

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF CLASS RELATIONSHIPS
AND INSTITUTIONAL ORDERS IN BIRMINGHAM
AND SHEFFIELD BETWEEN 1830 and 1895 WITH
PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO THE SPHERES OF
EDUCATION, INDUSTRY AND POLITICS

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Chapter One

"BUT HERE THE TOWNS ARE"

The Challenge to the Old Order in English Society 1830-70

There are persons, no doubt, who regard our progress with horror: who, forgetting for a moment their doubled rentrolls, would rejoice to see Manchester and Birmingham brought back again to their condition of a century ago, with numbers a tenth of what they are at present.

But here the towns are: not indeed possessing any monopoly of ignorance and vice, but disfigured with deep scars from long continued neglect. We cannot revert to rural felicity, to green fields, to rough and manly and ignorant squires, to independent yeomanry, to ill-supported and superstitious and serf-like hinds.¹

These words of 'a Birmingham manufacturer' written in 1869 introduce a central process with which this work is concerned: the confrontation between the class structures and institutional arrangements of a declining commercialised agrarian social order and a rising urban industrial order. The 'Birmingham manufacturer' was writing at a time when the outcome of this confrontation was not a foregone conclusion. To take one index, until the 1880s more than half of Britain's millionaires were landowners and not until the period 1880-99 did the number of manufacturers leaving private fortunes of at least half-a-million pounds draw nearly level with the number of merchant princes and financiers falling into the same category. Furthermore, in 1874 a quarter of English land was held by 363 landowners, mostly aristocratic. Over half of England consisted of estates of at least 1,000 acres, a size of holding generally regarded as being the minimum for

1 W.L. Sargant, 'The Characteristics of Manufacturers' in Sargant 1869, 3.

membership of the landed gentry. No other European landed elite owned so large a proportion of the national territory.²

The term 'confrontation' oversimplifies matters. By 1830 an urban industrial order was emerging in complex interdependence with the rural agrarian order.³ The distinction between the two was dramatised by the shift in social weight from the latter to the former in the course of the century. As this process occurred, elements that had been combined within highly localised structures in the decentralised society of 1830 and before were gradually and painfully wrenched apart. These elements were reshaped and combined in different ways within the more complex division of labour of the urban industrial nation-state. The disputes over the Factory Acts and the repeal of the Corn Laws are sometimes treated as great set-piece battles between 'the aristocracy' and 'the industrial bourgeoisie'.⁴

- 2 In the period 1880-99 there were 82 half-millionaires or millionaires in manufacturing occupations compared to 89 in commercial occupations. In the period 1900-1914, the figures were 79 and 129 respectively. Rubinstein 1977a, 102; F M L Thompson 1963, 28-9, 112-3; Bateman 1883, 515; Spring 1978, 3.
- 3 This approach differs from Rubinstein's argument that the increasing differentiation of commercial, manufacturing and landed elites led to their becoming 'more self-sufficient'. Rather, a more complex structure of interdependence developed on terms which were being continually fought over. Rubinstein, 1977a, 120.
- 4 One pertinent example of this is Barrington Moore's analysis: 'After 1840 the landowning class found in the support of factory laws a convenient way of answering manufacturers' attacks on the Corn Laws' Moore 1969, 35. Unfortunately, Moore's treatment of nineteenth-century England is one of the least convincing sections of an otherwise impressive book. One weakness, for example, is his encapsulation of commercial and manufacturing groups within one urban bourgeoisie which tends to be treated as a single social actor. Moore 1969, 35, 423. See also J R B Johnson 1976a Smith 1982 (forthcoming).

However in order to trace the currents of social development of which these clashes were one aspect it is necessary to examine a multitude of local conflicts and accommodations involving a bewildering diversity of collectivities and social interests. Research has suggested that during the nineteenth century existing establishments in the metropolis were able to assimilate potential challengers such as newly-wealthy industrialists with apparent ease. The role of the public schools and Oxbridge in this process has been stressed.⁵ However, less attention has been paid until recently to complementary processes, about which we still know and understand less, occurring in the English provinces during the same period. In a relatively decentralised society industrialisation and urbanisation presented their immediate challenge to provincial establishments.⁶

A recent commentator has argued that a debate which 'concerns all historians of nineteenth-century Britain, not just those interested in cities ... is about why Britain came through a period of rapid industrialisation and urbanisation without the violent social revolution that was widely predicted and whose non-occurrence still disappoints so many'.⁷

5 Guttzman 1951; Guttsmann 1954; Guttzman 1974; Perkin 1969, 427-37; F M L Thompson 1963, 292-302; Pumphrey 1959; Hanham 1960; Bamford 1967; Wilkinson 1967; Glennerster and Pryke 1964; Rubinstein 1977a, 123-125.

6 Lee 1963; Briggs 1968; F M L Thompson 1966; Vincent 1967; Vincent 1972; Dyos 1968; Dyos and Wolff 1973; Hennock 1973; J Foster 1968; J Foster 1974; Nossiter 1975; Laqueur 1976; Garrard 1976; Garrard 1977; ... Gadian 1978; Lees 1979; D Fraser 1973; D Fraser 1976a; D Fraser 1979a; D Fraser 1979b; Cannadine 1980.

7 D Fraser 1979b, 36. It perhaps begs a question to describe British industrialisation as 'rapid'. Compared to what?

Investigation of this particular question ultimately requires international comparisons which should contribute to the larger quest of seeking to understand the sequences of structural transformation undergone by societies in the course of transition from commercialised agrarian polity to industrialised and urbanised nation-state.⁸ The assimilation of business elites with 'traditional' elites at the national level in Britain might, for example, be compared with the development of elite relationships in Japan at this level in the late nineteenth century.⁹ Processes of class formation within British cities could be compared with equivalent processes in the United States, France, Germany or Russia, and so on.¹⁰ Studies confined to British (or in this case) English society may contribute to the broader enquiry indicated above. In this study an attempt is made to delineate some aspects of the processes whereby distinctive institutional arrangements developed through which the production and distribution of material and cultural resources were managed in English society. It will be argued that such an investigation should be sensitive to the dynamic opposition between contradictory tendencies in class relationships and institutional orders. It should also be alert to the compromises made by men and women as they sought a degree of security and order while subject to conflicting constraints in their social relationships.

8 For example: Skocpol 1979; B Moore 1969.

9 Britain has not experienced a modernising capitalist 'putsch' such as apparently occurred as a consequence of the Meiji Restoration. Beasley 1972; Kamatsu 1972.

10 B Moore 1978, 379, 474; Briggs 1950; Stearns 1978.

This thesis seeks to explain why three institutional orders, those of formal education, industrial relations and local government, developed in very different ways in Birmingham and Sheffield between 1830 and the last decade of the nineteenth century. The task is worth carrying out not least because the experience of the great provincial cities furnished a repertoire of institutional arrangements upon which central government was able to draw when confronting problems of educational organisation, the management of industrial conflict and the provision of public services at the national level in the twentieth century.¹¹ However, the work is primarily a comparative study of social development. It is argued that in the period concerned Birmingham and Sheffield followed quite dissimilar paths in undergoing the transition from being participants in a predominantly rural society under aristocratic leadership to being major centres within urban industrial society. In 1830 they 'fitted into' the national division of labour and their own regional power structures in very different ways while within the two cities different states of balance existed between the neighbourhood as opposed to the town as foci of social life. Transformations within these structures over the period 1830 to 1895 were, it is argued, dynamically related to processes of class formation of which changes in patterns of property ownership, control over industrial processes, residence, political activity, educational involvement and religious attachment were all, in part, an expression.

11 See Chapter Eleven.

Within this context, attention is paid to conflicts and accommodation between establishments among the better-off middle-class residents (or big bourgeoisie), within the ranks of shopkeepers and small businessmen (or petty bourgeoisie) and among the skilled working class. Particular regard will be given to the effect of these changing relationships on the three institutional orders mentioned. The values and practices expressed in the daily working of these institutions were a product of each city's particular trajectory of social development, tendencies within its class structure and the outcomes of struggles between competing industrial, political and religious establishments.

No city was typical of urban industrial society in England. If you take the six largest provincial cities in 1851 they fall into three categories. Liverpool and Bristol were centres of commerce and sea-trade with warehouses, exchanges, mercantile companies and shifting cosmopolitan populations. Manchester and Leeds were manufacturing centres specialising in textiles production carried out in large mechanised factories.¹² Birmingham and Sheffield were manufacturing centres which concentrated upon metal work and engineering of various kinds carried out to a great extent in small workshops by skilled craftsmen. The patterns of demographic growth displayed by these six cities in the first half of the century may be contrasted by expressing the decennial series of census returns for each city as a percentage of Birmingham's

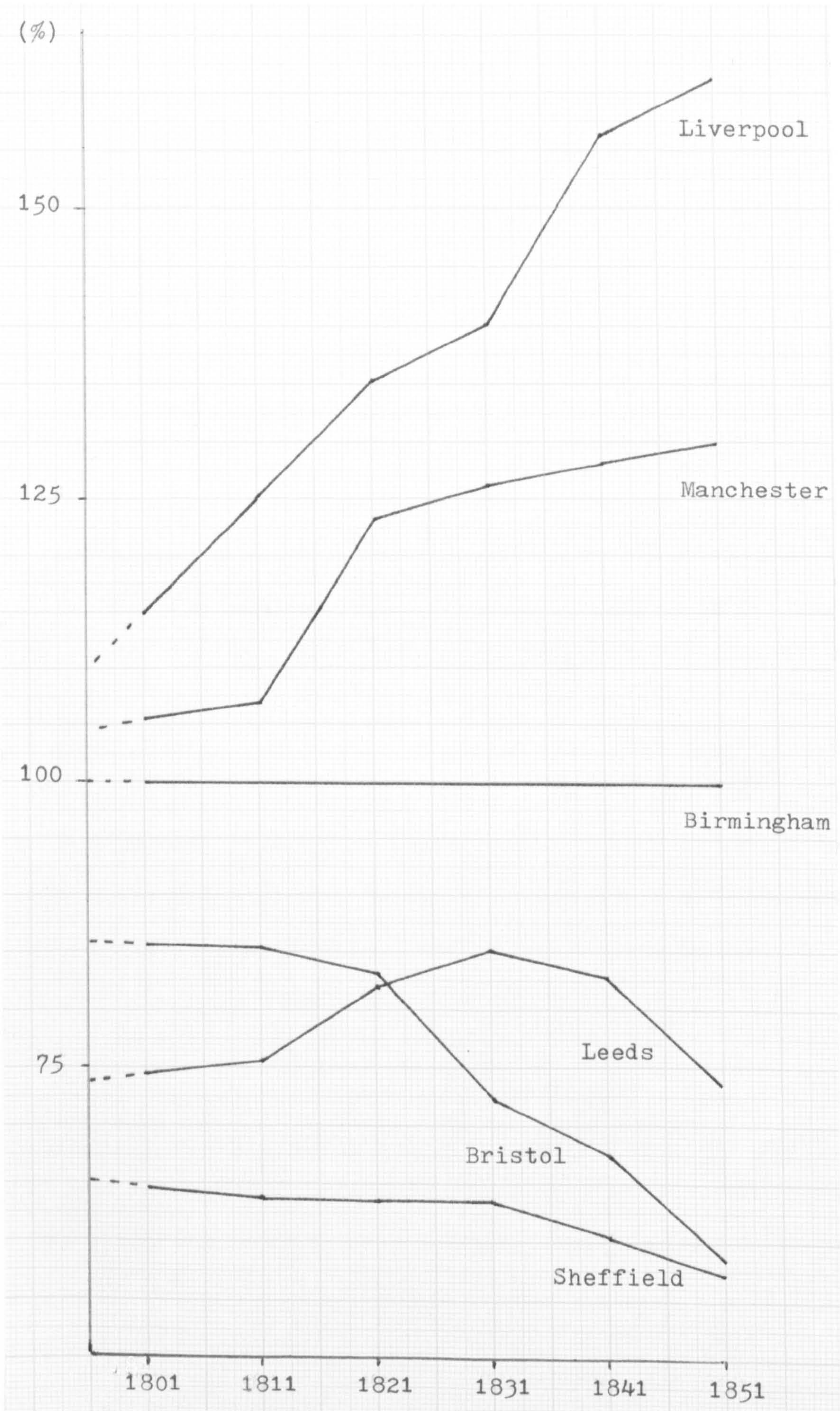
12 Vigier 1970; Meller 1976; Hennock 1973; RG Wilson 1971.

population (eg in 1801 Sheffield's population was 65 per cent as large as Birmingham's while Manchester's population was 106 per cent as large). Graph 1 shows that the leading part played by textiles in industrialisation during the early nineteenth century was expressed in the spectacular demographic advance of Manchester and Leeds, particularly between 1811 and 1831. Liverpool obviously also benefited from her position on the lucrative North Atlantic routes to and from the cotton plantations. Bristol, a city which had played a central part in the colonial trade of the eighteenth century, declined relative to the northern port and was overtaken in terms of population by Leeds. However, it is noticeable that by 1831 Manchester's rate of acceleration over Birmingham had slackened considerably and that between 1831 and 1851, Leeds fell back drastically compared to the Midlands city. In sharp contrast, the demographic superiority of Liverpool increased at an even faster rate after 1831 under the impact of Irish immigration. Throughout this period the population of Sheffield was approximately 60% that of Birmingham.

A similar graph may be constructed for the period 1851 to 1911, in this case taking the population within the boundaries of Birmingham as established at the latter date as the point of comparison for the whole period. By 1900 Birmingham had outstripped Manchester and Liverpool, becoming England's largest provincial city. Well before the First World War Sheffield overtook Leeds, her traditional Yorkshire rival.¹³ This change of civic fortunes was one

13 When the 1911 Census was published Sheffield's Master Cutler commented: 'Of course, I'm glad we've beaten Leeds.' Walton 1968, 240.

Graph 1 Population size of various cities as percentage of population of Birmingham 1801-1851



Source: Mitchell and Deane 1962 Note: 1851 borough boundaries are used

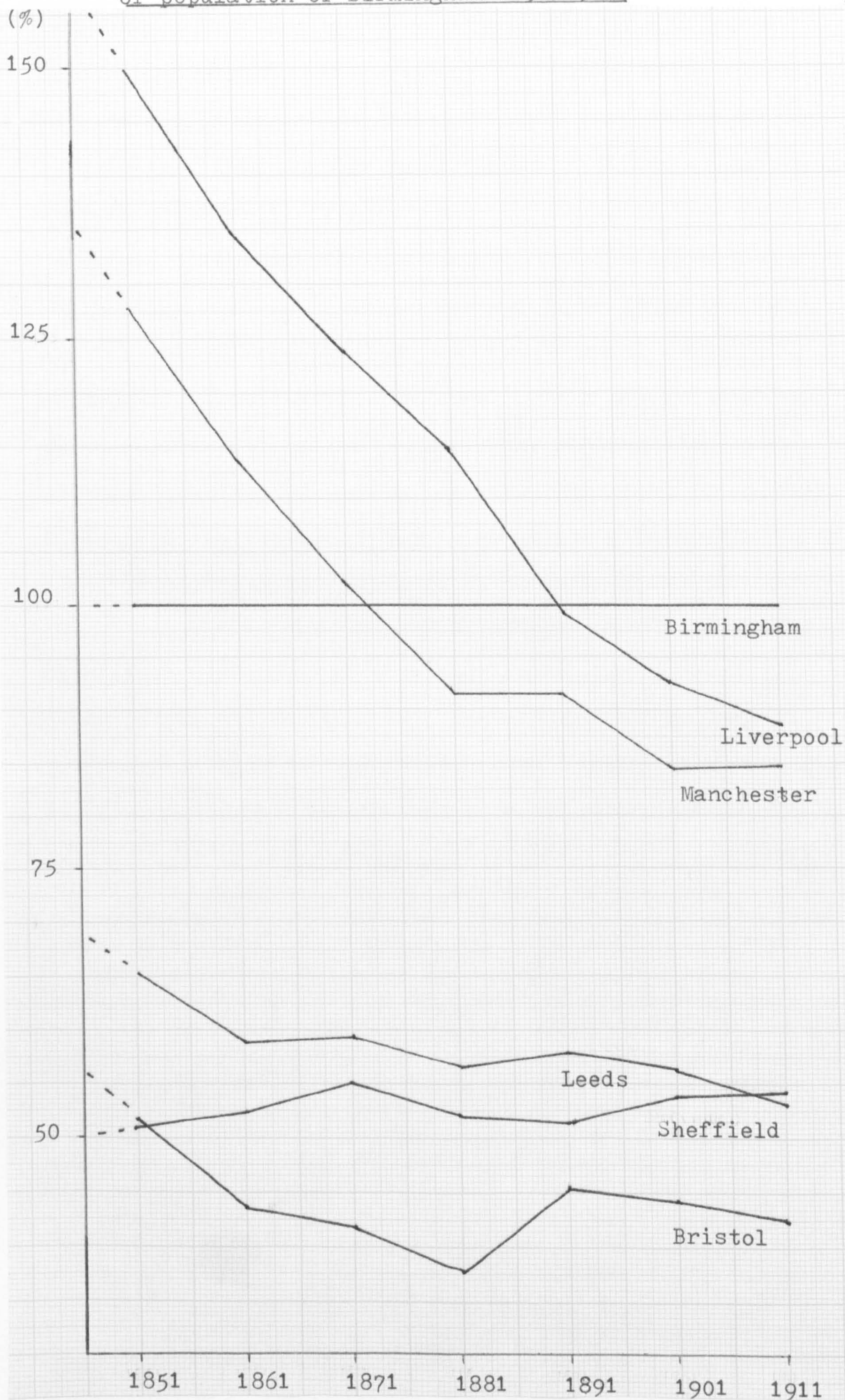
aspect of a major transformation within the industrial order. 'Between 1880 and 1900 British exports of iron, steel, machinery and coal doubled, to reach £95 million. The value of total textile exports fell absolutely during the same twenty years from £105 million to £97 million. The contrast in fortunes between these two sides of industry was remarkable'.¹⁴ By focusing on towns specialising in metal-working and engineering and by commencing in 1830 this study catches in its early stages a wave of industrial and social development which was in full flood by the end of the century. Birmingham and Sheffield have been chosen not as being 'typical' but because of their increasing strategic importance within the developing national society.

Two assumptions which underly the subsequent analysis will be briefly stated here. First, institutional orders such as education, industry and government are assumed to be particular and partial manifestations of complex networks of human interdependence. These networks are typically assymetrical. In other words, within them the capacity to initiate activity, exercise authority and enjoy rewards are unequally distributed. These distributions are the outcome and continuing object of competition and conflict as are the guiding rules within institutional spheres.

Second, it has been found convenient to adopt a framework of analysis which distinguishes between different 'levels of integration', in other words, different levels at which collectivities and institutions are coordinated.

¹⁴ Mathias 1969, 413.

Graph 2 Population size of various cities as percentage of population of Birmingham 1851-1911



Source: Mitchell and Deane 1962

It is possible to identify several such levels ranging from, say, the domestic level through the neighbourhood level and upward to the level of inter-societal relations. For present purposes four levels of integration are to be emphasised. They are the national level (locus of the central government, for example), the level of the county (with its characteristic social and administrative hierarchy led by the Lord Lieutenant), the municipal level (whose typical institutions include the town council and the chamber of commerce) and the level of the neighbourhood.¹⁵ In the early part of the period being studied the characteristic institutions of the neighbourhood were the local tavern and the vestry within which the parochial affairs of local inhabitants were discussed and largely decided. In the later part of the period the neighbourhood became the single-class suburb, it asserted a smaller degree of control over its own destiny, its affairs became less important to many of its inhabitants and its relationships to other levels of integration were transformed.

15 For further discussion of levels of integration see D Smith 1977b, 96-98. See also Hopkins and Wallerstein 1957; D Fraser 1976a; Elias 1978, 138-145. The last named work is full of valuable insights.

The challenge

Pre-industrial England had been dominated by land-owning and mercantile interests whose interpenetration was well over two centuries old by 1830. As Harold Perkin points out, the peculiar relationship of this commercialised aristocracy to the state had created conditions favourable to industrialisation. In defense of its own interests it had used its power to guarantee personal liberty and property rights, and minimise central political controls except insofar as they provided protection from foreign competition.¹⁶ Ironically, the appearance of unprecedented concentrations of capital and labour in the industrial towns placed an intolerable strain upon the very social system that had made this development possible. Industrialisation and urbanisation stretched beyond their limits the capacity for social management of institutions adapted to agrarian capitalism, small-scale craft production and local market trading. As these effects were increasingly felt, localised and particularistic networks of kinship and patronage focused on the country house and the vestry gradually yielded up the tasks of government. They were taken over increasingly by more impersonal and universalistic institutions regulated by bureaucrats, businessmen and members of the old and new professions. Coordination and control tended to shift from the local level towards the national level.

In the 1830s the aristocracy effectively combined domination over a major economic resource (agriculture), control over the apparatus of political administration

16 Perkin 1969, 63-7

(in Parliament and at Quarter Sessions) and the capacity to manipulate, interpret and enforce the ruling norms of the society.¹⁷ However, the aristocracy and their institutions did not constitute an 'ancien regime'. That term would imply too much uniformity and cohesion within a decentralised society in which the county and the parish or neighbourhood remained the most important levels of integration.

The major political decisions with respect to county affairs were made and implemented through particularistic networks of clients, kin and friends focused on the country houses of the aristocracy. Provision of justice, policing, administration, welfare and moral leadership were 'public' responsibilities of the leading dynasties, exercised both informally and through the ecclesiastical, legal and military bureaucracies.¹⁸ A determination to maximise the privilege and influence flowing from each aristocratic household modified the commitment to the free market by the agrarian ruling class. One expression of this principle was the practice of strict settlement of estates upon male heirs.¹⁹ Furthermore, within county society specialists such as physicians, lawyers, and academic tutors were

17 D C Moore 1966; D C Moore 1971 (cf Hennock 1971); RWDavis 1976; Stevenson 1977; Codrington 1930; Teichman 1940; Philips 1975; Philips 1977; Zangerl 1971; Quinault 1975.

18 To some extent these bureaucracies were means of entry into the aristocracy. F M L Thompson 1963, 45-75; Chadwick 1966; Donaldgrodzki 1977, 22-23; Harries-Jenkins 1977.

19 Younger sons frequently had to make their careers in the towns, thus strengthening the links between urban and rural society. F M L Thompson 1963, 64-75

constrained to recognise a subtle and strict hierarchy of status which regulated inter-personal contacts. They were placed in a clear position of inferiority vis-à-vis the aristocratic families which chose to patronise them.²⁰

The relationship of the county aristocracy and gentry to men and women whose lives were centred within the more confined sphere of the parish with its little neighbourhood communities was symbiotic but vulnerable to outbreaks of hostility on both sides.²¹ As late as 1830 in market towns and even large manufacturing cities such as Birmingham and Sheffield local affairs were to a great extent managed by shopkeepers, petty traders, agents and dealers of various kinds. Political influence was exercised, as at the county level, through particularistic networks of family and friends but in this case they ran through local taverns, parish vestries and bodies, often self-recruiting, such as highway boards, improvement commissioners and overseers of the poor.²² Not far removed from this petty bourgeoisie in income and respectability were some of the skilled artisans, many of them organised in trade societies. Radical Dissent acquired much of its support from artisans and the petty bourgeoisie. Its condemnation of aristocratic 'tyranny' and 'anti-democratic' closed corporations reflected and drew upon their own experience.²³ George Eliot has portrayed the close but ambivalent relationship between the county and parochial

20 F M L Thompson 1963, 64-70, 82-5, 178-9; Jewson 1974.

21 E P Thompson 1974; E P Thompson 1978.

22 D Fraser 1976a, pt 1; Webb 1906.

23 Peel 1971, 33-55.

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forms of life in Felix Holt, describing the pervasive influence of kin and connexion, the mediating role between the two levels played by the clergy and lawyers, the radicalism of some Nonconformist ministers and the subtle manipulation of 'the mob' by gentlemen and artisan demagogues.²⁴

During the last two thirds of the nineteenth century the burden of managing the human capacities of a rapidly expanding society shifted decisively onto urban structures. By 1851 the urban population had overtaken the rural and in 1881 town dwellers outnumbered those in rural areas by two to one.²⁵ The great industrial cities of South-East Lancashire, the West Midlands, the West Riding of Yorkshire, Merseyside and Tyneside grew up near and, in some cases, upon the estates of some of the wealthiest and politically most influential members of the landed aristocracy. Bateman's survey of great landowners, based upon parliamentary returns in the 1870s, tells us for example that apart from his 89,000 acres in Derbyshire the Duke of Devonshire had over 12,000 acres in Lancashire and another 19,000 acres in the West Riding of Yorkshire. Lord Derby was another major northern landowner, with 57,000 acres in Lancashire. The Duke of Portland owned 43,000 acres in Nottinghamshire, 8,000 acres in Derbyshire and 12,000 acres in Northumberland. This last holding was, however, overshadowed by the 180,000 acres held in that county by the Duke of Northumberland himself. Earl Fitzwilliam had a substantial rent from his 22,000 acres in Yorkshire, where

24 Eliot 1866.

25 Checkland 1964, 33.

the Duke of Norfolk also owned 19,000 acres of the West Riding. Both Fitzwilliam and Norfolk owned property in the City of Sheffield itself, making them urban landlords as was Lord Calthorpe in the Edgbaston area of Birmingham. North of that city, the influential Marquess of Hertford possessed a 10,000 acre Warwickshire estate and a county seat at Ragley Hall.²⁶

The very size and concentration of the populations of the large manufacturing towns denied the possibility of controlling them through an indefinite extension of particularistic bonds, either 'across' from rural society or 'upwards' from the parochial level. How would these new urban configurations such as Birmingham and Sheffield, bursting at their seams, fit into the developing national society? How would the county hierarchies and urban regimes articulate with one another? Where would the social and political initiative lie? Which groups would wield the major sanctions? There were issues which were being fought out at all levels of society during the period under study. Social leadership, political management and economic influence in large manufacturing cities were shared (and to a great extent, in dispute) amongst groups of industrialists, aristocrats, gentry, Anglican clergy, Dissenting ministers and other professional men, not to mention members of the petty bourgeoisie and artisan communities. The balance of power and forms of solidarity within and amongst these groups varied considerably between cities and over time.

26 Bateman 1883, 130, 127, 365, 337, 168, 334, 72, 219. Based upon PP 1874, LXXII, pts I and II, Return of Owners of Land 1872-3 (England and Wales); 1874, LXXII pt III (Scotland); 1876 LXXX (Ireland).

The institutions, attitudes and interests of Old Corruption did not simply disappear in the period 1832-5 or shortly afterwards. Participants within the old and new orders were involved in bitter struggle at least until the 1870s in towns such as Birmingham and Sheffield. In the course of these struggles political and religious rhetoric was as common as reference to economic interest. However, if the quotation from the 'Birmingham Manufacturer' with which we began is continued it reveals the latent hostility which existed between some industrialists and their longer-established rivals in commerce and land:

In these towns, the manufacturers are the true leaders: for it is their enterprise and experience and capital which employ and maintain the artisans; whose skilful labour produces the commodities the distribution of which enriches merchants and retailers.²⁷

The author goes on to lay about him at the expense of merchants and the aristocracy. Manufacturers and merchants, he argues, both have to 'perform the ordinary operations of buying and selling; but average common sense is enough for these. Unlike merchants, (manufacturers) ... have all the processes of manufacture in their hands'. In order to compete with his rivals, the manufacturer 'requires a superior system of inspection ..., a superior organization, and a judicious choice of managers ... Without lively and sound brains, a manufacturer is driven out of the field'. The manufacturer's intelligence and self-reliance, the writer clearly implies, place him above other classes. During the recent dearth of cotton as a consequence of the American Civil War, 'there was no appeal to Parliament

for Government aid, such as humiliated the rich landed proprietors, under the comparatively trifling misfortune of the Rinderpest. Our northern fellow subjects showed that in abilities and resolution they had not degenerated.'²⁸

The challenge posed by the cities was not simply to do with the distribution of private wealth. Its full extent must be measured in relation to the position previously occupied by an aristocracy whose members had combined material opulence with control over the political apparatus (including its means of physical coercion) and close identification with the symbols of authority fashioned and transmitted through the ancient universities and the Church of England. In the course of industrialisation and urbanisation three changes occurred: the social configurations within which these means of power were to be exercised were profoundly transformed; the sum total of the means of exercising power increased greatly;²⁹ and a large proportion of these means became available to men outside the charmed circle of landed gentlemen and their close associates. Furthermore, definitions of fact and value underwritten by the authority of the Church of England were subject both to a new secular challenge and to an old religious challenge, newly strengthened.

²⁸ op cit, 5, 6, 10.

²⁹ For example in 1878 it was calculated that 'personal property' in Britain had grown from £1,300 million in 1819 to £5,000 million in 1875, a growth which was relatively unaffected by changes in price level. From about mid-century the growth rate of domestic fixed capital was more rapid than the rate of population increase. Giffen 1878, 185; Giffen 1889, 59, 155; Pollard and Crossley 1968, 196-8.

1878-1879, 1879-1880, 1880-1881, 1881-1882, 1882-1883, 1883-1884, 1884-1885, 1885-1886, 1886-1887, 1887-1888, 1888-1889, 1889-1890, 1890-1891, 1891-1892, 1892-1893, 1893-1894, 1894-1895, 1895-1896, 1896-1897, 1897-1898, 1898-1899, 1899-1900, 1900-1901, 1901-1902, 1902-1903, 1903-1904, 1904-1905, 1905-1906, 1906-1907, 1907-1908, 1908-1909, 1909-1910, 1910-1911, 1911-1912, 1912-1913, 1913-1914, 1914-1915, 1915-1916, 1916-1917, 1917-1918, 1918-1919, 1919-1920, 1920-1921, 1921-1922, 1922-1923, 1923-1924, 1924-1925, 1925-1926, 1926-1927, 1927-1928, 1928-1929, 1929-1930, 1930-1931, 1931-1932, 1932-1933, 1933-1934, 1934-1935, 1935-1936, 1936-1937, 1937-1938, 1938-1939, 1939-1940, 1940-1941, 1941-1942, 1942-1943, 1943-1944, 1944-1945, 1945-1946, 1946-1947, 1947-1948, 1948-1949, 1949-1950, 1950-1951, 1951-1952, 1952-1953, 1953-1954, 1954-1955, 1955-1956, 1956-1957, 1957-1958, 1958-1959, 1959-1960, 1960-1961, 1961-1962, 1962-1963, 1963-1964, 1964-1965, 1965-1966, 1966-1967, 1967-1968, 1968-1969, 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The rise of the towns gave new power and confidence to Dissent, which was widespread amongst manufacturers and employees though far from having a monopoly within the urban populations or even amongst town-dwelling Christians.³⁰ Nonconformists, who were to be found in all classes, disagreed on much among themselves but shared a historiography which was deeply at odds with Anglican orthodoxy. A central theme in the Nonconformist view of history was that since the seventeenth century the righteous had been oppressed by the unjust. There was a widespread feeling among them that the influence and privilege of the Anglican Church and the aristocracy should be diminished though there was disagreement about how powerful Leviathan should become and the extent to which the righteous could in turn oppress the unjust. Nonconformity provided a powerful and long-established legitimation for opposition to the class structure and institutional arrangements of the old order, one which drew upon values and perceptions shared by rich and poor, masters and men.³¹ However, there was no strict coincidence of the lines dividing Anglicans and Nonconformists and the demarcations amongst 'economic' classes. For instance, the Birmingham manufacturer quoted above was an Anglican who in 1870 found himself at the head of opposition to the Dissenting interest on the Birmingham School Board.³²

30 Horace Mann calculated in 1851 that non-attendance at churches was most common in the large towns. The returns of the Religious Census suggested that nearly half of church accommodation in England and Wales belonged to Dissent. PP 1852-3, LXXXIX (henceforth 1851 Religious Census), 155, 181-2.

31 Skeats and Miall, *op. cit.*; Adams 1882; Watts 1978.

32 See Chapter Eight.

The political impact of Nonconformity has been nicely stated, in one respect overstated, by John Vincent:

The real corpus of thought uniting the middle class, or the Liberal section of it, was not a Benthamite, utilitarian, or natural-law view of the world, not American or economical principles, but something of a different order: a view or recollection of English history. The Dissenters above all, were formed in a historical culture of almost Judaic narrowness, and their political views were grafted onto an interpretation of seventeenth-century politics quite as much as those of the great Whigs were. One must think of the great Bicentenary celebrations of 1862, the revival of the cults of Cromwell and Milton, the woodcuts of Bunyan in Bedford gaol provided for readers of the Liberator - even John Bright reading his favourite Hallam aloud to his wife - to get some idea of the culture that the middle class could draw on to interpret their politics. The really important attitudes had nothing to do with the industrial revolution (sic!), much to do with the English Civil War33

To this may be added the comment that this historical culture was also available to men and women who were not 'middle class' but who read and discussed Bunyan and the Bible in Sunday school classes and mutual improvement societies.34

The increased scale and complexity of social life also encouraged the development of new skills in the manipulation of society and nature. Railway engineers, medical officers of health, industrial managers, and metallurgists are just a few examples of the host of professional and bureaucratic occupations brought into being.35 Possession of the appropriate educational certification and recognition by national associations became increasingly common criteria by which 'experts'

33 Vincent, 1972, 28-9.

34 J. F. C. Harrison 1961.

35 Checkland 1964, 82-5, 310-12; Pollard 1968.

were identified.³⁶ Law and medicine, the established professions, and the nation-wide bureaucracy of the Established Church had for generations been delicately attuned to the particularistic connexions and subtle social rhythms of parochial and county life.³⁷ In this context genteel men of leisure were the social arbiters. However, the newer concerns of the large manufacturing cities and the metropolitan state apparatus offered, to old and new professions and to religious and secular bureaucrats, the chance for an expanded role and a new self importance. These were arenas where the interests of provincial landowners were in competition with those of urban businessmen and metropolitan statesmen.³⁸ Increasingly, debates about how to cope with the new tasks of an urban industrial society were conducted by 'experts' and 'specialists'.³⁹ The intellectual and practical initiative swung steadily in their favour. This growing 'clerisy' did not form a monolithic bloc. As will be illustrated, its development expressed the conflicts and contradictions of a rural society becoming urban, a localised society becoming more centralised and a particularistic society acquiring the impersonal routines of bureaucracy and the market. However, it represented the advent of a source of authority, certified expertise, which could be tapped for different ends by competing interests. Its practitioners might be seduced by the lure

³⁶ Millerson 1964; Reader 1966.

³⁷ E Hughes 1952; E Hughes 1965.

³⁸ eg Dandeker 1977.

³⁹ Cullen 1975. See also Transactions of National Association for Promotion of Social Science (henceforth Trans NAPSS).

of gentility, harnessed to serve the growing state bureaucracy or they might commit themselves to the open market. Prussia and the United States offered instances of the various ways in which 'experts' might be incorporated within a modernising society.⁴⁰ The education and organisation of such men, their disposition and allegiances, were of strategic importance in the developing nation-state.

It was suggested above that the old order of English society was adjusted to forms of life centred on the county and the local neighbourhood and that its management was mainly in the hands of the aristocracy in association with the 'old professions' and the petty bourgeoisie. This last category shaded imperceptibly into the artisanry on one side and the more substantial mercantile and manufacturing capitalists on the other. Implicit in the analysis has been a recognition that there were conflicts between social groups whose solidarity was focused at the parochial or neighbourhood level in urbanising communities and others closely tied in to the county networks of the aristocracy and gentry. Furthermore, market power, bureaucratic capacity and the possession of expertise as means of influence were held in tension with kinship and patronage at both these levels. Urbanisation and industrialisation transformed the context of these tensions and conflicts as a result of the increased significance which was acquired by the municipal and national levels of integration.

⁴⁰ Ben-David 1962, 47-62, 68-76; Ringer 1979, 32-112, 206-59.

Nation, City and Neighbourhood

A radical disjunction appeared during the mid-nineteenth century between the disposition of institutions coordinated at the county and parochial levels and the social formations and social processes of the large manufacturing cities. For example, the strong tendencies towards residential segregation by class within the cities were an important manifestation of the working of the impersonal force of the market. New social formations took shape whose management was more susceptible to bureaucratic strategies, for example, through the provision of standardised educational facilities, than to the old particularistic strategies.⁴¹ The latter had depended not only upon close interpersonal relations between men and women of different ranks but also upon a capacity to minimise or at least predict the effect of external influences upon each localised 'cosmos'. The management on a large scale of tasks such as installing drains, combating epidemics, instilling basic literary and numeracy and improving communications was beyond their scope.⁴²

The development of institutional orders coordinated at the municipal level of integration was encouraged by a number of factors. These included: aristocratic resistance to a growth in the power of central as opposed to local government;⁴³ the hostility of parochial

⁴¹ Donajkowski 1977, 23-4.

⁴² Attempts to manage these tasks through a coordination of neighbourhood resources met opposition from establishments located at a higher level of integration. See Chapter Five.

⁴³ "Chief clerks are now the real rulers of England; they have already a power too despotic." Lord Montague in 1870 quoted in P Smith 1967, 43.

interests to an extension of county influence over the city; the appearance of a new class of large manufacturers whose operations extended far beyond parochial limits; the scope offered to members of the professionalising occupations (such as medicine) by a large urban clientele which would enable them to reduce their dependence upon the aristocracy; and the added strength industrialisation and urbanisation bestowed upon a Dissenting tradition amongst artisans, the petty bourgeoisie and manufacturers, a tradition which furnished a powerful critique of the predominantly Anglican character of county and national government. In practice, large manufacturing cities developed during the nineteenth century in the context of complex interactions between solidarities integrated at the county, parochial and municipal levels, producing conflicts and accommodations which took varying forms between cities.

The situation became even more complex as the significance of the national level of integration gradually increased, especially during the second half of the century. The market and bureaucratic networks which tended to displace or swamp the particularistic framework of social organisation were not bounded by municipal limits. The technical skills of bureaucrats, professionals and 'experts' did not tie them to specific localities. Capital and labour were also mobile. Their field of operations extended to the boundaries of the national polity and beyond.⁴⁴ Also, increasing international

⁴⁴ Jenks 1927; Erikson 1949; Clements 1955; Malchow 1976; Redford 1964.

pressures upon the British state encouraged its managers in Westminster and Whitehall to take greater cognisance of the national stock of resources upon which it might draw and the national institutions through which these resources might be mobilised.⁴⁵

Social classes were typically organised at more than one level of integration. As has been seen, the aristocracy dominated institutions coordinated at both the county and national levels. At mid-century, occupations such as medicine and the law were internally differentiated according to their practitioners' degree of commitment to weakening county and parochial orders or to the emerging municipal sphere.⁴⁶ Many of them were able to transfer their skills from the former to the latter and subsequently exploit the potential for national organisation. Many groups of artisans had skills whose value increased, initially at least, in the course of industrialisation. However, unlike doctors, lawyers and other occupational groups who provided specialised advice and services to clients on a personal level, the skills and autonomy of many artisans were quickly subject to the eroding effect of mechanisation and bureaucratic management. The responses of artisans to those opportunities and threats were organised at a number of levels; at the neighbourhood level (for example in the case of the Sheffield trade societies), at the municipal level (through the establishment of trades' councils) and at the national level

⁴⁵ The introduction of compulsory national service in 1916 was a climax of this process. A J P Taylor 1965, 53-56.

⁴⁶ See Chapter Seven.

(through bodies such as the Trades Union Congress and the National Association for Promoting State Colonisation).⁴⁷

As the significance of parochial institutions declined, the petty bourgeoisie suffered a serious and increasing decline of influence. As Bechhofer and Elliott point out, the businesses run by this class were (and are) characterised by the combination, often within family concerns, of small amounts of capital, low levels of technology and a simple, unbureaucratised division of labour.⁴⁸ The growth of big business and the increasing bureaucratisation of municipal government simultaneously reduced their political influence and increased their rates. Opposition to these tendencies was expressed through ratepayers' parties active in town hall politics (especially during the 1850s and 1860s) and at the national level through the strident Non-conformist wing of the Liberal party (from the 1870s) and subsequently the Conservative party.⁴⁹

Whereas the petty bourgeoisie was the product of a parochial social order which was being slowly overwhelmed, the other major group within the lower middle class was prototypical rather than anachronistic. Its members were functionaries within the expanding bureaucracies of government and commerce, such as warehouse clerks,

⁴⁷ Pollard 1959, 65-77; Corbett 1966; Mendelson et al nd; Hobsbawm 1964; Gray 1976; Moorhouse 1978; Roberts 1958; Malchow 1976.

⁴⁸ Bechhofer and Elliott 1976, 78-81.

⁴⁹ Bechhofer and Elliott 1976; Neale 1972; Hennock 1963; Nossiter 1975; Checkland 1964, 301-303; Mayer 1975.

railway officials, foremen, policemen and elementary school teachers. Above them, but still marginal members of the middle class were some managers, accountants, engineers, surveyors, notaries and other specialists.⁵⁰ Like the semi-skilled and unskilled urban working class, this new lower middle class was a creation of the latter phases of industrialisation and urbanisation (from about 1850 onwards) rather than being an established class to whom these processes offered a series of challenges.

The dynamics of market competition and bureaucratic growth which helped bring these new classes into being also tended to distribute and segregate them spatially in suburbs of a single class character.⁵¹ As The Economist recognised in 1857, this development had profound implications:

Society is tending more and more to spread into classes - and not merely classes but localised classes, class colonies; and nothing could have a more powerful effect on modifying our municipal institutions. It is not in London merely, nor as a matter of business and in consequence of the "division of labour" that this happens ... there is a much deeper social principle involved in the present increasing tendency to class colonies. It is the disposition to associate with equals - in some measure with those who have similar practical interests, in still greater measure with those who have similar tastes and culture, most of all with those with whom we judge ourselves on a moral equality, whatever our real standard may be.⁵²

By mid-century the increasingly homogenous suburb was beginning to displace the heterogenous semi-urban, semi-rural neighbourhood. This had deep implications for the institutions of the parish. Parochial organisation had

50 Checkland 1964, 303; Hurt 1972, 110-46; Dalvi 1957.

51 D Ward 1975; Cannadine 1977a.

52 Economist, 20.6.87, 669. *Italics in original.*

originally encompassed the class relationship between property owners and employees, both of whom had participated in its institutions and resided within parish boundaries. In the 1850s, The Economist supported the proposal to establish unions of parishes jointly responsible for the care of their poor, since

(whole) parishes exist in which there are no poor, while all the work is done by neighbouring parishes in which there are almost no rich A rich district has its poor district in close superficial association with it, instead of distributed evenly through it. The labourers encompass the landlord - Chelsea touches on Belgravia, a zone of poverty encircles the zone of wealth.⁵³

The social formations in whose management parochial institutions had a share were increasingly subject to determination at a higher level of integration. By the end of the century, local patterns of residential segregation in suburbs were manifestations of status differences and class relationships which had a national basis. The urban working class and the new lower middle class who constituted the bulk of the suburban masses were to a great extent educated and employed within institutions which were increasingly subject to the influence of national agencies. Institutions focused on the municipal level were being overtaken, as parochial institutions had been earlier, by the increasing scale and complexity of social differentiation. The division of large cities in 1885 into several parliamentary constituencies encouraged this development, tending to emphasise the shared class interests of voters in similar constituencies in different cities.⁵⁴

⁵³ op cit., 670

⁵⁴ Pelling 1967; P F Clarke 1972; Cornford 1963.

Social conflicts

The birth of a new society in the womb of the old generated three kinds of social conflict. The first of these was the continuation under transformed conditions of the antagonisms which set the aristocracy planted in the shires against bureaucratic central government on the one hand, and on the other hand against the highly localised parochial and neighbourhood circles of artisans and petty traders.⁵⁵ The second kind of social conflict was between groups whose power and prestige were rooted in the norms and practices of the old society and other groups coming into being as a consequence of urbanisation, industrialisation and bureaucratisation. The third kind of social conflict arose from the response of participants to the unequal division of labour and distribution of rewards expressed through the new or transformed institutional orders which developed in the course of attempts to control and exploit the new resources and capacities of the urban industrial nation state.

During the period 1830-1895 all three kinds of social conflict were occurring simultaneously and influencing each other, a process expressed in complex and shifting alliances which varied between cities and regions. The significance of the first kind of social conflict during the early decades of the period, indeed until the 1870s, requires emphasis. Not until the 1880s did the third kind of conflict, with its characteristic 'modern' pattern of

55 One issue which revealed some of these tensions was the introduction of the new poor law. For example Brundage 1978; D Fraser 1976b.

confrontation and bargaining between nationally-organised mass labour unions and nation-wide associations of employers begin to achieve dominance.⁵⁶ Mediating between these two kinds of conflict, interacting with both, was the second form of antagonism indicated above which will be elaborated further.

As urban industrial society became more complex and the significance of the municipal and national levels of integration increased, rights and responsibilities which drew their legitimacy from the values and routines of local particularistic solidarities were challenged. Prominent in the new order were large joint-stock companies, central government agencies such as the Local Government Board and the Science and Art Department whose tentacles stretched deep into the provinces, and national professional associations such as the British Medical Association and the Institution of Mechanical Engineers.⁵⁷ Those who manned these new institutions could justify their influence and self-importance by referring to the social needs for their skills and their own merit as individuals, regardless of kinship or ties of patronage.⁵⁸ The

56 Clegg et al 1964.

57 Gutchen 1961; Lambert 1962; Gosden 1966; 43-56;
RHParsons 1947; McMenemey 1959.

58 Sir Walter Foster, a Birmingham physician who achieved national fame, summed up in 1883 a philosophy he had applied for twenty years: '.... in town councils, local boards and boards of guardians there is plenty of work to do, useful to the community and good for the profession I would gladly see medical men taking their due share in the important and responsible work of local government.'
Edbastonia(henceforth Edg) 4, 1884, 98-9.

For a more detailed account of the history of the
local government see R. H. Parsons 1947.
See also 1963, esp. 6-2.

protestant tradition of Christianity supplied a ready vocabulary of dissatisfaction with social evil and the need for rigorous self-examination according to the criterion of worthiness.

In analysing these processes, it is useful to distinguish between, on the one hand, personal or family assets which were exploitable in a very wide range of social contexts and, on the other hand, highly 'institutionalised' social and technical skills which retained their value only as long as the specific social configurations in which they were practised remained relatively undisturbed. The highest and lowest social strata were distinguished by their primary dependence upon the highly transferable assets of personal wealth and labour power, respectively. The unskilled labourer, probably already a migrant from the countryside, was able to transfer his muscle from place to place and job to job as the market dictated.⁵⁹ Since his status, market power and political influence were low, he had little to lose and possibly something to gain from such mobility. At the other end of the scale, rich manufacturers could apply their fortunes to building a position within aristocratic circles. From the middle of the century leading industrialists found their way into aristocratic society. Ennoblement was uncommon before 1880 but in Cheshire (for example) file manufacturers, cotton spinners and shipbuilders had been appointed to the county commission of the peace in increasing numbers during the preceding three decades.⁶⁰ By the 1860s businessmen were

59 For the impact of migratory tendencies on working class families see M Anderson 1971.

60 Lee 1963, esp Ch 2.

finding that a parliamentary seat was a useful qualification for directorships. Of the 465 Liberal MPs sitting between 1859 and 1874, 151 were businessmen. Only thirty-four of these could be described as radical.⁶¹ At these commanding heights rich men were united by a common interest in managing their family fortunes rather than being divided by opposing commitments to an 'aristocratic class' and an 'industrial bourgeoisie'. Landed wealth could be applied to investment in mining and railway enterprises or used as security for loans drawing on the wealth of the towns.⁶² The rapid development of credit and banking facilities facilitated transfers of wealth between sectors.⁶³

The second kind of conflict was most evident in the profoundly unsettled middle ranges of English society. Those under threat included many artisans living in close neighbourliness guarding the customs of their craft, lesser gentry whose standing depended upon their position within local chains of patronage, parish notables dominating vestry politics, the managers and beneficiaries of endowed charities from Oxford and Cambridge to small local grammar schools, and so on. The atmosphere of Old Corruption is conveyed in the following reminiscence of a man who in 1849 served as a churchwarden at Kidderminster:

There were many charities connected with my office, and a large offertory to distribute, to say nothing of the trouble of writing out the rate books and collecting the rates.

61 Vincent 1968, 41-43.

62 Spring 1951; F M L Thompson 1963, 238-68; Cannadine 1977b.

63 Checkland 1964, 189-212.

There was also a visitation held at Bromsgrove which I had to attend, and at which I refused to pay the visitation fees, as I considered that money drawn from the pockets of parishioners ought not to be paid to a number of hungry officials, who did nothing for it in return All the travelling, collecting, account keeping, and charity distributing were done for nothing, yet on the very first day after I was out of office, the old men and women, who used to touch hats and curtsy to me in the streets, suddenly lost their eye-sight, so far as I was concerned; the blessings of which they transferred to my successor⁶⁴

The claims of customary privilege, grounded in law or tradition, were increasingly confronted with demands to eliminate waste, reduce injustice and increase national competitiveness.⁶⁵ During much of the nineteenth century a form of 'dual politics' was practised. On the one hand there were assaults (vigorously contested) upon closed corporate bodies, self-recruiting oligarchies and 'undemocratic' solidarities of all kinds; on the other hand antagonists sympathetic to both sides of these conflicts were busy making investments in the institutions of the new urban industrial order. Landowners under attack from the Anti-Corn Law League were heavily involved in the canal and railway booms and other aspects of urban growth. Faced with demands for disestablishment, Anglican clergy were building new churches in working class neighbourhoods.⁶⁶ Oxford and Cambridge dons, confronted

⁶⁴ G Griffiths 1870, 380.

