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ABSTRACT

'Political and Industrial Crisis: The Experience
of the Tyne and Wear Pitmen, 1831-1832.'

David Ridley

Ph.D History, 1994.

The coalfield of North East England was at the forefront of the industrial revolution in the early nineteenth century, in terms of both technological expertise and managerial experience in business practice. Labour relations were a source of intermittent conflict, and the conjunction of industrial unrest at the collieries, a major cholera epidemic, and the parliamentary reform campaign of 1831-1832, brought an unusual crisis.

Prompted by economic deterioration, a new Tyne and Wear pitmen's union, known after its chairman as 'Hepburn's Union', conducted a successful coal strike in the summer of 1831. But as the pitmen consolidated their victory, the House of Lords' rejection in October 1831 of a second parliamentary Reform Bill caused a major outcry, and locally raised the profile of the 'Northern Political Union', a Newcastle-based pressure group embracing all shades of pro-reform opinion. Many local pitmen gave demonstrable support to the NPU, not least at its May 1832 reform meeting in Newcastle.

Meanwhile however, the previously complacent coal owners had consciously set out to destroy the pitmen's union, and after establishing an indemnity fund, provoked the pitmen into strike action in April 1832. The resultant dispute was marked by evictions, the recruitment of outside labour, and by violence and even murder: but with state support from the army, navy, and magistrates, and financial and moral support from local bankers and newspapers, by mid-September 1832 the pitmen's resistance was broken.

Along with their leaders' interest in attempts to form general industrial unions, the pitmen's support for parliamentary reform during 1831-1832 suggests the political and industrial aspects of their behaviour were not mutually exclusive, but overlapping and complementary. And though ultimately defeated, Hepburn's Union was most significant in that it became a model for subsequent pitmen's unions.

'Political and Industrial Crisis: The Experience
of the Tyne and Wear Pitmen, 1831-32.'

Postgraduate thesis submitted by David Ridley
as part of the Examination for
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Department of History in the
University of Durham, 1994.



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TABLE OF CONTENTS.

MAP A - The Northern Coalfield: Nineteenth Century Development.....	iii
MAP B - Plan of the Coal Districts on the Rivers Tyne and Wear, 1826.....	iv
GLOSSARY OF TERMS.....	v
INTRODUCTION.....	1
Colliery Ownership and Management.....	5
The Coal Owners' Cartel.....	12
Industrial Relations in the Early Nineteenth Century.....	14
Trade Unions and Popular Radical Politics.....	23
CHAPTER 1: THE PITMEN'S STRIKE OF 1831	
Union Grievances and the Public Discourse.....	35
The Strike Underway.....	46
Abortive Negotiations.....	52
End of the Strike.....	62
Aftermath and Reactions.....	66
CHAPTER 2: POLITICAL AND SOCIAL FACTORS AFFECTING	
THE NORTH EAST COALFIELD IN 1831.....	80
Coalfield Unions outside North East England.....	81
The Northern Political Union and the October Reform Crisis.....	85
Cholera.....	97
CHAPTER 3: THE 'UNEASY TRUCE' OF WINTER 1831-1832.....	117
Disputes at Callerton and Coxlodge.....	118
The Waldrige Riot.....	125
The Coal Trade Indemnity Fund.....	127
The Public Debate.....	136
CHAPTER 4: THE 1832 BINDINGS AND STRIKE.....	160
Binding Problems at Hetton.....	166
Evictions.....	171
The Hetton Murder.....	177
The Riot at Friars' Goose.....	180
The Coal Trade Response.....	184
CHAPTER 5: THE PITMEN, THE NORTHERN POLITICAL UNION,	
AND THE REFORM CRISIS IN NEWCASTLE, MAY 1832.....	205

CHAPTER 6: 'A TENUOUS UNITY': THE COAL TRADE AND

/THE STRAINS OF ANTI-UNION ATTRITION, SUMMER 1832

Prolongation of the Dispute.....	237
Police Measures.....	250
Melbourne's Rebuke.....	256

CHAPTER 7: THE SUMMER ASSIZES AND END OF THE STRIKE

The Pitmen's Trials.....	282
Jobling's Example.....	290
Deterioration of the Union's Position.....	294
Union Resistance Ends.....	306

EPILOGUE AND CONCLUSION

The Union and 'the pitmen's magazine'.....	323
The Owners' Regulation and Indemnity Fund.....	326
Post-defeat Union Resistance.....	328
In Retrospect: The Political and Industrial Experience of the Tyne and Wear Pitmen, 1831-1832.....	332

APPENDIX ONE: *Rules and Regulations of the Coal Miners'*

<i>Friendly Society in the Counties of Northumberland and Durham, Established June 4, 1831.....</i>	342
---	-----

APPENDIX TWO: *An Account of the Receipts and Expenditure
of the Collieries Belonging to the Pitmen's Union,
May 27, 1831 to June 23, 1832.....*

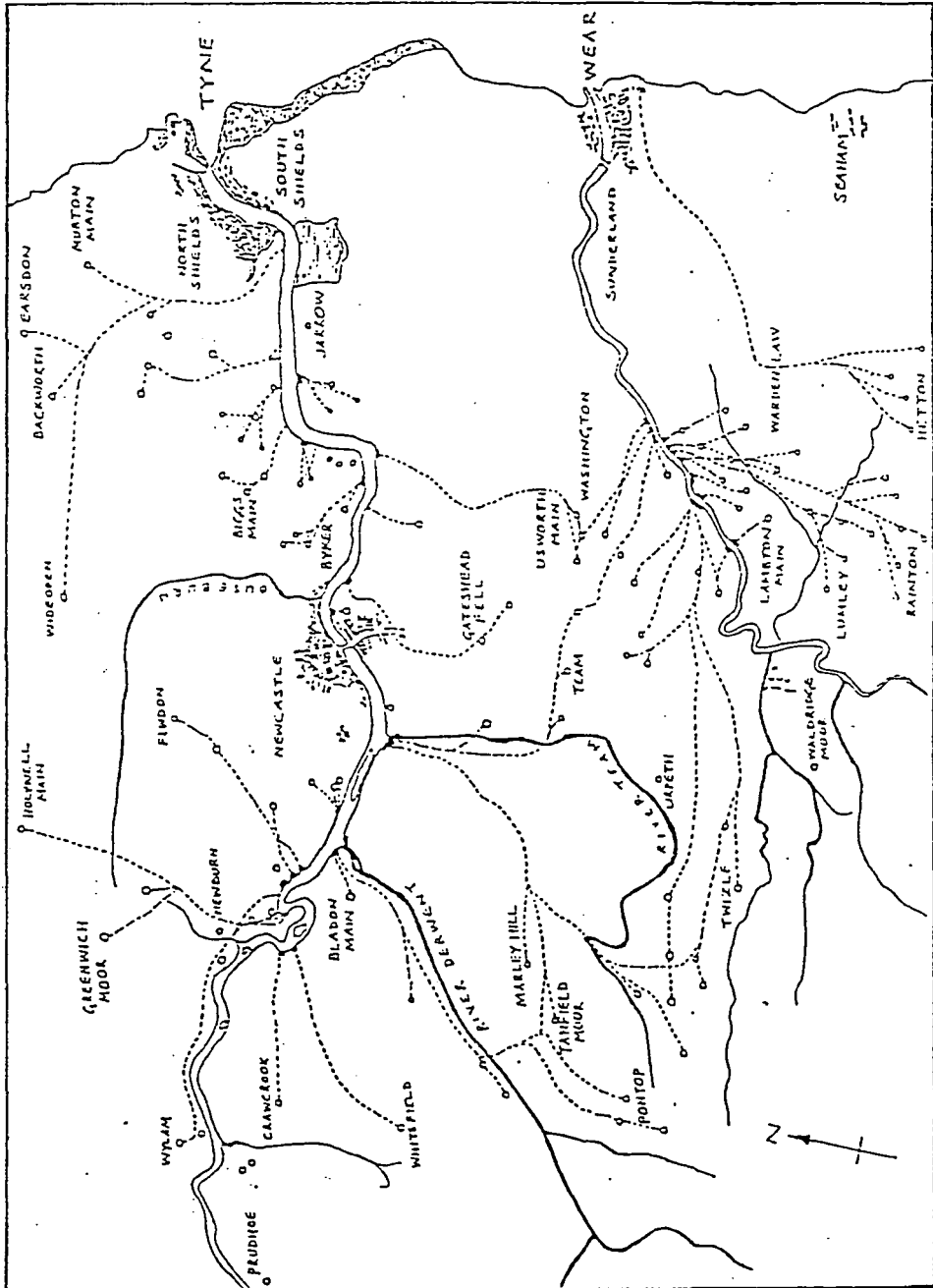
	348
--	-----

APPENDIX THREE: *Scale of Prices for putting 1 Score, or
21 Corfs of Coals, in the Wear Collieries, in the Years
1815, 1829, 1830, and 1831, showing also the Ground
travelled by the Putter to earn the Sums specified at
different Renks, in Miles and Yards.....*

	349
--	-----

BIBLIOGRAPHY.....350

MAP B - Plan of the Coal Districts on the Rivers
Tyne and Wear, 1826.



(Sketched from the original plan by R. Pellington of Wallsend, held by Newcastle Central Library.)

GLOSSARY OF TERMS.

- base* - the estimate of annual production from which the coal owners' cartel calculated the regulation of the market
- bindings* - the pitmen's annual hiring period, typically late March to early April
- bond* - the pitmen's annual contract of employment
- cavil* - a pitman's underground coalface workplace, established by the three-monthly drawing of lots known as cavilling
- chaldron* - a unit of coal measure, which in a 'Newcastle chaldron' amounted to approximately 53 cwt, and in a 'London chaldron' approximately 28 cwt.
- Coal Trade, Limitation, Vend, or Regulation* - names used to describe the coal owners' cartel
- corf* or *corve* - a hazel-rod basket in which coal was transported from the coalface to the surface
- deputies* - minor colliery officials promoted from the ranks of the pitmen, responsible for underground safety
- drivers* - boys who drove the horses which pulled corves along the main underground roadways to the shaft
- fitters* - brokers at the ports who sold the coal on to shippers
- issues* - the fortnightly output for each colliery, decided by the owners' cartel
- keeper* - the official in charge at the pit-head
- overmen* - colliery officials similar to the deputies, responsible for underground workings
- overs* and *shorts* - the over- and under-production of coal, relative to each colliery's allotted fortnightly issues
- putters* - boys and youths up to the age of about twenty-one, who heaved corves of coal from the coalface to the main underground roadways
- rolley way* - main underground roadway
- score* - a number of corves, usually twenty or twenty-one, from which the hewers' and putters' wages were calculated
- small coal* - coal broken into small pieces during hewing or transportation to the surface, which was discarded underground or on surface heaps, or sold off cheaply
- trappers* - boys as young as four or five who were employed to open and

close doors in underground roadways, thus regulating underground ventilation currents whilst facilitating the passage of coal to the shaft

viewer - manager of a colliery or group of collieries, often with associated under-viewers.

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INTRODUCTION

North East England was a border region until the early modern period, far removed from the nation's main centres of wealth and power. The majority of the population lived in small or moderate sized communities, orientated almost exclusively to local rather than national interests. Then as now Newcastle upon Tyne was the provincial capital and the local aristocracy exercised considerable influence which meant in county politics for example that during the early nineteenth century Northumberland was a largely Tory county, and Durham largely Whig. Propertied minorities dominated almost all economic, social, and political institutions by a mixture of official and unofficial influences and patronage of which the latter was the most important factor.

An unprecedented population growth accompanied a quickening of the process of economic development in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Though society remained predominantly rural and agricultural up to the 1850s, from the 1760s it was gradually expanding into a more industrialized and urbanized form, and the North East became a major centre of sustained economic growth and development during this period. The shipbuilding, iron and steel, engineering, glass, and chemical industries all increased considerably in size and scale, but their growth in turn owed much to the development of the Great Northern Coalfield. The adaptation to mining purposes of inventions like steam pumping engines were early regarded as 'the perfection of coalery', and capital investment and technological advances ensured that the coalfield enjoyed a reputation for expertise throughout the mining world.¹ The role of the coal industry was central to the development of the region's



economy, and as an extensive, elaborate and highly labour intensive industry, it necessarily employed a large workforce.

General histories such as McCord's *North East England* and economic works like Sturges' *Great Age of Industry* give an outline of the growth of the North East region during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries,² but it is with one particular product of this growth that this study is concerned. For the industrialised form of society which arose during this period inevitably brought with it problems of social organisation, not least in the workplace, and occasional breakdowns in relations between management and workers. Such breakdowns manifested themselves in the shape of strikes, and it was amongst the workers in the region's biggest industry, that of coal extraction, that such episodes often took on a particularly sharp character. It is the sometimes conflicting interests of this group of workers with their employers which forms the subject of this study, in an attempt to provide a more definitive study of the pitmen's strikes of 1831 and 1832, than the older and more general histories of the coalfield have been able to deliver.³

During recent years a number of new studies relating to the coal industry of Northumberland and Durham in the early nineteenth century have emerged. Christine Hiskey's thesis on the region's pre-eminent mining engineer, John Buddle, was the first of these to appear in 1978, followed by James Jaffe's 1984 study of economy and community in the Durham coalfield before 1840, which was succeeded in 1985 by Carol Jones' thesis of similar scope on industrial relations in the coalfield between 1825 and 1845, whilst 1984 and 1986 saw the publication of volumes II and III of the National Coal Board's ambitious attempt to provide a comprehensive *History of the British Coal Industry*, by Michael Flinn and Roy Church respectively. More recently came the appearance of

Robert Colls' work on the region's pitmen between 1790 and 1850, and finally in this brief survey a business study of one the coalfield's most important enterprises has emerged in the shape of J.D. Banham's thesis on Arthur Mowbray and the Hetton Coal Company.⁴

The consequent advance in our understanding of the region's coal industry during the early nineteenth century should therefore be complemented by a re-assessment of the disputes of 1831 and 1832, which have not received any historian's undivided attention since W.H. Johnson's thesis more than thirty years ago.⁵ Though Jaffe, Jones and Colls have all examined these disputes during the last decade, their studies have formed part of more general works and scarcely look beyond the industrial context of the disputes: this thesis seeks to provide a far more definitive and comprehensive account of the dispute by relating the pitmen's union where appropriate to attempts at general union taking place in the wider trades union movement, and also to the political movements accompanying the parliamentary reform crisis which paralleled the dispute. Some previously uncited original material is explored here but if any further justification were needed for this study it is that W.H. Johnson's 1959 Durham University MA thesis on the subject is now apparently unobtainable, and as such is lost to posterity.⁶

At this stage it is perhaps important to point out that the narrative form has been consciously chosen here as the best means of providing a clear account of the pitmen's experience of 1831-1832. Almost by definition this has meant the inclusion of much exhaustive detail, but this is considered justifiable here as indispensable to the provision of a full and accurate account of a thus far largely untold episode of British history. A sequence of progressive stages, beginning with the union's stunning victory in 1831, the October 1831 reform

crisis, and subsequently the onset of cholera in the coalfield, the owners' provocation of the 1832 dispute, the May 1832 reform crisis, and the disorder, criminal trials and importation of non-union labour which prefigured the union's defeat, are considered in succession as necessary preliminaries to one another. This chronological development lends clarity to the illustration of the ongoing frictions within and between the two sides, and how they coped as the sometimes parallel and sometimes alternating political and industrial crises evolved. As to the pitmen, this process explains for example how they came to be prominent in protests for parliamentary reform in the region, whilst on the owners' side revealing interconnections between their Coal Trade organisation and the various state, civil and legal authorities, as well as their business and social links with institutions such as the banks and newspapers.

It is appreciated here that the narrative construction as a means of historical discourse attracts criticism from historians such as White, who complain that narrative history is not genuinely explanatory in that it falsifies and distorts historical truth by the imposition of the practitioner's ideological sympathies upon the subject matter. This is particularly held to be the case for studies such as this one which deal with 'popular' history or 'history from below', concerned with the experience and lives of the 'ordinary' folk of the 'lower orders'. It would seem to this student however that all modes of discourse, narrative, thematic, or otherwise, are open to ideological imposition, and that what is crucial in this respect is not the mode of discourse adopted but the exercise of personal responsibility by the historian to avoid such imposition. Note is nevertheless taken of the above criticisms, but Norman's simple retort that contrary to White et al, narratives 'evidently do explain', is the position taken here. A good

narrative should be no impediment to a thorough or objective exposition of events. Aside from philosophical considerations however it simply seems, as pointed out above, that in this case the narrative style commends itself as the most appropriate and useful way of explaining the experience and significance of the pitmen's struggles of 1831 and 1832.⁷

Given the wealth of material embodied in the cited recent studies on the general economy and operation of the Northumberland and Durham coal industry during this period, it seems unnecessary to reproduce such work in this brief introduction: nor is it proposed here to enter into the bewildering and labyrinthine complexities of trade practices or the myriad details of colliery ownership. Instead it is merely intended to provide a brief summary outlining the principle features of contemporary colliery ownership and management: the *modus operandus* of the coal trade: and in order to establish the immediate background to the disputes of 1831 and 1832, industrial relations in the coalfield up to 1830, and a description of the popular working class political culture of the period.

Colliery Ownership and Management.

Carol Jones' thesis in particular has gone into considerable detail on colliery ownership, following on from the example of the Benwell Community Project on the same topic in west Newcastle.⁸ Roy Sturgess too provides valuable insights into patterns of colliery ownership during this period,⁹ and such findings will be cited where appropriate, but the main purpose of this section is to introduce some of the figures most pertinent to the 1831-1832 disputes, and by definition therefore dwells upon some of the most prominent amongst the coal owners.

Coal owners were drawn from 'a wide spectrum of middle class and aristocratic society', including 'sections of the urban business and professional classes... local gentry and farmers, and... speculators in London and elsewhere'. Owners accordingly varied according to stature and background, but broadly speaking fell into three general categories; Tyne owners were usually people with a background in industry, finance and trade; investors in the east Durham collieries were usually from a landed background; and other non-landed investors were often colliery viewers and others in coal-related industries such as shipping, whom Sturges explains had access to colliery business intelligence.¹⁰

Amongst the leading aristocratic owners in the two counties was John George Lambton, first Earl of Durham, son-in-law of Charles, second Earl Grey of Howick, Northumberland, Prime Minister during the reform crisis of the early 1830s. Durham was Lord Privy Seal in Grey's reform ministries, and indeed it is said that he 'has a strong claim to be considered the decade's most important radical politician... in 1834 for instance, we find him campaigning vigorously for the secret ballot, a vote for every householder and a general election at least every three years'.¹¹ There is conflicting evidence however for the Earl's reputation as a major coalowner on the River Wear: Professor McCord describes him as 'an intransigent employer with no real understanding of the pitmen in his collieries', whereas one biographer emphasizes his qualities as a paternalistic employer. The latter account is admittedly uncritical, but the fact that the Lambton Collieries Association, a benefit society set up by the Earl for his men in 1833, endured until 1927 goes some way to mitigate this. As is often the case, there was probably some truth in both sides of the story.¹²

Hugh Percy, third Duke of Northumberland, owner of the largest landed estate in the region, was Lord Lieutenant of Northumberland, a

former Viceroy of Ireland, and a stout Tory who preferred to spend his time at his Alnwick seat rather than in fashionable London circles. He was 'strongly opposed to parliamentary reform' and 'does not appear to have been popular in Northumberland' as he 'made continued encroachments on common rights'. His coalmining interests were not of the order of those of Lord Durham, and indeed (according to Carol Jones) he had ceased to directly operate his collieries in the early nineteenth century:¹³ he did however retain the mineral agent Hugh Taylor, which suggests he enjoyed at least a rentier income from mines on his estates.¹⁴ Nor could he afford not to retain an interest in the welfare of the coal trade as Lord Lieutenant, and his consequent duty of keeping the peace in times of dispute. In this respect he was frequently in contact with Archibald Reed, the Mayor of Newcastle during both of the troublesome years of 1831 and 1832.¹⁵

But the most controversial of the region's aristocratic grandees was Charles William Stewart, third Marquis of Londonderry (1778-1854). By his marriage to Frances Anne Vane-Tempest in 1819 he succeeded to large estates in County Durham, which marked the beginning of a 'continuous rivalry' with the Earl of Durham not only in commerce but also in politics, for whereas Durham was an ardent reformer, Londonderry was an equally ardent Tory and anti-reformer. A 'stubborn individualist', Londonderry was a paternalistic employer whose men 'were treated well so long as they kept their station in society': he was also a notoriously impatient man, but whereas this might be a handicap to others, in commerce this trait 'allowed him to aim higher and achieve more than a more prudent man', and by the time of his death in 1854 his annual income from coal and ancillary activities had given him 'a degree of dependence upon industry which was probably experienced by no other

wealthy peer during his lifetime'.¹⁶ His extravagance also contributed to his heavy dependence on this income.

By the early 1830s the trade was dominated by a small number of leading collieries, which numbered around six in the older and contracting River Tyne district, and three heavily-capitalised concerns on the expanding River Wear. Colliery ownership tended increasingly towards partnerships and away from traditional family ownership. Of the latter category, the Brandlings of Felling and Gosforth were the most prominent and well-connected family, with 'extensive' collieries at North and South Shields, Manor Wallsend, Coxlodge, Gosforth, and Middleton near Leeds.¹⁷ Of the four brothers, Robert William was chairman of the coal owners' association, Charles John had been a Tory MP for Newcastle, John was a Sheriff and Mayor of Newcastle, and the longest surviving, Ralph Henry, was an Anglican clergyman.¹⁸ They were notorious however for the bad relations which developed with their workforce, and a measure of this unpopularity was the satisfaction taken by older pitmen who outlived the four heirless brothers, at the breaking up of their estates.¹⁹

The Lambs were also significant figures on the Tyne, though with holdings on only a relatively modest scale. So too was the Newcastle barrister, reformer, and Whig party spokesman James Losh. In partnership with his brothers John, William, and George, who had varied industrial holdings, James Losh had an interest in Woodside Colliery in Northumberland and Tyne Main at Gateshead.²⁰ Whilst his brothers were industrialists, James seems to have been more interested in the political side of the Coal Trade, and as such held the position of chairman of the coal owners' executive committee. Through this medium the name of James Losh, along with Robert William Brandling, became synonymous with the coal owners' association, and during the colliery

disputes of 1831 and 1832 he was a loud opponent of the pitmen's union. The 'Grand Alliance' of Lords Strathmore, Ravensworth, and Wharnccliffe was a long-established aristocratic partnership, also on the Tyne, and Wharnccliffe especially proved a most vocal representative of the owners' interests in the House of Lords.

In the Wear district, Lords Londonderry and Durham were the major owners, along with the Hetton Coal Company, which was the best example of one of the new partnerships and has been described as comprising 'an especially contentious group of investors'.²¹ In 1843, Londonderry and Durham's colliery holdings were each valued at more than half a million pounds, but Hetton had reached this level more than a decade earlier in 1832, and according to Flinn was probably 'the largest colliery in the country'.²² It was estimated in 1829 by the leading colliery agent John Buddle that 'the Tyne collieries represented a capital investment of one and a half million pounds, and those of the Wear, six to seven hundred thousand pounds':²³ in the light of Hetton's half-million pound valuation only three years later, even this may be an under-estimate.

The Dean and Chapter of the Cathedral of Durham was a major local landowner enjoying considerable royalty income from leasing mining rights to speculators, but did not itself conduct mining operations. The economic power it accrued from its coal-rich properties however was put into sharp focus by William Cobbett, a veteran radical reformer, on a visit to the region in autumn 1832:

...This Dean and Chapter are the *Lord of the Lords*. Londonderry, with all his huffing and strutting, is but a tenant of the Dean and Chapter of Durham, who souse him so often with their *finer* that it is said that he has had to pay them more than a hundred thousand pounds within the last ten or twelve years...²⁴

The colliery managers, known as agents or viewers, were 'a group of confident, well-paid men... they comprised a technocratic elite as exclusive as that of the aristocratic colliery owners'.²⁵ In terms of

mining engineering the viewers were not simply highly competent: their combined expertise was one of the main reasons for the pre-eminence enjoyed by the coalfield during this period. Dr. James Mitchell for example, a government commissioner enquiring into the Durham coalfield in 1842, described the viewers as men 'of great talents and knowledge of engineering', and the Fourth Report from the Commissioner appointed under the Coal Mines Act of 1842 considered that

...the district where the greatest skill and science is applied to the management of collieries, and to providing for the safety of the people working in them, is the coalfield of Northumberland and Durham. The managers or "viewers"... combine a complete practical with much scientific knowledge...²⁶

Lord Londonderry believed his viewers to be 'the ablest and most scientific viewers and practical men in the trade', and even Martin Jude, a pitmen's leader of the 1840s, when asked by a House of Commons Select Committee in 1853 on Accidents in Coal Mines if he knew of any class of men in mining in Britain who were superior 'in intelligence and experience' to the viewers of the Northumberland and Durham coalfield, had to concede, 'I do not'.²⁷ Pollard has concluded that they were the 'fountainhead of managerial and engineering talent', and 'the first true professional class of skilled managers'.²⁸

Viewers varied in professional stature but notable names in the early nineteenth century were those of Nicholas Wood of Killingworth; Hugh Taylor, mineral agent to the Duke of Northumberland; and Henry Morton, viewer to the Earl of Durham's collieries. Matthias Dunn was acquiring a growing reputation not only as a viewer but also for his writings on the subject:²⁹ he was eventually appointed to the position of official government Mines Inspector, but by far the most prominent and renowned of the viewers was the Marquis of Londonderry's colliery agent, John Buddle, as Dr. Sturgess explains:

...Buddle was the doyen amongst colliery engineers and managers and a figure of great stature on Tyneside. When the Duke of

Wellington visited Lord Londonderry in 1826 he was shown around a colliery by Buddle and visited Buddle in his home at Penshaw. Besides acting as viewer to a number of colliery owners in the region and carrying specialist consultancy work for others, he was a shareholder in a number of collieries and ships, secretary to the Tyne Coalowners' Association for about forty years, patron of scientific societies, member of the local King and Constitution Club and witness before parliamentary enquiries. His Whiggish sympathies were tolerated by the arch-Tory Lord Londonderry, at whose collieries Buddle was the chief viewer... Buddle was reputed to have left £150,000 in his will...³⁰

It is evident from this that Buddle might equally well have been described as a coal owner, but a description of his interests is included here to show what the best viewers might achieve, and because it was as a coal viewer that Buddle earned his reputation.

But the viewers also had their critics. One anonymous writer in 1843 complained of them that there was

...much mystery and humbug thrown over the performance of the craft call'd viewers - they all depend on the under viewers and engineers - indeed, what is called a head viewer contrives to obtain so many appointments, that he can never be intimately acquainted with the minutiae of any concern he pretends to manage - 'twas so, even with the indefatigable Buddle...³¹

On the same theme, when viewers bought shares in colliery companies they often retained the post of viewer to one of them, 'a practice which was increasingly condemned by lawyers and other shareholders because of the risk of partiality being shown and of the access which the viewer/owners had to colliery revenues'.³² And another aspect of colliery management was that of the handling of the labour force, in which respect the pitmen complained of

...the insolent and contemptuous manner, in which we are generally treated by the agents, and men in office. We are absolutely treated, when we complain of anything, as if we were devoid of all feeling as men... every pains is taken to protect the interests of the masters, but the men are unprotected, and often very fraudulently treated...³³

Thus, whilst there can be no doubting the acknowledged technical skill and expertise of the North East colliery viewers, there were aspects to their character which stained an otherwise worthy reputation.

The Coal Owners' Cartel.

The tendency towards rapid self-aggrandizement by maximising the yield from their investments was not confined to viewers however, and notwithstanding petty jealousies and disagreements, with this object in mind the owners were united enough to operate a cartel to maximise coal prices. According to Pollard, from about the final third of the eighteenth century onwards, 'the northern coal-mines could be said to have become large industrial units of a recognisably modern type', and it was as a consequence of such developments that the 'Limitation of the Vend' came into existence, functioning from around 1771 until its demise in the 1840s, with only a few short breaks in between.³⁴ Owners' organisations were common to 'all coalfields [as] the employers reinforced their individual strength by joining together to counteract the growing power of the men'.³⁵ 1830 for example saw the formation of the West Yorkshire Colliery Owners' Association, and long before this similar organisations had arisen in the South Wales coalfield, as too in South Derbyshire, the Firth of Forth and Lothians, the Black Country, and the Erewash district of Nottinghamshire.³⁶

The subject of the Northumberland and Durham owners' cartel has been to some degree addressed in general histories of the industry by Galloway, Ashton and Sykes, Nef, and more recently by Buxton.³⁷ However, the great ground-breaking account of the owners' cartel in Northumberland and Durham remains that of the American Marxist economic historian Paul Sweezy, published more than half a century ago in 1938.³⁸ More recent works by Cromar, Hausman and Jaffe have modified and developed Sweezy's arguments, and though Jaffe has challenged some of Sweezy's assumptions he nevertheless finds his work 'particularly

compelling', and there is consequently little disagreement as to the functioning and effects of the cartel.³⁹

According to Pollard the expansion of coalmining in Britain 'preceded, as well as accompanied industrialisation; it was clearly a precondition as well as a beneficiary and accelerating factor once the industrial process had begun'.⁴⁰ It was against this dynamic background that the cartel came into existence, its prime purpose being 'the use of monopoly power to maximise profits, and the means of raising profits were to be the restriction of output, the elimination of price competition, and the control, so far as possible, of labour costs'.⁴¹ Each colliery was allocated a level of production according to its size, which varied greatly from the small drift mines and other landsale workings employing only a handful of men and producing for the local domestic market, most of which Leifchild said were too small to be admitted to the cartel:⁴² to the large seasale collieries, some of which employed over 1000 men and were so called because most of their coal was shipped, mainly from the Rivers Tyne and Wear, to London and other coastal and continental markets. The agreed annual sales projections were broken down after scrutiny of the latest news of actual sales and prices from the London market, to determine the fortnightly or monthly tonnages of coal to be released by each colliery, which if executed according to plan should maintain or increase prices. As a theory this was fine but Jaffe has recently pointed out that in practice the cartel could influence prices

...only ineffectively and only in the short-term. The cartel itself suffered from irresolvable conflicts of scale between the fewer and more-heavily capitalized Wear collieries and the smaller and more numerous Tyne firms. Potentially, the cartel offered stable prices and a secured portion of the market to all participants. However, to the largest producers the limits of their allotments easily could become shackles. The large Wear concerns were determined to maintain and even to extend their superiority in the trade. At times that entailed forcing the entire trade into open competition. It was at these times that

production rose and prices fell, and even the reorganisation of the cartel could not significantly revive the prices at market...⁴³

Pollard concludes that the 'Limitation of the Vend' was capable 'when fully operational, of raising the price of coal in London by a couple of shillings per chaldron at most', and that though the cartel was capable of exerting market power, its impact was limited.⁴⁴ Jaffe however goes somewhat further to claim that the occasional breakdowns of the cartel produced falls in price and thus profitability: it therefore follows that if the owners could then only boost profits by reducing working costs, that the breakdown of the vend between January 1828 and August 1829 may have brought a downward pressure to bear on the pitmen's wages, which could have been in some degree responsible for the labour troubles of the next two or three years. Indeed, the cartel's preoccupation with the supply and demand of the market as determined by the growth in coal production and the opening of new collieries, meant much time and effort was devoted to attempts to regulate and manipulate the labour supply: which point conveniently brings us to what Sweezy described as the cartel's most important secondary goal, which was to organise the owners in a united front against the claims of their workforce.⁴⁵

Industrial Relations in the early Nineteenth Century.

In so far as class terminology is appropriate in this period, the pitmen formed a working class group which was in practice much more complex than this label suggests. There were marked variations in status and attitudes, and numerous gradations in the colliery workforce according to function, with the coalface worker, the hewer, taking the prime position as the aristocrat of pit labour. 'Aristocrat' was not

however an epithet applicable to the men's behaviour in the pit villages, where the rough culture of drinking, gambling, and sport coexisted with the devout Primitive Methodism of a layer of the pitmen. All in all, a diversity and complexity of behaviour was common to all social levels, none of which, not even the coal owners, were always united or cohesive in attitude and behaviour.

The growth in the coalfield meant there was a steady demand for labour, and pitmen consequently enjoyed higher wage levels than other workers, so much so that by the end of the eighteenth century a shortage of labour had forced owners to offer extraordinarily favourable terms to their workforce. This cultivated the idea amongst the pitmen that the coal owners were somehow benign, paternalistic employers, personally concerned for the welfare of their men, and the consequent belief that relations between them and their employers were based on mutual respect. Several historians have echoed this view, explaining disputes as a product of the breakdown of these relations, but Jones has proposed that no such understanding ever existed on the owners' side, and that the industrial strife which increasingly came to characterise the coal trade during the nineteenth century was a product of the owners' efforts to reassert their rights of management and reduce wages. This was manifested not least by attempts to create a surplus of labour, and Jones' summary of this process and the industrial disputes which it brought convincingly bears out her theory.⁴⁶

In the years after what Pollard describes as the 'first large-scale pitmen's strike' in 1765,⁴⁷ circumstances had conspired to cause a labour shortage in the coalfield which was so pronounced by the turn of the century that to induce pitmen to commit themselves to one employer for a whole year, some owners were paying annual binding money of as much as eighteen guineas.⁴⁸ This might be supplemented with free

housing, pit clothes, and other sweeteners, but under the pressure of the financial outlay imposed by these conditions the owners in due course came to their senses to fight back. After probably the highest ever payments of binding monies, in 1804, their first significant step took place in 1805 when to counter the men's ability to choose at leisure for which employer they might work, the owners acted in concert, standardising binding monies to a maximum of £3/13/6 at the Tyne collieries and £6/6 on the Wear, at the same time reducing the numbers of men to be employed on a full-time basis.⁴⁹ This was the first step to controlling the labour supply, and the owners gradually consolidated their position in succeeding years.

In 1809 the categories of men receiving free pit clothes was reduced, and, more importantly, the time of the bindings was altered from October to January. This was a move from the heaviest to the slowest trading period of the year, with the deliberate consequence that only a minimal number of men were initially bound, to be augmented by casual labour as trade picked up. As the owners pressed home this policy the pitmen realised that they had lost this market advantage and struck in the autumn of 1810; prior to the bindings of January 1811. After a bitter strike in which scores of pitmen were arrested, arbitration through a local clergyman succeeded in finding a compromise wherein the bindings were thereafter to take place in April.⁵⁰ Because of the combination laws there was still no open union organisation amongst the pitmen, though the large scale of the strike was proof in itself of effective organisation. Since 1804 there had been evidence of secret 'Brotherhoods' and, as pointed out by Wearmouth, it was this form that the 1810 union took.⁵¹

The end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815 however brought economic depression, and the increased availability of labour strengthened the

owners' position. Moher expresses the belief that because of a wider policy of retrenchment against combinations of workmen by employers in general, a distinct shift 'in the balance of industrial power' away from the men had by this time already occurred and was continuing apace:⁵² and Jones reinforces this, arguing that by means of further gradual alterations in the bond, the Northumberland and Durham coal owners continued to erode the pitmen's terms and conditions until by 1822, Colls calculates that binding money had been reduced to 10/6d for married men and 21/- for single men (the higher figure being considered a necessary inducement to attract and retain unmarried and thus less reliable workers). The 1822 binding moreover indicated a higher level of organisation amongst the owners than hitherto, as Jones cogently argues of a meeting between the Londonderry collieries' viewer, John Buddle, and the Earl of Durham's colliery agent:

...Firstly, the coal owners' representatives now met together before the binding, agreed prices and strategies and presented the terms to the men as a *fait accompli*. Any advantages which the men might have had of manipulating the self-interest of their employers, had been lost. Secondly, the removal of the binding money, in an attempt to reduce costs, attests to the fact that the labour situation was already ceasing to work in the men's favour, and that economic considerations were the most important factor for management. And, finally, although Buddle dare not act *openly* to reduce the hewers' wages, the removal of binding money did in fact represent an *indirect* wage cut - a distinction which many observers of the strikes failed to grasp as they centred their analysis on wage increases or cuts...⁵³

The pitmen planned to strike at the 1822 binding, but the owners apparently played on their self-interest by circulating rumours that the numbers of men to be bound were to be reduced, and succeeded in stampeding the men into binding. Thus by 1822 the owners emphatically had the upper hand in workplace relations by virtue of the bond, the function of which as Colls puts it, had 'changed from a contract to a control'.⁵⁴ But a change in the combination laws in 1824 gave fresh

impetus to the pitmen's efforts to reclaim what they saw as lost privileges.

Throughout this period all workmen's agitational activities relating to the workplace had been governed by the Combination Acts of 1799 and 1800. These took no little inspiration from the judiciary, who had long viewed combinations of workmen as criminal conspiracies, and in response to pressure from employers and the ferment created by the French Revolution, Pitt's Tory government had basically applied the common law doctrine of conspiracy explicitly to workmen's combinations. Moher describes this as 'straightforwardly repressive... medieval industry-regulating legislation', banning as it did the trade objects of friendly and benefit societies, and providing for employers to initiate summary procedures before two magistrates against individual workmen and their societies.⁵⁵ Rule has pointed out that the Acts were indisputably class legislation in that they specifically referred to 'workmen' and workmen's combinations, but employers' combinations were also technically banned, and limited provision for binding arbitration procedures was included.⁵⁶ Rule endorses Dorothy George's earlier conclusion however that in practice the employers were able to make only 'very slight use' of the Combination Acts, and in February 1824 a parliamentary select committee met to consider their repeal.⁵⁷

Moher sees the underlying reason for their eventual repeal as being that basically, not least in the North East coal trade, the balance of industrial power had shifted and some employers felt they had no need of the laws, claiming they had 'broke the neck of all combinations'. There were other grounds too however; in Liverpool for example and more especially Dublin, where trade disputes were 'notoriously violent', many employers were afraid to resort to the Act; and in the daily struggle for control in the workplace, occurrences such

as violence against outside labour meant that 'if any law was to be used it was more likely to be the criminal law'. On the other hand, those employers invoking the Acts had found them 'ineffectual and even counter-productive' in that they embittered relations with employees, but because the situation was calm for much of the time the Acts were at any rate used only in exceptional cases. Judicial hostility to the extension of JP's powers furthermore raised the likelihood of their applying rigorous procedural requirements at appeal, which meant prosecution under the 1800 Act became 'an uncertain venture'. Add to this greater secrecy on the part of the workmen, and it becomes clear that the Acts were problematical at best, and virtually unenforceable at worst.⁵⁸

This point is neatly illustrated by Thompson's comment that 'it was in the very years when the Acts were in force that trade unionism registered great advances',⁵⁹ as indeed perhaps witnessed by the Tyne and Wear pitmen's brotherhood of 1810-1811. As Browne has explained, this was achieved by adapting the best features of current popular organisation to trade union purposes: the unions had for instance

...taken advantage of the improved postal services to keep in touch with other groups in other parts of the country. From freemasonry they had learned the techniques of secret societies and from Methodism the model of delegation, representation and federation. From the Hampden Clubs they had adopted their giant waving, carefully woven banners and the value of dramatic, colourful processions with banners held high. Pub landlords provided meeting places, security of funds and beer for the officials...⁶⁰

Aspinall makes the further point that '[t]he unions could easily shelter under the title of friendly societies, and hold their meetings under cover of the rules allowed to these clubs in pursuance of the Friendly Society Acts'.⁶¹ And moreover, this period even saw the first attempt at a general union of trades when in 1818 a group of Stockport spinners linked up with London shipwrights and other skilled workers to form the

'Philanthropic Society'. This may have had only a brief life, being broken by the arrest of five of the Stockport spinners, but marked a significant step in the developing trades union movement.⁶²

It was against this background that a campaign for the repeal of the Combination Acts was initiated in 1814. According to Moher they had proved 'anomalous, one-sided and unjustifiable', and for Browne were 'archaic in a society where government was reforming penal law and trying to lift some restrictions on trade':⁶³ and consequently by 1824 such was the breadth of opinion for repeal that the Tory President of the Board of Trade, William Huskisson 'informally facilitated the efforts of those like Joseph Hume to introduce a repealing measure'.⁶⁴ Thanks not least to a sympathetic Select Committee, which found the Acts served only 'to produce mutual irritation and distrust [and] give a violent character to the Combinations', their repeal was quickly pushed through parliament with even common law conspiracy being excused from application to unions.⁶⁵

But the implications of this latter point had passed unnoticed, and it proved a step too far by promptly rebounding upon the government as, coinciding with 'a rapid upturn in trade', the Acts' repeal led to 'an immediate expansion of trade unionism, coupled with strikes, with demands for closed shops, occasionally with violence'.⁶⁶ As unrest swept the country, employers clamoured for a re-enactment of the Combination Acts. A new Select Committee resisted this path but brought an amending measure which restored the common law of conspiracy to trades union cases: union activity for specific objects such as regulating wages or hours of work were legitimised, but funds were still unprotected in law and members could still be sued for breach of contract or for actions in restraint of trade. Perhaps the most crucial immediate outcome of the 1825 Act was that collective bargaining between workmen and employers

was now legal, but Moher has described the more fundamental long-term significance of the 1825 amending Act to subsequent trade union law:

...This distinction between the legitimacy of combination for some objects but not for others was to become the basis of all future policy on the law relating to trades unions in Britain... [The new Act] also stipulated further statutory offences such as intimidation, molestation or obstruction during trade disputes which carried punishments of up to three months' imprisonment. The precise interpretation of what constituted these offences was left to the discretion of the police and judges, a feature which remains to the present day...⁶⁷

It was in the wake of these changes that in 1825 the Tyne and Wear pitmen established their first official organisation, the 'United Colliers Association', which though nominally a friendly society, was known to both masters and men as 'the union'. Membership was confined to the elite workers, the hewers, and union activity appears to have been general on both the Tyne and the Wear. There were strikes at Hetton in July 1825 and at Jarrow in November of that year, both seemingly to no avail, and further disputes occurred across the coalfield in March and early April 1826, when the owners for the first time introduced a standard printed bond. But the strike movement suffered from the fact that it was more localised than uniform, and by mid-April 1826 the pitmen had agreed to bind.⁶⁸

The pitmen's union was paralleled by a seamen's union on the North East coast, and a strike of the seamen in 1825 was marked by four men being shot dead by troops at Sunderland:⁶⁹ the seamen's union survived intact however, but the defeat of the pitmen's strikes caused the failure of their union. The colliery bindings of 1827 to 1830 passed unobtrusively as economic depression returned the advantage to the owners, who continued the process of gradually eroding the pitmen's conditions: the weekly 15/- wage was reduced to 14/- in 1828 and subsequent endemic under-employment in the coal trade sapped any confidence the pitmen might have had to give a concerted response.⁷⁰ By

the end of the decade the United Colliers Association as such had contracted to no more than a rump, but its brief life was perhaps less significant for the strikes of 1825 and 1826 than for the legacy of pamphleteering literature which it produced.

The first of these pamphlets was the 'Rules and Regulations' of the union, published in Newcastle early in 1825.⁷¹ This showed the union structure to be based on a representative system of branch unions and delegates, with discussion and voting on policy issues and the election of all delegates and officers, but this highly democratic system was weakened by the fact that membership was confined only to hewers. Given the advances of Primitive Methodism in the coalfield, not least in the Sunderland circuit which incorporated the great Wear concerns of Hetton and the Lords Londonderry and Durham, it seems that the pitmen, in devising the mode of union organisation, copied the methodist class system which itself had been the organisational inspiration for Manchester radical leader 'Orator' Henry Hunt's 'Great Northern Political Union' of 1819-1820.⁷²

During the course of the next year or so the rulebook was followed by three polemical union pamphlets detailing, defending, and reiterating the pitmen's classic grievances. 'A Voice from the Coal Mines', published in South Shields in the autumn of 1825, drew a countering response in November from the colliery viewers in a pamphlet entitled 'Brief Observations in Reply', but this in turn was answered before the turn of the year by 'A Defence of the Voice from the Coal Mines'. The last publication officially sanctioned by the union was 'A Candid Appeal to the Coal Owners and Viewers', probably in advance of the unsuccessful strikes at binding time in April 1826.⁷³ This was addressed not only to the owners and viewers, but also to 'a Sympathising Public', indicating that the value of public opinion was already appreciated by the pitmen.

The Hammonds' comment that in the *Candid Appeal* 'the men claim a share in the management of affairs that directly concern them', endorses the view that this period saw a battle for control in the workplace, but the fact of the union's defeat in 1826 emphasized the owners' superiority, and rendered them all the less likely to heed the pitmen's complaints.⁷⁴

The 1826 defeat also illustrated the point that far from acceding to collective bargaining with the union, as provided for in the 1825 legislation, like most employers the coal owners 'continued to resist this means of reaching agreement with their workers'.⁷⁵ Despite such obstacles however workmen resorted time and again to build organisations and confront their employers, and the Tyne and Wear pitmen were no exception to this process. In this respect, though their union of the mid-1820s suffered defeat and its appeals to the coal owners fell on deaf ears, the United Colliers' Association and its public campaigns were of great value both in publicising the pitmen's grievances and establishing an organisational framework for future struggles. As one worker later recalled of the radical agitation, '[p]eople fancy that when all's quiet that all's stagnating. Propagandism is going on for all that. It's when all's quiet that the seed's a-growing'.⁷⁶ In the same sense, the late 1820s might be seen as years of assimilation of their recent experience by the pitmen, in preparation for the time when renewed efforts in more favourable circumstances might again come to challenge the coal owners' supremacy.

Trade Unions and Popular Radical Politics.

The demise of the United Colliers' Association serves here to raise a salient point about the nature of the historiography of trades unionism, for the fact that the pitmen's union disappeared for the rest

of the decade insofar as 'official' activity is concerned should on no account be taken to mean that the pitmen themselves ceased to combat their employers' machinations on a daily basis. The day-to-day battle to maintain and improve wages and conditions could not but have continued, and indeed it is strongly argued by Behagg that this constant daily struggle has been overlooked by historians in favour of conventional accounts of the formal but often only short-lived and transitory 'official' trades unions.⁷⁷ Underpinning the occasionally-flourishing formal unions was a more continuous informal or *ad hoc* unionism based on mutual 'understandings' between those in the workplace, a trade or even a district, and Behagg argues that this tells us as much about the history of trades unionism as the narrower concentration upon formal or 'official' unions which has so often been the case to date.⁷⁸

The workplace was obviously central to workers' economic battles against employers but it was also significant in a political sense, for not only did the early nineteenth century witness 'a contest for the control of work between capital and labour', but it also saw a parallel 'extensive and active public debate on the nature of the political order'. Behagg has criticised historians who separate these issues to point out that most contemporaries did not share this view and that to them, 'there was a clear and reciprocal relationship between the organisation of work and the organisation of society as a whole'.⁷⁹ This being so, by definition the ramifications of such a relationship were not merely wide but challenged the entire concept of the contemporary political system, though it is recognised here that more conservative historians than Behagg may question such a view.

That the workplace as a forum for economic discussion also took on a distinct political connotation was reflected not least in the mass participation and democracy of the workmen's affairs, which as Behagg

goes on to argue, belonged to a feeling for social responsibility 'that was clearly antithetical to liberal notions of personal freedom'. Typified by the election of spokesmen or representatives and votes on policy, as indeed exemplified by the United Colliers' Association, the workplace emphasis on full participation and democratic accountability was clearly at odds with a political system which 'offered a bourgeois democracy with representation qualified by property': thus the propertied classes' condescending criticism of such working class conventions, which were scorned as 'the tyranny of the multitude', 'the tyranny of numbers', and the 'tyranny of the majority'. According to Behagg, an extremely limited bourgeois democracy had nothing to offer the lower orders, hence their apparent support for political reform, and the fact that when for example some Birmingham workers financed the Chartist movement in 1839, 'they contributed politically as they acted industrially, through the informal organisation of the work group', as cash contributions listed in contemporary newspapers demonstrate.⁸⁰

Such financial support was a reflection of the intensity of political debate amongst 'the lower orders' in the early nineteenth century. This has been described by Wiener, Hollis, and more recently by Noel Thompson, who argues that from 1816 and the advent of a cheap radical press, the propagation of the literature of anti-capitalist and socialist political economy amongst the various strata of the lower orders reached unprecedented levels, stimulating considerable popular interest and involvement in political debate and agitation.⁸¹ The catalyst to this debate was the appearance of a number of influential works which seriously challenged the established classical political economy, notably William Thompson's *Inquiry into the Principles of the Distribution of Wealth most Conducive to Happiness* (1824), and his later *Labour Rewarded* (1827); John Gray's *Lecture on Human Happiness* (1825);

Thomas Hodgskin's *Labour Defended Against the Claims of Capital* (1825), and his later *Popular Political Economy* (1827).⁸²

These writers set out to develop a distinct labour theory of value which explained the exploitation of labour and the cyclical slumps in the capitalist system: their general theory as it emerged was deficient in that it saw the manipulation of prices and wages, i.e. exchange, as the solution of workers' problems, rather than outright control of the means of production as Marx was later to point out in *Das Kapital*.⁸³ This new popular political economy was nevertheless embraced by significant numbers amongst the lower orders, though perhaps more by urban workers such as in Behagg's study, than by the more isolated and numerous agricultural workers. It rejected classical political economists such as Ricardo, Mill, and Senior, who were widely seen as mere apologists for capitalists and landowners more concerned with maximising capitalist accumulation than applying the fruits of industry to the welfare of the working classes.⁸⁴

Taking up the new writers, the radical press explained the predicament of the lower orders by referring to the evident evils of an industrialising society with which working people could readily identify from their own experience, thus addressing the working man on his own terms to articulate and expose the irrelevance of classical political economy. The myriad of unstamped and therefore illegal radical publications was consequently avidly consumed and commonly read aloud to the illiterate where necessary, to produce a popular radical political programme of annual parliaments based upon universal suffrage, which considerable numbers of working class people are said by Noel Thompson to have supported during this period. Compounding the economic depression after 1828 was 'a fortuitous series of political crises' for the Tory governments which gave impetus to the movement for radical

reform and resulted in the most serious challenge to the established order of the nineteenth century.⁸⁵

The series of political crises to which Wright refers essentially began with Catholic Emancipation, when in 1829 Wellington had to rush an Act through parliament to prevent a civil war in Ireland threatened by Daniel O'Connell's Catholic Association. The success of the pressure which this ostensibly peaceful mass movement brought to bear was not lost on mainland radicals, and the Irish model was subsequently imitated by the Political Union movement which accompanied the reform crisis of 1831-1832:⁸⁶ but more immediately significant was the fact that the measure alienated ultra right-wing Tories and fractured the alliance which had kept the Conservatives in power for almost half a century. However, it was the death of King George IV in June 1830, and more especially the revolution in France in July, which gave impetus to a reform movement in earnest.⁸⁷

George's death and the overthrow of Charles X were only the most prominent symptoms of a climate of change which swept the country from the summer of 1830. Severe economic distress led to widespread arson, machine-breaking and food riots in many southern and eastern counties of England, and the situation was exacerbated by the failure of the harvest in autumn 1830 both at home and on the continent.⁸⁸ Even before the general election resulting from the King's death, Wellington's ministry had lost much of its authority, and the influx of new MPs at the election further weakened the position of the Tory government. Political Unions had begun to appear, beginning at Birmingham and followed by London, riots occurred at Bristol, Northampton, Norwich and elsewhere, and reform meetings and processions attracting massive crowds 'helped to induce a sense of crisis'.⁸⁹ By the end of 1830 Wellington had resigned to make way for the Whig Earl Grey, who recognised the dangerous

situation which was developing and set about delivering a measure of reform to defuse it.

There was no industrial unrest on the same scale as the reform agitation, but the political movement was shadowed by parallel efforts to establish general industrial unions. Building on his 'Operative Spinners' Union', in 1829 John Doherty of Manchester founded the 'National Association for the Protection of Labour', a Lancashire-based general union, which was echoed by the national 'Operative Builders' Union', and attempts at general unions in Yorkshire.⁹⁰ None of these made any great strides in North East England, but the region nonetheless had a thriving trade union scene: E.P. Thompson lists the Tyneside unions contributing to the Bradford artisans' strikes in 1825 as including 'smiths, mill-wrights, joiners, shoemakers, morocco leather dressers, cabinet-makers, shipwrights, sawyers, tailors, woolcombers, hatters, tanners, weavers, potters and miners', and describes Newcastle as 'among the three or four leading Radical and Chartist centres'. Thus whilst the disorder prevalent elsewhere was not apparent in the North East, it is evident enough that trade union activity was nevertheless proceeding apace.⁹¹

The parliamentary reform crisis of 1831-1832 was a highpoint in this phase of popular radicalism, wherein rural and industrial workers, middle class and even some aristocratic whigs, radicals, political clubs and trades unions both local and general all played their part. E.P. Thompson designates this 'revolutionary period' of the early 1830s as the crucial point at which for the first time a distinctive and widespread working class consciousness emerged in Britain, which he believes was 'the great spiritual gain of the Industrial Revolution' and produced 'perhaps, the most distinguished popular culture England has known'.⁹² It is against this background that the struggles of the Tyne and Wear pitmen's union of 1831-1832 are discussed.

NOTES TO THE INTRODUCTION.

- 1 N. McCord, *North East England* (London, 1979) p.14, cites 'the indefatigable Sir John Clerk [who in 1724] visited the area in pursuit of his search for information which could be turned to useful advantage.'
- 2 N. McCord, *North East England*, op.cit: R.W. Sturgess (ed), *The Great Age of Industry in the North-East, 1700-1920*, Durham County Local History Society (Durham, 1981).
- 3 The earliest standard history of the pitmen, which remains the classic account, is Richard Fynes' *The Miners of Northumberland and Durham* (Sunderland, 1873). J.L. and B. Hammond's *The Skilled Labourer* (London, 1919) usefully devotes a whole chapter to the 1831-1832 union, but other accounts covering these years have been more general, for instance S. Webb, *The Story of the Durham Miners, 1662-1921* (London, 1921), and E. Welbourne, *The Miners' Unions of Northumberland and Durham* (Cambridge, 1923).
- 4 C.E. Hiskey, 'John Buddle (1773-1843), Agent and Entrepreneur in the North-East Coal Trade', (unpublished M.Litt. thesis, Durham University, 1978): J.A. Jaffe, 'Economy and Community in Industrializing England: The Durham Mining Region Before 1840', (unpublished Ph.D thesis, Columbia University, 1984): C.L. Jones, 'Industrial Relations in the Northumberland and Durham Coal Industry, 1825-1845', (unpublished Ph.D thesis, Sunderland Polytechnic, 1985): M.W. Flinn, *The History of the British Coal Industry, 1700-1830: The Industrial Revolution* (Vol.II), (Oxford, 1984): R. Church, *The History of the British Coal Industry, 1830-1913: Victorian Pre-eminence* (Vol.III), (Oxford, 1986): R. Colls, *The Pitmen of the Northern Coalfield: Work, Culture, and Protest, 1790-1850* (Manchester, 1987): J.D. Banham, 'Arthur Mowbray and the Hetton Coal Company: A Study of Early Nineteenth Century Business Relationships', (unpublished MA thesis, Sunderland Polytechnic, 1988): For a recent more general work of social history see J. Benson, *British Coalminers in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1980).
- 5 W.H. Johnson, 'A North East Miner's Union (Hepburn's Union) of 1831-1832', (unpublished MA thesis, Durham University, 1959).
- 6 Enquiries to Durham University Library and Department of History have elicited no trace of the thesis. Likewise enquiries at Newcastle University which as King's College in 1959 formed part of Durham University. Neither Colls, Jaffe, nor Jones refer to Johnson's MA in the text of their theses.
- 7 For criticism of the narrative style see for instance H. White, 'The Question of Narrative in Contemporary Historical Theory', *History and Theory*, 23 (1984): For fears of the imposition of ideology upon historical writing see for instance G. Strauss, 'Viewpoint: The Dilemma of Popular History', *Past and Present*, No.132 (1991): For a recent discussion defending narrative history see A.P. Norman, 'Telling It Like It Was: Historical Narratives On Their Own Terms', *History and Theory*, XXX, No.2 (1991), who in his support cites B. van Fraassen, *The*

- Scientific Image* (Oxford, 1980), and A. Fine, *The Shaky Game* (Chicago, 1986).
- 8 *The Making of a Ruling Class: Two Centuries of Capital Development on Tyneside*, Benwell Community Project, Final Report, Series 6 (Newcastle, 1978).
- 9 R.W. Sturgess, 'The North East Coalmasters, 1820-55', *Pitmen, Viewers, and Coalmasters: Essays in North East Coalmining in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. R.W. Sturgess, North East Labour History Society, 1986.
- 10 R.W. Sturgess, 'The North East Coalmasters, 1820-55', *ibid.*, pp.1,14.
- 11 N. McCord, *North East England...* p.17.
- 12 N. McCord, 'The Government of Tyneside, 1800-1850', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 1970, p.18: L. Cooper, *Radical Jack: The Life of John George Lambton, the First Earl of Durham, Viscount Lambton, and Baron Durham*, (London, 1959), p.185: See for example the Rules of the Newbottle Colliery Relief Fund 1833-1927, FS 15/155/222 Durham (PRO).
- 13 C.L. Jones, 'Industrial Relations...', *op.cit.*, p.12.
- 14 Sturgess, 'The North East Coalmasters, 1820-55', p.14.
- 15 He was described by the diarist Charles Greville as 'an eternal talker, and a prodigious bore'. *Dictionary of National Biography*, Vol. XLIV, p.423: see also G. Brenan, *A History of the House of Percy*, W.A. Lindsay (ed), (London, 1892), Vol.II, pp.459-61.
- 16 R.W. Sturgess, *Aristocrat in Business: the third Marquis of Londonderry as coalowner and portbuilder*, Durham County Local History Society (Sunderland, 1975), pp.8,9. By the same author see 'The Londonderry Trust, 1819-1854', *Archaeologia Aeliana*, Fifth Series, Vol.X (1982), pp.179-192: see also A.J. Heesom, 'Entrepreneurial Paternalism: The Third Lord Londonderry (1778-1854) and the Coal Trade', *Durham University Journal*, LXVI (1974), pp.238-56.
- 17 C.L. Jones, 'Industrial Relations...', *op.cit.*, p.20.
- 18 R. Welford, *Men of Mark 'Twixt Tyne and Tweed*, Vol.I (London, 1895), pp.378-384.
- 19 *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, December 20, 1882.
- 20 C.L. Jones, 'Industrial Relations...', *op.cit.*, p.19.
- 21 Sturgess, 'The North East Coalmasters, 1820-55', p.5.
- 22 C.L. Jones, 'Industrial Relations...', *op.cit.*, p.12: L[ondonderry] P[apers], Durham County Record Office, D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, September 7, 1832: M.W. Flinn, *The History of the British Coal Industry...* Vol.II, p.23: see also J.A. Jaffe, 'Competition and the Size of Firms in the North-East Coal Trade, 1800-1850', *Northern History*, Vol.XXV (1989), pp.235-255.

- 23 D. Spring, 'The Earls of Durham and the Great Northern Coalfield, 1830-1880', *Canadian Historical Review*, Vol.33 (1952), p.238.
- 24 W. Cobbett, *Rural Rides*, (London, 1925) Vol.II, p.294.
- 25 R.W. Sturgess, 'The North East Coalmasters, 1820-55', p.14.
- 26 P[arliamentary] P[apers], Children's Employment Commission, First Report (Mines), Appendix Part 1, 1842 (381), xvi, para 93, p.128; PP, State of the Population in the Mining Districts, 1847 (844), xvi, pp.432-3.
- 27 *The Sun*, Wed. evening, August 7, 1850, p.3, col.3: PP, Select Committee on Accidents in Coal Mines, 1852-53 (740), xx, para 2003, p.8.
- 28 S. Pollard, *The Genesis of Modern Management: A Study of the Industrial Revolution in Great Britain*, (London, 1965), pp.127-128.
- 29 See M. Sill, 'The Journal of Matthias Dunn, 1831-1836: Some Observations of a Colliery Viewer', *Pitmen, Viewers and Coalmasters...* op.cit: for Dunn's writings see *An Historical, Geological and Descriptive View of the Coal Trade of the North of England* (Newcastle, 1844); *A History of the Viewers* (Newcastle, 1811); and *A Treatise on the Winning and Working of Collieries* (Newcastle, 1848).
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- 31 D/Lo/C 142, 'A True Conservative' to Londonderry, October 11, 1843.
- 32 Sturgess, 'The North East Coalmasters, 1820-1855', p.14.
- 33 United Colliers' Association, *A Voice from the Coal Mines; or a Plain Statement of the Various Grievances of the Pitmen of the Tyne and Wear...* South Shields, 1825, pp.21,26.
- 34 Pollard, *The Genesis of Modern Management...* p.64.
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- 36 Flinn, *History of the British Coal Industry...* Vol.II, p.255.
- 37 R.L. Galloway, *Annals of Coal Mining and the Coal Trade* (London, 1898 and 1904): T.S Ashton and J.Sykes, *The Coal Industry of the Eighteenth Century*, (Manchester, 1929): J.U. Nef, *The Rise of the British Coal Industry* (London, 1932): N.K. Buxton, *The Economic Development of the British Coal Industry: From Industrial Revolution to the Present Day*, (London, 1978).
- 38 P.M. Sweezy, *Monopoly and Competition in the English Coal Trade, 1550-1850*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1938).
- 39 P. Cromar, 'Economic Power and Organisation: The Development of the Coal Industry on Tyneside, 1770-1828', (unpublished Ph.D thesis, Cambridge University, 1977): W.J. Hausman, 'Market Power in the London Coal Trade: The Limitation of the Vend, 1770-1845', *Explorations in Economic History*, 21 (1984), pp.385-405: Jaffe, 'Competition and the Size of Firms...': Jaffe criticizes Sweezy's assumption that the number

of collieries was more or less static, but shows that the increase in their number was more pronounced than Sweezy believed ('Economy and Community...', pp.76-104).

- 40 S. Pollard, *Peaceful Conquest: The Industrialisation of Europe, 1760-1970*, (Oxford, 1981) p.121.
- 41 Flinn, *History of the British Coal Industry*, Vol.II, p.262.
- 42 J.R. Leifchild, *Our Coal and Our Coal Pits*, (London, 1856 edn), p.122.
- 43 Jaffe, 'Competition and the Size of Firms...' p.255.
- 44 S. Pollard, *The Genesis of Modern Management...* pp.398-399.
- 45 Jaffe, 'Competition and the Size of Firms...' p.255: Sweezy, *Monopoly and Competition...* p.34. Another object was to co-ordinate representations to occasional parliamentary enquiries into the coal trade.
- 46 Jones, 'Industrial Relations...', p.162-166.
- 47 S. Pollard, *The Genesis of Modern Management...* p.64: for an account of the 1765 strike see J.L. and B. Hammond, *The Skilled Labourer*, (London, 1919), pp.10-14 (1979 edn).
- 48 For an account of the bindings see P.E.H. Hair, 'The Binding of the Pitmen of the North East, 1800-1809', *Durham University Journal*, New Series, XXVII (December, 1965), pp.1-13. See also by the same author, 'The Social History of the British Coal Miners, 1800-1845', (unpublished Ph.D thesis, Oxford, 1955).
- 49 Colls, *The Pitmen of the Northern Coalfield...* pp.78-79.
- 50 For the 1810-1811 strike also see Hammond, *The Skilled Labourer*, pp.16-18 (1979 edn).
- 51 W.F. Wearmouth, *Methodism and the Working Class Movements of England, 1800-1850*, (London, 1937), p.62, cites a South Shields methodist preacher who, with colleagues, attempted to dissuade the pitmen from their affiliation to the brotherhood. The preachers were consequently 'way laid and had to flee for their lives': For a discussion of the brotherhoods see Colls, *The Pitmen...* pp.77,81-83.
- 52 J. Moher, 'From Suppression to Containment; Roots of Trade Union Law to 1825', *British Trades Unionism, 1750-1850*, John Rule (ed), (London, 1988), p.87.
- 53 Jones, 'Industrial Relations...', p.165-166.
- 54 Colls, *The Pitmen...* p.73.
- 55 Moher, 'From Suppression to Containment...' pp.74,82,83.
- 56 J. Rule, 'The Formative Years of British Trades Unionism: An Overview', *British Trades Unionism, 1750-1850*, John Rule (ed), (London, 1988), p.12.

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- 58 Moher, 'From Suppression to Containment...' pp.87-93.
- 59 E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, (London, 1965 edn), p.503.
- 60 H. Browne, *The Rise of British Trade Unions, 1825-1914*, (London, 1979), p.12.
- 61 A. Aspinall, *Early English Trade Unions* (London, 1949), p.xxiv.
- 62 See G.D.H. Cole, *Attempts at General Union, 1818-1834: A Study in British Trade Union History* (London, 1953), Ch.II, pp.4-13.
- 63 Moher, 'From Suppression to Containment...' p.93: Browne, *The Rise of British Trade Unions...* p.13. It is questionable however how far Browne considered Lord Liverpool's infamous 'Six Acts' of 1819 in reaching this judgement.
- 64 Moher, 'From Suppression to Containment...' p.91.
- 65 Browne, *The Rise of British Trade Unions...* p.13.
- 66 Browne, *The Rise of British Trade Unions...* p.14.
- 67 Moher, 'From Suppression to Containment...' pp.92.
- 68 Colls, *The Pitmen of the Northern Coalfield...* pp.87-88.
- 69 D.J. Rowe, 'A Trade Union of the North-East Coast Seamen in 1825', *Economic History Review*, 2nd series, Vol.25, 1972, pp.81-98.
- 70 Rule, 'The Formative Years of British Trades Unionism...' p.13: Hammond, *The Skilled Labourer*, p.22.
- 71 *Rules and Regulations... The United Association of Colliers, on the Rivers Tyne and Wear...* (Newcastle, 1825).
- 72 R.F. Wearmouth, *Methodism and the Working-Class Movements of England, 1800-1850*, (London, 1937), pp.107-113, 229: see also W.M. Patterson, *Northern Primitive Methodism: A Record of the Rise and Progress of the Circuits in the Old Sunderland District* (London, 1909).
- 73 *A Voice from the Coal Mines, or a Plain Statement of the Various Grievances of the Pitmen of the Tyne and Wear: Addressed to the Coal Owners - their Head Agents - and a Sympathising Public, by the Colliers of the United Association of Durham and Northumberland'* (South Shields, 1825): *Brief Observations in Reply to "A Voice from the Coal Mines"* (Newcastle, 1825): *A Defence of the Voice from the Coal Mines, in Answer to the "Brief Observations", in Reply to that Pamphlet. By an United Collier* (Newcastle, 1825): *A Candid Appeal to the Coal Owners and Viewers of the Collieries on the Tyne and Wear... from the Committee of the Colliers' United Association* (Newcastle, 1826).
- 74 Hammonds, *The Skilled Labourer*, p.22: C. Behagg, 'The Democracy of Work, 1820-1850', *British Trades Unionism, 1750-1850*, op.cit., p.162.

- 75 Browne, *The Rise of British Trade Unions...* p.14.
- 76 H. Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor* (London, 1884), Vol.I, p.22.
- 77 Behagg, 'The Democracy of Work, 1820-1850', pp.162-177. Behagg develops this theme in his recent work, *Politics and Production in the Early Nineteenth Century* (New York, 1990).
- 78 Other studies taking this view include A.E. Musson, *British Trades Unions, 1800-1875* (London, 1972), and C. Calhoun, *The Question of Class Struggle* (London, 1982).
- 79 Behagg, 'The Democracy of Work...' p.162.
- 80 Behagg, 'The Democracy of Work...' pp.171,172,174.
- 81 J.H. Wiener, *The War of the Unstamped*, (New York, 1969): P. Hollis, *The Pauper Press: a study in working-class radicalism of the 1830s* (Oxford, 1970): by the same author, *Class and Conflict in Nineteenth Century England, 1815-1850*, (London, 1973): N.W. Thompson, *The People's Science: The popular political economy of exploitation and crisis, 1816-1834*, (Cambridge, 1984).
- 82 See D.G. Wright, *Popular Radicalism: The Working-Class Experience, 1780-1880* (London, 1988), p.79.
- 83 J. Elster, *Making Sense of Marx*, (Cambridge, 1985), pp.165-233.
- 84 N.W. Thompson, *The People's Science...* p.219.
- 85 Wright, *Popular Radicalism*; p.82.
- 86 E. Royle and J. Walvin, *English Radicals and Reformers, 1760-1848*, (Hassocks, 1982), pp.140-141.
- 87 J. Cannon, *Parliamentary Reform, 1640-1832*, (Cambridge, 1973), p.191.
- 88 See G. Rude, 'English rural and urban disturbances on the eve of the First Reform Bill, 1830-1831', *Past and Present*, 37 (1967): E.J. Hobsbawm and G. Rude, *Captain Swing*, (London, 1969).
- 89 Wright, *Popular Radicalism*, p.87.
- 90 See G.D.H. Cole, *Attempts at General Union...* op.cit., and R. Sykes, 'Trade Union Consciousness: the "Revolutionary" Period of General Unionism, 1829-1834', in Rule (ed), *British Trades Unionism...*
- 91 E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class...* pp.425,691: P.H.J.H. Gosden (*The Friendly Societies in England, 1815-1875*, Manchester, 1961) notes a friendly societies of joiners at Newcastle in 1821, of 'All Trades' at Newburn in 1825, the 'Tyne Iron Society' of Lemington in 1826, and a 'Blaydon Friendly Society' in 1824 (pp.19,85).
- 92 E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class...* pp.831,830. The list of contributors to the Bradford strike oddly omits the local seamen, who were a notable and well organised group of workers in the region during this period.

CHAPTER ONE:THE PITMEN'S STRIKE OF 1831.Union Grievances and the Public Discourse.

Much of the historical background to the 1831 dispute has been outlined in the introduction. The pitmen complained of fraudulent treatment by the viewers (see p.11), in response to which they had attempted to combat incursions into wages and conditions, most notably with the 1810 coalfield strike. The employers then consolidated their position by the legal instrument of the annual bond (see pp.15-18), as reduced binding monies (a direct pay cut) if not indeed explicit wage reductions, and tight control of labour meant that by 1822 the owners exercised emphatic control of the workplace. The repeal of the Combination Acts in 1824 and 1825 had given impetus to union activity, but strikes proved ineffective not least because of their local rather than general character (see p.21). Union activity consequently faded and the bindings of the late 1820s passed smoothly, but by 1831 circumstances had conspired to revive union organisation.

According to Jones, industrial action had become 'more and more inevitable as the years progressed', but the spark which brought about the rebirth of the union was a curious property dispute concerning the Hetton Union House, a building held by the trustees of the 1825 union. The former union president, Matthew McIntosh, having covertly acquired the deeds to the building, was discovered in a clandestine attempt to sell it, presumably for personal gain. This prompted a newspaper advertisement in June 1830 from the sixty-seven 'Colliers' Union' members at Hetton, requesting that 'the Residue of our Brother Members will meet us at the Hetton Union Shop... when Matters of Importance will be laid before them, relative to their Property'.¹ McIntosh thereafter allegedly emigrated to America, but the significance of this episode was that it provided a focal point which gave impetus to the revival of the union itself, as one pitman confirmed that the restoration of the union building 'to

its rightful possessors... was the beginning of the present Union'.²

This aside however, the grounds for the union's revival were economic, lying in the stagnating wages of the coal trade. As will be presently discussed, hard evidence of actual wages for these years is scarce, but the best indications are that because of reduced prices resulting from excess production, the collapse of the owners' cartel in 1828 had forced down the minimum weekly wage from 15 to 14 shillings. Buddle privately admitted at the time that the pitmen were 'in a half-starving state': indeed the pitmen's complaints were supported by Buddle's evidence to the 1829 Lords' Coal Trade Committee, an 1830 Commons' Coal Trade Committee, and his private correspondence as to the state of the market throughout 1830-31, yet at the 1830 bindings some owners had reportedly withdrawn the minimum wage altogether resulting in earnings of only 7s to 9s per week.³ Drivers' wages were reduced by 1d and putters' by 2d or 3d per day, and according to Jones the pits were laid idle by the owners for at least one third of the year to February 1831.⁴ This was achieved by an invidious clause in the bond by which the owners might allow the pitmen to work only every fourth day, thus avoiding paying compensation and restricting coal output to suit the market.⁵ The union later controversially accused the Coal Trade of adopting this as official policy, but the undisputed result was endemic underemployment with all its consequent hardship, as reflected in coal-owner Rev. R.H. Brandling's note to Buddle that the men had 'endured much hardship for many years... I have heard you say that they have endured ill with much patience'.⁶

The problems of historic deterioration were compounded by wet weather in Northumberland and Durham which reduced the wheat, oats and barley harvest in autumn 1830 by two-thirds, with a consequent rise in prices noted by Buddle in March 1831.⁷ Despite agrarian disturbances in the south and unrest amongst Lancashire pitmen, the North East remained generally quiet, but the pitmen were meanwhile organising their union. On New Year's Day 1831 a meeting at Hetton, 'well attended' by pitmen 'from

all the principal collieries', reportedly formed a benefit society for the relief of the sick and lame, but by March the body was making industrial demands:⁸ as many as 8- to 10,000 pitmen met on February 26 at Black Fell near Wrekenton and Jaffe notes that on March 11 'the miners at individual collieries presented independent lists of demands to their owners and viewers... [detailing] specific grievances unique to the working of each mine'. On March 12 'an immense number' agreed that 'unless the coalowners comply with their requests, they are determined to refuse to work at the termination of the present binding'. Around two hundred pitmen's delegates were elected to a coalfield committee based at Newcastle's Cock Inn, described by Jaffe as evidencing an instinct for 'popular sovereignty and direct democracy'.⁹

When the owners dismissed the pitmen's claims and moreover raised the prospect of holding the annual bindings in February,¹⁰ a *tour de force* was planned in the shape of a mass meeting on Newcastle Town Moor on Monday March 21, a working day whereupon a big turnout would lay the pits idle with the maximum impact on the owners. On hearing of this, the owners brought forward binding day to Saturday March 19 in an attempt to split the pitmen's ranks, but the meeting went ahead as planned, a 24,000 crowd being addressed by delegates from the back of a waggon.¹¹ The main speaker spoke 'with bitterness of the length of time which their children were compelled to labour', and the severe conduct of some of the 'agents':¹² this was Thomas Hepburn, the Hetton hewer who was to chair all the pitmen's big meetings and after whom the union came to be known as 'Hepburn's Union'. Though his name was unheralded before this occasion, from the fact that early organising meetings took place in Hetton and that he chaired the Town Moor meeting, the role he must have played in re-establishing the union is evident enough.

In considering the pitmen's purported grievances it should be noted, as Buddle himself acknowledged with some interest, that the union functioned

...in two branches viz. the general and the local - the general extends to only three points, viz. the eleven days in the fortnight, 12 hours for the boys and not to be turned out of their houses... The local union goes into the measurement of the corves, the (providing) of the candles, the gunpowder,

etc., and to certain items of work at individual collieries...¹³

Because of this organisational dichotomy there were ambiguities in local demands, which varied according to the management practices and geological conditions at each colliery. At Cowpen for example there were five local demands, three of which concerned improvements in piece-rates for difficulties arising from underground conditions, one seeking the re-establishment of candle money which had been withdrawn in 1829, and the fifth requiring a revision of the viewer's criteria for fining the hewers.¹⁴ The general claims were clear however. The initial statement of grievances arising from the Town Moor meeting centred on the three general points outlined by Buddle, and a more explicit statement later showed that the union was disputing eight points for which they sought adjustments to clauses in the bond, broadly echoing grievances raised in the union pamphlets of the mid-1820s.

These concerned, firstly, the owners' provision for evicting the men from their pit cottages, which clause the pitmen wished to be entirely 'done away out of the bond'; they were secondly seeking a price of 1s 4d for a 60-yard putter's 'renk'; thirdly, the union wished the boys' working hours 'to commence as soon as the lads begin to go down the pit, viz: to work 12 hours from that time'; they fourthly required that the bindings should continue to be held in April; fifthly, they wished corf sizes to be regulated at 20 pecks and that union nominees observe the measurement of suspect corves, 'provided that we do not stop the work, and to be done within 3 days'; their sixth point was that fines should be levied only against the actual quantity of sub-standard 'laid-out' coal rather than forfeit their wage for the entire corf; seventh, they sought a minimum 11 days work per fortnight for 25 fortnights per year at a minimum rate of 3s per day or 33s per fortnight, 'out of which the fines are to be deducted'; and their eighth point was that the pit should only be laid idle for legitimate causes such as a *bona fide* accident to the engine, dropping the implicitly over-used bond proviso 'or from any other cause', and that in such cases they may seek work elsewhere.¹⁵ Such a catalogue of demands

represented what Hair has called the emergence of 'institutionalised haggling', an early form of collective bargaining which grew roughly in response to owners' initiatives like the introduction of a uniform printed bond in 1826 and uniform putting rates in 1830.¹⁶

Though most of the grievances addressed working practices and conditions, with the exception of the boys' hours all were either directly or indirectly related to wages, which were therefore the central focus of the pitmen's agitation. However, while colliery records survive in abundance, a considerable search has identified only one sequence of pay-bills for the years with which this study is concerned, rendering general corroboration of the respective claims of owners and pitmen ultimately inconclusive.¹⁷ Actual *bona fide* evidence of wage levels is therefore very scant, but what little there is tends to concur with the pitmen's claims, which some of their number were keen to publicise. One union correspondent to the *Newcastle Chronicle* for example claimed that whereas in 1815 a putter in the Wear pits needed to move corves a total underground distance of 1 mile 760 yards to earn 1s 6d, by 1830 this had increased to 3 miles 1440 yards (see Appendix Three).¹⁸ Because of the dearth of surviving pay-bills it is difficult to test such claims, but the table of prices agrees with the formula later cited by coal owner Nicholas Wood, that putters were typically paid a basic wage for each score of renks (the distance they had to convey twenty-one corves) per eighty or one hundred yards, to which 1d per score was added for each extra twenty yards.¹⁹ Such prices however were further distorted by the practice of putters sub-contracting their work to other lads, who might work with them jointly as 'half-marrows' or even as a junior partner for only a third or a quarter of the renk price.

Whilst putters' earnings are therefore difficult to ascertain, hewers' wages were also complicated by informal classifications which were applied according to the level of productivity of any given individual. The 1836 Parliamentary Select Committee on the Coal Trade referred to three grades of hewers: 'first class' men

who could complete their work in three or four hours, 'second class' men who spent five or six hours at work each day, and 'third class' men who worked a seven- or eight-hour shift.²⁰ 'A day's work' was an arbitrary measure which for the owners' public relations purposes came to assume a 4s per day optimum, but as Jaffe points out, such a standard was misleading:

...Despite the differences in working hours, all hewers did not earn comparable wages. The first class hewers were able to earn the most money in the least amount of time while the third class men earned the least and worked the longest hours...²¹

This is confirmed by apparently the only surviving sequence of colliery paybills for 1830-31, those of Cowpen Colliery in Northumberland. Cowpen however was atypical as it was not a member of the Tyne and Wear owners' cartel, and shipped its coals via the River Blyth. It was thus in a position to make higher volume sales than regulated collieries and thereby provide more work for its pitmen which, though not necessarily at a higher pro rata labour cost, may well have produced higher earnings than comparable lower-vending regulated collieries. Yet despite this, even the first class hewers' average earnings of 19s 7¼d per week failed to reach the owners' arbitrary 4s per day standard, second class hewers averaged only 17s 5½d per week, and the third class even less at 11s 10½d per week, giving a mean average of 16s 3¾d.²² This falls well below the owners' claims yet was still almost 3s higher than the average of only 13s 6d per week (15s 6d with housing, coal and garden increments) which viewer Henry Morton privately admitted the Lambton pitmen earned in the same year (1830-31): and Morton also acknowledged that the Lambton men's earnings compared unfavourably with the 14s per week earned by local farm labourers.²³ Such figures tend to confirm union claims that only the best hewers could hope to earn 4s per day.²⁴ Though detailed evidence is sparse and therefore inconclusive, given the context of the labour situation and earnings levels of preceding years as noted by Morton, Buddle and others, the clearest indications are that the pitmen's case was valid: there was no alternative convincing explanation

for their stubborn resistance in the weeks which followed.

The vast majority of men from 47 of the estimated 53 collieries attended the Town Moor meeting. It was agreed that their grievances be 'laid before the public in the newspapers', but contrary to threatening strike action they also agreed to work unbound if the owners would allow it, and meanwhile the men at each colliery were to meet twice a week 'in support of the cause in which they are embarked'.²⁵ The owners' immediate response was to reduce the boys' hours from 14 to 12 per day, but they refused to yield on any other point and hardened their position as to binding time, which they now stated should take place not in February as they had previously mooted, but in January. Considering that the 1810 coalfield strike had been prompted by the same issue this was a significant enough step in itself, but the owners also agreed a list of 'Final Resolutions' and, perhaps most importantly, refused to allow the men to work unbound.²⁶ On this particular point, Jones has contended that

...if, as the coal owners asserted there was such a surplus of labour, to have had an unbound workforce which could be engaged and dismissed at will without compensation would surely have been an advantage: unless it was in the employers' interests to have the pits laid totally idle...²⁷

The owners' response thus precipitated the union into strike action: by March 27 Mayor Reed of Newcastle was reporting to the Home Office that 'the colliers upon the Tyne and Wear have suspended their work', and the pitmen of six Tyne collieries which had hastily bound left work in solidarity with their comrades.²⁸ Having received the equivalent of two weeks' pay from the union, presumably collected since the January 1 meeting at Hetton, the pitmen had struck before they could be locked out, were firmly united and in no haste to rebind, leaving both sides in entrenched positions.

The resultant stand-off became no less a battle of financial and physical might than one of public relations, as a preface to which it may be helpful to examine some of the contemporary printed sources, which might be roughly divided into three categories, viz. newspapers, pamphlets, and posters/handbills. For both

sides the object of promoting their respective cases was to win uncommitted public opinion, along with uncommitted influential opinion: the value of this for the pitmen was the resultant goodwill and an almost indispensable source of financial income from charitable public support, whereas the owners needed to dissuade the public from such charity and secure the support of the various state and private agencies for their cause.²⁹ Because of their open and often polemical nature, the latter two source categories pose few problems of interpretation, but for their part the pitmen abandoned the pamphleteering which had characterised the 1825 union in favour of a combination of handbills/billposting, and letter-writing and advertising campaigns in the local press. In this respect the union clearly considered the public a form of open jury, consciously titling their broadsides 'An Appeal To The Public...', or else as open letters to the coalowners, viewers, newspaper editors or others as undisguised efforts to win public support. The target readership was an important consideration and broadly speaking, handbills might be intended for a middle- to lower-ranking audience of merchants and tradesmen, whilst the newspaper campaigns might reach the more 'respectable' propertied gentry classes: both were cheaper than pamphleteering and would address a distinct audience. For the owners however the newspapers held an advantage in that their private links and common social interest with the proprietors meant that much of the press could be called upon to canvass their case, and an outline of local press allegiances is of some value here.

North East England was served by a variety of local newspapers of which six titles are noted here, which provide a significant information resource on the disputes. The most important local press study of this period remains Maurice Milne's 1971 work, *The Newspapers of Northumberland and Durham*, and more specifically for this discussion his essay on the attitude of the local press towards strikes and strikebreaking, but despite an apparently all-embracing title only three papers are examined in this latter article. Of these Milne concludes that

the *Newcastle Chronicle* and *Newcastle Courant* reported the disputes in a 'balanced and even sympathetic manner', as perhaps is borne out by the union's advertising and letter-writing patronage, for it looked first to these two titles. Though the *Courant* was essentially tory and the *Chronicle* whig, it therefore seems that their political views did not unduly interfere with their coverage of the pitmen's disputes. The *Tyne Mercury* however, though radical in political outlook had little sympathy for workers in dispute, adopted a 'hostile' tone to the union and, Milne notes, 'repeatedly deplored' the pitmen's use of strike action whilst defending the coal-owners' resort to blackleg labour.³⁰ A comparison of data used by the *Mercury* with the private diaries of one leading viewer demonstrates a pronounced tendency to exaggerate, and at one juncture in 1832 when some pitmen were publicly supporting the reform movement, *Mercury* editor W.A. Mitchell went to some pains to distance his favoured local radical body, the Northern Political Union, of which he was a founder member, from the pitmen's union. The pitmen consequently came to consider the *Mercury* one of two local newspapers 'most conspicuous' in the coalowners' propaganda 'warfare' against them.³¹

The other title considered guilty in this respect was the *Durham Chronicle*, which vied with the *Mercury* as the region's most outspoken pro-reform newspaper. Whilst underlining the animosity of some whig/radical reformers to movements of workers, an added facet to the *Durham Chronicle's* outlook was the fact that its proprietor was coalowner Lord Durham, who founded the paper 'on Whig principles and in support of his interest as Member for the County' before his elevation to the peerage. His motives were therefore primarily political, but it seems to have been an open secret that the *Chronicle* could be relied upon to push the coalowners' case. Sweezy for example points out that the owners were 'well instructed in the ways of influencing the press', evidencing an 1830 Coal Trade resolution that 'the sum of £21 be remitted to Mr Veitch of the *Durham Chronicle* for printing an exposition of the real state of the Coal Trade in 1830'. The subsequent articles were collected in a pamphlet which in Sweezy's words was intended 'to show that there was no monopoly,

that the coalowners were scarcely making any money, and that the root of all evil was taxes and government interference'.³²

The two remaining titles, the *Durham Advertiser* and *Newcastle Journal*, were both anti-reform and pro-Tory in outlook. A contemporary Durham bookseller said the *Advertiser* was 'the organ of the High Church party and circulates among the higher ranks', and as such a safe traditional Tory paper, which it seems had connections with its local political ally Lord Londonderry.³³ The *Newcastle Journal* did not emerge until May 1832 and then apparently only to address the absence of a Tory newspaper on Tyneside. Of the two the *Advertiser* was the less vociferous in opposing the pitmen, but it could scarcely have matched the *Journal*, which openly considered union delegates to be unprincipled demagogues whom the coalowners should victimise as soon as the opportunity arose.³⁴ Overall the region's main half-dozen titles can thus be loosely divided into three groups, viz. the *Tyne Mercury* and *Durham Chronicle* which were politically radical but unsympathetic to the pitmen's case; the *Durham Advertiser* and the *Newcastle Journal*, which were politically Tory but likewise highly critical of the union; and the *Newcastle Chronicle* and *Newcastle Courant*, which were respectively whig and tory, but of all six were the least politically dogmatic and the most even-handed and tolerant, giving the fairest hearing to the pitmen's claims.

