of the scheme. This complete volte-face inside of four weeks may have been good reporting, but it was certainly bad leadership.

Chapter III. Course of the native movement.

Section I. Press War.

Eastern and Western leadership in different ways had proved to be broken reeds, but at least they gave the movement its unique spirit. Scottish Chartism's real strength lay in the initiative and drive of a great number of local associations, interpreting in their own ways the principles set out in the Radical periodicals. Yet for purposes of classification all these groups - unfortunately for Scotland - come under three headings (a) 'True Scotsman Chartists', (b) 'Scottish Patriot Chartists', and (c) 'O'Connor Chartists' (with a 'Physicals' label attached). Undoubtedly disunity and failure to support the Central Committee came from the competition between these two papers, and this arose, in its turn, out of the traditional/

traditional Glasgow-Edinburgh rivalry. Scotland could not support two successful weeklies devoted to Chartism - the operative word being 'successful'. The 'True Scotsman', until the advent of the 'Patriot', was probably paying its way. With two very similar papers, with the same potential customers, this affair became a battle for survival. Nominally they had both supported Moral Force, but Fraser was more consistent in that his paper would not tolerate the extremist element (notably O'Connor and Harney). Furthermore he was in favour of union with the middle class and gave support to the Anti-Corn Law movement.³⁶ Of the two, the 'True Scotsman' had a more national approach, reporting the activities of its opponents - the U.S.C.C.S. - quite adequately and without adverse comment. Malcolm's 'Patriot' lacked this consistency and its treatment of Chartist news was weighted heavily in favour of the Glasgow area. When Fraser and Brewster were mentioned, it was only as a target for direct or indirect criticism.³⁷ On the other hand Fraser lacked tact and was extraordinarily smug about his knowledge on all topics, sometimes ridiculing the illiteracy of working-class chairmen in meetings called for purposes of which he did not approve.³⁸ In a patronising manner, as a dogmatic pundit, he engaged in literary and musical criticism and his staff/

³⁶ True Scotsman 6.3.1841. It also ran a series of articles on
³⁷ Free Trade by Col. Perronet Thompson.
³⁸ Scottish Patriot 27.9.1840, 17.10.1840.
True Scotsman 19.12.1840, 3.10.1841.

staff made sure that ample 'coverage' was available for concerts in which Fraser and his two daughters appeared as artistes.³⁹ Morison's Pills were always to the fore in the advertisement columns, but even in this the 'True Scotsman' showed more consistency, since the 'Patriot' shared its allegiance between Dr. Greer's 'Vegetable Pills' and 'Dr. Allison's celebrated Condiu of Copaiba'! In one aspect, however, Fraser was unique - his unswerving advocacy of the temperance cause which influenced the middle-class in favour of Chartism.

Open war broke out between the two as to which was "the only genuine Chartist paper in Scotland", both claiming the honour. Relations became even more strained, the 'Patriot' as the younger paper doing most of the attacking. It accused Fraser and Brewster 'of being the first to talk physical force in Scotland' and finally called the 'True Scotsman', "the rotten remnant of a crafty deceiver". Fraser replied to these attacks in kind. Once started, local associations took sides in the dispute, and agents for the two papers undoubtedly encouraged this partisanship - in aid of their own pockets. Perhaps this can best be illustrated in the case of John Duncan who made many violent attacks on Fraser and the 'True Scotsman'. He was described as "Agent for the Northern Star, Northern Liberator and Scottish Patriot at his Radical Publishing Office, 114 High St., Edinburgh/

³⁹ True Scotsman 27.3.1841.

Edinburgh". The connection between the 'Patriot' and the Physicals is apparent here and this evidence is confirmed by pamphlets issued from the same office which desired Chartists to be 'up to the mark of Bronterre' [O'Brien] i.e. ready for all ulterior measures.⁴⁰ Further confirmation came from Douglas, an ex-physical, who declared 'The agents are the ruin of the cause'.⁴¹ No mention has been made in this context of the 'Chartist Circular'. Somehow this cheap periodical avoided acute controversy and was largely complementary to the two weeklies, achieving as a result a position of some authority. All Chartists - including extremists - appreciated its balanced outlook; both the Fraser-Brewster party and the Glasgow junta acted on its suggestions. Firmly pro-temperance, in January 1841 it launched an Appeal to all Chartists to dedicate that year to total abstinence. This was signed by the Central Committee, by Fraser, and by representatives of every variety of Chartist organisation. On this topic alone was something approaching unity achieved, but not complete unity. The still, small [local] voice of O'Connor denounced temperance as a Radical principle, but made little headway lacking a Scottish medium to express its views. True there was the short-lived 'Scottish Vindicator', edited by J. Cumming, which was devoted to O'Connor's policy/

⁴⁰ "A Pill for the Edinburgh Whigs, or, a new version of "A Conversation between a Chartist and his Friend", Dose I, 1840.

⁴¹ True Scotsman 24.10.1840.

policy as far as it could be discovered.⁴² Support was very limited and the paper failed soon after its birth in Sept. 1839. Even more ephemeral was the 'Scottish Radical' (5. Dec. 1840), an unstamped Glasgow periodical of Republican tendencies.⁴³ Mostly the Physicals received their injections of demagogic oratory either direct from the 'Northern Star' or at second-hand in the 'Patriot'. Like the two moral force sections they lacked positive leadership. O'Connor was in York gaol from May 1840 to Sept. 1841, and used the time for inculcating an O'Connor Legend - that he alond^e had unified the working classes and had saved them from disaster by calling off the 1839 National Holiday.⁴⁴ He accomplished this through the 'Northern Star'; which also exhorted the faithful to smite the infidel - the Anti-Corn Law League. Scotland, then, from 1839 to 1841 was divided into three camps, all without sound leadership but with plenty of ideas. Yet, because of the 'Chartist Circular', when they translated ideas into practice, surprisingly similar results were achieved.

Section II. _Chartist Churches.

Not the least interesting of these was the creation of Christian Chartist Churches. In nearly every neighbourhood with an/

42 Sept. 1839 Cummings also edited 'The Monthly Liberator' - the remnant of Taylor's paper.

43 Stewart W. 'Glasgow Press in 1840'.

44 N. Star 16.1.1841.

an active association, each Sunday a local Chartist lay preacher, or some itinerant 'missionary', would conduct religious services. Often the Churches were large and well-organised, but they had no uniform pattern for the. Several excellent reasons can be deduced for this unique growth. In its early days, Socialism questioned the tenets of orthodox religion and its followers generally were termed 'infidels'. This was noticeably so in the case of Owenite Socialism, which had strong Scottish connections. To many people Chartism and Socialism were very much the same thing, and in their turn Chartists were accused of being atheists or infidels. Such a charge was largely unfounded and rankled so much that something had to be done to disprove these "ecclesiastical bellowings about Chartist infidelity."⁴⁵ Again the Established Church did not conceal its hostility to reform, and used its power to retard democratic progress. In 1837 the Whig Jurist, Henry Cockburn, declared of one election "The clergy have again acted foolishly. They have not only voted in great numbers, but have canvassed, and almost invariably on the unpopular side.... Dr. Macleod, indeed, the Moderator of last year, had publicly boasted that the Church does not contain above 6 clerical Whigs. This being their line the Dissenting clergy carry off the popularity".⁴⁶ More positive intervention was the free distribution through the Religious Tract Society of anti-Chartist Sermons preached in Cheltenham and/

⁴⁵ Chartist Circular Vol.I, p.197.

⁴⁶ Cockburn op.cit. 27.8.1837.

and Norwich. One of these, printed in Edinburgh, infuriated the Scottish Chartists.⁴⁷ The Church in general had not faced up to the problems created by the Industrial Revolution and was not interested in a more widespread and liberal education. To the Chartists this was not surprising since they considered the Ministry to be chiefly composed of "the younger ^s sons of the nobility and gentry who enter the Church as they do the army or navy, for a living".⁴⁸

Other denominations appeared to be little better to the Chartists. They all frowned upon the participation of Christians in politics. On this subject a Congregational Conference declared "Christian ministers have no special concern, and Christian Churches and congregations, as such, have no proper concern at all with redress of grievances."⁴⁹ Sometimes this attitude went even further and a Baptist Church expelled one member from 'religious fellowship' for being a Chartist.⁵⁰ Much depended on the views of the local preachers. In Tilli-coultry the Rev. A Browning and nearly all his congregation were both Unitarians and Chartists. Amongst the Dissenting Ministers of Scotland there were many who favoured some electoral reform, and several like Andrew Marshall who preached the need/

47
48 Chartist Circular 22.8.1840, 7.11.1840.
49 22.8.1840.
50 Minutes of 1836 Conference II 185.
Scottish Patriot 17.8.1839.

need for it. Generally the Churches, however, were opposed to Chartism.⁵¹

Finally the Chartists had in mind a return to primitive Christianity with a little of the Covenanting spirit thrown in. Emphasis was placed on the social aspect of religion - the duty of Chartists to labour for the welfare of their fellowmen. There was no need for any priesthood, claiming an uninterrupted succession from the Apostles, since universal suffrage was based on the revealed word of God. The Bible was to be their religious and political text-book. All were to be equal, and there was to be equality of service. Thus to refute the charge of infidelity, to draw people away from orthodox religion, and from a desire to get back to fundamentals the Scottish Christian Chartist Churches were created.⁵²

Their growth was quite spontaneous. As early as Sept. 1839 services were being conducted every Sunday in the U.S.A. Hall, College Open, Glasgow.⁵³ Amongst the preachers were Malcolm M'Farlane and O'Neill, both connected with the U.S.C.C.S., and who gave much of the initial impetus to the Churches. A little later the Glasgow U.S.A. had elected a Preaching Committee and by March 1840 a 'Chartist Worshipping Assembly' had evolved, all members/

⁵¹ See Faulkner H.U. 'Chartism and the Churches'.

⁵² Chartist Circular 29.8.1840. 10.10.1840.

⁵³ True Scotsman 5.10.1839.

members being on the committee and each in turn acting as Chairman for the Sunday services.⁵⁴ Some of the more prominent Chartist lecturers acted as "missionaries": at Hawick, Abram Duncan was reported as having "made the clergy of Hawick look blue in the face by giving three services each Sunday to the Chartists".⁵⁵ However, Duncan's native 'parish' was destined to be Arbroath. Churches sprang up very quickly in the West, Glasgow alone had at least ^tfour. Shettleston announced they would 'now worship according to their conscience';⁵⁶ Trongate, Paisley, Kilbarchan, Johnstone, Newburgh, and Greenock followed suit. Elsewhere Stirling, St. Ninian's, Dundee, Forfar, Perth, Edinburgh, Kirriemuir, Aberdeen, and the Vale of Leven had distinctive religious organisations. These and many others drew their inspiration from the 'Chartist Circular' which set out its conception of the best organisation for such Churches.

This was, to say the least, a little ambitious and displayed the usual Chartist failing of over-organisation. A thousand Chartists, of sound mind and unconvicted of crime, were to band together to form a Church. They were to elect 24 elders half-yearly whilst a manager, chairman, secretary and treasurer were to be chosen by ballot. A monthly meeting of all Church members would formulate policy. The preacher was to be/

⁵⁴ True Scotsman 21.3.1840; Scottish Patriot 7.3.1840.

⁵⁵ True Scotsman 19.10.1839.

⁵⁶ True Scotsman 28.12.1839.

be a paragon of all virtues - "an honest, wise, intelligent, temperate, prudent, zealous and well-educated Chartist who has been duly trained in religion, literature, politics and philosophy to be appointed preacher".⁵⁷ Clearly none of these Churches could hope to live up to this (where would they get a thousand members?). Yet within their limitations they achieved much. The 'Circular', for instance, advocated that "baptism and marriage should be regularly dispensed by Chartist missionaries and likewise the Ordinance of the Lord's Supper, otherwise the parish and voluntary clergymen would keep a tenuous hold of Chartist families".⁵⁸ (Ironically no provision could be made for Radical burial!). The Glasgow Chartist Worshipping Assembly acted on these suggestions, making arrangements that any persons wishing to be married would 'be attested free by two accredited witnesses and united if of proper age.' The ceremony would be quite legal in Scotland and the Chairman or Vice-Chairman would perform it. Members of all ages could also be baptised, the Assembly requiring for this a belief in the Bible 'as an exclusive article of faith.' (Three such baptisms took place in one day in March 1840.⁵⁹). Perhaps the following account of a Glasgow Chartist Church, with printing trade connections, gives a clearer account of these activities,

"Mr./

⁵⁷ Chartist Circular Oct, 24, 1840.

⁵⁸ Chartist Circular 28.3.1840.

⁵⁹ True Scotsman 21.3.1840; Scottish Patriot 7.3.1840.

"Mr. William Govan, pressman ... was one of the many men of that creed [Radicals] who left the Churches with which they were connected and formed what was called the Chartist Church. They met in the Lyceum Rooms, Nelson St., and when that church collapsed a number of years ago, their meeting-place was the upper flat of the old Post Office. Their chief preachers were Mr. Malcolm M'Farlane, Mr. Matthew Cullen, and Mr. W. Govan. They were not weak brothers in the sacred desk. Often some of the juniors of their kirk were called upon to exercise their gifts. Two in particular were favoured to give biblical expositions, namely Mr. Wm. Dryburgh and Mr. Wm. S. Brown. Both were compositors. The latter could usually do fairly well both at the devotional and hortatory. Not so Mr. D. His sermons were allowed to be so good and orthodox as if he had been ordained by a bishop, but his prayers were considered poor; little, if any, unction characterised them. One day Mr. Dryburgh was discoursing on some of Paul's hard sayings in the Epistle to the Romans. He tried all his learning and his logic to give a lucid exposition to his text. At last he came to the conclusion that the Great Apostle was not sound here, and he (Mr. Dryburgh) was orthodox!" 60

At/

⁶⁰ Aird A. "Reminiscences of Editors, Reporters and Printers 1830-1870", p.76 et seq..

At Greenock Chartist Church, Mr. Thomson was reported as inclining 'to the Arminian rather than the Calvinistic side!, preferring brotherly love and charity to endless punishment in a future state. His text for this was v.42-43 Luke 22.⁶¹ A typical sermon was that given on one occasion by the Unitarian-cum-Chartist, Rev. A. Browning of Tillicoultry, which declared that the obstacles to the progress of popular freedom were, in that order, (1) the Govt., (2) political economy (3) the middle class (4) literary men and the religious profession (5) the people themselves with their principles of selfishness.⁶² It certainly was a judicious mixture of sugar and pill for his Chartist audience! Even the women were not overlooked by the preachers. The Forfar Female Political Union heard an address from Dr. M'Donnall based (ib) Proverbs 30, "The horse leech hath two daughters crying 'Give! Give!' - the daughters, of course, being the aristocrats and the middle classes. For good measure he threw in an attack on the 'True Scotsman' as a "3½d pill box".⁶³

There was much good in the Chartist Churches despite their politico-religious tone. The Rev. Patrick Brewster preached to such congregations on several occasions. One of these brought him/

61 True Scotsman 16.1.1841.
62 True Scotsman 5.9.1840.
63 True Scotsman 26.12.1840.

him before the Presbytery of Paisley. With much jubilation the Glasgow Chartists had taken over St. Ann's Church (called by them 'the Noddy')⁶⁴ which quite recently had belonged to the Establishment. Brewster gave one of his Discourses to them there and the Presbytery of Glasgow, much annoyed, appointed a Committee to report on the event. Brewster was ultimately brought before the bar of the Synod where he spoke in defence of Christian Chartism. As a result the whole affair was dismissed. However, his Chartist Sermons in Paisley Abbey (including the Military one) led to his appearance before the Commission of the Assembly in May 1842. His defence speech lasted nine hours but despite this (or perhaps because of it!) grounds for a libel, or charge, against him were found. He was suspended for a year pending the hearing of the charges, during which time a petition was signed by 1600 of his congregation denying the charges and approving of the Discourses. Once more, thanks to the schism in the Established Church at this time, all proceedings against him were cancelled. In December 1843 the Paisley Presbytery declared "the libellers have fallen from their purpose and therefore assolzie Mr. Brewster".⁶⁵ If Christian Chartism was not here vindicated, at least it had avoided/

⁶⁴ Scottish Patriot Aug. 1, 1840.

⁶⁵ Brewster P. 'The Seven Chartist and Military Discourses', Appendix.

avoided official condemnation. It was unlikely that Brewster would have associated himself with the new Churches if they had been of a sacrilegious or unseemly nature, and this is indirect evidence that they were well-conducted. In fact there were remarkably few attacks on them in the contemporary press. The 'Witness', organ of the future Free Church, was an exception accusing Abram Duncan of blatant sacrilege for performing Holy Communion in his church. Further evidence that they were real Churches came from Birmingham where Arthur O'Neill started one based on his Scottish experience. Temperance morality and knowledge were its watch-words. Even the employers there appreciated his efforts and a local iron-master gave him the use of a large room for the services. One witness declared, "They have a hymn-book of their own and affect to be a denomination of Christians. This is the way they gained converts here, by the name. There were very few political chartists here, but Christian Chartist was a name that took".⁶⁶

This observer (a Wesleyan Minister) did much less than justice to the attractions of Christian Chartism. Associated with them were evening classes, libraries, Debating and Dramatic societies, and schemes for liberal education. The 'Chartist Circular' put forward a scheme for Chartist Schools and maintained/

⁶⁶ Parl. Papers 1843 XIII p.cxxxii, and Solly H, 'There Eighty ? Years' Vol.I, p.382 et seq..

maintained that women must be educated - "a nation of philosophical, intelligent and political mothers would teach knowledge to their children", would give them the People's Charter and the Sermon on the Mount together.⁶⁷ Again the Churches tried to carry this out. Sch^Olls were set up at Peven, Greenock, Aberdeen, Partick, Arbroath, Perth, Paisley, and Kilbarchan. There were others smaller and not so well organised. Typical was the Partick 'Chartist Education Club', confined to Lanarkshire U.S.A., which met every evening from eight to ten. All paid equally towards the expenses and it was laid down that they should address each other as "brethren". A monitor was appointed on a monthly basis to keep order and organise proceedings. There were no paid teachers, the subjects studied being Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, Grammar and Geography.⁶⁸ Similar to thi^S wa^S s^{rec} the 'Chartist Mutual Institution Society' in Aberdeen. One of the most energetic Churches was in Kilbarchan, unique in that its finances were very sound. (a dramatic entertainment raised £6 for the U.S.C.C.S. and one day's collection in the church produced £1). It started a school for full-time attendance with M'Crae as preacher/teacher, for which he received twelve shillings a week. This seems quite small but M'Crae/

67 Chartist Circular 14.3.1840, 19.10.1840.

68 Scottish Patriot 19.9.1840.

M'Crae was in good demand as an outside lecturer and he augmented his income in that way. Significant of the newspaper 'war' was the fact that this school was organised in 'the system advocated by the 'True Scotsman'.⁶⁹ Finally in Greenock, Thomson, the preacher, ^argn a school in the Howie Lane Hall attended by 300 pupils. The same correspondent who wrote of "the Arminians" smugly remarked that it was not only cheaper "but the revolting dogmas of the monstrous Calvin (which are instilled in the young of all other schools) are disregarded by the teacher"! Thomson also instructed 'younger brothers for two hours every Saturday evening in sacred music, gratuitously'.⁷⁰

Such were the Chartist Schools, a bold experiment in positive Radicalism. Unfortunately it is difficult to estimate what practical results they achieved. Education is cumulative and has no real yard-stick for measuring progress. Probably the first fruits of enlightened Scottish Chartism were reaped by the Socialist movement after 1850. Partial confirmation of this is evidence in the political doctrines of these Churches. To fix any norm for the movement in this respect is very difficult, since organisation and active policy were matters left largely to local discretion. The Circular helped create some uniformity, but it is dangerous to generalise about this, All churches/

⁶⁹ True Scotsman 9.11.1839, 1.8.1840, 6.1.1841.

⁷⁰ True Scotsman 16.1.1841, 13.2.1841.

Churches were opposed to the Established religion, as noticed already, and all supported the People's Charter. Much agreement existed, too, over another important issue - an abhorrence of war. This pacifism arose not from conscience, but from a belief that wars were waged in the interests of the upper and middle classes. An Address to the Chartist Church in Birmingham for instance declared

"Urged by a deep sense of the unjust, cruel and unchristian character of the Indian and Chinese Wars, we feel that we would not be performing our duty ... without solemnly issuing our unqualified protest against them... Brethren, arouse yourselves, and with a peal of moral thunder, stop the uplifted hand of war".⁷⁰ Letham sent a 'memorial' to Victoria protesting against the war in Syria.⁷¹ From contemporary Chartist poets came a stream of verse denouncing war. One brief sample taken from 'The Gory Profession' must suffice: these opening lines indicate its general tone;

"What a noble profession is murder,
When sanctioned by King or by Queen."⁷²

Even the Chartist hymns often echoed the same pacifist sentiments, with the implied proviso that only the Charter was worth fighting for. Lastly all the Churches condemned capital punishment.

These/

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71 Chartist Circular 4.6.1842.

72 True Scotsman 28.11.1840.

The Altar of Liberty or Songs for the People 1839.

These, then, were the only three points on which unanimity existed. Temperance, although widely favoured, cannot be included; once the Oracle - Fergus O'Connor - had proclaimed against Teetotal Chartism, areas which were under his personal sway no longer allowed their Churches to preach abstinence as a policy. It says much for the inherent good discipline of the movement that despite their differences in personality and organisation, the Scottish Chartist Churches never gave any real cause to suspect that they behaved other than as truly religious bodies. Admittedly they were politico-religious, with the bias tending to move from one side to the other in different areas, but they were not congregations of infidels. No accusation could be levied against them as was the case with the later Socialist Churches that they sometimes ended their Sunday meetings with a sort of Bacchanalian dance, and that they preached " a grave without a resurrection and a world without a God".⁷³ These Chartist congregations were made up of ordinary working-class folk, traditionally religious, who hoped to find something in their own churches suited to the needs and conditions of the nineteenth century. Had the Established Church moved in response to the Industrial Revolution there would have been/

⁷³ Scottish Association for Opposing Prevalent Errors. Proceedings 1847, p.9.

been no Chartist Churches. When Chartism - and their Churches - died many were re-absorbed into the new Free Church or some of the smaller independent sects.⁷⁴ A minority left organised religion entirely, lured away by scientific socialism. The Chartist Churches officially were a complete failure - but they helped the Scottish working class develop valuable powers of independent thought and organisation.

Section III. Local organisation and the sinews of war.

For eighteen months Scotland was untouched by English influence and during that time the native movement expanded steadily. Churches were springing up and a multiplicity of new associations came into existence. As early as September 1839 the Edinburgh Trades were organising in support of the Charter, an example quickly followed by Glasgow.⁷⁵ Operative Masons, Smiths, Shoemakers, Cabinetmakers and Plasterers were absorbed into the organisation, often as separate associations. Dundee showed a similar diversity - not only was there the Dundee Youth U.S.A. but the Dundee Democratic Society of Oddfellows, Dundee Bakers and Confectioners U.S.A. and the Dundee Shoemakers U.S.A.⁷⁶ In addition/

⁷⁴ Aird, op.cit. p.76. Wm. Govan.

⁷⁵ Scottish Patriot 7.9.1839, True Scotsman 28.11.1840.

⁷⁶ True Scotsman 1.2.1840.

addition the two original associations - one physical force, one moral - had grown in strength. Matters were not left entirely in the hands of men. Large numbers of Female Chartists had been encouraged to organise themselves, mainly as separate associations. This development was not unexpected since the Scots Chartists had liberal views about education. Abram Duncan was a favourite speaker with these female associations, rather surprisingly since he had now become a confirmed O'Connorite. His approach to their participation was only too clever. At a demonstration in Dunfermline, where three hundred women were admitted free, he declared, "if the women began to demand the Charter, they would soon get it. The Government could never attack women." He referred to one woman correspondent in the 'True Scotsman', who had objected to women being associated with Physical Force, as a "blue stocking she bear".⁷⁷ Fortunately this attitude was not typical. Neither was that of James M'Nab, reporter on the 'Glasgow Constitutional', a confirmed woman-hater, who threatened to exterminate the sex, "as he did the Chairwoman of the Gorbals Female Association", by the application of the "Tawse". History throws no more light on this cryptic remark.⁷⁸ Naturally enough, the women helped mainly by raising/

⁷⁷ True Scotsman 28.11.1840.

⁷⁸ Scottish Radical 5.12.1840.

raising funds, canvassing, and organising social events - a very important contribution. On occasion they could, and did, make lengthy political speeches.

As the movement broadened, it also spread slowly northwards. In Inverness, about October 1840, a Chartist Monthly 'The Clackmacuiddin Record' was started with a circulation of six hundred. At the same time 150 copies of the 'Chartist Circular' were being taken locally.⁷⁹ Kirkwall also formed its own association and at the end of 1840 Orkney Chartists declared their bepief in temperance and willingness to abstain from snuff and tobacco.⁸⁰ Later still a Locharber correspondent enquired about the possinility of getting Gaelic-speaking missionaries and suggested that the 'Circular' be translated and 'thrown to the Highlands'.⁸¹ Nothing is known to have come from this proposal and in general the North of Scotland was not actively affected by Chartism.

There was much dabbling with co-operative schemes, always a feature of Scottish Radicalism. Newmilns had a Chartist Provision Store with 248 members.⁸² At Dalkeith was a Joint Stock Provision Company, with ten shilling shares available by instalments of one shilling a week.⁸³ Edinburgh Co-operative Society had/

79 True Scotsman 20.3.1841.
80 True Scotsman 19.12.1840.
81 True Scotsman, 16.1.1841.
82 True Scotsman 7.11.1840.
83 True Scotsman 24.12.1839.

had a similar scheme with premises at 17 Niddry St. Rather different was the ^oCupar-Angus 'Mutual Improvement Society' which mingled a co-operative scheme with an educational programme.⁸⁴ These are typical of many such schemes, often still-born, put forward by Chartist Association. It was also the general custom for Chartist papers to be bought on a communal subscription basis (e.g. the Canongate Paper Club.⁸⁴). Finally when the 'Scottish Patriot' got into extreme financial difficulties, a Radical Joint Stock Printing and Publishing Company was formed to take it over, the intention being that each association should take up shares in it. The plan met with indifferent success.⁸⁵

Symptomatic of weak central leadership was the preoccupation of all areas with drawing up suggested plans for a national association. Usually this took the form of a wider projection of what they had achieved locally. These plans were very similar, but rarely would one association risk losing its identity by amalgamating with another. When they did the union proved very temporary, soon splitting apart over the usual question of methods of agitation. Scottish Chartism - like the general movement - had a farm-yard mentality, every rooster (or leader) loudly proclaiming the virtues of his chosen sphere and warning others off his preserves. Looking at some of these local groups, and/

⁸⁴ True Scotsman 15.2.1840, 22.2.1840, Scottish Patriot 18.4.1840.
⁸⁵ Scottish Patriot 20.2.1841.

and their suggested plans, throws up in sharp contrast the virility of the part with the effeteness of the whole. Thus the Glasgow Universal Suffrage Election Association saw clearly the need for internal discipline, as expressed in this rule, "That any member who votes contrary to the decisions of the majority shall be considered to have acted improperly, and the names of all those doing so shall be ... struck from the list of members".⁸⁶ Obviously this society wanted to avoid the quarrels which had arisen earlier in England over supporting Whig or Tory candidates when no true Chartist one was available for election (either local or Parliamentary). A similar attitude was taken by the Edinburgh Charter Association (itself a merger of the Edinburgh P.U. and U.S.A.) whose guiding principles were peaceful agitation, diffusion of knowledge, and repudiation of any resort to arms. It laid down that "No connection shall be joined with any individual or body of men who do not in substance adopt the same [principles]." Of course this led to the inevitable internal strife with John Duncan attempting to get this rule expunged and once more coming in conflict with Fraser, who wanted to uphold it. Duncan gained the day and the association was again divided.⁸⁷ Forfar attempted a wider organisation calling a delegate meeting of all Chartists in the country.

This/

⁸⁶ True Scotsman 19.10.1839.

⁸⁷ True Scotsman 18.1.1840, 8.3.1840.

This decided to set up a general committee composed of one representative from each association, with two from places with more than six hundred members. An executive committee of five was to be elected and meetings were to be held in a central town, Dundee.⁸⁸ Yet again Dunfermline wanted all societies to include a savings movement, certainly a realistic approach to finance problems.⁸⁹ Perhaps the most comprehensive (and most theoretical) plan came from the Dumfries Chartists; this achieved publication in the 'Northern Star'. Adequate financial provision was to be made by having one Collector to every five members (one for ten if the association had over a hundred members). Over every five Collectors there was to be a Guardian and over the Guardians was to be a Convener! There was to have been a nationally elected Convention, on somewhat more restricted lines than that of 1839. It also proposed the establishment of reading rooms in large localities.⁹⁰ Finally after many of these plans had been tried and found wanting in that they all ended up with an accumulation of debt, there appeared the more practicable Edinburgh Chartist Total Abstinence Society. Subscriptions were but a halfpenny a month and the books were to be cleared monthly. At no time were the debts of the Association to/

⁸⁸Scottish Patriot 21.9.1839.

⁸⁹True Scotsman 28.12.1839.

⁹⁰True Scotaman 16.5.1840; N.S. 25.4.1840.

to exceed ten shillings. Naturally enough it supported moral force and Rule 12 of its Constitution declared that anyone recommending illegal means or violent language was to be expelled.⁹¹ This rather belated recognition that financial embarrassment precluded successful agitation, recognises one of the root causes of Scottish Chartism's comparative failure. From the largest to the smallest, associations over-estimated the powers (and will) of their members to pay regular subscriptions and contribute to the many other financial appeals made to them at this time. Taking Scotland as a whole, large sums were raised for Chartism, but they were dissipated over many different side-lines and not devoted to agitation. Perhaps this reflects lack of leadership, perhaps a strong social conscience; whatever the reason financial attrition stifled the growth of the main movement.

Enough has been said already to indicate how much energy was dissipated in raising funds for various purposes. The working class possessed no long purse and many claims were made upon them. Local associations asked for regular subscriptions and/

⁹¹ True Scotsman 20.3.1841.

NOTE: There was a Chartist Total Abstinence Society as a Border Union formed at Jedburgh; it was pledged to be teetotal for one year, to petition Parliament for the Charter and in the Frost Case.

and the U.S.C.C.S. also had to be supported. Although the Committee received over £120 in the first four months of its existence, this was not nearly enough to cover the losses on the 'Chartist Circular' (and presumably the 'Patriot'⁹²). Paying lecturers was clearly out of the question and in many cases the itinerant missionaries received their fee locally. Thus Kettle W.M.A. guaranteed £5 for Abram Duncan to come and lecture in their district, whilst Kilbarchan gave one pound to M'Donall in recognition of his efforts.⁹³ Any well-known Chartist orator was certain to receive at least his 'expenses' in return for an inspiring lecture. Somewhat uncharitably - but probably quite truthfully - it might be concluded that several of the Chartist leaders saw, in the resurgent Scottish movement, an opportunity for earning a Radical livelihood until their English supporters had recovered from the 1839 calamity. For all they contributed, Harney, O'Brien, M'Donall and later Lowery might just as well not have crossed the Border. However they did at least give the customers what they wanted and 'big names' often stimulated local interest. For ordinary members this expenditure was very satisfactory, with considerable entertainment value. Equally satisfactory, for another reason, did they consider responses to appeals for funds to help/

⁹² Scottish Patriot 4.1.1840.