⁶⁵ One instance is Tom Taylor's sharp criticism of Toulmin Smith's nostalgia for the ancient parochial system of government at the 1857 Social Science Congress in Birmingham. T Taylor 1858.

⁶⁶ J Fraser 1965; J Ward 1966; F M L Thompson 1959; Spring 1951; Spring 1954; Mee 1972; Cannadine 1977b; Miall 1842, 3-6; Mole 1973, 822-9.

with appeals for a decentralisation of their endowments, established local examinations directed at the 'new' middle classes in the provinces.⁶⁷ The provision of education, the regulation of industrial production and the politics of local government were three spheres within which these conflicts were worked out, manifesting allegiances forged within the old society and creating solidarities which would help shape the new.

The next six chapters focus on the period between 1830 and 1870. Chapter Two explores variations in the patterns of social differentiation in Birmingham and Sheffield, analysing inter-relationships between the national, county, municipal and neighbourhood levels of integration and also power relationships within families and between occupations and social classes. Chapter Three opens with a discussion of the impact upon existing middle-class and working-class networks within the two cities of new norms and practices associated with 'modern' institutions such as municipal corporations and the mechanised factory. These processes are then placed in a broader urban context through a comparative analysis of demographic tendencies, shifts in the relationship of capital to labour, alterations in patterns of residence, and changes in the physical lay-out of the respective city centres. These transformations are related to changes in the urban status hierarchies and tendencies towards contradiction and conflict in the industrial sphere. The chapter ends by comparing two

⁶⁷ Roach 1959, 143.

influential contemporary views about the tasks and functions which should be performed within communities and the kinds of institutions which should ideally be created to make this possible. These views are taken from the works of two ideologues, Isaac Ironside and George Dawson, who achieved fame and political influence during the late 1840s in Sheffield and Birmingham respectively.

The socio-political initiatives with which Ironside and Dawson were associated are in Chapter Four located within a comparative analysis of processes, under way by 1830, whereby in each city members of establishments presiding over key institutions were subjected to challenges from competing groups. Following a period of approximately a decade from the early 1850s during which opposing social tendencies were in a state of approximate balance, the old establishments were overwhelmed, albeit not by the initial constellation of opposing groups. These changes are located within a broader regional and national context. Whereas in Chapter Three emphasis is laid upon patterns of persistence and change in norms and practices, in Chapter Four more attention is paid to the evolving strategies of competing social interests. In Chapter Five and Chapter Six developments in the sphere of formal education are discussed in terms of the preceding analysis, looking first at secondary and elementary schooling, subsequently at adult and professional education with particular reference to medical training. Chapter Seven examines the period of crisis and conflict in the late 1860s, focusing upon the investigations of the two Royal Commissions whose objects of attention were the Sheffield

trade societies and the King Edward VI Foundation in Birmingham. The chapter ends by looking at the state of social relations and civic morale in the cities through the eyes of two prominent local men, writing twenty years after the visions of Ironside and Dawson had been first presented to their audiences.

Chapter Two

BETWEEN NEIGHBOURHOOD AND NATION

The Framework of Social Differentiation in Birmingham
and Sheffield 1830-70

One has not great hopes from Birmingham,
I always say there is something direful
in the sound.¹

Heaven knows what the snobbish Mrs Elton would have thought about Sheffield! In the social world which Jane Austen dissects in Emma such places were consigned to the fringes of consciousness. They were murky regions out of which there occasionally escaped upstarts such as Mrs Elton's former neighbours, the Tupmans, 'encumbered with many low connections, but giving themselves immense airs, and expecting to be on a footing with old established families; and how they got their fortune nobody knows'.² By the third quarter of the century the 'degredation' and 'immorality' of manufacturing towns had become a major theme in fiction. Charles Reade for example, based It is Never Too Late to Mend (1853) on the report of a Royal Commission exposing corruption and cruelty in Birmingham Gaol. The trade union 'outrages' in Sheffield provided material for Put Yourself in His Place (1870).³

There was another side to the picture which emerges in autobiography rather than the novel. F Condé Williams, a vicar's son who made careers in journalism and the law

1 Austen 1816 (1966 ed), 310.

2 *op cit*, 309.

3 W Burns 1961; R Williams 1963, esp Ch 5.

passed through both Sheffield and Birmingham en route to high office.⁴ In Sheffield he entered the literary circle of Alfred Gatty, Vicar of Ecclesfield. Gatty had attended Charterhouse, Eton and Oxford before settling in Yorkshire.⁵ Williams contributed to magazines run by the Gattys and made visits to the local theatre with 'the young men of the family - one of them now a dread functionary of the *Heralds' College*'.⁶ Culture was apparently not quite dead in mid-century Sheffield, nor in Birmingham. Of the latter city, Williams wrote:

English art owed much to Birmingham, both in the sixties and before that period. It may not be too much to claim that Birmingham set the nation an excellent example in giving preference to the original works of modern English painters over copies and questionable originals of old masters, such as at one time almost held the field of artistic investment ... (Men such as) Charles Hawker (an art dealer) and William Hall (artist) left their mark in the middle of the nineteenth century upon the taste of art patrons in Birmingham, and are to a great extent answerable for the fine collections accumulated at that period by manufacturing plutocrats of the district.⁷

This is to answer contemporary critics in their own terms, to show that persons of sensitivity and taste were to be found in these apparently unpromising locales. However, broader issues are raised by the writings mentioned, such as the confrontation between old and new forms of public administration and economic organisation, the relationship between masters and men, the interplay among professional

4. F C Williams 1903.

5. Stainton 1926, 328-9; Odom 1926, 47-8.

6. F.C Williams 1903, 33.

7. *op cit*, 42-3.

and business elites, the fashioning of popular taste and public opinion, and styles of local leadership. A systematic approach to these issues requires an analysis which sets each city in its regional and national context and locates neighbourhoods within the municipal framework.

The national context

If you compare White's 1852 Directory of Sheffield with White's 1850 Directory of Birmingham, you will find that of the 218 occupations listed for Sheffield 37 are not listed for Birmingham.⁸ Of these 37 occupations the vast majority (31) are in cutlery and steel manufacture or closely related to them. However, you will also find that the Birmingham Directory lists over 300 occupations which are not found in the Sheffield Directory. These occupations are very diverse. Taking examples at random they include alkali manufacturers, artificial limb makers, bagatelle and billiard table makers, bayonet manufacturers, case (card and cigar) makers, candle stick manufacturers, dog collar makers, door spring manufacturers, ecclesiastical ornament makers, engineers (civil), ferrule makers, furriers, gilders, gun barrel makers, handcuff makers, hook and eye makers, ink makers, ivory bone toy and ornament manufacturers, japan makers, jewellers and goldsmiths, key ring makers, letter clip makers, lock manufacturers, mathematical instrument makers, mould makers, net makers, optical glass manufacturers, organ builders, pearl button manufacturers, pencil makers, railway coach builders, Roman cement and plaster of Paris makers,

⁸ Cross-references were excluded.

scabbard manufacturers, sealing wax manufacturers, teapot handle makers, tulip shovel makers, umbrella furniture makers, varnish makers, vice manufacturers, wedding and mourning ring makers, whip makers and zinc workers.

A comparison of the two directories suggests that the occupational structure was at least twice as highly differentiated in Birmingham as it was in Sheffield at mid-century. Degree of differentiation is not a mere function of population size. This can be shown if we compare the two cities in terms of relative population size and degrees of occupation differentiation. The comparison will be extended to include Leeds. White's 1847 Directory lists 196 occupations in Leeds as compared with 527 in Birmingham (1850) and 218 in Sheffield (1852).
TABLE 1: Population size and occupational differentiation: Birmingham, Sheffield and Leeds 1851

	Birmingham	Leeds	Sheffield
Population size (1851):	100	73.8	57.9
Degree of occupational differentiation:	100	37.2	41.4

Source: 1851 Census and Directories

In other words, although Sheffield was about six-tenths the size of Birmingham the former city had an occupational structure only about four-tenths as complex as the latter. Leeds was nearly three-quarters as large as Birmingham but only four-tenths as complex in its occupational structure.⁹

9 Degree of complexity may not vary directly with degree of differentiation since interaction does not necessarily take place within all potential relationships between differentiated 'parts'.

The three cities may also be compared in terms of the proportions of their populations engaged in different types of occupation. The comparison will be extended further to include Bristol.¹⁰

Table 2: Occupational distribution: Birmingham, Sheffield and Leeds 1851.

Number occupied per thousand population, 1851				
	Bristol	Birmingham	Sheffield	Leeds
1 Engineering, Toolmaking, Metal working:	21.1	165.8	187.6	41.2
2 Textile workers:	11.7	5.5	3.1	146.1
3 Professional, Literary, Artistic:	23.0	23.2	12.8	14.1
4 Mercantile Occupations:	10.1	9.1	6.3	4.6
5 Transport and Communications:	37.7	26.7	16.0	18.2
6 Liquor and Victuals (whole-sale and retail):	37.5	29.7	22.8	25.8
7 Domestic Servants:	74.7	43.0	33.6	31.0
8 Persons of independent means:	14.3	4.3	4.4	4.2
9 General and Factory Labourers:	30.9	17.4	14.3	14.8
10 National and Local Government Officials (including Police):	4.3	2.5	1.5	2.0

Source: 1851 Census

10 PP1852-3, LXXXVIII et seq (hereafter 1851 Census). The categories in Table 2 are constructed as follows: 1=XI,7-11,XIV,7-14; 2=XII,6,7,12; 3=III,1-6,IV,1-4,XI,1-6; 4=VII,1('merchants' to 'commercial travellers' inclusive); 5=VIII,1-6; 6=XII,1,XIII,1-2; 7=VI,2(excluding 'gardeners' and 'innservants'); 8=XVI,1; 9=XV,1; 10=I,1-2

Three initial observations can be made. First, when Leeds and Sheffield are compared they have a broadly similar distribution of persons among occupations with one major exception. Sheffield's occupational composition is very heavily biased towards engineering, toolmaking and metal working while in Leeds textiles are preponderant. However, in Leeds there are roughly two workers in engineering, toolmaking and metal work for every seven workers in textiles. By comparison, in Sheffield there is one textile worker for roughly sixty two workers in engineering, toolmaking and metal work. In other words, although Leeds has a less complex occupational structure than Sheffield, this structure rests far less heavily upon a single branch of industry. Second, although Birmingham resembles Sheffield in the predominance of the hardware trades, in other spheres there is much more activity in the Midlands city. For example, Birmingham supports nearly twice as large a proportion of persons engaged in or servicing the three 'old' professions, literary, artistic, theatrical and scientific activity, teaching, publishing and selling books. Also, the proportion of people occupied in mercantile activities (including for example bankers, brokers, salesmen, accountants and commercial travellers but excluding shopkeepers and lesser agents) is nearly twice as large in Birmingham as in Sheffield. Furthermore, transport and communications (a category of occupations involving for example rail, road and canal conveyance, warehouse provision and 'others employed about messages') commands a much greater share of personnel than in Sheffield. Third, in respect of the first two occupational categories

just mentioned (professional, literary and artistic occupations and mercantile occupations) Birmingham strongly resembles Bristol and in respect of employment in transport and communications Birmingham stands midway between the very high ranking obtained by the southwestern port and the very low ranking achieved by Sheffield.

These differences between Birmingham and Sheffield were, in part, manifestations of the manner in which each city fitted into the national division of labour and the national system of communications. In the period 1830 to 1870, as in later times, 'made in Sheffield' signified high quality cutlery and high grade steel. An official report in 1865 noted of Sheffield that 'the manufactures of the district are far less miscellaneous than those of the Birmingham district'.¹¹ A high degree of local specialisation in a narrow range of products was encouraged by Sheffield's geographical isolation and the difficulties and cost of transport. By contrast, 'made in Birmingham' evoked a plethora of new-fangled contraptions coming out of the 'toy shop of the world'. The businessmen of Birmingham were located on a bustling regional and national crossroads and they provided a wide range of goods and services to consumers in an ever-changing countrywide and overseas market. A guide to Birmingham published in 1831 stated that the town possessed 'every convenience which can be desired in the way of public conveyances in every possible direction. It is, in fact, not so much in the line of communication, as itself the centre from which

11 PP1865, XX, Children's Employment Commission, Sheffield (henceforth CEC Sheff 1865), rep 2

many routes diverge; the starting place for Coaches, Waggon, and Canal Boats without number'.¹² The Birmingham canal had been opened in 1770, half a century before Sheffield acquired its own waterway. By the 1790s the wharves in and around Birmingham were the hub of a national network of canals stretching out to Nottingham, Coventry, Oxford and Liverpool.¹³ Birmingham's response to the railway from the 1840s onward was decisive and effective. In 1846 the city magistrates declared: 'Economy of transit should be carried to the greatest possible extent, more particularly to a district so far inland'.¹⁴ The city centre was radically transformed by the construction of New Street and Snow Hill stations. A comparison of the impact of railways on Birmingham as compared with London, Glasgow, Liverpool and Manchester yields the following comment:

In many respects Birmingham provides a text book model for the impact of railways upon a great city. Its termini are central and provide underground through-transport beneath the city centre. The cross-town link railways, which caused such expense to shareholders and dissatisfaction to travellers in other cities in the 1860s and 1870s, were not necessary in Birmingham because large and early decisions were taken. Birmingham also emerged with the nearest approach in any of the main cities to a single Grand Central Station, when New Street was enlarged to fifteen acres in the early 1880s. Moreover, with certain exceptions, the decisions on the siting and routes of Birmingham's railways and termini in the mid-nineteenth century seem to have been taken, by the various interests concerned, in a manner which was not merely timely and rational, but was also peculiarly single-minded.¹⁵

¹² W H Smith 1831, 121. Italics in original.

¹³ VCH, 33; Mathias 1969, 111-12; Linton 1956, 165; Goodfellow 1942. See note 50 below.

¹⁴ Kellett 1969, 10. Italics in original.

¹⁵ op.cit., 144-5.

In view of this prevailing climate of opinion it is not surprising that the inventor of the penny post, which was inaugurated nationally in 1840, should have been a local man, Rowland Hill.¹⁶

Although both Birmingham and Sheffield were landlocked in England's centre, geography had been kinder to the former city which stood on elevated ground within easy access of the surrounding area. By contrast, Sheffield was skirted by hills and barren moors on three sides and by the often-flooded Don Valley to the east. Rotherham, six miles to the north-east, was favoured by navigation on the River Don whereas Sheffield had no suitable waterway to the sea until a canal from Tinsley was opened in 1819. Overshadowed by Hallam Ridge, Sky Edge and Pitsmoor, the only viable exit from Sheffield's claustrophobic habitation was a half-mile wide gap running south-west to north-east. Eventually a canal, two through railways, two goods termini, a mineral line and sidings, main roads, a gas works and several industrial plants were to be crammed into this narrow passage way. Construction of turnpike roads and the canal was long delayed by the opposition of the neighbouring landowners and the difficulties of the terrain. The railway line to Rotherham was initially opposed by the Duke of Norfolk, the chief coal-owner in the region, probably for fear of its effect on coal prices. It was opened in 1838 but not until 1845 were the engineering problems of laying the line through to Manchester overcome. No direct rail connection to the Midlands and London existed until 1870. Unlike Birmingham, which was

the scene of intense competition for its lucrative traffic, Sheffield had to force itself against considerable resistance onto the national network of communications.¹⁷

Although it is an important conditioning factor, geography does not determine social development. For example, from the 1840s Sheffield became increasingly important as a centre for distributing foodstuffs throughout South Yorkshire, exploiting new rail links to the eastern counties and Manchester. This objective was deliberately sought by the Manchester, Sheffield and Lincolnshire Railway Company. It is significant that one of the directors of the Sheffield Board of this company was Michael Ellison, the agent of the Duke of Norfolk's estates in Sheffield. Ellison's brother was on the Manchester board. Evidence such as this suggests that it would be fruitful to focus next upon the relationship of each city to its immediate hinterland within which the influence of the regional aristocracy was rooted.¹⁸

The regional context

The hardware trades of each town were complemented by iron works and coal mines which stood upon neighbouring landed estates such as those of Earl Fitzwilliam in the West Riding and Lord Dudley in Staffordshire. However, these economic and political similarities were aspects of social configurations which were developing in radically dissimilar ways. Birmingham was not only a centre of

¹⁷ Linton 1956, 165-7, 228-36; Hopkinson 1971; Hopkinson 1950.

¹⁸ Blackman 1962, 93-4.

industrial production but also the entrepot of the Black Country and a flourishing market town, serving an extensive and well-populated region of industrial villages, rural hamlets and agricultural estates, all cheek by jowl.¹⁹ George Eliot's picture of northern Warwickshire just before the first Reform Act applies well to Birmingham's regional setting:

In these midlands districts the traveller passed rapidly from one phase of English life to another: after looking down on a village dingy with coal-dust, noisy with the shaking of looms, he might skirt a parish all of fields, high hedges and deep-rutted lanes; after the coach had rattled over the pavement of a manufacturing town, the scene of riots and trades-union meetings, it would take him in another ten minutes into a rural region, where the neighbourhood of the town was only felt in the advantages of a near market for corn, cheese and hay²⁰

Within four miles of Birmingham and gradually being swallowed up by it during the mid-nineteenth century were the settlements at Aston, Northfield, Erdington, Moseley, Castle Bromwich, Bordesley, Stetchford and Saltley. Like Birmingham they had a long tradition of hardware production and local market trading. Less than ten miles away were the market towns of Solihull, Halesowen and Coleshill and other centres mixing agricultural and manufacturing activities. To the north-west in the Black Country stood the hardware town of Sutton Coldfield and also Walsall, built on coal and iron. West Bromwich and Dudley were close by in the north-east

¹⁹ Mee 1972; Mee 1975; Raybould 1968; Raybould 1973.

²⁰ Eliot 1866 (1972 ed), 79.

with their mines, quarries, brass foundries, brick works, glass works, railways and canals. Within a twenty-mile radius were the market towns of Lichfield, Tamworth, Nuneaton, Coventry, Leamington, Warwick, Alcester, Droitwich and, twenty two miles away, Worcester. The same area included the hardware town of Redditch and others in which manufacturers, farmers and merchants all plied their trade such as Bromsgrove, Kidderminster, Bewdley, Stourport, Stourbridge and the mighty Black Country metropolis of Wolverhampton.²¹

By contrast, apart from Rotherham, five miles to the north-east, there was no other major centre of population within twelve miles of Sheffield. Beyond this ring of desolation the towns of Chesterfield to the south, Barnsley to the north, Doncaster to the north-east and Worksop to the south-east formed a semi-circle of market centres, providing alternative locales for the region's trading activities, more accessible and pleasant than Sheffield. In the 1830s, an aerial photograph of the ten miles around the junction of the River Porter and the River Don would have revealed a multitude of small villages and hamlets containing communities of cutlers, grinders and colliers. The parish of Sheffield was enormous, extending over 22,370 acres. It contained twelve villages and 47 hamlets within its area and was fringed by settlements at Dore, Totley, Norton, Greenhill, Woodhouse, Handsworth and Tinsley. The town of Sheffield itself was almost a geographical and demographic accident, the product

21 Bartholomew 1904; Warwickshire Directory 1850 (henceforth Bir Dir 1850); Worcester Directory 1855; Birmingham and Black Country Directory 1855.

of a confluence of rivers and valleys which provided water power and shelter for a dense cluster of small communities.²²

There were important differences between the regional aristocracies with which the two cities were confronted as they grew. A glance at Sandford and Townsend's map of 'the great landowners of England' gives the strong impression that Sheffield was encircled by ermine. To the north-east just outside Rotherham was the seat of Earl Fitzwilliam at Wentworth House. His close neighbour was Lord Wharnccliffe of Wortley Hall whose family, having made their money in the metal industry was raised to the peerage in 1826. Fourteen miles to the south-west in Derbyshire was Chatsworth which had been the home of the Duke of Devonshire for three centuries. An arc traced around to the south-east into north Nottinghamshire passes through Welbeck Park and Clumber Park, opulent seats of the Dukes of Portland and Newcastle respectively. The Duke of Norfolk, whose principal residence was in Sussex, nevertheless held two-fifths of his estates in the West Riding of Yorkshire, and drew over half his rent from that region. The Norfolk interest in Sheffield radiated outward from his agent's offices in the Corn Exchange.²³

The national influence of these men was immense.

F M L Thompson names Norfolk (the hereditary Earl Marshall of England), Fitzwilliam, Devonshire and Newcastle in his list of the eight most politically influential peers in

²² Sheffield Directory 1862 (henceforth Sheff Dir 1862); Clegg 1970, 31-2.

²³ Sanford and Townsend 1865 Vol 1; Perkin 1969, 88; Bateman 1883, 334; Sheff Dir 1841, 148; Sheff Dir 1852, 102.

the early 1830s. Wharncliffe was President of the Privy Council when Sheffield petitioned for its municipal charter in the early 1840s.²⁴ Not all of these peers were closely involved in the business of Sheffield. As far as the town was concerned, particular heed had to be paid to Wharncliffe who was an important organiser of the Tory interest in and around Sheffield, and to Norfolk and Fitzwilliam who owned extensive property within the city limits. In his Vital Statistics of Sheffield, published in 1843, Dr G C Holland acknowledged the importance of the Ellison family, agents for the Norfolk interest in Sheffield and the 'great obligations' due from the town to Fitzwilliam and Wharncliffe. This powerful trio of West Riding interests, albeit divided politically, exercised great sway at three levels simultaneously: nationally, regionally and within Sheffield itself.²⁵

A convenient way to identify the peers most closely associated with Birmingham in this period is to examine the presidential roll of the Birmingham and Midland Institute which was founded in 1854.²⁶ Nine of the first fifteen presidents were drawn from the local aristocracy. The wealth and property of their families, both locally and nationally, may be compared with that of the three leading South Yorkshire peerages as recorded in the early 1870s.²⁷

²⁴ F M L Thompson 1963, 47-8; Furness 1893, 3.

²⁵ JRB Johnson 1970, 97; Olsen 1973; Rowley 1975.

²⁶ R Waterhouse 1954, 183.

²⁷ Bateman 1883, 72, 119, 140, 168, 210, 212, 264, 270, 285, 334, 473, 490.

TABLE 3: Landowners in South Yorkshire and West Midlands

<u>Sheffield</u>				
	<u>Acreage</u>		<u>Annual Rent (£)</u>	
	<u>Yorkshire</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Yorkshire</u>	<u>Total</u>
Norfolk	19,440	49,866	"39,897" ¹	"75,596" ¹
Fitzwilliam	22,192	115,743	87,406	138,801
Wharncliffe	22,544	33,440	34,440	50,823
<u>Birmingham</u>				
	<u>Acreage</u>		<u>Annual Rent (£)</u>	
	<u>War/Wor Staffs</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>War/Wor Staffs</u>	<u>Total</u>
Lyttelton	5,907	6,939	9,170	10,263
Hatherton	14,901	14,901	23,196	23,196
Ward	19,428	25,554	117,005	123,176
Leigh	17,241	20,965	25,863	32,013
Wrottesley	5,785	5,785	11,021	11,021
Lichfield	21,433	21,530	41,560	42,042
Calthorpe	2,286	6,470	"114,608" ²	"122,628" ²
Dartmouth	7,316	19,518	16,356	58,657
Harrowby	5,165	12,625	7,728	20,291

Source: Bateman 1883

Notes

- 1 An underestimate since this figure excludes the value of mines and shooting rights, Bateman 1883, 334.
- 2 A gross overestimate, Bateman 1883, xxiii. By 1880 the Birmingham property of the Calthorpes was yielding a gross rental of nearly £30,000 which was over three-quarters of the Calthorpes' total income. Cannadine 1975, 729.

Although the largest West Midlands potentates recorded here could compete with Norfolk or Fitzwilliam in local rental (Calthorpe), local acreage (Leigh) or both (Ward, Lichfield) none had comparable national standing. Both Lord Ward (representing the Dudley interest) and

Lord Lichfield were more dependent upon their Black Country holdings than were Fitzwilliam and Norfolk upon their South Yorkshire estates. Despite their influence in the West Midlands, the Staffordshire aristocracy were only bantam-weights at the national level.

Six of the nine peers recorded held their largest estates in Staffordshire which, acre for acre, had the second highest proportion of country seats in the nation. Of the remaining three, Lord Lyttelton represented the Worcestershire aristocracy, Lord Leigh the Warwickshire nobility, while Lord Calthorpe owed his influence to his position as landlord of Edgbaston, the salubrious middle class neighbourhood which made up one third of the area of Birmingham as incorporated in 1838.²⁸ Located on the meeting point of three counties, Birmingham was entrammelled in a much denser aristocratic mesh than was Sheffield. However, property and influence were not concentrated in the hands of a few families as was the case in South Yorkshire. John Bateman's survey, The Great Landowners of Great Britain and Ireland, contains data on individual landowners based upon parliamentary returns made in the early 1870s. Despite the acknowledged deficiencies of Bateman's compilation it provides a means of making a very crude comparison between estates in Staffordshire, Warwickshire, Worcestershire and the West Riding of Yorkshire.²⁹ Bateman records the acreage and rental of

28 F M L Thompson 1963, 30; Cannadine 1975, 729.

29 According to David Spring, Bateman provides 'with respect to acreages, especially where agricultural land was involved a reasonably reliable guide to the structure of British landownership in the 1870s'. Introduction to 1971 edition, 19.

the estates held by owners whose total property in Great Britain and Ireland was at least 2,000 acres or which yielded at least £3,000 per year. 129 such estates were identified in Staffordshire, 111 in Warwickshire, 84 in Worcestershire and 110 in the West Riding.³⁰ Each of these totals was distributed as follows, in percentage terms, with respect to acreage and rental:

TABLE 4: Distribution of estates by acreage and rental:
South Yorkshire and West Midlands

		Gross annual rent £10,000 over or less £10,000		
10,000 acres or under	Staffs	88.6	7.0	n = 129
	Warwicks	91.1	6.3	n = 111
	Worcs	94.0	3.6	n = 84
	WR of Yorks	79.9	9.1	n = 110
Acreage				
over 10,000 acres	Staffs	00.0	5.4	n = 129
	Warwicks	00.0	3.6	n = 111
	Worcs	00.0	2.4	n = 84
	WR of Yorks	1.8	9.1	n = 110

Source: Bateman 1883

The distribution of estates among the four quartiles suggests that the West Riding and Staffordshire supported the highest proportions of landlords possessing enormous acreage and gigantic wealth. It is notable that in its

³⁰ Where total landholdings of owners are recorded as below 3,000 acres or gross annual rent below £3,000 per annum, Bateman does not give details of distribution of acreage and rent between counties. In one case where land is held in more than one county but gross annual rent is over £3,000 pa the relevant owner's estate is placed in the upper left quarter of Table 4. Bateman 1883, 28.

isolation Sheffield was more vulnerable to the influence of such men than was the rival city of Leeds which stood as the north-eastern bastion of a belt of textile towns stretching from Manchester.³¹ Birmingham's relative independence was aided by the propinquity of the Black Country whose affairs 'soaked up' much of the influence of Staffordshire interests such as the Dudley estate.³² Worcestershire and Warwickshire contained an aristocracy and gentry of more manageable proportions. As Lord Willoughby de Broke wrote of nineteenth century Warwickshire, "there was no great duke who owned half the county. The landowners were squires, one or two of whom happened to be also hereditary peers. There was no single estate of much more than 12,000 acres".³³ As Bateman shows, the estates of Worcestershire were even smaller.

The steep sides of Sky Edge and Hallam Ridge nicely symbolise the vast social gulf which separated Wentworth House and Wortley Hall from the Sheffield cutler's workshop.³⁴ Up until the middle of the nineteenth century very small units of industrial production were typical of Sheffield. In 1846, for example, the forgers in the cutlery and allied trades occupied 2,535 hearths and were to a great extent self-employed or semi-independent.³⁵

31 See Spring 1954; J T Ward 1966.

32 Tunsiri 1964, 66-83.

33 Verney 1924, 67; Tyack 1972, 8.

34 Wentworth House, the Fitzwilliam seat and Wortley Hall, home of the Wharnccliffe dynasty were, respectively, about eight miles north-east and north-west of Sheffield. Sheff Dir 1862, 526, 542-3.

35 Lloyd 1913, 182.

Business enterprises were numerous but, as Holland wrote,

(the) merchants and manufacturers among us are not men of large capital, exercising immense influence. They are very far from treading on the heels of the aristocracy.³⁶

The residential pattern of Sheffield reflected the importance of the Sheaf, Porter, Rivelin and Loxley in providing waterpower for the grinding wheels of the cutlers and toolmakers. These streams, converging close by the loop in the River Don which marked the centre of old Sheffield, divided the townships of the borough from each other. The six townships of Sheffield were themselves merely collections of hamlets which gradually merged in the course of urban growth. For example, Eccleshall Bierlow, west and south-west of the town centre, contained the hamlets of High Field, Broomhill, Crooks Moor, Sharrow, Button Hill, Bents Green, Banner Cross, Abbey Dale and Whiteley Wood.³⁷ The difficulties encountered in getting into Sheffield were matched by the problems of traversing it. As late as 1936, a geographer could write:

From the heart of the town roads radiate outwards, mainly along the river valleys, but a few climb the steep ridges. Thus the branch roads diverge as they leave the city, and cross roads are few, winding and steep. There is no place for circular boulevards in the town. The circular bus routes afford the suggestion of switch-back railways.³⁸

Sheffield was, in effect, a collection of closely adjacent industrial villages. An official report from 1889 comments:

³⁶ Holland 1843, 10.

³⁷ Wickham 1957, 18.

³⁸ RMR Brown 1936, 182.

'The population of Sheffield is, for so large a town, unique in its character, in fact it more closely resembles that of a village than a town, for over wide areas each person appears to be acquainted with every other, and to be interested with that other's concern'.³⁹ Rather, Sheffield was made up of a number of villages. For example in the mid nineteenth century,

the inhabitants of Upper, Middle and Lower Heeley were very clannish, and rarely associated one with the other, but kept themselves as much apart as if there were miles of space between each division.⁴⁰

The small industrial village, the large aristocratic estate and the interplay between them provided the framework for consciousness and action in South Yorkshire. Both social forms were intensely particularistic, the former built upon the strong solidarities created by common subjection to the dangers of the colliery and the grinding wheel, the latter exploiting ties of kinship and patronage in genteel society. On the side of the rural potentates the huge gulf between their world and that of the local workforce bred a tendency to regard the growth of the industrial population as a problem to be managed with an attitude of patrician disinterestedness.⁴¹ The villages and towns were not a likely source of political allies or socially acceptable persons. On the side of the industrial population two tendencies were observable. The

39 PP 1889, LXV, Report on an epidemic of small-pox at Sheffield during 1887-88, 286, cit Olsen 1973, 338.

40 Odom 1917, 48.

41 On the fourth and fifth Earls Fitzwilliam, see Mee 1972, esp 1-35.

first was an intense conservatism and parochialism, a distrust of 'outside' agencies and a belief in self-reliance. The second was a responsiveness to political, religious and other 'solutions' offering an escape from isolation and insecurity. The interplay between these two tendencies helps explain why in 1843 Holland could claim that the proportion of artisans contributing to sick clubs in Sheffield was probably 'far greater than any other manufacturing town' while at the same time the proportion of inns and beer houses per head of population was nearly eighty per cent higher than in Leeds. The great success of Methodism in South Yorkshire owed much to the contrast between its warm personal appeal and the distant authority of the Anglican Church which was so clearly allied to the aristocracy.⁴²

A radical and sometimes revolutionary political tradition persisted in this region throughout the early nineteenth century.⁴³ Within Sheffield, as will be seen, utopian politics had an anarchistic flavour. This was expressed in a desire to bring to account rogues who were mismanaging municipal and national affairs and a determination to keep power in the hands of the 'people' locally. These impulses were deeply traditional. Since at least the Civil War an ambivalent relationship had existed in English society between two kinds of solidarity, two networks of influence: between on the one hand the genteel landowning class integrated at the level of the county and

⁴² Holland 1843, 214, 259; Wickham 1957, 84-9

⁴³ Donnelly 1975a; Baxter 1976a; Baxter 1976b; Donnelly and Baxter 1975.

on the other hand the small communities of producers and traders in villages and urban neighbourhoods.⁴⁴ In and around Sheffield, the links between the regional aristocracy and the metropolis were very close while the parochial and plebian character of the industrial population was very marked. The underlying hostility between the two social worlds was the immediate stimulus for Sheffield's incorporation as a municipal borough.

Local ratepayers who feared the woeful expense of a new Corporation were frightened into it by the real threat that Lord Wharnccliffe's newly formed West Riding Constabulary would take over the task of policing the town.⁴⁵ Not until the heavy steel industry developed in Sheffield after the middle of the century did new social formations develop which swamped these hostilities by transforming the urban class structure and altering the relationship between city and county.

Men like John Brown, Mark Firth, and Charles Cammell, owners of vast new steel works in Attercliffe and Brightside to the north-east of Sheffield's city centre, played a major part in mediating the relationship between Sheffield and its aristocratic neighbours after 1850.⁴⁶ By that date Birmingham's mercantile and professional class had been performing a similar function for at least a century. The gradient of status and influence climbed in moving from city to county was far less steep than in South Yorkshire and from 1754 country gentlemen had

⁴⁴ E P Thompson 1974.

⁴⁵ A future mayor of Sheffield, the brewer, Thomas Moore, was nearly ruined financially when in 1853 the Duke of Norfolk attempted to eject him from the ducal land on which his brewery was built. This is just one illustration of the undercurrent of bad feeling. Stainton 1924, 250-1; Furness 1893, 4.

⁴⁶ See Chapter Four.

dined happily with Birmingham's leading citizens at the Bean Club. At the end of the eighteenth century its membership was described as including 'representatives of the Magnates of the County, the Gentlemen and Tradesmen of the town, and Clergy and officers from the Barracks, and the principal representative actors from the local theatre'.⁴⁷ John Money has argued that a distinctive 'Birmingham interest' was finding coherent political expression on some issues at least as early as the Warwickshire election of 1774. Birmingham's businessmen not only established their own pressure groups such as the Commercial Committee, active during the 1780s, but also exploited their connections with their neighbouring gentry and aristocracy to advance their interests in parliament.⁴⁸

In Birmingham, merchants and bankers rather than manufacturers took the leading positions in public affairs. Birmingham's earliest members of parliament included Thomas Attwood and Richard Spooner (both bankers), Joshua and William Scholefield, P H Muntz and George Dixon (all merchants). Another prominent local banker, Charles Geach, bought the Park Gate Iron Manufacturing Company at Rotherham in the early 1840s, made a fortune out of the railway boom, served as mayor for Birmingham in 1847, helped found the Institution of Mechanical Engineers (at Birmingham) in the same year, and ended his career as Member of Parliament for nearby Coventry. Through railways, Geach spread his influence both nationally and

⁴⁷ Stone 1904, 7; F C Williams 1903, 53-6.

⁴⁸ Money 1977, 24-47, 158-84; Norris 1958.

internationally. He was, for example, not only an active promoter of the Manchester, Sheffield and Lincolnshire Railway but also one of the concessionaires of the Western Railway of France.⁴⁹ Joseph Chamberlain, whose rise to political influence comes at the end of this period, was an accountant rather than a manufacturer. His brilliant financial operations helped to lay the foundations for what was to become the giant combine of Guest, Keen and Nettlefold.⁵⁰ Buccaneering bankers and bold financiers were not to be found in Sheffield. The banking enterprises of that city avoided overseas ventures and based themselves solidly upon small local businesses. After a number of bank failures in the early 1840s, financial conservatism increased further. The four local joint-stock banks had a scattering of branches in nearby villages and towns but very few in Sheffield itself before 1890. Commerce in Sheffield was a major aristocratic interest. One of the oldest banks, the Sheffield and Rotherham, was founded with the capital of a local iron-master and the Duke of Norfolk. Furthermore, Sheffield's very marketplace was controlled by the Duke, as lord of the manor, until 1899.⁵¹

In John Vincent's words,

In religion, politics, culture, wealth, there (was) almost no community of experience, no possible human solidarity, to unite the 'top ten thousand in Sheffield' with metropolitan 'good society', that is, with the world of Trollope, Thackeray, and Bagehot, with its extensions in the upper levels of Barsetshire society.⁵²

⁴⁹ Edwards 1877, 125-31, esp 128-9.

⁵⁰ WB Stephens(ed), The Victoria County History Vol 7: The City of Birmingham (henceforth VCH), 155-6.

⁵¹ Linton 1956, 168-71; Blackman 1962, 84.

⁵² Vincent 1972, 18-19.

This was not true of Birmingham. The comparison of census data in 1851 has shown that employments associated with the old professions and with literary and artistic production occupied twice as many people, as a proportion of the total population, in Birmingham as in Sheffield. In actual numbers, Birmingham was over three times as well provided and was the centre of culture and entertainment for the region. The county flocked to Birmingham's Triennial Music Festivals where they heard, for example, the first performance of Mendelssohn's Elijah in 1846. Birmingham men such as the lawyer Clement Ingleby played a leading role in the Shakespeare Tercentenary celebrations at the Warwickshire market town of Stratford-upon-Avon in 1864.⁵³

Political debate, like cultural activity, had a regional as well as a city audience, one fostered by the circulation of Birmingham's main newspapers, the Birmingham Daily Post and the Birmingham Daily Gazette.⁵⁴ Although at mid-century highly localised parochial conflicts were the staple of provincial politics, the constant movement of goods and people throughout the Midlands encouraged comparisons between particular disputes and the exploitation of specific local grievances in campaigns over general issues. The greater amount of sheer movement which occurred in and around Birmingham as compared to Sheffield is illustrated by the fact that the proportion of the population engaged in transport and

⁵³ Bunce 1858, 112-3; Edg 1883, 3, 65-8.

⁵⁴ Briggs 1949; Gammage 1972, Ch 2; D Fraser 1962.

communications was about fifty per cent greater in the former city. A commercial traveller such as George Griffith, for whom a typical day's work in the 1830s included visits to customers in Stourbridge, Wolverhampton, Bilston, Dudley and Birmingham, was able to spice his business affairs with a long-running campaign against the abuse of educational charities. The subtle interplay between economic conditions and intellectual and political currents in Birmingham's hinterland is nicely conveyed in the title of his autobiography, Going to Markets and Grammar Schools.⁵⁵

When contrasted with South Yorkshire, Birmingham and its immediate hinterland was characterised by a more complex division of labour, greater dynamic density (to borrow Durkheim's phrase), a stronger mercantile and professional element, and, instead of the gaping hiatus between county magnates and urban industrialists which existed in Sheffield, a much more balanced and open society in which no very small group of men could monopolise a resource, skill or activity.⁵⁶ Association, negotiation, argument and compromise were the stuff of politics and business in the West Midlands. Stationed on a great national crossroads within a social arena of this kind, people in and around Birmingham were especially sensitive to the flow and counterflow of ideas and the modalities of social exchange. This preoccupation was expressed in many ways: for example, in a readiness

⁵⁵ Griffiths 1870, Vol I, 91.

⁵⁶ Durkheim 1949, 257-8.

to adapt production techniques to shifts in popular taste (such as the decline in the fashion of wearing buckles), in sensitivity to design and presentation of wares, in the monetarist theories of Thomas Attwood and his followers, and in the confidence expressed by Joseph Sturge in the moral force exercised by currents of enlightened public opinion.⁵⁷ Having drawn some broad comparisons between the national and regional contexts of the two cities closer attention can now be paid to social formations at the municipal and neighbourhood levels of integration.

Industry, family, community

The skilled hardware trades of Birmingham and Sheffield had many similarities in the organisation of production and distribution but there were important differences between the two cities in the structure of power within industry. These dissimilarities in power structure were aspects of fundamental differences between Birmingham and Sheffield in the forms of bonding within and between groups and in the relative significance of the municipal and neighbourhood levels of integration.

The light trades of Sheffield were dominated throughout the period by the production of iron and steel goods, including joiners' and engineers' tools, agricultural equipment and cutlery. Typically, articles were fashioned initially by the forger on his hearth and anvil, passed on to the grinder to be smoothed and sharpened, and

⁵⁷ VCH, 101-2: Best 1940, 7-20; Checkland 1948; A Wilson 1974, 84-93.

eventually delivered to the hafter or assembler who fitted the handles. It is less easy to summarise the Birmingham trades. In 1841 the borough of Birmingham gave employment to 3,056 brass founders and moulders, 2,888 people engaged in making buttons, 514 other founders, 964 glass makers, 1,781 gun and pistol makers, 631 japaners and lacquerers, 730 platers and 1,398 jewellers, goldsmiths, silver smiths and allied workers. No single kind of employment was dominant within the total workforce of some 70,000 people. It is possible, however, to make the following generalisations.⁵⁸

Until the middle of the nineteenth century domestic industry and small-scale workshop production were common in both cities while factories were a comparative rarity. A typical figure was the 'garret master' who acted as the head craftsmen in a small work team which included a few apprentices and members of his own family. Successful garret masters were able to extend their premises, usually around their dwelling places, and employ a greater number of craftsmen. The activities of large numbers of small specialised units of production were coordinated by 'factors' who performed a wide range of intermediary functions. For example, they supplied capital and raw materials, arranged orders and organised distribution. Manufacturers on a larger scale in some cases constructed purpose-built factory premises fitted with steam-driven machinery and took over themselves many of the tasks performed by the factor. However, larger manufacturers were typically dependent upon a system of sub-contracting.

⁵⁸ Pollard 1959, 50-1; VCH, 110.

Under this system responsibility for the processes of production was in the hands of intermediaries who were themselves the direct employers of labour. The subcontractor reached an agreement with the factory owners on a price for the products and was himself responsible for paying the workmen. In times of expanded business additional contracts could be arranged with the owners of workshops and with garret masters outside the factory. Within such an industrial structure, rapid advancement was possible from the status of garret master to that of workshop owner. A successful workshop might be extended in times of enhanced trade and even replaced by a specially constructed factory employing a hundred workers or more. Movement in the opposite direction could occur with equal rapidity.⁵⁹ In 1830 John Parker was proud to claim that trade in Sheffield was 'as it ought to be, republican and not an oligarchy: it is in the town, and not in the hands of a few capitalists'. Just over a decade later, Charles Geach also commented that Birmingham's industry was not controlled by 'a few capitalists'.⁶⁰

This general picture of industrial life in the period 1830-50 may be compared with the comments of, first, a Birmingham industrialist and second, a Sheffield manufacturer in the mid 1860s:

The manufacture of Iron Wood Screws ... has, from its commencement, been carried on principally in Birmingham and the immediate neighbourhood, and now forms one of its staple industries. Its progress and the changes which have affected it, especially within the last sixteen years afford a good

59 Allen 1929, 49-64, 112-41, 151-72; Pollard 1959, 54-9; Fox 1955, 58-62; Court 1938.

60 Parker 1830, 18; DFraser 1976a, 46.

illustration of a revolution which is taking place in the principal hardware trades ... Almost all Birmingham trades have sprung from small beginnings and fifty years ago there were very few factories in the town of great size or importance. The business was carried on in some part of the dwelling house, or in small premises attached. The owner frequently worked himself, with his family and a few men; and these small manufacturers were more like the "chambermasters" of some London trades than the great mill-owners of Manchester or Leeds. Of late years, these factories have grown with extraordinary rapidity, the business has taken possession of house and garden, and the former occupant now lives out of town. Still, to this day, many of the largest works show their piece-meal origin; and the furniture of the old dwelling-house may frequently be seen in the counting-house or warehouse. The introduction of machinery and the universal employment of steam-power, has necessitated two changes: 1st the introduction of large capital into businesses which required little when hand-labour alone was used; 2nd, the construction of large mills, especially adapted to the wants of each trade. These innovations have brought with them the factory system, and it is probable that the change, which is deplored by some, and which is certainly leading to the extinction of the small manufacturers, as such, and is finding them employment as overlookers, or foremen in large establishments, is really an almost unmixed good.⁶¹

The chief branches of work carried on upon our premises are steel melting, converting and tilting, railway spring making, file making ... also saw making ... and the manufacture of small engineers' tools ... On the whole we employ more people off our premises than on them, particularly in file cutting. This is done chiefly at the houses of the workers, and it is this way that the greater part of the workers in the file trade are employed. In the Sheffield district, files are made by hand labour only. The forging, grinding and cutting could be done by machinery equally well, and at far less cost; but the jealousy of the workers on this point is so strong, that no manufacturer can venture to introduce machinery for the purpose. It would not be safe for him to do so; otherwise we could introduce machinery with great advantage The reputation, however of the Sheffield work is deservedly so great, and there are such advantages here for the manufacture of steel and steel goods, that in spite of the present impossibility of introducing machinery here, it is likely that the manufacturer will continue to be carried on here on the present system on a very large scale, at any rate for a long time.⁶²

61 Timmins 1866, 604-5.

62 CEC Sheff 1865, evid 126.

The first extract is from Joseph Chamberlain's contribution to Birmingham and the Midland Hardware District, a collection of reports on local industries produced for the British Association in 1866. The second extract is from evidence by Alfred Ibbotson contained in J.E White's report of 1865 to the Children's Employment Commission. They describe extreme examples of tendencies which were present in the two cities during the period 1830-70. In Birmingham there was a movement towards increased mechanisation and concentration of the workforce within factories in which the firm of Nettlefold and Chamberlain played a leading role by taking over several local workshops making woodscrews.⁶³ In Sheffield resistance to such a movement was powerful among the craft unions, especially those in the file trades.⁶⁴ Chamberlain's confident projection of his own industrial experience onto the whole of the hardware trades involved an exaggeration of the scale and pace of change. The factory returns of 1871 for Warwickshire distinguish between 'factories', establishments either using steam power or employing over fifty people, and 'workshops', establishments employing smaller numbers in handicraft trades. They show that factories were general in the production of iron, machines, glass and cartridges but workshops predominated in most of the gun trade and in the manufacture of files, saws, tools, buttons, gold and silver plate, jewellery and the 'miscellaneous metal trades'.

⁶³ Vance 1967, 118-9.

⁶⁴ Pollard 1959, 127-8. See Chapter Seven.

The brass-finishing trades were divided fairly evenly between factories and workshops.⁶⁵ Similarly, Ibbotson's pessimism about the mechanisation of the file trade was, as will be seen, less justified with respect to some branches of the Sheffield light trades and hardly applicable to the rapidly expanding heavy trades.

Nevertheless, Chamberlain's optimism and Ibbotson's pessimism reflected important differences in the character of the artisan communities in Birmingham and Sheffield. These differences were reflected in the activities of craft unions in the two cities. Beginning in the 1820s and continuing during the 1830s and 1840s there had been an upsurge of union agitation in Birmingham, responding to a serious threat to artisan independence and living standards.⁶⁶ Faced with falling prices after the Napoleonic Wars, many employers increased the size of establishments, introduced machinery, attacked the institution of apprenticeship and reduced wages. By 1824 a local magistrate was asserting that 'combinations exist in every branch of manufacture'.⁶⁷ Over fifty strikes were recorded during the next quarter of a century, involving a wide range of trades. Confronted with the 'logic of the market' many groups of artisans organised in trade societies to protect the traditional customs and usages of their occupations. Money alone was not at issue but a whole way of life. The old crafts, perhaps above all the gunmakers around St Mary's Church, were

⁶⁵ cit VCH, 118.

⁶⁶ Behagg 1979, 459, 466.

⁶⁷ op cit, 461.

used to dictating their own pace of work. Saint Monday was frequently invoked to extend the weekend break. Tuesday was often canonised as well. The appeal to traditional norms was complemented by participation in radical political movements. For example, many trade societies took part in agitation for the Reform Bill and the Charter. In 1845 a Central Committee of trades was set up in Birmingham under the leadership of the Chartist John Mason, president of the local boot and shoemakers society.⁶⁸

Despite these efforts, transformations within the means of production between 1830 and 1870 shifted the balance of industrial power away from skilled artisans. The tasks of organising (a largely unsuccessful) resistance and the increased scale of some industrial enterprises tended to encourage links between different trades, eventually leading to the establishment of the Birmingham Trades Council in 1866. The Council's official historian later wrote:

The declared political policy of the Trades Council was alliance with the radical wing of the Liberal Party, and this was maintained until 1885 to the point of subservience. In industrial matters the counterpart of this alliance was arbitration and conciliation. In 1869 (its Secretary) William Gilliver read a paper to the Social Science Congress suggesting that a permanent body of delegates from the Trades Council and the Chamber of Commerce should be the court of final appeal for industrial disputes. This attitude dominated Trades Council policy till the end of the century⁶⁹

Bargaining between masters and men over industrial, political and other matters within shared or at least

68 op cit 459, 470-8; D A Reid 1976; E P Thompson 1967, 72-6.