One feature of the letter-writing campaigns of would-be mediators and proponents of both sides was that, despite insistences to the contrary, the owners suspected that pseudonymous unionist writers were wealthy sympathisers rather than true pitmen. One such candidate would have been former pitman Thomas Wilson, then an ironmaster but an extensive writer of dialect verse on pitmen's culture who plainly identified with his former comrades, but the Wilson Papers at Gateshead Library contain no hint that he made such efforts. Another candidate would have been local historian Eneas MacKenzie, but the grasp of detail of colliery working practices in the letters is such as to suggest that only genuine pitmen could have been the

authors. To reverse the owners' argument, given the advances in literacy and the ethos of self-improvement which accompanied the progress of methodism in the coalfield, it should come as little surprise that a handful of such writers could be mustered from amongst the thousands of pitmen.³⁵

Because the claims of both sides were often partisan, an awareness of an inherent bias in the evidence is vital to the reader. However, when comment or opinion can be shown to be exaggerated, disingenuous or even dishonest, its interpretation becomes somewhat less fraught and uncertain as such evidence devalues itself and the case of those it seeks to represent. In this study there are reasonable grounds to suggest that the employers had much to lose by admitting the truth of the situation, and would conceal or confuse the facts at issue whenever expedient for their case. We have already noted for example the private admissions of Buddle and Morton that the pitmen's wages had diminished in recent years, yet despite this and in full knowledge of the pitmen's plight, the owners publicly denied the deterioration suffered by their employees whilst moreover apparently calculating upon a temporary lock-out to reduce colliery wage costs even further. This evident cynicism was mirrored in the owners' internecine squabbles, as the Coal Trade Minute Books testify. In debating the contending claims the owners seemed happier with the general rather than the particular (Losh later admitted that the owners had allowed the pitmen to beat them in detail), and the public pronouncements of the Coal Trade and its members were often so suspect or contradictory as to prompt Jaffe to comment that they 'were playing fast and loose with [the pitmen's] earnings statistics'.³⁶ The consequent impression created by all this is that the owners were rather less sincere than they would have the public believe.

By contrast however there was a consistency to the pitmen's case which the owners' side never achieved. In the context of the sequence of struggles from 1810 to the 1840s there is a credible continuity to the pitmen's claims, and the 1840s moreover saw the union engage the barrister W.P. Roberts, who was able to demonstrate in law that the owners were less than honourable as regards their legal

obligations to their workers. Indeed there is a very strong sense in which the pitmen merely sought fair dealing from the owners, and whilst maintaining a scepticism towards all claims, the impression arising from the evidence is that the pitmen's case was of rather greater veracity than that of the owners. It can be no accident that the long-standing consensus of historians of the Coal Trade points to the underlying validity of the pitmen's claims, and the view taken here is that there is little if any evidence to contradict such a standpoint.

The Strike Underway.

Major General Sir Henry Bouverie was northern military commander in 1831, and given the absence of a standing police force his role in keeping the peace was vital. He was provided with a steady flow of intelligence to this end, in which respect a letter from one of his officers following a chat with Mayor Reed exposed the owners' true object in rejecting the pitmen's grievances:

...so far from The Coal Owners being anxious to come to an immediate accomodation with the Workmen the very reverse is the case, they consider it for their interest to enhance the price of coals by a temporary stand, and for that reason the terms they have offered to the Pitmen are such as to be very beneficial to themselves if accepted, and if rejected (which they will be) they are well content...³⁷

Because this was a private confidence exchanged between official sources, such information may be assumed to be fairly accurate. The owners' subsequent public claims and counterclaims against the pitmen might therefore be viewed in the light of this unwritten but apparently tacit agreement amongst the members of the Coal Trade to divest themselves of wage costs for a convenient period.

The owners had large coal stocks but feared the pitmen's tradition of wrecking pithead gear during strikes and were not reassured by their assessment of the forces at Bouverie's disposal.³⁸ Buddle said the Yeomanry was considered a laughing stock by the pitmen and Bouverie was faced with 'incessant demands' to secure reinforcements to protect the pits: but he took a detached view of the owners' alarmist pleas, feeling that it was necessary 'to throw those gentlemen upon

their own resources, that they may protect their property with a civil instead of a Military force', and put the onus on the magistrates to organise an effective 'Constabulary Force'. The only problem was that some JPs were the very owners who had requested military assistance. Bouverie 'particularly disliked this feature of the civil power'.³⁹

On April 6 after the bonds' expiry, 'large bodies of colliers' met at Black Fell to confirm their policy.⁴⁰ The authorities did not anticipate disturbance unless the strike endured long enough to affect the keelmen and sailors, whose livelihood also depended upon the coal trade: this was a major worry to Reed and it was perhaps the same fears which prompted eleven Northumberland magistrates, unconnected with the coal trade, to offer to mediate at the Moot Hall on April 11.⁴¹ This embarrassed the owners who were 'keen for the fight' and none too eager to find a solution, but circumstances having dictated the situation they accepted the JPs' conciliation for appearances sake. On April 9 two viewers visited the Cock Inn to dissuade the union committee from negotiating through the magistrates:⁴² the pitmen agreed there should be no such negotiation but said they would nevertheless attend 'to determine who produced the best Arguments'.⁴³ Jones remarks that the owners only agreed to attend the meeting for public relations purposes, and that throughout they were 'anxious to appear the wronged party - victims of a designing workforce'.⁴⁴

Seven owners and seven delegates represented their respective sides at the Moot Hall, where 'a great number of the workmen were also in attendance', but nothing came of the meeting. The pitmen's delegates

...were frequently interrupted and broke in upon by others. - The men were cautioned against a breach of the peace. The Magistrates on retiring expressed an expectation that they would have been met with the Delegates and Viewers separately... but neither Party seemed authorised to accede to this proposition when the meeting broke up, under some marks of disapprobation on the part of the Pitmen...⁴⁵

The next day, delegates and owners met without the magistrates but to no avail, perhaps not least because, as the Hammonds put it, the owners' arguments were built

upon a 'bewildering logic'. On April 13 the owners resolved to stick to their guns, ordered that every colliery should report daily to the Coal Trade Office in Newcastle, and moved to evict leading delegates from their houses.⁴⁶ The pitmen's demands were not to be met because the owners felt it was their exclusive prerogative to decide on servants' conditions: the maintenance of their status in the social hierarchy was thus a powerful factor in the owners' considerations.

With the breakdown in negotiations, some pitmen turned to other means of asserting their case. A meeting of JPs at Houghton-le-Spring had warned against illegal assemblies intimidating strikebreakers, but on April 13 two hundred Hetton pitmen visited South Hetton to stop fifty shaft-sinkers there, and that same night the homes of the Hetton Colliery horse-keepers were attacked and the men threatened with murder. Two hundred horses stabled underground went 'upwards of twelve hours without food' and the Hetton owners, who had already brought eight London policemen to organise a constabulary force in Hetton, set up a nightly mounted patrol and offered 100 guineas reward for information leading to a conviction.⁴⁷

Hardship may have been a factor in such disorder for on April 16, '2800 Pitmen' on strike in the Houghton-le-Spring area published an appeal for charitable donations as their families were 'in want of food'.⁴⁸ The *Durham Chronicle* in particular attacked the union, the delegates in reply correctly claiming the *Chronicle* had been hired by the owners, as already noted.⁴⁹ But despite the disorder the union was in the ascendant, and Mayor Reed outlined its strong position to the Duke of Northumberland on April 16: the pitmen continued to stage mass meetings and in general talked

...confidently of their own Physical Strength and power, and hold the Magistrates Warrants and Civil and Military power in contempt... the pitmen go about in clusters, enter into the farm houses and help themselves to what is eatable...⁵⁰

Factories were lying idle for want of coals, affecting shipping and employment. Reed, anticipating further disorder, requested military reinforcements, arguing that

...the security of lives and immense property depends upon prompt measures. I shall most willingly discharge my duties with energy... but I cannot feel

myself accountable for the result, which must be hazardous and very uncertain...

Disorder was a major problem for the union because to win the dispute it needed the support of uncommitted public opinion, and the activities of the 'turbulent' men damaged their case. The example of Hetton provides a graphic illustration of this problem: Thomas Hepburn worked there and was well known to the men, who had elected him leader, and indeed the union came to be known as Hepburn's Union because of his personal standing, yet it was precisely the Hetton men who committed some of the worst excesses early in the strike.⁵¹ The American historian Jaffe, who sees Hetton as akin to a wild west frontier town, explains this apparent contradiction by the 'turbulent' men's recognition of the need for leadership:

...in times of social and economic distress other members of the mining community tended to look toward the Methodists when their skills or attributes were needed... these 'serious' people were thrust forward to articulate demands, not necessarily to provide spiritual leadership...⁵²

The problem can be characterised in terms of two co-existing cultures in the mining communities: religion and drink. Hepburn himself like most delegates was a Primitive Methodist 'ranter' preacher, but if such adherents of non-conformist religion made up a significant proportion of the pit community then so too did confirmed drinkers, who could not be relied upon to listen to the strictures of teetotal preachers however wise the advice proffered might be. This was despite what the Hammonds describe as the 'almost wearisome' regularity of pleas by Hepburn and others for peace and order.⁵³ Whilst such pleas were obviously directed towards the 'turbulent' pitmen, the fact that they were so openly voiced was at least partly for public consumption: for without any other means of finance the pitmen were almost completely dependent upon charitable support from the public, and the frequent open calls for order had the propaganda purpose of demonstrating the union leaders' condemnation of disorderly behaviour. Regardless of whether they were successful in this object, it is plain from the continuing level of disorder that such calls had only a limited restraining effect upon the men. This inability to keep effective central control caused continual problems, hence Colls' comment that Hepburn 'was

never such a complete master of the collieries as he was of the Cock Inn'.⁵⁴

On the night of April 17, Chirton, Bedlington and Netherton collieries were attacked and some pitmen visited the home of an unpopular viewer at Cowpen.⁵⁵ Two nights later they attacked Jesmond pit, wrecked the pithead gear and 'levelled a house to the ground in which an overman lived' whilst a nearby colliery 'had the rope, which hangs down into the pit, burnt in two'.⁵⁶ The Northumberland JPs issued a notice warning that any pitman convicted of riot 'shall suffer Death as a Felon', and a plea from the Duke of Northumberland to the Home Office for more troops was met with the despatch of HMS Samarang with eighty marines.⁵⁷ Mayor Reed issued handbills in Newcastle seeking volunteers as special constables, but the *Newcastle Chronicle* noted that

...it perhaps affords the best proof of the state of public feeling in this town to state that so few offered themselves that the Mayor afterwards sent round to request persons, and ultimately summoned them, to be sworn in, contrary to their wish...⁵⁸

The report concluded, 'we have not met with anyone who does not highly disapprove of such a course': this unwittingly oblique reference strongly suggests that in the struggle for public sympathy, and despite the misdemeanours of some of their number, the pitmen had the edge over their employers.

On the Wear the wounding of 'a man on guard over the Fatfield pit' prompted a meeting of Durham JPs at Houghton to detach soldiers now stationed there to local pits, and leading magistrate Lord Durham insisted on forcing open strike-bound pits beginning with his own Lumley colliery. One problem in the lower Wear area was the absence of a resident magistrate and it was suggested that local viewers should be sworn in, but there was antagonism to this idea: Losh said they were neither 'acceptable (as brethren) to the present magistrates nor in fact proper men for Justices of the Peace', and the Bishop of Durham too felt they 'were not proper persons to act as Justices'.⁵⁹ Mounting local concern at the general situation was expressed by Losh to Home Secretary Lord Melbourne on April 19. He complained of the

inadequacy of the civil force, which was unable to combat 'thousands of men organised' who 'calculate on the weakness of the military force', concluding, 'I have witnessed many similar disturbances, but none so determined and outrageous; without a speedy reinforcement of military force, it is impossible to answer for the consequences'.⁶⁰

The strike was consolidated as it spread north through Northumberland. An engine at Bedlington was destroyed and deputations went as far as Berwick to extend the strike. By April 23 the pits west of Alnwick had been stopped and the strike even involved other workers there as, according to the Duke of Northumberland, 'the collieries and Iron works are stopped from working, the men are sworn in to the Union, and all hopes of their being persuaded to return to labour seems now quite at an end'.⁶¹ The Duke attributed 'the increasing tendency to discontent and Riot [to]... the arrival of Radical Leaders from Manchester' (perhaps from the Manchester Union of the Working Classes - see Chapter Five), but contrast this and the alarming reports from Reed, Durham and Losh, with Bouverie's assessment of April 26:

...I find the colliers perfectly peaceable in their behaviour altho' they are all turn'd out, not a single Colliery in this neighbourhood on either side of the river being at work, there are a great number of processions and meetings, but everything is conducted in the most orderly manner, and they are extremely civil when met with upon the road...⁶²

Bouverie was a seasoned career soldier 'well aware of the difference ususally existing between industrial disputes and political disaffection... [who] provided the central government with cool observation and sensible advice'.⁶³ Whilst reported disturbances were no doubt genuine they were also exaggerated, and if the public perception was like Bouverie's, that the pitmen were 'perfectly peaceable', then the accusations against them may have seemed unconvincing, a point later openly admitted by the *Durham Advertiser*. But what is also clear is that the pitmen's position was strengthening, as Reed's report to the Home Office on April 24 confirmed:

...at present there is not a colliery between the Tees and Tweed at work, the keelmen are destitute of employment, the sailors are in a similar situation as the collier ships are laid up as soon as they enter the port, all the extensive manufactories upon the Tyne - are at a stand for want of coals, nay even in the town and adjacent counties they have not a coal fire in many houses...⁶⁴

Abortive Negotiations.

On April 23 the union delegates, apparently confident of their position, asked the owners for negotiations. With one newspaper reporting that coals from Berwick were now 'actually' selling at South Shields such confidence was well-founded, and indeed Sweezy comments that

...the tie-up appears to have been nearly complete. The price of coal which had been falling rapidly during the first four months of the year, turned up. Between the first market day in April and the first... in May, Stewart's Wallsend rose in London from 29s to 35s per London chaldron...⁶⁵

Subsequent studies have shown that prices rose over twenty-two per cent during the strike, prompting Jones to suggest that in this the owners had achieved their 'real aim'.⁶⁶

Seven delegates and seven viewers met at the Turks Head, Newcastle, on April 29, but nothing was agreed except to reconvene the ensuing Tuesday after consulting their respective bodies. The delegates however, aware that the continuing stalemate meant the 'refractory' pitmen would act again the next night, warned the viewers 'that they could not answer for the Peaceable Conduct of the Body'.⁶⁷ Bouverie was meanwhile under pressure from the Earl of Durham to assist in forcing open collieries, and on April 27 Lumley was set to work. Subsequently on Saturday April 30 'a very large body of pitmen assembled from all Quarters and from both Rivers' to try to stop the pit, but the magistrates had been forewarned and the arrival of extra troops and a reading of the Riot Act defused the situation.⁶⁸ This incident and weekend disturbances in Durham City did not augur well for the readjourned negotiations on Tuesday May 3.⁶⁹ The meeting lasted four hours and a time of binding was agreed, but the delegates rejected proposals on putters' prices and an offer of ten days work per fortnight with a minimum wage of 28s, holding out instead for eleven days and/or 30s. The viewers however noted a marked change in the temper of the delegates, possibly as a result of events at Lumley:

...Their tone and manner was not so courteous as at the former Meeting, and Hepburn appeared to be labouring under great mental agitation during the whole time of the Meeting... It was also evident that he did not possess the same degree of authority over his Colleagues, as at the former Meeting. At

Parting, they declared that they would give up their office as Delegates, and leave the Body of Men to pursue their own Course, adding that the Country might take, or look to the consequences...

The latter may have been bluff, but their changed manner perhaps reflected the pressure of conducting a dispute so affecting the life of the region, and the reference to Hepburn may raise questions as to his strength of nerve. But of immediate importance was the fact that negotiations had failed, and the owners' response was not conciliatory: at a general meeting the next day chaired by Londonderry they resolved that 'no good can come of such meetings' with the delegates, and to 'limit their efforts to treating with the men belonging to their respective collieries'.⁷⁰ Though the men were all organised at their own collieries, this tactic of division would be 'the best mode of breaking up the union' and in the meantime the owners hoped to force open more pits in the manner of Lumley.⁷¹ A list of minimal uniform concessions was agreed but the owners refused to budge on the 30s, the eleven days, or the system of fines.⁷²

The failure of negotiations met with 'an increased degree of irritation' from the men. A 'vast many' of their families were 'in a state of distress... and that distress must increase every day', said Bouverie. The owners were apparently calculating on starving the men back to work and if Bouverie was correct, were approaching a point when they might be successful.⁷³ It was against this background that another mass meeting of pitmen was held on May 5 at Black Fell: this was most notable however for the intervention of Lord Londonderry with two troops of cavalry, who ordered the meeting to disperse and threatened to read the Riot Act:⁷⁴

...The assemblage was therefore thrown into great confusion, and the consequences might have been serious... [but Hepburn] coolly held his handkerchief up, the signal for order: and it was obeyed as implicitly as if he had been the general of a perfectly disciplined force. The Marquis, who had seen a deal of active service, is said to have exclaimed when he saw this, "I never saw one man have so much influence over a body of men as this fellow has!"...⁷⁵

Hepburn's intervention impressed Londonderry and though he still insisted the meeting should disperse, he 'thought that as so much had been negotiated, it was as

impolite as absurd not to bring matters to a final adjustment'. He thus invited the delegates to Newcastle for private discussions, where he offered 30s for a 10 day fortnight and implied that the fines could be reduced.⁷⁶ Both points apparently met with the delegates' approval and a general meeting of owners was subsequently convened on May 6, despite their having resolved only two days earlier to eschew negotiations with the union.⁷⁷

The owners came up with two questions for a deputation of viewers to put to the delegates. True to Londonderry's offer of 30s for 10 days and his undertaking to review the fines the owners now offered the same - but only on condition that the pitmen abandon the remainder of their eight grievances, and agree to bind on the very terms offered on March 19 which had precipitated the strike. The owners secondly enquired whether the pitmen at each colliery would bargain with their employers without reference to the general union. This all suggested that the owners would still only settle on terms beneficial to themselves, and were therefore perhaps still confident that they could ultimately break the strike by causing divisions amongst the men over whether to accept the carrot of 30s for 10 days.

The delegates promptly responded with the unambiguously-titled handbill, 'An Appeal to the Public from the Pitmen'.⁷⁸ The offer of 30s for 10 days was unacceptable, they said, because they had already negotiated agreement with the owners on five of their eight original grievances: and as for the men making separate deals at each colliery, this would not be acceptable until the eight points had been redressed. The delegates then went on to detail the progress made upon each of the eight points thus far to demonstrate the concessions the union had been willing to make to reach agreement. The implication was that sensible reciprocal concessions on the three outstanding points could now quickly settle the dispute, and that the owners' suggestion of a deal based on the March 19 terms was unrealistic if not preposterous, and would only exacerbate the situation.

On the first point, the union had agreed to fourteen days' notice in the event of eviction from their cottages, rather than their previous insistence that

the eviction provision be withdrawn from the bond altogether. Secondly, as to putter's renks for which they had asked 1s 4d for the first 60 yards, the union had agreed to the owners' proposal of 1s 2d for 80 yards with 1d increments for unspecified increases thereover, with an extra payment for 'heavy putting' in bad conditions. Thirdly, as to boys' working hours, the owners had offered to draw coals for only twelve hours each day provided the boys were in place underground half an hour before drawing commenced, to which the union agreed. There were no conditions as to the fourth point concerning the annual binding, which it was agreed should be held at the usual time, and the union also accepted the owners' undertaking on the fifth point of corf sizes, 'to have the Corves made less when they get too large, or made larger, when they get too little'. In relative terms however these were minor points which involved little expense to the owners, whereas the three outstanding matters had rather greater financial implications for them. These concerned fines, working days and wages, and the criteria for laying the pit idle, each of which played an integral role in attuning colliery operations to a fluctuating coal market.

Fines, though ostensibly required to maintain the quality of mined coal, were believed by the pitmen to have become a means for the owners to effectively confiscate the saleable coal contained in a corf penalised for a small sub-standard coal or stone content. The men therefore asked that they be fined only for the actual quantity of foul coal rather than for the whole corf, but the owners stipulated varying fines of 6d, 1s, 'and sometimes more' per corf, which the union refused to accept. Even if penalised corves only constituted say five per cent of a hewer's output, on a colliery-wide scale this could be a significant determinant of the profitability or otherwise of any given concern. On working days and basic pay rates there was apparently less difference, as the men had seemed willing to accept 30s for 10 days rather than their original demand of 33s for 11 days. The owners' benefit in offering only 10 days would accrue from not having to pay compensation when the pit was laid idle on the eleventh day, but by making this conditional on

all other grievances being dropped they rendered this proposal unacceptable to the men.

Probably the most vital point for the owners however was the demand that the pits be laid idle only on *bona fide* operational grounds, to the exclusion of their proviso 'or from any other cause': this was crucial because the temporary suspension of mining operations was the single most important means by which the owners regulated coal production to suit the requirements of a sluggish market. Overproduction would otherwise lead to stockpiling and a glut of coal which would reduce market prices and thence profits, and if the owners had to keep on paying the pitmen for an increasingly unsaleable product, insolvency and bankruptcy might be the ultimate consequence. For the owners this was therefore a crucial issue which addressed their cartel's very *raison d'etre* and one which, apart from increased seasonal demand and/or reduced competition, it seems debate with the union could at best only temporarily resolve. The fundamental contradiction of this point was that in short, the owners regarded laying pits idle to match market conditions as legitimate, whereas for the pitmen it was emphatically unacceptable.

This aside however, it does seem that the owners were still reluctant to reach any settlement and maintained hopes of breaking the strike. The delegates thus felt, as they explained in their 'Appeal to the Public', that they should hold out for a more honourable solution than the owners' conditional offer. The intended impression of the handbill was undoubtedly to contrast the purportedly realistic and pragmatic approach taken by the union with the disingenuous response manifested by the owners' proposal, as was neatly summarised in the delegates' conclusion to their handbill:

...upon five of the points in dispute, the Pitmen had agreed to the Proposals of the Owners. But because the Pitmen have not given up the remaining Points, the Owners now want them to come to the Terms offered on the 19th of March, before any of the above Points were adjusted. From this plain Statement, the Public will be able to judge between us, and see which Party has made the most Concession...

The philosophy behind the union's public relations efforts is encapsulated in this extract: the object in hand was directly to address the public in the manner of

an open jury whom, without having made any categorical statement as to the merits of de-merits of either side, the union invited to 'judge' for themselves as to 'which Party has made the most Concession'. Contrast such subtle and skilful sweet reasonableness with the impression created by the coercive tactics of the owners and it is small wonder that the union was apparently able to out-manoeuvre them in the propaganda stakes, for when the union declined their offer of May 6 the owners' attitude only hardened further: they determined that a patrol of special constables be set up at each colliery to 'observe the movements of the men... so that Meetings at Particular Points may be prevented', and it was resolved to compel all the bound men to return to work.⁷⁹ Bouverie believed he now had sufficient force to prevent 'open violence' and with Lumley still working, agreed to force open two more pits at Wallsend and Willington, whilst elsewhere Dragoons were deployed to prevent Tyne pitmen from stopping the small working collieries in the Morpeth and Alnwick area.⁸⁰

The effects of the strike were by now extensive. Coal was shipped into the Tyne from Scotland, Berwick and the Tees, and hundreds of people were 'daily gathering coal-dust from the old pit-heaps at Elswick'.⁸¹ Mayor Reed described the scene on the Tyne on May 11:

...I found all tranquil on the River, and except upon two or three Ballast heaps where 15 or 20 were collected on each, not a Pitman was to be seen. The Manufactories were dormant - no craft upon the River, and the Ships lying up...

Londonderry was growing increasingly desperate to get his men back to work, as heavy borrowing in developing Seaham as a port facility combined with his notorious habitual personal extravagance meant he was facing 'serious cash problems'. He believed his bankers were trying 'to buy their way cheaply into the trade, over the bodies of bankrupts' and, anxious that his mines should be generating income, promptly invited his own men to meet him at Penshaw on May 7.⁸² The general consensus of the owners' May 6 meeting was, said Londonderry, that 'we were all to treat with our own people', and he thus offered his pitmen the terms he had put to

the delegates on May 5.⁸³ These were not at the expense of other points and Londonderry's only quibble concerned the fines, which he said 'must be left to my honor'.⁸⁴ He then left for Ireland to assist in his son Lord Castlereagh's election campaign, leaving directions with his viewers

...to settle my arrangements with my men, in a manner and spirit consistent with firmness, [and] at the same time to afford due and proper payment to the various inferior details with which my colliers were dissatisfied...⁸⁵

His pitmen did not accede, but Londonderry's move caused consternation amongst the owners, not least Lord Durham.⁸⁶ Londonderry had merely taken the May resolutions to their logical conclusion, but his offer produced in the pitmen 'an upsurge of confidence... in the justification of their claims and in their ultimate chance of success', and the Hetton Company's and Lord Durham's pitmen 'immediately demanded the same terms'.⁸⁷ The confidence of the Wear men was not however echoed on the Tyne, where it seems hardship and the failure of the May 6 talks was inducing some men to consider a return to work: a certain disunity was evident between the men of the two rivers, and the number of delegates from Hetton and Londonderry's collieries were consequently doubled for the pitmen's delegate meeting of May 10, 'for the purpose of outvoting the Tyne men on the question of binding immediately'. The Wear delegates were evidently successful as it was resolved that no pitman should bind until terms were agreed at every pit, but further divisions were about to open.⁸⁸

According to Colls, Londonderry's financial problems were so pressing that he saw the only solution as being 'to sell as much coal as he could without too much concern for owner solidarity': thus, with his pitmen still declining his offer, on May 12 he granted all their demands whereupon they agreed to bind, causing further splits amongst the pitmen.⁸⁹ Londonderry's Penshaw Colliery was visited by a party of Durham's Newbottle men, who sought 'to stop the Binding, but they were repulsed by the Pensher men'. The Newbottle and Hetton men were said to have panicked and also signed their bonds, leaving the Tyne men 'in the worst humour possible': but

Londonderry's men were no sooner bound than on strike again, as 'in consequence of the pitmen having succeeded so completely all the other branches of colliery workmen are uniting and going on strike... through the persuasion, it is understood, of the Delegates'.⁹⁰ By bringing in ancillary trades such as enginemen, carpenters and banksmen to stop the pits, the bound men could avoid legal obligations to work. Londonderry had thus given his men all their demands for no immediate gain: the dispute had moreover escalated, damaging the owners' tenuous unity and leaving them with the sole comfort that Londonderry's move had also split the union, which they had fruitlessly sought to achieve for weeks. Reed, Bouverie and the Duke of Northumberland all now felt that 'the other collieries upon the Wear will be obliged to follow [Londonderry]... and that the Coal Owners upon the Tyne must also acquiesce'.⁹¹

Accordingly on May 14, only two days after Londonderry, Lord Durham also gave in and his pitmen commenced to bind. This was a particular blow to Hetton, which now faced the desertion of its men to the Londonderry and Durham collieries where better terms were on offer, and the owners hurriedly resolved none should bind any Hetton hewer without the permission of the Hetton owners.⁹² As anticipated however, Durham's bindings also compelled other owners to independently increase their prices from 28s to 30s for a ten-day fortnight, which it seems was enough to get smaller pits like Jesmond back to work. But more ominously the owners now began to act on their earlier decision to evict unbound men from their houses, the *Newcastle Chronicle* commenting with disapproval that 'coercion is now to be resorted to'.⁹³ On May 16 evictions commenced at Newbottle, Tyne Main, Hebburn and Percy Main, eviction notices were issued at Hetton, and several Coxlodge pitmen were turned out, 'their furniture bundled to the door'.⁹⁴ For the *Chronicle* this simply resulted in 'a more alarming aspect for the peace of the neighbourhood', with confrontations arising from attempts to stop pits which had resumed working. A battle between bound men and strikers at South Shields was only averted by the appearance of a party of marines,

on May 17 'an immense number of men' attacked Hebburn, and a pitman accidentally died in a fall whilst pursued by Yeomanry at Willington.⁹⁵

Reed wrote on May 18 that 'the business assumes a more gloomy aspect, more especially upon the south side of the Tyne, and the Wear'. Collieries which had resumed work had struck again and there had been further developments on the night of May 17:

...About 9 o'clock... I observed groups of 20 to 30, and in some more of Men in various parts of the Streets in Newcastle, and there appeared great excitement among the people... they chiefly consisted of Pitmen who were turned out of their Houses... the lodging Houses and spare rooms will be occupied by these deluded people... I am sorry to add that the Keelmen have partially joined, and that my information this day leads me to apprehend that the sailors are about to rise...⁹⁶

Reed's response was to order four parties of constables to patrol the streets during the night. Whilst Bouverie believed the evictions to be 'proper and necessary' he recognised they would anger the pitmen, and thus ordered yet more troops to Newcastle.⁹⁷

No uniform return to work was yet taking place but the general strike policy had been abandoned, and the pitmen were settling with their owners wherever possible. Having effectively won the battle on the Wear, the pitmen played on the vulnerability of the smaller concerns to maximise their gains as the owners' unity evaporated and they regressed to what Jones calls a 'state of anarchy' akin to the early bindings.⁹⁸ Working unionists were limiting output and financially supporting the strikers against their owners, Londonderry's men donating a quarter of their wages and Durham's limiting earnings to 3s per day, whilst on the Tyne some strikers on May 20

...laid off some of the Collieries... which had agreed with their Masters, and gone to work, because the Men had agreed for lower prices than the Union think they ought to accept. They... also compelled certain Coalowners to discuss such petty agents as were obnoxious to them, and to hire all the ringleaders and Blackguards...⁹⁹

Buddle looked upon the deteriorating situation with utter dismay. He felt the owners should resist the men's demands, but as Londonderry's viewer he was 'acutely

compromised' by his Lordship's capitulation.¹⁰⁰ Buddle dutifully fulfilled his obligations to Londonderry but abhorred the suggestion that he should submit to his own Wallsend men, and said in no uncertain terms that he was

...determined not to yield... to the unreasonable demands of these ruffians... it would be known through the Trade of both Rivers, in a few hours... such a disgraceful defeat... will be the death of me... I will quit the Trade and emigrate to America rather than crouch to them...¹⁰¹

Buddle's determination to resist the men's demands made him the object of their hatred. He wrote on May 19:

...I shall be very happy if your Lordship will explain your motives for yielding to the pitmen's terms... I am beset, hooted and hissed and my life threatened wherever I go... under the impression that I have stood in the way of their obtaining their wishes... This is all very disagreeable, yet I dispute it, as I have all along acted on principle and will continue to do so... If I live, I will see this brush over, but it will be for serious consideration whether I shall ever again place myself in such a position...¹⁰²

Buddle was evidently disenchanted with Londonderry, whose selfish actions had placed him in such danger. This feeling was shared by other owners including James Losh, who wrote that 'nothing can exceed the folly of the Marquis of Londonderry except his wrong-headed obstinacy and his perverted selfishness'.¹⁰³ But Londonderry unrepentantly answered his critics after an anonymous attack in the *Sun*:¹⁰⁴

...The decision of the trade was to uphold all the great and essential points, and as far as that goes I have zealously and anxiously endeavoured to act with them... but I am yet to learn that I am circumscribed from not exercising my separate opinion on points arising out of new events, and out of the discussions of the 4th, 5th and 6th [May] instant...

Londonderry argued that as he had not been circulated with the owners' resolutions of March 19 to which they now wished to hold him, he was not bound by them: and accused of binding men from other pits, he deflected the charge towards Buddle, saying he 'did not think in conscience or in justice that I could act better than "to leave the details of this business to my own respectable viewer"'. His actions are described by Jones as opportunistic and ill-considered, but this could equally be said of Lord Durham:¹⁰⁵ had he too not panicked, circumstances might yet have worked in the owners' favour with hardship forcing the men back to work.

Buddle despaired at the prices granted by the Wear collieries. Only a week earlier the Tyne delegates had seemed ready to end the strike and the pitmen's unity was looking precarious. The binding of Londonderry's men had 'shocked the union almost as much as it shocked the Trade', but Lord Durham's subsequent capitulation had reversed a potentially disastrous situation for the pitmen. For Buddle, the consequences of the Wear owners' actions were all too clear: the union, despite its problems, was

...by no means broken - but it is more firmly united than ever - all the pitmen who have bound and gone to work are bound by the articles of their union to give up one quarter of their earnings to help support those men who are unbound, 'til they compel their masters to yield to such terms as they themselves dictate... At present the pitmen have complete dominion over all the collieries except those where the military are stationed and are more riotous and insolent than ever as many of their families are starving...¹⁰⁶

There was still no general or uniform return to work, but the owners' continuing disarray meant they were now effectively beaten.

End of the Strike.

With the *Newcastle Chronicle* of May 21 describing the want of coal as 'an evil of the most serious importance', Bouverie felt 'the temper of the pitmen [was]... growing worse and their determination not to go work unless all their demands were conceded to them more firm and decided'.¹⁰⁷ John Brandling gave in to the South Shields men on May 20, and it was against this background that the owners tacitly admitted defeat when on May 21 they resolved that each owner may 'make such alterations in the Bond prices of the 19th March, as may be thought reasonable'.¹⁰⁸ Losh congratulated himself on 'forwarding an arrangement' with the pitmen but his view of his fellow owners was less flattering:

...The coalowners have throughout this troublesome business acted imprudently. They have pursued the direct contrary course to what I think right. They have been severe and haughty in their manner and talk, and feeble and uncertain in their mode of acting... [and] from a want of mutual confidence have never kept firm to agreements made with each other. This has enabled the pitmen, by uniting firmly, to beat them in detail, and in many respects to become their masters, to the serious loss of both parties...¹⁰⁹

If, as Losh confessed, the pitmen had beaten the owners in detail, was this not

tantamount to an admission of the accuracy of the pitmen's arguments, and a tacit acceptance of the justice of the union's case?

Jones accurately describes the owners' disunity as giving the union 'an illusion of central strength' which might not otherwise have prevailed, but the owners were nevertheless, said Jaffe, 'routed'.¹¹⁰ The pattern of the return to work during late May and June was one of an initial settlement and binding followed by walkouts to force further improvements. And where the owners refused to settle, according to Buddle the 'turbulent' pitmen resorted to disorder with

...[a] system of terror and annoyance... against the Viewers and Agents of all the colls. which have not complied... Men assemble in the night dressed in Women's clothes, fire guns and pistols, break their Windows, destroy their Gardens etc...¹¹¹

Hetton settled on May 25 and by late May a general drift back to work was under way, but other workers were still suffering from the effects of the strike: in Newcastle All Saints' Parish alone more than 150 keelmen applied for poor relief in one week at the end of May, and the Mayor's measures to placate the seamen involved a public meeting at Newcastle Guildhall on May 23 to establish a 'Tyne Seamen's Relief Fund'.¹¹²

Because each owner was left to settle with his own pitmen, there was no general settlement and there is little definitive evidence of the various local deals which were made, but we may assume from the comments of the owners and viewers that the pitmen secured most if not all of their aims. The Duke of Northumberland put the average advance of wages at around ten per cent, but Sweezy's estimate of thirty per cent presumably takes into account the increased earnings accruing from being in full employment, as opposed to the underemployment of previous years: Jones states that the pits had been laid idle 'in most cases for at least a third of the year between February 1830 and February 1831', but if this were not the case then the Duke of Northumberland's estimate of a ten per cent increase would be nearer the mark, reflecting the rise in the guaranteed minimum wage from, in most cases 28s to somewhere between 30s and 33s.¹¹³ Some deals the owners had made with their men were

not at all to the Duke's liking however, as he complained that

...[i]n some cases a precipitate and absolute concession has been made to the demands of the Pitmen - more I apprehend in the eagerness of Mercantile Zeal, than from any positive and impending intimidation...¹¹⁴

By June 1 only five of the twenty-two pits in Northumberland were still on strike, yet the Duke was still nervous at reports from the Wear, and dreaded 'renewed discontent' in Northumberland.¹¹⁵

In one last effort to limit the damage, the owners' meeting of June 1 resolved that no colliery should take on any more men until ten collieries still idle had resumed work. These were later invited to discuss possible indemnification, but as the men returned to work those owners who had not settled with the union stood isolated. John Buddle, himself one of the last to settle, wrote that he and others who fought to the bitter end 'were likely to be left to their fate'.¹¹⁶ By early June most owners had decided that their immediate priority was to vend coal, and with the pitmen's victory virtually complete, on June 4 'the Union was fairly formed' as the 'Coal Miners' Friendly Society', with a rulebook and structure similar to its 1820s forerunner.¹¹⁷

The viewer Thomas Crawford wrote that the pitmen were well aware they had 'achieved a perfect triumph over their employers', as Buddle corroborated from his own experience:

...Pitmen have now found and established their power, and are devising magnificent plans for their further aggrandizement... I am complimented for having fought them fairly, like a Man. I was chaired by force last Friday Eveng. at W.end and was obliged to abscond on Sa. morning to avoid the honer of being drawn in grand procession from W.end to Newcastle...¹¹⁸

The Duke of Northumberland said the union was now 'in full force' and complained of the payments from working pitmen to those on strike. '£8 or 900£' had been shared out in the first week of June 'which averaged 7s 3d to those unemployed', indicating that 2500 or so pitmen were still on strike when the union was officially formed on June 4.¹¹⁹ By June 11 only the Earl of Durham's Newbottle Colliery remained out on the Wear, and the five striking Tyne collieries were 'still in a very turbulent

state'.¹²⁰ The Callerton owners paid two guineas binding money to tempt their men to work and Tyne Main was apparently the last colliery to settle, as late as June 24 still not having reached agreement.¹²¹

At working pits, coal production was limited to an earnings ceiling of 4s per hewer per day, most of the ancillary colliery trades had joined the union, and the men would not allow 'a Stranger who is not a regular-bred pitman to come amongst them on any account'.¹²² The men also attempted to control manning levels and at Hetton left off work for two days on June 12 when the owners tried to hire eight lead miners. And the *Durham Advertiser* reported with some incredulity that

...the Hetton men and some others are at this moment actually attempting to fix the prices which the farmers shall charge for their wheat, butter, milk, etc., and in some cases the rent which the landlord shall receive. They also require that women employed in the fields shall be paid 2/6d per day during harvest, and not less than 1/- per day at all other times; and they threaten punishment to the women if they accept inferior terms...¹²³

At Pittington and Rainton, where Buddle was chief viewer, the men were 'completely masters of the concerns', and even deputies and overmen were joining the union: Buddle concluded there was 'nothing left for the Viewers and Agents but to do the same'.¹²⁴ So complete was the pitmen's victory that the only source of solace for the owners might be the justice meted out to those 'turbulent' pitmen prosecuted for their misdemeanours, the toughest sentences going against seven Jarrow pitmen at Durham Summer Assizes for assault and theft.¹²⁵ The judge, Baron Justice Parke, said the pitmen's union was 'contrary to law' and 'highly dangerous to society', and because of the 'circumstances of cruelty' brought in a sentence of death: the seven were however spared but were transported for life to Australia.¹²⁶ Comparisons with the Tolpuddle Martyrs are inescapable though the Tolpuddle men were charged with administering illegal oaths rather than theft and assault.

On August 13 the pitmen held a meeting advertised as being 'for the Purpose of addressing His Majesty', at Boldon Fell. The attendance was put at 10 to 12,000 but there was little doubt that this was the pitmen's victory celebration. The men

arrived 'accompanied by bands of music' and 'bearing flags and banners... of the gayest description, nearly all being embellished with a painted design, and a motto more or less connected with the recent struggle'.¹²⁷ Hepburn exhorted the pitmen to good behaviour to maintain favourable public opinion, other speakers repeated the necessity of good conduct, and Hepburn was appointed a full-time paid official of the union. Hepburn moved a 'loyal address to the King' and closed the meeting with a vote of thanks to the public for their support during the strike, evidence that the pitmen's propaganda efforts had borne fruit. The assembly broke up 'with the finest order and regularity'.¹²⁸ This was the last great pitmen's meeting that summer, which because of its object of addressing the King on reform, Fynes describes as their 'First Political Demonstration'.¹²⁹

Aftermath and Reactions.

Despite the industrial nature of the dispute and the clear statement that there 'does not exist any political feeling whatever' amongst the pitmen, Mayor Reed and the Duke of Northumberland believed there to be sinister ulterior political motives.¹³⁰ To persuade the Home Office to send more troops, the Duke in particular made ominous references to 'rumours of Political agency' and the 'interference' of 'strangers' and 'radicals' from Manchester.¹³¹ The 'incessant demands' for reinforcements caused Commander Glascock of HMS Orestes to comment on 'the avidity with which the heads of departments in this district apply to government for naval or military aid', whilst Bouverie's view was that political agitation posed little threat to order, and the social peace of Tyneside was never seriously disturbed 'except when there were serious disputes between employers and workmen relating to specific practical industrial matters'.¹³²

Exaggerated press reports, particularly from the *Tyne Mercury* and *Durham Chronicle*, apparently cut little ice with the public and were contradicted by other accounts.¹³³ The *Durham Advertiser* for example remarked on May 13,

...[i]t is but justice to the body of colliers to say that they have conducted themselves with great forbearance, and though they have had several large meetings, not one act of violence or spoilation has to be recorded against them, either in going to or returning from such meetings...

The Hammonds comment that the delegates were 'on the whole successful in enforcing orderly conduct... the absence of serious outrage was remarkable ' with 17,000 men on strike. The pitmen's generally good conduct thus did much to win uncommitted public opinion to their side: that they enjoyed public support is evidenced by the appointment of tradesmen by the Wear pitmen to receive contributions from the public. Similarly, credit from local shopkeepers was important and the pitmen acknowledged such support at their victory meeting on August 13.¹³⁴

But if public support was crucial to their victory, the direct support of other groups of workers played little or no part. The seamen and keelmen were two groups thrown out of work by the strike but at no point joined it, nor were they in a position to support it financially, the seamen instead biding their time to skilfully use the dispute for their own ends.¹³⁵ Nor did pitmen from other coalfields join with or financially support the Tyne and Wear men, though the Wigan and Whitehaven pitmen themselves struck in August,¹³⁶ and suggestions that the pitmen brought other workers into the union are supported only by the Duke of Northumberland's reference to the Bedlington ironworkers.¹³⁷ The owners' attempts at coercion, culminating in the May evictions, only served to assist the pitmen's case, and the delegates' public statements were vital in exposing the owners' actions. The delegates' appeal of May 18 was particularly adept, portraying the owners as abandoning 'the Force of Argument' in favour of 'the Argument of Force':

...To accomplish their own sinister purposes, they have employed every means, every stratagem, in their power, but hitherto in vain - viz. hiring the Press to circulate statements which the least boy that enters the Coal Mine can contradict - threatening to starve us! - swearing in Special Constables to intimidate us! - calling up the Yeomanry Cavalry and bringing troops, both horse and foot, from various parts of the Kingdom, and also some Naval force. - In some cases the Riot Act has been threatened to be read amongst us, when peaceably assembled to discuss our grievances! All this has been done with a view to intimidate us, and, we believe, to excite us to a breach of the peace; but, thank God, hitherto without any effect, or indeed any prospect of accomplishing their wicked purposes...¹³⁸

Popular ballads and poems describing the strike, which were offered wholesale by local printers to hawkers and booksellers for widespread distribution, and the oratory abilities of public speakers were other facets of a publicity campaign which by most accounts appears to have convinced the public of the merits of the pitmen's case. The concerted leadership provided by the delegates was also indispensable to their success, and the title 'Pitmen's Union' became synonymous with the name of its chairman, Thomas Hepburn. But Hepburn did not have sufficient authority to exercise effective central control, and because 'the union leaders were not in full control of all their followers' the gains of the strike proved to be short-lived.¹³⁹ Indeed it might be argued that in no mining dispute did the pitmen again achieve such sweeping successes until 1974.

The owners were appalled at the pitmen's victory and worried as to where it might lead. Crawford complained that the men 'won't obey the overseer's and viewer's directions', that the delegates met every Saturday in Newcastle 'to issue their instructions', and that the pitmen were 'constantly holding meetings'. Moreover, with all the men back at work the union would amass 'a fearful fund', and their manner and bearing was to Crawford's utter distaste:

...I conceive the worst feature in the whole matter, to be that religious fanaticism which prevails among the Pitmen... the delegates are chiefly Ranter-Preachers, who have acquired a considerable fluency and even in some cases considerable proficiency in public speaking... the delegates have been regularly chaired in the same style as an MP, and of course long speeches are delivered by them - giving inflated accounts of the victory they have obtained over their oppressors... The Great Mass are excessively ignorant and therefore become the ready tools of these designing individuals...¹⁴⁰

Likewise, the Duke of Northumberland complained of 'the great and prominent evil - "The Organisation"', suggesting a renewal of the Combination Acts might be desirable, but Losh believed it would be possible to manage the pitmen should the owners 'act honestly and cordially' together.¹⁴¹ Defeat was taken hardest however by Buddle. His Wallsend Colliery was the last pit from which military protection was withdrawn, but his insistence that the union be opposed to the last had brought criticism from smaller owners who could not afford to resist. Thus he complained of the rough ride he received from both pitmen and owners,

...on account of having been the chief opposer of the union and for having opposed the coalowners in their wish to comply with the demands of the men. I have certainly been guilty of this crime and am a victim of my integrity and efforts to pressure the trade from a state of anarchy and ruin into which it seems rapidly to be falling... I certainly will be cautious how I again commit myself in supporting the cause of those who have not the moral courage to support themselves...¹⁴²

This was aimed in particular at Londonderry, and so upset was Buddle by the defeat that in late July he suffered a nervous breakdown and had to leave the region to recuperate.

Londonderry, with the pitmen a co-author of Buddle's breakdown, remained seemingly nonplussed by events. His expensive port venture at Seaham Harbour was opened at the end of July 1831, and with his collieries at full work his financial crisis eased. He felt it hard that 'a majority of voices' had tried to force him to reconsider his concessions to his men, but appears to have been immune to criticism of his role in ending the strike.¹⁴³ Indeed this raises a point perhaps overlooked by those who have variously characterised Londonderry as an opportunist and an aristocratic tyrant. Though such descriptions may be valid the fact is that of all the owners it was Londonderry who was willing to concede terms, particularly stressing that all minor points with which his men were unhappy should be redressed.¹⁴⁴ This at least suggests he might be worthy of the paternalistic reputation which he liked to think he deserved, though his refusal of an appeal by his men in 1844 to arbitrate between the pitmen and other owners tends to negate such claims.¹⁴⁵

That the owners would counter-attack was inevitable. They deeply resented the diminution of their authority but with the pits at work and demand for coal strong, the coalfield settled into an uneasy truce. Crawford's letter to Bouverie probably expressed the feeling of most owners and viewers:

...The Coalowners must again possess the proper authority and control that Masters ought to have over Servants... my own Opinion is that matters will go on for the present year in the present unsatisfactory state, and then a stand will be again made... The Battle must be fought over again sooner or later...¹⁴⁶

Jones comments that it was in Londonderry's capitulation that the seeds of the 1832

dispute lay, but her view that it is open to question how much of the union's success 'was due to force of circumstance rather than to forward planning' is too tentative: Jaffe's remark that a 'spontaneous system of union support' was 'jerry-rigged' towards the end of the strike is closer to the mark, and suggests that the pitmen's victory had everything to do with force of circumstance and little to do with forward planning.¹⁴⁷ But in the interim the pitmen were able to consolidate their gains: a significant wage increase, reduced hours, and changes in the yearly bond had halted years of deterioration.

The significance of the 1831 strike however lay perhaps less in the pitmen's success than the advance it represented in terms of disciplined organisation and action. Traditional protest forms of rioting and wrecking had in 1810 given way to more civilised but *ad hoc* organisation and action; this in turn was superseded in the 1820s by a formal established body with printed rules and regulations, but this had failed to act in uniformity and consequently did not flourish; it was not until 1831 that a formal general organisation was married with uniform action, and as such the 1831 strike was a watershed, symbolically as well as in fact, and marked a qualitative change in industrial relations in the coalfield. That the owners were disunited at the very point when the new union emerged was instrumental in the pitmen's success, but they had nonetheless succeeded in their aims and developed an organisational formula which their successors were to emulate for decades to come. Subsequent generations have since justifiably regarded 'Hepburn's Union' and the 1831 strike as marking the end of the pitmen's prehistory, and the beginning of their modern trade union history.¹⁴⁸

NOTES TO CHAPTER ONE.

- 1 Jones, 'Industrial Relations...', p.174: *Newcastle Courant*, June 5, 1830.
- 2 For Fynes, McIntosh was 'a bold, honest, intelligent man' whose emigration was forced by the men's unfounded suspicions, but contemporary evidence suggests he was not the innocent Fynes believed. R. Fynes, *The Miners of Northumberland and Durham*, (Sunderland, 1873), pp.16-17: *The Spirit of the Tyne and Wear...* (Hetton-le-Hole, 1832): Viewer Matthias Dunn later commented of the mid-1820s union that it 'continued with various interruptions 'til 1832' (*Gateshead Observer*, June 6, 1844), as the fact of 67 surviving members at Hetton in 1830 confirms.
- 3 See C.L. Jones, 'Experiences of a Strike: the North East Coalowners and the Pitmen, 1831-1832', *Pitmen, Viewers and Coalmasters: Essays in North East Coal Mining in the Nineteenth Century*, R.W. Sturgess (ed), North East Labour History Society, 1986, p.29: D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, February 19, 1828: *Newcastle Chronicle*, April 9, 1831: For example, Buddle publicly admitted reduced wages of 8s to 10s per week to the 1830 Commons Select Committee on the Coal Trade (PP, 633, VII, pp.66-67,274,315).
- 4 D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, March 26, 1831: Jones, 'Experiences of a Strike...' pp.174-6.
- 5 According to Galloway, by 1829 the compensation clause in the miners' bonds had been removed or was being disregarded (*Annals... Vol.1*, p.465).
- 6 Unionist writer 'Carbonarius' claimed (*Newcastle Chronicle*, May 16, 1832) to have a copy of a Coal Trade document dated September 8 1829, outlining such a policy. The owners denied this but comparison with Sweezy's account of the workings of the regulation (*Monopoly and Competition... Chapters VIII, IX*) shows that Carbonarius' claims were accurate: D/Lo/C 142, Rev. R.H. Brandling to Buddle, April 7, 1831: Eight hundred Lambton pitmen reportedly marched to petition Lord Durham in advance of the 1830 bindings, but were fobbed off with an under-viewer's promise to consider their complaints, and their petition was disregarded. This account appeared in an independent satirical magazine, the *Northern John Bull* (Newcastle, April 30, 1830), p.235, but is anecdotal and uncorroborated.
- 7 D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, March 7, 1831: Rapid price rises could be instrumental in sparking disputes, such as a 1789 pitmen's strike when colliery machinery was smashed at Shiremoor, Longbenton and Wallsend Collieries. See Ashton and Sykes, *The Coal Industry of the Eighteenth Century*, op.cit., p.127.
- 8 *Newcastle Chronicle*, January 15, 1831: This perhaps bears out Aspinall's point as to friendly societies providing a convenient subterfuge for otherwise uncounatenanced union activities (*Early English Trade Unions*, p.xxiv).
- 9 *Newcastle Courant*, March 5, 19, 1831: *Newcastle Chronicle*, March 5, 26, 1831: Jaffe, 'Economy and Community...', pp.234-5, 236-7. See also Jones, 'Industrial Relations...' p.169.
- 10 It was only 'the spectre of serious unrest, already awakened from slumber by chronic underemployment, that prevented the coal owners from reducing the earnings of the hewers even further by a direct cut in wage rates'. Jones, 'Experiences of a Strike...' p.30.
- 11 C[coal] T[rade] M[inute] B[ooks], General Minutes, March 12, 1831: *Newcastle Chronicle*, March 26, 1831: *Durham Advertiser*, March 25, 1831.

- 12 *Newcastle Chronicle*, March 26, 1831.
- 13 D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, April 13, 1831.
- 14 Northumberland County Record Office, Watson MSS, 1/5/91,92.
- 15 Handbill, 'An Appeal to the Public from the Pitmen', May 6, 1831, Watson MSS, 1/28/4. The 20-peck corf size was also described as '87.249ths imperial gallons'.
- 16 P.E.H. Hair, 'The Binding of the Pitmen of the North East, 1800-1809', *Durham University Journal*, December 1965, pp.1-2: Colls, *The Pitmen...* p.72.
- 17 Sources consulted include the Coal Trade Minute Books and other North of England Institute of Mining and Mechanical Engineers MSS held by Northumberland County Record Office, the Londonderry and National Coal Board Papers at Durham County Record Office, and miscellaneous papers relating to Buddle and to local collieries which are to be found in almost every academic and local history archive repository in the region. Jaffe's examination of the privately held Lambton Papers could find only fleeting reference to wages by viewer Henry Morton, and indeed Jaffe, whose 1984 Columbia Ph.D particularly addresses such economic aspects of the coalfield, pointedly comments (p.247) that the 'earnings records of Cowpen Colliery in Northumberland are some of the few such records to survive from this era'. Similarly Colls' exhaustive searches of primary sources reveal no other pay-bill evidence for these years, and Jones' chapter on the 1831-32 strikes in her 1985 Sunderland Ph.D neglects even the Cowpen wage-bills, resorting instead to generalised and contextual evidence in discussing wage levels. In this study a similar contextual approach is of necessity adopted, with due reference to the Cowpen pay-bills and the comments of Buddle, Morton, et al, which in the absence of all but the Cowpen evidence must assume added importance here. This is also the case with union correspondent 'An Old Pitman's' table of prices cited in the text, which though unofficial is of value in that it at least details the pitmen's perception of their position *vis-a-vis* wages, and is therefore reproduced here as Appendix Three.
- 18 Appendix Three comprises the table carried in a letter from 'An Old Pitman', *Newcastle Chronicle*, February 18, 1832: Jaffe, 'Economy and Community...' p.149.
- 19 PP, Children's Employment Commission (Mines), xvi (1842), p.586.
- 20 PP, Select Committee on the Coal Trade (1836), xi, p.118.
- 21 Jaffe, 'Economy and Community...', p.247.
- 22 NCRO, Watson/1/5/88.
- 23 Lambton Papers, Morton to Durham, March 16, 1831, cited in Jaffe, 'Economy and Community...' p.246.
- 24 *Newcastle Chronicle*, March 24, 1832.
- 25 *Newcastle Chronicle*, March 26, 1831.
- 26 CTMB, General Minutes, March 28 1831: *Tyne Mercury*, April 12, 1831.
- 27 Jones, 'Industrial Relations...' p.178.
- 28 HO 52/14, Reed to the Home Office, March 27, 1831. According to Colls (*The Pitmen...* p.90) and Jaffe ('Economy and Community...' p.254) the men were locked out after April 5, but Reed's news tends to contradict this: The six pits were Willington, Burdon Main, Percy Main, Heaton, Benwell and Coxlodge.

29 For examples of influential opinion inclining against employers, see Major-General Bouverie's attitude to the coal owners and pitmen later in this chapter; and RN Commander Glascock's view of the Tyne seamen and shipowners, in N. McCord, *North East England*, pp.86-87.

30 See Milne's book and his papers, 'The Tyne Mercury and Parliamentary Reform, 1802-1846', *Northern History*, 1978, p.237, and 'Strikes and Strikebreaking in North-East England, 1815-1844: The Attitude of the Local Press', *International Review of Social History*, 1968, pp.226-7,233,235,238,239: Thomas Hepburn himself favoured the *Newcastle Chronicle* (October 6, 1832), the Hetton pitmen had advertised in the *Courant* (June 5, 1830), and unionist writers patronised both the *Chronicle* and the *Courant*. It moreover seems that the *Chronicle* refused to print a letter from a colliery viewer except as a paid advertisement, apparently because it consisted of abuse against the union (NCB 1/JB/243, Francis Carr to Buddle, March 2, 1832).

31 See the *Mercury* and MSS Diary of Matthias Dunn (Newcastle Central Library), August to October, 1832: *Tyne Mercury*, April 24, 1832: *Newcastle Chronicle*, January 28, 1832.

32 Sweezy, op.cit., p.96: MSS note (ca. 1822) in *Speech of Mr Brougham Delivered on the Trial... The King v J.A. Williams for Libel on the Clergy*, p.2, Durham University Library: see also Milne, *The Newspapers...* p.50: Another contemporary testified that Durham, 'when Mr Lambton, established the Durham Chronicle in order to preserve his political influence... From first to last the paper cost him £15,000. This appears an incredible sum, but I have my information from one who has seen the accounts'. *The Larchfield Diary; Extracts from the Diary of the Late Mr Mewburn, First Railway Solicitor* (Darlington, 1876), p.21.

33 James Cannon (ed), '"On the road" one hundred years ago; a trade journey in 1830', *The Publisher's Circular and The Publisher and Bookseller*, February 23, 1935, p.253: The *Durham Chronicle* (September 22, 1843) later spoke of 'the years of fulsome adulation' which the *Advertiser* had heaped on Londonderry, and also in 1843 (when the *Advertiser* was, at last, taking a critical stance against Londonderry over his part in the return of John Bright as MP for the City), editor Francis Humble nevertheless agreed to insert self-justifying articles by Londonderry (NCRO, Bud/48/16, John Buddle's Place-Book, August 1,2, 1843).

34 *Newcastle Journal*, May 19, September 8,23, 1832,

35 Indeed a feature of the *Miners' Advocate*, published by the Miners' Association of Great Britain in the 1840s, were the many contributions from writers who were quite evidently *bona fide* pitmen. Later evidence of such propagandist aspirations was the *Miners' Advocate and Record* of 1873-74, brainchild of three Cleveland ironstone miners who ambitiously sought to represent 'the interests of the British mining community as well as the more diverse "interests of the poor"' (See Tony Nicholson, 'A Few Choice Spirits': *Working-Class Radicals in Cleveland, 1870-75*, Teesside Paper in North-Eastern History No. 3, University of Teesside, 1993).

36 Hughes, *Losh's Diaries*, II, p.113: Jaffe, 'Economy and Community...', p.246.

37 HO 40/29, Colonel Sir Henry Ross to Bouverie, April 4, 1831. Reed gave this information in confidence and was criticised when the owners discovered his indiscretion (D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, April 16, 1831).

38 Sweezy, *Monopoly and Competition*, p.95: 'Whenever they felt themselves aggrieved... a 'steek' took place... The men with whom the strike commenced visited all the neighbouring collieries; and on their arrival at each pit, they hung on a corf, filled with stones, at the same time hanging onto the clog. The weight of the corf moved the gin, and laid it in its side, thus rendering it totally unfit for use, and thereby putting a stop to all work for some time to come. This was the mode

then, generally resorted to, for compelling redress of grievances'. T. Wilson, preface to *The Pitmen's Pay*, (Gateshead, 1843).

39 D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, December 11, 1830: HO 40/29, Ross to Bouverie, April 4, 1831: *ibid.*, Bouverie to Home Office, April 7, 1831: Colls, *The Pitmen...* pp.250,252.

40 *Durham Advertiser*, April 8, 1831.

41 HO 40/29, Ross to Bouverie, April 6, 1831: *Newcastle Chronicle*, April 9, 1831.

42 Colls, *The Pitmen...* pp.251,255: Morton complained that the magistrates were interfering, and Buddle that this had boosted the union (Lambton Papers, Morton to Durham, April 10, 1831, cited by Jaffe, 'Economy and Community...', p.256; D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, April 10, 1831).

43 CTMB, General Minutes, April 9, 1831.

44 See Buddle (*ibid.*, April 10, 1831) and Jones ('Industrial Relations...' p.173).

45 *Newcastle Chronicle*, April 16, 1831: CTMB, General Minutes, April 11, 1831.

46 Hammond, *The Skilled Labourer*, p.27: Colls, *The Pitmen...* p.251: NCB 1/JB, Londonderry to Buddle, April 12, 1831: CTMB, General Minutes, April 13, 1831: By the pitmen's account, the seven delegates representing the union at the Moot Hall were consequently victimised. Handbill, 'The Coal Owners and the Pitmen', Meeting of Delegates, Newcastle, May 18, 1831, Bell MSS, XI, 280.

47 Notice of meeting of Durham magistrates at Houghton-le-Spring, Bell MSS, XI: *Durham Advertiser*, April 15, 1831: HO 52/14, Reed to Northumberland, April 16, 1831: HO 52/14, Notice from Hetton Colliery Office, April 15, 1831.

48 'Appeal from 2800 Pitmen in the Neighbourhood of Houghton-le-Spring', April 16, 1831, Bell MSS, XI.

49 *Durham Chronicle*, April 16, 1831.

50 HO 52/14, Reed to Northumberland, April 16, 1831.

51 Colls, *The Pitmen...* p.248.

52 See J.A. Jaffe, 'The "Chiliasm of Despair" Reconsidered: Revivalism and Working-Class Agitation in County Durham', *Journal of British Studies*, 1989, pp.41,42, which addresses the role of methodists as pitmen's union leaders (see also his 'Economy and Community...', p.232). Jaffe follows David Hempton (*Methodism in British Society*, London, 1984, pp.74-76) in countering E.P. Thompson's theory that methodism was embraced by workers as a compensation for defeats, arguing that it was not 'chiliastic' but held a positive appeal because of its 'missionary optimism'.

53 J.L. and B. Hammond, *The Skilled Labourer*, *op.cit.*; p.27 (1979 edn).

54 Colls, *The Pitmen of the Northern Coalfield*, p.255.

55 HO 52/14, Longridge (manager of Bedlington Ironworks) to the Home Office, April 18, 1831: HO 52/14, Reed to Northumberland, April 19, 1831: Fynes, *The Miners of Northumberland and Durham*, p.21. They took all the food and drink from his house

but neither caused damage nor used violence. Next day the viewer received a letter informing him, 'yor not gan te get se much of your awn way, wer gan te hev some of wors now'. The local demands of the Cowpen men, outlined earlier in this chapter, appear sterile until seen in the light of the frustration evident in this letter.

- 56 Handbill, 'An Account of the Destruction at the Colliery Belonging to Rich. Burdon Sanderson, Esq., Jesmond, near Newcastle', Bell MSS, XI: HO 52/14, Reed to Northumberland, April 19, 1831.
- 57 Notice, 'Caution to Pitmen and Others...' Bell MSS, XI: HO 41/10, Lord Melbourne to Northumberland, April 20, 1831.
- 58 Newcastle Chronicle, April 23, 1831.
- 59 It might be noted here that the Bishop still held the power of appointment of JPs of the County Palatinate of Durham: HO 52/14, Reed to Northumberland, April 19, 1831: Welbourne, *The Miners' Unions of Northumberland and Durham*, p.31: HO 52/12, Durham to the Home Office, April 19, 1831. The troops were detached to Hetton (50), Great Lumley (40), Fatfield (40), and 40 at Rainton/Chilton Moor: Hughes, *Losh's Diaries*, II, pp.190,192.
- 60 HO 52/14, Losh to the Home Office, April 19, 1831.
- 61 HO 52/14, Northumberland to the Home Office, April 21,23, 1831: The inhabitants of Alnwick sent an address to the Home Office complaining at the inconvenience caused by the stoppage of the pits. HO 52/14, Smith and Hewitson (Alnwick magistrates) to the Home Office, April 26, 1831.
- 62 HO 52/14, Northumberland to the Home Office, April 18, 1831: HO 40/29, Bouverie to the Home Office, April 26, 1831.
- 63 N. McCord, 'The Government of Tyneside, 1800-1850', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th Series, Vol.20, p.18.
- 64 HO 52/14, Reed to the Home Office, April 24, 1831.
- 65 CTMB, Committee Minutes, April 23, 1831: *Durham Advertiser*, April 29, 1831: Sweezy, *Monopoly and Competition...* p.96.
- 66 PP, Report of the Commissioners on Coal Supply, 1871, XVIII, p.208: Jones, 'Industrial Relations', p.179.
- 67 CTMB, General Minutes, April 29, 1831. The delegates were Thomas Hepburn, Ralph Atkinson, Charles Parkinson, Alexander Birbeck, Robert Arkil or Dixon, Benjamin Pyle, and George Brown: The viewers were Buddle, Hill, Nicholas Wood, Crawford, Watson, Hunter, and Easton (*ibid.* April 25, 1831).
- 68 HO 40/29, Bouverie to the Home Office, April 24,26,30, 1831.
- 69 *Durham Advertiser*, May 6, 1831: HO 40/29, Bouverie to the Home Office, May 8, 1831: CTMB, General Minutes, May 3, 1831.
- 70 CTMB, General Minutes, May 4, 1831.
- 71 *Durham Advertiser*, June 3, 1831.
- 72 CTMB, General Minutes, May 4, 1831.

- 73 HO 40/29, Bouverie to the Home Office, May 5, 1831.
- 74 HO 40/29, Bouverie to the Home Office, May 8, 1831: Handbill, 'An Appeal to the Public from the Pitmen', May 6, 1831, Watson MSS, 1/28/4.
- 75 *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, February 27, 1875.
- 76 *Durham Advertiser*, June 3, 1831. Londonderry's influence with the *Advertiser* (see note 33) suggests these details should be accurate.
- 77 CTMB, General Minutes, May 6, 1831.
- 78 Handbill, 'An Appeal to the Public...' op.cit..
- 79 CTMB, General Minutes, May 6, 1831. In addition, the owners' committee was to sit from 11am to 3pm daily to receive and act upon reports from the collieries.
- 80 HO 40/29, Bouverie to the Home Office, May 5,8, 1831. The numbers of troops apportioned to Willington were 30 of the 3rd Light Dragoons, 20 15th Infantry, and 22 Yeomanry, whilst Wallsend was allocated 44 Dragoons, 25 15th Infantry, and 20 Yeomanry, making a total of 161.
- 81 HO 52/14, Reed to Northumberland, May 18, 1831: Handbill, 'Just Arrived from Berwick... Household Coals...' May 18, 1831. Bell MSS, XI, 279: *Durham Advertiser*, May 13, 1831.
- 82 Colls, *The Pitmen...* p.90: Handbill, 'Lord Londonderry to his Pitmen', May 6, 1831. Bell MSS, XI.
- 83 *Durham Advertiser*, June 3, 1831.
- 84 Handbill, 'Lord Londonderry to his Pitmen', May 8, 1831. Bell MSS, XI, 300.
- 85 *Durham Advertiser*, June 3, 1831.
- 86 In a private letter to Cuthbert Sharp on May 12 1831, Durham wrote, 'I fear your friend Ld. L. has done great mischief by his harangue to the Pitmen', which he later said had ensured 'a continuance of similar proceedings for many years' (June 7, 1831). Durham also complained that the pitmen were 'dupes' of the 'Ranter preachers' and were better off than other workers (Durham University Library Additional MSS, uncatalogued).
- 87 Jones, 'Experiences of a Strike...' op.cit., p.35.
- 88 D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, May 10,12, 1831.
- 89 Colls, *The Pitmen of the Northern Coalfield*, p.90. Londonderry had a record of violating Coal Trade agreements - see the later chapters in Sweezy, *Monopoly and Competition...* op.cit: HO 53/14, Reed to Northumberland, May 11, 1831: *Durham Advertiser*, May 13, 1831.
- 90 D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, May 12,13, 1831: *Durham Advertiser*, May 13, 1831.
- 91 HO 52/14, Reed to Northumberland, May 11, 1831: HO 40/29, Bouverie to the Home Office, May 15, 1831: HO 52/14, Northumberland to the Home Office, May 14, 1831.

- 92 Colls, *The Pitmen of the Northern Coalfield*, p.91: CTMB, General Minutes, May 14, 1831.
- 93 *Newcastle Chronicle*, May 14, 1831.
- 94 Handbill, 'The Coal Owners and the Pitmen...', observations of the pitmen's delegates, May 18, 1831. Bell MSS, XI, 280: HO 40/29, Bouverie to the Home Office, May 22, 1831: *Newcastle Chronicle*, May 21, 1831.
- 95 Fynes, *The Miners...* pp.22-23: *Newcastle Chronicle*, May 21, 1831.
- 96 HO 52/14, Reed to Northumberland, May 18, 1831.
- 97 HO 40/29, Bouverie to the Home Office, May 17, 1831.
- 98 Jones, 'Industrial Relations...', p.181.
- 99 Jaffe, 'Economy and Community', p.271. Jaffe calls this a 'spontaneous system of union support', which Colls says 'represented a revolutionary change in coalfield protest' (Jaffe, *ibid.*, p.272: Colls, *The Pitmen...* p.249): D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, May 19,20, 1831.
- 100 Colls, *The Pitmen of the Northern Coalfield*, p.90.
- 101 D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, May 15,8, 1831.
- 102 D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, May 19, 1831.
- 103 Hughes, *Losh's Diaries*, Vol.II, p.154.
- 104 *Durham Advertiser*, June 3, 1831.
- 105 Jones, 'Experiences of a Strike...' p.35.
- 106 Colls, *The Pitmen...* p.90: D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, May 19, 1831.
- 107 HO 40/29, Bouverie to the Home Office, May 22, 1831.
- 108 *Newcastle Chronicle*, May 26, 1832: CTMB, General Minutes, May 21, 1831. See also Committee Minutes, May 23, 1831.
- 109 Hughes, *Losh's Diaries*, Vol.II, pp.112,113.
- 110 Jones, 'Experiences of a Strike...' *op.cit.*, p.39: Jaffe, 'Economy and Community...', p.272.
- 111 D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, May 28, 1831.
- 112 *Durham Advertiser*, May 27, 1831: CTMB, General Minutes, June 1, 1831. Newcastle Corporation donated fifty guineas and the coal owners also subscribed.
- 113 Sweezy, *Monopoly and Competition...* p.97: Jones, 'Experiences of a Strike...' p.28: HO 52/14, Northumberland to the Home Office, May 26, 1831: Martin Jude, a leading figure in the Miners' Association of Great Britain during the 1840s, said that in 1831 the pitmen 'got back full 25 per cent of their previous reductions' (*Miners' Advocate*, May 1847, cited by R. Challinor and B. Ripley, *The Miners'*

Association: A Trade Union in the Age of the Chartists (London, 1968), p.195.

- 114 HO 52/14, Northumberland to the Home Office, May 26, 1831.
- 115 HO 52/14, Northumberland to the Home Office, June 1, 1831. See also the enclosed copy of a letter from Bouverie to the Duke.
- 116 CTMB, General Minutes, June 1, 1831: D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, June 13, 1831.
- 117 John Thompson, pitmen's delegate, *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle*, December 23, 1882: 'Rules and Regulations of the Coal Miners' Friendly Society in the Counties of Northumberland and Durham' (Newcastle, 1831), Bell MSS, XI, 312.
- 118 HO 40/29, Crawford to Bouverie, June 8, 1831: D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, June 6, 1831.
- 119 HO 52/14, Northumberland to the Home Office, June 1, 1831: HO 40/29, Crawford to Bouverie, June 8, 1831.
- 120 *Newcastle Chronicle*, June 18, 1831: HO 52/14, Northumberland to the Home Office, June 9, 1831: HO 40/29, Crawford to Bouverie, June 8, 1831: The union extended its control, with delegates visiting collieries in the Bishop Auckland area to recruit the pitmen there into the union (NCB 1/JB/617, Thomas Hall to Buddle, June 9, 1831).
- 121 HO 52/14, Northumberland to the Home Office, June 20, 1831: D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, June 18, 1831: *Newcastle Chronicle*, June 18, 1831: ADMI/1868, Glascock to the Admiralty, June 20, 1831: *Durham Advertiser*, June 24, 1831: A rumour of ten guineas binding money prompted more serious consideration of establishing an indemnity fund. D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, June 13, 1831.
- 122 D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, June 21, 1831.
- 123 *Tyne Mercury*, June 14, 1831: *Durham Advertiser*, June 10, 1832: HO 40/29, Bouverie to the Home Office, June 12, 1831: The farms may have been targeted because they were run by the Hetton Coal Company (*Northern John Bull*, June 1829, p.195).
- 124 D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, June 19, July 8, 14, 1831.
- 125 *Tyne Mercury*, June 27, 1831: *Newcastle Chronicle*, July 2, 9, 30, 1831.
- 126 *Newcastle Chronicle*, July 30, 1831: The transportation of one of the Jarrow seven, 14 year-old Thomas Armstrong, was a factor in the murder of the arresting magistrate, Nicholas Fairles, by the boy's elder brother Ralph in June 1832. Anon MSS, 'Jarrow Records, or a Historical Register of Remarkable Events...', n.d. but circa 1890, p.69 (Newcastle Central Library).
- 127 Fynes, *The Miners of Northumberland and Durham*, p.24.
- 128 *Newcastle Chronicle*, August 20, 1831. The address said the pitmen had rid themselves of longstanding oppressions and noticed 'the favourable impression which there [sic] orderly and peaceable conduct... had made upon the public mind'. They deplored that some pitmen had been 'betrayed into excesses' and asked the King to mitigate the punishment which some innocent men were now suffering. The signatures of 11,561 pitmen from 57 pits were appended.
- 129 Fynes, *The Miners of Northumberland and Durham*, p.24.

- 130 HO 40/29, Crawford to Bouverie, June 8, 1831.
- 131 HO 52/14, Northumberland to the Home Office, April 18, June 9, 1831.
- 132 Colls, *The Pitmen of the Northern Coalfield*, p.250: ADMI/1868, Glascock to the Admiralty, June 20, 1831: Cited in McCord, 'The Government of Tyneside, 1800-1850', op.cit., pp.10-11.
- 133 *Durham Chronicle*, April 16, 1831.
- 134 Hammond, *The Skilled Labourer*, p.28: Handbill, 'Whereas 2800 Pitmen...' op.cit: *Newcastle Chronicle*, August 20, 27, 1831.
- 135 See McCord, 'The Government of Tyneside, 1800-1850', op.cit., pp.26-28.
- 136 See HO 40/29 for Bouverie's correspondence with the Home Office during August and September 1831.
- 137 HO 52/14, Northumberland to the Home Office, April 21, 23, 1831.
- 138 Handbill, 'An Appeal to the Public...' op.cit..
- 139 McCord, 'The Government of Tyneside, 1800-1850', op.cit., p.24.
- 140 HO 40/29, Crawford to Bouverie, June 8, 1831.
- 141 HO 52/14, Northumberland to the Home Office, May 26, 1831: Hughes, *Losh's Diaries*, Vol.II, p.113.
- 142 HO 40/29, Crawford to Bouverie, June 8, 1831: D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, June 4, 1831.
- 143 *Durham Advertiser*, June 3, 1831.
- 144 Jones ('Experiences of a Strike...' p.35) depicts Londonderry as an 'opportunist' and his actions as 'ill-considered', whilst Colls is described by Sturgess as continuing to 'embroil the Third Marquis of Londonderry in the demonology of the labour movement', in a review of his *The Pitmen of the Northern Coalfield* (op.cit.). See the *North East Labour History Society Bulletin* No.22 (1988), pp.43-45: *Durham Advertiser*, June 3, 1831.
- 145 See pitman Edward Richardson's letter in the *Durham Chronicle*, July 19, 1844.
- 146 HO 40/29, Crawford to Bouverie, June 8, 1831.
- 147 Jones, 'Industrial Relations...', pp.179, 183: Jaffe, 'Economy and Community...', p.272.
- 148 Colls, *The Pitmen...* p.249.

CHAPTER TWO:POLITICAL AND SOCIAL FACTORS AFFECTING
THE NORTH EAST COALFIELD IN 1831.

Whilst the Tyne and Wear pitmen were confronting their employers during spring 1831, Earl Grey's first Reform Bill had hit a major stumbling block, the first of a succession of parliamentary crises which it was to encounter before becoming law in June 1832. The opposition of ultra-Tories in the House of Commons succeeded in defeating the Bill in April, but Grey used the opportunity to call a general election, which brought the return of an increased Whig majority of 136, with a clear mandate to proceed.¹ A second Reform Bill was duly introduced, but according to Newbould the public agitation aroused during the spring general election 'shattered ministerial unity' and marked a major turn in the struggle for reform: this saw the role of the lower orders become increasingly dynamic, and Mandler argues that it was largely the exigencies of the growing reform agitation which held the cabinet of aristocrats together.²

The winter of 1830-1831 had seen over three thousand petitions sent to parliament, but the election campaign saw meetings, processions, and a riot at an April reform demonstration in London, a major political riot at Carmarthen, and disturbances in Scotland and in English towns from Rye to Whitehaven.³ However, the most serious such event during summer 1831 was the rioting at Merthyr Tydfil in the South Wales coalfield in May and June, resulting in 40 deaths which Jones points out was a far worse toll than Peterloo, and thus, he argues, was truly a massacre.⁴ It was against this background that the Duke of Northumberland and Mayor Reed of Newcastle expressed their fears of the Tyne and Wear pitmen's strike having political connotations, and though

the strike clearly had economic roots, Professor Williams' study of the rising at Merthyr suggests a possible link which whilst tenuous, may indicate that such fears were legitimate.

Coalfield Unions outside North East England.

According to Benson, one of the problems of trades unionism was fragmentation and the small scale of most early nineteenth century production, which meant that 'there were few sizeable, stable, homogeneous groups of workmen to organise', but adds that nonetheless the early 1830s 'were a high point of early nineteenth century union activity, with organisations being formed in almost every coalfield'.⁵ Similarly, Church comments that in most regions before the 1860s conditions allowed only ephemeral unions, the strength of which lay at 'district, rather than at national or even regional level'.⁶ But Wright describes the years 1829-34 as witnessing 'an unprecedented burst of trade union activity', and in March 1830 a new colliers' union, the 'Friendly Society of Coalmining', was formed at Bolton and became a major force within John Doherty's National Association for the Protection of Labour, an organisation originating in Manchester and initially based upon the spinners' unions of Lancashire and Midlands textile trades. This spread from Lancashire through Cheshire, Derbyshire, Staffordshire and Shropshire, and by April 1831 emissaries from the Bolton union had organised the Flintshire coalfield in North East Wales, which affiliated to the NAPL. From here the union in turn struck out to cover other coal districts in Wales such as Monmouthshire and Swansea, reaching Merthyr Tydfil before the rising. Benson points out that major colliery disputes took place in South Wales and the West Midlands in 1830, and both Jones and Williams suggest that the NAPL's growth obsessed the Home Secretary, Lord Melbourne, but whilst the

immediate cause of the Merthyr rising was wage cuts at a local ironworks, Williams says the local man who was hanged in consequence was a martyr to the NAPL.⁷

In what Sykes describes as '[a]n explosion of unionisation amongst the miners' during this period, the new colliers' union in association with the NAPL, was building more widespread links between colliers' organisations than had hitherto been the case, buttressed by the NAPL's other major spheres of activity in the textile and pottery trades.⁸ Williams describes John Betts, a tough NAPL organiser in the North and Midlands, as prefacing meetings called to form new unions 'with the raising of the tricolour'. The NAPL was 'committed to an Owenite co-operative socialism and the labour theory of value', and by such methods during 1830 and 1831 was '[a]ctively and successfully organising trade union federations'. This convergence of the political and industrial spheres, especially Betts' raising of the *political* symbol of the tricolour at meetings to form organisations for ostensibly *industrial* ends, confirms Behaggs' arguments on this subject, and Williams concludes that, motivated by this 'political drive and vision', the NAPL was 'perhaps the most sophisticated form of labour organisation yet to emerge'.⁹ According to Church, the affiliation of the Bolton-based 'Friendly Society of Coal Mining' and other colliers' unions to the NAPL 'was an indication of the aspiration towards an arrangement which would provide mutual support between unions in different districts; on which basis the Miners' Association of Great Britain and Ireland was formed in 1841'.¹⁰

This is further evidenced by the example of Robert Hughes, a Welsh collier who went to Bolton to work as a 'captain' for the new union, telling a magistrate on June 8 1831 that there was to be a general strike of pitmen in less than a month, which would be 'the time for

insurrection by the colliers throughout the kingdom'.¹¹ Such ambitious plans carried the necessary implication of previous contact with other coalfields, and may explain the reports of 'Manchester radicals' at the Tyne-Wear pitmen's 1831 strike meetings, which would certainly be an opportune time for such a visit. A similar general strike plan had been mooted in December 1830, soon after the formation of the NAPL and at a time when other colliers were on strike, but had come to nothing:¹² in the event no general strike took place in summer 1831 either, perhaps not least because the Tyne-Wear men themselves were then just returning to work after their own long strike, but it may have been the prospect of their involvement in such an affair which so worried Reed and Northumberland.

There were other similarities between the NAPL-affiliated collier's unions and the Tyne-Wear men. Williams describes the Welsh colliers' union as having 'resolutely respectable' public articles paralleled by much tougher secret rules, a copy of which turned up in North East England in 1832. This probably belonged to Welsh pitmen seeking work in the North East that year, and only two years later Buddle was describing similar secret oaths and ceremonies enacted by the Tyne and Wear pitmen. But a more concrete link is the fact that employers in the two regions were also in contact with one another, as in August 1831 a Merthyr ironmaster wrote to the Newcastle and other coal districts for information and advice on how to stop the growth of the new unions, to be told to nip them in the bud.¹³

That a national strike of pitmen did not materialise was due not least to the organisational difficulties arising from the varying conditions in different coalfields, and it was a salutary fact that the fortunes of other unions stood in stark contrast to Hepburn's Union. As the Tyne and Wear pitmen ended their strike in June, the pitmen of the

Forest of Dean were rioting, whilst the 'Friendly Society of Coal Mining' in Bolton was broken in August 1831 after the defeat of a strike in South Lancashire.¹⁴ The North Staffordshire colliers were on strike in May and June 1831, and from late September the Merthyr ironworkers and colliers struck to save their union in 'one of the most bitter struggles in the history of the coalfield', but were defeated in mid-November when 'the employers emerged triumphant' and, according to Jones, 'in north as in south Wales the colliers' union ceased to be of any importance after December 1831'.¹⁵ There were also riots at Brecon and Worcester, and after the Tyne and Wear pitmen's strike was over the northern military commander Bouverie had to turn his attention to colliery disputes at Wigan and Whitehaven, whilst in Yorkshire attempts at a general union of trades were inspired by the Leeds Clothiers' Union strike which lasted thirty-three weeks from February to October 1831.¹⁶

Like the Tyne and Wear pitmen's strike, these struggles were induced by deteriorating conditions resulting from economic depression, a point which is at odds with Benson's view that unions tended to flourish during economic upswings 'only to flounder during the subsequent down-swing', and that they 'were incapable of surviving let alone surmounting, a sharp down-swing in the trade cycle':¹⁷ the corollary here seems to be that Benson's formulation does not quite tell the whole story, and that workmen might also formally organise during down-swings or after years of deterioration to fight for their own economic survival. The unions formed exhibited a striving for varying degrees of informal workers' control: indeed Williams says the new colliers' unions in Wales involved a great deal of this, which along with the Tyne-Wear pitmen's enforcement of terms and in Hetton's case the fixing of farm produce prices, perhaps illustrates the often synonymous nature of trade union and political agitation to legitimate

the authorities' fears as to the political motives of unions.¹⁸ This of course further confirms Behagg's view of the inter-relationship between politics and economics in the workplace, which has been complemented from a different angle by a study of popular radical working class politics, in the shape of LoPatin's examination of the Political Union movement during the reform crisis of 1831-1832, a project which has been long-overdue.¹⁹

The Northern Political Union and the October Reform Crisis.