⁹³ True Scotsman 9.11.1840, 1.8.1840

help defend imprisoned Chartists. After sentence was passed these efforts concentrated on Relief Funds for the families of convicted leaders. Perhaps the most successful of all these appeals from the Scottish point of view was the Frost Fund raised nationally to help the leaders of the abortive Welsh rebellion, whose sentences of death were commuted to transportation for life. Scotland sent a hundred pounds to the Frost Fund in six months.⁹⁴ At the same time signatures were being collected for a National Petition asking for clemency to be exercised in this case. Many protest meetings were held in Scotland for this purpose. Twenty thousand signatures were obtained for it in Dundee alone, and over five thousand in Greenock. Paisley Town Council gave its official approval to this activity.⁹⁵ When completed the Petition had over two million signatures, far more than the National Petition of 1839. Duncombe presented it to the House of Commons in May 1841, together with a motion that the Queen be asked to reconsider the cases of all political prisoners. This was lost only on the Speaker's casting vote.⁹⁶ Scots expenditure and effort on helping these victims may have been the result of 'working-class solidarity' or 'There, but for the Grace of God, go I'.

More/

⁹⁴ Scottish Patriot 8.2.1840.

⁹⁵ True Scotsman 1.2.1840, 8.2.1840. Scottish Patriot 24.3.1840.

⁹⁶ N.S. 5.6.1841.

More expenditure was to come. This time two purely Scottish causes demanded attention. The Hustings Case has been discussed in another context and only supporters of Fraser and the 'True Scotsman' were affected by it. The other appeal had a wider significance, and savours a little of a Radical 'Dreyfus Case'. Whilst Frost was awaiting sentence, there took place in the North of England two or three semi-violent outbreaks, allegedly part of a more general plot to liberate the Welsh prisoners. Peddie, the Edinburgh stay-maker, was lecturing in the area at the time and somehow or other (his language was certainly violent) he became implicated in the outbreak at Bradford (January 1840). Arrested and sentenced to imprisonment in Beverley gaol, his plight aroused little sympathy in England where he was widely regarded as being an agent provocateur or government spy. In fact Harney wrote a long editorial in the 'True Scotsman' to vindicate him from this charge.⁹⁷ Whatever the truth of the matter may be, both the Scottish Chartist weeklies took up his case ^g earnerly and launched appeals on his behalf. Somehow these contemporaries give the impression that they were quite pleased to have a genuine Scottish Chartist martyr on their hands. If O'Connor could write from York gaol, why shouldn't Peddie give first-hand news from Beverley House of Correction/

⁹⁷ True Scotsman 22.2.1840.

Correction? Certainly Peddie had far more hardship to endure. Not only did he receive sentence of three years' hard labour but there were none of the mitigations which O'Connor, as a leader and newspaper proprietor, managed to obtain. Peddie's "Letters from Beverley" received much attention in Scotland; they reveal surprising fortitude and a religious outlook on life. Incidentally they give some idea of what the Chartist rank-and-file suffered in prison. Peddie had to operate the treadmill, mounting eleven hundred steps in twenty minutes, each step requiring much effort. After a ten minutes rest, he repeated the operation and this process continued (with short meal intervals) for nine hours every day! To make matters worse, Beverley also indulged in the 'silent system' - no talking allowed. All this made front-page news for the 'Patriot' with headings of 'Unmitigated Whigs Vengeance. Horrors of Beverley'.⁹⁸ Fraser's paper was rather more restrained but gave due prominence to Peddie's misfortunes. The appeal for aid to be given to Peddie's wife and family was well-supported, although certain sections were never fully convinced that he was not a spy!

Merely/

⁹⁸ Scottish Patriot 20.3.1841. Peddie always was unfortunate. At 8 he fell head-first into a ditch full of mud and was retrieved by his heels; later he fell from Greyfriars Wall in Edinburgh breaking breast, collar and jaw bones. He only saved himself from falling ogg a tenement roof in Cowgate by clinging to the rain-spout; and was nearly drowned in Leith Harbour! [True Scotsman 17.10.1840.]

Merely to emphasise all these strains on Chartist finances is not fair comment. Admittedly there were too many of them, all deserving cases. Apart from these main appeals some branches (owing allegiance to O'Connor), even sent funds direct to him, thus by-passing completely the Scottish organisation. However, there were very few of these. Constant appeals for funds became wearisome and are ultimately construed as a sign of weakness by all concerned with them. Yet they helped to make this into a real movement. Funds were raised most frequently by social entertainments. Often the local Chartists held a regular weekly concert, as did the Lanarkshire U.S.A. in the Lyceum Rooms, Glasgow.⁹⁹ Soirées, dances, dramatic performances, debating societies, even curling matches, produced money for the various objects already listed, and at the same time allowed Chartism to permeate into everyday life. On balance, though, the success of these social functions does not compensate for that financial stringency, the result of too many appeals which prevented any major issue being carried to a successful conclusion.

Section IV. "I am Sir Oracle...".

Chartism had a predilection for disputes, either internal or by launching attacks on other popular movements of the time.

Sometimes/

⁹⁹ Scottish Patriot 13.3.1841.

Sometimes such action was a logical move, more often it was nonsensical. Here the inconsistency of Western leadership shows up clearly - the opponents selected came from personal bias rather than active policy. To emphasise this Fraser, and the 'True Scotsman', had only two real antipathies - the 'Scottish Patriot' Chartists and the avowed Physicals. A third dislike really followed from these two - that of persons who challenged his position as a Chartist arbiter. Thus the Patriot was attacked over and over again but much space was devoted to the internal quarrels of the Edinburgh Chartists. The Edinburgh Political Union and the Universal Suffrage Association amalgamated to form the Edinburgh Charter Association, and Fraser was actively associated with the new group. Soon John Duncan managed to have one clause of the new association's constitution abrogated and this had the effect of bringing approval of Physical Force one step nearer.¹⁰⁰ From then on Fraser severed his connection with the E.C.A. and helped form the rival Radical Association which wanted full co-operation with the middle class. A long and desultory warfare broke out between Fraser and his supporters and the Charter Association, with verbal pyrotechnics on both sides. Fraser referred to them as 'braggadoccios like your musket, torch and dagger spouters in Whitefield Chapel'

Their meeting-place;¹⁰¹ in return he was called 'that anomalous Chartist/'

100 See above, note 87. p. 2.
101 True Scotsman 17.10.1840.

Chartist', with scathing references to pill pedlars, and the now familiar accusation that he was the first in Scotland to talk physical force. Abram Duncan, his comrade of the early days of agitation, joined in the attack making adverse comments about the conduct of the 'True Scotsman'.¹⁰² (A. Duncan seemed to have come completely under O'Connor's spell; this erstwhile temperance lecturer later referred to Total Abstinence Societies as 'one-eyed, hypocritical and sanctimonious'. He probably broke with Fraser over the Convention.¹⁰³). Much wrangling took place as to whether Fraser had been threatened with assassination in the event of a Physical victory in 1839. Both sides were in deadly earnest over this important question, with one Fraser witness actually making a Declaration before a J.P.! Actually there was some truth in Fraser's complaint but a wise man would have dismissed the incident as mere bluster.¹⁰⁴ The climax came when a meeting in Whitefield Chapel decided, despite the opposition of Fraser's loyal friends, to burn the 'True Scotsman'.¹⁰⁵ Of course the 'Patriot' sought to improve the shining hour by hinting that Edinburgh was not the only place to have burned that rag!¹⁰⁶

Often/

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- 102 True Scotsman 6.1.1841.
 - 103 True Scotsman 28.11.1840.
 - 104 True Scotsman 17.10.1840, 24.10.1840, 14.11.1840.
 - 105 True Scotsman 24.11.1840.
 - 106 True Scotsman 14.11.1840.

Often coupled with Fraser as a subject for attack was the Rev. Patrick Brewster - in fact, Malcolm and his friends made the fantastic suggestion that Brewster ^Cdictated Fraser's policy. Undoubtedly both abhorred violence and violent talk, distrusting the U.S.C.C.S. because some of its members had actively supported the Convention. It was Brewster who accused the 'Chartist Circular', rather unfairly, of being pledged to physicalism and wanted to form a new association by adopting the substance of the Birmingham and Calton Hill Resolutions. This was in February 1840 and nothing came of the proposal.¹⁰⁷ Seven months later he managed to arrange an unofficial delegate meeting of those who disapproved of the Central Committee. Unfortunately, for Brewster, the Committee got wind of this move, sending Moir and O'Neill down to defend their interests. Thanks to their intervention Brewster's attempt to form a separate body was defeated. At this meeting the difference between East and West (counting Brewster as of the former) consisted of four words only. Both were agreed on the method of getting the Charter, "legal, peaceful, and constitutional means", but the West were prepared to add the proviso "forcibly if we must".¹⁰⁸ In this affair, too, Fraser gave his support to Brewster, although by this time - sickened at the constant disputes - he no longer appeared/

107 True Scotsman 15.2.1840.

108 Scottish Patriot 19.2.1840.

appeared on political platforms. One last example of Fraser's consistent opposition to physical force must suffice. When Harney traversed Scotland on a lecturing tour under the unofficial auspices of the U.S.C.C.S., he was, with Brewster, almost alone in declaring that the peopard had not changed his spots. One editorial went "He may be an honest man, but he is a fool . . . instrumental in producing the deplorable state of Radicalism in England, he coward-like deserts the scene of desolation and ruin to travel in Scotland".¹⁰⁹ Fraser's judgement was correct; whatever moral force sentiments Harney now paid lip-service to, he was still a violent Republican at heart and his audiences, knowing his reputation, expected this to show up in his speeches. It did. At Kilmarnock he declaimed; "get a hundred good men and true to cross the Border, [the Charter] would be the law of the land in one week". His hearers probably went home to dream of their latent power; fortunately they were content with dreaming.¹¹⁰ M'Donall was similarly attacked by Fraser, quite justifiably, as was demonstrated when M'Donall left Scotland to found a violent newspaper, significantly named the 'Republican Journal'.¹¹¹

From/

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- 109 True Scotsman 18.1.1840.
110 True Scotsman 1.2.1840.
111 Scottish Patriot 13.3.1841.

From this it is apparent that Fraser was severely logical and consistent in his campaigns - they were directed only against the Physicals and his personal detractors. Church affairs, the Anti-Corn Law League, and middle-class movements are adequately reported but not attacked. His political judgement in this was shrewd; uneasy allies are better than bitter enemies. It is all the more regrettable that he undid so much of his work by the animosity he drew to himself by his tactless (and snobbish) handling of less gifted Chartists.¹¹²

As distinct from these easily-understood local struggles in which Fraser and Brewster participated, there were others which committed the 'Scottish Patriot' Chartists in particular to a number of lost causes with which at heart they could not agree. This resulted from a typical O'Connor policy, that anything which might detract from the Charter was to be deplored. The Charter must come first and all other reforms could be postponed until it was achieved. This unreal and intransigent policy was followed by these Western Chartists on several matters, producing contradictory results. A notable instance of this was over/

¹¹²True Scotsman 3.10.1841. The True Scotsman reported Ritchie, a local leader and a Physical, making a speech of welcome to M'Donall as follows, "introduce to them one of those patriots which had suffered, which their meeting have comed to hear, and which would address them". This was not an isolated example.

over their attitude to current Church affairs. For some time there had been much internal tension amongst members of the Church of Scotland over the dual problems of Disestablishment and Patronage. Many wanted separation of the Church from the State and coupled with this a demand for the modification or abolition of the right possessed by Patrons to appoint ministers to livings without reference to the wishes of the congregations in the matter. When the Civil Courts upheld this right, matters came to a head. Detailed consideration of this affair which led to four hundred ministers and thousands of their parishioners leaving the Establishment to form the new Free Church of Scotland would be out of place here. Those who advocated Disestablishment were known as 'Voluntaries' and they carried on a widespread and successful agitation. Others who did not go so far, wishing to reduce State control without making a definite break, were the Non-Intrusionists, led by Dr. Chalmers. 113&114

Logically the Chartists should have welcomed the Voluntaries as representing the right of self-determination and opposition to aristocracy whether of State or landed proprietor. One would also expect them to gloat over anything which embarrassed their *bête noire*(e), the Established Church. That was much too simple/

113&114 Faulkner, op.cit.; Mathieson. 'Church and Reform'; A.M. Mackenzie 'Scotland in Modern Times', deal with this problem.

Seymour! { simple; thoroughly indoctrinated with O'Connor's "All or Nothing" policy the Voluntaries and Non-Intrusionists were fiercely attacked. As early as Nov. 1838 the Perthshire Radicals were attending Voluntary meetings and moving resolutions to the effect that "the Voluntary principle can never triumph till the Charter be achieved".¹¹⁵ However opposition remained mostly latent, to become active only when personalities complicated the issue. One such occasion occurred in February 1840. The Glasgow Conservative Operatives Association advocated Non-Intrusion and held a meeting to support it. Local Chartists attended in force and disrupted proceedings to such good effect that the police were called in to restore order. This event was hailed as a great triumph by the 'Patriot'. However the Conservative Operatives themselves were probably the main irritant here.¹¹⁶ Feeling against them was strong, aptly - though crudely - summed up by Bronterre O'Brien, "An Operative Conservative Association? To conserve what? What the deuce has an operative in this country to preserve or conserve unless it be his second shirt from the pawnbrokers and his carcass from the paupers-bastille?"¹¹⁷ It was Harney (vindicating Fraser's judgement) who indirectly was responsible for turning this sporadic intervention into consistent opposition. He carried out the familiar Chartist practice of attending public meetings called for/

115 True Scotsman 17.12.1838.
116 Scottish Patriot 8.2.1840.
117 Chartist Circular 20.3.1841.

for any purpose whatsoever (so long as there was a large/crowd!) making an eloquent speech and finally putting forward a Resolution expressing belief in the Charter. Anti-Patronage speakers were amongst those who received these unwelcome attentions, notably Maitland Makgill Crichton. He was either cast in a sterner mould or was shorter tempered than the rest of Harney's victims. Anyway Harney, aided by Ker, interrupted a meeting held by Crichton in Luthermuir. The latter laid a complaint and as a result the verbose pair spent some days in Stonehaven gaol cooling off!¹¹⁸ Henceforth Harney made sure that Crichton and his colleagues were rarely left undisturbed. A sort of Chartist Fiery Cross went forth which soon produced results. At Dundee, with Harney to incite them, a hostile crowd surrounded St. Andrews Church where a 'closed' meeting on Patronage, with Crichton as one of the speakers, was being held. Rioting broke out, panes of glass were broken and police, specials and shore-porters used batons to quell it. Some youths were arrested and sentenced.¹¹⁹ A month later, the 'Patriot' came out with an official policy of opposing the Non-Intrusionists. It advised Chartists not to trouble their heads about the rights and wrongs of/

¹¹⁸Dundee Warder 2.2.1841.

¹¹⁹Broadsheet in Old Dundee Collection 1841.

of this question but 'in every corner where these brawlers raise their heads to crush them'. Already it appeared that Chartists in Dumfries, Stirling and Denny had ruined Crichton's meetings - mainly by turning off the gas! Rather oddly, the Patriot's main official justification for this policy was "Where men seek to raise an agitation against the laws of the country, it behoves the people to be on the alert".¹²⁰ Somehow this does not ring true and the whole opposition to Church Reform hinges on more personal issues. Chalmers, leader of the Non-Intrusionists, did not agree with a legal assessment of each parish for Poor Relief - private effort and charity were much (more) preferable.¹²¹ Obviously this notion would be unpopular with working-class Chartists as tending to reduce the relief provided. Therefore the party with which Chalmers was associated, whatever its principles, must be opposed. Further fuel was added by the participation of the Conservative Operatives and the treatment meted out to Harney (The O'Connor policy has already been mentioned). There can be no doubt that this attack was against the real interests of Chartism, since enlightened middle-class Chartist sympathisers clearly believed in the Voluntary principle and any prospect of ultimate success lay in co-operating with them.

Equally/

¹²⁰ Scottish Patriot 20.3.1841.

¹²¹ See W.C. Black's 'Thomas Chalmers'. Cockburn op.cit. 19.5.1840.

Equally complex was the Western Chartists' attitude towards the Anti-Corn Law League. This very powerful rival stirred to life just as the Charter was first published. Support for these Free Traders came from the middle class but after the 1839 débacle many Chartists turned towards it. O'Connor hated the League. Judging correctly the League's potential power, he declared it was a middle-class trap to weaken Chartism. In addition he was a Protectionist and had, as an ideal, the desire to get back to a purely agricultural society. The combination of the two slogans, "Cheap food means cheap labour" and "Back to the land!" brought him unswerving support from the starving hand-loom weavers of Yorkshire and Lancashire. With the 'Northern Star' as his voice, he instituted in England a policy of fierce opposition to the League, urging Chartists everywhere to move amendments at all Free Trade meetings in favour of the Six Points. Many English Chartists followed this plan.¹²²

The same was not true for Scotland. For various reasons O'Connor's point of view appealed only to a small minority - but a fanatical minority. Almost every class in Scotland wanted Corn Law Repeal and the League met very little real opposition. For this several reasons may be put forward:

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¹²²Hovell op.cit. Chapter XIII.

(1) the small farmers were not so ardently opposed to Repeal since a corn-rent was often paid.

(2) agriculture was not tied so exclusively to corn - more concern was felt over legislation regarding sheep, cattle and oats.¹²³

(3) the ideas of Adam Smith were well-known and thought peculiarly suitable for Scotland.

(4) the Dissenting Clergy actively supported the League and brought their lay followers into the Free Trade fold with them.

(5) Chartist economists appeared to be firmly convinced that under-consumption was the cause of economic distress. Repeal of the Corn Laws would increase consumers' purchasing power.

(6) Far too many Scots knew that O'Connor's notion of a return to the land was but a chimaera: they had only just left it themselves. There were no Arcadian crofts!

Yet even with this evidence before it, and the knowledge that the majority of Scots Chartists favoured Repeal, the Central Committee showed itself to be once more in two minds.

Even as early as November 1838 before the League had got into its stride, the Stirling Chartists in one procession carried a banner representing a small and a large loaf of bread with the motto "Monopoly loaf and free trade loaf".¹²⁴ The 'True Scotsman'

¹²³ Particularly in the West of Scotland. Cowan op.cit. p.201.
¹²⁴ True Scotsman 17.11.1838.

*u.k. English
'corn' (or
wheat), not
 Scots 'corn'
(= oats)*

Scotsman' ran an excellent series of articles by Col. Perronet Thompson on the subject of Repeal of the Corn Laws and Free Trade. Even the 'Patriot' seemed favourable towards it. Yet, as noticed already, Cullen proposed to the U.S.C.C.S. that Chartists should interfere with League meetings, only to be opposed by a fellow-member, Pattison, on the grounds that the Trades would not approve of such action. Despite this a month later a huge League meeting was held in Glasgow and four Central Committee members spoke eloquently on matters not included in the agenda. Pattison, of all people, ultimately brought forward a resolution in favour of universal suffrage and this was seconded by M'Farlane. The other two were Moir and Proudfoot. Out of this tangled web one familiar dictum emerges, - that it was no use trying to repeal the Corn Laws until the Charter was won!¹²⁵ In fairness to the Committee the attempts they made to thrust the notion (of all progress depending on the Charter) forward at League meetings were but half-hearted affairs. The same may be said of their attacks on Brewster for being a convinced supporter of the League. He was called only an 'expediency Whig'. Doubtless the situation was made very difficult for the Glasgow Junta because at the meeting of the League which appointed Brewster as their delegate to an Anti-Corn Law Dinner/

¹²⁵ Scottish Patriot 28.12.1840.

Dinner in Manchester, several prominent Renfrew Chartists were on the platform with him!¹²⁶ Undoubtedly if Brewster had not been present, the meeting would never have been reported. As it was, it seems likely that the Committee gave this modified support to O'Connor's policy only because Fraser and Brewster actively advocated Free Trade. It is significant that interruption of League meetings was never launched as a policy. The mass of the Chartists wanted Repeal of the Corn Laws so as to get lower prices. Up to the end of 1841 few League meetings were disturbed - except by the Physicals. To complete the record one noteworthy attempt to break up a League meeting was made in Dundee by the O'Connor faction, led by John Duncan (May 1841). The meeting was advertised as for 'merchants, manufacturers, and shop owners'. Under various disguises the Chartists attempted to 'gate-crash' but failed. An jubilant Free Trader has left an account of this episode, written in very indifferent verse. It gives an interesting picture of Chartist tactics from bluff to brute force, with a typical reference to one Chartist arguing that he was a merchant and sending for a copy of Johnson's Dictionary to prove it! But even here very few Chartists were involved in the demonstration.¹²⁷ Ignoring the typical, and ineffective, vacillation of the Central Committee noted/

¹²⁶ Scottish Patriot 18.1.1840.

¹²⁷ Memoranda of the Chartist agitation in Dundee p.16; also 'Corn Law agitation and the Radicals', anon..

noted above a true picture of the Scottish Chartists' attitude to the League would show passive acceptance by the majority with active opposition from a very small, very clamant, minority.

Personal animosity, as much as anything, caused the Chartists in Glasgow to oppose the two Irish Registration Bills of 1841. These would have created for Ireland a £5 suffrage and a fifteen years lease as a qualification. O'Connell approved of the proposals and that alone would have put the Chartists in the opposite camp. There was also O'Connor's policy; anything less than universal suffrage was not to be accepted. Events now pursued a familiar pattern. The Glasgow Irish held a large meeting approving these two measures. In reply the Chartists organised a very large demonstration, for which the equivalent of a 'Three Line Whip' must have been issued since Moir, Cullen, Rodgers, Thomson and Malcolm all participated. Three Resolutions were passed; (1) denouncing the attempt to 'abridge the franchise by a Registration Bill' and declaring the Irish to be following in the wake of faction rather than taking 'a stand on sound political principles' (a hit at O'Connell this), (2) Morpeth's Bill was an attempt by the Whigs 'to perpetuate their administration at the expense of the cause of justice', (3) that a Petition be addressed to Parliament/

Parliament to dismiss its Ministers.¹²⁸ What little importance this storm in a teacup possesses lies in the light it throws on the Glasgow Irish. They followed O'Connell and did not attend Chartist meetings except, on rare occasions, for entertainment. Lanark U.S.A. went even further by suggesting that the Catholic bishops discouraged Irish labourers from attending political demonstrations.¹²⁹ If such was the case, then this well-publicised intervention over the Registration Bills shows extremely bad political judgement. Attacking the Irish, over Irish affairs, was not likely to produce converts to the Chartist cause. Once more a slavish imitation of the 'O'Connor Line' weakened the Glasgow Chartists by alienating potential recruits.

However if these examples seem to make the Glasgow Junta, the Corn Laws excepted, an insipid projection of O'Connor, there was one matter on which it vigorously adopted an entirely independent policy. This was the necessity for full co-operation with the middle-class. Early in January 1841 O'Connell tried to start/

¹²⁸ Scottish Patriot 6.2.1841.

¹²⁹ Scottish Patriot 13.3.1841.

NOTE: the Registration Bill was intended to remove abuses of the electoral roll, but the Chartists declared it would lead to troublesome and vexatious delays. Morpeth's Bill was described as a 'tub thrown to the whale'. [Scottish Patriot 13.2.1841, 6.3.1841.] .

start a counter-movement to Chartism on the basis of amending the franchise only, without adopting universal suffrage (probably on the lines of the Irish legislation just reviewed). To further this aim he purposed speaking on the subject at Messrs. Marshall's mill in Leeds. Naturally a counter-demonstration was arranged with delegates from many parts, including Moir of the Central Committee. O'Connell failed to turn up but an impromptu meeting was held (Jan. 21). Joseph Hume, M.P. for Montrose, who had consistently supported the Charter, used this opportunity to put forward a resolution 'that the united efforts of all reformers ought to be directed to obtain such a further enlargement of the franchise as should make the interests of the representatives identical with those of the whole country'. It was obviously a thinly-disguised appeal for Chartists and middle-class reformers to get together. The resolution was seconded by Moir and Sharman Crawford, Col. Perronet Thompson and Roebuck all spoke in its favour.¹³⁰ When news of this reached Scotland, the Physicals sprang to life. O'Connor had decided that the interests of the middle and working classes were diametrically opposed. Further, the former had betrayed the workers in 1832 and undoubtedly would do so again. This Leeds declaration was sheer heresy and must be crushed. The chosen instrument was "A.M." of Edinburgh who wrote at length to the 'Scottish/

¹³⁰ Cummage op.cit.

'Scottish Patriot' denouncing the idea and those who had supported it in forthright O'Connor language.¹³¹ "Joe Hume, thou middle-class villain, you may have spouted Chartism at Leeds but I say it was gammon. You may declare your willingness to aid this cause but no joint of Dan's tail shall enter our ranks. Your intentions are bad; you have an india-rubber conscience, Joe".

Malcolm took it upon himself^f to reply to this attack, both in the 'Scots Times' and in the 'Patriot'. His arguments were very effective and showed no sign^f of pandering to the superior prestige of the English leaders. After stating the case very clearly for co-operating with the middle-class, he pointed out that the Glasgow Chartists had unanimously approved of the sentiments expressed by Moir, Hume, Crawford and Roebuck at Leeds 'and that they did this without consulting Mr. Fergus O'Connor, Bronterre O'Brien, or even "A.M." of Edinburgh!' Altogether it was a worthy statement of policy.¹³² Subsequently in the columns of the 'Patriot', Bronterre O'Brien attacked Malcolm - albeit without the usual venom - on this issue but made no impression.¹³³ Fraser in the east had always welcomed co-operation with the middle-class, and for once the west was in agreement; only the O'Connor faction objected. By supporting Hume, and opposing O'Brien, the western Chartists did much to/

131 Scottish Patriot 13.3.1841.
132 Scottish Patriot 13.3.1841.
133 Scottish Patriot 13.3.1841, 3.4.1841.

to persuade the Scottish middle-class that 'violence' and 'the People's Charter' were not necessarily synonymous, and this in turn influenced the future course of the movement.

Section V. Practical Chartism.

With so much heat being engendered over verbal exchanges, with no consistent central policy or funds to carry it out, there was very little time left for practical agitation. Obviously there were many local meetings but far too often they were preoccupied with raising funds. The release of the imprisoned English leaders gave the movement as a whole a chance to show its strength. Lovett, Collins, White and M'Donall were invited to tour Scotland. Lovett, through ill-health, was unable to travel north but the other three were enthusiastically received. At Edinburgh Collins and M'Donall each received a ring from the local Female Chartists and 'a cravat wherewith to defend themselves from the storm'.¹³⁴ This meeting produced a significant speech from M'Donall, typical of the equivocal attitude of the pseudo-physicals. Starting off by declaring that he was the grandson of a man who fought by the side of Washington, he went on, "We gave our passions the reign; but you have been more cautious, you have suffered less - you gave the reigns to/

B4 True Scotsman 19.9.1840.

to reason. . . Now we have abandoned all appeals to violence, but should the Government attempt to beat down this movement, those moral force men, as they style themselves, would be the first to take the field." Of course this demonstration was easily surpassed by Glasgow. There was a large procession to the Green, where 200,000 were supposed to be present. Amongst them were Operative Masons, Smiths, Shoemakers, Cabinetmakers, Plasterers, Boilermakers, Dressers, Twisters, Dyers - to mention some of the Trade groups in the procession. There were a hundred Chartist banners and about thirty bands. Later a soiree was held in the Chartist Church with 1200 ticket-holders present. Pattison was the chairman. Female Chartists read addresses to the three leaders and they were each given a medal and a plaid. White, for some obscure reasons, was also given a blue bonnet:¹³⁵ Other towns followed suit but trouble arose in Dunfermline as to who should sponsor the visit of M'Donall and Collins. The local moral force Chartists refused to serve on the organising Committee because of M'Donall's known violent opinions. That left the Physicals to organise the demonstration. They were not content with that but proposed holding a soiree at which an admittance fee of twopence would be charged to all non-Physicals, This was an unfortunate move since the Dunfermline Flax Dressers, who gave financial assistance to Lovett/

¹³⁵ True Scotsman 24.9.1840, 5.10.1840. Scottish Patriot 19.9.1840 gives a good insight into the organisation and constitution of the monster procession.

Lovett and Collins ⁱwhilst they were in prison, had already arranged a Public Entertainment for the evening of the demonstration. When Collins was informed of this impasse he sent a typical reply; 'He was not come to be tied up, neither by one party nor another - he was concerned with the spreading of principles', and announced his intention of attending the Flax Dressers' social. This Solomon-like decision meant that the Physicals organised the Demonstration attended by M'Donall, with John and Abram Duncan, which turned into a whole-hearted denunciation of the middle-class, John Fraser, and temperance, whilst Collins and the moderates held their own social gathering!¹³⁶

(Most of the Physicals' support here came from the miners who sent three bands and a contingent of '100 coallies ... and 13 coallies women'). After these receptions White and Collins travelled the country holding open-air meetings followed by M'Donall who gave indoor lectures. It is doubtful if these large-scale demonstrations accomplished much and it seems more likely that they accentuated the difference between the various sections. However, the Central Committee did try to turn these receptions into a Chartist Revivalist Campaign, sending its own speakers to places which were outside the orbit of the English leaders' main tour. Thus a large demonstration at Aberdeen produced the curious mixture of O'Neill (Christian Chartist),

Harney/

¹³⁶ True Scotsman 17.10.1840, 24.10.1840, 28.11.1840.

Harney (Chartist Republican) and Abram Duncan (Physical-cum-moral) all on the same platform!¹³⁷

Imitating the policy of the Anti-Corn Law League, the Scottish Chartists began in January 1840 to encourage individual Chartists and associations to send Petitions to Parliament about the Six Points. Harney in particular was very enthusiastic about this scheme.¹³⁸ From all over the Midland Belt, requests poured in to unfortunate M.P.s to present petitions to the House. Some of these must have been curious documents and Dennistoun, the Glasgow M.P., had to remind his constituents that 'Individual Petitions must be signed at the bottom'. However, The Central Committee soon got around^d that difficulty by publishing in the 'Patriot' a pro-forma Petition drawn up by Moir.¹³⁹ Dennistoun earned the commendation of the Chartists for his patience and tact in this matter. Amongst those he presented were some from individuals like 'John Chisholm, Engine-keeper, Clyde Grain Mills Hutchesontown', from groups 'The Operative Joiners of Mr. Laurie, Glasgow', and even factories. Partick and Airdrie were amongst Chartist Associations which carried out this idea, whilst even Strathaven Y.S.A. achieved 650 signatures to a Petition it sent to Joseph Hume for presentation.¹⁴⁰

Dalry/

¹³⁷ True Scotsman 24.10.1840.

¹³⁸ Scottish Patriot 28.3.1840.

¹³⁹ Scottish Patriot 14.3.1840.

¹⁴⁰ Scottish Patriot 28.3.1840.

Dalry, to be different, sent two simultaneously: one against the Corn Laws, the other in favour of the six points. Not all these efforts proved acceptable to the M.P.s concerned. Rather hopefully the 'Sub-Committee of the Glasgow North West Quarter Branch of the County of Lanark U.S.A.' sent theirs to Sir Robert Peel only to receive the stiff rejoinder "Sir Robert Peel wishes that the enclosed petition may be placed in the hands of some Member more favourable to a complainee with the prayer of it than he himself is".¹⁴¹ Greenock's petition had 5,304 signatures but Wallace refused to present it and the duty fell upon Wakley. Another who acquitted himself well from the Chartists' point of view was Fox Maule who declared that he would present all petitions 'respectfully worded'. (A necessary qualification: the Aberdeen Chartists at one procession carried a live fox in a wooden cage, with the legend, "A hen-house Conservative - Spy Inspector M--le, Finality Jackall"¹⁴²!) Taken as a whole the 'Patriot' could justly boast that 'the paper war goes on bravely - showers of petitions of all shapes and sizes pour in'. The object of all this activity was to gain publicity and quite frankly to annoy Parliament.¹⁴³ This was probably achieved. Unfortunately it is impossible to maintain for long the first flush of enthusiasm a new petition evokes. Soon/

141 Scottish Patriot 21.3.1840.

142 True Scotsman 24.10.1840.

143 28.3.1840. Scottish Patriot.