69 Corbett 1966, 37.

substantially overlapping normative orders had been facilitated by the predominance of workshop organisation in Birmingham before mid century.⁷⁰ By 1870 these processes of bargaining were to a much greater extent focused upon the municipal level of integration and took place through institutions such as the Trades Council and the Birmingham Liberal Association. Polarisation between some employers and their workforces had occurred through the introduction of relatively large mechanised factories in some industries such as glass manufacture.⁷¹ However, taking Birmingham's manufacturing population as a whole in 1871, between a few large factory owners at one extreme and their unskilled or semi-skilled labourers at the other extreme there stood a multitude of people employing their capital and skills in small and medium-sized enterprises. The municipal arena provided a forum which was not sharply polarised between rich and poor, strong and weak. It was in the interests of artisans whose control at the workplace was being undermined with the advance of mechanisation to build as strong a position as possible at the municipal level where they could adopt the traditional strategy of reminding the masters that they had obligations to fulfil within a shared moral order. Involvement in political movements alongside employers was part of this strategy.⁷²

⁷⁰ Tholfsen 1954.

⁷¹ VCH, 126-8.

⁷² See Chapter Four.

The Trades' Union Directory published in 1861 listed 42 trade unions at Birmingham. Sheffield, despite its smaller population, was credited with 60 unions. Details of regular meeting times were recorded in the directory for only seven of the Birmingham unions: two met weekly, two fortnightly and three monthly. Meeting times were listed for all sixty Sheffield unions. Half of their numbers were recorded as having weekly committee meetings (in some convenient tavern), a quarter had such meetings fortnightly and twelve unions had an official on duty daily at a fixed time. This suggests a higher degree of activity and closer communication amongst union members in Sheffield than in Birmingham. The returns for Birmingham may be incomplete but such slackness would be a further indication of the lower level of union activity in that city.⁷³ Indirect evidence of the greater capacity of the Sheffield unions to resist industrial changes of the kind which occurred in Birmingham can be seen in three areas: the adoption of steam engines, the employment of women and children, and the fate of apprenticeship.

In 1835 when Birmingham's population stood at about 135,000, 169 steam engines averaging 16 horsepower were being used. Nineteen years later when Sheffield's population was over 150,000, only 109 steam engines (with a similar average horsepower) were in use.⁷⁴ In 1862, Pawson and Brailsford's Illustrated Guide to Sheffield and Neighbourhood quoted a file-cutter's recent poem:

73 London Trades' Council 1861, 13-14, 84-87, 104.

74 VCH, 122; Sheffield Independent (henceforth SI) 15.4.1854.

77 SI 11.1.1865. col 1.

It's the wonder of wonders, is this mighty steam hammer,
What folks say it will do, it would make any one stammer;
They say it will cut files as fast as three men and a lad,
But two out of three, it's a fact, they are bad

So unite well together, by good moral means,
Don't be intimidated by these infernal machines;
Let them boast as they will-and through the press clamour,
After all, lads, there's nothing like wrist, chisel, and
hammer.⁷⁵

The attitude of these 'lads' was quite different from that of the smiths, founders and engineers of Birmingham whose efforts ensured that until the early 1850s far more patents for inventions were issued in that city than in any other place outside London. In Sheffield during the early 1840s Jelinger Symons was told by the bemused inventor of a magnetic guard and dust-receiving box that 'anything which tended to lengthen the lives of the grinders would be disliked by themselves, as tending to spoil the trade by enlarging the supply of labour'.⁷⁶

A convenient way to trace the contrasting profiles of juvenile and female employment and the fate of apprenticeship in Birmingham and Sheffield is through the reports of inspectors to the Children's Employment Commission in the early 1840s and mid 1860s. Jelinger Symons and J E White found broadly the same pattern at Sheffield in 1843 and 1865. In White's words:

Taking the manufactures of the district generally, the proportion of children to adults employed to them is small. It is in few that they are employed to any great extent under the age of 9 or 10, but from this age upwards they are employed wherever light work, and in some cases work which is not light, can be found for them ... (There) are few occupations at which females are employed to any large extent⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Pawson and Brailsford 1862, 150.

⁷⁶ VCH 123, PP 1843, XIV Children's Employment Commission Sheffield (henceforth CEC Sheff 1843) evid E10.

⁷⁷ CEC Sheff 1865, rep 2.

White's figures were imprecise but at the earlier date Symons identified about 4,000 persons under eighteen years working for nearly 900 different employers as well as nearly 900 young persons of similar age employed at about 90 grinding wheels. The vast majority were reported as being over the age of thirteen. The biggest single form of juvenile employment was in hafting table and spring knives.⁷⁸

Symons had found apprenticeship in full vigour, children being 'both apprenticed to and hired by the journeymen with whom they work, and not to manufacturers, except in some instances (In) most cases the apprentice leaves his parents, and boards and lodges with his journey-man master, who keeps, clothes and teaches him his business'. This practice was still widespread in 1865 though 'much declined, partly in consequence of the growing wish of the young for independence, and partly of the efforts of the trade societies to limit the number of apprentices allowed in each trade'.⁷⁹ In sharp contrast, R D Grainger found at Birmingham very few 'in-door' apprentices by 1843. He records local nostalgia for a passing system which was felt to have maintained standards of workmanship. He also found that '(in) Birmingham a very large number of children are employed in a great variety of manufacturing processes' and noted 'the system, which is prevalent in many branches, of substituting the labour of women for that of men'. In screw manufacture, for

78 CEC Sheff 1843, rep E1-2.

79 op cit E3; CEC 1865, rep 3.

instance, some 80-90% of the labour was female.⁸⁰ So widespread was this practice that in 1857 a local manufacturer, John Skirrow Wright, declared:

It has become one of our 'institutions', and the town of Birmingham owes its position to the ready supply of cheap labour afforded by women and girls, the suspension of whose industry, as at present carried on, would annihilate many of those trades for which Birmingham has been celebrated.⁸¹

Pinmakers and button manufacturers consumed large quantities of child labour, averaging about 8 or 9 years old. By 1865 J E White was able to record that large numbers of boys were also employed in brass foundries and that at least 2,000 children under the age of 10 were labouring for wages in Birmingham. Grainger and White both record that child labour was broadly of two kinds: first, direct employment of factory labour by employers, especially in the pin and button trades, and second, employment of juvenile helpers who were often their own children by the piece-workers themselves. Both inspectors found the second practice to be very extensive.⁸²

The inspectors' reports thus suggest that child and female labour were employed to a greater extent in Birmingham than in Sheffield. These general impressions are strengthened by three other calculations. W L Sargant, analysing the 1861 Census, provided figures which showed that in the age range from 20 years to 55 years, Birmingham had a substantial excess of women over men whereas in

80 PP 1843, XIV Children's Employment Commission, B'ham (henceforth CEC Birm 1843), rep F17-18.

81 JS Wright 1858, 538.

82 PP 1864, XXII, Children's Employment Commission B'ham (henceforth CEC Birm 1864) rep ix-x, 52-3; CEC Birm 1843 rep F18-19.

Sheffield the relationship was reversed. The census of 1871 recorded that whereas 71.4% of females aged twenty years and above in Sheffield were 'wives and others engaged in household duties', in Birmingham the figure was only 58.9%.⁸³ Finally, in a paper 'on the composition of the population of large towns' published in 1857, Thomas A Welton computed the extent to which male and female adults and young persons aged twenty years and under were engaged in manufacturers in Birmingham and Sheffield.⁸⁴ His figures may be expressed as follows:

TABLE 5: Rate of employment in manufacture per thousand by age and sex: Birmingham and Sheffield 1851

	BIRMINGHAM			SHEFFIELD	
	Male	Female		Male	Female
Over 20 years	349	83	Over 20 years	511	39
20 years and under	177	72	20 years and under	189	39

Source: Welton 1857

In other words, over half the adult males of Sheffield were employed in manufacturing occupations, a degree of commitment to this sector which was well over ten times as great as their womenfolk. In Birmingham, only just over a third of adult males were so employed, a degree of commitment a mere four times as great as adult females. Although a Birmingham adult male was less than twice as likely to be in manufacture as a male under twenty one years of age, his equivalent in Sheffield was over two and

83 Sargant 1866, 102-3; PP1873, LXXI pt 1 (henceforth 1871 Census), Tables 17 and 19. Domestic servants are otherwise recorded. The figures for Bristol and Leeds are, respectively, 50.0% and 61.7%.

84 Welton 1858.

a half times as likely to be so employed.⁸⁵

Taking all this evidence together, it may be surmised that in Birmingham earning power was more widely distributed within families than in Sheffield. Very young children might be exploited by their parents as 'helpers' at the workbench. As they became older they could go into other branches of trade and so reduce the risks of a family being dependent upon a single income or a single trade. This possibility was a result of relatively weak union control over the deployment of labour and must have taken some of the steam out of pressure for high wage rates. A committee of local medical men reported in the early 1840s;

The striking peculiarity of the manufactures of this town is the great variety and the division of labour. It rarely happens that all members of the same family work at the same trade; so that if one trade is in a depressed state, another may be in a thriving condition.⁸⁶

In Sheffield the overlap between the workplace and the household was exceptionally strong, producing exceptionally strong control by the local community over its members. The authority of the father over his young was shared with that of the journeyman over his apprentice. Women and children were to a much greater extent dependent upon adult male breadwinners than in Birmingham. Norms of masculinity within and outside the household must have been strengthened by the dominant position in local industry of the artisan controlling his labour and skills in conjunction with his fellows. As late as 1865, J E White noted that in spite of the increased use of steam-driven

⁸⁵ op cit, 416.

⁸⁶ CEC Birm 1843, evid f179.

machinery in cutlery manufacture, '(the) workers even in factories keep much of the old independence of their master, in fact are more in the position of small manufacturers themselves'⁸⁷

The statement of an anonymous edge-tool maker, taken by the Morning Chronicle in 1851, neatly summarises many of these differences between the artisan communities of Birmingham and Sheffield:

I left Sheffield to come to Birmingham about thirteen years ago, because work was slack there at the time. The strikes among the workmen are very numerous at Sheffield. In time of good trade a grinder will make three times as much at Sheffield as at Birmingham. They can make £3 a week there. A good deal of the heavy edge-tool trade has come to Birmingham and to Wolverhampton. I should think that the reason of this is, that iron and coal are cheaper here than at Sheffield, and also that the Sheffield unions are opposed to the introduction of machinery in the trade Machinery is much more extensively employed at Birmingham than at Sheffield, and the prejudice against it is so strong at Sheffield that I have known an instance of a man being obliged to leave that town because he substituted a bellows for the ordinary blow-pipe used for soldering Unions are much more general (at Sheffield) than at Birmingham. I was once obliged to leave a place in consequence of not belonging to the union of the trade in which I worked at the time; but it was not the trade to which I had been brought up, and the men took care to inform me that I was looked upon as an inter-loper. I had been out of work for some time before entering that business, but was obliged to leave it. I have seen nothing of that sort in Birmingham. There have been several attempts to form a union among the edge-tool makers in Birmingham and the neighbourhood since I have come here, but they have never succeeded. The men do not understand unions here so well as in the north, and the trade lies in a very large circle, so that the men cannot be often and readily collected together. In Sheffield I have known the children hoot a workman in the streets who did not belong to the union of his trade.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ CEC Sheff 1865, rep 2.

⁸⁸ Morning Chronicle, 20.1.1851.

Solidarities and sanctions

In Birmingham during the first two thirds of the century there were strong pressures for organisations representing skilled workers to focus more of their attention at the municipal level. Such pressures were not absent from Sheffield, as will be seen, but there was a powerful counter-pull. This was towards highly localised enclaves made up of fairly small groups of men and their families who earned their livelihood in similar ways. The workshop and public house were the centres of communal organisation and celebration. The beginning and end of apprenticeships, weddings, birthdays and Christmas were all attended with festive ceremony, as were fairs. Home brewing followed by house-to-house visiting to taste the product was a customary prelude to such feastdays. Public houses were later the scene of drinking, dancing and singing. These outpourings of a vigorous local culture were praised in the works of Joseph Mather, 'poet of the filesmiths'. He died in 1804 but the tradition persisted in strength for at least another half century.⁸⁹

The craft unions were one expression of these neighbourhood solidarities. These societies had been organised mainly during the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century in opposition to the Cutlers' Company, dominated by the larger masters, which had sought to regulate apprenticeship and entry into the local trades throughout the Sheffield area. In 1814 the main provisions of the Elizabethan Statute of Artificers were

⁸⁹ R E Leader 1905, 39-44; Armytage 1950; C O Reid 1976, 384-7.

repealed and the Cutlers' Company's powers of regulations were also abolished by a special act. In Birmingham subsequent attempts by trade societies to regulate apprenticeship and so control recruitment were widely opposed and circumvented by employers. For example, in 1826, the employers of silver plate workers successfully united in a bond of £500 each to reduce wages and destroy apprenticeship control by the newly formed Silver Plate Workers Gift Society. By contrast, unions were by and large more effectively organised and employers less so in Sheffield than in Birmingham. In effect, over much of the light trades industrial regulation shifted to a lower level after 1814, into the hands of unions who believed that 'they were the rightful heirs of the Cutlers' Company'.⁹⁰

The enclave mentality fostered by geography and residential patterns was increased by the effects of Sheffield's high degree of specialisation within the national economy. Because so much of Sheffield's manufacturing production was in a narrow range of commodities, large numbers of men were in almost direct competition with each other, exploiting similar techniques and materials. Maintaining lines of demarcation was a basic strategy for securing livelihoods. There were, for example, ten different grinders' unions in 1861: edge-tool grinders, file grinders, fender grinders, fork grinders, jobbing grinders, pen and pocket-knife grinders, saw grinders, scythe grinders, sickle makers and grinders and table-knife grinders. In 1867, Joshua Tyzack who was a

⁹⁰ Pollard 1959, 65-6; Behagg 1974, 69.

saw manufacturer, acknowledged that a 'very important' cause of disputes within his firm was 'the different unions claiming the sole making of different kinds of goods'.⁹¹ Sidney Pollard has well summarised the roots of union influence in Sheffield:

A determined and united trade society, in a branch whose members were easily assembled in one room and had the peculiar cohesion found in local specialised crafts, was difficult to resist (Experience) showed that well-organised trades did preserve high wages even during slack times, by maintaining men on the "box", thus reducing the supply of labour, and since the demand for labour appeared to be well below unity, a policy of restriction could be very favourable to the branch. Furthermore, the effect of restriction on the bargaining position of a trade was cumulative: the limitations upheld by strong unions (eg most grinders' societies) made them stronger still; the unrestrained influx of labour into badly organised trades (eg the cutlers') weakened their unions further.⁹²

The strength of neighbourhood and occupational solidarities conjoining families dependent upon a common means of earning their livelihood was expressed in the widespread toleration of physical sanctions against anyone who disobeyed the norms of the local community. A typical reason for their use was the infringement of union rules, for example on the matter of apprenticeship, and they were directed against both workmen and employers. The most usual form was 'rattening', the covert removal of the grinders' bands which connected the grindstones to the revolving shafts. More serious measures were sometimes taken. During the 1850s and 1860s there occurred an

91 London Trades' Council 1861, 85-7; PP 1867, XXXII, Sheffield Outrages Inquiry (henceforth Out Inq 1867) 348.

92 Pollard 1959, 67-9.

attempted shooting (1854), a murder (1859), gunpowder attacks (1857, 1859, 1861, 1865, 1866) and several other serious assaults on persons and property. The grinders' unions were the most deeply implicated. That such attacks and the minor rattennings were expressions of collective rather than merely personal feeling is suggested by the difficulty of tracing offenders and the failure to elicit information by offering large rewards.⁹³ In 1867 the Sheffield Independent declared:

With regard to commonplace rattening it must be admitted that it is a branch of unwritten law, and it has been the system to enforce obedience by that sort of restraint. Very little interest attaches to that part of the subject. Outsiders may represent these things as something horrible and marvellous, but to those who know the usages of the Sheffield trades, there will not appear to be anything more wonderful about them than in the executions put into force every week by the bailiffs of the County Court, except that the law of the land sanctions the one and forbids the other.⁹⁴

Within Birmingham neighbourhoods and occupations retained their distinctiveness but they merged into a city-wide network of inter-dependencies that was much more complex than in Sheffield. Artisans in Birmingham belonged to a moral order which was focused upon the city rather than the particular neighbourhood or specific occupation. Within such an order the regulation of particular relationships or tasks tended to be regarded as an expression of a set of general principles. There might be disagreement about these principles: for example, about the relative scope of the obligations and rights pertaining to private persons and public bodies. Disputes were also likely to take place about the particular application of

⁹³ Out Inq 1867, vii-xvi.

⁹⁴ SI 18.5.1867 quoted in Pollard 1959, 154.

widely accepted (though possibly ambiguous) general principles to novel tasks, relationships or situations. Such disputes were the daily bread of Birmingham Liberalism. Through their occurrence ambiguities were hammered out or glossed over, political commitments were re-charged, and opinion on the great 'strategic' questions of principle gradually given shape.⁹⁵

The population of Birmingham, including its working men, were well used to public disputes of this character between contestants for their political support. Assessment of rights and obligations and the appropriate measures of political 'restitution' were carried out by the jury of public opinion. This included non-voting craftsmen and warehousemen whose expressions of approval and disapproval weighed heavily in the minds of the shopkeepers and other property owners who enjoyed the franchise. Take the case of G F Muntz, Liberal MP for Birmingham. In 1847 Muntz refused to declare his support for William Scholefield who was the other local Liberal candidate during the General Election of that year.⁹⁶ Eliezer Edwards takes up the story: X

Matters stood thus when the meeting of non-electors was held in the Town Hall. It was a very hot afternoon, and the hall was crammed. The leaders of the Liberal party took, as usual, the right of the chairman, and filled the principal seats in front. Mr Muntz was conspicuous by his absence. The proceedings had gone on for some time, and on the name of Mr William Scholefield being proposed as a candidate, the whole audience rose enthusiastically, and the Town Hall rung with cheers, such as the Liberals of Birmingham know so well how to bestow on a Liberal favourite or a Liberal sentiment. In the midst of this demonstration, when the meeting was

95 The Town Hall was 'so constructed as to make enthusiasm infectious... the galleries and floor ~~are~~ so arranged that all the component parts of the whole meeting are in touch with one another'. Knox 1935, 187.

96 On G F Muntz, see Edwards 1877, 79-88; Flick 1975. On William Scholefield see Edg 1891, 9, 100-105.

in a state of fervid excitement, George F Muntz quietly came up the orchestra stairs, and took unobserved a seat upon a back bench, near the organ. I was within two yards of him. He wore a brown holland blouse, and had with him a paper bag, and as he placed his hat on the seat beside him, he emptied the contents of the bag into it. As he did so I saw that he had provided himself with half-a-dozen oranges.

In the course of the speeches that were made, much regret was expressed at the determination of Mr Muntz to stand aloof from the party in this election, and it was hinted that if the Conservatives should retain the seat, Mr Muntz personally would be to blame. Muntz heard it all pretty quietly, and at length, greatly to the astonishment of most who were there, who were not even aware of his being present, his stalwart figure rose, like an apparition, at the back of the gallery. Standing on a seat so as to make himself seen, he shouted out, "Mr Chairman!". The applause which greeted him was met with sober silence by Mr Scholefield's friends. He went on - I remember his very words - "I was going into the Reform Club the other day, and on the steps I met Joe Parkes: you all know Joe Parkes. Well, he said to me, 'I say, Muntz, you must coalesce with Scholefield.' I said, 'I shan't do anything of the sort; it is no part of my duty to dictate to my constituents who shall be my colleague, and I shan't do it.' 'Well,' he said, 'If you don't, I shall recommend the electors to plump against you! Well, I gave him a very short and very plain answer: I told him they might plump and be damned!" The uproar, the laughter, the shouts that ensued cannot be adequately described. In the midst of the din, Muntz coolly stooped, took a large orange from his hat, bit a piece out of it which he threw away, and then facing that mighty and excited crowd, proceeded to suck away in as unconcerned a manner as if no one were present but himself. When the noise had somewhat subsided, he commenced an elaborate defence of his conduct, and said he had been taunted with being too proud to ask for the votes of the electors. 'That's not the reason', he said; 'I knew I had done my duty as your representative, and that I deserved your votes; and I knew that I should get them without asking; but if it is any satisfaction to anybody, I take this opportunity to ask you now, collectively, to vote for me. As for your second vote, that has nothing to do with me. Choose whom you may, I shall work cheerfully with him as a colleague, and I have no fear of the result'. This little speech was altogether characteristic of the man. It showed his stubborn wilfulness, his intense egotism, his coarseness of manner, and his affectation of eccentricity. But it exhibited also the fact that

he thoroughly understood that he was liked by the bulk of the Birmingham people, and that he knew the majority of unthinking men would take his bluntness for manliness, and his defiance of the feelings and opinions of his political associates, for sturdy and commendable independence. He alienated many friends by his conduct on this occasion, but he won his election, coming in at the head of the poll.⁹⁷

By his skilful presentation of his rights and obligations vis-à-vis Scholefield and the people of Birmingham and by his assertion in this municipal arena of the principle of 'manly independence' which was central to artisan culture Muntz was an effective advocate in that 'court'. The ensuing election recorded Birmingham's assessment of the validity of his case.

Chapter Three

'THEIR BRUTAL, BLOATED, MINDLESS FACES :.....'

Class Structures and Institutional Orders in Birmingham and Sheffield 1830-70

The attempts by manufacturers to exploit the benefits of machinery in Birmingham and Sheffield were just one aspect of a multi-faceted process whereby members of middle-class establishments in business and the professions tested and sought to transform their relationships with the mass of the local population. The complicity of the latter was the goal sought in the industrial and political spheres and in the realm of 'public order and morality'. The terms upon which it was obtained were very different in the two cities. However, a simple model of 'class conflict' or 'class bargaining' would be very inadequate. As will be seen, not only were there deep divisions within middle-class and artisan establishments but the social configurations within which they sought to protect or advance their perceived interests were subject to transformations which were beyond the control of particular groups or social classes.

Class bonds, class boundaries

In 1855 a Birmingham man recalled, with a certain amount of romantic nostalgia, the old patterns of working-class work and leisure.

They lived like the inhabitants of Spain, or after the customs of the Orientals. Three or four in the morning found them at work. At noon they rested; many enjoyed their siesta; others spent their time in the workshops eating and drinking, these places often being turned into taprooms and the apprentices into pot boys; others again enjoyed themselves at marbles or in the skittle alley.

Three or four hours were thus devoted to "play"; and then came work again till eight or nine, and sometimes ten, the whole year through.¹

R E Leader recorded similar traditions in Sheffield where the 'ale pot not infrequently stood on the idle anvil, and the men gossiped and drank instead of working'.² The patron of these artisan customs was Saint Monday, a day which was habitually kept in visiting the ale house and engaging in sports such as boxing and animal fights. A popular venue was Old Park Wood, 'the original fighting ground of Sheffield'.³

From about 1840 the traditional pattern so inimical to industrial discipline, particularly in large mechanised factories, came under pressure. For example, employers, the clergy and other local professional men sponsored 'rational recreation'. In Birmingham, cheap railway excursions began in the summer of 1841. The Botanical Gardens at Edgbaston, which had been founded in 1829 under the patronage of Lord Dartmouth and Lord Calthorpe were opened in 1845 to the working classes at a penny a time on Mondays.⁴ Two years previously, the report of the Children's Employment Commission had noted that there were over two hundred brothels in the town. A 'committee of physicians and surgeons' had stated that the lack of public walks drove mechanics to the skittle alley and the ale house.⁵ However, two decades later, another witness

1 Birmingham Journal (henceforth BJ) 26.9.1855, quoted in D A Reid 1976, 77.

2 R E Leader 1905, 47.

3 Stainton 1924, 219.

4 Cannadine 1975, 732; D A Reid 1976, 83.

5 CEC Birm 1843, evid f173, f180.

declared:

I do not know ... if there is as much drinking as there was. The cheap trains and the opening of the parks, & co., have undoubtedly a tendency to diminish it.

He continued,

People ... who go to parks and such places try to appear in as good and neat a dress as they can, which is good for themselves by increasing their self-respect, and also has a good influence on their neighbours in the yards in which many of them live, by shaming them into making themselves respectable too.⁶

Rodger's Sheffield Directory of 1841 recorded that Botanical Gardens had been opened by a proprietary company five years earlier and it reported the intention of the Duke of Norfolk, 'with the liberality for which he is distinguished', to offer some fifty acres in Belle Vue 'for the use of the inhabitants of Sheffield, to be laid out in plantations, lawns, promenades, &c'. Seven years later the Church of England ran a train trip to York, the first of its kind from Sheffield.⁷

A shift of control over habits of work and leisure away from the workforce was encouraged by the Saturday half-holiday movement. This practice was being introduced by some Sheffield employers in the 1840s and became current in Birmingham after 1851, aided by the propaganda of the clergy and larger employers. In the words of a Birmingham master: '(The) half-holiday enables me still more strongly to insist on regularity, and say, "No, you have had your Saturday, and must be regular now"'.⁸

6 CEC Birm 1864, evid 119.

7 Sheff Dir 1841, 9; C O Reid 1976, 218.

8 Quoted in D A Reid 1976, 89.

National legislation in 1867 insisted upon the Saturday half-holiday for females and juveniles, both more prominent in the economy of Birmingham than in Sheffield.⁹ One reason for the undermining of traditional practices was, it has been argued, the appearance of a 'rift between artisans' dividing the supporters of Saint Monday from its opponents.¹⁰ Old 'irregular' habits were undermined by the adoption of tighter discipline and control on the part of many artisans in their pursuit of higher living standards (becoming possible by the 1850s and 1860s) and more efficient industrial bargaining. For example, Thomas Wright, a journeyman engineer, poured scorn upon 'lushingtons' and 'loafers' in the Black Country. The Secretary of the Scissors Grinders Union believed that 'half the men in Sheffield kept Saint Monday by their own folly'.¹¹ However, the parties to the 'rift' between artisans were not the same in Birmingham and Sheffield.

In Birmingham support for Saint Monday was characteristic of the declining trades such as sword-, nail-, and buckle-making and also prevailed among garret masters.¹² However, in Sheffield a vigorous defense of artisan controls over work practices attuned to long-established habits of working class life was being conducted in the 1860s by strong trade societies such as the file unions which had benefited from an extended phase of recent prosperity.¹³ By contrast, the Scissors Grinders Union

9 op cit, 101.

10 op cit, 97.

11 op cit, 98.

12 op cit, 97.

13 See Chapters Four and Seven.

had only acquired effective organisation in 1862 and it belonged to a branch of the light trades which had been among the earliest to feel the damaging effects of foreign competition.¹⁴ There is evidence that Saint Monday in Sheffield lasted longer (than in Birmingham) as a workshop based observance.¹⁵ As will be seen, in Sheffield the rift within the light trades was not between 'lushing-tons' and 'regular workmen' but between the supporters of two alternative strategies of industrial bargaining, one involving a great deal of cooperation with employers to the anticipated mutual benefit of both masters and men, the other entailing determined resistance to the dilution of the artisan community's capacity to regulate its own affairs. Both strategies required considerable discipline and organisation.¹⁶

The working people of Sheffield shared a culture which was less penetrable and manipulable from above than that of Birmingham's population. The difference was long standing. In 1791 Anglican and loyalist magistrates, including the Vicar of Aston, had encouraged a Birmingham mob to burn down houses belonging to radical supporters of Joseph Priestley, crying 'destruction to the Presbyterians, Church and King forever'.¹⁷ By contrast, in the same year Sheffield's vicar and chief magistrate had his own house destroyed by a crowd incensed at local enclosures and the

14 Pollard 1959, 76.

15 D A Reid 1976, 78.

16 See Chapter Seven.

17 VCH, 280; Money 1977, 221-8.

desecration of a graveyard in order to widen Church Street. The crowd were 'inflamed by one of Mather's fiercest diatribes' against 'the old Serpent', Rev James Wilkinson.¹⁸

In 1835 a Sheffield mob attacked the local School of Anatomy in anger at the work of the 'resurrection men'. Meanwhile, the administrators of Birmingham's School of Medicine were peacefully collecting all the paupers' corpses they required for dissection with the cooperation of the Guardians and Overseers of the Poor.¹⁹

When they are speaking of the labouring classes in the early 1840s the difference in tone between leading citizens in Birmingham and Sheffield is striking. On the one hand pained disapproval mixed with a paternalistic regard for the welfare of those needing moral regulation; on the other hand a grudging respect, tinged with anxiety, in response to the fierce independence of the artisan population, including their children. Theophilus Richards, a Birmingham manufacturer, suggested that many children in employment would benefit from being lodged in homes 'under the inspection of visiting committees and resident superintendents. The committee might consist of 6 gentlemen, 6 master manufacturers, and 6 steady respectable workmen with families'. A library could be attached to each boarding-house and occasional lectures given.²⁰ The medical men cited earlier were sympathetic in their assessment of the social causes of 'improvidence and thoughtless extravagance':

18 R E Leader 1905, 60. On Wilkinson, see Odom 1926, 56-7.

19 Donnelly 1975b, Morrison 1926, 52, 65.

20 CEC Birm 1843, evid f 170.

The improvidence of which we speak is to be traced in very many instances to extreme ignorance on the part of the wives of these people. The females are from necessity bred up from their youth in the workshops, as the earnings of the younger members contribute to the support of the family. The minds and morals of the girls become debased, and they marry totally ignorant of all those habits of domestic economy which tend to render a husband's home comfortable and happy; and this is very often the cause of the man being driven to the alehouse to seek that comfort, after his day of toil, which he looks for in vain by his own fireside. The habit of a manufacturing life once established in a woman, she continues it, and leaves her home and children to the care of a neighbour or of a hired child, sometimes only a few years older than her own children, whose services cost her probably as much as she obtains for her own labour.

This committee recommended the provision of not only public walks but also public kitchens, public baths and 'the better education of females in the arts of domestic economy'.²¹

In the evidence collected in Birmingham for the Children's Employment Commission in the 1840s, the dominant emphasis is upon deprivation and the lack of stable family life or regular employment as the root causes of the sorry state of many juveniles. Benjamin Ride, a Birmingham police superintendent, suggested that thieving by juveniles working in the hardware trades was due to the large number of young people employed, the irregularity of employment, the low rate of wages and the 'lamentable state of ignorance, moral and intellectual; the total absence of education of every sort'. He believed that 'many of the prostitutes had been driven to this kind of life by distress caused by want of employment'.²² Another police inspector

²¹ loc cit , f 180.

²² loc cit, f 172.

stated that prostitution was often due to 'the vicious habits of the parents. Sometimes from the drunkenness of the father; sometimes from the second marriage of the mother, leading to disputes and strife'. He continues:

In the low lodging-houses many boys and girls are admitted to sleep; the usual charge is 3d a night each. They change about, sometimes they sleep at one place, and sometimes at another; it is not unusual for them to sleep in barns, and outhouses, or at brickhill fires; and in the summer under hayricks &c. Some years ago a farmer living about a mile and a half from the town made a complaint of the annoyance to which he was subjected; witness went and found in a hovel about 8 couples of "little lads and wenches", the eldest of whom did not exceed 16.²³

Evidence of this kind focuses heavily upon the juvenile poor but reveals general attitudes respecting the labouring population as a whole. It is noticeable, for example, that although Birmingham had recent memories of the Chartist riots of 1839 and Sheffield of a revolutionary conspiracy the following year, anxiety about the threat of violent acts appears much more frequently in the Sheffield evidence.²⁴ The Vicar of St Mary's in Sheffield told of beer houses in which 'companies of ... youths, eight or ten in number not infrequently conspire in committing depredations, and robberies'. He believed that there had 'been a perceptible and unfavourable change in the character of the children in our Sunday-schools since the prevalence of Socialism ..'²⁵ George Mason, a police officer, also believed that young people were 'getting worse, independent of the growth of population'. He continued;

23 op cit f 173.

24 Edwards 1877, 19-36; Baxter 1976b.

25 CEC Sheff 1843, evid e3.

I think the cause is, that the system of apprenticing them, the masters paying them something per week, even if they lodge with their parents, gives them too much liberty, and makes them feel independent I remember the Chartist attack on Sheffield last winter; I am certain that a great number of very young lads were among them, some as young as fifteen. They generally act as men.²⁶

Depravity rather than deprivation, corruption rather than improvidence are the underlying themes of the Sheffield evidence collected by the Commission. The young are seen to have parental acquiescence in their wicked ways. Like his subordinate, Sheffield's superintendent of police believed;

That the system of apprenticeship, and the uncontrolled state of the children removed from their parents after their work is done, is a great cause of the juvenile depravity which prevails ... The great bulk of the men habitually spend their evenings in the beer houses, which is a great cause of the loose life of the younger branches of these families. Numbers of the apprentices are not even lodged with the journeymen who employ them, but are put out to board and lodge at houses where they are taken in, and where no control is exercised over them, and where their morals will not be improved. They are at best half-educated - numbers cannot read who say they can. Parents generally are very proud, and won't send their children to school unless they can go well dressed: but the general feeling is that they attach no importance to education. Witness is confident that the morals of children can not be so bad in Manchester and Leeds because the factory system prevents them running wild in the same manner.²⁷

Jelinger Symons concluded that 'as regards habits, hours, education and religious instruction, children are their own masters before fourteen years of age in the generality of instances'.²⁸

²⁶ loc cit e 7.

²⁷ loc cit e 7.

²⁸ loc cit rep E14.

An extreme statement of the fears of middle-class people, conscious that they had little control over the thoughts and ways of Sheffield's labouring population, came from Ebenezer Elliott, arch-opponent of monopolies:

Let any stranger, who happens to have formed a high opinion of the intelligence and morality of the workmen of Sheffield, take a walk on a Sunday morning through the Old Park Wood, or visit the lands and footpaths adjoining the town, and he will be surprised to meet group after group of boys and young men playing at pitch-penny, or fighting their bull-dogs, and insulting every decently-dressed passenger. Our Mechanics Institute has not on its list of members one physical-force Chartist; no, it is among the dog-fighters that physical-force orators, and other hirelings of monopolists, find applauders. They are the parties who, in the eve of Saint Monday, shoulder the white cravats from the causey, or extend a leg to throw down the passer-by to the disgust and astonishment of foreigners. The horrid words of the incipient sage and legislators; their ferocious gestures; their hideous laughter; their brutal, bloated mindless faces appal and amaze the stranger; and in their looks thoughtful men see a catastrophe, which is too probably destined to cast the horrors of the first French revolution utterly into the shade.²⁹

There is a significant clue in Elliott's repeated reference to the surprise which people from outside Sheffield would feel at these things. The 'problem' was not that working-class Sheffield was spectacularly disorganised and chaotic but that to a great extent it regulated itself, through institutions from which middle-class Sheffield was largely excluded, and in ways which denied Sheffield's more substantial citizens those means of eliciting deference and exercising influence which were available more readily to their counterparts in many other towns. Ironically, to belong to the 'civilised' upper region of Sheffield society was in a sense to be 'disenfranchised'.³⁰

29 loc cit evid, 313. On Elliott, see Odom 1926, 3-5.

30 'To respectable Sheffield, Leeds could appear as a kind of Utopia!' Storch 1977, 46. In 1866 about a quarter of Sheffield's electors were artisans. SI 9.1.1866; Pollard 1959 121.

Dr Arnold Knight perceived a deep communications barrier:

.... far too little is done by the middle classes to entice and allure the working classes from their vices and errors; we ought to meet their feelings in our efforts to improve them; there is much which is not reached at all by many institutions; we are too wise and philosophical in our modes of approaching and instructing them; something more must be done to meet them and adapt our efforts to their tastes.³¹

Symons unwittingly acknowledged the existence of a 'restricted code' which excluded his kind in his description of a major Sheffield institution:³²

The great bulk of the public-houses appear much more like private houses externally, at least at night, the only outside indication of their character is a painted window blind, merely coloured in a pattern, and without any letters or announcement on it. In these a large body of the workmen habitually spend their evenings.³³

In 1851 there were 359 beer shop keepers in Sheffield compared to 716 in Birmingham, representing a slightly greater provision per head of population in the latter city. However, although Sheffield's population was only six-tenths as large as Birmingham's, it gave employment to more innkeepers: 108 as opposed to 95. The census count of inn-servants (366 in Sheffield, 565 in Birmingham) suggests that such places of liquid refreshment were on average larger in Birmingham, many of them providing comforts for the 'carriage trade' whereas in Sheffield a host of cosy locals were catering for a neighbourhood clientele.³⁴

31 CEC Sheff 1843, evid e12.

32 On 'restricted codes' see Bernstein 1965.

33 CEC Sheff 1843, rep E16.

34 1851 Census.

Although by 1851 the vast majority of the urban population were not churchgoers, places of 'spiritual refreshment' provided centres of leadership and organisation which rivalled the taverns. The comparative strengths of the religious dominations in Birmingham and Sheffield was as follows:³⁵

TABLE 6: Church membership Birmingham and Sheffield 1851

	Birmingham (%)	Sheffield (%)
Church of England	47.9	30.8
Roman Catholic	6.9	10.1
Wesleyan	10.5	25.1
Other Methodist	5.0	13.6
Congregationalist	9.4	10.8
Baptist	10.9	6.0
Presbyterian	1.0	-
Unitarian	3.7	2.8
Quaker	1.2	0.6
'Isolated Congregations'	3.4	0.3

Source: Hennock 1973

Two points which emerge from these figures are, first, the stronger position of the Anglican establishment in Birmingham compared to Sheffield, and second, the dominance

³⁵ The percentages were calculated from Horace Mann's data in 1851 Religious Census as follows. Morning and evening attendances only are taken into account except in the case of Quakers where afternoon meetings took the place of evening services. 55% of the smaller figure is added to the total of the larger. Hennock 1973, 358

of Methodism in the latter city. Within Methodism, distinctions may be made between the conservative and ministerialist strand of Wesleyan Methodism, shaped by the authoritarianism of Wesley and Bunting, the more democratic strand of the Methodist New Connexion, and the more plebian tendency of Primitive Methodism.³⁶ Measured by the same methods used to produce the above figures, support within Methodism was distributed as follows;

TABLE 7: Methodism in Birmingham and Sheffield 1851

	Birmingham(%)	Sheffield(%)
Wesleyan Methodism	69.2	64.7
New Connection	9.7	14.6
Primitive Methodism	7.4	17.6
Other	13.7	3.0

Source: 1851 Religious Census

In effect, nearly a third of the membership of the major denominational grouping in Sheffield worshipped at chapels with a distinctly 'democratic' or 'plebian' flavour as opposed to the well-heeled respectability which pervaded Wesleyan Methodism. In Birmingham, Methodism could claim only a third of the support enjoyed by the Anglican Church and within Methodist ranks only one in six gathered at the chapels of the New Connection or the Primitives.³⁷ The denominational pattern just examined

³⁶ Currie 1968, esp pt 1.

³⁷ In 1850 it was noted that 'Wesleyan Methodists form a numerous and influential body in Birmingham.'. Bir Dir 1850, 11.

illustrates in a particular sphere the general point that in Birmingham the means of exercising cultural influence over the working class, from 'outside' and 'above' it (for example, through the Anglican clerical hierarchy) were more highly developed than in Sheffield. In the latter city habits of self-regulation were more fully and widely institutionalised. Again, the conclusion is not so much that Sheffield was a very much less regulated society than Birmingham as that the means of exercising control and their class location were different.

Had Sheffield's more substantial citizenry been in great fear of their lives and property in the early 1850s one might have expected a larger police force to have been in existence than was recorded. In 1852 from his office in the Town Hall the Superintendent of the Police Force commanded (in day time) an inspector, a sargeant, a clerk, twenty-eight constables and a detective force of four men. At night Sheffield was policed by an inspector, three sargeants, six patrol sargeants, seventy-three watchmen and an office-keeper.³⁸ Birmingham's force was, in proportion to that city's population size much larger. It also had a much more complex organisation. In 1850 there were three police stations, a 'section house' and a separate office for the detective force. The Chief Superintendent of Police directed the work of one chief superintendent, five inspectors, six sub-inspectors, twenty-two sargeants and 282 constables.³⁹

³⁸ Sheff Dir 1852, 28.

³⁹ Bir Dir 1850, 38.

In a paper read before the British Association in 1865, J Thackray Bunce compared the judicial statistics relating to Birmingham and other large towns, including Sheffield. He included the following table based upon the Home Office statistics relating to 1864.⁴⁰

TABLE 8: Indictable offences in various English cities
1864

	<u>Offences</u>	<u>Apprehended</u>	<u>Discharged</u>	<u>Convicted</u>	<u>Police to Pop- ulation</u>
Leeds	489	414	77	337	1 in 787
Sheffield	351	332	120	212	801
Birmingham	752	598	157	431	785
Liverpool	4326	2125	1213	912	431
Manchester	6623	1407	775	632	504
All England	51058	28734	8700	20004	906

Source: Bunce 1865

These figures should be approached with considerable caution but an interesting point which emerges is that Sheffield which had the lowest proportion of police to population among the examples listed, also had the highest rate of arrests relative to crimes reported, viz, an arrest rate of 94.6% compared to 84.7% in Leeds and 79.5% in Birmingham. The rates for Liverpool and Manchester were 49.1% and 21.2% respectively. It seems likely that in Sheffield indictable crimes would be readily reported to the police when they infringed the moral code of a

⁴⁰ Bunce 1865, 522.

significant part of the local community involved. In such circumstances apprehension of suspects would be relatively easy. When giving evidence to White on the possibility of legal regulation of child labour, two table-knife hafters were of the opinion that there were 'plenty of people here who would let it be known if the law was being broken'.⁴¹ However, 'rattening', which had the support of many unions, was a different matter. The Sheffield 'outrages' enquiry heard from a workman that 'recourse is seldom made to the police to recover property so taken away, but application is almost always made to the secretary of the union'. An employer, himself a magistrate, also commented that 'we as manufacturers had learned not to go near the bench with (trade cases)'.⁴²

In Sheffield, solicitude for the condition of public morality was mightily tempered by concern for the state of the private purse. This was true also of important sections of Birmingham society but the greater strength of the latter impulse in South Yorkshire is illustrated by the history of attempts to establish Courts of Quarter Sessions in the two cities. Birmingham successfully petitioned for such a court in 1839 and it was duly established as 'the natural complement to the Charter of Incorporation'.⁴³ Two years later Lord Wharncliffe, President of the Privy Council and a man who presumably knew his Sheffield asked for some assurance that the town would petition for a Court of Quarter Sessions (and a Recorder to go with it)

⁴¹ CEC Sheff 1865, evid 44.

⁴² Out Inq 1867, 352, 415.

⁴³ Bunce 1878, 139.

before advising the Queen to grant a Charter of Incorporation. After Sheffield had been duly incorporated the matter of the Court was half-heartedly discussed by the Town Council in 1846 (when they preferred an increase in the county bench), in 1864 (when they pleaded a lack of 'adequate cell accommodation'), in 1869 (without action), in 1873 (deciding to 'postpone the consideration for six months') and in 1874 when they set up a Special Committee to look at the issues involved. Four years later the committee was discharged without having presented a report. Finally in 1880 the Council took its courage in both hands and successfully petitioned for the Court. Justification of a kind was received in 1882 when the Borough Accountant stated that by having the Court of Quarter Sessions, the Town Council had saved over £3,500 on its rates bill. Such was Sheffield's craving for effective judicial administration.⁴⁴

The resistance of the Town Council and Sheffield's rate-payers to extending the duties and expense of official government implied a grudging tolerance of the less respectable, legitimate and public institutions through which much of the labouring population managed its own affairs. One rare instance of a limited but more positive alignment of interests was the issue of the new Poor Law. Hostility to the new 'bastilles' was expressed by middle-class Tories, some local philanthropists such as Samuel Roberts and by the trade unions.⁴⁵ In 1841 widespread

⁴⁴ Furness 1893, 3, 83, 125, 153, 185, 186, 202, 244-5, 267.

⁴⁵ Thickett 1951, 107; Stainton 1924, 271; Fletcher 1972, 11.

economic distress drove only 632 people to seek indoor relief at Sheffield. Eight years later, rather than put any of its members 'on the parish' the filesmiths union paid more than £4,000 to its members over six months. The trade societies of the edge-tool grinders, Brittania-metal smiths and file hardeners all employed their surplus labour on farms.⁴⁶

Mutual tolerance between important sections of the labouring classes and their 'betters' in Sheffield was made easier by shared assumptions expressed, for example, in the language of Methodism and a common thriftiness. However, the spirit of enthusiastic collaboration in the management and use of common institutions shown in Birmingham's Committee of Non-Electors, the Complete Suffrage Union, the Birmingham and Midland Institute and the fund-raising organisations of the Birmingham hospitals was much less weakly developed in Sheffield.⁴⁷ The Sheffield Savings Bank provides one illustration. Its first chairman was James Montgomery who had printed Samuel Roberts' attack on the State's treatment of paupers in his Sheffield Iris.⁴⁸ In 1840 G C Holland analysed the occupations of the 5,022 depositors. Prominent among them were tradesmen such as butchers (24), dressmakers (75), victuallers (26), tailors (54), grocers (15), confectioners (10), millers (22), bookkeepers (80) and blacksmiths (35) along with occupations such as men servants (153), female servants (650), labourers (201) and housekeepers (84).

⁴⁶ Walton 1968, 173; Furness 1893, 89; See also D Fraser 1976a. 78-85; Armytage 1948a, 146.

⁴⁷ On the organisation of Hospital Saturday and Hospital Sunday see JE Jones 1913; J E Jones 1909, 27, 49-50.

⁴⁸ Odom 1926, 22-26.

Holland was disappointed at the low proportion of artisan investors (relative to the numbers employed in each trade), finding the highest participation among the better-paid such as forgemen (24), edge tool makers (25), steel smelters (38), scythe makers (45) and saw makers (34). He blamed this upon 'an impression in the minds of many, that these institutions originate with Government, and are instruments in their hands for purposes not yet apparent'. In his investigation of friendly societies and sick clubs, Holland also encountered considerable 'prejudice and suspicious feeling'. He found that the principal means of distinguishing them was in terms of 'the greater or lesser respectability of the members'. Some clubs are composed exclusively of artisans, and others have a large proportion of master manufacturers, shopkeepers and persons of independent property. This is an important distinction.⁴⁹

The reluctance of artisans to associate with more substantial manufacturers and others with greater social pretensions is shown again in the history of land societies in Sheffield. The provincial movement of freehold land societies had received great stimulus from James Taylor's pioneering enterprise in Birmingham. Following the recent election of G F Muntz and William Scholefield as Liberal MPs for Birmingham extension of the franchise and political cooperation between different classes were popular causes in that city. Taylor had taken an active part in temperance and building societies in Birmingham. Described as a 'working man', he 'soon found influential supporters' in support of his double

⁴⁹ Holland 1843, 133-4, 135, 208.

object which was 'that of creating county votes and of promoting the welfare of the working classes, by stimulating them to save their money and invest it in allotments of land or in cottage-houses'. Muntz and Scholefield were both presidents of the Birmingham Freehold Society, and its members included manufacturers such as W H Blews and J S Wright.⁵⁰ The example of the Birmingham Freehold Land Society was soon followed by the establishment of similar societies in Sheffield. Significantly, the forerunners of the Sheffield societies were not exercises in inter-class cooperation as in Birmingham but independent initiatives taken by trade societies: specifically, the acquisition of farms by the edge-tool grinders and the Britannia-metal smiths mentioned above.⁵¹

So far, it has been argued that the network of working-class institutions in Sheffield was more resistant to transformation by penetration and manipulation 'from above' than its equivalent in Birmingham. More briefly, how did the network of institutions through which the more genteel and bourgeois sections of urban society manage their affairs in the 1830s respond to the establishment of the municipal corporations?⁵² Just as new strategies

50 Chapman and Bartlett 1971, esp 240-1; Beggs 1853, 339-40; G J Johnson 1865; Langford 1873, vol 2, 162; Biograph and Review 1880, 3, 251-6.

51 Gaskell 1971, 159; SI 2.2.1850. G F Muntz and W Scholefield were presidents of the Freehold Land Society in Birmingham.

52 For Joseph Parkes' role in this process see Finlayson 1973, 194-9.

of industrial management threatened Saint Monday and the pattern of life which accompanied it, so new modes of civic administration presented a challenge to a host of settled arrangements built up piecemeal over the preceding decades.

When the town councils of Birmingham and Sheffield were set up, no existing institution of any significance was actually abolished, nor willingly gave up any major powers. The councils had to shoulder their way onto the municipal stage against considerable resistance, both active and passive. The 'state of play' in Birmingham by 1849, just over a decade after incorporation, is conveyed in part by the report of Robert Rawlinson, inspector for the Central Board of Health.⁵³ Among the governing bodies of the borough he listed, apart from the municipal corporation, the Birmingham Guardians of the Poor, the Street Commissioners for Birmingham (with powers of paving, lighting, cleaning and regulating streets, markets &c, in Birmingham parish), similar Commissioners for Deritend and Bordesley, another set of Commissioners for Duddeston and Nechells, and three groups of Highway Surveyors for Deritend, Bordesley and Edgbaston respectively. He commented:

there are eight distinct and separate governing powers within the Parliamentary borough of Birmingham, and consequently eight separate sets of officers have to be paid to do the work which may be done by one efficient staff. These establishments act in opposition to each other.⁵⁴

⁵³ On the Central Board of Health see Gutchen 1961.

⁵⁴ Bunce 1878, 316-7; Gill 1948.