Most accounts of the reform crisis, notably those of Butler, Trevelyan and the current standard work by Brock, have focused on high politics to the neglect of the bottom end of the scale, ignoring or even denying the relevance of extra-parliamentary activity.²⁰ More recent work on this topic however by Stevenson, Bentley, Newbould and Mandler criticise these high-political treatments of the subject, claiming that such an approach not only perpetuates a traditional Whig interpretation of history, but that their rejection of the role of popular working class pressure in securing reform renders even the standard work on the subject, in the words of LoPatin, 'limited and skewed':²¹ indeed Mandler takes up those who speak of 'the half-closed world peopled by senior politicians... of which the masses knew little', to remind them '[i]t would be well if high-political historians remembered more frequently that the "half-closed world" was also, by definition, half-open'.²² The impact of organisations like the Political Unions, the existence of more than one hundred of which, whilst varied in social composition, LoPatin argues constituted 'a national popular political movement' during the reform crisis, has thus lacked attention and the need for a revision of the historical trend dismissing their role is overdue. This is vital to a more detailed understanding of the reform struggle and the origin of

'working class popular reform politics', and is a theme which is highly pertinent to the study of the Tyne and Wear pitmen during these years.²³

From roots in the post-Peterloo agitation of 1819-1820 and the inspiration of Daniel O'Connell's Catholic Association, Political Unions formed throughout Britain after autumn 1830 when agrarian unrest spread to the towns. The political demonstrations which then ensued 'had the virtue of cowing the Tory majority in the Lords', but the movement's strict object was 'to secure reform only through peaceful and lawful means and growing numbers... which earned it the respect of politicians and the general public'.²⁴ These constituted what LoPatin believes was effectively a popular national mass political movement, a view which concurs with Williams, who alludes to a phenomenon during this period of a 'relatively sudden rise of movements of plebian self-assertion which aspired to be national'.²⁵ The agitational impetus gained from the first Bill and 1831 general election united Grey's cabinet 'on the need to douse the political passions that had been aroused by the Reform crisis', but whilst the Whigs' reform programme was a minimal one designed in Mandler's view to admit middle class independents and moderates to the aristocratic monopoly of government, feelings ran so high that only the delivery of the measure would satisfy public opinion.²⁶

LoPatin's study describes not only how Political Unions were formed but also how radical working class members split from the middle class Political Union leaders to form their own distinct rival offshoots, Unions of the Working Classes. In the vanguard in this respect was the Manchester UWC, formed in January 1831 when working class supporters of the Manchester Political Union, in response to their middle class leaders' retreat from a full radical programme, walked out to establish their own independent radical organisation. LoPatin

describes the MUWC as 'the first popular political organisation in Britain composed of and led by working men exclusively', and argues that it represented 'an outright rejection of middle class political leadership' and was the first independent popular political working class organisation in Britain. Other UWCs appeared as the MUWC took the lead 'in directing an emerging working class consciousness and, along with it, a working class political movement',²⁷ separate and distinct from the middle class Political Unions.²⁸ As the reform crisis unfolded, UWCs were established to rival the existing middle class-led bodies at Leeds, Bolton, Bristol, Leicester, and Norwich. LoPatin goes on to cite twelve others as far afield as Yeovil, Brighton and Blackburn, and Jones says UWC branches were established in industrial regions of Wales in 1831.²⁹ LoPatin, refuting any idea that Birmingham or London led the way, thus cites Manchester as having

...created and provided the model for an independent working class radical reform movement which was to have such an impact upon popular political activities over the next few decades...³⁰

The contrast between the middle class rhetoric of pro-reform newspapers and the popular radical working class demands articulated by the illegal unstamped press, most notably *The Poor Man's Guardian*, was consequently a major feature of the reform campaign.³¹ The middle class-led bodies predominated however, of which according to the reminiscences of veteran Newcastle radicals there were three main Political Unions; the Birmingham Political Union, which with Thomas Attwood as president, 'extended its ramifications over the Midland Counties'; the so-called National Political Union, which 'fixed upon London as the centre of its operations'; and the Northern Political Union with Newcastle as its base and Thomas Attwood's brother Charles as its chief, which 'embraced the counties of Northumberland and Durham, spreading itself westward to the sea'. The London body styled itself the National UWC, presumably out of

an aspiration to lead the movement, an honour which has traditionally been assigned to the Birmingham Political Union . It now appears however that the BPU's supposedly leading role in the reform agitation is not only exaggerated but, according to Flick, a 'myth'.³²

The Northern Political Union was formed on June 27 1831 at a meeting of 'the friends of reform' at the Old Music Hall in Blckett Street, Newcastle. A governing Council of assorted reformers from across the region was elected, including surgeon Charles Larkin, Dr John Fife, ironmaster Charles Attwood, soap manufacturer Thomas Doubleday, and Durham landowners George Baker and Cuthbert Rippon. Attwood was treasurer and Doubleday, W.H. Brockett and Eneas Mackenzie were appointed secretaries, and according to the *Northern Tribune* the NPU's organisation was impressive.³³

...The members of the Northern Political Union were organized in classes, having a conductor or steward, who formed a medium of communication with the secretaries, distributed such tracts as the Council sanctioned, took charge of and assisted in forwarding petitions and remonstrances issuing from the Council, and in promoting objects essential to the public welfare. A fund was provided for the diffusion of political instruction, and the *Newcastle Press* was established as the organ of the Unionists. Branch Unions were formed in all the large towns and populous villages of the district, at the inauguration of which the leading members of the parent institution performed a conspicuous part. Thus was the Northern Union ramified throughout the counties of Northumberland and Durham, and extended its influence over the 'far west'. Meetings of the Council were held regularly in the Old Music Hall, Blckett Street, where questions of public interest, the proceedings in Parliament, and the position of parties were freely discussed, and such measures adopted as the circumstances of the period required...

Comprising Whigs and Radicals of varying shades and persuasions, it was commented that '[t]his modern society of "Friends of the People" was a strangely agglomerated mass'. The two parties did not have a record for such co-operation, but the *Tribune* explains that with the changes in the political situation in mid-1830 'the Whigs, unable to cope singly with Toryism in power, besought a close alliance with the Radical reformers, and thus were overtures made in the town of

Newcastle'. A meeting at the shop of Whig bookseller Emerson Charnley concocted a scheme to revive the practice of requisitioning the Mayor to hold public meetings, and the Whigs subsequently attempted to place themselves at the head of the reform movement, but on one occasion following the NPU's formation suffered an embarrassing defeat.³⁴

This occurred at Newcastle Guildhall on September 26 1831, when a proposed Whig petition 'was objected to as unworthy the occasion, and Mr Attwood drew forth a petition of his own, amidst the cheers of his Radical supporters'. As chairman however the Mayor objected to Attwood's petition,

...but at length, it was put to the meeting in competition with the Whig effusion. Both sides claimed the victory and a scene of indescribable uproar ensued. On a subsequent division Mr Attwood, Mr Fife, and the Unionists carried with them a great majority. The Whigs left the meeting in a rage, and Mr Fife having been called to the chair, the proceedings terminated in the complete success of the more Radical members of the Union...³⁵

From the interchangeable use of the terms 'Unionists' and 'Radicals' here, it would appear the NPU members more closely identified with the latter party than the Whigs, and following this victory the Radicals subsequently held sway in the NPU. That the Whigs largely remained aloof from the NPU is evidenced by the fact that they thereafter requisitioned the Mayor and held their own 'respectable' meetings, or otherwise simply attempted to limit the Radicals' worst excesses. It was perhaps because of this Radical predomination and the fact that figures such as Larkin held firm to Radical principles, that no serious split occurred and the NPU was never rivalled by a separate UWC.³⁶

The formation of the NPU was the first of a series of important events in the region during the latter half of 1831. It seems the pitmen took no part in the NPU's inception but some subsequently began to take an interest, as illustrated by the evident existence of a Durham branch union described as a Union of the Working Classes, which was reported to

the Home Office in summer 1831 when pitmen paraded banners with slogans including 'Political Union' and 'Unions for Wages, Unions for Suffrage'.³⁷ This UWC however was not a rival organisation but seemingly a branch union under NPU auspices, which suggests that during the summer the formation of NPU branches 'in all the large towns and populous villages of the district' had drawn the pitmen into the fold: and also perhaps that the pitmen's radical visitors during the strike may have been from the MUWC. There was significant precedent for radicalism amongst the pitmen, as during the post-Peterloo upsurge it was said that copies of the *Black Dwarf* were to be seen 'in the hat-crown of almost every pitman you meet', and all but five of the Mount Moor pitmen at Gateshead had joined the Radical party.³⁸ At any rate, by August 13 the pitmen had dedicated their victory meeting to thanking the King for his adherence to Grey's reform ministry, of which occasion John Buddle wrote that it was 'decidedly the first into which they have taken politics into their discussions - which marks it as an important meeting'.³⁹

In the early 1830s there was also contact with figures like NPU Council member Dr John Fife, who 'held daily intercourse with the mining population of the district as medical and chirurgical attache of the principal coal proprietors of the North; and this introduced him to the society of Mr Thomas Hepburn', by whom it seems the pitmen were led into the political fray.⁴⁰ It appears though that politics came only reluctantly to Hepburn who, preferring to confine his activities to the industrial objects of the Pitmen's Union, had to be convinced by NPU secretary Eneas Mackenzie that the pitmen should take an interest in politics. A witness to Hepburn's 'conversion' later recalled that when Mackenzie suggested that the pitmen should be instructed in politics, Hepburn replied that this was something he thought they should not trouble themselves with. But Mackenzie's argument that the average

pitman would usually pay out twenty-three times as much in taxes to the government per fortnight as his 1/- union subscription must have persuaded Hepburn, for

...[w]e soon after this see Mr Hepburn noticed in the newspapers as a politician, at the dinner given on the occasion of his present Majesties' coronation [on September 8], he having been elected a member of the council of the NPU...⁴¹

When Hepburn spoke at the dinner that afternoon he admitted that politics was a subject with which 'I have not employed my mind much', but went on to argue for reform:

...We are here met this day to promote a political union as a great means to push forward our plans. And what is it that union can effect? ...If all the reformers of England were united together, the reform bill will pass sooner than many of us anticipate; and the sooner the people of England get united in this way the better...

In closing the meeting the NPU chairman Charles Attwood was moved to remark of Hepburn that '[t]he walls of St. Stephens have seldom echoed to a speech more replete with genuine feeling and ability'.⁴²

An NPU public meeting on the Town Moor preceding the dinner, according to Brockie was 'the first great field day of the Union',⁴³ but this was surpassed following the defeat of the second Reform Bill by ultra-Tories in the Lords on Friday, October 7. The Bill had passed its first reading in the Lords in late September, but was rejected on its second by a majority of forty-one. This provoked a hostile reaction in some quarters and though North East England saw no serious disorder, rioting broke out elsewhere. The castle at Nottingham was burned and at Derby a crowd of protestors liberated the prisoners from the jail, but the worst outbreak was at Bristol where the town hall, the bishop's palace and the jails were fired, and over 200 lives were lost during the rioting. In response martial law was declared, hundreds were arrested, and Grey's government suspended sittings of Parliament until they considered what their next step should be.⁴⁴

Though a serious setback, the Lords' rejection of the Bill was seen as merely a temporary defeat and served to stimulate 'still greater exertions': 'the forbearance of the people generally was far greater than could reasonably have been anticipated', and attention turned to organising massive protest meetings. In North East England the high-point in the crisis was the public meeting of October 17 staged by the NPU on Newcastle Town Moor, where 80,000 people assembled 'in immense strength' in 'a grand display of popular feeling' to produce the biggest public gathering in the region since 1819.⁴⁵

The NPU's orchestration of the event was 'conspicuous' as a fifty-minute long procession marched four abreast with each class leader at the head of his class, through Newcastle to the Town Moor. The procession was led by a band of music followed by members of the NPU Council, the chairman of which 'had been drawn in from Whickham by a party of his staunch adherents'. Flags and banners abounded in the procession and hanging from windows en route, one of which

...was so obnoxious that the Mayor ordered it to be cut down. It was dedicated to the majority of 199 [Tory Lords] - a white ground, broad black border, the corners hung with crape, and the stave surmounted by a pike-head. It was emblazoned with the figure of Death, holding a spear in his right hand, from which tricoloured ribbons were suspended; in his left he held three bleeding heads - the Duke of Wellington, the Duke of Cumberland, and Lord Eldon, - and with his right foot he trampled on the mitre. Below was an inscription borrowed from Scripture: 'They are all gone aside; they are all become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no not one'. A black banner also attracted attention by reason of its appropriate significance. It represented the skeleton of a sheep's head with an enormous pair of horns, from the points of which two pistols were suspended, the motto underneath being 'Londonderry has got no brains'. Everything betokened the determination of the people no longer to be trifled with...⁴⁶

The meeting however 'from the commencement exhibited a spirit of turbulence and excitement', and during proceedings the 'colliery contingents',

...disappointed by the recent course of political events, were ripe for violence, when Mr Thomas Hepburn stood up, and in a voice

of thunder commanded the raging elements to be still. This was, indeed, the most remarkable event of the day. Mr Hepburn enjoyed the unlimited confidence of the pitmen, and fortunately for the peace of society in this district it was so...⁴⁷

Hepburn, 'the eloquent pitman',⁴⁸ 'was received with loud cheers' when he rose to speak: reason, he said,

...spoke loudly that reform was necessary (cheers and cries of "we will have it!"). He was not, himself, altogether satisfied with the bill but he believed it would do good... He had no doubt that if the bill passed, that in a little time five pound householders would have a vote, and from that we might get to universal suffrage, and then poor Hepburn, who had not even a five pound house, would have a vote. We would then get an even representation in parliament... Everyone had anticipated that the bill would pass, but... be patient - still be unanimous in supporting the ministry. We could trust Earl Grey. Let us be united to him... [and] if we are united to the King by duty and affection, all opposition will be in vain - the bill must pass; corruption must be done away with; we will hunt her till her hydra head is taken off, and the constitution placed on a foundation that cannot be corrupted. Let corruption be entirely eradicated, and then the long-standing wounds of the constitution would be healed (cheers)...⁴⁹

Thus, whereas Hepburn had to be persuaded into politics in the summer, it is clear that by the autumn he was enthusiastically promoting reform. Other speakers followed, culminating with the Irish surgeon and 'orator of the Union' Charles Larkin, who denounced the corrupt Lords majority, specifically naming the Lords Ravensworth and Londonderry, and the Duke of Northumberland as allies of the enemies of reform: '[i]f they persist in their opposition' said Larkin, 'the people will rise in their indignation and appeal from remonstrance to the sword'. Three cheers were given for the King and Earl Grey, to whom approving addresses were voted, after which the meeting quietly dispersed.⁵⁰

In mid-October the parliamentary session ended amidst uncertainty as to whether Grey would return with a third Bill when parliament reconvened after the recess, and consequently '[g]reat excitement prevailed throughout the kingdom'. In North East England further demonstrations were held in North Shields, South Shields and Sunderland, and the month ended with a county demonstration at Durham conducted by

the High Sheriff, C.J. Clavering of Axwell Park. The meeting was unusual for the attendance of a body of NPU members led by Attwood and Fife, 'preceded by a band and several banners, and presenting a very imposing appearance':⁵¹

...The Union had not before interfered in county demonstrations, but on this occasion it became known that there was a plan to bring a great force of men, in the employment of the Marquis of Londonderry, to cooperate with the Durham freemen in foiling the object of the meeting by noisy interruption. To counteract this, Mr Attwood, Mr Fife, and Mr Doubleday marched off, in the grey of the morning, with about three hundred men from Winlaton, Blaydon, and Swalwell. They posted themselves round the hustings in silent and anxious expectation, and they were soon employed. The brawlers began, but each man dropped to the ground with the shout in his mouth, so instantaneously that those even nearest to him could scarcely detect the blow by which he was floored! There was some amazement, some attempts at retaliation; but the patriot guards bore down all before them, and the meeting went on...⁵²

According to the *Durham Advertiser* some Weardale lead miners were also present, collieries were '"laid off" for the occasion', and they and the 'Men of Winlaton' were 'generally armed with sticks, which they applied unmercifully to the heads and shoulders of such Anti-Reformers as were pointed out to them'.⁵³ These however were evidently not numerous, as Hedworth Lambton made clear in his speech:

...I was told before I came here, that we would have a formidable opposition (a laugh). I was told that Lord Londonderry, Sir Henry Hardinge, and his Lordship's nominee Mr Trevor, were to be here with their formidable opposition. And after all, what is their opposition? Why, a few drunken Londonderry freemen - a few degraded men upon whom the splendid example before them, of thousands of enlightened men, is unable to make any impression (cheers)...⁵⁴

At the end of a successful meeting the grateful Durham reformers donated a purse of money to their 'guards', but rather than distribute this immediately for a spree which would cause 'rows and fights all night' in the City, it was spent on bread, cheese, beef and beer, and sent in a cart ahead of the men on their road home to be served up a mile outside the City. In a style more akin to Richmal Crompton than a political reform magazine, the *Northern Tribune* commented that '[t]he

feast was not protracted. The "captain" and his guards marched home, and the men were all in bed by ten o'clock'.⁵⁵

Political excitement continued during the parliamentary recess however, and it was said rather ominously that 'the almost entire population of the Tyne and Wear districts could be brought together to act in concert, at thirty-six hours notice, should the emergency call for a display of numbers'.⁵⁶ Indeed since the Bristol riots some had looked to adopt more forceful measures as a threat to the Lords, should its opposition continue, and the *Tyne Mercury* reported that 'mild political writers hinted at arming... not arming in the way of every citizen having a gun in his house... but arming as armed [political] unions, as united bodies with arms in their hands - such as had hitherto assembled only to hear speeches and to petition'.⁵⁷ The Birmingham Political Union drew up detailed plans to organise itself on such lines but this was going too far for the government, whose object was to effect reform in as constitutional a manner as possible, free from the appearance of revolution. With this in mind a Royal Proclamation was issued forbidding Political Unions from organising militarily, though they were still free to continue their former activities and meetings.⁵⁸ The BPU thus dropped its proposals, rendering the political atmosphere 'more clear and healthy' than previously, but nevertheless the *Durham Advertiser*, reflecting the unease of the middle and upper classes, graphically reported in early December that

...the whole elements of society are broken up, and a civil war appears to be on the eve of breaking out. The divisions between the working and the other classes of society are every day becoming greater and greater, whilst the former are gradually becoming more informed, more united, and more determined in their endeavours to obtain what they call their rights. Those 'rights', as thus demanded, are quite incompatible with the existence of the present government, or the present distribution of property, in England: they comprehend universal suffrage, vote by ballot, and annual parliaments; under which the limited monarchy of England could not exist a single twelvemonth;- and although not openly avowed, there is very widely spread an opinion in favour of a

Spencean division of property, which only requires *opportunity* to be brought into action. In such a state of things, it may be soon necessary for every man, who has anything to defend, to arm himself in defence of it - particularly in the dense manufacturing districts, where distress and increased population go hand in hand...⁵⁹

So worried was the government at the unrest in the country that post offices were used to monitor potentially seditious correspondence, but for now the immediate crisis was past and Parliament resumed on December 6.⁶⁰ By December 12 a third Reform Bill was before the House of Commons, and within a week it had passed its second reading. Its passage there was more or less assured: the question was whether the House of Lords would respond to the concessions in the new bill.

Within the space of a year the pitmen had thus moved from a position of dispirited and unorganised isolation to one of support not only for a trades union organisation for the advancement of their economic demands, but also a political union with much grander and wider aims. Hepburn himself epitomised this transformation, having by his own admission taken no great interest previously in matters political, but then swiftly rising to the status of a local celebrity, rubbing shoulders with NPU leaders and encouraging support for that organisation. Hepburn was undoubtedly instrumental in delivering the pitmen's support for the NPU, but there is a suggestion that because of this their support was unqualified: an inhabitant of Pittington wrote to the *Newcastle Courant* complaining that he heard nothing about reform

...except from some of the pitmen who were invited to attend the meetings at Newcastle, to give their opinions on that subject - and they cannot give us any further information about it, further than that they were *informed* a Reform in Parliament would relieve us of all our wants...⁶¹

This was probably pure cynicism as the writer was an opponent of reform, though there was previous evidence of such political naivety.⁶² Most significant here however is the fact that appreciable numbers of pitmen were indeed actively involved in the reform movement, though by the end

of 1831 an additional and specifically social problem was also taking their attention.

Cholera.

Cholera was another important issue facing North East England in the latter half of 1831 and into 1832. Millions had fallen victim by the time it arrived in Warsaw, Vienna, and St. Petersburg from the Indian sub-continent, and as it approached Britain across Europe Morris says it 'created a crisis atmosphere in the country quite unlike that produced by any other threat apart from foreign invasion'.⁶³ When in summer 1831 it was learned that the disease was in Riga, wherefrom up to eight hundred ships with cargoes of flax would be sailing for Britain, the government declared a fourteen-day quarantine on all incoming ships from the Baltic ports. Central and Local Boards of Health were set up, but the problem was that nobody really knew what the disease was or how it was transmitted. The cholera evaded the quarantine, and made its first British appearance on the north east coast of England.

It is probable that isolated, undiagnosed cases occurred during the late summer of 1831, but the first acknowledged outbreak was in Sunderland in late October.⁶⁴ However, local feeling was against admitting the presence of the disease, as from November 6 this had brought a fifteen-day quarantine on all vessels leaving the Wear, striking hard at the port's shipping, and particularly the coal trade. The quarantine was in itself inconsistent in that communications by land were not affected, and a determined campaign was waged to have it lifted.⁶⁵ 'Sunderland knew... that quarantine meant commercial dislocation, unemployment and increased poverty', and consequently the Sunderland mob was whipped up by 'selfish commercial interests' against the local doctors. This pressure appeared to pay off, the doctors

deciding that the symptoms of the cases they had seen should be referred to as a common bowel complaint rather than 'Asiatic Cholera'.⁶⁶ The *Lancet* was incredulous that

...a posse of starving colliers should threaten to "burn the doctors" who dare to admit the existence of the disease in that town is scarcely a matter of surprise; but that there should be found a set of well educated men weak enough to pander to the clamorous prejudices of the populace, is almost beyond credibility...

Morris has suggested that one section of the ruling class 'was using the threat of riot against another section of their class to protect the profit and wages of a sectional economic interest'. The Wear coalowners were not insignificant in this respect, having more at stake than most local businessmen: '[t]he coal trade needed the steady flow of colliers down the east coast to their major market in London...[otherwise they] faced falling profits on their major capital investment, and the risk of discontented unemployed colliers, casters, and keelmen'.⁶⁷ Indeed, one Sunderland businessman confirmed that 'despatch is the life of the coal trade'.⁶⁸ But it was not just the coalowners who exerted pressure:

...All sections of society took part. The keelmen used threats of violence. The merchants and professional men used their meetings, petitions, prevarications and argument. The aristocrats, Londonderry and Hedworth-Williamson, used their position within the ruling class. Sunderland's unwillingness to act against cholera was not due to class tensions or divisions. It was due to the solidarity of interests involved in the coal trade...⁶⁹

Londonderry is criticised by Morris as being motivated purely by commercial considerations, but Heesom has shown that this was not strictly the case. He confided to friends that his public claims denying the presence of cholera in Sunderland were calculated to help avoid panic in the region: the Lords Cleveland, Durham, and Ravensworth had fled the area rather than risk the epidemic, and in the light of this Londonderry made a conscious decision to remain, believing the presence

of at least one leading aristocratic figure was essential if the fears of the local population, not least his own pitmen, were to be allayed.⁷⁰ This itself may have had commercial overtones however, as suggested by Buddle's gleeful report to Londonderry during a cholera panic in 1832, that seventy men had fled from Hetton Colliery, 'which will cripple their workings'.⁷¹

But as the numbers of cases increased Sunderland came under the full glare of national publicity, and by the end of November cholera's presence could no longer be denied. The pattern of events was similar in Newcastle but the disease was officially confirmed there too in November, and once established in the region's two major towns, it 'spread slowly but persistently among the towns and villages of Northumberland and Durham'. In early December Hetton-le-Hole, Houghton-le-Spring, North Shields and Lemington were affected. Mid-December brought outbreaks at Swalwell, Seghill, Wideopen and Backworth, and Buddle wrote from Wallsend that '[t]his extraordinary disease is making havock all around this neighbourhood'.⁷² By the end of February the cholera had spread from Sunderland to infect almost all of North East England. The speed of its progress was almost certainly assisted by the unusually mild late autumn weather, but Durey has argued that the quarantine regulations did prove worthwhile in that they 'kept cholera out of Britain at least until the dangerous months for the disease's spread (August and September) had slipped by'.⁷³

The unpredictability of its progress was a source of alarm:

...Cholera could creep slowly across country, missing whole towns and suburbs. Personal contact, food, clothes, a cloud of flies would drive it forward. Every so often a water supply would become infected and this relentless progress would be punctuated by an 'explosive' outbreak. Perhaps the excreta of a passing vagrant infected a stream, or the privy midden of a cholera family seeped into surrounding wells. When this happened cases appeared dozens at a time...⁷⁴

The nature of the disease was even more frightening. The cholera micro-organism usually entered the victim via the mouth, from infected drinking-water or food 'contaminated by the faeces of persons who have contracted the disease or who have very recently recovered from it': dirty hands were also a source, as it was also later observed that 'miners who shared water and did not wash their hands and nurses attending cholera victims caught cholera, while visitors to cholera patients, who drank nothing and washed their hands before they left, did not'.⁷⁵ Attacking the wall of the intestine it caused violent vomiting and diarrhoea followed by collapse and fever, the cholera bacteria 'affecting the sodium pump mechanism of the intestinal cell, and allowing the damaging loss of body fluid into the bowel'. The loss of body fluids caused the blood to thicken and thus turn the complexion blue, accompanied by spasms and sweating as the sufferers died 'of sudden dehydration, shrivelled like raisins with blackened extremities, pale, staring, pouring watery fluid from their bowel onto the place where they lie'.⁷⁶ The victims looked dreadful. Those who attended and observed them were deeply shocked, and their accounts gave rise to the terror felt at its approach: towns such as Barnard Castle, Staindrop, and Stockton in the south of the region attempted to block the roads from the north.⁷⁷

In Newcastle, all those who died were interred within twelve hours of death; their coffins were not allowed into the chapels, but were taken straight to the graveside, where the service was read over them; all graves were a statutory six feet deep, and quick-lime was thrown in upon the coffins before burial. The barracks were closed, the theatre did not open for the winter season, and the annual Christmas Ball at the Mansion House was postponed.

...It was most distressing to hear... the constant tolling of the bells of the various churches from morn to night, and every heart

seemed to mourn, on observing, in rapid succession, such a number of corpses being conveyed through the streets, many of them without a single attendant, but the person who was appointed to lead the horse, which was attached to the hearse, and he holding the bridle at its utmost stretch...

By the end of January, in a Newcastle population of around 42,000, 896 cases had occurred with 285 deaths.⁷⁸

Gateshead had recorded only two cases by December 25, but on that day the local water supply must have been infected as an 'explosive' outbreak occurred, and by ten o'clock on December 27 there had been 99 cases resulting in 42 deaths. A local Methodist saw this as divine retribution for the ungodly behaviour of the town's inhabitants:

...About noon on Christmas Day (which was also the Holy Sabbath) in the lower part of this town, and in Bottle Bank, such scenes of drunkenness and outrage were witnessed, as would be disgraceful in a heathen country. Men and women were staggering in a state of complete intoxication. Some were brawling and fighting, while crowds were collected as spectators of their shame. The streets in this case were almost impassable. 'But because of these things the wrath of God cometh upon the children of disobedience'. That night and the following days awfully verified this divinely inspired declaration...

By the end of January, in a population of 15,000, 391 cases had occurred, with 141 deaths.⁷⁹

The densely populated colliery villages 'were particularly susceptible to the disease'. Underground conditions facilitated transmission, for as one contemporary wrote, 'the pit is one vast privy'. Matthias Dunn spoke of 100 cases amongst the Hetton pitmen on January 25, and newspaper reports tell of numerous cases in pit villages throughout the coalfield. But Newburn, on the north bank of the Tyne, was worst hit. By February 2, of a village population of 550, 320 cases and 55 deaths were recorded. This ten per cent mortality rate ranked amongst the highest in Europe.⁸⁰

One of the first victims was the local clergyman, the Rev. Edmondson, who 'was old, of rather intemperate habits, and when attacked obstinately refused medical aid'. Thus no funeral rites were performed



at the graves of the victims or of Edmondson himself, until some weeks later when a new clergyman was appointed.⁸¹ Another consequence of the outbreak at Newburn was the laying-off of nearby Walbottle Colliery in mid-January. Many of the Walbottle pitmen actually lived at Newburn, and those who had suffered the bereavement of relatives, friends, and neighbours were unwilling to work. But the pitmen residing in Walbottle village itself were probably the more unwilling, as Walbottle had remained free of the cholera and the men there were afraid of infection from their Newburn counterparts: so it was that 'by Common Consent' the colliery lay idle for a week.⁸²

Though the Local Boards of Health were charged with providing hospital accomodation and treatment, quarantine and cleansing facilities, and finding, reporting, and isolating suspects, because the nature of the disease was not understood their efforts were ineffective. The local surgeon at Houghton-le-Spring, Henry Dodd, blamed the epidemic on unseasonal weather and 'a column of pestilential matter arising in, or borne to certain districts, where it is attracted or detained by local causes hitherto unknown or undefined'. His treatment was based on the use of castor oil, magnesia and rhubarb as laxatives, in the belief that the 'poison' could be driven from the body by such methods. But no amount of these treatments, or quarantine or cleansing the streets with hot lime, could do much to prevent cholera's progress.⁸³

At Hetton, the Coal Company hired a reputable doctor named James Kennedy to 'take the general medical charge of that township', and superintend the local doctors in 'some uniform plan of medical treatment'.⁸⁴ His appointment lasted from January 13 to February 4, at which point he considered the number of cases remaining to be so few as not to warrant his presence any longer. He consequently wrote to the Newcastle Courant of his time at Hetton, favourably comparing the

numbers of recoveries since his arrival with those preceding. Proclaiming the success of his methods of treatment, Kennedy was effectively putting forward the results of his experience there to enhance his reputation, but his claims implicitly discredited the resident doctors at Hetton and drew a highly critical response from one member of the local medical profession.

W.H. Scott had practised as surgeon to the Gateshead Cholera Hospital, and though he acknowledged that Kennedy had written 'a work of some merit' on the cholera, said that he had been astonished to read of his 'mystical plan of treatment'.⁸⁵ This involved 'external heat, emetics, calomel, and opium, and purgatives', but the most controversial method of treatment had been blood-letting.⁸⁶ Scott said that every medical man was acquainted with such remedies and moreover, 'I even question that there is an old woman in the two counties to whom these secrets were not known before the printing of Mr. K.'s letter'. Yet Kennedy claimed to have achieved remarkable results. Before his arrival, forty-nine cases and seventeen deaths had occurred, and since his arrival 221 cases but only twenty-five deaths.⁸⁷

Kennedy particularly lauded the use of blood-letting, as almost all of the 241 cases he had seen had been bled and he claimed that where they bled freely, with only one exception his patients had survived.⁸⁸ Only those patients who had liberated no more than two or three ounces of 'black tarry fluid', which 'trickled forth in drops from the incised veins', had died.⁸⁹ Scott indignantly asked what this proved, except that

...there is sufficient vitality left in the patient to allow him to succeed in obtaining 16 or 18 ounces of blood, when his letter admits he could not do in a more advanced stage of the disease?... Although I have seen as many cases of cholera as most medical men, I am nevertheless unfriendly to Mr. K.'s recommended theory of blood-letting. I am unwilling to further reduce an already emaciated system. Mr. K. does not prove the necessity of blood-letting...⁹⁰

Scott went on to question Kennedy's case figures, and suggested that he had been extremely liberal in diagnosing cases as cholera. Asiatic cholera, said Scott,

...on its first appearance... is fourfold more virulent than later on in the attack; consequently, it is probable, that five sixths of the cases prior to Mr. K.'s induction to Hetton bore the malignant type of the disease, and it is also probable that two-thirds of the cases occurring subsequent to his arrival were merely diarrhoea. I do not assert this to have been the case, but I think it probable from this cause. Persons living in a district where cholera has not made its appearance... become alarmed, and apply for medical assistance that instant they are attacked with any of the precursory symptoms. There will be exceptions doubtless, but this may account for the comparative numbers, and for the difference between Mr. Kennedy's apparent success, and the Hetton medical men's real success...⁹¹

On the basis of this reasoning, Scott estimated the true figures during Kennedy's stay to have been twenty-three deaths from seventy-three cases, compared with the figures of seventeen from forty-nine for the resident Hetton doctors. This, said Scott, 'places the difference in a milder point of view', and went on: 'I would now ask the readers of Mr. K.'s letter, if it was a fair specimen of candour?' Scott said that Kennedy's letter had been 'a most illiberal and uncalled for attack upon the characters of the medical gentlemen of this neighbourhood, particularly those practising in the vicinity of Hetton', and Kennedy had no right 'to make a stepping-stone of his medical brothers of Hetton... to eck up his bubble reputation'.

Two days after Scott's letter was published the Hetton Colliery owners met and were lobbied by 'a grand assemblage of colliers', who complained amongst other things of 'the negligence of the surgeon'. According to Dunn they 'failed to establish any case' and 'went away completely worsted and of course grumbling hugely'.⁹² Could it have been that after hearing of Scott's letter, the realisation had dawned that scores of them had given up '16 or 18 ounces' of blood for nothing worse than a touch of diarrhoea? Were this so, given that Kennedy was brought

to Hetton by their employers, the pitmen might have been forgiven if they suspected the owners would stop at nothing in their efforts to put down the union. There had been riots elsewhere fuelled by popular suspicions that the epidemic was part of a plot to supply schools of anatomy with bodies for dissection, but it seems the cholera even came close to causing an industrial dispute at Hetton.⁹³

However, it was undoubtedly true that the company had hired Kennedy in good faith and with the best of intentions, and upon his departure they thanked him via the columns of the press for his 'skilful and successful Professional Exertions'.⁹⁴ Kennedy was also praised by a correspondent in the *Newcastle Courant*, identified only as 'A.B.', an inhabitant of Hetton. He defended Kennedy and the practice of bleeding, complaining that the 'Hetton medical men had no need for a champion' such as Scott: Scott was simply attempting to enhance his own reputation at the expense of a man who had now left the district and could not answer for himself. However, A.B. was not a doctor, and the contradictory nature of his letter suggests it would be unwise to place much reliance on his conclusions.⁹⁵

Regardless of the success or otherwise of their efforts, the Hetton owners did at least try to secure medical help for their men, but it seems there were those amongst the owners who were not entirely sorry to see the cholera taking such a heavy toll in the pit villages. Informing Lord Durham of the local situation in mid-January, his viewer Henry Morton acknowledged that this would be a 'harsh and unfeeling observation', but said that 'notwithstanding the mortality which has occurred, there still remains a larger population than is necessary - either as regards comfort to themselves or usefulness to society'. By the end of January, twenty of Lord Durham's Lambton pitmen had fallen victim to the disease,⁹⁶ and James Losh mirrored Morton's sentiments

when he commented that the cholera had 'took away none but those that could be very well spared'.⁹⁷

One very definite consequence of the epidemic was an upsurge in religious revivalism, based mainly on Wesleyan and Primitive Methodism. This took place all over the region in towns both large and small. At Gateshead 'the chapels were filled and 300 new members admitted', but it appears that the mining communities were particularly liable to revivals. Given that many of the leading figures in the pitmen's union were Primitive Methodist preachers, most pit villages had existing Methodist communities which were able to capitalize on the situation. 'At Walbottle, a prayer meeting in a widow's house drew people from a riotous dance and began a revival which brought 60 probationers to the local congregation'.⁹⁸ It was reported that the preachers at North Shields 'prayed... ate and drank and slept among the dying and the dead',⁹⁹ and in the Sunderland Primitive Methodist circuit, many of the local societies doubled in membership:

...Between December 1831 and March 1832, Primitive Methodist membership at Hetton increased from sixty-seven to eighty-six and the number of persons on trial for membership rocketed from six to 192. At Pitlington ...the combined total of full and trial members rose from thirty-one to seventy-four; at Newbottle ...full and trial members increased from nine to twenty-two, and at Rainton... full members rose from twenty-three to twenty-eight while those on trial jumped from ten to seventy-two...¹⁰⁰

Any suspicion that the revivals might have occurred simply as a result of the success of the union in 1831 can be dispelled by examination of the membership figures of the Sunderland Primitive Methodist circuit.¹⁰¹ Quarterly returns show that only Pitlington experienced any significant increase during the strike, and this was quite separate from the explosive increases which took place in almost all the local societies at the end of 1831. In short, as Jaffe has put it, membership 'only took off after November 1831, and the proximate cause was... the sudden and inexplicable onslaught of the cholera'.¹⁰²

The colliery disputes, the reform agitation, and now the cholera epidemic combined to make these eventful times. The intervention of the cholera was in no way connected with the other developments, but that does not mean it did not affect them. The role of the central government and its agents in imposing unpopular and inconsistent quarantine restrictions came in for criticism, and hence served to intensify political feeling in some quarters, not least in Sunderland. But more importantly for the pitmen's union, the epidemic had a weakening effect which was manifested not merely in terms of lives lost, or diminution of membership. Finance, as they well knew, was the sinews of war, and at precisely the point when the owners were gearing up their finances to challenge the union at the April 1832 bindings, those of the union were coming under increasing pressure from claims for sickness and death benefits. This problem could only have been a worrying drain on resources, but was compounded by the union's financial commitment to the Coxlodge and Walldridge pitmen who were meanwhile in dispute with their respective owners.¹⁰³ These skirmishes were a foretaste of the owners' determination to take on the union and formed the prelude to the exceedingly bitter coalfield dispute of 1832.

NOTES TO CHAPTER TWO.

- ¹ 'Grey had the satisfaction of seeing opinion move decisively to his own side in his home county of Northumberland. In 1826 the Whigs had failed to win a Northumberlandian seat, and they had won only one in 1830, but in 1831 Grey's son, Lord Howick, and T.W. Beaumont were returned unopposed: a dramatic sign of how swiftly and how conclusively local sentiment had rejected the Tories. For Grey this was especially gratifying. The old score with the [Tory] Duke of Northumberland had been settled at a time of immense significance in the life of the nation'. J.W. Derry, *Charles, Earl Grey: Aristocratic Reformer* (Oxford, 1992), p.199.
- ² I. Newbould, *Whiggery and Reform, 1830-1841: the Politics of Government* (London, 1990) p.71: P. Mandler, *Aristocratic Government in the Age of Reform: Whigs and Liberals 1830-1852* (Oxford, 1990), p.275.
- ³ D.G. Wright, *Popular Radicalism*, op.cit., p.90: for Carmarthen see D.J.V. Jones, *Before Rebecca: Popular Protests in Wales 1793-1835* (London, 1973), pp.117-132.
- ⁴ G.A. Williams, *The Merthyr Rising*, (London, 1978): Jones, *Before Rebecca*, p.117.
- ⁵ Benson, *British Coalminers in the Nineteenth Century: A Social History* (Dublin, 1980), pp.189,195.
- ⁶ Church, *History of the British Coal Industry*, Vol.2, pp.674-675: The Sheffield Coal Miners' Union of the early 1820s and the Glasgow union of 1816 might be taken as examples of earlier ephemeral unions, as also the Scottish coalfield unions of the mid-1820s. See P.E.H. Hair, 'A Social History of the British Coal Miners' (unpublished Ph.D thesis, Oxford, 1955) p.70: A. Campbell, 'The Scots Colliers' Strikes of 1824-1826: The Years of Freedom and Independence', *British Trades Unionism*, op.cit., pp.143-161.
- ⁷ Wright, *Popular Radicalism*, p.104: The Welsh evidence is Williams', pp.80,88,110,165,170. The hanged man was Richard Lewis, aka 'Dic Penderyn': The English evidence is J.R.M. Butler's (*The Passing of the Great Reform Act*, p.170): see also Benson, *British Coalminers*, p.203, and Jones, *Before Rebecca*, p.118: Sykes notes an 'explosion of unionisation amongst the miners in 1830' ('Trade Unionism and Class Consciousness...' op.cit., p.192): Church (*History of the British Coal Industry*, Vol.2, p.675) says the Bolton colliers' union also had links with Yorkshire: For the NAPL see for example Cole, *Attempts at General Union*, op.cit., Chapter IV: According to Williams the NAPL tried to enrol all grades of colliery workers (p.46), which along with evidence that the Tyne-Wear union admitted ancillary trades, endorses Colls' point that Church is incorrect to describe the Miners' Federation of Great Britain (1888) as being the first union to admit non-face and surface workers (Colls, p.327: Church, p.714).
- ⁸ For the textile trades see Cole, 'The Spinners' Union and the Union of Trades', *Attempts at General Union*, op.cit., pp.14-29: for the potters see R. Fyson, 'Unionism, Class and Community in the 1830s:

- Aspects of the National Union of Operative Potters', *British Trade Unionism*, op.cit., pp.200-219: Rule's *British Trade Unionism* is surprisingly weak on the Operative Builders' Union, another important body in the early 1830s - see Cole, op.cit., 'The Builders' Union', pp.101-108.
- 9 Williams, pp.87,210.
- 10 Church, *History of the British Coal Industry*, Vol.2, p.675. Church confuses the timing of events, putting the failure of the Bolton union at 1830 instead of late 1831, and apparently mistaking the NAPL's fall for that of the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union in 1834. The NAPL actually failed in 1832.
- 11 Williams, p.165.
- 12 Jones points out that only the Flintshire colliers 'took an oath not to go to work' on December 27, 1830 (*Before Rebecca*, p.118).
- 13 Williams, pp.209,211: M. Elsas, *Iron in the Making; Dowlais Iron Company Letters, 1782-1860* (Cardiff, 1960), pp.58-63: Benson (pp.193-194) says union men at Whitehaven were 'immediately sacked' when they began to recruit pitmen there, citing a letter from J. Peile on August 30 1831, to Merthyr ironmaster J. Guest, evidently in reply to the latter's request for advice. Peile was Lord Lonsdale's colliery viewer (see A.J. Heesom, 'The Northern Coal-Owners and the Opposition to the Coal Mines Act of 1842', *International Review of Social History*, XXV, 1980, p.254).
- 14 See R. Anstis, *Warren James and the Dean Forest Riots: Being the Story of the Leader of the Riots in the Forest of Dean in 1831* (Gloucester, 1986): C. Fisher, 'The Free Miners of the Forest of Dean, 1800-1841', *Independent Collier*, R. Harrison (ed), (Sussex, 1978), pp.37,39-44: Benson, *British Coalminers*, p.195.
- 15 Hair thesis, p.347. The Staffordshire men were 'not as well off as their North East brethren' and suffered 'severe fluctuations in wages' in the 1830s (*ibid.*, pp.350,258): Williams, pp.212-213: Jones, *Before Rebecca*, p.120.
- 16 HO 40/29 series, Bouverie to the Home Office, August-September 1831: Cole, pp.57-58.
- 17 Benson, p.189.
- 18 It merits note however that there were many older precedents for price-fixing during periods of stress.
- 19 Williams, p.46: C. Behagg, 'The Democracy of Work, 1820-1850', *British Trades Unionism*, op.cit., pp.162-177: C. Behagg, *Politics and Production in the Early Nineteenth Century* (New York, 1990): N.D. LoPatin, 'Political Unions and the Great Reform Act of 1832' (unpublished Ph.D thesis, Washington, 1988).
- 20 J.R.M. Butler, *The Passing of the Great Reform Act* (London, 1914): G.M. Trevelyan, *Lord Grey of the Reform Bill* (London, 1920): M. Brock, *The Great Reform Act* (London, 1973).

- 21 J. Stevenson, *High and Low Politics in Modern Britain* (Oxford, 1982); M. Bentley, *Politics Without Democracy, 1815-1914* (London, 1984); Newbould, *Whiggery and Reform, 1830-1841*, op.cit: Mandler, *Aristocratic Government*, op.cit: LoPatin, p.2.
- 22 Mandler, p.7.
- 23 LoPatin, pp.5,6,207,209.
- 24 Mandler, p.130: LoPatin, p.6.
- 25 Williams, p.87.
- 26 Mandler, p.131,125.
- 27 After planning a 'National Convention to draft a 'Reform Bill of the People' and taking up the idea of a 'National Holiday' or general strike, several MUWC leaders were jailed for sedition in January 1832. See LoPatin, Chapter 6.
- 28 LoPatin, p.154.
- 29 LoPatin, pp.163-165: Jones, p.129.
- 30 LoPatin, pp.6,176.
- 31 *Poor Man's Guardian*, Nos.1-186, 1831-1834, in 4 Vols. (Merlin, 1971).
- 32 C. Flick, *The Birmingham Political Union and the Movements for Reform in Britain, 1830-1839* (Connecticut, 1979), p.16.
- 33 *Northern Tribune* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 1854), pp.323-324,333-334.
- 34 *Northern Tribune*, pp.325,323: In Newcastle, the office of Mayor enjoyed 'a pre-eminence not accorded to the chief magistrate of every borough. His duties naturally included the presidency of every formal public activity in the town. It was accepted that he must preside at any public meeting requisitioned by a sufficient number of respectable people... party political bodies, such as the Northern Political Union, generally preferred to hold meetings under the chairmanship of one of their members... [and] the great meetings of... pitmen or keelmen, held usually on the Town Moor, were outside the framework of public life in the borough; but nevertheless the Mayor... was accepted as the public spokesman of the opinion of the inhabitants on all questions of general interest'. M. Cook, 'The Last Days of the Unreformed Corporation of Newcastle upon Tyne', *Archaeologia Aeliana*, 4th Series, Vol.XXXIX, 1961, pp.208,209.
- 35 *Northern Tribune*, p.334. The Mayor objected to Attwood's expression that '[t]he sword of civil contest was almost half out of its scabbard', a reference to the possibility of civil war should the second Reform Bill fail: see also the *Newcastle Courant*, October 1, 1831, and for a Whig account Hughes, *Losh's Diaries*, II, op.cit., p.121.
- 36 C. Muris, 'The Northern Reform Union, 1858-1862' (unpublished MA thesis, Durham, 1953) p.150.

- 37 HO 40/28-4, cited by LoPatin, p.164.
- 38 E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, p.691: A. Aspinall, *Early English Trade Unions* (London, 1949), p.338, citing the Mayor of Newcastle.
- 39 D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, August 6, 1831.
- 40 *Northern Tribune*, p.324.
- 41 Anon., *The Spirit of Tyne and Wear: or the Masters' and Workmen's Guardian*, op.cit., pp.16-18. Though written from memory the writer said this dialogue was 'pretty correct'.
- 42 *Tyne Mercury*, September 13, 1831.
- 43 W. Brockie, *History of the Town, Trade, and Port of Shields* (North Shields, 1851) p.162.
- 44 W. Brockie, *Sunderland Notables*, (Sunderland, 1894), p.319: Four Bristol rioters were later hanged: Londonderry had to be rescued by soldiers after being stoned by a London mob for his role in the anti-reform campaign in the Lords (see *Annual Register*, *Chronicle*, October 11, 1831, pp.162-163). John Buddle wrote that he was 'kept in a state of the greatest alarm and distress at the daily rencontres your Lordship had with the ruffians mob'. D/Lo/C 142, October 16, 1831.
- 45 *Northern Tribune*, p.334-335.
- 46 *Northern Tribune*, p.335.
- 47 *Northern Tribune*, p.335.
- 48 Poster, Report of the 'Great Northern Political Union Meeting', October 17, 1831, T[homas] W[ilson] Collection, Newcastle Central Library, Vol.3, p.745: Public feeling against the wealth and privileges of the clergy, especially in Durham, came to a head when the Bishops voted against the Reform Bill in the Lords, accusations of corruption against whom became 'daily more and more intense. At all the public meetings the more violent the abuse of them was, the more rapturously it was applauded'. Hughes, *Losh's Diaries*, II, p.202, Losh to Brougham, November 9, 1831. See also A.J. Heesom, 'The founding of the University of Durham', *Durham Cathedral Lecture*, (pamphlet), 1982, p.21: 'The Bishop of Durham having taken a somewhat prominent part as an Anti-Reformer in the debate on the bill, the reform-smit youths of South Shields determined on burning his effigy. While, however, they were parading him through the town, they were robbed in King-street, and had the effigy taken from them.' Brockie, *History of... Shields*, pp.162-163: An effigy of the Bishop, along with one of Lord Londonderry, was successfully burned in Sunderland. R.J. Morris, *Cholera 1832*, London, 1976, p.47: Bishop van Mildert was relieved that unlike Lord Londonderry, no personal violence had been offered him and that he had merely been burnt in effigy 'within sight of my castle gates' in Durham. In fear of Grey's ministry and the possible consequences of reform, the Dean and Chapter initiated the establishment of Durham University in 1832 to divert criticism by the high-profile expenditure of surplus church funds in the public interest (see Heesom, p.21).

- 49 *Newcastle Chronicle*, October 22, 1831.
- 50 *Northern Tribune*, p.335: Independently of the NPU, the Whigs held their own reform meeting at the Guildhall chaired by Mayor Reed, whom they had requisitioned with a petition of '300 of the most respectable persons of the town'. Losh said his own speech was well received, 'particularly by the well dressed part of the audience'. Hughes, *Losh's Diaries*, II, p.122: With similar disdain for the 'unrespectables' of the NPU a Whig friend of Earl Grey, Dr John Ralph Fenwick of Durham, warned the him that the NPU's leaders, though 'individually insignificant, acquire importance by their union and numbers, and still more by their connection with other similar bodies more numerous, and led on by men of more ability than they are'. Durham University, Dept. of Palaeography and Diplomatic, Grey MSS, Box 14, File 6, Fenwick to Grey, November 18 or 20, 1831.
- 51 *Newcastle Chronicle*, November 5, 1831.
- 52 *Northern Tribune*, p.335-336.
- 53 *Durham Advertiser*, November 4, 1831.
- 54 *Tyne Mercury*, November 8, 1831: Losh said Lambton was the best orator that day. Hughes, *Losh's Diaries*, II, p.123.
- 55 *Northern Tribune*, p.336.
- 56 Brockie, *History of... Shields*, pp.161,162.
- 57 *Tyne Mercury*, November 29, 1831.
- 58 The Royal Proclamation actually produced an increase of 180 members in the Northern Political Union. *Tyne Mercury*, November 29, 1831.
- 59 *Durham Advertiser*, December 9, 1831. The *Advertiser* however simply advised the government to drop the Bill and concentrate on alleviating the distress of the poor.
- 60 HO 40/29 series.
- 61 *Newcastle Courant*, December 10, 1831.
- 62 E.P. Thompson cites an 1819 report of the pitmen that 'Universal Suffrage is understood by many of them to mean universal suffering... "if one member suffers, all must suffer"'. *Political Observer*, December 19, 1819, cited in *The Making of the English Working Class*, p.713 (1963 edn).
- 63 R.J. Morris, *Cholera 1832* (London, 1976), p.14.
- 64 Morris cites the case of a River Wear pilot who guided in a ship from the Baltic, and died on August 14 with classic cholera symptoms. Doctors 'could not recognise the disease, and those who suspected something was wrong were reluctant to admit that cholera had arrived'. The surgeon who attended the pilot 'admitted several months later when he had had ample experience of cholera that this case was indeed Asiatic cholera'. The Central Board of Health in London was notified but 'was not very excited and asked for more details'. Further cases on October 9

and 17 were later admitted to have been Asiatic cholera, but it was not until October 23 that a case was officially acknowledged. *Ibid.*, pp.11,40-42.

65 The Privy Council opted for minimum rather than maximum quarantine measures, in the light of events in Eastern Europe. There, attempts to enforce quarantines with cordons of armed troops around towns and villages, coupled with the observation that the epidemic afflicted the poor but seemingly not the rich, gave rise to the popular belief that this was no disease but an international plot to kill off the surplus labouring population by poisoning, as the British had allegedly done in India. Foreign doctors, believed to be delegates of a London committee directing the exterminations, were subject to fatal attacks in Russia, Poland, Prussia and Hungary, where noblemen were also murdered. In Vienna, the Austro-Hungarian Emperor concluded that military cordons and quarantine produced 'consequences more mischievous than those resulting from the malady itself'. M. Durey, *The Return of the Plague: British Society and the Cholera, 1831-32* (London, 1979), pp.18-19.

66 Morris, pp.24,46,50.

67 Morris, pp.46,47,53: 'The truth is that the lower classes of the port of Sunderland had a desperate interest in keeping the coal trade open... of the 17,000 inhabitants... 14,000 were in a state of pauperism and on relief'. S.T. Miller, 'Cholera in Sunderland 1831-1832', *Journal of Regional and Local Studies*, Vol.3, No.1, Summer 1983, p.15, citing *The Times*, December 30, 1831: It was reported that a celebrated French physician, Dr Majendie, who visited Sunderland to study cholera, observed upon his return to Paris 'that up to that time he had not conceived it possible that there could exist, in any part of Europe, such wretchedness and misery as he had witnessed there; that it had been possible to find such frightful masses of filth, destitution, and degradation, and those affecting not a few, but involving a vast proportion of the total population' (*Tyne Mercury*, April 3, 1832): Yet a soldier in Sunderland in 1832 could describe the place as 'a very smart town' and wished to remain in the area should he be discharged from the army. *The Diary of Colour-Serjeant George Calladine, 1793-1837*, Major M.L. Ferrar (ed), (London, 1922), p.175.

68 One maritime historian comments that Sunderland coal-fitter and shipowner Henry Tanner 'was right to emphasize the importance of quick despatch'. S. Ville, 'Shipping in the Port of Sunderland 1815-1845: A Counter-Cyclical Trend', *Business History*, Vol.32, No.1, January 1990, p.37.

69 Morris, p.53.

70 A.J. Heesom, '"This Unpleasant Affair..." (II): Lord Londonderry and the Cholera in Sunderland, 1831-1832', *Durham County Local History Society Bulletin*, 30, (May 1983), pp.37-48.

71 D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, September 7, 1832.

72 Morris, p.61: D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, December 19, 1831.

73 Durey, pp.26,27: According to Smith, the arrival of cholera also coincided with a period of 'increased general sickness and epidemics of

- scarlet fever and typhus'. F.B. Smith, *The People's Health, 1830-1910* (London, 1979), p.230.
- 74 Morris, p.16.
- 75 Smith, pp.232,235. The observation as to dirty hands was made of the 1853-54 epidemic by Dr John Snow, who acted to prove his theory that the disease was water-borne.
- 76 Smith, p.230.
- 77 Morris, p.15.
- 78 J. Sykes, *An Account of the Disease termed Cholera Morbus...* (Newcastle, 1832), pp.7,9,10: D.J. Rowe, 'Population of Nineteenth Century Tyneside', *Essays in Tyneside Labour History*, N. McCord (ed), (North East Group for the Study of Labour History, 1977), p.20.
- 79 Morris, p.62: *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, Vol.55, 1832, p.203.
- 80 Jaffe, 'Economy and Community...', op.cit., p.280: Morris, p.61: *Dunn's Diary*, January 25, 1832: Sykes, p.16: Bilston was the worst-hit place in Britain with 742 deaths from 3,568 cases in a population of 14,500 (Smith, p.237).
- 81 N[ational] C[oal] B[oard] Papers, Durham County Record Office, 1/JB/712, Nathaniel Hindhaugh to Buddle, January 20, 1832: The death of Edmondson, a wealthy cleric, came as some surprise as it was mainly the poor who fell victim to cholera because of the overcrowded and insanitary conditions in which they lived, and his death was consequently equated with his liking for alcohol, which was seen as a working-class trait. Perhaps underlining this the Newcastle Board of Health published a notice in December declaring that 'nothing predisposes the Body more to the Ravages of deadly Disease than the IMMODERATE USE OF SPIRITUOUS LIQUORS', which went on that with few exceptions, victims of the disease elsewhere in Europe were 'habitual Drunkards', and recommended that those addicted to 'Spirit-drinking' should abstain from alcohol 'as one of the best Preventives against any Attack of that dreadful Malady the Cholera Morbus' (*Newcastle Chronicle*, December 10, 1831).
- 82 NCB 1/JB/712, Hindhaugh to Buddle, January 20, 1832.
- 83 *The Lancet*, Vol.II, 1832, pp.796-7, cited by Morris, pp.163,171: The most effective treatment is the injection of saline solution into the veins to counter the loss of water and salts. Following chemical analysis of the blood of a victim by Dr. William Brooke O'Shaughnessy, this treatment was practised with some success in 1832 by a Dr. Thomas Latta of Leith, but was ignored as Latta had 'little authority or prestige in the medical world he was trying to influence'. Morris, p.167: Durey, p.129: Similarly, an anonymous writer to the *Tyne Mercury* (February 28, 1832) suggested that blood transfusions might prove a more effective treatment than for instance the common but useless practice of injecting soapy water into the bowel.
- 84 *Newcastle Courant*, February 18, 1832: Kennedy's experience of cholera in India prompted his pamphlet, *The History of Contagious Cholera* (London, 1831), which was the first of several works to appear

during 1831. This was thought the best of its kind but Kennedy was criticized by the *London Medical Gazette* for neglecting to include all the available data, and thus implicitly tailoring the evidence to suit his conclusions. Durey, pp.110-111.

85 Scott was apparently also a Newcastle apothecary. *Newcastle Courant*, March 10, 1832.

86 For an example of such treatments recommended to an apprentice surgeon in early nineteenth century Newcastle, see E. Knox, 'The Body Politic. Bodysnatching, the Anatomy Act and the Poor on Tyneside', *North East Labour History Society Bulletin*, 24, 1990, p.23: Calomel, a compound of mercury, was actually toxic but was recommended by the Central Board of Health in London, and either on its own or in conjunction with opium was the most frequently used drug in Britain during this period. It was used as a cathartic, but because it fell out of use many years ago it is not now known how effective it was. Remedies such as rhubarb were 'of purely cosmetic value', and doctors who administered laxatives 'were frequently criticised in 1832'. Durey, pp.126-128.

87 *Tyne Mercury*, February 21, 1832.

88 The 241 cases included 20 which he inherited on his arrival, of which two died. *Tyne Mercury*, February 21, 1832: '[F]emale bleeders' were appointed in different parts of Hetton 'to whom people who were attacked were directed instantly to apply' (*Newcastle Courant*, March 10, 1832).

89 *Newcastle Courant*, February 18, 1832

90 *Tyne Mercury*, February 21, 1832: The '16 or 18 ounces' referred to is equivalent to half a litre (about one pint), the loss of which from a healthy person with a normal blood volume of five litres would cause nothing much worse than faintness. But such a loss had more serious consequences for a cholera victim, and one medical historian claims that '[n]o more harmful medical intervention could be conceived than the removal of already depleted blood'. N. Howard-Jones, 'Cholera Therapy in the Nineteenth Century', *Journal of the History of Medicine*, XXVIII, 1972, cited by Durey, pp.122-123: Durey (pp.126,124) says that 'venesection was legitimised by its apparent beneficial effect on the pulse rate' but believes doctors practising such methods were in a minority, and concludes 'there is little evidence to suggest that this was a widespread habit in Britain in 1832'.

91 The *Newcastle Courant* of January 28, 1832, tends to support Scott's view that many of the cases were diarrhoea. Reporting on the cholera at Hetton it stated 'we are assured the cases are extremely mild in their character'.

92 *Dunn's Diary*, February 23, 1832. The Hetton pitmen also complained at the stowage of small coal and that some deputies at the Elemore pit were working as hewers.

93 This may be the same W. Scott who published a pro-union pamphlet during the 1831 strike (*An Earnest Address... in Behalf of the Oppressed and Suffering Pitmen, of the Counties of Northumberland and Durham*, Newcastle, 1831): The cholera does not seem to have caused specific

industrial disturbances. Durey (p.186) cites the example of Newcastle, where despite 'high unemployment, acute distress, strikes and an epidemic at about the same time... there were no disturbances motivated by cholera, even in the colliery villages where striking miners were evicted from their tied homes while the disease raged [viz. Coxlodge]'. There were however many riots against the hated schools of anatomy which, in this era of grave-robbing and body-snatching, were seen as morbid beneficiaries of the epidemic. 'Of all the English towns which possessed private schools [of anatomy], only Hull and Newcastle failed to undergo some specific disturbance during the epidemic': for cholera riots see also R. Richardson, *Death, Dissection and the Destitute* (London, 1987), pp.222-230: and R.J. Evans, 'Epidemics and Revolutions: Cholera in Nineteenth Century Europe', *Past and Present*, 120 (August 1988), pp.123-146, who makes the point that the major cholera epidemics of the nineteenth century coincided with periods of great political and social unrest.

94 *Newcastle Courant*, February 11, 1832.

95 *Newcastle Courant*, March 10, 1832. For instance, A.B. enclosed a letter from an unnamed Hetton doctor as the authority for his comments, stating that he himself was not a medical man - but then said that he had personally attended 180 cholera cases in Hetton and, analysing the figures, gave himself a better success rate even than Kennedy. He denied that diarrhoea cases had been included in Kennedy's figures, and pronounced that cholera, if detected in time, was 'anything but unmanageable'.

96 L[ambton] P[apers], Lambton Estate Office, nr. Chester-le-Street, Henry Morton to Lord Durham, January 30, 1832, cited by Jaffe, *Economy and Community*, pp.280-281.

97 Hughes, *Losh's Diaries*, II, Losh to Lord Brougham, March 8, 1832, pp.207-208. Losh added that '[t]he real mischief done here is very slight, except to the coal trade'.

98 Morris, p.145.

99 *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, 1832, cited by Colls, *The Pitmen*, p.154.

100 Jaffe, 'The "Chiliasm of Despair"...' op.cit., p.33.

101 Colls, *The Pitmen*, p.153.

102 Jaffe, 'The "Chiliasm of Despair"...' p.34.

103 This was a point that Bouverie was able to confirm when he later told the Home Office that 'the Union has suffered very considerably in its funds in consequence of having to support so many of its members as have been turned out by Mr. Brandling' at Coxlodge. HO 40/30, Bouverie to the Home Office, March 15, 1832: He was probably referring to an account of a pitmen's meeting on March 3 when Hepburn revealed that 'no less than £10,000 had been paid this year' for the relief of the sick and destitute. Delegate Charles Parkinson said that £700 had been paid out in Hetton alone for this purpose. (*Newcastle Chronicle*, March 10, 1832).

CHAPTER THREE:THE 'UNEASY TRUCE' OF WINTER 1831-32.

In the months following the pitmen's victory Buddle remarked that the pitmen regulated production more strictly than the owners had ever done, but the relationship between owners and men was far from frictionless, as Sweezy noted:¹

..The successful strike of 1831 had had two effects. In the first place it had greatly increased the militancy and confidence of the union... frequent meetings were held, violence was occasionally used against non-union miners, and... the union began to dream of a closed shop. In the second place, the owners had learned a lesson. Most of them had never before had to face a large strike; the last general walkout had taken place in 1810. But the defeat of 1831 put them on their guard and made them long for an opportunity to even the score with their insubordinate workers...²

During the remaining months of 1831 sporadic local disputes occurred, the subject of which did not particularly differ from any other year: wage rates, corf sizes, fines, and other details of daily pit life were always matters of contention,³ but now the question of labour supply became an additional vexation and the context of the disputes had altered markedly. As noted by Buddle and others the roles of owners and men were now reversed with the pitmen 'completely masters of the Concerns', courtesy of their control of manning and output.⁴ An uneasy truce prevailed but the owners, angry and indignant at having had their authority usurped by their social inferiors, seemed determined to test it whenever the opportunity presented itself.

When for instance the Hetton brakemen and firemen struck on August 28, their bonds (contracts of employment) were legally rescinded by a magistrate on the grounds that they had been violated, and when the enginemen also struck the owners vowed 'to lay the coals at bank rather than submit to their demands'. The Hetton owners then circulated the

names of the discharged men, and the Coal Trade committee resolved that no workman was to be engaged 'without strictly enquiring into the cause of his having left his last situation': a simple expedient to preclude any dismissed 'ringleaders' from employment. Blacklisting thus became Coal Trade policy.⁵ Such examples illustrate how the owners could use the legal undertakings in the bond to suppress strikes and to discipline, dismiss or even imprison troublesome workmen as a means of reimposing their authority and curtailing the activity of the pitmen.

The Hetton owners were meanwhile looking to other means of undermining the union. On October 25 they resolved to establish a benefit society for its 'underground workmen', a set of rules having been drawn up for the perusal of potential members. The company declared it had 'no object in the proposed Establishment beyond that of benefitting the Workmen, and thereby attaching them to the Colliery', and offered to donate £500 to the society 'as soon as the number of subscribers shall reach 300'.⁶ But the manifest reason for this was to establish a counter-union: the figure of 300 members which they sought represented about a quarter of the Hetton workforce, and such a number of men 'attached to the Colliery' would provide an invaluable bulwark against the union pitmen come next binding day. But it seems relations with the men were so bad that the company union never got off the ground, attracting no more than a handful of men from a workforce of over 1200.⁷

Disputes at Callerton and Coxlodge.

Callerton had been the only colliery to pay a cash premium of binding money in 1831 to induce its men to bind, but at the end of September the Callerton pitmen were making a fresh demand, this time for the dismissal of a number of 'strangers' whom the owners had brought

onto the colliery.⁸ Thereafter in the first week of October the Callerton owners had twelve of their pitmen taken before the Northumberland magistrates and they 'were convicted of deserting the service of their employers without any lawful cause'.⁹ The owners obviously felt this a worthwhile exercise but such tactics antagonised the men. By mid-October, meetings of pitmen had resolved that the employment of lead-miners should not be allowed, and that force would if necessary be used to stop the pits which tried to employ them.¹⁰ The implications of this for their sense of class identity are obvious enough, but the evidence to hand suggests no forcible stoppage was made at Callerton, and if the engagement of lead-miners was a stumbling-block the pitmen there must have eaten humble pie: by November 20 colliery production was back to normal, and by February 15 1832 the Callerton owners had recruited 140 men and boys from the Alston lead-mining district. This set a significant precedent.¹¹

Though the employment of lead-miners was not uncommon in times of high demand when local labour was scarce, their numbers usually remained relatively small. The situation at Coxlodge tends to confirm this point, with three having been taken on at the beginning of June, one in July, a further five in September and another one in October, making a total of ten.¹² But it seems the influx of lead-miners at nearby Callerton was deeply felt by the Coxlodge pitmen. When, as the pitmen contemplated the arrival of the 140 Alston men at Callerton, the Coxlodge owners attempted to bring in a further three lead-miners, the Coxlodge men objected and on Wednesday November 23 stopped work: by the end of the week six of them had been sentenced at Newcastle Moot Hall to three months hard labour.¹³

However, the Brandlings of Coxlodge were also proprietors of neighbouring Gosforth colliery, which as the pitmen explained, put a different complexion on the affair:

...At the binding of Coxlodge colliery, the following verbal agreement was made:- That as they had more men bound than could be conveniently employed at Coxlodge, some of them were to go to work at Gosforth colliery, and if it should be found that more men were wanted at Coxlodge, then the men so sent to Gosforth were to return before any strangers should be employed. With this agreement perfectly understood, and in some instances acted upon, though but a verbal one, the colliery has gone on peaceably till a few weeks ago, when the owners brought some strangers to work in the pit without first bringing any men from Gosforth. The request on the part of the men, that these strangers should not be employed was met by a haughty refusal; this led to a strike, and this led to the men being summoned before the Magistrates, who were told that they were not to be believed, "because they were Methodists!" As was to be expected, the Magistrates decided against them...¹⁴

Coxlodge viewer George Hill insisted that the verbal agreement applied only to hewers and not other workmen, but the pitmen contested this point: 'the agent has, in opposition to the averment of upwards of 150 men, and in opposition to the acknowledged practice, denied the existence of such agreement - so much the worse for him!' The implication here was that Hill had perjured himself at the hearing before the magistrates.¹⁵

In response to Callerton's payment of binding money, the Coal Trade had agreed in August 1831 to indemnify any colliery stopped by the men refusing to go to work. This appears not to have been pursued by Hetton and Lambton as they had been stopped only temporarily, and Callerton had made only tentative enquiries, but four days into the Coxlodge dispute the Brandlings made a claim, which was approved: thus secure in the knowledge they would be reimbursed for any losses, they took decisive measures.¹⁶

On the ensuing Monday the pitmen continued to refuse to work. This the Brandlings interpreted as desertion from service and advertised the names of seventy-nine men in the local press, requesting not only

coalowners but also other employers 'not to give Employment to any of the said Men, they being the bound Servants of the Owners of Coxlodge Colliery'.¹⁷ But the remaining pitmen were still defiant, whereupon the owners attempted

...by serving summonses upon the remainder of the men, to induce them to quit their service... but as no attention was paid to them, they (the owners) were compelled to take out warrants for their apprehension, and on the 6th day of December 26 individuals were regularly discharged by a magistrate...¹⁸

Though the pitmen were grateful for the bond in that it guaranteed twelve months employment, this episode shows how the owners could turn its provisions against them. It could not normally be cancelled without the mutual consent of both parties, but both sides could apply to have grievances heard by magistrates, and should a grievance be proven cancelled bonds or criminal proceedings might follow. Using the law, the Coxlodge owners had thus taken the course of either cowing the men into submission or replacing them. On Saturday December 3 a general meeting of the Coal Trade approved of the line taken and took steps to more firmly establish their indemnity fund.¹⁹

The critical point upon which the affair turned was the nature of the agreement concerning the transfer of men between Coxlodge and Gosforth. The fact that it was verbal rather than written put the owners at an advantage in law, of which they were so confident that they appear to have consciously broken the agreement despite the fact that 150 pitmen might testify against them. The owners however had grounds for confidence, given the social and business links between the Coal Trade and magistracy. At least one JP presiding at Newcastle Moot Hall shared their interest in the cases brought before him: Charles John Bigge was a member of a longstanding gentry coalowning family,²⁰ in which light the pitmen's complaint that owners were their 'accusers, judges, and executioners' does not appear so extreme.²¹ And the claim that the

pitmen should not be believed "because they were Methodists!" does not seem such an unlikely one given the attitude of some viewers and the fact that the principal owner of Coxlodge, the Rev. Ralph Henry Brandling, was an Anglican clergyman.²²

Whilst the Coxlodge owners were supported by the Coal Trade, the pitmen received similar backing from the union at large, which since the summer had accumulated a considerable fund and ensured that the Coxlodge men were in receipt of strike pay throughout the dispute. On December 16 it was reported that 'all' the Coxlodge men were still 'sticking', and on the following day a general meeting of owners further considered arrangements for their indemnity fund.²³ With compromise no longer an option, matters had reached an impasse, and eventually on January 2 the owners issued fourteen-day notices of eviction. By January 9 most of the men not initially discharged had been apprehended and their bonds cancelled for desertion from service.²⁴

On January 16 the eviction notices expired, but over twenty houses still remained occupied by the pitmen 'as if they had never received notice to quit'. The owners offered to allow a further week for their removal provided each signed an engagement to quit, with a £5 penalty should they then fail to do so. But only two families agreed and thus,

...the law was allowed to take its course, and the pitmen were forcibly ejected from their houses, a large body of the military being upon the spot to prevent them offering any violence to the persons performing the disagreeable duty...²⁵

The Tyne pitmen's delegates were called upon 'to assemble on the spot and investigate the whole proceeding', and on January 20 'when as many of the men as could be collected were got together', after 'a minute enquiry into the whole of the facts', proposed a resolution to the men:

..."That the dispute having terminated in a manner highly prejudicial to the men, and in a way which cannot but be also injurious to the masters, a deputation be appointed to wait on

the Rev. Mr. Brandling, the owner, to solicit him to continue to employ those men who may be willing to remain." On a show of hands this proposition was rejected, but the committee, desirous that no doubt should remain on the subject, retired into another room and took each man's vote separately, when they found that there were against the resolution 108, and for it 34, leaving a majority of 75 [sic]. Against a feeling so strongly manifested there was no contending; and thus the labours of the committee terminated...²⁶

Such was the depth of feeling that they preferred to remain unemployed than even ask for work on the owner's terms, and the Rev. Brandling proceeded to staff his colliery with lead-miners. Buddle approved of the 'vigorous measures' taken at Coxlodge and told Londonderry he was glad the Brandlings had acted so decisively: 'I hope it will tend to sap the foundation of the Union - until this *monster* is subdued we shall never again know tranquillity in the trade'.²⁷

Though the Coxlodge men were beaten it seems the Hetton men retained control of manning into 1832. Comparisons between the two are unfair in that Coxlodge was a colliery of only modest size whereas Hetton was one of the largest in the coalfield, but it might be noted that the differing fortunes of the two workforces turned upon the question of the legality of their actions. The Hetton men had remained within the bounds of their contracts and so gave the owners no opportunity to dismiss them, but the Coxlodge men left themselves open to legal action and the owners exploited this opening to the full. Viewed in this light the repeated advice of Hepburn and other delegates to remain orderly, peaceful and not put themselves beyond the pale of the law was the best advice the pitmen could get. The lesson of the past few months surely was that whenever the men stepped outside the law the owners would pick them off as a means of victimising 'ringleaders' and so weakening and demoralising the union. And as one pitman wrote some weeks after the Coxlodge dispute had ended so badly for the union, the fate of those men was not a happy one:

...at present those stubborn men who have been so presumptuous as to endeavour to make a bargain with their masters contrary to their will and pleasure, after having made the tour of the collieries, have very probably, on arriving at home, to quit their houses and get others where they can, if the master will be so kind as to employ them again on any terms; perhaps they may be allowed a trifle to find a house for themselves, - perhaps they have to work unbound, and are thus used as toys to play with by the masters, or to keep on, or turn off at pleasure; this sport is at present practising at a colliery within two or three miles of Newcastle, where about one hundred men are employed, twenty-two of whom are unbound, and who, if they would not work at what the master pleased to give them for their labour, were to leave the Colliery...²⁸

The description fits Coxlodge, which by this time was working with lead-miners, whom Bouverie was able to report on February 3 had not been molested though the Rev. Brandling was obliged 'to keep a strong Police Force at his pits in order to protect them'.²⁹ The twenty-two unbound men may well have been those pitmen still occupying their colliery houses when the eviction notices expired on January 16. Their names were doubtless circulated and, after being refused work at other pits, the Coxlodge owners would then have been in a position to offer them their jobs back - on their own strict terms. It thus seems the Brandlings may have succeeded in cowing those men after all.

The Coxlodge men had been represented by the owners and press alike as unreasonable and misguided malcontents, but the Tyne Committee of the pitmen would have none of this and sought to put the matter in perspective:

...let us ask, what sort of treatment must those men have received, that they thus almost unanimously would rather incur all the misery consequent on the loss of employment, and expulsion from their homes than again submit to it? Is it to be believed that a large body of sober industrious men... would, without provocation, without ill treatment, without witnessing violation of contracts, wantonly abandon their work, to experience with their families, all the misery of houseless penury?...

Despite the setbacks however the delegates remained defiant and were determined the public should be aware that the responsibility for the Coxlodge dispute rested with the owners: 'so far from having caused

or fomented the quarrel, we have done all that lay in our power to put an end to it. That our efforts have not succeeded we sincerely lament, but yet can scarcely blame those who shrink from placing themselves again under the rod of tyranny'.³⁰

The Waldridge Riot.

Instances of sabotage accompanying events at Callerton and Coxlodge bear testimony to an increasingly unsettled state of affairs in the coalfield, and further evidence of discontent appeared at Waldridge Colliery, near Chester-le-Street.³¹ The colliery had only been open since August 1, when it was agreed that the hewing prices should be set by two viewers, one appointed by the pitmen and one by the owners. On December 8 the two viewers accordingly set the price but the men were dissatisfied, complaining it was based on the earnings of the best hewers and therefore meant that average hewers would be unfairly penalised.³² Jaffe has shown that such claims were probably justified, but the owners refused to moderate the prices, and the pitmen would not accept them as they stood.³³

Waldridge was a small colliery with an independent ownership lacking the resources of owners like Lord Durham or the Brandlings, and the pitmen may have calculated on this weakness to press their case. Despite having seen Coxlodge men criminalised that same week for breaking their bonds, on December 9 the Waldridge men 'quitted the colliery', presumably expecting the owner, George Sowerby, to give way and re-employ them. But from December 19 Sowerby brought in lead-miners, having already asked the Home Office for 'a small military force' to protect the colliery. His letter adequately demonstrated his indignation at the situation, and shows how the owners were moved to resistance by the control exercised by the men:³⁴

...Conceiving that no Owner of a Colliery ought so far to degrade himself as to permit his hired servants to dictate to him not only the men whom he shall employ but the manner in which he is to conduct his business, I have as the only alternative left, engaged a number of Lead-Miners from Weardale...

The Home Office view was that the deployment of a civil force should be attempted before the military was resorted to, and Sowerby thus engaged 'a number of constables' to protect the lead-miners.³⁵ But on December 21 he was obliged to send for military aid when the Waldridge pitmen 'came in numbers - with stakes in their hands' to a house occupied by the lead-miners, 'threatening vengeance if they proceeded to work at Waldridge Colliery'. The pitmen dispersed at the news of approaching Dragoons, but by December 24 the numbers of lead-miners had reached sixty and the pitmen tried again. That afternoon over one thousand assembled and commenced to attack the pit, at which time twenty-four lead-miners were underground, one of whom recalled their predicament:³⁶

....There was a great noise. Some of the men at the bank called down to them to ride (come up the shaft), but they durst not. He described the tubs, etc., coming down the front side of the brattice; and the effect produced by stopping the engine. The water in some places was ankle deep, and in others knee deep...

When word was received that troops were coming, '[s]omething was whispered among them' and the pitmen again dispersed: it was past four o'clock when the troops arrived after a ten-mile march from Newcastle to find the riot over, the engine restarted and the lead-miners being drawn to the surface.³⁷

The 'Waldridge Outrage' was reported in *The Times* and raised in the House of Lords by coal owner Lord Wharncliffe. No-one had been killed or apparently even injured but the pitmen had taken the law into their own hands, causing serious damage to private property and consequently stringent efforts were made to bring the culprits to trial.³⁸ The Coal Trade donated 200 guineas as a reward, supplemented by

50 from Sowerby and a further 250 from the Home Office, making a total of 500 guineas, no mean sum in the early 1830s. In due course seven pitmen were charged with riot to appear at the Durham Spring Assizes in March 1832, and Sowerby's original request was granted, the military to remain at the pit to protect the lead-miners.³⁹

The Coal Trade Indemnity Fund.

The Tyne Committee and the Wear Committee (the Joint Committees) effectively ran the corporate business of the Coal Trade, general meetings of owners taking place only periodically when matters of pressing importance required their attention. During the first months of 1832 the work of the Joint Committees (hereafter referred to as simply 'the committee') turned increasingly towards the bindings in March, with the functioning of the indemnity fund an important priority. Indeed, the stated aim of the meeting on January 21 was '[t]o carry into effect the Purposes of the Fund to indemnify any Colliery from loss by being laid off by the Workmen', but Matthias Dunn was more to the point: this was a meeting 'to establish a Counter Union association... to circumvent the Colliers' Union'.⁴⁰

The committee laid down strict conditions to regulate the operation of the indemnity fund. Any colliery in dispute with its men must first lay its case before the committee, which decided whether the owner qualified for indemnity: if so, the owner must subsequently follow the directions of the committee as to how to proceed with his workmen. In the event of a colliery being laid idle by strike action, the owner would receive five shillings compensation for every chaldron short of that colliery's production quota allocated by the cartel: such collieries could later make up lost production, but would repay part of the compensation received. Owners would also be reimbursed for the cost

of hiring constables to protect their collieries. It was resolved that 'a joint Committee Meeting be held every Saturday at 2 o'clock precisely', and two thousand copies of the pamphlet *A Short Address to Workmen on Combinations to Raise Wages* were ordered, presumably as anti-union propaganda to distribute amongst the pitmen.⁴¹

Dunn himself soon afforded the committee a chance to test procedures. In addition to his post at Hetton Colliery he was also manager at neighbouring North Hetton, and during a dispute with the banksmen there in January and February took warrants out against them. On February 8 he '[g]ot mends both of Banksmen and the Delegates whom I frightened no little by shewing them the warrants': but on reporting to the owners' committee on February 11 he was 'much implored' to put the warrants in force, and no doubt conscious that qualification for indemnity was dependent upon carrying out committee instructions, Dunn complied. The two banksmen and two union delegates were shortly afterwards dismissed.⁴²

To what extent North Hetton was indemnified, if at all, is not recorded and indeed it seems that only the details of the payments made to Callerton survive as a comprehensive account of how the fund functioned with respect to individual collieries. After the Callerton viewer Joseph Crawhall presented his claim on February 14, the following declaration was approved:

...It appears from the Statement of the Callerton Owners, that from the 29th Sept. to the 19th Nov, the raisings of best Coals, were [chaldrons]

		Short	1075
		and of Small, sent Coastwise	<u>358</u>
			<u>1433</u>
	£	s	
To 1075 Cha ^s . at 5s.	268.	15	
-- 358 ----- Small at 2/6	44.	15	
		£	s
		313.	10. 0.

[continues overleaf]

		[carried forward: 313. 10. 0.]
To removing Families from Alston	£	s
to Callerton - 38 at £2. 4:	83.	12.
To Expences in Procuring 140 Men and Boys and cash advanced to get away	51.	15.
To Moiety of Binding Money lost by the Pitmen discharged from the Colliery	29.	--
To loss to the Owners by the Miners working nearly all Small Coals	150.	--
To Constables, Law Charges, etc	<u>25.</u>	<u>5.</u>
		<u>339. 12. 0.</u>
	£653.	2. 0.

Given the almost total absence of press coverage on the Callerton dispute, this account stands as the main source of information on what passed there.⁴³ However, the account also highlights two specific items of wider interest.

Firstly, with the price of best Wallsend coals standing at around thirty shillings per chaldron, the five shillings compensation rate could not have covered the actual losses sustained by owners. But this was never the intention: it was designed simply to tide owners over the immediate financial crisis and was liable to be partly repaid when the colliery later made up its lost production. A second point worth note concerns the £150 paid to Callerton to cover losses incurred by the lead-miners 'working nearly all Small Coals'. Small (broken) coal fetched a lower market price than unbroken and was the hallmark of inexperienced, unskilled or careless workmen. This item thus gives credence to union claims that the lead-miners, if not tutored by local pitmen, would not make competent hewers or putters.⁴⁴

Though the owners shared the desire to overcome the union and saw the indemnity fund as the means to this end, they were not quick to pay out claimants. Callerton appears to have resumed full working by November 20 but was not indemnified until February 14, and Coal Trade minutes suggest other payments were also delayed. Indeed there is strong evidence of a surprisingly unbusinesslike approach to Coal Trade affairs,⁴⁵ those minutes referring to indemnity fund payments being so

confusing as to render the calculation of a running total extremely problematical, but if we take Jaffe's view the total paid out by mid-February may be estimated at over £1500.⁴⁶

Accompanying the indemnity fund, from mid-February the Coal Trade began to prepare for the bindings in March as a series of meetings carefully considered what steps to take. The Committee framed a number of questions asking for details of union organisation, policy and membership, along with average earnings and working hours,⁴⁷ which were to be put to a special meeting of viewers on February 18. General observations were invited but what the owners really wanted to know was, with the exception of wages, would the viewers 'recommend any change in the general provisions of the Bond, or any addition thereto?', and were the pitmen 'disposed to relax in their proceedings; or to resist any Measures the Coalowners may deem it reasonable to adopt?'⁴⁸ Around forty viewers were present when George Johnson of Willington took the chair, and John Reay of Wallsend sent Buddle an account of the proceedings:

...The General Sense of the Meeting was that in every branch of the working of the Pits, from the Trapper upwards, the Union prevented the Agents from obtaining the Just and lawfull Claims of the Owners - But One of the greatest Evils is the constant attempts to defraud in the *filling* of the Corves and also when suspected Corves were sent to the Tub - It appeared that at nearly all the Collieries the Hewers insist upon measuring their Corves and use every Means to Fill the Tub... hollow... The General Opinion seems to be, that the Pitmen are a great deal Cooler and more submissive - But whether this be real or only feigned I have my Doubts...⁴⁹

A further meeting of viewers on February 25 considered changes in the bond. The introduction of weighed rather than measured corves was discussed, as were maximum guaranteed earnings, the fixing of a date for binding day, and the possibility of recruiting pitmen from other coalfields. The resolutions passed by the viewers were accordingly approved by the committee on February 29, to be put to an all-important general meeting of owners on March 3. But the owners' meeting was

adjourned for a week as that same day the pitmen were congregating at Boldon Fell, and the owners cut short their own meeting to await reports as to the pitmen's intentions.⁵⁰

Thomas Hepburn chaired the pitmen's meeting at Boldon Fell, where seven or eight thousand were present.⁵¹ The Waldrige trial had taken place only the previous day and had a great impact upon the proceedings: six pitmen had received sentences of between six and fifteen months, and consequently every speaker urged the pitmen to good behaviour. Hepburn in particular warned the men that 'the eyes of the public and the law were upon them': they should be careful not to break the law 'and let the public see that though accounted the lowest of society, they could behave themselves with propriety and discretion'.⁵²

Some of the speakers criticised the men however. During the 1831 strike the men had been 'liberally' supported by the public and received credit from shopkeepers, especially the grocers and butchers. There had been an agreement to pay what they owed, 'yet to the shame of many they had not paid their debts'. Similarly, it was noted that after years of privation the pitmen 'could now have a leg of mutton on the Sunday, and get their families clothed, and send them to school', yet there were many 'who spent their money in drink, and luxury, and extravagance. Shame ought to be written on the brow of every one of them'. Hepburn took up this point but emphasized that it was only a minority of men who were guilty:

...Wages last year would not maintain their families. This year they had not only fed their families, but had laid out their money in clothing them. That was the way in which the majority of the pitmen had spent their money. And yet they had been subjected to insult and calumny for paying money into this union...