Soon the flow of petitions became a mere trickle and despite talk of a Scottish Petition interest died. The 'Patriot' attempted to revive it by publishing in April O'Connor's new petition as published in the 'Northern Star'. However Scotland was definitely tired of this form of agitation as O'Connor found out in January 1842. Undoubtedly there had been too much of a good thing, not so much from the Chartists who achieved moderate success, but because the Anti-Corn Law League with its flair for organisation had ruined a market already weakened by the petitionary proclivities of the contestants inside the Church of Scotland!

After this there was no activity widespread enough to be called 'national'. True Abram Duncan made a prolonged lecturing tour in areas where Chartism was weak. This embraced places like Edinburgh, St. Andrews, Buckhaven, Kinghorn and Crossgates. He also visited Kennoway where it was reported that the 'stillness of death lay upon the Chartist movement'. Whether this was a deliberate attempt at proselytising by the Central Committee in conjunction with Harney's tour in the West is not clear.¹⁴⁴ It was far more likely to have been a 'bread and butter' excursion of Duncan's own choosing. Incidentally in these remote areas he preached as much temperance as he did Chartism! Although the 'Patriot' declared official war on the Non-Intrusionists/

¹⁴⁴ Scottish Patriot 11.4.1840, 25.3.1840.

Non-Intrusionists, it was carried out mainly in areas where Harney and Crichton had crossed swords. Admittedly Perth and Airdrie seemed to feel strongly about the matter, 'taking over' meetings held to discuss this question.¹⁴⁵ Too often Chartist intervention was almost incomprehensible. Thus a meeting of the 'Gorbals Association for promoting Religious Liberty and extending voluntary Church principles' received the attentions of Charles M'Ewan and Malcolm M'Farlane, two of the more enlightened Chartists. As a result of their prolonged oratory the following curious resolutions were passed:

(1) 'the present struggle is subversive to the fundamental principles of government and is a most contemptuous aggression in the prerogatives of Parliament'. This should not be allowed whilst the Church remained incorporated and dependent on the State for its political existence'.

(2) The Govt. had been most unjust in condemning Collins, Lovett, and the other leaders whilst 'they have allowed the Established Clergy to escape with impunity'. (the Lethendy case: the rejected presentee of the Patron secured an interdict from the Court of Session forbidding the Presbytery of Dunkeld to induct any other candidate. The presbytery defied the Interdict.).

(3) /

¹⁴⁵ Scottish Patriot 20.3.1841.

(3) The Church and State must be separated.¹⁴⁶

How the Voluntary principle could be established without coming into conflict with the Govt. is not explained. The Chartists had made this real point in the second resolution. Probably they believed that with Universal Suffrage they would be the Govt. and meanwhile they must preserve all its powers intact!. However the Central Committee did make some effort to clarify the situation by appealing to the Relief and Secession Synods (the Dissenters) to join with them in the cause of reform.

"We beseech your Reverend Synod to unite with the people in the cause of truth and justice - to assist the people in emancipating themselves from the thralldom of tyranny, in realising their right of universal suffrage - a right which no member of your Synod can deem extravagant since it is exercised by all communicants of your Church on matters which concern their well-being".¹⁴⁷

No official reply was received but many read the appeal in the light of the Rev. Andrew Marshall's earlier advice, "It is the duty of the [Dissenting clergy] ... to save the masses for the Church and to morality, peace and order. The only way .. is to show some sympathy towards their efforts for an extended franchise".¹⁴⁸ No immediate effects resulted from this/

¹⁴⁶ Scottish Patriot 4.4.1840.

¹⁴⁷ Chartist Circular 27.6.1840.

¹⁴⁸ Marshall, 'The Duty of Attempting to Reconcile the Unenfranchised and the Enfranchised Classes', p.14.

this Chartist attempt at a modus vivendi with the Dissenting Clergy. Clearly the Scottish Chartists had fallen heavily between two stools - they were hated by the Established Church and disdained by the Dissenters. It was the only possible result from its ^{their} inconsistent tactics in Church affairs.

Whilst still on the subject of active Scottish Chartism it is interesting to note that some penetration of local government by the movement was evident. Paisley Town Council had associated itself with a clemency plea for Frost, in fact Provost Bisset was vice-chairman of Renfrew Political Union. In March 1840 the Lanark U.S.A. expressed its thanks to M'Gavin for moving in the Lanark Town Council that as a corporate body the Council should petition for universal suffrage. It was seconded by Tanner and four bailies supported it.¹⁴⁹ Much more successful were the "ewmilns Chartists. In the nomination^s for magistrates the President of the Chartist Association (Alec Brown, master shoemaker) headed the list, with his Secretary, (John Kilpatrick, master tailor) as runner-up! At the same place the Ward elections produced nine Chartists to six Tories.¹⁵⁰ Whilst on the subject of elections there was one other sphere in which the U.S.C.C.S. attempted to initiate a uniform/

¹⁴⁹ Scottish Patriot 14.3.1840.
¹⁵⁰ True Scotsman 7.11.1840.

uniform policy. Bronterre O'Brien had proposed that at the next general election Chartists everywhere should nominate 'hustings candidates' who would then be elected on show of hands. Once this had been done there would be no need for them to go to the Polls - they would be the people's accredited representatives. Tentatively O'Brien suggested that these successful candidates might meet in London as a People's Parliament. In March 1840 the Committee officially approved of this policy.¹⁵¹ Most associations welcomed the plan in principle, although the Aberdeen Chartists were divided about it. George Ross, the Chief Secretary, was in favour but John Mitchell successfully opposed it on the grounds of uselessness and expense.¹⁵² A much more effective deterrent was the Edinburgh Hustings Case which was still dragging on. However by December Fraser had achieved at least a partial victory and without this there would have been no hustings candidates. Before the next election, however, another point was added to this programme, at O'Connor's suggestion. There must be a Tory-Radical alliance to defeat the Whigs. Chartists and Tories were to give each other mutual support.

In July 1841 the chance for action came and the Scots Chartists made a laudable attempt to carry out this two-fold plan/

151 Scottish Patriot 18.3.1840.

152 True Scotsman 29.2.1840.

plan of hustings candidates and supporting the Tories. For a beginning the Chartists managed to get three official Chartist candidates and one near-Chartist to the polls. Of these the most successful was George Mills in Glasgow who obtained 350 votes as against the winning candidate's 2700.¹⁵³ At Aberdeen Bannerman and Innes, the Whig and Tory candidates, were opposed by Lowery, the English Chartist leader. This contest was the occasion of an O'Connor demonstration. The result was,¹⁵⁴

| | | |
|-----------|-----|---|
| Bannerman | 780 | } |
| Innes | 513 | |
| Lowery | 30 | |

The third candidate was Thomason, a Vale of Leven school-teacher, who, elected on show of hands, had no intention of polling. The Sheriff, with the Edinburgh Hustings Case in mind, ruled otherwise since Thomason was the only opponent to the Whig candidate. The actual poll was a complete fiasco as far as Thomason was concerned.¹⁵⁵ Finally James Aytoun, a well-known Radical, whose sympathies went at least as far as household suffrage, contested Stirling. Here the Tories carried out their part of the unofficial pact. Cockburn writes, "James Aytoun, who formerly stood for Edinburgh, and now stood for the Stirling Burghs/

153 Caledonian Mercury 5.7.1841.
 154 Caledonian Mercury 3.7.1841, 5.7.1841, 8.7.1841.
 155 Caledonian Mercury 5.7.1841.

Burghs as a Radical, had the satisfaction of seeing 25 of the most flaming Tories of Stirling and its vicinity walk in a body and poll for him".¹⁵⁶ This had rather an embarrassing sequel. Immediately afterwards a placard appeared with large head-lines "Triumphant Progress of Chartism", beneath which was a statement of the usual aims and an appeal for support, Underneath again, in prominent letters, proof of this progress, were the names of the 24 Tories who had voted for Aytoun, starting with Lt.-Col. James Dunbar Tovey and ending with J.T.Wingate(Writer)! Insult was certainly added to injury here.¹⁵⁷

Of the Hustings candidates perhaps those at Edinburgh attracted most attention. Here Gibson Graig and Macaulay were opposed by the Chartists, Col.P.Thompson and Lowery (again!). Dr. Glover nominated the latter pair and made a shrewd hit at Macaulay by saying he was unable to give a plain answer to a plain question and had voted against clemency for the political prisoners. Lowery also made a good speech stressing the desire of Chartists for constitutional agitation, 'We have already gained a footing on the platform and we have also entered the pulpit and turned its corrupt artillery upon itself'. On show of hands the Chartists were probably successful but declined to poll. Lowery had the last word, declaring "Were it a poll/

156 Cockburn op.cit. 23.7.1841.

157 Caledonian Mercury 10.7.1841.

poll of the whole people, I would go to the polls; but I would never consent to stultify my principles so far as to call a few thousands of the shopkeepers, the people of Edinburgh.... I protest against this power."¹⁵⁸ A week later he polled at Aberdeen, principles or not. Amongst those candidates who were successful by show of hands was Moir at Glasgow (jointly with Mills) and John Duncan in Fife.¹⁵⁹ They were emulated by M'Crae at Greenock; he was the only Chartist to state publicly that he considered himself the accredited representative of the people as distinct from the false one elected at the polls.^{159a} Wardrop, a frame-maker, contested Dumfries. He made a good impression and was described as a 'clever well-informed operative, who could discourse fluently on any political topic'. He also won on show of hands.¹⁶⁰ Equally successful was John Fraser in the controversial Roxburgh election. On withdrawing from the poll he commended the Tory candidate to the electorate.¹⁶¹ By Chartist standards all these were victories. At Perth, however, they suffered a bad defeat. Here their candidate was another emigré English leader, R.J. Richardson. Originally an out-and-out Physical, he had resigned/

¹⁵⁸ Caledonian Mercury 3.7.1841.

¹⁵⁹ Caledonian Mercury 8.7.1841.

^{159a} " " "

¹⁶⁰ New Statistical Account of Scotland 1841 [Dumfries].

¹⁶¹ Caledonian Mercury 8.7.1841.

resigned from the 1839 Convention when his Manchester constituents couldn't, or wouldn't, pay him the five pounds weekly they had promised. Instead they appointed Christopher Dean in his place. Richardson now became a pseudo-moral force man but that did not prevent him being sentenced to nine months imprisonment for sedition. Fox Maule, the Tory candidate, knew all this and attacked Richardson fiercely, accusing him of still being a Physical. Much more damaging was Maule's revelation that Richardson had actually given evidence against Dean (his successor at Manchester) which had helped place him in Liverpool gaol. Richardson could not deny this and his lame excuse was that he thought Dean a Govt. spy! A typical barrack-room lawyer Richardson received an unfavourable reception after this with repeated calls of 'Go to England; get a boro' there!' The returning officer wanted to go straight on with polling but Maule was so confident that he asked for a show of hands first; he won handsomely, defeating the Chartists on their own ground.¹⁶² This was all the more deplorable for Richardson's sponsors since he was now an avowed advocate of moral force.

¹⁶²Caledonian Mercury 3.7.1841.

Chapter IV. Decline and Fall.

These elections, then, evoked quite a show of strength from the purely Scottish movement. It was by way of being a swan song. The movement was fading away, not so much in numbers as in leadership. Always weak in this respect it was rapidly becoming a headless trunk. First sign of this was the demise of the 'True Scotsman' in March 1841. Fraser's final editorial was of more than ordinary interest; it clearly showed why Eastern leadership lacked incision: "We need hardly inform [our readers] that no Chartist papers in Scotland are paying their current expenses.... Our own loss has been too heavy to be longer borne, and it is not congenial to our taste to be urging the public to support us, and far less to solicit public subscriptions.... We from henceforth betake ourselves to another sphere of public usefulness that has been very little occupied - the cultivation of a taste for the most useful, important and instructive of the fine arts - the art of music - an occupation much more fitted to our nature than politics".¹⁶³ Openly displayed are the artistic temperament and desire to run a one-man show which gave the Eastern moral force

¹⁶³ True Scotsman 27.3.1841.

force agitation a curious aura of unreality. Although his Radical ideas even intruded into music in the shape of a 'new' musical instrument, he did well in his chosen career.¹⁶⁴

Billed with his two daughters as 'The Fraser Family', he toured America successfully. His participation in the 1841 election was his last major lapse into politics. Yet unlike many Radicals who became Conservative as they grew older, Fraser maintained to the end a firm belief in his reform principles.

Although the journalistic field was now left clear for the Western papers, they fared badly. The 'Patriot' had always been in financial difficulties but despite strenuous efforts - mainly verbal - by the associations to help (notably with the Joint Stock Printing Company), its burden of debt constantly increased. To make things worse, Malcolm had another paper, the 'Scots Times', of a more respectable character, which was at least half-Chartist in its outlook. In fact its policy differed only from the 'Patriot' in degree; thus it had no doubts about supporting the Anti-Corn Law League but did not agree with the O'Connor plan of a Tory - Radical alliance. Both papers soon disappeared. The 'Scots Times' disappeared in June 1841 followed some five months later by the 'Patriot'.¹⁶⁵ That left the 'Chartist Circular' to wage an/

¹⁶⁴ True Scotsman 27.3.1841. Glasgow Herald 10.2.1934, article by W.H. Marwick.

¹⁶⁵ Scotsman 12.1.1842.

an almost lone battle, one it was ill-fitted to continue. Throughout its career money had been owed, chiefly to George Ross. By July the debt was over £200 of which £75 was due to Ross. Even the editor had not been paid. Undoubtedly if all the associations taking the paper had settled their accounts, its continuance on a sound basis would have been assured. Instead there appeared a Black List of those places which owed money for past supplies of the 'Circular'. Theoretically it was a healthy paper with a circulation of 7,000 copies a week. In fact, it was bankrupt and the last number appeared in September 1841.¹⁶⁶ Of the other papers supporting universal suffrage very few were left. Many of them had gone over to the League. Perhaps the most important was the 'Aberdeen Herald' which not only supported universal suffrage and the ballot but had a strong anti-clerical bias. This undoubtedly appealed to the Chartists and James Adam, its editor, frequently spoke on Radical platforms. However the 'Herald' gradually took up the cause of Corn Law Repeal and its support for the Chartists faded in proportion. Admittedly this switch was only temporary but one indignant correspondent wrote "At the commencement of the Chartist movement the Herald gave us pretty/

¹⁶⁶ Chartist Circular 25.6.1841.

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¹⁶⁶ -----
Chartist Circular 25.6.1841.

pretty fair and frequent notice, but since the Corn Law explosion he has been almost unconscious of our existence".¹⁶⁷ Of the other papers the equivocal 'Perth Chronicle' disappeared at the end of 1841. During its brief career it had displayed no clear policy. Supposedly moral force Chartist in outlook it disapproved of Brewster and the temperance movement. Other reformers were infuriated by its refusal to commit itself one way or the other over the Anti-Corn Law League issue.¹⁶⁸ Much more interesting was the 'Dundee Chronicle' of George Milne, a prominent figure in that town and one-time President of the Dundee Society of Writers. Unfortunately though a Radical his campaigns were not confined to Chartism. There was, for example, the long drawn out 'Water War', a proposal to levy a rate for that purpose bringing much opposition from those liable for assessment. These and other activities led to his being assaulted publicly on four occasions. After losing several thousand pounds with the 'Chronicle' he sold it in August to the Dundee Chartists and the paper re-appeared on August 26th as the 'Dundee Herald'. The new editor was Peter Brown who had just been dismissed from a similar post with the 'Dundee Advertiser' for his extremist views. Apart from putting forward/

¹⁶⁷ True Scotsman 13.3.1841.
¹⁶⁸ Cowan op.cit. p.155, 195, 352.

forward the views of the moderate Chartists, this paper was also committed to the Voluntary side in the Church struggle. Little is known of its career; it seems likely that it carried on Milne's practice of ventilating local grievances, because in July 1843 it was engaged as defender in a libel action. Brown soon severed his connection with Dundee and the paper fell into less capable editorial hands. Those connected with its management were probably Alexander Easson (joint leader with Milne in the 'Water War'), Sime (the flax-dresser-cum-lecturer), and Dominie Clyde. However the paper had only a small local circulation and it obviously could not hope to take the place of the vanished 'Patriot' or 'True Scotsman'. It had the distinction of being the only true Chartist paper left in Scotland at this time.¹⁶⁹ Thus at the moment when advice was most needed, the only generally available paper was the 'Northern Star' and this peddled O'Connor's peculiar brand of Chartism.

With the loss of the 'Scottish Patriot' and financial difficulties besetting itself and the 'Chartist Circular', the weak control of the Central Committee became even weaker. At least four bodies were waiting to take over the mantle of leadership/

¹⁶⁹ -----
'Memoranda of the Chartist agitation in Dundee' pp.21,68-9.
W. Norrie, 'Dundee Celebrities' 1873, pp,159 et seq.,
249 et seq., 132 et seq., 382 et seq..

leadership from it. One can be dismissed almost completely at this time as a challenger - the Socialists who had several excellent lecturers touring Scotland. Equally inept was the National Association of Lovett. Undoubtedly this came nearest to the spirit of Scottish Chartism and the 'Address of the National Association' in March 1841 produced a favourable reaction in Scotland based as it was on 'education, self-sacrifice and persistent effort' as a policy to secure the Charter. Many members of the existing National Charter Association subscribed their names to this Address, only to recant when the 'Northern Star' (for O'Connor) laid down a 'party line' violently opposed to Lovett's ideas. It is interesting, if rather nauseating, to see the control exercised by O'Connor over his subjects and the mental gymnastics they indulged in to execute a volte-face. Even the 'Star' described them as 'rats escaping from the trap'. Many suggested that Lovett had forged their signatures to his Address, whilst M'Crae, the Scottish Chartist schoolmaster, begged his country to forgive him for signing! Lovett was hoping to organise this National Association on the successful lines of his London Working Men's Association with its kindred branches throughout the country. In practice he failed to do this and although many accepted his ideas there was no organisation to which they could affiliate.¹⁷⁰

Going/

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Hovell op.cit. and Cole G.D.H. 'Chartist Portraits' deal fully with this.

Going to the other extreme, the strongest contender was undoubtedly the Anti-Corn Law League which grew amazingly in strength during these years. Early in January 1842 it held a large conference in Edinburgh composed of ministers and members of Dissenting Churches. Subsequently the deliberations of this conference were issued in the form of an 'Address to the People of Scotland on the Principles and Operation of the Corn and Provision Laws'.¹⁷¹ Thus supported the League made great strides forward, Dissenting ministers participating actively in the agitation. An organisation which knew exactly what it wanted and promised material benefits in the form of lower prices undoubtedly proved attractive to many Chartists. A few, led by Patrick Brewster, attempted a compromise by supporting both League and Charter. One such attempt at a Paisley meeting in April 1842, with Brewster present, resulted in the following resolutions: (1) not to enlist in the army, (2) to refrain from consuming exciseable goods. A Dublin barrister, one of the principal speakers, was responsible for the first of these - presumably being an Irish as well as a Corn Law Repealer.¹⁷² That the League had popular backing is seen from the contemporary pastime of burning Protectionist M.P.'s in effigy. Pride of place in this was taken by Sir Robert Peel who was set alight in Hawick, Anstruther and Dundee. 'Faithless Frank/

171 - - - - -
171 Scotsman 12.1.1842.

172 Paisley Advertiser 23.4.1842.

Frank Scott M.P.' shared his pyre at Hawick. Elsewhere figures more to local taste suffered a similar indignity,¹⁷³ The League had no need to make any large scale propaganda attempt to win over the Chartists; economic distress was proving a more powerful argument than mere words. Unemployment and famine, which helped to undermine Scottish Chartism by curtailing financial support in 1841-1842, in turn helped forward the League, a sure indication of something the Chartist leaders had ignored - that the people were seeking economic and not political betterment. No wonder the League made progress even in the Vale of Leven and Dunfermline, two O'Connor localities, whilst Stirling, a strong-point of Chartism, could report 'we never knew a petition [for Corn Law Repeal] so numerously subscribed in our town'.¹⁷⁴

An indication has already been given of the other group seeking control - those Chartists bound by personal allegiance to O'Connor. Most of these were in the National Charter Association, but in Scotland they went under many names ranging from the Dundee Democratic Society to the Glasgow Universal Suffrage Association. Mostly they were moral force men but had vague sentiments that in the past resort they might use/

¹⁷³ Scotsman 2.3.1842, 5.3.1842.

¹⁷⁴ ibid. 19.2.1842, 9.2.1842, 5.2.1842.

use violence. For this they were termed Physicals. There were also genuine extremists - the 'Whole-hog Chartists' - verbally prepared for anything. With others they were linked to the National Charter Association through O'Connor. Even in prison he had exerted a powerful influence over that body and on his release in August 1841 he deliberately set to work to bring it under his personal control. A recruiting tour in the North was followed by one in Scotland. Although helped by John and Abram Duncan he was by no means completely successful. His peregrinations were attended by an incubus in the shape of the Rev. Patrick Brewster who opposed him with considerable effect on the subject of physical force. Yet O'Connor sent jubilant reports to the 'Northern Star' of his success, with more than a trace of megalomania. Thus at Glasgow, his visit would 'ever be remembered by citizens of Glasgow'. Making only a short speech, whilst Brewster held forth for 68 minutes he was gratified to see a vote of 'no confidence' in Brewster, instigated by M'Crae, endorsed by the assembly. With profuse thanks O'Connor attributed his success to support from the Glasgow Irish. This might well be the case: faced by a renegade Irishman and an alien cleric the former might prove more popular. ~~It~~ it does at least show the political awakening of the Glasgow Irish and undoubtedly caused/

yntax!

caused O'Connor, temporarily at least, to add Irish Repeal to his policy. Flattery, as always, played its part in this recruiting drive; Sankey was called 'that great and good man', whilst John M'Crae for services rendered received the accolade of a new Christian name. Henceforth to O'Connor and the 'Northern Star' he was John [Wallace] M'Crae, after the national hero. For the rank and file there was the O'Connor medal. Characteristically he attacked the Scottish Chartist Churches. He hated them because they meant education and self-discipline, virtues he could not appreciate. Above all he attacked 'the outcast Methodistical fanatics' of the Glasgow Synod, meaning by this the Glasgow Churches and those members of the Central Committee who did not see eye to eye with him.¹⁷⁵

Thus attacked on their own ground, the Scots took up O'Connor's challenge, and he suffered a major defeat in January 1842. It was the last effective action of the Central Committee. A Convention was held in Glasgow with delegates from sixty places to approve of the new National Petition which the National Charter Association wanted to bring before Parliament. It included demands for Repeal of the Union with Ireland (O'Connor's bid for Irish support) and Repeal of the Poor Law Amendment Act (to please the North Country weavers). For the Scots/

¹⁷⁵ -----
Northern Star 13.11.1842, 4.12.1842, 15.2.1843, 20.11.1842, 22.2.1843.

Scots these two proposals were quite irrelevant; instead they wanted to substitute (quite unsuccessfully) a demand for Repeal of the Corn Laws. The situation was clear-cut; the Scots Chartists objected to O'Connor's juggling with the movement in his own interests. Pattison led the attack, supported by most of the Central Committee. Briefly the Convention produced three main resolutions:

(1) Should the petition include a prayer for repeal of the Poor Law Amendment Act and the Repeal of the Irish Union? O'Connor sponsored these additions to the Charter in a long speech and was ably supported by M'Crae. However the motion for including them was lost on the casting vote of the chairman.

(2) Should moral or physical force be used?

Brewster wanted to repudiate physical force under any circumstances but this was rejected in favour of Pattison's 'all legal and constitutional means may be used', implying that force might be used in certain cases. The voting was 56 votes to 5 against Brewster. After this decision the Paisley and Stewarton delegates withdrew to be followed soon afterwards by Brewster himself.

(3) Should the usual amendment (i.e. to support the Charter) be moved at public meetings?

This moving of amendments, particularly at League meetings, was a favourite/

a favourite policy of O'Brien's. Oddly enough Brewster wanted to preserve freedom of action to do this 'as circumstances required' whilst Pattison now frowned upon the idea of any such intervention! O'Connor's policy was not endorsed.

As a result of these differences a Committee was set up to draft a separate Petition for Scotland. The members were Pattison, Thomason, Lowery, Abram Duncan and Thomson. Nothing came of their efforts. Finally a motion was brought forward expressing satisfaction at the progress of Chartist principles amongst the middle class. O'Connor tried to amend this to a vote of thanks being given to the working class for their resistance to oppression. Again he failed.¹⁷⁶

This abrupt transition from his 'triumph' in the Scottish tour to a major defeat at Glasgow proved too much. All the vituperative power of the O'Connor party machine was let loose. M'Donall wrote "we do hope that no absurd fastidiousness will prevent the Scots people generally from joining in the movement", going on to point out that after all they were only a minority compared with England, Ireland and Wales. The 'great Irish blunderbuss' ran true to form. The delegates had not been properly elected; they came from constituencies where Chartism did not exist; he had been defeated by the rank Whigs of/

¹⁷⁶ -----
Scotsman 12.1.1842; Chartist Circular 25.1.1842.

of the Glasgow Presbytery (amongst those named were M'Farlane, Currie, Dixon, Rodgers and M'Ewen - nearly all of the Central Committee!)¹⁷⁷ A significant omission was Moir who remained loyal to O'Connor until Autumn 1843. Named also were those Chartist Churches, and preachers, of whom O'Connor approved.¹⁷⁸ This outburst cleared the air. Henceforth O'Connor could only rely on a small band of noisy, but dependable, extremists in Scotland. There were also a number of moral force 'moths', like Moir, irresistibly attracted by O'Connor's lurid light. Pathetic attempts, in view of the strength of the opposition encountered, were made to carry out the official policy of moving Chartists' amendments to Anti-Corn Law Resolutions. Almost invariably these were defeated. Sometimes they created deliberate disturbances at such meetings. At Alloa an organised and successful attempt was made to break-up a League gathering. The rioters were drawn from Alva, Tillicoultry and Colonsnaughton for this specific purpose, breaking seats and windows in the process.¹⁷⁹ Middle-class sympathisers were frightened off by such thoughtless behaviour and Chartism lost ground locally. Typical of his contributions to League meetings was this, 'Justice could not be done to the people in the Corn and Provision laws without the previous concession of the Charter.'

On/

¹⁷⁷ Northern Star 15.2.1843, 22.2.1843.

¹⁷⁸ These were Thomason, Lowery, John Duncan, Abram Duncan and John [Wallace] M'Gree.

¹⁷⁹ Scotsman 19.2.1842.

On this occasion he was seconded by Pattison (who had formerly advised the Central Committee not to interfere with the League). Here, too, proceedings ended in a semi-riot with Samuel Kidd, a rising Chartist leader, being bundled out of the meeting by the coat-collar straight into the Police Office!¹⁸⁰ By far the most successful was Robert Lowery who lectured extensively, belying his link with O'Connor by rational expositions of the Charter in moderate language. Even he had the embarrassing experience of League supporters moving amendments to his addresses, declaring Repeal must come first and the Charter second.

Scotland did very little to implement the remainder of O'Connor's policy. Ultimately some half-hearted support was given to the 1842 National Petition with some sporadic gathering of signatures for it. This was purely local, confined to areas where O'Connor's personal influence was high. A Convention was organised in London to present this petition (April 1842) and the Scots delegates, five in number, could be called 'dependable' rather than representative of the feelings of their countrymen. They were Lowery, Thomason, A. Duncan, M'Pherson and Moir - all but one being on Fergus' list of approved Chartist preachers. This Petition had 3,317,702 signatures/

¹⁸⁰ ----
ibid. 14.12.1842.

signatures and came before Parliament on May 2nd. Duncombe's motion in favour of the Charter was defeated by 287 votes to 49. The main reason for this heavy defeat were a magnificent speech by Macaulay against universal suffrage and a strange outburst by Roebuck (the Radical M.P.) who, nominally speaking in favour of the Charter, referred to it as the work of a 'malignant and cowardly demagogue'. The Convention which had followed the usual pattern of internal dissent, dispersed after some vague threats to resort to physical force. So ended the attempt of the National Charter Association (and O'Connor) to secure the 'Six Points', an attempt which did not rouse much enthusiasm and support in Scotland.¹⁸¹ For this there were two reasons, - the growing economic distress and the effective competition with the N.C.A. of yet another reform movement.

Four claimants to fill the vacuum caused by the failure of Scottish Chartism have already been mentioned. Making a fifth was the Complete Suffrage Movement which was more directly competitive with O'Connor and undoubtedly was responsible for the lack of support he received in Scotland. Indirectly the Anti-Corn Law League was responsible for its birth and on this account was fiercely attacked by O'Connor. Its author was Joseph Sturge, a pious middle-class Quaker corn-miller who was an/

¹⁸¹ -----
Gamage op.cit. p.207 et seq..

an alderman in Birmingham. Much perturbed at the class warfare prevailing he began to advocate a "Reconciliation between the Middle and Working Classes" through the medium of the 'Nonconformist', edited by Miall. In November 1841 he attended a League Conference in Manchester and at its close initiated an informal discussion amongst the delegates on the "essentially unsound condition of our present parliamentary representation". Much agreement was achieved and a Manifesto on the subject was drawn up and signed by many of those present. This became known as the "Sturge Declaration" to the effect that "the undersigned affirm that a large majority of the people of this country are unjustly excluded from that full, fair and free exercise of the elective franchise to which they are entitled". A month later the Birmingham Complete Suffrage Union was formed to remedy this. Copies of the Declaration were issued to all classes who were asked to sign and return them if they agreed with it. At the same time arrangements were made for Sharman Crawford to introduce a motion on this subject in the House. Complete Suffrage societies sprang up in many localities, attracting enlightened middle-class representatives and those who disliked O'Connor. Much support also came from Ministers of the Dissenting Churches. With the movement growing in strength it was decided to call a Conference in April 1842 to decide on a definite programme.¹⁸².

The/

182 - - - - -
Cole op.cit. p.163 et seq.; Hovell op.cit. Ch.XV pp.240-250.
West op.cit.