Apart from the aforesaid, account has to be taken of the waterworks company, the two gas companies, Queen's Hospital and the General Hospital, a long list of charities headed by the very wealthy King Edward VI Foundation (which ran the town's Grammar School), the county and borough magistrates, and the large clerical establishment which accrued to a large and long-established market town whose borough boundaries included three parishes. Rawlinson might complain about the state of the town's drains but this tangled forest of institutions offered a splendid terrain for prolonged political battle.⁵⁵

Sheffield also had its gas and water companies, a rather shorter list of charities (mostly administered by the Cutlers' Company), the General Infirmary and an endowed grammar school whose management was one of the functions of the Church Burgesses.⁵⁶ Apart from the Guardians of the Poor, the other principal bodies outside the Town Council in the late 1840s were the Town Trustees (in existence since 1297), annually-elected Highways Boards, and the Improvement Commissioners.⁵⁷ The last-named were established in 1818 and included among their number the Town Trustees themselves, the Master and Wardens of the Cutlers' Company and some eighty others. Overshadowing them all were the Fitzwilliam and Norfolk estates, especially the latter. Norfolk's ancestor had

⁵⁵ Bir Dir 1850, 61-9; Bunce 1878, 329-30.

⁵⁶ Sheff Dir 1852, 25. The Church Burgesses also provided stipends for three ministers to assist the Vicar of Sheffield. Their income in 1862 was a mere £2,200 pa. Pawson and Brailsford 1862, 29-30.

⁵⁷ op cit 28-32; R E Leader 1906; J D Leader 1897.

given the Town Trustees their original charter and his legal agent dominated the Court Leet, whose principal function was to regulate the local markets.⁵⁸

In both Birmingham and Sheffield the social composition of the town councils in their early years was heavily biased towards small businessmen and away from the established urban elite. Hennock notes that although twenty-eight of the thirty-four Street Commissioners stood as candidates only eleven of these found their way onto the Town Council in Birmingham. He shows that in 1842 large businessmen and gentlemen accounted for 14% of the membership of the Town Council in Birmingham; ten years later large businessmen and lawyers made up 20.3% of the membership. Over the same period the share of representation taken by small businessmen was 46.9% and 37.5% respectively.⁵⁹ In Sheffield forty-two councillors were elected to serve alongside fourteen aldermen, including the mayor. Only two Town Trustees - William Vickers, an iron founder (who resigned from the Council in 1845) and J W Hawksworth, merchant and manufacturer-were elected to the Town Council in 1843. Three had stood for election. William Fisher who came top of the poll in Brightside refused to serve. Five years later, Hawksworth and Henry Wilkinson, a silver plate manufacturer, were the only men serving on both bodies. In 1853 there was again an overlap of only two, John Carr (surgeon) and T R Baker (white lead manufacturer).⁶⁰ In the course of its first

58 Sheff Dir 1852, 27-30.

59 Hennock 1973, 25-7.

60 Furness 1893, 11,12,14,17,22; J D Leader 1897,486.
Furness lists occupations of council members, 63-73.

decade, the Council attracted an increasing proportion of small-scale agents, dealers and petty traders partly at the expense of manufacturers in the heavy trades (steel manufacturers, including men in the allied file, edge-tool and saw trades) and employers in the light trades such as cutlery and silver plating.

TABLE 9: Sheffield Town Council membership 1843-53

	<u>1843</u>	<u>1848</u>	<u>1853</u>
Heavy trades	9	12	9
Light trades	11	8	9
Smaller manufacturers, agents and dealers	18	24	25
Total council members	56	56	56

Source: Furness 1893 and Sheffield Directories

In spite of these very broad similarities in the composition and situation of the two councils there were some remarkable differences in the careers of the two institutions. In the case of Birmingham, the issue of incorporation arose in the context of intense competition between radical and conservative parties for municipal influence. The sponsors of incorporation were overwhelmingly radical lawyers and businessmen. Its opponents were conservatives from a similar range of occupations. At the highest level, incorporation was opposed by men such as Lord Wharncliffe, who later supported the granting of Sheffield's charter, and, closer at hand, by the Earl of

Warwick.⁶¹ In its favour were the political skills of Joseph Parkes, the Birmingham lawyer who may also have had a hand in drawing the municipal ward boundaries so that the Tories were disadvantaged.⁶² Once in being, the Birmingham Town Council was from the start fighting for its legal existence. After the Bull Ring riots of 1839 the Government took away the Council's police powers which were not restored until 1842. The Conservatives, who captured control of the Poor Law Guardians in 1840, challenged the validity of the Charter of Incorporation, and (though the lawyer, J W Whateley) the right of the Council's appointee as Coroner to exercise his powers. The County Justices of Warwickshire also disputed the Council's powers. The Overseers of the Poor resisted the borough rate in 1841. Four years later, the Street Commissioners prepared a bill (followed by another one in 1849) which would give parliamentary sanction to an extension of their own local powers.⁶³

Despite all this intense pressure, by 1851 the Birmingham Town Council had successfully sponsored an Improvement Bill against the initial opposition of 'the Street Commissioners, the Duddeston Commissioners, the Governors of the Grammar School, the Gas and Water Companies, and the representatives of other public and private interests which were supposed to be affected by the provisions of the bill'. The powers of the Street Commissioners were added to those of the Town Council

61 Bunce 1878, 96-141 esp 138-9.

62 Hennock 1973, 22; Bunce 1878, 150-1; Buckley 1929; Finlayson 1973.

63 Bunce 1878, 184-220, 221-67, (esp 223, 234, 235), 270-1, 281-2, 296-7, 332.

and the former bodies ceased to exist.⁶⁴ Following a period of relative quiet during the 1850s and early 1860s the Town Council spearheaded an attack on the exclusivity of the King Edward VI Foundation, eventually obtaining representation on its Governors. In the 1870s the Council made a successful assault on the gas and water companies, which became municipal enterprises under council control.⁶⁵

Contrast the progress of the Sheffield Town Council. Brought into being by reluctant ratepayers in order to prevent the county justices from having greater police powers over the town, the Council was largely preoccupied in its early years with expressing radical or 'progressive' attitudes while taking care not to exceed its limited powers and budget.⁶⁶ The flavour of the Council's business may be tasted in a list of some of its decisions during the late 1840s and early 1850s. In 1847 they decided not to try to purchase the Duke of Norfolk's manorial rights (May 12th) but asked him, unsuccessfully, to stop keeping game on his estate near the town (December 8th). In 1848 they encouraged the formation of a local Medical Sanitary Association (January 26th) but deprecated the centralising powers of the Public Health Bill (March 15th). They kept a weather eye on the projected local railway and canal bills 'but no cost on the Borough Fund to be incurred for that purpose' (April 12th). They also asked, successfully, for a borough commission of the peace to be

⁶⁴ op cit, 337, 342. Significantly, Joshua Toulmin Smith was counsel for the street commissioners in 1850.
op cit, 334. See below.

⁶⁵ See Chapters Seven and Ten.

⁶⁶ Furness 1893, 4.

established, supplementing the county magistrates (August 9th). The following year, the Council petitioned for parliamentary reform and the closing of the Post Office on Sundays (May 9th) and sent a deputation to the Paris Peace Congress (August 8th). They worried about the water supply in Attercliffe (September 12th) and 'ill-conducted public houses' (October 10th). They established in 1850 a scale of fees for the magistrates' clerk which was 'lower than is allowed ... in other towns' (March 13th) and petitioned for parliamentary reform, the extension of the County Court Act, reduction of stamp duties and Fox's education bill (April 10th). A sardonic smile is appropriate when reading that in 1851 they authorised the spending of £25 'for the better heating of the Council Chamber' (March 12th).⁶⁷

Their one very limited success in advancing their powers at the expense of local rivals was in applying pressure on the Church Burgesses, a body of Anglicans much weaker than the King Edward VI Foundation in Birmingham. The Council proposed in 1852 that the Burgesses' powers should be transferred to themselves. In the event the Attorney-General approved a scheme which slightly increased the proportion of the Burgesses' revenue which was to be spent upon elementary education. This occurred a year after dismal failure by the Town Council to obtain an Improvement Bill which would have considerably increased its responsibilities. Not until 1864 was such a bill obtained and the powers of the Improvement Commissioners

⁶⁷ op cit, 86, 87, 88, 90, 91, 92, 93.

and the Highways Boards vested in the Council.⁶⁸

However, the Town Trustees continued to exercise their functions and the Cutlers' Company substantially increased its influence after 1860.⁶⁹ Although Fitzwilliam gave up control over the Ecclesall manorial rights in 1866, the water company survived enormous unpopularity following the Dale Dyke dam disaster of 1864 and only yielded to municipal control in 1888. The gas company retained its independence and was vigorously expanding as late as 1924.⁷⁰

The evidence of this section suggests that the networks of working-class and middle-class institutions already established by 1830 in Sheffield were much more resistant than in Birmingham to manipulation and erosion through the activity of 'modern' institutions. The progressive undermining of spheres of artisan independence in industry at Birmingham over the whole period contrasts with the pattern in Sheffield where a relatively high degree of artisan autonomy and strength was maintained through the craft unions until there occurred (as will be seen) a relatively effective attack upon their power in the last decade of the period.⁷¹ Turning to the two municipal corporations, the Town Council in Birmingham went through three stages in its relations with (principally hostile) outside bodies. During the 1840s it was subject to intense attack; this opposition had been beaten off by 1851 and the subsequent dozen years were a period of comparative

⁶⁸ op cit, 98-9, 94, 127-8.

⁶⁹ Pollard 1959, 66.

⁷⁰ Walton 1968, 208; Hawson 1968, 7. The gas company finally passed into public ownership in 1949. Roberts 1979, 43.

⁷¹ See Chapter Seven.

quiescence; from the mid-1860s, the Town Council went onto the offensive in its turn, initially (as will be seen) taking on the King Edward VI Foundation.⁷² By contrast, during the first two decades of its existence the Sheffield Town Council and its institutional rivals maintained an uneasy truce. This was broken by occasional sorties on the part of the Council which did little to alter the status quo. Not until the mid-1860s were the powers of the Town Council significantly increased. However, the trajectory of its ambition was far lower than its counterpart in Birmingham.

Urban-industrial transformations

The institutional tendencies noticed so far will now be located within a broader analysis of urban-industrial transformations between 1830 and 1870. The most obvious alteration in the conditions of existence in both cities was the increase in population.

TABLE 10: Population growth: Birmingham and Sheffield 1801-71.

	<u>Population (000's)</u>							
	1801	1811	1821	1831	1841	1851	1861	1871
Birmingham	71	83	102	144	183	233	296	344
Sheffield	46	53	65	92	111	135	185	240
	<u>Decennial rate of population increase (%)</u>							
	1801- 1811	1811- 1821	1821- 1831	1831- 1841	1841- 1851	1851- 1861	1861- 1871	
Birmingham	16.9	22.9	41.2	27.1	27.3	27.0	16.2	
Sheffield	15.2	22.6	41.5	20.7	21.6	37.0	29.7	

Source: Mitchell and Deane 1962

⁷² See Chapter Seven.

During the first three decades of the century both cities grew at a similar rapidly increasing rate, culminating in the heroic ingestion of people during the 1820s. Subsequently, they diverged sharply. Birmingham settled down to an almost constant rate of growth for three decades, increasing in population size by just over a quarter every ten years. The decade of the 1860s witnessed a retardation of this rate of growth. Sheffield also grew steadily after 1830 but at a slower rate than Birmingham and for two decades, not three. During the 1850s Sheffield experienced a massive demographic surge which rivalled in size the earlier wave of the 1820s. The onslaught abated somewhat during the 1860s but still amounted to a rate of increase nearly double that of Birmingham during the same decade. The demographic 'gear changes' (down in the 1830s, up in the 1850s) were much sharper in Sheffield than in Birmingham. They were related to structural transformations, for example in industry and residential patterns, which inflicted sharp reverberations upon the main body of Sheffield society. In Birmingham, the effects of transformations in these spheres were to a great extent 'cushioned' within the social structure, in ways to be explored, and in any case were more readily apparent on the fringes of the city rather than within the borough itself. This latter point is suggested if we look at the rates of population increase since 1841 in the Greater Birmingham area, created in 1911 by addition of districts on the outskirts of the existing borough:

TABLE 11

Decennial rate of population increase (%)

	1841/51	1851/61	1861/71
Birmingham	27.3	27.0	16.2
Greater Birmingham	30.7	32.2	21.1
Sheffield	21.6	37.0	29.7

Source: Mitchell and Deane 1962

These figures suggest that the rate of growth was increasing, fairly steadily, in the Birmingham area during the 1840s and 1850s, but that the burden was carried disproportionately by populations outside the borough itself. In any case, the rate of demographic growth slowed down both in and around the borough of Birmingham during the 1860s, dropping to rates well below Sheffield.

Industrial and urban developments followed contrasting courses in the two cities between 1830 and 1870. Sheffield will be considered first. During the 1850s and 1860s, huge markets developed for heavy steel forgings of many kinds, especially in railway construction, shipbuilding, armaments and machine tools. Sheffield firms such as Sandersons, Jessops and Naylor, Vickers and Co., had been engaged in steel production since the late eighteenth century but the bold venture of building large new plant on the extensive flat land north-east of the town centre in Attercliffe and Brightside was first undertaken by Charles Cammell, a newcomer to the industry. In 1845 he opened the Cyclops Works on the line of the Midland

Railway going towards Brightside.⁷³ By 1862, a local guide was able to report:

Mr Cammell was followed by Messrs Spear and Jackson; by Messrs J Beet and Son (now Peace, Ward and Co), Agenoria Works; Messrs John Brown and Co; Atlas Iron, Steel and Spring Works; Messrs Thomas Firth and Sons, Norfolk Works, who carry on a large steel trade, manufacture heavy ordnance, and also send out files, edge tools, and Messrs Moses Eadon and Sons, President Works; Mr Bessemer, who carries on the manufacture of steel by his own process; Messrs Wilson, Hawksworth, Ellison and Co, Carlisle Works; Messrs Sybray, Searls and Co; and others. Indeed the advantages of the locality are so apparent, that all the new steel manufacturies are being built in this direction. The large extensions contemplated by Messrs Naylor, Vickers and Co are on land further outside the town near Brightside, and on the estates of Earl Fitzwilliam. The other manufacturies mentioned are on land belonging to the Duke of Norfolk. Some idea of the extent of the works in this locality, may be formed from the fact that, on the estates of the Duke of Norfolk alone, about 50 acres have been taken for manufacturies, and about 70 acres more for dwellings for the workpeople, while upwards of ten miles of roads have been made. These figures refer only to this one particular locality, there being other extensions within the same township of Brightside.⁷⁴

When in 1856 Bessemer told the British Association that steel could be made quickly and potentially in vast quantities by blowing cold air through liquid pig iron in a convertor, he received several applications for licenses to exploit this technique. None came from Sheffield, an indication of the strength of local conservatism.⁷⁵ Bessemer took the technique to Sheffield himself

⁷³ Erickson 1959, 141-7; Pollard 1959, 159-64; J D Scott 1963; Willis 1926; A Grant 1950.

⁷⁴ Pawson and Brailsford 1862, 125-6.

⁷⁵ Erickson 1959, 141-3.

in 1859 and repaid the initial capital outlay of his partners eighty-one times in the first fourteen years. By 1864, both John Brown and Charles Cammell had established limited companies, each with a nominal capital of £1,000,000, to exploit the Bessemer process and, subsequently, the open-hearth process invented by C W Siemens. An army of labour was needed to man these new operations. The workforce of John Brown increased from 500 in 1856 to 5,000 in 1872. Cammell's payroll numbered 3,000 in 1865.⁷⁶ The transformation wreaked upon the labour market by heavy steel production in the second half of the century is shown by the following table:⁷⁷

TABLE 12

Employment in the light and heavy trades of Sheffield 1850-91

	<u>Light Trades</u>	<u>Heavy Trades</u>
1850/1	21,350	5,200
1891	32,100	21,384

Source: Pollard 1959

The expansion of the heavy steel industry was to a considerable extent fuelled by immigrant labour and immigrant capital. During the demographic surge of the 1850s and 1860s roughly half the increase was accounted for by net immigration, although this understates the amount of actual immigration since considerable numbers were also moving away from Sheffield, particularly to the United

⁷⁶ op cit, 143-5, 162-3; Pollard 1959, 162.

⁷⁷ ibid, 331-3.

States.⁷⁸ However, the mid-1860s were also the culmination of a lengthy period during which the Sheffield light trades with their proud local traditions and dependence on local capital had expanded and dominated international markets in tools and cutlery. At a point when foreign competition was beginning to throw traditional techniques and forms of organisation in the light trades into question, the north-eastern part of Sheffield was rapidly being colonised by a modern, highly mechanised industry organised on an Olympian scale. Within the new works of Attercliffe and Brightside, with the exception of the engineers, the labour force was not strongly unionised. It was subject to the stricter managerial discipline made desirable by the technology of high volume steel-making.⁷⁹ In other words, during the 1850s and 1860s in Sheffield, two modes of capitalist production - the older one reaching and passing its peak of strength, the newer one enormously powerful but still becoming institutionalised - existed side by side. Contradictions between the two modes of production were sharply experienced in firms which combined steel production with a trade in files, saws and edge tools. One such firm was Ibbotson Bros whose spokesman, Alfred Ibbotson, complained to the Children's Employment Commission of 1865 about his men's resistance to mechanisation.⁸⁰ Another firm was Thomas Turton and Sons,

⁷⁸ op cit, 91-2; Cairncross 1949. See Chapter Four for discussion of sources of capital in Sheffield steel.

⁷⁹ Lloyd 1913, 342-5; Pollard 1959, 164-75.

⁸⁰ See Chapter Two.

under the direction of F T Mappin, which was acknowledged to be 'at the head of the file trade' and whose Sheaf Works were 'very large'.⁸¹

Contradiction and conflict in the industrial sphere was complemented by a strong centrifugal tendency in the sphere of housing. The central area of Sheffield had become very crowded by the early 1840s. Speculative house construction, much of it carried out by small builders, contributed to a movement outwards to the west, south and east. Working class back-to-back terraced housing mushroomed around the old town, for example on the Norfolk Park Estate to the east. Those families who had their own transport or who could afford to ride on the horse-buses moved further out.⁸² G C Holland wrote:

All classes, save the artisan and the needy shopkeeper, are attracted by country comfort and retirement. The attorney, -the manufacturer, -the grocer, - the draper, - the shoemaker and the tailor, fix their commanding residences on some beautiful site and adorn them with the cultivated taste of the artist ... As an illustration of the proof of one part of this statement, we may mention, that in this town there are sixty-six attorneys, and generally men of high probity and respectability, and of this number, forty-one live in the country, and generally in the most costly mansions; and of the twenty-five remaining in the town, ten have been in practice only about five years.⁸³

Over the next thirty years Upper Hallam and Eccleshall to the west and south-west benefited greatly from this tendency. In 1865, sites were advertised on Earl Fitzwilliam's estate in the Dore and Totley districts

81 Pawson and Brailsford 1862, 150-2; Linton 1956, 234; CEC Sheff 1865, evid 30.

82 Linton 1956, 234-41; Olsen 1973, 342-5.

83 Holland 1843, 51.

as being 'admirably adapted for villa residences, the air being salubrious and clear of the smoke of Sheffield'.⁸⁴ The number of inhabited houses in Dore and Totley increased by fifty per cent between 1861 and 1881.⁸⁵ They were on the south-west fringe of Sheffield, about as far away as it was possible to be from Attercliffe and Brightside in the north-east. These latter were the scene of vast new working class housing developments during the same period, much of it on Norfolk land. The population of Attercliffe, for example, rose from 4,156 in 1841 to 16,574 in 1871, an increase of over 400 per cent in thirty years.⁸⁶

In sum, not only was the localised, artisan-controlled mode of production in the light trades being challenged by the industrial organisation of the new steel works but the cantonal pattern of close-knit neighbourhood communities in 'old' Sheffield and on its rural fringes was also being eroded and diluted by the development of class-based residential segregation within the rapidly growing city. The expansion of Attercliffe and Brightside with their vast new population of immigrants recruited to serve in the heavy steel industry dramatised the close relationship between changes in the industrial and residential spheres.

Between 1830 and 1870 Birmingham's industry became more mechanised and the average size of the unit of

84 SI 4.7.1865, cited in Gaskell 1974, 257.

85 op cit, 257-8.

86 C Parsons 1978, 3.

production increased. However, at both the beginning and the end of the period the same groups of products were prominent, notably guns, buttons, brassware and jewellery.⁸⁷ Instead of developing a sharp dichotomy between two radically different modes of production orientated to very different products and markets, Birmingham's business life continued to present a wide range of variation in scale and technique of production within its staple industries. Differentiation occurred within existing industries rather than by adding new ones.⁸⁸ A comparison of entries under different types of businesses in Birmingham Directories for 1777, 1830 and 1860 yields the following comments:

Although Birmingham attracted new business appropriate to the nascent engineering age from 1830 to 1860, by number of businesses top industrial trades scarcely shifted position even by 1860. Among industries jewellers, buttonmakers, coal dealers and brassfounders were predominant, betraying only slight differences from rankings in 1777 and 1830, and thus traditional lines continued to offer opportunity to new entrepreneurs. Although eighty-three percent of the entries in the 1860 directory were absent from the 1830 directory, new categories were often simply more specialised versions of established industries. For example, in 1830 the gun industry comprised nine different types of business but expanded to thirty-five types in 1860. Among the nine, the thirty-one firms in the category of gun lock and furniture forgers and filers later broke into twenty-one gun lock makers, seven gun lock filers, five gun lock polishers and twenty-nine gun furniture manufacturers. Thus, continued growth in familiar trades prompted much dynamism among business institutions.⁸⁹

87 VCH, 125.

88 Duggan 1975.

89 op cit, 463.

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87 VCH, 125.

88 Duggan 1975.

89 op cit, 463.

The gun trade was centred in the district around St Mary's Church, north of the city centre. Localisation was also a feature of the jewellery trade which expanded greatly and developed a much more complex division of labour in the course of the period. As producers sought larger premises, the centre of the trade shifted from the Newhall Estate around St Paul's Church northwards beyond Great Hampton Street. Both trades were subject to the gradually-increasing impact of mechanisation. In 1854, at the time of the Crimean War, machinery was introduced on a large scale into the gun trade through the government factory built at Enfield. Eight years later the Birmingham Small Arms Company established works on twenty-six acres of land near the canal and railway at Small Heath, south-east of the city. A decade afterwards, Witton to the north-east of Birmingham had become the site of a large cartridge works. However, as late as 1866 J D Goodman could write that '(till) within the last few years, (gun) locks were entirely the production of hand labour'. Nevertheless, he continued, '(at) the present time the steam hammer and stamp are superseding the forge, and milling machinery is doing much of the filer's work'. In the jewellery trade, expansion occurred largely through the proliferation of small concerns, many set up by men who had originally been apprentices or workmen. It was reported in 1866 that there were 'few large manufactories' although such establishments were being encouraged by the increasing use of dies and machinery.⁹⁰

90 Wise 1950,215; Timmins 1866,390,403,454-6; Vance 1967,113.

Mechanisation rather than skilled handicraft work was the dominant feature of the highly-populated button and steel-pen trades, the latter being a new industry in 1830. Both trades had an indirect but strong symbiotic relationship with the gun and jewellery trades. Of the 6,000 workers in the button trade, two-thirds were women and children in 1866. They were drawn heavily from working-class families living in the traditional gun and jewellery quarters which formed a useful reservoir of cheap labour. Although it employed a great number of workers, there were few large factories in the button trade and many small shops and outworkers. By contrast, in 1866 the steel-pen trade was employing about 2,400 workers (of whom 360 were men) in only twelve establishments. A total of 330 horsepower was being applied by that date, indicating easier working conditions than the button-makers' sweatshops. It is significant that the leading steel-pen manufacturers, Joseph Gillot and Josiah Mason should have located their works in the jewellery quarter and the gun district respectively.⁹¹

The existence of the button and steel-pen industries, both dependent upon female and child labour, softened the contrast between skilled handicraft work in small shops in the jewellery and gunmaking quarters, and the highly mechanised factory production which was developing in, for example, the brass trade and the making of iron woodscrews. Joseph Chamberlain's description of the spread of factory production in the last-named industry was quoted in Chapter Three. By 1850, screw production was

91 Timmins 1866, 443, 635; Vance 1967, 113, 116

spread among some 37 manufacturers employing many women as machine minders. However, over the next decade and a half J S Nettlefold in association with Joseph Chamberlain and his father introduced American automatic screw-making machines, set up a large factory at Smethwick and increased their rate of manufacture until this firm was responsible for about 70% of local screw production. The change in technology and the shift of location to the outskirts of the city were accompanied by an increased dependence upon male mechanics rather than female machine minders.⁹²

Between 1831 and 1861 employment in the brass trades increased by nearly five-fold. Male workers were traditionally predominant and only about a quarter of the labour force were women and girls. As the industry expanded new plants were built in Moseley, Islington and Bordesley towards the south, south-west and south-east of the city. Housing grew up around the brass works creating new working-class areas.⁹³

Factory construction outside the built-up city centre towards the south and, a little later, the north became an important movement in the 1860s but it did not produce such a radical or swift transformation of the urban social environment as the expansion of heavy steel production in Attercliffe and Brightside; nor was it focused upon one industry and a clearly defined set of neighbourhoods. Factory construction outside Birmingham's built-up city centre had been occurring as early as the 1840s, when Arthur Albright

⁹² Timmins 1866, 608; Vance 1967, 119.

⁹³ op cit, 123.

began making phosphorous by the Worcestershire Canal at Selly Oak. Even further back, Matthew Boulton's Brass Foundry at Soho to the north-west of the city had been employing over 800 workers in 1770.⁹⁴

The building of new housing for factory workers as the city's industry developed meant that residential segregation by class became increasingly evident in Birmingham as in Sheffield during this period. For example, Ladywood to the west of Birmingham's city centre was a new working-class district which grew rapidly. Its population was 8,787 in 1841, rising to 42,774 by 1871, an increase of over 500 per cent.⁹⁵ However, there were four major differences between the structural contexts within which these processes occurred in the two cities. First, in Birmingham, unlike Sheffield, increasing residential segregation by class did not coincide with the emergence of a giant new industrial sector which divided the city by challenging the influence and assumptions of an independent and well-entrenched artisanry. The second difference is indicated by the fact that immediately adjacent to Ladywood was the immensely salubrious suburb of Edgbaston, owned and developed by the Calthorpe family as a leafy middle-class neighbourhood with low density housing. Sheffield had no equivalent of 'Birmingham's Belgravia', in close proximity both to the local working class and to the city centre which was approximately a mile from Edgbaston.⁹⁶ When the

⁹⁴ VCH, 94-5, 129.

⁹⁵ op cit, 14.

⁹⁶ Cannadine 1975.

Duke of Norfolk had essayed a similar development at Alsop Fields in the late eighteenth century it had failed to prosper.⁹⁷ Sheffield's wealthiest and most prestigious citizens took flight to the western slopes while Birmingham continued to offer an acceptable sojourn in the city's midst. In 1881 the first issue of Edgbastonia, almost the house journal of Birmingham's civic elite, described this suburb as 'the favourite place of residence for the professional man, merchants and traders of the busy town which it adjoins with a population more wealthy than those of other suburbs'.⁹⁸

TABLE 13: Occupational distribution: Birmingham and Sheffield 1851, 1871

	<u>Number occupied per thousand inhabitants</u> <u>(aged twenty years and over)</u>			
	<u>BIRMINGHAM</u>		<u>SHEFFIELD</u>	
	<u>1851</u>	<u>1871</u>	<u>1851</u>	<u>1871</u>
1 Engineering, Toolmaking, Metalworking	206.4	199.4	258.7	264.2
2 Professional, Literary, Artistic	28.1	27.3	19.6	22.2
3 Mercantile	13.6	18.0	9.9	11.7
4 Transport and Communications	29.2	37.2	17.0	27.1
5 Domestic Servants	45.7	42.1	32.7	34.4
6 General and Factory Labourers	28.3	27.2	24.0	34.1
7 Persons of Independent Means	7.7	6.7	7.9	9.2

Source: 1851 Census, 1871 Census

97 Olsen 1973, 340-1.

98 cit Cannadine 1980, 81.

The third difference between the cities is suggested by the comparison of inhabitants' occupations in 1851 and 1871 (See Table 13).⁹⁹ Taken together the proportional increase in domestic servants, labourers and persons of independent means in Sheffield compared to a proportional decrease in Birmingham implies a tendency towards increasing polarisation in status differences in Sheffield and decreasing polarisation in Birmingham. This impression is strengthened by the proportional rise of about one third in persons occupied in mercantile activity at Birmingham compared to a proportional rise of only about one fifth in Sheffield. As a result, Sheffield has a smaller proportion engaged in this sphere in 1871 than Birmingham could boast twenty years earlier. Since mercantile occupations were the heart land of the new white-collar lower middle class, these contrasting patterns of growth suggest that Birmingham had a much more substantial wedge of warehouse clerks, office workers, bank officials and so on than Sheffield. Members of these occupations, respectable but not wealthy, filled out the middle ranges of the urban status hierarchy and so blurred the distinction between rich and poor, strong and weak, master and man.

Finally there were very great differences between Birmingham and Sheffield in the development of their respective city centres. At the time of its incorporation in 1838, the town of Birmingham was largely restricted to

⁹⁹ 1851 categories constructed as in Table 2. 1871 categories as follows: 1=10, 6-10 and 15, 8-14; 2=3, 1-9; 3=6,1; 4=7,1-6; 5=domestic servant (general), coachman, groom, housekeeper, cook, housemaid, nurse; 6=general labourer, factory labourer, assistant shopman, assistant shopwoman; 7=17,1

the eastern half of the parish of Birmingham. During the next three decades, outward expansion coincided with a vigorous restructuring of the old town, transforming it into the nucleus of a large city. The functional segregation of public administration and trading activities had begun in 1834 when the Town Hall was opened about half a mile west of the Bull Ring which was a major shopping and market place. The Street Commissioners who managed much of Birmingham's civic business until 1851 had their Public Office in the Bull Ring. However, the land around the Town Hall became the main civic centre and was gradually occupied by public buildings such as the Council House (opened 1879). Meanwhile the city's markets became increasingly concentrated in the area adjacent to the Bull Ring. The Street Commissioners had leased the market rights from the Lord of the Manor in 1806, later acquiring them outright. In 1834 a covered Market Hall was opened in the Bull Ring complementing the new Town Hall to the west. The wholesale slum clearance entailed in the construction of New Street and Snow Hill railway stations opened the way for the development of Colmore Row, New Street and the land in between as commercial and shopping centres.¹⁰⁰

In sharp contrast, throughout this period Sheffield was characterised by a very low degree of functional segregation in the city centre. Lacking a bustling hinterland and being highly specialised industrially, the impulse towards developing a distinct commercial centre was very weak. Not Council Hall (seat of Sheffield's town council)

100 VCH, 10; Wise 1950, 216-20.

but Cutlers' Hall and the Corn Exchange were the major centres of influence within municipal life. By 1860 the Cutlers' Company had been reformed to make it representative of all local steel-making and steel-using firms. The third Cutlers' Hall had been built in 1832 on the existing site in Church Street, a few hundred yards from the Corn Exchange just off Sheaf Bridge. From the Ellisons' office in the Corn Exchange the Norfolk interest cast its influence over the development of the adjacent market facilities, prohibiting their expansion into the suburb of Ecclesall early in the century, developing them after mid-century in order to exploit Sheffield's potential as a regional distributive centre for foodstuffs. Between Cutlers' Hall and the Corn Exchange and in the shadow of these two heavy-weights lurked the Town Council housed in its makeshift accommodation, the old Assembly Rooms on Norfolk Street.¹⁰¹ No imposing colony of public buildings magnified its importance in the manner that Victoria Square announced the crescent glory of Birmingham Corporation.

Elements of 'modern' urban industrial capitalism, such as the widespread use of machinery in industrial production, the establishment of large factories and the appearance of single-class suburbs, were coming into existence in both cities, especially after 1850. However, not only were these elements related to each other in different ways in Birmingham and Sheffield, but they were associated with dissimilar tendencies in occupational recruitment,

101 Linton 1956, 238; Blackman 1962, 85, 93; Pawson and Brailsford 1862, 63.

especially in the new lower middle class and working class, and in the topology of the city centres. These differences were in part due to the massive impact in Sheffield of the rapid establishment of a heavy steel industry. However, the nature of this impact was a consequence of the character of the urban and regional social structure within which it was planted. In the previous chapter these structures were compared in Birmingham and Sheffield with respect to the forms of social differentiation and bonding within networks of human interdependence. It was seen that Birmingham exhibited a more highly differentiated structure encompassing a wider range of occupations. It was also seen that the municipal level of integration was increasing in importance as a focus of solidarity and influence for social groups and as the site of institutional activity at the expense of both the neighbourhood and the county. By contrast, Sheffield offered a cantonal pattern of neighbourhood solidarities. The institutions and solidarities of two foci of the older capitalist order, the aristocratic landed estate and the parochial sphere of the town-dwelling artisanry and petty bourgeoisie, were articulated in different ways in Birmingham and Sheffield. One manifestation of these differences was the respective situations of wealthier middle-class people, members of the big bourgeoisie in the two cities: the larger manufacturers and merchants, doctors, lawyers, ministers, clergy and leisured gentlemen.¹⁰²

102 cf J Foster 1974, 161-4.

In Birmingham, municipal life revolved around the alliances and disputes of the people mentioned previously. As will be seen, some of them reached out into the county for wider social and political support; others found allies within the ranks of the city's skilled craftsmen, shopkeepers, and commercial clerks. In Sheffield the position was reversed. The great landed estates, with tentacles reaching deep into urban life, and the neighbourhood communities of grinders, forgers, small stores and beershops constituted the framework of class relationships and political life. Sheffield's larger businessmen and urban professionals were full members of neither the aristocratic networks nor the artisan solidarities; they were marginal to both. In both cities, middle-class men and women were connected through family ties and their joint participation in voluntary associations and public bodies. They were also divided and set against each other through their distinct occupational, ideological and economic commitments. The dynamic relationship between these two tendencies worked itself out in different ways in the two cities between 1830 and 1870. Various aspects of these processes will be examined in the course of the next few chapters, first with respect to the conduct of politics (though paying attention to the religious and industrial spheres), and subsequently with respect to formal education. However, the considerable divergence between the directions in which development was tending in Birmingham and Sheffield can be shown rather dramatically by contrasting the ideas of Isaac Ironside and

George Dawson.¹⁰³

Ironside and Dawson

In 1846 Isaac Ironside became the chief spokesman of Sheffield's Chartists (or Democrats, as they called themselves). The following year George Dawson became minister at the Church of the Saviour in Birmingham. Each man's ideas acquired considerable prominence in his own city during the late 1840s and 1850s, a prominence which flowed in each case from the congruence between the message preached and existing tendencies within the urban social structure.

Ironside had been born in 1808 at Masbrough, near Rotherham, a major centre of Dissent and when his family moved into Sheffield he attended the Congregational chapel in Queen Street.¹⁰⁴ He acquired a deep conviction that by giving ordinary people knowledge through education they would become truly enfranchised, politically and morally. Above all, education should occur through direct involvement in public affairs at the level of the neighbourhood. In the early 1850s, when his influence was at its height, he wrote:

Local and self-government cherishes and develops every moral and intellectual faculty and gives each of them in every man full scope for action; it humanises and elevates and kindles every kindly charity.¹⁰⁵

103 On Ironside see Salt 1960a; Salt 1960b; Salt 1967; Salt 1968; Salt 1971a; Salt 1971b; On Dawson see Hennock 1973, 63-79; R W Dale 1877; W W Wilson 1905; J M G Owen 1902, esp Ch 3; Driver 1948, 52-3.

104 Salt 1971b, 183-4.

105 op cit, 201.

Ironside was a disciple of Joshua Toulmin Smith whom he tried, unsuccessfully, to promote as MP for Sheffield in 1852.¹⁰⁶ Toulmin Smith's ideas were outlined in his book Local Self-Government and Centralization which had been published the previous year. He abhorred 'centralization' which he described as 'that system of Government under which the smallest number of minds, and those knowing the least, and having the fewest opportunities of knowing it, about the special matter in hand, and having the smallest interest in its well-working, have the management of it, or control over it'. The contemporary tendency to centralization was expressed in such measures as the Sturges Bourne Act of 1818 which gave larger property owners multiple votes in vestry elections, the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 which created the Poor Law Boards, the Public Health Act of 1850 which established a Central Board of Health, and state intervention in the provision of education. Toulmin Smith proposed a return to what he saw as the old English tradition of 'local self-government': 'that system of Government under which the greatest number of minds, knowing the most, and having the fullest opportunities of knowing it, about the special matter in hand, and having the greatest interest in its well-working have the management of it, or control over it'. The appropriate model he argued, was the Anglo-Saxon 'folk note', a regular meeting of local inhabitants at which attendance was compulsory. At such meetings 'all and any subjects can, at any time, be brought under discussion by any persons; are fully discussed; and - having been

106 Salt 1971a, 39-40, 45-6.

discussed - the result of that discussion is carried out by an organised and regular machinery'.¹⁰⁷

Between 1846 and 1849, successes in municipal elections gave Ironside's party twenty-two out of fifty-six seats on the Town Council. During the early 1850s, Ironside sought to take power back, as he saw it, to the people. He promoted the 'science of direct legislation' by instituting 'ward-motes' in Nether Hallam, Ecclesall and the wards of St Philip's and St George's. In these little local parliaments citizens were encouraged to discuss matters as varied as the state of the drains and the status of the new regime of Louis Napoleon. According to Ironside, 'the decisions of a properly convened vestry for the common good would hold against King, Lords and Commons '. Acting upon the 'authority' of ward meetings he engineered the election of seven 'people's aldermen', laid a set of deep drains in central Sheffield, mounted an onslaught upon the directors of the Midland Railway and established for a brief period a Sheffield Consumers' Gas Company.¹⁰⁸ That such an extraordinary series of events could occur is some indication of the relative strength of the neighbourhood as a focus of solidarity and a potential political base in Sheffield.

It is revealing to compare Ironside with a Birmingham ideologue who achieved a similar degree of local fame during the same period. George Dawson, who drew inspiration from transcendental philosophy, attracted a large and faithful congregation of Birmingham's leading citizens

¹⁰⁷ J T Smith 1851, 12, 198, 205, 207, 217.

¹⁰⁸ Salt 1971a, 40-52. The quotation is on page 41.

to the Church of the Saviour. His sermons and prayers acquired national renown. Like Ironside his primary concern was the education of the local community. The architecture of his church was modelled on a lecture theatre in the University of London. However, the focus of his preaching was not the parish but the city as a whole. Municipal affairs, he argued, should be approached with the sense of duty and altruism appropriate for the family itself. The cultivation of personal grace, so characteristic of Evangelism, should be extended to a practical concern with public business. Men and women should embrace an ever-widening sphere of responsibility, reaching out from the home to the city and, still further, to national and international affairs. It was Dawson who invited the Hungarian patriot, Kossuth, to Birmingham in 1851 and sat on the box of the carriage while Charles Geach rode inside.¹⁰⁹ However, he repeatedly told his audiences that their immediate work lay in the city of Birmingham itself. Writing soon after Dawson's death in 1876, R W Dale recalled this preoccupation:

For many years - as long indeed as I can remember - he maintained, though for some time without much effect, the vital importance of securing for municipal offices the wisest, the most upright, and the most able men in the town. He strengthened his teaching by his example. He let men see that in his case intellectual culture and literary enthusiasm did not make a man too fastidious to fight for a good candidate in a municipal contest; and that, while he was interested in European revolutions, he was resolved to do his best to get a good town council for Birmingham.¹¹⁰

Unlike Ironside, Dawson wished to see the powers of

109 R W Dale 1877, 47-8, 52-3; Hennock 1973, 66, 74, 76-9; Langford 1873, 393-4, 402 ff; G M G Owen 1902, 23-5; A W W Dale 1898, 131.

110 R W Dale 1877, 46.

the town council increased, not diminished. As Hennock has shown, Dawson and other prominent members of his church such as E C Osborne, Robert Wright, and William Harris campaigned vigorously for the local adoption of the Public Libraries Act, the Birmingham Improvement Act of 1861 and the discrediting of the petty-bourgeois regime which ran municipal affairs from the mid 1850s to the late 1860s.¹¹¹ The philosophy of Dawson was given its most memorable expression at the opening of Birmingham's Reference Library in 1866. That library, he declared, represented

the first fruits of a clear understanding that a great town exists to discharge towards the people of that town the duties that a great nation exists to discharge towards the people of that nation; that a great town is a solemn organism through which should flow, and in which should be shaped all the highest, loftiest, and truest ends of man's intellectual and moral nature.¹¹²

The organic analogy is clear. In Dawson's eyes, public institutions of ever-advancing scope and complexity offered increasing opportunities for the exercise of men's duties and obligations towards one another. By contrast, Ironside perceived such institutions as a massive and alien imposition which increasingly frustrated the capacity of men to exercise their right to have their interests as members of local communities directly and fully represented. Dawson's ideas assumed a highly differentiated society within which there existed a broad consensus over means and ends. It offered a vast executive function to a civic elite. Ironside's ideal assumed a cantonal arrangement of small neighbourhood communities, each able to satisfy its major

¹¹¹ Hennock 1973, 76-9.

¹¹² A W W Dale 1898, 101.

wants within its little cosmos. It minimised the distinction between the representative and executive tasks and abhorred elites of any kind. Dawson lived to see his vision acquire substance, in part at least. The ghost of Ironside, a man doomed to disappointment during his lifetime, may have taken some cold comfort from the radical programme of the Sheffield Workers' Committee in 1917.¹¹³

¹¹³ See Chapter Ten.

Chapter Four

FROM CONFLICT TO EQUIPOISE

Political, Industrial and Religious Conflict in Birmingham
and Sheffield 1830-64

Within South Yorkshire and the West Midlands the development of large manufacturing cities was associated with decisive shifts in the equilibrium of social, economic and political power during the period from 1830 to 1870. However, the dominant tendencies were different in the two regions. In the West Midlands the shift was a lateral one, away from the county hierarchies of Staffordshire, Warwickshire and Worcestershire and towards the municipal regimes of the cities, especially Birmingham. In Sheffield the disposition of power and initiative shifted away from the neighbourhood level of integration and towards the national level.

The manifestations of these processes in the political, religious, and industrial spheres will be discussed in the course of this chapter which is divided into three parts. In the first part, the structure and political dispositions of Sheffield's municipal establishments during the 1830s and 1840s are described. During this period they confronted industrial, religious and political challenges to their authority (and indeed to all centralising authority) from movements based at the neighbourhood level. The dynamic interplay between municipal and neighbourhood establishments was increasingly superseded after mid-century by the development of new social formations associated with the heavy steel industry which was to a much greater extent oriented to regional and national levels of integration. In the second part it is argued that in both Sheffield and Birmingham the period between about 1854 and 1864 may be

understood as an 'age of equipoise' during which contrary social tendencies were in approximate balance. Four axes of social differentiation and conflict are identified in terms of which the two cities are distinguished. In the third part, the sharpening confrontation between a rurally-oriented Anglican establishment and a predominantly Dissenting urban-oriented establishment in Birmingham is analysed. During the 'age of equipoise' the interplay between these establishments produced a relatively inactive town council regime whose torpor was to throw into sharp relief the energetic municipal enterprise of Joseph Chamberlain at a later date.

Sheffield

During the first two decades of the period 1830-70 Sheffield's municipal affairs, as opposed to the neighbourhood concerns which preoccupied the majority of its inhabitants, were largely managed by members of two establishments. One, Tory and Anglican (or Wesleyan), was broadly satisfied with the distribution of power and prestige in pre 1832 England. The other, more liberal and including both Anglicans and Dissenters, was prepared to respond more positively to demands for 'reform' in the interests of the 'people'.¹ Up until the 1850s the latter group had the political and social edge within Sheffield, being represented by families such as the Rawsons of Wardsend, long-established in business, and the Parkers of Woodthorpe, a legal and banking family.² Tory activists were to be

1 Useful background material on the political development of early nineteenth-century Sheffield may be found in: Fletcher 1972; Thickett 1951; Thickett and Crawshaw 1954; Walton 1968; Pollard 1959; Armytage 1951.

2 On the Rawson family see Stainton 1924, 343-4. On the Parker family see Odom 1926, 232.

found among the local Anglican clergy, the Wesleyan ministry, among the Church Burgesses and in the commanding heights of the Cutlers' Company. The Ellins, knife manufacturers, and members of the Creswick and Younge families (both in silver-plating) were notable local Tories. Their political weakness is shown by the fact that the local Conservative candidate polled only 665 out of 4,827 votes during the 1837 General Election.³

Both establishments tended to look to rural society for leadership. The county bench of magistrates was a point of contact between city and shire. In 1841 the three leading families were represented on the bench by the Lords Fitzwilliam, Wharncliffe and Howard and also the Hon Jno Stuart Wortley. Hugh Parker was there, along with W J Bagshaw. The latter two men were among the proprietors and trustees of the Tontine Inn, the centre of pre-Reform Bill politics.⁴ Significantly, the Anglican clergy upon the bench were not from the town. The Church of England in Sheffield offered fewer pickings to clergymen hoping to live in style than did Birmingham. While the latter city was intersected by three parishes and offered a fair number of reasonably attractive livings Sheffield consisted of a large single parish which was divided in 1846 into a vicarage district and twenty-four perpetual curacies. This measure reduced the vicar's income to about £500 per annum compared to £1048 that John Cale Miller was drawing in at St Martin's

3 Wickham 1957, 104; Stainton 1924, 339; Thickett 1951, 78; Wallis 1957, 61, 353-4, 356; Fletcher 1972, 10; Furness 1893, 509.

4 Sheff Dir 1841, 8; Stainton 1924, 66-84. Borough magistrates were first appointed in 1848. Furness 1893, 88.

in Birmingham. Miller's colleagues at the churches of St George, St Thomas, St Mary and St Bartholomew were all pocketing stipends of £500 or over. As has been seen, under a third of Sheffield's worshippers were Anglican compared to nearly half in Birmingham. The relative weakness of the Church's authority in Sheffield was manifest in the very swift settlement of the issue of church rates. Sheffield's Dissenters had won the right to avoid these payments as early as 1818 but Birmingham was still divided by the question two decades later. Parliamentary representation in the two decades after the Reform Bill of 1832 also reflected the local disposition of political interests. Sheffield sent to Westminster one moderate reformer (John Parker) drawn from the professional and business classes and one radical (from 1849 J A Roebuck) who was popular among the artisans.⁵

The Town Trustees provided a base for the more liberal and reforming establishment. Thomas Asline Ward, as Town Collector, suggested that G C Holland carry out the survey published in 1843 under the title Vital Statistics of Sheffield. Ward, a Unitarian cutlery merchant, worked closely with three Anglicans (James Montgomery, journalist and poet, Samuel Roberts, silver-plater and Rowland Hodgson, gentleman) in a variety of philanthropic causes encompassing plantation slaves, chimney sweeps, aged females and the poor.⁶

5 Sheff Dir 1852, 13-18; Bir Dir 1850, 3-8; Wickham 1957, 71-2; Mole 1961, 114-98; Furness 1893, 509-11. On J A Roebuck see Odom 1926, 234; Stainton 1924, 46-50; R E Leader 1897.

6 On Ward see Jennet 1954; Inkster 1973, 109-10, 116; Odom 1926, 176-8; Stainton 1924, 234-5. On Holland see J D Leader and S Snell 1897, 102-3; Odom 1926, 121-3; Stainton 1924, 227-8; Cohen 1950. On Montgomery see Odom 1926, 22-6; Holland and Everett 1854-6. On Hodgson see Odom 1926, 87-8.

They have been described as a 'mild and ladylike set, with their tea-parties, their verse-writing, their respectable domesticity'.⁷ Ward had his finger in many pies. Somehow, in the gaps between philanthropy and money-making he squeezed politics. His chief allies amongst local Liberals were a Quaker banker, two lawyers (one Congregationalist, one Unitarian), a Unitarian merchant, two more Congregationalists (a stove grate manufacturer and a newspaper proprietor) and an Anglican colliery owner.⁸

The relative weakness of Tory and Anglican interests within Sheffield's urban population discouraged formality and continuity in the organisation of Liberal and reforming politics. Also, the overlapping responsibilities and jurisdictions of the magistrates, Town Trustees, Church Burgesses, Improvement Commissioners and Highways Boards encouraged a spirit of compromise which was fostered by the mediation of legal agents such as James Wheat who not only was a Trustee of the Tontine Inn but also served as clerk to both the Town Trustees and the Church of the Burgesses.⁹ Furthermore, Sheffield's leading Liberals had much more in common socially with their Tory 'opponents' than with the petty bourgeois and working class leaders who were to an increasing extent attempting to seize the initiative from them.

7 Walton 1968, 159.

8 Respectively: Edward Smith (R E Leader 1875, 322-25), J W Pye-Smith (Stainton 1924, 301-2), Edward Bramley (Fletcher 1972, 49), William Fisher (Odom 1926, 82-3); Henry Hoole (Stainton 1924, 296); Robert Leader (Stainton 1924, 265-6; Odom 1926, 14-16) and Thomas Dunn (Stainton 1924, 233-4).