Resolutions were unanimously passed reaffirming the principle of union, deploring violence and urging peace and good order, and expressing gratitude to those who had supported the men during the 1831

strike. But in the face of the owners' denunciations of the union Hepburn was unbending, and in his speech closing the meeting gave a defiant answer to rumours of the owners plans:

...He would appeal to them all whether any of the delegates ever attempted to lead them wrong (cries of "no, no, no"). The masters were threatening deputies and others with the loss of their places if they did not leave the union, and to some they had promised 26s. a week... All who suffered from the caprice of the masters in the way of losing their employment should be supported by the union. - The Chairman here cast his eyes over the immense multitude, and after a moment's pause, continued - sixpence a fortnight, he thought, would keep a vast of men, and by that means the masters would get tired of turning them away. He had heard that there was one deputy at Hetton, and another at Fawdon, who were to lose their places, if that were so, they would not get a deputy to supply their places, and they would be compelled to get more west-countrymen [lead-miners from the west of Durham].

'Much cheering' followed and thanks were given to Hepburn and 'the collieries who had been most peaceable', before the meeting quietly dispersed.⁵³

The owners had informers amongst the pitmen but it was not always easy for them to learn what they wanted. It seems from Henry Morton's account that his informant was nothing more than an inveterate gossip: 'old Tommy Wade... is rather hazy a bit, and does not at all times express himself with brevity and distinctness, and even whose explanations are not the most lucid'.⁵⁴ But John Reay of Wallsend appears to have had a better source, and told Buddle, now in London:

...They have just come Home and appear in high Spirits - the Addresses delivered by Messrs. *Hebburn, Atkinson, Waddle and Pyle* all went to desire the Men to be *Firm, Quiet, and Orderly*, which I believe is intended to impose upon the *Public!!!* ...the Delegates at the Meetings at the different Collieries, are constantly plotting to keep the Mens Minds up and advising them to keep all they have got and to *Catch* what they can - I've just been informed, that the *Private* instructions are to *Stick* for a fortnight after the Bonds are called and then if they cannot succeed to give in - I have every reason to believe this is true...⁵⁵

Newspaper accounts of the Boldon Fell meeting were noticeably lacking in any mention of a distinct strategy: Hepburn had simply wished the men 'a happy year ensuing, and a good agreement'. Reay's information

that the men should 'keep all they have got' and 'Catch what they can' was plausible enough, but a few days later he heard that the men would bind at those collieries where wage levels were maintained and strike where reductions were made, an assessment which seems the most reasonable of the lot.⁵⁶

If the latter were true though, there would be trouble: a meeting of viewers on March 9 established that eighteen intended making reductions, nine did not, and eight were undecided, with six or seven absent.⁵⁷ When the general meeting of owners reconvened on March 10 they were unanimous as to the principles they should follow. The agreement to indemnify one another against the pitmen's actions was indefinitely renewed, and signed by all present (though not, significantly, by the Londonderry Collieries), and the date for opening the bindings was set for March 17, one week hence. The report drawn up by the viewers and the Committee was read and adopted, and it was unanimously resolved that it should be published in the London and provincial newspapers, but of greatest significance were three new clauses added to the bond:

...4th Resolved, that this Meeting are unanimously of opinion, that the overmen, Deputy Overmen, Banksmen, Head Wastemen and Keekers shall not be allowed to be in any Association with the Pitmen, whom they are employed to control, but that separate Benefit Societies should be encouraged upon each Colliery, upon proper regulations.

5th Resolved, that Binding Money shall on no consideration be given, but the earnest Money of 1s. each, and 1s. to each Man and 6d. to each Boy in lieu of ale at the Binding.

6th Resolved, that no coalowner shall bind any man from another Colliery until after a Meeting of Coalowners to be holden on or before Saturday the 24. Ins., unless such Man produce a Certificate from the viewer of the Colliery he is leaving, and that no Pitman shall be employed, until he and his Family shall have left the House he occupied under his late Master...⁵⁸

The second and third of these clauses would restrict the movement of men from one colliery to another: owners were thus prevented from poaching each other's men with promises of improved wages or conditions, and the pitmen were prevented from leaving collieries where matters were

not to their liking. The overall effect thus tended to unify the owners by means of the control of their respective workers, but while this was important, it was the first of the clauses which was the most critical. The owners would have been fully aware of Hepburn's remarks that the right to union membership of the overmen et al would be vigorously defended, but the demand that they should leave the union was at the heart of the owners' plans to regain working control of the collieries, and as such was not negotiable. This demand was therefore set to become a real sticking point but the mood of the owners was not for backing down:

...There is a feeling that the Pitmen will bogle [sic] at the determination of the Owners not to bind the deputies and Banksmen who are in the Union, but... it was as little as we could do, to counteract in some Measure, their Proceedings, for surely Banksmen sh^d. be free and unfettered to act between Masters and Men...⁵⁹

The terms of the bond were thus to be strictly adhered to, and the viewers were asked to call at the Coal Trade Office before the opening of the bindings to familiarise themselves with the owners' resolutions.⁶⁰

The state of the coal markets was not to the owners' liking. Lead-miners had been brought in on the pretext that demand for coal could not be supplied, but in the early months of 1832 this was not the case. Nathaniel Hindhaugh described the coal trade as being 'in that torpid state that a mild Winter always produces... a very trifling demand is shown even at very low prices - lower than for many Months'. Humble Lamb complained the trade was 'in a dismal state, no demand and little prospect' and Nicholas Wood gave a 'very sad account... large Stocks and ruinous prices'. John Reay reported that 'most of the Collieries are laying down Coals' and 'many Ships are laying up', whilst Dunn noted that Hetton was 'working short quantity'.⁶¹ Owners like Londonderry, whose finances were in a state of seemingly perpetual crisis, were

heavily dependent on their colliery profits but their only option was to wait for an upturn in the market. The switch to selling coal by weight rather than measure at the London markets, operative from the beginning of 1832, was also blamed for adding to the depression: one viewer thought the change a 'farce' and another that it was 'not doing anything but annoy the Traders'.⁶²

Though inconvenient for trade, this did allow the owners to accumulate coal stocks which as Hindhaugh noted, 'in the present temper of the Pitmen may prove an Advantage'. Humble Lamb spoke of a stock of 1600 chaldrons at Elswick, and at the end of March Thomas Taylor reported 1600 chaldrons at Backworth and 1300 at Holywell. The figures for the Londonderry and Hetton collieries are not known but it is likely they were of the order of Lord Durham's, whose collieries were of a similar capacity, Henry Morton informing Buddle, 'I have 12,000 Ch^s. of Coals laying at Bank... therefore if they will stick a month or even 6 weeks it will be a perfect Godsend to us'.⁶³

Were further proof needed, Morton's remark confirms that the owners were calculating on a strike. Since August they had accumulated a number of resolutions placing restrictions on the engagement and discharge of men, and organising themselves against the union.⁶⁴ Their efforts to organise the indemnity fund and ensure unanimity, both in the terms of the bond and the execution of the binding, testify to their determination to put down the union. And indeed, if the indemnity fund arrangements were faithfully adhered to, by the time the men's bonds expired the owners would have a fund in excess of £13,600 to draw upon.⁶⁵

The pitmen felt they had already been badly treated, especially at Callerton and Coxlodge, and the demand that the overmen must leave the union was certain to upset them further. If they refused to back the

overmen there was a chance that a dispute might be avoided, but the owners must have recognised there was little likelihood of such an escape. The previous year's contract was not due to expire until April 5, but the bindings were to be declared open on March 17, and from this point the pitmen would be able to renew their bonds for the ensuing year. All would depend on what happened during those next two or three weeks.

The Public Debate.

The 1831 strike was well covered in the region's press but since then only passing mention of sporadic disputes had reached the newspapers. Either by default or design the problems at Callerton went largely unreported, but the dispute at Coxlodge and the 'Waldridge Outrage' brought labour relations once again to the fore, and from mid-December a regular propaganda war began between protagonists of both sides. The letters were partisan and at first sight only highlight the differences between them, but for most readers this was a vital source of information on the disputes and as such played a crucial role in determining public opinion. With this in mind every accusation from the owners' side was met by the pitmen, and on occasion turned against their accusers by a combination of mastery of detail and sheer eloquence which surprised at least one prominent owner. The letters fall into two main sequences which it is useful to identify here, the first between 'Publicola' for the owners and 'A Coal Hewer' for the pitmen, followed in turn by a second letter from each party.⁶⁶

Publicola set the tone of the ensuing debate in the *Newcastle Chronicle* of December 17: the illegality of the union and its policies and the detriment to the public and trade arising therefrom were recurring themes for the owners, but the Coal Hewer said Publicola's

letter was 'fraught with intentional misrepresentation'. The rules of the union did not as alleged deny the employment of lead-miners, nor did they demand the employment of union men only. Moreover, if the owners were so keen on freedom of trade, then why had they for years operated a cartel to keep coal prices artificially high and maximise profits? Publicola had even attempted to connect the cholera to the union, equating the 4s per day earnings ceiling with lower wages, reduced food intake and therefore less resistance to disease. In response, the Coal Hewer was unequivocal:

...The cholera, had it come last year, would have found us bound down by oppression, starving... but for the unhappy miner not one tear was shed, not one kind hand was held out... But in the justice of their cause, and in the rectitude of their own hearts, they found consolation and support... I thank God starvation is not so common *this year* among the pitmen of this district as it was last...

Such points were easily met but it was when the issues became more complex that the Coal Hewer really came into his own, and taking up the subject of allegedly short coal supply he showed a rather more subtle grasp of the question than did Publicola. On the face of it though Publicola did have a point. The 1831 settlement had reduced maximum working hours from fourteen per day to twelve, and by the Coal Hewer's own admission it was now the case that 'three or four keels a-day less are frequently wrought in a colliery'. However, he said this was due not to the cut in hours but to the union having since the strike eliminated the use of outsize corves by insisting on their regular measurement.⁶⁷ But the exposure of this fraudulent practice was merely incidental to the argument. The Coal Hewer pointed out that in some pits the 4s limit was being exceeded with some pitmen earning 50s in eleven days, whereas in others 'owing to an over-supply of men, they cannot earn 4s a day, and, in several, are reduced to about 30s per fortnight'. Recalling negotiations in 1831, he noted that the viewers had made the 'greatest

objections' to guaranteeing 30s for ten-days' work on the grounds that the expense would oblige them to discharge one-third of the men:

...How then does it happen now, when all the men are employed, and many of them fully employed, and, consequently, producing far more coal than was produced last year, that the "supply does not meet the demand?". But if the supply really is short, as you would make us believe, why not let those men who are earning only 30s. a fortnight, and some even less, earn 50s. a fortnight, and thus increase the supply by the labour of the native miners, before you resort to the introduction of strangers...

Publicola's claim of short supply was thus hollow, and it was not long before others stepped in to back up the Coal Hewer's arguments.

The second main sequence of letters involved Whig coal owner and barrister James Losh and another unionist, 'An Old Pitman'.⁶⁸ Losh asserted that before the strike a moderate workman 'was certain to earn at the least 15s a week, besides his house rent and other advantages; and that a good workman can now earn 4s each day with the labour of very little more than four hours'. Pointing out that the wages 'guaranteed' by the bonds of 1830 and 1829 amounted to only 11s and 12s per week respectively, the Old Pitman asked,

...if we had been allowed 15s a week previous to the strike, why so much opposition at the strike to guarantee to us the same sum? It is well known to all, that this point and the fines were the last settled... Again, Sir, a good workman that can earn his 4s in as many hours, if such a thing can be done, labours to accomplish it in such a way, that if you could see him... you would think that even two hours were too much... you would be ready to exclaim, "not for thousands would I be in that man's condition"...

Jaffe suggests that the Cowpen Colliery pay-bills for 1830-1831 concur with the Old Pitman's arguments, and concludes that 'only the first class hewers could hope to earn four shillings at pre-strike piece-rates... the four-shilling limit indicated a goal not a minimum standard of earnings'.⁶⁹

One of Losh's favourite topics was the need to educate workmen and their children, but he was a victim of his own inconsistency on the matter. In an open letter in 1831 he had said that schools for pitmen's

children and medical help for their families were provided free by the owners, yet his January 28 letter contradicted this: 'had the pitmen been instructed as they ought to have been - and in this I blame the coal-owners for not establishing schools and diffusing knowledge as much as possible amongst them - they could not have been so much misled'. But when the Old Pitman reminded him of this on February 18 Losh reverted to his former position that 'at present in most (if not all) cases, pitmen may have their children taught to read and write nearly, if not wholly, at the expense of their masters'. This, replied the Old Pitman, 'sounds strangely in my ears':

...one free-school in this, my neighbourhood, I can solemnly take God for witness, I never yet heard of - much more to have had a child educated free of expense... this to a certainty I know, that if I had a child to set to school; I always paid as much at a colliery school as at any other...

The Old Pitman further asked how and by whom the men had been misled? They themselves knew their own condition best and 'clearly saw that ruin was staring them in the face... they began to be careless of consequences; hence the conclusion that a strike could make them no worse'. They knew the 1831 strike was for a livelihood and not, like their masters, 'to amass superfluous wealth'.

So surprised was Losh at the level of debate that he took his 'courteous adversary' to be 'a well-informed gentleman... under the assumed name of an "Old Pitman"'. This was perhaps excusable as Losh could not have expected a common workman to quote *The Wealth of Nations* at him, as the Old Pitman did in response to Losh's claim that men and masters had a mutual economic interest in the profitable operation of the pits: 'let us see what Dr Adam Smith says on the subject', retorted the Old Pitman -

..."The common wages of labour depends everywhere upon the contract usually made between those two parties (the master and workman) whose interests are by no means the same," &c. More might be said on the subject, but this quotation seems to imply that, as

political economists, Dr. Smith; with whom I agree, and you, sir, are in direct opposition...

Despite refutations of the claims that the men could now make their 4s in only four hours, this theme was repeatedly resurrected by the owners. But according to the Old Pitman any improvement in wages arose 'not so much from any advance made to their former prices, as from more constant employment': furthermore, 'the putting, that worse than Egyptian bondage, is not yet equal to the prices of 1829, and is greatly inferior to the prices of 1815'. To prove the point he produced the putters' prices for 1815, 1829, 1830 and 1831, and argued the case of the putter who,

...to earn 1s 4d at present prices... must travel at least 1 mile 1600 yards, and, before another penny becomes due, 840 yards more must be added, making the distance 2 miles 680 yards, and, for every extra penny more, the sum of 840 yards must be added... one half of which, with the empty corf, he has to push and manage, or guide upon the tramway, a weight of not less than one and a half cwt., and the other half, when loaded with coals, 7 cwt. or more; when to this is added the coals he has to fill in the loading of his corf, and the height of the seam he has to travel in, frequently below 4 feet, what can be expected of such beings but their being crippled by labour or accident, or premature old age and death? And yet we hear that a pitman, working for 4s or 4s 6d has little or nothing to do...⁷⁰

The idea that the pitmen 'had little or nothing to do' was allied to the owners' assertion that the lead-miners, who were accustomed to only 8s or 9s per week, were now making double that where they had been brought into the collieries. But the Old Pitman said that without instruction from pitmen, the lead-miners 'will never make either hewers or putters at all' and moreover, 'for the small quantity of work they are able to perform, they are better paid than the regular workmen'. The Old Pitman had no doubt as to the reasons for this:

...the cry of too many men has been reiterated in our ears year after year (not even forgetting the last), and although more work has been done this present year than in several preceding ones... the new report of too few men has since that time been as industriously circulated and made the foundation of a pretence to introduce colonies of strangers amongst us... for no other purpose but to procure a surplus of workmen, and then you think you will

reduce us altogether to our late state... this will last but for a season; if the owners can only make it answer their purpose...

This recognition perhaps goes some way towards explaining the pitmen's obstinacy at Callerton and Coxlodge, and the riot at Waldridge.

The Waldridge incident was a serious setback for the union in terms of winning public opinion, and Publicola's second letter on January 10 held up the riot as an example of the illegal and violent character of the union, a supposedly self-evident proof of the evil consequences to be expected of combinations of workmen. In response the Coal Haver, noting that Publicola had 'passed over in silence all the observations which your former erroneous statements drew from me', strongly denied that the riot was in any way instigated or condoned by the union. His answer implies it was common knowledge that this was the case:

...you exclaim, with prodigious effect, "Where were these reasonable, restraining, much-calumniated Unionists upon this occasion? Were they mixed with the mob? Were lookers-on, perhaps, only encouraging others by their presence?" and then you look grave and sport a bit of Old Bailey law with infinitely fine effect. However, as you do put the question, I will tell you that the "much-calumniated Unionists" were *not there*, and, what is more, I will tell you, or rather I will tell the public, for you knew it at the time you wrote your angry letter, that the "Unionists" have been earnest in their endeavours to put an end to the disturbances at Waldridge, and that they had not taken part with the men, but with the masters...

Verification of this unexpectedly came from the anti-union *Tyne Mercury*, which said it 'was due to the delegates to stress that they did everything in their power to prevent mischief, though their efforts were unsuccessful':⁷¹ underlining the opposition of most pitmen to the events at Waldridge, the Old Pitman argued that

...breaches of the law never had any, the least sanction from any body of pitmen, except the perpetrators themselves; but, on the contrary, have always been considered as the worst thing that could happen to the cause. We well knew that every ant-hill would be magnified into a mountain, and that a straw only was wanting to make a rope of; time has proved this to be too true...⁷²

Whilst the delegates could ultimately plead not guilty to accusations of complicity in the Waldridge riot, this episode does at least show the difficulties they faced in controlling some of their tempestuous comrades.

If the union was preoccupied with any single issue at this juncture, that issue was Coxlodge. The Coal Hower wanted to know whether the Coxlodge owner, Rev. Brandling, 'warmed, as his breast no doubt is, by "religious feelings", enjoys his night's rest the better from the consciousness of having turned out a score of families to starve during this season of pestilence'. And he asked of Publicola whether 'the worthy gentleman whose cause you so discreetly advocate, could not be better employed on the *Sabbath Day*, than in resolving on the expulsion of twenty poor families from their homes'. Their only crime, he said, was to dare to remonstrate against 'a gross breach of covenant' and 'legally resist a measure of oppression'.⁷³

The Coxlodge dispute drew specific comment from the Coxlodge viewer George Hill, and the Tyne Committee of the union.⁷⁴ The course of the dispute has already been discussed here but an additional point raised by the pitmen was the attitude of the press, which the delegates complained had portrayed them as 'a self-elected body, goading on the men to acts of aggression, stimulating them to the formation of an illegal union': they had been 'assailed with calumnies and reproaches' and in short were supposed to have been the root cause 'of all the injury which the owners think they have sustained'. But the delegates said that far from being a self-appointed body they were chosen by the men 'in open meeting', not with a view 'to harrass and annoy the masters, but to act as discreet and dispassionate mediators between masters and men, when any matter of dispute may arise'. They had no doubt as to the source of the rumours against them:

...Two journals in the district have been most conspicuous in this warfare against the men, and knowing, as we do, the sort of controul under which these journals are, we are compelled to view those attacks as the attacks of the *combined* body of Coal-owners, and have to lament that they furnish but too plain evidence, coupled with events that are daily occurring, that what the men accepted as a solid and lasting peace, was, on the part of the owners, considered but as a hollow truce, to be broken whenever it suited their purpose to do so...

These were the radical newspapers the *Tyne Mercury* and *Durham Chronicle*. The *Chronicle's* radicalism had attracted national attention in an 1821 libel case,⁷⁵ and the *Mercury* was in the vanguard of the current reform debate on Tyneside, but this political attitude did not transfer to labour questions. Compared to the *Newcastle Chronicle* and *Courant*, which reported the disputes in a 'balanced and even sympathetic manner', the tone of the *Mercury* was 'hostile'.⁷⁶ Whilst there was a need to cater to their 'respectable' readership and advertisers who provided most of their revenue, the delegates' suspicions that the said journals were under the 'controul' of the coal owners were not far from the truth in the *Mercury's* case, and absolutely correct as to the *Durham Chronicle* which, as already noted in Chapter One, was owned by Lord Durham.⁷⁷

But probably the most significant point in the general debate came with the 'Report by the Committee of the Coalowners Respecting the Present Situation of the Trade' on March 10, apparently published to prepare public opinion for the disputes expected to accompany the expiry of the pitmen's bonds.⁷⁸ This was the authentic voice of the owners as a corporate body, and as such was to be taken in deadly earnest by the pitmen. The union did not reply with a statement of its own but left the field clear for another of its correspondents: 'Carbonarius' reply appeared on March 24 and he proved to be every bit as adept with the pen as the Old Pitman and the Coal Hearer.

The owners, explaining that the Report was based upon the observations and experiences of the viewers, included statements of wages from the fortnightly pay-bills at each colliery: but Carbonarius pointed out that this was likely to be biased, complaining that

...one of the greatest evils which has befallen the men... has been that their owners viewed everything through the medium of their agents. Had the owners themselves come more frequently in contact with the men, they would have better understood their real situation, and they would have learnt to put the right value upon the evidence of the interested viewers and agents...

The pitmen held the perhaps naive belief that the owners were misled by the viewers, and that if they knew the truth the pitmen's circumstances might change for the better. This was a forlorn hope, but having thus prefaced his remarks Carbonarius proceeded to the meat of the Report.

The owners had again raised the point that the men were now earning more money for less work: 'two thirds of the hewers, from the period when they were engaged in May last, to the termination of the year, have obtained without any extraordinary exertion four shillings a-day in six hours, and the remaining one-third the same sum in seven hours'. Though the 4s in four hours claim had been modified, the argument was in essence the same. Carbonarius was adamant:

...This statement I aver, is not true... in the whole mine, it takes the very best men, to work with "extraordinary exertion" from six to eight hours to earn four shillings, and that one-fifth of the hewers cannot do this. The second class of hewers are on an average nine hours a-day in the mine, and there are many who are nearly twelve hours at work; and then have they earned 4s? I say confidently No! If the "fortnight pay-bills" are your proofs, the men on their part can produce the cheques or notes they receive from the overman, to draw their money by. In my own case, I know I have made about four shillings a-day since May, in eight or nine hours, but I know many collieries where the hewers have not made more than three shillings in eleven and twelve hours...

Hewers apart, Carbonarius pointed out that the owners' references to other grades of workers were fraught with discrepancies. 'How does it happen that the putters work "eleven", and the trappers "twelve" hours a-day? There are very few doors in the Rolley-way, consequently the

trappers need be there no longer than the putters'. The owners claimed that each 'able-bodied young man or two boys, acting as putters' earned 4s in eleven hours, trapper-boys made 10d per day, and shifters 3s: 'let us follow up your fascinating list of prices', said Carbonarius:

...With respect to the shifters, I did not expect you would have made any boast of their pay, knowing as you do, that they were formerly paid four shillings, and now get only three... instead of eleven hours, the putters are rarely less than twelve hours in the mine, and frequently *fourteen hours from home*... The poor trapper with his ten-pence a-day is the next subject for your triumphant boast. Truly the poor boy earns his ten-pence hardly enough - sitting in a niche in the mine in utter darkness, for twelve hours a day; his utmost attention demanded to his charge, on the due execution of which, the lives of scores of men are depending! If ten hours a-day is considered enough for a boy in a factory, what shall we say to a boy twelve hours in such a situation as the poor trapper is placed in!...⁷⁹

Resuming the shorter hours argument, the owners had attempted to calculate the loss in production arising from the shorter working day, to which was added the estimated loss sustained during the 1831 strike.⁸⁰ Carbonarius was again unimpressed.

...You would infer that three-eighths less work has been done by abridging the hours of labour. Now let us see what the fact really is. Before the strike, we worked fourteen hours a-day, and averaged nine, or nine and a half days each fortnight, which was equal to 133 hours which the pit drew coals; at present we work twelve hours, at least the crane is drawing twelve hours, for eleven days, which is 132 hours in the fortnight; thus there is the work of *one hour* in the fortnight less done now than before the strike. This is the real fact, colour it how you will. As to your calculation about what the pits would have produced during the time they were laid off during the strike, it is almost too contemptible to deserve notice. You know well that when the strike took place your stocks were so large, that for some time you congratulated yourselves upon the men having laid themselves off work, as it afforded you an opportunity of getting rid of an accumulated stock, and yet now you have the effrontery to tell the public that they as well as you, sustained a great loss by the strike...

As to the lead-miners the Report argued that because in the owners' view working hours had been cut, the trade had been unable to meet demand and had therefore been compelled to introduce 'strangers'.⁸¹ 'I am again obliged to say' replied Carbonarius, 'it is not true. The strangers were not introduced till long after the strike

was at an end; there was no want of coals when they were introduced, nor would they have been introduced at all, but that it was hoped, by their means, to subdue the men and break up the union'.⁸² And this point he said, brought the argument to the nub of the matter, to what the Report had called 'the general confederacy' and 'secret combination'. Carbonarius said it was this, the existence of the union, which was the owners' real grievance, and asserted that

...it is no secret combination; there has been no secret made of any of our proceedings, our rules are printed and widely dispersed, our objects are avowed in these rules, and you are yourselves compelled to confess they are legal. But you say the combination is not, "as has been craftily pretended, in the nature of a benefit society, for the purpose of providing for the sick and aged."... You know little of the men by whose labour, and may I say by the sacrifice of whose lives, you live, if you do not know that the "combination" has been, during the late season of pestilence operating powerfully in the relief of the sick, and in the interment of the dead. You know little of them, if you do not know that for all the best purposes of a benefit society it is perfectly efficient, and that it is doing now, what should have been years ago done... It is supporting the widows and orphans of those, whose lives have been sacrificed in the service of men, many of whom, who, while they rail at slavery and shudder at the use of the whip, expose their fellow-creatures to extreme labour in a pestilential atmosphere where their lives are in continual jeopardy, and where hundreds of them perish, and yet begrudge them their scanty pittance, and either by themselves, or by their agents, devise every means to plunder and oppress them...

Having gone through the Report Carbonarius ironically said there was at least one point with which he could agree. The owners had stated that in future 'the greatest care' should be taken in wording the terms of the bond 'to render them as clear and comprehensive as possible, and perfectly explicit upon all points wherein the least doubt or misunderstanding can possibly arise'. This, said Carbonarius was 'the very thing we have been labouring to attain':

...look to the bonds as they were framed before the last binding, and then tell me what you think of clearness and comprehensiveness. No man who read them, but could at once see that they were framed for the purpose of deceiving; and they did, indeed, but too well answer that purpose...

Expressing the hope that the owners would allow their 'better feelings to predominate', Carbonarius closed his letter content that he had adequately answered all the points raised by the Report. He had indeed made a thorough job - but not thorough enough. In the Report's very last sentence, the owners had given a warning that 'the decided and proper course adopted by those coalowners who have successfully resisted the unlawful demands of the Pitmen should be pursued in all cases where they violate their voluntary engagements'. This was perhaps only to be expected but they concluded that above all, 'immediate and effectual measures should be taken by the trade generally to secure to every individual complete indemnity for any loss he may sustain'. This was a clear declaration of intent but it was inexplicably passed over by Carbonarius: had he made an issue of it, it might have been widely recognised amongst the men that these were more than just empty words.

The chance to sound a note of caution to the men was thus missed, but the owners' actions at Callerton, Coxlodge and Waldridge should have been a warning to them, as should the owners' anti-union press campaign. The union had won in 1831 because the owners had been divided: the Report's very publication should have demonstrated that the owners were now united, and the timing of its appearance immediately preceding the binding might have further alerted the pitmen. That '*immediate and effectual measures should be taken by the trade generally to secure to every individual complete indemnity*', was as explicit an indication of the owners' resolve as the men were likely to get, but if such a clear warning could go unheeded by the thinking and literate Carbonarius, what chance the rest of the pitmen?

The final exchange of this phase was prompted by the reappearance of Publicola, who endorsed the Report and ridiculed the efforts of union correspondents to champion the pitmen's case.⁸³ They had failed he said,

'not from any disinclination to dash through thick and thin, but because truth and justice are invincible opponents'. The Coal Hewer replied in vitriolic style: Publicola had come to life again, 'not to deny any one statement made in the letter of "Carbonarius," - not to advance any one new fact in favour of his employers, but to talk nonsense'.⁸⁴ Where was the evidence that the union's writers had failed in their cause?

...Is it to be found in this specimen of "Publicola's" imbecility? Or are we to look for it in the reply of "Carbonarius" to the coal-owners' report? Is there one statement in that report that "Carbonarius" has not overthrown? Or is there one of his statements that "Publicola" can controvert? The utter absence of every thing like a contradiction in his last letter is a conclusive answer...

The Coal Hewer said Publicola talked 'absurd stuff', like his declaration that the hewers, shifters and drivers were 'confessedly well paid and well treated': 'Who has confessed either the one or the other?', he asked:

...The coal-owners, themselves, though they have said many bold things, have not been bold enough to say anything about good treatment. They have, indeed, wished the public to believe that every soul about a coal pit was over paid, but to convince the public that they are so, they must employ an abler writer than "Publicola" to overthrow the statements of an "Old Pitman" and of "Carbonarius"...

Similarly Publicola seemed to expect the men to succumb to the 'candid and convincing letters of Mr. Losh', but the Coal Hewer also scotched this idea: while Losh may have been 'candid' he was by no means 'convincing' and moreover had even admitted the force of the Old Pitman's arguments. And likewise, the Report had been written as an authoritative refutation of the pitmen's case, but 'all the statements it contained about wages, supply, &c., they have been blown to atoms by the letter of "Carbonarius".'

But the Coal Hewer was most angered by Publicola's observations on 'the delightful occupation of a trapper boy... this humane advocate of the coal owners, laughing at the idea of such a situation being at all

an unpleasant one, replies, if he is in darkness "a small deduction from their earnings (that is from their ten-pence a-day) would remedy the evil!" The Coal Hearer had seldom witnessed 'a more disgusting display of flippant inhumanity' and reproached the owners for permitting themselves to be represented by such an unworthy mouthpiece:

...It is really surprising that so rich and powerful a body as the coal-owners of the north can find no better advocate of their cause than this silly writer, who has never shewn himself capable of grappling for a moment with an argument however palpable it may be, but who flounders on, at one time in the most humiliating attempts to be witty, and at another in amusing endeavours to personate that very alarming personage, "raw head and bloody-bones"... a writer with a little better taste would be an acquisition to the coal-owners...

In conclusion the Coal Hearer said he would leave Publicola 'to the consolation which is afforded by the reflection, that in argument he has been beaten, - that the facts of his antagonists remain unshaken - and that, unable to meet his adversary in fair fight, he, like a baffled coward, puts on the blustering airs of a bully as he skulks from the field which has witnessed his disgrace'. With this, for the present, the 'Wordy-warfare' thus drew to a close.

Overall, the owners' underlying attitude to the pitmen's union is clearly defined in the events of winter 1831-1832 described here. The union's victory and subsequent consolidation left the owners appalled at the pitmen's control of colliery production and manning levels, and determined to regain effective management of the pits. Wary of provoking further strike action however, most owners stood back until, having seen the success of their colleagues at Callerton, Coxlodge and Waldrige, ably assisted by the magistracy, they were emboldened to organise their indemnity fund to seriously challenge the union at the 1832 bindings. Whilst the cholera epidemic and to a lesser degree the reform debate may have been of some distraction, the owners' actions and statements were meanwhile promptly and vigorously questioned by union writers, though to

little effect so far as the owners were concerned: during the winter they had moved from a position of defence to offence and, confident that they could overcome the union, were thus ready to provoke another strike when the pitmen's bindings opened in March 1832. In the interim the pitmen could only await developments, but by the appearance of the Coal Hewer's scathing letter of April 7 the bindings had already been open for three weeks and the war of words had given way to a conflict which was rather more tangible.

NOTES TO CHAPTER THREE.

- ¹ D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, May 29, 1831: P.M. Sweezy, *Monopoly and Competition in the English Coal Trade*, Harvard Economic Studies, 1938, p.97. Sweezy commented that 'the regulation worked frictionlessly', in reference to the complete absence of the bickering and petty jealousies usually evident amongst the coalowners.
- ² Sweezy, pp.98-99.
- ³ Colls, p.93.
- ⁴ D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, July 8, 1831.
- ⁵ Circular, Hetton Colliery, August 29, 1831, Bell MSS, XI: CTMB, Committee Minutes, August 31, 1831: Similarly at Lord Durham's Lambton Colliery, when two banksmen were dismissed in mid-September '[t]he rest of the men struck, and seven of their leaders were arrested. "For refusing to work, and inciting others to do the same", they were sent to jail... The delegate whom the colliery had elected at the last strike was one of the two who received the heavier sentence'. E. Welbourne, *The Miners' Unions of Northumberland and Durham*, (Cambridge, 1923), p.33.
- ⁶ Newspaper cutting, October 25, 1831, Bell Collection, XVII, p.110; Handbill, Hetton Colliery, June 26, 1832, recapitulating the contents of a handbill of October 1831. Pitmans Papers, Newcastle University Library, Vol.2, p.163.
- ⁷ Pamphlet, *Report of the Trials of the Pitmen and Others...* (Durham, 1832), p.26; The pitmen had long been sceptical of attempts by the owners and viewers to establish benefit societies. Similar offers were made in the mid-1820s after the pitmen had first formed the 'United Colliers Association'. In an 1826 broadside, they stated: 'It has long been a favourite object with the rich and opulent to devise and promote plans for making the poor maintain the poor, and the funds of Benefit Societies have generally been made to aid the poor rates, and thereby relieve at the same time both the poor and the rich... We view, therefore, with some jealousy and suspicion, a recommendation lately submitted to us from the Colliery Viewers, or some of them, to institute a general fund for the relief of colliers, their widows and families, etc.. We can hardly hope that those who have refused to attend to our complaints, or make any reply to our just remonstrances, will... interest themselves sincerely in the management and direction of a fund solely for our benefit. Besides, any plan proposed... must be under our own management and direction'. Pamphlet, *A Candid Appeal to the Coalowners and Viewers...* United Colliers' Association (Newcastle, 1826), pp.4-5.
- ⁸ D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, June 18, 1831. It was reported that the binding money was two guineas per man.
- ⁹ *Newcastle Chronicle*, October 8, 1831: Meanwhile a reminder of the dangers of pitwork came with an explosion at Willington on September 20 when 5 men were killed. The inquest verdict was accidental death, the mine being said to be in 'an uncommonly healthy state' at the time, but

because the pitmen were working with candles rather than safety lamps, the *Tyne Mercury* (September 27, 1831) said the owners were liable to be tried for manslaughter. Though public subscriptions for the sufferers were common, some owners like Lord Londonderry were against this. When asked for a donation after the 1844 Haswell explosion he wrote that the principle of donations 'is wrong. It is in fact subscribing for and saving the Haswell Company who ought to support the sufferers and not the Publick. It is for the Benefit of the Company the lost men toil'd and fell, and it is a sacred Duty on their part alone to support those they left behind'. After an explosion at one of his own pits in 1823, Londonderry himself paid out £2000 to victims and dependants in the next 4 years and was still paying out 20 years later. This perhaps goes to correct the traditional view of Londonderry as the ruthless exploiter and shows him more as he would have liked to be seen, as a paternal employer. See A.J. Heesom, 'Entrepreneurial Paternalism: The Third Lord Londonderry (1778-1854) and the Coal Trade', *Durham University Journal*, LXVI (June 1974), p.245.

10 HO 40/29, Bouverie to the Home Office, October 17, 1831. Letters in this series also report pit troubles at Whitehaven, as already noted, and at Wigan.

11 CTMB, Committee Minutes, October 15, 1831, February 14, 1832.

12 During the summer of 1831 Buddle had complained that the pitmen would not tolerate the employment of 'Strangers', 'so that it is not possible to pick up recruits from the Lead-Mines etc., as formerly'. D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, June 21, 1831; *Tyne Mercury*, January 31, 1832.

13 *Newcastle Chronicle*, December 3, December 17, 1831.

14 *Newcastle Chronicle*, January 7, 1832.

15 *Newcastle Chronicle*, January 28, 1832.

16 CTMB, General Minutes, August 5, 1831, Committee Minutes, November 26, 1831, February 14, 1832; *Newcastle Chronicle*, December 17, 1831.

17 *Newcastle Chronicle*, December 3, 1831.

18 *Tyne Mercury*, January 31, 1832.

19 CTMB, General Minutes, December 3, 1831.

20 *Newcastle Chronicle*, December 3, 1831; Charles John Bigge was the eldest of eight sons of Charles William Bigge (1773-1849), a proprietor of considerable landed estates incorporating collieries on the north side of the Tyne. He was to become the first Mayor of Newcastle after the Municipal Reform Act, and stood once as a parliamentary candidate for Newcastle. The family was prominent in gentry circles in the region. Welford, Vol.1, p.287. Though Newcastle was outside the jurisdiction of the Northumberland magistracy, sittings took place regularly at the Moot Hall because of the geographical importance of the city as an administrative centre for south Northumberland.

21 'An Appeal to the Public from the Pitmen of the Tyne and Wear', n.d.. Bell, XI.

- 22 The Rev. Ralph Henry Brandling (1772-1853), one of four brothers, was the proprietor of substantial landed and mining interests based upon the family seat, Gosforth House. The Brandlings were highly influential in local society, and indeed Ralph was himself a Northumberland County Magistrate. The property was inherited by Ralph on the death of his brother, Charles John, a former Tory MP for Newcastle. The other two brothers were Robert William, chairman of the Coal Trade and projector of the Brandling Junction Railway: and John, Sheriff of Newcastle in 1828-29, and Mayor in 1832-33. Welford, Vol.1, pp.378-384; The viewer Thomas Crawford regarded the ranter-preachers as 'designing individuals'. HO 40/29-501, Crawford to Bouverie, June 8, 1831: Henry Morton is said to have had 'an almost pathological obsession with the influence of Primitive Methodist preachers...' J.A. Jaffe, 'The "Chiliasm of Despair" Reconsidered: Revivalism and Working Class Agitation in County Durham', *Journal of British Studies*, 28 (January 1989), p.28.
- 23 Dunn's Diary, December 16, 1831; CTMB, General Minutes, December 17, 1831.
- 24 *Tyne Mercury*, December 27, 1831, January 10, January 27, 1832. The holiday at Christmas had more to do with unfavourable sailing conditions for the coastal coal trade than with adherence to the religious aspects of the season.
- 25 *Newcastle Chronicle*, January 21, 1832; *Tyne Mercury*, January 17, 1832; Colliery owned housing 'was specially common in Scotland and the North-East of England. Living in a colliery house brought with it the threat of eviction, a threat which many owners were not slow to use in the struggle against trade unionism'. Benson, p.194.
- 26 *Newcastle Chronicle*, January 28, 1832.
- 27 D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, January 26, February 13, 1832.
- 28 *Newcastle Chronicle*, March 17, 1832.
- 29 *Tyne Mercury*, January 17, 1832; HO 40/30, Bouverie to Home Office, February 3, 1832; However, on February 8 four Gosforth pitmen 'were ordered to find security for their appearance at the next sessions, to answer for an assault upon one of the lead-miners employed at Coxlodge Colliery'. *Newcastle Courant*, February 11, 1832: This followed an earlier incident on Saturday February 4, at Cramlington Colliery where, between 2 and 3 a.m., four non-union pitmen going home from work 'were waylaid by eight others, with blacked and muffled-up faces who attacked them with bludgeons, fractured some of their skulls and nearly murdered them...' (*Tyne Mercury*, February 7, 1832.) The Cramlington owners offered 100 guineas reward, and two constables captured two of the attackers, 'but as soon as it was known that the men were in custody, great numbers of pitmen from the neighbourhood of Seghill assembled, and threatened the lives of the officers unless the prisoners were released... the prisoners have thus, for the present, escaped the punishment that awaits them'. *Durham Advertiser*, February 10, 1832.
- 30 *Newcastle Chronicle*, January 28, 1832.

- 31 In early December a locomotive and its waggons came off the Wylam to Lemington waggonway at Newburn, after rails had been removed and stones placed on the tracks. And at High Barnes near Sunderland, ropes were cut on Lord Durham's waggonway causing considerable damage and resulting in the offer of 100 guineas reward. *Newcastle Chronicle*, December 10, December 24, 1831.
- 32 *Tyne Mercury*, December 27, 1831; *Newcastle Chronicle*, August 6, 1831. The method of settling disagreements by the appointment of two viewers as arbitrators was a long-standing practice, known as 'going to reference'. It was not popular with the men, who were unconvinced of the impartiality of the viewers for reasons which this example perhaps makes apparent.
- 33 Jaffe, 'Economy and Community...', pp.273-274.
- 34 *Tyne Mercury*, December 27, 1831.
- 35 HO 52/14, Sowerby to the Home Office, December 17, 1831: HO 41/11, Home Office to Sowerby, December 19, 1831.
- 36 *Report of the Trial of the Pitmen...* (Durham, 1832), p.5; *Tyne Mercury*, December 27, 1831.
- 37 *Ibid.*, pp.5-8.
- 38 *The Times*, December 31, 1831; *Newcastle Chronicle*, January 21, 1832.
- 39 CTMB, Committee Minutes, December 31, 1831; *Newcastle Chronicle*, January 21, 1832; *Durham Advertiser*, January 6, 1832. Having taken some prisoners, several constables were accompanying them to Chester-le-Street when they were 'surrounded by numbers of pitmen', who helped the men to escape. James Becketts 'was particularly conspicuous for his violence and the intimidating language he used towards the constable - threatening to "split his scull" with a pick-axe he held in his hand'. Becketts was captured, and sentenced at Durham Winter Assizes to six months hard labour: *Tyne Mercury*, January 17, 1832; *Report of the Trial...* p.3.
- 40 CTMB, Committee Minutes, January 21, 1832; *Dunn's Diary*, January 21, 1832.
- 41 CTMB, Committee Minutes, January 21, 1832. The regularisation of Committee Meetings was long overdue: even during the 1831 strike the Committee had met only infrequently.
- 42 See *Dunn's Diary*, January 24,25,28, February 2,8,11, 1832: CTMB, Committee Minutes, January 28, 1832: *Newcastle Chronicle*, February 18, 1832.
- 43 The example of Callerton serves to illustrate the sometimes haphazard manner in which information can come down to the historian. The only mentions which this dispute received in the press came with the initial prosecution, in October 1831, of twelve of the pitmen for desertion, and later unwitting references to the Callerton men having suffered the same fate as their Coxlodge and Waldridge comrades. See: *Tyne Mercury*, January 24, 1832: *Newcastle Chronicle*, October 8, 1831, March 10, 1832. A dispute at Mount Moor Colliery has received even less

notice, the only evidence being that colliery's listing as a beneficiary of the indemnity fund in the Coal Trade minutes (see note 46).

44 *Newcastle Chronicle*, February 18, 1832.

45 During Buddle's absence Morton wrote to say that he looked forward to the return of Buddle's influence: 'we do get on very badly without your assistance - in all Coal Trade Matters. There is *much gobble*, but very little work accomplished.' And James Losh, newly-elected to the Tyne Committee, was not impressed with what he found. The meetings were 'by no means so regular and businesslike as they ought to be... we waste our time sadly in useless discussions, jokes etc. to which our chairman [R.W. Brandling], valuable as he is in many respects, contributes in no small degree.' NCB 1/JB/998, Morton to Buddle, February 13, 1832; Hughes, *Losh's Diaries*, II, February 10, 14, 1832, p.133.

46 Jaffe, 'Economy and Community...', p.280. This assessment might assume that in addition to Callerton's £653, Coxlodge received £600, and Mount Moor (Springwell) £300, though other calculations put the total figures at a maximum of £1853, or a minimum of £1153. These figures do not include an unspecified claim from Willington Colliery arising from the 1831 strike, and no mention of claims from North Hetton or Waldrige appears. Also not included is the 200 guineas contributed to Waldrige from the Coal Trade's general fund, though it seems a reward was never paid. CTMB, Committee Minutes, December 31, 1831, January 14, 19, 28, February 14, 1832.

47 Losh credited himself with the progress made at this meeting: 'I... succeeded in obtaining the adoption of vigorous measures for punishing some outrages of the pitmen, and also for preparing measures as to prices, mode of binding, etc., at the approaching *annual binding*'. Hughes, *Losh's Diaries*, II, February 10, 1832.

48 CTMB, Committee Minutes, February 14, 18, 1832; *Dunn's Diary*, February 18, 1832.

49 NCB 1/JB/1184, Reay to Buddle, February 18, 1832; NCB 1/JB/1185, Reay to Buddle, March 3, 1832; Reay also reported that a large meeting of pitmen's delegates had taken place that same day, and that a general meeting at Boldon Fell was talked of, 'but as yet all is secret'. *Ibid.*, Reay to Buddle, February 18, 1832.

50 *Dunn's Diary*, February 25, 1832; CTMB, Committee Minutes, February 29, March 3: General Minutes, February 25, March 3, 1832.

51 NCB 1/JB/1002, Morton to Buddle, March 4, 1832.

52 *Newcastle Chronicle*, March 10, 1832: Pamphlet, *Report of the Trial of the Pitmen for the Riot at Waldrige Colliery* (Durham, 1832).

53 'There were about fifty banners with various mottoes and devices. One of them was surrounded with a deep border of crape, but was so with reference only to the death of a person at the colliery to which it belonged'. This tradition has survived in the Durham coalfield to the present day. *Newcastle Chronicle*, March 10, 1832; 'Several of the Collieries have got large New Silk flaggs which they carried with them today'. NCB 1/JB/1185, Reay to Buddle, March 3, 1832: It was reported

that two 'bands of music' were also in attendance. *Durham Advertiser*, March 9, 1832.

54 NCB 1/JB/1002, Morton to Buddle, March 4, 1832.

55 NCB 1/JB/1185, Reay to Buddle, March 3, 1832.

56 *Newcastle Chronicle*, March 10, 1832; NCB 1/JB/1186, Reay to Buddle, March 12, 1832.

57 NCB 1/JB/1186, Reay to Buddle, March 12, 1832.

58 CTMB, General Minutes, March 10, 1832.

59 NCB 1/JB/1430, Thomas Taylor to Buddle, March 10, 1832; James Losh wrote: 'We had an important meeting of the Coal Trade today and I think the *liberal party* (W. Brandling, Bell, etc.) were successful in carrying some important points both as to the approaching *Binding* and as to giving a statement of our conduct to the public'. He felt that 'if the coal owners in general will only act with common sense and tolerable fairness, I think the great difficulties as to our workmen might be overcome'. Hughes, *Losh's Diaries*, II, March 3, March 10, 1832, p.134.

60 CTMB, General Minutes, March 10, 1832.

61 NCB 1/JB/712, Hindhaugh to Buddle, January 20, 1832: NCB 1/JB/844, Lamb to Buddle, February 14, 1832: NCB 1/JB/1074, W. Peile to Buddle, March 11, 1832: *Dunn's Diary*, January 27, 1832; The monthly vends of 117,000 and 123,000 chaldrons in November and December 1831 dropped to 57,000 and 66,000 in January and February 1832, and by March had recovered only to 89,000 chaldrons. CTMB, Committee Minutes, December 3, 1831, January 6, February 4, March 3, April 4, 1832; In an attempt to curry favour on the coastal coal markets, the Hetton company increased the quantities of coals shipped, without increasing the price. Henry Morton called this a 'covert' and 'direct infringement of the regulation' which had the effect of further reducing coal prices, to the detriment of the whole cartel, and brought the matter to a general meeting so that Hetton might be censured. Such tensions were typical of the Trade in general and Hetton in particular, and caused jealousies which threatened the survival of the cartel. At this point though the matter was not of prime importance, the owners being preoccupied with their efforts to overcome the pitmen. NCB 1/JB/1001, Morton to W. Redhead, March 1, 1832: NCB 1/JB/1002, Morton to Buddle, March 4, 1832.

62 NCB 1/JB/712, Hindhaugh to Buddle, January 20, 1832: NCB 1/JB/1622, Wm. Watson (Tanfield Moor Colliery) to Buddle, January 14, 1832; Londonderry attempted to overcome short-term difficulties by putting off the payment of debts. But as his problems persisted he became increasingly reliant on this policy with the result that in early 1832, as Buddle told him, 'an opinion is gaining ground, that your Lordship will not pay anything, without being compelled by Law...' D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, February 8, 1832.

63 NCB 1/JB/712, Hindhaugh to Buddle, January 20, 1832: NCB 1/JB/846, Lamb to Buddle, April 3, 1832: NCB 1/JB/1431, Taylor to Buddle, March 25, 1832: NCB 1/JB/1000, Morton to Buddle, March 2, 1832: NCB 1/JB/1002, Morton to Buddle, March 4, 1832. Morton expected to augment the stockpile to 15,000 chaldrons before any strike took place.

64 See: CTMB, General Minutes, August 5, 1831, for the initial agreement to indemnify one another against the pitmen's actions: Committee Minutes, August 31, October 15, 1831, for the resolution that no man be engaged without enquiring into the cause of his having left his previous employment, and the need for consent to employ a man residing in the colliery housing of another owner.

65 This figure is derived from the agreed 2% levy on the November to March vend of 453,530 chaldrons (1,201,856 tons), at a notional price of 30s. per chaldron. However, it is unlikely that the Committee successfully collected the stated sum, as Londonderry for one did not pay any contributions, and the likelihood of all the other owners paying promptly was small. See: CTMB, General Minutes, December 17, 1831, Committee Minutes, December 3, 1831, January 6, February 4, March 3, April 4, 1832.

66 *Newcastle Chronicle*, December 17, 1831, January 7, 21, 1832; *Tyne Mercury*, January 10, 1832.

67 Another correspondent, 'An Old Pitman', corroborated this point. By the use of 'false, or great corves' the owners could gain 'from the men and boys, a day's work or two in the week'. *Newcastle Chronicle*, February 18, 1832.

68 *Newcastle Chronicle*, January 28, February 18, 25, March 17, 1832.

69 Jaffe, 'Economy and Community...', pp.273-274.

70 In the absence of any attempt from Losh to answer these observations, 'Castor' took up the argument. Castor was in fact Francis Carr, an under-viewer at Springwell Colliery, but his letter was sheer abuse, referring to the Old Pitman as an 'old loon' and the delegates as 'grace-be-here humgudgeons and pigmy pit-O'Connells'. The Old Pitman ignored his letter (*Tyne Mercury*, March 6, 1832): Carr applied to Buddle for a reference for a job at a Welsh colliery and it seems his letters were meant to impress Buddle. The letters, he said, 'may perhaps amuse you a little, but should the pitmen find out who Castor is, woe be unto him, as they will most certainly strip him, although there is nothing in the letter but what, I believe, is true. - It should have appeared in the *Chronicle* of this day, but the Editor has refused inserting it, except as an Advertisement, of which I was not aware at the time of sending it to him'. NCB 1/JB/243, Carr to Buddle, March 2, 1832: Castor implied that the putter's work was rendered easy by the metal plates flooring the mine passages, a practice which it is worth noting continued even into the modern period.

71 *Tyne Mercury*, December 27, 1831.

72 *Newcastle Chronicle*, March 17, 1832.

73 *Newcastle Chronicle*, January 21, 1832.

74 *Tyne Mercury*, January 31, 1832; *Newcastle Chronicle*, January 28, 1832.

75 See W.L. Burn, 'The libel on the Durham clergy', *Durham University Journal*, new series, VII (1945), pp.25-29.

76 The *Mercury* was the first local paper to introduce an editorial column to reinforce its view. It 'repeatedly deplored' the pitmen's use of the strike whilst defending the use of blackleg labour. See M. Milne, 'The Tyne Mercury and Parliamentary Reform, 1802-1846, *Northern History*, 1978, p.237; and by the same author, 'Strikes and Strikebreaking in North-East England, 1815-1844: The Attitude of the Local Press', *International Review of Social History*, 1968, pp.233,235, 238,239. Also his more comprehensive work, *The Newspapers of Northumberland and Durham*, op.cit..

77 Sweezy, p.96: *The Larchfield Diary; Extracts from the Diary of the Late Mr. Mewburn, First Railway Solicitor* (Darlington, 1876), p.21: MSS note (c.1822) in *Speech of Mr. Brougham Delivered on the Trial...The King v. J.A. Williams for Libel on the Clergy*, p.2, Durham University Library: M. Milne, *The Newspapers of Northumberland and Durham*, p.50.

78 Pamphlet, *Report of the Committee of the Coalowners Respecting the Present Situation of the Trade*, Newcastle upon Tyne, 1832. The Report was also ordered to be published in 'The Times, Morning Herald, Globe and Sun, London newspapers, The Newcastle, Northumberland, Durham, Berwick upon Tweed, Cumberland, Westmorland, Leeds, Edinbro' and Glasgow Newspapers'. CTMB, General Minutes, March 10, 1832: The owners had already paid a gratuity of twenty guineas to their printers, W.E. and H. Mitchell of Newcastle, possibly in recognition of the importance of the services of a reliable contractor during the difficult period ahead. CTMB, Committee Minutes, December 31, 1831.

79 The trapper boys' task of operating ventilating doors was crucial to the prevention of explosions. This was underlined at this point by the dismissal of George Heppell, a Wallsend Colliery overman, for amongst other things 'having neglected appointing a Trapper to a Main Door in the E^t. Drifts and the putters had left it Open, when the places Fouled and were at the very point of Fireing [sic] before the Hewers discovered it'. NCB 1/JB/1189, Reay to Buddle, April 7, 1832.

80 The Report stated that 145,913 chaldrons had been lost during the strike and a further 171,606 since, making a total of 317,519 chaldrons (841,425 tons), which at 18s. per ton amounted to a financial loss of £757,282.

81 Jaffe's view is that '[t]he real object' of the report was not to complain about production, but to talk about labor. The owners claimed that they tried to maintain production at 1830 levels (and hence keep down prices), but that they were prevented by the union who refused to allow extra "strangers" to work in the mines. This was the crux of the report: the union had successfully blocked the employment of scab labor'. Jaffe, 'Economy and Community...', p.287: If we accept this view, it does perhaps provide some explanation for the severity of the Coxlodge and other owners' actions.

82 Opposing the union claim that pitwork was a skilled art, the Report said 'the new Workmen experience no difficulty whatever in performing the work - that they execute it well, and are perfectly satisfied with the nature of the employment and the wages they receive... the Pitmen formerly employed could have been neither overworked nor ill-paid... it requires no great skill nor any long previous training to become an expert Coalworkman'. Contrast this with Buddle's later claim that if not

initiated into pitwork by the age of 13 or 14 at latest, a boy would never make a good collier. A.J. Heesom, 'The Northern Coal-Owners...' p.242.

83 *Tyne Mercury*, March 27, 1832.

84 *Newcastle Chronicle*, April 7, 1832. Publicola had complained that Carbonarius was 'an unprincipled anonymous writer' which, said the Coal Hower, 'sounds mighty well' coming from the anonymous Publicola: 'But if writing anonymously is a crime, why does not "Publicola" come forward in his own name? He can have nothing to fear from exposure... On the contrary, there does exist a strong reason why we, who have come forward on behalf of the men, should if possible, keep ourselves unknown. We are all pitmen, and were it known that we had opposed ourselves to the coal-owners, I know full well, and "Publicola" knows too, what tender mercies we should experience at the hands of agents and viewers.'

CHAPTER FOUR:THE 1832 BINDINGS AND STRIKE.¹

The pitmen's contracts were open for renewal from March 17 until April 5 when the old ones would expire, but it emerged that at the end of the first week only a quarter of the pits had bound.² Lead miners were taken on at Callerton and Waldrige and the Rev. Brandling, having already rooted out the union pitmen at Coxlodge, had proceeded in advance of the bindings to engage an estimated 600 lead-miners at Gosforth.³ He was described as acting 'with more spirit than any man in the Trade', but had been exceptionally harsh.⁴ Other owners met with mixed fortunes.

Lord Durham's Lambton hewers were engaged on the same terms as the previous year, but his Newbottle men at first refused to bind because of a disagreement over corve sizes, though encouraged by 'the really good behaviour of the Men', Henry Morton believed that they were 'anxious to hire - (their Spirit and Tone is altogether different from last year)'.⁵ At Backworth Thomas Taylor bound the men on the previous year's terms but had to pay travelling money - 'this I could not get over', and the banksmen and deputies there left the union 'without their having complained'.⁶ This may also have been the case at the Lambton and other Durham collieries but not elsewhere, if we are to believe Taylor's summary of the pitmen's objections:

...The Main obstacle to the Pitmen binding is that they want the Banksmen, and deputies to remain in the Union - some Coll^{YS}. ask 10^d. p. chaldron advance - some only gunpowder and Candles found them, some travelling money and at a few Coll^{YS}. the Owners want to reduce the Hewing Price...⁷

An account of the Wallsend bindings gives a glimpse of how viewers manipulated the pitmen. Unknown to the men, John Reay required only 120

of the existing 160 workforce, and by thus abandoning forty men to unemployment he was able to bind all those he needed, as he explained to Buddle:

...I held out against continuing the Gunpowder, and a little advance on the Band Stone (in two places in the C Pit, where it exceeds 18 inches) 'till 4 P.M. when I found they would not Bind - I then gave in on the *Express condition* that we should *pick* our Men and only Bind two *shifts* to this they Agreed, we then commenced Binding, as they were called upon out of a *list* I had prepared - when we had bound about 60 Men, they perceived our plan and made a *full stop* - after a long parley they gave in and we have just closed the Bond and not Bound one Shifter - several of our noisey and poor hands are thrown out - I may safely say it is just such a *Weeding* as you would like...⁸

That agents like Reay were binding significantly fewer men gave the lie to the argument that the union's 4s limit prevented the supply of enough coal to satisfy demand. But the union's response was to impose a 3s per day limit, which they hoped would genuinely restrict production 'in order to get all the Men Bound'.⁹ Henry Morton was unruffled by this: he saw 'no danger whatever, provided the Coal owners are only firm and united', and though George Veatch agreed that many men would wait until the expiry of their current bonds on April 5 before rebinding, he said 'we are prepared with so large a Heap of Coals at each Colly. it is of little consequence if a "Sticke" does take place and continue a month which will enable us to get the resting Coals off the weather having been so dry and fine the Coals fall out of the Heap in an excellent State'.¹⁰

An apparently contradictory state of affairs existed even at those collieries where the pitmen did bind, as the case of Percy Main seems to indicate. Initially the Percy Main men, 'after the Bond was read over appeared disposed to bind but when they were told... that no Banksmen would be engaged that belonged to the Union they instantly refused'. Within a few days the banksmen had complied and the pitmen acquiesced and agreed to bind, but it was nevertheless reported that 'the Men are

very assuming and there is almost a certainty of a strike'.¹¹ At Wallsend there was cause for concern over the forty men left unbound, as there were 'considerable Doubts' whether they would allow the bound men to continue at work after the 1831 bonds expired'. A few days later Reay said the expected trouble had not materialised, but it was still 'quite impossible to say what turn the unbound Men may take - it is at present very Uncertain'.¹²

John Buddle was meanwhile awaiting news from his deputy George Hunter of the bindings at Londonderry's collieries.¹³ His Lordship had given Hunter a letter setting out his position to the pitmen, which Hunter had duly read to them: he related to Buddle that

...the Letter had a good effect, in as much, as the Men thought I had no power to act contrary to it, otherwise they would have attempted to work me out of the 3d. a chaldron... after Binding at Rainton, they attempted to gain certain points as to their Cavels, etc - and laid the Adventure and Alexandrina pits off to try me again - I positively refused every point, and they went to work again yesterday quite content - I think now, we are at peace, but it is impossible to say...¹⁴

The Coal Trade committee on April 7 estimated that twenty collieries remained unbound, 'mostly sticking upon points of form such as having the Delegates bound first',¹⁵ though some were said to be holding out for increases and Hunter believed the Tyne owners were 'not willing to bind their Men, for the purpose of restricting the Vends'.¹⁶ One resolution passed by the committee was a recommendation to bound collieries 'to restrict the earnings of the Hewers to 3s per day, until the Men at all the other Collieries are bound'.¹⁷ This seems a strange move as the union had agreed an identical measure only one week earlier, but the owners probably had the better grounds for their decision. The union's intention had been to cut production and thereby sales and profits as a means of inducing the owners to hire those men left unbound, but at a time of falling demand and large stockpiles this was an ill-founded tactic. The owners on the other hand realised that should

the large numbers of unbound men be financially supported by the working pitmen, this would place an enormous burden not only on union funds but also on discipline, and thus calculated that the 3s limit would damage the union more than themselves. The danger that coal stockpiles might be exhausted before the pitmen succumbed was a risk, but which party was the more astute would emerge in due course.¹⁸

From the various accounts it seems that in the first two weeks, from thirteen to fifteen pits had bound. This figure remained fairly static until the last two or three days before April 5, when another eight or ten bound.¹⁹ Crucial to the calculations of both parties though was the exact number of pitmen (rather than pits) left unbound, but establishing just what this figure was is problematical. The evidence of the Coal Trade that twenty collieries remained unbound is not enormously helpful as collieries varied greatly in size.²⁰ However, according to both Hepburn and Dunn one-half of the men had not bound, and if we take the nearest official contemporary estimate of the coalfield workforce, the figure might be put at about 10,000.²¹

As soon as it was apparent that unbound numbers were so large the *Tyne Mercury* renewed its criticism of the union, and such was the diatribe in its April 3 issue that the pitmen published a handbill, 'An Address to the Public', responding to the *Mercury's* lies and distortions.²² The Address laid plain the obstacles to binding as the pitmen saw them: recalling that the 1831 dispute had been settled 'by mutual concession', the men had hoped that the terms then agreed would be honoured up to and beyond the present bindings, but they had been disappointed on both counts. Stating the real grounds for so many of their number now having refused to bind, the pitmen said they first had to correct the misrepresentations of the *Mercury* editor:

...The men did not obtain "whatever they desired" at the last strike, nor do they now "seek to obtain still further

concessions." *They conceded several points at the last binding, and there is not one Colliery now unbound where the same terms have been offered as were given last year!* So far, indeed, from the men seeking higher terms, the Owners have insisted on a reduction, - some of 1s., some of 8d., some of 6d., some of 4d., and some of 2d. per score, and the men, wherever they could obtain a hearing of their Owners, have offered to bind on half the above reduction being made, but the Viewers in this, as in all other instances, have stood in the way of an amicable adjustment, and have insisted on the full amount of the proposed reduction.

But a change still more important and more ruinous to the men has been proposed on the part of the Owners. At the last binding it was settled that the men should forfeit *threepence* for every two quarts of foul coal, splint, or stone, found in a corf when brought to bank, but now it is proposed that they shall forfeit the *full price of the corf* if it is found to contain *one quart* of foul coal, splint, or stone! Think, now, on the hardship of this! The only light the men have to work by is the Davy Lamp, or candles forty to the pound, either of them just sufficient to make "darkness visible," and yet they are expected to sort their coals with such exactness that there shall not be found a quart of foul coal in a corf of twenty or twenty-one pecks!...

It would be mad to bind on such conditions said the pitmen, as they would very soon find themselves in the pre-1831 situation, 'namely, that having laboured eight or ten hours in the mine, they come to bank and find the amount of their penalties, for faults which they were unconscious of having committed, is greater than that of their hard day's work!'

Though Thomas Taylor had informed Buddle that the main obstacle to the pitmen binding was their wish that banksmen and deputies should remain in the union,²³ the Address said this was not the case and clarified the union's position:

...Some of the banksmen were in the Union, but they have nearly all left it, on the command of the Owners, and to the great contentment of the hewers, but the overmen never were in the Union, nor has any wish ever been expressed that they should be in it. Indeed, it is little likely that the men would seek for their admission amongst them, experiencing as they daily do, their petty tyranny, and finding them on all occasions, just or unjust, enemies and oppressors. If it be asked why they are thus hostile to the men, the only answer they can give is... the slave driver is never the friend of the slave...²⁴

The Address said the only disputes as to union membership concerned those pits where unionists had been victimised, but this the *Mercury* had failed to report:

...The Owners, or their agents, have discharged some men merely because they would not leave the Union, no doubt with the intention of intimidating the rest. These men it is wished to have restored: they have committed no offence but that of being true to their engagements; and in stipulating for themselves, the great body of the Pitmen wish to stipulate for them also...

The *Mercury* had attempted to face two ways at once, advising the pitmen 'not to accept an insufficient remuneration for their labour - that we should never recommend - but to accede to the terms now offered to them'. This said the pitmen, was 'the cajolery of the Fox to the Crow... advice from an enemy is always to be suspected': should they accept such counsels the few advantages they now enjoyed would quickly disappear 'and we should remain butts for the ridicule of the *Mercury*, and of those who pay him for advancing their only cause - the cause of oppression'. The address revealed the root cause of the disputes: the pitmen had gone out of their way to compromise with their respective viewers, in some cases even agreeing to reductions on the previous year - 'but the Viewers in this, as in all other instances, have stood in the way of an amicable adjustment'.²⁵ This was clear evidence of a determination to either break the union or reduce it to impotence by forcing the men to bind on detrimental terms..

Not all owners took such a hard line, however, as half the men had agreed to rebind, but the bound collieries too were of value to the owners' anti-union campaign, as they would provide a supply of coal should the unbound men hold out for any extended period. Of major significance in this respect was the fact that two of the largest concerns in the trade, those of Lord Durham and Lord Londonderry, had been successfully bound. But the other side of the coin was that the pitmen of the third big Wear colliery at Hetton were still some way from

reaching agreement: and events there held out little hope of a speedy conclusion to the bindings.

Binding Problems at Hetton.

Hetton and North Hetton were both managed by Matthias Dunn and there had been trouble at both places from day one of the bindings. When he declared the bonds open at Hetton, Dunn found 'great bad humour amongst the Colliers', and at North Hetton there was '[g]reat ire shown amongst the men, everything wrong and the delegates ungovernable'.²⁶ A fellow viewer observed with incredulity that such was 'the very Strong feeling' against Dunn that 'he was Obliged at both places to give the Bond to the Delegates and they read it!!!'.²⁷ The Hetton pitmen 'cavilled with almost every clause of it - so that we never yet got to a discussion of anything like prices, which are meant to remain much the same as at present'. Judging that the North Hetton men would be 'wholly guided' by Hetton, Dunn decided it was 'not worth troubling them as yet', adding ominously that 'a sweep must be made here as well as there, cost what it will'.²⁸ But the situation worsened. Two days later as Dunn was meeting the committee of the Hetton Coal Company, a

...petition was handed in that M Dunn should be discharged. Amongst the 12 men who attended with it were six deputies - exhibiting the monstrosities of the Union in a very prominent way. The Committee received the petition with suitable disgust refusing to see the Deputation but returning a written answer in the most decisive terms, and requiring them to quit their Houses at the agreed time...²⁹

The 'agreed time' would be April 19, two weeks after the expiry of the current bonds. Whether the threatened evictions applied to all the Hetton pitmen or only the deputation is not clear, but this appears to have provoked attacks on the handful of non-union pitmen in Hetton. Dunn and the owners, incensed, took their case to the Coal Trade general meeting on March 24, where Dunn had a letter read out stating 'the real

grounds of dissatisfaction between the Hetton men and me': the Hetton owners were consequently urged to stand firm with the promise that the Coal Trade 'will support them against illegal proceedings on the part of their Men'.³⁰ This was perhaps of some encouragement as one Hetton shareholder spent March 30 'collecting evidence against the parties for three several assaults arising out of the Union', and Dunn was consequently despatched to Durham to take out warrants against a number of suspects. As a result, eighteen men were arrested at Hetton by the special constables there.³¹

These events speak eloquently of the manner in which the law was enforced in these last years before the permanent establishment of a professional police force: it was the Hetton owners who had set about collecting evidence, and Dunn who had secured the warrants. Dunn also referred to the assault victims as 'giving information' in Newcastle, without reference to the Durham magistracy which was the proper authority for such a transaction. It is not unlikely that the two men were interviewed by coal owning magistrates or lawyers to determine the likelihood of a successful prosecution: this being so it might thus be argued that the owners, viewers and members of the magistracy and legal profession involved in the coal trade were acting as a policing and prosecuting agency for the punishment of offending union pitmen. Successful prosecutions were invaluable to the owners in portraying the union as a lawless and disruptive organisation, to thereby undermine public support for the pitmen's case.

But having gone to such lengths to take suspects into custody, it was a mistake to hold the eighteen men overnight in Hetton as, early the next morning, 'a mob, consisting of about 400 pitmen, riotously assembled, and broke open the house at Hetton in which the said prisoners were confined, and forcibly and with dreadful threats and

violence liberated them from the custody of the said constables'.³² The Durham magistrates were informed, and the Hetton owners

...sent off an express to Newcastle requesting the military to meet them at Houghton-le-Spring. The troops of the Queen's Bays arrived there at four o'clock in the afternoon. The magistrates accompanied them to Hetton, with a view of retaking the men who had been forcibly released, but it was found they had all absconded. They succeeded, however, in apprehending six of the men who were concerned in the riot and rescue, and they were lodged in gaol...³³

On April 4 Dunn and Hetton owner George Baker met a union deputation to attempt to reach some agreement:

...we had a very full discussion upon the printed Bond, but as they object to many of the clauses which we could not give up, the discussion ended. After this a general meeting [of Hetton pitmen] took place, and the Deputation returned with pencil determinations to abide by the previous objections. In addition they determined themselves not to be bound so long as I remained on the Colliery. I took the opportunity of giving the party a hearty... declaration of independance and determination to do my Duty in spite of every cowardly threat. The Deputation retired with evident marks of disappointment...³⁴

But the following day when the committee of the Hetton Coal Company met, the deputation renewed negotiations with Dunn:

...interview with about 21 of the men who are cunning enough to withdraw their opposition to me finding that the owners will not treat with them on any other score - but their demands in other respects are still as unreasonable as ever. The Committee conceded to them as follows -

- Several Verbal Alterations in the printed Bond of little import.
- The words 8 hours to be left out.
- The stowing of small to be limited to 1 and a half Corf in the Main Coal and 1 Corf in the Hutton Seam.
- Corves to be not exceeding 22 Pecks.

The Deputation insisted on having several additional prices... and also some unadmissable positions regarding the men who have been guilty of riots etc.. At the earnest request of Mowbray I went up to the Colliery to read over the Bond to the men with the alterations, but they seem as determined as ever to have their will - the Separation Clauses to be out altogether. Deputies to be bound and kept in Union.³⁵

That the union could command negotiations says much for the strength of its position, but any demand to guarantee the jobs of deputies and banksmen refusing to quit the union, or of other 'obnoxious' characters, would not be countenanced. The evictions ordered after the presentation

of the petition stood, and from midnight on April 5 the Hetton men were technically locked out.³⁶ The situation at North Hetton was much the same, the pitmen there being left unbound.³⁷

Bouverie meanwhile had expected the bindings to go off quietly, but the events at Hetton prompted a flurry of correspondence with London and led to the deployment of more troops in the area.³⁸ By April 9 things were so quiet that Bouverie believed the remaining bindings would be able to go ahead without serious trouble,³⁹ but with magistrates and owners requesting yet more troops he had to point out, not for the first time, that this was not the answer:⁴⁰

...the Coal owners in the North should organise a more effective Civil Force for the Protection of their Collieries than has hitherto been done, such a Force aided by a much smaller Military Force than is now necessary would I am certain ensure the tranquillity of that district (which is never disturbed excepting in consequence of disputes between [masters and men] and then as to wages,) much more effectively than by the employment of large Bodies of Military; which can only act under certain circumstances, and in certain Situations...⁴¹

Bouverie felt such forces should be organised at the owners' expense and cited the example of the Rev. Brandling, who had 'been able to protect some of his Collieries in which he has employed new Hands, the old ones having been ejected by him, without the aid of the Military'.⁴² He accepted though that this was only one example and thought other owners would probably not form a civil force as long as the military was available:⁴³ but the Hetton owners did take steps to do so at a meeting of their committee in Newcastle on April 10, which applied directly to the Home Secretary for up to fifty London police, the cost of which the Hetton owners would bear themselves.⁴⁴ They believed their presence would

...be much more effective than having the Military stationed there, and they also intend to form a local police under the same regulations as the London Police and they will therefore be materially benefitted by having a party on the spot which will be able to give directions as to its Establishment as well as preserve the peace of the district...

The owners were supported by statements from four constables that 'the Civil force is totally unable to execute any warrant against the Hetton pitmen', and from a group of Hetton inhabitants certifying to the combination against the execution of warrants. The owners' application must have received immediate attention at the Home Office, for on the evening of April 12 one police inspector, one sergeant and five constables left London for Hetton.⁴⁵

But there were further compelling grounds for setting up a police force at this time. The Hetton owners had been so angered by the petition demanding Dunn's dismissal that they had resolved, '[l]ead miners now determined upon'.⁴⁶ With the pitmen refusing to bind and 'all the [Hetton] pits idle' on April 9, it was thus that the Hetton owners had met in Newcastle on April 10, and decided not only to request a party of London police but also to definitely proceed with the recruitment of lead miners. The two measures wholly complemented one another. Dunn set off for the Pennine lead mining districts the next day to recruit the blacklegs for whose protection the police were being hired.⁴⁷

By dint of circumstance Hetton thus became the focal point of the Coal Trade's assault upon the union. And though the owners in general often disagreed on commercial policy, on this issue they concurred wholeheartedly:⁴⁸ they would support the Hetton owners, by means of the indemnity fund, to the hilt. That the entire Coal Trade should unite against the Hetton men might give the appearance of an unequal contest, but the other unbound collieries would cause irritation to their respective owners and the men at the working collieries would continue to supply income to the union funds. And Bouverie for one felt the owners had reason for caution, as he reported to the Home Office during the disturbances at Hetton:

...If the Pitmen continue refractory, they will be awkward persons to deal with, one pitman being equal to 3 weavers at the least, and should the discontent spread to the Keelmen and Sailors, it may become very serious and the force at present in N'cle would be very soon harassed to death...⁴⁹

Evictions.

With so many members unbound the union had to take stock and held another rally on April 14 at Black Fell. 'The meeting was appointed for 11 o'clock, and before that hour not less than nine thousand men were at the place of rendezvous'.⁵⁰ Thomas Hepburn opened the meeting with a full outline of the union's position. Their opponents, he said,

...had got an idea that there was a re-action amongst them (the men), and that they were tired of associating for their common benefit.⁵¹ The present meeting, he thought, would be a sufficient answer to that... but he would go further; though one half of them was bound and the other half not, the half which was bound had not broken any faith with their fellows - they had only acted on agreement. It was agreed amongst them that such of them as could get their rights should bind; and such of them as could not obtain these rights should remain unbound until they were conceded to them. There was also another agreement amongst them, which was, that those who got themselves bound should support those who were not bound (hear, and "we will"). It was on that principle that the present meeting was held. They had met to declare their determination still to support each other in their reasonable claims, and that support should extend to the uttermost farthing. He would explain what he meant. It was that whilst he had a halfpenny, his fellow-sufferer should have the half of it (applause). If they were firm to one another... they would get what they wished for. Firmness obtained their privileges last year, and would do so this. Why were they now standing out? Did they want to better their conditions? He said, no - they only wanted to be as well as they were last year,⁵² which some of their masters were refusing them; and the common rights of all must be respected before they bound themselves (applause).

A number of resolutions were proposed, the first that the pitmen should follow the examples of other 'oppressed people, [who] in every age of the world, when united, had... withstood and overcome their enemies'. Explaining that the men drew their strength only from their unity, delegate Sam Waddle said he hoped they would discipline themselves and pointed out the debt they owed the delegates, as 'from the zeal they have displayed in the general cause, their names had been

posted up in the offices of various collieries, and probably they would not get work for a long time'. The delegates must therefore be supported and though he himself would probably never be a coal-hewer again, he declared to support the cause 'to the utmost of his power'. The resolution was seconded by John Johnson in his customary biblical style, comparing the pitmen and owners to the Israelites and the Pharoahs, after which the motion was put and carried unanimously.

The men having thus agreed to fight on, the next resolution was aimed at financing the fight. Echoing the point made by Hepburn, Charles Parkinson (still evading a warrant taken out against him by the Hetton owners), proposed "[t]hat as support is necessary to facilitate a conflict, we, who are in circumstances adequate to give relief to suffering humanity, will do so to the utmost of our ability". He had heard a viewer say the pitmen would not support each other, but Parkinson knew the men better:

...He thought all who were bound would support those who were unbound ("we will - we will"). They did not wish to live in luxury - they only wished for a frugal supply. Indeed, he had said only last night to some of his men, that before they would submit, they would live on potatoes and salt, and he felt sure they would do so (a voice near the waggon - "as long as I can make two pounds, you shall have one of them," - applause). He wished the men to impose every necessary restriction upon themselves, to be firm, and in the end they would be "more than conquerors."

Benjamin Pyle seconded the motion with a message that the Walker men would contribute half their wages, 'and sat down amidst loud cheering'.⁵³ Before the motion was taken Hepburn pointed out its 'great importance' and asked that it be 'seriously weighed in their minds before they gave their consent to it', but after a pause the resolution was put and carried unanimously: the bound men were now pledged to the financial support of their unbound comrades.⁵⁴

The pitmen's political consciousness at this time was reflected by Charles Parkinson, who did not stop at the remit of the resolution but

raised the perspective of a union which went beyond the occupational limits of the collieries and the geographical confines of the coalfield. The union he said, had several arms,

...the principal of which extended from the Tyne to the Wear, and he trusted they would not stop there, but would extend to the southern districts, and not only to pitmen, but to manufacturers of every kind (applause). He had been visited by several who wished to establish a correspondence with them, and form a sinking fund for the support and relief of each other. They wished to know the numbers of potters, smiths, glassmakers, and other trades, that they might know how much it would take to support them. It would be an excellent thing if this could be brought about, union would go forth, and religion would follow, and moral degradation be banished from the earth, and the world become evangelised (applause)...

The reference to forming 'a sinking fund' smacked of the NAPL, and it will be clear from his latter comments that Parkinson was one of the ranter preachers so disliked by the owners. Hepburn spoke again to conclude the meeting: his main point showed there was some apprehension at the numbers of blacklegs being brought into the district, but the pitmen should not be disheartened because a few lead miners had been introduced.

...There were fresh collieries opening both in the north and in the south, and to them they (the pitmen) might repair, if they could not get work elsewhere. Besides, what said the adage? "They might stop too long in one place." And, by doing so, many miseries had been entailed upon them. At St. Helen's Auckland there was now about one-half of the Wide-open men, and their places would either have to be supplied by lead-miners or by the anti-union men - the lazy characters whom the union would not admit. There would be need of all the men. Let them make a few sacrifices, twelve months would teach them a vast of experience. Things would come round in such a way that there would be need of more pitmen than were ever employed in England before...

Though he was described as having spoken 'in a very encouraging strain' this was a curiously downbeat note upon which to end such a vital meeting, perhaps betraying some unease on Hepburn's part.⁵⁵ But what was perhaps most remarkable about his speech was that despite the storm which he must surely have perceived to be gathering around the union, he called of all things for travelling libraries to be

established amongst the men. This could be done at a cost of one shilling per man per year he thought, with each book collection 'to remain at each colliery 12 months, on the principle lately set on foot by some benevolent individuals in this town'.⁵⁶ Though perhaps a little untimely, it is testimony to Hepburn's intellect and vision that he should be looking beyond the preoccupations of the union's everyday problems, and that even at this time of intense political and industrial strife he consciously kept in view the perspective of the intellectual development of his members. With talk of libraries and education Hepburn thus closed the meeting, the men dispersing 'in the most peaceable manner'.

On that same day however another meeting of Hetton owners took place in Newcastle and approved further resolutions which virtually closed the door to their pitmen; they would offer the same prices as last year but would not modify the contentious ninth clause of the bond regarding small coal;⁵⁷ no men would be bound who had 'conducted themselves improperly'; no deputy overmen would be hired who were in the union; and if the pitmen would not bind by April 20, 'legal Measures shall be resorted to in Order to make Room for other Workmen'.⁵⁸ The Coal Trade seems to have left the field open for the Hetton owners, and an abrupt retort to the union's resolutions promptly appeared in the local press. The result for the Hetton men was that they now faced the immediate choice of binding within a week or being evicted.

A further blow to the Hetton pitmen must have been the arrival, also on April 14, of Inspector Goodyear and seven London police officers. They were, said Dunn 'proceeding to get up a police force of about 40 to be stationed at Hetton and to put the warrants into execution', and by April 19 he recorded the accumulation of a force of sixty infantry, forty cavalry, eight London police and forty 'Policemen

Assistant', as well as visiting magistrates:⁵⁹ but Dunn said the presence of the police force in Hetton had not 'in the slightest degree softened the men, on the Contrary it seems to make them the more determined. Only that they attempt no violence, and are become sulkily civil'.⁶⁰

April 20, the deadline for the Hetton men to rebind arrived with the men still defiant, but as this was Good Friday no attempt was made to carry out the threatened evictions. The delegates used the day to frame an 'Address from the Hetton Pitmen to the Public', which answered the owners' resolutions of April 14 and particularly explained the men's objections to the thorny problem of small coal:⁶¹

...The points at issue between the Company and us are but few, but one of them is of much importance, and consequently it forms the principal feature of their resolutions, - it is the first, "That the prices actually paid to the workmen last Year, together with the alterations in the clauses of the bond, conditionally agreed to by the committee on the 5th of April inst., (*except the alteration proposed to be made in the 9th Clause, which clause shall remain unaltered*), be adhered to."

This ninth clause, the alteration of which is resisted, is the grievance. It says, "that each hewer shall cast aside or stow away in the mine the small coals made in the *nicking* and *kirving*, for which he shall be paid by valuation." On the face of it, this seems fair enough, but like many other parts of the bond, it is framed only to deceive. There is no quantity of small coals specified in the clause, and when the Viewer examines the quantity cast aside, which he does once a fortnight, if he pleases to think the quantity is not sufficiently large, he orders the Overman or Keeker to fine the hewer 2s. 6d. for not stowing away enough, without deigning to examine whether what he considers enough could by any possibility, in fair working, be obtained. It may be asked why the men do not stow away good coals to increase the quantity? The answer is easy, good coals cannot be made to resemble the kind thus enjoined to be stowed away, and should a man, by mixing good coals with the refuse, attempt to increase his quantity he would be fined 5s!

In an effort to settle matters the delegates had proposed that the quantity of small coal should be fixed. To this the owners seemed to agree,

...but with the same bad faith which has characterised the proceedings at many other collieries, they come with an after-thought, that the prices should be the same as they were previous to the last binding, with the exception of 6d. a score

occasionally paid in the broken. To this we agreed, provided the 6d. a score should be given generally in the broken, but this was refused. Still anxious to put an end to the dispute, we offered to accept their terms if 3d. a score were added all *through* the broken, but this small boon is also refused, and yet the resolutions state that the prices paid last year shall be adhered to...

Of men who 'conducted themselves improperly', the delegates said they were as anxious as the owners that no men of bad character should be bound, 'but we are compelled to say that the persons who receive most encouragement from them at this time, are the most depraved in the whole neighbourhood'. As to the refusal to employ deputy overmen remaining in the union, the pitmen felt that their being union members 'would contribute much to the harmony of the establishment, and that fewer bickerings and less heart burning would occur if they were all united, than if placed in a state of opposition to each other'.⁶² Even if the disagreement over small coal had been resolved this point would have remained outstanding, but the pitmen had no doubt as to the motives behind the owners' actions, and denounced them accordingly:

...the breaking up of the Union is, with the Owners, the great end to be attained. They have built up their bulky fortunes upon our sufferings, our mutilation, and too often on the destruction of many of us, leaving us in sickness to the precarious charity of others; and now when we, by our united means, seek to provide against the privations incident to old age and sickness, we are branded as conspirators, and are to be put down by a combination of masters...

But the Hetton owners were now past listening to their men and proceeded with the evictions on Easter Saturday, April 21, under the supervision of the magistrates. With 'a large body of police and military' in attendance no resistance was offered as twenty families were turned out, 'chiefly marked men and about Easington Lane', of which Dunn made the interesting remark, 'women even quiet and submissive'.⁶³ These evictions marked an important juncture in the dispute, but had fatal consequences for one blackleg.

The Hetton Murder.

It was at the Brickgarth at Easington Lane that many of the first Hetton evictions took place, but it was also here that some local strikebreakers lived, side by side with union men.⁶⁴ After the evictions on Easter Saturday the pitmen were left with their furniture in the street as their families lodged with neighbours or friends or camped out, but many of the men stayed up into the night by the two sentinel fires near their furniture. It was perhaps indicative of the climate of hostility that Hetton Colliery was issuing stocks of arms and shot to strikebreakers for their self-protection. John Errington, one such erstwhile union man, had been out drinking on the night of the evictions and passed one of the fires in the street. A 'groan from human voices' went up, audible to observers one hundred and fifty yards away, and he was seen to pass from the light of the fire into the darkness beyond. But a minute or so later came the 'tremendous large' discharge of a gun accompanied by a powder flash, implying that someone had lain in wait for Errington. Matthias Dunn recorded a rude awakening that Easter Sunday morning:⁶⁵

...April 22 - Alarmed at 4 o'clock by the Picket bringing in Tho. Wilson as prisoner and reporting that John Errington was shot... about 12 o'clock - he was shot dead - Holt and his Comrade saw the body about 2 this morning - and at 3 - the soldier picket took it up and gave the information. There will be every chance of convicting the murderers... Coroner sent for...

