

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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DENNIS SMITH

University of Leicester

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Chapter Seven

"OLD FASHIONED IDEAS AND CUSTOMS"

The Attack on Closed Corporations in Birmingham and
Sheffield 1864-70

When Matthew Arnold, writing in the late 1860s, wanted an example of the threat of 'anarchy' produced by contemporary developments in the middle and working classes he repeatedly referred to the 'no-popery' rioting at Birmingham in 1867.¹ When he sought to typify 'the notion of defect in the essential quality of a working class' he cited the 'Needy Knife-Grinder', that central figure in Sheffield's economy.² Nonconformist manufacturers hooked on biblical texts and obsessed with the power bestowed by their new machinery; ignorant workers combining their physical force to wreak havoc in the name of 'liberty': these were Arnold's bogeys. The state of relations between social classes had been dramatised during the late 1860s by a series of events such as the investigations of the Schools Inquiry Commission, the Royal Commission on Trade Unions and the extension of the franchise to many skilled workers. However, in Culture and Anarchy Arnold is not presenting a general plea on behalf of 'the upper class' but rather appealing for principles of social order, enforced by the state, which would give special recognition and a privileged position to styles of learning and forms of understanding embedded in the values and routines of Oxford.³

1 A meeting in Carrs Lane addressed by William Murphy, a notorious agitator', led to violence and the reading of the Riot Act. Arnold 1869, 187-8, 196, 209-10; VCH, 402.

2 Arnold 1869, 201. Arnold's father, Thomas, had used the Sheffield Courant as a platform for expressing his views on social questions in a series of thirteen letters from July 1831 onwards.

3 See P J McCarthy 1971; P J McCarthy 1964.

The development of large-scale industrial capitalism and gigantic manufacturing cities encouraged the growth of public bureaucracies to share the task of regulating the novel processes and solidarities coming into existence. However, the politics of the middle decades of the nineteenth century consisted to a great extent of attempts to employ the power of the local and central state either to strengthen or to weaken the defenses surrounding institutions and social groups embedded in the old social order. Ironically, despite Arnold's hostility towards the 'Needy Knife-Grinder', Sheffield's trade societies were as much threatened by 'machinery' as were Oxford colleges and like Arnold they sought the protection of the state for their special interests. Accused during the Sheffield Outrages Inquiry of organising rattening and 'outrages', William Broadhead argued that such measures were necessary in order to enforce the rules of the trade societies which were under serious threat.

Is it your opinion that in all trades whether at Sheffield or otherwise they will, from not having means of enforcing the payment of contributions or the means of enforcing their rules, resort to rattening of some sort or another? - Yes sir, and I believe that if the law would give them some power, if there was a law created to give them some power to recover contributions without having recourse to such measures there would be no more heard of them.⁴

In effect, like Arnold, Broadhead wished to call upon the resources of the state to buttress a declining interest, though in the latter case the challengers were based in Attercliffe and Brightside rather than South Kensington.

⁴ Out Inq 1867, 248 (q 13241)

Broadhead was reiterating a demand which had been made by the Sheffield Organised Trades five years before and which was often heard in that city during the 1860s.⁵

During the late 1860s the authority of the central state apparatus was brought into the local political equation at Birmingham and Sheffield through the investigations of two Royal Commissions whose outcome in each case was to help shift the balance of local forces to the disadvantage of social interests resisting 'modernisation'. In the years 1865 and 1866 the Schools Inquiry Commission paid special attention to the affairs of the King Edward VI Foundation in Birmingham. They heard evidence from the major participants in an intensely fought dispute over the control and management of the schools run by the Foundation and also received a special report on the schools from the Assistant Commissioner T H Green. The following year, 1867, the special Commission of Inquiry sat at the Council Hall, Sheffield to hear evidence on the "Sheffield Outrages". This evidence was the basis of a subsequent report to the Trades Union Commission. Each governmental inquiry was investigating a local conflict in which one of the main contenders was an entrenched vested interest dominating a vital local resource. In each case the vested interest being investigated recruited its membership largely through particularistic connexions and its affairs were exempt from any substantial degree of public scrutiny. In Birmingham this vested interest was the governing body of the King Edward VI Foundation. In Sheffield it consisted of

⁵ Pollard 1957, 131.

the artisan societies in the light trades. In both towns there was local opposition to these 'irresponsible' bodies. In Birmingham it was organised and articulated by the Free Grammar School Association and the Town Council. In Sheffield opposition had no parallel organisational form but was pungently expressed by W C Leng of the Sheffield Telegraph.⁶

In this chapter the investigations of the two Royal Commissions will be located within a narrative account of related events in the political, industrial and educational spheres between 1864 and 1870. The object will be to argue that these events illustrate decisive shifts within the framework of social differentiation of which the class structures and institutional orders of Birmingham and Sheffield were aspects. In the wake of the decade of 'equipoise' between about 1854 and 1864, the social and political initiative in Birmingham moved definitely towards public institutions closely identified with the municipality, and away from voluntaristic associations and semi-private organisations subject to strong influences emanating from the county. In Sheffield the initiative moved irrevocably out of the hands of the neighbourhood-based institutions of the petty bourgeoisie and skilled working class towards the new large-scale industrial enterprises.

Sheffield's leading manufacturers were very new arrivals, their enterprises had expanded very rapidly, were operated on an unprecedented scale, and commanded (with few effective competitors nationally and internationally)

a powerful strategic resource. The steelmen had no local manufacturing rivals, drew substantial amounts of capital and labour from outside Sheffield, and their leaders were wooed by the county and metropolitan establishments. Their principal concern was the management of the working class in the new residential areas of Attercliffe and Brightside. In other words, they had a special interest in some aspects of Sheffield life insofar as they affected a framework of operations which was national and international rather than municipal. These points may be expanded in comparison with Birmingham.

A high proportion of Birmingham's manufacture was oriented to the production of finished articles for export and local consumption.⁷ The division of labour in production was largely encompassed within the boundaries of the city, strengthening bonds of interdependence between producers with complementary skills. These bonds were made more complex still by the symbiotic relationship between the gun and jewellery quarters and firms employing female and child labour, as was seen previously. Sheffield's light trades also produced finished articles but within a much narrower range of goods. Competition, secrecy and the rigid demarcation of occupational boundaries were more prominent aspects of relations between producers within the city. Unlike Birmingham, the labour for the new heavy industry was not drawn from artisan families in the old-established trades (at least before the 1880s). Whereas before about 1850 the pattern of industrial differentiation in Sheffield had

⁷ See Chapter Three.

tended to strengthen neighbourhood commitments at the expense of municipal solidarity, after that date the steel industry created strong links between production in one sharply defined quarter of Sheffield and production in other cities, with an equally detrimental effect on municipal solidarity. Although steel firms produced some finished goods, for example, tools, and although a railway carriage works had been erected near John Brown's Atlas Works by the 1860s, a high proportion of steel products were sent out of the city for final processing and assembly.⁸ Among the new products being manufactured by the 1860s were

Cast steel locomotive double crank axles, and tender and carriage axles; single crank and other marine shafts; cannon blocks, jackets, tubes and hoops for ordnance and hydraulics, forged out of solid ingots of cast steel; solid castings in steel, not forged or rolled, for railway wheels (with tyres in one solid piece), railway crossings, hornblocks or cheek plates, and a variety of other castings and forgings in steel for railway rolling stock, permanent way, machinery, ordnance, &c., &c.⁹

In subsequent decades, the high costs of transport into and out of Sheffield were to engender even greater specialisation in high-quality steel, encouraging close collaboration with manufacturers and customers elsewhere whose precise specifications had to be determined and met.¹⁰ As will be seen, the principal aspect of local public work which drew the attention of some steel manufacturers at least was the provision of efficient education for their future workers.

8 Pawson and Brailsford 1862, 179.

9 op cit 119-20.

10 Warren 1964, esp 142; Pollard 1959, 159-64.

A final point to be made before looking in more detail at the two cities between 1864 and 1870 is that although the pivotal point of each analysis is a conflict between rising and declining interests, the composition of the social groups concerned and the strength of their members' commitment underwent important changes during the period. It will be possible in some instances to notice the subtle redefinitions of interest and shifts in allegiance which occurred as new issues arose and as the increased importance of public municipal institutions (in Birmingham) and heavy industry (in Sheffield) imposed new systemic constraints upon social action.

Sheffield

When the Dale Dyke Dam burst on March 11th 1864 it cost 240 lives in Sheffield and destroyed nearly 800 dwellings.¹¹ Indirectly, the rushing waters also helped to undermine the old Liberal establishment in that city. This establishment was, in effect, led by Thomas Dunn and Robert Leader at that time. One of their colleagues was Frederick Mappin, managing director of Thomas Turton and Sons, file manufacturers.¹² Mappin was also a director of the water company which owned the dam as was Robert Hadfield, Liberal MP for Sheffield. The other Liberal MP, J A Roebuck was publicly sympathetic to the plight of the water company. One of Turton's other directors, W A Matthews, was a long-serving alderman on the Town Council.¹³ This latter body failed to

11 S Harrison 1864, 93, 157; B Grant 1864.

12 On Mappin see Odom 1926, 91-5; Stainton 1924, 345-6.

13 March 1966, 31-3; SI 10.6.1865; Furness 1893, 69; Sheff Dir 1862.

act effectively against the water company in spite of demands that it should be 'municipalised'. Facts of this kind gave Leng of the Telegraph ample ammunition to direct at Sheffield's leading Liberals. He implied that they had culpably failed to act against the water company in spite of its gross neglect.¹⁴ However, despite Leng's hostility Roebuck, who was very popular amongst the Sheffield artisans, was successfully returned at the 1865 General Election.¹⁵ Nevertheless, the political weakening of the old Liberal establishment and its supercession by an increasingly Conservative establishment headed by the new steel men was hastened by the events of the subsequent four years during which the participants in the Water Company drama were drawn into very different alignments. In particular, skilled craftsmen and important file manufacturers such as Mappin, who had been loosely associated through their support of Liberal candidates, were thrown into radical confrontation at the workplace.

During the 1860s two models of industrial regulation were available to members of the Sheffield trade societies. The first was an elaborated version of the unions' traditional insistence upon their responsibility to govern the practices of their trades, especially through their control over the labour supply. In 1859 the Sheffield Association of Organised Trades was founded. Its Executive included William Broadhead

¹⁴ eg ST 18.3.1864, 23.3.1864, 6.5.1864.

¹⁵ Stainton 1924 46-50; Furness 1893, 510.

of the sawgrinders, William Dronfield, a printer, and Robert Applegarth, a carpenter. The Association was dominated by skilled craftsmen, many of whom identified not with the masters or with the men but with 'the trade'. The principal goal of the Association was to mediate in disputes within the local trades. Giving aid to workers against their masters was a secondary objective should the former fail. Indeed, the Association insisted that it would aid masters in the case of unauthorised strikes. Its ultimate ambition was the deeply-conservative one of restoring a 'gild-like corporate organisation of industry with legal powers of enforcement in which masters and men should be equally represented'.¹⁶

Arbitration was also a crucial feature of the second form of industrial regulation on offer, one which was associated with the name of A J Mundella, the Nottingham hosiery manufacturer.¹⁷ Under the aegis of the Nottingham Chamber of Commerce, Mundella was the principal founder in 1860 of a Board of Arbitration and Conciliation which was to fix piecework rates and the price of labour in the hosiery trade. Mundella presided over this body during its first eleven years in the course of which the Board's authority was successfully established. Its decisions did not have the force of law.¹⁸ In this and in other ways

¹⁶ Mendelson nd, 18-19.

¹⁷ On Mundella see Armytage 1951; Higginbotham 1941.

¹⁸ Higginbotham 1941, 10-15; Armytage 1951, 33 ff.

Mundella's scheme differed from the Association's model. The Board in Nottingham had been established at the initiative of manufacturers and within an industry in which the division between employers and employees was much clearer than in the Sheffield light trades. Mundella's rationale was that masters and men, both of whom had the right to organise, should agree on matters of mutual interest. Conciliation was to take place within a framework which recognised the constraints of market forces and the importance of mechanisation.¹⁹ By contrast, the Sheffield unions retained the ambition of manipulating the market through apprenticeship regulations and by putting men 'on the box' (ie paying them from union funds in times of slack trade). They were also, of course, hostile to mechanisation. In contrast to the strong and central emphasis in Sheffield upon preserving the rights and customs of the local trades, Mundella's scheme belonged to a broader political strategy of reform. This strategy encompassed working for the extension of the franchise (through the Reform League), for greater regulation of licensing hours (a cause dear to sabbatarians and campaigners for teetotalism), and for the rapid extension of educational facilities.²⁰ Such a strategy invoked a more positive role for the state than the mere protection of local vested trade interests, a more wide-ranging cooperation between masters and men than

19 Mundella was an associate of Cobden whose Anglo-French free trade treaty was signed in 1860. Armytage 1951, 30-2.

20 A prominent local supporter of these causes was H J Wilson. See Fowler 1961a; Stainton 1924, 355-6.

¹ See also Murray 1970.

submission to the dictates of local arbitration bodies; and a willingness to lend local energies to a national movement whose leadership tended to gravitate to the metropolis where constant pressure could be exerted upon Whitehall and Westminster.

During the mid-1860s the viability of the Association's model of industrial regulation was severely tested and found wanting. Divisions within the local artisan population were made public at the Social Science Congress at Sheffield in October 1865 when John Wilson, a penknife grinder, read a paper condemning the practice of arbitration and the effects of trade unions upon the free working of the market: 'being a believer in free competition, I detest interference with any man's labour'. He also argued that 'invariably the most powerful combinations of operatives have failed when met by combined capitalists'. William Dronfield read a defense of the unions, declaring that they benefited not just workers but also the community at large. In the proceedings of the conference, Wilson's paper was published in extenso. Dronfield's was omitted.²¹

Wilson's prognostications were confirmed by the file strike of 1866. The file trade was a prominent part of a sector of Sheffield industry in which several firms combined steel production with the fashioning of tools. A large number of skilled craftsmen were employed by these manufacturers, both on and off the premises. Such firms as Turtons, J Kenyon and Co (file makers), Spear and Jackson, Eadon and Sons (saw manufacturers) and Ibbotson Brothers (edge-tool

21 J Wilson 1866b, 480; Armytage 1948a, 146-7. On Dronfield see also Thornes 1976.

makers) were at the centre of the conflict between craft traditions and large-scale mechanised industry. In February 1866 nearly 4000 filesmiths, file grinders and allied workers struck over a wage claim and faced a lockout by the employers who were organised in a File Manufacturers' Association.²² Frederick Mappin was prominent among them. Several of the employers promptly ordered file-cutting machines of a kind which had recently been successfully introduced in Manchester. Such machinery had been forbidden by the unions. A Machine File Grinding Company was established. In response, the file unions organised a cooperative society to undertake file-cutting by hand. They also joined the Association of Organised Trades.²³ For more than fifteen weeks the unions paid out well over £1000 per week to their members. The Association's attempt to arbitrate during March, which included a public debate between both sides at the public house owned by Broadhead, failed when the employers insisted upon the unions' unconditional acceptance of the new machines. By early June the file unions, popularly regarded as the strongest in town, were forced to send their men back to work on the new machines without a wage increase. The most that could be won, after further strikes in 1866 and 1867, was an agreement that employers should only employ skilled men on the machines.²⁴

22 Lloyd 1913, 315.

23 J Brown 1975, 53; Pawson and Brailsford 1862, 150; Pollard 1959, 140; Mendelson nd, 26.

24 op cit, 26-7; Pollard 1959, 140.

The strike was a crucial test of the power relative to each other of two forms of capitalist order. Probably nothing less could have stimulated the call for national support which went out from the Association in spite of its members' strong parochial orientations. A conference of delegates met in Sheffield during July 1866, by which time the strike was over. There were delegates from the large national trade unions, county miners' associations (including the Yorkshire miners), local unions, trades councils (including Glasgow) and the International. Although the London Trades' Council and the amalgamated societies were cautious in their support, George Odger described the conference as 'one of the largest ever held in the cause of labour'. The conference proposed mutual support against lockouts, shorter hours, councils of arbitration and conciliation, schemes for cooperation, and amendment of the Master and Servant Law. A United Kingdom Alliance of Organised Trades was formed with its headquarters in Sheffield and its officials drawn lock, stock and barrel from the Sheffield Association.²⁵

For a brief moment the national initiative in trade union affairs lay with the Sheffield societies, local unions very deeply embedded in the old social order which were facing a very direct challenge from the institutions of modern capitalism. However, despite their apparent organisational triumph, the Sheffield unions rapidly became isolated both locally and nationally. The ignominious defeat of the file unions in 1866 was soon followed by the 'Hereford Street outrage'. A can of gunpowder exploded at the house of a

²⁵ Mendelson *ibid.*, 28; Armytage 1948, 146.

saw-grinder who had disagreed with his union. The saw-grinders operated in firms such as Eadon's which, like Turton's, were highly dependent upon skilled labour. The affair was a gift to leader writers. The Sheffield Chamber of Commerce seized the opportunity to call for an enquiry and were backed by the Town Council, the Cutlers' Company, the Manufacturers' Protection Society and, prudently, the Sheffield Association of Organised Trades. On this issue, the Association acted in concert with the London Trades Council to whom the initiative in national trade union affairs now shifted. The London trades were not only very anxious to disassociate themselves from the odium which attached to Sheffield but were also strategically well-placed to campaign within the metropolis for a reversal of a recent court decision which denied the legality of trade unions. The ensuing Royal Commission on the trade unions, whose membership included J A Roebuck, resulted in an improvement of the legal status of trade unions, but a sharp condemnation of the Sheffield outrages. It confirmed the leadership of the metropolis, centre of the great amalgamated unions, within the national labour movement.²⁶

The Special Commission of Enquiry discovered that most cases of rattenning and acts of violence against person and property occurred in the grinding trades. William Broadhead, the Secretary of the Saw Grinders' Union and (until the enquiry) treasurer of the United Kingdom Alliance of Organised Trades was found to be a major instigator of the outrages. In the course of the examination of witnesses,

²⁶ Mendelson nd, 29-30.

Broadhead was established as 'a very bad man' who had 'imposed upon the public' while Dronfield, speaking for the Sheffield and United Kingdom Alliances of Organised Trades was allowed to emerge as a 'respectable man'. The Sheffield Alliance's address to Lord Palmerston in 1863 condemning the outrages was praised as 'a respectable thing'.²⁷ Dronfield was told

If every society had so respectable a secretary as you, I do not doubt that they would be very much better off than they are.²⁸

The strategic advantage obtained by the larger employers as a consequence of not only the file strike but also the widespread condemnation of 'outrages' is shown in the evidence of William Bragge, managing director of John Brown and Company Ltd.²⁹ Browns had made a ten per cent cut in wages earlier that year and faced a strike of the Ironworkers Union. A lockout had been successfully carried out using non-union labour from outside Sheffield.³⁰

²⁷ Out Inq 1867 evid 293 (q 15,403), 291 (q 15,332), 292 (q 15,369).

²⁸ loc cit, evid 292 (q 15,370).

²⁹ In the light of Bragge's evidence it is worth noting that he was a prominent supporter of technical education in Sheffield. His stance on this issue and on the employment of unionists are both consistent with a desire to minimise worker control over the manufacturing process. See Chapter Nine. Erikson 1959, 39, 40.

³⁰ Out Inq 1867, evid 444 (qq 23,345 - 23,349).

Are the men whom you now employ unionists or non-unionists? - They are non-unionists. Have you made it a rule that you will employ non-unionists only? - We have abstained from employing unionists. On what grounds? - On the ground of the coercion exercised by them when we employed them.

.....

Is it your custom, when a man comes into your employment, to send to the place from which he had come to ascertain what is his character? - It is our custom.

Whether he is a union man or not? - Whether he is a union man or not.

If he is a union man is it your practice to engage him or not? - We should not do so now, though formerly we did.³¹

The publicity surrounding the enquiry gave Sheffield workers a bad name among readers of the national press and made it more difficult to advocate the defensive strategy of craft protection of which the 'outrages' were an extreme manifestation.³² However, the behaviour of Broadhead and the grinders was not deviant in the eyes of their peers but rather showed extreme commitment to values held by a very large proportion of Sheffield's workforce. Although only twelve out of the sixty unions were directly implicated by the enquiry, the midnight work of the ratteners was an expression of strong occupational solidarities to be found within several Sheffield trades.³³

Dronfield pointed out that rattening was most prevalent amongst grinders because the stealing of bands was relatively easy to carry out. However, the offense being punished might have occurred in a related trade, for example amongst forgers,

31 loc cit evid, 444 (qq 23,359 - 23,361, 23,376 - 23,378).
My italics.

32 Armytage 1948a, 147.

33 Out Inq 1867, rep xvi.

whose work would be equally disrupted by a cessation of grinding. Rattening the grinders could be a means of indirectly enforcing contributions or restricting numbers of apprentices in a wide range of trades. A complex system of cooperation and compensation had developed amongst the unions.³⁴

Is it necessary that they (ie other unions) should be amalgamated with the grinders in order to cause them to ratten for them or not? - So far as I know of those amalgamations (and I am speaking now of the trades amalgamated amongst themselves, and not of the general amalgamation), the saw trade, the scythe, sickle and hook trade, the scissors grinders, and forgers, and I believe the sickle grinders and scythe forgers are in amalgamation among themselves. - And if anything happens to one branch they call upon the others to assist them in enforcing the rules? - This is what I understand to be the case.³⁵

Devilish union officials could not be blamed for all such practices since '(we) have cases where secretaries themselves have been rattened, and had their bands taken'.³⁶ Another witness sketched a typical scene:

We will suppose three men. Supposing three men were in a beer-house, and began to talk of trade matters, and in conversation it is found that one of the three owes money to the society, trades' unionists as a rule would not be surprised to hear of that man's tools being taken without the interference of any official or any one further than the three.³⁷

34 loc cit, evid 291 (qq 15,323 - 15,356).

35 loc cit, evid 291 (qq 15,341 - 15,342).

36 loc cit, evid 291 (q 15,354).

37 loc cit, evid 33 (q 1,638).Evidence of J Thompson.

As Sydney Pollard has shown, the saw grinders' society was attempting to maintain a high level of wages by rigidly controlling entry into the trade and maintaining idle saw grinders out of union funds. The victims of the outrages instigated by Broadhead were maverick saw grinders who were outside the union. They produced inferior goods at low prices and took on several apprentices. The latter received an inadequate training and subsequently had to be taken on the 'box' lest they flood the market.³⁸ The victims of Broadhead had few friends in Sheffield. Even the Sheffield Daily Telegraph was forced to admit

that outside the immediate circle of roughs proper there are hundreds, and we very much fear, thousands who extenuate and palliate the dark deeds disclosed, and who secretly, if not openly, sympathise with Broadhead.³⁹

Nevertheless, the model of industrial regulation associated with the reform strategy of advanced Liberalism became increasingly attractive to Sheffield's union leaders after the traumatic experiences of 1865-7. William Dronfield on behalf of the Organised Trades and the Reform League, invited A J Mundella to come to Sheffield in 1867 as a possible parliamentary candidate. The old Liberal establishment of the city followed this lead by the artisans and at a subsequent mass meeting Mundella was adopted as the candidate instead of J A Roebuck. The latter had lost favour on a number of counts, including his hostility to union witnesses during his service on the Royal Commission and his

38 Pollard 1957, esp 128-9.

39 ST, 19.7.1867, cit Pollard 1957, 135.

ambivalent attitude towards Gladstone's Reform Bill in 1867.⁴⁰ The political campaign during the 1868 General Election showed that a considerable realignment of social forces had occurred in Sheffield during the mid-1860s.

Early in 1868 Roebuck gave a lecture in Sheffield on Capital and Labour which largely consisted of a rehearsal of the latter's faults. The vote of thanks proposed after the meeting was defeated.⁴¹ However, Roebuck had the support of Leng's Sheffield Telegraph, his strident opponent three years previously, and was also backed by several substantial employers. He was invited to address employees at several large works, including Turtons. Paradoxically, Roebuck had the sympathy not only of large employers who wished to see the long-established might of the local trade societies broken but also men who saw Mundella as the leading edge of an alien movement, directed from outside Sheffield, which was a threat to other local vested interests. Veterans of the old Democratic party came out for old 'Tear 'em', as did several wine and beer sellers including Broadhead who was a former landlord as well as a former union secretary. The latter told a meeting of working men that he feared that Mundella would represent the London trades rather than those of Sheffield.⁴²

⁴⁰ Higginbotham 1943, 286-90.

⁴¹ op cit, 288.

⁴² ST, 25.8.1868; SI, 25.8.1868. Roebuck's executive committee included W C Leng, Mark Firth, F T Mappin, Thomas Jessop and Robert Jackson. Apart from these members of the big bourgeoisie, W Crowther, an old supporter of Ironside, also sat on the committee. ST. 10.10.1868; Fletcher 1972, 85-6.

In his first major speech to his potential supporters Mundella declared himself to be in favour of the extension of the suffrage, the secret ballot, disestablishment of the Church, financial and administrative reform in government, compulsory education, cooperation, and support for trade societies whose bargaining rights should be recognised and whose funds should be 'protected against the thief as effectually as the funds of the Bank of England or any other Joint Stock Company'. This programme had no appeal for larger employers such as William Bragge who felt they could run their businesses very well without trade unions. Mundella's middle-class supporters included Nonconformists such as W J Clegg, J H Barber, Robert Stainton and J C Calvert who supported a programme of sabbatarianism and teetotalism. Mundella also won favour with a number of the larger shopkeepers who, it may be surmised, because of their dealings with a wide cross-section of local working-class people as customers were more sensitive than the larger manufacturers to the aspirations of the Sheffield population.⁴³ The experience of 1865-7 had shown that the pursuit of self-respect and a comfortable standard of living by standing firm on the traditional rights of long-established crafts now carried severe political and even legal penalties. At this moment of uncertainty, with their old champion Roebuck as discredited in the eyes of artisans as was Broadhead before 'respectable' society, Sheffield's working-class population were receptive to the alternative which they were offered.

⁴³ op cit, 60, 84; Higginbotham 1943, 290-3; Odom 1926, 135-7 (W J Clegg), 63-4 (J Calvert); Stainton 1924, 286-8 (R Stainton).

As Broadhead foresaw, Mundella had the full backing of the London-based Reform League. George Howell, the League's Secretary, claimed responsibility for doing 'what the local agents could not do, viz, unite the numerous trades into one committee for electoral purposes'.⁴⁴

The 1868 General Election had a dual character in Sheffield. On the one hand, dyed-in-the-wool protagonists of the old politics of the tavern and vestry were in opposition to advocates of national reform movements seeking to influence and extend the use of the central state's power. On the other hand, the election marked the transposition into the party political arena of a class conflict being fought within industry. The larger employers were heavily in favour of Roebuck while the union leadership was predominantly behind Mundella. Four candidates stood at the poll, including George Hadfield who took little active part in the contest, and Edwin Price, who campaigned as a Conservative. The voting was as follows:

Hadfield	14,797
Mundella	12,212
Roebuck	9,571
Price	5,272

45

Hadfield and Mundella were duly elected, with the help of heavy voting in their favour in the working-class districts of Nether Hallam, the Park, Attercliffe and Brightside.⁴⁶

The victory of Mundella did not signify the capture of Sheffield by advanced Liberalism. A population in which twenty-five per cent of the voters were artisans even before 1867 could drum up little local enthusiasm for the Reform

⁴⁴ R Harrison 1972, 167. On Mundella's connection with the Reform League see Armytage 1951, 40 ff.

⁴⁵ Furness 1893, 510.

⁴⁶ SI, 27.11.1868, cit Fletcher 1972, 87.

League amongst either the trade unions or the middle classes.⁴⁷ A city in which drink was considered a necessary companion to labour in both the light and heavy trades was relatively immune to the blandishments of the United Kingdom Alliance. The cause of educational reform certainly did not excite popular support. Subscriptions to the National Education League were meagre in Sheffield.⁴⁸ Significantly, the League whose leadership in Birmingham was firmly in the hands of the Liberal Party, was introduced to Sheffield under the aegis of both Liberals and Conservatives. A resolution in favour of the League was proposed in January 1870 by Robert Leader and seconded by his arch-rival, W C Leng. The president of the Sheffield executive was William Bragge, whose anti-union sentiments have been noted, but its members included William Dronfield. The League's effective influence in Sheffield lasted only about a year since the local executive refused to act as mere fund-raisers for Birmingham.⁴⁹

When responsibility for ensuring adequate elementary education in Sheffield passed to the School Board in 1870, the results of the first election revealed the outlines of the coalition of establishments through which the city's affairs would be managed during the next quarter of a century. Of the fifteen candidates who were elected, the majority belonged

47 Data on franchise based on returns made by the Union Clerks in Sheffield to central government in 1866.

48 SI, 5.3.1870.

49 SI, 18.1.1870, 4.4.1871; Fletcher 1972, 99-102.

to conservatively-inclined congregations of Anglicans (four), Wesleyans (three) and Roman Catholics (one) while only three (an Independent, a Unitarian and a Free Churchman) were sponsored by the National Education League. At the top of the poll, drawing the 'plumped' votes of Sheffield's Roman Catholics was Michael Ellison, the Duke of Norfolk's agent in the city. Eight of his colleagues were manufacturers, five of them in the steel industry: Robert Eadon, Charles Wardlow, Charles Doncaster, Mark Firth and Sir John Brown. The latter was to be chairman of the School Board until 1879 when he was succeeded by Mark Firth.⁵⁰

Of the five members of the School Board also serving on the Town Council in 1870, only one (Sir John Brown) was a steel manufacturer. In fact, the decade after 1863 had seen a diminution of the proportion of council members who belonged to the steel industry with some slight recovery between 1868 and 1873. A similar pattern is displayed with respect to council members classified as 'merchants and manufacturers' or otherwise identifiable as being fairly substantial employers both inside and outside the steel industry. Medical men and solicitors also lost ground although the latter recovered wonderfully well, an augury of their future significance in the council chamber.⁵¹

50 SI, 11.11.1870; Bingham 1949, ch 1 and App 12; Fletcher 1972, App C.

51 By 1883 there were eight solicitors on the Council; by 1892 the figure had risen to eleven. Furness 1893, 52, 61, 63-74.