The Complete Suffrage movement came at a most opportune time for Scotland. The Central Committee having defied O'Connor now became moribund, lacking the prestige and financial resources to lead a campaign. Those who did not appreciate O'Connor's peculiar qualities, the members of the Chartist Churches, the Teetotal and Knowledge Chartists, saw in this new movement a medium for carrying on the agitation without sacrificing their educational activities. Patrick Brewster, of course, was soon an active Sturge-ite but was easily outnumbered by the Dissenting Ministers who participated; amongst them could be noted Dr. John Ritchie, Rev. H. Wright, Rev. George Harris, all of Edinburgh, Rev. A. Browning of Tilli-coultry, Rev. Wm. Marshall (^oCupar Angus), Rev. Mr. Kennedy and Rev. J. Cairns (Paisley). They were not weak brothers in the faith. There was an irate report in the 'Scotsman' headed 'North Leith Church': "Not three months ago we noticed the fact that a reverend agitator whose turn it was, as a member of the Edinburgh Presbytery, to preach in the above vacant church, forgot and neglected his engagement altogether and that the congregation dismissed without service. The same occurrence took place on Sunday last, the delinquent ... being fonder of raaming about the country stirring up sedition and rebellion than preaching the charities of the Gospel at home". The culprit/

culprit was probably the Rev. James Robertson. Once more the initiative had swung over to Edinburgh where by March 700 electors had signed the Declaration.¹⁸³ Running a close second was Aberdeen. Up to that time Aberdeen, with Dundee, had given a true cross-section of the Chartist movement with local associations waging an internecine war. The 'Aberdeen Herald', edited by James Adam, had grown tired of this lack of purpose and wild talk. From supporting the Charter it went over completely to the League for a time. Now Adam switched back to the Complete Suffrage movement making excellent speeches in Edinburgh and Glasgow. Much more important the 'Herald' supported Sturge and defended him publicly against the attacks of the 'Scotsman'. Significant of the change brought about by the new movement in Aberdeen was a meeting held in the Court House, on March 8th. Three distinct parties were present: middle-class men, moderate Chartists, and the Chartists of the O'Connor school. There was no clashing of interests. The extreme Chartists set aside the advice of their chief O'Connor and allowed a measure condemnatory of the Corn Laws to be passed first. Such of the middle class men as did not choose to confine themselves to the Charter, were content to decline voting for the resolution in which the Chartist points were embodied/

183 -----
Scotsman 5.3.1842, 7.5.1842, 8.6.1842.

embodied. The whole meeting, except one or two, joined in hearty gratulation of James Sturge's "new move" towards the union of the all classes. It was one of the most cheering meetings that the Reformers have had for years. :184

On April 5th 1842 the Complete Suffrage Conference met at Birmingham. Obviously O'Connor could not let such an act pass unchallenged. The 'Sturge Declaration' was violently attacked in the 'Northern Star', whilst those members of the National Charter Association who associated themselves with this competing movement were regarded as traitors and treated accordingly. That there were many such was clear from the delegates to this Conference - Lovett, Collins and O'Brien had already been denounced, but there was also Vincent, Neeson, Mills, Lowery, R.J. Richardson (of Perth fame) and Dr. Wade. Arthur O'Neill, the Scottish Christian Chartist now resident in Birmingham, was amongst the 103 members. At the last moment O'Connor tried to cripple this Conference by ordering a meeting of N.C.A. delegates at the same place and on the same days as this Sturge-ite assembly. However, because of the near-bankruptcy of that Association, this attempt at counter-propaganda, rather optimistically arranged at very short notice, produced no tangible results. Some idea of the extent to which the "new move/

184 - - - - -
ibid 16.3.1842.

move" had penetrated Scotland can be gained from the areas represented. These were Edinburgh, Dundee, Aberdeen, St. Andrews, Dunfermline, Kirkcaldy, Paisley, Mirriemuir and Markinch.¹⁸⁵ Significantly enough nearly all of these were places which had come under Fraser's tutelage - Dundee being the main exception. Glasgow and the West were still undecided. The Conference itself produced a surprising result. Up to this time, Sturge and his friends had expressed agreement only with part of the Charter. Now one by one all the Six Points were adopted - almost unanimously - by these mainly middle-class delegates. However they boggled at adopting the name of the Charter, mainly because it was associated in their minds with violence. Lovett who had helped formulate that document, later suffering imprisonment for his beliefs, urged the Conference as a matter of policy to accept the Charter in name as well as in fact. O'Brien, for similar reasons, supported Lovett in this demand. Ultimately they agreed to a sort of compromise: if the Conference would not accept the name 'Charter' at the moment, at least they would not reject it and at some future date the claims of the Charter and of similar documents would be re-considered together.¹⁸⁶ This victory of the original Chartists caused a certain amount of ill-feeling amongst middle-class/

185 -----
ibid 27.4.1842.

186 Hovell op.cit. West op.cit.

class members yet it undoubtedly helped forward the Complete Suffrage Movement amongst the working class. Having accepted the Six Points it certainly looked as though the middle-class were sincere in their expressed intentions of helping reform forward. Typical of this was the report of the two Edinburgh delegates to the Conference given in the Waterloo Rooms. Dr. Ritchie declared that the meeting was held on the basis of recognising no class but the common class of humanity. He was candid enough to admit that whilst they had agreed to all the Six Points, they regarded universal suffrage as being by far the most important. A familiar note was struck when he declared, "If Parliament would not grant what the people wanted, the people would take it, and they had a right to take it [by force of argument]. They had no need of violence. The power of opinion was waxing stronger every day; and if the great body of the people were but united, they must succeed". George Thompson went even further, praising the working class for their forbearance, and 'begged them to forgive the past neglect of the middle classes and accept of his and their service now'. Complete agreement was achieved on this resolution. As a policy it was laid down that the Edinburgh C.S.U. would only support M.P's who adhered to Sturge's principles. James Adam of Aberdeen advised Chartists not to interfere with public meetings as it made them very unpopular and accomplished no good.¹⁸⁷

As/

187

Scotsman 7.5.1842.

As planned the Complete Suffragists presented their Petition to Parliament on April 21st - just before that of the National Charter Association already mentioned. Sharman Crawford's motion on reform was lost by 226 votes to 67, a result slightly better than that achieved by O'Connor and his supporters. From now on as far as Scotland was concerned the choice was between these two factions and whilst O'Connor gained few new recruits, the Sturge movement made fair progress. Yet in all this mass of theorising by Radical politicians, little attention was paid to the economic basis of Chartism. There was a widespread trade depression in both England and Scotland, particularly in coal-mining and textiles. The usual remedies of lowering wages and unemployment were applied, the situation being further complicated by high food prices resulting in part from the Government's Protectionist policy. In seeking to remedy this the League at least showed a greater realism, and a deeper insight into the causes of Chartism, than the Chartist leaders themselves. Events now took control. Threatened by a reduction of wages, workers in Lanarkshire went from mill to mill early in August ^d frawing fires and knocking out boiler-plugs so as to make work impossible. For this reason the disturbances which ensued because of this action were known as the "Plug Plot". Almost simultaneously with/

with this action strikes broke out in Tyneside, the Potteries, South Staffordshire and, of course, Scotland. The Chartist extremists were not slow to make political capital out of this highly inflammable situation. A Conference was called in Manchester for August 12th by the Executive of the N.C.A. . M'Donall took the lead in its proceedings and it was decided that the strikers should be urged to stay out until the Charter became the law of the land.¹⁸⁸ To secure solidarity in this a fierce Manifesto, ^{was} drawn up by M'Donall,

"Be firm - be courageous - be men. Peace, law, and order have prevailed on our side; let them be revered until your brothers in Scotland, Wales and Ireland are informed of your resolution; and when a universal holiday prevails - which will be the case in 8 days - then of what use will bayonets be against public opinion?... Cowardice, treachery, womanly fear, would cast our cause back half a century.... leave the decision to the God of justice and battle!" ¹⁸⁹

However this firm lead was too good to be true. Almost immediately differences of opinion broke out in the Conference over this, to be brought to a head by O'Connor who, in the 'Northern Star', strongly opposed the universal holiday as foolish, declaring that the strikes had been deliberately caused by the employers/

188 - - - - -
Novell op.cit.

189 Gammage op.cit. p.219.

employers as propaganda for the League and to divert the workers away from the Charter. M'Donall was also attacked in the same way and Chartists were advised not to carry on this hopeless strike.¹⁹⁰ All this was sound common-sense; workers don't strike during periods of unemployment. It is all the more remarkable that O'Connor did not make these statements at the Conference. Perhaps he realised the movement was temporarily out of his control, the forces of hunger and anger being too strong, foresaw the inevitable failure and found in M'Donall a ready-made scapegoat. The situation in the disaffected areas deteriorated; looting, burning and violence took place in many parts. Strong action was taken by the Government, troops being sent to key-points. Order was quickly re-established. Then came the arrests with most of the Executive being taken into custody, including O'Connor. M'Donall managed to escape to France and stayed there for two years. As was customary most of the accused were allowed out on bail, continuing to agitate whilst awaiting trial. When the cases were at last heard, harsh sentences were imposed on the Staffordshire Chartists. Those in Lancashire and Cheshire received more lenient treatment whilst O'Connor, most fortunate of all, had his conviction over-ruled on technical grounds.

M'Donall/

190

Hovell pp.262-3.

M'Donall (in absentia) and Campbell had a similar escape, no place of offense having been specified in their charges - a remarkable oversight.¹⁹¹ Naturally by posing as the apostle of peaceful means (which he probably was), foretelling the failure of the National holiday, and by evading the hated arms of the law, O'Connor strengthened his hold over the National Charter Association.

If the English strikes were foredoomed to failure those in Scotland were even more certain of ending in disaster. Those affected were the Paisley and Glasgow weavers, the coal and ironstone miners, but above all the general labourers. There were also victims among the well-paid trades but these formed only a minor part of the over-all distress. Weavers, miners and labourers faced the direct competition of immigrant Irish labour; in fact the most violent clashes took place after the so-called Chartist strike had ended, when Ayrshire mine-owners were attempting to use Irish 'scab' labour as strike-breakers. How badly wages were affected by the prevailing trade depression can be seen in this table,

| <u>Average weekly wage</u> | <u>Miners</u> | <u>Labourers</u> | <u>Masons</u> | <u>Cotton-Spinners</u> |
|----------------------------|---------------|------------------|---------------|------------------------|
| 1840 | 16/6 | 12/- | 22/6 | 32/- |
| 1842 | 12/6 | 8/- | 17/- | 25/- |

Even/

¹⁹¹ -----
Gammage pp, 230-239.

Even those aristocrats of labour, the cotton-spinners, dreaded the competition of 'self-actors' which were steadily cutting down the demand for operatives. More important was that for every twelve cotton-spinners idle, 300 weavers might be similarly affected. As for the hand-loom weavers themselves, their plight was desperate. There could be little for them when the retail price of shawls was 2/3d. To make matters worse Glasgow authorities had the habit of giving relief by issuing webs to unemployed weavers, the resultant cloth being sold on a falling market at cut prices. They were not the only culprits; a complaint was made that Edinburgh gaol was selling goods made by the prisoners on the open market at 'inferior prices'! Yet there was little unrest amongst these weavers - they were quiescent, if not apathetic. It seems likely that many of the newly-arrived Irish took up weaving, at the foot of the industrial ladder, glad to eke out an existence on wages which drove many in England to active revolt. After famine, ordinary hunger appeared desirable. Labourers were likewise hit by the general slowing down of industry, notably coal production, but a more specific cause of unemployment was the completion of the Edinburgh-Glasgow railway. Irish labour from this project^t could only turn towards weaving and the mines, both over-crowded, for employment. It was too early to join the seasonal immigrants in harvesting crops.¹⁹²

¹⁹² Scotsman 19.1.1842, 15.6.1842, 25.6.1842.

By April 300 operatives were petitioning Edinburgh Town Council for help but with no immediate result. Following this, local Chartists held a protest meeting on the Calton Hill to complain about this slackness on the part of the authorities. Significantly no resolution in favour of the Charter was passed but a deputation was sent to local clergymen to 'ask for benevolence'. Poor relief proving inadequate everywhere, local authorities raised large voluntary funds and in some cases embarked on a programme of public works. Glasgow employed 850 on stone-breaking, drainage and road schemes and supplied 250 indigent weavers with webs. Edinburgh built roads and made public improvements, the unemployed working on a rota and being paid, after investigation, from 5d to 10d a day. One such project was the Queen's Drive - or 'Radical Road'.¹⁹³ Other areas not so fortunate were Greenock where relief was $\frac{3}{4}$ d a day and Paisley where, whilst funds lasted, relief was given by issuing stones (an occurrence which annoyed Brewster since the stones 'lacked variety').¹⁹⁴ Most areas had the inevitable soup kitchens to supplement these measures.

Amongst the first to strike were the Glasgow masons. Not only were they hit by falling wages but they had been supporting unemployed in their own trade to the extent of £600. This was in/

¹⁹³ -----
ibid 19.11.1842.

¹⁹⁴ Paisley Advertiser 1.5.1842.

in June. The real trouble arose in August with the miners who had several grievances. There was the truck system still in force, compulsory 'four day working only' to keep wages low, and the 23 cwt ton for piece-work which so annoyed Dunfermline miners.¹⁹⁵ Strikes were widespread and disconnected, some starting as others were being settled. At Airdrie work ceased, but the miners seemed more eager to rob the fields for food than join in a general strike. From amongst their ranks rose a pathetic echo of Chartist teaching when it was proposed that they 'petition the owners for an increase and the Govt. for provision free of duty'. East and Mid Lothian, the two Fifes - places like Kirkintilloch, Campsie and Pathhead - caught the infection. Even at Montrose in the north the local Chartists - all strikes^r were so called by the Press - tried to turn out the hands to ensure that work stopped in all the mills. They met with little success, even though there was an implied threat to use force. That threat alone was enough to show that this action was not Chartist-inspired.¹⁹⁶

Two/

 195. Scotsman 24.9.1842.

| | | | |
|-----------------------|------------------|-------------------|---|
| <u>The rates were</u> | 23 cwt big coal | 1/6 | } |
| | 23 cwt hewn coal | 1/0 $\frac{1}{2}$ | |

They demanded 3/6 for 40 cwt of good coal.

¹⁹⁶ ibid 12.8.1842, 20.8.1842.

Two episodes only were Chartist-sponsored. The first was an attempt by the Clackmannan miners and local weavers to inspire a nation-wide strike. They adopted a most enlightened attitude and were determined to avoid all violence. It all started with Clackmannan colliers who issued an address containing the following points,

(a) 'strikes among working men for rise of wages merely, are not calculated to be productive of permanent good to the labourer.

(b) 'were the labouring population generally throughout Great Britain to display similar union of spirit and energy for the purpose of removing the grand first cause of destitution and misery, they would prove successful.

(c) 'that the colliers and miners of this district are determined to strike for nothing less than the People's Charter. Therefore we resolve that if our brethren now on strike make the People's Charter their demand, we will at once join them in the glorious struggle'. (Aug. 13, 1842).

Three days later another resolution declared their determination to strike if the working population generally 'agreed to act on the same determination". One week was to be allowed for the rest of the country to agree to this plan, and the Clackmannan miners provisionally agreed 'to cease from working on or before this/

this day week and never again produce a pennyworth of wealth till the People's Charter be law'. This challenge was taken up by the miners at Carnoch and the operatives of Dunfermline. Four days after the address was issued a meeting at the Abbey Pends agreed to a general strike on the lines suggested with an important addition that 'the people must scrupulously abstain from all violence and outrage'. Within a week the Dunfermline Chartists had organised a run on the Savings Bank, the directors being forced to refuse payments of over £10 without ten days previous notice. They also closed early - "whenever two o'clock struck the door was shut the stairs being crowded with persons eager of cash". In their turn the Dunfermline Chartists tried to extend the strike. A Cessation-from-Labour Committee was quickly formed under the leadership of Thos. Morison and Wm. Fleming. Printed resolutions (on the Clackmannan pattern) were sent 'to every town in Scotland and most of those in England', whilst the two leaders spoke in many local areas to gain support. It was all in vain. Morison had to announce ten days after the strike began that answers had been received only from Tillicoultry and Airdrie. For this he blamed the public mails declaring that the Post Office was holding back their correspondence.¹⁹⁷ There were two far more obvious/

197 *ibid.* 27.8.1842, 3.9.1842.

obvious reasons for this non-co-operation. The English strikes were already drawing to a close in a welter of disorganised violence - a veritable 'sauve qui peut' was in being amongst the leaders. As for the Scots they must have been impressed by the prompt action taken by the authorities. The day after the original address was sent out, dragoons arrived in Clackmannan. Soon afterwards special constables and soldiery were in Dunfermline where a picket was maintained for three consecutive nights. Morison and Fleming were arrested and were soon joined in custody by Henderson (President of the Chartist Association). All papers and letters in the Committee Room were seized. Left without leaders, forbidden to call a public meeting, the strikers gradually at first, then with increasing momentum returned to work. But there was no work for the seven hundred weavers on relief or the two thousand unemployed who were set to work making roads. Throughout this episode in Dunfermline there was no suggestion of violence or violent talk. Morison, Fleming and Henderson were moral force Chartists rather of the Fraser school. If this strike achieved no good, at least it avoided the undisciplined terrorism of the North of England.¹⁹⁸

Unfortunately for Chartist records the Clackmannan miners - or rather the female of the species - did not live up to their expressed/

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ibid. 3.9.1842.

expressed sentiments. Following street disturbance a collier was arrested and a mob attempted to rescue him. This failed and next day the managers of the Devon Iron and Coal works, together with the colliery overseer, were assaulted. All these events were largely instigated and led by female colliers, and as a result the ring-leader Helen Yuill, collier, got eight months imprisonment whilst her gentle companions Catharine Smith and Elizabeth Hunter each received six months. The male participants received lighter sentences. All this is partly explained because the collier originally arrested, James Hunter, was a relative of two of the leaders of this outbreak.¹⁹⁹

The second Chartist disturbance was led and inspired by the Physicals; yet it was a peaceful affair although the language used was rather violent - at the start. On August 16 the Council of the Dundee Democratic Society met publicly in Bell St. Hall. Their proceedings took on a belligerent tone, Anderson, a heckler, pointing to events in Manchester as a desirable example to follow, whilst John Mitchell wanted to make employers raise wages to the 1839 level. Finally there was a typical outburst from John Duncan, shoemaker-Chartist preacher (brother of Abram Duncan the vacillating Arbroath preacher and former colleague of John Fraser), who declared 'they ought to rise/

¹⁹⁹ Broun A.: 'Justiciary Cases'. 28.12.1842, p.480.

rise with determination ... and tell the oppressors of the country that they would no longer be slaves'.²⁰⁰ The next step was to call a meeting of one hundred delegates representing 53 mills. This meeting was not (quite so) unanimous but ultimately decided to call a strike in favour of the Charter. A letter from Forfar Chartists declaring they would act in sympathy undoubtedly influenced the delegates. The Council now called a large public meeting on August 20 at Magdalen Yard Green to discuss the means for carrying out the strike. There were eight thousand people present but it was soon obvious that they were not Physicals in any sense of the word. The resolutions passed, in a distressed community, are worth quoting for their very reasonableness,

(1) 'That this meeting now declares publicly its solemn and sincere opinion that life, liberty and property are sacred and cannot without a violation of the laws of God, be injured to the slightest degree; we therefore pledge ourselves to use every means in our power to preserve human life and security, to establish liberty to all classes of Her Majesty's subjects, and to protect property in the hands of the rightful owners. We ... have no ill-will to any portion of our fellow-beings ... we declare it is the effects of poverty alone that compel us to make/

²⁰⁰ Memoranda op.cit. pp.28-29. Scotsman 24.8.1842.

make a last appeal to those who have the power to put an end to all our sufferings.

(2) 'That ... the interests of the mercantile and working classes are closely connected; therefore we appeal to the employers ... to cast aside all doubts as to our objects, and at once ... to join with us ... to put an end to all unjust power. ... to secure the good of all'.

(3) 'After hearing the statements of the employers in reference to their inability to raise wages, it is the opinion of this meeting that the only means that can enable employers to give a fair remuneration to the employed is to strike for the People's Charter.'²⁰¹

Certainly there was originality in this idea that the strike was really to benefit the employers. John Mitchell promised them help from outside, 'The Forfarians were clannish, desperate devils and would act in concert with them'.²⁰² Hence on Monday Aug. 22nd, too late to co-incide with England, a strike started which was a comparative failure at first. Early in the morning there was the usual large meeting and a procession formed to march eastwards to meet the anticipated re-inforcements from Kirriemuir and Forfar. The previous day, James Lowe, a founder-member of the Democratic Society, had been despatched to those two places to arrange a joint demonstration at/

²⁰¹ ibid. 24.8.1842.

²⁰² Memoranda pp, 37-44.

at Dundee on this, the first day of the strike. When the meeting-place was reached no Forfar men appeared and many insinuated that Lowe was to blame. A notorious tippler they alleged the money given him for his expenses only carried him 'as far as the first public house on the way' and suggested they search the roadside where the delinquent was probably sleeping it off! Up to now the leaders, Mitchell excepted, were whole-heartedly for peaceful means. Stung by this partial failure to extend the strike, they called another large meeting for Tuesday this time hinting that if workers refused to come out on strike when asked, they would take 'other steps to compel them'. Meanwhile the authorities had assembled a large force of special constables and posted copies of the Riot Act all over the town. On receiving word of this implied threat of violent action, they proceeded to act. On the Tuesday as the strikers left Magdalen Green, their procession was split up by the police into small groups, the Riot Act was read again, and they were advised to disperse - which many of them did. However a hard core of pseudo-Physicals (1200) remained. These their leaders proceeded to arrange into eleven companies, each under a captain, and thus drawn up in semi-military fashion they marched towards Forfar. Apart from linking up with the hypothetical extremists in that town, their plan was nebulous although/

although they talked of striking a blow for freedom. It was the nearest approach to a revolt achieved by the Scots Chartists, a pathetic affair well-named 'The Pilgrimage of Folly'. That night they bivouacked out, and defections were numerous. Next day the remnant entered Forfar to learn that all was quiet there, with no strikes. Alarmed at first by the onset of the Chartist Army, the Forfar authorities soon realised they were dealing with starving men, not with rebels. Hurriedly they made arrangements to feed them and the 'militant' Chartists forgot any violent intentions they had at sight of food.²⁰³

Back in Dundee, four of the leaders - Duncan, Graham, Penny, Scott - were arrested on Tuesday evening, whilst Stewart and Ross were taken into custody on their return from Forfar.

X Unlike England where Chartist leaders used the Courts as sounding-boards for political propaganda, the Dundee Chartists were quietly, efficiently but fairly tried. No martyrs were made. The public prosecutor himself, M'Neill, asked for a lenient sentence saying that 'the main object of the prosecution ... had been gained by their admission that the convention of great numbers of people in the way and for the purpose libelled, was a crime which rendered them amenable to punishment'. As a result/

²⁰³ Scotsman 27.8.1842. Mudie G. 'The Rebels Route' 1865.
See Appendix-G.

result of this interposition four of the leaders received four months, whilst the charge against Duncan was deserted pro loco et tempore.²⁰⁴

Edinburgh reaction to the strike was almost identical with that adopted in 1839. Physicals and moderates came together at a large meeting on the Calton Hill, still expressing, however, different sentiments. Both agreed to a resolution by Blackie that only the People's Charter could alleviate the sufferings of the working class. Then Tancred, whose violent inclinations were obvious, made a long speech which ended on the stirring note, "that they had better perish than allow themselves to sink lower and continue in their present state." This somewhat contradictory statement was applauded. However it was left to Lowery to bring a realistic note into the proceedings and make it quite clear that the Scots did not approve of the National Strike: "we fear that to attempt to gain the Charter by a strike, when the whole people have not been consulted or communicated with, and are consequently unprepared for such a course ... would end in driving back our sacred cause covered with the odium of insults, excesses and defeat; ... we would earnestly call upon all classes to agitate unceasingly until this much to be desired end is accomplished."

This/

²⁰⁴ Broun A. op.cit. 16.1.1843 p.512.

This resolution, which also expressed appreciation of the orderly conduct of the Scottish strikers, also met with public acclamation. Evidently they believed strike action to be unwise but were prepared to lend moral support.²⁰⁵ Glasgow showed a similar disinclination to commit itself. Of the Central Committee Ross, Proudfoot, Gillespie, Cullen and Gardiner followed O'Connor, first supporting then condemning the strike.²⁰⁶ For once Moir deviated and refused to agree to M'Donall's violent placard of August 12th, opposing the idea of a nation-wide abstention from work as ridiculous.²⁰⁷

Despite the action taken by the Dundee and Dunfermline Chartists, the movement made progress. In Dundee itself an election for Police Commissioners resulted in 16 out of 22 successful candidates being prepared to vote for the Charter.²⁰⁸ One reason for this popularity with the middle class in Dundee was probably because the Chartists contained in their ranks many 'characters' who added interest to the town life. These could well be termed 'The Literary Chartists'. In poetic appreciation the middle and working classes met on common ground. One rendezvous was in the dark work-shop of James Gow, the weaver-poet. His 'four posts of misery' were set up in 'the darkest/

²⁰⁵ Scotsman 24.8.1842.

²⁰⁶ ibid 31.8.1842.

²⁰⁷ Scotch Reformers Gazette 17.12.1842.

²⁰⁸ Memoranda op.cit. p.66.

darkest, dirtiest and most dismal' quarters in the Long Wynd. Decorating the walls and the loom itself were numerous poems cut from the 'Chartist Circular', the 'True Scotsman' and the 'Northern Star'. In these surroundings Gow talked Chartism and poetry with kindred spirits. Every Saturday night William Thom (the Bard of Inverurie), Tough, Wilson Colville and other minor poets would meet there to compare their week's output of poetry. Of this company was John Mitchell, leader of the ill-fated march to Forfar, who fled to America on its failure. Another was James Myles, originally a mason then a Chartist lecturer and now a flourishing bookseller and publisher, who would drop in from his own neighbouring establishment to discuss sedition and iambics. A rather more exclusive circle was that of the Dundee Coffee House, known as the 'Halls of Lamb'. Emulating the weavers-shop, the Dundee Literary Institute discussed poetry and politics in rather more luxurious surroundings. This had Chartist connections since Isaac Peterkin, who gave the Institute its name, was unsuccessfully put forward as a Sturge candidate to represent the Dundee Chartists at a delegate meeting in Birmingham (December 1842). Certain prominent citizens belonged to both sets of poetasters; there were, for example, James Adie - the geologist, William Gardiner - the poet/botanist, and Professor George Lawson - the naturalist/

naturalist. Mention had ^s already been made of the 'Dundee Chronicle' and 'Dundee Herald' of Milne and Peter Brown, and this paper through its 'Poet's Corner' gave valuable publicity (local) to the weaver-poets. However there was yet another publication which provided amusement of a less innocuous kind, edited and owned by James Lowe - the intemperate Physical. When because of his unreliability he lost all control over the Democratic Society, he started a scurrilous penny unstamped 'newspaper', the 'Police Gazette'. This dragged into the public limelight any unfortunate enough to appear before the Magistrates. However a solatium to the editor would secure for the delinquent a discreet silence. It was pure literary blackmail made worse by the venomous caricature of his former associates (including Chartists) which appeared in its columns. Of one tailor, accused of being drunk, he reported, "He is the hero of a hundred thefts, if the stealing of tailors' wives can be termed so, which Brechin can testify. No jail or judge can frighten him". For this the tailor gave Lowe a sound beating! From these varied sources it seems clear that the Chartists formed an integral part of what was aptly termed 'The Dundee Republic of Letters'. Contacts thus established between the middle and working classes brought mutual respect and helped to counteract the 'class warfare' preached by O'Connor. 209

At/

At other places in Scotland the middle class were also showing a desire to help. Naturally enough they were attracted towards the Complete Suffrage movement. During September meetings were held in Paisley advocating a union of the middle and working classes, at the same time condemning those who 'had violated the public peace'. They culminated in a large meeting where Sharman Crawford, Vincent and Collins were the speakers whilst the Provost of Paisley acted as chairman. When proceedings closed a regular branch of the C.S.U. was formed and M'Nair gave our^t a list of places where membership tickets could be obtained at 'five shillings, half a crown, or even one penny.' This brought Brewster to his feet complaining that even one penny was too much for the working class - they should be issued free "the holders of such free tickets having as much power as those who held paid ones".²¹⁰ That same month in Glasgow the Trades Hall was crowded to hear Crawford, Sturge, Vincent and Collins expound the 'new move'. W. and J. Currie, M'Ewen, J. Rodgers and Malcolm M'Farlane were amongst those present - all former members of the Central Committee. Patrick Brewster, of course, was there and with him five Dissenting clergymen and a Catholic priest!²¹¹

Unfortunately/

²¹⁰ Paisley Advertiser 8.10.1842.

²¹¹ Scotch Reformers Gazette 8.10.1842.

Unfortunately the same urge to co-operate for reform was absent in England. At the end of the year events took place there which undoubtedly harmed the movement. In April the question of a modus vivendi between the ordinary Chartists and the Sturge-ites had been diplomatically postponed. A Conference was now called for Dec. 27th in Birmingham to settle this matter. As already noticed the Complete Suffragists had accepted all the Six Points but objected to the use of the term 'Charter' because of its violent associations. To get round this difficulty they drafted what was called the 'Bill of Rights', really the Charter under another name. O'Connor wanted the Charter and nothing but the Charter.²¹² Accordingly the ukase went forth that every conceivable artifice was to be used to ensure that the projected Conference would support his views. Theoretically both factions were to be equal in numbers. Actually the Chartists proper predominated and led Bronterre O'Brien to remark that "a Conference composed of such materials as Mr. Feargus O'Connor would pack into it would soon find itself utterly powerless".²¹³ This turned out to be a true forecast. Glasgow, at a very turbulent meeting, elected as delegates 'whole-hog' Chartists pledged to support the Charter 'in name and/

²¹² West op.cit. and Hovell op.cit. give good accounts of this dispute.

²¹³ The British Statesman 26.11.1842.

and in principle'. Dundee followed suit in a rather more sedate manner. On the other hand Edinburgh, Paisley and Stirling nominally supported Sturge.²¹⁴ Opinion in other places was about equally divided. Of the Conference itself little need be said. There was much bickering over the delegates to be allowed into the meetings, but no doubts existed over the fate of the main topic. The Sturge-ites refused to accept the Charter as such, though in complete agreement with its content. Heyworth was almost too blunt on this point. "It is not your principles that we dislike but your leaders". Equally outspoken were those who had worked and suffered for the Charter - they would not give up the name. Lovett himself, despite his hatred and contempt for O'Connor, moved that the Charter and not the Bill of Rights should be the basis of the movement. Seconded by O'Connor this motion was approved by a large majority. Thus defeated, Sturge and his followers withdrew from the joint Conference and met independently elsewhere.²¹⁵ The 'victory' did not help the O'Connor faction. They 'deliberated' at Birmingham for several more days, if acrimonious squabbling can be so termed, and their numbers dwindled rapidly. Lovett would have nothing more to do with O'Connor, their alliance was literally/

²¹⁴ Scotsman 3.12.1842. Paisley Advertiser 10.9.1842. Solly, K., 'These Eighty Years' Vol. I. p.406.

²¹⁵ West op.cit. Gammage op.cit. 240 et seq..

literally ephemeral, and the National Association with its educational ideals pursued a very different path from that taken by the National Charter Association.

Apart from this dismal failure, there was another episode in somewhat lighter vein which nevertheless showed that even the middle class Complete Suffragists had their internal quarrels. In this comic opera interlude Dr. Ritchie of Edinburgh was the chief figure. Newton, a barrister, rather jealous of Ritchie's prestige, proposed "That no person in holy orders be eligible to sit or vote in the reformed Chartist House of Commons", adding that he did not like to see holy men stripping off their gowns. To this Dr. Ritchie - a Dissenter - replied that he never wore a gown and that in his family 'his wife wore the gown and he wore the breeches.' [Thunderous applause²¹⁶]. Completing the farce a counter-motion was proposed to exclude all members of the legal profession from Parliament on the grounds that they only sought 'to mystify and make work for themselves'. The middle class, who had sneered at the blether of the first Chartist Convention, thus showed the same proneness to indulge in meaningless trivialities as the working class.

With the major defeat the Sturge movement virtually disappeared in England. However in Scotland it still prospered, its/

its policy gradually taking on a more realistic shape. Brewster thought the separation of the two movements a good thing since in four days at Birmingham the Sturge-ites by themselves had decided on a Bill to be placed before Parliament, whilst the O'Connor group had achieved nothing.²¹⁷ This opinion might well be true. One thing was quite clear about Scotland - there were very few leaders left in the ranks of the O'Connor faction. To those members of the Central Committee already mentioned as having gone over to the Complete Suffragists must now be added Abram Duncan and W.C. Pattison (the latter actually represented Paisley C.S.U. at Birmingham).²¹⁸ Of the more prominent Western leaders only Moir and M'Crae were still faithful, with reservations, to O'Connor. Nearly all of the Dundee leaders had withdrawn. John Duncan, the preacher, 'the most straightforward and honest of the batch, under the constant threat of the law, sank into a helpless state of insanity and ended his days in a Lunatic Asylum'. Mitchell, the soi-disant Commander-in-Chief of the Forfar March, made his escape to America whilst his two subordinates Anderson and Fryde quitted the neighbourhood.²¹⁹ Neither achieved prominence again. Control of the movement came/

²¹⁷ Paisley Advertiser 14.1.1843.