Magistrates sat at Hetton on Easter Sunday and the inquest commenced on Easter Monday, but because Errington was a blackleg the coroner's jury needed two weeks of 'long and tedious investigation' to narrow down the suspects.⁶⁶ The verdict on May 3 charged John Turnbull (39) and Errington's erstwhile neighbour George Strong (28) 'with having each fired a gun at the deceased... with intent to kill and murder him', and Luke Hutton (26) and John Moore (21) as accessories.⁶⁷ They were

taken 'under an escort of cavalry (it being apprehended that a rescue would be attempted by their comrades, by whom they were loudly cheered), to Durham gaol to take their trials at the ensuing assizes'.⁶⁸ This was to the satisfaction of Dunn, the Hetton owners and the Coal Trade, but there was little remorse from the Hetton pitmen at Errington's death. One viewer wrote that even the 'Ranter preachers are lauding this act - the murder was the instrument in the hands of the Almighty, to inflict this judgement on the miscreant who betrayed the Union'.⁶⁹ The *Newcastle Chronicle* called the murder 'a most diabolical outrage' and the *Durham Advertiser* reported the funeral with utter dismay:

...we are horror-struck while we relate the dreadful fact, that as the funeral procession of Errington passed down Easington Lane, the people there assembled saluted it with groans and hisses, and that on its arrival at the Four Lane Ends, near Hetton-le-Hole, a number of pitmen rushed from a public house, kept by a person named Lamb, and gave three loud huzzas! Nothing we conceive, could more clearly prove the brutal feelings of these barbarians, than such an exhibition at this time...⁷⁰

This 'exhibition' and the fact of the murder could only have alienated uncommitted public opinion, which would be a crucial loss to the pitmen. And Errington's death spurred on the Hetton owners, with '[t]urning out determined to be carried on successfully at 20 or 30 a day', whilst Dunn was sent to the dales 'in search of miners'.⁷¹

It seems one effect of the murder was to push the Coal Trade committee to further regulate binding conditions, as on April 28 the clause barring the binding of deputies and banksmen remaining in the union was extended. And lifting the earlier ban on binding unemployed men from other pits, the committee said they too may now be bound but only if they left the union. They should not 'belong to, or become Members of any Society, by being Members of which, their duty to their Employers may be interfered with'.⁷² The non-union clause would thus now apply to all those still unbound, with all the ramifications which that implied.⁷³

It was an unwritten rule that no delegates should be bound but this latest step marked a qualitative change in the owners' approach.⁷⁴ Their attitude appears to have hardened significantly though not just because of the murder, for the owners and pitmen were at odds throughout the coalfield, not least in the South Shields area.⁷⁵ On May 2 Mayor Reed of Newcastle went to a meeting of magistrates at South Shields at the request of William Brandling, who

...sent to me for Arms for his men (Miners) to enable them to defend themselves, as the Pitmen assembled in numbers last night, and were firing guns during the night, of course I let them have what they required - I also supplied other Collieries - I had it in my power to do so, as the [Newcastle] Corporation purchased the Rifles and Sword Bayonet of a Company, which I had the honour to command twenty years ago...⁷⁶

Bouverie was also present, and the magistrates put forward plans for the creation of a police force for North and South Shields. He was keen to support such a scheme and in addition to the arms promised by Reed, authorised the issue of 100 carbines and muskets from Tynemouth Castle for the special constables.⁷⁷

Precious few collieries had bound since April 5, and owners were losing patience with their recalcitrant men.⁷⁸ The owners had in general sought to convey to the public the impression that the pitmen were driven by the union to make the most unjustifiable demands from their kindly employers, but at North Hetton and elsewhere the men were only too willing to compromise.⁷⁹ Such instances give credence to Hepburn's claim that the men simply wanted the *status quo* rather than extravagant increases: far from the men refusing to bind it seems more the case that owners and viewers were looking for obstacles to prevent binding, and were too ready to victimise and discard union pitmen and fill their places with lead miners.⁸⁰

The Riot at Friar's Goose.

The strike at Losh's Tyne Main Colliery near Gateshead, known locally as Friar's Goose, had led to the recruitment of lead-miners, but they had been repulsed on their arrival on May 1 by the pitmen and their wives. An attempt to evict the Friar's Goose men on May 3 by the Rev. John Collinson JP, another of the owners, and twenty special constables was also repulsed, and help was sought from Mayor Reed.⁸¹ On May 4 he sent Newcastle town marshal Thomas Forsyth and thirty-two constables to perform the evictions, but upon removing the tenants of the first cottage a wholesale riot ensued. The constables were disarmed, stoned and beaten by two mobs totalling seven or eight hundred persons and were lucky to escape with their lives.⁸² A messenger who was sent to alert the military rode into Newcastle with a cut face and broken ribs, but by the time troops arrived the pitmen had dispersed.⁸³ Forsyth later reflected that '[i]f the two bodies of men had joined they would have destroyed us all', and Buddle too frankly admitted the pitmen's superiority:

...The Pitmen fought gallantly and charged the 1st division of the Constables - overthrew and disarmed them - the battle was settled by a large reinforce^t. of Constables and a detach^t. of Hussars coming up - but I don't understand that the pitmen were subdued.⁸⁴

A house-to-house search brought the initial arrest of thirty-seven men and four women,⁸⁵ twenty-one of whom were committed to Durham gaol on charges of riot, assault and incitement to riot, for trial at the next Durham Assizes.⁸⁶ As they left Gateshead escorted by hussars '[a]n immense crowd assembled to witness their departure from the Goat Inn, some of whom cheered the prisoners as they drove off'.

The circumstances of the riot raises several issues, one being the composition of the mob. Virtually the entire village, men, women and children, made a concerted community effort to resist the evictions, but it is clear that other workers were involved too, viewer Thomas Easton commenting that '[t]he mob consisted mostly of strangers', and Bouverie

that the Friar's Goose men were supported 'by workmen from some Manufactories'.⁸⁷ To extrapolate from those arrested, one in three came from elsewhere on Tyneside and excluding the women, one in eight were employed in other trades.⁸⁸ This may not accurately reflect the proportionate numbers, but this instance does indicate that some workers were ready to lend support, even physical support, to the pitmen's cause when a suitable opportunity arose, suggesting their recognition of a common class identity with the pitmen.

The role of the pitmen's wives in goading on their men and assaulting the lead miners also deserves notice. Reed told the Duke of Northumberland he

...may be astonished that we made any of the Women Prisoners, but they excited the Men beyond all bounds, and even assaulted the Officers most violently - Mr. Collinson and I thought it right to convince them that they are amenable to the Law, and subject to punishment for such unjustifiable Conduct...⁸⁹

Though it seems that evictions in particular were liable to furious opposition from the women, Reed's remarks show that the authorities exercised some discretion on such occasions as the exceptional circumstances of the Friar's Goose riot.

But the response of Bouverie to the riot reveals most as to how the situation was allowed to arise. Following the riot Mayor Reed expressed the view that 'the forebearance and good Conduct of our Police Officers is beyond any praise that I can bestow',⁹⁰ but did not appear to Bouverie to be in the least cognisant of his own bungled handling of the affair, having been personally responsible for sending an inadequate force into the field. The pitmen had been forewarned of the authorities' intentions, having twice in recent days mounted successful attacks against lead miners and the Gateshead constables.⁹¹ Such resistance should have alerted Reed and the pit's owners but they had pressed on with the evictions apparently blind to the dangers.⁹²

Bouverie was incredulous at the sheer ineptitude shown by these, some of the most senior civilian officials in the region, and wrote a very strong letter to R.W. Brandling about it.⁹³ Brandling was Coal Trade chairman but it was in his capacity as a magistrate that the shrewd Bouverie addressed him, knowing this message would receive a full airing amongst both owners and magistrates. He made oblique reference to the evictions in general, and 'the danger which must result from the unconnected and irregular manner in which these matters appear to me to be managed'. The clear implication was that the magistrates' own incompetence had brought the riot upon themselves, and Bouverie spelled out the logical end to which such a repeat might lead:

...It appears to me that if opportunities are given to the Pitmen of resistance (successful) to the Civil Power, they are sure to avail themselves of it, and that they will be emboldened by success and having once committed themselves they will grow more and more reckless and consequently more and more dangerous and difficult to manage, their strength and power is very great... the Result must inevitably be that the Constables will be overcome and discouraged, the new hands will be frightened away, and the engagement of others rendered unprofitable, and the Troops being always called for after the thing is over, will in a very short time become the laughing stock of the Country...

Bouverie thus made some suggestions which he made it plain the magistrates should strictly observe in future dealings with the men:

...the Civil Power should never be employed in ejecting the Pitmen, or in the execution of Warrants of Arrest, or any other Process likely to bring any collision with them, without being assisted and protected by a Military Force; and I would suggest that resolutions should be entered into by the Magistrates of both Counties, not to attempt any measures of Coercion without giving notice of the intervention [to] the meeting of Magistrates of the two Counties which should be held either daily or as often as convenient at Newcastle, and that measures should be taken by communication with Lt. Colonel Power, to whom I have given the Command of the Troops in both Counties, to ensure the means of success without Risk of Danger... if the Magistrates will act in Concert the Resistance of the Pitmen to the Civil Power will very soon be put an end to...⁹⁴

Given the magistrates' dependency on Bouverie for military support during these turbulent years, the likelihood is that they accepted his pointed advice. Bouverie sent a copy of this with his report to the Home

Secretary, whom he hoped 'will approve of the advice which I have given and the Tone which I have adopted in my communication'.⁹⁵

In his report Bouverie, not without justification, laid the blame for the riot at the door of the magistrates, but there is reason to suggest that he was slightly disingenuous here. In early April he had refused requests from magistrates and owners for troops, encouraging them instead to 'organise a more effective Civil Force', and though he did add that 'aided by a much smaller Military Force' this would be more effective than large bodies of troops alone, his emphasis upon the use of police may have created an impression that the military were to be used only in emergencies.⁹⁶ Thus when evictions took place against a background of disorder at South Shields on April 30, troops were supplied, whereas later that week evictions were performed at the relatively quiet Wideopen and Fawdon pits with no more than a force of Newcastle constables.⁹⁷

The question mark against Bouverie here lies in the fact that on the Wednesday of that very week, in the midst of these events, he was at the meeting of magistrates at South Shields with both Mayor Reed and R.W. Brandling.⁹⁸ He thus had the perfect opportunity to press home his views on troop deployment, yet only two days later the magistrates sent the police to their defeat at Friar's Goose. Bouverie may have felt it unnecessary to restate his position at the meeting, but whatever transpired the inescapable conclusion is that as regards evictions, there was a communication breakdown between Bouverie and the magistrates for which he as military commander must ultimately take responsibility.

In the wake of the riot Bouverie also took the step of ordering more troops to the region and at the request of C.J. Clavering, chairman of the Northumberland magistrates, issued another hundred pistols for the special constables.⁹⁹ He was ready to issue more should they be

required but only, he added dryly, 'should I ascertain that the Police are able and willing to defend them'.¹⁰⁰ With the aid of troops the Friar's Goose pitmen were finally evicted, but with growing concern Losh noted that '[t]he murder at Hetton and several other outrages, particularly this last, have caused great alarm in this district'.¹⁰¹ Hence as May dawned and thousands of pitmen remained unbound the complexion of the dispute grew darker and more earnest, and brought home the realisation to Losh and other owners that there could be no quick solution. The need to redouble their efforts focused the minds of the owners, and their discussions now turned almost entirely towards devising means for the defeat of the union.

The Coal Trade Response.

Since the Coxlodge evictions at the turn of the year, the owners had recognised that if they could undermine union funds the pitmen's capacity to sustain any dispute would be weakened.¹⁰² Towards the end of April it was confirmed that this was an avenue fertile for exploitation by John Buddle, recently returned to the region after recuperating in London from his breakdown.¹⁰³ The bound pitmen's wages were limited to 3s per day of which 9d went to support the unbound men, which Buddle felt was irksome to them:

...This heavy tax is causing very much grumbling and the unbound Men are also dissatisfied with what they receive. It was estimated that this heavy contribution would afford the unbound Men 12/- p. week - but the Treasury fell so far short last Satd^y. [April 21] that it could only afford them 3/- p. man p. Week - which was a woeful disappointment...¹⁰⁴

Union funds had been discussed when Bouverie attended the magistrates' meeting at South Shields on May 2. He said the general opinion was that the union was likely to face difficulty in keeping subscriptions going from the men at work for the support of those turned out, and the magistrates moreover estimated that the working pitmen were

now contributing '[f]ull one half of their earnings' for this purpose - a doubling in subscriptions presumably in response to the shortfall noted by Buddle.¹⁰⁵ In latching on to this structural financial weakness they felt they could see the way to the union's defeat.

Both sides had already arranged meetings of their respective bodies in Newcastle for Saturday May 5, but given the riot the previous day the timing could hardly have been more appropriate. At their meeting the owners hardened their position further, as Buddle's account indicated:¹⁰⁶

...We had a very full meeting at the Coal-trade Office today and the whole time and attention of the meeting was taken up with the affairs of the pitmen's War. It was unanimously resolved that no Colliery should employ any Union Men... I never saw the Coal-owners so unanimous on any point as on this, as they are now fully satisfied of the necessity of putting a Stop to further incroachment and aggression on the part of the Men... Many of the Coal-owners who have not yet bound their Men, declare that they will not now bind them on any terms and are sending for Lead-miners and for Colliers from Yorkshire Lancashire and Staffordshire, and some are thinking of sending to Ireland for Labourers...¹⁰⁷

Rumours amongst the pitmen of 'a general Stop' had reached Buddle the previous week, so he was worried at the 'very large meeting of the Delegates' at the Cock Inn on May 5.¹⁰⁸ But first reports indicated that the delegates could not agree, and Buddle had this view reinforced the next day at his own Wallsend Colliery:

...My trusty Spy has been with me this afternoon and says *positively that no general Stop is to take place tomorrow* - and he does not think that any general Stop will now take place at all. He is but a sort of a thick-head, but I have always found his information correct, as far as he knew. But his information is borne out by what I observe amongst my union neighbours, here. No special meeting was called of the Comm^{ee}. last night after the Delegates returned from the Cock and this morning - they look less fierce and more civil - 'though sulky than usual. And I have received an intimation that they wish to raise the work tomorrow, to 4/- a man p. day but as we have nearly 3000 [Ch] of resting Coals on hand, I mean to keep them to their own standard of 3/- to render them the less able to contribute to the union fund...¹⁰⁹

Buddle was wary of antagonising the men as they were in 'a most ticklish State',¹¹⁰ but his spy proved correct and the all-out strike failed to

materialise. A further meeting of Tyne pitmen on May 9 resolved to hold out a fortnight longer, 'which they say will most certainly enable them to beat the Coalowners', and also decided to counter the owners' petition to Parliament with one of their own.¹¹¹ Accordingly a few days later Hepburn was 'going through the Collieries, on the North Side of the Tyne to get the petition signed'.¹¹²

On May 12 the Coal Trade committee met to further the resolutions of the May 5 general meeting, but there was a scare in store: Buddle described this as

...a long and rather stormy meeting... as apprehensions are entertained, that John Brandling is disposed to part from the resolutions of last Saturday's meeting as to not binding any Union Men at the S^o. Shields Colliery - and betray the Trade as he did last year. Should he do so, we shall have a complete break up of regulation and everything else. The only chance is that the *Chairman* - his Brother may keep him in order...¹¹³

This kind of upset was typical, and the fact that even at this moment of supposed unity some owners were selfish enough to consider a breach of faith with their colleagues showed there was every chance that it would be the owners' union rather than the pitmen's which would succumb first.

Despite the arguments the committee did get through some business. A circular was issued to all owners instructing them against hiring union men,¹¹⁴ and a 'Special Committee' was appointed with a remit to frame rules for the establishment of counter-union benefit societies to supplant the pitmen's union.¹¹⁵ Most importantly though the meeting formulated an uncompromising oath of allegiance to be signed by any pitman subsequently seeking to bind:

...I do not belong to the present Pitmen's Union, nor will I become a member of any similar association, by a compliance with the fixed rules or regulations or occasional resolutions of which I can be prevented from the strict performance of any contract that I may enter into with my Employers...

Because the oath had not been included in the bond it did not apply to men already bound, but its target was clearly the unbound men.

However, the likelihood of such a condition being accepted by the pitmen was very slim, so the owners were in reality committing themselves to the recruitment of blackleg labour on an enormous scale. But they were now sufficiently determined and organised to attempt this; they felt they could overcome the pitmen's resistance whilst the indemnity fund should cover the necessary costs, and the only aspect of the operation they could not guarantee was the supply of new workmen.

But in this respect at least the strike had occurred at an opportune time. Even during normal times in the lead mining industry it was estimated that in Weardale for example, up to ten per cent of the workforce remained unemployed.¹¹⁶ But the early 1830s saw the lead price 'sink to a level it had not reached for fifty years', causing the worst recession in the industry for decades: 'the effect on employment was disastrous. Thousands of men were thrown out of work'.¹¹⁷ The almost complete absence of alternative work meant the lead miners had no choice but to overcome their reticence to leave their native dales.¹¹⁸ This necessity, combined with 'large-scale attempts' to attract them to the coalfield thus provided the coal owners with a convenient source of blackleg labour upon which they could draw with relative ease. The recruiting efforts of the Brandlings towards the end of 1831 had merely signalled the start of what was to become in effect a 'mass migration' from the lead mining districts.¹¹⁹

Though he thought there was little option but to bring in lead miners, Losh recognised the danger of leaving large numbers of unemployed pitmen homeless and destitute, and tried to do something about it. Earlier in the year he had urged his fellow directors of the proposed Newcastle and Carlisle Railway to apply to Parliament to borrow £100,000 from the Exchequer Loans Office, by which means he hoped the company could increase its workforce from the planned figure of 1000, to

3000.¹²⁰ Unemployed pitmen might thus be given work but the railway apart, Losh knew of 'no other resource for them. They are an ignorant (to the disgrace of the coalowners) and feeble set of men', and lamented 'I do not think they have spirit enough to emigrate'.¹²¹ He estimated that up to three thousand would be unemployed 'very soon'.¹²²

As evictions progressed across the coalfield it was reported that many families were 'peaceably encamped' in and around the pit villages.¹²³ Evictions took place almost daily as lead miners flooded in yet still the unbound men resisted the owners' conditions. In one respect this is not wholly surprising: having already lost jobs and homes the evicted men had everything to gain and nothing to lose by holding out. Indeed their salvation now lay in victory: it was either that, leave the pits for other work, or beggar their dignity by accepting the owners' terms. That many preferred to hold out was evidenced by the example of Sheriff Hill. After the evictions there

...the Church Road was filled with camps, after the style of the gypsies. Men, women, and children were huddled together without shelter. They endured their trials with wonderful patience, refusing to suffer the oppression and tyranny of their employers, and remaining loyal to the engagement not to return to work until their grievances were redressed...¹²⁴

Most of those evicted must have had to suffer such hardships, which caused Dunn to bluntly observe of the Hetton men that they were 'still as stupid as ever - and seem determined to stick out to the last notwithstanding the obvious storm that is gathering around them'.¹²⁵

The situation was thus at something of an impasse. With half the collieries at work and the remainder on strike, both the owners' and union finances were being supplied, with both sides determined to win their cause. The pitmen sought only to maintain the status quo but the owners' object was clearly to break the union, and to this end a process of attrition had begun. Some collieries were evidently refusing to agree with their men even where the union made concessions, apparently in

order to force their case and evict unionists from tied colliery housing. Evictions had however brought serious disorder and even death, and was stretching the resources of both the civil and military authorities.

Perhaps the most significant point arising from the events surrounding the 1832 bindings is that they nakedly illustrate the interconnections between industrial capital, in the shape of the coal owners, and the state, as represented by the military, the London police at Hetton and, albeit on a more familiar level, the magistracy. Whilst the pitmen had to rely largely upon their own resources, the owners had little hesitation in drawing upon all the available offices of state to achieve their ends. The presence of the magistrates and troops at evictions was a case in point, as too the fact that the magistrates, many of whom were themselves also coal owners, were willing to sanction an increase in the county rate to fund the special constables so important to the protection of the collieries. The owners' resort to assistance from their colleagues in the banking fraternity provides a further illustration of the linkages between the various powerful groups constituting the oligarchy which effectively ran local society. That this was the case became increasingly apparent as the dispute progressed and the 'society' coalition against the pitmen was extended and revealed. But in May the issue of parliamentary reform again came to the fore and the pitmen's strike temporarily receded in importance, though it emerged that some of the union's leaders thought this might produce a situation from which the union could take succour.

NOTES TO CHAPTER FOUR.

1 Jones ('Industrial Relations...' p.186) agrees with Welbourne's description (pp.36-37) of the 1832 conflict as a 'dispute' rather than a 'strike', because the owners provoked the pitmen into action as an excuse to destroy the union. This was true, but the fact that the pitmen nonetheless withheld their labour surely constituted a strike, by whatever name it was called. Colls (p.90) further qualifies matters by describing the conflict as a lock-out.

2 CTMB, Committee Minutes, March 17,20, 1832: On March 31 James Losh was 'by no means satisfied with either the good sense or the good faith of the coal owners'. Hughes, *Losh's Diaries*, II, March 31, 1832: Indeed, the 'Gentlemen of the Wear' were so reluctant to enter any agreement requiring them to part with money that they had to be pointedly invited by the Tyne owners to sign the indemnity fund minutes. CTMB, General Minutes, March 24, 1832: NCB 1/JB/1006, Morton to Buddle, March 25, 1832.

3 *Tyne Mercury*, March 20, 1832: Hughes, *Losh's Diaries*, II, Losh to Lord Brougham, March 8, 1832: Brandling had 'bound a great number of Miners for Kenton and Gosforth' on February 27, and on March 25 after opening bindings 'discharged all the Pitmen at Gosforth'. NCB 1/JB/1185, Reay to Buddle, March 3, 1832: NCB 1/JB/1006, Morton to Buddle, March 25, 1832.

4 NCB 1/JB/1006, Morton to Buddle, March 25, 1832: The need to support the unemployed men thus added to the union's financial burden, though with the cholera now on the wane the demand for sickness and death benefit must have receded.

5 'I believe they have made some promise to the delegates not to engage themselves yet. I however do not anticipate the slightest difficulty - indeed we have a very large stock of Coals - so there can be none so far as we are concerned'. NCB 1/JB/1006, Morton to Buddle, March 25, 1832.

6 '15/- was paid last year by Earsdon Colly. to their Men who live at Murton and they will give the same this year and unpaid 10/- last year to our Holywell Men living at New York etc': NCB 1/JB/1431, Taylor to Buddle, March 25, 1832: Humble Lamb wrote that 'the foot money 10/- at Backworth, is rather put in a new shape, but as Tommy stood 10 weeks last year (when many were working and vending briskly) and bound them at last on worse terms than at first were offered, he appeared anxious not to be in the rear guard this year'. NCB 1/JB/846, Lamb to Buddle, April 3, 1832.

7 NCB 1/JB/1431, Taylor to Buddle, March 25, 1832. In his letter, Taylor listed the collieries bound and unbound by March 24. The list was not exhaustive but gave those bound as Heaton, Willington, Percy, Backworth, Pontop and Garesfield, Low Moor, Tanfield, Whitley, Lambton part, Londonderry part, Waldridge, Wallsend, Seghill. Unbound were: Killingworth, Fawdon, Hebburn, Holywell, Walbottle, Earsdon, Jarrow, Walker, Wideopen, Benwell, Burdon Main, Cramlington, Elswick, Heworth, Manor, Pelaw, Sheriff Hill, Team, Townley, Tyne Main, Usworth, Wylam, Cowpen, Hartley, Hetton, North Hetton. Taylor also listed Elswick twice

(though this could refer to two separate pits, viz. Billet and Beaumont: see NCB 1/JB/846, Lamb to Buddle, April 3, 1832), and another unbound colliery is illegible; Dunn said the men were unhappy at the terms rather than wages, and gave the numbers as - Tyne collieries bound, 13, and unbound, 27 - Wear collieries bound, 2, and unbound, 7: making a total of 15 bound and 34 unbound. These figures were probably for Tyne and Wear, taking no account of the Blyth and Hartley collieries. *Dunn's Diary*, March 24, 1832.

8 NCB 1/JB/1187, Reay to Buddle, March 17, 1832. Reay added that he had 'not altered one word in the Bond, that was sent by the Coal Trade'; that some other collieries had altered theirs; and that a 'general Stop' was rumoured because of the clause requiring the overmen to leave the union.

9 NCB 1/JB/1188, Reay to Buddle, April 2, 1832: Dunn noted on March 29 that a union delegate meeting at Newcastle had resolved that 'no Hewers are to exceed 3/- per day, with a view of rendering coals scarce against the ensuing binding'. He responded by increasing production at North Hetton, 'the men to be put in double and every way met as they deserve'. Reay wrote from Wallsend three days later that the pitmen had adopted this measure 'at several of the Collieries'. But at Percy Main, the owners themselves had reduced the hewers to 3s 'sometime ago', presumably because of the fall in coal demand. *Dunn's Diary*, March 29, 1832: NCB 1/JB/1188, Reay to Buddle, April 2, 1832: NCB 1/JB/1568, Veatch to Buddle, March 19, 1832.

10 NCB 1/JB/1006, Morton to Buddle, March 25, 1832: NCB 1/JB/1431, Taylor to Buddle, March 25, 1832: NCB 1/JB/1568, Veatch to Buddle, March 19, 1832.

11 NCB 1/JB/1568, Veatch to Buddle, March 19, 1832: NCB 1/JB/846, Lamb to Buddle, April 3, 1832: NCB 1/JB/1188, Reay to Buddle, April 2, 1832.

12 'Some of them say if they had known that they would have been left out, they would have made a *Rush* to the Office... Many of them are looking about for to get Bound - As yet very few have got Bound away - but we do not allow either Man or Boy to have any more Work'. Reay also wrote that the 'Stock of Resting Coals now exceeds 3000 Cha^s'. NCB 1/JB/1188, Reay to Buddle, April 2, 1832: NCB 1/JB/1189, Reay to Buddle, April 7, 1832.

13 'God grant we may have good news of the Binding at Rainton'. D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, April 5, 1832.

14 NCB 1/JB/747, Hunter to Buddle, April 8, 1832.

15 *Dunn's Diary*, April 7, 1832: The owners appear to have kept the *Mercury* well informed of progress. The *Mercury* of April 3 put the number of Tyne and Wear collieries bound at 13 (out of 39), which almost exactly matches the numbers listed by Taylor on March 25. Similarly, the *Mercury* of April 10 listed 23 collieries ('about half') as being bound or part-bound, which also roughly correlates with the Coal Trade estimate 3 days earlier, of 20 remaining unbound.

16 NCB 1/JB/747, Hunter to Buddle, April 8, 1832: This may have been the case at Burdon Main. When the owners failed to guarantee the same terms as 1831 they complained that on April 5 the pitmen 'took Home

their *Geer*, laid in the Colliery, and thus threw out of Employment upwards of 420 Men and Boys'. *Newcastle Chronicle*, May 12, 1832.

17 CTMB, Committee Minutes, April 7, 1832. 3s per day was the minimum wage permitted in the bonds: Losh attended this committee meeting 'and was I think of use in forwarding one or two resolutions. It is quite clear to me that if the coal owners act steadily and with a moderate show of common sense, the pitmen must submit to reasonable terms'. But to this he added, perhaps hinting at his poor regard for many owners, 'beyond that, I do not wish them to submit at all'. Hughes, *Losh's Diaries*, II, April 7, 1832.

18 Not all the owners agreed with the measures taken by the Coal Trade. George Hunter, reflecting upon the situation after having bound Londonderry's men, was of the firm opinion that 'if the Pitmen had been left at Liberty to bind where they wished, the Union would have been broke thro', and I believe it will happen if we give up our Resolutions, and let them have length of Halter to hang themselves... I think instead of the Trade passing any Resolution to thwart them, they should meet them fairly, and matters may be brought round again'. Hunter appears to have been hinting that the Coal Trade's binding regulations were so stringent that they induced in the pitmen a uniformity of behaviour even greater than the union had been able to contrive. NCB 1/JB/747, Hunter to Buddle, April 8, 1832.

19 NCB 1/JB/1431, Taylor to Buddle, March 25, 1832: *Dunn's Diary*, March 24, April 7, 1832: *Tyne Mercury*, April 3, 1832: The *Tyne Mercury* of April 10 said lead miners had been bound 'instead of pitmen' at Callerton, Coxlodge, Gosforth, and Waldridge, whilst on the Wear Lord Durham's Fatfield Colliery and apparently all the Londonderry's collieries had been bound. 'In a word, at about half the collieries on the Tyne and Wear, pitmen are bound'.

20 For example the 3 large Wear collieries each employed over 1000 men, whereas small collieries such as that at Belsay in Northumberland were at this point advertising for only 'two or three steady MEN, to work a low Seam of Coal'. *Newcastle Courant*, April 7, 1832.

21 *Newcastle Chronicle*, April 21, 1832: *Dunn's Diary*, April 14, 1832: According to Buddle the number of colliers employed on the Tyne and Wear in 1829 was 21,000. PP, House of Commons Select Committee on the State of the Coal Trade, Report, 1830, (633), VIII: One account has it that 'eight thousand men were out of work', but this probably slightly understated the actual number of pitmen not bound at this point. J.L. and B. Hammond, *The Skilled Labourer* (London, 1919), p.31.

22 Handbill, 'An Address to the Public, From the Pitmen of the Tyne and Wear in answer to the... TYNE MERCURY, of the 3d of April', n.d., but by context April 7, 1832. Bell, XI: This paralleled an initiative taken by local seamen in 1815. See N. McCord, 'The 1815 Seamen's Strikes in North East England', *Economic History Review*, 2nd Ser., Vol. XXI (1968).

23 NCB 1/JB/1431, Taylor to Buddle, March 25, 1832.

24 There is some inconsistency here. Deputies were most certainly in the union at both Hetton and North Hetton, and the pitmen were opposed to them leaving. And at North Hetton, disputes since February over the

banksmen there were probably the basis for the demand that they too should remain in the union.

25 (Emphasis added.)

26 *Dunn's Diary*, March 17, 1832.

27 NCB 1/JB/1188, Reay to Buddle, April 2, 1832: The men had long complained of 'the imperfect mode of making us acquainted with the bond... Every person connected with the coal works well knows that the bond is read only once a year, at the time of binding, by one of the agents, from an eminence in the open air. His articulation is not always sufficiently loud and distinct so as to be heard by all the men, some of whom are necessarily standing at a considerable distance from the speaker... the wind is often blowing, which also greatly obstructs the sound from reaching the ears of those who are at a distance. Those that are near the speaker, when they hear an alteration made for the worse... begin immediately to complain of such measures; and as it is not the business of the speaker to listen to objections, he continues his task to the end without stopping, whilst the loud murmurings of the complainants prevail to such a degree, that very little more of the matter of the bond can be heard... the ceremony of reading is no sooner ended, than the poor victims of ignorance and despotism are called on to sign the contract, whether they understand it or not'. *United Colliers' Association, 'A Candid Appeal to the Coal Owners and Viewers of Collieries*, op.cit., pp.10-11.

28 *Dunn's Diary*, March 17, 1832.

29 *Ibid.*, March 19, 1832: According to the pitmen's Address in response to the *Tyne Mercury*, the demand 'was made by a few indiscreet individuals, contrary to the wish, and without the consent of, the body at large, and was no sooner made than it was abandoned'. 'An Address to the Public...', Bell XI, p.417: But the *Mercury* of April 17 said the demand was 'known to have been the work of many of their committee and delegates': Morton seems to have derived some satisfaction from this, writing that the men had 'sent a letter to the owners that unless they dismiss the *Papist Dunn* they won't hire - that he or they, (the workmen) must quit the Colliery. Two Suns cannot shine in one hemisphere. It is certainly the most... outrageous demand ever made upon Masters. - it is however the fruit of their base trembling and confusion last year, and we must all admit that the fruit is worthy of the seed'. NCB 1/JB/1006, Morton to Buddle, March 25, 1832: Reay said that at Hetton Dunn was 'the greatest Obstacle' to the men binding. NCB 1/JB/1188, Reay to Buddle, April 2, 1832.

30 *Ibid.*, March 24, 1832: CTMB, General Minutes, March 24, 1832.

31 *Dunn's Diary*, March 30, 1832: *Durham Advertiser*, April 6, 1832.

32 *Tyne Mercury*, April 3, 1832: Dunn described the rescue as 'a great commotion'. *Dunn's Diary*, March 31, 1832: Thomas Grey, presumably one of the few Hetton pitmen who had bound, seems to have been visited by the same men: 'about 4 o'clock in the morning, I was in bed, and heard shouting and the noise of a mob approaching. I heard them shout "put out the lights," which was done; and immediately after the door was forced open, and a volley of stones was poured in, which lamed one of my children who was in bed... In the course of the day, as I was going

along the public road, they blocked the road up, and I was obliged to jump over a garden wall, when they pelted me with stones'. *Durham Advertiser*, July 6, 1832.

33 *Durham Advertiser*, April 6, 1832: A leading Hetton delegate, Charles Parkinson, had been one of those rescued and was now 'amongst the fugitives'. *Dunn's Diary*, March 31, 1832.

34 *Ibid.*, April 4, 1832.

35 *Ibid.*, April 5, 1832: The problem as to the 'Separation Clauses' regarding small coal was touched on in the pitmen's reply to the *Mercury* of April 3. Dunn had 'exercised a power which neither the bonds nor the practice of the colliery ever gave - in fact he had fined the men for not throwing back more small coal than they could get out of the *curving* and *nicking* - the material did not exist, and yet they were fined because they could not produce it!' Bell, XI, p.417.

36 When he heard that the men had refused to bind, Hetton owner John Wood was said to be 'wild about it'. NCB 1/JB/1591, H. Lamb, in a letter from George Waldie to Buddle, April 9, 1832.

37 *Dunn's Diary*, April 1, 5, 10, 1832: Earlier, when he had ordered twelve horses to be drawn from the pit, Dunn complained that the union was '[s]o struck... that neither Deputies nor Onsetters would assist the Horsekeepers in sending away the horses'. *Ibid.*, March 24, 1832.

38 Bouverie wrote: 'I have reason to believe that the Colliers and Sailors will continue quiet... If any great Strike takes place... it will be at the Binding Time in April'. HO 40/30, Bouverie to the Home Office, March 15, 1832: *ibid.*, April 4, 1832: for Hetton see HO 41/11 series: A meeting of owners in Newcastle wrote to Bouverie 'in consequence of the disturbed state of the adjoining County', indicating that it was in County Durham that the worst troubles were taking place. CTMB, Committee Minutes, March 31, 1832: An indication of the government's concern at the excited state of the country was a letter from Lord Melbourne, the Home Secretary, telling Bouverie that any illegal drilling should be met with prosecutions. HO 41/11, Melbourne to Bouverie, March 26, 1832.

39 HO 40/30, Bouverie to the Home Office, April 1,2,9, 1832.

40 The Northumberland magistrates pointed out to the Home Office the desirability of the headquarters of a regiment being permanently stationed in Newcastle. HO 52/19, Reed to Northumberland, April 7, 1832: Having apparently failed in this, they suggested to Bouverie that the Dragoons usually stationed in their district, which was quiet, should be moved to Newcastle, but Bouverie disagreed. HO 40/30, Bouverie to the Home Office, April 12, 1832: This followed a request direct to the Home Office, from a meeting of those Tyne coalowners who were also magistrates, 'for an additional Force of Infantry to be stationed at Newcastle and Tynemouth in order to control the combination of the Workmen'. *Ibid.*, see also HO 52/19, R.W. Brandling to the Home Office, April 10, 1832, and CTMB, Committee Minutes, April 10, 1832: It was also suggested that if troop numbers were short, Bouverie should station marines along the two rivers. CTMB, Committee Minutes, April 14, 1832.

- 41 He said troops had been ineffective due to tiredness, perhaps demonstrating the demand in which the military found itself during the reform crisis. HO 40/30, Bouverie to the Home Office, April 12, 1832.
- 42 This was perhaps an injudicious example to have cited. The Coxlodge and Gosforth pitmen had apparently been entirely displaced, and the 600 lead miners brought in would be able by virtue of their sheer number to defend themselves against incursions by pitmen. It was elsewhere that problems would arise. For instance, on the same day that Bouverie praised this example to the Home Office, the Brandlings' South Shields Colliery was attacked. At five o'clock on the morning of April 12 an estimated 150 men, 'in disguise, armed with large sticks', threw three ninety-gallon tubs, metal pipes, and other articles down the pit, 'thereby injuring the Pit's Ropes, Brattice, etc. etc; the same parties then proceeded to the Dwelling-House of Matthew Arguile, a deputy overman at the said Colliery, (not in the Pitmen's Union,) ENTERED HIS HOUSE, AND BROKE ALL HIS WINDOWS AND PART OF HIS FURNITURE'. The total damage was put at £200, and the Brandlings offered 100 guineas reward for incriminating information. *Tyne Mercury*, April 17, 1832.
- 43 HO 40/30, Bouverie to the Home Office, April 12, 1832. He had contingency plans to bring in troops from Lancashire should the situation worsen.
- 44 HO 52/17, Hetton coalowners to Melbourne, April 11, 1832. By meeting in Newcastle the owners avoided being lobbied or harassed by the Hetton pitmen.
- 45 HO 52/17, Gateshead magistrates to the Home Office, April 11, 1832. A note, presumably by a Home Office clerk, details the despatch of the police officers from London.
- 46 *Dunn's Diary*, March 19, 27, 1832: Dunn had already tried to recruit from Reay's 40 unbound Wallsend men, 'but it is to no use till matters are settled at Hetton for it seems a standing rule that no one is to be hired at a Colliery where the men are still standing off'. *Ibid.*, March 26, 1832.
- 47 *Dunn's Diary*, April 9, 10, 1832: On April 11 Dunn started for 'Aldstone Moor', where he appointed an agent before crossing the next day 'to Middleton Teesdale where I saw a number of men willing to come, but who wish some time for consideration'. Dunn had a contact who 'undertook the charge of the business of the dissemination of handbills' both in Teesdale and around Reeth in Swaledale, whilst another contact was conducting similar work in Weardale. *Ibid.*, April 11, 12, 13, 1832.
- 48 Londonderry's precarious finances being heavily dependent upon his coal sales, Hunter complained that the Coal Trade resolution limiting the pitmen's earnings was 'contrived to stop us in the Vend'. He also acknowledged that several men from other pits had been mistakenly bound by an underviewer, contrary to Coal Trade regulations. NCB 1/JB/747, Hunter to Buddle, April 8, 1832: Dunn complained that some Hetton men had been poached even before the bindings had opened. *Dunn's Diary*, March 24, 1832: Morton was objecting to overvend by the Londonderry and Hetton collieries - he was willing to 'wink' at Londonderry but not at Hetton and felt the situation was so serious that 'the Regulation cannot be longer maintained'. NCB 1/JB/1006, Morton to Buddle, March 25, 1832: The Coal Trade committee endorsed Morton's view, requesting owners to

'confine themselves strictly to the monthly issues, without which it is absolutely impossible that the regulation can continue'. It was also pointed out to the Wear owners that they owed £1,312 7s. 5d. to the Coal Trade funds. CTMB, Committee Minutes, April 4, 1832.

49 HO 40/30, Bouverie to the Home Office, April 1, 1832. Bouverie referred to weavers in respect of his experience of troubles in the Lancashire and Yorkshire textile districts: This was in contrast to the complacency of Benjamin Arkless of Tantobie Colliery, who said the pitmen were unbound 'from various trifling causes which are of little importance, but the Men wish to show a little of the Spirit of the Times'. NCB 1/JB/29, Arkless to Buddle, April 12, 1832.

50 Except where otherwise indicated, this account is based upon the report in the *Newcastle Chronicle*, April 21, 1832.

51 According to George Hunter, they appeared 'to be tired of this Confusion and mischief'. NCB 1/JB/747, Hunter to Buddle, April 8, 1832.

52 Some owners reported their men to be seeking increases, though the pitmen's reply to the *Mercury* of April 3 denied this. On April 9 the owner of Elswick wrote that the men there were still unbound - 'will tell them to quit their Houses in 14 days and we will bring miners to work the Billet Pit and let the others lay rather than give an advance'. NCB 1/JB/1591, H. Lamb in a letter from G. Waldie to Buddle, April 9, 1832: The Jarrow men were said also to be seeking an increase. NCB 1/JB/1189, Reay to Buddle, April 7, 1832.

53 *Newcastle Courant*, April 21, 1832.

54 On the same day, Dunn reported a local meeting 'relative to obliging L^o. Londonderry's men to pay over to those at Hetton 5/- in the £... The Tradesmen are understood to decline supporting them', and four days later there was a meeting at Pitlington 'to enforce the men who are at work to pay 5/- p. £ to those lying idle'. *Dunn's Diary*, April 14, 18, 1832.

55 *Newcastle Courant*, April 21, 1832.

56 *Ibid.*..

57 This had been the cause of regular complaints from the pitmen for months. See: *Dunn's Diary*, November 16, December 7, 1831, January 25, February 23, March 8, 15, 24, April 5, 1832: 'An Address to the public...', Bell, XI, p.417.

58 *Tyne Mercury*, April 17, 1832, *Newcastle Chronicle*, April 21, 1832: *Dunn's Diary*, April 14, 1832.

59 *Dunn's Diary*, April 14, 18, 19, 1832: Bouverie too informed the Home Office of further trouble at Hetton and Houghton, and said the object of the men was to prevent the employment of non-union labour. HO 40/30, Bouverie to the Home Office, April 20, 1832: The 'Policemen Assistant' were special constables recruited and organised by the London policemen. Bouverie said most were Alston lead miners though up to a quarter may have been bound local pitmen. The non-union men thus had to protect themselves. Bouverie approved of this self-help and believed it would

bring the pitmen to their senses. HO 40/30, Bouverie to the Home Office, April 20, 1832.

60 *Dunn's Diary*, April 19, 1832. Dunn noted problems in finding accomodation. At this point a 'capital' inn which was being built by the Hetton Coal Company was nearing completion. Whether the inn was built in anticipation of such circumstances it is not possible to say, but the presence of large numbers of troops in Hetton during the 1831 strike must have revealed the need for such a barracks facility. See *Newcastle Courant*, March 31, 1831: Dunn also noted that Charles Parkinson had again escaped being served a warrant, 'and that very narrowly'.

61 *Dunn's Diary*, April 20, 1832: *Newcastle Chronicle*, May 5, 1832.

62 This statement directly contradicted the pitmen's reply to the *Mercury* of April 3. It may be that Hetton and North Hetton were the only places where the pitmen demanded the overmen should remain in the union. Bell, XI, p.417.

63 *Newcastle Chronicle*, April 28, 1832: *Dunn's Diary*, April 21, 1832: HO 40/30, Bouverie to the Home Office, April 20, 1832: The owners often cited the provision of cottages as proof of their generosity but Engels, an observer during the 1840s, rejected this. The cottage system was used he said, in the coal industry as elsewhere, 'for the better plundering of the workers'. It was no less than a form of control, 'the capitalists' last, but crushing, resource - the eviction of the men out of their dwellings, the cottages owned by the companies', and was practiced 'with revolting cruelty'. F. Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (Penguin, 1987 edn), pp.255,37,259.

64 John Robson, resident viewer at Hetton, said that 'of 12 or 1300 who were bound last year not more than ten persons are bound this year'. See *Report of the Trials... at the Durham Summer Assizes* (Durham, 1832) upon which this account is based (except where otherwise indicated).

65 Though he was not a magistrate, as chief colliery viewer it was to Dunn that the constables and soldiers appear to have reported when there was trouble.

66 The magistrates were Messrs. Mills, Shipperdson, Greenwell, and possibly Pemberton: The ten pitmen detained were William Wind, Robert Cowey, George Storey, John Reah (sic), William Turnbull, Joseph Taylor, Luke Hutton, Robert Kellett, Henry Nicholson, and Thomas Elliot. 'Report says, that one of the men committed has given information that they drew cuts which was to fire at Errington'. *Newcastle Courant*, April 28, 1832: Sykes, *Local Records*, II, p.354.

67 *Durham Advertiser*, May 11, 1832: Of the four charged, only Luke Hutton had been one of the ten initially arrested, possibly because he was known to have '[m]ony (sic) a time... had a fight together' with Errington. *Report of the Trials*.

68 Sykes, *Local Records*, Vol.II, p.354.

69 D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, April 27, 1832.

70 *Newcastle Chronicle*, April 28, 1832: *Durham Advertiser*, April 27, 1832: This conduct contrasted sharply with that on the occasion of the

funeral of a supporter of the pitmen soon after. The *Newcastle Chronicle* (May 26, 1832) reported of a local innkeeper that '[u]pwards of fifteen hundred persons attended his funeral, principally coalminers belonging to the union'. The inn, the Davy Lamp, was situated coincidentally in the Brickgarth, the same street in which Errington was murdered.

71 *Dunn's Diary*, April 23, 1832. 'Sep. Redhead started for Weardale and Geo. Lish and I started for Teesdale and Arkindale'. Dunn spent the next night at Reeth in Swaledale, subsequently riding to Barnard Castle, High Force, and Middleton-in-Teesdale, where he 'collected a good many miners', and left Lish to continue the recruitment. *Ibid.*, April 24-27, 1832.

72 CTMB, Committee Minutes, April 28, 1832: In his dealings with the North Hetton men Dunn was apparently unaware of this resolution, and was thus probably acting independently.

73 Dunn, Hepburn, and others had said that about half the pitmen were unbound but the *Newcastle Courant* (May 5, 1832) reported that a 'majority' of the men were holding out.

74 Colls describes the Coal Trade as having extended their proscription 'to include union delegates (30 April)', but there is no record of any such explicit decision in either the Coal Trade Minute Books or *Dunn's Diary*, both of which Colls cites as his authorities. See *The Pitmen...* p.94.

75 The Brandlings' collieries at North and South Shields were strikebound, the latter having been attacked by the pitmen on April 12. Nearby Jarrow Colliery sent for 200 lead miners to replace the strikers there, and 300 special constables were sworn in to support the Hussars in evicting the South Shields and Jarrow pitmen on April 30: *Tyne Mercury*, May 8, 1, 1832: HO 52/19, Fairles and Baker to Melbourne, April 28, 1832. '[T]he practising Attornies within the said parish have claimed to be legally exempt from serving as Special Constables - and have declined being sworn in': *Durham Advertiser*, May 4, 1832: Dunn had come across Brandling (of South Shields) and Brown (of Jarrow) at Middleton-in-Teesdale, recruiting lead miners. *Dunn's Diary*, April 26, 1832.

76 HO 52/19, Reed to the Home Office, May 2, 1832.

77 HO 40/30, Bouverie to the Home Office, May 2, 1832. At this point Bouverie had cavalry detachments at Houghton-le-Spring, South Shields, Jarrow, and Newcastle, and infantry at Hetton, Jarrow, and North Shields, perhaps confirming these (with the exception of Newcastle, which had a permanent barracks) as the worst troublespots: Bouverie also issued five rounds of 'Ball Cartridge' for each firearm. HO 52/19, Reed to the Home Office, May 2, 1832.

78 *Tyne Mercury*, April 24, 1832. Only Killingworth had bound since April 5, though the *Newcastle Chronicle* (May 5, 1832) said 'some of the smaller collieries' had come to terms, but 'those where the principal differences exist are as far from an arrangement as ever': On the Blyth, non-union men were taken on to break the strike at the pits supplying Bedlington Iron Works. HO 52/17, Gordon to the Home Office, April 27, 1832.

- 79 On April 25 in Dunn's absence the North Hetton men agreed with the owners 'in the most amicable manner' to bind, but were told on April 30 after Dunn's return 'that there were fifty men too many in the Colliery. How this statement is to be reconciled with the often-repeated complaint, that since the last strike the men did not work a sufficient quantity to meet the demand, we will leave it to the Owners of North Hetton or their Agents to inform the public'. Handbill, 'Address from the North Hetton Pitmen to the Public', May 1, 1832. Bell, XI, p.408: It was a similar story at St Lawrence Colliery near Newcastle (*Tyne Mercury*, April 24, May 1, 1832).
- 80 This is borne out by the pitmen's handbill in reply to the *Mercury* of April 3, and by George Hunter's view that the Tyne owners were not binding their men, the better to restrict the vends. Bell, XI, p.147; NCB 1/JB/747, Hunter to Buddle, April 8, 1832.
- 81 *Tyne Mercury*, May 8, 1832: Meanwhile the *Glasgow Chronicle* reported that Airdrie pitmen striking against wage cuts at this time attacked blacklegs 'wherever they could be found. One of them was assaulted, and actually deprived of his ears with a knife; and another escaped with his ears much mutilated and cut. Their houses were attacked - their windows demolished, and the unprotected women in some instances severely hurt'. *Newcastle Chronicle*, May 5, 1832.
- 82 HO 52/19, Reed to the Home Office, May 3, 1832: Bouverie said one constable received swan shot wounds and 'altogether 9 Men were wounded, two of whom seriously'. HO 40/30, Bouverie to the Home Office, May 7, 1832.
- 83 HO 52/19, Reed to the Duke of Northumberland, May 4, 1832. Due to Newcastle Corporation's role as conservator of the river, Reed's magisterial jurisdiction covered the banks of the Tyne to the river mouth. But such jurisdiction was limited which was why Reed took the trouble to seek out a Durham magistrate - 'It was most fortunate that I found Mr. Collinson at home, as I could not act beyond 500 Yards into the County of Durham - the Engine and Pit are not 100'. Ibid., May 5, 1832: Losh 'did not arrive at the colliery many minutes before the military and consequently did not see much of the disturbance'. Hughes, *Losh's Diaries*, II, May 4, 1832.
- 84 So said James Losh in his *Diary* of May 4, 1832: and Thomas Rolf, special constable, in the *Durham Advertiser*, August 3, 1832: *Durham Advertiser*, August 3, 1832: D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, May 5, 1832.
- 85 Except where otherwise indicated, this account is drawn from reports in the *Newcastle Chronicle*, May 12, August 4, 1832: *Durham Advertiser*, August 3, 1832: *Tyne Mercury*, May 8, 1832: *Newcastle Courant*, August 4, 1832: *Newcastle Journal*, August 4, 1832.
- 86 Hughes, *Losh's Diaries*, II, May 5, 7, 1832: Ibid., Losh to Lord Howick, May 6, 1832.
- 87 HO 40/30, Bouverie to the Home Office, May 7, 1832.
- 88 Other tradesmen listed were a ropemaker, a potter and 3 smiths. Apart from Friar's Goose, places of abode given were Bigge's Main, St.

Anthony's, St. Peter's Quay, Low Felling, Sheriff Hill, St. Lawrence, Dinnington, Gateshead, and Manor Chare. *Tyne Mercury*, May 8, 1832.

89 HO 52/19, Reed to Northumberland, May 5, 1832.

90 HO 52/19, Reed to Northumberland, May 4, 1832.

91 Losh said the 'alarm' had been given by the Gateshead constables' 'ill-managed attempt'. Hughes, *Losh's Diaries*, II, May 4, 1832

92 Easton in particular, as a partner in the colliery and the man on the spot, could have put off the evictions but was no doubt driven by the need to accommodate and set to work the forty-seven lead miners brought into the district earlier that week: On May 3, the day before the riot, after hearing of the Gateshead constables' repulse and detailing Forsyth and the Newcastle constables to the task, Reed told the Home Office he thought the pitmen's strike 'will not terminate without the shedding of Blood'. If he saw this, why he then sent such a weak force into action, especially given his military experience, is incomprehensible. HO 52/19, Reed to the Home Office, May 3, 1832.

93 HO 40/30, Bouverie to R.W. Brandling, May 6, 1832.

94 The superiority of the military to special constables was apparent from local experience but Bouverie also drew on his knowledge of disorders elsewhere in his command, like Lancashire and Yorkshire. Because special constables were usually local householders they were well known to the pitmen, often their physical inferiors, and thus held little fear, but Bouverie was aware that soldiers were a different proposition. A troop of cavalry in particular was an irresistible force even for the pitmen, a man on a horse being somewhat akin to the modern-day tank, and it was this respect for the 'mastery of soldiery' upon which Bouverie was now calculating. For a discussion of the visual impact of troops see S.H. Myerly, '"The Eye Must Entrap The Mind": Army Spectacle and Paradigm in Nineteenth Century Britain', *Journal of Social History*, Vol.26, No.1, 1992.

95 HO 40/30, Bouverie to the Home Office, May 7, 1832.

96 HO 40/30, Bouverie to the Home Office, April 12, 1832.

97 Reed's involvement with the latter may go some way towards explaining his decision to send only special constables to Friar's Goose.

98 HO 52/19, Reed to the Home Office, May 2, 1832: HO 40/30, Bouverie to the Home Office, May 2, 1832. Bouverie's issue of firearms for the special constables at Shields may have influenced Reed in arming the Newcastle police, and perhaps in consequently neglecting to seek military aid.

99 A detachment of 15th Foot was stationed at Durham Gaol at the request of the magistrates, who were wary of a rescue attempt of the pitmen held there for the Hetton murder, Friar's Goose riot, and various other incidents. The Grand Jury Room in the Court House was used as a barrack room for the soldiers. *Durham Advertiser*, May 11, 1832.

- 100 HO 40/30, Bouverie to the Home Office, May 7, 1832: Charles John Clavering was of the old gentry family of Axwell Park, but had homes in both counties at Ridlamhope, Co. Durham and Bitchfield, Northumberland. He had the probably unique distinction of being Sheriff of Newcastle in 1790, Sheriff of Northumberland in 1794, and High Sheriff of Durham from 1829 to 1833. He died in 1838. Welford, *Men of Mark*, Vol.I, p.573: W. Percy Hedley, *Northumberland Families* (Newcastle Antiquarian Society, 1968) Vol.I, pp.173-175.
- 101 Hughes, *Losh's Diaries*, II, Losh to Lord Howick, May 6, 1832.
- 102 HO 40/30, Bouverie to the Home Office, March 15, 1832.
- 103 Buddle returned despite the urgings of Humble Lamb, who was worried he 'might get entangled amidst the conflict with the Men and get excited and bring back your old complaint'. NCB 1/JB/846, Lamb to Buddle, April 3, 1832: At the same time though, such were Londonderry's differences with the other owners that George Hunter told Buddle 'the sooner you are down the better as peace must be made with the Trade'. Hunter was perplexed because Londonderry's policy was to 'take no notice' of Coal Trade decisions. Production quotas were being exceeded and Londonderry had still not signed the indemnity fund agreement. NCB 1/JB/747, Hunter to Buddle, April 8, 1832.
- 104 D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, April 27, 1832: Londonderry's pitmen had paid £274 'to the Treas^r. at the Cock last Sa. [April 28] to aid in supporting the refractory part of the Body'. Ibid., May 5, 1832: The situation at Londonderry's pits differed in that the men were not held to the 3s limit. To Buddle's chagrin though the pitmen imposed the limit upon themselves in accordance with the union resolution, though they did lift it from time to time: 'The Rainton Men raised their work to 4/- p. day - two days last week, but reduced to 3/- again without assigning any reason. They talk of raising again tomorrow - but there is no depending on what they say'. D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, May 3, 1832: Londonderry's object in ignoring the 3s limit was to maximise production, but one side-effect of this was that his men were able to pay a higher subscription to the union, thus prolonging the strike of his rivals' unbound men and leaving gaps in the market for which Londonderry could then compete to supply.
- 105 HO 40/30, Bouverie to the Home Office, May 2, 1832: The North Shields radical, Robert Lowery, later confirmed this level of contributions. B. Harrison and P. Hollis (eds), *Robert Lowery, Radical and Chartist*, London, 1979, p.74.
- 106 D/Lo/C 142/799, Buddle to Londonderry, May 5, 1832: Even John Clayton, the Newcastle Town Clerk, was present. It is not clear whether he was an owner but if not, his presence indicates the Coal Trade could place some reliance on the offices of Newcastle Corporation to help break the strike. HO 52/19, Reed to the Duke of Northumberland, May 5, 1832.
- 107 The two per cent levy on sales was to continue to finance the indemnity fund. This may have been intended as a hint to the Wear owners, for after a reminder on April 4 the Tyne owners complained to the Wear on April 24 that they still owed money; 'The pressure for the settlement of the claims due from the Coal Trade for the year 1831, becoming every day the more urgent, the Committee of the Tyne

particularly request that you will immediately take the necessary steps for calling the serious attention of the Wear Committee to this subject in the hope that the admitted Balance of £1312.7.5. may be paid here on Saturday next' (CTMB, Committee Minutes, April 24, 1832): Petitions were to go to the Houses of Lords and Commons asking for enquiries 'into the existing state of affairs between the Coal-owners and Pitmen' in the hope that 'the Legislature will adopt such Enactments as may put an End to, and prevent the Recurrence of, similar Outrages' to those at Hetton and Friar's Goose. CTMB, General Minutes, May 5, 1832.

108 D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, May 5, 1832. 'When at Rainton yesterday - the opinion of the Viewers and Overmen etc. was that our Men would join in the general Stop which is expected to take place, on Monday... I can scarcely doubt but our Men would join in'.

109 D/Lo/C 142/799, Buddle to Londonderry, May 6, 1832. The ambiguity of Buddle's position is laid bare here. Despite keeping his own WallSEND men to the 3s limit he said that should Londonderry's Rainton, Penshaw and Pitlington men seek to raise their work, 'their wishes shall be indulged'. Therefore, though Buddle personally agreed with the Coal Trade resolutions and adhered to them at his own colliery, in his capacity as Londonderry's head viewer he flaunted such decisions as and when His Lordship's policy required.

110 D/Lo/C 142/799, Buddle to Londonderry, May 5, 1832. Londonderry's debts were so pressing that he could on no account risk losing production by inadvertently provoking a strike. Buddle thus told him 'we should keep as quiet as possible, and by no means shew any anxiety to increase our workings at this time': When a boy was killed at Pitlington Buddle appeared more occupied with the pitmen having stopped work in sympathy than with the lad's misfortune. His main concern seemed to be the lost production, though he was sure 'the Men will make it up through the course of the fortnight'. Ibid., May 9, 1832.

111 D/Lo/C 142, (copy), Buddle to Londonderry. May 10, 1832.

112 D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, May 12, 1832. Buddle understood that the petition complained of 'too hard labour - small Wages - working in bad Air and above all of the tyranny of the Coal-owners!!! They totally forget the tyranny exercised by themselves'. D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, May 30, 1832: Handbill, 'Petition of the Pitmen to Parliament', May 21, 1832. Bell, XI, p.412. The delegates said that '[a] short time will prove... whether the Pitmen or the Coal-Owners are the cause of the present Disagreement': George Hunter thought the petition 'a piece of nonsense' but advised Londonderry to pretend to take an interest in it to appease his pitmen - 'your people are bound and working well, which is all you wish'. D/Lo/C 142, Hunter to Londonderry, May 13, 1832.

113 D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, May 12, 1832.

114 Dunn's Diary, May 12, 1832.

115 CTMB, Committee Minutes, May 12, 1832. The 'Special Committee' comprised Messrs. Nicholas Wood, George Johnson, Hugh Taylor, Thompson, Buddle and Losh.

- 116 Report of the 1834 Poor Law Commission, in C.J. Hunt, *The Lead Miners of the Northern Pennines in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (Manchester, 1970), p.194.
- 117 Hunt, p.199.
- 118 The 1834 Poor Law Commission was told of the lead miners' 'extraordinary attachment to their place of birth, occupations, and habits'. Despite the fact that a move of maybe only 20 miles into the coalfield might double wages, the miners were 'a people obstinately clinging to their native place, and in a tract of country quite unable to feed its own inhabitants'. When in desperation they did migrate it was usually to the Durham, Northumberland or Cumberland coalfields, i.e., to a parallel industry in neighbouring districts. Hunt, p.194.
- 119 Hunt, p.200: The coal owners had a direct link with the dales in T.W. Beaumont, the Northumberland MP whose family were for many years major operators of lead mines in the Northern Pennines. However, it is not apparent that Beaumont assisted the owners in their recruiting.
- 120 Hughes, *Losh's Diaries*, II, Losh to Lord Brougham, March 8, 1832: Philanthropy aside, as a director of the railway Losh also stood to gain personally from this initiative which, by hastening the completion of the project also brought forward the generation of the first profits and payment of dividends. Bearing in mind that Losh was in severe financial difficulties and had been 'for many years living above my income' (ibid., November 23, 1831), such a view is not quite as cynical as it first appears.
- 121 Ibid.. Despite espousing such apparently harsh sentiments against people who had included until recently his own employees, Losh was in other respects regarded as an enlightened liberal reformer: for example in the same letter he offered to Lord Howick the services of the Anti-Slavery Society in Newcastle to petition for the emancipation of negroes. The *Tyne Mercury* was similarly critical of the pitmen and supportive of the cause of the negroes, but perhaps caught a glimpse of the hypocrisy practised not least by itself in this respect, when it noted the curious fact that 'at a time when the government of Great Britain had peremptorily restricted the slaves of the West Indies to nine hours daily labour, it was a question deeply agitated whether the children employed in the factories at home should be compelled to work ten or twelve hours per day!' (March 20, 1832).
- 122 Evictions took place in early May at Felling, Fawdon, Jarrow, Hetton and North Hetton. *Durham Advertiser*, May 11, 1832: *Newcastle Chronicle*, May 12, 1832: *Tyne Mercury*, April 17, 1832: Buddle confided to Londonderry, '[w]e may consider ourselves fortunate in being far from all this sort of turmoil'. D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, May 9, 1832.
- 123 *Newcastle Chronicle*, May 12, 1832: Liefchild later confirmed this in some detail: the pitmen's families lived 'in nomadic fashion along the skirts of fields and lanes, and a miserable life they seemed to lead without roof, fire, or "singing hinnie." No more comfortable rooms and fireside; but the favourite four-post bedstead, and the grand chest of drawers, stood either in the open air or half packed up for transport. Others found accomodation in public-houses, and placed their rougher furniture in the back-yards and outhouses, whilst the best articles were

stored within. You might have seen three beds arranged in due position, and others preparing on the floor. In another public-house mattresses were laid all along the kitchen floor, and there was a room in which mattresses, and bed-clothes and furniture, covered every foot of available space'. J.R. Leifchild, *Our Coal and Our Coal-Pits* (London, 1856), p.207. He heard such stories as a government commissioner enquiring into child labour in the region's mines in 1842. He was told it was 'fine fun... for the evicted hewers to cheer and taunt some tiny tailor, or straddling sailor, as he was conveyed past them to the office as a volunteer for the pits' (p.208).

124 *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle*, January 28, 1882.

125 *Dunn's Diary*, May 14, 1832.

CHAPTER FIVE:THE PITMEN, THE NORTHERN POLITICAL UNION,
AND THE REFORM CRISIS IN NEWCASTLE, MAY 1832

...A desperate despondency has come over and clouded the minds of multitudes, who mutter to the secret winds... Revolution - and let us not disguise the fact - revolution is the alternative of reform. But [this prospect]... should rather infuse the spirit of wisdom into the councils of our legislators, than depress the people into a tame, quiet submission to tyranny and oppression (Great cheering)...

This was radical reformer Charles Larkin at a meeting of more than six hundred supporters of the Northern Political Union at their regular venue, the Old Music Hall, Blakett Street, Newcastle, in early April 1832.¹ The meeting foreshadowed the climax on Tyneside of the fascinating struggle for parliamentary reform of 1831-1832, and Larkin's comments here reflected both the common enthusiasm for reform, and dismay at the prospect that for the third time in a year the ultra-Tories might vote down the Reform Bill. Larkin, 'the orator of the Union', had a capacity for thinking the unthinkable and saying it out loud which did not endear him to 'respectable' opinion, but his comments were clearly in tune with his audience here and fairly reflected the dangerous situation which was arising.² As already noted in Chapter Two, most accounts of the reform crisis have neglected the lower end of the political scale but Lopatin's recent pioneering work has shown the importance of the role of Political Unions, hence the theme of the NPU and the May 1832 reform crisis in Newcastle addressed here.³

Political Unions had formed throughout Britain after autumn 1830 when agrarian unrest spread to the towns: the political demonstrations which then ensued 'had the virtue of cowing the Tory majority in the Lords', but the Political Unions' strict object was 'to secure reform only through peaceful and lawful means and growing numbers... which earned it the respect of politicians and the general public'.⁴ However, with workmen in the streets parading tricolours, symbol of the revolution in France, and the Tory Lords expressing undying opposition to the new measure, there was always the underlying threat of violent confrontation. Most

Political Unions did their best to restrain their followers from reacting violently, but serious rioting had nevertheless broken out after the defeat of the second Reform Bill in October 1831, notably at Derby and Bristol. Earl Grey's cabinet was alarmed that the protests had taken on such a political character, and that even the 'respectable' middle classes responded so angrily to the Tories' obstructionism. But strengthened by public support Grey had bounced back to introduce a third Reform Bill in December 1831, and with the people scrutinising every move it proceeded satisfactorily until May 1832.⁵

It was in the Lords' committee stage on May 7 that the third Bill's progress was halted, when the Duke of Wellington's ultra-Tories, whom it had been thought would this time acquiesce, proposed an amendment which would postpone the disfranchisement of the rotten boroughs: this was a big indication that the Tories meant to take control of the Bill in committee, but this was unacceptable to Grey and his ministers, who had privately vowed to retain control of the measure. At the division the Tories were able to muster 151 votes to the Whigs' 116, effectively a vote of no confidence in the government which threw the reform question once again into utter confusion. Though privately their pursuit of reform was calculated to head off any more sweeping measure, the Whigs in parliament and throughout the country received enormous public support in the belief that this, by radical criteria, very modest and limited Bill was a first instalment rather than the final measure which the government actually intended. In the knowledge of the pro-reform agitation now underway all over the country, Grey thus turned to the King with the intention of bringing matters quickly to a crisis.⁶ But King William IV refused Grey's request to create fifty or sixty peers, choosing instead to accept Grey's offer of the cabinet's resignation, and moreover invited the deeply unpopular Wellington to form a new government. The 'spirit of wisdom' to which Larkin had earlier appealed had been found lacking in both the King and the Tory peers, bringing the prospect of Larkin's revolution so much closer.

The possibility of Wellington's resumption as Premier ran the risk of pushing

an already greatly agitated public into the revolt which Grey's reforms had been intended to avoid, and even the King felt compelled to make a minimal measure of reform a condition of Wellington's return to office. Wellington accepted the condition out of duty to the Crown but he lacked popular credibility, was not trusted in the country, and could not hope to muster a working majority in the Commons, as a motion of support for the outgoing ministers, passed by 288 to 208 on May 10, clearly demonstrated. But everything hung in the balance whilst the Duke strove to assemble a cabinet. Should he fail, the prospect of the dissolution of parliament and another general election, with the consequent loss of all the progress made so far on the third Bill, was a distinct possibility. But should he succeed, such was the state of the country that the likelihood of civil war and insurrection was also very real. The more perceptive of the ultra-Tories whose opposition had precipitated this situation suddenly realised that only the return of Grey as Prime Minister and his successful stewardship of the Reform Bill could avoid the revolution which now stared them in the face: such demands were now being raised not only by Whigs and Radicals but by the general public all over Britain.

The country thus faced an unprecedented crisis. The defeat of the government, the King's refusal to create peers, his acceptance of the cabinet's resignation, and his invitation to Wellington to form a new administration provoked enormous public protest against anti-reformers, and strengthened the expedient accord between Whigs and Radicals. Brock says the Political Unions now came 'into their own at last: they grew in size and standing with every hour'. All over the country meetings were held and petitions collected: 200,000 assembled at Birmingham, whilst leading reformers made the tactical decision to confine their demands to the reinstatement of Grey and the passing of the Bill rather than press for more radical measures.⁷ It was felt that by thus limiting their demands the maximum public unity would be achieved in favour of the Bill, but hand in hand with this some consciously propagated what was a tacit threat of revolt, as at one of the Birmingham meetings where it was ominously stated that should their demands not be satisfied, the unions would be 'compelled' to take up arms, which they 'could not hesitate to use for the putting

down of their enemies'.⁸

The possibility of a popular uprising increased with each passing day. Reports reaching London indicated that the flood of new recruits to the unions included many men of property, middle class gentlemen anxious for reform but who had not, until now, been willing to participate in the agitation. Francis Place wrote of a May 12 meeting of the London-based National Political Union that those present

...were all men of substance... Some were very rich men... It was clearly understood that in the event of Lord Wellington... forming an administration... open resistance should at once be made, and in the meantime all that could be done should be done to prevent such an administration from being formed...⁹

The intermediate measures alluded to included non-payment of taxes and a campaign to promote a run on the banks. The Northern Political Union had resolved upon the former measure in March after the example of its Birmingham counterpart,¹⁰ but the idea for the latter was accredited to Place, whose slogan, 'To Stop the Duke, Go for Gold' was placarded all over London and the provinces. Though not decisive these campaigns did have their effect, and by May 13 the City of London was 'thoroughly frightened, wanted Grey's government re-established and the Reform question settled quickly'.¹¹ 'The whole country', wrote one Whig MP at the time, was 'in a state little short of insurrection'.¹² Though perhaps an exaggerated assessment, there could be no doubting what might result should Wellington become Prime Minister.

Whilst many amongst the middle classes clamoured for the Bill, amongst the working classes there were significant voices against. Henry Hetherington for instance, 'the most influential publisher of unstamped newspapers', consistently opposed the Bill on the grounds that there was nothing in it for the working classes, advising readers of his *Poor Man's Guardian* 'to "stand at ease" and let the middle class fight their own battles'.¹³ But overall the general attitude of many workers and their rudimentary organisations was that though the Bill was inadequate it should be supported as a first measure: this was certainly the view of Thomas Hepburn and other delegates of the Tyne and Wear pitmen's union.¹⁴

Word of the government's defeat reached Newcastle 'at a very early hour' on Wednesday May 9, and John Buddle's report to Lord Londonderry as to North East reaction was sanguine: news of the ministers' resignations had, he said,

...occasioned an immense sensation here. Lord Grey is lauded to the Skies, and the "Conservatives" and King, are execrated - the King's popularity is gone for the present... The cry against any Tory administration whatever, is vehement, and the more violent declare, that they would not accept any sort of reform at their hands... The most violent measures - refusing to pay Taxes, etc, are talked of, and according to present appearances - unless some most judicious and conciliatory measures are adopted at Westminster - we shall have a political convulsion...¹⁵

Two days later a clearly worried Buddle was describing the region as still

...in a State of ebullition. The cry of the *thorough-going reformers* here is to have Id. Grey reinstated. God knows how it will end, but we are certainly in a very unsatisfactory not to say critical and dangerous State at present...¹⁶

There was to be little news to calm Buddle's fears in the coming days.

Since about 1820 the Newcastle barrister James Losh, because of his friendship with 'a number of men of the first flight - Grey, Lambton, Attwood and the Radicals in politics; Brougham... and others in law', had come to play 'a prominent part not only in local but in national politics'.¹⁷ He thus took the news of Grey's downfall badly, was dismayed at 'the success of the manoeuvres of the oligarchy in the House of Lords', and thought the conduct of the King 'much to be lamented... he appears at length to have yielded to the persuasions of private advisers'. But he did not think it possible for the 'oligarchy' to assemble an anti-reform government as the country had been 'thrown into great agitation' at the fall of Grey's cabinet, and in summing up the situation said that the King 'has unfortunately placed both himself and the country in a sad dilemma - one must give way. The country certainly will not'.¹⁸

Losh did not exaggerate here but as a 'respectable' and essentially moderate Whig reformer, he saw it as his duty to keep a rein on the activities of 'unrespectable' radicals, or 'thorough-going reformers' as Buddle called them. Brock describes the strategy of Political Union leaders in Birmingham and London as being to inflame and heighten public anger at the Tories,¹⁹ but Losh's approach was

measured and cautious. He set out to subdue and harness the agitated public mood to a more moderate course by out-maneuvring the radicals of the NPU in organising Newcastle's inevitable protest meeting. The Whigs themselves nominally supported the NPU, though only out of political expediency: their relationship with the radicals was an 'uneasy alliance' prompted by mutual dislike of the Tories' control of Newcastle's electoral politics,²⁰ and as the radical journal *Northern Tribune* later put it, '[t]he union of the Whigs and Radicals was never very cordial. Notwithstanding their adhesion to the popular organisation, the Whigs (too much like their Tory rivals) were addicted to "hole-and-corner meetings"'.²¹

Losh wanted to confine demands to straightforward support for Grey's Bill, but was afraid that an unbridled NPU meeting would press for the radical programme of universal suffrage, annual parliaments, and the secret ballot.²² If this was to be averted the Whigs would have to take charge of the meeting's proceedings, which would be no easy task, but by a stroke of luck the result of a recent NPU Council meeting had already given Losh and his Whig colleagues a slight advantage. News of the government's defeat had not reached North East England on May 8, but in anticipation of such a development Dr John Fife of Newcastle had that day urged the NPU Council to stage 'an immediate demonstration of our strength'. Fife later recalled the response of Charles Attwood in the chair, who,

...alleging that the Duke of Wellington might be in office by the time we assembled and might send the Dragoons upon us, declared that he would not preside at the meeting or have anything to do with it, and that if my motion was carried he would probably leave the Union! I pressed my motion, the Council divided equally, and Mr. Attwood gave his casting vote against a public meeting of the Union...²³

The NPU thus missed an opportunity, for when word of the cabinet's resignation arrived on Friday May 11, it was the Newcastle Whigs led by Losh who took the initiative.²⁴ It was customary in Newcastle to requisition the Mayor to sanction public meetings and on May 11 the Whigs were quick off the mark, collecting the signatures of over 200 Newcastle notables in a few hours:²⁵ the Mayor, Archibald Reed, 'readily agreed to call a public meeting in the open air', and this was

scheduled for the Spital Field on Tuesday May 15 at 1pm.²⁶

In presenting the requisition Losh was accompanied by Thomas Doubleday of the NPU, who could only have been present in a personal capacity as the NPU Council did not discuss the cabinet's resignation until the following day, Saturday May 12, when their May 8 decision opposing a demonstration was duly reversed. Full support was then pledged for the May 15 meeting, but the NPU were too late. The fact that the Mayor had already been requisitioned by the Whigs meant the NPU could not now claim the meeting for their own: it would be a Whig-radical demonstration at best, with the Whigs setting the tone of the proceedings.²⁷

Losh however had no wish to exclude the radicals from participating in the meeting as the Whigs needed their support to make it a success. He therefore set out to persuade the NPU's radical leaders to co-operate with his plans, though as he told Lord Howick after having seen some of them, the NPU might be the least of his problems: 'I hope they may be kept within bounds... [but, with respect to public feeling] The great difficulty in the North of England is to put a drag upon the wheels, to prevent the machine from proceeding too rapidly'.²⁸

On Saturday May 12, in what the radicals would no doubt describe as one of their 'hole-and-corner meetings', Losh and the Whig committee met at his chambers 'to arrange matters' for the Spital meeting.²⁹ During their deliberations a NPU deputation, fresh from their own meeting that same day, called to offer their 'cordial concurrence and support', but when they went on to suggest 'that the meeting should be considered to be one of "The Union"' Losh was adamantly opposed:

...This, I distinctly refused to consent to... it was finally determined that the Union might attend if they pleased, but as part of the "Inhabitants of the Town and neighbourhood of N.Castle", the terms under which the meeting was called...³⁰

This NPU attempt 'to capture the great Reform Meeting' is described as '[o]ne of the most interesting disclosures' in Losh's voluminous *Diaries*.³¹ Having out-maneuvred the NPU on the terms of the meeting Losh also wanted to ensure the resolutions would not be too extreme, and had already told Lord Howick that he aimed

...to have two short resolutions, one expressing our unabated confidence in Lord Grey and the other stating our decided hostility to any Ministers who may have opposed *the Reform Bill*. Something to this effect I trust we shall be able to limit ourselves to...³²

Sure enough, things again went as intended:

...Mr. Doubleday, one of the Secretaries of the Union, and I agreed upon the Resolutions and we all concurred in opinion, that our speeches and resolutions ec. should be firm, but temperate and confined to the great measure of Parliamentary Reform... I think everything was well and satisfactorily arranged...³³

With Losh seemingly having fixed every other aspect of the meeting it was only left to the NPU leaders to organise a big turn-out of their own supporters. This was a key responsibility however, for it would not be Losh's Whigs but the people of the 'Town and neighbourhood' who would make the occasion. The NPU therefore looked to the working classes, in which respect they were fortunate that the crisis coincided with the pitmen's strike, as this meant that the many pitmen now settling in for a long dispute had the time and opportunity to respond to any call the NPU might make: whether they also had the inclination was all that remained to be seen.

The Tory *Newcastle Journal* was consequently appalled to discover that an NPU address advertising the meeting had been distributed 'especially amongst the colliery population, of which about ten thousand male adults are unemployed, and in a state of great exasperation and excitement'.³⁴ But control of canvassing was one aspect of NPU activity to which Losh's influence could not extend. The *Journal* went on to complain of the 'vast numbers' of striking pitmen whom the NPU sought to attract to the meeting in Newcastle, and said that the 'tradespeople of the town, reflecting upon the pitmen's desolate condition, coupled with the desperate character of their unprincipled leaders and delegates, were in great dread of the result'.

In fact it seems the NPU could legitimately expect a good turn-out from the colliery districts. The *Tyne Mercury* had recently reported that 'many of the pitmen belong to the Northern Political Union' and its grounds for this comment strengthen the probability of its accuracy, for this was mentioned only because the pro-reform but anti-trade union *Mercury* was afraid the pitmen's union might become too closely

identified with the NPU: it was at pains to point out that the NPU 'has no connexion whatever with their own [Hepburn's] Union... The Northern Union has nothing to do with their private affairs or their transactions with their employers'.³⁵ Yet as the *Mercury* well knew, Thomas Hepburn had himself spoken from the platform at an NPU demonstration in October 1831, when many pitmen had also been evident in the crowd.³⁶ What proportion of the pitmen had joined the NPU is impossible to say but the *Mercury's* concern suggests their numbers were appreciable, and was clear evidence of an overtly political stance for which there was already significant precedent, as noted by Aspinall.³⁷

Buddle had meanwhile heard during the week preceding the Spital meeting that 'two delegates from the Political Union at Manchester, or Birmingham, have been attending the meetings of the Pitmen's delegates, at the Cock'.³⁸ The timing of a remark by pitmen's delegate Charles Parkinson in April of being in correspondence with others seeking to establish a general union, suggests contact with the National Association for the Protection of Labour, which had announced in its paper *The Union Pilot* that unspecified groups of Newcastle workers had joined. But that was in late March and as, according to Buddle the object of the May approach was purportedly 'to get the pitmen to join them in a general political Union', this explicit *political* element along with the fact that the visitors had approached striking pitmen of all people, suggests the latest visitors were more probably from the Manchester Union of the Working Classes, a rival offshoot of the Political Union movement.³⁹

The MUWC was formed in January 1831 when working class supporters of the Manchester Political Union, in response to their middle class leaders' retreat from the radical programme, walked out to establish their own independent radical political union. LoPatin describes the MUWC as 'the first popular political organisation in Britain composed of and led by working men exclusively', and argues that as its example was emulated elsewhere the UWCs grew into an independent working class political movement, separate and distinct from the middle class Political Unions.⁴⁰ There are indications that the pitmen too had taken steps in the direction

of the UWCs, though not to the extent of renouncing the NPU to set up their own organisation:⁴¹ but the fact that the visitors were admitted to the pitmen's delegate meetings itself shows that the pitmen's union was sympathetic to their position, and was weighing the political situation in its deliberations. The NPU was not to be disappointed at the pitmen's response to its initiative.

On the morning of the meeting, Tuesday May 15, John Buddle at Wallsend noted 'bodies of pitmen going in all directions from the N[orth] Side of the Tyne with Banners and Bands of Music' towards Newcastle. In Newcastle itself 'numerous bodies of persons began to arrive at an early hour from the country', 'the surrounding villagers marching in rank, with military step, to bands of music',⁴² until at around 11 o'clock

...all the shops in the town, and nearly all the manufactories on the Tyne, within a moderate distance, were closed; and great numbers of the workmen attended the meeting. St. Nicholas Square, the area at the west end of Collingwood Street, and the spacious streets adjoining, were crowded. The [NP]Unionists marched, as usual, in classes, with their leaders bearing white wands [ceremonial batons], and accompanied by flags, banners, and musical bands. A portion of the men were armed... and ominous devices indicated a spirit of excitement, and a feeling of exasperation...⁴³

Placards were prominent 'in many Shop Windows with the words "no reform Bill, no Taxes paid here" - printed in large red letters'.⁴⁴ '[I]mmense bodies of pitmen... arrived in rapid succession... [carrying] with them oak saplings, of the most formidable dimensions, which appeared as if they had been recently cut and stripped of their bark'.⁴⁵ At about noon the crowd, 'comprising deputations from all the Branch Unions in the district', moved off and eventually assembled at the Spital Field off Westgate Street, where hustings had been erected on the raised walk at the south side.⁴⁶ The *Newcastle Journal* described the scene:

...there were many flags and banners waving in the air, belonging, with few exceptions, to the pitmen of the different works; the emblems and inscriptions being principally allusive to the struggle now going on with their employers... The pitmen's banners were of silk, and well executed; but not so the inscriptions, most of which were in rhyme. Judging from those we were enabled to copy, as the flags fluttered in the breeze, the pitmen are shockingly in want of a laureate sufficiently competent to set forth the grievous oppressions of which they complain...⁴⁷

Of banners bearing the words 'hard taskmasters' and passages of scripture referring to the bondage of the Egyptians, the *Journal* reflected that their exhibition 'by such men, reminded us of the well-known quotation, that "The D___l can quote Scripture for his purpose."' Other mottos borne by the pitmen included 'Invincible in Union', 'Peace and Unity', 'All Men have equal Rights', 'Live and let live', and 'Persevere and be free'. French tricolours 'and other revolutionary emblems' were also present.⁴⁸ Buddle thought the pitmen's mottos to be 'of an inflammatory nature', whilst Losh felt there were too many banners displayed 'and too many *sans culottes* in the crowd to please calm minded and reflecting people'.⁴⁹ The size of the crowd was a matter of some contention but despite the 'unfavourable state of the weather... 40,000 was supposed to be about the number', and the meeting commenced at one o'clock with over two hundred luminaries on the hustings.⁵⁰

The Mayor however, 'notwithstanding the solicitations of the "respectable" Whigs', had broken with tradition by declining to take the chair and instead, '[a]pprehensive of tumult, he held himself in readiness to co-operate with the military'.⁵¹ It was thus John Fife who stepped forward to open the proceedings and he surprisingly proposed a Whig, Dr T.E. Headlam, to the chair in preference to his colleague, NPU President Charles Attwood, who was also present. In justification Fife remarked that 'this is not a meeting of the Political Union exclusively, but of every denomination of reformers, who, regardless of minor differences, have united for one common object'. Fife's proposal was seconded and 'carried by acclamation', Headlam took the chair, and the business of the meeting got under way.⁵²

The main speaker was almost inevitably James Losh, who moved resolutions expressing confidence in Grey's Bill and none in those who opposed it, 'upon which were founded an address to the King, and a petition to the House of Commons'. Yet even the moderate Losh was swept up by the mood of the occasion to declare that should the worst come to the worst and revolution prove inevitable, '[w]e shall be found at our posts; for we cannot conceal that we are engaged in a mortal struggle'. One contemporary later admitted that this was 'rather strong language for a Whig of

the old school; but such was the excitement of the period that sober-minded men found the current to be irresistible when once within its influence'.⁵³

Losh afterwards wrote of the meeting that he 'spoke at considerable length, and pretty much to my own satisfaction', also recording that he was well received.⁵⁴ But with so many striking pitmen present and Losh a coal owner conspicuously leading the industrial battle against them, was this the entire truth? The *Newcastle Journal* suggested not, for when Losh had claimed that the Reform Bill 'satisfied the whole nation' and was 'universally approved', he had been greeted by hisses and cries of 'No, no'.⁵⁵ Such dissent might have stemmed from any 'unrespectable' radicals, but given the circumstances most probably came from the pitmen: the *Journal* indicated as much with its mocking sympathy for Losh, saying it regretted

...on account of his age and respectability, the indignities offered to this gentleman while speaking at the meeting... but we regret it still more on account of the cause, viz:- his praise-worthy and able exertions to open the eyes of the pitmen to the ruinous consequences that must accrue to themselves from their present struggle with their employers...