9 Vincent 1972, 127; Stainton 1924, 81; Odom 1926, 146.

This challenge from below had industrial, religious and political expressions and threatened Tory and Liberal establishments alike.

Before the 1850s (and, in all but the first respect, after the 1850s also) Sheffield lacked large manufacturing enterprises, a powerful Anglican hierarchy, a substantial professional and mercantile establishment and well-developed public bureaucracies. It is not surprising that the political opportunities opened up by the rapid growth of the manufacturing city should have been seized first by leaders whose constituents were the artisans and traders of Sheffield's tightly knit neighbourhood communities. Nor is it surprising that they should strongly resist centralising and bureaucratising tendencies which would in the names of 'efficiency', 'progress' and 'discipline' take power away from the local community. The increased power of the trade societies, achieved at the expense of the Cutlers' Company, has already been mentioned.¹⁰ A second movement, whose centre was amongst tradesmen and shopkeepers but which drew in some of the more 'respectable' artisans, took a religious form.

Following Wesley's death Methodism was riven by a conflict which Robert Currie describes as being between

Wesley's search for Christian Perfection or Scriptural Holiness, and the Methodist people's search for a religious democracy. Christian Perfection was born of an authoritarian personality. It vitalised a severe and demanding ethic. It was imposed by a drastic system of authority and control. It sought to create on earth a heaven of saints. The ideal of a religious democracy emerged in the conflict between the interests of local communities created almost incidentally in the search for perfection, and the demands of a disciplinarian

10 See Chapter Two.

hierarchy. This ideal required a religion of liberty, community and personal responsibility. It sought to create on earth a heaven of brothers.¹¹

On the one hand there was the Conference, dominated by Jabez Bunting in whose eyes 'METHODISM was as much opposed to DEMOCRACY as to SIN'.¹² Itinerant ministers and an 'aristocracy' of wealthy laymen tended to support this position. On the other hand there were the lay ministers, the class leaders and the local preachers who resented the cost and power of the hierarchy. Sheffield was one of the most powerful centres of the democratic tendency in Methodism. Alexander Kilham's revolt against Conference in 1797, which led to the foundation of the New Connexion, drew very heavy support from Sheffield. Kilham led his 'Tom Paine Methodists' from Scotland Street Chapel in that city till his death in 1798.¹³ The New Connexion chapels, and even more so the Independent Methodist chapel in Bow Street gave expression to what John Livesey, the incumbent of St Philip's, recognised in 1840 as the Sheffield artisans' 'feeling of English Independence ... which leads them to desire a place which they can call their own'.¹⁴ When Wesleyan Methodism split over the issue of democracy in 1849, one of the three expelled 'martyrs' was James Everett who had been a minister at Sheffield and retained close local connections. By 1851, the number of Wesleyan Methodists

11 Currie 1968, 81.

12 op cit, 43.

13 Wickham 1957, 67.

14 op cit, 74, 88; Sheff Dir 1841, 6.

(supporters of Conference) in Sheffield had dropped by over a third. Only sixteen of the sixty-two local preachers supported the Conference.¹⁵ The temper of this reform movement is shown in the inscription on the foundation stone of the first new chapel, built at Grimesthorpe. The stone was laid

in the presence of an assembled multitude who (had) unjustly been deprived of church membership simply because they could not conscientiously contribute their money to support a system of priestly intolerance and irresponsibility which has shaken our beloved Methodism to its centre, and bids fair ... to vie with the Apostate Church of Rome.¹⁶

The financial reference is very typical. Sheffield Methodists wanted control over their investments whether material or spiritual.

A third movement, equally contemptuous of centralising authority, also burst into local prominence in the late 1840s and early 1850s. Its spokesman was Isaac Ironside whose party had by 1849 captured nearly half the seats on the Town Council. Ironside's early political experience had been gained through the affairs of the Sheffield Political Union which had campaigned for parliamentary reform before the 1832 Act. The Union was initially a movement of artisans whose leadership was captured by moderate businessmen and professionals, headed by Thomas Asline Ward. Despite his popularity amongst the unenfranchised in Sheffield, Ward failed as a candidate in the 1832 General Election and serious riots followed.

¹⁵ Wickham 1957, 123, 128-9.

¹⁶ op cit, 129.

From the late 1830s artisans and small shopkeepers were drawn towards Chartism while moderate reformers such as the manufacturer William Ibbotson, with more to lose, supported the Anti-Corn Law League.¹⁷ This was the immediate background to the success of Ironside's Chartist or Democratic Party in municipal politics. As has been seen, the Town Council offered a new arena of public representation to the petty bourgeoisie. Ironside was an accountant and his close followers were agents and tradesmen in a small way of business. They included a plumber and glass merchant, a surveyor, a grocer, an auctioneer, a merchant, a table-knife manufacturer, a saw manufacturer and a cabinet case maker.¹⁸ In 1851 Ironside challenged the informal management of Liberal politics by founding a Central Democratic Ward Association with a formidable apparatus of committees and delegates.¹⁹ Robert Leader, whose newspaper spoke for moderate Liberals issued a warning:

The middle classes are not very likely to furnish the sinews of war for political agitation for the benefit of the unenfranchised, when it is made a boast that they are excluded by 'democratic triumphs' from most of the wards of the borough, and efforts are being made to turn them out of the rest.²⁰

Despite his party's spectacular advances on the Town Council, Ironside's position was severely weakened by his failure to establish strong links with the industrial

17 Salt 1971b, 188-91; Crawshaw 1954, 98-122; Fletcher 1972, 7-10.

18 Respectively: T E Mycock, W R Harrison, W Crowther, W Harvey, T Platts, I Scholefield, W Groves and C Alcock. Fletcher 1972, esp Ch 2; occupations given in Furness 1893.

19 Salt 1971a, 38.

20 SI 23.10.1852.

and religious movements against centralising authority. In 1839 a meeting of the 'Sheffield Organised Trades' decided, in the wake of police harrassment of Chartist meetings, that it was impolitic to support that cause 'in the capacity of Trades' Union Societies'. Most local trade societies also refused to join in the wave of strikes in support of Chartism in 1842.²¹ This rigidly apolitical stance of the organised trades continued throughout the period. Well-to-do artisans might support Ironside's Democrats as voters and attend their meetings but their trade societies kept strictly to industrial affairs. A similar distinction between the opinions and actions of individuals and of the organisations to which they belonged may be applied to the Methodist denominations, particularly Primitive Methodism. Wickham has 'no doubt that Primitive Methodism embraced more of the artisan class than any other church (in Sheffield) in the second half of the century'. He also points out that although Primitive Methodism provided early training for many working class leaders it was also 'the most pietistic, otherworldly (and) politically-passive working class religion'.²²

Ironside also encountered a serious contradiction between the Democrats' advocacy of speedy and effective reform of urban conditions and his own insistence on the importance of ward-motes, which were based upon local neighbourhoods. Having acquired great influence on the Town Council, he used this in 1851 to oppose an Improvement Bill which would have increased the Council's powers to provide municipal services.

²¹ Wickham 1957, 101; Pollard 1959, 46; Pollard 1957, 121.

²² Wickham 1957, 132, 133-4.

The following year he unsuccessfully sponsored the candidature of his hero, Joshua Toulmin Smith, in the parliamentary election at a time when moderates such as Hoole and Dunn were divided over support for J A Roebuck. Meanwhile he used the Highways Board, whose members were sanctified by election through vestries, to promote a Gas Consumers' Company in opposition to the existing gas company whose directors included opponents of Ironside such as Hoole and Montgomery. Acting without parliamentary license, the new company's men dug their trenches by day while the old company sent its workforce out to fill them up again by night. Ironside's adventure was terminated by the amalgamation of the companies in 1855, with three council nominees being appointed to the company board.²³

The Central Democratic Association ceased to exist in 1854, a date which marks the termination of a serious political challenge from below. During the subsequent decade the balance of power and initiative over Sheffield's affairs shifted away from the neighbourhood level of integration. However, it did not swing decisively towards establishments whose influence was primarily vested at the municipal level. Rather, the decade from 1854 to 1864 is characterised by a complex and unstable equilibrium between competing social tendencies. For example, although Ironside had been pushed off the Town Council he continued to exercise influence as chairman of the Highway Board which was elected through the vestries until its abolition in 1864. Furthermore, the informal management of parliamentary elections by the Liberal moderates ceased to function smoothly in the mid-1850s and

²³ Salt 1971a, 43-52; Roberts 1979, 18, 21.

a local Conservative, the lawyer William Overend, narrowly missed victory in the General Election of 1857. This was an early indication of a secular trend towards increased conservatism in the upper ranks of Sheffield society which was hastened by the Crimean War.²⁴

The conflict with Russia accelerated the growth of the Sheffield steel industry which won massive government contracts to supply armour plating for the British navy. Thomas Turton and Sons installed a Naysmith hammer in March 1855. The following year John Brown concentrated his business at the huge Atlas Steel and Spring Works. In 1858, with the help of J D Ellis and William Bragge, Brown built the new forges, rolling mills and convertors demanded by the Bessemer process.²⁵ This surge in activity was reflected in the representation of the new generation of steel manufacturers on the Town Council. During the five years 1848-53, in Ironside's heyday, the leading steel and file manufacturers of the day had drifted away from the Council. In 1848, Turton and Sons, large-scale file manufacturers, had been well-represented, having T B Turton, J Turton and W A Matthews in the chamber. Samuel Butcher, Edward Vickers, Charles Peace and John Marsh had carried the flag of the established steel firms. Charles Atkinson, Adam Knowles and Samuel Jackson represented Attercliffe and Brightside.²⁶ Between 1848 and 1853 the

24 Fletcher 1972, 34, 38-41. On William Overend see Stainton 1924, 261-2; Odom 1926, 139-40.

25 Armytage 1955a, 480-1. On J D Ellis see Erikson 1959, 145; Odom 1926, 165-6; Stainton 1924, 333-5. On W Bragge see Erikson 1959, 39, 40, 145, 168; Stainton 1924, 262. On John Brown see Erikson 1959, 31, 39, 41, 143-5, 161; Odom 1926, 161-4; Stainton 1924, 306-9.

26 Furness 1893, 17; Sheff Dir 1849; Sheff Dir 1852.

proportion of seats held by leading industrialists in the heavy trades fell by a quarter.²⁷ However, following the demise of the Democrats the newer steel manufacturers began to arrive on that body in greater force. Mark Firth arrived in 1855 and John Brown in 1856. Robert Jackson (of Spear and Jackson) and George Beardshaw were elected for Brightside and Attercliffe respectively in 1856 and were joined by Charles Cammell (Brightside) and S S Brittain (Attercliffe) in 1857. Alfred Beckett, a steel and file manufacturer, also joined the Council that year. The arrival of the new steelmen in municipal politics was confirmed by the selection of John Brown as Sheffield's mayor in 1861 and 1862. By the following year large-scale manufacturers in the heavy trades still only held ten seats out of a total of fifty-four but the Mayor was Thomas Jessop, senior partner of W Jessop and Sons.²⁸ This firm had steel works in the Park, Soho and Brightside and was described in 1862 as being 'the most extensive engaged solely in the steel trade, (with) branch establishments or depots in Manchester, Paris, Canada and at no less than six of the principal cities of America'.²⁹

27 Apart from the above-mentioned, Benjamin Vickers and William Moulson were on the Council in 1848, a total of twelve leading industrialists in the heavy trades. In 1853 the following appear to fall into that category: T B Turton, E Vickers, W A Matthews, W Groves, S Jessops, J Howarth, W Moulson, C Atkinson and T Gatley. Furness 1893, 22; Sheff Dir 1852.

28 Furness 1893, 24-7, 30-2. In 1863 the aldermanic bench included the following large manufacturers in the heavy trades: T Jessop (Mayor), G Beardshaw, W A Matthews, R Jackson and J Brown. Councillors included: A Beckett, D Ward, T Jowitt, R T Eadon and J Bramall. Sheff Dir 1862; Pawson and Brailsford 1862.

29 op cit, 124; Odom 1926, 171.

With the Council secured by ballast such as this it was safe to transfer to it the powers of the Improvement Commissioners. This body was duly abolished in 1864. The Dale Dyke disaster preceded this decision by a few weeks and dramatised the issue of municipal control over public services. This event no doubt stiffened the resolve of councillors to accept the financial burden of hiring a borough accountant and borough surveyor (if only part-time). One compensation was the chance to be rid of Ironside's remaining base, the Highways Board.³⁰

The Town Council did not rise in public esteem to the same degree that the new steel masters rose in private wealth and industrial influence. Instead, it suffered much criticism in the mid- and late- 1860s for its failure to deal with the trade union 'outrages' (of which more below). Following its reform in 1860 to encompass the new steel industry, the Cutlers' Company offered a more congenial social circle and a more satisfying array of honorific offices. John Brown was Master Cutler in 1865 and 1866, being succeeded for each of the next three years by Mark Firth.³¹ By 1868 the number of steel manufacturers on the Town Council had fallen to seven and in 1873 there were only nine such men although the number of council members had increased from fifty-six to sixty-four.³²

The new men moved rapidly out to mansions in private parks on the western and south-western outskirts of Sheffield,

30 Furness 1893,128; S Harrison 1864. On the Dale Dyke Disaster see Chapter Seven.

31 On Mark Firth see Odom 1926,79-82; Stainton 1924,251-7.

32 1868: T Jessop, J Brown, R Jackson, G Barnsley, J Nicholson, J Bramall, R Hadfield. 1873: T Jessop, W H Brittain, J Gamble, J H Andrew, E Tozer, W Bragge, J Knott, J Shipman, R Hadfield. Furness 1893, 37,42.

to Endcliffe, Ranmoor and Tapton. This path had been blazed during the thirties and forties by George Wostenholme, one of the first large-scale cutlery manufacturers, who was responsible for the development of the Kenwood Park Estate at Sharrow.³³ During the 1860s the movement reached its peak. John Brown built Endcliffe Hall in thirty acres of ground and probably employed about fifty servants. Mark Firth was rumoured to have spent £60,000 on Oakbrook in 1867.³⁴

Valerie Doe points out that such houses

were the active centres of social and political life as well as the tangible expression of the achievements of self-made men. These heads of large business concerns played a part in their communities not dissimilar to the part played in theirs of the landed elite, and they too needed a place which worked in a similar way to a country house as a centre of influence.³⁵

Elsewhere she describes the Victorian suburban mansion house as 'an urban branch of the great country house tradition ...' which persisted for an unusually long period in Sheffield as compared to other towns.

In Sheffield ... the wealthy businessmen were loyal to the city, and many of them lived out their lives in the houses they built in prosperous middle age. In other towns, such houses were an anachronism almost before they were finished, to be superseded by real country houses on real country estates.³⁶

'Loyalty' to the city in terms of physical residence on its surrounding hills was complemented by entry into county society. For example, John Brown was appointed Deputy Lieutenant of the West Riding in 1867 and was knighted the same year.³⁷ Like their aristocratic neighbours,

³³ On Wostenholme see Odom 1926, 178-9; Stainton, 246-7.

³⁴ Doe 1976, 181-2.

³⁵ op.cit., 181.

³⁶ op.cit., 185.

³⁷ Fletcher 1972, 55.

Firth, Cammell and Brown were responsible for the management of massive economic enterprises employing large amounts of capital and labour. The fact that many of the steel works were planted on land owned by Norfolk and Fitzwilliam and that both estates were suppliers of coal served to strengthen the bonds of interest between the steel masters and the local aristocracy. Thomas Jessop was able to acquire very large estates on the Yorkshire Wolds where he went shooting and fishing.³⁸ Charles Cammell bought the manor of Norton which had previously been owned by the Shore family and was resident in Norton Hall, some four miles south of the city, by 1852. He subsequently took 'advantage of every opportunity that presented itself ... to purchase land in the neighbourhood'.³⁹ The opulent residents of Endcliffe, Tapton and Ranmoor did not in fact need to become extensive landowners in order to acquire effective insulation from the murky sources of their wealth. Attercliffe and Brightside were on the other side of the city; the Derbyshire moors were on their doorstep; and they benefited from an extensive cordon sanitaire of detached houses on estates for the not-quite-so-opulent middle classes many of which were planned by the same architects who had designed their own magnificent residences. Furthermore, a man did not need to worry overmuch about worming his way into county society if county society, and indeed metropolitan society, came to him. When he was Prime Minister, Lord Palmerston visited Brown at Endcliffe Hall and in 1875 Mark Firth played host to the Prince and Princess of Wales for nearly a whole week.

38 Odom 1926, 172.

39 Sheff Dir 1852, 476; Stainton 1924, 249. On Cammell see also Odom 1926, 164-5; Erikson 1959, 19, 32, 144-5, 161.

On the first evening Firth's dinner table was graced by not only the Archbishop of York but also the Duke of Norfolk, the Earl and Countess Fitzwilliam and Lord John and Lady Manners.⁴⁰

The gravitational pull away from municipal concerns towards regional and national networks of power and influence was increased by the transformation of a number of the leading steel firms into limited companies drawing on capital from outside Sheffield. This process strengthened the links of local manufacturers with financiers in other parts of the country, particularly in the Manchester area. An important agent of company formation was the Manchester accountant, David Chadwick, whose firm acquired a London office in 1863 or 1864. Chadwick's allies, many of them merchants and manufacturers from the Manchester area, normally became directors of the companies he helped to organise. These men formed a major interlocking management block in the iron, steel, coal and engineering industries during the 1860s. The enormous expense of the Bessemer process made Chadwick's propositions attractive to Brown and Cammell in 1864 and Vickers likewise in 1866 following a period of financial difficulty. Sheffield was very early in the field with respect to the formation of joint-stock companies which were relatively rare in industry until the 1880s.⁴¹

As a consequence of the changes outlined above, by the mid-1860s the moderately reforming and Liberal Sheffield establishment associated with the Parkers of Woodthorpe and

⁴⁰ Doe 1976, 181, 183-4.

⁴¹ Payne 1967, 522; Erikson 1959, 145; Cottrell 1980, 113-125.

Thomas Asline Ward was being strongly challenged by the predominantly Anglican and Conservative steel manufacturers.⁴² Local Conservatism had also acquired the powerful voice of W C Leng, editor of the Sheffield Telegraph from 1864. The division between the old establishment and the incoming industrial regime was manifest in the many clashes of opinion between Leader and Leng through their respective newspapers during the mid and late 1860s.⁴³

The penalties for the new steel masters of this division within middle-class Sheffield were minimised by two circumstances. First, the influence of the old establishment over the labouring population, as opposed to its capacity to draw upon its political support by sponsoring electoral candidates, had been relatively weak since the early 1830s. The career of Ironside had damaged those links that did exist. During the Crimean War, while middle class Liberals supported Roebuck's movement for administrative reform which he headed as Chairman of the Sebastopol Investigation Committee, Ironside had thrown his lot in with David Urquhart, who was sympathetic to Toulmin Smith's emphasis on the priority of local institutions. The Sheffield Foreign Affairs Committee and the Sheffield Free Press (acquired by Ironside in 1855) led a virulent campaign, supported almost entirely by working men, against Russian imperialism and the government of Lord Palmerston.⁴⁴ It cannot have been pleasing for men of property to learn of Karl Marx's articles in the Free Press.

⁴² Mark Firth, Methodist and Liberal, was not typical of the large steel masters. By and large, the latter remain shadowy figures, preoccupied with their business affairs.

⁴³ March 1966 eg 31-7, 39-47, 77.

⁴⁴ Salt 1968; Salt 1960b, 168-87; Fletcher 1972, 37-8; Armytage 1955a, 474-8; Briggs 1972, 52-86.

even though their turgidity caused Ironside to complain that 'Dr Marx's articles were entombing the newspaper'.⁴⁵ The second circumstance which aided the industrial magnates of Attercliffe and Brightside was that they were not recruiting their labour force from Sheffield's old staple trades. Until the 1880s most of their workers came from country districts or other ironworking areas rather than from the local light trades.⁴⁶

To summarise: in the period before 1854 a municipal establishment of professionals and businessmen, largely integrated through personal ties, confronted a powerful political challenge from local Chartists which drew upon the support of artisans and tradespeople whose interests were focused upon neighbourhood communities. However, Sheffield's Democratic Chartists, led by Ironside, failed to harness the organisational power of the trade societies or the more plebian Methodist chapels. Nor did its leader overcome the contradiction between the intense parochialism which his ideology sanctioned and the difficulties of promoting urban reform in England's sixth largest provincial city through institutions focused at a level of integration below the municipality. The period from 1854 to 1864 had three dominating characteristics. The first was rapid and drastic structural transformation associated with the expansion of the heavy steel industry. The second was continuing prosperity in both the light and the heavy trades.⁴⁷ The third characteristic was the persistence of an unstable and

45. Marx wrote to Engels: 'Money is the only interesting point for me in my intercourse with these Calibans'.
Armytage 1955a, 475.

46. Pollard 1959, 170.

47. op cit 125, 163.

shifting state of balance between contrary or competing social tendencies. For example, the light trades were experiencing good trading conditions at the same time as the new steel works were being established; the influx of new large-scale steel manufacturers onto the Town Council in the late 1850s coincided with Ironside's continued agitation from bases outside it; the Liberal establishment maintained its grip on the management of parliamentary elections but faced a serious challenge from the Conservatives in 1857. The third period, after 1864, was characterised by a strengthening of regional and national networks of influence at the expense of municipal institutions and loyalties.⁴⁸

Equipoise

During the second half of the 1860s the period of unstable equilibrium came to an end. A series of overt conflicts were fought as a result of which it is possible to identify victors and losers reasonably clearly, although both victory and defeat were far from complete. The immediately preceding period from the mid-1850s to the mid-1860s coincides, give or take a couple of years, with the decade and a half which W L Burn has labelled 'the age of equipoise'. He argues that the dates 1852 and 1867 mark the approximate beginning and end of a 'generation in which the old and new, the elements of growth, survival and decay, achieved a balance which most contemporaries regarded as satisfactory'.⁴⁹ He describes the period as follows:

⁴⁸ See Chapter Seven.

⁴⁹ Burn 1964, 17.

Something of the passions, of the ingenuous and romantic emotions, which had found expression in Chartism, in Tractarianism, in the bitter controversies over the corn laws and the sugar duties, in dozens of utopian schemes, had abated ... (There) was less of that single-minded vehemence which had characterized and perhaps nearly destroyed an earlier England. But in 1867, though there had been tremors and vibrations (The Origin of Species appeared in 1859 and Essays and Reviews in 1860) the surface of things could be seen as almost intact. The England of the School Boards and the highly-organised parties, the upper-middle class England where the purchase of commissions had ceased and the highest ranks of the Civil Service were recruited by open competition and talent counted for rather more than birth or connection, was still a little distant ... ; local government of the country was still markedly and in some respects chaotically local; France rather than Prussia or Germany was the enemy to be feared; the labouring classes were still, for the most part, subordinate to their betters and their employers.⁵⁰

The above quotation is inevitably based upon a broad overview of processes in a number of institutional spheres and in different parts of the country. However, it is noticeable that when citing examples of mid-Victorian businessmen in his first chapter, Burn turns straight away to William Lucas Sargant of Birmingham and that in the second chapter, when noticing a few individual careers as illustrations of his theme his first two choices are Joseph Parkes, Birmingham's radical lawyer and Matthew Davenport Hill, the Recorder of Birmingham.⁵¹ It will be argued in the second part of this chapter that the period from 1854 to 1864 was indeed one of 'equipoise' in Birmingham and that equilibrium was accompanied by a substantial degree of equanimity since that city did not experience the traumatic structural changes which were inflicted upon Sheffield's population. In fact it is fascinating to discover that the central meaning of

⁵⁰ op cit, 15-16.

⁵¹ op cit, 21-2, 74-5.

Burn's equipoise thesis is applicable, though in rather different ways and with different nuances, to both Birmingham and Sheffield. In both cities it is possible to divide the period from 1830 to 1870 into three broad sub-divisions. Before the early 1850s members of establishments presiding over key institutions in the two cities faced new or strengthened challenges from competing groups. During the subsequent period of 'equipoise' challengers and challenged were on approximately equal terms and opposing social tendencies roughly balanced out. However, by the late 1860s rising interests were able to seize the initiative and seemed set for domination. These changes were aspects of transformations within the broader regional and national configurations to which the cities belonged. In Sheffield, power and initiative shifted in a vertical direction, away from members of social networks focused upon the neighbourhood and towards regional and national establishments. The municipal level of integration, with its civic institutions, networks and loyalties, remained relatively unimportant. By contrast, in Birmingham the shift which occurred was predominantly lateral or horizontal: away from the county hierarchies and towards establishments whose primary focus and commitment was the municipality.

Within each city four axes of conflict are identifiable in the period from 1830 to 1870. The first is the conflict between Tories or Conservatives on the one side and Whigs and Radicals on the other. The former, whose heartland was in the shires, were broadly satisfied with the disposition of authority and privilege in pre-1832 English society and sought to defend as much of that structure as possible,

incorporating the newly wealthy where necessary and adopting fresh means of inculcating habits of deference among the lower orders in the big cities. The latter were prepared, with varying degrees of conviction, to allow the expressed wishes of the articulate and organised middle and lower orders to be recognised and realised in the new institutions of urban industrial society. The second axis of conflict was between Anglicans and Dissenters, the latter being largely excluded from the choicest prizes in public and professional life in the earlier part of the century.⁵² The third axis of conflict was defined by the steadily increasing differentiation between the owners or controllers of industrial capital and the providers of skilled and (increasingly important) semi- and un-skilled labour. The fourth axis of conflict divided the executives and beneficiaries of public authority (in government, the law, chartered companies and elsewhere) from 'radicals', strongly represented in the petty bourgeoisie, who were deeply suspicious of 'corrupt' and 'exclusive' monopolies which, they believed, diverted public money and abused public responsibility for narrow and private purposes.⁵³

In Sheffield as has been seen, the latter two axes of conflict were predominant. Opposition to centralising authority at all levels above the workplace, tavern and chapel was a motif common to Chartism, Methodism and trade unionism in the city. The failure of these movements to combine their organisational strength was to have an ironic historical sequel in the coalescence of the interests of Anglicanism, Conservatism, large-scale capital and national government through the emergence of the staunchly Tory steel-masters of Attercliffe and Brightside bolstered up by massive

⁵² Perkin 1969, 208-17, 347-53; Vincent 1972, 72-6.

⁵³ eg Griffiths 1870, passim.

government munitions contracts. These axes of conflict were less prominent in Birmingham. Radical opposition to 'corrupt government' in that city was split during the 1830s between the supporters of Thomas Attwood, whose characteristic appeal was upward to the crown for help against 'borough mongers' who perverted the currency, and the colleagues of Joseph Allday, a small trader whose targets were more varied and predominantly local.⁵⁴ Furthermore, the organisation of new trade societies in Birmingham was a response to employers' tactics in the 1830s and 1840s whereas in Sheffield such societies were much more deeply entrenched. The latter's very presence inhibited and delayed innovation, eventually leading to a direct and radical confrontation which was avoided in Birmingham.

The first two axes of confrontation between Tories/Conservatives and Whigs/Radicals and between Anglicans and Dissenters were much more central in Birmingham, as will be seen in the next section. Two other important distinctions between the cities may be noticed here. First, to a much greater extent than in Sheffield, the four axes of conflict cut across each other in Birmingham, producing a complex pattern of shifting alliances. Second, and related to the previous point, in Birmingham there was a much more pronounced tendency for organised interests (defined, for example, by occupation, religion and political persuasion) to negotiate with each other and throw their weight into the balance in a calculated manner in order to seek maximum tactical or strategic advantage as situations unfolded. The politics of Birmingham were more sophisticated and less atavistic than the politics of Sheffield.

⁵⁴ See below.

Birmingham

The Free Grammar School Bill sponsored by the Governors of the King Edward VI Foundation in 1830 included the proposal 'that no person shall be elected a governor who is not a member of the Established Church of England'.⁵⁵ This attempt to formalise a practice that had grown up over preceding decades was an early and unsuccessful move in a process of shoring up the defences of the powerful Anglican-Tory establishment against attacks from many quarters.⁵⁶ This establishment belonged both to Birmingham and the surrounding county areas. It had to adjust to the secular drift of power and influence towards the city, compounded by the demographic surge of the 1820s and the constitutional changes of the 1830s. By 1847 new lines of communication and avenues of influence had been established. In that year, a rigorously Anglican constitution was foisted upon Queen's College and C B Adderley founded an Anglican teacher training college at Saltley. Although Richard Spooner, Birmingham's Tory MP, lost his seat that year, he almost immediately found another one in North Warwickshire, evidence of the close ties that had been forged between city and county amongst Tory political managers of post-1832 politics.⁵⁷

55 Dent 1880, 444.

56 In 1865 M D Hill, Recorder of Birmingham, recollected a time when Dissenters had been a majority of the School governors. Birmingham Daily Post (henceforth BDP), 14.10.1865. The Governors' strategy of seeking legal recognition of threatened customs was similar to that being pursued by local trade unions in the 1830s and 1840s.

57 Morrison 1926, 106-11; Dent 1894, 441; Mole 1961, 66.

A key figure in Birmingham's Tory politics was John Welchman Whateley, secretary to the governors of the King Edward VI Foundation and himself a governor of the General Hospital.⁵⁸ When examined before a parliamentary committee on the Free Grammar School Bill of 1842 he was asked whether it was not the case that the Foundation had 'been a tory trust ever since you were acquainted with it?' His answer was: 'Yes; and there are other trusts in the town equally exclusive in their character'.⁵⁹ It was not entirely clear whether he meant other 'tory trusts' but it was bitterly pointed out two years later that of the twenty governors of the Foundation, eighteen were also governors of the General Hospital and that seven of the hospital's officers had connections with the Grammar School.⁶⁰ The leading hospital governors at that time included Lord Dartmouth, Lord Calthorpe, the manufacturers Robert Winfield, J O Bacchus and Charles Shaw, the banker James Taylor and Rev J Garbett of St George's, the rural dean. Winfield and Bacchus were prominent Evangelical Churchmen, lay members of a movement which became strong in the city after 1830. Its centre was Elmdon Hall, home of William Spooner, rector of Elmdon. The Spooner family was related to the Calthorpes and the Wilberforces. Richard Spooner's son Isaac was Vicar of Edgbaston.

58. Whateley was the son-in-law of Isaac Spooner, Vicar of Edgbaston. General Hospital, Birmingham: proceedings of Annual General Meeting, September 20th, 1844. (Birmingham Reference Collection, henceforth BRC) (henceforth Gen Hos 1844).

59. Quoted in Report of Proceedings of Town Council in relation to the Bill of Governors of the Free Grammar School 1842. (henceforth Town Council 1842). (BRC), 27.

60. T Gutteridge to Earl of Dartmouth on Election of Medical Officers at General Hospital, 1844 (henceforth Gutteridge 1844) (BRC).

Informal and family ties gave added strength to the Church of England Lay Association which was founded in 1839 with Lord Dartmouth as President and James Taylor as treasurer.⁶¹

The politics of reform were far more difficult to organise in Birmingham than the politics of conservatism. The Birmingham Political Union was founded in January 1830 on the basis of an unstable alliance between extreme Tories who hankered for a return to a pre-seventeenth century natural order and Radicals who wished to move forward to the new kind of society envisaged by Tom Paine.⁶² Thomas Attwood's promise of currency reform as a universal panacea appealed to marginal merchants and manufacturers unable to cope with the immense pressures of economic and social change. His allies such as George Edmonds, a Baptist attorney's clerk, offered Birmingham's artisans a more direct and effective influence on the politics of the unfolding urban industrial society.⁶³ Parliamentary reform was a cause which held them together for a while. In the months before the 1832 Reform Act the Union had the enthusiastic support of the crowds who gathered at Newhall Hill and the far more cautious and pragmatic backing of the professional and mercantile men whose petition in favour of reform was delivered to Attwood by Joseph Parkes in May 1832. The involvement of the latter group ceased once the limited reforms of 1832 were passed, as did that of the local shop-keepers who no longer felt a common interest with the labourers who were left as the major constituency of the Union.⁶⁴

61 Gen Hos 1844; Mole 1961, 65-68; Aris's Gazette (henceforth AG) 3.6.1839.

62 Flick 1978, 12-13.

63 *op cit*, 22, 25. On George Edmonds see Edwards 1877, 140-54.

64 Flick 1978, chs 3-5 esp 81, 101; cf Ferguson 1960.

Radical Dissenters such as Edmonds, with the support of Parkes, turned their attention to opposing the levying of church rates by the Anglican establishment. The issue caused considerable local political excitement but its unintended effect was to stimulate more effective organisation by the city's Tory party. In 1834 the Birmingham Loyal and Constitutional Society was founded. Its most active agent was J B Hebbert, a solicitor who later helped in the prosecution of G F Muntz after a church rates riot at St Martin's Church. Hebbert 'became the recognised agent and representative of the Tory party, both in the county and the borough'.⁶⁵ Although church rates were not levied successfully in Birmingham parish after 1831 they were collected in Aston parish until 1843, and in Edgbaston parish until 1853. Another consequence of the church rate dispute was the propulsion of Richard Spooner, Attwood's banking partner and one-time supporter, into the opposing camp.⁶⁶

However, Tory influence among the enfranchised rate-payers was insufficient to win them representation on the new Town Council in 1838. The Birmingham Political Union, revived in 1837, had lost the support of the shopkeepers but it had the benefit of what the organisation's most recent historian describes as 'a new political front in Birmingham, a coalition between the unionists (ie the Birmingham Political Union) and the leaders of the trades' societies, organisations of skilled labourers which had 13,000 members in the city'.⁶⁷ Backed by the Birmingham Journal, the Political

⁶⁵ Edg 1888, 8, 1-8.

⁶⁶ D Fraser 1976a, 43, 45; Mole 1961, 198.

⁶⁷ Flick 1978. 116 ff, 128.

Union captured all the seats on the Town Council and appointed all the officers. The first mayor was William Scholefield, son of Joshua Scholefield, the Union's former deputy-chairman. Although Thomas Attwood and William Scholefield had founded the Union and entered parliament as advocates of action by national government to reform the currency, the Union's most solid achievement was local;

the successful campaign for municipal incorporation and the subsequent capture of the Town Council. It may be significant that very soon after this local political base had been constructed and occupied, the Union ceased to exist.⁶⁸

The immediate prelude to the Union's demise was the National Chartist Convention in Birmingham, during which the Union competed for leadership of the Chartists with the London Working Man's Association and Feargus O'Connor's 'physical force' movement. In 1839 as in 1832 Attwood's organisation provided a temporary focus or meeting point for disparate interests. However, on neither occasion was Attwood able to harness the energies of his apparent allies in support of his own programme. The events of the decade created a myth of Birmingham's centrality in furthering political democracy within the nation. Ironically, the decade ended with local Whigs, Radicals and Dissenters in utter disarray, with Joseph Parkes cursing the Town Council's 'aristocratic Bourgeois propensities' and the Tories cock-a-hoop at achieving a virtual walk-over in the Poor Law elections of 1840.⁶⁹

68 op cit, 119; Bunce 1878, 105.

69 Flick 1978, 125 ff, esp 113, 164; D Fraser 1976a, 73.

Between 1839 and 1847, while the Town Council was under sustained frontal attack from resurgent Conservative interests in county and borough, the old leaders of the Union fell out on the issues of the suffrage and (to a lesser extent) free trade. Joseph Sturge, the Quaker corn factor, took a radical position on both questions. In 1842 he founded the Complete Suffrage Union, dedicated to middle and working class cooperation in pursuit of a wider franchise. His supporters included Henry Hawkes (an associate of Joseph Parkes), Henry Smith (a Unitarian manufacturer and Street Commissioner) and James Baldwin (another Dissenting manufacturer).⁷⁰ When Joshua Scholefield died, Sturge competed with William Scholefield for the vacant parliamentary seat. The latter, who had been Mayor during the Chartist riots of 1839, was less radical than Sturge. The split between them at the subsequent by-election of 1844 let in Richard Spooner as Birmingham's first Tory MP, with G F Muntz serving as a Liberal. This Tory success was matched in the Town Council. Between 1844 and 1846 Tory representation there increased from nil to eight. However, during the General Election of 1847, William Scholefield adopted a position more clearly in favour of greatly widening the franchise. Spooner was defeated and the Tory advance was at last slowed down.⁷¹

⁷⁰ Hennock 1973, 28, 30. On Hawkes see Edg 1890, 10, 177-87. On Baldwin see VCH, 305-6; G H Osborne, Birmingham Biography (BRC) (henceforth Osborne) Vol 1, 33.

⁷¹ Langford 1873, vol 1, 95, 100; D Fraser 1976a, 144, 198-200; Tunsiri 1964, 214-28. See above 82-4.

The late 1840s were a minor watershed in Birmingham's political and religious life as they were in Sheffield's. The radical anti-centralising tendencies of Sheffield's Chartists and Methodists were powerfully expressed in those years, strengthening the organisational barriers to close cooperation between leading local businessmen and professionals and the lower middle and working classes. In Birmingham, by contrast, these years witnessed a new determination by the more prosperous Whigs and Dissenters of Birmingham to cultivate their links with skilled artisans and the middling commercial classes coming into existence. The willingness of artisans to cooperate in this political alliance is likely to have been increased by the signal failure of their own attempts to resist erosion of their traditional customs by industrial action. For example, following disputes in the glass industry in 1846 and 1848 the local bench found for the employers and imprisoned the offending workmen. In both cases the magistrate was the prominent local Tory, Charles Shaw, later described by one of his friends as 'the hardest man in Birmingham'.⁷² The liberal strategy of cooperation was aided by previous experience of collaboration between leaders of political and industrial organisations in the later days of the Political Union. The campaigns of the Union and the Dissenters had also been thoroughly intertwined during the long dispute over church rates. This complex interplay between political, industrial and religious movements had been lacking in Sheffield.

⁷² Behagg 1979, 467; Edwards 1877, 108; Corbett 1966, 30; Showell 1885, 187.

Discontent with the exclusive practices of the Anglican establishment reached into the upper ranges of Birmingham society. As a long standing and thriving market and manufacturing centre, Birmingham was well-stocked with prosperous members of old Dissenting congregations. The Quaker and Unitarian families were the most distinguished, by and large, the former strong in commerce and manufactures, the latter tending to gravitate towards the professions. The Congregationalist and Baptist congregations were less wealthy and 'genteel'.⁷³ Prominent among the Unitarians were the Kenricks, Rylands and Beales while the Society of Friends boasted the Cadburys, Bakers, Barrows, Goodricks and Sturges.⁷⁴ George Goodrick was a political ally of Joseph Sturge and a close friend of many Chartists.⁷⁵ However, deep involvement in radical politics was not a necessary precondition for the creation of grievance. The Quaker industrialist, Richard Tangye tells in his autobiography that the 'road locomotive' which his firm developed was effectively prohibited by parliament because the 'squires became alarmed lest their horses should take fright'.⁷⁶ The Congregationalists produced fewer political radicals although their number included the jewellery manufacturer Henry Manton who founded the Birmingham Sunday School Union in 1842. Sixty one years later he was remembered as a 'true and earnest Liberal of the old Birmingham School'.⁷⁷

73 Ram 1976, 31, 34-5, 37.

74 The influence of these closely-linked families on Birmingham's public life has often been noticed. See for example Bushrod 1954; Hennock 1956; Hennock 1973; Bailey 1952.

75 On Goodrick see Edg 1886, 6, 17-21.

76 Tangye 1889, 101.

77 On Manton see Edg 1903, 23, 193-9.

The Baptists, on the other hand, included not only George Edmonds but also the solicitor William Morgan who had been active in opposition to church rates and who became Town Clerk in 1852. A close friend was another Baptist, the manufacturer William Middlemore. The Middlemores were an ancient Birmingham family and William Middlemore acquired leading positions in several local companies. Another ardent Baptist was John Skirrow Wright who had his goods distrained on several occasions for non-payment of church rates.⁷⁸

Memories of ancient wrongs were still sharp. The Unitarian solicitor, H W Tyndal, was a descendant of the sixteenth-century Protestant martyr. Richard Tangye collected relics of his hero, Oliver Cromwell. William Sands Cox owned the chair upon which Charles I had sat during his trial at Westminster Hall.⁷⁹ However, the presence of old Dissenting congregations was not in itself a sufficient condition for the emergence of a strong civic establishment, actively identified with the prestige of municipal institutions and politically engaged with Conservative interests. It has been calculated that of the eight largest boroughs outside London in 1851, Birmingham had the largest proportion of Unitarians and Quakers amongst adherents to religious denominations. Between them, they accounted for a 4.9% of all worshippers. However, the second highest proportion of

78 Edg 1887, 7, 97-101 (W Morgan); Edg 1887, 7, 17-24 (W Middlemore); Edwards 1880; Biograph and Review 1880, 3, 251-6 (J S Wright).

79 Edg 1885, 5, 176; Vincent 1972, 30; Morrison 1926, 200.

80 On the Middlemore family see Compendium 10.

Unitarians and Quakers combined - amounting to 3.4% - is to be found in Sheffield where the 'civic gospel' was very undeveloped throughout this period.⁸⁰ Although this comparison does not take account of members of Dawson's Church of the Saviour, which had the support of many Unitarians, it emphasises the need to relate tendencies in the religious sphere to other aspects of social structure. Ties of religious affiliation, interwoven as they were with business, professional and kinship ties, made an important contribution to a political strategy which also, however, owed a great deal to the balance of power along three axes: between urban and rural interests, between the Tory establishment in Birmingham and its opponents, and between the professional and business elites of Birmingham and their labouring and clerical employees.

The urban estates of Calthorpe, Gooch, Colmore, Adderley and Inge 'had not reached their high money-making point in the 1830s'.⁸¹ Although the growth of the city was to increase the riches of these genteel interests it did not magnify their political influence within Birmingham itself. The inactivity of the Town Council during the 1850s offered much scope for private munificence by the Calthorpes, amongst others, but the latter did not seek to exercise political leadership.⁸² C B Adderley offered the Council land for a park in 1857 but he was turned down. When the following year

80 Hennock 1973, 176.

81 Bunce 1899 cit Tunsiri 1964, 144. See also Kellest 1969, 125-34.

82 On the Clathorpe family see Cannadine 1975.

he obtained an injunction against the Council to try to stop it fouling the river close by his home at Hams Hall, Adderley indirectly helped to stimulate a slow revival of municipal activity which would ultimately swamp the county influence around Birmingham.⁸³ In 1839 Lord Hatherton, a leading peer in South Staffordshire, had still been confident that political affairs in the county at least could be managed between himself and Lord Ward: 'he and I could keep the county quiet', he wrote. However, in 1853 he was telling his diary:

The partongage of the seats for the Southern Division is passing into the hands of the trades in the chief towns. In my earlier days they neither thought of it - or were thought of by others - The chief county families settled the matter among themselves.⁸⁴

He was no doubt thinking mainly of the coal and iron masters but the general tendency benefited Birmingham, and not only Dissenting manufacturers. For example, when in 1849 the Bishop of Worcester tried to send a diocesan inspector into the elementary schools run by the King Edward VI Foundation, the headmaster, Rev E H Gifford, tartly refused to permit it.⁸⁵ The underlying shift of political weight away from the county and towards the city meant that although the Tory interest in Birmingham and its rural hinterland had been able to exploit Whig and Radical disarray in the borough during the 1840s, the urban constituency was steadily increasing in significance. As has been seen, institutional barriers to manipulation from above such as protected Sheffield's artisans were less well-developed in Birmingham. Despite their

83 Cannadine 1980, 156; Hennock 1973, 107.

84 Hatherton Diary, 29.11.1839 and 22.12.1853, cit Tunsiri 1964, 67, 103.

85 Tyson 1960, 168-9.

many failures, the careers of the Political Union and the Complete Suffrage Association had provided the Tories' opponents with valuable experience in political negotiation with local artisans. This experience was exploited.

James Baldwin, who had worked in the Complete Suffrage Union, founded the Birmingham Political Council in 1848. His allies included the Chartist shoemaker John Mason, who declared the following year that 'the strength of democracy consists in reconciling the various classes of society, and inspiring every man with a just confidence of public order and security'. Baldwin was proud to be a self-made man as was John Skirrow Wright who was an active member of People's Chapel which he helped to found in a working class district in 1848. Political debate was as common as religious worship in the chapel and Wright helped to organise Sunday school teaching, penny banks and clothing clubs among the congregation. He was an enthusiastic supporter of the Birmingham Freehold Land Society, being the twenty-sixth member and the first allottee on the first estate purchased by the Society.⁸⁶ The new lower middle class was also fished with this net of unpatronising patronage. In 1846, George Dawson presided over a meeting at which the Birmingham Clerks' Association was founded to campaign for early closing. Two years later, Baldwin spoke at a meeting of the Clerks and Assistants during which they declared for universal suffrage. By 1853 a Professional, Commercial and Manufacturing Clerks Association was in existence.⁸⁷ The political

⁸⁶ Dent 1880, 533; Langford 1873, vol 1, 100; VCH, 305-6; Biograph and Review 1880, 3, 251-2.

⁸⁷ Langford 1873, vol 1, 58, 102-3, 413-4.

relationship between the Liberal leaders and their artisan and lower middle class supporters depended upon the cultivation of an atmosphere of mutual respect and good humour, as was exemplified by Muntz's appearance before the Non-electors in 1847, described in Chapter Two. During the 1850s and 1860s the alliances forged in the late 1840s were strengthened: for example, through the meeting of electors and non-electors to adopt John Bright as Liberal candidate for parliament in 1857, through the work of the Birmingham Reform Association (founded 1858) which embraced 'men of all shades of liberal opinion, enfranchised middle class and non-electors', through meetings of the Radical Reform League (from 1861) and through the work of the Birmingham Liberal Association (from 1865).⁸⁸

By the early 1850s Tory and Liberal establishments in Birmingham were in approximate balance with each other, the former sustained by gradually weakening county hierarchies, the latter by gradually strengthening artisan and lower middle class organisations within the city. The collapse of the resistance of the Street Commissioners to the Town Council's Improvement Bill enacted in 1851 reflected the increased weight carried by a Liberal party which was building up a solid lower class constituency. However, during the 1850s the Town Council did not greatly expand its activities; nor did it follow up the demise of the Street Commissioners by attempts to supplant other competing bodies. In 1855, for example, a plan to buy out the water company was defeated and two years later Piggot Smith, the nationally-renowned borough surveyor inherited from the Street Commissioners, was sacked.

Schemes for road-building and improving sanitation came to a virtual halt. When a government inspector pointed out that the borough needed one hundred more policemen, a derisory fifteen were appointed. The city's reliance on voluntary efforts of various kinds to provide public services continued. Facilities for popular recreation were provided by the Botanical and Horticultural Society and Calthorpe Park, the latter being opened to the public in 1857. To the services provided by the General Hospital and the Grammar School were added those of the Birmingham and Midland Institute, founded in 1854.⁸⁹

The foundation of the Midland Institute illustrates the state of delicate equilibrium which had been reached by 1854. The Institute's most active sponsor was Arthur Ryland, a prominent Unitarian lawyer who had served with Sturge's old ally Henry Smith on the Street Commission. Although Ryland had initially resisted the abolition of that body he had ultimately cooperated in the transfer of powers and became a councillor in 1854. Ryland, who was prominent in the Birmingham Law Society, was to be remembered among other things for his labours to amend the Act disqualifying practising solicitors from the county bench but in founding the Institute he cooperated wholeheartedly with the county establishment. The first president of the Institute was Lord Lyttelton and, as has been seen, his immediate successors were drawn from the neighbouring shires. Ex-officio members of the first council included Rev E H Gifford, who had resisted the Bishop of Worcester's demands to inspect the Grammar School in 1849 and J T Law, Chancellor of the

⁸⁹ Gill 1952, 415, 417-8, 419; Cannadine 1980, 156.

Lichfield diocese, who had helped impose an Anglican regime on Queen's College two years before that.⁹⁰ The Institute's Council also included the Mayor and four town councillors but they were swamped by thirteen other elected governors headed by local gentry such as Sir Francis Edward Scott and William Mathews. Active Tory politicians were represented by Richard Spooner and J B Hebbert. They sat beside more radical men such as Henry Hawkes, Charles Sturge and John Jaffray. The Institute's auditors were R L Chance, a glass manufacturer whose family had extensive political influence in Staffordshire and Worcestershire and the merchant George Dixon, who was to be an ardent advocate of municipal interests.⁹¹ The Institute was organised into a General Department, providing culture for the upper ranks of Birmingham society and an Industrial Department, offering useful knowledge to Birmingham's artisans and clerks.⁹²

As in Sheffield, 1854 or perhaps slightly earlier marks the beginnings of a brief period of 'equipoise' lasting until the middle of the 1860s. One of its manifestations was the cooling of sectarian rivalry between Church and Dissent during these years. For much of this period John Cale Miller

90. On Ryland see Bunce 1878, 340, Edg 1882, 2, 76-9.
On Law see Morrison 1926, 42; Langford 1873, vol 1, 228-34.

91 Jaffray, a Liberal businessman who later helped found the Birmingham Daily Post, exemplified a tendency towards assimilation between urban and rural interests. In 1874 he stood as parliamentary candidate for East Staffordshire. His son married the daughter of Sir Francis Edward Scott. In 1880 it was written: 'With the characteristics of a cultivated town life Mr Jaffray combines the tastes of a country gentleman.' Edg 1885, 5, 161-6, esp 165-6. On R L Chance see Langford 1873, vol 1, 368-74; VCH, 98, 109, 137; Tunsiri 1964, 128-31. On George Dixon see Edg 1886, 6, 1-6.