²¹⁸ Paisley Advertiser 14.1.1843.

²¹⁹ Norrie op.cit.; Memoranda op.cit. p.51; Myles J., Rambles in Forfarshire pp.78-79.

came into the hands of the moderates who were quite willing to co-operate with the middle class.

Meanwhile the industrial unrest which had driven the Chartists into action still continued. As the colliers in the east slowly returned to work, those in Ayrshire came out on strike, and there was much violence. Ill-feeling arose because of the widespread use of 'scab' labour to break the strikes. It is interesting to notice that the Glasgow Relief Committee sent many of their destitute labourers to the Dundyvan colliery.²²⁰ Gradually in 1843 an uneasy truce came over the affected areas. Industrial conditions had improved and the owners were able to give the miners some small concessions.²²¹ Of Chartist agitation in these later strikes there was no trace. Undoubtedly the haphazard attempt at organised strike action by the O'Connor Chartists had diminished their prestige with the workers. Common-sense demands that strikes do not take place in a time of depression and unemployment. For the next four years trade conditions in Scotland improved and Chartist agitation was at a very low ebb. Only the League and the Complete Suffragists persisted in their efforts; the better-paid artisans and middle class traders were able to take a long term view and seek/

220 E.E.C. 2.1.1843.

221 E.E.C. 22.2.1843, 13.9.1843.

seek after future benefits, ignoring contemporary conditions. The worker on the margin of subsistence could not do this; if wages permitted him to live that was enough. Only when starvation was imminent did he become vocal. Thus the Scottish Phase ended in a series of disjointed strikes. Because of this much of the distinctive and constructive side of Scots Chartism was lost; yet it had borne some fruit. England had rejected the middle-class offers to co-operate at the command of O'Connor. In Scotland they were welcomed, admittedly not with enthusiasm, but with a grudging respect.

NOTE : For Scots Chartism and Economics see Appendix F.

III. The Irish Phase.

In their early stages both the Scottish and Irish phases have a strong resemblance. Both were marked by a moribund English movement, a growing native organisation, and attempts by O'Connor to gain recruits in the north. With the defeat of the C.S.U. at Birmingham, activity in England for the next three years was very restricted. For the country as a whole it was a time of comparative prosperity marked by good harvests, much railway construction, and an expanding trade in textiles. Even the hardships of the obnoxious Poor Law Act had been ameliorated both in practice and by legislative amendment. So the economic conditions which produced Chartism were fast disappearing and with them the strength of the movement also declined. Now although there was no longer a true Scottish Chartism, the transplanted C.S.U. flourished and its programme acquired a new realien^s. It was not affected by improving conditions. Much of its memberships came from the ranks of the trading classes and the better-paid artisans. These people were able to concentrate on long-term improvements; the average Chartist had his horizon limited to immediate economic benefits. There could be little long-term planning for those at mere subsistence level. Lastly there was

O'Connor/

O'Connor, not one whit perturbed by the 1842 fiasco - in fact rather pleased since many potential rivals for leadership had been discredited. His temperament was not one to be satisfied with a quiescent Chartism or a policy of 'reculer pour mieux sauter'. Now he assumed the rôle of Agrarian Chartist. Typically he brought forward the Land Plan - a scheme for covering England with small peasant holdings, bought on a co-operative basis by the workers. By this means he hoped to withdraw all surplus labour from the market, supposedly strengthening the bargaining power of the workers since the numbers competing would be reduced and they would always find alternative employment on their own holdings. He really believed that factory hands would not only take kindly to a rural life but would secure as high a standard of living on their holdings as was possible in the cities. Such was his plan, supported by the dwindling voice of the 'Northern Star' and some Munchausen-like tales of the prodigies that this apostle of enclosure-in-reverse had accomplished on his Irish estates.¹ He was by no means the first Chartist to turn to the land. Bronterre O'Brien had suggested, and was still urging, a form of land nationalisation by 'Consolidating Landed Property' /

¹ Cole, Chartist Portraits p.323 et seq.; O'Connor, A Practical Work on the Management of Small Farms 1843.

Property'. The land was to be acquired by the State at a price equal to twenty years purchase. This price was to be paid in forty yearly instalments with no interest allowed - the State thus receiving one half of the yearly product of the land, and the land-owner having to subsist on the other half.² Actually this notion closely resembled Ogilvie's scheme for smallholdings by a Board of Land Purchase, a plan the Aberdeen economist had evolved from his analysis of land-values into (a) the original value (b) the improved value (c) the improveable value.³ The point about the schemes of these two Chartists was that the Scots had already experienced them in theory - and practice, and this was equally true of the immigrant Irish. Yet with sublime confidence such was the new line O'Connor intended to peddle in Scotland.

Both phases - Scottish and Irish - had the same tendencies to start with, but there the similarity ends. The former finished in a series of disjointed strikes, with no real attempt at violence. The latter assumed a Republican -Revolutionary shape with a genuine attempt at armed revolt which fortunately proved just as inept as the Forfar March.

² Scotsman 13.8.1839.

³ W. Ogilvie : 'Essay on the Right of Property in Land' 1782.

⁴ S.F.C. 22.4.1843.

Chapter I. Middle Class Chartism.

Considering the counter-attractions offered by the League and the imminent Church Disruption, the Complete Suffragists were very active in Scotland, particularly so in Edinburgh. In that city the Council of the local branch met weekly and by April 1843 had formed an Electors League amongst its members, who, in future, agreed to vote only for candidates approved by the Council.⁴ Support was given to yet another universal suffrage Petition to Parliament - presented by Sharman Crawford in May and rejected, by 101 votes to 32. These middle-class Chartists in Scotland at the time met with little interference from O'Connor's supporters. This can be attributed to the Physicals disorganised state and to the manner in which the Complete Suffragists took up nearly every point of Chartist propaganda. They certainly bore no malice for the events of December. They gave soirées to Duncombe, the M.P. who had presented the 1842 Petition, associating with them firm declarations that the trials of Chartist leaders had been unjust and protesting against the harsh treatment meted out to political prisoners. This was not all. In December 1843 a large meeting was held in the Waterloo Rooms, Edinburgh, to consider Sharman Crawford's proposed new plan of parliamentary action. Radical M.P's/

⁴ E.E.C. 22.4.1843.

M.P's were to refuse to vote financial supplies for the government until redress of grievances had been granted. To help enforce this it was suggested that they move motions and make speeches, so bringing all business to a stand-still, a plan strangely reminiscent of the Irish Nationalists of a later date.⁵ (Crawford also put this idea forward in the 'Non-Conformist' and the 'Northern Star', but O'Connor would have nothing to do with it declaring that Crawford lacked the energy and purpose to carry it out!) Sentiments expressed at this Complete Suffrage meeting, where the audience was mainly working class, showed how far the middle-class had gone to meet the Chartists. The Rev. W. Marshall denounced class legislation and declared that 'complete representation was the only means to just and equal laws'. Others attacked the 'coercive destructive measures of the Administration' and 'consequent suppression of public opinion'. All approved of Crawford's plan and it was further decided to send yet another Petition to Parliament. For this purpose they decided to raise fifty pounds, of which twenty were subscribed whilst the meeting was in progress. Significantly two Councillors were present, and spoke, whilst the Dean of Guild was the chairman.⁶

Had These/

⁵ E.E.C. 25.10.1843. 30.12.1843.

⁶ E.E.C. 30.12.1843.

These Scottish Complete Suffragists inherited the traditions of Fraser - the unique temperance character of Eastern Chartism. Favourite meeting-places were Temperance Hotels or Coffee Houses. As there was no central organisation (Edinburgh C.S.U. was the nearest approach to one) all propaganda was left to the individual leaders, with occasional large rallies. There were no paid lecturers, but the clerical members were a most efficient substitute. However there does appear to have been one professional Complete Suffrage lecturer. Henry Vincent, the ex-O'Connor leader, made a widespread tour, speaking on universal suffrage, temperance and free trade. The 'Scotch Reformer Gazette' seemed convinced that Vincent was in the pay of Sturge and said he received wages of from forty to fifty shillings per week. There was probably much truth in this assertion, although it is known that he also received payment from temperance organisations.⁷ What is more surprising was that Vincent stood as a Complete Suffrage candidate for Kilmarnock Burgh in a Bye-election during May 1844. At the election he was proposed by Hugh Craig, the first chairman of the 1839 Convention, and seconded by George Osborne. Now Craig had already contested one election as a Chartist, had owned a Radical newspaper, and was liked and respected in Kilmarnock.

Superficially/

⁷ Scotch Reformers Gazette 1.6.1844. Scotsman 25.6.1845.

Superficially Craig was the obvious candidate - but he was still a Chartist. There is thus a prima facie case for assuming that Sturge was the real sponsor - financially - of Vincent's candidature. Vincent obtained 98 votes as against the Free Trader, Bouverie, who headed the poll with 389.⁸

By far the largest demonstration staged by the middle-class Chartists occurred in August 1844. After much bickering a site had been obtained for a memorial to the political martyrs of 1793 and 1794. At the end of August Joseph Hume laid the foundation-stone of the monument on the Calton Hill and the occasion was made into an impressive display of Radical strength. Members of the Complete Suffrage Union marched in procession to the ceremony 'respectably clad in black clothes'. Hume on this occasion made a 'strong but not outrageous speech'. Official celebrations ended with a dinner at which Sir James Gibson Craig presided. For the rank and file ~~there~~ was first a meeting on the Calton Hill where 3000 were harangued by the middle-class leaders. Councillor Stott, rapidly becoming an influential leader, urged the crowd not to rest satisfied until they had made the representation of the people 'full, fair and free'. Brewster made a similar speech attacking the Government as being based on aristocracy. The real fireworks were reserved for a cheap/

⁸ S.R.G. 1.6.1844. Scotsman 29.5.1844. Wilkie, 'Representation of Scotland' p.180.

cheap soirée of 'cake and fruit' held later in the Waterloo Rooms, with John Dunlop in the chair. Here the Rev. William Marshall of Leith was the star performer and his attack on the Established Church was much to public taste: "There are the bishops, for instance, who are, if we take their word for it, the very best friends of the people, the people ever saw. But ask them what they mean by the good of the people and they will tell you to cram them with the Prayer Book and the Church Catechism, and all will be well". Others also were censured: "Then there is another class of politician who will tell you they are the best friends of the people, and yet who take upon themselves to restrict the supply of the people's food, and the prices which they shall pay for the necessaries of life. There is another class, of whom we are accustomed to think more kindly ... [the Socialists] will tell you that they are the friends of the people and that they will help to get all they want, but only they must wait till their time come, and that, in the meantime, the people must educate themselves a little better". Toasts were proposed; Ritchie wished 'success to the principles for which the martyrs suffered' whilst Somers, of the 'Scottish Herald', gave 'The Press and may it ever advocate the rights and interests of the people'. Into this scene of harmony and good-will Brewster brought controversy. He attacked/

attacked Hume as not being a true Chartist and there were some sharp exchanges between the two on the rather childish theme of "I was a Chartist before you". The result, as always, was quite inconclusive. Quite unprovoked, however, were Brewster's slighting remarks about Scott, "The rich tracery and magnificent proportions of that structure [the Scott Monument in Princes Street] showed that it was not erected by the poor but by the opulent. This was a monument to a man who had never showed himself favourable to the liberties of the people. His was the song of the siren lulling to repose". A storm of hisses and applause greeted these remarks. He ended this 'poetic interlude' by reminding those present that Burns was a true reformer and had sent four carronades as a present to the French Convention!⁹

Altogether this demonstration was a great success. Considering the occasion it might well have turned into a carnival of denunciation of the judges who tried the martyrs. As it was proceedings were not marred by any untoward incidents. Sympathy for the object of the demonstration was widespread and of the monument Henry Cockburn, the Whig jurist, could write, "this building ... a pillar of disgrace to the delinquent judges".¹⁰

Somehow/

⁹ Scotsman 24.8.1844.

¹⁰ Cockburn op.cit 1.10.1844.

Somehow ^tis seems wrong to consider these Scottish Complete Suffragists as a species distinct from the genus Chart-ist. In every way they were a continuation of the Eastern (moral force) Chartists, without, however, the strength of the 'True Scotsman' to fall back on. Sturge showed himself to be adaptable - an admirable tactician prepared to modify his programme if necessary. Clear proof of this is given by a meeting held in the Trades Hall, Glasgow in December 1844 under the chairmanship of Councillor Turner. Sturge was explaining the principles of universal suffrage when a question was asked about the Complete Suffragists attitude towards the Repeal of the Irish Act of Union. Imitating the O'Connor manner, he declared that universal suffrage must come first and other questions could be considered later. In elucidation of this he expressed his belief in federalism, with local parliaments sitting in Ireland and Scotland - "it was ridiculous that they [in Scotland] should be compelled to go to London for every thing they ^tconcerned them locally".¹¹ Such an answer made pleasant hearing for the Irish but it also fitted in well with the mood of the Scots Chartists, disgusted with the vacillation of O'Connor. (In fact Sturge anticipated a similar proposal by Moir.). Apart from their declared policy, the middle-class Chartists expressed themselves freely on all problems of the day/

¹¹ Scotsman 7.12.1844.

day. Brewster tackled the 1845 (Scottish) Poor Law Amendment Act, deploring the lack of provision it made for the able-bodied unemployed and objecting to the increased residential qualification for relief. His partner in this was Robert Reddie - the prisoner of Beverley, now released - and the two of them spoke at public meetings, finally organising a Petition against the Poor Law Bill.¹² Whilst this controversy over the Poor Law was going on, another issue troubled the Edinburgh branch of the movement. In 1845 Peel passed a measure to increase and stabilise the endowment of the training college for Catholic priests at Maynooth. Established Churchmen and Dissenters united against this plan. Thus the E.C.S.U. was only expressing average public opinion, with possibly a faint trace of Chartist religious unorthodoxy, when they resolved "That the conflict at present waged between constituencies and representatives in Parliament on the question of the endowment of Maynooth affords evidence that the House of Commons does not give expression to the people's will".¹³ Unlike the O'Connor Chartists, they had no doubts regarding Free Trade and constantly supported the League. In Glasgow, for example, they decided that at the next election they would adopt one Complete Suffrage and one Free Trade candidate. At this particular meeting an American, Henry Wight, shared the platform with Vincent, M'Farlane and other speakers.¹⁴

These

¹² - ibid. - 21.6.1845.
¹³ ibid. 3.5.1845.
¹⁴ ibid. 20.8.1845.

These middle-class Chartists had a strong practical bent. Two instances will suffice - though unfortunately they demonstrate as well that these Radicals replaced the adage 'Sauce for the goose, sauce for the gander' by 'All's fair in love and war'! For a time they were taken up with the ingenious suggestion that Scots should qualify as electors for the Northern Division of Northumberland by acquiring property there. It was estimated that an influx of only two hundred such voters would secure the division. Morpeth, in particular, was to be singled out for attack. This proposition was also intended to appeal to Scots thrift since it was pointed out that buying up forty shilling franchise, at the reigning prices, would yield a return on capital of from seven to nine per cent.¹⁵ It was implied that these infiltration tactics could be profitably pursued until the conquest of Parliamentary England had been achieved! Unfortunately, for history, the first step was not taken. The second instance was the formation of the Anti-Fictitious Vote Committee. This was brought into being by the Peeblesshire Case where, out of an electoral body of seven hundred, three hundred were enrolled 'in respect of a pretended liferent of ten pounds exactly' - a rent which was never drawn and 'for which they have not paid a farthing'.
(i.e./

¹⁵ *ibid.* 14.1.1846.

¹⁶ *ibid.* 15.12.1847.

(i.e. the local member had split his land up into holdings nominally valued at £10 per annum, and placed his nominee in titular possession. The latter, in fact, paid no rent but voted as required). The Committee complained bitterly of the identity of the tenants' politics 'with those of the nobleman over whose properties they are constituted'. A similar state of affairs was said to exist in Boxburgh, Stirling, Selkirk, Renfrew, Dumbarton and the Three Lothians.¹⁶ It would be difficult to verify the truth of these accusations; the only significant fact was the large number of uncontested elections that took place in these areas at that time.

Yet out of all this activity, as with so many Chartist proposals, nothing really tangible was gained. In their way the middle-class Chartists were just as ineffective as their working-class brethren. What they achieved cannot be measured by ordinary standards. They showed in Scotland at least - that class warfare was not inevitably^e and that all classes would gain by co-operation. The urge to violence in 1848 was probably curbed by the knowledge that responsible middle-class opinion was sympathetic towards radical principles. Undoubtedly as far as Edinburgh was concerned much good was accomplished by the timely action of that Complete Suffragist, Councillor Stott, in bringing before the Town Council a surprising series of

¹⁶ ibid. 15.12.1847.

of resolutions. There were four of them, containing many reforms desired by the Chartists: the Council were asked to request Parliament to

- (1) abolish class legislation and unequal taxation.
- (2) reduce the large standing army and navy.
- (3) abrogate the laws of entail and primogeniture.
- (4) enfranchise the working class.

The Lord Provost, in reply, gave the usual arguments against an extension of the franchise: "Suppose they get universal suffrage and suppose ... that five sixths of the community belonged to the working classes ... it was clear ... they would legislate for their own interest and make wages as high as possible.... They should bear distinctly in mind that all wages proceeded from capital. What could the working class do if it were not for capital?" Speakers for the resolutions stressed the aid given to the middle class by the workers in 1832. The Lord Provost's objections to these proposals were upheld by 22 votes to 8. Yet the fact that they were debated openly in the Council showed how much respect the Complete Suffrage Union had gained and must have been an encouragement to the unenfranchised.¹⁷ Evidence shows that the attention of Edinburgh/

¹⁷ *ibid.* 12.4.1848.

Edinburgh Chartists at this critical time was evenly divided between the violent clamour in London and proceedings in the Town Council. On the eve of the debate they held 'the largest meeting ever' on the Calton Hill, with 20,000 present, to express approval of Bailie Stott's resolutions. There was some violent talk but ultimately a memorial was drawn up and a procession formed to take it to the Lord Provost's house. This they did and then quietly dispersed. Considering that many Chartists were hourly awaiting news of a successful 'revolution' in London, this discreet behaviour reflects some of the good work put in by the middle class Chartists.¹⁸

Chapter II. The Chartists proper.

With trade improving the Scottish branches of the National Charter Association became semi-dormant. Somehow or other the gerrymandering of O'Connor did not appeal to them and they showed a strong inclination to go their own way. Events soon made this seem all the more desirable to them. A Conference of the National Charter Association was held at Birmingham from September 5th - 8th, 1843, at which no Scots delegates were present. It had three main objects: (a) to get the O'Connor/

¹⁸ *ibid.* 12.4.1848.

O'Connor organisation moving smoothly again after the 1842 set-back; (b) to secure better conditions for the workers; and (c) the cure of unemployment and all economic ills by the adoption of O'Connor's Land Scheme. An Executive of twenty-eight members was appointed - chiefly remarkable for its lack of well-known names, and abundance of nonentities. It had one salient virtue for O'Connor, that of unswerving loyalty to his will. Lovett was approached to throw in his lot with the new organisation (as secretary) but he would have nothing to do with it (or rather with O'Connor whom he termed 'the chief marplot in our movement'). Such an ineffective Executive had little appeal for the country at large, and they were even less successful than their predecessors in raising funds. In fact it seems likely that O'Connor paid the expenses of the Executive.²⁰

Encouraged by this personal 'success' he began to peddle the new Association and the associated Land Scheme all over the country. Part of this campaign included a recruiting tour of Scotland in Autumn 1843. Rather incongruously he was accompanied by Duncombe, the Radical M.P., who had been invited to Scotland to receive the thanks of both Complete Suffragists and Chartists for his parliamentary services to the movement.

O'Connor's/

²⁰ Gammage op.cit. 246 et seq..

O'Connor's tour produced very little in the way of results. It gave opportunities for the usual demonstrations. At Aberdeen there was quite a colourful procession organised by the local Trades and Duncombe set a good - if surprising - example by taking out a membership card for the Aberdeen branch of the N.C.A.²¹ When the two reached Edinburgh they split up, Duncombe attending a soirée given by the C.S.U. whilst O'Connor, booked to make only one personal appearance at a meeting organised by the Edinburgh Charter Association, gave identical speeches at two meetings the same night. This second meeting was sponsored by dissident members of the E.C.A.²² O'Connor's behaviour over this matter did not help his prestige in Edinburgh. However, it was left to his Glasgow visit to do most harm. *Syntax!* Re-united with Duncombe, the pair attended a soirée in the City Hall where the faithful Moir, with Adams and Paul, made them welcome. It was a most successful meeting and at its close O'Connor succeeded in selling five hundred membership cards/

NOTE : The Aberdeen procession "was led by the United Robers in full régalia, and dressed in suits of rich pink muslin and wearing splendid Turbans. They were headed by 3 marshals on horseback, two dressed in red and one in black silk velvet and carrying broadswords of polished steel, their horses being richly caparisoned. Chaplain in full canonicals, with powdered wig, marshals on foot, office-bearers carrying their batons, the master gorgeously dressed with a train borne by five pages of beautiful appearance." [Gammage] .

²¹ *ibid.* 251-2.

²² Scotsman 25.10.1843.

²³ Gammage op.cit. p.212.

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²¹ ibid. 251-2.

²² Scotsman 25.10.1843.

²³ Gammage op.cit. p.352.

cards for the N.C.A. He then left a thousand cards with the local secretary 'on speculation' and went on his way. In the next number of the 'Northern Star' the Glasgow Chartists were surprised to read in 'O'Connor's Letter' that he had disposed of 1500 tickets at this meeting. Whilst this was literally true, it was obviously intended to give an exaggerated picture of the results of his tour. The deception disgusted the Glasgow Chartists and 'the N.C.A. ⁿever enjoyed much power after the evening of the enrolment'. In fact Moir, the very next day, came out in favour of a local Charter Association and expressed his lack of faith in O'Connor's national scheme.²³ Nothing appears to have been done about this and the Glasgow branch maintained a slender connection with the English movement mainly through Smith, the local secretary and correspondent of the 'Northern Star'.

Although Scotland refused to take the Land Scheme seriously, it met with considerable success in England. By 1845 a Chartist Land Co-operative Society had been formed and a Land Conference of the National Chartist Co-operative Association was held in Manchester to appoint trustees. On the usual principle these were nominees of O'Connor, including one Scotsman - Duncan Sherrington. However all this left Scotland unmoved as did the various squabbles incidental to O'Connor's retention of power/

²³ Gammage op.cit. p.252.

power. The Glasgow Chartists did become partially embroiled over the case of M'Donall. In 1845 he returned to England and started a lecturing tour. Ultimately he arrived in Scotland and found, as was to be expected, great dis-satisfaction with the N.C.A. and a desire for a separate Scottish Association. At a meeting in Glasgow he suggested that one be formed. The secretary of the local branch was offended and wrote about the matter to the National Executive, who in turn printed an extract from his complaint in the 'Northern Star'.²⁴ Yet another tragi-comedy dispute took place, with much raking over old grievances between O'Connor and M'Donall. In this morass the original cause of the dispute was soon forgotten. However within a short time there was a reconciliation between the two protagonists and M'Donall once again worked for the N.C.A. If anything this dispute confirmed the Scottish Chartists in their determination to go their own way - and that increasingly became the way of the Irish Repealers.

Temperance and poor relief were the first two links between the Irish and Chartism. During the late thirties Father Mathew and Father Euraght began preaching total abstinence in the Irish communities of Scotland. They were very successful and by 1843 there were thirty thousand Irish in Glasgow connected with Temperance Societies.²⁵ Many Chartists belonged to/

²⁴ Gammage op.cit. p.258. 'Northern Star' 1.8.1846; 8.8.1846.

²⁵ Handley op.cit. pp.245-7.

to the same societies and this formed a common bond. Henry Vincent speaking almost equally on Chartism (Sturge variety) and temperance, drew as many as three thousand people to Glasgow City Hall. Chartist leaders such as M'Farlane, Cullen, Cranston and Adair were prominent in the temperance movement. Thus it was possible for the two groups, ignoring religious differences, to fraternise in temperance processions. Gradually a rough and ready alliance evolved, with the Irish tending to cluster round the small O'Connorite groups. Such an arrangement was mutually acceptable since both factions used violent language. The process was accelerated as O'Connell's prestige declined. The Irish aimed at the Repeal of the Act of Union and this was also taken up by the extreme Chartists. Another link was the inadequacy of the Poor Relief arrangements. Funds had soon become exhausted in 1842 and in many places persons of Irish origin were refused relief even when they had qualified for it by three years continuous residence without a claim on the funds. Many Scots in-comers to a parish, similarly qualified, received like treatment. (It may be added that in many instances the necessary funds did not exist). Paisley, where distress was greatest and which had a large Irish population, was the worst example. So in February 1843 a joint Irish - Chartist meeting was held in Edinburgh to protest against/

against this system. Lowery, whose allegiance was delicately balanced between Sturge and O'Connor, was the principal speaker.²⁶ Apparently the Paisley authorities would give no relief to the Irish unless they had ten years residence - and the relief granted then was but sixpence a day. Edinburgh on the other hand strictly enforced the three year rule. As already noticed Brewster and Peddie were still agitating on the same theme in 1845. However there were two sides to this working agreement. That the Chartists gained something - even at this stage - was demonstrated in June 1843. A large meeting was called ostensibly to promote 'Justice to Ireland' but which in fact produced a numerously signed Petition for clemency towards the imprisoned Chartist Leaders.²⁷ As for Glasgow, the Repeal movement grew rapidly and joint meetings with the Physicals were held in the Lyceum Rooms. Thousands of Irish, fleeing from the successive famines, poured into Glasgow, swelling the ranks of the Repealers. By 1848 the working arrangement between Chartists and Repealers was well established and the latter gave to the disturbances of that year a character hitherto unknown in Scottish Radicalism - a very real danger of armed revolt. Fortunately the years of education on moral force principles bore fruit, and at the critical moment Scottish Chartism renounced violence.

At/

²⁶ Scotsman 15.2.1843.
²⁷ Scotsman 21.6.1843.

At this point it is appropriate to examine the nature and scope of true Chartist activity during these years, apart from the joint efforts already mentioned. First it must be made clear that Scotland, although trade had improved, saw a number of industrial disputes taking place notably amongst the coal-miners. At some places they were contesting the truck system; elsewhere they were going slow, partly to maintain employment, partly to force wages up.²⁸ In fact a National Conference of the Operative Miners Association of Great Britain and Ireland was held in Glasgow (April 1844) to discuss the advisability of a nation-wide strike. Reports showed that England was well organised, whilst Scotland was not, and the meeting decided against the idea.²⁹ There was yet another counter-attraction in the growing Socialist movement. Missionaries were very active in Scotland. Thus Jeffrey one of their number was bound over in Edinburgh after disturbing a meeting, whilst Robert Owen lectured in the newly-opened Socialist Church in West Richmond St (complete with organ). It was left to a woman missionary, Mrs. Martin, to create most commotion - in the Gorbals district of Glasgow which was a Chartist stronghold. She announced her intention by placard to attend at John Knox's Free/

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|---------------|----------|----------------------|------------|------------|-------|
| ²⁸ | Scotsman | 13.9.1843, | 20.4.1844, | 20.6.1844. | ----- |
| ²⁹ | Voting. | For a Strike | | 23,357 | } |
| | | Against a Strike | | 28,042 | |
| | | For a partial Strike | | 1,528 | |

³⁰ Scotsman 21.3.1843.
³¹ Glasgow 22.11. p.264; Revell op.cit. pp.213-219.

Free Church on Sunday March 23rd 1845 to listen to the sermon with a view to criticising it later at the Socialist meeting-place. On the day appointed the Church was densely crowded, with people standing in the aisles and a crowd of 1500 outside. Mrs. Martin was ready, seated near the pulpit with Jeffrey and his wife, but the pastor quite justifiably cancelled the service. Turmoil ensued and ultimately all three required police protection. For this episode Mrs. Martin and Jeffrey were fined.³⁰ Scenes such as this were quite common in the larger towns and tended to reduce interest in Chartism. Industrial action to secure better working conditions and out-and-out Socialism reflected current opinion. In turn Scottish Chartism, always adaptable, tried to incorporate these two somewhat conflicting notions into its own programme.

One thing was certain, the minority of Scots Chartists who had followed out O'Connor's advice to move amendments at League meetings soon realised that a change was imminent in his attitude. For one thing there was the disastrous defeat inflicted on O'Connor and McGrath by Cobden and Bright in open debate on Free Trade at Northampton in August 1844. So weak was the case put forward by the two Chartists for their opposition to the League that many, quite unreasonably, believed they had been bribed to lose.³¹ This was rather unfair. The League case/

³⁰ Scotsman 26.3.1845.

³¹ Gammage op.cit. p,254; Hovell op.cit. pp.213-219.

case was very strong and logical economic reasoning had never been a strong point with the English Chartists. In December 1845 a Convention held in Manchester abandoned all opposition to the Repeal of the Corn Laws. O'Connor now praised Peel and what he called progressive Toryism. Further he believed that abolition of these duties would 'make his Land Scheme triumphant by bringing down the price of land so that it could be more easily purchased by the people'. Henceforth the Chartists would co-operate with the League.³² Paradoxically it was left to a small group of Edinburgh Physicals almost on the eve of Corn Law Repeal to attack the League furiously. It is hard to find an explanation for this, but it demonstrated how small was O'Connor's control over the Scots. The language used was exceptionally violent, almost socialist in content. M'Kay addressed the meeting as "Fellow Slaves" and wanted the Government to stop all food exports, and potatoes were to be transported free by H.M. ships to distressed areas, there to be given away. Cunningham attacked the League as "a set of deep designing, money-mongering rogues". There were only twelve present but they caused quite a disturbance. The incident is only of importance as drawing attention to the irrational elements which make all popular movements so difficult to control.³³

The/

³² Gammage op.cit.

³³ Scotsman 31.1.1846.

The resurgence of true Chartism took place in the east. There had been no Chartist press since the 'Dundee Herald' finished in 1843. Now a Chartist organ appeared, with a difference. It might best be described as a wolf in sheep's clothing. Initially it boasted of being non-political and tied to no party. However, its sympathies clearly lay with the Chartists and the last number made this obvious. The paper bore the formidable title 'Edinburgh Weekly Express and Railway and Commercial Price Courant', the first number appearing on January 3rd 1846. John Halketh, who had been a staunch supporter of Fraser, was the publisher. As with so many of these Chartist papers, the editor remained anonymous but it seems likely that the Rev. William Hill, late of the 'Northern Star', was the first editor followed by James Bertram and John Blair. In January 1848 the paper came under the management of an Edinburgh Chartist group which included Alex. Grant (formerly of the 'True Scotsman'), Ranken, Cranston, Cummings and Hamilton. Ranken now became the editor and in its last days Robert Cranston took over from him. From the files it is obvious that it was a true lineal descendant of the earlier Scottish Chartist papers, advocating all the points of the Charter but adding on pacifism and a firm belief in temperance.

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One/

³⁴ Edinburgh Weekly Express 15.8.1846, 3.1.1846.