Notes on the History of Sheffield, 1850, 6

TABLE 23

Membership of Sheffield Town Council 1863-1873

	1863	1868	1873
Steel manufacturers	12	7	9
All merchants and manufacturers	28	22	25
Medical men	2	1	1
Solicitors	4	2	5
Total number of council members	56	56	64

Sources: Furness 1893 and Directories

During the 1860s Sheffield Town Council suffered a very serious decline in its reputation which had barely recovered from Ironside's career. Even in the wake of the Dale Dyke disaster the Council had not had the political will to take over the water company and so it remained heavily dependent upon the rates squeezed out of the local population. Trade unionists as well as employers were deeply disgruntled with the Council. William Dronfield claimed in 1867 that six years earlier the Association of Organised Trades had been unable to carry out its own investigations into the local 'outrages'. A public meeting had been held and a committee formed 'but owing to the then mayor and the leading men of the town refusing to cooperate with them, the committee was dissolved without having gained any information on the subject'.⁵² Such revelations gave plausibility to the Saturday Review's suggestion that

there is a peculiar local and moral disease which we may venture to call Sheffieldism - a malaria and pestilential fog which saps the energies of Hallamshire in particular, and which infects the

⁵² Quoted in Gledstone 1867, 6.

particular trade of cutlery and steel goods, or the employers in that particular trade, with an indigenous cretinism and a paralysis of the moral functions that secrete the function of responsibility.⁵³

In fact, as has been argued, the tide of social development which overwhelmed the traditional strongholds of the tavern and vestry also left the Town Council stranded, a relatively minor institution in the shadow of the steel manufacturers and the great landowners. Aldermanic robes had no special charm for most of them but a well-trained and compliant labour force was a necessary adjunct to their industrial investments. The Town Council could languish but the School Board had to be a success.

Birmingham

The experience of Birmingham was very different. In 1865, William Harris, a prominent member of George Dawson's Church of the Saviour, joined the Town Council. E P Hennock writes:

In 1865 Harris's accession was an isolated case but from the perspective of a few years later he was a significant precursor. After 1867 we find a number of able recruits to municipal politics, 'belonging indeed to precisely the class of burgesses most desirable to the Council', to quote the words used of Joseph Chamberlain, who seem to have been brought there by their interest in the extension of popular education. Their accession was crucial. Having entered under what proved to have been a misapprehension, they stayed on, dealing with the pressing tasks with which the Corporation was faced at the time, and thereby raising considerably the ability and general tone of the Council.⁵⁴

53 Saturday Review, 2.11.1867.

54 Hennock 1973, 82.

The 'misapprehension' was that responsibility for ensuring adequate elementary education would eventually be given to the Town Councils, a belief which, in Hennock's view, helps account for the election of, for example, John Lowe (1863), George Dixon (1864), William Harris (1865), Jesse Collings (1868) and Joseph Chamberlain (1869). They were early participants in a movement which in the twenty years after 1862 increased the proportion of large businessmen on the Town Council from under eight percent of all seats to over twenty-three percent while the proportion of small businessmen decreased from over thirty-two percent to under eighteen percent.⁵⁵

Hennock argues that Dawson's preaching played an important part in providing 'a new vision of the function and nature of the corporation'. This vision was responsible for 'the recruitment to the Town Council of the social and economic elite of the town whose abilities made the actual administrative improvements possible'.⁵⁶ The vision of local government which developed in Birmingham subsequently became widespread throughout the nation, argues Hennock, but it was first expressed in that city because 'the town was the stronghold of the National Education League, the body that stood for no compromise on the issue of public responsibility for education'. A further reason was that in the League and in the municipal reform movement 'the pacemakers were ... the Unitarians, quasi-Unitarians and Quakers' who by comparison with other large towns 'formed

55 op cit, 34.

56 op cit, 172.

an exceptionally high proportion of the religious spectrum in Birmingham'.⁵⁷ Certain questions arise, however. Why did Dawson's vision of municipal responsibility find such a sympathetic audience in Birmingham? Why were Birmingham's Unitarians, quasi-Unitarians and Quakers so much more active in municipal public service from the mid-1860s than their equivalents in Sheffield? Why did the National Education League, a provincial movement seeking to impose a national policy of universal, free, compulsory and unsectarian elementary education upon the central state, find its headquarters in Birmingham?⁵⁸

The answers to these questions are suggested by the preceding chapters in this thesis. Birmingham was a city characterised by a high degree of dynamic density and complex intermeshing between its institutional orders and classes. A strong sense of local identity focused upon the city itself had been developing since the late eighteenth century in the course of conflicts with county interests (for example, during the early years of the Town Council) and with central government (for example, during the period of Chartist disturbances). By the middle 1860s the social tendencies which during the 1830s and 1840s stimulated the aggressive campaign of Nonconformists against church rates and which swept the Birmingham Political Union onto the Town Council had progressed to the extent that the balance of

⁵⁷ op cit, 175, 176.

⁵⁸ On National Education League see A F Taylor 1960; Adams 1882; Hamer 1977, Ch 7.

political advantage between county and city was swinging strongly towards the latter. At the same time, the scale of the tasks of social management was growing beyond the capacity of voluntary associations and private endeavours to cope with them.

In these new conditions the political agenda was transformed. First, institutions in Birmingham tainted with the 'jobbery' and 'corruption' of pre-1832 styles of government came under renewed attack from opponents whose confidence had greatly increased. Second, control of public institutions financed through local taxation became a more important objective for all groups seeking to influence the city's affairs. Third, as central government increasingly took cognisance of the developing shape of institutional orders such as education and industry (for example through the Royal Commissions of the 1860s) and as the major political parties began to accept that the state could be used to implement major social reforms, so political leaders in Birmingham, as elsewhere, worked to construct organisational means of influencing these processes.⁵⁹ Just as Ironside was able to exploit the remarkably solidary neighbourhood structure of Sheffield society in his attempt to monitor and control the activities of Sheffield Town Council, so, at a higher level of integration, men like William Harris and Joseph Chamberlain were able to exploit the strong bonds of the Liberal establishment with the local working-class and

59 The processes just described interacted in complex ways with the development of a 'national' party system expressing some aspects of 'national' opinion. cf Vincent 1972, 33.

lower middle-class population. Birmingham was experiencing steady industrial growth and differentiation and a relatively modest population growth. Free from the sharp divisions which set masters against men in Sheffield, Birmingham was a secure base for launching a provincial movement to influence national politics.

Another consequence of the relative freedom from fears of lower-class unrest in Birmingham was that when divisions within and between the city's middle-class establishments became more pronounced in the mid- and late - 1860s there were few inhibitions against bringing the conflicts into the sphere of public political debate. As has been seen, in Sheffield during this period the artisan population faced a choice between two modes of controlling industrial practices and managing relationships with larger employers. In Birmingham, members of the 'big bourgeoisie' faced a similar choice, in this case between two ways of controlling civic institutions and managing relationships with the working population. The first model insisted upon the privileged position of the Church of England and the genteel and exclusive lay circles closely associated with it. The local labouring population was to be cared for through the charitable endeavours of a patrician establishment which cultivated its connections with the county and metropolis. The competing model denied that Anglican persuasion, genteel birth or particularistic connexion should give special power or privilege within the public realm. Care for all members of the community was a primary function of public institutions rather than private charity, and these institutions should express the wishes of an enlightened citizenry,

including the intelligent working class. In practice, of course, the wealthier citizens would exercise a disproportionate share of responsibility and influence in civic affairs just as in Mundella's arbitration scheme the employers retained many strategic advantages in industrial bargaining.

Dawson's preaching was a powerful expression of the latter approach. It had an obvious appeal not only to Dissenters but also to warehouse clerks and artisans of various faiths or none, to public servants, and to professionals and businessmen who felt excluded from the influence which they felt their achievements merited, both in their occupational spheres and in public life. Too much emphasis should not be laid upon the special charisma of Dawson. He was active in Birmingham affairs from the late 1840s but, as R W Dale recalled, his insistence upon 'the vital importance of securing for municipal office the wisest, the most upright, and the most able men in the town' was 'for some time without much effect'.⁶⁰ It emerged as a powerful ideology of an establishment settling into power during the decade following the 'age of equipoise' when a stage of social development had been reached which made its realisation a plausible objective. By the late 1860s, as will be seen, some of its echoes could be heard in the words of an Anglican who would soon be leading the opposition to Chamberlain on the School Board.

In the early 1860s, dissatisfaction with the extent of educational provision was not rife amongst Birmingham's

60 RW Dale 1877, 46. My italics.

leading Liberals if the words of John Skirrow Wright in 1862 to the Social Science Association at London are any guide:

As regards education, the facilities for obtaining it are so great that no child or young person need be without the elements at least; in fact, there appears to be rather a want of scholars than schools. The free grammar school gives a gratuitous first-class education to several hundred boys, and its advantages are used by the principal inhabitants of the town, without respect to creed or sect. There are in connexion with this truly noble charity (its income is about 12,000l per annum) several elementary schools, at which the sons and daughters of artisans can obtain, without cost, a good, sound, and most useful education; also attached to every church, and to several chapels, are day schools, where good elementary (and in some cases more advanced) education can be obtained at from 2d to 6d per week.⁶¹

However, two years later, Wright was one of the two honorary secretaries of the Free Grammar School Association, a body set up in 1864 to campaign for fundamental reforms in the management of that 'truly noble charity'.⁶² This remarkable change of temper was an indication of the growing confidence and aggression of a rising establishment which had first cut its political teeth in the late 1840s and early 1850s.

Education was an obvious sphere within which to attack the clerical establishment and its lay associates who had built up such a strong position in Queen's College and the

61 Quoted CEC Birm 1864, evid 152.

62 SIC, vol 4, pt 1, 1001 (q 18,109). In association with George Baker, a leading Quaker, Wright had called the public meeting at which the Association had been founded. Baker became the Association's Treasurer. Edg 1907, 27, 483 ff; Biograph and Review 1880, 3, 251-6.

Grammar School. The issue was not simply the need to extend educational provision but also the wish to displace the old establishment from its privileged position of influence in the city's affairs and over the working population. In Birmingham, unlike Sheffield, formal education was by no means the only major institutional sphere connecting the upper and lower orders outside the workplace. As responsibility for the health and welfare of the population drifted increasingly into the public domain, the Liberal party political organisation in Birmingham was strengthened. By 1867, ward committees were established on a permanent basis.⁶³ Although the Birmingham Liberal Association, founded two years earlier, was initially intended to secure Liberal parliamentary representation, its machinery was also a means of capturing control of the Town Council.⁶⁴ Possession of this base offered a means of attacking the old establishment on a wide front.

As in Sheffield, the setting up of a Royal Commission offered an excellent opportunity of pouring opprobrium upon an institution which could be presented as thoroughly retrograde. The Free Grammar School Association, which rightly claimed support from 'leading gentlemen of the town, of all shades of political and religious opinions' criticised the secret and closed nature of the School's management and the fact that 'old fashioned ideas and customs were..perpetuated and such changes as were called for by the advancing spirit of the age were too long delayed'.⁶⁵ Before the commissioners,

⁶³ Hennock 1973, 133.

⁶⁴ VCH, 307.

⁶⁵ SIC, Vol 4, pt 1, 1006, 1007.

some members called for the Foundation's funds to be partly devoted to improving preparatory schooling and girls' education, with a special eye to the needs of the 'middle middle class'.⁶⁶ W L Sargant, an Anglican and the Association's first President, wanted an improvement in the teaching of mathematics and a more active involvement in the 'locals', the middle-class examinations which he had helped to sponsor.⁶⁷ Others, both Dissenting and Anglican, placed more emphasis upon educating the poor. John Skirrow Wright thought free schools for the poor should be established with Foundation funds.⁶⁸ George Dixon, who succeeded Sargant as President, argued that children of poorer working-class families were largely excluded from the Foundation's Elementary Schools.⁶⁹ He proposed that the schools in which such children were presently educated

should have either some possible or positive connexion with this foundation ... whereby the poorest boy in Birmingham might have the opportunity, if he were qualified by his industry and talents of availing himself of that opportunity, that he should have the opportunity of rising from those lowest schools up to the highest.⁷⁰

The concept of an educational ladder to be scaled by virtue of talent was also implicit in the Association's suggestion that a large share of places in the Grammar School should be filled by competitive examination rather than by the

66 loc cit, 984 (q 18,021), 1005 (q 18,122). Evidence of W L Sargant and J S Wright.

67 loc cit, 980-1 (q 17,992), 982 (q 17,996).

68 loc cit, 1003-4 (qq 18,111 - 18,112).

69 loc cit, 980 (q 17,990), 986 (qq 18,035 - 18,037).

70 loc cit, 980 (q 18037).

nominations of individual governors.⁷¹ It was also insisted that the share of resources devoted to boarders should be diminished

on the grounds that the whole of the powers of the masters should be devoted to the education of Birmingham boys, and that no part of it should be given to the instruction of boys coming from a distance.⁷²

The priority of the town's interests was also insisted upon in the selection of governors. T H Green emphasised the opposition of local opinion 'to the introduction of crown nominees or magnates of the neighbouring counties upon the board'.⁷³ However, the keenest-felt grievances were against the practice of excluding Dissenters and members of the Town Council from the governing body of the Foundation. R W Dale, Congregationalist minister at Carrs Lane said that the people of Birmingham, a 'heartily liberal town' in which about half the population and very many public figures were Nonconformists, objected to 'using the social influence and prestige connected with the administration of a great public trust in the interests of a particular political and ecclesiastical party'. He coupled this complaint with an assertion that 'the great majority of the governors ... ought to live in the town, or the immediate neighbourhood of it'. This is further evidence of the popular identification of the old Anglican establishment with county interests. Dale did not want Nonconformists to be placed on the governing body by virtue of their faith since 'the law should not recognise in any

⁷¹ loc cit, 1012.

⁷² loc cit, 988 (q 18,049). Evidence of G Dixon.

⁷³ Green Report, 96.

privileges or duties of citizenship a man's religious creed.⁷⁴ George Dixon took this principle further by objecting to the requirement that the headmaster and second master should be selected from among the clergy.⁷⁵ This objection was a strong echo of the battle also being fought over the administration of Queen's College during these same years.⁷⁶

The Association's solution to the problem of placing capable and illustrious citizens, including Dissenters, on the governing body was to permit the magistrates and the Town Council to share in the appointment of governors. The mayor, Edwin Yates, and Arthur Ryland both pointed out that the Town Council already helped to manage a number of educational and cultural institutions, including the Birmingham and Midland Institute upon whose Council representatives of the municipal corporation had served since 1854.⁷⁷ Here was the nub of the issue. As in the 1830s and 1840s it was a question of the relationship between two civic strongholds. One was closely identified with the old county-oriented Anglican establishment, and the other was becoming a major expression of the strong links between the Liberal establishment and its local constituency among lower

74 SIC, Vol 4, pt 1, 965 (q 17,927), 970 (q 17,948), 967 (q 17,929).

75 loc cit, 987 (qq 18,039 - 18,045).

76 See Chapter Six.

77 SIC, Vol 4, pt 1, 1010-11, 957 (q 17,892), 992 (q 18,071). Evidence of Yates and Ryland.

middle-class and working-class interests within the city. In 1864, C E Matthews, writing a pamphlet in support of the Association's case, had stressed that 'there are men enough in the present Council quite worthy to take their place by the side of the existing Governors'.⁷⁸ However, the relative fitness and 'respectability' of the two bodies was at the heart of this dispute, as it was in the case of Broadhead's saw grinders compared to Dronfield's Alliance of Organised Trades.

T D Acland, one of the Commissioners, identified the problem as being 'the removal of social jealousies between two important and highly respectable bodies in the town of Birmingham'.⁷⁹ That judgement was unsatisfactory to John Cale Miller, Rector of St Martin's and an ex-school governor. While he had 'the profoundest respect for the intelligence of the town council in their proper department' he doubted their being 'the best managers of a great educational establishment'. Miller recalled that the governors had preferred to keep nominations in their own hands because 'it was thought that we should secure to ourselves more respectable colleagues ...'. They had feared that 'there might be little cabals and cliques in the council, which would not so readily secure the election of suitable men'.⁸⁰ Grantham Yorke, whose revulsion from Birmingham's 'barbaric' workshops has already been noticed, went further. As a governor for over twenty years, he

78 C E Matthews 1864, 26.

79 SIC, Vol 4, pt 1, 1003 (q 18,113). Evidence of Wright.

80 loc cit, 959-60 (q 17,895), 961 (q 17,902). Evidence of Miller.

believed that 'a large portion of the intelligent inhabitants of Birmingham' were well-satisfied with the current system of appointing the governing body and with the school's classical curriculum. He was determined to uphold that 'the school is a church school and is intended to remain a church school'. On all these points he cited the example of the 'great public schools'.⁸¹

The headmaster of the Grammar School went furthest of all. Rev Charles Evans wanted to take more boarders, make fee-paying general, extend the teaching of Latin into the Elementary Schools and generally free himself from 'local pressure which may often be unwisely exerted'. He eschewed the indignity of entering the 'locals' and proudly claimed that 'in the classical school the routine of the education is very much the same as that adopted in the great public schools'.⁸² He proposed to the commissioners that King Edward VI Grammar School should stand alongside Eton, Harrow and Rugby in a category of great central endowed schools, eighteen in all, ministering to the educational needs of nine educational districts which would cover the whole of England.⁸³ It is not too fanciful to compare these grandiose aims with the attempt by the Sheffield trade societies to establish themselves as an important part of the leadership of a national trade union movement. However, the realisation of such aims was denied because the Grammar School,

81 loc cit, 993 (q 18,074), 993-5 (q 18,075), 997 (qq 18,076-18,077). Evidence of Yorke.

82 loc cit, 542 (q 5631), 545 (q 5677), 547 (qq 5707-10), 548 (q 5719), 552 (qq 5786-7), 556 (q 5835), 558 (q 5860), 559 (qq 5871-5874), 561 (q 5887). Evidence of Evans.

83 loc cit, 565-7.

like the Sheffield craft unions, continued to be primarily identified with and oriented towards a local clientele .84

T H Green was clear that the Grammar School could never emulate Eton or Winchester.

Any head master would see that a school, situate in a noisy street in the middle of a smoky town, can never hope to draw largely on the "genteel" classes. His chance of working it with distinction depends (speaking generally) on his success in getting the cream of the boys whose parents, as a class, want a mercantile education for them, and in stimulating them to seek the "higher culture". To do this he must take, as his test of promise, proficiency in the recognised elements of a mercantile education. .85

Here, in nuce, was a possible strategy for preserving and extending the practice of 'high reason and ... fine culture' whose threatened disappearance troubled Green's contemporaries at the ancient universities. At issue was not simply the relative value of different kinds of knowledge but also the relative influence to be exercised by different sections of the middle class whose various ways of life and competing claims upon the deference of others were intimately related to the importance placed upon these forms of knowledge within the schools.

84 Just as the London-based amalgamated societies, closer to central government than were the Sheffield unions, played a leading role in the Trades Union Congress (founded 1868), so the prestigious and well-connected headmasters of national public schools such as Eton, Winchester and Shrewsbury were essential to the success of the Headmasters' Conference (founded 1869) in becoming an effective influence on government policy. The latter organisation was founded by heads of grammar schools threatened by government legislation on endowed schools but within a year the leading public schools were showing interest. In 1879 the Conference met at Eton. Simon 1974, 103-8, esp 107; Stansky 1962.

85 Green Report, 109.

In the course of a masterly analysis of the Grammar School and the disputes surrounding it, Green suggested a scheme which cleverly incorporated many of the Association's proposals while throwing his intellectual weight behind the academic prejudices of Charles Evans, the head master. Green did not want to see the provision of education determined either by the blinkered market considerations of tradesmen or the equally narrow-minded snobbishness which caused the masters in the Classical Department to resist closer association with their less 'genteel' colleagues in the English Department. He was, however, prepared to exploit snobbery and competitiveness, particularly among the petty bourgeoisie, in support of his objective of creating, through the education system, a channel which would carry traffic in two directions: the lower middle class and even those below this level would be impregnated with 'general culture' administered from above; potentially high-minded children from these social ranks would be promoted to positions of influence at the Universities and elsewhere. Above all, there could be 'no better employment of educational endowments than as a balance in the interest of learning, to the attractions of money-making'.⁸⁶

Green suggested that more Elementary Schools should be built by the Foundation in the suburbs of Birmingham where the 'class of small shopkeepers is very strong'. Such schools would be of a higher academic and social standard than the National schools and would take a similar clientele to commercial academies. These new Elementary Schools would be financed by introducing fee-paying into the

Grammar School. The income from fees would also subsidise a large number of scholarships from the Elementary Schools to the Grammar School. The latter would be reorganised into a Preparatory Department for the younger boys and English and Classical Departments for those senior boys who were able to pass an entrance examination. This examination would also be available to pupils from other schools. It would be possible for a bright boy to win scholarships taking him from an Elementary School all the way to Oxford or Cambridge.⁸⁷

Like the Free Grammar School Association, Green believed in an educational ladder. However, he differed from the Association in two ways. First, his test of the Foundation was not whether it satisfied the existing 'legitimate' demands of Birmingham's population but whether it did enough 'to tempt its pupils to seek a higher education than they seek at present'. He believed that in Birmingham 'the supply of education must precede and create the demand'.⁸⁸ In practice Green was conducting an excellent piece of market research on behalf of that constituency of educational practitioners which looked to Oxford and Cambridge for their guidance, the same constituency which Temple had hoped to cultivate through the 'locals'. Green found that Birmingham's businessmen preferred to have their sons trained through practical experience 'under the father's eye'. To them 'the Universities ... are unknown ground'. A commercial career for their offspring from the age of sixteen years was

⁸⁷ loc cit 108-110, 115-6, 140-1.

⁸⁸ loc cit 134, 111.

'the natural course of things at Birmingham with the commercial, and to a large extent with the professional class'. Green's greatest expectations were directed at the old lower middle class in contrast to the greater pre-occupation of the Free Grammar School Association with the poor. Green had special hopes of small tradesmen such as the 'small baker or publican' who were not thriving in business and who commonly had 'a considerable but not very discriminating appreciation of intellectual decorations'.⁸⁹

Such persons are easily encouraged by the appearance of a taste for books in their sons to seek for them a scholastic career, and the temptation of exhibitions and scholarships can be set before them with great effect. As a rule, it is not among the rich that the grammar school must seek for a large supply of boys to train for the University. Among them a University career will always be looked upon as a speculation, and as comparatively not a good one. To men with a less advantageous alternative before them, if a way is opened to it by exhibitions, it will offer much higher attractions. This is not the place to remark on the limitation of these attractions to churchmen, by the exclusion of dissenters from the ultimate prizes on which they depend, the fellowships and the masterships in grammar schools.⁹⁰

Green also hoped that by keeping fees in the English and Classical Departments at the same level parents could be induced through 'bribery' (his term) to 'prefer the "classical" to the "English" education for their sons by offering them the more costly educational article at the same price as the less'. Ideally, suitable boys should be in the Classical Department by the age of thirteen years and the success of his plan depended upon 'the skill of the masters in picking out promising talent among the little boys'.

⁸⁹ loc cit, 134, 135.

⁹⁰ loc cit, 135.

Evidently, the system of 'sponsored mobility' which was later to become an important characteristic of English secondary schooling already had an influential advocate in T H Green. The sponsorship of talent through formal examinations would be aided by the exclusion of social undesirables through the introduction of fee-paying. Only the Elementary Schools would take responsibility for 'the rougher element now found in the English, and the lower region of the classical, school'.⁹¹ As will be seen, the mode of thinking which lay behind Green's plan had considerable effect on the development of secondary education in Birmingham over the subsequent two decades.⁹²

In Birmingham as in Sheffield, the late 1860s witnessed a process of realignment as new issues arose. In Sheffield, opposition to 'Broadheadism' was not the same as support for Mundella. In Birmingham, opposition to the Foundation's governing body was not the same as support for the Liberal clique, increasingly strengthened by the active adherence of men of substance, which was securing its grip on the Town Council, organising its forces to capture Birmingham's parliamentary seats in the wake of the 1867 Reform Act, and subsequently hoping to win a majority on the new School Board. The process of realignment may be traced from 1864 onwards.

The governors of the Foundation and the committee of the Free Grammar School Association were both drawn from a similar range of occupations. Among the governors were to be found Anglican clergy (including Grantham Yorke

⁹¹ loc cit, 116-17, 137, 141. Turner 1960.

⁹² See Chapter Nine and Chapter Ten.

and Isaac Spooner), doctors (including James Johnstone), legal practitioners (such as T C Snyd-Kynnersley, the stipendiary magistrate), and manufacturers (amongst whom were J D Goodman and J T Chance). The Association's committee comprised eighteen manufacturers, five merchants, two well-to-do tradesmen, nine members of the legal profession, five other professional or semi-professional men and ten men of the cloth (of whom three were Anglican). Of the town council members on the committee, twelve were businessmen and three were professional men. The Town Clerk, a solicitor, was also on the committee.⁹³

The professionals and businessmen in the Association were anxious to diminish the extent to which the exploitation of their wealth and expertise was hindered by the persistence of bodies constituted like the school governors. Among the professional members of the committee were men such as William Harris who helped to found the Birmingham Architectural Society and served as honorary secretary of the Birmingham Liberal Association from 1867 to 1870. He was an innovator in a number of fields. For example, he had been the first quantity surveyor in the Birmingham area to have an architect's training and also became known as the 'father of the caucus'. His colleagues included Walter Foster who was one of the Association's two honorary secretaries. Foster was prominent in the British Medical Association, and a strong advocate of involvement by doctors in public work. Prominent among the businessmen were self-

93 SIC, Vol 4, pt 1, 1007, 1034. Three of the Association's committee have not been identified. D Smith 1976, 69-70, 75-6.

made men such as Arthur Albright, who developed the safety match, and the paper manufacturer James Baldwin. The committee was not confined to liberals. J B Hebbert, who had helped to adapt Conservative party organisation to new social and political conditions during the 1830s, and William Gover, a persistent clerical campaigner for improved elementary education, were both members.⁹⁴

Gover's widely-publicised researches into the state of local schools for the poor in 1867 stimulated a last ardent attempt to improve school attendance by the old means of organised private charity.⁹⁵ The Birmingham Education Aid Society drew into temporary cooperation men on both sides of the recent dispute over the Grammar School. The Society's committee included George Dixon (as President), Jesse Collings, George Dawson and Joseph Chamberlain alongside T C Snyder-Kynnersley. The vice presidents were R W Dale and Grantham Yorke. However, already sensitivity about the special interests of the Church of England made it necessary to have separate funds for the support of children attending denominational and undenominational schools.⁹⁶ A large number of the children offered free education by the Society did not remain at school and by 1868 it was clear that this voluntary exercise by the city's leading citizens was completely inadequate. This realisation coincided with

⁹⁴ Edg 1911, 31, 61-70; Edg 1884, 4, 97-100; Edg 1888, 8, 1-8; King 1901; VCH, 305; D Smith 1976, 76. Gover was Principal of Saltley Training College.

⁹⁵ Gover 1867.

⁹⁶ Birmingham Education Society, Annual Report 1868, esp 7. Collings, a Unitarian, was a close political ally of Joseph Chamberlain. Edg 1893, 13, 177-85.

the brilliant success of the Birmingham Liberal Association in capturing all three seats in the 1868 General Election.⁹⁷

Earlier that year, Jesse Collings had reached the conclusion that elementary education throughout the nation would have to be 'secular (or unsectarian) ... compulsory as to rating and attendance and under local management'. He wanted to see created a national society which would uncompromisingly work for this end. Such a society 'would gather to its support the men of literature and science; powerful sections of Nonconformists, and the whole body of the people. It would effectually prevent the passing of any half measure ...'.⁹⁸ The expression of such sentiments carried the message that an increase in the involvement of the state, both centrally and locally, in elementary education implied a growth also in the influence of the radical and Dissenting wing of the Liberal party and hence a threat to the position of the Church of England.⁹⁹

George Dixon, an Anglican who had served on the Town Council since 1864 and entered parliament in 1868 was ready to draw the merely practical conclusion that effective measures for schooling the poor could not be provided by voluntary action and therefore he accepted the necessity of the scheme for state action supported by Collings, Chamberlain, J T Bunce, and Harris. Although Dixon, whose initiative led to the foundation early in 1869 of the

97 Birmingham Education Society, Annual Report 1869, 10-13, 17.

98 Collings 1870, 16, 49.

99 cf Reeder 1980, 2-3.

National Education League, preferred the term 'unsectarian' to 'secular', the alarm bells were already ringing loud in the camp of the conservative Anglican establishment which controlled the National schools. Gover, who had joined with Dixon in the work of the Birmingham Education Aid Society, held aloof from the National Education League. Sargant also 'declined to join a movement which appeared extravagant in its object'.¹⁰⁰

By the end of the year a Birmingham Education Union had been established under the presidency of a local aristocrat, the Earl of Harrowby, with the object of 'promoting the extension of the present system' and opposing 'the plan of free, rate-supported, secular schools'.¹⁰¹ Apart from heavy clerical support in the city and county, the Union had the adherence of Snyd-Kynnersley (as committee chairman), J D Goodman (vice chairman) and, among its vice-presidents, Foundation governors such as Grantham Yorke, and J O Bacchus. Its inaugural meeting was attended by Charles Evans, the Grammar School's head master and the school governors, C R Cope and W Matthews. However, other supporters included men who had earlier joined the committee of the Free Grammar School Association such as W H Blews and Sebastian Evans.¹⁰² They were now on the opposite side of the fence to previous colleagues on that committee such as George Dawson, William Middlemore, Henry Manton, C E Matthews and Samuel Timmins who all flocked to the standard of the National Education League.

¹⁰⁰ Adams 1882, 197; Marcham 1969, 308-9; Sargant 1872, 2.

¹⁰¹ Birmingham Education Union, Report of Conference at Birmingham, December 9th 1869, 4, 5.

¹⁰² loc cit 3,6,8,55. Evans, a barrister and litterateur, had been a close political associate of George Dawson. DNB, Supp II, Vol 1, 637; Hennock 1973, 77-8, 133-4; Gammage 1972, 80-1.

The League itself was divided on several issues such as the extent to which 'unsectarian' implied 'secular', whether free schooling should be confined to the poorest pupils, what share of the cost of education would be borne by the rates, and how rigorously compulsion was to be enforced. For example, A J Mundella was a fierce advocate of the need for compulsion but at odds with the League on other issues. When the Government's Education Bill was introduced its provision for rate-aid to be given to voluntary schools run by the denominations divided moderates such as Dixon from radical Dissenters within the League who were determined to deny aid to the Church of England. A Central Nonconformist Committee was set up to fight the relevant clauses. Chamberlain became an influential member of this committee, serving with J S Wright, William Harris, and Jesse Collings. William Middlemore was its chairman with R W Dale and H W Crosskey as joint secretaries.¹⁰³

By 1870 political groupings which six years previously had been polarised for and against the governors of the Grammar School were realigned for and against the radical Nonconformist clique within the National Education League. Of the fifteen Liberal candidates for the School Board, ten were members of the Central Nonconformist Committee.¹⁰⁴ Their eight opponents included several supporters of the Birmingham

103 Report of First General Meeting of National Education League ... October 12th and 13th 1869, 1869; Marcham 1969, 296-300, 585a; A F Taylor 1960, 137-9.

104 Joseph Chamberlain, R W Dale, Charles Vince, Jesse Collings, J S Wright, Henry Holland, H W Crosskey, William Middlemore, George Dawson and J Cooper.