92 Waterhouse 1954, chs 1 and 2; Woodward 1928, 1-51.

was the Rector of St Martin's Church. Relations between Miller and John Angell James, the Congregationalist minister of Carr's Lane Chapel were close enough for an informed observer to write of an 'underground connexion' existing between the churches. Controversy over issues such as the 'papal aggression' and Sunday observance did not divide Church from Dissent but set liberals against Evangelicals within each. By the time of the Crimean War, the local Tories had joined the Liberals in support of free trade but the latter subsequently divided on the war itself. John Bright, who sat for Birmingham from 1857, drew the support of anti-Palmerstonian radicals such as James Baldwin and Henry Hawkes. Whigs, such as Van Wart drifted towards the Tories.⁹³

Throughout this period, a potent source of disagreement within city and county, church and chapel was the question of the proper limits of state activity, both locally and nationally. Education was a focus of such disagreements. Among the prominent local landowners were C B Adderley (later Lord Norton) who became Vice-President of the Committee of Council on Education in 1858 and Sir John Pakington whose resolution in the House that year led to the Newcastle Commission.⁹⁴ Adderley's friend and neighbour, Lord Lyttelton had presided over a national conference in Birmingham on industrial and reformatory schools whose object was to stir

93 Bunce 1899, 21; Mole 1961 ch 6; Tunsiri 1964, 255-62. On J C Miller see Mole 1966. On J A James see Langford 1873, vol 1, 466 ff. On Van Wart see Edwards 1877, 101-7.

94 On Pakington see J N Williams 1973, 51-60; Pakington 1858. On Adderley see Childe-Pemberton 1909, Biograph and Review 1879, 2, 528 ff.

up public opinion in favour of legislation.⁹⁵ The High Churchman Adderley found a strong ally in M D Hill, the Recorder of Birmingham who, although an Anglican came from a family of strict Dissenters. However, Anglican opinion ranged from Adderley's enthusiasm for state involvement to the more cautious conservatism of George Lea, Vicar of Christ's Church. Hill's positive approach to government action was counterbalanced by the militant voluntarism of the Dissenting minister John Angell James.⁹⁶

These disagreements amongst the leaders of Birmingham society in conjunction with the temporary stalemate in power relationships opened up a political corridor through which an 'Economist' party could advance to influence on Birmingham Town Council in 1855. Its leader was Joseph Allday who had been the principal rival of Attwood during the early 1830s for the support of Birmingham's shopkeepers and small tradesmen. Some of Allday's activities recall Ironside's campaigns against abuse in high places. Allday stirred up public opinion against clerical abuse of the church rates, mismanagement at the Court of Requests and corruption in Birmingham Gaol. This latter crusade had inspired Charles Reade to pen his novel It's Never Too Late to Mend.⁹⁷ In his Personal Recollections of Birmingham and Birmingham Men, Eliezer Edwards describes the visits of 'the mighty and omniscient Joe Allday' to the Woodman tavern in Easy Row. On these occasions

95 J N Williams 1973, 23.

96 On M D Hill see R and F Davenport Hill 1878; J N Williams 1973, 17-22. On the Hill family and education see Dobson 1959; Dobson 1960. George Lea is discussed in Mole 1961, ch 6. For James on education see Langford 1873, vol 1, 125.

97 Walter Showell recalled that Allday 'the "Stormy Petrel" of modern Birmingham' had been horsewhipped by G F Muntz on one occasion. Hennock 1973, 32ff; Flick 1978, 198; Showell 1885, 173.

the discussion sometimes became a little more than animated, the self-assertive Joe making the room ring ... , as he denounced the practices of those who ruled the destinies of the town. Here one night, lifting his right hand on high, as if to appeal to Heaven, he assured his audience that they "need not be afraid." He would "never betray the people of Birmingham!"⁹⁸

Both Ironside and Allday distrusted the motives and competence of public officials who spent ratepayers' money. However, Ironsides's advocacy of ward-motes was foreign to Allday whose constituency was 'the people of Birmingham'.

The social composition of the 'Economists' was similar to that of the Sheffield Democrats. Allday's party was led by a draper, a cabinet maker and a vestry clerk. It is significant that the dominance of both Ironside and Allday within municipal politics was effectively ended by their opposition to Improvement Bills. Having fought bitterly against the introduction of the Improvement Act of 1861, Allday retired from the Town Council in disgust. During the 1860s Allday's successors such as Thomas Avery, appropriately enough a scale manufacturer, were preoccupied with keeping borough expenditure in balance with a modest income from the rates.⁹⁹ However, slowly and grudgingly they were prepared to concede the necessity for council control to be extended over essential services like the water supply. The gradually increasing influence of a more generous conception of the Town Council's role is indicated by the fact that William Harris, a disciple of George Dawson and later a colleague of Joseph Chamberlain, worked closely with Avery in the late 1860s.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Edwards 1877, 70.

⁹⁹ Hennock 1973, 33, 104; Avery 1866, esp 86-7.

¹⁰⁰ On Harris see Edg 1911, 31, 61-70; Hennock 1973, 81.

However, by that time Birmingham's 'age of equipoise' had come to an end.

To summarise: in contrast to the vertical shift of political influence in Sheffield, away from the neighbourhood and towards the county and national levels in Birmingham a lateral shift occurred which benefited the borough at the expense of the surrounding counties. Although kinship and particularistic connexions were important in Birmingham as in Sheffield, the greater structural complexity and 'dynamic density' of the former city encouraged a greater reliance on formal organisations in the political arena. Also the interplay between political, religious and industrial issues and organisations was much greater. The spirit of Birmingham's public life in this period is nicely conveyed by John Cale Miller, who wrote in 1851 that in all 'politico-religious questions a Minister is not only justified in giving, but is bound fearlessly to give, expression to his opinion, and to influence, by all fair and legitimate means, the opinions of others'.¹⁰¹

Tory interests, well-placed in prestigious institutions such as the Grammar School and the General Hospital, had been able to respond quickly to the new constraints of post-1832 politics and by the mid-1840s they had held the initiative. However, the Tory alliance between urban professionals and businessmen and country gentry was by the end of that decade being increasingly counterbalanced by a strengthening of the links between, on the one hand, Liberal professionals and businessmen and, on the other hand, members of Birmingham's

¹⁰¹ A G, 3.3.1851, cit Mole 1976, 8.

artisanry and lower middle class. From about 1854 a state of approximate equilibrium existed between county and borough and between Tories and Liberals. Internal divisions on matters such as the relative influence appropriate to state institutions and voluntary associations produced conditions for the establishment of a regime of Economists on Birmingham's town council. Although their social composition and attitudes towards public spending were reminiscent of Ironside's Democrats, the Economists sought their victories on the Council, not in ward-motes.

In the wake of the decade of 'equipoise' Birmingham's big bourgeoisie of businessmen and professional men was ridden with a conflict, running through all its major institutions, between a county-oriented establishment and an establishment closely identifying itself with the concerns of all Birmingham's citizens. By its creed, expressed in 1861 through the words of George Dawson, the latter defined itself in opposition to traditional institutions:

It was the tendency of old associations, old corporations, old churches and the like, to go to ruin and to serve no longer the objects which in bygone days they were established for But while the old guilds and the old corporations had declined, we had found a new plan of forming ourselves together more in accordance with the thought and feeling of the time, and capable of bringing about a better union of classes.¹⁰²

The city itself was to undertake the task of caring for its inhabitants since

a great town exists to discharge towards the people of that town the duties that a great nation exists to discharge towards the people of that nation.¹⁰³

¹⁰² Dawson Collection, XV, 29.

¹⁰³ Dawson 1866, 23.

The new civic establishment was largely successful in winning the support of Birmingham's artisan population as well as making significant headway among the new white collar lower middle class. As it re-acquired the aggressive strain of Nonconformity which had been expressed three decades before it also offered a congenial focus of allegiance for Dissenting shopkeepers and related elements of the old petty bourgeoisie.

In Chapter Four it was argued that the institutions and solidarities of Birmingham and Sheffield could be understood in terms of the relations between the big bourgeoisie and the two foci of the older capitalist order centred respectively on the landed estate and in the social networks of artisans and the petty bourgeoisie. In Birmingham, the big bourgeoisie divided into two sections, each establishing an alliance with a major wing of the old order. Birmingham's artisans and small traders were inheritors of norms and practices belonging to an age before mechanisation and bureaucracy although both had been constrained to adapt, the former through the paternalistic but forceful insistence of employers and the latter through the painful learning experiences of men like Allday and Avery. A complex interplay between a yearning for old ways and a modernising dynamism, between pressures to harry ancient enemies and a growing fear of new social dangers was to characterise the movement which Joseph Chamberlain was eventually to lead.¹⁰⁴ The division of Birmingham's business and professional leaders between the two wings of the old order is worth emphasising since it throws into sharp relief the contrasting pattern in Sheffield. In that city, as had been seen, the big

104 See Chapter Ten.

bourgeoisie was acquiring great wealth and influence and a new set of leaders with the rise of the heavy steel industry. This new establishment did not divide between the two wings of the old order but threw its weight decisively onto the side of the great landed magnates in opposition to long-entrenched artisan and petty-bourgeois solidarities whose manifestations had included the trade union 'outrages' and Ironside's democratic political movement.¹⁰⁵ As will be seen, the division within Birmingham's middle-class leadership was paralleled by a serious split within Sheffield's artisan population. An exploration of these two schisms, which had important consequences for the subsequent development of class relationships and institutional orders in Birmingham and Sheffield, will be carried out in Chapter Eight. Before that, however, the emergence of a distinctive pattern of provision in the sphere of formal education in each of the cities will be described.

105 These comparative remarks require three qualifications with respect to Sheffield: political divisions within the middle class between supporters of the Liberal and Conservative parties persisted; some of the former (eg Robert Leader of the Sheffield Independent) were less hostile to the trade unions than many of the latter (eg W C Long of the Sheffield Telegraph); and to a significant extent the new large scale capitalists were able to ignore rather than try to destroy 'old' Sheffield.

Chapter Five

"THE TRAINING UP OF WELL-EDUCATED, SOBER, LOYAL AND OBEDIENT
SERVANTS"

Elementary and Secondary Education in Birmingham and
Sheffield 1830-70.

The most important fact about education in the period 1830-70 is that it was provided and consumed almost entirely by volunteers. This was particularly the case in Birmingham and Sheffield which were practically untouched by the provisions of the Factory Acts. In 1851 less than three per cent of children attending school in the two cities were (at the behest of Guardians of the Poor, employers or magistrates) attached to workhouse, factory and industrial schools. Endowments subsidised the education of less than ten per cent of pupils. Government money, entailing the threat of increased central direction, began to flow more freely in the late 1850s but compulsory attendance at elementary schools was not generally required until after 1870.¹

Members of all social classes participated as sponsors or clients of educational institutions, giving the time, money and energy needed. Because of this formal education provides a sensitive indicator of differences between cities with respect to the social fissures and alignments that occurred as the growing manufacturing city impinged upon the old order. In order to capture in some degree of fullness the way formal education participated in the development of local class structures it is desirable to consider together institutions

1. Education Census 1851, Table P. Gosden 1966, 10-22.
On the earlier 1846 Minutes see J R B Johnson 1970,
esp 117.

catering for a wide range of middle-class and working-class groups. In this chapter secondary and elementary education are discussed. In the following chapter adult education and medical schools are examined.

There are two strands of argument interwoven within these chapters. First, a number of persisting structural characteristics of formal education in each city are interpreted as particular aspects of the forms of social differentiation analysed in Chapters Two and Three. For example, it is argued that the pattern of secondary education which developed in each city was an aspect of: the level of commercial and professional activity; the relative social power of professional as opposed to commercial families; and the relative influence of traditional status norms emphasising classical learning (as opposed to the market in business occupations) in regulating the relations between schools and clients. In Birmingham the schools of the King Edward VI Foundation acquired a central position within the city's array of civic institutions and became a major object of political conflict. The Foundation served as an institutional nexus closely linking together the schooling of professional and business families in an educational context which preserved the supremacy of classical learning. These schools greatly diminished the potential middle-class clientele of the private sector locally and, along with the Edgbaston Proprietary School, were for many an acceptable alternative to boarding public schools. In Sheffield secondary education was dominated by private provision oriented to vocational, particularly commercial studies. Boarding school was a much more attractive option for professional and business families.

As will be seen, the pattern of elementary education in each city was greatly influenced by the level of demand for juvenile labour and the vigour of apprenticeship as a form of industrial training under the control of the trade unions. In both cities working-class clients of educational institutions expressed a combination of motivations with respect to schooling. Among these were the desire to obtain marketable skills (such as literacy and numeracy) and the wish to express 'respectability'. In both cities also, middle-class sponsors had mixed motives. These included: the struggle for relative advantage between competing middle-class establishments, in part expressed as a contest between Anglicans and Dissenters; the attempt to maximise their influence over the socialisation of working-class youth; and, linking the two, the Evangelical mission to save souls and cultivate a Christian morality within domestic and class relationships. However, the relative priority of these different motives and their means of expression differed between the two cities. For example, it was more difficult in Sheffield than in Birmingham, especially at the beginning of this period, for working-class people to obtain marketable skills through formal education without a loss of 'independence'. The paucity of private schools for members of their class and the bureaucratic regimentation of the public day schools made Sunday schools a more popular source of instruction than in Birmingham where private provision was more abundant at this level.

Similarly participation in adult education in Sheffield entailed either subjection to a stifling middle-class morality or an assertion of 'self-government' by artisans in their 'own' institutions. In Birmingham, by contrast, a less tense relationship between the classes was maintained within adult

education. This reflected the weakness of autonomous artisan institutions in that city and the more relaxed disposition of members of the big bourgeoisie towards their employees. In these conditions the conflict between evenly-balanced civic elites within this bourgeoisie acquired great prominence and structured the provision of elementary day schooling in the public sphere. By contrast, in Sheffield a 'truce' developed whereby Dissenters maintained predominance in the sphere of Sunday schooling and the Church of England was allowed to build up a leading position in the sphere of weekday schooling. In this city the major axis of conflict was not horizontal, within the big bourgeoisie, but vertical, between members of that class and the labouring population. It was expressed, for example, in the hostility of Anglican clergy towards apprenticeship.

The second strand of argument refers to the participation of formal education in the transformation of class structures and related aspects of social differentiation as analysed in Chapters Three and Four. Between the 1830s and 1850s the provision of education in Birmingham was one aspect of a broader process which had three aspects: conflict occurred within a divided big bourgeoisie; there was a steady expansion of the network of civic institutions especially in the educational and cultural spheres; and the independent influence of working-class inhabitants within both the educational sphere (as clients of private schools) and the industrial sphere (as members of trade unions) was weakened. By the mid-1850s conflict within the big bourgeoisie was being dispersed or contained. Birmingham's labouring population were becoming tied in to a complex network of institutions through which inter-class control and intra-class bargaining took place.

Two examples may be mentioned. First, the progress of the King Edward VI Foundation was greatly affected by the conflict within the big bourgeoisie. Its tentative movement in the direction of the public boarding schools was halted during the 1830s by opponents of the Anglican establishment. However, subsequent expansion of the Foundation's local educational provision strengthened its influence over the lower middle class. Second, during the 1830s and 1840s the Church of England, having been under attack on the issue of church rates, succeeded in greatly extending public day school provision for working-class children at the expense of private schooling. Their efforts were matched by their Dissenting opponents. Jointly, the progress they made before mid-century in 'coralling' working-class children within their schools was paralleled by the steady erosion of artisan privileges in the sphere of industrial production.

Meanwhile, as will be seen, the development of medical education in Birmingham was ridden with conflict between, on the one hand, lawyers and clerics strongly connected to county society and, on the other hand, doctors whose influence was increasing in the course of urban industrial growth. By contrast, in Sheffield urban professional men measured their success not by their capacity to resist the old rural order but by the extent to which they were accepted by it. There were parallel differences between the cities in the development of elementary education although in this case the most powerful constraints in Sheffield derived from the neighbourhood level rather than the county. Before 1870 the provision of public elementary day schools made comparatively little headway against the contrary assertions of neighbourhood autonomy expressed through Chartism, plebian Methodism

and the trade societies. More specifically, in contrast to Birmingham, elementary education was in competition with the structures of control in the industrial sphere rather than complementing them. A decisive transformation in social relationships occurred at Sheffield during the two decades after mid-century. The growth of the heavy steel industry had three effects with important implications in the educational sphere. First, the relative influence of the trade societies and their apprenticeship rules was greatly reduced. Second, a considerable growth occurred in a section of Sheffield's population whose offspring were subject to the control of neither the trade societies nor clerical educationists. Third, a new elite of steel manufacturers was formed whose members had the political and economic capacity to construct a more extensive system of elementary and secondary education. However, little was done before the 1870 Education Act, a state of inactivity which reflected the weakness of either cooperative or competitive impulses in the public sphere in Sheffield.

Two other general points should be made. First, it will be seen that strong links were already developing between the different sectors of education in Birmingham by the 1850s, forming one part of the complex web of institutional bonds meshing together establishments and social classes in that city. Sheffield's educational enterprises were far less closely tied to each other and to other institutional orders within the city. This was one expression of a deep-seated revulsion in many parts of Sheffield society against participating in extended networks of interdependence and thereby increasing the elements of vulnerability and uncertainty in social life. By

contrast, Birmingham's educational institutions tended to be legitimated by their sponsors in terms of their responsiveness to a wide range of demands from different sectors of society. They tried, of course, to channel this demand for their own purposes but it was the comprehensiveness of the service on offer which they stressed before their public. By contrast, educational schemes in Sheffield tended to be either efforts by special interest to look after their own exclusive concerns or speculative attempts at drilling through the gritty barrier protecting labouring communities against intrusion from above. The Church of England broke many a bit in this endeavour. The code words of Birmingham education were 'responsiveness', 'encouragement' and 'comprehensiveness'. In Sheffield the code words were 'exclusion', 'inhibition', 'discouragement', 'rescue' and 'salvation'.

Second it should be emphasised that solidarities focused upon the municipal level of integration in Birmingham exercised, through their complexity and aura of self-confidence, an increasingly strong gravitational pull on local neighbourhoods and the county. By contrast, in Sheffield the city's middle class were hemmed in between the confident patrician culture of the country houses and the vigorous 'rough' culture of Sheffield's streets and woods. School rooms and lecture halls were irrelevant to the latter.² When he first came to the town, Mr Ashley of the *Lancasterian* school had been shocked 'by the dog-fighting exhibitions on Sundays, in the vicinity of the town':

2 In 1846 the percentage of marks made in signing marriage registers in Birmingham parish was 29% (men); 47% (women). The equivalent proportions in Sheffield were 34% (men); 53% (women). In 1864 the figures were for Birmingham parish 26% (men); 35% (women) and for Sheffield 27% (men; 42% (women). Sargant 1867a, 134-5.

Such a concourse of young men and boys in the field on the Sabbath, struck me as being a peculiar feature in the manners of the people; and, as I saw them only at a distance, I at first supposed that pugilistic contests were the occasion of these assemblies, till their number and frequency convinced me that it must be some more popular amusement that could congregate such numbers so constantly, and I soon learnt that these cruel and barbarous scenes were peculiarly interesting to the youth who systematically train a great number of dogs for the purpose.³

By the 1840s, such sports were anachronistic in Birmingham.

In 1841 the rector of All Saints remarked of part of his flock

The population of Nineveh is much behind the rest of Birmingham in moral, religious, and intellectual habits. Bull-baiting was only given up two years ago, being kept up longer than in any other part near Birmingham.⁴

It remains to provide evidence to support the generalisations set out above, beginning with secondary education.

Secondary education

In 1552, Edward VI endowed a Free Grammar School in Birmingham with lands yielding £21 per annum. In 1603, Thomas Smith endowed a Free Grammar School in Sheffield with lands worth £30 per annum. By the time of the Schools Inquiry Commission the King Edward VI Foundation was worth over £12,000 per annum, an income greater than the combined total receipts of the other thirty nine endowed grammar schools in Warwickshire, Worcestershire and Staffordshire (excluding Rugby School). At the same period Sheffield Grammar School could scrape together a mere £200 a year. The Head Master of King Edward VI Grammar School proposed to the members of the

³ CEC Sheff 1843, evid e 11.

⁴ CEC Birm 1843, evid f 195.

Schools Inquiry Commission in 1865 that his school should stand alongside Rugby, Harrow and Eton at the head of a national system of endowed public schools.⁵ By contrast, the Assistant Commissioner in Sheffield reported:

The general character of the institution is that of a secondary or commercial school of a high class rather than of a purely grammar school (It) leaves one great want, that of a high or classical school, still unsupplied.⁶

Birmingham's endowed grammar school had reaped the benefit of its favourable location in a thriving centre of commerce and on the crossroads of national communications. The Foundation's income had risen four-fold since 1824 and was increasing further as leases fell in and property values moved upwards. A huge debt had recently been settled by sales of land to the London and North Western Railway Company.⁷ The equivalent institution in Sheffield, marooned in its isolated collection of manufacturing communities, had been starved of funds and clients.

The career of Birmingham's grammar school up to the 1850s is woven into the broader conflict between municipal establishments for control of the city's institutions described in Chapter Four. In 1842 the Town Council expressed the opinion that the revenues of the King Edward VI Foundation 'if duly husbanded, would amply suffice to furnish the means of sound instruction to every family in the borough'.⁸

5 Dent 1894, 17; Sheff Dir 1862, 21; BJ, 30.2.1865; PP1867-8, XXVIII Schools Inquiry Commission (henceforth SIC), Vol 4, 565-6.

6 loc cit, vol 18, 250-5, esp 251. On Sheffield Grammar Schools see also G C M Smith 1937, J R Wigfall 1937.

7 C E Matthews 1864, 21.

8 Town Council 1842, iii.

The Foundation was in fact in the middle of a programme of expansion which between 1837 and 1852 provided four Elementary Schools, each placed in one of the four quarters of the town complementing the Grammar School which was at the town centre in New Street. By the latter date over 1000 boys and girls were receiving instruction in these schools which, like the Grammar School, charged no fees and admitted pupils on the recommendation of the twenty governors of the Foundation. The term 'elementary' is misleading insofar as it suggests that the schools were patronised by the poor. The school registers show that from the beginning almost all the children were the sons of tradesmen and artisans, shopkeepers, clerks and small manufacturers. These schools were under the general superintendence of the Head Master of the Grammar School and their curricula included geography, history and the casting of accounts. By the 1860s Latin was being taught in one of the schools.⁹

Three major complaints were directed against the Foundation. The first was that its rapidly growing revenues were under the close control of a narrow clique of Tories, with the solicitor J W Whateley at the centre. The second was that the funds of the Foundation were not being used to help the 'poorer classes, to whom it is in name and, in substance, ought to be principally devoted'. The third was that the Grammar

9 Tyson 1960, 129; VCH, 552-3; Griffiths 1861, 473; PP 1867-8, XXVIII, Pt XII, Report of T H Green, Assistant Commissioner (henceforth Green Report), 104-5. On the King Edward VI Grammar School see also C Foster 1940, 196-201; PP 1861, XXI, Royal Comm. on State of Popular Education in England and Wales (henceforth Newcastle) vol 1, 537-9; Science and Art Department, Seventh Annual Report, 1859, 25-6; Gifford 1858; Bunce 1895; Hutton 1952.

School concentrated upon classical studies to an intolerable extent in a large manufacturing city. Before mid-century the main attacks came in two waves. When in 1830 the Governors applied to Parliament for permission to build a new classical school on the outskirts of town (with the promise of a new commercial school only when this was completed), opposition was led by middle class Radicals such as the lawyer Joseph Parkes. The deputation to the House of Commons in which he served was backed in its protests by petitions from 7,000 artisans, the Birmingham Cooperative Society and the Board of Guardians. In effect, the Governors, who also wished to increase the number of boarders at the Grammar School, were hoping to make the establishment more like a public boarding school. However, they agreed to keep the school in the city centre, begin work on new classical and commercial departments simultaneously, and establish the 'elementary' schools described above. In 1842, the second attack came, this time at the hands of the newly established Town Council. On this occasion the curriculum and clientele of the Foundation schools were secondary issues. It was a battle between rival corporation - one Tory and Anglican, the other with a Dissenting and Radical stamp - who were competing for control over a strategic and increasingly valuable resource. Although the Town Council pressed for the Governors to be given powers to extend the provision of elementary schools their main demands were that they, the Town Council, should appoint five additional Governors and that the borough auditors should examine the accounts of the Foundation on a regular basis. They were completely unsuccessful.¹⁰

¹⁰ Town Council 1842, viii; C E Matthews 1864, iii-iv, 12-20; Griffiths 1861, 562-4.

From 1837 the Grammar School received competition from the Edgbaston Proprietary School. The new school was sponsored by a number of prominent Dissenting businessmen in reaction to the Anglican bias, old-fashioned classicism, cramped conditions and harsh pedagogic regime of the Grammar School at that time. However, its principal propagandist, himself a manufacturer, insisted that the school's founders could not 'be accused of making sacrifices to a barren utility'.¹¹ From the start its daily curriculum consisted of English, Latin, Greek, Mathematics and French with German and drawing as occasional subjects.

After twenty years' adherence to this course, they reaped their reward: for on the establishment of the Oxford Local Examinations, the school, in the first year, stood at the head of all the competing schools in the kingdom ...¹²

The same year that the Edgbaston Proprietary School opened its doors, the Foundation obtained an Act which allowed it also to introduce modern languages, English literature and other branches of the arts and sciences into the Classical School. However, the new Commercial School (which became known as the English Department) was described by T H Green as a 'crowded and ill-ventilated' place which 'towards dusk on an autumn or winter afternoon ... became a mere bear-garden'. Although most of the students passing

11. op cit, 16-17; Green Report, 93; letter from W L Sargant, BDP 13.12.1865. The Edgbaston Proprietary School was the successor to the Hills' ventures at Hill Top and Hazelwood where Sargant had been a pupil. Sargant 1870, 185-91; C E Matthews 1864, 13; Gill 1952, 384; Dent 1894, 439.

12. Sargant, BDP 13.12.1865.

through the Grammar School (in both its Classical and English Departments) were destined for some kind of commercial occupation, Green found least to criticise when discussing 'the most careful and effective' teaching of the classics in the upper school. There was, he thought, some truth in the accusation that the Grammar School 'turned out a great many bad clerks and accountants for the sake of turning out a few very good scholars'.¹³

Having survived the onslaughts of 1830-1 and 1842 and modified the curriculum, the Governors and Head Master of the Grammar School were by mid-century apparently in a secure and dominant position within Birmingham education. The Gentleman's Magazine caught the prevailing mood in 1855:

The Birmingham school is an important example of the good administration of an old foundation under timely change, which has raised it from insignificance to splendour, instead of the revenues being sacrificed to a job.¹⁴

When the British Association held its inaugural meeting at Birmingham, E H Gifford, the Head Master of the Grammar School presented figures which were apparently intended to emphasise the wide range and judicious balance of the Foundation's educational provision. Of 465 pupils, 250 were in the Classical School and 215 in the English School. Sons of professional men accounted for about a quarter of the former total but did not figure in the latter. Off-spring of manufacturers were almost equally divided between the two schools. About six-sevenths of the pupils in the English School were the sons of manufacturers, clerks and tradesmen. The

13 C E Matthews 1864, 16-18; Green Report, 105-6, 121-2, 144.

14 The Gentleman's Magazine, November 1855, 499.

Elementary Schools drew upon 'small tradesmen and respectable artisans'. Anglican pupils had a preponderance of about five to one in the Classical School and three to one in the English School. In the Elementary Schools the ratio was only about two to one. Finally, Gifford remarked with satisfaction that the elementary schools 'do not interfere to any considerable extent with the parochial schools, as three-fifths of the boys and more than four-fifths of the girls have never been in any other public elementary school'.¹⁵ Complimentarity with other institutions rather than competition, openness to 'legitimate' educational aspirations rather than 'arbitrary' exclusiveness: these were the latent themes of Gifford's paper. By the 1850s, the Foundation was emphasising its close identification with the educational needs of Birmingham while continuing to give effective pre-eminence to the prestigious classical curriculum. These values were shared by the leading spokesman for the Edgbaston Proprietary School:

Now for commercial pursuits, a boy may acquire by the time he is thirteen all the rudiments which are necessary; and if he is intended to be a clerk he may well leave at that age. If however, he is to come into an established business with the expectation of becoming a principal, he may well complain in after life, if he is removed so soon. He will find afterwards that he is at a great disadvantage when he gets into the company of educated men. He will frequently not understand what they are talking of, or their illustrations and allusions: a Latin quotation in a book, or a Latin name in a museum, abashes him: let him be the severest democrat imaginable, he finds that there is such a thing as intellectual rank, and he feels that his place is a low one. He may get wealth and outward consideration, but he cannot pass over into the class of the educated.¹⁶

¹⁵ Gifford 1858, 131-2, 134.

¹⁶ Sargant 1870, 200.

The Foundation thoroughly dominated middle-class education in Birmingham, pushing private enterprise at this level to the fringes. In the mid-1860s T H Green noted 'the want of good preparatory schools now felt by the more educated class'. Private schoolmasters had to compete with the free provision offered by the Foundation. The existence of the Foundation was responsible for a 'degradation of the private schools of the town'.¹⁷ The 1851 Education Census showed that recorded attendances at private day schools were in both Birmingham and Sheffield just over forty per cent of all day school attendances.¹⁸ However, such attendances were distributed between 'middling' or 'superior' private schools for middle-class children and 'common' or 'dame' schools for the children of poorer parents. A basis for comparing the two cities in terms of this distribution is provided by two investigations carried out in 1838, one in Sheffield by Thomas Sutton, Vicar of Sheffield, and one in Birmingham by J R Wood acting on behalf of the Birmingham Educational Statistical Society.¹⁹

17 Green Report, 110-12.

18 Calculated from Education Census 1851, Table P, clvii, clxv.

19 Holland 1843, 220-1. Birmingham Statistical Society for the Improvement of Education; 'Report on the state of Education in Birmingham', Journal of Statistical Society, 1840, vol 3 (henceforth Birm Stat Soc 1840), 25-49. The figures for Birmingham in Table 14 are based upon the summary table presented in Birm Stat Soc 1840, 49.

TABLE 14: Private schooling in Birmingham and Sheffield 1838

SHEFFIELD			
PRIVATE OR GENERAL DAY SCHOOLS	Schools	Scholars	(%)
Superior	31	1273	28.5
Middling (Day and Evening)	22	1019	22.9
Common (Day and Evening)	27	1130	25.3
Dame Schools	46	1037	23.3
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total	126	4459	100.0
BIRMINGHAM			
SCHOOLS SUPPORTED SOLELY BY THE SCHOLARS			
Infant Schools (Private)	3	68	0.7
Dame Schools	267	3900	37.5
Common Day Schools	177	4280	41.1
Superior Private and Boarding Schools	97	2166	20.8
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total	544	10414	100.0

Sources: Holland 1843; Birm Stat Soc 1840

Note: Sheffield figures refer to enrolments. Birmingham figures refer to average attendance.

The data are obviously not strictly comparable in all respects but even within their limits they suggest that 'superior' schools commanded a larger share of the private market in Sheffield than Birmingham. Although the Sheffield figures exclude local boarding schools, their inclusion would possibly have increased the bias in Sheffield's favour. White's Directories for 1849 list 25 private academies offering boarding accommodation in Sheffield and only 26 such institutions in Birmingham despite its greater size. Green complained that the 'number of boys attending schools of any kind, public or private, professing to be of the 'middle' kind, in

Birmingham and its suburbs, seems much smaller than it should be'. At Sheffield in 1838, though not in Birmingham, such schools had been sufficiently numerous and distinct to merit a separate classification.²⁰

Whereas in Birmingham the Foundation dominated secondary education through the strong vertebral link it created between the most prestigious local schools for professional families and the schools most favoured by the lower middle class, in Sheffield the sector was regulated by the market mechanism. This had important consequences for curricular patterns. In Birmingham, as Green noted in the 1860s, 'the professional class' were 'the first element in the constituency of the classical school'; 'probably four-fifths' of the local medical men had passed through that department.²¹ Businessmen aspiring to enter 'the class of the educated' accepted the values propogated there. In Sheffield, however, the strategic determination of curricular emphases within middle-class education resided in the broad band of commercial and manufacturing occupations. Vocation relevance was the key selling point for enterprising schoolmasters. They peddled their wares in a fickle market to a clientele who had to be convinced of their utility. Rather like eighteenth century physicians vying for aristocratic patronage, some of them offered to the local middle

20 The Sheffield Directory of 1849 lists 25 'Gents' and Ladies' Boarding and Day Schools". Sheff Dir 1849, 237-9; Bir Dir 1849, 299-301; Green Report, 110; Holland 1843, 220.

21 Green Report, 119.

class ambitiously-framed systems of educational diagnosis and treatment which would make their children fit for the struggle of life.²² Cosmologies abounded, eclectic mixtures of Pestalozzian and phrenological principles.²³ An example will illustrate the character of these enterprises. In 1839 H C Flory of Myrtle Spring House was claiming to teach only 'what is practicable and practically useful'. This included English grammar, composition and elocution, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Dutch, Anglo-Saxon, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, accounts, mathematics, history, geography, drawing, singing, and 'lectures on all branches of Moral and Natural Philosophy'. A few weeks later he also advertised 'Pestalozzian gymnastics with riding, swimming, fencing and dancing'. Flory in effect provided counting-house skills as a staple diet, adding a variety of side dishes to catch as wide a range of customers as possible. His competitors, such as Rev H H Piper at Norton Academy adopted a similar strategy. Samuel Eadon and J H Abraham were other well-known local pedagogues. Apart from the market mechanism, a degree of informal coordination between the leading private schools arose from their masters' participation in organisations such as the Sheffield Literary and Philosophical Society and the part played by a few schools such as Abraham's Milk Street Academy in training men who later founded schools of their own.²⁴

22 cf Jewson 1974.

23 Private adventure schools in Sheffield are discussed in Board 1959, esp 74-99.

24 SI, 19.1.1839; SI 30.3.1839 cit Board 1959, 84; op cit, 79-80, 91, 95, 122, 157; Austen 1957; Porter 1932, 83.

Green found that in Birmingham the wealthier businessmen, especially those 'whose wealth is of longer standing, generally send their sons to boarding school' or, if Dissenters, to the Edgbaston Proprietary School.²⁵ It is likely that patronage of boarding schools was at least as pronounced, if not more so, in Sheffield. Although both the Sheffield Collegiate School (to be discussed below) and the Sheffield Grammar School had some professional support, they could provide no equivalent to the Foundation's Classical School.²⁶ One Sheffield chronicler recalled that in the 1850s 'well-to-do people in Sheffield were sending their sons to Germany for educational purposes, Saxe Meiningen being a favourite place'. Herbert Bramley, a prominent solicitor who became Sheffield's Town Clerk, had an 'elaborate education' in that locale, for example.²⁷ J G Fitch, reporting in the 1860s believed that 'an unusual proportion of parents in the middle and upper ranks of life probably send their children out of the town to be educated'.²⁸ In a sample of British steel

25 Green Report, 119.

26 Among the alumni of the Sheffield Grammar School were Robert Leader (Odom 1926, 15), Evangelical parson W B MacKenzie (op cit 50), the surgeon Wilson Overend (129) and the lawyer William Overend (139), the solicitor Henry Vickers (144), the railway engineer Joseph Locke (155) and the ubiquitous T A Ward (177). The Collegiate's ex-students included the churchman and historian E L Cutts (39), H A Favell, an archdeacon (45), the surgeons William Fisher Favell (120), Richard Favell (121) and Arthur Jackson (123), the solicitors Arthur Thomas (142) and Charles Macro Wilson (147), the architect J B Mitchell-Withers (156), the steel manufacturer W H Brittain (160), the gentleman-scientist H C Sorby (199) and the assayer A T Watson (203).

27 Stainton 1924, 313. The steel manufacturer Thomas Vickers was also educated in Germany. Odom 1926, 176.

28 SIC, Vol 9, 335.

manufacturers in 1865 drawn from more than one region but over-representing Sheffield, Charlotte Erikson found that roughly half had attended local schools and half had been sent away to boarding schools. Erikson found that an 'increasing proportion of the steel manufacturers in each subsequent period was educated at independent boarding schools away from home'.²⁹

Standing between the boarding schools outside Sheffield and the private adventure schools, many ephemeral, within the town there were three more substantial enterprises which sought to provide a broadly-based middle-class education. Apart from the Grammar School, there were the Collegiate and Wesley College, both founded in the 1830s presumably with the hope of tapping an expanded clientele conjured up by urban growth.³⁰ Their respective fates are instructive. Wesley College, founded by a subscription of shares in 1837, was the most successful. Its curriculum in the mid-1860s was described as follows:

"Fancy Classics", as they are sometimes called, are discarded Classics and mathematics furnish the groundwork of the mental training, but are turned earlier (than in the ordinary grammar school) to account as instruments of general culture.³¹

The students of Wesley College were overwhelmingly boarders: 197 out of 227 students in 1864. The day boys were 'chiefly sons of manufacturers'. Wesley College did not depend upon

29 Erikson 1959, 4, 32. The locally-educated included self-made men such as Mark Firth who went to a private day school and John Brown who attended 'a small school held in an attic'. Stainton 1924, 251; Odom 1926, 162.

30 See Ball 1971; Cotton 1949; Davy 1931; Wallis 1953; Easton 1900.

31 SIC, Vol 18, 243.

Sheffield for its success but drew upon 'the upper ranks of Methodist Society' over a wide area. Backed by the Wesleyan Methodist Society it could keep its fees low and its classrooms full.³²

The Collegiate was founded in 1835 as an Anglican classical school under the presidency of Lord Wharncliffe. Unfortunately, many shares remained unsold, no dividend was ever paid, and from 1843 successive headmasters ran the Collegiate as 'essentially a private school'. In 1862 Rev G B Atkinson, the headmaster, established a 'School of Practical Science' at the Collegiate which was to offer preliminary instruction in engineering or 'any manufacturing or constructive art'. The Duke of Devonshire visited Sheffield to inaugurate the venture. This enterprising effort to boost student numbers failed miserably. By 1864 Atkinson and his eight staff were teaching only 71 students, of whom 20 were boarders. In 1872 the Collegiate came within a hair's breadth of closing down altogether.³³

The Sheffield Grammar School had introduced a commercial curriculum in the 1840s. So far from dominating local education was this establishment that in 1823 it had even lost control over the Free Writing School which the Church Burgesses had founded in its grounds a century before.³⁴ The steady decline of Sheffield's Grammar School, stubbornly resistant to resuscitation, contrasts forcibly with its namesake in Birmingham. In 1863 the Head Master of the latter

32 loc cit 243, 663; The Establishment, Principles ... etc of the Wesleyan Proprietary Grammar School ... 1839.

33 SIC Vol 18, 232-3, 667; Board 1959, 167-9; Atkinson 1861; ST, 16.12.1863; Sheffield Telegraph (henceforth ST) 11.1.1872.

34 Board 1959, 135; W G Matthews 1977, 282.

was dreaming of establishing scholarship links with the local public elementary schools and in this way giving his own school 'the position of a University, fostering and improving all the educational establishments of this neighbourhood'.³⁵ At this point it is convenient to turn to the sphere of elementary education.

The rest of this chapter is organised into four sections. First the motivations and realms of influence of working-class clients and middle-class sponsors of elementary education are discussed. Second, the character and significance of the development of Sunday schools in Sheffield and Birmingham are considered. Third, some aspects of the Evangelical movement in the two cities are analysed with particular reference to the provision of public day schools. Finally, the developing relationship between the institutional orders of formal education and industrial production in each city is examined for each city, especially after 1851.

Sponsors and clients

I should say that the greater part of parents are indifferent to the education of their children though occasionally I have met pleasing instances to the contrary. It is the opinion of most people connected with the welfare of the poor, that each church should have its day-school as well as a Sunday-school; and I trust the spirit is now abroad which considers this measure to be necessary. As to the schools of the Dissenters I know nothing, having the privilege of belonging to the Church of England; and I am fully persuaded church schools, attached to each church, and overlooked by the minister, would be the best means Government could adopt for the training of well-educated, sober, loyal, and obedient subjects.

(Member of the Visiting and Bettering Society, Sheffield 1843)³⁶

³⁵ Quoted in Tyson 1960, 263.

³⁶ CEC Sheff 1843, evid e8.

I've been married 18 years. I've eight children, five girls and three boys; the ages of the girls are respectively 18, 16, 9, 6, and 1½ years; and of the boys, 14, 12, and 4. The youngest that works is the boy of 12 years old ... he works with a table-knife hafter, who gives him 2s.6d a week. The boy of 14 works with his father, who is a table-knife hafter ... The two eldest girls are spoon-buffers ... Buffing is men's work; it's very hard work ... they work about 12 hours a day at buffing; the boy of 12 works twelve hours a day. Sometimes when my husband has work, my eldest son and he will work from 8 in the morning to 10 at night; my son has been accustomed to do so from the first. My husband thinks it better to work a little later at night than to get up early in the morning, for it would disturb the neighbours, as he works from home. The work tires my sons very much; they have to turn a glazer frame with the foot. We are all tired at night; I can hardly get up the stairs myself sometimes at night, my bones ache so. The boy that works out, works with a religious young man, who treats him well. They are not unhealthy children, but we are obliged to give them emetics and physic sometimes, for the dirt gets down their throats and makes them poorly.

The only one of my children who has been to school is my eldest son, who can read; he was taught to read at the poorhouse. The others can't read; they may tell their letters. The three eldest have been at Sunday-schools, but they don't go now, for want of clothes; therefore one only can read, and none of them can write. We sent one of the little girls to one of the large day-schools, where she went for four months, but didn't learn her letters; we can't afford to do more for them in the way of learning. On Sundays I make a fire upstairs, and keep them in the house as much as I can; I always try to keep them out of the streets, and the oldest boy reads sometimes.

There are great numbers of children who do run about the streets on Sunday. In many workshops there is great cursing and swearing; but the children are not forced to learn the habit. Some are well-behaved and some are not.

There are not two girls anywhere who are better behaved than mine, though they neither go to church nor chapel. I can't write myself; I could write when I was 15 years old. Children, in a general way, forget after they go to the (work) shops what they learned at school.

(Harriet Ashton, 40 years of age, 1843).³⁷

The lady from the Visiting and Bettering Society would probably not have considered that Harriet Ashton was one of the 'pleasing instances to the contrary' of the maxim that most Sheffield parents were 'indifferent to the education of their children'. After all, Mrs Ashton's three eldest had only been in intermittent attendance at Sunday school, a daughter had been taken away from day school after a mere four months, and it was only thanks to the poorhouse that one of her sons could read. In juxtaposition the two quotations indicate many aspects of the encounters between middle-class and working-class people which took place through the sphere of elementary education. The lady visitor was asserting the claim of the Anglican church to take responsibility for educating the labouring classes against the rival claims of Dissenters and the Government. The 'elementary school contest' between Anglicans and Dissenters was much more pronounced in Birmingham than Sheffield. It was informed by resentment against the rule of squire and cleric built up over several generations in the old lower middle class of shopkeepers and tradesmen.³⁸ There is evidence suggesting that although denominational enterprise in Birmingham was dominated by wealthy businessmen and leading professionals the lower middle class may have been better represented in Dissenting organisations.³⁹

The first quotation reflects the Anglican preference for day schools rather than Sunday schools. The latter sector, which relied heavily upon unpaid teachers, was dominated by Dissenting congregations.⁴⁰ A day school implied

38 F Adams 1882. See Chapter Two.

39 Frost 1978, 83.

40 Laqueur 1976, 39, 46, 60-1, 92-3.

the employment of a paid teacher and emphasised the clergyman's continuing responsibility for educational work.⁴¹ The monitorial system, still in fairly widespread use during the 1840s, relied upon the services of the more literate children as 'monitors'. In the Sunday schools, dependence upon the voluntary efforts of students drawn from among ex-students was even greater. Many of them were little more than children themselves. The detailed management of the Sunday schools, especially those run by the Dissenters was often in the hands of the teachers. Furthermore, Sunday schools drew an important part of their income from the donations of chapel congregations while day schools were to a significant extent dependent upon the schoolpence supplied by parents. The private schools also offered a degree of competition. In sum, the clientele of elementary schools were in a position to exercise a great deal of de facto influence over what occurred within them. The master of Pinfield Street National School went so far as to admit that 'if he was not very careful, the monitors would generally be bribed'.⁴²

Harriet Ashton epitomises the attitude towards education of the 'respectable' working class, a category which is not defined by income (since the Ashton family had clearly

41 Rev H W Bellairs, HMI for South Midland District, argued strongly that the clergy should make an improvement in the quality of paid schoolteachers a primary task. Committee of Council on Education, Minutes 1847-8, Vol 1, 1848, 106-7.

42 Hurt 1972, 88-91; Laqueur 1976, 65, 85-6, 92-3; C O Reid 1976, 175-6; CEC Birm 1843, evid f 195, f 197; rep F35.

known hard times) but by a pride in sober, disciplined and 'moral' behaviour. These values were not the product of attendance at church and school.⁴³ On the contrary, such attendance was one expression of respectability: the major inhibition against going to Sunday School was 'want of clothes'; that is, respectable clothes. The next best thing was to keep the children indoors and off the streets. Literacy and the opportunity for self-improvement were benefits which could be purchased at the expense of time, energy and money through attendance at school. In this case, a four-month trial of 'one of the large day-schools' (the apparent indifference to denominational colour is noteworthy) did not produce a result which justified the outlay. For many, Sunday school was a cheaper alternative. In Sheffield, Symons found that Red Hill Sunday school owed 'its popularity chiefly to its excellence as a writing school, for which it is still noted'. Allen Street Sunday school had a similar reputation.⁴⁴ As late as the mid-1860s in Birmingham, a

43 A distinction may, perhaps, be made between two notions of 'respectability': the first emphasises the distance between the norms of 'rough' and 'respectable' working class people; the second emphasises conformity to the norms of middle-class people as being desirable. Working-class people who were respectable in the first sense might well resist an appearance of deference or subordination to the dictates of middle-class groups. For two examples of the use of the concept of 'respectability' as a bargaining token in negotiations between working-class and middle-class establishments see Chapter Seven. For an alternative approach see C O Reid 1976.

44 CEC Sheff 1843, rep E27, E28; C O Reid 1976, 174.

manufacturer observed: 'I have found on inquiry that many of our people go to the Quakers' Sunday schools (which is strange, seeing that this is not the national religion), for the sake of the writing, and because they are systematically taught, and not merely confined to the Testament'.⁴⁵

Sunday Schools

It is possible to make crude distinctions among types of schools providing elementary education according to the degrees of influence upon their daily management which was exercised by, respectively, their predominantly middle-class sponsors and their predominantly working-class clients. Private schools, which had to survive in the market, were most subject to the whims of consumers. Public day schools, whose paid teachers were to a great extent responsible to managers, trustees, particularly clergymen, and to an increasing extent government inspectors, exemplified a higher degree of 'sponsor power'. Sunday schools stood at various points on a continuum between high client power and high sponsor power. Responsibility for their management was shared between teachers, many of whom were drawn from ex-pupils, and subscribers with a special regard for the interests of the sponsoring church or chapel.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ CEC Birm 1864, evid 98.

⁴⁶ A formulation in terms of this interplay between 'sponsor power' and 'client power' allows a more subtle representation of the expression of class relationships within formal education than one which lays undue stress on a single determining factor such as patterns of client demand or the control motivations of middle-class sponsors. Contributions to this debate include Laqueur 1976; JRB Johnson 1976b; Frost 1978; West 1978.

The distribution of children among the three forms of educational establishment may be roughly assessed by comparing once more figures drawn from the two surveys conducted in 1838. The context of these surveys will be briefly explained. The Birmingham Educational Statistical Society was formed in 1838 with the support of 'a considerable portion of the clergy ... as well as others not connected with the establishment, and gentlemen around'.⁴⁷ The regular agent of the Manchester Statistical Society carried out the survey, street by street, in a manner that appears to have been very thorough. He obtained enrolment figures for Sunday schools and figures of average attendance, which he thought were artificially low, for day schools.⁴⁸ The same year Thomas Sutton carried out his own survey of enrolments in Sheffield schools and 'subsequent enquiries in 1840-1', almost certainly by G C Holland were reported by the latter to have 'exhibited no material alteration in the facts'. The latter survey, which computed the 'number of children on the books' in Sunday schools and public day schools, produced slightly higher figures for Sunday schools and slightly lower figures for public day schools compared to Sutton's enquiry.⁴⁹

47 According to J Corrie, a local magistrate. Cullen 1975 125.

48 Birm Stat Soc 1840, 25, 26, 38; Frost 1978, 131.

49 Holland 1843, 220, 221; Cullen 1975, 131.

The relevant findings of the surveys of Wood and Sutton may be set out as follows:⁵⁰

TABLE 15: Enrolment and attendance at Sunday schools, public day schools and private day schools: Birmingham and Sheffield 1838

	1838	
	BIRMINGHAM	SHEFFIELD
Sunday Schools	16,757 (enrolment)	11,212 (enrolment)
Public Day Schools	3,834 ¹ (attendance)	6,100 ² (enrolment)
Private Day Schools (ie Common Day Schools and Dame Schools)	8,180 (attendance)	2,167 (enrolment)
	} 12,014 } 8267	

Sources: Holland 1843; Birm Stat Soc 1840.