Indeed in preparing for the meeting Losh had been very wary of them, having agreed with the NPU deputation on May 12 'the propriety of being temperate and avoiding everything which could inflame the minds of the pitmen'.⁵⁶ Contrasting his support for reform with his occasional open letters of 'advice' to the pitmen in the local press, the *Tory Journal* concluded by chastising Losh, declaring that the treatment he had received 'comes of the inconsistency of attempting to enlighten the public upon a question of trade, and of deluding them upon a question of *politics*'.⁵⁷

Losh's resolutions were seconded by various other speakers both Whig and radical including John Fife, who in the course of his speech revealed that in the three days preceding the meeting the NPU had 'enrolled a greater number of new members than during any six months of its previous existence', and said that the sheer numbers present showed it should be possible to have Grey and his Bill 'without revolution and bloodshed'.⁵⁸ Fife then went on to recall the eighteenth century politician, 'man of the people' Charles James Fox, who during a 1795 Commons

debate on sedition had said that parliament might pass whatever laws it pleased, but the people may subsequently find those laws so unjust 'that obedience is no longer a moral duty, and insurrection itself justifiable'.⁵⁹ When challenged to explain what he meant, Fox had simply repeated his statement and added, 'In these principles I will live and die'. 'Here', said Fife, 'is an immense multitude, and is there one man who will not join me in holding up his right hand and repeat after me - "In these principles I will live and die"?'.

...The responsive action was instantaneous. A forest of hands was uplifted in imitation of the speaker, and in solemn cadence the vast multitude ejaculated that memorable vow - 'In these principles I will live and die!' Scarcely had the hands disappeared, when a forest of oak saplings was uplifted, and remained there for some minutes, amidst profound yet most significant silence...⁶⁰

This was 'a scene never to be forgotten by those who witnessed it. The enthusiasm of the meeting was excited to the highest pitch'. Fife continued by lampooning the ultra-Tory Lord Londonderry, who on one occasion in October 1831 had drawn pistols on a hostile London mob:

...I know that many of my fellow-countrymen are armed, that many others are arming; and every man in this country has as great a right to his arms as the Marquis of Londonderry; and I hold that the most ignorant and simple-minded man in this assembly is as likely to make a proper use of them (*Laughter and cheers*)...⁶¹

He closed by stating that 'violence is the last and worst alternative' and urged all present to be 'firm, peaceable, and united... [but] declare that no administration shall exist which is against reform, and opposed to the wishes of the people'.⁶²

This was inflammatory talk but Losh seems to have been surprisingly unperturbed at Fife's words and the reaction they prompted, having presumably been carried by the mood of the occasion. Of this and other emotional addresses he afterwards recorded that '[n]othing remarkable' was said by any of the speakers - with the notable exception of Charles Larkin, one of the NPU delegation which had called upon Losh at his chambers, and to whose annoyance now made 'a very violent and very foolish speech'.⁶³ In a long address, Larkin claimed that the indignation of the people was no longer 'scattered and dispersed upon many objects - it is fixed, it is collected, it is condensed. It rests and centres, and burns and shines

upon a single personage', that of the King, whom Larkin then went on to abuse for his refusal to create new peers.⁶⁴ The sustained nature of this attack with its outrageous threats against the monarchy deeply upset Losh, but seem to have been hugely popular with the crowd. 'We are oppressed', complained Larkin,

...with taxes from which we want to be relieved.⁶⁵ We are doomed to the support of a church odious from its exactions, and still more odious from the opposition of its mitred heads to the freedom of the people. (Great cheering.) We possess an aristocracy unparalleled in insolence, haughtiness, arrogance, disdain of the people, and in rapacity.⁶⁶ We have a minister strong in popular support dismissed... We have an uxorious King, hostile to reform, and incited to resistance to the wishes of his people, by the disastrous influence of a foreigner, who has been elevated to the dignity and splendour of Queen Consort of England. But above all we have a people as resolute and determined as were ever the French to be free (Loud cheers.) Such is the state of England. Should not William the Fourth recollect the fate of Louis the Sixteenth? (Loud cheers.) Should not a Queen, who makes herself a busy, intermeddling politician, recollect the fate of Marie Antoinette? (Immense cheering.) From this hustings I bid the Queen of England recollect, that in consequence of the opposition of that ill-fated woman to the wishes of the people of France, a fairer head than ever graced the shoulders of Adelaide, Queen of England, rolled upon the scaffold. (Tremendous cheering.) Fearful, indeed, are the signs of the times...⁶⁷

Larkin cited reports of 'multitudes of men, fierce and menacing in their looks, congregated in the corners of the streets in London, shouting "No King! and Cromwell for ever."' ⁶⁸ His own references to regicide seemed to echo these republican sentiments, and left Losh thunderstruck at the expression of such views:

...I can not help thinking that he was sent by the *Enemy*... He spoke fluently (tho' I understand his speech was prepared) and his language was good, but... the whole drift of his harangue was to inflame the minds of the ignorant part of the audience... Dr. Headlam, the chairman, consulted me as to the propriety of interrupting Mr. Larkin. I advised him not to interfere as doing so was certain to produce confusion and there was no real danger of any violence being produced by what he said. For the same reason, I took no notice of what he had said, by way of reply to which I was entitled as having opened the business. I am persuaded that this was the right course to pursue, but calculated to mortify and disappoint the views of Mr. Larkin...⁶⁹

Larkin's ideas were thus offensive even to those of 'liberal' outlook, but the Irishman had delivered 'decidedly the most important and eloquent speech of the day' and from the crowd's response it seems clear that Larkin had the meeting with him.⁷⁰ This was neatly illustrated when his NPU colleague, Charles Attwood, said at the end of the meeting that he thought Larkin's 'heavy denunciations... were calculated to do more harm than good to their cause'; but was met with exclamations

of 'No, no': the rebuke was 'not approved of by, perhaps, the majority present, many of whom carried arms, and most of whom looked on an appeal to arms as inevitable'.⁷¹ The consequent suggestion by the Marxist historian Cadogan that the Spital meeting displayed 'the first manifestations of nineteenth-century republicanism in Newcastle' is therefore not an altogether idle one.⁷²

But notwithstanding the enthusiasm for the speeches of Fife and Larkin, the more moderate proposals favoured by Losh were unanimously carried and the petition to parliament received 19,190 signatures before its dispatch to London that evening. The meeting broke up without any trouble and despite earlier fears regarding the pitmen even the *Journal* had to acknowledge that they 'conducted themselves with order and decorum in their various perambulations', with Losh adding that the meeting was 'upon the whole well behaved'.⁷³ 'The people went home in peace having made it manifest beyond all doubt that peace was hanging by a thread which would not survive the strain of further resistance to the passage of the Bill'.⁷⁴

Smaller local reform meetings were held throughout the region at Gateshead, North Shields, South Shields, Sunderland, Darlington, Morpeth, Alnwick, Rothbury and Wooler, and the *Tyne Mercury* also reported the many other large meetings now taking place all over Britain. '[T]he feeling of the majority', wrote the private secretary to Lord Chancellor Brougham, 'was in favour of violent measures. The fact was that news was now pouring in from all parts of the country of the furious hatred that prevailed against Wellington'.⁷⁵ Lord Londonderry, riding with two fellow Tory peers through the London streets, 'was recognised and 'followed by a mob of between 200 and 300 men and boys, hooting and hissing' to the Houses of Parliament where 'they were again assailed with deafening yells and hisses... till a formidable force of the Police cleared the street and restored order'.⁷⁶ In anticipation of disturbance, insurrection, and possible mutiny, all troops in London were confined to barracks, 'the horses to remain completely equipped, and not to be even unbridled, except in succession... whilst feeding'.⁷⁷

The threat of disorder or even civil war was intensified by the economic pressure now bearing upon the increasingly beleaguered Wellington and his followers, as a run on the banks and the uncertain political situation led to a catastrophic slump in trade. One 'commercial house' in Manchester saw average sales of £2000 per day fall to £170 on May 12 and £155 on May 14, and more than £1.6m in gold was withdrawn from the Bank of England between May 8 and May 18. Wellington had known for several days that 'only Rothschild's utmost efforts were preventing a serious fall in government stocks', but the straw which finally broke the camel's back was a parliamentary one. After an uproarious Commons debate Tory MPs told Wellington in no uncertain terms that he could not form a new administration, and he consequently abandoned his efforts, advising the King on the morning of May 15 to recall Grey.⁷⁸

Thus even as the Newcastle reformers met at the Spital, word of Grey's reinstatement was on its way from London. But there were still some difficulties for Grey to overcome. Unwilling to be seen to push the King into immediately creating peers, Grey's recalled cabinet allowed persisting ultra-Tories the option of withdrawing from the Lords to allow the Bill to pass without the need for a new creation. But for three days this option was refused, during which public opinion became increasingly heated at the lack of progress. Lady Holland later said she had never until this time been 'seriously alarmed' at the state of the country but 'now it really appears there is, bona fide, an organisation of the people amounting to a national guard, all ready, equipped, disciplined, and as yet obedient to their leaders'.⁷⁹ The disciplined nature of the protests so far, as apparently manifested by the lack of rioting, was a source of fear in itself inspiring some awe in the control exercised by the Political Unions, and prompted the remark that '[a]ll seemed reserved for a tremendous explosion'.⁸⁰

Ultimately however Grey moved to call the bluff of the ultra-Tories and on May 18 finally obtained written consent from the King for the creation of unlimited numbers of peers. This had been left very late: the *Morning Chronicle* that day had called for an announcement by 'this evening' that Grey would be granted full powers

to proceed, with the warning that 'we are otherwise on the eve of the barricades'.⁸¹ When announcements to the desired effect were duly made in parliament that night, it was consequently to a reception of deafening cheers from the relieved politicians. Most ultra-Tories then withdrew from the Lords to avoid the need for Grey to create peers, seeking instead to preserve their built-in Lords majority for future use. North East England was not to learn of such details until a day or so after the event, and the terms of Grey's reinstatement were not finally settled until May 18, but all that mattered in Newcastle on Thursday May 17 was the report that Wellington had been stopped. Buddle was greeted at Wallsend by his cashier, John Reay, who had

...just returned from Newcastle, and says that the news is, that Lord Grey is recalled to Office, and that the greatest rejoicings are going on, on the occasion...⁸²

'What extraordinary times these are!' added Buddle. The ships in the river 'displayed their colours', the bells of the churches 'were rung at intervals', a band 'paraded the streets during the morning, playing several popular airs', and 'joy beamed in every countenance'.⁸³

The *Durham Advertiser* though was somewhat less joyous at the news, declaring that 'the Grey Ministry are again in power; and England is no longer a limited Monarchy, but a republic'.⁸⁴ This melodramatic view was of course inaccurate, though had Grey not resumed as Premier the *Advertiser* may have had legitimate grounds for its fears, as E.P. Thompson says Britain was 'within an ace of a revolution' in May 1832.⁸⁵ This was later tacitly confirmed by one Manchester worker, presumably organised in the MUWC, who admitted to 'having had his sharpened pike by him in 1832, ready for a march on London'. He had been 'but one of thousands of Manchester working men who were alike prepared for the dread hazard of civil war'.⁸⁶

It appears however that the Tyne and Wear pitmen were not so ready to march on London. Though supporting Grey and reform they had not believed Wellington would accept defeat, and instead calculated on national political events to effect an improvement in fortunes in their own concurrent industrial battle. Along with a scattering of local ultra-Tories, the pitmen must therefore have been the only

people in the region not to have received word of Grey's recall with enthusiasm, for on May 19 Buddle said they were

...greatly crestfallen since last Thursday - they were advised by the *Cock Parliament* that the Duke of W. would be made Premier - that there would be a revolution - that all the Soldiers w^d. be ordered to the South, and that the Country would be left at their mercy. The news of Lord Grey's re-appointment has disappointed their hopes - they think the bill will pass, and that there will be no row...⁸⁷

This rather startling calculation serves to underline the volatility of the situation, but Buddle later reiterated the point and it does bear out Church's view that the pitmen saw such political campaigns 'primarily as a movement to be exploited in promoting or defending their narrower, industrial interests'.⁸⁸ But along with the increasing numbers of blacklegs now arriving in the coalfield this disappointment apparently caused dissent, as Buddle heard that the pitmen were now 'beginning to accuse the Delegates of humbugging them'. Though the pitmen were in general still 'as obstinate as possible', rumours of such disagreements must have been very welcome news to Buddle, Losh, and the other coal owners.

In the absence of the opposition of most Tory peers, the Reform Bill cleared its Lords committee stage in seven days. In a pathetic spoiling attempt on May 25, the unremittingly ultra-Tory Lord Londonderry raised Larkin's Newcastle speech in the House of Lords, alleging that because Grey's friend Dr Headlam had chaired the Spital meeting and did not attempt to stop Larkin, Grey himself must therefore somehow be in sympathy with Larkin's regicidal sentiments.⁸⁹ But this desperate effort was easily brushed aside by Grey, and the third Lords' reading of the Bill was approved by 106 votes to 22 on June 4, finally receiving the Royal Assent to become law on June 7, 1832.⁹⁰

Celebration dinners were subsequently held by the NPU, the Gateshead Whigs, and the Newcastle burgesses, but the Act had achieved little for the lower orders.⁹¹ The increase in the United Kingdom electorate from 478,000 to 814,000, no more than one in thirty of the 24 million population, was far from the universal suffrage which some had demanded and excluded the great majority of workers. But delivering

the vote to workers had never been an issue, for as the Whig MP Macaulay told the Commons in May 1831, the object of reform was simply to admit the middle classes 'to a large and direct share in the representation without any violent shock to the institutions of the country'.⁹² Though a 'violent shock' was in the end only very narrowly avoided, that the Act was not simply a first instalment of reform but a final measure was to become apparent only too soon.

All that remained to those involved in the agitation was the satisfaction of having defeated the ultra-Tories, and in this the reformers of North East England, 'respectable' or otherwise, could be content they had done their bit. The region's contribution has however been considerably undervalued in terms of local working class participation, and the significance of the NPU's impact on the national scene. Whilst historians have consistently assigned to Birmingham the greatest credit for the success of the reform agitation, Charles Larkin's assertion that to Newcastle 'belonged the honour of having secured the £10 franchise... Birmingham being willing, at that time, to accept a £20 franchise', suggests that the middle class leadership of the NPU was rather more adept than its much-heralded Birmingham counterpart.⁹³ Indeed the question of the franchise level deserves further attention, as it underlines Flick's study which now argues that the BPU's supposedly leading role in the reform agitation is not only exaggerated, but 'a myth'.⁹⁴

The '£10 franchise' gave the borough vote to occupiers of houses worth at least £10 a year, though Grey had been under Tory pressure to set a higher level.⁹⁵ To appease the opposition he had thus hinted during the Bill's second Lord's reading that the £10 figure was not an 'unalterable principle', but this brought a sharp protest from the NPU's Charles Attwood who declared against raising the qualification.⁹⁶ When ministers then enquired what changes the Birmingham Political Union might accept, its leaders were 'publicly accused of failing to stick to the whole Bill', and according to Birmingham radical George Holyoake there were good grounds for this accusation: for though the BPU chairman Thomas Attwood was, he said

...a leader of the masses, he was no democrat, and would have induced the [Birmingham] Political Union to accept a £20 franchise, but for the refusal of the more robust politicians of Newcastle-on-Tyne who... declared for a £10 franchise. But for the Newcastle men, the electoral constituency of England would have been "confined to £20 householders"...⁹⁷

The importance of such opposition is acknowledged by Brock, who says that the decision to opt for a £10 qualification was 'influenced probably by the political difficulty of imposing a higher qualification on the very places where the reform agitation was the most intense'. This being so, though such places are left unnamed except for Leeds where a similar declaration was also made, it seems Larkin had genuine grounds for his claim.⁹⁸ In more general terms, Robert Lowery of North Shields echoed Larkin's view.

...No part of the country exceeded in fervour the district around Newcastle-on-Tyne for the Reform Bill. Nor did any association surpass that of the "Northern Political Union" in talent and influence. Its principal leaders combined philosophic astuteness, literary ability, oratorical powers, and social standing rarely equalled by the leaders of the public in any other district. And with their varied powers they bound the people to them with confidence and admiration...⁹⁹

Larkin and Lowery's arguments might be seen as the parochial opinions of local men interested in enhancing Newcastle's reputation for radicalism, as too might the later *Tribune* comment that though the Spital reform meeting 'originated with the Whig supporters of Earl Grey... it was the influence of the people and the organisation of the Political Union that gave weight to the proceedings'.¹⁰⁰ But contemporary accounts do support such claims: the *Diaries* of the moderate Losh give candid insights into the volatile state of public opinion, and newspaper reports of the May 15 meeting in particular, with pitmen and other workers marching in classes into town, also confirm the 'fervour' for the Bill in the district, and give credence to the NPU's alleged 'talent and influence' in organising such a turn-out.

The endorsement of radical socialist leader Robert Owen provides another indication of the NPU's part in the national agitation. Though the people of Birmingham had set the example said Owen, they were 'seconded and supported by the Northern Political Union', which after Birmingham was 'the foremost and most important' Political Union and 'more than answered the expectations of the

country'.¹⁰¹ Owen added that having mixed 'during the progress of the bills, with many reformers in the metropolis, I may say, that we looked with daily and hourly anxiety to the proceedings of the Northern Union'. Yet if, as is now contended, the 'myth' of Birmingham's leading role in the Political Union movement was created and propagated by the BPU's leaders themselves, then the NPU's significance may have been greater than even Owen believed: for Flick now argues that a major reason for Birmingham's reputation was Thomas Attwood's insistent eulogising of the BPU as the vanguard 'parent Union', which contemporaries including the press and even the government took at face value.¹⁰² It now appears however that in reality the BPU kept itself at arm's length from other popular political agitation, and LoPatin's challenging study goes so far as to assert that the BPU's role in the movement was minimal, refuting any idea that Birmingham or London led the way, and citing Manchester as having 'created and provided the model for an independent working class radical reform movement which was to have such an impact upon popular political activities over the next few decades'.¹⁰³

As regards the NPU's impact nationally, Larkin's controversial speech also merits further notice here. Acting on reports from John Buddle that it was 'downright treasonable', Lord Londonderry had raised the speech in parliament but in so doing simply 'increased its potency on public opinion' by bringing it to national prominence.¹⁰⁴ Indeed so seriously was the speech regarded that warrants were issued for the arrest of Larkin and others on charges of sedition: the warrants were never executed, but the claim that possibly 'no political speech ever produced so great a sensation throughout the country' is perhaps not as fanciful as it might appear.¹⁰⁵

In the light of such evidence it is difficult to see how Brock's standard history of the reform campaign can place the Tyne and Wear districts at the bottom of a scale of agitation.¹⁰⁶ The reason given for this judgement is that 'the strikes in the coal-pits over-shadowed Reform' yet little or no evidence is cited to this effect: on the contrary, it was reported in Newcastle at the time that temporarily,

the strike was 'almost totally forgotten amidst the all-engrossing importance of public affairs', whilst Muris has it that the NPU 'received great support from Hepburn's Miners' Union in its mass demonstrations'.¹⁰⁷

Hunter's more recent local study offers the view that Tyneside differed from other areas in having 'an unusually uninterested working class', but this too is at odds with the evidence not only of the Spital meeting, but of working class consumption of radical literature in the region.¹⁰⁸ At the time of the previous radical upsurge around 1820 for instance, the Newcastle agent for the twopenny radical tract *The Black Dwarf* sold 'between twenty and thirty thousand [copies] a week', and even in earlier years tracts such as Cobbett's *Register* received 'a rapturous display of political feeling on its being read aloud' to local people.¹⁰⁹ During the reform agitation of the early 1830s as many as 2400 unstamped newspapers were sold at Newcastle Quayside on Saturday evenings alone, bringing what was described as 'an outburst of popular thought and inquiry among the working-men... the number of readers and thinkers in their class was increased tenfold'.¹¹⁰ With this kind of tradition and enthusiasm it is inconceivable that at the culmination of the two-year long agitation for reform, the workers of Tyneside were 'unusually uninterested' in the issue.

The fact that Lord Grey and Lord Durham were themselves North Easterners influenced by regular communications from friends in the region seems also to have gone unappreciated. When Losh for example visited Grey in March 1832, after talk of the pitmen Grey asked 'what was thought of him and the Reform Bill in the North... [Losh said] the anxiety for Parliamentary Reform was very intense and that failure in the *present measures* would produce the most alarming consequences'.¹¹¹ This stark advice came conveniently in advance of the May crisis, and could not have left Grey under any illusions as to the temper of his native region.

It would therefore seem that on several levels, the historiography of the region's role in the reform struggle has been inaccurate. The working classes of

Tyneside were far from 'unusually uninterested' in the Bill, and whilst the colliery disputes may have been of some distraction they certainly failed to 'overshadow' reform. What is moreover clear is that amongst the working classes it was precisely the pitmen, rather than other organised groups such as the seamen or keelmen, who appear to have exhibited the greatest enthusiasm for reform. For them the May crisis was a political interlude in a long industrial battle which had been joined before the first Reform Bill was introduced in 1831 and continued beyond the successful passage of the Bill. Though admittedly their political and industrial struggles 'were never properly united either in theoretical understanding or in matters of organisation',¹¹² that many pitmen were so keenly involved in the reform agitation was no less appropriate than it was perhaps inevitable.

With limited reforms secured, popular agitation and the Political Union movement subsided and victory in the general election of December 1832 paved the way for the Whig ascendancy of the next few years. The Reform Act, traditionally seen 'as a grudging or cynical concession to outdoor demand', has come to be considered 'a shrewd and progressive alignment of the landed with the commercial classes' as Grey's political astuteness gains credit: but a new interpretation argues further

...that the Whigs restored social peace not only by conceding political power to the middle classes but also by conciliating the people as a whole to their government; in other words, that they forestalled revolution not only in 1832, but in 1839 and 1848 as well, by showing government to be responsive to petition and a source of relief to distress...¹¹³

The further crises of the ensuing years were the other side of the coin to the Whigs' success, and an indication of the lower orders' dismay that Grey's Act was a final measure. In Newcastle a contemporary memorial of local middle class gratitude for the Reform Act still towers in the heart of the city today in the shape of Grey's Monument, yet for the working classes the 1831-1832 campaign merely denoted a limited first success in a longer process. The lessons derived however were vital to the development of the popular independent working class political movement which emerged before the decade was out as Chartism: for it is increasingly clear that the Political Unions comprised 'a national popular political movement'

and played an appreciable role in the agitation, which of itself was more important in securing reform than traditional historians of high politics have been willing to admit. But perhaps more significant for the longer term was the fact that 1831-1832 also produced the Unions of the Working Classes, described by LoPatin as the first independent working class political movement, which mark the juncture when working men took the crucial step of rejecting middle class leadership and forming their own separate organisations. The Chartist movement embodied just such assimilated experience, but at any rate the high degree of working class support for both the Political Union and UWC movements suggests that perhaps here might lie the answer to the abiding question of where 'the foundations of working class popular reform politics' are actually to be found.¹¹⁴

NOTES TO CHAPTER FIVE.

- 1 *Tyne Mercury*, April 3, 1832. Dr John Fife was elected secretary at this meeting to replace Eneas Mackenzie Snr., who had died of cholera. Larkin was seen as perhaps Newcastle's most outspoken exponent of radical reform. Though evidently a great orator, his ideas were largely offensive even to those of 'liberal' outlook, and the Newcastle Whigs ensured his exclusion from all posts of political responsibility in the town, rendering him ultimately a somewhat impotent figure.
- 2 *Northern Tribune*, p.335.
- 3 N.D. LoPatin, 'Political Unions and the Great Reform Act of 1832', (unpublished Ph.D thesis, Washington, 1988).
- 4 Mandler, *Aristocratic Government...* p.130: LoPatin, p.6: For the agrarian riots see E.J. Hobsbawm and G.F.E. Rude, *Captain Swing* (London, 1969).
- 5 Mandler describes as myth the view that Grey's ministry was Whig, asserting that it was a centre coalition 'of whigs, liberals, moderates, and liberal Tories, united only by their agreement on a measure of Parliamentary Reform'. Ultra-Tories were excluded and of the radicals, only aristocrats such as Lord Durham were accepted (*Aristocratic Government...* pp.123,124).
- 6 Grey's friends and supporters kept him informed as to the state of the country. James Losh of Newcastle, Dr J.R. Fenwick of Durham City, and Northumbrian John Grey were all confidantes. For the latter see J.E. Butler, *Memoir of John Grey of Dilston* (Edinburgh, 1869): see also McCord, *North East England*, pp.27,29,31-33.
- 7 Brock, p.295. This meeting was timed to coincide with the commencement of the Bill's committee stage in the Lords, but came a day too late to influence the vote which defeated the government.
- 8 Cited by Brock, p.297.
- 9 G. Wallas, *Place* (London, 1898), pp.300-1. Place's memoirs are however flawed by the prominence he attaches to his own role and the fact that he only recorded these events many years later.
- 10 *Northern Tribune* (Newcastle, 1854), Vol.I, p.336. The *Tribune* was one element of the reform activity of 1850s Newcastle and carried a full account of the 1831-32 agitation by surviving Newcastle radicals of that period.
- 11 Brock, p.299: 'Financially the withholding of direct taxes was not overwhelmingly important, since these represented only about one-twelfth of tax revenue. But as a gesture of defiance it was effective and difficult to counter'. Seizure of goods was one of the few methods of recovering unpaid taxes, but when auctioneers refused to handle such goods and the public agreed not to buy them (*Morning Chronicle*, May 11, 1832), recovery was impossible. Brock cites alleged bank withdrawals of £20,000 in London and £16,000 in Manchester, and the rumour that one 'tory Lord' had his tradesmen withdraw his stock of gold from the Bank of England suggests panic amongst Tories at the prospect of the Bill's success (pp.297-301).
- 12 The diary of Edward John Littleton MP (1791-1863), later Lord Hatherton, in A. Aspinall, *Three Early Nineteenth Century Diaries* (London, 1952), p.253.
- 13 Brock, pp.167,296: Another notable radical was J.H.B. Lorymer, editor of the

Republican magazine, whose radical manifesto called for the replacement of the House of Lords with an elected 'National Convention' of delegates. *Newcastle Courant*, May 26, 1832.

14 Brock, p.167. The Unions of the Working Classes and National Association for the Protection of Labour both took this view: *Newcastle Chronicle*, October 22, 1831.

15 D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, May 12, 1832.

16 D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, May 14, 1832.

17 His links with government figures were due to the fact that 'this was an age when a remarkable galaxy of north-country men dominated the national scene' (Hughes, *Losh's Diaries*, I, p.xvi). Hughes however exaggerates Losh's role.

18 Hughes, *Losh's Diaries*, II, May 9, 1832; Losh to Lord Howick, May 11, 1832.

19 Brock, p.297. Francis Place of the National Political Union and Joseph Parkes and Thomas Attwood of the Birmingham body cynically wound up their working class followers to threaten the ruling elite with a revolution which they had no intention of leading and which once underway they could not hope to halt even if they wished.

20 C. Muris, 'The Northern Reform Union, 1858-1862' (unpublished MA thesis, Newcastle, 1953), p.51. The Tories exercised influence via their control of the town's Common Council, which the Whigs coveted but did not take until after the changes of the 1835 Municipal Corporations Act. 'The radicals particularly objected to the banquets given by the council and to the feasts which the newly-elected members of Parliament gave to the freemen after an uncontested election'.

21 *Northern Tribune*, p.334.

22 Grey had already told parliament that 'there is no one more decided against annual parliaments, universal suffrage, and the ballot, than I am. My object is not to favour, but to put an end to such hopes and projects'. Cited by E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the Working Class* (London, 1980), p.892.

23 John Fife to the NPU Council, June 13, 1832, in *Northern Tribune*, p.407.

24 Losh's standing as 'one of the leading Whigs on Tyneside' was illustrated when the Recordership of Newcastle County Court fell vacant at this point. The prestigious post 'was offered to me by the Tories themselves' and on May 23 he was 'unanimously elected Recorder, without canvassing'. Hughes, *Losh's Diaries*, I, p.xvi; II, Losh to Lord Howick, May 11, 23, 1832.

25 'The use of this quasi-constitutional device of the public meeting was growing rapidly, here as elsewhere, in this period'. M. Cook, 'The Last Days of the Unreformed Corporation of Newcastle upon Tyne', *Archaeologia Aeliana*, 4th Series, Vol.XXXIX, 1961, p.208.

26 Hughes, *Losh's Diaries*, II, May 11, 1832: Between 1801-32 Reed was Mayor six times. See R. Welford, *Men of Mark 'Twixt Tyne and Tweed* (London, 1895), pp.282-286.

27 The office of Mayor in Newcastle enjoyed 'a pre-eminence not accorded to the chief magistrate of every borough. His duties naturally included the presidency of every formal public activity in the town. It was accepted that he must preside at any public meeting requisitioned by a sufficient number of respectable people... party political bodies, such as the Northern Political Union, generally preferred to hold meetings under the chairmanship of one of their members... [though] the great

meetings of... pitmen or keelmen, held usually on the Town Moor, were outside the framework of public life in the borough; but nevertheless the Mayor... was accepted as the public spokesman of the opinion of the inhabitants on all questions of general interest'. Cook, 'The Last Days of...' pp.208,209.

28 Hughes, *Losh's Diaries*, II, Losh to Lord Howick, May 11, 1832.

29 Hughes, *Losh's Diaries*, II, May 12, 1832: Losh was quick to rally the 'respectables' and told Grey's son that he had 'seen Headlam, Mr. J. Fenwick and many of your other friends in Newcastle... I have also seen a good many of the solicitors ec.' Ibid., Losh to Lord Howick, May 12, 1832.

30 Ibid., Losh to Lord Brougham, May 12, 1832: *Diary*, May 12, 1832. The deputation consisted of 'Doubleday, J. Fife, Larkin, and Shield'. Losh maybe had some regard for Fife and Doubleday, whom he saw as 'two of the most respectable leaders of the Northern Union'. Ibid., Losh to Lord Howick, May 12, 1832: For Doubleday and Fife, *DNB*, Vol.V, pp.1160-1161; Vol.VI, pp.1300-1301.

31 Hughes, *Losh's Diaries*, I, p.xvii.

32 Ibid., II, Losh to Lord Howick, May 11, 1832.

33 Ibid., II, May 12, 1832.

34 *Newcastle Journal*, May 19, 1832.

35 *Tyne Mercury*, April 24, 1832.

36 *Newcastle Chronicle*, October 22, 1831.

37 During the comparable radical upsurge after Peterloo in 1819, the Mayor of Newcastle wrote of 'the disaffection of the pitmen... At one colliery (Mount Moor) near to Gateshead Fell, all the pitmen except five have joined the Radicals, and almost the entire body of the pitmen entertain the same mischievous and abominable principles'. HO 42/197, Reed to Sidmouth, October 27, 1819, in A. Aspinall, *Early English Trade Unions*, (London, 1949) p.338.

38 D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, May 12, 1832. The Cock Inn at the Head of the Side, Newcastle, was a regular venue for pitmen's delegate meetings.

39 In March 1832 the NAPL's Nottingham secretary H.V. Bullock had sent leaflets far afield soliciting support. *The Union Pilot* of March 24 reported favourable responses from the North East, and it was probably this exchange of which Parkinson spoke at the pitmen's rally on April 14. See R.G. Kirby and A.E. Musson, *Voice of the People: John Doherty (1798-1854)* (Manchester, 1975), p.256, and Cole, *Attempts at General Union*, op.cit., p.45: This matches evidence that there was an 'attempt by the Manchester committee to revive it [the NAPL] in the spring of 1832'. But this came to nothing and the NAPL 'disintegrated totally'. R. Sykes, 'Trade Unionism and Class Consciousness: the "Revolutionary" Period of General Unionism, 1829-1834', J. Rule (ed), *British Trade Unionism 1750-1850* (London, 1988) p.180.

40 LoPatin, p.154. During 1831-32 UWCs were established to rival existing middle class-led Political Unions at Leeds, Bolton, Bristol, Leicester and Norwich. LoPatin goes on to cite twelve others as far afield as Yeovil, Brighton and Blackburn (pp.163-5). The London body styled itself the National Union of the Working Classes.

41 The NPU seemingly differed in that the Whigs always remained aloof, leaving

its leadership to those like Larkin who held firm to radical principles (Muris, p.150); and the fact that its branch structure allowed scope for local differences, as indicated by the evident existence under NPU auspices at Carlisle and Durham of bodies described as Unions of the Working Classes. The latter was noted by the Home Office in mid-1831 when pitmen paraded banners with slogans like 'Political Union' and 'Unions for Wages, Unions for Suffrage'. HO 40/28-4, cited by LoPatin, p.164.

42 D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, May 15, 1832: J. Sykes, *Local Records*, II (Newcastle, 1866) p.356: B. Harrison and P. Hollis (eds), *Robert Lowery, Radical and Chartist*, (London, 1979), p.65.

43 *Northern Tribune*, p.377: One Tynesider later recalled that 'when meetings were held... the workmen were asked if they were for the measure, or if they were going to the meeting. The orders were, "Close the shop" - "Shut the factory up;" and, thus compelled to cease labour, animal curiosity led many to the raree-show' (Harrison and Hollis, *Robert Lowery*... p.243). The use of the word 'compelled' here may raise questions of individual freedom of choice and trades union practices.

44 D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, May 15, 1832.

45 *Newcastle Journal*, May 19, 1832: Relating events to Londonderry, Buddle said 'the whole aspect of affairs is very alarming - it seems as if we were on the verge of a revolution'. D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, May 15, 1832.

46 *Northern Tribune*, Vol.I, p.377: Sykes, *Local Records*, II, p.356: The Spital Field was what is now the east end of Neville Street, outside BR Central Station.

47 *Newcastle Journal*, May 19, 1832.

48 *Newcastle Chronicle*, *Newcastle Journal*, May 19, 1832. It was added that '[o]ne man held an old worn-out Broom aloft, with the inscription, "The friend of Reform," but whether it was meant in derision of the Lord Chancellor [Brougham], the people were left to discover'. Another banner read 'God save the _____', the word 'King' having been erased (Sykes, *Local Records*, II, p.356).

49 D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, May 15, 1832: Hughes, *Losh's Diaries*, II, May 15, 1832.

50 Sykes, *Local Records*, II, p.356: The *Newcastle Chronicle* (May 19) and the NPU's John Fife both put the crowd at 40,000, the most widely cited figure. Buddle was told the meeting was 'the largest ever known' at Newcastle and Losh thought it 'very numerous' but no larger than 10,000 (D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, May 15, 1832. Hughes, *Losh's Diaries*, II, May 15, 1832). The *Journal* (May 19) declared a 40,000 crowd impossible, calculating the field's capacity at 29,092 and the true attendance at only 13,922. This approach finds an analogy in the 1848 Kennington Common Chartist meeting where it was claimed 500,000 had gathered, though it is now thought the Common could barely hold 50,000. See D. Large, 'London in the year of revolutions', J. Stevenson (ed), *London in the Age of Reform* (London, 1977), p.142.

51 *Northern Tribune*, p.377.

52 Sykes, *Local Records*, II, p.357: Behind this however was Fife's antipathy to Attwood after the defeat of his proposal of May 8. Fife later said he had been 'perfectly fair' in calling a Whig to the chair 'both because they originated the meeting, and because they acted with more courage than the Cobbett party', the latter jibe being aimed at Attwood and his supporters (*Northern Tribune*, p.407).

53 *Northern Tribune*, pp.377-378.

- 54 Hughes, *Losh's Diaries*, II, May 15, 1832.
- 55 *Newcastle Journal*, May 19, 1832. The *Newcastle Chronicle* (May 19, 1832) reported this in a less pronounced manner, as 'some slight expressions of dissent'.
- 56 Hughes, *Losh's Diaries*, II, May 15, 1832.
- 57 *Newcastle Journal*, May 19, 1832.
- 58 *Newcastle Courant*, May 19, 1832.
- 59 *Newcastle Journal*, May 19, 1832. Fox was one of a small group in parliament arguing against British attempts to put down the French Revolution during the 1790s. See D. Powell, *Charles James Fox: Man of the People*, (London, 1989).
- 60 *Northern Tribune*, p.378.
- 61 *Newcastle Journal*, May 19, 1832.
- 62 *Newcastle Courant*, May 19, 1832.
- 63 Hughes, *Losh's Diaries*, II, May 15, 1832.
- 64 *Newcastle Journal*, May 19, 1832.
- 65 The radicals denounced taxation rather than argue for its use in tackling social problems. Belief in government agencies developed only slowly 'and began from a distinctly low level'. See N. McCord, *North East England* (London, 1979) p.74.
- 66 Such criticism of the aristocracy appears muddled as the Bill's authors were themselves Whig aristocrats, but Larkin's venom was aimed at the Tories in the House of Lords who now posed the prime obstacle to the Bill's progress. Peers favouring reform generally enjoyed public support, but Larkin himself warned that though Grey might for now be the champion of reform, he was ultimately no more than 'a feeble instrument in the hands of a mighty people' (*Newcastle Journal*, June 16, 1832).
- 67 *Newcastle Courant*, May 19, 1832: Queen Dowager Adelaide (1792-1849), a German Princess, married William in 1818. She denied interfering in politics but was 'very unpopular during and after the reform agitation, and her carriage was once assailed in the streets by an angry mob, who were only beaten off by the canes of her footmen'. *DNB*, Vol.1, p.136.
- 68 *Newcastle Journal*, May 19, 1832.
- 69 Hughes, *Losh's Diaries*, II, May 15, 1832. As if to explain Larkin's conduct, Losh wrote with no little contempt that he was merely 'a surgeon, a catholic, and the son of a gardener of by no means good repute'.
- 70 *Northern Tribune*, p.379: Lowery said Larkin was 'an eminent classical scholar, and one of the most commanding orators I have ever heard... with his commanding form and voice, [he] would utter forth, in swelling tones and powerful sentences, a torrent of indignation against those who opposed the measure, which would rouse the passions of the multitude vehemently'. Harrison and Hollis, *Robert Lowery*... pp.64,65.
- 71 *Newcastle Journal*, *Newcastle Courant*, May 19, 1832: *Northern Tribune*, p.380.

- 72 P. Cadogan, *Early Radical Newcastle* (Consett, 1975), p.91: Fife was cheered when he mentioned 'the Republicans'. 'Do we not hear them now, at every corner of the streets, inquiring, "When was the prosperity of the United States disturbed by an individual? When was the peace of that great country shaken by the intrigues of a foreign woman?"' (*Newcastle Journal*, May 19, 1832).
- 73 *Newcastle Journal*, May 19, 1832: Hughes, *Losh's Diaries*, II, May 15, 1832.
- 74 Cadogan, *Early Radical Newcastle*, p.93.
- 75 This was Whig MP Sir Denis Le Marchant (1795-1874). A. Aspinall, *Three Early Nineteenth Century Diaries* (London, 1952), p.252.
- 76 *Newcastle Courant*, May 19, 1832.
- 77 War Office papers, cited by Brock, p.301.
- 78 Brock, pp.302,305-6.
- 79 Earl of Ilchester (ed.), *Elizabeth Lady Holland to her Son, 1821-1845* (London, 1946) p.187 (May 18, 1832). Lady Holland's reference to a national guard was derived from the Birmingham Political Union's banned militarisation proposal of November 1831, which paralleled the 1789 Revolution when the people of France had themselves formed just such a body.
- 80 Brock, p.306: Le Marchant wrote that had Wellington resumed as Premier, '[f]ew but the most furious partisans of the duke expected that private property could long survive a change of the administration'. Aspinall, *Three Diaries...* p.263: John Stuart Mill was convinced that 'we are indebted for the preservation of tranquillity solely to the organisation of the people in political unions'. Hugh Elliot (ed), *The Letters of John Stuart Mill* (London, 1910), Vol.I, p.7.
- 81 Cited by Brock, pp.303-4.
- 82 D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, May 17, 1832.
- 83 *Newcastle Chronicle*, *Newcastle Courant*, May 19, 1832.
- 84 *Durham Advertiser*, May 25, 1832: The defiant *Newcastle Journal* (May 26, 1832) dryly observed that 'the people out of doors, who are favourable to the reform measure, bid the country stick by the House of Commons, which is so corrupt as to need reform; and Lord Grey, within doors, in order to put down the corrupt influence of 56 close boroughs in the Commons, proposes to make 65 rotten peers in the Lords. Glorious consistency - noble reformers - illustrious Grey'.
- 85 E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the Working Class*, p.898.
- 86 See Brock, p.307. Circumstantial evidence supports this view. In the months preceding the crisis arms sales had been 'brisk' and 'a radical manual on street fighting... enjoyed a large sale'. During the May crisis itself the stagnation in trade threatened to increase already serious unemployment levels, which in an underpoliced society like Britain might well have brought dangerous consequences.
- 87 D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, May 19, 1832 (see also June 13, 1832). By the 'Cock Parliament' Buddle meant the general committee of pitmen's delegates.
- 88 R. Church, 'Chartism and the Miners: A reinterpretation', *Bulletin of the*

Society for the Study of Labour History, Vol.56, No.3 (1991), p.33. This view addresses the Chartist years but applies equally here. The conclusion of Church's valuable survey of the subject literature is essentially that in politics the pitmen were at this stage guided more by a trade union consciousness than anything else.

89 Hansard, Vol.XIII, 3rd Series, p.98.

90 The *Durham Advertiser* (June 8, 1832) gloomily noted that the 'Revolutionary Bill' had passed. The Scottish Reform Act became law on July 17 and the Irish measure on August 7.

91 The NPU dinner on August 14 was attended by Robert Owen of the National Political Union. William Cobbett was at the Gateshead dinner on September 10, and the Newcastle burgesses' dinner was held the following day.

92 *Hansard*, Vol.III, 3rd series, col.1191. Similarly at the close of parliament in August 1832, the King said the Act's aim was 'to restore general confidence in the Legislature, and to give additional security to the settled institutions of the State' (*ibid.*, Vol.XIV, col.1414).

93 Larkin made this claim before a 'large gathering' in Newcastle on October 12, 1858. *Northern Reform Record*, November 1858, p.42.

94 C. Flick, *The Birmingham Political Union and the Movements for Reform in Britain, 1830-1839*, (Connecticut, 1979), p.16.

95 In county constituencies the long established voting qualification of freeholders of land worth at least 40s per year remained.

96 Brock, p.281: *Tyne Mercury*, April 24, 1832.

97 Brock, p.284: The accuser was William Cobbett, who wrote to friends such as Robert Blakey of Morpeth that Grey meant to 'raise the qualification', urging that petitions should 'pour in immediately' to prevent this. H. Miller (ed), *Memoirs of Dr. Robert Blakey* (London, 1879), p.53: G.J. Holyoake, *Sixty Years of an Agitator's Life* (London, 1892) Vol.I, p.26. Birmingham's Thomas Attwood was the brother of the NPU's Charles Attwood.

98 Brock, pp.140,380. For Leeds, see also E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, pp.899-900: The declaration was by Edward Baines of the Leeds Whig Political Union, a breakaway from the original Political Union in late 1831 in response to growing working class demands for a full radical programme including factory reform. The original LPU then changed its name to the Leeds Union of the Working Classes. Unlike the NPU, Baines' LWPU could not thus claim to have popular working class support (LoPatin, pp.156-157).

99 Harrison and Hollis, *Robert Lowery...* p.64.

100 *Northern Tribune*, p.377. The *Tribune* claimed the meeting exerted 'great influence' on the government (p.405).

101 *Newcastle Chronicle*, *Newcastle Courant*, August 18, 1832. Owen was however addressing a local audience here.

102 Flick, *The Birmingham Political Union...* p.16.

103 LoPatin, pp.6,176. The MUWC, it is argued, represented 'an outright rejection

of middle class political leadership' and was the first independent popular political working class organisation in Britain. Others UWCs appeared as the MUWC took the lead 'in directing an emerging working class consciousness and, along with it, a working class political movement'.

- 104 D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, May 15, 1832: *Northern Tribune*, pp.405,379: The *Tyne Mercury* (May 29, 1832) seemed to concur with this view. 'We shall not remark at the length we might on the impolicy of the Marquis of Londonderry's bringing the speech of Mr. Larkin before the House of Peers. The folly of such a proceeding is too evident to require observation... he seems to be one of those beings on whom Providence has not deigned to bestow "the giftie of seeing himsel' as ithers see him."'
- 105 See Thomas Doubleday, *DNB*, Vol.V, p.1160: *Northern Tribune*, p.377.
- 106 Brock, pp.168-169.
- 107 *Newcastle Chronicle*, May 19, 1832: Muris, 'Northern Reform Union...' p.125.
- 108 I.G. Hunter, 'Tyneside and the Reform Act in 1832', *North East Labour History Society Bulletin*, 16, 1982, p.11.
- 109 Miller, *Memoirs of Dr. Robert Blakey*, pp.19,30: These were illegal newspapers 'with a working-class circulation which were sold cheaply because the newspaper stamp duty had not been paid on them'. Brock, p.167.
- 110 Harrison and Hollis, *Robert Lowery...* pp.93,95: In contrast to this thirst for political knowledge Le Marchant wrote during May that the Tories 'regret that the people should know their own interests, as such knowledge may be incompatible with the present system'. Aspinall, *Three Diaries...* p.264.
- 111 Hughes, *Losh's Diaries*, II, March 17, 1832.
- 112 Cadogan, *Early Radical Newcastle*, p.65.
- 113 Mandler, pp.129,280. It is added that historians of working class radicalism are increasingly turning to this to explain the decline in popular militancy after the peak of Chartism, in which respect Gareth Stedman Jones' 'Rethinking Chartism' in *Languages of Class* (Cambridge, 1983) is cited.
- 114 LoPatin, pp.3,6,9.

CHAPTER SIX:'A TENUOUS UNITY': THE COAL TRADE AND
THE STRAINS OF ANTI-UNION ATTRITION, SUMMER 1832.Prolongation of the Dispute.

The excitement of the reform crisis may have provided a distraction from the tribulations of the strike, but it had done nothing to mitigate the pitmen's conflict with the coal owners. The *Tyne Mercury* listed twenty-three pits which remained unbound, and estimated that 'not less than eight thousand five hundred men' were on strike, supported by the same number at work.¹ The owners pressed on with evictions to accomodate blacklegs, but after more than seven weeks on strike the pitmen showed no signs of giving way. The *Mercury* estimated that by May 22 there were four hundred lead miners at Hetton alone, and 'in the collieries of the district altogether... not less than one thousand'.² But this caused Buddle problems with the Pittington men, as '[d]etachments of Strangers are daily marching past them to Hetton, which vexes them, and keeps up the excitement'. His concern here was for Londonderry's continuing debt problems: he dared not 'take any measures to keep up, or push the Work for fear of risking worse consequences as they are completely masters and beyond all controul'.³ The pitmen's control of the workplace was clearly intact here but the owners were taking further steps to put down the union.

Their general meeting on May 19 decided to use their committee as a clearing house facility to allocate the incoming lead miners to the various collieries,⁴ but by the end of May there was a greater earnest of such intentions when the owners resolved to borrow £10,000 from Ridley's Bank in Newcastle 'on the joint note of the members of the Comm^{ee}, to be repaid in six months by a two per cent levy on coal sales

in line with indemnity fund resolutions.⁵ Noting the owners' determination, Buddle said they agreed to

...put down the Union, by every means in their power, and as it seems that in a little time, an abundant Supply of Miners, and Colliers, can be had from other parts of the Kingdom, to supply those collieries which still want men it was resolved to raise a Loan of £10,000 to defray the expence of bringing the requisite supply of Strangers... The meeting was quite unanimous as to the necessity of adopting the most efficacious measures to break the Union under the conviction, that if it is not broken - it will not only ruin the coal-trade - but every other trade and finally the whole Country will be ruined by it...⁶

Such support from bankers such as Northumberland coal owner M.W. Ridley shows the depth of the owners' links, and constituted a critical development: the dispute so far had been evenly balanced but if the owners could now recruit lead miners on the scale which the loan would facilitate, the odds might begin to tip their way.⁷ The expense of special constables remained but within two days the Durham magistrates decided to allow the owners 5s per day for every policeman, which Dunn observed would 'go far to pay those expences'.⁸ This would admittedly swell the county rate but such a burden was manifestly deemed justified if it meant rendering the assistance required to put down the union.⁹ Losh underlined this when he openly declared that the owners would bring in 20,000 more strangers rather than employ union pitmen. According to the *Tyne Mercury* this was now the central issue: the dispute had 'changed its character', demands for higher wages had been dropped - 'all the men appear to require is that the owners should bind the whole of them, and that they should be allowed to continue in the Union'. The men said they had not sought more pay but the *Mercury* was correct in one respect: 'The great bone of contention is now the Union'.¹⁰ By June 16 the Hetton owners alone had hired 'about 1200 strangers men and boys'. Lead miners were arriving daily in Newcastle, evictions were 'still going forward', and it was estimated that by June 12 '[n]ot less than two thousand five hundred strangers' were at work in the coalfield.¹¹

Solidarity with their working class counterparts in the collieries was clearly secondary to the promise of high wages, as far as the lead miners were concerned.

The need to supervise the allocation of new hands meant the owners' committee was now meeting more frequently, and an addition to the already stringent binding rules resulted when unbound pits were forbidden to bind union pitmen 'until they have communicated the proposed terms to the Committee', to ensure that all those binding signed the anti-union declaration. Individual owners thus lost autonomy in selecting men,¹² but the imposition of what was effectively centralised control of binding was born of necessity as some owners could not be trusted to pay indemnity fund fees. Even after securing the loan and agreeing to co-ordinate strikebreaking efforts, the Coal Trade committee was still striving 'to secure the regular payment of the Contribution to the Indemnity fund'.¹³ Perhaps with this in mind it was also agreed to extend the 1832 regulation to the end of 1833, to allow those pits 'which are now fighting the battle with the Union' to make up deficient production.¹⁴

And underlying all these problems was the complicating factor of Londonderry's reluctance to sign the regulation document for 1832, and concern that this would deprive the indemnity fund of a major source of income.¹⁵ With the £10,000 loan now added to their burden the owners were thus anxious to secure his compliance, to which end their chairman, R.W. Brandling, was sent to London to pin him down on the subject. Londonderry had always opposed the regulation in principle but held a pragmatic attitude and was 'at one with other members... in trying to gain as much output as possible without wanting to precipitate the trade into a state of war'.¹⁶ With Seaham Harbour now operational he sought 'to secure an enlarged vend commensurate with his greater capacity for

shipment', and to achieve this 'adopted a tactic hitherto associated especially with the Hetton Coal Company and attempted to force the issue by over-vending to establish a case for receiving a larger allocation'.¹⁷ His grounds for this were not however derived from a vain desire for aggrandisement, but from major debt problems which forced him to maximise income by over-vending: for the realisation of the potential capacity of Seaham Harbour, the construction of which was a major source of his debts, was also the road to his salvation.¹⁸ Whether Londonderry knew of the gravity of his debt problem is questionable, but the imperative need to avoid his pitmen striking was illustrated when Buddle told him on June 6 that finances were so tight, 'if we once flounder, in making the Pay, it will be all over with us'.¹⁹

It was thus no surprise that Londonderry again evaded the issue by promising Brandling a full discussion on his return north from London. Buddle approved of this but was not optimistic as to the possible interim developments:

...your plan of putting off the Coal-trade discussion 'till then is excellent - if they will only wait so long - but they are by no means in a settled state at present - I apprehend a reduction of Prices...²⁰

As a corporate body, the owners were thus far from the cohesive unit they might be supposed, each being ready to pursue their own interests whenever possible. Their unity can thus be seen to have been tenuous at times and it seems if any one factor kept them together it was the overriding desire to put down the pitmen's union. But their efforts in this direction were not without consequence, as Buddle wrote on June 10 that the unionists were 'getting very angry at the introduction of so many Strangers and the Delegates are raising Heaven and Earth to [keep] them together'. Dunn noted that there were 'commitments taking place almost every day for various assaults', and Buddle concurred:²¹

...Assaults, and riots, are taking place daily in one place or

another. And commitments are numerous... Nothing can exceed the brutal spirit which is now manifested by the Union Pitmen - especially the unbound part - they see they will be beaten and are quite reckless - they talk coolly of murdering those who are obnoxious to them and we all have the most awful threatening letters...²²

That some were 'quite reckless' was beyond dispute, as shown by an attack on the old magistrate Nicholas Fairles on June 11, when two Jarrow pitmen 'way-laid' him

...on his way between Jarrow and S^o. Shields. They dragged him from his Horse fractured his Scull and otherwise so brutally maltreated him that they left him for dead. He was almost immediately taken up - and so far recovered his senses for a while, as to be able to make an affidavit, as to the identity of one, or two of the Villains - whom he happened to know...²³

One man was taken that evening at South Shields but the other, despite a £400 reward, was never traced.²⁴ Fairles died ten days later. The attack was raised in parliament on June 14 by T.W. Beaumont, MP for South Northumberland. Despite the fact that Fairles had not yet died the question was addressed as murder, and Beaumont called the Commons' attention to

...the state of the workmen in these pits; for it is intolerable that a body of them, because they choose to elect themselves into a Committee, should be able to make themselves lords and masters over all belonging to their calling...²⁵

Two days after the attack Buddle bumped into one of the pitmen's leading delegates. Though they did not apparently speak of Fairles, Buddle's account perhaps suggests some demoralisation, as the pitmen knew only too well that Fairles was fighting for his life and the prospects for the accused were grim:

...I have seen *Sammy Waddle*, Hepburns Coadjutor and Secretary to the Delegates, this morning. He says they are to have a general Meeting at Boldon Fell next Saturday - "to talk matters over". They prefer Boldon Fell, as being out of the immediate neighbourhood of any Colliery - to keep the Men out of the way of doing mischief, as much as possible... The return of Lord Grey to office is a great disappointment to them, as they now think matters will go on peaceably. I did not think Waddle in good Spirits about the cause of the Union - he would not bet me a wager as to who would win the day - the Coal-owners, or the Union - and he talked of emigrating to Van Dieman's Land...²⁶

The pitmen's most important meeting of the summer took place on June 16 at Boldon Fell. The *Newcastle Journal* said there was 'a great falling off in numbers', a view echoed by Fynes, yet others described it as 'a large meeting', 'very numerously attended'.²⁷ Hepburn as usual opened proceedings: that they should persevere for a further ten weeks was the opinion of the majority of members, he said, for by then

...the potatoe season would be in, and the coal trade brisk: and it had been considered that if they were not to come to an agreement, as pitmen, before that time, it would be most advisable to knock off altogether (continued cheering). The advice to do so did not come from himself; it was supported by two-thirds of the men, many of whom wanted it done now; But his advice was, to wait at all events till that period...²⁸

The ultimate sanction of a general stoppage was therefore under consideration, but Hepburn was against such a step at this point: this decision in defiance of 'two-thirds of the men' was to cost the union the strike.

In commenting on the continuing influx of lead miners Hepburn cautioned the men 'not to ill-treat the grovers, nor even to hoot at them'. The owners were 'already tired of them', as in two months 'they had not got as many coals as they did in a fortnight with the regular pitmen'. He alleged this had already cost the Hetton Coal Company £27,000, 'and by the time they exhausted the patience of the pitmen, there would be very few thousands left in their purses'.²⁹ Hepburn then turned to Losh, who claimed

...he was sorry they had not agreed to the old terms: but was it unknown, that in one colliery with which that gentleman was connected, the dispute - the refusal to bind, arose from the demand of the owners that the men should work for 1s a score less than they paid the previous year? The fact was, that the pitmen had suffered a great deal, but Mr. Losh did not care if they had suffered twice as much...³⁰

Hepburn made the telling remark that the union wanted a settlement, but 'they wanted one-half of that agreement to be of their own making', a plain indication of the delegates' willingness to compromise and perhaps

a sense of growing weakness.³¹

The rest of his remarks covered more immediate internal matters.³² there were three things to be settled he said, '[t]he first of which was, whether, the men should work for 3s or 4s a day', and it was later agreed to raise to 4s to increase subscriptions to the union, probably after votes at each colliery.³³ As Jones has pointed out, this was effectively an acknowledgement that their original policy, of limiting earnings to 3s a day in the hope that the reduced coal production would induce the owners to hire more unionists, was a serious mistake.³⁴ The second matter was

...whether they should indict any of the persons concerned in the recent turning out of the pitmen and their families. They had the opinion of counsel, by which it appeared, that although the owners had a right to their houses, they had no right to make a forcible entry for the purpose of recovering them: that ought to have been done in peace; they were not allowed to take armed men, and break open doors, &c. For his own part he was against indicting them; it would cost money, and he also wished that a better spirit should exist between the owners and the men. He thought they had better not do it...³⁵

The *Courant* said many men disagreed with Hepburn here as the law was used against them 'whenever an opportunity offered'. But on a show of hands 'the majority appeared to be against' indicting the owners, and the motion was lost. This was also perhaps a mistake, as the tactics of the MFGB, whose attorney W.P. Roberts made a policy of prosecuting owners in the 1840s and beyond, later served to prove.³⁶

The third point, of whether to send delegates 'into the south to contradict the false statements which were still being made there against the pitmen' was carried unanimously and three delegates left by coach the next morning.³⁷ It was also learned that significant numbers of Welsh blacklegs were defecting,³⁸ and on this hopeful note

...[t]he meeting then separated, with the understanding that the unbound men would stick out for ten weeks longer if necessary; and that, if they had not then got settled, a general strike would be a matter for their consideration...

Despite their difficulties the pitmen seemed optimistic, as the *Courant* found 'no appearance of dejection about the men, and whenever the Union was mentioned, they loudly expressed their determination not to leave it, nor cease to subscribe to support the unbound men and their families'.³⁹

The owners were concerned at the defections of Welsh blacklegs. Of forty-seven brought to Ryton Bank pit seventeen returned home to Wales with money provided by the Ryton pitmen: they had belonged to unions at home, as had thirty at Ouston who 'were all *Union Men*'.⁴⁰ Acting on this, the owners' committee heard that they 'had been deceived by Mr. Trotter... that it was... the N^o. of Deaths from Cholera that occasioned the Vacancies in the Pits here, and that they were not apprised of any differences between the Masters and the Men'.⁴¹ It was agreed to immediately inform Trotter to 'take steps to ascertain whether the Men he engages belong to any Union or not, and those who do should on no account be sent'.⁴² A letter was also sent to Bowness-on-Solway where the Welshmen were landed from their sea passage on the way to the region, warning a Mr. Waldie 'to ascertain on the arrival of the next detachment... whether they are Union Men, and if so... send them back again by the Vessel that brings them'.

At the owners' next general meeting on June 23 it emerged that since the decision to increase to 4s per day, unionists at working pits had been approaching their employers, offering to raise output above the union's earlier self-imposed 3s limit.⁴³ The owners thus focussed on 'whether the Pitmen sh^d. be allowed to advance their work'. Describing the owners' analysis, Buddle said that as the pitmen's object in raising their work was

...evidently to enable the workers, the better to support the men who are out of employment, for ten weeks longer, when if they don't beat the C.owners they mean to make a general Stop - it was resolved, that they should not be allowed to exceed the Standard

which they fixed in April viz 3/- P. day for 11 days in the fortnight, at any rate - but after I left, it seems... that it was resolved to put them down to the lowest Scale - 30/- P. Fort. At this rate viz. 15/- a Week, they can at 3^d. in the Shilling only pay 3/9 each P. Week to the Union - leaving the Workers 11/3^d. a Week each to live on. But at the rate at which the C^ock Parl^t. have allowed - 11 days a fort^t. at 4/- a day, they would earn 44/- a fort^t. or 22/- a Week, which would enable them to pay 5/6 a week each to the Union, and leave them 16/6 a Week, each Man, to live on...⁴⁴

This, said Buddle, with what other income they might have, 'would enable them to hold out well enough for the time they calculate'. The owners' decision to not only keep the men to the 3s limit but to reduce the work from eleven to ten days per fortnight was therefore an important step.⁴⁵

But there were complaints against Londonderry as other owners had now deduced, presumably from intelligence of the number of collier boats at Seaham and Sunderland and the fact that his pitmen were earning 4s per day, that he was not complying with Coal Trade resolutions. Buddle told Londonderry

...that there is terrible grumbling in the trade, both as to the Seaham Vend, and the line your Lordship has taken relative to the Pitmen - which is considered to be tending to support the Union, and rendering it more difficult for the trade to put down. The trade are resolved to put down the Union if possible, and regret that they have not your Lordship's support, in so important an object...

As to his financial problems Buddle added, 'of course, I could not hint at the true cause, why y^r. Lordship does not concur in the anti-union plans'.⁴⁶

A brief seamen's strike in June for higher wages had no direct bearing on the pitmen's dispute but another aspect of their activity concerned Buddle, as he wrote on June 21 that '[t]he Sailors and Trades Unions are all assisting the Pitmen now - which gives them hopes of ultimate success'. Taking in view the number, size and scale of the coalfield's pits and the huge capital invested, Buddle reflected, 'it is terrifick to think, that the movement of this great machine, is wholly dependant on the caprice of a body of refractory Pitmen, or Sailors! The

idea of it makes me nervous.' Reiterating that 'the assistance they receive from the Trade's Unions' could significantly prolong resistance, the exasperated Buddle was convinced that 'in the end Govt. must interfere to put down these trades Unions'.⁴⁷ However Buddle was now hearing of a disagreement in union ranks, and thought a meeting of Tyne pitmen at Byker on June 25 was

...for the purpose of discussing the expedience of making a general Stop immediately, in order to bring the dispute with the Coal-owners to a speedy Crisis, as they are of opinion that they will be beaten by procrastination...⁴⁸

But it was Hepburn who had 'procrastinated' against the general stop on June 16 and according to Buddle he did so again at Byker, telling 'the old story over again, it is said, about holding out and beating the Coal-owners etc.' Hepburn was also seeking negotiations however, having

...in addition said that he and a deputation of delegates meant to go to the Coal-trade Office next Sa. to demand a meeting with a deputation of Viewers and Coal-owners - to talk matters over, and shew the latter how very far he would beat them at all points - in reasoning and argument...⁴⁹

Hepburn's hint on June 16 of a willingness to compromise having been ignored by the owners, in talking of negotiations he now went a step further, but there is no evidence that he approached the owners as indicated. There would be a similar pitmen's meeting on the Wear said Buddle, as 'Hepburn finds it necessary to get these partial meetings frequently called - to enable him the better to keep up the esprit de Corps, which is evidently on the wane'. Buddle took this view from some Elswick pitmen who felt 'that Hepburn and the Delegates are cheating them', along with his report from Wallsend that the pitmen 'were fighting here last night hand over head - about some Union business - which all looks well'.⁵⁰

Hardship was acting powerfully in the owners' favour. The Tyne Mercury noted a handbill signed by Hepburn seeking aid from 'the united mechanics of Great Britain' for the striking Tyne and Wear pitmen who

were now 'suffering under severe privations'. Dismissing union boasts of having 'for nearly three months been able to hold out without injury to themselves', the *Mercury* said the bound men's subscriptions were obviously insufficient and that the strikers' other main source of subsistence 'seems to be begging about the country... they beg or steal to make up the deficiency', as evidenced by cases of food theft.⁵¹

Strikebreakers continued to arrive in the coalfield. Returns to the Coal Trade on June 26 showed that Hetton now had 1835 'strangers', and by the end of June had passed the 2000 mark. 'Great Numbers of Strangers are still flocking in' said Buddle, but with 2000 Hetton had reached its 'full complement'. As for the rest,

...an unlimited Number of excellent workmen - untainted with *Unionism*, may be had from Derbyshire and Somersetshire. So that all the Collieries may be fully supplied, without employing any more of the refractory Union Pitmen... the expence of recruiting however is heavy - the Men cost £3 a head, which will soon go with our £10,000...⁵²

The *Tyne Mercury* could thus report at the end of June that despite defections there were 'not less than *four thousand strangers* at work' in the coalfield. It seems unlikely that there could have been a greater strikebreaking operation in Britain's industrial history previous to this.

The *Mercury* went on to warn that even if the strikers 'were willing at once to return to their employment, not more than half of them could be engaged, and if the labourers from a distance continue to arrive as they have lately done, not one fourth of them can again be taken into the coal pits'. Bouverie too was sanguine: he told the Home Office on June 29 that more blacklegs had joined the local union and others had gone back to Wales, and his information was that the pitmen's funds were large. He saw no sign of accomodation with the owners and concluded that the pitmen seemed adamant, which certainly appeared the case in South Shields, now described by Buddle 'as blackguard a place as

can be'.⁵³ St. Hilda's Special Vestry complained of daily breaches of the peace in the area, exacerbated by Fairles' death, as the Rev. Thomas Baker of Whitburn and William Lorraine were left as 'our only acting Magistrates'.⁵⁴ The situation moved Lorraine to appeal directly to the Home Secretary: Lorraine lived near Chester-le-Street and with the Rev. Baker too busy at his clerical work, South Shields, a town of more than 20,000 inhabitants, was left without a resident magistrate: it was thus a matter of duty, said Lorraine,

...to draw your Lordship's attention to the present disturbed state of this immediate district; I have been obliged to leave my home and reside here for eight weeks, to preserve the public peace, as far as I am able with the assistance of the Military - I am justified in stating, that during that period, there has existed, and still does exist, a continued system of Insubordination, Riot, and Terror, with a strong disposition, on the part of the Pitmen, to commit violence and outrage...⁵⁵

Bouverie brought more troops into the region to counter the disorders, and the situation prompted a discussion initiated by Lord Wharncliffe in the House of Lords on June 29. On June 21 after ten days of 'dreadfull suffering' [sic], the magistrate Nicholas Fairles had died of his injuries.⁵⁶ This was to prove the fatal blow to the pitmen's efforts to win uncommitted public opinion, and Wharncliffe chose this juncture to present a petition from the Tyne and Wear coal owners, which he did without declaring his interest as a partner in a major local coal concern.⁵⁷ After explaining the background Wharncliffe said

...He had stated these facts, in order that his Majesty's Ministers might be fully aware of the present situation of that part of the country to which he referred. Every correctly judging man must see, that this was not a mere dispute between the coal owners and those whom they employed about the amount of wages. No; it was an attempt - and a just one - on the part of the owners and lessees of collieries to set their faces against this system of intimidation...⁵⁸

'If it were not put down effectually', he said, 'no trade could be carried on, in any part of the country', and said the owners sought a committee of inquiry on the subject 'for the purpose, if possible, of

organising a more powerful and efficient police force'. This exceeded the original terms of the petition, which suggests it was an amendment prompted by recent events: but possibly anticipating that this was a trifle ambitious, Wharncliffe hinted that the army might instead be given police powers. Until recently it had been the popular belief that in cases of civil disturbance, soldiers 'ought not to act except in the presence of a Magistrate', he said, but he believed that according to law, 'a soldier was as much bound to give his assistance in putting down outrage and riot, as any other citizen in the country... though no magistrate might happen to be present'. Wharncliffe was implying that this point at least should be conceded as an inexpensive alternative to help ease the owners' problems.⁵⁹

In reply Melbourne said he could confirm the facts of Wharncliffe's statement but addressed the case as a broader trade union problem, expressing his 'regret at that system of combination and intimidation which at present existed throughout the country... He was very sorry to find, that this pernicious system was rapidly communicated from one part of the country to another':

...It was now evident that the best provisions in the combination law passed in 1824 had been eluded and evaded by these unions, and it was necessary that something should be done to put an end to them. This subject would certainly receive the strictest attention of government...⁶⁰

No undertaking was made to appoint the owners' desired committee nor were police powers for the army mentioned, and as far as establishing a police force was concerned, Melbourne said the difficulty would be 'to find persons willing to bear the additional expense which would be attendant on it'. If there was sufficient indication that local ratepayers were willing to pay extra rates, ministers 'were ready to assent to such a plan, [and] would at once concur in the measure'. He implied however that the onus for such a step lay with the local

magistrates, to whose 'discretion, opinion, and recommendation' the owners should in the meantime turn.⁶¹

The Tyne owners subsequently paid to insert Wharncliffe's speech in the Durham and Newcastle press. In its editorial the *Newcastle Journal* was sorry to learn that Melbourne had 'afforded no hope of immediate relief by the interposition of the arm of the law, beyond the ordinary course'. The *Journal* declined to remark on Brougham's hint that 'a new Police is in preparation for us, for which, of course, the inhabitants must pay', as this plan had not yet been properly developed, but concluded instead: 'We can only echo the remark which comes from everybody's mouth - *something must be done...*'⁶²

Police Measures.

As if to emphasize this the *Journal* was answered the following day with further disorders. With the strike beyond the twelve-week mark, the pitmen's resentment of the blacklegs was illustrated at Felling on July 1 when a blackleg was cut on the head by a joiner's chisel. On the same day Lord Londonderry's Pittington men attacked five lead miners and two constables on the road from Durham City to Hetton, severely wounding the latter.⁶³ At this point, with no resident magistrate in the immediate area, several Durham magistrates 'were serving in rotation a few days at a time' at Hetton, and it fell to Edward Dale of Trimdon to attend to the incident. Seven pitmen were indicted on charges of riot, assault, and wounding, Dale pointing out to the Home Office that

...the Men who committed the outrage in question are in full employment, but nevertheless belong to the Pitmen's Union - an association which... has most assuredly been found from experience to be subversive of the peace and well being of Society...⁶⁴

In reply the advice from the Home Secretary was that a meeting of magistrates should be called with Bouverie in attendance to discuss such incidents, and with the owners' call for a permanent police force in

mind Melbourne gave an assurance that he would act on an appropriate response from the magistrates.⁶⁵ This was a broad hint as to which course they should take and was in line with his parliamentary answer to Wharncliffe, that the establishment of a regular police force was a question primarily for the local magistracy. The onus was thus placed upon the magistrates to come up with a suitable scheme.

In the meantime the magistrates were occupied with the quarter sessions. Whilst the Newcastle July Sessions failed to record one case against a pitman and the Northumberland Sessions at Hexham dealt with only two pitmen on charges of assault, the Durham Midsummer Sessions calendar was 'unusually heavy' which, said chairman J.W. Williamson, 'was mainly attributable to the riotous and disgraceful conduct of the pitmen'. Of 114 cases brought, 74 were for riot, assault and other crimes in the colliery districts, which reflected the number of committals to Durham Gaol and House of Correction, as the figure of 272 for the quarter ending June 30 was an increase of 74 over the corresponding quarter of 1831. Of the 272 committed, on June 30 249 remained confined, which left the Gaol 'dreadfully crowded' as its usual capacity was reportedly only 170.⁶⁶

Of the pitmen and their associates prosecuted, 24 were acquitted and 41 found guilty, the latter including one woman, two girls, and two boys, apparently of pitmen's families. Riot and assault were the most common charges with sentences ranging from twelve months hard labour to one month imprisonment. By far the most prolific seat of trouble was Hetton, where 21 of the 41 cases proven occurred, two for assaults against special constables.⁶⁷ The sessions heard a relatively large number of cases by its own standards though some defendants, such as those accused of the Errington and Fairles murders, traversed the sessions to await trial at the summer assizes. But this did not satisfy

the *Newcastle Journal*, which asked:

...Why has not a special Commission been sent down to try the murderers of Errington, the pitman, who was shot at midnight many weeks ago? If such a Commission had been sent down, Mr Fairles, in all probability, would not have been dragged from his horse and murdered in broad-day. From the supineness of the Government... the Pitmen's Union has gathered a strength which it would never otherwise have possessed - the pitmen are in fact above the law...

The *Journal* reasoned that government could not really object to the expense 'as the cost of policemen at one colliery, for one week only, amounts to a sum equal to the expense of a special Commission. But were the expense ever so great, it ought not to be an hindrance, when the proper administration of the law and the protection of the lives of the King's magistrates and subjects is concerned'.⁶⁸

The quarter sessions provided the Durham magistrates with an opportunity to act on Melbourne's suggestion of a formal meeting, to which they invited their Northumberland colleagues to draw up measures to establish a permanent police force.⁶⁹ This willingness to embrace the concept of a regular force may appear a sudden step, at odds with traditional objections to the increased taxation or rates consequent upon the expense of such an undertaking, but it was more the case that this represented the fruition of a longer process. The advantages of a permanent force must have been rammed home in the region by the example of the London police at Hetton and the murders of Fairles and Errington, but the weakness of the civil authorities exposed by the current disorders was possibly the most decisive factor in these moves towards a permanent force.⁷⁰

For the fact was that traditional means of handling disorder could not cope with the widespread and sustained strains imposed by a major prolonged and determined strike of the region's pitmen. The hiring of special constables for short periods, supervised by local magistrates, had usually proved effective enough in dealing with sporadic trouble,

but faced with the need to safeguard numerous collieries and thousands of blacklegs spread throughout the coalfield these time-honoured methods, stretched to the limit, were in danger of breaking down. There were difficulties in finding sufficient volunteers to act as specials, for such men would incur the wrath of the pitmen against whom they acted and in the same communities as where they would have to live long after the strike was over.⁷¹ For this reason some magistrates believed special constables could not be relied upon to act with any vigour, and superimposed on this, the exigencies of the hour had revealed the magistracy itself to be too few in number.⁷²

This then was the law-and-order background facing the Durham and Northumberland magistrates at Newcastle Moot Hall on July 7. Their resolutions, subsequently advertised in the local press, proceeded from an agreement that to preserve peace in the coalfield, 'a Police Force should be established, consisting of Two Police Magistrates, and an Adequate Number of Policemen, under their Direction, which Force shall have Jurisdiction through the whole District'.⁷³ This decision was reached, they said, because the special constables had been found to be 'an inefficient Force' whose attempts to preserve the peace must 'be vain'. As well as being inefficient, the expense of constables had imposed 'an insufferable Charge' on the county rates, so it was now proposed that because the object of the police would be 'the Preservation of the Property of the Coal-Owners, and Ship-Owners', it should be funded by a duty on coal cargoes and general shipping tonnage in the ports of Tyne and Wear, to be supplemented by contributions from the conservators of the two rivers. The Coal Trade, shipowners' societies, Newcastle Corporation and Sunderland Harbour Commissioners were accordingly notified, along with the Home Office, the Bishop of Durham, and the Lords Lieutenant and Members of Parliament for the two

counties. The meeting was then adjourned until July 13, presumably to await feedback from the parties concerned.

Now that the JPs had taken the initiative a positive response might reasonably have been expected, and indeed the owners' committee agreed to 'bear one fourth part of the Expences of carrying the said plan into Execution'. But the Home Secretary vetoed the plans, being 'of opinion that the expense of a Police Force must be provided for by a rate in the County and that it cannot be raised in the way proposed'.⁷⁴ Melbourne's objection was both practical and political, as by granting a means of funding based upon levies against trade and manufactures rather than local taxation he feared he would provoke political opposition, most crucially from the rising manufacturing and trading interests which had supported Grey in the struggle for reform. The practical obstacle of funding the police therefore remained, and the magistrates would have to come up with a more suitable plan to overcome it.⁷⁵

But the whole concept of a permanent police force was called into question at this point when the third violent death of the dispute was claimed by a special constable. This occurred when Cuthbert Skipsey, a Percy Main pitman, intervened in a disturbance between some pitmen and special constables at Chirton on July 8. Placing his hand upon the shoulder of special constable George Weddell, Skipsey asked him to leave the pitmen in peace, at which Weddell shot Skipsey through the chest at point blank range. The pitmen present claimed this was murder but the inquest verdict was one of manslaughter, and Weddell was arraigned to appear at the summer assizes. The resulting controversy called the whole issue of a police force and the arming of constables into question and gave a yet darker aspect to the dispute.⁷⁶

At this point Bouverie sent a comprehensive assessment of the local situation to the Home Office. The most striking aspect of his long

letter lies perhaps in his difference of opinion with the owners as to the balance of forces between the two sides: for while the owners believed their elaborate arrangements for hiring blacklegs would win the day, Bouverie was not so certain and his matter-of-fact manner comes across as far more astute than the blusterings of some owners. Bouverie reassured London that appropriate measures had been taken, but added:

...The State of the Collieries however is such that nothing short of Military and Police Patroles would enable the newly arrived Miners, to go about in safety, and should the present state of things continue untill [sic] Winter, as I much fear that they will, I have not the least doubt that the whole Country from Durham to Morpeth will be in a state of resistance to the Civil Power which will render it very unsafe not only for the newly hired workmen, or Strangers as they are termed, but for the owners of Collieries themselves...⁷⁷

Bouverie added that he was trying 'to get a Return shewing the number of Pitmen ejected from their Houses, the number who refuse to work, and the number of Strangers actually engaged and working in their Places', which he saw as a matter of urgency:

...This Return could it be made up with tolerable accuracy would shew *what chance there is* of the Owners gaining a victory over the Pitmen, a chance which I believe to be so exceedingly small, nor do I see how, should the owners be inclined to give way, they are to provide for the Strangers who must in that case be sent out the Collieries, as I believe nothing will induce the old Pitmen to allow any of them to remain...

The revelation that even Bouverie expected the men to win said much for the strength of their position and was no back-handed complement coming from such a senior military commander. He continued by putting the recent disorders into perspective and put his view of the prospects for the district should the dispute carry through into winter. That he was thinking in such terms in July should have been warning enough to London but he nevertheless spelled out his message in the most pointed terms: the situation, he said

...is in my opinion such as to demand the earliest and most serious attention of His Majesty's Government, the Question must if possible be settled one way or another before the Winter or unless I am much mistaken the consequences will be dreadful

[sic], the Pitmen are now well off, and therefore excepting in a few cases of outrage committed by a few against the Strangers or temporary Police, the district is quiet and they (the Pitmen) perfectly orderly, and sober, and to the Troops especially, civil in their Manner and conduct, but when the Winter sets in, and they come to feel the purpose of cold and distress, for many of them are I believe now living in huts, and others are doubled up in the Cottages with other Families, it is not to be supposed that they will be greatly quiet; and the [regular] Police in the Counties of Durham and Northumberland with the exception of the Town of Newcastle is literally nothing...⁷⁸

Aside from the plans for a police force Bouverie noted that 'the only Remedy [viewed] with any degree of confidence by the Owners and Magistrates of the Two Counties is a [Bill] to put down the Union'. How far this was practicable or advisable it was not his duty to consider, said Bouverie, but he promised to contact the magistrates and 'give the utmost attention to the consideration of the best means of protecting the Peace'. When the magistrates reconvened on July 13, Bouverie was thus present. Their deliberations went unpublished, but Losh gave a brief account of the meeting in his *Diary*. Their attention was again occupied with

...the subject of a Police Establishment and [I] took a very active part in the discussion. Genl. Bouverie and Col. Power attended. A Committee was appointed of 5, I being one to communicate with government and prepare a Bill, with its concurrence, for carrying the plan into effect...⁷⁹

Melbourne's Rebuke.

By mid-July 1832 the continuing expense of special constables was evidently causing serious financial problems for the owners. Though details of constables' wages are not recorded, with the troop allowance running at £7 10s 5d per month for each man, the cost of armed protection plainly constituted a great expense.⁸⁰ The magistrates had already agreed to resort to the county rates to reimburse owners for the cost of police, but this would require an increased rate which could not be raised overnight. The Coal Trade therefore had to wait for payment,

and in the meantime the very owners who had gone to the expense of importing strikebreakers and were worst hit by the effects of reduced coal revenues, had to continue to fund police wages. Paradoxically it would thus appear that the presence of the constables even contrived to work in the union's favour.

In the meantime all the owners could do was limit costs and in this respect the committee set out to regulate police numbers 'to not exceeding 16 Men at each place'. This varied from the letter of the indemnity fund resolutions of January 21 which provided for compensation for constables but, perhaps not having envisaged the size of the problem which they might face, did not allow for the regulation of police numbers. The owners were thus now exceeding indemnity fund resolutions, and that they did so because of increasing financial problems is an obvious conclusion.⁸¹

This problem seems in turn to have had its effect upon the magistracy as the Durham JPs called a meeting to discuss the special constables 'and the most effective Means for regulating and reducing their numbers'.⁸² They were wise to show such concern, for the imposition of unprecedentedly large police costs would not be taken kindly by ratepayers, particularly when this was so obviously to defray expenses incurred for the commercial benefit and advantage of the notoriously wealthy coal owners. Indeed it is not improbable that with this in mind, the magistrates were prime movers behind Coal Trade attempts to regulate police numbers, but it seems their efforts were inadequately appreciated by the Home Office, as on July 16 Melbourne issued a circular to the Durham and Northumberland JPs which was effectively a rocket politely exhorting them to greater application to their duties.⁸³ The most obvious stimulus for this was the death of Skipsey the preceding week, following the recent parliamentary

discussion which must have raised the dispute's profile in the eyes of ministers. But perhaps a more important factor was the magistrates' failed attempt to persuade Melbourne of their plan for a permanent police force: for this, in conjunction with Bouverie's simultaneous disclosure of the pitmen's strong position, created the impression that the magistrates could'nt cope and the union was poised to beat the owners. Such a message from such bona fide sources was probably decisive in persuading Melbourne to address the JPs as he did.

The circular described the situation as perceived from London, culminating in a series of instructions as to the line the magistrates should take: 'I am commanded by his Majesty', said Melbourne,

...to express his confident expectation, that all who hold the Commission of the Peace will act with the promptitude, decision, and firmness which are so imperatively required, and that they will exert themselves for the prevention and suppression of all meetings which shall be called together for an illegal purpose, or which in the course of their proceedings shall become illegal; for the detection and punishment of all unlawful combination and conspiracy, as well as of all outrage and violence; and for the encouragement and protection of his Majesty's peaceable and well-disposed subjects...⁸⁴

At times of upheaval and with forces overstretched such 'encouragement' from government was routine. The purpose was to alert local authorities that London was aware of their position, thereby bolster JPs' resolve, and hopefully cajole them to greater efforts and avoid the unnecessary deployment of further men and resources. But in this case the message imparted was effectively that despite all the letters on the subject, London was simply not aware of the local situation. It was clear for example that by conflating the intimidation of blacklegs with Larkin's 'inflammatory discourses', Melbourne had confused meetings of the NPU with those of the pitmen's union, and legal pitmen's rallies with disturbances such as at Friar's Goose. This was a serious blunder, and the impression gained locally could only have been that the Home Office was so inefficient, irresponsible and distant that

it did not trouble to fully acquaint itself of the problems against which it presumed to issue orders.⁸⁵

This slipshod attitude caused much anger. With scathing indignation the ultra-Tory *Newcastle Journal* took party political advantage to denounce the Whig Home Secretary. In reply 'to the numerous and just entreaties with which [he has] been besieged for "protection"', Melbourne had produced a preposterous response:

...A more ridiculous state paper... considering the circumstances, never was penned. The "serious" attention of the magistrates has been called to the state "of the Colliery districts" in a way not likely to be easily forgotten - viz. by the murder of one of their body, by two pitmen, in open day... peaceable and industrious labourers have been maltreated and intimidated, and other outrages "of the most atrocious character committed;" and against these it was the duty of government to afford effectual protection. And what have they done? Why the magistrates are recommended "to act with the promptitude, decision, and firmness, so imperatively required" - and this too in the teeth of the fact... that every exertion has been used by those functionaries, not only in putting in force the ordinary powers with which they are invested by law, but in arming themselves with extraordinary powers in the appointment of a very large body of special constables, and in adopting every other plan within the range of their authority...⁸⁶

The *Journal* protested against the 'indirect censure' of the JPs, whom it was imputed had not sought to put down illegal meetings. Though government was 'either ignorant, or wilfully shut their eyes to the fact' it said, the pitmen's meetings were not illegal: 'the pitmen know perfectly well that their public meetings are held under the sanction of a law, passed in accordance with the clamour of a Whig opposition'. This referred to the repeal in 1824-25 of the Combination Acts, from which the clause granting workmen the legal right to discuss wage-rates and hours of work was cited. Demanding government action however, the *Journal* then inadvertently paid tribute to the union by declaring that 'the organisation and tactics of the pitmen defy all magisterial activity':

...the combination cannot be put down by a twaddling letter. It can only be met by a strong, well disciplined, and organized police establishment, which the incapables in power either cannot or will not grant...

Melbourne's ill-founded intervention was thus roundly damned by the *Journal*, and the echoed appeal for a permanent police force could leave London in little doubt as to where the onus for action was felt to lie.

The Durham magistrates replied collectively on their own behalf to express four main points, most significantly that the union, 'however dangerous... is not prohibited by the existing Law'. And while the JPs agreed with Melbourne that 'partial conspiracies in the legal sense of the word have no doubt existed' amongst the pitmen, they had to emphasize 'that no such information of those offences has been obtained by the Magistrates (altho' every endeavour to effect this purpose has been used) as to call for their process to send them for trial before the Courts'.⁸⁷ They refuted Melbourne's mistaken view, explaining that the pitmen's meetings,

...tho' numerous, have not been in general tumultuous; threatening words or gestures have not been used, nor offensive weapons displayed, nor alarm excited among the surrounding population; and that as to seditious and inflammatory discourses, we see them stated for the first time, in reference to those meetings, by the Rt. Hon. Secretary...

To this it was pointedly added, presumably of instances such as Friars' Goose, that when 'tumultuous meetings have taken place, they have been immediately suppressed'. But the preface to the final point was perhaps of most interest as, tactfully excusing Melbourne's confusion, the JPs said he seemed 'to have been deceived by unfounded or exaggerated Statements of interested parties', indicating that some owners had painted a blacker picture to the Home Office than was the case.⁸⁸ They concluded by contradicting the suggestion that they had not fulfilled their duties:

...we have exercised the powers vested in us, as Magistrates, to the best of our Judgement, and ability, to preserve the peace in the Colliery Districts; that we shall continue to do... with the same zeal and firmness, but... we shall not be induced for any purpose, however desirable, to exceed the limits of those powers, and thus to transgress the Law, which we are sworn to administer...

The suggestion that Melbourne's instructions implied stepping outside the law was the only barbed rebuke in a letter which in the circumstances was remarkably restrained.