Education Union.¹⁰⁵ Through a failure of electoral management only seven of the fifteen successful candidates belonged to the Liberal group while the Church party captured the other eight seats.¹⁰⁶ The deeply ironical consequence was that William Lucas Sargant and George Dixon, successive presidents of the Free Grammar School Association and both Anglicans inclined to moderation, found themselves at the head of two bitterly-opposed factions on the first Birmingham School Board.

To summarise: the importance attached to service on public municipal bodies in Birmingham increased as they acquired functions whose management had serious implications for relations between competing civic establishments and the relations between these establishments and the bulk of the population. The acquisition of particular functions and the way they were exercised did not occur automatically or as a necessary realisation of inexorable 'social tendencies' but were bitterly fought over as has been seen. The main axis of conflict in Birmingham divided a big bourgeoisie whose social networks were coordinated at the municipal level of integration. Alliances were formed by elements within this divided big bourgeoisie with members of social classes whose solidarities were traditionally focused upon the neighbourhood and the county. In Sheffield, the main axis of conflict set against each other members of social formations rooted in tight neighbourhood-based solidarities and others increasingly oriented to regional and national levels of integration. The Town Council was of relatively small strategic importance to either side.

¹⁰⁵ eg Sampson Lloyd, Rev J H Burges, J Gough and Rev F S Dale.

¹⁰⁶ Adams 1882, 251; Sargant 1872, 17-19.

In Birmingham, the conflict had ramifications in the political, religious and educational spheres in complex interaction with each while the industrial sphere remained relatively undisturbed. By contrast, in Sheffield a direct clash between adherents of two modes of capitalist production in the industrial sphere imposed a new alignment of forces in the political sphere as evidenced during the 1868 General Election. Meanwhile the increasing scale of steel production presented the steel manufacturers with the task of managing a growing semi and un-skilled labour force. The provision of education was a responsibility which some leading steel manufacturers were prepared to share through the School Board, coming to the aid of a clerical establishment which was not under serious attack locally but which was unable to cope with a rapidly growing population of school age.

Gledstone and Sargant

Finally, it should be emphasised that George Dawson's message did not go unproclaimed at Sheffield. One of its advocates was J P Gledstone who served from 1862 to 1872 as minister at Queen Street Congregationalist Chapel which, ironically, was the place attended by Ironside in his youth.¹⁰⁷ Nor were civic pride and a belief in the virtue of public work on popularly-elected municipal bodies a monopoly of Birmingham's leading Dissenters. W L Sargant, a prolific writer whose participation in the disputes of the 1860s was at least as central as Dawson's, provides an example here.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ Fletcher 1972, 47; Salt 1971b, 184.

¹⁰⁸ Sargant 1856; Sargant 1857a; Sargant 1857b; Sargant 1866; Sargant 1867a; Sargant 1867b; Sargant 1874.

A brief comparison of the writings of Sargant and Gledstone gives some insight into the state of 'civic morale' in Birmingham and Sheffield in the aftermath of the two Royal Commissions.

Sargant's Essays of a Birmingham Manufacturer were published between 1869 and 1871. Of particular interest are two essays entitled 'Characteristics of Manufacturers' and 'Limited Democracy'.¹⁰⁹ Sargant recalls the disturbances of the 1830s, especially before the 1832 Reform Act: 'I remember, not without trembling, the tumults of those days. I can testify to the truth of the assertion, that we were not far from bloodshed. Excitement was at its highest in Birmingham ...'. He is in retrospect proud that '(in) passing the reform bill it was not London but Birmingham which took the lead (so that) ... the example of rapid and energetic combination was set to the whole country'. The animosities of that period were part of 'the severe struggle by which the great towns set themselves free from the humiliating predominance of the country gentlemen'.¹¹⁰

Compared to other towns 'judged by their actions during the last generation, the manufacturing towns have a triumphant preeminence'. He is scornful of London with its notoriously bad water supply, wretched street lighting and 'absence of public spirit ... in all classes'. He notes that 'not one of its great Parliamentary boroughs has obtained municipal powers'. In the trading city of Liverpool he could not find 'any proofs of superior intelligence' nor any

109 Sargant 1869, 1-61, 137-204.

110 op cit, 15, 143-4, 197.

newspaper which 'combines such a large circulation with sober and thoughtful writing as the three manufacturing journals, the Manchester Guardian, the Leeds Mercury, and the Birmingham Daily Post'. Considering the virtues of the manufacturing towns, Sargant finds that '(what) is true of the textile districts is still more true of the hardware towns'.¹¹¹ Compared to the more highly-mechanised northern towns, in a hardware town like Birmingham

the proportion of skilled and unskilled labourers is ... reversed; the skilled labourers, the ingenious and trained mechanics, outnumber the mere drudges. As the class of employers is largely recruited from the cleverest of such workmen, there will be found great ingenuity and skill among the master class.¹¹²

The view from Birmingham in 1869 gives Sargant ample grounds for optimism:

Many improvements have taken place under the writer's eyes: among the middle classes, a growth of public spirit, a submission to heavy local taxation for public buildings and sanitary improvements, an increased desire for education; among the working classes, a reduction of drunkenness, a greater sympathy with the richer classes, a desire for enlarged means of education, a more civilised deportment, and an augmented decency and propriety easily visible to those whose experience enables them to compare one period with another.¹¹³

Sympathy amongst classes and a capacity for self-government were expressed par excellence in the manufacturing towns:

Go into any of the towns I have mentioned, and ask about the public buildings: you will find them nearly all the work of a generation. True those towns thirty years ago were only half as populous as they are now; but even then they had attained a surprising magnitude

111 op cit, 10-11, 12, 18, 20-23, 27.

112 op cit, 13-14.

113 op cit, 198-9.

The growth of Town Halls and Courts, of Gaols and Lunatic Asylums, of Schools and Colleges, indicates a public spirit among the citizens: the Town Councils indeed, who have mainly erected them, are not in good odour with fashionable people, who feel towards them as toward democratic America; but the Town Councils, backed by the ratepayers, have shown a liberality in their outlay, which was impossible for self-elected Commissioners or close corporations, and which is not practised by the administrators of county rates. Among the town middle classes, public spirit has grown with the spread of democratic institutions.¹¹⁴

Such happy thoughts were denied to J P Gledstone who published in 1867 a 'letter to the manufacturers, merchants and principal tradesmen of the town of Sheffield' under the title Public Opinion and Public Spirit in Sheffield. It was written shortly after the enquiry into the Sheffield outrages. Unlike Sargant, he presented not a panegyric but an indictment. Gledstone found that among Sheffield's inhabitants there was an 'absence of the higher spirit of an educated community' which showed itself as utter 'helplessness under pressure of public work'.¹¹⁵

We possess the elements of astonishing influence, but they are not consolidated ... Private life will show any one who cares to look into it, that very decided opinions are held upon questions affecting our social life ... Not less surely will it show that our opinions are disfigured by many prejudices and savour of a strong provincialism, that they are held in a significant number of cases with much warmth and intolerance of opposite views, and, above all, that we distinctly disapprove of public demonstrations for the sake of an idea. Opinion is a thing for the parlour and the club, not for the town; hence of opinion we have a full share, but of public opinion we have none, or next to none. We are an aggregate of men; we are not a community; we are thousands of Englishmen, but we are not united in our social life. Business and pleasure -

114 op cit, 156-7.

115 Gledstone 1867, 5.

which are of a personal nature - get, I fear, more than their due attention, while things which require self-denial and some amount of enterprise and generosity are grievously neglected.¹¹⁶

Recalling the recent enquiry, Gledstone comments

I leave it to others to trace ... the share in stifling all honest expression of thought which must be given to our sixty trade unions - all of which are secret societies, avoiding publicity and a fair discussion within themselves and with spectators of their trade affairs; and many of which have resorted to the foulest and most cowardly methods of carrying out their policy, so gagging that part of the community which generally carries, by weight of numbers, any question which may be submitted to it for decision. The presence of a crowd of secret societies (numbering thousands of men, and standing in intimate relation to a large proportion of the monied classes of the town) and an absence of public opinion! how ominously suggestive!¹¹⁷

We may, continues Gledstone, excuse ourselves but 'the rest of England is not so well satisfied. We would fain hope, for the honour of our country, that no other British town would, under such severe pressure and urgent duty, have failed to act with promptitude and vigour'.¹¹⁸

There were numerous other instances. The General Infirmary was starved of funds. The distribution of prizes for the Cambridge Local Examinations had been delayed by the 'miserable difficulty' of failure to find a 'suitable gentleman ... to take the chair'. When the Social Science Congress came to Sheffield 'we had to open the work of the Congress in a private music hall; well - call it by its right name - a singing saloon, and then we shall understand how sad was our plight'.¹¹⁹ In fact

¹¹⁶ op cit, 4.

¹¹⁷ op cit, 4-5. Italics in original.

¹¹⁸ op cit, 5-6.

¹¹⁹ op cit, 7-9.

we are without public buildings of any size or worth ... In respect of public buildings, we are far behind Leeds, Bradford, Manchester, Birmingham and Liverpool, each of which has buildings of a noble order, a plain evidence that these towns have no small devotion to public work.¹²⁰

The only cure was 'that our men of wealth and education accept the burden of living for others, as well as for themselves'. This entailed not merely service on the town council and gifts to charity but also 'a spirited fulfilment of obligations'. Newspapers were no substitute for the lack of 'public assembly' by citizens. 'A newspaper government is quite as hateful as any other, when not tempered and modified by thought and action coming from other sources'.¹²¹

Gledstone viewed the future with pessimism:

Gentlemen, I fail to recognise any young men who are giving promise that they will be active, intelligent, disinterested friends of Sheffield beyond the trade relationships which they may sustain to it. There may be scores who are developing into quick merchants and enterprising manufacturers; but we have a right to look for more from them. Property and station bring their responsibilities. It is not enough that a man be successful in business; his increased wealth, his wider influence, his deep experience, are public property; and he fails in a serious respect if he simply settles down amongst his riches and lets the town struggle on ... The maiden speech of one of our junior merchants, or of any young gentleman holding a similar position, would be as sweet as May-blossom; and I earnestly beg of you, gentlemen, for the sake of our social advancement and honour, to prompt and aid all young men of your class to a speedy entrance upon public work.¹²²

Two comments will be made on these contrasting portrayals of civic life. First, they suggest that Arnold's view of the state of class feeling in the industrial provinces, with which this chapter began, is rather over-

¹²⁰ op cit, 9.

¹²¹ The last remark is evidently directed at W C Leng. op cit, 11, 12-13.

¹²² op cit, 13-15.

simplified. In Arnold's version, Nonconformity, love of machinery, hostility to established political and cultural authority, middle-class assertiveness and artisan aggression are different heads upon a single monster. However, while Sargant's Birmingham appears to justify Arnold's fear of a provincial middle-class challenge to London and Oxford, the scholar-manufacturer is proud of the 'decency and propriety' of the local working class. In Sheffield the threat of working class violence is felt by Gledstone but he berates the local middle class for its lack of political ambition on either the local or national stage. Contrary to Arnold's stereotype, Sargant is an Anglican manufacturer proud of his city's relative freedom from machinery while Gledstone is an active Dissenting ideologue who is ashamed of losing face before the examiners of Cambridge University.

Second, the representation of class structures and relations between levels of integration implicit in the writings just examined coincide with the main lines of the preceding analysis, although Gledstone's gloom and the self-satisfaction of Sargant heighten the contrast between Sheffield and Birmingham. Sargant stresses the strong co-operative bonds between masters and men, the victory of the town councils over closed, self-elected bodies, the failing power of the county aristocracy, the superiority of his city to the metropolis, and Birmingham's national pre-eminence. By contrast, Gledstone finds that Sheffield's middle class lack public spirit and are excluded from influence over artisan institutions which are closed and undemocratic. Levels of integration above and below the municipality take precedence. From below, domestic affairs, the calls of the

family business and trade union machinations draw energies away from municipal affairs; from above, the city of Sheffield had become exposed to enormous pressure from national opinion. While Sargant recalls times when 'Birmingham took the lead', Gledstone is ashamed of Sheffield's 'strong provincialism'. Through Birmingham and 'example was set to the whole country' but Sheffield has to be told that 'the rest of England is not so well satisfied.'.

Chapter Eight

MASTERING OUR EDUCATORS

Towards a national education system 1830-95

It is convenient at this juncture to pause in the analysis of processes in Birmingham and Sheffield in order to locate these two particular sequences of social development within the national context. This will be done by focusing upon education. In Chapters Five and Six formal education in Birmingham and Sheffield was treated as a very convenient index of contrasting patterns on persistence and transformation in the class structures and other aspects of social differentiation in these cities. However, more emphasis will now be placed upon the specific part played by formal education within such configurations at both the national and local levels.¹ The distinctive contribution of education was the bestowal of legitimacy. In the course of the nineteenth century this institutional sphere gradually superseded organised religion as the major public arena within which the moral grounds of authority and status were instilled in the young. It provided a means by which the leadership of the old agrarian order could recoup some of the losses sustained as industrial development and the growth of the state increased the power of urban businessmen, officials and experts.

1 The following discussion and, indeed, the whole thesis is a contribution to a process of empirical enquiry and theoretical discussion which must also take account of inter-societal comparisons. See, for example, Archer 1979, Ringer 1979, Smith 1981 (forthcoming). The need for local studies was clearly signalled a decade ago: '.... the dynamics of local action remain obscure. What seems to be needed, though the programme is an ambitious one, is a combination of educational research, social-structural analysis and local economic histories in order to examine the functions of schools and the purposes of schools within well-defined communities and regional economies'. J R B Johnson 1970, 99-100.

In the course of its slow decline the national bureaucracy of the Anglican church provided the cutting edge which enabled the gentry to secure a strong position in the educational sphere. The Church of England was deeply impregnated with the values of the threatened rural social order. According to W F Hook, who served in Birmingham during the early stages of a brilliantly successful career as a city parson, the rural parish exemplified the close personal relationship between the laity and their spiritual shepherd which should remain the clergyman's ideal. He recommended a probationary period of service in the shires to all keen young clerics.² The Anglican clergy held powerful positions not only at the ancient universities but also as heads and masters of public and grammar schools and principals of teacher training establishments. The National Society, offspring of the Church, was the leading provider of public elementary day schooling.³ Anglican advances in Birmingham, through the King Edward VI Foundation, Queen's College and so on, were local variants on a broader pattern. The failure to match this success in Sheffield had its sequel in the intervention, from the national level where the ancient universities and the Church held greater sway, of governmental agencies which pushed secondary and higher education in that city in an 'acceptable' direction. The work of the Treasury Committee responsible for distributing grants to the university colleges was complemented by the efforts of the Board of Education and the advice of Michael Sadler.⁴

2 Mole 1973, 817. On Hook see W R W Stephens 1878.

3 Burgess 1958; W B Stephens 1973, esp 13-20.

4 See Chapter Nine and Chapter Eleven.

As a consequence, by the early twentieth century, secondary and higher education in Sheffield provided secure enclaves for 'liberal culture', the inheritor of the classical tradition which was so closely linked to the authority of the gentry and aristocracy.

Formal education has acquired a special significance in English society for two reasons. First, many businessmen and landowners resisted a strengthening of the repressive capacity of the central state apparatus along 'Prussian' lines. A major concern of these groups was the eliciting of popular acquiescence in the disposition of rewards and use of social resources in England. The classroom and lecture hall were important means of carrying this out.⁵ Second, unlike the United States, France or those European societies which had experienced the Napoleonic imprint, England had no commonly-recognised charter of public rights and responsibilities expressed in terms of a few memorable principles and sanctifying the regime of a ruling class. The attempt of the Chartists to force such a set of principles into the Constitution was a failure. The Bill of Rights was the property of a Whig aristocracy rather than nineteenth-century urban industrialists. Furthermore, English society witnessed no relatively clean break between an old aristocratic order and a new bureaucratic state, no capitalist 'putsch', no workers' revolution, no overwhelming defeat in war followed by the clean sweep of an occupying foreign power. This society acquired a hybrid ruling class made up of local and

5 In the course of movement away from a predominantly rural and agrarian society, force was frequently used, locally and often with the backing of law or custom, in relations between retailers and customers, landlords and tenants, masters and men and so on. However, the issue here is what part should be played by physical repression, directed by central government, in managing a developing urban industrial society. E P Thompson 1966; B Moore, 1969.

national establishments whose values and commitments were in many respects at odds with each other. Its governing principles were not easily stated. They could only be instilled through socialisation of the young into the inhibitions and routines which permitted its compromises to be maintained. The schools and colleges 'blooded' each new generation, introducing them to the governing irrationalities of English life. The function just described was not deliberately sought or introduced by any particular establishment. Rather, it was an unintended outcome of the conflicts between establishments within the educational sphere. Furthermore, members of the old rural order were at least as much aware of the potential harm that formal education could do to their interests as they were of the help it could provide.

In this chapter, four themes are developed. First, the ambiguous impact of the growth of science and the spread of examining bureaucracies is discussed. Second, two influential prescriptions for the use of education in mediating the transition between the old society and the new are compared with each other. Third, some of the implications for educational provision of tendencies within the working class and lower middle class are examined. Finally, some of the consequences of the expansion of education for relations within the middle class are analysed.

Scientists and examiners

Education was a political minefield for three reasons. First, the bureaucratic machinery necessary to administer a national education system threatened to present a direct challenge to the localised, paternalistic control exercised

by the aristocracy, gentry, clergy and businessmen.⁶ Second, the questions of 'who were to be educated?', 'how?', 'by whom?' and 'at whose expense?' would immediately open up latent conflicts within existing establishments, for example, between Dissenters and Anglicans. Third, an expanded network of educational institutions would bring into being new groups with influence and skills which would enable them to challenge the authority and privileges of these establishments.

If any single institutional practice may be said to have offered a direct and comprehensive challenge to particularistic structures it was the external examination.⁷ The slight chill in the air induced by the India Act of 1853, which opened up appointments in the Indian Civil Service to competition, had become a howling gale by 1870. In between these dates there had developed a number of large examining bureaucracies, not only in the Civil Service but also in all the major sectors of education. The College of Preceptors, which began examining in 1850, had been joined by Oxford and Cambridge Universities, the University of London, the Society of Arts, the Science and Arts department at South Kensington and the Education Department at Whitehall.

6 This threat was a medium or long term one. During its early years the Education Department 'drew into its network of control the essentially voluntary but completely reliable agents of the local clergy, local elites, and denominational training colleges'. J R B Johnson 1970, 117. On the development of educational administration under governmental auspices see especially, Gosden 1966; Bishop 1971; Archer 1979; J R B Johnson 1968; J R B Johnson 1972; Sutherland 1972b; Hurt 1971.

7 Roach 1970; Montgomery 1965.

By the 1860s 'there were few parts of public life or educational effort upon which the examiner had not left his hand'.⁸

In a rapidly expanding society the external examination provided a medium by which a new and powerful hierarchy of educated experts might emerge.⁹ The increasing influence of 'specialists' in the educational sphere may be shown by comparing two Royal Commissions: the first presided over by Lord Newcastle, a great territorial magnate, the second under the direction of James Bryce, a constitutional lawyer.¹⁰

When the Newcastle Commission investigated the state of popular education between 1858 and 1861, ten Assistant Commissioners were sent into the regions. They were instructed to make 'detailed inquiry amongst persons of intelligence of either sex conversant with the locality'. In particular they were to speak to '(the) employers of labour, the clergy of different denominations, the governors and chaplains of gaols, inspectors of police and other officers of justice, and the shopkeepers whose customers are labourers'. This information was supplemented by written evidence from clergymen and also lay persons such as Sir Arthur Hallam Elton (benefactors of a National school in Somerset), W Ellis (a London merchant), Lord Lyttelton of Hagley (member of the Diocesan Board of Education), the

8 Roach 1970, 4-5.

9 On 'experts' in education see J R B Johnson 1977.

10 PP 1895, XLIII et seq, Report of Royal Commission on Secondary Education (henceforth Bryce).

Countess of Macclesfield (a local benefactor and philanthropist), J G Marshall (a Leeds mill-owner and school manager) and Colonel Stobart (a Darlington coal-owner and magistrate). In drawing up his evidence for the Commissioners, Rev James Fraser found himself citing (from Herefordshire) 'a gentleman of extensive local knowledge and long experience'. The Commissioners received statistical returns from several bodies active in the provision of education, such as the National Society and the British and Foreign School Society. They also heard evidence from a score of 'educationists'. However, they placed considerable weight upon the views of 'persons of all shades of opinion practically conversant with popular education in particular districts rather than those who had taken a prominent part in the public discussions of the subject'. The instructions to the Assistant Commissioners betrays the aristocracy's suspicion of 'experts' and a clear assumption that the oversight of education for the poor, was properly in the hands of the 'natural' leaders of provincial society.¹¹ By contrast, in the early 1890s the Bryce Commissioners who were investigating secondary education listened to the arguments of some 85 witnesses only a handful of whom did not derive their income from institutions mainly devoted to the management of formal education. These included spokesmen for the major educational departments of central government, the school boards and county councils, the universities and university college, teacher training establishments and

11 Newcastle, Vol 1, 11, 157-71, 179-82, 276-89, 292-6, 314-7, 361-8, 461; Vol 2, 10, 19.

several teachers' organisations.¹²

The introduction of new forms of knowledge, especially scientific knowledge, into the schoolroom presented a challenge to Oxford and Cambridge which combined the functions of Anglican seminary and finishing school for the genteel rich. In 1850 the Duke of Wellington, Chancellor of Oxford University, announced that Oxford has no intention of introducing German methods of education. The election of Prince Albert to the Chancellorship of Cambridge University, by a narrow margin, dramatised the degree of influence which had been achieved by advocates of modernisation.¹³ The probing enquiries of Royal Commissions into the ancient universities were paralleled by the growth of a complex of scientific institutions in South Kensington, notably the Imperial College of Science and Technology. This latter development had the enthusiastic support of Prince Albert. He was president of the Commissioners for the Exhibition of 1851. The success of the Great Exhibition provided much of the money for the South Kensington complex. Imperial College was intended as the summit of a national system as described in the Second Report of the Commissioners. With 'the active cooperation of the State, as well as of the public at large'

12 Bryce, Vol 1, 81-4. A similar pattern is revealed in the Cross Commission. PP 1888, XXXV, Final Report of Royal Commission appointed to Inquire into Elementary Education Acts (England and Wales)(henceforth Cross) Vol 1, iii-v.

13 Crowther 1965, 190.

a large scientific institution in the metropolis would be 'rendered capable, by means of scholarships and by other means, of affiliating local establishments over this country, in India, and Her Majesty's colonial possessions, whereby the results of its labours might be disseminated as widely as possible ... '. Britain was 'the only country which has neither supplied (in any practical or systematic shape) scientific nor artistic instruction to its industrial population; nor provided for men of Science and Art, a centre of action, and of exchange of the results of their labours'. If these needs were not speedily supplied Britain would 'run serious risk of losing that position which is now its strength and pride'. These comments implied a harsh criticism of the ancient universities.¹⁴

The leading member of the Commission after Prince Albert was Lyon Playfair who had served as professor of chemistry at the Royal Manchester Institution during the early 1840s. Born in India, educated in Glasgow and Germany, employed as a young man in a Clitheroe textile firm, Playfair was an important representative of a powerful provincial scientific culture which was almost completely divorced from Oxford and Cambridge.¹⁵ Arnold Thackray has argued that during the half-century after 1780 the pursuit of science offered many rewards to provincial urban elites, including Dissenting manufacturers, whose new wealth and local importance contrasted markedly with the marginality of their social status and their exclusion from established centres of political power:

14 PP 1852-3, LIV, Second Report of Royal Commission for Exhibition of 1851, 10-11.

15 On Playfair see W Reid 1899; Crowther 1965, 105-71.

The reasons for the choice of science were its possibilities as polite knowledge, as rational entertainment, as theological instruction, as professional occupation, as technological agent, as value-transcendent pursuit, and as intellectual ratifier of a new world order .16

In his study of science in Victorian Manchester, Richard Kargon has identified a 'scientific-cultural network' which by 1840 included members of not only the Lit and Phil but also the Manchester Natural History Society (founded 1821), the Royal Manchester Institution (1823), the Manchester Mechanics' Institute (1824) and the Manchester Geological Society (1838).

By mid-century the contribution of Manchester's scientific institutions as a focus of civic integration linking religious, manufacturing and professional elites as well as (to a lesser degree) artisans had diminished. Two aspects of this change were: the increasing domination of science by self-taught 'devotees' and, later still, institutionally-trained 'experts' who formed their own national networks of communication and criticism; and the gradual re-orientation of the urban business elites towards national issues and institutions in which they sought to participate.¹⁷ Thackray comments:

Manchester's aristocracy of manufacturers, by now legitimated and secure, abandoned both science and advanced religion as appropriate cultural symbols. The great manufacturing families found social issues, practical politics, and the reform of Oxbridge to be matters more congenial to third-generation taste .18

16 Thackray 1975, 686. For an attempt to sketch the normative and cognitive order implicit in the curricula of Mechanics' Institutes see Shapin and Barnes 1977.

17 Kargon 1977, 27-33.

18 Thackray 1974, 696.

As has been seen, in respect of both chronology and structure Birmingham and Sheffield presented patterns of development in their scientific institutions which differed from Manchester in important respects. However, evidence from the former cities does not contradict the generalisation that by the 1850s many manufacturers were peacefully sharing with the aristocracy and gentry the tasks of managing English society. Science and the external examination cannot be regarded as tools by which insurgent industrialists sought to displace the old landed class. In fact, both institutions were quite capable of being exploited with a conservative intention as may be seen in the work of two major polemicists concerned with popular education during the 1860s. Each spoke for social interests which wanted a particular amalgam of the old and new orders to be encouraged within the developing society. Their two prescriptions were, however, deeply at odds with one another.

Arnold and Spencer

Herbert Spencer was an ardent advocate of science education. Matthew Arnold was deeply involved in the administration of the Revised Code, one of the principle engines of external examination after 1862.¹⁹ Arnold and Spencer had each spent their early careers and formed their values in close association with men and institutions belonging to the old order. Their attachments were to opposing sides of the division between the Nonconformist petty bourgeoisie and the Anglican landed establishment. Both men had also experienced some of the transforming

¹⁹ Arnold 1862.

potential of institutions oriented to a larger industrial society increasingly organised on a nation-wide basis.

Arnold had read Classical 'Greats' at Oxford, served as private secretary to Lord Lansdowne when he was Lord President of Council and for ten years held the position of Professor of Poetry at his alma mater. However, he was also the son of the pioneering headmaster of a new kind of public school at Rugby and became one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools. By contrast, Spencer was the son of a Dissenting minister at Derby and familiar with the petty bourgeois radical circles in the Midlands which George Eliot described in Felix Holt. As a young man he had trained as a railway engineer, working mainly in the Birmingham area where he met Joseph Sturge. Spencer became local secretary in Derby for the Complete Suffrage Union, a body founded by Sturge in 1842. While working in the Midlands, Spencer had written articles for The Nonconformist, a journal edited by the Leicester Congregationalist, Edward Miall, who was selected for attack in Arnold's Culture and Anarchy.²⁰ Spencer was also for a short while sub-editor of a radical paper produced in Birmingham called The Pilot. This journal, founded by Sturge, conducted a campaign against oligarchy and maladministration in local government.²¹

20 Sutherland 1973, 9; McCarthy 1971 passim; Peel 1971, 10-12, 43, 100; Duncan 1911, chs 1-5; Arnold 1869, 193-4.

21 Through The Pilot, Spencer probably had contact with other prominent Birmingham radicals such as Henry Hawkes, a lawyer who began his career in the office of Joseph Parkes and later became in turn Coroner and Mayor of Birmingham. Edg 1890, 10, 117-87.

Spencer's book, Education: Intellectual, Moral and Physical (1861) and Arnold's Culture and Anarchy (1869) were published in a decade when the social fact of a mass education system was becoming accepted as an inevitability. Spencer and Arnold each wished formal education to be used in two ways: as a means of contradicting an abhorred feature stemming from the old society and as a way of containing a repellent possibility pregnant in the new order.

Central to the argument of Culture and Anarchy is a critique of laissez-faire utilitarianism for its failure to curb the excesses of working class militancy. Arnold attacked middle class 'shibboleths' such as individualism, love of machinery, and the belief in material wealth, population growth and untrammelled freedom. Throughout his argument the 'middle class' is closely identified with the old tradition of Protestant Dissent. Despite their industriousness and assertion of negative freedoms the Dissenters are condemned for their lack of 'high reason and ... fine culture'. The threat of 'anarchy', Arnold believed, could be removed by the pursuit of 'culture', that is by a continual striving for harmony and perfection in self and society. Classical art and poetry offered the basis for a model of 'sweetness and light'. However, educational reforms were to be coupled with a determination to 'encourage and uphold the occupants of the executive power, whoever they may be, in firmly prohibiting ... whatever brings risk of tumult and disorder'.²²

22 Arnold 1869, 166-70, 199, 219-41.

Eight years before Culture and Anarchy appeared,

Herbert Spencer had written:

If we inquire what is the real motive for giving boys a classical education, we find it to be simply conformity to public opinion. Men dress their children's minds as they dress their bodies, in the prevailing fashion. As the Orinoco Indian puts on paint before leaving his hut, not with a view to any direct benefit, but because he would be ashamed to be seen without it; so a boy's drilling in Latin and Greek is insisted on, not because of their intrinsic value, but that he may not be disgraced by being found ignorant of them - that he may have "the education of a gentleman" - the badge marking a certain social position and bringing a consequent respect.²³

In place of the defunct tradition of classical education he recommended a 'rational curriculum' which did not 'neglect the plant for the sake of the flower':

What knowledge is of most worth? - the uniform reply is - Science. This is the verdict on all counts. For direct self-preservation, or the maintenance of life and health, the all important knowledge is - Science. For the due discharge of parental functions, the proper guidance is to be found only in - Science. For the interpretation of national life, past and present, without which the citizen cannot rightly regulate his conduct, the indispensable key is - Science. Alike for the most perfect production and present enjoyment of art in all its forms, the needful preparation is still - Science, and for the purposes of discipline - intellectual, moral, religious - the most efficient study is, once more - Science.²⁴

Four years after the publication of Culture and Anarchy, Spencer devoted over twenty pages of his book The Study of Sociology to a critique of Arnold's opinions. He deprecated Arnold's 'longing for more administrative and controlling agencies':

"Force till right is ready", is one of the sayings he emphatically repeats: apparently in the belief that there can be a sudden transition from a coercive system to a non-coercive one.²⁵

23 Spencer 1861, 2.

24 op cit, 4.