One thing was new - for the first time since the early days of Tait's 'Liberator', a paper run by Chartists showed itself almost as pre-occupied in securing immediate economic benefits as in the long term aims of the Charter. Seeing that the 'Northern Star' on its removal to London tried to become a Trade Union paper, it seems possible that William Hill stamped part at least of that policy on the 'Weekly Express'. Thus the Edinburgh paper consistently advocated shorter hours and gave very strong support to the Operative Bakers in their fight to reduce their hours of labour. Again it backed up the Cabinet-makers in their purpose of forming a national union.³⁵ Working men were invited to contribute to a series called the 'Annals of Industry' which was supposed to describe their working conditions. Yet up to the end of 1847 it contained no traces of Socialism or violent language. However it still bore faint traces of the Scottish Chartism of Fraser and Malcolm - the formation of a United Tailors Joint Stock Company was mentioned, many references were made to the virtues of temperance, and, in didactic strain, it advised workmen's wives how to be thrifty!³⁶ The Land Scheme was ignored, but it carried occasional reports of Scottish lectures on this topic by members of O'Connor's nondescript Executive - such as McGrath. Space given to these reports was very small. The paper made no definite/

³⁵ Ibid. 31.10.1846, 9.1.1847, 10.10.1846, 30.3.1846.

³⁶ Ibid. 9.1.1847.

definite bid for Irish support and the question of Repeal was ignored. Yet it throws much light on the way in which the tide of Irish public opinion was setting against Daniel O'Connell. Its columns carried a fiercely satirical parody directed against O'Connell in 1846. There could have been no more opportune moment. 'The Liberator's' popularity with his fellow-countrymen was declining rapidly because he persisted in collecting the Irish Rent (contributions for his Repeal campaign) even though Ireland was stricken by famine. This effort was entitled 'King Dan' and one stanza^d will show its general tone:

"There came to him many starving
Who'd forgotten the word content
And widows their last mites halving
To add to the Irish Rent".

Sentiments such as these expressed by the author, might have caused a minor riot in 1842; but by 1846 they were a little too near the truth.³⁷

Above all else the paper kept crying out for a better organisation of labour, The following appeared in January 1847 "At the present time our Liberal newspapers have never got beyond the "pons asinorum" of Free Trade. Labour must be organised". The end of that year (December 25th) saw the last number under the anonymous régime. The proprietor (probably Halketh/

³⁷ ibid. 16.5.1846.

Halketh) declared that his other interests, particularly his news agency, took up so much of his time that he was forced to discontinue publication. The paper was not to disappear, however. The valedictory address declared "If the Express has done nothing more, it³⁸ has at least paved the way; and it will afford us much pleasure to enter into an immediate agreement with them the industrious classes for taking the control of it into their own hands". Once again a solemn warning was given that it was no use the working class attempting to do this unless they were properly organised.³⁹ Apparently some satisfactory arrangement was made because the paper re-appeared, under Chartist management, as the 'North British Express' with offices in the High St.. Its character soon deteriorated and in the 1848 disturbances one issue of the paper was seized by the police. Soon afterwards it ceased publication.

Apart from this paper, 'Hustings and Coffee Houses' would be an apt summary of Scottish Chartist activity over these years. Vincent contested Kilmarnock in 1844 and this was the only genuine Chartist candidature in Scotland. A bye-election at Edinburgh in July 1846 produced some activity. Gibson Craig was returned unopposed for one seat although up to the last moment it looked as though John Dunlop of Brockloch President of E.C.S.U. would oppose him.⁴⁰ The Rt. Hon. T.B. Macaulay and/

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ibid. 25.12.1847.
ibid. 25.12.1847.
E.E.C. 26.7.1846.

and Sir Culling Smith contested the other vacancy. The latter received Chartist support; in fact he seemed to bid for the support of all sections. Cockburn aptly summed him up: 'Formerly a Tory, he is now much more of a Radical than a Whig.... He is for universal suffrage because he finds it in the Bible; but as we have not got it, he is against any active measures to acquire it.... His Committee contained Established Churchmen and Wild Voluntaries, intense Tories and declamatory Radicals'⁴¹. Chartist support for such an equivocal character can only be explained by the hatred they bore Macaulay. There was a partial mystery about this election. O'Connor was supposed to have offered himself as a potential candidate against Macaulay, and a so-called election address was published in the 'Northern Star' nearly four months before the election!⁴² However there was no trace of O'Connor at the hustings. Only O'Connor could explain the purpose of this strange measure - it may just have been a case of wishful thinking, that he - O'Connor - would revenge himself on Macaulay for his slighting remarks in 1842 about the Charter. July 1847 produced a general election and the Chartists tried to implement, rather half-heartedly, the 'Hustings candidates' policy. At Aberdeen, James M'Pherson, comb-maker, was proposed by M'Farlane and seconded by Tongue. He/

⁴¹ Cockburn op.cit. 25.7.1846.

⁴² Northern Star 7.3.1846.

He won handsomely on show of hands but did not poll.⁴³ Greenock saw M'Rae (sic) proposed and seconded but he refused to submit even to a show of hands and resigned from the election.⁴⁴ The Chartists at Glasgow put up no candidates but appeared to support Deannistoun and Dixon. As a result these two scored an overwhelming success on show of hands but rather surprisingly finished in the bottom positions at the actual poll.⁴⁵ Feelings at Edinburgh ran high over the question of the Maynooth Grant and reform of the Excise Laws. Here Macaulay lost his seat because he 'was not sufficiently bigoted against the Catholics'. Charles Cowan, who headed the poll, was supported by the National Excise Association. For the moderate Chartists Dr. Glover and James Robertson attacked Macaulay over Catholic Endowment whilst Smith and Cumming, of the Physicals, exacted from Cowan a statement that he believed in the ballot and in extending the franchise.⁴⁶ All these were quiet elections. The only other contest worthy of note was at Montrose Burghs where the near-Chartist Joseph Hume was returned.⁴⁷ Altogether Chartist intervention during this election did not amount to very much but there was one great compensation; O'Connor was successful at Northampton and so became the first, and only, Chartist M.P. .

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|----|--------------------|-----------|---------------------|
| 43 | ----- | ----- | ----- |
| 44 | Caledonian Mercury | 2.8.1847. | |
| 45 | " | " | 2.8.1847. |
| 46 | " | " | 2.8.1847. |
| 46 | " | " | 29.7.1847. |
| 47 | " | " | 5.8.1847, 9.8.1847. |

In many places there had sprung up those by-products of Scottish Chartism, Temperance Coffee Houses, Undoubtedly their influence was great. Not only did they become the unofficial headquarters of the local Chartists but they became the common meeting-ground of the middle and working classes. To this can be attributed some of the understanding between the two that existed in Scotland. Lamb's, in Dundee, has already been mentioned, and there were several in Glasgow, the most notable being Steele's. Even in 1842 Chartist strikers in Dunfermline met in the local Coffee House.⁴⁸ Above all in Edinburgh the movement centred on the Coffee Houses. As early as 1837 John Aitken opened one in the High St., to be followed six years later, on a site almost opposite, by Robert Cranston - a local Chartist leader. Cranston's became the rendezvous of the staff of the 'North British Express' and reformers of all classes met there attracted by the newspapers, both local and London, which were available in the Coffee Room. A third Coffee House (Johnston's) seems to have been the centre of the E.C.S.⁴⁹ Despite the attachment of various shades of Chartist opinion to a particular resort, there was intermingling of clientèle. Undoubtedly the opportunity to talk politics together, in the relatively soothing atmosphere of a Coffee-House, helped middle and working classes to become a little more tolerant of each other in Scotland. Both could also show their belief in temperance principles.

48 Scotsman 27.8.1842.

49 Mein, 'Through Four Reigns' (privately published) p.3 et seq., Scotsman 22.4.1843.

Chapter III. The 1848 Convention and the National Assembly.

(a) Prelude in England.

By the middle of 1847 O'Connor thought it politic to launch yet another National Petition. M'Donall had been welcomed back into the O'Connor fold and became a N.C.A. lecturer. In this occupation he was joined by Samuel Kydd, an Arbroath shoemaker, who first came into prominence as a 'whole-hog Chartist' in 1842 and as such represented Glasgow in the Sturge Conference of that year. An intelligent and fluent speaker, like many others he became an itinerant agitator and through his unswerving support of O'Connor had secured rapid advancement in the Chartist hierarchy.⁵⁰ Both made wide tours and found a receptive audience everywhere. There was no apathy, the country was stirring to life - ready to Petition. This time the general mood was subtly different. Previously it was quite true to attribute unrest solely to economic distress. Now there was another element to be considered; from 1844 on it had become more usual for people to think in international terms. Men like Harney had made this approach popular. For example, by 1846 the Society of Fraternal Democrats had been formed with the motto "All men ~~are~~ brethren". Naturally enough/

⁵⁰ Gammage op.cit. p.286.

enough there was a quickening of interest in events on the Continent and this was heightened by the 1846 Cracow rising.⁵¹ For the first time a semi-republican outlook was found amongst rank-and-file Chartists. As far as Scotland was concerned the same ideas were prevalent and were derived, not so much from the English leaders with their Marxist connections (although they helped), but from the incoming Irish. Obviously unemployment played its part in this national radical resurgence, particularly in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Greenock, and Dundee where the Irish hand-loom weavers, labourers, and famine victims suffered most. If Chartism were to survive amidst the stirring events of the 'Year of Revolutions', a decisive policy was needed. For a start there was a rapprochement with the Irish Repealers, notably at Manchester in March, and this was followed by the National Convention meeting in London on April 4th.

All over the country workmen were drilling and supposedly collecting arms. Talk of a revolution on the contemporary Continental pattern was common. Even Fergus O'Connor talked of a Republic based on a peasant democracy, with himself as President. Once again the Convention faced that dilemma of being violent without using force. To this end they received reports from the delegates as to whether their constituents were ready and organised to proceed to the familiar ulterior measures. A programme/

⁵¹ See Cole, 'Chartist Portraits': Harney, O'Brien, Jones.

programme was drawn up which proposed,

(1) If the Petition was rejected a National Memorial would be sent to the Queen to dissolve Parliament and to get Ministers in favour of the Charter.

(2) A National Assembly would be elected to sit permanently till the Charter was achieved. (This de facto Government, as the Chartists hoped, was due to meet in London on April 24th).

(3) Simultaneous meetings were to be held on April 21st to adopt the National Memorial and elect delegates for the Assembly.

As for the Petition itself a gigantic procession was to be formed to escort it to the House of Commons on the 10th April.⁵² To the Government all this - violent talk, drilling, National Assembly, monster procession - looked like an incipient rebellion. They acted promptly by putting the Duke of Wellington in charge of all troops and mustered numerous special constables. London was placed almost on a war footing. On the appointed day the Chartists assembled on Kennington Common but O'Connor in view of the Government preparations, the danger of a spontaneous outbreak, and assessing the military character of his followers as nil, very wisely cancelled the march. The Petition was taken to the House in four cabs. On examination it/

⁵² West op.cit. p.239 et seq.; Gammage p.309.

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 it was found to contain less than two million signatures (the Chartists claimed 5,7000,000) and included amongst them were such doughty reformers as the Iron Duke and Queen Victoria. This revelation and the bursting of the Chartist military bubble made the movement something of a laughing stock, no longer a serious menace. The Petition itself was referred to a Select Committee for consideration.

Despite this crushing setback the Convention proceeded with its plan for a National Assembly. Their main hope now lay in Scotland where the repercussions of the Kennington Common débâcle were not so great. To this end Ernest Jones was despatched to Scotland to rally Chartist support there. In all these proceedings O'Connor took no part; he realised how hopeless it was to attempt to secure the Charter by means other than constitutional. As usual he changed his mind too late and the movement was divided. He made the division worse by pointing out, in a letter to the 'Northern Star', that the coming National Assembly was illegal. However on May 1st 1848 that body finally assembled. As in 1839 it listened to reports as to the State of the country from which it appeared that Scotland had taken steps to form a National Guard. Next O'Connor was censured in absentia for the 'Northern Star' letter. Yet when the question of physical force came up for discussion, M'Donnell/persuaded the Assembly to renounce its use,⁵³ This produced/

53 Gammage p.325 et seq..

produced a stalemate - the delegates were there as a pseudo-governing Republican Assembly without any power to enforce their edicts. A brief spell of ^f sanity produced a plan for re-organising the N.C.A. on a basis of delegation. There were to be Sections (ten men), Wards, Localities and Districts each with a specific leader. To co-ordinate these on a nationwide basis was the task of twenty paid Commissioners and they in turn were directly responsible to an Executive of five. One glance is sufficient to show that this organisation was capable of being adapted very quickly into a military establishment - as was intended. A Provisional Executive was appointed and, significant of the movement's changing centre of gravity, three of the five - M'Crae, Kydd and M'Donall - were Scots, as were seven of the Commissioners.⁵⁴ Having achieved some outward order, proceedings now degenerated into mere wrangling, mainly over the question of relations with O'Connor. Many parts of the country remained faithful to him - was he not the only Chartist M.P? - and wrote to the Assembly protesting at their treatment of him. Worst of all agreement could not even be reached as to the advisability of another procession to present the Memorial to the Queen. Kydd in particular opposed this notion as being disastrous. With nothing achieved/

⁵⁴ Gammage p.325 et seq.

achieved the Assembly adjourned till the end of June. During this recess there were disturbances in several parts of the country and the authorities banned all processions. Jones distinguished himself by making numerous Republican speeches but M'Donall was rather more restrained although he told his listeners to get arms. The delegates returned to London; next a reconciliation was effected with O'Connor who now sat in the new Executive with M'Donall, Kydd, M'Crae, and Jones. By this time the movement was penniless and nothing was done in the way of organised agitation. Another blow fell when the authorities arrested Jones, M'Donall and many local leaders for their part in the disturbances of these two months. Both of these members of the Executive received two years imprisonment, undergoing very harsh treatment whilst serving their sentences. Those leaders still at large continued their speech-making. Kydd was by far the most effective of them, speaking lucidly and coherently 'without bonbast'. He became Secretary to the Executive but on learning that the Attorney-General considered this new semi-military organisation to be illegal, he 'recommended the adoption of the old plan'. In October Kydd resigned from the Executive complaining that no effective organisation had been realised and that the Association owed him £60. Yet another delegate meeting was called to consider/

Syntax consider this situation but lacking funds, and followers, only a most ineffective attempt at re-organisation was made.⁵⁵

This marks the real end of the National Convention and National Assembly. Admittedly the N.C.A. still existed, and continued to exist for ten more years under different guises. Certainly the movement was 'unconscionably long a-dying' and Jones, in particular, tried to infuse life into what had long been the dry bones of a movement. O'Connor, his mental powers failing, was never again able to sway the masses. Yet interest in electoral reform was very much alive and the middle-class Chartists, notably in Scotland, took up projects such as Hume's 'Little Charter' with great enthusiasm.

(b) Scotland at the Convention.

By March 1848 the number of destitute Irish in Glasgow and Edinburgh had increased enormously. Despite the usual labour projects many thousands were on the verge of starvation. So it was that early in March at these two places, the first disturbances of 1848 took place. They were not of Chartist origin, although several of the Physicals became embroiled. Undoubtedly the presence of M'Donnell heralding the National Convention to great crowds gave the impression that Chartists/

⁵⁵ See West op.cit for an account of the Assembly. Also Gammage p.334 et seq..

Chartists were implicated. At Edinburgh the outbreak took the form of breaking street lamps. Dragoons and local Pensioners were called out and the Riot Act was read. A few cries of 'Vive la République!' reflected the excitement over Continental events but the affair had no political motives and, declared the 'Scotsman', was 'started by ill-disposed boys'. So little concerned about this event were the Chartists that one local leader, Robert Cranston, spent the evening at the Theatre Royal with his wife, unaware of what was going on outside.⁵⁶ Almost simultaneously the Glasgow unemployed, after days of waiting outside the Council Chambers for food or work, took matters into their own hands. Thanks to initial hesitation on the part of the police they looted shops taking bread from one and guns from another. Street lamps were also broken, and an attempt to cut off the town's gas supply was projected. All this was the work of starving and desperate men with a good deal of contagious mob hysteria. Although their slogan was 'Bread and the Revolution!', emphasis was placed on the former. When the local garrison was called in to/

NOTE : Only 2200 Glasgow unemployed were on the Roll for relief. Of these 350 were breaking stone, 54 received webs, and 20 were on River Trust work. Seven hundred received no money but a ration of bread and soup. Edinburgh, a little later, found employment for 950 - mainly breaking stone.

⁵⁶ Scotsman 8.3.1848; Mein op.cit. p.4.

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⁵⁶ Scotsman 8.3.1848; Mein op.cit. p.4.

to re-inforce the police, the affair was over and sixty four people were arrested.⁵⁷ Of these the leaders were sentenced to fifteen years transportation.⁵⁸ There exists an interesting analysis of these prisoners ^{which} and show the stuff on which riots are made:⁵⁹

| <u>Age.</u> | <u>No.</u> | <u>Nationality.</u> | <u>Religion.</u> |
|-------------|------------|---------------------|------------------|
| 15 or under | 14 | Scots 24 | Protestants 34 |
| 15 - 25 | 27 | English 2 | Catholics 26 |
| 25 - 30 | 11 | Irish 36 | Unitarians 1 |
| 30 and over | 12 | Foreign 2 | None 3 |
| Employed | 38. | Unemployed | 26. |

Occupations.

| | | | |
|-----------|----|-----------------|---|
| Labourers | 23 | Shoemakers | 5 |
| Miners | 18 | Cotton Spinners | 2 |
| Weavers | 10 | Blacksmiths | 2 |

The Chartists were not officially interested in the spontaneous outbreak although extremist members were in the rioting crowd and, as usual, made speeches. Later at the Convention James Adams declared the Chartists tried to stop the riot, but this was wishful thinking. Yet these two non-Chartist events/

57 Croal D., 'Early Recollections of a Journalist' p.69 et seq.
 58 Shaw op.cit. p.473.
 59 Scotsman 15.3.1848.

events are of great interest as demonstrating that the raw material for a violent rising was there, and this was to influence subsequent events in Scotland.

Meanwhile the various associations had been electing delegates for the National Convention. For a change there was little acrimony over the candidates. True in Edinburgh the election of Dr. Hunter, a moral force man, to accompany that extremist Hibernian, James Cumming, was by no means to the liking of the Physicals who proceeded to hamper the worthy doctor by 'forgetting' to give him any credentials to present in London.⁶⁰ The Scottish delegates were;

Edinburgh : Hunter and Cumming. Glasgow : James Adams.

Dundee : James Graham. Aberdeen : James Shirron.

Paisley : Robert Cochrane.

(Robert Lowery was now representing Carlisle whilst M'Donall and Kydd had English constituencies).

Of fruitful discussion at the Convention there was very little, the main interest lying in the reports given by the delegates of their constituencies and in the debate on ulterior measures. Delegate after delegate got up and stressed the misery and discontent in their areas. Then came a change. Cumming in his turn declared that 'they in Edinburgh were not poverty-stricken Chartists; they were Chartists from principle and/

⁶⁰ Scotsman 26.4.1848.

and were ready to represent that principle on the field, in the dungeon and at the stake.' How he reconciled this with his fellow-countrymen breaking stone on Bruntsfield Links was a mystery. Yet there was a certain element of truth about it - most of the leaders were prosperous artisans and the fact that they maintained their own newspaper implied some prosperity. In any case the effect of the bombast was nullified by his fellow-delegate, Dr. Hunter, who expressed the opinion that 'Edinburgh was not as democratic as all that, and that moral force alone would make the Charter the law of the land'. From the other Scottish delegates a rather optimistic report was received. Graham was convinced that Dundee would resent any attempt to coerce the Irish and would implement the decisions of the Convention. Shirron, rather more honest, did not think Aberdeen was well-organised although ten thousand had signed the Petition. Paisley, still under Brewster's influence, wanted the delegates to reason with M.P's, before the Petition was presented. The high-light of these reports came from Glasgow. Adams boasted of bringing a hundred thousand signatures with him and thirty thousand more had since been forwarded. So distressed were his constituents that 'at any rate they would manage to contain their soldiers'. Obviously the delegates could not resist the temptation of telling the Convention what it wanted to hear; but the presence of Irish Repealers/

Repealers in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee and Paisley certainly gave promise of action in the future.⁶¹

The other business of the Convention was of no great importance. An excellent address was drawn up by Kydd, aided by a committee of six, on the condition of the country.⁶² After the Report on the Petition which showed many signatures to be forgeries, Kydd moved in the Convention that a return should be made from every delegate as to the number of signatures obtained in his district. Adams, on the other hand, wanted the Convention to undertake to procure a greater number of genuine signatures - if the Government would consider that an argument in favour of the Petition.⁶³ Neither of these proposals was implemented. Preparations were now made for turning the Convention into a National Assembly and Jones was despatched to Scotland for this purpose. One interesting side-line of these proceedings was that Kydd, Adams, and Cumming amongst others addressed a meeting of the Fraternal Democrats (April 4th) showing clearly the semi-republican affiliations of these extreme leaders.

The National Assembly finally met on May 1st and little need be said of its proceedings. There were some changes and additions amongst the Scottish members. Hunter had not survived a dispute with the Edinburgh Chartists over his credentials and/

61 Gammage p.304.

62 *ibid.* p.308.

63 *ibid.* pp.309-320.

and was replaced by a hot-headed pro-Irish Repealer, Henry Ranken - editor of the 'North British Express'. Glasgow showed the same tendency by returning Adams, now almost as much a revolutionary as Jones. With him were Harley and, a significant addition, Massey of Dublin. The better-known M'Rae, a Chartist preacher, replaced James Graham at Dundee.⁶⁴ One or two additional areas were represented; Peacock came from Greenock whilst McLean was chosen by Alva and district. Both of these places had large Irish populations. Aberdeen now had two members, one of whom, Shirron, became Secretary to the Assembly. Altogether over half of that body was supplied by Scotland. The first business was to hear reports and the usual mixture of true and false appeared. Jones, for Aberdeen, and M'Rae grossly over-estimated Chartist strength in both places (probably deliberately) whilst Ranken blandly intimated that in Edinburgh the magistrates had handed over the safety of the town to the Chartists - a statement for which there was not the slightest factual justification.

Unity only came when attacking the absent O'Connor. Peacock and Rankin censured him for his 'illegality' letter whilst Adams and McLean wanted the 'Northern Star' to be banned, the former complaining that he had been called 'a wolf' in its columns and the latter claimed to have been misrepresented in one of its reports. Apparently in one speech, according/

⁶⁴ 'Memoranda' op.cit. p.70 et seq..

according to the 'Northern Star', McLean had declared that there were eight hundred riflemen in Alva. This false report apparently angered his constituents and McLean wanted redress against O'Connor. If guilty of such a slip, he was by no means alone since the contentious atmosphere of the Assembly seemed to breed exaggeration and false optimism in equal quantities. Protests against this wrangling were sent to the members by perplexed Chartists in many of the associations represented, notably from the Glasgow Trades ^g using them to act together. One Glasgow Committee actually made Harley resign his seat because they disapproved of his views on O'Connor. To complicate proceedings further there were numerous petty jealousies. Adams (not on the Executive but feeling he should be) moved that a great meeting should be called to adopt the Memorial (re. Ministers) after which they would proceed to the Palace direct to demand an audience of the Queen 'and that the Executive Committee should head the procession'! This was supposed to be aimed at Jones who in nearly every Scottish meeting affirmed that in future the people would go straight to the Queen. Adams overlooked the fact that he had echoed Jones' sentiments almost word for word on every occasion. Time was wasted over this foolish matter and one more was added to the long list of rejected motions. Notice should be taken of/

of one other resolution in view of subsequent happenings. It was by Rankin to the effect that "A standing army is contrary to the British Constitution and inimical to the liberty of the subject". What little sense came out of the proceedings was the work of Kydd; he wanted the poor to be employed on public lands and drafted an address to all classes on the labour problem.⁶⁵

Such were the Scottish contributions to these two meetings. They do not amount to very much because the organisations themselves accomplished almost nothing. The Assembly shows that Chartist Associations sufficiently remote from Kennington Common were able to continue an active existence after the débâcle of April 10th. It is doubtful if Kennington Common meant very much to the Scottish Chartists. True, they signed the Petition; but, for Edinburgh, Bailie Stott's Resolutions were almost as important. Taking Scotland as a whole actual hunger, the revolutions in Europe, and the desire for a free Ireland were much more real than the circumlocutions of the National Convention. The Irish did not become Chartists but with a quid pro quo arrangement they took control of the violent side of the movement. Any fight was better than no fight and the general feeling was that if the Charter were secured, Repeal would not be far behind.

⁶⁵ Gammage op.cit. p.325 et seq. gives a full, and fairly accurate, account of the Assembly.

Chapter IV. The Hibernian Chartists.

(a) Pre-Assembly meetings.

Working like a leaven amongst the rank-and-file Chartists were the Irish Repealers in the more populous areas of Scotland. Some of the results of this permeation were seen in the Scottish contribution to the Convention. Yet much of this impact was felt only in Scotland, in events which had only a slight connection with the general English movement. There was a strong Irish Republican element but fortunately this was tempered by the equally strong moral force, constitutional action, tradition built up by the Central Committee and Fraser. So there were two voices competing for public favour; one was loud, unreasonable and violent, the other quiet, logical and peaceful. Often the two spoke together from the same platform but despite outward semblances of agreement there prevailed a state of undeclared war between them. Perhaps the first signs of this conflict became apparent in Edinburgh on the day of the Kennington Common fiasco. On that day a huge crowd assembled on the Calton Hill to await the news from London and to express their support of the local Charter - Bailie Stott's Resolutions. All the pro-Irish Chartists were there, with the exception of Cumming in London, and Grant, of the 'North British Express/

Express', was chairman. News of the London procession was not forthcoming and Grant declared that 'the Government had stopped the electric telegraph'. Not knowing quite what had happened Rankin, and particularly Hamilton, urged the crowd to buy muskets or pikes telling them that the time for action had come. The extremists were not allowed to have things their own way. Cranston made a strong plea for restraint and suggested they draw up a Memorial expressing their confidence in Stott's Resolutions. When completed they would form a procession and take it to the Lord Provost's house. This sedative action on the part of the moral force Chartists entirely nullified the violent sentiments of Hamilton and Rankin. Four thousand formed up and marched to Drummond Place. Cranston, ^{w?} Ekings and Walker saw the Lord Provost who agreed to present the Memorial to the Town Council. He then told them of the Chartist failure in London. Under Cranston's leadership the assembled crowd marched back to the Mound and there quietly dispersed 'to show that it was a gross libel to say they desired or intended the destruction of property'. The contrast between the stormy opening of this meeting and its quiet ending was most pronounced. Undoubtedly the Chartists derived a vicarious enjoyment from the outpourings of the semi-Republicans but in the last resort reverted to familiar moral force tactics.⁶⁶

On/

On almost identical lines was a meeting held next day to express sympathy with the Repealers. The chairman was John Adair. This time Rankin brought forward three resolutions warning the Government against provoking the Irish too much, expressing sympathy with Repeal, and objecting to the Government's prosecution of certain Irish 'rebels'. However all the polemics came from Hamilton who started off quite bluntly with "I intend to talk sedition. If there are bad laws existing to keep me from stating my opinions ... the sooner they are broken the better" (a reference to the restrictive Sedition Bill recently passed by the Government). Then came the familiar plea to arm. Apparently Hamilton had been a moral force Chartist for fourteen years and 'was now tired of it'. Very reasonably he declared that he had no wish 'to butcher the aristocracy, although they well deserve it'. At this point the moral force Chartists re-asserted themselves and protested to such good effect that Hamilton half-apologised for his violent talk. Thereafter the meeting took a normal course most of the discussion revolving around a dispute as to whether a copy of the Sedition Bill should be burned at the Cross of Edinburgh (Peter Duncan), be burned in that meeting by the chairman (Grant), or not burned at all (Hamilton)!⁶⁷

Strangely/

⁶⁷ Scotsman 12.4.1848.

(b) ~~James Jones and his companions~~

Strangely enough Glasgow showed little signs of this conflict between the extremists and moral force supporters. For this the severe penalties inflicted by the authorities in the March outbreak were directly responsible. On the ill-fated 10th of April there were many small meetings but the main excitement came from watching the police busily tearing down placards with 'Threatened ~~R~~evolution in London' on them. For this effort, Harrower and Brown, who did most of the Chartist printing in Glasgow, were arrested. Subsequently they were released on payment of fifty pounds bail, provided by Moir and Ross.⁶⁸ Later still a large meeting with bands, flags and banners assembled on Glasgow Green, an attempt to march there in procession being prohibited by Sheriff Alison. The chairman was Moir and also present were Paul, Wingate, George Adams, and James Adams (Member of the Convention). Proceedings were quite subdued, most of the attacks being directed against the Crown and Government Security Bill (a measure restricting freedom of speech). It ended up with a ^a clamitous effort to sing the 'Marseillaise'. Two were chosen to lead the singing and strike the key, but they had such 'creaking and tremulous voices' that the crowd burst into laughter!⁶⁹

(b)/

⁶⁸ Scotsman 15.4.1848.

⁶⁹ Scotsman 15.4.1848.

(b) Ernest Jones and Republicanism.

When Jones, despatched there by the Convention, arrived in Scotland, the oratory at least took on a more revolutionary spirit. ^A Almost identical speeches were delivered by him in nearly all the large towns, and the faithful Adams was there to echo almost exactly the leader's sentiments. Crowds gathered to hear the reports from the Convention and to listen to Jones - the latter usually gave an exciting performance. A typical meeting took place in the Waterloo Rooms, Edinburgh, on April 19th. To Adams fell the rôle of 'white-washing' the Convention. Thus there had been 300,000 on Kennington Common, a most successful demonstration, and the decision to call off the procession had been a wise one since the Convention could not ask unarmed men to face armed police. The forged signatures were dismissed as being obviously the work of Government agents. In future the Chartists would go straight to the Queen for redress but Adams issued a solemn warning that "the throne, in common with the other institutions of the country, must take its chance in the general crash". Ernest Jones started with an attack on the 'Gagging' Bill which meant he said that 'Tongues were not to be used. Brains were not to think. Man was not at liberty to speak'. Then came the familiar phrases; that "the Charter was a 'bread and cheese question/

question'; 'once it was secured there would be food, clothing and shelter for everyone'; 'No more Petitions would be sent to the House of Commons - they would take it by force'. Throughout he openly proclaimed himself a Republican.⁷⁰ The main outline of this speech was duplicated at every meeting where he spoke. There could be no doubt that the mantle of O'Connor had now fallen over Jones' shoulders. Not all the speakers at this Edinburgh meeting came up to the standard, in content or style, of the two main speakers. Chartism delighted in bathos and from the sublime Jones (if that is the word) they descended to the unfortunate Dr. Hunter. Once more he complained about the lack of credentials and non-payment of his expenses which had hampered his work in London (apparently he had to borrow £4 from the Convention to get back home). Then came his report on the Convention proceedings and he launched forth with a glowing account of the horses which drew the cart containing the Petition to Parliament. Such irrelevancy proved too much for even the Chartists and he was forced to sit down.⁷¹ Scenes such as this were the real tragedy of Chartism, the national being swamped by the local. More interest was displayed in the grievances of the Craigs and the Hunters than in any injustice displayed by the Government.

From/

⁷⁰ Scotsman 22.4.1848.

⁷¹ Scotsman 22.4.1848, 26.4.1848.