The observations of a meeting of Northumberland JPs were of much the same kind.⁸⁹ They viewed the circular 'as conveying some Imputation upon them of Neglect of Duty and indifference to the deplorable Condition to which this County is reduced', and complained of their powerlessness to act. This suggests that their representations had not received proper attention, and like Bouverie they now looked

...with the greatest Anxiety to the ensuing Winter when large Bodies of unemployed Men may be driven to still greater Outrages against the Laws of the Country, which for want of sufficient Power cannot now be enforced in order to repress disturbance...

This was another indication of the failing confidence of the local authorities as to the outcome of the dispute. The Northumberland JPs asked that in the medium term, measures to establish a regular police force be introduced, and in the shorter term that government should appoint resident stipendiary magistrates in the coal districts.

These official responses were backed up by individuals like the Durham JP Rowland Burdon, who produced the reply probably most helpful and informative to London. He assured Melbourne that 'no man can be more desirous of acting with the "promptitude, decision, and firmness" which you recommend' than he, but had to point out that existing legislation stood in the way:

...it appears to me, that our purpose is in danger of being defeated by the provisions in the 5th Geo:4 Ch.96, which enables workmen to hold meetings for the purpose of doing that, which the first paragraph in your Lordship's Circular seems to consider as the basis of "extensive and determined combinations, and conspiracies". The fact is that the Pitmen do meet under the Plea of "consulting upon and determining their rate of Wages, quantum of Work" etc; and so form "an Union," which has rendered them formidable by the resources they have provided: for they collect contributions, from those in employment to support those, who stand out for better terms in other Collieries...⁹⁰

In terms of legality and finance the pitmen's union was thus strongly placed. Against this the civil power as currently constituted was, Burdon said, of little use, and the magistrates' main resort had been 'to use the Military force to preserve the peace of the district'.⁹¹ But experience had shown that it was not the deployment of armed force which would defeat the pitmen: in Burdon's view, '[t]o break the power of the "Union" their funds must be destroyed, or converted to a better purpose'. Burdon was a Tory paternalist who in 1792 had mediated in a major seamen's strike 'during which he advocated the establishment of a statutory wages board'.⁹² But his approach here was not conciliatory, for he was now asking London to sanction a more circumspect but incisive means than the traditional use of force, by which to put down the pitmen's union:

...Would it not be possible to declare... the levying of money for such purposes, criminal; (as I believe it is by the common law) and to enable Magistrates to distrain it in the hands of those, to whom it is entrusted? Even now, if the Owners could tempt the Pitmen to give up any remnant of their fund by such a proposition, as that above suggested, it might dissolve their present union, and render them more tractable...

But it seems Burdon was here simply articulating a further effort already contemplated by the owners in general. A special committee appointed in May to examine the feasibility of counter-union societies now proposed a statement of provisional terms and conditions for such societies, which was approved by the owners on July 21 and advertised in the local press.⁹³ The *Journal* reported that the owners, 'with a laudable desire to originate and promote every measure calculated to improve the condition and add to the comfort of those employed in the pits... will subscribe liberally', and crowed that such societies 'cannot fail to have a beneficial effect on the social condition of the pitmen and their dependents'.⁹⁴ The *Journal* neglected to acknowledge

that the pitmen's union was already having precisely such an effect, knowing that the owners' purpose was to usurp control of the pitmen's finances, but for this very reason any measure depriving them of independent control of their affairs was unacceptable to the pitmen.

A report to the Home Office from Bouverie on July 16 suggests that Burdon and the owners were perhaps correct to target the pitmen's finances. For not only was there no sign of a settlement, but his information was that the union had raised strike pay from 4s to 6s per week, and he calculated that the number of unemployed men was ten thousand. This was a worry but in his usual measured fashion Bouverie suggested that things would for now remain relatively quiet:⁹⁵

...I think that open violence and attacks on property are not to be feared at present as they do not form a part of the system of the union, but it is idle to suppose that with such a Population out of work and ejected from their cottages, attacks will not be made upon obnoxious individuals, and as the winter draws on I fear that these will become more frequent...⁹⁶

Significant here is the remark that 'violence and attacks on property... do not form a part of the system of the union', an admission which tends to confirm that in the war of words accompanying the dispute, the pitmen were right to say that the press and owners' claims as to union tactics were often deliberately false.

On the union in general the Duke of Northumberland's colliery agent, Hugh Taylor, conceded that the situation was causing concern. The question, he said, was 'which party are the masters and have the Controul', as the men were now casting their net ever wider to broaden the union's base:

...It is most material to state that the Unionists from these Districts have Emissaries to the Collieries in the South, Lancashire, Wales, etc., endeavouring to form one Union throughout the Kingdom, of Collieries; and if they should succeed, tis evident, that the property is in their hands; nor would it stop here; other Trades and Workmen would follow the example; and are known to watch the result of this struggle, with great interest - some, I believe, the Tanner's Company Workmen, have contributed to the Pitmen's Fund...⁹⁷

He said that the 'idle men' were receiving 'about 5/- per week from the Union, and Boys between 14 and 18 Years of age, half this Sum'. Many families were thus 'very ill off' yet there were 'very little, if any, symptoms of breaking up'.⁹⁸ Taylor's description of union activity was echoed by William Clark JP of Benton, who insisted that 'the source of these Evils' was political. He referred in particular to

...the growing strength their union has acquired, by uniting themselves with *if possible*, a still more dangerous class, designating themselves *political unionists*: who by every means in their power incorporate, and enrol them; already they have their emissarys [sic] dispatched to all the different mining districts even to Cornwall, for the purpose of forming *one general union*, which would place the whole property of the Country, and its best interests under their complete control, and will thus extend itself to all the labouring classes in the Kingdom...⁹⁹

If Taylor and Clark's information was correct, as delegate Charles Parkinson's comments in April tend to confirm, it would seem the pitmen were looking to build at least a national union of colliers, prefiguring the MFGB of a decade later, and more ambitiously were perhaps trying to launch a general union from the North East in the same way as the Yorkshire textile workers tried from Leeds and the NAPL from Manchester. If the pitmen found little response for such plans outside the region it was perhaps because they had chosen the wrong time, the recent failure of the NAPL having sapped enthusiasm for such plans at this point.

Clark's fears as to the NPU's influence in the pitmen's affairs appear exaggerated but derive credence from the fact that the pitmen were involved in Tyneside electioneering at this point. With a general election to the first reformed parliament expected in late 1832, the NPU declared T.W. Beaumont and W.H. Ord its favoured candidates for South Northumberland.¹⁰⁰ An NPU procession through Newcastle and Gateshead on July 23 to endorse the pair was led by a band of Gateshead radicals, but following them, the *Newcastle Journal* reported, was

...a body of unemployed pitmen, bearing the same inciting banners that were displayed at the celebrated Larkin and Headlam

revolutionary meeting in the Spital, two months ago... A number of persons followed the pitmen, bearing a large collection of silk flags, etc... [then] came the "observed of all observers", - the members of the Larkin Parliament themselves...¹⁰¹

The pitmen's links with the NPU were emphasized when it was rumoured that a Bill to put down the union was under consideration, and the NPU issued a handbill in the pitmen's defence. This however was lampooned by the *Journal*: 'The Larkin Legislature', it declared, 'has issued its "orders" to the Imperial Parliament, now sitting in London, not to interfere in putting down the Pitmen's Union'.¹⁰² Adding its own ironic emphasis the *Journal* cited two clauses from the handbill. The NPU Council had resolved:

..."That they... have heard, *with feelings of regret, not void of shame*, that certain legislative proceedings are in contemplation, by one or more Members of his Majesty's Government, in the nature of a Re-enactment of the Combination Laws, for the purpose of suppressing certain disorderly proceedings ALLEGED TO EXIST, on the part of the Pitmen and Colliers in the Counties of Northumberland and Durham, as acting in concert, under arrangements which it is asserted that the Law should hinder, by the name of the Pitmen's Union"... "That the Council, as living amidst the scene of these transactions, and having abundant opportunities to ascertain their nature, and the conduct of the parties, beg leave to certify to the Honourable House, that there is nothing in either to require or justify Interference or Constraint!!! except in Cases of Violation of the Law; occasions which, though there have been a few unhappy and violent instances, have not occurred, and are not likely, to any general extent, and to the Suppression of which existing Laws are adequate"...

The *Journal* dryly remarked that there then followed 'a long lecture to the members of the London Parliament', and maligned the NPU for its relationship with the pitmen:

...It is very natural that the revolutionary council should be alarmed at even an "intimation" that government intend to put down turbulence and sedition. The pitmen rendered the Larkin Parliament essential countenance and service, when its chief orator bawled for the murder of his Queen, and another distinguished member of it advised a general arming. The two bodies have, it may be inferred, a secret understanding with each other, - for the Larkinists are enabled to state, (no doubt from authority,) that "further violations of the law will not occur to any extent;" and we have the same high authority that the shooting of men at midnight, and the cold-blooded murder of a magistrate in open day, "DOES NOT REQUIRE OR JUSTIFY INTERFERENCE OR CONSTRAINT."...

But the *Journal's* parting shot showed its purpose to be not so much to attack the pitmen as to discredit the NPU-backed liberal candidates in the coming election. Beaumont and Ord, the '*reforming candidates*', it concluded,

...do not hesitate to ally themselves with those who can propagate doctrines so shockingly repulsive and disgusting. Electors, look to it! - Can you give your support to such candidates?

The *Journal's* partisan editor seemed in no doubt that the NPU influenced the pitmen's union, but for Bouverie the subject did not merit mention. Reporting again to the Home Office on July 30, he simply wrote that '[t]he Pitmen are perfectly peaceable but are as determined as ever to hold out, and there does not appear to be the least chance of an accomodation'.¹⁰³ He regretted 'that little or no progress has been made towards the establishment of a Police Force', and with the special constables proving largely ineffective, ensured that the build-up of troops in the region continued.

Rowland Burdon had meanwhile noted a lack of unanimity amongst the owners. He explained to the Home Secretary that, like the pitmen, the owners had

...also attempted to unite: but as their power is not based in physical force, but in Capital, of which they are by no means equally possessed; some of them have from necessity or policy given way to the United pitmen, whom they employ; these Coal-owners derive advantage from the stagnant state, to which the other Collieries are reduced, their own pitmen supplying those unemployed with the means of holding out under these circumstances...¹⁰⁴

It was thus Burdon's view that those owners who had bound their pitmen were making the most of their market advantage over strikebound counterparts, and they appreciated that the wages paid to their pitmen, recycled via union subscriptions as strike pay to the locked-out pitmen, helped prolong the dispute to their own short-term benefit. Whilst it is unlikely that working owners encouraged the strike, it seems that to some extent they saw a vested interest in exploiting the prevailing

circumstances.

The resultant disparity in production levels between working and strike-hit pits was most clearly expressed in the contrast between the two rivers. With most pits at full work the Wear produced an 'extraordinary excess of quantity' whereas the Tyne owners, many of whom were now reliant on blackleg labour, could barely fulfil quotas.¹⁰⁵ At a general meeting on July 28 the Tyne owners thus protested loudly. but it seems many were also thoroughly disillusioned at the lack of progress against the union. Buddle wrote of the meeting in the most depressing terms:

...We have had nothing at the Coal-trade meeting to day but grumbling and snarling about the unsettled state of the Trade, both with respect to Vends, and the expence of the War with the Pitmen, and the deprivations and suffering of those Collieries which are only at Partial Work, with Miners etc., as generally speaking, they are working to loss. Even Hetton is making but poor work of it, with their large establishment of raw levies, and I think Redhead is inclined, if he could find a loop-hole to slip out of, to break loose and supply the concern with a reinforcement of *Union Men*...¹⁰⁶

Significantly, for the first time here Buddle admitted the technical superiority of native pitmen over blacklegs, and the strength of the union's position. 'In short' he said, 'I think matters are in a very unsatisfactory state, and that the regulation will hardly hang together till the year is out'. If the vend was to be maintained much depended on Londonderry pacifying anger at his flaunting of production quotas, and his recent return to the region would be instrumental in this respect.¹⁰⁷

By the end of July, the situation in the coalfield was therefore such as to suggest that the union was approaching a point where it might be close to overcoming the owners. Bouverie thought so, and the magistrates were saying there was little more they could do to combat the union. The special constables were proving ineffectual and expensive, and appeals to London for assistance seemed only to fall on

deaf ears. The Home Secretary had managed to alienate himself from the local magistrates, who in turn were criticizing some coal owners for the self-interested and often conflicting nature of their policies. And still the union held the threat of a decisive all-out stoppage in reserve, while in the meantime reportedly working to extend its organisation beyond the region. On the other hand however, the desire to break the union remained the prime unifying factor amongst the owners, and Dunn noted of the discordant July 28 meeting that despite their difficulties, they had nevertheless 'resolved to stick it out'.¹⁰⁸ Having come this far and committed so much to the task, they could not realistically afford to leave the union intact, and had few better alternatives than to press on with the recruitment of blackleg labour and hope for a breakthrough.

The significance of the events of the summer was that they showed how the owners complemented the assistance of the state by invoking the help of personal banking connections to provide the kind of aid that the government, despite its probable willingness, could not sanction: for as Jaffe puts it in his article on the subject,

...[t]he banking community of Newcastle provided the liquid capital the coal-owners needed to hire and transport workmen and their families from other regions of England to the northern coalfields... With their property defended by the military and their supply of labor secured by local capital, the coal-owners were free to employ only those who swore to abjure the union...¹⁰⁹

In tandem with state assistance this help from the banks was absolutely crucial to the achievement of the owners' objectives, but despite such advantages they still faced their share of difficulties. Attempts via the magistracy to set up a permanent police force foundered on the question of cost, and were not forwarded when pitman Cuthbert Skipsey was shot by a special constable, highlighting the dangers of placing firearms into the hands of irregular forces.

The owners' cartel was meanwhile troubled by internal splits on

trade matters, and the Home Secretary's highly public disapproval of the magistrates' apparent lack of spirit, though perhaps misinformed and inaccurate, could only have focussed public attention upon the disruption the dispute was causing. Hints from the authorities of a government attempt to legislate against the pitmen's union, murmurs against the expense of the special constables, and then Wharncliffe's speech in the House of Lords, were all symptomatic of the increasing desperation of officialdom at their inability to suppress the union. But ultimately the union's own errors were proving the most crucial factor to the pitmen's ability to prosecute the dispute. The decision to limit earnings to 3s per day had reduced union income, but more important was Hepburn's overruling of what was reportedly the pitmen's majority view that they should go for all-out strike: this was the eventuality the owners feared most, and the longer this was held back as a reserve option, the weaker the union's position became. The union was therefore effectively playing into the owners' hands, and the authorities could consequently look forward with some hope to the Durham Summer Assizes, where it was anticipated that the judiciary would weigh in to deliver what might turn out to be the union's *coup de grace*.

NOTES TO CHAPTER SIX.

- 1 *Tyne Mercury*, May 15, 1832. Unbound on the Tyne were Burdon Main, Cramlington, Elswick, Fawdon, Felling, Hebburn, Heworth, Jesmond, Manor-Wallsend (South Shields), Mount Moor, Pelaw Main, Sheriff Hill, Springwell, Team, Townley, Tyne Main and Woodside, Usworth, Wideopen; and on the Wear, Hetton, North Hetton, Shield Row, Mount Moor, Washington. Mount Moor was mistakenly listed twice presumably because by virtue of its situation it was able to ship coal through both rivers: *Tyne Mercury*, May 22, 1832.
- 2 *Tyne Mercury*, May 22, 1832.
- 3 D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, May 31, 1832. In one week alone the men's unsettled state cost £1000 in receipts.
- 4 CTMB, General Meeting, May 19, 1832. 'Any representative forwarding such a list, will be expected to keep the situations open for one fortnight... during which time his colliery will be entitled to a payment for a deficiency of Vend'. Each colliery was asked to send 'a list containing the Number of Hewers, Putters, and Drivers they are in want of, for whom they can supply Houses, together with the Wages and Conditions they are willing to offer, and the time (which must not be less than one twelve month) that they will undertake to give them employment'.
- 5 Noteworthy here is a stipulation to guarantee 12 months' work to the blacklegs, which even the *Tyne Mercury* (May 22, 1832) confessed 'seems almost to be preventing future engagements with the pitmen': The owners sent a Mr Trotter to Liverpool 'to obtain information, as to the quantity of Pitmen that can be obtained in that neighbourhood and Wales and Cornwall and for the necessary purpose of establishing a regular Plan by which they may be most promptly conveyed by steam to Carlisle, and thence by Land to Newcastle' (CTMB, Committee Minutes, May 23, 1832: CTMB, General Minutes, May 29, 1832: D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, June 10, 1832).
- 6 D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, May 30, 1832.
- 7 For the owners' links with local banks, industry and commerce see Benwell Community Project, *The Making of a Ruling Class: Two Centuries of Capital Development on Tyneside*, Final Report Series, No.6 (Newcastle, 1978).
- 8 *Dunn's Diary*, May 31, June 2, 1831.
- 9 D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, June 17, 1832.
- 10 *Tyne Mercury*, June 5, May 22, 29, 1832.
- 11 Yet the Hetton men's spirit remained unbroken - 'the Pitmen stand out ruinly, ab^t. 40 or 50 persons only [out of 1200+] having come out of the Union. They are getting 5 or 6/- p week each out of the pockets of the workers - and every sign of it continuing'. *Dunn's Diary*, May 31, 1832: Buddle noted that the pitmen were 'doing all they can to get other

trades to join them', with a measure of success - 'some have joined them', and there was still the ultimate sanction of a 'general stop' (D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, May 30, 1832): *Newcastle Courant*, June 2, 1832: *Tyne Mercury*, June 12, 1832: Some of the newcomers had a rough passage en route to the coalfield. When on May 21 some lead miners passing through Darlington sounded three cheers, local radicals 'who were at the time parading the streets, with banners, &c., in consequence of Lord Grey's return to office, seemed to consider this an insult offered to them, and they forthwith attacked the poor miners with showers of stones and other missiles'. The Tory *Durham Advertiser* (May 25) regretted 'that the miners did not resent this brutal attack, for as each was armed with a stick, and possessed greater strength and infinitely more courage than their assailants, they might have given them a drubbing by which they really would have rendered a service to the community'.

12 If owners needed an incentive to comply, the committee provided one by declaring 'that £2 per head be advanced upon account for each Man, the Expences of whose removal has been paid by the owners' (CTMB, Committee Minutes, June 2, 4, 1832). Such expenses were to be paid from the loan; North Hetton benefitted with a £240 payout on June 8, and Buddle's comment that the Hetton Coal Company in particular would 'get a good haul, out of this' was borne out by a £1500 payment on June 9. *Dunn's Diary*, June 8, 1832: D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, June 4, 10, 1832.

13 CTMB, Committee Minutes, June 2, 1832: Moreover the owners' cartel was in danger of breakdown. Since the 1828 collapse it had functioned 'only half-heartedly' but the exigencies of the strike had compounded matters. By mid-1832 trade was 'brisk' and some owners were tempted to circumvent the vend to increase sales, but this risked wrecking the regulation (Sturgess, pp.28,87). This involved price competition which 'tended to promote "freighting", whereby coal proprietors dispatched coal to London at their own risk instead of leaving the risks of buying and reselling to a shipmaster' (Church, p.71). Alternately prices might be clandestinely reduced, or if demand was slow an owner might curry favour with customers by supplying more coal than for which they had paid. This could break the owners' unity and open the way for the pitmen to return to work with the union intact, the very outcome against which the Trade had plotted for a year: A blow was dealt by the bad faith of some Tyne owners who cut prices by 2 or 3s per chaldron. 'It having been communicated to the committee, that a Ship called the "Renown" [sic] had yesterday been upheld by Riddells W.E. office to London at 6/6^d per Ton... Mr. J.B. Pearson [of Heworth]... admitted it to be true' (CTMB, Committee Minutes, June 12, 1832). Word of this would soon reach the Wear owners and Buddle was afraid this was 'the forerunner of a general reduction' which could end the regulation (D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, June 14, 1832).

14 D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, June 10, 1832. Buddle said of a June 9 meeting that it was 'a full meeting... it was unanimously agreed to... put down the Pitmen's Union with the greatest energy - the leading features... are, to refuse to employ any union men, and to continue to bring Strangers from all parts of the Kingdom'.

15 Agreement on this was reached in December 1831 since when 'the regulation proceeded as if all were in order... from month to month in the continuous expectation that a satisfactory arrangement could be made

with him'. P.M. Sweezy, *Monopoly and Competition in the English Coal Trade, 1550-1850*, (Harvard Univ. Press, 1938), p.98.

16 Sturgess, pp.27,28.

17 Church, p.67.

18 For the development of Seaham Harbour see Sturgess, *Aristocrat in Business*, Chapter 5.

19 Buddle sent monthly accounts to his employer but Londonderry's knowledge of accountancy was 'meagre'. Yet the information forwarded 'only took account of his most pressing debts and the degree of urgency with which they were being pursued. In brief, Londonderry was provided with either hand-to-mouth, partial accounts which probably left him with an impression of Buddle's puritanical attitude to private spending, or overall accounts which gave a rosy picture' (Sturgess, pp.88-89): D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, June 6, 1832.

20 D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, June 19, 1832.

21 D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, June 10, 1832: *Dunn's Diary*, June 11, 1832.

22 D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, June 14,13, 1832.

23 D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, June 13, 1832.

24 A £300 reward was offered by government, plus £100 from St Hilda's Special Vestry. *Newcastle Courant*, June 23, 1832.

25 *Hansard*, Vol.XIII, 3rd Series, 618-619: This was the same T.W. Beaumont, lead mine owner, whose erstwhile employees were now at work in the coalfield. Sir Henry Hardinge added that he had seen 'several letters on the subject from the North' and was 'convinced that the Government cannot be too speedy in its measures', and Sir Robert Peel echoed this, saying that with respect to unions, 'some legislative enactment should be introduced for the purpose of remedying this evil'.

26 D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, June 13, 1832.

27 *Newcastle Journal*, June 23, 1832: Fynes, *The Miners*, p.32: *Tyne Mercury*, June 19, 1832: *Newcastle Courant*, June 23, 1832: From the point of view of servicing debts, Buddle was relieved the week before the meeting that his Lordship's men had raised themselves to 4s 'to work up for Satd^V in advance - as they will lose that day, by attending the Meeting'. D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, June 13, 1832.

28 *Newcastle Courant*, June 23, 1832.

29 *Newcastle Courant*, June 23, 1832: The £27,000 excluded the cost of police, troops, and blacklegs, representing lost production and sales alone. This may have been Hepburn's own calculation or possibly the union had access to production figures via a friendly overman or other confidante in the Hetton owners' camp. Hard statistics might not even be necessary, as the pitmen could judge from the surface approximately how much coal was being raised, and it was admitted by one apparently well-informed *Tyne Mercury* correspondent that Hetton was raising only 'from

one-third to one-half their accustomed quantity of coals' (*Tyne Mercury*, June 19, 1832).

30 *Newcastle Courant*, June 23, 1832. Another target was Dunn and his interests outside the region. 'In the midst of all this affected sorrow' said Hepburn, 'the coal-owners were foolish enough to be led by the nose by Mr. Dunn. He was urging them to resist the pitmen here, whilst he was sending ships off to his collieries in Scotland and other places. He was all right, pulling both ways. Well done Matthias Dunn! He was a very active man: he would make a gentleman of himself, beggars of the coal-owners, and paupers of the pitmen'.

31 *Newcastle Chronicle*, June 23, 1832.

32 The pitmen maintained the 1831 settlement had been achieved because of their readiness to make concessions. See 'A Coal Hewer', *Newcastle Chronicle*, January 7, 1832.

33 *Newcastle Chronicle*, June 23, 1832: *Tyne Mercury*, June 26, 1832: Buddle said that this 'they now wish to do, in consequence of the resolutions at their last [June 16] meeting'. D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, June 24, 1832.

34 Jones, 'Industrial Relations...', pp.191-192.

35 *Newcastle Chronicle*, June 23, 1832: 'Counsel' was evidently John Lowrey, a North Shields attorney (*Pigot Directories*, 1828-29, 1834). Buddle referred to him as 'their solicitor... Lowery', Dunn as 'Laurie of Shields', the *Newcastle Journal* as 'Mr. Lowry, of South Shields [sic], the pitmen's professional adviser'. D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, August 11, 1832: *Dunn's Diary*, August 11, 1832: *Newcastle Journal*, July 14, 1832.

36 See R. Challinor, *A Radical Lawyer in Victorian England: W.P. Roberts and the Struggle for Workers' Rights* (London, 1990): R. Challinor and B. Ripley, *The Miners' Association: A Trade Union in the Age of the Chartists*, (London, 1968).

37 *Newcastle Chronicle*, June 23, 1832: Buddle wrote that 'that slick headed ranting Knave Charly Parkinson and his two Coadjutors Banes and Liddell - set off to Wales, Staffordshire etc. P. Coach last Sunday Morning to stop Strangers from coming'. D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, June 21, 1832: But according to the *Tyne Mercury* (June 19, 1832), the trip was not without setbacks. The Hetton Company having hired 150 or so Derbyshire men, some of whom had 'returned to bring their families, and... prevail on their friends to come', Parkinson and Liddell were said to have visited their home districts to dissuade any more from going to Hetton. But their presence was allegedly not welcomed, they being reportedly 'stripped and dragged through a horse pond by the people of Alfreton, on their detecting the deception which they had been practising upon them'.

38 *Newcastle Courant*, June 23, 1832: Before the meeting could break up, two Welshmen brought to the coalfield by the owners stepped forward. They had been deceived, they said, by the accounts given by the owners' agents, 'but now, when they found how matters stood, they were going home again to their native place'. The *Courant* however reported that a further 500 Welshmen were expected, but it seems the defectors who had

returned to Wales were arguing the pitmen's case, as the owners' recruiting sergeant Sir Henry Browne had already been reported as 'in pursuit of some persons in Wales, who are endeavouring by the distribution of handbills and other means, to dissuade the miners from coming into this district assuring them that if they do they will come among a set of tyrants' (ibid., June 5, 1832).

39 *Newcastle Courant*, June 23, 1832: Buddle was told they would hold out 'in hopes of being able to frighten away or wheedle the Miners, etc., to join the Union, or to tire out the Coal-owners. If they cannot accomplish their object... against October, they are then to make a general Stand' (D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, June 17, 1832).

40 HO 40/30, Bouverie to the Home Office, June 22, 1832: D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, June 21, 1832: By June 18 48 Ouston Welshmen had 'joined the Pitmen who are off work' (HO 52/19, Reed to Duke of Northumberland, June 18, 1832). The native Ouston unionists consequently 'paid their expences and gave them a bonus for going back again to Wrexham'. All of this complained Buddle, 'has given our Union great confidence' (D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, June 21, 1832). But there was already discontent over some of the blacklegs. Matthias Dunn noted on June 6 that 'some few desertions' were occurring at North Hetton, and on June 14 that amongst others the Hetton Welshmen were 'only working slackly' (*Dunn's Diary*, June 6, 14, 1832): Mayor Reed sent a pamphlet to the Duke of Northumberland obtained from a defecting Welshman as 'evidence that the importation of these strangers increases our danger' (HO 52/19, Reed to the Duke of Northumberland, June 18, 1832). Indeed, the Monmouth pitmen were notorious for their secret brotherhood, the 'Scotch Cattle', which terrorised anyone betraying their cause. See D.J.V. Jones, *Before Rebecca*, (Allen Lane, 1973), Ch.4, and G.A. Williams, *The Merthyr Rising*, pp.77-78: The *Newcastle Chronicle* (May 26) cited a *Monmouth Merlin* report that '[t]he workmen of the collieries in the western part of this county, who were all out of work last week, have returned to their employments; the masters having pledged themselves to pay the wages of their men weekly in money, instead of in goods or by truck'.

41 CTMB, Committee Minutes, June 19, 1832: A notice issued by the Hetton Coal Company on June 16 'For the Information of Persons in the Lead Mine District' failed to refer to the strike, but did declare that a police force was in place to protect 'well-disposed workmen' and 'for the Suppression of the riotous and disorderly Proceedings which have recently disgraced the Township'. It was also stated that '[u]pwards of 80 Houses are just finishing upon the most approved plan, so that the miners may all be colonised together'. This was evidently a reprint of an April 20 poster. Watson, 1/28/17.

42 '[A]bout one half of the detachment under Mr. Mitchell, who arrived here on Friday last, proved to be Union Men and came principally from the neighbourhood of Wrexham... they had almost immediate intercourse with the Union Men here from whom they received Money and set off on their return home yesterday'. Significantly, Trotter was also requested 'to be careful in selecting healthy and useful Men'. CTMB, Committee Minutes, June 19, 1832.

43 Buddle gratefully accepted the offer at the Londonderry collieries, reporting to His Lordship that as a result of the meeting 'our Men went up to 4/- a day yesterday - which I trust will lend us a lift in the

Vend during the remainder of the mo.. This is entirely their own act - we dare not interfere with them in any way, as we must not on any Acco^t. risk an interruption, or Stop of the Work'. D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, June 19, 1832.

44 D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, June 24, 1832. Buddle here again exhibited the double standards he operated as Londonderry's viewer: 'When I perceived what the feeling of the meeting was on this question [of keeping the 3s limit], I sneaked off - not feeling myself authorised, on the part of your Lordship to sanction it, altho' I am quite satisfied of the sound policy of the measure'.

45 The owners also ordered that those pits still unbound 'proceed without delay to eject the Men from their Houses'. CTMB, General Minutes, June 23, 1832.

46 D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, June 28, 1832: In this connection Buddle also complained of the strain placed upon Londonderry's colliery staff by the need to service and put off bad debts. 'The money transactions alone would give full occupation to one of the most active and accurate Bankers Clerks in London, and would require his undivided attention... every one of your Lordship's Agents is acting in the double capacity of Agent, Viewer, and Cashier - so that none can give their undivided attention to [the pits]... at this time, my mind, time, and attention is so fully occupied with money matters, and the endless letter writing resulting from them, that I... feel as it were making a bad financier, and spoiling (I have the vanity to think) a good Pitman' (D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, June 27, 1832). Londonderry's debts extended even to Buddle, who was owed £6017 at this point, which included payment for an engine, a cargo of timber, and £2600 in unpaid wages. Buddle was recouping this by operating one of Londonderry's ships through his own account.

47 D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, June 21,24, 1832.

48 D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, June 25, 27, 1832. Unlike previous meetings this one was at 4pm, presumably to avoid disrupting the bound pitmen's shifts.

49 D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, June 27, 1832..

50 D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, June 25,27, 1832. 'They say Hepburn has put £500 into the Bank, that the other delegates are living like Gentl. and are swaggering about with hands full of Sovereigns - which can only be purloined from the treasury, at the Cock': But according to Fynes 'the owners were very industrious in their endeavours to foment discord and dissatisfaction against the [pitmen's] leaders, by freely circulating all sorts of reports about them, as well as about other collieries going to work' (p.29).

51 *Tyne Mercury*, June 26, July 3, 1832. The *Mercury* also attacked the union for the handbill's assertion that though 'some offences against the law' had been committed, they were 'trifling'; the pitmen must know, said the *Mercury*, that among the offences was murder, not merely 'of a fellow workman, against whom they were incensed for quitting their "Union"; but the murder of a magistrate in open day light': A former Hetton pitman was charged with having broken into a house at Chester-le-Street 'and stolen divers pieces of mutton therefrom', and the *Mercury*

alleged that pitmen going around 'in parties' were given money 'from a dread of violence if it was withheld'. Three pitmen who called at a house near Durham City simply helped themselves to food (*Durham Advertiser*, June 29, 1832: *Tyne Mercury*, July 3, 1832: *Durham Advertiser*, June 22, 1832).

52 D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, June 27, 29, 1832: On June 27 the Coal Trade advanced a second £1500 indemnity to Hetton. CTMB, Committee Minutes, June 26,27, 1832: *Dunn's Diary*, June 26, 1832: There is a hint that Hetton falsified returns to maximise such windfalls, as the figure of 1835 given to the Trade on June 26 contrasts with *Dunn's Diary* entry on the same day, 'now upwards of 1700'. Such a discrepancy could net Hetton more than £400.

53 *Tyne Mercury*, July 3, 1832: HO 40/30, Bouverie to the Home Office, June 29, 1832: D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, June 27, 1832.

54 HO 52/17, South Shields Magistrates' Clerks to the Home Office, June 13,17, 1832. The Special Vestry had requested government assistance 'in putting an End to all such Mischievous, Riotous and Unchristianlike Events'.

55 HO 52/17, Lorraine to the Home Office, June 22, 1832: The Home Office reacted quickly, urging the Bishop of Durham to appoint a replacement for Fairles in South Shields. The Bishop promised to take steps to do so but was afraid this might pose difficulties, presumably as suitable candidates were thin on the ground. HO 43/42, Home Office to the Bishop of Durham, June 25, 1832. HO 52/17, Bishop of Durham to the Home Office, June 26, 1832: Bryan Abbs of Westoe was later appointed (*Newcastle Courant*, June 30, 1832).

56 HO 41/11, Home Office to Bouverie, July 2, 1832: D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, June 21, 1832: Buddle bemoaned Fairles' demise; 'we have lost by far the best Magistrate in the district - in fact the only one, who did his duty with zeal and spirit' (June 13, 1832): Despite the fact that Armstrong was still at large, the inquest verdict on June 25 was 'wilful murder against William Jobling and Ralph Armstrong': On the morning of Fairles' funeral, the streets of South Shields were thronged by onlookers from both sides of the Tyne, but 'with the exception of one class'. (*Newcastle Courant*, June 30, 1832).

57 The petition was agreed by the owners back on May 5 and presented to the Commons by T.W. Beaumont on July 6. The union petition of May 9 countering the owners' allegations was presented to the Lords by the Duke of Northumberland on May 17, but did not appear in the Commons until July 12, courtesy of Alderman Waithman. CTMB, General Minutes, May 5, 1832: *Newcastle Journal*, May 26, 1832: *Tyne Mercury*, July 10, 1832: D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, May 12, 30, 1832: *Hansard*, 3rd Series, Vol.XII, 993: *Journals of the House of Commons*, 87, 1831-32 session, p.483: *Hansard*, Vol.XIII, 3rd Series, June 29 1832, 1152-1158: Wharnccliffe was one of the Grand Allies, 'the extensive monopolistic partnership' which 'drew huge incomes throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries from the development of mining on their estates' in the North East, and in the late 1820s 'either individually or collectively' owned five collieries and leased a further seven. Church, *History of the British Coal Industry*, Vol.3, p.14: Flinn, *Ibid.*, Vol.2, pp.160-1.

58 This *Hansard* account should not be taken as definitive, as *Hansard* at this time did not employ reporters but collated and condensed contemporary newspaper reports, which were often fuller and more accurate than those which eventually appeared under its own title. See D.L. Jones, *Debates and Proceedings of the British Parliaments*, (London, 1986), pp.71-74, esp. p.73; P. and G. Ford, *A Guide to Parliamentary Papers*, (Oxford, 1955), pp.68-76; H.D. Jordan, 'The Reports of Parliamentary Debates, 1803-1908', *Economica*, XI (1931), pp.437-449.

59 Wharnccliffe knew this to be 'the doctrine laid down by the Chief Justice of the Common Pleas in his celebrated charge delivered on the trials of the Bristol rioters', but perhaps raised the point for government approval here as a public warning to the pitmen (*Newcastle Chronicle*, July 7, 1832): CTMB, General Minutes, May 5, 1832.

60 Most of this passage is from *Hansard* but this particular quotation is from the *Newcastle Chronicle*, July 7, 1832.

61 Lord Ellenborough then reminded Melbourne that the King's Speech opening the session had specifically provided for 'a general system of police', but not a word had been heard on this since. Melbourne replied that there was great difficulty in such a plan, and though Lord Chancellor Brougham assured the House that a measure 'had been, and still was, under consideration... the difficulties and objections that were opposed to it, many of them of a local nature, were infinitely greater than noble Lords seemed to suppose'. Brougham was referring here to the vested interests of local oligarchies, to which Lord Wynford replied that government should never allow 'corporation privileges to stand in the way of the preservation of peace and tranquillity, for which corporations were established'. *Hansard*, op.cit., June 29, 1832, 1158.

62 CTMB, Committee Minutes, July 3, 1832: *Newcastle Journal*, July 7, 1832.

63 *Newcastle Journal*, July 7, August 4, 1832: A one-day strike at Londonderry's nearby Rainton Colliery the previous week demonstrated this point and showed that the pitmen still effectively controlled manpower and production. Buddle wrote that Robson (an under-viewer) had 'sent a Man to Shift Work who was not a hewer - that he might keep up the Work. This gave umbrage to our masters - because he did not ask their leave - so they lay idle, but they are going to work up the day's Work next Week'. D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, July 2, 1832: HO 52/17, Edward Dale JP to the Home Office, July 2, 1832.

64 HO 52/17, Dale to the Home Office, July 5, 9, 1832: HO 52/17, George Stephenson, Durham Magistrates' Clerk, to the Home Office, July 9, 1832: HO 52/17, Dale to the Home Office, July 2, 1832.

65 HO 41/11, Home Office to Dale, July 4, 1832.

66 *Newcastle Chronicle*, July 14, 1832: *Newcastle Journal*, July 7, 1832: *Durham Advertiser*, July 6, 13, 1832: HO 52/17, Dale to the Home Office, July 9, 1832: 'In 1828-29 the average number of prisoners was 159, in 1829-30 and 1830-31 it was 168; [but] in 1831-32 rose to 213'. At one point during the summer of 1832, accommodation blocks designed to hold only 100 were occupied by 156 inmates. R. Cranfield, 'Durham Prisons in an Age of Change II: 1832-1837', *Durham County Local History Society*;

31, December 1883, p.49 (Part 1); 32, May 1884, p.30 (Part 2).

67 *Newcastle Chronicle*, July 14, 1832: *Newcastle Journal*, July 7, 1832: There were also proceedings against a police sergeant and a soldier. The soldier received 6 months hard labour for theft but the other case was more serious, a Rainton pitman being struck on the head with a staff by a police sergeant. The pitman lost 12 days work and prosecuted the officer concerned. 'The indefensible nature of the assault was admitted by the defendant's Counsel', but it appears the police perjured themselves for the sake of their colleague, as 4 constables for the defence each gave wildly conflicting descriptions of the incident, none of which implicated the accused. He was nonetheless found guilty but his £5 fine was remarkably lenient considering the 6 months and more hard labour given to pitmen on identical charges at the same sessions. (*Durham Advertiser*, July 13, 1832).

68 *Newcastle Journal*, July 7, 1832: This was also Buddle's view. (D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, June 17, 1832). Such calls were echoed by *The Times* and derived from the government response to the rural riots of 1830 in Southern England when the Home Secretary, concerned 'that some of the local magistrates were treating the defendants with what he considered unjustifiable leniency', had despatched just such commissions (*The Times*, June 16, 1832: McCord, *Britain 1806-1914*, pp.128-129). Buddle's view of the temper of local magistrates thus mirrored that of Melbourne whilst Losh felt it would be enough to hasten prosecutions, but Mayor Reed wanted legislation as 'unless Government passes an Act to make these Unions and Meetings illegal, and enable the Magistrates to put them down, the consequences will be deplorable' (Hughes, *Losh's Diaries*, II, Losh to Lord Brougham, June 17, 1832: HO 52/19, Reed to Duke of Northumberland, June 18, 1832).

69 HO 52/17, Dale to the Home Office, July 9, 1832.

70 Mayor Reed had been thinking along these lines for some weeks, having in early June asked the Home Office for a copy of the regulations and orders governing the operation of the London police. HO 43/42, Home Office to Reed, June 7, 1832.

71 Anticipating the usual rowdy scenes at Newcastle Races in mid-June Reed had applied for extra military aid but the Home Office reply revealed a touch of irritation at such repeated requests. Reed was urged to hire enough constables 'to ensure the peace of the Town of Newcastle, not only during the Races, but at all other times and seasons'. HO 41/11, Home Office to the Duke of Northumberland, June 21, 1832: See also M. Kirkup, *The Pitmen's Derby: A History of the Northumberland Plate*, (Ashington, 1990).

72 Fairles' death left a gap in South Shields which had to be filled by Lorraine uprooting himself for several weeks from his home near Chesterle-Street until the appointment of Bryan Abbs. HO 52/17, Lorraine, Abbs, and Baker to the Home Office, July 28, 1832: Similarly, the absence of a resident magistrate in the lower Wear area had prompted other Durham JPs to serve in rotation at Hetton, though this ended in early July with the return of Rev. E.S. Thurlow to his clerical seat at Houghton, when the rota was replaced by meetings of JPs at twice-weekly petty sessions there. HO 52/17, Dale to the Home Office, July 9, 1832: North Shields too was without a resident JP but the problem there was possibly worse than elsewhere, as it emerged in early May that none of the local gentry

earlier named for commission were now willing to become JPs, with the result that stipendiary magistrates were instead to be considered (*Newcastle Chronicle*, May 12, 1832). In mid-June a new approach was tried when a memorial to the Home Office asked that the town be incorporated, as a new parliamentary borough under the Reform Act, and resident JPs be appointed: a stipendiary magistrate was felt on reflection to be insufficient, 'as many petty offences even cannot be disposed of in a summary way without two magistrates'. One magistrate would thus not do and though the exact requirements were still uncertain, the need of resident magistrates was now 'universally admitted' (*Tyne Mercury*, June 19, 1832).

73 *Newcastle Chronicle*, July 14, 1832.

74 CTMB, Committee Minutes, July 10, 1832: HO 41/11, Home Office to Bouverie, July 10, 1832.

75 For a general discussion on the formation of permanent police forces see V. Bailey (ed), *Policing and Punishment in Nineteenth Century Britain* (London, 1981); C. Steedman, *Policing the Victorian Community* (London, 1984), ch.1; D. Foster, *The Rural Constabulary Act, 1839*, (Chichester, 1982); or for example A. Brundage, 'Ministers, Magistrates, and Reformers: The Genesis of the Rural Constabulary Act of 1839', *Parliamentary History*, V (1986), pp.55-64.

76 *Tyne Mercury*, July 10, 1832: *Newcastle Chronicle*, July 14, 1832.

77 HO 40/30, Bouverie to the Home Office, July 8, 1832.

78 Bouverie included a list of what appears to be existing regular police officers in the coal districts, which read; Newcastle and River Tyne, 5 Town Marshals and 50 constables; North Shields, 1 Sergeant of the Watch and 1 constable; Northumberland, 2 Acting Sergeants; Northumberland and Durham, 23 constables. This excluded constables for Durham City and must also have excluded the large numbers of special constables hired to protect collieries and blacklegs (HO 40/30, Bouverie to the Home Office, July 8, 1832).

79 Hughes, *Losh's Diaries*, II, July 13, 1832.

80 *Dunn's Diary*, July 19, 1832.

81 CTMB, Committee Minutes, July 14, January 21, 1832: No indemnity was paid for special constables in 1831, costs being more evenly spread and trifling by comparison (*ibid.*, December 27, 1831). Further evidence of the gravity of the situation emerged when the quarterly appointments of 300 constables at South Shields expired and a mere 14 were resworn, apparently in line with the new limit of 16 at each pit: while in similar vein it was noted of Hetton that '[s]everal of the Constables have been discharged... on account of the expense'. HO 52/17, Lorraine, Abbs, and Baker (South Shields JPs) to the Home Office, July 28, 1832. 14 constables were also appointed for Jarrow: HO 40/30, Bouverie to the Home Office, July 30, 1832: On the owners' continual neglect of vend restrictions, see C.E. Hiskey, 'The Third Marquis of Londonderry and the Regulation of the Coal Trade: the Case Re-opened', *Durham University Journal*, new ser., xlv, 2, (June 1983), pp.1-9.

82 *Newcastle Courant*, July 21, 1832.

- 83 *Newcastle Journal*, July 21, 1832.
- 84 *Newcastle Journal*, July 21, 1832.
- 85 Given the increased pressure of work facing Home Office staff during this turbulent period there is every chance that Melbourne was badly briefed, but this cannot excuse him from criticism: for Londonderry had raised the issue of the NPU in parliament on two recent occasions, and Melbourne himself had replied to Wharncliffe in the discussion of the Coal Trade petition on June 29. Responsibility for the gaffe must therefore rest with Melbourne, be it for his lack of attention to the situation or for sheer absentmindedness.
- 86 *Newcastle Journal*, July 21, 1832.
- 87 HO 52/17, Durham JPs to the Home Office, July 23, 1832.
- 88 This point is perhaps borne out in the contrast between the Durham JPs' response to Melbourne and that of William Clark, owner of two pits and a Northumberland magistrate. Contradicting the Durham JPs, Clark wrote that 'alarming and tumultuous assemblages... are in the habit of meeting in *thousands*; acting in concert, and *frequently armed*... even a civil process cannot be executed without recourse to Military assistance'. He asked for measures 'to meet, and remedy, the defects in the present laws, otherwise the most alarming consequences are to be apprehended'. HO 52/17, Clark to the Home Office, July 21, 1832.
- 89 HO 52/19, Northumberland magistrates to the Home Office, August 3, 1832.
- 90 HO 52/17, Burdon to the Home Office, July 25, 1832. 5th Geo:4, C.96 was 'An Act to consolidate and amend the Laws relative to the Arbitration of Disputes Between Masters and Workmen', which superceded the Combination Acts in 1824.
- 91 The presence of troops was now 'useful and necessary'. HO 52/17, Burdon to the Home Office, July 25, 1832.
- 92 McCord, 'The Government of Tyneside...' p.18.
- 93 CTMB, Committee Minutes, May 12, July 18, 21, 1832: 'As some apprehension exists regarding the disposition of the Coalowners of the Tyne and Wear to promote the formation of Local Benefit Societies on their respective Collieries, they deem it proper thus publicly to declare, that it is their wish and intention to encourage by liberal donations or subscriptions, the establishment of such associations amongst their workmen. The funds however to be solely applied to the Maintainence of sick Members, or, as is usual, in the allowance on the death of any of their Families. The payment of five Shillings per week to the Men and two shillings and sixpence to Boys by the owners in cases of accident, continuing as at present, entirely unconnected with such proposed benefit Societies'.
- 94 *Newcastle Journal*, July 14, 1832.
- 95 HO 40/30, Bouverie to the Home Office, July 16, 1832.

- 96 Bouverie's calm assessment as opposed to the alarm of magistrates and owners was matched by some of his later counterparts. Maj-Gen. Sir C.J. Napier, succeeding Bouverie as northern commander, also played down troubles whilst JPs acted with vigour against Chartists in 1839, and General Sir R.H. Buller's experiences in Ireland in the 1880s were much the same. See: F.C. Mather, *Public Order in the Age of the Chartists*, (Manchester, 1959), p.230; D.N. Haire, 'In aid of the civil power', F.S.L. Lyons & R. Hawkins (eds.), *Ireland Under the Union*, (Oxford, 1980), pp.115-148.
- 97 HO 52/19, Hugh Taylor to Sir D.W. Smith Bt. of Alnwick, July 19, 1832, forwarded by Smith to London, July 21, 1832.
- 98 Taylor added that '[t]he System indeed is one of intimidation'; he thus varied with Bouverie on how far violence was part of 'the system', and on strike pay.
- 99 HO 52/17, Clark to the Home Office, July 21, 1832.
- 100 That striking pitmen should back establishment figures like these was ironic but even amongst the pitmen there were illusions in the altruism of the aristocracy and gentry, their employers' 'respectable' society counterparts. This was later illustrated by the pitmen's confident appeal to Lord Londonderry to arbitrate early in the 1844 strike. See Edw. Richardson (pitmen's union) to Londonderry, June 10, 1844, cited in the *Northern Star*, June 29, 1844.
- 101 *Newcastle Journal*, July 28, 1832.
- 102 *Newcastle Journal*, July 28, 1832. Noteworthy in this context is the presence on the NPU Council of George Baker of Elemore, a Hetton Colliery owner and noted reformer.
- 103 HO 40/30, Bouverie to the Home Office, July 30, 1832.
- 104 HO 52/17, Burdon to the Home Office, July 25, 1832.
- 105 CTMB, Committee Minutes, August 4, 1832.
- 106 D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, July 28, 1832.
- 107 Londonderry returned north on July 26. *Newcastle Journal*, July 28, 1832.
- 108 *Dunn's Diary*, July 28, 1832.
- 109 J.A. Jaffe, 'The State, Capital, and Workers' Control During the Industrial Revolution: The Rise and Fall of the North-East Pitmen's Union, 1831-2', *Journal of Social History*, Vol.21, No.4 (June 1988), p.729.

CHAPTER SEVEN:THE SUMMER ASSIZES AND COLLAPSE OF THE STRIKE.The Pitmen's Trials.

The assize circuit in North East England covered the jurisdictions of Newcastle, Northumberland and Durham, and the 1832 Summer Assizes commenced in the region at the latter. Durham Crown Courts were opened on July 30 by Mr Justice James Parke, accompanied by 'Mr. Baron Bolland, the Bishops of Durham and Bristol, Lord Kenyon, and several gentlemen, magistrates, &c'. Bolland from the Court of Exchequer, and Parke and Kenyon of the Kings' Bench, were Judges on county assize circuits, and the Bishop of Durham was in attendance as Prince Palatine.¹ Among the jurors were J.W. Williamson, chairman of the Durham magistrates; William Loraine, the Durham JP active in South Shields since Fairles' death; Sir William Chaytor, whose Witton estates included coal interests; and Humble Lamb of Ryton, a long-standing coal owner. The presence of such figures did not augur well for the accused unionists, for in a society guided by aristocratic values of rank, precedence and order, the feeling that the lower classes should know their place was strong and jurors might be set against the insubordination typical of the strike.

There might thus be some doubt as to whether accused pitmen could expect a truly impartial hearing from a jury whose social composition was so loaded as to include even coal owners:² but in accordance with contemporary criteria, the pitmen could not expect to be tried by men of their own class as lay jurors were at this time unknown, and given the limited number of 'gentlemen' from whom the courts might draw it was almost inevitable that some interested parties should appear on juries. Most working men were precluded by a £10 property qualification which ensured the predominance of 'respectable' jurors who would defend the

interests of private property and capital against, as for example on this occasion, the assaults of unpropertied workers.³ The accused pitmen thus faced trial by a jury not of their equals but social superiors, most if not all of whom were to some degree known to or influenced by the North East coal owners, and some of whom, as already noted, were owners themselves.

After the jurors were sworn in Judge Parke began a long preamble. The discharge of their duties, he regretted, would be a painful task not simply because the number of cases to be heard was 'unprecedentedly great' for the county, but because the many acts of violence and murder meant there was every chance that 'the lives of others must be sacrificed'. The likelihood of hangings was thus properly established in jurors' minds but by thereafter associating this possibility with 'combinations' Parke appeared uncommonly preoccupied with tainting trades unions: for he promptly launched into a discourse on the undesirability of unions in general and thus by implication the pitmen's union, with the comment that every act of violence currently up for trial

...might be directly attributed to those combinations amongst workmen which had prevailed in this county for a long time and to a great extent - perhaps in this and the adjoining county, to a greater extent than in any other part of England...⁴

According to one source, of seventy-two indicted on the Durham calendar fifty-four were pitmen, 'exactly thrice the number of those tried for the usual offences', a figure 'entirely attributable to the lamentable dispute between the coalowners and the pitmen'.⁵ Seen in this light, Parke was quite justified in identifying the link between the strike and the volume of cases for trial, but as he continued with burgeoning anti-union overtones it began to emerge that he perhaps had in mind for the assizes a purpose which went beyond prosecuting individual criminals: Parke was disturbed by the current plethora of

unions, which he said

...unfortunately derived their origin from the change which took place in the law about five or six years ago. At that time, an Act of Parliament was passed, by which all the penalties upon combinations were repealed, and permission was afforded to workmen to meet for one purpose, and for one only, but which, he feared, they had made the cloak for other purposes which were unquestionably illegal. These combinations, which were dangerous to the commercial prosperity of the country - injurious to the peace and welfare of society - and injurious also to the persons concerned in them, must, one day or other, be put down...⁶

This was a common enough contemporary view, but in expressing it Parke revealed an attitude which was bound to colour his judgement. He thought that 'this great object' could be achieved under existing law and was sure that

...he would have the concurrence of all concerned in the dispensation of the laws - both of magistrates and of jurors, - when he said that an end so desirable would be largely promoted by their firm and fearless yet temperate and impartial exercise of the functions with which they were respectively invested...⁷

But it is plain that for Parke this 'impartiality' was not to be afforded to the 'unquestionably illegal' pitmen's union, and the implication that he expected jurors to exploit their appointments by helping 'put down' the union was crudely obvious. This concern with the illegality of unions may have been perfectly sincere, derived from experience of assizes where violent crime coincided with union troubles, but it is difficult to escape the suspicion that Parke would have liked to see the union itself on trial. In the absence of any evidence of conspiracy this was impossible,⁸ but his remarks nonetheless assumed the existence of conspiracy and thus went a long way towards making the assizes a *de facto* political trial of the pitmen's union.⁹

Indeed, Parke widely applied a clause from an 1828 statute which appropriately provided for assaults 'in pursuance of a conspiracy to raise wages'.¹⁰ There were also five sentences of transportation but of greater significance was his statement that he would impose heavier sentences where union pitmen were involved: this was positive

confirmation that his anti-union attitude bore a direct influence upon his judgement of unionists, and must raise very serious doubts as to his credibility as an impartial judge in such cases. Parke's address in sentencing the eight found guilty of the Friar's Goose riot was as illuminating as any of his foregoing pronouncements, but he now perhaps exceeded previous bounds by declaring that the riot had been a direct consequence of

...the illegal combination which existed in this county, which had a tendency to make men of irreproachable character break the law in a most atrocious way...¹¹

In other words, he imputed mere membership of the union to turn pitmen 'of irreproachable character' into criminals. This gave no credence to the many appeals by Hepburn and other delegates that the pitmen should use only legal and peaceful means in their struggle. But Parke pursued the point, openly warning that he

...hoped the parties chiefly concerned in keeping up illegal societies [viz. Hepburn and the delegates], would speedily be brought to the punishment they deserved, and that the severe sentence he meant to pass upon the prisoners would at once be a warning to them, and an example to others...

He brought in penalties ranging from nine to twenty-one months hard labour, and 'recognances in £50 to keep the peace for two years' for the eight guilty, penalties which by his own admission were more severe than would have been the case were the culprits not trades unionists: but he also specifically imposed a further condition that the men should give up their membership of the union, urging them

...to abandon that which, if not voluntarily abandoned, must be put down by the force of the law, and concluded by saying that he imposed this recognizance upon them as a benefit to themselves. If they behaved properly no more notice would be taken of it, but if they misconducted themselves the property they might possess at the time would become forfeited to the Crown...¹²

The prison sentences and sureties accorded with other cases but here for the first time at these assizes Parke invoked the optional provision for a fine: conditional though these were upon the men leaving the union,

the crushing severity of their extent in requiring the possible forfeiture of a man's life possessions, provides strong argument as to Parke's partiality in cases involving trades unionists.

His consistent references to the union were obviously matters beyond the immediate criminal issues at stake, as too were his remarks about the need for sentences to set an example to union pitmen.¹³ If the question ended here it would be bad enough but Parke's approach more worryingly had the potential to create an atmosphere of anti-union prejudice in the courtroom. If such a mood did come to prevail in court, this was scarcely the background that the five pitmen facing capital charges would have chosen for their trials for the murders of the Hetton blackleg John Errington, and the magistrate Nicholas Fairles.

In the latter case strong circumstantial evidence convicted pitman William Jobling, whom Parke sentenced to be hanged and gibbeted. But Parke's obvious antagonism to the union raised comment, and one broadsheet report of the trial squarely rebutted his assertion that 'the commission of this crime was to be attributed to the illegal combinations' existing locally: this was no place, it said,

...to discuss the opinions delivered by an administrator of Justice, from the bench; but it may not be altogether irrelevant to remark, that evil will sometimes arise from good. To trace this murder to any union, or "combination", which may exist in this neighbourhood, is perhaps a strong enough stretch of the imagination...

Many unions existed for proper purposes said the broadsheet, thus it was inappropriate to conclude from the actions of a minority 'that the sensible and good are not to unite'.¹⁴

But Jobling's prospects were always negligible, as the circumstantial evidence against him was so strong that the only question was the extent of his involvement in the attack. The best he could have hoped for was a verdict of guilty as accessory before the fact, mitigated by a finding of misprision of felony:¹⁵ he might thus have

faced transportation rather than death but at least his life would have been spared. The only chance of a 'misprision' finding was if the jury found Jobling did not act with what Parke had described as *malus animus*, 'a heart regardless of social duties and deliberately bent on mischief': but the jury evidently agreed with Parke's statement to Jobling that '[t]he proof against you, on the evidence of Mr Fairles, is so clear and decisive, that there can be no doubt of your guilt'. Fairles' evidence was of course powerful, but Parke slipped up later in the same statement when he acknowledged that Jobling's role was not premeditated and that he had merely assisted Ralph Armstrong, 'that other wicked man who actually committed this atrocious murder'.¹⁶

There might be some doubt as to how far Jobling participated in the attack and whether he did act with *malus animus*, but his mere presence at the scene, which he admitted, made him an accessory before the fact and as such was sufficient to hang him. It would therefore be too strong to say there was a miscarriage of justice, as the steps taken accorded strictly with the letter of the law. But given the social status of the victim and the extent of his crime there could be little doubt as to why they were taken. Whether they were just is another question, though the view of the Fairles family on this would not be hard to imagine.

In the Hetton murder case however, the prosecution was defeated by the perjury of the many defence witnesses who manifestly took the side of the four accused, and Parke pointedly remarked

... upon the evident unwillingness to give evidence, and said it was so great as to amount almost to a conspiracy of the entire population, such as he had never before seen or heard of in this country, to screen the person who committed the foul murder...¹⁷

After an examination of bewildering complexity it was apparent that Luke Turnbull was most heavily implicated, but he strenuously denied the charge against him. The trial occupied most of the afternoon

and the entire evening, with Parke's summing up lasting from 9.30pm until 11.10pm, but it seems the long day in court and the prospect of fruitless discussion of dubious testimony was more decisive than the evidence, as the jury was out only five minutes before returning a verdict of acquittal, which

...was not anticipated as to Turnbull; and the announcement evidently created a feeling of surprise amongst the auditory in the body of the court...¹⁸

This verdict devalues criticism of the jury's social composition and possible consequent bias. But if the identity of Errington's assassin was unclear to the jury it appears to have been an open secret in Hetton, as the recollections of one old resident of the town provide a postscript which shows that Turnbull's culpability was common knowledge:

...A man named Bill [sic] Turnbull, a miner, lived at Easington Lane, he went by the name of Doggy, shot a miner named Errington, it was for blacklegging during a strike... I used to hear the people tell the story. Doggy was arrested and tried for murder but was acquitted for want of evidence. Afterwards he became a wanderer and could be seen carrying water from the Wells and running errands or doing odd jobs for anyone who cared to employ him. A number of us lads used to shout after him, "Doggy shot the man" then we had to run for it. He took a delight in bowling stones along the road or at anyone who annoyed him...¹⁹

Similarly controversial was the case of constable George Weddell who had shot dead an unarmed pitman, Cuthbert Skipsey, in broad daylight before numerous witnesses. To those who saw Skipsey die the inquest verdict of manslaughter must have seemed beyond credibility, but at Northumberland Assizes Judge Baron Bolland played down the manslaughter charge from the outset. Some of the questioning by defence counsel was way off the subject of the shooting as Weddell's side enquired as to details of the operation of the pitmen's union, to the loud dislike of the pitmen present. This was clearly not pertinent to the case but instead of ruling it out as irrelevant Bolland actively supported such questioning, the dubious nature of which was demonstrated by the report

that

...[o]ne of the witnesses was desired to state the amount of his contribution to the Union Fund, but before the answer was given a loud hiss was raised in the Court... The witness declined to give an answer...

COUNSEL - You *must* answer the question. I ask you how much you pay to the Union Fund?

WITNESS - I think you will not get it out of me.

MR. BARON BOLLAND - If you do not answer the question, I will most certainly commit you to prison. It is no great secret.

WITNESS - No, I know it is no great secret. We pay six shillings in the pound.

COUNSEL - Do you mean that you pay 6s out of every pound you earn?

WITNESS - Yes.

COUNSEL - Are not the expenses of this prosecution to be paid out of the Union Fund?

WITNESS - Aye, I don't know that.²⁰

Despite even Bolland's promptings the jury brought a verdict of guilty against Weddell, a finding which further confounds suspicions of jury bias. Yet it was plain that Bolland was seeking the least circumstance or consideration which might mitigate the charge: seizing upon a jury recommendation of mercy, he was almost apologetic to Weddell for his having been found guilty at all, and engaging in what might be contemptuously termed a 'Noble Dream',²¹ he went on to resort to every flimsy pretext he could find to justify mitigating the constable's punishment, concluding

...I think I shall do my duty to the public by sentencing you to six months imprisonment in the house of correction, and that during that time you be kept to hard labour...²²

Considering that the law allowed for four years hard labour or transportation this was viewed as scandalously lenient of Bolland, as the sentence was 'received in the body of the court with marks of disapprobation'.²³ The one other Northumberland case involving pitmen concerned four unionists prosecuted for assault and riot, and their consequent three-month sentences stood in stark contrast to the six months received by Weddell for killing Skipsey. This provided a clear example of the double standards at work in the courtroom: that both

sentences were brought in on the same day by the same judge could not have gone unremarked, and spoke volumes of the injustices to which the pitmen claimed they were subject.²⁴

Jobling's Example.

Jobling was publicly hanged in Durham on August 3 and gibbeted in irons on the tidal mudflats of Jarrow Slake, the scene of the murder, the following week. He was only the fifth man gibbeted in the county, and the first there for sixty-two years.²⁵ It has passed down in folklore that his sentence was enabled by legislation enacted only the week before trial but this was not strictly true:²⁶ the penalty of hanging murderers in chains had never been repealed, though it was so rarely employed that it had effectively fallen from use.²⁷ But there was indeed a change in the law exactly coinciding with the trial which modified the death penalty for murderers which unquestionably did operate to revive the practice with Jobling. It did so however in a way which could scarcely have been better designed to avoid such a conclusion: especially critical to Jobling's fate was the timing of the new measure, the importance of which is probably best illustrated by a look at the Bill.

The shortage of fresh corpses for anatomical dissection by surgeons and students had given rise to an illicit trade in bodies acquired by grave-robbing or even murder, and had become a subject of enormous public concern by the 1830s. 'A Bill for regulating Schools of Anatomy' had therefore been introduced in late 1831 to provide surgeons with an adequate supply by effectively legalising the sale of bodies, subject to the prior consent of the deceased or after death the next of kin or executors. It was anticipated that this would solve the problems of shortage, advance the cause of medical science and end the social ill

of body-snatching. Surgeons' main legal source of bodies previous to this had been those of murderers, for whom the usual sentence was to be hanged and dissected: thus, the most important point to note here is that the Bill now replaced dissection with the option of simple burial - whilst the provision for hanging murderers in chains was left in place.²⁸

The substitution of the dissection penalty with burial seems strangely at odds with the measure's main thrust of providing more bodies for surgeons, but this step was taken because of the revulsion against dissection felt by the lower orders, not just at the horror of the concept but also because it was identified as the punishment for murderers.²⁹ Such concern was also expressed in the House of Commons,³⁰ but there was markedly less opposition to the inclusion of the gibbeting penalty, with only one MP objecting to reviving 'the custom of hanging felons in chains, exhibiting them in the common highways dangling in the air': such a thing was, 'in this enlightened age, too barbarous a provision to form part of the Bill'.³¹ But the Bill's remit was to provide surgeons with more bodies, to which end the dissection penalty had to go: the remit did not include repealing other punishments, thus in the absence of dissection the concensus was to retain gibbeting as a deterrent. Indeed this point was explained to the Lords by Earl Grey, who said such a harsh sanction was required 'to distinguish murder from other crimes, and for the purpose of avoiding the possibility of lessening the moral horror of the offence'. Despite its inhumanity there was thus some logic in its inclusion in the Bill, and it was Grey himself who then moved the gibbeting clause, which was accepted, the Bill duly passing its third reading.³²

In the event the Anatomy Bill not only functioned as envisaged but by the end of the year was working 'with astonishing facility'.³³ But of

deeper interest here is the timing of the Bill's closing stages and more importantly its enactment. A brief chronology of events shows that Fairles' death on June 21 was closely followed by the House of Lords' discussion of the pitmen's dispute on June 29; and the Anatomy Bill received its second Lord's reading only a week later on July 6, before passing its third on July 19. The Bill was thus approved by parliament within a month of Fairles' death. There was nothing overtly untoward in this timing, for if the problems arising from the shortage of bodies were to be addressed it was vital that the Bill pass before the parliamentary session's close in August.

But if any one factor was responsible for Jobling being gibbeted it was precisely the timing of the Anatomy Bill's enactment on August 1, which proved a critical consideration for the presiding judge at Durham assizes. For Parke would have known from newspaper accounts of the Bill's provisions and their parliamentary approval. The only uncertainty for him was the date from which the Bill would come into force, and in the event its enactment on the very day of Jobling's trial effectively dictated that he should bring in a gibbeting sentence. The reason for this was that news of the enactment could not reach Durham from London probably until the ensuing evening, without which Parke was unable to order the new sentence of hanging and burial: and in the interim, as he knew the usual sentence of hanging and dissection to be under repeal, he was in a position to argue that he could only apply the one sentence common to both the new law and its predecessor, that of hanging and gibbeting.³⁴ And this indeed was how Parke rationalised the sentence: 'I do not know', he told Jobling,

...but that a bill, which may, by this time, have received the Royal Assent, has not taken from me the power to order your body to be dissected; and therefore, I must pass such a sentence as shall not be erroneous...³⁵

Having taken care to establish the technical accuracy of the sentence,

Parke was thus legitimately able to tell Jobling that he was bound by law to gibbet him.

Parke's retribution theory of justice was certainly well suited to exemplary sentencing, for rather than exhibiting any reluctance to bring in a gibbeting sentence he seemed pleased to be able to do so. Even a century after Jobling one barrister could still be deeply impressed by

...the powerful influence to which judges even of the greatest eminence are unconsciously subjected by the opinions and fears of the class from which they are drawn...³⁶

It is open to debate how far such factors affected Parke and Bolland, though a more glaring example of partial treatment could hardly be found than Bolland's handling of the Weddell trial. By most objective criteria, Bolland appeared to blatantly uphold a view here which was to the detriment of the standards of justice he was charged to defend, yet Buddle could still lament that Parke did not try this case. What this implied for Parke's reputation was that it clearly preceded him: and indeed Parke has gone down as a 'conservative' judge reknowned for elevating principles into 'inflexible dogma', in the pursuit of which he 'did not always follow even the House of Lords'.³⁷ Be this as it may however, though Colls for instance complains of Parke's bias in court, there is no concrete evidence to suggest any impropriety on the judge's part.³⁸ Indeed, it seems any such suggestions have been based more upon the application of modern criteria to the circumstances of early nineteenth century Britain, than upon fact: but in the event, there seems little reason to expect an assize judge in the world of 1832 to have acted other than he actually did.

Further ill-feeling arose however after Jobling was followed to the gibbet by Leicestershire murderer James Cook, who had beaten a man to death then cut up and burned the body. There was no immediate connection but Cook's case brought a controversial development. Cook

pleaded guilty and was gibbeted on August 11, five days after Jobling, but only three days later an order was issued by 'the Under Secretary of State, remitting that part of the sentence, which ordered the murderer Cook to be hung in chains', and his body was removed from the gibbet and buried.³⁹ But no such remission order was issued for the pitman. Ultimately it was left to his brother-in-law amongst others to risk transportation by rescuing and concealing his body three weeks later. The rescuers were not detected and Jobling's body has never been found.⁴⁰

Jobling was a striking pitman with a young family to support, yet saw fit to squander his meagre resources on drink rather than alleviate the hardships endured by his pregnant wife and two young children. He was therefore never in any sense an heroic figure, but despite this apparent neglect of his family, for his crime he was martyred. Recent efforts to erect a statue to his memory therefore seem misguided: his only significance was in his tragic fate, which still stands today as it was surely then intended, as a symbolic warning to any persons who, with whatever aims or means, by their actions injure or threaten the 'higher' interests of state, private property, and its representatives.⁴¹

Deterioration of the Union's Position.

'What the effect of all this may be upon the Union I don't know' wrote Buddle after the trials, 'but they are again reviving the idea of a general Stop'.⁴² The question of all-out strike had been raised at the pitmen's rally of June 16 only to be dismissed by Hepburn as unnecessary, but a 'general stop' of all the coalfield's pits still remained the union's most potent weapon. The gibbeting on August 6 took place exactly four months into the dispute, and more than eight thousand pitmen continued on strike beyond the trials and into August but there

was now evidence of a stir amongst them, hinting that after the long months of seemingly endless deadlock some kind of conclusion to hostilities might at last be in sight.

Some indication of this came two days after the gibbeting, when Buddle noted that the pitmen were 'like to meeting in all quarters, in consequence of the heavy contributions levied' and speculated that the union was 'approaching its bitter end'.⁴³ Bouverie told the Home Office he was hopeful of an end to the strike because the gathering numbers of imported blacklegs must be damaging the union.⁴⁴ But Buddle was correct in noting that a change in union policy was underway, for writing on August 8 from Wallsend he told Londonderry he had heard that

...[a] general Meeting of the Delegates is to be holden at a public house - within 200 yards of where I am writing, this Evening, at which some sort of a proposition to the Coal-owners, for a compromise, is to be concocted...⁴⁵

Buddle had a report of the meeting the next day, which confirmed his information both as to the possibility of all-out strike and an attempt at compromise: the two tactics were to be combined as it was acknowledged, he wrote, at

...the general meeting of Delegates, held here, last night, that matters could not longer continue to go on in their present State, and that they must be brought to a speedy crisis - the best way of accomplishing which was to make a general Strike.

This, however, was thought to be too strong a measure for the Delegates to carry into effect without the sanction of the Pitmen at each individual Colly. and it was therefore resolved that the Delegates should take the opinion of the Men, at their respective Collieries this Evening, and report to a gen^l. Meeting of Delegates, at the Cock, tomorrow Evening. When if the Majority should be in favor of a general Stop, it will immediately take place and all the Collieries wor^d. by Union Men will be off work on Monday...⁴⁶

The decision would rest with the unionists at working pits rather than those already on strike, though because they were suffering by dint of their 6s per £ contributions, a positive vote was no formality. This eventuality had been anticipated by the delegates however, for whilst the strike call seemed at odds with the idea of compromising with the

owners, Buddle explained that the latter was a fall-back option: his information was that

...if the majority is for continuing at Work - [the striking pitmen] are to persevere for a Month longer, and are in the mean time to endeavour to *wheedle* the Coal-owners into the best terms they can - but still to preserve the spirit, and essence of the Union, if possible, so as to be able to revive it at a future period, whenever a favorable opportunity may offer.

From all I can learn here, the Wallsend Men will oppose the Stop, and I expect your Lordship's Men will do the same, as well as others who have positively nothing to complain of, so that I hope *the division* tomorrow Evening will negative the motion of President Hepburn, for a general Stop...⁴⁷

If Buddle's sources were correct the delegates had privately acknowledged that neither a 'general stop' nor compromise tactics might be enough, and were preparing to retreat from their demands if necessary as a means of damage limitation. Coming from a group of workers not held by their employers in high intellectual esteem, such tactics may have seemed surprisingly adept and pragmatic. But also of note here is the fact that the owners were so well informed that they were briefed on union policy before the delegates could even report back to their own members. Their prompt reports no doubt came courtesy of pitmen such as Buddle's 'trusty Spy', whose betrayals of confidence could only have damaged the union by enabling the owners to anticipate its moves, underlining the necessity of absolute discretion amongst the pitmen.⁴⁸ But as 1831 had proved, the owners would be powerless against concerted all-out action by the pitmen. Buddle was only too conscious of this and whilst quietly confident the strike vote would fail, he was equally alive to the alternative, judging that '[i]f the majority should be for the Stop, I have no doubt a fortnight will settle the question for 20 years to come'.⁴⁹

The pitmen's delegates duly met at Newcastle's Cock Inn on August 10 to hear the voting returns from each colliery. The meeting was adjourned overnight but Buddle was pleased to inform Londonderry that

...[f]rom a Letter addressed by their solicitor, Lowery, to our Chairman, Mr W. Brandling, we infer that the Delegates have not been able to carry out their plan of the general Stop. This letter proposes a conference with the Coal-owners for the purposes of endeavouring to reconcile differences...⁵⁰

Robert Lowery was a North Shields solicitor whom Jaffe cites as having advised the pitmen's United Colliers' Association in 1825.⁵¹ According to the Hetton viewer Dunn, the proposal was that Lowery was to correspond 'in behalf of the pitmen with the coalowners through Mr Brandling'.⁵² The use of a solicitor as mediator suggests the owners were refusing direct contact with the delegates, which Buddle tacitly confirmed with his note that the owners' reply 'refers the Pitmen to the agents of such Collieries as yet want men - the Trade declines to recognise the Union in any shape'.⁵³ Dunn said they were unanimous in this and believed the union's approach to be proof that the pitmen were 'getting dispirited', but there was still a nervousness on the part of some owners, as one of Buddle's comments seems to demonstrate: 'I hope', he said, that

...this monster is at its last gasp - still I am not without apprehensions of some of the Coal-owners, whose Collieries are either standing, or working to loss, being also at the last gasp - and that the Union in it's dying struggles may kill them, and resuscitate itself...⁵⁴

Buddle gleaned no fresh intelligence during the next few days, observing simply from Wallsend that 'all the Colls. in this quarter are at work': whilst at Londonderry's Penshaw Colliery, George Hunter reported that the vend was going 'very well, and our Men all peaceably at work - we never heard of any Stop or Bother here, and I now think the Pitmen are about done'.⁵⁵ The delegates' decision to go for all-out action was manifestly left too late. There would be no 'general stop', and this fact along with the owners' latest refusal to compromise meant the union was in a very difficult position.

With negotiations conclusively blocked Dunn said there was now

'reason to believe that there will be great Desertion' from the union. This view would have been partly suggested to him after the Hetton episode when, on the road to Newcastle he '[t]ook Hepburn up with the Gig in going Home': the pair 'had much talk', from which Dunn concluded that 'Hepburn is evidently disconcerted'.⁵⁶ By mid-August the pitmen thus found themselves at a complete impasse. The strike continued, but to simply persevere with the dispute in the hope that the owners might give way must have seemed an increasingly depressing prospect for the men.

Indeed, during the last week in August Buddle heard from both Londonderry's Penshaw viewer George Hunter and the Earl of Durham's agent, Henry Morton, 'that considerable numbers are seceding from the Union daily', and the *Tyne Mercury* was reporting that generally, '[a] great many of the pitmen have seceded from the Union within the last few days'.⁵⁷ At the Londonderry and Durham collieries secessions were manifested not by a return to work as these pits had been working all along, but by a refusal to pay union subscriptions. The *Mercury* specifically claimed that '[a]bout a hundred' of Lord Durham's pitmen were now refusing to contribute their 6s in the £ to support the strikers at other pits, whilst 'upwards of a hundred of the Marquis of Londonderry's men have also given up contributing to the fund'. At Hetton however where the pitmen were on strike, secessions did manifest themselves in a return to work and the *Mercury* claimed that 'not less than a hundred' union pitmen had bound there, whilst elsewhere 'several more men have seceded from the Union and have been engaged to work at Ouston and other collieries'.⁵⁸ And all the while, blacklegs were arriving in the region as fast as they could be accommodated. Between one and two hundred arrived from Staffordshire on August 27 alone, and such was the impetus achieved by the owners' recruitment measures that on

August 29 the Tyne owners' committee agreed that

...as it appears certain that more Strangers are inclined to offer their Services than the trade can possibly employ, that Mr Reay be written to, to return home, and Mr Potter to remain, but not to engage any more men until he hears further...⁵⁹

Potter and Reay were the owners' recruiting sergeants and these new orders marked a most significant point in the dispute, as the striking pitmen were now effectively surplus to requirements, and along with defections from the union there was thus a real prospect of an end to the dispute and break-up of the union. Yet even the *Mercury* had to admit that the union's collapse would simply bring unemployment, one consequence of which would be a rise in parish rates for poor relief: it hoped however to see around

...half of the 7 or 8000 pitmen at present unemployed, again at work, and the shopkeepers of this district relieved from much of the depression under which they have laboured... [but] The remaining 3 or 4000 pitmen will have to seek work elsewhere, for their places are filled by lead miners and other labourers, whom it would be extremely unjust to dismiss...⁶⁰

The *Mercury* here captured the growing urgency of the situation for the union. With rising defections and so many blacklegs now gathered in the coalfield a mass meeting was set for September 1 at Boldon Fell. Yet the union's every tactic thus far had gone awry: the vote for all-out strike had been lost, collective negotiations and even open concessions refused by the Coal Trade, then attempts to 'wheedle' individual owners also came to nothing. With more men forsaking the cause and the union's position thus worsening by the day, the union could afford no more miscalculations, but the heavy rains could not have assisted either the mood or attendance at the pitmen's meeting on September 1. The number present was not recorded, but this was almost five months into the dispute and the meeting was reportedly composed 'chiefly of the out of work men'. Though unaware of what measures the pitmen decided, the *Tyne Mercury* believed that

...they determined to hold out a little longer, and endeavour to prevail on the industrious part of their body to continue giving them each six shillings a week...⁶¹

Dunn noted that they had indeed 'determined to stand firm' and raised the levy on working unionists to 7s in the pound. A delegate later recalled the highest contributions as 6s, but whether 6s or 7s, the continuation of such heavy fees was an indication of the financial pressure facing the union, as Dunn's further news that the 'idlers' were now receiving only 5s per week strike pay perhaps underlined.⁶²

But these were merely holding measures: more important and bearing out the August speculation was the addition of two clauses to the union rules, along with other minor alterations designed to make the union acceptable to the coal owners. This corroborated a surprising report in the *Newcastle Courant* following the pitmen's vote against all-out strike, that

...the pitmen have abandoned all the rules of their society, or Union, which interfered with the performance of their duty to their employers; retaining only such rules and regulations as belong to a benefit society, which by Act of Parliament they are authorised to establish...⁶³

As it seems that after all efforts to negotiate failed, they decided they had nothing to lose by calling the owners' bluff in this way. Buddle considered this a 'ruse' to preserve the union by another name, which being so it was perhaps naive of the delegates to hope for a positive response, but notice of the rule changes was nevertheless sent to Losh for the owners' perusal. Approval however was not only denied but the negative reply was advertised as a purportedly private exchange between Losh and R.W. Brandling, Coal Trade chairman. The *Tyne Mercury* said it had been 'authorized' to lay this before the public, but Losh, Brandling and the *Mercury* editor had obviously colluded here to show that the owners were now past making concessions.⁶⁴

The tone of the exchange, which was clearly pitched at the public,

was one of politely restrained contempt for the pitmen. Losh's letter of September 3, two days after the pitmen's meeting, informed Brandling that he was enclosing

...the new printed Articles of the "Coal Miners' Friendly Society," [the official title of the pitmen's union] together with two additional Rules sent to me this morning. I have told the parties from whom I received them, that it is necessary they should be submitted to a barrister, in London, appointed for that purpose, before they can be enrolled by the Clerk of the Peace; and, until that is done, it is quite clear that the Coalowners can take no notice of them. Pray, however, look them over, and tell me what you think ought to be done; and, if you consider it proper to do so, mention the subject to the committee...

The union had taken a step publicly recommended to them in a recent open letter by Losh yet only five days later, Losh was now saying he could 'take no notice' of it and hid behind the 1829 Friendly Societies' Act.⁶⁵

Brandling's predictably obliging response stated that he had that day submitted the new rules to a general meeting of owners, who agreed 'that they are not at all calculated to remove, or prevent the recurrence of, those disputes which have so long existed': it was only, he insisted, by

...the introduction of workmen of more upright principles and with more correct notions of the rights and relative duties of masters and servants, [that] the Coalowners may prevent the recurrence of those disgraceful scenes which we have this year witnessed... [the owners] must be blind to their real and permanent interest if they do not remain cordially and firmly united for the purpose of carrying the measure steadily into effect...⁶⁶

This was an almost casual dismissal of the pitmen's overtures but the issue went deeper than either Losh or Brandling admitted, for there had in fact been some secret contact in respect of which Losh had behaved dishonestly. The pitman 'Carbonarius' revealed this when he responded via the *Chronicle* to explain it was common knowledge that

...during the whole of the present strike the only matter in dispute has been the existence of the Union in its present form, but it is not generally known that a considerable time ago, a proposal was made through Mr. Losh, to alter or amend the rules of the Coal Miners' Society in such a manner as might be satisfactory

to the Coal Owners. The 7th and 8th articles of the rules were those to which the greatest objection were raised, and an alteration was proposed which it was hoped would obviate all difficulties...⁶⁷

This discreet exchange was presumably the origin of the August rumours, thus it was actually Losh's recommendations which were approved by the pitmen's September 1 meeting and submitted to the owners: yet despite this, said Carbonarius, they had simply raised new complaints concerning the powers of the delegates, citing the fifth and the last rules. Brandling had specifically objected that rule v allowed the delegates to 'decide upon any dispute or difference that may arise at any colliery', but Carbonarius met this head on:

...Now, Sir, the import of the 5th rule is to my mind clear enough... but to remove all difficulty, the men have no objection to alter it, and let it read thus:- "And to decide upon any dispute or difference that may arise between the members of any Society." As to the last rule, which says, "What may further occur to this Society to be observed, shall be entered in writing, or additional articles in the club book, which shall be of the same force and validity with the foregoing." Surely, Sir, there can be nothing objectionable in this, when I find a rule to the very same effect amongst the articles which the Coal Owners have drawn up for the government of their rival Society...

As indicated, the owners had already formulated rules for counter-union societies, tacitly confirming that any society was now clearly to be permitted only on the owners' terms:⁶⁸ with all hope of accomodation gone, the union was therefore simply left to persevere with the strike. Yet Carbonarius was still optimistic enough to contemplate a settlement, as he believed the owners were beginning

...to feel that our patience is more than a match for their oppression, and that we are beating them at all points. They feel that their workmen of "more upright principles" continue to leave them in droves, and they are glad to take union-men without inquiring whether they are union-men or not.

Mr. Brandling's letter shews that the points at issue are really not worth contending about; and I flatter myself that the hour is near at hand when by a very slight concession on each side the dispute may finally be put an end to...

But he also knew that their continued objections proved

...what I have repeatedly stated, that it is not this or that which the Coal Owners object to, but it is the Union altogether...

Indeed even as the pitmen met on September 1 the owners were instructing their 'Benefit Society Committee' to draw up rules for 'establishing Friendly Societies throughout the Coal Trade on the two rivers'. Since its appointment on May 12 this Committee had produced only a declaration of terms stating that the owners would help fund societies provided monies were applied to cases of sickness, accident and death, as opposed to strike pay.⁶⁹ But this latest step represented a more rigorous attitude which brought the despatch to London of a set of rules 'to be confirmed by the barrister appointed by the National Debt Commissioners', before submission to local JPs at quarter sessions in October.⁷⁰

The owners also redoubled efforts in other anti-union measures, their committee calling for returns 'of the Number of Men and Boys that has left the Pitmen's Union', which would help in assessing the state of the dispute and the deployment of blacklegs.⁷¹ And pursuant to previous instructions to suspend blackleg recruitment, further messages were sent asking Edward Potter to engage a further 50 to 100 'good married men with Families', whose expenses would be paid by the owners. Potter was told to give 'liberal encouragement' to 'young unmarried Men, but that they must be at the expence of conveying themselves' to ensure they might 'remain till they have given our Mines a fair trial', as some had already deserted the pits.⁷² But also at issue was the fact that some had claimed poor relief from their native parishes, from whence disquiet had evidently been passed on: this might pose a threat to continued recruitment, hence the owners now affirmed that as they were 'given to understand that many Young Unmarried Men are likely to become a burden to their Parishes', their intent was

...not to entice Men from their employment in the Mining districts of the Midland and Western Counties, but to afford assistance to those districts by supplying the superfluous labourers with work'...⁷³

This at least placed the owners' boasts of superior wages and conditions in a more sober light but meanwhile, had the pitmen only known it, they would have taken great encouragement from the fact that the Coal Trade was in growing turmoil as the Tyne owners protested at the Wear's excess coal sales. Though so far unmanifested, the Tyne owners' discontent had been simmering for weeks since they began to learn of the extent of the Wear overvend, and matters came to a head at the joint committee meeting of September 5, described here by Buddle:

...All went smoothly on 'till the statement of the Wear Vend... was produced. This caused an immediate uproar, and the meeting became a Bear Garden. The Tyne people declaring they would no longer be humbugged by the notion of a regulation, when the very principle and essence of it was so grossly violated by the outrageous overvend of the Wear. The Chairman [R.W. Brandling] was quite bamboozled, and nonplussed and could not rally nor make head against the tumult at all... I consider the regulation to be virtually at an end...⁷⁴

Buddle reaffirmed this view a few days later when he reflected that nothing was more clear

...than that the affairs of the regulation have arrived at a crisis... I believe that several Collieries on the Tyne have already begun to practice all the irregularities of an open Trade. And on the Wear the *Proprietary* reduced the price of the N. Hetton Coals 1/6 P. Cha. on the 1st Inst....⁷⁵

Worried as to the effects of the cartel's collapse for Londonderry's debt problems, Buddle had already expressed his trepidation of price reductions 'as we really cannot afford to abate £2000 or £3000 a Month out of our Profits': but matters worsened, as Buddle heard on September 12 that Henry Morton had received orders from the Earl of Durham

...to push his vend up to the same scale as ours [Londonderry's]. He declares he has no discretionary powers. I don't therefore, see how the Regulation can possibly hold together any longer...⁷⁶

The danger of the Earl overvending was that this might tempt Hetton to bind union pitmen to compete with Londonderry and Durham for markets and

sales. The outcome of the whole dispute could hinge upon such a turn, thus the potential effects of the Earl's move were of enormous significance.