25 Spencer 1873, 6.

Spencer vigorously defended the provincial Dissenting tradition in which he had been bred, praising its 'originality' and 'independence'.²⁶

Both men had visions of the perfectibility of men and women through education and believed that there were social forces favouring and opposing the realisation of their visions. In Spencer's view, the beneficent influence of industrialism was opposed by the threat of militarism and state power. Arnold, by contrast, identified industrialism with the rise of a middle class moving between the 'two cardinal points' of self-satisfied mediocrity and fanatical Dissent. His own best hopes, a strengthening of the state and 'the public establishment of schools for the middle class', were anathema to Spencer. For the latter, all that was good in society, including its system of education, would grow within the complex bonds of private exchange and private association. Progress towards perfection was hindered, not advanced, by agents of state interference such as Arnold, the school inspector.²⁷

In the event, external examinations were a device which enabled Arnold's successors at the ancient universities to combat the influence of both science and the state. In so far as institutional reforms and the emergence of new social classes were accepted as inevitable, examinations had many features which were attractive. They could be used to influence curricula and criteria of recruitment to schools and occupations. In this way they acted simultaneously upon the relationships between parents and schools, amongst students,

²⁶ op cit, 7.

²⁷ Arnold 1869,193-6; Arnold 1864,162; Spencer 1873,238-9.

between pupils and teachers, and finally, between educational establishments and the occupational structure. This influence was exercised with an ideological stress on universalism and 'fairness' combined with voluntarism and individualism. The onus of 'failure' was borne by the individual and was not to be seen as the consequence of inequalities built into the social structure. Examinations also had a standardising effect whose extent was ultimately national. In a rapidly changing social order they were a means of institutionalising competition within a vast section of the population through sets of bureaucratic rules which were subject to control 'from above'. Conflict about the content of these rules was increasingly confined within the upper reaches of society: for example, in South Kensington, Whitehall and the ancient universities. Not least, examinations provided an engine of influence amongst the growing middle classes which was outside the immediate aegis of the state.²⁸

Examinations played a key role in J L Brereton's plan for the reform of middle class education. He suggested that within each county a number of schools should be established for boys and girls between the ages of twelve and fifteen years. Above them would be a school for boys aged between fifteen and seventeen years. These establishments were to be financed by a combination of fees and the labour of pupils on farms attached to the schools. Each year a county examination would be held under the patronage of the county aristocracy. Young men aged between eighteen and twenty four

28 See also Rothblatt 1974.

years whose parents were in 'respectable and independent circumstances' would compete for a 'County Degree' and 'County Honours'. The system was to be crowned with a 'County College' at Cambridge University. Brereton's proposal is a nice indication of the state of balance between the municipality and the county as foci of social life. It was quite widely discussed and the County College (later known as Cavendish College) was actually opened at Cambridge in 1873.²⁹

However, the ground was rapidly occupied by the Local Examinations sponsored by Oxford and (soon afterwards) Cambridge. This movement was the product of co-operation between educationists in the large towns and reformers at Oxford who accepted Frederick Temple's view expressed in a letter to allies in Birmingham:

The education of the Middle Classes in England appears to me to suffer from two causes: the schoolmasters have no guide to direct them what subjects they should teach, or how they should teach those subjects; the parents no guide to direct them what schools they should prefer ... These difficulties would at once disappear if some Body capable of commanding the confidence both of teachers and parents were to undertake the task of guiding and testing the work done in these schools. I think that the University of Oxford might do this, and do it well³⁰

In the same letter Temple warned against the 'plausible appearance and skilful puffing' to which schoolmasters were prone and offered instead a diet of 'solid knowledge and real cultivation'.³¹ These were surprisingly confident

²⁹ Roach 1970, 52-3.

³⁰ Quoted in Sargant 1857a, 336.

³¹ *ibid.*

remarks considering the very sharp criticisms made by the commissioners who had investigated Oxford and Cambridge earlier in the same decade.³² They indicate the deep reserves upon which the ancient universities could draw in the craving of important provincial establishments for their benediction. Some evidence of the battle being fought may be gleaned from William Lucas Sargant's comments at an Education Conference in 1857:

An appeal has been made to the public against Mr Temple's Scheme, on behalf of the College of Preceptors and of the Society of Arts. The ground, it is said, is already occupied by these institutions, and the present proposal is a poaching on their manor.³³

Sargant argued that the College of Preceptors could not 'claim the whole educational field on the ground of prior discovery' and considered that the Royal Society of Arts should confine itself to adult education in mechanics' institutes and people's colleges.³⁴

The sponsorship of 'locals' was part of a strategy still being pursued by Oxford and Cambridge twenty years later when the University Extension movement began (at Cambridge in 1873, in Oxford five years later).

Benjamin Jowett of Balliol argued strongly that the ancient universities should take an active interest in the new local science colleges that were springing up. It was of the

32 PP 1852, XXII, Report of Royal Commission on the University of Oxford; PP 1852-3, XLIV, Report of Royal Commission on the University of Cambridge; Montgomery 1965, 44-51.

33 Sargant 1857a, 342.

34 op cit, 342-3.

greatest importance that the education offered in such places should be truly liberal and not narrowly vocational or technical: 'we ought not to allow a great movement to slip out of our hands, and become what I may call a mechanics' institute movement, instead of a real extension of such an education as the university would wish to see given'.³⁵

A threat from below?

At issue was the question: how would the labouring population and lower middle class within the cities use their growing strength? Both of these social categories were divided internally, each containing groups whose origins lay in the old particularistic small-town order alongside others being brought into being by the universalising, nationalising tendencies expressed in increasingly complex market and bureaucratic networks. The lower middle class contained two groups both of which performed vital functions as intermediaries at the lower levels of systems of production and distribution. They were the petty bourgeoisie (or 'old' lower middle class) and the 'new' lower middle class.

Members of the new lower middle class occupational groups had in common three characteristics. First, educational qualifications - increasingly taking the form of certificates achieved in competitive examinations - were the basis of their claim to employment and income. Second, there was a rapidly expanding demand for their services. This demand created a dilemma. Elementary school teachers, postmen, policemen and railway clerks were widely recruited from the offspring of small tradesmen, yeoman, farm labourers,

35 PP 1881, LVI, University of Oxford Commission, Part One
..., evid 155, cit Roach 1959, 142; Draper 1923, Chs 1,2.

domestic servants and artisans. To take on uneducated recruits was to court administrative inefficiency; to educate them above their fellows was to risk giving them a sense of their own importance which might make them difficult to control. In spite of this dilemma, their numbers grew rapidly. For example in 1846 the government established a system whereby elementary school teachers could gain augmentation grants and pension rights by passing an examination supported by training college courses and 'Queen's Scholarships'. By the time of the Newcastle Commission there were more than 7,000 certified teachers.³⁶ In 1862 Robert Lowe warned of 'the vested interests of those engaged in education':

If Parliament does not set a limit to the evil, such a state of thing will arise that the control of the educational system will pass out of the hands of the Privy Council and out of the House of Commons into the hands of the persons working the educational system ... ³⁷

The teachers were a highly visible element in a quickly growing sector of society. The number of white collared clerks was also increasing. Their ranks doubled during the 1860s. This startling rate of growth was maintained in the following decade.³⁸

The third and most unsettling characteristic of this new lower middle class was its cultural plasticity, the uncertainty of its socio-political allegiances. Its existence brought indirect benefits to the rich and powerful.

36 Hurt 1972, 86-147, esp 96; J R B Johnson 1970, 116-9.

37 Hansard, 13.2.1862 quoted in Tropp 1957, 87-8.

38 Checkland 1964, 218.

As the chains of interdependence intervening between capitalist and producer and between producer and consumer grew longer, conflicts of interest amongst capitalist, producer and consumer became less clearly visible. The appearance of a new lower middle class which manned these intervening institutional orders also made the distinctions between rich and poor, powerful and weak less sharp. However, the unformed nature of this strategically important sector of society made it the object of great concern. In 1858, Frederick Temple commented: "(the) one thing the middle classes want and which they cannot get without help, is organisation".³⁹ Despite tendencies towards organisation at the national level (for example through bodies such as the National Union of Elementary Teachers), the problem of how these social groups were to be incorporated within the urban industrial order was initially confronted at the municipal level of integration. As has been seen, there were significant differences between Birmingham and Sheffield in the proportion of the population engaged in such occupations and their rates of growth after mid-century.

There were also differences in the character of the manual labour force in the two cities. These differences, which increased after the 1840s, were local manifestations of a shift in the national economy. The proportion of the labour force engaged in manufacturing reached a peak of 32.7 per cent in 1851 and thereafter began gradually to decline. It had fallen to 30.7 per cent in 1881. However, within this section of the population the proportion of textile

³⁹39 Quoted in Reeder 1980, 218.

workers was reduced while that of metal workers increased from 15 per cent in 1851 to 23 per cent in 1881. The shift of emphasis away from textiles and towards iron, steel, engineering and mining was associated with two parallel but contrary tendencies. On the one hand, technological advances in steel-making and coal-mining encouraged very large concentrations of capital and semi- or unskilled labour. On the other hand, the 1850s and 1860s were decades of rising prosperity for artisan metal workers and allied tradesmen in both Birmingham and Sheffield as they were in many places for skilled craftsmen in the building and printing trades. In spite of the general trend towards increasing plant size a powerful fillip was given to small-scale workshop production of a kind which allowed artisan organisations a great deal of control over their craft and considerable bargaining power with those to whom they sold their skilled labour. Differentials in pay between skilled and unskilled workers steadily increased between the 1850s and 1880s. However, the other side of this coin was that the advance of mechanisation and the growth in size of the semi and unskilled workforce threatened to undermine the basis of craft privilege. Perhaps such fears underlay the 'no-popery' riots of 1867 in Birmingham directed against the immigrant Irish. In cases where a strongly entrenched artisan class confronted this challenge at close hand resistance was bitter, as was seen when looking at Sheffield.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Checkland 1964, 142, 164-5, 217-9, 230-2. On 1867 riots see Dent 1894, 560.

It is important not to exaggerate the extent to which the success of the artisan elite and the increasing size of the unskilled labour force (especially marked in the 1860s) generated alarm higher in the social order. Highly organised craftsmen could bargain effectively with their masters but in return the latter could deal with recognised spokesmen and expect that agreements reached would be backed up by the moral authority of the craft union. Furthermore, many craft unions or trade societies had been formed in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries before large factories were common or governmental bureaucracy a sizeable menace to their members. Their political attitudes had many similarities to those of the old lower middle class. Like small-town shopkeepers and manufacturers in the first half of the century artisans had veered between Paineite radicalism and parochial conservatism.⁴¹ They were, above all, a known quantity. At Sheffield in 1865, one year before the great strike by the Sheffield file unions and two years before the Sheffield Outrages Inquiry, the Dean of Chichester referred to the nation's artisans in almost affectionate terms:

Then comes the great body of men, advancing every day in importance and power, who have proudly assumed the title of the working classes. Hard-working men in other classes have reluctantly conceded the title, as claimed unjustly when claimed as an exclusive designation; but there it is, like all aristocracies, exciting an occasional growl, which the members of the favoured class consider as a compliment. This class can at once be described as consisting of the skilled artisans.⁴²

Furthermore, from the point of view of the middle class, the migration of unskilled labour to the towns helped to

41 Bechhofer and Elliott 1976, 79-80; E P Thompson 1966.

42 Chichester 1866, 45.

to supply a growing demand for domestic servants. Between 1851 and 1881 the number of people in domestic service rose from just over one million to 1.8 million, or one in seven of the general working population. Women and young girls predominated. A powerful instrument was thus forged for instilling deferential attitudes amongst the lower classes. Its effects must have been strongly felt in the households set up by servants and ex-servants when they married.⁴³

It has been seen that the distinction between skilled artisans and semi and un-skilled labourers was not the only significant form of differentiation within the urban labouring population. There were differences between cities with respect to the relative importance of female and child labour as opposed to adult male labour and in the significance of the division between 'respectable' and 'rough' working-class families (not the same as the division between high and low wage-earners). These differences were related to variations in working-class industrial bargaining strategies and responses to formal education. On the first-mentioned of these issues witness the Prince Consort at a conference on early school-leaving in 1857:

The root of the evil will, I suspect, also be found to extend into that field on which the political economist exercises his activity - I mean the labour market - demand and supply. (This issue will) cut into the very quick of the working man's conditions ... (for his children) constitute part of his productive power, and work with him for the staff of life. The daughters especially are the hand-maids of the house, the assistants of the mother, the nurses of the younger children, the aged and the sick. To deprive the labouring family of their help would be almost to paralyse its domestic existence. (Hear, hear).

⁴³ Deane and Cole 1962, 143; Perkin 1969, 143; Checkland 1964, 216.

Mixed motives apart (compare the words of Sydney Gedge in Chapter Five), a concern for social order and material prosperity did not necessarily entail an unquestioning insistence on the value of formal education on the part of either clients or sponsors.⁴⁴

Divisions within the bourgeoisie

The foci of debates on elementary education in the 1850s and 1860s suggest that the spectre of popular disturbance was receding. There was a reluctant recognition that the extent of elementary education would have to be increased, that established institutions were inadequate to cope with this task, and that new forms of provision were likely to alter the balance of power within the middle orders of English society. In particular, the Church of England was under threat. The 1851 Census showed that one in three children of school age were neither at school nor in employment. However, it also showed that of all churchgoers only half were attending Anglican places of worship. Among the issues debated by pressure groups such as the National Public School Association, the Royal Society of Arts and the United Association of Schoolmasters were: the extent and manner of state involvement in education provision, the degree to which school management should reflect Anglican interests as opposed to those of ratepayers, the status of elementary school teachers, and the academic content of the elementary school curriculum. That such issues could be debated for so long without producing a mandate for legislative action suggests, first, that there was a lack of widespread fears

⁴⁴ A Hill 1857, 373.

concerning the political temper of the working class, and second, that there existed serious conflicts within the middle class.⁴⁵

By 1846, W F Hook was prepared to admit that the purely voluntary system of educational provision had broken down.⁴⁶ However, nearly a decade later very little had been done to replace it. In 1854 an enthusiast for the voluntary system commented:

Such are the diversities of opinion which exist among educational philanthropists themselves, and the small degree of progress made in settling the primary elements of the problem, that upon no one point could thirteen men, picked out for the purpose from the whole House of Commons, find their way to an agreement. So much for the possibilities of education legislation in England.⁴⁷

In fact five educational bills failed in the House of Commons during the following year. In 1858 the question was passed to members of the Newcastle Commission whose instructions were 'to consider and report what measures, if any, are required for the extension of sound and cheap elementary instruction to all classes of the people'.⁴⁸

The sequence of royal commissions on education through the 1850s and 1860s - on Oxford and Cambridge, (1850-3), on the education of the poor (1858-61), on the top nine public schools (1860-4) and on the endowed schools (1864-8) - produced reports which strengthened the case for a 'national education system'. However, they also exposed a

⁴⁵ 1851 Religious Census, 181-2; 1851 Education Census, 52 D K Jones 1977, 13-27; Hurt 1971, 186-222; Montgomery 1965, 76-8; Tropp 1957, 48-57.

⁴⁶ Hook 1846.

⁴⁷ Hinton 1854, 3 quoted in D K Jones 1977, 23.

⁴⁸ op cit, 24; Newcastle, Vol 1, 1. *My italics*

strong capacity to resist central government on the part of school managers, boards of trustees, headmasters and college fellows.⁴⁹ The opposition aroused by the Endowed School Commissioners, set up in 1869, and the functions given to the school boards in the following year were a sign that for the foreseeable future the particular shape of educational provision at the elementary and secondary levels would be primarily determined by the specific balance of political forces in particular local areas.⁵⁰ Before a 'national education system' could be created there would have to emerge a 'national' clientele oriented to a labour market and occupational structure whose determinants were national rather than local.

During the 1850s and 1860s the most powerful tendencies in this direction in the educational sphere were the growth of the public schools and the proliferation of formal examinations. These institutional developments have been the subject of valuable studies. Analyses of the public schools have tended to show the part they have played in facilitating the relatively smooth interpenetration of business, professional and aristocratic elites during the late nineteenth century. By contrast, investigation of examining agencies has tended to reveal considerable conflict and contradiction in their mutual relations.⁵¹ Such a state of affairs was part of the overall confusion in the administration of education which was revealed by the Bryce Commission in 1895.⁵²

49 eg through the establishment of Headmasters' Conference.

50 See Stansky 1962 and Chapter Nine.

51 Bamford 1967; Mack 1938; Mack 1971; Wilkinson and Bishop 1967; Montgomery 1965, esp xii.

52 Gosden 1966, 77-81

By that date education was managed through a Byzantine network of local and metropolitan agencies. The Education Department at Whitehall, the Science and Art Department at Southampton, the Charity Commissioners and the two older universities all cast their influence over the schools and colleges. The institutions were relatively autonomous with respect to each other and co-existed with a host of ad hoc local bodies, over some of which they exercised control. These local bodies included school boards, school attendance committees, voluntary aid associations, technical instruction committees and the governing bodies of grammar schools. As the Bryce Commission reported:

Each one of the agencies ... was called into being, not merely independently of the others, but with little or no regard to their existence. Each has remained in its working isolated and unconnected with the rest. The problems which Secondary Education present have been approached from different sides, at different times, and with different views and aims. The Charity Commissioners have little to do with the Education Department and still less with the Science and Art Department. Even the borough councils have, to a large extent, acted independently of the school boards, and have, in some instances, made their technical instruction grants with too little regard to the parallel grants which were being made by the Science and Art Department. Endowments which, because applied to elementary education, were exempted from the operation of the Endowed Schools Acts, have been left still exempt; though the public provision of elementary education in 1870 and the grant of universal free elementary education in 1891 have wholly altered their position. The University Colleges, though their growth is one of the most striking and hopeful features of the last 30 years, remain without any regular organic relation either to elementary or to Secondary Education, either to school boards or to county councils.⁵³

53. Bryce, Vol 1, 17-18.

These apparently paradoxical developments, a successful integration of potentially hostile establishments through the public schools and the appearance of serious contradictions within the institutional sphere of formal education, require investigation which must take into account the changing relations between old and new establishments and between the national, county, municipal and neighbourhood levels of integration. Alongside the relatively smooth reception of the most successful business families into more elevated circles must be seen the fierce confrontations which continued to occur in some of the manufacturing cities they left behind. Alongside the careful adjustments to an expanded clientele made by the great public schools run by prestigious headmasters must be seen the bitter conflicts by competing municipal elites for control over the management and curricula of local secondary schools.⁵⁴ In the preceding chapters of this thesis the development of Birmingham and Sheffield between 1830 and 1870 was analysed in those terms. In the final part the analysis will be extended to the period after 1870.

⁵⁴ For several examples in the West Midlands see Griffiths 1870, passim.

Chapter Nine

'A NOISY STREET IN THE MIDDLE OF A SMOKY TOWN'

Elementary, secondary and higher education in Birmingham and
Sheffield 1870-95

As a continuation of the theme of the preceding chapter, in Chapter Nine the analysis commences by focusing narrowly upon differences in patterns of formal education in Birmingham and Sheffield between the establishment of the school boards and the publication of the Bryce Report. However, the argument subsequently broadens. In the course of Chapter Ten and Chapter Eleven specific features of the evolving class structures and institutional orders of the two cities are located in the wider context of the development of the national society during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This chapter opens with a comparative analysis of the development of elementary, secondary and higher education in the two cities during the late nineteenth century. It is argued that the policies of the school boards in the sphere of elementary education reflected the contrasting processes of political conflict and industrial growth whose early stages were noticed in previous chapters. In the spheres of secondary and higher education an apparently paradoxical pattern took shape. A classical or 'liberal' curriculum held pride of place in Birmingham's secondary schools and Sheffield's university college whereas a science-based curriculum was dominant in Sheffield's secondary schools and Birmingham's university college. An explanation for this pattern is suggested in terms of three aspects of local social structure: the relationships between the middle class and local secondary schools in the two cities inherited

from the previous period; the orientations towards the local colleges of industrialists in Birmingham and Sheffield; and the capacity of municipal establishments in the two cities to institutionalise forms of higher education contrary to metropolitan definitions which were subject to the influence of Oxford and Cambridge.

Diverging patterns of educational development

In July 1880, at a great meeting to celebrate the opening of the Central School, the Archbishop of York declared that in Sheffield 'the whole phenomenon of the establishment of the School Board had been a very remarkable thing indeed. The Board in Sheffield had scarcely ever been divided in its opinions during the nine years' chairmanship of Sir John Brown....'. Election times had provided what little excitement there was, largely due to the efforts of H J Wilson and other Nonconformists hostile to public money being spent upon voluntary schools. During the first six years 'voluntarists' were in a majority on the Board. In 1873 Mark Firth's nomination failed to arrive before the deadline and no election took place. In 1879 there were only sixteen candidates for the fifteen seats. Three years previously in 1876, the composition of the Board had shifted in favour of moderate Liberal Nonconformists but Brown, Anglican and Conservative, had remained as chairman with Mark Firth, a New Connexion Methodist with more liberal leanings, as vice-chairman. As will be seen, the School Board got on with its agreed task of building schools and filling them with an efficiency which was almost Kremlinesque. This epithet is also conjured up by the prevailing attitude on the Board towards public opinion in the city which was

indicated by the defeat in 1879 of a proposal to supply the local libraries, newspapers and the Athenaeum Club with copies of its minutes and 'such other information as may from time to time be printed and published by the Board'.¹

The public stance of the School Board was, in effect:

'Trust us for we know best'. As Brown wrote to the local press in 1882

Choose for the School Board men of known intelligence, integrity, business ability, and strict justice. Let them be men of wise economy, but let them be educationists first, then send them to the work unfettered and ready to form an impartial judgement on actual experience²

He added that the School Board had received 'the cordial support of such men as Mr Henry Wilson, Mr Thomas Moore and Mr Mark Firth, as well as others now living who hold utterly divergent views on both religion and politics...'³

The turbulence of school board politics in Birmingham made Sheffield's tranquil progress seem torpid by comparison. During the early years the fortnightly debates at Paradise Street were packed with the public and 'on a field day the Board Room was not unlike the Black Hole of Calcutta'.⁴ The Town Council was dominated by Liberals and Nonconformists under the leadership of Chamberlain who became Mayor in 1873.

1 Stainton 1924, 109; Fowler 1961 esp 36-42, 60-62; Bingham 1949, 15-18.

2 op cit, 18.

3 op cit, 19. Henry Wilson, Anglican snuff manufacturer, is not to be confused with Henry Joseph Wilson, Nonconformist smelter. Odom 1926, 108-9.

4 A W W Dale 1898, 476.

When the Council failed that year to obtain an assurance from the Board that money from the rates would not be spent on denominational schools, the Council withheld payment. In a blaze of publicity the case went before Queen's Bench in London. Meanwhile the school board election fell due. It was proclaimed from an Anglican pulpit that the very angels in Heaven were awaiting the result and that a Liberal victory would be followed by an inferno which would consume the Town Hall. In the event, torches were indeed lit and fireworks ignited but only to illuminate and glorify the progress of Liberal working men marching in celebration. Chamberlain and his clique now ruled both Board and Council. The issue of whether the Bible should be taught in schools run by the Board was deeply contentious until 1879 when a workable compromise was reached and the sacred text admitted onto the curriculum. During the intervening years (until 1877) the National Education League had conducted a strident country-wide campaign one effect of which had been to help split the national Liberal Party and contribute to its defeat in the 1874 General Election.⁵ If School Board affairs in Sheffield may be described as being somewhat Kremlinesque, then the politics of education in Birmingham occasionally took on a little of the fervour lately summoned up by other hallowed writings in the People's Republic of China!

These differences between the school boards are what the previous analysis would lead us to expect. The battles in Birmingham were a continuation of the phase of municipal conflict which began in the mid-1860s. The greater single-mindedness of the Sheffield board may be understood as a

⁵ BDP 19.11.1873; BDP 21.11.1873; A F Taylor 1955, chs 2 and 3; A F Taylor 1960, esp chs 9 and 10; Adams 1882, chs 6 - 9.

response both to the heightening of class conflict in the industrial and political spheres during the mid and late 1860s and to the increasingly evident failure of voluntary initiative, especially by the Anglican clergy, to keep up with the increase of population, which, as has been seen, had been occurring at a much more rapid rate in Sheffield than in Birmingham during the 1850s and 1860s.⁶ The greater severity of the 'problem' in Sheffield compared to Birmingham led to a more vigorous programme of building schools and enforcing compulsory attendance in the former city, especially in the early 1870s. By the end of 1874 the Sheffield Board had built fourteen schools to accommodate about 9,000 children and rented a further seven schools which made approximately another 1500 places available. By contrast, the Birmingham Board had built only seven schools with about 7,000 places and was renting a further four to accommodate about 1,300 pupils.⁷ When Chamberlain took over the chairmanship in 1873 the pace speeded up. By 1876 a total of thirteen schools had been built (accommodating over 13,000 pupils) and fourteen more schools (for about 11,000 pupils) were on the drawing board.⁸ By that time, however, the Board in Sheffield was already planning its Central School which was to provide advanced training for older children. These schools opened four years before the equivalent institution in Birmingham commenced operation in 1884.⁹

6 See above 113-5, 232-3.

7 Bingham 1949, 34, 36, 37; A F Taylor 1955, 133, 135.

8 op cit, 120.

9 Bingham 1949, 39; Birmingham School Board Report 1884, 14-15.

By 1872 both school boards had established a staff of 'visitors' or school attendance officers. Although Birmingham had thirty-five men so engaged in 1880 and Sheffield only nineteen by 1887, the latter were evidently backed up much more effectively by the magistrates' bench than their colleagues in the Midlands. In Sheffield there were 774 summonses in 1874 to enforce the bye-laws with respect to compulsory attendance. 644 defendants were fined the maximum of five shillings and only seven escaped with a one shilling fine. By contrast, although the Birmingham Board brought 3,150 prosecutions in 1876, only 454 cases resulted in a five shilling fine whereas the majority of those who were convicted suffered only a one shilling penalty. This was a small cost to parents for retaining the labour of their children. As late as 1887 the Birmingham Daily Gazette criticised the reluctance of Birmingham's magistrates to enforce compulsory attendance. Matters only began to improve significantly two years later when all such prosecutions were placed before the stipendiary magistrate.¹⁰

During the 1880s and 1890s differences between the emerging systems of municipal education were most clearly expressed in the realms of secondary and higher education. In 1872 the Collegiate School in Sheffield was rescued from financial collapse by the efforts of a small group of Anglican gentlemen including Henry Wilson, Bernard Wake and Henry Pawson. There were ambitions to make it a 'good classical school' with some boarding provision.¹¹ However,

10 A F Taylor 1955,144; Bingham 1949,60,68; Birmingham School Board, Report 1870-1876,41; J Chamberlain 1876,17-18. See also Birmingham School Board,Report on compulsion as applied to school attendance in Birmingham,1878, Birmingham. BDG 15.9.1887; Birmingham School Board Report 1889,25: See also Gammage 1972, ch 5, esp 132-40.

11 ST 11.1.1872. See also ST 12.1.1872; ST 13.1.1872; ST 30.1.1872; SI 27.1.1872.

the opening of the Central School by the School Board, in close cooperation with South Kensington, caused considerable anxiety at the Collegiate. At the opening ceremony Earl Spencer had praised the 'association of education and the technicalities of trade' represented by the Central School. He stressed that 'in England, attention should be turned at once and very fully to the soundest and best possible system of technical education, because of the certainty of increasing rivalry in trade concerns' with the Continent.¹² By 1883 S O Addy, an ex-student and teacher at the Collegiate was bitterly complaining about this 'educational palace' built 'illegally' with rate-payers' money. The new establishment, he feared, 'was intended to monopolise the whole of the middle-class education of the town'. When it was opened the Collegiate headmaster 'took fright' and fled to a public school in Jersey 'where he now flourishes with probably ten-fold the income and the reputation he had acquired in Sheffield'.¹³ Addy's rather comical distress and confusion is nicely conveyed in the anecdote with which he ends his pamphlet:

A poor boy applied for admission to the Grammar School. The Head Master thought that the applicant was more fitted for a Board School than a Grammar School, and recommended him to apply to the Central School. "Oh!" said the boy, "I have applied there and they won't take me". "Why?" inquired the Head Master. "Because I am not clever enough." And this to an old Cambridge scholar and able head of an ancient school which was founded to teach, and for centuries has taught, the Greek and Latin Literature and all polite learning, a foundation which has existed nearly 280 years and never drawn a penny from the State! O rem impudicam &c! Well, we live in strange times and there are plenty of people ready to rush in where angels fear to tread. What may be the end we may not wholly foresee.¹⁴

12 Stainton 1924, 108.

13 Addy 1883, 11.

14 op cit, 13-14.

In the event the Collegiate had become part of Wesley College by 1885, a consolidation which did not halt a progressive decline in support. By the years 1898-9 there were more vacancies than candidates for admission to Wesley College and the Grammar School. Finally, in 1905 both these schools amalgamated and fell under the control of the School Board's successor, the Sheffield Education Committee.¹⁵

When Birmingham School Board's Seventh Standard School was opened in 1884 (followed by a sister institution in Waverley Street eight years later) the chairman of the Board's Education Committee was Rev E F M MacCarthy, not only an Anglican cleric but also the headmaster of a local endowed school. Waverley Road School was something of a showpiece, containing workshops and a scientific laboratory, and providing teaching in mechanics, chemistry, machine drawing, geometry, and wood and metal work.¹⁶ In contrast to Sheffield, these events were not accompanied by a decline in support for the local endowed schools. Before the Bryce Commissioners in 1894, MacCarthy felt able to urge not only the building of more 'board secondary schools' with a technical bias but also a loosening of their dependence on South Kensington. MacCarthy was headmaster at one of the nine endowed secondary schools which the King Edward VI

15 Cotton 1949, 1-9; Hawson 1968, 75; Stainton 1924, 86.

16 Birmingham School Board, Report 1884, 14-15; *ibid* Report 1892, 35-6. On MacCarthy see Edg 1882, 2, 49-59. The technical curriculum at Bridge Street School, the higher grade school opened in 1884, is described in Crosskey 1885a, 375-9.

Foundation managed by the mid-1890s, and was secure in the knowledge that these schools were not only supreme in the local status hierarchy but also catering for approximately 2500 boys and girls. Following the dispute over the Foundation in the mid-1860s, various schemes had been proposed for its management, all being opposed by the Town Council. By 1894, an agreed scheme had been in operation for a decade. This final compromise allowed the Town Council to nominate eight of twenty-one governors. The Elementary Schools were replaced by seven grammar schools, three for boys and four for girls, taking pupils up to the age of sixteen. Two high schools, one for boys and one for girls, provided courses up to the age of nineteen. The schools all became mainly fee-paying.¹⁷

When the Bryce Commissioners asked MacCarthy in 1894 whether the higher grade schools at Bridge Street and Waverley Street might 'expunge the endowed secondary school' he replied that they met 'different educational needs' and that there was 'no competition between the two'.¹⁸ Earlier he had insisted that the Board's higher grade schools would in fact relieve the endowed grammar schools of 'scholars with whom they could not adequately deal'. The endowed schools were more literary, the board schools more technical. Of the former, said MacCarthy, the high schools led to Oxford and Cambridge, the grammar schools to the local Mason College (opened in 1880) or directly into commerce and the professions. The higher grade schools, on the other hand,

17 Bryce, Vol 2, 178-9 (qq1740, 1748). Evidence of A R Vardy. Loc cit vol 3, 45-6 (q6394), 47-8 (qq6401-6408), 57 (q6552). Evidence of McCarthy. Bunce 1895, 21-3; Bunce 1885, 527-8; Muirhead 1911, 525-60. On A R Vardy, headmaster of the boys' high school in 1894, see Edg 1900, 20, 148ff.