- 1 Excludes scholars of King Edward VI Foundation.
- 2 Original figure of 6188 reduced to exclude Sheffield Grammar School.

Wood computed a figure for average attendance at Birmingham's Sunday schools of 12,224 which is 72.9% of the enrolment figure. In the early 1840s Symons showed that in fifteen public day schools '26.47 per cent of the whole are continually absent', implying an average attendance of not more than about 73%. Symons also calculated that nearly a quarter of enrolled pupils were regularly absent from Sheffield's Sunday schools.⁵¹ If the above figures for enrolment in both cities are uniformly reduced by 27% the following distribution of average attendances is obtained:

⁵¹ The following data probably tend to understate day school attendance in Birmingham and overstate day school attendance in Sheffield for the reasons given. Figures for public day school attendance in Birmingham are based upon Birm Stat Soc 1840, 43, Table 10.

⁵¹ op cit 38; CEC Sheff 1843, rep E20, E21.

TABLE 16: Average attendance at Sunday schools, public day schools and private day schools: Birmingham and Sheffield 1838

	BIRMINGHAM	SHEFFIELD
Sunday Schools	12,224	8,185
Public Day Schools	3,834)	4,453)
) 12,014) 6035
Private Day Schools	8,180)	1,582)
Number of Private Schools	444	73
Average size of clientele in Private Day Schools	18.4	21.7

Sources: Holland 1843; Birm Stat Soc 1840.

The above table suggests that in Birmingham the Sunday schools attracted about the same number of students as the day schools in 1838 but that in Sheffield the Sunday schools were about a third more successful than the local day schools.⁵²

Undoubtedly there was some overlap in attendances since, for example, denominational day schools sometimes attempted to make attendance at Sunday school obligatory.⁵³ Private schools accounted for about two-thirds of day school attendances in Birmingham but only about a quarter of day school attendances in Sheffield.

The relatively high popularity of Sunday schools compared to day schools in Sheffield cannot be explained with reference to a market for juvenile labour during the week since, as has been seen, this was much more pronounced in Birmingham.⁵⁴

52: For estimates of attendance among working-class child population in Birmingham at Sunday and day schools see Frost 1978, 48,51.

53 According to J R Wood, of the 16,757 enrolled Sunday scholars in Birmingham 4141 also attended day school. Birm Stat Soc 1840, 38.

54 cf Hopkins 1974; J Rowley 1978.

The pull of the labour market may, however, have contributed to the fact that attendances at all types of school drew a smaller proportion of the juvenile population in Birmingham than Sheffield, according to the Education Census of 1851:

TABLE 17: Levels of school attendance by juveniles:
Birmingham and Sheffield 1851

	1851	
	BIRMINGHAM	SHEFFIELD
	%	%
Total juvenile population (twenty years and under)	106020 (100.0)	62220 (100.0)
Total Sunday School attendances	21406 (20.2)	14919 (24.0)
Total Private Day School attendances	9151 (8.6)	6284 (10.1)
Total Public Day School attendances	13032 (12.3)	9333 (15.0)

Source: 1851 Census

In fact the paucity of work for young people in Sheffield is likely to have tended to increase attendance at school during the week. In 1841 the master of Sheffield's Lancasterian boys' School commented that:

... while nothing is so provoking to the teacher who is anxious to do good, yet nothing is more common than the following expression which is uttered by the parents when they apply for the admission of their children to the public school. "Sir, I've brought my boy, if you'll have him; for I thought he might as well come here till he's fit to earn a trifle, as it will keep him from running the streets and getting into mischief, for we don't know what to do wi' him at home." 55

The effect of the labour market on attendance seems to have been most pronounced, as would be expected, in the case of girls in Birmingham:

TABLE 18: Levels of school attendance by juveniles, distinguishing by sex: Birmingham and Sheffield 1851

	1851	
	BIRMINGHAM	SHEFFIELD
	%	%
Male juvenile population (twenty years and under)	52640 (100.0)	31108 (100.0)
Male Sunday School attendance	10906 (20.7)	7380 (23.7)
Male Private Day School attendance	4377 (8.3)	2992 (9.6)
Male Public Day School attendance	7508 (14.3)	4986 (16.0)
Female juvenile population (twenty years and under)	53380 (100.0)	31112 (100.0)
Female Sunday School attendance	10500 (19.7)	7539 (24.2)
Female Private Day School attendance	4774 (8.9)	3292 (10.6)
Female Public Day School attendance	5524 (10.4)	4347 (14.0)

Source: 1851 Census

The rate of attendance at public day schools among juvenile girls was about thirty-five per cent higher in Sheffield than in Birmingham. By comparison, the rate of attendance among Sheffield's male juveniles was only about twelve per cent greater than among their peers in Birmingham. Rev Thomas Nunns of St Bartholomew's ran a day school for boys and girls in Birmingham. He commented in 1841:

The number attending the day school is about 150 boys and 60 girls. The age of admission is about 6 years. The average age of those attending is about 10; at 11 years the boys are generally withdrawn, because they can earn so much that the parents will not allow them to remain longer.

Many of the boys are withdrawn to help in manufacturies at an earlier age, some as young as 8 years. The girls are much less regular in their attendance, being called away by various causes, especially to nurse and take care of the family while mother is at work, washing &c. Many little girls also go out as servants to small shopkeepers. From these combined causes, the education of the girls is infinitely more neglected than that of the boys.⁵⁶

To some extent, Birmingham's young female population did make up for educational neglect during the week by attendance at Sunday school. It is noticeable that in both cities female attendance at private day schools was higher than male attendance. This probably reflects the prevalence of schools offering 'refinements' to young ladies from middle-class families of which there were a great number in both Birmingham and Sheffield.⁵⁷

To return to the issue raised above: how is the relatively high popularity of Sunday school attendance at Sheffield compared to Birmingham in the late 1830s to be explained? A lack of places in the public day schools is unlikely to have been the cause since, as a local Wesleyan minister noted in 1843, 'in this town there is provision for more than are receiving instruction, - several schools not being full'.⁵⁸ Perhaps part of the answer lies in the relatively small availability of private schools for working-class children in Sheffield. Nineteenth-century Birmingham had inherited a strong regional tradition of private schoolmastering from the previous century which ensured a ready supply of pedagogues, of varying degrees of ability and

⁵⁶ CEC Birm 1843 evid f 192.

⁵⁷ Robson's Directory of Birmingham and Sheffield 1839, 466, 803; Board 1959, 170-7; Leinster-Mackay 1974, 12.

⁵⁸ CEC Sheff 1843 evid e 5.

levels of aspiration, to set up dame schools and common day schools.⁵⁹ Sheffield was a less attractive site for anyone with literary or scholarly inclinations and those who made the journey from outside may well have preferred to fish the potentially more lucrative pond of middling-wealthy families in the market for commercial training. The two surveys of 1838 recorded 444 private schools offering services to working-class clients in Birmingham but only 73 such schools in Sheffield.⁶⁰ As a consequence, it was relatively more difficult in Sheffield to obtain training in literacy and numeracy for moderate fees as a straight market transaction. Some of the attractions of such an arrangement are suggested by the findings of J G Fitch in his survey of Birmingham's day schools later in the period.⁶¹ One private school teacher said that parents liked his school because the boys were not knocked about as in the '2d National Schools'. By paying slightly higher fees parents might buy for their children a less strict regime and be free from tiresome enquiries about the regularity of their attendance. Their children might even be addressed as 'Miss' and 'Master'.⁶²

Sunday schools, especially those run by Dissenting chapels, were less subject to the control of middle-class subscribers, trustees or clerical watchdogs than either the denominational schools or the endowed charity schools. Given the paucity of private schools and the size and bureaucratic regimentation of the large Lancasterian and National schools

⁵⁹ Money 1976.

⁶⁰ Birm Stat Soc 1840, 27; Holland 1843, 220.

⁶¹ PP 1870, LIV, Return confined to the municipal boroughs of Birmingham, Leeds, Liverpool and Manchester, of all schools for the poorer classes of children (henceforth Fitch 1870).

⁶² Fitch 1870, 44, 54.

in Sheffield, Sunday schools may well have been a favoured alternative.⁶³ The evidence of young people to Symons in the early 1840s suggested that attendance at private school followed by visits to Sunday school when full-time work commenced was considered an acceptable pattern of education:

I was two years at a private day-school before I went to work; and now I go to St Paul's Sunday school, and to Queen Street evening school twice a week.

I was at a private day school a year before I went to work, and now I go to Red Hill Sunday school. I don't go to chapel always, but I always go to school.

I go to Red Hill Sunday school now: I was at a private day/^{school} a year before I began to work. I can't write but I'm learning at Sunday school: they teach me to spell a little too.

I went to Mr Meakin's private school. I can write and read; I have gone as far as fractions and arithmetic. I attend Mr Farish's church and Sunday school; and am a teacher there.

I was at a private school before I commenced work. I can read and write. I know as far as interest in arithmetic. I have not learnt geography. I go to a Wesleyan chapel and used to go to Sunday school.⁶⁴

In 1838 56 Sunday schools were recorded at Birmingham and 83 at Sheffield. This implies an average clientele of about one hundred pupils per school in Sheffield's Sunday schools and roughly twice that number in Birmingham. The 1851 Education Census also suggests that the average size of the Sunday gatherings was smaller in Sheffield than Birmingham.⁶⁵ It thus seems likely that Sheffield's Sunday schools were smaller and more intimate, catering for a

⁶³ CEC Sheff 1843, evid e 11, e 16; rep E22, E23-4.

⁶⁴ loc cit evid e 30, e 30, e 31, e 34, e 34.

⁶⁵ Birm Stat Soc 1840, 38; Holland 1843, 220; 1851 Education Census, Table 5.

multitude of face-to-face neighbourhood communities like the inns and beershops with which they were in competition. The Sunday schools of Sheffield were attuned to the wishes of many inhabitants of these communities for moral emancipation, independence and a means of expression, inclinations whose other manifestations were the support given for Ironside's Chartists and the democratic movement in Methodism during the 1840s. However, these different movements and the independence of the trade societies were not concerted expressions of a 'united working class'. Exponents of the Sunday schools were engaged in a struggle with their very own neighbours for the soul of Sheffield's local communities. The battle with the beershop was crucial in the eyes of ministers and clergy alike.⁶⁶ It was interwoven with other conflicts: between parents and children, masters and employees, workmen and their juvenile helpers. A twelve-year-old warehouse errand boy told a government inspector

I don't go to Sunday School, because they don't larn me enough; I am going to another, a better one ... My father used to teach me a little sometimes on Sunday; he doesn't now. I go out walking in the country on Sundays, or sometimes go to church; I don't know how to play at pinch. When I get the 4d for coming here I shall give it my mother; my mother won't make me, but I shall give it her myself.⁶⁷

Representatives of a stove grate manufacturer were reported as saying:

No "saint-mondays" are kept on their premises ... They have taken a great deal of pains with the morals of their work-people and believe them to be very good. No ale is ever permitted to come on the works; the men drink nothing but water.

⁶⁶ See below.

⁶⁷ CEC Sheff 1843, evid e 31.

Those who are the sons of workpeople brought up here have such education as Sunday schools give. It is the general practice for them to go. There is a club in the works for sickness; and there are also fines for swearing, &c. None of the workmen ... are permitted to belong to trades' unions.⁶⁸

A table-knife hafter

Attributes bad morals, in a great degree, to the boys not being bound ... Wishes it to be made penal to employ a boy in any trade without indentures; and would like it to be made imperative on the master to send him either to a Sunday school or a place of worship.⁶⁹

The success of the Nonconformist Sunday schools was not lost on Sheffield's clergy. Rev Livesey of St Philips noted that 'of young people engaged in work only a small proportion attend Sunday schools connected with the church. In Dissenting schools, where writing is taught on Sundays, I am informed the number is greater'. He wanted the church day schools to tap similar sources of support:

It is my decided conviction that if, instead of congregating many hundred children in large central schools, smaller and more numerous schools were opened in the most convenient localities, many children might be brought under a sound system of instruction ... Also many additional subscriptions might be obtained from shopkeepers and other residents.⁷⁰

Thomas Booth, a Sheffield iron master had similar views:

I encourage private or small schools in preference to large public establishments, where education is carried out on the Lancasterian plan, for reasons which it would be superfluous in me here to state.⁷¹

68 loc cit, evid e 33.

69 loc cit, evid e 20.

70 loc cit, evid e 2, e3.

71 loc cit, evid e 16.

However, Livesey's colleague at St Mary's, Rev Farish, implicitly acknowledged the tendency for Sunday schools to express rather than mould currents of feeling within the communities they served:

There has been a perceptible and unfavourable change in the characters of children in our Sunday schools since the prevalence of Socialism, though I think we feel it much less now that our national school for boys has been for a few months open.⁷²

Jelinger Symons believed that the main value of Sheffield's Sunday schools was that they kept 8,000 children off the streets during the Lord's Day. He thought that the religious instruction imparted was 'very deficient: signally so where writing is taught'.⁷³ By contrast, R D Grainger noted deficiencies in the Sunday scholars' 'practical knowledge of religion' in Birmingham but made a point of criticism the fact that 'in Sunday schools of the Established Church, and in those of some dissenting congregations, reading in the Scriptures or religious books is the only instruction given; consequently the children who have attended no other school than these ... have no knowledge of writing or accounts'.⁷⁴ The difference in tone suggests that in Birmingham there was less fear than in Sheffield of the Sunday schools acting as a focus for a working class culture relatively independent from, and perhaps hostile towards the culture of the larger employers and professional men. Indeed, Grainger quoted at length the Report of the Birmingham Statistical Society which declared:

⁷² loc cit, evid e 3.

⁷³ loc cit Rep E 26.

⁷⁴ CEC Birm 1843, rep F 36.

As a moral means, the value of Sunday schools cannot be too highly appreciated ... They have been the means of infusing the most powerful moral checks into the consciences of tens of thousands ... (and) ... on the whole, the Sunday schools in Birmingham must rank higher than those of any other place which has been subject to a similar investigation.⁷⁵

Evangelicals and industrialists

The pattern of weekday schooling may be examined further from the 'supply' side, particularly with respect to the public sector. The relative lack of enterprise in providing day school education for working-class children in Birmingham before the 1830s was not simply a reflection of the thriving private market in schools or the demand for juvenile labour.⁷⁶ It was also a reflection of the structure and disposition of potential sponsoring groups. The Evangelical movement in Anglicanism and Dissent alike stressed education of the poor as one means of saving their souls.⁷⁷ Not until the 1830s did the movement make a sizeable impact in the upper reaches of Birmingham society, at least a generation after it had become dominant in Sheffield. It is true that by the first decade of the century the Congregationalists led by John Angell James at Carr's Lane and

⁷⁵ loc cit, rep 185-91; Birm Stat Soc 1840, 39.

⁷⁶ There had actually been a decrease in public day school provision in Birmingham in 1829 when the Charity Commission put a stop to an arrangement whereby the King Edward VI Foundation subscribed to the National School at Pinfold Street. During the previous four years the Foundation had also closed down several small English Schools, VCH, 551,

⁷⁷ On Evangelicalism see Bradley 1976; Binfield 1977.

the Baptists at Cannon Street were both strongly influenced by the missionary impulse to spread scriptural truth at home and abroad.⁷⁸ However, their congregations were of a lower social standing than the Unitarians at the New Meeting, whose minister Samuel Bache was a conservative and the Quakers at Bull Street who did not feel the new spirit with any real force until the 1830s.⁷⁹ Even more important, the Church of England, by far the most numerous and influential religious organisation in Birmingham, lacked effective local leadership before the end of the 1820s. For much of that decade the rectors of St Martin's and St Philip's were absentees, the latter until 1844. W F Hook of St Philip's disliked the Evangelical tendency and was the hero of the Tory Birmingham Argus. In Aston parish, High Church sentiments reigned at least until the 1850s. However, the foundation of the Birmingham Clerical Society in 1825 indicated the new influence of Evangelicalism in the city. Henry Ryder, the evangelical Bishop of Lichfield frequently visited Birmingham after his appointment in 1824. During the late 1820s two local Evangelicals, William Spooner of Elmdon and George Hodson of Christ Church, were made archdeacons.⁸⁰

78 Mole 1961, ch 3; Mole 1976, 6-9; Wickham 1957, 82.

79 Langford 1873, Vol 1, 468-9, 470-1; Ram 1976, 32-3, 35-6, 38; Mole 1973, 820. On Samuel Bache see Dictionary of National Biography (henceforth DNB) II, 318.

80 Mole 1973, 822; Mole 1961, ch 3 esp 65, 68-9, 88 ff.

The next stage in the infiltration of the movement into Birmingham's Anglican hierarchy was roughly contemporaneous with the halting career of the Birmingham Political Union. The chief agent of Birmingham Evangelicalism was Thomas Moseley who in 1829 was appointed Rector of St Martin's, the central church of Birmingham parish. Moseley was villified by local radicals for his attempts to collect church rates but the effort to enforce taxation was in part a response to the Church of England's enlarged sense of its local mission for which it had meagre funds. Pastoral efficiency was increased by an informal division of much of Birmingham parish into smaller districts in 1829 and by the creation of three new churches as separate rectories early in the following decade. In 1830, visiting societies composed of lay members of Anglican congregations were established to organise the distribution of charity and Evangelical propaganda. Since the Nonconformist churches tended to be in the more respectable areas, the Church of England had a fairly open field of work amongst the impoverished. Moseley had the help of colleagues such as John Garbett at St George's and J G Breay at Christ Church. Breay built new schoolrooms at Pinfold Street where he ran a National school for boys, a female school of industry, a Sunday school and a provident institution (the last founded in 1836). Garbett was similarly active.⁸¹ While the late 1830s witnessed the collapse of the Birmingham Political Union, its chief activists finding a new base on the Town Council, the same years saw the institutionalisation of Evangelical predominance

81 Mole 1973, 826-8; Mole 1961, 61; Memoir of the Rev John George Breay ..., Birmingham 1841; The Faithful Pastor delineated ..., Birmingham 1839; Langford 1873 Vol 1, 449-50; Bir Dir 1850, 16. For other examples of clerical enterprise in education see CEC Birm 1844, evid f191-f195.

amongst their opponents. In 1837, leading local Evangelicals set up a trust to ensure 'a succession in perpetuity of holy and devoted Ministers'. The trust exercised effective control over appointments to four out of the five rectories in Birmingham parish.⁸²

By contrast, Church affairs in Sheffield had since 1805 been dominated by the Vicar of Sheffield, Thomas Sutton, 'a strong evangelical churchman (who) ... was responsible for a long sequence of evangelical clergy in the parish'.⁸³ The survey of educational facilities in 1838 was one indication of Sutton's concern to provide schooling for working-class children, chief among whose vices he listed 'insubordination to parental authority, leading to insubordination to all authority'. His greatest enemy was the beershop and his best hope that in all social relations 'the directions of Scripture' would be adhered to. These aspirations found strong support among Wesleyan ministers such as John Henley who believed that a 'thorough scriptural education of the rising race would doubtless do much to improve the morals of society, and promote the national welfare'.⁸⁴ The work of 'redemption through education' was carried out with little interdenominational rivalry. Public provision was dominated by the two Lancasterian schools, the first of which had been founded in 1809.

82 Mole 1973, 828. It has been calculated that between 1828 and 1851 the average age of the local Anglican clergy fell from $54\frac{1}{2}$ years to 42 years. Frost 1978, 272.

83 Wickham 1957, 82. On Thomas Sutton see Odom 1926, 55.

84 CEC Sheff 1843, evid e 1, e 2, e 6.

Although Dissenters were predominant in its management many of its earliest pupils were Anglicans. In 1838 the two Lancastrian schools contained nearly twenty per cent of all children being educated in the public sector. Between them they had an enrolment of 1140 pupils.⁸⁵

Two complaints recur in counterpoint within the comments of the tiny band of clergy, ministers and laity engaged in the sponsorship of Sheffield's public day schools for working-class children. The first is that the wealthier part of Sheffield was not sufficiently involved in the sponsorship of education:

Very few of the upper class give themselves with any heart to this work, which is much to be regretted ...

... many wealthy and benevolent persons have thought they have done sufficient for the education of the poor in supporting Sabbath schools, and have been very indifferent about day schools ...

The great indifference of Christian churches, to which the (Sunday) schools respectively belong, in not taking oversight of their management ...

... those who are better qualified to teach, or to suggest the best methods of teaching stand aloof, or nearly so, from such self-denying engagements ...⁸⁶

The other sore point was the independent spirit of the pupils and their families:

... A son of hers, merely because he was dressed as a member of the Society of Friends, was grossly insulted and pelted with dirt in the street ...

The parents make it quite a favour to send their children to school. Pride is a great and very prevailing vice among them; the least thing said to a child at school is taken as an offence ...⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Eltringham 1939,147; C O Reid 1976,257; Holland 1843,220.

⁸⁶ CEC Sheff 1843 evid e 4, e 6, e 8, e 9.

⁸⁷ loc cit, e 8.

The denominations felt they were fighting a battle with precious little help from those in other spheres who shared their interest in discipline and order, notably manufacturers. As Symons pointed out in 1843:

Manufacturers ... are not the employers of children in Sheffield, with a few exceptions. There is no school attached to any of their establishments, nor do they, as manufacturers, take any part in promoting education, though many subscribe liberally to existing schools.⁸⁸

Samuel Earnshaw, who was assistant minister at the Parish Church from 1847, repeated the complaint in the 1850s.⁸⁹ He was clear that the school was in competition with industrial employment. Earnshaw wrote that in Sheffield 'boys are generally apprenticed to their father or to a workman'. Where piecework prevails, apprentices can in times of good trade make high earnings which allow them to follow their masters 'into habits of drunkenness'. Absence of parental restraint breeds an 'American notion of liberty' for which 'children naturally long; and are themselves anxious to leave school and begin work that they may at once "become men" and imitate the folly and vices of those that are grown up'.⁹⁰

As has been seen, in Birmingham the Anglican hierarchy had the active cooperation of factory owners such as J O Bacchus, William Chance and R W Winfield. The latter two

88 CEC Sheff 1843, rep E 31. Italics in original.

89 On Earnshaw see Odom 1926, 39-42; Stainton 1924, 278-9.

90 Earnshaw 1857, 73, 74. Earnshaw wrote as the representative of the Clerical Committee on Education in Sheffield.

men both established factory schools. The Church also had the support of the Church of England Lay Association. Through the Spooner family, the local Evangelicals penetrated into the centre of borough and county politics and into the Clapham Sect in London. During the mid-1840s Evangelical strength in the clergy was increased by the arrival of Grantham Yorke, son of the Earl of Hardwick, G S Bull, the old ally of Oastler in the latter's campaign for factory reform, and John Cale Miller.⁹¹

By comparing data from the surveys of 1838 and the Education Census of 1851 it is possible to assess in broad terms the degree of proportional shift between private education and publicly-provided education between the two dates in Birmingham and Sheffield. The following table includes all forms of schooling recorded at the two dates, that is, for both the working-class and middle-class children. Sunday schools are not included.

TABLE 19: Support for public and private schooling: Birmingham and Sheffield 1838, 1851

<u>1838</u>	Public	Private	Total
Sheffield ¹	6188 (58.1)	4459 (41.9)	10647 (100.0) (%)
Birmingham ²	4066 (28.1)	10414 ⁴ (71.9)	14480 (100.0) (%)
<u>1851</u>	Public	Private	Total
Sheffield ³	9333 (59.8)	6284 (40.2)	15617 (100.0) (%)
Birmingham ³	13032 (58.8)	9151 (41.3)	22183 (100.0) (%)

Sources: Holland 1843; Birm Stat Soc 1840; 1851 Education Census

- NOTES (1) The 1838 figures for Sheffield refer to enrolments
 (2) The 1838 figures for Birmingham refer to average attendance
 (3) The 1851 figures for both cities refer to attendances on Census Day
 (4) This total includes some boarding provision.

⁹¹ Mole 1973, 831; Mole 1961, 65-8 and ch 6. For Yorke's work see Langford 1873 Vol 1, 45-6, 56 and several other references therein. On Bull see CEC Birm 1843 evid f 192-4. Miller's evangelical work is described in Mole 1966.

In Sheffield the public and private sectors expanded at roughly the same rate during the 1840s but in Birmingham the public sector made considerable strides at the expense of the private sector. Table 14 suggested that common day schools and dame schools accounted for about half the private provisions being used in Sheffield but well over three-quarters of private provision at Birmingham in 1838. The King Edward VI Elementary Schools were built between 1838 and 1852 and their impact on the middle and the top end of the private market in conjunction with the Grammar School itself has been noted. It is likely that the private sector was hit even harder by the opening of National schools such as those attached to St Matthew's (opened 1841), St George's in Great Russell Street (1842), St Philip's (1842), St Mark's (1843), All Saints' (1843), St Peter's (1844), St Paul's (1845), St Mary's (1846) and St John's (1848).⁹² On Census Day in 1851, 6220 children were attending twenty-six Anglican day schools. However, by that time other denominations in Birmingham claimed 3726 children in twenty-three schools.⁹³ The latter included, for example, the New Meeting Street school, erected by the Independents in 1844.⁹⁴ The extent of denominational provision in the public sector by Anglicans and non-Anglicans in Birmingham and Sheffield in 1851 was as follows:

⁹² Bir Dir 1850, 16-17.

⁹³ See Table 20.

⁹⁴ Bir Dir 1850, 16.

TABLE 20: Public day schools supported by denominations:
Birmingham and Sheffield 1851

	Anglican		Others		Total	
	Schools	Scholars	Schools	Scholars	Schools	Scholars
Birmingham	26	6220(62.5)	23	3726(37.5)	49	9946(100.0)(%)
Sheffield	18	5814(77.2)	7	1716(22.8)	25	7530(100.00)(%)

Source: 1851 Education Census

The bulk of Birmingham's public provision had been established since 1830.⁹⁵ The climate of competition between Church and Dissent during the next two decades had stimulated a wave of new foundations on both sides. In Sheffield, inter-denominational competition was far less marked and the Anglican superiority in day school provision probably reflects the lack of enterprise by Dissenting congregations who apparently preferred to rest on their laurels in the realm of Sunday school provision. This is shown in the following table:

TABLE 21: Level of support for Sunday schools in
Birmingham and Sheffield 1838, 1851

	Anglican	Others	Total
1838 ¹			
Sheffield	2758 (24.6)	8454 (75.4)	11212 (100.0) (%)
Birmingham	4565 (27.2)	12192 (72.8)	16757 (100.0) (%)
1851 ²			
Sheffield	4524 (30.3 .)	10395 (69.7 .)	14919 (100.0) (%)
Birmingham	8911 (41.6 .)	12495 (58.4 .)	21406 (100.0) (%)

Sources: Holland 1843; Birm Stat Soc 1840; 1851 Education Census

Notes: 1 1838 figures for Sheffield and Birmingham refer to enrolments.
2 1851 figures for Birmingham and Sheffield refer to attendances on Census Day.

⁹⁵ Only 17 charity and endowed schools (including 3 infant schools) were recorded by J R Wood as having been established before 1831 in Birmingham. Birm Stat Soc 1840,40.

In Birmingham, resurgent Anglicanism had increased its harvest of Sunday school pupils from just over a quarter to about four-tenths. In Sheffield, the Church of England had only advanced its strength from about one-quarter to under a third of all attendances.⁹⁶

During the two decades after the 1851 Education census the rates of population growth in the two cities diverged sharply. By 1871 Birmingham's population had increased by less than half but Sheffield's population had grown by over three-quarters. During the decade 1861-1871 the rate of population growth in Sheffield was nearly double that of Birmingham (29.7% as compared to 16.2%).⁹⁷ During the late 1860s,

96 In his study Frost concludes that the period from 1829 to 1851 witnessed a sustained expansion in 'provided' schooling (as opposed to 'private') schooling for working-class children in Birmingham. He lays considerable stress on the impetus provided to middle-class sponsors by the Chartist agitation and its aftermath in the 1830s and 1840s. This present argument puts more emphasis than does Frost upon conflict within the middle-class. The persisting radical tendencies which Frost found among some teachers, especially Dissenters, may have reflected a relative lack of fear that social disorder was imminent. Such an explanation may also apply to the political ideology of the Mechanics' Institute at Birmingham (see Chapter Six). It is important to consider the various sectors of formal education in relation to each other in order to grasp their class implications. Frost 1978, 335-43, 376-8.

97 See Table 10.

J G Fitch carried out investigations of school provision for 'the poorer classes' in both cities.⁹⁸ His findings suggest that in both cities public provision had made ground against private provision since mid-century:

TABLE 22: Distribution of working-class pupils between private and public sectors: Birmingham and Sheffield 1868-9

	Private	Public	Total
Birmingham (1869) ¹	8424 (18.1)	38113 (81.9)	46537 (100.0)(%)
Sheffield (1868) ²	2584 (18.3)	11516 (81.7)	14100 (100.0)(%)

Sources: Fitch 1870; SIC

Notes: 1 Birmingham figures refer to pupils enrolled.
2 Sheffield figures refer to pupils "in attendance".

It seems likely that in the private sector, dame schooling continued to bulk larger in Birmingham than in Sheffield. In 1869 Fitch noted that in Birmingham well over 5000 children were attending establishments in private houses most of which were 'mere dame schools ... and scarcely profess to be places of instruction'.⁹⁹ The general standard of the lower private schools in Sheffield seems to have impressed Fitch a little more favourably. He commented:

98 Fitch 1870 esp 19-21, 30, 44, 78; SIC, Vol 9, 335-6 (Fitch's Report - Appendix I). Fitch's statistics for Birmingham distinguish inspected schools, non-inspected schools (mainly denominational) and private (including ragged) schools. His Sheffield data distinguish 'superior' and 'lower' private schools (the latter only being recorded here), and in the public sphere, 'national and parochial' schools, 'other' public elementary schools, workhouses, reformatory and orphanage schools. As Fitch suggested, his Sheffield figures have been uniformly increased by 15 per cent to take account of a probable failure to identify some schools. Table 22 must be regarded as a very approximate guide to the distribution of students among types of school.

99 Fitch Report 1870, 51.

It is singular that a considerable portion of the children of the class usually found in National schools are in Sheffield taught in private adventure schools, of which there is a large number of a humble kind ... (Some) of the humbler private schools are of unusual size, several of them containing upwards of 100 scholars.¹⁰⁰

As has been seen, Sheffield's middle-class establishments had few channels through which to exercise influence over the labouring population. Public day school education provided by the denominations had to bear a very large share of a burden which was in Birmingham shared among a wider range of institutions, especially industrial and political. In the sphere of working-class education in Sheffield, the weakness of interdenominational rivalry bred a readiness to allow the Anglican clergy to carry the heaviest part of the responsibility for running the schools. After mid-century the

¹⁰⁰ SIC, Vol 9, 335-6. It is noticeable that although the very rapid growth of Sheffield's population during the 1850s and 1860s is likely to have made the task of eliciting attendance a more pressing one in that city than in Birmingham the standard of existing accommodation seems to have been higher in Sheffield. In 1871 Sheffield's School Board recorded that there already existed 'efficient' accommodation for 30,702 children out of an estimated total 'need' for 39,978 places. The same year Birmingham's School Board recorded an estimated total 'need' of 54,958 places of which 38,405 were already in existence in schools supplying 'efficient' accommodation. In other words, Sheffield's educators had 'efficient' accommodation for about 77% of their potential working-class clients while Birmingham could supply 'efficient' schooling for under 70% of its putative pupil population. In fact, the Education Dept at Whitehall conducted its own survey which suggested that Birmingham had 'efficient' accommodation for only about 63% of the prevailing 'need'. The Department argued that local officials had not only undercalculated the numbers of children not receiving education but also had been too generous in their assessment of 'efficiency' in the case of several private schools, Bingham 1949, 292; Taylor 1955, 282; Birmingham School Board, Report 1870-73, esp 9.

scale of the task increased enormously. To the recalcitrance and independence of working-class parents and children was added the difficulties of catering for the growing army of labouring families resident in Attercliffe and Brightside. Samuel Earnshaw had suggested a solution to the former difficulty in 1857. It was

To make apprenticeship illegal until a certificate has been obtained of ATTENDANCE at an approved school a certain number of days (say 500 whole days, rejecting halves) after the age of 6 years.¹⁰¹

Investigations into Sheffield's steel industry carried out by the Children's Employment Commission in the 1860s found some blatant cases of the exploitation of child labour.¹⁰² The dilemma in which revelations such as this placed the local clergy, who felt themselves almost alone in educational work amongst the lower classes, was expressed in 1865 by

Rev W Wilkinson, a manager of one of Sheffield's larger schools:

(If) education is to be made compulsory, I ask, when are the schools to be founded? Who is to provide them? If the whole burden of raising funds and working schools is to be thrown on the clergy, the temptation to them will be to say - "We withdraw, and confine ourselves to our spiritual work; we leave the management of the schools to others, only taking care that the word of God is carefully taught."¹⁰³

101 Earnshaw 1857, 76. Italics in original. Another local cleric, Rev J Lettis Short, recommended the virtues of instructing 'the wage-class' in the principles of political economy. Short 1866 cf Goldstrom 1972; Gilmour 1967.

102 eg J E White's reports on Turtens, Joseph Peace & Co., Ward and Payne's, Sanderson Bros and Jessops. CEC Sheff 1865, evid 30-33. See also John Wilson's paper at Social Science Congress in 1865 and ensuing discussion. J Wilson 1866a.

103 Trans NAPSS, Sheffield Meeting 1865, (London 1866), 371.

The note of distaste running through the words of Earnshaw make a sharp contrast with the appeal of Birmingham educationists to values shared between masters and men. These values were to be cultivated by a strategy of kind inducement and benevolent paternalism. For example, Rev Nash Stephenson, in an open letter to the manufacturer R W Winfield suggested that the prospect of prizes was likely to be a more effective means of moulding behaviour than the fear of penalties. He had been a pioneer in the development of the Birmingham Prize Scheme and the Coventry Archidiaconal Prize Scheme. The main feature of such schemes was the award of prizes consisting of cash, prayer books and Bibles to children who were regular in attendance, of good character, attentive to their religious duties and successful in annual examinations in secular and religious subjects.¹⁰⁴

In Birmingham the 'barbarism' of the workshop was tempered by the more Christian spirit evinced by J Fawkenner Winfield who wrote in 1857 of the

noble efforts of our friends the Bagnalls, and the Chances, and others in our district, in furthering the education of their children, the glorious results which have attended these efforts, the self-denying labours of Messrs Wilson at Price's Candle Company - men worthy of the highest honour - these and many, many other such instances might be brought forward ...¹⁰⁵

Apart from the pleasures of self-congratulation, Winfield derived other benefits from his factory schools:

Your people become attached to you. They serve you from a love to you, because they feel you care for their best interests. They are not eye-servants. We have no strikes, no disorder. I have our lads at my house under perfect control; we can trust them, and look upon them as members of our own family.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ Stephenson 1856; Stephenson 1857; Norris 1857; Hopkins 1975

¹⁰⁵ Winfield 1857, 247.

¹⁰⁶ op cit, 247.

Evidently, Evangelical zeal was regarded as having a measurable effect on levels of production. However, this economic motive was part of a larger concern to establish a harmonious social order in which all had their Christian duty to perform. A similar tone runs through John Thackray Bunce's description of Birmingham's 'feeding schools and evening schools' for the poor. There was, he believed, 'a large class of children who can only be enticed to school'. One means of enticement was the provision of a square meal.¹⁰⁷ Another was the creation of an atmosphere of mutual respect:

The pupils should be taught to consider themselves as members of a family rather than merely as scholars: and above all ... nothing should be done to check, but rather everything to foster that spirit of independence, self-respect, and self-reliance, by which our best artisans are so favourably distinguished, and without which schoolmasters, clergymen, and teachers, may labour in vain to advance the real education of the working class.¹⁰⁸

The positive stress placed by Bunce on artisan independence anticipates the later political division which would place him in the Liberal camp in opposition to the Conservatism of the Winfields.¹⁰⁹ However, the relaxed attitude towards the labouring population of both men is quite distinct from the frustration and resentment of Earnshaw.

In 1857 Rev Sydney Gedge, a master at the King Edward VI Grammar School offered a 'balance view' of the relationship between education and industry.¹¹⁰ Gedge noted the general opinion that 'the improvement in the quality of the education in the schools under inspection (by Her Majesty's Inspectors) had been accompanied by an average shorter attendance of the

¹⁰⁷ Bunce 1857, 278, 280. *Italics in original.*

¹⁰⁸ *op cit* 287. *Italics in original.*

¹⁰⁹ See Chapter Seven.

¹¹⁰ Gedge 1858.

children at those schools'. However, he thought it probable 'that the children are in many cases deriving more benefit in the shorter time' and recognised the 'necessity laid upon working-men, as a class, to supply the demands of the manufactory, whatever they are, for juvenile labour'.¹¹¹ He added:

The truth is, that we are at present in this position: either we must cease to congratulate ourselves on our increasing trade, or we must submit to the stern necessity of having more children as well as more adults employed.¹¹²

Gedge believed that the introduction of the Factory Act to Birmingham would hamper factories at the expense of the 'house-shop' and believed that the best immediate strategy was not only to inculcate 'sound principles' and 'good habits' in school but also 'to carry the spirit of a good school into the manufactory'. Gedge continued:

A school of good or evil it certainly is - not, I venture to think, under any circumstances, of unmixed evil, unless the children are weighed down by a pressure of labour beyond their power to bear - not, I say, of unmixed evil, because a boy of even ten years of age, on entering a manufactory is, at all events, placed under a certain kind of discipline. He must learn something of an honest occupation. He can scarcely fail to acquire habits of punctuality, alacrity in duty, submission to just authority, and willingness to oblige those about him in the workshops. He sees many incentives to industry, and he may have an honest satisfaction and not improper self-respect in the consciousness that a widowed mother, or both parents of a large family are assisted by his earnings.¹¹³

Gedge saw formal education as acting in harness with other institutional orders as a means of ensuring harmonious class relationships in Birmingham. He believed there were grounds for optimism:

¹¹¹ op cit 164, 165.

¹¹² op cit 167.

¹¹³ op cit 169-70.

(Partly) from the direct efforts made for their improvement by employers, ministers of religion and other friends to the working-classes; partly through the reflex influence of schools through their children; from the better literature placed within their reach; from the absence, I venture to add, of political excitement, while there has been a growth of political knowledge; from connexions with provident societies, savings banks, and other institutions of the same kind; as well as from other causes, not easily traceable, but perhaps more influential because less directly so, many of the working-classes are rising in the scale of moral worth, and learning to measure themselves by the standard of Holy Scripture.¹¹⁴

In 1850 the Birmingham School Association was founded. It sent a deputation, including William Harris, to the conference which established the National Public School Association. The object of the Birmingham School Association whose members included William Scholefield, Charles Geach and William Middlemore, was 'the introduction of a free, secular, and compulsory system of National Education supported by local rates'.¹¹⁵ It was an unpropitious time to start a radical movement in education at Birmingham. Following the dying down of 'political excitement' in the 1850s, the initiative in the sphere of elementary education rested firmly in the hands of staunch Anglican paternalists amongst manufacturers and clergy. The Birmingham Educational Association founded in 1857 had amongst its most prominent members the merchant J D Goodman, the manufacturer J F Winfield, Rev William Gover, Principal of Saltley College (founded by Adderley), and J T Bunce (like the others, an Anglican).¹¹⁶ The main achievement of the Association was a

¹¹⁴ op cit 171.

¹¹⁵ Langford 1873, vol 1, 134-5.

¹¹⁶ Gover 1858; CEC Birm 1864, evid 154-63 esp 156.

survey of education among Birmingham's labouring population conducted by the Anglican clergy which demonstrated that levels of attendance were far short of the accommodation available.¹¹⁷ Nevertheless, trade was good and there was little sign of popular discontent.¹¹⁸ It is true that the most popular preacher in Birmingham was not a Churchman but the nationally-renowned George Dawson at the Church of the Saviour. However, in 1858 this famous Liberal Nonconformist was faced with a strike by his own workers on a newspaper he had tried to get under way in the city.¹¹⁹ In the same year Sir John Ratcliff, Wesleyan Mayor of Birmingham, appointed as his chaplain Rev Isaac Spooner, the well-born Evangelical Churchman who was also Vicar of Edgbaston.¹²⁰ That a degree of complacency should develop in Anglican circles was not surprising. It spread even to Dissenting radicals such as John Skirrow Wright who in 1862 told the Social Science Congress in London about Birmingham's 'comparative freedom ... from crime', the good relations between masters and workmen, the general 'spirit of independence and self-reliance' and the fact that '(as) regards education, the facilities for obtaining it are so great that no child or young person need be without the elements at least ...'.¹²¹

¹¹⁷ Gover 1858, 171-2.

¹¹⁸ Checkland 1964, 26-7, 37

¹¹⁹ Corbett 1966, 22.

¹²⁰ Langford 1873, Vol 1, 452.

¹²¹ CEC Birm 1864, 152.

Chapter Six

MECHANICS AND MEDICAL MEN

Adult Education and Medical Schools in Birmingham and
Sheffield 1830-70

The pursuit of 'improvement' by adults in their leisure time was a minority activity but one which revealed clearly the different forms of solidarity and division which were developing within the class structures of Birmingham and Sheffield. A broad distinction may be made between two kinds of enterprise: associations of professional men, businessmen and gentlemen of leisure for the discussion of literary and scientific topics; and gatherings of 'intelligent working men' (and youths) seeking 'mutual improvement' through their own efforts or with the guidance of men associated with the former kind of enterprise.¹ In Birmingham the two categories of enterprise merged together between the mid-1840s and mid-1850s. In Sheffield, despite efforts to integrate the different kinds of enterprise during the same period very strong tendencies towards fission and segregation predominated.

Implicit in the forms of education indicated above was an encounter between middle-class culture and working-class culture and the form this took depended greatly upon the confidence and vigour of each. In Sheffield, reaction to the 'pagan' traditions of the Sheffield Sunday (and Monday) dominated middle-class and working-class enterprises to enlighten the artisan population. At the same time, the genteel meetings of the Sheffield Literary and Philosophical Society

1. For examples of the latter see J F C Harrison, 1961, *passim*.

represented a rather desperate attempt to show that recruits to the thin red line of literati defending the outposts of civilisation in South Yorkshire were capable of justifying the words of James Montgomery:

We know of nothing in the soil of Hallamshire that will prevent it from growing philosophers, artists and poets equal to those of Greece.²

So insecure were these sentinels of civilisation that when Ebenezer Elliott, who despite his radicalism yielded to none in his revulsion from revolutionary upheaval, applied for admission in 1839 he met with a refusal.³

Schooling the working class

Sheffield's 'respectable' working class were awkwardly placed between a vigorous 'rough' working class culture and a weak, snobbish and insecure middle-class culture. Association with the former compromised their respectability and contact with the latter carried a cost in loss of independence. Retreat into the sanctuary of the home or an attempt to create an alternative working-class culture were the other perceived options. Birmingham's working men and women did not face these choices. Masters and employees could associate without loss of dignity on either side. The strength and confidence of professional and business establishments in Birmingham permitted them to admit labourers into close association without either side feeling threatened. The Society of Friends in Birmingham were particularly successful in managing this

2 At the Lit and Phil's inaugural meeting, Montgomery recalled Byron's sneer at 'classic Sheffield'. Porter 1932, 13; Holland and Everett 1854-6, Vol 3, 338.

3 Porter 1932, 32-3.

relationship. An early student at the Severn Street First Day Adult School recalled that he had looked forward to his weekly visits 'so that I might have the pleasure of meeting with men far superior to myself, who were always ready to make me their equal for the time being'.⁴ This school, in connection with the Bull Street Quaker Meeting, was teaching 84 students in 1847. Eight years later, it had subdivided into several classes containing 646 youths and adults. In 1862 John Skirrow Wright gave accommodation to a Severn Street School class at his People's Chapel in Hockley. By 1870, approximately 20,000 students had passed through the classes and received lessons in reading, writing, arithmetic, grammar, geography and elementary science.⁵

Some Anglican clerics followed suit. Grantham Yorke promoted 'self-improvement' at the St Philip's Literary Institute. This was opened in 1846, the year that John Cale Miller took up his post as Rector at St Martin's. Miller established a Workingmen's Association and in 1854 offered a prize for the best essay on the subject of 'cooperation of the working classes and the other classes of society for the elevation of the former'. He found it 'pleasant to see the working men of the parish, not standing alone in a class distinct from the others but going hand in hand with the higher order'.⁶ Like Sturge and Wright, Miller drew no sharp division between his religious and political involvements.

⁴ W White 1895, 12.

⁵ op cit, 15, 18, 57. Some of the teachers, including two Cadburys, served on the Town Council. Hennock 1973, 146.

⁶ Yorke 1846; VCH, 225.

The subtle weaving together of education, religion and politics was also exemplified in the relationship between the Church of the Saviour and the lower middle class. When the Drapers' and Grocers' Assistants formed a Mutual Improvement Association in 1845, George Dawson was one of its first speakers, delivering a lecture on poetry. The following year he was in the van of the campaign of the Clerks and Assistants for early closing.⁷

At Sheffield, in marked contrast to Birmingham, establishments for educating the working population were rigidly separated into three compartments: those which gave strict priority to scriptural education; those whose sponsors recognised the validity of discussing 'politico-religious questions'; and those which were sternly utilitarian in their intent, emphasising the need to train artisans in occupationally-relevant skills.

The reluctance of Sheffield's leading citizens to participate in any of these enterprises is ironically recognised in a resolution passed at the meeting to establish the School of Design in 1841:

That notwithstanding the neglect of the leading men of the town in not meeting, it is the duty of those who are assembled, amounting to three, to persevere till the great object be accomplished, aware from history that much greater revolutions have been accomplished and begun by much more incompetent means.⁸

A little more enthusiasm had been shown for the Mechanics' Institute, founded in 1832. Many of its committee members were drawn from participants in the Lit and Phil, in other

⁷ Langford 1873, Vol 1, 58, 123.

⁸ Pawson and Brailsford 1862, 80. Italics in original.

words from the thin layer of 'public' professional and business leaders which included Montgomery, Ward and medical practitioners such as Arnold Knight and Charles Favell.⁹ Like the Lit and Phil, the Mechanics' Institute had an ideology which stressed utility. Its object was to supply to the labouring classes 'instruction in the various branches of Science and Art' which were 'of practical application to their diversified avocations and pursuits'.¹⁰ The Institute's predecessor had been the Mechanics' Library, founded in the early 1820s. In both cases, the initiatives had come from artisans but the establishment of the institutions had been managed and monitored by the town's middle-class leaders: again, Montgomery, Knight, Ward, other businessmen and a sprinkling of Dissenting ministers and Anglican clergy. In line with its philosophy, an ambitious programme of scientific instruction was attempted and experimental apparatus purchased. However, by the 1840s the Mechanics' Institute was attracting only a few dozen students to its classes.¹¹

During the late 1830s the Mechanics' Library and the Mechanics' Institute were both under attack. The former was accused of making available books which would tend to

9 Committee members of Mechanics' Institute are listed in the minute books. See esp Vols 1 and 2. For Lit and Phil committee members see Porter 1932, 83 ff.

10 J Taylor 1938, 152-5; Board 1959. 121-3.

11 Eltringham 1939, 148; COO Reid 1976, 318-9, 340, 365; See also Salt 1966; Holland, 232-8; J Taylor 1938; Rodgers 1840; Inkster 1975; Inkster 1976a.

'deprave the minds, injure the morals, and weaken, if not subvert the religious faith of the great majority of readers'.¹² The latter was seen as narrowly secular. Many of the Anglican clergy, whose prominent role in the provision of basic schooling has already been noted, were deeply opposed to the Mechanics' Institute. In 1839 they established the Church of England Instruction Society, claimed by its supporters to be 'among the first of its kind in the country'.¹³ It was intended to provide a continuing education for graduates of the Sunday schools and an alternative to the streets for young apprentices. In its curriculum it placed a very heavy stress upon religious indoctrination. G C Holland noted in 1843 that the object of the Society was

to afford general knowledge to the artisan, and at the same time to produce religious impressions, a prejudice being entertained against the Mechanics' Institute, from the latter being altogether excluded from the scheme of instruction.¹⁴

Another denominational enterprise was the Quaker adult school, inspired by the example of Birmingham. However, its founder, the banker J H Barber was a different kind of political animal from Joseph Sturge. Barber was a 'strong Liberal' but lacked the common touch. This 'singularly undemonstrative' man devoted himself to commerce and good works, not the hustling, bustling world of popular politics.¹⁵

12 Sheffield Mercury (henceforth SM) 26.10.1839; Holland 1843, 238; C O Reid 1976, 208-9. This censorship was supported by relatively 'liberal' professional men such as Charles Favell and G C Holland, both medical practitioners.