Of similar import was the news that four Tyne collieries had raised the pitmen's earnings to 4s per day in contravention of the owners' 3s limit. That the union had previously had to raise its working members' subscriptions testified to the effectiveness of the 3s limit, so it was particularly ironic that such an ardent opponent of the union as John Buddle at Wallsend should be one of the culprits.⁷⁷ Thus overall whilst the union faced mounting problems the owners too manifestly had theirs, but the growing numbers of blacklegs were giving the owners' side the scent of victory. The *Tyne Mercury* commented on September 4 that if 'the 8,000 unemployed pitmen would consent to return to work tomorrow, we do not believe that more than 3,000 of them, if so many, could be engaged'.⁷⁸ And the *Newcastle Journal* bluntly told readers on September 8 that the pitmen's

...ruinous and unprincipled combination is tottering to its base. The men are seceding daily, but cannot all get employment. The demagogues and delegates are making a despairing effort to sustain its sinking energies; but the fabric they have reared in blood, and consecrated by the misery of their fellow-men, is crumbling to dust around them. Theirs will be a deserved fate, but we pity those of their victims who have been intimidated by their desperate measures...

The *Journal* also carried a missive from Thomas Sopwith, agent to the Blakett-Beaumont lead mines, whose long letter claimed it to be the opinion of all disinterested persons 'that whatever hastens the breaking up of the Union is for the good of the men'. But his main point was that

...[t]he Union is turned soft - it is wavering - it is going. A few weeks more, perhaps days, and this bugbear of shopkeepers, devourer of pitmen, this destroyer of the labourer's happiness and comfort, will be no more. I did think at one time that it would have come to a violent end - I did think... that it would have been terminated by the military; but... instead of a violent end, it will die of a decline... this termination is near at hand... in fact, it is now in operation; and... the Union actually is upon the verge of being dissolved: not dissolved by any violent or

positive act, but by the returning good sense and gradual declension of its members...⁷⁹

Thus it seems that a few days into September the union was indeed facing serious decline. Because of the secessions Bouverie told the Home Office on September 5 he believed the union was 'fast drawing to a close' and that the pitmen would 'all willingly go to work, but their places having been supplied by strangers the owners could not give them employment even if they wished to do so'.⁸⁰ Fynes' standard history of the pitmen confirms that 'instead of making fresh converts to the union, Mr. Hepburn and his brave followers saw his band every week growing smaller', but explained that though some men were returning to work, too precipitate a capitulation was still to be avoided if possible:

...The pits in most places, worked by strangers and those who had returned dispirited to their work, were now in almost full operation again, and it was felt by many of the most sanguine that the men had suffered a defeat. But they were not desirous of expressing their belief in this respect, because they were aware that one great object of the masters was to break their "rebellious and mutinous spirit,"... and they had sagacity enough to know that, if they capitulated too easily they might bid farewell to all independence for some time to come. Animated by this spirit, they therefore determined to hold out in the face of so many difficulties, even when prudence would have dictated the adoption of a different course...⁸¹

Union Resistance Ends.

By September 16 however it seems there was a qualitative change in the pitmen's attitude, and the strike started to give way. On that day Bouverie wrote that he had begun to disperse the military forces accumulated in the region, and two days later the *Mercury* commented that the union now seemed 'to be gradually crumbling to pieces', as

...[m]ore bodies of pitmen are refusing to contribute any longer out of their earnings to support the Fund. The owners, we hear, both of the Jarrow colliery and the Elswick colliery are about to bind as many of their men, who have just left the Union, as they can make room for...⁸²

After the earlier limited secessions at the Durham, Londonderry

and Hetton collieries, Jarrow and Elswick were thus the crucial breaches with which the capitulation of the union finally began. The *Mercury* condescendingly predicted 'that kindness will now be properly appreciated by the men', and urged others to follow so that 'the system of pouring in strangers from a distance' might end to leave as few pitmen as possible unemployed. This view was expressed less out of altruism than the practicalities of avoiding disorder from hungry workless pitmen, but as if made to order for the *Mercury* came the news from Dunn at North Hetton, also on September 18, that the union there too had that day

...all but broken up - and N^o. Hetton men offering themselves in great numbers - fixed to take about 25 of the picked men...

Dunn said the men were 'greatly dispirited', and within two days the colliery was 'nearly filled up with men'. Jarrow, Elswick and North Hetton had all suddenly given in on the same day, September 18.⁸³ After months of impasse events were now moving rapidly and on September 20 Dunn was at his other post at Hetton proper, when the pitmen

...this day surrendered at discretion and allowed us to pick out as many and whom we pleased binding them under the Declaration contained in the Bond against becoming members of any society acting against the free exercise of their working powers etc... Hebburn [sic] and the other leaders were in attendance...⁸⁴

By the end of the week Dunn had bound 'upwards of 800 hewers'. Hetton had been the only major Wear colliery on strike but as it was also the largest striking colliery on either river, according to Jaffe this marked the effective end of the strike throughout the coalfield.⁸⁵

During the rest of September large numbers of pitmen were re-employed, but thousands were left out of work having 'seen their error too late' and been displaced by imported labour.⁸⁶ The *Newcastle Journal* noted on September 22 that

...[a]t many collieries the men have applied for work at the masters' terms, but, from the numerous importations from the lead mines... a proportion only can obtain employment. The Hetton men

"gave in" in a body on Thursday... Several 100s have since been bound, amidst a strong competition among the claimants for that favour, the Union and all other conditions being surrendered...

Yet the *Tyne Mercury* of September 25 suggested the union's capitulation was not all it seemed:

...This breaking up of the Union has excited great surprise in many persons, from the recent apparent determination of the pitmen still to hold out. We believe their surprise is not unfounded. From information which we have received, we have reason to think that Hepburn and other delegates, who have been the chief promoters of the dissensions which have existed for six months past between the coal owners and their servants, have at length recommended the men to give way, to sacrifice the Union in appearance, but with the secret intention of bolstering it up under another name...

This concurred with Dunn's view of the Hetton pitmen, that despite their defeat 'great feeling prevails for some Union of their own - which will I believe be carried on in spite of fate'.⁸⁷ Likewise, a few days later Bouverie expressed concern that though the pitmen appeared to have dissolved the union 'for the present',

...from the power which the delegates still appear to have over them it is the opinion of some of the coal owners that another union will be formed, it seems however to be impossible that anything can be done in that way for some time to come...⁸⁸

In the meantime the owners pressed home their advantage by apparently seeking to extort the residue of union funds, as revealed in early October in a letter to the *Newcastle Chronicle* by Thomas Hepburn himself. This was the first time Hepburn had written in a personal capacity on union matters, which he presumably now did to cultivate the idea that the union was indeed broken. Yet in addressing the editor of the *Chronicle*, his letter implicitly acknowledged that the pitmen's 'Institution' had yet to be destroyed:

SIR,- In Order to develope [sic] and make known the Designs of crafty and designing Men, I transmit to you for Insertion in your Paper the following Letter, which bears Date from Sheffield, but which I strongly suspect was never written there, but by some Persons nearer Home, who are aiming at the Destruction of our Institution. Whether it was written at Sheffield or not, however, I care not, but I would inform the Writer and the Public that we can fight our own Battles without the Aid of mercenary Troops.

October 2, 1832.

Yours, etc.,

THOMAS HEPBURN

(COPY)

Sheffield, Tuesday Afternoon [September 25].

SIR,- I have been ill-used by the North Country Coal Owners after sending from 12 to 1300 men, therefore, if you send me some Funds, I will yet save the Union and cause the greater Part of the Men to return back directly. I have as much Power over the Derbyshire and Staffordshire Men as you have in your Neighbourhood. It must be done directly; therefore send me a Letter, with a Remittance, without a Moment's Delay. I have scarcely Time to save the Post.

Direct, Robert Bradley, Post Office, Sheffield. Hundreds are now Ready to start for the North. It must be now or never. - I am, Sir, your most obedient Servant,

ROBT. BRADLEY.

To Mr. Hebbbron [sic], one of the principal Delegates of the Colliers Union, Newcastle upon Tyne, Northumberland.⁸⁹

Unscrupulous owners or at least their cruder supporters were probably behind this attempted criminal fraud, and by asking for a letter which it might be assumed would bear Hepburn's signature may even have sought to lure him into a prosecution for conspiracy or interfering with the blacklegs' contracts of employment. Hepburn though was astute enough to recognise this and no more came of the matter, but more significant here was his continued defence of the pitmen's 'Institution', indicating that it remained to some degree intact and confirming the *Mercury's* view that a return to work was in fact instigated by the delegates to preserve the union for future battles.

The owners also took other measures to consolidate their position. Following the collapse of the strike, their joint committee meeting on Saturday September 22 for example decided that

...none of the Pitmen should be bound until after the quarter Sessions, when the general form of Bond should be submitted to the Bench of Magistrates, which they have a right to expect from the trouble and danger they have incurred, and the large sums they have been, and may be called upon to pay, for the purpose of preserving the public peace...⁹⁰

Machinery was set in motion to claim from the county rates for the expense of soldiers and special constables, and as for blackleg recruitment 'Mr Bell' was called home from Gainsborough in Lincolnshire,

where 'Mr Lough' was to stay 'to get all information as to the Places where Men may be procured' in case of renewed trouble from the union. A count of the 'strangers' at each colliery was also called for, with an urgent request to every viewer

...that he will not allow any of them to be discharged without his express authority in writing, stating the reason of such discharge, and that the Men [blacklegs] be encouraged to appeal to him before they leave the Colliery, in order that he may be satisfied that they are not forced from their employment by a Combination of *Pitmen and others*...⁹¹

As the owners' most valuable weapon the blacklegs were thus to be indulged as an insurance against resurgent union activity, but as Fynes describes, the immediate consequences for the locked-out pitmen and their families were dire:

...so overstocked was the labour market, that large numbers could not get work for a time; and as the men who had gone to work dare not subscribe for them, if even they had been willing to do so... many of the miners and their families were at the point of starvation, besides having no houses to live in, their furniture still remaining in farmers' byres and hay lofts, in public house long rooms, and by roadsides...⁹²

One saving grace was that because the men were now compulsorily unemployed, the poor relief previously denied them by the parishes would be forthcoming.⁹³ But more important was the owners' growing disregard for the regulation as this was leading most collieries to vend at higher capacities to compensate for falling prices: with the coal trade consequently 'striking out very brisk', more unemployed men were thus taken on until eventually 'the greater portion of them got employed' on condition they abandoned the union. Not content with the union's eclipse, the *Journal* pointed out the opportunity now available for victimising delegates, but the owners needed no prompting as

...on no account could the leading advocates of the union get work. Mr Hepburn and others who had fought so hard and faithfully for the welfare of the whole body of men, were now prevented from getting work at any colliery in the two counties...⁹⁴

Their predicament was later recalled by one delegate, John

Thompson of Hetton, who explained that at the final delegate meeting at Newcastle's Cock Inn 'in the fore part of September' 1832,

...Thomas Hebron [sic] had the offer of £300 to set him up in business, as we all knew he would have to suffer. He refused it, saying we would all have to suffer as well as him. We all did so, for shortly afterwards we (the delegates) got our leave from the Coal Trade, and work was refused us at all the collieries...

For Thompson however, there was at least the subsequent consolation that 'I think most of us got better situations, as many never went into the coal mines more'.⁹⁵

The end of the strike thus saw the achievement of the owners' objectives, though only after a bitter and protracted struggle. By August the slow trickle of defections was gaining impetus, but the failure of the all-out strike vote was the point from which it seems the union's position particularly deteriorated. Secessions at the Durham and Londonderry collieries thereafter compounded the union's financial problems, and spurred the owners to reject the pitmen's every approach, hardening their resolve to see the task through. It was the pitmen's misfortune that despite all the Coal Trade's internal jealousies and divisions over the vend, the one issue on which the owners were completely united was the need to break the union.

From the paucity of evidence it is not immediately clear exactly how or why the strike collapsed, but scrutiny of the circumstances favours the *Tyne Mercury's* explanation. Central to this is the optimism of Carbonarius' letter of September 15, which never so much as hinted at withdrawal by the union and thus implied he was unaware of the impending capitulation: yet the *Mercury* predicted Jarrow and Elswick's demise two days later, and the next day they and North Hetton had all fallen, the latter perhaps prompted by the former.⁹⁶ It may be that the delegates then responded by deciding for collective retreat as preferable to piecemeal domino-like collapses.

Alternately there may already have been plans to return to work, for by September there must have been some debate amongst the men over what course to take, especially if as the delegate John Thompson later claimed, working unionists 'gave up' paying subscriptions in mid-August.⁹⁷ And his remark that the last delegate meeting was in 'the fore part' of September might suggest, given the timing and circumstances of the collapse the following week, that the meeting in question was on Saturday September 15. With insufficient monies to continue the strike, the delegates may then have simply authorised the branch unions at each colliery to settle with their respective owners (as spontaneously occurred in 1831), with Jarrow, Elswick, and North Hetton merely being the first to do so. If indeed as Thompson implied, the last delegate meeting took place before the collapse, then the 'pre-emptive' rather than 'response' scenario is the more likely. After failing they gave in the following day, but the attendance of Hepburn 'and the other leaders' at Hetton's surrender presumably denoted Hetton's symbolic importance and the union's general consent for its secession.

Along with the persisting wariness of the *Mercury* and others over the union it therefore seems the delegates did call off the strike, probably because as Thompson said, subscriptions had dried up. Not the least consideration in this would be that an organised return to work should have the virtue of avoiding panic and an undignified scramble for the limited jobs still open, and hopefully maintain some semblance of unity amongst the men to preserve the union.

It was ironic that Carbonarius' September 15 prediction that slight concessions would settle the dispute was, before it could be published on September 22, overtaken by the union's collapse. But a greater irony was the fact that the owners' unity was itself meanwhile disintegrating: Buddle already felt the regulation was 'virtually at an

end' and could not 'possibly hold together any longer', and the Earl of Durham's decision to abandon it only a week before the union's fall promised to aggravate matters still further.⁹⁸ The Earl's move came just too late to bring the kind of schism which might have saved the union but even so, at the end of the week of the collapse Buddle was remarking that '[t]he affairs of the Coal-trade are looking as black as need be here... I will not say anything about them, as I can say nothing good'.⁹⁹ Had the pitmen persevered a little longer they might thus have profited from the vend troubles, though even had the vend totally collapsed it was unlikely the owners would back down: for whilst they might cordially despise one another, they hated the union that much more.

It seems it was essentially on the question of finance that the union finally foundered, for though the working pits funded both sides the economics of their respective operations favoured the owners. Their instrument of battle, the indemnity fund, was less immediately demanding than eight thousand pitmen who at 5s each would consume £2000 strike pay every week: and despite which, union subscriptions were doubly inadequate in that they were too high for the working pitmen who had to pay them, but never quite high enough to sustain the strikers. In retrospect, the union's partial strike was a mistake and an all-out stoppage may have stood a better chance of success.

It was thus only in the face of considerable odds that the pitmen's union met its defeat. The intervention of the military, and the magistrates and civil authorities, had been supplemented and justified by the statements of the press and politicians, and the finance provided by the banks had successfully facilitated the influx of thousands of imported blacklegs into the coalfield.¹⁰⁰ Aside from the union's mistakes it was this last factor which was apparently so telling in

demoralising union pitmen during August and September: thus it would seem that whilst there may have been considerable solidarity amongst both the pitmen's and lead miners' groups, there was no love lost between them, at least when pitted in competition for the same work. The role of the judiciary was also significant in bringing yet another arm of state to the owners' assistance, and in the region Jobling's gibbeting afterwards became a symbol of judicial contempt for trades unions comparable to the contemporary scandal over the Tolpuddle labourers. But importantly, what is perhaps less widely known and seems to have been hitherto overlooked by union historians, is that the union delegates seem to have recognised the impending defeat and apparently decided to end the dispute to avoid the utter destruction of their organisation. If this was indeed the case, then previous descriptions of the dispute having ended with the union's total annihilation stand in need of revision.

But the outcome of the dispute was undeniably a devastating defeat for the union, and the owners' subsequent policy of victimisation and blacklisting was ruthlessly implemented to crush any revival. The delegates and the unemployed men and their families were left to an uncomfortably harsh fate, effectively rendered industrial outcasts in their own communities as an example to those pitmen whom the employers had selected for the blessing of their employment. Yet despite this, the loss of thousands of members, and the virtual impossibility of organising any open and independent body, the spirit of the union still refused to be extinguished.

NOTES TO CHAPTER SEVEN.

¹ Sir James Parke (1782-1868) of Bedfordshire, later Baron Wensleydale. *Dictionary of National Biography*, Vol.XV, p.226: Sir William Bolland (1772-1840), London lawyer and bibliophile. *Ibid.*, Vol.II, p.785: George Kenyon (1776-1855), second Lord Kenyon of Gredington, Flint. *Burkes' Complete Peerage*, VII, p.187.

² Other notables included Sir Hedworth Williamson, bart., of Whitburn (foreman); John Bowes of Streatlam Castle, one of the 'Grand Allies' colliery partnership and later founder of the Bowes Museum; John Ralph Fenwick of Durham, an old friend of the Prime Minister; and North Durham landowner George Silvertop (R. Welford, *Men of Mark 'Twixt Tyne and Tweed*, Vol.III, pp.396-399).

³ See 6 Geo. IV, Cap.50 (County Juries Act, 1825). Even allowing for the withdrawal or exclusion of coal-owning jurors from cases involving pitmen, the fact is that despite their absence their personal influence upon gentry friends and neighbours on the jury would remain. Indeed even the judiciary had years previously acknowledged the difficulty of obtaining an impartial local hearing where the owners' interests were impugned. This occurred in 1794-95 when in protest at the owners' monopoly a newcomer from Somerset, one 'George Ward Errington, lessor of [the Shiremoor] mine from the Duke of Northumberland, brought suit against the members of the Committee of the Coal Trade. He specially requested a trial outside Newcastle or Northumberland on the grounds that the great wealth and influence of the coal owners would make a fair trial in those places impossible'. Sweezy, *Monopoly and Competition*, p.131: His point was accepted, and the Court of King's Bench in London agreed that the case 'be tried by a jury of the county of York'. After two years of ill health however Errington withdrew the suit and the case never came to trial, but he strongly maintained that his sentiments as to the limitation of the vend and other aspects of the conduct of the Northumberland and Durham coal trade remained unaltered (*PP*, Coal Trade Committee, June 1800, Reports of the House of Commons, Vol.10, pp.563,611).

⁴ *Newcastle Chronicle*, August 4, 1832.

⁵ *Durham Advertiser*, August 10, 1832: The calendar listed cases of '[m]urder, 5; concealing birth of a child, 1; burglary, 2; housebreaking, 2; highway robbery, 3; cutting and maiming, 14; firing at the person, 1; firing into dwelling-houses, 5; riot and felony, 22; receiving stolen goods, 1; larceny, 2; refusing to give evidence, 1'. It seems there were also 13 civil cases (*ibid.*, July 27, 1832).

⁶ *Newcastle Chronicle*, August 4, 1832. Parke referred to the amendment and repeal of the Combination Acts in 1824-25. That this was the origin of the current unions was untrue however as one reason given for the Acts' repeal was their ineffectuality, as unions flourished despite them. See *Hansard*, Vol.XI, 2nd Series, cols.811-814 (May 21, 1824).

⁷ *Newcastle Chronicle*, August 4, 1832.

⁸ The Durham JPs categorically stated there was no such evidence (HO

52/17, Williamson to Melbourne, July 23, 1832).

9 That Parke himself was led in this by the owners is unlikely, though his assize visits may have helped develop the links which brought the marriage in 1841 of his eldest daughter into a major Northumberland coal-owning family. See Viscountess Ridley, *Cecilia: The Life and Letters of Cecilia Ridley, 1819-1845*, (London, 1958): Parke is said to have exerted a most imposing presence in the courtroom, not least by dint of the profound impact of his speeches. But it seems that intrinsic to Parke's psyche was a worrying intellectual shortcoming, described here by a colleague; Parke was on the whole, 'no ordinary man. His massive and powerful frame was the abode of an intellect not less massive and powerful. Every sentence he uttered was like a die stamped by a mighty engine. Yet strange to say the narrowness of this intellect, at least in its professional aspect, was not less notable than its strength. As a lawyer and a Judge, Parke was remarkable for extreme technicality. "*Ingenio magno, immensa doctrina, acumine mentis subtilissimo, leges Anglicae feliciter, ad absurdum reduxit*" was the epitaph... which my impertinence composed for him, and I trust never reached his ears'. Goldwin Smith, *Reminiscences*, (New York, 1911), p.123: Smith was a judge's marshal on circuit with Parke during the 1840s (*Dictionary of National Biography*, 2nd Sup. Vol.III, p.329): Perhaps indicative of Parke's 'narrow intellect' was an incident in a stifflingly hot assize court. Learning that the windows could not be opened, he demanded 'in a voice of thunder' that 12 carpenters be sent for, to 'have the window-frames taken out'. 'And it was done', records the memoir of one bemused observer. W.W. Vernon, *Recollections of Seventy-two Years*, (London, 1917), p.132: Combined with a reputedly 'singular knack of riveting the attention and winning the confidence of juries', the intensity of Parke's approach might reinforce the prejudices of jurors and possibly compound any coal owner's influence upon them to view pitmen's evidence in a negative light (*Dictionary of National Biography*, Vol.XV, p.226).

10 9 Geo.IV, Cap.XXXI, para.XXV, 'An Act for consolidating and amending the Statutes in England relative to Offences against the Person'.

11 *Newcastle Chronicle*, August 4, 1832.

12 *Durham Advertiser*, August 3, 1832.

13 In considering the courtroom tenor of senior judges, one latter-day Professor of Law recommends that the typical judge 'should not advert to matters which go beyond those necessary for decisions in the case before him... He must act like a political, economic, and social eunuch, and have no interest in the world outside his court when he comes to judgement'. Parke's handling of the assizes was clearly a far cry from these later ideals. J.A.G. Griffith, *The Politics of the Judiciary*, (London, 1977), p.267.

14 John Bell, *Collections Relating to the Tyne*, Vol.III, p.179 (NCL).

15 The term 'misprision of felony' to which Parke had referred indicated a crime involving a lesser degree of guilt than specified by the charge, and therefore in this instance not liable to capital punishment: such a finding might effectively amount to an escape clause for Jobling.

- 16 *Report of the Trials...* p.20 (emphasis added).
- 17 *Newcastle Journal*, August 4, 1832.
- 18 *Durham Advertiser*, August 3, 1832: *The Times* (August 4) noted that the trial 'lasted 10 hours, and did not terminate until midnight': *Newcastle Journal*, August 4, 1832.
- 19 Recollections of Roger Lawson, in *Inch Deep in Coaldust*, Rev. John Stephenson (ed), (Hetton-le-Hole, 1988). That Turnbull became an odd-job man suggests he was blacklisted and never worked in the pits again.
- 20 *Newcastle Journal*, August 4, 1832: The witness, Joseph Taylor, was also asked if he was one of the union committee (whether he was a delegate), and the same line was pursued with four others (*Tyne Mercury*, August 7, 1832).
- 21 See S. Lee (Professor of Jurisprudence, Queens University, Belfast), *Judging Judges*, (London, 1988), p.90.
- 22 *Tyne Mercury*, August 7, 1832.
- 23 9 Geo.IV, Cap.XXXI, para.IX: *Tyne Mercury*, August 7, 1832: But if John Buddle's response is anything to go by the owners disapproved of the sentence even more: Buddle complained to Lord Londonderry that the conviction was 'a bad job, as it will now be quite out of the question to expect any Constables to act efficiently against the Pitmen, in any case. They convicted him by a set of well trained false Witnesses, and it is said by intimidating the Jury. A large body of Pitmen were in the Court and cheered, or hissed as they thought matters were going for or against the prisoner, and old Bolland had not the spunk to put this disorder down. It is much to be regretted that Justice Park [sic] did not try this case' (D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, August 4, 1832). The assertion regarding 'false witnesses' could hardly have been correct, as their evidence to the assize court was the same as that at the coroner's inquest. If as Buddle claimed they were 'well trained', their coaching must have been very rapid and intense to have successfully prepared them for the inquest, only the day after Skipsey's death.
- 24 *Tyne Mercury*, August 7, 1832.
- 25 The others were; a Scotsman during the 1640s for robbery near Bishop Auckland; Andrew Mills in 1683 for 3 murders at Ferryhill; Robert Vart in the early 1700s for murder at Staindrop; and Robert Haslett in 1770 for robbing the mail at Gateshead Fell. *Durham Advertiser*, August 10, 1832.
- 26 Handbill, 'Execution of William Jobling'; *Leicester Chronicle* extract in the *Durham Advertiser*, August 24, 1832; T. Kelly and V. Rea, *Gibbeting of Wm. Jobling*, (Jarrow, 1972), p.12.
- 27 See 9 Geo.IV, Cap.XXXI, para.IV. The last previous gibbeting was it seems in 1815 in Derbyshire; the gibbet was removed in 1826. W. Andrews, *Old-Time Punishments*, (Hull, 1890), pp.227,229.
- 28 See 2 & 3 Wm.IV, Cap.LXXV.

- 29 After a parliamentary enquiry in the late 1820s, a Bill introduced by Henry Warburton MP fell because of opposition to dissection. Warburton also sponsored this second Bill.
- 30 Sir Robert Inglis for example said he was glad to see a clause in the Bill which 'separated dissection from the crime of murder. He considered it inexpedient that such a penalty should remain on the Statute Books, while they were endeavouring to procure subjects to facilitate the study of anatomy, from poor-houses and hospitals'. *Hansard*, Vol.IX, 3rd series, col.578 (January 17, 1832). It was calculated that the 5000 pauper burials per annum would more than adequately supply the shortage.
- 31 *Hansard*, Vol.IX, 3rd series, col.827 (January 26, 1832).
- 32 *Hansard*, Vol.XIV, 3rd series, cols.535,536 (July 19, 1832).
- 33 *The Times*, December 19, 1832.
- 34 Given the view of possibly Oxford's most notable Professor of Jurisprudence that Parke was 'the greatest legal pedant that I believe ever existed', it seems inconceivable that he was unaware of the burial provision. Lord Hanworth, *Lord Chief Baron Pollock*, (London, 1929), p.198, citing Sir Frederick Pollock (1845-1937).
- 35 *Tyne Mercury*, August 7, 1832.
- 36 D.N. Pritt, *The Defence Accuses*, autobiography, (London, 1966) Vol.3 of 3, p.18: Pritt was led to this class analysis as a long-serving and distinguished advocate. He recalled one judge 'of great experience and knowledge, so bitterly opposed to anything left-wing that he could scarcely have given a fair trial if he had tried' (Ibid., *From Right to Left*, Vol.1 of 3, p.142). Pritt was a Labour MP, 1945-1951.
- 37 J.H. Baker, *An Introduction to English Legal History*, 2nd ed., (London, 1979), p.173.
- 38 Colls, *The Pitmen of the Northern Coalfield*, p.252.
- 39 *Durham Advertiser*, August 24, 1832. The Under-Secretary was George Lamb, Home Secretary Lord Melbourne's brother.
- 40 According to one source this had been despaired of, for after '[t]he time passed over for the guard watching the body, and still he was allowed to hang... a great many gave up all hopes of the task ever being accomplished, in consequence of the smell arising from the putrid state of his body; but to our great surprise late last night (Friday, August 31, 1832) or early this morning (Saturday), both the body and Gibbet have totally disappeared, to the utmost relief of the inhabitants of the surrounding neighbourhood'. Handbill, 'Particulars of the Gibbet being stole away from Jarrow Slake', John Bell, *Collections Relating to the Tyne*, Vol.III, p.183 (NCL). The 'rescue' was at low tide, high water at Shields that morning being at 7.02am: *The Newcastle Chronicle* (September 8, 1832) spoke for many with its comment that though the body's removal was against the law, 'it is an offence which has given great satisfaction in the neighbourhood, and shews the impolicy of reviving a practice which is so evidently opposed to the feelings of the people': The authorities were said to be 'only too glad that such a hideous sight

was removed from the district' and it was even supposed they had secretly paid to have the body disappear (Fynes, *The Miners...* p.35): G.B. Hodgson, *The Borough of South Shields* (Newcastle, 1904), p.278.

41 Jobling's fate remains a matter of public controversy today. For this and efforts to erect a monument to his name, see for example the *Newcastle Evening Chronicle*, April 27, May 9,11,18,19,24, June 2,13, 1989; *Newcastle Journal*, October 15, 1990.

42 D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, August 4, 1832.

43 D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, August 8, 1832.

44 *Tyne Mercury*, August 14, 1832: HO 40/30, Bouverie to the Home Office, August 12, 1832.

45 D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, August 8, 1832. Buddle also noted that the increased wages to Londonderry's pitmen in the past year amounted to 'more than £2000'. Assuming a workforce of 1500 (it was 1390 in 1820: Sturgess, *Aristocrat in Business*, p.4) working 46 weeks per year, this averaged about 7d per man per week, illustrating how limited the pitmen's claims in 1831 had actually been.

46 D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, August 9, 1832.

47 D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, August 9, 1832.

48 D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, May 6, 1832.

49 D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, August 9, 1832. He felt however that the union would be beaten 'provided the coal-owners do but stand firm, and which for very shame I think they will do - otherwise they will stamp themselves as the meanest of the mean, and the basest of pothorns'.

50 D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, August 11, 1832.

51 Jaffe, 'Economy and Community...', p.294, citing NCB 1/JB/332, Coxon to Buddle, August 10, 1825.

52 *Dunn's Diary*, August 9, 1832.

53 D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, August 11, 1832: The owners' resolution said that 'under existing circumstances, no beneficial result can... be expected from any negotiation with the Delegates or Managers of the Pitmen's Union'. CTMB, Committee Minutes, August 21, 1832.

54 D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, August 11, 1832.

55 D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, August 13, 1832; *ibid.*, Hunter to Londonderry, August 14, 1832.

56 *Dunn's Diary*, August 9, 1832. Dunn commuted between Hetton and his home at Leazes Terrace, Newcastle.

57 D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, August 30, 1832: *Tyne Mercury*, August 28, 1832.

58 *Tyne Mercury*, August 28, September 4, 1832: Buddle, Hunter and Morton's reports are to be taken seriously but the *Mercury* was prone to exaggeration: that its figures here were perhaps overstated is revealed by comparison with Dunn, who recorded on August 30 merely that 'several of the old Pitmen' at North Hetton were now 'dropping in', whilst at Hetton proper only '[t]en or a dozen of the Union men [had] come in during the week'. There was no indication here of the one hundred Hetton defections claimed by the *Mercury* and moreover, Dunn specifically noted that the union there was still 'far from being done up'. But while measured sources such as Dunn's private diaries provide a better gauge of the situation than the *Mercury's* biased reports, they nevertheless show that the pitmen's position was deteriorating as reduced subscriptions threatened to further over-stretch union finances (*Dunn's Diary*, August 30, September 1, 1832).

59 *Tyne Mercury*, September 4, 1832: CTMB, Committee Minutes, August 29, 1832.

60 *Tyne Mercury*, September 4, 1832.

61 *Tyne Mercury*, September 4, 1832.

62 *Dunn's Diary*, September 1, August 30, 1832: *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, December 20, 1882. The delegate was John Thompson of Hetton.

63 *Newcastle Courant*, August 18, 1832.

64 *Tyne Mercury*, September 11, 1832.

65 10 Geo.IV, cap.56. The main change of this consolidating measure was the registration requirement. This was the last Act before a change of heart towards friendly societies, the old idea having been that they should be monitored by the local gentry, but government was now for the first time indirectly involving itself in central administration. See P.H.J.H. Gosden, *The Friendly Societies in England, 1815-1875*, (Manchester, 1961), p.177.

66 *Tyne Mercury*, September 11, 1832.

67 *Newcastle Chronicle*, September 22, 1832. The 7th and 8th rules concerned union control over the transfer of members between collieries, and the 4s per day earnings limit, both of which were observed on pain of expulsion from the union.

68 A proposed rulebook was duly published by the *Newcastle Journal* (*Local Tracts*, 9, NCL).

69 The Benefit Society Committee comprised Buddle, Losh, Nicholas Wood, George Johnson, Hugh Taylor, and Benjamin Thompson (CTMB, Committee Minutes, September 1, 1832).

70 CTMB, Committee Minutes, September 17, 1832: Gosden, *The Friendly Societies...* p.177: A certificate issued at quarter sessions was the legal evidence of registration. J.T. Turnbull, Clerk to the Castle Ward magistrates, was named by the owners as one who could be relied upon to expedite such matters, fuelling suspicions of possible collusion with the owners evident in his conduct at the Skipsey inquest.

- 71 CTMB, Committee Minutes, September 1, 1832. The returns of defections from the union are not recorded.
- 72 CTMB, Committee Minutes, September 1,5,8, 1832. On August 25 the *Newcastle Courant* noted that blacklegs going home 'from the county of Durham, and other parts of the north (especially those conversant with the boring and sinking for coal,) have met with temporary employment at different places in the North Riding of Yorkshire'.
- 73 CTMB, Committee Minutes, September 15, 1832.
- 74 D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, September 5, 1832.
- 75 D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, September 8, 1832. Buddle was attending a Benefit Society Committee meeting.
- 76 D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, August 30, September 12, 1832. Buddle felt November would be 'an awful month' for his Lordship's colliery empire, requiring 'forethought, and previous arrangements or we shall be in insuperable difficulties. The thoughts of all this occupies me night and day, as I don't yet see my way through it'.
- 77 CTMB, Committee Minutes, September 15, 1832. The four pits were Percy Main, Wallsend, Willington, and Heaton.
- 78 Noting more arrivals of Staffordshire blacklegs the next week, the *Mercury* (September 4) reiterated that 'the services of the ordinary pitmen will become every week less necessary than they were the week before', and only regretted that though secessions were 'almost daily taking place' the strike had still not been concluded.
- 79 *Newcastle Journal*, August 25, 1832 (original emphasis). Sopwith used the pseudonym 'Th.S', and had earlier predicted a bloody suppression of the union (ibid., July 21, 1832).
- 80 HO 40/30, Bouverie to the Home Office, September 5, 1832: At this point Barrington Colliery near Bedlington was for example seeking only '10 or 12' hewers and putters (*Tyne Mercury*, September 11, 1832).
- 81 Fynes, *The Miners of Northumberland & Durham*, pp.32,33.
- 82 *Tyne Mercury*, September 18, 1832. The *Mercury* slavishly attributed this breakthrough to 'the correspondence between Mr Brandling and Mr Losh'.
- 83 *Dunn's Diary*, September 18,20, 1832.
- 84 *Dunn's Diary*, September 19,20, 1832.
- 85 Jaffe, 'Economy and Community...', p.296.
- 86 *Tyne Mercury*, September 25, 1832.
- 87 *Dunn's Diary*, September 20, 1832.
- 88 HO 40/30, Bouverie to the Home Office, October 2, 1832.
- 89 *Newcastle Chronicle*, October 6, 1832.

- 90 CTMB, Committee Minutes, September 22, 1832.
- 91 CTMB, Committee Minutes, September 22, 1832. It was also agreed to indemnify Cramlington for 21 special constables, presumably needed to guard against attacks on the colliery. £150 was later voted for this purpose, whilst Tyne Main was paid £86 for 43 blacklegs hired (*ibid.*, September 29, 1832).
- 92 Fynes, *The Miners of Northumberland & Durham*, p.35.
- 93 The gentry had heavy influence on Boards of Poor Law Guardians and might thus prevent the payment of relief to the strikers. See Jones, 'Industrial Relations', p.21.
- 94 *Newcastle Journal*, September 22, 1832: Fynes, *The Miners of Northumberland & Durham*, pp.35-36.
- 95 *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, December 20, 1882.
- 96 The *Tyne Mercury* forecast Jarrow and Elswick's collapse on September 18, but was printed the previous day.
- 97 *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, December 20, 1882.
- 98 D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, September 5,12, 1832.
- 99 D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, September 22, 1832.
- 100 One estimate has it that over 3200 workers were brought to the coalfield between June and the end of October. See J.A. Jaffe, 'The State, Capital, and Workers' Control During the Industrial Revolution: The Rise and Fall of the North-East Pitmen's Union, 1831-2', *Journal of Social History*, Vol.21, No.4 (June 1988), p.729.

EPILOGUE AND CONCLUSION.The Union and 'the pitmen's magazine'.

With overt union resistance finally at an end, the last weeks of 1832 saw the Coal Trade pass measures tightening the binding regulations with the aim of indulging the strikebreakers and thereby securing a source of labour against any resurgence of union activity.¹ Yet at the same time it became apparent that such measures were of only secondary importance to many owners, for whom the priority now that the pits were back in full work was to produce and sell as much coal as possible, as tacitly confirmed by Buddle's remark on November 28, 'I consider the campaign to have commenced'.² It would thus appear that with the union's defeat the *raison d'être* for any unity amongst the owners was lost, and their cartel quickly disintegrated under its internal strains. As Sweezy succinctly concludes, 'it was in the relations with their workers, and only there, that the owners' combination did not dissolve'.³

As noted by the *Tyne Mercury*, the delegates had apparently retreated 'to preserve the union for another day and meanwhile in Buddle's view were playing 'a deep game',

...pretending to have given it up, but going on smugly subscribing and providing the sinews of War against April, when they mean again to make a general Stand, and a great effort to gain the ascendancy. Hepburn and his colleagues are indefatigable in going in a private, and quiet way amongst the Collieries to keep the spirit of the thing alive. And my opinion is, they will succeed - as I foresee that as regards the Coal-owners, the trade is going into a state of dissolution. And they will be laid prostrate at the feet of 'General Hepburn'...⁴

On November 2 Bouverie considered that 'no apprehensions are entertained of Riot' in the coalfield, but the next weeks and months were punctuated by sabotage at the collieries and occasional violence against blacklegs.⁵ The worst such incidents were during late 1832 and early

1833: at North Hetton in November, Dunn noted 'a series of riots and disturbances created by the old pitmen against the new Comers', as a result of which a handbill was published warning that the blacklegs had been issued with firearms, and that the colliery meant to establish a police force.⁶ In February an altercation between pitmen and blacklegs at Hazlerigg brought the transportation of a twenty-year-old pitman for assault, and shortly after this a riot 'of a most brutal description' at Hetton saw the homes of imported Derbyshire colliers stoned, to be answered by volleys of swanshot which left three pitmen wounded.⁷ Despite their common class interest, there was clearly no love lost between the pitmen and blacklegs.

As indicated above by Buddle, Jaffe notes that Hepburn and the delegates went 'underground' after the strike:⁸ but whilst this was true of the union organisationally, following the defeat the union evidently turned its funds to another form of agitation, the publication of a magazine. This served the purpose of educating members and providing a focal point for the union faithful, and whilst only a short-lived venture it was significant in confirming the union's continued existence, though this has been overlooked even by the meticulous Colls. Officially entitled *The Spirit of the Tyne and Wear: or the Masters' and Workmen's Guardian*, this was a pamphlet known by its editor and correspondents as 'the pitmen's magazine'.⁹ Edited by James Johnston of Hetton and printed in Newcastle by Mackenzie, it appeared in December 1832 and carried articles, songs, poems and letters on contemporary topics like West Indian slavery and the revolutions in France and Poland, propagating the theories of radical political economy which came to prominence during this period. Though its life was very brief, which perhaps suggests a lack of widespread support amongst the pitmen for such a venture at this time, 'the pitmen's magazine' is of value for its

occasional references to the 1832 dispute which help to explain the end of the strike and the union's apparent dissolution in early 1832.¹⁰

One interesting item carried was a letter from a former unionist who had abandoned the strike in mid-August and criticised the delegates for their lack of policy, a point perhaps borne out by Hepburn's fatal delaying of the move for all-out strike. But more significantly, we also learn that after the strike only half the pitmen remained union members and that numbers deteriorated, as shown by an appeal that unless membership picked up by mid-February 1833 the union would be dissolved. The appeal was perhaps prompted by the formation by the Earl of Durham in January 1833 of the Lambton Collieries' Association, an anti-union friendly society 'for the maintainance of its members in old age, sickness, lameness, or infirmity': this is alleged to have quickly won the support of 1200 of the Earl's pitmen, a significantly large figure, and what was apparently one of its constituent branches, the Newbottle Colliery Relief Fund, was to endure for almost a century until 1927.¹¹

The magazine failed to reappear after the appeal for members and it was confirmed by Buddle on February 16, 1833, that 'the *Cock Parliament* was dissolved yesterday, and the Union Army disbanded'. Buddle however said this was related to the arrest of Hepburn following a pitmen's meeting after which blacklegs' houses at Birtley were attacked, and mocked that 'General Hepburn has broken up his Staff and gone into *dignified* retirement to prepare his defence, against the Assizes where he is to be tried for a riot': but the case was never brought, manifestly for lack of evidence.¹² These were undoubtedly difficult times for the pitmen and it was probably for a combination of both explanations alluded to here, plus perhaps the need to win breathing space from the owners and civil authorities, that the union was apparently formally dissolved on February 15, 1833.

The Owners' Regulation and Indemnity Fund.

The close of 1832 saw the total breakdown of the owners' regulation. This had threatened throughout 1832 because of the disruption of the normal functions of the vend and Londonderry's continuing refusal to sign the vend agreement, though the cartel, as Jaffe notes, 'was chronically unstable and subject to repeated bouts of open trade'.¹³ This bout however proved particularly difficult to resolve, for by the end of 1832 the Wear collieries had produced coal 11.7% in excess of allotted quotas whilst the Tyne was 3.85% deficient, described by Sweezy as 'a very large discrepancy which foreshadowed trouble'.¹⁴

Efforts to renew the general agreement indeed failed, mainly because of Hetton's obstinacy as to differences over the indemnity fund.¹⁵ In the meantime the price of best coals fell from 21s 9d on the first market day of December 1832 to 15s 6d in July 1833, 'the lowest point ever reached in the whole limitation period', rising to only 17s 3d in September 1833.¹⁶ Whilst Hetton was the main antagonist in blocking negotiations, another stumbling block pointed out by a Coal Trade Special Committee on August 31, 1833, was that 'there was very little prospect of renewal until Lord Londonderry should consent to pay his share of the strike expenses'.¹⁷ Indeed the parallel saga of the indemnity fund was instrumental to the vend disagreements, and by the time the latter were resolved in early 1834 the market situation had changed to the extent that the Tees collieries were of necessity included in the agreement, Stockton coal shipments to the Tyne-Wear's plum London markets having leapt from 62,749 tons in 1831 to 172,930 in 1832.¹⁸

The delay in the renewal of the vend and the settlement of indemnity fund claims were, as noted, closely linked. Prompt claims were

made against the county rates at quarter sessions for expenses for special constables, but other arrangements proved protracted: more than £2400 was still owed to the fund by the Tyne collieries alone in August 1833, and it was not until September that the criteria for the settlement of claims were approved, as follows:¹⁹

1st. Military	£1 per day for officer and servant 9d per day for Non-Comm Officer and Privates.
2nd. Men brought by Owners on the Premises	Total Expende actually proved of bringing Men to the Colliery.
3rd. Constables	No allowance, except what allowed by the County.
4th. Clothing and Work Gear	Two thirds of sums proved.
5th. Lodgings	To be allowed for one Fortnight.
6th. Lent Money	Disallowed in all cases.
7th. Damage to Houses	Ditto.
8th. Shorts	To be paid for at the rate of 5s. ²⁰

Yet it was only three months later on December 3 that the indemnity fund accounts were finally adopted, of which the following is the general abstract:²¹

Contributions at 4 per cent		£	s	d
	Tyne	33216	10	4
	Wear	17008	12	2
	Hartley	657	-	-
		<u>50882</u>	2	6
Deduct	£			
Mr Wade ²²	289			
Ditto	327 7 8			
		<u>616</u>	7	8
		50265	14	10
Contributions due	£	s	d	
Tyne and Hartley	11843	14	0	
Wear	<u>6091</u>	7	4	
		17935	1	4
Balance due				
Tyne and Hartley	11901	16	5	
Wear	1254	5	10	
Bank	<u>1629</u>	7	4	
		<u>14794</u>	9	7
		<u>3140</u>	11	9
1/16th off £50265 14s 10d =		3141	11	0
Expences of the Trade charged	£5000			
Actual cost	<u>4508</u>	11	4	
Balance to meet Mr Dobson's Accounts and other small outstanding incidentals	491	8	8	

The various debts and bills were to be paid as soon as possible in instalments at three, six, and nine months, but the Hetton owners' continued quibbling meant that a week later the Tyne owners' committee had to write to them 'to explain every transaction relating to the Indemnity fund and the attempts made to form a general regulation in the 'Coal trade'.²³ It here emerged that separate local vend agreements had arisen on the two rivers, but the Tyne committee argued that in settling Hetton's indemnity fund claims it had acted 'in strict Conformity with the principles and rules agreed upon by the trade and adopted in the settlement of the claims of every other Colliery':

...As a general proof of this it may be observed, that while the expence of bringing Men, by the rest of the trade, averaged 26/- per head, the cost incurred by the Hetton owners was £3.12.8. per head, every farthing of which has been allowed by the trade; and that the money actually paid, and to be paid to Coxlodge and Gosforth Collieries (which were the chief objects of attack on the Tyne) is only £1642.12.8., their contribution being £2842.10.11., while the money actually paid and to be paid to the Hetton Co. is £6789.9.2., their Contribution being only £5798.17.4...

Hetton had actually claimed £15,000 'for Military, Police, recruiting and deficient Vend', but it seems the Tyne committee's letter resolved matters as arrangements for settling the accounts were furthered the following week, and little more appears of the indemnity fund thereafter.²⁴ This then paved the way for the resumption of the regulation in 1834, and it was only then that the owners could finally put the strike behind them.

Post-defeat Union Resistance.

Shadowing the union's defeat came the first election to the reformed parliament with the general election of December 1832. Troops were stationed at Hetton and other villages from December 8 to 23 but there was no trouble and a Whig government was duly returned.²⁵ However,

the Whigs in power proved a different proposition to those radicals and others who had supported them in opposition. Their reform of the poor law system drew wide criticism, and the Whigs' popularity was not enhanced as their intent of consolidating power became apparent, the first concrete indication of which locally perhaps came when Melbourne asked the Mayor of Newcastle to suppress a proposed meeting of the Northern Political Union in February 1833: that the radical mood of previous years was declining was evidenced by the waning of the NPU during 1833, to which process the disappointment engendered by the Whigs in government may well have contributed.²⁶ Meanwhile as for law and order, renewed efforts were also made by the Durham, Northumberland and Newcastle magistrates to establish a permanent police force, but again foundered upon the problem of funding:²⁷ the military thus remained central to law enforcement, as in July 1833 when 'outrages' were committed by striking North Shields shipwrights.²⁸

But despite the apparent dissolution of the pitmen's union there are glimpses of further activity. Spurred by the wage reductions at the bindings that year which also evidently caused disquiet amongst the blacklegs, a delegate meeting in December 1833 agreed that forming a union was the 'only means possible of protecting the pitmen from the late oppressions of their employers', and published another pamphlet to this effect, bearing Hepburn's name.²⁹ A two-month strike thereafter took place at South Hetton in early 1834, Buddle noting in February that '[t]he "Cabinet" is formed - Hepburn, Sammy Waddle, Benjamin Pyle, Charles Parkinson and Paul Atkinson are all in pay and active employment'.³⁰

Also in 1834, the repeated if unsuccessful attempts at general union culminated in the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union, with which there is clear evidence that the pitmen were involved in April

1834, though like its predecessors the GNCTU failed to survive.³¹ The Tolpuddle Martyrs' transportation that year prompted Buddle to take an interest in illegal oaths and his spies succeeded in finding some evidence of a secret brotherhood amongst the pitmen:³² but perhaps more significantly, also in 1834 the pitmen's union inspired a monologue from one of Britain's most popular writers, though not for the reasons the pitmen would have wished.

This occurred when the Earl of Durham, his anti-union friendly society now firmly established, invited Harriet Martineau to Lambton Castle where she was 'plied with information about unions, strikes, and delegates to work up into a pamphlet'. This he saw as an educational adjunct to his benefit society and the result was a tract, *The Tendency of Strikes and Sticks to Produce Low Wages, and of Union between Masters and Men to Ensure Good Wages*, the nature and content of which is self-evident from the title. Published at Durham and 'widely circulated' by the Earl's agent Henry Morton, this pointed out that 'legislation was necessary to protect an exposed class against the oppression of unworthy officers'.³³

Martineau alluded to the examples of the Manchester spinners' strikes of 1824-1831 and the Bradford artisans' strikes of 1825-1826, of which latter she held up John Tester as an intelligent and responsible leader: this however was simply the better to prepare for her finale, which was to debase Hepburn and the Tyne and Wear pitmen's delegates as 'sly unprincipled fellows' who squandered members' subscriptions, tyrants 'who talk much of liberty without dreaming to allow it' in union affairs. The delegate system, and wages and conditions as objects of unions were thus to be eschewed said Martineau, concluding with the recommendation that 'the working-classes combine against ill-fortune instead of against the masters, and unite to help one another's savings

instead of to waste the earnings of all'.³⁴

Following the success of her nine-volume *Illustrations of Political Economy* series of 1832-1834, which set out to popularise classical political economy by means of fictional examples, the *Strikes and Sticks* pamphlet became the latest triumph for Martineau, the literary darling of liberal radicalism. That it satisfied the Earl's intentions is perhaps illustrated by the sentiments expressed in his speech at the first anniversary dinner of the Lambton Collieries' Association at Lambton Castle in January 1834, when he addressed the fifty pitmen comprising its management committee on the subject of unions. The only result of combinations he said, was 'that of enabling a certain number of cunning and unprincipled men to live at your expense, whilst you were starving', and concluded that the real effect had been 'merely the support of those delegates for a limited time in idleness and luxury'.³⁵

In July 1835 there was union activity at Wallsend after the loss of 102 lives there in an explosion, and brief local strikes at some Tyne collieries. These were echoed by 'isolated strikes against price reductions in 1836' but there was little other evidence of activity until 1838.³⁶ It was apparently at this point that, according to legend, Hepburn was reduced to hawking tea for a living and was so broken by hardship that he agreed to accept work at Felling Colliery on the strict condition he have no further involvement with trade unions.³⁷ This however did not preclude him from political agitation, and he took a prominent role in the Chartist agitation which saw the reconstitution of the Northern Political Union in June 1838, though he had to apologise for the pitmen's initial lack of involvement.³⁸ On the industrial front the emergence in 1842 of the Miners' Association of Great Britain accompanied the pitmen's strikes of the 'hungry forties' when continuing

hardship caused further conflict, but Hepburn kept his word to his employer not to participate in trade union affairs.³⁹ By the 1840s events had thus turned full circle, for it had been the deterioration of the pitmen's economic position which brought about the establishment of Hepburn's Union in 1830. Hepburn however played no leading part in the MAGB or subsequent pitmen's unions. He remained at Felling Colliery for the rest of his working life and died at his son-in-law's Newcastle public house, the 'Brandy-Butt', in December 1864, aged 69.⁴⁰

In Retrospect: The Political and Industrial Experience of the Tyne and Wear Pitmen, 1831-1832.

The union's victory in 1831 was achieved because of the pitmen's unity, and perhaps marginally more importantly, the owners' disunity. During the winter of 1831-1832 however the owners regrouped to organise themselves to combat the union. The establishment of the indemnity fund was central to this and as in 1831, the 1832 dispute was provoked by the owners. The violent events accompanying its early stages pushed them to adopt a stance harder than perhaps even they might have anticipated, and state support was secured in the form of the military, magistrates, and encouragement from ministers and parliament. The assistance of the press and banks was indispensable in undermining the union's case and facilitating the import of hired strikebreakers.⁴¹ The intervention of Britain's first cholera epidemic was also important in weakening the union's funds if not morale, but another major factor in the union's eventual defeat was the delegates' own mistakes.

From the outset of the 1832 dispute, the fact that half the pitmen were bound meant the owners could produce coal, thus undercutting the wider effects of a strike and providing the owners' anti-union efforts with a source of income: whilst in an effort to restrict supply and get more men bound, the union instructed working members to reduce their

earnings from 4s to 3s per day, thus cutting union income by a commensurate amount. This may not have mattered had not Hepburn, ten weeks into the strike on June 16, apparently vetoed the opinion of two-thirds of the pitmen for an all-out strike, the one thing the owners feared and which might well have won the day: but instead the strike continued without any clear strategy except of attrition, and when Hepburn and the delegates did decide to press for all-out strike it was too late and the vote was lost.

Following this all attempts at compromise and accommodation were refused by the owners, in whose favour the massive influx of strikebreakers was evidently tipping the scales: the sheer numbers of blacklegs consequently demoralised the pitmen, prompting defections from the union, a process also no doubt fuelled by the adverse publicity accompanying the Durham Summer Assizes, the gibbeting of a unionist, and the imprisonment and transportation of several others. Hepburn and the delegates, faced by a *fait accompli*, then retreated from battle. Efforts to maintain a semi-public organisation thereafter proved unsuccessful, though it seems an underground union or brotherhood did endure for some years.

Whilst the owners were seeking to crush the pitmen's spirit however, the radical celebrity William Cobbett, visiting the region in October 1832, favourably compared the men to the Epsom gentry, with which 'brutes' he said he would 'not be so unjust as to put the PITMEN of Durham and Northumberland upon a level'.⁴² But the owners had achieved their object and the effects of the 1832 defeat were disastrous, as one contemporary later wrote:

...oh! what a change the strike made! The men who had taken any prominent part in the strike were refused employment at the collieries where they had worked all their lives, and were obliged to seek other fields for their labour... The strong local attachment to their native place was severed, the social ties were broken, old and peculiar customs were neglected or forgotten, the

language and mode of expression were rendered obsolete by the introduction of strangers to the neighbourhood... foreigners in language and habits to the natives - immersed in the traditional sympathies so much cherished and carefully cultivated from generations...⁴³

The experience of the Primitive Methodists in 1833 bore this out: the Sunderland circuit met 'great difficulties through the untoward misunderstanding between the coalowners and the workmen', the South Shields circuit was disrupted by 'the disturbances and movings in the collieries', and the Newcastle circuit was 'kept in a fluctuating state, by reason of the unsettledness of the pitmen'.⁴⁴ Such remarks reflected the blacklisted pitmen's migration as they found work away from their native collieries: this though was only half the story, as many of the imported blacklegs soon left the coalfield altogether.⁴⁵

The emergence of the pitmen's union had coincided with a great highpoint of trade union and radical political agitation, and its end with what N.W. Thompson sees as a lull after a long period of radical development.⁴⁶ During the life of the union the pitmen made contacts with other workers both locally and nationally, and their experience of the often self-serving role of middle class radicals, and discovery of their own independent voice in their trades union and the Northern Political Union were all vital to their subsequent development of independent working class organisations. This experience in North East England was simply part and parcel of the general lessons assimilated by numerous British workers during the reform crisis and early 1830s which laid the foundations for the political and industrial struggles which materialised before the decade was out as Chartism, and the MAGB.⁴⁷

Of the struggles of 1831-32, the commonly held view that the men had learnt much but the owners nothing was perhaps borne out by the pitmen's return within a decade with a bigger and better organised union. Indeed, the pitmen were to regroup again after every defeat and

repeated their struggles until and beyond the permanent establishment of the Northumberland Miners' Mutual Confident Association in 1864 and Durham Miners' Association in 1869.⁴⁸ Just as their parallel involvement in the Political Union movement, which according to LoPatin was an important facet of the reform struggle of the early 1830s, was significant in laying the basis for their later involvement in the Chartist movement and campaigns for reform and the vote throughout the nineteenth century,⁴⁹ the experience of Hepburn's Union was significant in establishing an example and precedent for the pitmen's subsequent industrial battles. Though the 1832 defeat demonstrated the owners' power and strength, according to Jaffe 'the 1831-2 Strike became the symbol of the rewards of unionisation', and was, says Colls, 'seen by later generations of trade unionists as the beginning of their history and the end of their pre-history'.⁵⁰

It is important however to place the colliery disputes in their proper context, for although such troubles bore a direct impact upon the economy and lives of the region and its people, elsewhere in Britain others were concerned with their own local problems. In the northern military command alone, disturbances at Whitehaven, Wigan, Clitheroe and Hull necessitated the despatch of troops, whilst the agrarian unrest in southern England and riots in South Wales, Bristol and Derby provide other instances from further afield, to mention nothing of Scotland and Ireland, of the often turbulent nature of society in pre-Victorian Britain. The conjunction of the reform campaign with industrial unrest did though produce an increase in disorder, in which light, along with Britain's first cholera epidemic, 1831 and 1832 might legitimately be seen as exceptional years in the life of the nation. This was no less true for North East England, but it is in this broader national context which the 1831-1832 pitmen's strikes should be seen: for despite their

local impact, they nevertheless represented only one of the numerous parallel local developments occurring throughout the country at the time. The reader will hopefully thus appreciate that this account functions not only to relate the events of these years in North East England, but also to enhance our knowledge and comprehension of such significant moments in British history as the parliamentary reform crisis of 1831-1832. For whilst the peculiarly regional character of the events described here may stand independently, such local experience also has a valid place in its wider and perhaps more important context, as one of the many component parts which combine to form the history of a nation.

NOTES TO THE EPILOGUE AND CONCLUSION.

- 1 Blacklegs 'should be furnished by their employers, wherever it is practicable with full work' and by no means be 'reduced below the Bond price of 15s per Week, whether bound or unbound... none of the Strangers shall be discharged without previously communicating with the Committee' (CTMB, Committee Minutes, December 14, 1832 - see also September 17 and 22): Sweezy says the need for such measures 'suggests the fate of the unfortunate strangers' (*Monopoly and Competition...* p.100).
- 2 D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, November 28, 1832. He also said the shipowners were 'chuckling, at the improved state of the Trade with them' (*ibid.*, November 26, 1832).
- 3 Sweezy, *Monopoly and Competition...* pp.101-102.
- 4 *Tyne Mercury*, September 25, 1832: D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, November 6, 1832. The effects of the strike upon Buddle personally were evidently profound. He wrote on September 23, 'I have been obliged, in a great degree, to give up my desultory Viewing and Engineering business - besides salaries since the Union commenced in 1831 April - have come in so tardily and irregularly... [as to have] kept me in a threadbare State, with respect to disposable money... I am quite impotent'.
- 5 HO 40/30, Bouverie to the Home Office, November 2, 1832.
- 6 *Dunn's Diary*, November 12,13, 1832: At the end of October Dunn was sacked at Hetton proper apparently because of personal differences, and the Hetton Coal Company was consequently attempting to poach viewers from other collieries. See D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, November 6,10, 1832.
- 7 *Durham Advertiser*, March 1, 1833: M.A. Richardson, *Local Historian's Table Book*, Historical Division, Vol.IV, p.144.
- 8 Jaffe, 'Economy and Community', p.296.
- 9 The title affirms the view that the pitmen had illusions in an imagined reciprocal relationship with their employers, described by Jones as based upon 'mutual interests and shared responsibilities', which she says was in evidence as late as 1870 (see 'Industrial Relations', *op.cit.*, pp.250-255).
- 10 Little is known of the editor, James Johnston, but his literacy and contacts with both the pitmen's union and the NPU suggest he was perhaps a local merchant or shopkeeper of radical persuasion. The printer, Eneas Mackenzie Jnr., was the son of the late radical, local historian and printer of the same name.
- 11 J. Holland, *History and Description of Fossil Fuel, The Collieries, and Coal Trade of Great Britain* (London, 1835), p.301. The society had 1200 members before Holland's book appeared in 1835. It had a management committee of fifty pitmen and was funded 'by voluntary subscription; and his Lordship contributes a sum equivalent to one sixth part of the ordinary contributions of all the members': Durham had told fellow

radical Joseph Parkes, 'I have been taking the field agst. the unions in the only effectual way - viz, establishing one myself, in which all the ostensible and good objects of unions are attained, without the illegal, disgraceful and dangerous accessories which rendered the others so greatly obnoxious'. Lambton Papers, January 18, 1834, cited by R.K. Webb, *Harriet Martineau, A Radical Victorian* (London, 1960), p.131: FS 15/155, No.222, Durham: A similar society, the Wallsend Colliery Relief Fund, was set up in 1831 with Buddle as president. All other officials were to be elected annually, 'unusual proceedings in a time and a district where friendly society officers were chosen by rotation'. See P.H.J.H. Gosden, *The Friendly Societies in England, 1815-1875* (Manchester, 1960), p.86.

12 See *Newcastle Journal*, February 9, 1833: Bell, XI, p.544: D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, February 16, 1833.

13 Sweezy, *Monopoly and Competition...* p.101: Jaffe, 'Economy and Community...' p.302.

14 Sweezy, *Monopoly and Competition...* p.101. The excess and deficiency was expressed in Coal Trade jargon as 117 per thousand overs and 38 and a half per thousand shorts.

15 Buddle noted late in 1832, '[e]veryone calculates on the Trade running wild, till March, or April', but Hetton twice blocked negotiations for a new agreement in April and August 1833 (D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, December 12, 1832: Sweezy, *Monopoly and Competition...* p.102,104).

16 Sweezy, *Monopoly and Competition...* p.103.

17 CTMB, Committee Minutes, August 31, 1833.

18 Sweezy, *Monopoly and Competition...* p.105.

19 CTMB, General Minutes, August 10, September 5,6, 1833: Buddle said the Tyne expenses for troops and constables were £16,114, of which £6,420 was expected from the county rates (D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, November 19, 1832).

20 In addition Lord Londonderry was pointedly requested to contribute to the indemnity fund, and it was also noted that the Tyne's under-production in 1832 had 'principally arisen from the Pitmen restricting themselves to work only a certain quantity per day, and not allowing Strangers to be employed'. CTMB, Committee Minutes, September 5,6, 1833.

21 CTMB, General Minutes, December 3, 1833.

22 These figures probably referred to payments made following an appeal by Thomas Wade of Hebburn Colliery, that unless the Trade financed him he was about to go under and 'it was immaterial to him whether he was ruined by the Trade refusing to support him or by yielding to the Pitmen's Union' (D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, August 18, 1832).

23 CTMB, General Minutes, December 10, 1833.

24 D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, December 12, 1832: It emerged when three partners left in 1832 that Hetton company shares were valued

at over £16,731 each (ibid., September 7, 1832): CTMB, Committee Minutes, December 17, 1833.

25 Calladine, *Diary*, op.cit., p.177.

26 HO 43/43, Home Office to the Mayor of Newcastle, February 22, 1833.

27 HO 41/11, Melbourne to Bigge, February 7, 1833: The Tyne owners agreed to contribute to police costs (CTMB, General Minutes, February 2, 1833): County police forces were only permanently established in Durham in 1839 following the County Police Act of that year, and in Northumberland in the 1850s as a result of compulsory legislation. See T.A. Critchley, *A History of Police in England and Wales, 900-1966* (London, 1967), and S.H. Palmer, *Police and Protest in England and Ireland, 1780-1850* (Cambridge, 1988).

28 HO 41/11, Home Office to Edward Robson, July 27, 1833: Troubles in Lancashire in late 1832 had seen a movement of troops out of the region, but in August 1833 the Home Office was still asking Bouverie when forces might be reduced (HO 41/11, Home Office to Bouverie, August 15, 1833).

29 D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, March 30, 1833: Dunn noted on April 14, a '[g]reat many stranger Colliers going away in consequence of the reduction of prices especially at Jarrow, Wideopen, etc - they are incited by the old pitmen evidently under the notion of a future stick': *Tyne Mercury*, December 24, 1833: Bell, XI, pp.531,545.

30 D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, February 10, 1834: *Durham Advertiser*, January 10, February 21,28, 1834.

31 For the GNCTU locally see D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, April 15,19, August 16,28, 1834: *Durham Advertiser*, March 21, April 4,11,18, May 9, 1834: for an overall view see G.D.H. Cole's *Attempts at General Union*.

32 D/Lo/C 142, April 19, August 16, 1834.

33 Webb, *Harriet Martineau*, pp.131-132. Like Durham she considered herself a radical, but was criticised by one reviewer, W.J. Fox; 'She claims to be a teacher of the people... [but] to be the people's teacher she must always show herself the people's friend... by the tone and spirit of her admonitions': Martineau herself called upon the influential London radical Francis Place to assist in the pamphlet's promotion, writing, 'I send you a tract which I wrote lately for L^d. Durham and his Lambton men. He wishes, and so do I, that it sh^d. circulate very widely. If you approve it, you will help it on with your powerful good word' (Martineau to Place, March 28, 1834, Place MSS, British Library Additional MSS 35149, f.276). This was welcomed by Place, who 'distributed the booklet to working-class leaders who came to see him'. Webb says she 'must have found Place's letters to her encouraging. She was bold, he said, where others were timid. "You and I, Miss Martineau, are the only real radicals in the country"' (Webb, p.133): In 1834 *The Poor Man's Guardian* however attacked her for her support of the New Poor Law's Malthusian-inspired bastardy clauses, describing her as a lady, 'a single sight of whom would repel all fears of surplus population, her aspect being as repulsive as her doctrines' (cited by Thompson, *The People's Science*, op.cit., p.25).

34 Martineau, *The Tendency of Strikes and Sticks...* (Durham, 1834), pp.20,24,28-29.

35 Holland, *History and Description of Fossil Fuel*. He went on to insist that 'little or no profit is made by the coalowner... If any of these delegates tell you that the coalowner has been making great profits, out of which he could afford you a higher rate of wages, he has grossly deceived you... At the present moment most collieries are conducted at no profit at all, or at a loss; and if this state of things continues, will have to be shut up' (pp.301-302): Strictly speaking, because of the state of the coal trade at the time of Durham's remarks this was true - Dunn for example noted during the coal price slump of summer 1833 that 'every colliery is losing money, and the consequences will be ruinous' and that bankruptcy loomed for North Hetton unless £4000 could be found 'to meet urgent claims' - but on the whole, the Earl's claims were disingenuous. Hetton for example made £63,000 profit in 1830 and £30,000 in 1831, which is said to have answered beyond the hopes of one of its owners, John Gully. Likewise it was coal profits which kept Lord Londonderry's business empire afloat during this period and beyond when his estates were put in the control of administrators, and Durham's Lambton Collieries remained a major profitable concern into the twentieth century (*Dunn's Diary*, July 13,30, August 5, 1833: D/Lo/C 142, Buddle to Londonderry, September 7, 1832: B. Darwin, *John Gully and His Times* (London, 1935), p.204; Sturgess, *Aristocrat in Business*, p.99; McCord, *North East England*, p.114; Church, *History of the British Coal Industry*, Vol.3, pp.122-123,465,543..

36 Colls, *The Pitmen...* p.99,267.

37 See Fynes, p.36.

38 Colls, *The Pitmen...* pp.99,267.

39 Challinor and Ripley, *The Miners' Association*, op.cit..

40 For Hepburn's life see J. Oxberry, *Thomas Hepburn of Felling: What he did for Miners* (Gateshead, 1938); Fynes, pp.244-245; *Durham Advertiser*, December 16, 1864; *Primitive Methodist Magazine* (1865), pp.546-547.

41 The support of the Clerk to the Castle Ward Magistrates, Thomas Turnbull, was also evidently important to the owners, as they awarded him a gratuity of 100 guineas 'for his trouble during the Strikes of 1831 and 1832'. CTMB, Committee Minutes, December 14, 1832.

42 W. Cobbett, *Rural Rides*, Vol.III, G.D.H. and M. Cole (eds), (London, 1930), p.733. Cobbett added, 'a better race than that at NEWCASTLE and its vicinity, I am quite satisfied that there is not upon this earth' (p.736).

43 *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle*, January 28, February 11, 1882.

44 *Primitive Methodist Magazine*, New Series, Vol.III, pp.376-377 (October 1833).

45 The North Hetton viewer Matthias Dunn wrote in his *Diary* on April 14, 1833, of a '[g]reat many stranger Colliers going away in consequence of the reduction of prices especially at Jarrow, Wideopen, etc - they

are incited by the old pitmen evidently under the notion of a future stick'.

46 See N.W. Thompson, *The People's Science*, pp.1-7. This period he dates as 1816-1834, based upon the upsurge in and popularity of the unstamped press.

47 Welbourne notes that when the pitmen began to organise the MAGB in the region, '[i]t augured ill for the peace of the coal trade that among them were newcomers to the pits, blacklegs of 1832... enticed out of the lead-mines in that year of disaster' (*The Miners' Unions of Northumberland and Durham*, op.cit., pp.61-62): Welbourne perhaps referred to Mark Dent, a leader of the MAGB in the North East, who had been one of the 'blacklegs that was set to work in defiance of the regular pitmen's last [1832] strike' (*Newcastle Journal*, May 18, 1844).

48 It was Fynes' *History* in 1873 which first charted the pitmen's progress from temporary organisations to the emergence of their permanent benefit-paying unions in the 1860s.

49 LoPatin's view of the significance of Political Unions in the reform crisis is not one which has hitherto been generally shared by historians, perhaps, it would seem, because none have examined the question on the scale of her study. Similarly, the evidence of the pitmen's political activity during 1831-1832 is at odds with the view of some of the region's most eminent historians, whose attentions have focused upon the Chartist years. On this question McCord prefers Rowe's view that the pitmen were little interested in political affairs to that of Maehl, who places emphasis upon the pitmen's involvement (McCord, *North East England*, pp.79-80; D.J. Rowe, 'Some Aspects of Chartism on Tyneside', *International Review of Social History*, 1971; W.H. Maehl, 'Chartism in North-eastern England, 1839', *IRSH* (1963). For more recent work endorsing McCord's view see R. Church, 'Chartism and the miners: a reinterpretation', *Labour History Review*, Vol.56, No.3, 1991; in disagreement, K. Wilson, 'Chartism and the North East Miners: A Reappraisal', Sturgess (ed), *Pitmen, Viewers and Coalmasters*, op.cit..

50 Jaffe, 'Economy and Community...' p.297: Colls, *The Pitmen...* p.249.

APPENDIX ONE:

*Rules and Regulations of the Coal Miners' Friendly Society
in the Counties of Northumberland and Durham,
Established June 4, 1831.*

RULES AND REGULATIONS

OF THE

COAL MINERS'

FRIENDLY SOCIETY,

IN THE COUNTIES OF

Northumberland & Durham.

ESTABLISHED JUNE 4, 1831.



NEWCASTLE:

PRINTED BY W., E., & H. MITCHELL, ST. NICHOLAS'
CHURCH-YARD.

1831.

RULES, &c.

PREAMBLE.

WE, the undersigned, being persons following the employment of Miners or Colliers, upon the Rivers Tyne and Wear, do, by virtue of several Acts of Parliament, made and passed, in order to enable persons to associate themselves together for making provision for themselves and families, in cases of death, sickness, or other bodily infirmities, and also to meet to obtain a fair and reasonable remuneration and payment for their labour, being desirous of complying with the said several Acts of Parliament, and laws of this country, agree to associate ourselves together, from the day of the date hereof, in order to make provision for ourselves and families, in cases of accident, sickness, bodily infirmity, or death, and to unite in a firm manner, in order to obtain a more suitable recompense for our labour. And do, therefore, hereby voluntarily, for ourselves and for each and every of us, and for our and each and every of our several and respective heirs, executors, and administrators, bind ourselves, well and truly, to perform, fulfil, and keep the several Rules and Regulations, Clauses and Agreements, hereinafter mentioned

2

and contained, on each and every of our respective parts; and which Rules and Regulations, Clauses and Agreements, are to the purport and effect following, that is to say,

I.

That this Society be established, and be called and known by the name of "The Coal Miners' Friendly Society, in the Counties of Northumberland and Durham," and to consist of and admit of none but Coal Miners and Banksmen, notwithstanding any man having entered this Society, and after obtaining a more desirable calling or situation, shall not be excluded on that account, but each Member shall be in equality with each other.

II.

That there be a President, Secretary, and also Stewards and a Committee at each colliery, and that the Presidents, Secretary, and Stewards, by virtue of office, form and make part of the Committee, who shall transact the affairs of each colliery, and that the said Committee continue in office three months, or as may be thought proper by each colliery.

III.

That every member be liable to stand in the Committee, otherwise find a proper substitute, or be fined sixpence; which Committee shall meet once each fortnight, at least, to receive the contributions, &c.

5

IV.

That each Member pay into the fund, for the first year time per fortnight, and after that per fortnight, and for the expense of the fund-room, and should any thing occur, that the Members think proper to raise extra contributions, to be agreed upon by a meeting of Deputies or Delegates from each colliery.

V.

That there be a meeting of Deputies or Delegates from each colliery, to be held in Newcastle, every three months, viz.: the first Saturday of March, June, September, and December, or as it may be deemed necessary, to balance the accounts of each colliery, and to decide upon any dispute or difference that may arise at any colliery, and that they be allowed so much per mile travelling, as expenses, or as each colliery may deem proper; and should any of the said Deputies or Delegates be compelled to lose a day's work by attending the above meeting, that they be allowed four shillings for their day's work over and above the travelling expenses.

VI.

That the Members who shall be deemed admissible into this fund shall be as follows:—Young men, at the age of 14 years, to be half-members, to pay half-pay, and receive half-pay out of the fund, and at the age of 18 years to be considered as men, and to

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6

pay to that amount; and that no person, within three months from the day of the date hereof, be entered or taken as a Member into this Society above 50 years of age, and that not without paying 10s. entrance; and after that time no person to be taken in or entered above the age of 20, and to be a native of the county of Northumberland or Durham, and brought up a Pitman; and that the 10s. entrance be left with the discretion of each colliery how it shall be paid into the fund.

VII.

That if any Member of this Society have a desire to leave his colliery to go to any other, he be required to get a certificate from the colliery he belongs to, and lay it before the Committee of the colliery he intends to go to, before he goes to make a bargain or agreement with the master he intends to agree with, or be excluded from the Society.

VIII.

That no Members of this Society earn more than 4s. per day, clear of fines and off-takes, while employed as a hewer, for each and every day, if practicable; and in case any Member, being a hewer, earn above 4s. per day, all such sum or sums so earned above 4s. shall be paid into the fund; and in case any Member do not well and truly state to the Committee of this Society the amount of his earnings, or shall either directly or indirectly defraud, or attempt to defraud,

7

the Society of his said earnings, or fines or forfeitures, in any or either of the said cases, such Member shall be fined double the sum such Member shall have kept back, or be excluded.

IX.

That if any Member of this Society be afflicted with sickness, or soreness, or any casualty, not occasioned by a vicious or irregular habit of life, by which he is rendered incapable of following his calling or business, he shall notify the same to the Stewards, and after being a full week off work, receive 8s. per week during his illness; but in case he should continue in such a state for 26 weeks, then the above weekly allowance shall be moderated or reduced to 3s. per week.

X.

During the time that any Member is receiving benefit from the fund, he shall conduct himself in every respect becoming his situation: he shall not be out of his house, or lodging, in the morning before 6 o'clock, or after 9 at night, except by order of a physician or surgeon, or lose the benefit of such sick-money.

XI.

That if any suspicion appear respecting any Member receiving sick-money illegally, the Steward or Committee shall have power to order a surgeon to visit him, as often as they may find it necessary; and

8

if the Committee find the Member thus visited an impostor, they shall stop his sick-money, and bring the surgeon's opinion to the first meeting; and, if proved that such Member has been imposing on the Society, he shall be expelled.

XII.

And when it shall please Divine Providence to call to his mercies any of the Members of this fund, after all arrears are paid up, the Committee shall pay, or cause to be paid, out of the fund, to the widow, children, heirs, or executors of the deceased, L5.; and in case any Member's wife dies, he shall receive L5. to defray her funeral expenses; and if any Member of this fund has a child who dies not exceeding the age of fourteen years, and born in lawful wedlock, and draws the breath of life in this world, he shall receive the sum of L2. to defray the funeral expenses; and that half-members do receive accordingly.

XIII.

Any Member's money not being paid the third payment, he shall be fined three-pence; for the fourth, sixpence; for the fifth, one shilling; and for the sixth time, be excluded.

XIV.

Any Member not being silent when called to order by the President, to be fined two-pence.

9

XV.

Any Member coming intoxicated with liquor into the Club-room, without leave from the Committee, to be fined three-pence.

XVI.

Any Member, or Members, using obscene or filthy language, or swearing, speaking disrespectfully of any Member, or offering to bet any wagers during club-hours, shall be fined, for the first offence six-pence, and for the second one shilling.

XVII.

Any Member violently assaulting another Member with blows in the Club-room, to be fined 5s., and if out of the Club-room, 2s. 6d.

XVIII.

That if any promote, or carry on, any dispute either religious or political, in the Club-room, during business, speak disrespectfully of the King or Queen, or any of the Royal Family, or any lawful authority, or reveal any of the secrets of this Society, to be fined one shilling.

XIX.

That all such Members as shall bring disgrace upon this Fund by committing felony, or any other crime whereby they may be liable to punishment either

10

from Church or State, or any way not governed by the Rules of this fund, or found guilty of embezzling the money belonging to the fund, for every such offence to be excluded.

XX.

That every colliery have a box to keep their cash in, with three different locks and keys, and the keys thereof shall be kept by the Stewards and the Treasurer of the box; and to prevent the committing of any fraud, the Treasurer shall give security for the money that is therein, and his note for what money he receives, when required; and that the Stewards attend upon this fund, and be in the Meeting-room on the meeting day, at 6 o'clock, under the penalty of sixpence each to the fund; and that they shall take all money in, and pay all money out, and give in an exact account of what money is in the box, and what is paid out of the same; and give such statements, when required, that the whole Society may know how their money is disposed of.

XXI.

That any Member being three payments in arrear, and under affliction, shall not receive any sick-money until his arrears be paid up; but if he die, he shall receive his full legacy which he is entitled to.

XXII.

That no money shall be lent out of this Society

without the consent of a full meeting, and that upon sufficient security and legal interest.

XXIII.

That all fines and forfeitures heretofore mentioned, arising from the violations of these Articles, be added to the fund.

XXIV.

What may further occur to this Society to be observed shall be entered in writing as additional articles in the Club-book, which shall be of the same force and validity with the foregoing; and for the satisfaction of all concerned, that none may plead ignorance, these Articles are to be printed and one to be delivered to each Member, with his name and time of entering inserted; and every Member who cannot produce his Articles, when requested to bring them, shall pay one shilling to the box for a new one.

NEWCASTLE:

PRINTED BY W., E., AND H. MITCHELL.

APPENDIX TWO:

AN ACCOUNT OF THE RECEIPTS AND EXPENDITURE
OF THE COLLIERIES BELONGING TO THE PITMEN'S
UNION, COMMENCING MAY 27, 1831, TO AND WITH
JUNE 23, 1832.

	Income.			Paid to Sick and Death.			Paid to Men out of Employment.		
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Beamish ...	204	13	0	136	8	8	68	4	4
Black Boy, Auck- land ...	145	0	0	60	5	0	81	15	0
Derwent Crook ...	188	14	10½	79	7	11½	100	2	5½
Fatfield ...	703	0	10	288	14	2	414	6	8½
Felling ...	229	17	0	141	11	8½	83	5	8
Friar's Goose ...	161	7	0	91	19	3½	63	11	10
Gare's Field ...	242	16	6	64	4	5	173	3	2
Gateshead Park ...	119	2	0	62	0	0	46	4	6
Harraton ...	115	3	2	77	12	7	138	19	7
Haswell ...	75	11	0	10	0	0	65	11	0
Heworth ...	206	16	10	114	0	0	89	16	10
Hetton ...	2,886	15	10	2,060	14	10	794	15	2
Hetton (North) ...	527	19	2	296	5	11	237	17	3
Hebburn ...	388	11	6	146	5	6	146	19	6
Jarrow ...	425	7	3	380	0	0	41	1	7½
Kibblesworth ...	45	5	9½	15	7	0	25	14	6
King Pit ...	52	7	5	36	15	0	12	12	5
Lambton ...	2,262	8	4	788	6	1	1,464	0	4½
Monkwearmouth ...	66	2	10	9	1	10	57	1	1
Mount Moor ...	279	12	6	112	12	6	157	12	1
Newbottle ...	1,304	6	3½	618	13	1	707	19	1
Ouston ...	252	13	2	111	13	8	134	12	5
Pittington ...	1,117	7	2½	399	5	1	696	15	9½
Rainton ...	2,533	7	7	522	8	11	1,954	11	11
Shiney Row ...	998	14	10	164	2	10	768	5	1½
Sheriff Hill ...	175	13	3½	103	8	8	63	7	5½
Slare Gate ...	194	3	6	57	0	0	105	4	5½
Shield Row ...	69	10	0	57	18	11	5	0	0
Shields (South) ...	478	1	11	248	13	0	234	8	11
Springwell ...	287	3	0	186	3	0	100	11	0
Tanfield Lee ...	110	15	1	55	15	9½	50	8	10
Team ...	159	11	0	68	3	6	70	17	3
Waldridge Fell ...	152	17	1	15	12	0	134	16	7
Washington ...	295	5	3	160	19	3½	128	15	7½
Backworth ...	606	11	3½	202	9	3½	402	14	5
Benwell ...	412	12	0	101	3	10	295	5	2
Blakelaw ...	183	14	5½	54	0	1	130	8	7½
Cramlington ...	274	5	5	166	19	8	102	8	6½
Cowpen ...	1,077	8	7½	394	2	2	633	3	9
Earsdon ...	794	0	10	319	5	7	461	13	1
Elswick ...	184	0	0	108	12	1	62	11	0
Fawdon... ...	394	4	9	205	13	3	174	4	3
Glebe ...	165	19	0	75	12	5½	85	11	11
Gosforth ...	275	8	6	198	14	4	76	14	2
Hartley ...	396	0	9	264	12	4	105	9	9
Heaton ...	777	7	8½	162	2	1	591	7	11½
Holywell ...	592	2	2	138	11	11	428	16	8
Jesmond ...	199	0	9	54	0	8	134	0	5½
Kenton ...	288	7	7	207	8	7	40	19	0
Lawrence (St.)... ..	261	4	6	52	12	3	206	14	3
Percy Main ...	1,111	17	6	367	13	1	737	1	3
Segbill ...	781	6	1	131	14	0	642	9	6
Shilbottle ...	66	5	3	33	9	5	37	2	3
Shields (North) ...	377	4	3	167	18	7½	190	16	10
Walbottle ...	683	3	11	292	14	0	489	9	11
Walker ...	1,001	2	9½	268	17	8	726	14	6
Wallsend ...	955	6	8	208	6	11	679	3	0
West Moor ...	978	4	6	241	7	5	736	19	1
Whitley... ..	408	13	0	129	19	6	275	18	0
Wide Open ...	343	14	0	113	17	8	165	15	5
Willington ...	1,108	14	10½	265	4	6½	829	16	5
Wylam ...	312	11	9	120	0	8	292	11	1
Wylam (South) ...	3	4	0	0	0	0	3	4	0
Donations from friends ...	98	19	8	0	0	0	98	19	8
Total ...	32,580	18	4½	13,005	12	6½	19,276	12	4½

Source: R. Fynes, *The Miners of Northumberland and Durham*
(Sunderland, 1873), pp.288-289.

APPENDIX THREE:

Scale of Prices for putting 1 Score, or 21 Corfs of Coals, in the Wear Collieries, in the Years 1815, 1829, 1830, and 1831, showing also the Ground travelled by the Putter to earn the Sums specified at different Renks, in Miles and Yards.

Renks of	Price in		Price in		Price in		Price in		Dist. travelled	
	1815		1829		1830		1831		by the Putters	
	s.	d.	s.	d.	s.	d.	s.	d.	Miles	yds
60 yds	1	6	1	3					1	760
80 yds	1	7½	1	4			1	3	1	1600
100 yds	1	9	1	5	1	3	1	4	2	680
120 yds	1	10½	1	6	1	4	1	5	2	1520
140 yds	2	0	1	7	1	5	1	6	3	600
160 yds	2	1½	1	8	1	6	1	7	3	1440
180 yds	2	3	1	9	1	7	1	8	4	520
200 yds	2	4½	1	10	1	8	1	9	4	1360
300 yds	3	0	2	3	2	1	2	2	7	280
320 yds	3	1½	2	4	2	2	2	3	7	1220
500 yds	4	3	3	1	2	11	3	0	11	1640
1000 yds	7	4½	4	2	5	0	5	1	23	1520
1760 yds	12	6	8	4	8	2	8	3	42	

Extracted from a letter by 'An Old Pitman' to the Newcastle Chronicle, February 18, 1832.

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