18 Bryce, vol 3, 60 (qq 6597-6598)

qualified their pupils for 'the better classes of employment with respect to the manufactures, and on the commercial side for the smaller commercial posts'.¹⁹ MacCarthy believed that those board school children who sought entry to the endowed secondary schools should only be admitted at the age of eleven or thereabouts. A child transferring later would have 'a mental equipment much narrower in range than the pupils among whom he finds himself of corresponding age'. Such children would have to be chosen by formal examination, however fallible that system: 'The difficulty is that you have to satisfy the public'.²⁰ Rev A R Vardy, the Head Master of the Boys' High School was asked whether the passage of ex-board schools into his establishment had produced 'difficulties ... of what are called a social nature'. He replied,

No, not at all. But I think this is an important point, and one which ought to be made clear to the Commission. I am bound to say that most of those who have been previously in public elementary schools are to some extent picked boys. Many of them, for instance, are the sons of public elementary schoolmasters; others, one or two, the sons of men who are connected with public elementary education, sub-inspectors or assistant examiners. There are a few who are the sons of artizans, but I think most of them come from homes where education is more thought of ...²¹

Evidently a formal examination at the age of eleven would tend to perform the task, whose desirability was noted by T H Green thirty years earlier, of excluding 'the rougher element' from the upper reaches of the endowed schools in Birmingham.²²

19 loc cit, 46 (q6394), 58 (qq6564-6568).

20 loc cit, 44 (q6385), 45 (q6388), 53-4 (q6482).

21 Bryce, Vol 2, 196 (q 1934).

22 See Chapter Seven.

By the mid-1890s, a form of tripartite organisation of secondary education was thus developing in Birmingham. It depended upon a high degree of cooperation among local practitioners. Vardy stressed the integrated character of the Birmingham education system:

First of all, the city is not too large for those engaged in public work to know one another; secondly, a good many educational institutions are connected by having on their governing bodies members of other governing bodies. For instance, on the governing body of King Edward's Foundation there are five or six who are also governors of the Mason College. Thirdly, in Birmingham happily very intimate relations have for many years existed among teachers of all grades of schools. We have been in the habit of seeing a great deal of each other23

When A P Laurie visited Sheffield in the mid-1890s as an Assistant Commissioner he found a pattern of educational organisation and management very different from Birmingham's. His highest praise was reserved for the High School for Girls which had been founded in 1878 by the Girls' Public Day School Trust. Wesley College, by now largely dependent upon recruits from local private preparatory schools, passed muster but the Grammar School made 'a disappointing impression'. Its headmaster complained of competition from the Technical School which had been founded in 1888 and stated that the best boys from the elementary schools did not compete for his entrance scholarships. They preferred the higher grade (that is, the Central) school. A new extension was being built at the latter institution. Laurie commented that 'any University college that could get possession of (it) ... for their science department would think themselves very fortunate'. The Grammar School's other competitor, the Technical School,

had originally been part of Firth College, founded by Mark Firth in 1879, but had passed under the control of the Town Council in 1890. It was Laurie's view that 'both have suffered from the separation'. The Technical School had fallen away from 'university standards' and Firth College had lost the 'close association between university and technical work 'appropriate to a 'great manufacturing district'. In fact, in its overall appearance Firth College was 'more suited to the mechanics' institute of a small town than to the University College of Sheffield'.²⁴ Laurie's overall conclusion was that there was

no attempt at any organisation of the higher education of the town. The higher grade school, while engaged in work of immense value for the great mass of the townspeople, is making no use of the greater facilities for teaching languages and preparing special boys for the university possessed by the grammar school and Wesley College. While these institutions again seem to be hardly aware of the existence of Firth College, which struggles on without the support it should have from the secondary schools. The girls' high school, again, is quite isolated from the work which the higher grade school is doing for girls ... Then the technical school, instead of arranging with the other secondary schools in the town for a slightly modified training of boys who wish to enter its senior department, must needs start a boys' school of its own without proper class-rooms, playground, or adequate school organisation, and compete with the schools in which these things are provided.²⁵

In the two cities there were very different biases with respect to two kinds of school: on the one hand, secondary schools with a classical tradition and hopes

24 Walton 1968, 212, 231; Bryce, Vol 7, 166, 169, 172, 175. Laurie also noted the 'large private day school kept by Mr Newall' who was, ironically, an ex-employee of the Sheffield School Board. Loc cit, 165; Bingham 1949, 98.

25 Bryce, Vol 7, 177.

(however much dimmed) to send their best pupils to Oxford and Cambridge and, on the other hand, higher grade schools controlled by the local school board and placing a greater emphasis upon technical training. In Birmingham the Foundation secondary schools catered for about 2500 students by the mid-1890s while Waverley Street and Bridge Street between them had an attendance of about 1100 pupils.²⁶ By contrast, Sheffield's higher grade or Central school boasted over a thousand young people compared to the six hundred or so taught in the Grammar School, Wesley College and the High School for Girls taken together. As Laurie pointed out, these latter institutions were isolated from the board schools not only organisationally but also geographically. High up in the residential suburb of Broomhill, away from the pall of smoke which polluted the valley, they 'monopolised all cleanliness, fresh air and sunshine'.²⁷ The King Edward VI schools in Birmingham were neither isolated from nor threatened by the local board schools. In return for keeping its headquarters 'in a noisy street in the middle of a smoky town' the Foundation had reaped a massive reward in local influence and prestige.

At the 'university college' level there were equally striking differences between developments in the two cities. In 1897 Firth College amalgamated with the Technical School and the Medical School to become Sheffield University College. The expanded institution applied to join Victoria University which was a federation of colleges in Manchester, Liverpool

²⁶ loc cit, Vol 3, 43 (qq 6380-6382).

²⁷ loc cit, Vol 7, 165, 167, 168-9, 173.

and Leeds. Its application was met with a blunt refusal. In 1902 the Victoria University broke up and the college at Leeds was encouraged by the Privy Council to apply for incorporation as the Yorkshire University. Confronted with the threat of Leeds becoming the only university city in the county, Sheffield made a late and desperate bid for a charter which was granted in 1905. However, for the first seven years of its life Sheffield University was required to submit all its statutes and ordinances to the three northern universities for their approval.²⁸

A different trajectory was followed in Birmingham. Professor T H Huxley opened Mason College in 1880. After a decade of gradually increasing cooperation, the medical faculty of Queen's College became part of Mason College in 1892. By 1898 this establishment had become Mason University College, control passing from the hands of the college trustees appointed by Josiah Mason and becoming vested in a Court of Governors drawn from throughout the Midlands but dominated by Joseph Chamberlain. The latter was already committed to the creation of a massively-endowed University of Birmingham, a civic university inspired by the examples of Edinburgh and Glasgow. Birmingham University was established in 1900, the first civic university in England, providing a model which was different from the federal pattern in the North, the sprawling examination arrangements of London University and the collegiate system of Oxford and Cambridge. Within two years of the University's inauguration, a new twenty-five acre site was being prepared at Edgbaston,

this development being aided by a massive donation from Andrew Carnegie in the United States.²⁹ In 1903, while Sheffield University College was still desperately striving for some kind of higher recognition, Chamberlain was twitting R B Haldane, soon to be chairman of the Treasury committee supervising the distribution of government money to the provincial colleges. Inspired by a visit to the Technische Hochschule at Charlottenburg in Germany, Haldane had been campaigning since 1902 to raise the status of the scientific institutions in South Kensington. He proposed to Chamberlain that following London's example there could be 'a second start for the Centre of England, to be localised in Birmingham University'. Chamberlain's public reply was to declare that Haldane was 'by no means first in the field, but still welcome, however late ...'.³⁰

Apart from this large disparity in the power of the drive towards university status in Birmingham and Sheffield there were also important differences in the balance of social forces active within and upon the local colleges and in the curricular emphases which predominated. In both cities the leading part was played by professional men. As has been seen, the project of creating a 'grand scientific and commercial college' or a 'Central University' had been mooted by Birmingham's medical men in the early 1830s, although Anglican clerics at Queen's College were carrying this banner by the late 1840s.³¹ A reaction to the domination

29 Vincent and Hinton 1947 esp 17-22, 25, 28, 82.

30 Quoted in Ashby and Anderson 1974, 72-3.

31 See Chapter Seven.

of the Church of England and county interests upon Queen's College probably contributed to Josiah Mason's insistence in 1870 that no religious creed or dogma should be taught in his projected college, that its courses of instruction should develop a sound practical knowledge of scientific subjects 'excluding mere literary education', and that its doors should be open to all in the town and district. Although Mason had made his fortune in pen nibs, his closest advisers were a lawyer and a doctor.³² In the succeeding decades the combined influence of medical and scientific practitioners within Mason College was to be paramount. In Sheffield it was to be otherwise.

The initial stimulus in Sheffield came from the University of Cambridge and the Church of England. During the winter of 1874-5 the learning of the ancient university was brought to Sheffield by way of University Extension lectures. Their most prominent local advocate, Rev Samuel Earnshaw, had made a small fortune at Cambridge as a private tutor before coming back north. By 1877, Earnshaw was heard to say that the Cambridge lectures had produced 'a most marvellous effect' on the conversation and reading of 'the upper middle class'. When Firth College was founded two years later, the 'literary education' abhorred by Mason in Birmingham was well established within it. The Executive Committee identified 'the cultivation of that higher learning' as its 'primary object' although it hoped 'that a time may come when ... technical education may be included in the curriculum'. Such a time would be 'whenever the needful

32 The lawyer was G J Johnson, the doctor J G Blake. Vincent and Hinton 1947, 61; Burstall and Burton 1930, 9.

resources for this shall be available'. They were very slow in arriving. A proposal in the early 1880s to establish a Technical School in connection with the College drew a meagre response from local businessmen. Nearly a third of the small sum subscribed came from the Duke of Norfolk. The most prominent business sponsor was Frederick (soon to be Sir Frederick) Mappin who was subsequently to behave sometimes 'as if the Technical School - and later the University - was a branch of his own works'.³³ The Technical School remained an inferior element with the College. In 1890 it fell under the control of the Town Council (following the provisions of the Technical Instruction Act) and a junior department was opened whose studies were developed in co-operation with the local School Board. Although by 1905 the Technical School had been back in the university fold for eight years it was tucked away on a separate site apart from the main buildings at Western Bank.³⁴ It was all reminiscent of the aversion felt by the Church of England Instruction Society towards the Mechanics' Institute half a century before.

In Birmingham the Technical Instruction Act led to the science teaching of the Birmingham and Midland Institute being taken over by the municipal authority. This was a blow to the Institute's ambition, which may be read between the lines of its annual reports, of fusing with or even competing with Mason College. Although the Institute was cooperating with the School Board through its branch classes by 1873, eleven

33 Chapman 1955, 15-16, 17, 23, 24, 36, 39. Mappin was made a baronet in 1886. Odom 1926, 92. His central position in the file trade has already been noted.

34 Chapman 1955, 71, 78, 131, 173.

years later it had raised its sights and proudly claimed to be 'an Industrial College' offering all the social and intellectual benefits of 'University life'. It was able to 'satisfy any acknowledged want in the educational work of the town', was capable of 'developing and satisfying the higher intellectual needs of the town', and was 'in come degree realising for the many the best attributes of a college career'. However, when the City Council took over the Institute reluctantly acknowledged that 'the change, even if it had not been desirable, was inevitable'. By 1900 the Institute had appointed Granville Bantock as the Principal of its School of Music and its Annual Report for that year asserted that the new University of Birmingham would need a Faculty of Music which 'should find its home in the Institute'.³⁵ This evident passion for entry into the 'university stakes' was in marked contrast to the hiving off of 'contaminating' elements in Sheffield.

Although in both cities the medical schools were cautious about associating closely with the new colleges, academic cooperation began half a decade earlier in Birmingham than in Sheffield. Once installed, the medical men of both cities yielded to none in their ambition to obtain academic autonomy and degree-awarding powers. However, the alliances and strategies in which they participated were very different. In Sheffield they had by 1885 successfully bargained for a specially-privileged position in the appointment of their own staff.³⁶ In Birmingham they shared in a strong movement within the Science Faculty.

³⁵ BMIAR 1873; BMIAR 1884; BMIAR 1885; BMIAR 1888; BMIAR 1889; BMIAR 1890; BMIAR 1900.

³⁶ Vincent and Hinton 1947, 53; Chapman 1955, 120, 130.

Birmingham's University College was dominated by men such as the professors of Mathematics, Physics and Anatomy.³⁷ The Arts Faculty, including E A Sonnenschein (Classics), MacNeile Dixon (English) and J H Muirhead (Philosophy) was only weakly represented on the Charter subcommittee which planned the shape of the new University. Sonnenschein complained in 1898 that 'comparing Birmingham with other colleges ... in no other place was so much as twice the ~~spent on Science than was~~ amount/spent on Arts'. Whereas Birmingham had only four arts professors to seven science professors equivalent ratios were 13:9 in Edinburgh, 8:8 in Glasgow, 8:9 in Manchester, 8:6 in Liverpool and 52:34 in Leipzig. The Arts Faculty redressed the balance a little through appeals to Chamberlain. Nevertheless, the latter continued to insist that the university would give 'exceptional' attention ... to the teaching of Science in connection with its application to our local industries and manufactures'. The new site at Edgbaston was dominated by buildings equipped for the study of engineering, mining and metallurgy. It was Oliver Lodge's impression during the 1900 that 'the arts professors were only admitted on suffrance' in Birmingham University.³⁸

Apart from a few local men such as the industrialist Sir George Kenrick and the lawyer C G Beale, 'a graduate of Cambridge ... (who) understood these things better than some of the others', the main allies of the Arts Faculty in Birmingham were the members of the Treasury Committee

37 Respectively R S Heath, J F Poynting and Bertram Windle.

38 Somerset 1934, 9-10; Vincent and Hinton 1947, 30, 34, 82; Burstall and Burton 1930, 33; Sanderson 1972, 104.

responsible for distributing government grants to the University colleges, a body whose successor was the University Grants Committee. The Treasury Committee strongly pressed the claims of arts subjects. In view of the preceding analysis it is not surprising to find that one of the two leading figures in the campaign which led to this committee being established in 1889 was William Hicks, Principal of Firth College. The tradition of appealing for external help and guidance, already expressed by Sheffield's eager participation in the University Extension Movement, was thus continued.³⁹

Towards an explanation

It is not the intention to follow all the twists and turns of the politics and management of education in the late nineteenth century. The following generalisations may be made which summarise, and slightly extend, the above remarks. During the period of intensive building of elementary schools during the 1870s, the Sheffield School Board was united, businesslike, determined and secretive while the Birmingham School Board's highly-publicised divisions were the stuff of popular politics. It may be added that during its subsequent career the Birmingham Board acquired a reputation for high spending on its buildings and staff while, as R W Dale delicately expressed it, the Sheffield Board was 'pointed to in many parts of the country as an example of extremely economical expenditure'. In the 1930s it was recalled that the 'School Board had been a very economical body' which under-

³⁹ op cit, 104-5; Vincent and Hinton 1947, 37; Chapman 1955, Ch 3, esp 48, 51.

paid its schoolteachers .⁴⁰ As Vardy's remarks to the Bryce Commission suggest, by the mid-1890s a much higher degree of consensus had been achieved amongst educationists and politicians in Birmingham. This was shown, for example, in the widespread support for the opening of a Municipal Technical School by the Technical Schools Committee which would complement the work of the higher grade schools on the one hand and Mason College on the other. In effect, while the School Board trained the artisans, the Technical Schools Committee would educate their supervisors.⁴¹

Despite the promising start of the 1870s by the 1890s Sheffield had a disorganised array of educational institutions, many of them operating on a shoestring and often directly competing with each other. By their side, the Birmingham schools and colleges were a model of integration offering a systematically-organised pattern of routes leading to different occupational levels. Within this system, literary education leading to university entrance and entry into the higher reaches of the professions held pride of place. It is noteworthy that Vardy and MacCarthy of the King Edward Schools played a major part in developing a local system of teacher training for the elementary

40 PP 1887, XXIX Cross Commission, Second Report, Evidence, 728 (q 34951); 'Current Topics', Some Random Recollections: Forty Years of Education in Sheffield, 1938, 1-25 (newspaper cuttings relating to Sheffield, Vol 44, Sheffield Local History Collection).

41 BDG 12.3.1897; Gammage 1972, 239-52.

schools.⁴² The values of the High School permeated the Birmingham schools, making more 'tolerable' to its supporters the great extension of advanced technical education. No such counter-balancing process occurred within the advanced schools developed by the Sheffield Board. At the higher level, paradoxically enough, the pattern was reversed. The Arts Faculty remained weak compared to the Science Faculty in Mason College but in Sheffield it was the Technical School which had a marginal existence on the fringes of Firth College. When the latter institution first advertised its courses, mathematics and classics were prominently displayed (perhaps in unconscious mimicry of the traditional Cambridge curriculum) followed by ancient and modern history. Physics and chemistry were there as well, although the latter was hived off into the Technical School as were subsequent developments in metallurgy and engineering. When the new government grant became available in 1889 one of the first items on the shopping list of William Hicks was a Professor of English Literature.⁴³

42 This statement is based on a survey of the annual reports of the Birmingham Higher Education Society and the Birmingham Teachers' Association. MacCarthy was an honorary secretary of the former and Vardy a founder of the latter. The role of Vardy is mentioned in J H Smith 1903. Sonnenschein was also active in this field. See, for example, Birmingham Teachers' Association, Fifteenth Annual Report, 1889. The genteel hegemony of Vardy and MacCarthy no doubt provoked the candidature of W Ansell, representing elementary school teachers, for the School Board in 1894. Presumably he drew the 'plumped' votes of his colleagues. He came top of the poll. BDP 13.11.1894; BDP 14.11.1894; BDP 19.11.1894. See also D Smith 1976, 72-3.

43 Chapman 1955, 27, 81, 170 ff, 199, 207 ff, 229 ff, Ch 19.

Three reasons can be suggested for this pattern of curricular emphases. The first refers to the long-standing connection between the Foundation schools and the professional and mercantile members of Birmingham society. A comparison of census data in 1851 and 1891 gives an indication of changes in the relative importance of these occupations in the two cities.⁴⁴

TABLE 24: Professional, mercantile and related occupations: Birmingham and Sheffield 1851, 1891.

Number employed per thousand population at Birmingham and Sheffield in 1851 and 1891

	1851	1891
1 Professional, literary, educational, scientific, artistic occupations		
Birmingham	23.2	28.8
Sheffield	12.8	23.2
2 Mercantile occupations		
Birmingham	9.1	25.5
Sheffield	6.3	19.2

Sources: 1851 Census, 1891 Census

⁴⁴ The two categories in Table 24 are constituted as follows: with respect to 1891, 1 = 'Professional Occupations (with immediate subordinates)', 1-8 (excluding 'students') plus 'Books, Prints and Maps', 1-2 plus 'Houses, Furniture and Decorations', 3. 2 = 'Commercial Occupations', 1-3. PP 1893-4, CVI et seq Census, England and Wales (henceforth 1891 Census), Vol 3, Table 7. The categories for 1851 are constituted as in Table 2 (Chapter Two). Note that 'scientific persons' are included in category 3 of Table 2 within 'professional, literary, artistic'. While the boundaries of the categories in Table 24 are unlikely to be strictly comparable between 1851 and 1891 they are comparable between the two cities at each date. The figures provide a rough indication of variations between Birmingham and Sheffield with respect to the rate and degree of expansion in the broadly-defined occupational areas identified.

The rate of increase in both categories was more pronounced in Sheffield than Birmingham although both groups remained proportionately larger (and much larger in absolute terms) in the latter city.⁴⁵ The Foundation was peddling prestigious wares in a well-established and expanding market. Its reputation was bolstered by the fact that at the opening of the twentieth century the Mayor and four of the city's parliamentary members had attended schools belonging to the Foundation as well as fifteen of the forty-nine gentry and magistrates listed in Pike's Contemporary Biographies.⁴⁶ At the lower end their work was supplemented by the Birmingham and Midland Institute which registered sixty-one students for a new book-keeping class in 1876 and from 1885 was teaching commercial French as a service to what the instructor called Birmingham's 'army of commercial workers'.⁴⁷

By contrast, the equivalent schools in Sheffield had a dismal reputation. It is likely that a substantial proportion of the members of professional and allied occupations who were active in Sheffield by the 1890s were

45 Between 1851 and 1891 both cities experienced approximately the same degree of proportional population growth.

46 Three of the eight aldermen listed and a third of the eighteen councillors included in that volume were also Foundation alumni. Pike nd. These figures include ex-pupils of the Edgbaston Proprietary School which merged with the Foundation in 1884. Shewell 1951, 198-200.

47 BMIAR 1876; BMIAR 1885.

either upwardly mobile or immigrants to the city in view of their rate of increase over the preceding decades. Lacking sentimental family attachments to the Sheffield secondary schools up on the hill such people evidently preferred not to use the facilities on offer. The following exchange during evidence to the Bryce Commissioners by J F Moss, the secretary of the School Board, suggests that they went either 'up market' and patronised boarding schools or 'down market' to the benefit of the board schools:

What becomes of the boys of the middle and wealthier classes in Sheffield who do not go to the grammar school or to the public and other boarding schools at a distance? - Of course only a small proportion can be received in the grammar school, and some of our city councillors and others have sent their boys to the central higher school⁴⁸

Although the King Edward VI Foundation's capacity to serve a thriving Birmingham clientele bolstered up literary or 'arts' studies at the level of secondary education the natural continuation for those students from professional families who wished to pursue the highest prizes was not entry to Mason College but to Oxford and Cambridge which were by the 1890s at the height of their renewed prestige. A provincial degree would mean less and lead to less. As a consequence, Mason College was in thrall to the promoters of academic specialisms which could demonstrate their relevance to the business life of the city. This consideration introduces the second suggested reason for the differences between the curricular tendencies in Birmingham and Sheffield: the orientations towards the local colleges of the cities' businessmen.

48 Bryce, Vol 3, 89 (q 6956).

In 1884 Charles Lapworth claimed that the male population of Mason College was predominantly drawn from the sons of local manufacturers. A survey of all entrants in 1893 demonstrates the tendency to recruit from industrial and commercial families, especially from the higher reaches of the middle classes. Stanley Baldwin and Neville Chamberlain both studied at the College. The profits generated by Birmingham business in the late 1890s made a large contribution towards the endowment of some half-a-million pounds which Chamberlain succeeded in raising for the University.⁴⁹ However, the support of business was not spontaneously given, but had to be actively sought by the University. Thus, although the creation of a Faculty of Commerce (a great rarity amongst universities and university colleges in the late 1890s) was initially suggested by the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce, its first head, Professor William Ashley, was confronted with much local scepticism. He deliberately cultivated close relations with Birmingham businessmen. For example, he drew upon the advice of the Birmingham and Midland Society of Chartered Accountants when devising a pioneering course in accountancy. By the early twentieth century he was providing some firms with 'almost tailor-made mixes of economics and technology for their needs; for example, metallurgy and commerce for the son of a Wolverhampton brewer'. A special course devised for the jewellery trade, combining trade work with commercial training, marked a point of contact between this outward-looking movement of the academics and another movement

49 Lapworth 1884, 18; Burstall and Burton 1930, 57; Sanderson 1972, 69-70, 98-99.

developing within businesses which had become very sensitive to foreign competition during the years of depression in the late 1870s and mid 1880s.⁵⁰

A specialised school for jewellers was established in 1888 to improve standards of workmanship in the almost complete absence of any apprenticeship schemes. Similar ambitions lay behind the support of the Birmingham Trades Council for the higher grade schools. In the brass trade, employers such as R H Best and trade unionists such as W J Davis supported the establishment of trade continuation schools.⁵¹ It is important not to exaggerate the willingness of the majority of employers and workers to work towards these ends but three structural aspects of Birmingham's industry which distinguish it from industry in Sheffield may have stimulated interest. They are the long-standing tradition of innovation in most sectors of business, the weakness of apprenticeship (which would have provided an alternative pattern of training), and the existence of a large number of businesses of middling size which would jointly benefit from 'external' agencies providing services in the spheres of manpower training and research.⁵²

⁵⁰ op cit, 195-6;

⁵¹ Gammage 1978, 28; BDP 10.2.1888 cit Gammage 1972, 242; R D Best 1940, Ch 6; Dalley 1914, 377-85.

⁵² For example, in 1900 Birmingham's brewers established a school of malting and brewing at the university. Sanderson 1972, 85.

In Sheffield, in spite of the establishment of some relatively large firms in the light trades by the 1890s, 'the small firm and "outwork" system survived and were still, in many ways, typical for the industry'.⁵³ Despite the radical weakening of their position in the aftermath of the confrontations which occurred in the 1860s, the trade societies clung to old attitudes. 'In the early nineties, of 40 societies examined, 32 limited apprentices to members' sons only, and only two ... would permit an apprenticeship of less than seven years. Most societies had further numerical restrictions ... Virtually every one of these rules was ignored'. Nevertheless, as late as 1905 the Britannia-metal smiths were attempting to restrict the teaching of their trades in the city's schools as being detrimental to their apprenticeship regulations. By contrast, in the heavy trade, firms which were already large by the 1870s grew much larger through expansion and amalgamation. Brown's and Firths amalgamated in 1903. Jessops became the world's largest crucible - steel producers in the early twentieth century. In the decade before 1914 at least eight of the firms in this sector were employing over 2,000 workers with a further six firms employing over a thousand people. The majority of steel workers were outside unions before the 1890s.⁵⁴

The very large steel firms, such as Vickers who had over sixty acres of land in use in the early 1900s, devoted a substantial part of their budgets to research and development. Through their adoption of the Siemens regenerative

⁵³ Pollard 1959, 206.

⁵⁴ op cit, 135-7, 171, 212, 226.

furnace and entry into ordnance work Vickers had responded to the challenge of trade depression in the late 1870s and 1880s by virtually creating 'a new business'. By the early 1900s they were supporting a design staff of 300-400 people. Such firms were less interested in boosting the prestige of civic educational institutions than exploiting the talents of particular individuals doing relevant work. J O Arnold, head of the Technical School from 1889, provided a number of steel firms with the results of his metallurgical researches. Commercial rivalries imposed a demand for secrecy which, as an academic, he found irksome. In his relations with local businessmen he had a much lower degree of freedom and initiative than Ashley at Birmingham. By 1909 Arnold was complaining on behalf of the University of an 'attempt by a limited number of manufacturers to dictate to its professors'.⁵⁵

Sir Frederick Mappin, who was the Sheffield industrialist most completely devoted to the progress of the Technical School as an institution, had been a leading figure on the side of the manufacturers during the file strike of 1866. As the dominant personality in Sheffield's file trade, Mappin had a greater interest than many in the development of a system of training in engineering and metallurgy which would wrest control over the formation of the attitudes and practices of the skilled labour force away from the trade societies.⁵⁶ A similar strategy may be seen operating in the very rapid progress made by the Sheffield School Board

55 Scott 1962, 19, 48, PP 1886 XXI, Royal Commission on Depression of Trade, Second Report, 108 (q 3431); Trebilcock 1971, 4-5; Sanderson 1972, 88-9, 102-3; Sanderson 1978.

56 Mappin's character is suggested by the contemporary comment: '... in whatever he did, he was "boss"'. 'Big and little guns', South Yorkshire Notes 1899, 1.3, 215; cit J Brown 1975, 53.

in providing technical instruction. Evening science classes were started by the Board as early as 1874. The severity of the battle to make new industrial techniques acceptable to the local artisan population and its leaders is shown by the fact that as late as 1893 the Sheffield Federated Trades Council (successor body to the Association of Organised Trades) was demanding that 'machine-cut' files should be so labelled in recognition of their supposed inferiority. Many employers were equally resistant to advanced formal training. In 1883 it was stated that 'most of the best men that have been educated in the Sheffield school (of Art) have been taken up by other towns in consequence of not having received enough encouragement in the town'.⁵⁷ Breaking down the unions' residual resistance to new techniques and increased managerial control probably had a higher priority than providing future managers with university training. In 1904 a local steel manufacturer told the Sheffield Society of Engineers that

there was ... a feeling that a young man having an engineering or a science degree was an indication that too much time had been spent in theory for him to have the necessary workshop experience, and it might stand in the way of his securing the position he applied for.⁵⁸

These attitudes were deep-ingrained. Compare the following:

57 Pollard 1959, 115; Mendelson et al nd, 40; PP 1884, XXIX et seq, Second Report of Royal Commission on Technical Instruction (henceforth Samuelson), Vol 3, 555-6 (q 7727). Evidence of J B Mitchell-Withers.

58 Stainton 1924, 142.

... nobody believed in graduates. There was a grudging acknowledgement of their existence, but an outright rejection of the notion that they might be helpful ... I was taught nothing, not because I already knew enough, but because I was adjudged industrially ineducable.⁵⁹

The writer was a graduate trainee in a small Sheffield steel mill in the 1950s.

The third reason to be suggested for differences in curricular emphases between the two cities is of special relevance at the university college level. It is the much smaller capacity of Firth College, which lacked strong support from the local professional and business classes and which was much more dependent than Mason College on central government funding, to mount any effective resistance to metropolitan definitions of the character of higher education. This part of the argument opens up for consideration the relationships between, on the one hand, the municipal and provincial social networks to which the businessmen, professionals and administrators of Sheffield and Birmingham respectively belonged and, on the other hand, the social configurations focused upon London, Oxford, Cambridge and the leading public schools. The development of the relationships just indicated was conditioned by and in turn conditioned the transformations which occurred in the class structures of Birmingham and Sheffield during the last third of the nineteenth century and the years leading up to the First World War. An exploration of some aspects of the variations between the two cities in these respects may help to account in some degree for differences between them not only in their educational arrangements but also in their local patterns of industrial relations and public administration.