13 Pawson and Brailsford 1862, 83.

14 Holland 1843, 231.

15 Stainton 1924, 327-8; Odom 1926, 77.

The complaint of the denominations against the Mechanics' Library and Mechanics' Institute was the lack of positive provision within them for the inculcation of 'orderliness' in moral (and, consequently, social and political) behaviour. The attack from within was on different grounds. Early participants in the Mechanics' Institute had been the Nonconformist minister R S Bayley and the maverick Chartist Isaac Ironside. Bayley objected strongly to the strait gate of practical instruction through which working men were to be herded in the name of 'education'.¹⁶ His People's College, founded in 1842, offered a more humanitarian vision.¹⁷ Like its rivals, the People's College aimed to provide an alternative to the education of the street. Its curriculum aspired to give instruction in geography, history, philosophy, Latin and Greek. Science and natural history were also included but were by no means dominant. Students were not to be drilled into 'suitable' moral positions but encouraged to debate the issues arising from 'the history and science of politics'. Not surprisingly, financial aid from the wealthy part of Sheffield society was almost completely absent at the inauguration of this venture. A democratic atmosphere was inculcated drawing on both the model of the Nonconformist chapel and the ideal of a 'college' of scholars pursuing understanding. Its president in 1849 was a shoemaker, Thomas Rowbotham. When Bayley left Sheffield in 1848,

¹⁶ On R S Bayley see Odom 1926, 185-6.

¹⁷ On People's College see Stainton 1926, 128-9; G C M Smith 1912.

sixteen of the students took over People's College and ran it as a self-governing institution supported to a considerable extent by the fees of its scholars.¹⁸ Nearly twenty years later, John Wilson, a prominent Sheffield artisan was proudly stating its virtues before the Social Science Congress. He told his audience:

How the schools are to be maintained, is the problem to be solved. My present experience inclines me to the principles of the Sheffield People's College - "Self-support and self-government".¹⁹

Isaac Ironside fell out with the committee of the Mechanics' Library, of which he was secretary, in 1839. The committee had been applying a trenchant policy of censorship since the Library's foundation, sixteen years earlier. Sir Walter Scott, and indeed all novels and plays, were considered dangerously subversive. In 1839 Ironside was faced with the dire accusation that he had allowed the plays of William Shakespeare and works with a socialistic leaning most dangerous to Christianity to be placed on the Library shelves. He was ejected from his position as secretary and immediately transferred his abundant energies to the Hall of Science, opened in March that year by Robert Owen. To an even greater extent than People's College, the encouragement of open debate on controversial political issues was the object of Ironside's Hall of Science. For example, the socialist G J Holyoake delivered a series of lectures in 1841, including a talk on 'the advantages and disadvantages of trade unions'. Through this institution Ironside was putting

18 SI, 6.8.1842; Board 1959, 129-30; G C M Smith 1912, 13-41; C O Reid 1976, 322-3.

19 J Wilson 1866, 308.

into practice his conviction that the broadest possible cultivation of working men's intellectual and critical faculties was an essential step towards political emancipation. Like People's College, there was more than a little of the 'chapel' in the spirit of the enterprise. In 1840 Ironside claimed that the Hall was a religious institution and so exempt from the poor rate.²⁰

The three streams in Sheffield's educational provisions for working people - the utilitarian, the religious and the humanitarian (or emancipatory) - had two characteristics in common: a revulsion from the street-and-tavern culture of booze and 'baccy', dominoes and dog-fighting; and a chronic frustration caused by the low levels of elementary education among their students.²¹ However, efforts to bring about amalgamation so that they could pool their resources were unsuccessful.

In 1847 the Mechanics' Institute, under pressure from the Workers' Educational Institute (a new Ironside venture soon to be retitled the Hallamshire Mechanics' Institute) was persuaded to throw in its lot with the newly-founded Athenaeum, a recreational club for the well-to-do. A new building for both institutions was opened in 1849, mainly paid for out of funds initially intended for the Mechanics' Institute. There were vain hopes that the School of Design and the Literary and Philosophical Society would share the

20 G. P. Jones 1932, 11-19; Salt 1971b, 193-7; Salt 1960a, 135; Salt 1960b, 76-8.

21 Reg Holland 1843, 235.

new accommodation. However, middle-class members of the Athenaeum took the lion's share of the premises. In 1851 the two institutions separated.²²

Two years later the committee of the Mechanics' Institute tried to persuade the Church of England Instruction Society to share the burden of providing science instruction. The secretary of the latter body replied to their request

We do not think it would be expedient for us to unite our own classes with those of the Mechanics' Institute in the subjects and on the terms proposed ... While I think the amount of patent vice here less than in any town of its size I know, I am perfectly conscious that there exists a festering mass of iniquity among our population, the baneful effects of which can be scarcely overrated ... (My) own conviction is that that/only mode of meeting this evil is the training of our juvenile population in an education which is based distinctively on the word of God, and the leavening with that word (coupled with periodicals of a distinctively Christian character), of the adult population of our land 23

The Hall of Science closed its doors in 1848 and the Mechanics' Library did the same in 1861. Although People's College, the Mechanics' Institute and the Church of England Instruction Society all survived beyond 1870, only the last achieved a modest prosperity. By 1860 a new building had been opened for the society which had been renamed the Church of England Educational Institute.²⁴ During the subsequent decade elocution classes were 'most popular', suggesting that the tone was lower middle-class. Evidently, as in the sphere of elementary education, the Anglican clergy were demonstrating

22 Salt 1971b, 196; Board 1959, 125, 128; ST, 10.11.1849, 24.11.1849. 1.11.1851; C O Reid 1976, 358.

23 'Ms relating to Sheffield Mechanics' Institute', no 43, letter of 6.1.1853 cit Inkster 1976a, 298. *Italics in original*

24 Pawson and Brailsford 1862, 84.

considerable resource and staying power. In 1862 seventeen of their number were teaching there along with 'men of science, and members of the liberal professions'. Not least of the Educational Institute's advantages was its capacity to call upon the services of clergymen and the staff of the National Schools as teachers. In 1866, for example, classes in mathematics and geography were being conducted by headmasters of Church day schools. Among the honorary members in the 1860s were 'many leading Churchmen of that day', indicating the great resources of prestige which a national bureaucracy such as the Established Church could deploy if it chose.²⁵

The success of the Church of England Educational Institute was matched by the School of Design which, despite its unpromising beginnings, had carried off prize medals at the Great Exhibition of 1851 and moved into grander premises in 1857. Like the Educational Institute and Wesley College, the School of Design had the backing of a national bureaucracy, in the School's case the Government itself which provided over half the running costs.²⁶ The School's relative success is shown by the fact that in 1849 it drew over 550 class pupils while the equivalent institution in Birmingham could claim only 480 the previous year. Ironically, when a Select Committee of the Commons looked into the provincial schools of Design in 1864, 'it was then stated that the only town which had reported contrary to the generally-held opinion that such schools could not be self-supporting was Sheffield'.²⁷

25 op cit, 85; Odom 1917, 11.

26 Sheff Dir 1862, 23.

27 Inkster 1975, 467; Langford 1873, Vol 1, 225; Stainton 1924, 132.

In Birmingham adult education did not, as in Sheffield, consist of a set of fragmented reactions to the monster Demos haunting the streets and taverns. Instead, its progress was one aspect of: first, the growing confidence of urban radicalism and Dissent; second, the weaving of political ties between middle-class establishments and artisans, clerks and shop assistants in the later 1840s; and third, the political equipoise between older Tory and newer Liberal establishments which was coming into being at about the middle of the century.

On the face of it, the array of educational institutions for youths and adults at Birmingham in the mid-1840s looked very similar to the scene in Sheffield. There was a School of Design as well as a 'Lit and Phil', (by then known as the Philosophical Institution) and also a Polytechnic Institution. The Philosophical Institution, which had been in existence since 1800, concentrated upon scientific topics and provided a lecture theatre, museum, laboratory and newsroom for a clientele whose middle-class social composition is suggested by the terms 'select', 'elegant' and 'brilliant' which occur in a description of the institution and its supporters published in 1825.²⁸ The Polytechnic Institution, established in 1843, was the immediate successor of the Mechanics' Institute which had ceased to exist the same year.²⁹

28 Langford 1873, Vol 1, 113-4, 116-8, 120-8; Foster 1940, 68; Drake 1825.

29 Joseph Sturge bought the library of the defunct Mechanics' Institute and promptly re-sold it to the Polytechnic Institution. Langford 1873, Vol 1, 120-2.

30

31

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There were also, as in Sheffield, two other kinds of institution: instruction societies run by the denominations; and Owenite or Chartist ventures in popular education. A letter to the Times in 1848 claimed that in Birmingham

we have a literary and scientific society in connection with every large place of worship. There is St George's Instruction Society, St Mary's, St Luke's and other instruction societies, and various other church institutions, in which lectures are delivered regularly once, and frequently twice a week on different branches of science, by clergymen and others. The average attendance at each lecture room is two or three hundred. Attached to these institutions is likewise reading rooms and classes. Several dissenting congregations have also scientific institutions, in which lectures are regularly delivered.... (There) are also a number of general scientific associations ... the result is that if any particular evening in the week be fixed upon, say Tuesday, a person acquainted with the town, can reckon up about thirty or forty instructive and elevating meetings.³⁰

The author of the letter was a science lecturer. Against his evident enthusiasm should be weighed the consideration that the above institutions left few records and were mainly shortlived.³¹ The same is true of schemes such as the People's Hall of Science, opened in 1846 to promote the 'instruction and amusement of the people and the improvement of their understanding, morals and health ...'.³² At about the same time the Athenic Institute was founded by a group of Christian Chartists to provide a similar mixture of instructional and recreational facilities. William Scholefield opened the Hall of Science and Lord John Manners became President of the Athenic Institute. Despite this patronage,

30 Times, 19.9.1848, quoted in Inkster 1975, 465. *Italics in original.*

31 *ibid.*

32 VCH, 1229.

the former venture collapsed in 1849 and the latter in 1852.³³ Neither had the staying power of People's College in Sheffield or the strong connection with a powerful local political movement which made Ironside's educational ventures significant.

In Sheffield the Hall of Science was the educational expression of a major local radical movement. In Birmingham this part was played by the Mechanics' Institute which was founded by men who were shortly afterwards to be active in the Birmingham Political Union and the disputes surrounding the Town Council: Richard Spooner, Thomas Attwood, Joseph Parkes and William Redfern.³⁴ As in Sheffield the Mechanics' Institute was intended to provide instruction in science and the industrial arts. However, the political philosophies of the two Institutes were very different. At Sheffield in 1836 the physician Charles Favell had commended the local establishment on the grounds that education would produce gratitude and humility in the workforce; instruction 'should not make them impertinent'.³⁵ The previous year a leading official of the Mechanics' Institute in Birmingham had asserted quite the reverse:

Men have not their due, and they are, and ought to be, discontented. The prevalent discontent, in truth, properly considered, is one of the most favourable signs of the times ... The workman has more knowledge, more mind - he wants more. He believes that more is to be had, and eventually he will have it. Very silly it is to lecture him out of his craving. It is nature's provision for the progress of society.³⁶

³³ Bir Dir 1850, 19; Langford 1873, Vol 1, 124; C Foster 1940, 71.

³⁴ VCH, 227-9.

³⁵ Favell 1836, 7.

³⁶ The Analyst 1835, ii, 280-2, cit VCH, 228. Italics in original.

The waning of the Birmingham Mechanics' Institute coincided with the resurgence of local Conservatism in the mid-1840s.³⁷ Its immediate successor, the Polytechnic Institute, found survival difficult and, like the Mechanics' Institute in Sheffield at about the same time, began looking around for partners. This quest, however, was ultimately more successful than it had been in Sheffield. The Clerks and Assistants, who had recently founded a Mercantile and Literary Institute, were allowed in 1846 to share the premises of the Polytechnic Institute. One of the Clerks' honorary secretaries was J R Allen, an ally of Goerge Dawson in the early closing campaign. The same year the Polytechnic Institute proposed that all the literary institutions of the town - the Philosophical, the Polytechnic, the Society of Arts, the News Rooms and 'other similar institutions' should 'build a suite of rooms sufficient for the purpose of all these societies, and that the management should be consolidated, and thus rendered more efficient and less expensive'. In 1848 the plan was revived when the Polytechnic received notice to quit from its premises in Steelhouse Lane. Intimations of mortality were presumably also experienced when in 1849 the Philosophical Institution ended its career as a consequence of a mounting debt and lack of public support.³⁸

The movement for consolidation was spurred on partly by hopes that 'understanding' between social classes would be thus improved and partly by the promise of economies of scale.³⁹

³⁷ See Chapter Four.

³⁸ Langford 1873, Vol 1, 56, 124, 128, 133.

³⁹ op cit, 254.

⁴¹ op cit, 254.

W P Marshall, secretary of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers, was Honorary Secretary of a local committee which asked the Government to allow town councils to support literary and scientific institutions in 1849. Three years later, Birmingham's Society of Artists invited Charles Dickens to attend a meeting at which the latter gave support to the project for 'an Institution where the words "exclusion" and "exclusivism" should be quite unknown; where all classes and creeds might assemble in common faith, trust and confidence'. The decisive resolution, proposed by Lord Lyttelton at a town meeting early in 1853 called for

a Scientific and Literary Institution upon a comprehensive plan, having for its object the diffusion and advancement of science, literature and the arts in this important community.⁴⁰

A committee was appointed and a circular then distributed which stated:

The Institute will consist of two departments; the first being to carry on similar objects to those of the late Philosophical Institution upon a more comprehensive and extended scale, with the addition of a public gallery of Fine Arts. The other department to be an Industrial Institute, or in other words, a School of Science applied to the arts, for artisans, the members of which will participate of the more essential advantages of the first department, in addition to various class instruction, and weekly progressive lectures on the different branches of science, with special reference to the requirements of the town and neighbourhood ...⁴¹

Over £7,000 was subscribed. Several meetings of artisans were held in various parts of the town which received deputations from the committee, on which Sydney Gedge and Arthur Ryland were prominent. An Act passed through Parliament giving the Town Council permission to grant a block of

40 op cit, 249-50, 252, 257.

41 op cit, 258.

land to the projected Birmingham and Midland Institute which duly began its work in 1854.⁴² The Annual Report for 1858 recorded that the School of Design had been given rent-free accommodation in the Institute's building on Paradise Street.

In 1855 the Industrial Department ran three classes, in physics, chemistry and physiology. By 1868 the Industrial Department was running fourteen classes; chemistry, experimental physics, botany, practical mechanics, geology, physical geography, algebra and geometry, French, German, Latin, history, literature, grammar and writing. There were also special 'penny classes' in arithmetic and singing as well as 'penny lectures'.⁴³ By the early 1860s almost all the teachers were being paid for their work and at the end of the decade there were over a thousand subscribers in the General Department and about 1500 students in the Industrial Department.⁴⁴ The cost of teaching in the Industrial Department was heavily subsidised by subscriptions to the middle-class General Department. By 1882 over £20,000 had been transferred in this way between the departments making a sharp contrast to the sad experience of the Sheffield Mechanics' Institute when it amalgamated with the Athenaeum.⁴⁵

Two aspects of the Institute's work distinguish it from adult education establishments in Sheffield. The first is the broad range of its students and courses. In 1857, about 39% of the students were recorded as 'artisans', a proportion which had risen to about 45% ten years later.

⁴² op cit, 264, 266, 268, 290.

⁴³ ibid; E Smith 1869, 448.

⁴⁴ Birmingham and Midland Institute Annual Report (henceforth BMIAR) 1869.

⁴⁵ BMIAR 1881.

At the later date about 29% of students were shopmen and clerks and about 17% were simply recorded as 'females'. Students were evidently drawn to classes which would help advance their job prospects. In 1860 the committee of the Industrial Department was 'urgently requested' to establish a new writing class. Arithmetic was in such demand that by 1865 the teacher was complaining about the 'crowded state of the room'.⁴⁶ The chemistry class was in 1856 attracting 'chiefly young men engaged as assistants to chemists and druggists'. By 1859 the Institute Chemical Society was in existence whose members, many of them artisans, read papers 'on the scientific principles involved in the operation of their own trades'. Following the 1870 Pharmacy Act which established qualifying examinations, the chemistry teacher expressed his hope that

the Midland Institute may be to the chemists and druggists of Birmingham what the institution at Bedford Square is to the chemists and druggists of London.⁴⁷

In 1868 the Botany teacher acknowledged that his class was composed 'for the most part of adults holding more or less responsible positions in life and having various aims. Some members of the class have passed their examinations as apothecaries, some as pharmacutists, and some as certified teachers'. Presumably the pursuit of certificates was one reason for the 'numerously-signed requisition' received in 1866 asking for the formation of a Latin class.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Langford 1873, Vol 1, 291; E Smith 1869, 448; BMIAR 1860; BMIAR 1865.

⁴⁷ BMIAR 1856; BMIAR 1859; BMIAR 1871.

⁴⁸ BMIAR 1866; BMIAR 1867.

The second distinctive characteristic of the Institute was its wholesale commitment to providing channels of social advancement for all its students. In contrast to the Church of Educational Institute in Sheffield, the Birmingham establishment saw itself as the 'proud mother' rather than the 'stern father' of its progeny. Courses of instruction were deliberately arranged as graduated steps to greater accomplishment. For example, the penny lectures in a wide range of subjects were intended to create an interest amongst 'hard-working artizans' which could be satisfied through more systematic instruction in elementary and advanced classes at rather higher fees. Students in the chemistry classes under C J Woodward were put in touch with industrial processes and conditions, for example through visits to gas works, iron works and glass works, and recent advances in research practice.⁴⁹ Ex-students whose instruction had paid financial dividends in business were proudly reported. Some found employment at the Institute itself.⁵⁰ A pamphlet issued in 1865 stated that a register was kept of students who had been taught at the Institute 'who are desirous of obtaining situations, and to which register employers have access'.⁵¹ The principal means of regulating the progress of students was the formal examination. The Annual Report for 1858 announced that each teacher would examine his students at the end of the spring term and award 'teachers' certificates' to those who had made

49 BMIAR 1856; BMIAR 1864; BMIAR 1865.

50 Ex-students teaching at the Institute included C J Woodward (chemistry) and Albert Cresswell (practical mechanics); BMIAR 1863; BMIAR 1864.

51 BMIAR 1865.

satisfactory progress. 'Council certificates' based on examination by outsiders appointed by the Council would be awarded to those who performed well on the basis of two-years' work. The examinations of the Society of Arts were also entered that year and those of the Department of Science and Art three years later.⁵²

Looking back from 1882, John Henry Chamberlain recalled the Institute's early development:

In the early days of the Institute the Council found, by experience, that artisans could not use the classes, because they were destitute of the elementary knowledge that was necessary even to enable them to understand the ordinary scientific phraseology of the teacher. So that from the beginning, the Institute has always given elementary instruction in science subjects. It has, however, never ... confined itself to elementary teaching only. It was not established for any such purpose. Its end and its aim have, at all times, been to take its students step by step into the higher branches of whatever subject they wished to study, and that the Institute felt itself in a position to teach. Throughout the whole range of our work, from the most elementary to the highest stage to which it can be carried, we test it by the only authoritative test by which such work can be tested, viz, by examinations conducted by qualified examiners ... Our range of subjects is so great that we cannot find any one national examination that will include them all, but in all cases we appeal to the highest tribunal that is open to us.⁵³

These confident tones were not peculiar to the 1880s. Twenty years previously, the Council of the Institute had expressed a hope that it might be the 'centre around which all the educational institutions which addressed themselves to the public at large might cluster'.⁵⁴

52 BMIAR 1858; BMIAR 1861.

53 BMIAR 1881.

54 BMIAR 1860.

The Council's wish, expressed in 1861, had a similar ring to that espoused by the headmaster of the Grammar School two years later when he foresaw the School adopting 'the position of a University, fostering and improving all the educational establishments of this neighbourhood'.⁵⁵ The hegemonic impulse, couched in terms of offering a comprehensive service in harmony with other central civic institutions, was common to School and Institute. In 1849, for example, an industrial school had been built at Gem Street on land donated by King Edward VI Foundation. Training was to be provided for 'children of destitute parents, of all denominations, free of charge, in general accordance with the system of the Elementary Schools belonging to King Edward the Sixth's Foundation ...'. One of the Grammar School's governors, John Cale Miller of St Martin's suggested in 1857 that the Foundation's Elementary Schools should be opened for free instruction on four evenings a week. He evidently envisaged such evening classes as being complementary to the evening classes for adults which 'will now be opened to the artisans of Birmingham in our 'MIDLAND INSTITUTE'. When a board of teachers was formed at the Institute to help in running the Industrial Department, its chairman was Rev E H Gifford of the Grammar School. Three years later, classes in this Department were being made available at reduced fees to pupils at elementary schools run by the various religious denominations.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ See previous chapter.

⁵⁶ Langford 1873, Vol 1, 131-2; Miller 1857; Miller 1858, 197; BMIAR 1856; BMIAR 1859.

The School and the Institute were complemented by a third institution: Queen's College, known before 1843 as the Birmingham Medical School. In 1830, its founder William Sands Cox had called for the cooperation of other local institutions in his ventures including the practitioners at the General Hospital:

I appeal to the Medical Officers to aid the system, to afford clinical instruction to the student, to lay open the book of nature, and not to allow the exertions of several distinguished individuals to remain unseconded. I would appeal to the governors of the school founded by King Edward VI, at some future period on the increase of their funds, to include in their scheme of education medical science, and to afford to the medical student the same advantages which are offered to the clerical scholar; and lastly, I trust the committee of the Botanical Gardens, which originated with the School of Medicine, will open with liberal hands its valuable stores to promote this grand object.⁵⁷

In 1839 he was writing to James Thomas Law, Chancellor of the Diocese of Lichfield, about the need for a new clinical hospital which, 'would give to the parent the means of educating his son for a physician or surgeon beneath his eye; and in connection with the Grammar School, by drawing to the town families for the purpose of professional education, it would indirectly promote our prosperity ...'. By the early 1850s Queen's College included not only a medical department but also a theological department housed in an opulent building which 'might fairly be considered an imitation' of the Grammar School, departments of engineering and law, and an arts department for junior students aged sixteen years and over which provided instruction in a wide range of subjects (including languages, mathematics and science) leading to the examinations of the University of London.⁵⁸ In 1852 Sands Cox

⁵⁷ Morrison 1926, 36-7.

⁵⁸ op cit, 80-1, 115-18.

sought, without success, to extend the College even further by publishing a scheme for an Evening Institute attached to it.⁵⁹

Sands Cox's scheme was published a few days after details of the planned Birmingham and Midland Institute were circulated. However, Chancellor Law, Sands Cox's influential patron, was also closely involved with the latter foundation. Queen's College had to be satisfied with the more limited objective of giving 'industrial instruction to those who belong to a higher class of society' than the clientele of the Institute's Industrial Department. The Warden of Queen's College (Chancellor Law) and the Head Master of the Grammar School were both ex-officio governors of the Institute. Its establishment completed the formation of a trinity of prestigious educational institutions jointly seeking to provide a large proportion of the educational wants of Birmingham. These three institutions were widely felt to be jointly responsible for and representative of science, culture and education in Birmingham. For example, when in 1859 the British Association was pressed to return to Birmingham for its annual conference following a successful visit two years earlier, the invitation was sent by the Mayor, the Council of the Birmingham and Midland Institute, the Governors of King Edward's School and the Council of Queen's College.⁶⁰ Indeed, in the high summer of Birmingham's 'age of equipoise' men such as Law, Gifford and Miller could have been excused

⁵⁹ Langford 1873, Vol 1, 258; Waterhouse 1954, 26.

⁶⁰ *op. cit.*, 25, 156; Langford 1873, Vol 1, 267.

for nurturing the quiet hope that they were on a winning streak: that School, College and Institute might become the pillars of a benevolent Anglican ascendancy in Birmingham's educational life, one which would ensure that the cultivation of the lower and middling orders would occur in ways which did not threaten the prestige and authority of the clergy and that part of the lay establishment of gentry, businessmen and professionals with which they were closely associated.

The sphere of adult education replicates the findings of Chapter Five which were that in Sheffield, unlike Birmingham, practices oriented towards industry, religion and politics were rigidly segregated in distinct institutional frameworks. There was a deep-seated inhibition within the social structure of Sheffield against making the transition from a social order whose primary foci of experience and identity were particularistic solidarities and networks (those of the family, the tavern, the workshop, the parlour and so on) to a social order in which men, women and children could move happily between different institutional spheres and enter without a disabling sense of insecurity into a wide range of social relationships, some of them not quite consistent with each other and some with people outside the immediate circle of kin and friends. Birmingham's inhabitants were better equipped to adopt an attitude towards such institutional involvements which was mid-way between the absolute devotion to close and familiar circles and the outright hostility to commitments which threatened them which were the dominant responses of Sheffielders. In Birmingham a complex network of urban institutions gave inhabitants a feeling of manoeuvrability, a sense that they could find what they were looking for through crafty manipulation in association with chosen

fellows. In Sheffield, such institutions were often perceived as alienating. They drew energies and resources away from the primary solidarities which formed the substance of local society. Such solidarities were means and ends in themselves.

The ready acceptance of formal examinations in Birmingham signalled the recognition by local people that these devices provided useful handholds in the scramble for advancement in an increasingly complex and bureaucratic society in which the family and workgroup were, for many, inadequate sources of security by themselves. Henry Cole and Lyon Playfair found the Birmingham and Midland Institute thirsty for the schemes of the Science and Art department.⁶¹ Likewise, Birmingham's middle-class families were eager to enter their children for the local examinations run by the ancient universities. Sheffield was more sluggish in its response.

Medical education

So far this analysis has focused upon adult education facilities directed at artisans and members of lower middle-class occupations. In the final part of this chapter some comments will be made upon the part played by establishments of learning in the competition for status and influence within professional establishments, paying particular attention to medical men. Professional men were the mainstay of polite culture in the arts and sciences. Three aspects of their involvement in this sphere must be distinguished. First, professional men from genteel families were part of the literary and 'philosophising' wing of the old order. Their breeding assured their status; their bookish vocations encouraged cultural pursuits. Membership of literary and

⁶¹ op cit, 260, 262, 376, 378.

scientific societies was one expression of these interests and the societies gained prestige by their participation. For example, the old Etonian Alfred Gatty, vicar of Ecclesfield, lectured frequently on topographical, historical and literary subjects at the Lit and Phil and elsewhere. A leading litterateur and doyen of Birmingham debating societies was the lawyer Clement Ingleby whose family was well-established in law and medicine. He had been privately educated under masters at King Edward's school and later attended Trinity College, Cambridge. He helped to organise the Shakespeare tercentenary celebrations in 1864. In Sheffield, his counterparts were men like Herbert Bramley, son of the first Town Clerk and himself to be Town Clerk, and Bernard John Wake, a solicitor whose family had long-standing connections with the Norfolk interest. Bramley was 'a great lover of the fine arts' and had an impressive collection of books on logarithms in many languages while Wake was active in the Shakespeare Club and the Lit and Phil. Another well-established legal family was represented on the Lit and Phil committee by Michael Ellison, agent to the Duke of Norfolk.⁶²

Amongst medical men Ferguson Branson and Corden Thompson at Sheffield and the Cox and Johnstone families at Birmingham were all well-established by the 1830s. Branson was an active supporter of the Sheffield School of Art and 'a painter of no mean order'. His father had entertained Princess Victoria to lunch in 1835. Thompson, President of the Lit and Phil in

62 Odom 1926, 47-8; Stainton 1924, 328-30 (Gatty); Edg 1883 3, 65-8 (Ingleby); Stainton 1924, 296-7, 312-3 (Wake); op cit, 313-4 (Bramley); op cit 315-6 (Ellison).

1832, boasted a lucrative practice and an extensive collection of paintings. The son of a cleric, the security of his social position is shown by the fact that when the Provincial Medical and Surgical Association met at Sheffield in 1845, Thompson was offered the presidency - and he refused it. The surgeon Edward Townsend Cox, a 'good old Tory' who also came from a clerical family was remembered for having challenged a physician at Birmingham's General Hospital to a duel over some trouble connected with a book club. The social position of his son William Sands Cox is indicated by the fact that 'some days before the Queen's visit was made in 1858, it was to Mr Cox that application was made respecting the then mayor, upon whom there was some hesitation as to whether the honour of knight-hood should be conferred'. The Johnstones were, however, the more distinguished medical family and when the Council of the Birmingham Medical School was appointed in 1829 Edward Johnstone was made President and his younger brother John became Vice-President.⁶³

A second aspect of participation in scientific and literary societies was the pursuit of influence and acceptance by men who were 'marginal' by virtue of being newcomers or outsiders.⁶⁴ This included migrants into Birmingham or Sheffield without family connections there, Dissenters who felt excluded from patronage and privilege in the hands of the

63 Leader and Snell 1897, 106 (Branson); op cit 100-1; Odom 1926, 133-4 (Thompson); Morrison 1924, 3-4 (Edward Townsend Cox); Edwards 1877, 132-9; Morrison 1924, 198 (William Sands Cox); op cit, 33, 38-40, 205; Johnstone 1909 (Johnstone).

64 cf Inkster 1977

65 1897, 106 (Branson); op cit 100-1; Odom 1926, 133-4 (Thompson); Morrison 1924, 3-4 (Edward Townsend Cox); Edwards 1877, 132-9; Morrison 1924, 198 (William Sands Cox); op cit, 33, 38-40, 205; Johnstone 1909 (Johnstone).

Anglican gentry, and medical and legal practitioners from non-genteel backgrounds. Immigrants to Sheffield such as the Nonconformist ministers Henry Hunt Piper and Peter Wright were both prominent in the Lit and Phil. The same institution served as a useful stepping stone in the rise to influence of George Clavert Holland. He was its president in 1833 and two years previously had held the same office in the Mechanics' Institute. The son of a Sheffield saw-maker, he became physician to the Infirmary and an alderman. Robert Slater Bayley, founder of People's College, was an immigrant from Lichfield in 1836. He was a frequent lecturer on literary, historical and educational subjects. Arthur Ryland, promoter of the Birmingham and Midland Institute, was the nonconformist son of a coach harness manufacturer. He specialised in opening up closed circles to new social influences. A prominent member of the Birmingham Law Society (as secretary, Vice-President and finally President) Ryland was the first provincial solicitor to be elected to the Council of the Incorporated Law Society. As has been seen, it was largely through his efforts that the Act disqualifying practising solicitors from becoming county justices was amended.⁶⁵ This example introduces a third aspect of the cultural and educational activities of professional men which was the attempt by members of occupational groups such as architects, engineers, artists and doctors to raise their status and increase their capacity to regulate their own affairs. This movement was stronger in Birmingham than in Sheffield. The contrast between the two cities may be shown by examining the case of medical men.

65 Board 1959, 91-3 (Hunt, Wright); Inkster 1977, 138-9; Leader and Snell 1897, 102-3 (Holland); Odom 1926, 185 (Bayley); Edg 1882, 2, 76-9 (Ryland).

The establishment of provincial medical schools was one aspect of a profound transformation in the conditions of medical practice during the three decades after 1830.⁶⁶ The divisions between the three 'estates' of physicians, surgeons and apothecaries - consisting respectively of 'gentlemen', 'craftsmen' and tradesmen' - were breaking down. By 1850 the modern division between consultants and general practitioners was becoming established and the Provincial Medical and Surgical Association had been created as an important representative body for the latter group. The development of hospital medicine applying new techniques of clinical-pathological research provided an increasingly large part of the subject matter of medical education after 1830. The systematisation and rationalisation of medical science contributed to a great improvement in the power position of the medical practitioner vis-à-vis his patients. As the cities grew in population the market for professional services widened considerably. Instead of having to solve problems defined by aristocratic sufferers who summoned doctors to their bedsides, medical men had the new security of large urban practices built up by charging graduated fees. With the backing of his educational qualifications, the doctor could rely upon being of higher status than most of his patients. State legislation and professional associations such as the BMA (the successor of the Provisional Medical and Surgical Association) increasingly replaced aristocratic patrons as the arbiters of medical practice.

66 The following paragraph draws upon Holloway 1964, esp 304-5, 311, 316-9.

67 Porter 1928, 12.

68 Huxley 1872.

During the period 1830-1870 Queen's College in Birmingham was one of the most ambitious and well-developed medical schools in the provinces. The Sheffield Medical School was much less enterprising and its very existence was frequently in jeopardy. During the late 1820s rival medical families in Sheffield sponsored two competing institutions. The Jacksons and Overends in alliance with Corden Thompson opened the School of Anatomy and Medicine in October 1828. The Favells in association with Arnold Knight established the Medical Institution in July 1829. Clannishness and political antipathy fed the rivalry. The Jacksons and the Favells both had a long-standing connection with the Infirmary at Sheffield. However, their political dispositions were opposed. Charles Favell was relatively liberal and included among his connections G C Holland and Luke Palfreyman, both men with rather radical leanings. Favell and Arnold Knight were both active in connection with the Mechanics' Institute. The Jacksons had close kinship connections with the Overends, a conservative Quaker family.⁶⁷ The antipathies between the two groups can only have been increased when in 1831 Cordon Thompson, an ally of Overend, defeated Charles Favell in a contest to secure the appointment of physician to the Infirmary.⁶⁸ The Overends' school was destroyed in 1835 by a mob protesting against the 'resurrection' of corpses for dissection, which evened up the balance between the two factions somewhat.⁶⁹

67 Porter 1928, 20-1, 74. See Leader and Snell 1897, 83-8, 116, 146; Odom 1926, 123-5 (Arthur and Henry Jackson); Odom 1926, 128-9, 139-40; Porter 1928, 15; Leader and Snell 1897, 114-6 (Overend family); Fletcher 1972, 7, 9 (Palfreyman).

68 Porter 1928, 17.

69 Donnelly 1975b.

When Thompson refused the presidency of the Provincial Medical and Surgical Association in 1845 the position was awarded to Favell. Thompson gave as his reason for refusing the position 'that he was not in agreement with his medical brethren in the politics that were agitating the profession at that time'.⁷⁰

By 1850 the rivalries had cooled and a single school, the Sheffield Medical Institution was in existence with Wilson Overend as President. He was sufficiently liberal in politics to offer his benevolent support to People's College, though his lawyer brother William was a rampant Tory. Despite initial donations from Norfolk and Fitzwilliam and a loan from the Town Trustees the Institution depended greatly upon student fees and subscriptions from the doctors themselves. In 1865 the school was unable to fill the Chairs of Anatomy, Physiology, Materia Medica and Botany. At a meeting of the Council in March that year it was decided to close the school in the hope that it might later be reorganised on a sounder basis.⁷¹

A distinction must be made between, on the one hand, the weakness of 'the medical profession' in Sheffield - evidenced by rivalries amongst different families, and by the frailty of local 'collegiate' institutions - and, on the other hand, the signal success within Sheffield society of leading medical families.⁷² The son of Charles Favell became

⁷⁰ Leader and Snell 1897, 101.

⁷¹ Porter 1928, 21, 39, 75; C. O Reid 1978, 322-3; Chapman 1955, 113-5.

⁷² On Sheffield medical societies see Snell 1890. The 'Medical Society' founded in 1841, for instance, 'simply ebbed away'. Other attempts were subject to a 'process of atrophy and decadence'. op cit 20, 40, 48.

Archdeacon of Sheffield. Arnold Knight received a knighthood in 1841. Most striking was the upward mobility of the Overends. Hall Overend, the son of a clerk, had been apprenticed to a local apothecary. His eldest son Wilson became a magistrate and subsequently Deputy Lieutenant in both the West Riding and Derbyshire. Wilson's brother William took silk in 1851, stood as Conservative parliamentary candidate for Sheffield in 1852, and was Chairman of the Special Commission on the Sheffield trade union outrages in 1867.⁷³ The rapid growth of the city and the paucity of active local gentry created a 'status vacuum' at the top of Sheffield society which avidly 'sucked in' professional men. Financial success, kinship ties and a willingness to undertake public work counted for more than the local strength of professional associations.⁷⁴

By contrast, there was intense competition for positions of social leadership in Birmingham and the surrounding counties. Local doctors had among their ranks many men of long-established and unimpeachable gentility. This asset was exploited in the fight to establish a self-regulating medical profession with improved status and authority. The

73 Porter 1928, 20, 22; Inkster 1977, 137-8; Leader and Snell 1897, 116; Stainton 1924, 261-2.

74 The Jackson family, for example were related both to the Overends and to the Wakes. Bernard Wake, Arthur Jackson's father-in-law, was a solicitor who 'held a position of very great influence in Sheffield'. A prominent Anglican, Wake made many substantial charitable donations. It is probable that his local standing owed more to his position in this network of kin and personal influence than his early presidency of the Sheffield Law Society. Stainton 1924, 296-7; Leader and Snell 1897, 86.

76 Porter 1928, 36-7. Letter to ...

pretensions and privileges of lawyers and churchmen were deeply envied. When the Provincial Medical and Surgical Association was founded in 1833 its first president was Edward Johnstone, physician of Birmingham's General Hospital. Its second president was his younger brother John, who held an MA degree from Merton College, Oxford, and was a friend of the Bishop of Lichfield. As had been seen, both brothers also had leading positions on the committee of the Birmingham Medical School. By 1843 the school had acquired a royal charter as the Queen's College. Three years previously, Queen's Hospital, the only provincial hospital in England expressly designed for teaching purposes, had also been opened in Birmingham.⁷⁵

Two prominent features of the surging expansion of confidence amongst medical men in Birmingham were the ambitiousness of their vision and the ambiguous character of their relationship with the legal and clerical branches of the old order. William SandsCox was not a modest man. His medical school was intended to become a central institution in not only Birmingham but the whole of the Midlands. He wanted the Grammar School to 'afford to the medical student the same advantages which are offered to the clerical scholar' and was confident in 1830

that the School of Medicine will be fostered and supported, and that the day is not far distant when Birmingham will become the seat of a grand scientific and commercial college.⁷⁶

Nine years later he was eagerly anticipating the benefits which would accrue 'from the rapid communication in all directions

⁷⁵ Morrison 1926, 31, 63-4, 80-4, 107-8.

⁷⁶ op cit, 36-7. Italics in original.

with surrounding districts'. The new Queen's Hospital would draw professional families to the town and

we would thus be prepared to see eventually realised the prophetic and expanded views of our esteemed and venerated President, expressed at the anniversary dinner, June 4th 1831, that "Birmingham will become the seat of a Central University".⁷⁷

The charter of 1843 incorporating Cox's school as the Queen's College at Birmingham provided for departments of Medicine and Surgery, Architecture, Civil Engineering, Law, Theology and - in a junior department - General Literature and Arts. Three years later the college was granted the right to issue certificates qualifying students to become candidates for the degrees of BA, MA, LLB, and LLD at the University of London. By 1851 the Council of the College was extended to include representatives from the Institute of Mechanical Engineers, the Birmingham Architectural Society and the Birmingham Law Society.⁷⁸

This expanding empire was, however, riven by a widely reverberating contest for status and authority among doctors, clerics and lawyers. The issues were presented in an extreme way in the early 1840s by Thomas Gutteridge, Professor of Anatomy at the Society of Arts. His views may well have been sharpened by the progress of a dispute within the latter establishment between the practising artists and 'non-professional committee members'. When the School of Design

⁷⁷ op cit, 80-1.

⁷⁸ Vincent and Hinton 1947, 50; Morrison 1926, 108-111. The award-granting powers mentioned were in addition to the existing powers to award MB and MD degrees.

was founded in 1842 the 'professional committee' of artists objected to their teaching arrangements being subject to the control of 'non-professionals'. They withdrew from the Society of Arts and set up their own Society of Artists.⁷⁹ Gutteridge was a skilled practitioner, 'a specialist and highly successful operator' who came from a tough breed. His sister once attacked the editor of the Birmingham Daily Gazette with an umbrella.⁸⁰ In 1843 Gutteridge was an unsuccessful candidate for a post at the General Hospital. The position was awarded to a rival by a small clique of governors which included the successful applicant's father and father-in-law (an Anglican vicar) with the active connivance, alleged Gutteridge, of the solicitor John Welchman Whateley. The Whateleys, John Welchman and George, were not only governors of the Hospital but also legal agents to the King Edward VI Foundation.⁸¹

Gutteridge did not take this lying down. Instead he wrote a pamphlet in which he complained that 'admission to the medical service was allowed or debarred mainly at the pleasure of active and meddlesome attornies' and that the Whateleys were operating 'in effect, a register office for official appointments, not only for the General Hospital, but also for various public institutions'.⁸² Bitterly, Gutteridge continued:

79 Langford 1873, Vol 1, 208-17.

80 F C Williams 1903, 82.

81 T Gutteridge to James Taylor on the corrupt system of election of medical officers 1843 (henceforth Gutteridge 1843) esp, 3-5.

82 op cit, 3, 4. *Italics in original.*

The legal profession enjoys countless public advantages; - honours and riches, - peerages, judgeships, and offices of profit innumerable: the medical profession on the contrary has few of a public nature; its most distinguished posts are nearly all, as in this present instance, honorary yet not sinecures, and though laborious, not stipendiary.

MEDICAL HONOURS ARE MEDICAL PROPERTY.

The virtues and accomplishments of Ash, of Withering, of the Johnstones, and of Booth are the acquisition, and have become the inheritance, of the medical faculty. That inheritance shall not, without my loudest protest and sturdiest opposition, be seized by venal and unscrupulous attornies.⁸³

The Anglican Church also came under his whip. There were fifty clergy amongst the hospital's governors and on its staff was the Rev Peyton Blakiston whom Gutteridge accused of killing a patient with an overdose of Prussic acid. Blakiston was 'an interloper "amongst us"'.⁸⁴ The aggrieved Gutteridge declared:

Medical rights, free from extra-professional encroachment, is the cause I assert ...
Promotion by merit and not through lucre is the maxim I have espoused, and the upright distribution of honours to the worthy, the principle by which I will stand or fall.⁸⁵

In the event Gutteridge fell. Despite the tentative support of two governors of the General Hospital the allegations were dismissed after a discussion at the Annual General Meeting in 1844. During the meeting an effective speech against Gutteridge was made by Rev Prince Lee, headmaster at the King Edward VI School.⁸⁶

83 op cit, 13. Italics in original.

84 Gen Hos 1844; Gutteridge 1844, 13.

85 Gutteridge 1843, 15. Italics in original.

86 A committee of inquiry was demanded by John Suckling and Richard Hasluck. It is interesting that Suckling was an associate of W Sands Cox. Gen Hos 1844; J Suckling, The Queen's College, Birmingham Enquiry by Charity Commissioners. Reply for W Sands Cox, 1859.

Indeed, as has been noticed, during the 1840s and 1850s Anglican interests extended their influence over Queen's College. The site for Queen's Hospital was purchased by the wealthy Samuel Warneford, rector of Bourton-on-the-Hill, whom Cox attended without fee for many years. Between 1838 and 1852 Warneford donated a total of £27,150 to the hospital and college. There were expectations, disastrously disappointed in 1855, of a large legacy on the occasion of his (no doubt eagerly anticipated) passage to celestial reward.⁸⁷ The price of Warneford's support was a commitment

to combine religious and scientific studies and pursuits; to make medical and surgical students good Christians as well as good practitioners ... always and especially with a view to exemplifying the wisdom, power and goodness of God, as declared in Holy Writ.⁸⁸

The 1847 college charter insisted that the Principal, Vice-Principal, Treasurer, Dean and the tutors in classics, mathematics and medicine should be Anglican. Effective control was given to a Council stuffed full of Anglican clerics and the county gentry. Gradually day-to-day control narrowed even further, falling into the hands of the warden who was required to be a divine trained at one of the ancient universities. J T Law who held this office for many years, modelled the Theological Department on an Oxford College and hoped that in conjunction with the Arts Department it would become a 'flourishing College and nascent University, rising up with its appropriate chambers for students, lecture rooms, halls, courts and quadrangles'.⁸⁹ Law even began to speak (borrowing Johnstone's phrase) of 'our central University'.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Griffiths 1862, 361; Morrison 1926, 60-67; Thomas 1855.

⁸⁸ Morrison 1926, 67.

⁸⁹ op cit, 108-111, 114.

⁹⁰ op cit, 117.

⁹¹ op cit, 108-111.

However his vision assigned a distinctly subordinate place to the medical practitioners in Queen's Hospital.

The counter-attack of the medical men was not long in coming. In 1851 Sydenham College was opened by the staff of the General Hospital. It was purely a medical school. There were no religious tests. It was governed by local doctors on a voluntary and unchartered basis. Fees were low. For seventeen years Sydenham College provided medical practitioners with an institutional base free from the interference of lawyers and divines.⁹¹ Within Birmingham, the movement to improve the standing of the medical profession was led by impeccably genteel families, long-established locally, such as the Coxs and Johnstones. One of the Johnstones, a 'good Conservative Whig', even penetrated the ranks of the Grammar School governors, as has been seen. However, while the resources of prestige and influence commanded by such families were an asset in asserting the authority of doctors vis-à-vis legal and clerical practitioners, these same resources did not prevent their medical colleagues from pursuing the object of collective self-regulation by the whole occupational group. The foundation of Sydenham College was one manifestation of this determined pursuit. Another was a demand in 1859 by the staff of Queen's College that the cantakerous Cox should retire from managing that institution's affairs. The Charity Commissioners were called in and a long process of legal wrangling ensued which issued in the Act of 1867. As a result, the medical men of Queen's Hospital were freed from subjection to Queen's College, Sydenham College was amalgamated with the latter, and the Anglican bias built into Warneford's provisions was overthrown.⁹²

⁹¹ Vincent and Hinton 1947, 55, 58; Morrison 1926, 119-20.

⁹² op cit, 120-43.

One way of distinguishing the two cities is as follows. In Birmingham, relations among medical men were to a great extent governed by the existence of inter-professional rivalries amongst doctors, lawyers and clerics which took the form of disputes over the principles of management appropriate for established and newly-created institutions such as the General Hospital, Queen's College, Queen's Hospital and Sydenham College. In Sheffield, relations were to a greater extent governed by intra-professional rivalries amongst medical families such as the Favells and Overends. These rivalries were superceded not by the establishment of strong collegiate institutions but by the syphoning of the leading participant families into a social world whose command posts were the vicarage, the assize court and the country house. These processes were aided by the fact that even well-born medical men such as Cordon Thompson, Martin de Bartolomé and Ferguson Branson were 'new men' in the city. They were new in the sense of being immigrants: Thompson from Nottinghamshire (via Paris, Berlin and Vienna) in the mid-1820s, Bartolomé from Castille (via Edinburgh) in the late 1830s, Branson from Doncaster (via Winchester and Cambridge) in the early 1840s. Of these three, Bartolomé was the most clearly 'foreign' and despite his hidalgo pedigree complete assimilation into the higher reaches of genteel society in the West Riding was presumably more difficult for him than for Branson and Thompson. It is striking therefore that Bartolomé played a part in the formation of the Provincial Medical and Surgical Association and was the mainstay of the Sheffield Medical School for eighteen years after 1848. '(In) 1866 it was acknowledged that

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he had become quite the recognised leader of the profession in the town'.⁹³

The politics of collective organisation, public debate and conflict over the management of civic institutions were not exclusive to Birmingham's professional men. They were deeply ingrained throughout the middle, lower middle and artisan sections of Birmingham society, producing complex alliances within and amongst these classes. In Sheffield, by contrast, the urban elites of professionals and businessmen were integrated, loosely, through a web of private and semi-private ties rather than through participation in public and professional associations. There were two major exceptions. One was the Church of England which bore the brunt of elementary school management and ran the most successful adult education institution locally with an attendance which compared very favourably with the Birmingham and Midland Institute.⁹⁴ However, the range of subjects offered by the Educational Institute in the 1860s suggests that the establishment's appeal was heavily directed at the new lower middle class aspiring to a commercial training.⁹⁵ Its sponsors did not benefit from complex links with a wide range of industrial,

93 Odom 1926, 133; Leader and Snell 1897, 57, 71-75, 100-1, 106, 155; Stainton 1924, 285.

94 In 1862 there were 512 students on the books at the Sheffield Institution compared to 717 at the Birmingham and Midland Institute. Pawson and Brailsford 1862, 85; Waterhouse 1854, 37.

95 Odom 1917, 10-11.

clerical and 'minor professional' occupations, with wealthy subscribers to the General Department and with other educational institutions such as were developed in the Birmingham and Midland Institute.

The other major exception was the Sheffield trade societies. As the Sheffield Independent wrote in June 1867

The workmen of each trade thoroughly believe that they have a right to enclose for their own use their particular field of industry ... When arguments are addressed to them founded on the principle of the right of every man to use his industry and skill freely according to his own judgement, they quote the regulations of the bar and legal profession.⁹⁶

On the face of it there are some remarkable similarities between the occupational strategies adopted by Birmingham's reforming medical men and those of Sheffield's union secretaries. As has been seen, the Cox and Johnstone families exploited their strong kin and friendship ties with the old genteel order in the movement to build up the professional strength of doctors both locally and nationally. The United Kingdom Alliance of Organised Trades, to be discussed in the next chapter, represented a similar attempt to build up a national movement using as its base the strong particularistic solidarities of a local skilled working class. It is ironic that during the second half of the 1860s the reforming wing of the Birmingham medical profession in the guise of Walter Foster (later Lord Ilkeston) should have been in the van of the attack upon the closed and exclusive clique running the King Edward VI Foundation while in Sheffield the unions themselves were under serious attack for being closed and exclusive.

⁹⁶ SI, 8.6.67, cit Pollard 1957, 133.