From Edinburgh Jones proceeded to Glasgow to administer the same dose of rhetoric, and thence to Greenock, still accompanied by Adams.⁷² Here in defiance of police orders a procession formed to greet them and after the meeting a scuffle took place with the special police and several people were injured. Jones received a great welcome at Dundee and Aberdeen; he reported, quite falsely, that the latter place had formed a National Guard of six thousand men. As with O'Connor, so with Jones; gross exaggeration undid much of the good work they accomplished. Although Henry, the Aberdeen delegate to the Assembly, doubted the truth of this report he said nothing at the time because he 'thought that if it were sent abroad it might do good'. This did not prevent him, on returning to Aberdeen, accusing his constituents of misleading Jones and himself as to their being ready to fight. 'As a proof of this he asked all those present who had obtained arms to hold up their hands. Amidst loud laughter, one solitary individual did so'. There was the usual sequel. Smart, the local secretary, wrote to the 'Northern Star' indignantly denying that Jones had been told there were six thousand in the National Guard. Actually they had informed him that there were six hundred in the local association and they were hoping ultimately to get three thousand. As for arms it had only been proposed/

⁷² Scotsman 26.4.1848.

proposed that the Chartists apply to the Government for arms (presumably as specials to keep the peace).⁷³ Jones lost some of his influence in the North because of this ridiculous exaggeration. The dispute does serve to make it fairly obvious that if Aberdeen talked of armed revolt, very little had been accomplished towards that end. Similarly if Jones and Adams preached Republicanism (as they did) very few traces of this teaching could be seen in Scotland up to the end of May. When the English leaders had been arrested, the Assembly proved completely inept, then - and only then - did the Repealers and Chartists in Scotland co-operate in a positive policy of revolt. Once again there had been no attempt at national co-ordination. Scotland went her own way, which was the way of the Irish Repealers. Their hand can be seen in the National Guard organisation and in the Clubs formed to give it life.

(c) The National Guard.

Only three places were effectively connected with the National Guard - Edinburgh, Dundee, and to a lesser extent, Glasgow. Although the title of this body originated with the National Assembly, yet there can be little doubt as to the inspiration it derived from contemporary Irish events. Men like Thomas D'Arcy McGee saw, in the discontented immigrants, ideal material/

⁷³ Gammage op.cit. p.334 et seq..

material for their plans. Others such as Daly exhorted Glasgow Chartists and Repealers in the Lyceum Rooms that, "Prayer and petitions were the weapons of slaves and cowards; arms were the weapons used by the free and the brave. They [the Scots Chartists] would best help Ireland by keeping the army in Scotland".⁷⁴ That was the crux of the plot - to tie up the armed forces by means of an insurrection in Scotland, thus leaving the Irish free to deal with the garrison in Ireland.^{74a} So it was that the Chartists began to form a National Guard.

It began in Edinburgh. At the end of March a meeting was held in Adam Square Hall to form a Metropolitan National Guard, "for the defence and protection of the metropolis of Scotland". It was a true military organisation. Four divisions were to be formed, each commanded by a Colonel and containing 21 Officers and 400 Men. Sub-sections of a hundred men were to have a Captain, whilst - a familiar revolutionary touch - every Section of twenty five men was to be controlled by a Committee. Muskets and lances were to be the arms. At this meeting the projected formation of such a body did not go unchallenged by the moderates. Anderson/

⁷⁴ -----
McGee came to Scotland hoping to persuade the Glasgow Irish to seize the Clyde steamers and sail to Sligo, Killala and Westport. He is reputed to have won over the officers and crew of one Greenock steamer to try this.

Handley op.cit. p.316-317; Johnston op.cit. p.354.

^{74a} Pikes for Ireland were made at Anderston, Glasgow. op.cit.

Anderson, a tailor, believed it would drive 'peaceable, intelligent and trustworthy persons from Chartism' and that in any case thirty soldiers could defeat three thousand National Guardsmen.⁷⁵ However, recruiting began and a week later it was reported that skeleton sections only had been formed. This was disappointing and to speed matters up it was decided to form political clubs. Nominally intended as organisations to keep in touch with the moribund National Assembly, their real purpose was to get weapons. In any case they were supposed to be so organised as to be able to meet at one hour's notice. In their formation the Irish took the lead, as will be seen later.⁷⁶

Somehow the hour always produces the man. Grant, Rankin and Hamilton in Edinburgh looked after the political agitation; now there arose a military specialist who was appointed Brigadier-General to the Metropolitan National Guard, This was Mackay, an ex-private soldier with some ten years service and a dubious claim to have fought in the Ghuznee campaign. Brim-full of confidence, he was responsible for the Edinburgh organisation, frequently declaring that as a military man he had no fears of being able "to out-general the Duke of Wellington". He must have been a most persuasive individual. Proceeding to Dundee he organised a National Guard there. Once more he was appointed/

⁷⁵ Scotsman 29.4.1848.

⁷⁶ ibid. 6.5.1848.

appointed 'General'. To get his audience in a martial mood, he first read 'The Song of the Pike', then attacked moral force and ended up by showing how easy it could be to obtain arms. His solution of this problem was ingenious, if somewhat dishonest. Apparently the National Guard was to order arms from Birmingham; "The Birmingham manufacturers, who are speculative men, would immediately obey the order and give six months credit. Should they happen in the course of that six months to destroy the present Government at the point of bayonet and pike, the next Government would be a republican one and the Birmingham speculators would never say a word about paying for the arms - they would be too happy to think that they had helped form a glorious republic". One last point about Mackay; according to himself he was not a Chartist, a Whig, or a Tory but a "staunch conservative Republican - one of the school of Robespierre".⁷⁷

Organisation of the National Guard in Scotland was proceeding slowly but steadily, when the English Chartists' fondness for tactical 'victories' at the expense of long-term strategy came once more into prominence. What the National Guard needed was to avoid any clash with the authorities during its formative period. Now came a typical Chartist storm in a tea-cup directed against Lord John Russell. 'Finality Jack' had/

⁷⁷ Scotsman 24.5.1848; Memoranda op.cit. p.75.

had again stated in Parliament that the people did not want further reform and that the Chartist leaders were misguided cranks. The National Assembly, very sensitive indeed after the April 10th failure, took this as a personal affront and launched a full-scale attack on him. Simultaneous meetings were to be held everywhere on June 12th to express lack of confidence in the Government and to condemn Lord John Russell for his misrepresentation of the people's wishes. There could have been no more inopportune moment for Scottish demonstrations. The authorities were prepared, whilst the Chartists were not. This ill-timed ^d national demonstration nipped that Scottish National Guard in the bud. At some places the movement had already waned. Peacock, the Greenock delegate to the National Assembly, came back with a most damaging report on its conduct and declared "that any further agitation under the present leaders was folly". Like Dr. Hunter he was an embittered man; his constituents had failed to supply him with funds to stay in London and he had been forced to borrow his fare home.⁷⁸ At Aberdeen the meeting on the 12th was closely watched by the police but, as Henry discovered, it was an unnecessary precaution. Glasgow Chartists failed to meet on the appointed day. Two days earlier there had been a joint meeting with the Repealers on the Green when/

78

Scotsman 7.6.1848.

when the attendance was very small. A few banners, "a genuine silken tricolor", speeches expressing determination to get the whole Charter and sympathy with the 'new Irish martyrs' composed the whole of the proceedings over which George Adams presided. There was very little enthusiasm; probably this was damped by the presence of four hundred policemen.⁷⁹ The same sort of thing happened at Magdalen Yard Green, Dundee. There was a procession to a hustings decorated with a blue, white and green flag with a model pike two feet long fixed above it. Despite these revolutionary emblems, it was a quiet meeting. A Young Repealer addressed the meeting, as did the two Chartist weaver-poets James Gow and Peter Gray.⁸⁰

Edinburgh was the last organised of the towns and here the demonstration was potentially the most dangerous. Processions had been forbidden whilst troops and 'specials' were marshalled to deal with the anticipated outbreak. About twenty thousand people assembled on Bruntsfield Links and awaited the arrival of the Leith Charists who had decided to march there in procession. They never arrived. At Pilrig St. they were charged by the police and dispersed in great confusion. The band leading them being particularly unfortunate, "both ends of the bass drum/

⁷⁹ Scotsman 14.6.1848.

⁸⁰ *ibid.* 14.6.1848.

drum were beaten in by blows from the constables and police" (subsequently this became a venerated Chartist relic, showing the work of the police, "the ferocious blue-coated ruffians".). The non-arrival of the semi-military Leith contingent removed all danger of a violent outbreak. Only the sleakers retained their martial ardour. Grant, acting as chairman, urged the people to form clubs and Hamilton warned them to get guns and bayonets 'as the day is not far distant when you may require them'. As usual Ranken provided the rhetorical fireworks. One long resolution he made ended with, "we are determined that while there is misery for the inmates of the cottage, there shall be no peace for the inmates of the hall". One more extract from his speech is worth giving because it brings out very clearly the inordinate capacity for self-deception of the leaders,

"it was a well-known fact that the police, the special constables, and the military were tainted with the principles of Chartism; but although these men were true, they would not forget the advance of enlightenment among the working classes, that the science of chemistry had entered the workshop and that working men would provide themselves with as deadly weapons as Warner's long range ...".^{80a}

It/

^{80a} Scotsman 14.6.1848; Shaw's 'Justiciary Cases' p.21 et seq. pp.37-38.

It seems fantastic that Ranken really believed that the Crown forces were half-Chartist and that the workers could make their own arms. Yet he was quite emphatic about it. The only other explanation pre-supposes an extremely sardonic outlook on his part, an ability deliberately to deceive his followers which would be equally (as) fantastic. The meeting ended without any serious disturbances. It had shown that the authorities were capable of very efficient action. To complete the good work there was a ^Prepetition of General Napier's tactics in 1839. Two thousand soldiers - cavalry, foot and artillery - gave impressive demonstrations of an army in action before large crowds in the Queen's Park. After this very few believed in the possibility of a successful armed rebellion through the National Guard. With the failure of the twelfth of June (although no one seemed to know what was to be accomplished) the National Guard virtually disappeared. Although it continued a nominal existence in Edinburgh for another six weeks or so, no more was heard of the Dundee, Glasgow and Aberdeen branches. Fate was kind to 'General' Mackay; there was no St. Helena (or its equivalent) for that 'staunch conservative Republican'.

The/

(d) The Clubs.

The National Guard could now be disregarded as a serious threat but there still remained the political clubs from which it drew its membership. By this time there could be little doubt that they were Irish Nationalist 'cells'. Whatever connection they had with Chartism now became very slight. Ranken and Hamilton continued to preach violence in Edinburgh but it was noticeable that the Charter increasingly faded into the background whilst Ireland became the focal point. By July this was very obvious. Ranken on the Calton Hill proclaimed that 'If the power of Great Britain was brought to bear against the people of Ireland, then the people of Scotland must endeavour to distract the attention of the Government'. Hamilton went even further, "the young and spirited men of Scotland should go to Ireland and help the Irish people".⁸¹

Considerable latitude had been allowed to the National Guard in the belief, subsequently verified, that it was 'a thing of sound and fury, signifying nothing'. The smouldering political clubs were more dangerous. Despite the set-back to the Chartist hopes, they were still growing. New members came from the ranks of the Repealers. After March 1848 the police kept a close watch over political activities in Glasgow and/

⁸¹ Shaw, op.cit. p.38.

and Edinburgh, including a certain amount of opening of private correspondence. When the speeches of the Chartist leaders showed the Irish element to be dominant, they decided to take action. This decision was hastened by the chance interception of a letter from James Cumming to James Smith, secretary to the Glasgow Chartists, giving full information of the political clubs in Edinburgh and the progress made in securing arms. There were apparently still five hundred in the National Guard which had placed an order for thirty muskets. Nearly a thousand belonged to the clubs and it was a general practice to have an arms fund. The main topics of conversation were arming, street fighting, Irish Independence - and the Charter.⁸²

Political Clubs (Edinburgh) July 1848.

| Name of Club. | Member-ship | Name of Club. | Member-ship |
|-----------------------|-------------|-------------------|-------------|
| Burns Club | 25 | Mitchell Club | 56 |
| Muir Club | 200 | Gerald Club | 26 |
| Baird and Hardie Club | 20 | Emmet Club | Not known. |
| Wallace Club | Not known | Faugh-a-Balloch | " " |
| O'Connor Club | 12 | Washington Club | 25 |
| | | William Tell Club | Not known. |

Undoubtedly/

⁸² Cumming's letter was delivered to James Smyth, writer, who lived next door to the Commission Agents for whom James Smith (Chartist) acted as Porter. Why Cummings sent it to the latter's place of employment is a mystery. Having opened it the horrified recipient took it straight to the police.

⁸² Full text and National Guard hand-bill. Appendix H.

Undoubtedly a similar state of affairs existed in Glasgow and there was a close liaison between the extremist Chartist-cum-Repealers in both cities.

At the beginning of August the police in Edinburgh arrested Grant, Ranken, Hamilton and Cumming. They searched the offices of the 'North British Express' and one issue of the paper was confiscated. Even the moderate Chartists were not ^oamitted from this sweep. Robert Cranston, on the arrest of Grant, became editor of the Chartist weekly. For this he came under police suspicion; his house was searched and he was arrested. As no evidence against him was found he was liberated only to be taken into custody two days later on the unusual charge of 'preaching sedition under the guise of temperance'.⁸³ This, too, was dropped. John Adair, the Repealer-Chartist, suffered similar treatment. The authorities were not out for mere persecution but to give a warning to the political clubs. A 'cause célèbre' was the obvious method, minor offenders could be ignored. Much publicity, then, attended the trial of the principals for conspiracy and sedition; it became known as the ominous-sounding High Treason Trial. Everybody displayed a surprising amount of sympathy for the accused and the proceedings were scrupulously fair. This stood out in strong contrast with/

⁸³ 'Through Four Reigns' op.cit. p.4.

with comparable English trials. Malice, vindictiveness and harsh sentences were the lot of those who were tried at Lancashire Assizes. At Edinburgh Lord Ardmillan addressing the jury on behalf of the Crown said, 'The prisoners had advocated universal suffrage and annual parliaments. They are entitled by all constitutional means to carry out their object. This is not a prosecution for opinion'. A middle-class jury proved equally tolerant. The charge of conspiring was "Not Proven" and Grant was declared not guilty of sedition. Ranken and Hamilton were found guilty of using 'language calculated to excite popular disaffection and resistance to authority'. Even the judges were reluctant to pronounce sentence; here is Lord Moncrieff: " ... it is with great pain that I am called upon to pronounce sentence in this case. I wish I could have been spared this pain. Undoubtedly it is very painful to move a sentence against such persons as the pannels at the Bar, who appear in other respects to have been respectable individuals ... a very mitigated case of sedition". Each received four months imprisonment with a kindly homily from the Lord Justice-Clerk not to repeat the offence.⁸⁴

So ended the Irish Phase of the Chartist movement in Scotland. Prudently the authorities had made no martyrs although/

⁸⁴ Shaw, op.cit..Proceedings Nov.9-13-18-25.. Cockburn op.cit. 20.12.1848.

although acting with great decision. Strength had been tempered with justice. The Edinburgh trial was the most important but the same fair treatment was accorded to other Chartists in Scotland. Smith, Harrower and Brown (all of Glasgow) with Neilson and Burrell (from Greenock) were fortunate in being tried north of the Border. Its leaders in prison, the Metropolitan National Guard finally dispersed and the political clubs soon followed. The Chartist 'North British Express' probably survived till the following March but its influence had gone. Chartism generally was almost dead with a recurrence of the schisms which had been the curse of the movement. If an arbitrary date had to be fixed for the end of O'Connor-type Chartism, then April 10th 1848 (the Kennington Common fiasco) would suffice for England. Admittedly certain sections of the English Chartists planned to turn the simultaneous demonstrations of June 12th into an armed revolt and even projected similar action for August 15th. Ill-organised and sporadic, these efforts were broken up piecemeal by the Government and the *de jure*, if not *de facto*, end really was in April. For Scotland the conclusion of the High Treason Trial on November 25th is eminently suitable as a terminal date for the main movement. To complete the record, however, there must also be considered that painful euthanasia lasting ten years during which various leaders tried to persuade themselves and the country that the movement was still alive.

Chapter V. "That strain again ..."

For Scotland the years following 1848 produced very much the same mixture as before. Once again a discredited official Chartism by parthenogenesis produced its own version of the Laöcoon, whilst the rôle of active reformers fell to the middle-class. Even whilst the National Guard in Scotland was rattling its imaginary sabre they discussed various projects of electoral reform. The same week that saw Jones and Adams in Edinburgh declaring they would petition no more, two hundred and twenty electors there signed a requisition calling a meeting to discuss the enfranchisement of the working class. Other topics on the agenda were proposals to reduce national expenditure and to equalise taxation. Professor Dick was chairman and in his opening speech suggested that the army could be reduced by half, since railways had made it more mobile. The main contribution to the proceedings came from that Complete Suffragist, the Rev. William Robertson, who attacked the Government for the 'Gagging Bill' and wanted representation to be 'full, fair and free'. These sentiments were approved by the meeting which also passed the following resolutions:

(a) the Queen should be asked to dismiss her present Ministers.

(b)/

(b) a petition should be sent to Parliament on the lines of the main resolutions.

(c) a People's League was to be formed comprising both middle and working classes.⁸⁵

A follow-up meeting in June decided the petition should be sent to Parliament by the Chamber of Commerce.⁸⁶ That same month in Glasgow City Hall a very similar meeting came out in favour of universal manhood suffrage and opposed class legislation. Much of this activity came from the efforts of those who had followed Sturge. More was to follow - this time inspired by the moderate reform proposals of Hume and Cobden. At this time they were suggesting that household suffrage, vote by ballot, and triennial parliaments would be an adequate first step in a reform programme. To Scotland this became the New Reform Movement and meetings were held, particularly in Fife, to support it. In fact Dunfermline, Elie and Auchtermuchty sent petitions to Lovett (a Radical Achilles sulking in his National Association Tent) to come out in support of Hume's proposals. Even Dundee, despite the counter-attractions of Mackay's Militia, heard the Chartists resolve 'to offer no obstruction to those who do not go as far as we do'.⁸⁷ Final proof/

⁸⁵ Scotsman 21.5.1848.

⁸⁶ *ibid.* 10.6.1848.

⁸⁷ *ibid.* 10.6.1848; 17.6.1848.

proof of the survival of moderate middle-class Chartism was a pamphlet issued at the end of June by the Rev. Thomas Spencer on 'Justice to the Industrious Classes against physical force Chartists'. In its readiness to accede to the points of the Charter and in abhorrence of violent methods, this might well have been written by Sturge himself.⁸⁸ The middle-class in Scotland had not lost its interest in electoral reform nor its willingness to co-operate with the moderate Chartists. To a certain extent the same was true of England and both countries supported Hume's 'Little Charter' of 1849. This was sponsored by the 'National Parliamentary and Financial Reform Association' - a body intended to bring Radical Free Traders and moderate Chartists together. A larger franchise, abolition of property qualifications for M.P.'s, and the ballot, certainly took a long step towards the Charter. However this attempt failed, as did all these early middle class proposals for modified reform.

If all this seems like mere repetition of events in 1842, what can be said of the last days of the National Charter Association? Every year a Conference was held; every year there were fresh proposals for reorganisation, new quarrels and/

⁸⁸ Scotsman 24.6.1848.

and another crop of petty jealousies. Nothing much was attempted whilst Jones and M'Donall were in prison. On their release they gradually gave a socialistic bias to the remnants of the movement. Their plans met with complications. Bron-terre O'Brien, nominally still a member of the N.C.A., started in 1850 the National Reform League with a seven-point programme. Of these the most interesting were the State buying of land for the use of the unemployed poor, state ownership of land, mines and minerals, a State system of public credit and the setting up of "public marts or stores" to replace competitive trading.⁸⁹ This out-bid anything Jones had offered up to that time. The second difficulty was the re-appearance of O'Connor. Though freed from the burden of his Land Scheme by parliamentary action, his mental instability was fast approaching madness. He pursued the familiar tactics of a recruiting tour with very indifferent results, At Glasgow he was opposed by James Adams and for two and a half hours the meeting was in chaos. O'Connor only secured a hearing when Adams was dragged from the platform by the police. Strangely enough at Paisley, the stronghold of his old adversary, Brewster, he was much more successful. A unanimous vote of confidence in him was secured despite Cochrane's intervention.

The/

⁸⁹ Cole. Chartist Portraits pp.263-4.

The local Chartists showed a most charitable spirit and expressed their approval, not so much of O'Connor as his stand against violence in 1848.⁹⁰ Soon after his tour in Scotland O'Connor introduced in Parliament yet another motion in favour of the Charter. This time there was not even a division - the House was counted out. Even after this failure he still believed in his personal influence. By calling a Conference in Manchester during January 1851 in opposition to the official annual meeting of the N.C.A. he hoped to be able to nominate his own Executive and regain control of the movement. Four localities only were represented and the attempt failed.⁹¹ Personal loyalty to O'Connor was still fairly strong but it was not strong enough to overlook his mental failings and lack of any consistent policy. One day he would advocate joining with the middle-class to secure Hume's 'Little Charter'; next day he would exhort them to have nothing to do with these 'traitors to the working class'. His other voice, the 'Northern Star', was equally pathetic, a weak and distorted echo of its former self.⁹² O'Connor continued to serve on/

90 Gammage op.cit. p.353.

91 op.cit. p.366.

92 Circulation of 'Northern Star':

| | | | |
|---|---------------|---------------|---|
| { | 1839 : 35,559 | 1842 : 12,500 | } |
| { | 1840 : 18,780 | 1843 : 9,000 | } |
| { | 1841 : 13,580 | | } |

on the Executive for some time. However in 1852 he was declared insane and died three years later. His presence in the movement after 1848 made it awkward for anyone to attempt to give it unity.

Faced with these difficulties Jones made a valiant attempt to make Chartism fit the needs of the day. He gave it a socialist bias and brought to it a little of the continental outlook of Harney and the Fraternal Democrats. Typical of this approval was his address to the Dundee Democratic Association on September 30th 1850 which ended with him putting the following Resolution to the meeting: "Resolved, that all men are brethren; that an injustice inflicted on one is a crime against all; that the atrocious cruelties perpetrated in Italy and Hungary by Marshal Haynau, constitute him the open enemy of the human race". By agreeing to this the Chartists were brought into line with all those British Socialists who were objecting to the official reception given to the Marshal on visiting England (He had played a large part in suppressing revolution in Italy and Hungary).⁹³ Certainly it was strange to see Chartists concerned over events in Europe and this phenomenon must be contrasted with the deliberate refusal to associate themselves officially with the Anti-Slavery movement.

In/

⁹³ Memoranda op.cit. p,76.

In Scotland the attitude had been 'get rid of the white slaves here by securing the Charter and then we may be able to help the American negroes'. More definite proof of Jones trying to mould Chartism to contemporary feelings was given by the programme approved by the 1851 Conference. This was the nearest approach to a Chartist renaissance achieved and the last time the Scots attended in any strength. It affords evidence of the last effective Chartist organisations in Scotland. Of those delegates prominent earlier in the movement two survivors only appeared - Graham of Dundee and Paul from Glasgow. Paisley maintained its moral force and ecclesiastical tradition by sending the Rev. A Duncanson, whilst Edinburgh was represented by an unknown, W. Pringle. Undoubtedly the Scots were attracted there by the new policy of Jones which resembled very closely Bronte~~ere~~ O'Brien's proposals in the National Reform League. There was to be another National Petition and they were to try to form a closer relationship with the Trade Unions. Land nationalisation, repudiation of the National Debt, freedom of the Press, and public maintenance of the unemployed were also included. A central feature was to be the setting up of a National Credit Fund for 'bodies of workmen associating for industrial purposes'.⁹⁴ Graham thought this last proposal savoured/

⁹⁴ Gammage pp.371-2.

savoured too much of compulsory co-operation, or even Communism, and he attacked Jones very successfully, declaring that individuals should also receive aid from such a fund. By the next year no progress had been made, as usual, in implementing this programme and no Scots were present at the N.C.A's annual Conference. Yet another attempt was made by Jones to whip up Scottish enthusiasm by a whirlwind tour of Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen and Dundee. Large audiences listened, applauded - and that was all. They liked Jones, they liked his eloquence, but not his in-between Chartism. Scottish interest in the movement dwindled to nothing and as a result Jones transferred his attentions to England, fighting three unsuccessful elections as a Chartist. The movement was hopelessly disunited. In 1858 he gave up the struggle to reconstitute Chartism and helped launch the Manhood Suffrage movement, of which he became president. It was the beginning of a new national Reform movement destined to be more successful than its predecessor.⁹⁵ With the advent of the new movement, the last traces of organised Chartism disappeared. Yet this brief account of its declining days serves only to emphasise that it really died in 1848. Scotland in particular showed little interest after that year in keeping the local associations/

⁹⁵ Cole op.cit. pp.337-357.

associations alive, although some of them did carry on a hand-to-mouth existence. The real problem is not to say exactly when Chartism ceased to exist, but why it failed and what permanent effects it had.

Chapter VI. Resurgam.

Historical post-mortems are usually inconclusive and one seeking to explain the failure of Scottish Chartism would prove to be no exception to the rule. The verdict might well be that it succumbed to a surfeit of rhetoric, pecuniary debility, or even hara-kiri, and in each case the pronouncement would be partially true. In retrospect^(ive) it does seem, however, that an unfortunate combination of circumstances killed Scottish Chartism. There were always too many other movements competing for public favour. Sometimes these rivals promised immediate benefits (of one kind or another) instead of the long-awaited post-reform advantages of Chartism. Hence the drawing power of the Anti-Corn Law League on the material level, and the Church Disruption agitation on the spiritual one. By 1848 when the League had served its purpose and partially fulfilled its promises, there were the apostles of Socialism and the industrial reformers to be considered. In addition Scotland/

Scotland had more than its fair share of local counter-attractions. Thus in 1848 when Chartist hopes and endeavours should have been at their peak, Edinburgh stirred to life over the Annuity Tax (6% levied on the occupiers of houses and warehouses to provide salaries for the Established Clergy in Edinburgh). Bailie Stott went to prison, not for his radical beliefs but for non-payment of this tax. The nearest approach in that city to a riot during the meetings of the National Assembly was when one unfortunate had his furniture sold up because he owed this same tax. Troops and police were needed to protect the auctioneer.⁹⁶ At Glasgow similar interest was shown in the action brought against two Glasgow preachers to force them to grant relief to the able-bodied poor.⁹⁷ All these matters were near at hand whilst the long-winded fulminations of both Convention and Assembly seemed far away and unreal.

To make the ordinary Chartist take a dynamic interest in a People's Parliament was beyond the power of the leaders. Even today Hansard is not popular reading matter. Failure to achieve the well-nigh impossible can be excused, but there was no excuse for the bad leadership of the early years of the movement. For Scotland a major weakness was the traditional rivalry between/

⁹⁶ Scotsman 16.8.1848, 23.8.1848, 3.7.1848.
⁹⁷ ibid. 21.7.1848.

between East and West. Good leadership might have eliminated it, but the intransigent attitudes of Fraser on the one hand and the Central Committee on the other made matters worse. Fraser and Malcolm were gifted men and if told that their mutual antipathy had a partly geographical basis, they would have been amused. To their followers it was a very real thing. Equally surprising in view of this was the commercial rivalry introduced into a movement stressing the common interests of all men. Adequate support existed to maintain one successful Chartist newspaper - the early career of the 'True Scotsman' proves that. There was no room for a second. Starting the 'Scottish Patriot' may have been an error of judgement, but once committed it perpetuated existing rivalries. Fundamentally both papers had the same outlook but local subscribers and interested parties, such as the agents selling papers on commission, tended to exaggerate small differences of opinion. In this they only imitated their leaders. One final criticism remains to be mentioned: the constant changes in the official Chartist attitude to problems of the day. Far too often policy was clouded over by personal animosities. Here again it may be that ^bby modern standards the historian expected too much of these early leaders. The hardest lesson of democracy is the subordination of extreme individualism to the workings of a communal/

communal hedonistic calculus. Therein also lied^s the greatest potential danger to democracy itself. Chartism lacked 'party discipline' - a much-abused phrase - and its leaders were not aware that to achieve the Six Points all their reservations should have been mental. In the last resort the most obvious cause for the failure of Scottish Chartism is the very motive which called the movement into existence - economic distress. Unemployment and acute poverty were never so widespread amongst the Scots artisans as to bring them solidly and continuously into the agitation. Depression affected certain occupations only and as it happened those employed in them were best fitted, psychologically, to withstand long hours, low wages and semi-starvation. Famine victims do not quibble about the bread issued for their relief. Similarly the Irish immigrants, for this and other reasons already stated, endured conditions which would have driven the native Scots to violent protest. Paradoxically the Irish gave to Scottish Chartism in 1848 its nearest approach to positive revolt, yet over the whole course of the movement acted as a damper to any united Radicalism.

Perhaps the best way of assessing the results achieved by Scottish Chartism is to trace briefly what happened to the leaders and what public opinion in later years thought of the movement. One of the most common criticisms of the Chartists, was/

was that the leaders were vapid demagogues, too lazy to work, who had taken up political agitation as an easy way of life. There were undoubtedly a few of this type but many of the Scottish leaders achieved considerable financial and social success. Some of them emigrated after the 1848 failure - notably Abram Duncan. Unfortunately not much is known of these although one at least, James M'Pherson, a Dundee flax-dresser, made an impression on his adopted country. Soon becoming the owner of a large farm in Sprindale, Wisconsin, he became in succession Postmaster, Town Clerk, Clerk of the School District, J.P. attorney, and Chairman of the Assembly District Committee.⁹⁸ How far all this resulted from his training on Chartist Committees is interesting speculation. Many other Chartists had successful careers in later life; but they rarely gave up their Radical principles. This was somewhat unusual since increasing material prosperity usually gave a Conservative tinge to the politics of the commercially successful. Two only of those prominent in the Scottish movement changed their political outlook. Hugh Craig, chairman of the first Convention, successful Kilmarnock draper, newspaper proprietor, and amateur poet, became a Tory. Perhaps the long-drawn-out dispute with his Chartist constituents over financial/

⁹⁸ Weekly News 29.4.1876.

financial matters gave him a distaste for democracy at close quarters. His defection did not harm Chartism. The second instance presents a different picture. James Myles, a Dundee mason, became a prominent Chartist speaker and participated in the disturbances of 1842, although opposed to physical force. Becoming a bookseller and publisher, his shop became a Chartist salon.⁹⁹ However literary and financial success brought about a marked change in his opinions. A series of articles he wrote for the 'Dundee Courier' in 1848 made a vicious attack on his former comrades. Later he published them in pamphlet form, a symposium of all unenlightened middle class attacks on the Six Points and a testament to his own success. A few examples suffice to show this. The main theme, complacently stated, was that 'good men do not need the aid of the Six Points to succeed'. Of the 'No Property Qualification for M.P.'s' clause, he remarks "Set a beggar on horseback and we know where he will ride to. Put your no-property men into Parliament and they will soon drive the country in the same direction". Finally a venomous outburst over the proposal to pay M.P.'s £500 a year, "We like your liberality. It is, we are now satisfied, quite a mistake to suppose you are a shabby, scrubbish set of fellows who would sweep a certain place for a farthing"/

⁹⁹ Norrie, Dundee Celebrities pp.132-3.

farthing". Attention has been directed to Craig and Myles because their change of attitude stands out in such strong contrast to the consistency of all the others. It also illustrates middle-class counter-propaganda at its worst.¹⁰⁰

Scottish Chartism avoided the odium cast on the English version of the movement. Men like Moir, Ross, Cranston, Malcolm and Fraser, to mention five, won the grudging respect of their political opponents. Time served to confirm that impression. Moir, for example, virtually gave up active Chartism in 1848 on his election to Glasgow Town Council. In that capacity he gave nearly thirty years of useful public service. Throughout he maintained his interest in reform, becoming Chairman of the Glasgow Reform Association in 1858 and President of the Scottish National Reform League nine years later. Perhaps his last work was preserving Glasgow Green as an open space, opposing successfully projects to work the coal deposits beneath it. He received an official funeral.¹⁰¹ Then there was Robert Cranston. Son of a working mason, he was first a tailor and then opened the High St. Coffee-House already mentioned as a Chartist rendezvous. In 1848, despite implication in the 'High Treason Trial', he opened the Waverley Temperance Hotel/

¹⁰⁰ Myles 'The Charter examined and considered in its "Six Points". 1848.

¹⁰¹ Marwick, Glasgow Herald 10.2.1934.