Chapter Ten

COALESCENCE, CONFLICT AND COMPROMISE

Industry, Education and Local Government in Birmingham
and Sheffield 1870-1914

In both Birmingham and Sheffield a coalescence between the leaderships of the old rurally-oriented order and urban industrial society was well under way by the end of the century. However, this process occurred half a generation earlier in South Yorkshire than in the West Midlands. Furthermore, in Sheffield it was focused upon regional and national social networks while in Birmingham it occurred at the municipal level of integration. Finally, in Birmingham this process of osmosis was complemented by a subtle mingling of old and new values and practices in key institutional orders, facilitating a complex inter-meshing of social groups within the middle, lower-middle and working classes in that city. By contrast, the growing intimacy between leading Sheffield industrialists and the occupants of country houses and metropolitan corridors of power was accompanied by a rigidification and further institutionalisation of the social barriers between classes and status groups within Sheffield itself. In the longer term the refusal of the masters of Sheffield's heavy industry to share authority in the workplace left them open to a drastic and direct industrial challenge during the First World War. Indeed, representatives of their employees sought, with eventual success, to achieve total control in the sphere of local government. By contrast, in Birmingham education, industry and local government were managed in a way which fostered compromise between traditional and modern practices

and dispersed conflict between social classes. In Sheffield these three institutional orders were arenas of bitter conflict between the advocates of old and new ways and their management perpetuated class hostilities.

This argument will be developed initially through an analysis of the part played by Birmingham Liberalism in mediating the transition between the old order and the new in that city. The political strategies adopted by Chamberlain in the 1870s and 1880s will be compared with those of Ironside thirty years previously. Subsequently, the part played by municipal institutions and the white-collar occupations in processes of class formation in the two cities will be briefly considered. Finally, the analysis of education carried out in the last chapter will be broadened out to include more detailed examination of the processes through which distinctive political and industrial institutions took shape. The emphasis throughout will be upon the joint contribution of the three institutional orders to the development of class structures and, equally important, their common subjection to constraints and pressures inherent in class structures.

Joseph Chamberlain and Birmingham Liberalism

Birmingham in the late nineteenth century is stamped with the name of Joseph Chamberlain.¹ He was the city's mayor between 1873 and 1876 and its leading parliamentary representative from 1876. He dominated Liberal counsels in Birmingham and much of the surrounding area through the

1 On Joseph Chamberlain see Garvin and Amery 1934-69; Gulley 1926; Hurst 1962; P Fraser 1966; Dolman 1895; Browne 1974; Howard 1950.

National Liberal Federation (founded as the National Education League's successor in 1877) and the 'caucus' system of ward representation.² Following the split in the Liberal Party over Home Rule in 1886 which separated him from Gladstone, Chamberlain was the undisputed boss of the Liberal Unionists in the West Midlands.³ His monocle, swept-back hair and bristling eyebrows were the stock-in-trade of local and national political cartoonists. As Mayor, Chamberlain's municipalisation of the local gas companies was a brilliant financial success drawing heavily upon his experience as a businessman used to the accounting side of large-scale enterprises. At a stroke he provided the town with a valuable source of income apart from the rates. This success, and the favourable trade conditions of the period, prepared local opinion for the takeover of the waterworks company which followed. Finally, the Artizans' and Labourers' Dwellings Act of 1875 gave Chamberlain the opportunity to push through a massive improvement scheme in the city centre. The slums around Bull Street and New Street were swept away and a start was made on laying out Corporation Street, planned on the pattern of a grand Parisian boulevard.⁴

In the 1870s and 1880s Chamberlain gave municipal corporations the importance and respectability, almost the glamour, which Ironside had tried to bestow upon vestry

2 Watson 1907; Herrick 1945; McGill 1962; Tholfsen 1959; Chamberlain 1878.

3 For a valuable discussion see Hurst 1962.

4 Briggs 1952, 19, 69-80.

meetings three decades previously. Chamberlain declared in 1874

I am inclined to increase the duties and responsibilities of the local authority, in whom I have myself so great a confidence, and I will do everything in my power to constitute these local authorities real local Parliaments, supreme in their special jurisdiction.⁵

By 'local authority' Chamberlain meant town council.

Substitute 'ward-mote' for 'town council' and the speaker could easily be Isaac Ironside. Both men were flamboyant radicals who established novel organisations in an attempt to capture political strongholds and put new ideas into practice. Their political methods drew similar criticisms. In 1853 the editor of the Sheffield Independent wrote of Ironside's Democratic Party

It has aimed to set up a dictatorship, armed with a set of organised cliques called 'central democratic associations' and 'ward motes'; it has endeavoured to engross all local offices in the hands of subservient nominees of the moving power.⁶

Over thirty years later, The Dart carried the following comment on a recent election in the Birmingham 'caucus' which was made up of Liberal representatives from the various Birmingham wards:

To be faultlessly exact it ought to be said that a few gentlemen met in the various wards and appointed themselves, and a number of others not present, to form the 'Caucus' for the year. Probably not more than two per centum of the Electors of Birmingham took any part whatsoever in the business. Yet this fraction of the public will coolly take upon itself to dictate a policy to the other ninety-eight per cent of the voters, and will consider that man guilty of a sort of high treason who shall dare to question its authority. The members of the Town Council, the members and the policy of the School Board, and

5 cit Hennock 1973, 120

6 SI 9.4.1853.

practically, the whole Government of the town will be fixed for us by this august body of two per cent, not two per cent of the population, bear in mind, but of the registered voters.⁷

The Sheffield Independent was helping to bury a failed enterprise. The Dart was protesting about the behaviour of a municipal elite which had wielded power effectively for well over a decade. Ironside's political venture was directed at the level of the neighbourhood during a period when the increasing density and interdependence of urban industrial life was throwing up problems which could only be tackled effectively at a higher level of integration. Chamberlain, however, could point to the progress already made towards expanding the functions of the municipal authority in other towns such as Manchester.⁸ By comparison, Birmingham was backward in the early 1870s. Birmingham's Liberals also benefited from the strong tradition of civic responsibility, albeit focused upon voluntary associations, which had become well-established in the middle decades of the century, for example in the educational sphere.

Birmingham made Chamberlain at least as much as Chamberlain made Birmingham. The city provided a secure base from which the politician could launch his national campaigns and it proved to be a safe retreat even in 1886. As member for Sheffield (a distinction which Chamberlain himself had unsuccessfully sought in 1874) A J Mundella had far less natural sympathy with his constituents and had to rely heavily upon Robert Leader to keep him in touch with local feeling.⁹ Mundella found little scope within Sheffield for his own reforming zeal. His passion for

7 Dart, 19.3.1886. Italics in original.

8 Briggs 1952, 70.

9 Higginbotham 1941, 68-9, 118-9.

education, more practical and sustained than that of Chamberlain, found its sphere of exercise at the national level, in the Education Department at Whitehall.¹⁰

Chamberlain and Ironside both attempted to use a political base at one level of integration as a launching pad from which to secure reforms at a higher level. As has been seen, Ironside failed to link up with parallel movements in the religious and industrial spheres and was unable to adapt his political strategy to the constraints and opportunities of the municipal sphere.¹¹ By contrast, Chamberlain benefited from a tradition of municipal politics well-established in Birmingham by the 1870s, in which every subtle nuance could be understood and exploited within a densely-textured network of family, business and religious ties. In this respect he followed in the wake of G F Muntz and Charles Geach. The latter, who had been Mayor in 1847, was an international banker who had greatly improved the Town Council's financial management and was very active in movements such as the Anti-Corn Law League.¹² Within Birmingham Geach's influence was far-reaching and exercised with ease. 'He had singularly agreeable manners. His grasp of the hand was firm and cordial ... In his appearance there was evidence of power and influence that rendered any assumption superfluous'; the accomplished politician, in fact. However, as a member of parliament for nearby Coventry, Geach 'was not a fluent speaker, indeed he was

10 Armytage 1948b.

11 See Chapters Three and Four.

12 Langford 1873, Vol 1, 424.

hesitating, and sometimes his sentences were much involved'. He only spoke upon those financial topics with which he was perfectly familiar. Muntz, whose impressive command of a Birmingham audience has been noticed, was also singularly awkward amongst the gentlemen at Westminster.¹³ Chamberlain had no such problems. Self-confident and business-like, he was perfectly happy moving from the details of the Land Clauses Act to the first principles of political philosophy and back again to some other specific point of practice. Thus, for example, as President of the Board of Trade giving evidence to the Royal Commission on the Housing of the Working Classes in 1884, he paused in the midst of a commanding lecture on the Artizans' Dwellings Act to inform Lord Salisbury that 'everything in the shape of natural or artificial monopoly should if possible be undertaken by the community'. When his questioner rather dolefully suggested that expenditure by public bodies was likely to be 'unduly pressed by the influence of experts and ... permanent officers' Chamberlain was quick to claim that this was less likely in local government than in Whitehall: 'The control of public opinion and of public interest is very much more direct in the one case than in the other'. His Lordship quickly retreated into the details of compulsory purchase with Chamberlain in hot pursuit.¹⁴

As he moved from the municipal level to the national level and subsequently in 1895 to the international level

13 Edwards 1877, 81, 130.

14 PP 1884-5, XXXI, Royal Commission on Housing of Working Classes (henceforth Housing WC), Vol 2, 454 (qq 12,489-12,493).

as Colonial Secretary in Salisbury's Conservative government, Chamberlain was capable of adapting the rhetoric of Birmingham politics to the challenge of mobilising influence within successively more complex structures. By 1885 he was advocating the extension throughout Britain, including its rural areas, of a system of popularly-elected local authorities with powers of compulsory purchase, to be capped by a central board, also democratically-elected. Eighteen years later he was visualising the Empire as 'a voluntary organisation based on community of interests and community of sacrifices, to which all should bring their contribution to the common good'. The Empire was 'so wide, its products are so various; its climates so different that there is absolutely nothing which is necessary to our existence, hardly anything which is desirable as a luxury which cannot be produced within the boundaries of the Empire itself'.¹⁵ Apart from the reference to the climate, he could have been talking about Birmingham.

There is a double irony in the career of Birmingham Liberalism during this period. The first is that despite the association of Chamberlain's name with the implementation of 'modern' techniques in public administration and political organisation the well of popular feeling upon which he drew was essentially pre-industrial. Although an American visitor, impressed with the application of business methods to municipal affairs, labelled Birmingham 'the best-governed city in the world' and in spite of the fact that Chamberlain's

15 Howard 1950, esp 484-5; Garvin and Amery 1934-1969, Vol 5, 45, 148; Briggs 1952, 87.

political machine was dubbed the 'caucus' in the style of big-city Democratic politics in the United States, the driving animus of Birmingham Liberalism was very English and very traditional.¹⁶ It was fed by the long-standing hostility of small traders and artisans, particularly the Nonconformist element, to county society, the aristocracy and the Church of England. Evidence for this can be found in the pages of a book published by a Yardley solicitor in 1882, justifying the work of the National Education League.¹⁷

According to Francis Adams, the secretary of the League, the fundamental division in English society was between supporters of an aristocratic and Anglican tyranny based in the counties and at the metropolis and the advocates of local public bodies enacting the freely-expressed will of the community. The conflict between the Education Unions of Birmingham and Manchester and the National Education League was described in such terms:

The new programmes (of the two Unions) were put forth under the sanction of a long array of Archbishops, and Bishops, Dukes, Earls and Tory Members of Parliament. While the League could hardly boast a Coronet, the 'Unions' had very little else to boast of. Their lists were wholly uncontaminated by any association with popular institutions or their representatives. They were Conservative organisations, as much as the League was a Liberal and Democratic organisation.¹⁸

Later he writes,

Instead of relying on sectarian jealousy and rivalry, on denominational patronage and private charity, the members of the League appealed to public spirit, to local Government, and National resources, and to the cooperation of the parents and people ...¹⁹

Adams proudly points out the League's debt to the struggles

¹⁶ Ralph 1890.

¹⁷ Adams 1882.

¹⁸ op cit, 207-8.

¹⁹ op cit, 324.

of the Dissenters since Reformation times:

They had a noble history, which gave them a title to be heard as a part of the people, on questions affecting welfare, which it would have been ignominious to surrender. They had by immense sacrifice, exertion, and courage, defeated the design of the ecclesiastical leaders of the Reformation, that our Church government should be made to embrace the whole body of the people. From a despised and persecuted minority they had grown into a power. They had been especially the missionaries of religious and political instruction to the poor, and had defended the rights of minorities. They had obtained a paramount influence over the middle classes, and had shaken to its foundation the traditional authority which the church claimed over the lower orders.²⁰

In Adam's view, the League's campaign belonged to the most recent phase of a process of development, which had already lasted for centuries, whereby public opinion and social institutions were to a steadily increasing extent embodying the highest moral principles. Nonconformity was part of this movement although 'in its entirety and comprehensive character it was neither wholly religious nor philanthropic. It was social, industrial and political and was in fact the forecoming of the great wave of advancement which later times have witnessed'.²¹

In the first chapter of Adams's book there are eleven references to Herbert Spencer's Descriptive Sociology.²²

It will be recalled that Spencer came from a petty-bourgeois

20 op cit, 104.

21 op cit, 41.

22 Spencer was officially connected with the Birmingham Natural History and Microscopical Society when it established a Sociological section in 1883. His published work was indexed by an Edgbaston devotee, F Howard Collins. Another follower was W R Hughes, Birmingham's City Treasurer from 1867 to 1898. Duncan 1911, 231; Briggs 1952, 125.

Nonconformist background. Adams accepts the sociologist's view, most clearly set out in Social Statics, that the course of social change tends to be away from a state of internecine strife and towards one of heterogenous interdependence amongst spontaneously cooperating individuals. Altruism would increasingly be expressed in social institutions.²³ Adams, however, moved beyond Spencer and many Dissenters in welcoming the part played by the state, especially popular local government, in providing services such as elementary education for the people.²⁴

Birmingham Liberalism in the 1870s and 1880s may be seen in the historical context of the earlier part of the nineteenth century when advocates of laissez-faire, utilitarianism and radical Dissent entered into a practical alliance with each other, leaving a number of basic principles and political implications unresolved. They united on the basis of their common hostility to an 'obstructive' or 'tyrannical' government vested in aristocratic, clerical and Tory interests at every level from parliament to the parish vestry. When the political significance of collective organisations (such as the trade unions) and public bureaucracies increased, the practical alliance which had been established underwent a severe crisis with respect to philosophy and strategy. Different solutions were sought by different men. Edward Miall for example, devoted himself to the Liberationist cause. Herbert Spencer furnished laissez-faire with a new intellectual framework. John Stuart Mill began to see the great virtues

²³ Spencer 1850.

²⁴ D Smith 1977a, 25. The following paragraph is largely based upon this article.

of 'collectivism' and even 'socialism'. The League's secretary expressed another view, one which drew upon the diverging orientations of militant Nonconformity, statism and Spencerian analysis, refocusing them upon the ideal of popular Liberal local government. Despite the mutual antipathy of Spencer and the leader of Birmingham's Liberals, the influence of this intellectual synthesis is clear in the political programmes of Chamberlain.²⁵

In practice, in Birmingham the great Liberal mission of the 1870s and 1880s was to displace the old Anglican and Tory establishment from its institutional strongholds or to outflank them by expanding the Town Council's functions at the expense of 'denominational patronage and private charity'. By 1878 there was only one Conservative member of the Council. Four years later Satchell Hopkins, a local Conservative leader, claimed that none of his party could win admittance to the Board of Guardians and that the 'caucus' had taken control of the Board of Governors of the King Edward VI Foundation and the Council of the Birmingham and Midland Institute.²⁶

25 Arnold's neglect of Spencer in Culture and Anarchy (in favour of Mill and Miall, both of whom suffer attack) had been a precedent followed by recent critical surveys of nineteenth century literature. Raymond Williams mentions Spencer only once in Culture and Society. Terry Eagleton ignores him in Criticism and Ideology. Considering the concern of both Williams and Eagleton with the use of the 'organic analogy' and the spirit of laissez-faire their neglect of a writer who combines both is interesting. The social critique of Spencer and Adams exemplifies the richness of the Dissenting tradition and its tendency to emphasis divisions between the old landed aristocracy and the towns rather than differences between masters and men within the city. R Williams 1963, 166; Eagleton 1976, 102-3, 106; D Smith 1977b, 20-1, 31-2; Vincent 1972, 183-94; G L Williams 1976; Richter 1966; Hamburger 1965; B Webb 1926, 123.

26 Green 1973, 88; Briggs 1952, 170.

There is a second, and deeper, irony in the progress of Birmingham Liberalism under the leadership of Chamberlain. A party with an anti-aristocratic ideology, feeding on the prejudices of the Nonconformist petty bourgeoisie and with the proclaimed objective of promoting the welfare of the general population was led, by a politician whose fortune had been made in big business, into close alliance with the party of Anglicanism and the landed interest. Furthermore, according to an analysis of voting trends in the late 1870s and early 1880s the decisive political shift occurred at a time when working-class hostility to the 'caucus' had reached a level which threatened to break the Liberal Party's monopoly of parliamentary seats in Birmingham.²⁷ By the mid 1870s the ruling Liberals were adopting the same smug and superior attitude towards their Conservative opponents that the Foundation's governors, when they were a 'Tory trust' had taken towards the Town Council. The editor of the Birmingham Daily Mail had declared in 1874

The Conservative element is quite out of place in municipal matters. What is it that the 'Conservative Party' are going to conserve? Is it the mud, or the smallpox ...²⁸

By the end of that decade, however, the Conservatives were winning an increased proportion of votes at municipal elections in the poorest working-class areas near the city centre and also in the richest middle-class areas in the business centre and at Edgbaston. The Liberal Party's management of municipal institutions stimulated this protest from wealthier

²⁷ Green 1973, 89.

²⁸ Birmingham Daily Mail (henceforth BDM) 30.10.1874 cit Green 1973, 89.

ratepayers, disgusted with the cost of the Improvement Scheme which had been stigmatised as a 'bubble company', and from members of working-class communities who had seen their houses being torn down to make way for law courts. Despite plans to build new houses for the displaced families, few were constructed by the Council. In fact, many of the old residents 'followed the factories to other parts' so increasing the tendency towards increased residential segregation by class. The Council was also attacked as a bad employer which underpaid its workers.²⁹

By the late 1880s at least four political organisations were active in municipal politics: Liberal Unionists, Conservatives, Gladstonian Liberals and the Social Democratic Federation. Working-class origins and antipathy to Chamberlain were increasingly valuable assets for candidates, particularly in less well-off districts such as Bordesley. However, the SDF, which represented the nascent political wing of the Labour movement, failed to reap a rich harvest of votes. Instead, an increasingly sophisticated Conservative organisation which was prepared, unlike Chamberlain's party, to put up candidates with artisan and petty bourgeois backgrounds won support through skilful populist propaganda.³⁰

29 Housing W C, Vol 2, 447 (12,398); Green 1973, 91, 93-4. For an assessment of the relationship between Birmingham's sanitary conditions and variables connected with mortality in the period 1870-1910 see Woods 1978. Woods argues that 'the degree of association between sanitary conditions and mortality variables is lower than one might expect if in fact an improvement in the former were capable of influencing the latter to a very marked degree'. op cit, 56.

30 Green 1973, 95. The development of Birmingham Conservatism can be traced through the speeches and reminiscences of J B Stone who became MP for East Birmingham in 1895. See Biograph and Review 1880, 3, 65ff; Stone 1880; Stone 1904; Levy 1909.

The better off working men in the outlying parts of the city, less badly hit by unemployment during the late 1870s and 1880s, retained their loyalty to Gladstonian Liberalism. In 1889 the Gladstonian Sir Walter Foster was confident of electoral support in the eastern, and possibly the northern suburbs:

'The working classes here have all the pluck'.³¹

By the mid 1890s, Chamberlain had entered a Cabinet headed by the leader of the Conservative party. In Birmingham the Conservative and Liberal Unionist parties were slowly but steadily moving towards closer cooperation. By 1900 the Bishop of Coventry had become chairman of the Birmingham School Board. Five years later, Satchell Hopkins' hopes for the creation of a Bishopric of Birmingham became a reality.³² These changes were expressions of a major realignment within the city's bourgeoisie and its relationship to the local labouring population. During the last two decades of the century, business and professional establishments whose predecessors had been radically divided in the 1830s and 1840s, followed by a softening of animosities during the 1850s and early 1860s and a further period of serious division from the late 1860s to the 1880s, began to knit together socially, politically and economically.

One index of gradual coalescence in the realm of opinion is provided by the reports and editorials of the Birmingham Daily Post and the Birmingham Daily Gazette. The Post was edited by J T Bunce, a close political colleague of Chamberlain, between 1862 and 1898.³³ The ^{Conservative} Gazette, which

³¹ Hurst 1962, 53. See also op cit, 23-4.

³² op cit, 63.

³³ On Bunce see Edg 1892, 12, 34-38; Edg 1899, 19, 129.

in 1876 was warning that the spread of elementary education would tend to lead to an increase in white-collar crime, was by the late 1890s campaigning hard alongside the Post in favour of Chamberlain's efforts to obtain a university charter for Birmingham. This is just one instance of the trend towards consensus between the 1870s and 1890s.³⁴

Aspects of class formation: introductory comments

By the end of the century Birmingham and Sheffield were both participating in the gravitation of all forms of wealth in town and countryside into the Conservative Party. The movement had become strong in Birmingham about two decades later than in Sheffield. Crucially, the process of social and political fusion was focused at the level of the municipality in Birmingham whereas in Sheffield the national level was strategic. It is impossible to isolate this difference between the two cities from three other differences between them: the relative lateness of the development of large-scale heavy industry in Birmingham (compared to Sheffield); the great increase in the complexity and prestige of civic institutions since mid-century in Birmingham (compared to Sheffield)³⁵; and the long tradition and influential presence of professional, mercantile and white-collar occupations in Birmingham (compared to Sheffield).³⁶ These dissimilarities

³⁴ Gammage 1972, 64-89, 173, 271.

³⁵ In this instance the term 'civic' refers initially to institutions such as the King Edward VI Foundation, Queen's College and the Birmingham and Midland Institute which acquired great prestige in the 1850s and which in that decade were closely identified with the town as a whole (see Chapters Six and Seven). Subsequently, the Town Council was deliberately built up as the centre of civic life.

³⁶ See Table 24.

are also closely associated with differences between the two cities in the extent to which the growth of large-scale heavy industry was associated with tendencies towards class division. The above points will now be expanded.

The use of joint-stock methods of finance, which was associated with the growth of very large steel firms in Sheffield during the 1860s, was a comparative rarity in Birmingham before 1880. However, during the last two decades of the century this practice became more common as Birmingham's industry underwent a period of considerable innovation and diversification, continuing up to the First World War. Electrical engineering and chemicals were leading sectors. The Austin Motor Company, still in its infancy, employed 700 people by 1907. By 1914 the General Electric Company at Witton had 2,000 on the payroll, Dunlop Rubber had engaged 4,000 hands and Cadbury's at Bournville were employing 6,000 people. Such firms were at the head of a movement which involved the exploitation of new materials and techniques and the steady replacement of skilled labour by machine minders. This movement was not new in Birmingham's industry but the scale on which it was occurring within the city was unprecedented.³⁷

As has been seen, Birmingham's professional and lower middle-class inhabitants were integrated through a host of literary, recreational and educational enterprises into a thriving municipal culture. By contrast, Sheffield's lower middle class citizens are likely to have experienced a higher degree of anomie within a city which had no thriving

37 VCH, 127, 150-3, 167, 203-4.

or well-defined civic life.³⁸ Apart from differences in the structural position of the white-collar occupational groups within the two cities, the greater relative and absolute size of this contingent in Birmingham arguably had two effects: it strengthened the body of opinion which recognised the importance of formal education as a means of social advancement, an orientation which tended to stress individual effort as opposed to the exercise of collective strength; and the presence of such people within businesses and in distinct residential districts is likely to have weakened the consciousness of a starkly dichotomous class structure fostered by workplace experiences in large-scale industrial enterprises.

The social tendencies indicated above were strengthened by the strong identification of many of Birmingham's leading employers and their close associates with the city to which their workpeople belonged.³⁹ This contrasts sharply

38 J P Gledstone's pamphlet, discussed in Chapter Eight, has some remarkable Durkheimian overtones. On anomie see Durkheim 1970, 241-76, 288-9.

39 In a recent article G M Norris suggests that 'paternalist capitalism' is characterised, inter alia, by deference to a bourgeoisie which exercises a 'welfare' function. He argues that '(in) the final analysis ... the maintenance of paternalist capitalism rests on the retention of local ownership by an identifiable group of individuals and families who have historical ties with the locality'. By contrast, 'capitalists whose economic power base is national or international are not in a position to promote a system of paternalist domination'. The latter point clearly applies to Sheffield. Birmingham's political and economic life retained the aura of paternalist capitalism to a remarkable degree. G M Norris 1978, esp 477-9.

with Sheffield and introduces a further stage in the argument. There were important differences between the two cities with respect to the level of integration at which coalescence primarily occurred between old and new establishments, the former oriented towards rural society and the latter rooted in the business life of the city. In the case of Birmingham it occurred through their mutual occupation of a complex and sophisticated network of institutions at the municipal level. In the case of Sheffield it occurred through the entry of the leading industrialists into a world of business, politics, and socialising centred not upon the municipality but upon Whitehall, the City of London and the Carlton Club to which the leading landowners already belonged. This was most evident in the case of the great Sheffield steel firms which entered the armaments business, initially in the 1850s and 1860s, very heavily during the late 1880s.⁴⁰ The progress of Vickers, for example, was intimately tied up with decisions made in central government. By the end of the First World War Vincent Caillard of Vickers was writing privately of 'the special relations we have with the War Office and the Admiralty'.⁴¹ Tom Vickers, chairman between 1873 and 1915 'disliked publicity; he disliked speech-making, and the ornamental side of his position; politics did not interest him; local affairs were a duty, not a pleasure ...'.⁴²

⁴⁰ Pollard 1959, 161-2, 224; J D Scott 1962, 20-23.

⁴¹ Caillard to Albert Vickers 9.3.1918, quoted Trebilcock 1971, 16.

⁴² J D Scott 1962, 41.

When Conservative candidates were needed for parliamentary elections they could not be found among substantial local citizens. They were taken from the county (as in the case of Stuart Wortley of the Wharncliffe dynasty) and drafted in from Scotland Yard or Oxford University. When the Sheffield Liberals wanted somebody to fight Attercliffe in 1885 they called in the son of the Lord Chief Justice. They were not able to drum up a well-established local celebrity of the same stamp as George Dixon, William Kenrick and Joseph Chamberlain who all stood in Birmingham at this period.⁴³ It is unlikely that Sir Frederick Mappin, one of the few leading industrialists to maintain a public identification with the Liberals, would have been popular in such a thoroughly working-class constituency.

The above remarks do not ignore the fact that Birmingham politicians and businessmen acquired great influence in the surrounding counties and in the metropolis, nor that steel manufacturers and landed magnates sat in the mayoral chair at Sheffield. For example, the Duke of Norfolk served as Sheffield's Mayor for two years from 1895.⁴⁴ However, while the latter may be seen as falling within the sphere of 'noblesse oblige' the former was a manifestation of the power of a strong regional political influence centred on a civic bourgeoisie which was developing a high degree of social integration by the 1890s.⁴⁵ There is some

43 Howard Vincent, MP for Sheffield Central from 1885, had been Director of Criminal Investigations at Scotland Yard. Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett, MP for the Eccleshall Division from 1885, had been President of the Oxford Union. The son of the Lord Chief Justice was Hon Bernard Coleridge, himself a lawyer. Stainton 1924, 52, 59; Fletcher 1972, 181. On the Kenricks see Church 1968.

44 Earl Fitzwilliam was Lord Mayor of Sheffield in 1909. Hawson 1968, 340.

45 See Cannadine 1978.

evidence for this last point in the reminiscences of E A Knox, who served as Vicar of Aston from 1891 to 1895 and as Suffragan Bishop of Coventry based at St Philip's Rectory in Birmingham from 1895 to 1904.⁴⁶ Despite some bitter battles with Nonconformists on the School Board he remembered Birmingham as being 'an intensely hospitable city' with 'a civic consciousness stronger, perhaps, than any other English city'.⁴⁷ It is possible that the strengthened Anglican hierarchy in Birmingham may have played an important part in healing up the wounds left by the split between local Liberals in the mid-1880s. On the one hand, Knox and Bishop Gore had links through Conservatism to Joseph Chamberlain; on the other hand, good working relations were established with notable union leaders such as W J Davies, who like many trade unionists remained a Gladstonian, and prominent employers such as the Cadburys who did not desert the Liberal Party in 1886.⁴⁸ Knox praised the 'receptive friendliness' of the Society of Friends. At Richard Cadbury's funeral, Knox was invited to read the Benediction. Furthermore,

The conditions of Birmingham town-planning were exceptionally favourable to the existence of a kind of brotherhood or family of prominent citizens, living together in delightful homes at Edgbaston, within easy reach of the city, and taking an active part in its municipal and church life.⁴⁹

During his years at St Philip's Rectory Knox found that

I was within five minutes' walk of the Town Hall, the Council House, the Midland Institute, the Art Gallery and the Free Library. No civic meeting or function of any importance could occur that was not almost at my door. All the chief

⁴⁶ Knox 1935.

⁴⁷ op cit, 213.

⁴⁸ ibid; Dalley 1914, 268-9, 308 ff.

⁴⁹ Knox 1935, 214.

business offices were practically within sight of my windows, and so were the chief clubs and hotels. The termini of the trams, which radiated to the parishes in this direction and that, were within my parish ... The Bank of England was my neighbour ... St Philip's Rectory stood almost at the door of the two main lines ... Fast trains took me directly to all our chief towns50

Compare this description of Sheffield in the mid-1890s.

On entering Sheffield from the railway station, we find ourselves in a valley crowded with steel works and with the surrounding population. We are in the centre of the working portion of Sheffield, and in the midst of a large population of artisans. We must climb uphill for about three miles to reach the residential part of Sheffield. We then find ourselves in the suburb of Broomhill, planted high above the smoke and dirt, with the moorland country beginning just behind it, and beautifully green with trees and gardens. I know of no manufacturing town where the contrast between the dwelling places of the rich and the poor are so strongly marked, or the separation between them so complete.51

In both Birmingham and Sheffield the huge factories and monotonous workplace routines of large-scale industrial capitalism were a gigantic social fact by the end of the century. However, as has been seen, the two cities had followed very different trajectories of industrial development since 1830. One aspect of this was that professional and mercantile activity had been much more strongly established in Birmingham at the beginning of the period and this lead was maintained. The relative importance of the neighbourhood, the county, the municipality and national networks as foci of social solidarity and bases for mobilising influence had undergone transformation, but in very dissimilar ways in the two cities. More specifically, Birmingham and Sheffield had

50 op cit, 160.

51 Bryce, Vol 7, 165.

manifested very different patterns of development in the achievement of social integration between the old genteel social hierarchies and the new urban industrial order. Not least, the more gradual shift in the balance of power between establishments and social classes in Birmingham had instilled a deeply-ingrained habit of compromise which was far less evident in Sheffield. These differences combined to produce a considerable dissimilarity between the cities in the organisation of formal education, industrial relations and local government administration in the years around the turn of the century.

Birmingham: fusion and compromise

At Birmingham in each of these three organisational spheres tendencies towards social fission and conflict were counteracted by institutional arrangements which embodied complex compromises between the practices of a rural and small-town social order and those of modern urban industrial bureaucracies. During the late 1880s the King Edward VI Foundation was still under attack for its social exclusivity and literary bias.⁵² However, even so strong an advocate of technical education as Rev H W Crosskey, and one so conscious of the desirability of 'a thoroughly well-organised system', conceded that 'the old classical training has its own charms, its own power, and its own glory'.⁵³ In 1884 Crosskey reviewed the disorganised pattern of educational institutions in the large towns:

⁵² See Gammage 1972, 208.

⁵³ Crosskey 1885b, 284, 291.

Their number and character have been determined by the intensity with which particular individuals may have felt desirous of supplying local wants; the special tastes and idiosyncracies of rich people willing to give 'of their substance' to promote education; the character and extent of ancient endowments available in any district, and the personal dispositions of the members of the boards charged with their administration; the resources of particular Churches and the educational zeal of their members; the degree to which class distinctions are recognised and respected.⁵⁴

While Crosskey was anxious to see a local technical college established and indirectly criticised the lack of 'high scientific training' in the High School, the hidden principle of the 'system' he proposed was that facilities should be expanded so that the effective demand from all local clients could be met with minimum disruption of existing vested interests.⁵⁵ 'Class distinctions' would be disguised and preserved by an emphasis upon the age at which students left school:

A well graded system of schools does not ... mean a system under which the scholar passes from one kind of school to another, but a system under which schools exist which give as good an education as possible to each set of scholars in a community according to the time which they can devote to their education ... Were there enough Board Schools, and were these schools well scattered throughout the town so as to be found amongst our larger as well as our smaller houses, I am convinced that in a few years 'class' difficulties would disappear. It would soon be understood that the age at which the scholars are expected to leave, and not social distinctions, affected their management.⁵⁶

54 op cit, 283-4. My italics.

55 op cit, 291.

56 op cit, 286-7.

In fact, by 1895 the system of elementary and secondary education which was developing in Birmingham was a complex amalgam of the schemes of T H Green (the advocate of liberal culture) and Crosskey (the disciple of technical education). It also included some provision for promotion from the board elementary schools: a lure to higher scholarship according to Green's vision, a necessary though inadequate redistribution of local resources according to the critique of the Trades Council.

In the industrial sphere there was a similar tendency to adapt established practices to rapidly changing structural conditions. As had been seen, throughout the period 1830 to 1870 two widespread features of Birmingham's industry had been the use of cheap juvenile labour and the development of increasingly close institutional bonds between employers and craftsmen, ultimately through the medium of the Trades Council established in 1866.⁵⁷ These institutional links became especially strong in the period of Liberal dominance and by the 1880s trade union officials were widely represented on local public bodies such as the Board of Guardians. Artisan leaders and employers had a mutual interest in keeping unskilled labour cheap while maximising the selling price of goods: the employer and the craftsmen, the latter often acting as a sub-contractor, could then bargain over a 'reasonable' distribution of the profit. Unable to rely upon the strike as a weapon, union leaders 'carefully nurtured the approach of the honest, sincere, straightforward Englishman, appealing to the employer, as one reasonable, humanitarian gentleman to another'. The extent to which

⁵⁷ See Chapter Two.

the Trades Council felt it belonged to the same social world as the masters is shown by its members' interest in the Patents Act and the Bankruptcy Act during the early 1880s.⁵⁸

However, by the mid-1890s the spread of mass production in large factories, especially on the outskirts of Birmingham, had generated employment conditions which led to the decline of the craft unions and were soon to provide many recruits for general unions of semi and unskilled labourers. By 1893 the Trades Council had many members who were pressing for an improvement in the wages and conditions of these workers.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, the determination to maintain established institutional links with employers, links which were themselves an attempted re-creation of the shared normative order of the early nineteenth century, may be seen in the career of the local Brassworkers' leader.

W J Davis, a member of the Parliamentary Committee of the TUC and a very influential man in Birmingham, founded the National Society of Amalgamated Brassworkers in 1872. He was elected to the School Board in 1876 and to the Town Council three years later. By the end of the century his union had members in all branches of the brass trade including many workers in the bicycle and motor car industries. During the 1890s the spread of mass production techniques in the brass industry was associated with a decline of subcontracting, an increased number of craftsmen becoming wage-earners paid directly by firms, and new demands for improved

⁵⁸ Fox 1955, 64-5; Corbett 1966, 46.

⁵⁹ Fox 1955, 68; Corbett 1966, 49 ff.

basic wages for all hands.⁶⁰ Davis, who had begun his career when sub-contractors were dominant in the union and cheap unskilled labour a welcome commodity now found himself campaigning for a minimum wage and the abolition of 'sweated labour'. However, he continued to resist the use of the strike weapon.⁶¹

Davis believed that masters and men should be jointly responsible for, and proud of, their industry. Conciliation and arbitration were the correct way to resolve disputes. He told an official arbitrator in 1899

We represent a community of interests. The employers find the capital, business capacity and enterprise, and should have the lion's share of the profits. We find the technical skill and muscle which the product requires. The stomach must be fed; raiment and shelter is essential for the reproduction of mankind. Therefore you must apportion fairly the profits as between Capital and Labour.⁶²

This had been Davis's approach since his first successful appeal to arbitration in 1873. By 1891 he was successfully negotiating with the Brass Trade Manufacturers Council for permanent conciliation boards and later he gave full support to the Alliances promoted in the metal trades by E J Smith, a craftsman turned employer. These schemes conceded 'closed shop' status and special bonuses to unions in return for their support in enforcing throughout the trade the selling prices fixed by boards on which masters and men were both represented. Davis found that the court of Birmingham opinion was as valuable a forum at the turn of the century as it had been in the 1840s. When the employers were reluctant to accept arbitration in 1897 he forced them to meet by threatening to

60 Dalley 1914, esp Chs 5, 6, 9.

61 Fox 1955, 68-9. Davis led a strike just before his retirement in 1920, reportedly because he 'wanted to see what a strike was like'. R D Best 1940, 77.

62 Dalley 1914, 211.

expose the sweatshops. Twelve years later he was using the same strategy, this time calling in the Bishop of Birmingham to boost his case.⁶³

The great mission of Davis's career was to institute a system of industrial training and promotion which would recreate in modern conditions the best features of apprenticeship. Such a plan entailed the hearty cooperation of employers with workmen and the systematic use of educational facilities. His ambition was to see established

a minimum standard which shall regulate trade custom and recognise skill, dexterity, or ingenuity at their trade value, and give the best mechanics an opportunity of earning wages in proportion, and as a reward for their extra zeal and accomplishments.⁶⁴

In 1910, after a lengthy campaign, a scheme was inaugurated whereby workers were classified by the union into seven grades with different rates of pay. By attendance at the Municipal Brass Trades School young workers could improve their grade. Disputes about the grade to which a worker should belong were to be resolved by an examination conducted by the managers of the school in conjunction with representatives from the employers and the union.⁶⁵ Evidence of this kind from the brass trade is significant not only because of Davis's great influence on industrial relations in Birmingham but also because the skilled brassworkers had an intermediate position in local industry, being in everyday contact with small and large employers and experiencing the pressures of mechanisation upon a craft tradition. Their position was in these respects similar to the Sheffield file unions. However, the latter were fighting a long rearguard action to defend a

63 op cit, 36, 170-1, 183-4, 267; Fox 1955, 65-6; E J Smith 1895.

64 Dalley 1914, 272.

65 op cit, 279.

system of apprenticeship that had been strong when the brass-workers were still without a union. As has been seen, Sheffield's Technical School was sponsored by an employer deeply hostile to union involvement in the training and regulation of the workforce.

A third sphere where old and new forms were combined was in local government. The Town Council under Liberal control had improved the sanitary conditions of Birmingham, re-shaped its physical centre and acquired control of some basic amenities but it had done relatively little to offer direct help to poor working-class families. The benefits to business men of the Improvement Scheme and later, the extension of municipal boundaries in 1891, 1909 and 1911 to create a Greater Birmingham were fairly evident. White-collar workers and artisans were presumably a large proportion of the people who used the magnificent free libraries. However, provision of relief for the unemployed who refused to go the workhouse was left to voluntary agencies. The building of improved working-class housing, neglected under the Improvement Scheme, was left to paternalistic employers such as the Cadburys who laid out Bournville after 1895. A merging together of the long tradition of private charity with the new and expanding bureaucratic capacity of the local state occurred in the years around the turn of the century. It was encouraged by the increased influence of the Church of England under the aegis of E A Knox and Charles Gore, the Bishop of Birmingham, both of whom formed close links with the Society of Friends. Addressing the National Housing Reform Council in Birmingham in 1906, Gore stressed 'the debt

we owe to Mr Cadbury'.⁶⁶ By 1889 the City Council had passed plans for building working-class houses in Ryder Street which were completed the following year. When the project was proposed the Council was pointedly reminded about the deficiencies of the Improvement Scheme: 'when it was accepted no one dreamed that we were going to destroy 855 dwellings without putting any artisans' houses in their place'. A more extensive project in Lawrence Street was sanctioned in 1891. By 1900 the Council had also constructed four terraces of two-storey tenements in Milk Street. The Housing Committee, appointed the following year, presented the first scheme to be approved under the 1909 Housing and Planning Act.⁶⁷

Another strand in this general development was the creation of the City of Birmingham Aid Society in 1906, coordinating the work for the poor of several charitable organisations. It acquired a semi-public character, working closely with the City Council and the Board of Guardians.⁶⁸ In the period between 1905 and 1914 when the provision of labour exchanges and national insurances schemes was being widely discussed 'the most consistent and active proponents of social legislation were the members of the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce'. Significantly, the most striking contributions to this debate of the Sheffield Chamber of Commerce was to recommend its own city's system of technical education and the introduction of compulsory military training.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ E O Smith 1895,332; Briggs 1952,160.

⁶⁷ Vince 1902, 356-7,362; Briggs 1952,162; Nettlefold et al 1910; Cadbury 1915.

⁶⁸ The brass manufacturer R H Best was an active supporter of the Aid Society. R D Best 1940,Ch4. Joseph Chamberlain's nephew, Norman Chamberlain, was very active in social work in the early twentieth century as well as being a city councillor. Hay 1977,448.

⁶⁹ op cit, 441-3.

Sheffield: fission and conflict

Charitable donations, many of them channelled through the Church of England, were the preferred form of benevolence amongst Sheffield's industrialists: a park here, a hospital or a church there.⁷⁰ The Town Council did little to supplement their efforts before the last decade of the century. Control of basic services fell belatedly into its hands, beginning with the acquisition of the local waterworks company in 1888. A serious attack on insanitary conditions did not get underway until 1903 with the substitution of ashpits for ashbins. Between 1871 and 1915 Sheffield 'had the worst library system in any town of importance in the country'. Until 1897 the administration of local government was dispersed over at least four sites 'in the meaner streets of the town'. In 1888, Alderman W J Clegg, a leading Liberal, informed the Select Committee on Town Holdings that Sheffield had not put the Artizans' Dwellings Act into force even though a great proportion of the Duke of Norfolk's property in the Park was 'in a most deplorable state and not fit to live in'. A local solicitor gave evidence of rack-renting by the Duke who had 'not adopted the principle that the lessee, at the termination of the lease, has any moral claim upon him'. Slum clearance on any scale in Sheffield did not begin until 1903. Subsequent plans to erect houses for working-class occupiers ran into considerable political opposition. However, when unemployment became a serious problem in 1903 there was more determined action by the City

⁷⁰ Canon Odom's Hallamshire Worthies contains many instances. See, for example, entries under John Brown (who built All Saints Church, Brightside), Robert Hadfield (who 'in a quiet way .. helped Mount Zion Chapel, Attercliffe'), A J Hobson (who 'took a special interest in the Royal Infirmary and other charitable institutions'), Thomas Jessop (who provided Jessop's Hospital), etc. Odom 1926, 163, 168, 169, 171.

Council which employed out-of-work labourers on municipal projects.⁷¹

The stirring into life which began in the early part of the new century was a response to increasing pressure from below. The Sheffield Labour Representation Committee, founded in 1903, placed slum clearance, corporation housing development and the direct employment of labour by the City Council high on its list of demands.⁷² In local government as in education the decisive pressures emanated from the development of class conflicts in the industrial sphere. In 1884, Robert Leader had recognised the priority of this sphere when giving evidence in Sheffield to the Royal Commission on Technical Instruction. Discussing the possible development of Firth College as a school of technology he commented

But the life of the thing will not be in the public bodies of the town; it must be in the manufacturers and workmen of the town. If the great manufacturers who feel the inefficiency of their men from want of scientific and artistic training, take the matter in hand there will be a great success, but if they hold aloof, as one is led to fear they will from the scanty attendance of manufacturers this morning; if they show indifference, I do not think the proposal can be supported by other agencies. Therefore, the real appeal must be to those who conduct our great manufactures, and upon whom the prosperity of the town depends.⁷³

Class relations in Sheffield during the late nineteenth century were governed by a dialectic of indifference and fear. Indifference was sustained by the great social

71 Hawson 1968, xvii, xviii, 129; Walton 1968, 230, 239; PP 1888, CCII, Select Committee on Town Holdings, 42 (964), 155 (q 3511), 161 (3672); Evidence of G T Simpson and W J Clegg. On Clegg see Stainton 1924, 304-5; Odom 1926, 135-7.

72 Mathers 1979a

73 Samuelson, Vol 3, 557 (q 7732).

distance between managers and workers in large industrial enterprises combined with the virtual absence of civic life and the daily retreat after work into neighbourhoods and suburbs whose geographical location reinforced a sense of separateness. When the City Council tried to build some working-class houses at High Storrs in 1899, there were dangers of the 'cordon sanitaire' being broken. Councillor Muir Wilson of Whiteley Wood Hall, half a mile away, was very insistent that the site was unsuitable. The scheme was abandoned and later a much more 'acceptable' tenant, a local authority grammar school, was found.⁷⁴ The High Storrs episode typifies the other element of the dialectic, the fear that a group's 'proper' sphere will be invaded and alien rules and assumptions imposed. Such a response tended to generate a determination to resist to the last and not compromise willingly. This was the response of the trade societies to the introduction of machinery in the 1860s and it was also the response of the large steel manufacturers, relatively untroubled by unions before the 1890s, to the development of labour organisation in their plants. It is not surprising that the major successes of the Sheffield Labour movement have been in the sphere of local government where they could capture a citadel that was very weakly defended by the Sheffield bourgeoisie. Once in power, the Labour Party showed itself equally uncompromising. However, that is to anticipate the argument.

⁷⁴ Hawson 1968, 107-8.

The parliamentary election of 1868 which was examined in Chapter Seven occurred at an early point in a long process of social development which was to leave employers in a dominant position within Sheffield's heavy industry while the political wing of the local Labour movement acquired a commanding position on the City Council. Three subsequent parliamentary elections, those held in 1874, 1885 and 1894, illustrate this process. In 1874 George Hadfield retired as one of Sheffield's two MPs. Joseph Chamberlain accepted an invitation from H J Wilson, one of his most devoted followers in Sheffield, to fight the constituency.⁷⁵ Chamberlain received the support of the Sheffield Trades Council and Wilson's radical Sheffield Reform Association.⁷⁶ However, Robert Leader and the more moderate Liberals preferred another candidate as Mundella's running mate. In the event, Mundella's companion in Parliament after the 1874 General Election was neither Chamberlain nor his moderate Liberal rival but Roebuck. As in 1868, Roebuck was supported by the large employers. The extent of their alienation from Liberal causes is shown by the rejection of the arbitration principle by the management at Browns' and Vickers' membership of the new National Federation of Associated Employers of Labour.⁷⁷ The General Election of 1885 revealed the extent to which patterns of residence were reinforcing political hostilities and preferences. Hallam and Eccleshall, middle-class suburbs, were strongly

⁷⁵ On the 1874 Election see Fowler 1963; Hurst 1972, D G Wright 1973

⁷⁶ The Sheffield Trades Council was founded in 1872, the Sheffield Reform Association in 1873. Mendelson et al nd 36; Hurst 1972, 685.

⁷⁷ Fowler 1963, 153; Hurst 1972, 686, 694-5.

Conservative but Brightside and Attercliffe were markedly Radical. According to a student of nineteenth-century poll books this was 'the first clear case of political division following from class housing patterns'.⁷⁸

The radicalism of Sheffield's working-class inhabitants should not be exaggerated. Pelling points out that in the period 1885 to 1910 only Attercliffe was continuously Liberal or Labour. In 1900 the Conservatives won Brightside 'and probably could have won Attercliffe if they had contested it'. A major factor was the dependence of the steel industry upon military expenditure, a form of spending for which the Liberal Party was not enthusiastic. Both the steel industry and the cutlery trades were increasingly attracted by protectionist ideas which found a stronghold in the Conservative Party. Sir Howard Vincent, member of Sheffield Central was a pioneer in this cause. It is, incidentally, an ironic fact that although Chamberlain was rejected by Sheffield in 1874 both of his 'causes celebres', education for the working classes and trade protection for their employers, found their strongest advocates amongst Sheffield's parliamentary representatives: Mundella and Vincent.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Vincent 1972, 23. The more active and powerful Town Council in Birmingham was able to use its influence to disperse some of these tendencies, albeit for its own political advantage. By the mid-1880s a stronghold of Conservative votes was developing in five wards close to the city centre. The Town Council ensured that when the boundaries of the parliamentary constituencies were redrawn under the 1884 Redistribution Act each of the Conservative wards was swamped by one or more Liberal ones. Green 1973, 97.

⁷⁹ Pelling 1967, 232 ff; Stainton 1924, 52; Armytage 1948b.

A further bastion of Conservatism was the Church of England which worked hard to win hearts and minds in poor areas like St Simon's parish. The vicar had as early as 1857 acquired a Baptist church, its former congregation 'desiring to move to the suburbs'. In 1877 William Odom moved to this living with its gasometer, breweries and cutlery works. 'There was not a tree nor a foot of garden within the parish, nor did it contain a Nonconformist place of worship'. He rapidly created a network of recreational and welfare organisations for his parishioners following a strategy similar to that of Knox in Aston a little while later.⁸⁰ The attitude to its flock adopted by the hierarchy is nicely conveyed by the words of Bishop Godwin to a meeting of Sheffield working men in 1878:

You would scarcely believe it, but I think of Sheffield every day of my life. You don't know why? I will tell you. I shave every morning. I have a box which contains seven Sheffield razors—one for every day of the week ... They were good Englishmen who made those razors and they did not skimp their work ... The man who throws his whole heart and soul into the making of a razor, or into the management of a diocese, that is the man who is worthy of being called a man, and who shall stand erect before GOD in the great day of account.⁸¹

This line of approach may not have been quite the same as the lady from the Visiting and Bettering Society who in the 1840s urged the Church of England in Sheffield to press on with the task of 'training up ... well-educated, sober, loyal and obedient subjects'; but the message was effectively the same.⁸²

80 Odom 1917, 37ff; Knox 1935, 134ff.

81 op cit, 21.

82 See Chapter Five.

The retreat of Sheffield's middle class voters to the western suburbs produced the contradictory result that although union leaders were making very little headway in bargaining with employers the representatives of labour were beginning to find their way relatively easily onto the Town Council and other related bodies. Giving evidence before the Royal Commission on Labour in the early 1890s, several members of the Sheffield Federated Trades Council complained of the unwillingness of Sheffield employers to participate in setting up machinery for conciliation and arbitration. W F Wardley reported that repeated appeals to the Cutlers' Company and the Chamber of Commerce concerning the establishment of a joint board of arbitration had been ignored. He commented, with a touch of sarcasm

I think a good many employers of labour would not risk being subjected to examination by this board. I think they would rather do what is honest and fair than bring every detail before a board composed of practical, sensible, rational men. That is my opinion. In many cases it is a question of might over right; I think the thing would come to an end.⁸³

In 1893 the Town Council attempted to set up a Chamber of Arbitration in cooperation with the Chamber of Commerce, the Sheffield Federated Trades Council and the Cutlers' Company. Although arbitrators were appointed in 1894 and 1895 no appointments were made in 1896. The scheme was 'still-born'.⁸⁴

83 PP 1893-4, XXXIV, Royal Commission on Labour (henceforth Labour) Vol 3, 537 (q 19351). See also loc cit, 539-568. Evidence of W F Wardley, R Holmshaw and S Uttley. Holmshaw and Uttley gave similar evidence to Wardley.

84 Hawson 1968, 312.

Wardley had, however, been elected to the Town Council in 1890 as a Liberal. Three other working men from the Trades Council had preceded him. Two more followed in 1895 and 1897. Charles Hobson of the Brittania-metal smiths was also elected to the School Board and Guardians of the Poor in 1894. Although during the 1890s such men were elected for the central wards containing the old cutlery trades, by the turn of the century the centre of working-class municipal politics was shifting to Attercliffe and Brightside.⁸⁵

The Attercliffe by-election in 1894, caused by the elevation of the sitting member to the peerage, revealed the continuing strength of resistance to working-class candidates within the Liberal Party. When the Trades Council asked Charles Hobson to stand 'in the Labour interest', his candidature was vetoed by the President of the Sheffield United Liberal Association. The man who exercised this veto was Sir Frederick Mappin. He was expressing the deep reservations felt by local employers concerning the safety of allowing working-class representatives to exercise political power.⁸⁶

Between 1891 and 1911 the heavy trades overtook the light trades in terms of numbers employed within Sheffield. This shift was associated with radical alterations in the industrial and political strategies of organised labour. As in Birmingham, the years around the turn of the century saw the emergence of strong rivals to the old craft unions.

85 Mendelson et al nd, 41, 45, 48; Pollard 1959, 145.

86 J Brown 1975, 51, 53.

Jonathan Taylor was actively expanding the membership of the Gas Workers and General Labourers Union in the early 1890s. The railwaymen and tramwaymen were also acquiring organisation. Although the steelworkers were very poorly organised the number of engineers in the ASE increased from 884 in 1893 to 3,117 by 1914. The leadership within these new unions was (in contrast to Birmingham) badly represented on the Trades Council but it rapidly acquired a dominant influence within the Labour Representation Committee which was set up in 1903. In Birmingham at that time, men like Davis could point to three decades of reasonably successful manipulation of arbitration machinery and privileged access to the ears of employers and politicians. In Sheffield there was no such check upon a new movement which discarded the strategy of arbitration and turned towards a full-blooded socialist programme. By 1906 the LRC, in close association with the Independent Labour Party, had won three seats on the City Council. Two years later its members created the Trades and Labour Council to represent a membership and set of policies which were virtually excluded from the Sheffield Federated Trades Council, the latter still dominated by the old craft unions in the light trades. Thus by 1908 Sheffield had two trades councils. The following year it acquired its first Labour MP, fifteen years before Birmingham.⁸⁷

The philosophy of the Sheffield Trades and Labour Council was given extreme expression in the course of the shop stewards movement during the first world war. It was,

⁸⁷ Pollard 1959, 234, 332-4; Labour Vol 3, 79 ff. Evidence of J Taylor; Mendelson et al., nd, 49, 57; Stainton 1924, 44; VCH, 316.

as J T Murphy of the Sheffield Workers' Committee pointed out 'an engineers' war', one which gave unprecedented importance to production workers in the munitions industry of which Sheffield was a major centre. Conflicts on the shopfloor over the use of unskilled labour led to widespread strikes and the setting up of unofficial workshop committees by men dissatisfied with the national leadership, especially within the ASE. In his pamphlet The Workers' Committee: an outline of its principles and structure, J T Murphy envisaged the creation of a new structure of worker representation, reaching up to the national level but solidly based upon local committees, each of which would be the deliberative body and the voice of all workers of whatever union or skill level in a particular workshop. On this basis, ascending through a hierarchy of local industrial committees, plant committees, national industrial committees, local workers' committees (uniting different industries) and at the summit, a national workers' committee, Murphy envisaged the creation of 'the great Industrial Union of the Working Class'.⁸⁸ His basic message is summarised in the following passage:

.... increasingly insistent has been the progress towards government by officials. It allows small groups who are remote from actual workshop experience to govern the mass and involve the mass into working under conditions which they have had no opportunity of considering prior to their inception. The need of the hour is a drastic revision of this constitutional practice which demands that the function of the rank and file shall be simply that of obedience

88 Murphy 1917, 15.

Real deomocratic practice demands that every member of an organisation shall participate actively in the conduct of the business of the society. We need, therefore to reverse the present situation, and instead of leaders and officials being in the forefront of our thoughts the questions of the day which have to be answered should occupy that position We desire the mass of men and women to think for themselves, and until they do this no real progress is made, democracy becomes a farce, and the future of the race becomes a story of race deterioration.

Thought is revolutionary: it breaks down barriers, transforms institutions, and leads onward to a larger life. To be afraid of thought is to be afraid of life, and to become an instrument of darkness and oppression.⁸⁹

The year is 1917 but the voice is that of Isaac Ironside.

Chapter Eleven

"A SERIOUS DANGER TO THE UPPER CLASSES"

Summary and Conclusion

Before the themes of this book are drawn together a brief visit will be made to a fictional morning-room in Half-Moon Street, London. The year is 1895. A young man is being interviewed by his prospective mother-in-law:

Lady Bracknell: ... I have always been of the opinion that a man who desired to get married should know either everything or nothing. Which do you know?

Jack (after some hesitation): I know nothing, Lady Bracknell.

Lady Bracknell: I am pleased to hear it. I do not approve of anything that tampers with natural ignorance. Ignorance is like a delicate exotic fruit; touch it and the bloom is gone. The whole theory of modern education is radically unsound. Fortunately in England, at any rate, education produces no effect whatsoever. If it did, it would prove a serious danger to the upper classes, and probably lead to acts of violence in Grosvenor Square.¹

Lady Bracknell was the outraged and outrageous spokeswoman of a class for whom 'land had ceased to be either a profit or a pleasure' and whose matrons and dowagers were being forced to place even higher upon their lists of 'eligible young men' the offspring of persons 'born in what the Radical papers call the purple of commerce'.² Oscar Wilde, with all the advantages of Irish descent, was a brilliant commentator upon the peculiarities of the English at this period. The plot of The Importance of Being Earnest revolves around the subtelties of role-playing by the gentry in town and countryside. Dr Chasuble, the ridiculous Hertfordshire canon, epitomises the waning authority of the rural clergy while Lane, the sardonic London man-servant, illustrates

1 Wilde 1895, 151.

2 op cit, 151-2.

the dependence of genteel town society upon a working class whose ways remained mysterious to their masters.³

In Jack's words, Lady Bracknell was 'a Gorgon... She is a monster without being a myth, which is rather unfair'. Unfair, perhaps, but useful since here attitudes are an extreme but vivid version of the state of feeling in an important section of London Society. Agricultural depression and death duties were conspiring to produce the effect that 'land gives one position, and prevents one from keeping it up. That's all that can be said about land'. Investments were a different matter. Jack's 'a hundred and thirty thousand pounds in the Funds' were a great point in his favour. He was a Liberal Unionist but 'they count as Tories. They dine with us. Or come in the evening at any rate'.⁴ Such a concession was one aspect of an increasing alignment between genteel families and commerce in the latter part of the century.

However, urban life had its dangers not least of which was the growing pressure for 'social legislation'. It gave Lady Bracknell great pleasure to imagine that her nephew's fictitious friend Bunberry had been blown up as a consequence of dabbling in such dangerous matters: 'he is well punished for his morbidity'. Social currents nearer at hand were unsettling also, not least the wave of German idealism which was running through the ancient universities and public schools, encouraging their alumni to take seriously their civic responsibilities towards the whole community. This

3 op cit, 142-3, 157-8, 160-3.

4 op cit, 151, 152, 153, 159, 176.

ideology had acquired one form of expression in Birmingham through the preaching of George Dawson but made its full impact upon metropolitan society rather later, especially through the influence of T H Green and his disciples.

Lady Bracknell's niece proclaimed that '(we) live in an age of ideals' but her aunt would merely concede that 'German sounds a thoroughly respectable language'.⁵

From her point of view, Lady Bracknell was right about education. It did pose a potential threat to the tissue of assumptions and practices which bolstered the middle ranks of the aristocracy. Her gunboat marital diplomacy depended upon a widespread supposition that being 'well-connected' was infinitely preferable to being 'well-educated' and an indispensable complement to a substantial income.

Bradshaw's Railway Guide was no substitute for Burkes' Peerage nor a handbag for an unblotted escutcheon. In the event, cunning and a chance discovery in the Army Lists did more for Jack than he could have achieved by taking a degree at the London School of Economics and Political Science.

This last institution was founded by the illustrious Fabians, Sidney and Beatrice Webb, in the same year that Wilde's play was published. The final three words in the School's title indicate the threatening aspect of education in the Bracknell view. LSE was established with money bequeathed for the 'propaganda and other purposes of the (Fabian) Society and its Socialism'. Inspired by the example of the Ecole des Sciences Politiques the Webbs hoped to train cadres of Socialist administrators and specialists who would move into the corridors of power in central and local

⁵ op cit, 149,175.

government. It offered the prospect of an alliance between technologists and bureaucrats on the one hand and organised labour upon the other, a union of 'producers by hand and by brain' such as was envisaged in the new constitution of the Labour Party whose programme, 'Labour and the New Social Order', was drawn up by Sidney Webb in 1918. However, as the national level of integration increased in importance in the years around the turn of the century the conservative bastions of landed society and commerce, both with London bases of great ancestry, had the considerable strategic advantage of being well-established in metropolitan networks of influence. It was easier for them to move into closer association than it was for the Labour Party to coordinate its disparate provincial networks. The subsequent progress of the LSE was an indication of the balance of influence within the capital. Despite the Webbs' ambitions, it soon settled down into being a business college whose special aim was to study 'the concrete facts of industrial life'. The Commercial Education Committee of the London Chamber of Commerce lent the institution some lecture rooms 'with a view to encouraging an interest in the City on commercial questions by young men engaged in business during the day'. Jack Worthing could perhaps have been pleased to note that this committee especially recommended railway economics as an appropriate focus of study within the School.⁶

6 Sanderson 1972, 191, 192; Mowatt 1968, 18; PP 1898, XXIV, Special Reports on Educational Subjects, 86 cit. Sanderson 1972, 192.

Education and 'irrationality'

In 1895 the prognosis was not so clear. The Science and Arts Department at South Kensington had built a large empire based upon the award of grants for 'technical instruction', a term whose interpretation was treated generously.⁷ Rivalry between South Kensington, Whitehall, and the universities at Oxford, Cambridge and London acted in conjunction with the variegated growth patterns of municipal educational institutions to produce a 'system' which, when viewed from a national perspective, was lacking in order. More precisely, it embodied several principles of order none of which was fully realised.