Hotel (which still exists). Significantly Louis Blanc was one of the first visitors to it. Later he started similar temperance hotels in London and Glasgow. For twenty years he served on the Town Council, during thirteen of which he sat upon the bench as a Bailie. Unlike Moir he took no further part in organised Reform movements yet he maintained his Chartist contacts. Thus in 1864 he started a fund in Scotland to help Bronterre O'Brien's widow. (He also remembered O'Brien's grand-daughter in his will.). Civic improvements and better conditions for the working class, allied with temperance zeal, were his great interest. He supported measures to provide public baths and wash-houses, contributing to this by building a model block of workers' dwellings complete with library. He, too, received a public funeral!¹⁰² Of the same breed was Malcolm M'Farlane, 'cabinet-maker by trade, social reformer by temperament'. This one-time Chartist preacher and member of the Central Committee engaged in many social campaigns - Temperance, Sabbath Observance, Building Societies to encourage thrift, Public Baths for the working class, and the legal provision of a weekly day of rest for cab-men. Later - as became a follower of Sturge - he supported the Peace and Anti-Slavery campaigns.¹⁰³

Not/

¹⁰² Through Four Reigns pp.4.5.10.11.

¹⁰³ Saunders, Scottish Democracy p.235; Logan, 'Early Heroes of the Temperance Movement' 1874.

Not only did Chartist leaders become well-known public men but those who had worked for reform were much respected. In 1858, by public ^b subscription, an imposing statue was erected at Ayr to Dr. John Taylor with an inscription to "the eloquent and unflinching advocate of the People's Charter". In the same way Robert Stiven, machine merchant in Dundee, provided a burying place for John M'Rae, former Convention member and Chartist preacher, "teacher Christian and an eminent advocate of political liberty". Appropriately enough his grave is next to that of William Thom, the Inverury ^{ie} Bard.¹⁰⁴ Even the 'Scotsman' in 1874 thought it worth while to mention the death of George Whytock, a Perth tailor and some-time follower of O'Connor, with the heading "Death of an Old Chartist". He was described as "well read in English Literature ... a most genial and obliging person".¹⁰⁵ John Fraser, a staunch reformer throughout his life, having made a very successful tour of America, bought the mansion-house of Newfield and interested himself in local affairs. In 1872 he received an Address and a hundred guineas "in recognition of his public services".¹⁰⁶ If any further proof is needed that Scots Chartism was regarded as a gallant failure surely the Old Chartist Festival held in Lamb's /

104 Old Dundee Collection : cutting June 1865.

105 Scotsman 21.2.1874.

106 Glasgow Herald 10.2.1936.

Lamb's Hotel, Dundee, in 1874 should convince.¹⁰⁷ Discredited movements seek oblivion, yet here many reputable citizens gathered together to talk over the old times.

Only in relation to this background can the results of Chartism be appraised. In one sense there can be no doubt that the movement was a complete failure. Yet in the long run nearly all its objects were secured. Certainly it was a good thing for the country as a whole that the Charter was not secured immediately. The undisciplined behaviour of the Conventions, untrained in the art of government, showed that. Valuable experience was gained even though nothing positive was achieved and it must be regarded as one of the stages in educating the ordinary man to political responsibility. Perhaps the Scottish Chartists appreciated this more than their English counterparts. Hence their strong educational bias and the moderate political programme they adopted. Knowledge of government cannot be acquired quickly. Even the middle class appreciated this educational aspect of the Scottish movement and attempted, with success, to emulate it. Henry Cockburn sardonically remarked in 1853, "For the first time since the creation of the world, a Lord Advocate has delivered a popular lecture to a popular audience. James Moncrieff

spoke/

¹⁰⁷ Old Dundee Collection : 29.1.1874.

spoke ... on the first half compared with the last half of the current century, politics and religion excluded".¹⁰⁸ Through their excellent newspapers (particularly the 'Chartist Circular') working class Chartists had some contact with literature and an opportunity to express themselves in prose and verse. (It is surprising how often they tuned their thoughts into iambs : the Chartist Muse was virile and many associations had officially-appointed Poet Laureates.) Councillor Gray, speaking at that same Old Chartist Festival, made the same point: "It [1839-1848] was a season of great intellectual activity and though it failed in its immediate objects the present prosperous condition of the working class is largely due to the impetus which it gave to the study of those political and social questions which are surely leading to the fulfilment of the programme for which the Chartists fought and suffered".¹⁰⁹ Thanks to the example of the Chartists, Scotland did not lag in the study of those same problems.

Yet the best commentary on Chartism, whether English or Scottish, came from Edward Gibbon Wakefield. Written in 1849, so accurate were his deductions that they are surely worth repeating today, "Thus far [to 1848] the education of the common/

¹⁰⁸ Cockburn op.cit. 1.4.1853.
¹⁰⁹ Dundee Collection 29.1.1874.

common people has not improved their lot; it has only made them discontented. The present points of popular education ... are Chartism and Socialism.... There is a tradesman in the Strand who was a special constable on the 10th April last [Kennington Common] and who has no doubt that Chartism and Socialism were put down for ever on that day. I mention him as an instructive foolometer, his opinion is common enough amongst very dull people.... Others know that Chartism and Socialism were not ^trampant on that day, but only a pretence of Chartist agitation by a few scatter-brained English busybodies and some Milesian-Irish settlers in Liverpool, Manchester and London. Chartism, and still more Socialism, are not yet ripe, but they are growing apace; and they present ... some fearful dangers in prospect.... [With the growth of education] Chartism and Socialism in the end will be able to disturb the peace of the country. I do not pretend that either is likely to triumph for a long while yet; ages hence, perhaps, both will have triumphed, Chartism first, then some kind of Socialism.... Chartism and Socialism will have many a struggle for the mastery ^over a limited franchise and private property and in these struggles I perceive immense dangers for everybody".¹¹⁰

After/

¹¹⁰ E.G. Wakefield. 'The Art of Colonisation', pp, 67-69.

APPENDIX A.

After that there remains little to add, but it is interesting to speculate whether the dangers Gibbon Wakefield foresaw, and which are present today, would have been so great had the educational and political programme of the Scottish Chartists been adopted by the movement as a whole.

1858 30,060.

Cotton. (1) Spinning.

| | Mills. | Spindles. |
|------|-------------------|------------|
| 1787 | 19 (water twist). | |
| 1796 | 32 " " | 512,000 |
| 1833 | 134 (steam). | 1,722,628 |
| 1856 | 152 " " | 2,041,129. |

(2) Weaving.

| | Looms. | |
|------|----------------|-----------------|
| 1791 | 15,000 (hand). | |
| 1830 | 2,000 (power) | : Hand unknown. |
| 1833 | 17,500 " " | |
| 1846 | 22,100 " " | |

Coal.

| | Total Amount. | Used at home. |
|------|---------------|---------------|
| 1851 | 580,000 | 446,000 |
| 1854 | 7,445,000 | 2,520,000 |

Shipping (Clyde-built steamers).

| | No. | Tonnage. |
|----------|-----|----------|
| 1826-30 | 32 | 2,591 |
| 1836-40 | 53 | 11,650 |
| 1846-50* | 247 | 147,604. |

*114 only of these were built of wood.

Iron.

| | Exports. | Production |
|------|----------|-------------|
| 1835 | 27 | 75,000 tons |
| 1839 | 54 | 135,500 |
| 1859 | 128 | 1,160,000 |

APPENDIX A.

Industrial Expansion in Scotland 1830-1850.

| <u>Linen.</u> | <u>Power Looms.</u> | <u>Spinning Mills.</u> |
|---------------|---------------------|------------------------|
| 1835 | 168 | 170 |
| 1850 | 2,529 | 188 |

| <u>Jute.</u> | <u>Imports in tons.</u> |
|--------------|-------------------------|
| 1838 | 1136 |
| 1848 | 8905 |
| 1858 | 30,086. |

| <u>Cotton.</u> | (1) <u>Spinning.</u> | <u>Mills.</u> | <u>Spindles.</u> |
|----------------|----------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| 1787 | | 19 (water twist). | |
| 1796 | | 39 (" ") | 312,000 |
| 1833 | | 134 (steam). | 1,728,628 |
| 1856 | | 152 (") | 2,041,129. |

| | (2) <u>Weaving.</u> | <u>Looms.</u> | |
|------|---------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| 1791 | | 15,000 (hand). | |
| 1820 | | 2,000 (power) | : hand unknown. |
| 1833 | | 17,620 (") | |
| 1845 | | 22,100 (") | |

| <u>Coal.</u> | <u>Total Amount.</u> | <u>Used at home.</u> |
|--------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| 1831 | 560,000 | 440,000 |
| 1854 | 7,448,000 | 2,520,000 |

| <u>Shipping (Clyde-built steamers).</u> | | |
|---|------------|-----------------|
| | <u>No.</u> | <u>Tonnage.</u> |
| 1826-30 | 22 | 2,591 |
| 1836-40 | 53 | 11,030 |
| 1846-52* | 247 | 147,604 |

*114 only of these were built of wood.

| <u>Iron.</u> | <u>Furnaces</u> | <u>Production</u> |
|--------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| 1835 | 29 | 75,000 tons |
| 1839 | 54 | 195,560 |
| 1869 | 128 | 1,150,000 |

Single room apartment, amidst appalling conditions, in any close of Glasgow High St. was free 42 - 21 per annum.

Source: J. Smith, 'The Causes and Cure of Pauperism and Crime'

APPENDIX B.

| I. <u>Wages trends (weekly).</u> | 1836-7 | 1841-2 | 1846 |
|----------------------------------|------------|--------|------------|
| Machine spinners (cotton). | 20/-, 35/- | 25/- | 26/- |
| Power weavers (cotton). | 6/-, 11/- | 7/- | 8/- |
| Coal miners. | 30/- | 25/- | 15/-, 20/- |
| Bricklayers. | 18/-, 21/- | 21/- | 24/- |
| Joiners. | 20/- | - | 22/- |
| Masons. | 22/- | 15/- | 22/6 |
| Hand-loom weavers. | 6/- | 6/- | 7/- |
| Railway labourers. | 14/- | - | 15/- |
| Railway Masons. | 21/- | - | 21/-, 31/- |

Sources: Handloom Weavers Commission Report 1841.
 Edinburgh Review 1837-1850.
 Files of "The Scotsman" 1838-1848.
 Statistical Account of Scotland 1845.
 High Court of Justiciary cases [Scotland] 1835-1852.
 Marwick, W.H. 'Economic Development of Victorian Scotland'.
 Handley, J.E. 'The Irish in Scotland 1798-1845'.

II. Prices in 1846.

| | <u>Normal Selling Price</u> | <u>Tommy Shop Price</u> |
|------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| Bread 4 lb loaf | 8d | 10d |
| Tea per lb. | 5/- | 8/- |
| Flour per stone | 2/10 | 3/- |
| Butter per lb. | 10d | 1/- |
| Coffee " " | 1/8 | 2/- |
| Cheese " " | 7d | 8d |
| Sugar " " | 8d | 9d |
| Beef " " | 4½d | - |
| Peas " " | 1½d | - |
| Oatmeal per boll | 14/- | - |

Sources : Select Committee on Railway Workers 1846 quoted by
 Handley op. cit. 64.
 Scotus : The Scottish Poor Laws 1870 p.101.

III. Rents 1845-6.

Single room apartment, amidst appalling conditions, in any close of Glasgow High St. was from £2 - £3 per annum.

Source : J. Smith 'The Causes and Cure of Pauperism and Crime' 1846.

APPENDIX C.

IV. Sample Budget of an immigrant labourer (wife and two children).

| | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----|-------|
| <u>Per Week</u> : | | |
| Two pecks of oatmeal at 9d per peck | 183 | 1/6 |
| Five " " potatoes at 5d " " | 154 | 2/1 |
| Milk | 154 | 1/- |
| 4 lb. loaf of bread | 154 | 6d |
| Half ounce of tea | 154 | 2d |
| Half pound of sugar | 154 | 3d |
| One pound of bacon | 154 | 6d |
| Herrings or other fish | 154 | 6d |
| Coal | 154 | 7d |
| Oil | 154 | 2d |
| Tobacco | 154 | 3d |
| Soap | 154 | 3½d |
| House rent | 154 | 1/- |
| | | <hr/> |
| | | 8/9½ |

Source : Poor Enquiry 1835 p.99; quoted by Handley op.cit. p.259.

Assessed Parishes Voluntary Parishes

| | | |
|------|-----|-----|
| 1845 | 330 | 630 |
| 1846 | 442 | 412 |
| 1847 | 555 | 382 |
| 1848 | 603 | 280 |
| 1849 | 625 | 275 |
| 1850 | 644 | 215 |

Sources : Scottus, op. cit.
 Handley, J. E., The Irish in Modern Scotland.
 Annual Reports of the Board of Supervision for the Relief of the Poor in Scotland 1845-1850.

APPENDIX C.

| | <u>Population</u> | <u>Paupers</u> (excluding dependants). |
|----------|-------------------|--|
| 1836-7 | 2,315,926 | 79,429 |
| 1845 | | 63,070 |
| 1846 | | 69,434 |
| 2 X 1847 | 3,781,316 | 85,971 |
| 1848 | | 100,961 |
| 1849 | | 106,434 |

Numbers declined after 1849.

Expenditure on relief.

| | |
|------|----------|
| 1836 | £171,042 |
| 1846 | 306,044 |
| 1847 | 435,367 |
| 1848 | 544,000 |

Provision of funds.

| | <u>Assessed Parishes</u> | <u>Voluntary Parishes</u> |
|------|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1845 | 330 | 650 |
| 1846 | 448 | 432 |
| 1847 | 558 | 322 |
| 1848 | 603 | 280 |
| 1849 | 625 | 255 |
| 1850 | 644 | 236 |

Sources : Scotus, op. cit.

Handley, J.E., The Irish in Modern Scotland
Annual Reports of the Board of Supervision for the
Relief of the Poor in Scotland 1845-1850.

APPENDIX D.

Dr. John Taylor.

Born at Newark Castle, Maybole on September 16th 1805, his father was Captain John Taylor of Blackhouse and his mother was the sister of Provost Fullarton of Ayr. Little is known of his early career but he appears to have qualified in medicine and to have been a naval surgeon. There are some grounds for believing that for a time he was a theological student at Glasgow. (The last years spent in Ireland and his eloquent preaching tend to confirm this). For a time he lived in France, taking part in a revolutionary outbreak - he talks of "using the sabre with which he had cut down the people's enemies in France". Allowing for the usual Chartist exaggeration, it does seem likely that he was involved in the disturbances centred round the assassination of the Duc de Berri. Moving as he did in Jacobin and Babouvist circles much feared by the Government of Charles X, it is not surprising that he spent his 21st birthday in a French prison and was deported a little later. The next information available is that he used a legacy of £30,000 to fit out a ship to help the Greeks in their War of Liberation.

Returning to Ayr in 1830 he had some sort of interest in a chemical works, but his activities were now mainly political.
In/

In local affairs one of his first acts was to attack, bitterly and successfully, the imposition of a charge of threepence to see the Burns Monument by one Auld, the overseer of funds. However the first election for the new Reformed Parliament found him contesting Ayr as an extreme Radical, "a Leveller". He failed and the Yeomanry were called out to stop the crowd breaking the windows of those voters who should have supported (being under obligations to the Taylor family). His opponent, Kennedy, subsequently sued him successfully for libel, and partly as a result of this Taylor was adjudged bankrupt. Characteristically he now challenged Kennedy to a duel and the court taking a poor view of this affront to an M.P., Taylor was sent to prison for two months. Despite these activities he founded and edited the 'Ayrshire Reformer and Kilmarnock Gazette'. Again in 1834 he contested Ayr unsuccessfully, his opponent this time being Lord James Stuart. At the Ayr County by-election in the following year he was going to try again but withdrew in favour of Captain Dunlop, the Whig, so as not "to throw the county into the hands of the Tories". 1836 saw him installed as co-editor, with Tait, of the 'Liberator', later taking it over as the 'New Liberator'. Putting up as a Radical candidate in the 1837 Glasgow election he was accused (justly) of 'splitting the Progressive vote'. A Radical meeting repudiated him and he was howled down when trying to reply. Finally/

Finally he left the hall under police protection and did not go to the poll. Once more he was arrested for debt, but was released through the good offices of Samuel Hunter, editor of the 'Glasgow Herald'. The Cotton Spinners trial brought him into prominence again by his firm defence of the accused men. From that time on he became immersed in the Chartist movement (see text) and was supposed to have attempted to organise a revolution after the failure of the National Holiday. (In fact O'Connor alleged that he sold commissions for the revolutionary army in the North of England). There was also Taylor's projected attempt to rescue Frost from the vessel bearing him to Australia. For this, again according to O'Connor, he bought a ship "The Black Joke" at Ayr, manned it with staunch Republicans who had been in Greece with him, and intended to capture the convict ship. At the time this plan was mooted, Taylor's health was very poor. Even the authorities realised this and charges pending against him at Carlisle were quietly dropped. He withdrew from active participation in the movement and went to the home of his brother-in-law, the Rev. James Smith, Rector of Island Magee, Larne, N. Ireland, to recuperate. Here "in the society of near and attached relatives he enjoyed tranquility, profitable study and reflection". He contemplated taking/

taking holy orders but died on December 4th 1842 and is buried in Island Magee. Posthumously a book of 'Christian Lyrics' by Taylor was published in Dublin in 1851. A few years later a handsome statue to his memory was put up, by public subscription, in the George St. (New) Cemetery, Ayr.

Sources : W.H. Marwick, op.cit..
Howie, op. cit. p.104-5.
Gammage, op.cit. p.28 et seq..
Glasgow Constitutional 29.7.1837.
Ayr Advertiser 8.12.1842.
Liberator 26.10.1836.
Northern Star 6.1.1838, 13.1.1838, 3.2.1838,
16.1.1841, 19.10.1844, 3.5.1845.
True Scotsman - references already noticed.
Scottish Patriot - " " " and
13.7.1839, 20.7.1839.

Example of Taylor's oratory on the following page.

CHARTIST PRAYER,

DELIVERED BY

DOCTOR JOHN TAYLOR,
AT DALSTON,

ON SUNDAY, THE 8TH OF DECEMBER, 1839.

ALMIGHTY and everlasting God, thou great first cause, whose word called into existence this beautiful world, whose will sustains it amid the realms of space, and whose fiat can again consign it to the Chaos from which it originally sprung; who hast created man in thine own image, endowed him with faculties capable of exquisite enjoyment, and placed him in circumstances where every thing in nature should minister to his happiness; with no law to bind him but the law of thy will, easy to be understood and delightful to follow, leading ever to happiness here, and eternal bliss hereafter: Oh Eternal God of Justice, we pray thee now to look down in compassion upon thy creatures, sunk from the high estate to which thou hadst called them, and pining in want and wretchedness through a miserable existence, to which thy loving kindness never destined any one, and to which only the institutions of wicked men in opposition to thy Holy will and Word have reduced them. Grant to us now comfort and hope from above while we engage in services of grateful devotion to thee: Be present with us according to thy promise that whenever two or three are gathered together in thy Name there thou wilt be in the midst of them, to bless them and to do them good. Overrule our words to the end that we may speak that wisdom which is not in us, and which cometh only from above, and so dispose us to speak and hear as it becomes the oracles of the Living God to be spoken and to be heard.

Teach us Great Lord that the great object of life is to learn how to depart from this scene of our earthly pilgrimage with a Patriot's hope and a Christian's confidence, and so to act in every varying scene of this transitory world, that we may neither be ashamed to live nor afraid to die, and as we shall wish we had done when that hour draws near.

Ruler of Earth and Heaven, if it be thy will let the cup of thy wrath be turned away from this unfortunate Nation: Soften the hearts and enlighten the understandings of our cruel and obdurate rulers, so that peace and comfort may once more gladden the homes of thy creatures, and time be given to them to know and appreciate thy goodness, and worship thee in Spirit and in Truth amid the songs of joyful thanksgiving for all the blessings thy liberal hand has so bountifully scattered around.

Nevertheless, O Lord, not as we will but as thou wilt; if the iniquities of our rulers are not yet full, and that the nations' guilt for having so long submitted to them requires a heavier punishment; if want and misery with death on the pale horse are to stalk triumphant through the land; if desolation is to reign over our beautiful fields, and the groans of dying mothers and the shrieks of famishing children, to be the only requiem over their murdered husbands and fathers, brothers and friends, till like a second Jerusalem all is horror: grant us patience to endure and courage to resist: enable us to meet adversity with firmness, and prosperity, if such be thy will, with calmness, so that our lives, if preserved, may be useful to our fellow creatures, or if lost in the struggle, that our deaths may be honourable to ourselves, advantageous to the Nation, and acceptable to Thee.

We commend to thy fatherly care the widows and orphans wherever they are, or whom we may be obliged to part from in defence of our Freedom, that noblest boon thou hast bestowed upon us. Our prayers are offered up not for a sect but for mankind, wherever thou hast planted a human family we desire to look on them as brothers, and confident in the honesty of our intentions and the justness of our cause, we appeal to thee our only judge, through Jesus Christ our only Saviour.

AMEN.

APPENDIX E.

Expenditure of Cotton Spinners Union 1836-1837.

| | £ | s | d |
|----------------------------------|--------|----|-----|
| To Johnstone | 999 | 10 | - 0 |
| " England | 713 | 16 | - 6 |
| ¹ Combination Laws | 360 | 0 | - 0 |
| ¹ Time Bill | 721 | 0 | - 0 |
| To Emigration | 4375 | 0 | - 0 |
| ¹ Public Question | 100 | 0 | - 0 |
| ¹ Liberator Newspaper | 978 | 0 | - 0 |
| Cabinetmakers | 180 | 0 | - 0 |
| Block Printers | 340 | 0 | - 0 |
| Duntocher Strike | 3024 | 0 | - 0 |
| ¹ Voters | 90 | 0 | - 0 |
| | <hr/> | | |
| | 11,881 | 6 | 6 |

Source : Swinton, Justiciary Cases 1835-1837, 1838-1842.

¹ May be termed political action.

APPENDIX F.

NOTE.

Scots Chartism and Economics.

When the economic ideas of the Scots Chartists are examined there is clearly very much confusion. It is, perhaps, wrong to talk of Chartist ideas on this subject. Like all democratic movements, ideas originated with a small minority and the man-in-the-street had only a garbled second-hand version of them. Yet from the tone of the Chartist press - both newspaper and pamphlet - the Scots Chartists seemed to have a fair knowledge of economic jargon and a shrewd perception of the relationship of policy to their standard of living. Many of their ideas clearly derive from Adam Smith. Conversely in some ways their attitude was almost Mercantilist - their opposition to paper money and belief in gold was almost fanatical. Over and over again the virtues of gold are stressed and the evils of paper money deplored. Here is one extract: "Paper currency turns the whole country into stock-jobbers. Gold and silver are articles of importation and if we set up a paper manufactory of money, it amounts to prevent the importation of hard money or to send it out again as fast as it comes in; and by following this practice we shall banish specie till we have none/

none left. As every yard of cloth made in the country, means a yard less to be imported, so it is with money". Gresham's Law of bad money driving out good seems the basis for this rather crude reasoning. Bank notes possessed, according to this writer, only a fictitious or nominal value, yielding a clear profit to the manufacturers of such notes. In fact paper money manufacturers being debtors to the public (the note being a "promise to pay") should pay interest to the holders of such money, as was done with Exchequer Bills. Much indignation was expressed at bankers demanding interest for the loan of paper! Again the approach is ingenuous but in direct descent are the Social Credit theorists of a later date. Finally attacking the same paper money system, John Duncan the Edinburgh Physical leader struck a familiar modern note, "Russia has no desire to meet us in the field or on the high seas, she ^{is} known _{to} a surer method of stripping us of our colonies by piece-meal.... Nicholas knows the inherent corruption of our financial system - the improbability of its maintaining itself much longer against the increased intelligence of the people and the determination to bring it to a close".

Naturally/

Naturally enough some of their ideas are almost Marxist. There is the familiar truism, "Labour is the source of all wealth - without labour there can be no production and no rent". Even the slogan 'Labour has no frontiers' is present. One writer asks 'Have the poor really a country? Does the man without property owe anything to the country where he possesses nothing?' This is not Marx or Engels, but probably the homespun Hodgekin or Bray. Considering the popularity of Harney and O'Brien with the extreme Chartists, it is indeed surprising that more of this type of theory wasn't expressed. For this the unfortunate failure of the Scottish experiments of Robert Owen and others in co-operative communities was responsible. It probably accounted, too, for the stand taken by the 'True Scotsman' against Socialist ideas. A series of articles attacked Socialism mainly on the grounds that 'incentive would be destroyed when all were supplied from a common fund'. Disparaging remarks were also made about Owen's idea that men would be rational in their behaviour in such a community. The Orbiston experiment of A. Combe was pointed out as the horrible example.

Throughout they were generally in favour of Free Trade - not only the abolition of the Corn Laws but all duties on all foodstuffs/

foodstuffs. The arguments used were those of Adam Smith with references to the numerous pamphlets issued by Cobden and the Anti-Corn Law League. Linked with this belief was a widespread desire to reduce the burden of the national debt. Here the semi-Republicans were to the fore, comparing the cost of governing Great Britain with a queen (£445,040) with the contemporary expenses of Presidential government in the U.S.A. (£12,070). No basis is ever given for these semi-statistical romances! On the same score, but on a lower level, the Teetotal Chartists made much of such items as the Queen's expenditure each year of £8,000 for wines and £6,000 on crystal. This same group was also in favour of the virtual abolition of the standing army. Implicit in all their ideas was the fear of complete devaluation of the currency and a fall in purchasing power. Inflation was present in a mild form and they feared the Government might cause a catastrophic devaluation on the best continental pattern. Their very fears drove them to appreciate one verity which would not be out of place in modern economic theory, "But it is not of over-production that we have to complain, it is of our inability ... to obtain the means requisite for a sufficient consumpt of our national manufactory". Hence/

Hence the stress placed on purchasing power and free trade. In the light of the foregoing it becomes easier to appreciate the stress placed by all Scottish Chartist educational projects on Political Economy and its definition as 'the governing of a nation in the best possible manner with the least possible expense'.

Sources : Chartist Circular 19.10.1841, 12.10.1839, 25.1.1842.
True Scotsman 2.11.1839, 24.10.1840.
True Scotsman 5.1.1839. There was also an excellent series of articles by Col. Perronet Thompson.
Files of the 'Scotsman'.

APPENDIX G.

A vivid account of the Forfar Débâcle is given in 'The Rebels' Route' by George Mudie. It paints this picture of Magdalen Green, with small boys behaving as small boys always do in crowds,

"Arrived in order on the Green,
Of order some lost notion,
Bare heads to undulate were seen,
Like billows o' the ocean
For some young imps, wi' squib and preen,
Caused such a great commotion
That lasses crushed, cuist up their een,
Like zealots in devotion,
An' scriegh'd that day."

[Of course the youngsters had to imitate their elders!]

"Wee raggit laddies barefoot ran,
Supplied wi' swords and knives,
Frae tinklers clippings o' a pan,
An' practised taking lives."

[Standing out from the leaders was the inevitable Amazon, voluble and full of advice.]

"Her mutch was loose - the snow-white bands
Out-owre her shoulders flung,
The furious action o' her hands
Gae vigour to her tongue.
She spoke opinions like commands,
So counselled auld an' young,
The captains clutched their wooden brands
And on her accents hung,
Enrapt that day."

[An unsuccessful attempt to get provisions for the 'army'.]

"At Tothill Bank auld Madge Marklaw
A most outrageous tartar,
Bawled out - 'Ye thievin scamps gae 'wa
To some mair welcome quarter!
For here I stand for right an' law
This hazel-rung my Charter;
An' he who enters first shall fa'
And be a glorious martyr
I' cause this day'."

[Finally the Amazon once more, disgusted at the leaders who persist in making speeches when the Forfar folk have provided food]

"Care I a straw for France's peers',
Quo' Meg, 'or Britain's Commons?
I'm ae days rations in arrears,
An' fain for talk o' na man's!
Still making speeches, wanting cheers?
Sic conduct's like a showman's
Faith, if we need to pu' your years
The task shall be a woman's
I swear this day'."

The writer points out the advantages of education as opposed to violence and praises Britain as still being progressive,

"Though stiff an' unco' ill to move,
She's no a dune auld grannie"

From the general tone of the verse it is clear that this was no rebellion, only hungry men seeking some way out and so the author tells,

"How Dundee rebels were subdued,
By Forfar cakes an' ale."

APPENDIX H.

I. Evidence at Edinburgh Treason Trial
about
formation of Political Clubs.

- - -

Edinburgh, July 22, 1848,
14 Duncan St. Drummond Place.

DEAR SMITH,

I am in receipt of yours of the 13th, and take the earliest opportunity of communicating the information desired. Although I might have informed you generally as to the state and spirit abroad immediately, I deferred writing until I could procure correct accounts from the members and officers of the various clubs and political bodies intending to arm. There are a great many clubs, in fact they are springing up nightly, there is a sort of club mania. The following are the names and numbers of the clubs which are increasing weekly: Mitchell Club, 56. Burn's Club, 25. Muir Club, 200. Baird and Hardie Club, 20. Gerald Club, 26. O'Connor Club, 12. Washington Club, 25. Emmet Club, I have not yet ascertained the number. Besides the Clubs there is the National Guard which numbers 500, making a total of 864 men besides the Emmet Club. The National Guard have given an order for 30 muskets with bayonets, but a great many have provided themselves with arms; those ordered are for those who pay in weekly contributions for that purpose. Some of the Clubs have purchased a few muskets at £1 each, which have been shewn at the meetings. I do not know of more than 8 as yet; but there is an arms fund in most of the Clubs, for those who are not able to purchase them at once. When the Guard are supplied with the arms ordered, I may say safely there will be a 100 armed. As to the feeling which pervades the town, it is decidedly warlike at the present time; the general topic of conversation is arming, street fighting, &c. The Irish papers, the Felon particularly, is read with avidity, and hailed with rapture and enthusiasm. Never since I took any part in the movement, which is now nearly 20 years, was there such a strong feeling of resistance to the government. In 39 I was connected a defensive means association, but the spirit evaporated before a single gun was subscribed for. It is very different now. The desire to procure and possess arms is gaining strength every day; whether they would fight or not it is difficult to answer. I know that an Edinburgh mob generally fly if they are attacked; but having arms and some idea how to make use of them inspire confidence. I shall be glad to hear how matters stand in Liverpool and Glasgow as soon as convenient. In the meantime,

I am, Dear Sir,

Your's sincerely,

J. CUMMING.

II. Evidence at Edinburgh Treason Trial
on
the National Guard.

— — — —

‘ NATIONAL GUARD.

‘ A Nation to be free, requires but Arms and a knowledge of
‘ their use.’

‘ A Public Meeting of the NATIONAL GUARD will be held in the
‘ Trades’ Hall, Infirmary Street, on Wednesday, June 28, 1848, For
‘ the transaction of important business. Doors open at Eight, Chair
‘ to be taken at Half-past Eight. The various Clubs are respectfully
‘ invited to attend. An opportunity will be given to those desirous of
‘ joining.

“ It is the duty of all men to have arms.”—FORTESCUE.

“ It is the right and duty of all Freemen to have Arms of De
fence and Peace.”—BRACON.

“ I request you to take care that the people be well Armed and
in readiness upon all occasions.”—QUEEN ELIZABETH.

“ To attack the lowest among the people is to attack the whole
people.”—DE LOLME.

“ He is a fool who knows not that Swords were given to men
that none might be Slaves but such as know not how to use
them.”—ALGERNON SIDNEY.

‘ One Penny will be charged at the Door to defray expenses.

‘ ALEX. ELDER, Printer, 243 High Street.’

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