A dilemma which was to inform educational politics for at least half a century, and which indeed still remains unresolved had been indicated in the Taunton Report. Its authors noted that many 'tradesmen and others just above the manual labourers' were unwilling to allow their offspring to mix with 'the class beneath them' and eschewed the good accommodation and competent teaching of the public elementary schools in favour of inferior and more expensive private schools. Higher up the social scale, secondary school teachers with good classical backgrounds were worried about the possible influx of 'roughs'. One possible strategy for placating such valuable supporters of traditional establishments would have been to syphon off all instruction for the industrial classes into a separate hierarchy of schools. The higher grade schools with their strong technical bias, the science colleges in the provinces and

⁷ Gosden 1966, 55.

the South Kensington institutions together provided by the 1890s a well-developed framework for such a solution. Indeed in 1884 the Samuelson Committee had called for 'specialist institutions of high rank' to train captains of industry. However such a course offered, at the very least, the possibility of two divided and potentially hostile elites coming into existence, the one legitimised by a cultural tradition reaching back to Richard Hooker and transmitted in Oxbridge and the public schools, the other grounded in a Baconian tradition of equal ancestry and recruited through open channels of meritocratic promotion by bright boys from the higher grade schools.⁸ The 'brigadiers' and 'generals' of the latter regime might be susceptible to metropolitan wining and dining but what of the NCO's in Sheffield? Did the facilities for such subtle seduction exist throughout the manufacturing provinces?

The legislation of 1899 and 1902 was not simply a response to the educational disarray criticised by the Cross and Bryce Commissions. It was also part of a larger pattern of arrangements which tended to inhibit the development of a powerful and separate scientific-bureaucratic network of establishments such as had appeared in Germany, Britain's strongest European competitor. The Acts of 1899 and 1902 unified the administrative machinery of South Kensington, the Charity Commission and the Education Department at Whitehall, and replaced the School Boards by Local Education Authorities with powers to regulate both elementary and secondary education. During

8 SIC, Vol 1, 297; Mack 1971, 31-2; Samuelson, Vol 1, 525; Cardwell 1972, 99-100; Kearney 1970; Webster 1975.

the five years after 1902 the regulations and administrative decisions of the new Board of Education, created by the 1899 Act, had the effect of imposing in many areas a clear distinction between elementary schools, whose official object was to prepare the mass of children during 'the school years available ... for the work of life', and secondary schools within which a literary curriculum had an assured place. The higher grade schools which had been developed by local school boards, often with financial help from South Kensington, came under strong pressure either to restrict their activities within a less ambitious 'higher elementary' framework or to introduce a greater element of literary instruction and become 'secondary' schools.⁹

The confidence with which these changes were driven through, despite the opposition of some school boards (including Birmingham) and the hostility of some elementary school teachers, owed much to their compatibility with ideological tendencies in the university and public schools.¹⁰

9 The strengthening of the 'grammar school' element in Sheffield's secondary education was abetted by Michael Sadler's report to the city's Education Committee in 1903 which recommended, inter alia, a considerable increase of secondary school education for girls. In later years a more left-wing local authority was to insist that King Edward VII School should lose its independent governors and disband its OTC. Sadler 1903; Hawson 1968, 75, 79; Armytage 1976, 269; Board of Education, Elementary Code 1904; Banks 1953, 22-123; Eaglesham 1956; Simon 1974, 176-246; Sturt 1967, 404ff; Tropp 1957, 160-82.

10 Rev E F M McCarthy, a strong influence on the Birmingham School Board, had argued in the mid-1890s for either an 'ideal' school board elected by the local ratepayers with powers over all forms of education below the university level or a new special school board for secondary schools. He refused to serve on the Birmingham Education Committee created after the 1902 Education Act. Bryce, Vol 3, 50-52 (qq6425-6466); A F Taylor 1955, 260; Sturt 1967, 407-8; Richter 1964; Rothblatt 1968; Roach 1959, esp 147ff; Fowler 1961b; Richter 1966.

These were furnishing a new set of justifications for the authority of the ruling establishments in national life. J H Muirhead, who became Professor of Philosophy and Political Economy at Birmingham in 1897, was a typical exponent of the new philosophy. Muirhead's teachers at Balliol in the 1870s had included T H Green, R L Nettleship and A C Bradley. Among his fellow students were Charles Gore, Viramu Jones, Robert Baden-Powell and Alfred Milner.¹¹ A central tenet of Muirhead's beliefs was

the doctrine of the existence and effective operation in the life of every normal uncorrupted man ... of a reference in all he feels and does to a good wider than that which occupies him in the pursuit of his own particular interests or that of his own particular group¹²

In effect, the social and spiritual mission of the Evangelical parson was to be inherited by lay professional men whose lives would thereby re-acquire the sense of legitimacy and purpose which had been endangered by crises of religious faith and the steady weakening of the ecclesiastical order. In Muirhead's case this entailed not only bicycling around the poorer districts of Birmingham but also manoeuvring hard 'as a traveller in Oxford goods' to maximise the influence of a liberal curriculum in educational institutions. More generally, the new credo gave its disciples a contempt for money-making as a goal and a hostility to narrow academic specialisation, especially in the applied sciences. In its most diluted form it gave a sense of moral superiority in being 'an all-round chap'. A subtle elision occurred between the concept of the 'gentleman' and the concept of the 'professional'.¹³

11 Muirhead 1942, 38-51.

12 op cit, 88.

13 Richter 1964, 9ff; Muirhead 1942, 90, 91, 108, 110-111, 128; Somerset 1934; Rothblatt 1968, 91, 249ff, 266-7, 272.

Through the public schools this set of attitudes which sanctified the games field and glorified the Raj spread through the professions and the ranks of the well-born,¹⁴ It was to be found among city gents and Fabians alike. The sentiments it fostered provided a lingua franca within networks of 'old boys' who in their adult lives held leading positions in establishments which in other ways were deeply at odds with each other. As the institutional complexity of urban industrial society increased at the national level the public boarding schools performed a major function in providing a degree of social integration among establishments. In view of the incompatibility between important aspects of the cultures and practices of these establishments - for example, between the strong residual particularism of county hierarchies, the market concerns of the City and the bureaucratic impulse of civil servants - collaboration was well served by an ethos which stressed close bonds between people formed before entry into specific occupational groups, which emphasised individual character rather than group qualities, and which laid great emphasis upon mutual tolerance. These requirements were fulfilled by 'the public school spirit'. Through the local authority grammar schools aspects of this culture were pressed upon the lower middle classes in the provinces. Many grammar school teachers received their training in Day Training Colleges which were attached to the provincial colleges after 1890. The influence of men like Muirhead was deeply felt within such institutions, taking the place which the Anglican clergy had filled in a previous

¹⁴ Mack 1971, 123-30.

generation.¹⁵

Despite the dominance of science and technology in Birmingham University, which persisted into the twentieth century, the purveyors of 'Oxford goods' were in general well protected by the strong departmental boundaries which typically developed in the provincial universities. The strength of particular departmental 'cultures' encouraged a high degree of 'subject loyalty' amongst secondary school teachers, themselves the mentors of future pedagogues in the elementary schools. In this way horizontal links at each level of the education system were weakened and vertical bonds strengthened. The ethos of liberal culture and the values of Oxbridge and the public schools were thus transmitted downwards.¹⁶

The strategy which was being pursued, consciously or not, by the turn of the century was to accept the claims of scientific knowledge as a legitimate arena of advanced learning but to resist the development of either completely separate high-level scientific teaching institutions or educational institutions in which scientific learning was completely integrated with the arts. In 1904 R B Haldane declared: 'You cannot, without danger of partial starvation separate science from literature or philosophy. Each grows best in the presence of the other'.¹⁷ A sentiment apparently so unexceptional was in fact ridden with social and political implications. The 'collection' curricular mode permitted

15 Armytage 1955b, 255ff; Muirhead 1942, 162-3; De Montmorency 1909, esp 610-11, 618.

16 In this way, the 'collection curriculum' in English secondary schools performed a significant political function. D Smith 1976, esp 5-6; Bernstein 1973b.

17 Quoted in Armytage 1955b, 247-8.

the admittance of potentially threatening areas of knowledge into association, but not too close association, with liberal culture. The latter was recognised as the superior mode. This pattern was repeated through the incorporation of the Science and Arts Department into Sir Robert Morant's fold in Whitehall. A similar approach was expressed in the Regulations for Secondary Schools in 1904 which insisted on Latin and limited the hours available for science teaching. The School Certificate regulations of 1914 imposed a 'group' system. Pupils had to collect examination passes in three groups: English subjects; foreign languages; science and mathematics.¹⁸

The educational settlement of the early twentieth century inhibited the development of links between education, industry and the state of the kind which Prince Albert and Lyon Playfair had envisaged in the 1850s.¹⁹ In the conclusion of a comparative study of the iron and steel industries in Britain and Germany P W Musgrave points out this contrast:

18 Banks 1953, 174-7; Extracts from the Elementary Code and the Regulations for Secondary Schools of 1904 may be conveniently found in Maclure 1979, 155-9. Maclure notes Eaglesham's suggestion that the introduction to the Elementary Code may have been written by a man who had been Professor of Poetry at Oxford University. If this is the case it is a striking indication of the power of the Arnoldian tradition! op cit, 154.

19 See Chapter Eight

The comparison that immediately stands out is between the organised German system and the haphazard British system. In Germany from about 1812 there has been a plan. In Britain nothing substantial was done on a national scale till the establishing of the elementary system in 1870, and this was repeatedly allowed to probe forward in an uncontrolled way into the field of secondary education. Even the 1944 Act did not really fit technical or further education into the three-stage system that it created

The organisation of the German system ensured that the links between the various stages and institutions within the system were good. The curriculum was perhaps prescribed, but at least each stage fitted into the next. Above all the link from the schools to the universities was established early in the nineteenth century, thereby establishing high standards, perhaps at the cost of rigidity. Examinations were also controlled by the grant of privileges. The levels of examinations were linked first with the civil service, and after the industrial revolution industry had to accept the same standards to compete in recruiting labour. The links of the German system are possibly best seen in the case of apprenticeship, where the industry and trade unions cooperate to lay down the Berufsbild, the theoretical part of which is translated into educational terms in the Berufsschule. In Britain such links were very slow to come²⁰

The burden of Musgrave's argument is that in England there have been persistent inconsistencies between the 'products' of education and the 'needs' of industry and that the involvement of the state has done little to reduce these 'system contradictions'. However, the failure to develop along the German pattern brought definite social and political benefits to establishments in government, the professions and rural society whose predecessors had been relatively unchallenged at mid-century and who wished to minimise the losses sustained as England became more centralised, more bureaucratic, more urban and more industrial.

20 Musgrave 1967, 264. For a local attempt to introduce aspects of the German system see Chapter Ten.

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²⁰ Musgrave 1967, 264. For a local attempt to introduce aspects of the German system see Chapter Ten.

The success of this approach owed much to the inherited advantages of an early lead in industrial development and the receipts flowing in from the network of international trade and finance centred upon London. A relatively high degree of 'irrationality' could be permitted in the mutual relations of institutional orders so long as the City was reaping a satisfactory profit, the status norms of county society were left relatively unchallenged, the legal, medical and other professions allowed to build up their relatively autonomous empires, Oxbridge colleges and public school headmasters permitted to glory in a sense of tradition, and the municipal corporations allowed to pursue their varying policies of civic development. However, the other side of the coin was a denial, whether implicit or stridently expressed, of the worth and respectability of the social classes most deeply involved in manufacturing production. Furthermore, Britain had an electoral franchise which was one of the narrowest in Europe at the time of the First World War.²¹ This war and the years immediately preceding and following it were a crucial watershed in English social development which witnessed a profound transformation of the conditions which gave plausibility to the arrangements described above. These processes lie outside the scope of this present work but the following brief quotation from a recent book by Keith Middlemas conveys their significance:

21 H C G Matthew et al 1976, 724-5;
Moorhouse 1973, 352

By 1922 it had become clear that a sufficient number of union and employers' leaders had accepted the need of formal collaboration with the state. TUC and employers' organisations crossed a threshold which had not even existed before the war, and behaved thereafter in some degree as estates of the realm, to the detriment of more ancient, obsolete estates, the municipalities, the churches, the 'colleges' of professional men, and the panoply of voluntary bodies, so important in the political system of the nineteenth century.²²

In conclusion, the contrasting trajectories followed by Birmingham and Sheffield since 1830 will be summarised.

Summary

It has been argued that variations between Birmingham and Sheffield during the period after 1830 in the internal organisation and mutual relations of education, industry and local government were aspects of very different processes of class formation in the two cities. Three strategic determinants of these differences were identified. The first was the mode of social differentiation within each city. Industry in Birmingham produced a very wide range of goods and had a very complex division of labour. Manufacture was balanced by well-developed commercial and service occupations, including the 'old professions'. By contrast, Sheffield supported a much narrower range of industrial production, albeit subject to an intense local sub-division of labour, and occupied a much more highly specialised position within the national division of labour. Furthermore, commercial and service occupations were less well developed than in Birmingham. Second, there was a very pronounced difference between the scale of social organisation within Sheffield as opposed to the surrounding

county society, especially in the early part of the period. No such great disparity existed between Birmingham and its rural hinterland. The balance of power between town and countryside was skewed much more strongly in favour of the latter in South Yorkshire than it was in the West Midlands. Third, Birmingham was at the centre of a very active network of communications not only within its region but also nationally. By contrast Sheffield was much more isolated both regionally and nationally.

The distinctive class structures of the two cities were profoundly affected by these three conditions. In the early part of the period Sheffield's skilled working class and petty bourgeoisie were bound into dense neighbourhood solidarities. These not only supported a host of taverns and Sunday schools but also sustained the authority of several trade societies able to enforce a high degree of control over industrial production and labour recruitment. Larger employers and professional men, both relatively sparse, accepted the social and political leadership of the county. They were unable to establish strong collective associations amongst themselves or develop effective institutional means of either influencing or transforming the behaviour of the workforce. The relative significance of kinship and particularistic connexions was greater in Sheffield than in Birmingham. In the latter city the habit of participating in formal associations, both for the pursuit of reform and for the protection of aspects of the status quo was much more highly developed. A complex web of institutional bonds in the educational, political, religious and industrial spheres provided a framework for

interaction which was more susceptible to subtle adjustments in power and opinion than the encompassing particularism of Sheffield. The commitment of members of working-class families in Birmingham to a plurality of occupational spheres weakened their capacity and will to resist innovations promoted by the larger employers. However, their involvement in political and welfare organisations alongside leading businessmen and professionals gave artisan inhabitants a sense of participation in the management of social reform. Birmingham's middle-class establishments were in a stronger position vis-à-vis both the urban labouring population and the environing county society than their counterparts in Sheffield.

The increase in the population size and productive capacity of both manufacturing cities which was underway by 1830 had manifestations in the development of three related aspects of the structures outlined above: the significance relative to each other of the neighbourhood, municipal, county and national levels of integration; the relationships between social classes; and the norms and practices expressed within the institutional orders of education, industrial relations and local government.

In the case of Sheffield an increased degree of initiative was at first acquired by solidarities focused upon the neighbourhood. This took the form of movements to defend perceived political, spiritual and industrial rights which were felt to be under threat from tendencies towards centralisation. However, these movements among skilled labourers and the petty bourgeoisie had few significant institutional connections with each other.

Their primary objective was not so much to displace existing establishments operating at a higher level as to re-assert rights in their own spheres which were felt to have whittled away.

The processes of urban industrial growth in Sheffield had by the late 1860s produced a new manufacturing Leviathan whose demands ran directly counter to the norms and practices of important existing political and industrial establishments in 'old' Sheffield. At the same time a high degree of mutual dependence developed between Sheffield's new and largest employers and the occupants of regional and national networks of influence focused upon stock exchanges, country houses and Whitehall. Attercliffe and Brightside became the locale for a pattern of social and industrial life which had few resemblances with the routines of artisan communities oriented to the light trades. The fabric of habits, prejudices and social connexions which had grown up around the old industries of Sheffield had little to offer the new. Given the fact that in north-east Sheffield they were virtually creating a new settlement, and given their strong links with regional and national rather than municipal and neighbourhood networks, the steel manufacturers could by-and-large ignore 'old' Sheffield.

However, a sharp confrontation did occur during the 1860s within the intermediate sector of Sheffield industry which combined heavy steel work with the production of tools. Firms within this sector experienced the effects of a contradiction between the manufacturing processes and forms of labour regulation dominant in the light trades on the one hand and the heavy trades upon the other. The rapid expansion of the heavy steel industry after mid-century

altered the balance of power within Sheffield between these two sectors sufficiently for employers in the intermediate sector to adopt a more aggressive approach to the craft unions. Despite an almost unmitigated defeat in the ensuing conflict the trade societies made few efforts over the next four decades to adapt their defensive strategies. The division between religious, political and industrial organisations among the working class remained very marked, one instance being the hostility between the Labour Representation Committee and the Sheffield Federated Trades Council in the early twentieth century. The policy of the Sheffield Workers' Committee revealed the continuing strength in that city of Ironside's radical philosophy with its anarchist tendencies.

Education in Sheffield expressed in its development the dialectic of indifference and fear which governed class relations in that city. Before 1870 most participating groups in the working class and middle class preferred to look after their own narrow interests, excluding outsiders. The Sunday Schools were in a relatively thriving state compared to public day schools supervised by clerical watchdogs. Middle-class private schools offering commercial training survived in a healthier state than more pretentious secondary schools foisting classical learning upon their pupils. Middle-class residents were not willing to pay good money for second-rate liberal culture; more prosperous families preferred to send their children off to boarding school. Working-class inhabitants resisted clerical attempts to interfere with the training of their young. Trade union control over apprenticeship was perhaps at least as potent a means of socialising young Sheffielders as

church day schools. However, the rapid growth of the heavy steel industry brought into being a vast new section of the working class subject to neither apprenticeship regulation nor the failing enterprise of the Church. Through the School Board the new manufacturing elite of Sheffield constructed a system of elementary and secondary schooling which reinforced their control over their semi- and unskilled workers and reduced the degree of control exercised by the trade societies over industrial training.

However, four characteristics of Sheffield education persisted after 1870. First, in spite of the involvement of some steel manufacturers in the School Board, especially during the 1870s, and the participation of some other businessmen on this body, employers were generally unwilling to support educational enterprises beyond the 'basic' provision supplied by the elementary and higher grade schools.²³ The Technical School, the School of Design and Firth College were starved of local support. Second, members of professional and white-collar occupations were a much smaller proportion of the population in Sheffield compared to Birmingham after 1870 as before. This fact contributed to the relative weakness of classical secondary education in Sheffield. Third, both before and after 1870 educational institutions with an aura of 'refinement' derived from their connection with the ancient universities or the Anglican hierarchy were reluctant to associate closely with institutions devoting themselves solely to technical training. The aversion of the Church of England Instruction

23 Bingham 1949, 310-13.

Society towards the Mechanics' Institute anticipated the separation of the Technical School from Firth College. Fourth, a strong ethos of self-sufficiency and self-government was expressed in the Nonconformist Sunday schools, People's College and even (despite its reliance upon government grants) the School of Design. However, the more 'refined' section of Sheffield's educational order looked outside Sheffield for guidance and support. For example, the national Anglican establishment provided external support for the Church of England Educational Institute. Wesley College had similar backing from national Methodist organisation. Firth College was inspired by the University Extension movement and subsequently received financial support from the Treasury Committee in whose origination its own Principal had played a major part.

The growth of the heavy steel industry was accompanied by strong tendencies towards residential segregation by income and status. The steel workers were huddled around huge plants in Attercliffe and Brightside, the old light trades still clung to the centre of town, the Park district in the east was a warren of decaying slums, and the white-collar professional and managerial families lived up on the salubrious slopes to the west and south-west. The transference of social and political initiative from the neighbourhood level towards regional and national networks had left the Town Council with few functions, little income and a very modest respectability. Its functions, at least, began to grow after the turn of the century as the pressure from working-class political organisation increased. The capture of seats on the Town Council by political representatives of labour was encouraged by two circumstances: the

strength and obduracy of the large employers which inhibited a purely industrial strategy; and the growth of clear working-class constituencies within large areas of the borough.²⁴

In the case of Birmingham the increase in the population and wealth of the city which was underway by 1830 stimulated a challenge to county-oriented establishments from within the financial, manufacturing and professional bourgeoisie. The challenge was mounted at the municipal level over church rates, control of the new town council and the management of the King Edward VI Foundation. Although the challengers, many of them radical Nonconformists, drew upon the support of some artisans and petty traders, the rights vested in neighbourhood communities were not at issue as in Sheffield. Indeed, the customary privileges of Birmingham's artisans were being eroded in local industry. At issue were the conditions under which public authority within Birmingham should be exercised. In contrast to Sheffield, the shift in initiative was lateral, not downwards. Unlike in Sheffield, this initiative was exercised aggressively, not defensively. It was used to attack existing ecclesiastical privileges and to capture the new municipal corporation. Furthermore, unlike in Sheffield,

24 During the mid-1920s Sheffield became the first large English borough in which the Labour Party achieved a majority on the City Council. Ironically, like Birmingham eight decades previously, Sheffield came into confrontation with central government over the proper extent of municipal power. Sheffield's City Council repeatedly came into conflict with the Treasury and the Ministry of Health, departments dominated by Neville Chamberlain. Rowett 1979, 13; Hawson 1968, 25-6; Mowatt 1968, 471-3; Middlemas 1979, 230-3; F Miller 1979.

religious, political, industrial and educational institutions (such as the Mechanics' Institute) were all drawn upon in mobilising support. On the other side, the General Hospital, the King Edward VI Foundation, the Loyal and Constitutional Society and the ecclesiastical hierarchy together belonged to a similar network of inter-related institutions. By the early 1850s the two opposing networks began to institutionalise the bargaining and conflict taking place between their memberships. This was expressed in joint ventures such as the Birmingham and Midland Institute and the merging of the Street Commissioners with the Town Council. Complex cross-allegiances developed as new issues arose such as the part to be played by the central and local state in social management. For half a generation influence was shared between the contesting parties of the 1830s and 1840s.

As has been seen, the new business leaders in Sheffield after the 1850s found some aspects of 'old' Sheffield redundant and other aspects obstructive. A vigorous attack was made on the latter, mainly through engaging in conflict with the craft unions. The former were largely ignored and by-passed. Although it was useful to have a few steel manufacturers in the municipal corporation and the Cutlers' Company was a convenient talking shop, there was not a great deal in 'old' Sheffield that 'new' Sheffield could use. A very different pattern emerged in Birmingham. During the late 1860s and early 1870s a new establishment captured the Town Council and proceeded to magnify its status and extend its functions. This establishment did not attempt to sweep away the complex infrastructure of civic life which had been developing since the 1830s,

not least in the educational sphere. Rather, its members fought to extend their grasp over existing institutions - and were sharply resisted. Not until the 1880s did the governors of the King Edward VI Foundation cease to oppose schemes suggested by the Town Council for their reform. Meanwhile, employees of the Foundation such as MacCarthy and Vardy were worming their way into positions of great influence over the public system of elementary and secondary education. However, these political conflicts and bureaucratic manoeuvres were fought over an institutional terrain which while continually being adapted was neither ignored nor dismantled. In fact, this infrastructure served to bind together social groups whose skills and resources were thoroughly interdependent, especially so in a city with such a complex division of labour. There was no clear dichotomy between an 'old' Birmingham and a 'new' Birmingham such as existed in Sheffield.

However, four changes did occur in Birmingham with the emergence of the new regime. First, the network of civic institutions was greatly expanded through the implementation of Chamberlain's so-called 'municipal socialism'. Second, men whose predecessors had for decades been protesting about the exclusivity of an Anglican lay and ecclesiastical hierarchy worked hard to make the Town Council and the School Board their own political monopoly. Through intense propaganda they maximised the prestige and authority of the municipal corporation. From this base they moved out to acquire commanding positions for themselves in the leading voluntary associations such as the Birmingham and Midland Institute. Third, a new rhetoric of civic authority was

broadcast. The relationship between the civic community and its municipal corporation was infused with the sense of moral purpose previously attached to the relationship between the Evangelical vicar and members of his flock. Emphasis was placed upon public works which would improve the living standards of whole neighbourhoods. Finally, Chamberlain's Liberals built up and very effectively managed an urban political constituency through an organisation which gave a sense of participation to the 'class of master-workmen' whose members John Macdonald observed at a 'caucus' meeting in 1886:

Some talked with gestures more or less emphatic to the men next to them; others skimmed over Dr Dale's pamphlet, or produced their newspaper extracts, made marginal notes, or scribbled something - the heads of their speeches perhaps.²⁵

However, local Conservatives gradually learned to imitate some of the techniques of popular persuasion pioneered by Chamberlain. Furthermore, members of the newly-dominant elite acquired some of the patrician habits of their rivals as they settled into power. Macdonald noted in 1886 the great value of

the parks, the gardens, the public institutions, the scholarships, the works of art, with which in the short space of twenty years the Masons, the Rylands, the Tangyes, the Nettlefolds, the Adderleys, the Calthorpes, the Middlemores, the Chamberlains, the Rattrays, and others have enriched and adorned their city.²⁶

In this list the old guard and the new stand side by side. During the subsequent quarter of a century a gradual social coalescence occurred. As has been seen, during the same

²⁵ Macdonald 1886, 250.

²⁶ op cit, 245.

period within the spheres of education, industrial relations and local government a subtle compromise was reached between the norms and practices of large-scale urban-industrial bureaucracies on the one hand and the old agrarian and parochial order on the other. In the educational sphere, a hierarchy of 'post-elementary' institutions offered a higher classical education, technical training and, between the two, preparation for white-collar occupations. Educationists in the city were arguing that recruitment into such schools should not take place after early adolescence. In the industrial sphere, collaboration between unions and employers was widespread. The City Council was expanding its functions in the sphere of social welfare. Underpinning all was a strong awareness by civic leaders of the desirability of keeping in close contact with popular opinion.²⁷

These processes were aided by the growing magnitude of Birmingham's professional and white-collar occupational sector. Their patronage of educational and cultural

27 It is, to say the least, interesting that for much of the period between 1923 and 1940 the Conservative Party and the National Government were dominated by two ex-students of Mason College, Birmingham: Stanley Baldwin and Neville Chamberlain (the latter being Joseph's son). Baldwin owed his wealth to the family iron works near Birmingham. The Baldwin-Chamberlain years witnessed, at the national level: the slow but cumulative growth of institutionalised consultation between management, unions and government; a large programme of social legislation in housing, pensions and related areas; the gradual implementation of a tripartite system of 'post-elementary' education dominated by the grammar schools and legitimised by the 'eleven-plus' examination; and an increase in the amount of attention being paid by politicians and civil servants to means of assessing and influencing public opinion. Middlemas 1979, 214-265, 337-70; Mowatt 1968, 338ff; A J P Taylor 1965, 236-7; Simon 1974b, 116-48.

organisations in the city strengthened these integrative institutions. Lower middle-class inhabitants were more likely to develop attachments to such institutions than were semi- and un-skilled labourers employed within very large mechanised plants, a sector of industry which acquired predominance in Birmingham at least twenty years after this occurred in Sheffield.

Birmingham's municipal establishments were far better placed to exercise a moderate degree of 'management' of developments in local industry than were their peers in Sheffield. The Improvement Scheme, the re-drawing of constituency boundaries in 1884 and the city extensions of 1891, 1909, and 1911 were all, in part, attempts to direct or exploit socio-economic change in ways which would maintain or increase the influence of the 'city fathers'.

The development of Birmingham from 1830 to 1895, and indeed since that date, manifested a gradual shift in the balance of influence between countryside and city towards the latter within a regional bloc which throughout the period grew in its sense of collective identity and national importance. Increasingly Birmingham was established as the regional capital. Whereas the craft unions and the Church Burgesses became ill-fitting archaic survivals in modern Sheffield, Birmingham provided a social order which was able not only to welcome the increasing part played by new-fangled machinery and examination boards but also to adapt aspects of its traditional inheritance such as the King Edward VI Foundation.²⁸

²⁸ Hawson 1968, 307-9.

Birmingham and its surrounding area achieved the adaptation of traditional values to urban and industrial life, if not with theoretical perfection, then at least with appreciable practical success.²⁹

The above verdict comes at the end of a recent study of Birmingham and the West Midlands between 1760 and 1800. There are strong reasons for applying it to Birmingham one hundred years later.

A final note is in order on the sociological approach adopted throughout this thesis. Although a recurrent concern has been the interplay between the institutional orders of education, industry and local government they have not been treated as internally consistent 'systems'. Rather, each has been seen as an arena within which members of establishments and social classes have engaged in conflict and compromise as aspects of their pursuit of advancement or survival in a developing society. However, the analysis has gone beyond a quasi-Weberian survey of the strategies of competing status groups engaging in contingent encounters. Transformations in the class structures and institutional orders of Birmingham and Sheffield have been interpreted as aspects of processes of social development in the course of which an urban industrial society has taken shape in the midst of a commercialised agrarian society. The strategic determination of processes of class formation and control over institutional orders has tended to move away from lower and towards higher levels of integration. At the same time more complex forms of social differentiation and more bureaucratic modes of integration within human configurations have developed. The capacities and dispositions of participants in the educational, political and

industrial spheres have been explained in terms of their location within this developing class structure. Their conflicts and accommodations have produced patterns of management in these spheres which have in turn influenced the development of the class structure.

It has been seen that very different modes of articulation between old and new social orders developed in Birmingham and Sheffield. In spite of strong likenesses in urban and rural technology, institutions and social classes within the two cities were differentiated and integrated in very dissimilar ways. Thus, for example, in Sheffield before 1850 practices within elementary schooling tended to work against the prevailing structure of industrial regulation and there were few overlaps between educational involvements and activities in the political sphere. In Birmingham, by contrast, tendencies within all three spheres were much more complementary and the three institutional orders were much more closely interrelated.

There is, of course, a long-term tendency for education, industry and the political management of local government to develop a minimal consistency with each other which flows from the interdependence of the particular processes occurring within each sphere. However, one may not assume that a 'need' for the accumulation of industrial capital and the reproduction of capitalist relations of industrial production necessarily has priority within this nexus of institutional relations. The 'need' of genteel interests rooted in the rural order for the accumulation of cultural capital and the reproduction of social relations securing their own authority has imposed constraints just as powerful

as those stemming from industrialists and the system of industrial production. Very different patterns in these respects were noticed in Birmingham and Sheffield after 1850. Also noticed was the successful promotion of liberal culture and denigration of industrial activity at the national level after the turn of the century. In this analysis the pursuit of generalisations about the relative determinancy of the educational as opposed to the industrial or political spheres is superseded by the assumption that the development of all three institutional spheres was an aspect of transformations within the broader framework of social differentiation. Within this broader framework the important distinctions are two: between the institutions and solidarities of the rural social order as opposed to those of the large manufacturing cities; and between dominant, intermediate and subordinate social classes whose composition and consciousness were a product of the complex intermeshing between the old society and the new.

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Abbreviations

History Collection

Trans. NAPSS Transactions of the National Association
for the Promotion of Social Science.

THAS Transactions of the Hunter Archeological
Society.

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